



Revolutionizing Rural Banking 'Ama Bank' Expands to 2,750 Panchayats in Phase 2

Over 4,300 'AMA Bank' will be operational by March 2024




IRREGULAR by MANJUL



...speak, but no taunting the hon'ble justice or he might join politics

A day after the public bonhomie between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at a meeting in Jajpur just ahead of the upcoming polls added fuel to the speculations of a possible understanding between the two main political parties in the state, Wednesday's quick developments cemented it further. While BJD leaders reportedly ensconced in closed door meetings over seat sharing with the saffron party in Bhubaneswar, the BJP's central leadership held discussions over the same in New Delhi. However, till late in the evening, leaders emerging out of these meetings gave guarded statements, leaving everyone to guess about the shape of such an alliance which observers feel was far from being necessary for both the parties.

GOING TOGETHER

5 get death for killing former Block chairman

POST NEWS NETWORK

BJD and the Opposition BJP in Odisha, leaders from both parties Wednesday hinted towards a mutual tie-up before the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. While BJD leaders held a marathon meeting at Naveen Niwas, the residence of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, here Wednesday, the BJP leaders had a similar meeting in the national capital, discussing election matters, including a potential alliance. After three hours of discussion, BJD vice-president and MLA Debi Prasad Mishra acknowledged discussions about a possible alliance with the BJP but did not explicitly confirm its formation. "Biju Janata Dal will prioritise the greater interests of the people of Odisha. Yes, there were discussions on the issue (alliance)," Mishra told reporters.

Claiming that Odisha had progressed significantly under Naveen Patnaik's leadership, Mishra emphasised the need to take the state's development to the next level. In a press release issued by Mishra and BJD's senior general secretary Arun Kumar Sahoo, it was stated, "An extensive discussion was held under the leadership of BJD president and CM Naveen Patnaik with the senior leaders of the party today regarding the strategy of the upcoming Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections." Meanwhile, after a meeting presided over by BJP president JP Nadda in Delhi, senior BJP leader and MP Jai Oram admitted to discussions on a pre-poll alliance with the BJD. However, he said the party's central leadership would make the final decision on the matter. "Yes, there were discussions on the al-

liance among other issues. The party's central leadership will make the final call," Oram, who personally opposed the alliance, said. Top leaders of the state including Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal, and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, attended the core committee meeting chaired by Nadda. Both parties had previously rejected media reports about a potential pre-poll alliance February 29. BJD national spokesperson Sasmit Patra and BJP's Odisha election in-charge Vijay Pal Singh Tomar had dismissed the reports as rumours. Meanwhile, sources in the BJD said that another round of discussions would be held Thursday over the possible alliance with the saffron party.

Keonjhar, March 6: The additional district and sessions court of Anandapur in this district has awarded death sentence to five persons in connection with brutal murder of former Anandapur Block chairman Rama Chandra Behera in 2019. The court pronounced the verdict Tuesday based on the testimony of 53 witnesses and 94 documents, additional public prosecutor Aswini Kumar Mallick said. The five convicts are: Sanjay Prusty, Ajit Prusty, Arun Prusty, Alekh Prusty and Dola Boitei. One of the accused Pramod Das, who was a minor then, is under custody of a child care institute, Mallick added.

Indian dies in Russia
Moscow: An Indian national has died in Russia and authorities are making efforts to send his mortal remains back home, the Indian mission here announced Wednesday.

Bhubaneswar, March 6: Although there was no formal announcement regarding a pre-poll alliance between the ruling





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- Age limit extended to 40 years for special categories
- Empowered Youth, Empowered Odisha

Information & Public Relations Department

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leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Ganesh sees a wonderful time ahead for you. Today, you will meet many people who will prove reliable and trustworthy in the future. You aim to think and work perfectly. For that, says Ganesh, you will have to remain your practical and head-on-shoulders self.

TAURUS
You will manage to achieve all short-term goals that you had set today and your focus will now shift to setting long-term ones. Work pressure will continue but you will make it a point to find some time to renew your leisure activities. Family and friends will also figure in your scheme of things, predicts Ganesh.

GEMINI
You are likely to be concerned about your finances, jointly held assets and property, says Ganesh. Also, you will be a little edgy today. Even the most insignificant problems will dampen your mood. You will probably take chances in money matters.

CANCER
There is nothing extraordinary about today. You will be busy doing the routine work and will find contentment in the mundane. The absence of thrill and adventure doesn't mean that you'll be free for most part of the day. By evening, you may get indications that tomorrow may not be this boring.

LEO
The complete family man that you are, it is your near and dear ones who have always laid the foundation of your success. So why should today be any different. The auspicious tides of the day begin from your home and follow you everywhere. Be it work or play, you have a tempo that is undiminished.

VIRGO
Don't dilly-dally when it comes to matters of health, says Ganesh. You look lean and mean to take on those old wounds today. But peace and prosperity are the flavours of the day. Ganesh advises you to invest time in fun and entertainment today - just to get those batteries charged.

LIBRA
Put up that 'Do Not Disturb' sign on the door today. That's because Ganesh feels the tingle in your bones to want to stick to your preferred subject matter. This will help you achieve good progress in your research. Also, expect to be hit by a wave of nostalgia, as loving memories from the past sweeten your heart.

SCORPIO
Ganesh predicts you will possibly plan to launch a new product today. But put off the launch if you want to supersede certain unscrupulous elements. But after a waiting game, you may go ahead with your plan with much fanfare, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Zoom in on complicated problems and solve them with style, says Ganesh. Don't fret over problems; instead concentrate on ways to solve them. Your day will get even better when perhaps, news from an overseas friend reaches you.

CAPRICORN
Today, you will get back to playing the power game, using both fair and unfair means to achieve your goals, says Ganesh. Intellectual growth will be phenomenal; equally good will be your intuitions. In fact, your gut feelings will guide all the decisions you take today, and rest assured, none will leave you in a soup.

AQUARIUS
A romantic liaison is headed towards you. Quite naturally, you don't want to be caught dead in a ratty old tee. Today, you want to keep everyone happy and amused, both at home and at work. And you manage wonderfully, says Ganesh.

PISCES
'Love thy neighbour' is a commandment you may just end up implementing, literally, considering how religious scriptures provide you food for thought today. Spiritual pursuits will keep you occupied. You may also find yourself visiting places of religious significance, says Ganesh.



MICHELLE IS HEARTBROKEN OVER THE BROTHERS SUN CANCELLATION

Oscar-winning actress Michelle Yeoh talked about streaming giant Netflix's decision, not to proceed with a second season of *The Brothers Sun* in an emotional post, reports *deadline.com*.

JACK BLACK: KATE WINSLET IS MY FAVOURITE CO-STAR

Actor Jack Black has shared that his favourite co-star is Kate Winslet and it is because of her eyes. Talking about his favourite co-star, Jack told *etonline*, "Kate Winslet and I'll tell you why. She was my favorite co-star I've ever had because when you look in her eyes, she was like really present."



Janhvi's battle with nepotism

Mumbai: Actress Janhvi Kapoor, who comes from a famous film family, constantly finds herself embroiled in discussions about her 'nepo' status, overshadowing her cinematic endeavours.

Launched amidst great fanfare due to her lineage as the daughter of Sridevi, her debut in *Dhadak* coincided tragically with her mother's untimely demise. Despite initial support, the nepotism discourse clouded her entry into the industry. Subsequent films, like *Gunjan Saxena*, faced criticism amid the Sushant Singh Rajput controversy, irrespective of their

quality.

The actress' efforts to select diverse roles challenged the stereotype of nepotism beneficiaries merely serving as decorative elements in films tailored around male leads. However, her choices didn't mitigate the 'nepo' tag, overshadowing her performances.

In a candid interview, the *Bawaal* actress acknowledged the privilege she inherited but also expressed the burden it carried. Despite her genuine efforts, she faces incessant scrutiny and backlash, particularly on social media. Unlike older nepotism beneficiaries like Sunny Deol or Kajol, Janhvi's struggles are continually magnified, hindering her acceptance by audiences. Her movies, while appreciated by niche viewers, struggle to break free from the nepotistic narrative.

Until societal attitudes evolve or a breakthrough film changes the discourse, she remains a target of unwarranted criticism, trapped in the shadow of her lineage. AGENCIES



'Learnt everything from scratch'

Mumbai: Actress Sonakshi Sinha, who will soon be seen in SLB's upcoming period drama series *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar*, opened up about how, despite being a veteran actor's daughter, she had no experience being on a film's set and no formal training in acting or dancing, starting off 'completely from scratch.'

Speaking at the 24th edition of FICCI Frames, the *Double XL* actress said, "Throughout my career, I have learned through experience. I started off completely from scratch. I had no experience being on a film's set. I never visited my dad on sets when I was a child, and I had no training in acting or dancing. I was not groomed for the profession. I was literally thrown into the deep end of the pool and told to swim. That's how I learned."

"Every experience for me is something to be cherished. Every person I have worked with, I have learned a lot from, which has got me to the point that where Sanjay Leela Bhansali (SLB) comes to me, he has the confidence in me to offer me a role like that of Fareedan, who is very complex," Sinha

Pulkit-Kriti set to tie the knot March 13

Mumbai: *Pagalpanti* actors Pulkit Samrat and Kriti Kharbada are all set to tie the knot in March. The couple's beach-themed wedding card leaked online and has gone viral. The couple got engaged in January and are now ready to embark on their forever adventure. Their pre-wedding events will begin March 13, with the wedding taking place March 15.

The couple's wedding card defines their love story, which started in the city of dreams. The card shows a sketch of the couple enjoying a sundowner as Pulkit plays a guitar and Kriti looks

at the beach from their patio, along with pet dogs around them. The card seems to be made in a way to show their love for music and the beaches. There's also a message that reads, "I can't wait to celebrate with our squad. Love, Pulkit, and Kriti."

They co-starred in the film *Pagalpanti* in 2019 and fell in love. After getting engaged in January, their Valentine's Day post sparked rumours that they'd soon tie the knot too. In the post that they shared for each other, Kriti wrote, "Let's 'March' together", and Pulkit replied, "I do." AGENCIES



Akshay to present documentary on Statue of Unity

Mumbai: Actor Akshay Kumar, who will be presenting the documentary *Statue of Unity: Ekta Ka Prateek*, said it's about honouring the great spirit of unity that resonates within every Indian.

Directed by Aanand L Rai, *Statue of Unity: Ekta Ka Prateek* is a journey of an ambitious vision turning into reality. The 40-minute documentary celebrates the spirit of unity that binds the nation together and pays homage to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the architect of united India, who led the integration of 562 fragmented princely states into one nation post-independence.

The *Welcome* actor said, "Being part of the *Statue of Unity: Ekta Ka Prateek* has been an incredibly humbling experience for me. It's about honouring the great spirit of unity that resonates within every Indian."

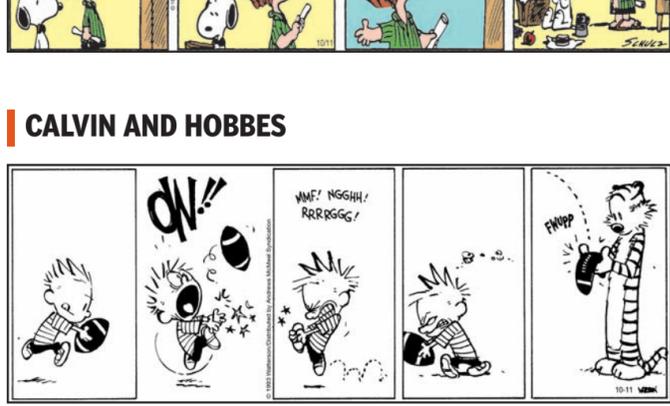
"Sardar Patel's vision and leadership continue to inspire us, reminding us of the strength that comes from our unity as a nation. I hope this documentary serves as a reminder of our shared heritage and the power of coming together for a common purpose," he added.

Statue of Unity: Ekta Ka Prateek will premiere on History TV18 on March 8. AGENCIES

PEANUTS
YES, MA'AM, WE'RE HERE TO SEE THE PRINCIPAL!
APPARENTLY, THERE'S BEEN SOME MISUNDERSTANDING... HE SEEMS TO THINK I BELONG BACK IN SCHOOL.
MY ATTORNEY, HERE, SHOULD BE ABLE TO STRAIGHTEN EVERYTHING OUT.
AFTER HE'S FINISHED HIS LUNCH!



CALVIN AND HOBBS

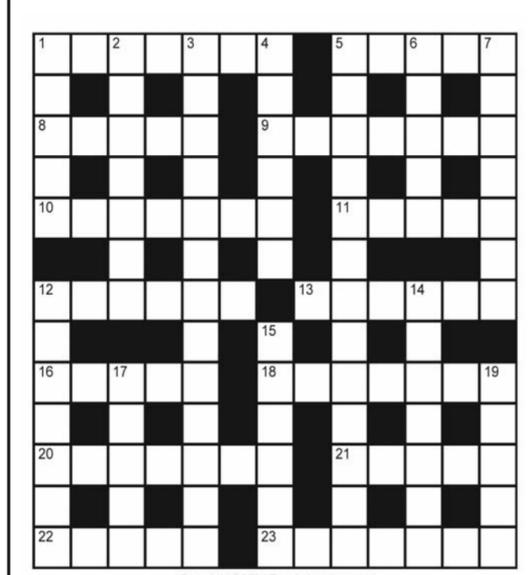


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Tooth
 - 5 Malicious satisfaction
 - 8 Promote
 - 9 Idle fancy
 - 10 Tennis competition
 - 11 Gladden
 - 12 Kitty's treat
 - 13 Keeness
 - 16 Photo finish
 - 18 Turkey, e.g.
 - 20 Relating to the heart
 - 21 Quinine water
 - 22 Parasite
 - 23 Heartfelt
- Down**
- 1 Set securely
 - 2 Lawn game
 - 3 TV receiver (9,4)
 - 4 Time out
 - 5 Radiation detector (6,7)
 - 6 Alpha's opposite
 - 7 Calamity
 - 12 Funny
 - 14 Vivid
 - 15 Winter hanger-on
 - 17 Brusque
 - 19 Marina sight

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



INFRA BOOST: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday inaugurated India's first underwater metro train in Kolkata. PPT PHOTO

BSKY Nabin Card for rural areas

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, March 6: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday launched a health scheme - Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) Nabin Card - for people of the rural areas of the state. Launching the BSKY Nabin Card, Patnaik said that people living in villages, except regular government employees and income taxpayers, will get this benefit. The people will be able to get the benefits from May 1, a statement issued by the CMO said, adding that the scheme will be implemented under the "5T initiative" of the state government. 5T is a governance model in Odisha, based on teamwork, transparency, technology and



time leading to transformation. The Nabin Card is an extension of the BSKY scheme under which about 1 crore families, around 80 per cent of the state's popula-

tion, are availing cashless health services, an official said. In the new scheme, there is a provision of medical benefits up to ₹5 lakh for each member of a family. The women, however, are entitled to ₹10 lakh. Patnaik said the BSKY Nabin Card will help cover more families in this scheme. Beneficiaries with BSKY Nabin Card are entitled to get cashless treatment for identified critical diseases - heart diseases, kidney diseases, liver diseases, brain stroke, severe head injury, brain tumour, burns management, nerve & muscle diseases and cancer - at all empanelled hospitals both inside and outside Odisha. The card holders will also get cashless coverage at empanelled private hospitals from May 1. In the next phase, the benefit will be extended to all the people in the urban areas.

CM lays stone for ₹100cr Adivasi Bhawan

Bhubaneswar, March 6: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone for state's maiden Adivasi Bhawan at Gothapatana here, Wednesday. Estimated to be constructed at an approximate cost of ₹100 crore, the facility will serve as a versatile centre for deliberation, meetings, conferences, and showcasing of tribal art, culture, and development initiatives. Dedicated to the tribal populace of the state, it is envisioned to be the focal point for tribal gatherings, contributing to the realisation of 'Nabin Odisha, Sashakt Odisha' (New Odisha,



Strong Odisha), Patnaik said in a statement. The ST and SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare department, catering primarily to the needs of 22.85 per cent of the state's population, highlighted the repeated demand for this proposed facility from all communities. Once completed, Adivasi

Bhawan will benefit tribal people from 64 ST categories, including Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). It will include accommodation facilities, conference halls, and an outlet for Adisha with Koraput Coffee Cafe. Managed as a project under the State-Level Administrative Unit for the Special Development Council (SDC), this multifaceted facility will address the needs of indigenous people, offering accommodation to visiting tribals and promoting cultural sensitivity and access to services. The facility is envisioned to provide a comfortable stay for tribal community members, re-

specting their distinct cultural practices, dietary preferences, and social norms, thereby ensuring a more inclusive environment, the statement added. Moreover, it will serve as a convenient base for accessing essential services and resources in Bhubaneswar, offering information and assistance regarding healthcare, education, government offices, and other amenities, it added. Additionally, it will exhibit artefacts, traditional textiles, and other art forms for display and sale, enriching the cultural experience and promoting the region's artistic heritage, the statement said.

'Wife doing household chores not cruelty'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi, March 6: Setting aside a family court's order denying grant of divorce to a man, the Delhi High Court recently clarified that expecting a wife to undertake household chores does not amount to cruelty. The judgement came from a division bench, comprising Justice Suresh Kumar Kait and Justice Neena Bansal Krishna, which was hearing an appeal filed by a man against a family court's ruling that had dismissed his request for marriage dissolution over alleged cruelty by his wife. The bench stressed the shared responsibilities that come with marriage, stating that tasks done

by a wife for her household stem from love and affection, and should not be compared to the work of a maid-servant. The expectation from a wife to manage household duties, according to the court, falls within the traditional division of responsibilities and cannot be viewed as cruelty. Despite setting aside the family court's judgement and granting the man divorce based on other grounds of cruelty under Section 13(1)(ia) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the court's observation on household chores drew attention to the balancing of roles within a marriage. The couple, who got married in 2007 and became parents to a

son born in 2008, experienced a strained relationship from the start. The husband accused the wife of reluctance to perform household duties and failing to integrate with his family, claims the woman contested by stating that her contributions went unappreciated. The bench noted the husband's efforts to salvage the marriage, including arranging separate accommodation to please his wife. However, the court observed that her frequent departures to live with her parents suggested a reluctance to uphold matrimonial unity, and depriving the husband of a shared life with his son.

Srikant back in Cong

New Delhi: Former Union minister Srikant Jena returned to the Congress Wednesday and asserted that the INDIA bloc will defeat the BJP-BJD's 'unholy alliance' in Odisha. Jena had been expelled by the Congress in 2019 for alleged anti-party activities. Congress' Odisha in-charge Ajoy Kumar welcomed Jena into the party. P8

Shahjahan in CBI custody

A CBI team reached CID headquarters before 4pm. But the handover from the state agency took place at around 6:48pm

Kolkata, March 6: The CBI Wednesday got the custody of Sandeshkhali Enforcement Directorate (ED) official attack case accused Shahjahan Sheikh from the West Bengal CID, following two orders by the Calcutta High Court to do so on two consecutive days. In a fresh directive Wednesday, the HC directed the state government to 'immediately implement' its Tuesday's judgement to transfer a case on the attack on ED officials at Sandeshkhali to the CBI and hand over custody of the main accused Sheikh to the central agency. A team of CBI officials reached CID headquarters Bhawani Bhawan before 4pm. But the handover from the state agency took place at around 6:48pm, despite the Calcutta HC setting a deadline of 4:15pm. "Shahjahan Sheikh was handed over to CBI," a CID official said. The CID took him to a state-run hospital for a medical check-up before handing him over to the CBI. The CBI officials are likely to take him to an ESI Hospital and then to Nizam Palace, the city office of the central investigating agency. He was arrested in a case related to a mob attack on ED officials at Sandeshkhali January 5 when the central agency had gone to search his premises in connection with an alleged ration distribution scam. "This is shameful. Despite the Calcutta

high court setting a 4:15pm deadline, Shahjahan Sheikh was handed after more than two hours. This only proves that the TMC government has the least regard for the judiciary," BJP MLA Shankar Ghosh said. The CBI Tuesday failed to get the custody of suspended TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh from the West Bengal CID even after waiting for more than two hours. The CID said the leader of Sandeshkhali was not handed over to the central agency as the state government had moved the Supreme Court against an order of the Calcutta HC. But an apex court bench refused an urgent listing of the plea and asked the state's counsel to mention the matter before the Registrar General. Sheikh, one of the key accused in cases of atrocities against women in Sandeshkhali, was arrested last Thursday by the West Bengal police. The case was later taken over to the West Bengal CID. Earlier in the day, the ED moved a contempt petition before a division bench presided by Justice Harish Tandon against the state government claiming that it did not implement Tuesday's orders of a division bench presided by Chief Justice TS Sivagnanam. The court noted that though the state pleaded that it has filed before the Supreme Court an SLP challenging Tuesday's judgement, there is no interim stay granted on the implementation of the orders till the time it was passing its order.

MARKET WATCH			
INDEX		VAIATION	
SENSEX	74085.99	▲	408.86
NIFTY	22474.00	▲	117.70
DOLLAR	82.89	▼	₹0.08
EURO	90.19	▲	₹0.10
GOLD	₹65,127	▲	₹282
SILVER	₹74,125	▲	₹751

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	34.7°C	34.8°C
Min Temp	23.8°C	23.5°C
Humidity	86%	87%
Rainfall	23mm	Nil

FORECAST
 LIGHT RAIN VERY LIKELY TO OCCUR

EVs emit more pollutants: Study

London, March 6: Contrary to the belief that electric vehicles (EVs) emit less pollutants into the atmosphere than the petrol and diesel powered ones do, a recent study has revealed that EVs release significantly more particulate matter from brakes and tyres. Since more people become concerned about climate change, there is a growing interest in environment-friendly transportation options. Many people believe that battery-powered vehicles are better for environment than traditional petrol and diesel cars because they produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions. However, a recent study by Emission Analytics, a firm that analyses emissions data, challenges this idea. The study, featured in a Wall Street Journal op-ed, brings to limelight the problem of particle pollution originating from brakes and tyres in both electric and fossil fuel powered cars.



The key finding is that EVs, due to their heavier weight, may release significantly more particulate matter from brakes and tyres as compared to modern gas-powered vehicles with efficient exhaust filters. The study suggests this could be 1,850 times greater. Emission Analytics pointed out that the concern lies in tyre wear as EVs' heavier weight causes tyres to deteriorate faster, releasing harmful chemicals into the atmosphere. This is because most tyres are made from synthetic rubber derived from crude oil. The study also highlights the impact of battery weight. EVs typically have heavier batteries as compared to tra-

ditional petrol-run vehicles. This extra weight puts more strain on the brakes and tyres, accelerating wear and tear. The study claims that tyre wear emissions from an EV with a half-tonne (1,100 pounds) battery could be over 400 times higher than exhaust emissions from a modern petrol car. While the focus has traditionally been on tailpipe emissions, this study suggests that particle pollution from brakes and tyres needs to be considered when evaluating the environmental impact of EVs. Back home, there is a craze for EVs. India recorded a significant uptick in EV sales in 2023, with volumes surpassing 1.5 million - marking a 50 per cent increase from previous year. The overall share of EVs in India's auto sales has risen sharply to 6.38 per cent in 2023 from 1.75 per cent in 2021, reflecting a growing consumer preference for electric vehicles over a two-year period.

BUSINESS EMINENCE AWARDS

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“ Detachment is the beginning of mastery.”

SRI AUROBINDO



Blockchain Primetime

As the crypto winter thaws, and financial institutions renew their interest in digital assets, an old debate has re-emerged over whether blockchain is truly a “trust machine,” as The Economist described it in 2015.

A figure from fifteenth-century Venice can help answer that question. Though he was neither a technologist nor a banker, the friar Luca Pacioli is remembered today for developing the double-entry book-keeping accounting system that underpins much of the modern economy. It was his ingenious model that introduced debits and credits to the method of recording transactions in two separate accounts.

This seemingly boring and cumbersome tweak to a core business function didn't just ensure accuracy and curb fraud; it also gave owners new insights into how to run and improve their businesses and cut costs. Under Pacioli's system, efficiencies soared, commerce accelerated, and the Renaissance took flight. Double-entry accounting became a cornerstone of economic activity because it was simple, easily shared, and undeniably useful. Centuries later, financial statements based on Pacioli's work became mandatory for any business. Such is the power of a basic infrastructure upgrade.

The broader lesson is that an innovation that makes it from conception to global adoption typically passes three tests of public trust: Does it work? Is it useful? Is it safe? Or put another way, users expect competence, value, and reliability.

Today, blockchain's advocates see the technology as the next great leap toward making financial transactions massively more efficient. “The root problem with conventional currency is all the trust that's required to make it work,” wrote Bitcoin's pseudonymous creator Satoshi Nakamoto in 2009. “With e-currency based on cryptographic proof, without the need to trust a third-party middleman, money can be secure and transactions effortless.” Nakamoto envisioned crypto proofs replacing human trust to create a truly peer-to-peer, trustless financial system.

The underlying blockchain technology that Bitcoin's creator(s) deployed builds elegantly on the foundation that Pacioli laid. Imagine if a fifteenth-century Florentine merchant's ledger entry showed up instantly on the books of every other merchant. Such a distributed ledger creates triple-entry (or effectively infinite-entry) accounting, making the data immutable and incontestable.

That functionality alone is transformative, but the architecture of blockchain networks gives them superpowers well beyond financial applications. As the tech entrepreneur Chris Dixon notes, “[I]t's wrong to think of blockchains as mere ledgers for tabulating numbers. Blockchains are not databases; they're full-fledged computers.”

Of course, one of the great ironies of the crypto industry is that a technology grounded in a desire to strengthen financial trust has generated so much mistrust. But while The Economist was not wrong to call blockchain a trust machine nearly a decade ago, its assessment may have been incomplete. After settling literally trillions of transactions, blockchain's fundamental claim to facilitate the reliable exchange of value has been well verified. Though it is little solace to those who lost funds during the industry's implosions in recent years, those episodes reflected irrational exuberance and old-fashioned fraud, not any flaws of distributed-ledger protocols.

These failures were as predictable as they were regrettable. Excitement about emerging technologies typically outpaces their utility, leaving a wake of disappointments. Even the most promising technologies struggle with early design flaws. AI chatbots can hallucinate. Electric-vehicle batteries can fail in extreme cold or heat. New software is often buggy. And blockchain networks have not been fully immune to hacks and performance issues. But their battle-tested durability makes them well positioned to upgrade the way we move money.

What about usefulness? This quality is more subjective. Obviously, collectible cartoon apes and purely speculative trading do not amount to a transformative, more inclusive upgrade to the global financial system.

Fortunately, responsible market players today are using blockchain to do many other things: delivering mobile, corruption-resistant humanitarian aid to refugees; lowering the costs of charitable giving, remittances, and cross-border payments by 80%; expanding access to basic financial services; giving workers in high-inflation countries a portable store of value; establishing provenance to power the “creator economy;” transmitting money at scale with the ease, security, and speed with which the internet transmits data; and upgrading legacy financial rails that date back to the 1970s.

While still nascent, these applications undeniably deliver high social and economic value. That brings us to the third question: whether blockchain-based financial rails are safe – which, in financial services, means regulated. Can users expect common, high standards around the world? Not quite yet, but we're getting close.

This is another irony for crypto. What began as a libertarian vision for a code-based financial system air-gapped from government is colliding with regulatory reality. There is a growing recognition that blockchain-based networks and financial applications are not displacing so much as modernising and democratising traditional financial infrastructure. That means working with – not against – regulators and policymakers.

The good news is that 2024 is poised to bring greater regulatory certainty. Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the European Union have all established strong standards and consumer protections for this growing ecosystem. And the US Congress could follow suit this year with bipartisan digital-asset and stablecoin legislation that would crack down on illicit financing and counterfeit digital currencies. That would make a material difference in public confidence.

Is blockchain a trust machine? The year ahead could give us a definitive answer.



Josh Burek

Today, blockchain's advocates see the next great leap toward making financial transactions massively more efficient

FOCUS SOCIAL SECURITY

OLD PENSION, NEW CHALLENGES

The OPS enemies are honing their lethal weapons by the day to bludgeon the NPS. Yet the governments of five states, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh have already reintroduced the Old Pension Scheme. The Karnataka government is in the process of reverting to OPS and Telangana is likely to follow suit soon since the ruling Congress promised it in its poll manifesto. Rebirth of OPS in every state and may be at the Centre seems to be the fait accompli for the new government after the 2024 election given the success of the employees achieving their demand in these states and the intense battle elsewhere chiefly enthused with this success despite tough opposition by the government at Centre and its supporters and despite some new hurdles in process of switching to OPS.

First a brief recapitulation of OPS, before going deeper into the current tussle. The government employees enjoyed pension even during British time; pension was introduced in 1881. The Royal Commission on Civil Establishments (Lee Commission) of 1924 recommended half the salary as pension for its recruits serving in India. The Government of India Act 1935 further strengthened pension provision, Lee Commission's suggestion. So, government employees have been enjoying pension benefit for more than a hundred years.

Notwithstanding this deeply entrenched post-retiral security, the government of India notified in December 2003 the replacement of OPS to prospectively take effect from January 1, 2004 (applicable for those who were recruited after that date). The OPS entailed a pension of about half the last drawn salary to its employees without any contribution from them towards any pension fund while the NPS required the employees to contribute 10% of their basic and DA to the pension fund and a matching contribution from the employer (the employers' share, however, was raised to 14% in 2019).

Not going into too much detail, the fund collected from the employees under NPS will be paid



The government should welcome and feel happy if life expectancy is increasing and should not feel it as a burden

to them on retirement, along with returns on it, partly in lump-sum and partly (at least 40% of accumulated amount) as annuities/ periodic pension through Annuity Service Providers, life insurance companies. Thus, OPS accrued to employees as a right and without any contribution from them; clearly, it is a defined benefit with no contribution scheme whereas NPS entailed a defined contribution without a defined benefit.

The OPS being far superior and more beneficial compared to NPS, the government employees are averse to accepting the latter. When they see their counterparts in some states succeeding in dumping NPS, they do not want to be silent spectators without themselves launching a similar movement. Already the process is on. Indian Railways employees have already threatened to go on a nationwide strike from 1 May if their demand for the restoration of OPS is not met by then.

The additional impetus: West Bengal government has never accepted NPS while Tamil Nadu though accepted it in 2003 has never implemented the scheme in its true earnest. As employees have been enjoying this benefit for ages it is not an easy task for governments to convince their employees to accept an inferior benefit. The government knew this very well. So it made its 2003 notification to be effective from 1 January 2004 to those employees who were recruited after that date. As it did not affect the existing employees there was not enough resistance to stall the move in the beginning. The

protest started very late. Intense agitation is seen now, two decades after the launch of NPS.

Then what are the objections of the pundits who oppose the OPS and what are the counter-arguments? Their main argument is the burgeoning financial burden on the government if the OPS is restored. A recent RBI Bulletin article (September 2023) argues that “the cumulative fiscal burden in case of OPS could be as high as 4.5 times that of NPS, with the additional burden reaching 0.9% of GDP annually by 2060.” The short-run reduction in the outgo with the discarding of NPS and the monthly payments towards it is no comfort because the long-run burden with the reintroduction of OPS will be untenably high since it is an unfunded pay-as-you-go model which entails payment out of the current revenues whereby the governments' capital expenditure gets eroded with the resultant adverse impact on output, income and employment.

One reason for the increasing burden as per the OPS critics is the increasing life expectancy. The UN projected average global life expectancy will go up to 77.2 years in 2050 from 72.9 years in 2022. The share of people above 65 years will increase from 10% to 16% over the same period. So, a larger pension outgo.

Also, they ridicule the argument of OPS as a good old-age social security because it pertains only to government employees whose proportion is less than 4% of the country's total workforce and therefore it would be unjust to spend public money on this minuscule share of workers.

Now absurdity of these arguments. When the critics themselves say that the OPS is for a small proportion of workforce, how can they say the burden increases in proportion to GDP? While the government boasts of the fast growth of the economy, the fastest in the world with the likelihood of reaching a \$5 trillion level, how can it be a burden to pay pension under OPS, asks noted economist Prabhat Patnaik in his recent article in People's Democracy. Patnaik also says that the pension burden will not increase in real terms since the governments do not revise the pension amount in tandem with rising inflation. He asserts the burden would proportionately decrease, not increase if the growth claims of the government are valid.

The extremely materialistic approach of OPS haters is that the burden would be higher on account of the increased longevity of people. The government should welcome and feel happy if life expectancy is increasing and should not feel it as a burden. The welfare of the people which includes senior citizens should be its responsibility. Also, it should be understood that the longevity increase will require continued and better support to senior citizens to ensure their dignified life without financially depending on others.

The claim that government employees' share is very small should not make the government stop providing necessary support on the fiscal constraint's plea. The government in a welfare state should act as an ideal employer and pay decent wages and pension to its employees. It should not stop at that but should work towards a pension scheme in the non-government sector, too, on par with its pension. It should discuss with stakeholders on the modalities and define the benefits – Discuss and Define the Benefit – a DDB Scheme. The goal should be to revert to OPS to government employees and take the initiative to provide adequate pension to all employees in private sector, not reduction.

The writer is a Development Economist and commentator on economic and social affairs.

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Revitalising the manufacturing landscape



SN Tripathy

A GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE MANUFACTURING SECTOR IS CRITICAL TO INDIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION IN THE COMING DECADE

Manufacturing is a cornerstone for India's economic growth, pivotal in critical sectors such as automotive, engineering, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and consumer durables. Accounting for 16-17% of the country's pre-pandemic GDP, the manufacturing industry is poised to become one of the fastest-growing sectors, showcasing resilience and adaptability.

The machine tool industry, integral to manufacturing, has undergone a transformative journey fueled by technological advancements. Digital transformation has become a driving force, fostering innovation, and providing a competitive edge in the fiercely contested market. The industry is gradually transitioning towards automated and process-driven manufacturing, promising improved efficiency and heightened productivity. The manufacturing sector contributes 17% to GDP and employs over 27.3 million workers. The government's vision, through various programmes and policies, aims to boost manufacturing's share

in the economy to 25% by 2025. India's evolving physical and digital infrastructure positions it to emerge as a significant player in global supply chains, with a capacity to export goods worth \$1 trillion by 2030.

A globally competitive manufacturing sector is critical to India's economic growth and job creation in the coming decade. India can leverage its advantages in raw materials, industrial expertise, and entrepreneurship and tap into value chains that align with global trends. India is making strides toward Industry 4.0 through initiatives like National Manufacturing Policy, aiming for a 25% contribution to GDP by 2025. The Production-Linked Incentive scheme launched in 2022 further bolsters efforts to align the core manufacturing sector with global standards. Such measures signify a concerted push towards digital transformation and technological adoption.

India's manufacturing sector presents an attractive destination for foreign investments. Notable brands in mobile phones, luxury goods, and automobiles are

establishing or contemplating manufacturing bases in the country. The implementation of GST and the potential for a common market with a GDP of \$3.4 trillion and a population of 1.48 billion make India an enticing proposition for investors. The Centre has introduced SAMARTH Udyog Bharat 4.0, focusing on Advanced Manufacturing and Rapid Transformation Hubs. This initiative aims to enhance the manufacturing sector's competitiveness in capital goods market. Developing industrial corridors and smart cities is also aligned to ensure holistic national development.

India's impressive economic growth of 8.4% in the October-December quarter of 2023 has revised the estimate for the financial year to 7.6%, surpassing projections by the IMF and World Bank. The manufacturing sector's 11.6% growth during this period and sustained growth in mining, quarrying, and construction underscores its critical role in driving economic expansion.

The 'Make in India' initiative

has proven successful, with the manufacturing sector's growth reaching a five-month high in February. This surge, combined with China's consecutive manufacturing contractions, positions India as the fastest-growing major economy globally. However, maintaining momentum requires a strategic approach and attention to areas like rural agriculture, which saw a contraction in the October-December quarter.

With the shift towards Industry 4.0, foreign investments, and global competitiveness, India is a critical player in the evolving global manufacturing landscape. Continued focus on innovation, infrastructure development, and inclusive policies is imperative to ensure sustained growth. The journey towards becoming a manufacturing powerhouse is well underway, and India's role in shaping the global industry's future is poised for expansion.

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

The writer is Senior Director of Strategic Positioning at Circle.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

“ Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.”

HENRY FORD

“ Don't grieve. Anything you lose comes round in another form.”

RUMI

“ Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.”

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

The joy of reading

Sir, Books, the ancient reservoir of human knowledge, encompass a diverse array of fiction, non-fiction, biographies, and self-published works. World Book Day, an annual celebration on 7 March, amplifies the joy of reading and underscores its enduring benefits. World Book Day is celebrated in more than 100 countries around the world. In our contemporary age, where information overload often sidelines book reading, this event assumes heightened significance. The 2024 theme, “Read Your Way,” advocates diverse reading styles among readers of all ages. With options like e-readers reshaping the traditional experience, World Book Day remains a timeless opportunity to dive into the realm of literature. In these days of “on demand entertainment,” it's no wonder that reading or listening to someone read has lost a little of its appeal. World Book Day 2024 aims to celebrate the idea that children are more likely to embrace reading when their choices are supported, fostering an enjoyable reading experience. Research from the National Literacy Trust indicates a concerning decline in children's reading enjoyment, particularly among those from disadvantaged backgrounds. With the ‘Read Your Way’ theme, the initiative encourages everyone to alleviate pressure, allowing children the freedom to choose and relish the pleasure of reading. This day has become a platform for stakeholders of the literary world including authors, publishers, teachers and mass media to come together to give access to books to everyone.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Old habits

Sir, By raking the Kashmir issue once again, Pakistan's new Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, has thrown down the gauntlet at India. Shehbaz, who assumed the role of the Prime Minister for a second term, expressed the need for a resolution to be adopted in support of “the liberation of both Kashmiris and Palestinians.” He promised to eradicate terrorism and maintain cordial relations with neighbouring countries. Shehbaz assumes the responsibility when Pakistan is neck-deep in debt and even borrows funds to cover the expenses of running the Parliament.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

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Teamwork makes the dream work: Dugar

In the bustling streets of Kolkata, an entrepreneur with a keen eye for opportunity has been quietly reshaping the retail landscape of East India. Driven by a desire to offer something unique to consumers, he was constantly looking for untapped opportunities in the market. Recognising a gap in the market, Vijay Dugar, founder of iDestiny, in 2017 unveiled a premium Apple store in East India. Starting with just three stores in Kolkata, Bihar and Jharkhand, iDestiny has become the largest and only Apple premium partner in the region. In 2019, iDestiny expanded its reach by opening the first Apple premium reseller in Bhubaneswar's Esplanade Mall. His journey exemplifies the spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation, demonstrating how a thoughtful approach to business can make a meaningful impact on the community. In an interaction with **Orissa POST**, Dugar shares his experience. Excerpts...



- **How is the demand for premium phones in the Odisha Market?**
Odisha market has evolved significantly when it comes to premium smartphones. Consumers here are highly tech-savvy, well-versed with the latest gadgets, features, and updates. Particularly, there's a strong affinity for Apple products, reflecting the state's penchant for high-quality brands.
- **iPhone sales are touching record heights in the country. Do you see any rise in customer base in the state?**
Absolutely, the growth trajectory for Apple products is remarkable in India, and Odisha is no exception. We've witnessed a steady rise in our customer base year on year. In fact, we took the initiative to introduce the full Apple experience to Odisha back in 2019, with our Apple Premium Reseller store at Esplanade Mall in Bhubaneswar. Over the past five years, we've expanded our presence with two additional stores (Janpath and Patia) ensuring accessibility and top-notch service for our customers.
- **As the one stop solution for all Apple products. What challenges do you face the most? Do you think e-commerce platforms affect your share of sales?**
Our main challenge lies in dispelling the misconception among some customers that our store might be more expensive, which isn't the case. In fact, we offer the most competitive prices for Apple products in the market. Both e-commerce and brick-and-mortar channels have their respective customer bases. However, when it comes to truly experiencing the Apple brand, nothing beats the personal touch and immersive experience of our stores. Unlike the transactional nature of e-commerce, our brick-and-mortar stores offer hands-on interactions, allow customers to try out the products and accessories before making a purchase. This tactile experience coupled with the assurance of seeing and testing products in person, sets us apart from online platforms.
- **With the growth of the flagship brand, do you have any expansion plans in mind?**
Odisha remains a focal point for our expansion strategy. We're keen to delve deeper into the state, particularly targeting smaller cities where there's a burgeoning demand for premium products. Our aim is to enhance accessibility and ensure that every customer, regardless of their location, can easily access and experience the Apple brand. Stay tuned for exciting developments in 2024!
- **As a young successful entrepreneur, what advice do you have for the new entrants in this business?**
My journey in entrepreneurship has taught me the importance of embracing new challenges and pushing past comfort zones. There was a time when I hesitated to explore beyond my familiar territory, but venturing into new avenues has been instrumental in my growth. Additionally, I can't stress enough the significance of building strong teams. While individual efforts are valuable, it's through collective collaboration and synergy that remarkable achievements are made. So, to all aspiring entrepreneurs, dare to explore, and remember, teamwork makes the dream work.

'Junior Rakshak' to curb road mishaps

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 6: State Commerce and Transport department Wednesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Odisha National Cadet Corps (NCC) Directorate to launch the 'Junior Rakshak' initiative.

The MoU was signed by additional commissioner transport (road safety) Lal Mohan Sethi and director, NCC, Odisha, Sagar K Mohanty in the presence of Commerce and Transport Minister Tukuni Sahu, commissioner cum additional chief secretary Anu Garg, department principal secretary Usha Padhee and transport commissioner Amitabh Thakur.

"This strategic alliance of Junior Rakshak is poised to revolutionise road safety initiatives through collaborative efforts in education and training with a shared goal for creating a culture of preparedness and swift response for helping the accident victims," said Chief Minister in a video message.

CM sanctions 691 projects in 2 dists

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 6: 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian interacted with people of Angul and Sambalpur districts over video conference here Wednesday.

He interacted with the people present at Badapadia at Kishorenagar and Barasahi ground at Chhendipada in Angul district; Rengali High School ground, Jamadaripalli ground at Sambalpur and Subash Maidan at Hirakud in Sambalpur district.

Based on the grievance petitions received from the people present at the venues, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik sanctioned 283 projects at a cost of ₹10.47 crore in Angul and 408 projects at a cost of ₹12.59 crore in Sambalpur. The sanction orders were also sent to the petitioners over their mobile phones.

Pandian also informed that since his visit in July last year to Angul and Sambalpur, based on petitions and feedback, ₹886 crore worth projects have been taken up in both the districts. He informed about the major decisions taken by CM like increasing in social security pensions across all categories by ₹500 each that would benefit around 58 Lakhs beneficiaries. The 5T Chairman also informed that financial assistance under MAMATA has been increased from ₹5,000 to ₹10,000.



"These NCC cadets-cum-Junior Rakshak will function as Road Safety Ambassadors who will help in spreading road safety awareness among their friends, family and public. With the signing of the MoU, Odisha embarks on a transformative journey towards a future where road accidents are minimized, lives are saved, and communities thrive," CM added.

Pacts for 'Mission Zero Casualty'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 6: Moving a step closer towards achieving 'Mission Zero Casualty', the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) has inked pacts with Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) of Bangkok and Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham of Kerala to strengthen state's preparedness for tackling calamities.

The pacts were signed in presence of Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena and Additional Chief Secretary-cum-OSDMA Managing Director Satyabrata Sahu here.

OSDMA Executive Director Susmita Behera signed the MoU with Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham Director Maneesha Vinodini Ramesh for developing landslide early warning system in Odisha.

"This collaboration will strengthen the state govern-

ment's preparedness for managing landslides through early warning dissemination," the official said.

The OSDMA Executive Director inked a pact with RIMES senior advisor KJ Ramesh. "RIMES will support OSDMA as knowledge partner and system integrator for implementing the World Bank-supported Odisha State Capability and Resilient Growth Programme (OSCRGP)," the official said.

"This collaboration will strengthen the government's preparedness for managing dis-

asters through impact-based forecasting, early warning dissemination and last mile connectivity. This shall empower the people of Odisha to leverage technology to mainstream disaster preparedness, strengthening state's disaster management," the official pointed out.

According to the Chief Secretary, these pacts shall ensure government's effort towards achieving 'Mission Zero Casualty' during disasters. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has said that 'every life is precious,' he said.

"Odisha is known as the best state in disaster management. These collaborations will also help in the capacity building of youth towards disaster preparedness," Jena said.



ment's preparedness for managing landslides through early warning dissemination," the official said.

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"This collaboration will strengthen the government's preparedness for managing dis-

cant cause of road accidents. Over the past 2-3 years accidents involving parked vehicles on the side of the road have accounted for 2,207 accidents with 852 fatalities in the state.

"Heavy Motor Vehicles are parked on the roadside due to inadequate parking facilities within the districts. Long-route drivers experience stress due to lack of sufficient sleep is a significant contributor to road accidents. The department will construct truck terminals across the state to provide basic amenities along with cargo loading and unloading and fueling facilities to the drivers," said Minister Tukuni Sahu.

The Transport department has also initiated many programmes starting from proper training and testing of drivers to having resting place for long route drivers along with distribution of free tea to drivers during late night to early morning to avoid drowsiness of drivers.

Eastern Ghats need special conservation efforts: Experts

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 6: The biodiversity of Eastern Ghats is facing threats such as illegal poaching and deforestation, hence special protection and conservation efforts are needed for preservation of biodiversity of the region, concluded experts at a webinar organised by the Orissa Environmental Society (OES) here Wednesday.

Sarat Kumar Palita, dean, department of biodiversity and conservation of natural resources at Central University of Odisha (CUO), joined the webinar as the chief speaker.

Speaking on the theme 'Eastern Ghats: Biodiversity, resource use and threats,' Palita explained that the biodiversity of the Eastern Ghats, more specifically of the Koraput region, has been under stress due to for-



est clearance for developmental activities, mineral extraction, agriculture and vegetable farming, continued practice of shifting cultivation, enhanced forest fire, increased tourist influx, plantation of exotic species and habitat degradation.

"In addition, climate change is observed to have enhanced detrimental impacts on the local biodiversity,

thus making them vulnerable and endangered," said Palita while emphasising on systematic planning and implementation of sustainable conservation measures to save the Eastern Ghats from imminent destruction.

OES president Sundara Narayana Patro said that our endeavour should be to protect the original biodiversity and maintain the balance of nature while Jaya Krushna Panigrahi, secretary of OES, said that nature-based solutions should be adapted to human problems so as to reduce devastation of the Eastern Ghats.

Passing through Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, parts extending into Telangana and Karnataka, the Eastern Ghats constitute a discontinuous range of mountains along the eastern coast of India.

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DEMAND NOTICE (for Immovable Property)

Demand Notice u/s. 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 was issued by the Authorised Officer against the following Borrower/Guarantor of **UCO Bank, Maitree Vihar Branch**. The details are given below:

MAITREE VIHAR BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower/ Guarantor	Balance due as per Demand Notice	Schedule of Mortgaged Properties	NPA Date / Demand Notice Date
Borrower: Mrs. Madhusmita Priyadarshani Panda, At: Plot No.: 24, New Airport Road, Bhipur, Bhubaneswar-751001 / Guarantor: Mr. Pravakar Panda, S/o.: Gandharb Panda, At: Bali Sahi, Pattamundai, Kendrapara, Odisha-754215	₹ 24,76,770/- as on 30.11.2023 + Interest and other expenses thereon	1) All the hypothecated assets, viz. Current Assets including Stocks, Book Debts, Receivables, Consumable Stores & spares and Hypothecated Movable Plant & Machinery, 2) Land & Building Situated at House No.: C-27, Khatian No.: 240/849, Anand Nagar, Near Xavier University, Nijagada Kurki, Harijapur, Pipili, Puri, Area of Land: 1200 sqft., Bounded by North: House No.: C-20, South: Road, East: House No.: C-26, West: House No.: C-28	29.12.2023 / 15.02.2024

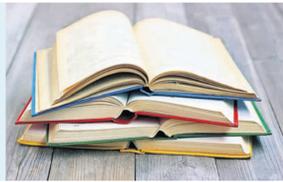
You have committed default in repayment of loan and further interest at the agreed rate availed from **Maitree Vihar Branch** as mentioned in the above table. The Bank has issued notice under the said Act to repay the outstanding amount in the above mentioned table. The Demand Notice sent to the above mentioned parties by Regd. Post with AD which could not be served. Due to irregularity in repayment of a such due, the debt has been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). You shall not transfer the above said property by sale, lease without obtaining written consent of the Bank. You are therefore, called upon to pay the dues together with interest within **60 days** from the date of this notice failing which Bank will be constrained to exercise the right of Enforcement of Security Interest as against the mortgaged secured assets given in the schedule as per securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. This notice is without prejudice to any other right remedy available to the Bank including initiation of legal action. **Your kind attention is invited to the provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.**

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NEW KANNADA TEXTBOOKS FEATURE KAMBAR AND KARNAD'S WRITINGS

Writings of Jnanpith awardees Chandrashekhara Kambar and Girish Karnad, and Padma Shri award winner Devanuru Mahadeva have been introduced in a revised Kannada language school textbooks as per the guidelines of National Curriculum Framework-2005 by the Textbook Revision Committee (TRC) of Karnataka Textbook Society



We never interfered in elections in the United States. And this time, we do not intend to interfere. We do not dictate to anyone how to live - but we don't want others to dictate us

PML-N: PAK'S LARGEST PARTY

Ex-premier Nawaz Sharif led-PML-N has become the largest political party in Pakistan's National Assembly after the number of its seats surged to 123, following the distribution of reserved seats denied to former prime minister Imran Khan backed-SIC, a media report said Wednesday



'NAVALNY DIED OF NATURAL CAUSES' Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny died his own death, Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) chief, Sergei Naryshkin, was quoted as saying Thursday. "I don't think this was some kind of special plan, but unfortunately, people have a peculiarity: sooner or later life ends, they die. Navalny died a natural death, yes," Russian news agencies said he told a television interviewer

SHORT TAKES

Former TMC leader Tapas Roy joins BJP

Kolkata: Former TMC leader Tapas Roy, who had quit West Bengal's ruling party two days ago, joined the BJP Wednesday. Roy had resigned as TMC MLA Monday, citing disillusionment with the party leadership. "I have joined the BJP today, as I want to fight against the misrule and atrocities of the TMC," he said, after being handed over the party flag from BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar and Suwendu Adhikari here. The TMC, however, said Roy has abandoned his principles and ideologies in his quest for personal gains.

Twin cylinder blast kills five

Lucknow: Five people of a family were killed and four others got injured when two LPG cylinders exploded in a house in the Hata Hazrat Sahab area here, police said Wednesday. The incident took place Tuesday around 10.30 pm in the area under Kakori Police Station jurisdiction.

Road mishap claims 5

Rewari (Haryana): Five people were killed here in a head-on collision between a Haryana Roadways bus and a car, police said Wednesday. All five deceased were car occupants, said police. The accident took place near Siha village on Mahendragiri road. Police said the victims were returning to Charhki Dabri after attending a wedding.

PANAUTI JIBE AT PM

Be more cautious: EC to Rahul

THE FORMER CONGRESS PRESIDENT TOOK THE "PICKPOCKET" DIG AT MODI DURING HIS POLL SPEECH, ALLEGING THAT THE PRIME MINISTER DIVERTS THE PEOPLE'S ATTENTION WHILE INDUSTRIALIST GAUTAM ADANI PICKS THEIR POCKETS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 6: The Election Commission has asked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to be more careful and cautious in his public utterances in the wake of his "panuti" (bad omen) and "pickpocket" jibes at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, sources said.

Acting on a Delhi High Court directive of December last year, the poll panel also asked Gandhi to follow its recent advisory for star



The EC had issued a notice to Rahul Gandhi last year after the Congress leader used terms like "panauti" and "pickpocket" for the PM

campaigners and political leaders in the right earnest during election campaign. In the advisory dated March 1, the Election Commission (EC) had warned that parties, candidates and star campaigners will face stern action, rather than just

'moral censure' for any violation of the Model Code of Conduct. It also said that the star campaigners and candidates who have received notices in the past will face stern action for repeat violation of the model code. The EC

had issued a notice to Gandhi last year after the Congress leader used terms like "panauti" and "pickpocket" for the Prime Minister. The commission was also asked December 21 by the Delhi High Court to decide on the notice it had issued to Gandhi for these comments, saying the statement made by the Congress leader during a speech delivered in November 2023 was "not in good taste".

Disposing off the court directive, the EC has asked Gandhi "to be

more careful and cautious in his public utterances in the future", sources said. The commission has further directed Rahul, as a star campaigner, to take into notice its March 1 advisory for all parties, star campaigners and candidates in right earnest while making public utterances.

The poll panel had issued a notice to Rahul November 23 seeking his stand about his speeches during his campaigns for the Assembly elections in Rajasthan.

ED files fresh court complaint against Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Shimla, March 6: The Enforcement Directorate has filed a fresh complaint before a Delhi court seeking prosecution of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for skipping multiple summonses issued to him in a money laundering case, official sources said Wednesday.

The latest complaint pertains to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener not honouring summonses no. 4 to 8 sent by the federal probe agency under Section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said. The court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) Divya Malhotra has listed the matter for hearing Thursday.

The ED had earlier moved a local court seeking Kejriwal's prosecution for not attending the first three summonses issued to him in the money laundering case linked to the now-scraped Delhi excise policy.

The court of ACMM Malhotra has listed this matter (regarding summonses no. 1 to 3) for hearing March 16. Kejriwal, 55, had called all the ED summonses "illegal" and informed the agency last time that he could be questioned via a videoconferencing link after March 12. "We have not done anything wrong nor are we trying to hide," he had said at a press conference March 4, the day he was asked to join the probe according to the ED's eighth summons.



PROTEST TURNS UGLY: Security personnel baton charge Youth Congress activists during their protest demanding a CBI probe into the death of Sidharthan JS, a second-year student of the Kerala Veterinary & Animal Sciences University, outside the Kerala Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

PTI PHOTO

OVER 8,500 MIGRANTS DIED GLOBALLY LAST YEAR

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Geneva, March 6: A total of 8,565 migrants died on land and sea routes worldwide last year, the UN migration agency said Wednesday, a record high since it began tallying deaths a decade ago.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said the biggest increase in deaths last year was on the treacherous Mediterranean Sea crossing, to 3,129 from 2,411 in 2022. However, that was well below the record 5,136 deaths recorded on the Mediterranean in 2016 as huge numbers of Syrians, Afghans and others fled conflicts toward Europe. IOM said the total number of



Every single one of them is a terrible human tragedy for families and communities for years to come

RECORD DEATHS

deaths among migrants in 2023 was nearly 20 per cent more than in 2022. It said most of the deaths last year, about 3,700, came from drowning. The Geneva-based migration agency cautioned that the figures

likely underestimate the real toll, and factors such as improved data collection methods play a part in its calculations. Overall, the biggest jump in deaths in recent years was in Asia,

where more than 2,000 migrants died compared to an annual average of under 1,000 since 2014. IOM said 2,138 migrants died in Asia last year 68 more than in 2022. The rise in Asia last year was primarily because of increased deaths

among Afghans fleeing to places like neighbouring Iran and among Rohingya refugees on maritime routes, IOM spokesperson Jorge Galindo said in an email. IOM said a record number of deaths also occurred in Africa last year — 1,886 — mostly in the Sahara Desert and along the sea route to

the Canary Islands. The agency cited difficulties in data collection in remote areas, such as in the dangerous "Darien Gap" in Panama, where many migrants pass from South America on their way north.

IOM's "Missing Migrants" project, which tallies the figures, was set up in 2014 after a surge in deaths in the Mediterranean and an influx of migrants on the Italian island of Lampedusa off Tunisia.

Palestinian deaths top 30,700

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rafah, March 6: Gaza's Health Ministry says the Palestinian death toll from the Israel-Hamas war has climbed to 30,717. It said Wednesday that 86 bodies were brought to local hospitals in the last 24 hours, in addition to 113 wounded people.

The ministry's part of the Hamas-run government and maintains detailed casualty records. Its figures from previous wars have largely matched those of the United Nations, independent experts and even Israeli courts. The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its tallies, but says women and children make up around two-thirds of those killed.

It says the real toll is higher as there are bodies buried in the rubble from Israeli airstrikes and in areas that paramedics cannot access. It says over 72,000 people have been wounded in the war.

Israel says it has killed over 10,000 Hamas fighters, without providing evidence. The war began after Hamas launched a surprise attack into Israel on October 7, in which Palestinian militants killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 hostages. Israel's offensive has driven some 80 per cent of Gaza's population of 2.3 million from their homes and pushed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to the brink of starvation.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto didn't get fair trial, says Pakistan SC

REUTERS

Islamabad, March 6: Pakistan's Supreme Court ruled Wednesday that former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was hanged 44 years ago after being convicted of murder, didn't get a fair trial. Bhutto, the founder of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) now run by his grandson and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, was hanged in 1979 after a trial under the military regime of late General Zia-ul-Haq.

"We didn't find that the fair trial and due process requirements were met," said Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa in remarks telecast live of the ruling that he said was a unanimous decision by a nine-member bench headed by him.

The ruling came in response to a judicial reference filed by Bhutto Zardari's father, Asif Ali Zardari, during his tenure as premier in 2011. It sought an opinion by the top court on revisiting the death sentence awarded to the PPP founder.

"Our family waited 3 generations to hear these words," Bhutto Zardari said later in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Haley ends WH bid

THE MOVE CLEARS PATH FOR A TRUMP-BIDEN REMATCH IN NOVEMBER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, March 6: Indian-American politician Nikki Haley suspended her presidential campaign Wednesday after being "trounced" in 15 states across the US Super Tuesday but stopped short of endorsing her only rival and former president Donald Trump, who is all set to be the Republican party's presumptive nominee in the November elections.

After Super Tuesday's election results, Trump, 77, had established a commanding lead in the delegate count over his only Republican opponent, 52-year-old Haley who dented him a full sweep by winning Vermont.

"The time has now come to suspend my campaign," she said Wednesday in South Carolina. As Haley suspended her campaign Wednesday morning, Trump posted on social media that the former South Carolina governor got "trounced" on Super Tuesday and invited her supporters to join his political movement.

"Nikki Haley got trounced last night, in record-setting fashion, despite the fact that Democrats,



The rematch between Trump, 77, and Biden, 81 - the first repeat US presidential contest since 1956 - is one that few Americans want. Opinion polls show both Biden and Trump have low approval ratings among voters

for reasons unknown, are allowed to vote in Vermont, and various other Republican Primaries. Much of her money came from Radical Left Democrats, as did many of her voters, almost 50%, according to the polls," Trump posted.

Haley congratulated her rival and former boss Trump during her announcement ending her presidential campaign but stopped short of endorsing him. "In all likelihood, Donald Trump will be the Republican nominee when our party convention meets

I said I wanted Americans to have their voices heard. I have done that. I have no regrets. Although I will no longer be a candidate, I will not stop using my voice for the things I believe in

in July. I congratulate him and wish him well. I wish anyone who would be America's president. Our country is too precious to let our differences divide us," said Haley, a former US ambassador to the UN under the Trump administration.

"It is now up to Donald Trump to earn the votes of those in our party and beyond it who did not support him. And I hope he does that. At its best, politics is about bringing people into your cause, not turning them away. And our conservative cause badly needs more people. This is now his time for choosing," Haley told her supporters.

Trump now has 995 delegates to his kitty as against Haley's 89. A candidate needs 1215 delegates to win the Republican presidential nomination, a landmark which he is expected to win in the multiple State primaries of March 12.



DEMANDING RIGHTS: Police officers extinguish a fire during a protest by farmers in Warsaw, Poland. The protest ratchets up pressure on the government as they demand the Poland-Ukraine border closed to food imports and demand changes to European Union climate and agricultural policies

AP

Indian national dies in Russia: Indian Embassy

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, March 6: An Indian national has died in Russia and authorities are making efforts to send his mortal remains back home, the Indian mission here announced Wednesday.

The Indian Embassy in Russia identified the deceased as Mohammed Asfan, but did not provide any details on the circumstances of his death.

"We have learnt about the tragic death of an Indian national Shri Mohammed Asfan. We are in touch with the family and Russian authorities. Mission will make efforts to send his mortal remains to India," the embassy said in a post on X.

It is learnt that Asfan is the second Indian national to have died in Russia. According to media

reports, many Indians recruited as security helpers in the Russian military are forced to even fight with Russian soldiers in certain areas along Russia's border with Ukraine.

Last week, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in New Delhi that authorities are trying their best for an "early discharge" of around 20 Indian nationals who are working as support staff to the Russian army.

"It is our understanding that there are 20-odd people (Indians) who have gone there to work as support staff or as helpers with the Russian army," Jaiswal said. "We are trying our level best for their early discharge," he added.

Jaiswal had said that the "20-odd people" contacted the Indian embassy in Moscow.

Taiwan min apologises for 'racist' remark against Indian workers

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taipei, March 6: Taiwan's Labour Minister Hsu Ming-chun has apologised for her inappropriate comments on her government's plans to recruit Indian migrant workers from a particular region which drew sharp criticism for being "racist".

Workers after signing an MOU with India February 16 to bolster people-to-people exchanges between the two countries and help alleviate labour shortages in Taiwan's industries, according to a recent statement by Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Elaborating on the recruitment plan, Hsu in a talk show said her ministry will first recruit Indian workers from the North-Eastern states of India because "their skin colour and dietary habits are closer to ours," CNA reported Tuesday.

FARMERS PROTEST

Traffic affected at Delhi borders: Police

- A 21-year-old farmer was killed and a few others injured following a clash between security personnel and farmers
The protesting farmers began their march February 13 but were stopped by the security forces, which led to clashes at the borders

Police have installed barricades at borders and other parts of the city and intensified checking on roads leading to central Delhi.

The Delhi Police said it will be keeping a strict vigil at the Tikri, Singhu, and the Ghazipur borders, as well as railway and metro stations and bus stands.

"We have stepped up security at all three borders. However, we are not shutting any border or route but vehicle checking will take place," an officer said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) Jimmy Chiram said force is already deployed at the Delhi-Haryana border. "We are keeping a tab on the situation in the wake of this call given by the farmers."

A huge jam was witnessed at Delhi-Haryana's Singhu border and Delhi-Noida border due to heavy deployment of the security personnel.



Tikri borders. The deployment of police and paramilitary personnel is still there and (they) will ensure strict, round-the-clock vigil." Additional police and paramilitary forces have been deployed at railway and metro stations and bus stands as the farmers would also be coming in public transport like trains and buses.

"Section 144 is already imposed

it doesn't affect the traffic." The call was made by farmer leaders Sarwan Singh Pandher and Jagjit Singh Dullewal. The two have also called for a four-hour countrywide 'rail roko' agitation March 10 in support of several of their demands, including a legal guarantee of minimum support price for crops. The leaders said the farmer's sacrifice will not go in vain and their struggle will continue until their demands are met.

The protesting farmers have been pitching their tents at the Shambhu and the Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana after their 'Delhi Chal' march was stopped by security forces.

They began their march February 13 but were stopped by the security forces, which led to clashes at the borders. Besides, we are trying to ensure that

TIDBITS

Former MP Dhananjay Singh gets seven-yr in jail

JAUNPUR (UP): An MP/MLA court here Wednesday sentenced former MP Dhananjay Singh to seven years of imprisonment in a 2020 kidnapping and extortion case. Presently with the Janata Dal (United), Singh was reportedly preparing to contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections from Jaunpur. But the conviction now makes him ineligible under the Representation of the People Act to contest election. Additional Sessions Judge Sharad Kumar Tripathi, who held Singh and his associate Santosh Vikram guilty in the case of kidnapping of Namami Gange project manager Abhinav Singhal Tuesday, also imposed a fine of Rs 75,000 on each of them. District Government Counsel (Criminal) Satish Pandey said.

Cafe blast: NIA announces reward for info on bomber

NEW DELHI: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) Wednesday announced a cash reward of Rs 10 lakh for information about the suspected bomber in the March 1 Rameshwaram Cafe blast case in Bangalore. On its official X (formerly twitter) handle, the NIA posted a picture of the suspected bomber wearing a cap, mask and glasses while entering the cafe. The agency shared phone numbers and emails where people can send information about the unidentified person, who has emerged as a prime suspect. The NIA assured that the identity of the informants will be kept confidential. The probe into the blast at the cafe was handed over to the NIA earlier this week. At least 10 people were injured in the blast at Rameshwaram Cafe in Brookfield in East Bangalore March 1.

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PATANA ASSEMBLY SEGMENT

BJD, BJP pin hope on support of Sana Sena

POST NEWS NETWORK

Patana, March 6: Both BJD and BJP have launched early preparations to win the Patana Assembly seat in Keonjhar district but the two mainstream parties are reportedly awaiting the support of Sana Sena to win the constituency as the elections draw near.

Sana Sena is a socio-political outfit in Keonjhar district led by former Champua MLA Sanatan Mahakur, a wealthy and influential political leader in the district. The Patana Assembly segment in Keonjhar district is reserved for the candidates of Scheduled Tribe (ST).

The three mainstream parties have launched public outreach programmes and are strengthening their organisational networks as the general election approaches.

Sanatan Mahakur led Sana Sena has restarted its public outreach drive in the constituency by conducting meetings, distributing blankets to poor villagers and digging up tube wells to supply drinking water to the villagers.

Though the Sana Sena worked for the BJD in the 2019 elections, the outfit is yet to clarify its stand in the upcoming election. Speculations are rife that Mahakur is trying to seal a deal with both the BJD and BJP, but is yet to announce which party it will support in



the upcoming polls.

Observers are of the opinion that the party which will manage to win the support of Sana Sena will be in a comfortable position to win the seat.

The ruling BJD is banking on the clean and transparent image and developmental works of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik while the BJP counts on Prime Minister Narendra Modi let Union government's public welfare schemes as well as developmental works.

While the BJD is drumming up support for the party in public meetings, the saffron party is conducting door to door visits and trying to gain the support of the people.

On the other hand, the Congress has alleged that the state government is function-

ing on the basis of a secret understanding between the BJD and BJP and trying to steer the public opinion to its advantage.

The BJD has been in power in this seat since 2009. BJD candidate Jagannath Naik defeated BJP's Bhabani Shankar Naik in the 2019 elections here. In the upcoming elections, incumbent MLA and district planning committee chairman Jagannath Naik is the frontrunner for the BJD ticket.

Bhabani Shankar Naik, BJP's former MLA candidate, who recently switched to BJD, and former Patana block chairman Biswanath Nayak are also in the fray and lobbying to get the ruling party tickets to contest from this constituency.

Mushakhori sarpanch Bhamamani Das and incumbent

Patana block chairperson Sukanti Naik are also in the fray in case the parties decide to field women candidates from this constituency.

The saffron party is also besieged with several ticket aspirants. Among them, former Zilla Parishad chairperson Mamita Naik, former Keonjhar MP Ananta Naik, former Saharpada block chairperson Goutam Naik, retired administrative officers Akhil Naik and Satyabrata Naik are in the fray for the party ticket. All these aspirants are lobbying hard to get the saffron party ticket accompanied by their supporters and party leaders.

On the other hand, five term MLA Hrushikesh Naik, who switched to Congress from BJD, has stated that the Congress party leaders have promised to give him the ticket to contest from this constituency.

Former Congress MLA candidate and engineer Binod Bihari Naik and Dumuria sarpanch and former Patana block, chairperson Gourahari Naik are also vying for ticket from the Congress party.

Observers have meanwhile said that five term MLA Hrushikesh Naik resigning from BJD and joining the Congress, and BJP MLA candidate Bhabani Shankar Naik defecting to BJD from the saffron party will take the electoral battle to a fascinating juncture.

Odisha Cong accuses PM of making false claims on Paradip oil refinery



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 6: The Odisha Congress Wednesday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of falsely claiming credit for establishing the Indian Oil refinery at Paradip in Jagatsinghpur district.

Addressing a press conference, Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Sarat Pattanayak and former chief Prasad Harichandan asserted that the project was initiated by ex-PM Manmohan Singh.

Inaugurating the mono ethylene glycol project in Paradip refinery, along with several other projects, Modi Tuesday said the

previous governments had not shown interest in completing projects on time. He claimed that projects stalled during previous administrations were completed during the tenure of the BJP-led Centre in the past 10 years.

The project was started in 2002. However, no progress was made till 2013-14. It is the NDA government which completed it, Modi had said at the event, which was attended by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

OCC president Pattanayak claimed the UPA government had allocated Rs 35,000 crore for the project and criticised both the BJP and BJD for attempting to

take credit for it.

Harichandan added that former prime minister Narasimha Rao had decided to set up the project in Odisha and proposed land acquisition for it. JB Patnaik then acquired the land. He said former prime minister AB Vajpayee laid the foundation stone in 2000 with the aim to complete the project by 2003, but it faced delays.

The Congress leader noted that the Manmohan Singh government allocated funds for the refinery in 2004, and it was nearly completed by the end of 2013. After assuming power in 2014, Modi inaugurated the project and took credit for it, he claimed.

Former minister Srikant Jena returns to Congress



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 6: Former Union minister Srikant Jena returned to the Congress Wednesday and asserted that the INDIA bloc will defeat the BJP-BJD's unholy alliance in Odisha. Jena had been expelled by the Congress in 2019 for alleged anti-party activities.

At a press conference at the AICC headquarters here, the party's in-charge of Odisha Ajoy Kumar welcomed Jena into the party.

"There were some misunderstandings which have now been clarified. I met Congress President (Mallikarjun Kharge), KC Venugopal. We had a long chat with Ajoy ji and it has been

sorted out. I have been working in favour of the Congress even though I have been away," he said.

"PM Modi and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, and their parties (BJP and the BJD), are uniting themselves in an open alliance. They had been in an open alliance, and now also they are joining hands," he said.

The Congress and INDIA bloc will face BJP-BJD and defeat them, he asserted. People of Odisha are angry with this unholy alliance. Their real face has been exposed, he said.

Kumar said that the BJP and BJD had been in a live-in relationship and it is high time that the marriage between the two parties be made official.

Cong to pick candidates today

SPECULATION IS RIFE OVER RAHUL GANDHI'S CANDIDATURE FROM AMETHI AND PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA'S FROM RAE BARELI, A CONSTITUENCY PREVIOUSLY HELD BY SONIA GANDHI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 6: The top leadership of the Congress will meet in the national capital Thursday to finalise the party's candidates for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections amid speculation that Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra may contest from Uttar Pradesh.

"The first meeting of the Congress' Central Election Committee (CEC) that considers and decides on candidates for Lok Sabha polls is being held at 6pm on March 7th," AICC general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

Top leaders including president Mallikarjun Kharge and former chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi will be present at the meeting, besides other senior leaders who are part of the panel.

The Congress has not declared any candidate so far. Last week, the BJP came out with its first list of 195 candidates for the Lok Sabha elections.

Congress sources said the party is likely to declare its first list of candidates soon to enable the candidates to start their poll campaign.

Speculation is rife over



Rahul Gandhi's candidature from Amethi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's from Rae Bareli, a constituency previously held by Sonia Gandhi. Both the seats are considered bastions of the Gandhi family and the local units of the Congress have demanded that the two scions of the Congress first family should contest from there.

Rahul Gandhi, who was previously an MP from Amethi, lost

the seat last time but won from Wayanad in Kerala.

Meanwhile, several states have already held meetings of their respective screening committees and have forwarded the list of candidates for seats in their states.

Chaired by party president Kharge, the committee also includes AICC general secretary KC Venugopal, Ambika Soni, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and TS Singhdeo, among others.

Former Nalco CMD, 5 ex-servicemen join BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 6: Former CMD of Nalco Tapan Kumar Chand and five other ex-servicemen Wednesday joined the opposition BJP ahead of the elections for the Lok Sabha and Odisha Assembly.

Bharatiya Janata Party's Odisha unit president Manmohan Samal greeted Chand and others who joined the saffron party here.

"I welcome Mr Chand and some ex-servicemen to the party. Their presence will strengthen the BJP in Odisha," Samal said.

Chand, a former student leader affiliated to the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), was also the student union president of Utkal University in Bhubaneswar.

He became a full-time CMD of

Navratna PSU, National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO) July 25, 2015. Two years later, he joined as the director of Central Coalfields Limited. He also served in Vedanta as Resident Director of Odisha and Chhattisgarh and has over three decades of experience in the mining and metal sector, Samal said.

Of the five ex-servicemen, three had served in the Navy, while the other two had IAF backgrounds, Samal said.

Earlier, March 3, former IAS officer Hrushikesh Panda, retired Air Marshal of Indian Air Force Dilip Kumar Patnaik, and former joint secretary of Rajya Sabha Ramakanta Das had joined the Odisha unit of the BJP.

Besides, four sitting MLAs and six ex-MLAs have joined the BJP so far, party sources said.



WOMEN POWER: BJP women workers and leaders participating in a programme on 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' at Bada Bazaar in Chandbali of Bhadrak district, Wednesday



PARTY HOPPING: As many as 200 Congress workers from Kashipur block in Rayagada district joined the BJD in the presence of state party vice-president N Bhaskar Rao and other party leaders at the party office in his residence in Rayagada, Wednesday

Leopards thrive in Dhenkanal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, March 6: In good news for wildlife enthusiasts, leopard population is on an increase in Dhenkanal district as around 10 leopards were found in the district's forests in the latest tiger census conducted by the state government.

Forest department sources said photographs of large number of leopards were captured by the trap cameras installed in Kandhara reserve forest under Hindol forest range, Kamakhyanagar west and Anantapur reserve forest under Mahabirod range.

It was revealed that the Kandhara reserve forest in the district is the densest and most suitable for free movement of wildlife as it is bordered by the Satkosia reserve forest in Angul district and the Badamba and Narsinghpur reserve forests in Cuttack district.

This is why the Kandhara forest is said to be a paradise for wildlife. Leopards do not live in one place and keep moving to different forests. Hence the leopards in Kandhara forest mostly



migrate towards Satkosia Wildlife Sanctuary, Badamba and Narsinghpur forests. It has been confirmed by examining the scratch marks left by the leopards' nails on trees in different forests through scientific process. Forest officials are hopeful that Kandhara reserve forest which covers 11,411.15 hectares of land will be suitable for tiger conservation projects in the future. The reported spurt in the number of leopards in Dhenkanal

district has come as a good news for the Forest department. About the presence of tigers, however, Dhenkanal district's divisional forest officer Sumit Kumar Kar said, "In the current tiger census, it seems that there are no Royal Bengal Tigers in Dhenkanal district." However, about 10 leopards have been identified by the camera traps and other evidences. The presence of leopards is definitely a good sign, he added.



FOLK DANCE: Artistes performing in a cultural programme for Sambalpuri Dhanu Yatra held at Gangadhar Mandap in Sambalpur, Wednesday

'Fake nurse' in RGH opens a can of worms



RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

Rourkela, March 6: The 'fake nurse' incident that came to light recently at Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH) may have opened a 'can of worm' for the authorities of this premier government-run healthcare centre. The question on everyone's mind is how a para-medical staff can operate in the hospital without really coming to the notice of the authorities for such a long time from 2020 to 2024?

It is fortunate that there is no reported incident of loss of life or other severe fallouts despite the

presence of a 'fake nurse'. The main concern now is to find out if this is just an aberration or the proverbial tip of an iceberg.

Newly posted medical superintendent Dr Gopal Chandra Das, who unearthed this incident, said, "I am going to cooperate fully with the police and I have support of my official staff. Today, the police had come and conducted the initial round of investigation."

"It is difficult to keep tabs on more than 160 staff nurses. They have been instructed that all of them must wear their badges and whoever is found violating this instruction will be marked

absent. Besides, the hospital manager is on leave and as soon as he joins, his first duty will be to operationalise the bio-metric attendance system which has already been installed but not operating," Das said.

Besides, an internal inquiry will also be conducted to ascertain the facts, he said adding, "I have instructed all the departmental heads to inform about their para-medical strength and keep an eye on anyone who should not be there."

Regarding the frequent complaints about free movement of middlemen in pathology labs, medicine shops and other medical facilities, he said, "Gradually information is tickling in. In addition, I am also keeping an eye on the CCTV more seriously along with my other engagements."

Some of the insiders, who did not want to be named, informed that this could be going on for a long time. "Many a times, one sees a new face and it vanishes after some days," they said.

NABARD observes International Women's Day

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 6: Regional office of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) celebrated the International Women's Day here Tuesday with the theme 'Count her in: Through economic empowerment.'

Sanghmitra Mishra of Utkal University joined the event as chief guest and Aruna M, GM of Indian Bank, Odisha joined as guest of honour.

During the event, 150



women micro-entrepreneurs from 15 districts, including Bolangir, Balasore, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Jajpur, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Khurda, Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh, Puri, Sambalpur, Subarnapur and Sundergarh, were recognised as 'change agents' for their contribution to overall development

of society. Eleven lady bank officers who have done outstanding work by extending credit to micro enterprises and for livelihood promotion were also recognized for their efforts.

While highlighting the relevance of International Women's Day, Sudhanshu KK Mishra, chief general manager (CGM) of NABARD Odisha, shared in detail various support schemes launched by NABARD for empowerment of rural women through micro enterprise development programmes (MEDPs), livelihood and enterprise development programmes (LEDPPs), self help groups (SHGs), joint liability groups (JLGs), farmer producer organizations (FPOs), watershed, financial and digital literacy camps, sanitary literacy campaign and save water campaign.

Indian Navy bolsters presence in Lakshadweep with commissioning of INS Jatayu at Minicoy

SAYAN CHATTERJEE

New Delhi, March 6: In a historic milestone, the Indian Navy marked the commissioning of INS Jatayu at Minicoy island of Lakshadweep archipelago Wednesday. The esteemed presence of Admiral R Hari Kumar, the Chief of Naval Staff, and the Administrator of Lakshadweep, Praful K Patel graced the ceremony. Also present were Vice Admiral V Srinivas, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Naval Command, and Vice Admiral Sanjay J Singh, Flag Officer Commanding in Chief, Western Naval Command.

Strengthening Naval Presence

The commissioning of INS Jatayu solidifies the Indian Navy's foothold in the Lakshadweep islands, emphasising capacity building, operational reach, and sustained presence in the region. The establishment of a naval base at Minicoy is expected to enhance connectivity with the mainland, contributing to the comprehensive development of the islands. Admiral R Hari Kumar, Chief of Naval Staff, highlighted the significance of this strategic move, stating, "The commissioning of INS Jatayu is a pivotal step in strengthening our maritime capabilities in the Lakshadweep region. This initiative aligns with our commitment to ensuring Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)."

Commissioning Ceremony Highlights

The commissioning ceremony



Indian Naval officers march past during the commissioning of naval base 'INS Jatayu', in Minicoy, Lakshadweep Islands

featured an impressive Guard of Honour presented to Admiral R Hari Kumar, followed by Commander Vrat Baghel, the first Commanding Officer, reciting the invocation in Sanskrit. The commissioning warrant was read, and the commissioning plaque was unveiled, accompanied by the hoisting of the Naval Ensign to the National Anthem. Vice Admiral V Srinivas remarked, "INS Jatayu symbolises the Indian Navy's dedication to safeguarding our maritime interests and promoting regional growth. This commissioning is a testament to our commitment to operational excellence and national security."

Operational Control and Future Prospects

INS Jatayu will operate under the jurisdiction of the Naval Officer in Charge (Lakshadweep), Southern

Naval Command. The newly commissioned naval unit is poised to play a vital role in operational surveillance, aligning with the broader vision of SAGAR and ensuring maritime security in the region.

As part of the post-commissioning events, the Maritime Operations Center at Minicoy was inaugurated, enhancing the Indian Navy's capabilities to monitor and respond to maritime activities in the region. Admiral R Hari Kumar concluded the ceremony by interacting with the officers and personnel of INS Jatayu and commending them for their dedication and commitment to the Indian Navy. The commissioning of INS Jatayu marks a significant stride towards bolstering India's maritime prowess and ensuring a secure and prosperous future for the Lakshadweep islands.

Awareness camp on forest fire held

Sundargarh: A programme aimed at raising awareness on forest fires, preventive measures and protection of wildlife has been organised in the Ujalpur forest range of Sundargarh forest division. The programme was inaugurated Tuesday at the Nuadini forest section of the Ujalpur forest range, where members of the local community participated and discussed the means to combat forest fires. Led by Range Officer Debadatta Nanda, a crucial awareness meeting was held, wherein experts in forest management and conservation provided detailed information about the dangers of forest fires.

ODISHA HYDRO POWER CORPORATION LTD.
O/O. Sr. GENERAL MANAGER, HIRAKUD HYDRO ELECTRIC PROJECT
POST BOX NO.5, BURLA-768017, DISTRICT-SAMBALPUR (ODISHA), INDIA,
PHONE:0663-2950721(O), 2950765(R), E-Mail:srgmhps_burla@yahoo.co.in, CIN:U40101OR1995SGC003963
No.HHEP/Tech-W-154 (Part-I) 1227 Date:04.03.2024

9-TENDER CALL NOTICE NO.HHEP-07/2024

No.CAD-4487:Unit Head, HHEP, Burla invites percentage rate e-tender in double cover system (Cover-I Technical Bid and Cover-II Price Bid) from the eligible class of contractor registered with the Govt. of Odisha and contractor of equivalent grade/Class registered with Central Govt./MES/Railway to be received online mode only for the following work in the portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in. Only those bidders who successfully remit their cost of tender paper & EMD online would be able to participate in the tender. (Bidders exempted from payment of EMD will be able to participate in the tender by uploading documentary evidences towards eligibility for such exemptions). Bidders can participate either of the two works or both.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Approx. tender value of work (in Rs.) excluding GST, EPF & ESI	Cost of tender paper (Rs) (Non-Refundable)	EMD in Rs.	Availability of bids online	Last date and time of receipt of bid online	Date & Time of opening of tender	Class of Contractor
1	Tile Flooring and Painting of 16 Nos. of DF type quarters of HHEP, Burla	59,54,961/-	Rs 11800/- (Rs 10000/- + GST 18%)	59550/-	07.03.24 (11.00 AM) to 18.03.24 upto 03.00 PM	18.03.2024 upto 03.00 PM	18.03.24 at 04.00 PM	'B'
2	Tile Flooring and Painting of SD & D type quarters of HHEP, Burla	43,70,275/-	Rs. 7080/- (Rs 6000/- + GST 18%)	43710/-	07.03.24 (11.00 AM) to 18.03.24 upto 03.00 PM	18.03.2024 upto 03.00 PM	18.03.24 at 04.30 PM	'B'

* The Bidders shall have to participate in online only in the portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in.
* Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in/www.ohpcitd.com
OIPR-04007/11/0034/2324

Sd./- Unit Head, HHEP, Burla

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, G.UDAYAGIRI
No.672, Date:06.03.2024
"e" Tender Notice
Bid Identification No.GUDGR-NAC-10/2023-24
No.C-3237:Bid documents consisting of work, Estimated Cost of Tender Paper, EMD, Time of Completion, Class of Contractors and set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Govt. website i.e. www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

1. Name of the works	: As per DTCN
2. No. of Works	: 1 No.
3. Estimated Cost	: Rs.67.44 Lakh
4. Period of Completion	: 4 Months
5. Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal	: Dt.07.03.2024 at 09.00 A.M. to Dt.16.03.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.
6. Last date & time for submitting online Bid	: Dt.16.03.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.
7. Bids shall be opened on	: Dt.18.03.2024 at 10.00 A.M.
8. Bid shall be evaluated on	: Dt.18.03.2024 at 04.00 P.M.
9. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	: Executive Officer, N.A.C., G. Udayagiri

Further details can be seen from the procurement portal i.e. www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
Sd./- Executive Officer
N.A.C., G. Udayagiri
OIPR-13066/11/0024/2324

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, SUNDARGARH
No.1464/ Date 04.03.2024
QUOTATION CALL NOTICE
No.C-3245:Sealed quotations are invited from the Travel Agencies/ Private Individuals for hiring of vehicles on monthly hire basis for office of the Municipal Council, Sundargarh. The detail quotation documents will be available in the District website of Sundargarh i.e. www.sundargarh.nic.in from Dt.04.03.24 to dt.11.03.24. The quotation document must be submitted to the Office of the Municipal Council, Sundargarh Municipality, Sundargarh through Regd. Post/ Speed Post only. The bidders should subscribe "Quotation for hiring of vehicle for Office of the Municipal Council, Sundargarh on the top of the envelope.
Last date of receipt of Quotation 11.03.2024 upto 3.00 PM
Date of Opening of Quotation 12.03.2024 at 4.00 PM.
The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any quotation without assigning any reason thereof.
Sd./- Executive Officer
Sundargarh Municipality
OIPR-13130/11/0032/2324

Government of Odisha No.MM-502:
"e" Procurement Notice
OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER
DHENKANAL DIVISION, DHENKANAL
Bid Identification No.03-DFO/DKL of 2023-24

1. Name of the Work	: Design, Supply, Installation and Commissioning of AI Based System for Reduction of Human-Elephant Conflict, Wildlife Protection and Wildlife Monitoring in various Forest Ranges of the Dhenkanal Forest Division, Divisional Forest Officer, Dhenkanal Division, Dhenkanal.
2. Estimate Cost	: Rs.68.56 (Approximate)
3. Period of Completion	: 3 (Three) Months
4. Date & Time of availability of the Bid documents in the Portal	: 10.00 AM of 07.03.2024 to 5.00 PM of 17.03.2024
5. Last date/time of receipt of the bid in Portal	: 17.03.2024 upto 5.00 PM
6. Date of Opening	: 18.03.2024 at 11.00 AM
7. Name and Address of the Officer	: Office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Dhenkanal Division, Dhenkanal

8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal "https://tendersorissa.gov.in".
Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer
Dhenkanal Division, Dhenkanal
OIPR-08037/11/0022/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No.E.E.GTN (R&B)-43/2023-24
E-mail address- eeghatagaon2015@gmail.com
Letter No.3331, Dt.29.02.2024

No.B-1887:1. The Executive Engineer, Ghatagaon (R&B) Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate Bids in Single Cover system in online mode from the eligible contractor for Building works as mentioned below.

- Nature of the work : Building Work
- Numbers of work : 01 (One) No.
- Estimated Cost : Rs.16.79 Lakhs (Approx.)
- Period of Completion : 01 (One Calendar Month)
- Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal: From 11.30 A.M. of dt.06.03.2024 to 05.00 P.M. of dt.12.03.2024.
- Last Date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal : 05.00 P.M. of dt.12.03.2024.
- Date of Opening of Bid : 11.00 AM of dt.13.03.2024.
- Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in. Any addendum/ corrigendum/ cancellation of tender can also be seen in the same website only.

Sd./- Executive Engineer, Ghatagaon (R&B) Division
OIPR-34140/11/0025/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
SAMBALPUR (R&B) DIVISION NO.II, SAMBALPUR
E-mail- eesbprndivision2@gmail.com, Phone-0663-2410104
Bid Identification No. SE/R and B/ SBP //19 (Online)/2023-24
E-Procurement Notice
No.1717, Dated 2.3.2024

No.B-1889:The Superintending Engineer, Sambalpur (R&B) Division No.II, Sambalpur on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites Percentage Rate Bids in Single Cover System in ONLINE MODE.

1. No. of Work	: 2 Nos. Building Works
2. Tender Cost	: Rs.6,000/-
3. Class of Contractor	: "D"/ "C" Class Contractor
4. Availability of bid document in the website	: 17.00 Hours of 13.03.2024 to 17.00 Hours of 06.03.2024
5. Date of Opening of Tenders	: 11.30 Hours on dt.14.03.2024

6. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in only. Any Corrigendum/ Addendum/ Cancellation of tender will be displayed in the website said only.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Sambalpur (R&B) Division No.II
OIPR-34136/11/0026/2324

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
L.I.DIVISION, BERHAMPUR
e-mail: eolicbam@gmail.com
e-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No.15/2023-24 OLIC (BAM)/Dt.04.03.2024
No.CAD-4494:The Executive Engineer, Lift Irrigation Division, Berhampur on behalf of OLIC invites Percentage Rate bids in Double Cover system to be received in online mode only for the work "Installation and Energisation of LIPs in Ganjam District as detailed in the table below. The Bid should be submitted by the eligible class of contractors as mentioned below registered with the State Government and Contractors of equivalent grade/ class registered with Central Government/ M.E.S./ Railways/ C.P.W.D. for execution of Civil Works and valid Electrical (H.T.) License issued by ELBO, Odisha as a single or having joint venture having proper registration with authorized registering departments through online in the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in. The bidders should have necessary portal enrolment with own digital signature certificate.

1. Numbers of Package	: 09 Numbers
2. Estimated Cost	: Rs.42.48 lakhs to 98.78 Lakhs
3. Tender Cost	: As per DTCN
4. Class of Contractor	: As per DTCN
5. Date & Time of publication	: Dt.07.03.2024 from 11.00 Noon
6. Date & Time of Closing	: Dt.19.03.2024 at 17.00 hrs.
7. Date & Time of opening of bid	: Dt.20.03.2024 at 12.00 Noon.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Addendum/ Corrigendum/Cancellation of tender, if any can be seen in the said website.
Sd./- Executive Engineer
OIPR-32442/11/0020/2324

Winter snow deficit poses growing risk of GLOFs in Himalayas

According to meteorologists, increasing global warming has been altering the weather patterns, leading to anomalies in the temperatures and rainfall patterns

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shimla, March 6: The reduced snowfall in the Himalayas increases glacial lakes that pose a growing risk of lake outburst floods (GLOF) in the Himalayas, warn glaciologists.

They call for increasing preparedness, international cooperation and climate adaptation.

The Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh received large deficit winter precipitation of 31 per cent since January 1 with nine out of 12 districts having received deficient precipitation, says the Meteorological Centre in Shimla.

The highest cumulative monthly rainfall in winter in Himachal Pradesh occurred in 1954, it says, adding the state received isolated rainfall in January with weak activity on many days and one day of normal activity January 31.

In February, the state received five spells of precipitation with moderate precipitation at few places. Kullu and Mandi districts received normal rainfall with excess precipitation in Chamba district.

Meteorologists told IANS that warmer winters continued for the second consecutive year across India. The cumulative countrywide rainfall from January 1 to February 29 is a large deficit by 33 per cent. The actual rainfall recorded during the winter season was 26.8 mm against the normal average of 39.8 mm. The prime weather system, western disturbances, continued to dodge western Himalayas as they mostly travelled in the upper latitude.

Western disturbance is known to drive the weather activities and bring winters to northwest India and adjoining areas of central India. Both the intensity as well as frequency of western disturbances has been on the lower side this winter season.

Western disturbances are primarily disturbances originating in the west and travelling in the upper atmosphere in the subtropical westerly jet and arriving in the Indian sub-continent during the winter time. Their frequency peaks during December to February, with an average number of four to five per month.

Climate change and associated glacier recession have led to the formation of new glacial lakes and the expansion of existing ones across the Himalayas.

Many pose a potential glacial lake outburst flood threat, a climate change-induced threat, to downstream communities and infrastructure.

The term glacial lake outburst flood refers to the catastrophic release of a water reservoir that has formed at the site of a glacier. Glaciologists warn of last year's Sikkim-like glacial lake outburst in other Himalayan states too.

According to a recent report on the Himalayas by the University of Zurich, glacial lakes are highly dynamic water reservoirs that respond to climate change by expanding in number, size and volume. This is particularly evident across the mountains of Asia, including in the Hindu Kush Karakoram Himalayas, Tien Shan and Tibet.



GREAT EXPECTATIONS: Farmers use a machine to harvest wheat crop at a field in Karad, Maharashtra

PTI

Cong removes HP leader from party secy's post

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Shimla, March 6: The Congress has stepped up efforts to set its house in order in Himachal Pradesh and is holding parleys with senior ministers of the state where its government was on the edge after six party MLAs switched sides and helped the BJP nominee win the lone Rajya Sabha seat in the state.

The party Wednesday removed former minister Sudhir Sharma, who was among the six rebel MLAs who were later disqualified for defying party whip on the state budget, from the post of AICC Secretary with immediate effect.

Sharma is a senior leader from Dharamshala and a former Himachal Pradesh minister.

In a release, Congress general secretary K C Venugopal said party president Mallikarjun Kharge has removed Sharma from the post of secretary with immediate effect.

Sharma responded in a Facebook post saying, "I have been relieved as if all the burden was on my shoulders. One who does not need anything is Shehanshah."

In another post, he quoted the Bhagwad Gita which said, "Suffering injustice is as much a crime as committing it" and asserted that the decisions taken by them are based on it.



He also said that he will continue to remain dedicated to the state of Himachal Pradesh and its people.

Senior party legislator Rajinder Rana also announced his resignation from the post of working president of Himachal Pradesh.

"I do hereby resign from the post of working president of HPCC with immediate effect," Rana said in his resignation letter to Kharge that he shared in a post on Facebook.

"Running from Sujampur to Shimla and from Shimla to Delhi with folded hands for the fulfilment of the promises made by the Congress in the run-up to the last Assembly polls in Himachal Pradesh did not yield results. I wished for justice, but

got only humiliation," he had said in a Facebook post addressed to people of Himachal Pradesh.

Sources said Kharge and general secretaries Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and K C Venugopal have been meeting senior legislators and ministers from Himachal Pradesh after the party managed to save its government in the state by getting the state budget passed through voice vote.

The Congress currently has 34 MLAs while the BJP has 25 and three are independents who had also sided with the BJP in Rajya Sabha polls. The six rebel Congress MLAs have meanwhile challenged their disqualification in Supreme Court.

The sources add that the Congress leadership met state deputy chief minister Mukesh

Agnihotri this weekend, while Priyanka Gandhi spoke to senior minister Vikramaditya Singh to help address their concerns.

Efforts are being made by the party leadership to end the rebellion against the Sukhu government in the hill state and Priyanka Gandhi has also stepped up efforts to assuage the feelings of some rebels.

Asked about the possibility of the rebels returning to the party fold, Vikramaditya Singh, who is among the disgruntled leaders and had even submitted his resignation in the midst of the crisis, said, "Everything is possible in politics and all doors are open in politics."

Singh recently met senior Congress leaders in New Delhi, including Priyanka Gandhi, after holding talks with the six rebel MLAs in Panchkula. "I was officially assigned the responsibility of meeting the rebels and have done my duty," he said in Shimla.

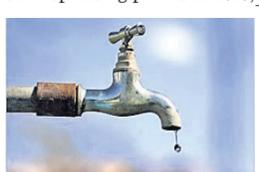
Himachal Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu also held consultations with the party leadership in Delhi.

Training his guns on Congress rebels, Chief Minister Sukhu, in his address at a public event in Hamirpur Wednesday, said he never imagined that a few MLAs from the district will go against the party and hinder the pace of development in the district.

Water situation grim in Shahapur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thane, March 6: The number of hamlets and villages affected by acute water shortage in Shahapur taluka of Maharashtra's Thane district has gone up to 42 so far this year as compared to 26 in the corresponding period in 2023,



prompting the administration to rope in more water tankers, officials said.

These figures were revealed by the Thane Zilla Parishad in its report Wednesday. Till March 4 this year, the population affected by water shortage in the taluka stood at 12,683 as compared to 9,871 last year.

Eight villages and 34 hamlets were affected by acute water shortage this year as compared to eight villages and 18 hamlets in the corresponding period last year, the report said.

A total of eight tankers were used last year to supply water to these affected villages and hamlets, which has now gone up to 15 this year, it added.

Mumbai: Pod taxi service to be launched between Bandra-Kurla

POD TAXIS ARE SMALL AUTOMATED CARS THAT OPERATE ON A NETWORK OF SPECIALLY BUILT GUIDEWAYS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 6: The Maharashtra government Tuesday announced that a pod taxi service will be launched to ease commute to the business hub of Bandra-Kurla Complex.

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) has approved a pod taxi service on the 8.8 km route between Bandra and Kurla railway stations, the chief minister's office said in a release.

Pod taxis are small automated cars that operate on a network of specially built guideways. With a capacity of six passengers each, the pods will run at the speed of 40 km per hour and will have 38 halts, it stated.

The project will be implemented on a public-private partnership basis and will ease the commute to BKC from the two railway stations. The project on the busy Bandra-BKC-Kurla route is expected to cost Rs 1016 crore, an MMRDA official said.

A reputed consultant has conducted the techno-economic feasibility study for this Automated Rapid Transit System. "It will take three years to build the Advance Rapid Transit System after receiving all the necessary



permissions," the official said.

He said Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has given his approval for issuing a tender for POD taxis on the route. Every day more than 4 lakh passengers travel to BKC for work, and as per the feasibility report, 1.09 lakh people are expected to use the POD taxi service by 2031, the official added.

"Daily 1.09 lakh passengers are expected to travel on these POD taxis by 2032 and the esti-

mated per km travel cost is Rs 21 per kilometre. This (POD Taxi) will not only help people who will get down at BKC, but it will also provide first and last-mile connectivity in the stretch," said the official.

MMRDA is the regional planning and executing body for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region that includes some areas in neighbouring Thane, Raigad and Palghar districts along with Mumbai.

Himachal CM Sukhu launches Mobile Veterinary Service

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, March 6: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu Tuesday launched the 1962-Mobile Veterinary Service for 44 development blocks in the first phase at a cost of Rs 7.04 crore.

Three mobile ambulances each are being provided to Bilaspur, Una, Solan and Kullu districts, two for Lahaul-Spiti, five for Mandi and Shimla, four each to Chamba, Sirmour and Hamirpur, one to Kinnaur and seven for Kangra district.

The Chief Minister also inaugurated the Pashu Sanjeevani Call Centre on the occasion, a statement issued here said.

Sukhu said that with the launch of these services, the farmers from any part of the state can call on toll-free number 1962 and get veterinary services at their doorstep for the treatment of serious animal diseases in case of any emergency.

He said that a veterinary doctor and a pharmacist would be available with each ambulance and added that this service would be expanded in a phased manner in the near future. The Chief Minister said that cattle breeders would be able to call the toll-free number 1962 and help will be provided to them through the nearest veterinary service.

Not answerable to Shah: NCP (SP)

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, March 6: The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) Wednesday said that it was not answerable to senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and Home Minister Amit Shah—a day after he criticised party leader Sharad Pawar.

The response of NCP (SP) by national spokesperson Clyde Crasto and chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase came after Amit Shah slammed Sharad Pawar, saying the "people of Maharashtra suffered him for 50 years", and questioned his contribution to the state.

"We do not owe an explanation of any kind to Amit Shah. Questioning what Pawar 'saheb' has done for the people of Maharashtra does not need to be answered or explained. The people of Maharashtra, and also the people of India know what Sharad Pawar has done for them in his 50 years of service towards them," Crasto said.

Condemning Amit Shah's remarks in Jalgaon and Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Tapase pointed out Sharad Pawar's substantial contributions to nation-building, particularly his leadership in the agricultural revolution, compared with the current plight of farmers, plus his proactive involvement in the relief and rehabilitation efforts in Gujarat 2001 earthquake.

"Despite Gujarat and Centre having BJP governments then,



a non-BJP Marathi leader like Sharad Pawar stepped forward to aid and reconstruct Gujarat, reflecting Maharashtra's cultural ethos of empathy and unity, epitomising the true essence of responsible leadership."

"Sharad Pawar's endeavours in disaster management garnered him recognition nationally and internationally, with late former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee publicly acknowledging his steadfast commitment to humanity," said Tapase.

Crasto claimed that from Amit Shah's "outburst", it was clear

that "he and others from the BJP take the name of Sharad Pawar to get some free publicity".

He told Amit Shah that before pointing fingers at others, he and his party should look in the mirror and ask what they have done for the people of the country.

"All know that Sharad Pawar, in 50 years of his political career, actually 55 years, has served the people of Maharashtra and India, and the people are happy with him. So the BJP that has failed to give good governance, has no right to question Pawar," said Crasto.

business

of the day quote

I would like to suggest the government to take steps to fast track the process of granting GI tags to Indian goods



AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

Indian developers are now dabbling with LLMs and building AI-native products, so it is only a matter of time before we see a truly disruptive AI-native product emerge from the country



PRAYANK SWAROOP | PARTNER, ACCCEL

We are very buoyant about the Indian market. The overall economics look very positive for the industry and the business here. We see a lot of positivity among the consumers



N SATISH | PRESIDENT, HAIRER

SHORT TAKES

Bank federation criticises SBI

Mumbai: After the Opposition parties, a national bank union has come out against SBI seeking more time from the Supreme Court to submit details of donors as well as political beneficiaries of the now annulled electoral bonds scheme. In a strongly worded statement Wednesday, Hari Rao, the general secretary of Bank Employees Federation of India, said the federation unequivocally opposes utilisation of banks for political purposes. "SBI as a public sector bank should disclose and submit all the details of electoral bonds to the Election Commission...As directed by the apex court, since delayed justice is denial of justice," Rao said.

Moody's affirms Tata Motors' rating

New Delhi: Rating agency Moody's Wednesday said it has affirmed Tata Motors' Ba3 corporate family rating while maintaining a positive outlook on all ratings. Concurrently, Moody's has also affirmed Tata Motors Ltd's (TML) Ba3 senior unsecured instrument ratings, Moody's Investors Service said in a statement. As per Moody's obligations rated 'Ba' are judged to have speculative elements and are subject to substantial credit risk with the modifier 3 indicating a ranking in the lower end of that generic rating category.



There is a dire need to move on from conventional construction approaches. It is absolutely imperative that we integrate sustainability and climate resilience into the life cycle of the built environment

HARDEEP PURI | UNION MINISTER

FLY91 GETS AIR OPERATOR PERMIT

Goa-based regional airline FLY91 Wednesday received the Air Operator Certificate (AOC) from aviation regulator DGCA. The carrier has now completed all the compliance requirements and will start commercial operations soon, it said in a release. FLY91 received its first ATR 72-600, one of the two aircraft leased from Dubai Aerospace Enterprise, last week



India to grow at 6.8% in FY25: Crisil

The country to become upper middle-income country by 2031, says the ratings agency

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 6: Crisil Ratings Wednesday projected India's GDP growth at 6.8 per cent in the next fiscal and said the country will become an upper middle-income nation by 2031 with the economy doubling to \$7 trillion.

In its India Outlook report, Crisil said the Indian economy will take support from domestic structural reforms and cyclical levers and can retain -- perhaps even improve -- its growth prospects to become the third largest economy by 2031.

"After a better-than-expected 7.6 per cent this fiscal, India's real GDP growth will likely moderate to 6.8 per cent in fiscal 2025," said the Crisil India Outlook report.

It said that the next seven fiscals (2025-2031) will see the Indian economy crossing the \$5 trillion-mark and inching closer to \$7 trillion.

"A projected average expansion of 6.7 per cent in this period



will make India the third-largest economy in the world and lift per capita income to the upper-middle income category by 2031," Crisil said.

India, with a GDP size of \$3.6 trillion, is currently the fifth largest economy in the world, after the US, China, Japan and Germany.

Crisil expects the economy to expand to \$6.7 trillion by fiscal 2031.

Fiscal 2031 will mark the year when India enters the club of

Continuous reforms, enhanced global competitiveness and moving up the value chain will boost the share of manufacturing in India's GDP beyond the projected 20 per cent in fiscal 2031

AMISH MEHTA | MD AND CEO, CRISIL

positive for domestic consumption."

India's manufacturing sector is at a sweet spot due to high capacity utilisation across key sectors, opportunities from global supply-chain diversification, thrust on infrastructure investment, the green-transition imperative and strong balance sheets of lenders.

Crisil report said near- and medium-term challenges to growth outlook would come from geopolitics, slowing potential growth from an uneven global recovery, climate change and technological disruptions.

The report said the near term

will be characterised by fiscal consolidation, with the gradually receding role of government capex and expectations of the baton being taken up by the private sector.

Emerging sectors, which are growing faster than others, are electronics, EV, and energy transition-intensive and they account for 16 per cent of the incremental capex in fiscals 2023 and 2024.

Through fiscal 2031, both cylinders of the economy -- manufacturing and services -- will fire, yielding a sturdier growth path.

Crisil Chief Economist Dharmakirti Joshi said there is ample opportunity for both manufacturing and services to cater to domestic and global demand. "We project manufacturing and services to grow 9.1 per cent and 6.9 per cent, respectively, between fiscals 2025 and 2031. Despite some growth catch-up by manufacturing, services will remain the dominant driver of India's growth," Joshi said.

RBI asks card insurers to give users choice of selecting network

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 6: Reserve Bank has directed banks to provide their eligible customers with an option to choose from multiple card networks at the time of issuing credit or debit cards, a move which will benefit card users.



The central bank also asked issuers of credit cards not to enter into any arrangement or agreement with card networks that restrain customers from availing the services of other networks.

"On a review, it is observed that some arrangements existing between card networks and card issuers are not conducive to the availability of choice for customers," the Reserve Bank said in a circular.

For the existing cardholders, this option may be provided at the time of the next renewal, it said.

"The RBI being satisfied that it is necessary and expedient, in the interest of payment system and public interest, to do so, hereby, directs... Card issuers shall not enter into any arrangement or agreement with card networks that restrain them from availing the services of other card networks," it said.

The circular listed authorised card networks -- American Express Banking Corp, Diners Club International Ltd, MasterCard Asia/Pacific Pte Ltd, and National Payments Corporation of India -- Rupaya and Visa Worldwide Pte Limited.

Card issuers and networks will have to ensure adherence to the RBI's guidelines in existing agreements at the time of amendment or renewal and when fresh agreements are executed, it said.

However, it said the direction would not be applicable to credit card issuers with number of active cards issued by them being 10 lakh or less in number.

"Card issuers who issue credit cards on their own authorised card network are excluded from the applicability of the circular," it said.

The directions of providing options to the eligible customers to choose from multiple card networks would be effective 6 months from the date of this circular, it added.

'Kolhu-extracted' mustard oil contains anti-cancer compound, says research



AGENCIES

Haridwar, March 6: Baba Ramdev's Patanjali has conducted a study on the health benefits of mustard seed oil extracted using traditional Indian 'Kolhu' method.

The study, published in the renowned research journal 'Food Chemistry', found the presence of Aurantiamide Acetate, a known anti-cancer compound, in mustard seed oil extracted using 'Kolhu' with wooden mortar and pestle.

The results demonstrate that 'Kolhu' extracted oil could have remarkable ability to help prevent cancer and could aid in its treatment. Baba Ramdev, commenting on the groundbreaking research, emphasised that this goes beyond mere investigations, representing a tangible manifestation of our time-honoured Indian traditions.

The Indian traditional heritage fostered a nature-friendly

development that results in simple healthy lifestyle. This core concept of our centuries old tradition has now been substantiated by modern scientific validation and publications in international research journals.

The nature-friendly tradition of extracting Mustard oil using 'Kolhu' not only has robust scientific merits; but also serves to conserve nature and revitalize home-grown cow-centric cottage industries, thereby generating local employment and promoting meaningful co-existence with our cows, he said.

The research published in 'Food Chemistry', supports the century-old practice of oil extraction using a wooden 'Kolhu' showcases exquisite scientific techniques, and paves the way for environmental protection, creation of numerous livelihoods through cottage industries, and the revitalization of the cow-based industries to the mainstream of our nation.

Equities climb to new record highs

The tone was negative in the first half, tracking weak global cues, however, resilience in banking combined with sharp recovery in the IT and FMCG majors completely changed the mood

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 6: Benchmark Sensex and Nifty rebounded from early lows and settled at fresh record high levels in a volatile trade Wednesday following buying in private bank and select IT shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 408.86 points or 0.55 per cent to settle at a new record high of 74,085.99. During the day, it went up by 474.14 points or 0.64 per cent to hit an all-time high of 74,151.27. The index had opened lower and later fell to a day's low of 73,321.48 in the first half.

The broader Nifty climbed 117.75 points or 0.53 per cent to settle at a lifetime high of 22,474.05. During the day, it jumped 140.9 points or 0.63 per cent to reach its record high of 22,497.20.

The benchmark indices traded lower in the first half of the session but gains in private banks and pharma shares and firm European markets helped erase losses, analysts said.

Among Sensex firms, Kotak Mahindra Bank rose the most by 2.47 per cent. Axis Bank, Bharti



Airtel, Sun Pharma, HCL Technologies, Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan and Tata Consultancy Services were among the major gainers.

UltraTech Cement, NTPC, Maruti, JSW Steel, Power Grid and Tata Motors were among the laggards.

"Global markets witnessed mixed signals ahead of the US FED chair's testimony to Congress. The domestic market exhibited a smart recovery in the second half, reversing initial losses as buying picked up in large-cap stocks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined 1.91 per cent and midcap index fell by 0.65 per cent. Among the indices, bankex climbed 0.99 per cent, teck jumped 0.87 per cent, IT (0.66 per cent), consumer durables were among the gainers.

Services declined 2.03 per cent, realty dipped 1.40 per cent, power (1.07 per cent), oil & gas (0.85 per

cent) and commodities (0.76 per cent).

Shares of JM Financial closed nearly 11 per cent lower after the Reserve Bank imposed restrictions on group firm JM Financial Products Ltd.

IIFL Finance Ltd tanked 20 per cent to hit the lower circuit at ₹382.80 on BSE, extending losses for the second day after RBI action against the company.

Indian-Canadian billionaire Prem Watsa-backed Fairfax India announced its commitment to provide up to \$200 million (about ₹1,650 crore) liquidity support to IIFL Finance after the Reserve Bank of India barred the non-bank lender from disbursing gold loans.

Sun Pharma, on the other hand, hit a 52-week high before closing at ₹1603.90, up by 1.89 per cent, after reports said that the USFDA has classified its Ankleshwar unit as No Action Indicated.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.80 per cent to \$82.59 a barrel.

Musk vs Altman is a battle everyone loses

MUSK SUED CHATGPT-MAKER OPENAI AND ITS CHIEF EXECUTIVE SAM ALTMAN FEB 29, SAYING THE COMPANY ABANDONED ITS MISSION TO DEVELOP TECHNOLOGY FOR THE BENEFIT OF HUMANITY

REUTERS

New York, March 6: Who decides what's best for humanity? Elon Musk thinks that OpenAI, run by Sam Altman, is shirking its responsibilities on the matter. Tesla's chief executive filed a lawsuit last week claiming Altman's shop is being run for profits instead of the greater good.

But the whole dispute rests on the assumption that it is up to heroic tech entrepreneurs to shape the development of an existentially dangerous technology.

Regulating issues affecting the fate of everyone is the remit of a democratic government. Artificial intelligence is no different.

It is easy to be cynical about Musk's attack on OpenAI. He launched his own AI company, xAI, in July last year. It is a bit player compared to Altman's Microsoft-backed outfit.

Any effort to force OpenAI to open up its technology or relinquish funding, as this lawsuit demands, could weaken the com-



pany and allow Musk's version to take market share.

That's bad news for Altman. The worse news for humanity is that the proceeding posits either Musk or Altman to be arbiters of the species' best practices.

AI promises to totally reshape how people interact with the world around them, from entertainment to health to information. Mapping that interaction shouldn't be the responsibility of one human. In fact, democratic governments elected by an entire population debate regularly about guardrails around

existentially risky technologies and forces.

Musk has already shown the dangers of foregoing those guardrails. He was lauded for allowing Ukrainians to use his company's Starlink satellites to facilitate communications after Russia invaded the country.

According to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal, however, Russian troops have access to "thousands" of Starlink systems. Biographer Walter Isaacson wrote that Musk restricted access for Ukrainian forces poised to strike near Crimea. And Republican Congressman Mike

Gallagher has claimed that Musk may have withheld Starlink service over Taiwan.

Tech founders, including Musk and Altman, regularly preach the libertarian notion that governments meddle too much, or in the wrong way. It's one thing to argue over entrepreneurialism when it comes to gadgets. But when it comes to defense and technology, their idiosyncratic ideologies may be more dangerous than even corporate profit-maximizing. Regulating their actions isn't antithetical to the foundations of either U.S. political party, either. Both Democrats and Republicans agree that the actions of social media firms like Meta Platforms should be tempered.

If cutting-edge technologies can tip the balance of global power, forcing AI companies to use their smarts to publicly identify whether a person is interacting with algorithms or humans, say, would be a start. At the very least, the watchdog of that technology shouldn't be its makers.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 6: As many as 80-85 per cent Paytm wallet users will not face any disruption because of regulatory actions, and the remaining users have been advised to link their apps to other banks, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said Wednesday.

The Reserve Bank of India January 31 barred Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) from accepting deposits, credit transactions, or top-ups in any customer accounts.

The deadline for linking the wallet attached with PPBL with other banks has been fixed for March 15, the governor said, ruling out any further extension.

The time given up to March 15 is sufficient and there is no need for further extension, he said, adding that 80-85 per cent Paytm wallets are linked to other banks, and the remaining 15 per cent have been advised to move on to other banks.

He said that the RBI has taken action against a regulated entity, which in this case is PPBL

85% Paytm wallet users not to face disruption: RBI Guv



and has nothing against Fintech companies.

Instead, Das stressed that the RBI favours innovation in the financial technology sector and has even introduced Sandbox for testing new tools.

"RBI is and remains fully supportive of Fintech...RBI is all for Fintech to grow," he said in an interview with ET Now.

Giving an analogy, he said, one may own and drive a Ferrari but still one has to obey the traffic rules to avoid accidents.

Asked by when the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) will take a decision on the Paytm payment app licence, Das said it has to do its internal due diligence.

"So far, as RBI is concerned, we have informed them that we have no objection if NPCI considers the Paytm payment app to continue because our action was against the Paytm payment bank. The app is with the NPCI...NPCI will take a call...I think they should be taking a call shortly," he said.

Following regulatory actions, promoter Vijay Shekhar Sharma last month stepped down as part-time non-executive Chairman of Paytm Payments Bank Limited and the board of the bank has been reconstituted.

Former Central Bank of India chairman Srinivasan Sridhar, former Bank of Baroda Executive Director Ashok Kumar Garg, and two retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers were inducted on the board of the bank.

On growth, Das said, "Our sense and understanding of the high-frequency indicators and the momentum of economic activity tells us that 5.9 per cent growth in the fourth quarter could be exceeded."

Ashwin, Bairstow all set to play their 100th Tests as India to press for 4-1, while England too fancy themselves at 'home'

Game of milestones

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dharamsala, March 6: The contest against England's 'Bazballers' was probably the biggest Test of Rohit Sharma's captaincy at home and not only did the India skipper ace it, he also got to "learn a lot" about his leadership in what he described as a "series of comebacks".

India have been put under pressure in all the four Tests played thus far but after the Hyderabad debacle, the hosts managed to put the pressure back on the opposition to seal the series in Ranchi. The finale starts here Thursday.

Rohit struggled to define the 'Bazball' approach adopted by England but gave the opponents due credit. "Honestly, I don't know what Bazball means... Whether it is to go and strike? whether it is to go and defend and wait for the loose ball? because I've not seen any wild swinging from anyone. I don't know exactly what this term means," Rohit said Wednesday.

"But yeah clearly they've played better cricket than the last series they were here. And you've got to give credit to two of their batters who got big hundreds (Ollie Pope and Ben Duckett)," he added.

Earlier, Duckett had suggested that the series' leading run-getter Yashasvi Jaiswal learned a lot from the opponents' fearless approach. Rohit was amused when reminded of that remark. "I think there was this guy called Rishabh Pant in our team. Probably Ben Duckett hasn't seen him bat," he quipped.

TAKE ON THE SERIES

On the eve of the final Test, Rohit was asked about his thoughts on the fiercely fought series and his learnings from it, and he had a lot to say. "There are a lot of different challenges that came our way right from Test match No.1 till now. During the series as well, as a captain, this was probably the series where I got to learn a lot about how to utilise the players I have at their best," said Rohit. "And when the pressure is put back on you, how to respond to certain situations of the game. I am glad that I was capturing this series, it made me understand where I have lacked as a captain as well and what are the things I need to do differently. "Well, learnings from this series are big. Obviously, there is one more (match) to go and I am sure I will understand a lot more here as well, but yeah different challenges are thrown at you, that is where the captain is looked up to."

Take on pitches

Considering the recent past, rank turners were expected in the series but sporting tracks were laid out for the first four games and the Dharamsala surface too wore a flat look a day before the game. Was the series win on good tracks more pleasing for the Indian captain? "I have a different take on this because whether it is a rank turner or a good pitch, you have to win. Rank turner is not just for us but for them as well. So both teams play on that and both teams have an advantage or disadvantage.

"I won't say that I am satisfied to win on a pitch like this. It's good but a win is a win. The way we won is important for me because a lot of time, we were behind in the game and we bounced back from there," he said.

Take on Dharamsala track

"It looks like a good pitch. Obviously, when you have a weather like that, you have to expect there will be some movement and in the evening it goes on to spin. "If we feel the weather is going to be like this, there's a good chance (that we might play an extra pacer)," he said.

Views on Ashwin

"(It's a) big achievement for any player to play 100 Tests. It is a big milestone. He has been a match winner for us. What he has done for us, no praise is enough," Rohit said on the eve of the match. "His performances over the last five-seven years, every series he has contributed. It is rare to have players like him."



Shubman Gill and Yashvi Jaiswal walk in for some batting drills during India's practice session, Tuesday



Brendon McCullum, Jeetan Patel and Ben Stokes during England's training session, Tuesday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dharamsala, March 6: India's premier off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin will be eyeing a memorable outing in his landmark 100th Test when the unassailable hosts face a fallen England in the finale of what has been a riveting five-match series, here Thursday.

India maintained their enviable record at home by sealing the series in Ranchi and now, they will be looking for another favourable result to extend their lead in World Test Championships standings.

Ashwin and Jonny Bairstow, both of whom will make their 100th Test appearance Thursday, expressed contrasting views on the surface going the match. Bairstow found the pitch 'nice' while Ashwin said both teams will be entering unknown territory considering the cold weather.

India are, however, unlikely to tinker with their bowling combination of two pacers and three spinners. Jasprit Bumrah will return to bolster the attack with Mohammed Siraj being the second pacer.

Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav, who has been able to play only 11 Tests since making a successful debut back

■ The pitch and the cold weather, that is making the English feel at home, have been the two big talking points going into the game. The maximum temperature is expected to hover around 10 degrees for the opening two days before rising over the weekend.

■ The pitch wore a flat look on the eve of the game but the moisture seeped underneath will keep the pacers interested in the early hours of play on all days.

■ Though traditionally, the venue favours fast bowlers, the role of spinners can't be discounted and they did play a big part in India's win over Australia in the one and only Test played here back in 2017.

■ In the recently held four Ranji Trophy games, the teams were able to score 300 plus on multiple occasions with the highest total of the season being 482 posted by Baroda

here in 2017, will share the duties in the spin department.

KL Rahul not regaining full fitness even for this game could provide another opportunity to the struggling Rajat Patidar, who has found bizarre ways to get out in his debut series, aggregating only 63 runs in six innings at number four. The game could be his one last chance to keep a place in the squad.

Devdutt Padikkal, who is a top-order batter, is another option

MATCHDAY

INDIA vs ENGLAND

5th Test

Time: 9:30 am

Telecast: Sports18 Network

Stream: Jio Cinema

that the team management has in the middle-order. Two-Test-old Sarfaraz Khan could not score big in Ranchi after a stellar debut in Rajkot and he will be desperate to make it big before the red ball season comes to a close.

The rest of the batters have also made their presence felt over the course of five games especially Yashasvi Jaiswal, who is within touching distance of becoming the second Indian after the great Sunil Gavaskar to amass 700 runs in a series.

England's high ambition

England have already lost the series, their first in the 'Bazball' era, but there is still plenty to play for before they return home after a long tour.

Bairstow's 100th Test milestone will be celebrated through the week and by the looks of it, the England cricketers are enjoying in this scenic town with the cold weather adding to their comfort.

The right-hander has been well below par in the series and would be aiming to make his

100th Test outing an unforgettable one by regaining his lost form. England fans have also arrived here in big numbers, giving the players another reason to come up with a special performance.

England, who went with only one specialist pacer at the start of the series and had two of them featuring in the last game, will continue with the latter formula here too.

Veteran James Anderson will partner Mark Wood, who will replace Ollie Robinson. Shoab Bashir, who is nursing a sore spinning finger, and Tom Hartley, have come of age in their debut series and will be the two specialist spinners.

We felt there would probably a bit more grass on the wicket just because of where we are but overall the wicket looks an absolute belter. So playing two seamers and still having Bash (Shoab Bashir) and Tom gives us a good mixture when you're a little bit unsure of what it will do as the Test goes on

BEN STOKES

Throughout the series you must have seen that we have absorbed pressure and put it back on the opposition. This has been satisfying, especially with a group of boys, who have not been under such pressure situations

ROHIT SHARMA



Kane steers Bayern into CL quarterfinals



Impressive outing: Harry Kane wheels away in celebration after scoring against Lazio, Tuesday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Munich, March 6: Harry Kane scored twice to steer Bayern Munich into the quarterfinals of the Champions League with a 3-0 win over Lazio Tuesday. Kane's 32nd and 33rd goals this season for Bayern ensured the Bavarian powerhouse recovered from losing the first leg of the last 16 tie-1-0 in Rome to win 3-1 on aggregate over two legs.

The win will ease the pressure on Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel, whose premature departure at the end of the season was announced by Bayern after the team's three-game losing run — including the defeat in Rome. Bayern's new sporting director Max Eberl said before Tuesday's game that Tuchel would remain in charge afterward even if the team lost, but there had been a feeling defeat would bring forward the coach's exit.

Bayern, which is 10 points behind Bayer Leverkusen in the Bundesliga, was facing the prospect of just its second elimination in 12 appearances at this stage of the Champions League.

Kane broke the deadlock in the 38th minute after Ciro Immobile had gone close for Lazio at the other end. Thomas Muller headed Aleksandar Pavlovic's cross back for Raphael Guerreiro to mishit it, and Kane threw himself at the ball to just

head it past Ivan Provedel in the Lazio goal.

There was still time before the break for Muller to score in first-half stoppage time with a glancing header to Matthijs de Ligt's shot after a corner.

Kane sealed the result in the 66th by firing in the rebound after Leroy Sané drew a save from Provedel. It was the England captain's sixth Champions League goal this season.

Mbappe scores twice

Kylian Mbappe led Paris Saint-Germain back to the Champions League quarterfinals Tuesday, scoring both goals in a 2-1 win over Real Sociedad that kept alive the French club's hopes of winning the European title in its last season with the France forward. Mikel Merino scored Sociedad's lone goal in the 89th to give the home crowd some reason to celebrate.

PSG advanced 4-1 on aggregate, with Mbappe also scoring one of the goals in the 2-0 win in the first leg in Paris three weeks ago. Mbappe has already told PSG he will not stay with the club after this season.

At 25 years and 76 days, Mbappe became the second-youngest player to reach 45 Champions League goals, from group stage to final. Lionel Messi reached that mark at 24 years and 257 days. Mbappe stands at 46 goals.

SHORT TAKES

Jaiswal in top 10

Dubai: Young India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal Wednesday broke into the top-10 of the ICC rankings for Test batters for the first time in his career on the back of his tremendous form in the ongoing home series against England. Jaiswal, who made his Test debut in 2023, jumped two places to be at 10th spot with 727 rating points to his kitty. Meanwhile, Rohit Sharma rose to the 11th spot with the Indian skipper moving up two positions. Virat Kohli also moved up one spot to be at eighth.

India to face NZ

Lausanne: The Indian men's hockey team will take on New Zealand in its opening match of the Paris Olympics July 27, according to the schedule announced Wednesday. India are in Pool B and will take on Argentina July 29, Ireland July 30, Belgium August 1 and Australia August 2. Pool A consists of the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, France, Great Britain and South Africa. The quarterfinals will be played August 4 with the semifinals August 6, while the bronze-medal playoff and the final will take place August 8. The matches will be taking place at the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium in Colombes. Belgium are the defending champions in the men's category.

Srikanth stuns Chou Tien Chen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Paris, March 6: India's Kidambi Srikanth progressed to the men's singles second round with a stunning win over Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen but HS Prannoy fell short to make an early exit from French Open Super 750 badminton tournament, here Wednesday.

The World No.24 Srikanth, who is racing against time to qualify for the Paris Olympics, outwitted 14th-ranked Chen 21-15, 20-22, 21-8 in a 66-minute opening round clash for his third win over the Taiwanese shuttler in seven meetings.

Mooney, Wolvaardt fashion Giants' victory



BETH MOONEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 6: Laura Wolvaardt and Beth Mooney were in their elements as Gujarat Giants recorded a comfortable 19-run victory over Royal Challengers Bangalore to log their first points after four defeats in the WPL here Wednesday.

Wolvaardt (76, 45b, 13x4) was at her free-flowing best, while skipper Mooney (85 n o, 51b, 12x4, 1x6) was equally regal as Giants finally put up a splendid batting show, posting a challenging 199/5 riding on an open-

ing stand of 140 in 13 overs.

In reply, RCB never seemed in the hunt as they managed only 180/8 with none of their top batters being able to convert solid starts. This was RCB's third defeat in six games and they were outplayed in all departments of the game.

RCB skipper Smriti Mandhana (24) started cautiously but then launched into rookie spinner Tanuja Kanwer, lofting her effortlessly over long-on for two sixes followed by a boundary behind square.

However Ashleigh Gardner



LAURA WOLVAARDT

deceived Mandhana with a flighted delivery that ought to have been played on the front-foot but the Indian women's team vice-captain went on the backfoot and was trapped plumb in-front.

Her opening partner Sabhinini Meghana (4) wasted deliveries galore before a lazy second run found her short of the crease. Once Ellyse Perry (24) and Sophie Devine (23) added 32 in just 3.5 overs, there were

hopes of revival but the latter was bowled going for an ugly hoick.

RCB's challenge was literally over when seamer Kathryn Bryce sent Perry back. Georgia Wareham (48, 22b, 6x4, 2x6) did use the long handle effectively but it was too late in the end. Richa Ghosh too chipped with a 30.

Earlier, it did help that RCB bowlers couldn't hit the right length on a Feroz Shah Kotla belter, as right-handed Wolvaardt and left-handed Mooney muscled the half-tracker during the powerplay overs.

Both Devine (0/37) and Renuka Thakur (0/34) bowled too full as Mooney played some crisp cover drives while Wolvaardt also launched into Thakur with some beastly pulls.

Once Wolvaardt was run-out, Mooney teamed up with Phoebe Litchfield (18) to add 52 runs in just 5.3 overs, but the Gujarat skipper remained stranded at the non-striker's end with seven runs being added off last 10 balls with as many as four dismissals.

BRIEF SCORES: GG Women 199/5 (Beth Mooney 85 n o, Laura Wolvaardt 76; Sophie Molineux 1/32) beat RCB Women 180/8 (Georgia Wareham 48, Richa Ghosh 30; Ashleigh Gardner 2/23) by 19 runs.

Gukesh shares points with Praggnanandhaa in Prague Chess Masters tourney

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prague, March 6: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa failed to register a win from an advantageous position against compatriot D Gukesh as their seventh round match ended in a draw in the Prague Masters Chess tournament here Wednesday.

Praggnanandhaa came very close to beating Gukesh who played black but in the end they split points. It was an Italian opening yet again and Praggnanandhaa showed his ability in pushing for more from a level middle game that arose. Gukesh fell

under pressure on the queen side and lost a couple of pawns in the ensuing queen and rook endgame.

Not losing heart, Gukesh fought on relentlessly and Praggnanandhaa faltered as he missed a winning manoeuvre on the 37th move. Gukesh still had a herculean task on hand but he managed to split the points after 91 moves.

With just two rounds remaining in the 10-player round-robin tournament, Vidit Gujrathi's chances of a recovery suffered another setback as he lost to Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran.