




Defining compassion

Actor Rashmika Mandanna takes to social media to reflect on the true essence of kindness

LEISURE | P2



NASA's word of relief

Asteroid 2024 YR4's chances of hitting the Earth drops to 1.5 per cent from 3.1 per cent days ago, NASA says

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Gold at fresh peak

Gold prices hit a fresh high of ₹89,450 per 10 grams in the national capital Thursday, advancing ₹50 amid firm global trends

BUSINESS | P11



Madrid crash out City

Kylian Mbappé scores a hat trick, Real Madrid dumps Manchester City out of the Champions League

SPORTS | P12

REKHA GUPTA TAKES CHARGE AS DELHI CM

New Delhi, Feb 20: BJP MLA Rekha Gupta took charge as the ninth Chief Minister of Delhi at her Secretariat office here Thursday and asserted that every commitment made to the people will be fulfilled by her government.

Earlier in the day, the first-time MLA from Shalimar Bagh was administered oath as the CM by Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena in a grand ceremony at the Ram Lila Maidan. Her Council of Ministers also took oath.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP's top brass including Union Ministers Amit Shah, JP Nadda and Rajnath Singh, and the CM and Deputy CMs of several NDA-ruled states attended the ceremony.

Later, Gupta reached the Delhi Secretariat to take charge as the CM. Later in the evening, Gupta announced allocation of portfolios among members of Council of Ministers, keeping with her finance, services, vigilance, revenue, women and child development among other departments.

At a presser, Gupta said her Cabinet colleague Parvesh Verma was given charge of PWD, water, legislative affairs, irrigation and flood control, while Ashish Sood got home, power, urban development and education portfolios.

Minister Kapil Mishra got law and justice, labour and employment, and tourism, while his cabinet colleague Manjinder Singh Sirsa received industries, forest and environment, food and supply departments. Among others, Pankaj Singh was allocated health, transport and information technology departments.



VOICING DISSENT: Activists wearing masks of AfD top candidate for Chancellor Alice Weidel, Elon Musk, US President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin and US Vice President JD Vance protest against the support of the US and Russia for the far-right AfD in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Thursday

Achyuta summoned over KIIT suicide row

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: Expediting its probe into the alleged suicide of a girl student of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) here and subsequent action against other Nepalese pupils by the institution, the state government's high-level committee Thursday summoned KIIT founder Achyuta Samanta seeking his personal appearance before it Friday.

In a letter, the Higher Education (HE) department asked Samanta to appear before the committee at 6:30pm of February 21, 2025 at the State Guest House to produce evidence related to the issue.

The three-member committee, headed by Additional Chief Secretary, Home department, Satyabrata Sahu, is mandated to ascertain the circumstances leading to the alleged suicide, high-handed action by the institute authority, reasons for issuing notice to only a specific group of students and closing the institute sine die for them and other incidental matter that emerges during inquiry.

The committee, also comprising the secretaries of HE and Women & Child Development departments, had visited KIIT campus Wednesday and held a discussion with some of the Nepalese students who were allegedly mistreated by the staffers of the private institute for staging demonstration on the campus. HE Minister Suryabanshi Suraj said, "The high-level committee is empowered to summon anyone for the purpose of inquiry into the matter. The committee is functioning on the basis of law."

Later in the evening, Infocity police arrested five more KIIT staffers - four security guards and an assistant field officer - in connection with the issue under Sections 126(2), 296 and 115(2) of BNS. They were later remanded to judicial custody by a local court.

Meanwhile, Samanta tendered an apology to the parents of the Nepalese pupils and urged all those who vacated the campus to come back.

SC jolt to Lokpal

In a jolt to Lokpal, the Supreme Court Thursday pulled up the anti-corruption authority for its apparent attempt to transgress its jurisdiction. The top court's reprimand came during the hearing of a suo motu case initiated by it after the Lokpal January 27 ruled that it has jurisdiction over High Court judges under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. While putting a stay on the ruling, the SC said the matter was of great importance, concerning the independence of the judiciary. "Something very, very disturbing," Justice BR Gavai, who headed the apex court bench, remarked. While advancing reasons for its order, the Lokpal, headed by former SC judge Justice AM Khanwilkar, had said that a judge of the HC would qualify as a person in a body established by an Act of Parliament within the sweep of Section 14(1)(f) of the Lokpal Act. In fact, the very reasoning drew the SC's ire.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai, Surya Kant and Abhay S Oka issued notices and sought responses from the Centre, the Lokpal registrar and the person who filed complaints against a sitting HC judge by 10.30am of March 18. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said a HC judge would never fall within the ambit of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013.

Dealing with Lokpal's order on two specific complaints against the sitting HC judge, the bench issued an injunction to prevent the complainant from disclosing the name of the judge and directed him to keep the complaint confidential. "In the meantime, there shall be stay of the order dated January 27, 2025 passed by the Lokpal of India..." it added.

The SC was dealing with a suo motu case initiated after the Lokpal passed the order January 27. When the bench assembled, Justice Gavai told



New Delhi, Feb 20: The Supreme Court Thursday stayed the Lokpal order on entertaining complaints against sitting High Court judges, saying it was 'something very, very disturbing'.

Headmistress found dead

Kamakhyanager, Feb 20: A school headmistress was found dead under mysterious circumstances in a locked garage outside her home in Dhenkanal district Thursday morning.

The victim, identified as Prabhathi Dehuri of Gunebilli village under Tumusinga police limits of the district, was the headmistress of Panchasakha Government High School. Her family members suspect she had been strangled to death as ligature marks were found on her neck. Dehuri's father-in-law Dhedia Pradhan lodged a complaint with police alleging that the suspect called her outside home before killing her.

Dehuri's husband had passed away two years ago, leaving her with a son and a daughter. When the school van came to pick her up Thursday morning, Pradhan realised she was missing. After a search, her body was found inside the locked garage outside house.

Tumusinga IIC Manaswini Mohanty said the exact cause of death would be ascertained after the post-mortem report comes. "Dehuri's necklace and her two mobile phones were missing," added Mohanty.

State plans 16 dams, 15 barrages on Mahanadi

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday informed the Assembly that 16 dam and 15 barrage projects have been planned for securing sustainable water development with equity for Mahanadi water in the interest of the state.

In a written reply to a query by BJD legislator Ranendra Pratap Swain, the CM said, "Due to excess unplanned use of Mahanadi water in the upstream catchment of Mahanadi basin by Chhattisgarh, flow of water to the downstream of Odisha is gradually reducing as observed at Hirakud dam site located near the interstate border of Chhattisgarh and

Prasanna Acharya, BJD deputy leader in Assembly, had raised the issue during Question Hour. "The previous BJD government had planned several in-stream storage projects on the river and invited tenders for the same. However, we heard that the tenders have been cancelled now," the BJD leader said.

Replying to Acharya, on behalf of the CM, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Mahaling said the BJD government has been in power for the last eight months. A dam cannot be constructed in such a short period, he said. About the tender cancellation matter, Mahaling said he will look into it.



IRREGULAR by MANJUL



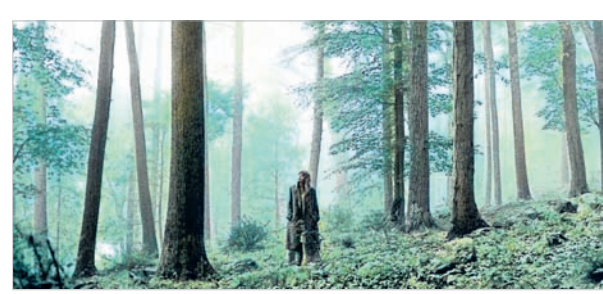
We should learn from USAID - how to influence elections without tampering with electoral rolls or EVMs!

Wordsmith: How interesting is your lore?

Last June, Lucy Wilson shared a chilling memory with her son Robin: In her 20s, she had witnessed her uncle dying in a fire mishap. For an enthralled Robin, who recorded the story on his phone, it was a mom lore that would definitely captivate the internet.

Lore, a finalist for Oxford Word of the Year 2024, has been a currency for people on social media. The Old English word for knowledge has become slang for dramatic and often traumatic details that define a person's existence.

"It makes your life sound like something that has these hidden facets that people would really want to know about," Dan Walden, a



humanities professor at the University of Tulsa, told The Wall Street Journal. Dan said, "Instead of just saying, 'I had depression when I was 16,' it sounds more mystical to say, 'That's my lore.'"

Confessions have always been a method for gaining likes and views on social media. Influencers use 'get ready with me' videos to pair their makeup routines with

said, adding, "Someone said, 'somebody who knows better, please recount this again. This is lore that has to be preserved.'"

Several people said they traced the word back to the fictional lore that undergirds popular franchises and online fandoms. For those trying to understand the world of 'The Lord of the Rings' or videogames like 'The Elder Scrolls,' lore is a shorthand for the rich back story necessary to appreciate a work fully. "It contributes to a sense of immersion, a sense that you're playing in this much larger world, and you're only in a small portion of it," said Walden, a longtime 'Elder Scrolls' player.

"It's a word of the heart and not the head," Peter

Sokolowski, Merriam-Webster's editor at large, told WSJ. "Lore conveys emotion somehow, in that organic way, and that's just a beautiful re-possession of this word," Peter said.

"Online, there is a kind of consciousness of your identity, an awareness of how you're projecting your qualities, and so to that extent, you are playing a role," Peter said, adding, "And lore conveys character, conveys narrative, conveys deep history, like ancient history."

After Robin posted the video of his mother on social media platforms, many people started sharing their mom lore - stories of their mothers revealing details from their lives.



Best of Luck

ALL HSC EXAMINEES

OrissaPOST

leisure



MINDY KALING HONOURED WITH HOLLYWOOD WALK OF FAME STAR

Actress, producer and writer Mindy Kaling was recently honoured with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, celebrating her outstanding contributions to the entertainment industry. The ceremony was attended by Kaling's peers, friends and family, including her ex-boyfriend BJ Novak.

TAYLOR DISTANCES HERSELF FROM BLAKE AMID LEGAL DRAMA

Taylor Swift is reportedly distancing herself from Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds after being mentioned in a legal dispute involving Lively and co-star Justin Baldoni. According to a report, the singer feels upset and believes she has been unfairly drawn into the situation



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Whip up some excitement in your life — put on your walking shoes and go explore some unknown destination, suggests Ganesh. Keep yourself busy, but take care not to overdo anything. Today, you will be the centre of attention in group activities.

TAURUS
You will find yourself at the crossroads and each turn and twist will come with its share of pros and cons, says Ganesh. Your sentiments may have an ill-effect on your health. You may spend quality time with family members and friends, hoping to shed the burden thrust upon your soul.

GEMINI
Today, you are likely to be rather emotional and sentimental, says Ganesh. Your love for performing arts may make you take up lessons in classical music or traditional dance. And much to your delight, your sweetheart will treat you to a surprise candlelit dinner.

CANCER
You will be in a joyous mood. You will be de-lighted in whatever task you do. Financial matters will confound you, with even a petty issue causing tension. Ganesh says it will be a colourful day, with happy tidings.

LEO
The passionate Scorpio might be the master of arousing passionate emotions, but it is the very same emotions that enslave it. But today is different, says Ganesh. You are all set to be lively on this lovely day, as your energy levels touch new peaks. Ganesh guesses it's your healthy eating habits that are the reason behind this super-charged feeling!

VIRGO
The booster rockets of your ambitions and spirit to work will kick in at the maximum today. Seek recreation after a hard day's work and look to relax at private parties, social-dos and even weddings, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Today is the day when you seem to agree with everything that people say, without striking even a note of criticism. It's just one of those days when you are amazed by all things around you. Such an elastic approach will enable you to be reasonable in your views and sensible in your ways.

SCORPIO
You will find yourself thinking with your heart rather than your head today, says Ganesh. You may not be able to repress your feelings, and you should not even try. But you should be careful about how you express them, particularly in public as people may judge you wrongly on the basis of it, advises Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
No wonder, if you feel like you are stuck in a rut. Your energy level and enthusiasm has gone for a toss due to mundane routine. Unfortunately, your stars too seem to be lazy today, and there's nothing on the cards that can cheer you up. Ganesh advises to let the day pass calmly and wait for a better tomorrow.

CAPRICORN
Duping the wisest with your extraordinary power of convincing may have been your forte, but you may have to prove yourself all over again, for Ganesh says you will be tested today. This apart, you are likely to find answers to questions lingering in your subconscious mind for long.

AQUARIUS
For a moment, it seems that you're swamped with problems. But you are brave enough to deal with any ugly issue that crops up suddenly. Ganesh hints at a romantic evening, which may just be time together in a jacuzzi, or simply preparing a meal together. Pure ecstasy!

PISCES
All the dieting that you have been undergoing will finally begin to show results, with compliments galore coming your way from your friends. Your energy and enthusiasm levels are likely to be high. A bright and beautiful day waits, says Ganesh.



Nawazuddin gets philosophical

Mumbai: Actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui, who is known for *Gangs of Wasseypur*, *The Lunchbox*, *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* and others, has said that the film industry is like a garden with a variety of flowers that blossom in the form of talent. The actor refused to compare his craft with his contemporaries or the actors of the past generation. His admirers may laud his ability to immerse himself into diverse characters but Nawaz says that he is just doing his job with honesty. Talking about the same, the actor said, "I am not like a great actor, but every person has been given a lot by the higher power. It is necessary to find it out. Everything is within you; you are the universe. Find it out, and that is life. We are also searching. I don't know what I am searching for, but I am making an effort to find it. That is the necessity to make an effort to discover oneself." He further mentioned, "And you know, there is a garden everywhere, and in it, there are different kinds of flowers. In it, there is Irrfan Khan, there is Shah Rukh Khan, there is Om Puri. So, all these flowers together make a garden, and each flower has its own value. You can't compare a black rose to a red rose; each has its own beauty."

Malaika walks down memory lane

Mumbai: Bollywood diva Malaika Arora relived 90s fashion and recreated retro magic in her new post on social media. Malaika took to Instagram, where she shared a video of herself. In the clip, the actress is seen wearing wide-legged jeans paired with a striped shirt. She steps into the changing room and comes out wearing a thigh-length dress with floral design. She completed her look with knee length boots and a half high pony. For the background score, the actress chose the iconic 1978 number "I Will Survive" by Gloria Gaynor. The actress-dancer wrote in the caption: "Jus some 90s retro." Last week, Malaika celebrated 10 years of her furry friend Casper, a white Pomeranian. She shared a video featuring the four-legged-friend, from the time when he was just a little puppy. The photographs also featured her son Arhaan Khan from his younger days playing with Casper. Some glimpses also showed that

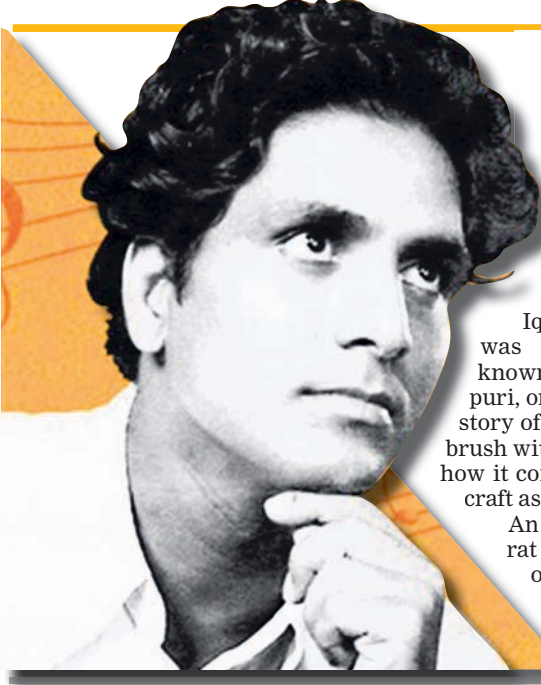
Casper joined the actress for yoga and workout. For the caption, she wrote: "And just like that's our baby casper is 10 today The centre of our lives happy birthday my caspuuuuuu #mymosthandsome."



Rashmika defines kindness

Mumbai: Actress Rashmika Mandanna recently took to social media to reflect on the true essence of kindness, emphasising how it often lies in the "little things." The actress shared her thoughts on how acts of kindness can be expressed through a smile, words, actions, or even silence. She also encouraged her fans to embrace a kindful language in their daily lives. Sharing a string of her photos, the *Animal* actress wrote, "Kindness is truly in the tiny little things. Sometimes it's in the smile, sometimes in the words you use, sometimes in your actions, and sometimes it's in the silence. What's your #kindful language? #RnR #Rashmika&Ru #TTTRashmika." The actress also posted a series of her photos with quotes written on love, care, empathy, and kindness. The text on the first read, "Love feels a lot like.. 'I saw this and thought of you.'" And the other slate read, "Care can be as simple as saying, 'You have had a long

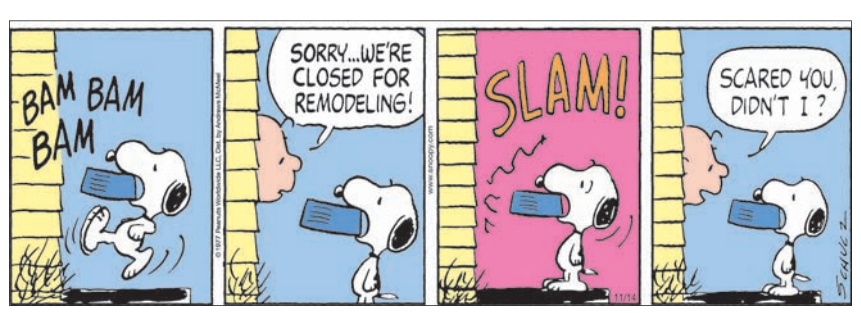
day. Drink some water.'" Meanwhile, Mandanna is currently basking in the success of her recent release *Chhaava*, where she played Maharani Yesubai opposite Vicky Kaushal, who essayed the role of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj. Produced by Maddock Films, the historical drama also starred Akshaye Khanna as Mughal Shahenshah Aurangzeb, Ashutosh Rana as Sarsenapati Hambirao Mohite, Divya Dutta as Soyarabai, and Diana Penty as Zinat-un-Nissa Begum, Aurangzeb's daughter.



Hasrat Jaipuri's lesson of love

Mumbai: The late lyricist Iqbal Husain, who was professionally known as Hasrat Jaipuri, once narrated the story of how he had his brush with first love, and how it contributed to his craft as a lyricist. An old video of Hasrat Jaipuri surfaced on social media, and it shows him talking about his education and how falling in love served as a catalyst to his career as a lyricist. He said in Hindi in the video, "My name is Iqbal Hussain. I was born in Jaipur. In front of my house, there was a beautiful girl named Radha. Love has nothing to do with religion or caste. It can be with anyone. I fell in love with her. I studied poetry. I got my education from my late grandfather. *Wahan se mujhe Ishq ka sabak mila* (Radha taught me the lesson of love). From there, I became a poet. I wrote my first poem for her. She used to come to *jharokha* often. When you look at *jharokha*, I ask so much. When you look at *jharokha*, I ask so much, should I love you or not?" Iqbal studied English till medium level in Jaipur and then acquired his *taalim* (education) in Urdu and Persian from his maternal grandfather, the poet Fida Husain 'Fida'. He began writing verse when he was around twenty years old. Around the same time, he fell in love with Radha.

PEANUTS



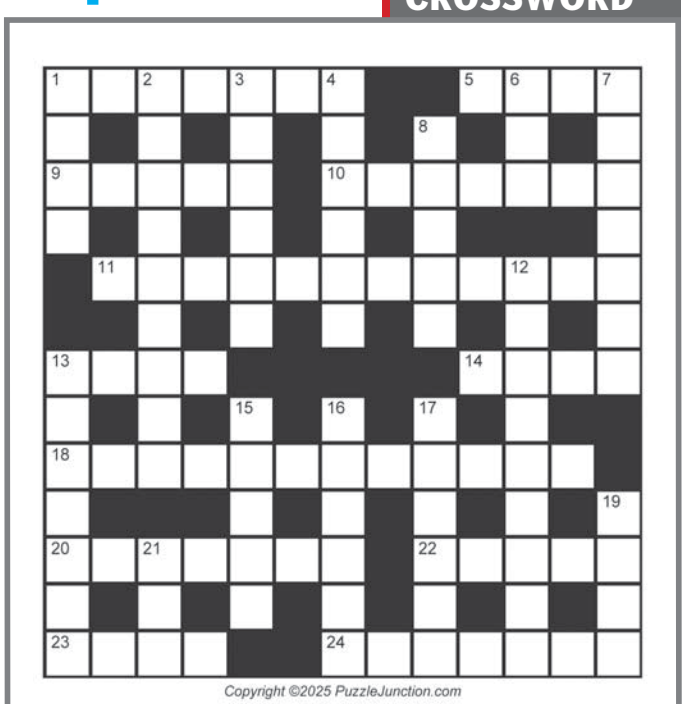
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN POST CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Immortal winged horse of myth
 - 5 Stomach woe
 - 9 Blood line
 - 10 Rattle
 - 11 Irrational belief
 - 13 Boast
 - 14 Kittiwake
 - 18 First hieroglyphics key (7,5)
 - 20 Inactivity
 - 22 Chilean range
 - 23 Small high-pitched flute
 - 24 Banderas of film
 - Down**
 - 1 Pinnacle
 - 2 Chatty
 - 3 Climbed
 - 4 Crush
 - 6 Mangy mutt
 - 7 Everlasting
 - 8 Blacksmith's block
 - 12 Herbivorous bipedal dinosaur
 - 13 City in Wales
 - 15 Condition
 - 16 Type of split
 - 17 Hellespont, e.g.
 - 19 Sonja Henie's birthplace
 - 21 Grimm character

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



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FINANCE
Government of India

ACCELERATING AGRICULTURE



ANNADATA AT THE HEART OF PROGRESS

**SPECIAL INITIATIVES FOR OUR FARMERS
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AND DEVELOPED BHARAT**



PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana
to enhance productivity in
100 districts, benefitting
1.7 crore farmers



Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) loan limit
increased to ₹5 lakh, potentially
helping 7.7 crore fishermen,
farmers and dairy farmers



Making India's seafood businesses
and fish farmers thrive with reduced
import taxes. Basic custom duty on
frozen fish paste slashed from 30%
to 5%, and tax on fish hydrolysate
dropped from 15% to 5%



Comprehensive Rural Prosperity
and Resilience programme to boost
local agriculture and job
opportunities; making migration a
choice, not a necessity (starting
with 100 agri-districts)



'Grameen Credit Score' framework
to serve the credit needs of
Self Help Group members and
people in rural areas



Launch of mission for
Aatmanirbharta in Pulses
with a special focus on
Tur, Urad and Masoor





SUICIDE ROW: AIDSO members stage a protest at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Thursday demanding stringent action against those responsible for the alleged suicide of Nepali student Prakriti Lamsal at KIIT recently

5 KIIT staffers held; protests rock City

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: Infocity police Thursday arrested five KIIT staffers, including four security guards and an assistant field officer, in connection with the assault on protesting students at the university following the suicidal death of a 20-year-old B.Tech student Monday, even as protests against the institutional brutality and police inaction continued in the City.



a 21-year-old engineering student Advik Srivastav who was arrested on charge of abetting the woman's suicide. "The accused has been brought on a three-day remand during which the police will further interrogate him and verify certain facts," Singh said. Police sources also said the accused will undergo a voice spectrography test to ascertain facts. The test is a non-invasive procedure that uses a spectrogram to analyse the sound waves of a person's voice, they said. Meanwhile, scores of protestors burnt effigies of KIIT founder Achyuta Samanta in

State-of-the-art ICU to open at SCBMCH

Cuttack, Feb 20: The Orthopaedic department at SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) will soon have a state-of-the-art six-bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU), equipped with advanced machinery. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will inaugurate the facility during the first week of March, according to medical sources. The Orthopaedic department at SCBMCH treats hundreds of patients daily. The department also performs over five surgeries each day. Previously, patients requiring post-surgical ICU care were transferred to Hospital's central ICU. With the opening of the advanced ICU, patient crowding will be managed more effectively. Around 70 per cent of the work has been completed, with the remaining 30 per cent to be completed before the inauguration, confirmed senior medical official.

Thunderstorms likely till February 23: IMD

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasting thunderstorms and lightning in the state for three days till Sunday, the Odisha government put at least 25 districts on alert. Light to moderate rainfall took place Thursday morning at many places, including the Capital City and in the districts of north coastal Odisha, including some places in the remaining districts.



Light to moderate rainfall took place Thursday morning at many places, including the Capital City and in the districts of north coastal Odisha, including some places in the remaining districts

Special Relief Commissioner's (SRC) office, in a letter to District Collectors, said that the places identified by the IMD should keep administrative machinery ready to face any eventuality. Forecasting thunderstorms with lightning, gusty surface wind and hail over the districts of Odisha from February 20 to 23, the IMD said, "People are advised to keep a watch on the weather and take safe shelter during the thunderstorm activity to protect themselves from lightning and follow traffic advisories in urban areas." The weather office also suggested that harvesting of crops

may be regulated judiciously and advised farmers to use hail nets to protect crops. It said that the trough from Gangetic West Bengal to Telangana now runs from north Bangladesh to Telangana across Gangetic West Bengal, interior Odisha and south Chhattisgarh. The IMD also warned of minor damage to unsecured structures, banana

States urged to share knowledge for SDGs



Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam called on Odisha and other states and UTs to enhance knowledge sharing for a greater collective impact at a workshop on fast-tracking and reporting sustainable development goals (SDGs) at an event here Thursday. The one-day event was jointly organised by the Odisha government, NITI Aayog, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under NITI Aayog's State Support Mission. Policymakers, senior government officials, and experts from various states and UTs participated, exchanging insights on accelerating SDG implementation through integrated planning, financing and monitoring. Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja provided an overview of Odisha's key SDG achievements, stressing their role in achiev-

ing 'Viksit Odisha @ 2036' and 'Viksit Bharat @ 2047.' He emphasised data-driven SDG localisation and decentralised governance for faster development. NITI Aayog vice chairman Suman Bery, in his keynote address, underscored the need for an evidence-based, multi-stakeholder approach to bridge development gaps, strengthen governance, and mobilise sustainable financing for inclusive growth. Development Commissioner-cum-Additional Chief Secretary Anu Garg outlined Odisha's initiatives in SDG implementation and monitoring, highlighting achievements and the need for integrated strategies to accelerate progress. UNDP India resident representative Angela Lusigi stressed the importance of institutional architecture and a strong monitoring framework.

Jena urges CM to impose 25% cess on minerals

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: Senior Congress leader and former Union Minister Srikanth Jena Thursday urged Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to impose a 25 per cent cess on minerals and mineral-bearing land in Odisha. In a letter to Majhi, he also demanded the suspension of mineral auctions and called for state control over mines through the Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC). Citing Supreme Court rulings from July and August 2024, Jena claimed Odisha could generate over ₹50,000 crore annually, boosting the state budget to ₹3.90 lakh crore. He criticised the long-term linkage policy, arguing that it benefits select mining operators at the state's expense. He highlighted that bauxite is sold to Vedanta at ₹465 per tonne, while the global market rate ranges between ₹6,000 and ₹7,000 per tonne, leading to massive profits for private firms. Jena warned that auctioning 10 mineral blocks at the Centre's behest would result in revenue losses, particularly amid a recession in the metal market. Instead, he suggested allocating these mines to OMC for better revenue generation. He accused a "mining syndicate" of controlling Odisha's political landscape and blamed unregulated mining for environmental damage, including the drying up of major rivers. Jena also demanded action on past mining dues of ₹1.5 lakh crore and proposed using additional revenue to increase Subhadra Yojana allowances.

52 cyclone shelters announced sans funds: Min

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: In an apparent dig at former chief minister Naveen Patnaik's close aide VK Pandian, state Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari Thursday said the '5T' had announced the construction of 52 new cyclone shelters without sufficient funds for those. Pandian was the secretary of 5T (transformational initiative) of the previous BJD government. During Question Hour of the Assembly, senior BJD legislator Pratap Keshari Deb asked why the work for the construction of new cyclone shelters sanctioned by the Revenue department during the previous government was not progressing during the past nine months. The work responsibility has been given to the Works and Rural Development department but the work has not yet started even after the issuance of tender, Deb said. "What was the reason behind the delay in the execution of the projects even after sanction?" he asked. Replying to Deb, the minister said, "The Revenue department had not taken the decision to construct 52 new cyclone shelters in the state. The '5T' had taken the decision. Wherever the '5T' was visiting, he was making announcements on the spot without any paperwork." In the case of cyclone shelters too, it was announced that 52 cyclone shelters would be constructed from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF), he said. "As the '5T' was most powerful at that time, the Rural Development department immediately prepared the detailed estimate and tenders were invited. But, when the work order was supposed to be issued, it was seen that sufficient funds were not available in the CMRF," Pujari said.

Sisters donate land worth ₹3cr for Holi celebrations



mittee hosted a grand ceremony to honour the three sisters. Committee president Bamadev Mishra, along with several distinguished guests, presented the sisters with certificates of honour, traditional shawls, and a sacred appliqué of Lord Jagannath as tokens of appreciation. The committee, which is as old as 150 years, had been facing the challenge of losing its traditional Melana ground, which originally belonged to the sisters' family. Recognising the importance of preserving this cultural heritage, the sisters took the extraordinary step of donating their land for the greater good. The selfless act of these three sisters has ensured that the historic Holi festival is celebrated on its rightful grounds without any hassles, thereby preserving Odisha's rich art and cultural heritage.

The selfless act of the three siblings has ensured that the historic Holi festival is celebrated on its rightful grounds without any hassles, thereby preserving Odisha's rich art and cultural heritage. The historic festival of Holi congregation, which was struggling due to lack of dedicated space and was on the verge of being discontinued due to encroachment, has now found a permanent home thanks to this noble gesture by the siblings. The three sisters' selfless act has been widely applauded by people from all walks of life. The institution had been facing difficulties due to shrinking land availability for over a century now. In a remarkable gesture, the three sisters have strengthened the festival's future by donating 35 decimals of their prime ancestral land, ensuring that this cultural tradition continues for generations. By contributing their valuable property to the festival committee, the three sisters - Rina Pal, Smita Bhattacharya, and Anita Dey, daughters of late Sushil Adhya, - have become a source of inspiration for others. The land was officially transferred to the committee, granting them full ownership rights through a settlement at Pipili Court February 19. In celebration of this momentous occasion, the com-

52 cyclone shelters announced sans funds: Min

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: In an apparent dig at former chief minister Naveen Patnaik's close aide VK Pandian, state Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari Thursday said the '5T' had announced the construction of 52 new cyclone shelters without sufficient funds for those. Pandian was the secretary of 5T (transformational initiative) of the previous BJD government. During Question Hour of the Assembly, senior BJD legislator Pratap Keshari Deb asked why the work for the construction of new cyclone shelters sanctioned by the Revenue department during the previous government was not progressing during the past nine months. The work responsibility has been given to the Works and Rural Development department but the work has not yet started even after the issuance of tender, Deb said. "What was the reason behind the delay in the execution of the projects even after sanction?" he asked. Replying to Deb, the minister said, "The Revenue department had not taken the decision to construct 52 new cyclone shelters in the state. The '5T' had taken the decision. Wherever the '5T' was visiting, he was making announcements on the spot without any paperwork." In the case of cyclone shelters too, it was announced that 52 cyclone shelters would be constructed from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF), he said. "As the '5T' was most powerful at that time, the Rural Development department immediately prepared the detailed estimate and tenders were invited. But, when the work order was supposed to be issued, it was seen that sufficient funds were not available in the CMRF," Pujari said.

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WEATHER table with columns for BBSR, CTC, Max Temp, Min Temp, Humidity, Rainfall, and FORECAST (Cloudy sky).

MARKET WATCH table with columns for INDEX, VARIATION, SENSEX, NIFTY, DOLLAR, EURO, GOLD, SILVER.

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FOCUS DIPLOMACY

ELEVATING BILATERAL TIES



How will India hedge between Qatar and US when the former was providing cheaper LNG to India? India should be careful in undermining long-standing mutually beneficial partnership with Qatar



DK Giri
NEW DELHI CANNOT COLD-SHOULDER ANY WEST ASIAN COUNTRY, LET ALONE QATAR



Daron Acemoglu

AI, properly developed and used, can indeed make us better – not just by providing “a bicycle for the mind,” but by truly expanding our ability to think and act with greater understanding, independent of coercion or manipulation

We must march on with the quiet certitude that what has to be done will be done.
THE MOTHER



The AI Opportunity

I was fortunate to participate in the recent AI Action Summit in Paris, where many discussions emphasized the need to steer AI in a more socially beneficial direction. At a time of increasingly loud calls for AI acceleration from Silicon Valley – and now from the US government – the opportunity to focus on what we want from the technology was like a breath of fresh air.

As I noted in one of my speeches, we should start by asking what is valuable and worth amplifying in human societies. What makes us so special, or at least successful in evolutionary terms, is our ability to devise solutions to problems large and small, to try new things, and to find meaning in such efforts. We have a capacity not only to create knowledge, but also to share it. Though the human journey has not always been smooth – our capabilities, machines, and knowledge sometimes cause profound harms – constant inquiry and prolific sharing of information is essential to what we are.

For more than 200,000 years, technology has been central to this story. From the days of stone tools to the present, we have built the solutions to our challenges; and from oral storytelling and the invention of writing to the printing press and the internet, we have developed new and better ways of sharing knowledge. Within the past 200 years, we have also figured out how to experiment better and more freely, and we have communicated this knowledge, too. The scientific process gave us established facts, allowing each generation to build on its predecessors' advances.

It also underpinned spectacular growth in most countries over the past two centuries. While economic development has created tremendous inequality between and within countries, people almost everywhere today are healthier and more prosperous than they would have been in the eighteenth century. AI could invigorate this trend by complementing human skills, talents, and knowledge, improving our decision-making, experimentation, and applications of useful knowledge.

Some may question whether we need AI for this purpose. After all, we already live in an age of information abundance; everything one might want – and much that one does not want – is technically accessible through the internet. But useful information is scarce. Good luck finding what you need to address a specific problem in a particular context, in a timely fashion.

It is relevant practical knowledge, not mere information, that makes factory workers more productive; enables electricians to handle new equipment and perform more sophisticated tasks; helps nurses play a more critical decision-making role in health care; and generally allows workers of all skills and backgrounds to fill new and more productive roles.

AI, properly developed and used, can indeed make us better – not just by providing “a bicycle for the mind,” but by truly expanding our ability to think and act with greater understanding, independent of coercion or manipulation.

Yet owing to its profound potential, AI also represents one of the gravest threats that humanity has ever faced. The risk is not only (or even mainly) that superintelligent machines will someday rule over us; it is that AI will undermine our ability to learn, experiment, share knowledge, and derive meaning from our activities. AI will greatly diminish us if it ceaselessly eliminates tasks and jobs; overcentralizes information and discourages human inquiry and experiential learning; empowers a few companies to rule over our lives; and creates a two-tier society with vast inequalities and status differences. It may even destroy democracy and human civilization as we know it.

I fear this is the direction we are heading in. But nothing is pre-ordained. We can devise better ways to govern our societies, and choose a direction for technology that boosts knowledge acquisition and maximizes human flourishing. We can also ensure that AI creates more good jobs and enhanced capabilities for everyone – regardless of their education and income level.

But first, the public must recognize that this socially desirable path is technically feasible. AI will move in a pro-human direction only if technologists, engineers, and executives work together with democratic institutions, and if developers in the United States, Europe, and China listen to the five billion people who live in other parts of the world. We desperately need more thoughtful advice from experts and inspiring leadership from politicians, whose focus should be on incentivizing pro-human AI through policy and regulatory frameworks.

But we also need more than regulation. One hopes that European AI companies and researchers can show that there are alternatives to the Silicon Valley model. To achieve this demonstration effect, European society must encourage the more socially beneficial direction of AI and European leaders will need to invest in the necessary digital infrastructure, design regulations that do not discourage investment or drive away talented AI researchers, and create the kind of financing mechanisms that successful startups need to scale up. Without a robust AI industry of its own, Europe will have little to no influence on the direction of AI globally.

The writer, a 2024 Nobel laureate in economics, is Institute Professor of Economics at MIT.

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double taxation. Qatar has been ruled as a hereditary monarchy held by Thanis since Mohammed bin-Thani signed an agreement with colonial Britain in 1868 to recognise Qatar as a separate entity. After Ottoman rule, Qatar became a British protectorate in 1916 and gained independence in 1971. The current Emir holds all powers under the Constitution of Qatar. It has the fourth-highest GDP per capita in the world. It is a high-income economy with the world's third-largest natural gas and oil reserves.

India-Qatar relationship consists of two main elements – Qatar supplying liquefied natural gas to India and the Indian expat community. Indian expats constitute a formidable 27% of Qatar's population. They are a major source of foreign remittances for India. World Bank data suggests that Indian expats in Qatar send around \$4.14bn in remittances to India. Both these elements are facing challenges in the changing geopolitical context. Indian expats are the backbone of Qatar's robust economy.

The construction industry which is the predominant sector of Qatar is a major employer of Indian blue-collar workers. So the mutual dependence – India for gas and Qatar for skilled manpower – is often underplayed in diplomatic niceties. The harsh punishment imposed on Indians has alarmed the expat community. Whether they were guilty is a matter of separate discussion. The supply of LNG faces competition from the US. For various reasons, India is moving closer to the US. It is inclined to import LNG from the US. Then what happens to Qatari LNG supplies? How will India hedge between Qatar and US when the former was providing cheaper LNG to India? India should be careful in undermining long-standing mutually beneficial partnership with Qatar. Remember, the recent 20-year LNG deal with Qatar is estimated to have saved India \$6bn. There is an attempt by European countries to buy Qatari gas in the wake of Russia-Ukraine war. Yet, Qatar signs a 20-year agreement with India in recognition of India as an emerging world power as well as a potential market.

The challenges which still persist between India and Qatar include issues related to labour rights, expat welfare and regional tensions. The last one fully occupies Qatar as it is often made to play the interlocutor. Persistent conflict between Israel and Pal-

estine, the instability caused by internal conflicts in Syria, rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran for regional leadership, unrelentingly occupy Qatar. New Delhi could team-up with Qatar to give a hand to the latter in dealing with the regional tensions.

India and Qatar have had a steady relationship. It needs to be deepened. New Delhi should engage more with Qatar in West Asian security situation. As such, Indian-Qatar relationship is too crucial for both countries to be taken for granted. The relation should enhance by constant nurturing, strategic foresight and a clear understanding of the dramatically changing global geopolitics. In that sense, the Emir's visit to India is quite impactful. Qatar should expand its investment in India. Modi should reciprocate by helping Qatari economy in many other areas where India is strong.

New Delhi cannot cold-shoulder any West Asian country, let alone Qatar. India has huge a diaspora in Middle East. Indian economy is bolstered by remittances from the expats. Indians are increasingly getting involved in the growth and development of the West Asian countries which they have embraced as their places of work and stay.

New Delhi is not short of diplomatic initiatives and Prime Minister's Modi personal warmth with leaders of West Asia. As said, Modi's personal intervention precluded a major tragedy when Indian Navy officers and others were given death sentence by Qatari judiciary. Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's strategic visits to Doha are indicators of New Delhi's deft diplomacy. That should continue in the interest of consolidation of India-Qatar bilateralism.

The writer is Professor, NIIS Group of Institutions, Odisha.

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SPECTRUM STATE BUDGET

Seed sown for a healthy tree

The first full-fledged budget of the new government has ushered a watershed moment for the state of Odisha. The change in regime marked with 'Odia Asmita' and 'Double Engine' portrays to document rising growth with undiluted pride of Odisha's ownness. The overall Rs 2.9 lakh crore budget of 2025-26 embarks a 42% hike in comparison to the last government's final full-fledged budget. Additionally, impressive budgetary provision for education, healthcare, social security, rural/urban development, and women empowerment depicts 360-degree attention for holistic growth. Given the complex view of the total budget, here, an exclusive effort is given to scan the budgetary provision towards agriculture and the allied sector, as 48% of the workforce is still dependent on it. The development of this sector is significantly essential and needs the attention and understanding of all stakeholders.

Low productivity, lack of crop diversification, over-dependence on other states for

potato and other crops, absolute reliance on the monsoon, and preservation of surplus production are some significant issues related to the state's agricultural sector.

With 80% of the state's population residing in rural parts of Odisha and agriculture being the principal source of income, the government enhanced the allocation by 12% to Rs 37,838 crores. Notably, some specific schemes are curated in line with the Union budget to generate extra power to advance the state economy – which seems parallel to a double engine in automobile setup. Initiatives such as CM-Kisan, with a ₹2020 crore allocation, can complement the PM-Kisan scheme for additional input benefits. Further, PM-Dhan Dhaanya Krishi Yojana and the Cotton Technology Mission will amalgamate with the state's own 'Crop Diversification Programme' to promote non-paddy crops like millet, oilseeds, pulses, and other high-value crops. Additionally, Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampad Yojana and Mukhyamantri Matsyajibi

Kalyan Yojana can strengthen the state's fisheries sector and make the state self-reliant.

Further, emphasis has been given to minimise the dependence on other states for potatoes. A new programme for Rabi potato cultivation has been announced where 1.80 lakh farmers are targeted for growing potatoes and the government will be streamlining the process for the same throughout the farming season. Thus, the same could result in building the foundation for the required production for self-consumption in the state soon. In addition, an exclusive allocation of ₹252 crore towards a cold storage policy can become a value addition for crops like potatoes and similar others.

With an ambition to add 2.77 lakh hectare of irrigation in the year 2025-26 and 15 lakh hectare by 2029-2030, the water resources department has been allocated ₹14,895 crore to make agriculture less dependent on monsoon. Additionally, ₹2,277 crore has been allocated for the cooperatives, which can

lead to the socio-economic development of farmers, as well as for modernising mandis and instilling in them modern testing and grading facilities along with other provisions.

With agriculture and allied sectors, irrigation, and rural development getting the majority share of approximately 32% of the total budget, it clearly showcases the government's plan for agriculture and the rural landscape of the state. Yet many times, a reasonable budget is followed by mediocre implementation, which results in no development of the sectors, and hence, the money spent becomes purposeless. To a great degree, the budget 2025 has something for the countryside and the "Annadata." Overall, the calculative provision conveys that a seed has been sown to germinate a healthy plant.

Khuntia & Mohanty are associated with the School of Rural Management, XIM University, Bhubaneswar, as faculty and master students, respectively. Views are personal.



Sashikanta Khuntia & Piyush Pratik Mohanty

SOME SPECIFIC SCHEMES ARE CURATED IN LINE WITH THE UNION BUDGET TO GENERATE EXTRA POWER TO ADVANCE THE STATE ECONOMY

Fuel fraud

Sir, Short fueling and rigging of petrol dispensing machines are common fraudulent practices that are indulged in a lot of petrol bunks right under the nose of the customers. Not setting the meter to zero is the commonest way to indulge in short fueling because a busy driver may not always be on his toes to detect the mistake. Petrol dispensing machines are amenable to be rigged by unscrupulous owners. Installation of electronic chips into the fuel machines so that inadequate petrol is pumped into the vehicle while the meter displays full amount is a common modus operandi. Filling synthetic oil is one of the latest tricks. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas should ensure regulatory and penal power on erring fuel station. If punitive actions do not work, blacklisting the petrol bunk dealers and even shutting them till they comply with fair practices should be the rule. Customers have a proactive role to play as well.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Dangerous tradition

Sir, Elephants running amok and causing destruction and loss of lives have become a frequent occurrence during festival season in South India, especially Kerala. Consequently, the presence of elephants on temple compounds during festivals creates a tense and scary situation. State governments and temple authorities must understand the hazards of parading elephants during festivals and effective action must be taken to end this centuries-old tradition. It is relieving to know people have started bringing in replacement for real elephants. Mechanical elephants are a viable alternative to real elephants. A few temples in Kerala have already started using them. They look like real elephants. Also, they are made of eco-friendly materials. By using such alternatives dangers caused by real elephants can be averted and a lot of money can be saved. Gone are the days when people enjoyed and admired the spectacle of caparisoned elephants. The safety of people coming to attend festivals is of utmost importance. Those who give permission to parade real elephants in festivals must be held accountable for the consequences.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

WISDOM CORNER

Your success and happiness lies in you. Resolve to keep happy, and your joy and you shall form an invincible host against difficulties.

HELEN KELLER

I have realized that the past and future are real illusions, that they exist in the present, which is what there is and all there is.

ALAN WATTS

Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for.

ZIG ZIGLAR

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 their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

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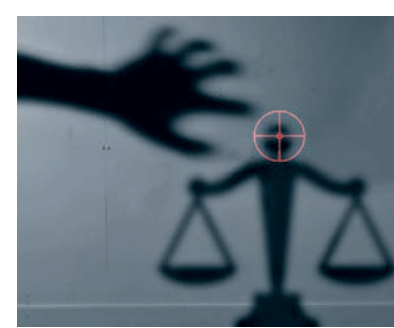


Who said I do not respect my religion? Remember religion belongs to an individual but festivals are for all. In our country, we have several states and each has different languages, education, way of living, cultures and beliefs

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

WITNESS PROTECTION SCHEME

Taking a big stride towards implementing the three new criminal laws, the Haryana government has rolled out a new programme -- the Haryana Witness Protection Scheme, 2025 -- to ensure the protection of witnesses in the state



of the day quote

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will address the valedictory session on Wednesday where two presentations on semiconductor and Numaligarh Refinery's Bio Refinery will be also made

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

The budget is a blueprint for systematically implementing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Viksit Bharat' through public welfare schemes

BHUPENDRA PATEL | GUJARAT CM

The main bus of the satellite is being done by India, and we are going to launch. But if India has spent x amount of money for this satellite mission, the money spent by the US is five times x

S SOMANATH | FORMER ISRO CHAIRMAN

VULGARITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Centre issues advisory to OTT platforms

In an advisory to over-the-top (OTT) platforms and self-regulatory bodies, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting also asked them to strictly adhere to the Code of Ethics prescribed under the IT Rules-2021 while publishing content, including stricter adherence to the age-based classification of content

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Amid a row over vulgar jokes on social media, the Centre has cracked the whip and warned OTT platforms against transmitting content that is pro-

hibited by the law.

In an advisory to over-the-top (OTT) platforms and self-regulatory bodies, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting also asked them to strictly adhere to the Code of Ethics pre-

scribed under the IT Rules-2021 while publishing content, including stricter adherence to the age-based classification of content.

It also asked self-regulatory bodies of OTT platforms to take appropriate proactive action for violation of the Code of Ethics by the platforms. The ministry said it has received complaints from Members of Parliament, statutory organisations and public grievances regarding the alleged spread of obscene, pornographic and vulgar content published by



certain publishers of online curated content (OTT platforms) and social media.

"In view of the above it is advised that the OTT platforms

adhere to the various provisions of applicable laws, and the Code of Ethics prescribed under IT Rules, 2021 while publishing content on their platforms, including stricter adherence to the age-based classification of content prescribed under the Code of Ethics," the advisory said.

It said the Code of Ethics, inter-alia, require OTT platforms not to transmit any content that is prohibited by law, undertake age-based classification of content, based on general guidelines

provided in the Schedule to the Rules, implement access control mechanism for 'A' rated content to restrict access to such content by a child and also exercise due caution and discretion.

The advisory also comes in the wake of the Supreme Court suggesting regulation on content on social media platforms. The apex court had flagged the "vacuum" in law when it comes to sharing content on platforms such as YouTube and said "all kinds of things were going on".

Rahul slams BJP govt, urges people to embrace love



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Raebareli (UP), Feb 20: Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi Thursday accused the BJP-led Union government of diverting attention from real issues and promoting capitalists while asserting that a country steeped in hatred can never progress.

Urging people not to accept hate, the Congress leader stressed that India "was and shall always remain" a country of love.

Kickstarting a two-day visit to his parliamentary constituency Raebareli, Gandhi interacted with party workers and youths in Bachhrawan and then went to Jagatpur in Unchahar where he unveiled a statue of Rana Beni Madhav Singh, a hero of the 1857 Indian Mutiny. Speaking at a public event, he took a jibe at the news media. "I have to say they (media) are our friends, but in reality, they are friends of Modi, Adani and Ambani."

"This is because they don't talk about the public, have you seen any news about farmers, labourers or inflation on TV? They will show you weddings of the Ambanis and Adanis, dance shows and watches worth ₹15 crore," Gandhi said. "Their work is to put pressure on the

government. If the government does anything wrong, they hold it accountable. But they are not doing their work properly now," he added.

Recalling the contributions of Rana Beni Madhav Singh and Beera Paasi in the 1857 mutiny, the former Congress chief said all great men who fought for India's Independence, "fought for the Constitution and if the poor, labourers and farmers in the country have a voice today it is because of the Constitution."

"This Constitution is the voice of India. Gandhi, Ambedkar and Nehru gave this Constitution. They fought the British and went to jail. Before them, Rana Beni Madhav Singh and Beera Paasi fought. They all fought for the Constitution."

"Political parties have a duty towards saving the Constitution and so does the media. But these days they (media) are not working to protect the constitution and that's why I talked about them," Gandhi said.

He alleged that the country was being "sold". "Airports, ports, infrastructure, coal, railways, everything is being sold. The Congress is fighting, I am fighting on the streets. But the media is not helping us. But we will fight and show you we can win."

MYSTERIOUS DEATHS IN KOLKATA

Autopsy finds two women, girl of family 'murdered' at home

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 20: Post-mortem examination conducted on two women and a teenage girl, whose bodies were found inside their house in Kolkata, Thursday found that they were murdered, dismissing speculations that the three died by suicide, a police officer said.

The three members of a family were found dead inside their house, while three others were injured after their car crashed into a Metro Rail pillar in the city on early Wednesday. One of the injured persons told the police about the deaths in their family home.

The autopsy conducted bodies of the two women, with wrists slit and deep injury marks on their throats, suggested that they died due to the effect of the injuries which were ante-mortem in nature. The minor girl died due to poisoning, the officer said. Two brothers - Pranay and Prasun Dey - lived in that house in Tangra area with their wives Sudeshna and Romi, respectively. Pranay's son and Prasun's daughter were the other occupants of the house.



Bodies of the three female members of the family were found in separate rooms of the house while the male members were in the car that crashed into the pillar early at around 4 am Wednesday.

Romi Dey had a single slash injury and both of her wrists were slit. The cause of her death is due to the effect of the antemortem injuries. The same was found on Sudeshna Dey's body. "The minor girl had several bruises all over her body, legs and lips. The fluid found in her stomach had the smell of medicine and the cause of her death was due to poisoning," the officer told PTI.

Sudeshna's body bore some superficial injury marks other than those on her throat.



People commute on a cycle during a rainy day in Nadia, West Bengal

PTI PHOTO

Gujarat govt presents ₹3.7lakh crore budget

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gandhinagar, Feb 20: The Gujarat government's Budget for financial year 2025-26 Thursday offered a tax relief of ₹148 crore by reducing the stamp duty on mortgage deeds and the motor vehicle tax on Electric Vehicles (EVs).

Finance Minister Kanubhai Desai presented the ₹3.70 lakh crore budget in the legislative assembly here without proposing any new tax. Among other things, it proposed to set up the 'Gujarat Reforms Commission' to bring in necessary changes in administrative procedures and integrate new technologies.

The budget outlay of ₹3,70,250 crore was an increase of ₹37,785 crore or 11.3 per cent over the previous fiscal, Desai said. Reduction of stamp duty on mortgage deeds, and that of vehicle tax on EVs would amount to tax relief of ₹148 crore, he said.

Announcing a host of new schemes and projects, Desai said the budget was based on five pillars - social security, human resource development, infrastructure development, green growth



and development of economic activities. The state government has prepared a roadmap for 'Viksit Gujarat 2047' to realize Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, the minister said.

Six "growth hubs", including the Surat Economic Region, will be developed, he said. For this, regional economic plans are being developed for Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Rajkot, Coastal Saurashtra region and Kutch to facilitate a "comprehensive and balanced economic development of the state," the minister added.

To tap the potential of the services sector, a new Commissionerate of Services will be set up, Desai announced.

'ENTHIRAN' PLAGIARISM CASE

ED attaches director's assets of ₹10 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Assets worth more than ₹10 crore of the director of 2010 movie 'Enthiran' facing charges of plagiarism and copyright violations have been attached under the anti-money laundering law, the Enforcement Directorate said Thursday.

This is possibly the first attachment of assets in the country under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), on grounds of plagiarism or copyright violation while making a movie, as per officials. A provisional order was issued February 17 under the PMLA attaching three immovable properties of the director S Shankar, the ED said. The money laundering case stems from a complaint filed by Aarur Tamilnadan, author of a story titled 'Jiguba', against Shankar before a court at Egmore in Chennai May 19, 2011. The complaint alleges that the storyline of the Tamil movie 'Enthiran' (Robot), directed by Shankar, was copied from 'Jiguba' thereby rendering Shankar liable for violations under the Copyright Act, 1957 and some sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the ED said.

NO MORE SOFT DRINKS, MOUTHWASH

Loco pilots in Southern Railway face new restrictions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Thiruvananthapuram division of the Southern Railway Zone has banned the consumption of some dietary items that produce false breathalyser test impacting the crew deployment and smooth train operations.

An Extra Ordinary Circular issued by the division February 18 said that the presence of alcohol in the exhaled air detected by the Breath Analyzer while Sign On and Sign Off at crew lobby is on the rise and the reasons cited for such unwarranted occurrences by the crew are mainly due to

the consumption of Homeo medicines, soft drink, tender coconut water, some kind of plantain fruits, cough syrup, mouth wash etc.

"While analyzing the blood sample taken in such cases at the Chemical Examiner's Laboratory, owned by the government, almost all blood samples were found with NIL content of alcohol in it," the circular said.

"But the disturbance created due to alcohol presence in the exhaled air is too high which directly affects the smooth operation of crew links. Hence, it is instructed to all running staff that the consumption of the above-mentioned items



before Sign On and Sign Off which leads to alcohol detection in the BA test is totally prohibited," it added.

According to the circular,

if the loco pilots want to consume any of such items in unavoidable circumstances, they should inform it in writing to the CRC (crew controller) on

According to the circular, if the loco pilots want to consume any of such items in unavoidable circumstances, they should inform it in writing to the CRC (crew controller) on duty with the justification for it before conducting the Signing On or Signing Off

duty with the justification for it before conducting the Signing On or Signing Off.

"CRC on duty should inform the same to the CCRC (a loco pilot who works in the Centralized Control Room Complex) and ADEE/OP (Assistant Divisional Engineer, Operation) immediately. Consumption of medicine containing alcohol should be continued with the written approval of Railway Medical Officers Only," the circular said.

"Detection of alcohol in BA test without unavoidable reasons will be treated as a wilful attempt made by the crew to disturb the train traffic and appropriate DAR action (disciplinary action) will be initiated against them," it added.



Wherever the Congress is strong or in power, it harbours hostility and casteist attitudes towards BSP and its followers. But in states like UP, where it is weak, it tries to mislead people by talking about an alliance with BSP. If this is not hypocrisy, then what is?

DELHI COURT JUNKS DEFAMATION CASE AGAINST BANSURI SWARAJ

A Delhi court Thursday dismissed a criminal defamation against BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj saying her statement was a reiteration of the information already put in the public domain by the ED



of the day uote

Our Chief Minister does not know anything about Urdu. He was opposing Urdu because it's Urdu. The truth is that Urdu is an Indian language originating from the region around Meerut

The Frontier Highway is going to be the largest road project in the history of India. It is going to be around 1,400 kilometres long, and close to ₹42,000 crore will be invested. It is going to transform the border areas of the state

The number of apprehensions of fishermen from Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan navy has rapidly risen in the past few months and immediate and continued diplomatic action has to be taken to stop these apprehensions as the livelihood of the fishermen and their families are affected for long period

Delhi Cabinet approves Ayushman Bharat scheme

New Delhi, Feb 20: The BJP formed its government in Delhi Thursday after more than 26 years, with Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and her six ministers being sworn in at the Ramliha Ground and the new Cabinet approved the implementation of Ayushman Bharat Yojana in its first meeting.



Addressing a press conference soon after the Cabinet meeting, the Chief Minister announced allocation of portfolios among the newly appointed ministers and said that 14 pending CAG reports will be tabled in the first session of the Delhi Assembly

Minister Modi had promised that the central health insurance scheme would be approved in the first Cabinet meeting if the BJP formed its government in Delhi. She has kept a total of 10 portfolios, the highest among her Cabinet ministers, with finance, services, vigilance, revenue, women and child development among other departments.

The CM said that her Cabinet colleague Parvesh Verma was given charge of PWD, water, legislative affairs, irrigation and flood control, while Ashish Sood got home, power, education, and urban development, among other departments.

After being administered the oath, Gupta, the first-time legislator from Shalimar Bagh, said that not a single day will be wasted in realising the mission of "Viksit Delhi" and assured that the new BJP government will fulfil all the promises made to people of the national capital.

Lokayukta police files 11K page final report to court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 20: The Karnataka Lokayukta Police submitted a 11,000 page final report in the MUDA site allotment case to the court Thursday.

The development came a day after the clean chit given to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah by the Lokayukta police was officially made public. Lokayukta police have submitted the 11,000 page final report to the Special Court that exclusively deals with criminal cases related to former and incumbent MPs/MLAs in Bengaluru, a senior official told PTI. Siddaramaiah is facing allegations of illegalities in Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) allotting 14 sites to his wife Parvathi B M.

Siddaramaiah, his wife, brother-in-law B M Mallikarjun Swamy, Devaraju -- from whom Swamy had purchased a land and gifted it to Parvathi -- and others were named in the FIR registered by the Lokayukta police establishment located in Mysuru September 27 after the special court gave an order to this effect.

The FIR was registered based on a complaint filed by RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna On Wednesday in a notice to Snehamayi Krishna, the Lokayukta police had said that they conducted the investigation and the allegations against the first four accused have not been proven due to lack of evidence, and they are submitting the final report to the court.

The notice stated that the Lokayukta police have found that the case was civil in nature, not fit for investigation, a case of misinterpretation of law or facts, and not fit for any action.

MANIPUR CRISIS

Guv urges people to deposit looted illegal weapons



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Feb 20: Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalha has urged the people of the strife-torn state to voluntarily surrender looted and illegally held weapons within seven days, assuring no punitive action would be initiated against those giving up arms during this period.

However, Bhalha asserted that "strict action" would be taken after the expiry of the seven days. "People of Manipur, both in the valley and hills, have suffered immense hardship for the last over 20 months due to a series of unfortunate incidents affecting peace and communal harmony," he said in an appeal issued Thursday.

He said all communities in the state must come forward to ensure cessation of hostilities and maintenance of peace and order in the society so that people can return to their normal day-to-day activities. "It is in this regard that I sincerely request the people of all communities, particularly the youths in the

valley and hills, to voluntarily come forward and surrender looted and illegally held weapons and ammunition to the nearest police station/outpost/security forces camp within next seven days, effective from today," he said.

The governor said this single act of returning weapons can be a powerful gesture towards ensuring peace. "I want to assure you that no punitive action would be initiated if such weapons are returned within the stipulated time. Thereafter, strict action will be taken for possession of such weapons," he said.

The Centre had imposed President's rule in Manipur February 13, days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned from his post led to political uncertainty in the northeastern state. The Manipur Assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

THE CENTRE HAD IMPOSED PRESIDENT'S RULE IN MANIPUR FEBRUARY 13, DAYS AFTER CHIEF MINISTER N BIREN SINGH RESIGNED FROM HIS POST LED TO POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY IN THE NORTHEASTERN STATE

POST OF THE DAY

Dear Pregnant women in Delhi, BJP is now officially in power. Do not forget to collect your 21,000 Rupees and 6 Nutrition Kits. Start collecting it from tomorrow, along with your 25000/- Per Month. @RoshanKrRaii

SNIPPETS

Police receive threat to blow up Shinde's car

MUMBAI: Mumbai police Thursday received mails threatening to blow up Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's car, an official said. According to the official, mails threatening to bomb Shinde's car were received at Goregaon and J J Marg police stations in the morning, after which a probe began in the case. "The IP address of the sender is being tracked. All angles are being probed," the official informed. A senior Mumbai police official had earlier said a threat call had been received. The opposition parties, meanwhile, attacked the state government over the law and order situation. A threat to Shinde has created doubt among people about whether law and order exists in the country, said Congress MLC Satej Patil. The deputy CM must be given appropriate security, Patil added.

Shah asks Northeast insurgents to surrender

NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Thursday appealed to insurgents in the Northeast to lay down their arms and join the mainstream saying their participation in India's development journey is most welcome. Participating in the 'Unity Utsav - One Voice, One Nation' organised by the Assam Rifles here, Shah also said everyone knows that the Northeast wants peace and development and the region wants to work as an integral part of the country. "I appeal to all those insurgents who have not surrendered yet to lay down the arms and join the mainstream. Your participation in India's development journey is welcome," he said.

Mob attacks Assam Congress MP Rakibul

GUWAHATI: Congress MP Rakibul Hussain and his personal security officers (PSOs) were attacked by a mob in Assam's Nagaon district Thursday, prompting Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to announce that the Opposition leader's security will be beefed up while he is in the district. Hussain, who represents Assam's Dhubri constituency in the Lok Sabha, is unhurt but his two PSOs sustained minor injuries, a police officer said. The state Congress demanded "immediate arrest of those involved in the attack. Hussain was on his way to attend a party meeting at Gunomari village under Rupohi police station on a two-wheeler when he was attacked with cricket bats by a group of people who had their faces covered with black cloth and were shouting slogans against the MP, police said.



Tourists at Solang Valley amid fresh snowfall in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh

Govt extends CEA V Anantha Nageswaran's term

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: The government Thursday extended the tenure of Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V Anantha Nageswaran for two years till March 2027.

Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the tenure of Nageswaran on a contract basis up to March 31, 2027. With the approval of ACC, the tenure of V Anantha Nageswaran as Chief Economic Adviser on contract basis is extended up to March 31, 2027, or until further order whichever is earlier, an office order said.

Nageswaran assumed charge of the CEA January 28, 2022, for a three-year term. The office of CEA is responsible for giving advice to the government on various economic policies and drafting the Economic Survey which is tabled in Parliament a day ahead of the Union Budget.

Nageswaran, an academic and former executive with Credit Suisse Group AG and Julius Baer Group, succeeded K V Subramanian. His extension comes weeks after the Economic Survey 2024-25 projected a growth of 6.3-6.8 per cent for the next financial year amid Asia's third-largest economy showing signs of moderation.

As per the government's advance estimates, the economy is expected to grow at 6.4 per cent in the current financial year. Prior to taking over as CEA, Nageswaran worked as an author, teacher and consultant. He has also been a part-time member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister from 2019 to 2021.



WHO identifies encephalitis as increasing global threat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: The World Health Organization and Encephalitis International have launched a critical Technical Brief on encephalitis which identified the infectious and autoimmune disease as an increasing global threat, making it an urgent public health priority.



The chief executive of Encephalitis International.

Encephalitis, caused by infectious and autoimmune factors, is an often-deadly brain inflammation that can affect anyone regardless of age, sex or ethnicity.

Encephalitis is an increasing global threat. Without urgent attention and investment, we will see more needless deaths and disabilities from the condition

DR AVA EASTON | CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF ENCEPHALITIS INTERNATIONAL

prevalent in India or from the immune system mistakenly attacking the brain. According to a survey in 2024, as many as 1,548 Japanese Encephalitis cases were reported from 24 states and Union Territories in the country.

WHO and Encephalitis International urged policymakers, public health professionals, healthcare providers, and researchers to implement its recommendations to save lives and reduce disability associated with encephalitis.

"WHO's recognition of encephalitis as a growing global threat marks a pivotal moment. We must act decisively to improve prevention, diagnosis, and care for those affected. Encephalitis disproportionately affects individuals in low-to-middle-income countries, where healthcare resources are often limited," Dr Easton said.

The technical brief aims to focus attention on the increasing global threat of the disease, prevention strategies and existing gaps in the diagnosis, treatment and care which will help enable more people affected to receive the treatment and care they need to live fulfilling and healthy lives, said Dr Tarun Dua, Brain Health Unit, Department of Mental Health, Brain Health and Substance Use.



Every country in the world takes advantage of us, and they do it with tariffs... It is impossible to sell a car, practically, in, as an example, India
DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, US

CHINA DRILLS ASIA'S DEEPEST VERTICAL WELL

China's state-run CNPC claimed to have drilled the deepest vertical well in Asia, reaching a depth of 10,910 meters in the country's north-western desert. The project named "Shenditake 1" is designed to advance the study of the Earth's evolution and deep-Earth geology besides the search for oil and gas resources



of the day quote

Consensus has been reached between the government of Sri Lanka and the government of India to establish solar power plants capacity of 50 Megawatt (stage 1) and 70 Megawatt (stage 2) at Sampur
NALINDA JAYATHISSA | OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN AND HEALTH MINISTER, SRI LANKA

UK's support matters indeed, and we will never forget the respect the British people have shown for Ukraine and our citizens
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

Always a good conversation with FM @VivianBala of Singapore, this time in Johannesburg on the sidelines of G20 FMM. Discussed the state of the world and our work in furthering bilateral ties
JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER, INDIA

NASA lowers asteroid 2024 YR4's impact risk

The asteroid 2024 YR4, estimated to be 130 to 300 feet wide, was first discovered December 27, 2024

Asteroid 2024 YR4's chances of hitting the Earth have dropped to 1.5 per cent from 3.1 per cent days ago, NASA has confirmed. NASA said the 3.1 per cent probability was the highest the agency ever recorded for an asteroid of this size or more. It may hit the planet after seven years, in 2032. The asteroid, estimated to be 130 to 300 feet wide, was first discovered December 27, 2024. It drew astronomers' attention when it appeared on the NA-

SA automated Sentry risk list December 31, 2024. While the initial risk of the asteroid was concerning, it has now diminished. What's being done about Asteroid 2024 YR4

The astronomers are regularly monitoring the situation to improve the understanding of where 2024 YR4 could be December 22, 2032. They also highlighted the importance of gathering data to determine the future risk to the planet. The US Space Agency said the impact probability will most likely change when further observations of the asteroid are made in the following days. In an X post, NASA said, "New observations of asteroid 2024 YR4 helped us update its chance of impact in 2032. The



current probability is 1.5 per cent. Our understanding of the asteroid's path improves with every observation." NASA further said that the probability of the asteroid hitting Earth is likely to drop to zero. "For the impact probability to drop to zero, the Earth would need to fall outside of the range of potential locations of

asteroid 2024 YR4 Dec 22, 2032," it added. There is also a smaller chance that the 2024 YR4 could impact the Moon, where the probability is estimated to be around 0.8 per cent. The space rock will be so far away by April 2025 that it will be difficult to detect by Earth-based telescopes, and the updates will not be possible until 2028, the

SK's Yoon attends first trial hearing for insurrection

Seoul, Feb 20: South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol appeared in a Seoul court Thursday for his first trial hearing on charges of insurrection in the country's first criminal prosecution of an incumbent leader. Last month prosecutors indicted Yoon after accusing him of leading an insurrection with his short-lived imposition of martial law December 3. A justice ministry motorcade took Yoon from the Seoul Detention Centre, where he is being held, to the court, outside which were parked lines of police buses to ensure security. Prosecutors called for swift proceedings considering the gravity of the case, but Yoon's lawyers said they needed more time to review records. The court also heard a bid by Yoon's lawyers to cancel his detention, saying the matter had been investigated in an illegal manner, and that there was no risk of Yoon trying to destroy evidence. It was unclear when the court would rule on the detention, but a judge set the next hearing of the criminal case for March 24. After the criminal case, Yoon also attended Thursday afternoon a parallel impeachment trial by the Constitutional Court that has entered its final phase. The court's acting chief justice Moon Hyung-bae said Thursday that the next hearing will be held February 25, during which Yoon and the parliament, which is presenting the case against him, will give final remarks.

Hamas hands over bodies of youngest Gaza hostages

Red Cross vehicles drove away from the handover site in the Gaza Strip with four black coffins that had been placed on a stage

Jerusalem, Feb 20: Hamas handed over the bodies Thursday of Israeli infant Kfir Bibas and his four-year-old brother Ariel, the two youngest captives taken by Hamas in their October 7, 2023 attack and among the most potent symbols of the trauma inflicted that day. Red Cross vehicles drove away from the handover site in the Gaza Strip with four black coffins that had been placed on a stage. Each of the caskets had a small picture of the hostages. Armed Hamas militants in black and camouflage uniforms surrounded the area. United Nations rights chief Volker Turk called the parading of bodies in Gaza abhorrent and cruel and said it flew in the face of international law. "Under international law, any handover of the remains of deceased must comply with the prohibition of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, ensuring respect for the dignity of the deceased and their families", he said in a statement. After the hostages were handed over by the Red Cross, the coffins were scanned for explosives, according to the military, before being transported to Israel. Israelis lined the road in the rain near the Gaza border to pay their respects as the convoy carrying the coffins drove by. "We stand here together, with a broken heart, the sky is also crying with us and we pray to see better days," said one woman, who gave her name only as Efrat. In Tel Aviv, people gathered, some weeping, at what has



- Bodies of infant Kfir Bibas and four-year-old brother Ariel handed over under Gaza ceasefire terms
- Hearts of an entire nation 'in tatters,' President Herzog says
- Prospects for deal on further hostage releases and future Gaza governance remain uncertain

come to be known as Hostages Square outside Israel's defence headquarters. "Agony. Pain. There are no words. Our hearts — the hearts of an entire nation — lie in tatters," said President Isaac Herzog. One militant stood beside a

poster of a man standing over coffins wrapped in Israeli flags. Instead of legs he had tree roots in the ground, suggesting the land belongs to Palestinians. The poster read "The Return of the War=The Return of your Prisoners in Coffins". The two boys, their mother Shiri Bibas and a fourth hostage, Oded Lifschitz, were handed over under the Gaza ceasefire agreement reached last month with the backing of the United States and the mediation of Qatar and Egypt. The Red Cross Wednesday urged the handover be kept dignified. The Hamas-directed public hostage release ceremonies have come under growing criticism, including from the United Nations, which denounced the "parading of hostages".

Zelenskyy calls for US pragmatism

Kyiv, Feb 20: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he was counting on unity at home and in Europe as well as pragmatism from Washington, striking a conciliatory tone after US President Donald Trump gave him a public scolding. Trump said Wednesday that Zelenskyy was a "dictator without elections" who should act quickly to secure peace or lose his country. It was hitherto unthinkable rhetoric from a US leader given Washington's role as a key ally of Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion three years ago. The US president is pushing for a quick deal to end the Ukraine war and has alarmed Washington's European allies by leaving them and Ukraine out of initial talks with Russia and blaming Ukraine for the February 2022 invasion. European leaders have responded by pledging to step up spending on defence and some are considering a US-backed European peacekeeping force for Ukraine, a plan the Kremlin says is a major cause for concern but which Zelenskyy has welcomed. "We are standing strong on our own two feet. I am counting on Ukrainian unity, our courage on the unity of Europe and the pragmatism of America," Zelenskyy told Ukrainians in

- Zelenskyy strikes conciliatory tone after war of words
- Trump envoy Kellogg to meet Zelenskyy later Thursday
- US seeks quick outline deal on minerals, sources say
- Kremlin alarmed by reports of European peacekeeping force

his video address late Wednesday. "Because America needs success just as much as we do," he added. Zelenskyy told Ukrainians that he would be meeting visiting US envoy for Russia and Ukraine Keith Kellogg Thursday and said it was crucial that both that meeting, and cooperation with Washington in general, were "constructive". Trump is seeking to reestablish ties with Russia and also invest in Ukraine's resources of minerals critical to the energy transition. Ukraine rejected an initial US plan as it did not entail security guarantees and Zelenskyy accused Trump Wednesday of repeating Russian disinformation about the war. White House national security adviser Mike Waltz said on Thursday that Ukraine should rein in its criticism of the United States and agree the minerals deal. "They need to tone it down and take a hard look and sign that deal," he told Fox News.



Russia's Lavrov joins top European diplomats at G20 meeting in SA

Johannesburg, Feb 20: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov arrived in South Africa Thursday for a two-day meeting of the Group of 20 nations, where top European diplomats are expected to reinforce their support for Ukraine and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio is a high-profile absentee. Lavrov travelled to Johannesburg for the G20 foreign ministers' meeting two days after landmark bilateral talks between the United States and Russia over ending the war in Ukraine. Those talks sidelined the US' European allies and Ukraine, who were not involved. US President Donald Trump further upended the West's position by criticising Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and falsely blaming Ukraine for the war, which marks its third anniversary next week. Rubio decided not to attend the G20 meeting amid tensions with South Africa over some of its policies that the Trump administration has condemned as anti-American. litical purposes, like it was in the time of the Soviet Union," he said. Russian rights group Memorial has identified 48 people it says are currently undergoing such treatment in politically motivated cases. Of those, 46 are psychiatric inpatients and two are receiving out-patient treatment while in prison. The most common charges against them related to criticism of the war. Thirteen of the people had been prosecuted under censorship laws passed shortly after Russia's invasion, the rights group said. According to Memorial, the youngest person subjected to compulsory psychiatric treatment for war protests turned 20 in hospital last week. He was investigated as a teenager in 2023 for seeking permission to organise an anti-war rally, and a court ordered his hospitalisation in February last year. Communist state. Among the best known cases were those of dissident Vladimir Bukovsky and Nobel prize-winning poet Joseph Brodsky. While far below that scale, the current trend is nonetheless "disturbing," van Voren said in an interview. Reuters has previously reported a revival of other Soviet-era practices during the Ukraine war, including citizen denunciations of suspected dissidents. In Russia, compulsory treatment "is now again used for po-

In Russia, dozens of dissenters held as psychiatric patients

London, Feb 20: Dozens of Russians are being subjected to compulsory psychiatric treatment because of their political views, according to lawyers and human rights groups - a trend they say has gathered pace since the start of the war in Ukraine. The practice carries echoes of a method of control used widely in the Soviet Union and known as "punitive psychiatry", even if the current scale falls far short of that seen from the late 1960s until the early 1980s. For this story, Reuters analysed data from an international expert and two Russian human rights groups, interviewed three lawyers and reviewed case materials of two female activists sent by court order to undergo psychiatric assessments at a Siberian hospital. The women, whose accounts are reported here in detail for

the first time, were released after a few weeks but described the experience as a scarring ordeal. Yekaterina Fatyanova, 37, was interned April 28 last year at the KKPND No.1 psychiatric hospital in her home city of Krasnoyarsk after being accused of discrediting the Russian armed forces by publishing an article in a small opposition newspaper she ran in her spare time. She was not the author of the piece, which argued the war in Ukraine was driven by imperialist motives. While in hospital she was subjected to painful, degrading and unnecessary procedures including a gynaecological examination, she wrote in letters of complaint to authorities, reviewed by Reuters. Fatyanova was discharged from the hospital May 27 after doctors determined, in a document seen by Reuters, that



she had no mental disorders or diseases. "I believe that the real purpose of placing me there was moral suppression and isolation from society, possibly as a punishment for my active civic position," she said. Robert van Voren, a Dutch professor and human rights campaigner who has spent decades studying what he describes as the political abuse of psychiatry in Russia, said he had documented around 23 such cases a year since 2022, when the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, up from an annual average of around 5 between 2015 and 2021. "DISTURBING" SCALE In the Soviet era, thousands of dissenters were hospitalised for political reasons, based on the premise that only someone mentally ill would oppose the

Rights group records nearly 50 political cases Human rights groups report increase in cases since Ukraine war began Youngest was investigated as teenager for 'fake news' on war Women activists describe degrading ordeal in clinic

of psychiatry in Russia, said he had documented around 23 such cases a year since 2022, when the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, up from an annual average of around 5 between 2015 and 2021. "DISTURBING" SCALE In the Soviet era, thousands of dissenters were hospitalised for political reasons, based on the premise that only someone mentally ill would oppose the

