



Extravagant gesture

Jacqueline Fernandez gets a Gulfstream Jet with her initials, JF, customised on exterior and interior as Valentine's Day gift

LEISURE | P2



India-B'desh talks

Border forces of India & Bangladesh to hold talks next week with issues such as border fencing, attacks on BSF personnel and civilians

NATIONAL | P8



Wealth erosion

Investors' wealth erodes by ₹25.31 lakh crore in eight days of market crash as Sensex tumbles over 3 per cent

BUSINESS | P11



Shuttlers bow out

HS Prannoy fights valiantly, but India succumbs to a 0-3 defeat against Japan in quarterfinals of Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships

SPORTS | P12

Gold zooms past record ₹89k-mark



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: Gold prices Friday soared by ₹1,300 to hit an all-time high of ₹89,400 per 10 grams amid heavy buying from jewellers and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at ₹88,100 per 10 grams Thursday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed by ₹1,300 to hit a fresh peak of ₹89,000 per 10 grams against the previous close of ₹87,700 per 10 grams.

Silver also rallied by ₹2,000 to hit a four-month high of ₹1 lakh per kg Friday. The metal had finished at ₹98,000 per kg Thursday. In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for April delivery rose ₹184 to ₹85,993 per 10 grams.

"Gold prices continued their upward momentum, driven by a weaker dollar index and sustained support from US tariff policies. Gold rose on MCX, while Comex gold gained to trade at USD 2,935 per ounce," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities.

The focus now shifts to upcoming US Retail Sales and Core Retail Sales data, which could influence the next move in gold, Trivedi added. Silver futures zoomed by 2.517 or 2.64 per cent to ₹97,750 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

Globally, Comex gold futures for April delivery rose USD 6.49 per ounce to USD 2,951.89 per ounce. Meanwhile, spot gold traded higher at USD 2,929.79 per ounce.

Talks amid tariffs

Hours before his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House, US President Donald Trump signed an executive order on reciprocal tariffs which are likely to affect India more than any other US trading partner. And, after the talks with Modi, Trump said that India would increase its purchases of oil, gas, and military equipment from the US to help reduce the trade deficit, while also emphasising that Washington would not exempt New Delhi from reciprocal tariffs. Trump was clear about his stance during a 44-minute joint news conference with Modi, when he said, "Whatever India charges, we will charge them. We are being reciprocal with India." The announcement of these reciprocal tariffs during Modi's visit means that India will now need to navigate the challenge of protecting its domestic businesses while ensuring continued access to the US market. However, this balancing act may come with a huge economic cost for India as it struggles with a slowing economy. For now, India is hoping that committing to purchase additional American oil and gas, along with defence items such as F-35 stealth jets, will mitigate the negative impacts of Trump's tariff war. However, this may not translate into reality as long as Trump pursues his 'America First' policy with regard to trade as well as diplomacy. On the national security front, India failed to negotiate with the Trump administration the extradition of Khalistani extremist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, who holds dual US-Canadian citizenship. However, the US has agreed to extradite Canadian citizen Tahawwur Rana, one of the key accused in the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks



BOOSTING TIES: In this image released by the PMO Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump gesture during their meeting at the White House in Washington DC

PNN & AGENCIES

Washington, Feb 13: India and the US agreed Thursday to start talks to clinch an early trade deal and resolve their standoff over tariffs as New Delhi promised to buy more US oil, gas and military equipment and fight illegal immigration.

The series of agreements emerged after talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump at the White House, just hours after Trump railed against the climate for US businesses in India and unveiled a roadmap for reciprocal tariffs on countries that put duties on

US imports.

"Prime Minister Modi recently announced the reductions to India's unfair, very strong tariffs that limit us access to the Indian market, very strongly," Trump said. "And really it's a big problem I must say."

The deal to resolve trade concerns could be done within

the next seven months, said India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.

A joint statement after the meeting said Washington welcomed New Delhi's recent steps to lower tariffs on select US products and increase market access to US farm products, while seeking to negotiate the

initial segments of a trade deal by the fall of 2025.

Some of the leaders' agreements are aspirational. India wants to increase by 'billions of dollars' its purchases of US defence equipment and may make Washington the 'number one supplier' of oil and gas, Trump said at a joint press conference with Modi.

And Delhi wants to double trade with Washington by 2030, Modi said. Long-planned cooperation on nuclear energy, also discussed by the leaders, faces ongoing legal challenges.

"We're also paving the way to ultimately provide India with the F-35 stealth fighters," said Trump.

Although Trump had a warm relationship with Modi in his first term, he again said Thursday that India's tariffs were 'very high' and promised to match them, even after his earlier levies on steel and aluminum hit metal-producing India particularly hard.

Modi vowed to protect India's interests. "One thing that I deeply appreciate, and I learn from President Trump, is that he keeps the national interest supreme," Modi said. "Like him, I also keep the national interest of India at the top of everything else."

The two leaders praised each other and agreed to deepen security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, a thinly veiled reference to competition with China, as well as to start joint production on technologies like artificial intelligence.

The joint statement said the two countries agreed to aggressively address illegal immigration and human trafficking by strengthening law enforcement cooperation.

Ruckus over farmer distress

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Congress legislators created a ruckus in the Odisha Assembly Friday over law and order situation in the state and alleged mismanagement in paddy procurement leading to farmers' distress, prompting the Speaker to adjourn the House several times.

The Opposition members trooped to the well of the House even before Speaker Surama Padhy took her seat and raised slogans against the BJP government in the state. They demanded discussions on the law and order situation and alleged mismanagement in procuring paddy, and urged the Speaker to suspend all other businesses of the House.



Senior Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati was seen attempting to climb the Speaker's podium. BJD members stressed the alleged mismanagement in paddy procurement, while Congress raised the law and order issue. Unable to run the House, the Speaker adjourned the proceedings till noon. When the House reassembled, a similar scene was seen forcing the Speaker to further adjourn the proceedings till 4 pm. The

Question Hour and Zero Hour proceedings could not be held due to the din in the House.

Opposition chief whip Pramila Mallik said the BJD members staged an agitation in the House as the Speaker rejected the party's notice for a discussion on farmers' issues.

"At least 14 farmers have died by suicide over crop loss due to unseasonal rains. We have given a notice for a discussion on the issue. However, the Speaker refused to accept it. Farmers are on the streets and have alleged that they are not being paid for about 10 kg of paddy for a quintal. The authorities deduct 10 kg of paddy for a quintal of grain in the name of 'katni chatni' (deduction of paddy)," Mallik told reporters outside the House.

State to create 25 lakh 'Lakhpati Didis': Majhi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday announced the launch of the 'Lakhpati Didi Sahayika Yojana' for the welfare of women working as community support staff at the grassroots level.

"I am introducing a new scheme called the 'Lakhpati Didi Sahayika Yojana.' Under this initiative, the government will temporarily bear the remuneration cost of the community support staff and will provide grants to Gram Panchayat Level Federations," he told the Assembly.

He said more than 62,000 community support staff will benefit from this decision, with their

remuneration starting from April 2024. "Our government is committed to making women self-reliant and building a prosperous Odisha. Women community support staff play a crucial role in this vision. To address their challenges, we have taken an important step by launching this scheme," he added.

Majhi said the government is also implementing the 'Lakhpati Didi Yojana' for the economic growth of women in SHGs. Under this scheme, the goal is to help as many women members of SHGs as possible earn an income of ₹1 lakh annually. "The state government has set a target of creating 25 lakh 'Lakhpati Didis' by 2027," the CM said.

PM-led panel to name new CEC next week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: A selection committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to meet early next week to finalise the name of the next Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), sources said Friday.

The panel also comprises the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and a Union Cabinet minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

The panel could meet either Sunday or Monday ahead of the retirement of incumbent Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar February 18.

It will recommend a name from among the candidates shortlisted by a search committee. The President will then appoint the next CEC based on the recommendation.

After Rajiv Kumar, Gyanesh Kumar is the senior-most election commissioner. His tenure is till January 26, 2029. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu is the other election commissioner.

So far, the senior-most election commissioner (EC) was elevated as CEC following the retirement of the incumbent. However, after a new law on appointments of the CEC and ECs came into force last year, a search committee shortlists names of five secretary-level officers for consideration by a PM-led panel for appointment to the posts.

Besides the CEC, a new EC could also be appointed to fill the vacancy created by Rajiv Kumar's retirement.

Scent of the mummy: Ancient Egyptian remains smell nice

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Feb 14: At first whiff, it sounds repulsive: sniff the essence of an ancient corpse.

But researchers who indulged their curiosity in the name of science found that well-preserved Egyptian mummies actually smell pretty good.

"In films and books, terrible things happen to those who smell mummified bodies," said Cecilia Bembibre, director of research at University College London's Institute for Sustainable Heritage. "We were surprised at the pleasantness of them."

"Woody," "spicy" and "sweet" were the leading descriptions from what sounded more like a wine tasting than

a mummy sniffing exercise. Floral notes were also detected, which could be from pine and juniper resins used in embalming.

The study published Thursday in the Journal of the American Chemical Society used both chemical analysis and a panel of human sniffers to evaluate the odors from nine mummies as old as 5,000 years that had been either in storage or on display at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

The researchers wanted to systematically study the smell of mummies because it has long been a subject of fascination for the public and researchers alike, said Bembibre, one of the report's authors. Archaeologists, historians, conservators



and even fiction writers have devoted pages of their work to the subject — for good reason.

Scent was an important consideration in the mummification process that used oils,

waxes and balms to preserve the body and its spirit for the afterlife. The practice was largely reserved for pharaohs and nobility and pleasant smells were associated with purity and dei-

ties while bad odors were signs of corruption and decay.

Without sampling the mummies themselves, which would be invasive, researchers from UCL and the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia were able to measure whether aromas were coming from the archaeological item, pesticides or other products used to conserve the remains, or from deterioration due to mold, bacteria or microorganisms.

"We were quite worried that we might find notes or hints of decaying bodies, which wasn't the case," said Matija Strlic, a chemistry professor at the University of Ljubljana. "We were specifically worried that there might be indications of microbial degradation, but that was

not the case, which means that the environment in this museum, is actually quite good in terms of preservation."

Using technical instruments to measure and quantify air molecules emitted from sarcophagi to determine the state of preservation without touching the mummies was like the Holy Grail, Strlic said.

"It tells us potentially what social class a mummy was from and therefore reveals a lot of information about the mummified body that is relevant not just to conservators, but to curators and archaeologists as well," he said. "We believe that this approach is potentially of huge interest to other types of museum collections."

leisure



PAMELA WANTS MORE CHALLENGING ROLES

The *Last Showgirl* star Pamela Anderson has revealed the lasting impact she hopes the film will have on her career going forward. "I want challenging roles, I want to transform and see what I am made of. I feel like I have only just scratched the surface," quipped the 57-year-old.

KANYE WEST, BIANCA DENY SPLIT RUMOURS

A representative for Kanye West and Bianca Censori has denied reports suggesting they are heading for divorce - insisting they are still together and have celebrated Valentine's Day as a couple.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES

Today ideas will flood your mind, but it is good that you will be able to carry them out efficiently. However, Ganesh warns you not to take rash decisions. Wise people will help you along the way. Pay heed to the advice of experienced people.

TAURUS

Ganesh predicts that today, you will be successful in money matters. There is, at best, only an outside chance that any stimulating event or thrilling escapade will occur today. In short, the day may be boring. Fret not as the dreary day may change into an exhilarating evening, feels Ganesh.

GEMINI

It is better for you to swim with the current in all of today's dealings, suggests Ganesh. This will help you effortlessly deal with even the most morbid state of affairs. No need to be a hero, today. Pleasure is the key word for you. Your performance will be satisfying at work, and more than satisfying back home.

CANCER

You will not only make plans, but will also act on them. So you can save money, time and energy for creative pursuits. The quality of your work and accomplishments will be high. Your creativity plays a key role in your accomplishments in career or business.

LEO

Today, Ganesh advises you to keep the Bhagavad Gita's verses in mind, and persist in fulfilling your duties without bothering about the fruits of your labour. Put in some extra effort to finish off whatever you undertake today. Patience bears its fruits and they are always sweet. Also, Ganesh reminds you that anybody can enjoy pleasure, but only few can handle pressure. So, take your pick!

VIRGO

You better identify your worth in the realms of emotions, feelings and sentiments. You shall warm up to and about everything - from play to colleagues to family. Simultaneously, you may realise where your limitations are. Ganesh predicts that the artist in you will flourish beginning today.

LIBRA

Ganesh says that today in your office you should be very careful in your work. It is likely that your superiors will not be happy about your work or your ability today. Those of you who are businessmen should try and delay sending off tenders today.

SCORPIO

It is likely that you shall learn an important lesson in life today. Remember that spite and envy beget enemies. Ganesh advises you to display some errors so as to make you seem more human and approachable.

SAGITTARIUS

Today, find yourself driving all your thoughts and actions towards your family. You will also spend some superb time with your dearie and discuss intimate matters. A relaxing day today as you spend time with your friends and family, chilling out and having a good laugh or two.

CAPRICORN

It's time to prove your extraordinary skills as a professional, says Ganesh. You will go out of your way, and even double your efforts to accomplish set goals, and chances are that you might succeed. Family and friends will be glad that could take out time to spend some happy hours with them. You will also let them know that they mean the world to you, and no matter what, you will be there whenever they need you.

AQUARIUS

The day begins on high note. You work hard, put your best foot forward and at the end get the final output as per your requirements. Romantic and beautiful, the setting Sun will bring the softer side of your personality to the fore as you will spend the evening with your sweetheart, predicts Ganesh.

PISCES

For you, today will be all work and no play, says Ganesh. This, however, will not stop you from putting in extra efforts to finish your pending projects and to meet your deadlines. Who else but a Virgo to handle the pain nonchalantly without bemoaning the lack of pleasure?

Jacqueline gets jet as V-Day gift

Mumbai: Sukesh Chandrashekhar, currently incarcerated in Mandoli Jail, New Delhi, has sent a special Valentine's Day letter to actress Jacqueline Fernandez, professing his love for her.

In an extravagant gesture for V-Day, Sukesh has gifted Fernandez a specially made Gulfstream jet with her initials, JF, customized on the exterior and interior.

The two-page letter, dated February 14, was addressed to Jacqueline and included a heartfelt message along with an attachment. The letter read, "Baby you know, how special Valentines Day is for us, our relationship started on the day of Valentines, the day where we forgave and accepted each other the way we are. Your Valentine's Day present is a specially made Gulfstream

Jet, with your initials JF customized on the exterior and interior."

He goes on to add, "The most important thing, no one can now question you about the Jet, because Baby I am Declaring the Jet in my Tax Returns for this year and paying the relevant gift taxes for the same, hereby making it fully legal and not any alleged proceeds of crime.

Baby girl, I know how much you love travelling, flying private, hope you love my Valentines present. Baby on this Valentines, I have only one wish, if there is a Re-Birth, I wanna be born as your heart, so that I can keep beating inside you."



Rashmika's life mantra

New Delhi: Known for her impressive performances in movies, Rashmika Mandanna, fondly called 'Crushmika' by her fans, has gained significant popularity for her versatility and captivating screen presence.

However, the actress says she doesn't follow a strategy when it comes to picking films and adds that she doesn't take her life too seriously, believing that one 'divine power' is guiding her.

It won't be wrong to call Rashmika one of the top heroines in Indian cinema courtesy the work she has done in blockbusters such as the *Geetha Govindam*, *Chamak*, *Pushpa* franchise and *Animal* to name a few.

When it comes to picking films, does she think about the value she would add to the project or the value it would add to her, the actress, who has a radiant smile, told this agency: "I think if you start thinking that way, you know, then life just becomes too hard."

"Firstly, I don't take my life too seriously. I just feel like there's one divine power guiding me, right. And I honestly just go with the flow," she added.

"But when I get films where I want to be a part of that storytelling, no matter what the character is, no matter if I'm a mother of two kids or a mother of four kids or I'm a grandmother or anything does not matter to me," said the actress, who has a natural sparkle and warmth in her eyes.



Qualities Adah looks for in men

Mumbai: Actress Adah Sharma on Valentine's Day has talked about what she finds most attractive qualities in a man and revealed that she is not into 'bad boys'.

Talking about what she looks for in her perfect man, Adah said: "I think the most attractive quality in a man is if he can keep his phone away and be present in the moment. I'm not into bad boys, just like I'm not into food gone bad."

Adah added: "I like good sanskaari guys. If he laughs at my jokes, he will be happier in the relationship! Larger volume of grey matter in the prefrontal cortex of his brain is more important for me in a guy than the size of his muscles."

Adah will next be seen in Mahesh Bhatt's *Tumko Meri Kasam* with Anupam Kher and Ishwak Singh.

Directed by Vikram Bhatt, the movie is set to release in theatres March 21.

She will also be seen in the season 2 of *Reeta Sanyal*. Adah will be doing an international project as well where she plays a superhero.

IANS

Years before SRK, PC, this Indian was 'world's biggest star'

The 1952 write-up highlighted Madhubala's stature, putting her over even Hollywood icons like Clark Gable, Audrey Hepburn, James Stewart, John Wayne, Natalie Wood, and Cary Grant

la. Barely 19 at the time, Madhubala was not just the reigning queen of Bollywood but one of the biggest box office draws in the world. And that piece highlighted her stature, putting her over even Hollywood icons like Clark Gable, Audrey Hepburn, James Stewart, John Wayne, Natalie Wood, and Cary Grant.

Art critic David Cort wrote the piece on Madhubala for Theatre Arts: "The story of India for the past 10 years may be condensed as follows: the war, the movie boom, and Madhubala." Born Mumtaz Jehan Begum Dehlavi, Madhubala began her film career at age 8 with Basant in 1942. She progressed to lead roles by 14 and achieved success with *Lal Dupatta*, *Mahal*, and *Dulari*, all before she turned 16. In 1951, filmmaker and editor Aurbindo Mukhopadhyay reported that Madhubala charged Rs 1.5 lakh per film, the highest in the country. By 1952, when the Theatre Arts piece was written, Madhubala was 19. But she already boasted of blockbusters like *Badal*, *Saiyan*, and *Tarana*. With *Tarana*, she also gained critical acclaim and was considered the top star in Bollywood, alongside the three male superstars - Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, and Dev Anand.



In 1959, Madhubala was featured in the Time magazine, which called her one of the biggest stars in the world.

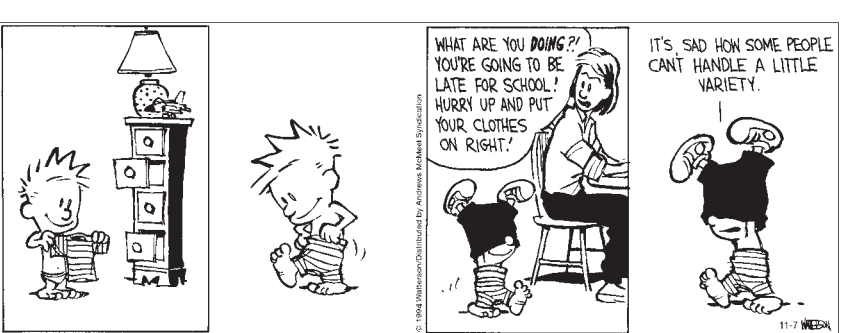
Madhubala gained international fame through a feature in the American magazine *Life* in 1951, followed by the *Theatre Arts* piece. Her *Life* feature had pictures by James Cobb Burke, one of the top photographers in the world. This prompted legendary filmmaker Frank Capra to approach her and offer her a break in Hollywood. However, Madhubala's father - who also managed her - declined as he was uncomfortable with the intimacy in American films.

'The biggest star in the world and she's not in Beverly Hills', read the headline of the cover story of the American magazine *Theatre Arts* edition in 1952. The subject of the full-page piece was Indian cine star Madhuba-

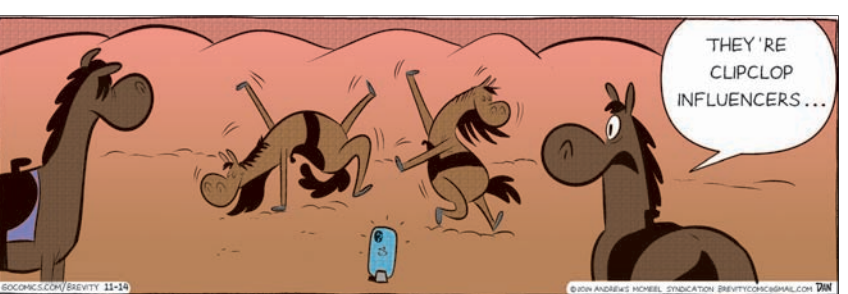
PEANUTS



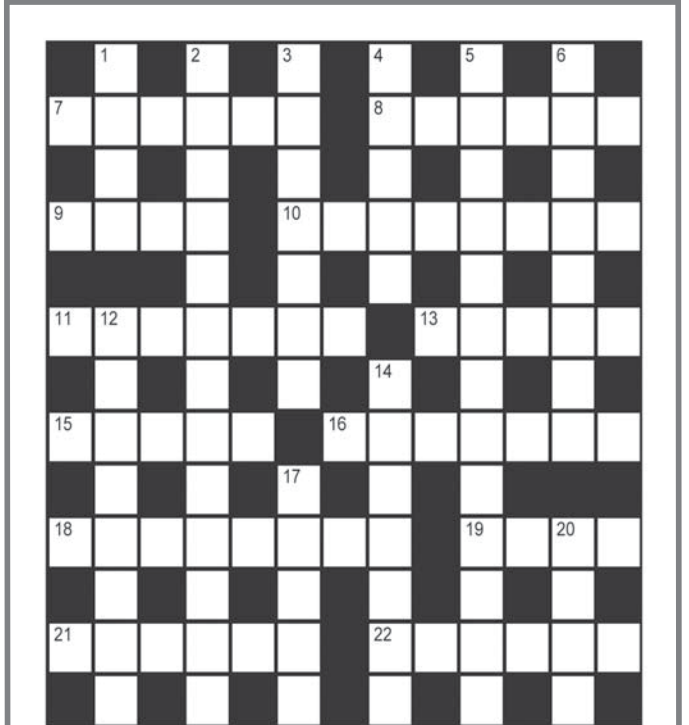
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



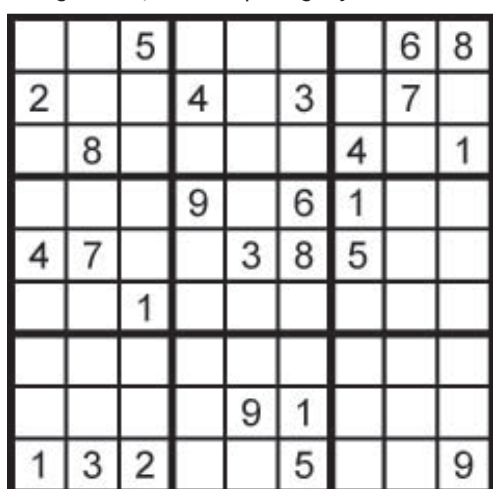
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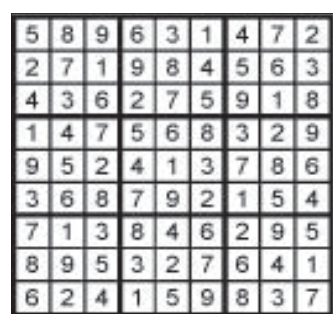
- Across**
- 7 Ravel classic
 - 8 Goof-offs
 - 9 Scorch
 - 10 Like weeds in a garden
 - 11 Intense indignation
 - 13 Personal journal
 - 15 It may be fixed or blank
 - 16 Penned
 - 18 Able to walk about
 - 19 Boundary
 - 21 Sailplane
 - 22 Crevice
 - 3 Dragon lizard
 - 4 It won't hold water
 - 5 Short-lived success
 - 6 Cross
 - 12 Too soon
 - 14 Defend
 - 17 Bear
 - 20 Lady's escort
- Down**
- 1 Tease
 - 2 Carousels

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



In concentration and silence we must gather strength for the right action.

THE MOTHER

Silent Shift

Something curious happened in Delhi's bureaucratic circles last week. The government announced the empanelment of 42 officers for Joint Secretary (JS) or JS-equivalent posts, and here's the kicker—only 16 of them were IAS officers from the 2009 batch.

What's even more intriguing? Central Secretariat Service (CSS) officers appear to be taking up a significant chunk of the slots. This isn't a one-off case either for those who have been tracking recent empanelment lists.

Is this part of a deliberate shift in government strategy—perhaps a move to dilute the dominance of the IAS and distribute power more evenly among different services?

Babu circles are abuzz with speculation. Some see this as a sign that the government is growing wary of the traditional IAS hegemony, while others argue that the service itself is failing to groom enough officers who meet the Centre's expectations.

A timely reprieve?

In a well-timed move just ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington, D.C., US President Donald Trump ordered the Department of Justice to halt prosecutions under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA).



BABUDOM BYTES Dilip Cherian

The FCPA, since 1977, prohibited American companies and individuals from bribing foreign officials to secure business deals. Over the years, it ensnared numerous corporate leaders worldwide, including those from India.

Critics of FCPA have long argued that strategic government contracts need bribery as much as business acumen. The fear of US legal actions have posed a serious threat to US companies and sprawling conglomerates with international operations.

With Trump's executive order effectively pausing FCPA prosecutions, the potential impact on ongoing cases is significant. This policy shift may lead to a reassessment of pending investigations.

However, global watchdogs argue that weakening anti-corruption enforcement will embolden corporate malpractice and erode global ethical standards.

With legal uncertainties possibly easing, the stage is set for babus to prosper and a recalibration of international business strategy by many companies.

Too many hats, too few hands

Gujarat's bureaucratic chessboard has been reshuffled yet again, with the transfer of over 68 senior officials, including nine district collectors and 16 DDOs.

The appointment of Pankaj Joshi as Chief Secretary appears to have triggered this overhaul. His relinquished responsibilities have been redistributed.

Some reassignments stand out. Ashwani Kumar, already helping Urban Development, now also oversees Ports & Transport. T. Natarajan, a key figure in Finance, takes charge of Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilisers Company.

Meanwhile, the IPS cadre remains in flux. Over a dozen officers are doubling up on roles, and critical posts like Gujarat's Anti-Corruption Bureau Chief and CID Crime Branch head remain unfilled.

With another round of reshuffles expected post-Budget, and the Model Code of Conduct for local body elections temporarily stalling major changes, the question remains: will this reshuffle bring tangible improvements, or is it just another game of bureaucratic musical chairs?

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

- The highest form of human intelligence is to observe yourself without judgment. JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI
We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them. KHALIL GIBRAN
You drown not by falling into a river, but by staying submerged in it. PAULO COELHO

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1898: An explosion in Havana harbour sank the battleship USS Maine, killing 260 American seamen and precipitating the Spanish-American War, which originated in the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain.
1927: The silent film 'It' was released in American theatres, and Clara Bow, the star, became Hollywood's first "It girl."
1933: An assassin's bullet meant for the U.S. president-elect, Franklin D. Roosevelt, wounded Mayor Anton J. Cermak of Chicago, who died three weeks later.

FOCUS WHO

TIME FOR REVAMP



All WHO member states have requested reforms to enhance the organization's performance, accountability, and transparency, as a quid pro quo for agreeing to increase the percentage of assessed contributions

After announcing his intention to withdraw the United States from the World Health Organization (WHO), President Donald Trump has indicated that he might be willing to reconsider.



Gordon Brown

WE MUST NEVER FORGET THE MEDICAL LESSONS WE HAVE LEARNED, FROM CHOLERA TO COVID: NO ONE IS SAFE UNTIL EVERYONE IS SAFE

Trump is right to point out the importance of equitable burden-sharing. In fact, the WHO has already adopted measures suggested by its member states to address this imbalance. At present, only 26% of the WHO's approved budget comes from assessed contributions.

Under the current formula, America's portion of the assessed contributions is capped at 22%, even though it accounts for 26% of global GDP. China now pays 15%, and that percentage will continue to rise as the country's share of global GDP grows.

The more the WHO is financed through assessed contributions, the more China, India, the Gulf petrostates, and several Central European countries will be obliged to contribute, ensuring that all countries pay their fair share.

Trump is equally concerned about China's influence on

the WHO and the country's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ironically, given the torrent of falsehoods about it, the pandemic accord under negotiation at the WHO would improve international health coordination and prevent similar failures from happening again.

Trump also wants evidence of reform at the WHO. That means decentralization, with country and regional offices gaining greater authority vis-à-vis what he sees as an overly bureaucratic Geneva headquarters.

In fact, all WHO member states have requested reforms—

both these and others—to enhance the organization's performance, accountability, and transparency, as a quid pro quo for agreeing to increase the percentage of assessed contributions.

The WHO has already made important progress. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has, in fact, launched an ambitious plan to transform the organization, including by bolstering and delegating more authority to country offices.

Perhaps most critically, Tedros himself has taken the

initiative to resist the natural tendency of the World Health Assembly (the WHO's decision-making body) to vote in new priorities and work areas. This has limited countries' practice of earmarking funding for special-interest projects that would dilute the WHO's purpose and strength.

In this age of mass travel, increasing urbanization, industrial livestock farming, and human encroachment on wildlife habitats, the need for the WHO is stronger now than it was in the 1850s, when the first formal international health conference was held in response to a cholera outbreak.

The last half-century has shown what such collaboration can achieve: smallpox was eradicated, polio and many tropical diseases are close to being eradicated, and HIV-related deaths have fallen by nearly 70%.

That is why, to reassure the Trump administration and other governments, like Argentina, that are threatening to leave, there is a case for bringing together a group of highly respected leaders, representing every continent, and a top-level American official. They could be asked to show how the reformed WHO would best serve the global community—both the US and the rest of the world—now and in the future.

The writer is the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. ©project syndicate

SPECTRUM INDO-FRENCH TIES

Key take-aways from PM's Paris tour



DK Giri

FRANCE HAS BEEN HISTORICALLY SEEKING TO CREATE AN ALTERNATIVE CENTRE OF POWER TO THE ANGLO-AMERICAN AXIS

The controversy on the participation of Prime Minister Modi in the swearing-in of Donald Trump figured prominently in the Indian media and the political community. Critiques construed it as a snub by the US President while US spokespersons mainly the former ambassador to New Delhi Eric Garcetti treated it as a trivial matter in line with the convention set by the White House.

Garcetti did say that Prime Minister Modi should meet Donald Trump one-to-one instead of being a part of the crowd and he was sure that Modi was soon to be invited, sometime in February. The invitation came and Modi is, at the time of writing, in USA.

The question that is being addressed, in addition to taking account of Modi's visit to France, is why Modi had to go to USA via Paris. It can again be interpreted in two ways. One, his schedule in Paris was prefixed and the invitation from USA almost aligned with the dates with his visit

to France. Modi was in France from 10 to 12 February and on the 13th he landed in USA. The timings for both visits could at best be fortuitous because Donald Trump's office could not align their invitation with Modi's visit to Paris.

The interpretation of Modi's visit to Paris is in order as it has implicit political implications. In global geo-politics, structurally, France and USA may be on the same side, but in their strategic thinking, there is a clear divergence. France has been historically seeking to create an alternative centre of power to the Anglo-American axis.

Currently, France expects a

multi-polar world where it can play its traditional world role. Likewise, India has moved on from Non-Alignment to strategic autonomy, a euphemism for multi-alignment which is possible in a multi-polar world.

Let us count the take-aways from Modi's visit to France. The primary purpose was to co-chair the third AI Action Summit in Paris. The first one was held in Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes, England in November 2023 and second in Seoul in May 2024.

Prime Minister Modi was also a distinguished guest among the world leaders in the dinner hosted by President Macron at Palais de l'Élysée (Elysee Palace).

Both leaders inaugurated a new Indian Consulate in Marseille City. This denotes an expansion of India's diplomatic presence in France.

Another significant take-away is the increasing collaboration between France and India on the nuclear sector. When US facilitated India's entry into NSG, France was the first country to sign an agreement with India on nuclear exchange.

India-France relations are close and growing. The only rider to this bilateralism is the need of a clear strategic security perspective, not based on past experiences and present prejudices.

The writer is a professor in NIIS Group of Institutions, Odisha INFA

Letters TO THE EDITOR Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 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

India's nuclear push

Sir, India is embarking on an ambitious expansion of its nuclear energy sector, recognizing its crucial role in achieving low-carbon energy goals. Seventeen years after the landmark India-US civil nuclear deal, the nation is prioritizing nuclear power as a key component of its energy mix.

Consensus key to end violence

Sir, This refers to the news report "Manipur Goes Under Centre" (Orissa POST, February 14). There is no denying that, despite the former Chief Minister's many shortcomings leading to the escalation of ethnic conflicts in Manipur, his tenure was deliberately prolonged because there was no consensus candidate for the post of Chief Minister.



Meeting between farmers, central team held cordially



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 14: A meeting between a Central team led by Union Minister Pralhad Joshi and farmers' representatives to discuss their various demands...

shared with their leaders in today's meeting," he added. Talking to reporters separately, farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal...

Poppy crop worth ₹125cr destroyed in Jharkhand dists

RANCHI: In a special operation, police have destroyed opium cultivation worth approximately ₹125 crore in four districts of Jharkhand -- Ranchi, Khunti, Saraikela-Kharsawan and Chaibasa.

Jharkhand farmers forced to let tomatoes rot as prices crash

In some areas, wholesale buyers are unwilling to pay even ₹1 per kilogram, making it impossible for farmers to recover their investment

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ranchi, Feb 14: Thousands of farmers in Jharkhand are in deep crisis after the price of tomatoes plummeted to as low as ₹2-₹3 per kg.



A balloon vendor is seen on the eve of 'Valentine's Day', in Amritsar, Punjab

PTI PHOTO

huge losses running into lakhs, as tomato farming communities span thousands of acres across various districts of Jharkhand like Chatra, Latehar, Hazaribagh, Jamshepur, Ramgarh, Bokaro, Ranchi, Lohardaga, and Giridih.



we are losing ₹8,000-₹10,000 per acre," he laments. Pachchu Mahato from

Balumath in Latehar shares a similar plight. We bought expensive seeds and spent heavily on fertilisers and irrigation, yet buyers refuse to pay more than a few rupees per kg, he said.

Punjab govt tightens noose around corrupt officers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 14: The Punjab government has directed the police and district administration officers to keep a check on corruption activities in their respective areas of jurisdiction or else face action themselves.

demand of financial considerations while interacting with the government officials at any level, he said. The state government has further directed that interaction of the public with the government at all levels should be completely hassle free.

PLATINUM JUBILEE OF BIT MESRA

Prez Murmu arrives in Ranchi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, Feb 14: President Droupadi Murmu Friday arrived here on a two-day visit to Jharkhand during which she is scheduled to participate in the platinum jubilee celebrations of BIT Mesra, officials said.



retary. The officials have been directed to ensure uninterrupted power supply, it said. "Preparations for the national anthem and arrangements for security, electricity and loudspeakers and fire fighting, medical arrangements at the programme venue and accommodation site were reviewed,"

commemorate 75 years of academic excellence, research and technological innovation, a BIT official said. Ranchi Deputy Commissioner (DC) Manjunath Bhajantri convened meetings with officials to oversee preparations for the President's visit.

Hazaribagh mourns its braveheart Karamjit

A pall of gloom has descended on the city of Hazaribagh after the tragic martyrdom of Army Captain Karamjit Singh Bakshi, fondly known as Puneet. The 28-year-old officer lost his life in an IED explosion along the LoC in J&K's Akhnoor sector Tuesday

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hazaribagh, Feb 14: The streets of Hazaribagh Thursday overflowed with sorrow and pride as thousands joined the final journey of Captain Karamjit Singh, who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Akhnoor sector two days ago.



National flag in silent tribute. In a mark of respect, shops along Guru Govind Singh Road remained closed. At Muktidham, as Army officers folded the Tricolour and handed it to his mother, Neelu Bakshi, she raised her voice -- choked with emotion -- declaring, "Jo Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal!"

son who had brought them immeasurable pride. Captain Karamjit was the only child of Ajninder Singh Bakshi, a well-known restaurant and tent house businessman, and Neelu Bakshi in Hazaribagh.

only 10 days ago. When his fiance arrived to pay her final respects, the air grew heavier with sorrow, eyes welling up at the sight of a love story left midway. On Tuesday, while on patrol along the LoC, Captain Karamjit and his unit were caught in an IED explosion planted by terrorists. Despite suffering grievous injuries, he was swiftly evacuated to a military hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries.

his sacrifice will forever echo in the hearts of a nation.

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, RAYAGADA. Tender Call Notice. Sealed tenders are invited from intending reputed authorized suppliers/dealers/agencies for supply of 01 (ONE) and more number of drinking water movable tank for use of CCTV with ACCESS CONTROL DIGITAL MANAGEMENT AND FRS for Odisha Police during the current financial year 2024-25...

ODISHA POLICE STATE HEADQUARTERS, CUTTACK. Office of the D.G. & I.G. of Police, Odisha, Cuttack. Tel.: 0671-2304001, Website: www.odishapolice.gov.in, Email: pankaj.odpol@gov.in & aig-prov.odpol@gov.in

Odisha Rural Development & Marketing Society. Panchayati Raj and DW Department, Government of Odisha. REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP). Selection of an Event Management Agency for Designing, Fabricating, Erection of stall with other allied works and Management of Event for Sisir Saras- 2025 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.



I want to profusely thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for Tahawwur Hussain Rana's extradition. We all wanted that the person who conspired against us, the mastermind of the Mumbai terror attack to be handed over to India

OVER 50 CRORE TAKE HOLY DIP AT TRIVENI SANGAM

Over 50 crore devotees have taken a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam till Friday evening during the ongoing Maha Kumbh, the Uttar Pradesh government said. The participation marks the largest congregation in human history for any religious, cultural, or social event, the state government, which is hosting the mega fair in Prayagraj, it said



Man found guilty of rape, murder of Irish backpacker



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji, Feb 14: Nearly eight years after an Irish-British woman was raped and murdered during her Goa visit, a court Friday convicted the lone accused in the case, a 31-year-old local resident.

Judge Kshama Joshi of the District and Sessions Court at Margao town found Vikat Bhagat, the lone accused, guilty of raping and murdering the woman, Danielle McLaughlin (28), said Vikram Varma, the lawyer representing Andrea Brannigan, the mother of the deceased.

The court will pronounce the quantum of sentence Monday (February 17), he said. Varma informed that the public prosecutor has sought "maximum sentence" for the accused from the court.

Though the lawyer did not elaborate, such heinous offences attract life imprisonment or death. McLaughlin, who arrived in the coastal state as a backpacker tourist, was found dead in a forested area of Canacona village in South Goa district March 14, 2017.

Bhagat, a local resident, was later arrested by the police on rape and murder charges. The accused, lodged at the Central Jail, Colvale in North Goa, Thursday attended the court proceeding through video conferencing.

The verdict was slated to be pronounced Thursday, but it was postponed for a day later by the trial court judge.

US plane carrying 119 deportees likely to land in Amritsar today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 14: A US plane carrying 119 illegal immigrants is likely to land at Amritsar airport February 15, the second such batch of Indians deported by the Trump government as part of a crackdown it resolved to carry out when it was sworn in last month.

According to official sources, the plane is expected to land at the airport around 10 pm Saturday. Among the 119 illegal Indian immigrants, 67 hail from Punjab, 33 from Haryana, eight from Gujarat, three from Uttar Pradesh, two each from Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan and one each from Him-



achal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, they said. Another US plane carrying deportees is also expected to land February 16. The development came days after a US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal Indian immi-

grants landed at the Amritsar airport last week. Of them, 33 each were from Haryana and Gujarat and 30 from Punjab.

Most of the deportees hailed from Punjab had said they wanted to migrate to the US for

a better life for their families. However, their dreams were shattered when they were caught at the US border and brought back in shackles.

After Donald Trump assumed office as the US President, the country's law enforcement agencies have launched a crackdown against illegal immigrants.

Many people from Punjab and some other states, who entered the US through "donkey routes" -- an illegal and risky pathway used by migrants to enter America or other illegal means by spending lakhs of rupees -- are now facing deportation. Several political leaders in Punjab had questioned the landing of a US aircraft in Am-

ritsar. "The BJP-led Central government wants to defame Punjab. Why does it not land in Gujarat, Haryana or Delhi?" Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said on Thursday while replying to a question on the likely arrival of another US plane carrying illegal immigrants.

Notably, the Punjab government had recently formed a special investigation team to probe the issue of illegal human trafficking following the deportation of Indian citizens domiciled in Punjab from the US. The SIT has so far registered 10 FIRs against fraudulent immigration consultants on the statements of deportees, said a senior police official.

Meitei body claims Prez rule in Manipur 'most unfortunate'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Feb 14: Two major organisations belonging to the Meiteis and Kukis, the communities which have been fighting with each other in Manipur since May 2023, Friday responded to the imposition of President's Rule in the state in opposite ways.

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), an umbrella body of several Imphal-based civil society organisations of the Meiteis, described the Centre's decision as "undemocratic" and "most unfortunate" and "a ploy to push the state into further turmoil". The Kuki Inpi, on the other hand, termed the imposition of the President's Rule as a "necessary intervention, albeit long overdue". The apex body of Kuki tribes, however, stuck to its demand for a separate administration for them under Article 239(A) of the Constitution.

India-B'desh border talks next week

Discussions will be held on prevention of attack/assault on BSF personnel and Indian civilians by Bangladesh-based miscreants/nationals, how to prevent trans-border crimes, construction of single row fence, action against Indian Insurgent Groups in Bangladesh, issues related to border infrastructure, joint efforts for effective implementation of Coordinated Border Management Plan, Confidence Building Measures and other issues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: The border forces of India and Bangladesh will hold their bi-annual talks here next week with issues such as border fence construction and attacks on BSF personnel and civilians by Bangladeshi miscreants figuring among the discussion points, an official statement said Friday.

The 55th Director General-Level Border Coordination Conference between BSF and the Border Guard Bangladesh

(BGB) will be organised at the Border Security Force (BSF) headquarters here between February 17-20 February. This would be the first top-level meeting between the two sides after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in August last year.

The Indian side will be led by BSF Director General (DG) Daljit Singh Chawdhary while the BGB delegation will be headed by Maj General Mohammad Ashrafuzaman Siddiqui. The conference is being organised



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This would be the first top-level meeting between the two sides after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in August last year

to discuss border-related issues and for better coordination between both the border guarding forces, the BSF said in a statement.

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for effective implementation of Coordinated Border Management Plan, Confidence Building Measures and other issues. The last edition of these bi-annual talks was held in Dhaka in March last year.

The 4,096 km long India-Bangladesh boundary spans across five states -- West Bengal (2,217 km), Tripura (856 km), Meghalaya (443 km), Assam (262 km) and Mizoram (318 km). The BSF is designated as the lead security and intelligence-gathering agency for this front.

SC to hear plea of Allahbadia against FIRs in few days

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 14: The Supreme Court Friday said the plea of influencer Ranveer Allahbadia against the FIRs lodged against him over his alleged distasteful comments during a programme on YouTube will be taken up in two-three days.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar told Abhinav Chandrachud, appearing for the influencer, that it does not allow oral mentioning of cases for urgent listing. "I have assigned the bench and it will come up (before a bench) in two-three days," the CJI said when Chandrachud submitted that the Assam police has summoned Allahbadia for joining the probe during the day.

Police visit Allahbadia's flat

Mumbai: Teams of Mumbai and Assam police Friday visited the residence of podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia here as part of a probe into his controversial remarks made on a YouTube show, but found his flat locked, an official said. Crass remarks by Allahbadia, popular on YouTube for his 'BeerBiceps' channel, about parents and sex on comedian Samay Raina's now-deleted YouTube show 'India's Got Latent' have sparked massive outrage, leading to complaints from several persons. "The Mumbai police, who have initiated an inquiry in connection with Ranveer Allahbadia's controversial remarks, Friday went to his flat in Versova area, but found it locked," an official said.

Podcaster Allahbadia's remarks on parents and sex on comedian Samay Raina's YouTube show 'India's Got Latent' triggered a controversy and several FIRs have been lodged

against him and others in various parts of the country.

An Assam police team is in Pune to issue summons to Raina in connection with a case filed in the north-eastern state over his now-deleted YouTube show 'India's Got Latent'. Raina has a house in Balewadi in Pune. A case was registered on Monday in Guwahati by a resident there for alleged promotion of obscenity in a publicly accessible online show.

Besides Allahbadia and Raina, others named in the case in Assam are Ashish Chanchlani, Jaspreet Singh and Apoorva Makhija. Earlier, Allahbadia was asked to remain present at Mumbai's Khar police station by the Mumbai police. The YouTuber is also facing a police complaint in Indore, Madhya Pradesh.



Sanitation workers clean a ghat at the Sangam area during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. 300 workers cleaned the ghats at various locations in an attempt to create a Guinness world record, according to officials

26/11 MUMBAI ATTACKS

Rana's extradition to unravel Pakistani state actors' role

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: The extradition of 26/11 Mumbai attacks accused Tahawwur Rana from the US would help probe agencies expose the role of Pakistani state actors behind the dastardly attack that left 166 people dead, sources said Friday.

In a major move, US President Donald Trump Thursday announced that his administration has approved the extradition of "one of the plotters and very evil one of the world" Rana to face justice in India.

Rana, a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, is currently lodged at a metropolitan detention centre in Los Angeles. He is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the 26/11 attacks.

India is working on the logistics of Rana's surrender and extradition from the US, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri has said.

The sources said that Rana's early extradition would help probe agencies expose the role of Pakistani state actors behind the 26/11 terror attack and may shed new light on the investigation.

A group of 10 Pakistani terrorists went on a rampage November 26, 2008 carrying out a coordinated attack on a railway station, two luxury hotels and a Jewish centre, after they sneaked into India's financial capital Mumbai using the sea route in the Arabian sea. Among the 166 people killed were US, British and Israeli nationals. The nearly 60-hour assault sent shockwaves across the country and even brought



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India and Pakistan to the brink of a war. The terrorists had targeted multiple iconic locations

in Mumbai, including Taj Mahal and Oberoi hotels, Leopold Cafe, Chabad House and Chha-

trapati Shivaji Terminus train station, each of which Headley had scouted in advance.

In November 2012, Ajmal Amir Kasab, the lone surviving gunman among the Pakistani group, was hanged to death in Yerawada Jail in Pune.

India has been trying to extradite Rana for many years because of his association with Pakistan-based terror groups Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Harkat-ul Jihadi Islami (HUJI), Headley and his active involvement in the Mumbai attacks, the sources said.

It is alleged that Rana was aware of Headley's terror links and even helped in reconnaissance of targets in Mumbai and planning the attacks on the National Defence College (NDC) in New Delhi and Chabad House in Mumbai. The extradition of Rana was cleared by the US

Supreme Court in January as it rejected his review petition in the case. Rana is wanted by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), which is probing the 26/11 attack case.

During the course of investigation the roles of senior functionaries of the banned terror groups LeT and HUJI, -- Hafiz Muhammad Saeed alias Tayyaji, Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, Sajjid Majid alias Wasi, Illyas Kashmiri and Abdur Rehman Hashim Syed alias Major Abdurrehman alias Pasha with active connivance and assistance from officers of ISI, namely, Major Iqbal alias Major Ali, Major Sameer Ali alias Major Samir, all residents of Pakistan, have emerged, the sources said.

The NIA had also sent extradition requests to the US for extradition of Headley and Rana.



Even in America, Modi Ji covered up Adani Ji's corruption! RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

AMIT SHAH ASKS MAHA GOVT TO IMPLEMENT NEW CRIMINAL LAWS

Union Home Minister Amit Shah Friday asked the Maharashtra government to implement the three new criminal laws in all police commissionerates of the state as soon as possible.



of the day quote

Right now, BJP leaders are embroiled in internal fights over ministerial positions, each vying for control over departments to exploit public funds.

On one hand, Prime Minister Narendra Modi changed the word handicapped to Divyaang and talks about giving them respect and on the other hand, the government of his own party is sitting on the work of two universities declared in the interest of the disabled in Rajasthan

Tamil Nadu is highly urbanised with nearly 48 per cent of its population living in urban areas. This will increase further in the coming years enhancing the demand for sustainable housing.

POST OF THE DAY

Finally! PM Modi is FORCED to do a press conference in the US - something he hasn't done in India in 11 years.

SHORT TAKES

Top court dismisses Jaya's kin's petition

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Friday dismissed a petition filed by the niece of late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalitha seeking release of the latter's properties seized by the authorities in connection with a disproportionate assets case of 2004.

Court awards life imprisonment to 3

New Delhi: A Delhi court has sentenced three men to rigorous life imprisonment in a 2015 murder case, saying it was not a fit case to impose death penalty.

Rajasthan HC rejects Naresh's bail plea

Jaipur: In a huge setback for Naresh Meena, who contested the Deoli-Uniara Assembly by-election last year as an Independent candidate, the Rajasthan High Court Friday denied him bail in connection with the Samrawata violence case.

Oppn asks Centre to acknowledge failure in Manipur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: Opposition parties Friday said the President's rule was imposed in strife-torn Manipur "to buy time to settle internal conflicts within the ruling coalition" as they asked the ruling BJP to acknowledge its "failure" in the state.

They also questioned why the government offered no clarification on Manipur in Parliament and why there was a delay in removing Biren Singh as Chief Minister. They also asked if there was a future plan for the state that has been in a state of chaos since ethnic violence erupted in May 2023.

President's rule was imposed in Manipur Thursday and the state Azzsembly put under suspended animation, days after Biren Singh resigned from his post. The Congress Friday said the imposition of President's rule in Manipur is a direct admission of the failure of the BJP governments at the Centre and the state, and asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to apologise to the people there.

In a post on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said there is a Constitutional crisis in Manipur that forced the imposition of the President's rule. "Narendra Modi ji, it is your party which has been ruling at the Centre for 11 years. It is your party which was ruling

Manipur for 8 years. It is the BJP which was responsible for maintaining Law & Order in the state."

"It is your government which is responsible for National Security and border patrol. The imposition of President's rule by YOU, suspending YOUR own party's government is a direct admission on how YOU failed the people of Manipur," Kharge said. The CPI(M) politburo, in a statement, said the imposition of the President's rule underlines the "utter bankruptcy" of the BJP's "double-engine" government.

It demanded that all political parties be taken into confidence to bring back normalcy in the state. The party said, "The (former) chief minister (N Biren Singh), the main culprit, who was backed all along by the BJP-RSS was forced to resign because his partisan role was being examined by a court where evidence was presented of his sectarian partisan role which left him with no choice but to quit".

The CPI(M) said the central leadership of the ruling party (BJP) refused to take the required action to alleviate the deep suffering inflicted on the people of Manipur, "symbolised by the Prime Minister's callous refusal to even visit the troubled state".

The CPI(M) party said imposing the President's rule is not the solution, and the Central government cannot escape responsibility.



Five militants arrested from 3 Manipur districts

IMPHAL: Five militants belonging to proscribed outfits have been arrested from Manipur's Imphal West, Imphal East and Thoubal districts, police said Friday. Two active cadres of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (Noyon) were apprehended from Thangmeiband and Keishampat in Imphal West Thursday, they said. Police also arrested another member of the KCP (Noyon) from Khurai Thoudam Leikai in Imphal East. The arrested militant was "directly involved in extortion activities from the general public, government officials, hospitals, schools and petrol pumps", a police officer said.

KOTTAYAM RAGGING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kottayam (Kerala), Feb 14: The Congress-led opposition UDF Friday claimed that the accused in the Kottayam Government Nursing College ragging case have connections with the Left student organisation, SFI.

Meanwhile, the Kerala Human Rights Commission ordered an investigation after registering a case on its own regarding the incident. Speaking to reporters, Leader of Opposition V D Satheesan alleged that the accused in the Kottayam ragging case are Students Federation of India



IAF's aerobatic team Surya Kiran performs on the last day of Aero India 2025, at Yelahanka Airbase in Bangalore

CHINA BORDER ROW

India rejects Trump's mediation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 14: India has virtually ruled out any role for a third party in its border dispute with China after US President Donald Trump suggested that he was ready to extend support if it helps in the resolution of the lingering issue between the two neighbours.

At a media briefing, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said Thursday (Friday IST) that New Delhi has always adopted a bilateral approach in dealing with these issues. As a matter of long-held policy, India has been maintaining that there is no role for any third party in any of its bilateral issues or disputes with any country.

"Your question about the offer to mediate between India and China, I think, I suspect you know the answer to this question," he said when asked about Trump's offer.

"Whatever issues we have with any of our neighbours, we have always adopted a bilateral approach to dealing with these issues. It's no different between India and China," he said. "We have been discussing any is-



AT A MEDIA BRIEFING, FOREIGN SECRETARY VIKRAM MISRI SAID THURSDAY (FRIDAY IST) THAT NEW DELHI HAS ALWAYS ADOPTED A BILATERAL APPROACH IN DEALING WITH THESE ISSUES

AS A MATTER OF LONG-HELD POLICY, INDIA HAS BEEN MAINTAINING THAT THERE IS NO ROLE FOR ANY THIRD PARTY IN ANY OF ITS BILATERAL ISSUES OR DISPUTES WITH ANY COUNTRY

of support at a media briefing while responding to a question on India's frosty ties with China over the border row. "I do see the skirmishes on the border, which are quite vicious, and I guess they continue to go on. If I could be of help, I would love to help as that should be stopped," he said. The US president also described China as a "very important player" globally and even suggested that Beijing could play a role could play a role in ending the war in Ukraine. Trump also underlined the importance of cooperation among India, China, Russia and the US.

SC criticises TN pollution board for challenging HC order on Isha Foundation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: The Supreme Court Friday slammed the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board for moving after two years against an order that quashed a showcause notice issued against Isha Foundation for allegedly flouting environmental norms.

A bench of Justice Surya Kant and Justice N Kotiswar Singh termed the petition filed by the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) as a "friendly match" played by bureaucrats wanting the apex court's stamp on the petition's dismissal.

"Mr advocate general what prevented the authorities from approaching the court on time. There is a delay of 637 days in filing this petition, which is nearly two years. This is actually a friendly match where the bureaucrats want the stamp of the Supreme Court and the high court on dismissal of the petition," the bench said.

The showcause was issued to the foundation for constructing buildings between 2006 and 2014 without reportedly obtaining mandatory environmental clearances but the Madras High Court quashed it.

Justice Surya Kant further told the state's law officer, "When the state comes belatedly, we become suspicious. We start reading between lines. How can you say a yoga centre is not an educational institution? If they are not going as per plan, then you can challenge the non-compliance but you can't be allowed to demolish the structure constructed in over a lakh yards. It is not some kind of hutment." The top court told state advocate general PS Raman that now that Isha Foundation had constructed a yoga and meditation centre in Coimbatore district's Velliangiri, the state must ensure environmental compliance.

UDF alleges SFI links to accused

members and that the Kerala Government Nursing Students Association (KGNESA) has links with the Left-affiliated student organisation.

However, Higher Education Minister R Bindu and Health Minister Veena George stated that stringent action would be taken against the accused in the Kottayam ragging incident. Satheesan, said, "Everyone knows they are SFI activists, yet they are now denying it."

There have been allegations that the accused are associated with KGNESA, a pro-Left outfit and that one of them holds a key position in the organisation.



However, SFI has refuted these claims, asserting that it has no connection to the accused. Taking a swipe at SFI, Satheesan also alleged that its leaders and members were involved in the death of a student at the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences in Pookode, Wayanad last year, allegedly due to ragging.

Can't allow bar bodies to be divided on caste, religion: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: The Supreme Court Friday refused to order reservations on caste basis in the lawyers body elections saying it would open a "Pandora's box" without any empirical data.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh said neither would it permit bar members to be divided on caste lines nor allow it to be politicised.

"This is a sensitive issue. It will open a Pandora's box. Without any empirical data, it can't be done. Reserving seats for women was a different thing. We will not permit bar members to be divided on

caste lines or let the issues to be politicised," it said. The bench was hearing a plea of NGO Advocates for Social Justice seeking reservations in the upcoming Bengaluru Bar Association elections to members belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes.

"There are serious arguable issues from both sides, which can be deliberated in a healthy atmosphere. We don't want different bar bodies to be divided on such grounds. This is not our intention," it added. The matter was then tagged with a pending issue on the strengthening of bar associations and coming up for hearing February 17.

Senior advocate Madhavi Divan, appearing for petitioner NGO, said not even one member from the SC/ST or OBC categories

were elected to the governing body of Advocate Association of Bengaluru in the past 50 years. Referring to reservation and affirmative actions in bar body elections in other countries, Divan said there should be diversity in key positions, which

could inspire young members of the bar. Justice Surya Kant, however, said at the moment the court was "handicapped"

in the absence of relevant data and observed parliamentarians of the country were sensitive enough to ensure adequate representation of different communities in key positions. "You see, when a legislation comes for reservation, there are lots of debates and deliberations with expert bodies. Different data are collected and made available. With in-

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh said neither would it permit bar members to be divided on caste lines nor allow it to be politicised

formed knowledge, you can take appropriate decision. As of today, in the absence of relevant data, we are completely handicapped," he said. The court said it would examine the "serious question" in another pending petition relating to reforms in bar associations.

"These are cases where we require some data, assessment. How many people from particular communities are there in the legal profession, to what extent they are underrepresented, etc.," it added. The petitioner's plea was dismissed by the Karnataka High Court.

The top court January 28 modified its order and allowed Advocate Association of Bengaluru to create a post of vice-president in the bar body for which elections would be held in the coming weeks. The move came after the court on January 24 earmarked the post of treasurer for women, after the election process had begun and nominations were filed even by male candidates.



international



As I have always said, immigrants have been crucial in building our city and will continue to be key to our future success, but we must fix our long-broken immigration system
ERIC ADAMS | MAYOR, NEW YORK

TIKTOK RETURNS TO US APP STORES

TikTok has returned to the app stores of Apple and Google in the US, after President Donald Trump delayed the enforcement of a TikTok ban. TikTok, which is operated by Chinese technology firm ByteDance, was removed from Apple and Google's app stores January 18 to comply with a law that requires ByteDance to divest the app or be banned in the US



of the day quote

If the American president makes peace, if an agreement is made, I think Russia will be reintegrated into the world economy, reintegrated into the European security system, and even European energy
VIKTOR ORBAN | PRIME MINISTER, HUNGARY

The theme 'Growth Unleashed' is to encourage British businesses to get out to extraordinary growth markets such as India, bang on doors and build their businesses
ALDERMAN ALASTAIR KING | MAYOR, LONDON

Unfortunately, the United States is making a wrong calculation about our region. One should not be engaged in an approach that disregards the region's history, values, and accumulation
TAYYIP ERDOGAN | PRESIDENT, TURKEY

Trump denies US role in B'desh crisis

While US President Donald Trump did not directly address the question, speculation is that the response indicated the new Trump administration may not get itself involved in Bangladesh

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Washington DC: The regime change in India's neighbour Bangladesh which many geopolitical analysts have attributed to the US' deep state's alleged work in the shadows grazed US President Donald Trump during his joint press briefing with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington DC.

A reporter sought the views of President Trump on whether the previous Democratic government under former President Joe Biden carried out a regime change in Bangladesh, and installed Muhammad Yunus as a chief adviser.

President Trump denied the US deep state played any role in the developments in Bangladesh, whose ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina took shelter in India.



"There was no role for our deep state. This is something that the Prime Minister has

been working on for a long time, for hundreds of years, frankly I have been reading about it. I will leave Bangladesh to the Prime Minister," President Trump said.

There was no role for our deep state. This is something that the Prime Minister has been working on for a long time, for hundreds of years, frankly I have been reading about it. I will leave Bangladesh to the Prime Minister
DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, US

Pak expresses concern over US transferring military tech to India

Islamabad: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan in a press briefing Friday expressed concern at the proposed transfer of US military technology to India. This comment comes following the release of the "India-US joint statement" after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's US visit and meeting with US President Donald Trump. The statement highlights the defence partnership between India and US spanning multiple domains. India and the US planned to elevate military cooperation across all domains - air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace - through enhanced training, exercises, and operations, incorporating the latest technologies, the statement said. Pakistan's Foreign Affairs Ministry has stated that the increase military capacity may cause imbalance in the region. In the joint statement, India and the US called on Pakistan to expeditiously bring to justice the perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai, and Pathankot attacks, and ensure that its territory is not used to carry out cross-border terrorist attacks. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson mentioned that the reference to Pakistan in the joint statement was one-sided, misleading, and contrary to diplomatic norms. He alleged that the statement cannot cover up India's role in sponsoring terrorism, and extra-judicial killings. The spokesperson also remarked on rising hate crimes in India against Muslims and other minorities and also to India's non-compliance to UN Security Council resolutions.

Drone damages Ukraine's Chernobyl nuclear plant

Radiation levels at the shuttered plant in the Kyiv region have not increased, according to the UN International Atomic Energy Agency, which said the strike did not breach the plant's inner containment shell



Kyiv, Feb 14: A drone armed with a warhead hit the outer protective shell of Ukraine's Chernobyl nuclear plant early Friday, damaging the structure and briefly starting a fire, in an attack Kyiv blamed on Russia. The Kremlin denied it was responsible.

stationed at the site heard an explosion and was informed that a drone had struck the shell.

Fighting around nuclear power plants has repeatedly raised fears of a nuclear catastrophe during three years of war, particularly in a country where many vividly remember living through the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, which killed at least 30 people and spewed radioactive fallout over much of the Northern Hemisphere.

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is Europe's

biggest, has occasionally been hit by drones during the war without causing significant damage.

The strike came two days after President Donald Trump upended US policy on Ukraine, saying he would meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss ending the war. The move seemed to identify Putin as the only player that matters and looked set to sideline Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, as well as European governments, in any peace talks.

Saudi leads Arab push for alternative to Trump's Gaza plan

Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies were aghast at Trump's plan to "clean out" Palestinians from Gaza and resettle most of them in Jordan and Egypt, an idea immediately rejected by Cairo and Amman and seen in most of the region as deeply destabilizing



kingdom's defences against Iran. Reuters spoke to 15 sources in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and elsewhere to build a picture of the hurried efforts by Arab states to pull together existing proposals into a new plan they can sell to the US president - even potentially calling it a "Trump plan" to win his approval.

One Arab government source said at least four proposals had already been drafted for Gaza's future, but an Egyptian proposal was now emerging as central to the Arab push for an alternative to Trump's idea.

THE EGYPTIAN PROPOSAL
The latest Egyptian proposal

Arab world furious about Trump's plan to 'clean out' Gaza
Arab nations to meet in Riyadh to discuss alternative Gaza plans
An Egyptian proposal currently the most likely candidate
Saudi crown prince expected to play a key role in discussions

involves forming a national Palestinian committee to govern Gaza without Hamas involvement, international participation in reconstruction without displacing Palestinians abroad, and movement towards a two-state solution, three Egyptian security sources said.
Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Palestinian representatives will review and discuss the plan in

Riyadh before it is presented at a scheduled Arab summit February 27, the Arab government source said. The role of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, widely known as MbS, is shaping up to be key.

"We are telling the Americans we have a plan that works. Our meeting with MbS is going to be critical. He is taking the lead," said a Jordanian official.
Long a major regional partner for the United States, the crown prince is expanding Saudi Arabia's relationship through business and global power politics.
Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund is holding a conference in Miami this month that Reuters revealed Trump is expected to attend. Riyadh is also expected to host his coming talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin to try to end the Ukraine war.

REUTERS

Riyadh/Abu Dhabi/Amman/Cairo, Feb 14: Saudi Arabia is spearheading urgent Arab efforts to develop a plan for Gaza's future as a counter to US President Donald Trump's ambition for a Middle East Riviera cleared of its Palestinian inhabitants, 10 sources said.

Draft ideas will be discussed at a meeting in Riyadh this month of countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. Proposals may involve a Gulf-led reconstruction fund and a deal to sideline Hamas, five of

Prosecutors see Islamic extremist motive in Munich car mishap

AGENCIES

Munich, Germany, Feb 14: The suspect in the car-ramming attack in Munich that left more than 30 people injured appears to have had an Islamic extremist motive, but there's no evidence that he was involved with any radical network, authorities said Friday.

The 24-year-old Afghan, who arrived in Germany as an asylum-seeker in 2016 and lived in Munich, was arrested after driving his Mini Cooper into the back of a labor union demonstration in the Bavarian city Thursday. Police officers pulled him out of the car after firing a shot at the vehicle, which didn't hit him, and arrested him.



Prosecutor Gabriele Tilmann said that the suspect said "Allahu Akbar," or "God is great," to police and then prayed after his arrest - which prompted a department that investigates extremism and terror to take on the case immediately.

In questioning, he admitted deliberately driving into the demonstration and "gave an explanation that I would summarize as religious motivation," Tilmann said.

She didn't give details, but added, "According to all we know at the moment, I would venture to speak of an Islamist motivation."

No one should make China an issue in bilateral ties: Beijing

Beijing: No one should make China an issue in their bilateral relations and their cooperation should not harm the interests of another country, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Friday reacting to queries on the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Trump. Modi's meeting with Trump in Washington, weeks after the US President assumed office for his second term, has evoked considerable interest in China, especially on defence cooperation between New Delhi and Washington. In the joint statement issued after Modi-Trump talks, the two leaders reaffirmed that a close partnership between the US and India is central to a free, open, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region and spoke of strengthening Quad partnership among other issues. Replying to questions on this, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said bilateral cooperation should not target third countries. "No one should make China an issue in the relations and cooperation between countries or seek to instigate bloc politics and confrontation," Guo said to a question on Trump's offer to provide F-35 fighter jets to India besides strengthening defence cooperation.

SNIPPETS

Musk's DOGE team: Judges to consider barring it from US govt

New York: Two federal judges will consider Friday whether Elon Musk's government cost-cutting team known as DOGE will have access to Treasury Department payment systems and potentially sensitive data at US health, consumer protection and labor agencies. The Musk-led Department of Government Efficiency has swept through federal agencies since Republican Donald Trump became president last month and put the chief executive of carmaker Tesla in charge of rooting out wasteful spending as part of Trump's dramatic overhaul of government. In Manhattan, US District Judge Jeannette Vargas will consider a request by Democratic state attorneys general to extend a temporary block on DOGE that he put in place Saturday, which prevented Musk's team from accessing Treasury systems responsible for trillions of dollars of payments.



M23 rebels seized 2nd airport in east Congo

Goma (Congo): Rwanda-backed rebels in eastern Congo claimed Friday that they have seized a second airport in the region following a days-long advance towards the Kavumu airport, which serves the South Kivu province. The Associated Press could not immediately confirm if the Kavumu national airport was under the control of the M23 rebels or government forces. Government officials and civil society leaders did not immediately comment. Locals told the AP Friday morning that the rebels were a few kilometres away from the airport, a strategic spot for the Congolese military in their fight with the rebels.



Gaza names 3 hostages to be released Saturday

Cairo: Palestinian militant groups in Gaza said they would release hostages Iair Horn, US-Israeli Sagui Dekel-Chen and Russian-Israeli Alexandre Sasha Troufanov Saturday, in accordance with the terms of the ceasefire with Israel. The announcement, after days of uncertainty about whether the ceasefire agreed last month would hold, followed intense efforts by Egyptian and Qatari mediators to keep last month's US-backed agreement on track. A statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Israel accepted the list but that was later corrected to say Israel had received the list, which it said was a "purely factual description" that did not reflect any Israeli approach to the issue. Hamas said Israel was expected to release 369 Palestinian prisoners and detainees in exchange.



Pope Francis hospitalised

Rome: Pope Francis was hospitalised Friday to treat a weeklong bout of bronchitis and undergo diagnostic tests, the Vatican said, confirming the latest issues with the 88-year-old's pontiff's health that forced him to cancel his agenda through Monday at least. Francis was diagnosed with bronchitis February 6, but had continued to hold daily audiences in his Vatican hotel suite.

Hockey teams ready for litmus test

ASIA MIXED TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

Shuttlers crash out

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Qingdao, Feb 14: HS Prannoy fought valiantly, but India succumbed to a 0-3 defeat against a second-string Japan in the quarterfinals of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships, ending their campaign on a disappointing note here Friday. India, the 2023 bronze medalists in Dubai, struggled to find their rhythm, and trailed 0-1 after going down in the mixed doubles. Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, ranked 37th in the world, showed resilience before going down 13-21, 21-17, 13-21 to world number 12 Hiroki Midorikawa and Natsu Saito. With PV Sindhu sidelined due to a hamstring injury, India faced an uphill task against Tomoka Miyazaki, who has quickly risen to world number 8 following her triumph at the 2022 World Junior Championships. World number 31 Malvika Bansod, stepping in for Sindhu, put up a brave fight, especially in the second game, but struggled to match the control and consistency of her younger opponent and lost 12-21, 19-21, leaving India 0-2 behind. It all came down to Prannoy to keep India alive, but despite a determined effort, the 32-year-old, returning after a long break and struggling with early-season form, couldn't sustain the pressure against world number 16 Kenta Nishimoto. The Japanese star sealed the rubber with a 21-14, 15-21, 21-12 victory in 1 hour and 17 minutes. India will be disappointed with the loss, especially as Japan did not field their full-strength team, with several top players absent. Japan were the inaugural edition champions in 2017 and were runners-up in 2019.

Miyazaki vs Malvika

Miyazaki, leading the new-look Japanese team, was sharp and precise, quickly surging to an 11-3 lead after Malvika hit long. However, two mistakes from the Indian allowed the Japanese to take the first game. The second game was more competitive as Malvika took a 5-3 lead, engaging in tight rallies.

Prannoy vs Nishimoto

In the men's singles, Prannoy fell behind 4-7 as Nishimoto dominated with angled returns. Prannoy handed Nishimoto six game points with a net error, and another mistake sealed the first game for Japan. The second game was intense, with Prannoy and Nishimoto tied at 6-6. He then earned five game points after Nishimoto sent a shot wide, converting the first to roar back into the contest.

FIH PRO LEAGUE



Our training is going well from Hockey India League, we have been preparing for months, have learnt a lot from IHL and we have been able to maintain our fitness as well

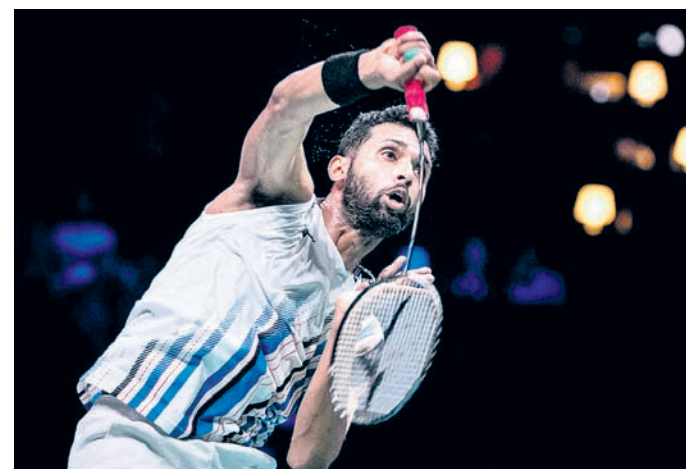
HARMANPREET SINGH | CAPTAIN, INDIA MEN'S HOCKEY TEAM

Harmansingh Singh will be joined by vice-captain Hardik Singh as they lead a well-balanced squad filled with both experience and youthful talent. Senior players such as Manpreet Singh, Mandeep Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Sumit, Sanjay, Jugraj Singh, and Vivek Sagar Prasad will form the backbone of the team while emerging stars like Arajjeet Singh Hundal, Angad Bir Singh and Arshdeep Singh bring fresh energy and skill to the lineup. "The team is fresh from some fantastic performances in the recently concluded Hockey India League. I am particularly happy to have seen Jugraj winning the top scorer award and this only means well for the Indian team as we have more firepower in our dragflick," expressed Harmansingh at the eve of their opening encounter. With a mix of seasoned campaigners and promising youngsters, India will be eager to make a strong start and challenge some of the world's top teams in the tournament. Moreover, after finishing seventh in last year's edition of the FIH Pro League, India will be determined to make a strong comeback this season. The team will aim to deliver an improved performance and clinch the top spot, a feat that carries the added reward of automatic qualification for the 2026 World Cup. He further elaborated, "This

Pro League is big opportunity: Salima

Indian women's hockey team skipper Salima Tete wants her side to give its best in the FIH Pro League without thinking about results, terming it a big opportunity to work on "grey areas". India will open their campaign against England on Saturday here. The hosts will again square off against England on Sunday before taking on Spain on February 18 and 19. The Indian women will then play Germany (February 21 and 22), Netherlands on February 24 and 25 in the India leg of the league. Salima said chief coach Harendra Singh, who joined again on April last year, made a lasting impression on the side with his tactics. is an important year for us and this only means well for the Indian team as we have more firepower in our dragflick," expressed Harmansingh at the eve of their opening encounter. With a mix of seasoned campaigners and promising youngsters, India will be eager to make a strong start and challenge some of the world's top teams in the tournament. Moreover, after finishing seventh in last year's edition of the FIH Pro League, India will be determined to make a strong comeback this season. The team will aim to deliver an improved performance and clinch the top spot, a feat that carries the added reward of automatic qualification for the 2026 World Cup. He further elaborated, "This

ing points. The other teams are coming here already having played a few matches in Europe, so our focus will be on doing well and winning matches."



SHORT TAKES

Blow for wrestlers

New Delhi: Indian wrestlers may miss the second Ranking Series of the year in Albania after the Sports Ministry withheld approval, blaming the WFI for its failure to submit the necessary recommendations on time even as the federation denied the charge Friday. The wrestlers had already missed the first Ranking Series in Zagreb, Croatia, due to a tussle between the ministry and the suspended WFI. The second Ranking Series is scheduled to take place in Tirana, Albania, from February 26 to March 2. The Wrestling Federation of India, which was suspended by the ministry in December 2023 but remains recognised by the international body, had sent the proposal to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) January 30 -- almost a month before the start of the tournament.

Gukesh loses, ends 8th

Hamburg: World champion D Gukesh ended in eighth position after losing to Iranian-French grandmaster Alireza Firouzja in the second game of their seventh-place playoff match at the Freestyle Chess Grand Slam here Friday. Gukesh thus concluded his forgettable campaign in the tournament at Weissenhaus resort without a single win. A day after his remarkable comeback from a hopeless position to draw game one against Firouzja Thursday, the ball was in Gukesh's court to do well as the white pieces, but clearly, the world champion had run out of steam to lose in 30 moves. In the final game, Firouzja proved superior and cashed in on the opportunities presented to him.

Ikeda suspended

Monaco: Japanese race walker Koki Ikeda, a former Olympic silver medalist, has been banned for four years for doping, the Athletic Integrity Unit said Friday. The athletics watchdog said that a disciplinary and appeals tribunal ruled that the 26-year-old Ikeda had broken anti-doping rules. Ikeda has been provisionally banned from competition since November 2024, with his results disqualified since June 2023. Doping authorities say abnormalities were detected in his blood samples taken in June, August and September of 2023. The AIU alleged the abnormalities "were indicative of blood manipulation."

Odisha shines at National Games with 46 medals

The state government has announced cash prizes of ₹6 lakh for gold medalists, ₹4 lakh and ₹3 lakh for silver and bronze medalists respectively

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: Odisha athletes clinched a total of 46 medals, including 14 gold, 15 silver and 17 bronze at the 38th National Games held in Uttarakhand. The state secured the 12th position in the final ranking list and placed itself among the top 15 in the country. To encourage and reward the outstanding performances of its athletes, the Odisha government has announced cash prizes of Rs 6 lakh for gold medalists, Rs 4 lakh for silver medalists and Rs 3 lakh for the bronze medalists. Odisha's Sports Minister Shri Suryabanshi Suraj stated, "This year, Odisha has made a mark in nation-

al games, securing a place among the top 15 states. Winning 46 medals, including 14 gold, is a significant achievement. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the athletes. In recognition of their achievements we will felicitate them with cash awards. We are committed to support our sportspersons and will continue to support and nurture the sporting talent to shine on national and global stages." It is pertinent to mention here that a total of 302 athletes and 75 support staff represented Odisha at the 38th National Games. Among the standout performers, sprinter Animesh Kujur secured three gold medals, gymnast Rakesh Patra won two golds, while gymnast Pranati Nayak bagged one gold, one silver and two bronze medals. Cyclist Swasti Singh added to Odisha's medal tally with one gold, two silver and two bronze medals. Additionally, Odisha athletes set new records in various categories, further strengthening the state's position as an emerging powerhouse in sports.

OFC keep playoff hopes alive

The Juggernauts are seventh in the table now with 29 points

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: Hugo Boumous' brilliance inspired Odisha FC to sustain top-6 hopes with a 3-1 comeback win against Hyderabad FC in their Indian Super League match here Friday. The Juggernauts are seventh in the table now with 29 points, two behind the sixth-placed Mumbai City FC (31) as Sergio Lobera's team continues to be a formidable contender for the playoffs. They entered the half-time trailing by a goal but produced a remarkable turnaround in the following 45 minutes to seal all three points -- holding 54.6% possession in the game and taking five shots on target as compared to three of the opponents. Odisha FC thus recorded their fourth straight win at home in Bhubaneswar against Hyderabad FC. Hyderabad FC drew the game



momentarily in their favour by exerting pressure on the Odisha FC defence from a set-piece situation in the 30th minute. The visitors worked in tandem to dissect the Juggernauts' backline, winning over second balls before Mohammed Rafi placed a headed pass from the left post in the path of Stefan Sapic for the latter to tap into the centre of the goal from extremely close range. The Juggernauts turned to Mourtada Fall to secure the equaliser in the 47th minute with a slightly unique take to their corner routine this time around. Boumous launched in a quick cross on the far post but fall was distant from the net at the time of the delivery. The centre-back

made a dash of a sprint before thumping in a powerful header into the top left corner, bringing the Sergio Lobera-coached side back into the game. Odisha FC treated this sudden shift in momentum to their advantage, pressing high up with Diego Mauricio leading the charge at the centre. The frontline worked collectively to recover possession in an instant, before Jerry Mawihmingthanga supplied Hugo Boumous with a slick ball on the right flank. Boumous exceptionally carried the ball into the box before placing it into the bottom left corner in the 49th minute to give the Juggernauts a slender lead.

NATIONAL GAMES CONCLUDES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Haldwani, Feb 14: A lively yet simple closing ceremony brought the curtains down on the 38th National Games here Friday with home minister Amit Shah as its chief guest asserting that the country is well on track to host a successful Olympics in 2036. Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president PT Usha declared the Games closed before handing over the flag to Conrad Sangma, chief minister of Meghalaya, the state that will host the next edition of the Games in 2027. India's bid to host the Olympics in 2036 is still in early stages and the International Olympic Committee will not decide on it until next year. Sports minister Mansukh

Shah asserts readiness to host 2036 Olympics

Mandaviya also joined the event to laud the athletes' performances. To start with, Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama welcomed Shah with a commemorative memento, a shawl and a bouquet of flowers. "Dev Bhoomi" has now also become a 'Khel Bhoomi' not just because of the National Games but also because of its athletes' performance in the Games and Dhama ji's relentless efforts towards hosting a successful Games," Shah said at the Indira Gandhi International Sports Complex here. The venue has a capacity of 25,000 and was packed for the ceremony. "Dhama ji has developed the infrastructure for sports in every district of the state. The sportsmen who have won so



many medals for Uttarakhand have turned 'Dev Bhoomi' into 'Khel Bhoomi'. "Thanks to their efforts, Uttarakhand has jumped from 21st position (in last Games) to seventh position (in the overall standings). I congratulate all the athletes who helped paved

the way for 'Dev Bhoomi' to also become a 'Khel Bhoomi'. My best wishes are with them." Several dignitaries were in attendance here, including Uttarakhand's Sports Minister Rekha Arya, boxing legend MC Mary Kom, and Olympic medalist shooter Gagan Narang,

I can say it today that India has a very bright future in sports. We have staked a claim to host the Olympics in 2036, and we are ready for it. When the Olympics are held here, our athletes will win medals and make the country's flag fly high

AMIT SHAH | HOME MINISTER, INDIA

among others. Shah expressed optimism about India's progress in sports in the coming times. He encouraged the athletes and said that the current Narendra Modi government is creating world-class infrastructure and ecosystem for sports across the country. He pointed out that Prime

Minister Modi has taken many steps to promote sports. "When Modi ji became PM in 2014, our sports budget was ₹800 crore, but now, it will rise to ₹3800 crore. This reflects the commitment of the Modi government towards sports," he said. He said that in 2014, Indian players won only 15 medals in the Commonwealth Games, while now the number has reached 26. The Asian Games have increased from 57 medals in 2014 to 107 in 2023. Shah and Dhama gave away the prizes to the top three performers in the Games -- Services Sports Control Board, Maharashtra and Haryana. Mandaviya said that the Games will be a catalyst in India's journey to become a sports hub.

CHAMPIONS TROPHY

ICC announces record \$6.9 million prize pot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Feb 14: Winners of the upcoming Champions Trophy will walk away with a whopping \$2.24 million cash reward after the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced a 53 per cent hike in its prize money pool for the eight-team tournament starting February 19. The winners' purse would be close to 20 crore in Indian currency. The runners-up will receive half the amount, \$1.12 million (₹9.72 crore), while each losing semi-finalist will take home \$560,000 (₹4.86 crore). The total prize pool has increased to \$6.9 million (₹60 crore approx). The winners' purse pot underscores the ICC's ongoing commitment to investing in the sport and maintaining the global prestige of our events, ICC chairman Jay Shah said in a statement ahead of the tournament which will be held in Pakistan and the UAE. Each group stage win would be worth over \$34,000 (₹30 lakh) for the victorious team.