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DSPL - 819

Incentive hike for Mission Shakti support staff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 9: Ahead of the Lok Sabha and Odisha Assembly polls, the state government Saturday hiked the monthly incentive of the community support staff working under Mission Shakti.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said 59,509 people will benefit from this decision. Under the new arrangement, the monthly incentive for MBK (master book keeper), Bank Mitra, and Jeevika Sahayika has been raised from ₹6,750 to ₹10,750. Similarly, Krushi Mitra and Praani Mitra will now receive ₹6,250 per month, up from ₹3,750. Additionally, the monthly incentive for CRP-CM (Community Resource Person-cum-Community Mobilisation) has been increased from ₹3,600 to ₹6,100.

Patnaik acknowledged significant contribution of Mission Shakti's community support staff in empowering women in the state. He mentioned that the increased incentives would take effect from October 2023. This decision will incur an additional cost of ₹96.51 crore to the state exchequer, an official said.

BJP, Cong cobble up pacts in AP, TN

Delhi, March 9: Ahead of the declaration of date for the forthcoming general elections, national parties, the Congress and the BJP, stitched significant pacts in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, Saturday.

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is set to join the NDA as the regional outfit and the BJP sealed their alliance for the Lok Sabha polls and Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections in talks involving former state chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the national party's president, JP Jadda.

TDP president Naidu told a group of reporters following the



talks that the BJP, the Jana Sena Party (JSP), led by actor Pawan Kalyan, and his party have arrived at an understanding for an alliance for the elections likely to be held in April-May, expressing confidence that together, they will sweep the polls.

Lashing out at the state's ruling YSR Congress Party and

likely to field candidates from the remaining 17 Lok Sabha and 145 Assembly seats.

Coming back to Tamil Nadu, repeating its 2019 seat-sharing formula for principal ally the Congress, the ruling DMK allotted nine seats in the state and one seat in neighbouring Puducherry to the national party for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

DMK president and CM MK Stalin and TNCC chief K Selvaperunthagai finalised the deal, in the presence of AICC leaders KC Venugopal and Ajay Kumar.

Addressing reporters, Venugopal exuded confidence of the DMK-led combine winning all 40 seats in TN and Puducherry.

Couple brutally killed in Kandhamal jungle

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani/Phiringia/Gochhapada, March 9: Miscreants brutally killed a couple, who were former ward members, at Maoist-infested Kaseru jungle of Salaguda panchayat under Gochhapada police limits in Kandhamal district, Friday night.

The deceased were identified as Dahiru Kanhar and wife Batasi Kanhar of Gumandani village under Luisingh panchayat.

Kandhamal Superintendent of Police Subhendu Kumar Patra has ruled out Maoist connection in the killing as no Maoist posters were found at the crime scene. The couple's son Angad Kanhar has lodged a complaint at Gochhapada police station. He has alleged in his FIR that some persons have killed his parents over suspected practice of witchcraft and sorcery.

EC Arun Goel resigns

New Delhi, March 9: Election Commissioner Arun Goel resigned Saturday, days before the expected announcement of the schedule for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. His tenure was till December 2027.

According to a Law Ministry notification, Goel's resignation has been accepted by President Droupadi Murmu with effect from Saturday. It was not immediately known why he stepped down.

Goel, a retired bureaucrat, was a 1985-batch IAS officer of the Punjab cadre. He



had joined the Election Commission in November 2022. Following the retirement of Anup Pandey in February and Goel's resignation, the three-member EC panel has now only Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

When they ignore the Supreme Court, how can I expect them to get my work done?

India's 1st Indoor Athletics Centre opens

Bhubaneswar, March 9: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated India's first Indoor Athletics Centre and Indoor Aquatic Centre at Kalinga Stadium here, Saturday. He also laid the foundation stone for the Indoor Diving Centre.

Speaking on this occasion, the chief minister said, "The new indoor facilities will provide our athletes to train and compete, round the year, without any external weather disturbances. We are confident that both Indoor Athletics Centre and the Aquatic Centre will certainly help set new standards for sporting excellence on both international and national stages." Chairman 5T and Nabin Odisha, Kartik Pandian was present dur-

ing the event and interacted with the athletes and swimmers.

The Indoor Athletics Centre is the country's first venue capable of hosting indoor continental and regional championships. The centre boasts a 10,000-square-meter Olympics-standard track. It also includes a 200-meter synthetic track, an 80m+20m running track, and designated areas for long jump, triple jump, pole vault, and shotput. It has 60 twin-sharing rooms for those undergoing full-time coaching.

The Indoor Aquatic Centre features a temperature controlled 50m Olympic size swimming pool and a 25 m warm up pool with a seating capacity for 1000 spectators. The infrastructure marks an important step in the direction of strengthening the robust sports ecosystem in Odisha.

WEATHER

BBSR	CTC
Max Temp 33.2°C	32.5°C
Min Temp 20.0°C	19.0°C
Humidity 78%	50%
Rainfall Nil	Nil

FORECAST

MAINLY CLEAR SKY

Microsoft fails to get rid of Russian state hackers

Boston, March 9: Microsoft Friday said it's still trying to evict the elite Russian government hackers who broke into the email accounts of senior company executives in November and who it said have been trying to breach customer networks with stolen access data.

The hackers from Russia's SVR foreign intelligence service used data obtained in the intrusion, which it disclosed in mid-January, to compromise some source-code repositories and internal systems, the software giant said in a blog and a regulatory filing.

It further added that the hackers stole 'secrets' from email communications between the company and unspecified customers — cryptographic secrets such as passwords, certificates and authentication keys — and that it



was reaching out to them 'to assist in taking mitigating measures.'

Cloud-computing company Hewlett Packard Enterprise disclosed January 24 that it, too, was an SVR hacking victim and that it had been informed of the breach — by whom it would not say — two weeks earlier, coinciding with Microsoft's discovery it had been hacked.

"The threat actor's ongoing attack is characterised by a sustained, signifi-

Earlier, cloud-computing company Hewlett Packard disclosed that it too was a victim of Russia's intelligence service

cant commitment of their resources, coordination, and focus," Microsoft said, adding that it could be using obtained data "to accumulate a picture of areas to attack and enhance its ability to do so".

Cybersecurity experts said Microsoft's admission that the SVR hack had not been contained exposes the perils of the heavy reliance by government and business on the Redmond, Washington, company's software monoculture — and the fact that so many of its customers are linked through its global cloud network.

"This has tremendous national security implications," said Tom Kellermann of the cybersecurity firm Contrast Security. Microsoft said it had not yet determined whether the incident is likely to materially impact its finances. The hackers, known as Cozy Bear, are the same hacking team behind the SolarWinds breach.

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99.98 PERCENTILE	99.69 PERCENTILE	99.51 PERCENTILE	99.51 PERCENTILE	99.44 PERCENTILE	99.26 PERCENTILE
99.25 PERCENTILE	99.14 PERCENTILE	99.04 PERCENTILE			

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DEMI'S BEAUTY ADVICE FOR HER TEENAGE SELF

Singer-songwriter Demi Lovato, who uses she/they pronouns, shared the advice she would give her teenage self. She told People: "What I would tell my teenage self is don't hold yourself to anybody else's standards but your own."

MILLIE COMPARED HERSELF TO CRUISE

Actress Millie Bobby Brown linked herself to Tom Cruise for performing her own stunts in the upcoming film *Damsel*. Despite initial fear, she found empowerment in scaling rock walls, riding horses, and wielding swords, admitting to the daunting challenge but embracing it nonetheless.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You already feel deeply connected to the universe. But today, you may want to particularly thank God for all His small mercies. You cherish your loved ones even more today, says Ganesh, and you may spend lavishly on people dear to you.

TAURUS
Anxiety will keep your nerves swollen for most part of the day, feels Ganesh. On the work front, you will face success later in the day. You will be a role model for business efficiency and people will try to follow in your footsteps. Your efforts will be validated with generous profits.

GEMINI
You are likely to make a list of your daily chores that take most of your time. Then you will find a way to outsource these activities or eliminate them from your routine altogether. You will also devote a lot of your time to meditation.

CANCER
You think you are smart. You will be most certainly savouring the positive aspects of your life. Sometimes, it is quite possible that you find yourself at the end of your wits. You had better sit together with your spouse and thrash out personality clashes and private quarrels, suggests Ganesh.

LEO
A moment once lost is not going to come back. So, it's about time you realised the value of time, says Ganesh, because time is money. On this day, set everything to a schedule and figure out your tasks right down to the brass tacks. Personal organisers are a good bet, but if you are old school, then maybe you would rather prefer a diary and a calendar.

VIRGO
Communication is your best handgun and creativity your best bullet. Ganesh feels you are full of energy, enthusiasm and exuberance. Creativity, though, will be at its best in an atmosphere free of pressure and strain, cautions Ganesh.

LIBRA
When you aim big, it is the small things that somehow manage to irritate you the most. Ganesh foresees you being troubled immensely by minute things today. But do not let this dampen your spirit, because today is also a day when you shall be receptive to new ideas. Allow for things to be absorbed by you today and maintain an even balance.

SCORPIO
You may face the music from bosses today, forecasts Ganesh. Your colleagues too may not warm up to you and offer half-hearted support. Novices knocking on the doors of career may look forward to belated success in interviews and final selection.

SAGITTARIUS
You nearly become a superhero in the eyes of your near and dear ones, says Ganesh. And what more? You loving your new avatar. Good news is on its way as promotion or increment is on the cards.

CAPRICORN
After running about helter-skelter for getting your work done, you will sit back and spend the day planning the course of future action. Sudden and unexpected profits are on the cards, but you will need to be mindful of how best you utilise it. You can expect a few good opportunities to knock at the door, but open the door before they turn to look for shelter elsewhere.

AQUARIUS
Some days, you crave to know everything. Today is one such day. You will also prove a worthy opponent. You may upset your adversaries' plans, much to your own advantage. You have it in you to be a scholar. You will also prove the strength of your character, especially when the going gets tough.

PISCES
Today is likely to be a day of mixed fortunes, says Ganesh. While a hectic morning and a positively frantic afternoon will see you at your wits' end, a sumptuous dinner with your sweetheart, followed by a sensuous evening, will delight you out of your mind.

ANANYA debunks comparison myth

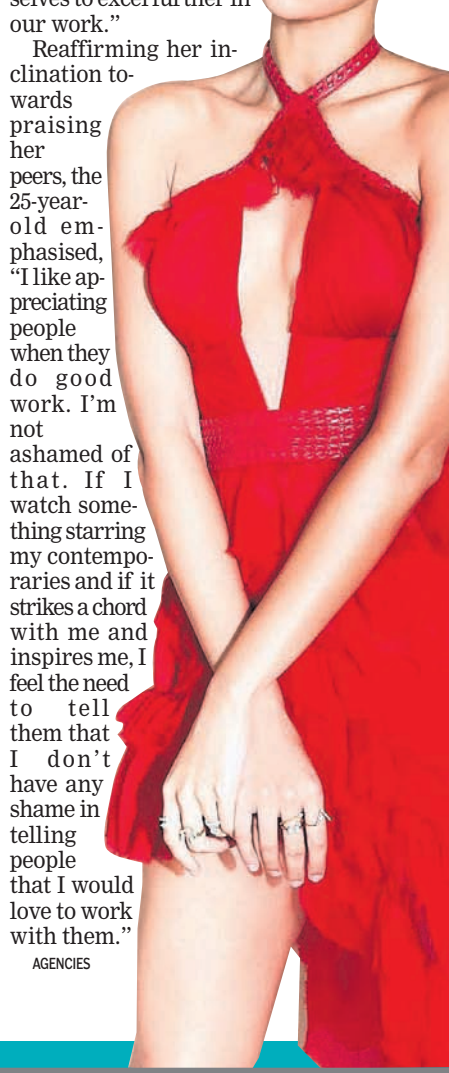
Mumbai: Actress Ananya Panday discussed the notion of women not getting along in the industry. She emphasised the importance of acknowledging good work and offering praise to boost confidence.

In a conversation with the media, the *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan* actress highlighted the industry's tendency to create rivalry among women, stressing supportive female friendships.

Having commenced her career around the same period as Sara and Janhvi, she frequently finds herself in comparison with them. Expressing her affection for the two, the *Gehraiyaan* actress mentioned, "Janhvi and Sara are always among the first to message or attend my releases, showing mutual support. Similarly, I reciprocate, valuing our unique contributions to the industry. Rather than competing, we inspire each other, pushing ourselves to excel further in our work."

Reaffirming her inclination towards praising her peers, the 25-year-old emphasised, "I like appreciating people when they do good work. I'm not ashamed of that. If I watch something starring my contemporaries and if it strikes a chord with me and inspires me, I feel the need to tell them that I don't have any shame in telling people that I would love to work with them."

AGENCIES



Kriti bats for female leads in comedy



Mumbai: Actress Kriti Sanon, who won a lot of praise for her performance in her last release, *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya*, where she played the role of a humanoid, is happy that despite being a robot, which lacks any emotions, she could keep the audience hooked with her antics. She shares her thoughts on winning recognition for such a character. She says, "I didn't actually imagine the kind of response that came in for my performance. I was surprised. Because, even when it comes to awards it (the main category) hardly ever goes to a comic character. Usually, all the intense roles draw attention. That's because an intense role is what makes you feel like, 'My God this person made me feel a lot'."

In an earlier chat with us, the *Dilwale* actress had opened up about her love for comedy. She had said, "I've always cherished comedy, though it's often underrated as it's not seen as intense or profound. Yet, making people laugh is incredibly challenging. I've yearned for a pure comedy film and believe female actors are undervalued in this genre. Few, like Sridevi, Madhuri Dixit Nene, and Juhi Chawla, have excelled. Yet, there's a scarcity of women attempting it. I've adored films like *Andaz Apna Apna* and *Chaalbaz*, and those with organic comedy like *Queen*."

AGENCIES

Mumbai: Actress Alia Bhatt, who was seen in the film *Heart of Stone*, alongside Gal Gadot and Jamie Dornan, expressed admiration for actresses Aishwarya Rai, Deepika Padukone, and Priyanka Chopra as sources of inspiration for her Hollywood endeavors. During a Forbes' event conversation, the *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahani* actress said, "Many actresses from the Indian film industry have done that and are huge sources of inspiration to me. Aishwarya, Priyanka, and Deepika are actors who are also friends of mine but whom I also admire deeply. I have to give them a lot of credit because they paved the way in a sense. You know, you made it a normal thing."

The *Kalank* actress also went on to speak about the associations across the industry while also highlighting the importance of inclusivity and diversity, she said, "At the end of the day, the story should be at the forefront, not where you come from or what accent you speak. What your ethnicity is or which part of the world you come from," she remarked.

On the work front, Alia will be seen next in *Jigra*, co-starring Vedang Raina.

AGENCIES

Alia's inspiration from B-town



From Reita to Manushi, Indians crowned as Miss World

Mumbai: After a hiatus of 28 years, India had geared up to present the grand finale of the prestigious Miss World beauty pageant, which was hosted by Karan Johar and former Miss World Megan Young in Mumbai, Saturday.

Over the decades, six Indian divas who have won the coveted title have gone on to carve out notable paths in different fields, such as cinema, modelling, and even healthcare, and have also become advocates for women's empowerment. From Reita Faria



Powell, the inaugural Indian Miss World in 1966, who pursued a successful medical career, to Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, an iconic figure in Indian cinema each winner has transcended beauty pageantry to embody grace, talent, and social impact.

IANS delved into the journeys of these remarkable women and explores where they are today.

Reita Faria Powell, now residing in Dublin, excelled in medicine and public health initiatives. Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, crowned in 1994, remains a prominent figure in Indian cinema and has ventured into international projects, earning prestigious accolades.

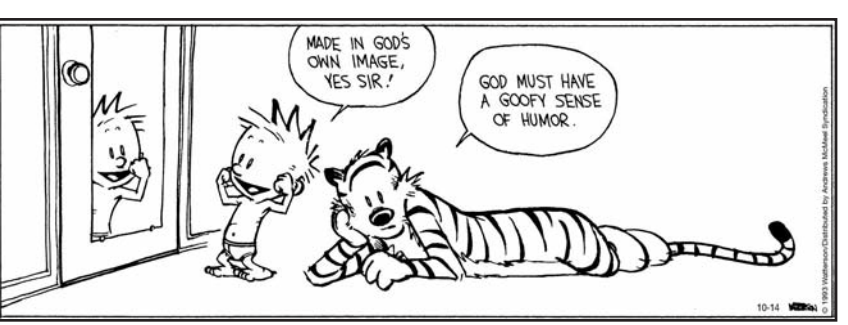
Diana Hayden, winner of Miss World 1997, diversified her career into modelling, acting, and television presenting, along with authoring a book on grooming. Yuktika Mookhey, crowned in 1999, ventured into the Hindi film industry but experienced limited success. Priyanka Chopra Jonas, crowned in 2000, soared to prominence in the film industry, winning awards and gaining international recognition through Hollywood projects and humanitarian work. Manushi Chhillar, crowned in 2017, transitioned from medical studies to acting, making her debut and lining up future projects in the film industry.

IANS

PEANUTS



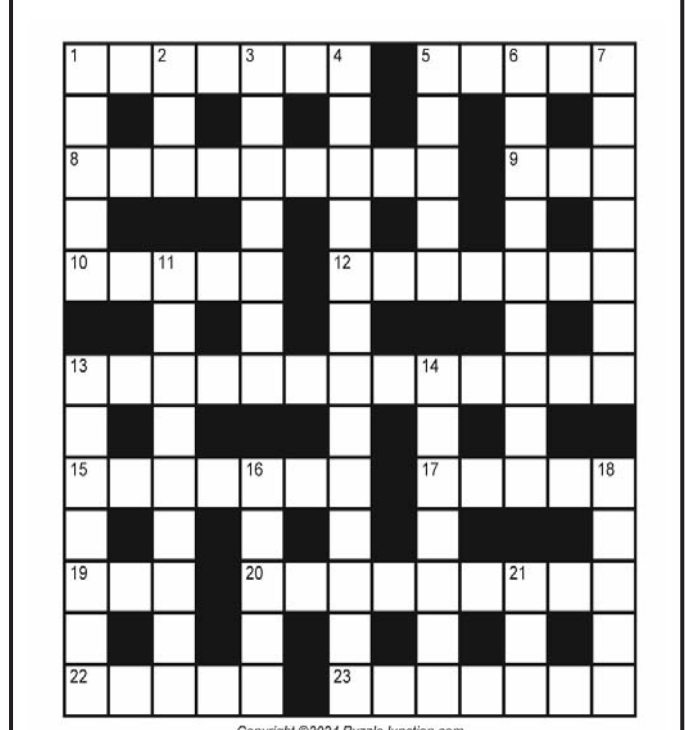
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Baker's tool
 - 5 Erect
 - 8 Sharpshooter's game
 - 9 Detonating device
 - 10 "Get ___ there!"
 - 12 Polygonal shape
 - 13 Statistical information form
 - 15 Strong green
 - 17 Dangerous bacteria (1,4)
 - 19 Attach
 - 20 Promotional aid
 - 22 Answer
 - 23 Some cans
 - 3 Highly strung
 - 4 Fear of spiders
 - 5 Unbend
 - 6 Like some spies
 - 7 Cost
 - 11 Miss the bus?
 - 13 After Latin or French
 - 14 More destitute
 - 16 Diaper
 - 18 Tennyson poem
 - 21 Psyches
- Down
- 1 Burnt sienna
 - 2 Cuckoo

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Zardari returns as Pak's 14th prez

Islamabad/Lahore, March 9: Asif Ali Zardari was overwhelmingly elected as the 14th president of Pakistan, Saturday, becoming the only civilian president of the coup-prone country for a second time.

Zardari, the co-chairperson of the Pakistan People's Party, was the joint candidate of the ruling alliance of the PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

His rival, Mahmood Khan Achakzai, is the head of his Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP). He was fielded by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party and backed by the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). **MORE P8**



CROWNING GLORY: Krystyna Pyszkova of the Czech Republic was crowned the 71st Miss World in Mumbai, Saturday. Krystyna edged out Yasmina Zaytoun of Lebanon, Ache Abrahams of Trinidad and Tobago, and Lesego Chombo of Botswana. India, meanwhile lost out on the title after Miss India Sini Shetty failed to make it to the top four. **PIC: NDTV**

NCB arrests ex-DMK member in drugs case

New Delhi: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Saturday arrested 36-year-old Jaffer Sadiq, an expelled DMK party functionary in Tamil Nadu, in connection with an international drugs trafficking racket investigation estimated to be worth more than ₹2,000 crore. NCB deputy director general (operations) Gyaneshwar Singh said here that Sadiq's linkages with the Tamil and Hindi film industry, some 'high-profile' people apart from some instances of 'political funding' were under the scanner of the agency. Sources said that a high-profile DMK leader could soon be summoned by the NCB for questioning with regard to some monetary transactions worth a few lakhs.

NOTA a toothless tiger: ADR

New Delhi, March 9: More than 10 years after a Supreme Court judgement paved way for introduction of the NOTA (None of the Above) button on EVM for polls, the number of voters choosing it still remains low. The head of Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) Major General (Retd) Anil Verma has dubbed it as a 'toothless tiger' with no implications on the results.

The need to introduce NOTA was felt to discourage the parties from fielding tainted candidates. After the Supreme Court order in September 2013, the Election Commission added the NOTA button on the EVMs as the last option on the voting panel. However, even as NOTA has secured over 1.29 crore votes in the state Assembly and the Lok Sabha elections combined in the last five years, the number of candidates with criminal records has increased in both elections.

According to an ADR report, the share of MPs with declared criminal cases against them has been increasing in the last decade. "NOTA has made no difference as far as criminality is concerned, in fact the number of candidates with criminal cases has increased," Verma told PTI. "In fact, it turned out to be a toothless tiger. It merely provided a platform to express dissent or one's anger for political parties to take note and nothing more," added Verma.

Nod to ₹562 crore Biju Patnaik Aviation Centre

Bhubaneswar, March 9: Establishment of Biju Patnaik Aviation Centre (BPAC) with an allocation of ₹562 crore at Birasal Airstrip in Dhenkanal district is among the 17 proposals that received approval of the state Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, here Saturday.

The mega facility will offer pilot training, simulator training, cabin crew training and other allied trainings related to aviation sector. "Upon establishment of BPAC, Odisha will be in a prominent position to create a pipeline of qualified workforce in aviation industry for the entire country," Commerce and Transport (C&T) Principal Secretary Usha Padhee said after the 76th Cabinet meet at the Lok Seva Bhawan in the Capital city.

India is facing a pressing need to produce 2,000 pilots annually over the next 20 years. The upcoming facility is aimed at offering training to over 500 professionals annually, she said. "BPAC will significantly benefit the local economy. It will provide immense opportunities to the youth to avail the benefit of participating as professionals in the aviation sector, contributing to the overarching 'Skilled in Odisha'," Padhee said.



KEY CABINET DECISIONS

- One-time cessation benefit to block grant employees. Upon superannuation, teaching and non-teaching employees will get ₹10 lakh and ₹5 lakh, respectively.
- Nod to modify pay structure of elementary teachers, headmasters and officers working in the elementary cadre
- Amendment to Nua-O scholarship scheme, extending financial benefits to UG and PG students pursuing non-technical courses in institutions under the administrative control of various departments

The state Cabinet also approved one-time cessation benefit to block grant employees. Upon superannuation, teaching and non-teaching employees will get ₹10 lakh and ₹5 lakh, respectively. The decision will benefit over 541 teaching and 649 non-teaching employees (already retired) and 847 existing employees. The state government will bear around ₹149.45 crore annually. The Cabinet also gave its nod to a proposal to modify the pay structure of elementary teachers, headmasters and officers working in the elementary cadre. The state government will spend around ₹587 crore annually for the purpose. As many as 1,04,350 teachers, headmasters and officers will be benefitted from the decision. The state government has approved amendment to Nua-O scholarship scheme, extending financial benefits to undergraduate and postgraduate students pursuing non-technical courses in institutions under the administrative control of various departments.

DSPL - 818

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THE MOTHER



Our Democracy

There was a popular video recently by a young man named Dhruv Rathee, which irked the government's supporters. Its broad argument may be understood by the title, which was "Is India becoming a dictatorship?" The examples used in the video included the recent rigging of the Chandigarh elections by the BJP, the recent rigging of the panel to select the chief election commissioner, the misuse of government agencies against Opposition leaders and so on.

The dictionary defines dictatorship as "a form of government in which one person or a small group possesses absolute power without effective constitutional limitations" and "a form of government in which absolute power is concentrated in an individual or a small clique." I will leave it to readers to see whether these definitions align with what is happening around us in India today.

The word dictator like the word fascist is overused and its real meaning may be lost because it is used as a term of abuse rather than one of definition. When the social scientist Ashis Nandy described meeting our present Prime Minister before he became Chief Minister, he wrote the following: "It was a long, rambling interview, but it left me in no doubt that here was a classic, clinical case of a fascist. I never use the term 'fascist' as a term of abuse; to me it is a diagnostic category comprising not only one's ideological posture but also the personality traits and motivational patterns contextualising the ideology."

Nandy added: "Modi, it gives me no pleasure to tell the readers, met virtually all the criteria that psychiatrists, psychoanalysts and psychologists had set up after years of empirical work on the authoritarian personality. He had the same mix of puritanical rigidity, narrowing of emotional life, massive use of the ego defence of projection, denial and fear of his own passions combined with fantasies of violence - all set within the matrix of clear paranoid and obsessive personality traits. I still remember the cool, measured tone in which he elaborated a theory of cosmic conspiracy against India that painted every Muslim as a suspected traitor and a potential terrorist. I came out of the interview shaken..."

To return to dictatorship, to my mind a less emotional and more reliable question is to ask whether we are under authoritarian rule. This is defined as "the lack of concern for the wishes or opinions of others." Now let us look at some indicators see if this is the case. What are they?

First, is there any concern for the wishes and opinions of those inside the government? To answer that let us look at two important cases where we have conclusive evidence. The first is the national lockdown of 24 March 2020. The BBC filed 240 RTIs (Right to Information requests) one year after the lockdown to ask who in the Modi government knew that the lockdown was being announced that evening. Was disaster management consulted? Or the finance ministry or health ministry? The answer from the government was: "No." Nobody had been consulted or informed.

The second is Demonetisation. On 8 November 2016 the Cabinet was summoned and ministers were told to not bring their mobile phones, meaning that they did not know till the PM told them on 8 November that ₹1,000 and ₹500 notes would be useless after that evening. Since the ministers did not know, the ministries did not know and did not prepare for either of these events.

Parliamentary forms of government function on something called collective responsibility. But not in New India. In India, the Head of State is instructed not to attend the inauguration of the new Parliament because the Prime Minister wants to preside and protocol requires that the Head of State be absent. Similarly and for the same reason the Head of State is not asked to come to the inauguration of the temple which the Prime Minister wants to preside over. This is not questioned, much less opposed, because the idea that only one individual represents the State has become accepted here. Have a look at his photograph everywhere: one cannot escape it.

We need not spend much time going over what this government has done and is doing to the Opposition, by misusing the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation. There is a daily update on that. It is nobody's case that there is any concern for the "wishes and opinion" of the constitutional Opposition. Those in civil society who dissent also have seen that they must go directly to jail because there is no question of tolerating what they say.

Lastly, we must pay heed to what the external world is saying about India on this subject. This month, the annual V-Dem Institute's report from the University of Gothenburg said: "India's autocratization process has been well documented, including gradual but substantial deterioration of freedom of expression, compromising independence of the media, crackdowns on social media, harassment of journalists critical of the government, as well as attacks on civil society and intimidation of the opposition."

Similar findings come from Freedom House, which ranks India as "partially free"; Civicus, the global alliance of civil society organisations, which rates India as "repressed" and the Economist Intelligence Unit which classified India as a "flawed democracy."

There are no indices anywhere in the world, including in nations we consider to be friends and allies, which suggest that Indians have become more free and India less authoritarian since 2014. There is no objective defence. What the supporters of the Prime Minister, and I accept that there are many, can do instead is to tell us why it is that his divine authoritarianism is so good for us and our country.



Aakar Patel

Parliamentary forms of government function on something called collective responsibility. But not in New India



Alessio Terzi

THE IDEA THAT A SWIFT CHANGE OF HEART AMONG THE RICH WOULD MAKE DEGROWTH POLITICALLY FEASIBLE LOOKS EVEN MORE UNREALISTIC

SPECTRUM TOKYO TRIALS

Defining dissent by an Indian judge



Satya Narayan Misra

JUSTICE PAL WAS DEEPLY SUSPICIOUS OF UNIVERSAL INTERNATIONAL LAW IN A DEEPLY UNEQUAL SOCIETY

Close on the heels of Nuremberg trials, the Tokyo trials were conducted between 1946 and 1948 to prosecute Japan's military commanders for war crimes conducted during the World War-II. At the trial stage, which was managed by the USA, Japanese judges were not included. The scope of the tribunal was limited to selected Japanese actions and did not include dropping of the atom bomb by USA in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Unlike the Nuremberg trials, the Tokyo tribunal was not unanimous. Out of 11 judges, three gave dissenting opinion. While two of these expressed specific reservation about the conduct of the trial, the dissent of Justice Radhabinod Pal was unique that it disagreed completely with the majority judgement. Justice Pal considered the trial to be an illegitimate case of victor's justice for prosecuting individuals for action that were made crime after they were committed. His acquittal of all the accused of all charges demonstrated nuanced counterpoint to caricatured depiction of early Asians by colonisers on a civilising mission. Today, when decolonisation agenda and independent dissenting opinions are perceived to be

scarce, Justice Pal's life and work would provide telling lessons and a mirror to the posterity. In essence, Justice Pal held that 25 military Japanese commander including General Tojo, could not be held guilty for offences such as aggression since they were not illegal actions at that time. Though they were not legally culpable, their actions were condemned by Pal just because the Allied powers had converted justice into a pursuit of vindictive retaliation. Pal would not convert his judicial opinion into a political retelling of why Japan may have acted the way it did. He was a judge and not a historian or a campaigner for world peace. In his judgement, if any action can be rightly called war crime, it would have to be dropping of the atomic bomb by the Americans. It was an appeal to the Americans to look for divine impulse of right and wrong with them rather than solely punishing the Japanese for their action. For Pal, law was culturally contingent and international law has to accommodate cultural diversities to be legitimate. At a time, when India finds itself in the midst of an overt decolonisation campaign, that seeks

to remove traces of colonisation rule from its citizens, we should rise to hear Pal's counsel. We should not fall into the folly of responding to colonisers with colonising one's own, meeting violence with violence. We must speak a different language from the West and imperialist Japan, not the same language differently. The Japanese have a memorial in Shinto Shrine complex in the heart of Tokyo in Pal's honour. Pal's unique standing as a fly in the ointment of post WW-II world is recognised because of his efforts to institutionalise international justice. The crux of Pal's argument was that for all the claims of a new progressive world order, global politics in the mid-20th Century was still defined by imperialism. There is a remarkable coalescence in the philosophy of Justice Pal and the philosophy of Edward Said, the celebrated academic critic. Said is best known for his book Orientalism (1978), which critiques the cultural representations that are bases of Orientalism - how the Western world perceives the Orient. Pal similarly critiques the Western countries for trying to dominate, restructure and have authority over Japan. The use of nuclear weapon by the US

tops the list of war crimes while the exclusion of judges from the vanquished nations signified for Pal "the failure of the tribunal to provide anything other than the Victors to retaliate. It was a sham employment of legal process for the satisfaction of a thirst for revenge." Justice Pal was deeply suspicious of universal international law in a deeply unequal society. No shared norm is possible in the absence of a truly homogeneous community. For Pal legal order flows from social order and is governed by a sense of cosmic reason. For Pal imperialism and colonialism are crimes far bigger than aggression. He would always be lionised for being unafraid of USA, at a time it threatened the world as a nuclear power. While concluding his dissent Pal quoted Jefferson Davis: "When time have softened and prejudice and reason shall have stripped the mask from misrepresentation, then Justice, holding evenly her scales, will require much of the past censure and praise to change place." Be it Pal, Said, or Gramsci, the crusade against cultural hegemony of Orientals is unrelenting.

The writer teaches constitutional law.

WISDOM CORNER

- Every man's life ends the same way. It is only the details of how he lived and how he died that distinguish one man from another. ERNEST HEMINGWAY
- The greatest heroes are those who do their duty in the daily grind of domestic affairs whilst the world whirls as a maddening dreidel. FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE
- Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it. GEORGE ORWELL

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1876: Alexander Graham Bell's "liquid" transmitter design permitted the first transmission of speech by Bell to his assistant, Thomas Watson.
- 1933: Opening of the Nazis' first concentration camp. On this day in 1933, soon after Adolf Hitler became chancellor, the first concentration camp in Germany opened at Dachau, where at least 32,000 people would die from disease, malnutrition, physical oppression, and execution.
- 1997: The cult television series Buffy the Vampire Slayer premiered; created by Joss Whedon, the show centred on Buffy Summers, "an alternative feminist icon" who battles vampires, demons, and other assorted supernatural forces of evil.

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, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

France shows the way

Sir, France has made an indelible mark on the global stage by becoming the first country to explicitly embed the right to abortion into its constitution. The historic decision reflects a significant milestone in the ongoing struggle for women's reproductive rights in France. Abortion has been legal in France since 1975, yet concerns persist over the potential erosion of this right. However, recent polls indicate that over 80 per cent of the French people support amending the constitution to enshrine the right to terminate pregnancies, highlighting widespread recognition of the importance of reproductive autonomy. Indeed the illumination of the Eiffel Tower in Paris with the message "My Body My Choice" underscores the profound significance of this constitutional milestone.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Combating glaucoma

Sir, Glaucoma, a progressive eye condition and the leading cause of blindness in India, particularly affecting those aged 60 and above, reveals concerning statistics. In the country, 1.2 million individuals have lost vision out of the 12 million grappling with glaucoma, often referred to as the "silent blinding disease" or the "sneak thief of sight." This condition impacts individuals of all ages, including children with congenital glaucoma. World Glaucoma Week, observed in the second week of March, addresses this global health concern. Predicted to affect 111 million people worldwide by 2040, this initiative, established in 2010 by the World Glaucoma Association and World Glaucoma Patient Association, aims to raise awareness about glaucoma. As the second leading cause of global blindness, it underscores the crucial importance of early detection and preventive measures. Glaucoma, a neurological disorder raising eye pressure and damaging the optic nerve, poses risks across all age groups. While more common in seniors, it significantly contributes to irreversible blindness, impacting over 78 million globally. Alarming is the fact that two-thirds of glaucoma patients in developing countries experience vision loss due to insufficient awareness. Therefore, the objective of Glaucoma Week is to highlight it as a primary cause of preventable visual disability, urging screening and educating patients on prevention and treatment.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

DEGROWTH IS DEAD END



Instead of trying to halt growth, we must redefine and reorient our growth patterns toward sustainability, so that we can reconcile the persistent desire to consume more with the imperative to make greener choices

The concept of degrowth has recently captured the imagination of academics, activists, and politicians - particularly in rich countries - who are concerned about environmental sustainability and socioeconomic justice. Last May, the European Parliament organised a Beyond Growth Conference. Since then, a spate of articles (including in leading scientific journals) has documented the rise of this once-niche movement, which calls for abandoning GDP growth as a goal, reducing energy and material use, and focusing economic activity on human well-being.

But despite the fervour of its adherents, the degrowth movement lacks a coherent theory of change, and is thus a dead end. While the ideals that underpin the movement and some of its proposals, such as universal access to public services and a green-jobs guarantee, resonate powerfully its overarching goals are politically impractical. Moreover, because degrowth is an all-or-nothing strategy, it would actually impede progress on climate policy.

For starters, degrowth is premised on the idea that "the system" is to blame for our climate predicament, which implies that the solution is to abolish capitalism. In this context, advocates do not view incremental progress toward the movement's stated goals, such as reduced working hours or targeted bans on highly polluting activities, as a step in the right direction; on the contrary, they interpret such changes as a way for policymakers to defend the current system against criticism. In other words, reform is anti-revolutionary.

At the international level, degrowth calls for actively shrinking rich economies and launching a voluntary transfer of resources to the Global South. Notwithstanding abstract so-

cial-justice considerations, this would be a political non-starter: when fewer resources are available, countries become less, not more, generous. Even now, when advanced economies are expanding, securing adequate funding for the Loss and Damage Fund operationalised at last year's COP28 in Dubai has proven difficult. On a societal level, degrowthers urge a collective moral awakening. If only people fully grasped the damage caused by the current economic model, the thinking goes, they would rapidly embrace an ascetic lifestyle. They would give up meat, flying, SUVs, and other carbon-intensive products and services.

But while proponents of degrowth imagine an enlightened society, betting on the moral improvement of humankind is a poor wager. As philosopher Emrys Westacott has shown, most world religions, including Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and Confucianism, have long preached simple living. It is safe to assume, given the state of the planet, that these calls for moderation have done little to tame the relentless drive for consumption. Expecting a moral revolution to kickstart structural transformation is like waiting for Godot. In fact, a backlash against the current pace of climate action - which is far from sufficient - is already gaining steam, with nationalist parties running in several upcoming elections exploiting fears about greener lifestyles. In this context, the idea that a swift change of heart among the rich would make degrowth politically feasible looks even more unrealistic.

The politics of climate change and environmental policy are complex precisely because of the need to balance people's immediate demands for quality of life, affordable energy, and economic security with long-term sustainability. As the New York Times' Ezra Klein eloquently put it, the degrowth movement is "trying to take the politics out of politics" and is "attacking the flaws of the current strategy as not moving fast enough when the impediments are political, but then not accepting the impediments to its own political path forward."

Instead of trying to halt growth, we must redefine and reorient our growth patterns toward sustainability, so that we can reconcile the persistent desire to consume more with the imperative to make greener choices. Technological advances, renewable energy, and a shift toward a circular economy offer ways to align economic progress with environmental stewardship.

The political obstacles facing the degrowth movement are insurmountable, which is why its newfound prominence will prove ephemeral. The most degrowthers can hope to achieve is to prod a privileged few toward more sustainable consumption habits. To the extent that it is successful, the movement will contribute, albeit modestly, to mitigating the effects of climate change.

As climate experts often remind us, there is no silver bullet for global warming. Avoiding a climate catastrophe demands a multifaceted strategy comprising multiple solutions. But degrowth is not one of them.

The writer, a lecturer at the University of Cambridge and Sciences Po, is an economist at the European Commission.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Naveen inaugurates Nilamadhhab Niwas

The affordable housing project for 'slum dwellers' features educational institutions, healthcare services & commercial establishments among others



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 9: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday inaugurated Nilamadhhab Niwas, an affordable housing project for 'slum dwellers' in the City. The project has been developed under the state government's 'Housing for All' policy.

Handing over the keys of the houses to the beneficiaries at the project site near Care Hospital, the CM expressed his happiness that the urban poor will now have their own homes.

"Understanding the importance of improving the living conditions of slum dwellers, the Nilamadhhab Niwas provides a spectrum of essential amenities to elevate the living standards of the beneficiaries. This initiative is designed to deliver high-quality housing at affordable rates, thereby democratizing home-

ownership and making it accessible to a broader demographic," said the chief minister. Strategically located near Care Hospital, Bhubaneswar, this project ensures convenient access to vital amenities such as educational institutions, healthcare services, and commercial establishments, enhancing the overall quality of life for its residents.

With a total of 1,200 dwelling units (DUs), 960 units have already been completed and handed over to the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) for allotment. As many as 455 beneficiaries have been allotted housing units, while the remaining units are undergoing the allocation process.

The project features a dedicated community hall for social gatherings, events, and educational initiatives, fostering a sense of unity and camaraderie

among the residents. Additionally, a well-designed commercial complex within the project area caters to the diverse needs of the community, promoting convenience and sustainability.

"Ensuring seamless connectivity, the project boasts convenient access to major roadways and public transportation hubs, facilitating easy commuting to the city center and surrounding areas for work, education, and leisure activities," said an official.

Furthermore, a dedicated play area for children, equipped with safe and engaging equipment, will encourage recreation and promote a healthy lifestyle among the youths of the community.

To ensure the safety and security of residents, round-the-clock security services, including fire safety measures, are provided, creating a secure living environment.

"Moreover, the project emphasizes the implementation of adequate water and sanitation facilities, including clean drinking water, proper sewage systems, and waste management, to meet the basic hygiene needs of the community," added the official.

The housing complex is dedicated to creating a holistic living environment that not only offers shelter but also empowers slum dwellers with the resources and opportunities necessary for an improved quality of life, he added.



MAKING A POINT: Delhi Health Minister and AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj addressing the press at Odisha State Guest House in Bhubaneswar, Saturday OP PHOTO

Stone slab falls of Srimandir

Puri: A stone slab fell off from Baraha temple inside Srimandir in Puri that damaged the roof of Ekadashi temple in wee hours of Saturday. According to the source, a 10-inch long and 5-inch wide stone weighing more than 1kg fell on the roof of Ekadashi temple. However, no casualty was reported in the incident. Following the incident, a Srimandir official alerted ASI authorities. Notably, Baraha temple is situated in front of Bimala temple on the southern side of the main temple. The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA), has not issued any comment about the incident. Though, this is not the first time a rock fell off from the 12th century shrine, Srimandir record reveal that stones and plaster chunks have been falling off the structure over the past 149 years.

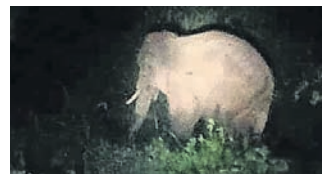
Woman trampled by jumbo

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, March 9: A woman was trampled to death late Friday night by an elephant at Ushumundi village under Koida Range in Sundargarh district.

Reports said Ituwari Bhadra, a woman in her thirties, was sleeping along with her family when a lone tusker which is causing havoc in the area for the last one year attacked her house. While Ituwari's husband and child managed to escape, she could not. The enraged tusker first kicked her and then trampled her to death. After killing Ituwari, the pachyderm stayed there for some time and then left the place.

Bonai DFO Lalit Patra confirmed that it was same lone tusker that is moving around this forest range. Explaining



about the killing, he said, "The jumbo managed to cross the trench dug around the village by us. Now we are examining what really attracted the elephant to Ituwari's house." The jumbo managed to cross the trench which is not the only path that leads to the village. That is worrisome, he added.

The family received Rs 60,000, which is ten percent of the entire compensation package announced by the government. "The remaining Rs 5,40,000 will be handed over to the family after completion of formalities," informed the DFO.

JSS holds certificate distribution program

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 9: Jan Shikshan Sansthan, a government of India initiative sponsored by Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship observed the international women's day on JSS' premises at Cuttack, Friday. The PM Vishwakarma Yojana certificate distribution ceremony was also held on the occasion.

The event was inaugurated by former state BJP president and PM Vishwakarma Yojana national executive member-cum-convenor Samir Mohanty. BJP OBC Morcha state president and co-convenor Surath Biswal was



the guest of honour. Cuttack-based Ashraya-The Shelter's vice chairman and secretary Sujata Pattanayak, attended the programme as the chief speaker while JSS, Cuttack director Anima Dash presided over the meeting.

In the event, all the successful trainees of PM Vishwakarma Yojana were provided certificates. Also, the candidates, who completed vocational training under JSS programme, were felicitated. A cultural program was also organised on this occasion.

1,294 JOIN GOVT SERVICE IN STATE

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik asks new employees to work with all their sincerity and commitment to serve the people to build an empowered Odisha



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 9: Joining an orientation program at the Lok Seva Bhawan here, Saturday where 1,294 youths were recruited for government jobs, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik highlighted his government's dedication to enacting transformative changes in the lives of people and underscored the primacy of public welfare in his governance approach.

He said the new employees should work with all their sincerity and commitment to serve the people.

Of the 1,294 people who joined the state government, 725 were accommodated in the School & Mass Education department, 280 joined the Finance department and 129 were recruited in the Rural

Besides, 160 outstanding sports persons joined five departments, namely Steel & Mines department, Revenue & Disaster Management department, Higher Education, School & Mass Education and Home department.

Welcoming the officials, Patnaik said this is a huge

achievement in our endeavour to accelerate the process of recruitment for filling up vacancies in the government.

He expressed joy over the appointment of numerous outstanding sportspersons, noting that their inclusion would serve as a source of inspiration for budding talents in the sporting arena.

Stating that 'No work is small or big,' Patnaik said every job has its own significance in achieving the overall goal of greater public good.

"Just remember that the people of Odisha are paying for our work and we are here to serve them," he told the new employees.

He further said, "I consider the entire four and a half crore people of Odisha as my family members. We have to serve them with dignity. Our 5T initiative has been very effective in bringing visible transformation in every sector and every region of the state. Odisha is now a model for other states in many areas. I am sure you will learn the mechanisms of 5T in your orientation and reflect it in your work in letter and spirit."

4 held in City with 20.8 kg marijuana

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 9: Four persons allegedly carrying 20.8 kg marijuana were apprehended by the Saheed Nagar police near Shantipali railway crossing, here, Friday.

IIC Saheed Nagar police station, Ashok Kumar Nayak said the cops were tipped-off by an informer Friday afternoon stating that two miscreants carrying a huge consignment of some contraband on a scooter were waiting near the Shantipli railway crossing to deliver it to some



drug peddlers in the locality.

Accordingly, a police team rushed to the spot and nabbed the duo. A search led to the recovery of the marijuana consignment kept in a gunny bag they were carrying, said Nayak. Following

their questioning, the police managed to locate and arrest their two other accomplices, Saturday, he added.

The accused were identified as Raj Kumar Arukh, 50, Nrusingha Charan Nayak, 35, Satya Prakash

Kanungo, 20 and Sonu Dalei, 20.

Police said during further investigation it was revealed that the accused would regularly source marijuana from Baliguda town in Kandhamal district, and later sell those to peddlers and consumers in the Capital City.

The Saheed Nagar police produced the accused in a local court after booking them under Sections 20 (B) (2), 20 (C) and 29 of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985 - which collectively carry a maximum of 10 years of rigorous imprisonment upon conviction.

Black marketer of AIIMS consultation ticket held

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 9: The Khandagiri Police arrested a man who allegedly sold doctor consultation tickets at an exorbitant price to patients at AIIMS Bhubaneswar, Saturday.

The accused has been identified as Nirlov Roy, a native of East Medinipur district in West Bengal. Moreover, the police have also detained two of Nirlov's accomplices who are believed to be security staff at the premier medical facility.

Sub-Inspector Badal Kumar Baral of Khandagiri police station said initial investigations have revealed that

Nirlov used to procure OPD consultation tickets from his acquaintances at the department. Later, he used to sell those tickets to needy patients who face difficulties in standing for long hours in queues for consultation.

Baral said that Nirlov's cover was ultimately blown off when the head of Cardiology department at the hospital, Ramachandra Barik, who is also the complainant in the case, caught the former red handed in the corridor while selling consultation tickets to patients.

The Khandagiri police produced Nirlov before a local court Saturday after booking him under Sections 34, 417 and 419 of IPC.

Missing tribal found dead in Jharkhand

Rourkela: The missing tribal farmer, for whom two politicians staged separate demonstrations in front of the Rourkela SP office Thursday, was found dead in Jharkhand. Mangala Kissan, 44, a tribal farmer, went to Jhirpani weekly market February 29 to sell vegetables. However, he was missing ever since. His last mobile location was traced to Vedyas March 1. His family members lodged a complaint with Jhirpani police. However, neither Kissan nor the vehicle in which he had come to Jhirpani could be traced. Rourkela police received information Friday that a body was found in Jaldega across the state border. A team led by DSP Pushpanjali Ningsi rushed to Jharkhand. Biramitrapur MLA Shankar Oram also rushed there. The family members of Mangala could recognise him from his photograph shown by Jharkhand Police. The Jharkhand Police had found his body March 1. As there was no claimant for the body, police buried it after five days. Oram had demonstrated in front of the Rourkela SP Office demanding quick tracing of Mangala Thursday.

Debrigarh embracing eco-tourism for wider appeal

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Sambalpur, March 9: With an influx of local and foreign tourists, the Debrigarh sanctuary and Hirakud reservoir have emerged as a tourism hotspot in the recent years. With this greater tourist presence in view, the local administration has taken initiatives to promote eco-tourism in the region with the help of local communities.

Among the initiatives, given increased leopard sightings during jungle safari and sightings of other wild animals all along the grasslands between Hirakud lake and



Debrigarh, Hirakud wildlife division authorities, under supervision of Wildlife Organization, have upscaled 7 sqkm of the eastern side spanning Bat Island inside Hirakud.

"Sitting places have been designed to accommodate 60 to 80 tourists at a time, between 6am to 6pm daily, with breakfast and

evening high-tea. All amenities have made out of locally collected palm tree, bamboo, and natural stones curated by the local communities adjoining Debrigarh. Visitors are swept off by the view of pristine beach with crystal clear turquoise water of Hirakud spread vast at front with rugged forested mountains and cliff at the back of

island," said a forest official.

The official added that tourists can now enjoy summer and winter evenings amidst the calm and shallow waters of the lake while listening to calls of animals echoing through the sanctuary. "This makes walking through the island not only adventurous but also soul soothing. All amenities have been created using natural materials giving the Island a vintage look, without any construction. The Island is a 7 sqkm forest patch inside Hirakud lake with a population of around 1,200 Indian Fruit Bats, popularly known as Indian Flying Fox," he added.

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Har Pal Aapke Saath



SUSPENSE OVER BJD-BJP POLL ALLIANCE CONTINUES

Rumours, lies worst part of politics, says Naveen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 9: Chief Minister and BJD president Naveen Patnaik Saturday said rumour and lies are the worst part of politics.

Patnaik made the remark during a conversation with his close aide and 5T (Transformation) and Nabin Odisha chairman VK Pandian.

"Sir, rajanitire sabutu kharap jinisa kan (what is the worst thing in politics)," Pandian asked the CM. In his reply, Patnaik said, "Gujjab (rumour) and michha katha (lies)."

The video of Pandian speaking to Patnaik went viral Saturday even as suspense continued over possible alliance between the ruling BJD and opposition BJP.

The political situation remained fluid all along the day after BJP Odisha president Manmohan Samal and party's Odisha election-in-charge Vijay Pal Singh Tomar claimed that there was no alliance talks with BJD in Delhi. Pandian accompanied by BJD's organisational secretary Pranab Prakash Das had visited the national capital Thursday night for tie-up talks with the BJP brass.

While Samal and Tomar said there were no talks of alliance, BJP senior leader and MP Jual Oram Thursday had admitted that they discussed on the alliance. Patnaik's remark that



rumour and lies were worst part of politics was seen in two different ways.

According to sources, Patnaik's response possibly indicated that talks of a tie-up was 'gossip' and 'lies' or the versions of Samal and Tomar that there was no discussion on alliance are 'gossip' and 'lies'. It was not clear in the video what actually Patnaik meant and the purpose of releasing it on Instagram.

Sources in both the camps, however, claimed that there was a discussion on alliance between the two parties. BJD leader Nrusingha Sahu and BJP leader Jual Oram have admitted there was discussion on the alliance matter. However, BJP state president Samal has denied it.

Lok Sabha and assembly elections are held simultaneously

in Odisha since 2004.

Tomar, who reached here from the national capital, said no leader of the ruling BJD had met him in New Delhi where BJP top brass was holding meetings for the polls.

"If alliance discussions have taken place, such talks with BJD are neither in my knowledge nor we have been informed in this regard," Tomar said.

However, senior BJP leader and Sundargarh MP Jual Oram March 6 had told reporters in Delhi that there was a discussion on alliance.

Tomar asserted that BJP has been making all preparations to fight the elections alone in the state. "We (BJP) will win more than 80 assembly seats and over 16 Lok Sabha seats in Odisha all alone," he told reporters.

Insisted to speak on the possible alliance between the two former allies (BJD and BJP) were in coalition government in Odisha from 2000 to 2009), Tomar said, "Ask the people who have floated the idea of an alliance in Odisha."

The suspense further deepened as two senior BJD leaders VK Pandian and Pranab Prakash Das also remained silent after their visit to New Delhi Thursday evening.

Tomar claimed none of the BJD leaders met him in Delhi.

However, senior BJD MLA Nrusingha Charan Sahu Saturday said alliance or no alliance, BJD is set to win at least 110 of the 147 Assembly seats in Odisha. "I have heard speculations about an alliance. CM Naveen Patnaik will take the final call on that," he said.

Asked whether there was a talk on alliance, Sahu said, BJD has agreed to an alliance only in the interest of Odisha. The people of Odisha will be benefitted from the alliance.

During his visit to Bhadrak Saturday, Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal, who returned after talks with central leaders from Delhi Friday, dismissed any discussions on alliance. "I do not know who is propagating about the alliance in the state. You have to catch its roots. Only the one who started the discussion can answer it. There will be a wave of lotus in Odisha in the upcoming elections," Samal said.

ALLIANCE POLITICS MARS CHARM OF ELECTIONS

RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

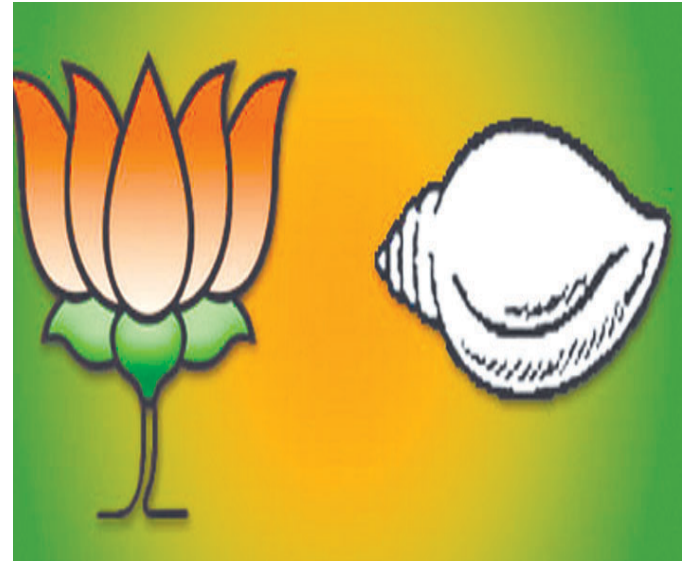
Rourkela, March 9: The mere utterance of the word 'alliance' is causing discomfort to many. It is not only the aspirants in both BJD and BJP but also the cadres, who were expecting a windfall this election. It is also bothering those waiting for good business and even for the political watchers who would have spent hours over cups of tea discussing the political moves.

"This time the state elections will have no meaning for persons like me. Because no political charm is left in it due to the alliance buzz, which will be declared any moment," said Satya Das, who watches politics from a very close quarter at a tea stall at Chhend.

Others present with him there with fair interest and knowledge about politics shared the same view. "No charm is left because the result is almost known to all," said one of them. In case of no alliance, he added, the balance is still in favour of BJD. The situation is and was dicey for the party due to incumbency, nevertheless it would have been interesting to watch, he said.

Even for businessmen of different hues, the alliance is not a good time. "Different political parties were doing price negotiation for printing work. But with a possible alliance, suddenly all are keeping quiet for the final outcome. This is not good," said a leading printer of the city having a network beyond the district. He is apprehensive that in case of alliance, the orders will be much less.

Another political observer said, "Even spending will be less



this time because Congress has no money and in case of an alliance, the candidates will curtail their expenditures. Bargaining power of any independent or rebel candidate will also lack teeth."

Pratik Naik, a student of political science, said, "Even expenses in campaigning, booth management and such activities will be less in comparison to a no-alliance situation." His calculation was that all these expenses would be halved and a huge cash flow will stop.

Even homemakers say the same thing. "Where is the charm in case of an alliance? There will be hardly any big or interesting news, or any worthwhile election analysis. I really feel sorry for the scribes working on the ground, they will have no 'masala' to write about," said Sarita Naik, a homemaker interested in politics.

The cadres in both the par-

ties here are not very keen about being active once the coalition comes to force. "Where is the fun left? For the last five years we are opposing them and now it is like Hindi Chimi bhai bhai? It's not possible. Like me, there are many who cannot stand on the same platform with them," said a BJP supporter.

He went on to make a very interesting remark, "Even for them, especially the cadres, it is not possible. How one will be able to meet them on the coordination table and share tea with a wide smile. On another platform it is possible but not now."

One wine shop manager forwarded an incisive comment from business point of view. "I don't think we will have to order for massive consignment. It will be just a little more than the summer time orders. There is no 'majaa'. So no windfall in business this time during election as expected earlier."

BHANDARIPOKHARI ASSEMBLY SEGMENT

Amid alliance buzz, party workers swing between hope and despair

ANXIOUS WORKERS ARE WAITING FOR A FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE HIGH COMMANDS OF BOTH THE PARTIES AS NO CLEAR PICTURE IS EMERGING

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bant, March 9: With speculations over BJD and BJP forming an alliance in the state yet to take any definite shape, workers and leaders of both the parties in Bhandaripokhari Assembly constituency under Bhadrak Lok Sabha segment are concerned as to which party will contest the poll if the buzz of alliance comes to be a reality.

Workers and local leaders of the two parties just want to know which party will get the Bhandaripokhari Assembly seat in case an alliance is formed. However, with no headway on the tie-up front, the workers of the two parties are in a state of uncertainty.

The Bhandaripokhari



PRAFULLA SAMAL (BJD)



MANMOHAN SAMAL (BJP)

Assembly seat is represented by Prafulla Samal of BJD while BJP's state president Manmohan Samal is also interested to contest from this seat. The BJP has done the necessary groundwork for the upcoming election.

Sources said the ruling BJD and BJP entered into an alliance in 2000 and 2004 Assembly elections. Accordingly, the Bhandaripokhari Assembly seat went to BJD's kitty.

In the 2000 elections, BJD candidate Ratha Das had won by gathering 59,441 votes. The then Congress candidate Kumarshree Chiranjeev was defeated by re-

ceiving only 39,789 votes.

In the 2004 polls, the alliance candidate BJD's Ratha Das was trounced by getting only 59,675 votes. The then Congress candidate Anant Prasad Sethi won the elections with 61,211 votes. BJD's Prafulla Samal has been winning from this constituency since 2009.

In the elections held in between 2000 to 2019, the alliance candidate has won once, BJD thrice and Congress once from this constituency.

The BJD workers seem to have been pushed into a state of distress and are lacking encour-

agement after the Enforcement Directorate conducted raids in the house of BJD MLA Prafulla Samal. The BJD workers were previously concerned whether Prafulla or his son Prayaskanti will get the ticket.

However, speculation over the two parties forming an alliance has pushed them into further confusion. The anxious workers are waiting for a formal announcement by the high commands of both the parties as no clear picture is emerging whether the seat will be retained by the BJD or the BJP will be allowed to contest from this seat.

The BJP workers, however, opined that the seat will go to BJP if the two parties form an alliance and saffron party's state president Manmohan Samal will contest from this seat. This is because Manmohan contested from this seat in 2009 elections and came third by receiving only 21,160 votes. Since then, BJP has strengthened its position in this constituency after the 2009 election.

BJP candidate Badri Narayan Dhal received 28,809 votes in the 2014 election and 39,141 votes in the 2019 election and was placed in the third position.

TDP has 'shamelessly' gone back into NDA: Congress

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh asserted his is the only national party that has consistently promised to give Andhra Pradesh special category status for five years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 9: As the BJP and the TDP sealed a tie-up, the Congress took a swipe at the N Chandrababu Naidu-led party, saying it has "shamelessly" gone back to the NDA despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi continuing to "fail" the people of Andhra Pradesh by not granting it special category status.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh asserted his is the only national party that has consistently promised to give Andhra Pradesh special category status for five years.

"In 2018, the then-chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, Chandrababu Naidu-garu, broke off his alliance with the BJP because of the Prime Minister's failure to give Andhra Pradesh its due through special category status for the state. The then-BJP president Amit Shah declared that the doors of the NDA were forever closed to the TDP," Ramesh said.

"In the six years since, the Prime Minister has continued to fail the people of Andhra Pradesh. The TDP has now shamelessly gone back into the



NDA. They have a lot to answer for today," Ramesh said.

The BJP sealed its alliance with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) on Saturday for the upcoming Lok Sabha and Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections, with former chief minister Naidu asserting the combine will sweep the polls.

The alliance was formalised after the two parties and actor Pawan Kalyan-led Jana Sena Party (JSP) held another round of talks

involving Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief J P Nadda, besides Naidu and Kalyan.

A joint statement issued by the three parties said that under PM Modi's "dynamic and visionary" leadership, they have decided to contest the Lok Sabha and Andhra Pradesh Assembly polls together as they are committed to ensuring the country's progress and an uplift of the state and its people.

BJNY: Rahul interacts with civil society leaders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bharuch, March 9: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Saturday interacted with around 70 civil society leaders associated with Dalit, tribal and farmer movements during his ongoing 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' in Gujarat's Narmada district.

The 6,700-km 'Manipur to Mumbai' yatra entered the BJP-ruled state on Thursday from Rajasthan. The interaction program took place at Kunwarpara. The activists highlighted the fact that some Adivasi (tribal) communities in Gujarat face multiple displacements in their lifetime, often being evicted three-four times without adequate compensation and rehabilitation,



Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

"The activists also spoke about how the housing market in different parts of the state is getting segregated caste-wise, and how minorities have become increasingly more vulnerable over the last twenty years," Ramesh said. The activists also spoke about the "all-

pervasive atmosphere of fear and intimidation" over the past two decades in Gujarat, he said, claiming that civil society institutions such as cooperatives in the milk sector have been captured politically. Later, in a public interaction at Netrang in Bharuch district, Rahul Gandhi said a caste census would be a revolutionary step,

ensuring everyone's participation in India's wealth and institutions, and also promised to remove the 50 percent cap on reservations in educational admissions and government jobs. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) candidate from Bharuch Lok Sabha seat, Chaitar Vasava, was standing by his side. Leaders and workers of AAP, which has formed an electoral alliance with the Congress for the Lok Sabha polls in the state, are taking part in the yatra. "You must not forget that a caste census is a revolutionary step. You should not let this go. It will open the way for you. It is my aim to ensure participation of every Indian in the country's wealth and its institutions," the Congress leader told the gathering.



MASS CONTACT DRIVE: BJD workers led by former MLA Anubhav Patnaik take out a rally as part of 'Ghare Ghare Sankha' programme, a public outreach drive by the party at Mardarajpur panchayat under Khandapara Assembly segment in Nayagarh district, Saturday

national

of the day quote

Mutual fraternity is necessary to maintain equality in the country

Under the concept of 'Viksit Bharat', everyone should play an effective role in national development while preserving the country's abundant cultural wealth, human resource and heritage

This is the election to save the Constitution and the democracy. This is the election to save reservation and save one's own honour. At one point of time, 'Samudra Manthan' (churning of the sea) had taken place. This is the time for 'Samvidhava Manthan'

The Rameshwaram Cafe reopens

Bangalore: Eight days after it was shattered by a blast that left 10 persons injured, The Rameshwaram Cafe in the city started serving its loyal customers once again Saturday, throwing open the eatery to the public with heightened security measures.

NCB arrests expelled DMK functionary in drugs case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 9: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Saturday arrested 36-year-old Jaffer Sadiq, an expelled DMK party functionary in Tamil Nadu, in connection with an international drugs trafficking racket investigation estimated to be worth more than ₹2,000 crore.

NCB deputy director general (operations) Gyaneshwar Singh said here that Sadiq's linkages with the Tamil and Hindi film industry, some "high-profile" people apart from some instances of "political funding" were under the scanner of the agency.



- Sources said that a high-profile DMK leader could soon be summoned by the NCB for questioning with regard to some monetary transactions worth a few lakhs
The Enforcement Directorate will soon register a money laundering case to probe this racket by taking cognisance of this NCB case, ED sources said

political persons were under the scanner of the agency. The ED will soon register a money laundering case to probe this racket by taking cognisance of this NCB case, ED sources said. He said Sadiq, whose full name is Jaffer Sadiq Abdul Rehman, went into "hiding" soon after the agency conducted raids in Delhi in this case in February and he travelled from Chennai to Thiruvananthapuram, Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad and Jaipur before being taken into custody following his brief questioning by the NCB. Sadiq, a producer of Tamil

Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir should be held soon after the Lok Sabha election as the people of the Union Territory cannot wait anymore

GHULAM NABI AZAD | DPAP CHIEF

11 Himachal MLAs move to U'khand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rishikesh, March 9: Six Himachal Pradesh Congress MLAs who voted against party nominee Abhishek Manu Singhvi in the Rajya Sabha elections, along with three Independent lawmakers, have shifted to a hotel in BJP-ruled Uttarakhand amid an ongoing rebellion against Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu.

Two BJP MLAs Vikram Thakur and Trilok Jamwal from Himachal Pradesh were accompanying the legislators, who arrived in Rishikesh from Haryana's Panchkula by a chartered flight late on Friday and checked into Hotel Taj. Congress MLAs Sudhir Sharma, Rajinder Rana, Inder Dutt Lakhnani, Devinder Kumar Bhuttu, Ravindra Thakur and Chaitanya Sharma have since been disqualified for defying the party whip on the state budget.

They have approached the Supreme Court for relief in the matter. Three Independent MLAs Hoshiar Singh, KL Thakur and Ashish Sharma were also with them when they arrived. The Congress currently has 34 MLAs in the Himachal Pradesh Assembly while the BJP has 25. The three Independent MLAs had also sided with the BJP in the Rajya Sabha polls.

Blow to Congress as Pachouri joins BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, March 9: In a significant political development in Madhya Pradesh, veteran leader and former Union minister Suresh Pachouri bid adieu to his five-decade allegiance with the Congress, and joined the BJP Saturday.

Pachouri, accompanied by former MP Gajendra Singh Rajukhedhi and a cadre of ex-MLAs, joined the BJP in a ceremony in presence of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, state BJP president V D Sharma, and former CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan at the Bharatiya Janata Party's state headquarters. This move marks a notable setback for the Congress party in Madhya Pradesh, as an increasing number of its members are opting to join the ruling alliance. Pachouri, 71, a long-time associate of the Gandhi family, had a notable political career within the Congress, having served as minister of state for defence and as a four-time Rajya Sabha member. At the function, Pachouri said



he had entered politics to serve the society and the Congress would talk about establishing a casteless society. "But now they are talking about caste. In the last few days, the political and religious decisions (taken by the Congress) made me uneasy," he said, apparently referring to the party's move to decline the Ayodhya Ram temple consecration ceremony invitation. "I have served in the Defence Ministry. Never were questions raised about the Army's bravery. There was never a talk to provide 'evidence' (as sought by Congress leaders regarding the 'surgical strikes')." Pachouri said while defending his decision to shift from Congress to the BJP.

Union Bank of India advertisement containing regional office details for Balasore, Jajpur, and Bhadrak, along with multiple real estate sale notices for various properties.

Woman killed in stampede at BJP event

Nagpur: A 65-year-old woman was killed and four others were injured in a stampede at a programme organised by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Maharashtra's Nagpur city Saturday, police said. The incident occurred at a camp organised by the BJP's Nagpur city unit at Kavivarya Suresh Bhat Auditorium in the Reshimbagh area around 10:30 am, an official from Kotwali police station said. The party had arranged the camp to distribute utensils and other essential items to workers registered with the Maharashtra Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board, he said. People started gathering outside the venue around 5 am, and a massive crowd had formed by the time the gates were thrown open to the beneficiaries, the official said.

EAST COAST RAILWAY tender notice for OHE Modification in connection with proposed replacement of girders of major bridges.

EAST COAST RAILWAY tender notice for supply and stacking of 20,000 cum machine crushed track ballast.

Bank of Baroda advertisement for Regional Office (Sambalpur Region) containing possession notices for various immovable properties.

international

of the day quote

We, of course, welcome the Prime Minister's statement. The United States values its relationship with both India and Pakistan, and we want to see them have a productive and peaceful relationship



MATTHEW MILLER | US STATE DEPT SPOKESPERSON

Biden's numbers are in the tank for a lot of good reasons, and we can certainly talk about that



BRIAN KEMP | GOVERNOR OF GEORGIA

What the Israeli government is doing is not war, it is genocide. Children and women are being murdered



LUIZ INÁCIO LULA DA SILVA | PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL

SHORT TAKES

Landslide batters Sumatra, kills 10

Padang: Torrential rains have triggered flash floods and a landslide on Indonesia's Sumatra island, killing at least 10 people and leaving 10 others missing, officials said Saturday. Tons of mud, rocks and uprooted trees rolled down a mountain late Friday, reaching a river that burst its banks and tore through mountainside villages in Pesisir Selatan district of West Sumatra province, said Doni Yusrizal, who heads the local disaster management agency.

Intense rainfall sweeps across Dubai

Dubai: Intense rainfall swept across Dubai and the wider United Arab Emirates Saturday, causing localised flooding and disrupting flights at the world's busiest airport for international travel. Nearly 50 millimetres (2 inches) of rain fell in Dubai over six hours — a heavy amount when the country as a whole averages under 120 millimetres (4.7 inches) of precipitation a year.

Gunmen kidnap 15 children

Abuja: Armed men invaded a boarding school in northwestern Nigeria early Saturday and abducted 15 children, police told The Associated Press, about 48 hours after nearly 300 students were taken hostage in the conflict-hit region. School abductions are common in Nigeria's northern region, especially since the 2014 kidnapping of more than 200 schoolgirls by Islamic extremists in Borno state's Chibok village shocked the world.

Nine killed in traffic crash

Dewhurst (US): A crash Friday at a western Wisconsin highway intersection involving a semitrailer and a van reportedly killed nine people. KSTP reports the Clark County sheriff's office told the station nine people died in the accident. The sheriff's office didn't return messages from The Associated Press, and the Wisconsin State Patrol referred questions to local authorities.

4 terrorists killed

Islamabad: Four terrorists were killed in an operation by security forces in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the Pakistani military said. The intelligence-based operation was launched in North Waziristan district of the province on reported presence of terrorists, triggering off an intense exchange of firing resulting in the killing of the terrorists, the military's media wing Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

'Presence of NATO troops in Ukraine is not unthinkable'



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Warsaw, March 9: Poland's foreign minister says the presence of NATO forces "is not unthinkable" and that he appreciates the French president for not ruling out that idea.

Radek Sikorski made the observation during a discussion marking the 25th anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO in the Polish Parliament Friday, and the Foreign Ministry post in X later in English.

They reflect a larger European debate over how to help Ukraine as Russia has gained some momentum on the battlefield and Kyiv is running low on ammunition. The US Congress is withholding aid that Ukraine says it critically needs to hold off the Russians, putting more pressure on Europe to respond to the war that has shattered peace on the continent.

Last month French President Emmanuel Macron said the possibility of Western troops being sent to Ukraine could not be ruled out, a comment that broke a taboo among allies and prompted an outcry from other leaders. French officials later

- Poland is a member of NATO along the alliance's eastern flank, with Ukraine across its eastern border
- The country has been under Russian control in the past, and fears run high that if Russia wins in Ukraine, it could next target other countries in a region that Moscow views as its sphere of interest

sought to clarify Macron's remarks and tamp down the backlash, while insisting on the need to send a clear signal to Russia that it cannot win its war in Ukraine.

The Kremlin has warned that if NATO sends combat troops, a direct conflict between the alliance and Russia would be inevitable. Russian President Vladimir Putin said such a move would risk a global nuclear conflict.

Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk was among those European leaders who initially ruled out sending troops to Ukraine after Macron's remarks, saying: "Poland does not plan to send its troops to the territory of Ukraine." But less than two weeks later Sikorski struck a different tone.

Biden signs key gov't funding Bills into law averting shutdown

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, March 9: President Joe Biden Saturday signed a \$460 billion package of spending Bills approved by the Senate in time to avoid a shutdown of many key federal agencies.

The legislation's success gets lawmakers about halfway home in wrapping up their appropriations work for the 2024 budget year. The measure contains six annual spending bills and had already passed the House. In signing it into law, Biden thanked leaders and negotiators from both parties in both chambers for their work, which the White House said will mean that agencies "may continue their normal operations."



Meanwhile, lawmakers are negotiating a second package of six bills, including defense, in an effort to have all federal agencies fully funded by a March 22 deadline. "To folks who worry that divided government means nothing ever gets done, this bipartisan package says otherwise," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY, said after lawmakers passed the measure Friday night just hours before a deadline. He said the bill's passage would allow for the hiring of more air traffic controllers and rail safety inspectors, give federal firefighters a raise and boost support for homeless veterans, among other things.

The Senate passed the bill by a vote of 75-22. Lawmakers sought votes on several amendments and wanted to have their say on the bill and other priorities during debate on the floor. It had been unclear midday if senators would be able to avert a short shutdown, though eventual passage was never really in doubt.



JOVIAL MOOD: Festivalgoers are seen during Dollywood's Season Passholder and Media Day in Pigeon Forge, Tenn. AP

Zardari becomes Pak's 14th Prez

Asif Ali Zardari, the co-chairperson of the PPP, was the joint candidate of the ruling alliance of the PPP and the PML-N

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad/Lahore, March 9: Asif Ali Zardari was overwhelmingly elected as the 14th President of Pakistan Saturday, becoming the only civilian President of the coup-prone country for a second time.

His rival, Mahmood Khan Achakzai, is the head of his Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP). He was fielded by jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party and backed by the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC).

"Asif Ali Zardari is the first civilian president in the history of Pakistan who was elected for a second term," the PPP posted on X soon after the election results were announced by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

He is expected to be sworn in Sunday. Zardari, 68, received 255



votes while his 75-year-old opponent got 119 votes in the National Assembly and the Senate. The new president was elected by the electoral college of the newly elected members of the National Assembly and the four provincial assemblies, which formed the electoral college.

In the Sindh Assembly, where Zardari's PPP is at the helm, he bagged 58 votes while he also swept the Balochistan Assembly votes bagging all the 47 votes polled there.

In the Punjab assembly where the PML-N has formed the government, Zardari polled 43 votes while Achakzai got 18 votes.

In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly, where SIC/PTI has

the government, Achakzai got 41 votes while Zardari received just 8.

"The total number of seats in the electoral college was 1,185 out of which 92 were vacant [...]. The ECP said. "The remaining 1,093 voters were to exercise their right to vote."

The election commission highlighted that 1,044 votes were cast of which nine were declared invalid. "Thus, the total number of valid votes cast is 1,035," it said.

A businessman-turned-politician, Zardari is the husband of slain Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Zardari has been haunted by his shady past due to his alleged involvement in cases of mega corruption during the two terms of his wife as Prime Minister, when he earned the derogatory nickname of 'Mr 10 per cent' for allegedly getting his share of bribes in development projects.

He was implicated in many cases of corruption and spent several years behind bars, even facing custodial violence, but he was neither convicted nor lost his trademark smile, and, ultimately, he was cleared in all cases.

Houthis target bulk carrier, US destroyers

REUTERS

Cairo, March 9: US, French and British forces downed dozens of drones in the Red Sea area overnight and Saturday after Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis targeted bulk carrier Propel Fortune and US destroyers in the region, the US military said in a statement.

The Houthis have been attacking ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since November in what they say is a campaign of solidarity with Palestinians during Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza.

The group's military spokesman Yahya Sarea said in a televised speech on Saturday they had targeted the cargo vessel and "a number of US war destroyers at the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden with 37 drones".

US Central Command (CENTCOM) said the US military and coalition forces had downed at least 28 uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs) over the Red Sea in the early hours of Saturday.

"No US or Coalition Navy vessels were damaged in the attack and there were also no reports by commercial ships of damage," CENTCOM said in a statement.

Earlier Saturday, CENTCOM said the military was responding to a large-scale attack on ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden between 4 am and 6:30 am (0100-0330 GMT).

The UAVs were intended to present "an imminent threat to merchant vessels, US Navy, and



coalition ships in the region", it said in a post on social media platform X.

A French warship and fighter jets also shot down four combat drones that were advancing towards naval vessels belonging to the European Aspides mission in the region, a French army statement said.

"This defensive action directly contributed to the protection of the cargo ship True Confidence, under the Barbados flag, which was struck March 6 and is being towed, as well as other commercial vessels transiting in the

area," it said. France has a warship in the area as well as warplanes at its bases in Djibouti and the United Arab Emirates.

DRONE ATTACK
Britain's Ministry of Defence said its warship HMS Richmond had joined international allies in repelling a Houthi drone attack overnight, saying no injuries or damage were sustained.

"Last night, HMS Richmond used its Sea Ceptor missiles to shoot down two attack drones successfully repelling yet another illegal attack by the Iranian-backed Houthis," defence minister Grant Shapps said on X.

"The UK and our allies will continue to take the action necessary to save lives and protect freedom of navigation."

On Wednesday three seafarers were killed in a missile strike by the Houthis on the Greek-operated True Confidence, the first civilian casualties since the group started its attacks on the key shipping route.

PLA units are 'faking combat capabilities', says China general

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, March 9: In a surprise development, a top Chinese military general has cast aspersions on the PLA's much-publicised 'real combat-oriented exercises' as 'fake combat capabilities' at a time when Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered it to prepare for "maritime military struggles" to win wars.

The remarks by General He Weidong, the second-ranked vice-chairman of China's powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high command of the three Armed Forces headed by Xi, during a discussion with a People's Liberation Army (PLA) delegation Tuesday, according to minutes of the meeting made available to media.

Though it was just one line — Gen He called for a crackdown on 'fake combat capabilities' in the military — military analysts say the remark by a top official



in the backdrop of the recent purges carried out by Xi, questions the authenticity of the real-time combat exercises as insisted by Xi since he took over power in 2012-13 and the quality of the equipment, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post newspaper reported Saturday.

Xi recently sacked Defence Minister Gen Li Shangfu last year, which was followed by the removal of another nine senior generals, many of them from the key Rocket Force, which operates the country's missile forces.

Unrest cripples economy, triggers food and water shortage

THE TERRIFYING VIOLENCE AS ANTI-GOVERNMENT GANGS BATTLE POLICE IN THE STREETS HAS CRIPPLED THE FRAGILE ECONOMY

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Port Au Prince (Haiti), March 9: Rotting fruit, withered vegetables, empty water jugs and spent gas canisters now stock the stores and stands that serve Haiti's poor — a consequence of the unrelenting gang attacks that have paralysed the country for more than a week and

left it with dwindling supplies of basic goods.

The terrifying violence as anti-government gangs battle police in the streets has crippled the fragile economy and made it extremely difficult for many of the country's most vulnerable to feed themselves.

The main port in the capital, Port-au-Prince, closed down, stranding scores of containers full of food and medical supplies at a time when UN officials say half the country's more than 11 million inhabitants don't have enough to eat, and 1.4 million are starving.

Grocery stores in upscale parts of the capital remain stocked, but their goods are out of reach to most in a country where most people earn less than USD 2 a day.

Next to him were rows of empty jugs he hadn't been able to refill because the violence



Woman cooks at shelter for families displaced by gang violence, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

had forced one of the country's main bottled water operators

to shut down. Gerald noted that he was running out of things

to sell because the depot where he usually buys rice, oil, beans, powdered milk and bread had been set on fire and its owner had been kidnapped. As he spoke, gunfire echoed in the distance.

Scores of people have been killed and more than 15,000 have been forced from their homes since coordinated gang attacks began February 29 while Prime Minister Ariel Henry was in Kenya to push for the UN-backed deployment of a police force from the East African country to fight gangs in Haiti. A Kenyan court, however, ruled in January that such a deployment would be unconstitutional.

As the gangs rampaged through Port-au-Prince, freeing more than 4,000 inmates from the country's two biggest prisons, attacking its main air-

port and setting police stations on fire, Haiti's least powerful have suffered the most.

Schools, banks and most government agencies remain closed. Gas stations have also shuttered, and the few who can afford to pay \$ 9 a gallon — more than twice the usual rate — have flocked to the black market. Street vendors are slowly losing their livelihoods and wonder how they'll feed their families. Michel Jean, 45, sat Thursday next to the makeshift metal shack where he normally sells rice, beans, milk and toilet paper. Meanwhile, Haitian officials extended a state of emergency and nightly curfew Thursday as gangs continued to attack key state institutions.

As more and more people are left unemployed, street vendors are selling smaller amounts of essential goods.

business

of the day quote

Manufacturing comes with great innovations, software and brain-power. India has a robust base of software and design capabilities that will help us become a major product nation in the world

ASHWINI VAISHNAV | UNION IT AND TELECOM MINISTER

As one of the world's top resources for information, it's critical for Wikipedia to represent the full, rich diversity of all humanity. When more people from India contribute to Wikipedia, we move closer to achieving this vision

MASANA MULAUZI | SENIOR MANAGER OF CAMPAIGN ORGANIZING AT WIKIMEDIA FOUNDATION

It makes more sense to go accelerated computing because the world is about a data centre and not about chip, not about a system, node or interconnect. One single data centre is a compute node

VISHAL DHUPAR | NVIDIA ASIA SOUTH MANAGING DIRECTOR

SHORT TAKES

GAIL cuts CNG prices by ₹2.50

New Delhi: GAIL (India) Limited, and its wholly owned subsidiary, GAIL Gas Limited Saturday announced a reduction in the prices of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) by ₹2.50 per kg across several key locations in India where it operates retail outlets. The move comes close on the heels of Indraprastha Gas Limited (IGL) reducing the selling price of gas in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) by ₹2.50 per kg with effect from Thursday. This reduction underscores GAIL's commitment to offering environmentally friendly fuel solutions at competitive prices, in line with the nation's efforts to combat pollution and reduce carbon emissions. "The decision to lower CNG prices comes at a crucial time when the automotive industry is witnessing a surge in the production and adoption of CNG vehicles by leading manufacturers such as Suzuki Motors Tata, Hyundai and Mahindra," GAIL said in a statement.

SJVN Ltd bags ₹7,436cr deal

New Delhi: SJVN Limited, a Mini Ratna Central public sector enterprise, has bagged a ₹7,436 crore deal for the development of solar power projects of 1,352 MW capacity in Maharashtra with an investment of ₹7,436 crore, the Power Ministry said Friday. The projects will be developed through the SJVN Green Energy Limited (SGEL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of SJVN, in four districts -- Nashik, Solapur, Ahmednagar, and Pune. This will be the first contribution of SGEL towards the PM-KUSUM scheme. These projects will be eligible for Central financial assistance, up to a maximum of 30 per cent of the project cost.

Indian startups raise \$308mn

New Delhi: At least 27 startups in India raised about \$307.8 million this week, which includes 17 early-stage and seven growth-stage companies. Nearly 32 early and growth-stage startups raised more than \$384 million last week, startup news portal Enttrackr reported Saturday. Seventeen early-stage startups raised about \$166.8 million, like mPokket, Ema, Hunch and Rozana, among others. Startups based in Delhi-NCR led the funding with 10 deals, followed by Bangalore at 9 deals.



Today at ₹503 for 14.2-kg, poor in India are getting this imported essential fuel (LPG) for one of the lowest prices, lower than prices in most producing nations as well

HARDEEP SINGH PURI | OIL MINISTER

OFFICE SPACE DEMAND ACROSS TOP 6 CITIES

Office space demand in India's six major cities - Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi-NCR, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune -- will remain healthy this year as domestic and foreign firms are expected to lease 50-55 million square feet area to expand their businesses, according to a FICCI-Colliers report.



India, four-nation European bloc to sign trade pact today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 9: India and four-nation European bloc EFTA will sign a free trade agreement Sunday, which is likely to help promote investments and exports of key domestic services sectors such as IT, audio-visual, and movement of skilled professionals, an official said.

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

The official said that for the first time in the history of free trade agreements (FTAs), a legal commitment is expected to be included in the pact about promoting target-oriented investment from EFTA to India and creation of employment.

India has sought an investment commitment of \$50 billion during the first 10 years after the implementation of the agreement and another \$50 billion over the next five years from the member countries of the bloc and to facilitate the generation of 1 million direct employment



in India through such investments.

This commitment would be linked to duty reduction under the agreement.

Sectors related to almost all the industrial goods exported from India to the bloc are likely to benefit from the agreement.

Another official said that Indian processed agricultural products may also get greater market access in EFTA countries. Besides, sectors like pharma, medical devices and processed food (these segments are covered under the production

linked incentive scheme) are expected to figure in the agreement. Items such as soya, dairy and sensitive agricultural products would be kept in the exclusion list, meaning no duty concessions would be provided in the agreement for these items.

The signing of the pact, officially dubbed as Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), follows approval from the Union Cabinet March 7.

There is no official announcement of signing of the pact on March 10 so far.

State's homegrown financial startup FINCIST launched

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 9: In a major development for Odisha's burgeoning financial sector, the homegrown startup FINCIST has been launched, heralding a new era of financial and investment opportunities for the people of the state.

The strategic timing of the launch on an auspicious day, combining the significance of Mahashivratri and International Women's Day, underscores the company's commitment to cultural values, inclusivity, and empowerment.

With recognition of the importance of technology in today's financial landscape, FINCIST ensures a user-friendly platform that caters to a diverse audience. The seamless integration of technology aims to bridge gaps, making financial services accessible to residents with varying levels of digital literacy.

In a world where technology often overshadows the human touch, FINCIST has emerged as a beacon, offering an innovative and personalised approach to investment. At the core of FINCIST's philosophy lies the harmonious fusion of data-driven insights and the human touch. Instead of relying solely on al-



gorithms and automated processes, FINCIST acknowledges the emotional and strategic nuances that characterise investment decisions. The platform seamlessly blends the precision of data analytics with the understanding that each investor is unique, with individual goals, dreams, and risk tolerances.

In a world where trust is paramount, FINCIST upholds the highest standards of ethics and transparency. The platform believes in fostering trust through openness about its practices, ensuring that users have a clear understanding of how their investments are managed. FINCIST adheres to stringent ethical guidelines, creating an environment where investors can confidently navigate the financial landscape.

The founder and CEO of FINCIST is a former investment banker, Sourajeet Pradhani. Sourajeet hails from the Puri sevayat lineage.

Byju's likely to miss salary deadline for 20,000 employees

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 9: Embattled edtech company Byju's is likely to miss the March 10 deadline to pay salaries for the month of February to its more than 20,000 employees as funds raised via its rights issue remain stuck.

The Bangalore bench of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) had directed Byju's that the proceeds from the rights issue (which is about \$250-\$300 million) is to be kept in a separate account till the disposal of the case with investors.

According to sources, the company appears not in a position to pay the salaries due to the status quo, as banks also remain closed over the weekend.

The company did not immediately comment on the development. Earlier this month, the company's founder and CEO Byju Raveendran told employees that "We are striving to ensure that your salaries are paid by March 10. We shall make these payments the moment we are permitted to do so as per law."

In a letter to the staff, Raveendran said that the rights issue has been successfully closed.

Gulf oil giants set sights on lithium

REUTERS

London/Dubai, March 9: Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates' national oil companies plan to extract lithium from brine in their oilfields, in line with efforts to diversify their economies and profit from the shift to electric vehicles (EVs), three sources told Reuters.

Other oil companies, including Exxon Mobil and Occidental Petroleum, plan to take advantage of emerging technologies to filter lithium from brine, as the world seeks to move away from fossil fuels.

Saudi Arabia, whose economy for decades has relied on oil, has spent billions on trying to turn itself into a hub for EVs as part of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's attempts to find alternative sources of wealth.

Three people familiar with the matter said Saudi Aramco and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) were in the very early stages of work to extract lithium, regarded as a critical mineral by many major economies because of its use in battery manufacture.

They declined to give detail on the type of direct lithium extraction (DLE) technology that would be used.

Aramco did not respond to a



request for comment, Adnoc declined to comment.

The three sources declined to be named because they were not authorised to speak publicly.

DLE technology is in its infancy and its economics are far less certain than those of oil. But Saudi Arabia and the UAE can draw on expertise in handling oil brine and wastewater at oil production sites.

An advantage of filtering the ultralight battery metal from salt water is that it avoids the need for costly and environmentally challenging open pit mines or large evaporation ponds, as employed in the world's leading producers Australia and Chile.

China is the biggest processor and consumer of lithium, needed for electric and hybrid vehicles.

For now, global economic weakness has depressed buying of new vehicles and led lithium prices to dive. Lithium prices have fallen by about 80% since touching a peak in November 2022 as a slowdown in EV sales exacerbated a supply glut.

Leading carmakers, however, are among those looking for new lithium supplies in anticipation of future demand. Analysts have said the EV industry will depend on lithium for years to come, even though cheaper battery technology alternatives using less or no lithium are being studied.

An issue with extracting lithium from brine is that concentration levels can be very low, making already uncertain economics less favourable. One of the people said Aramco was

working on using new filtration technology that seeks to solve the issue of concentration, while another person said Adnoc was also addressing that.

Saudi Arabia's oil wealth means it can afford to take a financial risk and its diversification plans include establishing itself as a hub for EVs to make use of whatever lithium it produces.

The kingdom has established its own EV brand Ceer, and built an EV metals plant. Its sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund (PIF), has a goal to produce 500,000 EVs annually by 2030.

Saudi Arabian Mining Company (Ma'aden), the Gulf's largest miner, is working to extract lithium from seawater.

"There is good research in the kingdom with Ma'aden ... and Aramco because the discharge of the oilfields have good salinity and good traces of minerals," Saudi vice minister of industry and mineral resources Khalid bin Saleh Al-Mudaifer told Reuters on the sidelines of a press conference in Riyadh in December.

"They have done good work, they have done good extractions of sodium, magnesium, and traces of lithium. The technologies are in the early stage, but there is good work and good investment," Al-Mudaifer added.

Coal sector PSUs surpass capex target

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 9: Coal sector PSUs such as Coal India Ltd and NLCIL have surpassed the annual target of 21,030 crore capital expenditure (capex) fixed for the current financial year ending March 31, 2024 with a total investment of ₹22,448.24 crore at the end of February, the Coal Ministry said Saturday.

The record level of productive investment which works out to 106.74 per cent of the target has a multiplier impact on the overall economy as it creates more employment and boosts demand in other sectors of the economy as well which spurs growth.

"With major capex investments materialising in the last two months of the fiscal



year, it is anticipated that both CIL and NLCIL will add to their achievement, further bolstering India's economic growth trajectory," the Coal Ministry said.

The coal PSUs have also achieved an asset monetisation of ₹55148.33 crore till February this year to outperform the target of ₹50,118 crore fixed by the government for monetising unutilised assets during 2023-24.

The coal PSUs have also taken the lead with procurements worth ₹88,518 crore through the government's e-marketplace (GeM) which is 415 per cent of target of ₹21,325 crore. The GeM procurement is being promoted by the government to enable transparent purchases that ensure a lower price and weed out corruption.

Success is not just about profits: Mishra

Located in Bolangir, Ovo Farm Private Limited has been one of the leading organisations in poultry farming business for over two decades. With a daily output of one million eggs, Ovo Farm is the biggest producer of eggs in eastern India and a major player in India's colossal egg industry, the third largest in the world. The entrepreneur behind this successful venture is Soumendra Mishra, founder and managing director of Ovo Farm Private Limited. With over two decades of dedication, he has weaved his vision into the fabric of a community centered on eggs. In a conversation with Orissa POST, Mishra gives an insight into his journey. Excerpts...



■ **With an experience of over two decades in poultry farming business, what do you think are the biggest challenges that you face?**

■ The challenges faced by the poultry and egg industry are similar to other agriculture activities. The biggest challenge is getting the right price for our products. India is a buyers' market where middlemen have the control and the farmers are at the mercy of traders. The second challenge that we face is propaganda and misinformation spread by vested interests against eggs and chicken. Developing customers' confidence on the product is the biggest challenge.

■ **Poultry farming is one of the fastest-growing agribusinesses in India. Is this also true for the state? What according to you is the reason behind people's inclination towards this business?**

■ Poultry farming indeed is experiencing rapid growth in India, and this trend holds true for our state as well. The reasons behind this surge are multifaceted. Firstly, poultry products, especially eggs and chicken, are staple items in the Indian diet, ensuring a steady demand. Secondly, advancement in technology and breeding techniques has made poultry farming more efficient and profitable, therefore, an attractive option for aspiring entrepreneurs in both rural and urban areas.

■ **The poultry industry is marred by allegations of adulteration in egg as well as chicken. How are you maintaining the standards of your products?**

■ Egg is one prod-

uct which is protected by nature and cannot be adulterated unlike milk and other food products. To maintain the standards of our products and address allegations of adulteration in eggs, we have implemented stringent quality control measures and high-end technology throughout our production process. From sourcing feed to monitoring animal health, we ensure strict adherence to regulatory standards and employ advanced testing methods to detect any potential adulteration. Additionally, we prioritise transparency and traceability, providing customers with detailed information about our production practices and fostering trust in the safety and quality of our products.

of blockchain technology in the poultry farming industry in India. This innovative approach enhances transparency, traceability, and accountability throughout the supply chain, ensuring that consumers have access to authentic and reliable information about the origin and quality of our products. Looking ahead, we plan to further leverage emerging technologies to optimise our operations, improve efficiency, and continue setting new benchmarks for sustainability and food safety in the industry. We are coming up with a state-of-the-art egg processing plant which will start production this September. This will be one of its kind in India which will bring recognition for Odisha.

■ **Last year, Ovo Farm became the first brand in India to use blockchain technology in the poultry farming industry. What more do you have in store?**

■ Last year marked a significant milestone for Ovo Farm with the introduction

■ **As the co-founder of the brand which started from Bolangir and went global, what advice do you have for young entrepreneurs trying their luck in this business?**

■ My advice to young entrepreneurs venturing into the poultry business is to prioritise innovation, integrity, and community engagement. Embrace technology and disruptive solutions to address the challenges facing the industry, but never compromise on ethical practices and commitment to quality. Build strong relationships with stakeholders including farmers, suppliers, and consumers, and actively contribute to the welfare of the communities you operate in. Remember, success is not just about profits but about making a positive impact on society and enriching lives through your endeavours.



ASHWIN'S 5-WICKET HAUL HELPS INDIA MAKE IT 4-1 AGAINST ENGLAND WITH CRUSHING WIN IN DHARAMSALA

RUDE REALITY CHECK FOR BAZBALL



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



England were bowled out for 195 towards the end of the afternoon session with Ashwin running through their reckless batting line-up to end with a match haul of nine wickets. Kuldeep Yadav was adjudged player of the match though for a haul of seven wickets, including the fifer in the first essay.

Joe Root was the lone ranger for his team and batted beautifully for his 84 (128b, 12x4). He was the last batter to be dismissed. England's second innings moved at a rather frenetic pace as the batters went on the offensive in their bid to survive against the Indian spinners but failed yet again.

The game appeared to be going only one way when India took a huge 259-run first innings lead in the morning session by posting 477 all out in response to England's 218 on day one.

Ahead of the final game of their long tour, Stokes had dismissed theories of the departure lounge syndrome but with the way his batters performed, it seemed they were in a hurry to get back home.

The attack at all costs approach clearly did not work for them in India and the debacle has given them plenty to ponder before the



JAMES ANDERSON

start of the English summer.

For India, the series was a remarkable success considering they had the likes of Virat Kohli and Mohammed Shami unavailable throughout. The youngsters, led by Yashasvi Jaiswal, grabbed the opportunities in the seniors' absence to give the team management more options for the future.

The writing was on the wall after Ashwin ran through England's self destructing top-order to leave them reeling at 103/5 at lunch. England skipper Ben Stokes (2) cut a sorry figure after falling to Ashwin at the stroke of

lunch with a straighter one.

With Rohit not taking the field due to a stiff back, Bumrah led the side in the middle besides opening the bowling alongside Ashwin. Jonny Baristow (39), also playing his 100th Test, joined Root in the middle and went on the offensive from the word go before being adjudged lbw off Kuldeep.

Not confident of defending against Ashwin and Co., England continued to use the long handle after lunch and failed miserably. Ben Foakes went for a wild slog sweep off Ashwin only to miss the ball completely, giving India's premier spinner his 36th five-wicket haul in Tests.

In the morning, the visitors took less than 20 minutes to wrap up India's innings with veteran James Anderson finally getting to the 700-wicket mark. Young off-spinner Shoaib Bashir had Bumrah stumped for his second five-wicket haul (5/173) in his debut series.

BRIEF SCORES

England 218 & 195 (Joe Root 84, Jonny Bairstow 39; Ravichandran Ashwin 5/77, Jasprit Bumrah 2/38, Kuldeep Yadav 2/40) lost to India 477 (Shoaib Bashir 5/173, James Anderson 2/60) by an innings & 64 runs.

STATFACTS

178-178 India's win-loss record in Tests after the Dharamsala game. This is the first instance in India's Test history of their wins not being fewer than their losses. Currently, four other teams have a positive win-loss record in Test cricket - Australia (1.780), England (1.209), South Africa (1.105) and Pakistan (1.042)

118 Test wins for India at home. These are the third-most home Test wins for any team, moving ahead of South Africa's 117. Only Australia (259) and England (233) are ahead of India in the list

36 Five-wicket hauls in Tests for Ravichandran Ashwin - the most by an India bowler, surpassing Anil Kumble's 35. Ashwin is now ranked joint-third for the most fifters in Tests, alongside Richard Hadlee (36), with only Muttiah Muralitharan (67) and Shane Warne (37) ahead

9/128 Ashwin's bowling figures in Dharamsala, the best for any player in his 100th Test. Muralitharan's match figures of 9/141 against Bangladesh in 2006 were the previous best in a 100th Test. Ashwin also became the first player to take two hauls of four-plus in his 100th Test

700 Wickets for James Anderson in Tests. He is the first pacer to register 700 Test wickets, and only the third player overall to achieve this milestone, after Muralitharan (800) and Warne (708)

100 Test wickets for Ashwin at home against England. He is only the third bowler to bag 100-plus wickets against an opponent at home. Stuart Broad took 106 wickets against Australia at home, while Anderson has 105 against India in England

68.51 Winning percentage of India in 9 Tests of WTC 2023-25 cycle as they top the standings ahead of second-placed New Zealand (60% in 5 Tests) and third-placed Australia (59.09% in 11 Tests)

"I'm privileged to work with a lovely team. I'm learning from them all the time. Rohit has been fantastic to work with. I think he's a terrific leader, and the guys gravitate towards him phenomenally, which is fantastic to see"
RAHUL DRAVID

Harmanpreet leads MI chase to pull off a heist against GG



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 9: Captain Harmanpreet Kaur made a savage unbeaten 95 (48b, 10x4, 5x6) to fire Mumbai Indians to a seven-wicket win over shell-shocked Gujarat Giants in their WPL match here Saturday.

Harmanpreet and opener Yastika Bhatia (49, 36b, 8x4, 1x6) played fine hands as the defending champions scaled down Gujarat's 190/7 in a stunning chase. They reached 191/3 with a ball to spare.

Yastika and her opening partner Hayley Matthews (18) added 50 runs in 6.3 overs as MI made a strong start to their chase. But

Mumbai lost Nat-Sciver Brunt and Bhatia before they even reached 100 inside 13.3 overs. When the match entered the last five-over phase, MI needed 72 runs off 30 balls to win at more than 14 runs per over.

But Harmanpreet, who was dropped on 40 by Phoebe Litchfield, turned on the beast mode and added 93 runs for the fourth wicket in just 38 balls with Amelia Kerr (12 n.o.). Harmanpreet smashed off-spinner Rana for 24 runs in the 18th over which set the tone for the chase.

Earlier, dynamic fifties by skipper Beth Mooney (66, 35b, 8x4, 3x6) and Dayalan Hemalatha (74, 40b, 9x4, 2x6) propelled Gujarat to a competitive total. The duo added 121 runs for the second wicket in a little over 11 overs after the Gujarat side elected to bat first. Their power walk started after the early departure of opener Laura Wolvaardt (13), who was cleaned up by Matthews.

But the dismissal of Mooney in the 14th over, right after the Strategic Time Out, applied breaks on Gujarat's scoring. Hemalatha soon followed her partner into the dugout as Gujarat lost four wickets while adding 28 runs.

BRIEF SCORES: GG Women 190/7 (Dayalan Hemalatha 74, Beth Mooney 66; Saika Ishaque 2/31) lost to MI Women 191/3 (Harmanpreet Kaur 95 n.o., Yastika Bhatia 49; Tanuja Kanwar 1/21) by 7 wickets.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Play Tests, earn more: A new BCCI scheme

NEW DELHI: Walking the talk about giving highest priority to Test cricket, the BCCI has decided to increase the match fee to up to Rs 45 lakh from the existing Rs 15 lakh for all those who play at least seven long-form games per season, Board secretary Jay Shah announced Saturday. A Test player, who gets to appear in a possible 10 Tests in a season will be richer by a whopping Rs 4.50 crore, apart from the assured retainer fee that he gets for having an annual central contract. The incentives will be retrospective and would factor in players who were part of Test cricket during the 2022-23 season. The decision was taken after some players like Ishan Kishan, Shreyas Iyer and Deepak Chahar snubbed Ranji Trophy cricket to continue training with their IPL teams despite the board's diktat to prioritise red-ball cricket. Currently, an Indian Test cricketer, who is picked in the playing XI gets Rs 15 lakh while the reserves get Rs 7.5 lakh.

Yamal strike helps Barca beat Mallorca

BARCELONA: Teenager Lamine Yamal curled in a second-half goal to grab Barcelona a 1-0 win over Mallorca at home, lifting the defending Spanish league champions into second place. Yamal's exquisite shot from just inside the corner of the area for the 73rd-minute goal on Friday salvaged an otherwise lackluster Barcelona from a second straight draw. It was the 16-year-old Yamal's sixth goal across all competitions in his first full season with Barcelona. He's set several milestones for his young age, such as the youngest player to debut and to score in the Spanish league, to score for Spain, and to start in the Champions League. Barcelona moved two points ahead of Girona before they host Osasuna Saturday. Leaders Real Madrid are five points clear of Barcelona before hosting Celta Vigo.

"I'm full of admiration for India and the beast they are in their home conditions. Obviously, a lot was said about certain (Indian) players not being here. But this series has shown the depth of Indian cricket"

"I'm very disappointed, not only in myself but I'm disappointed for the team. We came here with very high hopes but we've been completely outplayed"

"We've got a massive summer coming up with six home Tests - Pakistan and New Zealand. I am obviously disappointed but write this team off, write me off at your own peril"

BEN STOKES

"Throughout the series I have gone to different actions, speeds and releases. India is different, each ground has a challenge. I am least bit insecure about what people feel about me. Unless I try, I will never be able to learn. I am not saying sticking to one method won't work. But thankfully experimenting and learning has helped me"

RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN

"I really enjoyed the series. I am trying to take it one game at a time and always thinking of how I can contribute to my team so that I can keep the team in a winning position"

YASHASVI JAISWAL

"When you win a Test like this, everything has to fall in place...The way bowlers took responsibility was pleasing to see. When you win a Test like this, everything has to fall in place... The way bowlers took responsibility was pleasing to see. These (young) guys are maybe short of experience, (but) they responded pretty well under pressure. The credit goes to the entire team"

"One day, when I wake up and feel, I am not good enough then I will retire straightaway. But in the last few years I am playing the best cricket of my life."

ROHIT SHARMA

THAKUR OPENS UP ON PREPARATIONS FOR PARIS OLYMPICS

With Paris Olympics scheduled in August 2024, what are your thoughts on the preparations of the Indian Team. What medal count India can expect this time?

We have wholeheartedly supported our athletes to secure qualification and prepare well for Paris 2024. While we do not have a particular number in mind, I am confident that our athletes will come home with India's best haul in an Olympic Games. Our athletes are fearless and compete on equal terms with the best in the world. We have left no stone unturned in ensuring that maximum Indian athletes qualify for the Paris Olympic Games and are well prepared. More than 350 foreign exposure trips for training and competitions were sanctioned in select Olympic disciplines in this Olympic cycle. It has encouraged the athletes to be ready to deliver their best performances without facing the pressure of expectation.

What is the qualification scenario right now?

As of now, 58 of our athletes have qualified for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. For the first time, both the men's and women's Table Tennis teams have earned places in the Olympic Games draw. Similarly, India has won a quota each in women's Skeet Shooting and in Equestrian (Dressage) for the first time.

What has changed over the years in government's approach to sports development?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always motivated athletes to compete fearlessly in keeping with the brave new India that is emerging as a world leader in many areas. One of the most important things that has changed since Rio is the ease of

business for the athletes. Their proposals for training and competition are cleared faster than ever before, sometimes even in the matter of hours. Ministry and National Sports Federations have begun the process of identifying disciplines and events in which India can develop medal-winning potential beyond those which have already delivered results on the global stage and can get better. We have encouraged sports like cycling and swimming which offer many medals to step up and contribute to the tally.

What about funding? How much money has the Government been spending on sports development?

As for investment, suffice to say that the Government has enhanced the size of the Ministry's budget three times in the past decade from ₹1,093 crores in 2013-14 to ₹3,397.32 crores in 2023-24 and the right support at the right time is being extended to athletes. Besides the government budgetary support, corporate and private investments in sports through CSR funds have also contributed to the evolution of Indian sport.

Government seems to have invested a lot in Khelo India. Has it produced the desired results?

Of course, the Khelo India Scheme has delivered results. It is not just a scheme, it has become a nationwide movement. One of the major objectives of Khelo India is talent identification and development through structured training. We currently support over 2800 athletes who are given an annual scholarship of ₹6.28 lakhs to support their training, boarding, lodging, out-of-pocket allowance for their own expenses. Every year new athletes are

added to this scheme and there is a constant monitoring of performance which ensures that regular weeding out also takes place.

Can you throw some light on the sports infrastructure development in recent years?

The backbone of any sports ecosystem is infrastructure, both in terms of facilities and human resources. There is a need to take modern sports facilities to the doorstep of the grassroots talent as it will ensure that athletes are nurtured closer home than away. Just for creation and upgradation of sports infrastructure, ₹1,879 crores have been allocated till 2024-25 by the Ministry of Finance. It is our endeavor to optimally use sports infrastructure belonging to States/UTs through suitable Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Provision of maximum funding to the State Centres of Excellence and Khelo India Centres is being done for priority sport selected by the State under the "One State, One Game" initiative.

The Prime Minister has also spoken about hosting the Youth Olympics in 2030. What is the plan regarding that? Has any city been identified?

Yes, we are eager to host the Youth Olympic Games in 2030 ahead of the Summer Olympics in 2036. However, we are at the planning stage right now and initial discussions are

going on. We will plan as per the requirements of the International Olympic Committee and the conversations with the Future Hosts Commission have been positive.

EMERGENCE OF SPORTS IN INDIA

The government has announced its intention to bid for the 2036 Olympics. Could you please tell us about the current state of engagement with the IOC with respect to bidding for Olympics?

At the historic IOC session that took place in Mumbai in October 2023, PM Modi announced that India is keen and all out efforts are being made to organise the 2036 Olympics and 2030 Youth Olympics in India.

We are working in close coordination with the Indian Olympic

Association and are in talks with the IOC Future Hosts Commission to make a strong recommendation in favour of the Indian bid. In fact, we already have had two rounds of productive discussions with the Future Hosts Commission.

Is there any real benefit of hosting such events and other international competitions in India?

The time is ripe for the country to step up on the world sports landscape. The hosting of multi-discipline sports competitions can improve India's image and in the past few years, we have successfully hosted many international sporting competitions such as the FIFA U-17 Men's and Women's World Cup, 44th Chess Olympiad, FIH Men's Hockey World Cup amongst other events. Conducting a major sporting event offers home athletes - both elite and junior - to witness sporting competition of the highest level on home soil while being able to participate in the comfort of known conditions. Also, this strengthens the overall sports ecosystem in the country and motivates host cities and citizens to move towards healthier lifestyles. Hon'ble PM Modi has envisioned that India will emerge as an international sporting hub by 2036 and the Indian sports economy would be valued at ₹1 lakh crores in the coming years with our youth being the primary beneficiaries.

As India aspires to host Youth Olympics and Olympics, the country would be looking to achieve success in terms of more medals? What kind of investment is needed? What



ANURAG THAKUR, UNION YOUTH AFFAIRS & SPORTS MINISTER