



Casting coup

Janhvi Kapoor is reported to have replaced Sai Pallavi to portray goddess Sita in much-awaited movie *Ramayana*

LEISURE | P2



Fresh Red Sea attacks

Two ships travelling in Middle East waters come under attack by suspected Houthis rebel drones early Tuesday

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Paytm crackdown

Paytm app downloads fall 20%, while rival apps including PhonePe and Google Pay record average 52% growth

BUSINESS | P11



Praise for Bumrah

Former England skipper says none of the England batters had the technique to tackle Jasprit Bumrah in the 2nd Test

SPORTS | P12

SHORT TAKES

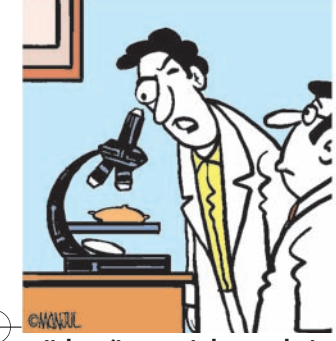
11 killed, 174 hurt in MP cracker unit blast

Bhopal/Harda: In a horrific incident, at least 11 persons were killed and nearly 200 others injured in a powerful explosion and subsequent blaze at a firecrackers factory near Harda town of Madhya Pradesh Tuesday, a senior official said. The cause of the blast was not yet known and efforts were on to control the blaze, according to officials. P9

Over 98K posts lying vacant in state depts

Bhubaneswar: A whopping 98,348 posts are lying vacant across various departments of the state government as of January 31, Skill Development and Technical Education (SD&TE) Minister Pritiranjana Gharai told the Assembly, Tuesday. Responding to a query posed by Bolangir MLA Mukesh Mahaling during the Interim Budget session of the House, Gharai went on to highlight vacancies across 41 departments as per the data of the General Administration and Public Grievances (GA&PG) department. Health and Family Welfare department has the highest number of vacancies (26,815), followed by School and Mass Education department (21,844). P3

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



It doesn't appear to be a product distributed by the govt. It doesn't have the PM's photo

| MARKET WATCH | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| INDEX | VARIATION |
| SENSEX | 72186.09 ↑ 454.67 |
| NIFTY | 21929.40 ↑ 157.70 |
| DOLLAR | 83.11 ↑ ₹0.14 |
| EURO | 89.29 ↓ ₹0.20 |
| GOLD | ₹62,590 ↑ ₹274 |
| SILVER | ₹70,680 ↑ ₹200 |

| WEATHER | | |
|----------|--------|--------|
| | BBSR | CTC |
| Max Temp | 34.4°C | 33.0°C |
| Min Temp | 21.2°C | 20.0°C |
| Humidity | 90% | 84% |
| Rainfall | Nil | Nil |

FORECAST
DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY



PEOPLE CONNECT: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi waving at crowd during a rally at Biramitrapur in Sundargarh district, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

BJP, RSS spreading hate, says Rahul

The senior Congress leader says his 'Nyay Yatra' is against social injustice towards tribals, women, Dalits and farmers as well as price rise, unemployment, and privatisation of govt companies

PNN & AGENCIES

Rourkela, Feb 6: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rashtriya Swyam Sevak Sangh (RSS) are spreading hate and injustice in states like Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and the Northeast, charged Congress leader Rahul Gandhi as 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' he began January 14, 2024 reached Biramitrapur in Sundargarh district from Jharkhand, Tuesday. Rahul was given a rousing welcome by Odisha Congress leaders at Biramitrapur. After entering Odisha through Jharkhand border, Rahul held a meeting near Pattalkana, 2 km away from Biramitrapur. Addressing the gathering, Gandhi said he has been listening to the people for seven to eight hours during the 'yatra' and addressing them for 15 minutes every day. The senior Congress leader said his 'Nyay Yatra' is against social injustice towards tribals,

women, Dalits and farmers as well as price rise, unemployment, and privatisation of govt companies. The first edition of 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' covered about 4,000 km from Kanyakumari to Kashmir in 2022-23 to unite the country, Gandhi said, adding that it was against "hatred and injustice". It was successful as millions of people participated in the 'yatra', he said. "However, people from other states like Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal and the Northeast told me that their states were not covered by the 'yatra'," Gandhi said. The BJP and RSS are spreading hate and injustice in these states too, he claimed. The 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' from Manipur to Mumbai was organised following the request of the people of those states, Gandhi said. The senior Congress leader said the Nyay Yatra seeks justice for the unemployed, tribals, women, Dalits and youths.

OFFERED BISCUIT TO DOG OWNER: RAHUL

Gumla: Rahul Gandhi Tuesday said he offered a biscuit to a dog owner to feed the animal after it refused to eat from his hands and wondered what is the obsession of the BJP with dogs? His remarks came after a video showing him offering a biscuit rejected by a dog to a person went viral on social media, with BJP leaders alleging this is how he treats workers of his party.

"On the way to Odisha, I met a man in Jharkhand who has a land issue. That has been resolved after my intervention," Gandhi told the gathering. He said that during the 'yatra' he had also encountered certain complaints from people like corporate bodies taking land of farmers. "Nafrat ki bazaar me mohabbat ki dukan khulne aya hnu. To open the shop of love in the market of hatred," Rahul said in his brief speech.

Question paper leak to invite ₹1 crore fine

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: A day after Assam government proposed stringent punishment of up to 10 years of imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹10 crore on anyone found involved in unfair means in recruitment examinations, a Bill seeking to deal sternly with malpractices and irregularities in competitive examinations with provisions for a maximum jail term of 10 years and a fine up to ₹1 crore was passed in the Lok Sabha Tuesday.

However, the Centre has clarified that students and candidates do not fall in the purview of this Bill and there will be no harm to job aspirants. Piloting The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said its provisions are meant to safeguard the interest of meritorious students and candidates. The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha after rejecting amendments proposed by the opposition members. The move comes against the backdrop of cancellation of a series of competitive tests such as the teacher recruitment exam in Rajasthan, Common Eligibility Test (CET) for Group-D posts in Haryana, recruitment exam for junior clerks in Gujarat and constable recruitment examination in Bihar following question paper leaks.

2 Bills passed modifying SC, ST list in Odisha, AP

In Andhra, three more ethnic groups - Bondo Porja, Khond Porja, Parangiperja - are being added to the list of STs while in Odisha four groups will be added to the list

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: The Rajya Sabha Tuesday passed two Bills which seek to modify the list of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. The Upper House cleared the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024, and the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024 by voice vote. The first Bill seeks to modify the list of STs in Andhra Pradesh, while the second one seeks to modify the list of SCs and STs in Odisha. Both the Bills were piloted by Minister of Tribal Affairs Arjun Munda in the upper house. Replying to the debate, he said both the Bills have been brought with a long-term planning. In Andhra Pradesh, three more ethnic groups - Bondo Porja, Khond Porja, Parangiperja - are being added to the list of STs while in Odisha it will add four



groups in the list. All these are part of Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and they have been added to the scheduled list after 75 years of independence. "There are 75 PVTGs which are spread from Andaman Island to the mainland. The government has started a scheme and worked in mission mode with a target to reach them in the far-flung area in which they reside," said Munda. According to him, the names of such 10 PVTGs were not added in the list of scheduled tribes and they were deprived of conditional rights and faced injustice. Munda further said he has written letters to the state governments, where the population of PVTGs is on the decline. Moreover, the government has also launched schemes such as PM-JANMAN (Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan) to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, he said.

Mom's joke pulls out woman from 5-yr coma

AGENCIES

Washington, Feb 6: The saying "laughter is the best medicine" virtually translated into a miraculous remedy for a US woman who triumphed over a 5-year coma with nothing but laughter. Yes, it's true. Jennifer Flewellen, hailing from Niles, Michigan, met with a car accident in September 2017 that plunged her into an "irreversible coma." However, her healing journey took an extraordinary turn when she woke up laughing in response to her mother's joke, defying the odds after precisely four years and 11 months. In an interview with People,



Flewellen's mother Peggy Means, said, "When she woke up, it scared me at first because she was laughing and she had never done that." "Every dream came true. Today's the day I said, 'That door that was closed, that kept us apart, had just opened. We were back,'" said Means. Now,

Flewellen is working hard to regain her speech and mobility after being in a coma for 5 years. Moreover, a GoFundMe campaign has begun to help her buy a handicap van and home remodels. "She woke up, but she didn't completely. She couldn't speak, but

she was nodding," Means, 60, told People. "She would still sleep a lot right at first, but then as the months would go by, she would get stronger and be more awake." One eager commenter pleaded, "Would you share what the joke was? I am desperate to hear it, please." Another chimed in, "What was the joke, please? I'm dying to know," echoing the sentiments of many. Flewellen's physician at Michigan's Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital Dr Ralph Wang said, "This is so rare. Not just waking up, but making progress. Maybe 1-2% of patients wake up and make progress this far out."

AJIT PAWAR FACTION REAL NCP, RULES EC

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: Ajit Pawar faction is the real Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), the Election Commission (EC) announced Tuesday, ending months of speculation over the factional fight with his party founder and uncle Sharad Pawar. In an order, the EC also allotted NCP symbol 'Wall Clock' to the group led by Ajit. The decision followed the laid-out tests of maintainability of such a petition which included tests of aims and objectives of party constitution, test of party constitution and tests of majority both organisational and legislative, the commission said.

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BARRYMORE NOT READY TO EMBRACE HER GREYS

Actress and talk show host Drew Barrymore says she can't give up colouring her hair just yet. "I do love that it's trending, looks so beautiful, and is like a fashion statement," she told *People.com*. "But I just don't feel ready to go down that road," added the actress.

MATT SMITH'S RITUAL INVOLVING MAIL VANS

House of the Dragon star Matt Smith has confessed he has a bizarre ritual that's ruled his life over the last 20 years. He says he has to touch something red every time he sees a Royal Mail van.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today you will feel like displaying your power. If you find that people are awestruck when you pass by, take it that your labours are doing the trick. Otherwise, take it that you have to get things in better order. Ganesh says either ways you have more work to do.

TAURUS
This day, Ganesh sees you brimming with pep and vigour. You'll be feeling playful and frisky and will want to amuse yourself, keep others amused. You are likely to hang out with old friends and cronies and will love very second of it. Long breezy drives on the wide open roads, jungle treks are distinctly in the cards. Your exuberance and playfulness will regale your pals and make the day a very lively and memorable one.

GEMINI
Today, you will realise that close relationships need care and concern to grow, predicts Ganesh. You will have new responsibilities and achieve huge profits in all your dealings. Pay special attention to your personal health.

CANCER
You will be quite sharp at work, and equally penetrating in the matters of the heart. Though, you may temporarily lose focus, your mind will bring you back to the real world. You will work at a break-neck speed, only to be able to spend as much time as possible with your sweetheart.

LEO
A lucky day is in the offing. You will taste success in all your endeavours. You will be extremely creative. You will contribute a lot of new ideas in meetings. You will be able to talk about your love without any hesitation today, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
If being humanitarian needed a definite physical form, you are most likely to be nominated. Such is the mix of values and practicality today, says Ganesh. Devise strategies to achieve more productivity. See the bigger picture, says Ganesh. This is not difficult considering you have a broad vision - with or without the glasses.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that you shall be immersed in successfully completing all your remaining work today. Whatever work you undertake today you shall be able to do it to your best capability and successfully and your work ability will be praiseworthy.

SCORPIO
The grey strands on your head is not just a colour, but speaks about your experiences. Your wisdom will make you take appropriate decisions at work. Ganeshji warns you to stay away from courtrooms and legal issues, or the trap may leave a deep scar.

SAGITTARIUS
Dressed to kill - this phrase is enough to describe you today, says Ganesh. Decked up from head to toe in chic attire and classy jewellery, you make a bold statement. Like a magnet, you will attract attention at a party. Don't get surprised if your list of admirers becomes longer.

CAPRICORN
You are not an impulsive person and this reflects in whatever you do. Money will be on your mind almost through out the day. Generally, you are a penny pincher, but during the later half of the day you will go on a spending spree. Don't ignore your pocket while spending, otherwise you may end up burning a hole in it, advises Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
Most of the time it is your way or no other way, especially when you charging towards your goal. Today, you will push your limits to achieve what you have desired. You are talented, hard working, creative, and icing on the cake is your luck which is favouring you big time.

PISCES
Controversy and differences circle overhead, almost waiting for a chance to corner you. Even though you are a happy go lucky person, you may feel a little run down and disgruntled today. But don't lose heart, says Ganesh, because as the day progresses you will find bigger and better reasons to smile. Your spouse or loved one will have a major role to play in restoring your happiness.

SAI PALLAVI OUT OF RAMAYANA

Janhvi to play Sita!

Mumbai: Nitesh Tiwari directorial *Ramayana* is one of the most anticipated Hindi film projects at the moment. The epic saga will star Ranbir Kapoor in the leading role of Lord Ram, while South superstar Yash is likely to play Ravana. The latest rumours now suggest Janhvi Kapoor will portray goddess Sita, as opposed to earlier reports of Sai Pallavi.

A lot of speculations have been made around upcoming movie *Ramayana* in recent times. It began with Ranbir and Alia Bhatt playing the mythological couple. While RK is indeed a part of the project, his wife was never approached. Deepika Padukone was also reportedly contacted, but the filmmaker has decided to cast one of the Kapoor sisters in a never-seen-before avatar.

As per the latest report, Janhvi has been finalised to play Goddess Sita. Nitesh seems to have noted a hidden gem and feels the *Dhadak* actress would fit the bill perfectly. It was earlier claimed that Sai Pallavi is set to commence the shooting with Ranbir in February 2024. But it looks like there have been some last-minute changes, and now she's out of the project.

It is to be noted that Janhvi has previously collaborated with Nitesh on *Bawaal*, which co-starred Varun Dhawan. The filmmaker knows her weaknesses and strengths very well, and if he thinks she would be apt to play Sita, it would be interesting to see her goddess avatar.



SUHANA hated attention due to SRK

Mumbai: Shah Rukh Khan and wife Gauri Khan's daughter Suhana Khan, who made her debut as an actor in Zoya Akhtar's *The Archies*, once revealed how her father would come to pick her up from school and she would hate that attention.

In her first-ever interview with *Vogue* in 2018, Suhana shared that she realised quite early on that it was different for them. But she never really thought about her dad being famous. The actress added that when she was about five, he would come and drop her off at school, and people would point and stare.

Suhana went on to say that SRK wasn't being addressed as Suhana's dad, which is what she wanted. It confused her.

"He would want to hug me, and I would push him back in the car. So, I hated the attention, it made me very self-conscious. But over time, I came to terms with reality," revealed the

star kid, now a star herself. For the unversed, Suhana Khan first acted in a short film named *The Grey Part Of Blue*. The 10-minute short film was directed by Theodore Gimeno, and it is available on YouTube. In this movie, she played the lead role of 'Sandy', a young girl who is smitten with love with her on-screen boyfriend, 'Robin', played by Robin Gonella.

AGENCIES

Sushmita explores new layers in acting



Mumbai: Actress Sushmita Sen expressed her delight in working with director Ram Madhvani, and shared how the latter has helped her discover her acting skills that she never knew existed.

She is seen as the lead in Madhvani's crime thriller series *Aarya*. Sharing insights on working with the Neerja director, the *Main Hoon Na* actress said, "Working with him is always a delight. I truly admire his genius. He transformed Aarya from a naive, sheltered woman to someone resilient in facing life's challenges."

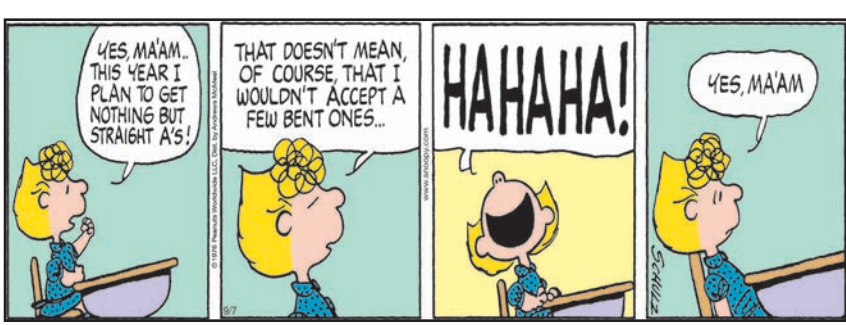
"Off-screen, Ram revealed new layers in my acting that I never knew existed. The trust he has in me is incredible; he saw *Aarya* in me before I could," said the former Miss Universe.

Sushmita added, "For *Aarya Antim Vaar*, Ram and I spent time understanding Aarya's soul. When he asked me to look into my soul, I followed his advice and isolated myself. You can see the pain and anger on screen - Ram's guidance brought those emotions to life."

Aarya Antim Vaar will be streaming on Disney+ Hotstar from February 9.

AGENCIES

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

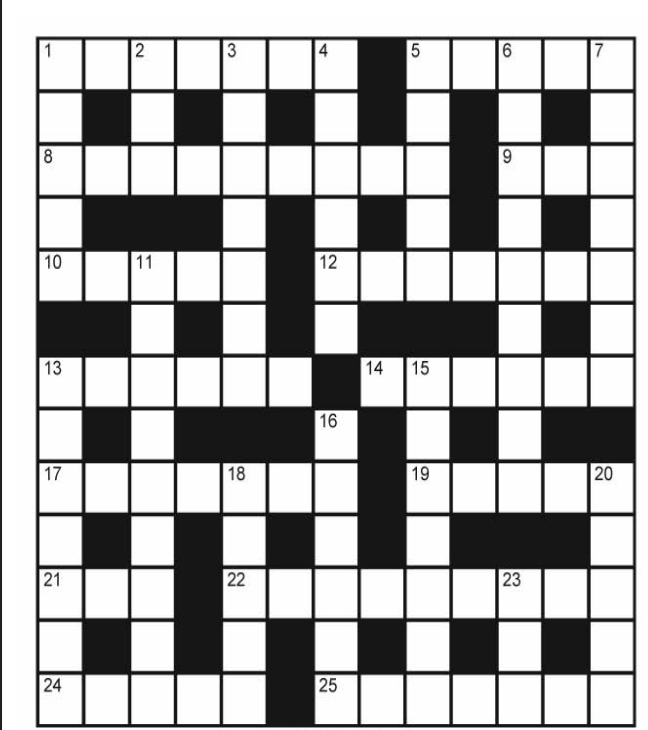


BREVITY



FUN post

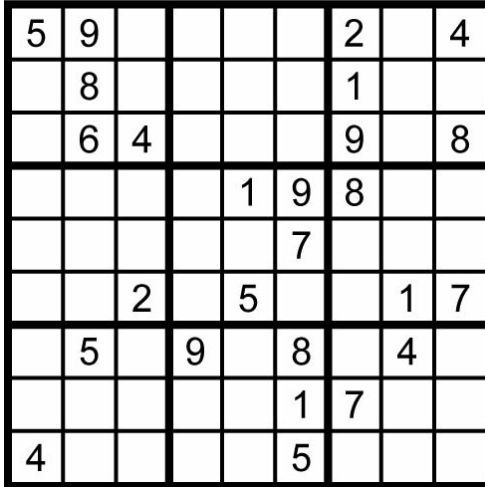
CROSSWORD



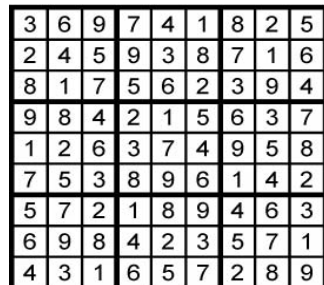
- Copyright ©2024 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Temporary stay
 - 5 Shocking weapon
 - 8 Good neighbor, maybe
 - 9 Egyptian cobra
 - 10 Frosting
 - 12 Polygonal shape
 - 13 Egotism
 - 14 Wide-ranging
 - 17 Excess
 - 19 Stigma
 - 21 Easily tamed bird
 - 22 Theatre section
 - 24 Sordid
 - 25 Shellfish
 - 5 Dogma
 - 6 Nirvana (7-2)
 - 7 Matured
 - 11 Bike shop item (5,4)
 - 13 Evensong
 - 15 Tooth problem
 - 16 Building material
 - 18 Jet black
 - 20 Draws nigh
 - 23 Casual attire
- Down**
- 1 Kind of bar
 - 2 Traffic problem
 - 3 Vertical
 - 4 Political entity

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

COURTESY CALL

Police Commissioner Sanjeeb Panda Tuesday pays a courtesy visit to Governor Raghubar Das after taking charge of the top post



98,348 POSTS LYING VACANT

Health and Family Welfare department has the highest number of vacancies (26,815), followed by School and Mass Education department (21,844). Similarly, Industries department has the lowest vacancy (one)

Education department (21,844). Similarly, Industries department has the lowest vacancy (one), according to Gharai. Home department has 7,315 vacancies, Revenue and Disaster Management department (5,892), Fisheries and Animal Resources Development department (4,674), and Forest, Environment and Climate Change department has 3,607 vacant posts.

Similarly, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department has 3,552 vacancies, Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare department (2,821), Water Resources (2,732), and ST and SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare department has 2,324 vacancies.

To another question on increasing the upper age limit for government job aspirants to 42, the SD&TE minister said, "The state government has not received any such proposal so far. However, we have increased the upper age limit from 32 to 38 for recruitment to various posts in calendar year 2024."

Jumbo attacks claim 1,054 lives in 10 years



IN THE HOUSE

CLP leader stages dharna

Bhubaneswar: The state Assembly was Tuesday adjourned several times as Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Narasingha Mishra staged a dharna in the well of the House, demanding return of land acquired for Vedanta Group's proposed university in Puri district to farmers. Mishra raised the issue during Zero Hour and demanded that Speaker Pramila Mallik ask the state government to return the land acquired for the project to farmers.

Bhubaneswar: More than 1,000 people died in wild elephant attacks in the past decade in Odisha, Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister Pradip Kumar Amat told the state Assembly, Tuesday.

In a written reply to a question from Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati, the minister said 1,054 people were killed in elephant attacks in the state between 2014-15 and 2023-24. As per the

reply, major elephant habitation zones in Dhenkanal, Sundargarh, Angul, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts accounted for the bulk of the casualties.

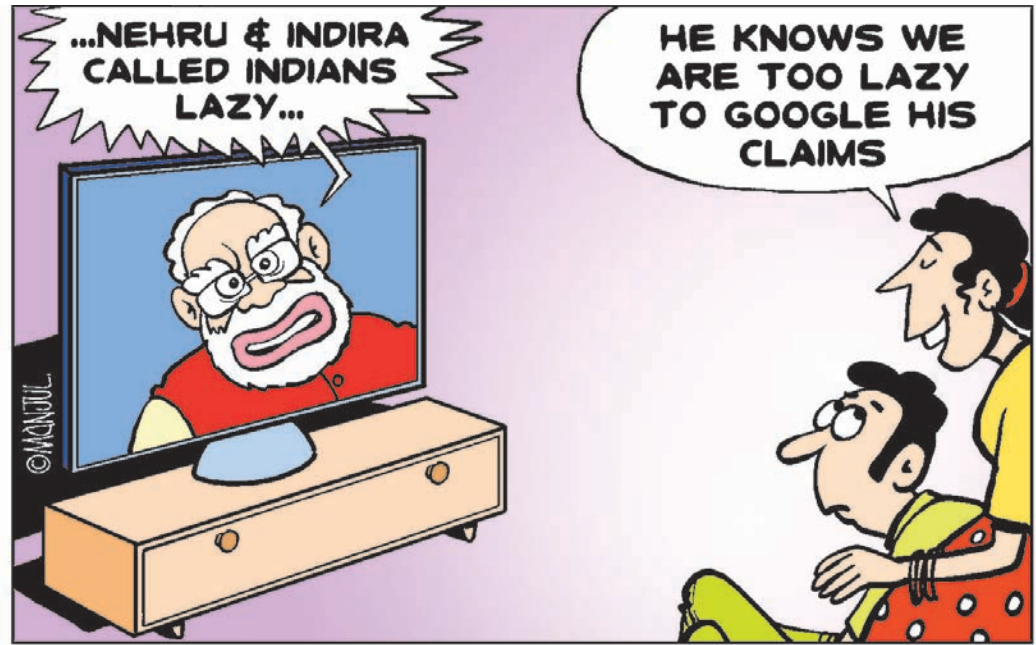
With 227 human casualties due to jumbo attacks in the last 10 years, Dhenkanal district topped the chart. It was followed by Sundargarh district (181), Angul (144) and Mayurbhanj (102).

Out of 30 districts of the state, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Koraput, and Malkangiri districts have reported zero human causality due to elephant attacks in the past decade, Amat said.

The state has 1,976 elephants, according to the last census carried out in 2017.

The state government has recently increased the ex-gratia from ₹4 lakh to ₹6 lakh for family members of people getting killed by jumbos.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



2024 ELECTIONS

5 coastal districts 'sensitive' for hooch, contraband trade

BHUBANESWAR RANKS TOP ON EXCISE DEPARTMENT RADAR FOR NARCOTICS CONSUMPTION

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Ahead of the 2024 elections, the state Excise department has categorized five coastal districts as 'sensitive' for trade of illicit liquor and narcotics drugs, while the Capital City of Bhubaneswar ranks the highest for consumption and distribution of contraband in the state.

Excise Commissioner Narasingh Bhol said Cuttack, Balasore and Nayagarh districts have been identified as areas having the highest illicit-alcohol manufacturing units, while Balasore, Puri, Bhadrak, Cuttack and Nayagarh have shot to notoriety for trade of brown sugar. "We have marked them as sensitive for the upcoming elections," he said.

The Excise department top official said Bhubaneswar reported the highest in the state for brown sugar peddling, supply and consumption.

While the department has directed the Bhubaneswar Excise Superintendent to undertake enforcement measures and deploy mobile units in the City's slums, plans are afoot to initiate crackdowns against the various syndicates running the operation in the coastal districts.

Sources in the Excise department meanwhile, said that a weekly-report detailing the state-wide enforcement drive would be submitted to the State Election Commission (SEC) till the culmination of the Lok



2 held with 400 gm brown sugar

Bhubaneswar: The special anti-narcotics unit of the Commissionerate Police, here, Tuesday claimed to have seized 400 grams of brown sugar, having an estimated street value of ₹40 lakh, and arrested two peddlers in connection with the case.

The accused, Siba Prasad Dash (27) and Jagabandhu Dash (29) hail from Cuttack district. They are suspected to have been sourcing the drugs from Khurdha for trade in the city, said a senior cop.

Twin-City Police Commissioner Sanjeeb Panda said the sleuths were tipped off about the duo operating out of Khuntuni village of Cuttack district and pushing the illicit



drug into the City. Accordingly, the anti-narcotics sleuths laid a trap near Pahala area of Bhubaneswar earlier during the day. When the duo was spotted in the area, the waiting cops zeroed in on them near NH-16 bypass and rounded them up. An investigation has started to ascertain the identity of the person/s who supplied the contraband to the accused, said the Commissioner.

Sabha elections.

Side by side, Bhol said round-the-clock security measures will be in place at the 38 inter-state border check posts along neighbouring states like West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Telengana from where the contraband consignments are finding their way into Odisha.

The field officials, in addition, would undertake strin-

gent preemptive actions at sensitive zones near the borders known for supply of manufactured hooch, said Bhol.

According to the sources, the Excise officials have also been instructed to tighten noose around peddlers involved in smuggling Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) to other states, thereby causing losses to the state revenue.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: A whopping 98,348 posts are lying vacant across various departments of the state government as of January 31, Skill Development and Technical Education (SD&TE) Minister Pritiranjana Gharai told the Assembly, Tuesday.

Responding to a query posed by Bolangir MLA Mukesh Mahaling during the Interim Budget session of the House, Gharai went on to highlight vacancies across 41 departments as per the data of the General Administration and Public Grievances (GA&PG) department.

Health and Family Welfare department has the highest number of vacancies (26,815), followed by School and Mass



FEST IN CITY: 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian with artistes at the Ekamra Utsav in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

4L more MBPY beneficiaries

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Chief Minister Tuesday approved a proposal to include four lakh more beneficiaries under the state government's social security scheme, Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY).

The state government had received several petitions for adding more MBPY beneficiaries.

Senior citizens, widows, differently-abled persons, unmarried women, AIDS and leprosy patients, divorced women, transgenders, and children orphaned by the Covid pandemic are covered under MBPY.

With Patnaik approving the proposal, the number of beneficiaries under MBPY increased to 36.75 lakh from 32.75 lakh people. The beneficiaries in the age group of five years to 79 years are eligible to get a monthly pension of ₹500. Those above 80 years are paid ₹700 a month, an official release issued by the CMO said.

Centre says no to mobile towers in core tiger habitats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: The Centre has disallowed installation of mobile towers in core or critical tiger habitats in the country, according to new guidelines by the Environment Ministry.

In an order issued in January, the ministry highlighted that the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (SCNBWL) has been receiving a large number of proposals for erection of mobile towers and laying of optical fiber cables in national parks, sanctuaries, and tiger reserves and corridors.

It said while providing connectivity to the people residing within or near wildlife-rich areas should be taken on priority, 'the protection and conservation of wildlife habitats should not get affected' by such installations.

The ministry also expressed concern that the mobile connectivity could be misused by offenders of forest and wildlife laws.

"The core/critical tiger habitat, notified under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, should be avoided for installation of the tower," read the order issued to the chief wildlife wardens of all states and Union Territories and the Ministry of Communications.

The ministry said any proposal seeking recommendation of the SCNBWL for 4G connectivity in such areas must be accompanied by an undertaking from the District Magistrate concerned indicating non-availability of alternate revenue/private lands.

It should also include drawings/sketches of the location of various components of the proposals within the required land and a plan for movement of the equipment and men for erection of towers and their maintenance, the order said.

The user agency will be required to provide an undertaking that call data records of suspected persons for contravention



of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 will be provided when requested by the officer not below the rank of deputy conservator of forests having jurisdiction over the area.

The ministry also said new towers should not be installed within a radius of one kilometre of the existing towers to pre-

vent overlapping of high radiation fields.

"If new towers are required to be built, these should be erected with utmost care and precautions so as not to obstruct the flight path of birds, and also not to increase the combined radiations from all towers in the area," the ministry said.

Installing mobile towers in core tiger habitats would mean laying power cables, deploying generator sets and movement of people which could disturb the wildlife. Mobile towers outside the tiger reserves also provide good connectivity

JOSE LOUIES | CHIEF OF ENFORCEMENT AT WILDLIFE TRUST OF INDIA

It said the location and frequencies of cell phone towers and other such installations emitting electromagnetic radiation should be made available in the public domain.

Location-wise GIS mapping of all cell phone towers should be maintained which would inter alia help in monitoring the population of birds and bees in and around the mobile towers and also in and/or around protected areas, it said.

Jose Louies, the chief of enforcement at the Wildlife Trust

of India, said. "Installing mobile towers in core tiger habitats would mean laying power cables, deploying generator sets and movement of people which could disturb the wildlife. Mobile towers outside the tiger reserves also provide good connectivity."

A tiger reserve includes two parts: core or critical tiger habitat and buffer or peripheral area.

According to the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, the critical tiger habitats are core areas of the tiger reserves meant to be "kept inviolate for the purpose of tiger conservation".

The buffer area surrounds the core habitat and serves as a transition zone.

While the core habitat remains intact, the buffer area allows for sustainable human activities and coexistence with wildlife.

The number of tigers in India has increased from 2,967 in 2018 to 3,682 in 2022, an annual rise of 6 percent, according to latest government data.

LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS ELIMINATION

Mass drug administration in 7 districts from Feb 10



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Health and Family Welfare department is rolling out a mass drug administration (MDA) programme from February 10 till 19 for elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (LF) in seven endemic districts of the state, informed an official here, Tuesday.

The districts include Bolangir, Kalahandi, Rayagada, Cuttack, Kandhamal, Khurda and Nayagarh.

As part of the programme, to create awareness about the significance of anti-filaria medication, the department organised a state-level media sensitisation workshop in collaboration with Global Health Strategies.

Speaking at the workshop, special secretary of public health Snehalata Sahu said,

“During MDA round, it will be ensured that everyone except children below two years, pregnant women and seriously ill people must consume the prescribed dosage in presence of trained volunteers and health workers.”

Sahu stressed that community participation will be extremely crucial for the success of the programme and media can play a pivotal role in creating awareness around Filariasis and its prevention.

Public health director Niranjan Mishra said that Filariasis is a serious public health problem which spreads by mosquito bites.

“Filariasis damages the lymphatic system and if left untreated, causes abnormal swelling of body parts which is irreversible. The condition affects livelihoods, opportunities and working capacity of affected persons and they often

Special secretary of public health Snehalata Sahu said that community participation will be crucial for the success of the programme and media can play a pivotal role in creating awareness around Filariasis and its prevention

become victims to social stigma,” he said.

He further mentioned that during the MDA, around 46 lakh people will be reached by trained volunteers and workers through booth and house to house visits.

On the occasion, Shubhashishya Mohanty, joint director cum state program officer of Vector Borne Diseases said, “From the 7 endemic districts, three type of anti-filariasis drugs (Ivermectin, DEC, Albendazole) will be administered in three districts namely Bolangir, Kalahandi and Rayagada while two drugs (DEC and Albendazole) will be administered in four districts namely Cuttack, Kandhamal, Khurda and Nayagarh.”



MATTER OF LIVELIHOOD: Members of Non-Government Aided and Un-Aided Colleges Teaching and Non-Teaching (+2 and +3) Employees' Association stage a demonstration at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, seeking fulfillment of their various demands, Tuesday
 OP PHOTO

NGOs roped in for de-addiction drive

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: To strengthen de-addiction drive under the ‘DISHA’ scheme, state Social Security and Empowerment of PwDs department (SSEPD) has joined hands with five non-government organisations (NGOs) extending them financial support.

The department recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the non-government stakeholders to help them provide services at their recovery centres for addicts.

SSEPD principal secretary Bishnupada Sethi said that the objective of the scheme is to provide a wide range of services at the de-addiction centres, including awareness generation, identification, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts through voluntary effort.

“All services at the recovery centres will be provided free of cost to the beneficiaries,” Sethi said while urging the stakeholders to maintain transparency and philanthropic spirit in their conduct.

The MoU was signed at the State Institute for Disability Rehabilitation (SIDR) by the principal secretary in presence of Niyati Pattnaik, director, Dillip K Ray, special secretary and senior officers of the department.

Under the initiative, five organizations, Faith Charitable Trust (Bhubaneswar), Mukti Foundation (Khurda), Peoples Forum (Berhampur), Peoples Cultural Centre (Cuttack) and Vedic Group of Institutions (Berhampur) will get financial assistance for three years to run recovery centres.

5th Odisha Travel Bazaar kicks off today at Konark



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: In a bid to promote Tourism in state by forging networks and collaborations across India and globally, the Tourism department and Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) will jointly host the 5th Edition of Odisha Travel Bazaar (OTB) 2023-24 from February 7 to 9 at Eco Retreat, Konark. This was informed in a presser organised here, Tuesday.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will inaugurate the event virtually Wednesday.

Addressing the media, OTDC

chairman Lenin Mohanty highlighted the efforts being made by Odisha Tourism to boost tourist footfalls, and the need for proactive partnership of stakeholders of travel and tourism industry to popularise unexplored destinations of the state.

He said that the primary objective of Odisha Travel Bazaar 2023-24 will be to create a platform for aggressive promotion of tourist destinations in Odisha to domestic buyers from India as well as in the international market.

Strategic actions are being taken in this regard by the state government to establish Odisha as a diverse tourism hub of global standards by pitching a refreshingly new vision of the state, he added.

A total of 70 domestic tour operators from 18 states like Assam, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, GOA, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal and 55 foreign tour operators from across 16 countries like Belgium, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Netherlands, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom and Vietnam are participating in the event.

Department of Tourism Additional Chief Secretary Surendra Kumar, Department of Tourism Commissioner-cum-Director Sachin Ramchandra Jadhav and, Co-Chairman, FICCI ‘Tourism, Travel and Hospitality Committee JK Mohanty also addressed the media.

MoU signed for disaster management

Bhubaneswar: In a move to deal with natural calamities, the department of Women and Child Development signed a Memorandum of Understanding

(MoU) with The Odisha Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) at the State Institute for Women and Children (SIWC) campus in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday. Joining

the programme as chief guest, Women and Child Development Minister Basanti Hembram said that MoU will strengthen Odisha’s disaster management plan.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

Before my marriage with Balakrishna Atla, my surname was Jhansirani Sativada. Now by virtue of being married my surname changed to Jhansirani Atla, C/o. Balakrishna Atla, Harijana Colony, VTC - Kambakaya, P.O.: Kambakaya, Dist.: Srikakulam, A.P., PIN - 532421.

LOST

I, Binodini Pradhan, W/o. Sachidananda Pradhan, of Jamudihi, Dhanisar, Banki, Cuttack declare that I lost a bag containing following documents in original in Banki Bazar on 25.01.2024. Despite of my all efforts I failed to trace the same. If anyone get the same, please inform me in Mobile No. 7854991231. R.S.D. No. 10411901058, Dt. 17.09.2019, R.O.R. of Mouza: Tarapur, Khata No. 907/584.

It is hereby informed that I Sri Sudarsan Swain, At-Barehnpur, P.O./P.S.-Chandabali, District - Bhadrak, Mob.: 8249606776, on dated 03.01.2024, while going for LIC House Loan, have lost the original Sell Deed of the land seller Parthabir Behera No.- 600/2009, Dt. 20.03.2009, Khata No. 719/190, Plot No.- 974/2328, which was inside my carry bag, somewhere on the way. If any kind heard person find such documents, please contact to the given Mobile number of Sudarsan Swain for the sake of your goodness.

Soaring dreams: Youths to get opportunity in aviation



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Under the leadership of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Skill Development and Technical Education and Commerce and Transport departments Tuesday collaborated with the GMR Aero Academy (GMRAA) to extend aviation related skilling to youths of Odisha.

Accordingly, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Directorate of Aviation, Directorate of Skill Development-cum-Employment with GMR. This ceremony was graced by Commerce and Transport Minister Tukuni Sahu and Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Pritiranjana Ghara, including several other dignitaries.

The MoU with Skill Development and Technical Education department will provide pathway for skilling of more than 300 Odia youths in specialised courses like Certification in Airport Operations (CAO), Basic Fire Fighters Course (BFFC), and Air Cargo Management Executive (ACME).

Minister Sahu, in her speech, said that under the leadership of the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and 5T framework, Odisha is witnessing a transformation in the aviation sector.

“This transformation is not only creating employment opportunities for the youth but also contributing to the realisation of a Nutan Odisha,” she added.

Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Pritiranjana Ghara underscored the significance of the partnership with GMRAA on this historic occasion, stating that it will enhance the value proposition. Appreciating the efforts of Government, GMRAA Head and Vice President Air Marshal K Anantharaman emphasised the transformative impact of this initiative stating, “Considering the scope of expansion of Aviation sector, the skill development initiative would be a game-changer, creating good opportunities for youth in the airport sector. The training at GMRAA will adhere to world standards, ensuring that graduates are well-equipped to contribute to the ever-growing aviation industry.”

Principal Secretary Usha Padhee said in the new age economy, aviation is going to play a crucial role. Aviation jobs are very inspirational. Providing this niche opportunity to our youth would help them to transform their lives, she added.

Similarly, the MoU with Commerce and Transport department through Biju Patnaik Aviation Centre (BPAC) will open opportunities for Odia youths to up-skill themselves in aviation-focused courses, equipping them with credentials and expertise for diverse roles across the aviation landscape.

The MoUs were executed under overarching umbrella of BPAC at Birasal, reinforcing the Skilled in Odisha brand.

AIIMS holds CPR training for NSS volunteers

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Bhubaneswar organised a three-day workshop Tuesday to provide Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to women National Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers from 10 aspirational districts of the state. The institute held the work-

shop in collaboration with the department of Higher Education. The workshop will continue till February 8.

AIIMS Bhubaneswar Executive Director Ashutosh Biswas and noted social activist Padma Shri Tulasi Munda inaugurated the workshop.

Speaking on this occasion, Biswas said the workshop not only ensures formal education

for women but also empowers them to build up their knowledge about their health and bodies so that they can make informed choices and advocate for themselves.

Keeping this in mind, the workshop has been uniquely designed to impart the knowledge and skills required to attain better health in day-to-day life, said Biswas.

Bullying leads to psychosis in teenagers

Bullied teenagers could exhibit higher chances of experiencing early stages of psychosis, a mental state characterised by being out of touch with reality, new study has found.

Researchers scanned the brains of nearly 500 bullied teenagers and found lower levels of the neurotransmitter glutamate in the region known to be crucial to regulate emotions, the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC). Glutamate, usually the most abundant neurotransmitter, is involved in wide-ranging functions, including moderating moods.

The researchers at the University of Tokyo, Japan, also used questionnaires to track bullying victimisation in these adolescents and employed formal psychiatric measurement methods to assess their experiences.

The team found that bullying was associated with the teenagers experiencing preclinical stages of psychosis. They explained that these symptoms ‘come close’ to psychosis, but do not meet



the full criteria for a clinical diagnosis of psychotic disorders. Some of these disorders include schizophrenia and the manic state of bipolar disorder.

“Studying these subclinical psychotic experiences is important for us to understand the early stages of psychotic disorders and for identifying individuals who may be at increased risk for developing a clinical psychotic illness later on,” said Naohiro Okada, project associate professor at the University of Tokyo’s International Research Center for Neurointelligence and lead author of the study

published in the journal Molecular Psychiatry.

While changes in glutamate levels have been implicated in various psychiatric disorders, the researchers said that the link between these changes in the ACC in individuals displaying higher risks of developing psychosis and the effects of bullying in teenagers was unclear.

For measuring the levels of the neurotransmitter glutamate, the team used magnetic resonance spectroscopy, or MRS, a type of radiological imaging applied to depict brain structure and function.

They also measured glutamate levels at a later point, allowing them to assess changes over time, and compare these changes to experiences with bullying or lack thereof, as well as with any intention on the part of those experiencing bullying to seek help.

“First and foremost, anti-bullying programs in schools that focus on promoting positive social interactions and reducing aggressive behaviours are essential for their own sake and to reduce the risk of psychosis and its sub-clinical precursors.”

“These programs can help create a safe and supportive environment for all students, reducing the likelihood of bullying and its negative consequences,” said Okada.

Other potential interventions like counselling services, peer support groups and other mental health resources can help adolescents cope with the negative effects of bullying and develop resilience, he said.

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Sukinda Seed Farm faces closure

More than 3,000 workers rendered jobless after unit stops production



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Feb 6: The Sukinda Seed Farm at Damodarpur under Sukinda block in this district is on the verge of closure due to alleged administrative and political negligence, sources said here Tuesday. The farm touted as Asia's largest seeds production centre was established in 1948 by the Odisha government over 1,437 acres of land. The idea behind setting up the unit was to provide quality seeds to farmers of the state. Trouble started for the organisation after the state Agricultural department and the Odisha Seeds Corporation jointly signed a MoU with the National Seeds Corporation (NSC) for privatisation of the farm, July 23, 2016. After the MoU, the state government handed over its farmlands to the NSC. However, NSC without paying any heed to the needs of the farmers launched paddy and Arhar (pulses) cultivation on the land. Labourers working on the

(moongs), black grams, pearl millet (bajra), horse grams, groundnuts, pumpkins, jute, dhaincha, maize, mustard and various other types of seeds. Approximately 3,000 persons from villages like Kuhika, Damodarpur, Pimpudia, Bandhgaon and Manatira were working in the farm and earning their livelihoods. Many of those who worked at the farm were women. However, now everyone is looking at a bleak future, sources pointed out. Sources informed that the Odisha government had signed an agreement to hand over 108.06 hectares to the NSC. However, the NSC in connivance with influential persons in the area has acquired a sal forest, all buildings and infrastructure that belonged to the farm. At a meeting of the trust board of the district mineral foundation (DMF), April 6, 2021 a decision was taken to plant 1,03,400 guava trees on the farm lands. The Odisha Mineral Bearing Areas Development Corporation (OMBDC) also sanctioned ₹9.75 crore for the purpose. The district Horticulture department also planted guava trees with funds worth ₹76.6 lakh sanctioned in the first phase. The project was estimated to return ₹2.5 crore as profits in five years. However, the project got scuttled after a case was filed in the NGT alleging violation of norms in use of forest land as non-forest land. Social activist Biswanath Patra has asked the Agriculture secretary to intervene and make the Sukinda Seed Farm operational once again.



TRIBAL BALLET: Tribals performing a traditional dance on the concluding day of a football tournament and Sanskrutik Mahotsav at Khadikashola village under Bangiriposhi block in Mayurbhanj district, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

Two women Maoists surrender in Boudh

PNN & AGENCIES

Boudh, Feb 6: Two women Maoists surrendered Tuesday before the police in this district after allegedly being sexually assaulted in camps of the red rebels, a senior officer said here. IGP (Southern Range) Jai Narayan Pankaj said the two Maoists who surrendered hail from Bijapur district in neighbouring Chhattisgarh. Pankaj told reporters that the two Maoists were associated with the Kandhamal-Kalahandi-Boudh-Nayagarh (KKBN) division of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) outfit. He added the surrendered Maoists had joined the banned outfit in 2018. Informing that the KKBN division is active in this and Kandhamal districts, Pankaj said the rebels who surrendered



were involved in various acts of violence. He said the women would receive benefits available for surrendered Maoists in the state. The former women Maoists claimed they were recruited in the banned outfit to sing songs but were used in various 'activities', Pankaj said. Both were frustrated by the 'continuous unethical activities' in the Maoist outfit, including sexual harassment of female cadres, extortion through intimidation and induction of boys and girls in the organisation with false promises, he said. The two who laid down arms also strongly resented the high-handedness of senior Maoist leaders who allegedly behaved rudely with the juniors and new cadres, the officer said. One of the surrendered Maoists has said she had 'problems with activities in the organisation that were against Maoist ideology', he added. Appealing to Maoists to shun violence and return to the mainstream, Pankaj said they would get a suitable rehabilitation package and get a chance to restart their life afresh.

Lecturer held for molesting student

Naktideul: Police here arrested the lecturer of Naktideul Junior College in Sambalpur district and forwarded him to a POCO court for allegedly molesting a minor girl student of the educational institution, a police official said Tuesday. The accused was identified as Sanjiv Kumar Dash, a Physics lecturer. Officials said, the 16-year old victim of Deogarh district was studying in Plus-II and was a boarder at the college hostel. The accused had sent the girl and two of her friends to clean the laboratory December 24. However, after some time the accused lecturer also reached there and when two of the students went outside to dump garbage, he touched the victim inappropriately. The traumatised girl then fled the spot. However, the matter did not end there as the accused continued to molest and sexually assault the student for some more days. As per the complaint lodged by the victim, she had informed the college authorities, but alleged that no action was taken against the accused following which a police complaint was lodged.

20 yrs RI for Pari murder convict

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Feb 6: The Special Children's Court here Tuesday handed down 20 years of rigorous imprisonment to a minor after convicting him in the sensational rape and murder case of five-year old girl Pari in this district. The judge of the Children's-cum-Additional District and Sessions Court, Lily Senapati also slapped a penalty of ₹6,000 on the convict, apart from the punishment. In default, the convict will have to undergo an additional two years of imprisonment, the judge observed while delivering the order. The convict being a minor was spared from death sentence.



years punishment for murder under Section 302 IPC. Special Public Prosecutor Chitta Ranjan Kanungo appearing for the state Crime Branch said that conviction terms shall run concurrently. The incident had rocked the state. Five-year-old Pari went missing while playing in front of her house in Jadupur village in this district, July 14, 2020. The decomposed body and skeletal remains of the kid were recovered inside a gunny bag from a pond in the backyard of her house, nine days after she went missing, July 23, 2020. The incident triggered widespread outrage among the people in the state. The Odisha government ordered for a probe by the state Crime Branch after the local police failed to crack the case. The Crime Branch formed a special investigation team (SIT) under the leadership of IG, Arun Bothra. The SIT conducted a probe and arrested the accused in this connection. Forensic and electronic evidences were collected during the probe while psychological experts were pressed into service as there were no eye-witnesses. Later, the SIT submitted the chargesheet following a detailed investigation. The Odisha High Court monitored the case during the investigation by SIT.

2 ELEPHANT TUSKS SEIZED, 10 HELD

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Feb 6: Acting on tip-off, a special team of Forest department personnel belonging to Similipal Tiger Conservation project in Mayurbhanj district seized Tuesday two elephant tusks weighing around 30kg and arrested 10 persons for their involvement in illegal ivory trade. The matter came to the fore after PCCF Susant Nanda posted about the seizure of the elephant tusks and the arrests of 10 persons in his 'X' handle. A press release on the matter was also issued by Samrat Gouda, deputy director of Similipal Tiger Conservation project. Those arrested were identified as Ghoshiram Jerai, 45, of Saunpala village, Anand Kerai, 55, Shibashankar Banra, 55, both of Dharuabeda village, Chaku Halda, 35, of Tamakshila village, Dabra Badra, 45, Berga Badra, 21, Paplu Badra, 22, all residents



of Khejuri village, Sanatan Badra, 24, of Kandabila village, Markand Ho, 23, of Thakurgada village under Jashipur police limits and Narendra Banra, 53, of Nuagaon village under Biso police limits. The Forest personnel achieved the breakthrough after

intelligence inputs alerted them about some persons planning to sell two elephant tusks. Accordingly, Gouda formed a special team comprising personnel from the special task force (STF), joint task force (JTF) and Forest department.

Acting on the inputs, some team members posing as decoy customers met the poachers and illegal ivory traders and expressed interest to buy the tusks and sealed a deal with them. As per negotiation, when the illegal ivory traders were on their way to meet the 'customers', other team members hiding in Biso, pounced on them and arrested them. The Forest department team also seized two elephant tusks from those held. During interrogation of the five, the names of more accomplices surfaced. They were also arrested from different parts of this district. The team members are investigating into the involvement of other persons and the extent of the smuggling racket. Deputy director Sai Kiran of Similipal North forest division as well as Rairangpur forest division also participated in the raid.

Rourkela gears up for FIH Pro League

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 6: Preparations are on in full swing for hosting the men's and women's FIH Pro League matches that begin here at the Birsia Munda International hockey stadium February 12. Newly-appointed ADM Rourkela, Commissioner of Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) and CEO of Rourkela Smart City Limited (RSCL), Ashutosh Kulkarni held a preparatory meeting here Tuesday with other officials so that the tournament

can be conducted in a hassle-free manner. Kulkarni stressed on the need for sanitation during the tournament. This aspect is being given special attention keeping in mind the recent outbreak of diarrhoea in this city just two months back. A total of 18 people had lost their lives due to the disease. Kulkarni also stressed on the uninterrupted supply of power during the tournament. "Along with sanitation, uninterrupted power supply is also another area of importance. Commissioner sir laid

special stress on this aspect and also harped on the need for power back-up," an official who attended the meeting said. Beautification of this city and areas around its vicinity are also going on in full swing, officials said. Along with roads leading to the stadium, the pavements are being repaired. Railings across the city are also getting a fresh coat of paint. The city is expected to receive a good number of visitors both from India and abroad like it happened during the World Cup played early last year.

Snake conservation awareness programme held at Sonapur beach

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 6: A dedicated effort to raise awareness about snake conservation took place at the newly-designated 'Blue Flag Beach', the Sonapur beach in Ganjam district Tuesday, under the leadership of snake rescuer Ganapati Sahu. With a steadfast commitment spanning 15 years, Sahu has been independently rescuing snakes in Ganjam district through his organisation, the 'Wild Animals Protection Force Ganjam'. This initiative was conducted in collaboration with 'Pati Sonapur Blue Flag Beach' and 'Jungle Lore Foundation'. The programme witnessed the participation of more than 50 individuals from the local community including youths, fishermen, women



and tourists. Wildlife expert Ashish Kumar Dash, along with wildlife scholar Akash Ranjan Rath, served as resource persons, enlightening the audience about the diversity, threats and the crucial role of community in snake conservation. Distinguished climate activists such as Soumya Ranjan Biswal, IIVLP Alumna climate activist Sagar Kumar Patro and Sibaram Panigrahi, president of 'Sabuja Bahini Group' lent their support by encouraging local

youths to champion the cause. During the event, pamphlets were distributed among participants and tourists, providing information about snakes, mitigation measures, and how to assist local snake rescuers and Forest departments in saving these reptiles in the region. Highlighting the urgency of such initiatives, recent statistics revealed a concerning trend in snake-related fatalities in the state. Between 2018-19 and 2022-23, a total of 4,870 human deaths were recorded, with 1,026 fatalities in 2018-19, 929 in 2019-20, 1,185 in 2020-21, 954 in 2021-22, and 754 in 2022-23. Speakers on the occasion said that a concerted effort must be made to promote harmony between snakes and human beings in the district and other parts of Odisha.



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Gold Auction Notice

It is hereby brought to the notice of the following gold loan borrowers, their legal heirs, person engaged in the business of gold ornaments and general public that in spite of repeated notices by the Bank, the following borrowers are not repaying their dues to the Bank. Notice is hereby published that if they fail to deposit all their dues in their respective gold loan accounts (including Up-to-date interest and all costs, charges/expenses) by 26.02.2024, their pledged gold ornaments will be auctioned at **Concerned Branch Premises on 27.02.2024 at 11.00 AM**. For this Bank shall not be held responsible for any inconvenience or damage caused to the concerned borrowers and no allegations or representations will be entertained from any borrowers in this regard. Bank reserves the right to cancel the auction without assigning any reason in case, the bidding price so arrived at is observed to be low or inadequate. Further, if needed be Bank reserves the right to change the date and time of the above scheduled auction or cancel the same without assigning any reasons thereon. Purity and net weight and reserve price of gold ornaments/coins etc. will be available to interested bidders on auction date and auction venue/auction portal.

| Sl. No. | A/c. No. | Name & Address of the Borrower(s) | Gross Wt. in Gram | Net Wt. in Gram | Total Dues as on 31.01.2024 (excluding unapplied interest Charges, Cost & Expenses) |
|---|-----------------|--|-------------------|-----------------|---|
| BIJUPATNAIK PARK BRANCH, PLOT NO. 10-2CM-819/D, JUDGE COLONY, SECTOR-10, CUTTACK-753014, MOB.: 9124333347 | | | | | |
| 1. | 512377610000406 | Baikunthanath Behera, S/o- Nidhishyam Behera, 3D/903, Sector-10, CDA, Cuttack, PIN-753014 | 24.1 | 23.5 | ₹ 1,07,050.10 |
| 2. | 512377610000156 | Ramesh Chandra Behera, Bidyadharpur, Ramdaspur, Barang, Cuttack, PIN-754006 | 69.45 | 68 | ₹ 4,18,326.50 |
| 3. | 512377610000190 | Sachidananda Muduli, House No. 170, C/o- Laxmidhar Muduli, Melachhaka Lane, Bidanasi, Kumbharsahi, Cuttack, PIN-753014 | 18.16 | 14.08 | ₹ 81,691.87 |
| POKHARIPUT BRANCH, PLOT NO. 400(P), GANDAMUNDA SQUARE, POKHARIPUT, JAGAMARA ROAD, KHANDAGIRI, BHUBANESWAR-751030, MOB.: 9731325932 | | | | | |
| 1. | 557377610000157 | Saroj Kumar Sahoo, Add: Plot No. 512, Jagamara, Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar-751030 | 109.85 | 101.50 | ₹ 4,74,624.00 |
| CUTTACK BRANCH, NAYASARAK, CUTTACK, PIN-753002, MOB.: 7978330922 | | | | | |
| 1. | 510077610000487 | Jhuna Sethi, W/o- Bansidhar Sethi, Kalfa Bazar, Chandnichowk, Cuttack Sadar, Cuttack-753002 | 33.67 | 28.97 | ₹ 1,03,002.00 |
| 2. | 510077610000594 | Nawal Kishor Moda, S/o- Deendayal Moda, Nayasarak, Cuttack-753002 | 159.41 | 116 | ₹ 4,00,125.00 |

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 06.02.2024 **Zonal Manager, Bank of India**



Doubt is not a sport to indulge in with impunity; it is a poison, which drop by drop corrodes the soul.

THE MOTHER



Soren & Kejriwal

The arrest on 31 January evening and subsequent remand of now former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren in Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody had come at a time when BJP had already succeeded in its “tod jore” (break and join) politics in the adjacent state of Bihar, wrecking an I.N.D.I.A alliance government and replacing it with one of its own bloc. Now the ED, as usual, seems hyperactive in getting in its net another Chief Minister – Arvind Kejriwal – of Delhi. All this is happening when the country is getting ready for the Lok Sabha polls a few months away. These developments are disturbing enough and pose a threat to democracy since Opposition-led states are being targeted in a controversial manner. At the very outset everyone has to accept, no matter which political party is concerned, there is no single party existing today of any worth that does not collect funds for organizational work and elections. Every single party boss past, present and in future will mandatorily have to ‘amass wealth beyond justifiable means’ to operate a vast political machine at a state or national level. It is not as if those in power at the Center currently are not funding the functioning of their huge party or are refraining from doling out massive amounts of money to their candidates in Assembly and Parliament elections. Just that there is, at present, no superior authority in the Indian administrative system that would dare to identify, investigate and penalize those currently ruling the country.

For someone like Soren or Kejriwal, it is predictable that they would plead not guilty and complain of being made victims of political mischief as they both and their respective parties are trying to make out of the cases that have been launched against them. Yet, the timing and the manner in which Central agencies are going after Opposition leaders does raise suspicion of abuse of power for grabbing power. Soren was arrested after a seven-hour grilling by the ED in connection with a money-laundering case linked to an alleged land fraud. This is suspected to be a pattern being followed by the agency to corner Opposition politicians apparently at the behest of their political masters. For this reason, it seems, Kejriwal is avoiding the ED like plague. He has, so far, refused to appear before it for the fifth time forcing the agency to move a Delhi court against him for skipping five summons in connection with what is now known as the Delhi liquor policy case. The court heard some submissions and put up the rest of the matter for “submissions and consideration” 7 February.

In the case of Soren, ED stated that land parcels spanning 8.5 acres were part of the criminal proceeds that the former CM allegedly acquired. ED stated that in a raid conducted 13 April, 2023, they unearthed several property-related records and registers. It said the whole criminal act was engineered by a “very large syndicate.”

Soren had no option but to be arrested and tender his resignation as CM, leaving the charge to one of his trusted ministers. His last ditch attempt to get relief from Supreme Court failed as the apex court asked him to approach the concerned High Court with his petition. He had challenged ED’s summons issued 22 January and 25 January contending that they were illegal, null and void.

It is for the judiciary to go into these allegations, but the arrest gives rise to more important questions. There is no denying the fact that the ED, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) is vested with sweeping powers of arrest. Barriers for bail are very high in PMLA cases. The Supreme Court upheld these powers in a judgement in July, 2022. But petitions challenging the judgement are still pending before it. When the powers are used to target a Chief Minister, it does appear that it is not merely a routine case of law enforcement.

However, public perception of some Opposition leaders’ conduct is by no means flattering for which the leaders themselves are responsible. In Jharkhand alone since its formation 15 November, 2000, the state has seen six chief ministers and three President’s rule terms. In fact, Hemant became the third state CM to be arrested. Before him, his father Shibu Soren and Madhu Koda had been arrested. Only one CM, Raghubar Das of BJP, managed to complete his full term from 2014 to 2019 and is now Governor of Orissa.

Koda was imprisoned for corruption during his tenure from 2006 to 2008. He formed a government in alliance with the UPA. He was allegedly involved in a mining scandal and was accused by the CBI and ED of taking bribes for allocating coal and mining blocks during his tenure as CM. After his arrest in 2009, Koda was released on bail in 2013. In 2017, he was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison with a Rs 25 lakh fine.

It is an open secret how Central agencies are deployed by ruling parties to achieve their political ends. If Opposition leaders by their acts of commission and omission give their opponents a handle to go after them, they are more to blame than anybody else. The BJP has made a political necessity out of it by either getting such politicians into its fold and whitewashing their alleged offences to form a new government or hounding them out and coming to power with breakaway groups.

This is an unhealthy trend that will not end soon but will keep vitiating the country’s political system.

WISDOM CORNER

- “I have learned silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind; yet, strange, I am ungrateful to those teachers.”
— KAHIL GIBRAN
- “The moment you have in your heart this extraordinary thing called love and feel the depth, the delight, the ecstasy of it, you will discover that for you the world is transformed.”
— JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI
- “Look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious.”
— STEPHEN HAWKING

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1940: The animated film Pinocchio had its world premiere, and it became one of Disney’s most beloved classics, known for its brilliant animation and compelling story.
- 1964: British Invasion launched with Beatles’ arrival in the US. The musical British Invasion began when the Beatles landed in New York City this day in 1964, and two nights later, as Beatlemania stormed America, their performance on The Ed Sullivan Show was watched by 73 million viewers.
- 1984: NASA astronauts take the first untethered spacewalk. The photographs of Bruce McCandless and Robert L. Stewart hovering freely in space became some of the most iconic images of the 1980s.
- 1986: Haiti’s president, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier, flees the country, ending 28 years of family rule. On the same day five years later, the first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was sworn in.
- 2013: Mississippi became the last US state to officially abolish slavery; it had ratified the Thirteenth Amendment in 1995 but failed to submit the necessary paperwork.

A STRUCTURAL PROBLEM

FOCUS KOTA SUICIDES



Ajit Ranade

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THE ANNUAL TURNOVER OF ALL COACHING CENTRES EXCEEDS THE ANNUAL BUDGETS OF ALL IIT AND AIIMS TOGETHER

A suicide note in Kota shook up the nation. A young girl says sorry to her parents, for letting them down. She died of not a broken heart, but of a broken spirit. The inhuman competition, and the burden of expectations was just too much for a teenager of tender age. It does us no good to blame the parents, for all they wanted was a better future for their child. They might have mortgaged their family wealth, although that just increases the burden on the child. It does not help to blame the regimented system of Kota coaching centres, which has already snuffed out twenty-five young lives, just last year.

Kota has already switched to suicide watch mode, alarmed by an increase in suicides and attempted suicides. Hostels fitted with spring loaded fans to prevent death by self-hanging, or high-rise buildings with anti-suicide steel nets and special police cells for suicide counselling, have all been in place for some time now. Yet enrolment in Kota has doubled in the last three years. More than 2,00,000 aspirants clock up to 18 grueling hours of study, seven days a week. Such is the power of the lure of the lottery that are these entrance exams called JEE and NEET. Let us not forget, it is a lottery whose odds are terribly stacked against the applicants.

The Union government has proposed guidelines to regulate the coaching centres which form an industry on their own. There are an estimated 30,000 coaching institutes and they also have their own national federation and industry body. In a place like Kota which is India’s most famous coaching cluster, there is a local thriving economy of paying guest accommodation, food delivery service, dummy schools and colleges, transport and other services. It is estimated that the annual turnover of all coaching centres exceeds the annual budgets of all IIT and AIIMS taken together! So, the new regulations will affect this industry adversely. The new proposed rules prohibit the in-



In 2024 around 12,31,874 students have registered for JEE Mains and the total number of seats across 23 IITs are 16,232. That is a success ratio of 1.3%, among the most difficult in the entire world

stitutes from registering any student who is less than sixteen years old. It also mandates that fees should be reasonable (which means price control), and that coaching centres look after the physical and mental health of their students.

Most members of the Coaching Federation of India are upset because their catchment starts in class five or six. Many parents plan for engineering, medicine careers for their kids, or even for civil services much in advance of class eleven or twelve. So, this catchment will no longer be available to the coaching institutes. The other problem is that enforcement of the rules will be difficult given the spread of coaching classes across the country. This is not to deny that some sort of regulation is certainly needed. Whether that is best served by self-regulation of the industry or by the government appointed regulator is the question. Some of the large players in this industry have received substantial investments from private equity or venture funds. It is in their interest to bring some order in the behaviour of all players, and hence self-regulation does have a chance.

But the larger point may be lost in this discussion about regulating a wild industry or in the tragic stories of suicides by young students. The Annual

Status of Education Report (ASER) by Pratham, the innovative learning organisation created to improve the quality of education in India, is an excellent source to gauge the depth of the real problem. Their report says that parents pay upward of Rs one lakh even for coaching at the level of class nine. This points to an utter lack of quality of education received from regular schools. It also points to the huge gap between available seats in engineering and medicine which are considered to be of good quality, and the number of applicants. In 2024 around 12,31,874 students have registered for JEE Mains and the total number of seats across 23 IITs are 16,232. That is a success ratio of 1.3%, among the most difficult in the entire world. And who is to say, that those ten thousand students after the last rank admitted, are not as good? This story is repeated in NEET, the all India entrance exam for medical seats too. Even for the all India civil services, the applicants to seats ratio is extremely adverse. And many students appear several times, especially for civil services. This is an utter waste of the prime years of their lives.

This is a deeply structural problem, and points to a very big weakness of our education system. The 1991 economic reforms were transformational because

it took the nation from one of scarcity, to one of choice and abundance. The dismantling of the licence permit raj, and the free entry of anyone into the manufacturing sector, meant that there was competition for quality and lower price. Across products such as automobiles, white goods, household items, and even food products we got used to expecting and getting world class quality products. This extended to services such as telecom, retail, banking, finance and stock markets. But the field of educational services remains shackled by regulation, licensing and rigid legacy practices. Of course, education is constitutionally in the States List, but higher education is influenced by Central government policies too. Much reform has been attempted to unshackle the sector. But the proliferation of what is called the “coaching culture” by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and the thriving economy of the coaching industry points to the widening gap between demand and aspirations on one hand, and supply of good educational institutions on the other.

India’s richer parents now send their kids abroad, not only for post-graduate studies, but increasingly even for bachelors’ degrees after class twelve. The steep prices for medical and business degrees are an added factor to choosing an affordable alternative in America, Europe or Australia. India’s annual “import” of education, i.e. dollars spent on foreign education is upward of \$30 billion, half of our entire defence budget! Just like Bisleri and the bottled water industry prospered, the booming coaching industry is a manifestation of the scarcity of quality supply that still plagues India’s education sector. This supply has to increase vastly both from public and private sources. That is the highest priority to enhance India’s human capital, if we want sustained increase in all round wellbeing.

The writer is a noted Pune-based economist.
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IN JEST THIS

Monkeys may need gainful employment



Melvin Durai

IF MONKEYS CAN LEARN TO COMMIT CRIMES, THEY CAN CERTAINLY LEARN TO BE PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

If you ask the experts why the crime rate is high among young people in some countries, they will tell you that it’s because there aren’t enough jobs. If these youths were working, they wouldn’t have the time to commit crimes.

I’ve been wondering if the same theory applies to monkeys. If we gave them jobs, would they stop stealing cellphones and purses from tourists?

Depending on where you live, you may not realize how much crime is committed by monkeys. Here is a fact that might surprise you: According to scientists, the average monkey is 10,000 times more likely to steal an object from a tourist than the average cow.

Yes, in many countries around the world, monkeys are the leading criminals among all animals that do not drive getaway cars. But the only monkeys we lock up are the innocent ones. Just go to any zoo and you’ll see dozens of innocent faces and not a lawyer in sight.

Meanwhile, the monkeys running loose are committing all

kinds of crimes. In some Asian cities, they travel around in gangs, raiding homes and terrorising people. Monkeys have also learned to grab valuables and demand a ransom for their return.

A monkey recently stole a man’s iPhone at Sri Rangnath Ji Mandir in Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh. An Instagram video shows the monkey holding the phone at the top of a building while passers-by try to help the man retrieve his phone. Only when someone tosses a Frooti mango drink at the monkey does the animal drop the iPhone.

As you can probably guess, this monkey was a novice. A more experienced monkey would have demanded a six-pack of Frooti.

The monkey that stole a woman’s phone in Bali, Indonesia, last year was a veteran crook. A video shared on X shows the monkey taking a fruit from the woman but not returning the phone until a second fruit is offered.

A Canadian study conducted

several years ago found that monkeys at Uluwatu temple in Bali target the most valuable items that tourists carry, such as mobile phones, wallets and prescription glasses.

After filming interactions between monkeys and tourists for more than 270 days, researchers determined that the monkeys expected bigger rewards for items of higher value. In one case, it took 17 minutes of negotiation for a tourist to get an item back. Imagine that: a monkey negotiating for 17 minutes. I wish I could have hired that monkey when I was negotiating the price of my car.

The monkeys of Bali learn to rob and bargain during their juvenile years, according to the study, which was published in Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society. “These behaviours are socially learned and have been maintained across generations of monkeys for at least 30 years in this population,” Dr. Jean-Baptiste Leca, an associate professor in the psychology department at the University

of Lethbridge in Canada and lead author of the study, told The Guardian newspaper.

If monkeys can learn to commit crimes, they can certainly learn to be productive members of society! I would love to hire one of these monkeys, but I’m not sure how to go about it. Here are just three of the questions I have:

1. Is there a minimum wage for monkeys? I’m willing to pay as much as two bananas per hour. I might even go as high as three bananas per hour if the monkey has any column-writing skills.
2. Is it okay to expect a monkey to rob and bargain on Sundays? The monkeys in Bali do not take Sundays off, as far as I know. When you’re paid in food, can you really afford to take any days off?
3. If monkeys are gainfully employed, do they have to pay taxes? It’s only fair that they do, but I might have to hire a tax accountant to figure out exactly how many bananas to mail to the government.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

Orissa POST
B-15, Ransagarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Free & fair polls

Sir, This refers to the news report “Won’t allow murder of democracy: CJI,” Orissa POST, February 6. Kudos to the Supreme Court for initiating prosecution against the Returning Officer who was accused of defacing ballot papers in the recently held Chandigarh Mayoral elections. I wonder if the responsibility of holding free and fair elections is bestowed upon the Returning Officers having no ethics and morality, then democracy will soon be reduced to mockery. I am getting scared of the fate of the conduct of the Lok Sabha elections which are due only in a few months. Never in the past the Returning Officer had to face this degree of fury of the apex court and this Chandigarh incident may be an eye opener for the BJP-led government at the Centre to be cautious.
Arun Gupta, KOLKATA

Kiss of death

Sir, Jasprit Bumrah made a match of it at Vishakhapatnam by claiming nine wickets for the match in an inspired spell of bowling. His wicket of Pope in the first innings was remarkable. Pope was the top scorer in the first Test and he was consumed by senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin in the second innings and that paved the way for English collapse after initial rush of quick scoring.
CK Ramnath, GHAZIABAD

Minimise disruptions

Sir, The RBI’s actions against the Paytm Payments Bank Limited, including the decision to halt transactions and revoke its license, overlook the impact on millions of merchants and customers. This has caused unnecessary chaos, particularly for the around 50 million merchants who rely on the Paytm Payments Bank for online transactions. The abrupt halt in operations leaves these small businesses, many of which cannot afford credit-card fees, in a precarious position. Moreover, the lack of clear guidance from the RBI on how customers should proceed exacerbates the uncertainty surrounding the situation. Furthermore, the RBI’s history of fines and restrictions on customer onboarding indicates a tendency towards punitive measures rather than constructive solutions, adding to industry confusion. I urge the RBI to reconsider its approach and collaborate with stakeholders to address compliance issues efficiently, minimising disruptions.
Vishal Mayur, BANGALORE



Oppn seeks timeline for holding polls in J&K

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: Opposition members in the Lok Sabha Tuesday urged the government to hold assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir at the earliest.

Participating in a debate on The Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, Hasnain Masoodi (NC) demanded that the polls in the union territory be held soon. He said the central government should have decided on the polls before the Supreme Court had to intervene in the matter.

The top court had a few months back asked the Election Commission to hold assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir by September this year.

Masoodi said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had Monday said his government will take big decisions. Polls in the union territory should be held before other big ticket decisions are taken, Masoodi said.

Minister of State for Home Ajay Misra intervened to point out that local bodies' elections



The top court had asked the Election Commission to hold Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir by September this year

for holding the democratic exercise.

BJP member from Jammu Jugal Kishore Sharma said the Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Laws (Amendment) Bill would ensure justice to the other backward classes (OBCs) in the UT.

Chinta Anuradha (YSRCP) said this is a progressive legislation and would help streamline the election process in the local bodies, including panchayats.

Moving the bill for discussion, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said after the abrogation of Article 370, the OBCs in J&K, who were being ignored earlier, have been put on the path of development.

This bill will ensure justice to the OBCs in Jammu and Kashmir. Currently, there is no provision for reservation of seats for OBCs in panchayats and municipalities in the Union territory.

were held in the erstwhile state.

Participating in the debate, TMC leader Saugata Roy also referred to the Supreme Court observation and pitched for early assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir

On August 5, 2019, Jammu and Kashmir was made a union territory with a provision for a legislative assembly through abrogation of Article 370.

At present, the UT is under central rule.

Supriya Sule of the NCP demanded a timeline and "not a vague" answer from the government on holding assembly polls and giving statehood to the people of J&K.

She said while the Election Commission will decide on the date, the government could at least give a tentative timeline

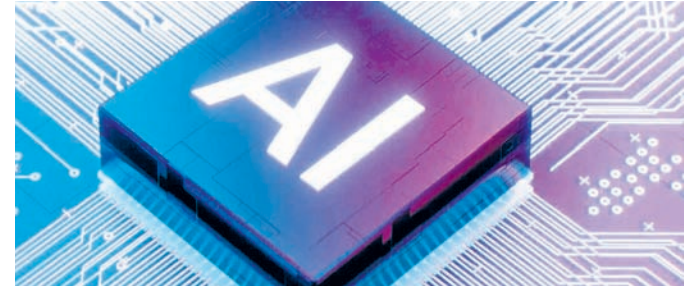
Courts facing complex time due to AI: Delhi HC judge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: Delhi High Court Justice Anish Dayal Tuesday said the courts are facing a complex and difficult time with the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) as the judges may not be able to believe the evidence presented before them.

Speaking at the 3rd IP Excellence Awards and Global IP conclave 'Envisioning India's IP - Innovation Ecosystem for Viksit Bharat', organised by ASSOCHAM, Justice Dayal said, "With the advent of AI, we are standing at the threshold of a very interesting, complex and difficult time where we may not be able to believe the evidence which is presented before us."

A statement issued by ASSOCHAM further quoted Justice Dayal as saying that instituting Intellectual Property (IP) division was a completely new era in IP adjudication as the Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB) was abolished in 2021. "The Delhi High



Court February 28, 2022 instituted the first intellectual property division putting an end to a long hiatus of lack of clarity. The IP rules allow us to have technical advisors advising us, which is an extremely innovative system. The IPD of the Delhi High Court has adopted modern methods such as hot tubbing, confidentiality club and video conferencing, electronic evidence and transcription," he said.

The judge said in the first year itself, 1000 cases related to all elements of intellectual property rights (IPR) were filed and in 2023, 1300 cases were filed comprising about 750 civil suits,

300 trademark rectifications and 51 patent appeals, the statement added.

As a responsible adjudication institution with a clear eye on disposals, out of the 1300 cases, 1352 were disposed of in 2023 reducing the pendency, Justice Dayal said. He added that the setting up of the IP division by the Delhi High Court was noticed by the parliamentary committee which said IPAD does not need to come back. The release said IP Excellence Awards were also handed out during the conclave, honouring path breakers and leading innovators in the IP ecosystem.

Transgenders to travel free in DTC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: The Delhi government is planning to offer free travel to people belonging to the third gender in DTC and cluster buses, officials said Monday.

Women are already provided free travel on these buses in the national capital. The free travel scheme for women began in October 2019.

"Women are already provided free travel in Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and cluster buses operated by the Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System Limited (DIMTS). We plan to extend the facility of free travel to people from the third gender too," a senior transport department official said.

The official said that the social welfare department of the Delhi government has data on people belonging to the third gender in Delhi which will prove helpful for the scheme.

Those looking to avail the benefit of this scheme will have

The official said that the social welfare department of the Delhi government has data on people belonging to the third gender in Delhi which will prove helpful for the scheme

Women are already provided free travel on these buses in the national capital

to furnish certificates issued by the revenue department, the official said. In April last year, the Delhi High Court asked the city government to decide on a representation to legally recognise the transgender community as the third gender in bus tickets issued by the DTC.

The Delhi government's women and child development department had approved various measures for transgender people, including the addition of a "third gender" category in job application forms and the setting up of monitoring cells to protect them from abuse.

The measures were approved following an advisory by the National Human Rights Commission to ensure the welfare of the category.

Over 4K take part in snow festival

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 6: Over 4,000 people Monday participated in a snow festival in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district which has turned into a winter wonderland after the first major snowfall of the season last week, officials said.

Kishtwar Deputy Commissioner Devansh Yadav expressed satisfaction at the success of the Snow Mela, emphasising its role in promoting tourism, cultural exchange, and community engagement.

"The Snow Mela is not just an event; it's a celebration of our rich heritage, natural beauty, and the spirit of Kishtwar. We envision more such initiatives to showcase the distinctiveness of our region," he said in a statement.

The festival was organised by the Kishtwar district administration in collaboration with Directorate of Tourism and Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art Culture and Languages, they said.

Cultural performances by local artists and musicians added a vibrant touch to the event as they showcased their talent in dance, music, and traditional arts.

The stage came alive with the rich cultural heritage of Kishtwar, captivating the audience and fostering a sense of community spirit, the officials said.

At the festival, thrill-seekers revelled in the excitement of zorbing and rolling down the snow-covered ground. The event also had fun activities for kids, including trampoline jumping.



Union Minister Piyush Goyal speaks at the beginning of 'Bharat Rice' distribution to beneficiaries in New Delhi

PTI

Twin sisters' reporting on snowfall goes viral

AGENCIES

Srinagar, Feb 6: Six-year-old twin sisters Zaiba and Zainab have taken the internet by storm with their cute vlog on last week's snowfall in Kashmir.

"Finally, it has snowed (in Kashmir)," one of the twins said while referring to the prolonged dry spell the valley witnessed from December to the end of January this winter. "You must be feeling how much I am enjoying. I feel like I am in paradise and this (snow) is a wave of milk," Zainab said.

The 73-second video, recorded in the Anantnag family home of the twins, was shared by industrialist Anand Mahindra on X, formerly known as Twitter,



Sunday. Mahindra's post has garnered 4.42,000 views so far, catapulting the sisters to national

fame. The twins, who are always identically dressed, have a YouTube channel of their own

No respite

Cold wave blowing from snow-clad mountains into Kashmir Tuesday resulted in freeze and frost affecting normal life activities. The Meteorological (MET) Department has forecast mainly dry weather till February 14 with a drop in night temperature during the coming days. Srinagar had minus 2.5, Gulmarg minus 10.5 and Pahalgam minus 11 as the minimum temperature. Leh and Kargil towns of Ladakh region both had minus 13 as the minimum temperature.

which has over 2,000 subscribers. They have posted 38 videos on YouTube.

Min temp in Delhi dips to 7.2° Celsius

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 6: The national capital Tuesday recorded a minimum temperature at 7.2 degrees Celsius, two notches below the seasonal average, the India Meteorological (IMD) Department said.

The IMD's forecast for the day showed that the maximum temperature was likely to hover around 20 degrees Celsius.

The weatherman said that moderate fog can be expected Tuesday night. Air quality at several stations across the city fell under the 'moderate' and 'poor' levels at several stations.

In the Anand Vihar area, at 9 a.m., PM2.5 levels were recorded to be in the 'moderate' category standing at 195 and PM10 reached 212 or 'poor', according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The Air Quality Index (AQI) between zero and 50 is considered 'good'; 51 and 100 'satisfactory'; 101 and 200 'moderate'; 201 and 300 'poor'; 301 and 400 'very poor'; and 401 and 500 'severe'.

The Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport (T3) recorded PM2.5 levels at 165, and PM10 at 152, both in moderate levels.

MEHRAULI DEMOLITION

Rebuild another mosque, demand locals

THE AKHOONDJI MOSQUE AS WELL AS THE BEHRUL ULOOM MADRASA WAS DEMOLISHED BY THE DDA JANUARY 30 FOR BEING AN 'LEGAL STRUCTURE' IN SANJAY VAN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: A week after the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) razed a 600-year-old mosque in Sanjay Van in south Delhi's Mehrauli, locals have demanded that the agency rebuild another mosque at the same site.

The DDA has defended its action before the high court on the ground that the demolition took place pursuant to the recommendations of the Religious Committee dated January 4.

The residents claimed a cemetery was also demolished during the drive.

Fauzan Ahmed Siddiqui, a member of the management committee of Dargah Qutub Sahani in Mehrauli, said that nobody in the area where the mosque, madrasa and cemetery were demolished has been barricaded

and no one is allowed to go inside.

The Delhi High Court Monday asked the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to maintain status quo with respect to the land in Mehrauli where a mosque, stated to be over six centuries old, was demolished last month.

The court, while listing the matter for further hearing February 12, stated that the DDA shall maintain status quo over the site where the Akhoondji mosque was located.

Regarding the recommendation from the Religious Committee, Siddiqui said the (DDA) should have gone to the court for a decision on the matter. He demanded that people be allowed to enter the cemetery area. "If someone dies today, where do we take him? There is already a lack of a cemeteries. The madrasa, graveyards and



the mosque were demolished without giving any prior intimation," he said. "It is being told that a notice was received from the revenue department January 2. The religious committee meeting was held January 4 and later no one received any notice. They came and gave a notice one hour before the demolition and told the people present there to remove their belongings," he added.

Israr Ali, general secretary of Akhoondji mosque, said the property is in the gazette of Waqf

should be done along with the fencing. The cemetery should be opened and the mosque should be rebuilt at that place and given protection by the Waqf board," he said in a statement.

Siddiqui added that the Akhoondji mosque was very old and renovated around 100 years ago. Nasir Ali, who is digging graves at the cemetery since 1976, alleged, "The demolition took place around 5 am. There were several orphan children who lived in the madrasa. They were made to stand outside. The officials took away the mobile phone of the Imam during the drive." The high court's order on Monday came on a plea by the managing committee of the Delhi Waqf Board which has argued that the demolition of the mosque was illegal.

The waqf counsel urged the court to direct maintenance of status quo on the site.

The decision to raze the mosque, DDA stated, was taken after the Religious Committee afforded an opportunity of hearing to the CEO of Delhi Waqf Board.

Special 'Aastha' train flagged off from Jammu to Ayodhya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 6: Amid religious fervor and 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans, a special 'Aastha' train carrying pilgrims was flagged off from Jammu to Ayodhya Tuesday. The train, flagged off by BJP general secretary (organisation) J&K, Ashok Koul, carried over 1,100 devotees for Ayodhya as it departed from the Jammu railway station at 11:55 am. A significant number of Ram devotees are visiting Ayodhya together for the first time since the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple January 22.

Speaking on the occasion, Koul expressed enthusiasm among the devotees of Bhagwan Shri Ram in Jammu and Kashmir. "Congratulations to everyone here. This is the first train being flagged off from Jammu today. Trains to Ayodhya from here will continue starting today. Another train will run from here tomorrow," he said. Praising the efforts of Jammu people for the construction of the Ram temple, Koul mentioned their participation in Kar Seva and the fight for the temple's construction.



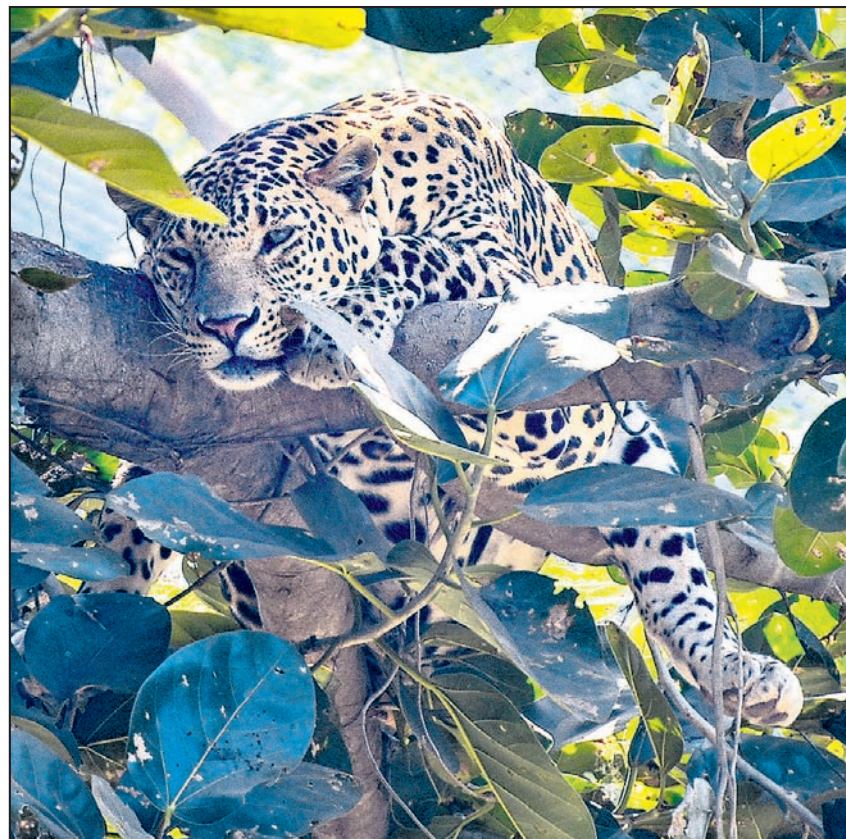
A man tries to extinguish a fire burning a house during the spread of wildfires in Vina del Mar, Chile



An artist gives finishing touches to a painting of King Charles III with a message of 'get well soon' outside an art school in Mumbai. King Charles III has been diagnosed with cancer



Tourists at the snow-covered Mall Road after fresh snowfall in Manali



A leopard takes rest on a tree at Sarthana Nature Park and Zoo in Surat



Palestinian children wait to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen amid shortages of supplies, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip



Tourists wait for hot air balloon ride in Manali



A Bolivian flag flies above the musicians during the Oruro Carnival, in Oruro, Bolivia



Women Handball team members during the launch of the Women's Handball League in New Delhi

REUTERS/PTI PHOTOS

national

of the day quote

Maharashtra will decide the direction of the country and a saffron storm will hit Delhi and uproot the dictatorship

UDDHAV THACKERAY | SHIV SENA (UBT) CHIEF

I felt in Rajasthan we had a very good chance. We made a lot of effort. But if we would have done a bit more, like changed the tickets... 17-18 out of 25 sitting ministers lost the election. If we would have picked different candidates, perhaps the performance would have been better

SACHIN PILOT | CONGRESS LEADER

Setting up 22 All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) across the country under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana have been approved till date

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | HEALTH MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Budget session extended by a day

New Delhi: The ongoing Budget session of Parliament is being extended by a day till Saturday, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said here. The government plans to table a 'white paper' comparing the state of the Indian economy before and after 2014, sources said. The session, which began January 31, was otherwise slated to end February 9. In her interim budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that the central government would release a 'White Paper' comparing the state of the Indian economy before and after 2014.

Four women labourers killed

Rampurhat (WB): Four women labourers were killed and several others injured after a mini-truck rammed into a motor van in West Bengal's Birbhum district Tuesday, police said. The accident took place at Munsuba More on National Highway - 14 in the district's Rampurhat area, the police said, adding, three women died on the spot, while the fourth woman was declared dead at the hospital. The speeding mini-truck hit the motor van, which was carrying 15 people, from behind and its riders fell on the road. The vehicle, while fleeing the spot, crushed three women labourers under its wheels, and they died on the spot, a police officer said.

UCC bill tabled in U'khand Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, Feb 6: The Uttarakhand government Tuesday tabled in the Assembly the Uniform Civil Code bill, the first such move in any state after Independence that could be followed by similar legislation in other BJP-run states.

The hill state's small tribal community is exempted from the proposed law, which also mandates registration of live-in relationships. Children born of live-in relationships will be considered legitimate and deserted women will be entitled to maintenance from their partners.

Coming just ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, the Uniform Civil Code, Uttarakhand, 2024 bill ticks off an important item on the BJP's ideological agenda — a common law on marriage, divorce, land, property and inheritance for all citizens, irrespective of their religion.

It is likely to be studied and possibly implemented by BJP gov-



Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami holds a copy of the Constitution of India, at Vidhan Sabha Bhawan in Dehradun. The Uniform Civil Code bill, which proposes uniform marriage, divorce, land, property and inheritance laws for all citizens irrespective of their religion in Uttarakhand, was tabled in the state Assembly Tuesday

ernments in states like Gujarat and Assam. Only Goa has a common civil law, in operation since the Portuguese rule. As it sets out common provisions, the bill effectively bans polygamy and ha-

lala — without naming them — practiced among a section of Muslims. Marriages can be solemnised through separate rituals, like sapatapadi, nikah and anand karaj, followed by different communities.

Tuesday, the second day of a special session of the Assembly, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami entered the House with a copy of the original Constitution. Ruling party members thumped their desks and chanted "Bharat Mata ki Jai", "Vande Mataram" and "Jai Shri Ram" as Dhami tabled the bill.

The original list of business for the day said the bill will be tabled, debated and passed by the House. But Speaker Ritu Khanduri allowed more time after opposition members protested, raising slogans in the House. They wanted time to study the bill and then offer their views.

"It seems the government wants to pass the bill without a debate in violation of legislative traditions," Leader of

11 killed, 174 hurt in MP blast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Harda (MP), Feb 6: Scattered bodies, damaged homes and debris lying all around — all these were reminders of the tragedy that struck Madhya Pradesh's Harda town where a powerful explosion triggered a massive blaze at a fireworks factory Tuesday.

At least 11 persons were killed and 174 others injured when the explosion ripped through the facility and caused a devastating fire. The factory is located in the Bairagarh locality on the outskirts of Harda town, about 150 km from the state capital Bhopal.

The first blast, whose cause was not yet known, was followed by intermittent explosions. Their deafening sound was heard 20 to 25 km away from the spot, where thick plumes of smoke billowed. A video shot from the helicopter carrying State Minister Rao Uday Pratap Singh to Harda showed that the factory had been reduced to rubble.

According to eyewitnesses, several bodies were lying on the spot, while many people were reported missing after the explosion-cum-blaze at the factory. Videos of the incident surfaced on social media, which showed intermittent explosions taking place at the unit as people frantically ran to save themselves.

The intensity of the explosions was so high that the body parts of the victims were flung far away from the spot, and in some videos, people can be seen collecting what appeared like human remains. "I have not been able to find my son so far," said a visibly helpless father of an eight-year-old boy who went missing during the explosion.

The distraught man, identified only as Raju, worked at the



factory, and his son had come there to deliver food to him. "My son Ganesh handed me lunch just as the first explosion occurred. He was running ahead, but I have not been able to find him so far," he said, looking visibly distressed.

Raju said more than 150 people worked at the factory and he was lucky to escape unhurt. Another factory worker, Rukhsar Bano, who sustained injuries, said the ground shook at the time of the first blast. "When we heard the blast, we ran frantically and came out of the building. There was fire all around," she said.

"The building has three to four floors and different workers were assigned on each floor.

Women and children were on my floor. My colleague's three children are missing. I saw some children and other people lying dead," Bano claimed. Eyewitnesses claimed that materials in the unit were blown to bits in the explosion and some of them hit vehicles were passing by the site. Some people shot videos of the fire even as they were fleeing, while some caught a glimpse of the site from the roofs of houses. Several houses located near the factory were also damaged, local residents said. Though the area was not densely populated, there were 30 to 40 houses in the vicinity and the ill-fated factory was mostly surrounded by open fields, eyewitnesses said.

INDIA TO FENCE ENTIRE BORDER WITH MYANMAR



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: India has decided to fence the entire 1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced Tuesday.

The move could virtually put an end to the Free Movement Regime (FMR) prevalent along the porous border. The FMR allows people residing close to the India-Myanmar border to venture 16 km into each other's territory without any document.

The 1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border, which passes

through Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, currently has FMR. It was implemented in 2018 as part of India's Act East policy.

Fencing along the border has been a persistent demand of the Imphal Valley-based Meitei groups which have been alleging that tribal militants often enter into India through the porous border.

The Meitei groups also allege that narcotics are being smuggled into India taking advantage of the unfenced international border. In a post on X, Shah said the Narendra Modi government is committed to building impenetrable borders. "It has decided to construct a fence along the entire 1643-kilometer-long Indo-Myanmar border. To facilitate better surveillance, a patrol track along the border will also be paved," he said. The Home Minister said a 10-km stretch of the border in Moreh in Manipur has already been fenced.

Further, two pilot projects of fencing through a hybrid surveillance system are under execution. "They will fence a stretch of 1 km each in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Additionally, fence works covering approx 20 km in Manipur have also been approved, and the work will start soon," he said.

Feb 15 hearing for plea on survey of Gyanvapi cellars

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Feb 6: A Varanasi court Tuesday fixed February 15 for the hearing of a petition seeking a survey of all closed basements in the Gyanvapi mosque complex by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). According to the petition, there are "secret cellars" inside the basements and it is necessary to survey them to reveal the entire truth of the Gyanvapi mosque, which Hindus claimed was built on the remains of a pre-existing temple.

The counsel for the Hindu side, Madan Mohan Yadav, said acting District Judge Anil Kumar has fixed February 15 as the next date of hearing on the petition. He said that on the petition of Rakhi Singh, lawyers said that there are eight basements in the Gyanvapi complex which have not been surveyed earlier. According to Yadav, though the district court had ordered an ASI survey of the entire Gyanvapi mosque complex except for "wazu khana", it could not be carried out in eight basements which were locked due to protest from the Muslim side. The lawyers for the Gyanvapi mosque management committee expressed their objection to the demand for a survey.

POLL PREP

BJP president JP Nadda will launch a month-long rural outreach programme of the party February 12 from Muzaffarnagar ahead of the Lok Sabha elections as its members look to connect with two lakh villages



ED raids Delhi CM's PA, others



Security personnel during the Enforcement Directorate's raid on the premises of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's personal secretary, Bibhav Kumar, in New Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: The Enforcement Directorate Tuesday searched premises of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's personal assistant Bibhav Kumar and others as part of its probe into charges that the AAP and some officials received kickbacks of about Rs 21 crore through alleged irregularities in the Delhi Jal Board contract, official sources said.

The action is part of a money laundering investigation focusing on alleged bribes that were garnered through irregularities in the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) tendering process and purportedly channelled as election funds to the AAP, they said.

A dozen premises in the national capital were searched by the federal agency's officials from 7 am under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The residences of Bibhav Kumar, former DJB member Shalabh Kumar, the office of party Rajya Sabha member and national treasurer N D Gupta, and the premises of chartered accountant Pankaj Mangal and others associated with the ruling party in Delhi were cov-

ered in the search action. In response to the raids, Delhi minister Atishi accused the authorities of attempting to "intimidate" the AAP. These searches are related to the investigation concerning alleged irregularities in the tendering process of the DJB, for which the ED had arrested retired Jal Board chief engineer Jagdish Kumar Arora and contractor Anil Kumar Aggarwal January 31.

Following the ED's assertion that further custodial interrogation was necessary to uncover a "larger conspiracy," a special PMLA court had extended their remand by five days Monday.

The money laundering case originated from a CBI FIR that alleged corruption and bribery in the DJB of the Delhi government. The FIR alleged that Arora awarded contracts to NKG Infrastructure Ltd. for a total cost of Rs 38 crore, despite the company's "failure" to meet the technical eligibility criteria.

ED officials claimed that NKG Infrastructure Ltd. secured the bid by submitting forged documents. The probe further indicated that the contract was inflated, allowing kickbacks to be collected from the contractors.

ZILLA PARISHAD, SAMBALPUR
Ph:0663-2410992, e-mail:ori-dsambalpur@nic.in

Corrigendum to Tender Call Notice No.532, Dt.01.02.2024
No.CAD-4005:With reference to the Tender Call Notice No.532, dt.01.02.2024 for supply of sports kits, Tribal Costumes and musical instruments it is notified that the last date of submission of tender is extended to 8th February 2024 upto 5.30 PM. The tenders will be opened on 9th February at 11 AM in the conference hall of Zilla Parishad.

Those who have already applied in response to the tender call notice are requested to submit the Financial Bids again in the revised Financial Bid Format. All other terms & conditions of the tender remain unchanged.

Sd./- CDO-cum-EO
OIPR-19241/11/0017/2324
Zilla Parishad, Sambalpur

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BHANJANAGAR
No.798/RWDBNJ/Dated 05.02.2024
1st CORRIGENDUM TO TENDER CALL NOTICE
IDENTIFICATION NO. 27/RWDBNJ/2023-2024 T.O. LETTER NO.490, DATED 25.01.2024
No.O-2451: The following modifications to the Online Tender/27/SERWBNJ/2023-2024 are made under unavoidable circumstances.

| Procurement Officer | Bid Identification No. | Availability of tender online for bidding | | Last date & Time of Seeking Tender Clarification | Date of Opening of Tender |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------|--|---------------------------|
| | | From | To | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Bhanjanagar | Online Tender/27/RWDBNJ/2023-2024 | As per TENDER CALL NOTICE | | | |
| | | 31.01.2024 10.00 AM | 08.02.2024 3.00 PM | 07.02.2024 upto 3.00 PM | 09.02.2024 at 12.00 Noon |
| | | As per 1st Corrigendum | | | |
| | | 05.02.2024 10.00 AM | 12.02.2024 3.00 PM | | 13.02.2024 at 12.00 Noon |

All other terms and conditions of the said tender call notice shall remain unchanged.
OIPR-25174/11/0058/2324 Sd./- Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Bhanjanagar

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
O/O. THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, R.W. DIVISION-II, CUTTACK
1st Corrigendum
No.O-2449:In respect of the Tender Call Notice online vide SECTC-II-29 of 2023-24 dt.03.02.2024 through e-Procurement, the Following additional two (02) numbers of work inserted in Annexure Table of TCN (Enclosed) serial no-06 which are given below.

ANNEXURE TABLE

| Sl. No. | Name of Work | Approx. value of work put tender (In lakhs) | EMD | Class of Contractor | Period of Completion | Cost of Tender Paper (Rs.) |
|---------|--|---|--------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 1 | Radhakishorepur to Maschyapur Road in the District of Cuttack for the year 2023-24 | 8.04 | EMD 1% | "D & C" | 15 (Fifteen) Days | 4000/- |

All other things in the Tender Call Notice remain unaltered.
OIPR-25095/11/0029/2324 Sd./-Executive Engineer, R.W.Division-II, Cuttack

GOVT. OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, NAYAGARH
At/PO-Nabaganpur, Dist-Nayagarh,Ph-06753-252049, Email:nayagarhrw2006@yahoo.in
No.Tender-Online-NayagarhDivn.-13/2023-24 Date:05.02.2024
e-Procurement Notice
No.O-2452:1.Name of the Work:Composite Building Works. 2.Total No. of Projects:53 (Fifty Three) No. of Projects. 3.Class of Contractor: a) Estimated cost above Rs.20.00 Lakhs & upto Rs.3.00 Crore: B Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities. b) Estimated cost upto Rs.40.00 Lakhs: C Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities. c) Estimated cost upto Rs.20.00 Lakhs: D Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities. 4. Estimated Cost put to tender: Rs.46.22 Lakh each. 5. Time for Completion: 06 (Six) Calendar Month. 6. Other details:

| Procurement Officer | Bid Identification No. | Availability of Tender online for bidding | | Date & Time of Opening of Tender | |
|---|--|---|---------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| | | From | To | Technical Bid | Financial Bid |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Nayagarh | No:Tender-Online-Divn. Nayagarh-13/2023-24 | 19.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M. | 01.03.2024 upto 5.30 P.M. | 02.03.2024 at 11.00 A.M. | Will be initiated later on |

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
OIPR-25106/11/0025/2324 Sd./- Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Nayagarh



In the 1990s, exports contributed a significant 30 per cent to Sri Lanka's GDP, compared to 15 per cent today

IMF TEPID TO PAKISTAN INTERIM GOVT PROPOSALS

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has not immediately endorsed Pakistan interim government's proposals to reduce industrial electricity prices, settle over one-fifth of the circular debt and make the Rs 268 billion debt of the Pakistan International Airline (PIA) part of the public debt, media reported



of the day quote

We the people of Myanmar are unified in opposition to the military dictatorship. And if we wish to live in a free, peaceful, inclusive, just and democratic society

KYAW MOE TUN | MYANMAR'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO UN

You should always ask probing questions, you should always approach things from a position of scepticism to ensure that you get value for money for taxpayers

RISHI SUNAK | UK PRIME MINISTER

Civilian casualties had been steadily decreasing in 2023 but the wave of attacks in late December and early January violently interrupted that trend

DANIELLE BELL | HEADS MONITORING MISSION, UN

SHORT TAKES

Heavy downpour, floods batter Calif

Washington: The heavy downpour, flooding and power outages caused by the tail end of a powerful atmospheric river storm has disrupted life for hundreds of thousands of Southern California homes and businesses.

Turkiye mourns tens of thousands dead

Antakya (Turkiye): Millions of people across Turkiye Tuesday mourned the loss of more than 53,000 friends, loved ones and neighbours in the country's catastrophic earthquake a year ago.

Blasts rock Balochistan

Quetta: Two separate blasts shook the districts of Kech and Panjgur in Balochistan Tuesday, sparking concerns about security as Pakistan gears up for the upcoming general elections scheduled February 8, a media report said.

2 terrorists killed

Peshawar: Two terrorists were gunned down during a search operation by security forces in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province while two policemen were injured when a remote-controlled bomb exploded in a restive tribal region, the Pakistan Army said.

Yemen gets new PM

Aden (Yemen): Yemen's ongoing civil war took a new turn as the Presidential Leadership Council appointed Foreign Minister Ahmed Awad Bin Mubarak as the country's new Prime Minister, according to media reports.

Houthis claim fresh Red Sea attacks

Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea over Israel's offensive in Gaza against Hamas. But they have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no clear links to Israel, imperiling shipping in a key route for trade among Asia, the Mideast and Europe

AGENCIES

Tel Aviv, Feb 6: Two ships, including one heading to India from the US, travelling in Middle East waters were attacked by suspected Yemen Houthi rebel drones early Tuesday, authorities said, the latest assaults in the Iranian-backed fighters' campaign of targeting vessels over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.



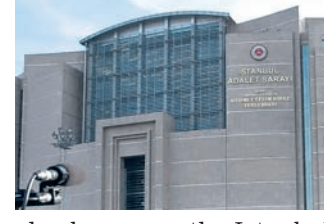
Last month, the US and Britain began striking Houthi targets in Yemen in retaliation. The US government has now designated the Yemeni group as "global terrorists". The US military confirmed its latest attack, conducted Monday, against two explosive Houthi naval drones that it said presented an imminent threat to navy ships and merchant vessels

"The vessel reported an explosion 50 meters off its starboard side," Ambrey said. "No injuries or damage were reported." Later, a military spokesman of the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, claimed in a statement that the rebel forces attacked two separate vessels, one American and one British, in the Red Sea. He provided no evidence to support the claim. The Houthis made no claim about the attack off the coast

of Aden. One of the ships the Houthis claimed they attacked — the Morning Tide — matched details provided by Ambrey. Tracking data showed it to be in the Red Sea near the reported attack. The Morning Tide's owner, British firm Furadino Shipping, told The Associated Press no one was hurt in the attack and the ship was continuing onward to Singapore. Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in

Istanbul courthouse attack leaves 3 dead

The attack took place on the day when Turkey was commemorating the anniversary of an earthquake in the country's south that killed thousands of people



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Istanbul, Feb 6: Two people attacked Turkiye's largest courthouse before being shot dead Tuesday in an exchange of fire that also left one other person dead and five wounded. Authorities alleged the assailants were part of an extremist organisation that had been largely inactive in recent years.

also known as the Istanbul Justice Palace, is a huge and heavily guarded court complex in the Kagithane district. It was Europe's largest courthouse when it opened in 2011.

Footage published by Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency showed the assailants appearing to shoot at police before being gunned down in the building's forecourt, while bystanders ran for cover. Private news agency DHA reported that the elder sister of the female attacker appeared as a defendant at the courthouse half an hour after the attack. She faced charges of membership in a terrorist organization and possessing dangerous materials.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said the man and woman attacked a security checkpoint at the Caglayan courthouse in Istanbul, and then were killed in an exchange of fire. Authorities said that one other woman also was killed in the gunfire, and that three police officers and two civilians were wounded.

Yerlikaya later said the attackers were alleged members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front, or DHKP/C, a far-left group that is considered a terrorist organisation by Turkiye, the United States and the European Union. The Caglayan courthouse,

The justice minister said the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has opened an investigation.

A witness to Tuesday's attack, Emre Ozyurt, said his "blood froze" as bystanders fled in fright.

The attack took place the day that Turkiye commemorated the anniversary of an earthquake in the south that killed more than 53,000 people.

Prince Harry arrives to be at ailing King Charles' side

London: Prince Harry Tuesday arrived here from the USA to be at King Charles' side after his father told him about his cancer diagnosis, raising hopes of a royal truce. The Duke of Sussex flew by a British Airways flight to London Heathrow alone leaving wife Meghan and children Archie and Lilibet at home in California.

Death toll from Chile's wildfires reaches 123

Santiago: Volunteers in central Chile tried to remove charred metal, broken glass and other debris Monday from neighborhoods devastated by wildfires over the past several days, as officials raised the death toll to 123. Hundreds of people remain missing. The fires appeared to have diminished by Monday morning after burning intensely since Friday on the eastern edge of the city of Viña del Mar.

Lanka reserves money to hold major elections

Colombo: The cash-strapped Sri Lankan government has reserved Rs 10 billion to hold the two major elections, including the presidential election this year. A Cabinet note on the two major elections - the Presidential and parliamentary polls - came as no action has been taken to hold the local council elections postponed since March of last year. The Cabinet note released after Monday's meeting said: "The Cabinet of Ministers considered that an allocation of rupees 10 billion has been made by the budget estimated for the year 2024, within the financial stamina of the government and those provisions have to be managed for covering the expenditure of the Presidential election and general election".



A carnival ride is lit up against a backdrop of clouds in Central. A recent bout of wet and humid weather left Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour and many of its most famous skyscrapers shrouded by mist and fog

Iran waives visa requirement for Indian tourists

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 6: Indian tourists do not need a visa for visiting Iran with a new policy coming into effect from February 4, according to a statement issued by the Embassy of Iran here Tuesday.

"Individuals holding ordinary passports will be allowed to enter Iran without a visa once every six months, with a maximum stay of 15 days," the Embassy said in a statement.

The visa-free entry applies only to individuals entering Iran for tourism purposes. Indians who visit Iran for business or educational purposes would have to apply for visa under the respective categories. Those who want to visit Iran more than once within the six-month time span will have to obtain a visa. The statement also made it clear that the visa-free entry would be applicable only to those Indian tourists who arrive in Iran by air.

Those coming to Iran via the land route through Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan or any neighbouring nation would not be allowed to enter without a prior visa.

Court rejects Trump's immunity claim

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Feb 6: A federal appeals panel ruled Tuesday that Donald Trump can face trial on charges that he plotted to overturn the results of the 2020 election, rejecting the former president's claims that he is immune from prosecution.

The decision marks the second time in as many months that judges have spurned Trump's immunity arguments and held that he can be prosecuted for actions undertaken while in the White House and in the run-up to January 6, 2021, when a mob of his supporters stormed the US Capitol. But it also sets the stage for additional appeals from the Republican president that could reach the US Supreme Court.

The trial was originally set for March, but it was postponed last week and the judge didn't immediately set a new date. "We conclude that the interest in criminal accountability, held by both the public and the Executive Branch, outweighs the potential risks of chilling Presidential action and permitting vexatious litigation," the judges wrote.

The trial date carries enormous political ramifications, with the Republican primary front-runner hoping to delay it until

ELECTION INTERFERENCE CASE



after the November election. If Trump defeats President Joe Biden, he could presumably try to use his position as head of the executive branch to order a new attorney general to dismiss the federal cases or he potentially could seek a pardon for himself.

The appeals court took centre stage in the immunity dispute after the Supreme Court last month said it was at least tentatively staying out of it, rejecting a request from special counsel Jack Smith to take up the matter quickly and issue a speedy ruling. The legally untested question before the court was whether former presidents can

A three-judge panel of the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit rejected Trump's claim that he cannot be prosecuted because the allegations relate to his official responsibilities as President

The decision marks the 2nd time in as many months that judges have spurned Trump's immunity arguments & held that he can be prosecuted for actions undertaken while in the White House and in the run-up to January 6, 2021, when a mob of his supporters stormed the US Capitol

be prosecuted after they leave office for actions taken in the White House related to their official duties. The Supreme Court has held that presidents are immune from civil liability for official acts, and Trump's lawyers have for months argued that that protection should be extended to criminal prosecution as well.

They said the actions Trump was accused of in his failed bid to cling to power after he lost the 2020 election to Biden, including badgering his vice president to refuse to certify the results of the election, all fell within the "outer perimeters" of a pres-

Pak may suspend internet services on election day

PREEE TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 6: The caretaker government in Pakistan will consider shutting down the internet connections on the polling day Thursday only if there is a request from a district or a province, interim Interior Minister Dr Gohar Ejaz said Tuesday.

"So far, there has been no decision made regarding the suspension of internet services at any place. The caretaker government will consider shutting down the internet connections only if there is a request," The News International newspaper reported, quoting him as saying. Ejaz was addressing a press conference along with the caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi.

Ejaz's announcement is important as just a day earlier, Solangi had turned down the possibility of an internet shutdown February 8.

"Local administrations have the authority to decide on an internet shutdown in light of the law and order situation, however, no such situation has so far been reported," Solangi had said Monday.

of the day quote

With the growing similarities in consumer preferences in urban and non-urban centres, there is a notable increase in interest for our Nexa offerings from both regions

We are on track towards achieving our mid-term goals of product and market share expansion, improving geographical presence and becoming more profitable

The overall car industry is growing, as well as the luxury segment is growing. Last year was one of the biggest numbers that the industry could achieve, which is also in line with the overall growth of the country

Q3 RESULTS CORNER

Britannia net profit falls 40%

New Delhi: Bakery food company Britannia Industries Ltd Tuesday reported a 40.4 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at ₹55.66 crore for the third quarter ended December 2023. The company had posted a net profit of ₹932.40 crore in the October-December quarter a year ago, Britannia Industries said in a BSE filing. Its net sales during the third quarter of the current fiscal grew 2.2 per cent to ₹4,191.83 crore. It was at ₹4,101.49 crore in the year-ago period. The net profit base in the year-ago quarter was higher as the company had gains on sale of 49 per cent equity stake held in Britannia Dairy Private to French cheese maker Bel SA.

Nykaa profit almost doubles

New Delhi: Lifestyle e-commerce platform Nykaa Tuesday reported a 97.55 per cent rise in its consolidated profit to ₹16.18 crore for the December 2023 quarter. The company's profit (attributable to equity shareholders of parent) stood at ₹8.19 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous year. Its revenue from operations rose 22.28 per cent to ₹1,788.79 crore in the quarter under review from ₹1,462.82 crore a year ago, according to a regulatory filing. A company statement said that the EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation) margin expanded to 5.5 per cent for the quarter, marking an annual growth of 26 per cent, driven by direct and indirect cost efficiencies.

JK Tyre net jumps 3-fold

New Delhi: JK Tyre & Industries Tuesday said its consolidated net profit surged over three-fold to ₹227 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2023, riding on the back of robust sales. The tyre major had reported a net profit of ₹67 crore in the October-December quarter of last fiscal. Revenue from operations rose to ₹3,688 crore for the period under review as against ₹3,613 crore in the year-ago period, JK Tyre & Industries said in a regulatory filing. The company's board declared an interim dividend of Re 1 per share having face value of ₹2 per share, it added. "We remain committed to achieving profitable growth centered on product premiumisation, volume expansion, and optimizing our product mix," JK Tyre Chairman and Managing Director Raghupati Singhania said.



India is the best place to be in right now. It has the resources as well as the market

ANIL AGARWAL | VEDANTA LTD CHAIRMAN

HDFC TO ACQUIRE 9.5% STAKE IN INDUSIND BANK

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved HDFC Bank's proposal to acquire an up to 9.5 per cent stake in IndusInd Bank.



Walmart, Google swoop in amid Paytm crackdown

Paytm app downloads fell 20% last week, while rival apps including Walmart's PhonePe and Google Pay recorded an average 52% growth

REUTERS

Bangalore, Feb 6: Hit by a regulatory crackdown, Paytm is mobilising its sales team to reassure the merchants who use its app to accept digital payments just as Walmart and Google are targeting those same vendors with their rival offerings. Cash was once king in India, but Paytm is credited with revolutionising India's digital payments market which is set to be worth \$10 trillion by 2026. Backed by SoftBank, and earlier by billionaire investor Warren Buffett and China's Alibaba, it has 100 million monthly users and clocked \$61 billion worth of merchant payments between October and December.

But many merchants are now refusing to deal with Paytm after India's central bank last week asked its banking unit - which mainly powers the popular payments app - to cease most operations from March 1 for 'persistent non-compliance'.

In Telangana, around 2,000 shops have put signs saying 'No Paytm, Pay Cash', and some have even covered up the Paytm QR code which customers scan for payments, said Mohammed Salahuddin, a member of a local retailers association. "I have decided to avoid using Paytm. Customers have to give cash," he said. To counter such concerns, the company is sending sales staff directly to customers ranging from roadside snack sellers to big retail outlets to ask them to use Paytm's partner banks so that they can continue to receive payments, more than 40 shopkeepers and several company sales staff said. "We are receiving a lot of calls from merchants," said a Paytm team leader in Chennai, adding that each salesperson there is



tasked with visiting at least 10 shops daily.

In a statement to Reuters, Paytm said customers continued to use its app, adding it is onboarding more merchants and 'there will be no disruptions' for vendors who 'can seamlessly be transitioned' to other partner banks.

However, with about 15% of Paytm's 40 million merchants needing to be migrated, the company last week said it would be a 'large exercise'.

Very few shopkeepers in India are also tech savvy, which adds to the challenge.

RIVALS CASH IN
Paytm has dominated digital payments in India but since the crackdown its stock has plunged 39%, wiping \$2.3 billion off its value. That has potentially created an opportunity for bigger rivals including Walmart and Google.

Paytm app downloads fell 20% last week, versus the previous week, data from market intelligence firm Sensor Tower shows, while rival apps including Walmart's PhonePe and Google Pay recorded an average 52% growth. PhonePe in particular registered a 76% downloads growth.

A Reuters reporter Sunday received a push notification from

Google Pay to migrate his Paytm-linked mobile number for bank transfers, and an industry source said many merchants were rushing to register with Google. Google said in a statement that it was supporting vendors and users.

PhonePe, which offers many services similar to Paytm's, took out front-page newspaper advertisements targeting merchants, saying: "Business runs best when it runs on PhonePe."

PhonePe, in a statement, said it was seeing a surge in demand for their payment offerings, including its speakers: tiny devices that help digitally challenged retailers and eases payment tracking.

The speakers - which give audio alerts to vendors when payments are received - were pioneered by Paytm with its Soundbox that is used by about 7 million Indian merchants.

Neil Shah, director at Counterpoint Research, estimates Paytm's rivals - PhonePe's SmartSpeaker and Google's Soundpod - have around 3 million such devices in India.

"This is where PhonePe and Google can now hit," he said. "The Soundbox and service from Paytm has been a major stickiness factor for Paytm which contributed to its success."

High capex, rail corridors to boost exports: Exporters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: Announcements of measures in the interim Budget such as high capex, three major economic railway corridors, and a target to increase seafood exports would help boost the country's overall outbound shipments, exporters say.

The government has proposed to step up the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) by enhancing aquaculture productivity from existing 3 tonne to 5 tonne per hectare, and setting up five integrated aqua parks.

CII National Committee on Exports and Imports Chairman Sanjay Budhia said that the announcement of a ₹1 lakh crore corpus for innovation with a 50-year interest-free loan for long-term financing, refinancing at no or nil interest rates will encourage the private sector to scale up R&D and innovation in sunrise domains and new age technologies.

"There is a reinforcement of continued thrust on exports. Announcement of three economic corridors, multi-modal connectivity, emphasis on additional airports, etc. And dou-



bling the target of seafood export to ₹1 lakh crore clearly reiterate the importance of our international trade as an engine of growth," Budhia, who is also the managing director of Patton Group, said.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President (Officiate) Israr Ahmed said that focus on investment in modern infrastructure, including digital, will help increase logistics efficiency for the industry.

Sensex rebounds 454 pts on foreign fund inflows



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 6: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded nearly 1 per cent Tuesday following buying in IT giants TCS and Infosys, foreign fund inflows and positive global trends.

After a firm opening, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 454.67 points or 0.63 per cent to settle at 72,186.09. As many as 19 Sensex shares advanced and 11 declined. During the day, the barometer jumped 529.98 points or 0.73 per cent to 72,261.40.

The Nifty gained 157.70 points or 0.72 per cent to close at 21,929.40, driven gains in BPCL, HDFC Life and HCL Tech.

A rebound in Chinese markets also bolstered the sentiment, analysts said. Chinese markets jumped up to 4 per cent after Monday's steep losses as a state-run investment fund said it would jack up share purchases. Reports also suggested China President Xi Jinping was set to meet with officials to discuss the markets.

Among the Sensex firms, HCL Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, Maruti, Wipro, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, Tata Steel, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Tech Mahindra, UltraTech Cement and Mahindra & Mahindra were the major gainers.

Bharti Airtel climbed over 2 per cent after the company Monday posted a 54 per cent

jump in consolidated net profit to ₹2,442.2 crore for the December quarter, mainly on account of growth in high-value customers.

Power Grid, IndusInd Bank, ITC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finserv and Axis Bank were among the laggards.

"All key sectors, barring banking, are attracting buying on a rotational basis and that is helping the index to maintain a positive tone amid consolidation," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 1.23 per cent and midcap index jumped 1.06 per cent.

Among the indices, oil & gas zoomed 3.02 per cent, IT jumped 2.94 per cent, teck climbed 2.74 per cent, telecommunication went up by 2.17 per cent, energy (2.07 per cent), auto (1.65 per cent) and capital goods (1.61 per cent). Utilities, power and bankex were the laggards.

A total of 2,353 stocks advanced while 1,508 declined and 83 remained unchanged.

In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled with smart gains while Seoul and Tokyo ended in the negative territory.

European markets were trading mostly in the green. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹518.88 crore Monday, according to exchange data.

WHITE-COLLAR HIRING FALLS IN JAN: REPORT



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 6: Hiring of white-collar workers fell 11 per cent on an annual basis in January, while it sequentially rose 1 per cent during the same period, a report said Tuesday.

On a year-on-year basis, the overall hiring in the IT sector declined 19 per cent in January this year. However, healthcare, hospitality and FMCG witnessed annual job growth last month in an otherwise cautious market, according to Naukri JobSpeak Index. The Naukri JobSpeak is a monthly index representing

the state of the Indian job market and hiring activity based on new job listings and job-related searches by recruiters on the resume database of Naukri.Com.

As per the report, hiring for niche AI-related roles such as machine learning engineer and full stack AI scientist jumped 46 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively, year-on-year.

On an annual basis, hiring in the healthcare sector rose 7 per cent in January with maximum increase in demand for administrative roles.

Recruitment in the travel and hospitality sector recorded a growth of 5 per cent y-o-y.

With the ongoing boom in both domestic and international tourism, demand for restaurant managers and service managers remained at elevated levels and hiring in this sector was high in Bangalore and Mumbai, the report said.

MPC starts deliberations; RBI likely to hold rates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das-headed rate-setting panel Tuesday started its three-day deliberations amid expectations of continued status quo on short-term lending rates as the retail inflation remains near the higher end of the central bank's comfort zone.

For almost a year, the Reserve Bank has kept the short-term lending rate or repo rate stable at 6.5 per cent. The benchmark interest rate was last raised in February 2023 to 6.5 per cent from 6.25 per cent to contain inflation driven mainly by global developments.

The retail inflation in the current financial year has declined after touching a peak of 7.44 per cent in July 2023, it is still high and was 5.69 per cent in December 2023, though within the Reserve Bank's comfort zone of 4-6 per cent. Governor Das will announce



the decision of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) Thursday (February 8) morning.

State Bank of India (SBI) in a report said the RBI is expected to continue its pause stance in upcoming policy.

"Strong US non-farm payroll data and wages seem to have pushed back on market expectations for a quick pivot to rate cuts," it said, and added the first rate cut on the table could be

Consumer Price Index (CPI) remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

The MPC is entrusted with the responsibility of deciding the policy repo rate to achieve the inflation target, keeping in mind the objective of growth.

In an off-cycle meeting in May 2022, the MPC raised the policy rate by 40 basis points and it was followed by rate hikes of varying sizes, in each of the five subsequent meetings till February 2023. The repo rate was raised by 250 basis points cumulatively between May 2022 and February 2023.

The MPC consists of three external members and three officials of the RBI.

The external members on the panel are Shashanka Bhide, Ashima Goyal, and Jayanth R Varma. Besides Governor Das, the other RBI officials in MPC are Rajiv Ranjan (Executive Director) and Michael Debabrata Patra (Deputy Governor).

MAHA, DELHI LEAD IN EV CHARGING STATIONS

Government has issued guidelines and standards for charging infrastructure, which enable the owners of EVs to charge their vehicles at their residence/office using their existing electricity connections

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

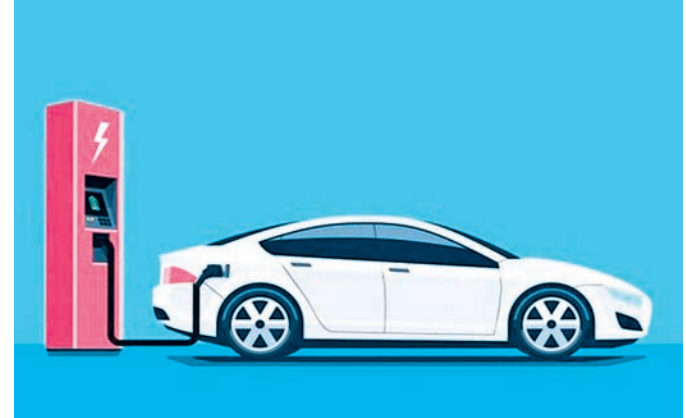
New Delhi, Feb 6: The number of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations that are operating in the country has gone up to 12,146 as of February 2 this year, Minister of State for Heavy Industries, Krishan Pal Gurjar, said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha Tuesday.

The data provided by the minister shows that Maharashtra leads with 3,079 EV charging stations followed by Delhi with

1,886, while Karnataka is at the third spot with 1,041 charging stations.

The top three states are followed by: Kerala (852), Tamil Nadu (643), Uttar Pradesh (582), Rajasthan (500), Telangana (481), Gujarat (476) and Madhya Pradesh (341), making up the top 10 list.

The Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) has been making consistent efforts for facilitating the promotion of EVs in India. The FAME-II scheme inter-



alia included financial support in the form of subsidy for setting up of public charging infrastructure to instill confidence among the EV users, the minister said.

Further, the Ministry of Power has taken several initiatives to accelerate the deployment of public EV charging infrastructure in the country. The government has issued

guidelines and standards for charging infrastructure, which enable the owners of EVs to charge their vehicles at their residence/office using their existing electricity connections.

A revenue sharing model for provision of land at promotional rates for public charging stations has also been introduced and provision has been made for providing electricity connection to Public Charging Station (PCS) within stipulated timelines.

The government has also prescribed the single part EV tariff for public charging stations. This amount cannot exceed Average Cost of Supply (ACoS) till 31.03.2025.

The guidelines specify a ceiling of ₹2.50 per unit and ₹ 3.50 per

unit of electricity used for slow AC charging of EVs at PCS during the solar and non-solar hours, respectively.

Additionally, a ceiling limit of ₹10 per unit and ₹12 per unit of electricity used for DC fast charging of EVs at PCS during the solar and non-solar hours, respectively, has also been specified.

Average cost of supply (ACoS) by DISCOMs to PCSs during solar hours shall have a rebate of 20 per cent and a surcharge of 20 per cent during all other times.

The Green Energy Open Access Rules, 2022, has been notified with the objective of further accelerating renewable energy adoption, ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and green energy for all, the minister added.

HOCKEY PLAYER BOOKED FOR RAPE

CURRENTLY VARUN, A MEMBER OF THE INDIAN TEAM, IS TRAINING IN BHUBANESWAR FOR THE FIH PRO LEAGUE

AGENCIES

Bangalore, Feb 6: Arjuna Award-winning Indian hockey player Varun Kumar has been booked under the stringent POCSO Act by the Bengaluru police after a woman accused the defender of sexually abusing her multiple times when she was a minor, police said Tuesday.

The 22-year-old, in her complaint filed Monday, said that she came in contact with Varun in 2018 through Instagram. Police said that as per the complaint, the victim has alleged that the player raped her on multiple occasions promising her of marriage when she was 17.

The victim stated that Varun was training at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) centre here when she met him. Varun, who was awarded the Arjuna Award in 2021, was recently promoted as a DSP in Punjab Police.

“Based on the complaint received from the woman, we have registered a case Monday against the hockey player under appropriate section of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and Sections 376 (rape) and 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property) of the IPC,” a senior police officer said here.

Varun is currently training with the national squad in Bhubaneswar for the upcoming



FIH Pro League. India are scheduled to face Spain in their opening encounter February 10. There was speculation that Varun, a 2022 Commonwealth Games silver medallist, is on the run, but Hockey India (HI) rubbished the rumour: “He is not absconding.

He is in Bhubaneswar with the team,” a HI source told this agency in New Delhi. Varun, who hails from Himachal Pradesh, made his debut for India in 2017.

In the FIR, the woman has alleged that Varun insisted on

Similar tale surfaces again

Bhubaneswar: This isn't the only time that an Indian hockey player who has been in the limelight for wrong reasons. In 2016, Ashpal Bhogal, a player of Indian origin representing the United Kingdom had accused legendary hockey player Sardar Singh of raping her. At one point of time, Ashpal was known as the fiancé of Sardar before things turned sour. Sardar was once questioned by the UK police in Leeds. Currently, the matter is sub judice.

meeting her after they got in touch on Instagram. The two eventually became friends and got into a relationship.

Police said that in her complaint, the woman said Varun took her to a hotel in Jayanagar locality in this city in July 2019. He entered into a physical relationship with her despite being aware that she was a minor.

“The victim accused him (Varun) of getting physical with her on several occasions over the five-year long relationship she shared with him on the pretext of marriage,” the police said.

The victim has alleged in her complaint that the accused stopped communicating with her since the death of her dad. He also threatened her not to keep in touch with him.

Dhas, Saharan show helps Boys in Blue enter WC final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Benoni (South Africa), Feb 6: Propped by splendid knocks by Sachin Dhas (96, 95b, 11x4, 1x6) and captain Uday Saharan (81, 124b, 6x4), defending champions India battled past South Africa by two wickets to enter the final, their fifth consecutive, of the ICC Under-19 World Cup here Tuesday.

Dhas and Saharan were India's guiding forces in the last match against Nepal with a hundred each. They did so again here with a 171-run for the fifth wicket as India hunted down the target of 245 with just seven balls to spare. Before the partnership, India were staring down the barrel after being reduced to 32 for four chasing a victory target of 245.

“It is a great feeling to reach the final. We got a taste of close games, and that will be good for us in the final. We don't let the morale get low in the dressing room at all and that helped today,” Saharan, who was later adjudged man of the match, told the host broadcaster.

India will face either Australia or Pakistan in the summit clash to be played at this venue Sunday. They will be searching for their sixth trophy in the marquee event.

But the beginning of India's chase resembled a debris yard as they lost four wickets. South African new-ball bowler Kwena Maphaka (3/32) and Tristan Luus (3/37) jolted India top-order. It was Luus who did the initial damage claiming the wickets of Musheer Khan (4), Arshin Kulkarni (12) and Priyanshu Moliya (5) as all three India batters were inde-



Uday Saharan (left) and Sachin Dhas put on a match-winning stand of 171 runs

cise outside the off-stump while hanging their bats to dry.

However, the Indians found their saviours in Dhas and Saharan, who dished out innings of vastly contrasting nature and tempo. While Dhas was aggressive, Saharan held one end up giving the innings stability. In the process, Saharan also became then highest run-getter in this World Cup with 389 runs. But these two youngsters showed immense maturity not to squander the start they got; piling runs to keep the pressure squarely on the hosts.

Earlier, bowlers played a significant part in shaping India's victory, limiting 2014 champions South Africa to 244 for seven

on a pitch that offered them considerable assistance. However, the Proteas managed to put up a fighting score due to the efforts of wicketkeeper-batter Luan-dre Pretorius (76, 102b, 6x4, 3x6) and Richard Seletswane (64, 100b, 4x4, 2x6). The pick of the Indian bowlers was Raj Limbani (3/60). Left-arm spinners Saumeer Pandey (1/38) and Musheer Khan (2/43) along with off-spinner Moliya did not allow the South Africans to score freely.

BRIEF SCORES
South Africa 244 for 7 (Luan-dre Pretorius 76, Richard Seletswane 64, Raj Limbani 3/60) lost to India 248 for 8 (Sachin Dhas 96, Uday Saharan 81) by two wickets.

SHORT TAKES

India U-19 eves in SAFF Cup final

Dhaka: Neha (54th minute and 80th) struck twice in a second half blitz as India beat Nepal 4-0 in their last league match to storm into the final of the SAFF U-19 Women's Championships here Tuesday. The two other goals were scored by Sulanjana Raul (85th) and Cindy Remruatpuili Colney (90+3) India will face hosts and defending champions Bangladesh for the title match to be played Sunday. The Indian colts had earlier won their first match 10-0 against Bhutan, followed by a 0-1 defeat to Bangladesh. After a goal-less first half, the Indian girls dished out an impressive display in the second session to slam in four goals.

2nd string squad to tour Zimbabwe

Harare: A second string Indian team will tour Zimbabwe for a five-match T20I series starting July 6, the country's cricket board announced here Tuesday. The series that will be held immediately after the conclusion of the marquee T20 World Cup in the USA and the West Indies June 29, is unlikely to feature any top Indian players as it has been the case during previous tours of the African nation over the years. The five matches will be played at the Harare Sports Club, July 6, 7, 10, 13 and 14. The confirmation of this tour comes after productive discussions between Zimbabwe Cricket and the BCCI, with the primary objective of fortifying bilateral ties.

Cricketer mugged in Johannesburg

Cape Town: West Indies and Mumbai India all-rounder Fabian Allen was mugged in Johannesburg while he was there to compete in the ongoing SA T20 League for his franchise Paarl Royals, who said the player is safe and was provided all possible support after the incident. Allen was robbed outside his team hotel at gunpoint January 25. Paarl Royals said he would be in action during the team's Eliminator against Joburg Super Kings Wednesday.

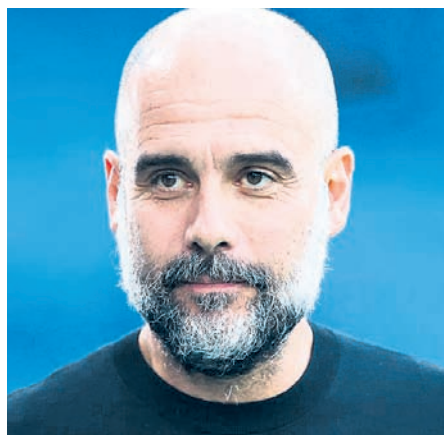
“...Paarl Royals would like to state that the West Indian all-rounder is safe, and enjoying his time at the SA20 as he, along with his teammates and support staff, prepares for the all-important Eliminator,” the franchise said in a statement Tuesday.

Three teams in race for PL title

LIVERPOOL, MAN CITY, ARSENAL GUNNING FOR GLORY WITH ONLY 2 POINTS SEPARATING THE 3 AT THE TOP



JURGEN KLOPP



PEP GUARDIOLA



MIKEL ARTETA

AGENCIES

London, Feb 6: One team are looking to make history. Another want to give their long-time manager the perfect send-off. The other is eager for revenge.

An English Premier League title race rich with narratives is shaping up to have a thrilling finish with the top three — Liverpool, Manchester City and Arsenal — separated by just two points with 15 matches remaining. Now it appears to be a three-way fight for English soccer's biggest prize.

Fourth-placed Aston Villa and fifth-placed Tottenham, five and seven points off the pace respectively, could possibly be in-

involved in the title race but few can expect them to stay the course given the pedigree of the teams above them.

Here's a closer look at the top three and how they stand.

Liverpool (1st, 51 points, 23 games)

Sure, Jurgen Klopp has won the Premier League with Liverpool, ending the storied team's 30-year wait for the title in the process. But that 2020 triumph was tinged with the slightest regret in that it came during the pandemic and there were no fans inside Anfield. Doing it before a full house and in the final days of Klopp's nearly nine-year tenure would be a fitting way for the German to depart.

Liverpool, have the joint-best defensive record in the league. However, they will have to be on the money when they play teams like Manchester City and Aston Villa.

Manchester City (2nd, 49 points, 22 games)

No team in the history of English soccer have won the top-flight for four straight years. That's what City are attempting to do as manager Pep Guardiola strives to break more new ground for an Abu Dhabi-owned club that won the Champions League for the first time last year and the Premier League in seven of the last 12 seasons. City also have a fully fit squad now that Erling Haaland

and Kevin De Bruyne are over their long-term injuries. Many believe a successful title defence will happen.

Arsenal (3rd, 49 points, 23 games)

Arsenal's push for a first league title since 2004 is being fuelled by a desire to make amends for last season, when the team imploded in the closing weeks after taking an eight-point lead with nine games left. Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta seems to be pacing this season better, setting up his team to control games more and not go full throttle like in the first half of the last campaign. He has a better squad at his disposal this time round, too.

Super Cup in new format

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: The Super Cup, India's premier knock-out football tournament and which also offers a spot in the AFC Champions League 2, is set to adopt a new format in the 2024-25 season, similar to England's FA Cup. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) in its calendar for the upcoming season has slotted the Super Cup in the October 1, 2024 to May 15, 2025 window.

“The AIFF wants the Super Cup in FA Cup (of England) style from this season. That is why it has a window of more than seven months,” an AIFF official told this agency here Tuesday.

The Super Cup will run almost concurrently with the top-tier Indian Super League (ISL) and the second tier I-League in the 2024-25 season. The details of the tournament, including the exact format, will be announced later, the source added.

The FA Cup of England is an annual knockout domestic competition. First played during the 1871-72 season, it is the oldest national football competition in the world. The FA Cup is open to all clubs from 10 tiers of the footballing pyramid in England, including the Premier League (PL) sides.

The competition starts with qualifying rounds featuring the lower division teams, with the higher ranked clubs slotting in at the advanced stages based on

11TH ISL EDITION TO BEGIN SEPT 11

New Delhi: The AIFF said Tuesday announced that the 11th edition of the ISL will kick off September 14 and will run till April 30, 2025, while the I-League will be played October 19 to April 30. The senior competition calendar for the 2024-25 season, will begin with the Duran Cup, Asia's oldest tournament, scheduled from July 26 to August 31. The Indian Women's League will be played October 25, 2024-April 30, 2024.

league hierarchy.

The Super Cup, organised by the AIFF, is open to all ISL and I-League clubs, the top two division of the domestic league system. The last Super Cup was held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, in January, with 16 clubs competing in the group stage.

All the ISL clubs directly entered in the group stage while the I-League sides played the qualifiers for the four remaining spots. During the group stage, the participating teams were divided into four groups of four teams. They played against each other in a single round-robin format. The team with the most points in a group qualified for the semifinals.

The champion team of the Super Cup will get to play in the AFC Champions League 2, the second tier of the Asian club competition.

NAGAL GUNNING FOR PARIS OLYMPICS SPOT

TENNIS PLAYER HOPING FOR A PLACE AMONG TOP 100 IN WORLD RANKINGS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 6: Ace Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal said Tuesday staying fit and breaking into the top-100 in world rankings will be his focus ahead of the Paris Olympics later this year.

The 26-year-old from Haryana has had his share of brushes with injuries in the past, having missed qualifying for the 2018 US Open due to an injury. In 2021, he suffered a hip injury before undergoing surgery in November of that year.

“Staying fit would be the high-

est priority. The second (goal) would be to play in the Olympics, which would be a nice feeling. But for that, you need to be within the top 100,” Nagal said at the ongoing Chennai Open ATP Challenger event, where he is through to the pre-quarterfinals.

Currently ranked 121 in the ATP singles, Nagal is confident of breaking into the top 100. “It (Olympic qualification) would only be possible if I keep winning the matches. I have to focus on upcoming matches and not wonder about what's going to happen in the next five months because tennis is a very unpredictable sport where anything can happen,” Nagal said. “I like to focus day-by-day and keep short goals and tunnel vision than to keep a large picture. It helps in achieving my targets,” Nagal added.

Playing at the Australian Open was a nice experience as it helped me gain both physically and mentally
SUMIT NAGAL

Hussain lauds ‘magical’ Bumrah

There was nothing that England batters could do feels former skipper

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Feb 6: The magical first innings spell by Jasprit Bumrah was the difference between India and England in the just-concluded second Test, according to former England captain Nasser Hussain. He asserted that the visitors were powerless against the Indian pacer's genius.

Bumrah displayed brilliance with the ball to play a key role in the team's series-levelling 106-run win. He picked up nine wickets, six in the first and three in the second and had match figures of nine for 91, a feat which helped him win the player of the match award.

“I think, really, it was just the magic of (Jasprit) Bumrah that was the difference. He got three wickets in the second innings, but it was that incredible spell in the first innings which blew away England for 253 on a really good, flat pitch,”



Hussain wrote in his column for ‘Sky Sports’.

Hussain felt that England could do nothing but ‘doff their cap’ to the genius of Bumrah. “Sometimes you can be critical of your own team, look at your performances and say, ‘what could we do better?’ But sometimes you also have to just doff your cap to the opposition and say they were touched by genius,” Hussain wrote.

“That's exactly what happened. That spell from Bumrah in England's first innings was genius. Reverse swing, with

his slightly unorthodox action and the way he leans across to the offside, he creates angles,” the former England skipper added.

Bumrah dismissed Joe Root for the eighth time in Test cricket before producing a ripping yorker that bamboozled an in-form Ollie Pope in England's first innings.

“He's all over Joe Root at the moment — he's got him out eight times in Test cricket, and he got Pope with an absolute beauty of an in-swinging yorker. He also bowled Ben Stokes from round the wicket, who dropped his bat in disbelief,” Hussain said. Hussain feels England should be prepared for an even stronger hit-back from the hosts in the remaining three Tests.

“It (series) is set up perfectly, with three Tests to play. I think it will be a tight series but England are going to have to expect India to come back even harder,” he wrote.

Foden hat-trick sinks Brentford

AGENCIES

London, Feb 6: Pep Guardiola said Phil Foden is enjoying his best season at Manchester City after the England international's hat-trick helped the side beat Brentford 3-1 Monday night. It also helped Manchester City to climb to 49 points, two points behind Premier League leaders Liverpool, but with a game in hand.

Neal Maupay fired the Bees in front against the run of play, but there was little doubt over the outcome once Foden levelled in first half stoppage time. Kevin De Bruyne and Erling Haaland then teed up the England international to complete his second career hat-trick after the break.

“He's a guy with a sense of goal,” said Guardiola after Foden took his tally for the season to 14. “I think he is playing his best season since we are together. The incidence of goals and assists, of playing in this central position, are unbelievable,” Guardiola added.