



## Dispelling rumours

Actor Mrunal Thakur addresses the desire for higher pay and dismisses rumours of double earnings

LEISURE | P2



## HK passes new law

Hong Kong's Legislative Council unanimously passes a new national security law that expands the government's power to crush dissent

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## First time in 17 yrs

Bank of Japan hikes interest rate for the first time in 17 years, ending longstanding policy

BUSINESS | P11



## Sharath's massive gain

Veteran Indian table tennis player Sharath Kamal jumps 54 places to move up to 34th spot in the ITTF World Rankings

SPORTS | P12



COLOURS OF LIFE: Workers prepare coloured powder 'Gulal' at a factory ahead of Holi, in Jaipur, Tuesday

# 'FOR A GREATER CAUSE'

Keeping hopes alive for a possible understanding between the ruling party and the principal Opposition party in the state for the upcoming polls, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's close confidant Kartik Pandian said the CM and Prime Minister Narendra Modi want to come together not for electoral gains, but for a 'greater cause'. Speaking at the News 18 Rising Bharat Summit 2024 in New Delhi Tuesday, the Chairman 5T and Nabin Odisha however, added that the equation between the two 'great statesmen' should not be viewed under political lens.



Pandian said the PM and the chief minister see some things that are beyond politics.

"BJD does not need BJP to form government in the state, and BJP may not need BJD to form government at the Centre. That's why I made it very clear that it has to do with two individuals who share a great friendship and they see some things are beyond politics. A rare mark of statesmanship," he said. Asked about the status of the alliance, he said, "If anything happens, we will all get to know... I told the logic behind this what-ever talk (over the alliance) has happened."

Earlier, state BJP leaders rejected the speculations on several occasions, asserting that they would fight the elections on their own and oust the BJD government.

Reacting to Pandian's statement, the Congress said the two parties have been in an 'undeclared alliance' over the last 10 years.

Pandian said the PM and the chief minister see some things that are beyond politics.

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PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 19: The BJP and BJD do not need each other to win elections, but some things are beyond politics and the two leaders - PM Narendra Modi and CM Naveen Patnaik -- want to come together for 'a greater cause', said Kartik Pandian, the close aide of the chief minister.

Speaking at the News 18 Rising Bharat Summit 2024 in New Delhi Tuesday, the Chairman 5T and Nabin Odisha said Naveen and Modi share a great friendship.

"Somebody wants to join an alliance because they want to have an impact on the electoral map. Here is a chief minister who is so popular in the state and he gets 3/4th majority every time," he stated.

## 'People to decide successor'

Responding to a question if he would be the political successor of Naveen, Pandian said, "I don't think, I should answer this. People of Odisha should answer it.... Politics can come later on, whenever, whatever people think, it's fine."

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## Blow to JMM as Sita Soren joins BJP

Ranchi: In a blow to the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), Sita Soren, three-term MLA and sister-in-law of former chief minister Hemant Soren, quit the party and joined the BJP in New Delhi, Tuesday. Sita Soren tendered her resignation from the JMM, claiming that she was being neglected and isolated. Earlier, a rift in the Soren family had surfaced after she had openly opposed any move to make Kalpana Soren, wife of Hemant Soren, who is behind bars in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam, as chief minister.

## 2 Forest staffers shot at by poachers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar/Balasure, March 19: Two members of Forest Department's anti-poaching squad were injured when poachers fired at them in Balasure district in the early hours of Tuesday.

March 19 at around 2am, staff of the Kuldiha forest range under the Balasure division came across two poachers inside the Kuldiha

sanctuary. They have been arrested, PCCF (Wildlife) Susanta Nanda said.

According to Nanda, the Forest department officials were chasing the poachers since 8 pm Monday and they faced off with the poachers at about 2 am. Suddenly, the poachers opened fire on the team.

Despite firing, the forest team was able to catch the two armed poachers.

# CAA: SC asks Centre to respond in 3 weeks

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 19: The Supreme Court Tuesday asked the Centre to respond within three weeks to applications seeking a stay on implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024 till the apex court disposes of the pleas challenging the constitutional validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019. The court, however, refused to stay the operation of the Rules that would give effect to the CAA, as sought by a battery of senior advocates representing the petitioners.

The Centre, on its part, told the bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud that the CAA does not take away the citizenship of any person.

The bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, issued notice to the Centre on the 20 applications seeking a stay on the implementation of the Rules returnable within three weeks.

"We are not expressing any prima facie view... We have to hear the petitioners, we have to hear the other side," the bench observed and posted the matter for hearing, April 9. The Centre had March 11 paved the way for the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, with the notification of the relevant rules,

four years after the contentious law was passed by Parliament to fast-track Indian citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who came to India before December 31, 2014.

During the hearing Tuesday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said there are over 230 petitions in the matter, and after the rules came into force, 20 application seeking stay have been filed. Senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for the petitioners, said the Centre should make a statement that pending the hearing, no one will be given citizenship.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, also appearing for the petitioners, said, "The problem is, if any process of citizenship starts and somebody gets citizenship, then it would be impossible to reverse it for several reasons and these petitions will become infructuous," Sibal said, adding, "Therefore, that process should not start".

The contentious CAA had sparked protests in various parts of the country in late 2019 and early 2020 over alleged discriminatory provisions.

While refusing to stay the operation of the law, the apex court had on December 18, 2019 issued notices to the Centre on the pleas challenging the validity of the CAA.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I tried to explain multiple times that I am from the tent house, but they made me join their alliance

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	72012.05	↓ 736.37
NIFTY	21817.45	↓ 238.25
DOLLAR	83.06	↑ ₹0.12
EURO	90.12	↓ ₹0.31
GOLD	₹65,457	↓ ₹151
SILVER	₹ 75,229.	↓ ₹267

# Delhi most polluted capital city again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 19: Bihar's Begusarai emerged as the world's most polluted metropolitan area while Delhi was identified as the capital city with the poorest air quality, according to a new report.

With an average annual PM2.5 concentration of 54.4 micrograms per cubic metre, India had the third worst air quality out of 134 countries in 2023 after Bangladesh (79.9 micrograms per cubic metre) and Pakistan (73.7 micrograms per cubic metre), according to the World Air Quality Report 2023 by Swiss organisation IQAir.

In 2022, India was ranked as the eighth most polluted country with an average PM2.5 concentration of 53.3 micrograms per cubic metre.

Begusarai stood out as the most polluted metropolitan area globally with an average PM2.5 concentration of 118.9 micrograms per cubic metre. The city did not even figure in the 2022 rankings.



Delhi's PM2.5 levels worsened from 89.1 micrograms per cubic metre in 2022 to 92.7 micrograms per cubic metre in 2023.

The national capital was ranked the most polluted capital city in the world four times on the trot, starting 2018.

It is estimated that 1.36 billion people in India experience PM2.5 concentrations exceeding the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended annual guideline level of 5 micrograms per cubic metre, the report said.

Also, 1.33 billion people, 96 per cent of the Indian population, experience

PM2.5 levels more than seven times the WHO annual PM2.5 guideline. This trend is reflected in city-level data, with more than 66 per cent of the country's cities reporting annual averages greater than 35 micrograms per cubic metre.

IQAir said the data utilised to create this report was aggregated from the global distribution of more than 30,000 regulatory air quality monitoring stations and low-cost air quality sensors operated by research institutions, governmental bodies, universities and educational facilities, non-profit non-governmental organisations, private companies and citizen scientists.

The 2022 World Air Quality Report included data from 7,323 locations in 131 countries, regions and territories. In 2023, those numbers have grown to include 7,812 locations in 134 countries, regions and territories.

Causing an estimated one in every nine deaths worldwide, air pollution is the greatest environmental threat to human health.

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## DUA REMINISCENCES HER EUREKA MOMENT

Singer-songwriter Dua Lipa, who recently released her album *Radical Optimism*, has spoken up on her eureka moment. In an interview she shared that she felt very strong in the moment when she was writing the song *Illusion*. She shared that she felt that lyrically she got her eureka moment.

## DRAKE GIFTS \$25K TO PREGNANT FAN

Rapper Drake's recent concert gesture is touching hearts as he fulfilled yet another fan's wish during his 'It's All a Blur' Tour in San Antonio, Texas. In a video posted on X (formerly Twitter), he engaged with a pregnant fan holding a sign referencing his album track and expressed concern for her safety in the crowd and offered her \$25,000.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
With your substantial interpersonal abilities, you will accomplish a great deal today, says Ganesha. Your power of expression will impress many people. Financial rewards are on the cards, but be cautious about minor accidents and illnesses.

**TAURUS**  
You have a very pleasant day ahead. Though you are, by nature, restless and excitable you will be very steady and focused in whatever you do today. So says Ganesha. Later you will desire to enjoy the company of your friends and will call them over to chat and gossip with them.

**GEMINI**  
You will spend your day fulfilling the demands made upon you by your family members and colleagues. You will need to devote time to matters at home. Pay attention to the needs of your relatives for they will be helpful to you in the near future, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
A wondrous beginning of the day! A unique vibrations in romantic life. Ties with life partner will be cordial. Blissful moments of married life are indicated. Peace and happiness prevail in the family. The whole day will be blooming and jovial, says Ganesha.

**LEO**  
You may have arguments with your family members today. You need to adopt an accommodating attitude today, since it is not a very promising day for you. Otherwise nothing may go in your favour. You will have to work harder than usual in the office, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
Ganesha suggests that you take a much-needed break from the daily rigmarole. Introduce an element of the exotic in order to replace all the mundane work that fills up your day. You may attend private and social get-togethers, and Ganesha advises you to mingle with other people to keep your spirits high.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says you shall pay more attention to your family and family issues. You will want to renovate and change the interior of your house or go in for purchasing new gadgets and décor for the home. You will spend time today with your family members. Ganesha says his best wishes are with you always.

**SCORPIO**  
You nearly emerge as a superhero today, as you have the knack of balancing home and work just perfectly. Intellectual discussions and brainstorming with peers would provide food for thought today. You may look forward to merry-making and soiree with family and friends in the evening.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Whatever you take up today, you are on a winning spree, foresees Ganesha. A leader, you will guide and instruct your subordinates when they seek your advise. In a way, you even encourage and motivate them. All in all, you are a happy soul at the end of the day!

**CAPRICORN**  
The hassle and bustle around you will not disturb you today. You've been holding your emotions in your heart and they have started suffocating you. Such an uncomfortable situation may hamper your logical reasoning power and make you feel trapped. But, this too shall pass. You will easily come out of the negative zone and move ahead on the path, foretells Ganesha.

**AQUARIUS**  
Flash warning signals to your arch rivals as you will be in a mood to prove you metal and give them a run for their money. Doubts and inhibitions - all will vanish in the air and you will be determined to make your mark, feels Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
There is a thick chance that your day will be profitable on the monetary front. Money may pour in from business or even through overseas investments. Your knack for good public relations and networking will work to your benefit and good deals will come from far and unexpected sources as well.

## Mrunal dispels rumours on her remuneration

**Mumbai:** Actress Mrunal Thakur, riding high on the success of her latest projects like *Hi Nanna*, *Made in Heaven season 2*, *Sita Ramam*, and many more, expressed a desire to be paid more, dispelling rumours of being paid double for films.

In a recent interview with the media, she was asked to name one ru-

mour about her that she wished was true, and she was quick to mention the buzz about her getting paid twice for films as she does two roles.

She said, "I so want that rumour to come true... I'm still getting paid less, and sometimes people think I'm getting paid double. Hearing all the money talk, my dad asked me, 'Where is all the money going?' and I had no answer!" She further added, "I still have loans to pay, and I definitely want to get paid more. I want to blossom, so let's just manifest."

She began her journey with TV and has slowly worked her way to the top in the world of movies with projects like *Super 30* with Hrithik Roshan, *Batla House* with John Abraham, *Jersey* with Shahid Kapoor and *Toofan* with Farhan Akhtar. On the work front, Mrunal will be seen next in *Family Star*.

## Money matters a lot to look good: Shehnaaz

**Mumbai:** Actress Shehnaaz Gill, who is known for her unapologetic personality and distinctive



style, has garnered attention for her fashion sense. The actress, who stunned everyone in her stunning blue jumpsuit at a fashion show, also got candid with the media, where the *Thank You For Coming* actress spilled the beans on how money can buy style upgrades.

She admitted that being a little wealthy helps a person do these things comfortably. According to her, everyone desires to look good and style themselves, but money matters a lot.

Elaborating further, the actress added that with money, one can do anything; without money, people can't do anything. She feels that she can carry everything comfortably, no matter what happens.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Shehnaaz is gearing up for her next project, *Sab First Class* along with Varun Sharma.



## Mahima yearns for diverse roles

While the actress acknowledges similarities between herself and Mahika, such as their determination and vulnerability, she clarifies that her journey in

**Mumbai:** Actress Mahima

Makwana, known for her role as Mahika Nandy in the Disney+ Hotstar and Dharmaic Entertainment's

*Showtime* series, delved into the intricacies of her character and her transition from television to web

platforms.

Reflecting on her experience with the series, she also emphasises the lesson of injustice portrayed in the series, particularly the discussion on nepotism, which heightened her awareness of the challenges faced by outsiders in the industry. Despite the competitive nature of the profession, she stays motivated by focusing on her individuality, moral values, and continuous skill development. Setting objectives and maintaining authenticity in her craft serve as pillars of strength in her journey as an actress.

## VICKY REFLECTS ON HIS DUNKI CAMEO

**Mumbai:** Actor Vicky Kaushal caught everyone's attention with his cameo performance in *Dunki*. In an interview with a magazine, he shared how he went after the role to work with the director again after *Sanju* because he truly admires him.

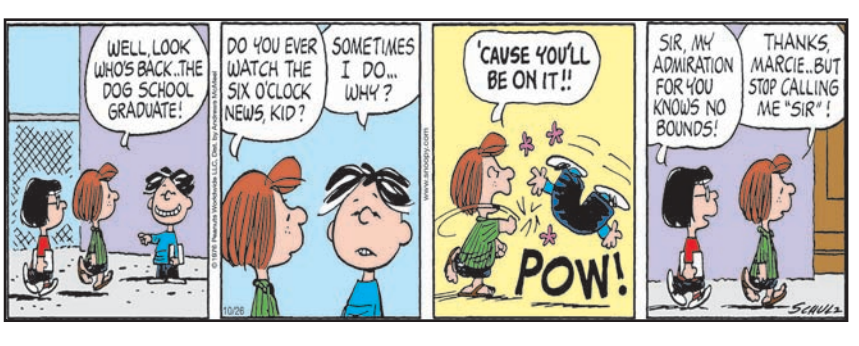
In the interview, the *Raazi* actor said how he called Hirani for the part after hearing about it. He said, "I told Raju sir (director Rajkumar Hirani) that even if he had wanted me to simply pass by unnoticed, I would happily do that as well. My father (action director) Sham Kaushal was working on *Dunki*, and because Sukhi (Vicky's character) had that fire sequence, my father asked Hirani who was playing the part. He wanted to know, 'Whom do I light on fire?' So Hirani said he wanted somebody like Vicky but did not offer it to me because he thought it was a small role. When my dad came home, I asked him how the meeting went. He recounted the [interaction with Hirani], and I said, 'Really?' The very next day, I called Raju sir and told him if it had to be somebody

like me, then why not me? I landed up in his office that very day and said yes without even listening to the script. The first time I saw the full film was during the screening. I only knew my part."

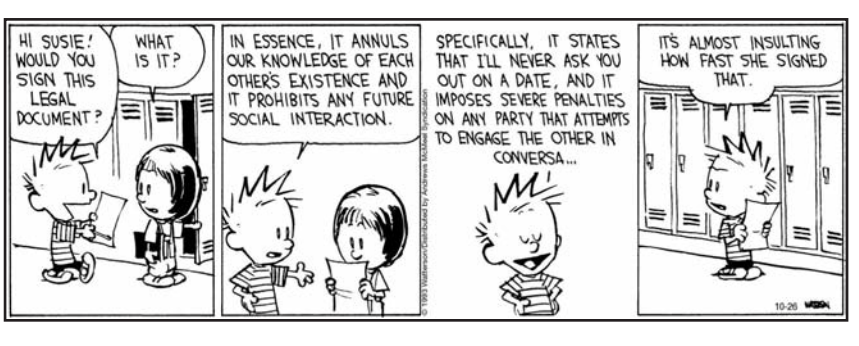
He further added that he liked the portrayal of a Punjabi in the film. "I was happy to see Punjab like that after a long time. I told Raju sir that, at a time when everything is gritty and real, where we see the problems and struggles of states, he actually gave a vibrant, colourful charm to Punjab. That moment when Taapsee's character removes her shoes and wants to feel the earth in her hometown upon returning from abroad after decades, that was special to me," he concluded.



### PEANUTS



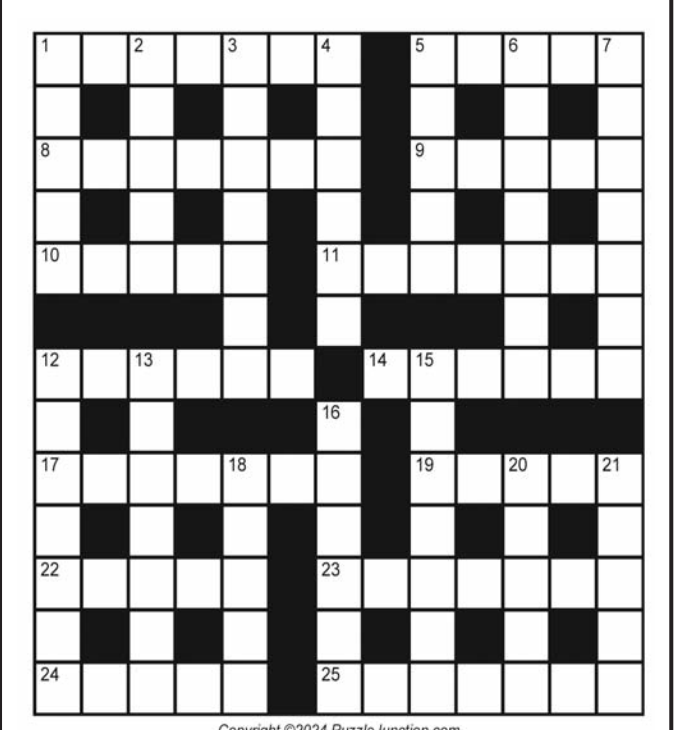
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



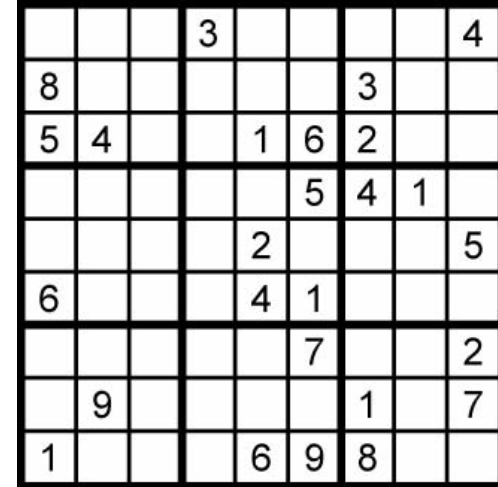
### FUN post CROSSWORD



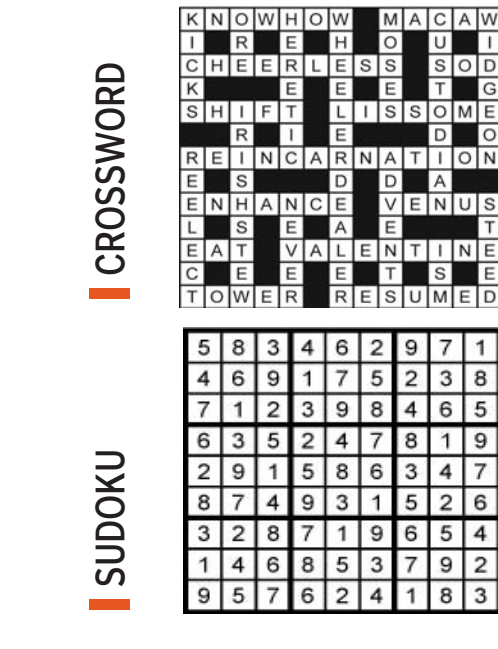
- Across**
- 1 Ch'in or Han, e.g.
  - 5 Tag
  - 8 Saw-toothed
  - 9 Type of oven
  - 10 Bakery supply
  - 11 Arid lands
  - 12 Kick out
  - 14 Up to the minute
  - 17 Bank employee
  - 19 Stomach woe
  - 22 Intense
  - 23 Penned
  - 24 Wield, as influence
  - 25 Fill to excess
  - Down**
  - 1 Somewhat dark
  - 2 Waterwheel
  - 3 Appetizer
  - 4 Concedes
  - 5 Trots
  - 6 Eccentric
  - 7 Go-between
  - 12 Impose
  - 13 Grazing land
  - 15 Eye doctor
  - 16 Speech patterns
  - 18 Sluggish
  - 20 Baked, in Bologna
  - 21 Gargle

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

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## POLL PREP

A meeting, comprising Puri Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain and SP Pinak Mishra, in progress at district Circuit House, Tuesday, for smooth conduct of the upcoming polls



# CONG TO WOO VOTERS WITH 25 GUARANTEES

CWC discusses LS poll manifesto; party to take its promises to people with 'ghar ghar guarantee' mantra



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 19:** The Congress' manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls would focus on 'Panch Nyay, Pachees Guarantee', and the party Tuesday resolved to take its promises to the people with a 'ghar ghar guarantee' mantra.

The party's highest decision-making body - Congress Working Committee (CWC), which met during the day, authorised Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge to give the final approval to the manifesto and decide a date for its release.

Addressing a press conference after the CWC meeting, party leaders KC Venugopal and Jairam Ramesh said the CWC has prepared a roadmap for taking the party's guarantees to the grassroots. Ramesh said the Congress will release not just a 'Ghoshna Patra (manifesto)' but a 'Nyay Patra' so that people see a bright future.

The CWC lauded the guarantees released during Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and discussed a roadmap to take these to every household in the country.

In a post on X in Hindi, Gandhi said, "Today in the CWC meeting, there was an in-depth discussion on the party's manifesto, including its 'five Nyays and 25 Guarantees.' "Through the Bharat Jodo Yatra and the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, we continuously went among the people to every village, street and heard the 'voice of the coun-

tee, the party has promised a ₹5,000-crore start-up fund for the youth. As part of 'Nari Nyay', it has promised the 'Mahalakshmi' guarantee of ₹1 lakh a year for one woman in every poor family. The party has also promised 50 per cent reservation for women in new Central government jobs and double salary contribution of the Centre for all ASHA, Anganwadi, and mid-day meal workers.

It has also promised 'Adhikar Maitri' in every village to ensure women get their legal rights. The party has also promised doubling the number of hostels for working women.

Under 'Kisaan Nyay', the Congress has promised a legal guarantee to MSP for crops at the Swaminathan formula, and a standing loan waiver commission for farmers, if it comes to power. It has also guaranteed insurance payment within 30 days of crop loss and a stable import-export policy to benefit farmers. The party has also promised no GST on inputs for farming.

As part of its 'Shramik Nyay' guarantees, the Congress has promised a right to health law that provides universal healthcare, including free essential diagnostics, medicines, treatment, surgery and rehabilitative and palliative care. It has also promised a national minimum wage of ₹400 a day, including all MGNREGS workers. The Congress has also promised an employment guarantee act for urban areas, life insurance and accident insurance for unorganised workers and stopping contractualisation of employment in core government functions. Under its 'Hissedari Nyay', the party has promised social, economic and caste census. It has also promised removing the 50 per cent cap on SC, ST and OBC reservation through a constitutional amendment and a special budget for SC and ST equal to the share of their population.

If it comes to power, the Congress has also vowed to settle Forest Rights Act claims in one year and promised that all habitations where STs are the most populous group will be notified scheduled areas.

Under 'Yuva Roshni' guaran-

tee, we got to know and understand closely the injustice being done to the people and the struggles of their lives," he said. "That is why our manifesto and guarantees are not merely a document, but a roadmap derived from dialogue with crores of citizens which is going to change the lives of every section of society through employment revolution and empowered participation," Gandhi said.

Ramesh said the aim is to take the guarantees under the 'Panch Nyay' - 'Nari Nyay', 'Shramik Nyay', 'Kisaan Nyay', 'Yuva Nyay' and 'Hissedari Nyay' - to every household with the aim 'ghar ghar guarantee'.

In his post, Gandhi said, "We will go among the farmers, youth, workers, women and the underprivileged with the pledge of the 'five Nyays' and will contest the elections directly on the real issues related to the lives of the people. The guarantees of the Congress are a resolve to bring prosperity in the lives of people."

The manifesto of the Congress would focus on the five 'Nyays' under which it has made 25 guarantees.

Under 'Yuva Nyay', the party has promised 'Bharti Bharosa' - ₹30 lakh new central government jobs, according to a jobs calendar. Under the 'Pehli Naukri Pakki', the Congress has promised a one-year paid apprenticeship for all educated youths at ₹1 lakh a year or ₹8,500 a month.

Under 'Yuva Roshni' guaran-

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Under 'Yuva Roshni' guaran-



RAIN RELIEF: Commuters caught in rain in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

## Thunderstorm alert for DMs

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 19:** In the wake of the prediction by India Meteorological Department (IMD) about thunderstorm, lightning, gusty surface wind, hail and heavy rainfall in several districts, Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Satayabrata Sahu Tuesday directed District Collectors concerned to keep administrative machinery ready for any eventuality.

He also instructed people to keep watch on adverse weather events and take safe shelter during the thunderstorm activities. He also directed the Collectors to submit a report to the government immediately on the damage, if occurred, due to thunderstorm, whirlwind, hailstorm and lightning.

The IMD has issued heavy rainfall warnings in five districts for 24 hours from Wednesday morning. In a bulletin, IMD's Bhubaneswar Centre Tuesday predicted heavy rainfall in Khurda, Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack and Nayagarh districts between 8:30am Wednesday and 8:30am Thursday



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Daringbadi recorded the highest rainfall of 26 mm, followed by 9.2 mm in Chandbali, 8 mm in each of Jajpur and Paralakhemundi, 7.1 mm in Bhubaneswar, 6.2 mm in Cuttack and 6 mm in Khurda, Tuesday

be prepared) for these districts. Predicting thunderstorms with lightning and gusty wind speeds of 30-40 kmph, the weather office has also issued an Orange Warning for Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Gajapati, Ganjam, Khordha, Nayagarh

and Puri districts. Similarly, it has issued Yellow Warning (to be updated) regarding thunderstorms and lightning in Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts.

Tuesday, from 8:30am to 5:30pm, Daringbadi recorded the highest rainfall of 26 mm, followed by 9.2 mm in Chandbali, 8 mm in each of Jajpur and Paralakhemundi, 7.1 mm in Bhubaneswar, 6.2 mm in Cuttack and 6 mm in Khurda.

The Met Office advised people to keep watch on the weather and take shelter during the thunderstorms to protect themselves from lightning and follow traffic advisories in urban areas.

This apart, farmers have been advised to use hail nets to protect vegetables and crops from hailstorms while instructions were issued to regulate harvesting of Rabi crops judiciously.

As many as 23 districts in Odisha are likely to experience thunderstorms with lightning during the next 24 hours, according to the IMD's weather bulletin.

## Khariar MLA quits Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 19:** Congress MLA from Khariar in Nuapada district Adhiraj Panigrahi resigned from the party Tuesday.

Panigrahi, a first-time legislator, thanked the Congress leadership for providing him the opportunity to serve the people.

"I hereby tender my resignation from all positions, including primary membership of the Indian National Congress, with immediate effect," he said in a letter to state Congress president Sarat Pattanayak.

He, however, did not specify the reason for his resignation.

Panigrahi is likely to join BJD ahead of the simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the state assembly, sources said.

The elections will be held in four phases, starting May 13.



## POSTAL BALLOTS FOR SCRIBES, PEOPLE IN ESSENTIAL SERVICES

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 19:** Mediapersons covering "polling day activities" carrying authorisation letters of the Election Commission and those part of essential services such as metros, Railways and healthcare can vote using postal ballots in the Lok Sabha and four state Assembly polls.

The Election Commission (EC) has shared its notification with all state chief electoral officers regarding the categories of "absentee voters on essential service", identified for voting through postal ballots.

While journalists on polling day coverage and those involved in essential services have been using postal ballots during Assembly elections, the facility has been extended for Lok Sabha polls.

"Mediapersons to whom authorisation letters have been issued with the approval of the commission to cover polling day activities" are among the various categories identified for the use of postal ballots.

An EC spokesperson said mediapersons in Delhi who are authorised by the commission for coverage on poll day can avail themselves of the option of casting their votes through postal ballots.

They can collect Form 12D from the office of the respective district election officer of their parliamentary constituency where they are registered as a voter.

They can also download the form from the website of the respective chief electoral officer.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Balipatna murder case cracked

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, March 19:** The twin city Commissionerate Police blew the lid off the sensational murder of a man at Mahala Sahi under Balipatna police limits here March 17, with the arrest of 10 persons, Tuesday.

Addressing media, City deputy commissioner of police (DCP) Prateek Singh said the prime accused, Dilip Bhoi, is still on the run.

"Balaram Palei, 45, Sunil Palei, 25, Bideshi Palei, 30, Bikash Palei, 18, Nabakishore Palei, 21, Kedarnath Palei, 61, Kalandi Palei, 35, Sanjukta Dei, 30, Ramamani Palei, 50, and Kalandi Bhoi, 48, all residents of Mahala Sahi under Balipatna police lim-



its here, have been arrested for killing Akshay Majhi of the village March 17," Singh said.

He added that the accused have been booked under Sections 341, 323, 324, 302, 120(B) and 34 of the IPC by Balipatna police. "The 10 were produced before a local court here that sent them to judicial custody," the City

DCP pointed out. About the turn of events, Singh said the duo was at loggerheads as Akshay doubted his wife - Shrabani - of having an affair with Dilip.

"Dilip had sent an objectionable message to Shrabani's mobile a few days ago. And that led to a heated exchange of words between Akshay and Dilip March 4. The issue was later solved amicably," the DCP said.

However, Dilip and the 10 accused attacked Akshay with sharp weapons March 17, leaving him critically injured.

Neighbours rushed a profusely bleeding Akshay to a nearby healthcare facility and later to Capital Hospital, where he was declared 'dead on arrival', Singh said.

## Intermittent fasting linked to risk of death from heart disease: Study

The safety of intermittent fasting, a popular strategy to lose weight by limiting food intake to certain times, was called into question by a surprise finding from research presented at a medical meeting.

Limiting mealtimes to a period of just eight hours a day was linked to a 91 per cent increase in risk of death from heart disease in the study, which was released Monday in Chicago.

The American Heart Association published only an abstract, leaving scientists speculating about the details of the study protocol. The study was reviewed by other experts prior to its release, according to the AHA.

Lifestyle interventions aimed at weight loss have come under scrutiny as a new generation of

■ The researchers, led by Victor Zhong of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, analysed data from about 20,000 adults included in the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey

■ The study looked at answers to questionnaires along with death data from 2003 through 2019

■ Some doctors questioned the study's findings, saying they could have been skewed by differences - such as underlying heart health - between the fasting patients and the comparison group, whose members consumed food over a daily period of 12 to 16 hours



drugs help people shed pounds. Some doctors questioned the study's findings, saying they could have been skewed by differences - such as underlying heart health - between the fast-

ing patients and the comparison group, whose members consumed food over a daily period of 12 to 16 hours.

"Time-restricted eating is popular as a means of reducing

calorie intake," Keith Frayn, emeritus professor of human metabolism at the University of Oxford, said in a statement to the UK Science Media Center. "This work is very important

in showing that we need long-term studies on the effects of this practice. But this abstract leaves many questions unanswered."

The researchers, led by Victor Zhong of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, analysed data from about 20,000 adults included in the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

The study looked at answers to questionnaires along with death data from 2003 through 2019. Because it relied in part on forms that required patients to recall what they ate over two days, scientists said there was room for potential inaccuracies. About half of the patients were men and the mean

age was 48.

It wasn't clear how long the patients continued the intermittent fasting, though the researchers assumed they kept it up, according to Zhong.

The fasting patients were more likely to be younger men with a higher BMI and food insecurity, he said by email. They also had a lower prevalence of hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular disease based on self-reports.

"We controlled for all these variables in the analysis, but the positive association between 8-h time-restricted eating and cardiovascular mortality remained," Zhong said.

The abstract was presented at the AHA's Lifestyle Scientific Sessions meeting in Chicago. BLOOMBERG

# Srimandir Nata Mandap repair almost over: ASI

Around 90% work of conservation is over and the rest of the works, particularly plastering, will be carried out during Ratha Jatra

**Puri, March 19:** The repair work of the beam on the Nata Mandap of Shree Jagannath temple in Puri has been completed, ASI informed Tuesday. There was a crack in the beam at the top of the Garuda Stamba. Four steel beams have been installed in the beam located on the south side of the Nata Mandap. The work was undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and work has been completed on war footing. The deadline was issued to complete the work by March 20. The beam work has been completed. Now, there is no problem for the devotees, said ASI Superintendent DB Gadaik. "Around 90 per cent of work of conservation at Nata Mandap is over. The rest of the works particularly plastering will be carried out during Ratha Jatra. There would be no threat to the structure and movement of devotees," Gadnayak said. The Orissa High Court had



ordered the ASI to complete the repair of Nata Mandap by March end. The ASI started the repair works of Nata Mandap in February. The Chhatisa Nijoga had changed the schedule of some of the rituals to ensure hassle-free darshan of devotees during the work. Earlier, complying with the Orissa High Court's direction to complete the repair work of Nata Mandap of Puri Srimandir by April, the ASI, February 23, started the repair works of beam cracks as the temple adminis-

tration made a few changes to the 'Nitis' policy of Lord Jagannath and siblings deities for hassle-free darshan for devotees. From 3:45am Friday morning, the repair work stated from the Dwara Phita niti of Srimandir. Then at 4:25am Inner Shodha, 4:30am Mangala Alati, 4:35am Mailam, 5:20am Abakash Puja, 6:50 am Surja Puja, 7:25 am Gopala Ballabh Puja, 8:15am Sakhala Dhoopa Puja, 10:55am Beshs Sesa, 11:25am Bhogmandap Puja and Madhyana Dhoopa at 12:10p.m. According to the decision of the Chhatisa Nijoga meeting, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) carried out the restoration work of the Nata MNndap from 1pm to 7pm. To ensure that the devotees and visitors experience a hassle-free darshan while the repair works are underway in the Shree Jagannath temple, it was decided to change the timings of some nitis and start the repair work of Nata Mandap beam by ASI.



FESTIVE MOOD: Marwari community people taking out a procession to celebrate Shyam Mahotsav in Cuttack, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

## Strict penalties for jumping red light

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, March 19:** With the polls approaching, the DCP Traffic issued strong action against red signal violators, which will lead to seizure of vehicles as well suspension of driving license for next three months. Speaking of the enforcement drive, DCP Traffic PK Rout said Monday that stringent action will be taken against drunken driving, wrong-side driving, driving with hand-held devices and red light violators. "Vehicle jumping red light in the city will be seized and driving license of the violator will be suspended for three months as per the legal provisions. The vi-



olator will also be forwarded to court," Rout said. Rout added that in cases of errant drivers jumping red signals at traffic junctions, the police could slap fines from ₹7,000 to 12,000 on offenders. However,

in case of non-payment of fine amount, they will be sent to jail for a three-month period. Furthermore, he said that the action will come under the purview of Section 166 of Motor Vehicles Act, 1988. This is a pre-emptive move to ensure the safety of riders against possible mishaps, he added. A special drive was conducted at AG square, Laxmisagar, Jaydev Vihar square and Khandagiri square in the first phase Monday evening. In the past two days, more than 40 four-wheelers and several two-wheelers were caught jumping signals with the police initiating action against 100-odd drivers.

## 40 WSC students leave for Singapore

**Bhubaneswar:** A group of 40 students from the 2023-24 batch, enrolled in advanced courses at the World Skill Centre (WSC), departed for Singapore here Tuesday as part of the annual 'student exchange programme' organised by the institute. During this programme, Alka Misra, chairperson of Odisha Skill Development Authority (OSDA) and CEO of World Skill Center (WSC), congratulated the youngsters. She expressed that this experience would provide a fresh perspective to their education and training, instilling in them much needed confidence. The students boarded a direct flight from Bhubaneswar to Singapore. "This global experience will pave the way for my career advancement. The diverse modules incorporated into the Electrical Technology curricula have adequately equipped me to excel according to the industry needs," said Itishree Rout from Bhadrak district.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Boudh, I, Dhananjaya Mahakul, S/o. Goutam Mahakul, R/o. Village-Kirasira, P.O.-Khamaripada, Dist.-Boudh, Odisha declare that I have changed my surname from Dhananjaya Naik to Dhananjaya Mahakul for all purposes. I swear this affidavit vide No. 129/25.07.2023 before the competent authority for necessary rectification of my name as Dhananjaya Mahakul and my daughter's name in her Aadhaar Card, Birth Certificate as Yunamsmita Mahakul.

I, Madhusmita Satapathy, W/o- Himanshu Shekhar Satapathy resident of Flat No.-2/5, Krishna Plaza near Iskon Temple, IRC Village, Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751015 declare by this affidavit No.-257, dtd. 19.03.2024, that now onwards I shall be known as Madhusmita Satapathy for all future purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit before Notary Public, BBSR I Tilottama Behera, W/o- Sisir Kumar Behera of Tamando, BBSR, Khordha have purchased a land in Mouza Subudhipur, Khata No.-10, Plot No.-46/127, A.O.150 Dcml., Kisan- Puratan Patita from Pramila Chhualsingh. Pramila Chhualsingh had purchased that land from Dillip Kumar Nanda vide Sale deed No.-1317, dt. 12.03.1993. Pramila Chhualsingh has handed over the linked Sale deed to me. The said Sale deed No.-1317 has been misplaced and it could not be traced out. Sd./- Tilottama Behera

## KIMS doc saves life on Air India flight

**Bhubaneswar:** In a remarkable display of quick thinking and medical expertise, Ashok Kumar Badamali, a senior consultant in Cardiac Anesthesiology at Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) Bhubaneswar, saved the life of a fellow passenger onboard Air India Express flight 15 764 en route from New Delhi to Pune. The incident, which occurred in the early hours of Sunday, unfolded when the cabin crew made an announcement requesting urgent assistance from onboard paramedics or nursing personnel due to a medical emergency. "A middle-aged woman was found unresponsive in her seat, needing immediate attention. Badamali, who was traveling to Pune for research activities, promptly responded to the call for help. The patient was moved to the floor of the aircraft to facilitate resuscitation efforts. Upon examination, Badamali found the patient to be unresponsive, and exhibiting agonal breathing, with an extremely fast carotid pulse. Using his expertise in cardiac emergencies, he performed a carotid massage that proved to be life-saving for the woman," explained a KIMS official.

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	29.4°C	25.5°C
Min Temp	22.1°C	18.5°C
Humidity	78%	96%
Rainfall	7.1	9.0

FORECAST  
LIGHT TO MODERATE RAIN



JOB SECURITY CONCERN: Members of Odisha Health Contractual Employees Federation warned the government of indefinite non-cooperation while urging the Chief Minister, Health and Family Welfare Minister, state Chief Secretary and ST Chairman to fulfill their demand for job regularisation in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

## WORLD ORAL HEALTH DAY

# 3.5bn people globally affected by oral health issues

World Oral Health Day is observed every year March 20 to spread awareness on oral health and hygiene. Poor dental hygiene can lead to many oral diseases such as dental cavities and gum disease, and also medical conditions such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. The dental disease involves a wide range of conditions with different symptoms ranging from mild to severe and reporting services correctly using the right codes can be challenging for dental professionals. Outsourced dental billing services are a practical solution to ensure timely claims filing and proper reimbursement. Over the years, the focus of this observance widened with clear targeting on individuals to take personal action, schools and youth groups to deliver learning activities about oral health, oral health professionals and the wider healthcare community to educate the populations they serve, and governments

and policymakers to champion better oral health for all. It is estimated that nearly 3.5 billion people worldwide are affected by some kind of oral disease. Dental cavities and gum (periodontal) diseases are very common. Reports suggest that 2.3 billion people suffer from tooth decay (dental caries) which is the most common health condition globally. Oral disease is a major health concern for many countries and negatively impacts people throughout their lives. It leads to pain and discomfort, social isolation, and a loss of self-confidence. That's why it's very important to empower people with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to maintain good oral health. The campaign focuses on spreading the word to encourage as many people as possible to keep their mouths and teeth healthy. It also illustrates the importance of oral health in maintaining general health and well-being.



Dental disease occurs when the oral cavity collects all sorts of bacteria, viruses and fungi and encompasses a wide range of diseases like dental caries, periodontal (gum) disease, tooth loss, oral cancer, and gingivitis. Dental conditions are caused by poor brushing habits, smoking, diabetes, use of medications that reduce the amount of saliva

in the mouth, hormonal changes and family history or genetics. A diet high in sugar can also create oral conditions in which acid-producing bacteria can flourish. The good news is that most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be successfully treated in the early stages. To reduce the risk of oral disease, we can take action to maintain healthy teeth and gums by following proper oral hygiene habits (like flossing, brushing and limiting sugar intake). Dental and oral conditions are detected through a detailed dental examination. The dentist will closely examine the teeth, mouth, throat, tongue, cheeks, jaws and neck areas of the patient. Dental specialists need to document treatment administered using the right medical codes. In 2021, a three-year campaign theme (2021-2023) was launched with the theme "Be Proud of Your Mouth". In 2024, a three-year campaign

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Brush your teeth at least two minutes, twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste
- Clean between your teeth daily (Floss)
- Adult toothpaste and kids tooth paste are different
- Eat a balanced diet and limit eating and drinking between meals, etc
- Replace your tooth brush every three months (or sooner if the bristles begin to look worn out).
- Keep your tongue clean regularly
- Always use soft or ultra soft toothbrushes to avoid hard bristle brushes)
- Don't brush haphazardly because there is a specific technique of brushing
- Consumption of acidic beverages (cold drinks, alcohol, soda) have detrimental effect on the tooth, avoid as much possible.
- Abrasive toothpaste should be avoided (consult a dentist for a better advice)
- Visit your dentist twice per year or as recommended by your dentist for prevention and treatment of oral diseases.

theme (2021-2023) was launched with the theme 'A Happy Mouth is a Happy Body'. This year, WOHD wants to inspire action by highlighting how a healthy mouth is important for happiness and well-being. The campaign will emphasise how an unhealthy mouth can severely impact every aspect of life such as emotional, social,

mental, and overall physical well-being. People can actively take part in the campaign by spreading awareness about good oral hygiene via social media platforms, and educating children to better understand oral health.

DR SUBASISH BEHERA  
BDS, MDS (ROOT CANAL SPECIALIST)

## FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

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

# 2 held for shooting Forest staff

The condition of the injured foresters is stable and they are undergoing treatment at the SCB Medical College & Hospital

PNN & AGENCIES

**Balasure, March 19:** Two members of the Forest department's anti-poaching squad were injured inside the Kuldiha range when poachers fired at them in this district in the early hours of Tuesday, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) Wildlife, Susanta Nanda said on 'X'.

"On March 19 at about 2.00am, staff of the Kuldiha forest range under Balasure division came across two poachers inside the Kuldiha sanctuary. They have been arrested," Nanda said.

According to Nanda, the Forest department officials were chasing and tracking the poachers since 8.00pm Monday and they cornered the poachers at about 2.00am. Suddenly, the poachers opened fire on the team. Despite being fired on, the patrolling team managed to catch the two armed poachers. Two rifles were also seized from their possession, officials said.

The injured Forest department personnel, identified as Kshitish Parida and Biranchi Jena, were first rushed to the district head-



quarters hospital. However, they were later shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack for better treatment facilities.

The two arrested poachers have been identified as Sania Singh of Chekamara village and Guna Singh of Kainmagadia village. Further investigation is on, officials informed.

Later in the day, Nanda said on 'X' that the condition of the two injured staff is stable. "Two staff were injured when fired upon. They are out of danger. Praying for their early recovery. Salutations to the team," Nanda wrote.

## Fishing trawlers attack patrol boat

**Kendrapara:** A Forest department patrol vessel engaged to prevent illegal fishing in prohibited areas of the sea was attacked by crews of 12 trawlers in this district, an official said Tuesday. The attack took place Monday late night near the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, a favourite nesting place for Olive Ridley turtles. Manas Kumar Dash, assistant conservator of forest, Bhitarkanika National Park said that 12 trawlers attacked the patrol boat in an effort to capsize it. However, they retreated when two other patrol boats came to the aid of the attacked vessel. "Despite being provoked, the patrolling crew did not open fire in self-defence," Dash said. He added that the fishing vessels had trespassed into prohibited sanctuary corridors.



Following the incident, the Forest department has decided to conduct combing operations inside the Kuldiha sanctuary from Wednesday. Officials also informed that a separate team will be formed to prevent tiger poaching within Similipal National Park.

It should be stated here that despite best efforts of the Forest department, poachers still carry on with their nefarious activities in various ranges of Similipal. Last year in June, poachers had shot dead a tribal forester who was out on patrolling duty in the Similipal Tiger Range.

## TPWOD appeals for quick bill payment

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, March 19:** Availability of electricity is considered as an essential ingredient for living. People need electricity with food, water and oxygen. Since the privatisation of electricity in Odisha and especially in Western Odisha, the licensee TPWOD has taken several initiatives and implemented payment facilities with the state-of-the-art technology for comfort, convenience of lakhs of consumers while paying their monthly bills.

At the same time, the company is creating awareness among the consumers to pay electricity bills on time. However, it is observed that there have been regular defaulters of bills at many corners of the distribution area consisting of nine revenue districts in western Odisha. Therefore, the company once again appeals to all its consumers to avail the most convenient methodology to pay the electricity bill regularly and enjoy the rebates announced by Hon'ble OERC from time to time.

It is not out of place to mention here that, under Section 47 and 56 of Electricity Act 2003 consumers are legally obligated to pay electricity bill within the stipulated time frame, failing which, the distribution company is empowered to restrict the electricity supply to the non-paying consumers.

## Student killed

**Papadahandi:** In a tragic incident, a Plus II student of Kendriya Vidyalaya was killed on the spot and his friend sustained serious injuries as the scooter on which they were travelling was hit by an unidentified vehicle near Mruga Vihar on Papadahandi-Nabarangpur road under this police limits in Nabarangpur district Tuesday. The deceased was identified as G Ishwar Rao. His classmate Akash Sarangi suffered injuries and is currently undergoing treatment.

## Couple murdered over sorcery: Cops



PNN & AGENCIES

**Phulbani, March 19:** The police claimed Tuesday that the tribal couple who was suspected to have been killed March 8 by Maoists in Kandhamal district was instead hacked and beaten to death by the villagers. The villagers were apprehensive that the two were performing black magic on a regular basis.

The gruesome murders took place at Gadapadar village. The bodies of the couple were recovered the next day in a pool of blood in a forested area with injuries on their heads.

Initially it was suspected that the couple, identified as Batasi

Kanhar (41) and Tahira Kanhar (45), was killed by Maoists. However, investigations later revealed that they were hacked and beaten with heavy objects by the assailants, Kandhamal SP, Subhendu Patra said here Tuesday.

Police after seizing the bodies examined the wounds of the victims. The police found out that the manner of killing was different to that of the Maoists. The killers had hit the victims on their heads with blunt objects. The Maoists usually do not adopt this method to kill anyone, police said.

The police investigation further revealed that the villagers suspected the couple of per-

forming witchcraft after some people in the locality fell ill. The couple was of a religious bent of mind and used to perform puja in their house on a regular basis.

The couple was then accused of sorcery and evicted from the village and they had shifted to a different place. At a village committee meeting March 4, a decision was taken to kill the couple. Accordingly a person by the name of Sunil Digal was hired for ₹40,000 to carry out the act.

Sunil later confessed before the police and said that he was accompanied by around 10 others to kill the couple. They first murdered Batasi then her husband Tahira, he told police. The deceased Tahira was a former ward member of Salaguda Gram Panchayat.

The police have arrested 10 people in this connection, the SP informed. He added that efforts are on to find out if anyone else was involved in the gruesome murders.

## CINI providing sustainable nutrition strategy

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rayagada, March 19:** 'Child in Need Institute' (CINI), a prominent Indian NGO with a legacy of over five decades, has been steadfast in its mission to uplift the health, nutrition, education, and protection of marginalized women, children, and adolescents. With operations spanning across the states of Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam, Tripura and Madhya Pradesh, 'CINI' has partnered with governments, development agencies, and international organisations, touching the lives of more than 10 million individuals.

CINI's presence in Odisha extends to all 30 districts, including this one, where it has been actively engaged in the 'Doorstep Care for Improving Maternal & Child Health and Nutrition, Adolescent Nutrition, and



Awareness on Non-Communicable Diseases for ST-SC Population with a special focus on PVTGs' project since 2021. The project is supported by IndusInd Bank Ltd. This initiative aims to elevate the health and nutritional status of the targeted population through active participation, multi-sectoral convergence, enhanced accountability, and preventive measures. To realise the project's objec-

tives, 'CINI' has collaborated closely with the administrative officials of this district and Bissamcuttack block, fostering multi-sectoral convergence, improving service delivery, and building the capacity of frontline workers.

Amidst the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, 'CINI' collaborated with the district and block administrations to ensure the health and well-being of the population through 'Covid Sahayata Kendras' in Bissamcuttack and adjacent blocks (Muniguda and Kalyansinghpur).

Prior to implementing interventions related to Non-Communicable diseases (NCDs),

## One must be polite, patient, says Dash

Torrent Advertisers is one of the leading and largest advertising agencies situated in Bhubaneswar. Started three decades back, the organisation has garnered reputation as an excellent, quality conscious and responsible outdoor media house. With an appetite for business, Nirranjan Dash, managing partner of Torrent Advertisers, started this journey out of curiosity. After relentless hard work with a commitment to cater to the growing demand, Torrent Advertisers has carved a niche for itself in the outdoor advertising space. In a conversation with Orissa POST, Dash gives an insight into his entrepreneurial experience. Excerpts...



### How is the demand for outdoor advertising in Odisha market?

Outdoor advertising is always in demand because it has many special features and an independent customer base. Nowadays, both outdoor and indoor advertising are in good condition with the customers placing more emphasis on quality service and products. In particular, we provide our clients with high-quality work and unique capabilities through our experienced human resources and cutting-edge technology.

### What is the uniqueness of your brand in the market?

Brand exclusivity is the key to staying ahead in the market. In particular, we focus on transparency and timeliness while providing differentiated thinking and quality services to meet customer demands and market needs. While both domestic and national brands are operating in the state, we are currently considered the best in the market.

### What is the difference between outdoor and indoor advertising?

There are many differences between outdoor and indoor advertising as both have particular customer bases. As there are all kinds of customers in the industry, there is a lot of discussion between advertising agencies and service providers. The

providers take the necessary steps in consultation with the best service providing advertisement agency as per the market demand.

### Do you have any expansion plans?

The brand has expansion plans lined up and various initiatives are being taken to expand services within the state, with emphasis on new technology and skilled human resources. Even in the major cities and districts of the state, separate units are functioning to provide quality services.

### What will be your advice for the new entrants in this profession?

While there is enough demand in this business, perseverance, hard work and integrity should be given more importance. Similarly, advertisers have to give utmost importance to transparency and punctuality along with quality services in their business. Both in business and behaviour, one must be polite and patient.

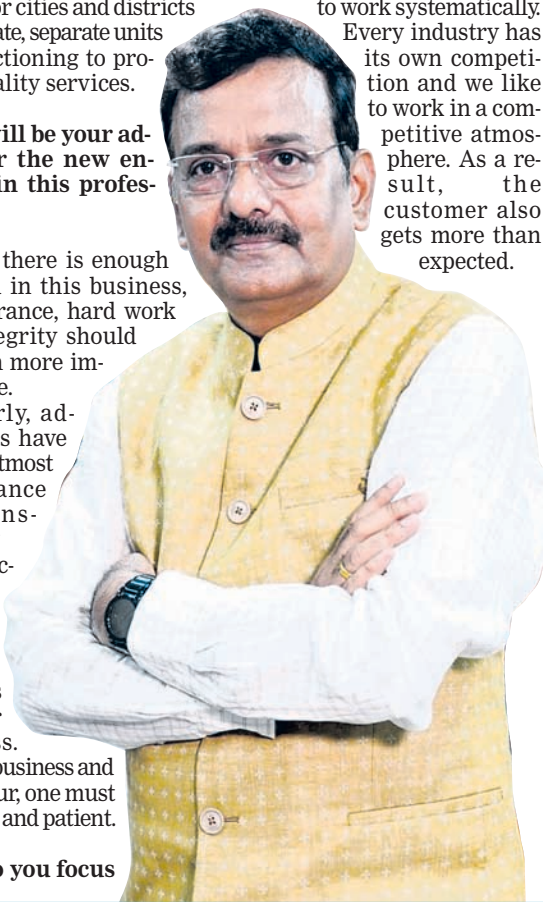
### How do you focus

### on customer satisfaction?

We always strive to provide quality services with transparency and integrity in business. We are also committed to delivering on our commitments and provide best customer services in the market.

### How do you see the competition in the industry?

Without competition in business, there is no incentive to work systematically. Every industry has its own competitive atmosphere. As a result, the customer also gets more than expected.



## Congress files complaint against Forest department

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, March 19:** The Congress has filed a complaint against the Forest department, government of Odisha for violating the model code of conduct (MCC). The complaint has been lodged with the election officer in this district and the magistrate, party officials informed here Tuesday.

According to the complaint, a district-wide cultural programme was organised by the Forest department Sunday at the Police Kalyan Mandap here. A huge gathering was present at the event. All the range officers and assistant conservators along with their families attended the event. Various cultural programmes were organised followed by a sumptuous meal.

However, the Congress alleged that organising such a programme with government



funds is a violation of the model code of conduct.

"Through this event, an effort has been made by the state government to influence all those present. Also government vehicles were used even though the programme was held on a holiday. This is also a violation of the MCC. Therefore, we demand appropriate action against the persons who organised the event and the officer concerned," said Dilip Kumar Sahu, chairman, district media cell of the Congress in this district.

Sahu added that complaint letters to this effect have been sent to the concerned authorities.

## BASTINA BECOMES A TRAILBLAZER IN KANDHAMAL

SHE IS AN INSPIRATION TO MANY FOR HER FIGHT AGAINST SOCIAL EVILS LIKE LIQUOR CONSUMPTION AND CHILD MARRIAGE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Daringbadi, March 19:** Bastina Singh, a tribal woman in Kandhamal district has carved a niche for herself as a social reformer by challenging conventions and breaking barriers. Her fight against liquor consumption by men at the expense of family welfare has been hailed by all and sundry.

Bastina is a native of Dasingbadi locality under this block in Kandhamal district. She was recently felicitated with the state-level 'Ananya' award at a function organised by 'National Alliance of Women'.

Bastina has become an example for others to emulate and a role model for scores of women to fight against various social evils.



With liquor consumption ruining many families, Bastina started a movement against it. She has also lent her voice and might to prevent child marriages and for providing education to kids.

Bastina's work came to notice

when she launched an agitation against liquor consumption by male members of many families in the 1990s. After drinking, these men used to torture women and other family members. Uncontrolled drinking also led

to families facing severe financial constraints. The education of the kids suffered and there was never enough food in the house. Many of the male alcoholics also got their kids married off at a very early age.

Bastina herself was married off early when she was a 16-year-old kid. She knew the trauma associated with child marriages. She decided to do something to curb and eradicate the drinking habits of men.

The first thing Bastina did was to bring women who were suffering due to their alcoholic husbands under one umbrella. These women then started protesting against the sale of country-made liquor in Dasingbadi area.

However, Bastina's road was never smooth as she had to face opposition from the members of

her own community as she intensified her agitation against sale of liquor. However, she refused to cow down and resolved to show results as Dasingbadi panchayat was declared liquor-free and received the 'Gandhi Award' in 1995.

Appreciating her work, the then Odisha Chief Minister Biju Patnaik sanctioned special powers to Bastina and 11 other women of her organisation. They were provided with 12 lathis known as 'Biju lathis' to launch crackdown on liquor sale.

Since then, Bastina has never looked back and has been in the forefront against liquor consumption and preventing child marriages in her area.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that, Aftab Khan, S/o Abdul Hadi Khan, R/o-Similipada, Jagannath Vihar, PO/PS/Dist-Angul, has sworn an affidavit on dt.16.03.2024 and has reported to OIC, Angul on dt.16.03.2024 regarding loss of original link Regd. Sale Deed No.1787, dt.25.04.2005 of Registering Officer, Angul and ROR vide Khata No.168/750 of Mouza-Turang Jungle in the name of Kumud Chandra Nath, S/o Brajabandhu Nath.

Aftab Khan S/o Abdul Hadi Khan has applied to the M/s CHOLAMANDAL INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED (CIFCL), Angul to avail loan on the above property by mortgaging the said property documents.

All concerned therefore, having any claim over the property purchased under the said document Regd. Sale Deed No.1787, dt.25.04.2005 of Registering Officer, Angul and ROR vide Khata No.168/750 of Mouza-Turang Jungle in the name of Kumud Chandra Nath, S/o Brajabandhu Nath is required to file his claim with the undersigned within 15 (Fifteen) days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which it will be presumed that, the property having link with the said document/s is/are free from encumbrances and any claim in respect thereof against the applicant as a mortgagor and the company as the mortgagee shall be void and ineffective after the lapse of 15(Fifteen) days of publication of this notice.

(A.K.Debta)  
Sambalpur Dt.18.03.2024 Advocate. M/s Cholamandal Investment and Finance Company Limited (CIFCL) At/PO-Modipara, Ps-Town, Dist-Sambalpur Mobile No. 9437158519

FOCUS SOCIETY

# FROM LETTER TO SPIRIT



Japan's remarkable transformation from a low-income economy to one of the world's richest countries can be partly attributed to its law-abiding culture

allow pedestrians to cross. When the road is empty, ignoring the red light does not run counter to the law's purpose. It facilitates what economists refer to as a Pareto improvement, whereby some people are better off without hurting anybody else's well-being.

While enacting laws that accommodate every individual's unique circumstances and preferences is not feasible, leaving laws open to some degree of individual interpretation can encourage creativity and enhance efficiency. This approach, which cultivates a culture conducive to technological and artistic innovation, has enabled the United States to become the world's growth engine and magnet for talent.

To be sure, attempting to bring about a normative transition from adherence to the letter of the law to realising its spirit could backfire, producing cacophony in the proverbial orchestra pit. Economists and legal scholars can play a crucial role in facilitating such a shift while mitigating potential risks. This cannot be achieved through precise policy prescription — that would in fact be self-contradictory. The key to achieving this is in the realm of ideas that John Maynard Keynes emphasised. We need to be aware of the two distinct modes of law enforcement, and, despite the risks, the surprising advantages of moving from following the letter of the law to the spirit.

As the British conductor Charles Hazlewood observed, for good music you need individual musicians to follow the conductor's instructions exactly. Great music, however, relies on "trust" and "personal freedom for the members of the orchestra." They need space for judgment and creativity.

*The writer, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University and a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.*

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The way people navigate traffic can tell us a lot about their respective cultures. Recently, while walking to my office in midtown Manhattan, I stopped at a red light when an elderly woman with a walking stick caught my attention as she cautiously looked both left and right. When she saw that no car was close enough to hit her — assuming they adhered to New York's speed-limit laws — she gave me a puzzled look and crossed the street. I must admit, I felt a bit foolish.

Such an incident would be unthinkable in Japan. Years ago, on the first night of a week-long visit to Tokyo, my young, jet-lagged children, who had lived only in India and the United States, were amazed by the law-abiding Japanese. Peering out of our apartment window at midnight, they observed a man standing alone at a crosswalk. Even with no cars in sight, he waited patiently for the light to turn green.

While these normative differences may seem trivial, societal attitudes toward the law can significantly affect a country's economic performance. Whereas the New Yorker's actions could be interpreted as aligning with the spirit of the law, the Tokyo pedestrian adhered to its letter.

A system that emphasises the spirit of the law gives individuals discretionary power, leading to potential misuse or abuse. When individuals have latitude to decide how to behave, they might, for example, choose to disrupt traffic. This is evident in the streets of New York and, to a greater extent, in my hometown of Kolkata (formerly Calcutta). While the city is gradually adopting the Western model, during my youth Kolkata was a pedestrian's paradise, where crossing the street required no more than a simple hand gesture.

It is crucial to understand the strengths and weaknesses of both systems. Japan's remarkable transformation from a low-income economy to one of the world's richest countries can be partly attributed to its law-abiding culture. Adherence to the

letter of the law fosters better organisation, which fuels economic growth and overall development. Consider, for example, an orchestra: without a conductor to guide them, the musicians onstage may still make music, but it would not be the Salzburg Opera.

The same is true for many other aspects of daily life. In a 2002 paper I co-authored with Jörgen Weibull, we argued that punctuality is not a genetic trait but a behaviour cultivated through coordination. Sticking to a fixed schedule becomes valuable when everyone is expected to do so. It is reminiscent of the stag hunt game described by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Discourse on Inequality*, in which two hunters could kill a stag by cooperating but only a hare if they go it alone. Contemporary Japan is known for its fastidious culture

of punctuality. What is overlooked is that, barely a hundred years ago, Japan was known for its sloppiness with respect to time. Japan's ascent coincided with normative transformation from tardiness to punctuality.

Sociologists have emphasised the crucial role of social and institutional embeddedness in driving economic development. Simply put, in addition to its trade, fiscal, and monetary policies, Japan's remarkable rise over the past century has been facilitated by a social transformation which enabled its economy to grow at an unprecedented rate.

Nevertheless, the New York model, where individuals are given leeway to interpret the law, has its merits. After all, pedestrian traffic lights are designed to facilitate the smooth flow of traffic and occasionally



Kaushik Basu

**ADHERENCE TO THE LETTER OF THE LAW FOSTERS BETTER ORGANISATION, WHICH FUELS ECONOMIC GROWTH AND OVERALL DEVELOPMENT**



Slavoj Žižek

**Failed states are no longer confined to a few corners of the Global South**

He who chooses the infinite has been chosen by the infinite.

SRI AUROBIND



## The Proud Boys

The way things are going in Haiti, violent gangs might not only gain an official government role; they might actually become the government. Following the gangs' seizure of critical infrastructure and the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry, Haiti is exhibiting all the familiar features of a failed state. Its people are left with a tragic choice: continued rule by a corrupt "democratic" elite, or direct rule by gangs who present themselves as "progressive."

With law and order having collapsed, CARICOM, the Caribbean regional intergovernmental organisation, has announced an agreement to create a transitional council aimed at representing a wide swath of Haitian political and civil-society groupings. The council would wield some powers that typically belong to the (vacant) office of the president, including the power to name an interim prime minister. The resulting government would be expected eventually to hold elections, thus achieving a complete political reset.

But whom will these new arrangements include? Haiti has been under a state of emergency since armed groups attacked the country's largest prison earlier this month, killing and injuring police and prison staff, and allowing nearly 4,000 inmates to escape. The gang leader Jimmy "Barbecue" Chérizier — himself a former police officer — took credit for the attack and called for the government to be overthrown. Gangs now control 80% of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, having seized the country's main airport to block Henry's return from a diplomatic mission to Kenya, where he was hoping to secure police reinforcements.

The CARICOM agreement bars anyone with prior criminal convictions or sanctions against them, thus disqualifying Chérizier. But Chérizier has long been known to harbour political aspirations. He is not only a gang leader but also a populist politician, telling an interviewer in 2019: "I would never massacre people in the same social class as me." Earlier this month, he said: "We won't lie to people, saying we have a peaceful revolution. We do not have a peaceful revolution. We are starting a bloody revolution in the country."

Chérizier has likened himself to Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and even Robin Hood. But he also admires François "Papa Doc" Duvalier, the right-wing dictator who ruled Haiti with an iron fist from 1957 to 1971 (and who also terrorised Haitian society with armed paramilitary groups, led by the infamous Tonton Macoutes).

In a warning issued late on the night of 11 March, Chérizier announced that the alliance of gangs known as Viv Ansanm would not recognise any government resulting from the CARICOM agreement, arguing that, "It is up to the Haitian people to designate the personalities who will lead the country." Similarly, an adviser to Guy Philippe, a Haitian rebel leader who recently returned to the country, warns that Port-au-Prince will be burned to the ground if the next government does not include Philippe.

Haiti's story is a long-running tragedy. For more than 200 years, it has been punished for the successful slave rebellion (beginning in 1791) that allowed it to emerge as the world's first black republic. Forced to pay reparations to France, its former colonial overlord, the only chance it ever had to prosper was when Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his Lavalas party took power a couple of decades ago. But Aristide, a thorn in America's side, was toppled in a coup in February 2004.

Haiti is an extreme case of a broader phenomenon. Violent gangs have also occupied parts of cities in Ecuador and Mexico; and, of course, a gang of outgoing US President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol in Washington on 6 January, 2021. Trump now promises that one of his first official acts, if re-elected, will be to pardon all those convicted for their participation in that assault.

The strongest of the gangs that organised the 6 January insurrection are the Proud Boys, an exclusively male neo-fascist organisation that openly promotes and engages in political violence. Recall that when asked about his appeal to white supremacist and paramilitary groups at a presidential debate in 2020, Trump infamously responded, "Proud Boys, stand back and stand by." The group's leaders have since been convicted of seditious conspiracy and other crimes against the United States for their attempt to block the constitutionally prescribed transfer of presidential power.

Interestingly, the Proud Boys have an initiation process that includes physical hazing, such as being punched unless you correctly answer pop-culture trivia questions, and members must "abstain from pornography." Strange as these rituals sound, they are familiar mechanisms. Fraternal rituals play the role of poetry, as described by Ernst Jünger, a reluctant Nazi fellow-traveller who, like the Proud Boys, celebrated the purifying effect of military struggle: "Any power struggle is preceded by a verification of images and iconoclasm. This is why we need poets — they initiate the overthrow, even that of titans."

Failed states are no longer confined to a few corners of the Global South. If we measure a state's failure by the cracks in the edifice of its power — that is, by the evidence of brewing ideological civil wars, deadlocked assemblies, and increasingly insecure public spaces — we must recognise that France, the United Kingdom, and the US are clearly on the spectrum. The Norwegian political theorist Jon Elster was correct, in 2020, when he wrote: "We can reverse the common dictum that democracy is under threat, and affirm that democracy is the threat, at least in its short-termist populist form." Recent experience offers clear signals of what will happen if Trump wins the November presidential election.

One might appropriately paraphrase an old joke from East Germany: Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, and Trump are given an audience with God and allowed one question each. Putin begins: "Tell me what will happen to Russia in the next few decades?" God answers: "Russia will gradually become a colony of China." Putin turns around and starts to cry. Xi asks the same question about China. God answers: "With the Chinese economic miracle over, you will have to return to a hardline dictatorship to survive, while asking Taiwan for help." Xi turns around and starts to cry. Finally, Trump asks: "And what will be the fate of the US after I take over again?" God turns around and starts to cry.

*The writer is Professor of Philosophy at the European Graduate School.*

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### WISDOM CORNER

The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.

MICHELANGELO

There are two kinds of teachers: the kind that fill you with so much quail shot that you can't move, and the kind that just gives you a little prod behind and you jump to the skies.

ROBERT FROST

Many individuals are doing what they can. But real success can only come if there is a change in our societies and in our economics and in our politics.

DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

### IN JEST THIS

## Google Maps may introduce you to swimming



Melvin Durai

**I'M NOT SAYING THAT YOU'RE DEFINITELY GOING TO END UP IN A LAKE IF YOU RELY ON GOOGLE MAPS. YOU MIGHT END UP IN A RIVER**

Google Maps can be very useful. Before it became a common app on mobile devices, drivers had to rely on printed maps as well as directions from various sources, including friends they were visiting and random strangers on the street.

Driver: "Excuse me, can you give me directions to Club Mahindra Resort?" Random stranger: "Yes. Keep driving straight for one kilometre, then make a left at the second traffic light, then stay on the right as the road forms a 'Y' and drive for another kilometre until you see the house with the barking dog. Make a right there, then a left after the coconut tree and keep going until you see another random stranger who can direct you further."

If you were making a long-distance trip and didn't need precise directions, you relied solely on a printed map. This was often a folded map that fit easily in the glove compartment or door pocket. To consult the map while

driving safely — keeping both hands on the steering wheel and your feet on the pedals — all you had to do was open the map carefully using your elbows and knees.

After you had succeeded in opening the map fully, the next step was to close it quickly in order to see the road. Not only were these maps large, hardly any of them were transparent. An experienced driver learned to keep a map open sideways or horizontally and glance at it occasionally, a technique that worked extremely well, up until the moment a gust of wind blew the map out the window. At this point, the driver had no choice but to stop and ask a random stranger for directions to the nearest map store.

Thankfully, Google Maps was released for mobile devices in 2006. As a result, an estimated one billion people now use Google Maps every month for directions, and only a few dozen of them end up in a lake.

Some of them, of course, in-

tended to be in a lake. Others just found themselves in a lake. All they did was follow the voice navigation on Google Maps: "Turn left, then make a sharp right. After 400 metres, turn right again and start swimming. Watch out for the alligators!"

I'm not saying that you're definitely going to end up in a lake if you rely on Google Maps. You might end up in a river. The ocean is also a possibility. That's what happened to two tourists driving a Dodge Caravan in Hawaii last May. They followed Google Maps down a boat ramp at Honokohau Harbor: "I was going to yell at them, 'Ladies, Google is wrong!' But before I even had a chance to do that, they were already in the water," a witness named Tony Perman told Island News.

Google Maps is quite reliable. That's why many drivers trust it. But before you rely on it completely, make sure you've taken swimming lessons.

Even if you're far from any

water body, it's wise to study a map before relying on Google's directions. Just ask a pair of German tourists whose car got stuck in muddy terrain after Google Maps led them erroneously through a national park in Australia. The young men had to walk for several days to get help, saying "Thank you Google Maps!" every time they encountered a crocodile or snake.

The residents of Karnataka's Kodagu district are apparently well-aware of Google's shortcomings. Kodagu Connect, a local news outlet, recently shared an image of a sign beside a road that says, "Google is wrong. This road does not go to Club Mahindra."

If only more people were as kind-hearted as Kodagu residents. We'd be seeing similar signs all over the world, such as "Google is wrong. You cannot drive from Dar es Salaam to Zanzibar," and "Google is wrong. If you make a right, you will find yourself in the Atlantic, not Atlantic City."

### Count your happiness

Sir, The definition of "happiness" varies from person to person. Common knowledge says happiness is a state of mind. Propagating and promoting global happiness on a large scale is of utmost importance. The then UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was convinced by special advisor Jayme Ilien to mark a day for happiness that culminated in the announcement of the twentieth day of March as the Universal Happiness Day. Happiness encompasses a wide gamut of physical and mental emotions. A Finnish proverb has aptly put happiness as "something between too much and too little." No medicine can make a person happy since there is no panacea for happiness. What makes an individual contented perhaps is the key to happiness. Quite often we fail to count our happiness, and dwell on unhappiness. Forgetting a past unhappiness will make the present happiness sound real. Is "not getting what you want but wanting what you get" real happiness?

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

### Prison reforms

Sir, Prisons in India are a colonial legacy that have remained largely unchanged for decades since Independence. The living conditions of the prisoners and the undertrials incarcerated in prisons leave much to be desired. The main objective of India's criminal justice system is reformation and rehabilitation of inmates through employment opportunities and ensuring that they get fair and reasonable wages as prescribed by the Model Prison Manual 2003, the guiding principle of prison management in India. But the sad truth is that prisoners in India are treated with paltry wages even today. Putting someone in jail for the crime he/she committed cannot be a mere punishment unto itself. But, it gives the inmate a sense of dignity and empowerment during the reform process through reasonable wages. If reformation is the primary goal, how can we expect prisoners to feel motivated with low incomes? Is it possible for them to support their family on such a salary, while still saving for their rehabilitation?

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

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# How microplastic travels to Mandovi



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Panaji, March 19:** Wastewater from homes, commercial establishments, markets and vessels used for entertainment purposes like casinos contribute to the abundance of microplastics in Mandovi river and onward in the Arabian Sea, a study by the Goa-based CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) has found.

- The study has concluded that the urban wastewater exhibited significant amounts of MPs in the size range of 100-300 microns mainly comprising fibres
- Also the source identification study carried by the researchers have found polymeric signatures of personal care products (PCPs) and Washing Machine Effluents (WMEs) were prevalent in the wastewater
- This underscores the role of wastewater as a distinct point source for impelling estuarine contamination encircling the environments of Panjim City

As part of the study titled 'Unraveling the land-based discharge of microplastics from sewers to oceans - A comprehensive study and risk assessment in wastewaters of Goa', researchers investigated the level of microplastics in wastewater and their potential risks to the ecosystem in Goa. In the study, which has been published in the Science of the Total Environment Journal, the researchers have said the discharge of microplastics into the coastal waters assumes the role of a precursor for their presence in the coastal environment of Goa.

"The urban wastewater exhibited significant amounts of microplastics in the size range of 100-300 microns mainly comprising fibres. Also the source identification study carried out found polymeric signatures of personal care products (PCPs) and washing machine effluents (WMEs) in wastewater," the study said.

This underscores the role of wastewater as a distinct point source for impelling estuarine contamination encircling the environments of Panjim City, the study mentioned. The research was led by Principal Scientist Dr Mahua Saha (CSIR-NIO), while others who were party of the study included Chayanika Rathore, Aniket Desai, Priyansha Gupta, Akshata Naik, Hariha Yespal Subha from CSIR-NIO, Goa and Jacob de Boer from Virj University, Netherlands.

The finding confirms land-based origins in wastewater significantly contribute to microplastic pollution and their potential risks to the ecosystem and eventually to human health

via seafood, the study said. The study confirms their hypothesis covering a knowledge gap about the pathways of microplastics from source to sink, the researchers said. Researchers said the study was the first to provide a snapshot information that illustrates the substantial influence of microplastics in wastewater and their transmission to receiving coastal waters.

The study can make a meaningful contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 6.3, which aims "to comprehend global wastewater generation, reduce pollution, eliminate dumping, minimize release of hazardous substances, cut proportion of untreated wastewater, and significantly enhance global recycling and safe reuse efforts", they said.

Meanwhile, polymers in microplastics may pose a risk to the Indo-Gangetic plain, a study on the Ganga and Yamuna rivers by the Goa-based CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) has said.

Researchers behind the study have said their findings could serve as a starting point for an action plan required by municipal corporations to "mitigate plastic pollution and target the possible sources at each location."

Microplastics are extremely small pieces of plastic debris in the environment resulting from the disposal and breakdown of consumer products and industrial waste.

# UP to have telemetric weather stations to monitor drought

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, March 19:** The Yogi Adityanath-led government in Uttar Pradesh will establish Telemetric Weather Stations (TWS) in tehsils across various districts, an official said.

In the initial phase, the TWS will be set up in 100 most drought-prone tehsils across different districts with priority being given to setting up the stations in Sonbhadra, Mirzapur, and seven districts of Bundelkhand where the threat of drought looms large every year.

The Relief Commissioner's office has issued essential guidelines to Additional District Magistrates for this purpose, a government spokesperson said. Furthermore, instructions

have been given to mark the land for establishment during the process.

Principal Secretary Revenue P Guru Prasad said that farmers in the state face significant challenges from drought every year. In wake of their predicament, it has been decided to initiate the setting up of TWS in 100 tehsils across different districts of the state in the initial phase.

Subsequently, TWS will be established in all tehsils within every district of the state. Relief Commissioner GS Naveen said that in the first phase, priority will be given to the tehsils of all seven Bundelkhand districts, including Banda, Chitrakoot, Hamirpur, Jhansi, Lalitpur, Mahoba, and Jalaun, which suffer from heightened drought impact.



Besides, weather stations will be set up in all tehsils of Sonbhadra, two tehsils of Mirzapur, and one tehsil of each district of the state. An amount of ₹10 crore has

been released for this. Necessary guidelines have been issued to the Additional District Magistrates of all the districts for marking the land for the purpose. It will be followed by the setting up of

TWS in all tehsils and blocks of the state.

TWS will be set up at a distance of 7-10 kms from the Automatic Weather Station (AWS) and Automatic Rain-Gauge Station (ARG).

The Relief Commissioner said that guidelines have been issued for setting up weather stations at a distance of 7 to 10 kilometres from AWS/ARG in a space of 10x10 meters.

Moreover, the location where the weather station is to be installed should be a suitable distance from large trees and buildings to mitigate the potential risk posed by shade, sunlight, rain, and wind. Necessary measures for security against theft must also be put in place, he added.



Mahamandaleswar of Kinnar Akhara Kaushalya Nand Giri takes part in a voting awareness rally, ahead of Lok Sabha elections in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

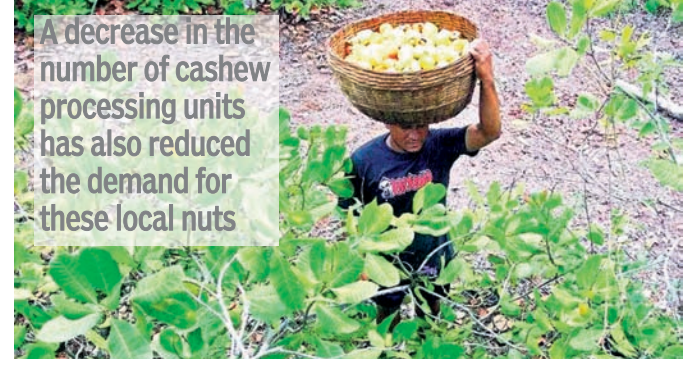
# Goa cashew farmers lose interest in Urrak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Panaji, March 19:** Cashew farmers in Goa have been unenthusiastic about brewing the seasonal Urrak drink from the fruit this year as they claim these nuts has been fetching a low price in the market.

The seasonal business of harvesting cashew across hills of the coastal state has become uneconomical for them, they said, adding the government should address their concerns. An official from the Goa agriculture department said there has been a low demand of local cashew nuts for roasting purposes.

Also, a decrease in the number of cashew processing units in the state has also reduced the demand for these local nuts though they are in demand



A decrease in the number of cashew processing units has also reduced the demand for these local nuts

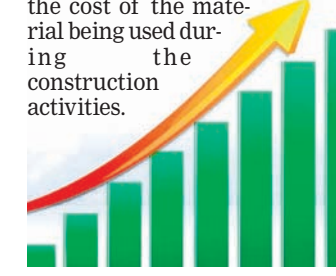
among tourists for their rich taste, he said. Urrak, an alcoholic brew, is distilled during the summer months of March to May from ripe cashew apples while the nuts (which are part of the fruit) are sold by farmers in the market. Gauresh Velip, who along

cashews from the money that a farmer earns from Urrak.

A one litre bottle of Urrak costs ₹250 in the market as of now, but the rate will get reduced as the season comes to an end, he said. As per the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) records, cashew plantation in Goa is spread over 55,302 hectare area with an annual production estimated at 27,070 tonnes.

The cashew plantation occupies the largest area among horticulture crops in the state, according to the ICAR.

Rupesh Velip, a leader of the Scheduled Tribe community from South Goa, said the government should address concerns of the cashew harvesters as it is their only source of income during the summer season.



# Performers fear code of conduct may dampen Shigmo festivities in Goa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Panaji, March 19:** As the model code of conduct has come into force for the Lok Sabha elections, performers participating in Goa's spring festival, Shigmo, worry that restrictions may be imposed on the celebrations.

The model code of conduct came into force Saturday after the Election Commission of India declared poll dates for the 18th Lok Sabha. The elections will begin April 19, followed by subsequent phases April 26, May 7, May 13, May 20, May 25 and June 1. Votes will be counted June 4.

The traditional Shigmo festivities in Goa will start March 19, while parades sponsored by the state tourism department will be held from March 26 till April 8 across major cities of the coastal state.



Performers participating in the Shigmo festival in Goa.

## LS POLLS

# Goa Police intensifies checking at borders

The coastal state will go to polls May 7, in the third phase of the Lok Sabha elections for two seats, North and South

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Panaji, March 19:** Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, intensive checking at the six check posts in North Goa has begun in order to curb illegal activities, along with monitoring of movement with the aid of CCTVs, an official said Monday.

Superintendent of Police (North Goa), Akshat Kaushal, while addressing a press conference here Monday, said that there was tight checking at all the six check posts at the Maharashtra and Karnataka border. "We have strengthened the border checkpoints with round-the-clock staff deployment. We are also monitoring all movement through CCTVs. Legal action will be taken against illegal activities at the border," he warned. He said that in order to stop liquor smuggling or transportation of cash, they were in constant touch with officials of



Police officers at a border checkpoint in Goa.

neighbouring states. "We are coordinating with the Excise and Income Tax departments of Maharashtra and Karnataka," he said in a statement. "Illegal activities like movement of cash, liquor and freebies, is also being checked in every Assembly constituency. We are conducting surprise checks to curb illegal activities," Kaushal said. He said that the Central Armed Police Force is patrolling areas in North Goa District to build voters' confidence.

"History-sheeters are being summoned at the police station and verification is being done. We are taking all necessary steps to maintain law and order during elections," he said.

There are 25,209 first-time voters, with 12,070 in North Goa and 13,139 in South Goa. As of March 16, in terms of voter demographics, Goa has a total of 11,73,016 voters, with 5,77,958 in North Goa and 5,95,058 in South Goa.

# UP govt to make over 1L frontline workers job-ready by 2025

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, March 19:** BetterPlace, Asia's largest SaaS and horizontal platform for frontline workforce management, Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Uttar Pradesh government's Department of Vocational Education, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, to upskill and make more than 1 lakh frontline workers job-ready by 2025.

In a move to foster gender diversity, the company in a statement said, it aims to focus on measures to upskill more and more women by creating content specifically designed for them, it said.

"Our core priority since day zero has been to improve opportunities, increase the employee competencies and widen the work horizons for frontline workforce in India," said Pravin Agarwala, Group CEO and Co-founder, BetterPlace.

Pravin said that together with the UP Government, the company will work "under a four-step approach of identifying the skill gaps, tailoring comprehensive training programmes to address the same, evaluating the effectiveness of the programme, and assisting with job placements for the programme participants".

# Bundelkhand on way to become Uttar Pradesh's new 'powerhouse'

Around 10 solar energy projects have been launched in Bundelkhand, which will generate over 3,000 megawatts of electricity

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



The solar energy production plants will be established in Jalaun, Jhansi

Lalitpur, Banda, Chitrakoot, and Mahoba districts of Bundelkhand

Three solar power units are being set up in Jhansi district alone

**Lucknow, March 19:** The Bundelkhand region, once seen as one of the most arid and backward areas, is taking rapid strides in development. With the ground-breaking ceremony of projects worth more than ₹10 lakh crore recently, the entire region is set to become the new energy hub of Uttar Pradesh.

It is worth mentioning here that the Yogi Adityanath government launched several development and infrastructure projects in Bundelkhand to encourage investors to set up their enterprises in this region since 2017. Another 29 big projects worth about ₹30,000 crore were launched in Bundelkhand sometime ago.

In Jhansi district, a 600 MW solar plant is being established by Tusco at the cost of ₹3,430 crore, with the potential to create 300 job opportunities. Fourth Partner Energy Private Ltd will

generate employment opportunities for 200 people. Furthermore, Avada Ind Solar Private Ltd will set up a 750 MW solar power project in Banda at a cost of ₹350 crore.

A 15 MW solar power project is also being established by Suresure Solar Park Private Ltd at a cost of ₹62 crore. In Chitrakoot, Tusco Ltd will set up an 800 MW solar power project at the cost of ₹4,700 crore. This will provide employment to 400 people. Shree Cement Private Ltd will set up a solar power plant worth ₹202 crore. Similarly, Tusco Ltd is establishing the 155 MW Arjun Sagar Floating Solar Power Project worth ₹1008 crore in Mahoba, which will create jobs for 78 people. IB Vogt Solar Four Private Ltd will also set up a solar power project in Mahoba at the cost of ₹80 crore.



## CHILIKA ASSEMBLY SEGMENT

# TICKET ASPIRANTS GALORE IN BJD

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Gambharimunda, March 19:** The ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) is facing a problem of plenty as ticket aspirants for Chilika Assembly segment in Khurda district are galore this time. Ticket aspirants in both ruling party as well as opposition BJP and Congress are putting every effort to make their demands heard by their party top brass. However, they have failed to move further as the haze over BJD-BJP alliance is yet to be clear. The Congress party, which is anxiously waiting to hear about the BJD-BJP alliance, has delayed announcing its candidature from this seat.

Chilika Assembly segment



a polling booth in 2022 panchayat election. The BJP workers had beaten him up black and blue. Later, he was arrested and forwarded to jail. The ruling party quickly suspended him from the party following which the Chilika BJD unit became headless.

Jagadev has recently joined BJP after quitting BJD. The BJD leaders who were making a beeline before him are now aspiring for the party ticket to contest from the constituency.

All of them are claiming themselves to be the best and are very active in social media. Among the aspirants are former MLA Raghunath Sahu, BJD's media cell head and Rajya Sabha member Manas Mangaraj, Banpur NAC chairman Mitu Nayak, sarpanch Manoj Pradhan and Gopinath Moharana. The name of senior party leader and former Lok Sabha MP Prasanna Patsani has also cropped up as another contender for the party ticket.

While Sahu is lobbying hard to get the party ticket, chatters are abuzz that he might leave BJD and contest as an independent candidate, if the ruling party deprives him of a ticket. However, his brawl with some frontline party workers during panchayat elections might pose hurdles in fulfilling his ambition. These workers might gang up and oppose him during the election.

Moreover, workers of both BJD and BJP are apprehensive about which party will get the seat if an alliance is formed.

BJP's Prithviraj Harichandan had unsuccessfully contested the 2019 election from this seat. He is trying to contest again from this constituency but Jagadev's entry has put a spoke in his plan and forced him to rethink. Harichandan has contributed a lot in organising the BJP from booth level but voters were not in favour of the dynastic politics of Harichandan family.

The grand old party Congress has some aspirants in Chilika constituency. Pradip Kumar Swain, who unsuccessfully contested the 2019 election, is again staking claim for the party ticket. He is active in block and panchayat levels and strengthening the party. Speculations are rife that if BJD and BJP form an alliance, the voters opposing the alliance candidate might tilt towards the Congress.

consists of two blocks, areas under two notified area councils (NAC) and 34 panchayats. BJP candidate Bibhuti Bhushan Harichandan won this seat in 2000 and 2004 elections.

Later, Raghunath Sahu, who left Congress and joined BJD, thwarted BJP's victory march by wresting the seat in 2009. He contributed a lot in building up the BJD party base in the constituency. However, BJP candidate Harichandan again trounced Sahu in the 2014 election.

Prasanta Kumar Jagadev, who had then jumped to BJD, was given the party ticket in 2019 election. Sahu was disappointed but supported Jagadev after being directed by the party supremo.

After winning the election, Jagadev worked towards strengthening the party base and organised ground level party workers and promoted the Naveen government's developmental programmes in the constituency.

However, he was soon embroiled in controversy after he assaulted the BJP's Mandal president and again ploughed his car into unarmed BJP workers and allegedly tried to kill them when they had assembled outside



Soro Municipality chairman Madhab Dhada (fourth from left) joins BJD at the party office in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday



Kantabanji MLA Santosh Singh Saluja flanked by party workers at a workers meet of Muribahal block Congress committee held at Babejuri Sajana Badia in Gudighat panchayat in Bolangir district, Tuesday



Panchayat Executive Officers' Association former state president Suresh Kumar Hota joins BJP at the party office in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday

## TMC questions 'Modi ki guarantee' slogan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 19:** Hitting out at the BJP, the Trinamool Congress Tuesday asked if the 'Modi ki guarantee' slogan meant capturing of institutions by the ruling party and claimed the Prime Minister has "never" kept his poll promises.

At a press conference here, TMC's Sagarika Ghose and Babul Supriyo also questioned the Election Commission's directions on the removal of officials and said the poll panel should ensure all parties get a level playing field.

"The hollow nature of Modi ki guarantee is clear, there is nothing real about it," Ghose said.

"Modi is not a prime minister, but an election minister. He makes promises at the time of election, but never keeps them. What is Modi ki guarantee? The manner in which officers in



Bengal are being changed and institutions are being captured, is that Modi ki guarantee?" she said.

Supriyo raised concerns over the staggered Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal, where polling will be held in all seven phases.

"The way elections are being held, DGP was transferred, what does it indicate? It has been seen that when voting goes on for a long time, people lose interest and there is less voting in the later

phases. If you see the election schedule, you will see there is a pattern," Supriyo said, adding the EC should ensure a level playing field for all parties.

The Election Commission had directed the removal of West Bengal DGP Rajeev Kumar and mandated the appointment of Vivek Sahay, once suspended by the poll panel, as the new state police chief.

However, the EC on Tuesday removed Sahay as West Bengal DGP, less than 24 hours after naming him for the post, and directed the state government to appoint Sanjay Mukherjee in his place.

The decision by the EC to remove Kumar had prompted a political duel between the ruling TMC and the opposition BJP in the state, with the saffron camp welcoming the move and the TMC accusing the BJP of controlling the constitutional body.

## Sundargarh: Female voters outnumber male

A total of 15,67,065 voters to exercise their franchise in the upcoming election



RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

**Rourkela, March 19:** At 7,93,327, female voters outnumber male voters in Sundargarh district which has a total of 15,67,065 electorates for the upcoming elections, Sundargarh Collector Parad H Gavali said here, Monday.

Briefing media about the election preparedness, Gavali said the district has 21,042 differently-abled voters, while 37,617 new voters have been added to the list. The number of voters in the age group of 20-29 years stand at 3,27,737. There are 9,422 above 60 year old and above 80 year old voters. This apart, there are also 167 transgender voters, the Collector said.

There are 1,847 polling stations across the district, and 12,000 polling officers have completed their first phase of training programme. The ADM is also the RO for Sundargarh MP seat, while Sundargarh ADM is the RO for the Talsara Assembly constituency.

The ADM is also the RO for Sundargarh Assembly seat. Similarly, Panposh ADM is the RO for Biramitrapur while Rourkela ADM will look after the Raghunathpalli seat. Panposh Sub-collector is the RO for Rourkela. ADM Revenue is the RO for Rajgangpur seat, while sub-collector Bonai is the RO for Bonai constituency.

In line with the directive of the Election Commission of India (ECI), the administration has

formed 22 flying squads to implement the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) in the district by looking into all complaints against its violation. Besides, complaints will be dealt with through the cVIGIL app. A district-level communication centre has been set up and a toll-free number - 1950 - has been launched through which the complaints can be registered.

The Collector has sought cooperation from every quarter for the smooth conduct of the election. "I am looking forward to cooperation from every individual and also request all

to refrain from any unethical work, which will destroy the sanctity of this great process," said Gavali.

Meanwhile, a meeting was held at Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) conference hall where representatives of all the political parties participated. ADM Rourkela Ashutosh Kulkarni appealed to all the representatives to help the administration for conducting a safe, fair, clean and violence free election. Other senior officials posted at Rourkela were also present at the meeting and they were explained about the 'dos' and 'don'ts' during the election.

The total number of voters in the three sister constituencies - Biramitrapur, Rourkela and Raghunathpalli - stands at 6,37,333, of which females again outnumber their male counterparts. The number of female voters stands at 3,18,872 and male voters 3,18,381, while 80 are 'other' voters, said sources.

# 71K have lost deposits since first Lok Sabha polls

ELECTION COMMISSION REGULATIONS STIPULATE THAT CANDIDATES FAILING TO SECURE A MINIMUM OF ONE-SIXTH OF THE TOTAL VALID VOTES POLLED WOULD HAVE THEIR DEPOSITS REDIRECTED TO THE TREASURY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 19:** Over 71,000 candidates have lost their security deposits since the first Lok Sabha polls in 1951 for failing to secure a minimum of one-sixth of the total valid votes polled in their respective constituencies, according to an analysis of the Election Commission data.

In the 2019 elections, a staggering 86 per cent of candidates suffered this fate.

Election Commission regulations stipulate that candidates failing to secure a minimum of one-sixth of the total valid votes polled would have their deposits redirected to the treasury.

Since the first Lok Sabha polls, 71,246 out of 91,160 candidates who contested have forfeited their security deposit, representing a cumulative figure of 78 per cent.

The increase in deposit amounts over the years has paralleled this trend, with the Rs 500 security deposit for general candidates and Rs 250 for candidates from SC/ST communities in 1951 increasing to Rs 25,000 and Rs 12,500 respectively for general and SC/ST candidates now.

Political analysts regard the preservation of deposits as a



THE PINNACLE OF THIS TREND WAS REACHED DURING THE 11TH LOK SABHA POLLS IN 1996 WHEN 91 PER CENT, OR 12,688 OUT OF 13,952 CANDIDATES, LOST THEIR DEPOSITS. THIS ELECTION ALSO WITNESSED THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF CANDIDATES VYING FOR LOK SABHA SEATS

In the inaugural Lok Sabha Elections in 1951-52, nearly 40 per cent - 745 out of 1,874 candidates - lost their deposits

The trend of candidates losing their deposits has consistently risen in subsequent Lok Sabha elections

matter of pride for candidates, while the forfeiture of deposits is often deemed humiliating.

In 2019 elections, among prominent political parties, the BSP forfeited deposits on the highest number of seats, with 345 out of its 383 candidates losing their deposits, followed by the Congress with 148 out of its 421 candidates losing deposits.

In BJP, 51 out of its 69 candidates lost deposits and in CPI, 41 out of its 49 candidates forfeited their deposits, according to official records.

In the inaugural Lok Sabha Elections in 1951-52, nearly 40 per cent - 745 out of 1,874 can-

didates - lost their deposits.

The trend of candidates losing their deposits has consistently risen in subsequent Lok Sabha elections.

The pinnacle of this trend was reached during the 11th Lok Sabha polls in 1996 when 91 per cent, or 12,688 out of 13,952 candidates, lost their deposits. This election also witnessed the highest number of candidates vying for Lok Sabha seats.

In 1991-92, 7,539 out of 8,749 contestants lost their security deposit, accounting for 86 per cent of the candidates.

In 2009, 6,829 out of 8,070 or 85 per cent of candidates lost

their deposits while 7,000 out of 8,251 candidates or 84 per cent lost their security deposit in 2014, indicating that forfeiture of deposits has not served as a deterrent against contesting elections.

Jagdeep S Chhokar, founder-member and trustee of the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) said money is now like chicken feed for certain sections of the society and there is so much division between the rich and the poor that many people contest elections just for the sake of it.

"The fundamental reason for many people contesting despite losing a security deposit was that people can afford it and losing the security deposit is not a big setback," he told PTI.

Historically, candidates from national parties have fared well in saving their deposits. In the first Lok Sabha polls in 1951-52, 28 per cent or 344 out of 1,217 candidates from national parties lost their deposits.

This improved in the next elections in 1957 when only 130 out of 919 candidates or 14 per cent candidates lost their deposits.

The 1977 polls witnessed the best performance ever by national parties as only 100 out of 1,060 candidates (nine per cent) from these parties lost their de-



# national

## of the day quote

The only effect of the CPI's campaign against me in Thiruvananthapuram is to divide the anti-BJP vote. And they preach alliance dharma in Wayanad!

It is not that it happened suddenly. For one year, I had been telling leadership that this is right time... Bring a new face

Real voters are the ones who shape electoral outcomes, not a handful of political activists

## SHORT TAKES

### UPSC prelims postponed

New Delhi: The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Tuesday postponed the civil services preliminary examination to June 16 from May 26 due to the Lok Sabha elections.

### Delhi court summons Karti

New Delhi: A Delhi court Tuesday summoned Congress MP Karti Chidambaram and others in a money laundering case linked to an alleged visa scam involving Chinese nationals.

### Sanjay takes oath as RS MP

New Delhi: Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar Tuesday administered the oath of office to jailed Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh after his re-election to the Upper House from Delhi for a second term.

### Haryana CM expands Cabinet

Chandigarh: The Nayab Singh Saini government in Haryana carried out its first Cabinet expansion Tuesday by inducting eight party MLAs as ministers.



They are giving five Bharat Ratnas in a space of few months at the time of polls. So this shows their fear, they are rattled, one can make out from the statements being made by BJP leaders

BHUPESH BAGHEL | CONGRESS LEADER

### SANDHU JOINS BJP

Former Indian ambassador to the United States Taranjit Singh Sandhu joined the BJP Tuesday, amid a possibility that he may be fielded in the Lok Sabha polls from Amritsar in Punjab



Students pose during a voter awareness campaign ahead of Lok Sabha elections, at a college in Chennai, Tuesday

## Top court puts end to NCP symbol war

Commission, on the ground that it is disrupting the level playing field. The NCP, founded by Sharad Pawar, had 'clock' as its election symbol before its split. The symbol is now with the Ajit Pawar faction.

## Paras resigns after BJP opts for Chirag



Union Minister Paras at a press conference

New Delhi, March 19: Union Minister Pashupati Kumar Paras resigned Tuesday as he accused the BJP of doing "injustice" with his Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party by excluding it from the seat-sharing deal with allies for the Lok Sabha polls in Bihar.

## BJP trying to 'steal' a Thackeray: Uddhav



Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, March 19: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray Tuesday accused the BJP of trying to 'steal' a 'Thackeray' to win elections, a remark coming in the wake of a meeting between MNS chief Raj Thackeray and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Addressing a gathering in Nanded district, Uddhav Thackeray also said he was not bothered if the BJP took away his estranged cousin. Uddhav Thackeray's swipe at BJP comes after Raj Thackeray met Shah in Delhi amid a buzz that the BJP is looking to ally with him for the Lok Sabha polls to boost its alliance in Maharashtra.

## Sita Soren quits JMM, joins BJP

New Delhi/Ranchi, March 19: JMM legislator Sita Soren, the sister-in-law of former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, joined the BJP Tuesday, saying she is becoming a part of "Modi's Parivaar" to save the state and ensure justice for its people.

## 2023 broke every single climate indicator: WMO

Antarctic sea-ice extent reached an absolute record low in February. The annual maximum extent was around 1 million square kilometres below the previous record low maximum



World Meteorological Organisation

New Delhi, March 19: Greenhouse gas levels, surface temperatures, ocean heat and acidification, and sea level rise all reached record highs in 2023, according to a new report by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released Tuesday.

near-surface temperature at 1.45 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial baseline (1850-1900). "Sirens are blaring across all major indicators... Some records are not just chart-topping, they are chart-busting. And changes are speeding up," said United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

community is sounding the red alert to the world... The climate crisis is the defining challenge that humanity faces," WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo said.

To limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, countries must deliver enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), economy-wide emissions reductions, and investments in nature and adaptation, he stressed. Concentrations of the three main greenhouse gases - carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide - reached record-high observed levels, the report said.

low in February. The annual maximum extent was around 1 million square kilometres below the previous record low maximum. The global set of reference glaciers for the hydrological year 2022-2023 experienced the largest loss of ice on record (1950-2023), driven by an extremely negative mass balance in both western North America and Europe, the WMO noted.

Kolkata, March 19: The Election Commission Tuesday removed Vivek Sahay as West Bengal DGP, less than 24 hours after naming him for the post, and directed the state government to appoint Sanjoy Mukherjee, a year junior to Sahay in the IPS cadre, in his place.

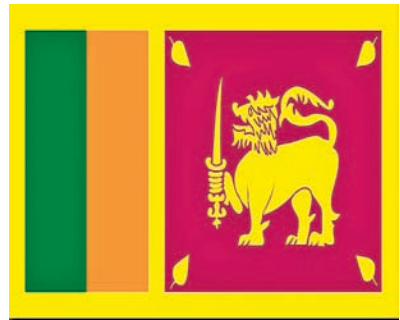
# international



Medical licences that have been granted to save people's lives should not be used as a tool to threaten and cause anxiety among the people  
YOON SUK YEOL  
| SOUTH KOREA, PRESIDENT

## SRI LANKA MOVES FOR ELECTORAL REFORMS

Sri Lanka's cabinet has approved a proposal to reform the Parliamentary election system in the island nation ahead of the Presidential election likely to be held later this year



## of the day quote

We expect strong support from the international community, including NATO, for the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan  
NIKOL PASHINYAN | ARMENIA PM

I am deeply concerned by the Indian government's decision to notify its controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, particularly the law's potential ramifications on India's Muslim community. Making matters worse is the fact that it is being pushed during the holy month of Ramadan  
BEN CARDIN | UNITED STATES SENATOR

Kiev plans to create a special register of the destroyed cultural and tourism facilities, which will be a tool for determining the amount of compensation from Russia  
DENYS SHMYHAL | UKRAINE PM

# HK passes new national security law

HONG KONG'S POLITICAL SCENE HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY SINCE THE MASSIVE 2019 STREET PROTESTS THAT CHALLENGED CHINA'S RULE OVER THE SEMI-AUTONOMOUS TERRITORY, AND THE IMPOSITION OF BEIJING'S NATIONAL SECURITY LAW

AGENCIES

**Hong Kong, March 19:** Hong Kong lawmakers unanimously passed a new national security law Tuesday that grants the government more power to quash dissent, widely seen as the latest step in a sweeping political crackdown that was triggered by pro-democracy protests in 2019. The legislature passed the Safeguarding National Security Bill during a special session that lasted Tuesday. It comes on top of a similar law imposed by Beijing four years ago, which has already largely silenced Opposition voices in the financial hub.

Hong Kong's Legislative Council, which is packed with Beijing loyalists following an electoral overhaul, expedited the process. Since the bill was unveiled March 8, a committee held daily meetings for a week, following an appeal by Hong Kong leader John Lee to push the law through "at full speed".

The law threatens stringent penalties for a wide range of actions authorities call threats to national security, with the most severe — including treason and insurrection — punishable by life imprisonment. Lesser offences, including the possession of seditious publications, could also lead to several years in jail. Some provisions allow criminal prosecutions for acts committed anywhere in the world. After the voting, Hong Kong leader John Lee announced at the council's chamber that the law will take effect Saturday. Legislative Council President



Hong Kong security chief Chris Tang poses for photos with lawmakers as they hold drafts of the Safeguarding National Security Bill, also referred to as Basic Law Article 23, before the second reading at Hong Kong's Legislative Council in Hong Kong, China

Andrew Leung said he believed all lawmakers were honored to have taken part in this "historic mission". "I fully agree with what the Chief Executive said: the sooner the legislation is completed, the sooner national security will be safeguarded," he said. Critics worry the new law will further erode civil liberties that Beijing promised to preserve for 50 years when the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997. Hong Kong's political scene has changed dramatically since the massive 2019 street protests that challenged China's rule over the semi-autonomous territory, and the imposition of

Beijing's National Security Law. Many leading activists have been prosecuted, while others sought refuge abroad. Influential pro-democracy media such as Apple Daily and Stand News were shuttered. The crackdown prompted an exodus of disillusioned young professionals and middle-class families to the US, Britain, Canada, and Taiwan. Hong Kong's mini-constitution, the Basic Law, requires the city to enact a home-grown national security law. A previous attempt in 2003 sparked a massive street protest that drew half a million people, and forced the legislation to be shelved. Such

HONG KONG'S LEADER JOHN LEE SAID THE LAW WOULD COME INTO EFFECT MARCH 23 AND CALLED IT A "HISTORIC MOMENT FOR HONG KONG"

protests against the current bill were absent largely due to the chilling effect of the existing security law.

Both Chinese and Hong Kong governments say the Beijing-imposed law restored stability after the 2019 protests.

Officials insist the new security law balances security with safeguarding rights and freedoms. The city government said it's needed to prevent a recurrence of the protests, and that it will only affect "an extremely small minority" of disloyal residents.

The measure targets espionage, disclosing state secrets, and "colluding with external forces" to commit illegal acts, among others. Its provisions include tougher penalties for people convicted of endangering national security by certain acts if they're also found to be working with foreign governments or organisations to do so.

Those who damage public infrastructure with the intent to endanger national security could be jailed for 20 years, or if they colluded with external forces, for life. In 2019, protesters occupied Hong Kong's airport and vandalised railway stations.

Businesspeople and journalists have expressed fears that a broad law against disclosure of state secrets and foreign interference will affect their day-to-day work.

Observers are closely watching to see if the authorities will extend enforcement to other professional sectors and its implications on liberties for Hong Kongers.

## SOUTH CHINA SEA ROW

# US underlines 'ironclad' support to Philippines



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Manila (Philippines), March 19:** Secretary of State Antony Blinken underscored Washington's "ironclad commitment" Tuesday to help defend the Philippines in case of an armed attack against its forces after clashes between Chinese and Filipino coast guards in the disputed South China Sea recently turned more hostile.

Blinken, the highest-level official to visit the United States treaty ally, met his Philippine counterpart Enrique Manalo Tuesday before planned meetings with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr and other top officials in Manila.

President Joe Biden will host Marcos and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in a White House summit in April. The three are likely to discuss growing concerns over increasingly aggressive Chinese actions in the South China Sea and North Korea's nuclear programme.

"We have a shared concern about the PRC's actions that threaten our common vision for a free, open Indo-Pacific, including in the South China Sea and in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone," Blinken said, using the abbreviation for the People's Republic of China.

The Chinese coast guard blocked and used water cannons against Philippine vessels in a confrontation two weeks ago that slightly injured a Filipino admiral and four of his sailors near the disputed Second Thomas Shoal. The March 5 faceoff in the high seas also caused two minor collisions between Chinese and Philippine vessels and prompted Manila's Department of Foreign Affairs to summon China's deputy ambassador to convey a protest against the Chinese coast guard's actions, which the Philippines said were unacceptable.

The Chinese coast guard said then that "it took control measures in accordance with the law against Philippine ships that illegally intruded into the waters adjacent to Ren'ai Reef," the name Beijing uses for Second Thomas Shoal. The Second Thomas Shoal, which is occupied by a small Philippine navy contingent but surrounded by Chinese coast guard ships and other allied vessels, was the site of several tense skirmishes between Chinese and Philippine coast guard ships in the past year. But Filipino officials said the confrontation earlier this month was particularly serious because of the injuries sustained by its navy personnel and damage to their vessel.

## SHORT TAKES

### H-1B initial registration period to close March 22

**Washington:** The initial registration period for the H-1B visas, the most sought-after by Indian IT professionals, for fiscal 2025 closes March 22, a federal agency has said. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. The initial registration period for the most sought-after H-1B visas for foreign guest workers for fiscal 2025 closes at 12 noon Eastern Time (9:30 pm IST) March 22, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said Monday.

### Guterres decries Myanmar violence

**Bangkok:** Military airstrikes in western Myanmar killed at least 25 members of the country's Muslim Rohingya minority, including children, local media reported, prompting the UN chief to express concerns over the escalating violence. According to the reports, the airstrikes took place early Monday morning and targeted the village of Thada, north of Minbya township in Rakhine state.

### Pak court acquits Imran in two cases

**Islamabad:** In some relief to Imran Khan, a court in Pakistan Tuesday acquitted the jailed former prime minister in two different cases related to the incidents of vandalism during his anti-government long march in March 2022. District and Sessions Court Judicial Magistrate Shaista Kundi accepted Khan's petitions and acquitted him in cases registered at Islamabad's Lohi Bhair and Sahala police stations, Geo News reported.

### 13 trapped after mine collapses

**Moscow:** At least 13 miners have been trapped in a collapsed gold mine in far eastern Russia, regional officials said Tuesday. Part of the mine collapsed in Zeysk district, authorities in the Amur region said. The Emergencies Ministry reported that 13 miners were trapped, but the regional prosecutor's office said that up to 15 could remain underground. A rescue operation has been launched.

## TIDBITS

### Kate Middleton spotted shopping near home

**London:** A video of a beaming Kate Middleton shows her out and about shopping at a farm shop with her husband Prince William near the family home in Windsor, her first public appearance since the so-called "photogate" fiasco of an "edited" royal photograph after her abdominal surgery triggered rumours over her health. The video, which shows the 42-year-old Princess of Wales carrying her own shopping bag as the royal couple walk together, was released late Monday by "The Sun" newspaper which said the footage is from Saturday.

### US defense chief vows continued aid to Ukraine

**Ramstein Air Base (Germany):** Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin vowed Tuesday that the US will continue to support Ukraine's war effort against Russia, even as the US Congress remains stalled over funding to send additional weapons to the front. "The United States will not let Ukraine fail," said Austin, addressing more than 50 defence leaders from Europe and around the world who are meeting at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany. "This coalition will not let Ukraine fail. And the free world will not let Ukraine fail." The meeting comes a week after US defence officials found and used \$300 million in contract savings to fund a new package of military aid for Ukraine, pulling weapons from Pentagon stocks.

### White House to host trilateral summit April 11

**Washington:** Leaders of the US, Japan and the Philippines will meet here April 11 for their first-ever trilateral summit, during which they will discuss cooperation to promote inclusive economic growth and emerging technologies and further peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region amidst China's aggressive actions. US President Joe Biden will host his Filipino counterpart Ferdinand R Marcos Jr and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio of Japan at the White House for the maiden trilateral summit, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Monday. During their meeting, the three leaders will advance a partnership built on deep historical ties of friendship, robust and growing economic relations, a proud and resolute commitment to shared democratic values, and a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.



Girls practice in a ballet school in a bomb shelter in Kharkiv, Ukraine. Kharkiv, Ukraine's closest big city to the Russian border, is regularly under Russian missile attacks

# Several hosps stop newborn delivery services in China

REUTERS

**Hong Kong, March 19:** Many hospitals in China have stopped offering newborn delivery services this year, state-backed news outlet Daily Economic News reported, with industry experts warning of an "obstetric winter" due to declining demand amid a record drop in new births.

Hospitals in various provinces including in eastern Zhejiang and southern Jiangxi have in the past two months announced that they will close their obstetric departments, according to notices viewed by Reuters.

The Fifth People's Hospital of Ganzhou City in Jiangxi said on its official WeChat account that obstetric services would be suspended from March 11.

Zhejiang's Jiangshan Hospital of Traditional Medicine announced on its WeChat page that its obstetrics business would stop from February 1. The closures come as Chinese



policymakers grapple with how to boost young couples' desire to have children as authorities face a growing demographic headache of a rapidly ageing society.

China's population fell for a second consecutive year in 2023 as the record-low birth rate and high deaths due to Covid-19 accelerated a downturn that officials fear will have profound long-term effects on the economy's growth potential.

The most recent available data from China's National Health Commission showed the number of maternity hospitals dropped to 793 in 2021 from 807 in 2020.

Local media including Daily Economic News said the plummeting number of newborns meant that it was not possible for many hospitals to keep operating their obstetrics departments. "The obstetric winter" seems to be coming quietly," the news-

MANY WOMEN IN CHINA ARE OPTING TO REMAIN CHILDLESS DUE TO HIGH CHILDCARE COSTS, AN UNWILLINGNESS TO MARRY OR PUT THEIR CAREERS ON HOLD IN A TRADITIONAL SOCIETY WHERE THEY ARE STILL SEEN AS THE MAIN CAREGIVERS AND WHERE GENDER DISCRIMINATION REMAINS RIFE

AUTHORITIES HAVE TRIED TO ROLL OUT INCENTIVES AND MEASURES TO BOOST THE BIRTH RATE, INCLUDING EXPANDING MATERNITY LEAVE, FINANCIAL AND TAX BENEFITS FOR HAVING CHILDREN AND HOUSING SUBSIDIES

paper reported Friday. Many women in China are opting to remain childless due to high childcare costs, an unwillingness to marry or put their careers on hold in a tra-

ditional society where they are still seen as the main caregivers and where gender discrimination remains rife.

Authorities have tried to roll out incentives and measures to boost the birth rate, including expanding maternity leave, financial and tax benefits for having children and housing subsidies.

But China is one of the world's most expensive places to bring up a child relative to its gross domestic product per capita, a prominent Chinese think tank said in February, as it detailed the time and opportunity cost for women who give birth.

More babies are being born in hospitals across China in the Year of the Dragon, which began February 10, financial news outlet Yicai reported, with the dragon Chinese zodiac sign believed to be particularly auspicious. But demographers say any bump from a "dragon baby" boom is likely to be short-lived.

## Bolsonaro indicted for suspected fraud on vaccine records

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Sao Paulo, March 19:** Brazil's Federal Police have accused former President Jair Bolsonaro of criminal association and falsifying his own Covid-19 vaccination data, marking the first indictment for the embattled far-right leader with others potentially in store.

The Supreme Court released the police's indictment Tuesday that alleges Bolsonaro and 16 others inserted false information into the public health database to make it appear as though the then-president, his 12-year-old daughter and several others in his circle had received the Covid-19 vaccine. During the pandemic, Bolsonaro was one of the few world leaders railing against the vaccine, openly flouting health restrictions and encouraging society to follow his example.

# business

## of the day quote

I think the next 2-3 years will be very crucial (2024-2026). These years will see many more new electric cars coming at different price points. Then I think our reach to our existing customers or first-time buyers will go up

BALBIR SINGH DHILLON | AUDI INDIA HEAD

One very important focus area of ours is going to be international consultancy... Under RITES Videsh which is basically a strategic initiative

RAHUL MITHAL | RITES LTD CMD

As climate change intensifies, so does the urgency for robust climate finance mechanisms to fund adaptation, mitigation, and resilience-building efforts worldwide

GIRISH CHANDRA MURMU | CAG OF INDIA

## SHORT TAKES

### Bol cuts home loan rates by 15 bps

Mumbai: Public sector lender Bank of India Tuesday announced a reduction in new home loan rates to 8.3 per cent from 8.45 per cent and fully waived off processing fees as a limited period offer till the end of this month. The bank claimed that at 8.3 per cent, it has the lowest rate among its peers. For SBI and HDFC Bank, which are the industry leaders, the lowest rate begins at 8.4 per cent. The offer is valid up to March 31, it added. The bank also said it is offering special financing for rooftop solar panels at 7 per cent interest rate and with no processing fee. At 8.3 per cent, a 30-year tenor home loan will have a starting EMI of ₹755 per month per lakh. The loan package is further enhanced with an overdraft facility, providing a flexible and comprehensive financial support system for homebuyers, it said.

### Tata Steel to raise up to ₹2,700cr

New Delhi: Tata Steel Tuesday said a board committee has approved raising of up to ₹2,700 crore through debentures. "The Committee of Directors (constituted by the Board of Directors of Tata Steel Ltd), at its meeting held today i.e., March 19, 2024, considered and approved the issue of NCDs," the steel major said in a regulatory filing. The date of allotment of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) is March 27 and its maturity date is March 26, 2027. Tata Steel group is among the top global steel companies with an annual crude steel capacity of 35 million tonnes per annum. Shares of the company declined 0.64 per cent to ₹148.65 apiece on the BSE.

### HCLTech, CAST expand alliance

New Delhi: IT company HCLTech Tuesday said it has expanded its alliance with semiconductor intellectual property (IP) core provider CAST to provide customised chips and aid enterprises in accelerating their digital transformation. HCLTech said it will enhance design verification, emulation, and rapid prototyping of its turnkey system-on-chip solutions by using silicon-proven IP (intellectual property) cores and controllers from CAST. This will help original equipment manufacturers in varied industries, including automotive, consumer electronics and logistics, to reduce engineering risk and development costs, a company statement said.



I always say that let's stay focused on the consumer and let's give them far beyond the expectations so that consumers don't have a reason to go to competition

FALGUNI NAYYAR | NYKAA FOUNDER AND CEO

### UNILEVER CUTTING 7,500 JOBS

Unilever, the company that makes Ben & Jerry's ice cream, Dove soaps and Vaseline, said Tuesday that it is cutting 7,500 jobs and spinning off its ice cream business to reduce costs and boost profits. The London-based company said the split is expected to be completed by the end of next year



## India can sustain 8% growth: RBI bulletin

Conducive macroeconomic configuration may become a launching pad for a step-up in the country's growth trajectory, says an article on the 'State of Economy'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 19: India can sustain 8 per cent annual GDP growth and the conducive macroeconomic configuration may become a launching pad for a step-up in the country's growth trajectory, said an article on the 'State of Economy' in the central bank's March Bulletin published Tuesday.

Over the period 2021-24, gross domestic product (GDP) growth has averaged above 8 per cent.

The global economy is losing steam, with growth slowing in some of the most resilient economies and high frequency indicators, pointing to further levelling in the period ahead, said the article authored by a team led by RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra.

In India, real GDP growth was at a six-quarter high in the October-December period of 2023-24, powered by strong momentum, robust indirect taxes, and lower subsidies.

The high visibility of structural demand and healthier corporate and bank balance sheets will likely be the galvanising forces for growth going forward.

"The world is confronted with large shifts in structure and sentiments, which are either underway or impending," it said. The article noted that the outlook



is shrouded with layers of uncertainty, exacerbated by geopolitical and extreme weather risks as well as fragmenting forces.

By contrast, it said the Indian economy is experiencing a conducive macroeconomic configuration that can be its launching pad for a step-up in its growth trajectory.

"Over the period 2021-24, growth has averaged above 8 per cent; and the underlying fundamentals indicate that this can be sustained and even built upon," the authors said.

The current account deficit is modest, external buffers are resilient and fiscal consolidation is into its third consecutive year even as corporations are deleveraging and improving their debt servicing capacity.

According to the article, balance sheets in the financial sector are

In India, real GDP growth was at a six-quarter high in October-December period of 2023-24, powered by strong momentum and robust indirect taxes

sound and healthy, providing the wherewithal for intermediating the productive credit needs of a resurgent economy. "Financial markets are reflecting these favourable formations. Capital inflows have resumed strongly as investor interest floods back into India," it said.

The authors further said technology is offering new growth opportunities to seize by becoming more competitive and efficient.

## AM/NS India receives Quality Circle, HSE Excellence Awards

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 19: ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India), a joint venture between ArcelorMittal and Nippon Steel, two of the world's leading steelmakers, has been presented with two prestigious awards, the Quality Circle Award and the HSE (Health, Safety, and Environment) Excellence Award during the Odisha Annual Meeting 2024 organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Both the awards were presented to the company officials by Bhupendra Singh, IAS, Special Secretary, Industries, Govt of Odisha. More than 70 companies participated in a rigorous evaluation process post which an independent jury panel decided the winners in each category. Winning these awards reaffirms the company's commitment to excellence in quality, safety, and sustainability, showcasing its persistent efforts towards operational excellence.

The Quality Circle Award, a testament to AM/NS India's dedication to quality enhancement and innovation, recognises the company's exemplary practices in fostering a culture of continuous improvement. AM/NS India has demonstrated its unwavering focus on quality



through the implementation of robust quality management systems and the encouragement of employee participation in quality initiatives.

Moreover, the HSE Excellence Award recognises AM/NS India's commitment to ensuring the highest standards of health, safety, and environmental measures across its operations. By prioritising employee training and implementing rigorous safety protocols, the company has successfully cultivated an environment where emphasis on health, safety and environment is not just a priority, but a core value rooted in every employee and partner.

Stating the significance of these accolades, Suresha G, Executive Director, Odisha Operations, AM/NS India said "We are grateful to CII for recognising our team's efforts in driving excellence across all aspects of our operations. These awards serve as a motivation for the entire AM/NS India team to continually raise the bar in terms of quality, safety, and sustainability performance."

## ZOMATO LAUNCHES 'PURE VEG FLEET'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 19: Zomato Founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal Tuesday announced the launch of a 'Pure Veg Mode' service to cater to customers who have pure vegetarian dietary preference. He cited feedback from vegetarian customers as the reason for the launch of the new service and informed that the online food delivery platform is also introducing a 'Pure Veg Fleet' in India for customers who follow a 100 per cent vegetarian diet.

In a series of posts on X, formerly Twitter, Goyal said India has the highest percentage of vegetarians globally, and these new features were launched based on their feedback.

"India has the largest percentage of vegetarians in the world, and one of the most important feedback we've gotten from them is that they are very particular about how their food is cooked, and how their food is handled." "To solve their dietary preferences, we are today launching a 'Pure Veg Mode' along with a 'Pure Veg Fleet' on Zomato, for customers who have a 100 per cent vegetarian dietary preference," the Zomato CEO said.

Goyal shared that 'Pure Veg Mode' includes a selection of restaurants serving exclusively vegetarian food, excluding any establishments offering non-vegetarian items.

## BIZ BUZZ

### Samsung launches Galaxy A55 5G & Galaxy A35 5G

Bhubaneswar: Samsung, India's largest consumer electronics brand, Tuesday announced the launch of Galaxy A55 5G and Galaxy A35 5G with awesome innovations. The new A series devices have multiple flagship-like features including Gorilla Glass Victus+ protection, camera features enhanced by AI, and a tamper-resistant security solution, the Samsung Knox Vault, amongst many other new features. "Galaxy A series has been the highest-selling smartphone series in India for the last two years, showcasing its immense popularity among India's MZ consumers. The launch of Galaxy A55 5G & A35 5G reinforces our commitment to make flagship-like innovations accessible to all. Galaxy A55 5G & A35 5G will help us consolidate our leadership in the 5G smartphone segment and the fastest-growing mid-premium (INR 30,000-INR 50,000) segment in the country," said Rishi Kulshrestha, Director, MX Business, Samsung India. For the first time, Galaxy A55 5G gets a metal frame and Galaxy A35 5G gets a premium glass back. These phones are available in three trendy colours - Awesome Lilac, Awesome Ice blue and Awesome Navy, and are rated IP67, which means they can withstand up to 30 minutes in 1 meter of fresh water. They are also built to resist dust and sand. With a 6.6-inch FHD+ Super AMOLED Display and minimized bezels, the 120Hz refresh rate provides extremely smooth performance. These smartphones come with flagship like durability with Corning Gorilla Glass Victus+ protection on the front and back. These new A series smartphones come with multiple innovative AI-enhanced camera features to take the user's content game to the next level. These features include Photo Remaster, Image Clipper and Object Eraser among many others.



### RBI's MSME outreach



Bhubaneswar: With an objective to reaching out to MSME entrepreneurs and create awareness of banking facilities, a Town Hall Meeting on MSME related issues was organised by Reserve Bank of India, Bhubaneswar at NOCCI Business Park in Balasore district, Tuesday. The meeting was chaired by Dr. SP Mohanty, Regional Director, RBI, Bhubaneswar and attended by D. Prasanth Kumar Reddy, IAS, Director of Industries, Odisha, Goutam Patra, GM-Cum-Convenor, SLBC, Pradyumna Kumar Choudhary, DGM, SIDBI, DGM, SBI and DGM, Bank of India. More than 170 participants from MSME associations i.e., BCIC, NOCCI and other entrepreneurs from Balasore district including General Manager of District Industrial Centre, Regional Managers and other officers of major banks in Balasore district and others participated in the programme. An interactive session for MSME entrepreneurs was also organised at the end of the meeting, where various participants asked their queries and shared their feedback on the problems faced by them in accessing bank finance and other related issues.

## In a first in 17 yrs, Bank of Japan hikes interest rate

THE SHIFT MAKES JAPAN THE LAST CENTRAL BANK TO EXIT NEGATIVE RATES, AND ENDS AN ERA IN WHICH POLICYMAKERS AROUND THE WORLD SOUGHT TO PROP UP GROWTH THROUGH CHEAP MONEY AND UNCONVENTIONAL MONETARY TOOLS

REUTERS

Tokyo, March 19: The Bank of Japan (BOJ) ended eight years of negative interest rates and other remnants of its unorthodox policy Tuesday, making a historic shift away from its focus



on reflating growth with decades of massive monetary stimulus.

While the move was Japan's first interest rate hike in 17 years, it still keeps rates stuck around zero as a fragile economic recovery forces the central bank to go slow on further rises in borrowing costs, analysts say.

The shift makes Japan the last central bank to exit negative rates, and ends an era in which policymakers around the world sought to prop up growth through cheap money and unconventional monetary tools. "We reverted to a normal monetary policy targeting short-term interest rates, as with other central banks," BOJ Governor Kazuo Ueda said at a press conference after the decision.

"If trend inflation heightens a bit more, that may lead to an increase in short-term rates," Ueda said, without elaborating on the likely pace and timing of further rate hikes.

In a widely expected decision, the BOJ ditched a policy put in place since 2016 by former Governor Haruhiko Kuroda that applied a 0.1% charge on some excess reserves financial institutions parked with the central bank.

The BOJ set the overnight call rate as its new policy rate and decided to guide it in a range of 0-0.1% partly by paying 0.1% interest to deposits at the central bank.

"The BOJ today took its first, tentative step towards policy normalisation," said Frederic Neumann, chief Asia economist at HSBC in Hong Kong.

"The elimination of negative interest rates in particular signals the BOJ's confidence that Japan has emerged from the grip of deflation."

In a sign future rate hikes will be moderate, the BOJ also said it expects "accommodative financial conditions to be maintained for the time being."

Japanese shares rose after the decision. The yen fell below 150 per dollar, as investors took the BOJ's dovish guidance as a sign the interest rate differential between Japan and the United States likely will not narrow much.

### 'A NORMAL COUNTRY'

With inflation exceeding the BOJ's 2% target for well over a year, many market players had projected an end to negative interest rates either in March or April.

Expectations for a shift this week heightened significantly after unions' annual wage talks with major firms delivered the

biggest pay hikes in 33 years.

The end of the Kuroda era stimulus now swings the focus for markets, analysts and the wider public to when the BOJ will raise rates further.

Already Tuesday, commercial banks flagged plans to raise some of their deposit rates for the first time since 2007. Nomura and BNP Paribas both expect the BOJ to hike rates again before the end of the year.

"Essentially we're a normal country," said Bart Wakabayashi, State Street Tokyo Branch Manager.

"How does this impact households locally and their spending power? I think that's going to be the next big discussion and with an eye to that I don't think the BOJ can do anything beyond what they've announced."

The central bank introduced negative rates and YCC in 2016 as tepid inflation forced it to tweak its stimulus programme to a more sustainable one.

# MANDHANA LAUDS KOHLI



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 19:** RCB skipper Smriti Mandhana feels it's not right for people to undermine Virat Kohli's achievements for the Bangalore franchise in the wake of her side's Women's Premier League (WPL) title triumph here recently.

The Mandhana-led RCB defeated Delhi Capitals to lift the WPL trophy in only their second year, while their male counterparts, led by the charismatic Kohli for nearly a decade before he stepped down, haven't had success in the 16 years of IPL.

"The title is one thing, but what he (Kohli) has achieved for India is remarkable. So, I don't think that comparison is right in terms of where my career is and what he has already achieved," Mandhana told the media Tuesday.

"The reason why I do not like the comparison is that what he has achieved is great; he has been an inspirational person. A title does not define a lot of things; we all respect him and I feel like the respect has to be right up there for Virat. So, there is nothing different from me as well," said the India vice-cap-

tain.

Both Mandhana and Kohli wear No.18 jerseys and the left-handed batter said drawing comparison between the two based on that was unwarranted.

"I would not term it as an 18 comparison. The jersey number is just a personal choice; my birth date is 18th and I have 18 on my back... It does not define how he plays or (how) I play my cricket. He's been an inspiration to us in a lot of aspects, so I would not say title should define anything," she added.

Mandhana felt that the men's counterparts had always played

good competitive cricket but an IPL title had eluded them.

"I think, to be fair, the men's team has also played good cricket in the last 16 years; it is not like they have not played well. I don't think the comparison is right. RCB is a franchise; let's treat the men's and women's teams separately because we don't want to be compared. They are good at what they do. We are good at what we do," she added.

On how she scripted the team's super spell, where RCB grabbed nine Delhi Capitals wickets for just 43 runs, Mandhana said Sophie Molineux taking three wickets after the strategic timeout was the turning point.

"Especially that over after that strategic timeout when Sophie got those three wickets, that was pretty much the turning point. It was good to watch the way they (spinners) planned and executed. I think that was good to watch."

Mandhana praised the 'one tribe' culture in the side, saying it was something that each one in the group has adhered to and tried to build on in the last two years.

"Yeah, the team culture. There is one big thing we spoke about after (poor) last season with the management, and they were keen on building one. Because of course, we are just the first or second year into it, and if we do a few things right, it might set a few things right for a long time, and culture is something that is a big thing (in the side).

"One tribe, we are like one family and we are all there for each other. We backed each other up, and we did that a lot in the last season as well. Things didn't work out last year, but this year it was even more. Much better, the management was just there, celebrating each other's success."

# Perry opens up on RCB's WPL success



Ellyse Perry plays a shot during her match-winning knock in the WPL final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 19:** Staying calm and composed in the most high-pressure moments and peaking at the right time helped Royal Challengers Bangalore win their maiden title at the Women's Premier League (WPL), said star Australian all-rounder Ellyse Perry.

RCB beat Delhi Capitals by 8 wickets in the summit clash to claim the title Sunday. The 33-year-old Perry emerged as the star performer for RCB as she ended the tournament as leading run-scorer with 347 and also recorded the best bowling figures in WPL history taking 6 wickets against Mumbai Indians in their last league game.

"We've had a great time together; franchise cricket is one of those where there is a small window in time and things have to come together for the group and the individuals," Perry, who scored a vital 35 not out in the final, told PTI in an interview.

"Fortunately for us, we peaked

at the right time, we played our best cricket in the backend, we held our nerves and stayed nice and calm in big moments and beat the other best teams in the competition to win the trophy."

RCB had started WPL 2024 with back-to-back wins but lost a bit of momentum in the middle before roaring back to form in the nick of time, winning their must-win last league match, the Eliminator and the final.

Perry hoped the maiden win will lay a strong foundation for the young and inexperienced players of the side. "Hopefully we are building a really strong foundation platform for some sustained success," said the four-time T20 World Cup winner.

"We have got a really great group of girls, pretty similar to last year, obviously a few different tweaks and things like that. It is a group that really wants to play for one another. I think we have got a good blend of youth and experience and that gives us a lot of energy and it's a nice group to play a part in."

# Wrestlers urge PM to oust 'oppressors'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 19:** Urging Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "do something" to oust "oppressors" like Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh from Indian sports, the protesting duo of Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi Malik Tuesday denounced the IOA's decision to hand back wrestling's administrative control to the controversy-marred national federation.

In strongly-worded posts on X, the two wrestlers, who have accused Sharan Singh of sexually harassing women grapplers, called on the PM to intervene.

"The Prime Minister is a spin master, knows how to spin the issue by invoking 'women power' to counter the speeches of his rivals. Narendra Modi ji, let us also know the real truth of women power," posted Phogat, who is bound for the Olympic qualifiers next month in the 50kg category.

"Brij Bhushan, who exploited women wrestlers, has again taken over wrestling. It is hoped that you (PM) will not just use women as shields, but will also do something to oust such oppressors from the sports institutions of the country," the Asian Games gold medalist wrote.

Retired Olympic medallist Sakshi Malik too said that the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) office-bearers were acting as if they were above the law. "History is witness to the fact that powerful people in this country have played with the honour of women for centuries.

"The rich miscreant is so powerful that he is above the government, the Constitution and



the judiciary," she alleged. "After the government suspended the wrestling association, Brij Bhushan and Sanjay Singh kept giving statements that this suspension is just a show, we will be reinstated after a few days and we will have control over the wrestling association forever."

"This proved to be true and this letter from the Indian Olympic Association officially confirmed this and proved that even in this new India, the age-old tradition of insulting women will continue."

Their outburst comes a day after the Indian Olympic Association dissolved the ad-hoc committee, which was running wrestling in the country, and handed over the reins to WFI, led by Brij Bhushan's close aide Sanjay Singh.

The IOA dissolved the panel, saying "there is no further need" for it to continue after revocation of the suspension on the WFI by United World Wrestling last month.

Phogat, Bajrang Punia and Malik have been protesting against Sanjay Singh, saying the culture of fear, which was there during Brij Bhushan's tenure, will continue under him too.

# Rohit backed Hardik, Bumrah to hilt: Parthiv

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 19:** Former cricketer Parthiv Patel said Tuesday that Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah had got the full backing of Rohit Sharma when they were struggling in the early part of their IPL stints at Mumbai Indians.

Parthiv compared Rohit's leadership with CSK talisman MS Dhoni, saying the Mumbai cricketer never "made a blunder", while the Chennai captain had erred on a few occasions during his long IPL stint.

"I think the most important thing is that he (Rohit) supports his players. The best examples of this are Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah. Bumrah came into the MI set up in 2014 and by 2015, his performance wasn't great," Parthiv told Jio Cinema Tuesday.

"They even pondered sending him back after half the season. But Rohit Sharma believed in his ability and from 2016 onwards, his performance has been excellent," added the former India wicketkeeper, who played 25 Tests.

Bumrah, who came into the MI setup in 2014, has gone on to become the country's go-to pacer



in all three formats and played a pivotal role in Mumbai's success in IPL. Pandya, after becoming a part of the five-time champions in 2015, went on to lead Gujarat Titans to the IPL title in 2022 and is now back as MI skipper, replacing Rohit.

"Same with Hardik Pandya. He came in 2015 and became popular. His 2016 season wasn't great but MI stuck with him and Pandya became the player he is today."

He added that Rohit brings a sense of calm to the side, which



is unmatched. "The best example is the two IPLs MI won by just

one run each. That would not have been possible if you don't have a captain who can stay calm on the ground.

"When there's a tense match, sometimes wrong decisions or blunders are made. But the hallmark of Rohit Sharma's captaincy is that in the last 10 years, you don't remember that he made a blunder.

"Even Dhoni has made blunders like giving Pawan Negi an over, but if you see Rohit, you'll never see a blunder. Keeping the process simple is something that Dhoni advises but we see Rohit practice that in games," added Parthiv. Former India pacer Zaheer Khan said Rohit takes decisions based on circumstances, which is one of the most difficult tasks for a captain in IPL.

"You can plan for a game in advance but nobody knows how proceedings will unfold in the middle. He (Rohit) acts according to situations and takes decisions, and many times they are different from what may have been planned in the run-up to the game.

"I think that's his strength. In the IPL, taking on-the-spot decisions is one of the biggest challenges for captains and he did that well for MI," he added.

# Surya certain to miss MI's first game against GT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 19:** Star batter Suryakumar Yadav is certain to miss Mumbai Indians' IPL opener against Gujarat Titans March 24 as he is yet to get fitness clearance from the National Cricket Academy (NCA).

The World No.1 T20 batter Suryakumar has been stationed at the NCA in Bangalore for his recovery and rehabilitation following a surgery for sports hernia. Suryakumar, who has been out of action since December, had a fitness test at the NCA Tuesday but PTI understands that the 33-year-old needs "further assessment".

His participation in the subsequent matches for Mumbai Indians — against Sunrisers Hyderabad March 27, Rajasthan Royals April 1 and Delhi Capitals April 7 — would be determined at a later stage. Suryakumar Tuesday posted a cryptic message on his Instagram page conveying a 'heartbreak'.

Mumbai Indians, meanwhile, are occupied with closed-door practice games here at the Wankhede Stadium.

# PADDLER IN PRIME POSITION FOR SINGLES OLYMPICS BERTH Sharath jumps to 34th rank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 19:** Veteran Indian table tennis player Sharath Kamal Tuesday gained as many as 54 places to jump to 34th spot in the ITTF World Rankings, following a quarter-final finish at the Singapore Smash last week.

Sharath had been in the top-50 for a long time before a string of early exits pushed him down in the rankings. The 41-year-old, who will be featuring in his fifth and final Olympics in Paris later this year, had beaten world number 15 Darko Jorgic before getting the better of 17th-ranked Omar Assar of Egypt enroute to the quarterfinals in the WTT event in Singapore.

Sharath, who is career best ranking is 30, will try to be in the top 16 before the Olympics in July-August. "Singapore turned out to be great. Will try to chase the top 16 at the Olympics," Sharath told PTI.

Sharath gained as many as 400 points for his last eight ap-



pearance, ensuring a comfortable entry in the top-50 of the rankings.

He is also now the highest ranked Indian by a distance with Harmeet Desai closest to him in 65th position. The two players are best placed to play singles in

the Paris Olympics with India having already secured a historic qualification in the team event.

The Table Tennis Federation of India will pick the two singles players on the basis of their world rankings by May 16.

# DECISION-MAKING TO GET HUGE AID IN IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 19:** A Smart Replay System will be introduced in the upcoming IPL to bolster speed and accuracy in decision-making.

The TV umpire will get inputs directly from two operators of the Hawk-Eye system who will sit in the same room as him and help with images captured from eight hi-speed cameras placed across the ground, a report in ESPNcricinfo stated.

Under the new system, the role of the TV broadcast director becomes redundant who serves as a 'conduit' between the umpire and the Hawk-Eye operators.

The new system will enable the TV umpire to analyse more visuals than before including split-screen images, and will also broadcast live his interactions with the Hawk-Eye operators so that the viewers have clear understanding of the thought process.



The system will be able to help the umpire with more and clear visuals from different angles when it comes to judging catches near boundary ropes, caught behind, leg-before, stumping or even those catches which are taken inches off the turf.

The BCCI has recently conducted a two-day workshop here for select umpires as about 15 of them, comprising both Indian and overseas umpires, would work with the Smart Replay System in this IPL. A similar referral system was trialled by the England and Wales Cricket Board in The Hundred competition.