



DSPL-655



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leisure



JANE FONDA WARNED JLO OVER PDAS WITH AFFLECK

Veteran actress Jane Fonda told Jennifer Lopez to dial down her public displays of affection with her husband Ben Affleck because she was worried 'flaunting' their love could lead to 'criticism or resentment.' However, JLo dismissed her concerns, saying: "That's just us living our lives."

BAD BUNNY WOULD BE WORKING AS A CHEF IF MUSIC CAREER FAILED

Rapper Bad Bunny has revealed he would have pursued a career as a chef if he had failed to break into the music industry, admitting he loves the creativity of creating new dishes.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Positive thinking can change the world, and you could do with some today. No matter how tough the going gets, take it in your stride, says Ganesh. If you think you can do it, you will. You have the magic touch today to initiate a new business strategy.

TAURUS
The time you previously spent on certain activities may not yield results as expected, predicts Ganesh. You will be reluctant to travel today. Your may find yourself wanting more space and freedom of expression. A stroll with your sweetheart, hand in hand, may be the highlight of your day, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
Today, it's time to meet those who are close to you, and maybe even those who were close to you at some point of time. Also, it's time to revive old friendships, old memories and sink into nostalgia. You may want to buy a valuable historic artefact, says Ganesh.

CANCER
It is about time that you cultivated healthy eating habits. Today, you will be prone to doing everything in excess. You may overeat or get swept away by emotions. You must keep a check on your emotions, or it may lead to unwanted complications.

LEO
You sure love playing a team sport, but that does not diminish the fact that you are a tough player to compete with, says Ganesh. If only they had a rugby team at the local club! You derive a sense of completion from the fact that you have given your best effort to any endeavour.

VIRGO
A shadow grows large in your mind today. An unknown fear will haunt your day, warns Ganesh. But be ready to take a hike. You are most likely to end up spending on your foreign associates. Be careful of those expenses, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Sometimes, you lend a helping hand and people end up taking the entire arm. Well, that's kids for you! So beware, because young ones around you may try to take undue advantage of your sympathetic nature today, hints Ganesh. Minor issues and problems may dampen the high spirits that you are in today.

SCORPIO
Today, there are chances that you would be disturbed by continuous flow of negative thoughts in your mind. Try to divert your mind and look for positive people or friends who would cheer you up. Understanding needy people and living up to their expectations would bring some respite to your disrupted mind, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
It's time for you to sit back, relax and let your actions do the talking. After all, actions speak louder than words, they say. You will also wrap up with all the pending tasks today, says Ganesh. You play an important role in resolving troubles, either for yourself or for others.

CAPRICORN
Success never comes easy, but in your case, it will make an exception, says Ganesh. You will meet with success in social as well as professional life, and this will also make heavy your treasure box. At work, prepare to get loaded with new assignments and simultaneously deal with existing work pressure. But it won't be as fatiguing as it sounds; evening recreations will charge you up for the next day.

AQUARIUS
Things barely move today. But just like the proverbial tortoise, you seem to be winning the race, for many opportunities will come your way. There won't be any cash crunch, so you needn't lose sleep over that, says Ganesh.

PISCES
The apple of your eye is what you will have your sights set on today. It is likely that you will find yourself attending a Parent-Teacher meet, says Ganesh. However, fortunately, it is likely only to receive news about how proud your children are making you.



10 YEARS ON

Kriti's secrets behind her showbiz success

Mumbai: From a college graduate who wasn't sure about starring in films to winning a National Film Award, it has been an interesting journey for actor Kriti Sanon, who credits her engineering background for staying curious. "It's my engineering mind that's really curious and always trying to absorb everything like a sponge to learn and grow. I have figured out what works for me as an

actor and what doesn't. These are the few things that helped me in my journey in the industry," shared the *Mimi* actress. Sanon, 33, said she is lucky to be in a profession that's not monotonous. "When I get a character that has something that scares me and I don't know how to do it, then it really excites me. I'm blessed to have a job where I wake up every day and I'm doing something different, and it's not a monotonous life," she said. "I want to leave a mark and be inspirational to many people who probably are dreaming of coming here and doing what they love. It just feels amazing. (I want to) keep finding new layers to me and my potential as an actor. Keep doing different work that excites me. I want to work till I physically cannot work," she said.

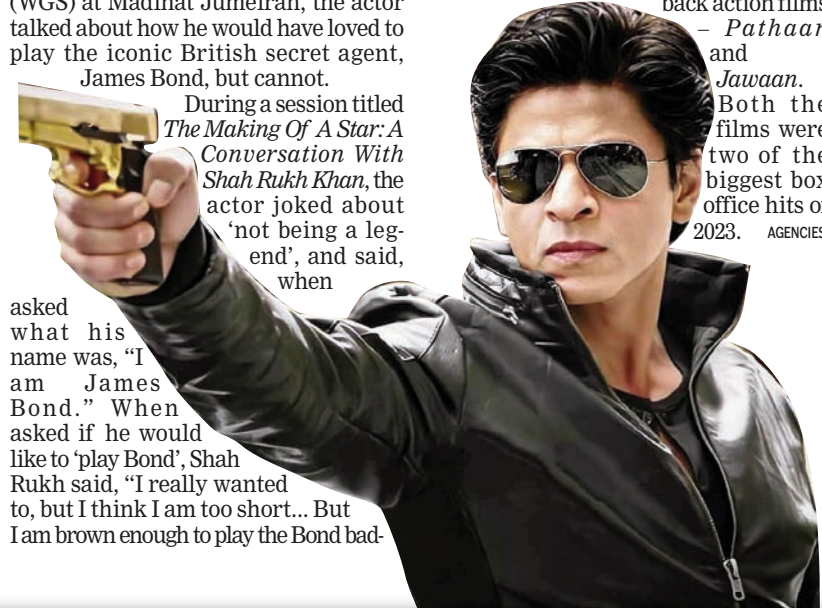
I'm too short to play Bond: SRK

Mumbai: Shah Rukh Khan was one of the speakers at the World Government Summit 2024 in Dubai Wednesday. Apart from speaking about his rise to fame at the 11th edition of the World Government Summit (WGS) at Madinat Jumeirah, the actor talked about how he would have loved to play the iconic British secret agent, James Bond, but cannot.

During a session titled *The Making Of A Star: A Conversation With Shah Rukh Khan*, the actor joked about "not being a legend", and said, when asked what his name was, "I am James Bond." When asked if he would like to 'play Bond', Shah Rukh said, "I really wanted to, but I think I am too short... But I am brown enough to play the Bond bad-

die." The actor then went on to speak about his acting career of 33 years, as well as his stardom. Asked why he didn't cross over to Hollywood, the actor was quoted as saying in a report by Gulfnews.com, "I know many people from the American and the English film industries. But nobody has offered me good work, and I wondered if I was spreading myself too thin. I was offered *Slumdog Millionaire*, but I felt that the role of the game show host was too mean."

The actor was last in *Dunki*, which was released in December 2023. Before that, Shah Rukh was seen in back-to-back action films - *Pathaan* and *Jawaan*. Both the films were two of the biggest box office hits of 2023.



MOUNI ROY OPENS UP ABOUT FACING REJECTION

Mumbai: Mouni Roy is one of the few actresses who has successfully transitioned from TV to films. At the trailer launch of her upcoming web series *Showtime*, she talked about facing rejection and how she was typecast into glam roles in the industry. "If you ask me if I have been typecast, then yes, of course, I have. But I also have been very, very lucky with directors who had the vision to see me in different roles and parts," she says. "Like Emraan Hashmi says, it may be a fair industry but I truly believe that it's a very difficult industry," adds Mouni. Talking about facing rejection in the business, Mouni said that she was told that she does not have the talent to become an actor in the film industry. However, she added that she holds no bitterness towards the industry despite

being snubbed by makers as she is determined to move ahead in her career. This statement came when Karan Johar asked Mouni to answer a rapid-fire question. When asked about the kind of rumour she would

like to spread about herself, she replied, "A rumour that I would like to spread about myself is that I am doing your next directorial."



Valentine's Day: Lovers shun parks in City

Bhubaneswar: For lovebirds across the globe, Valentine's Day is one of the most anticipated occasions of the year, and it's no different in the City. A lot of pop-up dinners, couple dance nights, V-Day games, and other such events happened during Valentine's Week. However, the D-day, Valentine's Day Wednesday, seems to have turned a dampener as members of some outfits issued warnings ahead of the day. Parks in the City wore a deserted look as the miscreants had forced young couples to engage in indecent activities last year at public places on this day. Some were made to get married with exchanges of 'bar-malas' while a few others were hounded like criminals. Therefore, many couples decided to remain indoors to avoid harassment by the anti-Valentine activists. This resulted in major parks in the city - Jayadev

Vatika, Indira Gandhi Park, and Science Park—not having any visitors during the day.

The prospective couples preferred to visit hotels and restaurants for lunch or dinner with their special ones to celebrate V-Day. City hotels also didn't leave any chance to make the most of it by offering hefty discounts and offers for the loved-up couples. On the other hand, Bakul Foundation celebrated V-Day by distributing 'Gift a Rose Roz Roz'.

The organisation also gifted saplings to commemorate the event.

"We encourage people to gift a sapling to promote eco-friendly Valentine's Day. Love birds gifting a rose sapling to each other is a good way of celebrating the day," said its founder, Sujit Mohapatra. Several film personalities in the Odia movie industry also wished their loved ones on their social media platforms. PNN

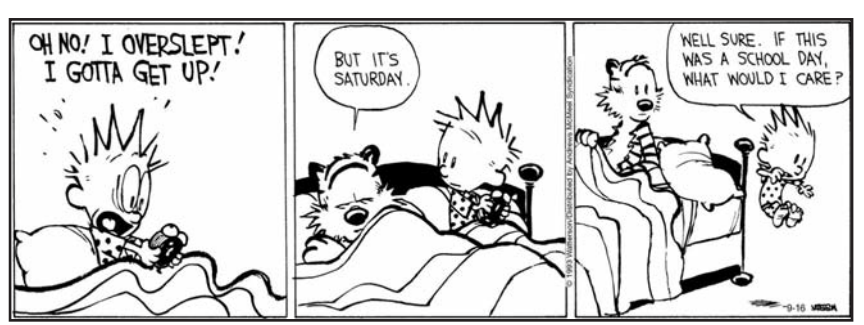


BDA Nicco Park wore a deserted look, Wednesday

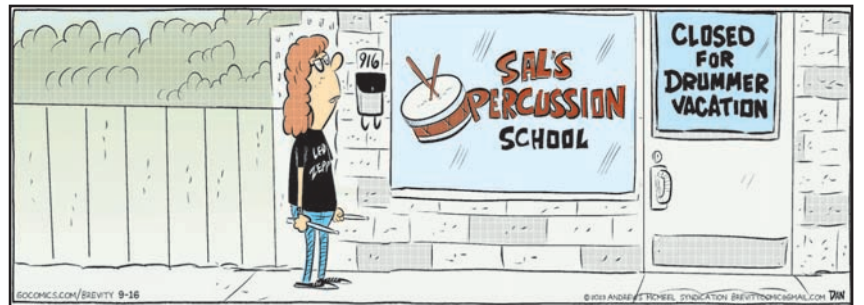
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

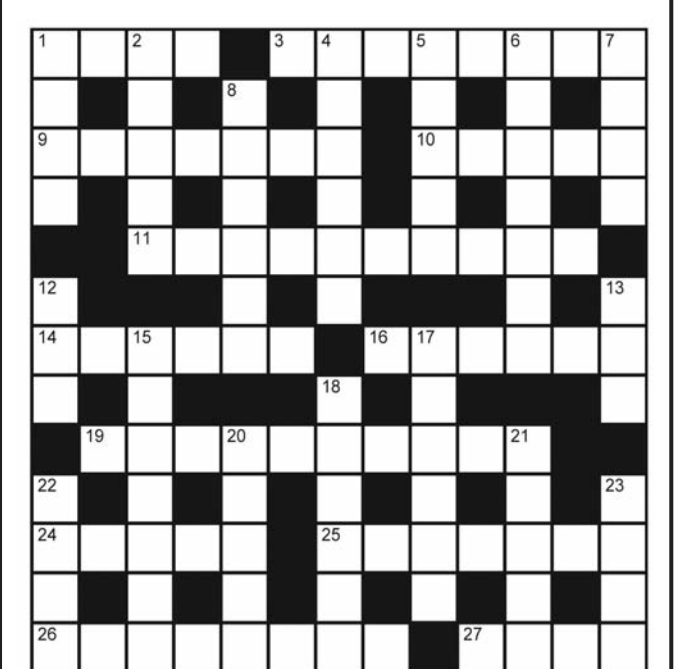


BREVITY



FUN post

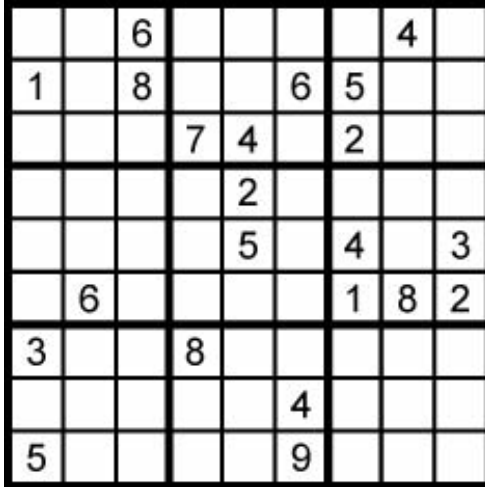
CROSSWORD



- Across**
1 Treasure hunters' aids
3 WHO's concern
9 Sweet snack
10 Mine carts
11 Probability
14 Simple shelter (4-2)
16 Wilhelm, for one
19 Most telephone lines (5-5)
24 Petrol unit
25 Pouched mammal
26 Lamp oil
27 Word of honour
Down
1 Cheese nibblers
2 Student
4 Spanish dish
5 Kind of treat
6 Grasslands
7 Vesicle
8 Sell
12 Gremlin
13 Circle segment
15 Louis Bleriot, e.g.
17 Boris Pasternak, e.g.
18 Insect's protective wrap
20 Fishing gear
21 Spain's del Sol
22 Jacket type
23 Chinese nurse

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



Farmers stay firm

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 14: On the second day of farmers' protest 2.0 seeking legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP) and other demands, thousands of farmers from Punjab stayed put at Shambhu border between Haryana and Punjab, and vowed not to go back and decided to march towards the national capital, Wednesday.

Haryana security personnel Wednesday lobbed tear gas shells on farmers from Punjab at Shambhu border between the two states as thousands of protesters stayed put there on Wednesday, the second day of their 'Delhi Chalo' march. The police action came whenever any group of the protesting farmers tried to move towards the barricades.

Some farmers also pelted stones at the security personnel who were positioned close to the barricades.

The police have deployed a drone to keep an eye on the protesting farmers who are demanding a legal guarantee to minimum support price (MSP).



TALKS TODAY

Chandigarh: A team of Union ministers will hold a meeting with farmer leaders Thursday evening, Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal said here. The meeting will be held with Union ministers Arjun Munda, Piyush Goyal, and Nityanand Rai, the farmer leader said. This will be the third round of meeting between the two sides. Senior Union ministers, including Rajnath Singh and Arjun Munda, Wednesday held discussions on the farmers' protests and ways to address the issues, according to sources.

A few youths even flew kites at Singhu border in order to bring the drone down by entangling the unmanned aer-

ial vehicle in the kite strings. One of the youths, who was flying the kite, expressed anger over the use of drones to drop tear gas shells on the protesters. The farmers stayed put at Data Singhwala-Khanauri border in Haryana's Jind district Wednesday.

Haryana Police have sealed the border with barricades to stop the farmers from travelling to Delhi on their tractor-trolleys. Farmers from several places in Punjab reached Shambhu border to participate in the 'Delhi Chalo' march and a large number of tractor-trolleys could be seen parked along the national highway on the Punjab side. Haryana security personnel lobbed tear gas shells Wednesday morning after some farmers gathered near the barricades at Shambhu border. Thereafter, the tear gas shells were fired whenever the protesters attempted to move towards barricades.

Meanwhile, as the CBSE Class X and XII exams are beginning Thursday, students in Delhi were advised to leave for their centres early as traffic movement has been hit in several areas.

Pension boon for state's weavers, artistes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday announced a new monthly pension scheme for weavers, handicraft artisans and artistes, an official statement said.

The 'Mukhyamantri Baristha Bunakar Sahayata Yojana' will replace the existing 'Baristha Bunakar Sahayata Yojana' for the weaver community.

The government has included handicraft artisans in the new scheme and enhanced the monthly pension provided to the beneficiaries which will be

implemented from this month.

Under the new scheme, the government will provide a monthly pension of ₹2,000 to weavers, their assistants and handicraft artisans. Female weavers, their assistants and handicraft artisans in the age group 40 to 80 and male weavers, their assistants and handicraft artisans in the age group 50 to 80, can avail the benefits of the scheme. Similarly, weavers, other workers engaged in handloom work and handicraft artisans above 80 years will get monthly pension of ₹2,500 under the scheme. Under the existing pen-

sion scheme, the weavers, who attained the age of 60 years and are below 80, are receiving ₹500 per month, while the weavers who have attained the age of 80 years are getting ₹700 a month.

The CM also announced a hike in financial assistance provided to different kinds of needy artistes under Mukhyamantri Kalakar Sahayata Yojana (MKSY). The monthly financial aid for MKSY beneficiaries up to 80 the age of years has been increased to ₹2,000 from ₹1,200.

Similarly, artistes aged above 80 years will get ₹2,500 per month, the statement added.

BJD backs Vaishnav for RS polls



BHUBANESWAR: In a repeat of 2019 Rajya Sabha elections, the ruling BJD Wednesday announced its support to opposition BJP's Ashwini Vaishnav in the biennial polls.

The BJD justified the decision to back the Railway and Telecom minister, saying it is in the "larger interest of the state", while the saffron party claimed it is getting the support without being asked. The BJP central leadership Wednesday named Vaishnav as its candidate for the February 27 Rajya Sabha elections from Odisha, though the party lacks the required number in the Assembly to sail its nominee through. Soon after this, BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced his party's support for Vaishnav.

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BLOOD DONATION CAMPS MARK LULU MOHAPATRA'S 60TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: Odisha's popular leader, prominent youth icon and former MLA late Lalatendu Bidyadhar Mohapatra aka Lulu's 60th birth anniversary was observed at various places in the state with grand blood donation camps to mark the occasion, Wednesday.

The blood donation camps were mentored by the departed leader's close friend Amiyakanta Dash. One such blood donation camp was held at the Institution of Engineers, Bhubaneswar where the followers and supporters of Lulu Mohapatra joined and donated blood. As many as 260 persons donated blood on the occasion.

MLA Suresh Kumar Routray, BJP's former



state president Samir Mohanty, Congress spokesperson Prasant Satapathy, former MLA Dillip Srichandan, OPCC vice-president Subhendu Mohanty graced the camp as guests. Among others, Biswa Bhushan Das, Rajiv Patnaik, Aditya Pritam Das, Chittaranjan Das, comedian Gyana, social worker Mir Mohammed Ali also attended the camp and helped in smooth conduct of the camp.

A massive candlelight march was also organised on this occasion from Giri Durga temple to Ram Mandir praying for peace to the departed soul. Youth leader Niranjana Nayak conducted the programme.



Boost to green fuel

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stones for two green fuel projects worth ₹35,000 crore at Gopalpur Industrial Park Wednesday that are expected to create 5,500 job opportunities. Patnaik also participated in the ground-breaking ceremony for the state-owned IDCO's utility corridor in Ganjam district.

Acme Cleantech Solutions is setting up a 1.10 MMTPA green ammonia plant with an investment of ₹27,000 crore, which will create employment for about 4,000 people.

Avaada Green H2 Private Limited will invest ₹8,000 crore for a 0.5 MTPA green hydrogen/ammonia facility, providing job opportunities for 1,500 individuals.

Patnaik said with the commencement of these two green fuel projects, Odisha is entering a new era of sustainable industrial development. The CM



emphasised the role of these projects in achieving green growth and boosting local employment and skills in the state. "The projects by ACME and Avaada will make Odisha a pioneer in the green fuels sector," Patnaik said. "More importantly, these new-age sectors will be highly beneficial for the youth of this region," he added.

He also mentioned that industrial training institutes (ITIs) in Berhampur, Hinjilicut, Sheragada, Purusottampur, and others in the region will be utilised for up-skilling and imparting new-age skills to the youth of Ganjam and nearby areas.

Similarly, high-tech and pro-

fessional institutions such as Parala Maharaja Engineering College, Government Polytechnic, Berhampur, JN Tata Technical Education Center, Gopalpur; and others will greatly benefit from the presence of these renowned companies, the CM added.

Regarding the impact of new-age industries on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the region, the CM said, "The establishment of industries in new-age and future-oriented sectors like green fuels will catalyse the growth of MSMEs in this region. This will open up numerous new avenues of growth for budding entrepreneurs in Ganjam and South Odisha."

The Chief Minister also highlighted that the state-owned IDCO (Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation) has begun construction of a 600-metre utility corridor at a cost of ₹128.88 crore, which will connect Gopalpur Industrial Park to Gopalpur Port. This is expected to further enhance the attractiveness of the industrial park and stimulate new investments in the region, he added.

Gopalpur Industrial Park, run by Tata Steel SEZ, was established nearly a decade ago. While it attracted a few industries in the past, it is in the last couple of years, particularly after the Make in Odisha Conclave 2022, that the park has started to witness a lot more interest from investors across sectors.

This has been driven mainly by the progressive Odisha Industrial Policy Resolution 2022, the renewed focus on industrial infrastructure, and the proactive actions of the state government.



SEEKING BLESSING: Members of All Newspaper Suppliers Social Welfare Association take part in Saraswati Puja at Unit VIII of Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

2024 POLL PREP BY COPS

NSA against habitual offenders



DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: The Commissionerate Police has decided to book habitual offenders - having potential to disrupt the upcoming polls process - under the stringent National Security Act (NSA), Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Bhubaneswar, Prateek Singh said, Wednesday.

Addressing a press confer-

ence to give details about the preparations of the City police ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, Singh said Inspector In Charge (IIC) of every Police Station under the Bhubaneswar Urban Police District (UPD) has been directed to prepare (and submit) lists of individuals having Non-Bailable Warrants (NBWs) issued against them. "They have also been asked to undertake

stringent action against habitual offenders and individuals with criminal antecedents," Singh said.

The DCP said the Commissionerate Police is reviewing a list of 2,400 individuals against whom NBWs are pending at present. Local police stations have been directed to arrest them under 110 CrPC as a preventive measure in the run up to the elections.

"In case of reasonable apprehension that some among these individuals might cause disruptions in the fair conduct of polls, we would book them under NSA," Singh added.

Singh said around 425 persons having licensed firearms will be asked to deposit their weapons at local police stations till the elections were over.

Sheragad now NAC

Sheragad: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday announced the state government's decision to grant NAC status to Sheragad gram panchayat in Ganjam. The CM also inaugurated and laid foundation stones of various projects worth around ₹304 crore in Sheragad under Hinjili Assembly segment. Patnaik said Hinjili has become a model Assembly segment in the state.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

By an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate SORO on the dt.31.01.24 I Smt. Tilottama Sahoo which is mentioned also in my Aadhaar Card No. xxxx xxxx 9110. But in the Army Service Record of my husband mentioned as Tilattama instead my actual name Tilottama. Tilottama Sahoo and Tilattama Sahoo is one and same person.

LOST

I, Gunnam Bhaskar Rao, S/o. Gunnam Ramachandra Rao, R/o. Ramakrishna Nagar, P.O. Barahguda, P.S./Dist.-Bargarh, Odisha declare that I am the partner of M/S VIKASH RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS. On behalf of said Institution I have purchased landed property. At the time of execution of Sale deed the vendor has handed over the previous Sale deed bearing document No.233 of 1991 dt 21.3.1991. While I was going from Vikash School Campus, Sason to Majhipali on dated 10.02.2024 the above mentioned Sale deed along with other documents has been fallen somewhere and after through search the same could not trace out.

Sale Deed Lost:
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 ମୌଜାର RSD No. - 3351,
 Dt. 15.07.2005, ମୁଦରଫର
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 କୌଣସି କାରାରେ ହଜିଯାଇଛି ।
 କୌଣସି ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଏହାର
 ସନ୍ଧାନ ପାଆନ୍ତି, ତେବେ ନିମ୍ନ
 ଠିକଣାରେ ଯୋଗାଯୋଗ
 କରିବାକୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ । Contact:
 Brungilata Barwa,
 Mob: 6371284224,
 7008872686.

City edu institutions observe Saraswati Puja with fervour

WISHING PEOPLE ON THIS OCCASION, GOVERNOR RABHUBAR DAS AND CHIEF MINISTER NAVEEN PATNAIK SOUGHT THE BLESSING OF GODDESS SARASWATI UPON ALL

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP



Wearing a festive look, the institutions were abuzz with activities since morning. Students were seen going to schools with flowers and prasada to offer to the goddess of education

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: Schools, colleges and other educational institutions across the state observed Saraswati puja with fervour and gaiety, Wednesday. The Governor Raghubar Das and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik greeted the people on this occasion.

Said Governor Raghubar Das, "I wish that the grace of Maa Saraswati, the founder of education, knowledge and skills, rests upon us all. Happy Basant Panchami to all of you."

CM Naveen Patnaik said, "My best wishes to all on the occasion of the holy Basant Panchami and the Saraswati Puja. May everyone's life be filled with wealth of knowledge and all be happy and prosperous with the blessings of Maa Saraswati".

Wearing a festive look, the institutions were abuzz with activities since morning. Students were seen going to schools with flowers and prasada to offer to the goddess of education. Later, they offered puspajali to the deities bedecked at their institutions. While placing their books at the feet of the goddess, the students sought her blessings for their academic progress.

Saraswati Puja, also known as Basanta Panchami, was celebrated in schools and colleges where pujas is organized to pay homage to the Goddess of Knowledge. Several schools and colleges of the City offered prayers by offering 'Puspanjali'

to Goddess Saraswati for success in their academics. Amid chanting of hymns, students performed puja with great zeal.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said "Basant Panchmi greetings! May Maa Saraswati bless us all with knowledge and wisdom!"

Many parents also chose the day as a symbolic start of learning the alphabets by children. Moreover, pandals were erected and large idols were brought to worship Goddess Saraswati at several places.

Today marks the beginning of the chariot making process for the Rath Jatra in Puri. On the day of Shree Panchami, wood logs for Ghosha Yatra arrives at Srimandir. It is to be noted that the day is also known as Basanta Panchami that marks the end of winter and advent of spring in India.

Special patrol protecting Spain's brown bears

Spain's brown bears, once nearly extinct, stray into the mountain villages in the north of the country so often these days that the regional government of Castile and Leon has set up a patrol for locals to report animals on the prowl.

The patrol, which has nine rangers, protects residents and their crops in the mining town of Villablino, in the nearby province of Palencia, and other surrounding areas, aiming to keep the endangered Iberian brown bears safe and healthy and allow humans and animals to coexist.

Adult bears can weigh as much as 150-250 kg and can measure up to 2 metres. They can live for up to 30 years. Three decades ago there were only 60 bears left in Spain, but today their population numbers over 400.

The higher number of bears

is leading to a greater number of encounters with humans, however. For some, the bears are unwanted intruders, but others welcome them and the increased numbers of tourists they attract.

If locals spot a bear they are advised to call the rangers and keep calm. To ease locals' concerns, the patrol must act fast. As soon as the staff receive a call to their 24-hour phone line, they grab their radios, rubber ball shotguns and tracking devices and rush out the door.

Their mission is to deter the bears from the villages by firing warning shots, while following a strict protocol.

"The increase in the bear population leads to an increase in conflicts (with humans)," said patrol coordinator Daniel Pinto. The bears now approach the villages more often as they struggle to find enough food up in the mountains, he added.



Villager Angeles Orallo, 73, is one of those who finds the bears' presence challenging.

"We are older people... the fact that we can't go out for a quiet walk is sad," she lamented. She has been struggling to keep the bears out of her vegetable garden.

But while some locals feel unsafe and worry about their crops, the patrol is providing a boon for the Iberian brown bear popula-

tion and is providing an income for locals from tourists who come to the region to spot the bears, still considered endangered, in the Cantabrian mountains.

Population recovery
 Thanks to more awareness, strong surveillance and compliance with conservation rules, the Iberian brown bear population is growing.

Historically, brown bears roamed much of the Iberian peninsula but hunting and loss of habitat had a significant impact on the species. They received protected status in 1973, although hunting was allowed to continue.

The patrol also wants to improve understanding of the bears' behaviour: To that end, a team of veterinarians, biologists and mountain rangers developed in 2021 a new satellite system to monitor the animals, as well as an innovative, remote-controlled cage that can trap the bears without trapping other species.

Once caught, the bears are anaesthetised and a GPS collar is placed around their necks to make it easier to locate them in the future. Rangers have so far trapped 12 bears that were then released far from the villages, preventing them from eating crops, and garden fruit and vegetables.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIAION
SENSEX	71822.83 ↑ 267.64
NIFTY	21840.00 ↑ 96.70
DOLLAR	83.07 ↑ ₹0.04
EURO	88.99 ↓ ₹0.58
GOLD	₹61,255 ↓ ₹249
SILVER	₹69,631 ↓ ₹8

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	33.0°C	32.5°C
Min Temp	19.9°C	19.5°C
Humidity	86%	84%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
 DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY

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MODI GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO BOOST CONNECTIVITY FOR ODISHA'S GROWTH



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-Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India

Empowering Odisha Through Projects Worth Over ₹6600 Cr Laying of Foundation Stone and Dedication of 28 National Highways Projects

Dedication

6-laning of Chandikhole-Bhadrak Section of NH-16

4-laning of Baharagora-Singhara Section of NH-49 (EPC)

Foundation Stone Laying (Bhoomipujan)

Development of Road Connectivity from Chhatrapur to Gopalpur Port on NH-16

Construction of 8 EUPs, 01 VUP, 01 LVUP, 01 PUP in Baharagora-Singhara Section of NH-49

Nayagarh Town Bypass on NH-57

Khordha Town Bypass on NH-57

Jeypore Town Bypass on NH-26

Widening of Kandarpur-Balikuda Section of NH-55

Kotpad Town Bypass on NH-63

Borigumma Town Bypass on NH-26

Baghamari Town Bypass on NH-57

Minor Bridge on Jeriguda Nallah on NH-326 in Rayagada District

Major Bridge in Madhopur-Badabanta Section on NH-20

Railway Over Bridge at Matiapada on Puri-Konark Road on NH-316

Reamal Town Bypass on NH-53

4 Nos High Level Bridge on Malkangiri-Motu Road of NH-326

Widening of Kalinga Ghat Section on NH-157

Widening of Dhaugaon-Podamari Section on NH-326

Widening of Balikuda-Mulakani Section on NH-55

High Level Major Bridge over Dahuka River on NH-57 in Nayagarh District

Daspalla Town Bypass on NH-57

Widening from km 367.480 to 376.480 on NH-26 in Koraput District

Rayagada and J. K. Pur Town Bypass on NH-326

ROB on LC No. 102 on ODR in the Railway line Bahanaga Bazar-Soro

Widening of Karanjia & Patna section on NH-220

Nabarangpur Town Bypass on NH-26

4 Nos Culverts in Koraput-Sunki section of NH-26

ROB on LC No. KP-14 ODR in the Railway line Pattanaika-Delanga Road

On Thursday, 15th February, 2024 | Time -10:00 am onwards | Venue - Puri, Odisha

Advantages of the Projects

- ★ Increase of connectivity and industrial activities to ports with the construction of Baharagora Singhara 4 Lane road
- ★ Increase in industrial operations with easy transportation of raw materials
- ★ Ease of tourist flow into Jagannath and Konark temples, and adding to their conveniences
- ★ Chandikhole-Bhadrak 6 Lane will cut down travel time and add to fuel savings
- ★ Convenience for farmers to reach markets with ease, adding to more employment options
- ★ Increased safer travel options and addition to fuel savings

by

Nitin Gadkari

Minister of Road Transport & Highways, Govt. of India

In the august presence of

Dharmendra Pradhan

Minister of Education, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Govt. of India

Ashwini Vaishnav

Minister of Railways, Communications Electronics & IT, Govt. of India

Bishweswar Tudu

Minister of State for Tribal Affairs and Jal Shakti, Govt. of India

Aparajita Sarangi

MP, Lok Sabha

Nitesh Ganga Dev

MP, Lok Sabha

Pinaki Mishra

MP, Lok Sabha

Pramila Bisoyi

MP, Lok Sabha

Chandrani Murmu

MP, Lok Sabha

Dr. Rajashree Mallick

MP, Lok Sabha

Bhartuhari Mahtab

MP, Lok Sabha

Sarmistha Sethi

MP, Lok Sabha

Chandra Sekhar Sahu

MP, Lok Sabha

Ramesh Chandra Majhi

MP, Lok Sabha

Achyutananda Samanta

MP, Lok Sabha

Manjulata Mandal

MP, Lok Sabha

Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka

MP, Lok Sabha

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FOCUS ECONOMY

BLACK & WHITE PAPERS



It goes without saying that more resources are needed for which a Wealth Tax must be imposed on the rich, but the government is hesitant

unemployment. On inflation, the Congress stated that there has been a steep increase in the prices of essential commodities from 2014 to 2024 – 120% in increase in the cost of LPG, 37% for petrol and 64% for diesel, 59% for mustard oil and 59% for wheat flour and 71% for milk.

The above findings can't be denied as social and economic development was mainly geared towards the urban sector and the privileged sections got the maximum benefit. Also, the middle-income sections got their due share but the marginalised and backward sections didn't notice any perceptible change in their incomes and standards of living. However, in recent years, the Modi government has turned its attention to the rural sector, but real backward areas have yet to be brought into mainstream of development.

It was expected that the Paper of the ruling dispensation while criticising the previous UPA regime would have outlined future priorities, especially with regard to the farming community, small traders, those working in unorganised sector, all of whom are a major segments of the population. Though governance may have improved during the Modi government, there is an absolute need for ensuring that welfare measures reach these sections and development is geared in the right direction.

It goes without saying that more resources are needed for which a wealth tax must be imposed on the rich, but the government is hesitant. The logic that such tax will not boost investment can't be accepted as private sector investment in recent years has been quite low despite various government incentives.

Finally, the development matrix must change, and the present government should be realistic and judicious in allotment of funds to sectors that need them and those that cater to the welfare of the major section of the population. Development must come from below and its spread effect must be uniform, reaching all corners of the country.

INFA

The White and Black Papers released recently by the ruling BJP and the Congress respectively have tried to find fault with the other. Though such analysis may be useful in understanding the way each government has functioned, one of these studies has shown how they plan to tackle future economic problems. These papers come close on the heels of three important southern states, led by Karnataka, protesting denial of adequate funds only because of their better performance in various sectors compared to northern states.



Dhurjati Mukherjee

DEVELOPMENT MUST COME FROM BELOW AND ITS SPREAD EFFECT MUST BE UNIFORM, REACHING ALL CORNERS OF THE COUNTRY

The 59-page NDA Paper accused the UPA rule of bringing public finances to a 'perilous state' with high levels of fiscal deficit, which a panel headed by noted economist Vijay Kelkar had pointed out. As a result of fiscal mismanagement, the deficit ended up much higher than it was expected, and the government subsequently ended up borrowing 27% more from the market than what it had budgeted for in 2011-12.

Regarding the banking crisis, the report said that in September 2013, the ratio of gross NPAs to advances, including restructured loans, climbed to 12.3% largely because of political interference in commercial lending decisions. These observations have been rightly pointed out, especially the improvement of the health of the banks during the NDA regime, though it can't be denied that interference in bank management continued. This is corroborated in the cases of Mehul Choksi and lately Gautam Adani, both of whom are said to be close to the Prime Minister.

The Paper highlighted Modi government's successes, saying it cleared loans of over Rs 1.9 lakh crore taken during the UPA regime to fund food, fertilizer and oil subsidies with over Rs 1 lakh crore to be paid in the coming years as principal and interest. It pointed to revival of the Indian economy from a state of crisis. "When the NDA government took over the reins in 2014, the economy was in bad shape, nay crisis. We faced the hydra-headed

challenge of fixing an economy mismanaged for a decade, and restoring its fundamentals to sound health," stated the White Paper. Besides, it highlighted how the economy emerged stronger in the past decade under the BJP-led NDA government and is today counted amongst the top five economies of the world.

The Paper referred to the mismanagement of the economy during the UPA regime and apart from the various scams, it found that over Rs 94,000 crore or 6.4% of the budgeted expenditure for 14 major schemes and rural sector ministries remained unspent over 10 years. Besides, it showed that funds not deployed properly as capital expenditure fell from 31% during 2003-04 to 16% in 2013-14, resulting in a "supply constrained economy." Additionally, a large part of resources was used for unproductive purposes, involving an estimated outgo of Rs 26,000 crore in 2008-09 and Rs 52,000 crore farm loan waivers as cases in point.

The overall improvement of the economy has been well highlighted but what has not been said is whether this uptrend has benefited the poor; the marginalised and the economically weaker sections. Various experts and studies have pointed out that the main beneficiaries of the government's policies have been the rich and one segment of the middle class or perhaps the entire middle class. As per the World Bank's Commission on Global Poverty using the leaked

data of the NSS revealed that 320 million rural Indians lived in acute poverty in 2017-18.

It would be appropriate to mention the Oxfam report, released last month, which revealed that the wealthiest 1% of the population possesses 40% of the nation's wealth, while the remaining 50% holds just 3%. Furthermore, the number of billionaires in India has seen a notable rise. A UNDP report indicated that top 10% of the population commanded 65% of the country's wealth. Over the past decade real wages of 35% of the population have experienced a decline. Real wages denote the purchasing power of wages concerning goods and services. India was ranked 139th on the Global Hunger Index. In terms of per capita income, India is at the bottom of all the G20 countries.

Thus, the overall scenario is quite grim though India may be the fifth largest economy. This has been revealed in the Congress' Black Paper, which pointed out that "the Modi government's 10 years in power devastated the country's economy, aggravated unemployment, destroyed the country's agricultural sector; abetted crimes against women and committed grave injustices against minorities in the country." The 54-page Paper said the highest rate of unemployment in 45 years, going from 1 crore in 2012 and 4 crore in 2022. 10 lakh sanctioned Central government post still remain unfilled, despite high

SPECTRUM MEDIATION

The future of dispute resolution

One of the major contributions made to the system of access to justice in India by the Modi government is the enactment of the Mediation Act, 2023, and the institutionalisation of mediation. Mediation has been in the domain of courts and court-annexed mediation centres since 2002. Section 89 of the Indian Civil Procedure Code has permitted only courts to refer cases to mediation instead of allowing litigants to undergo the rigmarole of court procedures.

The traditional mediation settlements hitherto made in rural India were neither legally valid nor had any rights base. Even today, every family, especially an extended family, has a conflict or difference of opinion. However, they neither go to courts nor to mediation institutions for resolution of disputes. The family elder, or the person in the family who commands respect in the family, resolves the dispute with his/her authoritative acumen.

The current pendency of over five crore cases in Indian courts could be very frustrating. The mediation and conciliation project

committee appointed by the Supreme Court exactly felt the same, and it collected opinion from all chief ministers before formulating a formal training and recognition approach to mediation in India. The Mediation Act, 2023, has made a paradigm shift in the way mediation is conducted. The Act articulates, "The mediation results in amicable resolution of disputes in civil, commercial, family, and matrimonial matters and fosters a collaborative approach, reduces the burden on the courts, and preserves relationships amongst disputants." Therefore, bringing a comprehensive mediation law and providing for online mediation may serve the interests of all stakeholders as an effective alternative mechanism for resolving disputes.

The Mediation Act seeks to introduce compulsory pre-litigation mediation in matters of civil or commercial dispute before parties approach a court or a tribunal, treating the mediated settlement agreement resulting from mediation, which will be final and binding and will be en-

forceable in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, in the same manner as if it were a judgement or decree of a court. The Act further gives a strict deadline for the completion of mediation within 180 days. The Act further seeks to establish the Mediation Council of India to promote mediation and develop India as a robust centre for domestic and international mediation, make regulations for registration of mediators, grade mediation service providers, specify criteria for recognition of mediation institutions and mediation service providers, and hold training workshops and courses in mediation.

The intentions of the Act are clear from its statement of objectives and its various provisions: disputants are no longer required to run to courts for all commercial, civil, matrimonial, and family disputes before resorting to a mediated settlement in an amicable manner, either through trained mediators appointed by courts or through mediation service-providing institutions, which will appoint a

mediator at the joint request of the disputing parties.

Even before the enactment of the Act, there were many mediation and arbitration institutions functioning in the country that were established in pursuance of the Justice Sri Krishna Committee on Institutionalisation of Arbitration in India, and have been providing better alternatives to court settlement of disputes.

The coming years are the years of mediation and arbitration that not only reduce the burden on courts, but also allow courts to focus only on criminal cases to extend speedy justice to undertrials. The government must speed up the establishment of Arbitration Council of India and the Mediation Council of India, so that the new mediation and arbitration institutions can be established in all districts to make access to justice a dream come true for the common person.

The writer is a former international senior advisor to UNDP. Views are personal.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

A collective cry

Sir, In the heart of India's agricultural landscape, Farmer Protest 2.0 has emerged as a powerful movement, demanding government assurance on Minimum Support Price (MSP) and loan waivers. With the rallying cry "Delhi Chalo," tens of thousands of farmers challenge the government to address their pressing concerns. As clashes intensify, urgent attention to the farmers' plight becomes crucial. The recent Bharat Ratna awardee MS Swaminathan's contributions add weight to the protests, emphasising the failure to implement his comprehensive roadmap for agricultural development. Swaminathan's report advocates land reforms, equitable land distribution, protection of prime agricultural lands, and substantial investments in irrigation and conservation farming. Despite promises, successive governments, including of the BJP and the Congress, have neglected these recommendations for over two decades. With elections looming, political posturing continues, raising scepticism about genuine reforms. Beneath the political maneuvering lies a stark truth: a significant population faces the harsh realities of low income, healthcare crisis, and an enduring agrarian crisis. Farmers, half the population, grapple with escalating input prices and sell crops at suboptimal rates. Rural India's economic distress is evident, with wages stagnating and incomes diminishing. Critics may dismiss protests, but Farmer Protest 2.0 represents a collective cry for immediate attention and systemic reform. Ignoring this call perpetuates a crisis that has lingered for far too long.

Preetiyukta Mohakud, BUBANESWAR

Silent MPs

Sir, There have been media reports suggesting that popularly known figures like Sunny Deol and Shatrughan Sinha are among nine MPs who chose to remain silent throughout their tenure in the outgoing 17th Lok Sabha. Six out of nine such MPs are from the ruling BJP. This is even after Speaker Om Birla reached out to the members who had not got an opportunity to speak in the Parliament. What is evident from this is that Parliamentarians need to understand their crucial role before contesting elections as the electorate assigns the responsibility of being represented, addressed and their issues heard in legislature through MPs. This is sheer wastage of the power they receive as MPs, diminishing the trust of the electorate, becoming weak representatives.

Rishu Jaiswal, CUTTACK

To love is not to possess, but to give oneself.

THE MOTHER



A Toxic Legacy

There are more than 390,000 identified plant species in the world, but just three – rice, maize, and wheat – account for roughly 60 per cent of the plant-based calories in our diets. The dominance of these three grains is largely the result of major technological breakthroughs, particularly the development of high-yielding varieties (HYVs) of rice and wheat during the Green Revolution of the 1960s.

These innovations have yielded enormous benefits, significantly increasing access to staple foods and rescuing hundreds of millions of people from hunger. But ramped-up agricultural output has also brought a host of other problems, particularly when it comes to the cultivation process. Notably, the enhanced productivity of HYV seeds depends heavily on the availability of reliable irrigation and the application of various chemical inputs, especially fertilizers and pesticides.

Consequently, the adoption of HYV seeds has led to the overuse of canal irrigation and subsequent waterlogging problems, forcing farmers to rely on groundwater irrigation, even in semi-arid regions. Similarly, the use of nitrogen-based fertilizers has dramatically increased following the shift to HYV-based agriculture.

The inherent vulnerability of these varieties to pests, together with the tendency to cultivate them in monocultures, has led to frequent infestations and the widespread, often indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides, resulting in residual toxicity in plants and grains. With pests developing resistance to these chemicals, it became necessary to seek out new technological solutions, including the development of genetically modified crops designed to be naturally resistant to (at least some) pests.

In addition, although these technologies are scale-neutral, access to the required inputs and markets typically is not. As a result, large farmers benefited disproportionately, adding to agrarian inequality.

As if these challenges were not daunting enough, experts are growing increasingly concerned about the deteriorating nutritional content of high-yield crops. For example, a recent study suggests that although the Green Revolution has helped India achieve food self-sufficiency, it has undermined the country's nutritional security.

By analysing the quality and potential toxicity of roughly 1,500 rice and wheat varieties developed and introduced in India from the 1960s to 2018, the authors trace the long-term effects of HYV-focused breeding programmes. These programmes, they find, have modified the grains' nutritional makeup, resulting in significantly reduced dietary benefits and a higher concentration of toxins.

In short, although enhancing nutrition was the primary goal of cultivating these grains, the emphasis on increasing yields has significantly compromised their nutritional value. Notably, the levels of vital nutrients like zinc and iron in rice and wheat, India's two most important food staples, have declined markedly. Specifically, rice experienced a 33 per cent drop in zinc and a 27 per cent decrease in iron, while the zinc and iron content in wheat fell by 30 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively. Even worse, arsenic levels in rice surged by 1,493 per cent.

These findings have far-reaching health implications for those who consume these grains. In particular, the authors highlight "strong evidence" that "oral ingestion of metal toxicants" could lead to serious health problems like "lung cancers or chronic respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases, hyperkeratosis, renal toxicity, and impaired bone calcification." Increased consumption of staples like rice and wheat – the goal of the Green Revolution – could end up exacerbating India's already significant disease burden.

This is also true for many other countries that have relied heavily on HYVs to boost yields and increase the production of staple crops. For example, the recently rebranded Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa continues to advocate an outdated industrial model of agriculture that has failed to deliver the expected nutritional benefits.

As I have previously argued, nutrition should not be viewed only in terms of total calorie consumption based on mono-cropped cultivation. While the superior nutritional value of a diverse diet is now widely recognised, achieving it requires not just technological innovation but also a shift in focus toward cultivating a variety of crops best suited to the local environment and climate. In addition to improving nutritional outcomes, this approach promotes sustainability by reducing carbon dioxide emissions across the food's entire life cycle.

India's experience provides a cautionary tale for developing countries. In India and elsewhere, it is becoming increasingly clear that adopting agroecological practices based on smallholder farming is the most effective way to develop food systems that are both sustainable and nutritionally rich. But this requires moving away from the predatory commercialisation of agriculture, which primarily serves the interests of large agribusinesses, toward a model that benefits the actual producers and consumers of food.

The writer, Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, is a member of the Club of Rome's Transformational Economics Commission and Co-Chair of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation. @PROJECTSYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

All that is gold does not glitter, not all those who wander are lost; the old that is strong does not wither, deep roots are not reached by the frost.

JRR TOLKIEN

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

■ **1898:** USS Maine destroyed, leading to Spanish-American War. On this day in 1898, an explosion in Havana harbour sank the battleship USS Maine, killing 260 American seamen and precipitating the Spanish-American War, which originated in the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain.

■ **1965:** Canada adopts its current national flag showing a maple leaf. The leaf symbolizes the country's forests, the middle white stripe the arctic snow, and the red stripes the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

■ **1978:** Leon Spinks defeated Muhammad Ali to become the heavyweight boxing champion of the world.

Bull shark attacks man in river; locals kill fish

The encounter took place when a group of villagers, out to collect wood and for fishing, entered the Vaitarna river



Manor village, out to collect wood and for fishing, entered the river. A large fish sprang up a surprise attack and grabbed the left leg of one of them, identified as Vicky Govari. Hearing his screams, the others pulled him to the shore, he said.

In their bid to save their friend, they began hitting the fish, eventually killing it, the official said. However, the fish, later identified by wildlife experts as a bull shark, had ripped off the calf muscle of Govari's left leg, leaving the shin bone exposed. Govari was rushed to the nearest hospital, where he is receiving medical care for the serious injuries sustained to his leg, he said. The bull shark was about seven feet long and weighed nearly 130 kg, said Pawan Sharma, who is the founder and president of non-profit RAWW (Resqink Association for Wildlife Welfare) and also the honorary wildlife warden with the state Forest department.

The Mangrove Cell, which takes care of the marine and aquatic wildlife wings of the Forest department, will look into the matter, Sharma said. Bull sharks are usually found in the sea but there are reports and evidence of them being found in creeks, rivers and dams several kilometres away from saltwater due to reasons like reduction in prey base due to excessive fishing, being victims of bycatch, degradation and habitat loss, he said. Bull sharks are considered a vulnerable species as per the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) and are among the top protected species of sharks that are facing extinction worldwide, he added.

'Hubby giving time, money to mom not domestic violence'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 14: Husband's provision of time and financial support to his mother does not constitute domestic violence, a local court has said.

The woman, an assistant at the 'Mantralaya', alleged in her complaint that her husband's frequent financial assistance and time spent with his mother led to conflicts in their marriage

The court's decision came as it rejected a plea of a 43-year-old woman seeking action against her husband and his relatives under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. The grievance that the husband is giving time and money to his mother cannot be considered as domestic violence, additional sessions judge Ashish Ayachit said in his order Tuesday. Initially rejected by a magistrate's court in 2015, the woman, an assistant at the 'Mantralaya' (state secretariat), alleged in her complaint that her husband's frequent financial assistance and time spent with his mother led to conflicts in their marriage. She also claimed ignorance about her mother-in-law's mental health condition prior to marriage, which increased tensions within the family. Dismissing the wife's assertions as vague and lacking confidence of truthfulness, the court highlighted that the husband's support for his mother and the alleged mistreatment by in-laws did not meet the threshold for domestic violence, ultimately dismissing her appeal. In addition to seeking relief under the DV Act, the woman had pursued compensation and maintenance for her daughter, who is now an adult, rendering her ineligible for maintenance claims on her behalf. The court perused the facts of the case and noted that the couple, married in 1993, ended their marriage in 2014 on grounds of cruelty by the woman, with evidence indicating the husband's struggles, including suicide attempts during the marriage.

It added that as per evidence and other relevant pleadings, the husband had attempted to end his life two to three times during the marriage. "Careful reading of the entire evidence of the applicant and respondent number 1 (husband), I am of the opinion that the applicant has miserably failed to prove that she was subjected to domestic violence," the judge said. The court scrutinised the case details and concluded that the woman's claims lacked substantiation. It noted that the divorce was initiated by the husband following alleged cruelties by the woman, emphasising a lack of evidence supporting her domestic violence allegations. The woman, in her complaint, had claimed that her husband stayed abroad for his job from September 1993 to December 2004 and used to send his mother ₹10,000 every year besides spending money for his mother's eye operation. The husband countered with accusations of financial impropriety, citing unauthorised withdrawals from his NRE (non-resident external) account to purchase a property. Amid legal proceedings, the woman was granted interim maintenance of ₹3,000 per month before the magistrate court dismissed her plea upon reviewing the evidence.

Assembly urges Centre to amend wildlife laws

The resolution was moved amidst a spate of animal attacks or forays into human settlements in Kerala, especially in the mountainous regions, in the past few months

and hindered the control, regulation or killing of animals, such as wild boar, that come out of the forests and trouble the general public. He said that these provisions have not been modified with the changes in time and circumstances and, therefore, need to be amended. One of the amendments he put forward in the resolution was to give to the Chief Conservator of Forests the powers of the Chief Wildlife Warden to take immediate action in instances of animal attacks or forays into human habitations. Another amendment he pushed for was to declare or classify as vermin wild boars that come out of the forests and multiply in human-inhabited areas. The resolution was moved amidst a spate of animal attacks or forays into human settlements in the state, especially in the mountainous regions, in the past few months. There have been reported instances of wild bears, elephants, tigers, leopards and bison attacking people and livestock as well as destroying crops. In the most recent incident, a 42-year-old man was trampled to death by a radio-collared wild elephant in Mananthavady area of the mountainous district of Wayanad. More than four days after the incident, the animal is yet to be captured by Forest officials. Alarming incidents of tiger, bison and elephant herds venturing into human settlements have been reported from the mountainous district of Kerala in the last couple of days.

The resolution to amend certain provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act and related rules, guidelines and advisories was moved in the house by Minister for Forests and Wild Life Protection AK Saseendran, while several modifications to it were suggested by opposition MLAs of the Congress-led UDF. Except the modification with regard to controlling the numbers of wild animals, other suggestions, such as urging the Centre to sanction ₹50 lakh compensation to families who lost loved ones in animal attacks, were rejected by the minister. In his resolution, the minister said that the Central laws, rules, guidelines and advisories protecting wildlife were stringent

RS polls for all 6 seats from Maha may go unopposed

WITH THE EXISTING STRENGTH OF 284 MLAS, EACH RS SEAT NEEDS A QUOTA OF 41 VOTES IN THE MAHARASHTRA ASSEMBLY TO WIN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Minister Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the Ajit Pawar-helmed Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the 'Mahayuti' candidates will file their nominations February 15. Amid animated discussions on the nomination for Chavan, who was associated with Congress for nearly four decades before crossing over to the saffron fold, Bawankule said, "The BJP nominated Chavan owing to his long career in the state politics." "I hope our nominees, once get elected to the Upper House of Parliament, will raise the issues concerning the people of Maharashtra," he said and extended his best wishes to Congress nominee Handore. With the existing strength of 284 MLAs, each RS seat needs a quota of 41 votes in the Maharashtra assembly to win. Considering the strength of the BJP, which has 105 MLAs and is believed to enjoy the support of some Independents and other smaller allies, it can send three members to the Upper House of the Parliament. The Shiv Sena headed by Eknath Shinde, Ajit Pawar-led NCP, and the opposition Congress can win one seat each. The Shiv Sena has 40 members in the Assembly and the Ajit Pawar-led NCP has 45. The opposition Congress has

43 MLAs. Meanwhile, responding to a query about the agenda of a meeting of Mahayuti allies held at CM Shinde's residence Tuesday night, Fadnavis said discussions were mainly centred around a seat-sharing formula for upcoming Lok Sabha polls. "We also discussed the campaign strategy for the general elections, besides the campaign schedule and prospective venues," he added. In the election held for six Rajya Sabha seats in May 2022, the MVA comprising Shiv Sena (undivided), NCP and Congress, suffered a major setback despite being in power with the opposition BJP bagging three seats. Notably, the election was held after 24 years at that time following the refusal of the then Opposition leader Devendra Fadnavis to have a consensus candidate for the Rajya Sabha. The contest was for the sixth seat for which the BJP had fielded former MP Dhananjay Mahadik and the Shiv Sena candidate was Sanjay Pawar, who lost. The BJP winners include Union minister Piyush Goyal, former state minister Anil Bonde, and Dhananjay Mahadik. The high-stakes battle for the sixth seat turned out to be a nail-biting affair with the Congress and BJP trading charges and even approaching the Election Commission.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 14: In the wake of increasing incidents of human-animal conflict in the state, the Kerala Assembly Wednesday unanimously passed a resolution urging the Centre to amend wildlife protection laws to prevent such instances that have claimed many lives and resulted in major property and crop loss.

The resolution to amend certain provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act and related rules, guidelines and advisories was moved in the house by Minister for Forests and Wild Life Protection AK Saseendran, while several modifications to it were suggested by opposition MLAs of the Congress-led UDF. Except the modification with regard to controlling the numbers of wild animals, other suggestions, such as urging the Centre to sanction ₹50 lakh compensation to families who lost loved ones in animal attacks, were rejected by the minister. In his resolution, the minister said that the Central laws, rules, guidelines and advisories protecting wildlife were stringent



'We survived only because of our defence training'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 14: Ragesh Gopakumar, one of the eight ex-Indian Navy personnel released by the Qatar government, said Wednesday that they survived the prison days only due to their defence training. Expressing joy and gratitude over returning home and being reunited with his family after spending months in captivity in the tiny gulf nation, he also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian government for their release. "We are just happy to be alive... Happy to be home," a relieved Gopakumar told PTI. "Prison and confinement is something terrible," he said, adding he and his colleagues survived only because of the training they underwent as defence forces. He along with seven other former Navy personnel returned

Monday, nearly three-and-a-half months after a Qatari court handed them death sentence that was subsequently commuted to varying jail terms. Gopakumar, who served as a Petty Officer in the Navy, said he had retired in 2017 and later joined the Oman Defence training company as a communications instructor. He resides in Balaramapuram, a suburb located over 16 km away from Kerala's capital city. Whenever someone enquired what the plight of his family had been when he was in prison, he would ask them to imagine a situation where a husband who used to speak to his wife at least five times a day suddenly stopped calling her. The former Navy veteran attributed his release to his family's prayers and the efforts of the Union government. Lavishing praises on Prime Minister Modi, he said it was only because of his personal in-



tervention that their release was made possible. Gopakumar said all of them were hopeful that they would step out of the prison "if Modi intervened" but had no idea how long it would take. He also expressed gratitude to the central government for having made arrangements to

bring the families of the jailed ex-Naval officers to Qatar. "If an Indian is in trouble abroad and is innocent... If our PM is convinced about it, he will come to their rescue even if it is just one person... Every Indian should know this," he said. The eight Indian Navy per-

sonnel faced charges of espionage but neither the Qatari authorities nor New Delhi had made the allegations levelled against them public. On October 28, they were sentenced to death by Qatar's Court of First Instance. On December 28, the Court of Appeal in the Gulf nation commuted the capital punishment and sentenced them to jail terms for durations ranging from three years to 25 years. The Court of Appeal had given 60 days to appeal against the prison terms. In December last year, PM Modi met Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on the sidelines of the COP28 Summit in Dubai and discussed the well-being of Indians there. It is learnt that National Security Adviser Ajit Doval played a role in the negotiations with the Qatari authorities in securing the release of the Indians.

TENDER NOTICE
ବିଭି ସ୍ୱାଧିକାରୀଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ଅନୁଯାୟୀ, ଚେକ୍‌ସ୍‌କୋର ମାପକାଠୀ ଅର୍ଥର ମନର: S-12012/ITDP/59/2023-24/ER/Gen, ତାରିଖ 20/09/2023 ସହିତ ଅନୁପାଳନ, Wood Crafting ଗାର 50ଟି ଅନୁପାଳନ ହୁଏ (measuring tape, marking divider, outside caliper, try square, bevel, triangular file, center punch, screwdriver, carving chisel, frame hack saw, power drill machine, sandstone, wood planer, clamp, meter ruler, rip saw grinding file, hammer and wooden mallet) ଯୋଗାଇବା ପାଇଁ କୋଟେଜନ ଆମନ୍ତ୍ରିତ କରାଯାଉଛି । ଏହି ବିଜ୍ଞାପନ 19/02/2024 ମଧ୍ୟରେ ନିର୍ମୂଲ୍ୟ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ଠିକଣାରେ କୋଟେଜନ ଦାଖଲ କରିବାକୁ ପଡିବ । ଠିକଣା: L-40, Baramunda Colony, Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751003

PENSION FUND REGULATORY AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
B-14/A, CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI BHAWAN, QUTAB INSTITUTIONAL AREA, KATWARIA SARAI, NEW DELHI - 110 016.
VACANCY NOTIFICATION
Applications are invited from Indian citizens for appointment as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), National Pension System Trust (NPS Trust), New Delhi on Contract/Deputation basis for an initial period of three (03) years, which may be extended for another period of two (02) years, if the Authority so desires. The details of eligibility criteria, mode of selection, emoluments and application form etc. are available on PFRDA's website i.e. www.pfrda.org.in as well as NPS Trust's website i.e. www.nps-trust.org.in and also on the website of National Career Service www.ncs.gov.in.
Corrigenda/ Addendums/ Notices (if any) relating to this vacancy notification shall be issued only on the website of PFRDA/NPS Trust.
The last date for receipt of application is 04 April, 2024 (Thursday).
Sd/- CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER HR Department
Please visit our website www.pfrda.org.in for complete information or scan the QR code



Farmers face tear gas used by police to disperse them during the second day of their 'Delhi Chalo' march, at the Punjab-Haryana Shambhu border near Patiala

PTI



Visitors look at a giant inflatable heart called 'Chubby Hearts', an installation by designer Anya Hindmarch, on Valentine's Day in Hong Kong

REUTERS



Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel during a rehearsal for the exercise 'Vayu Shakti 2024', at the Air Force firing range at Pokhran, in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan

PTI



Revellers take part in a traditional event marking the last day of the carnival season called "Kusaki", a folk party and a re-enactment showing the "defeat of death" where all roles are played by males in Jedlinsk, Poland

REUTERS



Students participate in a procession on the occasion of 'Basant Panchami' in Varanasi

PTI



School students pay tribute to victims of the 2019 suicide bombing attack by militants in J&K's Pulwama in Jammu

PTI



Villagers wearing masks and traditional clothes dance during the Fagli festival in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh

PTI



Revelers perform during the night of the Carnival parade at the Sambadrome in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

REUTERS

national

of the day quote

Five years of Pulwama attack! No hearing, no hope and countless questions that are yet to be answered. When will the martyrs get justice

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

Prime Minister had strongly criticised MGNREGA before Covid pandemic. But, after the pandemic, he realised that there is no alternative to MGNREGA in the hands of the government to provide jobs

JAIRAM RAMESH | SENIOR CONG LEADER

The number of pharmaceutical facilities with 10 plus active US approved API products is fast rising. India is emerging as a world leader in this sector

MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI | FORMER UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

First conviction in Behmai massacre

Kanpur (UP): Forty-three years after bandit Phoolan Devi and her gang perpetrated the Behmai massacre in which 20 people, mostly from the Thakur community, were shot dead to "avenge" her rape, a court here Wednesday gave life sentence to one of the two surviving accused. It is the first conviction in the sensational case involving 35 accused, including Phoolan Devi who gained notoriety after the incident and later surrendered and became an MP but was shot dead on July 25, 2001, at the age of 37. On February 14, 1981, Phoolan Devi and her gang allegedly killed 20 people in Behmai village located in Dehat to avenge her rape by two men from the so called "upper caste" Thakur community. Seventeen of those killed in the massacre were Thakurs.

Two tribal youth beaten up in MP

Betul: The police have so far arrested seven persons after two tribal men were allegedly beaten up in separate incidents in Madhya Pradesh's Betul district, while the local administration bulldozed the house of one of the accused, officials said Wednesday. In one of the incidents which took place November 15 last year, the victim, a resident of Baspani area, was brought to Betul city by one of the accused, who was known to him, under some pretext following a dispute over money between the two.

Khalid withdraws bail plea from SC

New Delhi: Former JNU scholar and activist Umar Khalid Wednesday withdrew his bail plea from the Supreme Court in a case lodged against him under anti-terror law UAPA over his alleged involvement in the conspiracy behind the northeast Delhi riots of February 2020, saying he will try his luck before the trial court. Khalid's bail application was pending in the top court since April 6, 2023 and the proceedings were adjourned 13 times because of a variety of reasons.

India-Poland sign pact

New Delhi: India has signed an agreement with Poland for issuing summons, search warrant to any person or taking the evidence of witnesses residing in either country in relation to criminal matters. In a notification, the Union Home Ministry said arrangements have been made by the central government with the government of the Republic of Poland for service or execution of summons or search warrant in relation to criminal matters on any person in Poland.



Out of 140 crore people in the country, 70 crore are women. If they will sit at home, then how will the country and society run

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT OF INDIA

CONG NYAY YATRA TO RESUME TODAY

The second phase of Rahul Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' in Jharkhand, which was scheduled to commence Wednesday, has been cancelled, Congress leaders said. The march will resume from Bihar's Aurangabad Thursday as was planned earlier



Rajnath, Munda discuss farmers' issue

THOUSANDS OF FARMERS, WHO ARE SEEKING A GUARANTEED MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE (MSP) AMONG OTHER DEMANDS, STARTED THEIR 'DELHI CHALO' MARCH TUESDAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: Senior Union ministers, including Rajnath Singh and Arjun Munda, Wednesday held discussions on the ongoing farmers' protests and ways to address the issues, according to sources.

The meeting in the national capital assumes significance against the backdrop of farmers from Punjab marching towards Delhi and Haryana Police using tear gas shells to stop them at the Shambhu border between the two states.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, also a former agriculture minister, deliberated upon various farmer issues with Munda, who is currently in charge of the agriculture ministry. Munda is also one of the ministers who held discussions with farmer groups, the sources said. Details about the meeting could not be immediately ascertained.

Thousands of farmers, who are seeking a guaranteed minimum support price (MSP) among other demands, started their 'Delhi Chalo' march Tuesday. Haryana Police lobbed tear gas shells at farmers from Punjab at the Shambhu border as thousands of protesters stayed put there Wednesday, the second day of their march.

There was a similar standoff at Data Singhwala-Khanauri



A farmer shows a tear gas shell fired by the police to disperse protesting farmers

border in Haryana's Jind district, with Haryana Police barricades stopping farmers from travelling to Delhi on their tractor-trolleys.

In an interview with PTI, Munda Tuesday said a law guaranteeing MSP cannot be brought in a hurry without consulting all stakeholders. He urged farmer groups to have a structured discussion with the government on the issue. Sources in the BJP attacked the Congress for prom-

THE CENTRE INVITED THE FARMER LEADERS FOR HOLDING THIRD ROUND OF TALKS IN A WEEK AFTER TWO SUCH MEETINGS ORGANISED FEBRUARY 8 AND 12 REMAINED INCONCLUSIVE

THE FARMER LEADERS SAID THEY WILL NOT MAKE ANY FRESH ATTEMPT TO MOVE TOWARDS DELHI TILL THE MEETING IS HELD, ASSERTING THAT THE NEXT COURSE OF ACTION WILL BE DECIDED ON THE BASIS OF THE CENTRE'S PROPOSALS

did not accept the recommendations by the Swaminathan Commission when it was in power at the Centre.

They cited that Minister of State for Agriculture K V Thomas, in his written reply to a question asked by BJP member Prakash Javadekar in Rajya Sabha April 16 2010, had stated that the government did not accept the Swaminathan Commission's recommendation that Minimum Support Price (MSP) should be at least 50 per cent more than the weighted average cost of production. "The National Commission on Farmers under the chairmanship of Prof MS Swaminathan has recommended that the Minimum Support Price (MSP) should be at least 50% more than the weighted average cost of production," Thomas had said in a written reply to the BJP member's question.

"This recommendation, however, has not been accepted by the government because MSP is recommended by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) based on objective criteria and considering a variety of relevant factors," Thomas had said.

"Hence, prescribing an increase of at least 50% on cost may distort the market. A mechanical linkage between MSP and cost of production may be counter-productive in some cases," Thomas had also said.

EXCISE POLICY CASE

ED issues 6th summons to Kejriwal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: The Enforcement Directorate has issued the sixth summons to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for questioning him in the excise policy-linked money laundering case, official sources said Wednesday.

The 55-year-old politician, who is also the national convener of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), has been asked to depose before the federal agency February 19.

Acting on a complaint filed by the ED for disobeying its summons in this case, a Delhi court last week had asked Kejriwal to appear before it February 17 and noted that prima facie the AAP chief was "legally bound" to comply.

In its complaint, the ED claimed that Kejriwal was summoned for probe on numerous occasions in order to unearth the role of others, including him, and to trace further proceeds of crime in the ongoing investigation. The agency claimed that Kejriwal intentionally disobeyed each summons and made each of such omission or disobedience a separate offence.

This is the sixth summons in this case by the ED to the former Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer. He was earlier called December 21 and November 2 in 2023 and January 3, January 18 and February 2 this year. The chief minister always called these notices as "illegal".



Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) volunteers take part in a 'Path Sanchalan' on the foundation day of Banaras Hindu University and 'Basant Panchami', in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

Mushroom on frog baffles scientists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: In an intriguing discovery that has baffled the scientific community, researchers have stumbled upon a frog in the foothills of Western Ghats sporting an extraordinary feature - a mushroom sprouting from its side. The discovery has raised numerous questions regarding the ecological dynamics and potential symbiotic relationships between amphibians and fungi in their natural habitats.

The finding, described in the journal Reptiles and Amphibians, has left the scientific community intrigued since it is for the first time that a mushroom has been seen growing in a living amphibian.

The frog, identified as Rao's Intermediate Golden-backed Frog (Hylarana inter-media), was encountered by a team, including researchers from World Wildlife Fund (WWF), June 19 last year in Karkala, Karnataka.

This particular species is endemic to the Western Ghats of Karnataka and Kerala, specifically above the Palghat Gap, where it is known to thrive in relative abundance.

The researchers noted approximately 40 of these frogs in



LOHIT YL/WWF-INDIA

a small roadside rainwater-fed pond. One individual stood out with a distinct outgrowth on its left flank, which upon closer examination, revealed a mushroom sprouting from its side, the researchers said. The frog was alive and moving despite this unusual appendage, they said.

The frog was not captured, instead, the researchers took pictures of it and documented it in a note published in the journal Reptiles and Amphibians. Fungus experts who looked at the images identified the white growth to be a Bonnet mushroom, which usually grows on dead and rotting wood. A saprotroph is an organism that feeds on non-living organic matter.

This finding raises numerous questions regarding the ecological dynamics and potential symbiotic relationships between amphibians and fungi in their natural habitats.

The discovery holds significance beyond its novelty. While fungi are known to play vital roles as saprotrophs or symbionts in ecosystems, their relationship with amphibians has largely been unexplored.

The prognosis for the frog with the mushroom appendage could not be done since it was not captured for further study.

"To the best of our knowledge, never has a mushroom sprouting from the flank of a live frog been documented," the authors of the study said.

Pak Rangers violate ceasefire along IB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 14: The Pakistan Rangers violated the ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan Wednesday by resorting to unprovoked firing at a BSF post along the International Border (IB) in the R S Pura sector here, officials said.

The residents of the area where the ceasefire violation took place said it was after a gap of more than a decade that they witnessed cross-border firing, which triggered panic among them.

"At about 5:50 pm, the Pakistan Rangers resorted to unprovoked firing in the R S Pura area, which was befittingly responded by the BSF troops. The firing stopped at 6:15 pm," the Public Relations Office of the BSF, Jammu frontier said. It added that the troops are on high alert.

They added that there was no casualty or damage on the Indian side. On the intervening night of November 8-9 last year, a Border Security Force (BSF) jawan was killed in firing by the Pakistan Rangers in the Ramgarh sector of Samba district - the first death on the Indian side since February 25, 2021, when a renewed ceasefire was agreed upon by the two neighbouring countries.

Sonia files nomination; BJP fields party chief Nadda, Ashok Chavan

RS POLLS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi Wednesday filed her nomination papers for Rajasthan for Rajya Sabha polls while the BJP renominated its chief J P Nadda and Union ministers Ashwini Vaishnaw and L Murugan, besides fielding new-entrant in the party and ex-chief minister Ashok Chavan.

Ahead of the Thursday deadline for nominations, the BJP and the Congress have named 28 and 10 candidates respectively for the seats they are expected to win going by their current strength in state assemblies.

Among the 10 candidates announced by the Congress Wednesday were party treasurer Ajay Maken, who has been fielded from Karnataka, noted advocate Abhishek Singhvi from

the lone seat in Himachal Pradesh and Renuka Chowdhury from Telangana.

Sonia Gandhi was accompanied by her children Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra besides former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot and other Congress leaders when she filed her nomination papers in Jaipur.

Many senior BJP leaders and outgoing Rajya Sabha MPs, including seven Union ministers such as Dharmendra Pradhan and Bhupender Yadav, have not been renominated by the party for the biennial Rajya Sabha polls amid strong indications that several of them may contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Senior party leader and former Union minister Anand Sharma was seeking a Rajya Sabha berth from Himachal, which is his home state.

SNIPPETS

TN Assembly adopts resolution against Centre's 'One Nation, One Election' policy

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu Assembly Wednesday adopted a resolution against the Centre's proposed 'One Nation, One Election' policy, terming it impractical and undemocratic. The Assembly also passed a resolution on the delimitation exercise, stating that the population of 1971 (census) should be the criteria for carrying out the process, if it was to be held for 'unavoidable reasons.' Moving the two resolutions, Chief Minister M K Stalin described as 'autocratic', the one nation one election proposal.

EC seeks 3.4L CAPF personnel for deployment in polls

New Delhi: The Election Commission (EC) has sought 3.4 lakh Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) personnel for deployment in a phased manner during the upcoming Lok Sabha election and Assembly polls in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim. The poll panel has also sought adequate rolling stocks with all appropriate facilities in the trains, thereby ensuring hassle-free mobilisation and a timely movement of the forces to perform election duties. In a communication to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the EC has said the chief electoral officers of all the states and Union territories have requested for the deployment of CAPFs for poll-related duties, such as area domination, confidence-building measures, poll day-related duties, guarding of electronic voting machines (EVMs) and strong room centres, counting centre security etc during the elections.

WB BJP chief injured after falling down on car bonnet

Kolkata: West Bengal BJP president Sukanta Majumdar was injured Wednesday after losing balance and falling on a car's bonnet, on which he was standing, while addressing reporters in North 24 Parganas district, following which he was taken to a hospital, a party official said. Majumdar, who was prevented from going to restive Sandeshkhali by the district administration Tuesday, put up at a guest house in Taki late in the night following a dharna in front of the Basirhat police district SP's office. The state BJP president, who made attempts to go to Sandeshkhali again Wednesday morning, was prevented by the police from leaving the area. Majumdar, also a Lok Sabha MP from the state's Balurghat constituency, was addressing reporters standing on the car's bonnet, when he slipped and fell on it, the party official said.

international

of the day quote

Russia has chosen a path which is a long-term confrontation ... and the Kremlin is probably anticipating a possible conflict with NATO within the next decade or so

KAUPO ROSIN | CHIEF OF FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, ESTONIA

Climate and conflict are two leading drivers of (our) global food crisis. Where wars rage, hunger reigns - whether due to displacement of people, destruction of agriculture, damage to infrastructure, or deliberate policies of denial

ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

The operational environment is extremely complex and stressful. The Russian occupiers continue to increase their efforts and have a numerical advantage in personnel

OLEKSANDR SYRSKYI | NEW ARMY CHIEF, UKRAINE

SHORT TAKES

Indonesians vote

Jakarta: Millions of Indonesians were choosing a new president Wednesday as the world's third-largest democracy aspires to become a global economic powerhouse just over 25 years since emerging from a brutal authoritarian era. The incumbent Indonesian defence minister, who has been accused of human rights atrocities as an ex-general, and two former governors are vying to succeed the still-widely popular President Joko Widodo. Widodo's rise from a riverside slum to his country's presidency has showcased the vibrancy of his Southeast Asian nation's democracy in a region rife with authoritarian regimes.

China's intimidation

Taipei: Taiwan's defence ministry said it detected 14 Chinese air force planes operating around Taiwan and carrying out "joint combat readiness patrols" with Chinese warships. China, which views Taiwan as its own territory, has over the past four years regularly sent warplanes and warships into the skies and waters around the island as it seeks to assert sovereignty claims that the Taipei government rejects. Taiwan's defence ministry said that starting around 1 pm it had detected 14 Chinese aircraft including J-16 fighters and drones operating off northern and southwestern Taiwan.

NK missile mania

Seoul: North Korea fired several cruise missiles off its east coast Wednesday, Seoul's military said, the latest in a string of weapons tests this year. "Our military detected several unknown cruise missiles over the waters northeast of Wonsan and South Korea-US intelligence authorities are conducting a detailed analysis," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said. Earlier this week, North Korea announced it had tested of a new control system for a multiple rocket launcher it said would have an "increased" battlefield role.

Army service must

Naypyidaw: Myanmar's ruling military plans to call up young people for mandatory service from April and also require retired security personnel to serve, media reports said, as the army struggles to crush an anti-junta insurgency. The Southeast Asian country has been in turmoil since the military seized power from an elected government in a 2021 coup and plans by the junta to call up more people to fight point to the military being under growing pressure.



When America gives its word, it means something. When we make a commitment, we keep it. And NATO is a sacred commitment. Donald Trump looks at this as if it's a burden

JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

HISTORIC IMPEACHMENT IN US

The US House voted to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, with the Republican majority determined to punish the Biden administration over its handling of the US-Mexico border. In a historic rebuke, the House impeached Mayorkas 214-213, the first Cabinet secretary charged in nearly 150 years



PAK STALEMATE ENDS

SHEHBAZ SHARIF LIKELY TO BECOME NEXT PAK PM AFTER MAJOR PARTIES STRIKE DEAL ON COALITION GOVT

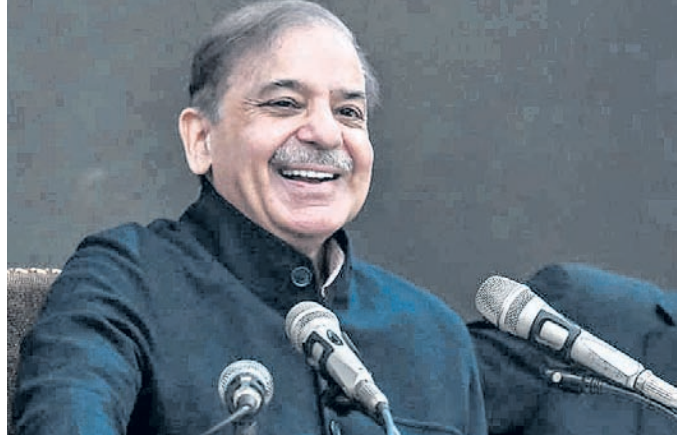
AGENCIES

Islamabad, Feb 14: Shehbaz Sharif, the younger brother of former premier Nawaz Sharif, is expected to become Pakistan's next prime minister as a post-poll alliance of leading political parties led by them struck a deal to form a coalition government after last week's elections produced a split mandate.

The surprise move means the party of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan will not be in power, despite independent candidates backed by his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) winning the maximum number of seats in Parliament in the February 8 elections marred by allegations of rigging.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Tuesday night nominated 72-year-old Shehbaz as the prime ministerial candidate instead of the party's supreme and three-time former premier Nawaz Sharif. The 74-year-old veteran politician, who was seeking a record fourth term as prime minister, returned to Pakistan in October last year after ending a self-imposed exile in the UK.

Earlier, Shehbaz along with Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan Peoples Party, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui of Muttahida Quami Movement Pakistan (MQM-P)



met at the residence of Shujaat Hussain of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) for a consultative meeting and agreed on government formation.

"Today we have united to tell the nation that we all accept the split mandate. I am thankful to Zardari and Bilawal (Bhutto) that they decided for their party to vote for the PML-N," he said.

PML-N Information Secretary Marriyum Aurangzeb has said that party supreme Nawaz Sharif has nominated the party president and his younger brother Shehbaz Sharif for the post of the country's prime minister.

Earlier Tuesday, the Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said he was with-

drawing his bid to become the prime minister and his party would support the PML-N candidate for the top post.

"Nawaz Sharif has thanked the political parties which provided support to the PML-N (in forming the upcoming government) and expressed hope that

through such decisions Pakistan will come out of crises," she said.

Shehbaz, who was prime minister after the Imran Khan-led government was ousted in April 2022, said the other parties that joined hands with the PML-N enjoyed "almost 2/3 majority" of the Parliament after the elections. He also said that the new government would pull the country out of trouble.

Imran Khan's party cries foul

As major political parties in Pakistan backed the formation of a coalition government led by PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif, jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party Wednesday alleged that its mandate has been "stolen in the dark of the night". Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's Central Information Secretary Raouf Hasan said that Imran's "mandate has been stolen in the dark of the night". In a post on X, Hasan said, "Pakistan is being put on [the] road to further destabilisation." Referring to a possible coalition government led by the PML-N, he said, "The decision to induct a bunch of criminals to form governments, who have been rejected by the people, reflects a myopic view of the grave challenges the country is beset with."

but the lender's support ends in March, following which a new, extended programme will be needed.

Negotiating a new programme, and at speed, will be critical for the new government.

It could also face new political tensions with independent members of parliament, backed by jailed former premier Imran Khan, forming the largest group in the legislature. This group is at loggerheads with the powerful military and alleges that the vote was rigged.

The caretaker government and election commission have rejected those accusations.

Khan is in jail on charges of corruption and revealing state secrets, and his party was barred from contesting the election, forcing members to run as independents.

Ukraine destroys Russian warship

REUTERS

Kyiv, Feb 14: Ukraine destroyed a Russian landing warship off the coast of occupied Crimea in an operation with naval drones that breached the vessel's port side Wednesday and caused it to sink, Kyiv's military spy agency and armed forces said.

There was no immediate comment from Russia, which said earlier that it had destroyed six drones in the Black Sea. The Kremlin declined to comment.

"The Ukrainian Armed Forces, together with the Defence Ministry's intelligence unit, destroyed the Tsezar Kunikov large landing ship. It was in Ukraine's territorial waters near Alupka at the time of the hit," the military said on Telegram messenger.

The Black Sea resort town of Alupka lies not far from Yalta on the southern edge of Crimea, which Russian forces seized and annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

Ukraine's GUR military intelligence agency said the warship appeared to have been loaded when it sank and that, before the attack, it had spent some 10 days at a loading site used by the Russian military.

It published grainy footage on Telegram purporting to show several naval drones approaching a large vessel at night and at least one large explosion. Some of the footage at the end appeared to show major damage with the vessel listing heavily to one side.

MODI VISIT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

UAE, India ink 10 pacts for collaboration

Abu Dhabi, Feb 14: In a bid to further strengthen their bilateral relationship, India and the UAE have inked 10 pacts for collaboration in key sectors like energy, infrastructure, investments, and management of archives, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said here Wednesday.

The 10 memoranda of understanding and agreements were signed during the meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi had with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan Tuesday.

He said the MoU in the field of electricity interconnection and trade will focus on green hydrogen and energy storage, besides cooperation on ensuring energy security and trade.

Kwatra said the Inter-governmental Framework Agreement concerning Cooperation for the Empowerment and Operation of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) will further regional connectivity.

"The main areas under this agreement include cooperation on logistics platforms which is a crucial element of furthering the objectives of these particular corridors and provision of supply chain services to cover all types of general cargo, bulk con-



tainers, and liquid," he said.

"One of the aims is to see how quickly the IMEC gets operated and benefits the core objective of stronger, deeper, more extensive regional connectivity between the parties involved," Kwatra said.

The corridor was announced in New Delhi during the G20 summit in September.

The IMEC is being seen as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The IMEC will connect India, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and Europe.

Kwatra said the MoU on Cooperation in Digital Infrastructure Projects will create a framework for wide-ranging cooperation, including investment cooperation, in the digital infrastructure sector and also facilitate the sharing of technical knowledge, skills and expertise.

The agreement on interlinking of the instant payment platforms - UPI (India) and AANI (UAE) will facilitate seamless cross-border transactions be-

First Hindu stone temple unveiled



Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday inaugurated Abu Dhabi's first Hindu stone temple amid devotional chants and in the presence of spiritual leaders of the Swaminarayan sect. Dressed in a light pink silk dhoti and kurta paired with a sleeveless jacket and stole, the prime minister participated in rituals of a ceremony to dedicate the temple to the people. The prime minister also participated in "Global Aarti", which was performed simultaneously at over 1,200 temples of the Swaminarayan sect worldwide built by the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS).

tween the two countries. Kwatra said the agreement on inter-linking domestic debitcredit cards - RuPay (India) with JAYWAN (UAE) was an important step in building financial sector cooperation and will enhance the universal acceptance of RuPay across the UAE.

BHARAT MART

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his UAE counterpart Sheikh Mohamed bin Rashid Al

Maktoum Wednesday virtually laid the foundation stone of Bharat Mart that will offer the Indian MSME sector an effective platform to reach out to international buyers.

Modi and Maktoum took part in the virtual foundation laying event at Jebel Ali Free Trade Zone here for the Bharat Mart that will be built by DP World, a statement from the Ministry of External Affairs said.

INDIA MATTERS

UK imposes Serious Crime Prevention Orders on nine Indian-origin criminals

London: A nine-member gang of Indian-origin criminals found guilty of smuggling goods and migrants have been placed under Serious Crime Prevention Orders (SCPOs) by the UK authorities to prevent future offending. Swander Dhal, 38, Jasbir Kapoor, 36, Diljan Malhotra, 48, Charan Singh, 46, Valjeet Singh, 35, Jasbir Dhal Singh, 33, Jaginder Kapoor, 48, Jaccar Kapoor, 51, and Amarjeet Alabadis, 32, are now under the National Crime Agency (NCA) imposed orders designed to limit their ability to engage in serious and organised crime. As members of an organised crime group, they were recently convicted for removing GBP 15.5 million from the UK to Dubai hidden in suitcases, as well as attempting to smuggle 17 migrants into the country, receiving lengthy prison sentences for the crimes. The terms of their SCPOs, to come into effect once the offenders have served their jail sentences, include restrictions on finances, assets, bank accounts and the purchase of international travel tickets.



Accused of crimes: 43 Indians among 186 foreigners deported by Maldives



Male: The Maldives has deported 186 foreigners, including 43 Indians, after accusing them of committing crimes like visa violations and drug offences, according to a media report. The highest number of people deported was from Bangladesh. At least 83 Bangladeshis were deported followed by 43 Indians, 25 Sri Lankans and 8 Nepalis. The date of their deportation is not yet known. Male-based news outlet Adhathu reported. The deportations come as efforts are underway in the Maldives to shut down businesses operated illegally. Homeland Security Minister Ali Ihusan said at a press briefing Tuesday that the ministry was working together with the Economic Ministry to take action against illegal businesses operating under various names.

Crime against Indians in US thrives

INDIAN-AMERICAN COUPLE, TWIN SONS FOUND DEAD AT THEIR HOME IN US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, Feb 14: An Indian-origin family, including their 4-year-old twin boys, has been found dead at their home in California with the police investigating the case as a murder-suicide, in the latest in a string of tragedies to strike the community in the US.

The victims have been identified by the friends as Anand Sujith Henry, his wife Alice Priyanka, and their 4-year-old twin boys, NBC Bay Area reported.

However, the victims' identities have not yet been released, police said. The incident took place in San Mateo Monday, police were quoted as saying by the the report.

On Monday, Police said a 911 call spurred a welfare check at the location after someone reported they hadn't heard from the residents for some time. They arrived and checked the exits of the home and found no signs of forced entry.

"Unfortunately, we located



There have been seven deaths of an Indian or Indian-American in the country in recent months

four deceased people inside the home. One adult male. One adult female and two children," said Jerami Surratt, public information officer with the San Mateo Police Department.

The case is being investigated as a murder-suicide, police said Tuesday. On February 10, a 41-year-old Indian-origin IT executive died after suffering life-

threatening injuries during an assault outside a restaurant in Washington.

Before that, Syed Mazahir Ali, an Indian student was attacked by robbers in Chicago.

Earlier, 25-year-old Indian student Vivek Saini was fatally attacked in Georgia state's Lithonia city by a homeless drug addict.

Another student identified as 19-year-old Shreyas Reddy Beniger was found dead in Ohio. However, local authorities have ruled out foul play.

Sameer Kamath, a 23-year-old Indian-American student at Purdue University, was found dead in a nature preserve in Indiana February 5.

Another Indian student, identified as Neel Acharya at Purdue University, Indiana, was confirmed dead days after being reported missing January 28.

Akul B Dhawan, an 18-year-old at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, was found dead last month with signs of hypothermia.

Ban on ritual slaughter upheld

In opposing the law, Jewish, Muslim leaders came together in an unusual alliance

AGENCIES

Brussels, Feb 14: Europe's top rights court upheld a ban on killing livestock without first stunning them, finding Tuesday that animal welfare could trump religious practice, as per reports.

A mixed-faith group of people and organizations brought the complaint to the European Court of Human Rights, arguing Belgium's ban on ritual animal slaughter violates their religious freedom.

In 2017, the Belgian region of Flanders mandated that all animals be stunned before slaughter, virtually banning Jewish and Islamic ritual slaughter, which require that animals be in perfect health before they are killed. A second region, Wallonia, followed in 2018.

The laws were pushed by an odd mix of animal rights groups and far-right, anti-Muslim politi-



cians. In opposing the law, Jewish and Muslim leaders also came together in an unusual alliance.

The group of 16 people and 7 advocacy groups first brought a suit in Belgian court, which landed at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg in 2020.

The Court of Justice — which oversees European Union law — held that the ban did not violate the rights of Jews and Muslims. EU regulations require that animals be "rendered insensible to pain before slaughter," but member states can make exceptions for religious rituals.

The group then turned to the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights. The court is underpinned by the 1953 European Convention on Human Rights, which protects the political and civil rights of Europeans.

The seven-judge panel came to a similar conclusion as their compatriots in Luxembourg. "The protection of animal welfare constitutes an ethical value to which contemporary democratic societies attach increasing importance and that should be taken into account when assessing restrictions placed on the external manifestation of religious convictions," the justices wrote.

The two courts are not obliged to follow the other's rulings and are sometimes at odds. However, Tuesday's decision was closely aligned with that of the European Court of Justice.

Belgium is home to some 500,000 Muslims and 30,000 Jews. Those who want to observe their religion's slaughter rules must now obtain meat from abroad.

business

of the day quote

The defence ministry has made an astounding accomplishment by surpassing the ₹1 lakh crore mark in terms of total order value transacted through the GeM portal

PK SINGH | CEO, GEM

We are pleased to announce that we have extended our partnership with BOC Aviation through a lease agreement for four Airbus A320NEO aircraft

RIYAZ PEERMOHAMED | CHIEF AIRCRAFT ACQUISITION AND FINANCING OFFICER, INDIGO

In light of the changing landscape, the premium and luxury sectors are expected to sustain their attractiveness, supported by favourable market conditions driving healthy growth in the foreseeable future

ANSHUMAN MAGAZINE | CHAIRMAN, CBRE

Q3 RESULTS

Senco Gold PAT up

Mumbai: Jewellery retailer Senco Gold has reported a 5.8 per cent growth in consolidated profit after tax at ₹109.32 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2023. The company's profit after tax (PAT) stood at ₹103.35 crore during the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal, the jewellery retailer said in a regulatory filing Tuesday. The company's revenue from operations grew by 23.3 per cent during the quarter under review at ₹1,652.20 crore, compared to ₹1,339.63 crore in the same period of the previous year.

M&M PAT surges

Mumbai: Mahindra & Mahindra Wednesday reported a 34 per cent increase in its consolidated profit after tax at ₹2,658 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2023, driven by robust sales across verticals. The auto major had reported a profit after tax of ₹1,984 crore for the October-December quarter of the last financial year. Revenue increased 15 per cent to ₹35,299 crore for the period under review, as compared to ₹30,621 crore in the year-ago period, Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) said in a regulatory filing.

NMDC profit rises

New Delhi: State-owned NMDC Wednesday posted a 62 pc rise in consolidated net profit to ₹1,469.73 crore in the December quarter, pushed by higher income. It had clocked a net profit of ₹903.89 crore in the year-ago period, the mining company said in an exchange filing. The company's total income surged to ₹5,746.47 crore over ₹3,924.75 crore a year ago. NMDC's expenses stood at ₹3,516.78 crore in the third quarter of the current fiscal as against ₹2,693.01 crore a year ago.

NET BUYERS

FPIs' investment value rises 13% in Dec quarter

New Delhi, Feb 14: The value of FPIs (Foreign Portfolio Investors) holding in Indian equities reached ₹738 billion in the three months ended December 2023, marking a surge of 13 per cent from the preceding quarter, driven by the strong performance of the domestic stock market, according to a report by Morningstar.

The value of FPIs investment was at \$651 billion in the September quarter of the current fiscal.

On a year-on-year basis, the value of such investments rose 26 per cent from \$584 billion in December 2022.

"This could be attributed to the good performance of the domestic equity markets as well as strong net inflows from FPIs," the report noted.

However, FPIs' contribution to Indian equity market capitalisation fell marginally during the quarter under review to 16.83 per cent from 16.95 per cent in the previous quarter.

After withdrawing \$5.38 billion in the September quarter, foreign investors were net buyers in the Indian equity markets to the tune of \$6.07 billion in the three months ended December 2023 owing to the decline in US Treasury bond yields. Also, the listing of IPOs and the fall in crude prices brought foreign investors back.

However, this momentum could not be maintained, and FPIs turned into net sellers in January this year and took out \$3.10 billion from Indian equities on multiple factors including profit booking.

'CIL to add new mines, expand existing ones to meet demand'

REUTERS

Singapore, Feb 14: State-run Coal India plans to start operations at five new mines and expand capacity of at least 16 existing ones to address growing demand for the fuel, its chairman told Reuters Wednesday.



India has increasingly relied on coal to address record power demand in recent months, with the rise in coal-fired power output outpacing renewable energy growth for the first time since at least 2019.

A record output by Coal India - the world's largest coal miner whose profits and share price have surged since early 2023 - is set to boost inventories at power plants running on domestic coal by 16.1 per cent year-over-year to 40 million metric tonnes by end-March, Coal India Chairman PM Prasad said in a written response to questions.

The company is on track to exceed its production target for the second straight year during the fiscal year ending March,

3-MONTH LOW

WPI cools down

Wholesale inflation eases to 0.27% in Jan as food prices rise at a slower pace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: The wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation eased to a three-month low of 0.27 per cent in January, mainly due to moderation of food prices, including vegetables.

The WPI inflation was in the negative zone from April to October and had turned positive in November at 0.39 per cent. In January 2023, it was at 4.8 per cent and in December 2023 it was 0.73 per cent.

"The annual rate of inflation based on the All India Wholesale Price Index (WPI) number is 0.27 per cent (provisional) for the month of January, 2024 (over January, 2023)," the commerce and industry ministry said in a statement Wednesday.

The previous low level of WPI inflation was recorded in October 2023, when it was (-) 0.26 per cent.

In January, food inflation declined to 6.85 per cent, from 9.38 per cent in December 2023.

Within food articles, inflation in vegetables eased to 19.71 per cent from 26.3 per cent in December. Inflation in potatoes was in the negative zone.

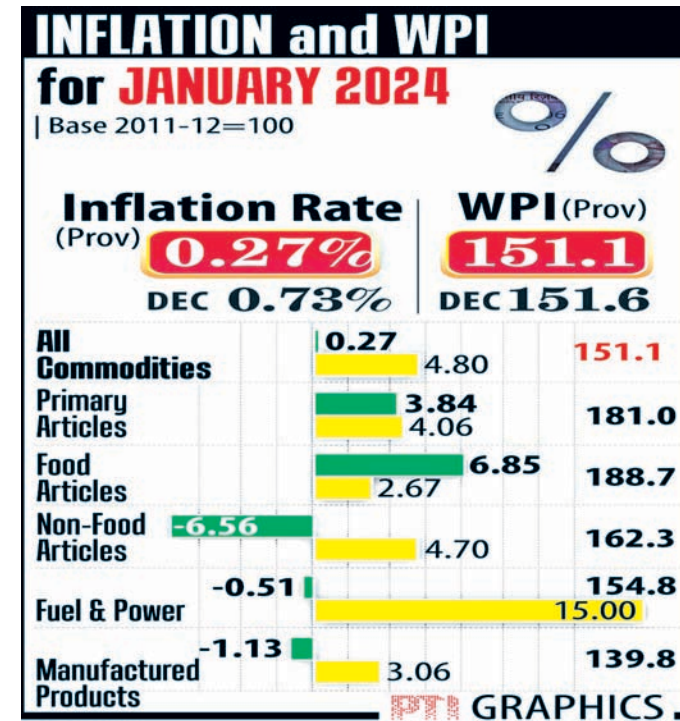
The prices of fruits, eggs, milk, fish, and milk have eased.

In the fuel and power segment, inflation was (-) 0.51 per cent in January, as against (-) 2.41 per cent in December 2023.

In manufactured products, in-

Carbon capture is not a solution for the energy transition and political leaders need to provide real, non-greenwashed, commitments to encourage investment

ANDREW FORREST | EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, FORTESCUE METALS



Weakening of inflationary pressures has continued into January in wholesale prices

SAUGATA BHATTACHARYA | INDEPENDENT ECONOMIST

Inflation was (-) 1.13 per cent, as against (-) 0.71 per cent in the previous month.

The Reserve Bank in its bi-monthly monetary policy earlier month held interest rates steady with a view to bringing down Consumer Price Index (CPI) or retail inflation at 4 per cent. Retail inflation still rules over 5 per cent.

As per government data, the month-over-month change in

BITCOIN RECLAIMS \$1TN MCAP

Bitcoin Wednesday reclaimed the market cap of \$1 trillion after rising 3 per cent to over \$51,200. In the last seven days, Bitcoin has jumped 19.5 per cent, according to CoinMarketCap. It last traded at this level in November 2021. The token has more than tripled in value since January 2023. However, it continues to be far below its peak of \$69,000 achieved in November 2021



FAG-END BUYING PUSHES INDICES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 14: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty reversed losses and closed higher for the second straight day Wednesday following buying in energy, metal and utility stocks in the last hour of trade amid positive domestic inflation data.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 267.64 points or 0.37 per cent to close at 71,822.83 points, extending gains for the second day. The index opened lower and fell further to a low of 70,809.84 points during intra-day trades.

The broader NSE Nifty also gained 96.80 points or 0.45 per cent to end the day at 21,840.05 points.

"Nifty opened gap-down tracking the weak US markets however strong recovery in the select heavyweights not only pared losses but also helped the index to close around the day's high," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

State Bank of India was the biggest gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 4.24 per cent, followed by Tata Steel, Axis Bank,



Maruti, NTPC, PowerGrid, ITC and Nestle India. Shares of SBI closed at ₹743.35 apiece.

In contrast, Tech Mahindra, Sun Pharma, TCS, Infosys and HDFC Bank were among the laggards.

In the previous session, Sensex surged 482.70 points or 0.68 per cent to settle at 71,555.19 points. Nifty climbed 127.20 points or 0.59 per cent to close at 21,743.25 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets Tuesday as they purchased shares worth ₹376.32 crore, according to exchange data.

₹20L-cr mcap: Reliance scripts history

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Wednesday became the first Indian company to achieve a market capitalisation of ₹20 lakh crore, and its market value is ahead of the likes of PepsiCo, Dutch energy giant Shell, and China's Petrochina. Reliance stock had Tuesday briefly touched ₹20 lakh crore market capitalisation (m-cap), but it ended the day at ₹19,93,881.61 crore. The firm closed at ₹2,963.60 on the NSE Wednesday, up 1.14 per cent over the previous close, according to stock exchange data. This gave it a market value of ₹20.05 lakh crore at the close. This achievement places the company at the 49th position among the world's top 50 companies by market capitalisation, ahead of giants such as Pepsi Co, Shell Plc, and Cisco. Microsoft Corp is the most valuable company in the world with an m-cap of \$3.08 trillion, followed by Apple Inc (\$2.89 trillion), Saudi Aramco (\$2.04 trillion) and Google-owner Alphabet Inc (\$1.84 trillion). In dollar terms, Reliance m-cap is \$239 billion.

BEST-EVER JAN FIGURES

PV sales start 2024 with a bang

PASSENGER VEHICLE WHOLESALERS RISE 14% YOY IN JANUARY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

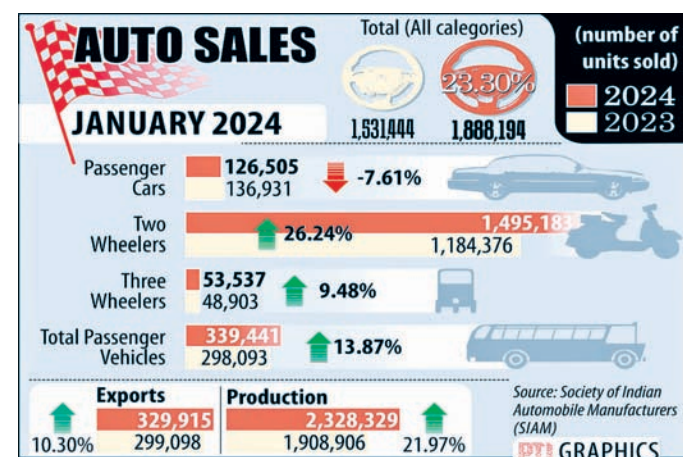
New Delhi, Feb 14: Passenger Vehicles (PV) sales in India kicked off on a strong note in 2024 with wholesales rising 14 per cent year-on-year to 3,39,074 units last month, the best-ever figure for January driven by robust demand for utility vehicles, industry body SIAM said Wednesday.

As per the data issued by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), dispatches of passenger vehicles from manufacturers to dealers stood at 3,46,080 units in January 2023.

Two-wheeler wholesales rose 26 per cent to 1,49,183 units last month as compared with 1,18,437 units in January last year.

"Passenger vehicle sales have remained resilient led by positive consumer sentiments, while the two-wheeler segment witnessed good growth in January as well as the rural market continues to recover," Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) President Vinod Aggarwal said.

Though the commercial ve-



hicle sector did not grow in January 2024, it is likely to see good offtake in the next two months of this financial year, he added.

Three-wheeler wholesales witnessed a growth of 9 per cent at 53,537 units as against 48,903 units in January 2023.

According to SIAM, market leader Maruti Suzuki India posted wholesales of 1,66,802 units last month, up from 1,47,348 units in January last year.

Rival Hyundai Motor India sold 57,115 units as compared to 50,106 units in the same month a year ago.

Mahindra & Mahindra's wholesales were at 43,068 units

as against 33,040 units in the same month last year, it added.

In the motorcycle segment, Hero MotoCorp sold 3,89,752 units last month in the domestic market as against 3,26,467 units in the year-ago period, while Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India posted wholesales of 1,83,638 units as compared to 1,27,912 units in January 2023.

Bajaj Auto Ltd sold 1,78,056 units of motorcycles last month as compared to 1,38,860 units in January 2023, SIAM said.

Scooters also saw strong traction with market leader Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India posting 1,98,874 units, up from 1,50,243 units in January last year.

KYC COMPLIANCE

Visa, Mastercard told to stop card-based commercial payments

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 14: The Reserve Bank has asked international payments major Visa and Mastercard to stop card-based commercial payments made by small and large businesses due to concerns over KYC compliance.

While Visa has acknowledged to a communication to this effect from the regulator February 8, a response from Mastercard was awaited.

The development comes on the heels of the RBI initiating regulatory actions against Paytm Payments Bank.

According to industry sources, RBI directions to Visa and Mastercard have been issued due to concerns over non-compliance with KYC norms.

In a statement, a Visa India spokesperson told PTI that "they have received a communication from the RBI February 8 in what appears to be an industry-wide request for information on the role of business payment solution providers (BPSPs) in commercial and business payments. That communication included direction that we hold all BPSP transactions in abeyance."

The development comes on the heels of the RBI initiating regulatory actions against Paytm Payments Bank.

IEA talks with India for full membership

New Delhi: Ministers from the International Energy Agency's member countries have begun talks with India on its application to become a full member of the Paris-based agency of 31 nations, IEA said Wednesday. In a statement issued after IEA's 2024 ministerial meeting in Paris, the agency said the talks with India are in recognition of the country's "strategic importance" in tackling global energy and climate challenges. "The Ministerial gave the IEA a strong mandate to deepen cooperation with major emerging economies. This includes starting discussions with India on its request for full IEA membership," it added. India, which joined the IEA as an associate member in 2017, sent a formal request for full membership in October 2023.

Hyundai plans to drive to D-St for largest IPO ever

THE COUNTRY'S SECOND-BIGGEST CARMAKER SEEKS EXPANSION, HIGHER VALUATION WITH \$3BN INDIA IPO

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 14: Hyundai Motor's planned \$3 billion IPO in India will help the carmaker score two goals in one go: expand in one of the world's fastest growing markets and tackle the so-called "Korea discount" that suppresses the value of its business back home.

Hyundai, India's second-biggest carmaker behind Maruti Suzuki with a 15% market share, has appointed bankers for the initial public offering which could be the country's biggest ever, and Hyundai's first such listing outside South Korea. Prior to this, the \$2.7-billion listing of LIC in 2022 was India's biggest IPO.

The India IPO is aimed at accelerating its expansion in a country where it has operated for over 25 years and where its affordable cars are popular with price-conscious Indians, according to analysts and four people familiar with the carmaker's plans.

The listing will also reduce Hyundai's dependence on its parent for funds, giving it the



The IPO plans come as India's stock markets are soaring. The benchmark Indian indices have doubled between 2019 and 2023, while Seoul's KOSPI index has risen just 30% in the same period

financial muscle to take on local rivals such as Tata and chart its

India will become the ground to raise money for local projects. Hyundai understands the market dynamics

GAURAV VANGAAL | ANALYST, S&P GLOBAL MOBILITY

own growth plans in a market that accounts for 14% of total

global sales, the sources said.

Hyundai plans to use the IPO proceeds largely to fund the launch of EVs in India, as well as set up a charging network and a battery facility, the sources said. The money will also be used to expand its manufacturing capacity in the country.

India is a "sizable" market for Hyundai, and more capital raised locally will help it build EV infrastructure there, said Kevin Yoo an analyst at Daol Investment & Securities.

A spokesperson for Hyundai declined to confirm the IPO plans, reiterating an earlier statement that said the company "constantly reviews various activities, including listing of overseas subsidiaries, to increase corpo-

rate value".

Two of the sources said Hyundai wants to cash in on this growth and also tackle the "Korea discount", a term analysts use to refer to the typically lower valuations for South Korean companies compared to global peers because of lower dividend payouts, the dominance of opaque conglomerates and geopolitical risks involving North Korea.

Hyundai is considering a valuation of \$30 billion for the India unit IPO, the sources said, which is more than half of its Korea-listed parent which trades in Seoul at a market capitalisation of \$46 billion. A rich valuation for India could boost valuations at home, one of the sources added.

Eyes on India middle-order

Ben Stokes downplays milestone of 100th Test

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rajkot, Feb 14: India will need to be ruthless and tactful in equal measure while dealing with an unpredictable England when the third chapter of a riveting Test series begins here Thursday.

After England shocked India in the series opener at Hyderabad, the hosts came back strong in Vizag to get on level footing, leaving the five-match series perfectly poised.

The brilliance of Yashasvi Jaiswal (321 runs) and Jasprit Bumrah (15) allowed India to make a comeback in the series but concerns remain over a misfiring middle-order, which will now be relying on the young talent to deliver the goods.

Skipper Rohit Sharma's form with the bat before the eight-day break only added to the growing concern surrounding the Indian batting, which will be without KL Rahul in this game and Virat Kohli for the entirety of the series.

Over the last year or so, Rohit's aggressive approach with the bat has not yielded him big scores and the current situation demands the Indian skipper to perhaps contemplate changing gears.

Rahul's unavailability for the third Test has put forth the possibility of Mumbai batter Sarfaraz Khan getting his long awaited debut in the longest format. The domestic run machine could be teaming up with one-Test old Rajat Patidar to occupy two of the most coveted batting spots in the middle-order.

India's glaring inexperience in the middle-order would have been well noted by the English camp, whose robust research on opponents and aggressive play has time and again delivered results.

Wicketkeeper KS Bharat's persistent failures with the bat has raised the possibility of India turning to Uttar Pradesh's 23-year-old Dhruv Jurel, who is known for his aggressive batting.

With an average of 46.47 in 15



(From L): Rajat Patidar, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel and Sarfaraz Khan look on during India's practice session in Rajkot

First-Class matches, Jurel has given a fine account of himself. With the pitch here at Rajkot not expected to be a rank turner, a debut here would only help Jurel ease into the world of top flight cricket.

With local hero Cheteshwar Pujara no more in the plans of the selectors, there will be a high anticipation from the local hero Ravindra Jadeja to get back into the ring and deliver for India, whose spinners were outmatched by England in the first two Tests.

Numbers tell only one side of the story and India's think tank will not be overly concerned with how their spinners have averaged collectively (38.39) compared to England's (33.90).

Unlike in the past where spinners would rule the roost and fast bowling reduced to mere formalities, this series has wit-

THE SQUADS

INDIA: Rohit Sharma (C), Jasprit Bumrah (vc), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Rajat Patidar, Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel (wk), KS Bharat (wk), R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Akash Deep, Devdutt Padikkal.

ENGLAND: Ben Stokes (C), Rehan Ahmed, James Anderson, Gus Atkinson, Jonny Bairstow (wk), Shoaib Bashir, Dan Lawrence, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ben Foakes (wk), Tom Hartley, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robinson, Joe Root, Mark Wood.

MATCH DAY

INDIA vs ENGLAND

3rd Test

Time: 09:30 am

Telecast: Sports18 Network

Stream: Jio Cinema

nessed a stunning turnaround which has, fortunately for India, coincided with Bumrah being at his absolute best.

Bumrah's brilliance in the first two Tests has stood tall and to some extent saved the blushes for the celebrated spinners who have not thrived in the absence of rank turners.

With the pitch at Rajkot being traditionally friendly to the batters, India will have to pick one among chinaman Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel, with the latter winning the vote purely on his batting credentials. Sitting on 499 wickets, India's premier spinner R Ashwin will be expected to enter the elite 500-club over the course of the game.

England too are expecting the pitch to be batting friendly at least in the initial phase of the game, prompting one change to

their playing eleven. They have brought in a second pacer in Mark Wood in place of spinner Shoaib Bashir.

Back from their Abu Dhabi base where the players spent time away from the game, the relaxed mood in the England camp is easily perceptible.

Tom Hartley's confidence has grown manifold from the time he stepped on the Indian shores. His probing line and lengths have persistently questioned the Indian batters and with the bat, his aggressive approach has matched the team's philosophy.

It remains to be seen if sharing spin bowling workload is taking more out of Joe Root than it should, but England will have no other option but to lean on the senior-most batter for wickets given Jack Leach is ruled out of the series with a knee injury.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rajkot, Feb 14: England captain Ben Stokes tried hard to be self-effacing on the eve of his 100th Test appearance, saying "milestones are what they are" but he is looking forward to the "theatre" that would come with playing the marquee game against a star-studded India.

Stokes will become the 16th England player to appear in 100 Tests when he will lead the side out in the third Test against India here Thursday. In the pre-match press conference, the dashing big-hitter tried his best to downplay the hype around his achievement.

"Milestones are what they are. I've always enjoyed playing against India because of the contest, the theatre it brings," he said in a brief reply when asked about his thoughts on the match.

Stokes said his mind is focused on decoding the conditions and having a solid strategy in place for the crucial game. "You look down and there's a few cracks that meet up. Only time will tell if they will come into it. (I) don't want to have too many preconceived ideas about pitches, but you do have to have some sort of idea which informs the XI you pick," he said.

India saw their fortunes take a turn for the better in Vizag thanks to a superlative effort by pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who snared nine wickets on a sporting track. Asked if England will

have any special plans in place for the bowler, Stokes said, "No not really."

Stokes said England's past experience of this venue, having played a Test in 2016, combined with the nature of the pitch here resulted in spinner Shoaib Bashir being swapped with pacer Mark Wood.

VISA ISSUE SORTED

Stokes also expressed relief after young leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed's visa issue was sorted in quick time due to the intervention of the Indian government and the BCCI. Ahmed, the spinner of Pakistani descent, had a single-entry visa upon arrival in Rajkot but he was able to complete his paperwork a day before the start of the third Test against India.

"For any individual having to wait for that is always an anxious period, but thankfully, we got it through this morning, and great job from the guys at the airport for giving him his visa to get through initially, and everyone at the BCCI and the government to get the visa quickly," Stokes said ahead of the third Test.

"We do not have to worry anymore about those issues, we were very confident that we would get the visa for Rehan before the game started," he added.

Earlier, before the start of the series, off-spinner Shoaib Bashir also faced visa issue and arrived in Hyderabad on the third day of the first Test.



Ben Stokes and head coach Brandon McCullum look at the Rajkot pitch

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Eves go down fighting against the Netherlands



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 14: India women's team put up a splendid fight against the World No.1 Netherlands, but eventually went down 0-1 in their FIH Pro League match at the Birsas Munda International Hockey Stadium here, Wednesday.

It was the Dutch side who went on attack mode from the word go. Their effort earned them a penalty corner in the second minute. However, much to the delight of over 10,000 spectators, Indian defence stood tall denying the visitors an early lead.

Lalremsiami showed promise in the left flank as she started breaking free with her speed whenever she got the chance. Deepika and Jyoti moved in tandem in the right flank giving some harrowing time to the Dutch backline in the first quarter.

The Dutch yet again threatened Indian defence when they were awarded their second PC in the 14th minute for stick infringement as the ball rose dangerously. Local girl Salima Tete deflected the ball which led to another PC. The Netherlands scored this time but the goal was disallowed.

It took the Dutch 12 minutes into the second quarter to finally break the deadlock. In the 27th minute, Felice Albers found the net following some impressive moves by the visitors.

Indian skipper and goalie Savita was brilliant under the bar, pulling off some impressive saves which denied the Dutch side run away with the game.

After the breather Deepika and Salima made their intentions clear as they started moving in tandem and making some incisive entry into the Dutch box. India earned quite a few PCs when their attacking gameplay, but couldn't find the target.

The final quarter was more fast-paced with Indian eves, despite their height disadvantage, matched the Dutch eves. In the 53rd minute, the visitors won yet another PC. The Indian referral was disallowed and the PC call stood. For a few minutes there were tense moments as one stop by the goalie resulted in a stroke which was disallowed.

One evident weakness was the girls in the forward line were holding on to the ball for long, which resulted in losing possessions and missed chances. Albers won the player of the match.

India eves stun China in BATC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shah Alam (Malaysia), Feb 14: Two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu made a winning return from a lengthy injury lay-off as India stunned formidable China 3-2 in the women's competition of the Badminton Asia Team Championships here Wednesday.

With just two teams in Group W, India were assured of a knock-out round berth even before their opening match but the team made its mark in style with the shock win over the top-seeded Chinese side.

The Indian men's team, which lifted the Thomas Cup in 2022 and secured a first-ever silver medal at last year's Asian Games, registered a dominating 4-1 win over Hong Kong to qualify for the knock-out round from Group A. Hong Kong had lost to China 0-5 Tuesday. India will take on top seeds China Thursday to decide the group winner in the men's section.

Sindhu, who was missing in action since October last year due to a knee injury sustained at the French Open, led the way as she beat higher-ranked Han Yue 21-17, 21-15 in 40 minutes to give India 1-0 lead in the women's tie.

The pair of Tanisha Castro and Ashwini Ponappa then lost to Liu Sheng Shu and Tan Ning 19-21, 16-21, followed by Ashmita Chaliha's 13-21, 15-21 loss to World No.9 Wang Zhi Yi, as India trailed



1-2 after three matches.

India were on level terms when Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand beat the Chinese duo of Li Yi Jing and Luo Xu Min 10-21, 21-18, 21-17 in one hour and nine minutes in the women's doubles.

In the deciding match against the second-string Chinese outfit, Anmol Kharb punched way above her weight as the 472nd-ranked Indian emerged 22-20, 14-21, 21-18 winner over World No.149 Wu Luo Yu in a gruelling contest to give India a memorable win.

Meanwhile, in the men's competition, HS Prannoy lost the first singles against Ng Ka Long Angus 18-21, 14-21 but that turned

out to be the only blip for India who won the next four matches.

World No.1 men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty were ruthless in their 33-minute-long 21-16, 21-11 win over Lui Chun Wai and Yeung Shing Choi before Lakshya Sen easily beat Chan Yin Chak 21-14, 21-9 to give India the lead.

With momentum on their side, India quickly wrapped up the tie with the pair of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila making it 3-1 with a 21-12, 21-7 win over Chow Hin Long and Hung Kuei Chun, before Kidambi Srikanth beat Jason Gunawan 21-14, 21-18 to complete the rout.

De Bruyne inspires Man City win in Champions League

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Copenhagen, Feb 14: Kevin De Bruyne is so often Manchester City's man for the big occasion. He delivered again at the start of the Champions League's knock-out stage. By scoring one goal and having a hand in two others, the Belgium playmaker inspired City to a 3-1 win at FC Copenhagen in the first leg of the round of 16 Tuesday as the English champions resumed their quest to retain their European crown.

It's an English-record nine straight wins in the Champions League for City stretching back



Kevin De Bruyne (in black kit) strikes past Copenhagen goalie for City's first goal

to last season, and 10 victories in a row in all competitions over the

past two months. De Bruyne scored the opening

goal with a low finish into the far corner in the 10th minute after running onto Phil Foden's pass on the right side of the area.

Copenhagen managed to pull level in the 34th after Ederson's pass out from his area went astray. It was intercepted by Mohamed Elyounoussi, whose shot was blocked by Ruben Dias. The ball flew toward Magnus Mattsson, who curled home a first-time shot from edge of the area.

City retook the lead in the first minute of first-half stoppage time. De Bruyne overran the ball and lunged to make a tackle, inadvertently sending the ball flying into the path of Bernardo

Silva, who deftly flicked the ball into the far corner.

De Bruyne then ran onto Foden's pass down the inside right channel and cut the ball back to the England midfielder, who slotted home.

Real toil hard

After scoring Real Madrid's winner with a mazy solo run, Brahim Diaz jogged to the sideline and spread his arms wide open to celebrate. He was imitating the trademark goal celebration of Jude Bellingham, the injured teammate he replaced in the starting lineup. Diaz led Madrid to a 1-0 win at Leipzig in the round of 16 in the Champions League.