



## ଘରେ ଘରେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ

ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ଯୋଜନାର ପ୍ରମୁଖ ବୈଶିଷ୍ଟ୍ୟ

- ଗ୍ରାମାଞ୍ଚଳରୁ ସହରାଞ୍ଚଳକୁ ସୁନିଶ୍ଚିତ ବସ୍ ସଂଯୋଗ
  - ସୁଲଭ ଓ ନିର୍ଭରଯୋଗ୍ୟ ସେବା
- ମହିଳା, ଛାତ୍ରଛାତ୍ରୀ ଏବଂ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟକୁ ସଶକ୍ତ କରିବା
- ପର୍ଯ୍ୟଟନ ଏବଂ ଆଞ୍ଚଳିକ ଅର୍ଥ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥାକୁ ପ୍ରୋତ୍ସାହନ
  - ଯାତ୍ରୀ ଏବଂ ସଡ଼କ ସୁରକ୍ଷାକୁ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱ
- ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛ ଏବଂ ବୈଷୟିକ ଜ୍ଞାନକୌଶଳ ଦ୍ୱାରା ପରିଚାଳିତ ସାଧାରଣ ପରିବହନ



ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ମାନ୍ୟବର ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ  
ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ନବୀନ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକଙ୍କ  
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ଭଦ୍ରକ | ଯାଜପୁର | କେନ୍ଦ୍ରାପଡ଼ା  
ଖୋର୍ଦ୍ଧା | ନୟାଗଡ଼ | ପୁରୀ

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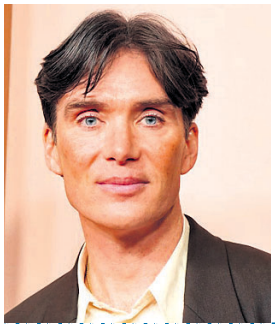


ବାଣିଜ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବହନ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

DSPL-660

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# leisure



## CILLIAN: I'D GO AND SEE A NOLAN BOND MOVIE

Actor Cillian Murphy has backed iconic filmmaker Christopher Nolan to direct the next James Bond movie. The actor, who has worked with the filmmaker several times over the years, said, "I'd go and see a Chris Nolan Bond movie. He's a huge Bond fan. He loves the movies."

## HUDSON STILL EARNS FROM HOME ALONE 2

Actress Kate Hudson has revealed that her appearance in *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York*, which released in 1992, still pays her residuals, even if she's only earning a dime, reports *deadline.com*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL \$5181

**ARIES**  
Today in the morning you will choose to approach work audaciously. You will churn out fancy ideas. However, Ganesh says, by noon, you will feel disoriented again. Ganesh urges you to take a break to re-energise yourself.

**TAURUS**  
This day, you are likely to be in a mood to extend your business activities, launch new venture. Ganesh urges you to hold your horses today, and reminds you that haste makes waste. It would be a good idea to wait for a few days and, in the meantime plan out your projects meticulously, in detail. Post noon you are likely to get indisposed.

**GEMINI**  
There seems to be a mood of celebration in your family. However, you will be busy handling a business deal while your family enjoys the occasion. You are likely to go on a tour for business purposes later in the day. You will devote time to achieving professional success rather than celebrating a personal achievement, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You get full co-operation of Dame Luck, says Ganesh. You will plan a new business strategy to achieve success. Kids will benefit as also profit and prestige is indicated from your father's side, too. Hopes of foreign travel may blossom. Today you feel a unique sense of joy and zest for life.

**LEO**  
You will be able to spend an enjoyable time with your partner today. For those who are unmarried, it is a good time to tie the knot. In the later half of the day, work related worries will keep you occupied. However, do not get preoccupied with minor issues and forget your principle responsibilities, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
In the ocean of relationships, you might just stumble upon the right person for whom you have been searching. However, Ganesh warns that you think carefully before forging an intimate relationship. In the evening you may have second thoughts about your present job. Ganesh hopes there will be slow and steady progress on the romantic front.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says your outfit and dressing sense will add to your personality and beauty. People will be impressed with your beauty. A social event in the evening will bring you closer to someone and there may be romance in the air.

**SCORPIO**  
Haste makes waste. It's important to think twice before you come to a decision, says Ganesh, or your plans may go haywire. The day does not seem promising as your efforts may go in vain. Business trip on the cards. Make your beloved feel special, in the evening!

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You may turn to your family for love and happiness today, predicts Ganesh. But your soul searching will come at a high material cost. In the evening, you may encounter a thrilling love prospect with who you might indulge in some adventurous activity.

**CAPRICORN**  
You will perform a balancing act today. On one hand you'll be working very hard to meet your targets, while on the other hand, you will take some time out for your hobbies. Your boss and team-members will shower praises on you. But, all that glitters is not gold, warns Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
You are not at a laid back person. You like to be active and be a part of the action happening all around. Now is your time! Take an initiative and grab the opportunity, after all, early bird catches the worm. Till the end of the first half of the day, you will be in a jovial mood.

**PISCES**  
For those who are single, today is a good day to "get hitched". For those who are married or have lovers, a romantic day awaits you which will bring you closer to your partner. New partnerships in business are also a possibility.

## Allu to represent India at Berlinale

**Mumbai:** Actor Allu Arjun is all set to represent Indian cinema at the Berlin Film Festival with the special screening of the 2021 blockbuster *Pushpa: The Rise*, directed by Sukumar.

Arjun will be seen having a conversation with international filmmakers, producers, and market buyers during his visit and will also interact with the international press alongside the screening.

The first in-

stallment depicts the rise of a coolie, Pushpa Raj, in the smuggling syndicate of red sandalwood, a rare wood that grows only in the Seshachalam Hills of Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh. The action drama also stars Fahadh Faasil and Rashmika Mandanna.

The *Pushpa* franchise has gained global success with *Pushpa: The Rise* in countries such as Russia, the US, the Gulf, Australia, and the UK.

The film's second installment, christened *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, is all set to release August 15.

## DP now Hilton's brand ambassador

**Mumbai:** Global icon Deepika Padukone, who was recently announced as a presenter at the BAFTA Film Awards, has just been announced as Hilton's global brand ambassador.

In July 2022, Hilton launched the 'It Matters Where You Stay' campaign to promote its platform, Hilton.

Hilton hotels quoted the actress as saying, "I'm delighted to collaborate with Hilton, a renowned global brand, to emphasize the significance of stays for Indians worldwide. My generation values meaningful experiences and hard work. Hilton comprehends the essence of a stay; it can enhance or hinder a trip. Anticipating and fulfilling needs ensures guests feel cared for. Excited to craft enduring memories with Hilton!"

Mark Weinstein, CMO, Hilton, also spoke about why Deepika was the ideal brand ambassador for Hilton. He said, "Deepika's iconic status in India, coupled with her ability to effortlessly bridge tradition with modernity, makes her the ideal brand ambassador for Hilton. We look forward to exploring her unique, authentic Hilton Stay experiences."

Deepika became the ambassador for Dyson Hair Care Technologies, following her presence at the Oscars 2023 and consistent appearances at prestigious events like the Met Gala and Cannes Film Festival.

AGENCIES



## Katrina dislikes being called 'Kat'

**Mumbai:** Actress Katrina Kaif, was last seen in *Merry Christmas* and is still basking in the praise for her portrayal of Maria, recently expressed her displeasure with the nickname Kat in an old video which has surfaced on the internet.

In the video, she was asked about her preferred nickname and the *Welcome* actress responded, "What I don't like is Kat. No, I don't like Kat. My favourite nickname was given to me by my best friend Ali Abbas Zafar. He calls me Goldfish."

Elaborating further, Katrina added that goldfish have a short memory span and forget every few seconds. Ali, her best friend, uses that term for her, suggesting that at times, it seems like she has no recollection of people's actions. This video resurfaced on the microblogging site Reddit and has gone viral on the platform in no time. Taking to the comments section, one person wrote, "Prime Katrina was," while another wrote, "So cute! Love when she is candid and has her guard down."

On the work front, Katrina has *Jee Le Zarraa* in the pipeline.

AGENCIES



## Wamiqa's way to get respite from work

**Mumbai:** Actress Wamiqa Gabbi, known for her performance in *Jubilee* and *Khufiya*, opens up about her passion for painting. She loves experimenting with multiple colours in her work and hopes to hold an expo soon.

Talking about the hobby, she says, "During the pandemic, I took a short-term class in Chandigarh to learn watercolour painting. Although I got busy with my work, the interest to learn something new never faded away. I paint in the middle of my busy schedule. It comes as a respite."

Recalling early influences she says, "In school, painting provided me with a liberating escape. Unlike other subjects with strict curriculums and right or wrong answers, drawing had no such restrictions. It became my favourite activity, offering a stress-free outlet for expression and creativity, seamlessly integrating into my life over time!"

"I love experimenting with colours and it reflects in my wardrobe. I have realised that I love adding a lot of colours to my pieces. It's never two or three colours, but the palette includes more than five to six colours minimum," the actress further says, adding, she would love to have an exhibition in the future.

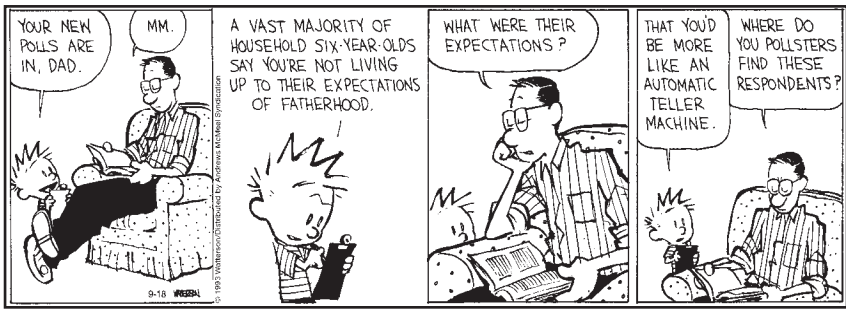
AGENCIES

### FUN post

#### PEANUTS



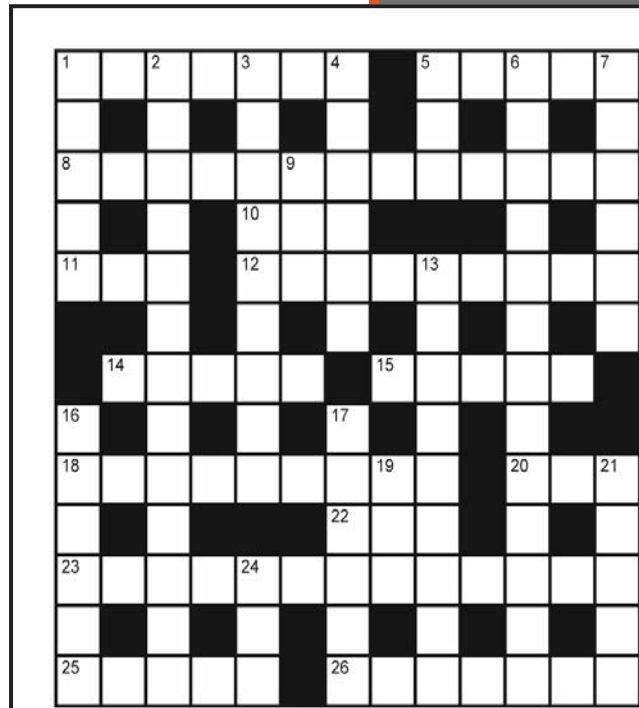
#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### BREVITY



#### CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Denial
  - 5 Pay out
  - 8 Type of neurosis
  - 10 Compass point
  - 11 Hankering
  - 12 Soldier of fortune
  - 14 Sharp as a tack
  - 15 Fend off
  - 18 Links items (4-5)
  - 20 Printing fluid
  - 22 Ruddy
  - 23 Crude but effective (5-3-5)
  - 25 Impertinent
  - 26 Overly surprised
  - Down
  - 1 Settle a loan
  - 2 Complete success (6,7)
  - 3 Wiring diagram
  - 4 Optical devices
  - 5 Bottom line
  - 6 Over-the-top
  - 7 Duck hunter's gear
  - 9 Singleton
  - 13 Listen in
  - 16 Greek public squares
  - 17 Root vegetable
  - 19 Hospital unit
  - 21 Excited, with "up"
  - 24 Stable diet

#### 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.

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

#### SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



**RTO in Vig net**  
Vigilance unearths properties worth crores of rupees and bank as well as insurance deposits worth ₹3.9 crore from Boudh RTO BK Mohapatra

DOWNTOWN | P2



**Assault continues**  
Israeli forces raid the biggest functioning hospital in Gaza as footage shows chaos, shouting and gunfire

INTERNATIONAL | P8



**Exports see a jump**  
India's exports rise to a three-month high of 3.12 per cent to \$36.92 billion in January despite global uncertainties

BUSINESS | P9



**India reach 326/5**  
With a century, skipper Rohit Sharma leads from front and, with help from Ravindra Jadeja's ton, guides India to 326/5 against England

SPORTS | BACK PAGE

**SHORT TAKES**

**Plus II exams today**

**Bhubaneswar:** As many as 3,86,250 students will appear for the Class XII (Plus II) examinations scheduled to start, Friday, even as the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE), conducting the examinations, released an advisory for students in this regard, Thursday. Among other courses, as many as 2,37,750 students will appear for Arts, 1,16,620 for Science and 26,089 for Commerce, according to CHSE. The examinations will conclude March 20, 2024.

**MLA under ED scanner**

**Bhubaneswar:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Thursday carried out raids at multiple locations linked to Bhadrak's Bhandaripokhari MLA and former minister Prafulla Samal in Bhubaneswar and Bhadrak in connection with a multi-crore rupees land scam. The raids were conducted at the residences of Samal at the two places and also at the residence of the former principal of Barapada School of Engineering and Technology of which the MLA is the chairman.

**Cremation of organ donors with state honours: Naveen**

**Bhubaneswar:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday announced that the cremation of organ donors would be performed with state honours. In order to facilitate organ donation process, the state government set up SOTTO in 2019 and has been providing ₹5 lakh from CM Relief Fund to organ donors' families. P2

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**



Bad news! Supreme Court has done a Notebandi on us!!

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	72050.38 ↑ 227.55
NIFTY	21910.80 ↑ 70.80
DOLLAR	83.06 ↓ ₹0.01
EURO	89.25 ↑ ₹0.26
GOLD	₹61,588 ↑ ₹145
SILVER	₹71,168 ↑ ₹1016

**WEATHER**

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	33.0°C	32.5°C
Min Temp	20.9°C	19.5°C
Humidity	96%	84%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST  
DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY



**POURING SUPPORT:** Members of various organisations block railway tracks at Rajpura as they stage 'rail roko' protest in support of farmers agitating at Punjab-Haryana Shambhu border, in Patiala, Thursday (Report on P7)

## Naveen inaugurates food park in Khurda

### CM ALSO LAYS STONE FOR INDUSTRIAL PARK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated a new food park at Mundamba and laid the foundation for a new industrial park at Kalibeti, both in Khurda district, Thursday.

Companies such as PepsiCo, Nestle, Indo Nissin, and their ancillaries will have production units at the food park, while garment manufacturing companies such as EPIC, MAS Holdings, and Indian Stitches will have their units at the upcoming industrial park, an official release by the CMO said.

Built at a cost of ₹1,160 crore, the food park will provide employment to over 1,900 people. The upcoming industrial park for which the state government will spend ₹1,460 crore will generate employment for over 1,500 youths.

Out of these industries, 10 have already started constructing their factories.

"The establishment of these companies is a testament to the hard work put in by the government. The companies will provide employment to thousands of youths of the state," Patnaik said.

The state government also plans to construct large-sized working women hostels in the region.

### 20 new bus stands

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday launched 20 new bus stands developed under the 'Ama Bus Stand' scheme in 13 districts, with a focus on improving the transport system between villages and cities. The Interim Budget for 2024-25 proposed the development of 132 new bus stands under the scheme, with an outlay of ₹210 crore. Patnaik had previously inaugurated 21 new bus stands in August 2023 across 13 districts. P2

### Boost to cancer care

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday inaugurated Bagchi Sri Shankara Cancer Centre and Research Institute in Bhubaneswar to provide quality treatment to patients at an affordable cost. Set up in association with the Sri Shankara Cancer Hospital and Research Centre in Bangalore with a cost of ₹410 crore, the new institute has 750 beds for treatment of patients. It has a facility for providing radiotherapy to 300 patients and chemotherapy to 150 patients daily. P2

# SC scraps electoral bonds

Apex court orders SBI to provide details of donations made through the scheme

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 15:** In a major blow to the Union government, the Supreme Court Thursday annulled the electoral bonds scheme, introduced January 2, 2018 as an alternative to cash donations for political funding, saying it violates the Constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression as well as the right to information.

A five-judge Constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud, also ordered the State Bank of India (SBI) to disclose to the Election Commission (EC) by March 6 the names of the contributors to the scheme, details of each electoral bond encashed by political parties, date of encashment and the denomination of the bonds.

"The SBI shall stop issuing electoral bonds and submit details of bonds purchased since April 12, 2019 till date to the EC. It should also submit details of political parties which have received contributions through electoral bonds since April 12, 2019 till date to the poll panel," the SC said, adding that the EC should publish the information shared by SBI on its official website by March 13.

The bench, also comprising



Justices Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai, JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, delivered two separate and unanimous verdicts on the pleas challenging the scheme. Pronouncing the verdict, the CJI said the scheme is violative of the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of Constitution. The bench said the fundamental right to privacy also includes the citizens' right to political privacy and affiliation. It also held as 'invalid' the amendments made in various laws, including the Representation of Peoples Act and the Income Tax laws.

"This will restore people's faith in democracy. This is the greatest thing that could have happened. This is the most historic judgement that we have got from the Supreme Court in the last five-seven years. It is a great boon for democracy," former chief election commissioner SY Quraishi said.

In October last year, the bench began hearing arguments on the four petitions, including those filed by Congress leader Jaya Thakur; the CPI(M) and the Association for Democratic Reforms.

Advocate Varun Thakur, who represented Jaya Thakur in the case, described the verdict as a setback for the government 'because from 2018 to 2024 whatever transactions which have taken place have to be made public'.

The scheme, which was notified by the government January 2, 2018, was pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties as part of efforts to bring transparency in political funding.

According to the provisions of the scheme, electoral bonds may be purchased by any citizen of India or entity incorporated or established in the country. An individual can buy electoral bonds, either singly or jointly with other individuals without disclosing the identity.

The SC had November 2 last year reserved its verdict in the matter. MORE P7



**We respect the SC verdict. The government, headed by PM Narendra Modi, has made efforts to reform election funding, and the introduction of electoral bonds was a part of such measures**

**RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD | EX-LAW MINISTER**



**We welcome the SC decision, which has struck down this 'black money conversion' scheme of the Modi government, calling it unconstitutional**

**MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONG PREZ**

## Gadkari launches ₹6,600cr projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari Thursday inaugurated two national highway (NH) projects and laid the foundation stones for 26 other such projects worth ₹6,600 crore through videoconferencing in Puri.

The inaugurated projects are: 79km four-lane road between Baharagora and Singhara on NH-49, valued at ₹1,203 crore, and a 78km six-lane road from Chandikhol to Bhadrak on NH-16, costing ₹2,035 crore. While laying the foundation stones for 26 road infrastructure projects,

### PURI-AYODHYA SPL TRAIN SOON

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav Thursday announced introduction of a special train service from Puri to Ayodhya. He said the train service will be rolled out during July or August this year. The Puri to Konark new railway line in the Puri district will also be approved very soon, he added. In 2014, Odisha got around ₹800 crore in the Budget for development of the railway infrastructure. "But now, the funding has been enhanced to ₹10,000 crore and the state is witnessing its results," he said.

Gadkari announced plans for various projects, including a 111km greenfield ring road around Bhubaneswar, costing ₹6,253 crore.

During the event, Gadkari highlighted the significant progress in NH development in Odisha since 2014. "The total length of NHs in Odisha has increased from 4,639 km to 5,753 km during this pe-



**All +2 Examinees**

OrissaPOST

## Ground-based docs perform surgery on ISS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Washington, Feb 15:** Earth-bound surgeons remotely controlled a small robot aboard the International Space Station (ISS) over the weekend, conducting the first-ever such surgery in orbit albeit rubber bands.

The experiment, deemed a 'huge success' by the participants, represents a new step in the development of space surgery, which could become necessary to treat medical emergencies during multi-year manned voyages, such as to Mars.

The technology could also be used to develop remote-control surgery techniques on Earth, to serve isolated

**MEDICAL MILESTONE**



areas. The robot, developed by Virtual Incision (VIC) and the University of Nebraska, is called space MIRA.

It took off for the International Space Station at the end of January, aboard a payload carried by a SpaceX

rocket. Stored inside a compact box the size of a microwave oven, the robot was installed last Thursday by NASA astronaut Loral O'Hara, who has been in space since last September.

The experiment then took place Saturday, conducted from Virtual Incision's headquarters in Lincoln, Nebraska. It lasted around two hours, with six surgeons taking a go at operating the robot, which is equipped with a camera and two arms.

"The experiment tested standard surgical techniques like grasping, manipulating and cutting tissue. The simulated tissue is made up of rubber bands," Virtual Incision said in a statement.

In a video shared by the company, one arm equipped with pincers can be seen gripping the band and stretching it, while the other arm equipped with scissors makes a cut -- mimicking a dissection. A key difficulty is the time lag -- about 0.85 seconds -- between the operation center on Earth and the ISS.

For a control experiment, the same process will take place with the same equipment, but on Earth.

"The experiment was deemed a huge success by all surgeons and researchers, and there were little to no hiccups," Virtual Incision said in a statement, claiming it will 'change the future of surgery.'

# Cremation of organ donors with state honours: Naveen



State government has been providing ₹5 lakh from Chief Minister's Relief Fund to the family of organ donors

In order to facilitate the process of organ donation, the state government set up State Organ and Tissues Transplant Organisation (SOTTO) in 2019

The government has also instituted Suraj Award for the organ donors in 2020

Tissues Transplant Organisation (SOTTO) in 2019. The government has also instituted Suraj Award for the organ donors in 2020, the chief minister said.

The award has been instituted in the name of Suraj from Bhanjanagar of Ganjam district. Suraj sustained critical injuries in a road accident and was declared brain dead by doctors during treatment. His relatives decided to donate major organs of Suraj. Their decision helped save the lives of 6 persons later.

The government has been providing ₹5 lakh from Chief Minister's Relief Fund to the family of organ donors. Besides, the chief minister has been honouring their relatives on World Organ Donation Day August 13.

people, the Chief Minister said. Besides, it would create awareness in the society about the importance of organ donation and motivate more and more people to come forward in this regard, he added.

"Organ donation is a noble gesture. The relatives of brain dead people, who take courageous decision on donating the organs, play an important role in saving many human lives," he said in a press release.

In order to facilitate the process of organ donation, the state government set up State Organ and

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday announced that the cremation of organ donors would be performed with state honour. CM said, "To recognise the sacrifice and courage of those who save the lives of others by donating their organs, their last rites will be performed with full state honours."

The state government's initiative aims at honouring the courage and sacrifice of the donors to save the lives of other

## Special allowance for ambulance crew

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** The state government Thursday announced a special allowance of ₹5,000 per month for ambulance drivers and emergency medical technicians, along with ₹3,000 per month for helpers, starting this month.

The 108 ambulance crew members will receive the monthly special allowance in addition to their existing basic salary.

The decision comes after ambulance crew members, during the district visits of 5T and Nabin Odisha chairman Kartik Pandian, had submitted representations requesting an increase in remuneration.

Taking into account their difficult working hours and emergency nature of work, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has approved the special allowance for them out of state resources.

Currently, the 108 ambulance service is operational with a fleet of 1,366 ambulances including 411 advanced life saving ambulances and six boat ambulances.

## MP Anubhav's father no more

**Cuttack:** Actor and Kendrapara MP Anubhav Mohanty's father Abhay Mohanty passed away Thursday at his residence in Cuttack. Anubhav's father breathed his last at the age of 74.

Abhay had been suffering from kidney disease for a long time. He was undergoing dialysis. On receiving the news of Abhay's death, relatives came and reached Anubhav's residence in Nandisahi and paid their last respects. Several local dignitaries also offered tributes to the departed soul.

## CLASSIFIED

### LOST

I, Sazid Khan, S/o- Sabir Khan of Village- Muslim Basti, Athmallik NAC, Angul declare that on dt. 06.02.2024 while I was on the way to my home from Madhapur by Motorcycle the Original Mutation (Patta) No.- 403/429, Mouza Kaintragarh, Tahasil/SRO- Athmallik, Dist.- Angul has been lost somewhere. I could not find the said Mutation (Patta) after a thorough search.

## SOA students, faculty in Minigolf team

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** Six students of Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (SOA) Deemed to be University and a faculty member have been selected to represent Odisha in the men's and women's Minigolf National Championship to be held at Nagpur from March 3 to March 6.

The chosen players are Vineet Das, Aditya Raj Dora and Badal Samal who are part of the men's team while Adyasha Mishra, Amrita Das and Lipsa Mohanty will be representing the women's team, according to a communication received from the Odisha Minigolf Association.

Smruti Rekha Pattnaik,



Assistant Professor in the department of Electrical Engineering at the Institute of Technical Education and Research (ITER), SOA's faculty of engineering and technology, has also been chosen as a member of the women's team.

The selected players called on SOA Founder President Manojranjan Nayak Thursday who wished them success in the championship.

## Crorepati RTO in Vig net

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** Vigilance officials Thursday unearthed assets worth ₹19 crore from Boudh regional transport officer (RTO) Basanta Kumar Mohapatra, an official said.

The raids were initiated following allegations of possession of disproportionate assets against Mohapatra.

A team of Vigilance officers, including two additional superintendents of police, six DSPs, six inspectors, and other staffers, conducted the raids at 10 locations in Bhubaneswar, Boudh and Ganjam, he added.

The Vigilance officials are

also searching Mohapatra's official chamber at Boudh RTO office, rented house in Boudh, paternal house at Bhanjanagar in Ganjam district and a relative's house at Berhampur in Ganjam, the official said.

The sleuths claimed to have come across records of various properties owned by Mohapatra, including a flat in Utkal Signature at Pahala (worth ₹1 crore), two shopping outlets in Utkal Kanika Galleria (worth ₹2 crore) and a 3-BHK flat in Utkal Royal Residency at Kalpana Square (worth ₹1 crore).

Mohapatra has also made advance payments to the tune of ₹2.23 crore for purchasing two flats in Bangalore and Bhubaneswar, respectively, he said. The sleuths also seized



**BOOST TO CANCER CARE:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian and Odisha Skill Development Authority chairman and entrepreneur Subroto Bagchi among others inspecting a state-of-the-art machine during the inauguration of 750-bed Bagchi Sri Shankara Cancer Centre & Research Institute in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

OP PHOTO

## AMA BUS STAND YOJANA

# CM inaugurates 20 bus stands in 13 dists

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday inaugurated 20 new bus stands under the 'Ama Bus Stand' Yojana in 13 districts, with a focus on improving the transport system between villages and cities.

"Transport has a major role in boosting economic activity of a region. Our goal is to improve the transport system between villages and cities. The 5T (transformational) initiative is focused on improving infrastructure and public transport system. The villages are also being connected to the blocks under LAccMi public transport system," Naveen said after inaugurating the bus stands in virtual mode.

The state interim Budget for 2024-25 proposed the development of 132 new bus stands under the scheme, with an outlay of ₹210 crore, building upon the redevelopment of 55 bus stands in the previous year.



Patnaik had inaugurated 21 new bus stands in August 2023 across 13 districts.

Meanwhile, the Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC), the implementing authority of the 'Ama Bus Stand' scheme, said that the modern bus stands are part of the government's vision to strengthen public infrastructure in the state. "These new bus stands would not only provide better public transport but also enhance people's socio-economic condition by creating employment opportunities as well as

business opportunities," the OSRTC, in a release, said.

Complying with the 5T guidelines, these new bus stands are being developed to accommodate each and every requirement of the citizens, it said.

The places where the 20 new bus stands have been constructed include, Kanha and Pallahara blocks of Anugul district; Baliapal and Bhogarai blocks of Balasore district; Harabhanga block of Boudh district; Hindol block of Dhenkanal district;

Nuagada block of Gajapati district; Rajkanika and Rajnagar blocks of Kendrapara district; Harichandpur, Anandpur and Saharapada blocks of Keonjhar district; Semiliguda block of Koraput district; Ranpur, Khandapada blocks of Nayagarh district; Nuapada block of Nuapada District; Kolnara and Muniguda blocks of Rayagada district; Jujumura block of Sambalpur district, and Birmaharajpur block of Subarnapur district.

The OSRTC said the well-connected bus stands will add to the convenience of passengers with additional facilities and give boost to public transport infrastructure in every block of Odisha.

FMS agencies have been roped in for maintenance and cleanliness of these bus stands that will provide better connectivity, fast and safe movement of people to various economic centres, tourist places, historical places, and places of religious importance across the state, it added.

## VAISHNAW FILES NOMINATION

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** A day after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) nominated Ashwini Vaishnav as its candidate for the third Rajya Sabha seat from Odisha and the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) announced its support to his candidature, the Union minister Thursday filed his nomination papers.

Accompanied by state BJP president Manmohan Samal and 13 party MLAs, Vaishnav submitted his papers to Rajya Sabha Election Returning Officer Abanikanta Patnaik on the Assembly premises. He submitted two sets of papers, an official said. Immediately after nomination, Vaishnav the Union Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics & Information Technology, said, "I thank my party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for giving me another chance to serve the state of Odisha from Rajya Sabha. I pray before Lord Jagannath that he gives me more energy and motivation to serve Odisha even better. I will work uninterruptedly like the squirrel of Lord Ram and will not cease to work until Odisha becomes a developed state as envisioned by PM Modi."

Though the Naveen Patnaik-led BJD Wednesday announced its unconditional support to Vaishnav's candidature, none from the regional party was present when Vaishnav filed his nomination papers. However, when Vaishnav had filed his papers for the 2019 Rajya Sabha bypoll, BJD leaders Sasmit Patra and Amar Patnaik were present.

## Inter-university athletic meet at UU



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** Utkal University vice-chancellor Sabita Acharya inaugurated the Odisha State-level 2nd Inter-university Athletic Competition, 2023-24 here at the university Thursday in presence of vice-chancellor of Ramadevi Women's University Aparajita Chowdhury and Olympian Anuradha Biswal.

A torch march was taken out from the Maa Talpadeshwari temple to the Biju Patnaik Sports Complex where the inter-university competition is being organized with financial support of the state Higher Education department and the Odisha Higher Education Council (OHEC).

On this occasion, Acharya said that the inter-university athletic competition, organised by the state government, is a commendable initiative as it will help the students develop a com-

petitive spirit. "It will promote the students' sportsmanship to a great extent at the national level," she said.

In her address, Chowdhury said that the national education policy has given emphasis to how sports can be used to develop personality of the students along with their studies.

Speaking to the participants, guest of honour Olympian and sportsperson Anuradha Biswal said that winning and losing are part of the game. "If someone loses, someone else will win. Those who lost will continue to try to do better. Success can be achieved with hard work and practice," she advised the students.

On the first day, competitions were held in categories of 'javelin throw' and 'shot put'. The state-level inter-university competition, which is scheduled to last till February 19, will be organised at both the Biju Patnaik Multipurpose Stadium and the Kalinga Stadium.



**TAKING STOCK:** Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena reviews progress of CDA Petan near Bidanasi in Cuttack, Thursday

OP PHOTO

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# Border residents urge AP for drinking water supply

Dwellers of Golur, Sariapali, Mali Bhimadal and Gangaguda border villages under Nandapur block are forced to fulfil their water needs by digging up pits



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

Sisha, Subhash Kurukuria, Gopinath Pujari, Saba Khara, Jaysen Nayak, Kamesh Khil, Ramaswami Kuda, Rama Matam and Randu Matam said that the charitable trust will solve their drinking water problems by supplying water flowing from the fountains on the hilltop.

Chatters went abuzz after reports surfaced, evoking sharp reactions in various quarters. Meanwhile, the block administration claimed to be constructing a mega drinking water project at an expense of over ₹200 crore. The project, when completed, will help in supply of drinking water to every household but it will take three to four years to get completed, officials said.

In this situation, the villagers are worried about their survival in the absence of any drinking water facilities. The villages have tube wells but most of them are lying defunct. Moreover, those operational are throwing out iron-laced water in very less quantity as ground water level has also declined in the area. At least four out of eight tube wells in Mali Bhimadal village are lying defunct while stand posts have stopped throwing water due to rupture in pipelines of Basudha project.

When contacted, Durga Prasad Dora, block development officer (BDO), Nandapur said that he has directed the RWSS officials and the panchayat extension officer to visit the affected villages and submit a report after reviewing the situation. Necessary steps will be taken after receiving the report, he assured.

the villagers fear that water scarcity might worsen making their lives harder.

With no help coming from the administration, they have written to an Andhra-based outfit 'Sai Charitable Trust' to supply them with drinking water. In their letter, they have pleaded with the trust authorities to construct a drinking water project for their villages like the one constructed in Andarguda village under Panthlung panchayat of Koraput district and hand it over to them for their use.

As per sources, the charitable trust is implementing various developmental projects in the fringe villages of Koraput district under the supervision of the Andhra Pradesh government.

On receipt of the letters, officials of the outfit visited the four villages and took stock of the situation. They also identified land and the water sources to construct a spring based water supply system. Villagers Reli



**FLEXING FITNESS:** Youths display their chiselled figures at Sri Classic Body Building Competition organised by Amateur Body Building Association at Shanti Nagar Kalyan Mandap in Sambalpur

## Delay in truck terminal project sparks concern

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhatrapur, Feb 15:** Difficulties in land acquisition and allied problems have hit the establishment of a proposed truck terminal planned three years ago in Ganjam district, sources here said Thursday. The truck terminal was proposed to be built on the outskirts of Berhampur, but nothing has materialised so far.

Other than issues regarding land acquisition, delay in sanctioning of funds and absence of coordination among various departments have contributed to the project remaining a non-starter. Even though authorities have launched an all-out effort for



land acquisition, only four acre land has so far been acquired.

The proposed terminal will have slots for parking of trucks, dormitories for drivers and helpers, lavatories, drinking water facility, canteen, a separate bunker

for vehicle repairing, guard and office rooms, officials said.

Sources said the state government had decided to establish a truck terminal in 2021 to ease the burgeoning traffic problem on national highways and to put a clamp on increasing road mishaps and the resultant deaths. However, it was only in 2023 that the government issued a letter to the District Collector directing him to acquire and hand over necessary land (at least 10 acre) to the Regional Transport department. The office of the Transport department at Chhatrapur had then written to the district Revenue department urging them to provide 14.611

acre land at Girisola under Chikiti tehsil on Berhampur outskirts. Sources informed that the total expenditure for construction of the project will be approximately ₹30 crore.

Notably, hundreds of cargo-laden trucks ply daily on national highways on the outskirts of Berhampur. This is leading to traffic congestions and also giving rise to accidents. Moreover trucks visit the FCI godown at Jagannathpur on the outskirts of Berhampur as well as the railways goods shed in the area for loading and unloading of cargo. A proper truck terminal can ease the traffic problems, officials pointed out.

## Former Congress MLA quits party

PNN & AGENCIES

**Rajnagar, Feb 15:** Former Congress MLA Anshuman Mohanty, who was elected to the state Assembly from the Rajnagar constituency in Kendrapara district in 2014, has stepped down from both his primary membership in the party and his role as president of the Kendrapara District Congress Committee.

Sources said, Mohanty submitted his resignation letter to the party's state president Sarat Pattanayak Wednesday. Mohanty conveyed his gratitude to party leaders and workers for their support during his tenure in the Congress. However, the ex-MLA did not mention the reason behind his resignation from the party.

Mohanty's resignation comes two days after the resignation of Nihar Ranjan Mohananda, another ex-MLA of the Congress.

Mohananda who was elected to state Assembly from Attabira (SC) constituency in 2009, had resigned from the primary membership of the party February 12. He had tendered his resignation letter to party president Mallikarjun Kharge.



**REEKING ROADS:** Garbage dumped at a selfie-point titled 'Mo Ganjam' at the entrance to Ganjam town has made it difficult for commuters to travel on the route owing to emanating stench

## 2 picnickers die, 7 critical as van hits roadside tree

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, Feb 15:** Two members of a picnic party were killed and seven sustained critical injuries in a road mishap Thursday on Tara-Barahatipura road near Nakajhari village under Ghatagaon police station limits in Keonjhar district.

The deceased were identified as Sayeed Khan (42) of Jamunagar of Jharkhand and Abhimanyu Patra (53) of Binajhari village under Ghatagaon block. The two died on the spot.

According to reports, a group of officials of an ice cream trading firm was returning from Kalimati dam after a picnic. The mishap occurred after a Tata ACE van they were travelling in hit a roadside tree at about 5pm, Thursday evening after the driver suddenly lost control on the wheels about 4 km from Ghatagaon.

The injured were rushed to Ghatagaon community health centre but later shifted to the district headquarters hospital in Keonjhar.

## Woman dies after coming in contact with 11-KV wire

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, Feb 15:** A woman was electrocuted Thursday after coming in contact with a snapped live wire of 11-KV transmission line in Keonjhar district due to alleged negligence of Power department personnel.

The deceased was identified as Purnami Mohanta (52) of Ramachandrapur village under Town police limits in this district. Police have registered a case and launched an investigation. Family members and villagers have alleged that the incident occurred due to the negligence of the Power department.

Villagers questioned the Power officials' ignorance about snapping of a wire from the insulator as power supply trips in such cases. This has raised doubts on the officials' claims, the villagers alleged.

The incident occurred when the woman had gone to graze her goats to a jungle abutting the village. A wire from the insulator of an 11-KV transmission line passing through the jungle had snapped and was lying on the ground. While grazing her goats, she accidentally



stepped on the live wire and got electrocuted.

On being informed, police, Fire brigade personnel with the help of Power department officials seized the body and handed it over to family members after conducting a post-mortem at the district headquarters hospital. The deceased is survived by her husband, son and two married daughters. When contacted, Tata Power SDO-2 engineer Santosh Kumar Parida said that a probe has been launched and action will be taken after availability of the probe report.

## Teacher slapped life term for murder of second wife

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Feb 15:** A local court in Ganjam district Thursday sentenced a teacher to life imprisonment after convicting him in the 2018 murder case of his second wife.

The convict was identified as Prafulla Chandra Pradhan, a native of Jharinipada village under Jarada police limits, posted as a teacher at Srirampur Primary School in Ganjam district.

The court of District and Sessions Judge Rupashree Choudhury pronounced the order after examining the statements recorded by 33 witnesses. This was stated by public prosecutor Trilochan Parida to mediapersons here, Thursday.

According to case file, he was married to Padmabati Pradhan of Dekhali village under K Nuagaon police limits but their relationship turned sour soon. Later, Prafulla started living separately from Padmabati after taking a house on rent at Triveni Nagar under Town police limits



in Berhampur.

In the pretext of being unmarried, he married another woman named Subhadra Pradhan in 2012. The couple soon became parents to a girl child and Subhadra once again became pregnant in 2018.

However, Subhadra came to know that her husband was married earlier and pestered Prafulla to divorce his first wife and to save money for her children. Enraged, Prafulla decided to get rid of Subhadra and strangled her to death, August 5, 2018.

He feigned that Subhadra died during labour and took her body

## 2 SOG jawans injured in landmine explosion

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** Two security personnel were seriously injured in a landmine blast triggered by Maoists during a combing operation in a forest in Boudh district Thursday, police said.

A police officer said that the landmine is suspected to have been planted by the Maoists.

The incident happened at Nalikulmpha forest of Boudh district when around 30 jawans of Odisha's elite Special Operation Group (SOG) were conducting a search operation Thursday morning to flush out the Red rebels hiding in the forest after a tip-off was received that movements of Maoist cadres were noticed in the area, the police officer said.

Both the injured were initially admitted to Kantamal Community Health Centre (CHC)



but later shifted to Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital in Bolangir as their conditions deteriorated.

While one received wounds on the head, the other suffered eye injuries, the doctors at the hospital said.

Sources said the two seriously injured jawans, Utkal Patel (33) and RS Nayak (31), have been airlifted to AIIMS Bhubaneswar for better health-care facilities.

## STF seizes 2 leopard hides, arrests man

PNN & AGENCIES

**Sambalpur, Feb 15:** A person was arrested and two leopard skins were confiscated from his possession in Sambalpur district Thursday, police said.

Following a tip-off regarding illegal trading of wildlife parts, a combined team comprising the Special Task Force (STF) of Odisha Police and Forest officials from Bamara forest division conducted a raid near Thianala under the jurisdiction of Kuchinda police station area in the district this morning, an STF officer said.

During the search operation, two leopard skins along with other incriminating materials were seized from 45-year-old Sankirtan Munda of Pahadamara village in Deogarh district, he said. STF sources said Sankirtan, the accused person, will be forwarded to the SDJM Court of Kuchinda as he could not produce any authority in support of possession of leopard skins.

The STF has filed a case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, he added. The recovered skins will be sent to the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in Dehradun for examination, he said.

FOCUS RAILWAYS

# MUCH MORE THAN SPEED



Lack of integrated rail-led passenger transport vision has added to tremendous cost of less utilised metros as in Lucknow, Kanpur, Jaipur, Bangalore and other such cities

Railways is beyond speed. It connects India. It takes passengers to the farthest, remotest and inaccessible area and immensely contributes to the growth of hinterlands. Its contributions are not for getting lost amid glitz of the infrastructure push, the roads, the solar or the space achievements. It is much more than speed, coaches and corridors. The Indian Railways remains the driver of the economy as COVID-19 exemplified. The closure of the trains slowed down the economic growth. It tumbled to minus 24 per cent.



Shivaji Sarkar

**OVERALL LOSSES OF METROS IN ALL SECTIONS ARE BEING OVERLOOKED**

The Prime Minister's Gati Shakti, which is a transformative approach for economic growth and sustainable development, is a good target to make corridor functioning more efficient. All the same it needs to stress on the trains that connect every station of the country, once served by the trains like the Janata Express. Rail travel still remains affordable, but the cost on the most deprived is increasing. Logically correct, but the nation must take care of the large number of the poor who have just come up the official poverty line, but who as Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, told in Rajya Sabha, need more care and his free food dole for another five years is meant to tend them and handhold them to the next better phase of life.

Railways is self-funded and having profits too though emphasising less on commuters. Somewhere it gets into oblivion that locally connecting trains are not only needed in metro cities of Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore but also in all other states whether Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha or the critical North East.

Various metro projects have been allocated ₹23,931 crore and ₹1,300 crore for electric buses in the budget. But it is observed that these do not cater to the poorer class, even in cities like Delhi. They shun metro for its high

fare affecting their mobility. The Delhi-Meerut rapid transit metro runs parallel to Northern Railway suburban-cum-local tracks. It has a high cost and proposed fare as well. But it deprives the highest number of poorer travellers as they lack affordability. The Chennai and Mumbai local trains are more efficiently run than the metros in these cities. Overall losses of metros in all sections are being overlooked.

As per official figures, 50 per cent of total railway passengers are suburban commuters from three major cities - Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai. If other hubs all over the country are included, they would form the major chunk of approximately 80 lakh passengers. They despite contributing substantially to the economy, remain the most neglected. In pursuit of speed, the most productive people are being ignored. Their contribution to rail profit is underestimated. Even the running trains generate jobs for thousands of vendors.

Projects such as the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) need a review. It has also been observed that Kolkata metro of Indian Railways remains the best and most profitable despite high cost of deep tunnelling under the river Hooghly. Unlike most other metros it remains profitable and has high ridership as is also the case with the

Kolkata suburban railway. It is often said that Railways is not making enough money. That's incorrect. It has earned ₹2242 crore extra revenue denying concessions between March 2020 and March 2023. In the financial year 2022-23 alone it earned ₹560 crore from the change in norms making it the most profitable year, according to Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS). The Railways earned ₹2800 crore in the last seven years from child travellers, who are made to pay full fare since April 21, 2016. Earlier, children between 5 and 12 years were offered separate berths at half the travel fare. Fares of suburban travel have also been revised.

The budget has earmarked a capex of ₹2.55 lakh crore for Indian Railways, which is just marginally higher than the ₹2.4 lakh crore announced in last year's budget. The Railways needs a bigger push. It should not be for suddenly changing 40,000 coaches to Vande Bharat type structure as this is not needed. The actual total receipt of Indian Railways was ₹240,176.96 crore in 2022-23, which was estimated to rise to ₹265,000 crore in 2023-24 (BE) but was found to be ₹258,600 crore in 2023-24 (RE). As against this, total expenditure has been on the rise, which was ₹237,659.58 crore in 2022-23 (actual), ₹262,790 crore

in 2023-24 (BE), and ₹256,600 crore in 2023-24 (RE). Now, the interim budget 2024-25 has estimated it to rise to ₹279,700 crore.

The finance minister's announced budgetary support of ₹2.55 lakh crore is an illusion. It only rechristens the Railways' own accounts in finance ministry terms. In other words, it could be said that the Railways is not being given any extra finance. Even its capex is generated by the Railways itself. It has one of the highest operating ratios up from 90 per cent in 2013 to 98 per cent in 2025. This means that Railways is to spend ₹98 per every ₹100 it earns. This reflects in the share market too on the high demand of railway-related company stocks.

In pursuit of speed, it should neither slow down regular trains, nor cancel local passenger trains or neglect the suburban sector. It is not wise to leave passengers to be catered to by metro or RRTS trains at huge costs. Each metro station construction, security and avoidable paraphernalia cost much more than the railways would have done.

Lack of integrated rail-led passenger transport vision has added to tremendous cost of less utilised metros as in Lucknow, Kanpur, Jaipur, Bangalore and other such cities. Metros should be replaced with elevated trams. Any average 150-year-old rail station serve far better. Rail stations need simple, beautiful and easy access, not a designer one. Most demolitions of old efficient structures of stations must be stopped. Along with that elevated trams with simple access to platforms should be planned for efficient, inexpensive, comfortable city commuting.

This calls for reorientation of a falsified approach that the Indian Railways needs very high speed. The rural, semi-urban and urban travellers need the attention and the Railways must orient it towards them.

INFA

To be free from all egoistic motive, careful of truth in speech and action, void of self-will and self-assertion, watchful in all things, is the condition for being a flawless servant.



SRI AUROBINDO

## A Lose-Lose World

If the international community was ever on track toward a more peaceful and just global order, it was during the early post-Cold War years. While global governance was not free of flaws, the risk of a great-power war seemed low, and poverty was declining. Moreover, the initial results of summits dedicated to promoting development and safeguarding the environment raised hopes for breakthrough solutions to humanity's most pressing problems.

But geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainty have long since crowded out the optimism and ambition of that era. Rather than working together to address urgent challenges, the international community is now "gridlocked in colossal global dysfunction," as UN Secretary-General António Guterres put it.

Worse, many states no longer seem to care about the wider benefits of the liberal world order; they are more worried about their own slice of the pie. Key actors in the transatlantic community, powerful autocracies, and the so-called Global South have all become dissatisfied with what they perceive as an unequal distribution of the gains from global cooperation.

In many Western countries, large parts of the population believe that their piece of the pie is shrinking, owing to what they see as a general trend of domestic stagnation and decline. New data from the Munich Security Index shows that few people in the G7 today believe that their countries will be more secure and wealthier a decade from now. Moreover, many expect China, as well as Brazil, India, and South Africa, to become much more powerful over that period.

Populist politicians in the West are adept at exploiting the fear of decline, but the nationalist policies they propose could accelerate the process. Even non-populist leaders have grown wary of globalisation, as the downsides of increasing interdependence become apparent.

China arguably has been the main beneficiary of the liberal economic order. Having helped grow the global pie, Chinese leaders now believe their country deserves a bigger slice, and that the United States is in fact the revisionist power attempting to halt China's rise and prevent it from assuming its proper role on the global stage.

Faced with several domestic challenges, including a shrinking population, a property crisis, and high levels of government debt, China will likely focus even more on relative gains in the coming years. While Chinese leaders continue to speak of "win-win" cooperation, others joke that now it means China wins twice. Clearly, Chinese policies in recent years have led some to grow more skeptical of China's long-term goals and even prompted a few to "de-risk" their relations with the country.

Others are not worried about their share of the pie getting smaller, because they believe it was paltry in the first place. To people living in poverty or suffering from protracted conflicts, calls to defend the abstract rules-based order and shoulder the accompanying costs sound tone-deaf and intended to reinforce Western dominance.

Many Global South countries know well that they will suffer the most from increasing geopolitical fragmentation. That is why they try to avoid taking sides and instead call for multi-alignment, which would allow them to pursue their own interests. But the transactional diplomacy that some of these countries endorse, with its focus on bilateral deals and short-term wins, could undermine the long-term prospects only a rules-based system can provide.

As more states define their success relative to others, a vicious cycle of zero-sum thinking could begin, undermining shared prosperity and exacerbating geopolitical tensions. This lose-lose scenario is already unfolding in many policy fields and engulfing various regions. Even climate policy, perhaps the best example of how global cooperation can benefit all, risks falling prey to concerns about which country might gain at another's expense.

There are valid reasons for some of these policy choices: "de-risking" economic relations is a rational response to a more competitive environment and can help reduce vulnerabilities. But the increasing fragmentation of the world economy into competing geopolitical blocs could derail growth, especially in low-income countries. Reduced economic growth, in turn, nurtures a zero-sum mindset - creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In the face of geopolitical uncertainty, it is understandable that a country would want to protect its piece of the pie. But the international community must prevent fears of unequal outcomes from prevailing in policy debates. Above all, efforts to protect individual shares must be balanced with attempts to enlarge the pie. This will require building new partnerships, based on mutually beneficial cooperation, and reforming the rules-based international order to ensure that the gains are shared broadly. If these efforts fail, every slice is destined to shrink - and countries will end up competing over who loses less.

**Tobias Bunde is Director of Research and Policy at the Munich Security Conference. Sophie Eisentraut is Head of Research and Publications at the Munich Security Conference. @PROJECTSYNDICATE**



Tobias Bunde & Sophie Eisentraut

**Key actors in the transatlantic community, powerful autocracies, and the so-called Global South have all become dissatisfied with what they perceive as an unequal distribution of the gains from global cooperation**

SPECTRUM GLOBAL SOUTH

## Addressing forced displacement

The year 2023 witnessed a surge in global emergencies, setting the stage for an even more challenging 2024. Projections estimate that the number of forcibly displaced people will reach 130 million by the end of this year. This crisis, fuelled by persecution, conflict, violence, economic hardships, climate change, and political fragility, demands urgent attention and collaborative efforts. Despite 75 per cent of displaced individuals finding refuge in low- and middle-income countries, research influencing policy predominantly originates from the Global North. Recognising this disparity, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) spearheads initiatives to localise and institutionalise research on forced displacement in the Global South.

IDRC has established Research Chairs in 12 universities across the Global South to mitigate the critical need for localised research. These Chairs serve as beacons of locally grounded knowledge, fostering partnerships with affected communities, policymakers, and decision-makers. This approach aims to develop tailored, effective, and sustainable solutions to the multifaceted challenges of forced displacement.

As of September 2023, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported a staggering 114 million forcibly displaced individuals globally. Disturbingly, this number is predicted to escalate to 130 million by end of 2024. The Emergency Preparedness and Response report in 2023 revealed that UNHCR issued 43 emergency declarations in 29 countries, delivering 7.4 million relief items worth \$53.5 million to assist up to 16.7 million people worldwide.

Dominique Hyde, UNHCR Director of External Relations, highlighted the unprecedented increase in emergencies, ranging from conflicts and human rights violations to natural disasters and extreme weather events. These crises have pushed the boundaries of the UNHCR's capacity to respond effectively. During 2023, the agency responded to multiple crises globally, including earthquakes in Syria, Türkiye, and Afghanistan, new conflicts in Sudan, flare-ups in Karabakh and Somalia, a deteriorating crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mixed movements of refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean, and floods in Libya and the

Horn of Africa. Acknowledging the pivotal role that low- and middle-income countries play in hosting displaced populations, IDRC initiated a CAD 7.5 million project supporting Research Chairs on Forced Displacement in 12 universities. These Chairs, funded for five years, are committed to developing a Global South perspective to offer enduring solutions. They employ a multidisciplinary approach, engaging in research, curriculum development, teaching, and mentorship while collaborating with impacted communities. The goal is to bridge the gap between research and policy at local, national, and international levels.

Supported by the Local Engagement Refugee Research Network (LERRN) at Carleton University, the IDRC Research Chairs Network on Forced Displacement facilitates collaborative efforts. LERRN supports peer-to-peer learning, collaborative research activities, and twinning opportunities among research chairs. The network emphasises sustainability by providing training and capacity-building activities for chairs and students, establishing pathways to funding sustainability.

The IDRC Research Chairs Network, in collaboration with LERRN, actively engages in joint knowledge mobilisation efforts. The network shares findings through webinars, publications, and conferences to influence priorities and shape the discourse on forced displacement. This collaborative approach amplifies displaced people's and host communities' voices, ensuring their perspectives are central to research and policy development.

As the forced displacement crisis continues to escalate, the imperative for collective action and solidarity becomes undeniable. IDRC's commitment to localised research, embodied in the Research Chairs on Forced Displacement, represents a crucial step towards developing sustainable and practical solutions. Through fostering partnerships, amplifying marginalised voices, and influencing policy at all levels, IDRC and its collaborators are paving the way for a more inclusive and impactful response to one of the most pressing global challenges of our time.

**The writer is a former Professor of Economics, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune.**



SN Tripathy

**AS THE FORCED DISPLACEMENT CRISIS CONTINUES TO ESCALATE, THE IMPERATIVE FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION AND SOLIDARITY BECOMES UNDENIABLE**

WISDOM CORNER

The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate. **OPRAH WINFREY**

Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darknesses of other people. **CARL JUNG**

To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering. **FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

**1923:** The burial chamber of Pharaoh Tutankhamun is opened. Howard Carter's discovery is one of archeology's best known, especially due to the myth of the "Curse of Tutankhamun" that was sparked by the death of Lord Carnarvon who was one of the first to enter the chamber.

**1959:** Power in Cuba seized by Fidel Castro. After defeating the forces of dictator General Fulgencio Batista, Fidel Castro became premier of Cuba this day in 1959 and transformed the island country into the Western Hemisphere's first communist state.

Skill development

Sir, "When judges have judicial academies to be trained in salient features of law, why not the lawyers?" was an apt query of the Supreme Court bench of Justices Bela Trivedi and Pankaj Mittal. The top court's observation is a wake-up call for a profession that once enjoyed unquestionable reverence but has several questions asked about its ethics and professionalism over the years. Young lawyers are often thrown into the vast sea of legal profession without proper hands to guide. They are often found wanting in court room etiquettes and decorum. Barring senior lawyers who have a reputation to maintain, and a handful of old timers, many young lawyers suffer from paucity of drafting skills and presentation acumen. Their advancement in legal profession hinges on favourable court verdicts. Therefore, a successful lawyer is an amalgamation of impeccable courtroom behaviour and outstanding arguing skills that can impress the judges. **Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA**

Happy homecoming

Sir, India celebrates a diplomatic triumph as eight Navy veterans, previously incarcerated in Qatar for 18 months on alleged spying charges, are finally released. This significant victory comes after relentless efforts by the Indian government, combining diplomatic finesse with strategic legal manoeuvres. The long-awaited homecoming of the veterans underscores the effectiveness of sustained diplomatic engagement in resolving complex international legal disputes. India's diplomatic strategy was multifaceted and meticulously executed. From the outset, the government expressed deep concern over the initial death sentence handed down by Qatar's Court of First Instance. Subsequently, India swiftly mobilised legal resources to file an appeal against the sentence, signaling its unwavering commitment to the veterans' cause. Concurrently, high-level diplomatic efforts were initiated, culminating in crucial meetings with Qatar's leadership, including discussions with Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani during the COP28 summit in Dubai. These engagements were instrumental in conveying India's resolve to secure the release of its citizens and in fostering a conducive environment for negotiation. The reduction of the sentence from death to imprisonment by Qatar's Court of Appeal marks a pivotal moment in the diplomatic saga. **Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH**

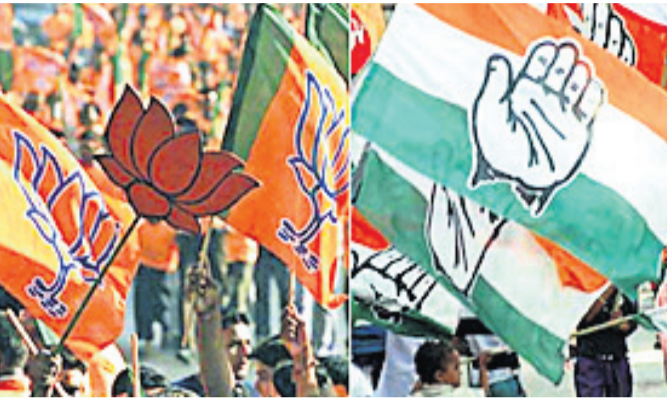
## Letters

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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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

# LS POLLS Upbeat BJP eyes clean sweep in Raj



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, Feb 15:** The ruling BJP and the opposition Congress in Rajasthan have started their preparations for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. While the Congress has reportedly scheduled a screening committee meeting in Delhi February 16, the BJP also has a national executive meeting lined up in the national capital February 17-18.

However, there is a big difference between the approach of the party leaders of the Congress and the BJP. While most of the senior Congress leaders have expressed their reluctance to contest the Lok Sabha elections at the committee meeting held February 9, the BJP leaders are willing to contest the polls irrespective of from where they are fielded.

The Congress drew a blank in the last two general elections

in Rajasthan, as the BJP swept all the 25 seats in offing in 2014 before clinching 24 seats in 2019, while one seat went to its ally RLP. The situation with regard to the Lok Sabha elections will be clear after the meeting of both the parties to be held in Delhi by the end of this week.

According to Congress sources, the party wants former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, ex-Assembly Speaker C.P. Joshi, senior leaders Govind Singh Dotasra, Harish Chaudhary, Sachin Pilot, Ashok Chandra, Bhanwar Jitendra Singh, Raghuvver Meena, Ram Lal Jat, Brijendra Ola, Pratap Singh Khachariya to contest the Lok Sabha polls.

Congress' state in-charge Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa himself had said in Jaipur that the party wants to give a strong contest by fielding these leaders in the general elections.

However, according to sources, most of these big names are reportedly not that keen to contest the elections.

While some have reportedly cited health reasons, the others have said they want to 'bring forward the new generation'. Now at the meeting to be held February 16, it will be interesting to see if the Congress high-command asks these leaders to contest the polls.

Meanwhile, unlike the grand old party, BJP leaders are all excited and confident of winning all the 25 seats in Rajasthan. The party is confident of making a clean sweep due to its initiatives like the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra and Gaon Chalo Abhiyaan, among others, said former Rajya Sabha MP Narayan Pancheria.

"All the senior leaders, including CM Bhajan Lal Sharma, are visiting villages and discussing local issues with the villagers. They are meeting the beneficiaries of different Central schemes. We are holding 'Chaupals' involving the farmers in the villages. In fact, people are already raising the slogan 'Teesri Baar Modi sarkar'," he said.

When asked if new faces will be fielded in the Lok Sabha polls, Pancheria said, "The top party leadership will decide on this, and the local leaders shall abide by the decisions. Ours is a disciplined party and we follow the guidelines issued by the senior leaders."



School students perform Surya Namaskar on the occasion of 'Surya Saptami' in Jaipur

PTI PHOTO

# First gold mine auction in Raj soon

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, Feb 15:** Rajasthan mining department is all set to create history as it will start a gold mine auction for the first time in the state in the Banswara district's Bhukia-Jagpura area.

The department has made all preparations for the e-auction of these mines and necessary information will be made available on the portal within a month, said Anandi, Secretary, Rajasthan Mines Department.

She said, "There are huge reserves of gold in the 14 square kilometre area of Bhukia-



Jagpura of Ghatol tehsil in Banswara. "After extensive exploration in this area, a preliminary estimate of 113.52 million tonnes of gold ore has been made, in which the amount of gold metal has been estimated at 222.39 tonnes. According to a rough estimate, during the mining of gold ore here, more than 1 lakh 74

thousand tonnes of copper; more than 9,700 tonnes of nickel and more than 13,500 tonnes of cobalt mineral will be obtained.

"Both the blocks are being finalised for auction by the state government's Rajasthan State Mineral Exploration Trust (RSMET). The tender for auction will be launched on the Government of India's e-portal in about a month with the completion of the necessary formalities for the e-auction of two gold mines.

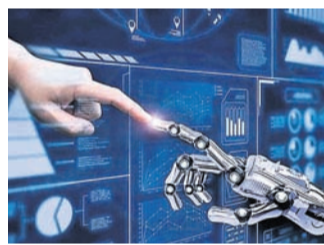
The Mines Secretary said, "We are preparing on a war footing for the auction of the state's first gold mines in Bhukia-Jagpura of

Banswara. Along with gold, abundant quantities of copper, nickel and cobalt minerals will be obtained from these gold mines in. This will create unprecedented opportunities for direct and indirect employment along with new investments in many industries, including electronic, petroleum, petrochemical, battery, etc., in the country and the state. Along with copper industries, the availability of copper as raw material will increase in the electronic sector, while nickel will provide a boom to the battery industry, coin minting, electronic industry, etc."

# Kota teenager builds AI robot to help farmers

*Aryan was the only boy from Rajasthan among nine boys and ten girls from 18 states and Union Territories who won awards. He got the award from President Droupadi Murmu in New Delhi January 22 this year*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



of the Rajasthan government for startups. "They incubated me and I got a place to work, labs and support from them," Aryan said.

AgRobot is fitted with cameras to analyse crop's condition. There is also a dropper on the top which helps spread seeds and irrigation in the field, reducing manual labour for the farmer. The robot is also equipped with soil moisture sensors that help farmers assess the soil health and look for any pests in them.

The robot uses Artificial Intelligence which is trained on different farming data, he said. It can also be controlled remotely. "Using IoT, we have made the robot remotely controllable. For instance, if you want to use the robot from Jaipur city and your crops are in Kota, you can simply log in to the application that I have developed and use it," Aryan said.

The robot is fully run on solar energy with the help of a piezoelectric panel installed in it that uses pressure to produce electricity. "For instance, the pressure created on the tyres and the panel will produce electricity that can be stored in the batteries for use when the sun is down," he said.

The boy added, "So this creates a chain of power, once the solar energy is exhausted you can switch to a piezoelectric panel. The robot will not need any external source whatsoever to work." Prakesh Soni, his mentor at ATL, said Aryan was moved to build the prototype after his family facing troubles farming, and the lab helped him convert his idea into AgRobot.

"Today, this device is so helpful that his father, sitting at home, operates through internet all the works in agriculture field, like switching on or off a water pump for irrigation in field, assessing amount of water, measure release of water in accordance with requirement of particular crops, detect infected and wormed crops, monitor and guard the field and there are several others," Soni, a physics lecturer, said.

# GARLIC PRICES SOAR OUT OF CONTROL IN UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Feb 15:** Connoisseurs of good food can put away basic Chinese and Mughlai dishes from their plates for a while. Garlic, which is a basic ingredient in these two cuisines, is now out of reach for the common man.

The price of garlic in major cities of Uttar Pradesh has soared and is selling between ₹500-550 per kg. Traders assure that the prices may fall after two weeks when the new crop arrives.

Garlic comes to the cities from

local farms in small supply, but mainly from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, besides other districts of UP. Traders attributed price hike to delayed monsoon last year that pushed garlic sowing to August, leading to a late harvest in January and a subsequent supply deficit.

In the wake of this, city restaurants are dilemma over whether to absorb the increased cost and bear loss, or pass it on to customers.

"We obviously cannot absorb the price rise because we use garlic in huge quantities. We cannot reduce the use of garlic because that would im-



pact the taste. We have no option but to pass on the price rise to consumers," said the owner of a popular Chinese joint in Lucknow. Street vendors selling noodles and momos have also been directly hit.

"How can you even think of

preparing momos without garlic. We have been forced to increase the prices but our customers are not yet complaining and that is a major relief," said Rajkumar, who sells momos in trans-Gomti area.

Mughlai restaurants are also feeling the heat. "Whether it is the abnormal hike in price of tomatoes, onions or now garlic, we are invariably taking a hit because these three ingredients are essential in Mughlai dishes," said Javed Khan, owner of a popular eatery.

He further said, "Garlic is crucial ingredient in our non-veg-

etarian dishes and the price hike has forced us to choose between raising prices or compromising on quality, both detrimental to our business."

Households are hit too, having to cut back on garlic use. "At ₹550 per kg, garlic has become a luxury and I am forced to readjust my grocery budget. The seasoning in 'dal' does not taste the same without garlic," said Premalata Sharma, a housewife.

A trader, Ravi Kashyap, said that there was increase demand for garlic -- despite the high prices -- because of the ongoing wedding season.

# 5 girl cadets from UP Sainik School get selected to NDA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Feb 15:** Five girl cadets from UP Sainik School Lucknow have been selected by the Services Selection Board to join the elite National Defence Academy (NDA).

These five cadets will commence their training shortly. Apart from these girl cadets, an equal number of male cadets too cleared the exam but the spotlight was on girl cadets.

The girl cadets who have been selected include Hansi Malik, Priyanka, Sanskriti Sharma, Vaishnavi Tripathi and Jyotsna Yadav. The training of these five girl cadets -- Hansi Malik, Priyanka, Sanskriti Sharma, Vaishnavi Tripathi and Jyotsna Yadav, selected by SSB from UP Sainik School Lucknow, will commence shortly.

Colonel Rajesh Raghav, the school principal, said, "This is one of the highest ever selection of girls from a single school." "It is a rare achievement as five girls and five boys of the Captain Manoj Pandey UP Sainik School have brought laurels to the institution. They were motivated to work on a plethora of areas, like, general knowledge, communication and reasoning skills and a thorough understanding of the selection mechanism," he said.

Of the 27 female seats in NDA, five were bagged by girl cadets of UP Sainik School, comprising an impressive 18.5 per cent of the total selection.

The UP Sainik School opened its gates for the girl cadets in 2018 losing its all-boys institution tag as 15 girl cadets were admitted for the first time in 57 years.

# Religious tourism attracts major projects in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Feb 15:** The sustained efforts of the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh over the past seven years are paying off and religious tourism now accounts for a major share in the tourism sector.

Over 46 per cent of the total 819 projects set for launch during the fourth groundbreaking ceremony (GBC-4.0) in the tourism sector are located in centres of religious tourism, namely Varanasi, Ayodhya, Mathura and Prayagraj, according to the official spokesman.

The tourism department's target for the event was ₹ 37,500 crore. Against this, 819 projects worth ₹33,134.47 crore are set to take off, which is an achievement of 88 per cent against the goal. Of the total, projects worth ₹15,434.18 crore are located in these four cities -- Varanasi, Ayodhya, Mathura and Prayagraj.

The projects include hotels, resorts, spas, retreats, theme parks and so on. According to the spokesman, Varanasi leads the list with projects with 34 entries bringing in an investment of ₹6,730 crore. It is followed by Ayodhya which has been able to pull in 114 projects worth ₹4,318 crore.

Mathura ranks number three with 74 projects to the tune of ₹3,278 crore. Prayagraj, which ranks number seven in the regular list, has been able to attract investment of ₹1,108.18 crore through 21 projects.

Chitrakoot, which is also attracting a lot of pilgrims because of its connection with Lord Ram, has got eight new projects worth ₹118 crore. Principal Secretary, tourism, Mukesh Meshram said that the figures speak for the rising tourism economy of UP which is riding the spiritual tourism wave.

"Apart from being the birthplace of Ram and Krishna and the abode of Shiva, Uttar Pradesh is also the land of Buddha's enlightenment. Then, there are 20-plus world-famous destinations closely linked to Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism, Sikhism and Christianity. Together these facts make the state a must-visit for many pilgrims," he said. Tourism minister Jaiveer Singh said that this was just the beginning for UP.

"Around 1.5 lakh tourists are visiting Varanasi daily while an equal number are already visiting Ayodhya since the Ram temple was dedicated to people," the minister said.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA** No.A-1496:  
**DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**  
**Office of the Superintending Engineer,**  
**Barpali Irrigation Division, Barpali**  
 E-mail Id - ee.barpali.canal@gmail.com  
**'e' Procurement Notice No- 05/2023-24**  
**BID IDENTIFICATION NO- BID 05 (01 to 41) /2023-24 (ON-LINE)**  
**DATED 09.02.2024**

- Type of the work : Improvement to Water Course Canal Structures.
- No. of works : 41 (Forty One) Nos.
- Class of Contractor : "D" & "C" & "B"
- Bid identification No : BID 05 (01 to 41) /2023-24
- Estimate cost : 6.78 Lakhs to 41.56 Lakhs
- Period of completion : As per DTCN.
- Date and time of availability of bid documents in the portal : Dt. 16.02.2024 at 11.00 AM to Dt. 26.02.2024 upto 5.00 PM.
- Last date/ time for receipt of bids in the portal : Dt. 26.02.2024 upto 5.00 PM.
- Date of opening of Bid : Dt. 27.02.2024 at 11.00 AM
- Date of Lottery : 01.03.2024

1. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said Website. 2. Further details can be seen from Government Website- <http://tenderodisha.gov.in>.  
**Sd./- Superintending Engineer**  
**Barpali Irrigation Division, Barpali**  
 OIPR-32413/11/0005/2324

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
**Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur**  
 E-mail: eeteldivn2022@gmail.com  
**E-Procurement Notice No.EE,TID,SNP- 19/2023-24**  
 No.A-1503: The Executive Engineer, Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites online Percentage Rate tenders in single cover system to be received in online mode only for the works as detailed below.

- Name/Nature of the Work : Canal Lining Works
- No. of Works : 10 Nos.
- Class of Contractor : As mentioned in Col. No.4 of NIT
- Bid Identification No. : EE, TID, SNP-19/2023-24
- Estimated Cost : From Rs.31.05 lakhs to Rs.41.94 Lakhs
- Period of Completion : As per mentioned in Col.No.7 of NIT
- Date & Time of availability of bid documents in the portal : From 16.02.2024 (10.00 AM) to 26.02.2024 (05.30 PM)
- Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal : In portal - 26.02.2024 from 10.00 A.M. upto 05.30 P.M.
- Date of Opening of Bid : On Date 27.02.2024 (11.00 AM onwards in the Office of the undersigned)
- Name of the Officer inviting Bid : Executive Engineer, Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur (Dist.Subarnapur)

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.  
**Sd./- Executive Engineer**  
**Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur**  
 OIPR-32362/11/0021/2324



Army Chief General Manoj Pande inspects guard of honour at Fort Myers in Florida

PTI



A competitor takes part in the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Race at the City of London's Leadenhall Market

REUTERS



Vehicles are scattered during floods after heavy rains in Antalya, southern Turkey

AP



An idol of Goddess Saraswati being immersed in a water body a day after Saraswati Puja in Nadia, West Bengal

PTI



Artistes perform during a 2-day cultural festival 'Guldasta-e-Jammu & Kashmir' in Jammu

PTI



Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the 'Nanda-Gaura Mahotsav', at Gauchar in Chamoli district

PTI



Children dressed as Momotroros, half bull, half man figures wrapped in blood-spattered sheepskins, take part in carnival celebrations in Alsasua, northern Spain

REUTERS



The Bayi Aerobatic Team of the People's Liberation Army Air Force performs at the World Defense Show in Saudi Arabia

XINHUA



# national



**Farmers protesting in Delhi are being fired upon with tear gas shells and pellets. One such farmer, whose face had been disfigured by rubber bullets, met me. I said you are doing nothing wrong. You are fighting for the country, just like the soldiers do on the borders**

**RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER**

## COURT TO HEAR PLEA AGAINST HINDU PRAYERS FEBRUARY 28

A Varanasi court Thursday fixed February 28 as the date for hearing the Gyanvapi Masjid committee's plea against the recently allowed puja in a cellar of the mosque, the Hindu side counsel said



# DEMOCRACY DOESN'T BEGIN & END WITH ELECTIONS: SC

*The Supreme Court in a landmark judgment annulled the electoral bonds scheme for political funding, saying it violates the constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression as well as the right to information*

Democracy does not begin and end with elections and the integrity of election process is pivotal for sustaining the democratic form of government, the Supreme Court said Thursday while striking down as unconstitutional the electoral bonds scheme for political funding.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said the apex court has consistently pointed out the pernicious effect of money on the integrity of the electoral process in India.

"The Preamble to the Constitution describes India as a 'democratic republic': a democracy in which citizens are guaranteed political equality irrespective of caste and class and where the value of every vote is equal. Democracy does not begin and end with elections," Justice Chandrachud, who penned the verdict for himself and on behalf of Justices B R Gavai, J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said.

"Democracy sustains because the elected are responsive to

the electors who hold them accountable for their actions and inactions. Would we remain a democracy if the elected do not heed to the hue and cry of the needy?" the CJI said. Justice Sanjiv Khanna wrote a separate verdict and gave different reasons



for concurring with the judgement authored by the CJI.

In his verdict, Justice Chandrachud noted that the question that "we ask ourselves is whether the elected would truly be responsive to the electorate if companies which bring with them huge finances and engage in quid pro quo arrangements with parties are permitted to contribute unlimited amounts".

The bench said the reason for political contributions by companies was as "open as daylight" and even Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who argued for the Centre in the matter, did not deny during the arguments that corporate donations are made to receive favours through quid pro quo arrangements.

### BIG BOOST TO DEMOCRACY: ADR

NGO Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), one of the petitioners in the electoral bond case, Thursday termed the decision to strike down the scheme a big boost to democracy but also noted that the infirmities which existed in the electoral system pre-2017 still have to be worked on. Shivani Kapoor, program lead and manager (legal) at ADR, said to fix the system, to contain corruption and to seek complete transparency and accountability in political functioning and finances, every penny should be accounted for.

Shelly Mahajan, program and research officer (Political Party Watch) at ADR, said, "The SC has made it clear that the citizens' right to information cannot be compromised for the informational privacy of the companies. However, the fight is not over yet - we cannot rest till a better system of political funding is in place. For now, this is a moment to rejoice as this is a big win for citizens of India."

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN ELECTORAL BONDS CASE

- **2017:** The Electoral bond scheme was introduced in the Finance Bill.
- **Sep 14, 2017:** NGO 'Association for Democratic Reforms', lead petitioner, moves SC challenging the scheme.
- **Oct 03, 2017:** SC issues notices to Centre and EC on PIL filed by the NGO.
- **Jan 2, 2018:** The Central government notifies the Electoral Bond Scheme.
- **Nov 7, 2022:** The electoral bond scheme was amended to increase the sale days from 70 to 85 in a year where any assembly election may be scheduled.
- **Oct 16, 2023:** SC bench headed by CJI DY Chandrachud refers pleas against the scheme to a five-judge Constitution bench.
- **Oct 31, 2023:** A five-judge Constitution bench headed by CJI D Y Chandrachud commences hearing on pleas against the scheme.
- **Nov 2, 2023:** SC reserves verdict.
- **Feb 15, 2024:** SC delivers unanimous judgement annulling the scheme, saying it violates Constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression as well as the right to information.



## BJP GOT IN EXCESS OF ₹6.5K-CR TILL LAST FISCAL

Electoral bonds have accounted for more than ₹16,000 crore worth funds contributed to various political parties so far, a lion's share is estimated to have gone to the BJP, data shows. All political parties put together received more than ₹12,000 crore till last

During the last fiscal 2022-23, BJP's total income stood at ₹2,360 crore, of which nearly ₹1,300 crore came through electoral bonds. In the same year, the Congress saw its total income fall to ₹452 crore, of which ₹171 crore came through electoral bonds.

The BJP saw the funds coming through electoral bonds rise from ₹1,033 crore in 2021-22, while that of the Congress fell from ₹236 crore in that year. Among other parties, TMC received ₹325 crore through these bonds in the last fiscal, while it was ₹529 crore for BRS, ₹185 crore for DMK, ₹152 crore for BJD and ₹34 crore for TDP. The Samajwadi Party saw its electoral bonds contribution fall to nil, while that of the Shiromani Akali Dal was also zero.

Nearly half of funds in electoral bonds come from corporates, while the rest is from "other sources".

**THE BJP REPLACED CONGRESS AS THE COUNTRY'S RICHEST PARTY SINCE THE LAST YEAR OF UPA-II**

**IT HAD TOTAL INCOME OF ₹73.8 CRORE IN FISCAL YEAR 2013-14, AS AGAINST ₹598 CRORE OF THE CONGRESS**

**SINCE THEN, BJP'S INCOME HAS MOSTLY BEEN RISING WHILE THE CONGRESS HAS SEEN ITS FORTUNES DECLINE EXCEPT FOR A FEW YEARS IN BETWEEN**

## OPPOSITION PARTIES HAIL VERDICT

Leaders of several Opposition parties Thursday hailed the Supreme Court verdict. The Congress said it will reinforce the power of votes over notes, with party president Mallikarjun Kharge hoping the Modi government will stop resorting to such "mischievous ideas" in future. The BJP, however, alleged that the Opposition parties are politicising the issue as they do not have any alternative to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Kharge said the Congress had called the scheme "opaque and undemocratic" when it was launched. Subsequently, in the 2019 manifesto, the Congress promised to scrap the Modi government's "dubious scheme". Reacting to the verdict, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said, "Another proof of Narendra Modi's corrupt policies is in front of you. The BJP had made electoral bonds a medium for taking bribe and commission. Today a stamp has been put on this." Welcoming the judgment, the CPI(M) said it was an "unscrupulous scheme designed to help the ruling party" and it was now essential to introduce reforms for political and electoral funding. CPI general secretary D Raja said his party welcomes the judgment declaring electoral bonds as unconstitutional. The Aam Aadmi Party welcomed the decision saying it is an important step in ensuring transparency in election funding. The ruling DMK and the Opposition AIADMK in Tamil Nadu too hailed the verdict, with Chief Minister M K Stalin saying it has restored democracy and level playing field for all political parties besides ensuring the public to have faith in the system. The TDP too welcomed the SC decision and targeted the ruling YSRCP in Andhra Pradesh, asking it to reveal details of funds it allegedly received through this.

## SNIPPETS

### 7 dead after fire breaks out in paint factory

**New Delhi:** At least seven people were killed in a fire that broke out in a paint factory in outer Delhi's Alipur Thursday evening, police said. The charred bodies of the seven victims were found from the premises of the factory located in Alipur's Dayalpur Market, an official said. The Delhi Fire Services (DFS) official said a call about the incident was received at 5:25 pm and 22 fire-tenders were pressed into service. The blaze was brought under control by 9 pm, he said, adding that the cooling-off operation is underway.



### ED summons Mahua Moitra in FEMA case

**New Delhi:** The Enforcement Directorate has summoned TMC leader and former Lok Sabha MP Mahua Moitra for questioning in a FEMA contravention case next week, official sources said Thursday. The 49-year-old politician has been asked to depose February 19 at the central agency's office in Delhi. Her statement will be recorded under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) once she deposes, they said. Moitra is being probed by the CBI too and it is conducting a preliminary inquiry into the allegations against Moitra on the reference from the Lokpal.

### Filing of nominations for RS polls ends

**New Delhi:** BJP chief J P Nadda, new party entrant Ashok Chavan and former Congress president Sonia Gandhi are among those in the fray for the Rajya Sabha elections with the deadline for filing of nominations ending Thursday. The biennial elections are scheduled February 27 in 56 seats - 10 in Uttar Pradesh, six each in Maharashtra and Bihar, five each in West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh, four each in Gujarat and Karnataka, three each in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan and Odisha, and one each in Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

### Hemant Soren remanded to judicial custody

**Ranchi:** A special PMLA court Thursday remanded former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren to judicial custody till February 22 in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam. The ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) executive president was in the ED custody. Soren was arrested by the ED January 31, shortly after he resigned as the Chief Minister. Earlier in the day, Soren on reaching the PMLA court in the afternoon, waved at his supporters present there.



## FARMERS' PROTEST

# 3 Union ministers hold talks with farm union leaders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Feb 15:** Three Union ministers held a third round of talks with the leaders of protesting farmer unions in Chandigarh Thursday, amid a standoff between the protesters and security personnel at two points on the Punjab-Haryana border.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann also joined the meeting at the Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Public Administration in Sector 26 here.

Union Agriculture and Farmer Welfare Minister Arjun Munda, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai represented the Centre at the meeting over the farmer unions' various demands, including a law guaranteeing a minimum support price (MSP) for crops. The talks were un-



derway till late at night.

This was the third round of talks between the two sides. The two previous rounds of dialogue February 8 and 12 remained inconclusive. Among the farmer leaders taking part in the meeting are SKM (Non-Political)

leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher.

The Sanyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha have given a "Delhi Chalo" call to press the BJP-led Centre to accept their demands. Farmers from Punjab began their march to the national capital Tuesday, but were stopped by security personnel at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Delhi and Haryana.

The protesting farmers have been camping at the border points.

Earlier, the farmer leaders had said they would not make any fresh attempt to move towards Delhi till the meeting with the ministers was held, asserting that the next course of action would be decided on the basis of the Centre's proposals.

Separately, farmers squatted on railway tracks at many places in Punjab over the Haryana Police's action against the "Delhi Chalo" protesters.

## BHARAT BANDH: POLICE ISSUE TRAFFIC ADVISORY

**Noida:** The Gautam Buddha Nagar Police Thursday said restrictions under CrPC Section 144, including a ban on unauthorised public assemblies, would be enforced across the district in view of Bharat Bandh called by farmers' unions Friday. The police also cautioned commuters going to Delhi and coming back from the capital city of traffic diversions in Noida and urged citizens to opt for metro rail service "as far as possible" to avoid inconvenience. The decisions have been taken in view of the proposed protest marches called by the farmers' body Sanyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) and other unions, the police said. The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), part of SKM, had earlier called for a Bharat Bandh February 16, citing a host of unmet demands of farmers. The Noida-based Bharatiya Kisan Parishad (BKP) has also extended support to Friday's Bharat Bandh. "Various programmes like protest demonstrations are proposed by SKM and various organisations for Friday. Hence, Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) is implemented February 16," the police said in a statement. According to the order, unlawful assembly of five or more people, unauthorised processions or demonstrations, including political or religious, are prohibited. The order also bars the use of private drones in a radius of one km of government establishments and also bans people from carrying sticks, rods, tridents, swords, firearms and the likes in public places.

## Ajit Pawar faction is real NCP, says Maha Speaker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 15:** Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar Thursday held that the NCP faction led by deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar was the real Nationalist Congress Party, and the anti-defection provisions in the Constitution can not be used to stifle internal dissent.

While dismissing disqualification petitions filed by the factions led by Ajit Pawar and his uncle Sharad Pawar against each other's legislators, the Speaker noted that the Ajit group had "overwhelming legislative majority" of 41 out of 53 party MLAs when it decided to join the Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra in July 2023.

The Ajit Pawar group was, thus, the "real political party" when the factions emerged, Narwekar said.

The ruling, which followed the Election Commission's decision last week holding the Ajit-led faction as the real NCP, was criticised by the Sharad Pawar group as "copy-paste" of Narwekar's earlier decision on disqualification petitions filed by rival Shiv Sena factions.

"An invisible power" was trying to finish off two key Maharashtra-based parties, NCP MP and Sharad Pawar's daughter Supriya Sule alleged. "All the petitions seeking disqualification of MLAs are rejected," Narwekar said, reading out the ruling at the legislature complex here earlier in the evening.

A party leadership can not use the tenth schedule to stifle dissent of large number of members by threatening to disqualify them, he said.

# international



I welcome that the European allies are investing more in defence and NATO has called for that for many, many years  
JENS STOLTENBERG | NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL

## PRIVATE US MOON LANDER LAUNCHED

A moon lander built by Houston-based aerospace company Intuitive Machines was launched from Florida Thursday on a mission to conduct the first US lunar touchdown in more than a half century and the first by a privately owned spacecraft



### of the day quote

The genocide convention was enacted following World War II and its intention was to ensure that never again would we see the atrocities that were part of the Holocaust against Jewish people in Europe. Those who were to be the beneficiaries of the Convention are today the ones we believe are committing genocide

NALEDI PANDOR | FOREIGN MINISTER, SOUTH AFRICA

We want peace and stability through adherence to international resolutions

NAJIB MIKATI | LEBANESE PM

Delivering modernisation to more than 1.4 billion people will be a remarkable achievement in human history, one that will provide continuous impetus to the development of China and the wider world

LI QIANG | CHINESE PREMIER

# ISRAEL RAIDS MAIN GAZA HOSPITAL



REUTERS

Jerusalem/Doha, Feb 15: Israeli forces said Thursday they had raided the biggest functioning hospital in Gaza as footage showed chaos, shouting and gunfire in dark corridors filled with dust and smoke.

Israel's military called the raid on Nasser Hospital "precise and limited" and said it was based on information that Hamas militants were hiding and had kept hostages in the facility, with some bodies of captives possibly there. Hamas called that lies.

## PTI nominates Omar Ayub as PM candidate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 15: Jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party Thursday nominated as its prime ministerial candidate the party secretary general Omar Ayub Khan, grandson of former military dictator Ayub Khan.

Omar Ayub Khan, 54, joined Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) before the 2018 general elections after losing the 2013 polls as a candidate of the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) from Haripur in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Due to the fractured mandate with none of the parties getting a clear majority, Pakistan is yet to get a new government. Even when more than 100 independents backed by Khan's PTI party won the February 8 polls, it has alleged that its mandate was stolen.

If those troubles were any less, over the last three days, some of the independents have joined the possible coalition to be formed by PTI's rival parties. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has announced that its President Shehbaz Sharif, 72, will be its prime ministerial candidate. The former prime minister is supported by the Pakistan Peoples Party and four other smaller parties.

ASKED ABOUT SPECULATION ON BIDEN'S HEALTH ISSUES, PUTIN RESPONDED THAT "I'M NOT A DOCTOR AND I DON'T CONSIDER IT PROPER TO COMMENT ON THAT"

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, Feb 15: President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday that Russia would prefer to see President Joe Biden win a second term, describing him as more experienced than Donald Trump.

ISRAEL SAYS RAID ON NASSER HOSPITAL 'PRECISE AND LIMITED'  
HAMAS DENIES HIDING HOSTAGES, FIGHTERS AT THE HOSPITAL  
DEATH TOLL IN GAZA RISES TO 28,663, GAZA HEALTH MINISTRY SAYS

Balah in central Gaza, they said. The war began October 7 when Hamas sent fighters into Israel, killing 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and seizing 253 hostages according to Israeli tallies. Israel's air and ground offensive has since devastated tiny, crowded Gaza, killing 28,663 people, also mostly civilian, according to health authorities, and forcing nearly all its more than 2 million inhabitants from their homes.

The medical charity Medicins San Frontieres said Israel shelled

## 3 detained after mass shooting

REUTERS

Kansas City, Feb 15: Police in Kansas City, Missouri, Thursday were questioning three people detained after a deadly mass shooting at a rally to celebrate the city's Super Bowl victory, hoping to find out what prompted the gunfire, which killed a beloved local DJ.

In addition to the woman who was killed, at least 21 others suffered gunshot wounds Wednesday outside the city's landmark Union Station, authorities said, where thousands of fans had gathered with the Kansas City Chiefs to celebrate the team's NFL championship triumph over the San Francisco 49ers.

The bloodshed, which came at the end of the rally following a parade, turned the festive occasion into a scene of panic as throngs of attendees scrambled for cover at the sound of rapid-fire gunshots.

Local radio station KKFI identified the slain victim as Lisa Lopez, one of its disc jockeys and host of the show "Taste of Tejano." "This senseless act has taken a beautiful person from her family and this KC Community," the radio station said in a post on Facebook.

Fifteen other victims suffered

the hospital in the early hours, despite having told medical staff and patients they could remain. "Our medical staff have had to flee the hospital, leaving patients behind," it said on social media platform X, adding a member of its staff was detained at an Israeli checkpoint set up to screen those leaving the compound.

Fighting at the hospital comes as Israel faces growing international pressure to show restraint, after vowing to press its offensive into Rafah, the last relatively safe place in Gaza. Attacks that have destroyed the majority of Gaza's medical facilities have caused particular concern, including Israeli raids on hospitals in other cities, shelling in the vicinity of hospitals and the targeting of ambulances.

As massive bombardment destroyed swathes of residential districts and forced most people from their homes, hospitals quickly became the focus for displaced people seeking shelter around buildings they thought more likely to be safe.

Israel accuses Hamas of regularly using hospitals, ambulances and other medical facilities for military purposes, and has aired footage taken by its troops that it says shows tunnels containing weapons below some hospitals. The Israeli military said it apprehended various suspects at the Nasser Hospital and that its operations there were continuing.



life-threatening wounds, Fire Department Chief Ross Grundyson said at a late-afternoon news conference.

Eleven of those hurt by gunfire or the ensuing pandemonium were children as young as 6, officials said. None of the football team, their coaches or other staff attending the rally was injured, the Chiefs said.

Police Chief Stacey Graves told a Wednesday evening news conference three people were detained "and under investigation" in connection with the shooting, but she said investigators had yet to determine a motive.

She said police were still unsure whether the Super Bowl victory celebration was targeted for attack or whether the violence was incidental to the event and spilled over into it.



Tractors pass in front of the Colosseum as farmers' protest continues in Rome, Italy

AP/PTI

## Albanese gets engaged in office

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Feb 15: Anthony Albanese has become the first Australian Prime Minister to get engaged while in office, revealing Thursday that his partner accepted his marriage proposal on Valentine's Day.

He and Jodie Haydon, a financial services professional, have been together for three years. Albanese said he proposed on a balcony of his official residence, known as the Lodge, following a romantic dinner at an Italian restaurant.

"She said yes," Albanese posted with a love heart symbol on the X social media platform. The first-term Prime Minister said he had planned both the date and place of the proposal and even helped design Haydon's diamond ring. But he did not know if the wedding would be held before he sets the date for Australia's next election, sometime between this August and May of next year.

"We'll now have those discussions between us, which I think people would understand, and sort out those details, but we just want to live in the moment at this point," Albanese said at a brief news conference on a lawn outside the Lodge.

"It is such a joy to be able to share this news with people and it's wonderful I found a partner who I want to spend the rest of my life with. Last night was a very great occasion here at the Lodge. We couldn't be more happy," he added.

Haydon thanked friends, family and strangers for their messages of congratulation. "It's just been overwhelming, but beautiful," Haydon said. Albanese, 60, has an adult son with his first wife. They divorced after a 19-year marriage.



## Modi holds talks with Qatari Emir



After the talks at the majestic Amiri Palace in Qatari capital city, Modi described his meeting with the Emir as 'wonderful' and said the bilateral ties are growing 'stronger and stronger' and both the nations are looking forward to collaborating in futuristic sectors that will benefit the planet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Doha, Feb 15: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday thanked Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani for the release of eight Indians, previously on death row, even as the two leaders held extensive talks that set the stage for taking the bilateral ties to a higher level, especially in the spheres of investment, energy and new technology.

After the talks at the majestic Amiri Palace in this Qatari capital city, Modi described his meeting with the Emir as "wonderful" and said the bilateral ties are growing "stronger and stronger" and both the nations are looking forward to collaborating in futuristic sectors that will benefit the planet.

Modi arrived here Thursday night from the United Arab Emirates in his second visit to Qatar which came days after Doha released the Indians in a major relief to New Delhi. Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said at a media briefing that the

talks focussed on expanding cooperation in key areas, increasing convergence on regional issues, examining partnership in third countries, and viewing the overall ties from a strategic perspective rather than a transactional one.

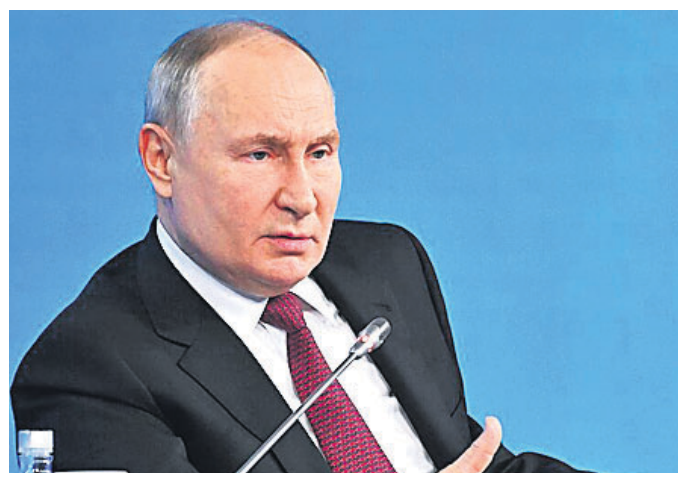
The two leaders also spoke about the need for strategic investments and strategic partnerships in the domain of energy and to proceed beyond the buyer-seller relationship in this field. Prime Minister Modi also thanked the Emir for his support for the welfare of the Indian community in the Gulf nation, he said.

"The prime minister thanked the Emir for his support for the welfare of the Indian community, and in this regard, expressed his deep appreciation to the Emir for the release of eight Indian nationals of Al-Dahra company. We are extremely gratified to see them back in India," Kwatra said.

Seven out of eight Indians had returned to India Monday after Qatar freed them. The Navy veterans were October 26 given death sentences by Qatar's Court of First Instance. The Court of Appeal in the Gulf nation December 28 commuted the capital punishment and sentenced them to jail terms for varying durations.

The former Indian Navy personnel apparently faced charges of espionage, but neither the Qatari authorities nor New Delhi made the charges against them public. Kwatra said Modi's "very successful visit" has set the stage for taking ties to a much higher level in a range of areas and exploring engagement in new areas such as space, technology and innovation.

# Putin says Biden presidency better for Russia than Trump



he wants to shake up the NATO alliance could better serve Putin. Biden accused Trump on Tuesday of having "bowed down to a Russian dictator."

Asked about speculation on Biden's health issues, Putin re-

sponded that "I'm not a doctor and I don't consider it proper to comment on that." Biden's team worked to alleviate Democratic concerns over alarms raised by a special counsel about Biden's age and memory. They came in

a report determining that Biden would not be charged with any criminal activity for possessing classified documents after he left office.

Putin noted that the talk about Biden's health comes as "the election campaign is gaining speed in the U.S., and it's taking an increasingly sharp course." He added that allegations of Biden's health problems were also circulating at the time when they met in Switzerland in June 2021, adding that he witnessed the contrary and saw the U.S. leader in a good shape.

"They talked about him being incapacitated, but I saw nothing of the kind," Putin said. "Yes, he was peering at his papers, to be honest, I was peering at mine, not a big deal." At the same time, Putin noted that he sees the Biden administration policy as wrong.

Russia-West ties have plunged to their lowest levels since the Cold War era after Putin sent his troops into Ukraine in February 2022. "I believe that the position of the current administration is badly flawed and wrong, and I have told President Biden about that," Putin said.

Putin has claimed that he has sent troops into Ukraine to protect Russian speakers there and to prevent a threat to Russia's security posed by Ukraine's bid to join NATO. Ukraine and its Western allies have denounced Moscow's action as an unprovoked act of aggression.

Putin argued that Moscow was forced to act after Ukraine and its allies refused to fulfill a 2015 agreement to grant more powers to separatist territories in eastern Ukraine, where Moscow-backed separatists launched a rebellion in 2014.



# TWIN TONS PROPEL INDIA



**MAKING A MARK:** Sarfraz Khan dabs the ball during his innings in Rajkot, Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rajkot, Feb 15:** Rohit Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja made classical Test match hundreds while debutant Sarfraz Khan announced his arrival on the big stage with a fluent half-century as India reached 326/5 at stumps on day one of the third Test against England here Thursday.

With India reduced to 33/3 inside the first hour of play, Rohit (131, 196b, 14x4, 3x6) and Jadeja (110 batting, 212b, 9x4, 2x6) steered the ship through choppy waters with a 204-run partnership.

side edge to send back India's No.3 for a nine-ball duck. Patidar was outdone by a ball from Hartley that neither spun sharply nor bounced unevenly but seemed to have slowed off the surface. Patidar was unable to control his shot as the ball simply ballooned towards short

cover for a regulation catch. The pressure on the Indian camp was palpable and the team management opted for a safer route by holding Sarfraz back and promote Jadeja at No.5—a spot where he has batted at in only five out of his 70 Tests yet. What transpired after the first hour calmed all the nerves in the dressing room as senior pros Rohit and Jadeja recorded only the third double-century partnership for India against England in 135 Tests.

After the pair was separated, Sarfraz (62, 66b, 9x4, 1x6) scored the joint fastest fifty by an Indian on debut to push India past the 300-run mark.

With 204 runs for the fourth wicket, Rohit and Jadeja joined the esteemed company of Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly (249 vs England at Leeds in August 2002) and Vijay Hazare and Vijay Manjrekar (222 vs England at Leeds in June 1952) for having put on more than 200 against the Englishmen.

It was also the highest partnership between Rohit and Jadeja in an under-transition Indian side as well as their second in triple figures, having put on 100 for the sixth wicket against New Zealand at Kanpur in September 2016.

As if he had saved his best in the series for this day, Rohit was un-hurried and completely assured in the middle, producing a knock that was in complete contrast of his recent approach.

Rohit brought up his 11th Test ton shortly after play resumed in the final session and looked set for a long haul. With Wood returning for another barrage of short balls amid a packed leg-side field, Rohit's timing

went awry as he looked to work the ball. A top edge settled into the hands of England captain Ben Stokes, who was ultimately rewarded for his out of the box field settings.

**Rohit, Jadeja rescue India with centuries before Sarfraz makes his debut count with superb half century as hosts reach 326/5 at stumps on Day 1 of the third Test against England**



### BRIEF SCORES

**India 326/5** (Rohit Sharma 131, Ravindra Jadeja 110 batting, Sarfraz Khan 62; Mark Wood 3/69) vs England. Match to continue

The timing for his maiden Test outing was perfect for Sarfraz, who unleashed his array of strokes — powerful sweep shots and lofted drives over the infield — to race to a maiden half century, which came off just 48 balls. In fact, Jadeja was 15 runs short of his ton when Sarfraz walked out to bat and when the senior batter reached his triple-figure mark, the youngster had already returned to pavilion.

Jadeja eventually brought up his fourth Test hundred and a second consecutive at his homeground here, but not before Sarfraz was tragically run out following a mix-up with the southpaw.

## Sarfraz, Jurel debut invites tears, hugs, joy



Dhruv Jurel and Sarfraz Khan with their Test caps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rajkot, Feb 15:** Emotions ran high in the Indian team's huddle this morning when domestic batting star Sarfraz Khan and wicketkeeper Dhruv Jurel were handed their Test caps on debut, before the start of play for the third Test against England here Thursday.

A consistent performer on the domestic circuit for Mumbai, Sarfraz has been in contention for national selection for a long time but the 26-year-old has had to wait for his chance to break into the Indian Test side.

Having received his maiden India call-up earlier in the series, Sarfraz was in line for debut ever since India lost the services of KL Rahul for this Test and also given that his Mumbai teammate Shreyas Iyer lost his spot and Virat Kohli is unavailable.

**Coming to the ground for the first time and getting the cap in front of my father. I was six-years-old when he started my cricket (training). It was my dream to play for the Indian team in front of him**

SARFAZ KHAN showing his India cap to his father and coach Naushad Khan who was overwhelmed with emotions and broke down. Sarfraz was also seen wiping off his wife's happy tears at the venue. Former India wicketkeeper-batter Dinesh Karthik shared interesting anecdotes and statistics while making his speech during the cap presentation to Jurel.

## India men suffer narrow loss against China in BATC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Shah Alam (Malaysia), Feb 15:** The Indian men's team felt the absence of star doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty as it suffered a narrow 2-3 loss to China in the Badminton Asia Team Championships (BATC) group tie here Thursday.

21 to Chinese combination of Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi, ranked 17 places above them. Lakshya Sen then thrashed Lei Lan Xi 21-11, 21-16 in 40 minutes to again bring India back into the lead but national champions Suraj Goala and Pruthvi Krishnamurthy Roy lost 13-21, 9-21 to Ren Xiang Yu and Xie Hao Nan in second doubles as the scoreboard read 2-2.

## India drop 15 spots to 117th in FIFA rankings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 15:** The Indian football team Thursday dropped 15 places to 117th in the FIFA rankings, the worst in seven years, after the recent debacle in the AFC Asian Cup, where they lost all their three group matches.

## India go down fighting against Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** Skipper Harmanpreet Singh's brace went in vain as the Indian men's hockey team conceded three goals in the final quarter to lose 4-6 to Australia in a FIH Pro League match here Thursday. India will next play Ireland here Friday.



Australia and it took a save from Pathak to deny Welch from a penalty corner. In the 12th minute, India secured their first penalty corner and Harmanpreet made no mistake, firing in with a rocket flick which Australia goalkeeper Andrew Charter had no answer to.

Sukhjeet's feed was saved by Charter. The hosts continued their attacking game and secured their second penalty corner soon but it was wasted. Sukhjeet levelled the scores for India in the 18th minute, putting in a wobbly ball from Abhishek. Two minutes later, Harmanpreet gave India the lead converting another penalty corner and then a minute from half-time Mandeep scored with a bullet shot from top of the D after

receiving a defence splitting 45 degree ball from his skipper. Trailing by two goals, Australia pressed hard after the change of ends and earned a couple of penalty corners and from one such chance, Zalewski deflected in Goovers flick. The fourth and final quarter completely belonged to Australia as they pumped in three more goals through Sharp, Anderson and Welch to pocket three points from the game.



HS PRANNOY

## BAYERN STUNNED AT LAZIO, PSG WIN IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Rome, Feb 15:** High and wide, headers and half-volleys, free-kicks and more. No matter what Bayern Munich tried, the German club simply couldn't find the goal. None of Bayern's 16 shots were on target Wednesday in a 1-0 loss at Lazio in the first leg of the Champions League's round of 16.

converted a penalty kick when Bayern was reduced to 10 men midway through the second half after the German club failed to capitalize on a series of chances. Harry Kane was set up by Thomas Muller directly in front of the goal seven minutes in but missed high with a half-volley. Together with the 0-3 defeat at Bayer Leverkusen, the result puts pressure on Bayern and coach Thomas Tuchel ahead of the return leg March 5.



quarterfinals or better in 11 of their last 12 Champions League campaigns — the exception being a last-16 elimination by Liverpool

five years ago. Bayern defender Dayot Upamecano was sent off for a foul on Gustav Isaksen and Immobile sent goalkeeper Manuel Neuer the wrong way with the ensuing spot kick.

**Mbappe on target** Kylian Mbappe scored yet again in the Champions League and emerging winger Bradley Barcola grabbed his first goal in the competition as Paris Saint-Germain beat Real Sociedad 2-0 in the first leg of the round of 16.