



Bhumi's achievement

Bhumi Pednekar says she is happy that she has built her career on playing women with agency

LEISURE | P2



Zelenskyy hits back

Ukrainian President Zelenskyy hits back at Trump's suggestion that Ukraine was responsible for Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion

INTERNATIONAL | P10



US SEC seeks help

US Securities and Exchange Commission asks Indian authorities for help in its probe into the Adani bribery case

BUSINESS | P11



India bounce back

India win their second match in the FIH Hockey season by beating reigning World Champions Germany

SPORTS | P12



VALLEY STARES AT DROUGHT: A view of old Mehjoor Nagar Bridge over a dried water channel following a prolonged dry spell, in Srinagar, Wednesday. The absence of snowfall and extended dry conditions have hindered the replenishment of water reservoirs, leaving many streams and the Jhelum river flowing below normal levels

PTI PHOTO

CM urges Nepal students to return, assures justice

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday urged Nepalese students of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) to return to the campus here and resume studies, assuring them that peace and normalcy will be restored soon.

Around 1,000 Nepalese students of KIIT were issued suspension notices and asked to leave the campus immediately by the institute's authorities Monday following protests after the body of a student hailing from the neighbouring country, Prakriti Lamsal, was found hanging from the ceiling of her hostel room Sunday.

However, following the intervention of the Centre and the state government, the KIIT authorities tendered an apology and requested the Nepalese students to return to the campus.

Majhi, who is currently in Rajasthan, spoke over the phone with officials from Nepal, Sanjeeb Das Sharma and Navin Raj Adhikari, who held a meeting with Odisha Par-

liamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Mahaling and Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj, along with Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja at the State Guest House here during the day on the evolving situation.

The Chief Minister also assured them that justice will be served in the case of the deceased KIIT student, Prakriti Lamsal, a CMO statement said.

Besides, Nepal's Foreign Minister Dr Arzu Rana Deuba also spoke with Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj over the phone on the issue.

Nepalese students of KIIT alleged they encountered harrowing experiences following the protests over the unnatural death of the student, including being shunted out of the campus and left at Cuttack railway station, besides being roughed up, leaving many of them scarred and fearful of returning to the campus.

Meanwhile, the high-level committee, headed by additional chief secretary Satyabrata Sahu, Wednesday visited the KIIT campus and held discussions with a section of students and officials. **MORE P3**

SHORT TAKES

Vig nets OAS officer while taking bribe

Bhubaneswar: Vigilance sleuths Wednesday arrested a senior Odisha bureaucrat while he was accepting a bribe of ₹50,000, an official statement said. The Odisha Administrative Service (OAS) officer, Sarat Kumar Giri, was working as LA (General) and was the competent authority for land acquisition in the Collector's office in Keonjhar. The officer was apprehended by Odisha Vigilance in his office while demanding and taking a bribe of ₹50,000 from the complainant for disbursing the compensation amount of his land acquired for a highway. The entire tainted bribe money has been recovered from the possession of the accused and seized, it said. Following the apprehension, simultaneous searches were underway at three places linked to Giri in connection with a probe into disproportionate assets. **P3**

SC defers hearing as CEC, EC take charge

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday adjourned the pleas against the appointments of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (EC) under the 2023 law. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh indicated that the matter would be listed after the Holi festival break due to paucity of time. However, no date was fixed for hearing the matter. Earlier during the day, Gyanesh Kumar took over as the 26th CEC, while Vivek Joshi assumed charge as an EC. An EC since March 2024, Kumar was elevated as the CEC Monday.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Dirty? No way! This water is as pristine as the Sangam's. Go ahead, get it tested!

Trump spills the beans on tariff talks with PM

After calling PM Modi a 'better negotiator' than himself, Trump has spilled the beans on their tariff talks in a recent interview with Fox News saying nobody can argue with him, not even Modi, when it comes to tariffs. The US President revealed details about his tough stance during the talks and emphasised that he made it clear he would impose equivalent tariffs on India's imports to the US, mirroring the charges India places on American goods. Highlighting the challenge of selling to India due to its high tariff rates, Trump noted that India's import duties can reach as high as 100 per cent, which has led him to adopt a firm 'reciprocal' approach



Trump made these remarks during an interview with Fox News' Sean Hannity recently. Fox News aired a joint television interview with President Trump and billionaire Elon Musk Tuesday night.

On February 13, hours before Prime Minister Modi's bilateral meeting with Trump in the White House, the US President announced reciprocal tariffs.

Under the plan, the Trump administration "will work strenuously to counter non-reciprocal trading arrangements with trading partners by determining the equivalent of a reciprocal tariff with respect to each foreign trading partner." During the interview with

Hannity, Trump reiterated his stance on existing tariff structures between the US and its partners, including India.

"I told Prime Minister Modi yesterday - he was here - I said, 'Here's what we're going to do, reciprocal. Whatever you charge, I'm charging,'" President Trump said. "He (Modi) goes, 'No, no, I don't like that.' 'No, no, whatever you charge, I'm going to charge.' I'm doing that with every country."

India has very strong tariffs on certain imports from the US. Like in the automobile sector, India charges 100 per cent. Musk said, "It's 100 per cent - auto imports are 100 per cent."

"Yeah, that's peanuts. So, much higher. And — and others too. I said, 'Here's what we're going to do reciprocal. Whatever you charge, I'm charging,'" Trump said.

"Nobody can argue with me," President Trump insisted. "If I said 25 per cent, they'd say, 'Oh, that's terrible.' I don't say that anymore... because I say, 'Whatever they charge, we'll charge.' And you know what? They stop."

Sangam water unsafe: Govt data

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Ganga water at Triveni Sangam, where lakhs of people are taking a holy dip every day during the ongoing Maha Kumbh, is currently unsafe for bathing as it exceeds the prescribed limit for biological oxygen demand (BOD), a key parameter to determine water quality, according to government data.

BOD refers to the amount of oxygen required by aerobic microorganisms to break down organic material in a water body. A higher BOD level indicates more organic content in the water. River water is considered fit for bathing if the BOD

Yogi says otherwise

Lucknow: The water at the Sangam is fit for both bathing and ritual drinking (aachman) as confirmed by some recent reports. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said Wednesday, amid claims it may contain high levels of faecal bacteria. He told the state Assembly that the Uttar Pradesh Control Board and the Central Pollution Control Board are continuously monitoring the water quality at the Sangam. He also trained his guns at Opposition Samajwadi Party, saying the condition of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers was so poor while it was in power that the Prime Minister of Mauritius refused to take a dip during the 2013 Kumbh. **P9**

level is less than 3 mg per litre. Government data shows that the river water at Sangam is

currently exceeding this limit. The BOD level at Sangam was 5.09 mg per litre at 5am January 16. It was recorded at 4.6 milligrams per litre at 5pm January 18 and 5.29 mg per litre at 8am January 19 (Wednesday).

According to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data, the BOD level at Sangam was 3.94 mg per litre January 13 when the Maha Kumbh started. It improved to 2.28 mg per litre on Makar Sankranti (January 14) and further dropped to 1 milligram per litre January 15. However, it rose to 4.08 mg per litre January 24 and was recorded at 3.26 mg per litre on Mauni Amavasya (January 29).

Odisha gets ₹255cr NDRF aid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: A committee headed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah has approved ₹1,554.99 crore of additional central assistance under the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) to five states including Odisha, which were affected by floods, flash floods, landslides and cyclonic storms during 2024.

Out of the total amount of

₹1554.99 crore, ₹255.24 crore has been approved for Odisha, ₹608.08 crore for Andhra Pradesh, ₹170.99 crore for Nagaland, ₹231.75 crore for Telangana and ₹288.93 crore for Tripura, according to an official statement.

This additional assistance is over and above the funds released by the Centre to the states in the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), already placed at the disposal of the states.

Rekha Gupta to be new Delhi CM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: First-time MLA Rekha Gupta will be the new chief minister of Delhi, the BJP announced Wednesday.

Gupta was chosen as the Leader of the House in the Delhi Assembly at the BJP legislature party meeting. The party has returned to power in Delhi after over 26 years, ending the 10-year rule of the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP.

Gupta and her Cabinet ministers will take the oath of office at the Ramlila Ground Thursday. She will be the fourth woman chief minister of Delhi after Sushma Swaraj, Sheila Dikshit and Atishi. She will be the only woman chief minister among the states being ruled by the BJP at present.

The 50-year-old leader won from Shalimar Bagh, defeating AAP candidate Bandana Kumari by over 29,000 votes in the February 5 Assembly polls.

All 48 newly-elected BJP MLAs attended the legislature party meeting in the presence of Central observers Ravi Shankar Prasad and OP Dhankar. Gupta's name was proposed by senior party leaders Parvesh Verma, Vijender Gupta and Satish Upadhyay.

Philippine village offers bounties for mosquitos

CRITICS WARN THE STRATEGY COULD BACKFIRE IF DESPERATE PEOPLE START BREEDING MOSQUITOES FOR THE REWARD

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manila, Feb 19: A village in the densely populated Philippine capital region launched a battle against dengue Wednesday by offering a token bounty to residents for captured mosquitos — dead or alive.

The unusual strategy adopted by the Addition Hills village in Mandaluyong City reflects growing concern after the nearby city of Quezon declared an outbreak of the mosquito-borne illness over the weekend. Eight more areas reported an upsurge in cases of the potentially deadly viral infection.

At least 28,234 dengue cases have been recorded in the Philippines this year up to February 1, a 40 per cent increase compared to the same period last year, according to health department statistics. Quezon

City declared a dengue outbreak Saturday after deaths this year reached 10 people, mostly children, out of 1,769 residents infected.

An urban village of more than 100,000 residents living in crowded neighbourhoods and residential condominium towers, Addition Hills has done clean-ups, canal de-clogging and a hygiene campaign to combat dengue. But when cases spiked to 42 this year and two young students died, village leader Carlito Cernal decided to intensify the battle.

"There was an alarm," Cernal told The Associated Press. "I found a way."

Residents will get a reward of one Philippines peso (just over 1 cent) for every five mosquitos or mosquito larva they turn in, Cernal said.

Critics warned the strategy



could backfire if desperate people start breeding mosquitos for the reward. Cernal said that was unlikely because the campaign would be terminated as soon as the uptick in cases eases.

As the campaign began, about a dozen mosquito hunt-

ers showed up at the village office. Miguel Labag, a 64-year-old scavenger, handed a jug with 45 dark mosquito larvae squirming in some water and received a reward of nine pesos (15 cents). "This is a big help," Labag said, smiling. "I can buy coffee."

leisure



MINDY KALING WANTS TO GET BACK ON CAMERA

American actress Mindy Kaling wants to get back into acting after working with Kate Hudson and Brenda Song. The 45-year-old star - who hasn't appeared on screen since in 2023 - admitted working behind the camera on her latest show *Running Point* has inspired her to consider acting roles again.

NICOLE KIDMAN'S HOME RANSACKED

The Los Angeles home of Babygirl actress Nicole Kidman and country music star Keith Urban has reportedly been ransacked. According to NBC News, a law enforcement source confirmed the break-in, which included ransacking and breaking glass. The property was targeted on Valentine's Day.



FORTUNE FORECAST



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ARIES
Ganesha will play Cupid with you today. You will be seized by temptations, and may even forget that your desires are one-sided. If in a troubled relationship, you may get insights into some unresolved matters, says Ganesha.

TAURUS
This day there could be a lot of surprises in store for you. Be prepared for sudden and unexpected twist and turns in the flow of events. This is not a day for taking up meaningful activities. Ganesha advises you to postpone all major programmes and decisions for tomorrow.

GEMINI
You will don the role of a very affectionate parent today. Your children, however, may get a bit uneasy by this sudden surge of love on your part. Don't overdo it; if you have just realised that your kids need warmth, be patient with them. With your spouse, however, you will have no problem in the warmth department.

CANCER
Today, your love for your partner will reach the point of obsession. Before you realise it, you will uncharacteristically go out of your way to impress the love of your life. It will be as if you are under a spell. So unless someone shakes you out of your stupor, you may end up doing something that you may live to regret for the rest of your life.

LEO
"Show me the money!" Well, you might as well be saying that aloud, because today, you are going to be heard. Ganesha foresees a fruitful day in money matters. Even professionally, you come to terms with enjoying the power of money. It is a good day for a bit of splurging, especially on those you love.

VIRGO
A candid conversation with your beloved is on the radar today. Labour to complete tasks you've been putting off for a while, says Ganesha. A trip to a sacred place is also blinking. But be advised, and weigh your options before making a choice.

LIBRA
Call it your charm, your influence or whatever you will, but today, it brings incredible results for you, says Ganesha. Also, you may personally contemplate a little bit of self-improvement for ensuring better prospects in the future. It is likely that some of you may decide to smarten up your dream house.

SCORPIO
Endless ambitions and limitless energy - a day tailored to perfection, forecasts Ganesha. On the career front, you will be looking for some challenging activities. You will have more than enough vigour to tackle anything that work or academics can throw at you.

SAGITTARIUS
The artist in you will shine today, and how, says Ganesha. You'll be content with your possessions, which have been preserved over long years. Later in the day, your focus may shift to renovating or decorating your home by adding artifacts and furniture.

CAPRICORN
The day will find you in an exceedingly good mood and you will be all energetic and geared up to take on challenges as and when they come, says Ganesha. A number of business activities will command your attention, and agreements and contracts you will take hold of as a consequence may get you a fortune.

AQUARIUS
Today, you decide not to mix business with pleasure. A wise decision, says Ganesha. Your commitment to work increases and you don't want to harm your prospects. However, you reserve the evening only for your loved ones, who are more than happy to have you with them.

PISCES
The feelings of resentment that you have been harbouring since some time will not allow you to take any criticism that comes your way in the right spirit. This does none harm, but you. Learn to let go of your negative thoughts and indulge in some harmless fun and frolic today, says Ganesha.

Bhumi's surreal feeling

Mumbai: Actor Bhumi Pednekar, who is completing a decade in the industry this year, says she is happy that she has built her career on playing women with agency, right from her debut with Dum Laga Ke Haisha.

Bhumi, known for films such *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*, *Bala*, *Bheed*, and *Bhakshak*, said it is a surreal feeling that she gets to live her dream of being an actor everyday through movies.

"I realised I wanted to be an actor when I was 12 so I am grateful that even after 10 years I am doing what I love so deeply. I constantly seek agency in my characters. If they don't have agency, I wouldn't do them because I just wouldn't enjoy being a part of that process. I am lucky that I had the opportunity to play such diverse women," the actor told this agency.

Bhumi will next be seen in *Mere Husband Ki Biwi*. The actress, talking about the movie, shared, "A man woman relationship is so complex, there are so many shades there. There is a lot of happiness and sadness and I love to play such complex roles."

The Mudassar Aziz directorial also features Rakul Preet Singh and Arjun Kapoor. PTI

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The Mudassar Aziz directorial also features Rakul Preet Singh and Arjun Kapoor. PTI



Solitude is intimidating: Samantha

Hyderabad: Samantha Ruth Prabhu took a break from her busy acting schedule to find peace and refreshment. The actress shared her experience of spending three days in silence without using a mobile phone to reset herself.

Samantha took to her Instagram stories to share a picture from her recent spiritual visit to an organisation in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

The actress showcased the beautiful green surroundings along with her ID card for the sessions. She captioned the picture, "Three days in silence. No phone. No communication. Just me for company."

She further added, "Somehow, being alone with our selves has become one of the scariest things. Would I do it again? A million times, yes. Would I recommend you try it? A million times, yes."

The *Citadel: Honey Bunny* actress admitted that solitude can be intimidating, yet she would willingly experience it again and again.



Deepika on why she's an introvert

Mumbai: Actress Deepika Padukone recently made a surprising revelation about her personality, uncovering the reason behind her introverted nature.

The Fighter actress took to her Instagram and reposted a video suggesting that intelligent people tend to enjoy being alone and are naturally inclined towards introversion.

In the clip, an Instagram user is heard saying, "Here's how you know somebody is intelligent. This is a simple theory and observation. The more intelligent someone is, the more they struggle with social interactions. Or, as he put it, the more intelligent someone is, the more at risk they are of becoming antisocial. Intelligent people like to be alone. They tend to be natural introverts. In fact, they have a small, select group of people they trust, and they feel a bit uncomfortable when surrounded by others, especially strangers."

Reposting the video, Deepika wrote, "Aah! I have always wondered why I am such an introvert... Now I know."

On the work front, she was last seen in the blockbuster *Kalki 2898 AD*, which also featured Prabhas, Amitabh Bachchan, and Kamal Haasan. Deepika also appeared in Rohit Shetty's cop drama *Singham Again* alongside Ranveer. In the action-packed drama, she played the role of Shakti Shetty, aka Lady Singham. IANS

CURTAINS DOWN ON NATAKA PARIKRAMA



Uttar Purusha, one of the oldest drama troupes of Odisha, staged Odia play *Uttarayada* on the third and final evening of its three-day drama festival at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Wednesday. Written by Narayan Chandra Sahoo, the play was directed by troupe's president Prasanna Mishra. It exposed the evil designs of fake god-men prevailing in contemporary society. Noted theatre personality Haren Sahoo was honoured with Uttar Purusha Samman. OP PHOTO

Jagadish Samman for Pabitra, Sunanda

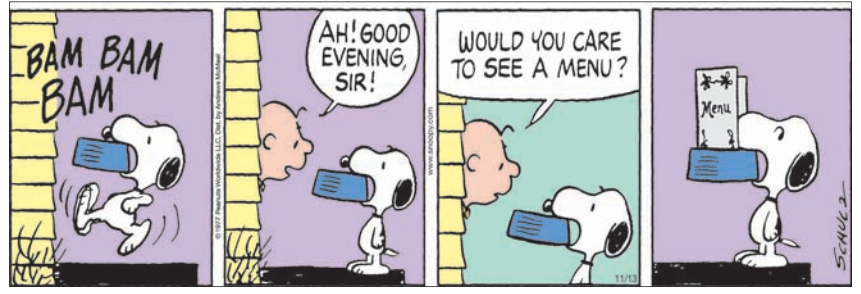
BHUBANESWAR: The birth anniversary of trendsetting modern Odia fiction writer Jagadish Mahanty was celebrated here at the Buddha Mandir, Wednesday.

On this occasion, the prestigious Jagadish Katha Samman of the year was conferred on distinguished short-story writer Pabitra Panigrahi. The award comprises a cash prize of Rs 10,000 and a commemorative plaque. Similarly, author Sunanda Pradhan received Jagadish Yuva Samman. She received a certificate along with a cash prize of Rs 5,000.

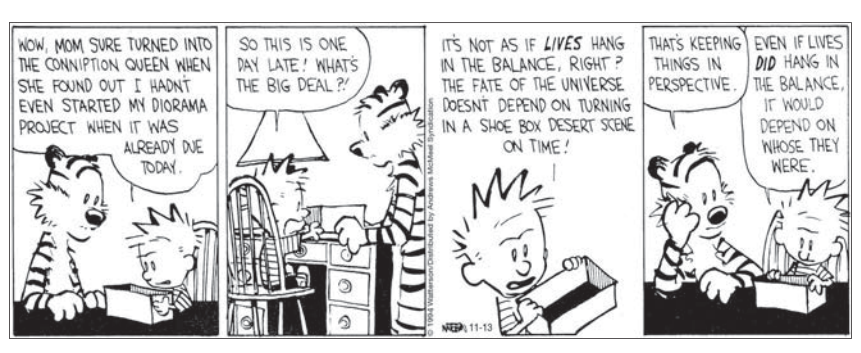
This festival, Jagadish Jayanti, organised in his memory by Jagadish Mahanty Trust was graced by retired professor and critic Guru Charan Behera from Banaras Hindu University as the chief guest while noted translator and critic Himanshu Sekhar Mahapatra was the keynote speaker.

The event was presided over by author Sarojini Sahu while poet Saroj Bal, delivered the welcome address. A dramatic presentation of a story by Jagadish Mahanty, was performed at the beginning by noted storyteller Prachitara. PNN

PEANUTS



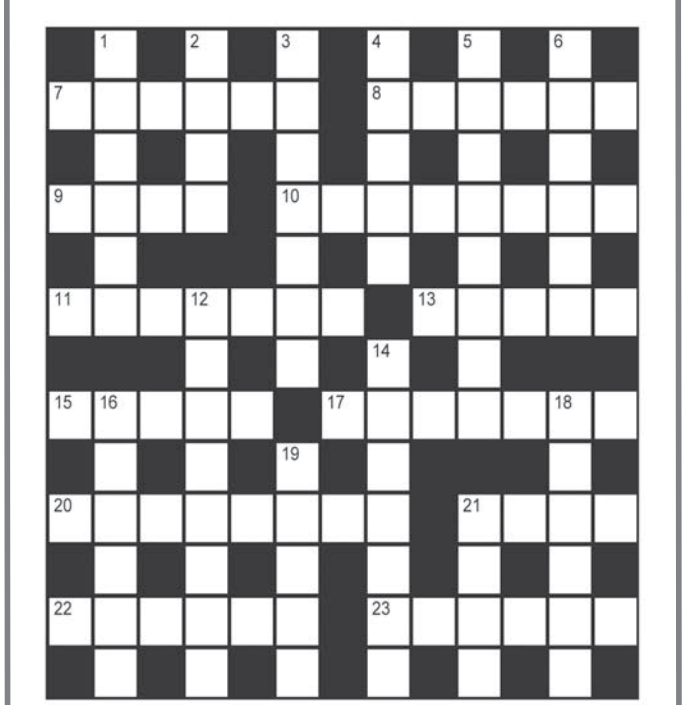
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



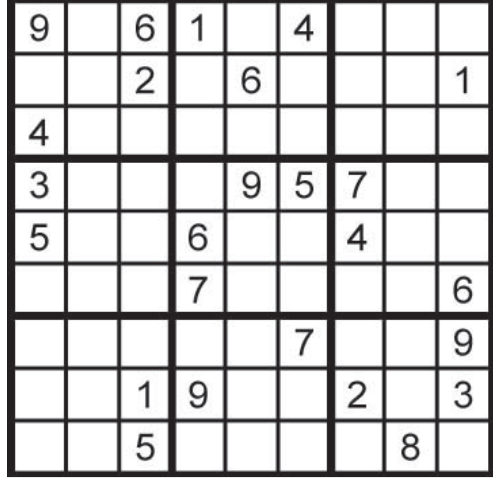
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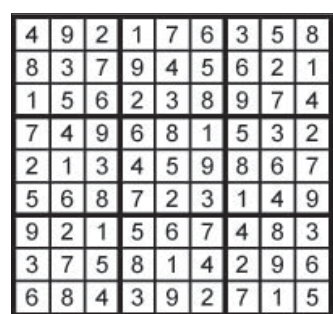
- Across**
- 7 Popeye, e.g.
 - 8 In the middle of
 - 9 Neighbor of Vietnam
 - 10 Indian Ocean island group
 - 11 Dog treat
 - 13 Cheap jewelry
 - 15 Orderly pile
 - 17 Real
 - 20 Circle measurement
 - 21 Cousin of a mandolin
 - 22 Tension
 - 23 Miner's goal
- Down**
- 1 Highly seasoned sausage
 - 2 Handouts
 - 3 Sprite
 - 4 Aesop's output
 - 5 Observant
 - 6 Rise
 - 12 Salad addition
 - 14 Drifter
 - 16 Pollutes
 - 18 It's national, at times
 - 19 Hoard
 - 21 Box seat

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

Members of Odisha Government College Retired Lecturers' Association during the annual session and felicitation ceremony at Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan in Cuttack, Wednesday



downtown

Students, activists, lawyers question police role

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: The unrest that broke out on the campus of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) following the alleged suicide of a 20-year-old B.Tech student from Nepal and the forcible eviction of hundreds of justice-seeking students from hostels after subjecting them to inhuman brutality at the hands of university guards and bouncers has raised several questions on the role of the police whose absence was conspicuous.

many of them at railway stations instructing evicted students to go back to the campus raises questions about their integrity which needs to be investigated, said lawyers and social activists. The lid over the suicide blew off February 16 after Siddhanth Sigdel, a cousin brother of the deceased, Prakriti Lamsal, lodged a complaint at the Infocity police station, alleging that she took the extreme step following protracted harassment by a fellow student Advik Srivastav, who was subsequently arrested following wide-spread outcry. As per the reports, tensions flared up on the campus after news of her death spread, with students—particularly from Nepal—staging demonstrations and demanding justice. But instead of helping the overseas students, the authorities acted by declaring sine die and allegedly used force in evicting them from their hostels. They were packed in the institute's buses in hordes and dropped at railway stations. Some students, who wished not to be identified, alleged that

KIIT SUICIDE ROW



a woman constable aided their forced eviction along with institute's security personnel. "Instead of bringing the culprit to justice, the police were more interested in forcing students to vacate hostels. It seems for them (police) what matters is to stay on the side of the powerful than finding the culprit," they alleged. Activists and lawyers questioned why police were aiding the university authorities in perpetrating violence on the students rather than controlling the situation. Bibhuti Bhusan Mohapatra, convener of Students Against Corruption, said, "On whose

the university staffers - arrested by Infocity police in connection with the brutal assault on the varsity students - by a local court, has sparked discussions over the alleged police bias. Senior advocate Chittaranjan Dash said that a probe should be ordered to find out if the police were also involved in the beating up of the students instead of protecting them. He alleged that the police deliberately applied 'lighter' sections in order to ensure quick bail to the accused. "They should rather have charged them under Sections pertaining to the attempt to murder and kidnapping," he said. Meanwhile, when queried over the alleged police inaction, Infocity police station IIC Mahendra Kumar Sahu denied of any involvement of police in the beating up of the students. "We have arrested the culprit, Advik Srivastav, immediately. What happened at the hostel is not in our hands. It can be probed," he said, while avoiding a direct question about their mishandling of the entire situation.

Nepal Foreign min urges Suryabanshi for fair probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Feb 19: Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba Wednesday requested Odisha Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj to make arrangements for impartial investigation into the death of a Nepalese student and take legal action against the culprit. During a telephone call, she also asked Suryabanshi to ensure that classes resume for other Nepalese students in the university in his state in a safe environment, according to a statement from the secretariat of the Foreign Minister.

Prakriti Lamsal, 20, a third-year B.Tech student at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) in Odisha, allegedly died by suicide at her hostel room February 16, leading to unrest on the campus. During the conversation, Suryabanshi informed that the Odisha government has taken the matter seriously and a high-level probe committee has been formed to provide justice to Lamsal and punish the culprit. He also assured that arrangements have been made for the safety of Nepalese students in the hostel and for resumption of studies, the statement added.

Scholarship in Prakriti's name

Bhubaneswar: KIIT University Wednesday announced a scholarship in memory of Prakriti Lamsal, the 20-year-old Nepalese student of the private engineering institute who died allegedly by suicide at her hostel room February 16, leading to unrest on the campus. The announcement was made by KIIT and KISS founder Achyuta Samanta, who met the deceased student's father and uncle, offering his deepest condolences, according to a statement issued by the institute. "A scholarship would be instituted in Lamsal's name as a tribute to her memory," Samanta said, adding, "As per the desire of Prakriti's father, the scholarship will be awarded to meritorious Nepalese girl students." During the day, senior officials from Nepal's New Delhi Embassy met students of their country on the campus, assuring them that similar incidents would not be repeated. "KIIT has taken proactive measures to facilitate the return of those who are yet to return," the statement added.

3.90L GHOST BENEFICIARIES REMOVED FROM PDS: MIN

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: The state government has removed the names of 3,90,814 dead and ineligible beneficiaries from the public distribution system (PDS) during the ongoing e-KYC verification process, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare (FS&CW) Minister Krushna Chandra Patra told the Assembly Wednesday. Replying to a question by Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati, Patra said, "During the e-KYC process, names of 3,28,932 deceased persons have been deleted from the ration card database." Similarly, 61,882 ineligible beneficiaries of 16,184 ration cards have been identified through field verification and deleted from the database so far, Patra added. According to data provided by the FS&CW Minister, ineligible beneficiaries whose names have been identified during field verification and subsequently deleted include 6,003 in Nayagarh, followed by Cuttack (5,154), Balasore (4,748), Mayurbhanj (4,403), Khurda (3,783) and Puri (3,009). In another written statement, Patra said, "So far, 2.99 crore beneficiaries have successfully completed the e-KYC verification of their ration cards, while 32,82,491 are yet to complete the process." Steps are being taken to make e-KYC mandatory during the digitisation of new ration cards, along with cross-examination of new applicants with other exclusion criteria, he said while replying to a question by Congress MLA Sofia Firdous. "The e-KYC verification of the remaining beneficiaries is expected to be completed by March," he said.

However, all the existing beneficiaries in the database, irrespective of their e-KYC verification status, are being provided ration, he said, adding, "No beneficiary will be deprived of their foodgrain quota due to want of e-KYC." Meanwhile, Opposition BJD and Congress demanded that the ration cards of those staying outside Odisha and small traders should not be deleted from the list. Speaking outside the House, BJD legislator Goutam Budha Das said, "Deletion of dead beneficiaries and inclusion of new people is a continuous process. However, in the name of e-KYC verification, the government is creating trouble for the people," he said. "Those staying outside Odisha are facing a lot of problems for e-KYC verification. We want to alert the government that they should not delete the eligible persons from the PDS," Das said. Similarly, Bahinipati said, "We welcome the move to delete the names of deceased beneficiaries from the ration card list. However, small-time traders and shopkeepers who are filing zero I-T return only to get bank loans should not be removed from the list." "Some beneficiaries died four or five years ago, but the government has been providing the rice quota. After an inquiry, it can be ascertained who was taking the rice. During the last 24 years of BJD rule, there was huge corruption, which came to the fore now," the FS&CW Minister told reporters outside the House. "Some I-T payers are also availing free rice. Notices have been issued to them. After physical verification, the ineligible persons will be removed," he added.

Mission Shakti, women atrocity set House on boil

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: The Assembly witnessed chaos as Opposition BJD and Congress members disrupted proceedings, forcing Speaker Surama Padhy to adjourn the House thrice during the day, eventually adjourning it for the day without transacting much business Wednesday. The House was first adjourned at 10:31am, just a minute after it convened for the day

to take up the Question Hour, until 4pm without transacting any business. This came as BJD and Congress members stormed into the well of the House, shouting slogans against the government. While BJD members, holding placards, rushed to the podium and raised slogans opposing the state government's move to restructure the Executive Committee of Mission Shakti, Congress members protested against the rising cases of atroc-

ities against women under the current BJP dispensation. After the House was adjourned, agitated BJD members, holding placards in their hands, marched in a procession to the Mahatma Gandhi statue on the Assembly premises and staged a protest, demanding the immediate withdrawal of the notice for restructuring the Executive Committee of Mission Shakti. BJD leaders Ranendra Pratap Swain and Arun Sahoo, accused the BJP government of

attempting to saffronise Mission Shakti and restructuring it against the wishes of lakhs of women who have been serving the programme for the past two decades. They highlighted that these women have been staging an indefinite protest in front of the Assembly for the last six days, opposing the government's move. The BJD members argued that there was no justification for restructuring Mission Shak-

ti and alleged that the government was deliberately pursuing the move for political gains. When the House reassembled at 4pm after the adjournment to take up the Private Members' Bill, the situation remained unchanged. Both BJD and Congress members continued shouting slogans inside the well of the House, disrupting proceedings and forcing the Speaker to adjourn the House twice, finally adjourning it at 5:15pm for the day.

4-yr-old girl donates stem cells to sister

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 19: A four-year-old girl donated stem cells to her two-year-old sister, who has been diagnosed with blood cancer, marking the first such allogeneic bone marrow transplant (BMT) in Odisha. According to sources at SCB Medical College and Hospital, where the procedure was performed, Aliza Naaz, daughter of Sharukh Ansari of Jharkhand's Dhanbad, was admitted to Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH) in Jamshedpur for treatment July 3 last year. Following examinations, she was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML), a severe form of blood cancer. Doctors advised Sharukh to go for allogeneic BMT and find a suitable stem cell donor. As human leukocyte antigen matching conducted at TMH confirmed a 100 per cent match with her elder sister, the family decided that Aliza's sister Aatifa will donate stem cell. As the procedure required expenses of Rs 30 lakh, she was brought to SCB. The procedure was performed in January.



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Keonjhar Dy Collector arrested over bribery

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: Vigilance sleuths Wednesday arrested Keonjhar Deputy Collector (land acquisition) Sarat Kumar Giri while accepting ₹50,000 bribe, official sources said. According to Vigilance sources, the district court of Keonjhar had September 14 last year ordered for payment of ₹6,96,696 in the joint account of the complainant and his brothers towards compensation for their land acquired for construction of NH-215 (now NH-20) by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). The complainant approached the Deputy Collector at least five-six times for disbursement of the amount. "The OAS officer, however, demanded 10 per cent of the amount as commission for release



of the compensation money," the anti-corruption wing said. After the complainant cited his poor condition, Giri reduced the amount to ₹50,000. With no way out, complainant approached the Vigilance authorities.

Acting on the complaint, the anti-corruption wing officials laid a trap and apprehended the officer in his office chamber, it said. "The officer was caught by Odisha Vigilance in his office while demanding and receiving a bribe of ₹50,000 from the complainant for disbursing the compensation amount of his land acquired for a highway. The entire tainted bribe money has been recovered from the possession of the accused and seized," it said. The Balasore Vigilance police station has registered a case (1/2025) under Section 7 of the PC (prevention of corruption) Act, 2018. Following the trap, simultaneous searches were underway at three places linked to Giri - his paternal house in Khurda, his rented residential house at Keonjhar, and his office chamber - in connection with a probe into disproportionate assets.

GOVT PLANS HEATWAVE SAFETY FOR LABOURERS

The government takes proactive steps by adjusting work schedules, ensuring access to drinking water, and enhancing medical readiness

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: With summer temperatures expected to rise above 40°C in several districts, the state government has initiated precautionary measures to protect labourers from the adverse effects of extreme heat.



cluding those under the state and Central governments, as well as private employers, have been advised to adjust working schedules accordingly.

She emphasised that while productivity must be maintained, worker safety should be prioritised. Wherever possible, tasks should be carried out in the early morning or late afternoon without compromising wages.

Industries like emergency and essential services where rescheduling isn't feasible, em-

ployers and contractors must ensure necessary safety measures. These include ensuring adequate drinking water supply, ORS packets, shaded rest areas, and periodic breaks to prevent heat-related illnesses.

Health officials, including chief district medical officers (CDMOs), sub-divisional medical officers (SDMOs), and medical staff in primary and community health centers (PHCs/CHCs), will be kept on high alert to handle cases of sunstroke and dehydration.

Additionally, awareness programmes will be conducted across industrial units and construction sites to educate workers about heat stress symptoms, precautions, and first aid measures, ensuring their safety throughout the peak summer months.

NUBS celebrates Foundation Day

Bhubaneswar: The Nikhil Utkal Biswakarma Samiti (NUBS), Bhubaneswar Mahanagar Sakha, marked its 81st Foundation Day at the Buddha Mandir Auditorium here Wednesday.

OASME hosts loan mela for startups & MSMEs



LOAN MELA FOR MSMEs & STARTUPS

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: The Odisha Assembly of Small and Medium Enterprises (OASME), in collaboration with the MSME department, organised a loan mela at the Institute of Entrepreneurship Development here Wednesday.

Over 1,000 startups, MSMEs, and aspiring entrepreneurs participated at the event, exploring funding opportunities. Leading banks, including SBI, HDFC Bank, Bank of Baroda, UCO Bank, and SIDBI, offered tailored financial solutions to support business growth.

Speaking at the event, MSME department Additional Chief Secretary Hemant Sharma reaffirmed the state's commitment to empowering businesses.

"The Odisha government is dedicated to ensuring financial accessibility for startups and MSMEs, enabling their growth and success," he said.

A key highlight was OASME's MoU signing with SIDBI to facilitate loans for startups and MSMEs. OASME Additional Secretary General Satwik Swain called it a first-of-its-kind initiative in the state.

The event also saw the participation of senior officials, including SIDBI deputy general manager Pradyumna Choudhury, SLBC head and UCO Bank general manager Goutam Patra, and OASME (Women Wing) chairperson Jyotirmayee Mohanty, among others.



AGAINST PLASTIC POLLUTION: Students of Girls High School, Unit II, Bhubaneswar take out an awareness rally in the City Wednesday, carrying a banner that read 'No to Single-Use Plastic'

National-level handloom expo kicks off in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: The 23rd national-level handloom expo, organized by Odisha State Handloom Weavers Co-op Society Ltd (Boyanika), was inaugurated by Cooperation, Handlooms, Textiles & Handicrafts Minister Pradeep Bal Samanta at the Exhibition Ground here Wednesday.

The event will run until April 1, providing a platform for weavers from across the country to showcase and sell their handwoven products.

Highlighting Odisha's rich textile heritage, Minister Samanta said, "Odisha's handwoven products, especially Ikat (Bandha) weaving, hold a special place in Indian textiles."

Sponsored by the Handlooms, Textiles & Handicrafts department, the expo features leading state-level organisations and 50 PWCS from Odisha.



Additionally, major handloom clusters from across India, including Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Haryana, Tamil

Nadu, Puducherry, Telangana, Delhi, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Punjab, and Gujarat, are participating.

A total of 225 stalls have been set up, with 150 participants showcasing a diverse range of handloom products. The expo will be open daily from 11:30am to 9:30pm, offering visitors access to exclusive handwoven collections.

Boyanika is spearheading the event, ensuring promotion and sales to support the economic development of Odisha's weavers.

WEATHER: BBSR CTC Max Temp 33.7° 32.2° Min Temp 22.2° 21.5° Humidity 85% 89% Rainfall Nil Nil FORECAST Dry weather very likely

MARKET WATCH: INDEX VARIATION SENSEX 75,939.18 28.21 NIFTY 22,932.90 12.40 DOLLAR 87.75 0.03 EURO 91.03 0.20 GOLD ₹86,011 ₹269 SILVER ₹96,228 ₹336

India's first 'Take a Book' library at Bhub airport

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: Bakul Foundation, in collaboration with the Airports Authority of India, has launched India's first "Take a Book" library, Flybrary, at Bhubaneswar airport recently.

Unlike other airport libraries in India, such as those in Varanasi, Pune, and Bangalore, which do not permit book borrowing, Flybrary enables travelers to take books home.

Passengers can also donate books by placing them on Fly-



brary shelves or sending them to Bakul Foundation, which is actively setting up libraries across Odisha.

The idea, conceived by Bakul Foundation founder Sujit Mahapatra, was long in the making. It gained momentum when he proposed it to Commerce and Transport department Principal Secretary Usha Padhee

during the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas event. With her support, the initiative became a reality.

Padhee praised the concept and promised to donate some books while encouraging passengers to contribute.

Seeing the enthusiastic response, BPI Airport director Prasanna Pradhan decided to continue the initiative. A Bakul volunteer visits daily to restock and organise the shelves, but demand is high.

IMD director general Mrutyunjay Mohapatra was among the many delighted to discover the library on arrival, marking a significant step in promoting reading and creating a positive impression of Odisha.

NTSC 2025 to be held Feb 21-23



RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: The second National Thermal Spray Conference (NTSC 2025) and Expo will be held from February 21 to 23 at the CSIR-IMMT campus, Bhubaneswar.

Announcing the event at a press meet here Wednesday, CSIR-IMMT director Ramanuj Narayan, principal scientist Sisir Mantry, and chief scientist Laxmidhar Besra highlighted its significance.

"Around 400 delegates, including 22 international participants, will explore the role of thermal spray technology in sectors like defense, mining, and metallurgy," he added.

Besra noted that corrosion costs India 3 to 4 per cent of its GDP, and thermal spray technology offers effective solutions.

The conference will feature keynote lectures on plasma spray, HVOF, cold spray, nanostructured coatings, and corrosion-resistant technologies. A dedicated expo zone will showcase live demonstrations by manufacturers, material suppliers, and research institutions.

Odisha Yatri crosses one lakh rides in 45 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb19: Odisha Yatri, the state's pioneering mobility application launched by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, has accomplished a significant feat by surpassing one lakh rides within a mere 45 days of its introduction.

This rapid success highlights the increasing trust and enthusiasm of commuters across Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, who have embraced the app for its commitment to safety, transparency, and convenience.

The app's rapid adoption reflects its effectiveness in addressing the key concerns of passengers and drivers alike, setting a new benchmark in the state's public transportation sector.

Odisha Yatri has been designed with a strong emphasis on both passenger safety and driver empowerment. The app offers a host of essential features, including real-time trip tracking, transparent pricing, and direct integration with the



Odisha Police 112 emergency response system.

Additionally, passengers have the option to share their trip details with family and friends, further enhancing the sense of security and reliability.

What sets Odisha Yatri apart from conventional ride-hailing platforms is its revolutionary zero-commission model. Unlike private mobility services that take a significant cut from drivers' earnings, Odisha Yatri

allows drivers to retain 100 per cent of their fares.

This transformative approach has not only improved the livelihoods of thousands of drivers but has also encouraged them to provide safer and more customer-friendly services.

With better earnings, drivers are more motivated to maintain vehicle standards, follow safety protocols, and ensure high-quality service, ultimately benefiting passengers with affordable fares and a superior

commuting experience.

Supported by the government, Odisha Yatri stands as a trustworthy alternative to private ride-hailing services, reinforcing its position as a game-changer in the state's mobility sector.

Speaking about the app's impact, Commerce & Transport department Principal Secretary Usha Padhee stated, "Odisha Yatri is more than just a ride-hailing platform; it is a movement towards a saf-

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Missing company VP, his driver return home

Keonjhar, Feb 19: Vice president of Grewal Minerals and Metals at Barbil Nimananda Pradhan and his driver who had gone missing from Barbil February 12 returned home Wednesday evening. While suspense prevails over the reason behind their sudden disappearance, their family members and the police have remained tightlipped over the issue. According to reliable sources, Barbil police had caught a cyber criminal and interrogated him. But suspense prevails whether it is a case of abduction or a missing case. Pradhan had left his office

around 7:30pm February 12 but did not return. Worried over the incident, his family members started a frantic search and tried to contact Pradhan over phone, which showed switched off. Later, they tried to contact his driver Md Firoz but his mobile also showed switch off. With no options left, his family members lodged a complaint with Barbil police Thursday. The police began a search and started checking the CCTV footage of the company and Barbil town. Police teams also visited Jharkhand and camped there for last six days. Barbil police station IIC Ashok Kumar Nayak said, "Details will be shared soon."



Sea ingress into Rushikulya sparks concern in Ganjam



POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, Feb 19: Frequent incursion of seawater into Rushikulya river and upto 10 km into the coast in Ganjam district has severely impacted irrigation and drinking water supply of the region. The tidal ingress has led to increased salinity level of Rushikulya river. While saline water is unsuitable for irrigation purpose, it is also unfit for human consumption. "Farmers are now facing an agrarian crisis as seawater ingress into the river has affected the irrigation," said Simanchal Nahak of Rushikulya Rayat Mahasabha.

Due to tidal incursion, Rushikulya river water has turned saline (from Ganjam estuary up to Kansariganda in Chhatrapur block). This has severely affected water supply and irrigation facilities in Ganjam NAC, Kainchapur, Malad, and Karapada panchayats of Ganjam block, and Potlampur panchayat of Chhatrapur block. Experts fear that at least 10 villages in these areas will bear the brunt of the tidal ingress. Frequent incursion of tidal waves is disturbing the region's ecological balance. Environmentalist Arun Satapathy and others have stressed the urgency of resolving this issue. However, the authorities are yet to

Water supply and irrigation facilities in Ganjam NAC, Kainchapur, Malad, and Karapada panchayats of Ganjam block, as well as Potlampur panchayat of Chhatrapur block have been severely hit. Experts fear that at least 10 villages in these areas will bear the brunt of the tidal ingress. Frequent incursion of tidal waves is disturbing the region's ecological balance.

take corrective measures. Ajit Kumar Pradhan, executive engineer of Irrigation department, explained that high tidal force is pushing seawater upstream, while accumulated silt and the sand dunes near the river mouth is obstructing the outflow of saline water. As a result, brackish water remains in the riverbed longer than usual, seeping into irrigation canals and water supply pipelines. Chhatrapur MLA Krishna Chandra Nayak has alerted Irrigation and Rural Water Supply department officials about the crisis. Similarly, former deputy speaker Ramachandra Panda has raised the issue with the chief engineer of the Rural Water Supply department.



BEATING THE HEAT: A youth jumps into Chaunrpur canal in Sambalpur district for a bath Wednesday as mercury rises

7-yr-old raped in Keonjhar dist

Patana, Feb 19: A seven-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a 13-year-old boy at a village under Turumunga police limits in Keonjhar district Monday night. The matter came to light after police conducted a medical examination of the survivor and the boy before producing him in a juvenile justice board Wednesday. The incident occurred when family members were busy participating in a post death ritual of a kin Monday night. The girl had gone to the backyard of her house to attend nature's call when the boy raped her. The victim's family members lodged a complaint with Turumunga police alleging rape following which a case was registered. "We have launched an investigation into the incident," Turumunga IIC Dharmendra Shanti said.

Elevated corridor in Sambalpur by Dec 2026

The 3.44 km long six-lane corridor, having a width of 14.5 metres, is expected to decongest the busy section of NH-53 near Ainthapali



Everything goes according to plan, the construction is likely to be completed by December next year," he said. Sahu said, "It would be a six-lane corridor having a width of 14.5 metres, with a total length of 3.44 km, including a 1.2 km flyover section. A significant portion of NH-53, around 12 km,

would run through Sambalpur city." At present, commuters witness heavy traffic congestion at Ainthapali area on the national highway as the Sambalpur-Rourkela Biju Expressway and another road, which leads to Sambalpur airstrip at Jama-darpali area, meet with NH-53 at two separate crossroads.

Moreover, a new bus terminus has come up at Ainthapali and, as a result, at least 450 buses pass through the road, contributing to the traffic congestion in that area. "It has been proposed that heavy vehicles will pass through the proposed elevated corridor, effectively mitigating traffic congestion issues," the officials added. On the request of the Sambalpur district administration, the NHAI had approved the proposal of the elevated corridor. Soil testing for the proposed project was conducted in 2020, sources said. Last year, the Union highways and road transport ministry allocated ₹374.17 crore for this project and for the construction of a railway over-bridge near the venture, they said.

Municipality status to Chhatrapur soon

Chhatrapur, Feb 19: Chhatrapur, an NAC in Ganjam district, is set to be upgraded to a municipality soon, state Housing and Urban Development Minister Krishna Chandra Mohapatra announced. Chhatrapur MLA Krishna Chandra Nayak raised the issue in the Assembly, asking about the municipality status for Chhatrapur NAC. In response, the minister stated that during an official visit, he assessed the NAC's layout, area, and environment, and said it fulfilled all the criteria for municipality status. Following this, a proposal was sought from the district Collector, which has now been submitted and is under review. The minister emphasised that Chhatrapur is in the process of achieving municipality status. Notably, before the last general elections, the then BJD government had announced municipality status to Chhatrapur, in compliance with a directive from Orissa High Court. However, no official notification was issued at that time. During Mohapatra's visit to Chhatrapur, local representatives, including Berhampur MP, MLAs, and the NAC chairperson, submitted a memorandum urging him to upgrade Chhatrapur to a municipality.

Student's body found hanging

Khallikote, Feb 19: The body of a Plus II first-year student of RCM College here was found hanging from a tree atop Jay Durga hills behind Jagannath Vihar in Ganjam district Wednesday. The deceased was identified as Badal Palei, a resident of Deogaon village under Kabisuryanagar police station. Locals spotted the body hanging with a rope and alerted the police. A team of Khallikote police, under the direction of IIC Ramesh Ku-

mar Pradhan, reached the spot and launched an investigation. The cops recovered the body, seized a bag containing notebooks, a pair of slippers, college uniform, and a mobile phone from the spot. Badal's father Pitambar Palei, who reached the scene on hearing the news, alleged that his son was murdered. It was revealed that Badal's biological mother had passed away, and he was living with his stepmother. The investigation into the incident is in progress.

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, CHILIKA WILDLIFE DIVISION. Tender Notification No. 08/01WL-706/2025, Dated 18.02.2025. TENDER NOTICE FOR SELECTION OF A COMPANY/ FIRM FOR SUPPLY, INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING OF BOAT ENGINES WITH ASSOCIATED REPAIR WORKS. No.MM-490 : Sealed tenders/bids are invited from established/reputed, registered, experienced and accredited manufacturers/resellers for "Supply and installation and commissioning of two numbers of 50 HP outboard boat engines and associated repair works in existing boats as per specifications in the tender document".

WATER CORPORATION OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR. NOTICE INVITING BID NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-PROCUREMENT. REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR "Selection of Consultant for Setting up PMU for Planning, Project Management, Policy Support, Implementation of Central and State Government Urban Water Supply Projects in Odisha, Coordination and Monitoring Support to WATCO".

UCO BANK ZONAL OFFICE 18/1, Ainthapali Road, Sambalpur, Ph.: 0663-2540640. POSSESSION NOTICE Appendix - IV [See Rule 8(1)]. (Under Section 13(4) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 for Immovable Property) Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of UCO Bank, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of Powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notices under section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon the Borrowers to repay the amount with interest at the contractual rate together with incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. within 60 days from the date of the said Notice. The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken POSSESSION of the property described here-in below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank, Brajrajnagar Branch for an amount with interest and expenses thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

THE KARUR VYSYA BANK LTD., Asset Recovery Branch-Kolkata. E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 9 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/ charged to the Secured Creditor, The Karur Vysya Bank Ltd, Aska Branch, the constructive Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of The Karur Vysya Bank Ltd., Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 17th March 2025 for recovery of Rs.76,62,942.53 (Rupees Seventy Six Lakhs Sixty Two Thousand Nine Hundred Forty Two and Paise Fifty Three Only) as on 31.01.2025 with further interest from 01.02.2025 onwards for Open Cash Credit facility payable as per law due to the Karur Vysya Bank Ltd, Secured Creditor from 1) M/s. Mahanta Cashew Industry (Borrower), At Sahapur, Aska, Ganjam Orissa 761110 2) Mrs. Gayatri Patra (Partner) 3) Mrs. Rina Kumari Patro (Partner) 4) Mrs. Rajlaxmi Patra (Partner) 5) Mrs. Manasmita Patra (Partner), 6) Mrs. Jyoti Patra (Partner) 7) Mr. Surendranath Patra (Guarantor) 8) Mrs. Sulabha Patra (Guarantor) 9) Mr. Panchanan Patra (Guarantor) 10) Mr. Rabindra Kumar Patra (Guarantor) 11) Mr. Bulu Patra (Guarantor) 12) Mr. Manoj Kumar Patra (Guarantor), all residing at Sahapur, Aska, Ganjam Orissa 761110



Firewall Breached

With only a few weeks to go before the federal election on 23 February, Germany experienced a political earthquake. For the first time, the main opposition party, the center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU), relied on the support of the extreme-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) to pass a motion in the national parliament.

CDU leader Friedrich Merz, long seen as a shoo-in for the chancellorship, justified the move by blaming other parties for their unwillingness to address migration. But while the motion produced nothing concrete, the democratic political parties' "firewall" against the far right was breached. No longer can Germany claim to be one of the last major European democracies not to have "normalized" the far right.

But what exactly is normalization, and on what grounds should it be criticized? For starters, it is not the same thing as mainstreaming. Normalization is specifically about rationalizing a transgression of an existing norm – not collaborating with far-right parties that pose a threat to democracy, in this case – whereas "mainstream" is always relative. Like the notion of the political center, it has no objective content, but simply refers to what is most common or widely subscribed.

Thus, entering a coalition with a far-right party, or relying on it to pass laws, is a form of normalization, while copying the rhetoric of the far right is an example of mainstreaming. To mainstream an issue is to call attention to it and frame it the way the far right wants it to be framed. Hence, social scientists have long warned that if the issues the far right favors dominate in an election campaign, the far right will do well at the polls.

Since pro-democracy politicians do not want to be perceived as cynical opportunists, they usually seek ways to justify normalization. One option is simply to claim that the norm remains in force, and that one's behavior does not qualify as a violation. Merz took this path when he stressed that his goal is to diminish AfD's share of the vote. But this argument is unconvincing. Rival parties often end up in coalitions, and the fact that they have conflicting programs does not mean that they never cooperate.

Another option is simply to declare the norm invalid. For decades, the Italian Social Movement (MSI), which cultivated nostalgia for Mussolini and Fascism, was deemed beyond the pale. Like the Communists, it was not considered to be a part of the arco costituzionale ("the constitutional arch"): the parties that basically accepted Italy's post-war democratic constitution. But then came Silvio Berlusconi, a pioneer of normalization who suggested that the anti-fascist consensus was either obsolete or a left-wing plot against the right. His party proceeded to form a coalition with the MSI in 1994.

One other option is to retain the norm, while insisting either that it does not apply to a particular party, or that it is less important than other political imperatives. Think of Italy's current Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni, who got her political start in the MSI's youth organizations. Plenty of politicians, both inside and outside Italy, have decided that her Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia) party – a direct descendent of the MSI – is a perfectly acceptable partner. Even those still hesitant to work with the most right-wing Italian government since World War II can invoke larger issues – such as the need to present a united front in support of Ukraine – to justify cooperation.

A similar logic applies in Austria, where the center-right People's Party had initially ruled out working with Herbert Kickl, the chair of the far-right Freedom Party. After coalition talks with the center-left had failed, the People's Party proceeded to negotiate with Kickl's party, all in the name of keeping Austria governable. These talks, too, have now failed, but, in the process, the People's Party signaled to Austrians that Kickl was an acceptable choice after all (a signal that no doubt will help the Freedom Party in the next elections). It is reasonable to assume that many Austrians voted for the People's Party in the most recent election precisely because it had vowed not to normalize the far right; it is unclear whether it will be trusted again after its glaring betrayal of that promise.

Even more nefarious are situations where the far right calls the shots even as its leaders remain out of high office, and thus largely unaccountable. In Sweden, for example, the current minority government is supported by the far-right Sweden Democrats; in France, the government – which also lacks a majority – is ultimately at the mercy of Marine Le Pen's National Rally; and in the Netherlands, the government includes the far right, but its leader, Geert Wilders – who completely controls his party as its only official member – remains in the background.

Normalization is easier to detect than mainstreaming. But recognizing it as a problem requires a public that is paying attention, and prominent figures who will make norm-breaking a scandal, instead of normalizing it. Voters take their cues from elites; if a politician who is seen as mainstream treats a party as normal, public opinion will tend to follow. Moreover, research has shown that such acceptance spreads beyond partisans of the mainstream party that started the process and eventually extends to the citizenry as a whole.

Once normalization has happened, it is virtually impossible to undo. The significance of mainstreaming is somewhat different, because it remains up to politicians which topics to emphasize and how to treat them. It is high time they learned that uncritically adopting far-right talking points – often thinly veiled incitements to hatred – is not only immoral. It is also a losing proposition at the ballot box.

The writer is Professor of Politics at Princeton University.

WISDOM CORNER

Do one thing at a time, and while doing it put your whole soul into it to the exclusion of all else

The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do

Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going

THRUST ON N-POWER

FOCUS RENEWABLE ENERGY

2024 was the warmest year in history, the first to exceed 1.50 C pre-industrial levels with 44% of the globe affected by heat stress. The environmental challenge thus poses major problems for countries like India which must grapple with a huge population and balancing environment and development. Presenting, the Union Budget 2025-26, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman laid stress on the country's energy transition efforts.



Dhurjati Mukherjee
INDIA CONTINUED TO DECOUPLE ECONOMIC GROWTH FROM ITS GHG EMISSIONS WITH THE EMISSION INTENSITY REDUCING BY 36% BETWEEN 2005 AND 2020



100GW of nuclear power generation by 2047 is required for India to achieve its declared goal of net-zero emission

energy has a vital role in the country's energy transition to net zero as it is a base-load source of clean electricity, available 24x7."

However, India must also flog the anomaly stated by a report of World Inequality Lab (WIL): "The global top 10% are responsible for almost half of global carbon emissions and global top 1% emitters are responsible for more emissions than the entire bottom half of the world's population." This reveals no balanced or inclusive development and could be an obstacle in achieving Sustainable Development Goals and reducing inequalities (SDG10) and climate action (SDG13). The per capita emission of the bottom 50% is 1.4 tCO2/person which accounts for 12% of total emissions. The middle 40% emits 6.1 tCO2/person while the top 10% has 28.7 tCO2/person, representing 40% and 48% share respectively of the total emissions.

The effect of climate change on tropical and sub-tropi-

cal countries has been quite severe, leading to projected revenue losses of over 80% by end of the century. If the figures for half of the population of the Global South are taken into consideration, their emissions would be around just 6%, while economic losses would be around 82 to 85%. In contrast, the top 50% of the global population accounts for 50% of all emissions and suffers a mere 3% of income losses.

India has pledged that by 2030 it would cut one billion tonnes of emissions, meet 50% of its energy needs from renewable energy and reduce emission intensity by 45% and increase non-fossil fuel energy to 500GW from 134 GW in 2019. Keeping this in view, India continued to decouple economic growth from its GHG emissions with the emission intensity reducing by 36% between 2005 and 2020. Moreover, in its biennial submission, the country stated that its share of non-fossil fuel sources in the installed electricity generation

capacity was 46.5% by October 2024 and total installed capacity of renewable power, including large hydro power, was 203.2GW. India's cumulative renewable power installed capacity (excluding large hydro projects) increased 1.5 times by 35GW in March 2014 to 156.25GW in 2024.

It may be mentioned here that, as per IMF estimates, under current policies, India's emissions will rise 41% by 2030 and keep growing up to 2040. This is obvious keeping in view the fast pace of development. Moreover, costs of renewable energy have to be further brought down and its use popularised.

Experts have pointed out that transitioning to a sustainable "nature economy" could unlock \$10 trillion business opportunities and 395 million jobs by 2030. Every dollar invested in restoring degraded lands has been estimated to bring between \$7 to \$30 economic returns.

The possibility of reducing emission intensity is indeed quite bleak despite all efforts by most countries. Though in India renewable energy use has increased, fossil fuel extraction has not declined with increasing demand for such fuels.

Emissions must be reduced in future as the effects are indeed quite hazardous.

The thrust on renewable power as also nuclear power can be a counter to the high rates of emission that has become a threat to the environmental crisis.

SPECTRUM LANGUAGE

Protect, promote & propagate

It's more than a decade since the declaration of Odia as a 'classical language' of India in February 2014. Although the 8th Schedule of the Constitution recognises 22 languages, very few of them have the distinction of being declared a classical language. Odia received this accolade fairly early. The occasion entrusts a responsibility of all Odias to protect, promote and propagate the language and its literature at a critical juncture when the next-generation Odia-speaking people are moving away from their mother tongue. The digital transformation has added both challenges and opportunities to make the language user-friendly without compromising its pristine purity. It is now all the more important that scholars, writers, intellectuals and students of Odia literature come forward and shoulder the responsibility to carry forward the legacy of the language while confronting the challenges.



Rup Narayan Das

APART FROM THE LITERARY AND CREATIVE WORKS, ODIA LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE HAVE BECOME AN INSEPARABLE WITNESS TO OUR FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Language is a rare gift to mankind to express feelings and communicate. One can rarely get the comfort of the mother tongue in any other language. Language is also a cementing force amongst various groups of people as they can easily connect on matters related to their day-to-day affairs and carry forward various commitments. Literature gives the right medium to

give vent to the inner voice. Odia is an ancient language spoken by people inhabiting not only this geographic territory known differently as Utkal, Udra, Koshala, but also by many people in adjoining states like Jharkhand, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. The migration of Odia diaspora abroad expanded the compass of the language. Srimad Bhagabata, a 16th Century epic written by Atibadi Jagannath Das is not only an excellent creation in Odia literature but has also been a guiding light of socio-cultural life for all Odias. The establishment of 'Bhagabata Tungis' in villages across Odisha and regular recitation of the verses of Bhagabata resonated the life and living of Odias over the centuries.

The earliest written texts in the language are about thousand years old. The modern Odia language is formed mostly from Pali words with significant Sanskrit influence. Historians have divided the history of the Odia language into five main stages: Old Odia (8th Century to 1300), Early Middle Odia (1300 to 1500), Middle Odia (1500 to 1700), Late Middle Odia (1700 to 1850) and Modern Odia (1850 to present) with profound imprints of works of eminent poets, writers and other literary luminaries like Sarala Das, Upendra Bhanja and the Pan-

chasakhas. The first great poet of Odisha is Sarala Das, who translated the Mahabharata. This translation has since provided subsequent poets with the necessary foundation for a national literature, providing a fairly accurate idea of the Odia culture of the time.

The great poet Radhanath Ray is the most well-known poet who wrote with a Western influence, and his 'kavyas' (long poems) included 'Chandrabhaga', 'Nandikeshwari', 'Usha', 'Mahajatra', 'Darbar' and 'Chilikka'. Similarly, the contribution of Fakir Mohan Senapati, the most known Odia fiction writer, also known as 'Vyasa Kabi,' to inhibit the marginalisation of the Odia language, his creative writings, translations from Sanskrit, creation of valuable poetries and various forms of literature, have befittingly made him known as the father of modern Odia prose fiction. Other eminent Odia writers and poets of the time include Gangadhar Meher, Madhusudan Rao, Nanda Kishore Bal and Gaurisankar Ray. The names are only illustrative.

Similarly, the fiction trend that Fakir Mohan started developed further after independence, led by Gopinath Mohanty, Surendra Mohanty and Manoj Das. These authors pioneered the trend of developing or projecting the 'individual as protagonist' in

Odia fiction. Purnachandra Odia Bhashakosha, the Odia language dictionary of Gopal Chandra Praharaj is a monumental seven-volume work of about 9,500 pages that lists some 1,85,000 words and their meanings in four languages – Odia, English, Hindi and Bengali.

Apart from the literary and creative works, Odia language and literature have become an inseparable witness to our freedom struggle. A new era in literary thought emerged influenced by Gandhi and the trend of nationalism. Gopabandhu was a large part of this idealistic movement, founding a school in Satyabadi and influencing many writers of the period. Other famous writers of the era were Godabarisha Mishra, Nilakantha Dash, Harihara Acharya and Krupasindhu.

At a time when we are more using Hindi and English as two prominent languages both for official and communicating purposes, the need for propagating the values and essence of regional languages is important. This will not only help enhance better bonding between linguistic states and the Union, but will strengthen relationship between various language-speaking people.

The writer is a former senior fellow of Indian Council of Social Science Research.

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



Disconcerting data

Sir, It is sad that India's school enrolment has dropped by 37 lakh in 2023-24, according to data from Unified District Information System for Education Plus (U-DISE+), which was released by the Ministry of Education in December last year. The sharp decline is not an isolated incident but part of a broader pattern observed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, Bihar, in particular, has experienced high dropout rates, with female enrolment being severely impacted. The big fall in school enrollment is a wake-up call for all stakeholders involved in India's education system. It highlights the urgent need for policy reforms that prioritize equitable access to quality education for every child, regardless of their socio-economic background. As we reflect on these troubling statistics, it is essential for parents, educators, and policymakers to engage in meaningful dialogue aimed at addressing these challenges collectively to ensure that every child has the opportunity to receive an education that empowers them for a brighter future..

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Economic misery

Sir, A new study report shed light on the realities of employment generation in India, which has been overhyped for many years. Niti Aayog defines gig workers as those who labour outside of the traditional employer-employee structure, and their number has surpassed one crore. This figure is expected to reach two crore 35 lakh by 2030. It has recently been revealed that 97.6 per cent of such workers earn less than five lakh rupees per year. In fact, 77.6 percent of gig workers make less than ₹2.5 lakh a year. According to a report from market research firm TeamLease Digital, at least 21 per cent of gig workers work more than 12 hours every day. Gig work primarily consists of delivery guys, platform workers, and cab drivers. All such workers are not eligible to any form of social security. If the government begins to view such labour opportunities as employment, it will be argued that the economic hopes that rest on them are nothing more than a castle in the sand.

Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

Kashmir may see 'drought' R'sthan Budget focuses on jobs, water supply

According to officials, several water bodies are flowing below the zero level mark at many places while some springs in south Kashmir have dried up completely due to the receding water table



CM Abdullah calls for collective effort

Jammu and Kashmir is staring at a water crisis this year due to a massive deficit in rainfall, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said Wednesday, calling for a more proactive approach and collective efforts towards water management and conservation. Abdullah said in a post on X, "J&K is staring at a water crisis this year. It's not a recent phenomenon, actually it's been building up for a few years now. While the government will have to adopt a more proactive approach for water management & conservation, it can't just be a government centric approach. All of us residents of J&K will have to change the way we take water for granted." The chief minister said he will review the measures being taken by the concerned department to deal with the crisis. "I'll be reviewing the measures the Jal Shakti (PHE) Dept intends to take to deal with the developing crisis & I'll also be talking to the people of J&K over the next few months about what we can do collectively," he added.

bodies was more than a metre below the usual water level for this time of the year.

"If it does not rain or snow in the next fortnight, there is a possibility of crisis with regards to water for drinking and irrigation purposes," he added.

Social media is flooded with videos and images of dried up water bodies with Acchabal springs in south Kashmir hav-

ing dried up completely.

The river bed of Jhelum is visible at many places, especially upstream in south Kashmir while the water level downstream in north Kashmir is alarmingly low. The lack of enough snowfall has forced authorities to postpone the fifth edition of Khelo India Winter Games which were scheduled to begin from February 22.

Calling this the state's first "green Budget", Kumari said special focus will be given on climate change adoption, forest and environment, sustainable agriculture, water harvesting, recycling and waste disposal, circular economy, and capacity building

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Feb 19: Recruitment for up to 2.75 lakh positions in the government and private sector, water supply projects, and the construction of nine greenfield expressways were the highlights of the Rajasthan Budget 2025-26 presented by state Finance Minister Diya Kumari in the Assembly Wednesday.

While presenting the ₹5.37-lakh crore Budget, Kumari, who is also the Deputy Chief Minister of the state, announced that 20 lakh new houses will be provided with drinking water connections and ₹400 crore will be spent for this purpose.

"We are committed to creating a \$350 billion economy by 2030... We have increased capital expenditure by more than 40 per cent in a short period and have constructed more than 9,600 km of new roads and upgraded more than 13,000 km of roads," Kumari said.

Calling this the state's first "green Budget", Kumari said special focus will be given on climate change adoption, forest and environment, sustainable agriculture, water harvesting, recycling and waste disposal, circular economy, and capacity building.

"Under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, the GDP, indicating the development of the state, is estimated to increase to more than ₹19,89,000 crore in



While presenting the ₹5.37-lakh crore Budget, Kumari, who is also the Deputy Chief Minister of the state, announced that 20 lakh new houses will be provided with drinking water connections and ₹400 crore will be spent for this purpose

2025-26," she said.

Kumari announced recruitment for 1.25 lakh posts in government departments and state undertakings and 1.50 lakh private sector jobs in the coming year.

She said the state government will construct nine green-

field expressways at a cost of ₹60,000 crore.

For the energy sector, she announced 50,000 new agriculture connections and 5 lakh domestic connections, abolition of banking with other states at high rates, solar plants, and 150 units of free electricity per

month to beneficiaries under the CM Free electricity scheme.

An allocation of ₹10 crore was made for work of non-patchable roads in each Assembly constituencies and ₹15 crore in constituencies under desert region, ₹50 crore for detailed project report of ring roads in 15 cities, ₹250 crore for traffic improvement work in Jaipur, Jaipur metro work from Sitapura industrial area to Ambabari and Vidhyadhar Nagar, DPR for Jaipur metro extension to Jagatpura and Vaishali Nagar.

A fund of ₹150 crore was announced under the CM Thar region development programme, installation of 50,000 street lights in all cities of the state.

She announced global capacity centre policy for investment in the service sector, Rajasthan trade promotion policy for trading sector, development of 10 sites as iconic tourist destinations.

Kumari said ₹100 crore will be spent to promote night tourism, ₹100 crore for Tribal Tourist Circuit covering Tripura Sundari temple, Mangarh Dham, Beneshwar Dham and other temples, and Govind Devji Kala Mahotsav to mark 300 years of foundation of Jaipur.

She said "Vaidik Gurukul" and "Vaidik Tourism Centres" will be established in Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Udaipur, and "Yuva Sathi Kendra" in Kota, Jodhpur, Jaipur and Sikar to address the issues of suicides and stress among students.

J&K HC quashes order of detention of journalist under PSA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, Feb 19: The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh Wednesday quashed the detention order of journalist Majid Hyderi under the Public Safety Act (PSA).

Justice VK Chatterjee quashed the detention of Hyderi under PSA, the petitioner's advocate told reporters here.

Majid Hyderi was arrested and booked under the PSA on charges of extortion and defamation in September 2023. He was later lodged in the Kot Balwal jail in Jammu district. The court had reserved the judgement on Majid's detention after a heated argument from both sides and announced the judgement today.

In another case, the high court dismissed the petition filed by senior advocate, Mian Qayoom, challenging his detention order under the PSA. Mian Qayoom was arrested June 25, 2024, during the investigation into the murder of advocate Babar Qadri.

Qadri was killed by gunmen in his home in the Hawal area of Srinagar city in 2020. Before his killing, he had accused Mian Qayoom of hatching a conspiracy to kill him.



In this image released by @ombirlakota via X on Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla pays tribute to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on his birth anniversary, in Kota, Rajasthan.

IGP Jammu reviews railway security

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 19: Inspector General of Police (IGP), Jammu Zone, Bhim Sen Tuti, conducted a comprehensive security review of strategic locations along Katra-Banahal railway section, which is likely to be thrown open for commercial operations shortly to fulfill the dream of Kashmir's rail connectivity, an official said.

Accompanied by Udhampur-Reasi Range Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Rayees Mohammad Bhat, Doda-Kishtwar-Ramban Range DIG Shridhar Patil and other senior police and railway officers, the IGP visited Railway stations at Katra, Reasi and Sangaldan and the iconic Chenab bridge at Kauri Tuesday, a police official said.

He said the visit focused on assessing the existing security measures, law enforcement deployment, surveillance systems and anti-sabotage preparedness to counter any potential threats.

The IGP interacted with the officers and personnel on the ground, reviewing security protocols, surveillance systems and coordination mechanisms among different agencies, the official said.

At the Railway stations and



the Chenab bridge, he said the IGP reviewed the security arrangements for passengers and the vital infrastructure and directed the officers to enhance security measures and to coordinate effectively with the Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel.

Emphasizing the importance of proactive policing and intelligence gathering, he directed the officials to enhance vigilance, strengthen security checks and ensure seamless coordination between police, railway authorities and other security forces. "Continuous monitoring and enhanced security measures will remain a priority to ensure the safety of passengers, residents, and critical infrastructure", the IGP said.

India-Egypt joint exercise Cyclone-III underway in Bikaner

The third edition of 14-day exercise, which started February 10, includes joint training on close quarter battle (CQB) drills, survival techniques, demolition training and combat medical skills, among others

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Feb 19: Indian and Egyptian troops are undergoing rigorous combat conditioning and tactical training under the ongoing joint special forces exercise Cyclone-III at Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan's Bikaner, officials said Wednesday.

The military drill is aimed at strengthening joint operational capabilities, defence spokesperson Col Amitabh Sharma said in a release.

The third edition of 14-day exercise, which started February 10, includes joint training on close quarter battle (CQB) drills, survival techniques, demolition training and combat medical skills, among others, he said.

"High-intensity drills being carried out in the exercise



have been designed to enhance the soldiers' ability to respond effectively to complex operational scenarios, particularly in desert and semi-desert terrain," the spokesperson added.

The joint training sessions emphasised agility, endurance and precision, ensuring that

both contingents operate seamlessly as a cohesive force in real-world combat situations.

The exercise also provides a unique opportunity to showcase India's indigenous defence capabilities and the Egyptian contingent gains first-hand exposure to India's cutting-edge military technology

The joint training sessions emphasised agility, endurance and precision, ensuring that both contingents operate seamlessly as a cohesive force in real-world combat situations

The exercise also provides a unique opportunity to showcase India's indigenous defence capabilities and the Egyptian contingent gains first-hand exposure to India's cutting-edge military technology and weapon systems

and weapon systems, he said. "Such collaborations not only enhance tactical capabilities but also deepen diplomatic and military ties between the two nations," he said.

The exercise will culminate in an intense 48-hour validation phase, during which both con-

tingents will conduct simulated counter-terrorism operations.

The final phase is designed to rigorously test the troops' ability to plan and execute tactical manoeuvres in high-pressure environments. This segment will see soldiers executing joint tactical drills, neutralising simulated threats and applying their learned skills in a realistic operational setting.

"Exercise Cyclone-III stands as a symbol of India and Egypt's enduring defence cooperation and shared commitment to counter-terrorism and regional security. This high-intensity exercise is a testament to the strong strategic partnership between India and Egypt, reinforcing military cooperation and enhancing inter-operability between the two nations' elite forces," the spokesperson said.

ODISHA STATE CASHEW DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD.
(A Govt. of Odisha Undertaking)
At/PO. - Ghatikia, Near Kalinga Studio, Bhubaneswar - 751029

Notice for Auction of Cashew Plantation No. 8

No.CAD- : Odisha State Cashew Development Corporation Limited hereby invites interested person/ organization to bid for the cashew plantations under its jurisdiction in six divisions i.e. Khordha, Jaipur, Dhenkanal, Mayurbhanj, Koraput and Sundergarh in the auction to be effectuated on the website <https://www.msotecommerce.com/> on. Dt. 19/02/2025. The details of the date and time related to the auction process are as mentioned below.

S.No.	Particulars	Date	Time
1	Publication Date	19/02/2025	11:00 A.M.
2	Document Submission / EMD Payment Start Date	19/02/2025	11:00 A.M.
3	Document Submission/EMD Payment End Date	27/02/2025	05:00 P.M.
4	Auction Start Date	28/02/2025	11:00 A.M.
5	Auction End Date	28/02/2025	05:00 P.M.

Auction timing for the plantations being leased out for 3 years is 11:00 A.M. to 02:00 P.M. and auction timing for the plantations being leased out for 5 years is 02:00 P.M. to 05:00 P.M.

The plantations will be leased out for 5 years/3 years as per the area of the plantation. The detailed terms and condition may be obtained from the website <https://www.msotecommerce.com/> or <https://www.oscdc.nic.in>.

N.B : This is the last phase of auction for cashew plantations under OSCDC.

Thus it is notified for the information of general public that, you are requested to take part in the auction process carefully as per the instructions mentioned in the above mentioned website, date and time. For more information you may contact to the Head Office or the respective Division Offices.

OIPR-01049/11/0028/2425 Sd./- Managing Director

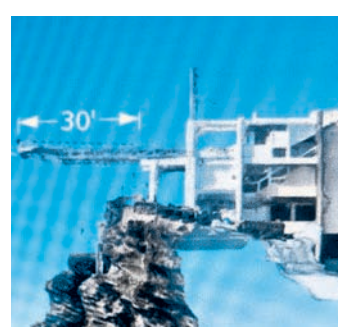


Planting trees is crucial for saving environment, stopping soil erosion, saving water and life... This pledge is now becoming a people's movement

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | UNION MINISTER

MIZORAM GETS ITS FIRST SKYWALK

The first skywalk in Mizoram has been inaugurated in state capital Aizawl, officials said. The privately owned sky bridge located at Aizawl Peak Resort or Hangi Lunglen Tlang in the northern part of the state capital was inaugurated by Chief Minister Lalduhoma for the public Tuesday, they said



A view of the snow-covered Tandri village, confluence of the rivers Chandra and Bhaga, in Lahaul and Spiti

NIA arrests 3 men for leaking defence info to Pak operatives

It has been alleged that Pakistani intelligence operatives funded the espionage through cryptocurrencies, and used escorts to honeytrap officials. With the latest three arrests, the NIA has so far picked up eight people in the high-profile espionage case, originally registered by Andhra police's Counter Intelligence Wing



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 19: Three men were arrested for leaking sensitive information to Pakistani-based intelligence operatives, the NIA said Wednesday. In a statement, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) said the three men were sharing sensitive information about Indian defence establishments at Karwar Naval Base and Kochi Naval Base.

While Vethan Laxman Tandel and Akshay Ravi Naik were picked up from Uttara Kannada district in Karnataka, Abhilash P A was arrested from Kochi in Kerala Tuesday. All three accused persons, arrested with the assistance of local police, were allegedly

found to have been in contact with Pakistan Intelligence Operatives (PIOs) through social media. As per NIA investigations, they were sharing sensitive information about Indian defence establishments at Karwar Naval Base and Kochi Naval Base and were receiving money from PIOs in exchange for the information.

A total of eight people have been arrested so far in the case. NIA has so far chargesheeted five persons, including two absconding Pakistani operatives, in the case that was originally registered by the Counter Intelligence Cell, Andhra Pradesh in January 2021. The anti-terror agency took over the case in June 2023. NIA

investigations have revealed that Pakistan national Meer Balaj Khan and one Akash Solanki -- who has been arrested -- were involved in the espionage racket related to leaking of sensitive vital information about the Indian Navy as part of an "anti-India conspiracy". Another absconding PIO, Alven, and two others -- Manmohan Surendra Panda and Amaan Salim Shaikh -- have also been chargesheeted by the agency.

The NIA will continue its probe in the case to unravel the espionage conspiracy by Pakistan-based operatives and other anti-national elements, the statement said. The NIA took over the case after the Andhra Pradesh police suspected the involvement of foreign intelligence operatives. The chargesheet filed before the NIA court in Vijayawada in July 2024, the probe agency said Solanki had confidential details of Indian warships and submarines, which he passed on to a Pakistani intelligence operative, who went by the name 'Aditi Chouhan'. It was reported that Khan funded Solanki through cryptocurrencies. Meanwhile, the NIA -- which had inspected various locations in multiple states -- is still probing the case.

Media must exercise utmost caution before publishing any news: SC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Supreme Court has said persons working in key positions in the media must exercise utmost caution and responsibility before publishing any statements, news, or opinions and observed the right to freedom of speech and expression was paramount. A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan reiterated that the power of the media in shaping public opinion was significant and the press possessed the ability to influence public sentiments and alter perceptions, with remarkable speed.

The bench's observation came when it quashed a defamation case against English daily Times of India's editorial director and other journalists, who were accused of publishing alleged defamatory contents over the authenticity of certain paintings to be auctioned by Bid & Hammer - Fine Art Auctioneers. "We find it necessary to emphasise that right to freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India is paramount. At the same time, it is reiterated that those working in the media, particularly, individuals in key positions, authors, etc., must exercise utmost caution and responsibility before publishing any statements, news, or opinions," the bench said in its February 18 judgement.

"The top court quoted English writer Bulwer Lytton as saying, "The pen is mightier than the sword". Given the vast reach, the court said, a single article or report could resonate with millions, shaping their beliefs and judgments. It has the capability to cause severe damage to the reputation of those concerned, with consequences that may be far-reaching and enduring, it added. "This highlights the critical need for accuracy and fairness in media reporting, especially when dealing with matters having the potential to impact the integrity of individuals or institutions. Keeping these aspects in mind, publication of the news articles must be done in public interest and with good faith," said the bench. The top court was hearing an appeal filed by the journalists against a Karnataka High Court order, which dismissed their petition challenging the initiation of the criminal proceedings against them. The were facing charges of under Sections 499 (defamation) and 500 (punishment for defamation) of the IPC. The complainant (art auction house) alleged that the defamatory news item that was printed, published and circulated by all the accused persons had caused readers to view the complainant with suspicion and also fostered an unjustifiable and unfounded public opinion that its works offered for sale through public auctions could be fake. The top court however observed procedural irregularities in the magistrate's summoning order and said the complainant failed to produce any witness to prima facie establish the alleged imputations had lowered its reputation.

STAMPEDE ROW

Delhi HC asks rlys to take note of PIL raising concerns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Delhi High Court Wednesday asked the Railways to examine the fixing of maximum passengers and sale of platform tickets -- issues raised in a PIL over the recent stampede at the New Delhi Railway Station. A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela asked the authorities concerned to state in its affidavit, the details of its measures on the issues. "Let the issues raised in the petition be examined, as suggested by the solicitor general, at the highest level at the Railway Board and thereafter an affidavit be filed by the respondent giving details of the decisions which might be taken by the Railway Board," the court ordered.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta said the matter was not taken in an adversarial manner and the Railways was bound to follow the law. He said there was an "unprecedented" situation and assured the court that the issues raised in the PIL would be considered at the highest level. The court said the PIL was not confined to the recent incident of stampede as it sought implementation of the existing legal provisions with respect to maximum number of passengers in a compartment and sale of platform tickets. If the legal provisions were perhaps implemented adequately, such incidents of stampede could be avoided, it added. The matter would come up March 26. A PIL was also filed in the Supreme Court February 17 two days after the tragic incident that claimed 18 lives and left 15 injured, and sought immediate action to prevent such disasters in the future.

The PIL, filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari, sought a direction to the Centre and other authorities for implementation and consideration of a 2014 report of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on "Managing Crowd at Events and Venues of Mass Gathering".

Four Naxalites gunned down by police in MP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Balaghat, Feb 19: Four Naxalites, including three women cadres, were killed Wednesday in an encounter with the police in Madhya Pradesh's Balaghat district, an official said. The anti-Naxal Hawk Force of the state police and local police teams took part in the operation that took place in a forested area, said additional superintendent of police Vijay Dabar. Weapons were also recovered from the encounter site, police said. Balaghat shares borders with Gondia district of Maharashtra and Rajnandgaon, Khairagarh and Kawardha districts of Chhattisgarh with both adjoining states facing Left-wing extremism in certain pockets.

The gunbattle broke out in the morning, at a location some 90 km away from the district headquarters, Dabar told PTI. The spot is near Ronda Forest Camp in Supkhar Forest Range under Garhi police station area, as per an official statement. Police recovered an INSAS rifle, a Self-Loading Rifle (SLR) and a .303 rifle besides essential daily-use items from the spot.

No evidence against Siddaramaiah, wife

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 19: The Lokayukta police probing the MUDA site allotment case Wednesday said the charges against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his wife Parvathi could not be proved for want of evidence. Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, R Ashoka, addressing the media said the Lokayukta report giving clean chit to Siddaramaiah was on the expected lines, while the petitioner in the case, activist Snehamayi Krishna, told PTI: "Only those officials who have sold their conscience can give such a report". The probing officers said they have submitted the final report to the High Court. "Since the above allegations against accused-1 to accused-4 in the case have not been proven due to lack of evidence, the final report is being submitted to the High Court," the Lokayukta police said in a letter to Krishna. Besides Siddaramaiah and his wife, his brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy and the land owner Devaraju are the accused.

The Lokayukta police said that further investigation will be conducted into the allegations of Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) providing compensatory plots in the ratio of 50:50 from 2016 to 2024 and an additional final report will be submitted to the High Court under Section 173 (8) CrPC. In the MUDA site allotment case, it is alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to Siddaramaiah's wife in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by the MUDA. The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a 50:50 scheme in lieu of 3.16 acres of her land, where it developed a residential layout.



MUDA CASE

The probing officers said they have submitted the final report to the High Court

Ensure child care, feeding rooms in public buildings: SC to states

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Supreme Court Wednesday outlined the importance of separate spaces for child care and feeding of infants in public buildings and asked states to ensure such facilities were provided. A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Prasanna B Varale said setting up such facilities would ensure privacy of mothers and prove beneficial for infants. In existing public spaces, as far as practicable, the state governments may ensure such facilities were provided, added the court. "In so far as public buildings which are at the stage of planning and construction at public places, the state gov-

ernments may ensure that sufficient space is reserved for the purposes referred to above," said the bench. The top court was hearing a plea seeking directions to construct feeding rooms, child care rooms or any other facilities for infants and mothers in public spaces. The Centre's counsel said the secretary of the Ministry of Women and Child Development February 27, 2024, issued a communication on the issue to chief secretaries and administrators of all states and union territories (UT). Saying it was conscious that it issued no notice to states and UTs, the bench expressed satisfaction over the secretary's communication incorporating the prayers mentioned in the plea. "On a perusal of the same, we



find that the advice for setting up of the aforesaid facilities at public places is for the purpose of ensuring privacy and ease of discharging of duties of mothers who have young children and for the benefit of the

infants," it added. The bench said if the advice was acted upon by the states, it would go a long way in facilitating privacy to young mothers and infants at the time of feeding. "We find that the said ad-

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Prasanna B Varale said setting up such facilities would ensure privacy of mothers and prove beneficial for infants. In existing public spaces, as far as practicable, the state governments may ensure such facilities were provided, added the court

and UTs along with a copy of its order. The petitioner's counsel said states complying with the advisory issued by the Centre February 27, 2024, would serve the purpose of filing the plea. The bench disposed of the plea and asked the Centre to comply with its direction within two weeks. The plea sought a direction to the authorities to ensure the fundamental right of nursing mothers and infants were protected aside from dedicating exclusive spaces for child care and feeding in public buildings, etc. The top court November 19, 2024 observed at the moment, there appeared to be no concrete law including rules or notifications, issued by the Centre.

of the day quote

The Central Pollution Control Board has also confirmed this in its report. The UP and Central Pollution Control Boards are continuously monitoring water quality, and recent reports confirm that the water at the Sangam is now fit for both bathing and ritual use

The menace of drug trafficking and abuse has assumed alarming proportions today and is of much concern to my government

No one is against the Maha Kum-bh, but the government invited people to the event claiming to have made arrangements for 100 crore people

SHORT TAKES

Eight killed in 2 road accidents

Ranchi: At least eight people were killed in two road accidents in Jharkhand's Giridih district, police said Wednesday. Six people were killed in Madhuban police station area late Tuesday night, while two others died in Bagodar police station area early Wednesday. In another incident early Wednesday, two persons were killed when the motorcycle they were riding rammied into an electric pole in Bagodar police station area, another police officer said.

Court grants interim bail to kin of Azam

Rampur (UP): A special court Wednesday granted interim bail to the kin of SP leader Azam Khan, a day after his other son Abdullah was given the reprieve in a property related case. MP MLA special court magistrate Shobhit Bansal granted the relief to the veteran politician's wife Dr Tazeen Fatima and son Adeb Azam Khan in the case registered in 2020. Advocate Zubair Ahmed Khan, who appeared for the applicants, said, "This was a case of 2020 in which there were allegations related to the destruction of records in the record room related to enemy property. In this case three including Fatima, her son Adeb Azam Khan surrendered before the court today and after hearing the arguments the court has released them on interim bail."

Five militants held in Manipur

Imphal: Five militants belonging to three banned outfits have been arrested in Manipur in the last two days, police said Wednesday. One sympathiser of a proscribed organisation has also been nabbed. The arrests have been made in Imphal East and West, Bishnupur and Kakching districts, a police officer said. An active member of banned outfit People's Liberation Army (PLA), identified as Waikhom Ibungo Meitei (26), was arrested from Hatta Golapati area in Imphal East Tuesday.

Gurugram: Girl raped, brutally thrashed

Gurugram: A 13-year-old girl was brutally raped and beaten up by her neighbour in Sector 29 area here, police said Wednesday. The girl's mother, in her complaint, alleged that at around 3 pm Tuesday her daughter left home to meet her maternal grandmother.

international



The Global South cannot continue to be short-changed. India and major players in other parts of the world deserve their due representation in the structures of the United Nations. As regards Security Council, this translates to permanent category membership

CONTEST TO NAME PAK'S FIRST MOON ROVER
Pakistan authorities launched a nation-wide contest to name its first moon rover as the country prepares to launch its maiden lunar mission in 2028. The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) announced



of the day quote

In our first meeting, we will clarify the proposals put forth by the US, and what the new administration aims to achieve. Then we'll put Mexico's arguments on the table, particularly those concerning the (economic) integration between the two nations

I announce that I have reached an agreement with the new American administration so that the extradition treaty will continue with the necessary safeguards for the state of Honduras

The members of the criminal organization structured at the presidential palace a plan to attack institutions, aiming to bring down the system of the powers and the democratic order, which received the sinister name of 'Green and Yellow Dagger'

The Global South cannot continue to be short-changed. India and major players in other parts of the world deserve their due representation in the structures of the United Nations. As regards Security Council, this translates to permanent category membership

Zelensky demands 'more truth'

REUTERS

Kyiv, Feb 19: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hit back Wednesday at Donald Trump's suggestion that Ukraine was responsible for Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion, saying the US president was trapped in a Russian disinformation bubble.

Speaking ahead of talks with Trump's Ukraine envoy, a day after Trump said Ukraine "should never have started" the conflict, Zelensky said he would like Trump's team to have "more truth" about Ukraine. The Ukrainian leader said Trump's assertion that his approval rating was just 4% was Russian disinformation and that any attempt to replace him would fail.

"We have evidence that these figures are being discussed between America and Russia. That is, President Trump unfortunately lives in this disinformation space," Zelensky told Ukrainian TV.

The latest poll from the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, from early February, says 57% of Ukrainians trust Zelensky.

Less than a month into his presidency, Trump has upended US policy on Ukraine and Russia, ending Washington's bid to isolate Russia over its invasion of Ukraine with a



Adds Zelenskiy ratings, paragraph 5, Putin on talks, and damage to pipeline, paragraphs 8 and 23

US Ukraine envoy says in Kyiv he expects substantial talks

European envoys approve new sanctions against Russia

Live updates on the talks, their fallout and the war

Trump-Putin phone call and talks between senior US and Russian officials.

Trump said he may meet Putin this month. The Kremlin said such a meeting could take longer to prepare but Russia's sovereign wealth fund said it expected a number of US companies to return to Russia as early as the second quarter.

Putin said he rated the US-Russia talks in Saudi Arabia on ending the war in Ukraine highly. "There are results," he said, according to Russian news agencies, which

did not elaborate.

The talks have excluded both Ukraine and Europe, which Trump says must step up to guarantee any ceasefire. Zelenskiy has suggested giving US companies the right to extract valuable minerals in Ukraine in return for US security guarantees, but indicated that Trump was not offering that.

Zelenskiy told a press conference the US had given Ukraine \$67 billion in weapons and \$31.5 billion in budget support, and that American demands for \$500 billion in minerals are

Pak rejects allegation of Afghan refugees' 'mistreatment'



Foreign Office spokesperson issued a statement in response to remarks by Afghanistan's acting Charge d'Affaires Sardar Shakaib, who alleged that Afghan refugees in Pakistan were being 'arrested without warning or formal correspondence'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 19: Pakistan Wednesday rejected the allegation of "mistreatment" of Afghan refugees while highlighting its role in hosting millions of Afghans for decades.

Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan issued a statement in response to remarks by Afghanistan's acting Charge d'Affaires Sardar Shakaib, who alleged that Afghan refugees in Pakistan were being "arrested without warning or formal correspondence".

He also alleged that the Pakistan government intended to expel all Afghans, even those with documents permitting their stay, especially saying that Afghan nationals in Islamabad and Rawalpindi were recently subjected to arrests, searches, and orders from the police to leave the twin cities and relocate to other parts of the country.

The FO spokesperson stated that Pakistan noted the remarks made by the Afghan charge d'affaires in Islamabad, about Pakistan's Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan.

"His assertions regarding mistreatment of Afghan nationals are misplaced," Khan said. "I would like to remind him that Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghans for decades with respect and dig-

nity, while extending traditional hospitality, sharing its resources and services such as education and health, even with very little international support."

He also stated that Pakistan started the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP) in 2023 to expel aliens and put in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure that no one is mistreated or harassed during the repatriation process.

He said Pakistan also extensively engaged the Afghan side to ensure smooth repatriation of Afghan nationals.

"While Pakistan has done what it could, we expect interim Afghan authorities to create conducive conditions in Afghanistan, so that these returnees are fully integrated in the Afghan society," he said.

"The real test of Afghan authorities would be to ensure that rights of these people about whom the Afghan diplomat talked are protected in Afghanistan," he added.

The Afghan refugee issues began in the wake of invasion of Afghanistan by the troops of the former USSR in 1979. The inflow peaked in the 1980s and Pakistan continues to host them due to instability in Afghanistan. But it launched a plan in 2023 to expel aliens.

The Dawn newspaper reported that over 18,000 Afghan nationals returned to their country from the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad in January this year, with repatriations in the second fortnight of the month slightly higher than the first fortnight.

According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the pace of deportation of Afghan nationals from the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and Rawalpindi has increased.

SHORT TAKES

7 passengers killed in Pak

Islamabad: Unidentified gunmen killed at least seven passengers of a bus Wednesday after checking their identity cards in Pakistan's troubled Balochistan province, officials said. The gunmen targeted the passenger bus in the Barkhan area of the province when it was moving from the provincial capital, Quetta, to Punjab province. Police said that the assailants stopped the bus on a national highway by setting up a blockade. The attackers boarded the bus, checked the passengers' identity cards, and forcibly took seven individuals to a nearby mountain. Shortly after, gunshots were heard. Barkhan Deputy Commissioner Waqar Khurshid Alam confirmed the incident and the death toll.

300 deportees from US held in Panama

Panama City (Panama): Panama is detaining in a hotel nearly 300 people from various countries deported under US President Donald Trump, not allowing them to leave while waiting for international authorities to organise a return to their countries. More than 40 per cent of the migrants, authorities say, won't voluntarily return to their homeland. Migrants in the hotel rooms held messages to the windows reading "Help" and "We are not safe (sic) in our country." The migrants hailed from 10 mostly Asian countries, including Iran, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and others. The US has difficulty deporting directly to some of those countries so Panama is being used as a stopover. Costa Rica was expected to receive a similar flight of third-country deportees Wednesday.

Man convicted over attack on ex-Japan PM

Tokyo: A Japanese court Wednesday convicted a man who threw a homemade pipe bomb at Japan's former Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at a 2023 campaign event, sentencing him to 10 years in prison, court officials said. Ryuji Kimura, 25, was found guilty of attempted murder in the April 15, 2023 attack on Kishida at a small fishing port in the western city of Wakayama, as well as four other crimes including violations of laws on explosives and other weapons. At stake was whether Kimura intended to commit murder.

Alleged drug kingpin shot inside SL court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, Feb 19: Sri Lankan police Wednesday said a 34-year-old gunman has been arrested for the murder of a noted underworld figure who was shot dead Wednesday morning within the magistrate's court premises here.

Ganemulle Sanjiwa died after admission to the hospital, Dr Rukshan Bellana, director of the National Hospital said.

The gunman was arrested at the northwestern region of Puttalam hours later. Police said the gunman was wanted for seven murders committed previously. He had served in the Sri Lanka Army commandos regiment, police said.

Sanjiwa was brought to the main magistrate's court from the prison in the southern town of Boossa for a hearing at court number 5. He was shot at by a gunman who was present at the hearing disguised as a lawyer, police said.



In this photo provided by Jocelyn Flint, false killer whales are stranded, Wednesday, on a remote beach near Arthur River in Australia's island state of Tasmania

SNIPPETS

Indian national arrested in balloon explosion incident

Kathmandu: Nepal police have arrested an Indian national in connection with an incident at a tourism event in which Deputy Prime Minister Bishnu Paudel sustained a minor burn injury. Kamlesh Kumar, 41, who was responsible for filling a balloon with hydrogen gas during the inauguration of "Visit Pokhara Year 2025", has been arrested, Deputy Superintendent of Police Basanta Sharma said. Two sets of hydrogen gas-filled balloons exploded when Deputy Prime Minister Paudel and

Mayor of Pokhara Metropolitan City Dhanraj Acharya released them along with a banner soon after lighting candles through an electric switch as part of the ceremony February 15. The balloons caught fire as the candles lit for the festival were too close to them. DSP Sharma said a case has been registered against Kumar in Kaski district court. Paudel, who is also the finance minister, and Acharya had sustained injuries on their hands and face. Paudel was discharged Monday after treatment at Kirtipur Burn Hospital in Kathmandu while Acharya will remain under medical supervision for a few more days, according to hospital sources. Soon after the incident, Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak formed an investigation committee.

Bangladesh clashes leave nearly 150 students injured

Dhaka: More than 150 students have been injured in Bangladesh during clashes at a university campus, a sign of serious discord between groups instrumental in fomenting a national revolution last year. Tuesday afternoon's clashes began after the youth wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) sought to recruit students at the Khulna University of Engineering and Technology in the country's southwest. That sparked a confrontation with campus members of Students against Discrimination, a protest group that led the uprising that ousted autocratic ex-premier Sheikh Hasina last August. At least 50 people were taken for treatment after the skirmish, Khulna police officer Kabir Hossain told AFP. "The situation is now under control, and an extra contingent of police has been deployed," he added.

UK's knife crime crackdown named in memory of Indian-origin boy

Ronan's Law will require retailers to report suspicious and bulk purchases of knives on their platforms to police, with tougher sentences for selling knives under 18s

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Feb 19: The UK government Wednesday announced stricter rules for online retailers selling knives, along with tougher penalties for failing to enforce them, as part of a new crackdown named in memory of an Indian-origin boy killed in a stabbing attack.

Ronan's Law will require retailers to report suspicious and bulk purchases of knives on their platforms to police, with tougher sentences for selling knives to under 18s.

Ronan Kanda, 16, was attacked near his home in Wolverhampton in the West Midlands region of England in July 2022 and died at the scene after being stabbed twice in what emerged as a case of mistaken identity. His mother, Pooja Kanda,



Ronan Kanda, 16, was attacked near his home in Wolverhampton in the West Midlands region of England in July 2022 and died at the scene after being stabbed twice in what emerged as a case of mistaken identity

His mother, Pooja Kanda, has since been campaigning for more stringent measures after two teenagers - also of Indian origin - were sentenced to a total of 34 years' imprisonment for her son's murder

has since been campaigning for more stringent measures after two teenagers - also of Indian origin - were sentenced to a total of 34 years' imprisonment for her son's murder.

"In 2022, I lost my son, Ronan, to knife crime and mistaken identity. In 2023, we sat in the courtroom where we were shown a Ninja sword and over 25 bladed articles. Looking at them, I knew my son didn't stand a chance," Pooja Kanda said in a statement. "Retailers, social media, and sellers need to take on more

responsibilities. We welcome the proposal of a registration scheme, where the government will continue to implement stricter measures on the online sale of bladed articles."

"This part of Ronan's Law will provide much-needed barriers against knife crime. I wish this was done years ago, and my son would be with me today," she said.

The campaigner has been raising the issue of online sale of bladed articles being allowed without proper ID checks after Wolverhampton Crown Court

heard that her son's teenage killers illegally bought lethal weapons online and collected them from the Post Office on the day of the attack - with no age or identity verification taking place. It was later revealed that one of them had bought more than 20 knives online, including by using his mother's ID.

"I knew we could not go on like this, and our fight for what was right had begun. Proper ID checks by sellers, as well as postal and delivery services, played a crucial role," noted Kanda.

The Home Office said Ronan's Law is aimed at closing lethal loopholes in the online sale of knives as a result of "tireless campaigning" by Ronan's mother and sister Nikita to restrict young people's access to weapons online and to protect other families from the same heartbreak.

Under the new set of measures, retailers will be required to report any bulk or suspicious-looking purchases of knives on their platforms to police to prevent illegal resales happening across social media accounts. The sentence for selling weapons to under 18s will be increased from six months to up to two years' prison time, which could apply to an individual who has processed the sale or a CEO of the company.

Can Men in Blue rise to glory?

India look to overcome selection challenges, past turbulence against Bangladesh in their CT opener



Mohammed Shami, who will have to lift his game by a few notches here.

Rana might have been impressive so far in his outings, and he has the ability to hustle the batters with sheer pace and bounce even on the most docile of pitches.

But, at this moment, Arshdeep is the frontrunner to share the newball duties because of the left-arm angle and the variety he possesses in his bowling.

Other than that, India is likely to go with three spinners with Hardik Pandya as the fast bowling all-rounder.

But herein too, India will have to ponder over who is the third spinner behind primary choices Ravindra Jadeja and Axar.

They have a tough selection to make between left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy.

If the recent form is the yardstick then 'mystery spinner' Chakravarthy should get the nod, but Kuldeep showed his readiness while outwitting some reputed batters in the nets here Tuesday.

Dubai, Feb 19: A turbulent recent cricketing past has made a resonant effort mandatory for India in the Champions Trophy, and their opening match against a tricky Bangladesh here Thursday will be the first point in assuaging a set of existential questions surrounding this team.

These questions are worrying even for a pre-tournament favourite like India. Can this Indian bowling unit tide over the absence of injured pace talisman Jasprit Bumrah? Can Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma summon their glory days back? Can young names like Shubman Gill ace the pressure of a multi-nation competition to deliver consistently?

In that context, the ICC showpiece is a godsend because ODI is the comfort zone of those icons and young tyros in this Indian line-up, and they will be genuinely eyeing a strong outing here. It's imperative that they do so -- from a team and individual perspective.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Kohli, Rohit and even head coach Gautam Gambhir, although only six months into his tenure, are living on borrowed time because the shockwaves created by the setbacks against New Zealand and Australia have not subsided yet.

Some bright signs are there though. Skipper Rohit made a century a few days back against England and Kohli a fifty, while Gambhir masterminded the dominant 4-1 and 3-0 victories in T20s and ODIs respectively.

Gill was exceptional while emerging as the player of the series, cracking two fifties and a hundred in three ODIs against England.

But the challenge India face in the Champions Trophy is vastly different from a rather cozy home series.

Bangladesh, Pakistan and New Zealand, their opponents in Group A, are far more motivated than the seemingly disinterested England whom they faced recently, and even one defeat can change the whole league stage equation quite dramatically.

ting position. Will he bat at No 5, his most productive slot, or at No 6 with Axar Patel coming one place above him?

The wicketkeeper batter had batted at No 6 in the first two matches against England before going back to No 5 in the final one-dayer. In all likelihood, the team management could remain fluid and take a call as per the game situation here.

However, finding the right balance in bowling poses a bigger challenge, partly because of the injury-enforced absence of Bumrah.

It will be a toss up between Arshdeep Singh and Harshit Rana as the new-ball partner of lead pacer

Gill tops ODI rankings

Dubai: India vice-captain Shubman Gill Wednesday dethroned Babar Azam of Pakistan from the No 1 spot in the ICC ODI Rankings for batters on the back of his strong show against England in the recent home series. The ICC issued the latest rankings just ahead of the start of the eight-team Champions Trophy in Karachi with the match between Pakistan and New Zealand. Gill, who scored two fifties and a century in the recent three-match ODI series against England at home which India won 3-0, jumped one place to the No 1 spot. He now has 796 rating points compared to Babar's 773.

NATIONAL PARA ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIP



1 Para-athlete Jayanti Behera after winning Odisha's first Gold Medal in the T-47 women's 100m race with an impressive time of 13.43 seconds

2 Pankaj Bhue after winning Bronze medal in the men's T13 Long Jump category with a jump of 5.93m

3 An overjoyed Janaki Oram secures Bronze in the women's T12 100m category

Defending champion lose to Kiwis in CT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, Feb 19: Will Young and Tom Latham struck fine hundreds as New Zealand maintained their recent dominance over hosts Pakistan with an emphatic 60-run win in the Champions Trophy opener here Wednesday.

Young compiled an important innings of 107 off 113 balls, while Latham remained unbeaten on 118 off 104 balls to steer the Black Caps to 320 for five after Pakistan put them in to bat. Glenn Phillips' 39-ball 61 also went a long way in the Kiwis getting past the 300-run mark as New Zealand overcame a shaky start.

The Pakistan top-order comprising Babar Azam (64 off 90), Mohammed Rizwan (3 off 14) and Saud Shakeel (6 off 19) were a tad too conservative in their approach. That ultimately cost the home team as it ended with 260 all out in 47.2 overs.

Fakhar Zaman (24 off 41) batted at number four after being off the field for a major part of the New Zealand innings due to an injury scare. It was New Zealand's third win over Pakistan in less than two weeks, the Kiwis having beaten the Rizwan-led side twice in the preceding tri-series.

FIH PRO LEAGUE

India beat Germany in tightly-contested affair

Gurjant Singh's lone goal in the fourth minute helps team win over world champion

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: India won their second match in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2024-25 (Men) season Wednesday after beating World Champions Germany 1-0 at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium Bhubaneswar.

Gurjant Singh scored the only goal of the match as India climbed to seventh in the standings.

It was a good response from India after they had succumbed to a 4-1 loss to Germany Tuesday. The Indian defence, marshalled by Captain Harmanpreet Singh, put in a solid display to secure an important win.

After a bright start, India took the lead four minutes into the match as Gurjant Singh scored in back-to-back matches.

Rajinder Singh sent the ball into the circle hoping for Mandeep Singh to put it into goal. Mandeep's effort was



Players of both teams trying to maintain possession in the FIH Pro League at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar

saved by Alexander Stadler but the German goalkeeper did not clear the loose ball away. An unmarked Gurjant dove in to sweep the ball into the empty goal.

India deployed a half-court press as they looked to protect their lead and pounce on any German mistakes. Germany nearly got the equaliser as Thies Prinz showcased his incredible 3D skills to beat his markers. Krishan Bahadur Pathak stood tall and swatted away Prinz's attempt before Florian Sperling scooped the loose ball over the goal.

Germany won the first penalty corner of the match with 46 seconds left in the quarter but Gonzalo Peillat's drag-flick flew wide of the goal as the first quarter ended 1-0 in India's favour.

Dortmund start 3-0 up at home to, respectively, Brest and Sporting Lisbon. A tricky week for Italian clubs against the middle classes of European soccer continues with Juventus taking a 2-1

Berrettini outlashes Djokovic in Doha



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Doha, Feb 19: Novak Djokovic was upset by Matteo Berrettini 7-6 (4), 6-2 Tuesday at the Qatar Open in the Serb's first match since exiting the Australian Open with a hamstring injury.

The 37-year-old Djokovic, ranked No 7, lost to the Italian for the first time in five career matches and will have to wait to join Jimmy Connors (109) and Roger Federer (103) as the only players in the ATP Tour's 100-win club.

The 24-time Grand Slam champion reached the Australian Open semifinals but retired from the last-four match against Alexander Zverev because of a hamstring injury.

Djokovic said he didn't have "any pain or discomfort."

"I wasn't at my desired level, and it could be that I'm still not moving the way I want to move, but ... I played without pain, so there is no excuse in that."

Berrettini won for the 10th time in his career against a top-10 player and will face Tallon Griekspoor in the second round.

Madrid, City to reach dramatic finish

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Madrid, Feb 19: One of the past two winners of the Champions League, Real Madrid or Manchester City, is going out of the competition Wednesday before the round of 16.

Defending champion Madrid takes a 3-2 lead into the second leg at home in their knockout playoff which Man City coach Pep Guardiola suggested left his team with just a 1% chance to advance. Guardiola later backtracked on the claim, which Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti also dismissed.

Man City was shown Tuesday how to approach a daunting task by Celtic which pushed Bayern Munich to the limit after losing the first leg at home. A fortunate



goal deep in stoppage time let the heavily favored Germans salvage a 1-1 draw and avoid the jeopardy of extra time, to progress 3-2 on aggregate. Also Wednesday, Paris Saint-Germain and Borussia Dortmund start 3-0 up at home

SPANISH REF UNDER SCRUTINY

Barcelona: The referee who sent off Real Madrid star Jude Bellingham for cursing at him has denounced what he calls a false accusation by local media that has led to him being temporarily sidelined by the Spanish soccer federation. The federation said Tuesday that José Luis Munuera would not be named to referee games until it concludes its analysis of a report by online newspaper El Español that alleged Munuera had business relations with "officials" in the Spanish league.

lead to PSV Eindhoven.

AC Milan was ousted at home by Feyenoord, the fourth-place team in the Dutch league, Tuesday hours before Atalanta was beaten 5-2 on aggregate score by Club Brugge, second in the Belgian league.

Gold medallist power-lifter dies after 270-kg rod falls on neck

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Feb 19: A gold-medallist female power-lifter in the Junior National Games died when a 270-kg rod fell on her neck during practice in Rajasthan's Bikaner district, police said Wednesday.

Female power-lifter Yashtika Acharya (17) died while practising in the gym. The neck of the gold medallist player broke when a 270-kg rod fell on her Tuesday, Naya Shahr SHO Vikram Tiwari said.

He said immediately after the accident, she was taken to the hospital where doctors declared



her dead.

Tiwari said the accident happened when the trainer was making Yashtika lift weights in the gym. The trainer also suffered minor injuries in the tragedy. The SHO said the family has not registered any case in this regard. After the post-mortem, the body was handed over to the family Wednesday.

Yashtika won the gold medal in National Bench Press Championship in Goa in October last year in the Sub Junior 84kg and above category.

Power-lifting is a competitive strength sport in which an athlete tries to lift maximum weight on three lifts -- squat, bench press and deadlift.

In a squat, the bar loaded with weights rests on the lifter's shoulders at the back of the head. The lifter bends her or his knees and drops into a squatting position and then ascends back to an erect position.