

## INTERIM BUDGET

**₹9,968CR**  
(Total: ₹24,764 crore for FY25) allocated for School and Mass Education department

**₹8,264CR**  
(Total: ₹19,729 crore for FY25) allocated for Health and Family Welfare department

**₹4,470CR**  
(Total: ₹9,330 crore for FY25) allocated for Rural Development department

**₹3,309CR**  
(Total: ₹7,923 crore for FY25) allocated for Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment department

**₹1,368CR**  
(Total: ₹3,096 crore for FY25) allocated for Transport department

## Modi not OBC by birth: Rahul



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jharsuguda, Feb 8:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Thursday claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was not born in an Other Backward Class (OBC) family, and he is 'misleading' people by identifying himself as an OBC.

Gandhi, while making a brief speech here on the third and concluding day of his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' in the state said, "Modi was born in a family that belonged to the general caste."

"Modi ji has been misleading the people by saying that he is an OBC. He was born in a family of the 'Ghanchi' caste, which was included in the OBC list during the BJP government's tenure in Gujarat in 2000. He changed his caste to OBC after becoming the CM of Gujarat. Therefore, Modi ji is not an OBC by birth," he asserted.

Gandhi had earlier in his address claimed that Modi belonged to the 'Teli' caste, but later clarified he meant the 'Ghanchi' caste.

The former Congress president also alleged that the PM will never conduct a caste census in the country, without which social justice cannot be achieved.

# Push for infra, health & edu



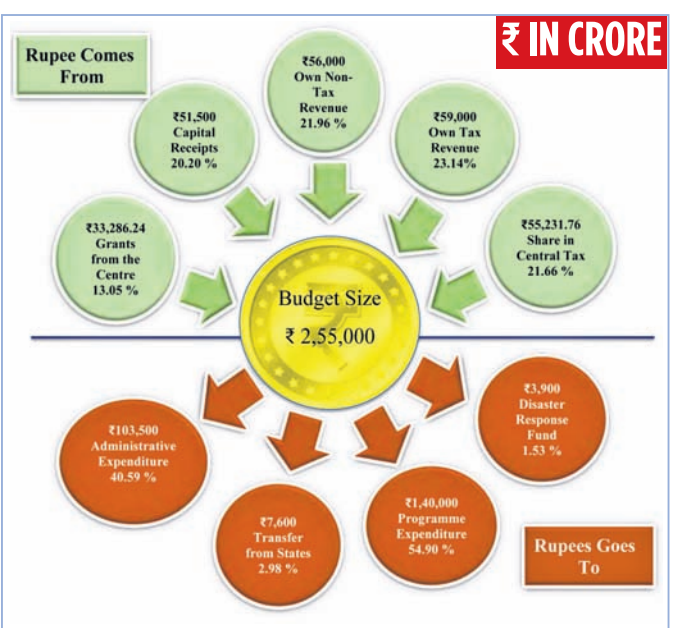
Finance Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha tables the Interim Budget for the first four months of 2024-25 financial year in the state Assembly, Thursday. PHOTO

## FINANCE MINISTER PRESENTS ₹1.18L CRORE VOTE-ON-ACCOUNT AS GOVT EXPECTS ECONOMY TO GROW AT 8.5% AGAINST NATIONAL FIGURE OF 7.3%

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** Noting that Odisha has now become more than a 100 billion dollar economy, Finance Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha Thursday presented an Interim Budget of ₹1.18 lakh crore - for the first four months of the 2024-25 fiscal - in the Assembly that aims at augmenting key sectors like infra, healthcare and education.

The state government has presented a vote-on-account instead of a full Budget in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. The government estimated that the total Budget outlay for the next financial year will be ₹2.55 lakh crore, which is about 11 per cent more than the annual Budget of 2023-24.

"Keeping in view the requirement of funds for expenditure on payment of salary, pension, interest payment, repayment of principal, relief, old age pension, scholarship of ST & SC students and other ongoing scheme and programmes, a sum of ₹1,18,000 crore is proposed in the vote-on-account," the minister said in the House.



Of the total ₹2.55 lakh crore provision, ₹1,03,500 crore has been allocated for administrative expenditure, ₹1,40,000 crore for programme expenditure, ₹3,900 crore for disaster management and ₹7,600 crore for transfer to Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies, Arukha said.

To take the legacy of Lord Jagannath forward, Ama Odisha Nabin Odisha (Our Odisha, New Odisha) has been launched and the government has earmarked more than ₹4,000 crore to implement various initiatives under the scheme, he said.

"Odisha has now become more than a 100 billion dollar economy. Since 2015-16, the state has

registered an average growth of 7.25 per cent, which is about 1 per cent higher than the average growth of the national economy," Arukha said.

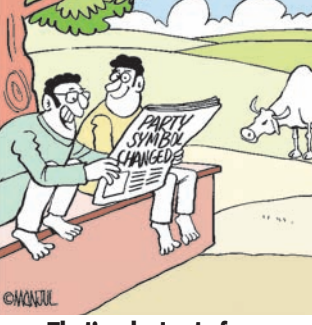
According to advance estimates, it is projected that the state economy will grow at 8.5 per cent compared to 7.3 per cent of the country. Thus, Odisha continues to be a bright spot in the whole country, he pointed out.

On the fiscal status of the state, he said the debt stock at the end of 2024-25 is projected to remain at 13.1 per cent of GSDP against the FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003) mandated level of 25 per cent.

Highlighting major allocations, Arukha said School and Mass Education department was allocated ₹24,764 crore for FY25 (Rs 9,968 crore for first four months), Health and Family Welfare department ₹19,729 crore (Rs 8,264 crore), Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment department ₹7,923 crore (Rs 3,309 crore), Rural Development department ₹9,330 crore (Rs 4,470 crore) and Transport department ₹3,096 crore (₹1,368 crore).

**MORE P4**

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



That's why I vote for a symbol which never changes... symbol '₹'

## 'White Paper' vs 'Black Paper'

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** A 'White Paper' versus 'Black Paper' battle erupted Thursday as the Centre and the Congress unveiled documents and crossed swords over the handling of the economy during the nearly 10 years of the BJP-led NDA rule and the previous 10-year tenure of the Congress-led UPA government.

As the rival multi-party alliances sought to put the spotlight on economic issues just ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a jibe at the Congress for coming out with a 'Black Paper' on the NDA government, calling it a 'kaala teeka' (black dot) that will ward off the evil eye on the achievements of his government.

While the NDA government's 'White Paper' said the Indian economy was on 'road to nowhere' in 2014 because of the multiple wrong turns taken during the UPA rule, the Congress 'Black Paper' highlighted what it called the 'failures' of the Modi government and alleged that the last 10 years have been a period of 'injustice'.

The 'White Paper' tabled in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted the alleged 'economic mismanagement' by the previous UPA government and achievements of the 10 years of NDA rule. The BJP is likely to launch a nationwide campaign around the 'White Paper' as it believes that the issue will resonate with the masses in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls and reinforce its message about the PM's able leadership and the ineptness of the Congress and its allies.

The Centre's 54-page document said the Modi government after assuming power in 2014 took 'tough decisions' to overcome the 'hydra-headed challenges' of runaway fiscal deficit, decision stasis, banking crisis, corruption and scams.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge released a 54-page 'charge sheet' titled '10 saal anyay kaal' (10 years of injustice) just ahead of the government's tabling in Parliament of the 'White Paper' on the 'mismanagement' of the economy prior to 2014 with an aim to draw lessons.

## Tiger found dead in Similipal

**BARIPADA:** The carcass of a tiger was found in Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district, an official said Thursday. The carcass of the male tiger, around 3.5 years old, was found near a nullah in the core area February 5, the reserve's field director Prakash Chand Gogineni said. During patrolling, forest guards found the carcass, and it is suspected that the death happened two days before being found, he said. "We informed the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF) about the incident February 6," he said. The post-mortem examination has been completed, Gogineni said. Samples from the carcass were sent to different laboratories for testing, he said.

## Uddhav's aide shot dead

**MUMBAI:** Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) leader Abhishek Ghosalkar was shot dead during a Facebook live by local social activist Mauris Noronha in Mumbai, Thursday, police said, adding that Noronha also ended his life by shooting self. Ghosalkar, a former corporator, succumbed to bullet injuries at a hospital in north Mumbai. A viral video of the incident showed Ghosalkar being shot in the abdomen and shoulder as he was live on Facebook with Noronha. Sounds of three other shots being fired are also heard in the clip. Both had 'personal emphy' but the Facebook live was to clarify that they have come together ending their bitterness for the betterment of the IC Colony area in Borivali, an official said.

## WEATHER

BBSR	CTC
Max Temp 29.2°C	27.6°C
Min Temp 20.9°C	20.5°C
Humidity 83%	78%
Rainfall Nil	Nil

FORECAST  
DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY

## Radio stn on standby as 200-ft tower stolen

**Washington, Feb 8:** A radio station in US's Alabama is on standby after thieves made off with a 200-foot steel tower from its campus a few days back, the New York Post reported.

According to WJLX station general manager Brett Elmore, he learned of the theft Friday when a landscaping crew went to the rural tower site to maintain the property, but there was not much left to maintain. The station general man-



ager explained, "When he (a crew member) arrived, he called me Friday and said that the tower is gone."

"What do you mean the tower is gone? Are you sure you are at the right place?"

Brett asked the crew member, who replied, "The tower is gone. There is wire everywhere, and it is gone."

In a Facebook post, Brett said that thieves dismantled the tower by cutting the wires that secured the tower and also stole other equipment from the property.

"I have tried all weekend to figure it out, and I just can't," he said.

"I've been in the radio business, around it all my life and then in it professionally for 26 years, and I can say I have never heard of anything like this," he said, adding, "I can say I've seen it all now." According to the station general manager, the radio station will work to rebuild the tower. "But I want thieves to know — loud and clear — that we will work with investigators to find out who committed the puzzling federal crime," he said.

"This really hurts a small operation like this, but like I said, I believe we will find out who did this," Brett said, adding, "It's a federal crime and it absolutely will not be worth it to them."

VITEEE 2024  
B.Tech. Admissions  
APPLY NOW

Learn, Believe, Lead and be the

# CHANGE

BECOME PART OF OUR GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF STUDENTS

**A++ Grade**  
IN THE 4<sup>TH</sup> CYCLE

**601-800**

**8<sup>TH</sup> BEST**  
UNIVERSITY

**WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS**  
ASIA | 2024  
**RANKED #163**

**HIGHEST CTC**  
₹1.02 Cr.  
HIGHEST CTC OFFERED FOR 2023 BATCH

**OVERALL OFFERS**  
14,565

**45 Diverse UG Engineering Programmes**

- Aerospace • Biotechnology • Chemical Engineering • Civil Engineering • Computer Science and Engineering
- Electrical and Electronics Engineering • Electronics and Communication Engineering
- Fashion Technology • Mechanical Engineering

**Option for minor/specialisation credentials in emerging areas**

- AI • Machine Learning • Robotics • Data Science • Cyber Security • IoT and more...

www.vit.ac.in | ugadmission@vit.ac.in

FOR ENQUIRIES +91-44-462 77 555

vituniversity | VIT\_univ | VITUniversityVellore

vellore\_vit | vellore-institute-of-technology

VIT VELLORE, CHENNAI

VIT-AP UNIVERSITY

VIT BHO PAL

# leisure



## MILEY, MORANDO LIVING TOGETHER

Singer-songwriter Miley Cyrus and her boyfriend Maxx Morando seem to have taken a big step forward. The *Flowers* singer, and the *Lilly* drummer, are living together, reports *People* magazine.

## BRITNEY'S SENSATIONAL CLAIM ABOUT AFFLECK

Britney Spears has posted a throwback photo of herself and Ben Affleck from the summer of 1999 -- a time during which she claims they locked lips. She writes, "Cool pic of me and Ben !!! He's an amazing actor. Did I fail to mention I made out with Ben that night."



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Sush stresses on breaking routine

**Mumbai:** Actress Sushmita Sen, who is set to return in *Aarya Antim Vaar*, recently addressed queries about her 8-year break post *No Problem* in 2010 and expressed that she did not feel she missed out on films during that period. Instead, she reflected on the quality of work she had been doing before the break, describing it as 'really bad.'



"Sometimes you have to stop the autopilot in your life." The actress made a conscious decision to step back, stating that none of the scripts or projects excited her. She decided to explore other avenues, refusing to continue with work that lacked passion, inspiration, or purpose. The actress admitted, "I don't want to waste six months of my life just because everyone else was doing it." During the break, she became a mother for the second time with the arrival of her daughter Alisah. Sen also dedicated time to managing a jewellery store and overseeing the Indian franchise of Miss Universe, showcasing her diverse interests and responsibilities.

On the work front, Sushmita's *Aarya Antim Vaar* is set to release on OTT February 9. **Bhubaneswar:** The International Theatre Festival of India, also known as Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM), organised by the National School of Drama (NSD) - New

## BHARAT RANG MAHOTSAV - DAY 1 Taj Mahal Ka Tender exposes bureaucratic evils



A scene from the play performed at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Thursday

**Bhubaneswar:** The International Theatre Festival of India, also known as Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM), organised by the National School of Drama (NSD) - New

Delhi, kicked off here at Rabindra Mandap with the Hindi play *Taj Mahal Ka Tender*. Written by Ajay Shukla and directed by NSD Director Chittaranjan Tripathy, the play

was presented by the Repertory Company from Delhi.

The plot revolves around Moghul ruler Shah Jahan who emerges from past and seeks to build the Taj Mahal in the present. He appoints a CPWD engineer to erect the memorial. The engineer and his colleagues delays the project they see it as an opportunity to make money. The tender for the Taj Mahal's construction takes around 25 years to float. Shah Jahan's dream monument is not erected, but the engineer does manage to construct a few structures including a shopping mall. While waiting for a mausoleum, the emperor dies.

Among the dignitaries Odia Language, Literature and Culture Director Dilip Kumar Routray, Kadambini Editor Iti Samant, OFDC Chairman Kuna Tripathy, director Subash Das and Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi Secretary Prabodh Rath were present on the occasion.

## AYUSHMANN advocates for safe digital space

**Mumbai:** Taking the lead in advocating for a safe digital space for children, actor Ayushmann Khurrana has improved the safety of internet users in general.

"The internet is a powerful tool, and we need to ensure that children can make the best use of it. They can use the internet to learn about the world, discover new hobbies, advance their skills, explore job opportunities, and harness its potential safely and securely," he said in a statement.

"The rise of smartphones and social media has led to an increase in online trolling, which often adversely affects children's mental health and self-esteem. It is important that we educate and sensitize our children on ways to maintain online hygiene - to not only stay protected from trolling and bullying but to also refrain from being an online troll/bully. It is of utmost importance to ensure that our children are empowered enough to approach their trusted adult whether it's a parent, family member, or teacher if they are being trolled online," the *Vicky Donor* actor said.

On the work front, Ayushmann was last seen in *Dream Girl 2*.



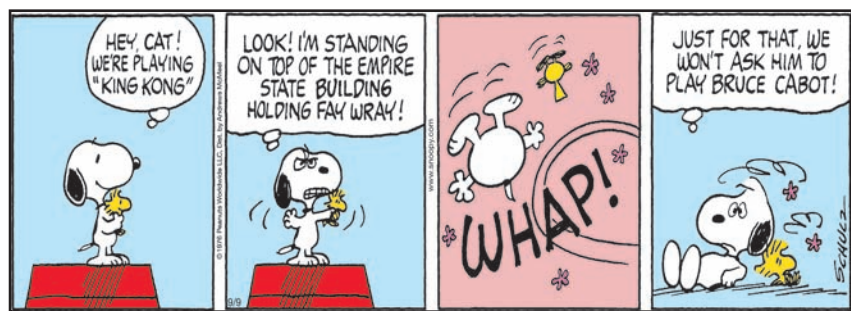
**Mumbai:** Actress Rasika Dugal, who is awaiting the release of her upcoming film *Fairy Folk*, feels that working on an improvised film brings absolute delight to an actor as they get to push the envelope of their craft.

**'Working on a quality film an actor's delight'**

*Fairy Folk*, which is an evocative film about human relationships, garnered a lot of positive response at the Sydney Film Festival, the Chicago International Film Festival, the MAMI Film Festival, and the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne. Sharing her opinion, the actress said in a statement, "Working on an improvised film is an actor's delight. This style of shooting gave us the room to explore the many odd things that people do and say when they find themselves in unprecedented situations—the beautiful oddities that sometimes get lost in the need to write a 'logical' script. It was so much fun to play off skilled improvisers. This is the kind of film that is a must-have in the life of an actor."

*Fairy Folk*, which also stars Rasika's husband, Mukul Chadda, and has been directed by Karan Gour, is set to have its theatrical release in India March 1.

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

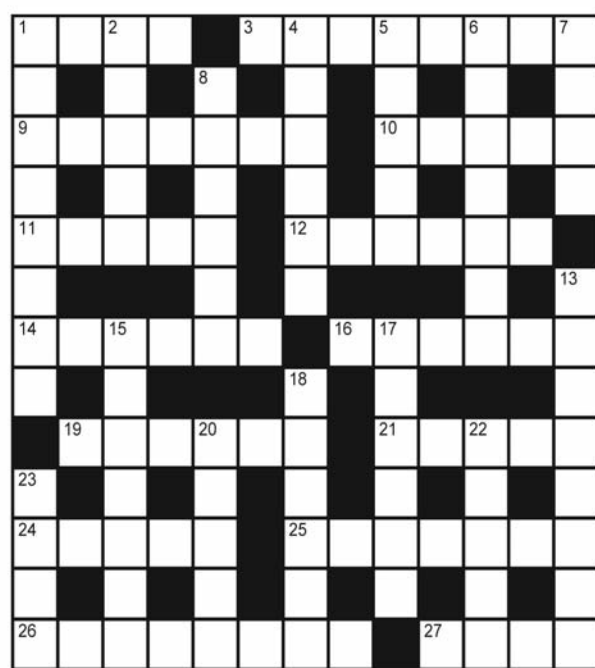


### BREVITY



### FUN post

### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Baby elephant
  - 3 Mainstay
  - 9 Type of weapons
  - 10 Express
  - 11 Levels
  - 12 Oration
  - 14 Baggage handler
  - 16 Flowering shrub
  - 19 Stain
  - 21 Excuse
  - 24 Farewell
- Down**
- 25 Like a romantic evening, maybe
  - 26 Unequivocal
  - 27 Decant
  - 1 Scorn
  - 2 Ill-gotten gains
  - 4 Means of escape
  - 5 Boozer
  - 6 Visual
  - 7 Nobleman
  - 8 Tenant
  - 13 Sugar holder
  - 15 Preserves
  - 17 Fanatic
  - 18 Chunky rodent
  - 20 Thin porridge
  - 22 Eskimo residence
  - 23 Spanish sparkling white wine

### 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.

2	6		9	1	4			
	7							
			7		6			
9	1	7						2
		9	8	3				
4			5	7				
	3	9						2
	6							
			1		5			

### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD

T	E	Q	U	I	L	A	S	H	R	U	B
O	U	C	E	V	M	O	B	A			
D	I	O	C	E	S	E	B	O	N	Y	
T	O	T	D	N	L	F	O				
S	H	A	F	T	G	E	L	A	T	I	N
F	A	C	I	A	L	P	U	P	P	E	T
O	U	A	L	H	S						
R	I	S	S	O	L	E	U	N	T	I	E
E	T	T	A	A	E	B					
S	W	A	T	H	P	U	L	L	T	A	B
E	L	D	E	R	E	L	R	A	N	D	
E	L	D	E	R	D	R	E	A	D		

#### SUDOKU

9	6	1	8	3	7	2	5	4
7	5	8	9	2	4	1	3	6
4	3	2	1	5	6	9	8	7
1	7	5	4	9	3	6	2	8
2	8	9	6	7	1	5	4	3
6	4	3	2	8	5	7	1	9
5	9	7	3	1	8	4	6	2
3	2	6	5	4	9	8	7	1
8	1	4	7	6	2	3	9	5

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# LaccMI: Connecting people, augmenting life & livelihood

**I**n a bid to ensure sustainable, affordable, assured and safe transportation of passengers across rural Odisha, the state government, under the visionary leadership of hon'ble Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, has launched affordable bus service under Location Accessible Multimodal Initiative (LaccMI).

The state government plans to operate 1,623 buses in rural areas under LaccMI, the ambitious initiative that aims at connecting all gram panchayats, block headquarters, district headquarters, major cities and economic hubs across Odisha.

The hon'ble CM launched the initiative with the flagging off of 36 buses in Malkangiri district on October 12, 2023, in the presence of Chairman 5T and Nabin Odisha Kartik Pandian. The buses connect all the 111 gram panchayats with the district headquarters. The buses, under the initiative, also ply to Bonda Ghati, the home of PVTG (particularly vulnerable tribal group) people in the district.



**LaccMI is likely to transform our rural transport system. The buses will now connect from one village to another, improve social bonding and strengthen the rural economy**

NAVEEN PATNAIK |  
HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER

with the 10 blocks in the district. The hon'ble CM launched the service in Koraput district on December 14. 63 state-of-the-art buses were flagged off to connect 234 panchayats of the district, benefiting 13 lakh people.

The affordable bus service was extended to Deogarh, Angul and Dhenkanal districts on January 31. A total of 101 buses—17 in Deogarh, 29 in Angul and 55 in Dhenkanal—were made operational in these three districts that will connect 440 panchayats to the block headquarters. It will benefit more than 27 lakh people.



## Bring home LaccMI

- Promotes affordable and sustainable transportation
- Focus on providing mobility in rural areas
- Dependable and economically priced public transport
- Initially aims to provide intra-block and intra-district connectivity
- Plan for future to integrate with inter-city services
- Bridges rural-urban divide
- Empowers women, students, farmers and entrepreneurs
- Enables socio-economic development of rural areas
- 5 Star comfort

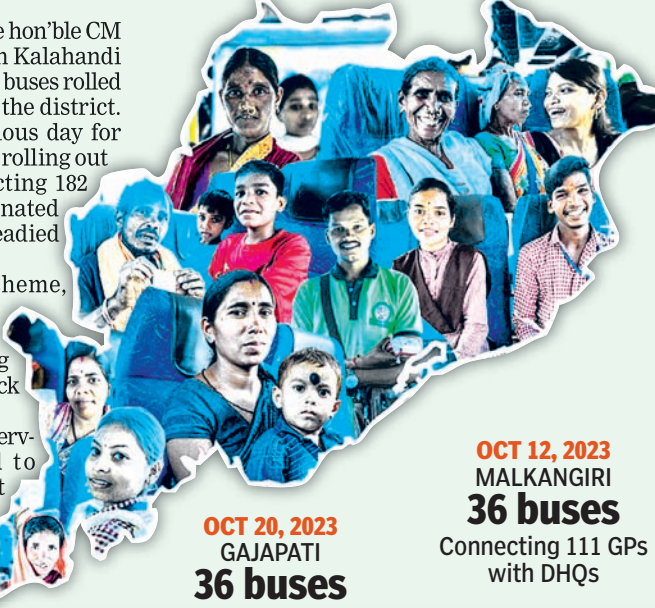
The service was extended to Gajapati district on October 20 when the hon'ble CM flagged off 36 buses in the tribal-dominated district. The buses connect 126 gram panchayats and seven blocks in Gajapati with the district headquarters of Parlakhemundi. At least 69 new bus stops have been built, while 64 have been renovated for the purpose.

It was November 1 last year when the hon'ble CM launched the affordable bus service in Kalahandi district. Under the initiative, at least 63 buses rolled out, connecting all the panchayats of the district.

November 25, 2023 was an auspicious day for Rayagada residents as they witnessed rolling out of at least 52 LaccMI buses, connecting 182 gram panchayats in the tribal-dominated district. The state government has readied 300 bus stops for the purpose.

Under provisions of the scheme, women, students and persons with disabilities will pay Rs 5 bus fare for travelling from their villages to block headquarters.

The ambitious bus service was extended to Nabarangpur district on November 30. In the first phase, 44 buses will connect all 44 panchayats



**JAN 31, 2024**  
DEOGARH, ANGUL & DHENKANAL  
**101 buses**  
Connecting 440 GPs to DHQs

**NOV 1, 2023**  
KALAHANDI  
**63 buses**  
Touching all GPs

**NOV 25, 2023**  
RAYAGADA  
**52 buses**  
Connecting 182 GPs

**NOV 30, 2023**  
NABARANGPUR  
**44 buses**  
Connecting 44 panchayats with 10 blocks

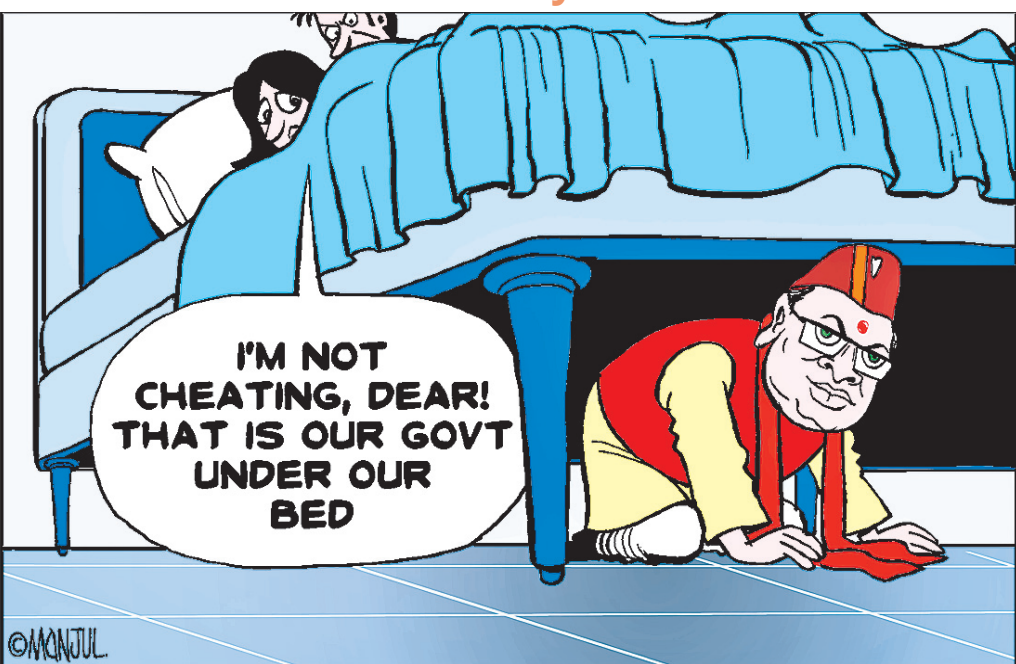
**DEC 14, 2023**  
KORAPUT  
**63 buses**  
Connecting 234 panchayats of district

CITY

BUS STOP



**POLITICKLE** by MANJUL



**NAVEEN FLAGS OFF PILGRIMAGE TRAIN**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik virtually flagged off a pilgrimage train carrying senior citizens under the Baristha Nagarika Tirtha Yatra Yojana (BNTYY) from the railway station here, Thursday. This is the 8th year of BNTYY pilgrimage scheme launched by the state government in 2016-17. This trip was approved during 2023-24 under which a total of 1,000 (960 pilgrims along with 40 escort officers) from Khurda, Cuttack, Puri, Kendrapara, Jagatsingpur and Dhenkanal districts will visit Tirupati-Vellore. The scheme enables the poor and deprived senior citizens for realisation of their life-long dream of having one Tirtha Yatra (Pilgrimage), with the support of the government.

**₹1,314CR FOR HOSP TRANSFORMATION**

An outlay of ₹5,450 crore has been proposed for Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana in the Budget, while ₹529 crore allocated for 'Mission Shakti Scooter Yojana' and ₹1,449 crore for disbursement of scholarship to 14.86 lakh ST, SC and OBC students

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** The state government has set an ambitious target for transformation of 1,858 healthcare facilities within a period of five years with an investment of ₹3,389 crore. An outlay of ₹1,314 crore has been proposed for the purpose in the Budget for 2024-25, Finance Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha said. Similarly, an outlay of ₹5,450 crore has been proposed for Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) in the Budget while ₹ 529 crore allocated for Mission Shakti Scooter Yojana, and ₹1,449 crore for disbursement of scholarships to 14.86 lakh ST, SC and OBC students.



The state government has allocated ₹1,050 crore for Skill Development sector and ₹21,004 crore towards infra development, like roads, bridges, airports and railways, including ₹1,000 crore for metro rail - which is 25 per cent higher than the allocations last year, the minister said. Arukha said the Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa (Jagannath Temple Heritage Corridor project) is a milestone in the annals of history of Odisha and the world. "We have also dedicated the SAMALEI project (redevelop-

**12mn children, women to undergo deworming**

AGENCIES

ment of Samaleswari Temple in Sambalpur district) within a record time. Establishment of a new campus of Odia University at Satyabadi and organisation of the 1st World Odia Bhasha Sammilani are important steps in growth of Odia language, literature and culture," he said. Stating that preservation and protection of these monuments is essential for the future generation, the Finance minister said, "We are taking up about 150 projects under the ABADHA scheme to be completed by 2025-26 with a massive investment of ₹1,400 crore." On the fiscal status of the state, he said the debt stock at the end of 2024-25 is projected to remain at 13.1 per cent of GSDP against the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003 mandated level of 25 per cent. Similarly, the interest payment to revenue receipt ratio is projected to remain at 3.7 per cent against the FRBM prescribed level of 15 per cent, he added. **Nothing on employment: BJP** Opposition Chief Whip and senior BJP leader Mohan Charan Majhi said the Interim Budget has nothing to meet the problems of unemployment. "There is no point in claiming a revenue surplus budget while 2.5 lakh posts remain vacant for years," Majhi said.



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

cial village health sanitation and nutrition day during the same period. Addressing the media here, Bijaya Kumar Panigrahi, Director Family Welfare, informed, "During NDD, the children aged 6 to 19 years and women of reproductive age between 20 and 24 years will be provided with Albendazole tablet while children aged 1 to 5 years will be administered age-appropriate Albendazole suspension at respective schools and anganwadi centres facilitated by teachers, Anganwadi and ASHA workers." "In some of identified blocks of seven districts i.e. Bolangir, Cuttack, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Khurda, Nayagarh and Rayagada, where Filariasis doses are administered, the children between 1 and 2 years of age will only be covered under NDD," said Panigrahy. All schools and Anganwadi centres will be the implementation sites of the NDD.

**Parl nod to amend SC, ST lists in Odisha & AP**

THE FIRST BILL SEEKS TO MODIFY THE LIST OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN ANDHRA PRADESH WHILE THE SECOND ONE SEEKS TO MODIFY THE LIST OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES IN ODISHA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** Parliament gave its nod to two bills which seek to modify the list of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, with Lok Sabha passing it with voice vote, Thursday. The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024, and the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024 were both passed by Rajya Sabha, Tuesday. The first bill seeks to modify the list of Scheduled Tribes in Andhra Pradesh while the second one seeks to modify the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Odisha. Replying to the debate on the bills, Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Bharti P Pawar said the Modi government has done a lot for the upliftment of tribal peo-



ple including its effort to make aspirational district to inspirational one. Moreover, the government has also launched schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), she said. In Andhra Pradesh, three more ethnic groups — Bondo Porja, Khond Porja and Parangiperja — are being added

Scheduled Tribes, saying piecemeal measures would not help. Initiating the debate, Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka of the Congress welcomed the bill but pointed out that about 150 to 200 tribes have been added to the list of Scheduled Tribes in the past five years. "There are around 12 crore Scheduled Tribes across the country. When we were in government, there used to be a procedure, where a JPC was constituted. MPs were part of it," Ulaka said. "In the last four-five years, I think we have included almost 150 to 200 tribes in Scheduled Tribes. In Odisha, anyone who comes demanding ST status, the state government sends it to the Central government. "They have sent around 180 tribes to be considered as ST. This naturally raises a concern if the demands are genuine or not," he said, and added a JPC should look into the issue.

**Notification issued for 3 RS seats in Odisha**

**Bhubaneswar:** The formal notification for election to the three Rajya Sabha seats in Odisha was issued Thursday, marking the beginning of the process for filing of nominations. As per the notification, the polling will be held February 27 between 9am and 4pm in Odisha Assembly premises and the counting of votes will be conducted on the very day at 5pm. The last date for filing of nominations is February 15, the notification said, adding that the election process will be completed before February 29. Three MPs, two from ruling BJD - Prashanta Nanda and Amar Patnaik and BJP's Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, will complete their tenure in Rajya Sabha in April this year necessitating the conduct of fresh elections to fill the vacant posts, an official said. In 2019 Rajya Sabha polls, the ruling BJD supported Vaishnav. As per the present strength in the Odisha Assembly, BJD has 111 MLAs (three expelled) while BJP has 22 members and nine lawmakers belong to Congress. The House has one Independent MLA and a MLA from CPI(M).

**5 from Bihar held for ganja smuggling**

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** Excise department sleuths Thursday claimed to have busted an interstate drug syndicate by arresting five men and seized 30 kg marijuana from their possession. The accused, all from Bihar, had plans to escape to their state by train when the police intercepted them near Baramunda ISBT. The action comes in the backdrop of Excise Commissioner's assertions a few days ago that Bhubaneswar topped the list for consumption of brown sugar and marijuana among places in the state. The commissioner had highlighted the department's plans to increase surveillance



in sensitive zones of the City to curb drug consumption. Excise inspector Bikash Kumar Nayak stated that the arrested accused had sourced the marijuana consignment from Kandhamal district and had plans to sell it at several dance bars in Bihar. "Due to ongoing restrictions by Bihar government on manufacture and sale of alcohol, marijuana consumption is increasing by the day," he added. Adding further details about

the gang's operation, a senior official said the accused boarded a bus from Kandhamal to Bhubaneswar to avoid police glare. The sleuths, however, got a tip-off about their movement and lay in waiting near the bus terminal. As the bus approached the area, the sleuths in mufti confronted the accused about the contraband and asked them about the costs involved in the trade. When the accused failed to give satisfactory answers to the queries posed by the policemen, they were swiftly rounded up and taken into custody, he added. Those arrested were found to have been involved in smuggling marijuana consignments from Odisha to Bihar earlier, said the Excise department sources.

**CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT**

I, Bibhuti Behera, S/o-Rabindra Behera, resident of ward No.-1, Kandagadia, P.O.-Pariorada, P.S.-Tangi, Dist.-Khordha, PIN-752023, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.-197 dtd. 06.02.24 that now onwards I shall be known as BIBHUTI BHUSAN BEHERA for all future purposes.

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** In a first of its kind, cardiologists at the Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) have performed a complex procedure called MitraClip to clip leaking heart valve of a 70-year-old female patient. The patient had suffered severe heart failure due to leakage in the mitral valve, one of four valves in the heart that help the blood keep flowing in the right direction. As she was considered 'very high risk' for a surgical valve replacement, the lady was instead recommended the MitraClip method.



"The mitral valve controls blood flow between the lower left heart chamber (ventricle) and the upper left heart chamber (atrium). In case of mitral valve regurgitation, the mitral

valve doesn't close properly, causing leakage. This leakage means the heart has to work harder to pump blood through the body, which can cause atrial fibrillation (AFib) or heart failure," explained a doctor from the hospital. Though the MitraClip procedure hadn't been conducted in Odisha before, doctors at KIMS, led by assistant professor Anupam Jena from the Department of Cardiac Science, carried out the procedure, saving the woman's life. "MitraClip offers significant benefits over open-heart surgery. Patients typically recover more quickly, spending less time

in the hospital and experiencing fewer complications. Patients also report less pain following catheter-based procedures," said the doctor. The doctor informed that MitraClip is a small device that is used to stop leakage in the mitral valve. "It is placed on the mitral valve in a minimally invasive procedure through a small puncture in the groin. It is also called transcatheter edge-to-edge repair (TEER). No need to open the chest," he said. Earlier, KIMS had also performed the Transcatheter Mitral Valve Replacement (TMVR) procedure for the first time in the State to repair the damaged valve.

**Govt urges stakeholders to explore real Odisha**

**Konark:** During the Business-to-Government (B2G) meeting held under the 5th Odisha Travel Bazaar 2024 at Eco Retreat, Konark Thursday, government officials emphasised the need to diversify tourism offerings. They urged investors to visit lesser-explored places, fostering a connection with the real Odisha. The government is open to suggestions, aiming to make its tourism policy more vibrant and inclusive. To support investors, the state is undergoing significant infrastructure developments, including new airports, roads, and hotels in various parts of Odisha. This initiative is aimed at creating a robust foundation for the growth of tourism beyond the conventional destinations.

**FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS**

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech-Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

Wrong injection takes pregnant woman's life

POST NEWS NETWORK

Titilagarh, Feb 8: The death of a woman due to alleged administration of a wrong injection sparked tension Thursday at the Titilagarh Mother and Child Hospital (MCH) in Bolangir district.

The deceased was identified as Binodini Chhatar, 24, wife of Bimal Chhatar of Sihini village under this police limits. The family members blamed the hospital authorities for the death of Binodini. They alleged that she died after being administered a wrong drug through injection.

However, police reached the spot and managed to defuse the situation after holding talks with the irate family members and villagers, informed SDPO Ankita Kumbhar and Titilagarh police station IIC Ababni Sahu. Later, the body was handed over to the family members after conducting a post-mortem.

The irate family members rented after they were handed ₹10,000 from the district Red Cross fund and ₹3,000 under 'Harishchandra Sahayata Yojana' from the local panchayat. Binodini is survived by her two-year-old daughter and her labourer husband. Meanwhile, in a separate development, local sarpanch Birabar Sahu demanded ₹5 lakh financial assistance for the bereaved family from the Chief Minister's relief fund.

Family members informed that Binodini was admitted to the MCH, February 2 where she delivered a stillborn the same day. However, the placenta failed to come out. The next day doctors at the hospital conducted a sur-



REPRESENTATIONAL PIC

gery and pulled out the placenta. Since then, she was undergoing treatment at the hospital and doctors had said she would be discharged Thursday. They said a nurse gave Binodini an injection early morning, Thursday. However, her condition started deteriorating once the injection was administered. On being informed, a gynaecologist residing inside the hospital premises rushed to the ward but by then Binodini had already breathed her last.

When contacted, medical officer Dr Pradip Kumar Sahu of Titilagarh sub-divisional hospital said that further steps will be taken after conducting a probe. He assured that disciplinary action will be taken if anyone is found to have administered the wrong drug to the deceased.

Mother-daughter duo killed in road mishap

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Feb 8: Two women were killed Thursday after the car in which they were travelling to Bhubaneswar overturned after being hit from the rear by a speeding car. The mishap took place on Cuttack-Sambalpur old highway near Khandahata ice factory under Sadar police limits in Angul district.

The deceased were identified as Sanjukta Pradhan, 58, a senior clerk at the district panchayat office in Angul and her mother Durgabati Pradhan, 70. Police and Fire services personnel rushed them to the hospital where doctors pronounced them brought dead.

The mother-daughter duo was travelling in the car to attend the post-death rituals of a relative in Bhubaneswar. A co-passenger Swarnamayee Pradhan, who is also the sister-in-law of the deceased Sanjukta and a stenographer posted at the ADM office, sustained critical injuries along with the car driver.

Swarnamayee and the car driver have been admitted to the district headquarters hospital and undergoing treatment. The condition of Swarnamayee is stated to be critical.

The driver of the accident causing car and two occupants fled the scene leaving behind the vehicle after the accident. Sadar police seized the two cars and launched an investigation, IIC Dhiren Behera said.



SUNDARGARH TEAMS EMERGE CHAMPIONS



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 8: Sundargarh men's and women's teams emerged champions in the state-level hockey championships conducted under the 'Nua-O Yuba Odisha Nabin Odisha' programme, which concluded here Wednesday evening.

The tournament was played at the Birsa Munda International Hockey Stadium here. Teams from Khurda finished runners-up in both the categories.

In the women's final Sundargarh defeated Khurda 7-1 while the men's summit clash was a tighter affair with Sundargarh win-

ning 3-2. The women's final was completely dominated by the Sundargarh girls. Only a consolation goal by Khurda in the middle of the fourth quarter saved them from utter embarrassment.

In the men's final, Sundargarh were the dominant team, but they failed to utilise the chances that came their way. Had they done so, the scoreline would have been similar to that of the women's final. In the last quarter Sundargarh had a look at the opposition goal on four occasions, but failed to convert.

Padma Shri and Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey was the chief guest on the concluding day. He presented cheques of ₹2 lakh to the men's and women's teams. The runners-up teams got ₹1 lakh each.

In the women's final captain of the Sundargarh team Jiban Kisori Toppo got the player of the match award while Khurda goalie was adjudged the same honour for the men's summit clash.



15 BENGAL TOURISTS INJURED IN ACCIDENT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasure, Feb 8: 15 tourists from West Bengal suffered injuries when the bus they were travelling in met with an accident on NH-60 in Balasure district Thursday, police said.

The bus carrying 65 passengers was on the way to Bankura in Bengal's Birbhum district from Puri when it hit a truck while overtaking it near Nidhipanda in Balasure district, police said.

The passengers, majority of whom sustained minor injuries, were taken to Balasure district headquarters hospital. They were discharged later in the day after first aid.

Officials of the Balasure district administration made arrangements to send the passengers back to Bengal in another bus, police informed. Passengers informed that the driver lost control of the vehicle due to a punctured tire leading to the collision.



IGH INSTALLS MODERN ENDOSCOPY MACHINE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 8: Ispat General Hospital (IGH) belonging to SAIL and run by the Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) has introduced a state-of-the-art capsule endoscopy machine. With the installation of the machine, SAIL and RSP have kept their commitment to provide advanced healthcare facilities to all. Dr BK Hota, ED (M&HS) unveiled the sophisticated machine at the endoscopy room of the hospital. Dr NP Sahoo, CMO, (Anaesthesia department), Dr LK Biswal, CMO (Orthopaedics department), Dr P K Mohapatra, CMO (Medicine department), many other eminent doctors and staff of the hospital were present during the unveiling ceremony. The cutting-edge device marks a significant advancement in diagnostic capabilities, offering a non-invasive and painless method for imaging the digestive system with unprecedented clarity. Patients undergoing this procedure will simply have to swallow a small capsule equipped with a miniature camera. As the capsule traverses the digestive system, it captures high-resolution images, enabling the medical team to assess and diagnose various gastrointestinal conditions with precision.

With the introduction of the capsule endoscopy machine, IGH remains in the forefront as far as providing technologically advanced medical facilities is concerned.

EAST COAST RAILWAY File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/23-24/E-Tender/127 Dtd. 05.02.2024 (1) Tender No: e-Tender-SpIKUR-408-2023 Dtd. 25.01.2024 DESCRIPTION: PROPOSED RAISING OF PFS FROM LOW LEVEL TO HIGH LEVEL AT BARUA AND SUMMADEVI RAILWAY STATIONS UNDER DEM(SOUTH) OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION. Approx Cost of the work (₹) 433.03 Lakh, EMD (₹): 3,66,500/-, Completion period: 12 (Twelve) Months.

ASKA SCIENCE COLLEGE, ASKA At/P.O.: Nuagam, Dist.: Ganjam, Odisha - 761111 (NAAC ACCREDITED WITH B++ GRADE)

It is hereby informed to all concerned that Sri Saswat Mishra, Ex-Lecturer in English of Aska Science College, Aska, was relieved in absentia from Aska Science College, Aska w.e.f. 03.02.2024 FN vide Letter No. 304/24 Date: 03.02.2024 in pursuance to the Letter No. 4573 Date: 02.02.2024 of the Department of Higher Education, Govt. of Odisha. As Sri Saswat Mishra was absent in the College on 02.02.2024, the relieve order was sent to him through E-Mail and by Registered and Speed Post to the home address of Sri Saswat Mishra mentioned in his official Service Book. However, the Speed Post was returned undelivered due to "Door Locked". Thus, Sri Saswat Mishra, is hereby informed once again that he has been already relieved w.e.f. 03.02.2024 FN from Aska Science College, Aska vide the Letter No. 304/24 Date: 03.02.2024, which has already been communicated to him through his E-Mail.

FORM No. 13 BEFORE THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, CUTTACK, ORISSA C-71, SECTION - 7, CDA, CUTTACK, ODISHA ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 393 OF 2023

UCO Bank, Cuttack Main Branch ...Applicant Versus M/s. V.S. Overseas (HUF) & Others ...Defendants To D-1. M/s. V.S. Overseas (HUF), Proprietor: Vishal Kamani, S/o: Shiv Kumar Kamani, At: Plot No.: 38/707, CDA, Sector-8, Markat Nagar, Cuttack, Odisha-753014. B) Godown at Naranpur, Plot No.: 72/734, Khata No.: 28, P.O.: Baranga, Cuttack-754005, Odisha.

SUMMONS BY PAPER PUBLICATION FOR SHOWING CAUSE AS TO WHY THE RELIEF PRAYED SHOULD NOT BE GRANTED Take notice that the applicant has instituted an O.A. No. 393/2023 in the court of the Debts of Recovery Tribunal, Cuttack for recovery of Rs. 87,45,955/- only together with current and future interest, costs and other reliefs. The above mentioned defendants are therefore, directed to appear before this tribunal in person or through an Advocate or duly authorized agent, in support of their defense to show cause within 30 days from the date of publication or on 05/04/2024 at 10.30 a.m. as to why reliefs prayed for should not be granted.

Take notice that in case of default, the application will be heard and determined in their absence. Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on this 7th day of Feb 2024. Sd/- (N.R.Pati) REGISTRAR Debts Recovery Tribunal, Cuttack

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, BHANDARIPOKHARI At/P.O.: Bhandaripokhari, Dist.: Bhadrak, PIN - 756120 e-mail: ori-bhandaripokhari@nic.in INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) BID IDENTIFICATION NO. 1/2024-25, Dt.09.02.2024

Table with 5 columns: Sl. No., Name of the Project, Amount put to Tender, EMD, Time for Completion, Class of Contractor, Cost of Document. Contains 5 entries for construction of office buildings with Market Complex for GPLF Building at various locations (Nereda GP, Napanga GP, Dakhinabada GP, Tesiga GP, Bishnupur GP).

1. Date & Time: 10 A.M. of 09.02.2024 to 5 P.M. of 18.02.2024 2. Last Date: Upto 5 P.M. of 18.02.2024 3. Time of Opening: 11 A.M. of 19.02.2024 4. Name and Address: Block Development Officer, Bhandaripokhari, Bhadrak Further details can be seen from the website portal https://bhadrak.nic.in/. The interested bidders can contact office of the Block Development Officer, Bhandaripokhari, Dist.: Bhadrak, Contact No. 8018221007. Sd/- Block Development Officer, Bhandaripokhari

Indian Bank ZONAL OFFICE: SAMBALPUR 2ND FLOOR, SHYAM ARCADE, KHETRAJPUR, SAMBALPUR - 768003, e-mail: zosambalpur@indianbank.co.in

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE (See proviso to rule 6(2) & 8(6) Sale Notice for sale of property/ies under SARFAESI Act 2002) Sale of Immovable property/ies mortgaged to Bank under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002)

Whereas, the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank had taken possession of the following property/ies pursuant to the notice issued under Sec 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 in the following loan accounts with right to sell the same on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS", "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WITHOUT ANY RECOURSE BASIS" for realization of Bank's dues plus interest as detailed hereunder and whereas consequent upon failure to repay the dues, the undersigned in exercise of power conferred under section 13(4) of the said Act proposes to realize the Bank's dues by sale of the said property/ies. The Sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the Website https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp.

Table with 5 columns: BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrowers / Guarantors / Mortgages, Description of the Immovable Properties, Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession / Outstanding Dues, Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount, Date & Time of E-Auction. Lists multiple properties and guarantors for Sambalpur Branch - 1.

BAREILIPAL BRANCH Mob No.: 9778399766 / Borrower: M/s. Siyaram Agencies, At: Densargi Road, Near B K Sale Corporation, Dist: Sambalpur-768004, Prop. cum Borrower: Mrs. Sikha Sanon, W/o: Gaurav Kumar Sanon, Flat No.: 202-A, 2nd Floor, Kushabhadra Block-A, Greater Sambalpur, Bareipali, Dist.: Sambalpur, PIN-768006 / Guarantor/Mortgagor: Mr. Ram Singh VEDI, S/o: Sri Indar Singh VEDI, At: Contractors Colony, PO./P.S.: Burla, Sambalpur, PIN-768017

DATE AND TIME OF E-AUCTION: 28.02.2024 from 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM with unlimited extension of 10 Minutes duration LAST DATE AND TIME FOR SUBMISSION OF EMD AND DOCUMENTS ON OR BEFORE 27.02.2024 upto 05.30 PM by online Date & Time of Inspection of Properties: 17.02.2024 between 11.00 AM to 4.00 PM (with prior appointment from bank) at their own expenses TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1) For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer to the link: https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp and https://ibapi.in. Prospective bidders may also contact the Authorised Officers / Branch as mentioned in above list, 2) This is a statutory 15 days sale notice to the above mentioned borrowers/guarantors under Rule 9(1) of the SARFAESI Act, 2002, 3) This is a 15 days' notice to the Borrower / Guarantor / Mortgagor of the above said loan about holding of this sale on the above mentioned date, 4) All expenses relating to the stamp duty and registration of Sale Certificate/conveyance, if any, shall be borne by the successful bidder, 5) The Authorised Officer will not be held responsible for any charge, lien, encumbrance, property tax or any other dues to the Government or anybody in respect of the property under sale, 6) The Authorized Officer has the absolute right to accept or reject any bid or adjourn/postpone/cancel the sale without assigning any reason thereof. It may be noted that nothing in this notice constitute or deemed to constitute any commitment or representation on the part of the bank to sell the property. STATUTORY 15 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 9(1) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002. Borrowers/Guarantors/Mortgages are hereby notified to pay the total dues along with up to date interest and ancillary expenses before the date of E-Auction, failing which the property will be auctioned/ sold and balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest & cost. Place: Sambalpur Date: 08.02.2024 Sd/-Authorised Officer Indian Bank

FOCUS TAIWAN

# THE COMING CRISIS



Taiwan was never part of the People's Republic of China. It is a self-governing island that, for most of its history, had no relationship with China and has remained fully outside Chinese control for the last 129 years

precisely what Xi is likely to avoid. Not only does China probably lack the amphibious-assault capability to seize all of Taiwan; a full-scale attack, akin to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, would also be out of character for the country, which has typically preferred quieter, more gradual aggression anchored in stealth, deception, and surprise.

Just as China has made great strides in the South China Sea and the Himalayas with this strategy of incremental expansionism, it will probably use hybrid warfare to squeeze Taiwan. The Chinese military has already simulated the imposition of a quarantine or blockade on the island. China could also announce the "lawful" closure of the Taiwan Strait to foreign vessels or periodically block shipping routes to choke the Taiwanese economy.

As former US Defense Secretary Robert Gates has warned, such measures could, over time, "bring Taiwan to its knees and create huge incentives for Taiwan to have a very different attitude toward China." But the measures are also subtle enough that they are unlikely to elicit a concerted US-led response until it is too late.

A majority of Taiwanese believe that, in the face of a Chinese invasion, the US would abandon them, just as it did in 1979, when it terminated bilateral diplomatic relations and a mutual defence treaty with the island, in order to restore ties with China. If the US were to forsake Taiwan again, the international credibility of US security assurances would lie in tatters, effectively ending America's global preeminence.

The writer is Professor Emeritus of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

The more US President Joe Biden's administration has sought to ease tensions with China through high-level dialogue, the more brazenly Chinese President Xi Jinping has applied coercive pressure to Taiwan. Never was this pattern more obvious than late last month, when China sent 33 warplanes and seven combat ships toward Taiwan, just as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan were holding talks in Bangkok. Fears that Xi will soon launch an even more overt push for "reunification" with Taiwan are rising.



Brahma Chellaney

**FEARS THAT XI WILL SOON LAUNCH AN EVEN MORE OVERT PUSH FOR 'REUNIFICATION' WITH TAIWAN ARE RISING**

Taiwan was never part of the People's Republic of China. It is a self-governing island that, for most of its history, had no relationship with China and has remained fully outside Chinese control for the last 129 years. Even so, Xi has made no secret of his intention to enforce China's claim to the island. In fact, Xi has called "reunification" with Taiwan his "historic mission."

Xi reportedly reaffirmed his intentions to Biden at their recent summit in San Francisco, noting that the only matter left to be decided is when to take over the island. And there are good reasons to believe that the time might be near. With the wars in Ukraine and Gaza claiming America's attention and resources, and the world undergoing a broader geopolitical reconfiguration, Xi might see a window of opportunity. And Taiwanese voters' delivery of a third consecutive presidential term to the pro-sovereignty Democratic Progressive Party has likely bolstered Xi's motivation to assert control over the island.

Already, Xi has been stepping up intrusions into Taiwan's air-defence zone and encircling the island with warships. China has also fired missiles into the waters around the island and carried out large-scale war

games simulating attacks on it. According to a recent survey by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, two-thirds of US experts now believe that a Taiwan Strait crisis is likely this year. In November, the bipartisan US-China Economic and Security Review Commission warned that China is preparing to wage war over Taiwan – and position itself to launch cyberattacks against the United States that would "wreak havoc" during such a conflict.

One might expect the Biden administration to respond to such developments by strengthening deterrence, by both bolstering Taiwan's defences and stating unambiguously that the US has the strategic intent and political will to defend the island against a Chinese attack. Yet there is a \$14 billion backlog in US military sales to Taiwan, with weapons deals announced as long ago as 2017 still unfulfilled. And Biden has repeatedly declared that the US is "not looking for conflict" with China.

Although Biden's policy of engagement with China – including two face-to-face meetings and five virtual talks or phone calls with Xi since 2021 – has so far yielded no dividends, his administration apparently is unwilling to change course. The

result is a paradox: the stronger established power, in attempting to preserve the status quo, is seeking to appease the revisionist power, which continues to expand its frontiers. In the South China Sea, China has turned its contrived historical claims into reality without incurring any international costs.

The ineffectiveness of US-led sanctions against Russia has probably emboldened Xi yet further. If unprecedented Western sanctions cannot bring down Russia's economy, they certainly cannot destroy China's, especially given Chinese countermeasures. Even if the West could crush China economically, doing so would amount to shooting itself in the foot. China's central position in the global economy may well explain why the country has faced no meaningful Western sanctions for maintaining its Xinjiang gulag, where it is holding more than one million Muslim detainees, or for snuffing out Hong Kong's autonomy.

To be sure, when Biden was asked last September whether US forces would defend Taiwan from a Chinese attack, he replied in the affirmative. But he added a caveat: "if, in fact, there was an unprecedented attack." And an "unprecedented attack" is

## Settler Sanctions

On February 1, US President Joe Biden signed an executive order imposing sanctions on four Israeli settlers in the West Bank, where extremist violence and property destruction have been rising. That comes after five new rounds of sanctions on Hamas since October 7, and after the sanctioning of financial networks funding the Houthis in December.

Biden's historic decision to sanction the private citizens of a close ally reflects both domestic and international political pressure. The administration seems to have recognised that Israeli extremist violence, and the settlements themselves, threaten US strategic interests and the broader liberal international order.

Critics of Biden's "democracy-defense credo" view the Israel-Gaza conflict as another example of him sidestepping the issue driving the conflict: territorial control and sovereignty. It is also worth highlighting that enforcing human rights and the rule of law should be integral to democracy promotion, and shared democratic values underpin US support for Israel, a key ally against Islamist extremism and terrorism. But given Israel's own democratic backsliding and the high civilian death toll in Gaza, Biden's unwavering support for Israel reflects a double standard that undermines America's credibility and global standing.

Of course, the settlements issue is not new. These government-sponsored communities have long been expanding in areas occupied by Israel since the 1967 Six-Day War, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. A majority of countries, and the United Nations, considers them illegal under international law.



Carla Norrlof

**Biden's historic decision to sanction the private citizens of a close ally reflects both domestic and international political pressure**

Since 1967, UN Security Council resolutions (such as 237) have urged Israel to observe humanitarian principles in the occupied territories; condemned extremist violence by settlers (271); deemed territorial acquisitions in Jerusalem inadmissible (252, 267, 298); and declared Israel's settlements to be illegal under international law, and an obstruction to peace in the Middle East (446, 465, 2334). Moreover, the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from transferring its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.

The new executive order targets individuals initiating riots, assaulting civilians and activists, setting fires, causing property damage, and contributing to the displacement or deaths of Palestinians. The sanctions allow for freezing assets, prohibiting transactions with individuals and entities, and restricting their entry into the US.

The US has a long history of enforcing international law, sanctioning terrorism, policing drug trafficking, and promoting democracy, human rights, and peace in support of the liberal international order it helped create. Sanctions are often swiftly implemented against US adversaries such as Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Syria, as well as terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and Hamas. Belarus, China, Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Russia, South Sudan, and Syria have all been sanctioned specifically for human-rights abuses.

In other cases, the US has imposed sanctions on countries with which it previously had good relations. These are typically nearby countries whose policies affect the US directly, as in the case of sanctions against Colombian, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan officials under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act. In other cases, the US soured on faraway countries, such as Myanmar and Zimbabwe, that failed to make a democratic transition.

Only in rare cases has the US sanctioned countries where it had major economic or strategic interests. In 1986, a bipartisan vote in Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (overriding President Ronald Reagan's veto), which sanctioned South Africa and demanded Nelson Mandela's release and an end to minority rule. By contrast, the 2018 murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi led to sanctions against several individuals under the Global Magnitsky Act, but spared the Saudi leadership, despite CIA evidence of the Kingdom's direct involvement.

As a diplomatic matter, deciding to sanction Israeli settlers may have been as difficult for Biden as it was for Reagan to sanction South Africa or for Donald Trump to sanction the Saudis. Fundamentally, though, sanctioning Israeli settlers for human-rights violations in the Occupied Territories is fully consistent with US support for the liberal international order. Settler violence is illegal under international humanitarian law, as defined by the Geneva Conventions and its Protocols, which offer civilians protection during military strikes, prohibit indiscriminate attacks, and require military operations to be proportionate to the expected military advantage.

By imposing sanctions on individuals for behaviour that is considered illegal under international law, or merely seen as an obstacle to peace, the US is reaffirming its commitment to resolving conflicts through law enforcement. The Biden administration is demonstrating US leadership in promoting peace and adherence to globally accepted norms, and ultimately strengthening alliances with countries that share similar values and have a stake in the existing global order.

But the US can and should do more to end the conflict. Ian Lustick, the founder of the Association for Israel Studies, notes that "Israel has never ended a war without being ordered to do so," suggesting that Israel is using an expansion of the war as a negotiating tactic. It fully expects, even needs, the US to intervene. Clearly, stopping the war should be US policymakers' top priority.

Until then, they should require that participants respect the laws of war. The first step would be to amend America's own legislation accordingly. A bill offering aid to Israel, with no conditions attached, did not pass in the House. If a more comprehensive security package is put to a vote, it should offer only assistance that can be used to find, capture, and neutralize Hamas, and it should offer humanitarian and reconstruction aid to civilians in Gaza in excess of the aid withheld from the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

Finally, since this is not the last time the US will face such a dilemma, it is worth considering a counterfactual. Had Biden refrained from sanctioning Israeli settler violence, he would have undermined the legitimacy of US sanctioning powers and the very international system such sanctions are meant to uphold.

Given all the precedents, it would be outrageous not to sanction settler terrorism. As Mohamed ElBaradei, the former director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, warned last month, America's failure to respond to Israel's gross violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza exposes its selective commitment to liberal norms and poses a direct threat to the international order.

Punishing transgressions according to its stated principles is vital for shoring up US hegemony within a liberal global framework. At a time when rising powers are challenging that hegemony, the US has a fundamental interest in broadening the coalition in favour of maintaining such an order. It will need that support if the Israel-Gaza war, Russia's war on Ukraine, and the brewing conflict with China spiral into a global war – a risk that is too great to discount.

Biden's evolving Middle East policy has become strategically imperative for the US as it navigates the challenges accompanying today's growing geopolitical turmoil. The more America's stance on the Israel-Gaza war isolates the US internationally (reflected in votes at the UN), the greater the risks for us all.

The writer is Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto. PROJECT SYNDICATE

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

## Inequality needs sustained attention



Dhurjati Mukherjee

**THOUGH THERE IS MUCH TALK OF FISCAL CONSOLIDATION, THE BASIC ECONOMIC PROBLEMS REMAIN UNRESOLVED**

Budget analysis from various angles is found reflected in the media. Economists, financial experts, and others involved in the analysis rarely try to find out how much of the allocated sum reaches the lower segments of society. This aspect is necessary as around 60% of the population or more belongs to the above category. Experts note that fiscal consolidation was attempted in the interim budget and there were no populist measures, such as reducing the tax slab or increasing the standard deduction so that the middle class pays less tax. However, emphasis on infrastructure, especially railways with allocation of Rs 2.55 lakh crore needs to be appreciated. The three major economic railway corridors announced shall improve logistic efficiency, reduce costs, ensure safety and higher travel speed for passengers. Besides, the decision to roll out the first set of 10 Vande Bharat trains with sleeper facilities and converting 40,000 bogies to such standards shall enhance passenger comfort.

The other positive aspects include the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' which emphasises a prosperous nation in harmony with nature and the steps outlined therein are welcome. Though the focus of assisting states in accelerating development of aspirational districts and blocks is well received, the target for each year and the funds to be disbursed have not been outlined. The interim budget allocates significant resources to bolster the green energy sector, with a focus on harnessing India's vast offshore wind energy potential. One such notable initiative includes viability gap funding for development of 1 GW of offshore wind energy, which is expected to play a crucial role in diversifying India's renewable energy portfolio and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Besides, there's an ambitious goal to set up coal gasification and liquefaction projects capable of processing 100 tonnes by 2030 to diminish India's import dependency on natural gas, methanol, and ammonia, while simultaneously promoting cleaner sources. There are plans too to set up one crore rooftop solar power units for households.

As regards the farm sector, the government's resolve to increase output of oilseeds, milk and aquaculture production to help reduce dependence on imports for its food security and boost exports is a long-awaited step. Experts have been emphasising

diversification of agriculture beyond crops to livestock and fisheries to increase farm income. For the masses, support for 20 million rural homes is possibly the only area of satisfaction as over Rs 50,000 crore has been allocated to PMAY-G for 2024-25, which is almost double the Rs 28,174 crore spent in the current fiscal, as per revised estimates.

Inequality remains a key problem in the Indian economy and as per government data, per capita national income increased from Rs 72,805 in 2014-15 to Rs 98,374 in 2022-23 – a 35% hike. However, as known this is unequally distributed. A few big capitalists make some big investments, but these are not enough to offset the decline in medium and small enterprises or generate the much-needed employment. The big economic concerns are unemployment and underemployment, poor viability of farming, high food prices relative to workers' incomes and inadequate access to basic services. Reacting to the interim budget, Congress leader and former finance minister P Chidambaram had said the fundamental flaw in NDA's approach to the economy and governance is it is biased in favour of the rich. "It is a government of the rich, by the rich and for the rich," he said.

Regarding the government's claim that it was empowering women by increasing their participation in the workforce, he said the Labour Force Participation Rate among urban women is 24% against 73.8% for men. Perhaps, the government increases workforce participation for women by including unpaid helpers in family enterprises who don't get remuneration for their work.

The other basic problem of the economy is the lack of momentum in the manufacturing sector, with weak private consumption and investment and a rising divide between strong high-end and subdued low-end purchases. Though there is much talk of fiscal consolidation, the basic economic problems remain unresolved.

Its basic knowledge that generation of more revenue will lead to increase in development expenditure. Most experts have been insisting on the need to increase tax to GDP ratio, which would of course affect the corporate. This too is being ignored by the ruling dispensation perhaps as some experts feel that top corporates may be making donations to the party and/or for temples. The inequality spectrum requires sustained attention.

INFRA

### Regulatory action

Sir, The recent ban imposed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) has sparked concerns within India's fintech sector. The ban, effective from March 1, 2024, comes as a response to persistent non-compliance issues identified by the RBI. This directive prohibits PPBL from onboarding new customers and conducting deposit or credit transactions, impacting its operations significantly. While Paytm foresees a potential annual earnings hit of up to \$60 million, its core digital payments platform and other financial services remain unaffected by the ban. Despite the regulatory setback, Paytm continues to operate with limited services, and its founder, Vijay Shekhar Sharma, has engaged in discussions with RBI officials in pursuit of a resolution. Amidst these efforts, Paytm has not reported any major service disruptions, maintaining stability for its existing customers. While the ban on PPBL is significant for Paytm, it also sheds light on the broader regulatory landscape within India's fintech industry. The RBI's action underscores the importance of regulatory compliance for all fintech players, potentially leading to increased scrutiny across the sector. However, it's essential to recognise that Paytm is just one player in India's diverse fintech market, where competition remains high. This ban serves as a reminder for all players to prioritise regulatory adherence to ensure long-term sustainability and trust within the industry. Overall, while the ban has prompted concerns about regulatory trust and investor confidence in Paytm, its broader impact on the Indian online landscape may be limited. Users have the option to explore alternative platforms or payment methods, mitigating the immediate effects of the ban on their digital transactions. Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

### Pawar politics

Sir, The Ajit Pawar faction stole the thunder from Pawar Senior as the Election Commission of India (ECI) recognised them as the true Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). The ECI stated that Sharad Pawar couldn't prove he had the backing of most NCP legislators. Sharad Pawar has been given a special concession by the ECI to name his new political faction considering the imminent Rajya Sabha elections. The development could rock the INDIA bloc boat, where Pawar is a key leader. NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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

## Noida farmers hold protest march amid heavy security

Thousands of villagers, including women and elderly, joined the march, to press for their demands



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi/Noida, Feb 8:** Noida Police Thursday stepped up security along its borders with Delhi as thousands of farmers from around 100 villages took to the streets seeking hiked compensation and made an unsuccessful bid to march towards Parliament. Barricades were set up at Chilla border with Noida Police on one side and Delhi Police on the other side to prevent protesters, who started their march from Mahamaya Flyover here around 12 pm, from entering the national capital. Several police personnel were in anti-riot gears with tear gas shells and water cannons handy, even as personnel from the rapid action force and provincial armed constabulary were deployed at the Chilla border. In the evening, a minor scuffle broke out between the protesters and security personnel as they tried to detain local farmer leaders near the Dalit Prerna Sthal.

Thousands of villagers, including women and elderly, joined the march, to press for their demands for hiked compensation and developed plots in lieu of their land acquired by local development authorities in Noida and Greater Noida in the past. The protest march also slowed down movement of vehicular traffic at various routes, including the key stretches of Noida-Greater Noida Expressway and DND Flyway that thousands of commuters use daily. Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait joined the protesters in Greater Noida in the afternoon where his Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) members have been protesting outside the local authority office. In Noida, the protesters were led by the Bharatiya Kisan Parishad (BKP), whose activists have held camps outside the local authority office since December 2023. In view of the farmers' movement, barriers have been installed at all the borders with

Delhi and at Kisan Chowk and other places. Each vehicle is being checked due to which the traffic is moving slowly, a police spokesperson said. Senior officials and other personnel are present at various locations to control the traffic, he added. The farmers from around 100 villages were led by the BKP after they assembled at the Mahamaya Flyover in Noida around 12 pm Thursday, with a proposed plan to march towards the Parliament. From Mahamaya Flyover, the farmers shall march towards the Parliament in Delhi to press for our long-pending demands, BKP leader Sukhbir Yadav 'Khalifa' said earlier in the day. Later, a scuffle broke out between several villagers and security personnel as they tried to detain local farmer leaders, including the BKP leader, near the Dalit Prerna Sthal. Farmer organisations proposed to go to Delhi with their various demands. Peaceful talks are being held with them near the Delhi border. Senior police officers are present on the spot, the police spokesperson said around 5 pm. Meaningful conversations with farmers are taking place in a peaceful environment, the official added. Ahead of the protest by the farmers in Noida and Greater Noida, the Gautam Buddha Nagar Police had already imposed CrPc Section 144 for Wednesday and Thursday. The police also issued a traffic advisory, cautioning the commuters against diversions on some routes in the twin cities in view of the farmers' movement on tractors.



**MATTER OF FAITH:** Hindu devotees gather at Sangam to offer prayers on the eve of 'Mauni Amavasya' during the annual religious 'Magh Mela' festival, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, Thursday

## GOKULPURI METRO SLAB COLLAPSE

### ₹25L compensation for family of deceased

**AGENCIES**  
**New Delhi, Feb 8:** The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Thursday announced ₹25 lakh in compensation for the family of 53-year-old man who died after a portion of the Gokulpuri Metro Station on the Pink Line in north-east Delhi collapsed, official statement said. The DMRC announced ₹5 lakh

for the grievously injured and ₹1 lakh for those who received minor injuries, it stated. The transporters also suspended two of its officials over the collapse. Two DMRC officials, a manager and a junior engineer from the civil department, have been immediately suspended, the statement read. The transporter had initially announced an ex-gratia of ₹50,000

for minor injury, ₹2.5 lakh for grievous injury and ₹15 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased. The figures were later increased. The DMRC will be investigating the circumstances leading to this incident to take necessary remedial measures to prevent such unfortunate occurrences in the future, it said. According to the statement, in an incident at the Gokulpuri

Metro Station on Pink Line, a portion of the station wall towards 'up' platform fell on the road at 11.04 am Thursday, injuring five persons. They were rushed to the nearest hospital for medical attention. However, one of the injured unfortunately passed away, Anuj Dayal, principal executive director corporate communications of DMRC, said.

## After Ayodhya, Yogi pitches for Mathura



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Feb 8:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath appeared to make a pitch in the Assembly for a temple where a mosque stands now in Mathura, saying that Krishna Kanhaiya wouldn't have it any other way. The CM indirectly also referred to two other shrines involved in temple-mosque disputes in his state -- the Ram temple in Ayodhya built after a Supreme Court go-ahead in 2019 and the Kashi Vishwanath shrine in Varanasi. Participating in a debate on the Governor's Address Wednesday, he recalled the Mahabharata episode in which the Kauravas refused to concede land equivalent to the point of a needle to the Pandavas. He said the same thing happened with Kashi, Mathura, and Ayodhya. "We have asked only for three. These are not ordinary places -- these are lands of Gods," he said. But there is stubbornness, and when this stubbornness starts getting political and the politics of vote-bank starts, then a controversy arises, he said. Adityanath alleged that foreign invaders not only looted the wealth of India, but also tried to end faith in the country. It is unfortunate that after independence, there were malicious attempts to glorify those foreign invaders for vote-bank. The country is not ready to accept it, he said. The CM referred to the recent consecration led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Ram temple, and also slammed the previous Samajwadi Party

**We have asked only for three. These are not ordinary places - these are lands of Gods**  
**YOGI ADITYANATH | CM, UTTAR PRADESH**  
(SP) government of ignoring the development of Ayodhya. When people saw the celebration in Ayodhya, Nandi Baba too said why he should wait. Without waiting, he too got the barricades removed in the night, he said. And Lord Krishna too wasn't the one to be dissuaded, he added. "Aur hamare Krishna Kanhaiya kahan manane wale hein," Yogi said in Hindi. The Nandi Baba reference was to a recent Varanasi district court order allowing a Hindu priest to offer prayers in a cellar in the Gyanvapi mosque, located next to the Kashi Vishwanath temple. The order came on a plea by a Varanasi resident who claimed that his grandfather used to offer regular prayers in the cellar up to 1993, when he was stopped from doing so. The same night, hours after the court order, the local administration removed a section of the barricade to provide access to the basement. A court-ordered Archaeological Survey of India report recently suggested that the Gyanvapi mosque was built after the demolition of a temple there during Aurangzeb's rule. In Mathura, Hindu litigants make a similar claim. They say the Shahi Idgah was built on the site believed to be the birthplace of Lord Krishna. A Krishna temple stands next to the mosque.

## First brick for new Ayodhya Mosque arrives from Mecca

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, Feb 8:** Symbolising reconciliation and religious harmony, the first brick for the foundation of the proposed grand mosque in Ayodhya arrived here Wednesday after a consecration pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The brick, baked in a Mumbai kiln, was sent for a 'gusl' (wash) with the holy Zam-Zam water in Mecca and in perfumes in Medina before it was brought back here. This brick is scheduled to reach the new upcoming Masjid Mohammed Bin Abdullah mosque - named in honour of the Prophet Mohammed - at Dhannipur Village in Ayodhya around mid-April, most likely after Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations. The brick's auspicious journey will commence from the home of Haji Arfat Shaikh, Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation member and Chairman of the Masjid Mohammed Bin Abdullah Development Committee, who is overseeing the preparations. "The new masjid and the institution around it would be an important centre of prayer and healing in India... Its construction and renovation, by the grace



### Mosque body distances from 'sacred' brick

**Lucknow:** The Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation, set up for construction of a mosque at Dhannipur village in Ayodhya, has distanced itself from claims by a member of the same foundation that a sacred brick has been brought from Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia to lay the foundation of the new mosque. Foundation Chairman Zufar Farooqui, who also heads the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board, said, "I have no knowledge about any such brick from Mecca or Medina." The Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation is the trust formed by the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board to look after the Dhannipur project in Ayodhya. of Allah will be magnificent, majestic and would prove to be as aesthetically important a monument as the Taj Mahal globally," remarked Shaikh. Terming the upcoming mosque as 'special', he said it is the first masjid coming up in India that would be built on the basis of the five Tenets of Islam, for which five symbolic minarets, that would be visible for over 11

## Delhi PWD issues notice to L&T over design flaws

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** The Delhi government's Public Works Department (PWD) has issued a notice to Larsen and Toubro (L&T) over alleged "glaring infirmities" in the Pragati Maidan tunnel project while demanding a "token amount" of ₹500 crore from the firm and directing it to immediately initiate repair work. L&T said that they have made a counterclaim of ₹500 crore against the PWD. The notice was issued February 3, asking the company to respond within 15 days. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had June 19, 2022 inaugurated the 1.3-km-long tunnel and five underpasses as part of the Pragati Maidan Integrated Transit Corridor Project that aims to ease connectivity between central Delhi with the eastern parts of the city and the satellite towns of Noida and Ghaziabad. The tunnel has witnessed multiple closures due to waterlogging during the Delhi floods last year. The notice alleged that the project with time revealed "glaring infirmities that were not

only technical in nature but were also design flaws". "The most glaring as well as alarming issue was the accumulation of water across various locations in the tunnel/underpass. This issue, especially during the monsoon season, rendered the entire project non-operational for the general public and ultimately ended up causing far more blockages and congestion along the arterial roads of the entire New Delhi area which defeated the very purpose of this ambitious project," the notice stated. An L&T spokesperson said his company has filed a counterclaim of Rs 500 crore. "PWD, Delhi, is an esteemed client and we value the long years of association we have enjoyed with them. However, L&T would like to state that a counter-claim of Rs 500 crore has been made by the company against PWD, Delhi," the spokesperson said.

## Navratri connection: Female elephant 'adopts' calf

**BOTH THE ELEPHANTS HAD COME TO DUDHWA DURING NAVRATRI AND HENCE GOT THEIR NAMES - DURGA AND GAURI**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lakhimpur Kheri (UP), Feb 8:** Both were born during Navratri in different years and they now share an undeniable bond. Durga, a seven-year-old female elephant in Dudhwa, has 'adopted' a 15-day-old orphaned elephant calf which was rescued by the Forest department from Najibabad forest in Bijnor, in September 2023. The calf, named Gauri, was sent to the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve (DTR), after the Forest department's team in Bijnor had failed to reunite the calf with herds of elephants crossing over the region. When the herds did not take the calf along, it was sent to Dudhwa where it got its name, Gauri.



Deputy director of DTR, Rengaraju Tamilselvan, said that it was Durga who accepted Gauri and took it under her wings, like a mother, making the job of nurturing the calf

much easier for them. Today, Gauri is three months old and scampers along with her doting mother Durga. Both the elephants had come to Dudhwa during Navratri and hence got their names -- Durga and Gauri. Dudhwa has 25 captive elephants, but none except Durga accepted the calf. The reason for her affinity towards Gauri was, perhaps, her own past. She herself was found orphaned in Bijnor in 2018 as a calf. The Forest department tried to send her back to the forests, but the herds did not accept her. She was also sent to Dudhwa. There is another link between the two elephants -- their mahout, Irshad, who reared Durga and is now taking care of Gauri. "His experience with Durga

helped us in the case of Gauri too. We knew how to rear the calf like our own child," said the official. The captive elephants at Dudhwa were brought from Karnataka and other states to be trained in patrolling, rescue operations and other specialised wildlife activities. Durga is one of the lot, undergoing training at the reserve. Gauri will also join them by the time she is ten years old and is done with the training, said the deputy director. For now, the two are inseparable. Gauri is being raised on cow's milk and lactogen daily. About 16 litres of milk and two packs of lactogen is what she consumes in 24 hours, about five times a day and night.



Displaced children sit on wooden pallets, as displaced Palestinians, who fled their houses due to Israeli strikes, take shelter in a tent camp amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, near the border with Egypt in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip



A woman cooks outside, as displaced Palestinians, who fled their houses due to Israeli strikes, take shelter in a tent camp



A volunteer walks next to a burned truck following the spread of wildfires in Quilpue, Chile



Houthi followers hold a cutout banner, portraying the Galaxy Leader cargo ship which was seized by Houthis, during a parade as part of a 'popular army' mobilisation campaign by the movement, in Sanaa, Yemen



Indian Air Force personnel during preparations for the upcoming 'Vayu Shakti 2024' exercise



Artists perform during the inauguration of 'Vividhata Ka Amrit Mahotsav' at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi



Indian Navy's Rear Admiral Nirbhay Bapna (R) with French Navy's Rear Admiral Jean Marc Durandau during the 17th Indian Navy-French Navy Staff Talks, in New Delhi



Rescuers carry a body from the landslide-hit village of Masara in Maco, Davao de Oro province, southern Philippines. A landslide in the southern Philippines left a number of villagers dead and several others missing



# national



**The BJP-led Uttar Pradesh government, despite telling 'a billion lies', has not been able to reach its target of a USD 1 trillion economy**  
AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF

## 30 SPACE MISSIONS PLANNED

India's space regulator IN-SPACE Thursday said about 30 space launches, including seven by private startups Skyroot and Agnikul, are scheduled in the fourth quarter of 2023-24 and the next fiscal



### of the day quote

The state government would soon introduce the internet as a basic right to make digital infrastructure accessible to all and will also position Hyderabad and Telangana as the AI capital of the country  
TAMILISAI SOUNDARARAJAN | TELANGANA GOVERNOR

Taking inspiration from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we are running a transparent and corruption-free government in Tripura. We will not tolerate any form of corruption, no matter who is involved. The government will deal with corruption firmly  
MANIK SAHA | TRIPURA CM

Ongoing construction activities across Assam have created large-scale employment opportunities in the state  
HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

### SHORT TAKES

#### Srinagar terror attack: Second victim dies

**Srinagar:** A worker from Punjab who was injured in Wednesday's terror attack in Srinagar's Habba Kadal area died at the SKIMS hospital here Thursday morning, taking the toll to two in the first targeted killing of the year by terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. The city is on alert following the attack with security measures being intensified and authorities asking people to be cautious and vigilant. Rohit Masih succumbed to injuries at the SKIMS Hospital here this morning. He was shifted to the tertiary care institution late Wednesday night after his condition worsened at the SMHS Hospital, officials said. Wednesday, Amritpal Singh, also a worker from Punjab, was shot dead from point blank range at Shalla Kadal in uptown Habba Kadal.

#### Airlines faced 478 tech snags

**New Delhi:** Airlines faced 478 technical snags related to their planes in the last one year, with IndiGo experiencing 246 glitches, according to official data. The data for the period from January 2023 to January 2024 was submitted to Lok Sabha in a written reply by Minister of State for Civil Aviation V K Singh. During this period, IndiGo grappled with 246 glitches while Air India faced 63 technical snags, Vistara 79, SpiceJet (47), AirAsia (India) Ltd (22), Alliance Air (7), Akasa Air (6), Fly Big (5), BlueDart Aviation (2) and the grounded Go First (1). AirAsia (India) has been rebranded as AIX Connect and is being merged with Air India Express while Go First stopped flying from May 2023.

## Violence in Haldwani over demolition drive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Haldwani (Uttarakhand), Feb 8:** A curfew was imposed here Thursday after local residents set vehicles and a police station on fire and hurled stones, injuring more than 60 people, over the demolition of an "illegally built" madrasa and an adjoining mosque, officials said.

Most of the people hospitalised after the violence at Malik ka Bagicha in the city's Banbhoolpura area were police personnel. The remaining were municipal workers involved in the demolition of the local madrasa and a mosque in its complex, they said. The injured also included Haldwani SDM, they added. In state capital Dehradun, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama held a meeting with senior officials, including Chief Secretary Radha Raturi and DGP

Abhinav Kumar to review the situation in Haldwani, according to an official statement.

Besides imposition of curfew in entire Haldwani, shoot-at-sight orders against rioters were also issued in the city, the statement said. The Chief Minister urged everyone to maintain calm and asked officials to deal sternly with "anarchic elements", it added.

As the violence escalated, all the shops in Haldwani were closed. After the imposition of curfew, all schools from Classes 1-12 in and around the city have also been closed. Senior Superintendent of Police Prahlad Meena said the madrasa and the mosque stood on an illegally encroached government land and the demolitions were carried out in the heavy presence of police and Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) personnel in compliance with a court order.



Tourists flock to Taj Mahal in Agra, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

## India scraps FMR with Myanmar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah Thursday said the Centre has decided to scrap the India-Myanmar Free Movement Regime (FMR) to maintain the country's internal security and demographic structure of the northeastern states.

As the Ministry of External Affairs is currently in the process of scrapping it, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has recommended the immediate suspension of FMR, Shah said. FMR allows people residing close to the India-Myanmar border to venture 16 km into each other's territory without any documents. "It is Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi Ji's resolve to secure our borders. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has decided that the Free Movement Regime (FMR) between India and Myanmar be scrapped to ensure the internal security of the country and to maintain the demographic structure of India's North Eastern States bordering Myanmar," Shah said on X. The announcement came two days after Shah said India has decided to fence the entire 1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border.

The 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.

## Vijayan leads protest against Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** Several INDIA bloc constituents Thursday rallied around the Left Democratic Front government of Kerala as Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan led a protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar against the Centre alleging democracy envisaged as a union of states is being "crippled" by its "undemocratic Union over states mentality".

While leaders from the AAP, the DMK and the NC were among those present, no one from the Congress was there. The Congress-led UDF opposition in Kerala which was invited to join the protest had declined it saying it does not agree with the Left narrative blaming the Centre for all of the state's financial problems.

Attacking the Centre, Vijayan criticised the "Union over states mentality" of the Centre, saying it is not only manifested in

financial matters, but was evident in the functioning of governors in opposition-ruled states as well.

"We have all come together to register our strong protest against this and to preserve the federal structure of India. Today we are marking the beginning of a renewed fight that would herald a dawn of ensuring equitable treatment of the states," he said. He alleged that in opposition-ruled states, governors are acting at the "behest" of the Centre and disrupting the state government's work, with a 'Union over states' mentality. At the protest, the opposition leaders also challenged the BJP's accusation of promoting a "north-south divide" and said the demonstration is being held to ensure states get their due share. Vijayan, as well as other leaders, stressed that the protest was not about any "north-south divide", pointing at the presence of Delhi

and Punjab chief ministers Arvind Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann and the National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah.

"It is totally untrue, unfounded and baseless. Ours is a democratic protest against the undoing of federal structure and the sheer discrimination against the states, irrespective of north-south considerations," he said, adding February 8, 2024 will be a "red letter day" in the history of the republic of India. In an apparent reference to the Congress-led UDF's allegation that the protest is being held with an eye on the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, Vijayan said the agitation is not politically motivated. "This protest is against the denial of what is rightfully ours."

"Isn't it a fact that our borrowings have been limited and that our grants have been denied? How is it politically motivated to point it out?" he asked. Addressing the gathering, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said, "The prime minister said the opposition is trying to create a north-south divide. The prime minister needs to understand India's geography. Mr Kejriwal is not south, Mr Mann is not south, Mr Farooq Abdullah from Kashmir is not south..." Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin also extended his support, and DMK leaders Tiruchi Siva and Palanivel Thiagarajan were present at the protest.

## Kashmir shivers; more than 250 roads blocked

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** Cold wave conditions prevailed over several regions in north India Thursday with Kashmir shivering at sub-zero temperature and Himachal Pradesh witnessing heavy snowfall and landslides that blocked more than 250 roads.

The national capital witnessed pleasant weather with the city recording a maximum temperature of 20.2 degrees Celsius, a notch below the season's average. The minimum temperature in Delhi settled at 8.2 degrees Celsius, according to the India

spectively, officials said. The minimum temperatures in Pahalgam, Gulmarg, Qazigund and Srinagar were around five degrees below normal for this time of the year.

Although 'Chilla-i-Kalan' -- the 40-day harshest winter period -- ended earlier this week, the cold wave has continued in Kashmir. In Himachal, Lahaul and Spiti district's Kusumseri recorded a low of minus 14.2 degrees Celsius while the weather remained dry Thursday.

Thick fog was witnessed in Sundernagar, Mandi and Bilaspur in the morning, reducing visibility to 500 metres



Meteorological Department.

Meanwhile, according to official data, several parts of Jammu and Kashmir, including Srinagar city, witnessed the warmest January in 43 years. There was no let-up in cold conditions in Punjab and Haryana too, with minimum temperatures staying below normal at several places.

Thursday, Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 5.2 degrees Celsius compared to previous night's minus 2 degrees Celsius. The minimum temperature in Gulmarg skiing resort in north Kashmir fell to minus 12 degrees Celsius, while Pahalgam tourist resort in south Kashmir, which serves as the base camp for the annual Amarnath yatra, recorded a low of minus 11.9 degrees Celsius.

Kokernag and Qazigund towns in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 4.5 degrees and minus 6.4 degrees Celsius, re-

while ground frost occurred in mid and higher hills, making commuting hazardous. Restoration works are in full swing to open 254 roads including five national highways closed due to heavy snowfall and landslides, officials said. Narkanda and Kalpa recorded a low of minus 4.4 degrees and minus 4.2 degrees Celsius, respectively, followed by Manali and Barmour minus 2 degrees, Kufri minus 1.8 degrees, Bhuntar 0.1 degree, Sundernagar 0.2 degree and Shimla 0.9 degree Celsius.

The high-altitude tribal areas and other higher reaches reeled under piercing cold with mercury staying 15 to 22 degrees below freezing point. All natural sources of water like lakes, springs, rivulets and tributaries of snow-fed rivers and a large stretch of Chandrabhaga River were frozen resulting in a sharp decrease in the discharge of water in Sutlej, Ravi, Beas and other rivers.

## Technical personnel to replace Indian troops in Maldives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** India will replace its military personnel operating three aviation platforms in the Maldives with "competent" Indian technical personnel even as New Delhi asserted that it remained an important development partner of the island nation.

"I would like to say that the present personnel will be replaced by competent Indian technical personnel," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.



Following the second meeting of the high-level core group to address the issue of the military personnel, the Maldivian foreign ministry said India will replace its military personnel in two phases by May 10. Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu Monday said the first group of Indian military personnel will be sent back before March 10 and the remaining manning ones will be withdrawn before May 10.

The second meeting of the core group took place in Delhi February 2. The two sides decided to set up the core group following a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Muizzu on the sidelines of the COP28 summit in Dubai in December.

At present, around 80 Indian military personnel are in the Maldives primarily to operate two helicopters and an aircraft which carried out hundreds of medical evacuations and humanitarian missions. The ties between the two countries came under some strain since he came to power in November. Muizzu, widely seen as a pro-China leader, maintained after assuming charge as the president that he will keep his election promise of evicting Indian military personnel from his country. Muizzu, 45, defeated India-friendly incumbent Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in the presidential runoff held in September last year.

sonnel will be sent back before March 10 and the remaining manning ones will be withdrawn before May 10.

The second meeting of the core group took place in Delhi February 2. The two sides decided to set up the core group following a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Muizzu on the sidelines of the COP28 summit in Dubai in December.

At present, around 80 Indian military personnel are in the Maldives primarily to operate two helicopters and an aircraft

which carried out hundreds of medical evacuations and humanitarian missions. The ties between the two countries came under some strain since he came to power in November.

Muizzu, widely seen as a pro-China leader, maintained after assuming charge as the president that he will keep his election promise of evicting Indian military personnel from his country. Muizzu, 45, defeated India-friendly incumbent Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in the presidential runoff held in September last year.

## J&K witnessed driest, warmest January in 43 yrs

THE LOWEST PRECIPITATION IN THE SUMMER CAPITAL OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR WAS RECORDED IN JANUARY 2018 WHEN ONLY 1.2 MM OF RAINFALL OR SNOW TOOK PLACE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Feb 8:** Several parts of Jammu and Kashmir, including Srinagar city, witnessed the warmest January in 43 years, the Meteorological Centre Srinagar's data said.

In terms of snowfall or rains, Srinagar city witnessed the second driest January in the past four decades, recording a mere 3.0 mm of precipitation in the month this year, it said.

The lowest precipitation in the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir was recorded in January 2018 when only 1.2 mm



of rainfall or snow took place. According to data, the mean Tmax (maximum temperature)

recorded in January over Srinagar station was 11.9 degrees Celsius while for Gulmarg

in north Kashmir and Banihal in Ramban district, it was 5.7 degrees Celsius and 16.9 degrees Celsius respectively.

Jammu city recorded the lowest mean maximum temperature for the first month of the year in over four decades, it said. This is the highest mean maximum temperature for the month of January for these stations in the past 43 years, the MeT centre said in a post on X.

"2024 January was one of the driest and warmest January in the last 43 years for most of the stations of J-K except the stations of plains of Jammu

(Jammu, Samba and Kathua)," it added.

It said Jammu station, on the other hand, observed a mean maximum temperature of 13.4 degrees Celsius in January, which is the lowest since 1983.

The mean minimum temperature for January observed over Srinagar, Jammu, Gulmarg and Banihal were minus 3.2 degrees Celsius, 5.5 degrees Celsius, minus 3.9 degrees Celsius and 0.1 degrees Celsius respectively. "The 2024 mean Tmin is one of the highest for Gulmarg in the last 43 years," the MET centre said.

**PANCHAYAT SAMITI, BARKOTE DIST-DEOGARH**  
No. 366/Dev. Date 06.02.2024

**TENDER CALL NOTICE**  
No.i-612:- The Block Development Officer, Barkote on behalf of Govt. of Odisha invites sealed tenders for - works under Panchayat Samiti, Barkote in percentage rate basic (PI). The contractors registered with Government of Odisha/Central Govt. or Contractors equivalent to grade "B", "C" & "D" class of P.W.D. (R&B)/Water Resource/Rural Works/M.I./C.P.W.D are eligible to submit the tender paper for following work eventually to be drawn up in P.W.D. F2 form of agreement in conformity with the detailed tender call Notice. The other details can be downloaded from district website, i.e. www.deogarh.nic.in  
**Sd./- Block Development Officer, Barkote**  
OIPR-19394/11/0003/2324

# international



**Surrendering to Hamas' delusional demands that we heard now not only won't lead to freeing the captives, it will just invite another massacre. We are on the way to an absolute victory. There is no other solution**  
BENJAMIN NETANYAHU | PM, ISRAEL

**OATH ON BHAGAVAD GITA**  
Varun Ghosh, a barrister of Indian descent, has become the first ever Australian Senator to take the oath of office on the revered Hindu scripture Bhagavad Gita. Ghosh, 38, of the Labour Party Tuesday filled the party's Senate seat, which was left vacant after the retirement of Patrick Dodson last month due to health reasons



## of the day quote

Not to exaggerate, but we deal with at least one death a day across the country and mostly among young students or H-1B employees who have recently immigrated to the US from India  
MOHAN NANNAPANENI | FOUNDER, TEAM AID

The problem is, India doesn't trust us to win. They don't trust us to lead. They see right now that we're weak. India has always played it smart. They have played it smart, and they have stayed close with Russia, because that's where they get a lot of their military equipment  
NIKKI HALEY | REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, US

I am assuring the people that the Maldives will be led to a point where there aren't any foreign military troops in the country  
MOHAMED MUIZZU | PRESIDENT, MALDIVES

## SHORT TAKES

### Xi rings Putin

**Beijing:** China's President Xi Jinping told Russian President Vladimir Putin that the two countries should pursue close strategic coordination and defend the sovereignty, security and development interests of their respective countries, state media said. During a phone call with Putin on Thursday, Xi said both sides should resolutely oppose interference in internal affairs by external forces, state broadcaster CCTV said. The two countries should also cultivate new dynamics of cooperation and maintain the stability of the industrial chain and supply chain, Xi was quoted as saying.

### Fishermen held

**Colombo:** Sri Lanka has arrested 19 Indian fishermen and two trawlers for illegally fishing in the island nation's waters near Delft Island in northern Jaffna province, the country's Navy said Thursday, in the second such incident this month. The Sri Lanka Navy in the operation with the Sri Lanka Coast Guard Wednesday also seized 2 Indian trawlers alongside the arrest of 19 Indian fishermen poaching in Sri Lankan waters, the Navy said in a statement. The apprehended fishermen and their two trawlers were escorted to the Kankesanthurai Harbour and will be handed over to the Malladi Fisheries Inspector for further action, it said.

## TIPPING POINT

# EARTH IS BURNING

World breached 1.5-degree limit for entire year for first time, says European climate agency

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** The global mean temperature breached the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold for an entire year for the first time, the European climate agency said Thursday.

However, this does not imply a permanent breach of the 1.5-degree Celsius limit specified in the Paris Agreement, as it refers to long-term warming over many years.

Scientists at the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) also said that the world experienced the warmest January on record.

In fact, every month since June last year has been the warmest such month on record.

They attribute the exceptional warming to the combined effects of El Niño - a period of abnormal warming of surface waters in the central Pacific Ocean - and human-caused climate change.

C3S said the global mean temperature for the past 12 months (February 2023-January 2024) was the highest on record and 1.52 degrees Celsius above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average.

The global average temperature in January was 1.66 degrees Celsius above the January average for 1850-1900, the designated pre-industrial reference period. With an average temperature of 13.14 degrees Celsius,



**It is clearly a warning to humanity that we are moving faster than expected towards the agreed upon 1.5C limit that we signed**

JOHAN ROCKSTROM | SCIENTIST, POTSDAM INSTITUTE FOR CLIMATE IMPACT RESEARCH

WORLD EXPERIENCED THE WARMEST JANUARY ON RECORD

EVERY MONTH SINCE JUNE 2023 WITNESSED RECORD HEAT

GLOBAL TEMPERATURE PEAKED TO ALL-TIME HIGH IN 2023

January 2024 was 0.12 degrees Celsius warmer than the previous warmest January in 2020, the EU's climate agency said.

Samantha Burgess, Deputy Director of C3S, said that "2024 starts with another record-breaking month - not only is it the warmest January on record but we have also just experienced a 12-month period of more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial reference period".

"Rapid reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are the only way to stop global temperatures from increasing," she said. The year 2023 was the warmest on record, with the average global temperature rise compared to pre-industrial levels nearing the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold.

house gas emissions are the only way to stop global temperatures from increasing," she said.

The year 2023 was the warmest on record, with the average global temperature rise compared to pre-industrial levels nearing the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold.

The World Meteorological Organisation in December said 2024 could be worse as "El Niño typically has the greatest impact on global temperature after it peaks."

## BRITISH PM MAKES TRANSGENDER JIBE

REUTERS

**London, Feb 8:** British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak joked that the leader of the opposition Labour Party could not define what a woman was, during a parliamentary exchange Wednesday that the mother of a murdered transgender girl had been invited to watch.

Last week, two teenagers were jailed, opens new tab for the murder of Brianna Ghey, who was stabbed 28 times with a hunting knife, and a Labour lawmaker had invited Ghey's mother to watch Sunak's weekly question-and-answer session in parliament.

In an exchange with Labour leader Keir Starmer, who had said Ghey's mother was watching, Sunak said "defining a woman" was on a list of Starmer's broken promises, joking it had been "only 99% of a U-turn".

In reply, Starmer said: "Of all the weeks to say that, when Brianna's mother is in this chamber. Shame. Parading as a man of integrity when he's got absolutely no responsibility."

Sunak has said "a man is a man and a woman is a woman" and has criticised Starmer, saying he "still does not know what a woman is".



**BOILING VOLCANO:** A view of lava crossing the main road to Grindavik in Iceland as a volcano in southwestern Iceland has erupted for the third time since December and sent jets of lava into the sky. The eruption Thursday morning triggered the evacuation of the Blue Lagoon spa, which is one of the island nation's biggest tourist attractions

PTI PHOTO

## US strike kills Kataib Hezbollah commander in Baghdad

REUTERS

**Baghdad, Feb 8:** A commander from Kataib Hezbollah, an Iran-backed armed group in Iraq that the Pentagon has blamed for attacking its troops, was killed in a US strike Wednesday, the US military said.

"(US) forces conducted a unilateral strike in Iraq in response to the attacks on US service members, killing a Kataib Hezbollah commander responsible for directly planning and participating in attacks on U.S. forces in the region," a statement from the military said. It did not name the commander.

It added that there were no indications of civilian casualties. Two security sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the commander was Abu Baqir al-Saadi, killed in a drone strike on a vehicle in eastern Baghdad. One of the sources said three people were killed and



**The US-led coalition has become a factor for instability and threatens to entangle Iraq in the cycle of conflict**  
YAHYA RASOOL | PM'S MILITARY SPOKESMAN, IRAQ

that the vehicle targeted was used by Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a state security agency composed

of dozens of armed groups, many of them close to Iran.

Kataib Hezbollah fighters and commanders are part of the PMF. Three US troops were killed in January in a drone attack near the Jordan-Syria border that the Pentagon said bore the "footprints" of Kataib Hezbollah. The group then announced it was suspending military operations against US troops in the region.

## NEW LOWS

# NORTH SCRAPS ECONOMIC TIES WITH SOUTH KOREA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



**Seoul, Feb 8:** North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament has voted to abolish laws on economic cooperation with the South, state media said Thursday, as relations between the two neighbours hit new lows.

Ties between the two Koreas have been in a deep freeze as Pyongyang accelerates its weapons development programmes and Seoul ramps up military cooperation with Washington and Tokyo, with key inter-Korean economic cooperation projects suspended for years.

At a plenary meeting of the Supreme People's Assembly on Wednesday, officials voted to scrap the law on inter-Korean economic cooperation "with unanimous approbation", the Korean Central News Agency reported.

Pyongyang last month declared Seoul its main enemy, jettisoned agencies dedicated to reunification, and threatened to occupy the South during war.

The parliament also unanimously approved a plan to abolish a special law on the operation of the Mount Kumgang tourism project, once a prominent symbol of inter-Korean cooperation.

The resort was built by South Korea's Hyundai Asan on one of the North's most scenic mountains, and once drew hundreds of thousands of visitors from the

South. But its tours ended abruptly in 2008 after a North Korean soldier shot dead a tourist from the South who strayed off an approved path, and Seoul suspended travel.

The Mount Kumgang resort was once one of the two biggest inter-Korean projects, along with the now-shuttered Kaesong Industrial Complex, where Southern companies employed North Korean workers while paying Pyongyang for their services.

Seoul pulled out of the venture - launched in the wake of a 2000 inter-Korean summit - in 2016 in response to a nuclear test and missile launches by the North, saying Kaesong profits were helping fund the provocations.

In 2020, the North blew up a liaison office with the South on its side of the border - paid for by Seoul - saying it had no interest in talks.

## Saturn's 'Death Star' moon has a watery secret

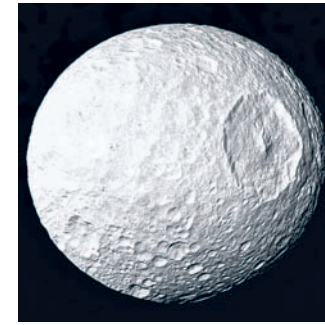
The findings make Mimas a compelling site for exploration into the conditions that could lead to the formation of life, considering Earth's first living organisms arose in our planet's primordial seas billions of years ago

REUTERS

**Washington, Feb 8:** Saturn's moon Mimas is known for its uncanny resemblance to the dreaded Death Star in the original "Star Wars" movie. But it has another intriguing distinction as well, according to researchers - a subsurface ocean hidden under its icy and crater-scarred outer shell.

Astronomers said Wednesday that data obtained by NASA's Cassini spacecraft on the rotational motion and orbit of Mimas confirm the presence of an ocean of liquid water beneath an ice layer 12-19 miles (20-30 km) thick. This ocean, they said, appears to have formed recently, in cosmic terms - less than 25 million years ago and likely between 5 and 15 million years ago.

"At first glance, it is the most unlikely place in the solar system to look for liquid water," said Observatoire de Paris astronomer Valery Lainey, lead author of the study published in the journal Nature. "It looks old



and inactive - a huge amount of craters. Nothing betrays the ocean existence, at the moment."

Mimas becomes the smallest of five moons in our solar system with compelling evidence of subsurface oceans, alongside Saturn's Enceladus and Titan, and Jupiter's Europa and Ganymede, Lainey said. There also are suspicions of subsurface oceans on a few other moons, including Jupiter's Callisto.

Cassini finished 13 years of studying Saturn and its moons in 2017 with a death plunge into the huge ringed planet's atmosphere. Cassini's observations of the icy

surface of Mimas did not spot any deformations suggestive of an ocean below. But the researchers determined that certain aspects of its orbit could be explained only by the presence of an internal ocean, not a solid interior.

Mimas is the seventh-largest moon of Saturn, which all told has well over 100 moons ranging from Titan - larger than the planet Mercury - to some only the size of a city block.

Mimas, not precisely round, has an average diameter of about 250 miles (400 km). It is tidally locked, meaning it perpetually shows the same side toward Saturn, as our moon does toward Earth. The most emblematic feature of Mimas is the Herschel crater, which stretches a third of the way across its face and makes it resemble the Death Star. Earth's moon is roughly 2,000 times more massive than Mimas.

An internal ocean's presence implies a strong heat source inside Mimas that turned ice into an ocean. Mimas follows an elliptical orbit around Saturn at

an average distance of about 115,000 miles (186,000 km). As its distance from Saturn changes along its orbit, the gravitational and tidal forces exerted by Saturn also change.

"This results in periodic deformation of Mimas' interior, and part of the energy involved in these deformations is converted into heat," said planetary scientist and study co-author Gabriel Tobie of the French scientific research agency CNRS and Nantes Université.

The liquid water inside Mimas represents more than half of this moon's total volume, though it amounts to just 1.2-1.4% the amount in Earth's oceans. The fact that the water is in contact with the rocky core of Mimas may facilitate the type of complex chemistry that could pave the way for life, they added.

Scientists believe the basic ingredients for life - warmth, water and organic compounds - exist in the Saturnian system on Enceladus, which has huge plumes erupting off its surface.

# business

## of the day quote

One of the things that I'm very excited also is to bring one of the initiatives which we've had called Code Without Barriers, and expanding to India and really helping 75,000 women developers by 2024

**SATYA NADELLA** | CHIEF, MICROSOFT

This is a pivotal moment in Inox Wind's history as we announce today the signing of India's largest wind project deal for 1,500 MW with CESC

**KAILASH TARACHANDANI** | CEO, INOX WIND

We started with 600 merchants on-board in January last year. At present there are around 3 lakh merchants (on-boarded). In the coming year we expect this will be multiplying and build its momentum. At least ten times growth I expect in the coming year

**THAMPY KOSHY** | MD & CEO, ONDC

## Q3 RESULTS

### LIC profit up 49%

**New Delhi:** State-owned insurer LIC Thursday reported a 49 per cent jump in net profit at ₹9,444 crore for the third quarter ended December 2023. The country's biggest insurer had a net profit of ₹6,334 crore in the year-ago period, according to a regulatory filing. Its net premium income rose to ₹1,17,017 crore in the third quarter of the current fiscal from ₹1,11,788 crore in the same period a year ago. LIC's total income increased to ₹2,12,447 crore in the latest December quarter compared to ₹1,96,891 crore in the year-ago period.

### SoftBank shines

**Tokyo:** Japanese technology conglomerate SoftBank Group returned to profitability in October-December after four straight quarters in the red, the company said Thursday. Tokyo-based SoftBank reported a 950 billion yen (\$6.4 billion), profit for the October-December quarter, a reversal from a 783 billion yen loss in the same period a year earlier. It remained in the red for the first nine months of the fiscal year that ends in March. Its 458.7 billion yen (\$3 billion) loss for April-December was still an improvement from the 912.5 billion yen in losses a year earlier.

### Zomato sees profit

**New Delhi:** Online food delivery firm Zomato Ltd Thursday reported a consolidated net profit of ₹138 crore in the December quarter. The company had posted a consolidated net loss of ₹347 crore in the same quarter last fiscal, Zomato Ltd said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operations in the third quarter of the ongoing fiscal stood at ₹3,288 crore as against ₹1,948 crore a year ago, it added. Total expenses were higher at ₹3,383 crore. The same was ₹2,485 crore in the corresponding period a year ago, the company said.

### PFC profit surges

**New Delhi:** State-owned Power Finance Corporation Thursday said it has posted an over 20 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to ₹6,294.44 crore in the December quarter, on the back of higher revenues. The company's consolidated net profit was ₹5,241.10 crore in the quarter ended December 31, 2022, according to a BSE filing. Total income in the quarter rose to ₹23,593.40 crore from ₹19,662.65 crore in the same period a year ago.



**Total outstanding dues of power distribution companies have come down to around ₹50,000 crore after the implementation of Electricity (LPS and Related Matters) Rules, 2022**

**RK SINGH** | POWER MINISTER

## CENTRE TIGHTENS WHEAT STOCK LIMIT

The government Thursday tightened wheat stock holding norms for wholesalers, big chain retailers and processors to curb hoarding and check price rises. According to the food ministry, traders and wholesalers are now allowed to maintain wheat stock of up to 500 tonne instead of 1,000 tonne, while big chain retailers can hold 5 tonne in each outlet and total 500 tonne at all their depots instead of 1,000 tonne



# SIXTH TIME IN A ROW RBI maintains status quo

The Central Bank keeps interest rate unchanged at 6.5%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 8:** The Reserve Bank of India Thursday decided to keep policy rate unchanged for the sixth time in a row in view of global uncertainty and the need to bring down retail inflation to 4 per cent.

Following RBI's decision to maintain status quo, banks and financial institutions will largely keep lending rates stable.

Announcing the decision of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das Thursday said it has decided to keep the policy repo rate unchanged on the basis of an assessment of the current and evolving macroeconomic situation.

MPC also decided to remain focused on withdrawal of accommodation to ensure that inflation progressively aligns to the target while supporting growth, he said.

These decisions are in consonance with the objective of achieving the medium-term target for Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation of 4 per cent within a band of +/- 2 per cent while supporting growth.



## HIGHLIGHTS OF RBI MPC

- Repo rate kept unchanged at 6.5%
- GDP growth for 2024-25 projected at 7%, lower than 7.3% this fiscal
- Retail inflation to average 5.4% this fiscal, to come down to 4.5% in 2024-25
- Forex reserve at \$622.5 billion; comfortable for meeting foreign obligations
- Next MPC meeting scheduled during April 3-5, 2024

**Global growth is likely to remain steady in 2024 after a surprisingly resilient performance in a turbulent year gone by. Inflation is edging down from multi-decade highs, with intermittent upticks**

**SHAKTIKANTA DAS** | GOVERNOR, RBI

**RBI had last raised repo rate in February 2023 to 6.5% after six consecutive rate hikes aggregating to 250 basis points since May 2022**

at 7 per cent and Q4 at 6.9 per cent.

As per the National Statistical Office (NSO), the country is expected to record a growth rate of 7.3 per cent in the current financial year ending March 2024.

"Domestic economic activity is strengthening. As per the first advance estimates released by the NSO real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected to grow by 7.3 per cent, year-on-year (y-o-y) in 2023-24, underpinned by strong investment activity," Das said.

On the supply side, he said that Gross Value Added (GVA) expanded by 6.9 per cent in 2023-24, with manufacturing and services sectors as the key drivers. Talking about headwinds, he said, geopolitical tensions, volatility in international financial markets and geo-economic fragmentation pose risks to the growth outlook.

**INFLATION PROJECTION**  
Referring to retail inflation,

## Khimji's new wedding campaign

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** Khimji Jewellers, Odisha's favourite jewellery brand renowned for its rich legacy of 88 years in crafting exquisite jewellery, announced the launch of its latest 'Bridal Jewellery Campaign'.

With a fresh brand identity and an unwavering commitment to craftsmanship, Khimji Jewellers introduces a campaign that redefines the narrative of bridal jewellery in India - the "NO COMPROMISE" campaign.

In recent times the jewellery industry has been flooded with loud discounts on making charges, offers and freebies. And in this whole noise, somewhere, the very essence of buying jewellery is forgotten. The result we see is jewellery, even though hall-marked, but sub-standard in finishing. This campaign by Khimji Jewellers is an effort to get the spotlight back on jewellery with world class finishes or in simpler terms "NO COMPROMISE!"

Mitesh Khimji, Managing Director of Khimji Jewellers, articulates the brand's vision,



stating, "Our heritage is steeped in generations of master craftsmen who have dedicated themselves to creating timeless pieces of art. Our campaign 'No Compromise' celebrates the enduring legacy of craftsmanship and the cherished moments of joy and pride associated with weddings. Our offerings for this year's bridal season include heavy necklace sets, chokers, kundan and jadau work, enamel work jewellery, kadas and other ornaments that adorn a bride to be. These exquisite pieces are a testament to the skill of our craftsmen that cannot be matched by anyone else in the state of Odisha."

## Equity MF inflow hits 2-yr high; SIPs reach all-time high

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** Equity mutual funds attracted a net inflow of ₹21,780 crore in January, making it the highest monthly infusion in nearly two years, propelled by investors' continued preference for small-cap funds and huge contributions from thematic funds.

Also, the latest flow was about 28 per cent higher than inflows of ₹16,997 crore seen in December despite slight volatility in equity markets.

Moreover, monthly Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) contributions reached an all-time high of ₹18,838 crore, surpassing December's ₹17,610 crore, according to the data released by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) Thursday.

Further, SIP accounts surged to 7.92 crore in January along with a milestone of 51.84 lakh new SIP registrations.

# EVOS ALCHEMY: City's tallest tower unveiled

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** EVOS Buildcon, a trailblazer in the real estate and property development sector in Odisha, unveiled EVOS ALCHEMY, a 42-storey residential tower in Raghunathpur, Bhubaneswar, setting a new standard for opulent living in the heart of the city.

The grand launch event, featuring a concert by Bollywood sensation Jubin Nautiyal, marked the beginning of a new era in luxury living.

Kalinga Keshari Rath, Founder of EVOS Buildcon, expressed his excitement, stating, "We are thrilled to introduce EVOS ALCHEMY, a landmark project in our portfolio. Designed for the discerning millennials with cosmopolitan mindsets, this premium project of EVOS promises an unparalleled living experience,

blending world-class amenities with timeless aesthetic."

Designed by the renowned architect Sanjay Puri, EVOS ALCHEMY stands tall in the upscale neighborhood of Patia, redefining the city's skyline. The 42-storey structure is set to become the tallest in Patia, offering panoramic views and striking architecture that will undoubtedly make it a landmark in Bhubaneswar.

EVOS ALCHEMY boasts palatial 3 and 4-bedroom residences, each featuring grand sun decks



that provide a serene and breathtaking ambiance. The development comprises four towers, a true architectural marvel, setting new standards for luxury living in the region.

Booking inquiries for EVOS ALCHEMY can be made through the official EVOS Buildcon website, www.evosalchemy.com. EVOS Buildcon continues to shape the future of luxury living in Odisha, and EVOS ALCHEMY stands as a testament to their commitment to delivering excellence in every project.

# India to begin LNG supplies to SL in '25

SRI LANKA WAS IN DISCUSSIONS WITH PETRONET FOR YEARS AND IT IS ONLY NOW THAT THE ISLAND NATION HAS FINALLY AGREED TO BUY THE FUEL FROM THE INDIAN FIRM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Betul (Goa), Feb 8:** Petronet LNG Ltd, India's biggest liquefied natural gas company, will in 2025 start supplying LNG to Sri Lanka, initially in containers loaded on ships and later going on to build an import terminal, its chief executive said Thursday.

Sri Lanka is seeking supply of gas in liquid form to meet requirements for generating electricity and other industries.

Petronet CEO Akshay Kumar Singh said the company will ship 850 tonne of gas daily to the island nation in containers of 17 tonne each. The supplies would be for five years during which the company will build a floating LNG receipt facility at Colombo port.

"The supplies will start in 18 months or so," he said.

The Indian firm imports LNG from Qatar, Australia and other countries at two terminals - Dahej terminal in Gujarat and a facility at Kochi in Kerala.

It plans to load LNG or super-chilled gas in containers from Kochi in containers. A ship will



make a ferry every two days, carrying 100 such containers.

At Colombo, a small regasification unit will turn the LNG into gaseous state again for use in gas-fired power plants.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of India Energy Week, Singh said Petronet also plans to commission a floating storage regasification unit (FSRU) in Colombo, for which it hopes to get Sri Lankan government approval by 2025. The facility will be built by 2028.

"We have not finalised the investment plan but it may roughly cost ₹2,500 crore," he said adding the company will do a detailed feasibility report once the Sri Lankan government approves

## Petronet is looking to build a new terminal in Odisha

FRSU proposal.

Singh said Petronet, which earlier this week extended a 7.5 million tonne a year LNG import deal with Qatar for another 20 years beyond 2028, is looking at sourcing more gas, including on long term contracts.

It is expanding the Dahej facility from 17.5 million tonne per annum to 22.5 million tonne and is looking to build a new terminal in Odisha. Also, its 5 million tonne a year Kochi facility will by next year start operat-

## BIZ BUZZ

### Kinetic Green launches E-Luna

**New Delhi:** Kinetic Green, a leading manufacturer of electric vehicles in India, proudly introduced the highly anticipated E-Luna Thursday, a stylish, multi-utility electric two-wheeler with advanced technology and features, at a prestigious event in New Delhi. This all-new electric version of the iconic Luna was unveiled at the hands of Nitin Gadkari, Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India, alongside Hanif Qureshi, IPS, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Heavy Industries, Government of India, Arun Firodia, Chairman of Kinetic Group and Sulajja Firodia Motwani, Founder and CEO of Kinetic Green, adding great significance to the momentous occasion. The E-Luna stands out in the electric vehicle market as a unique offering with unparalleled versatility. It represents innovation as it is designed to cater to personal commuting and various applications for small businesses. Its advanced electric technology and innovative features contribute to an eco-friendly and highly contemporary riding experience. E-Luna is a high-speed Electric two-wheeler that is 100% designed, engineered and Made in India with a vision that masses, and not just classes, participate in the EV revolution and benefit from the advantages of e-mobility of great savings and noiseless, emission-free ride.



### BoI Keonjhar holds review meeting

**Keonjhar:** Bank of India, Zonal Office, Keonjhar Zone, organised a review meeting at Talik Baisya Samaja Mandap chaired by Vikas Krishna, General Manager of National Banking Group. All branches were reviewed by Himandri Shekhar Dash, Zonal Manager and Shyamal Kumar Das, Deputy Zonal Manager of Keonjhar Zone. The bank organised a Corporate Customer Meet at Zonal Board Room where prospective customers were greeted and interacted with General Manager of the bank. During his address he enlightened about various schemes of the bank along with various fixed deposits and new NFO schemes with the branch managers. In this review meeting, the branch managers of all the 51 branches working under Keonjhar Zone attended the programme and were felicitated for their good performance on various business parameters. AGM SMECC, Lalit Kumar Mahanta along with other officers of the zonal office also attended the same.



# 'Booked' Varun pulls out

# Eves aim to turn the tide



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** Arresting the free-fall after a hat-trick of defeats will be the top-most agenda of Indian women's hockey team as it gears up to face the United States in its fourth FIH Pro League 2023-24 clash here Friday.

Having failed to qualify for the Paris Olympics, the Savita Punia-led women's team's performance had gone from bad to worse in recent times.

India lost 1-2 to China, followed by another 1-3 defeat at the hands of The Netherlands. The hosts lost their third match on the trot against the formidable Australia, who blanked them 3-0.

Reflecting on the team's early setbacks, skipper Savita said: "Our initial matches have posed formidable challenges, but we're

a resilient team. Each defeat has fuelled our determination to learn, adapt, and come back stronger. The upcoming clash against the USA is an opportunity to showcase our true potential and register our first win in the tournament."

On the flip side, the USA had a challenging start to the tournament as well, suffering a comprehensive 0-7 defeat against the Netherlands. Subsequent losses of 0-3 to Australia and 1-3 to China have added to their woes. The American squad, too, will be eager to bounce back in the tournament.

The Indian captain knows the significance of earning the first points in the tournament. "Both the teams are hungry for victory, and we are fully aware of the significance of securing our first points.

We have analysed our

strengths and areas of improvement, and we are ready to implement a strategic approach on the field. Our focus is on playing as a cohesive unit, supporting each other, and executing our game plan effectively."

When it comes to their head-to-head record, the USA hold a statistically advantageous position with 10 victories in 16 encounters, while the Indian team has secured four wins, and two matches ended in draws.

Speaking on that record, Savita said, "Head-to-head records are historical statistics, but what matters most is the present. We respect our opponents, but our focus is on our game and executing our strategies. The aim is clear - secure our first win in the FIH Pro League 2023-24 and build momentum for the challenges ahead."



but a calculated attempt to extort money out of me and to tarnish my reputation and image as I'm an accomplished hockey player having played for India and being an Arjuna Awardee and she knows that such a case could hamper my career and image."

Varun, who was with the Indian team in Bhubaneswar for the Pro League matches, said he will fight the allegations legally. "In order to avail my legal remedies and legal rights I would require urgent leave

from the academy and furthermore given the circumstances, I will unfortunately not be in a position to participate in the Pro League," Varun wrote.

"This incident has taken a toll on my physical and mental health and this is a very tough time for me and my family... Being a sports person I have always been taught to fight till the very end and therefore I request your support in these difficult times," he added.

Besides Tirkey, the letter has also been sent to men's team

chief coach Craig Fulton and HI secretary general Bholanath Singh.

In her FIR, the woman has alleged that Varun insisted on meeting her after they got in touch on Instagram in 2018 and she relented after some of his friends convinced her. The two eventually became friends and got into a relationship.

According to the woman, he took her to a hotel in Bangalore's Jayanagar in July 2019 and made physical relations with her despite being aware that she was a minor and her resistance.

According to HI sources, the victim was a volleyball player at the National Centre of Excellence in SAI, Bangalore and the relationship between the two started there. However, she is no longer an athlete and is currently working as an air hostess.

The woman has alleged that Varun stopped responding to her calls and messages after her father died last year. According to her FIR, Varun paid her a visit after the tragedy but began distancing himself after that.

She said that Varun resumed communication with her when she approached the police on a previous occasion. However, he went incommunicado when she persisted on the topic of marriage. He then threatened to upload her photos on social media if she exerted pressure on him.

Varun hails from Himachal Pradesh, and made his debut for India in 2017. He was promoted as a DSP in Punjab Police. He was bestowed the Arjuna award in 2021 and was a part of the 2022 Commonwealth Games silver-winning team.

## India declared joint winners of SAFF Women's U-19 C'ships



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, Feb 8:** India were Thursday declared joint winners of the SAFF Women's U-19 Football Championships with hosts Bangladesh though the visitors initially thought they have won the title through the toss of coins, in an unprecedented change of decision made by the match officials.

The match ended 1-1 after the regulation 90 minutes of play and direct penalty shootout was ordered by the referee. Interestingly, all the 11 players of both sides, including the goalkeepers, converted their penalty kicks. After the scoreline reached 11-11, the referee was about to continue the penalty shootout when she was told not to do that.

Suddenly, she called in the

captains of the two sides and the toss of the coin was done. India were the lucky side to win the toss of coin and they celebrated. The Bangladeshis protested and their players refused to leave the field of play for a long time.

There was confusion and pandemonium all along and the sizeable spectators were seen throwing a few bottles onto the field and shouting slogans.

After more than one hour, the match commissioner, who initially took the decision for tossing the coin, changed his decision and India and Bangladesh were declared joint winners.

There was confusion on the part of the match officials regarding the tournament rules, which led to the unprecedented scenes.

## Kohli's absence a blow for India: Hussain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Feb 8:** A player of the stature of Virat Kohli missing the upcoming Tests against England is a blow not just for the Indian team but also for the series and world cricket in general, feels former skipper Nasser Hussain. Hussain though supported the Indian maestro for prioritising his private life.

Kohli, who withdrew from the first two Tests against England due to personal reasons, is likely to miss the upcoming matches in Rajkot and Ranchi, and remains a doubtful starter for the Dharamsala game too. The five-match Test series is currently tied at 1-1. The third Test will be held in Rajkot from February 15-19, while the fourth game is in Ranchi from February 23-27.

"Yeah, well, nothing's confirmed at the moment. There's speculation, whether it's the next two Test matches, they're going to announce their side in the next few hours. Whether it's the next three Test matches, so nothing's confirmed, but it will be a blow.

"It'll be a blow for India. It'll be a blow for the series. It'll be a blow for world cricket. It's going to be a special series. It already has been. The first two games have been fascinating," Hussain said on Sky Sports.

Lauding the Indian batter's achievements and contributions to cricket, the former England captain said players such as Kohli deserved to spend some



time with family after serving the game with distinction for over 15 years.

"The game needs to look after the likes of Virat Kohli as well. He has been playing international cricket for more than 15 years now, and if he needs a break to be away with family, (to) get some time away from the game, we absolutely wish Virat Kohli all the best," Hussain said.

"If it means we don't get the mouth-watering possibility of

an Anderson versus Kohli contest that we have seen over the years, then so be it. But Kohli and his family and his private life has to come first."

Hussain also said that while Kohli is hard to replace, he expected KL Rahul, who missed the second Test due to pain in his right quadriceps, to return to the playing XI.

"Virat Kohli is one of the greatest batters ever to play the game and any series, and any side will miss someone of his stature. It

will be a blow for India, but as we have seen, they have got a very good lot of young batters.

"I think, just speculating, KL Rahul, who missed the second game after being brilliant over the last few months, could come back in for India," Hussain added.

Recently Kohli's close friend and former South African captain AB de Villiers had revealed on his YouTube show that the Indian batting ace is missing in action due to the impending arrival of his second child.

## Nikhat, Arundhati storm into semis at Strandja Memorial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sofia (Bulgaria), Feb 8:** Two-time World Champion Nikhat Zareen eked out a gritty win while Arundhati Choudhary too won her bout to advance to the semifinals of the 75th Strandja Memorial Tournament here Thursday.

The first Indian to take the ring, two-time gold medalist Nikhat (50kg) defeated France's Lkhadiri Wassila by a 5-0 unanimous verdict margin. However, the bout was much closer than the final result reflected as both boxers fought on an even keel before Nikhat edged past the French pugilist. Nikhat will now prepare to meet home favourite Zlatislava Chukanova in the semifinals, Saturday.

In the other match of the day, national champion Arundhati (66kg) dominated against Matovic Milena of Serbia. She will face Jessica Triebelova of Slovakia in the semifinals.

Sakshi (57kg) suffered a 2-3 defeat against Mamajonova Khumorabonu of Uzbekistan to exit the tournament in the quarters. Late Wednesday, Deepak (75kg) and Naveen Kumar (92kg) entered the quarterfinals with identical 5-0 unanimous decision wins over Asankul Uulu Sultan of Kyrgyzstan and Voisnarovic Darius of Lithuania respectively.

## Road to 2024 Paris Olympics challenging: Sindhu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** Set to return after an injury-induced break, two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu is aware the road to Paris will be "challenging" and she needs to be "smarter" in her pursuit of coveted gold medal in the French capital.

Former world champion Sindhu has been enduring a lean patch. She has suffered injury setbacks and a dip in form in the last 18 months. She suffered stress fracture on her left ankle during the successful 2022 CWG campaign and later sustained another injury on left knee during the French Open in October last year, forcing her out for three months.

"I would say, this Olympics is going to be a different experience because the 2016 and 2020 Olympics were very different. Paris will be more challenging but at the same time, I have much

more experience and I will have to be much smarter this time," Sindhu told PTI in an interaction.

The 28-year-old from Hyderabad was in Mumbai Thursday at 'Great Place To Work's FOR ALL' summit. "In women's circuit, players in the top 10-15 are tough. It is important to be focused and have a strategy so that you can switch to plan B if plan A doesn't work. It is important to stay calm as sometimes you can go blank. It is important to have a strong mindset," she said.

Desperate to find her mojo back after a series of low results, Sindhu parted ways with Korean coach Park Tae-sang early last year. She trained with Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Vidhi Chaudhary and then Malaysia's former All-England champion Muhammad Hafiz Hashim in July but success continued to elude her.

Then former All England



Champion Prakash Padukone reached out to her and soon she shifted her base to Bangalore. She is currently training under Indonesia's Agus Santoso at

Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy (PPBA), which operates out of the Padukone-Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence.

Asked if the focus is on fine-

tuning strokes and strategising against the top players, Sindhu said: "Definitely yes. After the injury, it is important to focus on physical, mental, and technique, where we focus on a lot of skills. We have been working on every aspect at the moment. I have not played tournaments in the last three months, so I will come to know where I am after I start playing tournaments. It has been pretty good so far.

"We have been talking and discussing against all the top 10-15 players in the women's circuit. I think right now Aya Ohori, An Se Young, (Akane) Yamaguchi, and Carolina (Marin) are doing well.

"So it is not just one or two players, we need to know how every player is playing and we have been discussing them but it is important to focus on our own skills and technical aspects and also physical aspect," added the current World No.11.

## India to meet Sweden in away match in Sept

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** India were Thursday drawn to meet Sweden in an away Davis Cup World Group I tie in September: The Indian Davis Cup team had blanked Pakistan 4-0 in the World Group I play-offs in Islamabad last week while Sweden lost 1-3 to Brazil at home in the Qualifiers first round.

India have never defeated Sweden in five meetings so far but will have a great opportunity to get their first win as the hosts do not boast of intimidating singles players. The last time India competed against Sweden was in 2005 when India hosted them in Delhi and lost 1-3.

Sweden have a very talented Elias Ymer, who is ranked 160, in their ranks. India have higher-ranked Sumit Nagal (121) and



if he is available, it will be an interesting tie.

India captain Rohit Rajpal seemed happy with the draw, considering that they could have been drawn against Novak Djokovic-led Serbia. "The away ties are tough because surface choice is with the home team. It will depend on what surface they choose to play on. We could have drawn tougher teams and now we have to make full use of this draw," Rajpal told PTI.