



## Modernised & Faster Railway Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

Laying of Foundation Stone / Inauguration / Dedication to the Nation of  
Redevelopment of **554** Railway Stations under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme  
and **1500** Road Over Bridges / Underpasses  
at the cost of **₹41000 crores**



### Redevelopment of 21 Railway Stations

- |                 |                   |                 |                |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| ■ Rayagada      | ■ Sambalpur city  | ■ Paradeep      | ■ Bimlagarh    |
| ■ Bhadrak       | ■ Jharsuguda Road | ■ Panposh       | ■ Jaroli       |
| ■ Baleswar      | ■ Jeypore         | ■ Betnoti       | ■ Rairangpur   |
| ■ Titlagarh Jn. | ■ Raghunathpur    | ■ Talcher       | ■ Brajrajnagar |
| ■ Kesinga       | ■ Belpahar        | ■ Parlakhemundi |                |
| ■ Koraput Jn    |                   | ■ Kendujhargarh |                |

- Stations to be redeveloped as City Centres with provision of amenities like roof plaza, shopping zone, food court, kids' play area etc.
- Provision of segregated entry & exit gates, multi-level parking, lift, escalator, executive lounge, waiting area, travelator, Divyangjan friendly facilities
- With the integration of multi-modal connectivity the redeveloped stations will become the centre of socio-economic activities of the region

and

### Construction of 50 Road Over Bridges / Underpasses in Odisha

- Seamless movement of rail & road traffic
- Safe & convenient passage for local residents across railway tracks
- Decongestion of traffic, reduction in travel time

By

## Narendra Modi

Prime Minister

26 February, 2024 | 11:00 AM onwards

(through video conferencing)

In the August Presence of

Ashwini Vaishnaw  
Minister of Railways, Communications and  
Electronics & Information Technology

Raosaheb Patil Danve  
Minister of State for Railways  
Coal and Mines

Darshana Jardosh  
Minister of State for Railways  
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## AMY SCHUMER DIAGNOSED WITH CUSHING SYNDROME

American actress Amy Schumer has been diagnosed with Cushing syndrome. The 42-year-old revealed the disorder is caused by getting steroid injections in high doses and symptoms include round, red, full face (moon face), weight gain, thin skin with easy bruising, fatigue and anxiety.

## DAKOTA NEVER IMAGINED PLAYING A SUPERHERO

Hollywood actress Dakota Johnson, who plays the titular character in the much-maligned *Madame Web* has now revealed that she almost rejected the project. The Hollywood star told Extra: The Podcast, "I never really saw myself in a superhero film."



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
If you have a sportsman spirit, today will be a very bright day for you. You should make the best of it as something unexpected may turn out to be in your favour. Ganesh says you are sensible and know exactly how to balance work and leisure.

**TAURUS**  
This day, you're liable to act very harsh and assertive towards your subordinates. You will insist that they follow your orders and do exactly as you say. Your rough handling will not go down well with your workers, or colleagues. Be sure that you are going to suffer and pay for that in the long run. Ganesh urges you to be more open and amicable.

**GEMINI**  
You will be caught up in your daily routine so much that you will begin to think of ways to break free and do something new for a change. You need to spend more time with your family members and children to unwind.

**CANCER**  
With Ganesh's grace, your dream of gaining name and fame is fulfilled. You will accomplish a task with total planning. Ganesh wishes that you succeed in every endeavour.

**LEO**  
You will be full of energy and enthusiasm today, and will be able to excel in all spheres of life. Do not feel low if others fail to appreciate your efforts however. You will consider the financial aspect of everything that you take on today, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Women will find enjoyment both in the kitchen and at the dining table. You may host your close friends and relatives in the evening for dinner and perhaps even a drink or two. You might feel very romantic about your beloved, says Ganesh, and he/she will not mind.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says you will be immersed in work and matters relating to work and not be able to pay attention to your family members. This is a good time for those of you who are advertising and marketing professionals. Ganesh says today is a good day to try and attain the maximum with minimal efforts.

**SCORPIO**  
Ganesh foresees that your enthusiasm and renewed zeal would encourage you to take up all the challenges at work front. And just like a smile is infectious, your positive attitude towards work too would be contagious and encourage your peers. However, it's important to unwind after a stressful day.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
All prim and proper, today you dress up to grab eyeballs. You are surrounded by glitterati when you attend a social function today. Your effective communication skills will be like icing on the cake and work wonders. Bask in the limelight, says Ganesh.

**CAPRICORN**  
You are lost somewhere in the piles of files, and the most tried and tested formulae - meditation is not helping you take the stress off your mind and find a way out. Everything is not as dull and boring as it seems, assures Ganesh. It is a favourable day to buy a car or house. There is also a possibility of you moving to a new house.

**AQUARIUS**  
When the going gets tough, the tough gets going! You will find your way through the storm, that too with a smile on your face. While you will be trying to manage your responsibilities on one hand, you will be pleasing everyone around with your wit and humour on the other. Your capability to handle and endure difficulties will say plenty about your character, feels Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
The first half of the day should see you busy with fulfilling your social obligations and completing your daily routine. You may be called upon to aid someone in the afternoon. You will win over everybody's heart with your pleasing manners. Today will be an unremarkable day bereft of any surprises, says Ganesh.

## Bhumi opens up on her Hollywood aspirations

**Mumbai:** Actress Bhumi Pednekar is now basking in the success of her latest released *Bhakshak*. The recently released crime thriller is yet another feather on her illustrious career.

Amidst the immense success of *Bhakshak*, there are also speculations about the talented actress' Hollywood aspirations.

"Brown girls are now making waves internationally," Bhumi said, in a recent interview with a news portal. She confessed having Hollywood aspirations, and expressed that it is the best time for artists to be ambitious because the world is now a melting pot of cultures, of diversity and authenticity.

The *Badhaai Do* actress stated that actors can have an active career internationally, these days, because of the kind of films and series that are being

made or the kind of roles that are being written for them.

Quoting Ambika Mod from Netflix's *One Day*, she said, "It's so refreshing to see an Indian origin girl play a lead role in such a successful series that has garnered love from its audience globally."

Bhumi also emphasised that if she were to do an international project ever, she will choose one that gives her immense joy and creative satisfaction.

She acknowledged being aware of the fact that she needs to represent her country proudly.

"I will not be hasty but I want to do great work in the West. It has to be a project that gives me a meaty role to shine," Bhumi added.

AGENCIES



## Berlin honours Manoj for clocking 30 yrs in cinema

**Berlin:** Indian cinema icon Manoj Bajpayee received a tribute by Tagore Centre at the Indian Embassy in Berlin, Saturday, for enthralling the audience with his 30-year-long illustrious career. Organised and hosted by Trisha Sakhlecha, Director of the Tagore Centre, it coincided with Bajpayee's presence in Berlin for the premiere of his latest film, *The Fable*, in the competitive Encounters section at the ongoing 74th Berlin Film Festival.

The event was attended by several government dignitaries and the ambassadors of many countries, including Ambassador of India to Germany HE Parvathaneni Harish.

*The Fable* has been directed by Raam Reddy. Apart from Bajpayee as the lead, it also stars Deepak Dobriyal, Priyanka Bose, and Tillotama Shome. The movie debuted at the Berlin International Film Festival February 16, making it only the second Indian film in three decades to compete at the Berlinale. The *Fable* has already impressed critics and audiences alike globally.

Bajpayee, who first faced the film camera for a one-minute role in Govind Nihalani's *Drohkaal* (1994), is completing 30 years in the business in 2024.

AGENCIES

## Kubbra scales Africa's highest peak

**Mumbai:** In a world where the pace of life often leaves little room for introspection, actress and influencer Kubbra Sait embarked on a transformative journey to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.

In a recent reflection, she shares the profound impact this climb had on her personal growth and self-discovery.

For Kubbra, the journey to the top of Africa's highest peak wasn't just about conquering a physical challenge; it was a deeply introspective experience that forced her to confront her inner demons and embrace change.

Recalling the climb, she describes in her caption, "Hi Hoomans! It's rather strange that only when I watched this video on repeat, is when the memories of the #Summit of #Uhuru peak came crashing in. Standing small on the roof of #Africa All I remember is being positively delirious!"

Her caption concluded, "Climbing a #mountain let alone a marker world class summit isn't something that happens ever so casually... but for me it happened in the blink of an eye... Exactly a month before this climb I was beating stress with more stress..."



AGENCIES



## Oppenheimer continues winning run

**Los Angeles:** *Oppenheimer* continued to steamroll through Hollywood's awards season Saturday, winning the top prize, for outstanding cast, along with awards for Cillian Murphy and Robert Downey Jr., at the 30th Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards.

As the Academy Awards draw closer, Christopher Nolan's blockbuster biopic — already a winner at the Golden Globes and the BAFTAs — has increasingly looked like the runaway favorite. The SAG Awards, one of the most telling Oscar predictors, will only add to the momentum for *Oppenheimer*, the lead Academy Awards nominee with 13 nods.

In a first for a major Hollywood



award show, the SAG Awards were streamed live on Netflix. That made for some significant tweaks to the age-old traditions of such ceremonies. There were no ads. Profanity was

permitted. And winners were occasionally interviewed backstage by red-carpet co-host Tan France — sometimes awkwardly, sometimes charmingly.

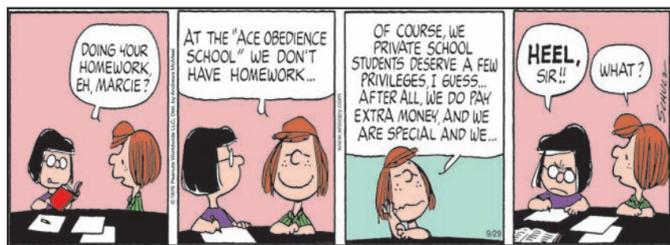
The night's most thrilling win went to Lily Gladstone for female actor in a leading role in Martin Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon*. No category has been more hotly contested, with analysts evenly split between Gladstone and Emma Stone for *Poor Things*.

Murphy and Paul Giamatti (*The Holdovers*) have also been seen as in a neck-and-neck contest. But Murphy has now won at the SAGs, the BAFTAs and Globes, suggesting he has the clear edge heading into the Academy Awards.

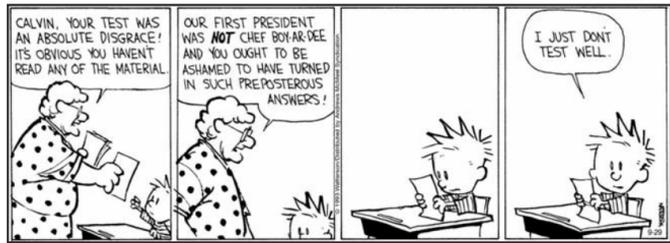
Downey Jr. and Da'Vine Joy Randolph each won for their supporting performances, likewise solidifying their status as Oscar favorites.

AGENCIES

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

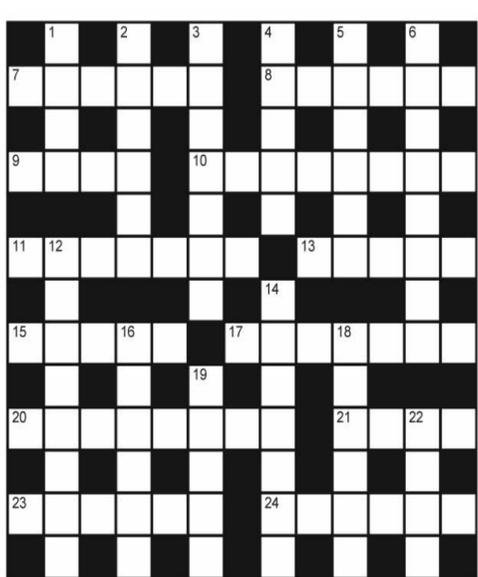


### BREVITY



### FUN post

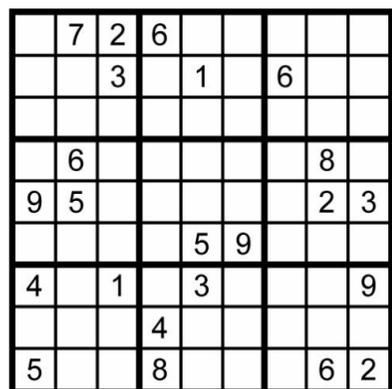
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Number puzzle
  - 8 On the train
  - 9 Close-fitting
  - 10 Approval
  - 11 Endless
  - 13 Mean and sarcastic
  - 15 Investigate, as a crime
  - 17 Squeeze out
  - 20 Bartender's shout (4,4)
  - 21 Carnival attraction
  - 23 Apropos
  - 24 Cuba, e.g.
- Down**
- 1 Destroy
  - 2 Boarder
  - 3 Shaft of light
  - 4 Candle
  - 5 Toxin
  - 6 Family member
  - 12 Edible web-footed turtle
  - 14 Manipulate to one's advantage
  - 16 More beneficial
  - 18 Seldom
  - 19 Forest god
  - 22 Beach feature

### 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.

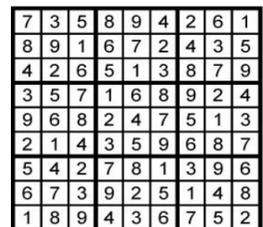


### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



DSPL-721



## “ନୂଆ-ଓ”

### ଛାତ୍ରବୃତ୍ତି ବିତରଣ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ

୨୭ ଫେବୃଆରୀ ୨୦୨୪  
ସମ୍ବଲପୁର | ଦେବଗଡ଼ | ଅନୁଗୋଳ



OIPR-11001/13/0083/2324

# ଉଚ୍ଚ ଶିକ୍ଷାରେ ଅର୍ଥ ଆଉ ସାଜିବନି ବାଧକ ନୂଆ-ଓ ଛାତ୍ରବୃତ୍ତି ହେବ ସହାୟକ ।

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ଉଚ୍ଚ ଶିକ୍ଷା ବିଭାଗ

# Fair visitors jittery over loot, snatching



Police said additional cops have been deployed in the area to keep vigil on any suspicious activities and detain the suspects

(DCP) to track the phone," he said. When asked, Khandagiri police station sub-inspector Amulya Pradhan said a woman gang is suspected to be involved in this crime. "Additional cops have been deployed in the area to keep vigil on any suspicious activities and detain the suspects," he added.

This apart, the cops at Property Offence Prevention and Detection (POPD) unit have been called to launch an investigation into these cases, he stated.

A police officer, requesting anonymity, said in such cases a request is sent to DCP office for locating the stolen phones. The police stations here lack an in-built apparatus to track lost mobile phones; so the delay, he said.

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 25:** The annual Khandagiri Fair nearing an end has witnessed several instances of loot and snatching but the response to such complaints by Khandagiri police has left the complainants in jittery, Sunday.

Jyotsna Mohanty, a sexagenarian, said that as soon as she alighted from a Mo Bus at Khandagiri Square around 5pm, a minor girl snatched away her gold chain and before she could stop her the girl disappeared

into the crowd. She lodged a complaint but to no avail.

In another case, Sibhasis Mohanty, a student at Centurion University of Technology and Management, said two days have passed since he lodged a complaint at Khandagiri police station about his cellphone being stolen at the fairground, but the phone is yet to be located. "Being a student, I can't purchase another phone instantly," he rued.

"Upon enquiring at the police station, the cops said a request has been sent to the office of the deputy commissioner of police



**STRANDED:** A cement-laden truck gets stuck as a portion of Niladri Vihar-Chauliganjan road in Cuttack caves in, Sunday

OP PHOTO

## QUESTION PAPER 'LEAK' Probe, minister's scalp demanded

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 25:** Activists from the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarathi Parishad (ABVP) and the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) staged separate demonstrations Sunday outside the residence of School and Mass Education Minister Sudam Marndi, over the alleged leak of Class X state board exam question paper last Friday.

The ABVP, which was protesting in the morning, called for a high-level investigation into the alleged leak, while the NSUI, that staged a demonstration in the afternoon, demanded the resignation of the minister.

Both groups, brandishing posters and banners, chanted slogans against Marndi and attempted to enter his official residence.

NSUI activists also organised similar protest before the minister's house and burnt posters of Chief Minister Naveen



Patnaik and Marndi. The protests were triggered by a purported video of an English question paper and answer sheet circulating on social media.

The Board of Secondary Education (BSE), Odisha, which oversees the examination, rejected the allegation of a question paper leak Saturday.

ABVP state secretary Arijit Patnaik criticised the minister's

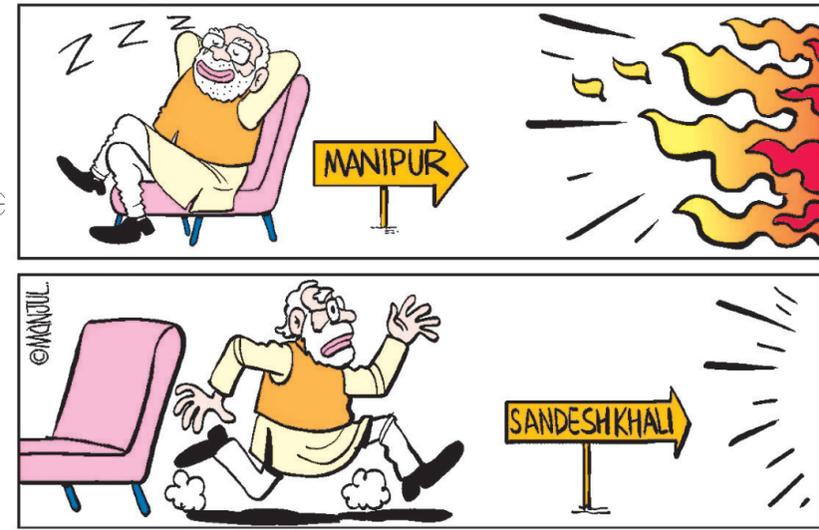
**Board of Secondary Education (BSE), Odisha, which oversees the examination, rejected the allegation of a question paper leak**

leak, calling for strong action against those involved.

NSUI state president Yashir Nawaz alleged that question paper leaks have become a recurring issue under the BJD government, accusing the administration of allowing the sale of question papers before exams. "As the school and mass education minister has failed to discharge his duty properly, we demand his resignation," said Nawaz.

The matriculation examination, which involves over 5.5 lakh students at 3,047 centres across the state, began February 20 and will conclude March 4.

### POLITICKLE by MANJUL



### CLASSIFIED

#### AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit before Executive Magistrate, Kantapada on dt.15.02.24. I Manasi Mohapatra, Vill-Kheras, PO-Brahmansailo, PS-Gobindpur, Dist-Cuttack in my Aadhaar Card No. xxxx 0235 my name is Manasi Mohapatra, my father name is ABADUTA MOHAPATRA in place of ABADHUTA MOHAPATRA. Henceforth my father name is ABADUTA MOHAPATRA in my document for all purposes. Manasi Mohapatra

#### LOST

I, Sri Sahadev Parida, at-Badabandhakera, PS-Brahmagiri, Dist-Puri. I have purchased property of Mz- Badabandhakera, Khata No- 651/182, Plot No- 637/1937, A0.50 dec 500 bargakadi from Pratima Mahapatra, W/o- Harihar Mahapatra of Vill- Barudi she given original ROR to me. But original ROR has misplaced. If anyone gets it. Please Contact Mob. No-8839911795

## 100 Cube Startup Conclave at IIM Sambalpur soon

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Sambalpur/Bhubaneswar, Feb 25:** To foster entrepreneurial spirit and encourage innovation among students, IIM Sambalpur is hosting the '100 Cube Startup Conclave' on its premises March 1, 2024.

This initiative, being organised under the Union Ministry of Education, aims to establish 100 startups on the institution's premises, each with an approximate valuation of ₹100 crore, by 2036, the year of Odisha's centennial celebration.

"Aligned with one of IIM Sambalpur's core values of inclusiveness and regional development, the event seeks to catalyze the entrepreneurial



ecosystem in the region," said an IIM official.

Union Minister of Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Dharmendra Pradhan will be chief guest for the inauguration. The conclave will also mark commencement of the 'I-Hub Foundation,' as IIM Sambalpur's incubator, established under Section 8 as a registered company.

The conclave will feature an exhibition showcasing 50 startups from Sambalpur, Jharsuguda,

Sundargarh, Bargarh and other districts of Odisha. "We anticipate approximately 1,200 attendees, including 300 startups, as well as key stakeholders, investors, industry mentors, ministry representatives, students, and leaders from venture capital (VCs) and angel investment communities," said the official.

IIM Sambalpur director Mahadeo Jaiswal said that the conclave's goals align with the institute's vision of promoting entrepreneurship and startup culture in Odisha. He highlighted that the event would not only provide a platform for startups to showcase their potential but also offer founders comprehensive support and networking opportunities.

## DEBASIS, NIHAR JOIN BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 25:** Ahead of the simultaneous Assembly and Lok Sabha polls, former minister and four-time BJD legislator Debasis Nayak, and ex-Congress MLA Nihar Ranjan Mohananda Sunday joined the BJP.

They were inducted into BJP in the presence of party state president Manmohan Samal, former president Samir Mohanty and other senior leaders.

Nayak, speaking on the occasion, said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has be-

come a strong country. "Naveen Patnaik is not ruling Odisha, someone else is. Those who have funded the BJD and made Patnaik the CM are now being neglected in the party," he alleged.

Nayak, a four-time MLA from Bari Assembly constituency in Jajpur district, submitted his resignation letter to Patnaik February 20. "With a heavy heart, I am submitting my resignation herewith with immediate effect. Thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to serve the people of Odisha as well as the party," Nayak said in his resignation letter.

## CP holds 2-day meet over apartment theft

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 25:** In a bid to curb the rising menace of thefts in apartments, the Commissionerate Police held a two-day meeting about security sensitisation which concluded Sunday.

The meeting, chaired by twin-city Police Commissioner Sanjeeb Panda along with Additional Commissioner of Police Awinash Kumar and DCP Bhubaneswar Prateek Singh, was attended by 285 representatives from more than 475 apartments under the City limits.

Addressing the representatives, Panda said the owners must secure the flats by appointing skilled security professionals. He also said that the inhabitants in every flat must equip their houses with a motion detector device and alarm sensor system, which would swiftly track the movement of trespassers.

He also instructed flat owners to build high boundary walls and gates with barbed wires and spikes.

The meeting introduced a new mechanism where the Commissionerate Police would develop a portal, through which the dwellers could rate the security arrangement of their flats.

## Barabati to be restored, not demolished: Behera



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Feb 25:** Putting buzz about demolition of Barabati stadium here to rest, former Odisha Olympic Association (OOA) and Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) secretary Ashirbad Behera Sunday said that there is not an iota of truth behind the rumour.

Briefing mediapersons at OCA conference hall here, Behera said, "Barabati stadium will be renovated and there is no question of demolishing the iconic structure. Some portions of the stadium have become weak which calls for immediate restoration. As these structures were built way back in 1960, they need restoration and renovation."

He also said that then minister Basant Biswal had faced stiff resistance during an expansion plan for Gallery No-7 in 1980s. And, now this gallery has become weak, he added.

ever there is plan for any developmental work for the stadium. Efforts are now being made by the state government in collaboration with BCCI and OCA to transform Barabati into a world-class stadium. However, some people with vested interests are misleading people of Odisha through media on the pretext of heritage structure which is highly unacceptable."

Behera also said that the state government has been attaching utmost importance to growth and development of cricket in the state while OOA and OCA are working in coordination with the government.

"Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will lay the foundation stone for the infrastructure development work at Barabati stadium February 27 through video-conferencing. I convey my gratitude to the Chief Minister, 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian and OCA officials for the mega initiative," he said.

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ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ନବୀନ ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

5

## ଲୁକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ଯୋଜନାର ଗୁଣବତ୍ତାକୁ ଉପାଦାନ କରି

ଫାଉଣ୍ଡେସନରୁ ସ୍ଥାପନ କରାଯାଇଛି

DSPL-720

OIPR-15001/13/0464/2324



## UP tops custodial rapes

**Press Trust of India**

**New Delhi, Feb 25:** More than 270 cases of rape in custody were registered from 2017 till 2022, according to NCRB data, with women rights activists attributing such instances to lack of sensitisation and accountability within law enforcement systems.

The offenders include police personnel, public servants, members of the armed forces and staff of jails, remand homes, places of custody and hospitals, according to the data of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

The data highlights that there has been a gradual decrease in such cases over the years. In

2022, 24 cases were registered, down from 26 in 2021, 29 in 2020, 47 in 2019, 60 in 2018 and 89 in 2017.

Cases of custodial rape are registered under Indian Penal Code Section 376 (2). It pertains to the offence of rape committed by a police officer, jailer, or any other person who has the lawful custody of a woman. This Section specifically deals with cases where the perpetrator takes advantage of their position of authority or custody to commit the

crime of rape against a woman. Of the 275 cases of custodial rape registered since 2017, Uttar Pradesh accounts for the highest number of cases at 92, followed by Madhya Pradesh at 43 cases. "Custodial settings provide unique opportunities for abuse, with state agents often using their power to force or coerce sexual access," Population Foundation of India, executive director, Poonam Muttreja said.

Muttreja highlighted that there is a complex interplay of factors contributing to custodial rape, including patriarchal social norms, inadequate gender-sensitivity training for law enforcement and stigma surrounding victims.

## PM praises Odisha couple for 'Goat Bank'

**Press Trust of India**

**New Delhi, Feb 25:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday lauded a 'Goat Bank' initiative of an Odisha couple which promotes goat rearing at the community level and helps the villagers move towards self-reliance in the field of animal husbandry.

In his 'Mann Ki Baat' radio broadcast, Modi said when people talk about animal husbandry, they often stop at cows and buffaloes only. But the goat is also an important animal, which is

not discussed much, he said. He pointed out that many people in different areas of the country are associated with goat rearing. In Kalahandi, Odisha, goat rearing is becoming a major means of improving the livelihood of the village people, the Prime Minister said.

"Behind this effort is a major decision of Jayanti Mahapatra ji and her husband Biren Sahu ji. Both of them were management professionals in Bangalore. But they decided to take a break and come to Salebhata village of Kalahandi," he said.

## HARYANA INLD CHIEF KILLED

**Press Trust of India**

**Chandigarh, Feb 25:** The Indian National Lok Dal's (INLD) Haryana unit president Nafe Singh Rathee and a party worker were killed when unidentified assailants sprayed bullets on their SUV in Bahadurgarh near Delhi Sunday, a senior party leader said.

Three private gunmen hired by Rathee for security also suffered injuries in the attack.

The attack, which came weeks before the Lok Sabha elections, drew sharp reactions from opposition parties, which alleged a breakdown in law and order in the BJP-ruled state.

**Birmaharajpur declared NAC**  
**Bhubaneswar:** A day after announcing 34 NACs for the state, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday said that another NAC will be formed in Birmaharajpur of Subarnapur district.

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ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

# ମାତ୍ର ୫ ଟଙ୍କାରେ 'ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ' ବସ୍ରେ ଯାତ୍ରା

## ଗାଁକୁ ସହର ସହିତ ଯୋଡ଼ୁଛି ୧୭୪୫ ବସ୍

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### ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ଯୋଜନାର ବିଶେଷତା

- ୩.୨୪ କୋଟି ଲୋକ ହେବେ ଉପକୃତ
- ମହିଳା ସଶକ୍ତିକରଣରେ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭୂମିକା
- ବୁକ୍ ଓ ଜିଲ୍ଲା ମୁଖ୍ୟାଳୟକୁ ପ୍ରତି ପଞ୍ଚାୟତରୁ ବସ୍ ସେବା
- ବଦଳିବ ଗ୍ରାମାଞ୍ଚଳ ଅର୍ଥନୀତିର ରୂପରେଖ

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FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

# A TWISTED GLOBAL ORDER



The obvious contextual corollary is, where does Bharat as an emerging global power stand, what is its official position on Russia's naked aggression against Ukraine and Israel's genocidal warfare against Palestinians?

elections a few months away. That apart, the vilification of the Muslim community, as witnessed in Haldwani, along with the adoption of a prejudiced UCC in Uttarakhand, the first code to be so enacted by any state in Independent India, are pointers to a disturbing scenario which affronts the very legitimacy and sustenance of democracy, pluralism and secularism as envisaged in the Constitution. There were reports that at the opening session of the new Parliament for this year, copies of the Constitution were distributed with 'socialist' and 'secular' deleted from the Preamble, which is part of the unamendable Basic Structure. To add to the social disharmony and economic malaise, with rise in unemployment, inflation and increasing pauperisation of the population, the ongoing farmers' agitation has added further misery and raised fears of a near-collapse of the agricultural sector with the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), the main body which had led the previous agitation in 2021-22, joining the fray. The movement could well spread like prairie fire if the farmers' demands are not met. The provocative stopping of the farmers march ("Delhi Chalo") by raising nails and barbed wires and hitting them with rubber bullets and pellets does not bode well for a democracy meeting its electoral test, incongruous with India's aspirations to play a frontal role on the global stage.

If the death of the courageous dissident Alexei Navalny, fighting the despotism of a system till the last breath of his life in the cold penal colony of the Russian Arctic, did not send a shiver down the spine of the mainstream thought processes in this country, it may well indicate how dissent in the true democratic traditions has been felled. Yet, the sparks of democracy, smoldering under the debris of chaos and disruption, would ignite someday to awaken the conscience of humanity.

The writer is a retired diplomat. Views are personal.

Recently my old university JNU organised a talk by EAM Jaishankar on the above topic. I have not followed up on his talk, so unable to surmise what he would have said. However, his address on "Bharat and the World" would have revealed the basic propositions he holds in his latest book, "Why Bharat Matters." However, I'm disturbed with some recent news stories which hit the media, one, that some 100-odd Indians have been found to be working as army conscripts or 'army security workers' for Russia in its war against Ukraine, the first time ever that Indian non-combatants have been drafted to fight in a zone of conflict. The External Affairs Ministry has acknowledged the fact and has stated that the Indian government had been putting pressure on Russia to let the Indians leave. The other piece of news, which is equally hard-hitting, is that some thousands of unemployed youth from the states of Haryana and UP have been carted to Israel to work in replacement of Palestinian workers while severe battle is ongoing between the Israeli forces and Hamas, with nearly 30,000 casualties by now.



Malay Mishra

THE RECENT ARAB STATES-LED UN RESOLUTION DEMANDING AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE AFTER THREE MONTHS OF INCESSANT FIGHTING AGAIN COLLAPSED, THANKS TO A US VETO

Interestingly, the Water Transport Workers Federation has announced its refusal to aid Israel's genocidal war by loading any 'weaponised cargo'. There are reports that the huge Hermes 900 drone missiles, besides other arms such as assault rifles, LMGs, etc, manufactured in India by the Adani group in joint collaboration with the Elbit Advanced Systems Ltd of Israel, are being sent to be used by the IDF in Gaza.

The above news stories bring out a sordid though coherent story about where India, as an emerging global power is headed. Clearly, the 'two-state solution' which GOI has been advocating along with the US, China and a host of Arab countries of the region, along with the demand for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, has not made any headway with the Netanyahu government having clearly overruled the idea of a separate

Palestinian state. Instead, the recent plan of Israel has been to take over the security and administration of the Palestinian territories after the war is over.

The recent Arab states-led UN resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire after three months of incessant fighting again collapsed, thanks to a US veto. This calls into question not only the relevance of the UN, mandated to bring about peace in a war-torn world, but the importance of the veto power which can be abused with impunity when any of the permanent five wishes to. Thus with China's belligerent attitude, India can never be a part of the Permanent Members group unless the UN system undergoes major structural reforms which India has been persistently advocating. In this case, the US government has gone all out to support Tel Aviv, notwithstanding the ceaseless demonstrations all over the country in support of Palestine and cries to stop the horrendous war which continues in the last security space of Rafah for the beleaguered Palestinians.

The obvious contextual corollary is, where does Bharat as an emerging global power stand, what is its official position on Russia's naked aggression against Ukraine and Israel's genocidal warfare against Palestinians? None of these important geopolitical issues elicit a definitive reply from South Block though the popularity and outreach of the Indian PM could

come of immediate salience to halt such acts of aggression. Instead, India has been in a way abetting the war with export of weapons systems and manpower. Besides, if self-interest (coexisting with multilateralism, as stated by the EAM at the Raisina Dialogue) be the major motive for conducting foreign policy, every action is justifiable. The so-called rules-based order, a favourite expression of the Biden administration on which the whole Quad has been conceptually based, is then rendered irrelevant. Furthermore, China's role in the whole game, to checkmate India at every turn, not ceding space on Ladakh nor in the Indo-Pacific theatre, what some specialists have termed as "greyzone warfare", limits India's hand to engage in big game diplomacy. The recent docking of a Chinese spy vessel in the Maldives while an India-Sri Lanka naval operation is ongoing is a case in point.

While the global order represents a convoluted picture, the domestic scene is littered with an array of disruptive factors; the overturning of the Chandigarh mayoral elections by the Supreme Court, declaring the Electoral Bonds scheme unconstitutional, charges of manipulation of fiscal federalism, the role of Governors as proxies for the Centre, rampant horse-trading, calling into question the accuracy of the EVM-VVPAT system, all these present a desperate situation in the run-up to the national

SPECTRUM DISRUPTION

## Corporations and public health

Corporations are increasingly moving into the public-health domain. Companies like Amazon, Google, and Microsoft are being "pulled" by market opportunities for non-traditional actors to "disrupt" healthcare. Others are being "pushed" by the imperative - highlighted by events like the COVID-19 pandemic - to act as responsible community stakeholders, such as by helping to address health inequities.



Tom Achoki

COMPANIES LIKE AMAZON, GOOGLE, MICROSOFT ARE BEING 'PULLED' BY MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR NON-TRADITIONAL ACTORS TO 'DISRUPT' HEALTHCARE

When such pull and push forces intersect, there are often important opportunities to align economic and social objectives. But if strategic corporate philanthropy is to improve public health, those charged with making decisions and allocating resources must have a deep understanding of the health system, including the institutions, organisations, and resources that comprise it, and the complex interactions among them.

According to a framework established by the WHO, health systems have six pillars: service delivery; development and deployment of a health workforce; collection, analysis, and

use of critical health information; provision of essential medical products, vaccines, and other health technologies; financing; and effective leadership and governance. To meet a population's health needs, all six must work in harmony, in an elaborate process involving inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact.

Consider COVID vaccination programmes, which depend on inputs - including financial resources, workers, equipment, and the vaccines themselves - that are partly outputs from activities like medical-product development and service delivery, with all the logistics, infrastructure, personnel training, and supervision this entails. Together, all these factors lead to an outcome - getting a large enough share of the population vaccinated - with the impact being a reduction in mortality and morbidity from COVID.

As the WHO also explains, an effective health system is fair and equitable, both in the distribution of health goods and services and in the way it is financed. It emphasises efficiency and cost-effectiveness as well, and responds to the legitimate

non-health expectations of those seeking health care, such as respect and compassion. Ultimately, an effective system ensures that anyone in need of a specific health good or service can access it and derive the relevant benefits.

This framework should guide corporations - and all stakeholders - as they engage in the public-health domain. So should the principle that any direct investment in the health system must serve to strengthen one or more of the framework's six pillars. To this end, a clear, data-based strategy for measuring health-system performance is crucial. Only a comprehensive monitoring and evaluating plan - identifying not only what data need to be measured, but also how, when, and by whom - can ensure that decision-makers have the information they need to plan, organise, and implement effective public-health programmes.

Organisations seeking to engage in public health can use such data - together with a broader understanding of the health-system framework - to identify where they are best suited to make a difference, based on their competitive or compara-

tive advantages. The better they know the terrain they are entering, the easier it will be to pinpoint unmet needs and anticipate their actions' likely impact.

Health actors need to engage effectively with other stakeholders, because public-health programmes often involve diverse groups with different priorities and objectives that must be harmonised to meet overarching health goals. For such engagement to work, however, trust and credibility are key. An effective impact-measurement strategy can help here, too, by supporting transparency and accountability.

The final critical insight for companies entering the health-care domain is that not only are health systems highly complex, but they also operate within an environment in which they must continually interact with various political, socioeconomic, and sociocultural forces. The better newcomers understand these interactions, the more likely they will be to have a positive impact on public health.

The writer is a former Sloan fellow at MIT. PROJECT SYNDICATE

Love is the keynote, Joy is the music, Knowledge is the performer, the infinite All is the composer and audience.



SRI AUROBINDO

## Fall From Grace

Two of the most prominent names in the Indian startup ecosystem - Paytm and Byju's - are fighting their biggest battles for survival. While the former has faced regulatory crackdown from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for "persistent non-compliances," the latter has witnessed erosion in investor confidence with a majority of its shareholders, in an Extraordinary General Body Meeting (EGM), seeking to oust its CEO and his family from management responsibilities. During their heydays, the two firms deeply penetrated the Indian market and attracted big money from local and foreign investors. With time, their valuations too soared to record highs and everything seemed rosy. What went wrong with the poster-boys of the Indian startup world? Perhaps they couldn't see the writing on the wall. Also, it may be noted that almost all known Indian startups are clones or copies of similar ventures that have succeeded in the West or China and Japan.

Paytm, the company credited with revolutionising digital payments in India and which carried full front page advertisements in national dailies immediately after the November 2016 Demonetization declaration, has benefited the most from the present government's push for doing away with cash transactions. The Centre's decision to demonetize Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 denomination currency notes came as godsend for the company. It soon became a payments giant with the backing from international investors like Japan's Softbank. In 2021, when Paytm got listed in the stock market its value was nearly \$19 billion. However, today it is worth just \$3 billion. The RBI delivered a significant setback to the fintech behemoth 31 January prohibiting Paytm Payments Bank from accepting customer deposits, credit transactions, and top-ups citing "persistent non-compliance, and continued material supervisory concerns." This came almost two years after the entity was barred from onboarding new customers. Undoubtedly, the company had been slipping for a long time and the RBI had been trying to cover up the misdeeds. But, this time the regulator's unprecedented action came only when it failed to cover up any further wrongdoings and was forced to order the company to effectively shut down its banking operations. The central bank stated that it had given the company ample time for course correction. However, according to RBI, prompt action from the company's board of directors was clearly lacking. The biggest concern for the regulator was the massive lapses in the company's Know Your Customer (KYC) compliance.

A similar story has unfolded in Byju's. Less than two years ago, the edtech giant held a valuation of \$22 billion. It became a household name during the COVID-19 pandemic when a countrywide lockdown confined a billion plus Indians to their homes. However, the company's worth plummeted to less than \$1 billion recently. Following years of purported irregularities, shareholders who hold about 30 per cent stake in the cash-strapped startup have voted in an EGM to remove Byju Raveendran, the founder and CEO, along with his family members from the board. The firm however termed the decisions taken at the EGM as invalid as they did not comply with the company's internal laws. Ravindran expanded ultra-fast through mergers and acquisitions. As a result, the company had issues with creditors and its auditor, Deloitte, had to quit. Besides, investors like Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and Prosus left the company and now want a leadership change.

Shoddy internal governance, flagrant disregard for norms and greed are some of the vices that have always ailed the Indian corporate world in general and the startups in particular. It appears, investors were too quick to back Indian startups as they expected a repeat of the runaway market success of China's Alibaba and Tencent. Yet, today many Indian startups are trading below their listing prices even though the benchmark indices - the Sensex and Nifty - are trading at record highs. With big names like Paytm and Byju's cutting a sorry figure, easy money may get difficult to come for Indian startups.

WISDOM CORNER

- Live your life while you have it. Life is a splendid gift. There is nothing small in it. Far the greatest things grow by God's law out of the smallest. But to live your life, you must discipline it. FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE
- A good upbringing means not that you won't spill sauce on the tablecloth, but that you won't notice it when someone else does. ANTON CHEKHOV
- Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood. All is riddle, and the key to a riddle is another riddle. RALPH WALDO EMERSON

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1802: Victor Hugo, a poet, novelist, and dramatist who was the most important of the French Romantic writers, was born.
- 1815: Napoleon's escape from Elba. Forced to abdicate as French emperor in 1814, Napoleon escaped from exile on the island of Elba this day in 1815 and, gathering support en route, retook power on his return to Paris on March 20, ushering in the Hundred Days.
- 1909: A color motion picture is shown to the general public for the first time. A series of 21 short Kinemacolor films were presented at the Palace Theatre in London.
- 1917: The world's first jazz record is created. The "Original Dixieland Jass Band" recorded "Livery Stable Blues" for the Victor Talking Machine Company in New York.
- 1951: American novelist James Jones published From Here to Eternity, about the U.S. Army in Hawaii before the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor; it was later adapted into an Academy Award-winning movie.
- 1993: The World Trade Center in New York City was bombed in an act of terrorism, and Islamic radicals were later convicted for the crime. Six people died in the blast.

LOL

### A good dentist

A couple of old guys were golfing when one said he was going to Dr Taylor for a new set of dentures in the morning. His friend remarked that he had gone to the same dentist a few years before. "Is that so?" the first said. "Did he do a good job?"



"Well, I was on the course yesterday when the fellow on the ninth hole hooked a shot," he said. "The ball must have been going 200 mph when it hit me in the stomach. That," he added, "was the first time in two years my teeth didn't hurt."

### Destroying dissent

Sir, This refers to "Navalny's body handed over to mother, says aide," OrissaPOST, Feb 25. The death of Alexei Navalny in a remote prison in Russia's Arctic region is a chilling reminder of the status of dissent in the state Vladimir Putin has built. Navalny was the Kremlin's most prominent critic and the reason for his death is still unknown. Whatever the reason for his death, the Russian state cannot absolve itself of this tragedy. Russian authorities were hell bent on destroying the political opposition that Navalny had built. In Russia's managed system, there are opposition parties that the Kremlin tolerates and there are dissidents who are treated as enemies of the state. Navalny fell into the second category and he was sentenced for decades and there was no scope for organised protests. Still, the fact that he had to die like this in a prison suggests the extent of the state's fear of voices of dissent. The state does not want any voices of criticism or organised protests. It may have established order through fear as of now, but Russia's own history suggests that this is not a sustainable model of governance.

### Exam stress

Sir, The Central Board of Secondary Education may introduce Open Book Examinations (OBE) to reduce stress and anxiety among students. I agree that the growing incidents of student suicide are concerning, but OBE is not the sole solution to reduce the pressure and stress on students. The idea of OBE may make weaker students even weaker, while those who excel in studies might become carefree. For decades, the routine of taking exams has guided us toward a brighter future. Exams are crucial for understanding the potential and efficiency of students. If we need to change something, it should be the mentality of society and parents' thinking. This is a major reason why students fall victim to depression and stress. In this rapid and digital generation, where competition is high and learning skills have diminished, OBE may only lead to insincerity and will hamper the future.

## 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

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N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Preetiyukta Mohakud, BHUBANESWAR



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# Water crisis looms large in Bhitarkanika wetland

# Hounded by moneylender, youth commits suicide

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, Feb 25:** As summer season draws near, the famed Bhitarkanika wetland, a Ramsar site sheltering the Bhitarkanika National Park and its rich flora and fauna in its lap, is in impending danger with the flow of freshwater to the eco-sensitive area rapidly declining.



The water crisis has become quite evident as deer from the forest areas of Mahakalpara have started straying into human habitats. The matter came to the fore after villagers in Mahakalpara area caught a deer when it had strayed into their village, Thursday.

The wetland feeds on freshwater from Mahanadi, Baitarani, and Brahmani rivers and their distributaries. However, with the state government launching various projects on Mahanadi and Baitarani and the neighbouring Chhattisgarh constructing barrages on the Mahanadi upstream, the flow of water to the wetland has diminished to a great extent.

The launching of various projects on these rivers without conducting proper survey in

Bhitarkanika and Kendrapara district has led to the situation. As a result, Mahanadi is witnessing a rapid decline in water level ahead of summer.

Environmentalists apprehend Bhitarkanika might face an acute water crisis within the next fortnight. Environmentalists Hemant Kumar Rout, educationist Bhuban Mohan Jena, reader Kshitish Kumar Singh, Srikant Nayak, and social activist Sanjay Behura said that the absence of freshwater will result in the destruction of the mangroves on the wetland.

The rich biodiversity of Bhitarkanika draws tourists and nature lovers to Odisha from all over the world. The mangrove forest here, which acts as a natural shield against calamities like cyclones, storm surges and tsunami, requires 60 per cent saline water and 40 per cent freshwater for its growth. Lack of freshwater has led to the growth of casuarinas on the seacoast.

Out of the 480-km long coastline in the state, the mangroves are spread over 222 sq km area. However, Kendrapara has just 48-km long coastline but 183 sq km area in the district has mangrove forest cover.

The river system supplying freshwater to Bhitarkanika will

soon become defunct with water levels declining in the rivers.

As if this was not enough, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to lift 130 million litre of water daily from the Mahanadi at Mundali in Cuttack district for supply of drinking water to the residents in the Capital city.

Earlier, the state government had decided to tap the Mahanadi water through an in-stream storage structure at Santara under Kujang block in Jagatsinghpur district and supply drinking water to the residents in Kendrapara district.

Construction of two mega drinking water projects is underway on the Mahanadi for supply of drinking water to the residents of 200 villages under Mahakalpara and Marshaghai blocks of Kendrapara district.

The river's water, apart from fulfilling drinking water needs of people at various places, is also supplied to scores of industries which have come up in the state.

The exploitation will lead to a water crisis in the Mahanadi and other rivers and water bodies in the system such as Birupa, Chitrotpala, Luna, Karandia as

well as Kendrapara and Pattamundai canals. As a result, the flow of freshwater to Bhitarkanika downstream will dry up.

Similarly, water flow from Baitarani river to Bhitarkanika has also reduced due to supply of the river water to industries and conservation in barrages. Moreover, construction of a mega drinking water project on Kharasrota river, a distributary of Brahmani, for supply of drinking water to Bhadrak is also reducing the water flow to Bhitarkanika.

Bhitarkanika was getting Brahmani river water all round the year. However, supply of the river water to industries and its use for drinking water projects are affecting the water flow to Bhitarkanika.

Freshwater should flow through Bhitarkanika into sea to ensure the protection of mangroves. However, the government is yet to implement any plan in this regard. Moreover, it is yet to conduct any review on the volume of freshwater that is flowing into Bhitarkanika wetland from these rivers, the environmentalists added.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Feb 25:** A youth committed suicide after he was threatened by a moneylender for payback at Badasahi village near Ankushpur under Sadar police limits here, police said Sunday.



The victim was identified as Jeetendra Kumar Bishoyi at Badasahi in Ankushpur in the Silk City. The matter came to the fore after the victim's brother Dharmendra Bishoyi lodged a complaint at the Sadar police station, Sunday.

Police said that Jeetendra had borrowed some money from a co-villager to invest in his business. However, the accused moneylender threatened him and snatched away his scooter after he failed to repay in time. Left with no option, Jeetendra took Rs 15,000 from his mother and managed to get his scooter back and assured to pay the rest amount soon.

However, the lender waylaid him again near Ankushpur panchayat office when he was returning home on his scooter,

December 1, last year. He threatened Jeetendra and forcefully took away some documents and a house patta which he had stored in the scooter dickey. He threatened to return the documents only after getting the whole payback.

The development pushed Jeetendra into distress following which he committed suicide the next day, the complainant stated in his FIR. Meanwhile, police have registered a case and started an investigation.

# Fire breaks out at Badmal ordnance factory; none hurt



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 25:** A major fire broke out at the Badmal ordnance factory in Bolangir district Sunday, police said. However, no injuries have been reported in the incident that took place in the evening.

"A fire broke out at a temporary storage unit of the ordnance factory. The factory's in-

ternal fire brigade team and our local fire service personnel immediately rushed to the spot and doused the fire. No one was injured in the incident," Bolangir SP Khilari Rishikesh Dnyandeo told PTI over the phone. The reason behind the fire is yet to be ascertained, he said. No official information has been received yet about the losses incurred due to the blaze.

# Neglected Mahurigarh fort inches towards extinction

SILENT WITNESS TO TWO BATTLES WITH THE FRENCH AND EAST INDIA COMPANY, THE HISTORICAL FORT IS LYING IN RUINS AND CRYING FOR ATTENTION

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Feb 25:** The historical Mahurigarh fort, the seat of erstwhile Mahuri royals near Aska in Ganjam district, is on the verge of extinction due to lack of proper upkeep and government apathy.



Ganjam district is full of antiquities. Mahurigarh fort is one such monument which mirrors the rich cultural heritage of the district. However, it is fast fading into oblivion. Academics and historians lament that the medieval era Mahurigarh fort, which once stood as the silent witness to the attack launched by the East India Company, is now in ruins. Mahurigarh is located on the outskirts of Berhampur under Kukudakhandi block of Ganjam district. The distance of Mahurigarh is around 15 km from Berhampur town and 8 km from Kanishi on National Highway-16.

It came into existence when Puri royal Purushottam Dev returned home after victory in Kanchi war. He stopped mid-way and donated land there to all his sardars (army commanders) and directed them to become kings. His two commanders Somaraj and Bhimaraj received Mahurigarh as their province to rule. The royal province was named as Mahurigarh as the two commanders played 'Mahuri' (a piece of musical instrument) during the war.

Somaraj was anointed as the king of the princely state while Bhimaraj was anointed as his 'Thata Raja' (deputy) in 1450. The Mahuri royal lineage consisted of Somaraj, his son Purushottam Singh, Purushottam's son Dhruba Singh and his descendants. The Mahuri princely state, con-

sisting of 411 villages and seven forts, was spread over 521 square mile area. The seven forts are Mahudagarh, Satapahandia, Pandijholi, Nuagaon, Nalihada, Dengapadar and Narayanpur. Mahurigarh or Mahuda was the capital of the princely state. Mahurigarh, ruled by the Mahuri royal family for six generations, had a Jagannath temple and many historical relics and antiquities apart from the royal palace.

However, bad days followed soon as the French army attacked Mahurigarh in 1755. The Mahuri royal fought with the French army and managed to save his fort. Later, the army of East India Company attacked Mahurigarh and tried to capture it in 1765. The East India Company pulled down several temples and mutts during the war to inflict humiliation on the Mahuri royals.

Back-to-back battles pushed the Mahuri royal into distress while disputes within the royal family aggravated the problems. According to historians, the then Mahuri royal Harihar Narendra Dev was assassinated by his brothers, December 10, 1782. Family disputes and enmity weakened the royal family and it became difficult to collect revenue from the people in the kingdom. As a result, the then British government auctioned

the princely state as it failed to deposit Rs 60,000 towards outstanding revenue to the British treasury in 1832-33. There was no end to the Mahuri royal family's woes as the princely state had to face a drought from 1837 to 1840. The unending hurdles forced the Mahuri royal family to shift their base to Berhampur from Mahuda. As a result, the historical Mahurigarh was pushed to obscurity and left abandoned.

The then British government took over the governance of Mahurigarh and paid some allowances to the Mahuri royal and asked them to live at Berhampur.

This is the reason behind the destruction of Mahurigarh, noted historian and researcher Anantram Kar Koundinya said. Mahurigarh has turned into a haunted house with wild shrubs and creepers growing all over the fort.

Locals said that the place is visited by historians, researchers and people from various parts of the state during the picnic season. The state government has declared 21 sites in the district as tourist sites. However, it is yet to give tourist site tag to the historical Mahurigarh. The Berhampur University is conducting research on various subjects but has forgotten to take note of Mahurigarh.

Professor Geetanjali Das, Vice-Chancellor of Berhampur University, assured to review the matter and take steps to find if there is any rock edict and matter of interest regarding Mahurigarh.

When contacted, Collector Dibyajyoti Parida said steps will be taken to protect the historical Mahurigarh.

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Revellers dance on the closing day of Carnival in La Paz, Bolivia

AP



Bike racers from various countries take part in the CEAT Indian Supercross Racing League at Chikkajala in Bangalore, Karnataka

PTI



People attend a "Wulong Xuhua" show to celebrate the Lantern Festival in Taijiang county, southwest China's Guizhou province

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST



Prime Minister Narendra Modi went scuba diving off the Panchkui beach coast in Gujarat and performed prayers as he witnessed the ancient Dwarka city of Lord Krishna, which is submerged in the waters

PTI



Participants during the New Delhi Marathon 2024, at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium

PTI



The band "Deichkind", whose members wear sweatshirts and pants with the slogan "Impulsive people against the right", performs at the demonstration against the right wing in Hamburg, Germany

AP



A stork flies past the cross on the steeple of St. Gallus church in Zell near Riedlingen, Germany

AP



Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ships during the 'Day at Sea' event organised as part of the 48th Raising Day of ICG in the Bay of Bengal, off Chennai harbour, Tamil Nadu

PTI

# national

## of the day quote

Kerala is the last outpost of religious harmony, coexistence and brotherhood. It must not be lost. We must be able to strengthen the emotion that is India while preserving the innate culture of Kerala

PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

Resolve to form the Modi-led government at Centre again by winning more than 400 seats. The upcoming Lok Sabha polls are for making Bharat a superpower and the world's third largest economy under Modi's leadership

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

BJP is creating confusion over the ERCP. They are cheating the people of Rajasthan. Madhya Pradesh's interests are being protected as dams are being built there and they are getting all the benefits

ASHOK GEHLOT | CONGRESS LEADER

## SHORT TAKES

### Seven killed in UP blast

**Kaushambi (UP):** At least seven people died and seven others were injured in an explosion at a firecracker factory in Uttar Pradesh's Kaushambi district Sunday, police said. The blast took place around 12 noon at Maheva village in the Kokhraj police station area and was heard several kilometres from the factory, they said. Soon after information was received about the explosion, 10 fire tenders and ambulances rushed to the spot, officials said. Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) of Prayagraj Zone Bhanu Bhaskar said, "The cracker factory belonged to one Shahid (35). He was also killed in the blast along with six others."

### 3 Naxalites killed

**Kanker:** Three Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district Sunday morning, a senior police official said. The face-off took place in a forest in Koyalibeda area when a joint team of the District Reserve Guard and the Border Security Force was out on an anti-Naxal operation, Kanker Superintendent of Police Indira Kalyan Elesela said.

### Elephant kills three

**Bokaro (Jharkhand):** Three persons, including two women, were killed by an elephant in Jharkhand's Bokaro district Sunday, an official said. The incident happened in Kodwatand panchayat area under the jurisdiction of Lalpania police station, around 100 km from state capital Ranchi. Bokaro Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Rajnish Kumar told PTI that the elephant first trampled to death a 60-year-old man around 7 am.



The reason behind the rising hatred in the country is injustice. In India, injustice is being done to the poor, farmers, youths and women. We have started 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' against this injustice

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

# Akhilesh joins Nyay Yatra



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 25:** The INDIA "janbandhan" is locked and loaded, ready to dispel the "darkness of the anyay kaal", the Congress said Sunday after Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav joined Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Agra.

The coming together of Gandhi and Yadav put days of uncertainty on the latter's participation in the yatra to an end and came as a boost to the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), which has sealed key seat-sharing deals of late.

The AAP and the Congress on Saturday sealed a seat-sharing deal for Lok Sabha seats in Delhi, Gujarat, Goa and Haryana but decided to contest separately in Punjab, considering the "special circumstances" in the state. With this, the Congress finalised its seat adjustments for 125 constituencies with INDIA bloc constituents, after recently striking an arrangement with the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh.

However, challenges still remain as the INDIA bloc has to work out seat-sharing deals in the key states of West Bengal and Maharashtra. In a post on X, Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "Massive, enthusiastic, and energised crowds gathered in Agra to welcome Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka

Gandhi, and Akhilesh Yadav. The leaders garlanded the statue of Babasaheb Ambedkar before taking out a historic roadshow through the heart of Agra."

"The INDIA janbandhan is locked and loaded, ready to dispel the darkness of the anyay kaal," Ramesh said. In another post, the Congress leader said the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra has completed its journey through Uttar Pradesh (UP), that lasted eight days. The journey started in Chandauli and passed through the Varanasi, Bhadohi, Prayagraj, Pratapgarh, Amethi, Raebareli, Lucknow, Unnao, Kanpur, Moradabad, Amroha, Sambhal, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Hathras and the Agra districts, he said. "Undoubtedly, the high point was Akhilesh Yadav's participation in Agra this afternoon," Ramesh said.

"The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra has not only galvanised the party organisation in UP but also given new hope to all sections of UP society, especially the youth. Rahul Gandhi raised the issue of paper leaks for four consecutive days and the impact of his speeches was felt on the morning of February 24 when the Yogi (Adityanath) government announced the cancellation of the examination held earlier this month for the recruitment to the post of police constable, the paper for which had been leaked," he said.

# TMC delegation visits Sandeshkhali again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sandeshkhali, Feb 25:** A TMC delegation visited the troubled Sandeshkhali in West Bengal for the second consecutive day Sunday and heard the grievances of villagers who have been protesting against alleged atrocities by local leaders of the ruling party.

The delegation, comprising state ministers Partha Bhowmick and Sujit Bose, visited Bermajur area, which witnessed violent protests recently, and sought one-and-half month from locals to address their grievances.

The state ministers also urged villagers in restive Sandeshkhali to come up with their demands. Bhowmick and Bose participated in a 'kirtan' (religious song) at a Radha Krishna temple and addressed a gathering there. "Give us one-and-half month. We have promised that all the land grab incidents, which had been reported, will be verified.



TMC leaders Sujit Bose and Partha Bhowmick interact with villagers during their visit to Sandeshkhali, in North 24 Parganas district

We cannot solve all the problems in one go. To address the issues, there are official procedures that need time to be completed," Bhowmick, the state irrigation minister, said in a statement.

He also said they were physically present at Sandeshkhali for the second day in a row to encourage everyone to come up with their grievances and

claimed that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is committed to "wipe tears of every resident of the area".

Bhowmick said he and Bose, the fire and emergency services minister, will visit the riverine belt regularly in the coming days and hold parleys with the villagers. Asked about action against the local TMC leaders against whom the villagers, in-

The riverine Sandeshkhali area in North 24 Parganas district has been on the boil for more than a month with protests against local TMC leader Sheikh Shahjahan, who is absconding, and his supporters over allegations of land grabs and sexual abuse of locals

Around 100 women in the locality protested against the visit of TMC ministers, holding posters 'Sujit Bose Go Back,' and demanded the arrest of the local TMC strongman Shahjahan

cluding women, have levelled allegations, he said. "We have already removed them from party posts and the police have initiated investigations."

"We are here to hear from you. Don't consider us as outsiders," Bose told the gathering. The ministers were accompanied by Sandeshkhali MLA Sukumar Mahato who also claimed that allegations of "improper activities by some leaders of the party were being expeditiously addressed with the involvement of police and administration".

## SNIPPETS

### BSP MP Ritesh Pandey quits party

**Lucknow/New Delhi:** Ahead of the upcoming general elections, the Bahujan Samaj Party's Lok Sabha MP from Ambedkar Nagar Ritesh Pandey Sunday resigned from the party's primary membership and joined the BJP in New Delhi. In his resignation letter to BSP chief Mayawati, Pandey said he has concluded that the party does not need his service as neither has he been called for meetings for a long time nor has the party leadership spoken to him. He shared his resignation letter on X. Pandey claimed in his letter that he made numerous efforts to get in touch with and meet Mayawati and the top leadership of the party but it did not yield any result.

### No 'Mann Ki Baat' for next three months

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Sunday that his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast will not be aired for the next three months in line with political ethics in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. In the 110th episode of the programme, he asked first-time voters to poll in record numbers in the elections and said their maiden vote should be cast for the country. With the general elections expected in April-May, he said there is a possibility that the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) will be enforced in March as it was done in 2019, a reference to the expected announcement of the election schedule sometime next month. The MCC guidelines of the Election Commission asks governments to not use official events or public-funded platforms for something that may be seen to give the ruling party publicity or political advantage.



### Kavitha to skip CBI questioning in Delhi liquor policy case today



**New Delhi/Hyderabad:** Former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's daughter K Kavitha who was summoned by the CBI in the Delhi Excise Policy case under a CrPC section meant for 'suspects', Sunday asked the agency to keep the notice in abeyance, citing upcoming parliamentary polls. The BRS MLC was asked to appear before the CBI Monday, under Section 41A CrPC, under which a notice is issued to a person against whom a "reasonable suspicion" exists that the person had committed a cognisable offence. In a letter to the CBI, she said, "There is absolutely no logic, reason or background forthcoming as to how, why and under what circumstances have you now resorted to Section 41A CrPC." Kavitha said that if required, with prior intimation she would appear through virtual mode, to answer any queries. She pointed out that about 15 months ago, the then Investigating Officer, Deputy Superintendent of Police, CBI ACB issued her a notice under Section 160 CrPC -- which pertains to summoning a witness.

# PM inaugurates 5 AIIMS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rajkot, Feb 25:** Development was taking place under his government at a rate many times faster than what happened in the past six to seven decades, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Sunday, and emphasised that his guarantee begins from where hope ends from others.

He was speaking after inaugurating All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Rajkot in Gujarat, Bathinda in Punjab, Raebareli in Uttar Pradesh, Kalyani in West Bengal and Mangalagiri in Andhra Pradesh. At the function held here, the PM also dedicated to the nation various development works costing ₹48,000 crore, including more than 200 health care infrastructure projects costing ₹11,500 crore in 23 states and Union Territories.

"Modi's guarantee begins from where hope ends from others," he asserted, adding that even the country was saying this looking at the pace of development. "For 50 years after Independence, there was only one AIIMS in the



country, and that too in Delhi. In the seven decades since Independence, only seven AIIMS were approved but even these were never completed," Modi said in a swipe at previous governments. "But in just 10 days, seven new AIIMS were either inaugurated or their foundation stones laid. That's why I am saying that we are developing the country many times faster than what happened in the last six to seven decades and are dedicating it at the feet of the citizens," he said.

In the past, people from different states used to get tired seeking AIIMS in their areas from the Union government, whereas today modern hospitals and medical facilities like

AIIMS are opening one after the other, he said.

Asserting that he had fulfilled his guarantee of setting up a large number of AIIMS, Modi said his government had approved 10 AIIMS in the last 10 years. "I had given a guarantee of (setting up) AIIMS to UP's Raebareli. The royal family of Congress only indulged in politics in Raebareli, while the work was done by Modi," he said.

India managed to defeat the COVID-19 pandemic because of changes in the health care system brought about in the last 10 years, the PM said. Modi said his government had carried out unprecedented expansion in AIIMS and medical colleges as well as critical infrastructure network by opening more than one lakh 'Ayushman Arogya Mandirs' in villages, and taking the number of medical colleges to 706 from 308-309 a decade back. The number of MBBS and medical PG seats have increased during this period to more than one lakh and 70,000, respectively, from 50,000 and 30,000, he informed.

# 9 killed in Bihar road accident

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kaimur (Bihar), Feb 25:** At least nine people, including two women, were killed in a collision between a truck, a jeep and a motorcycle in Bihar's Kaimur district Sunday evening, police said.

The incident took place on GT Road near Devkali village in Mohania police station area.

Speaking to reporters, Mohania DSP Dilip Kumar said, "According to eyewitnesses, the accident took place when a jeep, carrying eight people, including two women, first hit a motorcycle while travelling in the same direction. It seems that the driver had lost control over the jeep, leading to the collision." "Subsequently, both the jeep and the bike veered into the opposite lane, where a speeding truck collided with them, resulting in the deaths of all nine people, including the motorcyclist, at the spot. The truck driver fled after the accident," Kumar said in a statement. The truck has been seized and further investigation is underway.

# Haryana INLD chief shot dead in Jhajjar



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Feb 25:** The Indian National Lok Dal's Haryana unit president Nafe Singh Rathee and a party worker were killed when unidentified assailants sprayed their SUV with bullets in Bahadurgarh near Delhi Sunday, a senior party leader said.

Three private gunmen hired by former MLA Rathee for security also suffered injuries in the attack. The attack, which came weeks before the Lok Sabha elections, drew sharp reactions from opposition parties, which alleged a breakdown in law and order in the BJP-ruled state

soon. INLD leader Abhay Chautala told PTI that Rathee and a party worker accompanying him were shot dead. The party worker was identified as Jai Kishan. Three private gunmen, whom Rathee had hired for security, also suffered injuries, Chautala said, adding, "No police security had been given to him." Chautala later visited the hospital in Bahadurgarh where the bodies were kept. Speaking to reporters there, he demanded a CBI probe into the incident. Rathee, aged 67, was travelling in an SUV when the assailants, who were in a car, attacked him in Bahadurgarh town in Jhajjar district. "A volley of bullets was sprayed at him," Chautala said. Doctors at the hospital said that Rathee had suffered injuries in neck, stomach, spine and thigh and suffered heavy blood loss.

Rathee was elected MLA from Bahadurgarh twice in 1996 and 2005. Chautala accused the government of failing to provide Rathee with security despite there being threat to his life, and demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Home Minister Anil Vij.

# Goods train runs from J&K to Punjab without drivers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu/Chandigarh, Feb 25:** A diesel locomotive-hauled freight train travelled more than 70 kilometres from Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua to a village in Punjab's Hoshiarpur district without its drivers Sunday, officials said.

No casualty or damage to property has been reported, they said and added that an inquiry has been ordered into the incident that took place between 7:25 am and 9 am. The 53-wagon train loaded with chip stones was on its way to Punjab from Jammu, the officials said.

The train had stopped at the Kathua railway station in Jammu for a driver change and it seems



that it began to roll down a slope gradient track on the Jammu-Jalandhar section, a spokesperson of the Northern Railway said, citing preliminary infor-

mation. Both drivers - loco pilot and assistant loco pilot - were not on board the freight train, the officials said. The train gained speed along the way, finally com-

No casualty or damage to property has been reported

The 53-wagon train loaded with chip stones was on its way to Punjab from Jammu

The officials said that the train was successfully halted with the assistance of sandbags

ing to a stop on a steep gradient near Unchi Bassi railway station in Punjab, they said. Divisional Traffic Manager, Jammu, Prateek Srivastava said that "an inquiry has been initiated to know the exact cause of the incident. Prima facie, it seems that the train started rolling down the slope gradient towards Punjab without the driver and his assistant". He said the train

came to a halt near Unchi Bassi due to steep gradient, after covering a distance of more than 70 km. The officials said that the train was successfully halted with the assistance of sandbags.

Whether the train had been "secured" properly at Kathua on the down gradient is a matter of investigation, the spokesperson said and added that an in-depth probe is underway.

Railway officials and staffers were put on alert along the route. Government Railway Police (Jalandhar) Sub-Inspector Ashok Kumar said upon receiving information about the runaway train all rail-road crossings on the Jalandhar-Pathankot section were secured.

# international

## of the day quote

The explosion in prejudice and antisemitism since the Hamas attacks on the 7 October [2023] are as unacceptable as they are un-British. Simply put antisemitism is racism

We expect to receive \$11.8 billion in economic support this year from the United States

We cannot take all this progress for granted, we need to do more and better together

## SHORT TAKES

### PIO dies in blaze

New York: A 27-year-old Indian national, who worked as a journalist here, tragically lost his life in a "devastating" fire caused by a lithium-ion battery in an apartment building in Manhattan. Fazel Khan was killed in the fire that broke out in a six-story residential building at 2 St. Nicholas Place in Harlem, Manhattan that left about 17 other people injured. The New York City Fire Department said that its marshals have determined that the "devastating" fire was caused by a lithium-ion battery. Khan is a journalist with New York-based media company The Hechinger Report, which is focused on innovation and inequality in education. The Consulate General of India in New York expressed condolences on Khan's death and said it is extending all possible assistance to repatriate his mortal remains to his family in India.

### Pak Prez election

Islamabad: Still struggling to address the rigging allegations after general elections in the country, Pakistan is now gearing up to elect the new president by March 9. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is set to hold an election for the office of the country's president by March 9, two days before the retirement of half of the senators after completing their six-year term, Dawn reported quoting sources. "The president will be elected by the present senators after setting up of all the four provincial assemblies," a senior Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) office-bearer said, adding that the election could take place on March 9 or 10. The six-party alliance, set to form a coalition government at the Centre under the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Shehbaz Sharif, has already announced Asif Ali Zardari as its consensus candidate for the country's top constitutional office.

### Belarusians vote

Tallinn: Belarusians will cast ballots Sunday in tightly controlled parliamentary and local elections that are set to cement the steely rule of the country's authoritarian leader, despite calls for a boycott from the opposition that dismissed the balloting as a "senseless farce." President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus with an iron hand for nearly 30 years, accuses the West of trying to use the vote to undermine his government and "destabilize" the nation of 9.5 million people. Most candidates belong to the four officially registered parties: Belaya Rus, the Communist Party, the Liberal Democratic Party, and the Party of Labor and Justice. Those parties all support Lukashenko's policies. About a dozen other parties were denied registration last year.

## GAZA WAR

# 'Slaughtering horses to feed children'

World Food Programme teams this week reported "unprecedented levels of desperation" while the UN warned that 2.2mn people were on the brink of famine

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Gaza, Feb 25: At the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza, Abu Gibril was so desperate for food to feed his family that he slaughtered two of his horses. "We had no other choice but to slaughter the horses to feed the children. Hunger is killing us," he told AFP. Jabalia was the biggest camp in the Palestinian territories before the war, which began after Hamas fighters attacked southern Israel October 7, leaving some 1,160 dead, based on Israeli figures. Gibril, 60, fled there from nearby Beit Hanun when the conflict erupted. Home for him



and his family is now a tent near what was a UN-run school. Contaminated water, power cuts and overcrowding were already a problem in the densely populated camp, which was set up in 1948 and covers just 1.4 square kilometres. Poverty, from high unemployment, was also an issue among its more than 100,000 people. Now food is running out, with aid agencies unable to get in to the area because of the bombing - and the frenzied looting of the few trucks that try to get through.

On Friday, the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said a two-month-old baby died of malnutrition in hospital in Gaza City, seven kilometres (just over four miles) away from Jabalia. Overall, at least 29,606 people have been killed in Gaza in the war, the ministry said Saturday. 'DYING FROM HUNGER' Tempers are rising in Jabalia about the lack of food and the consequences. On Friday an impromptu protest was held involving dozens of people. One child held up a sign read-

ing: "We didn't die from air strikes but we are dying from hunger." Another held aloft a placard warning "Famine eats away at our flesh", while protesters chanted "No to starvation. No to genocide. No to blockade." In Beit Hanun, Gibril used two horses to harvest a parcel of land. But the conflict destroyed that, along with his house, leaving him with nothing. Over the weeks and months, Israel's relentless bombardment has left Gaza largely a place of shattered concrete and lives. Gibril kept the radical decision to slaughter his horses to himself, boiling the meat with rice, and giving it to his unwitting family and neighbours. Despite the necessity, he said he was still wary of their reaction. "No one knows they were in fact eating a horse." SCAVENGING, BEGGING In the camp, bedraggled children wait expectantly, holding plastic containers and battered cooking pots for what little food is available. With supplies dwindling, costs

are rising. A kilo of rice, for example, has shot up from seven shekels (\$1.90) to 55 shekels, complaints one man. "We the grown-ups can still make it but these children who are four and five years old, what did they do wrong to sleep hungry and wake up hungry?" he said angrily. The UN children's agency UNICEF has warned that the alarming lack of food, surging malnutrition and disease could lead to an "explosion" in child deaths in Gaza. One in six children aged under two in Gaza was acutely malnourished, it estimated February 19. Residents have taken to eating scavenged scraps of rotten corn, animal fodder unfit for human consumption and even leaves to try to stave off the growing hunger pangs. "There is no food, no wheat, no drinking water," said one woman. "We have started begging neighbours for money. We don't have one shekel at home. We knock on doors and no one is giving us money".

## Pak meets IMF terms for \$1.2bn tranche

Islamabad, Feb 25: Pakistan has met the IMF's benchmarks for maintaining the status quo in the energy sector - in an outcome that may help to get the next loan tranche of \$1.2 billion, officials said, ahead of the visit of the global lender's review mission to the cash-strapped country. The Ministry of Energy officials said they have met the end-December targets related to containing the flow of circular debt below Pakistani Rs 385 billion, timely increase in the electricity prices, and slowing the increase in line losses. The Express Tribune newspaper reported. The IMF would review the implementation of these targets during the loan negotiations under the second review of the \$3 billion bailout package. The IMF's review mission might visit Islamabad by the end of this month or early next month, provided the government formation at the federal and provincial levels is complete.

## US PRESIDENTIAL RACE

# Trump beats Haley

THE FORMER PRESIDENT EASILY BEAT HALEY IN HER HOME STATE SOUTH CAROLINA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Charleston, Feb 25: Donald Trump secured a resounding win over his Indian-American rival Nikki Haley in her backyard in South Carolina in the Republican primary, enabling the former US president to move closer to clinching a third straight presidential nomination from his party in 2024. Refusing to give up, Haley, 52, a two-time former governor of South Carolina on Saturday vowed to take the fight to the Super Tuesday states on March 5 when Republican primaries are scheduled to be held in 21 US states. Trump, 77, has now won every contest that counted for Republican delegates, adding to his previous wins in Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and the US Virgin Islands. The South Carolina primary race was called mere minutes after polls closed. After results were counted, US media outlets said Haley received 39.5 per cent of the vote in the Palmetto State while Trump 59.3 per cent, giving the former president 44 delegates and just three to the former South Carolina state governor. A candidate needs 1,215 dele-



I said earlier this week that no matter what happens in South Carolina, I would continue to run for president. I'm a woman of my word. I'm not giving up this fight when a majority of Americans disapprove of both Donald Trump and Joe Biden

We're going to be up here on November 5, and we're going to look at Joe Biden, and we're gonna look him right in the eye. He's destroying our country and we're gonna say 'Joe, you're fired. Get out. Joe. You're fired'

gates to bag the party's nomination in the November 5, 2024 presidential election. So far, Trump has won 102 delegates while Haley, the only major contender to the Republican frontrunner, has just 17 delegates. "This was a little sooner than we anticipated, and an even bigger win than we anticipated," Trump told a crowd at his election night watch party in Columbia shortly after being projected the winner. Saturday's result now places the onus on Haley, who continued in her concession speech to insist she has no plans to drop out of the race - a move that

she said would leave the Republican voters in the upcoming primary states with "a Soviet-style election with only one candidate." "There are huge numbers of voters in our Republican primaries who are saying they want an alternative. I said earlier this week that no matter what happens in South Carolina, I would continue to run for president," Haley told supporters in Charleston. Trump has easily swept all five Republican nominating contests thus far as he inches closer towards a rematch with Democratic President Joe Biden.

# Iran blasts US, UK over Yemen strikes

REGIONAL TENSIONS HAVE SOARED SINCE THE GAZA WAR ERUPTED, STOKING VIOLENCE INVOLVING IRAN-BACKED GROUPS IN LEBANON, IRAQ, SYRIA AND YEMEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Tehran, Feb 25: Iran condemned Sunday the latest strikes by the United States and Britain on Yemen, saying they were seeking to "escalate tensions and crises" in the region. On Saturday, American and British forces carried out fresh strikes against 18 Houthi targets in Yemen, in response to a wave of attacks by the Iran-backed group on Red Sea shipping. "With such attacks, America and Britain seek to escalate tensions and crises in the region, and expand the scope of war and instability," Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said in a statement. "Certainly this kind of arbitrary and aggressive military operation, aside from aggravating insecurity and instability in the region, will not achieve anything for these aggressor countries," Kanani added. He further condemned the United States and Britain for failing to "take immediate and



effective action" to stop Israel's deadly campaign in Gaza. The Houthis say their attacks on shipping around the Red Sea are in support of Palestinians in war-ravaged Gaza. Israel's withering military campaign in Gaza began following the unprecedented October 7 attack on southern Israel by the Palestinian group Hamas. Iran backs Hamas but has denied any involvement in the October 7 attack. Following the Saturday attacks, Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin said the US "will not hesitate to take action, as needed, to defend lives and the free flow of commerce in one of the world's most critical waterways". The Houthis' military spokesman Yahya Saree said the attacks would continue until "the aggression stops" in Gaza. The Islamic republic has previously said it sees a "duty" to support what it calls "resistance groups" in the region, but insists they are "independent" in decision and action.

# Xi's attempt to combine Marx and Confucius

ERASING THE PAST IN A COUNTRY WITH SO RICH A HISTORY WAS ALWAYS A STRUGGLE

In 2023, Hunan TV, China's second most watched television channel, aired a series titled 'When Marx Met Confucius'. In five essays, Marx and Confucius discussed the nature of politics, concluding that Confucianism and Marxism were compatible. In one episode, Marx noted that he and his companion "share a commitment to [political] stability," adding that "in reality, I myself was Chinese for a long time," pointing out that his had always been in line with traditional Chinese worldviews. The series, sponsored by the Communist Party of China, was part of President Xi Jinping's broader political project to rethink his country's ideological identity. After coming to power in 2012, Xi made it important for Chinese people to hear of Chinese thought, which he calls "Xi Jinping Mind". Central to Xi's ideology is the synthesis of Marxism and Confucianism. Xi's efforts to redefine China's ideological

foundation feel all the more important as slowing growth has raised skepticism among investors and public distrust at home. To the frustration of Chinese leaders like Xi, Western countries are reluctant to accept China's global influence. Xi's attempt to combine Marx and Confucius drew consternation and even ridicule from observers in China and beyond. Over the past century, Chinese communist thinkers have tended to believe that a flourishing future demands a complete break from the past. China's formative early Marxist thinkers, in particular, generally condemned Confucianism, a philosophy that stresses hierarchy, ritual, and a return to an idealised past. Mao Zedong and other Chinese Marxists believed that Confucianism was theoretically incompatible with Marxism, which celebrates revolution and perpetual change, and that its practical influence on politics had made China weak. Confucian



thinking, in their view, had generated a moribund bureaucracy that failed to adapt to the challenges of modernity; this renunciation found its ultimate expression during Mao's Cultural Revolution, when the Chinese Red Guards dynamited the philosopher's tomb before hanging a naked corpse in front of it. But erasing the past in a country with so rich a history was always a struggle. It has consistently also seemed to matter to Chinese thinkers, and Chinese people in general, that their country should be seen as re-

sponding to political change with methods derived from a recognisably Chinese source. Even as many of China's early twentieth-century political theorists condemned Confucianism, other thinkers strove to show that China did not have to imitate Western ideas - be they national, liberal, or Marxist - to modernise. They found a road map for a different but potentially effective kind of modernisation within the universe of traditional Chinese ideas. In 'The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought', his magnum opus,

Wang Hui, a scholar of Chinese language and literature at Tsinghua University, returns to the late-nineteenth-century thinkers who worked to reshape Chinese philosophy. First published in Chinese in 2004, it appeared last year in a new English edition, the work of several translators under the direction of Michael Gibbs Hill. Although the translation clocks in at over 1,000 pages, it represents just over half of the four-volume Chinese original. Wang analyses the connections between political theory and more concrete issues of governance over a millennium of Chinese history. But he notes that "explanations of modern China cannot avoid the question of how to interpret" the Qing dynasty, which ruled China from 1644 to 1912. Wang's deep exploration of the work of a group of late Qing thinkers implies that China's embrace of Marxism did not, in fact, arise from a wholesale rejection of Confucianism. Chinese Marxism may have had the space to emerge precisely because these late thinkers sought to apply Confucian thought to the chal-

lenges of modernity. Like many countries on the rise today, China does not feel a sense of ownership over the world's international norms, which were largely created by the West in the twentieth century. Chinese elites believe that these norms and their universalist intellectual premises have largely been imposed on China. And despite China's strength, it is increasingly afflicted by a sense of crisis. This sentiment is partly a reaction to material circumstances. China's urban youth unemployment, now estimated at 20 per cent or higher, and a growing rural-urban inequality are rooted in economics. So, too, is the difficulty that Chinese families now have in meeting their mortgage payments or coping with inadequate health care and pensions. Chinese identity is still multiple, not monolithic, and Chinese thought has always best contributed to China's flourishing when it has been free and disputatious, not closed and sterile. This is the aspect of Chinese tradition that today's CCP cannot afford to ignore.

# business

## of the day note

As far as EVs are concerned, I think the biggest challenge here is the pace at which the charging infra is growing. It is lagging behind the pace at which the EV adoption is happening



SHAILESH CHANDRA | MD, TATA MOTORS

Imports of paper and paperboard in huge volumes and worth ₹10,000 crore in nine months are impacting the Make-in-India drive as well as depriving employment to 5 lakh committed farmers who are aligned with the domestic Paper Industry through agro, farm forestry



PAWAN AGARWAL | PRESIDENT, IPMA

Affordable housing segment remained strong in tier-2 and tier-3 markets. We remained focused on this segment, as it gives an opportunity to millions of aspiring Indians to own their home with a moderate budget



TRIBHUVAN ADHIKARI | MD AND CEO, LIC HOUSING FINANCE

## SHORT TAKES

### Steel exports at 18-month high

**New Delhi:** India's monthly steel exports hit a 18-month high to 1.1 million tonne in January 2024 on increased demand from the European Union and supportive global prices, SteelMint said. Besides, competitive domestic prices of steel contributed to rise in export. The outbound shipment of steel in January 2023 was 0.67 million tonne, as per SteelMint data. On reasons behind the surge in exports, SteelMint said, "good restocking demand from the European Union (EU) contributed 67 per cent of the 1.11 MT (export) in January. It was highest in last 18 months."

### Mcap of eight of top-10 firms up

**New Delhi:** Market valuation of eight of the 10 most valued firms jumped ₹1,10,106.83 crore last week, with Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) emerging as the biggest gainer. Last week, the 30-share BSE Sensex benchmark rose 716.16 points or 0.97 per cent. RIL, ICICI Bank, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), ITC, and Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) were among the gainers while Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys saw a combined erosion of ₹38,477.49 crore in market valuation. Reliance Industries continued to retain the title of the most valued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, SBI, LIC, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and ITC.

## Power min finalises funding mechanism for BESS projects

Battery energy storage systems will ensure round-the-clock supply of renewable energy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 25:** Union Power and New & Renewable Energy Minister RK Singh has finalised the mechanism for deployment of funds for various projects to develop battery energy storage systems in the country.

Battery energy storage systems (BESS) will ensure round-the-clock supply of renewable energy.

The minister chaired a meeting February 22 to finalise the structure for operationalising the scheme of viability gap funding for development of BESS with the capacity of 4,000 megawatt-hours (MWh), an official statement said Sunday.

Officials from the power ministry and those from Central

## IMPACT OF ₹2K NOTES WITHDRAWAL

# CiC decelerates

CURRENCY-IN-CIRCULATION GROWTH DROPS TO 3.7% IN FEB FROM 8.2% YOY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 25:** The growth in currency in circulation decelerated to 3.7 per cent for the week ended February 9 from 8.2 per cent a year ago, reflecting the impact of the decision of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to withdraw ₹2,000 banknotes.

Currency-in-circulation (CiC) refers to notes and coins in circulation, while currency with the public comprises notes and coins in circulation minus cash with banks.

According to the RBI, commercial banks have reported double-digit growth in deposits in January, which too can be attributed to withdrawal of ₹2,000 currency notes.

The growth of Reserve Money (RM), as per the RBI data, decelerated to 5.8 per cent as February 9, 2024 from 11.2 per cent a year ago (8.8 per cent adjusted for the first-round impact of change in Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)).

Components of RM include CiC, banks' deposits in RBI and other deposits with the central bank.

The growth in CiC, the largest component of RM, decelerated



We plan to invest up to ₹4,500 crore in the next three to four years to double our room capacity to 10,000

KAVINDER SINGH | MD AND CEO, MAHINDRA HOLIDAYS & RESORTS INDIA



As on Jan 31, nearly 97.5% of the ₹2,000 banknotes were returned to the banking system, and only about ₹8,897cr worth of such notes are still with the public

to 3.7 per cent from 8.2 per cent a year ago, reflecting the withdrawal of ₹2,000 banknotes, according to the RBI.

On May 19, 2023, RBI announced withdrawal of ₹2,000 denomination banknotes from circulation.

As on January 31, nearly 97.5 per cent of the ₹2,000 banknotes were returned to the banking system, and only about ₹8,897 crore worth of such notes are still with the public.

The total value of ₹2,000 banknotes in circulation was ₹3.56 lakh crore at the close of business May 19, 2023, when the withdrawal of ₹2,000 banknotes was announced.

Public and entities holding such notes were initially asked to either exchange or deposit them in bank accounts by September 30, 2023. The deadline was later extended to October 7, 2023. Deposit and exchange services at bank branches were discontinued on October 7, 2023.

Starting October 8, 2023 individuals have been provided with the choice of either exchanging the currency or having the equivalent sum credited to their bank accounts at the 19 offices of RBI.

The ₹2,000 banknotes were introduced in November 2016, following the demonetisation of the then-prevailing ₹1,000 and ₹500 banknotes.

## Number of M&A deals plunges 10% in 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 25:** The number of merger and acquisition (M&A) deals during 2023 dropped by 10 per cent on an annual basis to 793, said a PwC India report Sunday.

However, the total disclosed deal value for M&A declined much steeper at 38 per cent during the year, according to the report titled 'Deals at a glance'.

The report further observed that PE (Private Equity) investments totalled \$36 billion, marking a substantial 36 per cent drop from 2022.

Despite this decline, the average investment size per deal increased to \$46 million from \$42 million in 2022, reflecting a potential shift towards larger opportunities.

While early-stage investments were 53 per cent less compared to that in 2022, the report said, these along with growth-stage investments continued to make up the major share, constituting around 73 per cent of fundings in 2023.

On the other hand, buyouts demonstrated resilience with only a 5 per cent decline compared to 2022.

This suggests a nuanced landscape, where investors show interest in diverse strategies and larger-scale ventures, even amid an overall decrease in PE in-



Despite a restrained deal-making environment throughout the year, the deal activity stabilised towards the last quarter leading us to anticipate an upswing in 2024

DINESH ARORA | PARTNER & LEADER DEALS, PWC INDIA

vestments, the report said. In 2023, India resiliently navigated global headwinds, solidifying its appeal to international investors. The economic fundamentals stay strong reflecting investor enthusiasm for the country's expanding economic opportunities and this optimism is also echoed in PwC's latest CEO Survey.

In calendar year 2023, PwC said the retail and consumer sector emerged as the most active sector with technology finishing up marginally behind for the second consecutive year.

Following closely were the professional services and fintech sectors, which exhibited high activity in terms of volume. Meanwhile, financial services, renewable power, and healthcare dominated in deal value.

## Housing.com launches ops in Bhubaneswar

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 25:** Housing.com, India's premier digital real estate platform, announces the launch of its operations in the City of Temples, Bhubaneswar. With a focus on expanding into emerging markets, the company aims for a high double-digit annual growth rate over the next three years from tier-II markets.

With a solid foothold and a leading position as a comprehensive digital real estate platform, Housing.com is now poised to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the thriving real estate market of Bhubaneswar.

Moreover, a growing number of property buyers are gravitating towards apartments with configuration sizes of 2.5 and 3.5 BHK. Key areas such as Patia, Pahala, Khandagiri, Patrapada, and Rasulgarh are gaining traction due to their growth potential and investment opportunities.

Amit Masaldan, Chief Revenue Officer of Housing.com, expressed his excitement about the growth strategy, stating, "Bhubaneswar boasts a diverse range of residential options, from luxury apartments to villas, enriched by integrated townships and mixed-use developments. Our robust expansion in emerging markets, especially in Bhubaneswar, reflects the city's allure as an opportunity hotspot. With remote work trends on the rise, Bhubaneswar's tranquil charm has become a magnet for those seeking serenity."

Following closely were the professional services and fintech sectors, which exhibited high activity in terms of volume. Meanwhile, financial services, renewable power, and healthcare dominated in deal value.

## THIRD STRAIGHT QUARTER

### 6 PSUs fined for failure to appoint directors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 25:** State-owned oil and gas giants including IndianOil, ONGC and GAIL (India) have been slapped fines for the third straight quarter for failing to meet listing norm requirements of having the requisite number of directors on their board.

Stock exchanges have fined oil refining and fuel marketing giant Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), explorers Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL), gas utility GAIL, and refiners Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) a cumulative ₹32.5 lakh, stock exchange filings showed.

In separate filings, the companies detailed the fines imposed by the BSE and NSE for either not having the requisite number of independent directors or the mandated women director in the third quarter ended December 31, 2023, but were quick to point out that appointment of directors was done by the government and they had no role in it.

The six PSUs in separate filings said they have been slapped with a fine of Rs 5,42,800 each for the third quarter.

## DLF PLANS MEGA PROJECTS

Realty major DLF plans to launch properties worth nearly Rs 80,000 crore over the next 3-4 years to tap rising demand for housing and commercial projects. DLF, the country's largest real estate firm in terms of market cap, sold properties worth Rs 15,000 crore during 2022-23 and is set to surpass this number in the current fiscal going by sale bookings clocked in the first three quarters



## India to add 18 more N-power reactors

Presently, the NPCIL operates 24 reactors with a total capacity of 8,180 MWe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 25:** India will add 18 more nuclear power reactors with a cumulative capacity to generate 13,800 MWe of electricity, taking the total share of atomic power in the energy mix to 22,480 MWe by 2031-32.

This was announced by the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) after Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated two home-built 700 MW nuclear power reactors at Kakrapar in Gujarat last week.

Presently, the NPCIL operates 24 reactors with a total capacity of 8,180 MWe.

The prime minister dedicated units 3 & 4 of Kakrapar Atomic Power Station (KAPS 3 & 4) to the nation February 22.

KAPS-4 was connected to the western power grid February 20, two days ahead of PM Modi's visit to Kakrapar.

KAPS 3 & 4 (2 X 700 MW) are the largest indigenous Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWR) with advanced safety features comparable to the best in the world, the NPCIL said.



"These reactors have been designed, constructed, commissioned, and operated by NPCIL, with the supply of equipment and execution of contracts by Indian industries/ companies, reflecting the true spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat," the NPCIL said.

The prime minister said the role of nuclear power in electricity generation is going to increase in the 21st century and it was a matter of pride that India is Atmanirbhar in this advanced technology.

Four nuclear power plants of 1,000 MWe each are being built at Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu with Russian assistance. Four 700 MWe home-built PHWRs are coming up at Rawatbhata (RAPS 7 & 8) in Rajasthan and Gorakhpur (GHAVP 1 & 2) in Haryana. Ten 700 MWe PHWRs have been sanctioned to be built at GHAVP 3 & 4 at Gorakhpur in Haryana, Kaiga Generating Station 5 & 6 near Karwar in Karnataka, Chutka in Madhya Pradesh (CMPAPP 1 & 2) and four power units at Mahi Banswara in Rajasthan (MBRAPP 1, 2, 3 & 4).

## FPIs infuse ₹18,500cr in debt mkt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 25:** Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) continued their bullish stance on the country's debt markets with a net infusion of over ₹18,500 crore so far this month, driven by upcoming inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Index.

This came following a net investment of over ₹19,836 crore in January, making it the highest monthly inflow in more than six years. This was the highest inflow since June 2017, when they infused ₹25,685 crore.

On the other hand, foreign investors pulled out ₹424 crore from equities during the period under review. Before this, they withdrew a massive ₹25,743 crore in January, data with the depositors showed.

According to the data, FPIs made a net investment of ₹18,589 crore in the debt markets this month (till February 23). With this, the total investment by FPIs reached over ₹38,426 crore in 2024. They have been injecting money in the debt markets for the past few months.

FPIs infused ₹18,302 crore in the debt market in December, ₹14,860 crore in November, and ₹6,381 crore in October. The upcoming inclusion in JP Morgan EMBIGD in June 2024 is a major driver for the huge inflow in the debt market, Bhuvan Rustagi, Co-Founder and COO, Per Annum and Lendbox, said.



Additionally, attractive yield, stable macroeconomic indicators and relatively stable rupee too attracted FPIs towards the debt market. JP Morgan Chase & Co in September last year announced that it will add Indian government bonds to its benchmark emerging market index from June 2024.

This landmark inclusion is anticipated to benefit India by attracting around \$20-40 billion in the subsequent 18 to 24 months. This inflow is expected to make Indian bonds more accessible to foreign investors and potentially strengthen the rupee, thereby bolstering the economy.

On equities front, FPIs pulled out ₹424 crore so far this month, sharply down from ₹25,744 crore in January. The resilience of the market is preventing FPIs from selling aggressively despite attractive bond yields in the US. V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Making similar statement, Bharat Dhawan, Managing Partner at Mazars in India, said the Indian market continues to captivate international interest, signifying not only the resilience of the economy but also the trust global investors place in its growth trajectory.

In terms of sectors, FPI sell-off was significant in the banking sector; as it saw lower-than-expected results in terms of net interest margins due to competition in deposit mobilization, smallcase's Upadhyay said.

Overall, the total FPI flows for 2023 stood at ₹1.71 lakh crore in equities and ₹68,663 crore in the debt markets. Together, they infused Rs 2.4 lakh crore into the capital market.

The flow in Indian equities came following a worst net outflow of ₹1.21 lakh crore in 2022 on aggressive rate hikes by the central banks globally. Before the outflow, FPIs invested money in the last three years.

## Monthly household spending doubled in last decade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 25:** The per capita monthly household expenditure more than doubled in 2022-23 as compared to 2011-12, according to the latest study of National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).

NSSO, under Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, conducted Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) during August 2022 to July 2023, an official statement said Saturday.

The survey aims at generating estimates of household Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) and its distribution separately for the rural and urban sectors of the country, for states and Union Territories, and for different socio-economic groups.

As per the survey, the average MPCE at current prices (without imputation) more than doubled to ₹6,459 in urban areas in 2022-23 from ₹2,630 in 2011-12. Similarly in rural areas, it



jumped to ₹3,773 from ₹1,430 at current prices.

As per the study, the average MPCE at 2011-12 prices (without imputation) also increased to ₹3,510 in 2022-23 from ₹2,630 in 2011-12 in urban areas. Similarly, it rose to ₹2,008 from ₹1,430 in rural areas at 2011-12 prices.

It showed that the average MPCE also increased (with imputation) to ₹6,521 in 2022-23 from ₹2,630 in 2011-12 at current prices in urban areas. Similarly,

it rose to ₹3,860 from ₹1,430 in rural areas.

The average MPCE at 2011-12 prices (with imputation) increased to ₹3,544 in 2022-23 from ₹2,630 in 2011-12 in urban areas. It increased to ₹2,054 from ₹1,430 in rural areas.

The estimates of MPCE are based on the data collected from 2,61,746 households (1,55,014 in rural areas and 1,06,732 in urban areas) in the central sample spread over all states and Union

### Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure

|                       | 2022-23 | 2011-12 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| <b>CURRENT PRICES</b> |         |         |
| Urban areas           | ₹6,459  | ₹2,630  |
| Rural areas           | ₹3,773  | ₹1,430  |
| <b>2011-12 PRICES</b> |         |         |
| Urban areas           | ₹3,510  | ₹2,630  |
| Rural areas           | ₹2,008  | ₹1,430  |

Territories.

In HCES:2022-23, the usual practice of imputation of the value figures for consumption out of home-grown/home-produced stock and gifts, loans, free collection and goods received in exchange of goods and services etc. Has been continued; and accordingly, estimates of MPCE have been generated.

Besides, a provision for collection of information on the quantity of consumption for a number of items, received and consumed by the households free of cost through various social welfare programmes has been made in HCES:2022-23. Consequently, the value fig-

ures for food items: rice, wheat/atta, jowar, bajra, maize, ragi, barley, small millets, pulses, gram, salt, sugar, edible oil and non-food items: laptop/PC, tablet, mobile handset, bicycle, motorcycle/scooty, clothing (school uniform), footwear (school shoe etc) received free of cost by the households through these programmes, have been imputed using an appropriate method.

Accordingly, another set of estimates of MPCE considering imputed values of these items and of consumption out of home produce, free collection, gifts, loans etc has also been compiled for HCES: 2022-23.

Ashwin, Jurel, Kuldeep shine as hosts rise above England in remarkable turnaround on Day 3 of fourth Test

MEN IN BLUE THRASH IRELAND 4-0

# TROIKA LIFTS INDIA



**India end FIH Pro League hockey home leg on high**

PNN & AGENCIES

**Rourkela, Feb 25:** The Indian men's hockey team defeated Ireland 4-0 at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium here to finish the Rourkela leg of the FIH Hockey Pro League 2023/24 on a high. Nilakanta Sharma (14th minute), Akashdeep Singh (15th), Gurjant Singh (38th) and Jugraj Singh (60th) scored a goal each for the home team.

Ireland found themselves awarded a penalty corner midway through the first quarter, followed by another opportunity. However, the Indian Goalkeeper PR Sreejesh and the defense successfully denied both attempts.

With approximately two minutes remaining in the first quarter, India earned a penalty corner, and Nilakanta capitalised on the opportunity, scoring a goal from a rebound.

Before Ireland could recover from the first goal, the Men in Blue swiftly added another through Akashdeep, concluding the quarter with a 2-0 lead.

At the start of the second quarter, Ireland seemed to have command over the game and earned an early penalty corner. However, the solid Indian defense once again prevented them from scoring.

Despite Ireland maintaining ball possession for the majority of the second quarter, they couldn't penetrate the Indian defense to narrow the lead. The score remained 2-0 in favour of India at halftime.

In the 41st minute, Ireland earned their fourth penalty corner, but once more, Amit Rohidas thwarted their attempts to score. Mandeep Singh orchestrated a chance for Gurjant to increase India's lead to three goals with a superb reverse-hit cross. Gurjant Singh delivered, sliding in to redirect the ball into the net. The quarter concluded with India leading 3-0.

Even with Ireland earning a fifth penalty corner, PR Sreejesh showcased exceptional skills, preventing any change in the score. In the final minute of the game, Jugraj successfully converted a penalty corner, concluding the Rourkela leg with India triumphing over Ireland 4-0.

**R Ashwin became the highest wicket-taker in Tests at home for India. He now has 354 wickets from 59 matches at home, overtaking Anil Kumble's tally of 350 from 63 matches**



**WRIST MAGIC CONTINUES:** Ben Stokes haplessly looks at the stumps after being cleaned up by Kuldeep Yadav (top left) as Indian players rejoice

stump.

Crawley was looking in an ominous mood and tore into the Indian attack against the run of play to stretch their overall lead past 150 as Rohit persisted with Ashwin and Jadeja in the second session. But Kuldeep breathed fire into the attack as he got drift and was at his deceptive best. Having survived through an umpire's call, England skipper Ben Stokes was castled by Kuldeep with the ball staying low. Bairstow looked in firm control but fell in the first ball after tea when Jadeja exploited the cracks on the pitch to turn it away and the batter drove it straight to short cover.

Kuldeep then dismissed Tom Hartley and Ollie Robinson in four balls, before Ashwin raced to his fifth wicket as stumper Jurel took a brilliant reflex catch to oust James Anderson.

In the process, Ashwin also became the highest wicket-taker at home for India. He now has 354 wickets from 59 Tests at home, overtaking Anil Kumble's tally of 350 from 63 matches.

**'Jurel' in the crown**

Jurel's innings might just have ended India's search for a wicket-keeper batter in Tests in the absence of recuperating Rishabh Pant.

The 23-year-old from Agra was not only terrific with his glove-manship but exhibited oodles of maturity during that determined fifty as India mounted an incredible fightback, trimming England's first-innings lead to a mere 46 runs.

After reaching his maiden fifty in 96 balls, the Rajasthan Royals' wicketkeeper-batsman shifted gears, taking on English spinners Shoaib Bashir and Hartley. Jurel hurried for a single off Hartley to bring up his fifty in an entertaining 40-run stand off just 75 balls for the ninth wicket with Akash Deep (9). But Hartley denied him a hundred with a quicker delivery that stayed low. Young England off-spinner Bashir completed his maiden

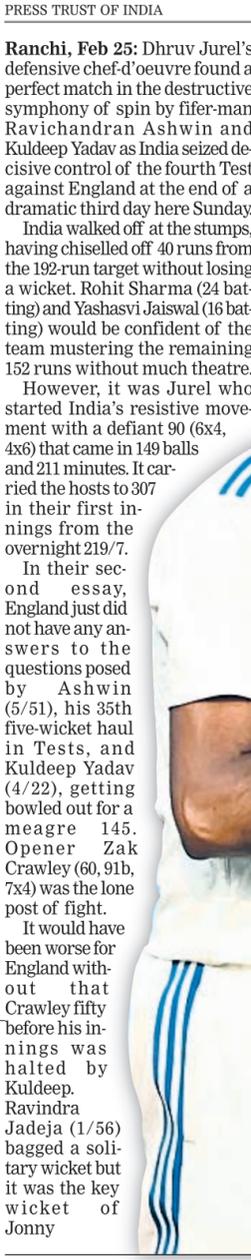
**BRIEF SCORES**

**England 353 & 145** (Zak Crawley 60, Jonny Bairstow 30; R Ashwin 5/51, Kuldeep Yadav 4/22); **India 307** (Dhruv Jurel 90, Kuldeep Yadav 28; Shoaib Bashir 5/119, Tom Hartley 3/68) & 40/0 (Rohit Sharma 24 batting, Yashasvi Jaiswal 16 batting).

**Match to continue.**



**MAKING A MARK:** Dhruv Jurel walks off the field after being the last man to be dismissed of Indian innings, Sunday



**Ranchi, Feb 25:** Dhruv Jurel's defensive chef-d'oeuvre found a perfect match in the destructive symphony of spin by fifer-man Ravichandran Ashwin and Kuldeep Yadav as India seized decisive control of the fourth Test against England at the end of a dramatic third day here Sunday.

India walked off at the stumps, having chiselled off 40 runs from the 192-run target without losing a wicket. Rohit Sharma (24 batting) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (16 batting) were confident of the team mustering the remaining 152 runs without much theatre.

However, it was Jurel who started India's resistive movement with a defiant 90 (6x4, 4x6) that came in 149 balls and 211 minutes. It carried the hosts to 307 in their first innings from the overnight 219/7.

In their second essay, England just did not have any answers to the questions posed by Ashwin (5/51), his 35th five-wicket haul in Tests, and Kuldeep Yadav (4/22), getting bowled out for a meagre 145. Opener Zak Crawley (60, 91b, 7x4) was the lone post of fight.

It would have been worse for England without that Crawley fifty before his innings was halted by Kuldeep. Ravindra Jadeja (1/56) bagged a solitary wicket but it was the key wicket of Jonny

# Kerr all-round show helps MI defeat GG

**Bangalore, Feb 25:** Amelia Kerr came up with a splendid all-round effort to assist Mumbai Indians seal a five-wicket win over Gujarat Titans in a Women's Premier League (WPL) match here Sunday.

Kerr first made a strong impression with her leg-spin, grabbing 4/17 that helped defending champions Mumbai limit Gujarat Giants to an under-par 126/9. The New Zealand player followed that effort with a 31 (25b, 3x4) as Mumbai overhauled the target in 18.1 overs after getting reduced to 21/2 in the fourth over.

Kerr received excellent support from skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (46 n o, 41b, 5x4, 1x6) as the pair stitched 66 runs for the fourth wicket as MI registered their second successive win in the tournament.

Nat-Sciver Brunt (22) too played a good hand and her scoops behind the wicketkeeper for fours off pacer Leah Tahuhu were epitome of innovation and timing. But Brunt was run out leaving MI in a spot of bother at 49/3. However, Kerr and Harmanpreet displayed excellent game-awareness to bail their team out.

With a paltry target in front, both Kerr and Harmanpreet did not have to show any unneces-



Amelia Kerr (L) and Shabnim Ismail celebrate a wicket, Sunday

# Man City, Arsenal close gap to Liverpool

**London, Feb 25:** With first-placed Liverpool not playing in the Premier League this round because of their involvement in the English League Cup final Sunday, title rivals Manchester City and Arsenal had a chance to trim the gap to the leaders. They both took it — and now the top three are separated by just two points.

Second-placed City moved one point behind Liverpool by beating Bournemouth 1-0 away, with Phil Foden grabbing the 24th-minute winner from a rebound after Erling Haaland has a shot parried out. It was Foden's 16th goal of the season in all competitions, already tying the England forward's most in a single season.

Arsenal responded to City's result by dominating Newcastle a few hours later, winning 4-1 at Emirates Stadium to stay a point behind City.

An own-goal by Sven Botman was followed by strikes by Kai Havertz and Bukayo Saka, before Jakub Kiwior glanced in a header for the fourth. Joe Willock, a former Arsenal player, scored an 85th-minute consolation for Newcastle.

**New era begins with loss**

The week started at Manchester United with Jim Ratcliffe completing his purchase of a minority stake and setting out a three-year plan to return the club to the top of English soccer, knocking local rivals Manchester City and Liverpool "off their perch" in the process. It ended with the team get-



Phil Foden reacts after scoring for Man City against Bournemouth, Sunday

# Raphinha helps Barca thrash Getafe

**Barcelona, Feb 25:** Raphinha made the most of starting again for Barcelona by scoring one goal and playing a part in two more to lead a 4-0 rout of Getafe.

Barcelona's biggest win since September saw it move past Girona and provisionally claim second place in the Spanish league.

Raphinha opened the scoring in the 20th minute at Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium. The Brazil winger then participated in passing moves to help Joao Felix and Frenkie de Jong add goals in the 53rd and 61st. Substitute Fermin Lopez rounded it off with a goal in stoppage time.

Leader Real Madrid are five points clear of Barcelona before they host Sevilla. Girona, who fell into third place, is one point adrift of Barcelona before playing Rayo Vallecano Monday.

Barcelona had been struggling at their stadium with only one win in their previous three home games, including a 3-5 debacle to Villarreal that prompted coach Xavi Hernandez to announce he would not see out the final year of his contract next season.

Raphinha led Barcelona's attack with his speed down the right side that repeatedly beat Getafe's high back line. The Brazilian latched onto a long ball by Jules Kounde and slotted a left-footed shot inside the far post to put the hosts ahead.

Barcelona again broke Getafe's pressure when Andreas Christensen charged from his spot as holding midfielder to receive a through ball by Raphinha that played him clear on the right flank. Christensen squared the ball for Felix to finish off.

Raphinha helped make it three when he drew goalkeeper David Soria off the line and laid off for De Jong. De Jong then assisted Lopez for his goal.



# Deepika secures two gold in Asia Cup Leg 1

**Baghdad, Feb 25:** Former World No.1 archer Deepika Kumari returned to winning ways 14 months after embracing motherhood as she bagged two gold at the Asia Cup Leg 1 here Sunday.

Indian archers won all the seven finals as well as three silver medals. Deepika defeated Simranjeet Kaur 6-2 to pocket the recurve women's title. She helped the women's team overcome Uzbekistan 5-4 (24\*24) in a tight shoot-off finish en route her second gold.

Recurve men's team and mixed team beat Bangladesh in lopsided finals for two more gold. Dhiraj Bommadevara clinched the men's title, defeating his senior Army colleague Tarundeep Rai 7-3.

Prathamesh Jawkar claimed the compound individual title, pipping teammate Kushal Dalal 146-144. Parneet Kaur prevailed over Fatemeh Hemmati of Iran 138-135 to secure the compound women's title.



Pramod Bhagat

# Pramod, Yathiraj, Krishna win Para Badminton Worlds gold

**Pattaya (Thailand), Feb 25:** Pramod Bhagat, Suhas Yathiraj and Krishna Nagar capped their impressive run by securing gold medals in men's singles SL3, SL4 and SH6 class respectively at the Para Badminton World Championship here Sunday.

Tokyo Paralympic gold medalist, Pramod, who won a gold and two bronze at the Para Asian Games in China, edged out England's Daniel Bethell 14-21, 21-15, 21-14 in SL3 (standing/lower limb impairment/severe) final.

Bhagat thus completed a hat-trick of crowns after Stoke Mandeville in 2015 and Basel in 2019. He also won a gold medal at 2022 Tokyo and 2009 Seoul edition.

Apart from the gold, the 35-year-old from Odisha also won two bronze medals in men's doubles and mixed doubles along with Sukant Kadam and Manisha Ramadass respectively.

The World No.3 Yathiraj, a Paralympic silver medallist, outwitted Indonesia's Fredy Setiawan 21-18, 21-18 in SL4 final (standing/lower limb impairment/minor) for her maiden world title. Yathiraj has an impairment in one of his ankles.

In SH6 category (standing/short stature), Krishna Nagar, a Paralympic gold medal winner, also emerged champion after prevailing 22-20, 22-20 over China's Lin Naili in another men's singles final.