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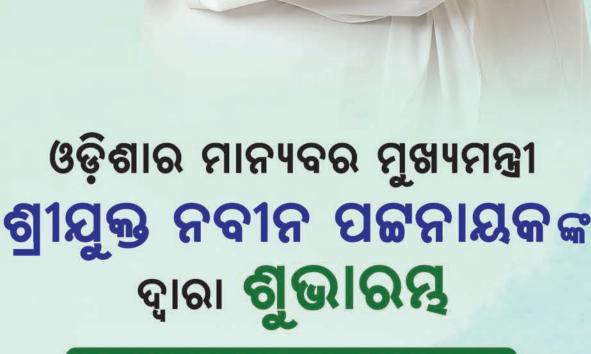


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- ଗ୍ରାମାଞ୍ଚଳରୁ ସହରାଞ୍ଚଳକୁ ସୁନିଷ୍ଟିତ ବସ୍ ସଂଯୋଗ
 - ସୁଲଭ ଓ ନିର୍ଭରଯୋଗ୍ୟ ସେବା
- ମହିଳା, ଛାତ୍ରଛାତ୍ରୀ ଏବଂ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟକୁ ସଶକ୍ତ କରିବା
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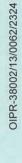
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ବାଶିଳ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବହନ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

DSPI -660



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 said, "I'd go and see a Chris Nolan Bond movie.

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



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

Talking about the hobby,

demic, I took a short-term

class in Chandigarh to

learn watercolour paint-

ing. Although I got busy

with my work, the in-

terest to learn some-

thing new never faded

away. I paint in the mid-

dle of my busy sched-

ule. It comes as a

Recalling early in-

"In school, paint-

ing provided me

with a liberating

escape. Unlike

other subjects

with strict curricu-

lums and right or

wrong answers, draw-

ing had no such re-

strictions. It became

my favourite activity,

offering a stress-free

outlet for expression

and creativity, seam-

lessly integrating

into my life over

menting with

colours and it re-

flects in my

wardrobe. I have re-

alised 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

AGENCIES

"I love experi-

time!

fluences she says,

respite.

she says, "During the pan



accuracy • reliability • trust

Today in the morning you will choose to approach work audaciously. You will churn out fancy ideas. However, Ganesha says, by noon, you will feel disoriented again. Ganesha urges you to take a break

TAURUS

This day, you are likely to be in a mood to extend your business activities, launch new venture. Ganesha 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 meticu lously, in detail. Post noon you are likely to get indisposed.

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 Ganesha.

CANCER

You get full co-operation of Dame Luck, says Ganesha. 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. Hones of foreign travel may blossom. Today you

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 Ganesha

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

LIBRA

Ganesha 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 Ganesha, or your plans may go haywire. The day does not seem promis ing 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 Ganesha 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-mem bers will shower praises on you. But, all that glitters is not gold, warns Ganesha.

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.



with the filmmaker several times over the years, He's a huge Bond fan. He loves the movies."

deadline.com.

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 block-buster *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

DP now Hilton's brand ambassador

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

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

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

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 am-

memories with Hilton!

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

AGENCIES

PEANUTS

SNOOPY, I HAVE A PROBLEM...

MY DAD IS WILLING TO

SEND ME TO A PRIVATE

SCHOOL, BUT THEY ALL

COST FOUR OR FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS

I CAN'T ASK HIM

TO SPEND THAT MUCH

MONEY ON ME... WHAT

SHOULD I DO?

last seen in Merry Christmas and is still basking in the praise for her portrayal of Maria, recently expressed her displeasure with the nick-name Kat in an old video which has surfaced on the internet.

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 Elaborating further, Katrina added that

tions. This video resurfaced on the microblogging site Reddit and has gone viral on the platform in Katrina was," while another wrote, "So cute!

Katrina dislikes being called 'Kat' Mumbai: Actress Katrina Kaif, was

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 acno time. Taking to the comments section, one person wrote, "Prime

In the video, she was asked about her pre-ferred nickname and the *Welcome* actress

Love when she is candid and has her guard down.' On the work has Jee Le Zaraa in the pipeline.

"ACE OBEDIENCE

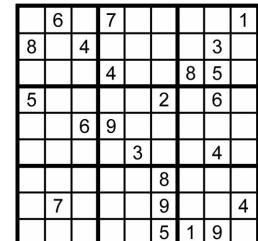
SCHOOL ... COMPLETE TRAINING ... TWENTY-FIVE

DOLLARS"

CROSSWORD

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.

SUDOKU

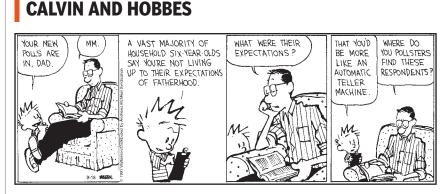


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWOR

MAPSEPIDEMIC

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



BREVITY



Across

1 Denial 5 Pay out

8 Type of neurosis

FUN

DÜST

- 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

- 1 Settle a loan 2 Complete

Copyright ©2024 PuzzleJunction.com

effective (5-3-5)

23 Crude but

25 Impertinent

surprised

26 Overly

Down

- success (6,7)
- 3 Wiring diagram
- 4 Optical devices 5 Bottom line
- 21 Excited, with "up"

6 Over-the-top

9 Singleton

13 Listen in

16 Greek public

vegetable

19 Hospital unit

squares

17 Root

7 Duck hunter's

- 24 Stable diet
- CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

SUDOKU

6



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

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BHUBANESWAR | FRIDAY FEBRUARY 16 2024

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 our raids at multiple locations linked to Bhadrak's Bhandaripokhari MLA and former minister Prafulla Samal in Bhuhaneswar 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.



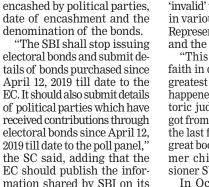
Bad news! Supreme Court has done a

MARKET WATCH VARIATION INDEX SENSEX **72050.38** 227.55 21910.80 70.80 ₹0.01 **1** ₹0.26 EURO **1** ₹145 GOLD ₹61.588 **1** ₹1016 SILVER ₹71,168

WEATHER

/ V I L /		
	BBSR	CTC
/lax Temp	33.0℃	32.5°C
/lin Temp	20.9°C	19.5°C
lumidity	96%	84%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
ORECAST		144
RY WEATHER		The second

VERY LIKELY



Punjab-Haryana Shambhu border, in Patiala, Thursday (Report on P7)

mation shared by SBI on its official website by March 13. The bench, also compris-

New Delhi, Feb 15: In a major

blow to the Union govern-

ment, the Supreme Court

Thursday annulled the elec-

toral bonds scheme, intro-

duced January 2, 2018 as an al-

ternative to cash donations

for political funding, saying it

violates the Constitutional

right to freedom of speech

and expression as well as the

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

right to information.



POURING SUPPORT: Members of various organisations block railway tracks at Rajpura as they stage 'rail roko' protest in support of farmers agitating at

ing 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 privacv 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 Java 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 incornorated 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 vear reserved its verdict in MORE P7



We respect the government. headed by PM Narendra Modi. has made efforts to reform

election funding, and the introduction of electoral bonds was a part of

RAVI SHANKAR EX-LAW MINISTER

such measures



SC decision. which has struck down this 'black money

conversion⁵ scheme of the Modi government, calling it

MALLIKARJUN

unconstitutional

Naveen inaugurates food park in Khurda

CM ALSO LAYS STONE FOR INDUSTRIAL PARK

PNN & AGENCIES

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 thou-

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.

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.

sands of youths of the state,' Patnaik said.

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

Gadkari launches ₹6,600cr projects **SC** scraps electoral bonds

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 sixlane 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

nion Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw 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 riod. The ministry has allovarious 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 pecated nearly ₹1.50 lakh-crore for highway development in Odisha," he added.

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra, MPs, MLAs and officials were present during the inauguration and the foundation stone laying ceremony



+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



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



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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

for ambulance crew

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The

state government Thursday an-

nounced a special allowance of

₹5,000 per month for ambulance

drivers and emergency medical

technicians, along with ₹3,000

per month for helpers, starting

The 108 ambulance crew mem-

bers will receive the monthly spe-

cial allowance in addition to their

The decision comes after am-

bulance crew members, during

the district visits of 5T and Nabin

Odisha chairman Kartik

Pandian, had submitted repre-

sentations requesting an in-

ficult working hours and emer-

gency 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'

father no more

Cuttack: Actor and Kendrapara MP

Anubhav Mohanty's father Abhay

Mohanty passed away Thursday at

his residence in Cuttack. Anubhav's

of 74. Abhay had

been suffering from

kidney disease for a

long time. He was

undergoing dialysis.

of Abhav's death.

On receiving the news

father breathed his last at the age

Taking into account their dif-

crease in remuneration

existing basic salary

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 providing ₹5 lakh from Chief Minister's Relief Fund to the family of organ

 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

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.



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

AMA BUS STAND YOJANA

CM inaugurates 20 bus stands in 13 dists

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 socioeconomic 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. Kanhia 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

in Minigolf team Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: Six stu-

SOA students, faculty

dents 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

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,



partment 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



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

bank and insurance deposits from Mohapatra's possession (worth ₹3.90 crore), 520 gm gold ornaments, 318 gm silver ornaments along with ₹1,16,720 cash, he added. The current market value of immovable property will be around ₹14.5 crore while other assets including deposits, gold and silver ornaments and household articles is estimated to be ₹4.5 crore. The total current value of Mohapatra's assets is about ₹19 crore, according to vig-

ilance officials. Mohapatra had joined service in Transport department as a mechanical engineer in 1991. He was promoted to the rank of iunior motor vehicle inspector (MVI) in 2014 and worked in Balasore, Koraput, Bargarh and Gajpati districts.

VAISHNAW FILES NOMINATION

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: A day (BJP) nominated Ashwini Vaishnaw 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, Vaishnaw 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, Vaishnaw, 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 Patnaikled BJD Wednesday announced its unconditional support to Vaishnaw's candidature, none from the regional party was present when Vaishnaw filed his nomination papers. However, when Vaishnaw had filed his papers for the 2019 Rajya Sabha bypoll, BJD leaders Sasmit Patra and Amar Patnaik were present.





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 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 statelevel 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.

relatives came and reached

to the departed soul.

Anubhay's residence in Nandisahi

and paid their last respects. Several

local dignitaries also offered tributes

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.



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

BOOKING STATIONS OR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT

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

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



POST NEWS NETWORK

Nandapur, Feb 15: In an embarrassment for the state government, people in four villages bordering Andhra Pradesh, fed up with incessant drinking water woes, have urged the neighbouring state to intervene and supply them with drinking water.

Reports said Thursday that the dwellers of Golur, Sariapali, Mali Bhimadal and Gangaguda villages under Nandapur block of Koraput district are suffering due to lack of drinking water facilities in their respective villages. They are forced to collect water for day-to-day use by digging up pits near the hills and on

their farmlands. The border residents have alleged that despite apprising the panchavat representatives, block officials and the authorities of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) department about their problem, their pleas are yet to be addressed. With summer season drawing near,

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 gov-

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

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.



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 cargoladen 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 Pattanavak 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.

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.



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

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 a Nalikumpha 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 po-

lice 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 healthcare facilities.

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.

Woman dies after coming 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 Kharinipada 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 me-

diapersons 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

in an ambulance to a cremation ground in Chikiti.

On being informed, Chikiti outpost police detained the ambulance and handed it over to Baidynathpur police. Police registered a case of unnatural death over a complaint filed by the killer husband himself. However, a postmortem of the body blew the lid on the murder mystery as the report claimed that Subhadra, eight months pregnant at the time of

her murder, was strangulated. Police arrested Prafulla and produced him in court. He remained in jail for four years and was later released on bail.

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.



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

SRI AUROBINDO



Tobias Bunde &

Sophie Eisentraut

Key actors in the

autocracies, and

community, powerful

the so-called Global

South have all become

dissatisfied with what

unequal distribution of

the gains from global

cooperation

they perceive as an

transatlantic

A Lose-Lose World

f the international community was ever on track toward a more peaceful and just global order, it was during the early post-Cold War lacktriangle 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 be-

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 atrole on the global stage.

tempting to halt China's rise and prevent it from assuming its proper 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

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

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.

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 succe 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 selffulfilling 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. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER



Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the

To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1923: The burial chamber of Pharoh 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
- 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.



MUCH MORE THAN SPEED



Shivaji Sarkar

OVERALL LOSSES OF METROS IN ALL SECTIONS ARE BEING OVERLOOKED

ailways 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 corri dors. 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.

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



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

fare affecting their mobility. The Delhi-Meerut rapid transit metro runs parallel to Northern Railway suburbancum-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 denving 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

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

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.

SPECTRUM GLOBAL SOUTH

Addressing forced displacement



SN Tripathy

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

TO THE EDITOR

are most welcome to contribute letters

postal address/email ID. They may also

and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

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columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are

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 middleincome 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 Horn of Africa. 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 Svria, 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

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.

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.

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



RAJASTHAN TWO STATES





FRIDAY | FEBRUARY 16 | 2024 | BHUBANESWAR

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 dif ference 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, exs-Assembly Speaker C.P. Joshi, senior leaders Govind Singh Dotasra, Harish Chaudhary, Sachin Pilot, Ashok Chandna, Bhanwar Jitendra Singh, Raghuveer Meena, Ramlal 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 highcommand 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','

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

First gold mine auction in Raj soon

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

preparing momos without gar-

lic. We have been forced to in-

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 mint ing, 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

Kota (Rajasthan), Feb 15: A teenager in Rajasthan's Kota has built an all-purpose robot to help farmers assess soil and crop health, their water needs, and de-

Aryan Singh, 17, built the AgRobot at his school's Atal Tinkering Lab, a central government initiative to help school children hone their building skills.

The son of a farmer, Aryan spent four years building the robot which won him the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar under science and technology category.

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.

"I belong to a farming family, grew up watching my grandparents and parents working in the field. While studying in Class 10, I conceived the idea of developing a multi-task device and later developed a prototype that can reduce farmers' labour in the field," Aryan said.

The boy sent his proposal to NITI Ayog's Atal Innovation Mission and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who is an MP from Rajasthan, as well as, then Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar, who all praised his device.

"The AgRobot is able to perform multiple tasks like cutting, irrigation, loading, soil-tracking etc," Aryan said, adding, he has received over 15 national and international awards and

appreciation for his innovation. Though building the prototype cost him ₹ 50,000, "it will cost less when manufactured in

large numbers," he said. The boy, as well as his mentor at SR Public School in Kota, is hopeful that AgRobot would hit the market within a year. The initial funding for the robot came from iStart, a flagship initiative



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." Arvan 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 andguard the field and there are several others," Soni, a physics lecturer, said.

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

5 girl cadets from UP

Sainik School get

selected to NDA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Academy (NDA).

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

These five cadets will com-

mence their training shortly.

Apart from these girl cadets, an

equal number of male cadets

too cleared the exam but the

The girl cadets who have

been selected include Hansi

Malik, Priyanka, Sanskrti

Sharma, Vaishnavi Tripathi

and Jyotsna Yadav. The train-

ing of these five girl cadets --

Hansi Malik, Priyanka,

Sanskrti Sharma, Vaishnavi

Tripathi and Jyotsna Yadav,

selected by SSB from UP Sainik

School Lucknow, will com-

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 thor-

ough understanding of the se-

lection mechanism," he said.

five were bagged by girl cadets

of UP Sainik School, comprising

an impressive 18.5 per cent of

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.

the total selection.

Of the 27 female seats in NDA,

mence shortly.

spotlight was on girl cadets.

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

crease the prices but our customers are not vet 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-veghas forced us to choose between raising prices or compromising on quality, both detrimental to our business. Households are hit too, having

etarian dishes and the price hike

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 Premlata 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.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES Office of the Superintending Engineer,

'e' Procurement Notice No- 05/2023-24

BID IDENTIFICATION NO- BID 05 (01 to 41) /2023-24 (ON-LINE) **DATED 09.02.2024** Improvement to Water Course

No. of works

Class of Contractor

Bid identification No

Estimate cost

Period of completion

Date of opening of Bid

10. Date of Lottery

Date and time of availability

of bid documents in the portal 8. Last date/ time for receipt of

bids in the portal

Dt. 26.02.2024 upto 5.00 PM

Dt. 27.02.2024 at 11.00 AM 01.03.2024 1. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be

Canal Structures

"D" & "C" & "B"

As per DTCN.

41 (Forty One) Nos.

BID 05 (01 to 41) /2023-24

6.78 Lakhs to 41.56 Lakhs

Dt.16.02.2024 at 11.00 AM to

Dt. 26.02.2024 upto 5.00 PM

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



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

10 Nos.

No. of Works

Class of Contractor

Bid Identification No. **Estimated Cost**

Period of Completion Date & Time of availability of bid documents in the portal

bids in the portal

Last date/time for receipt of Date of Opening of Bid

10. Name of the Officer inviting

On Date 27.02.2024 (11.00 AM onwards in the Office of the undersigned)

As mentioned in Col. No.4 of NIT

As per mentioned in Col.No.7 of NIT From 16.02.2024 (10.00 AM) to

EE, TID, SNP-19/2023-24

From Rs.31.05 lakhs to

26.02.2024 (05.30 PM) In portal - 26.02.2024 from 10.00

A.M. upto 05.30 P.M.

Rs.41.94 Lakhs

Executive Engineer, Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur (Dist.Subarnapur)

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal https://

OIPR-32362/11/0021/2324

tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sd./- Executive Engineer Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur

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-

investment of ₹1,108.18 crore

tourism wave.

- 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 Avodhva 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

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

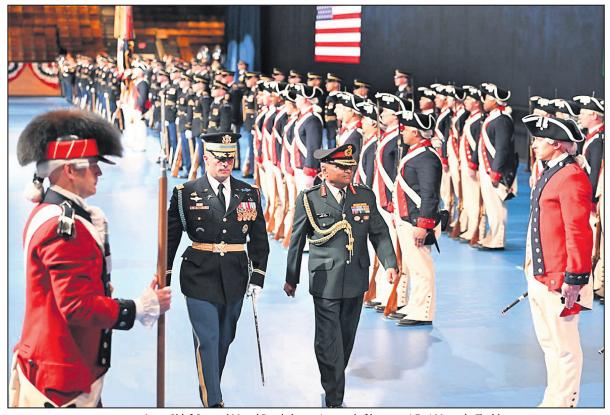
"Apart from being the birthplace of Ram and Krishna and the abode of Shiva, Uttar Pradesh is also the land of Buddha's enlightenment. Then, there are 20-plus world-famous destinations closely linked to Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism, Sikhism and Christianity. Together these facts make the state a mustvisit 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.

Barpali Irrigation Division, Barpali E-mail Id - ee.barpali.canal@gmail.com



PHOTO POST



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

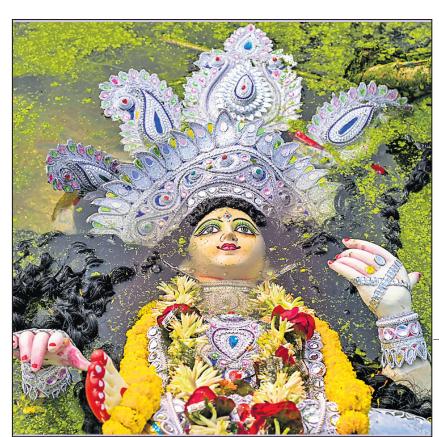


A competitor takes part in the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Race at the City of London's Leadenhall Market

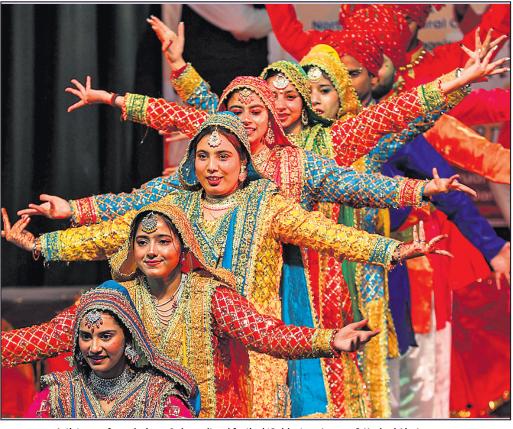
REUTERS



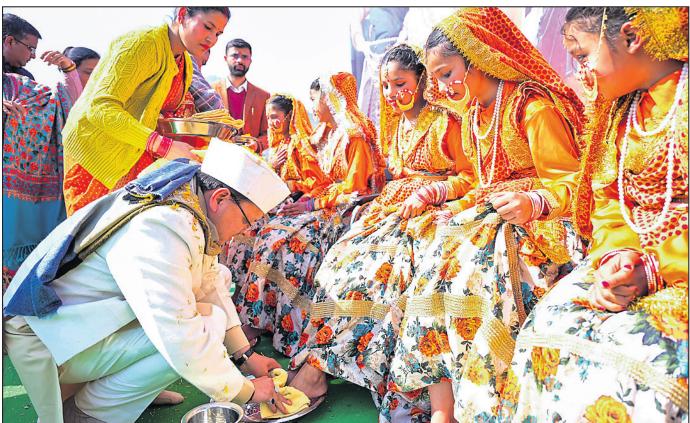
Vehicles are scattered during floods after heavy rains in Antalya, southern Turkey



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



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



 $\label{thm:continuous} \textbf{Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the ``Nanda-Gaura Mahotsav', at Gauchar in Chamoli district \textit{Continuous Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the ``Nanda-Gaura Mahotsav', at Gauchar in Chamoli district \textit{Continuous Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the ``Nanda-Gaura Mahotsav', at Gauchar in Chamoli district \textit{Continuous Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the ``Nanda-Gaura Mahotsav', at Gauchar in Chamoli district \textit{Continuous Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the ``Nanda-Gaura Mahotsav', at Gauchar in Chamoli district \textit{Continuous Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the ``Nanda-Gaura Mahotsav', at Gauchar in Chamoli district \textit{Continuous Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the ``Nanda-Gaura Mahotsav', at Gauchar in Chamoli district \textit{Continuous Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the ``Nanda-Gaura Mahotsav', at Gauchar in Chamoli district \textit{Continuous Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the ``Nanda-Gaura Mahotsav', at Chamoli district \textit{Continuous Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the ``Nanda-Gaura Mahotsav', at Chamoli during$



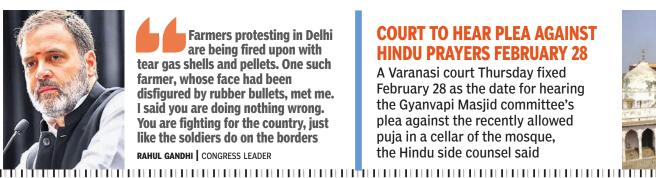
Children dressed as Momotxorros, half bull, half man figures wrapped in blood-spattered sheepskins, take part in carnival celebrations in Alsasua, northern Spain

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

emocracy 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 BR 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

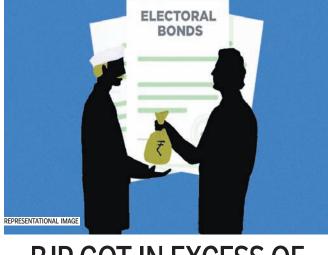
NGO Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), one of the petitioners in the electoral bond case, Thursday termed the decision to strike down the scheme a big boost to democracy but also noted that the infirmities which existed in the electoral system pre-2017 still have to be worked on. Shivani Kapoor, 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.
- lead petitioner, moves SC challenging the
- Oct 03, 2017: SC issues notices to Centre and EC on PIL filed by the NGO.
- Electoral Bond Scheme.
- sale days from 70 to 85 in a year where any assem-bly election may be scheduled.
- ct 16, <mark>2023</mark> : SC bench eaded by CJI DY Chandrachud refers pleas against the scheme to a five-judge Constitution bench.
- judge Constitution
- <mark>ov 2, 2023</mark> : SC eserves verdict.
- unanimous judgement Constitutional right to





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

lectoral 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

BJP REPLACED CONGRESS AS THE fiscal since the introduction of COUNTRY'S RICHEST PARTY the now-an-SINCE THE LAST YEAR OF UPA-I nulled electoral bond IT HAD TOTAL INCOME OF ₹673.8 scheme in **CRORE IN FISCAL YEAR 2013-14,**

2018, of

which the THE CONGRESS ruling BJP SINCE THEN, BJP'S INCOME HAS got nearly 55 MOSTLY BEEN RISING WHILE TH per cent or **CONGRESS HAS SEEN ITS** ₹6,565 crore, ORTUNES DECLINE EXCEP according to the FOR A FEW YEARS IN data available **BETWEEN**

Commission and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). While the party-wise data for the current fiscal 2023-24 would be available later after they file annual audit reports for the year, ADR put the collective amount of funds generated through sale of electoral bonds between March 2018 and January 2024 at ₹16,518.11 crore.

with Election

On an average, these bonds are estimated to account for over half of total contributions received by the parties, though it is more than 90 per cent in case of some regional parties that are in power in their states. In case of the BJP as well, electoral

leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal and

Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh

began their march to the

national capital Tuesday, but

were stopped by security

personnel at the Shambhu and

Khanauri border points between

The protesting farmers have

Earlier, the farmer leaders

had said they would not make

any fresh attempt to move to-

wards 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.

on railway tracks at many places

in Punjab over the Haryana

Police's action against the "Delhi

Chalo" protesters.

Separately, farmers squatted

been camping at the border

Delhi and Haryana.

bonds account for more than half of its overall income.

In the year 2018-19, the first full fiscal after introduction of electoral bonds, BJP's income had more than doubled to ₹2,410 crore (from ₹1,027 crore), while that of the Congress also rose sharply from ₹199 crore to

During the last fiscal 2022-23, BJP's total income stood at ₹2,360 crore, of which nearly ₹1,300 crore came through electoral AS AGAINST ₹598 CRORE OF bonds. In the same year, the Congress saw its total income fall to ₹452 crore, of which ₹171 crore came through electoral

> 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"

Ajit Pawar faction

is real NCP, says

Maha Speaker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mob attempts to storm Churachandpur **SP office in Manipur**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Feb 15: A mob attempted to storm the Churachandpur SP office in Manipur Thursday night, hours after a head constable of the district police was suspended after he was allegedly seen with armed men in a video grab, an official said.

Taking to X, Manipur Police said, "A mob numbering approximately 300-400 attempted to storm the office of SP CCP today, pelting stone, etc. The SF (security forces) including RAF is responding appropriately by firing tear gas shell to control the situation. Things are under watch."

Head constable Siamlalpaul was kept "under suspension with immediate effect until further orders" by Churachandpur SP Shivanand Surve after a video of him with "armed men" and "sitting together with village volunteers" went viral on social media.

"A departmental inquiry is being contemplated against Siamlalpaul of Churachandpur district police, as a clip has gone viral on social media showing him making a video with armed men February 14," the order said. Siamlalpaul has been asked not to "leave the station without prior permission" and "his pay and allowances have been restricted to subsistence allowance admissible as per the rules", it said.

Manipur has been seeing gunfights between rival armed groups - who call themselves "village defence volunteers" amid the ethnic tensions between the hill-majority Kuki-Zo tribes and the valley-majority Meiteis.

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



OPPOSITION PARTIES HAIL VERDICT

✓ Mallikarjun Kharge hoping the Modi government will stop resorting to such "mischievous"

eaders of several Opposition parties Thursday hailed the Supreme Court verdict. The

ideas" in future. The BJP, however, alleged that the Opposition parties are politicising the issue

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,

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

important step in ensuring transparency in election funding. The ruling DMK and the Opposition

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

Congress said it will reinforce the power of votes over notes, with party president

as they do not have any alternative to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Kharge

"Another proof of Narendra Modi's corrupt policies is in front of you. The BJP had made

bonds as unconstitutional. The Aam Aadmi Party welcomed the decision saying it is an

AIADMK in Tamil Nadu too hailed the verdict, with Chief Minister M K Stalin saying it has

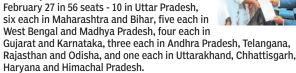
in Andhra Pradesh, asking it to reveal details of funds it allegedly received through this

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



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

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.

president was in the ED custody. Soren was arrested by the ED

FARMERS' 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

Committee general secretary two previous rounds of dialogue Sarwan Singh Pandher. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha February 8 and 12 remained in-(Non-Political) and the Kisan conclusive. Among the farmer leaders taking part in the meet-Mazdoor Morcha have given a ing are SKM (Non-Political) "Delhi Chalo" call to press the BJP-led Centre to accept their demands. Farmers from Punjab

BHARAT BANDH: POLICE ISSUE TRAFFIC ADVISORY

Noida: The Gautam Buddh 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 Samyukta 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.

Mumbai, Feb 15: Maharashtra

Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar Thursday held that the NCP faction led by deputy Chief Minister Aiit 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 \(\lambda\) members by threatening to disqualify them, he said.

international



European allies are investing more in defence and NATO has called for that for many, many years JENS STOLTENBERG | NATO

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





The genocide convention was following World War II and its intention 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

We want peace and stability through adherence to international resolutions



LEBANESE PM



LI QIANG | CHINESE PREMIER

SHORT **TAKES**

Motel owner shot dead in US

Washington: A 76-year-old Indian-origin motel owner was shot dead by a customer in the US state of Alabama following an altercation over a room, the latest in a string of tragedies to shock the community in the country. Pravin Raojibhai Patel, who owned Hillcrest Motel in Sheffield, was shot dead last week. According to Sheffield Police Chief Ricky Terry, William Jeremy Moore, 34, was arrested for the shooting death of Patel on February 8, WAFF TV, a television station in Huntsville, reported.

Nine arrested in Kathmandu

Kathmandu: Nine people -another from Nepal -- have been arrested on the charges of holding 11 Indian nationals hostage and extorting money on the pretext of sending them to the US via Mexico. The Indian nationals, who were held hostage for a month, were rescued on Wednesday by the Kathmandu Police from Ratopul area. Addressing a press conference, Bhupendra Khatrai, SSP, District Police Range, Kathmandu, said: "Of the 11 hostages, eight were from Punjab and three from Haryana.'

6 killed in strike on Russia's Belgorod

Kyiv (Ukraine): A missile strike on the Russian city of Belgorod near the Ukraine border Thursday killed six people, including a child, and injured 18 others, a Russian official said. It was the latest in exchanges of long-range missile and rocket fire in Russia's war on Ukraine. Hours earlier, Russia fired two dozen cruise and ballistic missiles at a broad area of Ukraine, hitting multiple regions after a midnight strike in Ukraine's northeast killed five people in an apartment building, authorities said. Five of the 18 people injured in Belgorod, a city of around 340,000 people, were children, regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Telegram. Tass news agency reported that 15 people were hospitalised.

Turkey launches rescue mission

Ankara (Turkey): Turkey launched a search and rescue mission after a cargo ship with six crew members on board sank Thursday in the Turkish inland Sea of Marmara, off Istanbul, amid high waves, officials said.

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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.

Health authorities in the Hamas-run Palestinian enclave said Israel had forced out displaced people and families of medical staff sheltering in Nasser Hospital. Some 2.000 Palestinians arrived in the southern border city of Rafah overnight while others pushed north to Deir Al-

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-Insaaf (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 vet 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.

ISRAEL SAYS RAID ON NASSER HOSPITAL 'PRECISE AND

HAMAS DENIES HIDING HOSTAGES, FIGHTERS AT THE HOSPITAL

DEATH TOLL IN GAZA RISES TO 28,663, GAZA HEALTH

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 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 com-

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 tar geting 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 pur poses, 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

3 detained after mass shooting

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

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

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 rapidfire 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



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 investiga tion" 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.



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 fi nancial 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 restau-

"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 Havdon'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 vear.

'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 nare 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 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 buyerseller 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

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

Speaking in an interview with a correspondent from Russian state television, Putin declared that he will work with any US leader who is elected, but noted that he would prefer Biden's victory when asked who would be a better choice from the point of view of Russia.

"Biden, he's more experienced, more predictable, he's a politician of the old formation," Putin said. "But we will work with any US leader whom the American people trust." Putin's comments were his first about the upcoming US presidential election, likely to pit Biden against Trump, and come as tensions between Republicans and Democrats are high over Biden's attempts to send more military aid to Kyiv.

However, Trump's recent statements calling into question US funding for Ukraine and saying



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 peeking at his papers, to be honest, I was peeking at mine, not a big deal."At the same time. Putin noted that he sees the Biden administration policy as wrong.

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.

Russia-West ties have plunged

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 unpro-

voked 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.

business



As somebody who has spent the last 25 years thinking about growth in one form or another in virtually every corner of the world, let me just say that the major economy with the highest potential growth rate is India MICHAEL SPENCE | NOBEL LAUREATE

FM RELEASES SOUVENIR COINS

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Thursday released three souvenir coins, including the one based on the theme of Ram Lalla and Ram Janmabhoomi Temple, Ayodhya. At the 19th foundation ceremony of state-owned Security Printing & Minting Corporation of India, Sitharaman also released bi-metallic clad souvenir coin on Enlightenment of Lord Buddha and another on Greater one-horned Rhino





We remain vigilant to through the last mile of disinflation as it is often the most difficult part of the

journey. We firmly recognise that stable and low inflation will provide the necessary bedrock for sustainable economic growth

SHAKTIKANTA DAS GOVERNOR, RBI

Measures like the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism taken by developed nations to combat climate change are unfair towards developing economies

V ANANTHA NAGESWARAN

CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISER

Being a large buyer, there is opportunity to do gold refining. India imports about 250

tonne for refining. I think, there is a case to look at whether refining can be commenced in the GIFT city as well

K RAJARAMAN | CHAIRPERSON, IFSCA

SHORT **TAKES**

Vedanta's parent sells \$209mn stake

Bangalore: Vedanta Resources, the parent of Vedanta Ltd has sold a stake worth more than ₹17.37 billion (\$209 million) in the Indian miner, exchange data showed Thursday, Finsider International, part of billionaire Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta Resources, sold more than 65.5 million Vedanta Ltd shares at ₹265.14 each, the data showed. That is a 5.2% discount to Vedanta Ltd's closing price Wednesday. The stock ended 4.2% lower at ₹267.95 Thursday. UK-based Vedanta Resources held a 63.72% stake in Vedanta Ltd through the six subsidiaries as of December 31, 2023, per stock exchange data.

Cisco to sack 4K

Washington: Cisco Systems global workforce, or more than 4,000 jobs, and lowered its annual revenue target as the company navigates a tough economy that has led to thousands of layoffs by tech firms this year. Shares of the networking equipment maker fell more than 5% in extended trading Wednesday, after Cisco cut the forecast to \$51.5 billion to \$52.5 billion from \$53.8 billion to \$55 billion, it projected earlier, "We also continue to see weak demand with our telco and cable service provider customers," CEO Charles Robbins said in a conference call.

ABFRL sees net loss

New Delhi: Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd has reported a consolidated net loss of ₹107.60 crore for the third guarter ended December 2023. The company had posted a net profit of ₹11.21 crore during the October-December quarter a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd (ABFRL). Its revenue from operations was at ₹4.166.71 during the guarter under review. In the year-ago period, the company's revenue from operations stood at ₹3,588.80 crore.

NCI declines 4.75%

New Delhi: Indicating sufficient coal availability in the market, the National Coal Index (NCI) declined 4.75 per cent in December. The NCI was at 155.44 points in December 2022, the coal ministry said in a statement Thursday. This decline shows a strong supply of coal in the market, with sufficient availability to meet the rising demand. NCI is a price index that combines coal prices from all sales channels, including auction and import prices.

BRITAIN ECONOMY PLUNGES INTO RECESSION

Britain's economy has been stagnating for nearly two years

REUTERS

London, Feb 15: Britain's economy fell into a recession in the second half of 2023, a tough backdrop ahead of this year's expected election for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak who has promised to boost growth.

Gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 0.3% in the three months to December, having shrunk by 0.1% between July and September, official data showed.

Sterling weakened against the dollar and the euro. Investors added to their bets on the Bank of England (BoE) cutting interest rates this year and businesses called for more help from the government in a budget plan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

according to sources.

Mumbai, Feb 15: The Reserve

Bank Thursday asked card net-

work Visa to stop making pay-

ments through intermediaries to

entities which do not accept card

payments, saying a large amount

of funds are involved in the ac-

tivity without legal sanction,

only one card network has op-

erationalised this arrangement

in the country so far, the Reserve

Bank of India (RBI) said without

naming Visa. However, sources

fered any comments, but indi-

cated it may come with one later.

matter is under detailed exam-

ination, the card network has

been advised to keep all such

arrangements under abeyance,

RBI that a card network had an

arrangement that enables busi-

nesses to make card payments

through certain intermediaries.

to entities that do not accept

card payments," the central bank

RBI said the intermediary ac-

cepts card payments from cor-

porates for their commercial

Under this arrangement, the

"It has come to the notice of

till further orders.

said in a statement.

The central bank said as the

Visa did not immediately of-

said the card network is Visa.

As per information available,

RBI urges Visa to stop

unauthorised route for

commercial payments

The move is the latest clampdown by the financial

regulator in the fast-changing payment sector

due March 6.

Thursday's data means Britain joins Japan among the Group of Seven advanced economies in a recession, although it is likely to be short-lived and shallow by historical standards. Canada has yet to report GDP data for the fourth quarter.

Britain's economy stands just 1% higher than its level of late 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic struck - with only Germany among G7 countries faring worse.

British households are due to see their first drop in living standards between one national election and the next since the Second World War, analysts have said.

Ruth Gregory, deputy chief UK economist at Capital Economics, said the GDP figures had more political significance than economic, with voters due to elect lawmakers in two constituencies Thursday.

payments and then remits the

funds via IMPS/RTGS/NEFT to

On closer scrutiny, the RBI

non-card accepting recipients.

found that the arrangement qual-

ified as a payment system and

under the provisions of Payment

and Settlement Systems (PSS)

Act, 2007, such payment system

requires authorization, which

has not been obtained in the in-

stant case. "The activity was,

therefore, without legal sanc-

the arrangement has raised con-

cerns as the intermediary in the

arrangement pooled large

amount of funds into an account

which is not a designated ac-

this arrangement did not com-

ply with the originator and ben-

eficiary information require-

ments, as stipulated under Master

Direction on KYC issued by the

The central bank also clari-

fied that it has not placed any re-

striction with respect to normal

usage of business credit cards.

Reserve Bank," the RBI said.

"Transactions processed under

count under PSS Act

The central bank further said

tion," RBI said.



contracts 0.3% in Q4 2023, sealing

Economic output stands 1% higher than pre-Covid level

There were signs the British economy is turning a corner

and we must stick to the plan - cutting taxes on work and business to build a stronger economy

JEREMY HUNT | FINANCE MINISTER

"The news that the UK slipped into technical recession in 2023 will be a blow for the prime minister on a day when he faces the prospect of losing two by-elections," Gregory said.

'The prime minister can no longer credibly claim that his plan is working or that he has turned the corner on more than 14 years of economic decline under the Conservatives," Rachel Reeves, Opposition Labour's top economy official, said.

Media reports said Hunt was seeking to cut billions of pounds from public spending plans to fund pre-election tax cuts in his GDP per person has not grown since early 2022, representing the longest such unbroken run since records began in 1955

budget, if penned in by tight fi-

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the economy grew 0.1% across 2023 compared with 2022. The BoE forecasts output will pick up slightly in 2024 but only to 0.25% growth.

The Covid-19 pandemic triggered the deepest contraction on record over two quarters in early 2020 when the economy slumped by 22%. Before that, the global financial crisis sparked a severe recession that lasted just over a year, from the second quarter of 2008 through to the second quarter of 2009.

Around 21L PACL investors get their money back: Sebi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 15: Nearly 21 lakh investors in PACL's illegal investment schemes, with claims of up to ₹19,000, have received ₹1,022 crore in refunds, markets regulator Sebi said Thursday.

The regulator had found that PACL Ltd, which had raised money from the public in the name of agriculture and real estate businesses, collected more than ₹60,000 crore through illegal collective investment schemes. A panel headed by retired

Justice RM Lodha had initiated the process of refunds in phases for investors, who had invested "As on date, the committee

has successfully effected refunds in respect of a total number of 20,84,635 eligible applications with outstanding (principal) amount up to ₹19,000 aggregating to ₹1,021.84 crore," the statement noted.

In December 2015, the Securities and Exchange Board Board of India (Sebi) had ordered the attachment of all assets of PACL and its nine promoters and directors for their failure to refund the money that was due to investors Sebi had asked PACL as well

as its promoters and directors to refund the money in an order dated August 22, 2014. The defaulters were directed

to wind up the schemes and refund money to the investors within three months from the___ date of the order.

9-MONTH TRADE GAP DIPS Despite the Red Sea crisis, recession in economies of advanced

India's share in global exports has increased to 10.35% (\$261.09bn) in 2022 from 8% (\$194.96bn) in 2014

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 15: India's exports rose to a three-month high of 3.12 per cent to \$36.92 billion in January despite global uncertainties including the Red Sea crisis, while the trade deficit narrowed to a nine-month low of \$17.49 billion, the government data released Thursday showed.

After recording negative growth for two months in a row, imports grew by about 3 per cent to \$54.41 billion in January. The previous low in trade

deficit -- the difference between imports and exports -- was recorded in April 2023 at \$15.24 billion. In January 2023, it was \$17.03 billion. Crude oil imports rose by 4.33

per cent to about \$16.56 billion during the month under review. Gold imports jumped by about 174 per cent in January to \$1.9 billion.

Cumulatively, exports during April-January this fiscal dipped by 4.89 per cent to \$353.92 billion. Imports contracted by 6.71 per cent to \$561.12 billion, leaving a trade deficit of \$207.2 billion in the ten-month period of this fiscal as against \$229.37 billion in April-January 2022-23.

Crude oil imports declined by about 15.91 per cent to \$146.75 billion in April-January 2023-24

while gold imports surged 301.7 per cent to about \$38 billion. During January, 18 of the 30

SUNIL BARTHWAL COMMERCE SECRETARY Exports rise 3.12% to \$36.92bn Imports grew by 3% to \$54.41bn

merchandise exports in

January

countries, and falling commodity prices, India has recorded positive growth in

Trade deficit shrank to \$17.49bn key sectors exhibited positive growth including iron ore, spices, oil meals, oil seeds, carpet, electronic goods, tea, pharmaceuti-

cals, petroleum products, coffee, engineering goods and chemicals. According to the data, the estimated value of services export rose to \$32.8 billion last month, as compared to \$28 billion in January 2023. During the ten-

month period, services exports

increased to \$284.45 billion as compared to \$267.5 billion in April-January 2023. Briefing reporters on the data, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that he has held three meetings with exporters. concerned ministries and stake holders on the Red Sea crisis. The objective was to help the

situation created in the Red Sea. 'We also try to tell banks that whatever maximum credit can be given during this period to our exporters that should be ex-

exporters navigate the difficult

tended. Exim bank and ECGC was told not to increase insurance premium rates. This overall positive atmosphere which we create...Has helped in (promoting) the export growth," he told reporters here.

"I assure you that we will be continuing our efforts by working with them, so that in the coming year also we are able to see a positive growth in our exports," he said.

RED SEA CRISIS

The Red Sea crisis is impacting exporters as it has pushed the transportation cost as they are taking a longer route -- via Cape of God Hope, encircling Africa -- to ship their goods to Europe and certain parts of Africa.

The situation around the Babel-Mandeb Strait, a crucial shipping route connecting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean, has escalated due to attacks by Yemen-based Houthi militants.

Due to these attacks, the shippers are taking consignments through the Cape of Good Hope, resulting in delays of almost 14 days and also higher freight and insurance costs

Windfall tax on crude petroleum, diesel up

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 15: The government Thursday hiked windfall tax on domestically produced crude oil to ₹3,300 per tonne from ₹3,200 per tonne with effect from Friday. The tax is levied in the form

of a Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED).

According to an official notification, SAED on the export of diesel too has been hiked to ₹1.50 a litre from nil earlier. On petrol and jet fuel or ATF,

the levy will be retained at nil. The new rates are effective from February 16. India first imposed windfall

profit taxes July 1, 2022, joining a host of nations that tax supernormal profits of energy companies.

The tax rates are reviewed every fortnight based on average oil prices in the previous two

POSITIVE GLOBAL CUES

Markets rise for third straight session

HEAVY DEMAND FOR AUTO, ENERGY AND UTILITY STOCKS BOOSTED THE MOMENTUM AS THE MARKET **CONSOLIDATED GAINS**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 15: Equity benchmark Sensex climbed over 225 points to reclaim the 72,000 mark while the Nifty settled close to the 22,000 level Thursday on hectic buying in market heavyweights M&M, HDFC Bank and SBI, and positive global cues.

Rising for the third straight day, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 227.55 points or 0.32 per cent to close at 72,050.38 points. The index touched a high of 72,164.97 points and a low of 71,644.44 points during intra-day

The broader NSE Nifty also gained 70.70 points or 0.32 per cent to end at 21,910.75 points.

Sensex and Nifty started on a positive note but turned volatile soon after. During the day, the indices witnessed a range-bound trading with a positive bias and



ond half of the trading session. Shares of HDFC Bank surged 2.15 per cent to close at ₹1,413.75

apiece against its previous close.

"The benchmark indexes inched higher, mirroring the positive sentiment prevailing in the global market. The disinflation trend in the euro zone, coupled with better earnings, lifted investor sentiment. Despite the broad-based recovery, market participants are more inclined towards quality large-cap stocks owing to the prevailing valuation gap, which led them to exercise caution on small and midcaps," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

6.51 M&M 3.58 NTPC 279 Power Grid HDFC Bank TOP LOSERS -2.11 Axis Bank -1.85 ITC -1.58 HUL -1.32 Nestle 0.79 Sun Pharma

TOP GAINERS

M&M was the biggest gainer in the Sensex chart, rising 6.51 per cent, followed by NTPC, PowerGrid, SBI, HDFC Bank, Asian Paints and Wipro. In contrast, Axis Bank, ITC, HUL, Nestle India and Sun Pharma were among the laggards.

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and depreciated by 3 paise to close at 83.05 against the US dollar Thursday, tracking a strong American currency and elevated crude oil prices in the international market.

In the previous session, Sensex rose by 267.64 points or 0.37 per cent to close at 71,822.83 points. Nifty also gained 96.80 points or

Paytm shares in red

Shares of Paytm owner One97 Communications fell 5 per cent Thursday after the Enforcement Directorate questioned its senior executives as part of preliminary examinations before a formal probe under foreign exchange rules. According to sources, Enforcement Directorate (ED) is conducting preliminary examination of documents before it decides to launch a formal investigation into the RBI-flagged alleged irregularities at the fintech company under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). They said that ED officials have questioned senior Paytm executives and also taken submission of documents from them. Extending its losses for the third consecutive session, Paytm shares tumbled 5 per cent to settle at ₹325.05 apiece -- lower circuit limit on the NSE. On the BSE, scrip of crisis-hit One97 Communications declined 4.99 per cent to close at ₹325.25 per piece. The stock also hit its fresh 52-week low on both BSE and NSE. In terms of volume trade, 1.03 crore equity shares were traded on the NSE, while 11.05 lakh shares were traded on the BSE during the day. In broader equity markets, 30-share benchmark BSE Sensex advanced 227.55 points or 0.32 per cent to close at 72,050.38 points, while NSE Nifty gained 0.32

TIDBITS

OYO forays into sports hospitality biz New Delhi: Hospitality and travel-tech firm

OYO Thursday announced its foray into sports hospitality business shortlisting 100 hotels across 12 key cities, including Delhi, Chennai, and Bangalore, to cater to large sports events. The sports hospitality



business aims to meet the unique needs of large sports events with a focus on providing end-to-end solutions, including providing accommodation to athletes and sports officials participating in various sports events, the company said in a statement. Under the vertical, a wide array of accommodation options, ranging from budget-friendly to premium hotels, will be offered to ensure a comfortable and convenient stay to participants and attendees throughout the event, it added. "The launch of our sports event management unit aligns with OYO's commitment to continuous innovation and customer-centric solutions. With a focus on delivering quality hospitality, OYO plans to offer athletes a conducive and comfortable environment, ensuring they can fully concentrate on their training and competitions," OYO Head, Government and Sports Hospitality Business, Pankaj Kumar said. The company said it has identified 100 hotels in different categories across 12 cities, including Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore, Pune, Lucknow, Jaipur, Chandigarh, and Bhopal for the accommodation of

India, Nepal sign terms to link UPI–NPI

Mumbai: State-owned Central banks of India and Nepal Thursday signed terms of reference for the integration of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and National Payments Interface (NPI). The Reserve Bank of India and Nepal Rastra Bank signed the terms of reference. The formal launch of the linkage or commencement of operations will be done at a



at facilitating cross-border remittances between India and Nepal by enabling users of the two systems to make instant, low-cost fund transfers," it said. The RBI further said the collaboration between India and Nepal in linking their fast payment systems through the UPI-NPI linkage will further deepen financial connectivity and reinforce the enduring historical, cultural, and economic ties between the two countries. Based on the terms of reference exchanged between the RBI and NRB, the necessary systems will be put in place for the interlinking of UPI and Nepal's NPI.



TWIN TONS PROPEL INDIA



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

side edge to send back India's

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 sim-

ply ballooned towards short

No.3 for a nine-ball duck.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rajkot, Feb 15: Rohit Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja made classical Test match hundreds while debutant Sarfaraz 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.

After the pair was separated, Sarfaraz (62, 66b, 9x4, 1x6) scored

joint fastest fifty by an Indian on debut to push

India past the 300-run mark. Jadeja was batting with nightwatchman Kuldeep Yadav (1 batting) at close of play. In batting friendly conditions, the home team will be looking get near the 500-run mark on day two.

For England, fast bowler Mark Wood (3/69) vindicated his selection as England's second pacer with a two-wicket burst in the morning, accounting for Yashasvi Jaiswal (10) and Shubman Gill (0), while spinner Tom Hartley (1/81) got the better of Rajat Patidar (5) to leave India tottering.

Jaiswal was caught in the slips by Joe Root while Gill looked susceptible against the moving ball. After beating Gill on the inside edge, Wood found an out-

The pressure on the Indian camp was palpable and the team management opted for a safer route by holding Sarfaraz 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

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 against



ing a knock that was in complete contrast of his recent 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 Rohit, Jadeja rescue India with centuries before Sarfaraz makes his debut count with superb half century as hosts reach 326/5 at stumps on Day 1 of the third Test against



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. Nevertheless, the Indian captain walked off having done his job of rebuilding the innings.

The timing for his maiden Test outing was perfect for Sarfaraz, 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 Sarfaraz walked out to bat and when the senior batter

> ster had already returned to pavilion. Jadeja eventually brought up his fourth Test hundred and a second consecutive at his homeground here, but not before Sarfaraz was tragically run out following a

> > mix-up with the

reached his triple-fig-

ure mark, the young-

Sarfaraz, Jurel debut invites tears, hugs, joy



Dhruv Jurel and Sarfaraz 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 Sarfaraz 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, Sarfaraz 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, Sarfaraz 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.

On the other hand, with a

sparkly average nearing 47 with the bat, Uttar Pradesh's Jurel became the obvious pick for the wicketkeeper-batter's spot after KS Bharat failed to make the most of the opportunities with the bat. The two youngsters got their

names engraved on the rich roster of India's Test cricketers with Sarfaraz becoming the 311th player and Jurel the 312th. The right-handed Sarfaraz

was presented his cap by Anil

Kumble. Sarfaraz was later seen

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

SADEADA7 KHAN

showing his India cap to his father and coach Naushad Khan who was overwhelmed with emotions and broke down. Sarfaraz was also seen wiping off his wife's happy tears at the venue.

Former India wicketkeeperbatter Dinesh Karthik shared interesting anecdotes and statistics while making his speech during the cap presentation to

"Coming from Agra, moving to Noida at a very young age, your mother being with you... all the tough things that must have happened in the journey, there must have been so many people through that journey who would have really helped you. I am sure all of them would be watching today," he said.

Karthik said doing well in Test cricket is paramount for every cricketer and wished Jurel to have success like his teammate Rinku Singh. "Your dad is watching today who is your biggest hero and he will be really proud and happy like everybody

India men suffer narrow loss against China in BATC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shah Alam (Malaysia), Feb 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.

Star shuttlers HS Prannov and Lakshya Sen won their singles matches but China fought back with wins in the two doubles contests to make it 2-2. National champion Chirag Sen then lost 15-21, 16-21 to Wang Zheng Xing in the fifth match as India conceded the tie. Already through to the knock-out stage, India finished second in the group, with China taking the top spot.

World No.1 pair of Satwik and Chirag and 2021 World Championships silver medallist Kidambi Srikanth were rested by the team management as India had already made it to the quarterfinals after the 1-4 win over Hong Kong Wednesday.

World No.7 Prannoy started the proceedings with a gritty 6-21, 21-18, 21-19 win over World No.16 Weng Hong Yang to put India 1-0 ahead.

In the first doubles, World No.44 MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila squandered one-game advantage to lose 15-21, 21-19, 19-

HS PRANNOY

21 to Chinese combination of Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi, ranked 17 places above them.

Lakshva 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 scoreline read 2-2.

In the deciding match, Chirag couldn't get India the win. With both the teams already assured of a knockout berth, the focus will now shift on the quarterfi-

Prannoy and Weng had earlier faced each other in two finals with each getting the better off the other once. On Thursday, the duo dished out some superlative badminton to keep the fans on the edge of their seats. Weng opened up 10-0 lead in a jiffy to take the first game 21-6.

In the second game, Prannoy slowly and steadily build up lead at 3-1 and 9-7, before jumping to a 15-11 advantage. Though Weng clawed his way back to 15-15, the Indian showed nerves of steel to keep his opponent at bay and win the second game 21-18.

The decider was no different as once again lead changed hands with Prannoy 8-5 and 15-12 up at different stages and managed to keep a fighting Weng at bay to close out the match.

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. This was India's worst ranking after they were placed at 129th spot in January 2017 chart. The historical worst ranking, though, was 173 in 2015. The Indian team were placed at 102nd in the last FIFA rankings, issued December 21, 2023.

India also lost 35.63 rating points from the previous total. It now lies in between Togo (116th) and Guinea-Bissau (118th). The country is ranked 22nd among the Asian nations.

India, under Igor Stimac, ended their Asian Cup campaign in January pointless and goal-less after losing to Australia (0-2), Uzbekistan (0-3) and Syria (0-1). It finished at the bottom of the

four-team Group B. The main movers were the countries of Asia and Africa as they had their continental championships during this period. There was no change in the top-10 with world champion Argentina still leading the pack. France, England, Belgium and Brazil follow Argentina in that order.

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

It was Australia who started and finished the match in style with the Indians dominating in the middle period. Harmanpreet (12th, 20th minutes) converted two penalty corners, while Sukhjeet Singh (18th) and Mandeep Singh (29th) were the other goal getters for India.

Blake Govers struck twice for Australia in the second minute besides Aran Zalewski (40th), Lahlan Sharp (52nd), Jacon Anderson (55th) and Jack Welch

The Kookaburras took India for a surprise at the start of the match with Govers handing the visitors a 2-0 lead in the second minute. He first scored from Australia's first penalty corner past India custodian Krishan Bahadur Pathak and then doubled his side's lead with an unstoppable shot past the goal-

It was full press from the Kookaburras in the first 10 minutes as they secured another penalty corner soon but the Indians defended stoutly. It was relentless pressure from



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

India grew in confidence with the goal and started to dominate the proceedings and minutes

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 halftime 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

BAYERN STUNNED AT LAZIO, PSG WIN IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Rome, Feb 15: High and wide, headers and half-volleys, freekicks 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.

Four days after a damaging loss in the Bundesliga, Bayern again didn't meet expectations. Lazio captain Ciro Immobile

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.

Bayern, a six-time European champions, have reached the



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

Mbappe on target

ing spot kick.

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.

the wrong way with the ensu-



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