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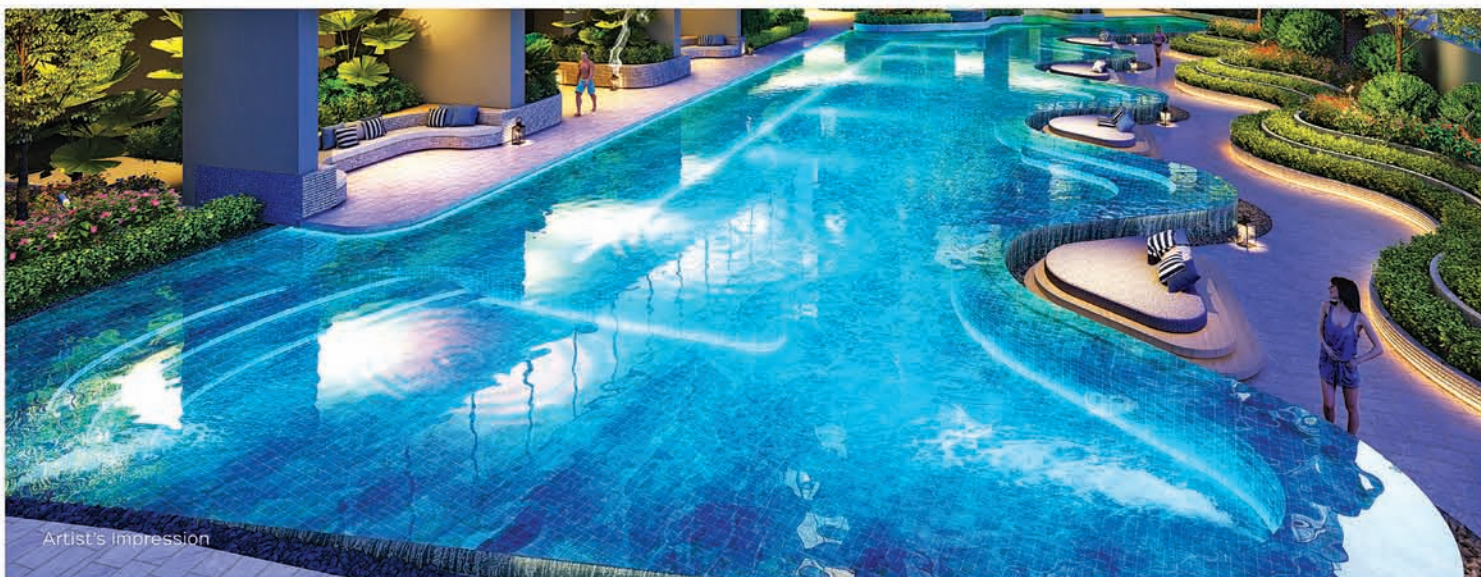
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Artist's Impression

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BHUBANESWAR - ROURKELA



BHUBANESWAR

10.02.2024	INDIA	VS	SPAIN
11.02.2024	INDIA	VS	NETHERLANDS
15.02.2024	INDIA	VS	AUSTRALIA
16.02.2024	INDIA	VS	IRELAND

WATCH LIVE ON



ROURKELA

19.02.2024	INDIA	VS	SPAIN
21.02.2024	INDIA	VS	NETHERLANDS
24.02.2024	INDIA	VS	AUSTRALIA
25.02.2024	INDIA	VS	IRELAND

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Naveen in Chennai to see ailing Sugnana

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday rushed to Chennai to meet ailing senior BJD leader V Sugnana Kumari Deo, who is under treatment at a private hospital there, CMO officials said.

The 86-year-old former MLA from Khallikote in Ganjam district was admitted to the hospital in Chennai following health complications.

She was first elected to the Assembly in 1963 and has won a total of 10 times in her political career. Deo belongs to the royal family of Khallikote.

ILLEGAL SEX DETERMINATION

Doc, wife among 5 held in Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 9: Mangalabag police arrested five persons, including a doctor and his wife, for their alleged involvement in illegal sex determination at Friends Colony here, Friday.

The accused were identified as Dr Punyaslok Das, his wife Bismita Das and their three associates - Bibhuti Sahoo, Debendra Kumar Behera and Soumyaranjan Prusty.

An ultrasound machine and Rs 40,000 in cash were recovered from their possession. "We are investigating if some other persons are involved in this," ACP (Zone II) Amitabh Mohapatra told newsmen here.

Acting on a tip-off, a team comprising Health and Family Welfare department official Dr Prasanta Samal, Cuttack Sadar sub-collector Kamaljit Das and ACP (Zone V) Krushnachandra Sathy raided Dr Punyaslok's residence at Friends Colony. "Upon reaching the doctor's place, the team found a pregnant woman and two others accompanying her. An ultrasound machine and Rs 40,000 in cash were also recovered from Dr Punyaslok's residence," the ACP (Zone II) said.

It was learnt that Dr Punyaslok has been carrying out the illegal practice at his residence with the help of his wife for long.



KODAK MOMENT: Members of Odisha Legislative Assembly pose for a photograph after the Budget Session ends sine die, Friday

OP PHOTO

Have resigned from BJD: Telkoi MLA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MLA Premananda Nayak Friday said he has resigned from his party as he was "sidelined".

Nayak, the MLA of Telkoi in Keonjhar district, said that he sent the resignation letter to BJD president Naveen Patnaik, the Chief Minister, in October last year but is yet to get a reply.

"I am resigning from the primary membership of 'Biju Janata Dal'. A valuable time, that spent with you will inspire me to serve better for my Constituency further," Nayak in the letter, a copy of which was shared with the press.

He was annoyed after the BJD inducted former Congress MLA from Champua Dhanurjay Sidu into the party, sources said.

Nayak, a tribal leader, had defeated Sidu in 2019 Assembly elections.

He has served as the Skill Development and Technical Education Minister in the BJD government.

Last month, former Lanjigarh MLA Balabhadra Majhi, also a tribal leader, resigned from the BJD.

City AIIMS removes needle from 9-year-old boy's lungs

It is the first instance of removing such a sharp foreign body without resorting to open surgery in any paediatric centre in Odisha, say doctors

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: In nothing short of a miracle, doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here have saved the life of a nine-year-old boy by removing a four-cm-long sewing needle lodged in his lungs.

Paediatricians at the premier medical institution performed a 'bronchoscopic intervention' to remove the foreign body which had pierced into the lungs of the boy from neighbouring West Bengal. Bronchoscopy is a procedure to look directly at the airways in the lungs using a thin and lighted tube (bronchoscope) which is put in the nose or mouth. It is then moved down the throat and windpipe (trachea), and into the airways.

This achievement marks the first instance of removing such a sharp foreign body without



“The entire process (bronchoscopic intervention) that took approximately an hour spared the young patient from a major life-threatening surgery (thoracotomy)”

DR RASHMI RANJAN DAS | PEDIATRICIAN, AIIMS-BHUBANESWAR

resorting to open surgery in any paediatric centre in the state,

the doctors said.

The team of paediatricians, including Dr Rashmi Ranjan Das, Dr Krishna M Gulla, Dr Ketan, and Dr Ramakrishna, performed the 'bronchoscopic intervention' to extract the needle last week.

"The entire process that took approximately an hour spared the young patient from a major life-threatening surgery (thoracotomy)," Dr Rashmi Ranjan Das said.

Thoracotomy could have jeopardised the boy's health, as it would require the removal of a portion of the lungs.

The patient, admitted for four days after the procedure, is now in stable condition and on the path to recovery.

AIIMS-Bhubaneswar executive director Dr Ashutosh Biswas extended his heartfelt congratulations to the dedicated team of doctors, praising their life-saving procedure.

Corporate leader Santrupt joins BJD

Soon after joining, Misra was appointed the BJD's national spokesperson

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: Corporate leader Santrupt Misra joined the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Friday.

Misra resigned as the director of group human resources at Aditya Birla Group in December after 27 years in the conglomerate.

"I welcome Santrupt Misra to the Biju Janata Dal. He left an important post in the corporate world to help us in good work," Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said. Soon after joining, Misra was appointed the BJD's national spokesperson.

"I will take up any work assigned to me by the BJD leadership and abide by party disci-



pline. I joined the BJD after being inspired by the ideology, personality and people-oriented work of the chief minister," he said.

Misra joined the party ahead of the elections to the three Rajya Sabha seats in the state, besides the Lok Sabha polls and Assembly elections which are held simultaneously.

Meanwhile, former Brahmagiri MLA Sanjay Kumar Das Burma has been appointed the spokesperson of the party.

CSIR IMMT seminar on aluminum industry

Bhubaneswar: Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR IMMT) in collaboration with Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) organised a seminar on 'Technological Advancements in the Aluminum Industry, Standardization, and Quality Control' at SS Bhatnagar Auditorium, CSIR IMMT here Friday.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	71595.49 ↑ 167.06
NIFTY	21782.50 ↑ 64.50
DOLLAR	83.07 ↑ ₹0.05
EURO	89.54 ↑ ₹0.06
GOLD	₹62,287 ↓ ₹156
SILVER	₹ 70,727 ↓ ₹110

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	29.2°C	27.5°C
Min Temp	17.5°C	16.5°C
Humidity	70%	70%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

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AFFIDAVIT

I, ADARSH VIKRAM SINGH, S/o Sh Sarvada Nand Singh resident of Flat No. 402, Aditya VIP Enclave, Jharpada, Bhubaneswar- 751006, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.11 dtd 28.03.2022 that now onwards I shall be known as ADARSH SINGH for all future purposes.

Mo School, British Council join hands to promote sports



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: Mo School Abhiyan, a state government initiative, recently organised a pilot programme called 'Premier League Primary Stars' in collaboration with United Kingdom's British Council to promote sports in government-run schools of the state by providing training to teachers and equipping them with the right tools.

An international collaborative project between English football's Premier League and the British Council, UK's cultural and educational outreach body, the 'Premier League Primary Stars' programme was organised across 30 government schools of the state. "The programme provides teachers and coaches with world class training, learning resources and equips them with valuable insights into the most effective approaches for utilising sport as an educational tool. It aims to inspire children to learn, be active and develop important life skills," said a British Council official.

Since its launch in India in 2019 and in Odisha in 2023, the initiative has focused on enriching school-going children's

learning experience through sports, enhancing the quality of curricula in physical education (PE) and personal, social, health, and economic education (PSHE).

"Through comprehensive training sessions conducted in collaboration with the Mo School Abhiyan Parichalana Sangathan, this project provided valuable skills to 54 teachers from 30 districts, enabling them to deliver principles-based PE and PSHE sessions in their respective schools," informed the official.

Speaking about the programme, British Council's East and Northeast India director Debanjan Chakrabarti said, "We are delighted to mark the successful conclusion of Premier League Primary Stars pilot initiative in Odisha, a testament to our enduring partnership with the state government. Odisha is rapidly emerging as the sports capital of India and this partnership defines our longstanding relationship with the state."

Similarly, Abinash Satapathy, programme officer from Mo School Abhiyan, emphasised the importance of nurturing physical wellbeing and instilling life skills in students through sports, which he said enables them to excel both on the field and in the classroom.

ORMAS SIGNS 6 AGREEMENTS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society (ORMAS) under Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department has signed six memorandums of understanding (MoU) with various government organisations for enhancement of market-led livelihood opportunities through capacity building of rural producers, training of trainers' modules and skilling initiatives.

The MoUs were signed with ICAR-Indian Institute of Maize Research (IIMR), Ludhiana, State Institute for Development of Arts & Crafts (SIDAC), World Skill Centre (WSC), Government e-Marketplace (GeM), USHA International Limited (UIL), Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation of Odisha Ltd. (TDCCOL) in Bhubaneswar Thursday. The state-level MoU signing ceremony was attended by Panchayati Raj Minister Pradip Kumar Amat, department's principal secretary Sushil Kumar Lohani, OSDA chairperson and CEO of World Skill Centre Alka Arora Mishra, Director-cum-CEO of ORMAS Guha Poonam Tapas Kumar and other delegates and senior officials from various organisations.

The MoUs promise enhancement of market led livelihood opportunities through capacity building of rural producers, training of trainers' modules, skilling initiatives for candidates in various sectors and fostering shared partnerships and economic growth.



CULTURAL EVENING: Sand artist Sudarshan Patnaik, Director, Odia Language Literature and Culture Dilip Routray, Padma Shri Debi Prasanna Patnaik, Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Culture Sujata Karthikayan and Orissa Dance Academy Secretary Aruna Mohanty at the 20th edition of the Dhauli-Kalinga Mahotsav, in Shanti Vihar on the foothills of the historic Dhauli in Bhubaneswar, Friday

OP PHOTO

₹197cr sanctioned to deck up Baleswar stn

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Friday said that ₹197 crore has been sanctioned for the redevelopment of Baleswar railway station.

The Railway Ministry said that the design of the new construction has been inspired by traditional Baleswar architecture, and integrates elements like arches, ornate facades, and locally sourced materials that reflect the city's

cultural heritage.

The station facade features wheels of the Konark temple, while the Shikhar (roof) draws inspiration from the Puri Jagannath temple. The facade showcases Saura paintings of Saura tribals.

The station, designed for next 50 years, will be having the capacity to handle 50,000 passengers per day. The station buildings on both sides of the platform will be connected with 18 metre wide roof plaza, while, according to the plan, improvements

will be made to the circulating area. There will also be covered shed while the waiting hall will be refurbished along with construction of an air conditioned lounge, the release stated.

The station will be equipped with 14 lifts, six escalators, 20 access control gates, three foot over bridges connecting all platforms, 7,000 sqm parking area, 133 KW solar panel and 1000 KLD water recycling plant, the ministry said adding that the project will be completed in 30 months time.

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Israel strikes Rafah

Israel bombs targets in Rafah, hours after Biden administration officials warn Israel against expanding its Gaza ground offensive

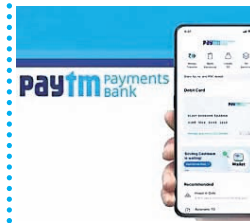
INTERNATIONAL | P5



Alizeh's admission

Actor Alizeh Agnihotri, the niece of Salman Khan, talks about the advantages of being from a film family

LEISURE | P6



More trouble for Paytm

EPFO announces that it will block deposits and credits into EPF accounts linked with Paytm Payments Bank following RBI restrictions

BUSINESS | P7



Shreyas doubtful

Shreyas Iyer's place in the Indian team for the remaining Tests against England unlikely after he complains of stiffness in his back and groin

SPORTS | BACK PAGE

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BHUBANESWAR | SATURDAY FEBRUARY 10 2024

P1

BE PRESENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: The BJP has issued a whip to its MPs in Lok Sabha as well as Rajya Sabha to ensure their presence in Parliament Saturday on account of some 'very important' legislative business, which will be tabled for discussion and passage.

Though there was no official word on the nature of the business on the last day of the last session before the Lok Sabha polls, some party leaders said there is a possibility that it may touch the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had attended the consecration ceremony at the temple January 22.

The event generated a nationwide appeal and the BJP believes that the temple issue will help create a positive atmosphere in its favour in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

The government has in the past thrown a surprise by introducing some significant items at the last minute.

SESSION ENDS

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: Assembly Speaker Pramila Mallick Friday adjourned the House sine die.

The Budget Session of the Odisha Assembly, which commenced February 5, was scheduled to continue till February 13, with seven working days.

However, the Assembly was adjourned sine die after five working days in which the vote-on-account for four months was presented by Finance Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha Thursday.

Governor Raghuraj Das addressed the inaugural session February 5 and only one adjournment motion was taken up during the five-day session.

Congress Legislature Party leader Narasingha Mishra announced that he will not contest the upcoming elections, while his party colleague Suresh Chandra Routray also announced that he would not contest the 2024 Assembly election and instead his two sons would contest the polls.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



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ON ALERT: Security personnel deployed in a sensitive area in Kanpur, Friday, a day after violence in Uttarakhand's Haldwani over the demolition of an 'illegally built' madrasa

6 killed in Uttarakhand violence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Haldwani, Feb 9: Six rioters were killed in the violence that broke out over the demolition of an illegally-built madrasa here in Uttarakhand.

A curfew was imposed and shoot-at-sight orders were issued Thursday when violence erupted in a Haldwani locality. Six rioters were killed, SP (City) Harbans Singh told PTI Friday. Seven injured people, including a journalist, are receiving

treatment at three different hospitals in the town.

Most of the 60 people admitted to different hospitals in the town were discharged after first aid. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, who visited Haldwani to take stock of the situation a day after the clashes, said it was a 'planned attack' on police personnel.

Each rioter involved in the arson and stone pelting should be identified and strictest action should be taken against

them, Dhami had said earlier in the day at a high-level meeting at his official residence in Dehradun. Uttarakhand DGP Abhinav Kumar Friday said action under the stringent National Security Act will be taken against those who attacked police personnel and indulged in arson and vandalism in Haldwani.

The DGP along with ADG (law and order) AP Anshuman visited the violence-hit town in Nainital district to assess the situation in consultation with senior officials.

Bharat Ratna for Rao, Singh, Swaminathan

MODI GOVERNMENT'S MOVE TO RECOGNISE TWO NON-BJP LEADERS RESONANT WITH POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MESSAGING



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: Former Prime Ministers PV Narasimha Rao and Charan Singh as well as Green Revolution pioneer MS Swaminathan will be conferred the Bharat Ratna, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced Friday.

The government had earlier named former Bihar CM Karpoori Thakur, a champion of backward empowerment, and LK Advani, a founding BJP member credited with charting the course of its rise through the 1990s, for the country's highest civilian honour. At five, one more than the four announced in 1999, this is the maximum number of Bharat Ratnas announced for a year. Making the announcements for Rao, whose liberalisation policies revolutionised the economy, Singh, a champion of farmer causes, and Swaminathan, a globally renowned agricultural scientist, Modi lauded their contributions to the country.

Singh, a Jat leader from western Uttar Pradesh who was PM in 1979-80, was one of the pioneers of anti-Congress poli-

Jayant signals switch to NDA

NEW DELHI: RLD president Jayant Chaudhary Friday here signalled that he would be switching over to the NDA ahead of the Lok Sabha polls as he hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his government's decision to confer Bharat Ratna on his grandfather and former PM Chaudhary Charan Singh. "Koi kasar rehni hai? Aaj main kis munh se inkaar karoon aapke sawalon ko? (Is there anything left now? How can I deny your queries today?)" Chaudhary said when asked if he was ready to join hands with the BJP.

tics at a time the party was a hegemonic political force. Congress leader Rao, who was PM for a full five-year term during 1991-96, is widely recognised for ushering in economic reforms.

The Modi government's move to recognise two stalwart politicians who came from non-BJP backgrounds is resonant with political and social messaging. It is expected to boost the BJP's efforts to present itself as a party which represents pan-India interests and aspirations and recognises leading people in different fields.

Modi said it is a matter of immense joy that his government is conferring the Bharat Ratna on Swaminathan in recognition of his contributions to the nation in agriculture and farmers' welfare.

Cancer resilient Chernobyl wolves

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New York, Feb 9: Mutant wolves around Chernobyl, where the world's worst nuclear accident took place 35 years ago, have now developed anti-cancer abilities, an advance that may open door for cure against the deadly disease, according to a study. In 1986, a nuclear reactor at the Chernobyl power plant exploded, releasing cancer-causing radiation and irradiated debris into the environment. The Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (CEZ), a 1,000 square mile zone surrounding area, cordoned off to prevent further exposure to radiation, has been recolonised by wildlife like horses and wolves.

Now, researchers at the Princeton University in the US are studying how the wolves of Chernobyl survive and thrive

despite generations of exposure and the accumulation of radioactive particles in their bodies. The team led by Cara Love, an evolutionary biologist and ecotoxicologist in Shane Campbell-Staton's lab at Princeton in 2014 went to the CEZ, radio-collared wolves, and took blood to understand the wolves' responses to cancer-causing radiation. Using these specialty GPS collars armed with radiation dosimeters, "we get

real time measurements of where they are and how much (radiation) they are exposed to," said Love.

They discovered that Chernobyl wolves were exposed to upwards of 11.28 millirem of radiation everyday for their entire lives, over six times the legal safety limit for the average human worker. Unlike wolves living exclusively outside the CEZ, Love found that Chernobyl wolves have altered immune systems, similar to cancer patients undergoing radiation treatment. And most promising, she has identified specific regions of the wolf genome that seem resilient to increased cancer risk.

Most human research has found mutations increasing cancer risk, but Love's work hopes to identify protective mutations that increase the odds of surviving cancer.



Can Preamble be amended without altering date: SC

Top court to hear plea seeking deletion of 'Socialist' & 'Secular' from Preamble

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: The Supreme Court Friday questioned whether the Preamble of the Constitution could be amended while keeping the date of adoption, November 26, 1949 intact.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta posed the question to former Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy and lawyer Vishnu Shankar Jain, who have sought deletion of the words 'Socialist' and 'Secular' from the Preamble of the Constitution.

"For the academic purpose, can a Preamble that has the date mentioned, be changed without altering the date of adoption. Otherwise, yes the Preamble can be amended. There is no problem with that," Justice Datta said.

Swamy replied, "That's precisely the question in the matter." Justice Datta further said, "This is perhaps the only Preamble I have seen which comes with a date. We give this Constitution to us on so and so date... originally these two words (Socialist and Secular) were not there."



Jain said that the Preamble of the Constitution of India comes with a specific date, therefore it cannot be amended without discussion. Swamy intervened and said that the 42nd Amendment Act was passed during the Emergency (1975-77). Justice Khanna at the outset told Swamy that the judges had received the case files early in the morning and due to the paucity in time, they had not gone through them.

The bench said that the matter required detailed discussion and posted the hearing on the two petitions to April 29. September 2, 2022, the top court had tagged Swamy's plea with other pending matter -- filed by one Balram Singh and others -- for hearing. Both Swamy and Singh have sought deletion of words 'Socialist' and 'Secular' from the Preamble.

The words 'Socialist' and 'Secular' were inserted in the Preamble of the Constitution under the 42nd Constitutional amendment moved by the Indira Gandhi government in 1976.

The amendment changed the description of India in the Preamble from a "sovereign, democratic republic" to a "sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic."

Swamy in his plea has contended that the Preamble cannot be altered, varied, or repealed.

He said in his plea that the Preamble not only indicated the essential features of the Constitution but also the fundamental conditions based on which it was adopted to create a unified integrated community.

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Our actual enemy is not any force exterior to ourselves, but our own crying weaknesses, our cowardice, our selfishness and our hypocrisy

SRI AUROBINDO



Switching Tracks

Guess who's wearing a new hat? Anil Kumar Lahoti, the ex-bigwig at the Railway Board, has just become the head honcho at the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). A seasoned railway official with an illustrious career, his appointment showcases the versatility and transferability of skills across domains.

The transition from leading the railway sector to heading the telecom regulatory body might seem unconventional at first glance. But Lahoti is not the typical railway guy. His tenure as the former Chairman and CEO of the Railway Board demonstrated his adeptness in managing complex infrastructural projects. He was pivotal in planning and executing projects like the Anand Vihar Terminal and the slick Ajmeri Gate side station building in New Delhi. He was also closely associated with planning for the redevelopment of the New Delhi railway station as a world-class station railway, including the commercial development of the land.

Lahoti's extensive experience in project management and strategic planning equips him with a unique skill set. And now he's got his eyes set on the telecom world. His appointment not only bridges sectors but also highlights the importance of leadership qualities that transcend specific domains, emphasising the value of a well-rounded and visionary leader in steering diverse sectors towards innovation and growth. Fasten your seatbelts—Lahoti's bringing the railway vibe to your calls and data!

Finance Commission's new faces

The recent announcements regarding the composition of the 16th Finance Commission paint an interesting picture of strategic appointments by the Modi sarkar. Former deputy chairman of NITI Aayog Arvind Panagariya's appointment as the chairman of the Finance Commission set the stage for the inclusion of four members of the commission.

Interestingly, two of the full-time members of the new commission are former Finance Ministry officials. Ajay Narayan Jha, a retired IAS officer, brings a wealth of experience to the commission. His prior role as expenditure secretary and involvement in the 15th Finance Commission make him a valuable asset. Annie George Mathew, formerly special secretary in the Department of Expenditure, has joined Jha in the panel, and their combined expertise hints at a comprehensive approach to financial matters, suggesting a nuanced understanding of the task.

In an interesting mix, Dr Niranjan Rajadhyaaksha, executive director at Artha Global, will bring a private sector perspective to the commission's deliberations, stressing a diverse approach to financial planning. Dr Soumya Kanti Gosh, Group Chief Executive Advisor at the State Bank of India, brings a unique blend of private and public sector insights to the table.

A lot is riding on this eminent group and its recommendations, especially when revenue sharing among states has become a rather controversial issue.

Uttarakhand's first woman Chief Secretary

Uttarakhand got its first woman chief secretary with the appointment of Radha Raturi, an IAS officer of the 1988 batch. She has succeeded batchmate Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, whose tenure ended last month. Her ascent to the highest administrative post not only underscores her achievements but also symbolizes a broader shift towards inclusivity in the state's governance.

To be sure, India has come a long way since 1970, when women made up only 9 per cent of those joining the IAS. At present, 21 per cent of serving IAS officers are women. Several states have seen women head the IAS from time to time, the most recent being Usha Sharma in Rajasthan in 2022, but the numbers are still low enough that such appointments, when they occur, create a buzz.

On her journey to Uttarakhand's top administrative post, Raturi held several important positions, first in undivided Uttar Pradesh and then in Uttarakhand. Interestingly, her husband, Anil Raturi, an IPS officer, retired as Director General of Police of Uttarakhand in 2020.

The state, which was formed in 2000, is now witnessing a transformative moment with the breaking of the glass ceiling in its administrative echelons. Meanwhile, India still awaits its first female Cabinet Secretary.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

- Music should strike fire from the heart of man, and bring tears from the eyes of woman. **LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**
- My music has a very spiritual background, a sanctity that is almost like worship. **PT. RAVI SHANKAR**
- If there is a better singer in England than Craig David, then I am Margaret Thatcher. **ELTON JOHN**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1763:** The Treaty of Paris was signed, ending territorial conflicts between France and Britain in the Seven Years' War, the North American phase of which was called the French and Indian War.
- 1898:** German poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht, whose epic theatre departed from the conventions of theatrical illusion and developed the drama as a social and ideological forum for leftist causes, was born in Augsburg.
- 1939:** The American film classic Stagecoach, widely considered to be the first "adult" western, had its world premiere; one of director John Ford's defining movies, it also elevated John Wayne to stardom.
- 1990:** The spacecraft Galileo flew past Venus on its way to Jupiter. Galileo was an American robotic space probe that studied the planet Jupiter and its moons, as well as the asteroids Gaspra and Ida. Named after the Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei, it consisted of an orbiter and an entry probe

LOL

Requesting a three day pass

An Israeli soldier who just enlisted asked the Commanding Officer for a 3-day pass. The CO says "Are you crazy? You just join the Israeli army, and you already want a 3-day pass? You must do something spectacular for that recognition!" So the soldier comes back a day later in an Arab tank! The CO was so impressed, he

asked "How did you do it?" "Well, I jumped in a tank, and went toward the border with the Arabs. I approached the border, and saw an Arab tank. I put my white flag up, the Arab tank put his white flag up. I said to the Arab soldier, "Do you want to get a three-day pass? So we exchanged tanks!"

FOCUS PAK-IRAN TENSIONS

ON BRINK OF WAR

Is the broader Middle East conflict drawing Pakistan in? The answer hinges on Iran. Not only are its proxies in Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen keeping regional hostilities at a boil, but it also backs militant groups that have attacked positions in Syria, Iraq, and Pakistan — three countries that are generally friendly toward it (to varying degrees). Recent missile and drone strikes by Iran, a would-be nuclear power, on nuclear-armed Pakistan's territory are particularly worrying.

Iran's attacks on Syria, Iraq, and Pakistan are responses to hostile activities that it believes originated within those countries. Iranian strikes in Syria, for example, followed suicide bombings that killed nearly 100 people in the Iranian city of Kerman. In a sense, these episodes were nothing new. Iran and its proxies have been battling the Islamic State (ISIS) for years. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad himself has relied heavily on Iran in fighting ISIS.

By contrast, a recent Iranian attack on the Iraqi city of Erbil, the capital of Kurdistan, was intended to punish Israel. As General Amir Ali Hajizadeh of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force told Iranian state TV on January 16, Israel's covert attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities and assassinations of its nuclear scientists have been planned from a facility in Erbil. "We had to confront this and retaliate in the name of the blood of our martyrs," he explained.

Similarly, according to Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, the strikes on Pakistan's restive Balochistan province the same day were directed at a training camp for a Sunni extremist group. The Iranians claim the group, Jaish al-Adl, specialises in attacking positions along Iran's border with Pakistan, and it recently struck a police station in south-



Pakistan has long believed that Iran is supporting separatist groups in Balochistan, and in 2017, it shot down an Iranian drone over the province

eastern Iran, killing 11 officers.

Established in 2012, Jaish al-Adl emerged from the remnants of Jundallah, a Sunni militant organisation whose strength waned after Iran captured and executed its leader, Abdolmalek Rigi, in 2010. In 2021, the IRGC carried out a cross-border operation to rescue two Iranian soldiers who were being held hostage by the group.

Following the Iranian strike last month, Ahmed Quraishi, a Middle East analyst based in Islamabad, warned that "the Pakistanis [cannot] afford to let this incident pass without a response. But retaliation, whenever it happens, will be swift and will maintain an element of surprise." That is indeed what happened: On January 18, Pakistan launched air strikes against militant groups in Iran, killing nine people.

Iran and Pakistan have accused each other for years of

sheltering militants along their shared 559-mile border. Pakistan has long believed that Iran is supporting separatist groups in Balochistan, and in 2017, it shot down an Iranian drone over the province. But the latest exchange of fire will add to Pakistan's nervousness. Clearly, Iran believes it can strike its enemies at will. "We are a missile power," Iranian Defence Minister Mohammad Reza Ashtiani recently told state media. "Where they want to threaten the Islamic Republic of Iran, we will react, and the reaction will definitely be proportionate, tough, and decisive."

Hence, one goal of Iran's recent missile strikes is to call attention to its rapidly developing, increasingly sophisticated weapons programme. Unveiled only in 2022, the "Kheibar Shekan" used last month is a solid-propellant precision-guided missile with a range of 1,450

kilometers (900 miles), long enough to reach Israel.

Iran has come a long way since it first amassed an arsenal of crude Scud missiles acquired from Libya and North Korea in the 1980s. Today, it designs and manufactures its own missiles (both offensive and defensive), and these are central to its broader military and foreign policies. Having also developed its own missile and nuclear programs, Pakistan harbours no illusions about its neighbour's growing military power.

Although the Pakistani and Iranian foreign ministers spoke by phone immediately after the Iranian strike, Pakistan nonetheless felt the need to retaliate. And although both sides said they had targeted separatist militant groups that pose cross-border threats, it is hard to believe their claims that the incident is not connected to the conflict between Israel and Hamas. With tensions rising and proxy forces being unleashed across the region, events are becoming ever more difficult to predict.

For now, though, both governments seem anxious to lower the temperature. Amir-Abdollahian has stressed that Iran "targeted only Iranian terrorists in Pakistan," not Pakistani citizens; and the Pakistanis have justified their own strikes in much the same way. Both sides highlight that they have had friendly relations for decades, and that they intend to return to that status quo. But as long as proxy armies and forces are committed to raising tensions and exploiting the fog of war, no one can dismiss the risk of renewed violence between these two regional powers.

The writer, a former finance minister of Pakistan and vice president of the World Bank, is Chairman of the Shahid Javed Burki Institute of Public Policy.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

SPECTRUM ELECTION

Domestic poll impact on foreign policy

In developing countries, elections at home do not usually have serious foreign policy issues. Only the big countries having international markets and influence make foreign policy an election issue at home. In the age of globalisation as well as interdependence between countries, the trend may be changing. Let us examine this assumption.

Interestingly, 64 countries in the world, including the seven most populous countries, are going to elections in 2024. No wonder, this year is being called 'world election year'. What would be the impact of these elections on their respective foreign policies and on world politics at large? Remember that a few countries that deeply matter to India have just had their elections and are going to have another round.

Bhutan had its elections last year, and the incumbent Prime Minister got re-elected and was visiting India at the time of writing, 7th of February. Bangladesh had Parliament elections and Sheikh Hasina got re-elected. Her Foreign Minister is likely to come to Indian soon. Maldives also had its presidential election and tension with India has begun since as a pro-China candi-

date became the President.

Also, countries where elections are going to be held this year matter to India in their foreign policies. To start with, Pakistan went to the polls on 8th of February. New Delhi may hope for a thaw in India-Pakistan tensions and revival of bilateralism.

Sri Lanka is going to have both presidential and parliamentary elections sometime this year. New Delhi would expect the ruling dispensation in Colombo to win the elections.

Let us turn to P-5 countries, the big powers. Russia will have its elections from 15-17 March to re-elect the powerful President Vladimir Putin.

In Europe, another powerful bloc, the European Union goes to elections between 6 and 9th of June. Although EU elections are not much talked about here, the results would be important in terms of quite a few important issues.

Now on the big one, elections are to be held this year in the United States. With some reservations, the US is the sole super power today. Washington views India to be the counterpoint to China. To be sure, New Delhi is still not there, although it has the

potential with right partnerships to become an alternative hub for manufacturing etc to China. There is going to be a rematch between Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Some observers call it a contest in gerontocracy as both Donald Trump and Biden, in their age, are much past their prime.

Britain, the closet ally of the US will also have elections later this year. The current Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has to announce the time for the election. As per opinion polls, the Labour Party is sure to come to power. However, New Delhi wishes to complete the Free Trade Agreement with Britain before the elections, lest they start the negotiations all over again.

In the Global South, out of the countries which matter, Indonesia is going to presidential elections on 14th of February. Joko Widodo who has reached his term limit is putting forward his son against Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto. If any of them do not reach the majority mark, there will be a run-off on 26th of June. Mexico has a single term presidency so it will have a new government by June-end. South Africa, which is aligned with India's position in

BRICS and on some other issues is going to have a hotly contested election, so New Delhi will watch it carefully.

Finally, back home, India is going to have its Parliament elections in April-May. There is a lot of debate and some agitation on the autonomy of the institutions, misuse of enforcement agencies, use or misuse of EVMs etc. Notably, only four countries in the world use EVMs. The results of elections in India will determine her foreign policy mainly towards its neighbours.

As said before, domestic elections are drawing in foreign policy issues. In the past, foreign policy used to be based on national consensus. But this is no more the case. Many democracies are perceived to be turning to autocracies. Hence, many observers are suggesting that world democracy is on the ballot this year. Therefore, not only domestic politics, but foreign policies and world politics are going to be impacted by the elections this year.

The writer is Secretary General, Association for Democratic Socialism

INFIA



DK Giri

WITH MORE THAN 60 COUNTRIES GOING TO POLLS THIS YEAR, 2024 IS BEING RIGHTLY CALLED THE 'WORLD ELECTION YEAR'

Shameless act

Sir, While there is a strong allegation that the BJP is winning the elections only by tampering with the Electronic Voting Machines and the electorate is demanding to go in for the tamper-proof ballot system in the ensuing Parliamentary elections this year, the saffron party has proved that they are capable of tampering with even the ballot system of voting! The shameless manner in which the Returning Officer who belongs to the BJP went on to openly deface the ballots of the opposition members to declare the BJP person elected as Mayor of Chandigarh not only exhibits his audacity and arrogance but also the fact that the saffron party will stoop down to any extent to win elections, whether for the Corporation or the Parliament. One really wonders whether the stinking remarks of the Chief Justice of India on the above despicable act of the BJP as 'Murder of Democracy' will have any effect on the inborn highly condemnable traits of the saffron party. It hence becomes paramount that the ensuing general election is conducted using the ballot system, and both the elections and the counting of votes monitored by the Supreme Court-appointed committees. However, the confident assertion of Prime Minister Modi that his National Democratic Alliance would annexe more than 400 seats in the general elections makes one wonder whether his statement is based on the support of the electorate or the allegations that the EVMs are tampered with by the BJP!

Tharcus S Fernando, CHENNAI

Alarming alzheimer's

Sir, Alzheimer's causes the person to lose memory and can no longer have feelings of pleasure and joy nor control of their own organs. But it can be prevented by changing some daily routines. Each morning, when you wash your face in front of a mirror, do the exercise as below: Stretch out your tongue and move it to the right, then to the left, 10 times. The tongue exercise helps to control and prevent Alzheimer's. Medical research has found that the tongue has a connection with the big brain. When our body becomes old and weak, the first sign to appear is that our tongue becomes stiff, and often we tend to bite ourselves. Frequently exercising your tongue will stimulate the brain, help to reduce our thoughts from shrinking, and thus achieve a healthier body.

CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

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

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Maoists trying to regain lost ground in Malkangiri

Posters surface in some villages of Swabhiman Anchal, spark fear among people

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Feb 9: Maoists are trying to regain their lost ground in Malkangiri, sources said here Friday. They are trying to strengthen the organisation and in the recent past, there has been a surge in their activities, the sources added. They informed that small groups of Maoists are regularly visiting villages in Swabhiman Anchal and those bordering Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in this district to assess the situation.

The activities of the Red rebels came to the fore, after posters were found at various places in the villages of Masughati, Patel, Papulur and a few more under Kalimela police limits. The posters written in Odia and Telugu are signed by Ganesh, the organising secretary of Andhra-Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee of Maoists (AOBSZC). The surfacing of the posters has sparked panic among the villagers.

The Maoists in the posters have asked villagers not to cooperate with former ultras, Ramesh Rakesh and Swapna Tuleshi. It has been stated that the two are extorting money from the people for which they have been expelled from the party. The Maoists have asked people to detain the two if they enter any village.

Since the surfacing of posters, police are probing the matter. However, the presence of the posters proves that Maoists are active in the district once again. With the elections drawing near, it is a worrying issue for the district administration and the cops. In the recent past, police have seized bombs, grenades, gelatin sticks and other ammunitions concealed in various hideouts in Kalimela. It is a pointer to the fact that the Left wing extremists are trying to

CRPF-Maoist gun battle in Sunabeda sanctuary



Nuapada: A gun battle broke out between the CRPF personnel and Maoists at Barakote ghat inside Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary under Komana police limits in Nuapada district in the wee hours of Friday. After a few days of silence, the Maoists have shown their presence in the area leaving the local residents panic-stricken.

According to reports, the CRPF jawans of 216 Battalion in Barakote camp undertook a combing operation inside Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary Thursday night. However, when the jawans were returning to their camp Friday morning after their operation ended, they had a faceoff with the

Maoists.

The outlawed Red rebels first opened fire on the CRPF personnel near Barakote ghat. The jawans also fired in retaliation resulting in a brief gun battle inside the dense forest. The Maoists then could not face the wrath of the CRPF jawans and managed to flee the spot taking advantage of the dense forest cover.

The CRPF personnel then started a search operation at the encounter site following the incident. During the search, the body of a dog along with Maoist items has been recovered. However, no injury from any side was reported in the exchange of fire.

disrupt peace in this district.

Sources informed that in the last couple of weeks a rebel outfit from Chhattisgarh visited Papulur village on a number of occasions to assess the situation. They even talked to some of the villagers. Sources added that Maoists from Andhra Pradesh have been visiting many villages in the border areas on a regular basis. They are warning people not to promote any government project or work for the local administration.

Amid these developments, po-

lice have intensified search operations in various places of Kalimela and other parts of this district. Police officials of this district are regularly holding meetings with their counterparts in Chhattisgarh to assess and keep a close watch on the developments. A number of CCTV cameras have been put up at strategic places in villages where the Maoists are expected to visit. "We will try our best to thwart their attempts to disrupt peace in Malkangiri district," a senior police officer said.



FOR LORD'S SOJOURN: Priests perform rituals at Jagannath temple in Nayagarh old town before flagging off of timber log laden trucks to Puri for construction of chariots for Rath Yatra, Friday

Police crack murder case of missing duo

The mastermind of the murder plot is the complainant, who is also the brother of one of the deceased

PNN & AGENCIES

Balasure, Feb 9: The police have solved a missing and murder mystery involving two persons in Balasure with the arrest of six accused, including a woman, and forwarded them to court Friday.

The mastermind of the murder plot is the complainant, who is also the brother of one of the deceased, Balasure Superintendent of Police Sagarika Nath told newsmen.

She said the murder conspiracy was hatched by the complainant, Bijay Rout, of Kansa village under the Nilagiri police station, who gave supari of ₹1.7 lakh to the assailants to eliminate his younger brother, Bhabani Rout, 21, due to nagging family and property disputes.

Bijay lodged an FIR with police February 6, stating that his brother Bhabani went missing since the previous evening and that he was seen along with another person, Manoranjan Mohapatra, on a bike.

The next morning, his bike was found parked near a lake, and near it, his slippers with blood stains too were found, as he men-



tioned in the FIR.

Suspecting it was murder, the police began an investigation with a scientific team. They also pressed the ODRAF team and Fire brigade personnel to trace the bodies in the lake, popularly known as 'blue lake'.

After three days of searching, the bodies were fished out of the lake water. The police intensified their investigation from all angles leading to the breakthrough in the case.

Manoranjan Mohapatra, the other person with Bhabani, was killed by the accused gang as he witnessed the murder of Bhabani, police learned during the investigation.

The conspiracy was hatched by the prime accused, Bijay Rout, before three months to eliminate his brother Bhabani Rout due to various family feuds.

Accordingly, he made a plot with a criminal gang, and the deal of supari amounting to ₹1.7 lakh was finalised.

On the fateful day of February 5, the accused called Bhabani to the lakeside, the crime scene, on the pretext of a party Bhavani arrived with Manoranjan on a bike at the site.

The accused, after killing Bhabani with a sharp weapon, also killed Manoranjan as he witnessed the crime. Sub-Divisional Police Officer

(SDPO) Sasanka Sekhar Beura said ₹70,000 was recovered from the possession of the accused. The wife of the prime accused is among the six apprehended in the murder, he said.

Advertisement for EAST COAST RAILWAY tender No. 51-KUR-TRD-OT-2023-24. Details include tender value, completion date, and bidding information.

Advertisement for EAST COAST RAILWAY E-AUCTION OF MULTI PURPOSE STALL. Details include station location, auction start/end dates, and contact information.

Man held for raping, posting vulgar photos of daughter's friend

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jajpur, Feb 9: Police arrested a 54-year-old man in Jajpur district for allegedly raping his daughter's friend and uploading her obscene photos after she refused to have physical relationship with him, a police officer said Friday.

According to the complaint filed by the 23-year-old woman at Panikoili police station, the accused happens to be the father of her friend. The accused was known to her as she had visited her friend's house many times. "I had gone to my friend's house to meet her last year. When I reached there, my friend and her mother were not at home. When I inquired about my friend, her father who was alone in the house told me she had gone outside and would return after some time, so I waited in the house to meet her. Taking advantage of the situation he sexually assaulted me," the woman stated in her complaint.

However, she did not reveal it to her friend or anybody else as the accused apologised for the incident. The victim said

the accused raped her again when she was in her relative's house in Cuttack a couple of months back. He also filmed the act on his mobile phone, she stated in her complaint.

The accused then threatened to make the photos of their intimate moments viral if she did not continue the physical relationship, as per the complaint.

Meanwhile, the marriage of the woman was finalised to a youth in the area. The accused came to know about the marriage and asked her to continue the relationship but the woman refused to have a relationship with him as her marriage was already finalised.

The accused then posted her obscene photos on social media last week.

The woman then filed a complaint after learning from her friends about her obscene photos posted on social media Tuesday, said Lizarani Biswal, IIC, Panikoili police station.

Based on the complaint, police registered a case under the relevant sections of the IPC and IT Act and arrested the accused, the IIC said.

Woman kills toddler by slitting throat

Bolangir: In a chilling incident, a woman allegedly killed her 6-month-old son by slitting his throat here at Khaliapali village under Puntala police limits in Bolangir district Friday morning. The accused woman has been identified as Meena Nag (38), wife of Rabindra Nag of Khaliapali village. According to reports, Meena slit her infant's throat at home Friday morning for unknown reasons. The accused woman has gone missing after committing the crime. When the family members found the baby in a pool of blood, they immediately rushed him to Tarabha hospital. Later, the baby was shifted to the Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital where the doctor declared him dead. On receiving information, the Puntala police started an investigation into the incident. A preliminary probe suggests that the woman is mentally unstable.

Court sentences 3 ganja peddlers to 10 years RI

PNN & AGENCIES

Berhampur, Feb 9: A court in Ganjam district has sentenced three ganja peddlers to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) in an NDPS case registered by the Excise department around one-and-a-half-years ago.

Additional District Judge-cum-Special Judge RK Das pronounced the judgment Thursday and also imposed a fine of ₹1 lakh on the three convicts, identified as Dasarathi Gomango, Iras Sabar and Jaydeb Jena, all hailing from Gajapati district.

They will undergo an additional six months of imprisonment if they fail to pay the fine amount, additional public prosecutor Bikram Kumar Kunda said. The court gave the verdict after recording the statements of witnesses and verifying documents, he said.

The trio was arrested by the Excise department of Berhampur and around 100 kg of ganja was seized from their car on Balipada-Dengapadar Road October 30, 2022.

A case under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act was registered and the trio was in judicial custody, sources said.

'Add Kurukh language in 8th schedule'



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 9: The members of All India Kurukh Parah Yuvak Sangh (AIKPPS) and five other tribal organisations Friday staged a massive rally here calling for the inclusion of Kurukh language in the eighth schedule of the Constitution, a long-

standing demand of the tribals.

Kurukh is the dominant language of the tribals irrespective of religious affiliations. The tribals have been demanding for long the inclusion of their language in the 8th schedule. As declared earlier, over 7,000 tribals from Odisha, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh participated in the rally Friday.

The rally began from Birsa Munda Chowk after offering homage to the tribal icon. Then, the participants walked till the ADM office here and handed over a memorandum to him addressed to the President of India. Majority of the women were dressed in traditional white and red sarees, which they generally wear during their religious celebrations. The men were dressed in white shirts and dhoti.

"We will continue to press for inclusion of our language and its script 'Kurukh bana' in the 8th schedule in a peaceful manner," said Bijaya Beck, one of the office bearers.

Another woman participant said, "This will benefit us. Our children will get more jobs and other opportunities. By denying this the government is denying us our fundamental rights."

Advertisement for Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) 2nd National Call for Proposals Under E-YUVA Scheme. Details include fellowship grants, support for students, and application information.

international

of the day quote

I have no desire for diplomacy with South Korea and the North will annihilate its rival if provoked

KIM JONG UN | NORTH KOREAN LEADER

Iran will never leave the negotiation table and is insistent on its right to develop nuclear technology for 'peaceful' purposes

EBRAHIM RAISI | IRAN'S PRESIDENT

I do believe that the American people are going to vote in favour of what is in the best interest of the future of our country and in particular our children

KAMALA HARRIS | US VICE PRESIDENT



The international financial and development institutions should be reformed to reflect the interests of the Global South

ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

RUSSIANS ENTER N KOREA

A group of Russian tourists headed to North Korea from Vladivostok airport in Russia's Far East Friday, likely the first foreign travellers from any country to enter the isolated state since the pandemic



Asante King Osei Tutu II greets delegates from the Fowler museum at the Manhyia Palace in Kumasi, Ghana. Seven royal artifacts which were looted by British forces from Ghana's ancient Asante kingdom in the 19th century were returned by UCLA's Fowler museum, the latest of a series of stolen treasured items now being repatriated to several African countries

Israeli bombs target Rafah

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rafah (Gaza Strip), Feb 9: Israel bombed targets in overcrowded Rafah early Friday, hours after Biden administration officials warned Israel against expanding its Gaza ground offensive to the southern city where more than half of the territory's 2.3 million people have sought refuge.

Airstrikes overnight and into Friday hit two residential buildings in Rafah, killing eight Palestinians, and a third strike targeted a kindergarten-turned-shelter for the displaced in central Gaza, killing at least four people, according to hospital officials and AP journalists who saw bodies arriving at hospitals.

U.S. President Joe Biden said Thursday that Israel's conduct in the war, ignited by a deadly Oct. 7 Hamas attack, is "over the top," the harshest U.S. criticism yet of its close ally and an expression of concern about a soaring civil-

ian death toll in Gaza.

Israel's stated intentions to expand its ground offensive to Rafah also prompted an unusual public backlash in Washington.

"We have yet to see any evidence of serious planning for such an operation," Vedant Patel, a State Department spokesman, said Thursday. Going ahead with such an offensive now, "with no planning and little thought in an area where there is sheltering of a million people would be a disaster."

John Kirby, the National Security Council spokesperson, said an Israel ground offensive in Rafah is "not something we would support."

The comments signalled intensifying US friction with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who pushed a message of "total victory" in the war this week, at a time when US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was in Israel to press for a cease-fire deal in exchange for the release of dozens of Hamas-held hostages.

SHORT TAKES

Astronauts return

Cape Canaveral: Astronauts from Turkiye, Italy and Sweden returned to Earth Friday, ending a private three-week mission to the International Space Station. The trio were accompanied by a retired NASA astronaut who now works for Axiom Space, the Houston company that arranged the chartered flight. The crew returned in a SpaceX capsule that parachuted into the Atlantic off the Florida coast. Turkiye celebrated Alper Gezeravci's launch from Cape Canaveral last month. A former fighter pilot and captain for Turkish Airlines, he became the first person from his country to fly in space.

Prince Harry settles phone-hacking case

London: Britain's Prince Harry will receive a "substantial" payout after he settled the remainder of his phone hacking claims against the Mirror Group Network (MGN) of newspapers, it emerged at a hearing in the High Court in London Friday. The lawyer for Duke of Sussex, who is now based in the US with wife Meghan and kids Archie and Lilibet, said at the costs hearing that the newspaper publisher had now accepted it would pay "a substantial additional sum" by way of damages and Harry's legal costs. It follows a High Court ruling in December last year that phone hacking was carried out at MGN from 1996 and 2011 and was "widespread and habitual" from 1998.

Volcanic eruption in Iceland subsides

London: A volcanic eruption in southwestern Iceland appears to have subsided, though scientists are warning that the area may experience further eruptions in the coming months. Iceland's Meteorological Office said late Thursday that the eruption had decreased significantly. The eruption began at about 6 am local time Thursday in the area northeast of Mount Sylingarfell, the Met Office said. It prompted the evacuation of the popular Blue Lagoon thermal spa and cut off heat and hot water to several communities on the Reykjanes Peninsula in southwestern corner of the island.

Acclaimed Japanese conductor dies

Tokyo: Seiji Ozawa, the Japanese conductor who amazed audiences with the lithe physicality of his performances during three decades at the helm of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, has died, his management office said Friday. He was 88. The internationally acclaimed maestro, led the BSO from 1973 to 2002, longer than any other conductor in the orchestra's history.

Biden hits back at special counsel

The special counsel report said he had kept secret documents related to military and foreign policy in Afghanistan after serving as Vice President until 2017

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 9: In a damaging report ahead of the November 5 polls, a special US counsel has said that President Joe Biden "willfully" mishandled classified documents as a private citizen but concluded that it would be difficult to convict him as he comes across as an "elderly man with a poor memory".

The special counsel report said he had kept secret documents related to military and foreign policy in Afghanistan after serving as Vice President until 2017. The comment by Special Counsel Robert Hur in his 345-page report described Biden, 81, as "an elderly man with poor memory", prompting a furious response from the President who held an impromptu press conference at the White House during which he asserted that his "memory is fine."

The report was released after an investigation that lasted more than a year and related to classified files found at Biden's home and former private office from 2022-23. The report revealed for the first time that the documents were classified as Top Secret - the

highest level of classification, and related to Afghanistan.

The files included notebooks containing Biden's entries about national security and foreign policy matters "implicating sensitive intelligence sources and methods". The report criticised Biden for sharing some of the sensitive material in those notebooks with a ghostwriter for his memoir.

Hur said: "We conclude that the evidence does not establish Mr Biden's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt." "Prosecution of Mr Biden is also unwarranted based on our consideration of the aggravating and mitigating factors."

Biden's memory was significantly limited, both during his recorded interviews with the ghostwriter in 2017, and in his interview with the Special Counsel's office in 2023, he said. "And his cooperation with our investigation, including by reporting to the government that the Afghanistan documents were in his Delaware garage, will likely convince some jurors that he made an innocent mistake, rather than acting willfully—that is, with intent to break the law as the statute requires," Hur wrote.



Nawaz urges rival parties to join hands



A vendor arranges shoes next to an election campaign poster of Pakistan's jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan party's candidate for Parliamentary election at a market, in Lahore, Pakistan, Friday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 9: Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif Friday called for a unity government as the cash-strapped Pakistan appeared to be heading towards a hung Parliament, with independent candidates backed by jailed ex-premier Imran Khan's party springing a surprise by winning 92 out of the 226 seats for which results were declared so far.

Addressing the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supporters at the party's Central Secretariat in Lahore, 74-year-old Sharif said his party respects the mandate of all parties, including the independent candidates backed by Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party.

According to the latest Election Commission data, results of 226 constituencies out of 265 were declared.

Independent candidates (mostly supported by PTI) bagged 92 seats while PML-N got 64, Pakistan Peoples Party secured 50, Muttahida Qaumi Movement won 12 and other

parties got 8 seats.

To form a government, a party must win 133 seats out of 265 in the National Assembly. Election to one seat was postponed after the death of a candidate. Overall, 169 seats are needed to secure a simple majority out of its total 336 seats, which include the reserved slots for women and minorities.

Votes are still being counted after Thursday's general election which was marred by allegations of rigging, sporadic violence and a countrywide mobile phone shutdown. Changing his stance of not forging any alliance with any party, Sharif on Friday said that there is a need for all the political parties to sit together and form a government to pull Pakistan out of its difficulties.

"We can't hold elections again and again," he said. "We were all sitting together yesterday but didn't address you because the results were not in." "Our party has emerged as single largest winning party in the country after Thursday's polls. To steer Pakistan out of crises, we want

Jaishankar holds talks with Wong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Perth, Feb 9: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Friday met his Australian counterpart Penny Wong and discussed the bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership, the Indo-Pacific region, situation in West Asia and other regional and global topics.

Jaishankar is in the Australian city of Perth to attend a two-day conference on the Indian Ocean beginning Friday. Jaishankar joined Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe, Australian Foreign Minister Wong and her Singaporean counterpart Vivian Balakrishnan at the inaugural session of the conference.



"Delighted to meet FM @SenatorWong of Australia in Perth today as we gather for the 7th Indian Ocean Conference. Good exchange on our comprehensive strategic partnership and convergence on matters related to the Indian Ocean. Also discussed the Indo-Pacific, situation in West Asia and other regional and global topics," Jaishankar posted on X along with some photographs of the meeting.

In another post, he said "Pleased to join President @RW_UNP, FM @SenatorWong and FM @VivianBala at the opening of the 7th Indian Ocean Conference in Perth. Delighted to welcome ministerial colleagues from across the Indian Ocean."

The 'Indian Ocean Conference' is a flagship consultative forum for countries in the region, organised annually by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in association with the India Foundation.

Singapore PM encourages couples to have more babies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, Feb 9: With many Chinese-origin families considering children born in the Year of the Dragon to be "especially auspicious", Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on Friday urged married Singaporean couples to have babies during the year and assured them his government's support.

In his annual Chinese New Year message, Lee said the dragon is a "symbol of power, strength and good fortune". "So now is as good a time as any for young couples to add a 'little dragon' to your family," said the Prime Minister who celebrates his birthday on February 10. Lee was born in the year of Dragon in 1952.

"We will build a 'Singapore

Made for Families', and continue supporting your marriage and parenthood aspirations," The Channel News Asia quoted the 72-year-old Lee as saying. Support for infant caregiving and work-life harmony has been "progressively strengthened" to see parents through their children's formative years, he said, adding that government-paid paternity leave was recently doubled from two weeks to four weeks on a voluntary basis.

Such measures will "lighten the burden on parents, but they are merely enablers", said the prime minister. "Ultimately, couples will decide whether to have children for their own reasons. I hope more will decide to go ahead, and I am confident they will find parenthood a deeply rewarding and ful-



filling journey."

He added that he hoped his encouragement "prompts more couples to try for a baby", although he acknowledged that "the decision is a very personal

one". The Prime Minister also said families should be celebrated as Chinese New Year is celebrated.

"Families are at the heart of our society. Our families give us

unwavering strength and support, cheer for us in our triumphs and stand by us through adversity. They are a big part of our sense of identity, belonging and purpose. Through our families, we pass on our aspirations and values from generation to generation," said Lee.

"One important element of family life is having and bringing up children. It is a great joy for parents to bring kids into this world, and to watch them learn and grow, reaching one milestone after another and growing up year-by-year.

"Grandparents, like me, share this joy too. We dote and fuss over our grandchildren, helping the parents to bring them up and contributing our part in this journey filled with happiness, purpose and love," he said.

Singaporeans will celebrate Chinese New Year this weekend, February 10-11, and will get an additional holiday on Monday in lieu of the celebration falling on Sunday as it is for all festivals.

The Prime Minister also noted that fertility rates around the world have been declining, especially in "developed societies" such as Singapore.

Singapore's resident total fertility rate hit an all-time low of 1.05 in 2022, dipping below the previous record of 1.1 in 2020 and the 2021 figure of 1.12.

The drop "was partly due to the Tiger year in the lunar calendar, which is generally associated with lower births among the Chinese", Minister in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Indraneel Rajah had said in Parliament in February 2023.

national

of the day quote

The trading of allegations between the BJP and the Congress, and proving each other wrong through a white paper and black paper ahead of the Lok Sabha election is nothing but an exercise done for electoral gain

Today, when the Basic Education Council is providing the same curriculum, it is not necessary for us to send our children to private schools

People's mandate was in favour of Hemant Soren, who formed a popular government and started delivering the goods even though economic activities came to a standstill for two years because of the pandemic

SHORT TAKES

3 killed over sharing logs of felled tree

Gumla: Three members of a family were hacked to death with an axe in Jharkhand's Gumla district Friday allegedly over sharing of logs of a felled tree, police said. One person was injured in the incident that happened in Sakrauli village in Sisai police station area around 3 pm, they said.

Court grants interim bail to Rabri Devi

New Delhi: A Delhi court Friday granted interim bail to former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi and daughters Misa Bharti and Hema Yadav till February 28 in the Railways land-for-job case. Special Judge Vishal Gogne passed the order after the ED sought time to file a reply to the regular bail applications filed by the accused persons -- Devi, Bharti, Yadav and Hridayanand Chaudhary.

Miss World pageant to take place in India

New Delhi: The much anticipated 71st edition of Miss World will be held in India from February 18 to March 9, the organisers said Friday. With its latest edition, the coveted international beauty pageant is making a return to the country after nearly three decades. The pageant will commence with "The Opening Ceremony" and "India Welcomes the World Gala" by the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) in New Delhi February 20.

Haldwani violence a conspiracy: BJP MPs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: Several MPs from BJP Friday said the violence in Uttarakhand's Haldwani appeared to be a "conspiracy" and warrants strict action against the guilty, while a Shiv Sena lawmaker termed it a result of "polarisation" created by the saffron party for electoral gain.

Asked about the Thursday violence, BJP Rajya Sabha MP Harnath Yadav said, "The incident in Haldwani is a conspiracy. Bombs, country pistols, and other weapons were used, and government officials and police were attacked. There should be an order to shoot rioters at sight. There is no need to be lenient with them."

The MP from Uttar Pradesh said the Uttarakhand government should "search every house," and take action against the perpetrators. BJP MP and former Uttarakhand Chief Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said the anti-encroachment drives to remove illegal structures is not a new thing.

"Unfortunately, the attack on police personnel (in Haldwani) was sad. As the CM (Pushkar Singh Dhami) has said, strict action will be taken against the culprits," he said in statement.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi blamed the violence on "polarisation" created by BJP. "When the intention is just polarisation, this is what happens. Curfews are imposed, look at the incidents in Manipur. In every state, BJP has created a situation where it will benefit from polarisation. Their tried and tested model is to polarise people for votes," she said.



We are aware of problems faced by our farmers. Even today, many farmers are living in poverty. To ensure they get the right price (for their produce) and improve their livelihood, we need to work even harder in this direction

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT OF INDIA

PM TAKES LUNCH WITH MPs

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had lunch with some MPs belonging to different parties at the Parliament canteen Friday. BJD leader Sasmit Patra, RSP leader N K Premachandran, TDP's K Ram Mohan Naidu, BSP's Ritesh Pandey and some BJP leaders, including Union minister L Murugan and Heena Gavit, were with Modi as they had lunch together



Parl passes Bill to curb paper leaks

The Bill was passed through a voice vote in the Rajya Sabha, after amendments proposed by some Opposition members were rejected. The Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha February 6



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 9: Parliament Friday passed a Bill that aims to curb malpractices and irregularities in competitive examinations, and entails provisions for a maximum jail term of 10 years and a fine up to ₹1 crore for offences.

The Bill was passed through a voice vote in the Rajya Sabha, after amendments proposed by some Opposition members were rejected. The Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha February 6.

Replying to a discussion on the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024 in the Rajya Sabha, Union minister Jitendra Singh said the youth power of the country is "vital" and asserted that the Bill is meant to deter those who are playing with their future.

He asserted that merit cannot be allowed to be hijacked by non-merit.

"We can't allow vital youth power of this country to be surrendered or sacrificed in the hands of a handful few...Very

THREE J&K BILLS PASSED

New Delhi: The Parliament Friday cleared a Bill to add four groups including Paddari and Pahari in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir. The house approved the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which adds two other communities -- Gadda Brahmin and Koli -- to the Scheduled Tribes list. The Upper House also cleared the Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 and the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Castes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024 by voice vote. The Lok Sabha had cleared the Bills earlier this week. The Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Laws (Amendment) Bill-2024 seeks to provide reservation to Other Backward Classes in panchayats and municipalities in Jammu and Kashmir and bring consistency in the local body laws of the Union territory with the provisions of the Constitution. Currently, there is no provision for reservation of seats for OBCs in panchayats and municipalities in Jammu and Kashmir.

cautiously, we have kept the bona fide candidate out of purview of the law, be it a job aspirant or a student. So the message does not go that this new legislation is meant to harass the youth of this country. It is only meant to deter those who are playing with their future, and thereby the future of the nation," Singh, the Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions said.

(Bill)... It is a dynamic journey we have started," Singh said.

The Bill seeks to deal sternly with malpractices and irregularities in competitive examinations with provisions for a maximum jail term of 10 years and a fine up to ₹1 crore.

The Bill also proposes a high-level national technical committee on public examinations that will make recommendations to make the computerised examination process more secure.

Shinde govt under fire over killing of Sena (UBT) leader

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 9: The Eknath Shinde government in Maharashtra came under opposition fire Friday over the murder of a Shiv Sena (UBT) leader during a 'Facebook Live' session and faced calls for the resignation of Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis as the Mumbai crime branch launched a probe into the sensational killing and made the first arrest.

The killing of former Shiv Sena (UBT) corporator Abhishek Ghosalkar (40) Thursday in Mumbai by local businessman and 'social worker' Mauris Noronha came days after a functionary of the ruling Shiv Sena was shot at inside a police station by a BJP legislator in adjoining Thane district as the Opposition alleged breakdown in law and order in Maharashtra.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) led by Uddhav Thackeray demanded the dismissal of the Shinde government citing deteriorating law and order, while its ally, the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) and the Congress sought the resignation of deputy CM Fadnavis, who holds the home portfolio.

Opposition parties also slammed Fadnavis for his apparent off the cuff remarks over the killing of Ghosalkar.

Replying to a query during a media interaction, Fadnavis termed the opposition's charges on the law and order situation as politically motivated.

"This (Ghosalkar's killing) is a serious incident, but even if a dog were to come under a vehicle, they (opposition) will seek the home minister's resignation," said Fadnavis, a senior BJP leader.

Top court quashes Andhra HC order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: The Supreme Court Friday quashed an Andhra Pradesh High Court order that voiced strong disapproval over the apex court collegium transferring two chief justices and castigated Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy for his apparent attempts to undermine it.

A bench comprising Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mishal set aside the observations made in the order passed by a single-judge bench of the high court and disposed of the matter.

The top court was hearing an appeal filed by the Andhra Pradesh government challenging the December 30, 2020 judgment by Justice Kumar of the high court.

The observations were made while adjudicating a plea seeking the judge's recusal from a case involving a challenge to the auction of state land.



FEARLESS ACT: Artistes perform a stunt with fire during a religious procession to mark the 669th birth anniversary of Hindu guru Bawa Lal Dayal in Amritsar, Punjab

SNIPPETS

Govt to announce national creators' awards

New Delhi: The government is set to announce the national creators' awards to recognise new-age influencers and creators, official sources said Friday. They said the first-of-its-kind awards will be targeted at "Gen Z", a reference to the young generation hooked to the internet and social media, and will be given in nearly 20 categories. Social media influencers, such as those on YouTube and Instagram, will be in contention for the awards as well, the sources said.

Bilkis case convict out on 5-day parole

Dahod (Gujarat): Days after convicts in the Bilkis Bano case surrendered before jail authorities on Supreme Court orders, one of them has been given a five-day parole by the Gujarat High Court due to the death of his father-in-law, a police official said Friday. Convict Pradip Modhiya, a resident of Dahod district, has been released from Godhra district jail on parole. The Supreme Court had last month quashed the remission of sentence of all 11 convicts in the 2002 post-Godhra riot case of gangrape of Gujarat woman Bilkis Bano and murder of her seven relatives.

INDIA HAS NEARLY 97CR VOTERS NOW: EC

THERE HAS BEEN A SIX PER CENT INCREASE IN REGISTERED VOTERS FROM 2019, WHEN THE LAST LOK SABHA POLLS WERE HELD. THE REGISTERED VOTERS THEN WERE 91.20 CRORE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: The Election Commission Friday said nearly 97 crore Indians will be eligible to vote in this year's Lok Sabha elections.

The gender ratio has increased from 940 in 2023 to 948 in 2024, the poll panel said. The Commission has put special emphasis on purity and health of the electoral roll along with disclosures and transparency in the revision of electoral rolls, an official pointed out.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar had explained at a press conference in Pune the various tasks involved in revision of electoral rolls along with participation of political parties at every stage.

Over 2.63 crore new electors have been included in the electoral roll, out of which around 1.41 crore are women who surpassed the newly-enrolled male voters (1.22 crore) by over 15 per cent, the poll authority said.

The EC also underlined that effort were made to support persons with disabilities (PwD) by flagging around 88.35 lakh such voters in the electoral roll database. This, it said, will ensure accessibility and inclusivity on polling day.

In 2019, voters who had iden-



tified them as persons with disability stood at 45.64 lakh.

After a thorough house-to-house verification, names of over 1.65 crore deceased, permanently shifted, and duplicate electors were deleted from the electoral rolls. "This comprehensive cleanup ensures the integrity and purity of the electoral process. It includes 67.82 lakh dead voters, 75.11 lakh permanently shifted or absent

voters and 22.05 lakh duplicate voters," it said.

According to data shared by the EC, the number of third gender voters increased from 39.68 thousand in 2014 to a little over 48,000. At the same time, more than two crore young electors, spanning the 18-19 and 20-29 year age groups, have been added to the electoral roll.

Over 10.64 lakh advance applications were received from those above 17 years of age for enrolment in the voters list. People who are not yet 18 will automatically get their voter identity cards once they attain the age of voting if they apply in advance.

While 1.85 crore voters have been identified as above 80 years of age, the total number of 'centenarian' (those who are 100 years and above) stood at 2.38 lakh. EC considers those who are 80 years and above as senior citizens.

As February 8, Uttar Pradesh has the maximum number of voters at 15,30 crore. Lakshadweep has over 57,000

registered voters.

According to a 2023 letter sent by the EC to political parties, India had 17.32 crore registered voters in 1951, which rose to 19.37 crore in 1957. In the first Lok Sabha elections the voter turnout was recorded at 45 per cent. It was 67 per cent in the last parliamentary polls in 2019.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. A-1471
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
LOWER INDRACANAL DIVISION, KHARIAR
Dist.: Nuapada, Odisha, PIN - 766107
e-Procurement Notice No. SELICD-08/23-24, Dt. 08.02.2024 (Online)
E-mail ID: eeicld.kha@gmail.com

- Type/Nature of Work : Civil Works
- Total No. of Works : 04 (Five) Nos.
- Approx. value of works : Rs.6.65 Lakh to Rs.43.13 Lakh (Excluding GST)
- Period of Completion : 1 or 2 Months
- Classification of Bidders : 'D', 'C' & 'B' Class Contractors only.

Other Details as follows:

Procurement Officer	e-Procurement Notice No.	Availability & Submission of Bids in Online		Date & time of opening of Tender
		From	To	
1	2	3	4	5
Superintending Engineer, Lower Indracanal Division, Khariar, Dist.: Nuapada, Odisha	SELICD-08/2023-24, Dt.08.02.2024 for 04 (Four) Nos. of works	13.02.2024 At 10.00 A.M.	21.02.2024 Upto 5.00 P.M.	22.02.2024 At 11.30 A.M.

N.B.: Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation to the above notice will be published in the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Sd./- (Er. Soumya Kishore Jaipuria)
Superintending Engineer, Lower Indracanal Division, Khariar
OIPR-32206/11/0009/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. I-615
PANCHAYAT SAMITI OFFICE, LATHIKATA, DIST- SUNDARGARH
TENDER CALL NOTICE NO. 04 OF 2023-24
e-mail- ori-lathikata@nic.in

Letter No. - 725 Date: 08.02.2024
No. I-615- The Block Development Officer, Lathikata, Sundargarh on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites in "OFFLINE MODE Percentage Rate bids" in sealed cover for the following work from the class of eligible contractors as mentioned in Column-7 (seven) registered with the State Governments having validity of Civil License and contractors of equivalent Grades/Class Registered with Central Government/ MES/ Railways and other state government having validity of Civil License for execution of Building Works (including EI & PH). The proof of registration from the appropriate authority shall be enclosed along with the Bid. The eligible contractors of the state P.W.D. (R&B)/ Water Resources/Rural Works/M.I.C.P.W.D. for the following work, eventually to be drawn up in the P.W.D. P1 forms in conformity with the Detailed Tender Call Notice. The bidders may submit bids for the following work.

Sl. No	Name of the Work	Amount put to Tender in (Excluding GST)	Cost of Tender paper (Non-refundable) in ₹.	Bid security (1%)	Period of Completion	Class of Contractor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Const. of Market Complex at Jaldia, Jaldia GP	33,62,058/-	6,000/-	33,620/-	Three(03) Months	'B' & 'C' Class

The Bid documents and detailed terms and conditions can be downloaded from the District website www.sundargarh.nic.in.
1. Date and time for download Tender Paper: From Dt. 12.02.2024 to 24.02.2024.
2. Last Date of Receipt of Tender Paper: Dt. 26.02.2024 (03.00 P.M.)
3. Date of Opening of Tender Paper: Dt. 27.02.2024 (11.00 A.M.)
OIPR-19036/11/0006/2324 Sd./- BDO, LATHIKATA

leisure



NOLAN: DOWNEY JR. AS IRON MAN THE BEST DECISION EVER MADE

Filmmaker Christopher Nolan praised his Oppenheimer star, Robert Downey Jr. He added that he always wanted to work with the actor, and him playing Iron Man is one of the most consequential casting decisions that's ever been made in the history of the movie business.

RAPPER OFFSET COLLABS WITH ANANYA BIRLA

American rapper Offset has collaborated with multi-platinum singer-songwriter and businessperson Ananya Birla, inking her with a brand new record deal with global music company BMG. Offset said: "I'm pumped to kickstart a relationship with India with this collaboration with Ananya. Sending a big shoutout to all my Indian fans."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
You may be taut with stress at work. But it doesn't stop you from knocking down your opponents. You are considerate but cunning when you need to be. People should know you by now. Ganesha say just march on ahead.

TAURUS
The day is coloured in the shade of arguments and belligerence for most part of today, predicts Ganesha. You may spend the afternoon in lengthy business discussions with friends. Things will look up by evening as you might get some special treatment from your soul mate.

GEMINI
Today, resolving issues will be a tough task, but you will be able to accomplish it nonetheless. It may take time, but don't lose hope. Persistence and hard work will be rewarding. The grind will increase your understanding of the things happening around you. You will be able to understand those around you better.

CANCER
Today, in all likelihood, is going to be a challenging and complicated day for you, says Ganesha. You are likely to be a little short on confidence; either that, or you may be feeling a little subdued. You may not be as assertive as required on certain issues.

LEO
You may want to carry some aspirin with you today, suggests Ganesha. For, there are strong indications that you shall be up against a lot of stress and tension at work. This headache-inducing factor aside, you have the uncanny knack of beating your opponents at their own game.

VIRGO
Settling and resolving issues will be a long-drawn process today, says Ganesha. However, keep at it because the results will be well worth the efforts you put into it. You will feel more capable to look at things from others' perspective today. Loosen your grip on your wallet, as you may end up taking your sweetheart on a shopping spree.

LIBRA
Ganesha foresees that today you will chart out your future course of action, so that any steps you take from thereon leads only to success. Sudden and unexpected profits are also on the cards as on the professional front, increased reputation and rewards knock on your door.

SCORPIO
Today will consist of varying highs and lows at work and in confrontations, predicts Ganesha. At work, you may end up quarrelling with your peers. You will be reasonable in your views and still you will find yourself on the receiving side of the argument.

SAGITTARIUS
Today is most likely to be a day of mixed fortunes for you, predicts Ganesha. At the workplace, you may have a hectic afternoon, burdened with more work than you can handle. In the evening, a loved one will understand your needs, and try to bring back cheer with a home-cooked meal for dinner.

CAPRICORN
Whether or not your business will prosper will depend on how decisive you are, says Ganesha. Besides, it's time to test the potential of subordinates you have appointed, and see if they can deliver their best. And if they meet your standards, you can expect quick returns by the end of the day.

AQUARIUS
You may not want to, but you have to pay the bills! Okay, so you can't even remember what you bought, and are cursing the loony credit cards. However, this may persuade you to be a bit more organised. There is no harm in taking ideas from others, suggests Ganesha.

PISCES
A turning point in romantic liaisons is likely today, says Ganesha. In love, as at the office, you will discover that there is no substitute for hard work. However, evening promises bountiful pleasure to make up for all the sweat and tears.

10TH KALINGA LITERARY FEST KICKS OFF IN BHUBANESWAR



Hindi author Nasira Sharma being conferred with the KLF Literary Honour

Bhubaneswar: The 10th Kalinga Literary Festival (KLF) kicked off here at a City hotel Friday with ceremonial lamp-lighting programme followed by inspirational speeches by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and other guests. The CM addressed the gathering in virtual mode. The central theme of the festival, 'Legends of Ancient Bharat and Beyond: Inspiring Lived Experience in the 21st Century,' promised an extraordinary celebration of literature, wisdom, and humanism. The first day unfolded with a dynamic array of sessions where prominent writers, poets, and journalists engaged in insightful discussions on diverse topics such as literature, media, women, nationalism, and more.

Chief guest Patnaik, expressing his pleasure at being among literary minds, said, "The Kalinga Literary Festival is more than an event; it is a bridge connecting the past with the present, ancient wisdom with contemporary insights. The festival has turned a platform to explore solutions proposed by ancestors for societal challenges." "The festival is a call to preserve, propagate, and build upon Bharat's literary legacy," he added. KLF director Rashmi Ranjan Parida, welcoming dignitaries, emphasised the responsibility that comes with this inheritance. Among other dignitaries, Dr. Sanrup Misra, Amish Tripathi, Sitakant Mahapatra, and Paramita Panda shared insights regarding Odisha's ancient art and culture.

The KLF Literary Honour was conferred upon Hindi author Nasira Sharma and Nepali writer Beena Paudyal, while novelist Amish Tripathi and veteran journalist Sandeep Bamzai received the National Living Legends Awards

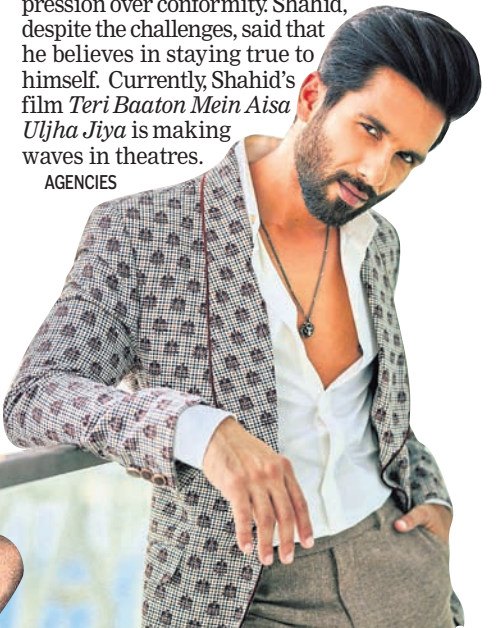


Mrunal's response to body-shaming

Mumbai: Several actresses in the film industry have, in the recent past, opened up on the issue of body-shaming. Now, actress Mrunal Thakur has come out in the open to address criticisms regarding her body. In a recent interview, she confronted the issue, recalling instances where she was rejected for roles due to a perceived lack of sex appeal. She asserts the value of her skin colour while advocating for neutrality to accommodate diverse character portrayals. The *Dhamaka* actress challenged societal norms, expressing confidence in her body, particularly her thick thighs, which she embraces unapologetically. Rejecting societal pressures to conform to narrow beauty standards, she advocated for self-acceptance and said she celebrates her natural curves. For her, sexiness transcends physical appearance, valuing meaningful conversations over superficial attributes, added Mrunal. The actress also expressed her frustration with Bollywood's casting processes, seeking roles that challenge her as an actress. Despite opportunities in Hindi cinema, she refuses to settle for less than substantial characters like Sita, Yashna, or Sonia.

I've a wolf mentality: Shahid

Mumbai: Celebrating 20 years in the industry, actor Shahid Kapoor emphasises his unique approach to roles, eschewing conformity for individuality and growth. Preferring unconventional characters like those in *Bloody Daddy* and *Farzi*, where he delves into shades of grey, Shahid says he embodies a 'wolf mentality,' rejecting herd mentality for individuality and growth in the industry. In an exclusive interview, the *Kaminey* actor articulated his philosophy, stating, "I have a bit of a wolf mentality, which is the opposite of sheep mentality." He explained his inclination to go against the grain, avoiding trends and opting to follow his instincts. "I have this concept of not wanting to do what everyone else is doing or following the flavour of the season," added the actor. Acknowledging the risks involved, the actor remains committed to carving his own niche in the industry, prioritising growth and self-expression over conformity. Shahid, despite the challenges, said that he believes in staying true to himself. Currently, Shahid's film *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya* is making waves in theatres.



Alizeh on advantages of being from a film family

Mumbai: Alizeh Agnihotri, the niece of Salman Khan, made a remarkable but unconventional debut last year with *Farrey*. Reflecting on her decision to enter the industry with such a unique film, Alizeh said she felt a genuine connection and believed in the project's potential to showcase her strengths without compromising her authenticity. Growing up in a film family, she acknowledges the invaluable guidance she received from her relatives, including Salman and his father, Salim Khan. Their collective experiences instilled in her a resilient mindset, reminding her that success and setbacks are inherent in the industry. "Mamu's encouragement and belief in my abilities have reinforced my determination to carve my own path in the industry," acknowledges Alizeh, who recently bagged the Best Debut (Female) Film Fare award. Despite the competitive landscape of showbiz, the young actress adopts a positive outlook, embracing the diversity of talent and opportunities in the evolving cinematic landscape. "I value constructive criticism and aim to sustain my career with meaningful roles that resonate with my artistic sensibilities," says the actress.

Panchamveda's state-level drama fest



Bhubaneswar-based theatre troupe Dynamic Platform presented Odia play *Abhiyan* on the third day of the event at Bhanjakala Mandap, Friday. Written by Prafulla Kar, the play was directed by Debabrata Pattanaik

PEANUTS



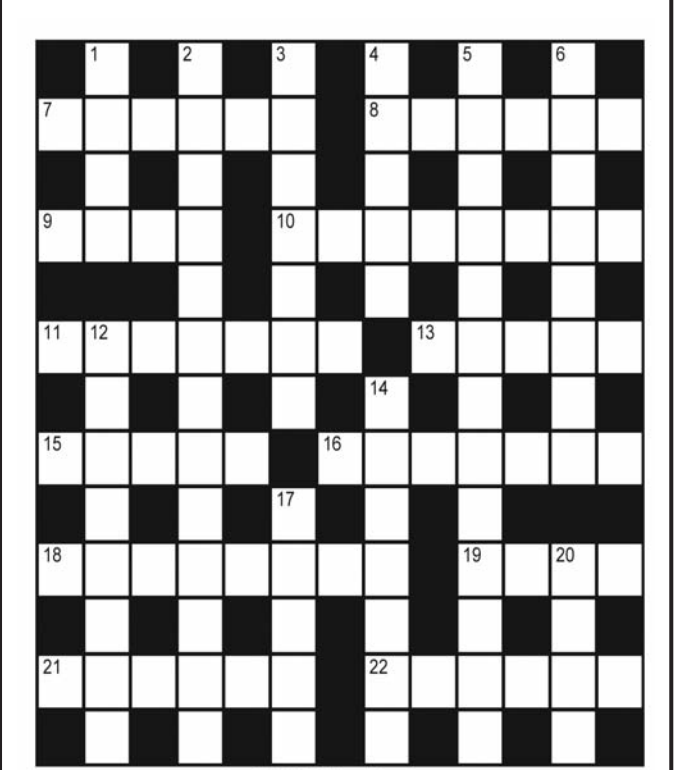
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



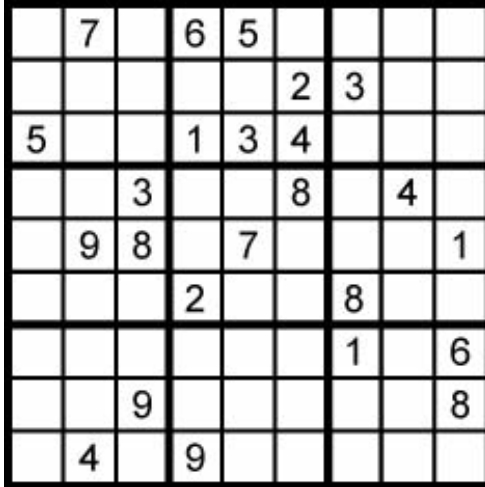
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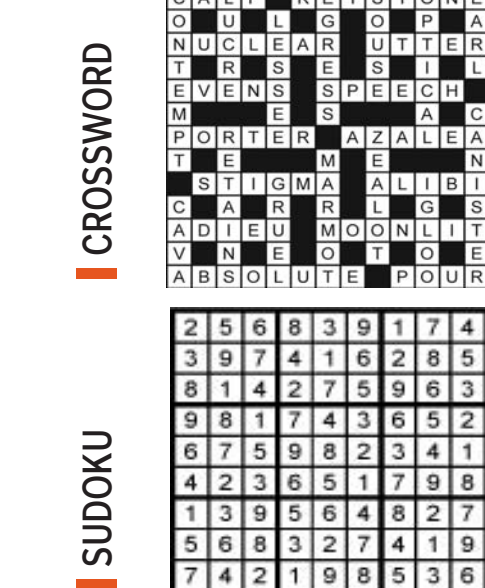
- Across**
- 7 Cure-all
 - 8 Pasture herb
 - 9 Wise Men
 - 10 Happy-go-lucky
 - 11 Policeman
 - 13 Sewing stitch
 - 15 Plait
 - 16 Barricade (4,3)
 - 18 Last hurrah (4,4)
 - 19 Joint problem
 - 21 Choice bit
 - 22 Soapsuds
 - Down**
 - 1 Pond growth
 - 2 Show-off
 - 3 Continue
 - 4 Aromatic resin
 - 5 Road signals (7,6)
 - 6 Individualist (4,4)
 - 12 Type of fuel
 - 14 Arbour
 - 17 ___contested
 - 20 Employed

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

of the day quote

In the upcoming quarters, we anticipate a consistent rise in PAT, driven by enhanced patron confidence, improved customer experience, and favourable market conditions conducive to sustained growth

A sum of about Rs 15,948 crore has been released to various sugar mills of the country in last five financial years including the current financial year till January 31, 2024

The record-breaking performance is a result of our product portfolio's strategic diversification and the successful launch of commercial credit card offerings

Q3 RESULTS

MRF net up 3X

Bangalore: Tyre maker MRF reported a three-fold rise in third-quarter profit Friday, helped by an uptick in two-wheeler sales. MRF, the country's top tyre maker and the most expensive stock, said its profit from continuing operations for the three months ended December 31 rose to ₹5.08 billion from ₹1.69 billion. The results are largely in line with those of other tyre makers, who reported profits that grew between 70% and 400%.

Pizza Hut shines

Bangalore: Sapphire Foods India, the operator of KFC and Pizza Hut restaurants, Friday reported its biggest quarterly decline in profit since listing in 2021, hurt by domestic competition and as inflation-weary consumers cut back spending on fast food. The Yum Brands franchisee's consolidated net profit fell nearly 69% to ₹101.4 million for the quarter ended December 31. Analysts, on average, had expected a profit of ₹239.6 million.

Bandhan Bank up

New Delhi: Private sector Bandhan Bank Friday reported over two-fold increase in net profit at ₹733 crore for the third quarter ended December 2023 on account of improvement in core income. The Kolkata-based new generation bank had posted a net profit of ₹291 crore in the year-ago period. The bank's total income increased to ₹5,210 crore in the latest December quarter from ₹4,840.94 crore a year-ago, the bank said.

Emami PAT surges

New Delhi: FMCG major Emami Ltd Friday reported 11.88 per cent rise in consolidated profit after tax at ₹260.65 crore for December quarter 2023-24, helped by improvement of margins due to reduced input costs. The company had logged a net profit of ₹232.97 crore in October-December FY23, according to a regulatory filing from Emami. Revenue from operations was up 1.38 per cent to ₹996.32 crore during the quarter under review as against ₹982.72 crore in the corresponding quarter.

Tata Power rises

New Delhi: Tata Power Friday posted a marginal increase of 2 per cent in its consolidated net profit at ₹1,076 crore in December 2023 quarter. Its consolidated net profit was ₹1,052 crore in the quarter ended on December 31, 2022, a company statement showed.



NBFCs have evolved as niche companies serving specific economic functions, and it is uncharacteristic of them to demand becoming like a bank

M RAJESHWAR RAO | DEPUTY GOVERNOR, RBI

CAPPING OF AIRFARES

A Parliamentary panel has proposed route-specific capping of airfares and setting up of a separate entity to exercise control over air ticket prices, amid concerns in various quarters about surging fares



DOUBLE TROUBLE

Now EPFO bans PPBL

AFTER RBI, THE SOCIAL SECURITY FUND TO STOP CLAIMS MADE VIA PAYTM PAYMENTS BANK LIMITED

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 9: India's state-run social security fund will halt claims made via Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL) accounts from February 23, as the country's central bank imposed restrictions on the payments bank due to persistent irregularities, a government order said.

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has asked its officers to refrain from accepting claims linked with accounts in Paytm Payments Bank, an associate of One 97 Communications according to the order.

In a circular issued on Thursday, the EPFO, which comes under the ministry of labour and employment, stated, "All the field officers are advised to refrain from accepting claims associated with bank accounts in Paytm Payment Bank w.e.f February 23, 2024. A wide publicity should be initiated to raise awareness about this change."

The EPFO order has been issued a week after the Reserve Bank of India asked Paytm Payments Bank to stop accepting all deposits after February 29, citing supervisory concerns and



Shares of One97 have tumbled more than 40% since RBI's surprise action

non-compliance with rules. "No further deposits or credit transactions or top ups shall be allowed in any customer accounts, prepaid instruments, wallets, FASTags, NCMC cards, etc. after February 29, 2024, other than any interest, cashbacks, or refunds which may be credited anytime," the central bank had stated.

The EPFO, with a corpus of over ₹18 trillion and covering nearly 30 crore workers, had allowed the Paytm Payments Bank to settle claims in November last year.

The state-run social security

Govt respite likely

Paytm is close to winning Centre's approval to invest in its key payments gateway arm, a decision which has been pending for two years and which would give the troubled fintech company some respite. The government grew more supportive of the investment after Paytm's Chinese shareholder Ant Group Co. lowered its stake in the Indian firm, people familiar with the matter said, with one of the people saying the approval could come within days. A federal approval is needed because Ant's stake in Paytm makes its outlay in the Paytm Payments Services Ltd. arm a direct foreign investment. The investment allows Paytm to beef up its arm which processes online transactions. While the investment is less than ₹1 billion (\$12 million), an approval would signal Paytm is still in the government's good books even as the country's banking regulator has tightened its grip on the company.

Shopping amid snub

Paytm E-commerce has rebranded itself as Pai Platforms, marking a shift in its corporate identity. The move comes alongside the acquisition of Bitsila, a prominent seller platform operating within the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC). This strategic shift underscores Pai Platforms' ambition to assert its presence and gain a larger foothold in the fiercely competitive landscape of online retail.

fund also overseas workers' pension funds.

The EPFO restriction will affect timely withdrawals and credit transactions in the bank accounts belonging to Payments Bank. The action comes a year after the EPFO had allowed payments through Paytm Payments Bank and Airtel Payments Bank. The subscribers will have to

update their bank account details to be able to access the EPFO corpus.

On action against Paytm Payments Bank, the central bank's governor Shaktikanta Das had said, "There is no worry about the system at the moment. Here we are talking about a specific institution, a specific payment bank."

Forex reserves jump to \$622.4bn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 9: India's forex reserves jumped by \$5.736 billion to \$622.469 billion for the week ended February 2, the Reserve Bank said Friday.

In the previous week, the overall reserves had increased by \$591 million to \$616.733 billion.

In October 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached an all-time high of \$645 billion. The reserves took a hit as the central bank deployed them to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments since last year.



For the week ended February 2, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by \$5.186 billion to \$55.331 billion, as per the data of RBI.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves increased by \$608 million to \$48.088 billion during the week, RBI said.

Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by \$58 million to \$18.19 billion, the central bank said.

India's reserve position with the IMF was unchanged at \$4.86 billion in the week.

Stocks see topsy-turvy trade

After a volatile session, the market ended on a positive note, aided by a rebound in banking stocks after yesterday's sell-off

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 9: Benchmark Sensex closed higher by 167 points in a volatile trade Friday driven by buying in ICICI Bank, State Bank of India and Reliance Industries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 167.06 points or 0.23 per cent to settle at 71,595.49. During the day, it hit a high of 71,676.49 and a low of 71,200.31.

The broader Nifty rose by 64.55 points or 0.30 per cent to 21,782.50 with 27 of its shares closing in the green and 23 in the red.

Stock markets took a breather after Thursday's slide and ended marginally higher on gains in banking and FMCG shares, analysts said. On the other hand, metal telecom and power shares



New milestone

After beating Hong Kong to win the crown of the world's fourth-largest stock market, India has now beaten China's Special Administrative Region in terms of trading volumes as well. Stock trading volumes in both BSE and NSE have surged to a one-month average of \$16.5 billion per day higher than Hong Kong's average of \$13.1 billion a day.

came under selling pressure. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge fell by 1.36

per cent and midcap index declined 0.82 per cent. Among the indices, oil & gas went lower by 1.97 per cent, metal fell by 1.62 per cent, telecommunication (1.45 per cent), utilities (1.36 per cent), industrials (1.21 per cent) and power (1.10 per cent).

Bankex, FMCG, financial services, consumer durables and healthcare were the gainers.

On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark declined 490.14 points or 0.67 per cent, and the Nifty dipped 71.3 points or 0.32 per cent.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,933.78 crore Thursday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark fell by 723.57 points or 1 per cent to settle at 71,428.43 Thursday amid uncertainty about the timing of interest rate reduction after the Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy decision. The Nifty declined by 212.55 points or 0.97 per cent to 21,717.95.

AACCI announces Odisha Chapter

BHUBANESWAR: Asian African Chambers of Commerce & Industry (AACCI) has announced their Odisha Chapter at Press Club, Bhubaneswar February 9. The AACCI International Business Summit & Expo 2024 - The Green Conclave: Exploring Business Opportunity Beyond Border - is scheduled from February 12 to 14 at Mayfair Lagoon Vatika. It will comprise of MSME supported stalls and multiple summits over a period of three days promoting business opportunities beyond borders. The announcement event was attended by Lita Mohapatra, President, AACCI Odisha, Rajendra Parida, VP Odisha Chapter, Sushmita Mohanty Joint Secretary, AACCI Odisha, Gaurav Ralhan Chairman Health Committee, Garima Sarawgi Chairperson Healthcare Surgical Committee and Pritam Nayak Vice Chairperson, Lifestyle & Fashion among other eminent committee members. The event is supported by Govt of Odisha, MSMEs, Startup Odisha and many other organisations.



BIZ BUZZ

SBI donates school bus for disabled

BHUBANESWAR: Under its CSR initiative, State Bank of India Bhubaneswar Circle has donated a school bus to 'The Institute for Helping the Disabled', located at Saheed Nagar. The institute runs a school for differently abled children and currently 75 kids are receiving various special education and therapeutic services. In an event organised at LHO, SBI CGM Bhubaneswar Circle Dinesh Pruthi handed over keys to Santanu Kumar Acharya, President and Retired Professor in Chemistry. Among other senior officials, General Manager (NW-I) Ponnambalam Murugan, DGM & CDO Manoj Kumar Singh were present in the event. Secretary of the Institute Bhagirathi Panda thanked SBI for the generosity and assured that the school bus will add quality to their services.



Red Sea disruptions to push freight, forwarding cost: Ind-Ra

THE INITIAL REACTION CAN BE SEEN IN FREIGHT RATES RISING BY 150% IN THE PAST 45 DAYS, IND-RA SAID

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 9: Sustained disruptions in the Red Sea route is likely to raise the freight and forwarding (F&F) cost by 25-30 per cent for corporates largely dealing in international trade, a report said Friday.

Moreover, the working capital cycle is likely to aggravate by 15-20 days, and the impact could be higher for sectors such as agriculture and textiles, credit

ratings agency Ind-Ra said in its report.

Working capital cycle refers to the period between payments made to suppliers and revenue received from sales.

The report also said that pressures on cash flow, although moderate for large entities, will further increase borrowings, especially for sectors such as iron and steel, auto and auto ancillaries, chemicals and textiles, which have seen a year-on-year rise in net leverage in the first half of the current fiscal.

For medium-sized entities, he said, the challenge is two-fold, both cost and supply, and consequently on working capital cycle.

The initial reaction can be seen in freight rates rising by 150 per cent in the past 45 days, the rating agency said.



The route constituted 40 per cent of the total oil imports and 24 per cent of the total exports during April to October 2023, it said.

Major shipping lines have rerouted vessels around the Cape of Good Hope, which has increased time and costs, impacting both exports and imports, as per the report.

This detour adds 12-15 days

- Freight and forwarding cost likely to rise by 25-30%
- Detour adds 12-15 days to voyages on biz-as-usual basis
- Red Sea route constituted 24% of the total exports

to voyages on a business-as-usual basis; however, there could be a further delay owing to any

The challenge is significant for the entities having low value addition therefore thin margins. Although large entities have adequate elbow room to accommodate such incremental cost, delays and disruptions in supply chains will be key factors to watch for

SOUMYAJIT MIYOGI | DIRECTOR (CORE ANALYTICAL GROUP), IND-RA

sudden operational challenges, it said.

This detour is directly translating to a higher operational cost, along with freight and insurance and intermittent disruptions on account of ship size and cost dynamics. Although these disruptions have historically been short lived, a swift

resolution seems improbable given the geopolitical standing, Ind-Ra said.

As much as 20-25 per cent of India's foreign trade is routed through the Suez Canal, with key products such as crude oil, auto & auto ancillaries, chemicals, textiles and iron & steel being affected. Indian exports are facing higher shipping costs due to rerouting, leading to reduced export volumes, affecting small and medium-sized enterprises dealing with a high volume of low-value products.

On the import side, vital commodities such as crude oil, fertilisers, and electronic components face inflated costs due to the crisis, leading to higher landed prices and inflationary pressures, impacting various sectors of the Indian economy, the ratings agency said.

ABD admits his mistake

Iyer unlikely for last 3 Tests against England



Johannesburg, Feb 9: Former South Africa captain A B de Villiers has said that he "made a terrible mistake" by sharing "false information" about the personal reasons that have forced star India batter Virat Kohli to take a break from international cricket, insisting that he has no idea "what's happening there".

On his Youtube channel a few days ago, de Villiers had claimed that Kohli opted out of the first two Tests of the ongoing home series against England due to the impending arrival of his second child with actor wife Anushka Sharma.

Kohli is unlikely to play any part

in the ongoing series. He backtracked on that statement Thursday night in an interaction with select media on the sidelines of the ongoing SA T20 here.

"Family comes first, it's priority as I said on my Youtube channel. I also made a terrible mistake at the same time, sharing false information that was not true at all," de Villiers, who is the brand ambassador of the event, said.

"I just think that whatever is best for Virat and his family comes first, no one knows what's happening there. All I can do is wish him well. Whatever the reason is for this break, I really hope he comes back stronger and better, healthy and fresh and ready to take on the world,"

he added.

Awaiting SKY show De Villiers also spoke about international cricket in general during the interaction. The original Mr.360 degree, who could hit the ball to just about any corner of the ground, De Villiers said he is eager to see Suryakumar Yadav's performance in the T20 World Cup, where he feels, India would be one of the strongest contenders. Yadav has been described as the next Mr.360 due to his wide range of strokes.

"There are too many players to watch out for in the T20 World Cup. However, I love to watch 'SKY' bat. I am a big fan and hopefully, he has a great tournament," De Villiers said.

He also feels that India can break the jinx of not winning an ICC trophy during the T20 showpiece in the West Indies and the USA this year. "I am not a fortune teller but I do think that India is one of the top contenders. The IPL has been going on for so many years and has really strengthened the depth of Indian Cricket.

"They are one of the strongest teams but then, it's not always the strongest team that wins the World Cup," said De Villiers. "They know that they have to play their big moments well and have to take the opportunities at the right time with a little bit of luck. Then you lift the World Cup.

"That's how they get a chance

to come closer and maybe this time cross that line," added one of the most innovative and destructive batsmen in the modern era.

He also dismissed suggestions that having the IPL just before the T20 World Cup would cause fatigue among players. "Though IPL is so close to the World Cup but both are still T20 formats where bowlers have to bowl four overs in a day. It is not like Test Cricket where you have to bowl 15-20 overs everyday.

"I think they can handle and manage the workload," said the former Royal Challengers Bangalore player, who announced his retirement from all formats of cricket in 2021.

"There is also a short break after the IPL. Only two teams will play the final so rest will be fresh and raring to go in the World Cup. The Schedule is also like that players have rest between the games," he added.

On his expectations from this T20 World Cup where 20 teams are in fray for the first time, he said that one or two upsets will definitely happen. "We have seen so many Cricketers from the associate countries now feature in the IPL. Some of them are from Afghanistan, Nepal and quite a few others. It's good to have a big tournament," he signed off.

New Delhi, Feb 9: Shreyas Iyer is unlikely to be picked in the India squad for the remaining three Tests against England after complaining of stiffness in his back and groin.

Iyer has had recurring troubles with his back and had also undergone a surgery last year. The 29-year-old made 35, 13, 27, 29 in the opening two Tests in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam and was guilty of not building on the starts.

"He has complained of stiffness and back issue and is unlikely to take part in the remainder of the series," a BCCI source told PTI.

India are already reeling with injuries to key players KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja. Star batter Virat Kohli had missed the first two Tests due to personal reasons and is unlikely to be available for the games in Rajkot and Ranchi as well.

The selectors are yet to an-

nounce the squad for the last three Tests and they will do that after getting clarity over Jadeja's fitness. The all-rounder will need to pass the fitness test conducted at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru. He had missed the Vizag Test due to a hamstring injury while Rahul complained of pain on his right quadriceps.

Even if both Jadeja and Rahul come back into the playing eleven, Iyer's injury could give another opportunity to Rajat Patidar, who could not make a big impact during his Test debut in Vizag.

Monday, India bounced back to level the five-match series with a 106-run victory in Visakhapatnam. England, who have flown back to Abu Dhabi before the third Test in Rajkot, which will begin February 15, won the series opener by 28 runs. India will assemble in Rajkot February 11 and England are expected to reach there a day after.



Huge backlash puts blue card introduction in doubt



London, Feb 9: The trial-introduction of blue card in football has been reportedly thrown into doubt due to a huge backlash against the bizarre rule changes.

Thursday, it was reported that the new card would be trialled to sin-bin players guilty of minor offences for ten minutes – a rule which left the fans and pundits baffled. The raged supporters claimed that the new rule will ruin the game.

According to the Telegraph, the proposals from the International Football Association Board (IFAB) have now been put on the back-burner following the growing opposition to the idea – including from some of the biggest power-makers in the game.

The latest report claims that unrest over the decision was summed up by a statement from FIFA, which confirmed sin-bin trials would not include top-tier competitions. "Any such trials,

if implemented, should be limited to testing in a responsible manner at lower levels," the statement reads.

Further division on the concept was seen in UEFA too with UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin declaring he would not allow a trial in the European Championship, Champions League, Europa League or Europa Conference League.

An announcement had been planned for Friday, but instead the trial looks to be in serious doubt – with the future of blue cards set to be debated at the next annual general meeting of IFAB next month, the report goes on.

WHAT IS A BLUE CARD?

Referees will have the power to show blue cards for cynical fouls that stop threatening attacks and dissent towards a match official.

The card may also be issued to confirm a player should be shown a red card if they receive two blue cards in a match or a combination of a yellow and a blue.

The revolutionary move would be the first new colour of card introduced into top end football since red and yellow cards were adopted at the 1970 World Cup.

Trials will not be conducted during top-tier matches, though FA Cup and Women's FA Cup games could be used for testing next year as the FA is reportedly considering volunteering next season's competitions.

Odisha FC share spoils with Goa in thrilling game



Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: FC Goa held Odisha FC to a 1-1 draw at the Kalinga Stadium here as the top-of-the-table clash of Indian Super League (ISL) produced a gripping 1-1 draw with goals in the first half by Roy Krishna and Jay Gupta.

The result ensured that the juggernaut held on to their top spot in the league table as Goans are breathing down their neck with 28 points in 12 games, compared to Odisha's 31 in 15 encounters.

Amey Ranawade recovered possession on the right channel of the field and curled in a peach of a delivery for Krishna. The Fijian brought up his 11th strike of the campaign by merely flicking the ball past Goa custodian.

However, Goans weren't a side who would bog down when the scales are tilting against them. And Gupta rose to the occasion to smash in a screamer to draw the scores level, and help them secure at least a point from this difficult away encounter.

Eves end Pro League campaign with win

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: Indian women produced a flawless effort to outwit United States 3-1 and end this leg of the Hockey Pro League on a winning note here Friday. India will now travel to Rourkela to face China February 12.

Vandana Katariya (9th), Deepika (26th), and Samila Tete (56th) scored for the home side, while Sanne Carls (42nd) netted the consolation goal for the USA.

India started the game with an opportunity to score through a penalty corner but Deepika's drag-flick sailed wide of the post. The USA answered back with a move of their own as Elizabeth Yeager shot from a

tight angle, but India captain Savita Punia diffused the situation with a save.

But India soon found the target. Sangita Kumari ventured down the right wing and tried to find Sonika in the shooting circle but the ball bounced off the US goalkeeper. Kealsie Robles and Katariya tapped the ball in to score India's first goal.

In the second quarter, Tete initiated a blazing run on the right wing but she couldn't find Lahremisami in the circle and the move fizzled out.

But India pressed on for the lead. Monika threaded a pass to Katariya who shifted the ball to Deepika on the right wing and her reverse swing capped off the

intricate passing sequence with a goal. The first half ended 2-0 in India's favour.

In the third quarter, India continued to peg USA back in their own half and it wasn't long before they earned a penalty corner. However, Navneet Kaur shot just wide of the post.

With three minutes left in the quarter, Carls picked up a loose ball outside the shooting circle and unleashed a tomahawk shot to beat keeper Savita and give USA a foothold.

As the game drew to a close in the final quarter, Deepika went on a scintillating run across the left wing and crossed to Tete who deflected the ball into goal and restored India's two-goal lead.



Panghal, Sachin reach Strandja Memorial semis

Sofia (Bulgaria), Feb 9: Commonwealth Games gold medalist Amit Panghal and national champion Sachin entered the semifinals of the 75th Strandja Memorial boxing event here.

Amit (51kg) continued his fine form to grab a 5-0 unanimous decision win over Aldarkhishig Battulga of Mongolia. Coming from a dominating win in his last match, Amit looked lethal. He controlled the bout right from the start giving his opponent no chance to make a comeback.

The boxer from Haryana continued to build on the momentum and did not lose the grip of the game even for a second. Amit was so dominant in the bout that he won each round with a 5-0 verdict en route to the semifinals on Saturday.

Sachin (57kg) was equally dominating against Kapanadze Giorgi of Georgia. The south-paw boxer took some time in finding his rhythm but once settled, he was a force to reckon with. Sachin won the first round 4-1 and took the game heads on in the second one, using his counter attacking game to strike some effective left hooks.

The opponent tried to be more aggressive in the third round but Sachin comfortably won the bout with a 5-0 verdict. Sachin will now face Ukraine's Abduraimov Aider in the semifinals Saturday.

Playing his first bout of the tournament after receiving bye in the pre-quarters, Rajat (67kg) wasted no time and went into aggressive mode from the go. Within 37 seconds, Rajat delivered a straight jab, breaking his opponent's defence and disbalancing him, causing the referee to stop the bout and declare Rajat the winner by knockout. He will take on Georgia's Guruli Lasha in the semifinals, Saturday.

Lalit (54kg) made a quarter-final exit after losing the bout 0-5 against Uzbekistan's Nortojiev Khujanazar. Late Thursday, Naveen Kumar (92kg) made his way into the semifinals with a 4-1 win over Kutybekov Abzal of Kazakhstan. He will be up against Georgia's Giorgi Kushitashvili.

Vaibhav, Jiwanjot prop Uttarakhand

Cuttack, Feb 9: Vaibhav Bhatt (101 batting, 289b, 12x4, 1x6) and skipper Jiwanjot Singh (90, 178b, 10x4) helped Uttarakhand reach 232/3 at stumps on Day 1 of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group D match against Odisha at the Barabati Stadium here, Friday.

Opting to bat first, Uttarakhand were reduced to 22/2. However, Vaibhav and Jiwanjot rescued the visitors with a splendid 180-run partnership for the third wicket. Harshit Rathod (1/56) broke the stand dismissing Jiwanjot. Vaibhav was accompanied by Swapnil Singh (21 batting) at stumps.

MCC RECOMMENDS AT LEAST 3-MATCH TEST SERIES

London, Feb 9: A minimum of three-match Test series and the home team footing the bill of the visiting side in a bilateral contest are some of the recommendations made by the MCC's World Cricket Committee.

The World Cricket Committee of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the custodians of laws of the game, met in Cape Town last week on the sidelines of SA20.

In a statement, the Committee rued the lack of a series decision in the drawn series between Australia and West Indies following the visitors' stunning win at the Gabba. India and South Africa too drew a

fiercely contested two-match series in December.

"In support of the thrilling Test cricket currently being played and the importance of sustaining the traditional format of the game, the WCC recommends men's Test series be played across a minimum of three matches from the next ICC Future Tours Programme from 2028 (next cycle) onwards," said the Committee.

The WCC also highlighted the inequality among ICC member nations and stressed on the need for taking the game to uncharted territories. "The game owes a debt of gratitude to India, with its insatiable thirst for cricket driv-

ing the wealth in the global game.

"However, this reliance upon India belies the fact that the game needs to identify new markets to ensure its global growth, at a time when media rights beyond the current cycle are by no means guaranteed. "With this uncertainty identified and on the back of the momentum built through this year's ICC Men's T20 World Cup in the USA and Caribbean and the build up to the 2028 Olympics in the USA, the acceleration of the USA as a growth market for cricket would seem a natural consideration," it said.

Recently, West Indies Cricket CEO had claimed that the travelling expenses of its teams ac-

counts for a chunk of the board's budget. At the moment, the home team gets to keep all the media rights revenue generated from the series but the WCC wants the existing model to be reviewed.

"The WCC has long been aware of the game's global economics being heavily imbalanced and detrimental to touring teams who bear the cost of travel, whilst all revenue is retained by the host body. With evidence emerging of this now creating inequalities the committee calls for this model to be reconsidered, with analysis to be conducted on the impact of home bodies absorbing these touring team costs as a way of redistributing income."

Gokulam Kerala beat Odisha FC eves in IWL

Kozhikode, Feb 9: Gokulam Kerala FC turned the Indian Women's League (IWL) title race on their head with a come-from-behind 2-1 victory over Odisha FC at the EMS Stadium here Friday.

Despite making a dream start at the home of the defending champions with a goal inside 23 seconds through skipper Indumathi Kathiresan, Odisha FC were unable to deal with the firepower of Fazila Ikwaput, who netted a first-half brace to take the Malabarians to the top of the table. Gokulam now have 20 points in nine games.