



## Kriti's worry

Actor Kriti Sanon shares her concerns about detrimental effects of Artificial Intelligence on personal reputations

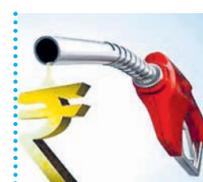
LEISURE | P2



## 30 killed in Pak blasts

A day before the general elections, twin blasts rock Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, killing at least 30 people

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Fuel retailers in loss

State-owned fuel retailers are losing close to ₹3 per litre on selling diesel while the profit on petrol has trimmed

BUSINESS | P11



## Bumrah creates history

Jasprit Bumrah becomes the first Indian pacer to top the ICC Test rankings for bowlers as he replaces teammate R Ashwin

SPORTS | P12

## SHORT TAKES

### ₹244.77 crore wagon workshop approved

**Bhubaneswar:** The Railway Board has approved ₹244.77 crore for establishing a wagon periodic overhauling (PoH) facility at Kantabanji in Odisha's Balangir district. The decision comes in response to the demands of the local people, including public representatives, East Coast Railway (ECOR) said in a statement, Wednesday. Recognising the need for such a workshop in the region, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav had assured local people that their demand would be met, it said. The detailed project report of the wagon PoH was submitted in September 2023. P4

### ₹10cr corpus fund for Odia promotion

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha government Wednesday unveiled several initiatives aimed at promoting the Odia language and literature, both nationally and internationally. Odia Language Literature and Culture Minister Aswini Patra announced in the Assembly the establishment of a corpus fund of ₹10 crore to support research in the language at national and international levels. This decision was based on discussions held during the recently held World Odia Language Conference and talks with the Odia diaspora, the minister said. P3

### Uttarakhand clears UCC Bill

**Dehradun:** The Uttarakhand Assembly Wednesday passed the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, which may serve as template for other BJP-run states to enact similar legislation. The UCC Bill was passed by voice vote after a two-day debate. The Opposition's proposal for referring the draft legislation to a select committee of the House on the ground that they did not get enough time to study its provisions was rejected. The Bill will now be sent to President Droupadi Murmu for her assent after which it will become a law. P9

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I've no option but to leave the state. I was fed up registering my relationships. I've had three breakups

### MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VI	VA
SENSEX	72152.00	↓	34.09
NIFTY	21930.50	↑	1.10
DOLLAR	83.0375	↓	₹0.08
EURO	89.5075	↑	₹0.21
GOLD	₹62,605	↑	₹31
SILVER	₹70,353	↓	₹241

### WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	31.8°C	30.2°C
Min Temp	23.5°C	22.2°C
Humidity	82%	83%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FOG/MIST IN THE MORNING



**NEW BEGINNING:** Governor Raghubar Das administers oath of office to Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh, the new Orissa High Court Chief Justice, in Cuttack, Wednesday

(Report P3)

## MYSTERY SHROUDS SINGER'S DEATH

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, Feb 7:** Mystery shrouds the death of an orchestra artiste whose body was found adjacent to a road in Old Town here, Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Prakash Padhi, 42, alias Daddy. He was the lead singer of an orchestra troupe, Daddy Mix, in the town and has some albums to his credit. He had been admitted to the district headquarters hospital (DHH) for treatment of his illness two days back.

The discovery of his body from the roadside near Baghuabeda bridge, about 2 km from the hospital, has created a sensation in the area.

Hospital authorities claimed that Prakash died after consuming poison. But a deep wound found on his head during post-mortem has deepened the mystery. His younger brother Pradip Padhi cried foul over the death and claimed his brother had been murdered. The Town police has registered a case and launched an investigation. IIC Ramakant Soy said. Preliminary inquiries indicated that Prakash had died after consuming poison, he added.

Pradip alleged that he admitted Prakash to the hospital after the latter fell sick, two days back. He shared his phone number with hospital authorities to call him during emergencies as it was not possible for him to stay beside his ailing brother round the clock. However, he allegedly got a phone call from the hospital, informing about his brother's death, Wednesday. He wondered how his brother could leave the hospital and travelled for 2-km to end life without the knowledge of hospital staff and security guards, and demanded a thorough probe into the case.

## House din over parboiled rice

**Oppn BJP alleges in the state Assembly that rice collected through 'Arpan Rath' from villages during inauguration of Srimandir Parikrama Prakarpa was mixed with parboiled rice and offered to Lord Jagannath**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** The Odisha Assembly proceedings Wednesday were stalled for several hours after Opposition BJP members created a ruckus in the House alleging that in a departure from practice, parboiled rice was mixed with Lord Jagannath's prasad in Srimandir. The saffron party legislators also demanded a reply from Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on the issue, asserting that it has hurt the religious sentiment of lakhs of devotees.



They alleged that the rice collected through 'Arpan Rath' from villages across Odisha during the inauguration of Srimandir Parikrama Prakarpa or Heritage Corridor Project was mixed with parboiled rice and offered to Lord Jagannath. Traditionally parboiled rice is not used in Lord's Prasad.

As soon as the House assembled for the day, BJP MLAs trooped into the well of the House and created uproarious scenes holding placards. They also demanded a statement from the Chief Minister over the matter. As pandemonium prevailed over the issue, Speaker Pramila

### Naveen slams BJP

**Bhubaneswar:** Amid a noisy walkout by BJP members from Assembly, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday came down heavily on the saffron party accusing it of politicising sensitive crimes and development works that affect the image of the state and its people. "In the past 24 years as a member of this House, I've never seen this kind of politicisation of sensitive issues. People won't forgive those who defame their own state for narrow political interests. People won't forgive those who tried to stop Srimandir and Lingaraj projects. People won't forgive those who block development of the state," Patnaik said. P3

Mallik initially adjourned the House for one hour till 11:30am and subsequently extended it till 4pm. When the House reassembled at 4pm, the saffron party members again trooped into the well and raised slogans demanding a statement from the CM.

Several of the agitating members also attempted to climb the

Speaker's podium but they were stopped by marshals. The MLAs, however, snatched away mike from the Speaker. Unable to run the House, the Speaker again adjourned the House for one hour. Treasury bench members were also seen shouting from their seats and displaying placards. They accused the BJP members of politicising the Nayagarh minor girl rape and murder case.

Both BJD and BJP members shouted at the top of their voices for some time. After the House was adjourned, the BJP members staged a demonstration outside Assembly holding posters as a mark of protest. They lashed out at the government claiming that Mahaprasad was prepared in the Jagannath Temple using Arpan Rath rice which was mixed with par-boiled rice and distributed to devotees.

BJD MLA Bhagirathi Sethi, however, rejected the allegation made by BJP members and accused the saffron party lawmakers of politicising the matter. ■ **Proposals for 28 new dists** P3

## BJP, BJD partnership in Odisha, says Rahul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rourkela, Feb 7:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Wednesday accused the BJP and BJD of having a 'partnership' in Odisha, and stated that his party has been opposing them to protect the interest of the people, including rights of tribals of the state.

Gandhi resumed his 'Bharat Joda Nyay Yatra' in Odisha's Steel City here. While delivering speeches here, Rajgangpur and Sundergarh, Gandhi said, "As you know, (BJD chief) Naveen Patnaik and (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi run a partnership government in Odisha. They have joined hands and work in tandem. I find in Parliament that BJD supports the BJP. The BJD people also harass us at the instance of BJP."

Gandhi claimed that it is the Congress party alone which has been opposing the BJD-BJP combine for the people of Odisha.

The Congress MP said this was also the situation in



Telangana where Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) was supporting BJP and getting protection from the Centre. "We have defeated BRS in Telangana and are optimistic to repeat the show in Odisha," he said.

"It is actually the Congress which has been supporting the BJD in Odisha. We have seen Congress leaders coming to the rescue of the BJD government in the Assembly," BJD MLA Nauri Naik said.

BJD vice-president and MLA Debi Prasad Mishra said, "Rahul Gandhi is free to say whatever he thinks, but the fact remains different. In Odisha, people have trust in Naveen Patnaik for which he has been successively elected to power five times in a row."

## Don't mention litigants' caste or religion, SC directs registry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 7:** The Supreme Court asked its registry officials Wednesday to comply with a recent order of the court in which it was directed that the practice of mentioning the caste or religion of litigants must be shunned.

A bench headed by Justice Hima Kohli January 10 directed the apex court registry and all other courts to immediately shun the practice of mentioning the caste or religion of lit-

igants in court cases.

In a circular issued Wednesday, the Supreme Court said, "In compliance with the directions of the court, as above, all the concerned officers/officials of the Registry are hereby directed to adhere to the aforesaid directions that henceforth the caste or religion of parties shall not be mentioned in the memo of parties of a petition/proceeding filed before this court, irrespective of whether any such details have been furnished before the courts below."

## Nostradamus' King Charles prophecy surfaces

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** The Buckingham Palace in a statement Monday announced that Britain's King Charles has been diagnosed with a form of cancer that has hastened the 75-year-old monarch to postpone his public-facing duties while he undergoes treatment, and assured that he is looking forward to returning to full public duty as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, a report in 'Metro', a London-based tabloid, has published the eerie similarities between the palace developments

and the predictions made by 16th-century French astrologer Nostradamus detailing a royal turmoil. Nostradamus, who foresaw events including '9/11' and the 'cost of living crisis', wrote 942 predictions for the future in his book Les Propheties in 1555.

He wrote drama could be on the cards for the Royal Family in 2024, saying the 'King' may be 'driven out by force'.

The book reads: 'King of the Isles driven out by force... replaced by one who will have no mark of a king.' Expert Mario Reading analysed the passage, and interpreted it: 'Because they



disapproved of his divorce, a man who later they considered unworthy; The People will force out the King of the islands; A man will replace who never expected to be king,' Metro reported. Nostradamus has a proven track record in his predictions concerning the royals.

The renowned French future teller foresaw the death of Queen Elizabeth II in 2022 and even guessed her age correctly.

According to reports, King Charles III's estranged son Prince Harry arrived in London Tuesday after learning about his father diagnosed of cancer, which doctors detected at an early stage. Harry, who now lives in California with his actress wife Meghan and their children, has been at loggerheads with his family since quitting royal life and launching a barrage of scathing criticism in his best-selling autobiography, 'Spare'.

# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

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

### ARIES

Believe it, life is good some times; today is one such day. Things will not be hectic, even though you remain occupied, both at work and in your personal life. With no troubles brewing, what more can you ask for? Perhaps, Ganesh is trying to impart the crucial lesson of contentment.

### TAURUS

The three Es will rule your mood throughout the day: energy, exuberance and excitement. Such enthusiasm is always contagious and near and dear ones will be charmed by it. Things will get better as the day progresses. Take a break from work to relax and recharge if you feel weary, says Ganesh.

### GEMINI

There are strong indications that you will find it easy to assume a leadership role and set the agenda at work today, says Ganesh. In the afternoon, you will be busy looking for an expensive gift for someone very important to you.

### CANCER

Today, you are likely to address all problems with a human touch, predicts Ganesh. You are likely to play Agony Aunt to one and all. But for that, you will have to learn to leave your problems at the workplace.

### LEO

Something piques the demon within you today, says Ganesh, making you emotional and zealous. But then, we must all wage a war against our personal demons every time they rear their ugly heads. Ganesh foresees you emerging victorious in this battle today, and regaining your happy-go-lucky attitude in the latter part of the day.

### VIRGO

Helping your colleagues will bring loads of good will. Your superiors will be superiorly happy with your work. Interaction with friends will be special. Revel in the company of your loved one, says Ganesh.

### LIBRA

It's all about family today. In fact, the bigger the better since Ganesh foresees it is quite likely that both close and distant relatives will fill your heart with glee today. It might be some good news worthy of raising a toast to. However, you might be doubtful about getting along with your peers at work.

### SCORPIO

Today, you are likely to make a fine show of your knack of organising things, predicts Ganesh. At the workplace, you will develop a special liking for your job. Later in the day, you may find lasting solutions to pending problems. Take the trouble to research any decisions you make so that you are liable to make well-informed decisions about your future.

### SAGITTARIUS

Work while you work and play while you play, says Ganesh. On the professional front, you will outclass your rivals with sheer brilliance, leaving them flabbergasted and intimidated. On the personal front, you may spend quality time with loved ones or spend your evening being chased by the spotlight of a party.

### CAPRICORN

You will settle for nothing less than excellence in whatever work you choose to take up, says Ganesh. In fact, working extra hours may leave you a little exhausted in the afternoon. Here's the remedy: delegate work to those around you and see that they meet your high standards.

### AQUARIUS

The explorer that you are, today your restlessness will get the better of you! Your plans will finally take off, whether it is a new entrepreneurial or educational course or a trip to your home town. It's a promising day, says Ganesh, and you never know what you may find!

### PISCES

There is a lot of brain-racking in store for you today, as you try to conjure up ways to convert your extraordinary brilliance into exceptional performance. Keeping in mind that your family is the foundation of your success could provide some vital insights, says Ganesh.



## SWIFT WARNS TO SUE STUDENT OVER TRACKING CELEBRITY JETS

Singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, who recently fought an uphill battle against her deepfake porn images, has threatened legal action against Jack Sweeney, a college student who tracks celebrity jets and faced Elon Musk's ire in the past.

## SOFIA VERGARA KEEPS A NUDE PICTURE OF HERSELF IN CLOSET

Actress Sofia Vergara revealed that she keeps a nude photograph of herself in her closet. While giving a tour of her luxurious walk-in closet, Vergara holds up a framed black-and-white, nude boudoir-style photo of herself, explaining wistfully, "And this picture, it was when I was young and fresh."



## PC dives into virtual world

**Mumbai:** Actress Priyanka Chopra recently surprised her fans by offering a sneak peek into her life abroad through an Instagram story, showcasing her newfound fascination with the virtual world. The actress' excitement was evident as she unveiled a virtual reality (VR) headset, adorned with a beaming grin, and shared her journey into the immersive digital experience.

## Kriti reflects on AI's darker side

nology and its impact on individuals' lives. During a promotional interview, Kriti shared her concerns about the detrimental effects of artificial intelligence on personal rep-

utations. She recounted, "There were some fake articles roaming out about me. They were written by an app to promote themselves. It's been so hard for me because they morphed like Times of India. They morphed BBC and all. So, I had my family members and all the people messaging me, 'What is this?' And they have taken some pictures from different films where I am crying. They made the eyes more red and all, and it's like some scandalous thing has happened to me."

She further added, "Honestly, it was very difficult for me, at my position, to get those articles off. Once it's out, it circulates to another level. You can't. I genuinely feel like social media is probably one of the worst things that's happened to our generation in general. The amount of stress, the amount of issues that it has created... The amount of information... Our brain is not used to having so much information fed to it all the time."



## Esha, Bharat part ways

**Mumbai:** After 11 years of marriage, Esha Deol, daughter of veteran screen couple Hema Malini-Dharmendra, and husband Bharat Takhtani, announced their divorce. As per a joint statement, the couple said that the separation is "amicable".

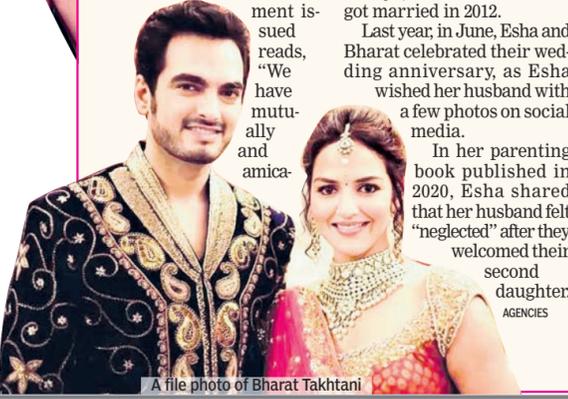
Through this shift in our lives, the best interests and welfare of our two children are and will be of utmost importance to us. We'd appreciate our privacy being respected." Esha and Bharat are parents to daughters Radhya, 6, and Miraya, 4. Esha and Bharat got married in 2012.

The statement issued reads, "We have mutually and amica-

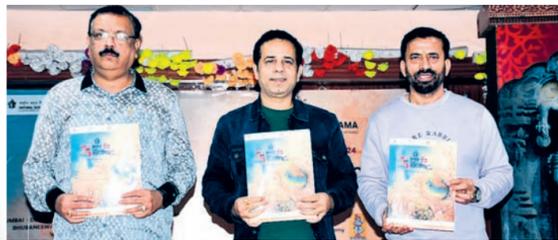
ly decided to part ways. Last year, in June, Esha and Bharat celebrated their wedding anniversary, as Esha wished her husband with a few photos on social media.

In her parenting book published in 2020, Esha shared that her husband felt "neglected" after they welcomed their second daughter.

AGENCIES



## 6-DAY BHARANGAM BEGINS IN CITY TODAY



Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi Secretary Prabodh Rath, NSD Director Chittaranjan Tripathy and alumnus Samresh Routray at the presser

The National School of Drama has introduced *Rang Haat*, an innovative initiative aiming to create Asia's first global theatre market, in the 25th edition of the event

Rajendran; Troupe- Sri Ram Centre, New Delhi), *Chitraganda* (Language - Bengali; Playwright - Rabindra Nath Tagore; Direction - Zahid Repon; Troupe- Swarnadal, Dhaka), *Tadanta* (Language - Assamese; Playwright - GB Priestley; Direction - Dakshina Sharma; Troupe- Silpa Kanon, Nagaon, Assam), *Naagmandal* (Language - Hindi; Playwright - Girish Karnad; Direction - Satyabrata Rout; Troupe- Black Pearl Arts, New Delhi) *Asharasya Prothom Diboshe* (Language - Bengali; Playwright - Mohan Rakesh; Translation- Anshuman Bhowmik; Direction - Alok Basu; Troupe- Theatre Factory, Dhaka).

**Bhubaneswar:** The International Theatre Festival of India, also known as Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM) or Bharangam, is organised every year by the National School of Drama (NSD) - New Delhi offering theatre-goers a rich tapestry of Indian and global theatre traditions.

Expressing enthusiasm at a presser held on the occasion at the Sanskruti Bhawan here, Odisha-born Chittaranjan Tripathy, the Director of NSD, said, "The upcoming edition promises to be a grand celebration, showcasing not only the extraordinary creativity within the theatrical realm but also emphasising the beauty of collaboration. We are dedicated to fostering the magic of theatre, providing a platform for diverse voices and narratives to thrive."

BRM's 25th edition, a 21-day event, began February 1, 2024 featuring over 150 plays, along with workshops and discussions, in 15 Indian cities.

He went on to add, "This year's festivities will not only mark a milestone but also reaffirm our steadfast belief in the transformative power of the performing arts." PNN

In the Bhubaneswar leg of the event, six plays will be staged at Rabindra Mandap beginning Thursday. The dramas shows to be performed are: *Taj Mahal Ka Tender* (Language - Hindi; playwright - Ajay Shukla; Troupe-Repertory Company (New Delhi) Direction - Chittaranjan Tripathy), *Agni Aur Barkha* (Language - Hindi; Playwright - Girish Karnad; Direction - KS

## PANCHAM VEDA'S 20TH STATE-LEVEL DRAMA FEST

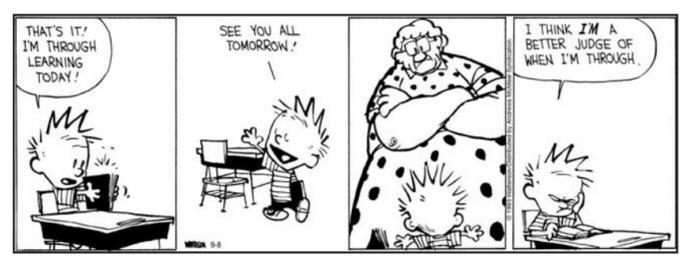


Bariapada-based theatre troupe Rupantara presented Odia play *Smruti Bismruti* on the first evening of 5-day event being held at Bhanjakala Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Wednesday. Written by Bhaskar Chandra Mohapatra and directed by Paresah Sahoo, the play showcased how today's youths, influenced by the Western culture, are neglecting the senior citizens in nuclear families. Among the luminaries, Odia Language, Literature and Culture Department Director Dilip Routrai, Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi Secretary Prabodh Rath, dramatist Dhira Mallick and host troupe's President Haren Sahoo were present. The programme was curated by Prakash Moharana.

## PEANUTS



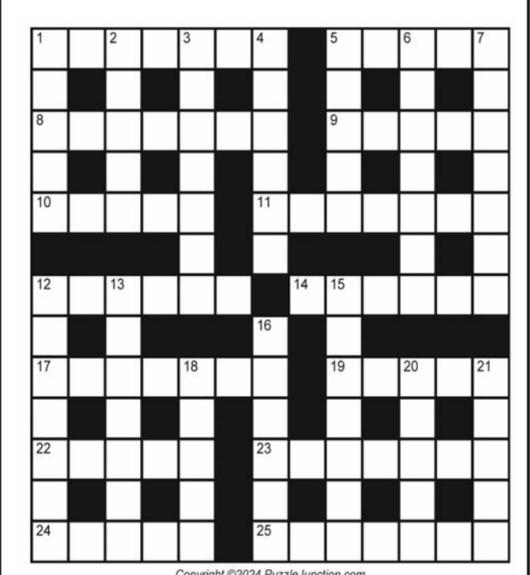
## CALVIN AND HOBBS



## BREVITY



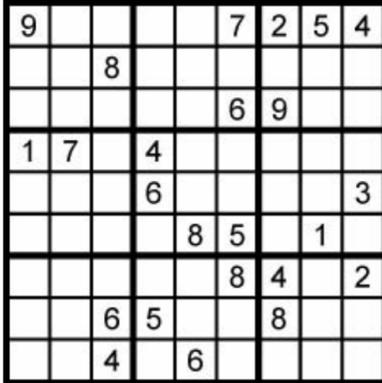
## FUN post CROSSWORD



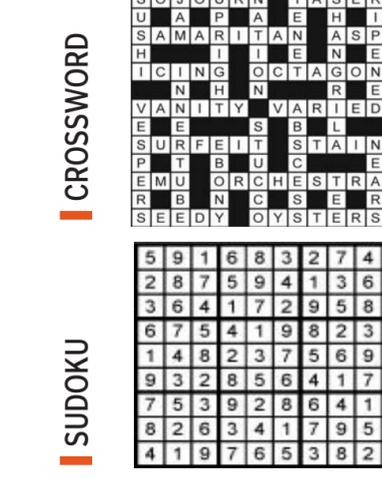
- Copyright © 2024 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Agave liquor
  - 5 Woody plant
  - 8 Bishopric
  - 9 Pitch black
  - 10 Mine passage
  - 11 Aspic
  - 12 Salon offering
  - 14 Marionette
  - 17 Minced cooked meat dish
  - 19 Loosen
  - 22 Lawn mower's path
  - 23 Can opener (4,3)
  - 24 Graybeard
  - 25 Terra firma (3,4)
  - 4 Retaliate
  - 5 Odour
  - 6 Santa's landing spot
  - 7 Rifle attachment
  - 12 Anticipate
  - 13 Bavarian cream
  - 15 Ordinarily
  - 16 Stacked
  - 18 Survey choice
  - 20 Aquarium fish
  - 21 Receded
- Down**
- 1 Commotions (2-3)
  - 2 Allotment
  - 3 Summer drink (4,3)

## SUDOKU

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



## SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown

## VET STUDENTS' STIR

Peaceful agitation by Veterinary Science students in front of College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry at OUAT in Bhubaneswar enters 12th day, Wednesday



## Burglars sweep clean railway official's house

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** There is no let-up in housebreaking incidents in the Capital City as some unidentified miscreants raided a house at Bhotapada under Mancheswar police limits Tuesday night and decamped with gold ornaments worth ₹4 lakh and ₹10,000 in cash, raising the total number of such cases under this police station to two within a week.



The burglars looted 14 gold rings and three sets of anklets from the wardrobe locker of Purnananda Bhoi, an employee

of Indian Railways, a senior police official at Mancheswar police station said.

Bhoi, along with his family members, had gone to one of his relatives' house and stayed there Tuesday night, said the cop, adding that Wednesday morning he received a call from one of his neighbours who said that his gate lock and door were broken. Bhoi then rushed to his residence and discovered articles in rummaged condition.

Bhoi came down heavily on night security in the City and alleged that lack of police patrolling had given a free hand to criminals to commit such acts. "Had there been proper police patrolling during night, such an incident would not have happened," he said.

Notably, last week unidentified men swept gold ornaments and other valuables estimated to around ₹25 lakh from two homes in Satyabadi apartment under Mancheswar police limits.

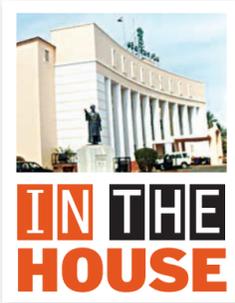


AT LORD'S ABODE: Judges of Patna High Court among others near Srimandir Lion's Gate after paying obeisance to the Trinity in Puri, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

# DON'T POLITICISE SENSITIVE CRIMES, DEVPT WORKS: CM

Patnaik's remarks come as a reply to the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the Governor's address in the Assembly, considered as the last session of his fifth term in office as Chief Minister



IN THE HOUSE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** Amid a noisy walkout by BJP members from Assembly, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday came down heavily on the saffron party accusing it of politicising sensitive crimes and development works that affect the image of the state and its people.

Patnaik made these remarks while responding to the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the Governor's address in the Assembly, considered as the last session of his fifth term in office as Chief Minister.

"I have been a member for the last 24 years in this House. I have never seen this kind of politicisation of sensitive issues. People won't forgive those who defame their own state for narrow political interests. People won't forgive those who tried to stop Srimandir and Lingaraj projects. People won't forgive those who block development of the state," Patnaik said.

Earlier, the House proceedings were stalled due to a din by the BJP members who raised the issue relating to alleged break of tradition in Srimandir by offering 'Bhog' prepared from parboiled rice.

The BJP members, led by opposition chief whip Mohan Charan Majhi, walked out of the House by shouting 'Jai

**Bhubaneswar:** The state government Wednesday unveiled several initiatives aimed at promoting the Odia language and literature as Odia Language, Literature and Culture Minister Aswini Patra announced in the Assembly about the establishment of a corpus fund of ₹10 crore to support research in the language at national and international levels.

This decision was based on discussions held during the re-

Jagannath and Jay Sriram' slogans while Patnaik was making his statement in the House.

The BJP members later went to Raj Bhawan and submitted a memorandum drawing the Governor's attention to violation of tradition in the 12th century shrine.

Patnaik, however, targeted the BJP for politicising the rape and murder of a little girl in Nayagarh. A local court Tuesday had convicted a juvenile with 20 years rigorous imprisonment.

While listing out the successes during his fifth term in the office, Patnaik said, "When all these

## Lightning claims 1,472 lives in 5 years

**Bhubaneswar:** Lightning strikes have claimed 1,472 lives and left 145 people injured in the state in the last five years, state Revenue & Disaster Management Minister Sudam Marndi told the Assembly Wednesday. Replying to a query by Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati, the minister said the state government had declared lightning as a disaster in June 2015. An ex gratia of ₹4 lakh each has been paid to the next of kin of those killed in lightning strikes in accordance with state disaster response fund guidelines, he said. Similarly, a compensation of ₹2.50 lakh is being provided to any person in case he or she loses an eye (s) or any other organ leading to a disability of more than 60 per cent due to a lightning strike, he added. If disability is between 40 per cent and 60 per cent, the compensation amount is ₹74,000, he said.

## ₹10cr corpus fund for Odia language research

cently held First World Odia Language Conference and talks with the Odia diaspora, the minister said, adding that the Odia University at Satyabadi will have a facility in this regard.

To bolster Odia language education, the government plans to recruit exclusive Odia teachers in 1,500 high schools initially, and eventually cover all high schools.

A syllabus revision committee will also be formed to

provide regular suggestions for teaching Odia in schools, Patra said.

The government will provide a heritage grant of ₹1 crore in two phases to schools and colleges over 100 years old, and ₹2 crore to universities established before Independence.

A translation policy will be introduced, offering grant for translating Odia books into other Indian and foreign languages, the minister said.

achievements were happening, I am sorry to say the Opposition was busy politicising every crime and trying to defame the state and its people. Yesterday, a court in Nayagarh delivered the judgment in the tragic minor girl case. I would like to remind the members of the Opposition about the kind of obstruction they did in this House and tried to politicise this sensitive case."

Patnaik also cautioned the Opposition, particularly the BJP, that people of Odisha knew very well all those who are trying to get bail for the accused and all those who tried to derail the ju-

dicial process in the minor girl rape case.

"Now that the accused is convicted, where will the Opposition, especially the state BJP who tried to politicise this issue at the cost of stalling justice to the little girl, go?" Patnaik asked.

"We should always work together for a larger cause, for a 'New and Empowered Odisha'," the CM said.

Patnaik also expressed satisfaction over the NITI Aayog report which said more than one crore people have been lifted out of poverty. He also highlighted how Odisha is the number one

## PROPOSALS FOR 28 NEW DISTTS

**BHUBANESWAR:** Amid growing chorus in several parts of the state for the formation of new districts on the ground that the smaller geographical revenue areas will help save travel time - besides improving reach of local administration - the state government Wednesday told the Assembly that it has received proposals for formation of 28 new districts by reorganising 15 existing districts.

Replying to a query raised by BJP MLAs Naba Charan Majhi and Kusum Tete, Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Sudam Marndi told the House that the government would take suitable decision at the proper time on the demands for formation of new districts.

Marndi further informed that the Orissa High Court, while hearing a PIL (No 41923 of 2023) on the reorganisation of districts, December 21, 2023, directed the state government not to issue any final order on this without the consent of the court.

As per the reply of the minister, the government has received demands to form four new districts by reorganising the existing Mayurbhanj district. It was proposed to form west Mayurbhanj, Rairangpur,

Khiching and Karanja or Panchipur as new districts by dividing the tribal-dominated district.

Similarly, proposals were submitted to the government to reorganise the existing Ganjam district and declare Ghumusar, Aska, Berhampur and Bhanjanagar as new districts.

Some people demanded that Rourkela and Bonai in Sundergarh district as new districts, while the government has also received petitions from some other people demanding not to declare Rourkela as a new district.

Further, some people in Bolangir district demanded to declare Titlagarh, Kantabanji and Patnagarh as new districts. There are demands to form Nilagiri, Soro and Jaleswar as new districts by reorganising the existing Balasore district.

The other proposed new districts are—Padampur (Bargarh district), Dharmagarh (Kalahandi), Talcher and Pallahara Gadjat (Angul), Bhubaneswar (Khurda), Athagarh and Chandikhol (Cuttack), Kuchinda (Sambalpur), Baliguda (Kandhamal), Anandpur (Keonjhar), Nimapara (Puri) and Gunupur (Rayagada).

revenue surplus state in the country. "We have got second highest manufacturing investment in the country and in IT, we have got all major MNCs to the state while doing all this, we have also increased the area under irri-

gation hugely," the CM said.

He said the state government has come up with a great initiative to procure 100 per cent minor forest produce and ensuring the minimum support price through LABHA.

## JUSTICE CS SINGH SWORN IN AS ORISSA HC CJ

PNN & AGENCIES

**Cuttack, Feb 7:** Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh Wednesday took oath as the 34th Chief Justice (CJ) of Orissa High Court.

Governor Raghubar Das administered the oath of office to the new CJ in a swearing-in ceremony held on Orissa High Court premises here.



Born January 20, 1963, Justice Singh was enrolled as an advocate in 1990 after completing a law degree from the University of Delhi (Campus Law Centre). He was appointed as additional standing counsel in the Central government in 1998 and continued as such till October 2001, official sources said.

Singh also served as additional advocate general in Bihar and continued as such till his elevation as an additional judge in Patna High Court in April 2012, they said.

He assumed charge as acting CJ of Patna High Court in February 2023.

Last week, President Droupadi Murmu appointed him as the CJ of Orissa High Court after consultations with the CJ of India, they added.

## Daitari offers apologies

AGENCIES

**Puri, Feb 7:** Jatra artiste Daitari Panda, whose statement triggered widespread reaction from various quarters, came to Srimandir Wednesday and prayed to Lord Jagannath to forgive him for his comments.

Panda, who joined the BJD recently, equated Naveen Patnaik with Lord Jagannath.

After visiting the temple, Panda, who is a famous villain in Odia opera arena, tendered his apology to all 4.5 crore Odias for his statement.

He said there would be no repeat of this mistake in the future.

An FIR has also been lodged against the opera actor for his remarks describing the CM as Lord Jagannath.

# In apex court, Centre supports quota inside quota

SOLICITOR GENERAL TUSHAR MEHTA OPPOSES THE EV CHINNAIAH VS. STATE OF AP JUDGEMENT OF 2004 WHICH HELD THAT ANY 'SUB-CLASSIFICATION' OF SCS WOULD VIOLATE ARTICLE 14 (RIGHT TO EQUALITY) OF THE CONSTITUTION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 7:** The Centre Wednesday supported in the Supreme Court the sub-classification of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) for grant of quota inside quota, saying it is committed to the reservation policy as an affirmative action for those who suffered "hundreds of years of discrimination".

A seven-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud is examining the validity of its 2004 judgement which had held that states do not have the power to further

sub-classify SCs and STs for grant of quotas.

Advancing the arguments, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, opposed the EV Chinniah judgement and said, "The sub-classification furthers the actual purpose behind reservations."

"It is submitted that the legitimate state aim behind reservations is to support the backward classes who have had a history of discrimination of centuries and aiming to provide equality of opportunity," the top law officer said.

The Chinniah judgement had held that any 'sub-classification'



of the SCs would violate Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution.

The 2004 verdict had stated that only Parliament, and not state legislatures, can exclude castes deemed to be SC from the Presidential List under Article 341 of the Constitution.

The top court is examining questions - whether sub-classification inside the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes categories be permitted like in the case of other backward

classes (OBCs) and if the state assemblies are competent to introduce laws empowering the states to undertake this exercise.

The law officer said the 2004 judgement disempowered the state to frame appropriate policy by sub-classifying the zone of reservation appropriately and diminished the constitutional guarantee of equality of opportunity.

"The central government is committed to the declared policy

of reservation for backward classes as a measure of affirmative action to bring equality to those who have suffered hundreds of years of discrimination," he said.

The solicitor general, in his written submissions, referred to various judgements and provided several propositions for the court's considerations.

"The concept of Equality of opportunity operates at a dual level - between open category and backward classes - and secondly, it has to operate even within the backward classes inter-se.

"This bundling together of SC/STs by EV Chinniah Vs. State of AP... which disempowers the State to frame appropriate policy by sub-classifying the zone of reservation appropriately, diminishes the constitutional guarantee of equality of opportunity.

"It is stated that the lack of sub-classification perpetuates the zone of inequality within

the reserved category and stops the State from framing appropriate policy in this regard," the Centre said.

The Union government said the Constitution permits reservations at the level of higher education, entry-level in the government service sector and promotion in the government services.

"It may also be noted that the reservation benefits available are limited in nature. The State can only provide for a limited number of seats in government higher education institutions and posts in the government services which are reserved. The said seats and the posts are even otherwise a scare commodity and therefore required to be re-distributed rationally," it said.

In order to achieve the actual objective behind reservations, the rationalisation is key and proliferation and deepening of the reservation benefits are necessary, it said.

# Approval for ₹244.77-crore wagon workshop in state

ECOR says the workshop will help increase freight traffic in the region along with improving efficiency and reliability through wagon maintenance



PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** The Railway Board has approved Rs 244.77 crore for establishing a wagon periodic overhauling (PoH) facility at Kantabanji in state's Bolangir district. This decision comes in response to the demands of the local people, including public representatives, East Coast Railway (ECOR) said in a statement Wednesday. Recognising the need for such a workshop in the region, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav had assured local people that their demand would be met, it said. The detailed project report of the wagon PoH was submitted in September 2023. The proposed

Wagon PoH workshop, with a capacity for 200 wagons, will be set up on vacant land available with railways at Kantabanji. The ECOR said the workshop will help increase freight traffic in the region. This apart, the wagon maintenance will improve efficiency and reliability. In addition, to increase the freight traffic in this region, regular overhauling of wagons will be maintained well for safe train operations. The life span of wagons will aid in rectify the wagons which will lead to cost saving on replacements. The establishment of the Wagon PoH workshop at Kantabanji underscores the government's commitment to enhancing railway infrastructure and ensuring the safety, and cost-

## Puri-Sonepur-Puri Weekly Express

**Bhubaneswar:** East Coast Railway (ECOR) has decided to run the regular service of Puri-Sonepur-Puri Weekly Express from Puri and Sonepur from February 8 and 9, respectively. ECOR sources here Wednesday said the 18421 Puri-Sonepur Weekly Express will leave from Puri at 1935 hrs (07:35 pm) every Thursday and will reach Sonepur at 0530 hrs every Friday. On its inaugural run, the train was flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi February 3 at Sambalpur during his day-long visit to Western Odisha. In the return direction, 18422 Sonepur-Puri Express will leave from Sonepur at 1930 hrs (07:30 p.m.) every Friday and will reach Puri at 0655 hrs every Saturday. This train will have stoppages at Khurda Road, Bhubaneswar, Naraj Marthapur, Dhenkanal, Talcher, Angul, Boinda, Rairakhol, Sambalpur, Bargarh Road, Bolangir, Bichhupali, Jhartarbhha, and Narsinghgarh between Puri and Sonepur from both directions. The train will have one AC-2 tier, seven AC-3 tiers, one AC-3 tier economy, six sleeper classes, three second-class seating, one guard, a luggage cum Divyanjan coach, and one guard, a luggage and motor coach in its composition.

effectiveness of the railway system, an ECOR official said.



**RAISING VOICE:** Integrated B.Ed students of Ravenshaw University sitting on dharna in front of university vice chancellor's office seeking fulfillment of their demands, Wednesday

# Haryana man nabbed in Pan-India courier fraud

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Odisha police arrested a Haryana man for his alleged involvement in a pan-India courier fraud of Rs 5.58 crore, a police officer said Wednesday.

The accused, identified as Rajat Kumar of Mohali, was arrested February 4 from Himachal Pradesh and brought to Bhubaneswar on transit remand after producing him before a local court at Paonta Sahib,



Himachal Pradesh, the EOW said in a press statement. The man was arrested in a case regis-

tered on the complaint of Ratna Tripathy, a journalist of Bhubaneswar. The accused in

association with others have cheated Rs 1.5 lakh from the complaint.

During the investigation, the EOW found that it was a huge scam using the name of courier companies.

Following the arrest, the EOW has got vital clues about the real mastermind of this scam and the fraudsters, who are sitting in Dubai. Efforts are on to arrest them. So far, 17 incriminating bank accounts have been frozen in this case, the economic offence wing said.

## BMC distributes cycles to Swachha Sathis



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** In a significant step, 73 bicycles were distributed by Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) to Swachha Sathis at Niladri Vihar Wealth Centre. Bhubaneswar-North MLA Susant Rout and Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das in the presence of Standing Committee chairpersons, Additional Commissioner, Corporators, distributed the cycles under 'Urban Mobility Infrastructure Scheme'. BMC has already distributed 557 cycles so far. The remaining 115 Swachha Sathis of 672 will be distributed cycles in the coming days.

The civic body is taking care of Swachha Sathis in many aspects by providing them with healthcare benefits, health insurance of Rs 2 lakh, uniforms, PPE kit for their safety, arranging Bada Khana for them and cycles for their convenience.

# HC for change in rural infra devtpt scheme

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cuttack, Feb 7:** The Orissa High Court Wednesday directed the state government to include local public representatives (Sarpanches) on board while taking up new projects under a scheme for augmenting rural infrastructure development. 'Ama Odisha Nabin Odisha' scheme was launched by the state government in July last year. The team that finalises projects under it does not include the local sarpanch. Several petitions were filed in the High Court in October last year praying for the inclusion of local sarpanch in the decision-making process for projects. Justice BP Routray directed the state government to take the local public representatives on board before shortlisting any



project under the developmental scheme. Petitioners Prajit Kumar Bhoj and others had submitted before the court that the state government's decision to depend only on government officials in shortlisting and finalising the projects for the scheme. Inclusion of sarpanches in the scheme would help in empowering villages, they said. "For any developmental project in villages, the sarpanches play a pivotal role and they cannot be side-lined or ignored," the petitioner's counsel argued.

## Bhub Metro to be completed by 2027

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** Bhubaneswar Metro Rail project is expected to be completed by December 2027. This was revealed at a meeting of the state-level Project Monitoring Committee held in connection with the first phase of the Bhubaneswar Metro Rail project held at the Lok Seva Bhavan here Wednesday.

According to an official press release, the meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena discussed funding arrangements, technical specifications, station plans at various locations and platform arrangements. Within the next 6 to 8 months, tendering will be done concerning land planning and structural arrangements, civil works and relocation of various utilities according to the project. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone for this project in January 2024.

# Naveen unveils 5th Odisha Travel Bazaar

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik virtually inaugurated the 5th edition of Odisha Travel Bazaar at Eco Retreat in Konark, Wednesday. More than 70 domestic tour operators from 18 states are participating in the 3-day exhibition.

In his address, CM said, "In the recent past, Odisha has taken focused strides to develop and introduce several niche tourism experiences. With products which are centered on key tourism offerings to match global standards, the exhibition will be able to attract the finest brands in business of travel and hospitality." Patnaik welcomed the tourism fraternity and sought their active contribution in marketing the state. Tourism director Sachin

Ramchandra Jadhav, while making a presentation on state's tourism initiatives, said, "The state is focusing on new and innovative products such as Eco Retreats, Boat Clubs, Yachts, Caravans and Camping to lure the new-age travelers to the state. Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) chairman Lenin Mohanty said that Odisha Travel Bazaar is important in the sense that it provides a platform for interacting with stakeholders of travel and tourism industry from across the globe. Swosti Group CMD JK Mohanty spoke about the importance of the tour operators and travel agents' fraternity and how their participation will enable several business opportunities and offer a bouquet of exciting tourist destinations and experiences for the travel community.

## Mercury to rise in coming days

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** With the onset of February, the mercury has already started soaring across the state and the IMD has predicted that hotter days are ahead. While the maximum temperature in Odisha touched 35°C Tuesday, the minimum temperature was as high as 24°C. As many as 13 districts in state recorded day temperatures of above 33°C Tuesday. The weather office has predicted that the temperatures may further go up by 3°C to 7°C in the coming days as warm air is flowing into the state due to the El Nino effect. Odisha experienced one of the coldest winters this year and similarly, the heat experienced now is also unusual in the first week of February. Overall, the entire state is witnessing hot and dry weather and the conditions are unlikely to change soon, the weather office predicted.

# Prior zika infection may increase risk of severe dengue

People who have had zika may be at a higher risk of developing severe dengue and being hospitalised, according to a study that has implications in the development of a vaccine. Previous research has shown that a second infection by any of the four known dengue strains is known to be typically more severe than the first. However, until now no correlation between this fact and the occurrence of other diseases had been investigated. Dengue and zika are both transmitted by the same mosquito (Aedes aegypti), and have similar symptoms, often making diagnosis difficult. Dengue is more serious be-

cause in addition to fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, rash and nausea, it can cause bleeding and even death, the researchers said. The symptoms of zika are milder, but the virus can cause severe problems in pregnant women and in babies, such as microcephaly and possibly Guillain-Barre syndrome, a neurological disorder that leads to paralysis, they said. The latest study, published in the journal PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases, found the mechanism that exacerbates dengue infection following a case of zika differs from that of two consecutive infections by the dengue virus. The viral load is higher in the



second dengue episode, with high levels of inflammatory cytokines not seen in zika, the researchers at Sao Jose do Rio

Preto Medical School (FAMERP) in Brazil said. Cytokines are small proteins that are crucial in controlling the

growth and activity of other immune system cells and blood cells. Detection of other markers suggested that the increase in severity may be due to activation of T cells - key parts of the immune system that help produce antibodies - in an immune response that has been termed the 'original antigenic sin'. The process involves so-called T-cell memory, a response in which T cells produced during a previous infection stimulate the production of more T cells to combat a new infection, the researchers said. Because these new cells are not specific to the virus, they trigger an excessive release of inflammatory cytokines, which attack

the organism's proteins and tissues, potentially leading to hemorrhage, they said. The researchers analysed samples from 1,043 laboratory-confirmed dengue patients, identifying those with prior zika and dengue infections. The cases occurred in 2019 in Sao Jose do Rio Preto, a large city in Sao Paulo, Brazil, considered hyper endemic for dengue since more than 70 per cent of the population has had the disease. Its climate and geography favour the circulation of arboviruses throughout the year. Dengue epidemics occurred there in 2010, 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2019, with a record number of cases involving serotype 2, the researchers said.

**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-Cookieman-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-977682449, 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.



FOR A LIVING: A girl performs a tight rope walk on the roadside at Sunabeda in Koraput district

OP PHOTO

# 20-yr jail to youth for rape of minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, Feb 7:** A Fast Track Court here Wednesday handed down 20 years of imprisonment to a youth after convicting him for the rape of a 14-year-old girl.

The convicted youth was identified as Bijay Kumar Barik, 21, of Nuabeda village under Daitari police limits.

Judge Bijay Kumar Mishra of the Fast Track Court convicted and awarded the punishment to Barik under Section 6 of POCSO Act and also slapped a penalty of ₹10,000 on him. In



default, Barik has to undergo additional six months of rigorous imprisonment.

The judge also directed the District Legal Services Authority

(DLSA) to give away ₹5 lakh compensation to the survivor. This was stated by special public prosecutor Gyanendranath Jena to mediapersons here, Wednesday. The judge passed the order after examining the statements of 20 witnesses and the police charge-sheet, Jena added.

The incident occurred when the survivor and her friend, riding separate bicycles, visited another friend residing at Brahmanipal, June 15, 2021. When she did not return home after long hours, family members grew apprehensive and searched

for her in all possible locations.

The same night, they got a phone call. The caller informed them that the survivor was at Brahmanipal. They tracked the phone number on Truecaller and found it belonging to one Bijay Kumar Barik. They waited for the girl to return in vain and finally lodged a complaint at Daitari police station, June 17.

Daitari police registered a case and rescued the girl from the custody of Barik in Brahmanipal, June 26. Police arrested Barik on charge of rape of the girl and produced him in the court.

## CHOLERA OUTBREAK IN ROURKELA

# NGT takes suo-moto cognisance

THE OUTBREAK, AS PER THE GOVT'S ADMISSION, CLAIMED 18 LIVES AND LEFT THOUSANDS AFFECTED IN THE FIRST WEEK OF DEC LAST YEAR

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Feb 7:** The Eastern Zone Bench of the National Green Tribunal in Kolkata has taken suo-moto cognisance of the diarrhoea outbreak in Rourkela in the first week of December 2023. The apex green body has taken the cognisance based on a news report published in a reputed English national daily December 21, 2023, mentioned the order.

The tribunal has issued notices to six persons in this regard and allowed them four weeks' time to submit counter affidavits. The order of the NGT mentioned that basing on the report '6 dead and 1000 affected in suspected cholera outbreak' the green body took the matter into cognisance.

A bench comprising Justice B Amit Sthalekar, judicial member and expert member Arun Kumar Verma issued notice to District Magistrate (DM), Sundargarh; Additional District Magistrate (ADM), Rourkela; Commissioner, Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC); Member Secretary, Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB); Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change and Member Secretary, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

"Let notice be issued to the above respondents for filing their response before the Eastern Zone



The green tribunal has issued notices to six persons and allowed four weeks' time to submit counter affidavits

Bench, Kolkata at least one week before the next date of hearing," the bench said. The order mentioned, "The disease is suspected to be caused by water contamination leading to severe health complications among the affected populace. Six places in Rourkela have been identified as hotspots for diarrhoea infection. As per the said report, it is suspected that the infection has spread through a rupture in water supply pipes."

"Hence, in the circumstance of the case, we deem it proper to implead the following as respondents in this original ap-

plication," the order said. Papiya Banarjee is representing the Odisha State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) while rest of the respondents are being represented by SK Nayak, additional government advocate. All the respondents will have to file their counter affidavits within four weeks.

In the first week of December 2023, Rourkela witnessed a horrific outbreak of cholera. This caused a huge embarrassment for the state government. The outbreak, as per the government admission, claimed 18 lives and left thousands affected. The outbreak was due to contaminated water consumed by the affected persons. The state government constituted an enquiry committee to look into the case and submit its report. So far, nothing has been made public regarding the findings of the expert committee.

## BHARAT JODO NYAY YATRA

# Attempt being made to steal tribals' land: Rahul

PNN & AGENCIES

**Rourkela, Feb 7:** In a speech during 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' here, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi claimed that people, during interaction with him in tribal majority Sundargarh district, told him that an attempt is being made to steal the land of tribals through a survey using drones, which needs to be stopped.

Alleging that the survey is being made to provide land to industrialist Adani, Gandhi said, "At the time of (tribal icon) Birsa Munda ji, the British had bullets and today they are drones. We want to say to the tribals - do not be afraid. We will not let your water, forest and land go to billionaires."

In Sundargarh, Gandhi paid his tribute to a statue of Bhagwan Birsa Munda and said that he had fought the British Rulers to protect the interest of tribals. "The symbol of courage and justice, the power of Birsa Munda Ji is with Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra. Following his ideals, we will ensure justice for every Indian," Gandhi said. Referring to Gandhi's interaction with some labourers under MNREGA, a post on the official X handle of the Yatra said, "Contractors bring labourers from outside for work. It is written in the diary that a woman was given ₹720, whereas she received only ₹200. This is an injustice to women workers."

Noting that unemployment is the biggest problem across the country, Gandhi during an interaction with youths at Rajgangpur said, "The phone you use is made in China. Due to this,

the youth of China are getting employment, but the youth of India are suffering loss. That's why I want 'Made in Odisha' to be written on this phone."

The Congress leader also came down heavily on Odisha's BJD government claiming it is not working for them. While 30 lakh people have migrated to



Rahul Gandhi performing rituals at Vedyas temple in Rourkela

other states for their livelihood, 30 crore patris from outside Odisha have come here to loot the state's wealth, Gandhi said. He said Odisha has a huge population of tribals, but they along with Dalits are being neglected in the state by the government.

Earlier in the day, Gandhi began his Yatra in the Steel City by offering prayer at Vedyas Shiv temple and started a 3.4-km-long padayatra from Uditnagar to Panposh Chhak here. Accompanied by AICC Odisha in-charge Ajoy Kumar and OPCC president Sarat Pattanayak, the Congress leader mingled with the people.

# PSUs created by Congress govts in danger, BJP selling them: Ramesh

PNN & AGENCIES

**Rourkela, Feb 7:** Congress general secretary (Communication) Jairam Ramesh Wednesday claimed public sector undertakings including the Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) created by the previous Congress governments are in "danger" as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is

government had set up major projects like RSP, Nalco, NTPC and other such projects in Odisha and all of them are "not safe" because of the BJP's policies.

"The country's big PSUs including Rail, SAIL, Port, Airports and others created by Congress are being sold today due to Modi's 'Mitra Niti' (friendship policy). Our priority is to create a new economic model for small industries by reforming GST, stopping blind privatisation, reviving PSUs and filling vacant government posts. This vision of Congress can generate employment in the entire country including Odisha," Ramesh said.

Ramesh claimed that 40 per cent youth are away from studies in Odisha while more than 1 lakh government posts are vacant.

He alleged that more than 30 lakh people from Odisha have migrated to other states in search of jobs while 30 billionare industrialists have come from outside the state under the patronage of "Modi-Naveen Patnaik friendship".

The Congress leader also came down heavily on Odisha's ruling BJD and opposition BJP and alleged that they were engaged in "shadow boxing".

The regional party headed by Naveen Patnaik has been "supporting" all policies, bills and issues of BJP openly. "Even BJD MP friends privately say that they get direction from Bhubaneswar to support the BJP policies," Ramesh said describing BJD and BJP as two sides of the same coin.

"busy in selling" these units. Ramesh, who is accompanying party leader Rahul Gandhi in his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' that reached Rajgangpur in Sundargarh district, said this at a press conference.

"Pandit Nehru created many public sectors in the country, but all of them are in danger today. PM Modi is busy selling these PSUs created by Congress, to his friends, but the Congress party will oppose it," he said.

Stating that Rourkela holds a special importance in the economic history of our country, Ramesh said the Congress

# Royal Bengal Tiger scare in Hatiguda



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhanjanagar, Feb 7:** Panic gripped people in the locality after a Royal Bengal Tiger allegedly killed a cow and dragged it from the cattle-shed of one Brundaban Gouda at Hatiguda village under this police limits in Ganjam district Tuesday night.

After the news spread Wednesday morning, residents of Hatiguda and other nearby villages feared to venture outside, Wednesday evening. Sources said, two villagers also spotted the tiger near the embankment of a canal while they were returning to the village from Bhanjanagar on a motorcycle.

This is the first time that a Royal Bengal Tiger has been spotted in North Ghumusar forest division in Ganjam district. Sources added that the big cat has been wandering in Hatiguda area in between Mujagarh and Central forest ranges for the last three days.

On being informed by the villagers, Forest department officials arrived at the spot. When contacted, DFO Sudarshan Behera said, "There is no accurate information about the movement of tiger in the area. However an investigation is going on in this regard."

# DUO HELD FOR ₹3.16CR FRAUD

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Feb 7:** The police in Uditnagar here have arrested two persons in connection with a massive fraud to the tune of ₹3.16 crore by producing forged documents.

As per reports, one Aurobindo Dasmal, senior manager, fraud risk management of Sumitomo Mitsu Financial Group, a non-banking financial company, had reported January 31 that loans amounting to about ₹3 crore 16 lakh had been taken by 84 customers by producing forged documents. During their internal audit, they came to know that as many as 84 customers who are not eligible for loan had taken the said loans amounting to ₹3 crore 16 lakh. It was found that the documents were forged, and the 84 borrowers had no business establishments, which were produced during loan processing. Based on this report Uditnagar police registered a case (Case No. 91/25) u/s IPC

430/406/465/467/468/471/120-B/34. The two accused persons, Abahay Bhol of Chhend who had prepared and signed the forged documents, and Dinesh Sahoo of Fertilizer areas, who had provided false physical verification reports were arrested.

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
**E-AUCTION FOR PARKING STAND**  
Auction Catalogue No.: Prkg-KUR-24-57  
Station & Location: Balugaon (2 wheelers) (adjacent to circulating area).  
Auction Start Date & Time: 17.02.2024 at 1300 hrs.  
Auction End Date & Time: 17.02.2024 at 1330 hrs.  
**E-AUCTION FOR P&U CLOAK ROOMS**  
Auction Catalogue No.: PnU-CR-KUR-24-8  
Station & Location: (1) Cuttack-Cloak Room (on PF-1), (2) Khurda Road-Cloak Room (in new station building).  
Auction Start Date & Time: 17.02.2024 at 1100 hrs. (for all Sl. No.).  
Auction End Date & Time: 17.02.2024 at 1130 hrs. (for Sl. No. 1) & 1140 Hrs. (for Sl. No. 2).  
Note: Prospective bidders are advised to visit the <https://www.ireps.gov.in> and check the upcoming e-auctions/leasing tab to get all required information regarding this auction.  
Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/ PR-1061/O/23-24 Khurda Road

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER**  
**MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, MAYURBHANJ**  
Tel. No. (06792) 260788, e-Mail ID: mi.mayurbhanj@yahoo.co.in  
**"e" Procurement Notice** Dated: 31.01.2024  
No. 369 Identification No. S.E.M.I.D., Mbj. No. 13/MID, MBJ/2023-24  
No. A-1420: The Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Mayurbhanj on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids through e-procurement to be received in online mode only for the works as detailed in the table below.  
1. Name of works : Civil Construction works as mentioned in the website  
2. Total No. of works : 12 Nos.  
3. Estimated Cost : 6.70 lakh to 41.54 lakh (Detail list of work annexed)  
4. Class of Contractor : As Mentioned against Work  
5. Period of Completion : As Mentioned against Work  
6. Date & time of availability of Bid document in the portal : 12.02.2024 at 10.00 A.M. to 21.02.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.  
7. Last date/time for receipt of Bids in the portal : 21.02.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.  
8. Date/Time of Opening of Technical Bid : 22.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M.  
9. Name and Address of the Officer Inviting the Bid : Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Mayurbhanj  
10. Mode of Payment of Bid Cost : Online  
11. Further details can be seen from the "e" Procurement Portal "<https://tendersorissa.gov.in>".  
Sd/- Superintending Engineer  
Minor Irrigation Division, Mayurbhanj  
OIPR-32041/11/0011/2324

# Man arrested for raping daughter

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Angul, Feb 7:** A man was arrested and forwarded to court Tuesday for allegedly raping her 19-year-old daughter multiple times here at Kumurisingha village under Sadar police limits in this district, police said.

The accused was identified as Narottam Naik, 45, a resident of Kumurisingha area in Angul district.

According to Sadar PS IIC Dhiren Behera, the accused first raped his 19-year-old daughter, and then threatened her not to disclose the matter to anybody. Making threats of dire consequences, he raped her multiple times on differ-



ent days. However, the man ran out of luck one day in December, last year, as his wife caught him while attempting to rape their daughter, and opposed his immoral act.

The girl's mother then sent her to her paternal aunt's house in Angul area. From there the girl directly went to her maternal aunt's house at Bhawanipatna. While residing there the

girl mustered courage and lodged a written complaint against her father at Bhawanipatna police station.

Acting on the complaint, Bhawanipatna police registered a case (No-61/24) February 1. As the incident had happened under Sadar PS in Angul district, so, the case was then transferred from Bhawanipatna PS to Sadar PS, Angul.

A case (No-91/24) was then registered at Angul Sadar police station February 3. After investigation police arrested Narottam and forwarded him to court Tuesday, said IIC Behera. More investigation is underway in this regard, he added.

**Bank of Baroda**  
**Regional Office (Sambalpur Region)**  
1st Floor, At: Christian Para, G.M. College Chowk, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha, PIN-768001

**DEMAND NOTICE**  
(Under Sub Section (2) of Section 13 of the SARFAESI Act 2002)

Demand Notice u/s.13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 is issued by Bank of Baroda as Secured Creditor against the following Borrower of the Branch.

PATNAGARH BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower / Guarantor	NPA Date / 13(2) Date / Notice Return Reason	Limit (₹)	Rate of Interest	Total Dues
Borrower: Mr. Sunil Kumar Agrawal / Guarantor: Mr. Hrushikesh Jain, Both are A/P.O. Ghasian, Near Primary School Ghasian, P.S.: Patnagarh, Dist.: Bolangir, Odisha, PIN - 767025	20.11.2023 / 30.12.2023 / Addressee out of station return to sender	Mortgaged Loan: ₹12,00,000/-	10.20%	₹ 12,12,514.85 as on 29.12.2023 with further interest there on at contractual rate plus costs, charges and expenses till the date of payment

**Description of Mortgaged property:** Equitable Mortgage of Residential Land & Building admeasuring Area: Ac. 0.14 Dec., KISSAM: Gharabari, situated at Mouza: Ghasian, P.S.: Patnagarh, P.S. No.: 42, Tahasil: Patnagarh, Tahasil No.: 336, Dist.: Bolangir, having Holding No.: 1317/2496, standing in the name of Mr. Sunil Kumar Agrawal, Bounded by North: Land of Biswamitra Dandsena, South: Land Tikeswar Dandsena, East: Road, West: Land of Tikeswar Dandsena.

You have committed default in repayment of loan mentioned above with further interest at the agreed rate availed from our Branch as mentioned above. The bank has issued notice under the said Act to you to repay the outstanding amount in the above mentioned table. The Demand Notice sent to you by registered post but it has been returned with the reason mentioned above. Again you have committed default in payment. You are called upon to pay the dues together with interest within 60 days from the date of this notice failing which Bank will be constrained to exercise Right of Enforcement of Security Interest as against the secured asset given in the schedule of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. We hereby give you a notice that in terms of sub-section (13) of Section 13 of the said Act, you are barred from transferring the secured asset mentioned above by way of sale, lease or otherwise other than in the ordinary course of business without prior written consent of the Bank. We further invite your attention to sub section (8) of section 13 of the said Act in terms of which you may redeem the secured assets, if the amount of dues together with all costs, charges and expenses incurred by the Bank is tendered by you, at any time before the date of publication of notice for public auction / inviting quotations / tender / private treaty. Please note that after publication of the notice as above, your right to redeem the secured assets will not be available. This Notice is without prejudice to any other right remedy available to the Bank including initiation of legal action.

Place: Sambalpur, Date: 07.02.2024  
Authorised Officer Bank of Baroda



Pain is the hammer of the Gods to break a dead resistance in the mortal's heart.

SRI AUROBINDO



## Lenin's Lessons

It is now a century since Vladimir Lenin's death, and more than three decades since his Bolshevik project collapsed. But while much of his political life was highly problematic from today's perspective, his remorseless pragmatism, as one might call it, still has purchase.

Recall Lenin's well-known commitment to "concrete analysis of the concrete situation." One must avoid both dogmatic fidelity to the cause and unprincipled opportunism. Under quickly changing real-world conditions, the only way to remain truly faithful to a principle – to remain "orthodox" in the positive sense of the term – is to change one's own position. Thus, in 1922, having won the civil war against all odds, the Bolsheviks embraced the "New Economic Policy," allowing a much wider scope for private property and the market.

In explaining this decision, Lenin used the analogy of a mountain climber who must retreat "in order to leap further forward." After enumerating the new Soviet state's achievements and failures, he concluded: "Communists who have no illusions, who do not give way to despondency, and who preserve their strength and flexibility 'to begin from the beginning' over and over again in approaching an extremely difficult task, are not doomed (and in all probability will not perish)."

One hears echoes of Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian from whom Marxists can learn quite a lot. Any revolutionary process, Lenin believed, is not gradual but repetitive, a movement of repeating the beginning again and again.

How better to capture where we are today? After the "obscure disaster" of 1989, which put a definitive end to the epoch that began with the 1917 October Revolution, one can no longer impute any continuity to what "the left" has meant over the last two centuries. Although indelible moments like the Jacobin climax of the French Revolution and the October Revolution will remain in our memory, those stories are over. Everything should be re-thought from a new starting point.

A fresh approach is more important than ever now that global capitalism has become the only true revolutionary force. What remains of the left is obsessed with protecting the old achievements of the welfare state, a project that largely ignores just how much capitalism has changed the texture of our societies over the last few decades.

There are exceptions, of course. Among the rare theorists and politicians who have recognised this process for what it is has been Yanis Varoufakis. Capitalism, he argues, is morphing into techno-feudalism, which is why the traditional anti-capitalist rhetoric is losing its traction. The implication is that we should abandon social democracy and its central idea of a left-liberal welfare state.

In a properly Leninist way, Varoufakis sees that the object of our critical analysis (capitalism) has changed, and we must change with it. Otherwise, we will just be helping capitalism revitalise itself in a new form.

Lenin's form of pragmatism is by no means available only to the left. Last month, Ami Ayalon, a former leader of Shin Bet (Israel's internal security service), called for a paradigm shift: "We Israelis will have security only when they, Palestinians, will have hope. This is the equation." Because Israel will not be secure until Palestinians have their own state, Israeli authorities should release Marwan Barghouti, the jailed leader of the Second Intifada, to lead negotiations to create one.

"Look into the Palestinian polls," Ayalon says. "He is the only leader who can lead Palestinians to a state alongside Israel. First of all because he believes in the concept of two states, and secondly because he won his legitimacy by sitting in our jails." Indeed, many see Barghouti (who has been imprisoned for over two decades) as a kind of Palestinian Nelson Mandela.

Or consider an even more surprising example. Last week, the Ukrainian army chief, Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, following media reports that he may soon be dismissed from his post, published a commentary laying out his priorities for Ukraine and identifying the highest ones for the war effort. "The challenge for our armed forces cannot be underestimated," he wrote. "It is to create a completely new state system of technological rearmament."

What that means is a doubling down on "unmanned systems – such as drones – along with other types of advanced weapons, that provide the best way for Ukraine to avoid being drawn into a positional war, where we do not possess the advantage." The "Iron General," as he is sometimes called, then acknowledged that, with key allies grappling with their own political tensions, Ukraine must prepare for a reduction in military support.

I see Zaluzhnyi's brief commentary as a Leninist (that is, principled-pragmatic) intervention. True, radical leftists and Zaluzhnyi himself will regard this characterisation as absurd, and I am no expert on the power struggles currently underway in Ukraine, nor on Zaluzhnyi's role in them. All I am saying is that Zaluzhnyi has deftly combined fidelity to the goal (maintaining Ukrainian independence and territorial integrity as a democratic state) with a concrete analysis of the situation on the battlefield.

To put it bluntly, we are past the heroic phase of popular resistance to the invader and close personal combat on the front lines. Ukraine must reorient itself by adopting new technologies appropriate to a prolonged war, and by getting ahead of Western countries' growing reluctance to deliver aid indefinitely. Ukraine will also need to get its own house in order, by acting more decisively against corruption and oligarchs, and by clearly articulating what it is fighting for.

Above all, Ukraine needs a shared vision that is not narrowly nationalist or defined by the suspicion that the Ukrainian left is pro-Russian. To withstand the effects of exhaustion from the war, Ukrainians must put themselves in the shoes of Lenin's mountain climber.

The writer, Professor of Philosophy at the European Graduate School, is International Director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities at the University of London.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

### WISDOM CORNER

The real man smiles in trouble, gathers strength from distress, and grows brave by reflection.

THOMAS PAINE

Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.

DESMOND TUTU

We will receive not what we idly wish for but what we justly earn. Our rewards will always be in exact proportion to our service.

EARL NIGHTINGALE

# UTILITARIAN EDUCATION

FOCUS SOCIETY

The way in which education is perceived in India generally is severely problematic. The distinction between arts and science, unlike in the rest of the world, becomes less about the fields themselves and more about a stratified status symbol reinforced through the prejudices of parents. Most parents in India prefer to, or rather force their kids into "science" because of its imagined benefits. They have no interest in the beauty of the subject itself. They are not inspired by the pioneering work on gene editing by Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuel Charpentier. Neither have they read the writings of Carl Sagan and Richard Feynman. Why Science, you ask? Well, a possible reason owes to the false relief they get through comparisons of their kids with that of their friends. As absurd as this may sound to the outsider, this simple and shameful fact is a common occurrence in India.



Anwesh Satpathy

IT IS OBVIOUS THAT MANY PARENTS FORCE THEIR OWN FAILED DREAMS ON THEIR CHILDREN

Science is thus reduced merely to a fad. A means to the end of becoming doctors and engineers. It is at times like these that one breathes a sigh of relief that luminaries like Dr BR Ambedkar are not alive to see the pathetic state of their country's denizens. Perhaps more than any of our other founding fathers, Ambedkar elucidated the value and meaning of true education in no uncertain terms. Critical thinking and reflection were inseparable from good education for Ambedkar. John Dewey, a philosopher and teacher who influenced Ambedkar enormously, emphasised on the



We must strive to foster a culture that empowers and evangelises the value of individuality. It is only through such a culture that we can expect our kids to create original ideas, innovate and most importantly, be content

separability of education from social environment. Thus, if we force kids to study "science" for utilitarian purposes, we'll end up manufacturing needless automatons whose contribution to the upliftment of human society will be minimum.

There is also the problem with those who let their kids pursue humanities for the sole purpose of clearing civil services. Notwithstanding the mediocrity and corruption of our bureaucracy, such an approach is just as problematic for precisely the same reason i.e. utilitarianism. First, it is gratuitous of parents to expect their kids to be grateful simply for having the basic decency to let their kids' study what they want. Second, it makes a mockery of everything that good education is supposed to be, presumably by "educated" people. Good education inculcates rationality, scepticism and paves the road for in-

dividual autonomy. The same individual autonomy that parents refuse to grant their kids.

It is obvious that many parents force their own failed dreams on their children. They are being oblivious to the fact that their kids are not extension of themselves but different beings with their own individual needs, desires and dreams. Sadly, this is not limited to the field of education. Deepa Bhatia's six-part docu-series "First Act" does a good job of illuminating the world of aspiring child actors. Throughout the series, we encounter clear instances of abuse by parents on kids as young as 5. These kids, of course, are in no position to deliberate on their future. Yet, their parents insist that their kids want to become actors. In both instances, it must be said that kids are not empty vessels for you to fill in your dreams. There is something to be said

about mistakes. Parents, being "elders," assign to themselves the benefit of experience and hindsight. This, according to the common argument, makes them a better judge of their kids' future. This argument fails to account for the pluralities of experiences and pathways that exist. Had the great Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan heeded his fathers advice to become a doctor or engineer, the world would have remained oblivious to his sheer ingenuity and the potentialities of music. Every individual in this world makes mistakes. It is entirely possible for your kid to make a mistake while deciding on her future educational or career pathway. However, it is a mistake for them to make and later amend in whatever way they seem fit. Halfway through, if they find out that they're better suited to a different pathway, good for them! This is not a "mistake" that you have the ability or the right to identify. It is simply incomprehensible to me as to why any parent would want their kids to live the life of someone else while resenting every second of it. The responsibility of the parent is limited to letting their children pursue whichever pathway they seek, no matter how "low status" it may seem to the parent. We must strive to foster a culture that empowers and evangelises the value of individuality. It is only through such a culture that we can expect our kids to create original ideas, innovate and most importantly, be content.

The author is a writer and a student at Jindal School of International Affairs.

### SPECTRUM NATIONAL SECURITY

## Protecting critical infrastructure

Hybrid-plus warfare employs a multifaceted strategy, predominantly integrating sub-conventional and asymmetric tactics, particularly within the cyber-electronic domain. Here, adversaries use cyber-electronic precision to target a nation's vital critical infrastructure, intentionally avoiding direct conventional conflicts, random low-value targets, or the civilian population. Strategic asymmetry is employed to exploit weaknesses and vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure and operational technology (OT) platform targets, allowing the adversary to gain tactical advantages while strategically evading and avoiding direct military confrontation.



Padmalochan Dash

NAVIGATING THE ERA OF HYBRID-PLUS WARFARE REQUIRES A HOLISTIC, INCLUSIVE, AND FORWARD-THINKING APPROACH TO ENHANCE SECURITY RESILIENCE FOR INDIA'S CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

When faced with the growing prevalence of hybrid-plus warfare, the challenges in critical infrastructure safekeeping become pronounced. In this scenario, safeguarding vital critical infrastructure demands a precise and comprehensive strategy, implemented through a focused and technically proficient security framework.

In an era marked by hybrid-plus warfare and persistent cyber threats, safeguarding India's critical infrastructure emerges as a national priority. The challenges are multifaceted, stemming from three key factors: the convergence of warfare into a hybrid state, increasing dependence of critical infrastructure on interconnected cyber platforms, and essential need for cyber security resilience to address threats originating from these platforms. Navigating through these intricate dynamics high-

lights the necessity for cohesive strategies, collaborative initiatives, legislative frameworks, and the adoption of global best practices. These elements are crucial to effectively shield India's critical infrastructure from evolving hybrid threats.

The complexities of hybrid-plus warfare, incorporating both unconventional, cyber and asymmetric components, necessitate a strategic and adaptive approach to safeguard India's critical infrastructure. As the landscape of cyber-electronic warfare evolves, recognising the urgency for a multifaceted defence strategy becomes imperative. The interplay between traditional and unconventional forms of conflict underscores the need for nuanced understanding and innovative solutions in fortifying critical infrastructure.

The increasing reliance of critical infrastructure sectors on interconnected cyber-OT platforms results in the amplification of vulnerabilities. It goes beyond merely acknowledging the interdependence of critical systems across diverse sectors for example like transportation and healthcare. It becomes crucial to formulate comprehensive strategies that ensure resilience in the face of evolving threats during the era of hybrid-plus warfare.

In the context of hybrid-plus warfare, cyber threats further strengthen with the AI emergence that poses substantial risks to India's critical infrastructure, impacting national security and public safety. Recent threat landscapes have witnessed an alarming increase in sophisticated attacks, including

advanced persistent threats (APTs), ransomware, and state-sponsored cyber-espionage. Notable incidents, such as the ransomware attack on major energy infra and networks or state-sponsored actors targeting sensitive government databases underscore the urgency for robust cybersecurity measures tailored to the specific vulnerabilities of critical infrastructure.

The legislative landscape plays a pivotal role in shaping a proactive stance, especially in the context of hybrid-plus warfare. Initiatives like Personal Data Protection legislation, evolving National Cybersecurity Policy and most importantly legislative provisions to deal with AI intensive challenges can reflect India's commitment to counter emerging threats. To fortify critical infrastructure in the face of hybrid-plus warfare, specific protection legislations are indispensable. These legislations should not only recognise the evolving nature of threats but also provide a legal framework for proactive defence strategies. In addition to empowering authorities to take proactive preventive measures and respond effectively to incidents, the legislation should establish clear accountability measures for perpetrators.

Furthermore, the legal framework should encourage collaboration between public and private entities in sharing threat intelligence and implementing unified defence strategies. Adopting best global practices is paramount for India to fortify its critical infrastructure. While the international community offers valuable lessons, it is es-

sential to tailor these practices to the unique challenges faced by India. Identifying and categorising specific components of infrastructure as critical, as outlined in global standards, is a crucial step. This allows for targeted protection measures by ensuring that the most vital elements of the nation's infrastructure are fortified against hybrid-plus threats. Furthermore, it is essential to encourage research and development initiatives that contribute to the creation of indigenous cyber-electronic security solutions, aligning with global best practices for addressing unconventional nuances.

Global collaboration is crucial to ensure the resilience of critical infrastructure against hybrid-plus threats. India actively participates in forums like the Internet Governance Forum, demonstrating its commitment to discussions on critical infrastructure protection and cybersecurity. Creating an environment where countries share insights, best practices, and resources collectively is essential to counter the evolving challenges of hybrid-plus warfare.

Navigating the era of hybrid-plus warfare requires a holistic, inclusive, and forward-thinking approach to enhance security resilience for India's critical infrastructure. Moving forward, continuous adaptive strategies are crucial to evolving with the dynamic nature of hybrid-plus warfare.

The writer is working with an independent think tank. He is specialising in Critical Infra Protection Programme.

### Firm favourites

Sir, The Indian colts exhibited exhilarating qualities of grit and maturity beyond their age to storm into the Under-19 Cricket World Cup final. They are now the firm favourites to lift the cup; they will face either Australia or Pakistan in Sunday's final. This will be India's ninth go at a cup they have lifted a record five times. Tuesday, the Indian top order looked out of sorts in the chase, as they seemed to wilt under pressure of playing the big semis, as four of their frontline batsmen were back in the hut with a mere 32 runs on board before Sachin Dhas and Uday Saharan stitched a match-winning partnership of 171 runs for the fifth wicket. Dhas, in particular, went for the runs from the word go never letting the run-rate climb up. Skipper Saharan, who is in top form, played the second fiddle initially to open up later with some scintillating cover drives.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

### National shame

Sir, In the vibrant mosaic of Indian politics, the queasy incident that took place in the Chandigarh mayoral elections has morphed into a national shame, rippling outward and reaching the hallowed halls of the Supreme Court. Thanks to the Supreme Court, it has made a timely intervention, with the Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud condemning the incident with strong words, "a mockery of our democracy" and summoning the Presiding Officer, who is said to be a former the BJP minority wing president, for further inquiry. The BJP's victory, secured by a whisker, stands accused of foul play, revealing its desperate thirst for power through skulduggery means and its willingness to bend the rules. Such a precedent, etched in ink instead of votes, would be a chilling indictment of our democratic ideals. The dust may settle in Chandigarh, but the question remains: "Was this a mere skirmish or a harbinger of the things to come?"

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

Orissa POST  
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

# It's going to be a historic protest in Delhi: Vijayan

SOUTHERN STATES OF KARNATAKA AND KERALA HAVE JOINED HANDS TO CORNER THE CENTRE OVER LATTER'S FISCAL POLICY ALLEGING PARTISAN APPROACH IN ALLOCATING GST SHARE AND GRANTS TO THE OPPOSITION-RULED STATES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram/New Delhi, Feb 7: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said Wednesday that the state is set to stage a historic protest in the national capital Thursday.

As per sources, Vijayan along with his Cabinet colleagues, MLAs and MPs of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) will stage a dharna at the Jantar Mantar in Delhi Thursday to protest against the Centre's 'economic discrimination' against the southern state.

"Ministers, legislators and parliamentarians from the state will actively take part in the protest. We have to resort to such an unprecedented struggle, as it is essential for Kerala's survival and advancement," Vijayan told mediapersons in the national capital.

"This agitation is intended to safeguard the constitutional rights of all states, not just Kerala. The aim of this struggle is not to triumph over anyone, but to secure what we rightfully deserve instead of surrendering. We believe that the entire country will stand with Kerala in support of this protest," said Vijayan.

"Cooperative federalism is



This agitation is intended to safeguard the constitutional rights of all states, not merely Kerala's. The aim of this struggle is not to triumph over anyone, but to secure what we rightfully deserve instead of surrendering

PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CHIEF MINISTER

our nation's expressed ideal, yet some recent measures by the Union government have cast a shadow on this principle. The BJP governs independently or in coalition with other parties in 17 states," he said.

"The Central government appears to solely favour these 17 states, while neglecting those not aligned with the NDA. This disparate treatment displays favouritism towards specific states while imposing punitive measures on others, prompting us to rise in symbolic defence," added Vijayan.

Apart from issues like 'sidelining' Kerala in the financial sector and when it comes to Centrally-sponsored schemes, Vijayan said another important

point that is being raised is with regard to Governors.

"We are seeing how Governors should not function. They are sidelining the state legislatures. The (Kerala) Governor (Arif Mohammed Khan), who has turned the state into a stage for his theatrics, withholds Bills approved by the Assembly and misuses his chancellorship to disrupt the functioning of universities.

"These actions pose a direct challenge to constitutional values. These actions are necessitating legal actions and people's protests to safeguard federalism and democracy. Indian constitutional values have never before encountered such serious challenges except during

## Kerala one of most financially unhealthy states: Centre in SC

A day ahead of the protest to be led by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, his cabinet, legislators and top leaders from the Left ruling front, the Centre Wednesday in a detailed written note filed before the Supreme Court said that there were multiple studies documenting poor public finance management by Kerala.

"Kerala has been one of the most financially unhealthy States and its fiscal edifice has been diagnosed with several cracks ... Squeezed for funds for capital expenditure and to circumvent borrowing limits ... Kerala has resorted to substantial off-budget borrowings through the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB)," stated Attorney General (AG) for India R

Emergency," Vijayan said.

He also said that a strong Centre alongside empowered States is crucial for upholding India's unity and integrity.

"Kerala's gathering in Delhi

Venkataramani.

The written note came in response to an original suit filed by Kerala raising grievance over the central government allegedly interfering with the former's power to borrow and regulate its own finances.

The state had also in its plea alleged that the Centre's actions can lead to a grave financial crisis, as the State has not been able to fulfil the commitments made in its annual Budgets.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and KV Viswanathan is set to take up the matter February 13 next and decide on Kerala's interim relief application.

Kerala is the second state after Punjab to move the apex court in relation to a financial dispute with the Union government.

marks a significant stride towards this overarching objective. In this regard, we earnestly seek the wholehearted support of all the advocates of democracy," said Vijayan.

## INDIA-MYANMAR BORDER

# Amid objection, Centre to fence entire stretch



IN MANIPUR, IMPHAL VALLEY-BASED MEITEI ORGANISATIONS HAVE WELCOMED THE CENTRE'S DECISION, WHILE NAGA AND KUKI BODIES TERMED IT UNACCEPTABLE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi/Aizawl, Feb 7: Amid objection from different northeastern states, including Mizoram and Nagaland, and many other organisations, the Centre Tuesday reiterated that the Indian government is committed to fence the entire 1,643 km-long India-Myanmar border.

Commenting on the development, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said Tuesday, "It has been decided to construct a fence along the entire 1,643 km India-Myanmar border. To facilitate better surveillance, a patrol track along the border will also be paved." Shah also said the Narendra Modi government is committed to building impenetrable borders.

"Out of the total border length, a 10-km stretch in Moreh, Manipur, has already been fenced. Also, two pilot projects of fencing through a Hybrid Surveillance System (HSS) are under execution," he said.

"They will fence a stretch of 1 km each in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Additionally, fence works covering approx 20 km in Manipur have also been approved, the work for which will start soon," Shah said.

After the Mizoram government, the National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) has also opposed the Centre's move to fence the India-Myanmar border and scrap the Free Movement Regime (FMR) be-

tween the two countries. The FMR allowed citizens residing close to both sides of the border to move 16 km into each other's territory without passport or visa.

The NSCN-IM said it is totally against boundary fencing "in our lands that violates our rights as one family".

Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio had said the decision of the Centre to fence the India-Myanmar border needs thorough discussion before implementation.

Rio said that if the fencing along the India-Myanmar border is urgently required, "we have to work out a formula on how to solve the issue for the people and prevent infiltration as well, because Nagaland is bordered by Myanmar, and on both sides there are Nagas".

Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma, hours after the home minister's first announcement in this regard January 20, had said in Aizawl that his government does not have the authority to stop the Centre from erecting border fencing along the India-Myanmar border and scrapping the FMR between the two countries, but it would oppose both the moves.

Lalduhoma had said that the border with Myanmar in Mizoram was "unilaterally imposed" by the British without consulting the people and the Mizo-Zo-Chin community people living on both sides of the border do not accept the boundary.

Mizoram's most influential civil society body, Young Mizo Association, and more than a dozen organisations in Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur are vehemently opposing both the proposed fencing and the scrapping of FMR.

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh, however, had earlier thanked the Home Minister for his announcements, saying that these assurances are the biggest gifts for the people of the state.

## Merit in demand for separate High Court for Nagaland: Panel



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 7: Presenting its report to both the Houses of Parliament, a Parliamentary Committee Wednesday said that there was merit in the demand for a separate High Court by the state of Nagaland.

The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice in its 141st report 'Judicial Infrastructure in the North-Eastern States of India' noted that the State of Nagaland does not have its own High Court and has been under the jurisdiction of Gauhati High Court since 1963.

During interactions, the President of the Kohima Bar Association informed the parliamentary panel that the states like Tripura, Meghalaya and Manipur which came under the jurisdiction of Gauhati High Court in 1971 have now established their own High Courts but the state of Nagaland does not have its own High Court.

In its report, the Standing Committee, chaired by BJP Rajya Sabha MP Sushil Kumar Modi said that there is merit in the demand for a separate High Court by the State of Nagaland and the Union Ministry of Law and Justice must coordinate with the Ministry of Home Affairs to address the demand.

Further, the Committee said that the status of judicial infrastructure in the northeastern states can at best be termed as work in progress and a lot of work still needs to be done to meet the requirement at the lower end of the spectrum.

"Although, the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary is a ray of hope in otherwise gloomy scenario, it is imperative to enhance the share of North Eastern States under the Scheme," it said.

The report added that it does not augur well for a vibrant and aspirational democracy to have Courts which are functioning from dilapidated rented premises with insufficient space and which lack basic amenities like toilets, water connection, proper electricity supply, etc.

The panel said "It is the duty of the State to provide access to justice to all its citizens and create judicial infrastructure to provide efficient, economic and timely delivery of justice."

## SABARI RAIL PROJECT

# Vaishnav blames Kerala govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 7: The proposed Sabarimala railway project in Kerala has not made progress even after so many years of efforts due to lack of cooperation from the state government and two alternative alignments are being looked at, Union minister Ashwini Vaishnav said Wednesday.

The project, also known as Sabari rail project, is aimed at providing connectivity for pilgrims visiting the Sabarimala temple in the state.

The Railways Minister told the Lok Sabha that two alternative alignments are being looked at for the project.

Sabari rail project is another classic case study in which despite so many years of efforts, it has not made the kind of progress it should have because of the lack of cooperation from the state government on the issue of land acquisition and giving matching funds, he said during the Question Hour.

"Right now, we are working on two possible alternative alignments. One alignment will take the project line very close to the shrine and other alignment will



2 alternative alignments are being looked at for the project aimed at providing connectivity for pilgrims visiting the Sabarimala temple in the southern state, Vaishnav said

terminate at around 25-26 km before the shrine. Once both the alignments are fully examined, then only a final decision will be taken," Vaishnav said.

Emphasising that the gov-

ernment is committed to the development of railway network in Kerala, the minister said an important project is to take the network to the Sabarimala shrine. The Chengannur to Pamba railway line is a new alignment and the Detailed Project Report (DPR) is under preparation. Once the alignment is chosen and the DPR is completed, then the next steps will be taken, he said.

As many members were asking supplementaries about specific railway stations, Speaker Om Birla suggested that members should be asking about policy matters rather than about railway stations.

# Loktak's floating village a showcase of Manipuri heritage

CHAMPU KHANGPOK IN LOKTAK LAKE IS SAID TO BE THE ONLY NATURAL FLOATING VILLAGE ON EARTH WITH 500 HUTS AND HOME TO AROUND 2,000 PEOPLE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Feb 7: Champu Khangpok -- the floating village on Manipur's internationally famed Loktak Lake -- and classified as a wetland of international significance by the Ramsar Convention, has always taken a centre stage in the Manipuri society.

The village assumes significance in preserving age-old traditions associated with Loktak Lake.

Champu Khangpok village in Loktak Lake is said to be the only natural floating village on earth with 500 huts and home to around 2,000 people.

The village is one of the floating biomasses called 'phumdis' in the middle of the Loktak Lake.

Its unique cultural and ecological importance came into

focus during the World Wetland Day observation Friday last week, emphasising the need for collective efforts to ensure its sustainable future.

The Loktak Development Authority (LDA) and the fishing community commemorated World Wetlands Day on the theme 'Wetlands and Human Wellbeings', underscoring the critical role wetlands play in enhancing human lives.

LDA Chairman M Asnikumar Singh, a local of the lake area, along with renowned bamboo expert Kamesh Salam and state government officials, stressed on the collective commitment to preserve the Loktak Lake.

Famous for its floating islands and picturesque landscape, Loktak Lake in Manipur's Bishnupur district is one of the largest freshwater bodies in northeast India.

Solar lamps, water filters, generator set, and a fibre canoe were recently distributed among the villagers generously funded by the Minorities and Other Backward Class Department.

This initiative, tailored for Champu Khangpok, aimed to enhance the community's living conditions and promote sustainable practices in the heart of Loktak.

Acknowledging Champu



Khangpok's deep roots in history, LDA Chairman M Asnikumar Singh said "The cultural and ecological importance of this floating village is crucial for Loktak's sustainable future, making collective efforts imperative."

The LDA director pledged support for the construction of a special floating school for Champu Khangpok, with funding allocated by the government of India through the state education department.

Plans also include the installation of bio-digester toilets for each khangpok shang (hut), contributing to improved sanitation facilities tailored for the unique lifestyle of Champu Khangpok.

LDA Chairman reiterated his appeal directly to the fishing community, urging responsible practices and a halt to illegal fishing and hunting of water birds in Loktak Lake, particularly through the use of electric current and lights.

This call aligns with ongoing efforts to protect the diverse ecosystem of the lake and uphold the sustainable practices championed by Champu Khangpok.

As Loktak Lake faces an imminent threat of extinction with its natural life cycle disrupted by the Ithai barrage, the hydroelectric project, Champu, with its population of around two thousand settling on 500 circular floating huts comprising the village, is central to the collective commitment towards sustain-

able development, conservation, and the overall well-being of Loktak Lake and its associated wetlands.

The Loktak Lake covering an area of 287 sq km is considered the lifeline of the people of Manipur due to its importance in their socio-economic and cultural life.

The lake is oval-shaped with a maximum length and width of 32 km and 13 km respectively. The depth of the lake varies between 0.5 and 4.6 meters with an average recorded at 2.7 meter.

There are 14 hills located in the Lake varying in size and elevation and appear as islands in the southern part of the lake. The most prominent among these are Sendra, Ithing, and Thanga islands.

Three of northeast India's most important ecosystems - Rudrasagar Lake in Tripura, Deepor Beel in Assam and Loktak Lake in Manipur are categorised as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

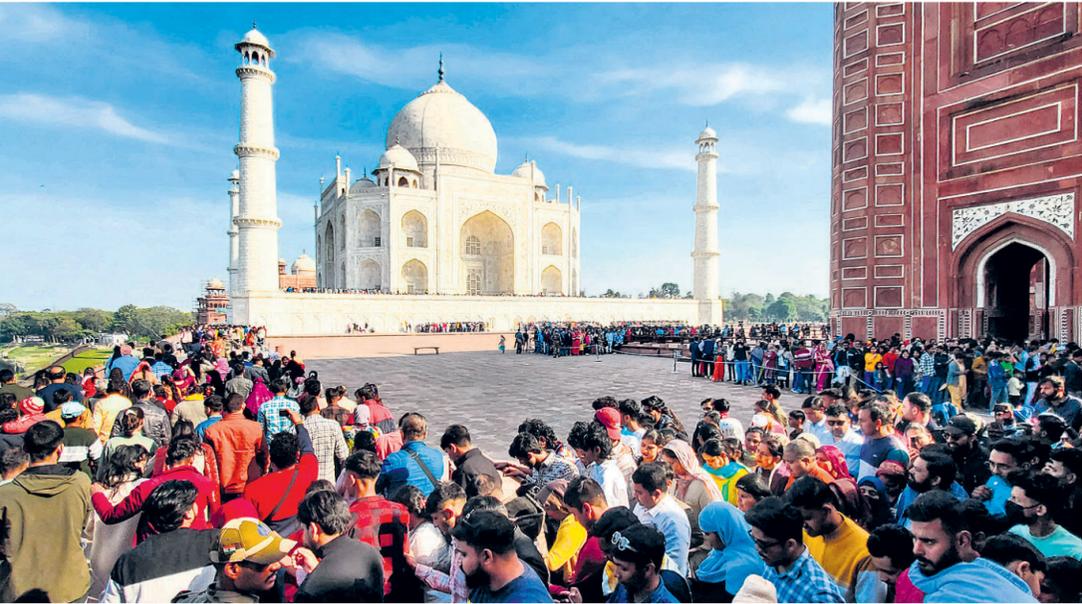
Held in February 1971 at Ramsar in Iran, the Ramsar Convention provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their resources.



People push a car stuck on highway following heavy snowfall in the region, during the Spring Festival travel rush ahead of the Chinese Lunar New Year in Wuhan, China



A demonstrator holds up a machete while standing next to a burning barricade during a protest to demand the resignation of Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry, in Port-au-Prince



Tourist rush at the Taj Mahal during the 369th Urs of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in Agra, Uttar Pradesh



Britain's Prince William, the Prince of Wales, centre left, awards Edward Harley, Chair of the Acceptance in Lieu (AIL) Panel, with the Commander of the Order of the British Empire, at Windsor Castle, England



An artiste gives finishing touches to a clay idol of Goddess Saraswati, ahead of the Saraswati Puja festival, at Kumartuli (artisans village) in Kolkata, West Bengal



Opposition BJP councillors protest inside the Municipal Corporation of Delhi during the special meeting on the revised Budget Estimates 2023-24, at the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Civic Centre in New Delhi



Nobel laureate Morten P Meldal, his wife Phaedria Marie St Hilaire with students during the Global Science Festival Kerala (GSFK) in Thiruvananthapuram



Drummer Swarangi Savdekar, percussionist Viveick Rajagopalan, Nitin Shankar, Genius Gino Banks, drummer Yamini Khamkar rehearse for the upcoming Mumbai Drum Day, at the Shivaji Park in Mumbai, Maharashtra

# national

## of the day quote

Our businessmen donate so much to foreign NGOs. The corporates must come forward and utilise their CSR funds to contribute towards education of girls

Around Rs 1.16 lakh-crore is due to us (West Bengal). Those who have worked under the 100 days' scheme haven't received their wages for the last three years. There are 21 lakh job card holders who did not get money

Is the total (number of LS segments) only 400? There are 543 constituencies and there will be no surprise if he says he will (the BJP/NDA) win them all

### SHORT TAKES

#### Sanjay Singh's bail plea rejected

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court Wednesday refused to grant bail to arrested AAP leader Sanjay Singh in a money laundering case related to the Delhi excise policy 'scam'.

#### AP govt tables interim Budget

Amaravati (AP): Andhra Pradesh Finance Minister B Rajendranath Wednesday tabled a vote-on-account budget of Rs 2.86 lakh crore for fiscal 2024-25.

#### Six workers killed

Udhagamandalam (Tamil Nadu): Six women construction workers died Wednesday after they got buried under sand and rubble at a construction site.

#### Nitish meets PM

New Delhi: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar met Prime Minister Narendra Modi here Wednesday in what was their first meeting after the Janata Dal (United) president dumped the Opposition INDIA bloc.

#### 'Door closed for BJP'

Chennai/New Delhi: Tamil Nadu's main Opposition AIADMK Wednesday said it had already shut its door on the BJP and ruled out joining forces with the saffron party.



The labourer should get his wages before his sweat dries. In Amritkaal, this phrase has become a joke for the workers?

### NO AMBASSADORSHIP FOR POONAM PANDEY

Actor Poonam Pandey is not being considered as the brand ambassador of the government's national campaign to spread awareness on cervical cancer.



## Karnataka govt stages protest against Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 7: Top Congress leaders from Karnataka led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah staged a protest at Jantar Mantar here Wednesday against the Centre alleging "injustice" meted out to the state in devolution of taxes.

The protesters demanded that the Centre set right the losses to the tune of Rs 1.87 lakh crore allegedly incurred by Karnataka under the 15th Finance Commission.

Dismissing the BJP's allegation that the protest was aimed at raking up the north-south divide, he said the Congress wants the country to be united but there should be no discrimination against the southern states.

"We are raising the issue of discrimination meted out by the government of India to the state of Karnataka and other southern states," Siddaramaiah said while addressing the protesters.

Finance Commission was changed by the 15th Finance Commission and called for reverting to the old formula to stop the loss of revenue for his state. He said they would also submit a representation to the new Finance Commission for adopting the formula used by the 14th Finance Commission.

"We are the voice of Karnataka. We demand justice," Shivakumar said. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said top leaders from Karnataka protested at the Jantar Mantar to safeguard the interests of the whole state.

"The Prime Minister talks big about 'cooperative federalism', but as usual that is just a jumla. His anti-democratic, anti-people views are evident in the repeated ANYAY to Karnataka, as well as other Opposition-ruled states — drought relief funds denied; food grains denied; projects delayed," he said in a post on X while sharing his statement.



President Droupadi Murmu takes a ride in a metro train with school students in New Delhi

## Court summons Kejri Feb 17

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 7: A Delhi court Wednesday asked Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to appear before it February 17 on a complaint filed in the ED for skipping summons in an excise policy-linked case.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Divya Malhotra said that Kejriwal "purportedly failed" to appear before the investigating agency Enforcement Directorate and summoned him for the offence under Section 174 of IPC.

In its complaint, the ED alleged that the Delhi chief minister intentionally did not want to obey the summons and kept on giving "lame

excuses." If a high-ranking public functionary like him disobeyed the law, it would "set a wrong example for the common man i.e. The Aam Aadmi," the agency said.

"Accordingly, issue summons to accused Arvind Kejriwal for the offence under Section 174 of the IPC for February 17, 2024," the judge said.

The ED had February 3 filed a fresh complaint case against Kejriwal for non-compliance with its summons.

## Champai to expand cabinet February 16

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, Feb 7: Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren will expand his cabinet February 16, rescheduling the event which was initially planned for Thursday, a minister said.

"The swearing-in ceremony has been deferred. Now, it will take place at 3 pm February 16 at Raj Bhavan here," state minister Alamgir Alam told PTI Wednesday.

He cited the two-day second leg of "Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra" led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in the state starting February 14 as the reason for the change of schedule of the swearing-in event.

Rahul Gandhi's yatra is scheduled to enter Jharkhand February 14 from Chhattisgarh and proceed to Bihar February 15.

Champai Soren, the 67-year-old Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader, was sworn in as the 12th Chief Minister of the state February 2, after his predecessor Hemant Soren was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate last week in a money laundering case.

## 3 TN men in boat from Kuwait held in Mumbai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 7: Three individuals from Tamil Nadu have been arrested by Mumbai police for unlawfully entering India on a Kuwaiti boat, raising red flags regarding potential maritime security breaches.

The police requested for custody to probe the trio's travel route, potential criminal activities in international territory, and any threats to national and global security. Although police maintain that no immediate evidence of wrongdoing was found onboard the vessel, the circumstances raised red flags regarding potential maritime security breaches.

## UCC Bill passed in U'khand Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, Feb 7: The Uttarakhand Assembly Wednesday passed the Uniform Civil Code Bill, which may serve as template for other BJP-run states to enact similar legislation.

The UCC bill was passed by voice vote after a two-day debate. The Opposition's proposal for referring the draft legislation to a select committee of the House on the ground that they did not get enough time to study its provisions was rejected.

The Bill will now be sent to President Droupadi Murmu for her assent after which it will become a law. BJP-ruled states like Gujarat and Assam appear keen to model their UCCs on the Bill passed by the Uttarakhand Assembly.

Uttarakhand will now become the first state after Independence to get a common law on marriage, divorce, land, property and inheritance for all citizens, irrespective of their religion. During the discussion, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said it is not an ordinary legislation.



he said. He said the UCC will create equal laws for men and women across all faiths and will help create a non-partisan and non-discriminatory society.

The hill state's small tribal community is exempted from the proposed law, which also mandates registration of live-in relationships. Children born of live-in relationships will be considered legitimate and deserted women will be entitled to maintenance from their partners.

like saptapadi, nikah and anand karaj, followed by different communities. The Bill applies to the whole of Uttarakhand and to people from the state living outside.

Like marriages, live-in relationships must be registered. Live-in partners must not be under 18. But if any one of them is under 21, the registrar is bound to inform their parents or guardians.

The bill stipulates a penalty of up to a month in prison or a fine of Rs 10,000, or both, if the partners do not submit a statement on their relationship to the registrar within a month.

If a woman in a live-in relationship is deserted by her partner, she can approach the court for maintenance from him. There is also a provision to terminate a live-in relationship. The Bill makes it clear that a marriage between a man and a woman can be solemnised if "neither party has a spouse living at the time of marriage".

## Patanjali's Melanogrit research published in noted UK journal



POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 7: Patanjali's research on herbo-mineral medicine, Melanogrit, has got placed on the cover page of prestigious journal, Bioscience Reports. This international research journal falls under the aegis of Biochemical Society, UK, an institution with over a century of establishment that actively contributes to the advancement of biological sciences.

expressed that the achievement is a significant milestone, highlighting the intensive research conducted by scientists at the Patanjali Research Foundation on skin white patches, leveraging the principles of Ayurveda.

Emphasising the scientific perspective of the study Acharya Balkrishna stated that Melanogrit effectively enhanced the expression of crucial melanogenesis pathway genes such as MITF, TYR, and TRP1, leading to an observable rise in cellular tyrosine activity.

Patanjali has been treating thousands of patients suffering from vitiligo and leucoderma for years, and now, its cellular validation has been acknowledged scientifically by the UK and the entire world.

## EC allots new name for Sharad Pawar faction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 7: The Election Commission Wednesday allotted 'Nationalist Congress Party-Sharadchandra Pawar' as the party name for the group led by Sharad Pawar.

The order by the poll authority came a day after it gave the Nationalist Congress Party name and the "clock" election symbol to the group led by Ajit Pawar, who had walked away with a majority NCP MLAs in the Maharashtra assembly in July last year.

Accordingly, the Sharad Pawar group has suggested the names - Nationalist Congress Party-Sharadchandra Pawar; Nationalist Congress Party - Sharadrao Pawar and Nationalist Congress Party-Sharad Pawar - to the Commission.

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, BRAJRAJNAGAR E-Procurement Notice Bid Identification No.: BRJNRM-08/2023-24

SAMBALPUR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, SAMBALPUR 'e' Procurement Notice Bid Reference No. 35/SMC\_SBP/2023-24

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES O/O THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER HADUA IRRIGATION DIVISION, NARASINGHPUR

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER BALASORE IRRIGATION DIVISION, BALASORE

# international



To be clear, Russia is the only aggressor in this war, and the only one that could end this war today  
SERHII DVORNYK | UN DIPLOMAT, UKRAINE

## CENTENARIAN TAKES TO THE SKIES

A former Royal Air Forces pilot has taken to the skies in a Spitfire at 102 years old. Jack Hemmings, an ex-squadron leader with Britain's air force, is believed to be the oldest pilot to fly the World War II plane. His 20-minute flight, from an airfield in southern England, was to raise money for a charity he co-founded nearly 80 years ago



## of the day quote

We have gotten addicted to temporary foreign workers  
MARC MILLER | IMMIGRATION MINISTER, CANADA

Despite a 7.8% GDP contraction and six consecutive quarters of negative growth in 2022, the nation rebounded with a 1.6% growth rate in the Q3 of 2023  
RANIL WICKREMESINGHE | PRESIDENT, SRI LANKA

I am honoured to establish the New Jersey-India Commission to strengthen the cultural and economic ties between New Jersey and India for generations to come  
PHIL MURPHY | GOVERNOR, NEW JERSEY

# ATTACKS ON INDIAN STUDENTS IN US CONTINUES

THE BACK-TO-BACK INCIDENTS SINCE SUNDAY WERE THE SIXTH IN THE US IN 2024 ALONE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, Feb 7: In a series of disturbing incidents, an Indian doctoral candidate was found dead at Purdue University in Indiana while another Indian IT student was brutally attacked near his house in Chicago.

According to The Purdue Exponent, a news agency independent of the university, Sameer Kamath, 23, a doctoral candidate in mechanical engineering, was found dead in Warren County Monday, the mechanical engineering head Eckhard Groll announced Tuesday.

Kamath's body was found at a nature preserve at Crow's Grove, the agency said, quoting a press release from Justin Brummett, the Warren County Coroner.

In another incident, Indian IT student Syed Mazahir Ali was chased and brutally attacked by unidentified men near his house in the US city of Chicago Sunday, February 4.

There were videos posted on social media and in one video posted on X, Ali can be seen with a bloodied nose and face and blood stains on his clothes as he



describes his ordeal.

Ali, who moved to the US from Hyderabad about six months ago, told ABC7 Eyewitness News that one of the attackers pointed a gun at him.

Video surveillance shows Ali walking to his home at night with a packet in his hand when the three men chase him when he was punched by the men in the eye and hit on the face, ribs and back. The ABC7 report said he was taken to a local hospital where he was treated for several cuts and bruises.

"America has been my dream country and I came here to fulfil my dreams and pursue my Masters. The incident gave me trauma," he told the channel.

The report said that the police do not have any suspect in custody and the investigation is ongoing. The Consulate General of India in Chicago said on X that the "Consulate is in touch with Syed Mazahir Ali and his wife in India Syeda Ruquiya Fatima Razvi and assured all possible assistance. The consulate has also contacted the local au-

thorities who are investigating the case."

Ali's wife Ruquiya Fatima reached out to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, requesting assistance to travel to the US along with three minor children.

Last week, 19-year-old Shreyas Reddy Beniger, a student at the Lindner School of Business in Ohio State was found dead. However, local authorities have ruled out foul play.

Another Indian student, identified as Neel Acharya at Purdue University, Indiana, was confirmed dead days after being reported missing January 28. The incident comes just days after 25-year-old Indian student Vivek Saini, who had recently earned an MBA degree in the US, was hammered to death by a homeless drug addict in Georgia state's Lithonia city January 16.

The horrifying incident was caught on camera when assailant Julian Faulkner, a homeless man, mercilessly struck Saini nearly 50 times on the head with a hammer. Akul B Dhawan, an 18-year-old at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, was found dead last month with signs of hypothermia.

## Putin's 1st interview to US journo since Ukraine invasion

REUTERS

Moscow, Feb 7: President Vladimir Putin granted an interview to US television host Tucker Carlson Tuesday, the Kremlin said, his first to an American journalist since before Russia's invasion of Ukraine nearly two years ago.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Putin had agreed to the Carlson interview because the approach of the former Fox News host differed from the "one-sided" reporting of the Ukraine conflict by many Western news outlets.

"When it comes to the countries of the collective West, the large network media, TV channels, (and) large newspapers can in no way boast of even trying to at least look impartial in terms of coverage," Peskov told a regular news briefing Wednesday.

"These are all media outlets that take an exceptionally one-sided position. Of course, there is no desire to communicate with such media, and it hardly makes sense, and it is unlikely that it will be useful."

Asked directly why Carlson had landed an interview with Putin, Peskov said the American journalist's approach was "in no way pro-Russian, it is not pro-Ukrainian - it is pro-American".

The interview is likely to be aired Thursday, Russia's TASS news agency said, citing reports by the Wall Street Journal.

Carlson said in a post on X Tuesday that the interview would enable Americans to understand Russia's view of the war. "We are not here because we love Vladimir Putin... We are not encouraging you to agree with what Putin may say in this interview, but we are urging you to watch it. You should know as much as you can," he said.

## SHORT TAKES

### Baroness Shreela Flather no more

London: Prominent British-Indian peer Shreela Flather passed away after a short illness in the UK Tuesday, her sons Marcus and Paul Flather said in a statement. She was 89. Known for her elegant saris in the House of Lords, the teacher and politician was a life peer as Baroness Flather of Windsor and Maidenhead in Berkshire. As the Lifetime President of the Memorial Gates Council, she was instrumental in the creation of the iconic Memorial Gates at Hyde Park Corner in London as a tribute to the war efforts made by some 5 million Commonwealth soldiers during the World Wars. "Baroness Flather was a trailblazer, having been appointed as the first UK Asian Woman Justice of the Peace, Mayor and Baroness. She worked tirelessly for women's and girls' rights, and served the South Asian community in the UK," reads a family statement.

### Russian strikes kill 5 in Ukraine

Kyiv: Russia unleashed missile and drone strikes on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities during Wednesday morning's rush hour, killing five people, wounding more than 30, and damaging residential buildings and energy infrastructure, Ukrainian officials said. Four people were killed when debris from a missile hit an 18-storey residential building in Golosiivskiy district in the southwest of Kyiv, causing a fire and smashing windows, officials said. One person was killed in Mykolayiv in the south. "Another massive attack against our state. Six regions were struck by the enemy. All our services are now working to cope with the consequences of this terror," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on the Telegram messaging app.

### Taiwan halts group China trips

Taipei: Taiwan's Tourism Administration Wednesday told travel agents to stop organising new group tours to China since Beijing has yet to allow such trips to the island by Chinese tourists and has altered a flight path in the sensitive Taiwan Strait. Post pandemic, China has largely resumed permission for its nationals to visit a host of popular tourist destinations including Japan, but has yet to add Taiwan back on its approved list amid ongoing tensions between Beijing and Taipei. China claims democratically-governed Taiwan as its own territory despite the strong objections of the government in Taipei.

# Gaza truce talks going nowhere

Hamas proposes three-stage ceasefire over 135 days which was rejected by Israel



REUTERS

Doha, Feb 7: Hamas has proposed a ceasefire to quiet the guns in Gaza for four-and-a-half months, during which all hostages would go free, Israel would withdraw its troops from the Gaza Strip and an agreement would be reached on an end to the war.

The militant group's proposal - a response to an offer sent last week by Qatari and Egyptian mediators and cleared by Israel and the United States - came during the biggest diplomatic push yet for an extended halt to the fighting.

Israel's Channel 13 cited a senior official as saying some of the demands presented by Hamas were not acceptable to Israel, without providing details. Israel has previously said it will not pull its troops out of Gaza until Hamas is wiped out.

The report quoted the unidentified official as saying Israeli authorities would debate whether to reject Hamas's proposals or-

right or ask for alternative conditions.

But the Hamas offer, in a document seen by Reuters and confirmed by sources, appears to finesse Hamas's longstanding demand for a full end to the war as a pre-condition before releasing hostages it seized October 7 in the raid that precipitated Israel's assault.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who arrived overnight in Israel after meeting the leaders of mediators Qatar and Egypt, met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss the proposal.

A source close to the negotiations said the

Hamas counterproposal did not require a guarantee of a permanent ceasefire at the outset, but that an end to the war would have to be agreed during the truce before final hostages were freed.

A second source said Hamas still wanted guarantees from Qatar, Egypt and other friendly states that the ceasefire would be upheld and not collapse as soon as hostages go free.

## EVE OF ELECTION

# Blasts rock Pak

Explosions near Pakistan candidates' offices kill 30, scores hurt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 7: Two blasts near electoral candidates' offices in Pakistan's southwestern province of Balochistan killed 30 people and more than 40 others injured, local officials said Wednesday, raising concerns over security on the eve of a general election.

Pakistan goes to the polls Thursday amid rising militant attacks in recent months and the jailing of Imran Khan, the winner of the last national election, who has been dominating the headlines despite an economic crisis and other woes threatening the nuclear-armed country.

Authorities have said they are boosting security at polling booths.

In the first incident, a powerful blast outside the office of independent candidate Asfandyar Khan Kakar in Pishin district killed 20 people and wounded 30 others.

Less than an hour later, another blast took place outside the election office of a Jamiat Ulema Islam-Pakistan in the Killa Abdullah area claiming the lives of 10 people and injuring 22 others, officials said.

The deputy commissioner of Qila Saifullah, Yasir Bazai, said that 12 people were killed in the blast which emanated from a motorcycle parked near the office and 25 were injured.

It was not immediately clear who was behind the attacks. Several groups, including the Islamist militant Pakistani Taliban (TTP) and separatist groups from Balochistan, oppose the Pakistani state and have carried out attacks in recent months.

Separately, a TTP spokesman claimed an attack Monday that



It has been by all means is the worst ever political engineering through all phases of the elections to keep the PTI out of the election process and achieve the desired result  
RAOOF HASAN | SPOKESPERSON, OPPOSITION

had killed ten people at a police station in north-west Pakistan. Though the TTP has said it is targeting police and security officials, rather than electoral can-

didates, the attack had raised concerns about security in Pakistan's border regions as the country goes to the polls.

Khanzai hospital, close to the site of the explosion in Pishin Wednesday put the death toll at 14 and said more than two dozen were injured. The deputy commissioner of Pishin district, Jumma Dad Khan, said that the blast had injured many people.

The attacks came as political parties wrapped up their campaigning in the quiet period mandated by electoral rules the day before the election.

## IN RACE FOR PRIME MINISTER

Islamabad: Pakistanis will vote Thursday to elect a new government to rule the cash-strapped country amid a spree of violence including deadly blasts on the eve of elections in which the front-runner former prime minister Nawaz Sharif is believed to have the backing of the powerful military. With former prime minister Imran Khan in jail, Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is tipped to emerge as the single largest party in the elections. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidates are contesting the polls independently after the Supreme Court upheld the decision of the election commission to deprive his party of its iconic election symbol cricket 'bat'. Sharif, 74, will be eyeing the premiership for a record fourth time in Thursday's election. The contest also involves the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) of Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, who has been declared as the party's prime minister face. Nearly 650,000 security personnel have been deployed across the country as authorities were busy setting up polling stations to enable more than 12.85 crore registered voters to cast their ballot in the general elections.

## 50K drug traffickers arrested in Lanka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, Feb 7: The Sri Lankan government has said that more than 50,000 criminals were nabbed and narcotics worth millions of rupees were seized during an ambitious operation against drugs in the island nation in 50 days.

Conceptualised by Minister of Public Security Tiran Alles and overseen by acting Inspector General of Police (IGP) Deshabandu Tennakoon, the controversial Operation 'Yukthiya' (the Sinhala term for 'justice') was launched December 17 with a June 30 deadline to end the drug menace plaguing the country and arrest all the drug dealers.

"It's been 50 days since the Yukthiya operation was launched. A total of 56,541 criminals throughout the island were arrested. Of them, 49,558 were drug abuse arrests while 6,958 more were those in the crime suspect lists," a release from the Ministry of Public Security said Tuesday.

# Middle East faces moment of reckoning

At the dawn of 2024, the disastrous conflict within the Gaza Strip ignited a volatile situation in the wider region, placing Middle Eastern stability at the forefront of US international policy. Following the October 7 offensive by Hamas, the Biden administration strategically relocated two aircraft carrier strike groups, and a nuclear-powered submarine to the Middle East. This move was accompanied by a continuous flow of high-ranking US officials, President Joe Biden included, embarking on significant visits to the area. As the conflict proved increasingly challenging to control, the US escalated its involvement. In early November, last year reacting to attacks on US military personnel in Iraq and Syria by groups supported by Iran, the US executed strikes on weapon facilities in Syria, utilised by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. By the start of January, US forces had eliminated a high-ranking commander belonging to one of these Iranian-

backed factions in Baghdad. Fast forward to mid-January, after enduring continuous attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea by the Houthi movement, another Iran-backed group, the US, in collaboration with the UK, initiated a wave of strikes on Houthi fortresses in Yemen.

Despite this show of force, it would be unwise to bet on the US committing major diplomatic and security resources to the Middle East over the longer term. Well before Hamas' October 7 attacks, successive US administrations had signalled their intent to shift away from the region to devote more attention to a rising China. The Biden administration has also been contending with Russia's war in Ukraine, further limiting its bandwidth for coping with the Middle East. By 2023, U.S. officials had largely given up on a revived nuclear agreement with Iran, seeking instead to reach informal de-escalation arrangements with their Iranian counterparts. At the same time, the administration was bolstering the military capacity of re-



gional partners such as Saudi Arabia in an effort to transfer some of the security burden from Washington. Despite Biden's early reluctance to do business with Riyadh—whose leadership U.S. intelligence believes was responsible for the 2018 killing of the Saudi journalist and Washington Post contributor Jamal Khashoggi—the president prioritised a deal to normalise relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel. In pursuing the deal, the US was willing to offer significant incentives to both sides while mostly ignoring the Palestinian issue.

October 7 upended this approach, underscoring the centrality of the Palestinian issue and forcing the US into more direct military engagement. Yet

remarkably, the war in Gaza has not led to significant shifts in Washington's underlying policy orientation. The administration continues to push for Saudi normalisation despite Israeli opposition to a separate state for the Palestinians, which the Saudis have made a condition of any such agreement. And US officials seem unlikely to end their effort to disentangle the US from Middle East conflicts. If anything, the war's increasingly complicated dynamics may result in even less US appetite for engagement in the region. Doubling down on commitments in the Middle East is also not likely to be a winning strategy for either American political party in a crucial election year.

Neither European nor Chinese leaders have demonstrated much interest in or capacity for taking on the job, even as US influence wanes. Given this emerging reality, regional powers—particularly Israel's immediate Arab neighbours Egypt and Jordan, along with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the UAE, which have been coordinat-

ing since the war began—urgently need to step up and define a collective way forward.

Finding common ground after Hamas's brutal October 7 attacks and Israel's devastating campaign in Gaza will be exceptionally difficult. And the longer the war continues, the greater the risk of broader fractures across the Middle East. But in the years preceding the attacks, both Arab and non-Arab states showed the potential for new forms of cooperation in what amounted to a major reset of relations across the region. Even after months of war, many of these ties have remained intact. Now, before this trend reverses, these governments must come together to build lasting mechanisms for conflict prevention and, ultimately, peace.

The Middle East is facing a moment of reckoning. If it becomes paralysed by the horrific bloodshed in Gaza, it could further descend into crisis and conflict. Or it can start building a different future.

# business

## of the day quote

India and the US need to cooperate on framing regulations on artificial intelligence



**SATYA NADELLA** | CHIEF, MICROSOFT

Hopefully we will see some announcements soon on investment in Indian companies



**FAISAL FAQEER** | SENIOR VP, SAUDI ARAMCO

Taking cognizance of the challenges involved in mapping the trade barriers, and to give increased focus, a task force has been set up under Department of Commerce, to identify, categorise and develop tailored strategies for resolution of these identified non-tariff barriers



**PIYUSH GOYAL** | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

## Q3 RESULTS

### Trent net surges 2X

**New Delhi:** Tata Group retail firm Trent Ltd Wednesday reported a two-fold rise in consolidated net profit to ₹370.64 crore for the third quarter ended December 2023, helped by strong momentum in sales and improved margins. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of ₹154.81 crore a year ago, Trent Ltd said in a regulatory filing. Trent Ltd operates retail stores under the brand name Westside, Zudio and Star.

### KPIL net jumps 32%

**New Delhi:** Engineering major Kalpataru Projects International (KPIL) Wednesday reported over 32 per cent jump in its consolidated net profit to ₹144 crore in December quarter compared to a year ago mainly on the back of higher revenues. Its profit stood at ₹109 crore in the quarter ended on December 31, 2022, a regulatory filing showed.

### Nestle profit rises

**New Delhi:** FMCG major Nestle India Ltd Wednesday reported an increase of 4.38 per cent in its net profit at ₹655.61 crore for the quarter ended December 31. The company had posted a profit of ₹628.06 crore in the same period a year ago, Nestle India said in a regulatory filing. Nestle India's net rose 8.27 per cent to ₹4,583.63 crore during the period under review. It was at ₹4,233.27 crore in the corresponding period of last fiscal.

### Power Grid net up

**New Delhi:** State-owned Power Grid Corporation Wednesday posted a 10.5 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to ₹4,028.25 crore in the December quarter, mainly on the back of higher revenues. Its consolidated net profit stood at ₹3,645.29 crore in the year-ago period, the company said in a regulatory filing. Total income increased to ₹11,819.70 crore in the third quarter of FY24 from ₹11,530.22 crore a year ago.

### TCPL profit plunges

**New Delhi:** Tata Consumer Products Ltd (TCPL) Wednesday reported a 17.26 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to ₹301.51 crore in the December quarter, on account of lower contribution by associate and joint venture firms. The consolidated profit before exceptional items and tax of the Tata Group FMCG arm was up 27.12 per cent to ₹513.27 crore in the October-December period as against ₹403.75 crore of the corresponding quarter a year ago.



Now, no trade (with Pakistan) is being done through land route. But some trade is being done through sea and air

**ANUPRIYA PATEL** | UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

# OMCs losing money

**OIL FIRMS LOSING CLOSE TO ₹3/L ON DIESEL, PROFIT ON PETROL DOWN**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Betul, Feb 7:** State-owned fuel retailers are losing close to ₹3 per litre on selling diesel while the profit on petrol has trimmed due to recent firming up in international oil prices, industry officials said detailing reasons for continuing to hold retail prices.

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), who control roughly 90 per cent of India's fuel market, "voluntarily" have not changed petrol, diesel and cooking gas (LPG) prices for almost two years now, resulting in losses when input cost was higher and profits when raw material prices were lower.

International oil prices, against which domestic rates are benchmarked as India is 85 per cent dependent on imports to meet its oil needs, had softened late last year but firmed up again in the second half of January.

They have resisted calls to revert to daily price revision and pass on softening in rates to consumers on grounds that prices continue to be extremely volatile - rising on one day and falling on the other - and that their past losses haven't been fully recouped.

"There are losses on diesel," an industry official said. "It had turned positive but now oil companies are losing close to ₹3 per litre." He said the profit margin on petrol has trimmed from low teens to around ₹3-4 a litre.

Asked about fuel price revision, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri told reporters on the sidelines of the India Energy Week that the government does not dictate prices and the oil companies take their decision considering all economic aspects.

"They say there is still volatility (in the market)," he said.

Asked about the bumper



₹69,000 crore profits that the three firms have clocked in the first nine months of the current fiscal, he said the expectation would be to start price revision if the trend continues in the fourth and last quarter of the current fiscal year ending March 31.

The combined net profit of IOC, BPCL and HPCL in the April-December (first nine months of current fiscal year) was better than their annual earning of ₹39,356 crore in pre-oil crisis year, regulatory filings by them showed.

The firms had posted a combined net loss of ₹21,201.18 crore during the April-September 2022 despite accounting for ₹22,000 crore announced but not paid LPG subsidy for the previous two years. Subsequent softening of international prices and government giving out LPG subsidy helped IOC and BPCL post annualised profit for 2022-23 (April 2022 to March 2023 fiscal) but HPCL was in the red.

This fiscal year, things have changed dramatically. The three firms posted record quarterly earnings in the first two quarters (April-June and July-September) when international oil prices - against which domestic rates are benchmarked - almost halved to ₹72 a barrel from a year ago. International prices rose again in the subsequent quarter to \$90, leading to moderation of their earnings.

International oil prices had softened late last year but firmed up again in the second half of January

But, on a year as a whole they had rich profits.

The fuel price freeze that began April 6, 2022, had a loss as high as ₹17.4 a litre on petrol and ₹27.7 per litre on diesel for the week ended June 24, 2022.

However, subsequent softening led to losses being eliminated. The three firms had a margin of ₹11 a litre on petrol and ₹6 on diesel last month.

But now things have changed, another industry official explained.

International oil prices have been turbulent in the last couple of years. It dipped into the negative zone at the start of the pandemic in 2020 and swung wildly in 2022 - climbing to a 14-year high of nearly \$140 per barrel in March 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine, before sliding on weaker demand from top importer China and worries of an economic contraction.

But for a nation that is 85 per cent dependent on imports, the spike meant adding to already elevated levels of inflation and derailing the economic recovery from the pandemic.

So the three fuel retailers froze petrol and diesel prices for the longest duration in the last two decades. They stopped daily price revision in early November 2021 when rates across the country hit an all-time high, prompting the government to roll back a part of the excise duty hike it had effected during the pandemic to take advantage of low oil prices.

## Vibhor Steel Tubes opens unit in state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 7:** Vibhor Steel Tubes Ltd (VSTL) is setting up a new unit at Sundargarh in Odisha to scale up its total manufacturing capacity to 3.41 lakh tonne, a company official said Wednesday.

The Hisar-based steel maker presently has two plants - one in Mahabubnagar, Telangana and one in Raigad, Maharashtra - having a total installed capacity of 2.21 lakh tonne.

"With the commissioning of the third project in Odisha, our capacity will increase by 1,20,000 MT to 3,41,000 MT," its chairman Vijay Kaushik told reporters in an interaction.

Replying to a question related to the timeline of the project, he said the aim is to make the plant operational by the first quarter of financial year 2024-25.

On the expansion plan, Kaushik said the company has already acquired the land for the project, and orders for plant and machinery have been placed. It will be funded through internal accruals.

He did not disclose the investment details due to regulatory obligations as the company is in the process of listing on BSE and NSE.

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of Vibhor Steel Tubes will open February 13 and close February 15, he said.

The company has set a price range of ₹141-151 per share for its proposed IPO. The company's offering comprises a fresh issue of equity shares (having a face value of ₹10 each), aggregating to an issue size of up to ₹72.17 crore, through book-building route.

Khambatta Securities is the sole book-running lead manager to the offer and KFIN Technologies is the registrar.

The proceeds from the issue will be utilised for working capital requirements.



## MEESHO FORAYS INTO LOGISTICS

E-commerce marketplace Meesho has launched Valmo, "a portmanteau of value and movement", in an effort to build a pan India-level logistics solution. By partnering with fulfillment centres across the country, Valmo aims to create a national logistics solution by eliminating entry barriers for local players and helping them grow their businesses, Meesho said



# Sensex, Nifty close flat in choppy trade



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 7:** Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed flat in a volatile trade Wednesday as investors stayed on the sidelines ahead of RBI's interest rate decision Thursday.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 34.09 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at 72,152. During the day, it hit a high of 72,559.21 and a low of 71,938.22. The Nifty ended marginally up by 1.10 points or 0.01 per cent to 21,930.50.

IT shares TCS, Infosys and Tech Mahindra declined due to profit taking offsetting gains from select banking and pharma shares.

"The domestic market exhibited cautious range-bound movement, despite robust PMI data and favourable global cues ahead of RBI policy meet. While no change in stance is anticipated, the RBI's commentary on any hints regarding potential rate cuts and improvements in liquidity will be closely monitored," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

Among the Sensex firms, State Bank of India rose the most by 3.78 per cent after the bank announced the acquisition of SBI CAPS subsidiary for ₹708.07 crore.

Nestle India gained 1.68 per cent after it reported around 9 per cent growth in sales.

JSW Steel, Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank and Asian Paints were among the gainers. Tech Mahindra, Power Grid, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, HDFC

Markets erased all its gains towards the end as profit-taking in IT stocks and sluggish global indices weighed on the sentiment. Traders are adopting a cautious stance ahead of the credit policy announcement tomorrow

PRASHANTH TAPSE | SENIOR VP (RESEARCH), MEHTA EQUITIES

Bank, Wipro, Larsen & Toubro and NTPC were the major laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 1.31 per cent and smallcap index advanced 0.38 per cent.

Paytm-owner One97 Communications climbed 10 per cent, continuing its recovery journey. Among sectoral indices, IT fell by 1.18 per cent, tech declined 0.97 per cent, services by 0.81 per cent, capital goods by 0.31 per cent and auto by 0.06 per cent.

Realty jumped 1.96 per cent, telecommunication climbed 1.18 per cent, consumer discretionary (0.89 per cent), financial services (0.76 per cent) and power (0.92 per cent).

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹92.52 crore Tuesday.

The BSE benchmark climbed 454.67 points or 0.63 per cent to settle at 72,186.09 Tuesday. The Nifty went up by 157.70 points or 0.72 per cent to 21,929.40. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.66 per cent to \$79.11 a barrel.

# 'RBI to deal with Paytm issue'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 7:** Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi Wednesday said it is for the Reserve Bank to deal with the Paytm issue and the government has nothing to do with the matter for now.

He also said that Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) is a small financial entity and there are no systemic stability concerns.

Amid concerns over non-compliance, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has taken various measures against PPBL wherein it will not be allowed to offer any services concerning deposits, pre-paid instruments and e-wallet after February 29.

The entity has also been di-



rected to stop onboarding new customers.

"It is action taken by the regulator. They regulate the banks. The government has had nothing to do until now when it comes to the actions taken against Paytm. And we believe that RBI must have taken the action in the overall interest of the consumer and the economy," Joshi told PTI in an interview.

With regard to Foreign Direct

Investment (FDI) in Paytm's payment aggregator subsidiary, he said permission that has been sought for investment from China.

"The application is under review as it is an inter-ministerial process. It is under consideration," he said.

On whether there are any financial stability concerns due to the action taken by the RBI against PPBL, Joshi said it is a very small bank and there were no systemic stability concerns as such.

"The customers who have an account in the payments bank, they will have to shift their account.... From what I understand, it is not the bank that will migrate the accounts. The customers have to do it," he added.

# India to pip China as oil demand growth centre in '27: IEA

**CHINA CURRENTLY IS THE BIGGEST DRIVER OF OIL DEMAND AND INDIA RANKS NO 2 IN GROWTH**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Betul, Feb 7:** India will overtake China as the biggest driver of global oil demand in 2027 as transportation and industry consumption in the world's fastest-growing major economy will drive growth despite a big push for clean energy and electrification, the International Energy Agency said Wednesday.

The Paris-based agency in a special Indian Oil Market Outlook to 2030 report released at the India Energy Week here, said the country's oil demand will rise from 5.48 million barrels

per day in 2023 to 6.64 million bpd in 2030.

The numbers given by IEA in the report seem to talk of crude oil processed into fuel for domestic as well as for exports. The domestic consumption as per the oil ministry data is around 5 million barrels per day (bpd).

"India's oil demand will grow at a rapid pace by 2030 despite accelerated green energy moves," IEA director of energy markets and security Keisuke Sadamori said. "Growth in India will surpass that of China in 2027."

But in absolute terms, demand in India will still lag China's even in 2030.

The demand growth is despite the push for electric vehicles which make up for a small fraction of the automobiles on the road currently. The EV push will see greater adoption in two- and three-wheelers while their pen-



etration in the four-wheeler segment would be around 5 per cent.

"More than 500,000 barrels per day of oil demand will be avoided due to increased EV penetration, energy efficiency improvements and biofuels growth," she said. Of this, around 200,000 bpd would be because of EV penetration. She said refinery expansions

As oil demand slows in developed countries and China, India becomes the largest source of growth

TORIL BOSONI | HEAD OF OIL INDUSTRY AND MARKETS DIVISION, IEA

nies are targeting an additional 1 million barrels per day of refinery capacity.

On biofuels, IEA said raising ethanol blending in petrol from current 12 per cent to 20 per cent may be a challenge given feedstock constraints. Lack of major discoveries will see domestic production fall to 540,000 bpd by 2030, she said adding imports

will rise from 4.6 million bpd in 2023 to 5.8 million bpd in 2030.

India holds oil stock equivalent to meet 66 days of requirement. This includes 7 days requirement stored in underground strategic reserves and the rest in depots and tanks in refineries and other locations. IEA member nations maintain a stockpile equivalent to 90 days of their demand. India is an associate member of IEA.

"India will become the largest source of global oil demand growth between now and 2030, while growth in developed economies and China initially slows and then subsequently goes into reverse in our outlook," IEA said. "India is on track to post an increase of almost 1.2 million bpd, accounting for more than one-third of the projected 3.2 million bpd global gains, to reach 6.6 million bpd by 2030".

India currently is the third largest consumer of oil behind the US and China. It imports 85% of its oil needs and this dependence is likely to rise as domestic production falls

# Ponting unsure of Pant role

# India go down against Aussies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** The Indian women's hockey team lost 0-3 to third ranked Australia, completing a hat-trick of defeats in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2023-24 here Wednesday. India will take on the USA Friday.

Australia captain Grace Stewart (19th minute), Tatum Stewart (23rd) and Kaitlin Nobbs (55th) were the goalscorers for the winners in the match played at Kalinga Stadium.

India started the match on the offensive, forcing Australia to concede a penalty corner in the second minute of the game but an alert visiting side goalkeeper Zoe Newman averted the danger.

Both the teams created significant goal-scoring opportunities in the next couple of minutes but were unable to find the back of the board. Australia piled on the pressure as the first quarter came to a close but the Indian defence stood firm.

As India continued to search for a goal in the second quarter Australia initiated a counter through Nobbs, who found herself open in the shooting circle and passed on the ball to Stewart, who tapped the ball in to score the first goal of the game.

Indian team tried creating chances but was unable to get it right in the striking circle. Soon after, Australia went for a quick counter through Amy Lawton but her reverse shot was countered away by Indian goalie Bichu Devi Kharibam.

Halfway through the second quarter Australia earned a penalty



corner and a drag-flick by Stewart doubled Australia's lead.

India pegged Australia back as the first half was drawing to a close and earned two penalty corners. However they failed to capitalise on either of them and the scoreline remained 0-2. The Hockeyroos were happy to sit back and absorb the pressure in the third quarter as India struggled to find a chink in their armour.

India had the opportunity to score through a penalty corner in the last minute of the quarter but Udita slapped the ball wide and Australia retained their two-goal lead.

India pressed hard in the last quarter and were awarded a penalty corner two minutes into the final 15 minutes of the game but Udita's shot, from a variation, sailed wide of the post again. A few minutes later, Mumtaz Khan earned a penalty corner but the Indians once again failed to convert.

Australia increased their lead as Nobbs rolled the ball through Savita's leg to make it 3-0 with five minutes left in the game. As the game drew to a close Navneet attempted a shot on goal but the Australian keeper was alert in front of the goal.



game and I'm batting at No.4. That's just what he's like, but we'll keep our fingers crossed.

"He's such a dynamic player. He's obviously our captain. We missed him incredibly last year. If you understand the journey he's been on the last 12-13 months, it was a horrific incident. One that I know he feels very lucky to have even survived, let alone have the chance to play cricket again."

Warner may lead  
David Warner led the Capitals last season and Ponting con-

firmed that star Australian batter would be captain if Pant is unavailable to do the job. The franchise picked up young England batter Harry Brook for Rs 4 crore at the auction last year. The Capitals had finished fifth in 2022 and ninth last season.

While Ponting is happy with his squad, the two-time World Cup winning captain acknowledged the team has underperformed in the past two seasons. "With Harry Brook coming into the set-up as well, so Warner, [Mitch] Marsh, Harry Brook,

we've got some really good overseas batters," Ponting said.

"Marsh and Warner will bat up the top somewhere and Harry Brook has been finishing off with England, so he'll probably play a finishing role for us there.

"(If) we can get [Anrich] Nortje and Jhye Richardson fit, and with the two spin options we've got with Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav we've got a really good squad that to be fair has probably underperformed the last couple of years, so we've got some work to do."

## Gymnast Pranati Nayak hopes for further success

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 7:** With a specific aim on improving her fitness, Indian gymnast Pranati Nayak is hoping to garner success in four World Cup events and an Asian Championship to seal her berth in the Paris Olympics.

The 28-year-old Nayak, who represented India at the Tokyo Olympics, will take part in the FIG Apparatus World Cup (Qualifying OG) in Cairo from February 15-18, followed by two similar events in Baku (Azerbaijan) from March 7-10 and in Doha from April 17-20.

"I am heading for the World Cup on Tuesday (February 13) as qualification for the Olympics is starting with it. There is a World Cup in February and one each in March and April," Pranati told PTI in an exclusive chat during an event organised by the gymnast's sponsors Welspun.



"I am going especially for vault since two quotas are left from it. If I am able to win medals in at least two of the four World Cups, I have a chance to qualify (for the Olympics)," she said. "At the Asian Championships in May, there is one quota from an Asian country on the all-round basis. I will try (to qualify) from both the ways," Pranati added.

Pranati said she has spent last two months training under an overseas coach who has brought about a significant change in her methods. "I have been training at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar under a foreign coach Amari (from Egypt) for the last two months. I am confident of doing well because earlier the fitness levels were also not high," she said.

"I would attend just a camp one month before any competition which is not enough. I am hoping to do well, who does not want to compete in the Olympics?"

"The coach felt I was lacking in fitness, so he made me work on it for one month at a stretch, even though the performances were there. For us it all depends on exhibition, improvement in fitness would reflect in performances," she added.

## BUMRAH 1ST INDIAN PACER TO BE NO.1 IN TEST RANKING



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, Feb 7:** Jasprit Bumrah Wednesday became the first Indian pacer to top the ICC Test rankings after a stellar performance against England in Visakhapatnam.

The 30-year-old's nine-wicket match haul has helped him leapfrog Pat Cummins, Kagiso Rabada and Ravichandran Ashwin, making him only the fourth from his country to attain number one position. Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja and Bishan Singh Bedi are the other Indians who have been at the top of the charts.

Bumrah ended Ashwin's 11-month long reign. Ashwin, on 499 Test wickets, is now third in the standings. Bumrah now has 881 rating points with Ashwin (904) and Jadeja (899) the only India bowlers to have aggregated more rating points. Ashwin and Jadeja also have the unique distinction of being jointly top-ranked in March 2017.

The batting rankings see left-handed opener Yashasvi Jaiswal progress 37 places to 29th after completing a fine double-century in the first innings and Shubman Gill go up 14 places to a career-best 38th after notching a century in the second innings.

## Eves face Bangla for SAFF U-19 crown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, Feb 7:** The Indian football team will be out to break a jinx as they take on hosts Bangladesh in the SAFF U-19 Women's Championship final here Thursday.

Despite improvement in women's football, India somehow hold a dismal record in this age-group in SAFF. The title has eluded India on more than one occasion, the latest being the SAFF U20 Women's Championship in Dhaka last year, when Bangladesh piped them to win the trophy.

The upcoming final will definitely be a huge opportunity for India to put past records on the burner and retain the title. The Young Tigresses will enter the final match with a strong determination to win the championship title and set the records straight from the Indian perspective.

In the group stage, India won comfortably against Bhutan (10-0) and Nepal (4-0) but lost to Bangladesh by a solitary goal before entering the final as the second-place finishers in the group.

Apart from having a tight defence and a balanced midfield,



India enjoy good attacking qualities with forwards Pooja and

Sulanjana Raul and wingers Neha and Sibani Devi putting up

a commendable show.

However, it will definitely not be easy to topple the hosts, who beat India in the group league earlier this week. No one knows it better than India's head coach, Sukla Dutta.

"I'm truly not pleased that India has been losing to Bangladesh for the past three years, but tomorrow will be the time to change that. I am sure both teams will put in equal efforts, but the team who score first will likely emerge champion, as the confidence to score more will start from there," she said ahead of the Bangladesh clash. "I understand there will be huge support for Bangladesh, but we'll only concentrate on our own game," she said.

Having already played against Bangladesh in the group stage, the India head coach knows how to handle the situation. "We know exactly how they play. But there's no doubt they're a good side. I have instructed my players to stay focused on their positions and prioritise man-marking.

"It's crucial to cover the midfield more effectively because if we disrupt their ball distribution in that area, we can perform even better."

## Living up to name: Sachin lives his father's dream

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 7:** His police officer mother didn't want cricket to be Sachin Dhas' focus in life but the father knew that he was destined to make it big on the 22-yard strip despite spending a better part of his life training on 11-yard grass tracks that pass for infrastructure in his hometown Beed.

The 19-year-old Dhas is among the brightest prospects to emerge in the Indian team that is competing in the U-19 World Cup in South Africa. He has displayed superb game sense as the team's designated finisher with 294 runs at an above 100 strike rate.

"You only have half pitches over here (in Beed). Sachin came here with his father when he was four and a half years old and even before going to South Africa, he trained on half turfs," said an ecstatic Sheikh Azhar, the area's most famous coach who shaped Dhas' early years.

For a country which produces phenomenal cricketing talent often not because of, but despite the system, Sachin's emergence as the next big thing from junior India stable shouldn't come as a surprise.

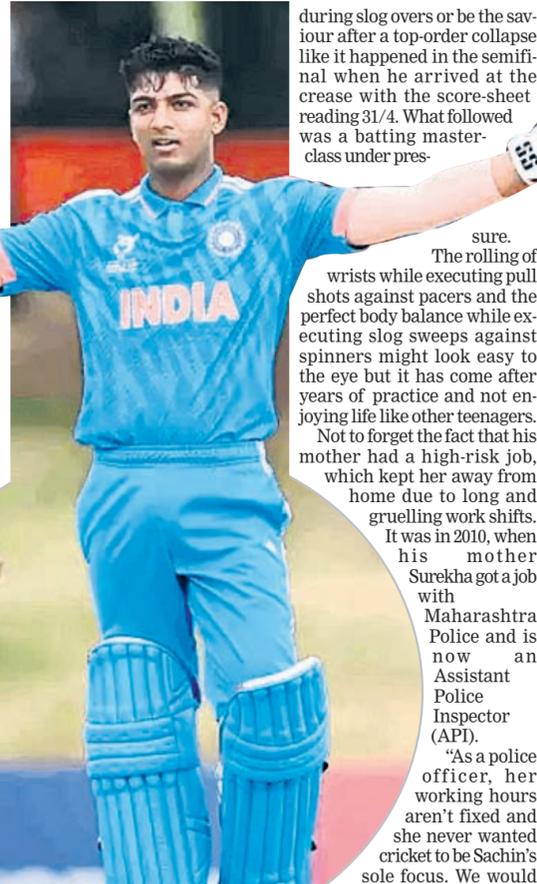
Named after the iconic Mumbaier, who is synonymous with Indian cricket, Sachin is a fan of Virat Kohli, the modern great he has perhaps seen more closely although he wears the number 10 jersey which was owned by Tendulkar in every

sense of the word. "I named him after Sachin Tendulkar when he was born in 2005 because I was a huge fan but he also likes Virat Kohli a lot," declared his beaming father Sanjay when PTI reached out

to him to understand how Sachin was shaped into the promising talent he is now. "Sachin ka koi dost nahi hai. Main hi uska dost hun. Koi shaadi, koi janamdin kahin gaya nahi. Cricket se focus hate, aisa kuch karne maine diya hi nahi (He has no friends. I am his only friend. I have never allowed him to attend marriages, birthday parties so that his focus never wavers)," he said.

"Uski mummy police mein hain toh discipline hai (His mom is in police and there is discipline in him)," added the proud father, whose phone hasn't stopped ringing thanks to his son's achievements at the mega-event.

Sachin bats at No.6, where either one is expected to go for big shots



during slog overs or be the saviour after a top-order collapse like it happened in the semifinal when he arrived at the crease with the score-sheet reading 31/4. What followed was a batting master-class under pres-

sure. The rolling of wrists while executing pull shots against pacers and the perfect body balance while executing slog sweeps against spinners might look easy to the eye but it has come after years of practice and not enjoying life like other teenagers.

Not to forget the fact that his mother had a high-risk job, which kept her away from home due to long and gruelling work shifts.

It was in 2010, when his mother Surekha got a job with Maharashtra Police and is now an Assistant Police Inspector (API).

"As a police officer, her working hours aren't fixed and she never wanted cricket to be Sachin's sole focus. We would

have our differences but I knew that my son will only become a cricketer," Sanjay recalled. "Gradually she understood and now watches his World Cup games on her phone in between duty," he laughed.

Asked about his practice hours, Dhas senior revealed, "Four hours in the morning and three and half hours in the evening, including gym work. It's seven and half hours per day. I must give credit to Azhar, his coach. Without him, we wouldn't have seen this day."

In between discussing his son's game, Sanjay also gushed about how close he is to him. "He still sleeps beside me and whether he wants to have a meal at a restaurant or watch a movie, I am his companion," he said.

In Maharashtra, there was a time when players in and around Pune represented the state team but in recent years, a more open selection process has made it easier for talents emerging from far off corners to make a case for themselves.

"The training part in Beed was certainly tough but not the selection part in age group state teams. Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) has been fair to my son. He performed at every level and he was always picked on merit."

## Kohli unlikely for next 2 Tests, also doubtful for 5th tie

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 7:** India's star batter Virat Kohli is likely to miss the third and fourth Tests against England due to personal reasons, which also kept him out of the first two matches of the series, a BCCI source said Wednesday.

Chances of Kohli playing the final Test of the series in Dharamsala (from March 7-11) are also remote but the board isn't looking that far ahead as that particular match is still a month away. The third Test will be held in Rajkot from February 15-19, while the fourth game is in Ranchi from February 23-27.

Recently Kohli's close friend and former South African skipper AB de Villiers had revealed on his YouTube show that the Indian batting ace is missing in action due to the impending arrival of his second child.

"The BCCI has time and again made it clear that when it comes to family matters, it stands firmly behind the cricketer and it will be Virat's call when he is ready to make a comeback. As of now, it looks unlikely that he will play in the series," a BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Among the imminent comebacks, KL Rahul and Mohammed Siraj are likely to return to the playing eleven in places of Rajat Patidar and Mukesh Kumar.