



## FOR A CAUSE

Actor Bhumi Pednekar has joined hands with UNESCO to educate girls on menstrual hygiene

LEISURE P2



## NEW MEASURES

Bloggers and influencers in China will need to have government approval before they can publish anything

INTERNATIONAL P10



## MBAPPE SHINES

Kylian Mbappe's hat-trick helps PSG thrash Barcelona 4-1 in their Champions League last 16 tie

SPORTS P12

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



So you will double our income by 2022. But how many folds will you hike fuel prices by then?

## SHORT TAKES

### 4 more bodies take MP bus toll to 51

**Bhopal:** The death toll in the bus accident in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi district has gone up to 51 with the recovery of four more bodies officials informed Wednesday. Bodies of 47 people, including 20 women and two children, were recovered Tuesday after the packed private bus skidded off the road and plunged into a water-filled Bansagar canal situated approximately 80 kilometres away from the Sidhi district headquarters.

### 4 die, 20 injured in tractor mishap

**Baripada:** In a tragic incident, four people died while over 20 others were injured after the tractor they were travelling in overturned at Murunia under Jharpojaria police limits in Mayurbhanj district Wednesday night. One person died on the spot while three succumbed to their injuries while undergoing treatment. The identities of the deceased are yet to be ascertained. Eyewitnesses said the tractor skidded off the road and overturned trapping the persons travelling on it. They were returning to their homes in Barabuda from Gorumahisani locality.

## MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VIATION
SENSEX	51703.83	↓ 400.34
NIFTY	15208.90	↓ 104.60
DOLLAR	73.57	↑ ₹0.05
EURO	87.63	↓ ₹0.56
GOLD	₹46,371	↓ ₹528
SILVER	₹68,766	↓ ₹606

## WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	32.8°C	32.2°C
TEMP. MIN	19.4°C	18.0°C
Humidity	61%	65%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	

## REGULAR PETROL BREACHES ₹100 PER LITRE MARK

# Fuel prices burn pockets

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 17:** For the first time ever, the price of petrol crossed Wednesday the ₹100 per litre mark in India. Petrol and diesel prices were increased by 25 paise per litre each according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. It meant that prices for both petrol and diesel increased for the ninth day in a row.

While branded or additive-laced petrol, which attracts higher taxes, had crossed the ₹100-mark in some places in states like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, this is the first time that regular petrol crossed the physiological mark. In Sriganganagar town of Rajasthan, petrol price soared to ₹100.13 a litre Wednesday.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges. Rajasthan levies the highest VAT on petrol in India.

After Wednesday's price increase, petrol in Delhi cost ₹89.54 per litre and



diesel ₹79.95. In Mumbai, petrol was being sold for ₹96 a litre and diesel was priced at ₹86.98.

The record price in Rajasthan is despite the state government cutting VAT on petrol and diesel by two per cent late

last month. The value-added tax (VAT) on petrol, after the cut, at 36 per cent plus ₹1.5 per litre road cess is still the highest in India. On diesel, Rajasthan levies 26 per cent and ₹1.75 per litre road cess.

In Anuppur of Madhya Pradesh, regular petrol is close to breaching the ₹100-mark. It was being sold at ₹99.90 per litre Wednesday while the price of diesel stood at ₹90.35 per litre.

In nine straight days, prices have gone up by ₹2.59 per litre for petrol and ₹2.82 per litre for diesel.

The relentless hike in prices has been criticised by the opposition parties including the Congress. The opposition has demanded an immediate cut in taxes to ease the burden on the



**FUEL**  
Petrol and diesel prices have increased for 9 days in a row  
Central and state taxes make up for 60% of price of petrol and 54% of diesel

FUEL PRICES IN CITY		
PETROL	₹90.25	(+0.27)
DIESEL	₹87.11	(+0.27)

NEIGHBOURS SMILE		
Country	Petrol/Ltr	Diesel/Ltr
Pakistan	₹51.00	₹52.91
Bangladesh	₹76.70	₹56.01
Sri Lanka	₹60.33	₹38.97
Nepal	₹68.99	₹58.33

Prices equivalent to Indian rupees  
common man. However, the government is not considering a reduction in excise duty to cool rates.

Central and state taxes make up for 60 per cent of the retail selling price of petrol and over 54 per cent of diesel. The Union Government levies ₹32.90 per litre of excise duty on petrol and ₹31.80 a litre on diesel.

## MODI BLAMES PREDECESSORS

**NEW DELHI:** On a day when regular petrol crossed the ₹100 mark, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Wednesday the middle class would not have been burdened if the previous governments had focussed on reducing India's energy import dependence. He said India imported over 85 per cent of its oil needs in the 2019-20 financial year and nearly 53 per cent of its gas requirement. "Can we be so import dependent? I don't want to criticise anyone but I want to say (that) had we focussed on this subject earlier, our middle class would not have been burdened," Modi asserted at a function in Tamil Nadu.

## #METOO MOVEMENT GETS A BOOST

# Ramani acquitted in defamation case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 17:** A Delhi court Wednesday acquitted journalist Priya Ramani in MJ Akbar's criminal defamation case against her over the allegations of sexual harassment. The court said that a woman has the right to put grievances before any platform of her choice even after decades.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Pandey dismissed the complaint filed by Akbar. He said that no charges were proved against Ramani.

The court said it is shameful that crimes against women are taking place in India where mega epics like Mahabharat and Ramayana were written about respecting them.

Ramani had made allegations of sexual misconduct against Akbar in the wake of #MeToo movement in 2018. Akbar had filed the complaint against Ramani October 15, 2018 for allegedly defaming him by accusing him of sexual misconduct decades ago.

Akbar resigned as a Union minister



October 17, 2018. He has denied all the allegations of sexual harassment against the women who came forward during #MeToo campaign against him.

Ramani said it feels great to have truth validated before the court. "It feels amazing, truly does. I feel vindicated on behalf of all the women who have ever spoken out against sexual harassment at work place," she said.

Ramani also said the sexual harassment issue has got the attention it deserves. "It was me the victim who had to stand up in the court as an accused. I thank everyone who stood by me especially my witnesses Ghazala Wahab and Niloufer Venkatraman who came to the court and testified on my behalf," she said.

## ₹25 crore fine collected from traffic violators

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** A total fine amount of ₹25 crore has been collected from traffic rule violators in the cities of Cuttack and the state capital in approximately one year. This information was shared by Twin City police commissioner Sudhanshu Sarangi here Wednesday. He was speaking at the valedictory programme of the month-long 'Traffic Awareness Month'.

The senior cop said that on the basis of CCTV footages, around 350 challans are being issued every day over violation of traffic rules. The numbers will further increase in next two to three months.

"Police, within one year of implementation of stricter traffic rules, have collected ₹25 crore as fines from the violators in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar. Do not ever think that you can escape after violating the traffic rules," Sarangi told the gathering.

"There are certain people who are still not obeying the traffic rules and waiting for the cops to catch them. Then they will be cautious," the top cop asserted.

## KOTIA PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS

# Odisha's plea in SC misconceived: AP

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** The Andhra Pradesh government has termed the contempt petition filed by Odisha against it for holding panchayat elections in three villages of Kotia panchayat in Koraput district as grossly misconceived and non-maintainable.

In an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court, Andhra Pradesh submitted Wednesday that there was no direction passed by the apex court in 2006. It had recorded the statement of both states after it dismissed the suit filed by Odisha on the ground it was not maintainable under Article 131 of the Constitution of India.

"Since there was no direction passed by the Supreme Court, there is therefore no question of committing contempt

**AP GOVERNMENT**  
Since there was no direction passed by the Supreme Court, there is therefore no question of committing contempt

passed an order. There was no such undertaking in the present matter," the counsel for the Andhra Pradesh government said.

Meanwhile the two main opposition parties in the state – the BJP and the Congress have decided to raise the Kotia issue in the Budget session of the Assembly which begins Thursday.

Congress leader Narasingha Mishra was also critical about the developments in Kotia panchayat. "Andhra Pradesh government is taking our land, Chhattisgarh is taking water from the Mahanadi and West Bengal, our sand. Due to weak leadership, other states are looting our resources," Mishra alleged in Bhubaneswar.

"It is very sad that Andhra Pradesh conducted rural polls in our state. The inefficiency of the Odisha government is responsible for this. We will raise the Kotia issue in the Assembly," leader of Opposition Pradipta Naik said.

## Samaleswari temple to get ₹200 crore for shrine development

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** As part of the 5T initiative, the Odisha government has prepared a draft plan for redevelopment of the Samaleswari temple in Sambalpur. The total expenditure in the project will be to the tune of ₹200 crore.

A detailed presentation on the draft redevelopment plan – Samaleswari Temple Area Management & Local Economy Initiatives (SAMALEI) – was made Wednesday before Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. The government has sought suggestions from the public on the draft plan. The suggestions can be mailed to development.samalei@gmail.com by March 15.

The government plans to develop 108 acres of land around the Samaleswari temple as part of the redevelopment programme in the 2021-22 fiscal. Now the temple is located over an area of 12 acres.



As per the proposed plan, four gates will be constructed around the temple. Devotees will enter the temple through the east gate and exit through the other three gates. An office, interpretation centre and service desk for the public will be set up the main entrance of the temple.

A heritage corridor will be built around the temple. A one kilometre long pedestrian stretch will be built to facilitate easy movement of devotees. Adequate facilities including parking space, special vending zones, toilets, information and donation centres will be built. Accommodation arrangements will be made available for devotees near the temple.

A 30-metre wide walkway will also be developed so that devotees can visit the Mahanadi Ghat from the temple. In addition a 30 metres high deck will be built in the middle of the walkway, from which both the Mahanadi and the temple will be clearly visible.

# Shabnam 1st woman to be hanged in independent India

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Amroha (Uttar Pradesh), Feb 17:** With the decks having been cleared for the hanging of Shabnam and her paramour Salim, the stage is now set for the first Indian woman to be taken to the gallows in independent India. The two have been accused of killing seven members of Shabnam's family.

Shabnam and Salim were convicted and awarded death sentence for the multiple murders by the Sessions Court and the Allahabad High Court before the Supreme Court upheld the verdict. Shabnam had filed a mercy petition before the President, which has also been turned down.



THE GRUESOME ACT TOOK PLACE APRIL 15, 2008 IN UP'S AMROHA DISTRICT

THE FAMILY MEMBERS WERE GIVEN MILK LACED WITH SEDATIVES, THEN HACKED TO DEATH

SHABNAM WILL BE THE FIRST WOMAN TO BE HANGED IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

It may be recalled that April 15, 2008, Shabnam and her lover Saleem had wiped out the former's entire family in this district of Uttar Pradesh. The duo was having an

affair and wanted to get married. However, the woman's family was opposed to their marriage.

Shabnam made her family members drink milk laced with sedatives before killing them along with her lover. Seven members of the family, including a 10-month-old child, were then axed to death on the night of horror.

The reaction to the multiple murders was so strong that people who had named their daughters as Shabnam had changed the names almost overnight.

Meanwhile, Shabnam's uncle and aunt have expressed happiness at the court verdict. "We were not at home when the carnage took place. When we went there at around

2.00am, there was blood all around and the bodies were cut up. The crime was unpardonable," said Shabnam's uncle, refusing to disclose his name. He asserted that he would not accept the body of Shabnam after her hanging.

Pawan Jallad, who had executed the four accused in the Nirbhaya case in March last year, will be executing Shabnam and Salim in Mathura jail. Incidentally, this is the only prison which houses the India's lone female execution room.

Pawan said that he had been asked to inspect the Mathura jail for the hanging and he is ready for the job even though the date for the hanging has not been set yet. It will be set soon, he informed

# leisure



## BANDERAS IS AN ABSOLUTE GENTLEMAN: SALMA HAYEK

Hollywood diva Salma Hayek recalls how her *Desperado* co-star Antonio Banderas helped her when she started sobbing on the sets of the 1995 film during the shoot of an intimate scene. He is an absolute gentleman, says the actress.

## KOURTNEY MAKES RELATIONSHIP WITH TRAVIS OFFICIAL ON INSTAGRAM

Socialite Kourtney Kardashian Wednesday made her relationship with longtime friend Travis Barker official on Instagram. She posted a picture with her hand entwined with musician Travis's hand. There is no caption with the photo, but his tattoos can be identified.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
Go with the flow. At least that's what Ganesha suggests where relationships are concerned. You can be your assertive self some other time. Today, you can be large-hearted and fulfill your beloved's wishes, maybe even propose. What say?

**TAURUS**  
Today is a perfect day to relax and enjoy your health, feels Ganesha. However, precaution should be the buzz-word while dealing in money matters. You may develop a new interest in jewellers, artists, bankers and orators.

**GEMINI**  
It is a good day for you to participate in cultural events and group activities, predicts Ganesha. You are likely to be an important part of some convention or joint venture, but don't get too bogged down by it. In the evening, you may take a fancy to fine arts, such as drawing or classical music.

**CANCER**  
You will take on new responsibilities, says Ganesha. So you will be busy in your task. You may feel exhausted due to hectic work. So it entails mental tension.

**LEO**  
Guides help other people choose the right path in life and to select the correct alternatives. It is a good day for those who are in the teaching or coaching professions. It is also a progressive day for those working in MNC's.

**VIRGO**  
Expenditures will be like oil spills—wasteful and dirty. But cosmic energies and positivity are gathering wind today, and you should do well to make full use of them in your personal and professional life, says Ganesha.

**LIBRA**  
Lady Luck smiles on you today. With all the good fortune on your side, it's assured to be a day when financial gains come your way, especially if you are in the banking business. Agreed everything is going your way today, but be careful not to let your emotions cloud your reasoning and slow you down.

**SCORPIO**  
Keep your guards up and be wary today, warns Ganesha. A heat seeker meant for someone else may hit you in mid-flight. But all that watchfulness will save you from embarrassment. Like those old fables, these experiences have a lesson in them, says Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Expect yourself to be hit with religious fervour. You may find yourself in the spotlight for an event or inauguration. Ganesha indicates travelling, so pack your bags for a long-distance business trip.

**CAPRICORN**  
After all the drudgery you endured in a bid to reach a certain point in your career, it's time to sit back and enjoy the rewards, says Ganesha. Today, you can expect to get a transfer, a promotion, a pay hike or all the three.

**AQUARIUS**  
Things have become stagnant but it fails to frustrate your spirit. Slow and steady wins the race and it seems you have imbibed it very well. You will be able to seize opportunities coming your way and march ahead on your path. Financially, you will be on a stable ground, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
You need to tread cautiously today when it comes to matters related to business. Do not make any decisions in haste, or it could come back to haunt you at a later date. All financial dealings will need to be carefully monitored.

## 'Honey and I maintain a winning streak'

**Mumbai:** Actress Nushratt Bharuccha notes how rapper Honey Singh's songs have always been a highlight in her career as an actress, and adds that featuring in the video of his new song *Saiyaan Ji* has been special for her.

Nushratt said: "*Saiyaan Ji* is close to my heart as it is my first single music video with Honey Sir. This is our fourth song together, after *Dil chori*, *Care ni karda* and *Chote chote peg* and with the song now crossing 100 Million views, we have maintained our winning streak."

"The fact that the song has become such a massive hit is an amazing hype for us," the actress added.

"The song is special to me as I shot for it right after lockdown was lifted. That time, I was in the middle of promoting *Chhalaang*, and was running from one activity to another, but somehow we fixed up dates and worked it out - even if it meant shooting for 18 hours a day," she recalled. The actress has *Hurdang*, *Janhit Mein Jaari* and *Chhorii* coming up.

IANS



NUSHRRATT BHARUCCHA

## Bhumi to educate girls on menstrual hygiene

**New Delhi:** With an aim to raise awareness and educate girls on menstrual hygiene management, UNESCO has joined the #KeepGirlsInSchool mission, being supported by actress Bhumi Pednekar. The movement, launched by feminine care brand Whisper, begins with shedding light on the impact of 2.3 crore girls dropping out of school due to lack of period education and protection.

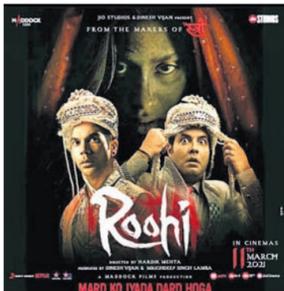
A study reveals, even today, 71 per cent of adolescent girls in India remain unaware of menstruation till they get their first period. This affects their confidence and self-esteem adversely, leading to 2.3 crore adolescent girls dropping out of school every year, at the onset of the puberty, it says.

According to the UNESCO, the global pandemic has impacted 74 crore schoolgirls, and could severely affect their return to school.

To bring to light the struggles of young girls as they reach puberty, Whisper and UNESCO released a film that illustrates the journey of the playful innocence of a schoolgirl with boundless dreams coming to a grinding halt due to the lack of period education and protection. IANS



## Roohi trailer gets over 14mn views in one day



**Mumbai:** The trailer of the horror comedy *Roohi* has crossed over 14 million views in just one day. The film features Rajkummar Rao, Varun Sharma and Janhvi Kapoor.

The trailer had been released Tuesday on Youtube and within 24 hours has garnered 14,123,568 views. According to the video streaming website, it also trended at number one in India.

Several top stars including Ayushmaan Khurrana, Kriti Sanon, Vicky Kaushal, Jacqueline Fernandez, Varun Dhawan,

Sonakshi Sinha, Shradha Kapoor, Bhumi Pednekar, Aparshakti Khurana, Radhika Madan, Mouni Roy and filmmaker Amar Kaushik shared their love for the trailer online.

Jio Studios and Dinesh Vijan have presented the film, which is directed by Hardik Mehta.

"The biggest win of this trailer is that everyone, right from the film industry to true blue cinephiles are looking forward to catch *Roohi* on the big screen," producer Vijan said. IANS

## Exhibit of leading Indian classical artistes' photographs goes live

Rakesh Sinha has been photographing performances of not just dancers and musicians but also that of theatre and literature personalities for over four decades

Sinha also works with colours but his first love and passion is for black and white photography. Although not having received any training professionally he develops and prints all his photographs by himself in his Darkroom. Rakesh Sinha has had both solo and participated in group exhibitions across India including at Tansen Samaroh 2003 in Gwalior; Virasaat 1997 Allahabad; Rajaya Natya Samaroh 1988 Dehradun; and Rajaya Natya Samaroh 1990 Bareilly.

An online exhibition of archival portraits of leading Indian classical artistes, including Kishori Amonkar, Pt. Birju Maharaj and Pandit Gopikrishna, taken at their live performances is currently open for view. The photographs are taken by Lucknow-based photographer Rakesh Sinha.

Titled *Aks-e-Mausiqui* (Shadow of Music), this collection of heritage photographs of some of the most known classical musicians and dancers captures the myriad moods and emotions of the artiste as they immerse themselves in their art forms.

Often intimate and personal, the bromide photographs capture for-



Pandit Birju Maharaj



Kishori Amonkar



Pandit Gopi Krishna

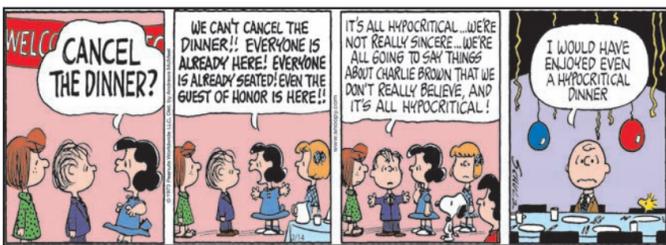
ever a moment in time.

A self-taught photographer, Rakesh Sinha has been photographing performances of not just dancers and musicians but also that of theatre and literature personalities for over four decades. He has worked with all the leading artistes in the different fields and has been appreciated and acknowledged by the artistes. Sinha makes it a point to present a set of the photographs to the artistes each time he photographs

The online exhibition is on view from February 15-28, 2021 on the website of India International Centre (www.iicdelhi.in).

### FUN post

#### PEANUTS



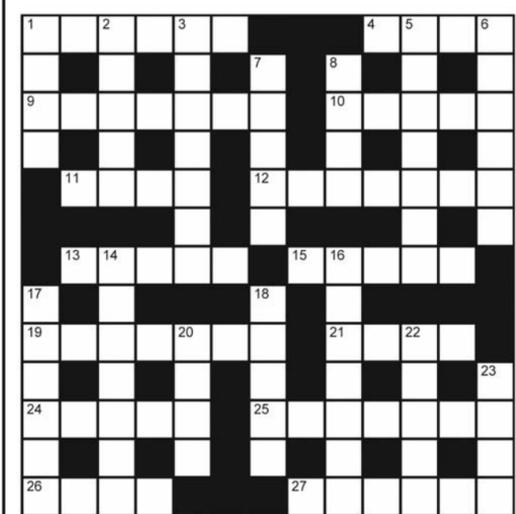
#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### BREVITY



#### CROSSWORD

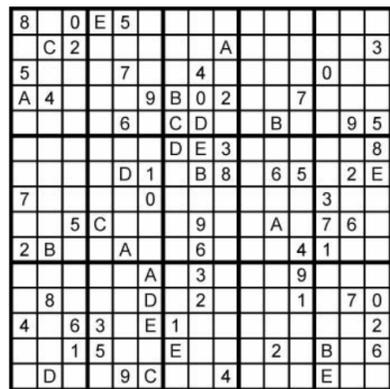


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- Across**
- 1 Fight back
  - 4 Chooses
  - 9 Accomplished
  - 10 Pigeon's perch
  - 11 Smile widely
  - 12 Like a toenail, at times
  - 13 British biscuit
  - 15 Chinese zodiac animal
  - 19 Eternal
  - 21 Fumble
  - 24 Bring together
  - 25 Rapture
  - 26 "Piece of cake!"
  - 27 Unconscious mind
  - Down**
  - 1 Farrier's tool
  - 2 Paris divider
  - 3 Man of wisdom
  - 5 Racetrack area
  - 6 Beer mugs
  - 7 Own up to
  - 8 Wallop
  - 14 Links figures
  - 16 Scourge
  - 17 Periwig
  - 18 Michaelmas daisy
  - 20 Former spouses
  - 22 Swiss capital
  - 23 Combustible heap

#### SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.



#### SOLUTIONS

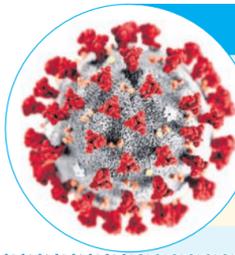


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



### SAFETY FIRST

Dignitaries, including state Transport Minister Padmanabh Behera, unveil Odisha's safety mascot 'TIA' on the concluding day of National Road Safety Month celebrations in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday



### COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	11,01,37,899	8,49,63,641	24,32,192
India	1,09,25,533	1,06,31,109	1,55,850
Odisha	3,36,397	3,33,788	1,912

# CM presses green button for 5 units worth ₹415Cr



### INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

Naveen performed ground-breaking ceremony for 17 industrial units with investments worth Rs 12,895.86 crore

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** In what would usher in major industrial expansion in the state, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday performed ground-breaking and inauguration of 22 industrial projects worth Rs 13,311.53 crore.

He inaugurated five industrial units with investments of Rs 415.67 crore and laid foundation stone of 17 other projects worth Rs 12,895.86 crore. The state government aims to generate employment opportunities for 10,677 persons through these projects.

The projects include metal and

downstream, tourism, textile and apparel, cement, plastic and food processing units.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister said, "I am pleased that step by step, we are going high with impressive investments in the manufacturing sector, making the position of our state stronger as a manufacturing hub of India."

"Our consistent efforts to improve the investment ecosystem laced with our peaceful social climate are paying off to realize our desired goal," he said.

He further said the Mo Sarkar and 5T Initiatives of state government are solidly in place to effectively

streamline the investment facilitation mechanism in the state.

"We must ensure that the citizens and businesses are provided services from the government in a hassle-free and time-bound manner. Towards this objective, the launching of the mobile version of GO PLUS, the land bank information system will be helpful for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the state," he added.

Industries Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra said over the past few months, the state has developed and enabled online registration and approval systems for over 30 Government to Business (G2B) services.

Further, the state Single Window System GO SWIFT has been streamlined and now it provides over 50 services covering 18 departments through an end-to-end mechanism with no need for any physical contact between the applicant and the approving authority, Mishra said.

The Chief Minister has inaugurated a logistic park by KTL Logistics and Services Limited (Purvi Bharat) in Choudwar (Cuttack), five-star hotel in Bhubaneswar by Lifeline Multi-ventures Pvt. Ltd, pellet plant expansion project of Shyam Metals and Energy Limited at Pandloi (Sambalpur), water and amusement park by Fun Leela Water Park at Lahandabad (Jharsuguda) and waste plastic recycling plant by Lackeir Stilit Plastic Industry at Rambha (Ganjam).

## FASTag no cure for serpentine queues



In a bid to promote digital payment, reduce waiting time and fuel consumption at the toll plazas, the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has made FASTags mandatory for vehicles from February 15 midnight. Any vehicle not fitted with the tag, based on Radio Frequency Identification technology, would cough up double the toll at electronic toll gates across the country. Accordingly, all lanes at the plazas on National Highways were declared 'FASTag lanes' from the date. However, many toll plazas in the state seem to care a fig. Serpentine queues caused due to alleged manual payment at Manguli and Pipili toll plazas on NH 16 and 316 Wednesday speak volumes of the implementation of NHAI order. Notably, FASTag is a device that enables toll payments directly from the prepaid account linked to it. Motorists have to affix the tag on the windscreen of vehicles for seamless travel at toll plazas.

## Varsities to have maintenance units

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** The Higher Education department Wednesday directed the Odisha State Police Housing and Welfare Corporation (OPHC) for setting up of a maintenance unit in each university to take up day to day maintenance work of university infrastructure and facilities.

In the letter, Saswat Mishra, secretary of Higher Education department said that as per a decision of state government, the OPHWC has been designated as the sole executing agency for all infrastructure maintenance works of state public universities coming under HE department. Accordingly, the universities have assigned a number of infrastructure works to OPHWC in this financial year. He said an area which often remains neglected in the universities is the day-to-day maintenance of university infrastructure facilities. As universities face a lot of difficulties in keeping the ever increasing infrastructure and facilities well maintained, OPHWC is requested to consider setting up of a maintenance unit in the universities for the purpose.

The university shall pay for the expenses of running the maintenance unit which will comprise of manpower cost and material cost.

# ₹200Cr Kalinga Studio facelift gets govt nod

Chief Secy directs officials to make the studio employment intensive & transform it into a tourism and social destination

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** The state government Wednesday decided to redevelop the Kalinga Studio here and transform it into a state-of-the-art film hub.

A high-level meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra approved a redevelopment plan of around Rs 200 crore for the purpose to develop Kalinga Studio into a tourist and social destination.

Considering the business prospects of Kalinga Studio in the film industry, Mahapatra directed the officials to develop it as a "modern state-of-the-art futuristic studio with competitive business models".

He also directed to make the unit employment intensive and a tourism and social destination as well. The Chief Secretary hoped that it would fetch additional revenue.

Development Commissioner Pradeep Kumar Jena asked the officials concerned to work out the details of investment, employment potential and revenue generation time frame for making the unit rewarding and sustainable in the competitive world of fast changing technology.



### MAKEOVER STRATEGY

FILE PHOTO

Zone-1 would have facilities like indoor shooting floors, shooting facades, central country yard, film tech zone, commercial space and cafeteria

Zone-2 would have outdoor shooting facilities, shooting locales, theme-based shooting gardens, kids zones, castle view, snow world and adventure land

The food court boarding and lodging facilities for the film crew, space for social & wedding destinations will be in Zone -3

A target has been set to complete the construction and landscaping of the core support area by December 2022

Outlining the redevelopment proposal, Industries secretary Hemanta Sharma said, "Presently, Kalinga Studio stands on an area of around 26 acres. With its nostalgic heritage and profit-making track it could

be developed into a modern film centre with promising future prospects."

With minor repairs and renovations done in 2014-15, the studio is able to generate revenue of around

Rs 4 lakh per month since September 2020.

Skill Development and Technical Education secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh said the availability of well-trained skilled manpower in the

state is another opportunity for growth of the proposed modern centre.

The meeting decided that the new studio would be developed with three main zones.

IDCO would be the executing agency for redevelopment. Zone-1 would have the facilities like indoor shooting floors, shooting facades, central country yard, film tech zone, commercial space and cafeteria.

Zone-2 would have outdoor shooting facilities, shooting locales, theme-based shooting gardens, kids zones, castle view, snow world and adventure land. The food court boarding and lodging facilities for the film crew, space for social and wedding destinations will be in Zone -3.

Sharma said, "In course of its redevelopment, some old structures and existing facilities would be retained for maintaining its legacy."

The Chief Secretary directed the Industries department to go ahead with the tender process for completing the base level earth work before the monsoon.

A target has been set to complete the construction and landscaping of the core support area by December 2022.

## Four of robbers' gang nabbed; booty seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** In a major crackdown, the Commissionerate Police arrested four members of a robbers' gang here, Wednesday.

According to sources, police recovered 12 gold chains weighing over 80 grams and worth around Rs 4, 00, 000, three motorcycles and a number of incriminating instruments from their possession.

### 12 gold chains worth around ₹4 lakh and 3 bikes were seized

Acting on a tip-off, a special squad of the Commissionerate Police conducted a raid and nabbed the looters, a police official said.

Several cases of loot, snatching and other criminal offences are pending against the arrested members of the gang at several police stations of the Capital city, the police official added. Notably, the gang was active in Bhubaneswar and its adjoining areas for several months. A manhunt has been launched to arrest other members of the gang and find out if they have links with other gangs.

# Start infra work for Odia varsity at Satyabadi, Works dept told

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** The Higher Education department Wednesday wrote a letter to Works department again requesting it to undertake infrastructure development work for the proposed Odia University at Satyabadi in Puri district.

Higher Education department principal secretary Saswat Mishra, in a letter to Commissioner-cum-secretary of Works department, said that the proposed architectural plan and design of the proposed Odia University in Satyabadi has not been received yet from the chief engineer of Building, Government of Odisha for which further progress could not be made.

Mishra also stated that the department had earlier written October 14, 2019 for undertaking infrastructure development work for the proposed Odia University at Satyabadi but no action was taken.

As per reports, the construction work for the proposed university is yet to begin even though the foundation stone was laid around two years ago.



FILE PHOTO OF FOUNDATION STONE

### PROJECT IN LIMBO

Higher Education dept Wednesday wrote a letter to Works dept again requesting it to undertake infrastructure development work for the proposed Odia University at Satyabadi

The construction work for the proposed university is yet to begin even though the foundation stone was laid around two years ago

It was then decided that the university would be set up on the land of Satyabadi Gopinath Deb for which 28.74 acre land at Phula Alasha mouza was earmarked

The inordinate delay in the establishment of the Odia University has invited criticisms from social activists as well as intellectuals.

The heritage cabinet of the state government, formed to propagate and preserve the heritage and culture of Odisha and enrich Odia language in 2017, had decided to set up the university at Satyabadi where Satyabadi Vana Vidyalaya was established by the famous Panchasakha - Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Acharya Harihar Das, Pandit Nilakantha Das, Krupasindhu Mishra

and Godavarish Mishra.

The proposed university would offer postgraduate courses in Odia language and promote research.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had laid the foundation stone for the proposed university at Satyabadi 'Bakulabana' on the occasion of Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das's 141st birth anniversary October 9, 2018.

It was then decided that the university would be set up on the land of Satyabadi Gopinath Deb for which 28.74 acre land at Phula Alasha mouza was earmarked.

## BUREAU OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY

(A statutory body under Ministry of Power, Government of India)  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Sewa Bhawan, R.K. Puram, New Delhi-110066 (INDIA)  
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**Secretary**

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davp 34106/13/0015/2021

# Vax drive one of the best in country: State

# Aparajita ignorant of Odia culture, says BJD

# LoP demands bus service for Kotia

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** The state Health department Wednesday said that its performance on Covid-19 vaccination is one of the best in the country.

The department said that the Centre recently took a review meeting of the states on the performance of states in the mass vaccination drive.

State Health and Family Welfare department director Bijoy Panigrahi said, "The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare recently held a review meeting on the success of the vaccination drive in the states. They tried to understand how the state is undertaking the in-



**In Odisha the performance of vaccination drive is quite good. On an average, we are seeing 90 vaccinations per session which is the highest in the country**

**BIJOY PANIGRAHI | DIRECTOR, H&FW DEPT**

oculation drive. They wanted to know how the schedules are organised, what is the status of adverse reactions reported in the state and other details related to the drive."

Citing data, he said that the inoculation drive has been going in

good pace in the state. He said, "In Odisha the performance of vaccination is quite good. On an average, we are seeing 90 vaccinations per session which is the highest in the country."

He also said that adverse reactions are also minimal in Odisha. "The adverse reactions post Covid-19

vaccination are also very less in the state. Majority of the reactions had also been minor: 60 per cent of the target of the frontline workers has been completed in the first phase," he said. He, however, lamented that the drive was affected a bit during the Odisha Bandh. "The Odisha Bandh had hit the vaccination drive a bit. We hope that in the second round we will achieve 100 per cent target. We have not yet received instructions on when to start the vaccination drive for the elderly," he said.

According to the data released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Wednesday, Odisha was one among the nine states to have achieved more than 75 per cent success in vaccinating health care workers in the first round of vaccination.

Data claimed that in Odisha more than 85 per cent of health care workers have been vaccinated till now in the first round of the drive.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Wednesday came down heavily on Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi for her recent comments on monument bylaws.

In a written statement, the ruling party said that the BJD leader has no understanding of Odia culture.

"As Aparajita Sarangi does not understand Odia culture, maybe it's difficult for her to appreciate the sensitivity involved in a religious issue that links living deities with sevayats and devotees. Perhaps Minister Pratap Sarangi, who is from Odisha, will be able to understand these sensitivities in a better way," BJD general secretary (Media Affairs) Manas Mangaraj said in a written statement.

Mangaraj also challenged Aparajita on the reading of laws related to the drafting of bylaws for monuments.

He said that the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is directly involved in drafting heritage bylaws.

"Anyone can read this and un-

derstand in five minutes that the regional director ASI, Kolkata is the competent authority for the drafting of Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMSAR Act). I am shocked at the misrepresentation of my statement and sheer falsehood by Aparajita Sarangi," stated Mangaraj.

"The Culture director is not the competent authority for the drafting of bylaws. It is the regional director ASI, Kolkata, who has sent the proposal for heritage bylaws of Odisha temples," the senior BJD leader added.

The senior BJD leader said that the former IAS officer-turned politician seemed to haven't read the AMSAR Act properly or deliberately trying to spread falsehood.

"It would be better if you read the AMSAR Act and answer my question - who is the competent authority Section-20E of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMSAR Act) which will affect Ekamrakhshetra? Don't try to fool the people of Odisha by resorting to falsehood," he said.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** Leader of Opposition in the Odisha Assembly Pradipta Naik Wednesday wrote a letter to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik demanding basic amenities for Kotia gram panchayat in Koraput district.

This comes after the visit of a BJD delegation including Naik to the GP. The BJD leader expressed concern citing lack of amenities in the area. In his letter to the CM, Naik asked for a regular bus service to Kotia and other tribal welfare services to win the confidence of the people of the area.

In his interaction with the media, he said, "I visited Kotia recently with our delegation. Kotia panchayat has seen massive apathy from the state government. Around 22 km of road there is non-motorable. It is difficult for them to reach at the district headquarter."

He said that a lot of them do not understand Odia language. "The government has not worked on bringing improvement in their situation. If the government had tried to use multi-language teachers and took them into confidence, the situation would have been different. The Andhra Pradesh government has been giving them better incentives than Odisha government," he said.

He said, "The state government has failed to engage in talks with the Andhra government on the issue. The government is silent. I failed to see officials there getting directions from the state government to go there and intervene. Schools, hospitals and other facilities have not been provided by the government to the villagers. Why the people will stay with you if you do not provide them basic amenities."

# Khadi Bazar fair in City from Feb 19

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** The state-level Khadi and Gramodyog fair known as 'Khadi Bazar' will kick-start here from February 19 and it will conclude February 28.

This was announced at a presser by the Khadi Board where Odisha Khadi Gramodyog President, Sangram Keshari Paikray, said that the exhibition offers an appropriate platform for sellers to showcase and sell their products to residents of the city.

He also said, "Energy, Industries, Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra and Water Resources, Information & Public Relations Minister Raghunandan Das will inaugurate the fair in the campus of Odisha Khadi and Gramodyog Board in the city. Ananta Narayan Jena MLA Bhubaneswar Central, Satyabrata Sahu, principal secretary Department of Micro, Small and Medium Industries will also be present at the event."

Around 60 stalls will be set up while following Covid guidelines and various weavers, organic turmeric and other organic products will be up for sale.

The key attraction of the fair will be Sabai grass products. Besides a live demonstration of pottery making, Khadi making charkha will be available at the fair for the visitors. Colourful cultural programs will be presented by artistes during this 10-day long fair.

The main aim of the fair is to rebuild the financial status of village weavers.

# State registers 75 fresh Covid cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** Odisha's Covid-19 caseload Wednesday surged to 3,36,397 after 75 more people tested positive for the virus, a Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

The 75 new cases were detected in 17 of the state's 30 districts, with 46 cases reported from different quarantine centres, while the remaining 29 are local contact cases.

Sundargarh district reported the highest of 11 new cases.

# CLASSIFIED

# AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit before the Notary Public, Sambalpur, I Gourav Deep, S/o Bideshi Deep, At-Bandhalipada, P.O./P.S.-Loisingha, Dist.- Balangir do hereby declare that I have changed my name from Garib Deep to Gourav Deep. Henceforth, I shall be known as Gourav Deep for all purposes.



Police and youth Congress activists clash as the latter demonstrate near Union Petroleum Minister's residence at Chandrasekharpur in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, condemning the skyrocketing fuel and LPG prices

# Pradhan bats for CoE on Marine Biotech at ILS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has sought the personal intervention of Union Science and Technology Minister Harsh Vardhan in setting up of a Centre of Excellence (CoE) on Marine Biotechnology at Institute of Life Sciences (ILS), here to preserve Odisha's delicate marine ecosystem.

In a letter to the Union science and technology minister Tuesday, Pradhan said, the state's coastline provides employment to millions and has been at the centre of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a marine-led Blue Economy.

Blue Economy covers all ocean-related activities, including direct and indirect supporting activities required for functioning of the sector, while adjusting the costs of environmental damage and ecological imbalance caused due to exploitation of ocean resources for consumption.

Noting that Odisha's long and beautiful coastline has been one of the hallmarks of the state for centuries, Pradhan said, it provides sustenance and employment to millions who are engaged in pisciculture and fishing, travel and tourism, and trade and logistics.

World-famous sites like Puri Jagannath temple, Konark Sun temple, Chilika Lake and Bhitarkanika National Park form

the backbone of Odisha's tourism and allied industry, Pradhan, who hails from the state, said.

"Projects like the expansion and development of Paradip Port, IOCL Paradip refinery, Paradip Smart Port city, development of Dhamra LNG Terminal, Digha-Gopalpur coastal highway and development of fishing harbours at Paradip and Balasore will unlock the true potential for marine-led economic growth in Odisha and eastern India," the letter said.

Mentioning that PM Modi has reiterated that such industrial economic growth must be balanced with ecological conservation, the Union minister said, "It is essential to invest in the preservation of delicate marine ecosystems such as nesting sites of the endangered Olive Ridley turtles and mangrove ecosystems while developing novel approaches using marine biotechnology."

ILS, Bhubaneswar, has been undertaking scientific research in this area with a proven body of publications and patents which have led to favourable outcomes for the management of local bio-resources, eco-conservation efforts and optimal marine resource utilisation, Pradhan said.

"Therefore, I seek your personal intervention in facilitating a CoE on Marine Biotechnology at ILS, Bhubaneswar," he said.



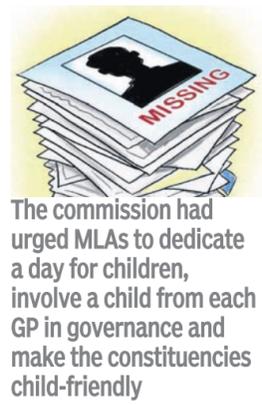
# Missing kids: Bring changes in approach, SCPCR tells police

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** The Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSPCPCR) Wednesday wrote a letter to Odisha Police recommending strengthening of police intervention on the issue of missing children.

In a letter to Director General of Police (DGP) Abhay, OSCPCR chairperson Sandhyabati Pradhan said that Odisha Police has taken a strong and proactive approach in handling missing children cases, due to which a number of children have been rescued in last few months. "This we appreciate very much. However, there is need to continue this spirit and also bring some changes in the approach," said Pradhan.

She recommended a few points for consideration and necessary action such as directions to be issued to all police stations to prioritise the missing cases of children,



The commission had urged MLAs to dedicate a day for children, involve a child from each GP in governance and make the constituencies child-friendly

work out case-specific strategy to track and rescue. The progress can be reviewed on a monthly basis. All these cases must be registered in the website.

Apart from this, review and re-

work the standard operating procedure (SOP) for dealing with case of a missing child issued by Crime Branch October 9, 2014. The SOP can be more holistic to cover preventive measures, proactive measures for gathering information and registered FIR, building convergence with other Acts, schemes, programmes and departments for the rehabilitation of the recovered children is also recommended by commission in the letter.

Building coordination among the Panchayat Level Child Protection Committees formed as per Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) and Ama Police Samiti to create awareness on the safety and security of the children and also track the children in a day to day basis.

Earlier, the commission had urged MLAs to dedicate a day for children, involve a child from each GP in governance and make the constituencies child-friendly.

# CLOTHES FOR THE NEEDY

# BMC to roll out 'Wheel of Kindness'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 17:** Aiming for an organised distribution of used clothes to the needy, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Wednesday, stated that it will launch a special vehicle under the banner 'Wheel of Kindness' that will bridge the gap between donors and receivers.

The civic authority in this regard had invited Request for Proposal (RFP) in December last year: Four Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) had responded to the proposal out of which one was selected. Following which, NPO Vikash, was then given the responsibility for collection, washing and distribution of the usable clothes in the state capital. Moreover, a central washing,



packaging and inventory management centre location has also been zeroed in at Madhusudan Nagar. "We have initiated this idea to properly organise the system of donating the used or old clothes. From now on those who want to donate the clothes can do it through BMC. The NPO will wash, iron and

sort out clothes for men and women. A bus will later be converted into a special vehicle that will act as shopping centre," informed BMC Commissioner, Prem Chandra Chaudhary.

Required infrastructure will be provided by BMC to the selected agency for a scientific processing and packaging, the BMC Commissioner added. Moreover, the vehicle will have shelves for display of clothes along with trial facility which will attract the intended user in a dignified manner. Different collection and distribution points will be chalked out throughout the city for smooth functioning of the activity.

"BMC will start the community mobilisation process soon. The selected agency will undertake in-

formation, education and communication activities for mobilising citizen cooperation. Collection and distribution will be continued round the week and exact timing of touching communities in different points in the day will be fixed," said Suwendu Kumar Sahoo, deputy commissioner, Sanitation.

It can be mentioned that earlier in January, the BMC had announced that it will be banning distribution of clothes and food to people living in the streets without prior permission of the civic authority. The move had come after the BMC said that it aims to make the capital city beggar free. However, it had cited homeless people's reluctance to move to shelter homes as an impediment to the cause amidst constant supply of free food and clothes.

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PRE-POLL GROUNDWORK AHEAD OF CIVIC BODY POLLS

# BJP's 'Chai Pe Charcha' to take on BJD's digital drive

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Feb 17:** The poll schedule for urban civic bodies in the state has not been declared, but the ruling party and the opposition BJP have apparently drawn up their electioneering strategies to woo voters in Ganjam district. Members of both the parties have become active on the field.

The youth wing of the BJD has aimed at reaching out to the people by way of a digital drive. Such campaign will highlight a host of developmental and welfare measures and activities being implemented by the state government.

Ahead of this campaign, the BJD youth wing has formed committees in all wards of the Berhampur Municipal Corporation.

Meanwhile, a youth gathering was held at the residence of MLA Bikram Kumar Panda which urged party workers to make this campaign a success. Party workers at the grassroots are being sensitised about the digital campaign.

On the other hand, the BJP has drawn up its strategy to counter the ruling party's move. The saffron party has already set a "Chai Pe Charcha" campaign in motion in all 40 wards of the BeMC.

The party leaders and workers are organizing 'Cha Khatris' with local people at different places including Aska Road First Gate and various places in Gosaninuaagan.

The BJP leaders while sharing tea with people are sensitizing people to various welfare schemes, projects and financial contribution of the central government at 'cha khatris'. They also get to know of the



Counter strategies

The youth wing of the BJD aims to reach out to people by way of a digital drive.

The campaign will highlight a host of developmental and welfare measures and activities being implemented by the state government

The BJP party leaders and workers are organizing 'Cha Khatris' with local people at different places including Aska Road First Gate and various places in Gosaninuaagan

In 2014 civic body polls in the BeMC, the BJD had won in 24 wards, Congress in 15 wards and one independent while the BJP failed to open its account.

personal and civic body problems in various areas.

The BJP leaders are seen assuring people of taking up their issues with the administration for redressal. Development activities in urban areas have been more in focus now. This indicates that the government is going to announce the poll schedules for the civic bodies soon.

Officials and ruling party leaders have been routinely conducting reviews on the progress of development works in urban bodies in Ganjam. MLAs and BeMC commissioners are visiting wards to take stock of the progress of development.

Besides, the BJD is likely to play women card in the forthcoming civic body elections. SHGs are now in focus.

In the BeMC area, there are 200 SHGs with male members and 1,600 SHGs with women members. Each SHG has at least 10 members.

Women SHGs have been roped in various civic body works like toilet maintenance, wall painting on the official buildings, Aahaar centres. SHG members are paid good remunerations.

For various civic body works, the BeMC has been provided crores of rupees in the first phase.

Political circles observed that SHGs will play a crucial role in the coming civic body polls. They also discuss on the strategies of the BJP to counter it.

Notably, in 2014 civic body polls in the BeMC, the BJD had won in 24 wards, Congress in 15 wards and one independent while the BJP failed to open its account.

## SI SUSPENDED OVER TORTURE OF MINOR BOY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Feb 17:** Rourkela SP Mukesh Kumar Bhamu suspended a police sub-inspector (SI) of Udit Nagar police station in Steel City on charge of brutal torture of a minor in custody in connection with a mobile phone theft case. The suspended SI was identified as Manas Ranjan Nayak.

Reports said the SI had picked up the minor boy from Gopabandhu Palli area on charge of a mobile phone theft December 26, and detained him in the police station for probe. The minor, an orphan, lives with his grandmother in the area.

Her grandmother Bimala Badaik alleged in the police station that Nayak had brutally beaten up her grandson and even administered him electric shock in police custody. The matter came to the fore after the woman approached BJP leader Pramila Dash. The child welfare committee was asked to conduct a probe to establish the veracity of the allegations.



Taking suo moto cognisance of media reports, the Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) directed the Rourkela SP to probe the matter and submit a report by February 15.

Notably, the minor found the mobile phone lying on the road while passing near a temple in the Timber Colony in December last year. He took the phone to a person named Sanju and asked him to unlock the phone. However, Sanju expressed his desire to purchase the phone following which the minor sold the phone to him at Rs 1,500.

## ROAD SAFETY



Police personnel along with folk artistes creating awareness on road safety in Kodala area of Ganjam

OP PHOTO

# Admin worried over fringe villages leaning towards AP

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Pottangi, Feb 17:** The district administration of Koraput and the block administration of Pottangi have drawn flak from various quarters after Andhra Pradesh held panchayat elections at Ganjeipadar, Fagunasineri and Fatusineri villages. Amid allegations of the administrative negligence to the fringe villages and villagers leaning towards the neighbouring state, the administration is worried about it.

Another fact has come to the fore that people of Galigabada under Nuagan panchayat, eight km from the block headquarters, have exercised their franchise in panchayat election at Sariki panchayat, which is under Salur block of AP.

The administration has started investigation into the matter and came to know that Galigabada vil-



FILE PHOTO

The administration investigating the issue came to know that Galigabada villagers had reached Sariki panchayat on Feb-12 night and voted for the Sariki sarpanch nominee

lagers had reached Sariki panchayat at night of February 12 and gave their votes to the Sariki sarpanch nominee.

The matter was alerted to the

district administration by Galigabada Anganwadi worker and some officials of ICDS.

The administration is now on its toes over such development. A team of officials comprising tehsildar Haripada Mandal, IIC Bijayraj Majhi and revenue inspector Mundagadia Dambaru talked to villagers of Galigabada.

Villagers admitted that only 20 of them have participated in the AP panchayat polls in Sariki panchayat, but in fact it was learnt that about 60 people of the village took part in the voting. Former Nuagan sarpanch Sitru Pangi revealed before the officials in this regard.

Meanwhile, the AP government had engaged two volunteers to woo villagers for panchayat polls. The two - Samuru Khara and Pradip Pangi - are absconding after the administrative investigation.

## Kuchinda chilli powder to be marketed at national level

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Feb 17:** Red chilli powder produced in Kuchinda sub-division of Sambalpur district will be marketed at the national level, a report said.

According to the report, chilli is farmed on a large scale in Kuchinda sub-division, but marketing of the produce has always been a problem for farmers.

Now, their perennial concern for marketing will be over soon. ITDA, RMC, district agriculture department, horticulture department, Odisha Livelihood Mission and ORMAS have come together and initiated joint efforts to market the chilli powder.

A godown and a chilli processing unit have been set up at Kulang at a cost of Rs 20 lakh. Chilli farmers have been trained in farming and harvest. Chilli powder production has started here on an experimental basis.



It was decided that chilli powder will be packed in packets and sold in local and different markets.

The above stakeholders have talked to a private company to buy the chilli powder and market it outside the state.

Initially, chill will be cultivated in 166 hectares in the first phase while 210 members of SHGs have been roped into this farming.

ORMAS Director Srimant Hota said 10 producers' groups have been formed for the management of the chill unit while 5 FPOs have been constituted.

In the current year, chilli has been grown on 4786 hectares in Kuchinda area and 35,000 tonnes of chilli are expected to be produced.

# Biju Setu project hangs fire as locals wade through river water

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jhumpura, Feb 17:** The state government lays stress on rural connectivity in riparian areas through the Biju Setu Yojana. Crores of rupees are spent for the bridges across these rivers. But, one such project is nowhere near completion even four years after its construction in remote hilly area like Jhumpura of Keonjhar district, a report said.

According to the report, thousands of people living in Malda and Basantpur panchayats under Jhumpura block and Phuljhar panchayat under Bansapani block have been suffering commuting woes in the absence of a bridge across the Baitarani. They have to wade through river water when a diversion road gets washed away.

Taking the commuting plight of the people into account, the state government wanted to set up the bridge in 2016 under the Biju Setu Yojana. An outlay of Rs 9.11 crore was made. The rural development department floated a tender for the bridge project. It was started April 5, 2016 and was to be completed by April 4, 2018.

Locals said four years have passed since its construction was undertaken, but it has been abandoned



An outlay of ₹9.11 crore was made while the rural development dept floated a tender for the bridge project. It was started April 5, 2016 and slated to be completed by April 4, 2018

by the contractor. "A diversion road has been built through the river and people commute on it with difficulties. In rainy season, the diversion road in the riverbed gets washed away, leaving people in difficulties," locals

lamented. People along with bicycles and bikes are often seen wading through river water.

People of Patakudar and Basantpur had approached the rural development department to complete the bridge several times in the past, but nothing has been done to resume its work.

Asked about its stalled work, executive engineer of the rural development division in Keonjhar, Benudhar Lenka, said the work was stalled over issues related to forest while the contractor has abandoned the work. The contractor has been served a notice. Steps will be taken to resume its work, he added.

## Wedding party falls off bridge; 2 die, 6 critical

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bijepur, Feb 17:** Two people of a wedding party died after the auto-rickshaw they were traveling in fell off Ranj river bridge near Sarandapalli of Bargarh district Wednesday. Six others were critically injured.

The deceased were identified as Jadu Mirig (46) of Rohinia and Ghanashyam Meher (30) of Melechhamunda.

According to police, Meher had gone to Rohinia to attend a wedding party of his maternal uncle.

He was returning with his relatives in an auto rickshaw at Tuesday night. The vehicle faced

an accident on the bridge. It fell off the bridge.

Two of them died on the spot while six critically wounded were hospitalized by local police.

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**

Tender No. ELS-ANGL-OT-20-21-08

Name of Work: HIRING OF ONE LIGHT ROAD VEHICLE I.E. NON-AC TATA SUMO, BOLERO OR EQUIVALENT FOR OFFICIAL USE OF SR. DIVISIONAL ELECTRICAL ENGINEER/TRS/ANGUL FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS.

Advised Value: ₹ 14,07,782.72, Period of completion: 36 Months.

Bidding start date: 23.02.2021, Tender closing date & time: At 1500 hrs. of 09.03.2021.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Complete details & tender documents will be available at website www.treps.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRS), PR-554/L/20-21, Angul

Government of Odisha

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PANIKOILI (R&B) DIVISION, PANIKOILI

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

Email ID:- eepwd.pkl@rediffmail.com

Corrigendum to

Bid Identification No. E.E.PKL R N B- 32/2020-21

No.B-751:- The sale and receipt of the tender documents is extended to dt.22.02.2021 and the opening of tender will be opened on dt.23.02.2021 at 11:30 hours due to unavoidable circumstances. All other terms & condition remain unchanged.

Sd./- Executive Engineer, Panikoili (R&B) Division OIPR-34067/11/0024/2021

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

BHUBANESWAR (R&B) DIVISION NO-III, BHUBANESWAR

bbsrandb03@yahoo.com

60Estg.No - 1070 Date - 11.02.2021

Government of Odisha "e"-Procurement Notice No (58) of 2020-21

No. B-747: Bid Identification No: - C.C. (R&B) 03

1	Name of the Work	Road work
2	Total No of works	1 no work
3	Estimated Cost	Rs. 53,36,268.00
4	Class of Contractor	(B & A)
5	Period of Completion	2 (Two ) Calendar Months
6	Type of Tender	Double Cover System, (Online)
7	Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal	From 19/02/2021 at 10.00 hrs to 02/03/2021 upto 17.30hrs.
8	Last Date & Time for Receipt of bids in the Portal	02/03/2021 upto 17.30 hrs
9	Name & Address of the Officer inviting Bid	Er. Himansu Sekhar Sarangi, Executive Engineer, Bhubaneswar (R&B) Division No III, Bhubaneswar

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>

N.B: Subsequent corrigendum / addendum if required shall be available in the website as indicated above.

Executive Engineer, Bhubaneswar (R&B) Division No III, BBSR OIPR-34089/11/0013/2021

# Mating of horseshoe crabs starts in Gahirmatha

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Mahakalapara, Feb 17:** Mating of endangered horseshoe crabs has started in the Gahirmatha marine sanctuary in Kendrapara district, a report said Wednesday. These crabs are found in large numbers in the Gahirmatha sanctuary of Mahakalapara block, Hukitola Island in the Bhitarkanika sanctuary, Madali sea mouth, Launchghola, mangrove forests as well as rivers and creeks flowing in the Mahanadi delta region. With the change in weather condition in the state, pairs of crabs could be seen mating.

These crabs are very alert in nature and do not mind attacking their enemies with their pointed pincers at the slightest provocations.

Reports said that horseshoe crabs have been living on the planet even before the advent of dinosaurs. A medical analysis in 2019 said horseshoe crabs have been here for more than 30 crore years and survived four mass extinctions for which they have been classified as a living

## ENDANGERED SPECIES



THEIR BLOOD CONTAINS AMEBOCYTES, WHICH PLAYS A SIMILAR ROLE TO THAT OF THE WHITE BLOOD CELLS OF THE VERTEBRATES IN DEFENDING THE ORGANISMS AGAINST PATHOGENS. THE CHEMICAL PRESENT IN THEIR BLOOD HELPS IN DETECTING DISEASE IN THE BLOOD OF HUMANS AND IN PREPARING MEDICINES FOR DREADED DISEASES LIKE CANCER

fossil. Their blood contains copper instead of iron while they use a chemical called hemocyanin to carry oxygen through their blood. Their

blood is blue in colour due to the copper present in hemocyanin. Their blood contains amebocytes, which plays a similar role to that of

THE MATING OF THESE CRABS USUALLY TAKES PLACE ON NEW MOON NIGHT AND FULL MOON NIGHT WHEN HOARDS OF CRABS COULD BE SEEN MOVING TOWARDS SEA BEACHES. THE GAHIRMATHA SANCTUARY IS A SAFE BREEDING PLACE FOR THESE CRABS

THEIR BLOOD CONTAINS COPPER WHILE THEY USE A CHEMICAL CALLED HEMOCYANIN TO CARRY OXYGEN THROUGH THEIR BLOOD. THEIR BLOOD IS BLUE IN COLOUR DUE TO THE COPPER PRESENT IN HEMOCYANIN

the white blood cells of the vertebrates in defending the organisms against pathogens. The chemical present in their blood helps in de-

tecting disease in the blood of humans and in preparing medicines for dreaded diseases like cancer.

The mating of these crabs usually takes place on new moon night and full moon night when hoards of crabs could be seen moving towards sea beaches. The Gahirmatha sanctuary is a safe breeding place for these crabs.

However, the forest officials seem to be oblivious of their protection as these creatures die in large numbers after coming contact with big trawlers, fishing boats and fishing nets.

Their carcasses could be seen lying on the beaches after being washed ashore. These crabs also travel thousands of miles from Pacific and Indian Oceans to Odisha coast while two of their types are found in the marshy mangrove forest and sand-cast areas on the state's coast.

Samarendra Mahali, an environmentalist, said awareness programme for protection and conservation of this endangered marine creatures will be taken up soon.

FOCUS FARM LAWS

# A GLOBAL PROBLEM



The Indian government should repeal its new farm laws and, through a careful deliberative process, craft legislation that stands the test of reason and can benefit poor farmers and consumers most of all

Clearly, in some cases it is not. The southern US state of Louisiana enacted a law in 1859 giving people of colour the “freedom” voluntarily to opt in to slavery, a practice often described as “warrantageism.” Today, countries such as China give workers the option of working in export-processing zones in exchange for basic labour rights. No one is forcing anyone to work under these conditions, goes the specious argument: it is just an extra option.

Most people would deplore these additional choices. On the other hand, government suppression of individual freedom often has its origins in knee-jerk objections. Fortunately, as I show in my book *Beyond the Invisible Hand*, we can apply to these real-world contexts a sophisticated argument rooted in the work of the philosopher Derek Parfit.

This goes back to the ancient Greek “sorites paradox.” According to a common formulation, if n grains of sand do not make a heap, then surely n+1 grains of sand cannot constitute a heap, either. The paradox arises from the fact that if we start with nothing and keep adding one grain of sand at a time, we will eventually make a heap.

Similarly, each individual decision to give up basic rights in exchange for a job in an export-processing zone may enhance that person’s welfare. But when lots of people do it, all workers may be worse off.

In short, what we need is not market fundamentalism, but a market that functions freely within the broad parameters set by well-crafted laws. The Indian government should repeal its new farm laws and, through a careful deliberative process, craft legislation that stands the test of reason and can benefit poor farmers and consumers most of all.

*The writer is a former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India.*

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India’s three new farm laws, enacted in September 2020 with little public or parliamentary debate, have attracted enormous global interest. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government described the measures as a gift to farmers, but farmers in several Indian states, led by small-holders in Punjab and Haryana, have refused to accept them. Sustained and highly polarising protests have followed.

The situation in India is unfortunate, but it is not unique. Agriculture is an intricate issue that raises important questions not just for India but for all economies struggling to strike a balance between the market and the state.

I had long felt that India’s existing farm laws needed changing, and that the country’s food grain market needed to be more open. The new laws, among other things, permit farmers to sell grain outside designated state-regulated areas called mandis in states where they previously were not allowed to do so. The government appears to be giving farmers more choice. Why should anyone object to that?

Then I read the fine print of the legislation. With their uncanny grassroots intuition, the farmers had realised something that many economists, including me, had missed.

If the government permitted farmers to sell their products outside the mandi, the farmers would surely benefit, even if the market outside the mandi was unregulated. With all else remaining constant, they would simply be gaining an additional option. But belief in the ceteris paribus condition – that all other conditions will remain unchanged – requires farmers to trust the government. They clearly don’t – and, on closer examination, with good reason.

Farmers the world over receive government subsidies. In 2019, China spent an estimated \$185.9 billion on farm subsidies, followed by the European Union (\$101.3 billion), the United States (\$48.9 bil-

lion), and India (\$11 billion). But different countries give these subsidies in different ways.

Indian farmers currently have the right to sell their products, mainly wheat and rice, to the government for a guaranteed minimum support price (MSP) that is set periodically each year. The MSP system runs largely on trust. Policymakers can effectively dismantle it by setting the price so low that no farmer will want to sell, or by not providing accessible product collection centres. In many parts of India today, for example, farmers are told they can sell their grain at a certain price, but there is nowhere in their vicinity to sell it.

If the government dismantles the MSP system instead of reforming it, millions of farmers will be forced to sell their products to four or five big agribusiness corporations. And this is precisely what the fine print of the new laws reveals.

If a corporation violates a contract with a farmer, the new laws

prohibit the farmer from seeking redress in a regular court. The legislation further helps big business by removing restrictions on stockpiling food grain that were put in place to discourage firms from artificially raising prices.

I believe big corporations are needed in agricultural markets. And I think the Indian government’s new laws would have been more acceptable had policymakers shown sensitivity to the need for antitrust enforcement to level the playing field for the millions of farmers who would be pitted against a few large firms. Even in the supposed free-market bastion of the US, prominent legal scholars such as Eric Posner, Suresh Naidu, Glen Weyl, and Cass Sunstein have expressed concern about the need for antitrust laws to regulate monopolies, like big corporate buyers.

India’s farm-law debate thus prompts a related question: Is providing more choice always desirable?



Kaushik Basu

**AGRICULTURE IS AN INTRICATE ISSUE THAT RAISES IMPORTANT QUESTIONS NOT JUST FOR INDIA BUT FOR ALL ECONOMIES STRUGGLING TO STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN THE MARKET AND THE STATE**



THE MOTHER

## The meat paradox

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

In India most animal welfare people are vegetarians. We, in *People for Animals*, insist on that. After all, you cannot want to look after animals and then eat them. But most meat eaters, whether they are animal people or not, have a hesitant relationship with the idea of killing animals for food. They enjoy the taste of meat, but shy away from making the connection that animals have been harmed grievously in the process.

This moral conflict is referred to, in psychological terms, as the ‘meat paradox’. A meat eater will eat caviar, but he will refuse to listen to someone telling him that this has been made from eggs gotten from slitting the stomach of a live pregnant fish. The carnivorous individual simply does not want to feel responsible for his actions. Meat eaters and sellers try and resolve this dilemma by adopting the strategy of mentally dissociating meat from its animal origins. For instance, ever since hordes of young people have started shunning meat, the meat companies and their allies in the government, and nutraceutical industry, have deliberately switched to calling it ‘protein’. This is an interesting manipulation of words and a last ditch attempt to influence consumer behaviour.

For centuries meat has been a part of people’s diet in many cultures. Global meat eating rose hugely in the 20th century, caused by urbanisation and developments in production technology. And, most importantly, the strategies used by the meat industry to dissociate the harming of animals from the flesh on the plate. Researchers say, “These strategies can be direct and explicit, such as denial of animals’ pain, moral status, or intelligence, endorsement of a hierarchy in which humans are placed above non-human animals.” The French are taught, for instance, that animals cannot think.

Added to this is the justification of meat consumption based on spurious nutritional grounds. Doctors and dieticians, who are unwitting tools of the “nutritional science” industry, put their stamp on this shameless hard sell. The most important of all these strategies, and the one that has a profound effect on meat consumption, is the dissociation of meat from its animal origins. Important studies have been done on this (Kunst & Hohle, 2016; Rothgerber, 2013; Tian, Hilton & Becker, 2016; Foer, 2009; Joy, 2011; Singer, 1995). The meat eater actively employs dissociation as a coping strategy to regulate his conscience, and simply stops associating meat with animals.



Maneka Gandhi

Studies have found that people prefer, or actively choose, to buy and eat meat that does not remind them of the animal origins

In earlier hunter-gatherer and agricultural societies, people killed or saw animals killed for their table. But from the mid-19th century the eater has been separated from the meat production unit. Singer (1995) says that getting meat from shops, or restaurants, is the last step of a gruesome process in which everything, but the finished product, is concealed. The process: the loading of animals into overcrowded trucks, the dragging into killing chambers, the killing, beheading, removing of skin, cleaning of blood, removal of intestines and cutting the meat into pieces, is all secret and the eater is left with neatly packed, ready-to-cook pieces with few reminders of the animal. No heads, bones, tails, feet. The industry manipulates the mind of the consumer so that he does not think of the once living and intelligent animal.

The language is changed concealing the animal. Pig becomes pork, sausage, ham, bacon, cows become beef and calves become veal, goat becomes mutton and hens become chicken and white meat. And now all of them have become protein.

Then come rituals and traditions which remove any kind of moral doubt. People often partake in rituals and traditions without reflecting on their rationale or consequences. Thanksgiving is turkey, Fridays is fish. In India all rituals were vegetarian. Now, many weddings serve meat. Animal sacrifice to the gods is part of this ritual.

Studies have found that people prefer, or actively choose, to buy and eat meat that does not remind them of the animal origins (Holm, 2018; Te Velde et al, 2002). But Evans and Miele (2012), who investigated consumers’ interactions with animal food products, show that the fast pace of food shopping, the presentation of animal foods, and the euphemisms used instead of the animal (e.g., pork, beef and mutton) reduced consumers’ ability to reflect upon the animal origins of the food they were buying.

Kunst & Hohle (2016) demonstrated how the process of presenting and preparing meat, and deliberately turning it from animal to product, led to less disgust and empathy for the killed animal and higher intentions to eat meat. If the animal-meat link was made obvious – by displaying the lamb for instance, or putting the word cow instead of beef on the menu – the consumer avoided eating it and went for a vegetarian alternative. This is an important finding: by interrupting the mental dissociation, meat eating immediately went down. This explains how, during Covid, the pictures of the Chinese eating animals in Wuhan’s markets actually put off thousands of carnivores and meat sale went down. In experiments by Zickfeld et al (2018) and Piazza et al (2018) it was seen that showing the pictures of animals, especially young animals, reduce people’s willingness to eat meat.

Do gender differences exist when it comes to not thinking about the meat one eats? In Kubberød and colleagues’ (2002) study on disgust and meat consumption, substantial differences emerged between females and males. Men were more aware of the origins of different types of meat, yet did not consider the origins when consuming it. Women reported that they did not want to associate the meat they ate with a living animal, and that reminders would make them uncomfortable and sometimes even unable to eat the meat.

What are the other dissociation techniques that companies and societies use to make people eat meat. For men, the advertising is direct: Masculinity, the inevitable fate of animals, the generational traditions of their family. For women it is far more indirect: Just simply hiding the source of the meat and giving the animal victim a cute name to prevent disgust and avoidance.

Kubberød et al (2002) compared groups from rural and urban areas but found little evidence for differences between these groups. Moreover, both urban and rural consumers in the study agreed that meat packaging and presentation functioned to conceal the link between the meat and the once living animal. Both groups of respondents also stated that if pictures of tied up pigs, or pigs in stalls, would be presented on packaging of pork meat, or pictures of caged hens on egg cartons, they would not purchase the product in question.

Are people who are sensitive to disruptions of the dissociation process (or, in plain English, open to learning the truth about the lies they tell themselves) more likely to become vegetarians? Probably. Everyone has a conscience. The meat industry has tried to make you bury it. We, in the animal welfare world, should try to make it active again.

To join the animal welfare movement contact [gandhim@nic.in](mailto:gandhim@nic.in), [www.peopleforanimalsindia.org](http://www.peopleforanimalsindia.org)

WORDSWORTH

Maloik

It’s the gesture you make with the index and little fingers while holding down the other two with the thumb. In the music world it indicates that the gesturer is rocking with enthusiasm and is encouraging others to join in. It’s associated particularly with the late Ronnie James Dio of Black Sabbath and other bands, who borrowed the gesture and name from his Italian-born US immigrant grandmother. It’s from Italian malocchio, the evil eye, a look from an individual which superstitious peoples in many cultures down the ages have believed could cause injury or bad luck for the person whom it’s directed at. The Italian word just means “bad eye” (mal occhio).

SPECTRUM ENVIRONMENT

## Getting the social cost of carbon right

President Joe Biden deserves congratulations for committing the US to rejoin global efforts to combat climate change. But America and the world must respond to the challenge efficiently. Here, Biden’s January 20 executive order establishing an Interagency Working Group on the Social Cost of Greenhouse Gases is an especially important step.

The group’s task is to devise a better estimate for the dollar cost to society (and the planet) of each tonne of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere. The number, referred to as the social cost of carbon (SCC), gives policymakers and government agencies a basis for evaluating the benefits of public projects and regulations designed to curb CO2 emissions – or of any project or regulation that might indirectly affect emissions.

If the working group settles on a low number, many emission-cutting projects and regulations won’t go ahead, because their price tags will exceed the estimated climate benefits. So, it is vital to get the number right – and by right, we mean higher than it has been in the past.

Broadly speaking, there are two ways to figure out this cost. One method, employed by President Barack Obama’s administration, is to attempt to estimate directly the

future damage from emitting an extra unit of carbon.

Unfortunately, implementing this technique well is extraordinarily difficult. The problem was the Obama administration’s use of integrated assessment models, which, as the name suggests, integrate economics and environmental sciences to calculate the course of the economy and climate over the next century or more. Integrating economics and the environment makes eminent sense, but the devil is in the details. These models have shown themselves to be unreliable, generating widely varying ranges of estimates that are highly sensitive to particular assumptions.

Another problem with the Obama methodology is that it disadvantaged future generations. Much of the benefit of curbing emissions now lies in avoiding the risk of dangerous climate change decades in the future. That means we have to ask how much we care about our children and grandchildren. If the answer is “not a lot,” then we need not do too much. But if we do care about them, that has to be reflected appropriately in our calculations.

Formally the Obama-era methodology addressed this issue by making assumptions about discounting, showing how much less a dollar

will be worth next year (and the year after) compared to today. The Obama administration used an annual discount rate of 3%, implying that to save \$1 in 50 years, we would be willing to spend only 22 cents today; to save \$1 in 100 years, we would be willing to spend less than five cents.

There is no ethical justification for giving so little weight to future generations’ welfare. But there is not even an economic rationale once we take risk into account.

Spending money today on climate action is like buying an insurance policy because it reduces the risk of future climate disasters. So, risk translates into a lower discount rate and a higher carbon price.

Now that the Biden administration has committed itself to the international goal of limiting global warming to 1.5-2°C, it should embrace a second, more reliable way to calculate the SCC. It is simply the price at which we will be able to reduce emissions enough to prevent the world from heating up dangerously.

This is the price that will encourage the low-carbon investments and innovations we need, and help to make our cities less congested and polluted. Many other complementary policies will be necessary, including government investments and regulations. As the international carbon-pricing

commission that we co-chaired emphasized in its 2017 report, the more successful these policies are in curbing CO2 emissions, the lower the carbon price could be in the future. But the likely SCC would be closer to \$100 per ton by 2030 than the \$50 per ton estimated by the Obama administration (with a 3% discount rate). An SCC at the upper end of the \$50-100 range we suggested in 2017 is entirely appropriate, given that the Paris agreement’s targets have rightly become more ambitious – a 1.5°C limit on warming and net-zero emissions by 2050.

These may seem like technical matters best left to the experts. But too many experts have not sufficiently accounted for the scale of climate risks, the well-being of future generations, and the opportunities for climate action given the right incentives.

The Biden administration must put a high enough price on carbon pollution to encourage the scale and urgency of action needed to meet the commitments it has made to Americans and the rest of the world. The future of our planet depends on it.

*Nicholas Stern is a former Chief Economist of the World Bank. Joseph E. Stiglitz is a Nobel laureate in Economics.*

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## Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST  
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Border dispute

Sir, Andhra Pradesh’s claim over Kotia village in Koraput district is similar to the Chinese claim of Indian land as theirs. I am hopeful that this problem will be solved with the Supreme Court’s intervention. In some cases it is the neglect of the area that has led people to get inclined towards the neighbouring state. However, an alert media has brought the issue to the fore. The Kotia issue will be resolved soon.

Sunil Pradhan, NUA PADA

Too many UTs

Sir, There were 29 states and seven UTs in India when Article 370 was abrogated and the state of J&K was bifurcated into two UTs. With the merger of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, there are 28 states and eight UTs now. The UT of Pondicherry is divided into four districts, each one having a separate identity and surrounded by Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. These four districts can be merged with TN or AP. This will save administrative cost of our country. A similar exercise may be done with Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu.

Gopal Mittal, BHUBANESWAR

Global climate concerns

Sir, There have been various pop-up messages one can easily get from Google about the ongoing fight against climate crisis. Flooding, drought, wildfire and increased temperature are some of the issues that are raised in the wake of the climate crisis. But in the midst of the entire hullabaloo, what we should do first is to protect agriculture sector from all those crises in order to keep our food production safe and sound. Now, here comes one more important voice to fight the climate disaster. And that is of Bill Gates. A benevolent and humble philanthropist, Gates has come up with his pen and pencil literally. He has written a book titled “How To Avoid A Climate Disaster.” In fact, Gates had been an enduring inspiration during our college days. Since he has been inspiring many generations at the world stage through his knowledge and simplicity, Gates is going to be heard in the climate fight. His sincere efforts at releasing a book on the climate disaster deserve adulation and are noteworthy because books are the best way to carry forward such serious messages.

P Senthil Saravana Durai, MUMBAI

# Watching porn? Beware, UP cops 'keeping an eye' on internet search data



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Feb 17:** The police in Uttar Pradesh will now 'keep an eye' on people's internet search data to monitor those looking up pornographic content. The UP Women Powerline 1090 will be alerted if a person searches for pornographic material on the internet and following the alerts, the police team will reach out to the person to prevent 'crime against women'. The project, which had previously been conducted in six districts, had received good response from the public. Additional Director General (ADG) Neera Rawat said that in view of the increasing use of the internet, the powerline 1090 would

reach out to people to prevent crimes against women.

She said that a company has been hired to keep an eye on what is being searched on the internet by using data.

"Basically, it is meant to study the analytics of the internet. If a person watches pornography, the analytics team will get the information," she added.

Those who search for pornography will receive an alert message and the information will be saved with the police as well. "The internet data will inform the 1090 team if a person is searching for porn. The team will then send 'awareness messages' to the person," she said. Uttar Pradesh has about 11.6 million internet users as per estimates.

Basically, it is meant to study the analytics of the internet. If a person watches pornography, the analytics team will get the information  
NEERA RAWAT | ADG

# 'God declared dead' to grab temple land

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Feb 17:** In a bizarre case of land grab in Uttar Pradesh, the deity of a temple was 'declared dead' in the mutation documents of the land deed title of a temple in Lucknow. The temple is said to be 100 years old, its land is spread over 7,000 sq mt and run by a trust registered in the name of Lord Krishna-Ram. It is in Kushmaura Haluapur in Mohanlalgarh area. At some point in time, a man Gaya Prasad was added to the land record documents as the father of Lord Krishna-Ram. When consolidation of land records took place in 1987, Lord Krishna-Ram was declared 'dead'. Subsequently, the trust was transferred to Gaya Prasad as his property. In 1991, Gaya Prasad was declared dead. The trust passed on to his brothers identified as Rammath and Haridwar. Twenty-five years later, the matter came to light when the temple's original trustee named,

Sushil Kumar Tripathi filed a complaint with Naib-Tehsildar in 2016. The case travelled from the Naib-Tehsildar's office to the district magistrate, and to the deputy chief minister's office but without any results.

It has now emerged that multiple mutations of the land have taken place in a fraudulent manner. Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma, who recently ordered a probe into the matter by SDM Prafulla Tripathi, said that the investigation revealed that somebody had forged the documents in the name of the man, who originally registered the trust. The forgery was done to grab temple land of around 7,300 square metres. According to SDM Sadar Prafulla Kumar Tripathi, the investigation established that both, the temple and land, were registered in the name of Lord Krishna-Rama in the past. Tripathi said the temple's land was being described as barren land of the local gram sabha.

# Cong rakes up CAA issue in poll-bound Assam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, Feb 17:** Following Rahul Gandhi's emphatic assertion that the Congress will not implement Citizenship (Amendment) Act if voted to power in Assam, the state unit of the party Wednesday urged cadres to collect 'Gamochas' (Assamese scarf) with messages against the Act.

The gamochas (traditional white and red woven cloth offered as an honour in Assam) collected as part of the anti-CAA campaign will be displayed at the martyrs' memorial to commemorate the protesters against the Act who sacrificed their lives that the party proposes to set up in Guwahati if voted to power in the upcoming assembly elections.

"I request all Assamese to share gamochas with a message on why you do not want the CAA in the state. You may sign the gamocha and send it to us through courier or hand it over to any party worker when they visit you," said party's manifesto committee chairman Gaurav Gogoi at a meeting in Bihpuria.

The party's state unit president Ripun Bora said "We have our ears on the ground and expect that the party will get at least 50 lakh gamochas from across the state and all of them will be displayed at the upcoming memorial."

After Rahul Gandhi's no CAA call, the Assam unit of the Congress



is devising programmes to make the contentious citizenship law an important election issue.

Polls to 126-member Assam assembly are expected in March-April this year. The legislation had generated strong protests in Assam and elsewhere.

Five persons were killed in police firing in the state in December 2019 during violent protests against the Act that seeks to grant Indian citizenship to non-Muslim religious minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Gandhi and other leaders were seen wearing 'gamocha' where symbolically the CAA word was crossed, giving a message against the controversial law.

Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said that issues of Citizenship (Amendment) Act, National Register of Citizens (NRC) and unemployment are no more poll issues in the state.

But, the Congress which has formed a Grand Alliance with AIUFD and four other parties against the BJP for the state polls,

has signalled that it would rake up the CAA issue prominently in the Assam assembly elections.

PCC chief Bora said that CAA shall be rooted out and the sacrifices made for saving "Assamese pride" will be immortalised.

The Congress Legislature party leader in the assembly Debabrata Saikia said that the dark days of BJP's oppression of Assamese people are about to end and "we will make sure that CAA is not implemented in Assam".

The chairman of the Congress

## CONTENTIOUS ISSUE

Addressing his first public rally in poll-bound Assam at Sivasagar Sunday, Rahul Gandhi had declared that his party will protect every principle of the Assam Accord and will never implement the CAA if voted to power in the state

Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said that issues of CAA, NRC and unemployment are no more poll issues in the state

The Congress which has formed a Grand Alliance with AIUFD and four other parties against the BJP for the state polls has signalled that it would rake up the CAA issue prominently in the Assembly elections

Five persons were killed in police firing in the state in December 2019 during violent protests against the CAA that seeks to grant Indian citizenship to non-Muslim religious minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan

# Two journalists arrested for 'maligning' Assam minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, Feb 17:** Two journalists were arrested and three others detained Wednesday for their alleged attempt to malign Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma after they shared a photo of him along with his daughter with a "salacious intent", police said.

The minister's wife had filed a complaint with the Dispur police station here under the POCSO Act, following which the Guwahati City Police began probing the case.

Taufiquddin Ahmad, Editor-in-Chief of local news website 'Pratibimba Live', and its News Editor Iqbal were arrested for investigation into the "conspiracy", while three other employees were detained, Guwahati City Police Commissioner Munna Prasad Gupta told PTL.

The three employees who were detained are being interrogated to ascertain their involvement in the case, he said.

The minister told reporters here that this was a clear case of political conspiracy but to "stoop so low and not spare even my minor daughter, reflects a very low mentality".

"I have been attacked on all fronts by my opponents but when they failed to create any impact, they have adopted a different strategy to malign my character and I have



been noticing this recently," he said. Sarma said that the photograph posted with a malafide intent was disturbing and "we could not sleep the whole night".

Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) GP Singh said that the police will take strong action against all such attempts under stringent provisions of the POCSO Act, he said.

They were arrested on the basis of a case registered with the Dispur police station under IPC Section 509 (intending to insult the modesty of any woman), and Sections 14 and 21 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, he said.

"Action shall be taken against all persons irrespective of their place

of residence who use any of the social media platforms to maliciously use such platforms for furthering this conspiracy," Singh added.

The website had shared a photo of the minister hugging his daughter, following which it went viral on social media.

The website later apologised for not mentioning that the girl in the photo was the minister's daughter and blamed others for sharing it with the intent to defame Sarma.

The news outlet received backlash for the intent to share the photo in such a way with Sarma retweeting it and mentioning that it was him and his daughter.

Police said they are investigating the matter to identify those behind the post going viral.

# UP aviation sector set to take wings

UNTILL THREE-AND-A-HALF YEARS AGO, THE STATE HAD ONLY TWO ACTIVE AIRPORTS; NOW IT HAS 7, WHILE 17 OTHER AIRPORTS ARE BEING DEVELOPED

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Feb 17:** The aviation sector is set to take wings in Uttar Pradesh as Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has linked development of tourism and religious centres to aviation.

After initiating construction of a full-fledged airport in Ayodhya to enable landing of large aircraft and to boost religious tourism, the Chief Minister has now issued directives to accelerate the expansion of the airstrip and construction work of the airport terminal at Chitrakoot, the place where Lord Ram is believed to have spent part of his 14 years in exile.

The airport at Chitrakoot, situated on the border of Madhya Pradesh and amidst the Vindhya mountain range, will be developed as the most beautiful airport of the country. The airport, undergoing expansion, is expected to be functional soon.

The development of Chitrakoot airport will not only spur religious tourism in the state but will also serve as a major push to the Bundelkhand region.

The 296-km Bundelkhand Expressway which is also under construction, starts from Chitrakoot, which is one of the six nodes of the defence corridor.

According to a government spokesman, the airport in Chitrakoot is being developed as a table-top airport. The runway of the airport is located on an elevated terrain amid the Vindhya Range and is being expanded and it will encompass nature at its best.

The airport, built on approximately 260 acres of land, will be expanded with a 1,475-metre-long and 23-metre-wide runway.

It will also be equipped with a new terminal, apron, air traffic controller and a car parking. To ensure the development work progresses rapidly with no interruptions, the government has issued a sum of Rs 50 crore out of the allocated amount of Rs 92 crore for this project.

Prayagraj and Kanpur are expected to be the first cities to be connected with air services from Chitrakoot.

**BOOST TO TOURISM**

AIRPORTS AT PRAYAGRAJ, KANPUR, HINDON AND BAREILLY ARE READY FOR PASSENGER AIRCRAFT AND AZAMGARH, ALIGARH, CHITRAKOOT, MORADABAD, SONBHADRA, SHRAVASTI, AYODHYA, KUSHINAGAR AND SAHARANPUR (SARSWAN) ARE UNDER CONSTRUCTION AND WILL BE OPERATIONAL SOON

ONCE ALL THE 17 AIRPORTS BECOME FUNCTIONAL, THE STATE WILL GET A CONNECTIVITY BOOST, UPSWING IN TOURISM, EMPLOYMENT GENERATION THAT WILL ADD TO THE STATE'S DEVELOPMENT

# Despite pandemic, Kaziranga attracts 1.1L tourists

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Guwahati, Feb 17:** The Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown could not dampen the spirit of 1.11 lakh tourists, including 175 foreigners, from visiting the UNESCO world heritage site Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNP & TR), considered as one of the best conserved wildlife reserves in the country.

The authorities of KNP & TR, extending across Assam's five districts - Golaghat, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Biswanath and Karbi Anglong - along the Arunachal Pradesh border, expected 1.25 lakh tourists to visit the park in the current season. KNP & TR Director Karmashree P. Sivakumar said the park and the tiger reserve was closed for three months last year - March to May - and then the four-month-long (June to September) annual flood havoc inundating around 95 per cent of the 1,302 sq km KNP & TR areas. "In the current financial year (2020-21) so far, 1.11 lakh tourists, including 175 foreigners, have visited KNP & TR and we have earned revenues worth over Rs 2.06 crore. We expect that over 1.25 lakh tourists would visit the park this fiscal," Sivakumar told IANS over phone. During 2019-20, 1.74 lakh tourists had visited the KNP & TR and the revenues earned stood at Rs 4.83 crore against 1.76 lakh tourists and revenues of Rs 4.83 crore in the previous year



(2018-19). Over 19,040 foreign tourists had visited the park in the two financial years - 2019-20 and 2018-19. The Indian Forest Service officer said that a French government delegation led by Barbara Pompili, Minister of France for Ecological Transition, had visited Kaziranga last month to take stock of the work being carried out under a forest and biodiversity conservation project funded by the French government. "The first phase of the French government sponsored project has been completed. The works for building highlands and other infrastructure were finished. In the second phase,

community development work would be undertaken," he added. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Assam Governor Jagdish Mukhi and Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal have separately appreciated the authorities for taming the rhino poaching racket and taking other conservation efforts, besides removing illegal encroachments. Environmentalist and wildlife expert Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, who received the prestigious IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Heritage Hero Award, said that KNP & TR is a nature's wonder and great pride

of India. "People from all over the world give utmost importance to this universal property of mother earth. Kaziranga not only protects rich biodiversity and diverse wildlife, but also carries the identity of Assamese people. It must be well protected for future generations," Lahkar told IANS. In a major breakthrough, a notorious rhino poacher and smuggler of rhino horns, Jobi Gadi alias Autho Gadi, was arrested from Arunachal Pradesh's Naharlagun last week. Gadi has, since 2011, been associated with poaching of rhinos in Kaziranga and selling their

horns in international markets.

"Around 70 cases including 17 rhino related cases were registered since last year and around 100 people, including 38 in rhino related cases, were arrested in connection with poaching of animals and other related crimes," Sivakumar said.

Set up in 1908, the KNP & TR, one of India's seven UNESCO world heritage sites in the natural and environment category since 1985, is home to more than 2,400 one-horned Indian rhinoceros, approximately two third of the total world population. Besides rhinos, the KNP & TR has 121 tigers, 1,089 elephants and huge numbers of Asiatic buffalo, swamp deer, wild boar, hog deer, porcupine and other endangered animals and snakes. Like previous years, the floods in Assam (from June to September last year) badly hit KNP & TR, when 18 rhinos and 135 other wild animals died due to the deluge.

Sivakumar said that 172 wild animals were rescued from the flood waters last year. In 2019, 263 animals, including many endangered rhinos, were killed in the floods while 169 animals were rescued.

"All-out efforts are being made, including construction of highland, to take care of the animals in the national park to protect them during the floods and other calamities," he said. During the latest Census, the number of waterfowls in KNP & TR increased by 173 per cent to 93,491.





The present government is attacking small and medium businessmen because it only wants one or two corporate entities to control every business in this country

RAHUL GANDHI | FORMER CONGRESS PRESIDENT

## LOW VACCINATION TURNOUT IN GOA

Goa Health Minister Vishwajit Rane Wednesday blamed 'casual' attitude for the low turnout for the first two phases of the Covid-19 vaccination drive in the state



## of the day quote

Having the vaccine does not mean that we should be complacent. In fact, all the preventive measures must be followed by all of us now and in the near future, as well. Considering this, it is praiseworthy that IRCS is continuing the distribution of masks from the prevention perspective

HARSH VARDHAN | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

So in India, despite the pandemic, nobody was deprived of education and online education

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR | UNION MINISTER

Our family believes in worshipping God including Lord Rama, but has never indulged in dividing people on communal lines. But some fake Hindus and rats are doing it

HD KUMARASWAMY | FORMER KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Civilian shot at by militants

Srinagar: A civilian was injured after militants opened fire at him in the high-security Durganag area of the city Wednesday, police said. The militants fired at Akash Mehraj in his shop, Krishna Dhaba, a police official said. He said Mehra was rushed to the hospital in an injured condition. Krishna Dhaba is a popular food joint in Durganag area. Several high-profile installations like the office of UN Military Observers Group for India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) and the residence of the Jammu and Kashmir chief justice are located within 200 metres of the food joint.

### Three dead in road mishap

Bikaner: Three persons, including a toddler, died and 14 were injured in a head-on collision between two cars in Rajasthan's Sri Ganganagar district on Wednesday, police said. The incident occurred on Anupgarh-Suratgarh highway in Vijay Nagar area on Wednesday, police said. Komalpreet (24) and her daughter Harleen Kaur (3), who were in one of the cars, and Rajjo Bai (50), who was in an SUV, died on the spot.

### Asaram Bapu hospitalised

Jaipur: Asaram Bapu, who is serving life imprisonment in Jodhpur jail on charges of sexually harassing a minor girl, was admitted to Jodhpur-situated Mathuradas Mathur Hospital (MDM) after he complained of chest pain and difficulty in breathing. The self-styled godman was hospitalised Tuesday night. The doctors monitored his health Wednesday morning and said that "he is stable now".

### Fishermen rescued

Chennai: Five fishermen, who were stranded mid-sea after the engine of their fishing boat broke down, were rescued in a sea-air coordinated operation by Coast Guard (CG), officials said Wednesday. The fishermen onboard the vessel, "Madhana Sea Foods", were stranded in the Bay of Bengal as the engine of the boat broke down and water flooded the engine room. The distress message from the boat, registered in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, was received by the Coast Guard Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre which launched the sea-air coordinated rescue operation, an official release said.

# FARMERS TO HOLD 'RAIL ROKO' TODAY



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 17: The railways has deployed 20 additional companies of the RPSF across the country, with focus on Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, in the wake of the "rail roko" called on Thursday by farmer groups protesting against the Centre's new agri laws.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of farmer unions which is spearheading the protest, last week had announced the rail blockade to press for its demand to repeal the legislations. Director General, Railway Protection Force, Arun Kumar on Wednesday said, "I appeal to everyone to maintain peace. We will be liaising with district administrations and will have a control room in place."

"We will gather intelligence. States such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, and some other areas will be our focus. We have deployed 20 companies of the Railway Protection Special Force (RPSF) in these areas," he said. "We want to persuade them not to cause inconvenience for passengers. We have a four-hour window and we want it (rail roko) to get over peacefully," Kumar said.

The SKM had said that the rail blockade will hold across the country from 12 pm to 4 pm. The announcement came amid the ongoing protests against the laws at Delhi's borders by farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, and 'mahapanchayats' that are being organised in these

## Man seen swinging swords at Red Fort held

A 30-year-old man allegedly seen swinging swords with the intent of "motivating" and "energising" protesters at Red Fort during the violence on Republic Day has been arrested, police said on Wednesday. Maninder Singh, who runs a sword training school near his home in Swaroop Nagar in northwest Delhi and works as a car AC mechanic, was arrested around 7.45 pm on Tuesday near the C D block bus stop in nearby Pitampura, police said. "Singh was seen in a video swinging two swords at Red Fort with the intent of motivating and energising violent anti-national elements indulging in brutal assault and attacking police persons on duty with swords, 'khandas', iron rods, axes, 'barsaas', sticks etc and damaging the historical Red Fort on Republic Day," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Pramod Singh Kushwah said in a statement.

states to garner support for the movement.

On Tuesday, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Gurnam Singh Chaduni had said that farmer unions will hold meetings in poll-bound West Bengal as well and indicated that they will ask people there not to vote for those who are "snatching our livelihood".

# Temporary relief for Nikita Jacob

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 17: The Bombay High Court on Wednesday granted transit anticipatory bail to advocate Nikita Jacob, a suspect in a case registered by Delhi police in connection with the "toolkit" shared by climate activist Greta Thunberg over the ongoing farmers' protest.

Justice P D Naik gave Jacob three weeks' time to approach the court concerned in Delhi for relief. The court in its order noted the applicant (Jacob) is a permanent resident of Mumbai and the FIR is lodged in Delhi, and the relief sought by her now is only temporary.

"The applicant apprehends that she will be arrested at any point of time. She has to make arrange-



ments to seek relief from a court in another state. Hence, this court is of the opinion that protection as sought by the applicant can be granted for a temporary period," Justice Naik said. The HC said since Jacob would be approaching the court concerned in Delhi to seek anticipatory bail, it would not be appropriate for this court

to make any observations on merits of the case.

"The applicant is granted transit anticipatory bail for a period of three weeks to enable her to approach the court concerned in Delhi," Justice Naik said. The court said if Jacob is arrested in the three-week period, then she shall be released after furnishing a bond of ₹25,000.

Justice Naik also took note of the fact that another suspect in the case, Shantanu Muluk, an engineer based in Maharashtra's Beed district, was granted transit anticipatory bail for 10 days by the HC's Aurangabad bench Tuesday. Jacob and Muluk, who claim to be environmental activists, had approached the Bombay HC after a Delhi court issued non-bailable

warrants against them.

According to the Delhi police, the two along with arrested accused Disha Ravi, an activist from Bangalore, were allegedly involved in preparing the document and were in direct touch with "pro-Khalistani elements". The Delhi police Monday alleged that Ravi along with Jacob and Shantanu created the toolkit and shared it with others to tarnish India's image.

The accused persons have been booked under Indian Penal Code Sections 124(a) for sedition, 153(a) for promoting enmity between different sections of the society and 120(b) for criminal conspiracy. Jacob's plea was opposed by the Delhi police's cyber cell which sought dismissal of the same.

## RAISING VOICE



West Bengal Pradesh Youth Congress activists participate in protest rally against the fuel price hike, in front of Raj Bhavan, in Kolkata

## Major tragedy averted as Army destroys IED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 17: A major tragedy was averted on Wednesday with the timely detection of a suspected Improvised Explosive Device (IED) planted inside a pressure cooker on a busy highway in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

The suspected IED was found on the roadside at Manjakote on Jammu-Poonch highway and was subsequently destroyed by the Army's Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS), the officials said.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Rajouri, Chandan Kohli said, "This morning a road opening patrol of the Army found a suspicious object along the highway near Manjakote."

"Soon, traffic was controlled on the highway and a bomb disposal squad was called in. The suspected material, packed in a fruit packing box, has been destroyed through a controlled explosion," he said.

## NATURAL LAKE FORMED IN MURENDA AFTER FLASH FLOODS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 17: A natural lake has been formed in Uttarakhand's Murenda area after the recent floods that wreaked havoc in Chamoli district of the state.

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) team along with the officials of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Wednesday reached Murenda where the natural lake has been formed. The team has established its base camp near the lake besides selecting a location for making a helipad, an ITBP official said.



The helipad is being developed with proper markings and other aids to guide the aircrew.

# Cabinet nod to juvenile law changes to increase scrutiny of childcare homes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: The Union Cabinet Wednesday approved amendments to the juvenile justice law to increase the scrutiny of child care institutions and enhance the role of district magistrates to ensure the set-up works in the best interests of children.

Addressing the media on the Cabinet decision, Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani said district magistrates (DMs) along with additional district magistrates (ADMs) will monitor the functioning of various agencies under the JJ Act in every district.

She said a bill in this regard would be brought in Parliament to amend The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015, that will expand its purview.

Sources said plans are afoot to ensure that Indian embassies in every country follow up on children adopted by foreigners for a period of two years from the day they land there. The Women and



Child Development Ministry is working out details with the Ministry of External Affairs in this regard. There is a proposal to appoint a nodal office in each embassy to monitor the child adopted abroad, the sources said. Child victims of trafficking, drug abuse and those abandoned by their guardians will be included in the definition of "child in need of care" and protection under the amended law, Irani said. The amendments also categorise certain previously undefined offences as 'serious offences'. "At present, the act has three

categories of petty, serious and heinous crimes. One more category will be included of offences where maximum sentence is more than 7 years but no minimum sentence is prescribed or minimum sentence of less than 7 years is provided shall be treated as serious offences within the JJ Act," she said. The amendments also include authorising district magistrate, additional district magistrate to issue adoption orders under Section 61 of the JJ Act in order to ensure speedy disposal of cases and enhance accountability.

The district magistrates have been further empowered under the act to ensure its smooth implementation as well as garner synergised efforts in favour of children in distress conditions.

Several difficulties faced in implementation of various provisions of the act have also been addressed, Irani said.

She said the district child protection unit will also function under the district magistrate.

## MP govt to make Indore 'beggar-free' city

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Indore, Feb 17: The Madhya Pradesh government has accelerated the efforts to make its business capital Indore a 'beggar-free' city. Initiatives have also been adopted to ensure the rehabilitation of beggars and how people can contribute to the cause.

Indore District Magistrate Manish Singh held a meeting with officers on Tuesday for the rehabilitation of homeless people and beggars living in the city under the Beggars Rehabilitation Programme.

During the meeting, the District Magistrate said that a Beggar Rehabilitation Centre will be set up to make Indore a "beggar-free" city and proper arrangements will be made there for the persons involved in begging. The facilities will include health check-up, food, clothes, etc.

The efforts are aimed at rescuing the beggars from the begging rackets, he further said.



The District Magistrate also sought suggestions from the NGOs to make this campaign successful. He said the effort to make the city beggar-free can only be fruitful if the common public contributes to it. Therefore, the voluntary organisations should give suggestions and cooperate in this programme.

In January, the civic body workers were accused of taking homeless and old people in a garbage van and trying to dump them outside the city. This was objected to by some people and the video of the incident also went viral.

# How symptoms of new Covid strains are different from original one

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 17: Amid cases of new variants of mutated SARS-CoV-2 emerging in India, it has become important to understand how the symptoms of different new variants vary from the original one.

According to new studies, the UK variant or the Kent variant - B.1.1.7 - spreads more easily and quickly than other variants.

The UK-based New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG) recently reported that the Kent variant may be up to 70 per cent more deadly than previous strains.

Health experts have cited that those who test positive for the variant are more likely to report persistent cough, tiredness, muscle aches, sore throat and fever compared to those who have the origi-

nal strain. In South Africa, another variant called B.1.351 emerged independently of B.1.1.7.

Originally detected in early October 2020, B.1.351 shares some mutations with B.1.1.7. Cases caused by this variant were reported in the US at the end of January 2021, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Vaccine makers Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech have already announced that they are working to modify their vaccines - and possibly to create booster shots - to better protect against the South African variant. A variant called P1 emerged that was first identified in travellers from Brazil, who were tested during routine screening at an airport in Japan, in early January.

This variant contains a set of additional mutations that may affect its ability to be recognised by



antibodies.

According to various reports, the three variants carry the same genetic mutation - E484K - that allows it to evade the immune defences in the body, leading to infection. However, the mutated variants are comparatively new and under radar by various health

experts and scientists, so, it may take a while for us to know the exact symptoms of these variants.

"First of all, viruses do have a tendency to mutate, all we have to do is to ensure safety and required precautions to reduce the risk," Gitali Bhagawati, Consultant and Head, Department Meanwhile, pre-

liminary research shows the two vaccines against COVID-19 approved in India are effective against the UK variant of the novel coronavirus but there is no data on their efficacy against the South African and Brazilian mutants detected in the country.

On Tuesday, the Health ministry said four people were detected with the South Africa variant of SARS-CoV-2 and one tested positive for the Brazil variant, a first for India, prompting scientists to stress the need for more data and studies so the country's vaccine programme can be tailored to evolving exigencies.

The number of people who have tested positive for the UK variant in the country has climbed to 187, officials added.

The vaccines currently approved for emergency use in India are

Covishield, from the Oxford-AstraZeneca stable manufactured by Pune's Serum Institute of India, and Covaxin, developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Institute of Virology (NIV). Answering the question uppermost in many minds, researcher Deepak Sehgal said it is difficult to say how effective the two will be against the new emerging variants, particularly the South African and Brazilian ones, unless scientists have studied them properly. UK government scientific advisers say the COVID-19 variant now predominant in the country may be 30-70 per cent more "deadly" than previous variants, underscoring concerns about how mutations may change the characteristics of the disease.

## of the day quote

It's alarming that a phase of murders of leaders, lawyers, and traders has started before the Assembly and panchayat elections in UP. And, it is very unfortunate and condemnable that these incidents are not being taken seriously and being termed cases of old rivalry. The government should pay attention



MAYAWATI | BSP PRESIDENT

We must have an accurate idea of the respective population of different social groups so that we can formulate policies accordingly



NITISH KUMAR | BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER

Japanese companies are familiar to Assam. India-Japan partnership can really make a difference. Assam is the springboard of India's Act East Policy



S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Lawyer couple stabbed to death

**Karimnagar (Tel):** A lawyer couple was stabbed to death by unidentified assailants in broad daylight in Peddapalli district Wednesday, Police said. During his last moments, Gattu Vaman Rao reportedly named a local TRS leader as being responsible for the attack. Home Minister Mohd Mahmood Ali said the incident was highly condemnable. "This is being viewed very seriously by the government. The culprits will soon be brought to book and dealt with, as per the law," he said in a statement. Rao and his wife, both practicing lawyers in the Telangana High Court, were travelling in a car when two assailants intercepted and attacked them using knives and other sharp weapons near a village in Ramagiri Mandal, around 2.30 pm, they said.

### 14 minors rescued

**Ranchi:** Fourteen minors rescued from Delhi were brought to Ranchi Wednesday, said a government official. Of the 14, two are boys and the rest girls. They hail from different districts of Jharkhand. According to a state government official, five of them are residents of West Singhbhum, one each of East Singhbhum, Pakur, Khunti, Godda and Simdega and two each from Sahebganj and Gumla.

### Couple found dead

**Surat:** A speech and hearing-impaired couple were found dead under mysterious circumstances in a flat in Gujarat's Surat district, police said. The deceased were identified as Dhruvi Tailor (21) and Arpit Patel (24). They got engaged two weeks ago, they said.



Some people are collecting money in Lord Ram's name. Shiv Sena workers should make people aware of such fraudulent elements

UDDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER

## CLASS 10 EXAMS BEGIN IN BIHAR

The class 10 exams conducted by the Bihar School Examination Committee began Wednesday amid tight security. In order to prevent malpractices in the exams being held in two shifts daily, strict arrangements have been made by the Committee



## INTER-FAITH MARRIAGES

# Top Court allows HP, MP to be made parties in the matter

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 17:** The Supreme Court Wednesday allowed an NGO to make Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh as parties in a pending matter challenging their controversial laws regulating conversions due to inter-faith marriages.

A bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde and comprising Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian also permitted Muslim body Jamiat Ulama-Hind to become a party in the matter. Advocate Ejaz Maqbool, representing the Muslim body, contended before the bench that a large number of Muslims men are being harassed under these laws in various parts of the country.

Senior advocate CU Singh, representing the NGO Citizens for Justice and Peace, urged the top court to make Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh as parties in the matter. Singh said these states have also framed laws on the lines of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Last month, the top court had agreed to examine the controversial laws of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, which aimed at reg-

ulating religious conversions due to interfaith marriages. However, the top court had declined to stay these laws and sought response from the state governments in the matter.

The petitions filed by advocate Vishal Thakre, the NGO and others have challenged the constitutional validity of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020 and the Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018 which regulate religious conversions of interfaith marriages.

The controversial UP ordinance is connected with not only inter-faith marriages but all religious conversions and lays down elaborate procedures for any person who wishes to convert to another religion.

The Uttarakhand law entails two-year jail term to any person or persons found guilty of religious conversion through force or "allurement", which could be cash, in kind of employment, or material benefit.

In its application Jamiat Ulama-Hind has raised the issue of fundamental rights of Muslim youth who are being allegedly targeted by using the ordinance.



# Cong sweeps Punjab civic polls

AMARINDER SINGH THANKED AND CONGRATULATED THE PEOPLE FOR DEFEATING THE "NEGATIVE AND VICIOUS FORCES THAT ARE OUT TO RUIN PUNJAB AND ITS FUTURE"

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, Feb 17:** Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Wednesday hailed his Congress' spectacular victory in the municipal polls as not just a validation of his government's development-oriented policies but also a total rejection of the "anti-people" actions of the major opposition parties - the SAD, the AAP and the BJP.

Congratulating state Congress President Sunil Jakhar, as well as all MLAs, members and workers of the party, for the sweeping victory in the civic polls, the results of which were declared on Wednesday, he said the people of the state had "clearly and unequivocally denounced the divisive, undemocratic, unconstitutional and regressive agendas" of the three parties. In the final count, the Congress won 1,199 of the 1,815 wards in municipal councils and 281 of the 350 municipal corporation seats, with Shiromani Akali Dal trailing at 289 and 33, the Bharatiya Janata Party at 38 and 20, and the Aam Aadmi Party at 57 and nine, respectively,



Congress candidate Bajinder Kaur Rinki celebrates her win in the municipal election, in Patiala district

while the remaining went largely to independents and the BSP (K) and the CPI winning in 13 and 12 wards, respectively.

The swing in favour of the Congress in comparison with the 2015 municipal corporation elections in Bathinda, Hoshiarpur, Moga and Pathankot districts is manifest in the fact that from 11 seats back then, the party's tally has improved to a whopping 149 now. Similarly, in the wards, from 356 in 2015, the Congress score now

has gone up to 1,480. Amarinder Singh thanked and congratulated the people for defeating the "negative and vicious forces that are out to ruin Punjab and its future".

The first major polls to be held in Punjab since the enactment of the "draconian" farm laws had also underscored people's angst with the BJP, which was responsible for the anti-farmer legislation with the active support of its then ally, SAD, and the collusion of ruling AAP in

Delhi, Amarinder Singh said. All these parties had "shamelessly trampled the rights of the farmers, with the clear aim of destroying Punjab", he said, adding SAD's and AAP's "subsequent theatrics" for the farmers had failed to befool the voters, who had seen through the political gimmickry of these parties.

With all three opposition parties not even a close second to the Congress and trailing even independent candidates in some wards, the "pro-governance and pro-progress verdict of the urban voters of Punjab was a clear endorsement of their negation of their loathsome political ideologies", he contended.

"It was a powerful message to these parties to keep out of Punjab, which was not ready to either forgive or forget the deceit and the treachery to which the people of the state had been subjected by them," he added.

"With these results, all these parties have got a foretaste of things to come in the assembly elections, due just a year from now," Amarinder Singh told the media here.

## Govt issues new guidelines for international arrivals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 17:** The government Wednesday issued new guidelines for international arrivals amid the spread of mutant variants of coronavirus in many countries.

The new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) will come into effect from 23.59 hours February 22 till further orders.

In the context of the spread of mutant variant of SARS-CoV-2 in many countries, the civil aviation ministry in consultation with the health and family welfare ministry has issued new guidelines for international arrivals, according to an official release.

There are fresh guidelines for all international travellers coming/transiting through flights originating from the United Kingdom, Europe and Middle East. The government has suspended international scheduled flights till February 28.

Overseas flights to and from India are currently operated as per air bubble agreements with various countries. As part of the new set of guidelines, all international travellers except the ones coming through flights originating from the UK, Europe and Middle East will have to submit self-declaration form on Air Suvudha portal before their scheduled travel. They will also have to upload a negative COVID-19 RT-PCR report with exception of those travelling to India in the exigency of death in the family. For seeking exemption, the travelling entity will have to apply to the online portal www.Newdelhiairport.in at least 72 hours before boarding.

The test should have been conducted within 72 hours prior to the journey and each passenger will also have to submit a declaration with respect to the authenticity of the report, as per the guidelines.

# J&K cops on terror hit list

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 17:** Seven officers of Jammu & Kashmir's elite anti-terror Special Operations Group (SOG) and Special Police Officers (SPOs) are on the radar of a new terror outfit in the valley, intelligence agencies have warned the security establishment.

The agencies stated that they have gathered inputs that a new terror outfit named Kashmir Liberation Warriors which had posted a threat letter about Jammu & Kashmir Police on Telegram app titled 'Shaheed Naikoo Media Group' last month.

"The group has warned officials working in Special Operations Group and Special Police Officers against providing information



about terrorists and creating problems in the 'fight against India', an intelligence agency has flagged.

The terror group has also posted names and details of seven officers and the types of vehicles they own, the agency stated.

Agencies have also flagged that

the group has also warned non-Kashmiris against purchase of land in the valley.

"They also threatened to kill the locals selling land to outsiders," the agency said. Last year in October, the Union government had paved the way for non-residents of Jammu & Kashmir to purchase land in the valley by amending several laws a year after the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Indian citizens can now purchase land in Jammu & Kashmir without any domicile certificate. However, citizens are not yet allowed to buy agricultural land. The Centre has removed "being a permanent resident of the state" as a precondition for buying land in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

## WEAR A MASK

# Mumbai Mayor hits the streets

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, Feb 17:** As the state apparently hurtles towards a second lockdown, Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar Wednesday took to the streets and with folded hands, appealed to the people to follow all Covid-19 protocols in public interest. Reiterating her warnings since Tuesday, Pednekar said that nearly 60 percent of the people are violating Covid-19 protocols like not wearing face-masks, maintaining physical distancing and cleanliness.

"I appeal to you all Do not force the government to impose another lockdown. Please maintain all protocols very strictly Its in your hands to avoid another lockdown," the Mayor appealed.



Mumbai mayor requests people to wear masks in the city. Credit: Twitter/@KishoriPednekar

Pednekar, accompanied by a couple of officials and security personnel, caught a suburban train from Byculla to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) and approached commuters who

were not wearing face-masks to comply forthwith.

She repeated this on the foot overbridges where many people could be seen sauntering without face-masks and not adhering to

physical distancing norms. Outside Byculla and CSMT, she went to a paan shop, local street-vendors and shopkeepers urging them to wear masks and insist that customers follow suit.

"The Corona danger has not subsided yet We must all remain extremely vigilant, any let-up could lead to another lockdown in the city and state," Pednekar warned.

In a related development, Buldhana district authorities clamped full restrictions till Feb. 28 in view of the increasing Covid-19 cases in the district.

The health and police officials in Pune, Nashik, Solapur swooped down on people roaming around without face-masks or in crowds and imposed fines on them.

## EU envoys in Srinagar to assess situation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Feb 17:** A group of envoys including those from several European Union countries and a few OIC member states began a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir Wednesday to take a first-hand account of the situation in newly-carved union territory, especially after the recently-concluded local body elections.

The envoys which has representation from four Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) -- Malaysia, Bangladesh, Senegal and Tajikistan -- were taken to Magam in central Kashmir amid heightened security arrangements in the city and elsewhere in the Valley, officials said here.



Other envoys included in this delegation were from Brazil, Italy, Finland, Cuba, Chile, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Sweden, Kyrgyzstan, Ireland, Ghana, Estonia, Bolivia, Malawi, Eritrea and Ivory Coast.

This is the third delegation that has arrived in Jammu and Kashmir since the government abrogated the erstwhile state's special status August 5, 2019 and bifurcated it into two union territories by carving out Ladakh.

In Magam, the envoys went to a college and were received in a traditional way and after the customary rituals by the administration, they interacted with the locals.

It was a free-flowing exchange of ideas by the delegation with the locals, the officials said.

# Who is responsible for over 50 deaths in MP bus mishap?

Locals say that due to the poor condition of the road, there are hundreds of vehicles involved in transporting sand etc., which pass through this route and have the patronage of politicians along with government machinery

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhopal/Sidhi, Feb 17:** The deaths of 51 people in Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh when a bus fell into the Bansagar canal has raised many questions. The bus was scheduled to take a route which had been witnessing jams for several days. As a result, the bus was diverted to the canal route on Tuesday where it plunged into the water.

Will the government be able to show the courage to take quick action against the culprits or will it be a mere routine affair?

The bus travelling from Sidhi to Satna district fell into the Bansagar canal Tuesday. Most of the passengers were going to appear for an



exam for a job. Till now the bodies of 51 people have been recovered from the canal.

The big question is why was the bus travelling through the Sarda

Patan village route. This bus usually took the Chuihya Valley route but for the last three-four days, it diverted to the canal route due to frequent traffic jams.

The pictures of the Chuihya Valley Marg from Sidhi to Satna are coming out now and show the appalling condition of the road. There are huge pits and vehicles are not able to run smoothly on the road. This is the reason that there are jams on this route and the same was happening for the last few days. Was there no plan to repair the road and if the plan was there and the government had approved the money, then why was the road not repaired.

Who has the contract for road construction? If the road gets jammed then what is the transport department, police, construction department and the various agencies doing. Why are vehicles taking

other routes? This is the big question? The picture of Govind Singh Rajput, the Madhya Pradesh Transport minister, attending a feast on the day of the accident has gone viral on social media. Congress media cell general secretary K.K. Mishra tweeted this picture and wrote, "Sidhi bus accident .. administration is counting bodies, CM's sentiments are being politically sentimental! Responsible Transport Minister Govind Singh Rajput enjoys food at home of his fellow minister and is laughing !! Heights of shamelessness ?? Will CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan say something?"

The Transport Minister said that the bus permit has been revoked, investigation would be done and strict

action would be taken against the culprits. Prima facie it seems to be the fault of the bus driver. On joining the feast at another minister's residence, Rajput says, "There were many other ministers besides me present there. The Congress does politics on the pretext of an accident, I strongly condemn it."

Former Chief Minister and Congress state President Kamal Nath said, "Transport mafia is active in Madhya Pradesh. On the state highways, on roads, without fitness, without permits, without insurance, over-capacity of passengers like animals, without a speed governor; hundreds of buses are racing at a fast pace giving open invitations to accidents."

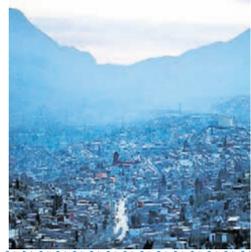


It's really very important that we limit our social contacts as much as possible because of the risk of transmission of the virus. So, please do that. Do it for yourself, but also for each other

MARK RUTTE | PRIME MINISTER, DENMARK

## STORM CAUSES BLACKOUT IN 12 STATES OF MEXICO

Mexican authorities announce rolling blackouts would hit 12 states covering more than one-third of the country, extending the power cuts from northern Mexico into the central part of the nation



## of the day quote

Canada must take a stand, but we don't need to do this alone. We should work with our closest allies. China is also imposing a police state on Hong Kong and arbitrarily detaining two Canadians in Chinese prisons



ERIN O'TOOLE | CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADER, CANADA

Ecuador is in mourning. Starting tomorrow, I will decree a national mourning in memory of Gustavo Noboa, former President of the Republic. Beloved friend, respected democrat, youth moral builder, patriot. My condolences to his family and friends



LENIN MORENO | PRESIDENT, ECUADOR

It's great to celebrate the momentous occasion of Tagore's visit to Houston a century ago, to deliver a lecture at Rice University as part of his second transcontinental lecture tour in America



ASEEM MAHAJAN | CONSULATE GENERAL OF HOUSTON

## SHORT TAKES

### Maldives expands vax programme

Male: Maldives has vaccinated over 50,000 people, including 6,230 Monday, local media reported Wednesday. Health Protection Agency's (HPA) data showed that the country's total vaccination count has climbed to 50,047. Maldives received 1,00,000 doses of the Covishield vaccine from India February 1, and has purchased another 7,00,000 doses from AstraZeneca which is expected to arrive in two months, Xinhua reported.

### Prince Philip hospitalised

London: Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, has been admitted to hospital after feeling unwell, Buckingham Palace said Wednesday. The 99-year-old husband of Queen Elizabeth II was taken to King Edward VII Hospital in London on the advice of his doctor as a "precautionary measure". "His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh was admitted to the King Edward VII hospital in London, on Tuesday evening," the palace statement said.

### Landslide toll climbs to 12

Jakarta: The death toll in the Indonesia's East Java province landslide climbed to 12 Wednesday, while search is on for seven missing people, the country's disaster mitigation agency said. As many as 20 people were injured in the disaster and they have been treated now at local clinics, Xinhua reported. Seven villagers have been still missing from Tuesday night. Rescue operation is underway to evacuate victims who are believed to be buried by the landslides.

### SL to re-acquire 99 oil tanks

Colombo: Sri Lanka will re-acquire 99 World War II-era oil storage tanks leased to Indian Oil Corporation in the eastern port district of Trincomalee, Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpila announced Wednesday. It is the second deal with India to be scrapped by Sri Lanka this year. Last month, the Sri Lankan government scrapped the trilateral deal with India and Japan to develop the Colombo Port's Eastern Container Terminal (ECT).

# China steps up online controls

AGENCIES

Taipei, Feb 17: Ma Xiaolin frequently wrote about current affairs on one of China's leading microblogging sites, where he has two million followers. But recently, he said in a post, the Weibo site called and asked him not to post original content on topics ranging from politics to economic and military issues.

"As an international affairs researcher and a columnist, it looks like I can only go the route of entertainment, food and beverage now," the international relations professor wrote January 31.

Ma, who often posted on developments in the Mideast, is one of many popular influencers working within the constraints of China's heavily censored web who is finding that their space to speak is shrinking even further with the latest policy changes and a clean-up campaign run by the country's powerful censors. He declined an interview request.



Beginning next week, the Cyberspace Administration of China will require bloggers and influencers to have a government-approved credential before they can publish on a wide range of subjects. Some fear that only state media and official propaganda accounts will get permission. While permits have been needed since at least 2017 to write about topics such as political and military affairs, enforcement has not been wide-

Beginning next week, the Cyberspace Administration of China will require bloggers and influencers to have a government-approved credential before they can publish on a wide range of subjects

spread. The new rules expand that requirement to health, economics, education and judicial matters.

"The regulators want to control the entire procedure of information production," said Titus Chen, an expert in Chinese social media policy at National Sun Yat-Sen University in Taiwan.

The latest move is in line with ever more restrictive regulations under President Xi Jinping that constrict an already narrow space for dis-

course. The Chinese leader has made "digital sovereignty" a central concept of his rule, under which authorities have set limits and increased control of the digital realm.

The new credential requirement could restrict individuals from posting original content, including people like Ma who aren't openly challenging the line of Xi's ruling Communist Party Weibo CEO Wang Gaofei, responding to Ma on the platform, said commentary on news released by official media was permitted but commentators could not "release news" themselves.

The policy revision is meant "to standardize and steer public accounts and information service platforms to be more self aware in keeping the correct direction of public opinion," according to a statement posted by the Cyberspace Administration. A week after unveiling the new rules in late January, the administration held a nationwide conference on the importance of "strengthening order in online publishing."

## Gunmen storm into school in Nigeria, kidnap 27 students

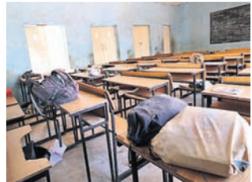
AGENCIES

Kaduna, Feb 17: Unidentified gunmen abducted 27 students and some staff and their family members in an attack overnight on a secondary school in Nigeria's Niger state, the state governor's spokeswoman said Wednesday.

The assailants stormed the Government Science college in the Kagara district at around 2 a.m., overwhelming the school's security detail, according to local residents.

The state governor ordered the immediate closure of boarding schools in the area.

It was not immediately clear who was responsible for the attack. President Muhammadu Buhari condemned the raid and dispatched security chiefs to coordinate rescue operations, his spokesman said.



Militant Islamist group Boko Haram and a branch of Islamic State are active in northern Nigeria, but kidnappings by other armed groups - mostly for ransom - are also common.

Gunmen also stormed a secondary school in northwestern Katsina state two months ago and kidnapped nearly 350 boys, who were subsequently rescued by security forces.

About 100 of more than 270 schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram from the town of Chibok in 2014 are still missing.

Such attacks have raised concerns about rising violence by Islamist insurgents and armed gangs and fuelled widespread criticism of Buhari's handling of national security. In January, the president appointed a new military high command.



A man walks to his friend's home in a neighbourhood without electricity as snow covers the Black Hawk neighbourhood in Pflugerville, Texas

## WHITE BLANKET

## Big Tech's Dem critics discuss ways to strike back with WH

AGENCIES

Washington, Feb 17: Congressional Democrats have begun discussions with the White House on ways to crack down on Big Tech including making social media companies accountable for the spread of disinformation on matters such as the U.S. Capitol riot and addressing the abuse of market power to harm corporate rivals.

The conversations, described by a lawmaker and congressional aides, have included the contentious topic of what to do with a measure called Section 230, part of a 1996 law called the Communications Decency Act, that shields social media platforms from lawsuits over much of the content posted by users.

Democratic President Joe Biden as a candidate last year called for revoking Section 230, and his Republican predecessor Donald Trump unsuccessfully pressed Congress to repeal it.

Many lawmakers in recent years



have called for laws and regulations to rein in dominant tech companies such as Facebook Inc, Twitter Inc, Alphabet Inc's Google, Amazon.com Inc and Apple Inc. Democratic lawmakers also have expressed alarm over social media's role in the lead-up to a pro-Trump mob's Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

The conversations between lawmakers and Biden aides represent the first sign that the White House has begun actively getting involved in considering how to take on Big Tech. They also show how lawmakers are trying to get Biden staffers on board as part of the lengthy lawmaking process on a wide range of issues. Biden took office January 20.

## US Navy warship sails in SCS nearby China-claimed islands

AGENCIES

New York, Feb 17: A U.S. Navy warship sailed by islands claimed by China in the South China Sea Wednesday in a freedom of navigation operation, marking the latest move by Washington to challenge Beijing's territorial claims in the contested waters.

The U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet said destroyer USS Russell "asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the Spratly Islands, consistent with international law."

China claims sovereignty over the entire archipelago, but Brunei, Malaysia, The Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also have lodged competing claims for some or all of the islands.

China's extensive territorial claims in the resource-rich waters have become a hot button issue in an increasingly tense Sino-U.S. relationship. The two countries are at odds



over trade, the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hong Kong, Taiwan and accusations of human rights abuses against Uighur Muslims.

Washington has denounced what it called Beijing's attempts to bully neighbours with competing interests. China has repeatedly denounced what it called U.S. efforts to foment unrest in the region and interfere in what it regards as its internal affairs.

The U.S. ship's pass by the Spratly Islands follows a joint exercise by two U.S. carrier groups in South China Sea and another warship sailing near Chinese-controlled Parcel Islands earlier this month. Those actions had suggested that the Biden administration was not about to scale back operations challenging Beijing's claims after the ramp-up seen during the Trump administration.

# For Biden, the White House is a 'gilded cage'

BIDEN'S WORKING-CLASS UPBRINGING IN SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA, HAS LONG BEEN A CENTRAL PART OF HIS POLITICAL BRAND. HE MOST RECENTLY LIVED IN A LARGE HOUSE IN THE WILMINGTON, DELAWARE, SUBURBS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Feb 17: Four weeks into his presidency, Joe Biden said he's still getting used to the trappings of the office. Biden offered a frank description of what it's like to live at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. During his CNN town hall speech Tuesday night he referred to past presidents who have spoken of the building as 'a little like a gilded cage'.

"I get up in the morning and look at Jill and say, 'Where the hell are we?' Biden added that he wasn't used to household staff waiting on him. "I find myself extremely self-con-



I get up in the morning and look at Jill and say, 'Where the hell are we?' I get extremely self-conscious when household staff waits on me

scious," Biden stated. He pointed out, he was unaccustomed to someone "handing me my suit and coat". Biden's working-class upbringing in Scranton, Pennsylvania, has long

been a central part of his political brand. He most recently lived in a large house in the Wilmington, Delaware, suburbs.

The White House features a spacious lawn that has an unimpeded view of the Washington and Lincoln Monuments, but is otherwise surrounded by high fencing and a small army of guards. Biden said it's "totally different" from the vice-president's residence, set on 80 acres and offering ample room to swim, explore and exercise in greater privacy.

new, Biden suggested he's already settled deeply into the work of the presidency. "Sometimes, because things are moving so fast, not because of the burden, it feels like four years," Biden said. "It's not because of the burden, it's because there's so much happening, that you're focused on, you're constantly focusing on one problem or opportunity," the US president added.

Biden confirmed he had picked up the phone to talk with one or more of his predecessors but declined to say who. He said: "By the way, all of them have, with one exception, picked up the phone and called me as well." It can be gauged as to who the past president is who hasn't picked up Biden's phone.

Islamabad, Feb 17: Pakistan has opposed the addition of new permanent members to the UN Security Council (UNSC), warning of compounding the Council's inequality and dysfunctionality, Radio Pakistan reported Wednesday.

Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Munir Akram said this while addressing a meeting of the Inter-Governmental Negotiations Framework, Geo tv reported. He reiterated Pakistan's principled stance on restructuring the Security Council by expansion in the non-permanent category so that the ideal of a comprehensive reform can be met.

## Pak no to induction of new permanent member into UNSC

AGENCIES

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# business



India is working to meet growing energy demand, while reducing its energy import dependence and also diversifying import sources  
NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

## CARGO TRAFFIC CONTINUE TO FALL

India's top-12 ports witnessed a considerable decline in cargo traffic for the tenth straight month in January to 542.13 MT, according to ports' apex body IPA. Cargo traffic at 12 major ports that are under the control of the Centre dropped by 7.44% to 542.13 MT during April-January this fiscal



## of the day quote

Privatisation (of CPSEs) is best done when the economy is booming. Privatisation in a recession time is a horrible idea



PRONAB SEN | FORMER CHIEF STATISTICIAN

It is very unlikely mandatory 5 days in the office is ever going to come back again



NITIN PARANJPE | COO, UNILEVER

The current semiconductor shortage will certainly revive with time. However, other similar disruptions may occur again. Automobile manufacturers should make use of rapid what-if scenario modelling capabilities that are available in modern day Intelligent digital planning solutions to assess such risks in advance



YUGESH AGLAWE | PARTNER AND SUPPLY CHAIN LEADER, EY INDIA

## PETROL AT ₹100

# INDIA ASKS OPEC TO EASE OUTPUT CUTS

International oil prices have been on the boil since Saudi Arabia pledged additional voluntary output cuts of 1 million barrels per day in February and March under a deal between the OPEC and its allies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: India, the world's third-biggest oil consumer, Wednesday urged Saudi Arabia and other global oil producers to ease production cuts, saying rising international oil prices are hurting economic recovery and demand.

Demand recovery should take "primacy" over oil prices at least for the next few months, Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said.

International oil prices have been on the boil since Saudi Arabia pledged additional voluntary output cuts of 1 million barrels per day in February and March under a deal between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries



(OPEC) and its allies including Russia, a group known as OPEC+.

This has resulted in oil prices rising to USD 63 per barrel, the highest level in more than a year, leading to retail pump rates in India

breaching the ₹100 a litre mark.

"The rising crude oil prices during the last few weeks is hurting the fragile global economic recovery due to significant demand contraction, which might even mirror

the impact of Covid-19 in its initial stages," Pradhan said at the 11th IEA IEF OPEC Symposium on Energy Outlooks.

India, he said, had contained the inflationary pressures on several fronts but not those impacted by crude prices.

"The price-sensitive Indian consumers are affected by rising petroleum product prices. It also affects demand growth, which could potentially impact the delicate aspirational economic growth trajectory not just in India but in other developing countries as well," he said.

Petrol sales, which reached pre-Covid levels six months back, fell below pre-pandemic levels in the first half of February.

"There is an urgent need to allow consumption-led recovery, that has just taken root in several emerging and developing economies, including India to continue in the coming months," he said.

Referring to the output cut, Pradhan said the collective interests of both producing and consuming nations need to be promoted.

"The key producing countries have not only revised the production cuts over and above the previously announced levels but also added additional voluntary cuts. I had supported the joint decision by major oil-producing countries to cut oil production in April last year amid a sharp fall in demand due to the Covid pandemic."

## RENAULT KIGER COMPACT SUV LAUNCHED IN CITY



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: Renault India Wednesday launched the all-new Kiger at Renault Bhubaneswar showroom in city. The new international model is priced starting from ₹5.45 lakh (ex-showroom, Bhubaneswar).

Managing Director of Renault Bhubaneswar Satish Garg, Chairman of Gupta Power Mahendra Kumar Gupta, LIC Senior Divisional Manager Akshya Kumar Sahoo and MD of Magma Foods Pawan Agarwal were present at the launching ceremony.

"New SUV Kiger is a game changer. Its features and comforts at this reasonable price are like value for money for the riders. It is a proud to say that the model has been manufactured in India and will be exported other countries," said Garg.

Renault Kiger is surely set to radically alter the dynamics in the B-SUV segment. Renault Kiger is designed with collaboration of France and India teams.

Renault Kiger has established itself as a Stunning, Smart and Sporty B-SUV. KIGER is equipped with smart cabin combines technology, functionality and roominess. Customers can choose from four available trims - RXE, RXL, RXT and RXZ. The top variant with all the bells and whistles is priced at ₹9.55 lakh (ex-showroom, Bhubaneswar).

# Centre okays ₹12K cr PLI scheme for telecom sector

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 17: The government Wednesday approved a 12,195 crore production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for telecom gear manufacturing in India which is expected to encourage production of equipment worth ₹2.44 lakh crore and create direct and indirect employment for about 40,000 people, Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said.

The PLI scheme for telecom gear manufacturing will be operational from April 1, 2021.

"In the coming five years we hope to have incremental production of ₹2,44,200 crore, export worth ₹1,95,360 crore, direct and indirect employment to 40,000 people and tax revenue of approximately ₹17,000 crore to the country," telecom minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said after the Cabinet meeting.

According to an official statement, the scheme is expected to bring investment of over ₹3,000 crore and generate huge direct and indirect employment and taxes both.

Addressing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Prasad said that the government is positioning India



In next five years we hope to have incremental production of ₹2,44,200 cr, export worth ₹1,95,360 cr, direct and indirect employment to 40,000 people and tax revenue of approximately ₹17,000 cr to the country  
RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD | TELECOM MINISTER

as a global powerhouse for manufacturing, and has created a conducive environment for ease of doing

business.

"Cabinet has approved PLI for telecom sector... To ensure further progress of Make-in-India in telecom equipment space... 5G equipment will also come... So it was important to give incentives. We held widespread consultation with stakeholders," Prasad said adding that the scheme also aims to promote MSMEs in "Aatmanirbhar Bharat."

The scheme is expected to offset huge imports of telecom equip-

ment worth more than ₹50,000 crores and reinforce it with "Made in India" products both for domestic markets and exports, the release said.

The new scheme has an outlay of ₹12,195 crores over five years, and its eligibility will be subject to achievement of a minimum threshold of cumulative incremental investment and incremental sales of manufactured goods.

The incentive structure ranges between 4 per cent and 7 per cent for different categories and years. Financial Year 2019-20 will be treated as the base year for computation of cumulative incremental sales of manufactured goods net of taxes, the release added. Minimum investment threshold for MSMEs has been kept at ₹10 crores and for others at ₹100 crores.

# India-Mauritius trade pact gets Cabinet nod

Over 300 domestic items to get concessional market access

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 17: More than 300 domestic goods from agriculture, textiles, electronics and other sectors will get market access at concessional customs duties in Mauritius, with the Indian government Wednesday approving signing of a free trade agreement between the two countries.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved signing of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) between India and Mauritius, an official statement said.

It said that Mauritius will benefit from preferential market access into India for its 615 products, including frozen fish, speciality sugar, biscuits, fresh fruits, juices, mineral water, beer, alcoholic drinks, soaps, bags, medical and surgical equipment, and apparel.

"The CECPA between India and Mauritius covers 310 export items for India, including food stuff and beverages (80 lines), agricultural products (25 lines), textile and textile articles (27 lines), base metals and articles thereof (32 lines), electrical and electronic item (13 lines), plastics and chemicals (20 lines), wood and articles thereof (15 lines), and others," the statement said.



India and Mauritius have been negotiating this pact since 2005. This is the first such agreement approved for signing by the Modi government since it came to power in 2014

In a free trade agreement, two trading partners cut or eliminate customs duties on a host of products besides liberalising norms to promote services trade.

With respect to trade in services, Indian service providers will have access to around 115 sub-sectors from the 11 broad service segments such as research and development, telecommunication, construction, distribution, education, environmental, financial, tourism, recreational, yoga, audio-visual services, and transport services.

## SHORT TAKES

### Amazon acquires Oz-based Selz

San Francisco: Amazon has quietly acquired Selz, an Australia-based e-commerce platform that helps businesses to have their own online stores. "We have signed an agreement to be acquired by Amazon and are looking forward to working with them as we continue to build easy-to-use tools for entrepreneurs," Martin Rushe, CEO and Founder of Selz, said in a blog post. "Nothing is changing for our customers at this time, and we'll be in touch with customers as and when we have further updates."

### Housing fin cos to grow at 12-15%

Mumbai: The long-term growth outlook for affordable housing finance companies remains positive and the segment is likely to see a growth of 12-15% in the next financial year, says a report. As of September 30, 2020, the total portfolio of the new affordable housing finance companies (AHFCs) in the affordable housing space stood at ₹55,061 crore, registering a moderate year-on-year (Y-o-Y) growth of 9%, Icra Ratings said in a report.

### Airtel to acquire 20% equity stake

New Delhi: Bharti Airtel Wednesday said that it will acquire Warburg Pincus affiliate's 20% equity stake in its DTH arm Bharti Telemedia. The deal involves a total consideration of ₹3,126 crore which will be discharged primarily via issuance of 3.64 crore equity shares of Airtel at a price of ₹600 per share, and up to ₹1,037.8 crore in cash, Bharti Airtel said in a regulatory filing. The issuance of shares proposed through preferential allotment is subject to shareholders' approval.

### FM addresses Sebi board

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Wednesday appreciated the measures taken by Sebi, especially to deal with the Covid situation, and emphasised the need for timely implementation of announcements related to the capital market made in the Union Budget 2021-22. The minister addressed the board of Sebi in the national capital on Wednesday for the first time after the presentation of the Budget February 1.

## BIZ BUZZ

### Dr Batra's launches Derma Heal in City

Bhubaneswar: Dr Batra introduced Derma Heal, a first-of-its-kind, easy and pain-free skin care solution to its patients. Derma Heal is a revolutionary skin care treatment combines the goodness of UVB light rays and homeopathy to treat skin diseases safely and naturally. Each Derma Heal session takes only 30mins and is administered by trained therapists under the guidance of qualified homeopathic dermatologists. With a proven efficacy of more than 400 clinical research studies, this treatment method enhances skin treatment outcomes to give you bettered results in just 5 weeks.

### BMW rolls out X3 xDrive 30i Sport X

Bhubaneswar: The new BMW X3 xDrive30i Sport X has been launched in India. Locally produced at BMW Group Plant Chennai, the new exciting 'Sport X' petrol variant of the BMW X3 is available at dealerships today onwards. LED headlamps with extended contents create a familiar BMW four-eyed front face. Black High Gloss elements on the radiator grille bars, two-tone underbody protection, air-breather and the classically designed 18" light-alloy wheels add to the overall athleticism.



# Credai Odisha urges state govt to reduce stamp duty

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: Real Estate body Credia Odisha Wednesday urged state government to consider on reduction of stamp duty and registration fee on sales of housing units to boost and recover the industry from the pandemic affect.

President of CREDAI Odisha SK Routray said, "Many states have adopted reduction of stamp duty and registration fees in the view of the pandemic. Odisha government too needs to consider the matter and take decision on it."

At present, the state government charges 7% of stamp duty but real estate body urged the government to reduce it to 3%.

The president expressed concern over the current slugging condition in the sector on account of recessionary turmoil caused due to corona and other economic stresses. Routray appealed the government to provide substantive help in the budget to boost the house building activities. "This will boost sale of houses at affordable cost and shall ensure increase in state revenue," he added. The state government

charges 7% in registration fee as well. Routray expected the Odisha government, which pioneered the mission of house for all by 2030, shall modify imposition of 7% stamp duty & registration fees on registration of General Power of Attorney as it is neither a conveyance deed nor a separate instrument for real estate constructions. He also appealed that the stamp duty and registration fees in case of GPA should be 1% of the benchmark value of the land subject to condition that it should be maximised to ₹50,000.

# 57% OF INDIANS PLAN TO TRAVEL IN 2021: SURVEY

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 17: As travel returns in 2021, 57% respondents across age groups said they will connect with family and friends through personal trips this year, according to a survey.

According to a research conducted by research firm YouGov for Airbnb, this sentiment was reflected in traveller groups who are most likely to travel after the pandemic as well, including GenX and millennials, it revealed.

The survey was done online among 1,040 travellers across the country between February 2-10.

Further, 50% of millennials said they would travel with friends and family, suggesting new opportuni-

## STEPPING OUT

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ties for hosting across the country that could emerge in 2021, it said. It found that 85% would like to stay in unique accommodations when they travel including heritage homes, havelis, farm stays and villas among

others, exploring new destinations and places recommended by local hosts, family or friends. GenX (89%) and Millennials (86%), who comprise a large pool of current and future travellers, lead this trend.

About 39% of Millennials stated a firm intent to travel in 2021, it added. It also found that over 59% of respondents consider health and safety a key priority, with the number understandably increasing for re-

spondents that are 40 and above. "After a year of sacrifice and hardship where so many were kept apart for so long, 2021 offers many the chance to reconnect with friends and loved ones. We will also see the continued growth of restorative, inclusive and sustainable travel throughout India," Amanpreet Bajaj, Country Manager - Airbnb India, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Taiwan, stated. Travellers are looking at more meaningful experiences, prizing personal connection and valued time with friends and family, he opined.

"Holidays in the hills and other natural settings are also helping travellers re-connect with the environment as a medium to rest and recharge," Bajaj added.

## 'Travel, hospitality sectors hit hardest'

NEW DELHI: The tourism, travel and hospitality industries have been hit the hardest by the Covid-19 pandemic, a report by Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) said. Accordingly, the survey report results reflect an across-the-board decline in revenue, with very large companies most likely to have experienced a considerable decline in revenue. "Despite the general decline in revenues among firms of all sizes, one-third of our survey respondents felt they were doing better than their competition, and fewer than 10% felt they were lagging behind their competitors," IMA said in a statement.

# CATCH ME IF YOU CAN!



## 'Untouchable king' Mbappe bags hat-trick as PSG humiliate Barcelona taking a 4-1 lead ahead of their Champions League round of 16 second leg in Paris

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Barcelona, Feb 17:** Kylian Mbappe outplayed Lionel Messi as Paris Saint-Germain put Barcelona up against the ropes in the Champions League again. And with Mbappe in that kind of form, it's hard to see Barcelona staging another epic comeback this time.

After Messi put Barcelona ahead from the penalty spot, Mbappe netted a hat-trick at the Camp Nou Tuesday to give PSG a 4-1 win in the first leg of their round of 16 match.

It was the team's first meeting since Barcelona erased a 0-4 deficit by winning the second leg 6-1 at the same stage of the competition four years ago. But Ronald Koeman's team was thoroughly outplayed at home, even with PSG missing Brazil star Neymar, and now has to attempt a comeback in Paris instead.

Mbappe scored five minutes after Messi's opener and added two second-half goals to become the first player to score an away hat-trick at the Camp Nou in the Champions League since Andriy Shevchenko for Dynamo Kyiv in a 4-0 win in 1997.

His dominance was epitomized by the image of Barcelona captain Gerard Pique — making his return from a long-term injury layoff — pulling at Mbappe's shirt in an unsuccessful attempt at slowing down the France star as he rushed forward in attack. Moise Kean also scored in the



**DEVASTATING OUTING:** Lionel Messi looks dejected after one of PSG's goal at Camp Nou, Tuesday

second half for PSG, last season's finalist which looked far more dangerous than the hosts throughout the match at the empty Camp Nou. The second leg will be March 10 in Paris. Liverpool defeated Leipzig

2-0 in the other round of 16 match, Tuesday.

Barcelona were in control early on and opened the scoring with a 27th-minute penalty after Frenkie de Jong fell in the area when his heel was clipped by defender Layvin Kurzawa.

Messi fired a left-footed shot into the top corner for his 10th goal in the last 10 matches. It was Messi's record 28th goal in 31 matches in the round of 16 of the Champions League, according to UEFA. He has scored in the tournament for the 17th consecutive year — from 2005 to 2021 — to match Raul Gonzalez's feat from 1995 to 2011.

PSG immediately pressed forward and equalized five minutes later after a nice exchange of passes inside the area, with Mbappe controlling the ball and shooting it into the top of the net from close range after a clever one-touch pass by Marco Verratti.

PSG continued to play better and Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen had to make a few good saves before Mbappe put his team ahead from inside the area in the 65th.

Kean added to the lead five minutes later with a header off a free-kick, and Mbappe sealed the scoring by finishing off a quick counterattack by curling a first-time shot into the far corner in the 85th. The goals allowed Mbappe to pass Pauleta for third place on the club's all-time scoring list with 111 goals.

### PIQUE MOCKED

**BARCELONA:** Barcelona's desperation in dealing with Kylian Mbappe was best encapsulated in the one image which went viral, Tuesday. The PSG striker was using his blistering pace to devastating effect and Barcelona defender Gerard Pique could only make a desperate attempt to grab the 22-year-old's shirt. It seemed the only way he could stop him. Pique's desperate attempt to slow Mbappe down was ruthlessly mocked online by fans on a night Match of the Day host Gary Lineker felt there was a 'changing of the guard' for football. Fans quickly shared the image of him stretching to reach the back of Mbappe's jersey in a bid to slow the Frenchman down. "Dear Pique, if you wanted Mbappe's shirt, just ask," one fan joked. Another added: "Mbappe looks like a cartoon character there. It's like Pique trying to grab the roadrunner." The jokes continued long after the match with one amused fan writing: "Mbappe: I'm going for your girl; Pique: no; Mbappe: catch me if you can."

### SPANISH MEDIA TEARS APART 'CHARACTERLESS' BARCELONA



**MADRID:** Spanish press tore into Ronald Koeman's 'characterless' Barcelona after 'another embarrassment' in the Champions League as they were ripped apart by Kylian Mbappe and PSG at the Nou Camp. It was Mbappe who dominated Wednesday's front pages with his performance described by 'Diario AS' as like 'a hurricane' that devastated the Nou Camp. 'MARCA' described how Mbappe 'blew Barca away', while 'SPORT' went with a similar line as the French striker 'sweet Barca aside' on the night. 'Mundo Deportivo' simply coined the term 'Mbappe'd' after his one-man show left Koeman's side on the brink of elimination at the halfway stage in the last 16 tie. They described Barcelona as 'fragile, imprecise and characterless' on the night in a performance that was an indictment of their decline in recent seasons.

## Salah, Mane lift Liverpool

**BUDAPEST:** Liverpool's players will take any help they can get as the stuttering English champions look to snap out of an alarming slump in form. With two defensive blunders, Leipzig obliged in the Champions League Tuesday.

Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane pounced on errors to score Liverpool's goals in a 2-0 win over the German team in the first leg of their last 16 match, giving the Reds some respite from their imploding Premier League title defense.

The Champions League is the only trophy Liverpool can win this season now the team has dropped out of the top four in the Premier League unexpectedly early, and Jurgen Klopp's side is already in sight of the quarterfinals.

Salah latched on to a misplaced pass from Marcel Sabitzer back to defender Lukas Klostermann in the 53rd minute, before racing into the area and slotting his finish past former Liverpool goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi.

Only five minutes later, a long ball forward was misjudged by Leipzig defender Nordi Mukiele, allowing Mane to run clean through and dispatch a similarly sharp effort beyond Gulacsi.

The first leg of the teams' last 16 match was played at the Puskas Arena in Hungary because of German restrictions on arrivals from Britain amid the pandemic.

Aside from its two-goal advantage, Liverpool will have the added benefit of playing the second leg March 10 at their home stadium, Anfield, albeit without fans allowed.

Klopp struck a defiant mood ahead of the match, insisting he would not be quitting or taking a break despite looking worn down by his team's dreadful run of results of late. The Reds, who have won just two of their last 10 Premier League games, are now in sixth place and battling just to qualify for next season's Champions League.

This win, against a team in second place in the Bundesliga and which reached the Champions League semifinals last season, will be a morale-booster, then.

The victory did come with a welcome clean sheet, however, which is a rarity these days for Liverpool's injury-hit defense that was again being propped up by new signing Ozan Kabak and midfielder Jordan Henderson.



Liverpool players celebrate Mo Salah's (with beard) goal against Leipzig, Tuesday

## Gaurs beat OFC, end six-game winless run

AGENCIES

**Goa, Feb 17:** FC Goa ended their six-match winless run beating Odisha FC 3-1 in their Indian Super League (ISL) encounter here, Wednesday. Alberto Noguera (18th minute), Jorge Ortiz (26th) and Ivan Gonzalez (75th) struck for the Gaurs, while Diego Mauricio (30th) pulled one back for the Bhubaneswar-based side.

They now move to the fourth position with 27 points from 18 matches. The third-placed Hyderabad FC too have 27 points from 18 games, but with a better goal difference (eight compared to Goa's 7) the Nizams are a spot higher.

FC Goa could lose their position if NorthEast United FC win their next match as they have now 26 points with a game in hand as they have played 17 matches so far.

It was a well-deserved win as they had entered the second half with a goal's lead and it was them who began, as well as ended the second essay the better side.

OFC did look threatening a couple of times on the counter. Mauricio probably should have equalised in the 63rd minute but he failed to get good contact with the ball. That

was probably the best chance of the half for them.

Gonzalez then sealed the deal in the 75th. He could have scored another but his header came off the bar. It was all Goa even after the third goal for them. Overall, they were the better side and deserved the three points.

Before of the game, Goa head coach Juan Ferrando had said that they know where to work on considering the goals they have conceded so far.

"So far this season we have conceded 21 goals (and scored 26 before the match against Odisha FC), but 16 out of these 21 were because of penalties and set-pieces, not because of play moves of the rival team. So we know where to focus our work on."

After six draws in a row, they finally won a game. Speaking about the drawn games, Ferrando said: "Some fatigue and injuries might be affecting the team's performance over the last few matches and be the reason we find it difficult to be focused on the game for 90 minutes."

"It might also be a reflection of a pretty young team. Anyhow, we need to keep our professional approach, keep working as a team and feed the motivation."

## TSITSIPAS ENDS NADAL RUN



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Melbourne, Feb 17:** For the 225th time in his illustrious career, Rafa Nadal grabbed a two-set lead in a Grand Slam match. For only the second time, he blew that big edge and lost.

A couple of uncharacteristically sloppy overheads and a framed backhand in a third-set tiebreaker began Nadal's undoing, and his bid for a men's-record 21st major championship eventually ended in the Australian Open quarterfinals Wednesday with 3-6, 2-6, 7-6(7-4), 6-4, 7-5 loss to Stefanos Tsitsipas.

At his put-the-ball-where-he-wants-it best in the early going,

Nadal went ahead rather easily, winning 27 consecutive points on his serve in one stretch and running his streak of consecutive sets won at major tournaments to 35, one shy of Roger Federer's record for the professional era. Nadal and Federer are currently tied at 20 Grand Slam singles titles, more than any other man in the history of tennis.

But Tsitsipas never wavered and that surprisingly poor tie-breaker by the 34-year-old Nadal helped hand over the third set and begin the epic comeback.

So now, instead of Nadal attempting to continue his pursuit of Federer, it will be Tsitsipas — a 22-year-old from

Greece with a flashy game — who will meet 2019 US Open runner-up Daniil Medvedev, who got the better of seventh seed Andrey Rublev 7-5, 6-3, 6-2, in the semifinals Friday. Neither Tsitsipas nor Medvedev has won a Grand Slam tournament.

In the other men's semifinal, 17-time major champion and No. 1-ranked Novak Djokovic will face qualifier Aslan Karatsev, who is making his Grand Slam debut.

The women's semifinals will see Serena Williams vs. Naomi Osaka, and Jennifer Brady, a 4-6, 6-2, 6-1 winner over Jessica Pegula, vs. Karolina Muchova, who stunned World No.1 Ash Barty 1-6, 6-3, 6-2.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### India retain team for last two Tests

**NEW DELHI:** The selectors Wednesday retained 17 of the 18 members in the Indian squad for the final two Tests against England while senior pacer Umesh Yadav's inclusion would depend on his fitness assessment ahead of the day/night game in Ahmedabad. Shardul Thakur is the only player who has not been kept as he will be released to compete in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. **THE SQUAD:** Virat Kohli (C), Rohit Sharma, Mayank Agarwal, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, KL Rahul, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant (wk), Wriddhiman Saha (wk), R Ashwin, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah & Mohammed Siraj; **standby players:** KS Bharat & Rahul Chahar.

### Faf bids adieu to Tests for T20Is

**JOHANNESBURG:** Former South Africa captain Faf du Plessis Wednesday announced his retirement from Test cricket to focus on the shorter formats with T20 being his priority. The 36-year-old made the announcement through a statement on his Instagram page. Du Plessis said his focus now shifts to T20 cricket but ODIs will also remain a part of his plans. Du Plessis played 69 Tests, scoring 4,163 runs at an average of 40.02 including 10 hundreds and 21 fifties. He stepped down as South Africa's Test and T20 captain last year after taking over from the charismatic A B de Villiers back in 2016. He captained the team in 36 Tests, winning 18 of them.

### Kings XI Punjab renamed as 'Punjab Kings'

**New Delhi:** Kings XI Punjab were Wednesday renamed as Punjab Kings ahead of the 2021 IPL auction Thursday in Chennai. PTI had reported of the name change February 15. A new logo was also unveiled Wednesday. Speaking about the new brand identity, team CEO Satish Menon said: "Punjab Kings is a more evolved brand name, and we understand it was a right time for us to move focus on the core brand itself. The change in brand identity is not about changing our brand ethos but celebrating our one-ness as we stand in unit like a family. The new logo honors the liveliness and vibrancy of the brand and provides modern elements, while we stand out from rest of the teams."

