

**Going next level**  
Actor Bhumi Pednekar is all set to collaborate with Hollywood for her next movie

LEISURE | P2

**Houthi attacks continue**  
Houthi militants in Yemen launch attack on cargo ship 'Rubymar' in the Gulf of Aden and the vessel may now sink

INTERNATIONAL | P10

**Nifty's new peak**  
Stock markets close higher for the fifth consecutive day Monday with Nifty scaling its lifetime high

BUSINESS | P11

**Eves win, men lose**  
Indian women's team ease past Uzbekistan while the men's squad suffer successive defeats in the WTT championships

SPORTS | P12

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 320 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | TUESDAY FEBRUARY 20 2024

12 PAGES | ₹5.00

**SHORT TAKES**  
**LaccMI services for five more districts**

**Bhubaneswar:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched Monday affordable bus services under the 'Location Accessible Multi-modal Initiative' (LaccMI) in five more districts of Odisha. Subarnapur, Cuttack, Jharsuguda, Kandhamal and Sambalpur districts were added to the list of LaccMI services, officials said. Patnaik launched the services via video-conferencing from Bhubaneswar. More than 44 lakh people in these districts will benefit from the initiative, with over 1,000 buses plying across the state, officials informed. **P4**

**Farmers reject govt proposal**

**Chandigarh:** Farmer leaders taking part in the 'Delhi Chalo' agitation rejected Monday the Centre's proposal of procuring pulses, maize and cotton at MSP by government agencies for five years. They said it was not in farmers' interest and announced that they will march towards the national capital Wednesday. **P9**

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**



The celebration has been cancelled. Our senior leader is not leaving the party

**MARKET WATCH**

INDEX	VALUE	VAR.	CHANGE
SENSEX	72708.16	281.52	↑
NIFTY	22122.30	81.60	↑
DOLLAR	83.03	₹0.03	↓
EURO	89.50	₹0.24	↑
GOLD	₹61,984	₹106	↑
SILVER	₹71,375	₹737	↓

**WEATHER**

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	34.4°C	32.2°C
Min Temp	26.2°C	21.6°C
Humidity	91%	87%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

**FORECAST**  
DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY



**LIVING DANGEROUSLY:** An artiste blows a fireball during a roadshow at Solapur in Maharashtra to celebrate Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's birth anniversary Monday **PTI PHOTO**

## Horse-trading on: CJ Fake job racket busted; 3 held

Despite the AAP-Congress alliance, BJP swept the mayoral polls January 30. However, a number ballots were 'defaced' allegedly by the RO prompting AAP to move SC

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** Observing that 'horse-trading is taking place', the Supreme Court has said it would peruse Tuesday the ballot papers of the Chandigarh mayoral polls and the entire video-recording of the counting day. The apex court directed the registrar general of the Punjab and Haryana High Court to depute a judicial officer to bring the records safely to Delhi.

The top court, February 5, rapped Returning Officer Anil Masih, who conducted the mayoral polls. The SC observed that it was obvious that he had defaced the ballot papers and that he should be prosecuted. The Supreme Court added that his action amounted to 'murder' and a 'mockery' of democracy.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud also directed the Chandigarh administration Monday to provide security to the judicial officer to ensure the safety of the person and the records. "We ourselves will look at the records at 2.00 pm,"



**8 votes were allegedly defaced by returning officer**  
In the elections BJP's Manoj Sonkar defeated AAP's Kuldeep Kumar 16-12

the bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said. "Horse-trading taking place," the CJ said while declining a plea that the case on the mayoral polls be heard some other day instead of Tuesday.

Masih appeared before the bench in pursuance of the apex court's direction and was quizzed by the judges over the alleged tampering of certain ballot papers. Replying to the questions, Masih said he did put the 'X' mark on eight already 'defaced' ballot papers and accused Aam Aadmi

Party (AAP) councillors of creating a ruckus and trying to snatch away the ballot papers. He said that due to this incident, he was looking at the CCTV camera at the counting centre.

Earlier, the top court had come down heavily on the returning officer, observing that it was obvious that he had defaced the ballot papers and that he should be prosecuted.

One of the AAP councillors, Kuldeep Kumar, then moved the top court challenging a Punjab and Haryana High Court order that refused to grant any interim relief to the party, which is seeking fresh mayoral polls in Chandigarh.

Meanwhile in a separate development three AAP councillors - Neha, Poonam and Gurcharan Kala - joined the BJP in the presence of senior party leader Vinod Tawde here Sunday.

The development came hours after BJP leader Manoj Sonkar resigned as Chandigarh mayor Sunday, a day before the Supreme Court was scheduled to hear a plea alleging irregularities in the mayoral polls.

**Berhampur, Feb 19:** Odisha police arrested Monday three persons from Andhra Pradesh for allegedly deceiving 20 job seekers belonging to Ganjam district, swindling approximately ₹9.70 lakh by falsely promising them employment opportunities in Kenya.

The accused, identified as Ch Mohan Reddy (48), P Simanchalam (40) and T Dhilleswar Rao (35), were allegedly operating a fake recruitment agency in Andhra Pradesh, police said.

The suspects purportedly issued counterfeit job offer letters and tourist visas instead of employment visas to the victims after collecting money and original passports from them, Berhampur SP Saravana Vivek M said.

"A total of 92 passports, application forms, screenshots of financial transactions and 20 tourist visas issued by the Kenyan government were seized from the possession of the arrested," authorities disclosed. Following their arrests, police returned the passports and funds collected from the victims.

A job seeker from Khallikote area in Ganjam district filed an FIR at Goshaninuaogaon police station February 5, alleging that Reddy had received ₹9.70 lakh from 20 candidates along with their passports. He had allegedly taken ₹48,500 from each of the job aspirants.

According to the complainant, Reddy requested an initial advance of ₹25,000 from each candidate to provide them with passports. After 10 days, he issued them offer letters from a company, followed by tourist visas after another 10 days.

However, when the candidates tried to contact Reddy for air tickets, he did not respond. Subsequently, when the victims reached out to him through other phone numbers, he verbally abused them. This prompted the job seekers to realise they had been duped, police added.

## Reasons why Putin 'feared' Navalny

**Moscow, Feb 19:** There can be no doubt that Alexei Navalny was a giant figure in Russian politics despite President Vladimir Putin's oppressive regime. No other individual rivalled the threat he posed to the Putin regime. His death in an Arctic labour camp is a blow to all those who dreamed he might emerge as the leader of a future democratic Russia.

What made Navalny so crucial to Russian politics was his decision to become an 'anti-corruption crusader' in 2008. Time and again he exposed the corruption that existed within the Putin-led government and many of his ministers.

Navalny's proposal in 2011 to vote for any party, but



Putin's 'party of crooks and thieves' in the Duma (Parliament) elections was the first sign what he could do. Faced with a collapse of support, the regime resorted to widespread election fraud and won.

Such was the aura of the man that despite being convicted on trumped-up embezzlement charges, he was

stop Navalny. He promptly formed the 'Foundation for the Struggle against Corruption' (FBK) and carried on his fight. Two YouTube videos completely shattered the image Putin wanted the world to believe in.

The first in 2017 exposed the network of charities that funded the palaces and yachts of then-premier Dmitry Medvedev. Viewed 46 million times on YouTube, it triggered huge protests in Russia.

Then came the second video, a documentary titled *A Palace for Putin*. In the nearly two-hour video, Navalny chronicled the obsessive greed which transformed an obscure KGB officer into one of the world's most notorious kleptocrats. With over 129 million views

**GOOD LUCK**

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# leisure



## MCU ROLE ONE OF MY BIGGEST GOALS: KATHRYN

Actress Kathryn Newton, who played Cassie Lang in *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*, has fulfilled a long-held dream by becoming part of the film franchise. She told Empire magazine, "One of the biggest goals of my career was to be a Marvel superhero. I would do it forever if I could."

## SWIFT, KELCE TAKE HOME BIG HONOURS

Singer-songwriter Taylor Swift and her beau Travis Kelce won big at the 2024 People's Choice Awards. While Swift won four awards – female artiste, pop artiste, concert tour and social celebrity, Kelce won one – athlete of the year, reports *Billboard*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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#### ARIES

You are an imaginative and enterprising person, and today you may taste success. Ganesha says that you are ambitious but warns you not to take on more work than you can handle. You are positive about your capabilities, so work sincerely and have faith in God.

#### TAURUS

This is one of those days when not goes well, warns Ganesha. No matter how hard you try you may not be able to keep problems and difficulties at bay. You may not be pleased or comfortable doing what has been assigned, or required, and could simply sit sullenly, doing nothing. Do not, therefore, take up anything difficult or complex.

#### GEMINI

Your mind will be uneasy and anxious due to some reason today. You will be unable to express your anxieties. You will be able to secure the love of your partner by sharing your feelings. You need to let go of the past and strive to keep on moving forward with confidence, says Ganesha.

#### CANCER

A restless or irritating mood is indicated. Keep you cool and be calm even in adverse circumstances, suggests Ganesha. If you do so, you will always succeed in life. It is difficult to wriggle out of adversity, if you have hot temper.

#### LEO

You will seek the opinion of others in a lot of matters today. You need to patiently listen to others and keep your lips sealed during the course of conversations today. Your self-confidence may take a beating today, hence do not take any important decisions. It is time for a major change in your work or field of work, says Ganesha.

#### VIRGO

You will remain engrossed in personal matters at the cost of professionalism. Solve your problems today by taking them head-on. Ganesha warns you not to let your emotions suppress your enterprising spirit, especially in the evening.

#### LIBRA

Ganesha says you will showcase your ability and skills today in your work field and impress people. You will develop and express your inner love for art and artistic things and you will purchase a new work of art today. Ganesha showers you with all his blessings.

#### SCORPIO

According to Ganesha, you will be soaked in your work today. During the day, you may be loaded with duties and responsibilities, however, evening has a different story to reveal. Exciting as ever, a get away with friends may be liberating and relaxing.

#### SAGITTARIUS

A day of full of caution, warns Ganesha. There are chances that your heart will find its partner, forcing you to fall in love. You may be cupid's next prey. However, watch your steps, as the initial stages of a relationship may be fragile and need to be handled with care. Also, it's time to guard your reputation.

#### CAPRICORN

Forced to some backbreaking work today, you will feel exhausted by the end of the day. It is a cut-throat competition when it comes to the business world. Your arch rivals are looking out for one small opportunity to damage your business and reputation. But, you are no less. You understand their moves. Ganesha predicts that you will be ready with the equally strong counter attack and fight back.

#### AQUARIUS

Academically, you have performed exceptionally well, and Ganesha congratulates you for that. You will inspire and motivate a number of people, and may create a fan following, too. This, however, doesn't mean that you throw your weight around. Keep a humane and humble approach towards others.

#### PISCES

The day will be exceptional for working people as the planets seemed to be aligned perfectly, portends Ganesha. You will achieve all the expected results in the office and/or at work today. Those looking to pursue further studies in foreign countries will also make progress and come closer to fulfilling their dreams. Ganesha gladly predicts this day to be fruitful and generous for those who fall under this sign.

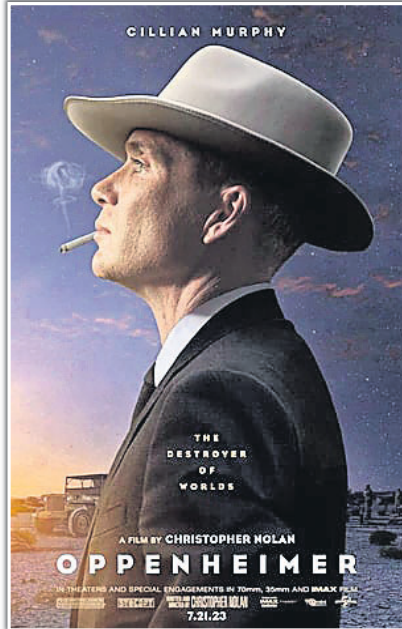
# OPPENHEIMER SWEEPS BAFTA AWARDS

London: Atom bomb epic *Oppenheimer* won seven prizes, including best picture, director and actor, at the 77th British Academy Film Awards Sunday, cementing its front-runner status for the Oscars next month.

The movie earned seven awards in total, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor. The BAFTA shortlist was another disappointment for *Barbie*, the other half of last summer's Barbenheimer box office phenomenon, which only managed five nominations. Greta Gerwig's film has so far failed to capture the number of top prizes expected this awards season.

### HERE'S A LIST OF TOP HONOURS

- Best Film** *Oppenheimer*
- Best Actress** Emma Stone (*Poor Things*)
- Best Actor** Cillian Murphy (*Oppenheimer*)
- Best Supporting Actress** Da'Vine Joy Randolph (*The Holdovers*)
- Best Supporting Actor** Robert Downey Jr (*Oppenheimer*)
- Rising Star Award** Mia McKenna-Bruce
- Best Director** Christopher Nolan (*Oppenheimer*)
- Costume Design** Holly Waddington (*Poor Things*)
- Outstanding British Film** *The Zone of Interest*
- British Short Animation** *Crab Day*
- British Short Film** *Jellyfish and Lobster*
- Production Design**



Shona Heath, James Price (Zsuzsa Mihalek *Poor Things*)  
**Original Score** Ludwig Goransson (*Oppenheimer*)  
**Documentary** *20 Days in Mariupol*  
**Cinematography** Hoyte van Hoytema (*Oppenheimer*)  
**Editing** Jennifer Lame (*Oppenheimer*)  
**Animated Film** *The Boy and the Heron*  
**Special Visual Effects** Simon Hughes (*Poor Things*)  
**Original Screenplay** Justine Triet, Arthur Harari (*Anatomy of a Fall*)



## AYESHA SCHOOLS TROLLS

Mumbai: Actress Ayesha Takia took to her Instagram and slammed trolls who attacked her for her looks at the Mumbai airport. As she checked in at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport recently, her photos and videos went viral, with a certain section of Internet users commenting on the actress' looks. Many trolls commented on her pictures, accusing her of having plastic surgery and using botox. She wrote, "I need to say this; I rushed to Goa two days ago... I had a medical emergency in my family... My sister has literally been in the hospital. Amidst all this, I remember being stopped by paps and posing for them for basically a few seconds before flying off. It turns out there are no other important issues in the country except dissecting my looks." She further mentioned, "Expecting a girl who has mostly been seen in her teens to look identical even after 15 years... How unrealistic and ridiculous are these people? Lol, please find better things to do with your time rather than pick apart good-looking women. I'm blessed with a fabulous life and do not need your opinions; save them for those interested."

# Bhumi set to foray into Hollywood

Mumbai: Actress Bhumi Pednekar is riding high on the success of her latest film, *Bhakhshak*. Her outstanding performance in the movie has garnered immense praise and applause from audiences worldwide. The movie has even secured a prestigious spot among the Top 5 non-English films globally, showcasing India's prowess on the global content stage.

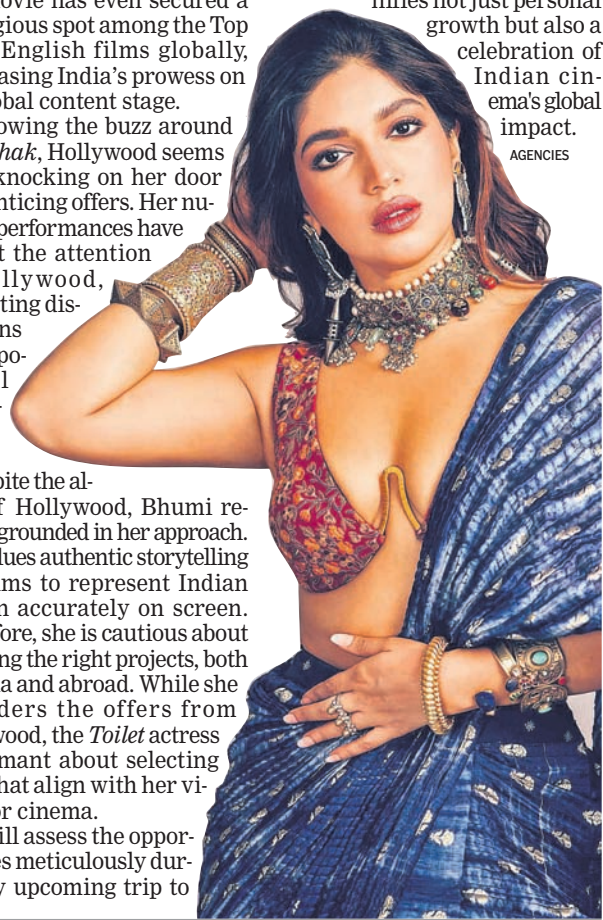
Following the buzz around *Bhakhshak*, Hollywood seems to be knocking on her door with enticing offers. Her nuanced performances have caught the attention of Hollywood, prompting discussions about potential collaborations.

Despite the allure of Hollywood, Bhumi remains grounded in her approach. She values authentic storytelling and aims to represent Indian women accurately on screen. Therefore, she is cautious about choosing the right projects, both in India and abroad. While she considers the offers from Hollywood, the *Toilet* actress is adamant about selecting roles that align with her vision for cinema.

"I will assess the opportunities meticulously during my upcoming trip to

Los Angeles and understand the importance of representing India on the international stage. I intend to intend to do it with integrity and grace," said the actress.

Her foray into Hollywood signifies not just personal growth but also a celebration of Indian cinema's global impact.



# Coffee, Katha O Kabita 6.0 connects youths with literature

BIJAY MANDAL, OP

Bhubaneswar: Bishwoksen Dash, a techie from Bhubaneswar, read-aloud a story while young Manisha Biswal, Srisikta Priyadarshini, and several other young minds of literature recited Odia poems to a vibrant gathering of over 100, comprising authors, actors, musicians, and performers of other forms of art.

The occasion was the sixth edition of *Coffee, Katha O Kabita*, a platform to connect youths with the art and culture of Odisha. The event, touted as 'literature therapy' to unwind in a creative manner, was organised by Kalinga Bhasha Mukta Manch here at Kalabhoomi, Sunday.



A view of the event

As the title suggests, the participants were treated to aromatic coffee, authentic Odia snacks, and, of course, poems, stories, songs, and many more.

Poet Anshuman Sahoo and social media influencer Ahalya Patnaik anchored the show, while

Pati's soulful rendition was the icing on the cake.

What separates the six-hour session different from others in its category was that those who read stories or recited poems were given cash prizes, which was quite unheard of. "It was a moment to cherish for life," said Bishwoksen, narrating a short story from Manoj Das' *Shesha Basantara Chithi*.

It was not just an assembly of members from Gen Z, there were millennials as well as old-schoolers to motivate creative minds.

People from as far as Baliapal, Rayagada, and other far-flung destinations were also part of the event.

Among the luminaries present to support the initiative were poet Surya Mishra, novelist

Hiranmayee Mishra, poet-publisher Saroj Bal, actors Abhishek Giri & Bhaswati Basu, storyteller Saqti Mohanty, poet Subhashri Subhasmita Mishra, poet-lyricist Sumit Panda, author Amaresh Biswal and film director Tapas Rout.

The youngsters who formed the core of the movement were Satya Shiba Sundar Das, Anshuman Sahoo, Sumit Panda,

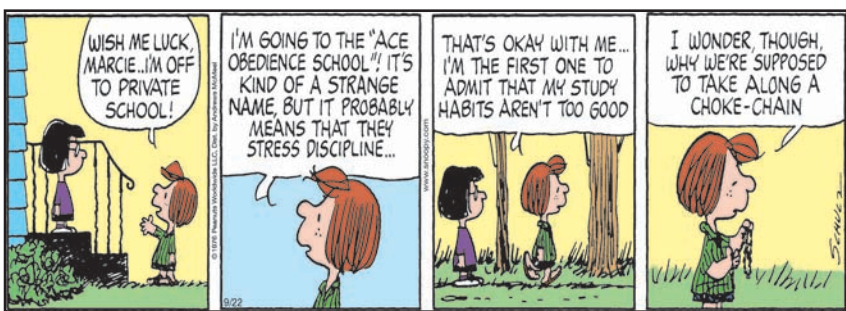
Rupesh Sahoo, Srisikta Suvadarsini, Bishwoksen Das, Trupti Ranjan Das, Sangram Moharana, and Jyoti Ranjan Barik.

Speaking about the main objective Satya Shiba Sundar Das, the chief initiator behind the event, said, "This is an effort to connect today's youths with the rich art, culture, and literature of Odisha which will go on in the future, too."



A performance by Vardaan band

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

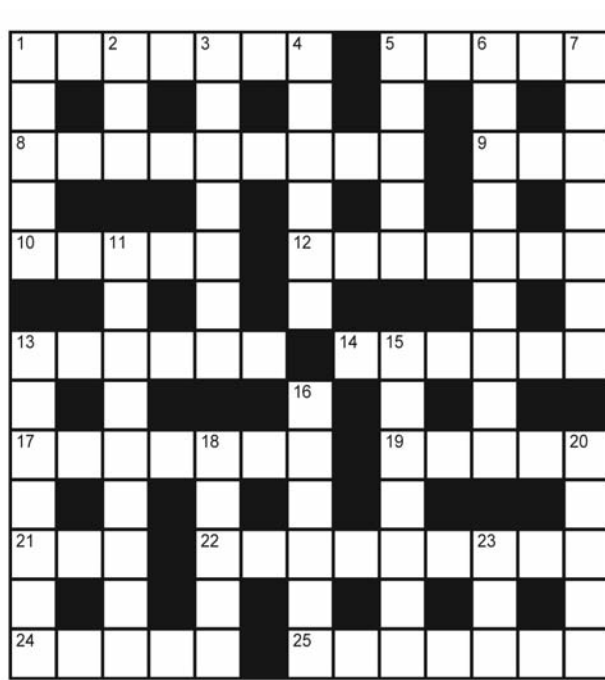


### BREVITY



### FUN post

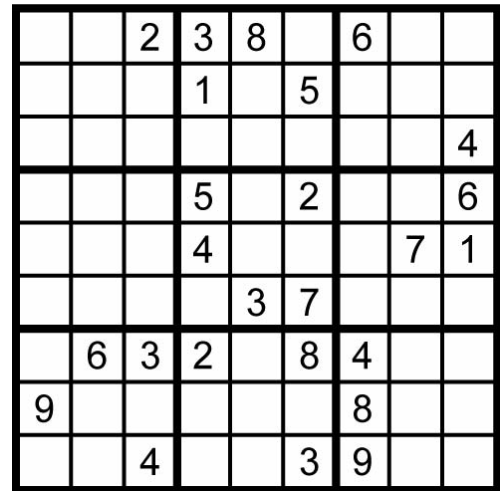
### CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Aircraft part
  - 5 Coquettes
  - 8 Enigmas
  - 9 Golden, in France
  - 10 Spanish port
  - 12 Songbird
  - 13 Muller
  - 14 Funny business
  - 17 Windfall
  - 19 Athletic events
  - 21 Choler
  - 22 Herbivorous
  - 24 China cabinet
  - 25 Kick upstairs
  - 5 Panorama
  - 6 Retrofit
  - 7 Scribbles
  - 11 Sterilise
  - 13 Make known
  - 15 Candidate
  - 16 Inherent character
  - 18 Stable sound
  - 20 Burn slightly
  - 23 Genetic info inits.
- Down
- 1 Funnyman
  - 2 Romaine lettuce
  - 3 Pub handout
  - 4 Craving

### SUDOKU

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

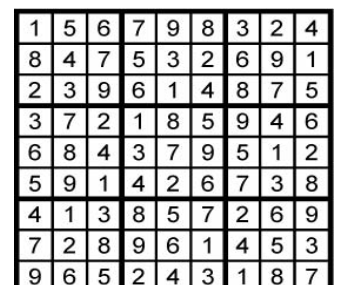


### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

# A Leap Towards Viksit Bharat



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2 Skill Development Institutes)

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## August Presence

**Shri Manoj Kumar Sinha**

Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor  
The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

**Shri Dr. Jitendra Singh**

Hon'ble Union Minister of State  
Ministry of Science and Technology

**Shri Jugal Kishore Sharma**

Hon'ble Member of Parliament (Loksabha)  
The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

**Shri Gulam Ali Khatana**

Hon'ble Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha)  
The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

**Place - Jammu | February 20, 2024, Tuesday | Time - 11:00 AM**



Watch Live telecast on



# CM: Transformation essential for youths



need to swiftly adapt to new dimensions of the socio-economic structure.

He expressed hope that the summit would lay the foundation for identifying potential growth sectors, innovative job creation opportunities, and developing skilled manpower for upcoming industries.

Minister for Skill Development and Technical Education Priti Ranjan Ghadai highlighted that the summit would help Odisha's youngsters acquire appropriate skills to stay ahead of others.

Nabin Odisha chairman Kartik Pandian praised the Chief Minister for transforming the state and making it a global model in cyclone management.

"The NUA Odisha Global Summit on Growth and Employment aims to create a platform for exchange of ideas, best practices, and innovations in the field of skill development and employment generation while accelerating the growth of the state. It will also provide an opportunity for networking and partnership among the stakeholders and the participants," said DTET and CEO of Odisha Skill Development Authority Reghu G.

The summit is hosting over 500 delegates from across the country and abroad, including policymakers, CXOs (chief experience officers), entrepreneurs, HR heads and other top brass from various promising sectors like IT/ITeS, FMCG, logistics and supply chain, auto, apparel, services in power packed panel discussions, roundtables, iconic speaker sessions, interactive sessions and others.

## NUA Odisha scheme aims to empower youth with continuous skilling, re-skilling, and upskilling opportunities across all the districts, prioritising aspirational, tribal, and remote areas

Chief Minister said.

The NUA Odisha scheme aims to empower youth with continuous skilling, re-skilling, and upskilling opportunities across all 30 districts, prioritising aspirational, tribal, and remote areas.

The summit, attended by industry representatives and stakeholders, focused on understanding future growth sectors and necessary skill training to make Odisha's youth future-ready for the global job market.

In the age of rapidly changing technology, Patnaik stressed the

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday said transformation is essential for the youth of Odisha, as the state stands at the crossroads of economic evolution.

He made these remarks while inaugurating a two-day 'NUA-Odisha Global Summit on Growth and Employment' in the state capital.

Patnaik highlighted the importance of industry leaders and key stakeholders coming together to shape the destiny of the workforce and propel Odisha towards unprecedented prosperity.

"Transformation for us is not a choice, it's an essentiality. Our youth must be future ready. As we stand at the crossroads of economic evolution, it is imperative that we come together - industry leaders, and other key stakeholders - to deliberate on strategies that will shape the destiny of our workforce and propel Odisha towards unprecedented prosperity," the



**NEW PASSPORT OFFICE:** The Passport Seva Kendra in Bhubaneswar was shifted from Nayapalli in Unit VIII to Rasulgarh, Monday. The new office will be operational from new address at Odysaa Business Centre, Ground Floor 008 to 014, Plot No 30, 31/982

# LAccMI launched in 5 more dists

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** Odisha government's Location Accessible Multimodal Initiative (LAccMI) now covers 25 districts, with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launching the affordable bus service in five more districts - Subarnapur, Cuttack, Jharsuguda, Kandhamal and Sambalpur, Monday.

Launching the services in virtual mode from the City here, Naveen said a fleet of 202 LAccMI buses will ply across 700 gram panchayats of these districts, benefitting more than 44 lakh people of the region.

"Our aim is to strengthen the rural economy and LAccMI bus service will play an important role in this regard," the chief minister said.

In Sambalpur district, a fleet of 36 buses (29 non-AC and seven AC) will improve connectivity across 97 gram panchayats, ben-



efitting more than seven lakh people.

The flagging off of 26 buses (21 non-AC and five AC) under LAccMI in Subarnapur district will benefit over five lakh people in and around 102 gram panchayats of the district.

A fleet of 58 luxury buses (46 non-AC and 12 AC) will boost connectivity across 261 gram panchayats of Cuttack. The affordable bus service of the state government will benefit over 18 lakh people.

It was a memorable day for Jharsuguda as the CM launched the transformative bus service in the district. As many as 19 LAccMI buses (15 non-AC and four AC) will enhance connectivity across 76 gram panchayats of the district, benefitting over five lakh citizens.

A fleet of 63 buses (50 non-AC and 13-AC) will boost connectivity across 164 gram panchayats of Kandhamal and benefit over 7 lakh people of the region. Earlier, the service was

launched in Khurda, Puri, Kendrapara, Bhadrak, Jajpur and Nayagarh February 16, and across 1,457 gram panchayats of Mayurbhanj, Bolangir, Bargarh, Keonjhar and Sundargarh February 12.

The affordable bus service was first launched in tribal-dominated Malkangiri district October 12, 2023. It was later extended to Gajapati district (October 20), Kalahandi district (November 1), Rayagada district (November 25), Nabarangpur district (November 30) and Koraput district (December 14).

Deogarh, Angul and Dhenkanal districts got the LAccMI bus service January 31. Altogether, 117 luxury buses have improved connectivity across 507 gram panchayats, benefitting over 28 lakh people in these three districts.

The state government aims at providing the affordable bus service in all the districts by February end.

## Cong MLA Saluja gets life threat through posters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** Banners and posters threatening to kill Congress MLA Santosh Singh Saluja were put up in Kantabanji town of Bolangir district, police said Monday.

After seeing the posters threatening to kill the Kantabanji MLA in 15 days, local people informed Kantabanji police, which seized the posters and initiated an investigation into the matter.

While reacting on this issue, Saluja said the life threat was given for political reasons.

"From some electronic media, I came to know about the incident. As the election is approaching, I am working day and night for the development of my constituency. At this time, someone is directly challenging to kill me by putting up posters, which is shocking," the senior MLA said.

"I will not fear to die for the development of my constituency. If one Saluja dies, hundreds of Salujas will take birth," he said.

The Congress leader urged the police administration to immediately arrest the person, who has given life threat.

## KISS opens school in Boudh



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS)-Boudh, a CBSE English medium school, was inaugurated while foundation stone for a state-of-the-art 100-bed hospital was laid at Lunibahal under the initiative of Kandhamal MP and KIIT-KISS founder Achyuta Samanta, Monday.

The inauguration ceremony and foundation stone function were attended by Minister for Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water, Forest, Environment & Climate Change, and Information & Public Relations Pradip Kumar Amat, who graced the event as the chief guest.

Kantamal MLA and district planning committee chairman Mahidhar Rana, district council president Prabhassini Das, Boudh Collector J Sonal and SP Raj Prasad among others were also present.

Speaking on the occasion, Amat lauded Samanta's efforts in fulfilling the vision of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in the realms of education and health. He said that the establishment of KISS Boudh English medium school and the hospital in Lunibahal will propel progress in the education and healthcare sectors in Boudh district.

Addressing the gathering, Samanta said that the new school has been established to provide quality education to the poor (BPL) students of Boudh district. He assured that the students belonging to BPL category would receive education in English medium without any cost. It will run under the aegis of KISS Bhubaneswar and admission will start from the ensuing academic session. He added that meritorious students from this school will be given the opportunity to study at KIIT Bhubaneswar.

# NAVEEN LAYS STONE FOR STATE LIBRARY MAKEOVER

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone for transformation of Harekrushna Mahtab State Library and inaugurated Santha Kabi Bhima Bhoi Library here, Monday.

The transformation of Harekrushna Mahtab State Library will be carried out jointly by the Culture department and Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) Limited.

As part of the transformation plan, various facilities will be available within the library premises. The upgraded facilities include specially-abled accessible toilets, multilingual sections, engaging children's reading areas, tranquil study spaces, window seating space, a state-of-the-art conference facility, comfortable lounge areas, quiet reading rooms, reading pods, and book stacks halls.

An Aahar centre and Mission Shakti Cafe will offer a diverse range of delicious meals and snacks to library visitors.

Moreover, the integration of essential amenities such as water dispensers, emergency services, and seamless Wi-Fi connectivity underscores a commitment to cultivating an environment conducive to visitors, a release by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said.

The transformed library will feature seating arrangements for up to 500 individuals simultaneously. Furthermore, the implementation of a digitisation and automation drive will enable online access to the library's existing collection of books, en-



The transformed library will feature seating arrangements for up to 500 individuals simultaneously

Implementation of a digitisation and automation drive will enable online access to the library's existing collection of books, ensuring that readers can conveniently explore literary treasures on the go

With the introduction of climate-controlled chambers and premium drinking water facilities, the refurbished library is poised to emerge as a beacon of intellectual enlightenment, fostering a culture of learning and innovation for generations to come, the release added.

Established in 1967 as the cornerstone of literary enlightenment, the State Library embarked on a journey to nurture knowledge and inspire generations. It was renamed as Harekrushna Mahatab State Library August 15, 1987. Since then, Harekrushna Mahatab State Library has served as a vital knowledge centre for

people from various walks of life. The library has played an instrumental role in facilitating academic endeavours, catering to a diverse audience - from students to researchers.

The inauguration of Santha Kabi Bhima Bhoi Library at the Integrated Public Service Centre (IPSC) in Bapuji Nagar area of the City by the CM signifies a pivotal step towards access to literary resources.

Equipped with amenities like Aahar centre, Wi-Fi connectivity, surveillance systems, and comfortable reading rooms, the library - managed by the Culture department and OMC - will not only enrich the cultural landscape of the Temple City but also provide a vital hub for knowledge dissemination and community engagement.

Among others, Science and Technology Minister Ashok Chandra Panda, Bhubaneswar (Central) MLA Ananta Narayan Jena, Bhubaneswar (North) MLA Susant Kumar Rout, and Odia Language, Literature and Culture Commissioner-cum-Secretary Sujata R Karthikeyan and Director Dilip Routray were present on the occasion.

## Rajiv Dubey no more



SEPT 6, 1962 - FEB 19, 2024

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** Well known entrepreneur and the Managing Director (MD) of Rohan Autoriders Pvt Ltd Rajiv Dubey passed away following a massive heart attack at his Gautam Nagar residence here, Monday family sources said. He was 61. Dubey is survived by his wife, son and two daughters who live in New Delhi.

Dubey was also the MD of PNR Infracon Pvt Ltd and DRR Realty Pvt Ltd. Born September 6, 1962, Dubey was the Director of Buymey Technology Pvt Ltd. People from across the business fraternity consoled Dubey's untimely demise and paid their last respects.

## Rly Min Vaishnav to visit state today

**Bhubaneswar:** Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav will visit the state February 20. During his visit, Vaishnav will join in scheduled programmes of Railways and Postal departments. Union Minister of Education, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Dharmendra Pradhan will grace the function at Biju Patnaik Auditorium, Sambalpur University, Burla.

**FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS**

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

# Fake fabric of Army's combat fatigue seized from shop in Ganjam

The Indian Army possesses exclusive rights to the new digital pattern combat uniform and can file a complaint against unauthorised sale of this design



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Feb 19:** Acting on credible inputs from the Military Intelligence Unit at Gopalpur, Berhampur police conducted a raid Monday at 'Ganjam Galaxy Store' situated near Old Bus Stand under Town police limits here and seized counterfeit Army combat uniform material being sold illegally.

A criminal case (No-57/24) has been registered in this connection at the Town police station and police are investigating the matter.

As per official sources, one R Dangi, an officer in Army Air Defence College in Gopalpur, during his visit to Berhampur noticed that counterfeit cloth resembling new digital pattern combat uniform of the Indian Army was being sold at the shop and informed the matter to the authorities.

During a joint raid by the Military Intelligence and Berhampur police, a total of 488 meter combat uniform material worth ₹1,20,000 has been seized. During the investigation, it was

found that the owner of Ganjam Galaxy Store had procured this uniform material from a Kolkata trader, who earlier had procured it from Ludhiana. Further investigation is going on to verify the place of manufacturing and the people involved in the illegal business.

The new digital pattern combat uniform was unveiled by the Army January 15, 2022 as a replacement for the old fatigues, which is in process.

The Army has obtained Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for the design and camouflage patterns for 10 years, extendable for another five years. This has been done to prevent unauthorised vendors from manufacturing and selling the combat fatigues in the open market, as it was posing a serious security threat to the Indian Army.

As per orders, the new fatigues have to be sold only in the Army's unit-run canteens. Due to the IPR, the Army now possesses exclusive rights to the design and can file a complaint against unauthorised sale of this design.

# 2 minors critical as abandoned toilet's ceiling comes down

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, Feb 19:** At least two students had a close shave but sustained critical injuries after the ceiling of an abandoned and dilapidated toilet on the premises of Urdu Maktab Primary School in Patana block headquarters of Keonjhar district collapsed on them, Monday.

The injured Class-V students were identified as Santosh Karua and Raja Naik of Tainsira village. Locals and school authorities rescued the two students and rushed them to Patana hospital and later shifted them to the district headquarters hospital in Keonjhar where they were administered treatment.

Both of them have sustained injuries on their waist and head. The incident occurred when the headmistress had allegedly engaged the students to pull down the abandoned toilet.

The incident sparked tension in the area as guardians blocked Patana-Kendeipasi road near the school demanding action against the headmistress. Women from minority community also gheraoed the headmistress' office.

It is alleged that the headmistress Naliniprava Mohanta had handed over some tools and crowbars to the two students and asked them to pull down the abandoned toilet on the school premises. On being informed, BEO Purna Chandra Amant, ABEOS Sachidananda Sethy and Bijay Ojha, GPDO Rashmirekha Mohanty, and PEO Sudhanshu Sekhar Paikaray visited the spot and took stock of the situation.

The agitators relented after police intervened. SMC president Md. Sarfaraj Alam alleged that the headmistress had engaged the two students to demolish the abandoned structure and demanded a high level probe and her transfer.

Headmistress Mohanta rejected the charges stating that the incident occurred when the two students had gone to relieve themselves.

BEO Purna Chandra Amant said that an inquiry will be conducted and action will be taken after receiving the probe report.

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BEO Purna Chandra Amant said that an inquiry will be conducted and action will be taken after receiving the probe report.



# Taxidermist held for poaching spotted deer in Bhitarkanika

PNN & AGENCIES

**Kendrapara, Feb 19:** A taxidermist was arrested for poaching a spotted deer inside a forest of Bhitarkanika National Park, ACF-cum-In-Charge of Kanika wildlife range Manas Kumar Dash said Monday.

He was booked under Sections 9, 27, 29, 35(6) of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and produced before the JMFC court of Rajnagar which remanded him to jail custody.

This is the second case within the last fortnight in which Forest personnel of Kanika range have nabbed taxidermists for their involvement in killing antelope.

Dash said during a raid Sunday night, the Forest personnel of kanika forest range



arrested one Surendra Das of Sailendrasarai village under Talachua Marine police station, who after trespassing into Kantiakhai reserve forest killed the spotted deer.

The Forest personnel also seized 12 kg of raw venison, a chopper, an axe and four snares from the possession of the taxidermist, DFO of Rajnagar Mangrove Forest and Wildlife Division Sudarshan Gopinath Jadav said.

The Forest personnel also managed to arrest one of his associates near Khola bridge while the taxidermist was trying to flee with raw venison on his bike. They later seized the venison from his possession.

According to the DFO, Das was a member of a poaching racket active in the area. On February 4, the Forest personnel had arrested four taxidermists for poaching a spotted deer and seized 6 kg of raw venison, two choppers, three loops and a bike from the possession of the arrested taxidermists.

Poachers often trap animals by spreading nylon ropes in the mangrove forest and its nearby areas. Some also use trained dogs to kill spotted deer, the official said.

The vicinity of Bhitarkanika National Park is bordered by numerous human settlements, making it easier for animals wandering out of the park to become targets for poachers, the official added.

# Migrant labourer commits suicide

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhograi, Feb 19:** A migrant labourer allegedly committed suicide over acute financial scarcity plaguing his family at Dehurda village under this block in Balasore district, Sunday night.

The deceased was identified as Sasthidhar Khatua, 28, in the village. He took the extreme step by consuming pesticide.

Family members noticed him frothing from the mouth and rushed him to the nearby hospital with the help of villagers. However, doctors at the hospital pronounced him brought dead.

On being informed, police reached the hospital and launched an investigation. A case of unnatural death was registered in this connection and the body sent for post-mortem.

# Woman cop manhandled during raid at gambling den; 20 detained

PNN & AGENCIES

**Balasore, Feb 19:** A woman police Inspector was allegedly manhandled and locked up by miscreants during a raid at a gambling den in Balasore district.

According to police, the Inspector in-Charge (IIC) of Talsari Marine police station Champabati Soren along with three of her staff was on patrolling duty Sunday night.

Getting information, the police team raided a house in Udaipur village where a gambling session was going on. Seeing the police party, some local people assembled and started manhandling them. It was alleged that the woman police officer along with her staff was locked up in a room, the police said.

Police force from Bhograi police station and Chandaneswar outpost reached the spot and rescued them, they said.

Acting on a tip-off about illegal gambling, the IIC and her staff reached the place. When she reached the spot during patrolling, there was an argument between the IIC and the locals. The locals scuffled with the IIC and detained her, said Dilip Sahu, Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), Jaleswar. "An investigation is going on into the case. Appropriate action will be taken against the accused as per the law," the SDPO said.

About 20 people were detained over the incident and further investigation is on, police said.



# Adi Mahotsav marathon draws heavy participation by tribals

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, Feb 19:** As many as 100 tribal boys and girls participated in the Kendujhar Adi Mahotsav marathon that concluded Monday here.

The two-day programme was organised by the Special Development Council (SDC), Keonjhar to promote tribal art and culture. A marathon was organised for tribal boys and girls on the concluding day which started from the district collectorate to Baladevew temple.

Sanjay Hansda, Kshirod Chandra Hansda and Vir Singh Majhi won the first, second and third positions respectively in the men's marathon and in the women's category, Manju Munda, Sukhi Baske and Lily Majhi bagged the first, second and third positions respectively. Cash prize worth ₹50,000 was awarded to the winner, ₹30,000 to the runner-up and ₹20,000 to the second runner-up. Patana MLA Jagannath Nayak, chairman of SDC, Keonjhar Lakshmi Naik and vice chairman of SDC Narayan Poorti attended the programme as guests. Later, a friendly football match was played at the Dharinidar Sports Complex.

**CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF KERALA**  
(Established under the Central Universities Act, 2009)  
Tejaswini Hills, Periyar P.O., KASARAGOD-671320

No. CUK/APPT/NT/IAO/2017 Dated 1st February 2024

**EMPLOYMENT RE-NOTIFICATION (NON TEACHING)**

Online applications are invited from the eligible Indian Nationals for filling up the post of Internal Audit Officer on deputation/ Short term contract basis. The notification containing full particulars such as Number of Posts, Notification No., Category, Essential Qualifications, Experience, Pay, Details of Submission of Online Application etc. are available at the University website: www.cukerala.ac.in. The last date for receipt of Online application is 11th March, 2024.  
CBC-21353/12/0016/2324 REGISTRAR

**NOTICE**

I, the undersigned bring it to the notice of public that I had purchased a land from Khata No. 190 of Mouza- Bandaeswar vide RSD No. 10791901406 dated 19.12.2015 from Mr. Prasanta Kumar Jena, S/o. Late Mayadhara Jena of Indupur, Dist.-Kendrapara and from Khata No.45 of Bandaeswar and Khata No. 11 of Mouza- Baujanga, Dist.- Jajpur vide RSD No.1460 dated 05.07.1991 from the vendor named Atto Bibi, W/o- Late Umar Ali of village Baujanga, Dist.- Jajpur. Above sale deeds have been lost some where in Balichandrapur market on 17.12.2023. In this connection I have lodged FIR in Balichandrapur Police Station and it is registered as GD No. 017 dt. 20.12.2023. Further I declare that I have not availed any loan from any financial institution against mortgage security against two RSDs. Presently I propose to deposit above documents in SBI, Byasanagar Branch, Jajpur against mortgage security of the above land in respect of a loan to be availed by M/s. Mahavir Food Processor and objection if any from any quarter is invited to be placed before the concerned bank and the undersigned within 30 days from the date of the publication of this notice.

Signature and Address  
Shri Damodar Swain  
Bandaeswar, Palai, Balichandrapur  
Jajpur-754205

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
ENGAGEMENT OF CONTRACTUAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS (CMP) AT SAMBALPUR, BALANGIR, KANTABANJI & MAHASAMUND (INTERVIEW THROUGH VIDEO CONFERRING)

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE No. 01/2024-CMP Date: 12.02.2024

Applications are invited for engagement of "Contract Medical Practitioner" on contract basis in East Coast Railway. Total No of Requirement: 05 Nos., (02 - Divisional Railway Hospital, Sambalpur, Balangir Health Unit-01, Kantabanji Health Unit-01 & Mahasamund Health Unit-01) of Sambalpur Division. Willing MBBS Doctors, who fulfill the Qualification/eligibility criteria may apply for the above engagement on mail id of mscsecorsb8@gmail.com. The engagement will be offered purely on contract basis for a period of one year or till the scheme become available or posting of a regular incumbent whichever is earlier, which can be renewed as a fresh contract on year to year basis. The last date for submission of application on above mail id is 11.03.2024.

**How to Apply :** Eligible and willing candidates may send the scanned copy of their application in the prescribed format along with scanned copies of their Certificate/Work Experience Certificates (if any)/ Testimonials on mail id mscsecorsb8@gmail.com. After scrutiny of the application, interview through video conferencing/video calling would be taken of eligible candidates for which they would be intimated through their e-mail & WhatsApp number. Selected candidate will be intimated through the WhatsApp number/e-mail id of the candidate. While reporting for duty the candidate will be required to bring all the original Certificates/Testimonials for verification and two passport size photographs. After due verification of the Certificates/Testimonials, the final engagement order will be issued.

**NB :** For application format, Total No of Requirement, Educational Qualification/ Eligibility, Age, Remuneration and other terms & conditions, please refer to website <http://www.eastcoastrail.indianrailways.gov.in> > About us > Division-Sambalpur Division>Recruitment>Sl.No. 34 & 35.

PR-1097/01/23-24 Divisional Railway Manager (Personnel), Sambalpur

**UCO Bank** Zonal Office : C-2, Ashok Nagar, Unit-II, Bhubaneswar-751009, Ph.: 0674-2620423

**VEHICLE FOR SALE**

NAME OF THE BRANCH	NAME OF THE BORROWER	DETAILS OF VEHICLE	RESERVE PRICE EMD	DETAILS OF OFFICER CONCERNED
CUTTACK CITY BRANCH	Dina Krushna Dash	Maruti Suzuki Eeco 5 STR AC, Regd. No.: OD 05 AV 5968	₹2,00,000/- ₹20,000/-	Mr. Laxmikant Jena, Mob.: 9861685865

**TERMS & CONDITION:** The above mentioned vehicle seized by UCO Bank are under Sale in its "As is where is condition". The public Auction will be held on 05.03.2024, 11.00 AM at Respective Branch premises. For further details contact concerned officer mentioned above (All prices mentioned above are including GST)

Place : Bhubaneswar, Date : 19.02.2024 Authorised Officer, UCO Bank

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA** E-mail id:eeabd.anandapur@gmail.com/loabp-eicvr.od@nic.in

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, ANANDAPUR BARRAGE DIVISION, SALAPADA**

No.A-1542: E-Procurement Notice No. SEABD-07 OF 2023-24

E-Procurement Officer	Name of the Work	Bid Id No.	Tender cost in Lakhs (Appx)	Bid Security (online)	Cost of Bid Document (Online)	Class of Contractor	Period of Completion	Availability of tender online for bidding		Date of Opening of technical Bid
								From	To	
Superintending Engineer, Anandapur Barrage Division, Salapada	Barbed wire fencing to Acquired Areas at U/S and D/S both side of Anandapur Barrage	ABP-ABD-07 of 2023-24	32.85	33,000/-	6,000/-	D & C Class	2 Calendar Months	19.02.24 11.30 AM	01.03.24 05.00 PM	02.03.24 11.30 AM

Further details can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersorissa.gov.in/ www.dowrordisha.gov.in. Addendum/Corrigendum/ Cancellation if any required will be published in Govt. website only. The Authority reserves the right to reject the tender without assigning any reason therefor.

OIPR-32177/11/0014/2324 Sd./- Superintending Engineer, Anandapur Barrage Project, Salapada

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

**E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE**  
(See proviso to rule 6(2) & 8(6) Sale Notice for sale of property /ies under SARFAESI Act 2002)

**Sale of Immovable property/ies mortgaged to Bank under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002)**

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

Sl. No.	BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrowers / Guarantors / Mortgagees	Description of the Immovable Properties	Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession Notice/ Outstanding Dues	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount
1.	<b>ROURKELA BRANCH/</b> Borrower: M/S. RCN Enterprises Prop.: Mrs. Subarna Rout , Shop No.: 6,Kamala Market Complex, Udtnagar, Rourkela, PIN -769004, Dist.: Sundergarh /Borrower/ Mortgagee: Mrs.Subarna Rout, W/o.: Niranjan Rout, Qtr No.: B/222, Koelnagar, AB Chowk, Rourkela, Dist.: Sundergarh /Guarantor: Mr.Niranjan Rout, S/o.: Bauribandhu Rout, Qtr No.: B/222, Koelnagar, AB Chowk, Rourkela, Dist.: Sundergarh	<b>Property -1:</b> All that piece & Parcel of Property recorded in the name of Mrs. Subarna Rout, W/o.: Niranjan Rout at Mouza: Jagasara having Plot No.: 493/1994 under Khata No.: 229/1049, Area: Ac.0.055 Dec, KISSAM: Gharabari,Tahasil/PS: Jatni, Dist: Khurda, Odisha. Bounded by North: Baladev Ghosh, South: Plot No.: 464/747, East: Raj Kishor Mishra & Dayanidhi Mohanta, West: Road. <b>Property -2:</b> All that piece & Parcel of Property recorded in the name of Mrs. Subarna Rout, W/o.: Niranjan Rout at Mouza: Jagasara having Plot No.: 229/1105, Area: Ac.0.055 Dec, KISSAM: Bagayat-II, Tahasil/PS: Jatni, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha. Bounded by North: Road, South: Plot No.19(P), East: Plot No.: 9&18, West: Plot No.: 11 & 20.	17.04.2023 / 07.07.2023	(1) ₹20.80 Lakhs / ₹2.08 Lakhs / ₹10,000/- (2) ₹20.80 Lakhs / ₹2.08 Lakhs / ₹10,000/- (3) ₹14.00 Lakhs / ₹1.40 Lakhs / ₹10,000/-
			₹ 1,12,64,377/- as on 16.02.2024 + further interest, costs, other charges and expenses thereon	
			₹16.60 Lakhs / ₹1.66 Lakhs / ₹10,000/-	
2.	<b>CHATUANKA BRANCH/</b> Borrower: M/s. Maa Bread Factory, Prop.: Sri Babul Putel, S/o.: Sri Makardhwaj Putel, At: Ward No.: 9 (Opposite of RMC), PO.: Kantabanji, Dist.: Bolangir -767039 / Mortgagee: Sri Babul Putel, S/o.: Sri Makardhwaj Putel, At: Ward No.: 9 (Opposite of RMC), PO.: Kantabanji, Dist.: Bolangir - 767039	All that part and parcel of the immovable property consisting of Land & Building in the name of Sri Babul Putel, S/o.: Makardhwaj Putel, situated at Mouza: Kukudahad, P.S./Tahasil: Kantabanji, Khata No.: 218/238, Plot No.: 145/3173, Area: Ac.0.060 Dec, KISSAM: Gharabari, Bounded by North: Road, South: Laldei Putel, East: Laldei Putel, West: Laldei Putel	14.11.2019 / 23.01.2020 / ₹ 20,64,571/- as on 16.02.2024 + further interest costs other charges and expenses thereon	₹16.60 Lakhs / ₹1.66 Lakhs / ₹10,000/-
3.	<b>KEONJHAR BRANCH/</b> M/s. Swastik Deal, Prop.: Mr. Baburam Panda /Mortgagor/Guarantor: Smt. Subasini Panda, W/o.: Sri Baburam Panda, Both are At: Buladwar Sahi, Hatia Tangar, Keonjhar-758001 KISSAM: Gharabari, Bounded by North: Narayan Rana, South: Narayan Rana, East: Narayan Rana, West: Private Road / Iswar Nayak	All that immovable properties in the name of Smt. Subasini Panda, W/o.: Baburam Panda situated at Mouza: Suleikhamar, P.S.: Keonjhar Sadar No.: 125, Tahasil: Keonjhar Sadar, Dist: Keonjhar, bearing Khata No.: 74/101, Plot No.: 372/540 of Area: Ac.0.36 Dec.,	04.05.2019 / 29.07.2019 / ₹ 85,33,688/- as on 12.02.2024 + further interest costs other charges and expenses thereon	₹20.20 Lakhs / ₹2.20 Lakhs / ₹10,000/-

For SI No.: 1 to 2 DATE AND TIME OF E-AUCTION: 06.03.2024 from 11.00 AM to 05.00 PM and For SI No.: 3 DATE AND TIME OF E-AUCTION: 22.03.2024 from 11.00 AM to 05.00 PM with unlimited extension of 10 Minutes duration

For SI No.: 1 to 2 LAST DATE AND TIME FOR SUBMISSION OF EMD AND DOCUMENTS ON OR BEFORE 05.03.2024 upto 05.30 PM and For SI No.: 3 LAST DATE AND TIME FOR SUBMISSION OF EMD AND DOCUMENTS ON OR BEFORE 21.03.2024 upto 05.30 PM by online

For SI No.: 1 to 2 Date & Time of Inspection of Properties: 26.02.2024 to 05.03.2024 between 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM and For SI No.: 3 Date & Time of Inspection of Properties: 16.03.2024 to 21.03.2024 between 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM (with prior appointment from bank) at their own expenses

**TERMS & CONDITIONS:** 1) For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer to the link: <https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp> and <https://ibapi.in>. Prospective bidders may also contact the Authorised Officers / Branch as mentioned in above list., 2) This is a statutory 15/30 days sale notice to the above mentioned borrowers/guarantors under Rule 9(1)/8(6) of the SARFAESI Act, 2002, 3) This is a 15/30 days' notice to the Borrower / Guarantor / Mortgagee of the above said loan about holding of this sale on the above mentioned date., 4) All expenses relating the stamp duty and registration of Sale Certificate/ conveyance, if any, shall be borne by the successful bidder. 5) The Authorized Officer will not be held responsible for any charge, lien, encumbrance, property tax or any other dues to the Government or anybody in respect of the property under sale. 5) The Authorized Officer has the absolute right to accept or reject any bid or adjourn/postpone/cancel the sale without assigning any reason thereof. It may be noted that nothing in this notice constitute or deemed to constitute any commitment or representation on the part of the bank to sell the property.

**STATUTORY 15/30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 9(1)/8(6) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002.**

Borrowers/Guarantors/Mortgagors are hereby notified to pay the total dues along with up to date interest and ancillary expenses before the date of E-Auction, failing which the property will be auctioned/ sold and balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest & cost.

Place: Sambalpur Date: 19.02.2024 Sd./Authorised Officer Indian Bank

FOCUS INEQUALITY

# THE NEW GILDED AGE



In today's highly concentrated world economy, the 'Big Three' index funds – BlackRock, Vanguard, and State Street – control more than \$20 trillion in assets

has been a resurgence in labour action, with more than 460,000 workers going on strike in 2023 – the second-highest number since 1986. An economic paradigm shift appears to be underway within the US government, exemplified by a reinvigorated anti-monopoly movement. Federal Trade Commission Chair Lina Khan and Jonathan Kanter, the head of the Justice Department's antitrust division, have advanced a series of ambitious reforms, rewriting the lax merger guidelines that enabled corporations to amass unprecedented power, proposing a ban on non-compete clauses, and securing landmark victories for patients and consumers. The FTC's antitrust lawsuit against Amazon, in particular, represents a powerful rebuke to industrial oligarchy.

To be sure, the decades-long dominance of neoliberalism – the handmaiden to America's soaring inequality – will not be dismantled overnight. To get there, Congress must rein in outside private power and pass legislation capping excess profits, guaranteeing living wages, and safeguarding collective bargaining rights. And the US should not act in isolation. Brazil's G20 presidency offers a unique opportunity to establish international cooperation to combat inequality. Reimagining public action is vital to advancing this paradigm shift. As US President Joe Biden revives industrial policy, we must ensure that tax dollars are not used to subsidise corporate dominance. Guarantees and public solutions that uphold people's interests, such as universal family care and affordable housing, offer promising pathways from oligarchy.

Escaping the new Gilded Age may be a more daunting challenge than escaping the original one was. But, as workers, regulators, and organisers are showing, the fight against inequality can be won.

*The writer is Director of Economic and Racial Justice of Oxfam America.*

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The past 12 years have been extremely good for the ultra-rich. The fortunes of billionaires – a group comprising the 2,640 wealthiest people on the planet, most of whom are men – has more than doubled. The wealth gap between the top 0.1% and the bottom half of the world's population has increased by 50% since the 2008 global financial crisis. The aftermath of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine have been particularly lucrative for the ultra-wealthy as they reaped an enormous windfall from pandemic-era stimulus packages and corporate welfare, raked in record profits by raising prices and blaming inflation, and benefited from decades of favourable policies. A recent report by Oxfam found that the combined wealth of the world's five richest people – Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Bernard Arnault, Larry Ellison, and Warren Buffett – has more than doubled since 2020, to \$869 billion.

At the same time, nearly five billion people, representing 60% of the world's population, have become poorer. While global income inequality declined gradually over time, primarily due to rising incomes in China, inequality between countries has increased for the first time in decades, and inequality within most countries has increased, too. Worryingly, a recent World Bank analysis has found that "the fight against poverty has stalled." Given the current trajectory of wealth distribution, the world could have its first trillionaire within a decade, while eradicating global poverty would take 230 years.

While such statistics may no longer be surprising, they should be alarming, for the trend they capture poses a grave threat to democratic governance. While rising inequality is rightly linked to tax policies and debt, we can no longer overlook the crucial role of corporate monopolies in transferring wealth from the working and middle classes to the top 0.1%. In the 12 months up to June 2023, 148 of the world's largest firms earned nearly \$1.8

trillion in profits, a 52% increase from their average annual profits between 2018 and 2021.

Corporate gains have come at the expense of workers, as merely 0.4% of the world's 1,600 most influential companies have publicly committed to paying and supporting a living wage. Meanwhile, rich shareholders are receiving \$82 of every \$100 in profits through dividends and buybacks. Dominant firms draw workers, consumers, and smaller businesses into their orbit, with multinationals' share of global profits quadrupling over the past 40 years of neoliberal orthodoxy. According to a recent study by the International Monetary Fund, the increase in monopoly power accounts for 76% of the decline in labour's share of income in the US manufacturing sector over the second half of the twentieth century. In today's highly concentrated world economy, the "Big Three" index funds – BlackRock, Vanguard, and State Street – control more than \$20 trillion in assets. Even the late John Bogle, Vanguard's founder, sounded the alarm about the Big Three's dominance in 2018, warning of a future in which "a handful of giant institutional investors will one day hold voting control of virtually every large US corporation."

During the original Gilded Age, monopolists like John D. Rockefeller were synonymous

with economic power. In contemporary iteration, seven of the world's ten largest firms either have a billionaire CEO or a billionaire as a principal shareholder, giving Rockefeller's modern-day counterparts even greater influence over our political economies. This extreme concentration of wealth and power is reminiscent of what late US Supreme Court Justice William Douglas called an "industrial oligarchy," whereby people's fortunes are "dependent on the whim or caprice, the political prejudices, the emotional stability of a few self-appointed men." But while this state of affairs may seem bleak, recent developments offer a glimmer of hope.

Consider the US. Since 2020, the top 0.1% of Americans, who own 13.9% of the country's wealth, have become more than \$2 trillion richer than the poorest half of the population, which holds just 2.6% of the country's wealth. The racial wealth gap is nearly as large as it was in 1950, with the typical white household owning six times as much as its Black counterpart. Meanwhile, as tens of millions of Americans struggle to make ends meet, hunger has increased to its highest level in nearly a decade.

The good news, however, is that low-wage workers have experienced real-wage growth over the past three years, and the wealth of the bottom 50% has slightly increased. Crucially, there



Nabil Ahmed

ESCAPING THE NEW GILDED AGE MAY BE A MORE DAUNTING CHALLENGE THAN ESCAPING THE ORIGINAL ONE WAS

## Crusader of Truth

The anarchic is the true divine state of man in the end as in the beginning; but in between it would lead us straight to the devil and his kingdom.

SRI AUROBINDO



The name Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, conjures up images of fearless revelations of government wrongdoings of monumental proportions and years of persecution thereafter. He represents the cause of journalism, especially in the digital age, and is looked upon as a hero in various circles of journalists and free thinkers. The US government is hell bent on putting him behind bars virtually for his entire life on charges of espionage to silence him forever and stop him from ferreting out sinister classified information. With that end in view, the US government is trying to get him extradited from the UK. The final trial process is to begin in a few days in London.

In 2010, WikiLeaks published US government documents exposing its diplomatic and military policies vis-a-vis the Afghan and Iran wars. Four years ago, the US justice department under the Donald Trump administration indicted WikiLeaks and Assange on 18 counts. He was charged with multiple breaches of the 1917 Espionage Act. The Act had come into force during World War I. However, it has been invoked in recent times against whistleblowers and leakers of sensitive and damning official documents. Prominent among the targets included the Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daneil Ellsberg who made documents available to the New York Times that exposed US government misinformation about the Vietnam War. The charges could not be substantiated and Ellsberg was exonerated, but it was a close shave for him.

The worst aspect of the Espionage Act is that it contains no public interest defence. It means a person charged under it cannot present evidence about the content of the material leaked nor can he present why he did so. The plea that the exposé is done in public interest or the public has a right to know about the issues is untenable. Such restrictions cannot be allowed in the case of Assange. He exposed documents to the public not about an ongoing war but government doings of the past. Even journalists sometimes depend on whistleblowers for unearthing vital information about government irregularities and wrongdoing. No doubt such a relationship is delicate particularly in cases where national security is concerned.

It is heartening that India's Supreme Court, in a different case, ruled that the government cannot use the national security plea to stonewall disclosure of government documents to preserve the people's right to know.

Similarly when the US government is involved in cases, national security cannot invariably override public interest in publication of documents and the right to information. This is at the heart of the WikiLeaks case.

This week all eyes are on Assange's lawyers who will seek court permission to appeal against the extradition decision made in 2022 by then home secretary Priti Patel. There are three possibilities. Assange may be extradited. The UK may relent and President Biden may intervene, providing relief. If the first possibility comes true, Assange will have to face a criminal trial in which he will not be allowed to make his arguments and a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison for each of the Espionage Act charges will be slapped on him. Conviction will make the prison his home for the rest of his life.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has slammed the US and said his country as a whole shared the view that "enough is enough." Assange is an Australian citizen. Speaking in parliament after backing a motion calling for an end to Assange's prosecution so that he can return to his family in Australia, Albanese said things cannot go on and on indefinitely. In a forceful language he said his government had a duty to "lobby" for its citizens and that he had raised the issue at the highest levels in Britain and the US. Without trying to interfere in the legal process of other countries, he said it is appropriate for Australia to put its very strong view that the matter should end without any further delay and justice be given to the whistleblower.

It is time to stand with Assange not only for his sake but for the sake of transparency and protection to whistleblowers and journalists across the world. The media world needs to get united in slamming down the attempt by the United States to get Assange extradited from Britain to face charges under the US Espionage Act. The application of the provisions of this Act is as much a threat to Assange as to journalism with global implications.

A crusader for truth should not, in the interest of a healthy democratic world, spend his life in prison.

### WISDOM CORNER

Before success comes in any man's life, he's sure to meet with much temporary defeat and, perhaps some failures. When defeat overtakes a man, the easiest and the most logical thing to do is to quit. That's exactly what the majority of men do.

NAPOLEON HILL

Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.

OSCAR WILDE

The law condemns and punishes only actions within certain definite and narrow limits; it thereby justifies, in a way, all similar actions that lie outside those limits.

LEO TOLSTOY

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1872: The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City opened to the public, and it later became one of the foremost museums in the world.
- 1913: Works to build Australia's capital city commence. Canberra is an entirely planned city and was chosen as the Australian capital as a compromise between rivals Sydney and Melbourne.
- 1944: U.S. bombers attack German aircraft manufacturing centers, in a bombing campaign that became known as the "Big Week." The goal was to achieve air superiority to secure the invasion of Europe.
- 1962: John Glenn's orbit of Earth. John H. Glenn, Jr., the oldest of seven astronauts selected by NASA for Project Mercury spaceflight training (and later a U.S. senator), became on this day in 1962 the first American to orbit Earth, doing so three times.
- 1988: The Nagorno-Karabakh War is triggered by der Autonomous Oblast's secession from Azerbaijan. Today, Nagorno-Karabakh is a de facto independent state, but the territory is still internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan.

### LOL

#### Something less expensive

A shoplifter was caught red-handed trying to steal a watch from an exclusive jewellery store. "Listen," said the shoplifter, "I know you don't want any trouble either. What do you say I just buy the watch and we forget



about this?" The manager agreed and wrote up the sales slip. The crook looked at the slip and said, "This is a little more than I intended to spend. Can you show me something less expensive?"

### SPECTRUM FARMERS' STIR

## Increasing farm income imperative

The conferment of Bharat Ratna to the late MS Swaminathan brings to the forefront the subject of farmers and their conditions for which the agricultural scientists had a definite contribution. But just after that, there has been a fresh agitation by farmers with various demands which include legally binding minimum support price (MSP) of 23 crops.

It is well known that MSP is fixed at a level of at least 1.5 times of the all paid-out costs incurred by farmers. Experts have opined that this should receive a statutory legal backing and the MSP should be fixed at 50% above the comprehensive cost of production which includes actual cost incurred to grow crops and assumed values for other items such as family labour, fertilisers and chemicals etc.

With no legal backing, it is a fact that over 80% of the country's farmers have been unable to sell their crops at the MSPs fixed by the government. Most analysts believe that the ruling dispensation has little concern for the farming community and is not serious in ensuring how their income increases.

However, it is quite benevolent towards the rich and reports indicate that the ruling party has allowed tax concessions of around ₹1 lakh crore every year to Indian domestic corporate houses but most of them were not increasing their investments.

According to government sources, farmers from both Punjab and Haryana benefited immensely from increased procurement of paddy and wheat at MSP as well as from multiple farm schemes during the last 10 years under NDA compared to the previous 10-year period when UPA was in office. In the case of Punjab, total procurement of paddy in 10 years of UPA (2004-05 to 2013-14) was 1263 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) which went up to 1686 LMT during the NDA government (2014-15 to 2023-24). Similar has been the case of Haryana.

Meanwhile, an analysis by the Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) showed that farmers in Punjab are already getting MSP that is 50% higher than the comprehensive cost (C2). Applying C2+50% formula in Punjab results in a cost of ₹1503 a quintal while the cur-

rent MSP is ₹2275 a quintal, which is 51% higher than the comprehensive cost (C2) or Swaminathan Committee formula. However, the comprehensive cost for a farmer growing the same commodity in Bihar and Bengal works out to ₹1745 a quintal and ₹2003 respectively. This means that they are getting less than 50% over the comprehensive costs under the C2+50% formula.

Apart from MSP procurement, experts have suggested the need for a more decentralised and dynamic framework that might play a role in supporting sustainable, agro-ecological and economic transitions across different regions. The government needs to look into this aspect to ensure that small farmers at the grassroots get the right price for their produce.

With a stagnant rural sector and a huge population dependent on agriculture, there is an imperative need to make agriculture more profitable. It goes without saying that the path shown by Swaminathan in evolving an integrated approach can help solve the challenges facing Indian agriculture.

In this connection, the Indian Council for Agricultural Research should provide inputs about crop diversification suited in specific areas and set up experimental farms, preferably at the block level. Unless this is done at the grassroots, it would be difficult for farm incomes to increase.

Additionally, there have been suggestions to set up farm management cooperatives that would manage for a fee, i.e., increase productivity without any rights to the land. These farms would benefit from economies of scale and their owners would have the option of seeking non-farm work. But even the allocation for the flagship scheme MGN-REGA cannot guarantee employment for more than 40 days. The point that needs to be stressed is that if industry can be given so many incentives, why not agriculture, which employs a huge section of the population. Moreover, agriculture contributes 17% to India's economy. If the country has to develop in a balanced manner, the ruling dispensation has to give sufficient attention to the rural and farm sectors as they cannot be allowed to languish. INFRA



Dhurjati Mukherjee

WITH A STAGNANT RURAL SECTOR AND A HUGE POPULATION DEPENDENT ON AGRICULTURE, THERE IS A NEED TO MAKE AGRICULTURE MORE PROFITABLE

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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

### Social justice

Sir, Though the world has tremendously taken off in all spheres of life, there are some races, classes and religions which feel, or are, deprived of equal chances to education, healthcare and employment and privileges among others. Social justice aims at correcting this, and a robust social justice system encompasses social integration, equal employment opportunities and poverty eradication. Social development and social justice are crucial for fostering peace and security in, and among, nations. On the corollary, social justice and social development cannot be attained in the absence of peace and security or in the absence of human rights. "Global coalition for social justice: bridging gaps, building alliances" is a natural theme for the World Social Justice Day on 20 February.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

### Hockey delight

Sir, Steel city Rourkela celebrates its evenings these days with joy and jubilation. Friends and families reunite and share the visual treat of international hockey matches under the good grace of flood lights. The city smiles and cheers even the foreign faces who are our guests as they dribble, dodge and score. Hearts skip beats and the colossal stadium resounds with every cut-throat competition – be it India, Australia, China or Netherland. For now, Rourkelites belong to all nations. Glamour, extravaganza and entertainment mark the evenings, making the steel city a centre of attraction around the globe. And hence, a heart-felt gratitude to the state government of Odisha for the blessing of the Birsu Munda Hockey Stadium. It's a boon to the land.

Ajit Kumar Barla, ROURKELA

### Biggest win

Sir, India exposed the chinks in England's baseball approach, recording the biggest win in its Test history. The Poms could only manage a score of 122 while chasing a mammoth 557 to win. Skipper Rohit Sharma led by example, scoring a brilliant 131 in the first essay. Ravindra Jadeja 112 and 5-41, Yashasvi Jaiswal (214), Sarfaraz Khan (62 and 68 n.o) and Mohammed Siraj (4-84) also threw their weight around. The victory is noteworthy because it occurred without the star batters Virat Kohli and KL Rahul.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

# Centre to discuss demand for Ladakh's statehood



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** The Centre agreed Monday to discuss threadbare the demands for Ladakh's statehood, the inclusion of the Union Territory in the 6th Schedule of the Constitution and the setting up of an exclusive public service commission for the high-altitude region.

The agreement was arrived at a meeting held here between the High Powered Committee (HPC) for Ladakh headed by Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai and a 14-member delegation of the Apex Body of Leh (ABL) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), representing various organisations of the Union Territory.

"The meeting decided to discuss threadbare our main demands: statehood for Ladakh, inclusion of Ladakh in the 6th Schedule of the Constitution and the constitution of the exclusive public service commission for Ladakh February 24," according to a joint press release issued by the ABL and KDA.

The two organisations from Ladakh also decided to call off "for the time being" their plan to go on a hunger strike from Tuesday "in view of this significant development."

The meeting resolved to constitute a joint sub-committee for carrying forward the exercise to look into the details of the demands.

"We have, accordingly, set

up the sub-committee with the following members: Thupstan Chhewang, Chering Dorjay Lakrook and Nawang Rigzin Jora, representing the ABL, and Qamar Ali Akhoun, Asgar Ali Karbalai and Sajjad Kargili, representing the KDA," the release said.

The two organisations conveyed the names of the sub-committee members to Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla.

"All members of the sub-committee are in Delhi and we look forward to fruitful discussions at the next meeting," the release added.

The other demands of the delegation include two Lok Sabha seats (one for Kargil and one for Leh) and job opportunities for the residents of the Union Territory, sources said.

Ladakh currently has one Lok Sabha constituency.

Ladakh, which no longer has any Assembly constituency, was earlier part of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution, which gave a special status to Jammu and Kashmir, were abrogated August 5, 2019 and the erstwhile state was bifurcated into the Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.



A vehicle moves on a snow covered road amid snowfall at Sonamarg in Ganderbal district of Jammu and Kashmir. Higher reaches of the Kashmir Valley including Sonamarg received heavy snowfall while plains were lashed by rains.

PTI PHOTO

# Multi-tier security for PM's visit to Jammu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Feb 19:** A multi-tier security setup has been put in place and traffic advisories issued for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jammu Tuesday, officials Monday said.

Modi is scheduled to address a public rally at Maulana Azad Stadium in the heart of winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir during his visit February 20, they said.

The officials said the PM will also launch multiple development projects, including for education, railway, aviation and road sectors, worth Rs 30,500 crore. According to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), he will also distribute appointment letters to about 1,500 newly recruited government employees of Jammu and Kashmir and interact with beneficiaries of various schemes as part of the 'Viksit Bharat, Viksit Jammu' programme.

"A multi-tier security setup has been put in place across Jammu for the Prime Minister's visit to the city of temples. The major focus of heightened security arrangements remains the venue of his public meeting and adjoining areas," a senior police officer told PTI.

He said that a high alert had



been sounded along the borders, while the border and highway grids were further strengthened with the officers asked to intensify patrolling and checking of vehicles to keep subversive elements at bay. The officials said the Maulana Azad Stadium has been taken over by the security agencies who conducted a thorough anti-sabotage check. February 17, Jammu District Magistrate Sachin Kumar Vaishya announced a temporary ban on the use of drones, paragliders and remote controlled micro-light aircrafts as a precautionary measure to counter possible activities by the terrorists and anti-national elements.

The order was issued under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code while responding to intelligence reports highlighting potential security threats.

# HP: Tourist arrivals increase by 6% in 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Shimla, Feb 19:** Tourist arrivals in Himachal Pradesh increased from 1.51 crore in 2022 to 1.60 crore last year, despite the disruptions caused by heavy rainfall, floods and landslides in mid-2023.

In the first half of 2023, more than one crore tourists - 99,78,504 domestic and 28,239 foreign - had visited the state till June.

But tourist inflow completely stopped during the monsoon due to heavy rainfall, flash floods and landslides, and disruption caused by these, an official said.

Himachal Pradesh suffered losses to the tune of Rs 9,905.77 crore due to the July and August rains, and more than 200 people were killed in rain-related incidents and accidents. Several people were also displaced.

In one instance, 75,000 stranded tourists had to be evacuated from the state July 9 and 10 after roads were blocked in the hill state, according to government data.

Following the monsoon mayhem, relief and restoration works were undertaken on war-footing. The large flow of tourist during the Kullu



International Dussehra marked the beginning of the revival of the tourism industry, officials told the PTI.

Data from the tourism department showed that 1.60 crore tourists, including 62,806 foreigners, visited the state during 2023 as compared to 1.51 crore tourists, including 29,333 foreigners, in 2022.

While the overall increase was six per cent, it was 53 per cent foreign tourists, it showed.

The officials said that a boost in infrastructure and addition of tourists spots has aided the recovery.

President of the Manali Hoteliers Association, Mukesh Thakur, said Atal tunnel (Rohtang), the new gateway to Lahaul and Spiti, has emerged as a tourist hotspot. Tourists

are visiting the area in large numbers, the president of the Manali Hoteliers Association, Mukesh Thakur.

Besides the prominent tourists spots like Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti, Chamba, Dharamsala, Shimla and Kullu-Manali, there is also a perennial flow of visitors to 'shakti peeths' in Kangra, Bilaspur, Una, Sirmour and Mandi.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukkhu has said that the state's target is to have five crore tourists annually and for this infrastructure in being made.

During his budget speech Saturday, he had announced plans to develop Chandratal, Kaza and Tandi in Lahaul-Spiti and Rackchham and Nako 'Chango' Khab in Kinnaur as tourist destinations.

# 'BJP in touch with MLAs across party lines'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Shimla, Feb 19:** Leader of Opposition in Himachal Pradesh Jai Ram Thakur Monday said the BJP is in touch with MLAs across party lines and given the atmosphere of 'disappointment and unhappiness' in the Congress, anything could happen in the Rajya Sabha polls for one seat. He said he has appealed to the

Congress and independent MLAs to exercise their 'conscience vote' if they are unhappy with the government.

This comes days after the BJP sprung a surprise February 15 by fielding former minister Harsh Mahajan, who had joined the party in 2022 ahead of the state Assembly polls, as its candidate for the Rajya Sabha seat against Congress' Abhishek Manu Singhvi.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER  
MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, SONEPUR  
IN FRONT OF CIVIL COURT DIST-SUBARNAPUR, PIN-767017  
E-mail: -eeminsp@gmail.com  
ODISHA INTEGRATED IRRIGATION PROJECT FOR CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE (OIIPICRA)  
(WORLD BANK PROJECT ID: P163533)  
REQUEST FOR BIDS (RFB) E-Procurement Notice  
NATIONAL OPEN COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENT FOR SMALL WORKS  
No.- 194 Date: 14.02.2024  
No.A-1557: RFB No. - OIIPICRA-SNP-W2-03/2023-24

Name of work	Modernization works of Minor Irrigation Projects under OIIPICRA in Subarnapur District.
No. of works	1 (One) No. Minor Irrigation Project
Estimated cost	From Rs. 45.10 Lakhs
Cost of Bid Document	Free of Cost
Time for completion	Refer to DTCN.
Availability of bid documents	From 22.02.2024, 10.00 Hrs. to 22.03.2024 up to 15.00 Hrs. through e-procurement website (https://tendersodisha.gov.in)
Date of Pre-Bid Meeting	04.03.2024 As per Para-7 of DTCN
Last date & time of receipt of bid	Upto 22.03.2024, 15.00 Hrs. through online
Period of receipt of bid security	Shall be paid online through the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha
Date of opening of technical bid	On dt 22.03.2024 at 15.30 Hrs.
Date of opening of financial bid	To be intimated online after off-line evaluation of Technical Bid.
Digital signature certificate of Bidder	The bidder must possess compatible digital signature certificate (DSC) of Class-II or III.
The detail tender call notice can also be seen in the DOWR website	https://dowr.odisha.gov.in, https://odctrms.in
Name & Address of the OIT	Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Sonapur, Infront of Civil Court, Dist-Subarnapur, Pin-767017, Email:eeminsp@gmail.com
Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement market place in	www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd./- Superintending Engineer  
MI Division, Sonapur

OIPR-32290/11/0013/2324

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER  
RURAL WORKS DIVISION-I, GANJAM, BERHAMPUR  
Phone:0680-2291405, E-Mail:eerw\_gm1@yahoo.co.in  
Government of Odisha, e-Procurement Notice  
Bid Identification No. Online Tender/15/SERWDG-II/2023-24  
Letter No.1007// RWGD-I/BAM/Date:13.02.2024

1 Name of the Work	Repair to Road Works
2 Estimated Cost	Rs. 15.13 to Rs. 30.25 Lakhs
3 Period of Completion	15 (Fifteen) days as shown in Column No.06 of Annexure
4 Date & Time of Availability of Bid documents in the Portal	From 20.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M. to 27.02.2024 upto 6.00 PM
5 Last Date/Time for Receipt of Bids in the Portal	27.02.2024 upto 6.00 PM
6 Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid	Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division-I, Ganjam, Berhampur

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal website https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer  
R.W. Division-I, Ganjam, Berhampur  
OIPR-25085/11/0021/2324

# Massive plantation to protect rare 'Hangul'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Srinagar, Feb 19:** In order to protect the fragile environment of Kashmir's rare stag species known as the 'Hangul', a social enterprise has decided to plant over 1,25,000 plants in the habitat of this protected animal.

As the after-effects of climate change are adversely affecting not only the environment but, also the rare and distinct wildlife in the Valley, there is an urgent need for intervention.

A social enterprise, Grow-trees.com has come forward to plant over 1,25,000 trees of various species in the habitat of the Hangul.

Hangul is a subspecies of the Central Asian red deer found in the dense riverine forests of the Valley, the mountains of Jammu and northern Himachal Pradesh.

"The initiative is aimed at an urgent intervention to prevent the population from going extinct. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has already classified the Hangul as Critically Endangered in the Red Data Book and placed the animal under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, highlighting the imminent risk of Hangul disappearing forever," said Pradip Shah, Co-



Founder at Grow-Trees.com

He said that in response to the situation and to raise awareness about the need for Hangul conservation, the social enterprise, actively involved in afforestation projects in the country, has initiated the 'Trees for Hanguls' project.

"This project aims to create a lasting and meaningful impact, focusing on the area around Pampore, in the periphery of the Dachigam National Park, and serves multiple purposes," he said.

Shah said that by planting trees, the programme works towards

restoring the Hanguls' habitat, and as these trees mature, they offer vital ecological benefits such as carbon sequestration, a sustainable water supply, and a healthy source of nutrition for the Hanguls. Afforestation also helps to fight climate change.

"Studies indicate that human activities are among the major factors contributing to the decline in the Hangul population," Shah said.

He said that rising pollution, poaching, habitat fragmentation due to land use and climate change have had adverse effects on the ecosystem.

"Planting trees is an effective measure to counteract these threats," he said.

Following a landscape-level conservation planning model, the agency is implementing a strategic mix of coniferous and broadleaf species, such as kail (Pinus wallichiana) and apricot (Prunus armeniaca), to serve as a valuable food source for the Hanguls. Additionally, cypress (Cupressus torulosa) and deodar cedar (Cedrus deodara) have been included to provide ample shade and shelter. The project also features the planting of apples (Malus pumila/domestica), pears (Pyrus communis L.), quince (Cydonia oblonga), and horse chestnut (Aesculus hippocastanum), contributing to the social impact by offering various benefits to the villagers residing around the planting site.

The greatest advantage of the 'Trees for Hanguls' is that the public can become a part of this initiative by gifting or purchasing a tree for Rs 85 through www.grow-trees.com.

"Once the trees reach maturity, the project will play a pivotal role in enhancing the Hangul habitat and fostering biodiversity within the ecosystem," Shah added.

# Remain committed to unity of INDIA bloc: PDP

**Srinagar:** The PDP Monday rubbished reports about the party considering leaving the Opposition INDIA bloc and said it remains committed to the unity of the alliance. In a post on its official handle on X, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) said, "Disregard the fabricated news about @jkpdp considering breaking ties with the INDIA alliance. We stand firm in our commitment to unity and our alliance. Don't be misled by this malicious misinformation!" The party's reaction came after reports in a section of the media claimed that the PDP had left the INDIA bloc and decided to contest Lok Sabha elections on its own.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BOLANGIR  
E-mail ID: eerw\_blgrr@yahoo.co.in  
e-Procurement Notice  
IFB IDENTIFICATION NO. EEBLGR-Online-23/2023-24

1. Name of Work	Building Works
2. Total No. of Works	03 (Three) Nos.
3. Approximate Estimated Cost	Rs. 34.50 Lakh
4. Time for Completion	6 (Six) Calendar Month
5. Mode of Submission of Tender	Tender should be submitted online in www.tendersodisha.gov.in at 11.00 A.M. upto 5.00 P.M.
6. Other details are as follow	As per TCN No. EEBLGR-Online-23/2023-24

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender online for bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender
		From	To		
Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Bolangir	EEBLGR-Online-23/2023-24	20.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M.	26.02.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.	23.02.2024 upto 1.00 PM	27.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M.

\* Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in  
\* Any Corrigendum/Addendum will be displayed in the above e tender website only.

OIPR-25068/11/0033/2324 Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Bolangir



Farmers listen to a leader at the Punjab-Haryana Shambhu border during their 'Delhi Chalo' protest, near Patiala, Punjab

PTI



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with supporters during the 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' in Pratapgarh, Uttar Pradesh

PTI



Students perform during 'Khelo India University Games' competition in Agartala, Tripura

PTI



People take photos in front of the giant road barricade lights decoration on the shore of Tsim Sha Tsui

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST



Republic of Korea Air Force's Black Eagles perform during an aerial flying display ahead of the Singapore Airshow at Changi Exhibition Centre

REUTERS



Miss World 2023 participants during a photo shoot in New Delhi

PTI



Children perform the 'Kuthiyottam' ritual at the Attukal Bhagavathy temple, ahead of the 'Attukal Pongala' festival in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

PTI



Snow-covered Auli area after fresh snowfall in Chamoli, Uttarakhand

PTI



## of the day quote

Kumaraswamy has spoken, made offers (to Congress MLAs), they (MLAs) came and told me. He had threatened them. I am aware of it. I will not speak on it now

Mamata Banerjee will now allow her men to pick out young Hindu married women to be raped night after night in the TMC office cannot be articulated in mere words. Can we as citizens be mute spectators?

We have given a final offer of 17 Lok Sabha seats to the Congress. Akhilesh Yadav's participation in the Nyay Yatra in Raebareli Tuesday will depend on their acceptance

## SHORT TAKES

### Seven BJP MLAs move Delhi HC

New Delhi: Seven BJP MLAs approached the Delhi High Court Monday challenging their indefinite suspension from the Delhi Assembly for interrupting the lieutenant governor's address. Justice Subramonium Prasad listed the matter for hearing February 20 on whether to grant any interim relief to suspended legislators Mohan Singh Bisht, Ajay Mahawar, OP Sharma, Abhay Verma, Anil Bajpai, Jitender Mahajan and Vijender Gupta.

### SC stays proceedings against Siddaramaiah

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Monday stayed criminal proceedings against Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and others in connection with a protest march held in the state in 2022. Issuing notice to the Karnataka government, a bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and P K Mishra also stayed the proceedings against Congress general secretary and Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala, state ministers M B Patil and Ramalinga Reddy.

### ED issues fresh summons to Mahua

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate has issued fresh summons to TMC leader and expelled Lok Sabha MP Mahua Moitra for questioning in a FEMA contravention case after she did not appear Monday, sources said. The 49-year-old politician has been given a week's time to appear after she sent a communication to the agency expressing her inability to appear, they said.

### 4 cops suspended

Jaipur: Four policemen were suspended and other personnel at a police station in Rajasthan's Khairthal-Tijara district shifted to the police lines for not taking action against people allegedly selling meat suspected to be beef, officials said Monday. The action was taken after some people were caught while allegedly selling suspected beef. After getting information of cow slaughter and selling of beef in the open, several police teams conducted raids in the area and caught some suspects.

### Over 100 huts gutted

New Delhi: Around 130 huts were gutted after a massive fire broke out in a slum cluster in Delhi's Shahbad village area, an official said, adding that no one was injured. Sharing the details, Director of Delhi Fire Service (DFS) Atul Garg said that a call regarding the blaze was received at 10:17 pm Sunday.



In general, the budget is prepared based on finance. This is prepared based on justice; social justice is the pivot

M K STALIN | TAMIL NADU CM

### KEJRIWAL SKIPS ED SUMMONS AGAIN

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal did not appear before the Enforcement Directorate Monday for questioning in a money laundering case linked to the excise policy matter, with his party terming the summons as "illegal"



## SANDESHKHALI VIOLENCE

# NCW chief seeks Prez rule

Amid ongoing tensions in Sandeshkhali over protests against TMC-led atrocities and sexual harassment, police maintained a strong presence as normalcy struggled to return to the area



Local women wait to meet National Commission for Women (NCW) Chairperson Rekha Sharma (not seen) during her visit to Sandeshkhali

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata/ New Delhi, Feb 19: NCW chairperson Rekha Sharma Monday demanded the resignation of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and imposition of President's Rule following unrest in Sandeshkhali, evoking a sharp retort from TMC, which accused the panel of echoing the BJP's agenda.

Sharma, who led a delegation of National Commission for Women (NCW) to the unrest-hit area in North 24 Parganas district, said the visit was aimed at bolstering confidence among women to speak out about their experiences.

Meanwhile, the Calcutta High Court Monday granted permission to the Leader of Opposition in West Bengal assembly Suwendu Adhikari to visit Sandeshkhali, who was earlier stopped twice from visiting the area.

In New Delhi, BJP MP Locket Chatterjee slammed the TMC government and said what happened to women in Sandeshkhali was a reminder of atrocities against women in countries like Iraq and Pakistan.

Amid ongoing tensions in Sandeshkhali over protests against TMC-led atrocities and sexual harassment, police maintained a strong presence as normalcy struggled to return to the area. "After speaking with women in Sandeshkhali, it's clear the situation is dire. Numerous women shared their harrowing experiences; one even reported

### The Supreme Court Monday refused to entertain a PIL seeking a court-monitored CBI or SIT probe into the violence, saying the incidents can't be compared to the savagery in Manipur

being raped inside a TMC party office. We demand President's Rule in Bengal, which we will also include in our report," Sharma told PTI.

The demand for imposition of President's Rule came days after the National Commission for Scheduled Caste (NCSC) recommended the same in its report to President Droupadi Murmu on alleged harassment of women by TMC supporters in Sandeshkhali.

"I think the Chief Minister should resign," Sharma said while talking to reporters.

She accused the Mamata Banerjee government of attempting to suppress women's voices to conceal the truth and emphasised the need to arrest Shajahan Sheikh, an absconding TMC leader allegedly involved in the atrocities, to encourage more women to come forward with complaints. "I am in Sandeshkhali for the entire day

to hear from women. We have to instil confidence in them. I will talk to the police," Sharma told reporters soon after reaching the area.

Sharma's visit comes after a two-member team of the commission took stock of the situation in the area last week and submitted a report.

The NCW chairperson alleged that neither the district magistrate nor the superintendent of police were present there to meet her. "The administration and police are not listening to complaints of women and they do not do anything. Only one woman has come out and registered her statement before a magistrate. We want more women to come in the front... Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has never allowed her officers to meet teams of central officers. But the truth will come out," Sharma said.

The two-member NCW team's report revealed a "troubling pattern of negligence and complicity" by the state government and law enforcement officials. "We want to talk to the victims and will then meet the West Bengal governor and then the President in New Delhi. Even if only one incident takes place, it is shameful," Sharma said in a statement. Reacting to Sharma's allegations, the TMC asked why she does not go to BJP-ruled states where similar allegations were raised.

# Farmer leaders reject govt's proposal on MSP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 19: A day after a meeting with Union Ministers, farmer leaders taking part in the 'Delhi Chalo' agitation Monday rejected the Centre's proposal of procuring five crops at MSP, saying it wasn't in farmers' interest and announced that they will march towards the national capital February 21.

Earlier, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), which spearheaded the 2020-21 farmers' stir, rejected the government's offer.

In the fourth round of talks with farmer leaders Sunday, a panel of three Union ministers proposed buying of pulses, maize and cotton crops by government agencies at minimum support price (MSP) for five

years after entering into an agreement with farmers.

Earlier Monday, farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher said farmers will hold a discussion on the Centre's proposal but will not budge from their demand for a law guaranteeing MSP. Later in the day, Jagjit Singh Dallewal, a leader of SKM (Non-Political) that is spearheading the 'Delhi Chalo' march along with the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, said, "After holding a discussion in our two forums, it has been decided that the Centre's proposal is not in the interest of farmers and we reject this proposal."

When asked if their call for the march to Delhi still stands, Pandher said, "We will move to Delhi peacefully at 11 am February 21."



FOR A CAUSE: Mid-day meal workers raise slogans during a protest in Patna, Bihar

## AIR POLLUTION CRISIS

# 'Smog towers, cloud seeding not solution'

ACCORDING TO INDEPENDENT THINK-TANK GREENPEACE INDIA, MORE THAN 99 PER CENT OF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION BREATHE AIR THAT EXCEEDS THE WHO STANDARDS ON PM2.5

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: Improving air quality in India requires long-term effort, a senior US scientist has said and noted cost-intensive technologies such as smog towers and cloud seeding are not sustainable solutions to the pollution problem plaguing the country.

In an interview with PTI, Richard Peltier, a member of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Air Pollution and Health Technical Advisory Group, said there is a good understanding that air pollution is "really quite bad" across India but precision is lacking due to the limited distribution of air pollution monitors.

When asked how much time is needed to control air pollu-



tion in cities such as Delhi, he cited the example of the US.

The US implemented the Clean Air Act in the 1960s, Peltier said and added only recently has the country developed air quality that is generally considered good.

"So, it took 50 or 60 years to get here. This is not an instantaneous problem. This is not something that's going to be resolved with the stroke of a single pen or a law. This takes time... It is more of a marathon than a

sprint," he said. Asked about the role of smog towers in resolving the issue, Peltier -- also an executive editor of the Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology -- said these giant air purifiers work on a small scale but are impractical for entire cities due to cost and maintenance challenges.

"Do they remove air pollution from the air? Yes, they do. Do they remove an adequate amount of air pollution from the air? Absolutely not. It is like trying to dry up a big mighty river with a bath towel. You just cannot do it," he said in a statement.

On fighting air pollution with cloud seeding technology, the scientist said it is not something that is sustainable and certainly

### Mamata writes to PM over deactivation of Aadhaar cards in WB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 19: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the "sudden deactivation" of Aadhaar cards of people in her state, "especially those" belonging to the SC, ST and OBC communities.

She also asserted that such a "deactivation" exercise was against regulations and in gross violation of natural justice.

"I wish to bring to your kind notice a sudden development of the serious nature of indiscriminate deactivation of Aadhaar Cards of the people, especially those belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and OBC communities in West Bengal," Banerjee said in a letter to Modi.

"I would like to know the causes for such sudden deactivation of Aadhaar cards without assigning reasons. Is it to deprive beneficiaries of benefits or to create a panic situation among people before LS polls?" she said.

The Chief Minister claimed that the head office of Unique Identification Authority of India in New Delhi was directly issuing deactivation letters to individuals and family members without any field inquiry or taking the state into confidence.

"The present development has created chaos and hue and cry among the residents of the state, as a large number of people are approaching the district administration for redressal of their grievances," she said in the letter.

Earlier in the day, Banerjee attacked the BJP government at the Centre, alleging that the Aadhaar cards "were being deactivated" as a precursor to bringing in the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Banerjee also spoke of a "separate identification card" to ensure that people avail the benefits of social welfare schemes in the state.

# Sharad faction can use new name till further orders: SC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Supreme Court Monday directed that Election Commission's order of February 7 allotting 'Nationalist Congress Party-Sharadchandra Pawar' as the party name for the Sharad Pawar faction will continue till further orders.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and K V Viswanathan sought response of Ajit Pawar faction on a plea of Sharad Pawar against the February 6 order of Election Commission recognising the Maharashtra deputy chief minister-led group as the real Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

"We would like to examine the matter," the bench said as it issued notice to the Ajit Pawar led-faction.

The bench gave liberty to Sharad Pawar to move the Election Commission for allocation of the party symbol and directed the poll panel to allot it in one week of the application.

The bench, which appeared critical of the EC's February 6 order on recognising the real NCP, said, "The order says both of you (factions) violated the party constitution, both of you

The top court gave one week to Ajit Pawar faction to file its reply to the plea of Sharad Pawar, who will file a rejoinder in further two weeks

went against the 'aims and objective' and yet no one is disqualified. Just imagine what would happen to the voters, who voted for you."

During the hearing, Justice Viswanathan, while referring to the recent situation in Pakistan, said, "At some stage, let the voter have some say. It will cause chaos. I don't want to draw an analogy but if you're following the elections from across the border, the whole thing happened because someone wanted the 'bat' symbol and it was not given."

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Sharad Pawar, said the order passed by the Election Commission February 7 is an interim arrangement made by the poll panel for Rajya Sabha elections till February 27.

"The budget session of Maharashtra assembly is scheduled to start from February 26 and our group will be without any name or symbol after February 27," he submitted.

The senior lawyer further contended "the order said that Ajit Pawar side is the real NCP, which we will contest at a later stage but for Rajya Sabha elections, Sharad Pawar can use the name as a one-time measure. After February 27, technically I will be nameless, symbol less and will be bound to obey the whip of Ajit Pawar".

### SP offers 17 seats to Congress in UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Feb 19: The Congress has been offered 17 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party said Monday and asserted that its chief Akhilesh Yadav will join the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Raebareli only if the proposal is accepted.

"We have given a final offer of 17 Lok Sabha seats to the Congress. Akhilesh Yadav's participation in the Nyay Yatra in Raebareli Tuesday will depend on their acceptance," Rajendra Chaudhary, the Samajwadi Party's chief spokesperson, told PTI.

He, however, refused to identify the seats offered to the Congress.

A Congress statement Sunday said party chief Mallikarjun Kharge would join the yatra -- currently in Pratapgarh -- in



Amethi. The Samajwadi Party had earlier offered 11 seats to the grand old party while the Congress' state unit demanded a higher allocation.

Ajay Rai, the Congress' Uttar Pradesh unit chief, had earlier said the party should get around two dozen seats it had won in the 2009 general elections.

The Samajwadi Party and the Congress are partners in the opposition INDIA bloc.

The Congress secured victory only from the Raebareli seat in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections from Uttar Pradesh.

At 80, the state sends the highest number of MPs to Parliament.

Meanwhile, Union minister Smriti Irani dared Rahul Gandhi to contest from Amethi alone in the Lok Sabha elections.

# international



The war in Ukraine is still going on at this very moment and the situation is not easy. The promotion of economic reconstruction, however, is not only an investment for the future of Ukraine but also investing in Japan and the whole globe

## URSULA SEEKS SECOND TERM

Germany's Ursula von der Leyen will seek a second term as head of the European Union's powerful Commission in a move that could make her the most significant politician representing the bloc's 450 million citizens



### of the day quote

If voted to power, my administration will not only strengthen the alliance with NATO but also with several other countries including India, Australia, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines

NIKKI HALEY | INDIAN-AMERICAN REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRANT

Despite a 7.8% GDP contraction and six consecutive quarters of negative growth in 2022, the nation rebounded with a 1.6% growth rate in the Q3 of 2023

RANIL WICKREMESINGHE | PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA

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

EBRAHIM RAISI | IRAN'S PRESIDENT

### SHORT TAKES

#### Eight dead

**Cagayan de Oro (Philippines):** Philippine troops clashed with Muslim militants in a gunbattle that left at least six soldiers and two rebels dead in a fog-shrouded hinterland in the south, military officials said Monday. Military chief Gen Romeo Brawner Jr said four other soldiers were wounded in the army offensive Sunday against fighters of the Dawlah Islamiyah, a small armed group aligned with the Islamic State group, near Munai town in Lanao del Norte province. Troops were hunting a still-unknown number of militants, who withdrew from the scene of the battle, military officials said. Brawner vowed to get justice for the slain and wounded soldiers.

#### Eiffel Tower closed due to strike

**Paris:** Visitors to the Eiffel Tower were turned away Monday because of a strike over poor financial management at one of the world's most-visited sites. A sign was posted at the entrance in English, saying, "Due to a strike, the Eiffel Tower is closed. We apologise." The hugely popular 330-metre (1,083-foot) landmark in central Paris has seen soaring visitor numbers in the lead up to the Summer Olympics in the French capital. Tourists planning to visit the Eiffel Tower Monday were warned of disruptions in multiple languages on its website.

#### Mexican army kills 12 gunmen

**Mexico City:** Mexican soldiers killed 12 gunmen in a shootout near the Texas border, authorities said. The security department of the northern border state of Tamaulipas said late Sunday the confrontation took place in the township of Miguel Aleman, across the border from Roma, Texas.

#### South Korea doctors resign

**Seoul:** Trainee doctors in South Korea began submitting their resignations en masse Monday in protest of a government medical policy, causing reported delays in surgeries and other treatments at hospitals. Doctors' groups and the government have been squabbling over a government plan to increase the number of medical school admissions by 2,000, starting from next year. Health authorities say it's urgent to have more doctors considering South Korea's fast-aging population.

## Minister accuses Israel of apartheid

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**The Hague, Feb 19:** The Palestinian foreign minister Monday accused Israel of apartheid and urged the United Nations' top court to declare that Israel's occupation of lands sought for a Palestinian state is illegal and must end immediately and unconditionally for any hope for a two-state future to survive.

The remarks came at historic hearings into the legality of Israel's 57-year occupation. The case opened against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas war, which immediately became a focal point of the day — even though the hearings were meant to centre on Israel's open-ended control over the occupied West Bank, the Gaza Strip and annexed east Jerusalem.

Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister Riyad al-Maliki told the International Court of Justice that "2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza, half of them children, are besieged and bombed, killed and maimed, starved and displaced."

"More than 3.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank, including in Jerusalem, are subjected to colonisation of their territory and racist violence that enables it," he added. International law expert Paul Reichler, representing the Palestinians, told the court that the policies of Israel's government "are aligned to an unprecedented extent with the goals of the Israeli settler movement to



expand long term control over the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in practice to further integrate those areas within the territory" of Israel.

The hearings follow a request by the UN General Assembly for a non-binding advisory opinion into Israel's policies in the occupied territories. Judges will likely take months to issue an opinion. Israel's representatives were not scheduled to speak but submitted a five-page letter to the court last July that was published after Monday's hearing.

In the letter, Israel said that the questions put to the court are prejudiced and "fail to recognise Israel's right and

duty to protect its citizens," address Israeli security concerns or acknowledge Israel-Palestinians agreements to negotiate issues, including "the permanent status of the territory, security arrangements, settlements, and borders."

"While the request made to the Court seeks to portray it as such, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a cartoon narrative of villain and victim in which there are no Israeli rights and no Palestinian obligations," it said. "Entertaining such a falsehood can only push the parties further apart rather than help create conditions to bring them closer together." Prime Minister Benjamin

## Yemen's Houthis claim attack on ship

The attacks have prompted several companies to halt Red Sea voyages and take a longer and more expensive route around Africa



REUTERS

**Cairo, Feb 19:** Houthi militants in Yemen said Monday they had attacked the Rubymar cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden and the vessel is now at risk of sinking.

The crew is safe, Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said in a statement. The Houthis had also shot down a US drone in the port city of Hodeidah, he said. "The ship was seriously hit which caused it to stop completely. As a result of the extensive damage the ship suffered, it is now at risk of sinking in the Gulf of Aden," Sarea said.

The Belize-registered, British-registered and Lebanese-operated general cargo ship came under attack in the Bab al-Mandab Strait off Yemen Sunday, British maritime security firm Ambrey said. The UK Maritime Trade Operations agency reported Sunday that the crew had abandoned a ship off Yemen after an explosion — apparently the same incident.

Iran-aligned Houthi forces have made repeated drone and missile attacks against international commercial shipping in the

Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait — a route that accounts for about 12% of the world's shipping traffic — in what they say is an effort to support Palestinians in the war between Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

The attacks have prompted several companies to halt Red Sea voyages and take a longer and more expensive route around Africa. U.S. and British warplanes have carried out retaliatory strikes across Yemen. Ambrey said the ship was heading north during its journey from Khor Fakkan in the United Arab Emirates to Varna, Bulgaria, when the attack occurred.

"The partially laden vessel briefly slowed from 10 to six knots and deviated course, and contacted the Djiboutian Navy, before returning to her previous course and speed," it said.

The UK maritime agency said it had received a report of an incident 35 miles south of Al Mukha, a town on Yemen's Red Sea coast, and that an explosion close to a vessel had resulted in damage, the agency said in an advisory note.

## Navalny's widow vows to continue his fight

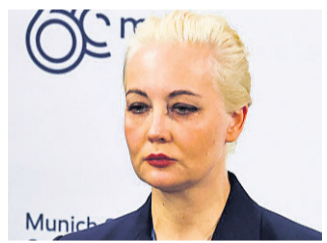
ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Moscow, Feb 19:** The widow of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny vowed Monday to continue his fight against the Kremlin while authorities denied his mother access to a morgue where his body is believed to be held after his death last week at an Arctic penal colony.

Fighting back tears, Yulia Navalnaya accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of killing her husband in the remote prison and vowed to punish him and other alleged perpetrators. She also slammed the authorities, saying they were refusing to hand over the body to Navalny's mother to cover-up his alleged killing, and referred to his alleged earlier poisoning with a Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent.

Russian authorities said that the cause for Navalny's death Friday at age 47 is still unknown. He had been jailed since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from poisoning with a Novichok-type nerve agent that he blamed on the Kremlin. He received three prison terms since his arrest, on a number of charges he has rejected as politically motivated.

"They are cowardly and meanly hiding his body, refusing to give it to his mother and lying miserably while waiting for the trace of another Putin's Novichok to disappear," Navalnaya said. She urged Russians to rally behind her "to share not only the grief and



endless pain that has enveloped and gripped us, but also my rage." "Rage, anger, hatred for those who dared to kill our future," she said. "I address you with the words of Alexey, in which I really believe: It's not a shame to do little, it's a shame to do nothing. It's a shame to let yourself be intimidated." Navalnaya urged all those who mourn Navalny to unite to fulfil his dream of a "beautiful Russia of the future" so that "the unimaginable sacrifice" he made would not have been in vain.

"The main thing that we can do for Alexei and ourselves is to keep fighting," she said. "Stronger, more fiercely and valiantly than we did before. We all need to get together in one strong fist and strike that mad regime, Putin, his cronies, bandits in epaulets, thieves and killers who mutilated our country."

Navalny's spokesperson Kira Yarmysh said that the Investigative Committee, the country's top criminal investigation agency, informed Lyudmila Navalnaya that the cause of her son's death remained unknown and that the official probe had been extended.

## Russia takes control of Avdiivka coke plant

REUTERS

**Moscow, Feb 19:** Russian forces Monday claimed full control of the vast Soviet-era coke plant in the ruined Ukrainian town of Avdiivka, cementing the biggest battlefield gain in nine months after one of the most intense battles of the war.

The fall of Avdiivka is Russia's biggest gain since it captured the city of Bakhmut in May 2023, and comes almost two years to the day since President Vladimir Putin triggered a full-scale war by ordering the invasion of Ukraine.

Russia's defence ministry said its troops had advanced about 9 km (5 miles) in that part of the 1,000-km (620-mile) front line, and that Russian troops were pressing forward after a deadly urban battle.

Ukraine said it had withdrawn its soldiers to save troops from being fully surrounded after months of fierce fighting. Putin hailed the fall of Avdiivka as an important victory and congratulated Russian troops.

"The 'Centre' grouping of troops, taking the offensive, took full control of the coke plant in Avdiivka," Russia's defence ministry said in a statement alongside video showing a series of blasts in what appeared to be the plant. "Russian flags were hoisted on the administrative buildings of the plant," the ministry said. Russian state television showed blue-and-yellow Ukrainian flags being taken down in Avdiivka and Russia's white, blue and red tricolour flag raised, including over the coke plant.



Farmers with tractors stand on a street in the centre of the Czech capital during a demonstration to draw attention to the poor situation of Czech agriculture in Prague, Monday

## 26 men massacred in tribal violence

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Melbourne, Feb 19:** At least 26 men were massacred in tribal violence in Papua New Guinea, Australian media reported Monday.

A tribe, their allies and mercenaries were on their way to attack a neighboring tribe when they were ambushed Sunday in Enga province in the South Pacific nation's remote highlands, Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary Acting Superintendent George Kakas told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Kakas initially said 53 had died. But security forces later

revised the death toll down to 26, ABC reported. It was not immediately clear whether any of the ambushers might be among the dead. Bodies were collected from the battlefield, roads and the riverside, then loaded onto police trucks and taken to the hospital. Kakas told ABC authorities were still counting "those who were shot, injured and ran off into the bushes."

Police in the capital of Port Moresby did not immediately respond to the AP's request for information on the massacre. Papua New Guinea is a diverse, developing nation of 10 million mostly subsistence farmers with

800 languages in a strategically important part of the South Pacific.

Internal security has become an increasing challenge for its government as China, the United States and Australia seek closer security ties. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his government was ready to assist Papua New Guinea, which is Australia's nearest neighbor and the largest single recipient of Australian foreign aid.

"That is very disturbing news that has come out of Papua New Guinea," Albanese said before the death toll was revised down.

## China building villages on disputed border with Bhutan: Report

AT LEAST THREE VILLAGES HAVE BEEN BUILT IN THE MOUNTAINOUS REGION SEPARATING THE TWO COUNTRIES, WITH SOME DOUBLING IN SIZE, THE HONG KONG-BASED SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST REPORTED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Beijing, Feb 19:** China is reportedly pressing ahead with the construction of border villages in the disputed territory with Bhutan, despite the ongoing border talks between the two countries.

At least three villages have been built in the mountainous region separating the two countries, with some doubling in size, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning

Post reported Sunday. The rapid expansion began as a poverty alleviation scheme but serves a dual national security role, the report quoted the ruling Chinese Communist Party officials as saying.

According to the report, in a remote village in the Himalayas, inside a border zone that has long been disputed by China and Bhutan, 18 new Chinese residents were waiting to enter their newly built homes.

Each carried a freshly framed portrait of Chinese President Xi Jinping — large enough to leave only their heads and lower legs exposed — while behind them a bright red banner welcomed them in Chinese and Tibetan script.

It was December 28 and they were the first batch of people — made up of 38 households from the Tibetan city of Shigatse — to move into the newly expanded Tamalung village, the report said, quoting a statement made by the Tibet Federation of Industry and Commerce in its WeChat account.

"The village is one of at least three built by China inside the disputed zone. Local governments in the Tibet Autonomous



Region led a rapid expansion of border villages last year, with Tamalung doubling in size in the latter half of 2023," the report

said. Satellite imagery — taken by US-based Maxar Technologies seven days before the residents moved in — shows 147 new houses.

The village expansion was designed to accommodate 235 households, in addition to the 200 people who were living there in just 70 homes at the end of 2022. China has been pressing ahead with its plans to build well-furnished villages in both the Indian and Bhutan borders.

Significantly, China is pressing ahead with its border villages plan along its disputed border with Bhutan after the two countries signed a "Cooperation Agreement" outlining the Responsibilities and Functions of the Joint Technical Team (JTT) on the

Delimitation and Demarcation of the Bhutan-China Boundary in October last year.

The agreement was signed during the visit of Bhutanese Foreign Minister Dr Tandi Dorji who held talks with China's former Ambassador to India and the current Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong at the 25th Round of Boundary Talks between the two nations.

China and Bhutan do not have diplomatic relations but maintain contact through periodic visits by officials. While China has resolved its boundary disputes with its 12 other neighbours, India and Bhutan are the only two countries with whom it is yet to sign border agreements.

## of the day quote

As the world continues to transition towards green technologies, the importance of these minerals and the geopolitics surrounding them will only increase. World is already witnessing critical mineral supply gaps

**AJAY SRIVASTAVA** | FOUNDER, GTRI

This strategic partnership between IREDA and PNB marks a significant step in our commitment to accelerate the growth of renewable energy in the country. By combining our strengths and resources, we aim to provide robust financial support to a diverse range of renewable energy projects, fostering sustainability and environmental awareness

**PRADIP KUMAR DAS** | CHAIRMAN & MD, IREDA

We will be rapidly expanding our pan-India sales network from 140 to 300 dealers in the next six months

**ROHIT VADERA** | CO-FOUNDER & CEO, PURE EV

## SHORT TAKES

### AI, TASL to invest ₹2,300cr in K'taka

**Bangalore:** Tata Group companies Air India (AI) and Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) plan to invest ₹2,300 crore in Karnataka in multiple projects which will provide employment to about 1,650 people, an official statement here Monday said. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Large and Medium Industries Minister MB Patil were among those present at a MoU signing ceremony regarding this. Patil said Air India plans to establish an Airframe Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility at Bangalore International Airport with an investment plan of ₹1,300 Crore which is likely to employ 1,200 people. This will be the first-of-its-kind facility in India and will open doors for a full-scale MRO, Patil claimed. Air India will also create an aviation hub at Bangalore Airport which will increase the economic activity and air traffic through Bangalore, he added.

### Sugar output falls

**New Delhi:** The country's sugar production dipped 2.48 per cent to 22.36 million tonne till February 15 of the ongoing 2023-24 marketing year, as per the industry body ISMA's latest data. Sugar production stood at 22.93 million tonne in the year-ago period. Sugar marketing year runs from October to September. In its second estimate, the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) has projected sugar output to decline by 10 per cent to 33.05 million tonne in the current 2023-24 marketing year as against 36.62 million tonne in the previous year.

### FCL defaults

**New Delhi:** Future Consumer Ltd (FCL) has defaulted on the payment of ₹132.97 crore towards payment of principal and interest of Non-Convertible Debentures (NCD) issued by the company to CDC Emerging Markets. FCL had defaulted on payment towards interest amount of ₹32.97 crore and principal amount of ₹100 crore, according to a regulatory filing by the FMCG arm of the debt-ridden Future Group Friday. "The company has been unable to service its obligations towards payment of principal and interest due on unlisted Non-Convertible Debentures issued by the company to CDC Emerging Markets Ltd," it said. The default happened February 15, 2024.



Now that inflation is pretty much in control, I suspect we will soon see the reversal of the rate hikes starting in India, whether it happens in the next or the second monetary policy from now. I think it's only a matter of time

**PIYUSH GOYAL** | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

### MINERALS AUCTION: CIL TO BID FOR THREE BLOCKS

State-owned mining giant Coal India Ltd (CIL) Monday said it will participate in the upcoming auction for critical mineral blocks, signaling its venture beyond coal. "Coal India will bid for three blocks in the critical minerals auction conducted by the mines ministry in February," Chairman PM Prasad said



# Nifty at new peak

MARKET RALLY CONTINUES FOR 5TH DAY

**Mumbai, Feb 19:** Stock markets closed higher for the fifth consecutive day Monday with the benchmark Sensex rising 281 points and Nifty scaling its fresh lifetime high driven by gains in financial and FMCG shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 281.52 points or 0.39 per cent to close at 72,708.16. As many as 17 Sensex shares advanced while 13 closed in the red. After a firm start, the index hit a high of 72,881.93 in day trade.

The broader Nifty closed at its all-time high of 22,122.25 points, up by 81.55 points or 0.37 per cent from the last close.

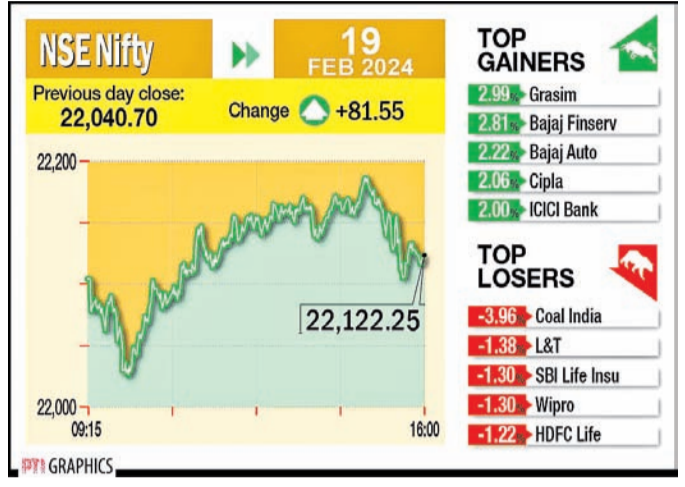
The 50-issue barometer also scaled its intra-day record high of 22,186.65 helped by gains in pharma, banking and oil shares. As many as 27 Nifty shares posted gains while 23 declined.

In the broader market, the BSE Midcap rose by 0.29 per cent while BSE SmallCap gained 0.77 per cent, beating bigger peers. The BSE largecap was up 0.35 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Telecom rose by 1.52 per cent, BSE Utilities by 1.29 per cent, BSE Consumer Durables by 1.76 per cent, BSE Services by 1.22 per cent, and FMCG by 0.84 per cent.

Among losers, BSE Metal dropped 0.87 per cent, Realty by 0.63 per cent, Capital Goods by 0.62 per cent, and IT by 0.26 per cent.

Key stock indices closed in the green for the fifth straight day Monday, gaining around 2.3 per cent. Among Sensex shares, Bajaj



**BULL RUN:** In last five sessions, overall market capitalisation of BSE listed shares surged to ₹391.69 lakh crore or \$4.72 trillion, making investors richer by ₹2.20 lakh crore

The overall sentiment appears to position Nifty for a potential upward movement towards 22,500-22,600 in the short term. The immediate crucial support is situated at 22,000

**RUPAK DE** | SENIOR TECHNICAL ANALYST, LKP SECURITIES

Finserv, ICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance, Sun Pharma, Maruti Suzuki, ITC, and Nestle were the lead gainers. On the other hand, L&T Wipro, IndusInd Bank and TCS and Tata Motors were the lead losers.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said, "Despite an unattractive risk reward, the broader market continued its outperformance in expectation of improvements in private capex and optimism about political stability."

Benign input costs and expectations of a pickup in rural demand will aid corporate earnings growth.

Key Asian markets were mixed. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.8 per cent, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 lost 0.04 per cent while the Shanghai Composite index gained 1.4 per cent.

On Friday, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) were net buyers as they purchased securities worth ₹253.28 crore, according to exchange data.

## BIZ BUZZ

### CREDAI lauds release of RERA-Compliant Odisha Apartment Ownership Rules 2024

**BHUBANESWAR:** CREDAI Odisha, the apex body of real estate developers in the state, commends the state government's proactive step towards enhancing transparency and accountability in the real estate sector with the release of the Odisha Apartment Ownership Rules 2024. The rules, along with associated bylaws, deed of conveyance format, and formats for the deed of transfer of common area, mark a significant milestone in aligning the state's regulatory framework with the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (RERA Act). The Odisha Apartment Ownership Act and Rules introduce several salient features aimed at promoting transparency, accountability, and consumer protection in the real estate sector. These include: Defined Ownership Rights, Formation of Associations and Common Area Transfer. The release of these rules underscores Odisha's commitment to promoting a robust and investor-friendly real estate ecosystem. By adopting RERA-compliant regulations, the state aims to elevate industry standards, enhance consumer confidence, and foster sustainable growth in the real estate market.



### Dept of Fisheries inks pact with ONDC

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** The Department of Fisheries Monday signed an MoU with the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) platform to provide better market access for the fisheries sector.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in the presence of Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Parshottam Rupala, Minister of State L Murugan, Fisheries Secretary Abhilaksh Likhi, ONDC Managing Director T Koshy and other officials.

"This is a historical MoU," Rupala said adding that the collaboration will unlock the potential of digital commerce for the Indian fisheries sector, an official statement said.

Rupala also said the collaboration would serve numerous benefits for fisheries industries like reduced transaction costs, increased market reach, improved transparency, increased competition & competitiveness, innovation, and employment generation.

The collaboration aims to empower all stakeholders, including traditional fishermen, fish farmer producer organizations, entrepreneurs from the fisheries sector to buy and sell their products through ONDC in a structured manner, the statement said.

### bigbasket now launched in Bhubaneswar

**BHUBANESWAR:** bigbasket, a TATA Enterprise, has launched its quick delivery service, bigbasket now, in Bhubaneswar - a first-of-its-kind for the City. With a tagline that emphasizes "Want Now, Get Now," bigbasket now is set to redefine the grocery shopping experience for local residents by offering lightning-fast 10 minutes delivery of daily essentials. This is for the first time that any company is offering such convenience to the residents of Bhubaneswar. People in the city can now choose from a huge range of 7,000 products covering all aspects of household and personal requirements in just 10 minutes. Also, bigbasket now will offer the first 10 deliveries for free.



### 'ED has not found forex breaches at Paytm arm'

**REUTERS**

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** An investigation into possible foreign exchange violations at Patym Payments bank by India's financial crime fighting agency has not yet found any breaches, a government source directly aware of the matter said Monday.

Last week, India's Enforcement Directorate announced the investigation into overseas transactions by Paytm Payments Bank, a unit of One 97 Communications, popularly known as Paytm.

Paytm shares have plunged more than 50% since the Reserve Bank of India announced January 31 that Paytm Payments Bank could no longer accept new funds into its accounts or wallet. The rout has eroded around \$3.1 billion in shareholders' wealth.

The investigation has found some lapses related so-called know-your-customer rules that verify the profiles of users, said the source.

But, the "Enforcement Directorate has not yet detected any foreign exchange management act violations by Paytm Payments Bank," the source said.

There were also some issues with a suspicious transaction report not being generated by the bank, the source said, adding that the Enforcement Directorate is still ascertaining whether to bring charges for any potential violations.

Paytm, Monday, replied with an earlier statement from last week saying it was providing information to the Enforcement Directorate and other authorities.

## SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT

# Goldman raises global equities to 'overweight'

The brokerage also downgraded global credit assets to 'underweight' from 'neutral'



**REUTERS**

**Washington, Feb 19:** Goldman Sachs upgraded its rating on global equities to "overweight" on prospects of economic growth and recovery in manufacturing activity, after starting the year with a "neutral" rating across assets.

Recent data has shown signs of improvement in global manufacturing activity, including in the United States, and market participants will assess incoming economic data to determine the trajectory of interest rate cuts of major central banks.

"We expect growth to become a more important driver of risk appetite and equity/bond correlations should be more negative this year," Goldman said in a note dated February 16.

The brokerage added that monetary policy easing cycles have historically been supportive for risky assets but may be less so this year, "as markets have already pre-traded much of the rates relief."

Traders see about a 51.3% chance for the US Federal Reserve to cut interest rates by 25 basis points in June, according to the CME FedWatch tool.

However, the potential for global earnings growth remains 'relatively muted' due to falling revenue growth and minimal room for margin improvement, Goldman said, although adds that global economic growth creates 'upside risks' to earnings growth.

"While equities have digested higher bond yields so far with better growth, there is a risk of shifting back to a good news is bad news regime," Goldman cautioned.

The brokerage also downgraded global credit assets to "underweight" from "neutral."

"Tight credit spreads are likely to become a speed limit to returns," the brokerage noted.

Goldman reiterated its "neutral" rating on longer-dated global bonds and commodities.

## BLOCK DEALS

# Whirlpool to sell 24% stake in Indian unit for up to \$451mn

**REUTERS**

**Mumbai, Feb 19:** Appliance maker Whirlpool is selling a 24% stake in its Indian unit this week for up to \$451 million via block deals, according to a term sheet seen by Reuters, amid record share offerings on the country's stock market.

Whirlpool plans to sell the stake at a price of ₹1,230 per share, a 7.6% discount to Monday's closing price. It aims to complete the deal by Wednesday.

Goldman Sachs is advising Whirlpool on the deal, the term sheet showed. Goldman and Whirlpool did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Whirlpool said in a US filing in November that it planned sell the stake in a bid to reduce debt.

The company's profit fell for a sixth straight quarter in the three months to end-December as it faced rising competition and price pressures.

It will sell a minimum of 19 million shares in the Indian unit, worth \$282 million at the proposed sale price, with the option to offer an extra 11.4 million, which would be worth an additional \$169 million.



**THE COMPANY'S PROFIT FELL FOR A SIXTH STRAIGHT QUARTER IN THE THREE MONTHS TO END-DECEMBER AS IT FACED RISING COMPETITION AND PRICE PRESSURES**

India's benchmark stock indices are near record highs, lifted by an economic growth rate higher than many other large countries and the expectation of political continuity in an election later this year.

Investors including Blackstone, Alipay and SoftBank have raised a combined billions of dollars through selling stakes in Indian portfolio companies in the past year or so, giving other investors more confidence about offloading large amounts of shares.

# ONGC's Mumbai High: 50 years on, still going strong

**OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS, THE LARGEST OILFIELD HAS PRODUCED AROUND 70% OF INDIA'S DOMESTIC PRODUCTION**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** India's flagship and largest oilfield Mumbai High was discovered on this day 50 years back and while most fields of that vintage have gone out of production, the field in the Arabian Sea is still going strong.

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) held a function in Mumbai to mark the

golden jubilee of the field which "brought newly-independent India on the world oil map."

"Over the past 50 years, thanks to the generation of energy soldiers of ONGC, Mumbai High has produced 527 million barrels of oil and 221 billion cubic meters of gas, around 70 per cent of India's domestic production so far," the firm said.

The Mumbai High field (previously Bombay High field) lies some 160-kilometer in the Arabian Sea offshore the western coast of India. It was discovered in February 1974 by the Russian and Indian team from the seismic exploration vessel Academic Arkhangelsky while mapping the Gulf of Cambay.

The field commenced production May 21, 1976.

The field initially produced



3,500 barrels of oil per day and within three years, it reached 80,000 bpd.

A sub-sea pipeline was laid in 1978 to take the oil from the field to refineries in Mumbai. Until then, oil was shipped in tankers.

The field hit a peak of 4,76,000

Those felicitated included former chairmen RS Sharma and DK Sarraf, and five former directors for operations/offshore, including SK Moitra, Tapas Kumar Sengupta, and AK Srinivasan.

"The successful completion of Mumbai High's 50 years marks an extraordinary and glorious journey," complimented Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri at the event held in Mumbai February 18, a company statement said. Puri emphasized Mumbai High's pivotal role as a beacon for future exploration, urging ONGC to embrace cutting-edge technologies like AI and Data Analytics for sustainability and reduced environmental impact.

has over the years four redevelopment plans, involving billions of dollars of investment, that have kept the oil and gas flowing.

The field still has reserves that can continue to produce for a few more years. It had about 1.659 billion tonne of total reserves in place.

At the function, former chairmen and directors associated with the western offshore fields were honoured.

# India unearth talent for future

IN THE ABSENCE OF BIGGIES LIKE KOHLI AND RAHUL, JAISWAL AND CO SHOW EXPERIENCE IS NOT EVERYTHING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: Inexperience of India's batting line-up was flagged as a major concern following the shocking loss in the first Test but three games into the five-match series against England, the same fearless bunch has grabbed its chances to give the hosts a comforting 2-1 advantage.

Respective of what happens in the remaining two games, the series will be remembered for the coming of age of 22-year-old Yashasvi Jaiswal, who has bossed the English bowlers with back to back double hundreds at the top of the order.

While growing up, nothing came easy for Jaiswal and after getting his set of opportunities across formats, it is not surprising that the southpaw has shown an insatiable hunger for runs.

The way he constructed his innings in Rajkot not only belied his age, it was also a masterclass in Test match batting. He was extremely watchful at the start of the innings before deciding to hit sixes at will including three off the great James Anderson in three different directions.

From the team's perspective, another big takeaway from the Rajkot Test was the performance of debutants Sarfaraz Khan and wicketkeeper-batter Dhruv Jurel.

"Ye aaj kal ke bacche (these kids of today)," quipped skipper Rohit Sharma, sharing a picture of the trio in his social media account, a day after the record win in Rajkot.

In the absence of Virat Kohli and KL Rahul, the middle-order looked extremely vulnerable but after finally getting his big break, Sarfaraz showed he belonged at the biggest stage from ball one and piled on the runs



**I work hard in practice as I know every innings counts. The biggest motivation for me is to play for my country and I know I need to give my 100 per cent**

YASHASVI JAISWAL

## RANCHI TEST

### Bumrah may be rested, fit-again Rahul to return

Lead India pacer Jasprit Bumrah is likely to be rested, while batter KL Rahul is expected to come back after recovering from a quadriceps injury, in the fourth Test against England beginning February 23 in Ranchi. Bumrah is the leading wicket-taker in the five-match series with 17 scalps and singlehandedly bowled India to victory in the second Test. The hosts led 2-1 in the five-match rubber. "The team will travel to Ranchi tomorrow and Bumrah is likely to be given rest," said a BCCI source while also informing that Rahul is nearing full fitness and should be a part of the squad in Ranchi. The decision to rest Bumrah doesn't come as a surprise considering he bowled 80.5 overs in the first three Tests. India are well-placed to seal the series in Ranchi but if they are not able to, the home team will desperately need the services of Bumrah for the fifth and final Test in Dharamsala beginning March 7.

like he did for years in domestic cricket. Indian batters are not known for their sweep shots but in a welcome change, that is how Sarfaraz got most of his runs in the game.

He did not play the reverse

that often but his conventional sweep and slog sweep off the spinners did fetch him a lot of runs and at the same time, put pressure on the opposition. Jurel's nimble work behind the stumps was hard to miss

and was highlighted with his spectacular run out of in form England opener Ben Duckett in the second innings here.

Needless to say, Rohit was a pleased man and was quick to acknowledge the efforts of the inexperienced lot. On purpose, he did not gush over Jaiswal and Co, who have a long future ahead of them.

For someone who slept in tents at the very same maidans of Mumbai where he practised in the morning, the motivation to get the big runs innings after innings comes naturally to Jaiswal.

While Jaiswal has cemented his place in the side with his remarkable consistency, Sarfaraz and Jurel will need to do more in the coming games to earn themselves an extended run.

## Ex-England skippers slam 'Bazball' style

London: Former England captains Nasser Hussain and Michael Vaughan have criticised the team's 'Bazball' approach in the ongoing Test series against India, saying the visitors need to apply themselves based on match situation instead of being guided by a one-dimensional philosophy of aggression. "This was the worst defeat under (Ben) Stokes and Brendon McCullum, and one that exposed their method. They cannot take the aggressive at every opportunity, they have to pick their moments," Vaughan wrote in his column for Telegraph.Co.Uk. Hussain echoed the sentiment. "Bazball is about being attacking but it is also about soaking up pressure," Hussain said on 'Sky Sports'.

## WORLD TT CHAMPIONSHIPS

# Indian women blank Uzbeks 3-0, men go down to South Korea

Having started off their campaign with a 2-3 loss to China, the Indian women's team now have secured two wins on the trot to occupy the second spot in the Group 1 standings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Busan, Feb 19: Indian women's team eased past Uzbekistan while the men endured successive defeats with the loss to South Korea in the World Table Tennis Team Championships here Monday.

Ayhika Mukherjee and Sreeja Akula were rested from the rubber, providing an opportunity to Archana Kamath and Diya Chitale. They both won their respective singles while senior teammate Manika Batra also had it easy against her opponent to make it a 3-0 win for India.

Archana defeated Rimma Gufranov 11-7, 11-3, 11-6, while Manika stormed past Markhobo Magdieva 11-7, 11-4, 11-1.

Diya on the other hand faced tough resistance before prevailing over Rozalina Khadjieva 11-6, 10-12, 11-4, 11-6.

Having started off their campaign with a 2-3 loss to China, Indian women's team now have secured two wins on the trot to occupy second spot in the Group 1 standings.

They will next face Spain in their concluding Group 1 league fixture Tuesday. They earlier defeated Hungary 3-2.

The men's team of veteran Sharath Kamal, reigning national champion Harmeet Desai and G Sathiyam lost their respective singles to go down meekly in its third group stage tie against third seeds Korea.

Harmeet, who is India's top-ranked player at 67, went down to world number 14 Jang Woojin 4-11, 10-12, 8-11.

Sathiyam was then brushed aside by world number 16 Lim Jonghoon 5-11, 7-11, 7-11.

Sharath managed to put up a fight, taking the second game but couldn't capitalise on the momentum losing 9-11, 11-8, 6-11, 5-11 to Lee San Su.

After winning their opening tie against Chile, Indian men lost 1-3 to Poland Sunday.



## Matsuyama: Asia's most prolific PGA Tour winner



Los Angeles: The conversation began seven years ago when Japanese star Hideki Matsuyama won his fourth PGA Tour title to pass Shigeaki Maruyama, his mentor. Maruyama told him the ultimate mark was nine tour wins, a record for most by an Asian-born player. Matsuyama had little reason to believe that would come Sunday at Riviera. Six shots behind to start the final round of the Genesis Invitational, Matsuyama delivered a record performance — 9-under 62, the lowest closing round by a winner at Riviera — to achieve the record that really mattered. He now has nine PGA Tour wins, one better than KJ Choi of South Korea. "Reaching nine wins was one of my big goals, passing KJ Choi," Matsuyama said after his three-shot victory. "After my eighth win, I've been struggling with my back injury. There were a lot of times where I felt I was never going to win again. I struggled reaching to top 10, but I'm really happy that I was able to win today."

## KKR name Chameera as Atkinson replacement



New Delhi: Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) Monday named Sri Lankan Dushmantha Chameera as a replacement for England pacer Gus Atkinson for the 2024 Indian Premier League. Chameera will join KKR at a reserve price of ₹50 lakh, the IPL organisers said in a statement. The Sri Lankan speedster was a part of Rajasthan Royals and Royal Challengers Bangalore in the 2018 and 2021 seasons respectively. He represented Lucknow Super Giants in the 2022 season, where he picked up nine wickets from 12 matches.

# India pip Spain in shootout

India will face the Netherlands in their fourth match Wednesday

## FIH PRO LEAGUE



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rourkela, Feb 19: Experienced goalkeeper PR Sreejesh's heroics saw India pull off a thrilling 8-7 shootout win against Spain in their fifth match of the FIH Hockey Pro League here Monday.

Sreejesh made one save in the shootout, while Harmanpreet Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Lalit Upadhyay, Abhishek and Raj Kumar Pal converted their chances to help India bag a bonus point.

Jarmanpreet Singh (1st minute) and Abhishek (35th) scored a goal each for India, while Jose Basterra (3rd) and Borja Lacalle (15th) were on the scoresheet for Spain in regulation time.

India started the game on aggressive note as Jarmanpreet Singh scored an excellent field goal in the first minute from an acute angle.

Spain responded well after going down and started playing a fast counter-attack game, which helped them earn a PC. Spain

equalized as Jose Basterra found the back of the net.

India kept constant pressure on Spain's defenders. Akashdeep earned a PC soon but Harmanpreet Singh's shot went wide.

With just seconds remaining in the end of the first quarter, Spain took the lead as Borja Lacalle found the back of the net after receiving a pass from captain Marc Miralles from the right flank.

India made an aggressive start in the opening minutes of second quarter. India enjoyed greater possession of the ball but Spain defence stood tall, not allowing the Indian forwards to equalize. Going into the half-time, Spain led India 2-1.

With India trying to find ways to bounce back, the third quarter was entertaining with both teams displaying quick-fire hockey and both stepping up the ante in attack.

India earned a PC on which they capitalized as Abhishek reacted quickly and fired the ball in the back of the net to make the score 2-2. At the end of the third quarter, the score was tied at 2-2.

With 15 minutes left on the clock, India started mounting pressure on Spain. With constant attacking moves, India earned a PC with six minutes remaining, but failed to convert as Amit Rohidas' shot was blocked well by the Spain goalkeeper.

Sreejesh made some superb saves in the last five minutes of the game as Spain gave their all, but couldn't find the back of the net, ending the regulation time in a 2-2 scoreline.

## RANJI TROPHY

# Delhi end season on high with dramatic Odisha win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: Left-arm spinner Sumit Mathur took a five-wicket haul on debut as Delhi defeated Odisha by seven wickets on a dramatic day four to end their Ranji Trophy campaign on a high.

Sumit, who took four wickets in the first innings, ended with a match haul of nine as Delhi recorded their third win of the season.

Delhi finished third in the standings behind Madhya Pradesh and Baroda. Had not been for the unexpected loss to Puducherry in the tournament opener, Delhi could have qualified from Group D. Odisha on the other hand finished seventh in an eight team group.

With both teams not in the race to advance in the competition, the game was headed for a dull draw on day three but the events on the final day made the game more than interesting.

Having taking a slender 11-run first innings, Delhi came



out to bowl on day four with a lot of purpose and bowled out Odisha for 133 to enforce a result.

After Odisha's top three perished without scoring, Sumit ran through the visitors' batting line up. Rookie pacer Himanshu Chauhan and Pranshu Vijayran collected two wickets each to play their part in the game.

Set a target of 123, Delhi got home in 20.3 overs with Ayush Badoni and Yash Dhull remaining unbeaten on 40 and 16 respectively.

Delhi had made 451 in their first innings in response to Odisha's 440. Dhull and Jonty Sidhu were the centurions for the hosts in the first innings.

# Acosta wins first Buenos Aires title

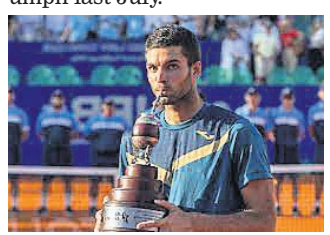
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, Feb 19: Argentine wild card Facundo Diaz Acosta captured his maiden ATP title in Buenos Aires on Sunday by defeating Nicolas Jarry, the man who had stunned Carlos Alcaraz in the semi-finals.

World number 87 Diaz Acosta claimed a 6-3, 6-4 victory, sealing the triumph on a sixth match point. Before this week, 23-year-old left-hander Diaz Acosta had only won four tour-level matches in his career. He will now rise to 59 in the world.

On Saturday, Chilean world number 21 Jarry had celebrated the biggest win of his career when he knocked out second-ranked Alcaraz in straight sets.

That loss extended Alcaraz's title drought to nine tournaments since his Wimbledon triumph last July.



## END OF AN ERA

# Five stalwarts bring curtains to illustrious Ranji careers

Bengal legend Manoj Tiwary, Jharkhand duo of big-hitting Saurabh Tiwary and express pacer Varun Aaron, Mumbai stalwart Dhawal Kulkarni and Vidarbha's Ranji Trophy-winning captain Faiz Fazal have decided to bring curtains to their illustrious domestic careers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: The ongoing Ranji Trophy season marks the end of an era in domestic cricket with five heavyweights bidding adieu to the game, leaving a huge void to fill.

Bengal legend Manoj Tiwary, Jharkhand duo of big-hitting Saurabh Tiwary and express pacer Varun Aaron, Mumbai stalwart Dhawal Kulkarni and Vidarbha's Ranji Trophy-winning captain Faiz Fazal have decided to bring curtains to their illustrious domestic careers.

The reasons for their retirement are varied, ranging from not having anything to play for (IPL contract or national call-up), to embarking on new adventures or focussing on politics.

For Aaron, Manoj and Faiz life came a full circle as they said goodbye at the same venue they began their domestic jour-

neys. But needless to say, domestic cricket will be poorer without the quintet turning out.

One of the doyens of domestic cricket, Bengal's Manoj Tiwary said goodbye to his "beloved 22 yards" after leading his state to a comprehensive win over Bihar Monday. Tiwary served his state for over 19 years, the 38-year-old had taken Bengal to the finals of the Ranji Trophy last season.

An aggressive batter, he has over 10,000 first class runs in his kitty. As a captain, he always led from the front, helping Bengal become a force to reckon with.

The absence of the supremely experienced duo Aaron and swashbuckling Saurabh Tiwary will be a big void Jharkhand will have to fill.

Tiwary, a left handed middle order batter, made his first-class debut while he was still a teenager in the 2006-07 Ranji Trophy season. Over the last 17



years, the Jharkhand captain became a prolific run-getter in domestic cricket, playing 115 first-class matches amassing 8030 runs in 189 innings at an average of 47.51 including 22 hundreds and 34 fifties.

"I think, if you are unable to make in the national team or IPL, it is best time to leave space for talented youngsters," Tiwary said while announcing his re-

irement last week.

One of the country's fastest bowlers, Aaron has been unable to realise his potential due to persistent injuries that included a series of stress fractures in the back and the legs.

But the pacer, who grabbed everyone's attention with the 153kmph delivery in the 2010-11 Vijay Hazare Trophy final, still managed to snare 173 first class

wickets in the 66 games he played at an average of 33.27.

"This might be my last game in front of my family and the people of Jamshepur, because we don't often play white-ball games here (Keenan Stadium). I had started my career here, so this is quite emotional for me," Aaron, who wrapped his red-ball career with a match haul of five wickets, was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

Fazal hangs his boots after 21 year's service to Vidarbha, having contributed immensely to their legacy. The elegant opener famously led them to their maiden Ranji Trophy title in 2018. He was the side's leading run getter that season.

Fazal began his first-class career with a bang, scoring 151 on debut in Plate Group match against Jammu and Kashmir in December 2003. Since then the southpaw has been ever-present at the top of the Vidarbha

batting order thanks to his impeccable technique.

He collected 9183 runs in first class cricket, 3641 runs in List A games and 1273 in T20s and retires as Vidarbha's leading run-getter in both List A cricket and first-class cricket.

Known for his swing, movement and accuracy with the new ball, Mumbai's Kulkarni quickly established himself as one of the most reliable seam bowlers in domestic cricket.

A big-match player, Kulkarni eked out several outstanding performances in his 17-year domestic career including five-fors in three Ranji Trophy finals.

So important is Kulkarni's experience in the team that the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) requested the medium pacer to put off his retirement until the end of the season.

The 35-year-old played 95 First-Class matches and has taken 281 wickets at an average of 27.31.