



BRUTAL TROLLING

Kenisha Awasthi, daughter of singer Swapna Awasthi, faces cybersexual harassment by fans of Indian rapper Raftaar

LEISURE P2



PREPARATIONS FOR ULB POLLS

The SEC Friday begins training for master trainers from 15 districts of Odisha on EVMs ahead of upcoming ULB elections

DOWNTOWN P3



CRISIS DEEPENS

The Russian military announces massive drills of its strategic nuclear forces amid Ukraine standoff

INTERNATIONAL P10

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3 cops on poll duty killed in mishap

Nabarangpur: In a tragic incident, at least three policemen were killed and over 20 others sustained injuries as the bus carrying them for panchayat poll duty overturned near Sorispadar under Papadahandi police limits in Nabarangpur district, Friday. The injured policemen were rescued and admitted to Papadahandi community health centre and the district headquarters hospital for treatment. According to reports, the bus was carrying 45 police personnel from Nabarangpur reserve police office to Kosagamuda for election duty ahead of the third phase of the polls. The bus was negotiating a sharp turn at Sorispadar when it overturned. Some policemen got trapped under the bus. Three of them died on the spot.



CBI quizzes former NSE CEO

New Delhi: The CBI Friday questioned former CEO of National Stock Exchange Chitra Ramkrishna in the view of fresh facts emerging in connection with its ongoing probe into alleged abuse of co-location facility in the NSE. The CBI has also issued look out circulars against Ramkrishna, another former CEO Ravi Narain and former Group Operating Officer Anand Subramanian to prevent them from leaving the country. The probe agency had booked owner and promoter of Delhi-based OPG Securities Pvt Ltd Sanjay Gupta and others in connection with alleged abuse of NSE co-location facility to make gains by getting early access to the stock market. P7

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Bollywood wants us to evacuate Indians instead of asking them to leave Ukraine. It will make a great movie and you a hero

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VI	VA
SENSEX	57832.97	↓	59.04
NIFTY	17276.30	↓	28.30
DOLLAR	74.96	↓	₹0.40
EURO	84.85	↓	₹0.57
GOLD	₹50,085	↓	₹307
SILVER	₹63,884	↑	₹23

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	30.0°C	30.0°C
TEMP MIN	18.2°C	18.5°C
Humidity	64%	60%
Rainfall	Nil	Nilmm
Forecast	Clear sky	mainly

HALE & HEARTY



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik waves at people during his visit to Lingaraj temple in Bhubaneswar, Friday, as ST Secretary VK Pandian looks on

Rumours on my health spread during polls: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: Rubbishing rumours doing the rounds about his health condition, BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday said his health is perfect and he is here to serve the people of Odisha.

The Chief Minister visited the famous Lingaraj temple here in the evening and prayed for the good health of the people of the state. He also reviewed the progress made on execution of the Ekamra Plan, launched for beautification of the periphery of the Shiva shrine. "Whenever there is an election in the state, rumours start doing the rounds about my health. But I can assure all of you that I am in perfect health, very happy and here to serve the people of Odisha," Patnaik told reporters with a smiling face. When asked if such rumours

Whenever there is an election in the state, rumours start doing the rounds about my health. But I can assure all of you that I am in perfect health, very happy and here to serve the people of Odisha

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER

were being spread by the Opposition as the panchayat election is going on in the state, he did not make any direct comment as the model code of conduct is in force in the state for the on-going panchayat polls. He said: "Whenever there is such rumour, you can be assured that the BJD is going to do well." Patnaik also gave his Covid-19 cautionary message to the people. "The pandemic is still around and please do not lower your guard. Wear a

mask and follow Covid-appropriate behaviour," he said.

The CM's statement carries much significance as it came at a time when there was a hushed discussion about his failing health on social media platforms. Notably, Patnaik has not campaigned for the ongoing panchayat elections. He was also criticised for not physically attending his office and the Assembly despite visiting different districts in recent months to launch the BSKY smart health cards. However, he had attended the state-level Republic Day parade here alongside Governor Ganeshi Lal last January 26. He also went around the garden at Lok Seva Bhawan on that day.

Commenting on this statement of the CM, Opposition BJP and Congress said that the rumour was created by the BJD itself before the polls to woo the voters.

AHMEDABAD SERIAL BLASTS

DEATH PENALTY TO 38

This is for the first time that so many convicts have been handed down death sentence by any court at one go

AGENCIES

Ahmedabad, Feb 18: A special court here Friday awarded death penalty to 38 convicts and sentenced 11 others to life imprisonment in the case of 2008 Ahmedabad serial blasts, which had claimed 56 lives and left over 200 injured.

This is for the first time that so many convicts have been handed down death sentence by any court at one go. In January 1998, a TADA court in Tamil Nadu had awarded capital punishment to all 26 convicts in the case of assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. The pronouncement of the quantum of punishment by judge AR Patel came nearly 14 years after the deadly blasts. The court had convicted 49 persons and acquitted 28 others in the case February 8. As many as 21 explosions had ripped through the city July 26, 2008 within a span of 70 minutes.

In the over 7,000-page judgement, the court termed the case as the rarest of rare and ordered that 38 convicts in the case be hanged till death, while 11 others were awarded life imprisonment till death, public



prosecutor Amit Patel told reporters. These 38 persons were convicted under the IPC sections 302 (murder) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) and provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Eleven others were held guilty for criminal conspiracy and under various sections of the UAPA, he said.

The court imposed a fine of ₹2.85 lakh on 48 convicts and of ₹2.88 lakh on another one. It also awarded compensation of ₹1 lakh to the kin of those who died in the blasts, ₹50,000 to those who were seriously injured and ₹25,000 to those who received minor injuries.

Those awarded death sentence include key conspirators in the case - Madhya Pradesh natives Safdar Nagori and Qumaruddin Nagori, as well as Gujarat residents Qayyumuddin Kapadiya, Zahid

Shaikh and Shamsuddin Sheikh. Both Safdar Nagori and Zahid Shaikh were accused of collecting funds for acquiring explosives and for other illegal activities of banned outfit Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). Kapadiya had acquired mobile SIM cards using fake documents and stayed in hotels using fake identity. All the convicts were present for the hearing via video-conference from eight different jails - Sabarmati central jail in Ahmedabad, Tihar in Delhi, Bhopal, Gaya, Bangalore, Kerala and Mumbai.

"I can say that this is the case in which highest number of convicts were awarded death sentence. Earlier, in one case, 26 people were given death sentence. But in this case, the number is 38," the public prosecutor said. MORE P9

71% polling in second phase panchayat polls

Security was tightened in the second phase with 240 platoons of police deployed in the wake of the violence that marked the first phase of polling

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: Barring a few incidents of violence, the second phase of panchayat elections were held smoothly in the state Friday with about 71 per cent polling.

At least 71 per cent out of 62.10 lakh voters have exercised their franchise in this phase. However, the polling percentage may go up as the final report was yet to come, State Election Commissioner Aditya Prasad Padhi said here. There was 77.2 per cent polling during the first phase of panchayat election held in the state, Wednesday.

As per schedule, the voting began at 7 am and continued till 1 pm. However, in places where voters were seen standing in queues, they were allowed to cast their votes beyond the stipulated time. The elections were held for the post of 168 ZP members at 20,436 booths in 1,514 panchayats in 68 blocks across the state, the SEC said. In view of incidents of violence reported in the first leg of the polls, the Commission had asked the DGP to ensure law and



76% polling in Kotia

Bhubaneswar: The panchayat elections were conducted peacefully in the disputed Kotia area in Koraput district. About 76 per cent of eligible voters have exercised their franchise in 13 booths set up in the Kotia cluster of villages, Koraput District Collector Abdaal M. Akhtar said. According to reports, over 5,000 voters of Kotia panchayat cast their votes at 13 polling booths.

order during the election and Friday the situation during the elections improved, said Padhi.

"As per preliminary reports, the polling was disrupted in some booths of Jagatsinghpur and Jajpur districts due to law and order problems. Re-polling is likely at two to three places where voting was affected due to errors in ballot papers," he said. After getting detailed reports from the district collectors, the Commission will examine them and take a decision in this regard soon, Padhi added.

SC to UP: Refund recovered fines, restore properties of CAA protesters

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 18: In a setback to the Uttar Pradesh government, the Supreme Court Friday directed it to refund the fine and restore the attached properties of the alleged anti-CAA protesters for causing damage to public and private assets in December 2019.

The apex court said it is a case of 'unjust enrichment', and the state can very well recover the damages under the new law, once it is established before the claims tribunal that public and properties were damaged. The UP government told the top court that it has withdrawn 274 recovery notices and subsequent proceedings initiated against anti-CAA protesters in 2019 for property damages.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and Surya Kant granted liberty to the UP government to proceed against alleged anti-CAA protesters under the new law -- Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damages to Public and Private Property Act notified August 31, 2020.

"Orders in pursuance to the show cause notices have been withdrawn, in terms of the government orders (GOs) by the state of Uttar Pradesh, there shall be refund of any recoveries which have been made in the meantime. This will, however, be without prejudice to such action as may be warranted, in terms of the proceedings and decisions of the claims tribunals, at the subsequent stage," it said.

The bench said it is a very important Constitutional principle that all deterrence against the evasion of law has to be provided in the four corners of the law. "There cannot be any principle of deterrence, which lies outside the fold of law," the bench said, adding that after the withdrawal of orders, it will be a case of 'unjust enrichment'. It noted the submission of Additional Advocate General Garima Prasad, appearing for Uttar Pradesh, that February 14 and 15, 2022, two GOs were issued in terms of which show cause notices in 274 cases for alleged destruction of public properties since December 2019 have been withdrawn together with the proceedings which were subsequently carried out.

In Ukraine's east, a day of shelling, outages, fear

The eastern Ukraine conflict zone saw the most intense artillery bombardment for years, with Kyiv government and separatists trading blame. West says the shelling is part of a pretext to invade

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kyiv, Feb 18: Shells struck by the hundreds along the tense front lines in eastern Ukraine, drones monitoring a fragile cease-fire lost their way when the GPS signal they rely on was jammed, and then the cellphone network went dark.

In a sliver of land where pro-Russian separatists have battled for years against Ukrainian government forces, a group of international monitors tasked with keeping the peace reported more than 300 explosions in 24 hours ending Thursday around four times as many as an average day over the past month.

As the world warily watches Russian troops massing near Ukraine's borders for signs they're preparing to invade, Western officials have warned the spark could come from the volatile east: Repeatedly in recent weeks, the US has said the simmering conflict there could provide cover or an excuse for Russia to roll across the border.



A kindergarten damaged by shelling in Stanytsia Luhanska, Ukraine. REUTERS/PHOTO

The village of Stanytsia Luhanska suffered more than its share of explosions Thursday.

One shell crashed into a kindergarten, blasting a hole in the wall that sent soccer balls flying off the classroom shelves just as the school day started. Others blasted craters into the schoolyard and shattered windows of nearby homes.

"We heard the sound of broken glass. The children were very scared. Some kids started crying immediately, and the explosions continued for the next 20 minutes," said Olena Yaryna, the school director. At Valentyna Melnychenko's nearby home, the explosions filled her living room and hall with smoke.



PATTINSON STUDIED BATS TO PLAY BATMAN

Hollywood star Robert Pattinson has revealed that he studied real-life bats ahead of shooting *The Batman*. "I looked up how a bat fights and there was this one video of the technique of a vampire bat with a chicken in a cage and how it fights the chicken," revealed the actor.

KENDALL JENNER FACES LAWSUIT FOR TRADEMARK INFRINGEMENT

Kendall Jenner's 818 Tequila is facing a lawsuit from a rival brand. The 26-year-old model's 818 Tequila is alleged to have blatantly copied the branding of Tequila 512, which has now launched a lawsuit for trademark infringement.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You will be quite circumspect throughout the day, predicts Ganesh. Your spirits will soar high as you will be invited to join parties and socialise a bit. You will find the correct balance between work and having fun.

TAURUS
You are likely to be in a mood to get away from the daily grind and take a much needed break. You would naturally try to stay free from future concerns and commitments and keep all your woes and worries aside for the day. An adventurous and fun filled outing or a trip to some happening resort, along with your friends and family members is a near certainty, assures Ganesh.

GEMINI
You will long for some privacy today, says Ganesh. You may end up earning a large amount of money, mostly through some private venture. The day will be a greatly profitable one for cashiers, money lenders and those in retail business. Keep working hard to achieve success.

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

LEO
Today, Ganesh advises you to keep the Bhagavad Gita's verses in mind, and persist in fulfilling your duties without bothering about the fruits of your labour. Put in some extra effort to finish off whatever you undertake today. Patience bears its fruits and they are always sweet.

VIRGO
Matters of religion and spirituality rise to the fore today. Throw yourself into a single-minded pursuit to be successful in your chosen field, and make the most of your skills and natural talent, says Ganesh. Matters of relationships will see you more critical and analytical than emotional.

LIBRA
Ganesh says the higher officials in your work place may be displeased with you and you will face issues with them. Due to this you will feel mentally depressed and down but towards the afternoon you will be able to please them with your impressive work ability.

SCORPIO
At work, you would want to change the perspective with which people see you. Your colleagues recognise you as the emerging alpha-lion. Ideas and opinions will impress your bosses. But keep a level head and learn where to stop, even when winning, counsels Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Lengthy business meetings keep you occupied almost throughout the day. You may also do some value addition to your work by taking co-workers' suggestions and inputs, says Ganesh. Implementation of these inputs will prove highly beneficial in the long run.

CAPRICORN
The day will be of paramount significance as you are likely to meet someone who will be associated with you for life, says Ganesh. Also, relationships and relatives will keep you busy for major part of the day. You may not find it interesting, but you will not have any options either.

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

PISCES
You are likely to find yourself as part of a team involved in tackling a difficult project or task today. The role you will play in this Endeavour will be noteworthy. Your efforts will yield excellent results. Everything you touch will turn to gold today, says Ganesh.

TOXIC FANDOM

Kenisha subjected to cybersexual harassment



Mumbai: Actress Kenisha Awasthi, daughter of *Chaiyya Chaiyya* singer Swapna Awasthi, is currently being subjected to cybersexual harassment by the fans of Indian rapper and music producer Raftaar.

The whole thing started after she answered a question asking, "Who does she like more? Emiway Bantai or Raftaar." She chose Emiway's name giving a context categorically explaining how she shares a long standing friendship with him.

This resulted in Raftaar's self-proclaimed fans getting agitated. Soon after, the actress started receiving death

and rape threats on her DM and comment sections.

Talking about the ordeal through social media, Kenisha said, "I'm appalled, disheartened, and somewhat scared right now seeing how vicious this toxic fandom phenomenon can be."

She mentioned that she wouldn't have mind harmless trolling but things are really getting out of hand at this point.

Hence, the actress is planning to seek help from the cybercrime department of Mumbai and plans to lodge an FIR with regards to the case after due consultation with her legal team.

Samantha's newest Insta Reel goes viral

Hyderabad: Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu has managed to become the talk of the town once again, with her perky grooves for Tamil's most famous *Arabic Kuthu* song.

The first single from Thalapathy Vijay and Pooja Hegde's upcoming

movie *Beast* was released as the *Arabic Kuthu* song.

With the lyrics Halamithi Habibo, the song has become one of the most viral ones in recent times.

Samantha Ruth Prabhu, who fell in love with this song, shared an Instagram Reel, in which she has danced to *Arabic Kuthu- Halamithi Habibo*.

"Just another late night flight a NOT!! Rhythm for tonight be #HalamithiHabibo. This song is beyond lit #BeastA@anirudhoficial," Samantha wrote, as she shared the sensational song performance.

The video hints that Samantha has been traveling, as the song is shot somewhere in the airport. In a casual look, the gorgeous actress has danced with a mask on, as her perkiness and ease are unmatched.

On the work front, Samantha is currently busy shooting for her upcoming movie, *Yashoda*, while she has a couple of other biggies in her kitty.



This six-episode series meaning, false or lies, is an intriguing noir crime thriller that depicts the after-effects of trauma taking place within the mind of a troubled woman.

Mithya appears gloomy and trite but beneath its surface is an engaging thriller mounted in a pretentious manner.

With its characters quoting from literature and poetry, there are many a line that appears superfluous, a by-product of contrived dialogues in the screenplay. This is especially evident when Juhi, a professor of Hindi literature, before giving an assignment to her students on "Tathya, Satya and Kathya," which means Fact, Truth and Fabrication (Story), tells them, in science and history, there are only lies and truth, but in literature, the truth has many facets.

The facts begin with; while lying in bed with



Webseries Review

her husband Neil (Parambrata), after a dispassionate session of what was supposed to be an intimate moment, Juhi looks into the ceiling only to notice a spider weaving a web. The spider and its web are subtle metaphors to Juhi and her universe.

Juhi's web gets complicated when she accuses her student Rhea Rajguru, the daughter of one of the college trustees, of plagiarising. Rhea's plagiarised assignment is just a Macguffin that allows Rhea to manipulate Neil and Juhi so that she can reveal the

an avatar or incarnation to preserve the Universe each time mankind is in danger or when evil and tyranny overpowers righteousness. This was the theme of the play *Dashavatara*. But what made the play unique was its style of presentations. The artistes enacted the Dashavatara tales using some traditional folk elements like Pala, Daskathia and Chhau which added to the quality of production.

Among the dignitaries, author and dramatist Arabinda Roy, playwright Shankar Tripathy and theatre director Pradeep Biswal attended the event.

The festival was organised by Asim Basu Foundation, Bhubaneswar in collaboration with the Department of Odia Language, Literature and Culture.

Play *Dashavatara* holds viewers spellbound



A scene from the play *Dashavatara*

OP PHOTO

Bhubaneswar: Satabdira Kalakar, one of the oldest theatre troupes of Odisha, Friday presented the play *Dashavatara* on the second and concluding day of Asim Utsav, a two-day theatre festival in the memory of eminent artist and theatre personality Asim Basu.

Written by noted playwright Shankar Prasad Tripathy, the 96-

5TH ASIM UTSAV DAY II

minute play, based on the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu, was directed by troupe's founder Dhirendranath Mallick.

According to mythology Vishnu descends in the form of

Mithya: Pretentious but engaging noir thriller

DIRECTOR
Rohan Sippy

CAST
Huma Qureshi, Avantika Dassani, Parambrata Chatterjee, Rajit Kapoor and others

dark hidden truth that has been haunting her.

Most of this series pleasures come from its innate taut story, but the many feints and dodges are a killjoy. There's some good casting. With an author-backed noir role, Avantika Dassani, in her debut performance, is sincere and projects the right mix. As Rhea, a figure dependent upon control, Avantika plays her part of menace, intrigue, and scheming minx with gusto and conviction.

Huma Qureshi as the traumatised Juhi, Parambrata Chatterjee as her concerned densely mindless husband, Rajat Kapoor and Avantika Akerkar as Juhi's parents - Anand and Sudha, Samir Soni as Rhea's father Rajguru, Indraneil Sengupta and Naina Sareen as Juhi's colleagues, are all fabulous actors living in the skin of their characters.

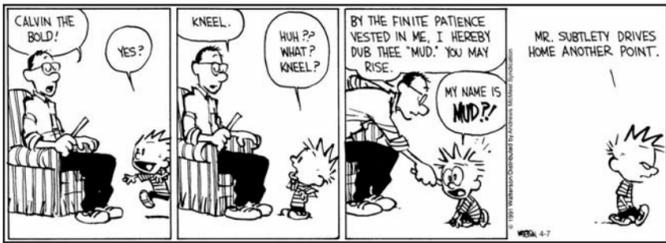
The series ends on a cliff-hanger subtly promising to return with season 2.

FUN post

PEANUTS



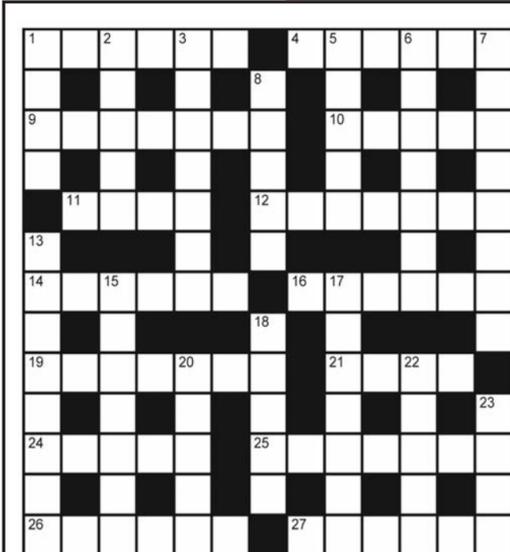
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



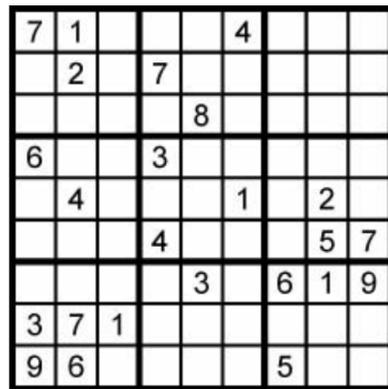
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Scalawags
 - 4 Succour
 - 9 R & R time
 - 10 Append
 - 11 Family member
 - 12 Canadian province
 - 14 Tropical fruit
 - 16 Strand
 - 19 Pokes fun at
 - 21 A fisherman may spin one
 - 24 Impostor
 - 25 Betrothed
 - 26 Sashays
 - 27 Graceless
 - 8 Citrus fruit
 - 13 Some TV shows (4-4)
 - 15 Multi-coloured mount
 - 17 One of the Leeward Islands
 - 18 Hibachi residue
 - 20 Soup scoop
 - 22 Type of puzzle
 - 23 Wood-shaping tool

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

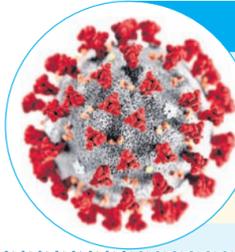
SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



MARIGOLD FARMING

A farmer plucks marigold in a field near Daya river, on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Friday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	42,08,72,276	34,52,68,367	58,84,384
India	4,27,80,235	4,19,77,238	5,10,905
Odisha	12,81,455	12,65,843	8,976

EOW freezes fraudster's bank deposits worth ₹17.10 crore

On EOW's request, the Bureau of Immigration has issued a lookout circular against Deepak Kindo in order to prevent him from fleeing the country through immigration check posts at airports and seaports



Kindo, through his firm Sambandh Finserve Pvt Ltd, took a loan of Rs 5 crore from Annapurna Finance Pvt Ltd on the pretext of providing microloans to women self-help groups. However, it was found that Kindo had submitted forged and misleading documents to secure the loan

Kindo's wife Amrita was also arrested in the case as the sleuths found that Rs 22.72 crore out of the cheated amount had been diverted to a dairy firm owned by her

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the state Crime Branch has frozen deposits worth over Rs 17 crore held in 61 bank accounts connected to M/s Sambandh Finserve Pvt Ltd, its managing director (MD) and absconding notorious conman Deepak Kindo, and his wife and relatives.

During the investigation into the EOW case (17/2021) registered under Sections 406, 420, 467, 468, 471 and 120B of IPC against M/s Sambandh Finserve Pvt Ltd, its MD Deepak Kindo and others, the EOW, Bhubaneswar has identified 47 accounts maintained with several banks and frozen the available balance. "The frozen amount comes to Rs 17,10,66,862," said an EOW official Friday.

Sources said Kindo, through his firm Sambandh Finserve Pvt Ltd, took a loan of Rs 5 crore from Annapurna Finance Pvt Ltd, a non-banking financial company, on the pretext of providing microloans to women self-help groups. The financial institution found that Kindo had submitted forged and misleading documents to secure the loan, it was learnt.

The EOW subsequently launched a probe upon receipt of a complaint from the NBFC.

During the probe, the sleuths found that Kindo had misappropriated more than Rs 100 crore raised from different investors and lenders, including Annapurna

Finance Pvt Ltd, DCB Bank, SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India), BOPA PTE Ltd (a Singapore based Company) and DIA Vikash Capital Pvt Ltd, from 2015 to 2020.

Kindo's wife Amrita was also arrested in the case as the sleuths found that Rs 22.72 crore out of the cheated amount had been diverted to a dairy firm owned by her.

Similarly, on EOW's request, the Bureau of Immigration (BoI) has issued the Lookout circular against Deepak to prevent him from sneaking out of the country through immigration check posts at airports and seaports.

BOOST TO CRIME INVESTIGATION



The Belgian Malinois inducted into the K-9 squad of the Odisha Police along with their trainers at state police headquarters in Cuttack, Friday. With this, the canine squad has got a shot in the arm

OP PHOTOS

Ex-cop, aide held for extortion

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: The Commissionerate Police Friday arrested two miscreants, including a former policeman, for allegedly impersonating police officials and extorting money from people by threatening to implicate them in false cases.

The accused were identified as Gyan Ranjan Mohanty, 60, of Saheed Nagar and Kahnu Chaaran Sahu, 58, of Nuasahi area under Nayapalli police limits.

Mohanty had worked as the assistant sub inspector (communication) and has been dismissed from the service recently. Sources claimed that Mohanty, while working in police signal department in Cuttack, remained absent for around five years without any intimation.

He and Sahu used to wander in Satasanga Vihar and Saheed Nagar area and closely followed the activities of youths present at the spot. The duo would intercept their targets identifying themselves as police officials under various pretexts and later threaten to implicate them in false case. They would later demand money from the victims who would pay to avoid getting arrested.

Recently, they had looted a youth of Rs 8,000 in Lingaraj police station area by following similar modus operandi.

The police arrested the duo by registering a case (27/22) in this regard. The miscreants were produced before the court that sent them to judicial custody. The cops have urged public to inform the police if anyone demands money in similar manner.

SEC holds training session on EVM ahead of ULB polls



The training session in progress at Toshali Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Friday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: The State Election Commission (SEC) Friday began the training session for master trainers from all districts on Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) ahead of the elections to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

According to SEC sources, master trainers from 15 districts attended the session Friday, while those from the remaining districts will attend the training programme Saturday.

There will be one booth for every 1,000 voters. In case the number of voters crosses 1,200, a separate booth will be set up.

"Master trainers are being trained on EVMs for the forthcoming elections to ULBs. These trainers will in turn train the election officers in their respective

Master trainers are being trained on EVMs for the forthcoming elections to Urban Local Bodies. These trainers will train the election officers in their respective districts. They are learning the functions and operations of the EVMs during the session as the NOTA (none of the above) option has been introduced for the first time in the civic body polls

MADHURI MISHRA | LAW OFFICER, STATE ELECTION COMMISSION

districts. They (master trainers) are learning the functions and operations of EVMs during the session as the NOTA (none of the above) option has been introduced for the first time in the civic body

polls," said SEC Law Officer Madhuri Mishra.

The SEC had February 11 this year decided to include NOTA in the civic body polls in order to empower voters to use their discretion of voting no one from the contesting candidates in their respective ULBs.

This apart, in order to help voters cast their votes for electing corporators, councilors, mayors and chairmen directly, there will be two EVMs in each ward.

"As there will be direct election to mayor and chairperson posts this time, we are conducting extensive training sessions," added Mishra.

Meanwhile, store in-charge for the SEC, Rajendra Sahoo, said, this is the initial phase of training.

"The master trainers will once again be trained in their respective districts. They will further train officials like the presiding officers and returning officers involved in the ULB polls in order to ensure smooth conduct of voting," added Sahoo.

The elections to various ULBs across 48 municipalities and 59 notified area councils (NACs), besides Cuttack, Bhubaneswar and Berhampur municipal corporations will be held by the end of April.

Around 4,584 booths will be set up in 1,931 wards for the polls. While 1,407 booths are in municipal corporation areas, 3,177 booths fall under municipalities and NACs.

Prez to visit state today



POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 18: President Ram Nath Kovind will visit Odisha Saturday, an official said Friday.

During his visit, the President will inaugurate the three-year-long celebrations of the 150th birth anniversary of Srimad Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupad, the founder of Gaudiya Math and Mission in Puri February 20.

Soon after, he will leave for Andhra Pradesh to witness the Fleet Review and Flypast at

Visakhapatnam February 21. The President of India, as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, reviews the Indian Naval Fleet once in his/her term as part of the 'President's Fleet Review', it was learnt.

On Thursday, a team of six Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel arrived at Puri and inspected Talabania helipad in the beach town and took stock of the situations there.

The district administration has already conducted a preparation meet for this programme.

'Stop work order' on Polavaram kept in abeyance till July '23

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 18: The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has once again kept the 'stop work order' on the Polavaram project in abeyance till July 2023.

In a letter to the Secretary of Water Resources department of Andhra Pradesh, the ministry conveyed its decision to keep the 'stop work order' on the Polavaram project in abeyance till July 2, 2023 upon a request by the Andhra Pradesh government and the Ministry of Jal Shakti, it was learnt.

In 2015, the 'stop work order' of 2011 was kept in abeyance for a year and after that it was extended on yearly basis till July 2, 2021.

Alleging that the construction is going on illegally in absence of keeping the 'stop work order' in abeyance, Pentapati Pulurao, an activist, approached the NGT saying that over 6,000 people in Odisha will be affected by Polavaram dam.

Consumers now more conscious of health, holistic nutrition: Survey

PANDEMIC EFFECT



Around 94% of Indians are worried about their family's health against 82% globally, while 52% of respondents think changes in their approach to mental wellbeing will persist beyond Covid-19, globally it is just 39%

40% of Indian respondents said they will pay a premium for products promoting health and wellness, which is higher than their global counterparts at 29%

OVER THE LAST YEAR, THE DEMAND FOR HERBAL SUPPLEMENTS AND VITAMINS AND MINERALS HAS WITNESSED A GROWTH OF OVER 25%

THE SURVEY NUMBERS ARE BASED ON EY FUTURE CONSUMER INDEX (NOVEMBER 2021) WITH A TOTAL OF 16,000 GLOBAL RESPONDENTS OUT OF WHICH 1,002 WERE FROM INDIA

Indian consumers are willing to spend more on fitness classes and activities, consuming natural foods, health supplements, and following specialised diets with the Covid-19 pandemic creating 'the biggest seismic shift' taking health and immunity to the centre stage, according to a survey by consultancy firm EY India.

Around 94 per cent of Indians are worried about their family's health against 82 per cent globally, while 52 per cent of respondents think changes in their approach to mental wellbeing will persist beyond Covid-19, globally it is just 39 per cent as per EY India's report 'The Sunrise Consumer Health and Nutrition Sector'.

"While some see this as a short-term phenomenon, we expect this phase to catalyse a larger acceleration in the propensity towards personal health, hygiene, fitness and holistic nutrition," EY India National Leader - Consumer Product & Retail Sector Angshuman Bhattacharya said in a statement.

European and Asian nations have adopted functional foods and supplements, the Indian consumer is still predominantly showing a preference for 'better for you' foods and home remedies, he added.

"Ayurveda and herbal are increasingly becoming 'back to roots' answers to modern problems," Bhattacharya noted.

EY said Indian consumers have opened their wallets towards fitness classes and activities, consuming natural foods, health supplements, and following specialised diets.

According to the survey, 40 per cent of Indian respondents stated that they will pay a premium for products promoting health and wellness, which is higher than their global counterparts at 29 per cent.

The survey numbers are based on EY Future Consumer Index (November 2021) with a total of 16,000 global respondents out of which 1,002 were from India. The dietary supplements mar-

ket, always considered to be high potential given the growing lifestyle diseases, has witnessed an accelerated adoption curve, post Covid-19, EY India said, adding over the last year, the demand for herbal supplements and vitamins and minerals have witnessed a growth of over 25 per cent.

The growing interest in natural and ayurvedic products has encouraged companies, already active in this segment, to assert their credentials more strongly, while it has also attracted the attention of players from pharmaceuticals, the EY report said.

FOR A CAUSE



People under the banner of 'Hindu Sena' take out a rally to Cuttack Collector's office alleging poor treatment to destitute patients at SCB Medical College and Hospital in the Silver City, Friday

OP PHOTO

OSHEC team begins Ramadevi Women's Univ academic audit



The team of experts will assess the works of the institutions via both online and offline modes, and will also mentor these colleges and universities

The council is developing a web portal to maintain a database of degree colleges and universities in the state, and the institutions can fill up their baseline status on the website

The experts, including retired professors, administrators or people from the industry, will visit these institutes to verify their claims and assess their performance

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: A four-member delegation of the Odisha State Higher Education Council (OSHEC) began its two-day academic audit of Ramadevi Women's University Friday. The audit will cover academic and administrative aspects of the university. For the first time, the OSHEC is conducting an academic audit of autonomous colleges and state public universities to help them improve grades and ranks.

According to the program, the delegation will translate every department of the university, the quality department, the NCC, the Red Cross and so on. Each aspect of the curriculum, teaching, and research will be reviewed.

The delegation includes academicians Susmit Kumar Pani,

The delegation includes academicians Susmit Kumar Pani, Pradeep Kumar Behera, Swetanshu Kumar Rath and former Vice-Chancellor of Gangadhar Meher University Atanu Kumar Pati

Pradeep Kumar Behera, Swetanshu Kumar Rath and former Vice-Chancellor of Gangadhar Meher University Atanu Kumar Pati.

The team attended an introductory meeting with Ramadevi Vice-Chancellor Aparajita Chowdhury. Chowdhury said, "This academic audit will be helpful in our preparation for the NAAC accreditation."

In the first phase, the council will do the audits of Rama Devi Women's University and BJB Autonomous College, Bhubaneswar; Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur; and Pranatanth Autonomous College, Khurda. The audit will be completed by the end of February.

An official of the council said that the team of experts will assess the works of the institutions via both online and offline modes. It will also mentor these colleges and universities. He further said that the council is developing a web portal to maintain a database of degree colleges and universities in the state. The institutions can fill up their baseline status on the website. The experts, including retired professors, administrators or people from the industry, will visit these institutes to verify their claims and assess their performance, he added.

YOUTH & YOGA



Students, teachers and staffers of Sailabala Women's College in Cuttack performing 'Surya Namaskar' on the institution's premises, Friday OP PHOTO

Railway special drive on public etiquettes in trains

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: The East Coast Railway (ECoR) has recently launched an awareness drive on maintaining etiquettes like not speaking loud over phone or playing loud music while travelling in trains along with other guidelines.

Instructions have also been given to on-board train staff including ticket checking, RPF, catering, and electrical and mechanical staff to counsel passengers regarding the public etiquettes during their train journey. Passengers are advised not to disturb the co-passengers; to avoid having loud phone calls or listening to loud music, to avoid using

the lights in the cabin except focus lights after 10pm, and to minimise sound/noise level of general discussions in the coach after 10pm.

ECoR has sensitised its on-board staff to maintain politeness while being tactful and courteous when dealing with passengers on the above issues. Instructions have also given to assist passengers like

people above 60 years of age, differently able, patients and single female passengers during their urgent requirements in train.

Strict action will be taken against the passengers who are violating the guidelines and making inconvenience to the other co-passengers or disturbing them while travelling in trains, said an official.

INTOXICATION INTOLERANT



Members of the students' wing of Cuttack Congress stage a protest demanding action against illegal intoxicant trade in the Silver City, Friday OP PHOTO

New faces, more cases come to fore in fake doctor row

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: Victims from across the state are coming to fore with fresh allegations of cheating against the notorious conman and imposter Ramesh Swain, the fake doctor who allegedly duped 17 women of lakhs after marrying them.

Friday, a youth from Boudh district alleged that Swain had reportedly taken four lakh from him by promising to give his sister a job as a staff nurse, back in March 2020.

The accused had allegedly demanded ₹6 lakh from the youth. But the young man could manage to give only ₹4 lakh. Upon receiving the money, Swain had started to avoid the youth.

Meanwhile, the court Friday allowed the Commissionerate Police to take Swain on a five-day remand for further investigation related questioning. Police would also try to find out other cases in which the fraudster is involved.

The hunt is on to arrest individuals how might have helped the Don Juan of Odisha in committing the forgeries.

India's popular e-commerce website IndiaMart.Com and four other markets, including New Delhi's famous Palika Bazaar, have figured in the latest annual list of the world's notorious markets released by the US Trade Representative Thursday.

The 2021 Notorious Markets List identified 42 online and 35 physical markets around the world that are reported to engage in or facilitate substantial trademark counterfeiting or copyright piracy.

The three other Indian markets in the list are Heera Panna in Mumbai, Kidderpore in Kolkata and Tank Road in Delhi.

"The global trade in counterfeit and pirated goods undermines critical US innovation and creativity and harms American workers," said United States Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai.

"This illicit trade also increases the vulnerability of workers involved in the manufacturing of counterfeit goods to exploitative labour practices, and the counterfeit goods can pose significant risks to the health and safety of consumers and workers around the world," she said.

The USTR report said IndiaMART, an e-commerce website and mobile app that connects buyers with suppliers, describes itself as the world's second largest online business-to-business market. Counterfeit goods can allegedly be found in large volumes on IndiaMART, including counterfeit pharmaceuticals, electronics and apparel.

Right holders are concerned with IndiaMART's failure to adequately implement anti-counterfeiting best practices, including seller verification, penalties against known sellers of counterfeit goods, or proactive monitoring of infringing goods.

IndiaMART apparently has a notice-and-takedown system, but right holders report that it is burdensome to use, the time-to-takedown is slow, and the status of notices is not transparently communicated to right holders, the report said.

The USTR said a major indoor market located at the heart of Mumbai, Heera Panna reportedly offers counterfeit watches, footwear, accessories, and cosmetics. Right holders warn that counterfeit cos-

US NOTORIOUS MARKETS LIST

Counterfeiting and copyright piracy place 5 Indian markets



Since February 2011, USTR has been publishing annually the Notorious Markets List separately from the Special 301 Report, to increase public awareness and help market operators and governments prioritise intellectual property enforcement efforts that protect American businesses and their workers

USTR is an agency of the US government responsible for developing and promoting American trade policy and it first identified notorious markets in the Special 301 Report in 2006

metics sold at this market have health and safety risks. A raid at Heera Panna in September 2021 resulted in arrests for selling counterfeit versions of premium watches.

Locally known as "Fancy Market", Kidderpore allegedly sells counterfeit apparel and cosmetics, often in wholesale quantities. Severe skin problems, rashes, irritation, and eye diseases have reportedly been caused due to the poor quality of the counterfeits, the report said.

Palika Bazaar remains on the

notorious market list (NML) in 2021. This underground market in Delhi is well-known for the trade of counterfeit products, such as mobile accessories, cosmetics, watches and eyewear. Many shoppers are reportedly students and other young people who want trendy products at cheap prices. The market is also a popular destination for tourists, the report noted.

Right holders report that Delhi's wholesale Tank Road market continues to sell counterfeit products,



Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: The East Coast Railway (ECoR) has loaded 311 rakes of fly ash from its jurisdiction towards different places of the country following the Environment Guidelines. This was possible due to the consistent effort of the Business Development Unit (BDU) of the ECoR.

ECoR BDU, in its frequent interactions with the customers and industries, explored ways to increase miscellaneous non-bulk goods traffic through rail. In a move to increase Railway's share in the transportation sector and ensure modal transit from road to rail, ECoR BDU has taken an initiative to transport fly-ash towards different destinations of the country from the industries under ECoR jurisdiction. This is one of the

steps towards strengthening Railway's share in traditional transportation patterns and also to attract more traffic to Railways.

Participants of fly ash transportation have jointly agreed to make concerted efforts for 100 per cent utilisation of fly ash, as per the guidelines of the Ministry of Environment, and for ensuring this by the joint effort of the producers, transporter and the end-users of the same.

ECoR BDU consistently meets the representatives of thermal power

plants, integrated steel plants, aluminium smelter plants and cement plants for transportation of fly ash by Rail. Since September 15, 2020, 311 rakes (goods train) of fly ash have already been transported towards different parts of the country. A total of 141 rakes have been transported from Khurda Road Division, 138 rakes from Sambalpur and 32 rakes from Waltair Division till now.

In 2020-21 fiscal, ECoR had carried 91 rakes of fly ash. From this, ECoR had loaded 0.356MT of fly ash. Before the end of the current fiscal i.e. from April 1 to February 16 this year, ECoR has carried 0.847MT of fly ash in 220 rakes towards various places. This includes 99 rakes from Angul, 91 from Sambalpur and 30 from Koraput & Visakhapatnam. Altogether, ECoR has loaded 1.20MT fly ash towards different destinations from its jurisdiction.

ALIBABA, TENCENT DEBUT

The US has added sites operated by Chinese technology giants Alibaba and Tencent as well to the list of businesses it believes are involved with trading counterfeit goods. The US and China are in a long-running dispute over trade and technology. The office of the USTR said its list had for the first time included AliExpress and WeChat e-commerce sites. AliExpress is owned by Alibaba and WeChat is operated by Tencent. It called the sites "two significant China-based online markets that reportedly facilitate substantial trademark counterfeiting". China-based online markets Baidu Wangan, DHGate, Pinduoduo and Taobao continue to be listed, it added, "as well as nine physical markets located within China that are known for the manufacture, distribution, and sale of counterfeit goods". Tencent said it had "invested significant resources" into protecting intellectual property rights on its platforms. "We strongly disagree with the decision made by the USTR and are committed to working collaboratively to resolve this matter," a spokesperson told media. Alibaba did not respond to a request for comment.

including apparel, footwear, watches, handbags, electronics, and beauty products. Wholesale counterfeit goods are also reportedly supplied from this market to other Indian markets, including Gaffar Market and Ajmal Khan Road, the report said.

"Right holders note that conducting enforcement actions at this location is challenging, as the market is located in a residential area and sellers often appear to have advanced knowledge of raids, limiting their effectiveness," it said.

USTR, an agency of the US government responsible for developing and promoting American trade policy, first identified notorious markets in the Special 301 Report in 2006. Since February 2011, USTR has been publishing annually the Notorious Markets List separately from the Special 301 Report, to increase public awareness and help market operators and governments prioritise intellectual property enforcement efforts that protect American businesses and their workers. AGENCIES

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

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

SHORT TAKES

Driver, helper burnt alive

Champua: A driver and a helper of a trailer burnt alive late Thursday night when the vehicle caught fire following a mishap on NH-520 at Naradpur Sishumandir Chhak under Champua police limits in Keonjhar. The trailer coming from Joda and a Hyva going to Rimuli collided head on following which the trailer caught fire. The fire spread so fast that the driver and the helper of the trailer could not find time to escape. Though their identities are yet to be established, prima facie they appeared to be from West Bengal, police said.

Ballot papers looted in Jajpur

Jajpur: Ballot papers were snatched away from polling officials at booth no- 2 and 3 of Kanikapada panchayat under Dasarathpur block in Jajpur district during the second phase of panchayat elections, Friday. An incident of booth rigging was also reported from Nalipur panchayat under Barchana block while a ballot box was snatched away and thrown into a pond in Dasarathpur panchayat.

BeMC expansion soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 18: Ahead of the urban polls and amid protests by the people of three panchayats and some other villages on the outskirts of Silk city demanding merger of their areas with Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC), the civic body has assured that their demand will be fulfilled soon. The locals, who have been fighting for the cause for years, argued that as their areas are out of the purview of the civic body, they have been deprived of the benefits of government's developmental initiatives and basic amenities. People of the three panchayats and some other villages on Berhampur outskirts have formed United Action Committee (UAC) and submitted a memorandum to the state government through the BeMC commissioner. These people have been staging protests for the last 13 years, demanding inclusion of 18 peripheral panchayats in BeMC area. They have also cited an order of the High Court in this regard.

The UAC had earlier moved a petition in the High Court seeking its direction for inclusion of some of the suburb areas of the city under BeMC.

Hearing the case, the HC had issued a directive to the adminis-

MERGER OF SUBURBS ON CARDS



BeMC COMMISSIONER SIDDESHWAR BALIRAM BONDAR SAID THE STATE GOVT IS AWARE OF THE HC ORDER AND THE PROCESS OF MERGER WILL START SOON

trator of the BeMC and the Housing and Urban Development department February 11 for inclusion of some peripheral villages.

A delegation of the UAC has held discussions with the commissioner regarding their long-

standing demand and the HC order thereof. During the talks, BeMC commissioner Siddeshwar Baliram Bondar said that the state government is aware of the HC order on the issue.

"The Ganjam Collector and the Urban Development director have discussed the issue. There is positive response at the government level about execution of the HC order," he added.

The commissioner said apart from the proposed panchayats, two more panchayats have to be included in the BeMC area. He assured that the process of inclusion will start soon.

Vig raids asst engg of Sunabeda municipality

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Feb 18: Vigilance officials Friday raided the houses and office of Manoj Patra, assistant engineer of Sunabeda municipality, on allegation of possessing properties disproportionate to his know sources of income.

Simultaneous searches were conducted at six places in Koraput, Khurda, Gajapati and Ganjam districts.

As per sources, the sleuths of the anti-corruption wing raided his official residence and municipality office at Sunabeda, Kanakalata Apartment in Bhubaneswar, a two-storey building at Shaktinagar in Berhampur, Sitapur in Paralakhemundi and a relative's house in the Silk city Friday.

The two-storied building at Berhampur was valued at Rs 50.57 lakh as per preliminary estimate. He also has seven plots including one in Bhubaneswar and three each in Berhampur and Koraput.

Vigilance officials have seized fixed deposits and bank deposits worth Rs 28.75 lakh, a four-wheeler (Hyundai Venue) worth Rs 12.88 lakh, a two-wheeler worth Rs 59,447 when the report was being prepared. The Vigilance officials have recently arrested Trinath Mishra, ASP of Cuttack, and a crorepati doctor in Puri.

Poll boycotts galore

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Feb 18: The second phase of panchayat elections ended peacefully in Mayurbhanj but four booths under Suliapada block saw voters boycotting the polls over lack of development. Polling officials were seen returning from booths with empty ballot boxes.

According to sources, people of four booths in Kujidiha, Baghada, Deuli and Fania panchayats did not turn up for voting.

Besides, people of two booths had locked the gates of booths Friday in protest against their names missing from voter lists. Since tension prevailed in the areas for hours, more police were deployed at these booths.

People of Asanbani village in Kujidiha panchayat have been grappling with commuting woes in the absence of a pucca road. Many eld-

Two Nabarangpur villages shun polls

Nabarangpur: People of Ladipadar and Barada under Tentulikhunti block of Nabarangpur district boycotted the panchayat polls, Friday. The villagers were upset over the underdevelopment of their area. "Our villages are far from availing basic facilities. Welfare schemes don't reach the people. People's representatives and the administration have no concern for socioeconomic development of the people," they lamented. They said that their votes have no meaning when the fruits of development elude the villagers.

erly people are deprived of social security benefits. Residents of Kundishola village under Fania panchayat abstained from voting at booth-1 and 2 as their names have been missing from voter list.



People of Asanbani stage a protest alleging apathy of the administration

RESOLUTE STAND



People waiting for their turn outside a booth in Kotia panchayat of Koraput during the second phase of panchayat elections, Friday

OP PHOTO

National Entrance Screening Test (NEST) 2022
Admission to 5-year Integrated MSc Programmes in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physics at NISER (Bhubaneswar) and UM-DAE CEBS (Mumbai) (Autonomous institutions under the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India)

The National Entrance Screening Test (NEST) is a compulsory test for admission to the 5-year Integrated MSc programme in basic sciences - Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics - at National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER), Bhubaneswar and University of Mumbai - Department of Atomic Energy Centre for Excellence in Basic Sciences (UM-DAE CEBS), Mumbai. NEST 2022 will be conducted in around 115 towns and cities all over India on June 18, 2022 (Saturday).

The candidates admitted to the programme are eligible to receive an annual scholarship of Rs 60,000 through DISHA program of Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India. In addition, the scholarship recipients receive a grant of Rs.20,000 per annum for summer internship. Candidates selected by DST for the INSPIRE-SHE program are endorsed for INSPIRE scholarship by NISER and CEBS.

For detailed information on NEST 2022 application procedure and previous years' question papers please visit NEST 2022 website: www.nestexam.in

Application: Through ONLINE portal ONLY. Visit www.nestexam.in to apply. Online portal opens on Feb. 21, 2022, & closes on May 18, 2022

Examination: ONLINE/computer based ONLY. Date of examination: June 18, 2022 (Saturday) Time: 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM (1st session) 2:30 PM - 6:00 PM (2nd session) Results announcement : July 05, 2022

Address for correspondence : The Chief Coordinator, NEST 2022 UM-DAE CEBS, Nalanda Building, University of Mumbai, Vidyaynagar Campus, Kalina, Santacruz (E), Mumbai 400098, India E-mail: nest@cbs.ac.in Website: www.nestexam.in

Fees structure and mode of payment : Male (General and OBC categories): Rs.1200/- Male (SC and ST categories): Rs.600/- Female (all categories): Rs.600/- Divyangjan candidates: Rs.600/- Pay ONLY via Net banking/ Credit card/ Debit card

Govt official's viral audio creates ripples

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boinda, Feb 18: An audio clip of an administrative official revealing favouritism to ruling party candidates has gone viral in Kishorenagar area of Angul district. In the audio, the official assures a ruling party leader that he would fully cooperate in ensuring the win of good candidates in zilla parishad zones. In 2017 panchayat elections, the BJD had to face debacle in three zones. Local BJP leaders questioned the impartial conduct of the panchayat elections.

Athmallik sub-collector Lalit Mohan Behera was tightlipped when his reaction was sought over phone.

Model code flouted in Jharsuguda

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, Feb 18: Lakhanpur police has registered three cases and Rengali police two regarding violation of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) during the ongoing panchayat elections in Jharsuguda district. According to sources, Damayanti Sa, the samiti member candidate of Kusraloi panchayat under Lakhanpur block, along with some of her supporters had allegedly distributed money to voters Wednesday. Its video had gone viral on social media. Lakhanpur tehsildar Anuranjan Gete had filed a



police complaint in this regard.

Similarly, some outsiders had also distributed money among voters at Ainlapada Thursday when BJP workers opposed it, leading to a confrontation between two groups. BJP leader Rajkumar

Sahu had filed a police complaint Thursday.

In Pandari panchayat, sarpanch candidate Subansini Sahu's husband Gourang Sahu had abused and threatened Debadhicharan Pradhan of Balanda village over phone regarding votes. Pradhan had filed a complaint in this regard too.

Two similar cases regarding MCC violation have been filed with Rengali police Thursday.

Jharsuguda superintendent of police (SP) Bikash Chandra Das said police have started investigations into the cases.

Rural polls litmus test for BJD, BJP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasure, Feb 18: The ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) is leaving no stone unturned to bag all the five zilla parishad (ZP) zones under Balasure Sadar block.

As per sources, elections will be held in 37 panchayats under five ZP zones in this block February 24. Altogether 1,46,428 voters will decide the fate of the candidates for 37 sarpanch posts and five ZP seats.

The BJP is pulling out all the stops to regain its influence it had lost in the by-election to the Sadar Assembly seat. Winning all the ZP seats and maximum number of sarpanch seats is now a challenge for the newly-elected BJD MLA Swarup Das.

It is said that ZP zone-29 will see a tough fight between BJD's Narayan Pradhan and BJP's Bijay Kumar Nayak. Congress has fielded Gayaprasad Das for this seat. Similarly, BJD's Sanjay Das, BJP's Gayadhar Behera and Congress' Krushna Das are contesting in zone-25. In zone-26, BJD has fielded Sonali Biswal; the BJP Jhumulata Swain and Congress Rinki Rout.

Those fighting for ZP zone-27 are: BJD's



BALASURE SADAR

■ Elections will be held in 37 panchayats under five ZP zones in this block February 24

■ While the ruling party leaders and workers have been highlighting various welfare measures and Mission Shakti programme of the state government, the BJP has been trying to woo voters by highlighting Central schemes

Banalata Sethi, BJP's Archana Samal and Congress' Renubala Ghadei.

In zone-28, BJD has fielded Sanjay Kumar Sethi; the BJP Sanotsh Sethi and the Congress Karunakar Jena.

Given the weak organisation of the Congress in all the ZP zones, battle lines are now drawn between the BJD and the

BJP, political observers said. While the ruling party leaders and workers have been highlighting various welfare measures and Mission Shakti programme of the state government, the BJP has been trying to woo the voters by highlighting Central schemes of the NDA government.

In 2017 panchayat elections, four ZP seats, except zone-28 had gone to the BJP's kitty. With this, the BJP bolstered its base which handed out win to party's Madanmohan Dutta in 2019 Assembly elections from Balasure Sadar. After the death of Dutta, the BJD grabbed the Sadar Assembly in 2020 by-election. Prior to the Assembly bypoll in the Sadar seat, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had announced to take care of the Assembly constituency and later crores of rupees were pumped in for various developmental programmes in the area.

Since then, MLA Das has been making all-out efforts to keep the voters in good humour so that his ZP candidates win the poll to maintain his clout which is essential for the 2024 general elections.

However, BJP sounds confident of winning all the five ZP seats under the Sadar block riding on the wave of reported discontent in BJD.

Bank of India Zonal Office: Bhubaneswar Zone, 1/1D, Star House, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015, Ph.: 0674-2362249

Bank of India Auction Sale of Vehicle

Sl. No.	Branch Name & Contact No.	Name of the Borrower	Vehicle Details	Reserve Price / Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Parking Yard Details
1.	VSS NAGAR BRANCH, Ph.: 0674-2584141	Mr. Satya Ranjan Samal	AUDI TT COUPE 45 TFSI QUATTRO, Engine No.: CHH232518, Chassis No.: TRUZJHFV2J1006101, Regd. No.: OD33T0099, Year of Manufacturing: 2018	₹ 25,00,000/- / ₹ 2,50,000/-	Sriram Automall India Ltd. (SAMIL), Cuttack, At: Sriram Automall Yard, Nuapatana, NH-42, Choudwar-Angul Road, Cuttack-754007, Contact Person: Mr. Prabhat Kumar (Mob-8658738320), Mr. Debasish Subudhi (Mob-9861342494)

Date of Auction: 26.02.2022 from 11.00 AM, Auction Venue : Sriram Automall India Ltd. (SAMIL), Cuttack, At: Sriram Automall Yard, Nuapatana, NH-42, Choudwar-Angul Road, Cuttack-754007

Terms and Conditions: Interested bidders can inspect the vehicle at the premises of Sriram Automall India Ltd. (SAMIL), Cuttack, At: Sriram Automall Yard, Nuapatana, NH-42, Choudwar-Angul Road, Cuttack-754007. Application & quotes to participate in the auction would be supplied by SAMIL. The application along with earnest money, mentioned against above vehicle to be submitted well before public auction. The bidders are informed to be present at the venue positively. The successful bidder has to deposit 25% of bid amount within one day after bid is successful and the balance amount within 7 days failing which the money deposited by the successful bidder would be forfeited. The cost of transfer of ownership and statutory dues/all misc. charges, if any is to borne by the successful purchaser. Vehicle will be auctioned on "AS IS WHERE IS & AS IS WHAT IS" basis. However the Bank reserves the right to accept/reject/cancel the auction sale process of the vehicle at its own discretion at any point of time. There will be bidding in the auction and the highest bidder will be declared as successful bidder.

For further information & clarification contact at Ph. No.: 0674-2362249 & 8658738320

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 19.02.2022 Zonal Manager, Bank of India

Bank of India Area Manager Office, Tahasil Road, Bhadrak, Odisha-756100

Bank of India Demand Notice

Notice under Section 13 (2) of SARFAESI Act, 2002 for Enforcement of Security Interest

The Bank has granted following various credit facilities to the under mentioned borrower & the amount outstanding dues mentioned below has not been paid in time. Therefore Demand notice under Sec. 13 (2) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 was issued by the Authorized Officer against the following Borrower of the Bank of India, Dhenkanal Branch but the same could not be served on the below mentioned parties which was sent by Regd. Post A.D. Therefore, the contents of the same including the amount outstanding, Loan amount and details of the secured assets are herein furnished below.

DHENKANAL BRANCH / Name and Address of Borrower	Nature / Limit	Date of NPA / Date of Demand Notice	Amount as per Notice under SARFAESI Act	Details of the mortgaged property
Borrower : Mr. Siba Prasad Mohanty, S/o: Mr. Prasanta Mohanty, At: Durga Bazar, Dhenkanal-759001	Home Loan / ₹15,00,000/-	30.12.2021 / 12.01.2022	₹17,92,320.95 + Interest & expenses thereon	All that part and parcel of Land and Building situated over Mutated Khata No.: 535/284, Plot No.: 2066/3223, Area: Ac.0.120Dec.,

Kissam: Gharabari at Mouza: Banamali Prasad, P.S.: Sadar, SRO: Dhenkanal, Tahasil: Dhenkanal, Dist.: Dhenkanal, standing in the name of Mr. Siba Prasad Mohanty, Bounded by North: Road, South: Gourendra Pratap Singh, East: Mr. Prahallad Pani, West: Gourendra Pratap Singh

As the above mentioned Borrower of the Dhenkanal Branch have defaulted in repayment of the principal loan/ facility in installments/ interest/ both, the account has been classified as NPA, in accordance with the directions or guidelines issued by the RBI. In spite of our repeated demands you (borrower) have not paid any amount towards the amount outstanding in your account, you have not discharged your liabilities. Hence, we are now constrained to make this publication of Demand Notice, required u/s 13(2) of the said Act and Rule 3 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. You are here by called upon to pay the aforesaid amount alongwith further interest, cost, incidental Expenses, Charges etc. within a period of 60 days from the date of Notice, failing which we will take necessary action under the provisions of sec 13(4) of the said Act, against all or any one or more of the secured assets including taking possession of your secured assets and sale them. If the dues are not fully recovered in the course of these actions against secured assets, then the Bank reserves the right to take action by filing recovery action against you before DRT/Court for recovery of the same. It may be noted that under the provisions of section 13(8) of the Act, right of redemption is available to you, by paying the dues of the Bank together with all cost, charges and expenses incurred by the Bank, at any time, before the date of publication of notice for public auction or inviting quotations or tender from public or private treaty for transfer by way of lease, assignment or sale of the secured assets. Please take note that as per sub section (13) of the aforesaid Act. after receipt of this notice, you are restrained from transferring or creating any encumbrances on the aforesaid secured assets whether by way of sale, lease, license, gift, mortgage or otherwise. This notice is issued without prejudice to the rights of the bank available under any other law.

Place : Bhadrak, Date: 19.02.2022 Authorised Officer, Bank of India

Be grateful for all ordeals, they are the shortest way to the Divine
THE MOTHER



Disinvestment Target

The Budget is done and dusted, and the tough part starts now, which is implementing the proposals. One space where heavy lifting needs to be done is the disinvestment sector. The process needs to pick up pace, as Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kant Pandey is only too aware.

The government has revised its disinvestment estimate for the current financial year to ₹78,000 crore, down from ₹1.75 lakh crore envisaged in the budget estimate last year, which is more than 55% reduction, and has set a target of ₹65,000 crore for 2022-23.

Last year's target will only be met by this non-disinvestment of 5% in LIC. Other major disinvestments planned include Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), Pawan Hans and Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL). Those are big looming tasks for Pandey and his team. But even then, there will be a big gap between the Budget and actual disinvestment. Perhaps keeping disinvestment targets modest is an admission that they were rather ambitious in the past!

Centre's lateral entry programme picks up after a lull

The Centre's lateral appointments programme is progressing despite initial hiccups and lukewarm response. The first lateral entry from the private sector and public sector undertakings for appointment at senior and mid-level positions in various ministries happened in 2019 with seven candidates and a mere three candidates in 2021. However, 19 more candidates were selected last year for appointment to the post of Director on a lateral recruitment basis and are working in various capacities, according to the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT). The first round of lateral appointments in 2019 was disappointing when out of the nine selected candidates two resigned shortly later.

Now, in the current year, the Centre has recommended 31 candidates in various Union Ministries under lateral entry programme on contract. Six of these appointments are to the Ministry of Finance, including Rajeev Saksena (Department of Economic Affairs), Sourabh Mishra (Department of Financial Services) and Balasubramanian Krishnamurthy (Department of Revenue). Among the 10 candidates recommended for Joint Secretary rank are Samuel Praveen Kumar (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare), Manish Chadha (Ministry of Commerce and Industry), Amber Dube (Ministry of Civil Aviation) and Dinesh Dayanand Jagdale (Ministry of New and Renewable Energy).

All the babus have specialised knowledge and expertise in their domain areas. While those from the private sector have been appointed on a contract basis, those from public sector undertakings have been appointed on deputation.

Kerala babu stirs controversy again with memoir

A memoir penned by Kerala IAS officer M Sivasankar, who was incarcerated for his alleged role in the gold smuggling case and was brought back into service from suspension only last month, has set off a fresh round of accusations and denials.

While the juicy contents may ensure that the case and Sivasankar remain in the headlines, the babu may find himself being questioned by the state government. The matter is still sub judice and Sivasankar reportedly did not seek prior clearance from the government for writing his version of the smuggling case.

The babu, who is currently posted as Principal Secretary of Sports and Youth Welfare, denies that there is any content in the book that deals with the sub judice case. He however does vigorously defend himself, claiming that there is nothing to connect him with the gold smuggling case. But the state government is unlikely to accept Sivasankar's claims at face value. But a far more awkward dilemma for the authorities would be questioning Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan since the babu was Principal Secretary to the CM when the scandal broke out. As of now, Pinarayi seems to be backing Sivasankar's memoir, but that may quickly change if the case continues to haunt the babu corridors in Kerala.

Share a babu experience! Follow [@dilipthecherian](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian) on twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect



BABUDOM BYTES
Dilip Cherian



Daniel Cohen

VALÉRY GISCARD D'ESTAING, THE CENTER-RIGHT INCUMBENT, WAS CERTAIN THAT HE WOULD WIN RE-ELECTION IN 1981. BUT OWING TO THE FALLOUT OF THE SECOND GLOBAL OIL SHOCK, HE LOST TO FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND.

Although the French presidential election is just two months away, it still feels as though the campaign hasn't really begun. On both the right and the left, the candidates are busy marking their territories off from close rivals. Each seems to be more focused on settling internal accounts than on confronting the incumbent, Emmanuel Macron.

On the left, seven candidates are playing a zero-sum game for no more than 25% of the electorate. On the right, a similar contest is playing out between the center and the extreme, with three candidates ultimately vying for about 45% of the electorate. Opinion polls currently show Macron winning the first round with 25% and being re-elected in the second round, regardless of whether he faces Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Rally or Valérie Pécresse of the traditional center-right party, Les Républicains.

Macron, meanwhile, seems content to watch his challengers fight among themselves. He has been postponing the official announcement of his candidacy until the last minute and has made clear that he will not participate in the first-round debates.

Macron's remarkable hold on French political life is anomalous. In most large democracies, politics has become increasingly polarized, with the left and the right locked in a state of mutual hatred. How has Macron managed to hold a moderate centrist line? Part of the answer lies in the exceptional circumstances in which he was elected in 2017.

In that election, the left's main candidate, incumbent President François Hollande, was so unpopular – his approval rating was just 4% a year before his term ended – that he ultimately opted not to run. At the same time, the candidate of the mainstream right, François Fillon, became caught up in a financial scandal and was sentenced to five years in prison

FOCUS FRENCH POLLS

WAITING FOR MACRON



While in most large democracies, politics has become increasingly polarised, with the left and the right locked in a state of mutual hatred, Emmanuel Macron has managed to hold a moderate centrist line

on embezzlement charges.

Beyond these unique circumstances, Macron also benefited from the growing radicalization of both the left and the right, which enabled him to consolidate control over a large bloc of voters who were worried about extremism on both sides. His campaign followed a textbook "median-voter" strategy, attracting moderate left-wing voters (many of whom remain faithful to him) as well as a significant share of the moderate right.

Now, a new analysis of French electoral trends, based on a sample of nearly 10,000 voters collected by Ipsos, highlights the trajectory of left-wing voters who had previously supported Hollande. In 2012, this cohort represented 28.5% of the electorate. In 2017, 46% of former Hollande voters cast ballots for Macron. Now, this segment of the electorate is divided into thirds: 36% continue to support Macron, 34% are preparing to vote again for a

left-wing candidate, and 29% intend to abstain from voting.

The share of voters committed to the left thus has fallen by some 18 percentage points. Not only has the moderate left defected; a growing share of working-class voters has decided to abstain or support the far right. Since the left is clearly in need of an ideological reboot, its candidates in this election are largely focused on preparing the ground for after Macron leaves the scene.

But Macron has also had a dramatic impact on the right. The same poll shows that support for Pécresse is lower than it was for Fillon around this time in 2017, reflecting the migration of right-leaning voters elsewhere. Around 29% of Fillon voters are preparing to vote for Macron, and 16% are supporting Éric Zemmour, the new far-right rival to Le Pen. Pécresse thus commands only 48% of Fillon's electorate. In her effort to claim both the center right and the radical right, Pécresse

lately seems more interested in winning over the latter, going so far as to highlight the racist "great replacement" theory, developed by the far-right thinker Renaud Camus. As with the left, the traditional right is struggling to assert itself against extremists.

The problem for both the left and the right is that this election comes at a time voters are primarily concerned with kitchen-table issues, rather than ideological purity tests. The Ipsos poll shows that the two worries most frequently cited by voters are declining purchasing power (44%) and COVID-19 (35%).

These issues – which are mainly about vaccination and the price of fuel – are hardly conducive to ideological grandstanding. The right can't accuse Macron of fiscal profligacy, because voters want more deficit- and debt-financed support. But nor can the left capitalize on the situation. French voters will protest vehemently against rising energy prices, making it much more difficult to push for new taxes on fossil fuels (even if there are also measures to help reinforce a new consumption model).

Then again, French politics never remains dormant for long, as Charles de Gaulle and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing both discovered in their own times. In 1965, de Gaulle assumed that his election was assured; yet against all odds, he had to run a second-round campaign against François Mitterrand, who had been endorsed by the left, including the Communist Party. Similarly, Giscard d'Estaing, the center-right incumbent, was certain that he would win re-election in 1981. But owing to the fallout of the second global oil shock, he lost to Mitterrand.

This year's campaign, too, might still surprise us. After all, the main protagonist has not yet entered the scene.

The author is President of the Board of Directors of the Paris School of Economics

SPECTRUM BANKING IRREGULARITIES

PSBs responsible for ABG scam

ABG shipyard was an internationally prominent shipbuilder. It had built 165 ships in the last 16 years of which 46 were exported. However, the 2008 global financial crisis led to a change in the fortunes of the Company. The demand for ships declined and the Company gradually slipped into losses. The loan taken by the Company was classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) by various banks in 2013. It was only in 2018 that meeting of the lending banks decided to order a forensic audit to uncover any possible wrongdoing. Global consultancy firm Ernst and Young (EY) was appointed as the forensic auditor. EY gave its report in January 2019 and disclosed that certain scam had taken place. Interestingly, the lead bank ICICI remained inactive even after the EY report came in. The State Bank of India filed the first complaint in November 2019 – 10 months after the EY report; filed the second complaint in August 2020 – 8 months after the first complaint; and a CBI enquiry was ordered in August 2021 – full one year after the second complaint. This shows that not only the lead bank ICICI, which had the primary responsibility to manage this loan, was inactive but even State Bank of India was laggard and it took more than 2.5



A CEO of a PSB drawing a salary of, say, ₹2 crore PA would stand to gain 10 years' salary by accepting a bribe of ₹20 crore

the profits of the owner. Thus the owner of a private bank would not take a bribe of ₹20 crores to give a suspected loan of ₹2,000 crores because the owner himself will lose ₹1,980 crores in the process. The CEOs of PSBs continue to give suspected loans because of this lack of alignment between the personal objectives of the CEO and the objectives of the PSB. No wonder we have had a number of scams involving PSBs in the last few years. I say with certainty that such scams will continue to take place in the times to come.

It is time for the government to take bold action and privatise all PSBs except, perhaps, the State Bank of India which provides services such as clearing houses to the banks across the country. Only then we will get rid of the corruption that is prevalent in the PSBs. It is time that the Government deals with the root cause of the continuous scams hitting the PSBs rather than making scapegoats of a few CEOs of PSBs just as Chanda Kochhar was shunted out only to have ICICI Bank extend bad loans to ABG Shipyards.

The author is a former Professor of Economics at IIM, Bangalore

WISDOM CORNER

I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them.
DALAI LAMA

A man who dares to waste one hour of time has not discovered the value of life.
CHARLES DARWIN

WORDSWORTH

Acersecomiac

The legitimacy of this word rests entirely on two appearances in dictionaries, in 1623 and 1656. It seems never to have been used seriously and ever since has been held up as an example of an odd word, in modern times in works with titles like The Joy of Lex, Popolillies and Bellibones, Have a Word on Me, and Dimboxes, Epopots, and other Quidams. It means a person whose hair has never been cut. Though that may appear comic to some, there's nothing humorous in its etymology. The word is from the classical Latin acersecomes, a long-haired youth, a word borrowed from an earlier Greek one that was made up from kome, the hair of the head (which is where comic comes from in the ending), keirein, to cut short, and the prefix a-, not. Though this sounds like an aged curmudgeon's way to talk about unkempt youngsters who weren't like that in his day, it was actually neutrally descriptive – it was usual for Roman and Greek youths to wear their hair long until they reached manhood. Greek kome has given us one sense of coma: a diffuse cloud of gas and dust that surrounds the nucleus of a comet. The same -comic ending turns up in two terms that, if possible, are even rarer: acrocomic, having hair at the tip, as in a goat's beard (acro- means tip) and xanthocomic, a person with yellow hair (from Greek xanthos, yellow).

LOL

Guide Dog

A blind man with a guide dog at his side walks into the middle of a grocery store. Then he picks up the dog by the tail, and starts swinging it around in circles over his head. The store manager, who has seen all this, thinks this is quite strange. So, he



decides to find out what's going on. So, he approaches the blind man swinging the dog and says, "Pardon me. May I help you with something?" The blind man says, "No thanks. I'm just looking around."



Bharat Jhunjhunwala

COLLUSION WITH BORROWERS IS ENDEMIC TO THE PSBs BECAUSE THE PERSONAL INTERESTS OF THE OFFICIALS DO NOT CONVERGE WITH THE INTERESTS OF THE BANKS

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

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

America's immediate enemy

Sir, Apropos, article 'Wrong enemy', Orissa POST, Feb 18. Given Russia's military buildup around Ukraine's borders and Western intelligence forecasts that an invasion may be imminent, surely Moscow is the more "clear and present danger" for US. Clearly, China's economic growth and increased international assertiveness are areas of major concern. By comparison, Russia, with a tenth the population and a fraction of China's GDP, is economically relevant only in the vital energy sphere. But what is often overlooked is that Russia has at least as formidable if not a stronger military than China. Its navy, while numerically smaller, is more capable, especially its nuclear submarine and missile forces. Russia possesses many more strategic and tactical nuclear weapons than China. Furthermore, Russia has more recent combat experience than China in Chechnya, the Middle and Near East, Georgia and, of course, Ukraine. While China is adept at intellectual property theft, Russia has been more aggressive in cyberattacks and information and influence operations. Its foreign intelligence services have also had greater global experience, including use of proxies such as the Wagner Group. And Russia exploits past operations and networks once created by the Soviet Union. While China is exerting greater political and economic influence through the Belt and Road and other diplo-economic initiatives, unlike Russia, it is less reliant on the military tool even though it is increasing its global presence. While Russia is the more immediate political-military threat, China is a long-term geo-economic challenge.
N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Landmark achievement

Sir, The Goa government's decision to close down the vaccination center comes 13 months after it began the extensive exercise of administering the vaccine doses to its citizens. Goa has achieved the target of administering both the doses of anti-coronavirus vaccines to its entire 11.66 lakh eligible population above 18 years of age, a health official recently said. After achieving the target, the state Directorate of Health Services has decided to close down all its COVID-19 vaccination centers and integrate them into the normal immunisation programme. The state has registered 100 per cent vaccination of the second dose of anti-coronavirus vaccines. It is one of the great achievements and can be called a landmark achievement. This was possible because the Chief Minister, himself a doctor, did the spade work from the word go.
CK Ramani, CHENNAI

national

of the day quote

The election manifesto is not a piece of paper but is a commitment to the people and to make Manipur stable with all round development of the state

People's lives are more important than important power reactors. The Tamil Nadu government should not make any compromise on the safety of people and should reject projects that threaten the state's safety

Apart from Gujarat, which was the only state to have a Science & Technology policy, 11 more states, including those from the northeast, are now working to prepare their respective Science and Technology policies

SHORT TAKES

Student ends life

Jaipur: A Class XII student from Jaipur, who was a PUBG addict, committed suicide after his parents refused to gift him a phone on his birthday, police officials said Friday. The teen, identified as Aaditya Kumar, celebrated his birthday February 13 and demanded a mobile phone as gift. His parents assured him of buying it after he cleared his 12th board exam with good marks. However, they were in for a shock when they saw him hanging from a ceiling fan with his mother's saree.

2 killed in mishap

Jaipur: A day after two minor students were killed and 22 grievously injured when a speeding school bus overturned in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer, the state government gave a financial compensation of Rs one lakh to the family members of each of the deceased victims. Two minors identified as Hasam Khan (12) and Kasam Khan (14) had died when their school bus met with an accident.

Grenade attack

Srinagar: Militants hurled a grenade Friday at a security forces party in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar city, but no damage was caused, police said. "Militant attacked a party of the CRPF and the local police in Khswaja Bazar area of old Srinagar city Friday afternoon. "The grenade exploded without causing any damage. The area has been cordoned off and searches started to nab the militants", police sources said.

Couple arrested

Bangalore: Karnataka police have arrested a couple on charges of killing their relative, who allegedly abused the accused woman sexually in Bangalore, police said Friday. The accused are identified as Mohammad Ghouse (39) and Kauser a.k.a Heena (27), both residents of Rayadurga in Ananthpur district of Andhra Pradesh. The couple had killed Vajeer Pasha (35), their relative, at their residence on May 13, 2015.

Girl raped

New Delhi: Delhi Police have arrested a 27-year-old man for allegedly raping a minor girl in the national capital's Kirti Nagar area, an official said Friday. The accused, identified as Sarvesh, was the neighbour of the 14-year-old victim. According to the official, the minor girl, a student of Class 7 and resident of Chumna Bhatti Jhuggi had lodged a complaint on February 16 alleging that she was raped twice by the accused.



The Congress will perform brilliantly in the proposed elections in five states. Our vote share will increase significantly. Priyanka Gandhi has continuously worked among the people living in UP whereas SP-BSP remained inactive for a long time. Congress will definitely get the benefit out of this

SACHIN PILOT | CONGRESS LEADER

OVER 2 CR ADOLESCENTS VACCINATED: MANDAVIYA

Over 2 crore adolescents in the 15-18 years age group nationwide are now fully vaccinated against COVID-19, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said Friday



Kejriwal denies separatist remarks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 18: AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal Friday denied as "laughable" allegations by a former party leader that he has made separatist comments, saying he must be the "world's sweetest terrorist" who builds schools and hospitals. Kejriwal has been under attack from both the Congress and the BJP who have questioned him over former AAP leader and poet Kumar Vishwas's accusations of supporting separatists in Punjab. The Delhi chief minister's party has emerged as a key challenger to the ruling Congress in the state.

The AAP leader said that even Britshers had called Bhagat Singh a terrorist, but the country knows there was no bigger patriot than him. "A hundred years ago, Britishers had called Bhagat Singh a terrorist and 100 years later, history is repeating when all these parties want to prove Bhagat Singh's follower (Kejriwal) as a terrorist, but people know the reality," he said. Kejriwal said leaders of the BJP and the Congress as well as their allies have joined hands to target him over Vishwas's accusations which he dubbed as "laughable".

"Narendra Modi, Priyanka Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Charanjit Channi, Sukhbir Badal, Amarinder Singh, Navjot Singh Sidhu, all are now levelling allegations that for the last ten years, Kejriwal is hatching a plan to break the country into two parts and wants to become the prime minister of one part," Kejriwal told



reporters in Bathinda. "If one goes by their claims, that means I am a big terrorist. If one goes by their logic, then what were their agencies doing, why did they not arrest me? Earlier Congress was ruling and now for last over seven years the BJP is in power (at the Centre). Were all of them sleeping", he said. The AAP leader dubbed the allegations levelled by Vishwas and other leaders as "a comedy". "This is laughable. Is this possible," he asked.

Kejriwal said he has learnt that "last evening, Channi (Punjab CM) received a call from the Centre saying that the matter (accusations of supporting separatists) should be investigated."

"One officer told me that over the next one or two days, an FIR will be registered against me by the NIA. All such FIRs are welcome, but if the Centre deals with national security in this manner, then it is a matter of concern." Aam Aadmi Party leader Raghav

Chadha had already described Vishwas's allegations as "malicious, unfounded and fabricated." Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi took to Twitter and demanded from Prime Minister Narendra Modi an impartial inquiry into the allegations levelled by Kumar Vishwas.

Kejriwal pointed out that all his rivals have joined hands as he was talking about undertaking development and building schools and hospitals if his party comes to power in Punjab in the February 20 polls. Two national parties and their top leaders are making a joke of national security, he said.

"Perhaps I am the world's sweetest terrorist who builds schools, hospitals, builds roads, improves road and power infrastructure, and sends elderly on pilgrimages. Such a terrorist would never have been born," Kejriwal said in a lighter vein. "See the sequence of the whole thing. Rahul Gandhi was the first

PM should probe allegations: Channi

Chandigarh: Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to order a probe into former AAP leader Kumar Vishwas' allegations that Arvind Kejriwal is supporting separatists during the campaign for the assembly elections. Aam Aadmi Party leader Raghav Chadha had already described the allegations as "malicious, unfounded and fabricated." In a tweet, Channi said, "As CM of Punjab, I request Hon'ble PM @narendramodi ji to order an impartial enquiry in the matter of @DrKumarVishwas Ji's video". "Politics aside, people of Punjab have paid a heavy price while fighting separatism. Hon'ble PM needs to address the worry of every Punjabji," Channi said in a tweet.

to level accusations (after Vishwas' statement), then the prime minister, then Priyanka and Sukhbir Badal used the same language against me," he said. Kejriwal said people used to say when Rahul Gandhi says something people don't believe him. "But I never thought the PM too would toe Rahul's line and the PM would also become Rahul Gandhi," he said, referring to Modi targeting the Delhi CM on the issue at his poll rallies. Targeting the Centre, Kejriwal said, "Earlier the Delhi Police, ED and the IT conducted raids at my offices, in my house, but none of the agencies found anything.

AI to run special flights to Ukraine

Air India will operate three flights between Delhi and Kyiv on its Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 18: As tensions between Russia and Ukraine remain high, the Tata Group-led Air India will run three direct flights to Kyiv to bring back stranded Indians from the East European country.

Accordingly, Air India will operate three flights between Delhi and Kyiv on its Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft. The flights to the Boryspil International Airport from India will be operated on February 22, 24 and 26.

On Thursday, the Centre removed the restrictions on the number of flights and seats between India and Ukraine, evidently to facilitate the return of students and professionals stranded in the East European nation due to the ongoing tensions with Russia. "The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has removed the restric-

tions on the number of flights and seats between India and Ukraine under the 'Air Bubble' arrangement," the Ministry said in a statement. Thus, any number of flights, including charter flights, can operate between the two countries.

"Indian airlines have been informed to mount the flights due to increase in demand. MoCA is facilitating in coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs," the statement added.

The Centre, through an advisory, had asked Indians in Ukraine to leave the country but reportedly there were no flights available before February 20.

In view of the prevailing situation in Ukraine, a control room has been set up at the External Affairs Ministry to provide information and assistance to the stranded Indians.

PM hosts prominent Sikhs at his residence



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted a number of prominent Sikhs at his residence Friday and highlighted the works done by his government for the community.

The meeting came two days before the Punjab Assembly polls, with the BJP going all out to woo the Sikh community as it seeks to put up a strong show in an alliance with former chief minister Amarinder Singh's Punjab Lok Congress and the Akali Dal faction headed by Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa. Later in tweets, Modi said these Sikh religious and community leaders are at the forefront of popularising Sikh culture and serving society. He said, "I was humbled by the kind words from the distinguished members of the Sikh community on various efforts of the Central Government. I consider it my honour that the respected Sikh Gurus have taken Seva from me and their blessings have enabled me to work for society."

BJP leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa said that Modi in the interaction said he wants to work for the community everyday and regretted that the previous Congress dis-

Modi said these Sikh religious and community leaders are at the forefront of popularising Sikh culture and serving society

pensations lost opportunities to bring Sikhs' holy places like Kartarpur Sahib, which is in Pakistan, into Indian territory.

At a press conference, Sirsa quoted Modi as saying that India could have got the territory after 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan if efforts were made.

Modi has often criticised the Congress for not taking measures to ensure that the Kartarpur Sahib did not fall in Pakistan when India was divided in 1947.

Sikhs have carried a certain pain because many commitments made to them were not fulfilled but the Modi government has done "historic" works, including opening the corridor to Kartarpur Sahib and taking the decision to commemorate the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh's sons, Sirsa said.

The Sikh personalities who attended the meeting with Modi included Delhi Gurudwara Committee president Harmeet Singh Kalka, Padma Sri-awardee Baba Balbir Singh Sihewal, Mahant Karamjit Singh of Sewapanthi in Yamuna Nagar, Baba Joga Singh of Dera Baba Jang Singh in Karnal and Sant Baba Meor Singh Waa of Mukhi Dera Baba Tara Singh Waa in Amritsar, official sources said.

VENTING ANGER



Members of Samyukt Kisan Morcha block a road to protest against Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, in Patiala PTI PHOTO

ED arrests Iqbal Ibrahim Kaskar

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Feb 18: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Friday arrested Iqbal Ibrahim Kaskar - the brother of absconder mafia don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar - from Thane Jail in a money laundering case.

The development came after a Mumbai Court granted permission to the ED to interrogate Iqbal Kaskar, who was arrested by Thane Police's Anti-Extortion Cell in 2017 and remains in custody since then.

The ED will produce him before a Special PMLA Court for remand and further investigations.

Iqbal has been nabbed by the ED in a fresh money-laundering case lodged against him and others three days ago after it raided around 10 properties linked to the Kaskar clan in Mumbai.

The ED has recorded the statements of six persons in connection with the money-laundering cases and a few more including builders and politicians are likely

to be questioned.

The central agency is probing how the money laundering racket involved the use of digital wallets and darknet, and re-invested in realty sectors in certain foreign locations to avoid detection.

The agencies suspect that the money may have been extorted or collected through ransoms, settlement of cases, narcotics and routed through hawala for which the entire money trail is being probed as also terror links.

CBI issues LOC against ex-NSE MD Ramkrishna, 2 others

The CBI has already lodged an FIR against Chitra on the basis of the 192 page report of SEBI in which she has been accused of leaking classified information to a Yogi who lived in the Himalayas

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Feb 18: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has issued a 'Lookout Circular' for Chitra Ramkrishna, the former Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the National Stock Exchange (NSE),

Subramanian Anand, the former group operating officer and Ravi Narayan, former NSE CEO (before Chitra). This was done as a precautionary measure.

Sources said that Ramkrishna and the other two were flight risks and hence the Lookout Circular (LOC). Arrests in the case are now more likely to happen, said the source. The CBI is currently grilling Chitra Ramkrishna at one of its offices in Mumbai. She was earlier called by the CBI to join the investigation immediately.

The CBI official close to the investigation said that Ramkrishna was evasive and was frequently changing her statements. She has tried to mislead the investigation and in the coming days Ravi Narayan and Subramanian will also be grilled by



the CBI, added the official. "There was a flight risk, there

were possibilities that they may flee abroad and taking preventive

steps we issued the LOC," sources told IANS.

Thursday the Income Tax Department had conducted raids at her houses in Mumbai and Chennai. The sources said that incriminating documents were recovered during the raids.

The I.T department scanned various transactions and digital records.

They also recorded the statements of a few of her employees. Recently SEBI had imposed a fine of Rs 3 crore on her. SEBI had uploaded a 192-page order on its official website narrating how Chitra was allegedly involved in suspicious activities by leaking information.

Chitra had said that a sage, who lives in the Himalayas, was giving her directions. She also sent him

emails regarding the NSE. She quit SEBI in December 2016.

It has been learnt that she allegedly shared vital inputs with the Yogi. "Information regarding organisational structure, dividend scenario, financial results, human resource policies and related issues, response to regulator, etc., were shared by her with the Yogi," said the source.

Between 2014 and 2016 she sent emails at rigyajursama@outlook.com.

Subramanian was made the Chief Strategic Advisor of NSE. He served at this post between 2013 and 2015. He was given the post of group operating officer and advisor to the MD. He discharged his duties on this post between 2015 and 2016.



in Hindi, "This is an important aspect of BJP's politics that the one who refuses to bow before them is harassed in every possible way." "Lalu Prasad Yadav ji is being attacked because of this politics. I hope he will definitely get justice," the Congress general secretary said.

Priyanka's olive branch to Lalu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Friday expressed support for RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav, convicted in the fodder scam case, and said an important aspect of the BJP's politics is that the one who refuses to bow before it is harassed in every possible way.

A special CBI court Tuesday convicted RJD supremo and former Bihar chief minister Yadav in the Rs 139.5 crore Doranda treasury embezzlement case, the fifth and final case against him in the fodder scam.

Soon after the conviction, the ailing 73-year-old politician was shifted to the Birsa Munda Central Jail in Ranchi and then he was admitted to the state-run Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS).

Expressing support for Yadav, Priyanka Gandhi said in a tweet

'Recovered IED designed to attack public places'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: IEDs found in a Seemapuri house Thursday and at the Ghazipur market last month were prepared with the intention of carrying out blasts at public places across the city, according to Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana.

Talking to the media, Asthana said an IED was recovered in Ghazipur January 17 and a similar IED was also recovered and neutralized in Old Seemapuri Thursday. "According to the probe, these IEDs were prepared with an intention to carry out blasts at public places. Such activities are not possible without local support," he said.

The Special Cell and other teams are investigating the case, he said, adding that they are probing forward and backward linkages. "We are trying to pre-empt every such incident in Delhi and expose any local and foreign network," he added but refused to divulge any other detail. A senior police officer said around 400 people were vacated from nearby buildings after the "suspicious" bag was found. "We have stepped up the security



MAJOR TRAGEDY AVERTED IN DELHI

The improvised explosive device (IED), weighing 2.5 to 3 kg, was later diffused while the owner of the house and a property dealer are being interrogated by the police

Such activities are not possible without local support, the Delhi Police chief said

The police have stepped up security and deployed additional personnel there

in the area. We have put up barricades and sealed the house. The crime scene has been preserved. "The local police had also conducted the verification of tenants in the area as part of security measures ahead of the Republic Day. A local enquiry has also been con-

ducted by the local police," the officer said.

A Special Cell team has also retrieved the footage of all the CCTV cameras installed in and around the building where the suspicious bag was found. The footage of the cameras are being

analysed, the officer said.

The mother of house owner Aashim alleged that police have taken him in their custody, while his wife said they had rented out the floor, where the explosives have been found, to two persons a couple of months ago. During interrogation, the owner of the house told the police that he had taken the documents of two people while providing while giving the house on rent.

However, the documents are yet to be recovered by the Special Cell unit probing the case, another senior police officer said. NSG sources had said the explosive is suspected to be a mix of ammonium nitrate and RDX but a forensic lab will examine it in detail.

With this explosive having similarity with the one recovered from the Ghazipur flower market ahead of Republic Day last month, the police believe that both these cases might be linked to the same people. According to an official, investigation into the Ghazipur flower market case led the police to receive a tip-off about the explosive in Old Seemapuri.

No sooner the information was received in the afternoon, Special

Cell teams dashed to the site. NSG officials and the Forensic Science Laboratory team were also rushed to the spot.

The officer said, "When our team went to the house, it was vacant. The bag was found there and we immediately informed the NSG."

"The suspects have managed to escape. We suspect the explosive recovered from Old Seemapuri has been made by the same persons who placed IED at Ghazipur flower market last month," the officer said.

The IED was picked up by the NSG bomb disposal squad from the second floor of the building. Security has been beefed up and the area cordoned off. The IED was destroyed using a water disruptor, an NSG officer said, adding all pieces of evidence have been handed over to the Delhi Police.

In January, an IED stuffed with RDX and ammonium nitrate was found inside an unattended bag at the Ghazipur flower market here but it was later defused. The incident had happened ahead of Republic Day celebrations January 26 for which the security apparatus in the National Capital was already on a high alert.

Shift vaccination centres from Delhi govt schools: AIPA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: The All India Parents' Association (AIPA) has written to Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal demanding that vaccination centres running in government schools be shifted to other places and teachers posted on Covid duty be called back.

The letter comes following the reduction in coronavirus cases as well as reopening of schools in the national capital after prolonged closure.

Amid declining coronavirus cases in the city, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) decided to reopen higher education institutions and coaching centres along with schools for classes 9-12 from February 7. It also decided to reopen schools for students from nursery to class 8 from February 14.

Delhi Thursday reported 739 new Covid-19 cases and five more deaths, while the positivity rate stood at 1.48 per cent, according to the city health department. The number of daily cases in Delhi has been on the decline after touching the record high of 28,867 January 13.

While the Centre has dropped the mandatory parental consent for students to physically attend schools from its guidelines and left it to the

"Now that students have started returning to school, vaccination centres running in government schools should be shifted to other places. Also, teachers posted on Covid duties should be called back since the number of cases have gone down considerably," AIPA president Ashok Agarwal said

states, the Delhi government has decided to continue with it. There is no cap of 50 per cent student strength and schools are free to decide the number of students based on their infrastructure so that the Covid protocols are followed. According to guidelines issued by the DDMA, the area or part of a school being used for vaccination or ration distribution should be properly separated or demarcated from the area which is being used for academic activities.

680 migratory birds of nine species spotted in Patratu Dam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ramgarh (Jharkhand), Feb 18: A total of 680 migratory birds of nine species, including rare and endangered ones, were spotted at Patratu Dam, a popular tourist destination in Jharkhand's Ramgarh district, an official said.

The census was part of International Water Bird Census and was conducted by the state. The birds were counted in the Asian Water Bird Census, 2022, which concluded February 12



PERFECT CLICK: Students click photos at Miranda college after Delhi University reopened following ease of Covid-induced restrictions in New Delhi PTI PHOTO

Learning licenses given to over 93% of 1.54L applicants

The e-learning licence, under which applicants can take the driving test online and receive the document at a given address, was started August 7 last year

certificates on August 11, 2021.

According to official figures, from August till mid February 2022, a total 1,54,618 applications were received for e-learning licence. The number of applicants who passed the test was 1,45,124.

The number of pending applications for learning licence test was 3,410. Those who failed the test numbered 6,084, including 1,157 due to colour blindness, the figures showed.

Under the 'faceless services' for various other transport related documents, over 85 percent applications have been approved so far, it showed.

Since the launch of the scheme, over eight lakh applications were received by the department, Transport department officials said.

The department communicates to people whose applications are not

DELHI TRANSPORT DEPT'S 'FACELESS SERVICES'



accepted due to various reasons, including incomplete details or certain other technicalities, they said.

With the Transport department services related to driving licence, registration certificate, permits

and termination of hypothecation available online in a faceless manner, the government has closed down four motor licensing office (MLOs), including IP Estate Vasant Vihar, Sarai Kale Khan and Janakpuri.

The Faceless Services envision providing contactless, queue-less, hassle-free services to the applicants applying online and getting work done without visiting any transport department office.

People can avail a faceless service by logging on "http://transport.Delhi.Gov.In and apply for required document. The process is Aadhaar-authenticated and fees can also be paid online.

The applied for document is dispatched to the applicants through speed post. They can also download it through a link sent to them through an SMS on their registered mobile number.

Model schools in 24 Jharkhand districts to be ready by Dec



The model schools will provide high standards of education and modern infrastructure to children coming from poor families

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, Feb 18: The Jharkhand government Thursday said it will ensure that construction of model schools in all districts are completed by December 2022, aiming at imparting quality education on par with public schools.

Work on building 325 model schools at the block level will start thereafter, an official release said. "The construction of model schools across 24 districts of Jharkhand is scheduled to be completed by December 2022. The state government is planning to establish three model schools per district, throughout the state.

"These include a district school, a girls' high school and a Kasturba Vidyalaya. Once the school building is ready, the government would start providing books and other resources in accordance with patterns followed by private schools," it said. The model schools will provide high standards of education and modern infrastructure to children coming from poor families.

The Jharkhand government is working expeditiously to complete the construction of at least two model school buildings in 13 districts, the release said.

People's lives in danger as fire intensifies in J'khand coal mine

IT IS FEARED THAT IF EFFECTIVE MEASURES ARE NOT TAKEN IMMEDIATELY TO CONTROL THE BLAZE, THEN THREE SETTLEMENTS IN KARKATA, BISHRAMPUR AND KHILAN DHOORA AREAS LOCATED NEAR THE MINE WILL DIRECTLY IMPACT NEARLY 2,000 PEOPLE

AGENCIES

Ranchi, Feb 18: A fire has reportedly intensified in a closed underground coal mine in Jharkhand's Karkata village situated around the north Karanpura area of the Central Coalfields Limited's Karanpura Dewalkhand Hesalong (KDH) project.

Several incidents of natural disasters have occurred in Karkata village in the past but due to an alleged fire in the coal mine it has further increased the risk of subsidence. Meanwhile, a team led by Sanjay Kumar, General Manager, CCL, KDH Project, inspected the mine Thursday.

A fire suddenly broke out in this mine on Wednesday afternoon. The high flames along with fumes of the smoke rising from the mine slowly spread to residential colonies of Karkata, Bishrampur and adjoining areas as well. Ratia Ganju, a member of the Ranchi Zilla

Parishad, who lives in a settlement near the mine, says that smoke used to emanate from the closed underground mine since several months.

He says that even if the source of the fire is closed immediately the underground fire will not be completely extinguished. The only solution is that the people of these three settlements must be settled elsewhere at the earliest by paying them financial compensation. The situation is so grave that people are not able to sleep peacefully at night due to fear of the accident.

This coal mine located at KDH was earlier run by an outsourcing company. Later, this mine was closed down nearly two years ago due to non-availability of land for mining expansion.

Following the shutting of this coal mine, many sources of illegal mining were opened here. Last week, the security depart-



ment of CCL and the police had closed several sources of illegal

mining by destroying them. At the very same sites, fire broke

out. According to the locals living near the mine, after the out-

of the day quote

We need to keep aside our political differences while working for the people and development. Maharashtra will give a helping hand to the Centre and together we can make our country strong

UDDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CM

I had heard Akhilesh Yadav say on television that he would now come to Karhal only on March 10 (the day the poll results are scheduled to be announced). But he came here six days later and under this scorching sun, also had to bring Netaji (Mulayam Singh Yadav). When the beginning is like this, what will be the end result?

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

Modiji's governance is only in advertisements, there is no governance in the country. Had there been governance, there would have been employment and price rise would not have been there. Had there been governance, PSUs, which generate employment, would not have been sold to his friends

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Mamata retains nephew Abhishek

Kolkata: TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee Friday formed a new officer bearers' committee, reappointing her nephew Abhishek Banerjee as the party's national general secretary and veteran leader Yashwant Sinha as its vice-president. Senior TMC leaders Subrata Bakshi and Chandrima Bhattacharya, too, have also been given the post of national vice-presidents. Among others, TMC minister Aroop Biswas has been made the treasurer, and Kolkata mayor Firhad Hakim the in-charge of coordination.

Three workers die

Durgapur (WB): Three contract workers died in an accident in Durgapur Steel Plant (DSP) while working on a maintenance job in a part of the unit in West Bengal's Paschim Bardhaman district Friday, the plant authorities said. Union leaders alleged that they died after inhaling toxic gas. The three fall unconscious while working at the basic oxygen furnace (BOF) converter. When they were taken to hospital, one was declared dead on arrival and the other two succumbed in course of treatment, the DSP said in a statement.

Girl gangraped

Patna: A 17-year-old girl was gang raped by two youths in Bihar's Sitamarhi district, an official said Friday. The incident happened Monday but the victim reached Sitamarhi's Sonbarsha police station on Thursday evening. In her complaint, she said that she went to a farm to look after the crops when two persons named Sushil Mandal and Chabila Mandal, both residents of Rohua village, overpowered her and then raped her at knife point.

Students expelled

Patna: Nine students of Patna's prestigious Science College were expelled from the hostel for ragging junior students, an official said Friday. The alleged ragging took place in the Faraday hostel on February 15 and one of the victim's fathers registered a complaint with the University Grant Commission (UGC). Sandeep Garg, the superintendent of Faraday hostel said that action has been taken on the direction of college administration.

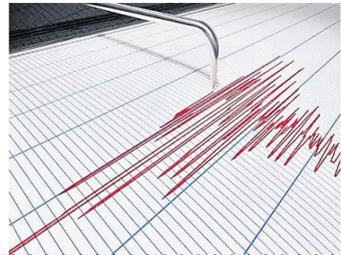


We are fighting to form a majority government like in 2007 to get rid of the casteist, narrow-minded, arrogant and dictatorial rule of the BJP. You will have to support BSP, the only party that cares for all sections of the society, to ensure this

MAYAWATI | BSP PRESIDENT

2 QUAKES HIT ASSAM

Two quakes, one moderate and another mild, hit Darrang district of Assam Friday within four and a half hours, the National Centre for Seismology report said



ISI instructs terror outfits in J&K to use Communist names



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 18: In a bid to avoid detection by the Indian security forces, the Pakistan's intel wing Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has instructed the terror outfits active in Jammu and Kashmir to rename their organisations with Communist names such as 'The Resistance Front' or something similar, sources in the security grid said.

The sources also said that ISI has specifically asked these ultras to publicise themselves as Communist organisations among the cadres. The sources further said that ISI is worried that after any terror incidents in Jammu and Kashmir, India always holds Pakistan responsible with substantial proofs, indicating its clear hands behind the incidents. As a result, now a majority of the nations, barring China, believe that Pakistan has been supporting terrorism from its soil.

The ISI has also instructed the ultras not to raise any religious slogans during encounters with the security forces, which also points finger at Pakistan's involvement. "The names of terrorist organisations operating in Kashmir are associated with jihad, or their names make it clear that they are Islamic terrorists. Now they are using names like United Liberation

Front' or 'People's Anti-Fascist Front' or similar ones, which are used by the ultra-Left wing groups, those who are opposed to the law of the land," the sources said.

They also said that these ultra groups have been asked to open new social media accounts with Communist or Leftist names, and avoid using religious slogans to avoid detection.

Security officials deployed in J&K said that with this new strategy, Pakistan wants to kill two birds with one stone - firstly, now it will be convincing nations like the US, the UK, Germany, France and many others that it is not responsible for the terror acts in J&K; and secondly, to avoid the 'black list' of international watchdog Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Such perceptions and substantial facts have established many times that Pakistan has been nourishing and supporting terrorism, and that's why it has been in the 'Grey List' of FATF since June 2018. Pakistan is likely to be categorised in the 'black list' of FATF on February 22 this year in Paris.

Ahead of the FATF plenary, experts feel that Pakistan will slip into the 'black list' of the global anti-terror financing and anti-money laundering watchdog because of non-compliance.

SC seeks CBI response on Indrani's bail plea

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 18: The Supreme Court Friday agreed to hear bail plea of Indrani Mukerjea, the prime accused in the Sheena Bora murder case, and sought a response from the CBI.

A bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and P.S. Narasimha said: "Issue notice. Returnable in two weeks." Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Mukerjea, submitted before the bench that his client has been in jail for more than six years and taking into account the ongoing state of affairs it is apparent that the trial will not come to an end in 10 years. "Six and a half years she has been in jail. The trial is not going to end in the next 10 years," he said.

The bench asked Rohatgi, how many witnesses are there in the case. Rohatgi responded that 185 witnesses are yet to be examined. He added that no witness has been examined in the past one and half years, and her husband is already on bail.

Rohatgi further submitted the trial court has been vacant without a presiding officer since June 2021. He also informed the top court that his client is also not well. "My husband is on bail. This lady is not well. She is suffering," he said. Mukherjea has been in jail since her arrest in the murder case in 2015. Recently Mukerjea created a sensation by sending a letter to the CBI claiming that her daughter Sheena Bora was alive. The CBI has made it clear this particular angle will not be taken up, unless there is an intervention from the court.

In April 2012, a case was filed with the Mumbai Police alleging kidnapping and murder of Sheena Bora. In 2015, the CBI took up the investigation. Indira was arrested and so was her husband Peter Mukerjea, who was granted bail in March 2020.

In December last year, Indrani wrote a letter to CBI stating that she would move the special court to record the statement of an inmate who had claimed to have met Bora in Kashmir.

Punjab polls: Cong manifesto out

The party promised a hike in old-age pension and procurement of pulses, oilseed and corn at MSP besides free education and health services

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 18: The Congress Friday released its manifesto for the February 20 Punjab Assembly polls, promising Rs 1,100 per month for needy women, eight free cooking gas cylinders per year and one lakh government jobs.

The party promised a hike in old-age pension and procurement of pulses, oilseed and corn at MSP besides free education and health services. Addressing the media here, state party chief Navjot Singh Sidhu said if the party returns to power, they will end the mafia raj by creating corporations for the sale of liquor and sand mining.

"It is our road map and agenda with which we can change the lives of the people of Punjab," said Sidhu speaking on his party's 13-point agenda. Flanked by Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, Congress leaders Sunil Jakhar, Harish Chaudhary and Rajiv Shukla, Sidhu said, "This is an instrument for the resurrection of Punjab."

Sidhu said the party's 13-point agenda reflects Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's vision. If the Congress returns to power, the first file which the CM will sign will be for giving one lakh jobs, Sidhu said.

The Punjab Congress chief also stressed on the elimination of the mafia in the state and said it could happen by creating government corporations for liquor sale and sand mining. He also spoke about breaking the monopoly in the cable TV sector. The party promised to reduce cable TV charges from Rs 400 to Rs 200 per month per household.



Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi during a roadshow, ahead of the upcoming Punjab Assembly elections, at Bhadaur in Barnala

The manifesto promised Rs 1,100 per month for needy women and eight free cooking gas cylinders every year. "It is a historical decision to make womenfolk as partners and shareholders of the economy," said Sidhu, adding, "We are strengthening our society by strengthening the homemakers."

The party also promised to give "pucca" houses to the poor within six months of forming the government. This issue had earlier been raised by Channi. The Congress also promised to raise the old-age pension from Rs 1,500 to Rs 3,100 per month.

Stating that nobody had given any road map on the farming sector, Sidhu while referring to other promises in the manifesto, said, "We will procure oilseed, pulses and corn at the minimum support price."

He stressed that it will promote crop diversification, which was the need of the hour. The party also promised free education for all

needy students in government schools, colleges and universities while SC scholarship will continue. There will be free health services for all in all government hospitals, said Sidhu, adding that the spending on the health sector will be hiked.

The party promised Rs 5,000 for needy girls who pass Class 5, Rs 10,000 for those who clear Class 10 and Rs 20,000 and a computer for the girls who pass Class 12.

The party also promised a hike in wages for MGNREGA workers from 270 to Rs 350 and also an increase in man days from 100 to 150 days.

Sidhu also spoke about having an investment fund of Rs 1,000 crore for startups and an interest-free loan of Rs 2 lakh for them.

He said cluster-based industries will be developed in the state. Besides promising to end the "Inspector Raj", Sidhu said 170 government services will be made available online.

NIA's ex-officer held for leaking info to LeT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) Friday arrested its former Superintendent of Police (SP) and IPS officer Arvind Digvijay Negi for allegedly leaking secret documents to an over ground worker of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba terror group, its official spokesperson said here.

The spokesperson said that Negi, a police officer who was promoted to the IPS batch of 2011, was arrested in connection with a case registered by the NIA on November 6 last year.

The case pertains to the spread of network of over ground workers (OGWs) of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) for providing support in planning and execution of terrorist activities in India.

The NIA had earlier arrested six people in the case. "During investigation, the role of A D Negi, IPS, SP posted at Shimla (since repatriated from NIA) was verified and his houses were searched. It was also found that official secret documents of the NIA were leaked by A D Negi to another accused person who is an OGW of LeT in the case," the spokesperson said.



HC directs Karnataka govt not to violate interim order

AGENCIES

Bangalore, Feb 18: The Karnataka High Court bench, hearing petitions on hijab row, Friday directed the state government to see to it that its interim order is not violated.

The bench, headed by Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, gave this direction after an advocate for students brought to the notice of the bench that Muslims are being troubled over the interim order.

Advocate Tahir submitted before the court to provide clarity on the interim order prohibiting any religious symbols in the premises of colleges, contending that the order is also being implemented in Urdu schools, where all students and teachers are Muslims.

He further stated that students are being asked to remove hijabs and burqas outside such colleges and schools, following orders of the Minority Welfare Department. Teachers wearing hijabs are also being stopped by officials saying that they are carrying out the interim orders of the High Court. All departments are passing orders in this regard, he said.

The bench, which also comprises Justice Krishna S. Dixit and Justice Khaji Jaibunnisa Mohiyuddin, asked the advocate to give a written submission on the matter and directed the government to see to it that interim orders are not violated.

Advocate General Prabhuling Navadagi, representing the government assured the court that it will be seen to it that not an iota of the interim order is violated.

Lecturer quits job over 'bar' on hijab

Tumakuru: An English lecturer working as a guest faculty has resigned from her post as she was asked to shun the hijab while teaching in Tumakuru district of Karnataka Friday. "It is a matter of my self-respect. I can't teach without the hijab," the lecturer Chandini said after quitting. "Since three years I am working in Jain PU College as a guest lecturer. In these three years I did not have any problem and I worked normally with ease. But, yesterday my Principal called me and told me that classes must be conducted without a hijab or any religious symbols. Since the last three years, I am lecturing wearing a hijab, it hurt my self-respect and I didn't want to work in that college anymore. Hence, I resigned voluntarily," she stated.

Meanwhile, Navadagi, while countering arguments of counsels for the petitioners who vehemently argued that the government has no right to indulge into the religious matter, argued that under Article 25 (1), the state has powers to restrict religious matters. During Covid crisis, the government has ordered closure of the temples, churches and mosques. And, it can't be said that wearing of hijab is absolute right, he said.



Students search their roll number as they arrive at a centre in Bhopal to appear in the Higher Secondary examinations of the Madhya Pradesh Board of Secondary Education

Survivors hail verdict, but want death penalty for all convicts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Feb 18: Survivors and the kin of those who died in the 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb blasts welcomed the court's decision to sentence the perpetrators to death as well as life imprisonment.

A special court Friday handed down the death penalty to 38 persons and sentenced 11 others to life imprisonment for the 21 blasts that took place in a span of 70 minutes on July 26 that year, killing 56 and injuring over 200.

Collegian Yash Vyas, who was a 9-year-old when he suffered severe burn injuries after a bomb blast rocked the trauma ward of the civil hospital in Asarva area, said he and his mother were waiting for

this verdict day for the last 13 years.

"I am happy that the court awarded death penalty to 38 persons responsible for killing innocent people, including my father and brother. Even the 11 who were given life imprisonment should have got the death penalty. There should be no mercy for such people," Yash, 22 now and a second-year B.Sc student, said.

Yash spent four months in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of a hospital with 50 per cent burn injuries, and continues to suffer from partial hearing impairment because of the impact of the explosion.

His father, Dushyant Vyas, was a lab technician in a cancer medical facility located on the civil hospital campus and had, on the fateful day, taken his two sons to an



In this July 26, 2008 file photo, a man walks past a bus damaged in the 2008 Ahmedabad serial blasts

open ground of the hospital to teach them how to ride a bicycle.

"At around 7.30 pm, when my father saw some blast victims being

brought in ambulances (from an incident in another area in the city), he decided to help them. As soon as we reached near the civil hospital's trauma ward, an explosion occurred killing my father and 11-year-old brother instantly," Yash said. As people injured in blasts that were taking place in other parts of the city were being brought into the civil hospital, two blasts ripped the trauma centre, killing patients and kin, medical staff and bystanders.

Among the victims were Dr Prerak Shah, who used to serve in the civil hospital, and his pregnant wife Kinjal. The duo had come to the civil hospital's gynecology ward for Kinjal's medical check-up.

"I welcome this verdict. I al-

ways had trust in police and judiciary that one day I will get justice. However, I feel all 49 guilty persons should have been given the death penalty. Nonetheless, I am satisfied 38 will hang," said Prerak's father Ramesh Shah, a resident of Modasa town.

Jagdish Kadia, who used to sell sandwiches on his cart in Raipur Chakla area of the old city, lost his wife Hasumati Kadia in a blast that occurred near his cart.

"Some 19 sharp objects pierced my wife's body due to the blast. I remember my wife everyday and have been living a lonely life since then. I strongly believe even the 11 who were given life imprisonment must hang," the 65-year-old man said.

international



Japan will ease Covid-19 border controls starting from March by raising the daily entry cap and reducing the quarantine period from seven days to three for both Japanese and foreign nationals

FUMIO KISHIDA | JAPAN PM

NEW SHELTER

Turkey said that it has granted citizenship to 194,000 Syrians, including 84,000 children, by the end of 2021. There are around 3.7 million Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey and have been registered by the authorities



of the day quote

The reason for the enemy's emphasis on the Iranian nuclear issue and the imposition of oppressive sanctions, despite their knowledge of our peaceful use (of nuclear energy), is to prevent the country's scientific progress aimed to meet Iran's future needs

AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI | IRAN'S SUPREME LEADER

The US has been ganging up in the Asia Pacific region, creating trilateral and quadrilateral small cliques, and bent on provoking confrontation

ZHANG JUN | CHINA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

An attack on a kindergarten in Ukraine was a false flag operation designed to discredit the Ukrainians

BORIS JOHNSON | BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Indian jailed for 12 weeks in S'pore

Singapore: An Indian driver in Singapore was sentenced to 12 weeks in prison Friday for damaging a company vehicle by pouring soil into its engine compartment, following a work-related dispute with his employer. Seeni Paramasivam, 40, was jailed for one count of committing mischief. In March 2020, Paramasivam, who worked as a driver for Integrated Infrastructure and stayed in the company's dormitory in Sungei Kadut (an industrial area in the Northern region of Singapore), became embroiled in a work-related dispute with his company, Channel News Asia reported. Details of the dispute were not revealed in the court documents.

Global Cov caseloads top 419.4 million

Washington: The global coronavirus caseload has topped 419.4 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 5.86 million and vaccinations to over 10.30 billion, according to Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update Friday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and the death toll stood at 419,431,761 and 5,861,258, respectively, while the total number of vaccine doses administered has increased to 10,302,830,465.

Winter storm hits central US

Washington: A winter storm system with strong winds hit central US, bringing with it rain, sleet, ice and snow from the Central Plains to the Midwest and the Great Lakes. Heavy snow has been reported in many areas in the states of Kansas, Missouri, Illinois and Oklahoma, reports Xinhua news agency. The National Weather Service has issued winter storm warnings and winter weather advisories from portions of Oklahoma and the northern Texas Panhandle to the southern Great Lakes, upstate New York and far northern New England.

Canada approves Novavax for adults

Ottawa: Canada approved the Novavax Covid-19 vaccine for people aged 18 and over Thursday, making it the fifth Covid-19 vaccine authorised in the country after AstraZeneca, Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson. Health Canada said in a news release the vaccine is 90 per cent effective at preventing symptomatic Covid-19 and 100 per cent effective at preventing severe disease, Xinhua news agency reported.

Ukrainian rebels to evacuate civilians to Russia amid crisis

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kyiv, Feb 18: Separatists in eastern Ukraine announced Friday they are evacuating civilians to Russia, as spiking tensions in the region aggravated Western fears of a Russian invasion of Ukraine and a new war in Europe.

It was the latest in a cascade of developments this week that have brought East-West relations to their lowest point in decades.

US and European officials, focused on an estimated 150,000 Russian troops posted around Ukraine's borders, fear the long-simmering separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine could provide the spark for a broader attack.

Russia announced massive nuclear drills Friday to flex its military muscle, while the West sought ways to keep the peace. US leaders issued their most dire warnings yet that Moscow could order an invasion of Ukraine any day. Immediate worries focused on the volatile front lines of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the east, where a surge of shelling Thursday tore through the walls of a kindergarten and basic communications

Ukrainian authorities and separatists traded accusations of violations of a shaky truce in the nearly 8-yr-old conflict in the eastern industrial heartland known as the Donbas

were disrupted. The separatist conflict between Ukrainian government forces and Moscow-backed separatists erupted in 2014 and has killed over 14,000 people.

Denish Pushilin, the head of the separatist government in the Donetsk region, said women, children and the elderly will be evacuated first, and that Russia has prepared facilities to accommodate them.

The drumbeat of warnings that a larger conflict could start at any moment continued Friday after US President Joe Biden warned that Washington saw no signs of a promised Russian withdrawal — but instead saw more troops moving toward the border with Ukraine.

Russia to stage massive N-drills

The war games follow US President Joe Biden's warning Thursday that Russia could invade Ukraine within days

AGENCIES

Moscow, Feb 18: The Russian military Friday announced massive drills of its strategic nuclear forces, a stark reminder of the country's nuclear might amid Western fears that Moscow might be preparing to invade Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin will personally oversee Saturday's exercise, which will involve multiple practice launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, the Defense Ministry said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Putin would observe the drills from the Defense Ministry's situation room and supervise the practice missile launches himself. The ministry said it planned the maneuvers some time ago to check the readiness of Russia's military command and personnel, as well as the reliability of its nuclear and conventional weapons.

The war games follow US President Joe Biden's warning Thursday that Russia could invade Ukraine within days. Western fears focus on an estimated 150,000 Russian troops — including about 60 per cent of Russia's overall ground forces — concentrated near Ukraine's borders.

The Kremlin insists it has no plans to invade. But Moscow has demanded that the U.S. And its allies keep Ukraine and other ex-



- Drills to test readiness and reliability of weapons
- Kremlin denies they are meant to increase tension
- Putin expected to observe from situation centre

Soviet nations out of NATO, not deploy weapons in Ukraine and pull back NATO forces from Eastern Europe. Washington and its allies bluntly rejected the Russian demands, and Moscow threatened to take unspecified "military-technical measures" if the West continued to stonewall. Russia holds massive drills of its strategic nuclear forces on an annual basis, but the maneuvers planned for Saturday pointedly involve the Black Sea Fleet.

The fleet is based on the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014. The Black

FERRY ON FIRE



A ferry is on fire at the Ionian Sea near the island of Corfu, Greece. Greek authorities say firefighters and rescue specialists are racing to try and free two truck drivers stranded inside a burning ferry off western Greece, while 11 others have been reported missing. The coast guard said Friday 278 passengers and crew had been rescued from a fire that engulfed the Italy-bound ferry Euroferry Olympia with 291 people on board near the Greek island of Corfu. Officials said two truck drivers were stranded on the burning vessel awaiting a helicopter rescue that required assistance from Fire Department special forces due to the thick smoke that continued to billow out of the vessel

US, China face-off in Nepal over \$500 million US grant

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kathmandu, Feb 18: A small Himalayan nation, Nepal, has been caught in diplomatic wrangling between two superpowers, the United State of America and China, over \$500 million US grant to Nepal. Earlier this week, after Nepal delayed in ratifying the US aid in the Parliament, a senior US State Department official had warned that the US will force a review of its ties with Nepal if Kathmandu fails to ratify the grant under the Millennium Challenge Corporation. And now Kathmandu is witnessing violent protests everyday, particularly by Communist parties, against the American aid. On



Friday, China accused the US of employing "coercive diplomacy" against Nepal to pass the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact.

Some media and civil society members in Kathmandu are accusing China of fuelling anti-American protests in Kathmandu. At a regular press briefing in

Beijing Friday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin protested against what it called "coercive diplomacy" by the US in Nepal, and said "China will support the Nepali side in making the right choice that conforms to national interests and reflects the will of the people", referring to MCC.

Spokesperson Wang said so in response to a query by a journalist. A journalist had sought China's views on MCC in Nepal while reminding the recent US State Department statement that Nepal needs to decide on MCC before February 28 or else US-Nepal diplomatic relations would not remain the same.

Ex-Lankan police chief, Defence Secy, acquitted

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Colombo, Feb 18: Sri Lankas former Defence Secretary Hemasiri Fernando and Inspector General of Police (IGP) Pujitha Wijesundara who were charged on criminal negligence of duty by failing to prevent the 2019 Easter Sunday terror attacks despite receiving specific intelligence information from India, were acquitted Friday.

Fernando and Wijesundara who were charged in two separate cases were acquitted by the three judge High Court bench due to lack of evidence.

They were separately charged on 855 counts each and were accused of criminal dereliction of duty for failing to take action to prevent the Easter attacks on three star-

2019 EASTER SUNDAY ATTACKS

class hotels and three churches. At the end of prosecution case, the High Court judges acquitted the two accused without calling the defence trial.

The court held that the two accused had shared the intelligence information they received from a foreign island to their subordinates and ruled that the prosecution had failed to prove the charges beyond reasonable doubts.

During the investigation it was revealed that India had shared several specific intelligence information with Sri Lanka, starting from April 4, 2019 and last was on the morning of the attacks.

Ship carrying Porsches and Bentleys ablaze near Azores, towing boats en route



REUTERS

Berlin/Lisbon, Feb 18: A ship carrying around 4,000 vehicles, including Porsches, Audis and Bentleys, that caught fire near the coast of the Azores will be towed to another European country or the Bahamas, the captain of the nearest port told Reuters Friday.

Lithium-ion batteries in the electric cars on board have caught fire and the blaze requires specialist equipment to extinguish, captain Joao Mendes Cabecas of the port of Horta said.

Towing boats were on route from Gibraltar and the Netherlands, with three due to arrive by Wednesday, Cabecas said. He added the vessel could not be towed to the Azores because it was so big it would block trade at the port. A sixteen-person salvage team from Smit Salvage, owned by Dutch marine engineer Boskalis, was sent to the ship to help control the flames, Boskalis said.

The Panama-flagged ship, owned by Snowscape Car Carriers SA and managed by Mitsui O.S.K. Lines Ltd, was travelling from Emden, Germany - where Volkswagen has a factory - to Davisville in the United States, based on the Maritime Traffic website. Mitsui O.S.K. Lines Ltd and Smit did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

'Omicron subvariant BA.2 may cause severe disease'

AGENCIES

Tokyo, Feb 18: The BA.2 subvariant of the Omicron coronavirus variant is not only faster at spreading, but may also cause more severe disease, a lab study suggests.

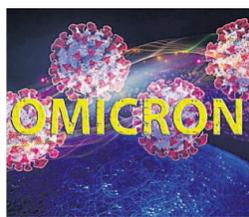
The yet-to-be peer-reviewed findings, recently posted on the preprint repository BioRxiv, show that the BA.2 sub variant may have features that make it as capable of causing serious illness as older coronavirus variants.

On Thursday, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said while BA.2 is more transmissible than BA.1, the subvariant is not more severe. "Among all subvariants, BA.2 is more transmissible than BA.1. However, there is no difference in

terms of severity," Maria Van Kerkhova, Covid-19 Technical Lead at WHO said in a video.

In the latest study, a Japanese team led by researchers from the University of Tokyo found that similar to BA.1, BA.2 subvariant of Omicron appears to rapidly escape the immunity induced by Covid-19 vaccines. "Neutralisation experiments show that the vaccine-induced humoral immunity fails to function against BA.2 like BA.1," the authors of the study said.

Omicron was first reported from Botswana and South Africa in November, 2021. Its BA.1 sub variant has since rapidly spread across the world and outcompeted other variants such as Delta. As of February this year, another subvariant of Omicron, the BA.2 lin-



age, has been detected in multiple countries such as Denmark and the UK. BA.2 has started outcompeting BA.1, suggesting that it is more transmissible than the original Omicron, the researchers said.

"Although BA.2 is considered as an Omicron variant, its genomic sequence is heavily different from BA.1, which suggests that the virological characteristics of BA.2 is

6 African countries to receive mRNA vax tech

Brussels: The first African countries selected to receive the technology necessary to produce mRNA vaccines against Covid-19 are Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia, a summit meeting of European Union and African Union nations heard on Friday. The six countries have been chosen to build vaccine production factories as part of a bid the World Health Organisation launched last year to replicate what are believed to be the most effective licensed shots against Covid-19. Africa currently produces just 1% of coronavirus vaccines. According to WHO figures, only 11% of the population in Africa is fully vaccinated, compared with the global average of about 50%.

WHO Secretary-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the Brussels summit meeting that although more than 10 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines have been administered globally, billions of people still remain unvaccinated.

different from that of BA.1," the authors noted. When the researchers infected hamsters with BA.2 and BA.1, the animals infected with BA.2 got sicker and had worse lung function. In tissues samples, the lungs of BA.2-infected hamsters

had more damage than those infected by BA.1, they said. "Our investigations using a hamster model showed that the pathogenicity of BA.2 is similar to that of an ancestral B.1.1 and higher than that of BA.1," the authors noted.

of the day quote

The primary purpose of our participation at Expo2020 is to benefit the small and marginal farmers who need economies of scale, collectivisation, and more forums to come together, create synergies connected with markets both domestic and international,

ABHILASH LIKHIA
ADDITIONAL SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE & FARMERS WELFARE

The government has tried to address some of the key demands of the industry in terms of open access, grid banking and faster approvals for green hydrogen and ammonia projects

MANOJ K UPADHYAY
FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN, ACME GROUP

This tie-up (Mahindra Electric-Common Service Centres) will help us to penetrate rural markets and propagate the use of electric vehicles, thereby helping India achieve its EV mission quicker

SUMAN MISHRA | CEO, MEMIL

SHORT TAKES

Bitcoin falls 7.4%; Ether down 7.43%

Washington: Bitcoin dropped 7.4% to \$40,631.78 Thursday, down \$3,248.05 from its previous close. Bitcoin, the world's biggest and best-known cryptocurrency, is down 15.3% from the year-to-date high of \$47,989 set January 2. Ether, the cryptocurrency linked to the ethereum blockchain network, fell 7.43% to \$2,891.32 Thursday, down \$231.92 from its previous close.

CIL fuel supply stands at 575MT

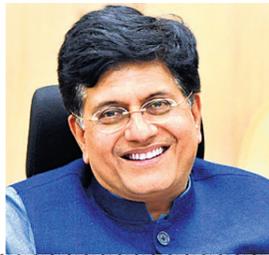
New Delhi: State-owned CIL has supplied 575 million tonne (MT) of coal so far this fiscal, surpassing the total dispatch of dry fuel in 2020-21. The company had dispatched 574.5 MT of coal in FY21, Coal India Ltd (CIL) said in a statement. "With almost a month-and-a-half remaining before FY22 draws to an end, CIL as of February 16 has already raced ahead of the total coal despatch of FY21," it said. Till February 16 of the current fiscal, CIL's despatch to power plants of the country was up at 468.4 MT compared to 381 MT of corresponding period last year, posting 23 per cent growth.

LIC IPO likely on March 11

New Delhi: A public offering of shares by India's state-run Life Insurance Corp (LIC), set to be the country's biggest yet at \$8 billion, is expected to open for anchor investors March 11, three sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters. The book will open for bidding by other investors a couple of days later, the sources said. LIC's initial public offering (IPO) is expected to obtain regulatory approval by the first week of March, after which an indicative marketing price band will be set, said the sources, declining to be named as the deal discussions are private.

Forex reserves down by \$1.763bn

Mumbai: The country's foreign exchange reserves declined by \$1.763 billion to \$630.19 billion in the week ended February 11, the RBI data showed. In the previous week ended February 4, the reserves had risen by \$2.198 billion to \$631.953 billion. It touched a lifetime high of \$642.453 billion in the week ended September 3, 2021. FCA dipped by \$2.764 billion to \$565.565 billion in the week ended February 11.



India wants to make the gem and jewellery sector self-reliant. Therefore, this will be a focus area both for domestic growth and for export promotion
PIYUSH GOYAL
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

READY TO GO GREEN: INDIGO

Budget airline carrier IndiGo shared the pictures of the first-ever aircraft utilising sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) on its Twitter handle. IndiGo tweeted, "Fasten your seatbelts, [because] we're ready to go green. Are you?" "There's a green streak in the sky today. Can you spot our first ever SAF aircraft conquer the blue Indian skies," the airline said in another tweet



GDP may grow at 5.8% in Q3: SBI

THE REPORT NOTED THAT GIVEN THE SIGNIFICANT SUCCESS OF VACCINATION IN THE THIRD WAVE IN RURAL POCKETS, THE LIVELIHOOD LOANS CAN BE THE SILVER BULLET CATAPULTING THE BROADER ECONOMY TO UNPRECEDENTED HIGHS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 18: The country's gross domestic product (GDP) is likely to grow at 5.8 per cent in the third quarter of fiscal 2022, according to an SBI's research report - Ecowrap.

The country's economy expanded by 8.4 per cent in the second quarter of 2021-22, to cross pre-pandemic levels. However, the GDP growth in July-September period was slower than the 20.1 per cent expansion in the previous quarter.

The National Statistical Office (NSO) will declare the GDP estimates for Q3 FY 2021-22 February 28. "As per SBI Nowcasting Model, the forecasted GDP growth for Q3 FY22 would be 5.8 per cent, with a downward bias. The full year (FY22) GDP growth is now revised downwards to 8.8 per cent from our earlier estimate of 9.3 per cent," the report said Friday.

The Nowcasting Model is based on 41 high frequency indicators associated with industry activity, service activity, and global economy.

The high frequency indicators suggest some weakening of de-



mand in Q3 also continuing to January 2022, reflecting the drag on contact-intensive services.

Amongst the urban demand indicators, consumer durables and passenger vehicle sales contracted in Q3, while domestic air traffic weakened in the wake of Omicron variant spread. Investment activity though, is displaying a traction in pick up, with merchandise exports remaining buoyant, it said.

The report said this slower growth momentum reconfirms recent assertion that incipient growth recovery needs to be supported by accommodative policy longer than anticipated.

"We thus expect liquidity normalization may be delayed. This could have a further softening impact on government securities (G-sec) yields from current 6.7 per cent towards around 6.55 per cent or so," the report said.

This loan may be given on the premise that interest-servicing alone will keep the loan standard with subsequent loan renewal linked to successful repayment record, it said.

"If the government were to bear, say, 3 per cent interest subsidy, on a portfolio of ₹50,000 crore, the out-

lay would be only ₹1,500 crore during 2022-23. And these loans will also act as a big consumption booster at subsistent levels," it said.

The additional advantage of these micro livelihood loans is that they will help the banking system prepare a comprehensive database and credit history of marginal bor-

THE REAL GDP WILL BE AROUND ₹2.35 LAKH CRORE MORE / 1.6 PER CENT HIGHER THAN THE FY20 REAL GDP OF ₹145.69 LAKH CRORE

THE RECOVERY IN DOMESTIC ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IS YET TO BE BROAD-BASED, AS PRIVATE CONSUMPTION REMAINED BELOW PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

THE REPORT SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN OFFER LIVELIHOOD LOANS, SAY UP TO ₹50,000 TO RURAL POOR

rows that can be further leveraged to create new credit-worthy borrowing classes, the report said.

The present overdraft facility for PMJDY accounts in the banking system, in existence for sometime can be streamlined and tech enriched with a central nodal agency/bank to monitor and promote the scheme meaningfully, it said.

Ind-Ra pegs states' fiscal deficit at 3.6%

Mumbai: Revising the outlook on state finances to "improving" in FY23 from "neutral", India Ratings expects the aggregate fiscal deficit of the states to come in at 3.6 per cent of their gross domestic product from 3.5 per cent in FY22 on the back of robust revenue growth. The agency had earlier forecast the fiscal deficit of the states to print in at 4.1 per cent. The upward revision is due to the better-than-expected growth in revenue receipts and higher growth in the nominal GDP in FY22, India Ratings said in a note Friday. The agency also estimates the national nominal GDP to grow 17.6 per cent this fiscal, higher than the previous estimate of 15.6 per cent. Accordingly, the agency expects gross and net market borrowings by the states in FY22 to be lower than at ₹6.6 lakh crore and ₹4.6 lakh crore, respectively, than its previous estimate of ₹8.2 lakh crore and ₹6.2 lakh crore. Their gross and net market borrowings are estimated at ₹7 lakh crore and ₹4.63 lakh crore, respectively, in FY23 due to an improvement in states' aggregate revenue receipts and higher tax devolution from the Centre. The quality of the fiscal deficit, which is revenue deficit as a percentage of fiscal deficit, is likely to improve in FY22 and FY23, after deteriorating in the previous two fiscals of 2020 and 2021 due to the impact of the pandemic on the states' revenue receipts.

Indigo co-promoter Gangwal quits from board; to cut stake

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: IndiGo's co-promoter Rakesh Gangwal Friday resigned from the board of directors of parent company InterGlobe Aviation, stating that he will gradually reduce his equity stake in the airline over the next five years.

Gangwal and his related entities own around 37 per cent stake in this company. Rahul Bhatia and his related entities own around 38 per cent in InterGlobe Aviation. "I have been a long-term shareholder in the company for more than 15 years and it's only natural to someday think about diversifying one's holdings," Gangwal said in his letter to the board members.

Accordingly, my current intention is to slowly reduce my equity stake in the company over the next five plus years, he added.

At an extraordinary general meeting held December 30, IndiGo shareholders had approved a special resolution to remove a clause from the company's Articles of Association (AoA) which gave its two promoters the power of right of first refusal when one of them wanted to sell his shares.

The passage of the special resolution paved the way for resolution of a dispute that has been going on between Gangwal and Bhatia since 2019.

DROUGHT PARCHES SOUTH AMERICA Record import of US soyoil

REUTERS

Mumbai, Feb 18: Indian traders have contracted to import a record 100,000 tonnes of soyoil from the United States because of limited supplies from drought-hit South America, at a time when prices of rival palm oil are scaling record highs, three dealers told Reuters.

The higher purchases from the United States are expected to support US soyoil prices, which have climbed nearly 20% this year to close to their highest in a decade, fuelling worries about food inflation.

The world's biggest edible oil importer traditionally buys soyoil from Argentina and Brazil, but lower bean output in these two leading exporters of the commodity forced New Delhi to turn to the United States, they said.

"Indian buyers have bought US soyoil vessels. Prices were attractive and supplies were not enough in South America," said the India head of a global trading firm, who sought anonymity because of the company's policy. "Buying of another two vessels in the short term is possible," he added.

India usually gets two-thirds of its soyoil needs from Argentina, and the rest from Brazil.

But last season's reduced soybean output has tightened soyoil reserves in Argentina, forcing Indian buyers to shop around for alter-



Sunflower oil is cheaper than palm and soyoil, but some buyers are sceptical about deliveries because of geopolitical tension (in Russia). They are going with soyoil

SANDEEP BAJORIA
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SUNVIN GROUP

natives, such as sunoil from the Black Sea region.

Crude palm oil (CPO) is being offered at about \$1,575 a tonne, including cost, insurance and freight (CIF), in India for March shipments, compared with \$1,620 for crude soybean oil and \$1,515 for crude sunflower oil, traders said.

Soyoil was cheaper than palm and sunflower oil last month, but the sudden jump in soyoil demand has lifted prices by 16% in a month to the highest in 14 years, traders said.

'Digital to be largest medium'

POST NEWS NETWORK

GroupM India Friday announced their advertising expenditure (Adex) forecasts for 2022. As per the GroupM futures report 'This Year, Next Year' (TYNY) 2022, the ad expenditures are estimated to reach ₹107,987 crore in 2022. This represents the estimated growth of 22% for the calendar year 2022. India is set to be the fastest-growing market among the top 10 global markets and retains its 9th rank in 2022



The pandemic has pushed the envelope towards digital and has hence topped the pie, with advertisers keen to explore more of it. Ecommerce and Telco will drive the economy. We also expect FMCG and auto to slowly catch up and contribute towards this growth

PRASANTH KUMAR | CEO, GROUPM SOUTH ASIA

Global ad spend to grow by 11% in 2022 to reach \$850bn; Digital at 66% share
Indian ad spend estimated to grow by 22% in 2022 vs 2021
India: All media estimated to grow in 2022 vs 2021
India: TV estimated to grow by 15% in 2022 vs 2021
Digital estimated to become lead medium with estimated share of 45%, driven by 33% growth



With the pivot to digital by consumers and companies alike, digital emerges as the largest medium in 2022 with an estimated share of 45 per cent. Digital is estimated to grow by 33 per cent in 2022. As digital capabilities enhance and connectivity becomes omnipresent, technology will further poise and change almost every sector of India's economy

TUSHAR VYAS
PRESIDENT OF GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION, GROUPM SOUTH ASIA



While digital is set to take the larger pie, we are expecting a noteworthy revival for OOH & cinema too after a tough period. Advertising on e-commerce, the rise of influencers and short format videos along with OTT has witnessed growth in 2021, which would continue in 2022

SIDHARTH PARASHAR
GROUPM INDIA'S INVESTMENTS & PRICING PRESIDENT

Dollar millionaires in India rise 11% in Covid-hit 2021

A RECENTLY RELEASED REPORT BY NON-PROFIT OXFAM PEGGED THE WEALTH OF TOP 100 RICHEST INDIANS AT \$775 BILLION, AND ADDED THAT INDIA ACCOUNTED FOR 4.6 CRORE OR HALF OF THE OVERALL PEOPLE ON THE PLANET FALLING INTO EXTREME POVERTY IN 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 18: Dollar millionaires or those possessing a personal wealth of over ₹7 crore rose by 11 per cent to 4.58 lakh households in India at the end of the pandemic-hit 2021, as per a survey.

The survey of 350 such dollar millionaires also indicated that the number of those who classify themselves as happy in personal and professional lives slipped to 66 per cent in 2021, down from 72 per cent in the previous year.

The Hurun Report findings on the dollar millionaires come at a time when there is rising concern about the growing inequality in the country with a population of over 130 crore.

The report estimated the number of Indian dollar millionaires to increase by 30 per cent to touch 6 lakh households by 2026

Mumbai is home to the largest number of dollar millionaires at 20,300 households, followed by Delhi at 17,400 and Kolkata with 10,500



At a time when calls for taxing the super-rich are growing - Oxfam advocated higher taxation to save lives - less than a third among those

surveyed felt paying taxes is a determinant of social responsibility, the report by Hurun said. Similarly, when calls for greater

The next decade presents a meaningful opportunity for luxury brands and service providers to enter/ further strengthen presence in India

ANAS RAHMAN JUNAID | MD AND CHIEF RESEARCHER, HURUN INDIA

help through philanthropy are growing, only 19 per cent of the millionaires surveyed by Hurun said they believe in giving back to society.

Over two-thirds of those surveyed said they will prefer sending their kids abroad for education, with the US emerging the favourite destination followed by the UK, New Zealand and Germany.

Over two-thirds of those surveyed said they will prefer sending their kids abroad for education, with the US emerging the favourite destination followed by the UK, New Zealand and Germany.

The survey also focused on consumption, and found that a fourth of those in the list change their cars every three years with the German carmaker Mercedes Benz emerging as the most preferred.

Indian Hotels' Taj emerged as the most preferred hospitality brand, while Tanishq, also owned by the Tata Group, emerged as the favourite jewellery retailer. Louis Vuitton was the most preferred luxury goods brand while Gulfstream was the most preferred private jet brand, the survey said.

India seal T20I series

Eves concede series against White Ferns

Indian teams fail to qualify for knockouts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 18: Bhuvneshwar Kumar (1/29) and Harshal Patel (0/46) produced superb bowling in slog overs as India survived some anxious moments before walking out with an eight-run win over West Indies in the second T20I that handed them an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series here Friday.

Chasing a stiff 187, wicketkeeper-batter Nicholas Pooran (62, 41b, 5x4, 3x6) and Rovman Powell (68 n o, 36b, 4x4, 5x6) hit belligerent fifties to keep them in the hunt as they needed just 29 runs from the last two overs.

But death bowling specialist, Bhuvneshwar Kumar revived India's hopes by removing the dangerous-looking Pooran with a slower off-cutter. Under pressure after he dropped Powell off his own bowling, Bhuvneshwar was brilliant and conceded just four runs in the over.

Needing to defend 25 in the final over, Patel was hit for two consecutive sixes but he held his nerves to seal the issue for India. This was India's 100th win in T20Is as they sealed the series with one match to go Sunday.

Earlier continuing his impressive run in his debut series, Ravi Bishnoi (1/30) dismissed Brandon King (22) in his third delivery to break the second-wicket stand. But Pooran and Powell looked without any trouble against the Indian attack.

Wicketkeeper-batter Pooran continued his impressive form to smash a second successive half century, while Powell gave a fine support at the other end as the Windies recovered from being 59/2 inside



nine overs.

Dropped on 21 by Bishnoi in the 10th over, Pooran brought up his fifty in 34 balls. Powell then completed a 28-ball fifty as India looked under real pressure before Bhuvneshwar turned it around.

Earlier, Virat Kohli (52, 41b, 7x4, 1x6) was back among runs with a fifty while Rishabh Pant smashed a quick-fire unbeaten 52 (28b, 7x4, 1x6) to lift India to a challenging 186/5.

Kohli hit his 30th fifty in the shortest format, his first since the 57 versus Pakistan in the T20 World Cup October 24 last year. The former captain's sheer elegance was on full display as he cut, pulled and also took the aerial route en route to his half century.

Luck also favoured Kohli on the day as the former skipper brought up his 30th T20I fifty with a slog over long-on after Jason Holder failed to get hold of the catch as the ball went over the boundary.

But Kohli failed to make it big and was cleaned up by Chase two balls later after the Windies off-spinner breached his gate for his third wicket.

Chase was impressive in the middle overs to return with 3/25 and which included the wickets of Rohit Sharma (19) and Suryakumar Yadav (8).

Thereafter it was Pant and Venkatesh Iyer (33, 18b, 4x4, 1x6) show on offer as they took charge on the likes of Kieron Pollard and Romario Shepherd in their 76-run

partnership from 35 balls.

Earlier India got off to a slow start with Sheldon Cottrell bowling four dots on the trot before dismissing Ishan Kishan in the second over of the day. Kishan looked listless and under pressure to continue his poor form and departed for two after his 10-ball stay.

But thereafter it was Kohli show at the sparsely-crowded Eden as the former India skipper delighted his fans with his elegant timing and strokeplay. Kohli found his timing early on and got a second boundary in the same over of Akeal Hossain.

Kohli was the aggressor and skipper Rohit was happy to play the second fiddle as the duo took India's score to almost 50 in the first six overs. There was a clear shift in India's batting in the powerplay as the duo were not afraid to take the aerial route.

Rohit departed after a fine partnership with Kohli that yielded 49 runs from 36 balls before Chase gave the breakthrough in his first over removing the Indian skipper after inducing a thick leading edge to be caught at the point. In his next over, Chase accounted for Suryakumar but Kohli ensured that there was no further damage.

India seemed to be cruising to their first win of the tour when they reduced New Zealand to 171/6 in the 35th over but in the end they could not do so as Lauren Down (64 n o, 52b, 6x4, 2x6) took the hosts home with five balls to spare.

This was the second highest run chase in women's ODI cricket history. New Zealand needed 105 runs from the last 15 overs and 64 from 10 with four wickets in hand and the Indians failed to polish off the home side's lower order.

Down and Katey Martin (35) made life difficult for the Indian bowlers with a 76-run stand for the seventh wicket. New Zealand needed 18 runs from the final two overs and Goswami conceded 12 in the penultimate over before Down hit a six in the first ball of the final over bowled by Deepti Sharma (1/57) to reach 280/7 and win the match.

The 39-year-old Goswami struck in the third ball of New Zealand run chase by removing captain Sophie Devine for a duck before cleaning-up Suzie Bates (5) to leave the hosts at 14/2 in 2.3 overs.

She then returned to break a dangerous-looking partnership between

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Queenstown, Feb 18: Veteran pacer Jhulan Goswami's impressive three-wicket haul (3/47) was the only bright spot as India yet again failed to defend an imposing total with hosts New Zealand notching up a series-clinching three-wicket victory in the third ODI here Friday.

It was Goswami yet again who led the bowling pack, after sitting out of the second ODI. She accounted for the three New Zealand wickets at the top to rock the home side's run chase of 280.

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Jhulan Goswami celebrates a wicket with her teammates, Friday

Amy Satterthwaite (59, 76b, 6x4) and Amelia Kerr (67, 117b, 7x4) by dismissing the former in the 24th over. Satterthwaite and Kerr had revived the New Zealand innings with a third-wicket stand of 103 runs.

Earlier, India rode on half centuries from Sabbhineni Meghana (61, 41b, 9x4, 2x6), Shafali Verma (51, 57b, 7x4) and Deepti Sharma (69 n o, 69b, 7x4, 1x6) to post 279 - their highest total against New Zealand - after being asked to bat.

Young openers Meghana and Verma gave India a flying start with a stand of 100 in 13 overs, but the visitors lost wickets at regular intervals later to be all out for 279 in 49.3 overs.

BRIEF SCORES: India Women 279 (Deepti Sharma 69 n o, Sabbhineni Meghana 61, Shafali Verma 51; Rosemary Mair 2/43) lost to New Zealand Women 280/7 (Amelia Kerr 67, Lauren Down 64 n o, Amy Satterthwaite 59; Jhulan Goswami 3/47) by 3 wickets.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shah Alam (Malaysia), Feb 18: India's campaign at the Badminton Asia Team Championships came to end as the men's and women's teams failed to advance to the knockout round after going down to their respective opponents here Friday.

While the men's team lost 2-3 to three-time defending champions Indonesia, the women's side were hammered 1-4 by Japan. The Indian men's team had earlier lost 0-5 to Korea and beaten Honk Kong 3-2. It needed an outright win against title holders Indonesia to advance to the knockout stage. The Indians finished third in the group stage behind Indonesia and Korea. Hong Kong finished last.

BADMINTON ASIA TEAM C'SHIPS

The women's team also needed a win to qualify for the knockouts but found Japan to be a formidable opponent. The Indians had earlier lost to hosts Malaysia 2-3.

Lakshya Sen and Mithun Manjunath gave a good account of themselves. Sen eked out a hard-fought win over Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo 21-18, 27-25. Manjit Singh Khwairakpam and Dingku Singh Konthoujam went down 16-21, 10-21 to Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin. Kiran lost 13-21, 21-17, 10-21 to Ikhsan Leonardo Imanuel Rumbay. The Indonesians then sealed the tie as the Indian duo of Hariharan Amsakarunan and Ruban Retinasapathii Kumar lost to Muhammad Shohibul Fikri and Bagas Maulana 10-21, 10-21.

Japan proved too much for the young women's side.

Odisha strike twice after Dhuper show

MISFIRING BARCELONA HELD BY NAPOLI

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: Rajesh Dhuper (71 n o, 107b, 8x4, 1x6) rescued Odisha to help his team take a slender eight-run first innings lead against Goa in their Ranji Trophy Elite Group D match against Goa at Motera, Ahmedabad Friday.

Responding to Goa's first innings total of 181, Odisha were bowled out for 189. Goa were off to a smooth start to their second essay, with the openers adding 76 runs, before two quick wickets late on the day reduced their side to 87/2 at stumps.

Resuming their innings at 23/3, Odisha were reduced to 54/5 after losing former skipper and experienced Govind Poddar (8) and current captain and overnight batter Subhanshu Senapati (29).

It could have been worse had Dhuper and Abhishek Raut (29) not resurrected their innings with a crucial 47-run partnership for the sixth wicket. The stand allowed Odisha to go past 100-run barrier, which was looking unlikely considering how the batters were struggling against Goa bowlers.

Dhuper then lost another partner in Debabrata Pradhan after adding 20 runs for the seventh wicket. However, Rajesh Mohanty (18) managed to provide Dhuper a much-needed assistance. Dhuper and Mohanty added 44 runs for the eighth wicket before the latter got out.

Knowing there is not much batting left, Dhuper went on to aggressive mode and found some quick runs to guide Odisha past Goa's 181-run first innings total

before running out of partners. Shubham Ranjana (5/49) was the standout among the Goa bowlers, grabbing a five-wicket haul.

In response, Goa openers provided their team a splendid start before Odisha bowlers got rid of both the openers in successive overs. Sumiran Amankar (33) and Amogh Sunil Desai (42) added 76 runs for the opening wicket. Seasoned Basant Mohanty (1/21) broke the stand dismissing Desai, before Raut (1/10) cleaned up Amankar to add misery to Goa innings.

Brief scores: Goa 181 & 87/2 (Amogh Sunil Desai 42, Sumiran Amankar 33; Abhishek Raut 1/10, Basant Mohanty 1/21); Odisha 189 (Rajesh Dhuper 71 n o, Abhishek Raut 29, Subhanshu Senapati 29; Shubham Ranjana 5/49).

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barcelona, Feb 18: After dropping out of the Champions League, Barcelona now face a difficult task just to qualify for the round of 16 in the Europa League.

In their first appearance in the second-tier European competition in nearly two decades, the Catalan club was held 1-1 by Napoli at Camp Nou Stadium Thursday in the first leg of one of eight play-offs between third-place finishers in the Champions League groups and Europa League group runners-up.

It is the first time since 2003-04 that Barcelona is not in the knockout stages of the Champions League, a tournament it won five times.



FERRAN TORRES

In the other matchups, Scottish club Rangers stunned Borussia Dortmund 4-2 away, Real Betis won 3-2 at Zenit St. Petersburg and Sheriff beat Braga 1-0. Sevilla, Atalanta and Porto recorded home victories, while Real Sociedad drew 2-2 at Leipzig.

In the play-off matches to reach the last 16 of the inaugural Europa Conference League, Leicester ended a five-game winless streak in all competitions by beating Denmark's Randers 4-1, while Norway's upstart Bodø/Glimt upset Celtic 3-1 in Glasgow.

Marseille, PSV Eindhoven, Rapid Vienna, Midtjylland, Slavia Prague and Partizan Belgrade also won the opening leg. The second-leg games in both competitions are

scheduled for Feb 24.

Ferran Torres, who missed at least three clear goal scoring chances, salvaged the draw for Barcelona by converting a penalty that was awarded due to Juan Jesus' handball in the 59th minute. The forward calmly sent goalkeeper Alex Meret the opposite way from the spot. Barcelona dominated the remaining 30 minutes but couldn't find a winner.

Napoli scored from a counter-attack after Torres wasted a chance to net for Barcelona. At the other end, Eljif Elmas set up Piotr Zielinski for the opener in the 29th. Barcelona goalkeeper Ter Stegen saved his first low attempt but the Polish midfielder fired a rebound in the roof of the net.

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