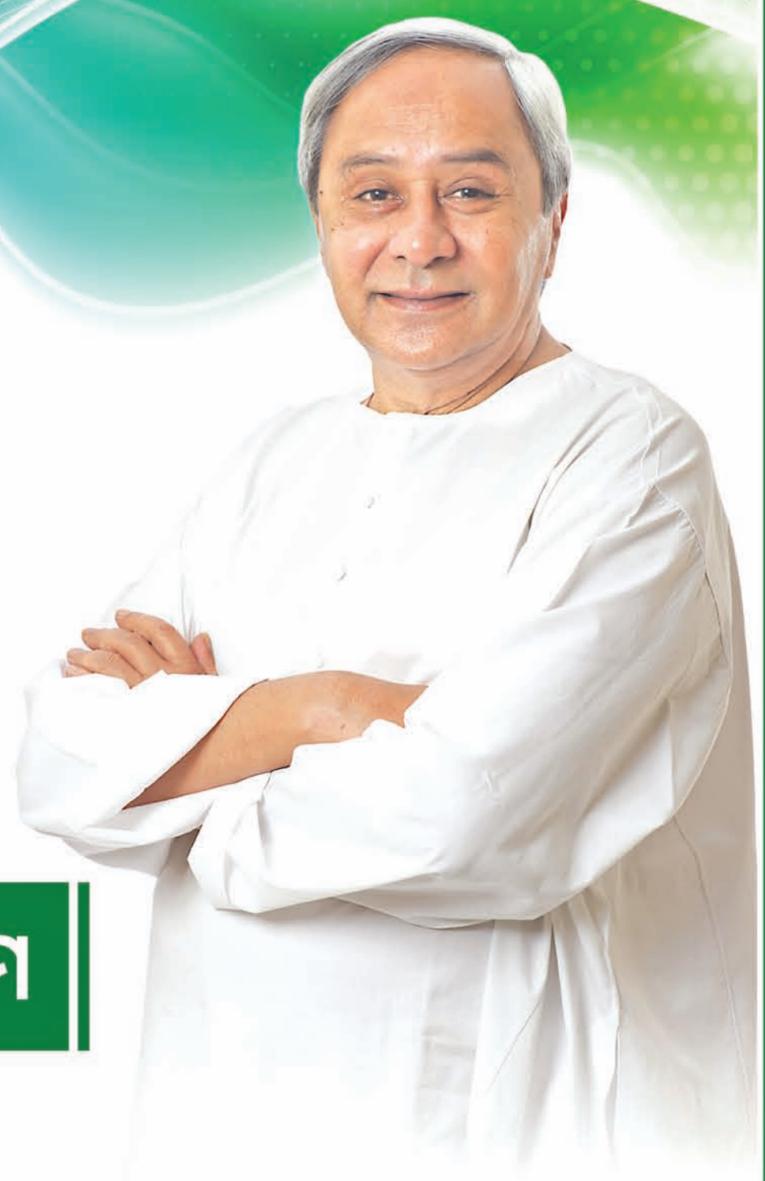


DSPL-748



“ନୂଆ-ଓ”

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leisure



BRAD PITT 'CAN'T STOP SMILING OVER NEW GIRLFRIEND' INES

Top Hollywood actor Brad Pitt is said to be 'smitten' with and 'can't stop smiling' over his new girlfriend, Ines de Ramon. The 60-year-old *Fight Club* actor - who split from his wife Angelina Jolie, 48, in 2016 - was first linked to the jewellery executive, 34, in 2022.

JLo 'MANHANDLED' IN PAST RELATIONSHIPS

Opening up about horrific previous romances in her new documentary, Jennifer Lopez has said she was 'manhandled' and endured 'other unsavoury things.' The singer, 54, who got married to her on-off love, Ben Affleck, 51, in Las Vegas in 2022, opened up in her new documentary, *The Greatest Love Story Never Told*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You spend happy times with your loved ones today. Ganesh suggests you learn to play some musical instrument as it is a good way to express emotions. Besides, it gives you a novel method to attract new people. Do it promptly before the mood changes.

TAURUS

This day you are likely to be prone to daydreaming and fantasizing. Ganesh sees you losing touch with reality and making errors in judgment, in your assessment of facts. You will, by sheer force of your tenacity and determination ensure that things work out in the end. In spite of an initial lack of focus, you will be able to sort out your affairs and find that everything turns out in your favour.

GEMINI

You will be in the mood to pursue your heart's many desires today. You will want to spend more time with your family and your children. You need to translate desires into action by better balancing your schedule, says Ganesh.

CANCER

You will help others and be cheerful, feels Ganesh. you will inspire and encourage others. Closeness with beloved will gladden you. You will be attracted to special person, and it could benefit you.

LEO

Long forgotten relationships may be renewed today. Old acquaintances, room partners, hostel mates and the like may bump into you today. You will be in a happy mood as a result. Marital life will be blissful, says Ganesh.

VIRGO

Business acumen is natural to you. Your management skills are immaculate. Move with imagination, innovation and motivation to further your enterprise, advises Ganesh. Feel free to express and exercise your sense of judgement, says Ganesh.

LIBRA

Ganesh says you will be more aware about your beauty and outward appearance and try to enhance it by going to a beauty parlor. You will spend most of your time looking after your external beauty. Due to this you will not be able to pay attention to anything else other than your looks.

SCORPIO

Despite a secured job and a harmonious home environment, you are still looking for something else. Long-term, financial security keeps bothering you. And your worries are solved to some extent as unexpected monetary gains are on cards today, predicts Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS

Your business is likely to scale new heights, says Ganesh. You need to build up your confidence and move ahead with zest and enthusiasm. Rake in the moolah as the business yield profits.

CAPRICORN

Celebrations are in the offing and all the near and dear ones are invited to the party. Today, you will enjoy yourself to the fullest, feels Ganesh. You will get the desired profits in the business irrespective of how hard you have worked to achieve them. Really seems a good investment option for you. With cooperative bosses and supportive colleagues, today is a good day for professionals as well.

AQUARIUS

If the Almighty loads you with pain, He will also bless you with pleasure, assures Ganesh. You will begin the day with a long list of things to be done, but luckily you will be able to finish them off one by one. It will drain you out, so later on the day take a hot water bath, sit back and relax, says Ganesh.

PISCES

You are not by nature ill-tempered or jealous. However, you will need to be on guard against being both, today. Someone may try to sully your image or slander your name today. However, the best way to deal with provocation is not to lose your temper and to continue as usual, for things will take care of themselves soon enough, says Ganesh.

Shriya on being unfairly judged

Mumbai: In a candid revelation, actress Shriya Saran shared her experiences of being unfairly judged and facing assumptions about female actors in the film industry.

The actress, who has been part of the entertainment scene since her debut in 2001, expressed that the judgmental stares persist even today, despite being married and a mother.

Talking to a news portal, Shriya acknowledged the constant scrutiny, stating that people often assume female actors to be stereotypes.

She emphasised that, although her husband Andrei reassures her that nobody thinks that way, she can feel the judgmental stares. Shriya, however, asserted that such judgements have never affected her, as she operates from a space of not caring about others' opinions.

The actress stressed her commitment to doing what she wants, wearing what she likes, and not letting societal perceptions dictate her choices. The actress' candid revelations shed light on the challenges and stereotypes faced by women in the entertainment world, even as they navigate personal milestones like marriage and motherhood.

Meanwhile, Shriya is currently gearing up for the release of her upcoming series *Shoutime*, which promises to provide a glimpse into the behind-the-scenes dynamics of the film industry, exploring themes of lies, deceit, power, and stardom.

Bhansali encapsulates the essence of the series with a powerful statement: "This is not just a series; it's a world, and I am eager for audiences worldwide to immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of *Heeramandi* on Netflix."

In the buildup to the auteur's series debut, an intriguing aspect of *Heeramandi* is set to make its grand entrance at the Next on Netflix India event February 29.

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'Want viewers to immerse in rich tapestry of Heeramandi'

Mumbai: Known for his signature touch of grandeur, allure, and evocative tones, Sanjay Leela Bhansali (SLB) acknowledged his shift to working on a show where each episode resembles a cinematic masterpiece, making *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar* even more monumental.

"I've made big films, I enjoy making those big-scale films, and it comes naturally to me. But while shifting to digital with Netflix, I've taken it up a notch. *Heeramandi* is my biggest project; I wanted to make it really special and I have surprised myself with this one," he explained, underscoring the uniqueness and grandeur of this venture.

The series comprises a cast of sparkling heeras, including the supremely talented Manisha Koirala, Sonakshi Sinha, Aditi Rao Hydari, Sharmin Segal, Richa Chadha, and Sanjeeda Shaikh, who bring to life this fascinating and enigmatic world. Together, they personify grace on

screen, each contributing to the irresistible odyssey of *Heeramandi*.

Bhansali encapsulates the essence of the series with a powerful statement: "This is not just a series; it's a world, and I am eager for audiences worldwide to immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of *Heeramandi* on Netflix."

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Mumbai: A true-blue nature lover, filmy diva Sara Ali Khan, who is often seen expressing her fondness for celestial bodies, has once again treated her fans to breathtaking pictures of herself posing in enchanting locations.

Taking to Instagram, where the Gen-Z actress has a fandom of 44.8 million followers, she dropped a string of photos. The *Atrangi Re* actress can be seen hanging out with her friend in a scenic mountainous region.

The first picture shows her wearing a white fur jacket and a matching cap, and playing with the pine tree.

Another photo shows Sara wrapping a shawl around her and sporting a beanie cap, while sitting in front of a bonfire.

The third picture is a candid shot of Sara and her friend sitting on the road, and enjoying the mountainous view and the sun. There is also a solo photo of Sara gazing at the sunset in the mountains.

In one picture, Sara is seen wearing a *Winnie-the-Pooh* printed night suit and sleeping with a pillow and eye

Sara shares her love for nature

The post is captioned as: "Oh Pine... Will you be mine? In nature you're closest to the divine... Sometimes sun-kissed, sometimes under moonshine."

On the work front, Sara has *Murder Mubarak*, *Ae Watan Mere Watan*, and *Metro...In*

Dino in the pipeline.

AGENCIES



Taapsee reacts to speculation on her marriage

Mumbai: Actress Taapsee Pannu, who is currently rocking the headlines for reportedly getting married to her longtime boyfriend, badminton player Mathias Boe, in March, has revealed that she would not like to share details of her personal life.

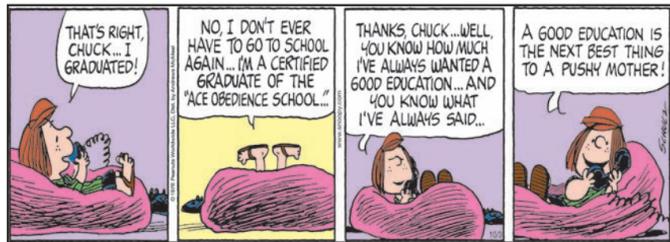
In an interview, the *Pink* actress shared that she has never given any clarification regarding her personal life and she never will.

Reportedly, the wedding celebrations will take place at the end of March in Udaipur and will be a complete family affair, as no celebrities will be invited. The reports also stated that the couple will tie the knot in a grand celebration that promises to blend the rich traditions of Sikhism and Christianity in a mesmerising display of love and culture.

Taapsee recently opened up about her relationship, expressing her happiness. In a conversation with a top influencer, she disclosed meeting Mathias in the year she made her debut film, *Chashme Baddoor*, in 2013. The actress also affirmed her commitment, stating, "I have been with the same person since then, and I have no thoughts of leaving him or being with anyone else because I am way too happy in the relationship."

AGENCIES

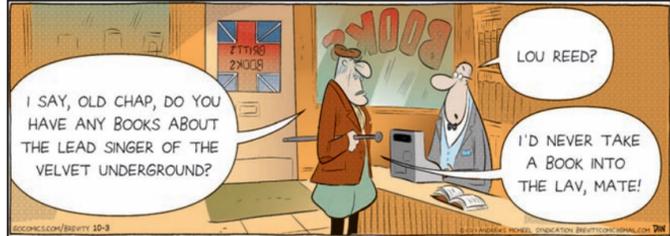
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

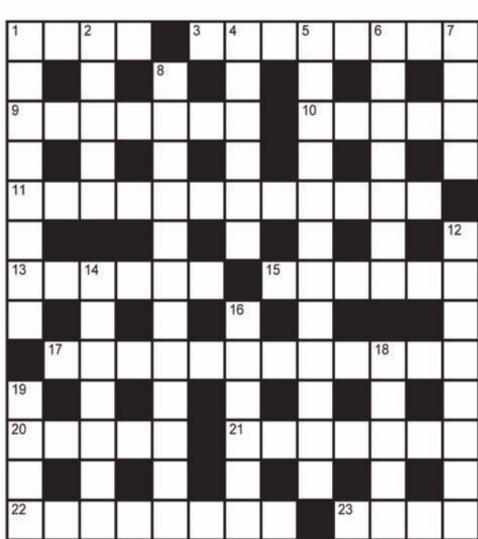


BREVITY



FUN post

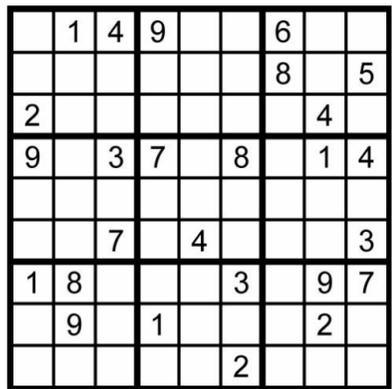
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Ramble
 - 3 Natural elevation
 - 9 Spare time
 - 10 Talking bird of poetry
 - 11 Math class
 - 13 Leave
 - 15 Dragon of heraldry
 - 17 Dangerous profession
 - 20 Military uniform fabric
 - 21 Synopsis
 - 22 Rule out
 - 23 Dovetail
- Down
- 1 Aunt or uncle, e.g.
 - 2 Cover story?
 - 4 Spotted SA wildcat
 - 5 Bedtime story (7,5)
 - 6 Hostile
 - 7 Babylonian goddess
 - 8 Ordinary (3-2-3-4)
 - 12 Cameo
 - 14 Mood
 - 16 Slanted
 - 18 All worked up
 - 19 Hop

SUDOKU

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

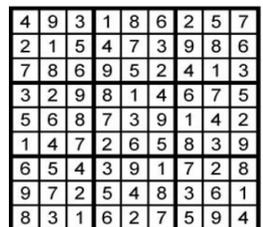


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

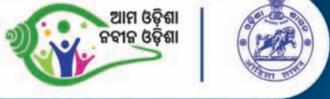


SUDOKU



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HIMACHAL GOVT SAFE

Fillip to science infra

Hours after submitting his resignation, Minister Vikramaditya Singh softens his stand and says he is not pressing for it

AGENCIES

Shimla/New Delhi, Feb 28: The Congress government in Himachal Pradesh, led by Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, appeared to have survived a crisis with party strongman Vikramaditya Singh softening his stance late Wednesday night following his meeting with party central observers who rushed to the state following dramatic overnight developments that threatened to put the 14-month-old government into a crisis in the aftermath of 'cross-voting' during the Rajya Sabha polls, Tuesday. Emerging out of the meeting with central observers in Shimla, Singh cited the Chief Minister's



Leader of Opposition in Himachal Pradesh Assembly Jai Ram Thakur during the Budget session of the Assembly in Shimla, Wednesday

'rejection' of his 'offer' to resign and the need for unity in the party. In view of this, he told reporters, he is not 'pressing' for it. He also claimed then that the state gov-

ernment was never in crisis. Earlier in the day, the Congress scrambled to save its government amid dramatic developments that included suspension

of 15 BJP MLAs by the Speaker and a resignation offer by high-profile minister Vikramaditya Singh.

Singh, who is the son of Himachal Congress president Pratibha Singh, said in the morning that he is submitting his resignation from council of ministers but hours later softened his stand. The turbulence in Himachal was triggered by Tuesday's cross-voting by six Congress MLAs in the Rajya Sabha election for the lone seat from Himachal Pradesh.

The party has now sought the disqualification of these MLAs from the assembly. The matter was heard by Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania who

has reserved his order.

The suspended BJP MLAs, who include the leader of the opposition Jai Ram Thakur, initially refused to leave the House - in an apparent bid to stall the assembly from passing the Sukhu government's Budget through voice vote. The BJP wanted voting on the Budget, which they felt would reveal that the Congress has lost its majority in the state assembly.

But in the afternoon, the crisis was staved off for the time being as the House passed the Finance Bill by voice vote with no Bharatiya Janata Party member being present. The Speaker then adjourned the session sine die.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: A day after launching sports infrastructure projects, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated District Science Centre at Jeypore in Koraput district, planetarium at Rayagada and district science centres and planetariums at Ghatgaon in Keonjhar and Baripada in Mayurbhanj on the occasion of National Science Day Wednesday.

The CM also laid the foundation stones for district science centres at Kalahandi, Gajapati, Boudh, Nuapada, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur and Jharsuguda.

Patnaik said science and development go hand in hand. "Development is incomplete without science. Science and technology have been bringing tremendous changes in the lives of millions every day. It plays a

key role in education. Thanks to science and technology, educational institutions have been equipped with smart classrooms, e-libraries and modern laboratories under the 5T school transformation programme," he said.

Patnaik said the state government has decided to set up science centres across all districts as it would help all, especially the students who are the nation builders. This apart, innovation centres will also come up at all the schools.

While Bhadrak will have a science centre soon, Bolangir, Sundargarh and Ganjam will get science centres and planetariums, he said.

According to sources, the state government has spent ₹6.5 crore for each science centre, ₹15 crore for a planetarium and ₹21 crore for a science centre and planetarium.

4 IAS officers moved

BHUBANESWAR: In response to the recent directive from the Election Commission of India (ECI), the state government Wednesday effected a minor reshuffle by reassigning four IAS officers. Puri Collector Bijay K Dash has been appointed Commissioner of Cuttack Municipal Corporation, while Siddharth Shankar Swain, his predecessor, will assume the role of Puri Collector.

Similarly, Ashish Thakare and Dattatraya Bhausahab Shinde, Collectors of Mayurbhanj and Balasore respectively, have swapped positions. The ECI had asked state governments to ensure that officers who are transferred out of the district after completing three years are not posted in another district in the same Lok Sabha constituency.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Voting shapes the party's future, but cross-voting shapes mine

BJP richest: ADR report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: Six national parties have declared a total income of nearly ₹3,077 crore in financial year 2022-23, with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) getting the maximum share ₹2,361 crore, which constitutes 76.73 per cent of the total income of the parties, Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) said Wednesday.

The Congress declared the second highest income of ₹452.375 crore, which forms 14.70 per cent of the total income of the six national parties. Besides the BJP and the Congress, BSP, AAP, NPP and CPI-M have declared their income.

Between FY 2021-22 and 2022-23, income of BJP increased by 23.15 per cent or ₹443.724 crore from ₹1,917.12 crore during FY 2021-22 to ₹2,360.844 crore during FY 2022-23, the ADR said.

The income of National People's Party

(NPP) increased by 1502.12 per cent or ₹7.09 crore from ₹47.20 lakh during FY 2021-22 to ₹7.562 crore during FY 2022-23. Similarly, Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) income increased by 91.23 per cent (Rs 40.631 crore) from ₹44.539 crore during FY 2021-22 to ₹85.17 crore during FY 2022-23.

Between FYs 2021-22 and 2022-23, income of Congress, CPI(M) and BSP decreased by 16.42 per cent (Rs 88.90 crore), 12.68 per cent (Rs 20.575 crore) and 33.14 per cent (Rs 14.508 crore) respectively, it noted, citing their records submitted to the Election Commission.

It also said the BJP declared a total income of ₹2360.844 crore during FY 2022-23, but spent only 57.68 per cent, which comes to ₹1361.684 crore of the total income. The Congress' total income was ₹452.375 crore while it spent ₹467.135 crore, with its expenditure for that year exceeding its total income by 3.26 per cent.

Eco-friendly kitchens in tribal schools

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: The state government has decided to transform the traditional kitchens in its residential schools and hostels into 'eco-friendly' ones and stop the use of conventional methods of cooking.

Commissioner-cum-Secretary ST&SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare department Roopa Roshan Sahoo, in a letter to the

Collectors Wednesday, directed all schools, hostels and establishments under the department to adopt 'eco-friendly' campaign and convert the kitchens into LPG-based cooking facilities.

There are 1,736 schools functioning under the administrative control of ST&SC Development, M&BCW department while there are around 6,000 hostels across the state including the hostels under Anvesha and Akankhya programme in which more than 5 lakh ST&SC students stay.

Bolsonaro in soup for harassing whale

AGENCIES

Rio de Janeiro, Feb 28: There is no let-up in litigations for former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro as the former far-right leader is facing a probe for allegedly 'harassing' a humpback whale while riding a personal watercraft off Sao Paulo's coast last year, in contravention of a Brazilian legislation. Bolsonaro appeared at the federal police in Sao Paulo Tuesday to meet officers, along with his lawyer and former adviser who was also present at the time of the alleged incident.

The investigation is just one of the many legal



headaches Bolsonaro is facing. Since leaving office a year ago, he has been banned from running for office until 2030, investigated for plotting a coup to remove his successor from power and stripped of his passport.

In a June 2023 video that circulated on social media, a man is seen riding a personal watercraft close to a whale, seemingly recording the encounter with a cellphone. Federal prosecutors, who are also investigating the case, said the

man appeared to be Bolsonaro.

Under Brazilian legislation, motored vessels must keep a minimum distance of 100 meters from whales and other cetaceans. Any intentional attempt to get closer can lead to a sentence of up to two to five years in prison and a fine.

The man on the personal watercraft seemed to be about 15 metres from the animal, prosecutors said last year.

For Bolsonaro's large base, the case is yet another example that their former leader is being politically persecuted - an argument he has often made since leaving office.

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CM unveils memorial of Manoj Das, brother

Patnaik launches projects worth over ₹2,200 crore in Balasore



Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday inaugurated the Manmath Das and Manoj Das memorial at Sankhari village in Balasore district besides launching various development projects in the district.

Paying tributes to the two sons of the soil of Balasore, Patnaik said renowned English and Odia writer Manoj Das and his elder brother and prominent historian Manmath Das have made the country proud with their talent and wisdom. Their contributions to history and literature have immortalised them, he said while addressing a gathering in virtual mode.

The state government also launched Manoj Das International Literary Award. Carrying a cash reward of ₹10 lakh, the award will be conferred on litterateurs from Odisha for their creative contributions to English literature every year.

After the death of Padma Bhushan awardee Manoj Das in Pondicherry, the state government had taken steps to construct a public memorial at his birthplace.

Family members had donated 3.55 acres of personal land for the purpose and the state government sanctioned ₹16 crore to build the memorial in his vil-

Renowned English and Odia writer Manoj Das and his elder brother and prominent historian Manmath Das have made the country proud with their talent and wisdom. Their contributions to history and literature have immortalised them

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER

- The state government launched Manoj Das International Literary Award
- The CM also launched the LABHA scheme in Nilagiri area which provides proper MSP to tribals on forest produce
- Patnaik also gave land rights certificates to the residents of Remuna Notified Area Council

lage. Many literary works and daily use items of the two brothers have been kept for public display in the memorial, said an official of the Culture department.

"It is a historic day for the people of Balasore. The state government's effort to preserve the memory of two great sons of this soil has made the people of the district happy. The memorial houses items collected from Bhubaneswar and Pondicherry which will be of help to researchers and litterateurs in fu-

ture," Odia Language, Literature and Culture Minister Aswini Patra said.

On the occasion, Naveen also launched projects worth over ₹2,200 crore in Balasore.

Patnaik launched the LABHA scheme in Nilagiri area which provides proper MSP to tribals on forest produce. He also gave land rights certificates to the residents of Remuna Notified Area Council.

The CM also launched City Bus Service in Balasore.



IN MEMORIAM: Members of Utkal Sammilani and VSS Nagar Development Committee pay tributes to Veer Surendra Sai on his death anniversary in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Gates meets CM, lauds state's welfare initiatives

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates met Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at his residence here and praised state's various technology-driven farmer empowerment initiatives.

"Pleasure meeting @Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist Mr @BillGates. Had a wonderful discussion on our technology-driven farmer empowerment initiatives, several welfare initiatives like #JagaMission, #MissionShakti, #OdishaSchoolTransformation, #BSKY and healthcare transformation," Patnaik said on X.

He appreciated the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for supporting innovation in extending inclusive benefits to the people.

Earlier, Gates visited a slum in Bhubaneswar and interacted with the residents.

He visited the Biju Adarsh Colony in the Maa Mangla Basti



along with state government officials. Besides enquiring about the well-being of the residents of the slum, Gates also interacted with members of women's self-help groups (SHGs).

State Development Commissioner Anu Garg said, "We have shown him that the slum dwellers have got land rights, tap water connections, toilets and power supply. He expressed happiness over the transformation of the slum area into a model colony."

State Urban Development Secretary G Mathi Vathanan said that Gates spoke to the beneficiaries of different welfare schemes of the government.

Later, he visited Krushi Bhawan, the headquarters of the state agriculture and farmers' empowerment department.

The state has been partnering with the Foundation since 2017 to forward shared goals around improving farmers' income, nutrition security and climate resilience in the state.

"This partnership has allowed the state to emerge as a leader in digital public infrastructure, with the government launching key farmer-centric systems including the Krushak Odisha database, GO-SUGAM portal, and Ama Krushi extension system," a senior official said.

KISS honour for Bill Gates

Bhubaneswar: In recognition of his significant philanthropic work, Bill Gates was honoured with the KISS Humanitarian Award 2023 in a ceremony here Wednesday. KIIT and KISS founder Achyuta Samanta said, "Awarding Bill Gates with the KISS Humanitarian Award not only honours his exceptional contributions but also elevates the prestige of this recognition. His acceptance sets a new benchmark for humanitarian work globally. It is a profound honour for us that Bill Gates is joining the esteemed roster of our awardees." In his acceptance speech, Gates expressed deep gratitude for the recognition and reflected on the transformative work of Samanta and KISS. "Thank you so much for this wonderful award, and for welcoming me here. Though I should be the one congratulating you on all you have accomplished," Gates said.

SUMUM completes four years in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: SUM Ultimate Medicare (SUMUM) has completed four years of service in the eastern region of the country, especially Odisha, Wednesday.

Founder and president of Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (SOA) Manojranjan Nayak said that SUMUM's efforts have not only benefited the region but also boosted medical tourism in the state. SUMUM's compassionate and world-class medical care delivery has put Odisha on the global healthcare map.

SUMUM CEO Swetapadma Dash said, "At SUMUM, we're constantly pushing the boundaries of healthcare by investing in cutting-edge technology and expanding our services. We're committed to providing exceptional patient care and earning the trust of our community through our innovative healthcare practices."

"We are committed to providing quality and affordable care to our patients and making a positive impact on their lives. This commitment is at the core of our mission, and we will continue to uphold it as we raise the bar in the healthcare industry," said Biraj Mohan Mishra, Chief of Medical



Services at SUMUM. A unit of Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (SOA), SUMUM boasts of more than 30 specialties including Emergency and Trauma Care, Cardiac Care, Advanced Surgical Procedures, Diagnostics and Imaging, Maternity Care, Physiotherapy and Prosthetics and Orthotics, among others.

The 350-bed hospital has become a popular healthcare centre because of the facilities it provides including SPECT GAMMA Camera, Linac (True Beam), Dedicated Trauma ICU, PET CT Scan, 3 Tesla MRI, 14 Modular OTs, 128 Slices CT Scan and HDR Bravos Brachy Therapy.

ICAR's approval for Centurion University's fisheries program

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, Feb 28: Centurion University's School of Fisheries, has received approval from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) for its Bachelor of Fisheries Science (BF Sc) degree program.

"This recognition is a testament to our ongoing commitment to providing quality education and fostering innovation in the field of fisheries sciences. We look forward to continuing our mission of training the next generation of fisheries professionals and contributing to the sustainable development of our region," said DN Rao, vice-president of



Centurion University. The degree program offers students a comprehensive curriculum designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in the dynamic field of fisheries management and aquaculture. The program covers a wide range of subjects including Aquaculture, Fisheries Resource Management, Fish Processing Technology, Aquatic Environment

Management, Fish Engineering, Aquatic Animal Health Management, Fisheries Extension, Economics, and Statistics.

In addition, the School of Fisheries is dedicated to community engagement and sustainable development. Through innovative programs such as vermicomposting, live fish feed culture, pearl culture, and value-added fish products.

BGU OBSERVES NAT'L SCIENCE DAY



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: Birla School of Applied Sciences, Birla Global University (BGU) observed the National Science Day here Wednesday. The occasion brought together scientists, researchers, educators, students and enthusiasts to commemorate the spirit of scientific inquiry and discovery.

LP Singh, former Professor of Physics, Utkal University, graced the occasion as chief guest and Luna Samanta, Professor of Zoology and Chairperson, PG Council, Ravenshaw University was the guest of honour.

In his address, Singh focused on the usage of technology that has been there since ancient times by sighting the example of Konark temple. Samanta delivered an eye-opening speech explaining how science is changing the world.

Birla Global University VC PP Mathur encouraged the students to focus on the recent developments in the field of AI. He advised the students to treat science as a passion.

BK Das, Registrar of BGU, enlightened the students on science and its recent advancements. Bandita Sahu, convener of the event delivered the welcome address and Manaswini Jena, co-convener proposed vote of thanks.

The event was concluded with the felicitation of guests, the awarding of the Hackathon winner conducted by School of Applied Sciences.

Bimal Kishore Mishra birth centenary celebration March 2

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: The birth centenary of eminent administrator and former Utkal University vice-chancellor Bimal Kishore Mishra will be celebrated at Jayadev Bhawan here, March 2.

A centenary souvenir and a biography of the former additional chief secretary titled 'Abichala Bimal', along with its English translation, will be released during the event which will begin at 6pm.

On the occasion, Dr. B Suraga

will be presented Kshetramani Debi Memorial Award for research on cancer. Dr. Suraga will be given away ₹50,000, a certificate and a memento.

Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena will join as the chief guest at the programme which will be presided over by retired administrator Sanjeeb Chandra Hota. The centenary committee general secretary Bijayananda Singh said that National Monuments Authority (NMA) chairman Kishor Kumar Basa will deliver the memorial lecture at the function.

EC asks state govt to clarify on 'conch'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: The Election Commission has sought a clarification from the Odisha government and the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) over the alleged use of party's 'conch' symbol in advertisements issued using public funds, sources said Wednesday. The Commission has sought their responses by March 2 evening. Assembly polls in Odisha would be held along with Lok Sabha elections, likely during April-May. Model Code of Conduct has not come into effect yet. The poll panel had received complaints that the 'conch' symbol of BJD was being displayed and promoted through various advertisements in leading Odisha newspapers, TV channels, state transport buses and by way of hoardings in different cities.

Samaleswari Exp to halt at Rengali

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: The East Coast Railway (ECoR) has decided to provide Samaleswari Express a stoppage at Rengali on experimental basis. Similarly Puri-Durg Express will also have stoppage at Loisinga and Muribahal stations.

18005/18006 Howrah - Jagadalpur - Howrah Samaleswari Express will have additional stoppage at Rengali Station. 18005 Howrah - Jagadalpur Samaleswari Express from Howrah w.e.f Wednesday and 18006 Jagadalpur - Howrah Samaleswari Express from Jagadalpur w.e.f Thursday will provide stoppage at Rengali station.

Samaleswari from Howrah will arrive at Rengali at 0836 hrs and will leave at 0838 hrs to-



wards Jagadalpur. Similarly, this train from Jagadalpur will arrive at Rengali at 1855 hrs and will leave at 1857 hrs towards Howrah.

Similarly, 18425/18426 Puri-Durg Express from Puri w.e.f March 1 and from Durg w.e.f March 2 2024 will have stoppages at Loisinga and Muribahal. 18425 Puri-Durg Express from Puri will arrive at Loisinga at 0358 hrs and will leave at 0400 hrs. This train will also arrive at Muribahal at 0612 hrs towards Durg.

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FOCUS POLITICS

BATTLE FOR LOK SABHA



In this big ensuing electoral battle, it remains to be seen whether Modi's experiment of a sharper thrust on religion will get him the massive majority that he claims to be heading towards and drastically change politics in the country

Hindu Nationalism & The Rise of Ethnic Democracy by Christopher Jaffrelot published in 2022 which dealt with Modi's spectacular popularity in spite that his was a pro-rich government, ideologically opposed to policies of redistribution, those that worked towards a welfare State. Perhaps, the pursuance of religion and aggressive Hinduism has tilted the balance in favour of the ruling dispensation. It is indeed distressing that the country navigated from a flawed yet hopeful experiment in building democracy with equal citizenship of people of every faith to a place where it is increasingly dangerous to be a minority, dissenter or even to report the truth as dissent and protest are being thwarted, not just by the Centre but in the states as well, West Bengal being a glaring example.

In the present situation, even though the Modi government has been pro-rich and favouring this section along with the middle class, the higher castes, the poor and the lower castes appear to be mesmerised with Modi's religious overtures. He has portrayed himself as a saintly person, possibly the first of its kind to occupy the chair of the Prime Minister. The skills of Modi, including his articulation and gestures, seem to have had a great impact on the masses.

On the other hand, Rahul has been focussing on basic social and economic issues that affect the common man. His yatra, no doubt, may have an effect, but doesn't match either BJP's money power or its surreptitious methods of harassing Opposition leaders by unleashing the ED or IT agencies after them.

In this big ensuing electoral battle, it remains to be seen whether Modi's experiment of a sharper thrust on religion will get him the massive majority that he claims to be heading towards and drastically change politics in the country.

INFA

The battle for Lok Sabha elections 2024 is turning out both intriguing and exciting on the political landscape of the country. The popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is reflected in his claim that he would return to office in May with a landslide victory, with his party BJP, winning more than 370 seats on its own and the NDA crossing the 400 mark! The overconfidence came during the reply to President's address, but at this point of time when the INDIA bloc is making every effort to work out seat-sharing formulas, the figure appears inflated. The score of 370, if at all the BJP reaches this figure, will be the highest since 1984 when Congress rode the sympathy wave following Indira Gandhi's assassination.

Notably, the BJP is going all out to emerge victorious with a big margin. A move which is bolstered with the shift of Nitish Kumar back to the NDA along with the RLD after Charan Singh was honoured with the Bharat Ratna. Clearly the efforts to muster more support won't stop here, as in Delhi, the AAP flogs the claim that BJP is offering big sums of money to wean away its MLAs.

Undeniably, following the overwhelming response to the Ram temple consecration and other such temples expected to follow suit in Kashi and Mathura, Modi's popularity has risen, and the NDA is eyeing regional parties for support. Political analysts believe that the religious card is overshadowing the economic rights of the marginalised and backward sections, including their justified demand for a dignified existence.

At same time, it's evident that BJP is seeking to win back its old allies. The Bihar effect is being felt in other places as in Punjab and West Bengal, where the ruling AAP and TMC have decided to go it alone respectively. Much depends on what happens in Maharashtra and

whether seat-sharing between Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray group), Congress and NCP is worked out well amongst all three. Latest reports indicate that Kejriwal has decided that AAP will contest all 90 Assembly seats alone in Haryana but shall continue to be part of INDIA bloc in the battle for Lok Sabha.

Alliances in the Opposition bloc are still being worked out even if there's no alliance among AAP and Congress in Punjab as also between TMC and Congress in Bengal. In Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party and Congress have reached an agreement with the latter contesting 17 of the 70 seats. Moreover, while in Delhi, AAP and Congress will be jointly fighting in four and three seats respectively, the situation in Haryana is quite complex.

Modi has claimed Congress won't get even 50 seats! While many would say it's an absurd claim, the fact that Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has hardly any following in the northern and eastern states may not be totally wrong. As it appears the Congress is rely-

ing heavily on Rahul Gandhi and his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, which is reportedly drawing large crowds. Plus, grassroots leaders of the party in Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh are expected to help the grand old party in its calculations. But as things stand today, it would be extremely impossible for the Congress to get a sizeable number of seats to make a claim to form the next government.

The power needed for a strong working alliance is somewhat missing in the INDIA bloc. One reason being the Congress' incapability and the results it got in the recent Assembly elections. Though Rahul has been highlighting the right social and economic issues that affect the impoverished and backward sections, the neglect of OBCs, the Dalits and tribals, the induction of religion into politics and the aggressiveness of the Hindutva brigade appear to be influencing the semi-literate masses of the northern states, where the BJP is now dominating.

It would be pertinent to refer to a book titled Modi's India:



Dhurjati Mukherjee

POLITICAL ANALYSTS BELIEVE THAT THE RELIGIOUS CARD IS OVER-SHADOWING THE ECONOMIC RIGHTS OF THE MARGINALISED AND BACKWARD SECTIONS



Natalie Dunleavy Campbell & Stan Adams

As more barriers to information flows are erected, the risk of harm to people, businesses, and countries rises

There is no greater courage than that of recognizing one's own mistakes.

THE MOTHER



Digital Walls

Last October, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) abandoned its longstanding demand for World Trade Organisation provisions to protect cross-border data flows, prevent forced data localisation, safeguard source codes, and prohibit countries from discriminating against digital products based on nationality. It was a shocking shift: one that jeopardises the very survival of the open internet, with all the knowledge-sharing, global collaboration, and cross-border commerce that it enables.

The USTR says that the change was necessary because of a mistaken belief that trade provisions could hinder the ability of US Congress to respond to calls for regulation of Big Tech firms and artificial intelligence. But trade agreements already include exceptions for legitimate public-policy concerns, and Congress itself has produced research showing that trade deals cannot impede its policy aspirations. Simply put, the US—as with other countries involved in WTO deals—can regulate its digital sector without abandoning its critical role as a champion of the open internet.

The potential consequences of America's policy shift are as far-reaching as they are dangerous. Fear of damaging trade ties with the US has long deterred other actors from imposing national borders on the internet. Now, those who have heard the siren song of supposed "digital sovereignty" as a means to ensure their laws are obeyed in the digital realm have less reason to resist it. The more digital walls come up, the less the walled-off portions resemble the internet.

Several countries are already trying to replicate China's heavy-handed approach to data governance. Rwanda's data-protection law, for instance, forces companies to store data within its border unless otherwise permitted by its cybersecurity regulator—making personal data vulnerable to authorities known to use data from private messages to prosecute dissidents. At the same time, a growing number of democratic countries are considering regulations that, without strong safeguards for cross-border data flows, could have a similar effect of disrupting access to a truly open internet.

Without a strong commitment on crucial internet protections from the US and the 90 WTO members involved in the joint e-commerce initiative, there is a real risk that many more countries—including the more than 100 developing countries without an approach to data governance—could be swayed to choose a regulatory path that veers away from an open internet.

As more barriers to information flows are erected, the risk of harm to people, businesses, and countries rises. Consider data-localisation mandates, which may require all information about citizens or residents to be stored, collected, or processed within their country's physical borders. Far from protecting individual privacy and security, such mandates compromise it.

For starters, the mandates could leave data more vulnerable to direct seizure by authorities that do not respect human rights. Over the last decade, the Wikimedia Foundation—the nonprofit that hosts Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia created and maintained by volunteer editors around the world—has received dozens of requests for user data each year, many of which have had little or no legal basis.

There have been cases, for example, where a government or wealthy individual has sought to obscure accurate public information or even to take retaliatory action against the volunteer who published it. The Wikimedia Foundation refuses such requests, but data-localisation requirements could make this more difficult, as governments assume greater control over information stored within their borders.

Then there are the economic implications. Establishing data-collection and storage facilities in countries around the world would be expensive—so expensive, in fact, that it could threaten the economic viability of non-profit and commercial entities alike. Smaller players would have an even harder time competing with big global tech platforms.

Finally, forcing internet-based services to establish multiple, redundant data centers in different countries will create new security vulnerabilities, which leave sensitive personal and corporate information in greater danger of intrusions and data breaches. People's access to information could also be hampered.

Following the US announcement last October, G7 ministers were quick to reaffirm their commitment to open digital trade and digital markets, and their support for the Data Free Flow with Trust initiative, which promotes coordinated approaches to privacy and data governance amid increasing digital protectionism. But the G7, on its own, is ill-equipped to counter the misguided policies and geopolitically-driven efforts that could carve up the internet beyond recognition. To preserve an open, globally connected, and secure internet, all countries—including the US, with its enduring global clout—must reassert strong support for the policies that underpin it.

But the sustained effort needed to prevent the global erosion of the internet goes beyond trade negotiations. People everywhere must urge their leaders to protect the internet from aggressive digital-sovereignty measures at the WTO's joint initiative on e-commerce negotiations, in other international engagements, and at home. For their part, policymakers taking decisions or designing legislation must be diligent to assess potential impacts to online data flows and prevent harm to internet openness.

In some ways, the internet is a victim of its own success: it has become so integral to our lives that we take it for granted. But the survival of the internet as we know it today is far from guaranteed. Only with a concerted global effort can we ensure that it does not become increasingly fragmented, insecure, and under the control of governments and corporations.

Natalie Dunleavy Campbell is Senior Director of North American Government and Regulatory Affairs at the Internet Society. Stan Adams is Lead Public Policy Specialist for North America at the Wikimedia Foundation. @PROJECTSYNDICATE

SPECTRUM NATION

Invest in healthcare, education



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

TO RECLAIM A HIGH GROWTH TRAJECTORY, EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE MUST BE PRIORITY INSTEAD OF ILL-DIRECTED SUBSIDIES AND TAX EXEMPTIONS

Managing a country and solving people's problems is not an easy job for any government. However, a government or ruling party must admit its failures or weak areas. In India, the ruling parties at the Centre and even some states are engrossed in a publicity blitzkrieg. While spending each rupee of taxpayers' money, they are resorting to publicity and self-aggrandisement so as to derive political mileage.

Recently, in an interview to a national daily, former RBI governor, Raghuram Rajan pointed out that India is doing well for the rich and the upper middle class. They have good jobs, and government policies are helping them. But, the economy is not working so well for the lower middle class, who haven't seen it produce the jobs they need. Our labour data are bad, but anecdotal evidence is worrisome. For instance, employment in agriculture, as a share of employment, is up, when economies should see it fall as they develop.

The grim reality that Indians are deprived of a decent life is clearly manifested as India is abysmally placed in almost all in-

ternational indices like human development index (132 out of 191 countries), global hunger index (111 out of 125), corruption perception index (93 out of 180 countries), sustainable development index (121 out of 163), human happiness index (136 out of 146 countries), and world peace index (135 out of 163 countries).

According to the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-23 of NSSO, the poorest 5% of the country survive on a daily consumption of just Rs 46 per person in rural areas and Rs 67 in urban areas. The survey, which took place after over a decade, also shows the large gap in consumption between the bottom 5% and the top 5%. The per capita daily consumption for the richest 5% of the population is Rs 350 in rural areas and Rs 700 in urban areas.

Amartya Sen, the Nobel laureate economist, has highlighted the importance of addressing social inequalities and investing in education and healthcare to combat poverty in India and sustain economic development. To reclaim a high growth trajectory, expenditure on education and healthcare must be priority instead of ill-directed

subsidies and tax exemptions.

Rajan thinks that government spending priorities are wrong and India has to focus on building the human capital of its citizens—better nutrition, education and healthcare—and not be fixated on following a manufacturing export-led growth path of China. He asks question—why spend \$2 billion in government subsidies on attracting Micron to set up a plant in Gujarat for just 5,000 jobs in assembly and testing? Why not spend the money on improving the quality of our schools and colleges so that we can produce more capable workers and engineers that companies will be eager to hire?

Education budget of Centre as percentage of GDP has declined from 0.55% in 2014-15 to 0.37% in 2024-25 (BE). Similarly, health budget as percentage of GDP has increased marginally from 0.25% in 2014-15 to 0.28% of GDP in 2024-25 (BE). But in India, direct funding for basic research has remained at a low of 0.6-0.8% of GDP over the last decade, much lower than that of other BRICS nations. India's total expenditure on R&D has, in fact, fallen from 0.82% to 0.64% of

the GDP between 2005 and 2023.

A study conducted by the department of gastroenterology and human nutrition at AIIMS has revealed that out-of-pocket medical expenditures have significantly reduced the quality and quantity of major dietary items such as fruit, vegetables, meat and eggs consumed by families when there is a patient in a household. According to the study, more than 80% of the families did not change the intake of cereals, pulses and sugar, but reduced consumption of fruits, followed by ghee, milk and milk products, vegetables, meat, egg and oils. Besides, the catastrophic effects of extra expenditure on illnesses were also visible in children, where a significant number of households with dietary decreases compromised on children's education or the children started working to augment family finances. It is high time the government gives priority to ensuring a decent life to all Indians.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist. Views are personal.

Rare diseases

Sir, Autoimmune disorders, inherited cancers and congenital conditions are not uncommon. Across the globe, there are some three fifty million people who live with about seven thousand of what are called "rare diseases." A disease is said to be "rare" when it affects fewer than one in two thousand people. More than seventy per cent of these diseases begin in childhood. Insufficient knowledge on the part of the doctor and lack of awareness among the patients render these rare diseases challenging. That more than seventy five per cent of rare diseases are of genetic origin, and fifty per cent are present from birth, further complicate things. Besides misdiagnosis leading to inadequate treatment, crippling pain and discomfort are unpleasant companions of the patients with rare diseases. The 'Rare Diseases Day' on 29 February aims at achieving "true equity" for those afflicted by the rare conditions.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Ghazal legend

Sir, Pankaj Udhas, the revered ghazal and playback singer, passed away on 26 February at the age of 73, leaving behind a legacy that transcends generations. Born on 17 May, 1951, in Jetpur, Gujarat, he embarked on his musical journey at a tender age, honing his craft in classical music under various mentors. Relocating to Mumbai in 1976, he ventured into the film industry and made his mark as a playback singer with his debut in the movie Kamna in 1979. His rendition of "Chitthi Aayi Hai" from the film Naam catapulted him to fame in 1986, paving the way for numerous chart-topping hits in films like Saajan, Phir Teri Kahani Yaad Aayee, Yeh Dillagi, and Sirf Tum. Beyond his illustrious musical career, Udhas was a dedicated philanthropist, championing causes such as cancer awareness, thalassemia, and education for the underprivileged. As the founder of the Parents Association - Thalassaemic Unit Trust, he touched countless lives. Survived by his wife Farida and daughters Nayaab and Reva, Udhas will be fondly remembered not only for his melodious voice but also for his unwavering commitment to social causes, leaving an indelible mark on both the music industry and society at large.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1896: Indian politician Morarji Desai—who, as Prime Minister of India (1977-79), was the first leader of Independent India not to represent the long-ruling Indian National Congress party—was born.
- 1920: A new, democratic constitution was adopted by the National Assembly elected by Czech and Slovak leaders, furthering the consolidation of the two states into Czechoslovakia.
- 1940: For her performance in Gone with the Wind (1939), Hattie McDaniel became the first African American to win an Academy Award, for best supporting actress.
- 1992: Voting begun on Bosnian independence. Beginning this day in 1992, the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina held a referendum on independence that won almost unanimous support, and on March 3 independence was proclaimed, prompting shelling by Serbian forces.

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

Orissa POST

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Akhilesh summoned by CBI in illegal mining case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Lucknow, Feb 28: The CBI has summoned Samajwadi Party president and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav as a "witness" to record his statement Thursday in illegal mining cases registered five years ago.

In a notice issued under section 160 of CrPC, the agency has asked Yadav to appear before it February 29, officials said. The section allows a police officer to summon witnesses in a probe. "He is not the accused. He is a witness," a senior official in the know of the development told PTI.

Reacting to the notice in the cases registered in 2019, Yadav attacked the BJP and linked the CBI move with the approaching elections. "The SP is on the maximum target (of the BJP). In 2019, I got a notice in some matter as there was Lok Sabha elections then. Now, when the election is approaching again, I am getting a notice again," Yadav told Times Now Navbharat's 'Navbharat Navnirman Manchi' programme in Lucknow.

"I know, when election comes, notice will also come," he said. "Why this nervousness?"

If in past 10 years, you (BJP) have done a lot of work then why are you nervous?" He took a swipe at the BJP over the issue of development also, saying, "The prime minister landed here on a Hercules plane at the expressway. It was built by Samajwadis. Why you could not make such highways in the country where Hercules can land." According to officials, it is alleged that when Yadav was Chief Minister, officers allowed the theft of minerals, and extorted money from lease-holders and drivers. The CBI filed seven preliminary enquiries - which initiates the process of verification of allegations by the agency based on which a decision to file an FIR



is taken - in 2016 on the directions of the Allahabad High Court to probe the case of illegal mining of minor minerals.

The agency had alleged that then Chief Minister Yadav's office cleared 13 projects in a single day February 17, 2013 in violation of e-tendering process, officials said. Yadav, who was the Chief Minister of the state between 2012 and 2017, also held the mining portfolio during 2012-13 apparently bringing his office's role under scanner, according to the FIR. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) claimed that February 17, 2013, the leases were granted by the Hamirpur district magistrate B Chandrakala after getting approval from the Chief Minister's office in violation of its 2012 e-tender policy, which was ratified by the Allahabad High Court January 29 that year.

The CBI had carried out searches at 14 locations in January 2019 in connection with its FIR against 11 people, including IAS officer B Chandrakala, Samajwadi Party MLC Ramesh Kumar Mishra and Sanjay Dixit, who unsuccessfully contested the 2017 assembly election on a BSP ticket, to probe the alleged illegal mining of minor minerals in Hamirpur district during 2012-16.

THE CASES PERTAIN TO THE ISSUANCE OF MINING LEASES IN ALLEGED VIOLATION OF E-TENDERING PROCESS. THE ALLAHABAD HIGH COURT HAD ORDERED THE PROBE. IT IS ALLEGED THAT PUBLIC SERVANTS ALLOWED ILLEGAL MINING DURING 2012-16, THE PERIOD WHEN YADAV WAS CHIEF MINISTER, AND ILLEGALLY RENEWED LICENCES DESPITE A BAN BY THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL ON MINING.

Bihar likely to witness hotter summers: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Feb 28: Bihar is likely to witness hotter summer seasons and scantier rainfall in the next two decades, which may pose greater health risks with more severe heat waves and an "exponential" rise in vector-borne diseases.

The submission was recently made before the state assembly by the Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (DEFCC) which cited a report of the Bihar State Pollution Control Board (BSPCB).

"The macro-level climate analysis reveals shifts in Bihar's rainfall and temperature patterns over the coming decades.

Projections indicate that minimum winter temperatures will rise by 0.5 degrees Celsius to 1 degree C by 2040 across the state and by 1.5 degrees C-2 degrees C in 2050-2070. "Summer temperatures show a similar rise, starting with 1 degree C-1.5 degrees C in the 2040s to anticipated temperature increase beyond 2 degrees C by 2070," the report said.

Projections also indicate a surge in flood intensities in the northern Tarai zone while the intensity of drought could rise with an increase in consecutive dry days for the southwestern districts, the latest annual report of BSPCB said.

"Monsoon precipitation is projected to display a declining

Fourteen of the 50 districts considered most vulnerable to climate change in India are in Bihar

trend. All regions estimate sharp decreases in winter rainfall by 2040 and 2050," it said. Commenting on the annual report (2023-24), BSPCB Chairman Devendra Kumar Shukla, said it has been tabled in the assembly and talks about estimated shifts in Bihar's rainfall and temperature patterns over the coming decades. "The projection, covering all

38 districts, is based on state and district-level data as well as information and insights from experts and stakeholders. "I must say that if immediate steps are not taken to stop carbon emission, the global temperature will increase considerably, and consequently several countries, including India, will have to face consequences. Bihar will certainly witness adverse impact of the changing weather patterns," said the BSPCB chairman told PTI.

The projected decline in winter rainfall and higher summer temperatures could severely impact groundwater recharge potential and spur acute shortages of water for house-

holds, agriculture and industry in the state, Shukla said.

"Higher temperatures could lead to an exponential rise of vector-borne diseases," he said, adding that Bihar needs a strategy for an integrated approach to mobilise resources for climate resilient and low carbon development.

Fourteen of the 50 districts considered most vulnerable to climate change in India are in Bihar. The state's current contribution to national emissions is modest, the chairman said.

As per the analysis, the energy sector is the highest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions, followed by agriculture, forestry and the waste sector, he said.

UP launches helpline for senior citizens

Eligible senior citizens can avail the benefits of the various schemes by calling Kalyan Sathi helpline number



and old age home portal for senior citizens and departmental quarterly magazine 'Kalyani' have also been launched simultaneously. Eligible senior citizens can avail the benefits of the various schemes by calling

Kalyan Sathi helpline number. The department will provide the benefits of the scheme to the beneficiary at home through the Panchayat assistant. This service will be operational from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. on working days.

According to the government spokesman, about 53 lakh elderly people are already getting pension benefits from the department.

Social Welfare Minister Aseem Arun said that to solve the problems faced in getting information, assistance and benefits of departmental schemes, the Social

Welfare Department is running an Integrated Command Centre, under which callers can call the Kalyan Sathi helpline number 14568 and can register any type of problem related to availing the benefits.

The problems registered through the helpline will be resolved by regular monitoring from the district level and the beneficiary will also be informed. Similarly, problems related to schemes like scholarship, mass marriage, etc., will also be resolved immediately.

Fresh plea in Varanasi court

Varanasi: The Varanasi district court Wednesday fixed March 19 for hearing a plea seeking to stop the entry to the terrace of "Vyas Tehkhana" located in the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi complex. The plea filed by the Hindu side said the cellar's terrace is very old and weak and there is a possibility of an accident when Muslims offer namaz on it. Hindu side's counsel Madan Mohan Yadav said that in-charged District Judge Anil Kumar has fixed March 19 for hearing the petition which also seeks repair of the cellar's pillars.

AGENCIES

Lucknow, Feb 28: The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has launched 'Kalyan Sathi' helpline number 14568 for senior citizens. The 'Kalyan Sathi' mobile app

UP govt set to boost IT sector

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 28: With the aim to bring Uttar Pradesh at par with Bangalore and Hyderabad in the field of technology, the Yogi Adityanath government is set to significantly invest in the IT sector, especially in the Data Centre Park and Artificial Intelligence.

A government official said that several tech giants, such as NIDP Developers, Tata Technologies, STT Global Data Center, and Jackson Limited, have started to channel their investments in the state.

He said that through GBC 4.0, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched projects worth more than Rs 90,000 crores in the IT and electronics sector of the state as well.

"This constitutes over 8 per cent of the total projects worth Rs 10 lakh crores implemented through the Ground Breaking Ceremony," the official said.

He said that Yotta Data Services, under the prestigious Hiranandani Group, is investing Rs 30,000 crore to establish a high-capital data centre park, expected to generate employment for 2160 individuals.

"STT Global Data Centres India Pvt. Ltd. is also investing Rs 1850 crore in setting up a data centre, creating job opportunities for 160 people," the official said.

He said that this investment encompasses infrastructure construction and operation, contingent upon demand, policy support, and feasibility.

BHUBANESWAR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Akash Shova Building, Sachivalaya Marg, Bhubaneswar - 751001, Visit us at: <http://www.bda.gov.in>
No. CAD-4362

INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB) Dated: 27.02.2024

Bid Identification No. 370

1. Executive Engineer, Division-IV, BDA, Bhubaneswar on behalf of Bhubaneswar Development Authority invites percentage rate bids in Double Cover System conforming to the Detailed Tender Call Notice (DTCN) from Electrical Contractors having valid MV and above licence registered under Government of Odisha, having PAN and valid EPF & ESI registration No., GST Certificate for the item of work mentioned in the table below:

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (In Rs.)	EMD (In Rs.)	Cost of Tender Paper (In Rs.)	Period of Completion
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.	Provision of Street light on the road from Baramunda play ground (Ravanpodi ground) upto the underpass near ISBT Baramunda on NH-16, Bhubaneswar	10,52,451.00	1% of the estimated cost put to tender (Through online transfer by the last date & time for receipt of bids)	6000/- + GST @ 18% (Through online transfer by the last date & time for receipt of bids)	21 (Twenty One) Days

2. The Bid documents will be available in the website: <https://tendersodisha.gov.in> from 29.02.2024 to 11.03.2024 upto 17.00 hours.

3. Bids along with cost of tender paper and EMD (Bid Security) shall be received only "Online" on or before 11.03.2024 upto 17.00 hours. The bidder must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) of Class-III.

4. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents.

5. The authority reserves the right to cancel any or all bids at any moment without assigning any reason thereof.

6. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation shall only be uploaded in the website: <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>

OIPR-13033/11/0689/2324 Sd/- Executive Engineer, Division-IV, BDA

AYODHYA TO HAVE ITS OWN 'BEACH' SOON

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ayodhya, Feb 28: One of the banks of Saryu river in Ayodhya will be developed as a beach, popularly known as 'chowpatty', an official said.

The Uttar Pradesh Housing Department has given its consent to the proposal of the local development authority to set up a chowpatty at Ram Ki Paidi.

The Ayodhya Development authority (ADA) has started its homework to provide a variety of food items that are made in a hygienic manner.

"The idea is to create multiple temporary structures, zones for housing food carts and covered spots under canopies or pergolas at Ram Ki Paidi," said a senior officer from the authority.

A tender has been floated to begin work at the site and the selected agency would be given six months to complete the civil works, after which space would be given out to food vendors.

A budget of close to Rs 4.66 crore has been set aside to give shape to the project.

Besides, building the basic structure, electrification, sanitation, firefighting, water supply, horticulture, parking zone and paved entry route will have to be created by the contractor.

20-fold rise in Bihar's dog bite cases: Survey



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Feb 28: Bihar has witnessed a more than 20-times increase in dog bite cases compared with the previous year, according to data released by the state's latest economic survey.

The Bihar Economic Survey (2023-24) released by the state government has identified dog bite as the most prevalent disease in the state.

According to the report, a total of 2,07,181 people suffered dog bites in the year 2022-23 whereas the total number was just 9,809 in the year 2021-22.

The report, however, did not mention the number of rabies cases usually transmitted by a bite from an infected animal, including dogs.

According to the World Health Organisation report, "Dogs are the main source of human rabies deaths, contributing up to 99 per cent of all rabies transmissions to humans. The incubation period for rabies is typically 2-3 months but may vary from one week to one year, depending on factors such as the location of virus entry and the viral load."

As per the report the state capital, Patna, reported total 22,599 incidents of dog bites, highest in Bihar in the year 2022-23, followed by Nalanda (17,074), Gopalganj (15,253), Vaishali (13,110), West Champaran (11,291), East Champaran (9,975), Madhubani (8,401), Araria (6,710).

Nawada district reported 6,234 cases of dog bites followed by Sitamarhi (6,198), Jamui (5,851), Jehanabad (5,683), Bhojpur (5,323), Madhepura (5,169), Darbhanga

Analysis of the data reveals that on average 600 people become victims of dog bite in Bihar every day. The second most prevalent disease in the state, as per the report, was malaria

The state witnessed 45,532 cases of malaria in 2022-23, the report said

(5,023). The districts that witnessed less than 2,000 reported dog bite incidents in 2022-23 include Kaimur (33), Aurangabad (435), Buxar (686), Muzaffarpur (1,258) and Khagaria (1,916).

In January 2023, a stray dog allegedly went on a biting spree and attacked more than 80 people in Bihar's Arrah in Bhojpur district. Commenting on the state capital (Patna) reporting the highest number of dog bite incidents, Animesh Kumar Parashar, Patna Municipal Commissioner (PMC), told PTI, "We are aware of the fact and will soon intensify our drive to check such this menace as per the existing norms. The PMC is also going to engage non-government organisations for the purpose."

Echoing a similar view, Shekhar Anand, Municipal Commissioner, Nalanda, the district which reported the second highest number of dog bite incidents in Bihar, told PTI, "We have our dedicated and trained team of municipal employees to curb his menace. We have already intensified the drive against the stray dogs in the city."

Expressing his concern over the stray dog menace in the state, Patna-based medical practitioner, Dr Manoj Kumar, told PTI, "The survey report should have mentioned the number of rabies cases usually transmitted by a bite from an infected animal, including dog. How can dog bite incidents be termed as a disease? Rabies is a disease it's a dangerous virus that causes brain inflammation. Animals can spread rabies to humans through bites and scratches."



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

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE
E-Auction Sale Notice Under SARFAESI ACT, 2002

Where as the Bank acting through its Authorised Officer in exercise of its powers under-Section 13(4) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (SARFAESI) has decided to put up for E-auction of the following properties "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis for realization of the debts due to the Bank.

Sl. No.	BRANCH/ Name & Address of the Borrower/Guarantor/ Mortgagee/ Total Dues	Description of the Properties	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount
1.	KHANDAGIRI BRANCH, MOB.: 9178286377 / Borrower: Mr. Jagannath Patnaik, S/o: Late Bipra Charan Patnaik, At: Plot No.: 248, Uppar Sahi, Jagamara, Bhubaneswar, Khurda-751030 / Total Dues: ₹7,35,393.24 as on 15.09.2023 + interest, costs and expenses from 16.09.2023, less any part amount repaid.	All that part and parcel of Land and Building situated over Flat No.: 422, 4th Floor, Block-B, "Prabhujee Enclave", Plot No.: 401, 410, 410/995, Khata No.: 253/106, Mouza: Kujimahal, At/P.O.: Chandaka, P.S. Chandaka, SRO: Khandagiri, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda, Total Area: 560 Sq.Ft., KISSAM: Homestead, standing in the name of Mr. Jagannath Patnaik, Bounded by North: Open Space, South: Corridor, East: Open Space, West: Flat No.: 423	₹12,39,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) / ₹1,23,900/- / ₹50,000/-
2.	KHANDAGIRI BRANCH, MOB.: 9178286377 / Borrower: Mr. Jagannath Patnaik, S/o: Late Bipra Charan Patnaik, At: Plot No.: 248, Uppar Sahi, Jagamara, Bhubaneswar, Khurda-751030 / Total Dues: ₹7,11,061.01 as on 15.09.2023 + interest, costs and expenses from 16.09.2023, less any part amount repaid.	All that part and parcel of Land and Building situated over Flat No.: 105, 1st Floor, Block-B, "Prabhujee Enclave", Plot No.: 401, 410, 410/995, Khata No.: 253/106, Mouza: Kujimahal, At/P.O.: Chandaka, P.S. Chandaka, SRO: Khandagiri, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda, Total Area: 560 Sq.Ft., KISSAM: Homestead, standing in the name of Mr. Jagannath Patnaik, Bounded by North: Plot No.: 399, 411 & 412, South: Road, East: Plot No.: 405 & 406, West: Plot No.: 400 & Road	₹12,39,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) / ₹1,23,900/- / ₹50,000/-
3.	SAHID NAGAR BRANCH, PH.: 9652075096 / Borrower: Mr. Chitta Ranjan Mishra, At: Plot No.: 562/1973/2794, Khata No.: 704/1270, Mouza: Baliana, Tahasil: Baliana, Dist.: Khurda, Communication Address: At: N-6, Plot No.: 181, IRC Village, Bhubaneswar, Khurda, Odisha - 751013 / Total Dues: ₹37,33,118.38 as on 30.07.2023 + interest, costs and expenses from 31.07.2023, less any part amount repaid.	EQM of Land & Building G+1 constructed over Land bearing Khata No.: 704/1270, Plot No.: 562/1973/2794, duplex No.: 15, admeasuring Area: Ac.0.0264 Dec. i.e. 1149.98sqft, in name & style JB TWINS, status: sthitiBan, KISSAM: Gharabari, situated at Mouza: Baliana, P.S./SRO: Baliana, Dist: Khurda, standing in the name of Mr. Chitta Ranjan Mishra, Bounded by North: Road, South: Kailash Chandra Sahoo & Others, East: Sovita Rani Mohapatra, West: Debashree Bhattacharya	₹60,40,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) / ₹6,04,000/- / ₹50,000/-
4.	CHAKEISIANI BRANCH, PH.: 8861961676 / Borrower: M/s. Shivashakti Traders, Prop.: Mr. Kabiraj Behera, S/o: Mr. Dhruva Charan Behera, Address- 1: At: Plot No.: 409, Samegadia, PO: Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar-751010, Address- 2: At: Plot No.: 89/257, Mouza: Kalyanpur, Near Anukulachandra Mandira, Bhubaneswar / Total Dues: ₹44,75,637.02 as on 17.05.2023 + interest, costs and expenses from 18.05.2023, less any part amount repaid.	Property-1: All that part and parcel of the Property situated over Khata No.: 216/89, Plot No.: 89/1201, Area: Ac.0.040 Dec. i.e. 1742.4 Sqft., KISSAM: Homestead at Mouza: Kalyanpur, P.S.: New Capital, Thana No.: 09, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, Registration SRO: Bhubaneswar & Dist.: Khurda, Standing in the name of Mr. Kabiraj Behera, S/o.: Mr. Dhruva Charan Behera, Bounded (as per Sale Deed) by North: Rest Part of this Plot, South: Road, East: Rest Part of this Plot, West: Plot No.: 88, South: Road, East: Plot No.: 89, West: Plot No.: 82 & 83	Property-1: ₹13,67,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) / ₹1,36,700/- / ₹50,000/- Property-2: ₹34,83,000/- (excluding GST & other statutory dues) / ₹3,48,300/- / ₹50,000/-

Date & Time of E-Auction: 19.03.2024 From 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. with unlimited extension of 10 (Ten) minutes each.

Last Date & Time for submission of EMD & Documents: 18.03.2024 upto 4.00 P.M.

Inspection will be provided to the prospective bidders on any working day before 18.03.2024 with prior appointment of the authorised officer

The sale shall be subject to the terms and conditions and provisions prescribed in the SARFAESI Act 2002 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Regulations 2002.

This is also a 15 days sale notice to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) of the aforesaid loan account for settlement of their outstanding dues with the Bank and to participate in the public auction on the above mentioned date. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in (1) <https://www.ibapi.in> (2) <https://www.mstcecommerce.com> (3) www.bankofindia.co.in

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 29.02.2024 Authorised Officer, Bank of India



A villager points towards Pakistan from his house near the International Border, in Ramgarh sector of Samba district. Many villagers have transformed their homes into homestays after the J&K administration has recently given its nod to promote border tourism



Pope Francis poses for photos with a group of nuns at the end of his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Hall, at the Vatican



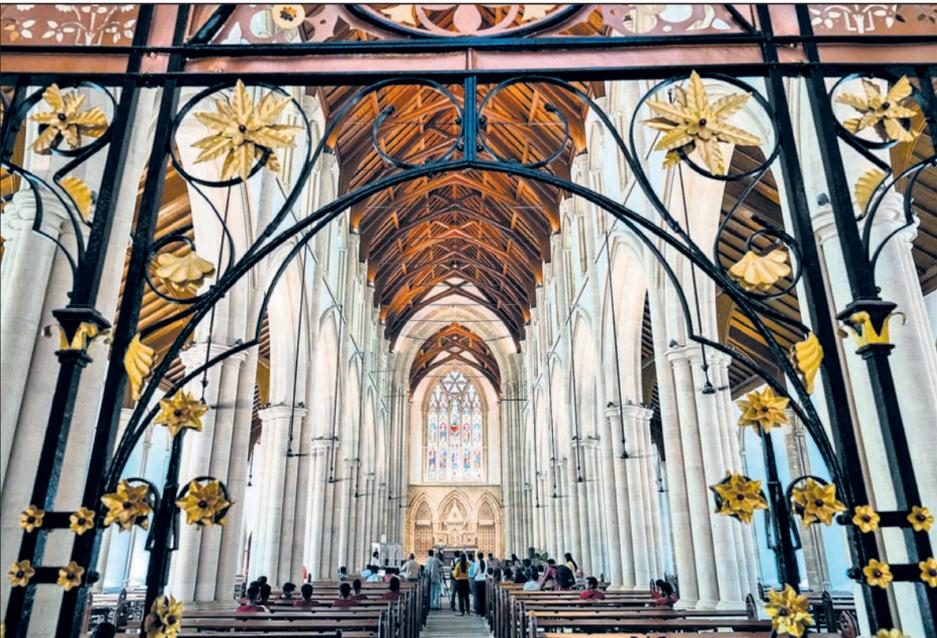
Captain Pikachu, one of the stars of 'Pokémon Horizons: The Series', proudly posed with the Empire State Building's world-famous tower lights as they shined bright for Pokémon Day 2024



NCC Director General Lt. General Gurbirpal Singh interacts with cadets during a visit to West Bengal & Sikkim NCC Directorate, in Kolkata



India's first indigenous green hydrogen waterway vessel built by Cochin Shipyard, at the backwaters of Kochi



View of the newly-restored Afghan War Memorial Church, in Mumbai



A local artist with long mustache poses for photos with a tourist after the arrival of Maharajas Express train, in Bikaner

national

of the day quote

Tamil Nadu's connect with Shri Ram is well-known. Before the January 22 consecration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, I visited different temples, including in Dhanuskodi (in TN). The entire country was happy that the temple was coming up after so many years. A related matter came up in the Parliament but the DMK MPs ran away

Our party has appointed observers in Himachal Pradesh. They will talk to everyone and hopefully the matter will be resolved very soon

UP has now emerged as the biggest investment destination in the country. The state is experiencing prosperity with the blessings of Goddess Lakshmi

SHORT TAKES

Top court extends protection to Kavitha

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday extended protection, till March 13, to BRS MLC K Kavitha from action by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) which has summoned her in connection with the ongoing probe into the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy case. At the request made by the senior counsel appearing for the petitioner, a bench headed over by Justice Bela M Trivedi ordered the matter to be listed high on board after two weeks.

4 die, 8 injured in road accident

Hyderabad: Four women agricultural labourers died and eight others were injured in a road accident involving a state-run RTC bus and an auto-rickshaw in Suryapet district about 180km from here Wednesday, police said. The incident occurred in Mothe mandal of the district when the two vehicles were involved in an accident while passing through an underpass, they said. The injured were shifted to a hospital; while seven of them are said to be out of danger, the condition of one is critical, police said.

Court grants bail to Rabri, two daughters

New Delhi: A Delhi court Wednesday granted bail to former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi and her daughters Misa Bharti and Hema Yadav in the Railways' land-for-jobs case. Misa Bharti, the eldest of RJD president Lalu Prasad and Rabri Devi's children, is a Rajya Sabha MP from Bihar. Special Judge Vishal Gogne granted relief to the three after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) did not oppose the bail applications. The central probe agency submitted that considering the serious nature of the case, stringent conditions should be imposed on the accused while granting them bail.

Major fire in slum

Thane: A 42-year-old man was killed and four others, including two Fire Brigade personnel and a boy, were injured after a major fire broke out in a slum at Bhayandar in Thane district neighbouring Mumbai Wednesday morning, destroying several huts and shops, officials said. The incident occurred at around 5 am in the Azad Nagar slum, Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation (MBMC) Commissioner Sanjay Katkar said, adding that many commercial establishments are located in the locality.



Remember Singur is Singur, Nandigram is Nandigram, Khatra is Khatra, and Bishnupur is Bishnupur. Each place has its own characteristics. So do not compare one with the other

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

INDIA, GERMANY SET TO CARRY OUT JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE

India and Germany have resolved to closely collaborate on high-technology for military use in line with a broader aim to develop defence cooperation as a key pillar of the bilateral strategic partnership



3,300 kg drugs seized off Guj coast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Porbandar/New Delhi, Feb 28: Indian agencies Wednesday made their highest-ever narcotics bust from the sea as they seized 3,300 kg drugs, which sailed from an Iranian port, off the Gujarat coast and arrested five foreigners from a dhow.

The cache could be worth anything between ₹1,300-Rs 2,000 crore in the international market, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Director General S N Pradhan said.

Home Minister Amit Shah called the joint operation by the Navy, NCB and the Gujarat Police a "historic success" and a testament of his government's "unwavering commitment to making our nation drug-free". There is no standard for calculating the value of drugs as it varies depending on volume, quality, region and demand and supply links. However, rough estimates peg the international price of Hashish at ₹5-10 lakh per kg and meth (Methamphetamine) and heroin at ₹2-5 crore per kg, according to the NCB.

The source of the drugs is found to be the Chabahar Port in



The unregistered fishing boat was intercepted Tuesday morning at the Arabian Sea. The Navy deployed its P8I long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft and marine commandos onboard a warship apart from helicopters

About 3,300 kg of contraband that includes 3,110 kg charas or Hashish, 158.3 kg of crystal Methamphetamine and 24.6 kg of suspected heroin has been recovered from packets that bore the stamp of 'Ras Awad Goods Co, produce of Pakistan'

Iran, the agency said. "This is the biggest offshore narcotics seizure made in the country till date. We have seen that drug smuggling has increased through the maritime route over the last few years and hence we are jointly working with other government agencies like the Navy, Coast Guard, Customs etc. To intercept such activities," Pradhan said. "The smugglers and drug operators use the Arabian Sea to exploit the Indian coastline that is vulnerable. It is part of the grand design to destabilise the country using drugs," Pradhan

said. The last big seizure from the high seas was of 2,500 kg by the NCB and the Navy off the Kerala coast in May, 2023. The NCB said it has begun speaking to its foreign counterparts to probe the forward and backward linkages of this consignment.

NCB deputy director general (operations) Gyaneshwar Singh said the fishing boat has been brought to Porbandar and the five foreign nationals who were on board have been arrested. "They could either be Pakistani or Iranians. However, we have recovered no IDs from them.

A Thuraya satellite phone and four mobile phones have been seized from these men," Singh said. The DDG said the drugs packets carry the name of a Pakistani food company and hence they "suspect" the hand of that country in mobilising this cache whose destination was being probed. The traffickers onboard vessels carrying drugs keep in touch with buyers on the land and once they strike a deal, the consignment can land anywhere up to the southern-most tip of India, the NCB officials said. DDG Singh said this operation was codenamed 'Sagarmanthan-1' and the joint teams have been working on inputs for the "last few weeks".

"This seizure of drugs is by far the largest in terms of quantity, & was possible through collaborative efforts of #IndianNavy's #missiondeployed assets with the NCB," the Navy said in a post on X. The NCB DG said combating the drugs trafficking was a task as this stockpile has grown in Afghanistan post the installation of a new government there even as Myanmar (on India's eastern side) was a record supplier.

Manipur commandos hold 'arms down' protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Feb 28: Hundreds of commando personnel of all five districts in the Imphal Valley region Wednesday held a symbolic 'arms down' protest against the mob attack on the residence of an Additional Superintendent of Police Amit Kumar Moirangthem and his abduction, officials said.

The police commandos of these districts put down their arms asking for action against Meitei radical group Arambai Tenggol and no hindrance from political executives when the forces act against the outfit, they said.

They are protesting against Tuesday's incident during which a group of Meira Paibis (women volunteer group) and cadres of Arambai Tenggol, a Meitei organisation, stormed into the police officer's residence, abducted him and beat up the personnel guarding him. The Additional SP (Operations) was rescued within hours and is currently hospitalised. The Army had to be called in as fresh tension mounted in

Manipur East on Tuesday and four columns of the Assam Rifles were deployed after the senior police officer was abducted. "Protesting against the attack, the commando personnel of Imphal West district held an arms down protest at their respective complex," an official said.

Those personnel of the commando units in Imphal East, Bishnupur, Thoubal and Bakhching districts also followed the move. "They put down their firearms on the ground in a row as a symbol of protest," he said. Senior police officials talked to their personnel assuring them that strict action would be taken against the perpetrators.

"You can't keep snakes in your backyard and expect them to only bite your neighbour. This was stated by the then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Pakistan in 2011 but today it holds good for Manipur where a section of the community was welcoming the return of these terror and radical groups," a senior security official said.

SNIPPETS

Mahadev app case: ED conducts raids in WB

Kolkata: The Enforcement Directorate Wednesday conducted raids in six places of West Bengal as part of its investigation into a money laundering case linked to the Mahadev online gaming and betting app that purportedly involved various politicians and bureaucrats from Chhattisgarh, officials said. The six places included the residence and office of a businessman in Salt Lake and the house of a share trader at Hatibagan in Kolkata. Several documents related to business transactions, share deals, and bank accounts belonging to the businessman were seized, an official said. A total of 15 premises in Mumbai, West Bengal and the Delhi-NCR as part of the investigation, official sources said.

Santhan, ex-convict in Rajiv assassination, dies

Chennai: Santhan, a convict in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case who was later freed by the Supreme Court, died here Wednesday following a cardiac arrest, a government official said. Santhan alias T Suthendraraja (55), a Sri Lankan national, was one of the seven persons set free by the Supreme Court in 2022 after they served over 20 years of jail term in connection with the killing of the former prime minister in Sriperumbudur near here in 1991. E Theranirajan, Dean of the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital where Santhan was undergoing treatment for liver failure, said he died at 7.50 am. Santhan suffered a cardiac arrest at around 4 am Wednesday but was revived following a CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) procedure and given an oxygen supply with a ventilator, Theranirajan told reporters.

Chinese flag in TN govt ad sparks row

Tirunelveli: In a major goof-up, a newspaper advertisement by the Tamil Nadu government for a new Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) spaceport featured a rocket with the flag of China, drawing criticisms from several quarters with Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday coming down heavily on the DMK government for being 'oblivious' to the nation's achievements in space sector. Modi alleged the DMK has disregarded India's success in space technology and demanded that the Dravidian party apologise for featuring China in its advertisement in a daily.

Two killed after being hit by train

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jamtara, Feb 28: At least two persons were run over and killed by a train in Jharkhand's Jamtara district Wednesday evening, police said.

Jamtara Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Mujibur Rahman told PTI that the accident took place near Kaljharia around 140 km from Jharkhand's capital Ranchi. According to railway officials, the incident occurred at 7 pm and only two persons were killed. A three-member committee has been formed to investigate the issue, it stated.

Centre bans two J&K-based groups

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: The government has outlawed two factions of the Muslim Conference in Kashmir, the first such move against the moderate Hurriyat Conference constituent under Mirwaiz Umar Farooq's leadership.

The groups led by Abdul Ghani Bhat and Ghulam Nabi Sumji were banned for their promotion of anti-India sentiments and pro-Pakistan propaganda, along with discouraging participation in elections. Abdul Ghani Bhat's faction held a prominent position within the moderate Hurriyat Conference following the group's split in 2003, while Ghulam Nabi Sumji's faction aligned with the conglomerate led by the late pro-Pakistani figure Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

At least four constituents of Geelani's faction including Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir have been banned by the government. Union Home Minister Amit Shah emphasised the government's commitment, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, to eradicate ter-

rorism. Shah warned of severe consequences for those engaging in unlawful actions.

"By decisively targeting terrorist networks, the government has designated the Muslim Conference Jammu & Kashmir (Sumji faction) and Muslim Conference Jammu & Kashmir (Bhat faction) as Unlawful Associations," Shah stated.

"These outfits have been engaging in activities against the sovereignty and integrity of the nation," Shah wrote on 'X'. On Tuesday, the government extended the ban imposed on the Jamaat-e-Islami, Jammu Kashmir (JeI), by another five years for continuing activities that pose a threat to the security of the nation.

In a notification Wednesday, the Union Home Ministry said the Muslim Conference Jammu and Kashmir-Sumji faction (MCJK-S), chaired by Ghulam Nabi Sumji, is known for its anti-India and pro-Pakistan propaganda and its members have been involved in supporting terrorist activities and providing logistical support to terrorists in J&K.

Human trials may reveal efficacy of new ₹100 cancer pill: Doctors

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 28: Only human trials will help understand the efficacy of the new ₹100 pill developed to prevent recurrence of cancer, said doctors Wednesday. According to a report by NDTV, researchers at the Tata Memorial Centre (TMC) in Mumbai claimed to have discovered a treatment to prevent relapse of cancer that would cost only ₹100.

The study on mice showed that the pill, named 'R+Cu', containing a pro-oxidant combination of resveratrol and copper, generated oxygen radicals in the stomach to curb cancer recurrence.

The experimental mice study "is not a substitute for established treatments, which continue to result in cures in a substantial proportion of cancer patients," Dr Shyam Aggarwal, Chairman, Department of Medical Oncology, at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital told IANS.

In a post on X, Dr. Rajeev Jayadevan, Co-Chairman National IMA Covid Task Force called it "an exaggerated claim". While calling the research "interesting, praiseworthy", he said it cannot be seen as "cancer cure."

Dr Shyam Aggarwal explained that the research shows the effect of cell-free chromatin (fragments of chromosomes released from can-



cer cells after chemotherapy) on normal tissues causing a cascade of inflammation leading to side effects such as mucositis, low blood counts, etc.

"Use of a combination of copper and resveratrol (a commercially-available nutraceutical) has been shown to degrade circulating cell-free chromatin, leading to reduction of toxicity in some human studies. Other human studies are underway," he said.

The study claims that the pill can halve the side effects caused by chemotherapy, while also reducing the odds of getting cancer by 30 per cent. The researchers "used a pro-oxidant combination of copper and resveratrol (found in peanuts, cocoa, grapes) known to damage DNA by generating oxygen radicals," Dr Rajeev Jayadevan wrote in his post on X. "Whether

this will translate into real world outcomes for people with cancer (beyond mice), what toxicities could occur from its pro-oxidant, DNA-damaging effect, is yet to be determined," he said.

However, Dr. Rahul Bhargava, Principal Director & Chief BMT, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram, called it "a great breakthrough in the field of medical research. Indian researchers are creating history. If the drug works, it will be a great benefit for cancer patients."

"The tablet is promising and shows potential to be effective, but human trials are yet to be completed, which could take about five years," he told IANS. The tablet is awaiting approval from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and is expected to be available in the market by June-July.

PANCHAYAT SAMITI OFFICE, LEPHRIPARA DIST-SUNDARGARH No.644/ Date: 26.02.2024 Tender Call Notice No 03/2023-24 No.i-643:Sealed Tenders are invited for the interested bidder for the civil work under BDO, Lephripara of Sundargarh district. The detail of works, eligibility, estimated cost and cost of tender paper has been uploaded in the district website www.sundergarh.nic.in. The bidder should be C & B class contractor. They have to submit the bid document to the undersign in the address of office of the B.D.O., Lephripara, At/P.O. Lephripara, Pin-770012, Dist- Sundargarh (Odisha) through Registered Post / Speed Post only on or before 07/03/2024,04.00 PM. The sale of tender paper will be from dated 27.02.2024 to dated 06.03.2024 in the district website www.sundergarh.nic.in. The authority reserves the right to cancel or reject the entire process without assigning any reason thereof. The tender will be opened on dated 11.03.2024 at 11.00 AM in the office of the undersigned in the presence of the bidders or his/her representatives. Sd./- Block Development Officer Lephripara OIPR-19339/11/0004/2324

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, PADMAPUR DIST: BARGARH (ODISHA) PIN-762100 Email:orrisagudnacgmail.com, Ph-06847260366 Letter No.442 Dated:28.02.2024 Notice Inviting Expression of Interest No.C-3254:Executive Officer, PADMAPUR NAC, PADMAPUR, on behalf of PADMAPUR NAC, invites an Expression of Interest (EOI), for "Drone with DGPS Survey & Quantification of Legacy Waste", from a Registered & Experienced Consultancy Agency. The detailed EOI document will be available on the District Website of Padmapur District www.Bargarh.nic.in. from dt-29.02.2024 to 07-03-2024 Last date & time of receipt of the EOI : Upto 1 .00 PM. of dt. 07.03 .2024. Scheduled date & time of opening of EOI : 3.00 PM. of dt-07-03-2024. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any proposals without assigning any reasons thereof. Sd./- Executive Officer, PADMAPUR NAC OIPR-13118/11/0043/2324

Bhubaneswar Development Authority AKASH SHOVA BUILDING, PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU MARG BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA-751001 Visit us at: http://www.bda.gov.in 'e' Procurement Notice BID IDENTIFICATION No./SE-II/BDA/2023-24 No.225/SE-II/BDA/2023-24 Dated:28.02.2024 No.CAD-4378:Superintending Engineer, Division No.II, BDA on behalf of Bhubaneswar Development Authority invites Percentage Rate bid in SINGLE COVER SYSTEM to be received in online mode only for the work detailed below. 1. Name of the Work Fixing of M.S. Grills over Brick work of compound wall of OFDC Nursery in front of Abdul Kalam Park at Kalinga Nagar, Zone K-8, Bhubaneswar. 2. Estimated Cost Rs.22.88 Lakh (Approx.) 3. Period of Completion 03 (Three) Calendar Months 4. Tender Cost Rs.6,000.00+ 18% GST= Rs.7,080.00 5. Date and Time of availability of bid From 02.03.2024 to 5.30 PM of 12.03.2024 in the website 6. Class of Contractor 'C' & 'B' Class The Bidders have to participate in online bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: http://tendersodisha.gov.in. NB: The quoted rate should be all inclusive but excluding GST applicable under works contract. Sd./- Superintending Engineer, Division No.II, BDA, BBSR OIPR-13033/11/0696/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA ee_rwbdk2@yahoo.co.in OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, BHADRAK "e" Procurement Notice for Building Works Identification Online Tender 17/RWD/BDK-II/2023-24, Dtd.27.02.2024 No.O-2690:1. Name of the Work: Building Works as per Annexure. 2. Total Number of Works: 5 Nos. 3. Approximate Estimated Cost: Rs.35.06 Lakhs- Rs.36.54 Lakhs. 4. Class of Contractor: As per Annexure. 5. Period of Completion: As per Annexure. 6. Other details: The details are as follows. Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. Availability of Tender Online for bidding From To Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification Date & Time of opening of Bid 1 2 3 4 5 6 Executive Engineer, R.W.Division-II, Bhadrak 17 01.03.2024 At 11.30 A.M. upto 2.00 P.M. 07.03.2024 upto 3.00 P.M. 06.03.2024 upto 3.00 P.M. 7.03.2024 at 4.00 PM 7. Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal "https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in." 8. Any other changes/ Corrigendum may be seen only in website www.tendersorissa.gov.in. 9. Date of transparent lottery to be conducted on dt.11.03.2024 at 11.30 A.M. in the office of the Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Bhadrak. OIPR-25090/11/0035/2324 Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W.Division-II, Bhadrak

international



It is time to start a conversation about using the windfall profits of frozen Russian assets to jointly purchase military equipment for Ukraine

UK LAWMAKERS IN FEAR

The British government said Wednesday that it is stepping up security for lawmakers after politicians reported threats and intimidation connected to the Israel-Hamas war. The Home Office said a 31 million-pound (\$40 million) fund will give every lawmaker a "dedicated named police contact" and provide money for those facing threats to pay for private security protection



of the day quote

Although I am not a US voter, I think it's obvious that Biden is a greater guarantee for the survival of democracy in the world and the United States

LUIZ INACIO LULA DA SILVA | PRESIDENT, BRAZIL

We will continue to play our unique role, conduct shuttle diplomacy, build consensus among all parties, and contribute Chinese wisdom to promote a political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis

MAO NING | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON, CHINA

The world sees genocide of the Palestinian people. Hunger, forced displacement, savage bombardments are used as weapons. And the international community still hasn't managed to adopt a unified position to end the war in Gaza

SHEIKH TAMIM BIN HAMAD AL THANI | EMIR, QATAR

US PREZ RACE

Biden, Trump inch closer to rematch

TRUMP DEFEATS INDIAN-AMERICAN NIKKI HALEY IN MICHIGAN PRIMARY, BIDEN WINS DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

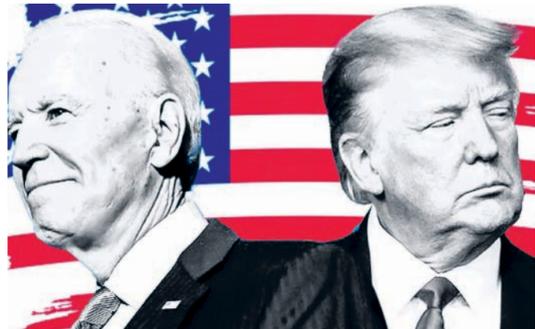
Washington, Feb 28: Voters handed decisive victories to US President Joe Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump in their respective parties' presidential primaries in Michigan Tuesday, increasing the chances of a 2020 rematch between the two leaders in the race for the White House in 2024.

Trump easily defeated his main rival, Indian-American Nikki Haley, winning yet another early contest and additional delegates - bringing him one step closer to being able to formally secure the Republican Party's nomination in November.

When the last reports came in, Haley had received 26.5 per cent of the votes as against Trump's massive 68.2 per cent. US media outlets projected that 77-year-old Trump would sweep the Michigan primary with more than 40 per cent of the votes against 52-year-old Haley.

Trump's win further shuts the door on former South Carolina Governor Haley's hopes of building momentum ahead of next week's Super Tuesday contests, when more than one-third of the Republican Party's delegates are at stake.

Trump has previously won the Iowa caucuses, New Hampshire primary, caucuses in Nevada and the US Virgin Islands, and South Carolina primary. He needs 1,215 delegates to



formally secure the nomination. Trump reached the Michigan Republican Watch Party Tuesday night shortly after the race was called in his favour.

"I just want to thank everybody. This was a great day," he said, pointing to the state's autoworkers, saying Democrats "destroyed the autowork business," but vowed to "bring it all back into Michigan" if elected.

"So that day, November 5th, and January 20th is when we take over," Trump said, referring to Election Day and Inauguration Day. "We're going to make America great again, greater than ever before," Trump said, amidst applause from his supporters.

Trump has won 119 delegates while Haley has just 22. To receive the Republican Party's presidential nomination, one should get the backing of 1,215 delegates.

Meanwhile, Biden, 81, coasted to another victory in the state, marking his fourth primary victory in four tries. He has won 177 delegates from the four victories. Biden, who does not have any known rivals, has to win 1,968 delegates to get the Democratic Party's nomination.

Reacting to his victory, Biden said, "I want to thank every Michigander who made their voice heard today. Exercising the right to vote and participating in our democracy is what makes America great. Four years ago, it was Michigan's diverse coalition that came together to reject Donald Trump's MAGA (Make America Great Again) extremism and sent me and Kamala to the White House.

Meanwhile, the results in Michigan further solidified the positions of Trump and Biden as frontrunners in their respective

Donald Trump is threatening to drag us even further into the past as he pursues revenge and retribution

JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

I can tell you this November cannot come fast enough. We have the worst president in history--the most incompetent and the most corrupt president, and we can't let this continue

DONALD TRUMP | REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, US

parties. Republicans will formally name their presidential candidate during a national convention in July. Democrats will have their convention in August.

However, a key feature of the Democratic primary in Michigan, which has a significant Muslim population, as around 13.25 per cent of Biden's Democratic voters cast ballots for the "uncommitted" as part of their protest against the president for his handling of the Israel-Palestine war.

Strong opposition to Biden's support for Israel's war in Gaza against Hamas militants led some Democrats to call for vot-

ers to select "uncommitted" instead of casting a vote for the incumbent president.

Supporters of the effort for "uncommitted" ballots in Michigan said they were hoping for 10,000 such votes, a level that was easily surpassed. With nearly 99 per cent of the ballots counted, there were already more than one lakh "uncommitted" votes.

Internal challenges

Meanwhile, according to The Washington Post, both Trump and Biden are facing internal challenges within the party.

"Trump continues to face a faction of Republicans who refuse to back his candidacy despite his chokehold on the nomination. Biden was confronted with a protest movement urging Democrats to vote "uncommitted" in the primary over his handling of the Israel-Hamas war. Early returns showed that "uncommitted" was poised to easily garner more than 10 per cent of the vote statewide," the Politico reported.

While for Biden, the main political threat has come from progressives and like-minded voters, for Trump, the threats have been both political and legal.

"His unbroken swing of early state victories has given him a commanding position in Republican politics. But he remains embroiled in court cases stemming from his business practices and his time in office," he said.

SHORT TAKES

Indian American jeweller indicted

Washington: An Indian jeweller has been indicted for illegally evading customs duties for millions of dollars of jewellery imports into the US and operating unlicensed money transmitting businesses, a US attorney has said. Monishkumar Kirankumar Doshi Shah (39) -- based out of both Mumbai and New Jersey -- was arrested over the weekend and appeared February 26 before US Magistrate Judge André M Espinosa in the Newark federal court. Shah alias "Monish Doshi Shah" was released on a bond of \$100,000, with home detention and location monitoring. He has been charged on a complaint with one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and one count of operating, aiding and abetting the operation of an unlicensed money transmitting business.

Judge rules against Prince Harry

London: Prince Harry was not improperly stripped of his publicly funded security detail during visits to Britain after he gave up his status as a working member of the royal family and moved to the US, a London judge ruled Wednesday. Justice Peter Lane said in the High Court that the decision to provide security to Harry on a case-by-case basis was not unlawful, irrational or unjustified. The Duke of Sussex claimed he and his family were endangered when visiting the UK because of hostility toward him and his wife on social media and relentless hounding by news media. His lawyer argued that the government group that evaluated Harry's security needs acted irrationally and failed to follow its own policies that should have required a risk analysis of the duke's safety.

Navalny to be buried Friday

Moscow: Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny's funeral service and burial will take place in Moscow Friday, his wife Yulia announced, but she said she was unsure if it would pass off peacefully or whether police would arrest attendees. Kira Yarmysh, Navalny's spokesperson, posted on X that a service for Navalny would be held Friday afternoon in the Church of the Icon of the Mother of God in the Moscow district of Maryino where Navalny used to live. Navalny would then be buried at the Borisovskoye cemetery, which is located around 2.5 km away on the other side of the Moskva River.

SHRINKING POPULATION

In SK, world's lowest fertility rate plunges again in 2023

Seoul: South Korea's fertility rate, already the world's lowest, continued its dramatic decline in 2023, as women concerned about their career advancement and the financial cost of raising children decided to delay childbirth or to not have babies. The average number of expected babies for a South Korean woman during her reproductive life fell to a record low of 0.72 from 0.78 in 2022, data from Statistics Korea showed Wednesday. That is far below the rate of 2.1 per woman needed for a steady population and well behind the rate of 1.24 in 2015 when concerns about issues such as the cost of housing and education were lower. Since 2018, South Korea has been the only Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) member with a rate below 1, defying the billions of dollars spent by the country to try to reverse the trend that led the population to decline for a fourth straight year in 2023.

Japan population down by largest margin, births drop

Tokyo: The number of babies born in Japan in the year 2023 fell to a record low from a year earlier as the country's population shrank by its largest ever margin, government data showed, according to a report by Kyodo News. The figure for babies was down by 5.1 per cent to 758,631, according to preliminary data released by the health ministry Tuesday, the Japanese news agency reported. A country's birth rate is the ratio of live births to the total population in a given year. It's usually expressed as the number of live births per 1,000 people. The figure has remained below the 800,000 mark since the year 2022. Japan's population, including foreign residents, fell by 831,872, with deaths outnumbering births. A forecast by the Japanese government's National Institute of Population and Social Security Research has estimated births in the country to decline to below 760,000 in the year 2035.



Singapore fertility rate falls below 1% for the first time

Singapore: Singapore, facing a dwindling population and a manpower shortage, has seen its resident total fertility rate (TFR) drop to an estimated 0.97 per cent in 2023, the first time it has dropped below one per cent in the country's history. The TFR, which refers to the average number of babies each woman would have during her reproductive years, fell from 1.04 in 2022 and 1.12 in 2021. Minister in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Indraneel Rajah told Parliament Wednesday. The birth rate remains below the replacement rate of 2.1 - the level at which a population replaces itself. The latest figure places Singapore among countries with the lowest birth rates globally, with South Korea topping the list at 0.72 in 2023. The Straits Times newspaper reported Wednesday. There were 26,500 resident marriages and 30,500 resident births in 2023, said Indraneel, who oversees the National Population and Talent Division, which is under the Strategy Group in the PMO.

Macron floats idea of West sending troops to Ukraine

REUTERS

Paris, Feb 28: French President Emmanuel Macron wanted to create "strategic ambiguity" by openly discussing the idea of sending Western troops to Ukraine, but he was so ambiguous that he sparked confusion and irritation among some allies.

Macron's comments at a late-night news conference, after he hosted a meeting of Western leaders to rally support for Ukraine, fitted with his reputation as a diplomatic disruptor who likes to break taboos and challenge conventional thinking.

By declining Monday night to rule out putting Western boots on the ground in Ukraine, Macron was challenging the prevailing view that such a move would gravely escalate the risk of a global war between NATO and Russia.

His comments may turn out to be prescient and pave the way for greater direct Western involvement in the war in Ukraine



against Russia's invasion sometime down the line.

But they also run the risk of undermining the very thing Macron sought to bolster with Paris meeting - unity among Ukraine's Western allies as Kyiv's forces struggle to hold off Russian troops two years into the war.

The White House declared it would not send troops to Ukraine. Germany, Britain, Italy, Spain, Poland and the Czech Republic also all swiftly distanced themselves from the idea.

The Kremlin, meanwhile, said such a move would make a direct conflict between NATO and Russia an "inevitability".

Asylum applications in EU surge

REUTERS

Berlin, Feb 28: Asylum applications in the European Union jumped 18% to 1.14 million in 2023, the highest level since the 2015-2016 migrant crisis, data from the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) showed Wednesday.

The new data will likely fuel an already heated debate about migration and far-right sentiment ahead of a slew of local and national votes across the continent as well as European Parliament elections in June.

Syrians and Afghans remained the largest applicant groups, according to the EUAA data. In a new trend, Turkish nationals made up the third largest applicant group, lodging 82% more applications than in the previous year.

The number of Palestinians applying for asylum rose to a record high of nearly 11,600 in the wake of the Israel-Hamas war, it said, noting it was difficult to correctly register their number given a majority of EU



member countries do not recognise Palestine as a state.

Germany was once more the leading destination of asylum seekers in the EU, receiving nearly a third of all applications, while Cyprus received by far the most applications in relative terms - one per 78 inhabitants.

While the 2023 asylum applications are just under 2016 levels, they come on top of the 4.4

million Ukrainians that have sought refuge from Russia's invasion of Ukraine in the European Union - and do not need to formally apply.

Such high levels have galvanized discussion about how to curb migration as some local authorities say they are overwhelmed.

The European Union has tightened external borders and its asylum laws since the

Sunil Mittal becomes first Indian to be knighted by Britain's King

Previous Indian recipients of the Honorary KBE include Ratan Tata (2009), Ravi Shankar (2001) and Jamshed Irani (1997), conferred by the late Queen Elizabeth II

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



the revival of OneWeb (now known as Eutelsat), leading a consortium with the UK Government and other strategic investors to offer satellite broadband services globally.

He is a member of the India-UK CEO Forum as well as a member of the Vice Chancellor's Circle of Advisors at the University of Cambridge.

He also served on the governing body of the London Business School (LBS) and as a member of the India Advisory Group at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

Commenting on the award, Mittal, 66, said, "I am deeply humbled by this gracious recognition from His Majesty, King Charles. UK and India have historical relations, which are now entering a new era of increased cooperation and collaboration".

Back home, he was bestowed with the Padma Bhushan, the third-highest civilian honours, in 2007.

- EUROPEAN UNION REGISTERS HIGHEST RISE IN IRREGULAR BORDER CROSSINGS SINCE 2015-16 CRISIS
- ASYLUM APPLICATIONS JUMP 18% TO 1.14 MILLION
- PALESTINIAN APPLICATIONS SURGE TO RECORD HIGH IN WAKE OF WAR
- TURKISH NATIONALS MAKE UP THIRD LARGEST APPLICANT GROUP
- DATA TO FUEL HEATED MIGRATION DEBATE AHEAD OF EU ELECTIONS

2015-2016 crisis, and struck deals in the Middle East and North Africa to have more people stay there.

The bloc also reached a landmark agreement in December on new rules designed to share the cost and work of hosting migrants more evenly and to limit the numbers of people coming in. But some parties say those rules do not go far enough.

business

of the day quote

We are exploring all the options. I am not at liberty to give you any details on this because no decision has been made. We are looking at everything we want to bring volume electric car to India

MARTIN JAHN | MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT (SALES AND MARKETING), SKODA AUTO

As a brand, we endeavour to align our efforts to adopt various sustainable measures and contribute significantly towards India's ambition to achieve net zero

PANKAJ MIGLANI | DIRECTOR (SUPPLY CHAIN), BHARTI AIRTEL

The Indian retail sector will more than double in size to \$2 trillion in the next decade - across categories and formats - and the successful retailers are the ones who continue to challenge the perceived growth profitability trade-off

ABHEEK SINGHI | MD AND SENIOR PARTNER, BCG

SHORT TAKES

Swisscom to buy Voda's Italian unit

Geneva: Telecoms operator Swisscom confirmed Wednesday it's in talks with Vodafone Group toward a possible purchase of its Italian subsidiary for 8 billion euros (\$8.65 billion). The Swiss company, which is majority owned by the Swiss government, said in a statement it's in "advanced exclusive negotiations" to buy all of Vodafone Italia and merge it with Swisscom's Italian subsidiary, Fastweb. Swisscom says it expects the purchase, if concluded, would add value and cash flow to the Swiss company and help improve its dividend policy. The Swiss telecoms operator says the deal would bring lower costs and pave the way for synergies, and comply with aims of the Swiss executive branch, the Federal Council.

2 CIL projects to be inaugurated

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will Thursday inaugurate Coal India's two first-mile connectivity projects worth Rs 1,393.69 crore, according to an official statement. The first mile connectivity (FMC) projects are expected to reduce the state-owned coal producer's dependence on road traffic for transportation of the dry fuel. Owned by Coal India arm Northern Coalfields Ltd (NCL), the projects located in Madhya Pradesh will enhance coal supply and quality in an eco-friendly way, the coal ministry said in a statement. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate two significant FMC projects virtually February 29. These projects are valued at Rs 1,393.69 crore, the ministry said.

Vedanta eyes \$6bn EBITDA in FY25

New Delhi: Mining conglomerate Vedanta Group is eyeing \$6 billion of pre-tax profits in the next financial year and scaling it to \$7-7.5 billion in the following year on the back of operational efficiencies across businesses. "The building blocks are already in place, and largely under our control for EBITDA augmentation. The increase will be driven by ongoing cost optimization, price increases and volume ramp-up," Ajay Goel, CFO, Vedanta Limited said at a recent analysts' meet. The company is expected to clock nearly \$5 billion of EBITDA in FY24 (April 2023 to March 2024); adjusting for one-time gains of the Cairn arbitration, the operational EBITDA for FY24 will be \$4.4 billion.



We expect the digital economy to really grow at an increasing pace in the next few years. A \$2 billion digital economy is what India seriously needs

S KRISHNAN | SECRETARY, MEITY

ULTRA-RICH COUNT RISES IN 2023

The number of Ultra-high Net Worth Individuals in India increased 6 per cent annually to 13,263 last year on rising prosperity and the number of affluent would grow further to reach nearly 20,000 by 2028, according to Knight Frank. Ultra-high Net Worth Individuals (UHNWIs) are defined as individuals having a net worth of \$30 million and above



FUTURE OF ENTERTAINMENT

Disney, RIL to merge ops

The merger aims at creating a ₹70K-cr media juggernaut far ahead of rivals in the world's most populous nation



This is a landmark agreement that heralds a new era in the Indian entertainment industry. We welcome Disney as a key partner of Reliance group

MUKESH D AMBANI | CHAIRMAN & MD, RELIANCE INDUSTRIES

India is the world's most populous market, and we are excited for the opportunities that this joint venture will provide to create long-term value for the company

BOB IGER | CEO, THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: Walt Disney Co and Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) Wednesday announced signing of binding pacts to merge their media operations in India to create a Rs 70,000 crore behemoth.

Reliance and its affiliates will hold a 63.16 per cent stake in the combined entity that will house two streaming services and 120 television channels. Disney will hold the remaining 36.84 per cent stake, the companies said in a statement.

Reliance has also agreed to invest at closing Rs 11,500 crore into the joint venture to give it muscles to fight rivals such as Japan's Sony and Netflix.

Disney+Hotstar has seen its paid subscriber base decline from around 55 million to about 40 million in the first quarter of this financial year because of Reliance's Jio Cinemas winning exclusive rights for live sports.

Media ventures of Reliance are currently housed in Network 18, which owns TV18 news channels as well as a plethora of entertainment (under the 'Colors' brand) and sports channels.

Besides, NW18 has stakes in moneycontrol.Com, bookmyshow and also publishes magazines. It also owns the news channels CNBC/CNN. Reliance separately owns a movie production arm - JioStudios - and majority stakes in two listed cable distribution companies, Den and Hathway.

Disney+Hotstar was launched in India in 2020, post the acquisition of the entertainment assets of 21st Century Fox at a valuation of \$71.3 billion, thereby taking over the operations of Star India and Hotstar. It housed entertainment and cinema channels such as StarPlus and StarGold as well as sports channels like Star Sports.

While Disney+Hotstar rapidly increased their subscriber base initially with the streaming rights of cricket matches (IPL, World Cup), it lost the bid for the digital streaming rights in 2023-27 cycle, which was won by Reliance-backed Viacom18 for \$720 billion, 12.92 per cent higher than what Star India had paid on an average per match value.

Nita Ambani, wife of billionaire and Reliance chairman

Reliance to hold 63.16% stake in the combined entity while Disney will hold the remaining 36.84% stake

The combined entity will have the largest OTT subscriber base and close to 120 channels in the country

Mukesh Ambani, will head the joint venture while Uday Shankar will be the vice chairperson. Shankar is a former top Disney executive and has a joint venture with James Murdoch, called Bodhi Tree.

"Reliance Industries Ltd (and its affiliate) Viacom 18 Media Pvt Ltd and The Walt Disney Company today announced the signing of binding definitive agreements to form a joint venture that will combine the businesses of Viacom18 and Star India," the statement said.

"As part of the transaction, the media undertaking of Viacom18 will be merged into Star India Private Limited (SIPL) through a court-approved scheme

Kruti Coffee opens new outlet



BHUBANESWAR: Kruti Coffee, one of India's fastest growing specialty coffee venture, opened its State of Art Specialty Coffee Experience Center cum cafe at Patia Bhubaneswar February 28. The highlight of the event was inauguration of the experience center by tribal coffee farmers of village Kindiriguda in Koraput, National awardee Kotpad weaver Bidyadhar Mohanta and State awardee Dokra artisans Golap Gartia and Trinath Behera. Kruti Coffee conducted a live brewing session and brewed Kindiriguda Naturals which was awarded India's No. 1 Arabica Naturals at 5th World Coffee Conference. Dr Kamakhyia Das (Co-Founder of Kruti Coffee) who has completed professional level roasting from World's No. 1 Coffee skill body Specialty Coffee Association (SCA), presented the journey of Kruti Coffee over last one decade and how coffee grown in tribal heartlands of Odisha has been showcased in global platforms like World Coffee Conference, World of Coffee Dubai, Gulf Food Dubai, etc by the power of specialty coffee roasting. Spread over 4000 square feet, this is one of the biggest specialty coffee experience centers in India which houses a specialty brewing counter, roastery, live artisanal bakery, continental kitchen and co-working space. During this event, Kruti Coffee started retailing Tribes Gold and Tribes Silver (two signature blends that combine the best washed coffees grown by tribals of Koraput in Odisha and Araku region in Andhra Pradesh). Tapan Barisal (Business Head, Kruti Coffee) mentioned that Kruti Coffee has already set up five specialty coffee outlets across India and opening the sixth outlet in Berhampur in April. It intends to open 10 more outlets in company owned and franchisee model over next one year apart from introducing five new products.

GDP may slide to 6.7-6.9% in Q3: SBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 28: The Indian economy is likely to grow at 6.7-6.9 per cent in December quarter FY24 as compared to 7.6 per cent growth in the second quarter on poor performance in the farm sector, a report by SBI Research said Wednesday.

The report comes a day ahead of the release of official GDP data for the third quarter of 2023-24 financial year.

India retained the tag of the world's fastest-growing major economy, with its GDP expanding by a faster-than-expected rate of 7.6 per cent in September quarter on booster shots from government spending and manufacturing.

The 6.7-6.9 per cent growth forecast by SBI Research is lower than the Reserve Bank's 7 per cent growth projection for the quarter. SBI Research has projected Q4 GDP at 6.8 per cent.

SBI Research said the biggest reason for the lower growth forecast is the very poor show by the farm sector as, barring fisheries, the whole sector is badly affected.

As per the first advance estimates, the production of major kharif crops in 2023-24 is pegged at 148.5 million tonne, which is 4.6 per cent lower than that in the year-ago period.

New sanctions threaten Russian oil sales to India

RUSSIA EMERGED AS INDIA'S TOP OIL SUPPLIER IN 2023 AS IT OFFERED HEFTY DISCOUNTS

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 28: Fresh US sanctions on Moscow threaten to dent Russian oil sales to India, the biggest buyer of Russian seaborne crude, and complicate efforts by Indian state refiners to secure annual supply deals, three industry sources familiar with the matter said.

Washington Friday imposed sanctions to mark the second anniversary of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and retaliate for the death of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

The sanctions target Russia's leading tanker group, Sovcomflot, which Washington accused of being involved in violating the G7's price cap on Russian oil, as well as 14 crude oil tankers tied to Sovcomflot.

Sources said Indian refiners

Equity investors poorer by ₹6L-cr

Sensex, Nifty tumble over 1% amid weak global market trends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 6 lakh crore in a single day Wednesday as the BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled over 790 points.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 790.34 points or 1.08 per cent to settle at 72,304.88. During the day, it slumped 872.93 points or 1.19 per cent to 72,222.29. The Nifty slumped 247.20 points or 1.11 per cent to settle at 21,951.15. As many as 46 Nifty shares closed with losses while four advanced.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of BSE-listed companies eroded by Rs 6,02,338.56 crore to Rs 3,85,97,298.49 crore (\$4.71 trillion).

"Investors resorted to heavy selling ahead of Thursday's F&O expiry. Weak Asian market cues and Dow Futures indicating a negative start also led to a massive round of profit-taking across the board as benchmark Sensex closed below the crucial 73k mark. The pessimism can also be attributed to lack of direction ahead of Thursday's release of the January US Personal Consumption and Expenditures (PCE) index, the Fed's preferred measure of inflation that tracks consumer spending," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

Among the Sensex firms, Power Grid fell the most by 4.43 per cent. Reliance Industries fell by 2 per cent, contributing 185.59 points to the market's slide. Maruti, IndusInd Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Wipro, JSW Steel, Asian Paints, Tata Steel, Reliance and Titan were the other major laggards.

Hindustan Unilever, Infosys



Indian markets were jittery mirroring weak global markets. Global investors are awaiting the key US economic data like personal consumption expenditure, in anticipation of good forecast there is a fear that Fed rate cut maybe delayed

VINOD NAIR | HEAD OF RESEARCH, GEOJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

and Tata Consultancy Services and Bharti Airtel were the gainers.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined by 1.94 per cent and midcap index went lower by 1.82 per cent.

All the indices ended lower. Utilities fell by 2.82 per cent, oil & gas declined 2.19 per cent, realty tanked 2.12 per cent, telecommunication dipped 1.92 per cent, services (1.89 per cent) and commodities (1.85 per cent).

A total of 2,963 stocks declined while 881 advanced and 77 remained unchanged.

In Asian markets, Seoul settled with gains while Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading mostly lower. The US markets ended mostly higher Tuesday.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,509.16 crore Tuesday.

Apple shuts down electric car project after a decade

APPLE KICKED OFF PROJECT TITAN AS A WAVE OF INTEREST IN SELF-DRIVING VEHICLES SWEEPED THROUGH SILICON VALLEY

REUTERS

Washington, Feb 28: Apple has canceled work on its electric car, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters Tuesday, a decade after the iPhone maker kicked off the project.

Shares of the company were up 0.7% in afternoon trading, having pared some losses from earlier in the trading day.

Several employees working on the electric car project will be

shifted to the firm's artificial intelligence (AI) division, according to Bloomberg News, which first reported the development.

"If it is true, Apple will put more focus on GenAI and that should give investors more optimism about the company's efforts and ability to compete at a platform level on AI," said Ben Bajarin, chief executive of consulting firm Creative Strategies. Apple has so far held back



from any big moves in AI, in stark contrast to other tech giants such as Alphabet and Microsoft,

which was first-mover advantage in incorporating the breakthrough technology.

Apple declined to comment. High interest rates to tame inflation have soured consumer sentiment and led to a slowdown in demand for usually pricier electric vehicles, prompting the industry to cut jobs and reduce production.

Several major automakers, including EV market leader Tesla, have decided to pull back on investments, with some shifting plans to focus on hybrids instead of fully battery-powered cars.

Apple kicked off Project Titan, as its car effort was known internally, a decade ago, as a wave of interest in self-driving vehicles swept through Silicon Valley

Reuters reported in 2020 that Apple was considering releasing a vehicle as soon as 2024 or 2025.

But progress had been uneven even before the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the global automotive industry.

Apple had laid off 190 workers from the group in 2019 after re-vamping its software approach. The design of the concept car also changed, from a radical, steering-wheel-free autonomous vehicle that would have been a departure from traditional automotive design, to a more conventional car with advanced driver-assistance features.

JAISWAL RISES TO 12TH IN TEST RANKINGS

Dubai: India's latest batting sensation Yashasvi Jaiswal advanced towards a top-10 spot in the ICC rankings for Test batters by climbing three spots to 12th while his compatriot Dhruv Jurel leapfrogged 31 places to 69th Wednesday. Jaiswal, who started the series in 69th position, continues his ascent to the top after scores of 73 and 37 in the fourth match of India's ICC World Test Championship series against England in Ranchi. Former England captain Joe Root moved up two places to third position among batters, while rising up three spots to fourth among all-rounders. Senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has narrowed the gap with top-ranked Jasprit Bumrah to 21 rating points at 846. Wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav moved up 10 places to the 32nd spot and England's Shoaib Bashir, who climbed 38 places to 80th, have also attained career bests.



RAHUL unlikely for last Test

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: Senior India batter KL Rahul is unlikely to feature in the fifth and final Test against England in Dharamsala as he continues to feel sore in his right quadriceps. Rahul became unavailable after the series-opener in Hyderabad in January but as per BCCI, he was 90 per cent fit before the third Test in Rajkot earlier this month. Rahul has now travelled to London to get an expert opinion on his injury and with the series in the bag, the Indian team management will not take the risk of playing him in the Dharamsala Test beginning March 7.

He needs to be fully fit before the IPL where he will lead Lucknow Super Giants and is expected to bat in the middle order to bolster his chances of making the India squad for the T20 World Cup in the USA and the Caribbean. "It is more to get an expert opinion (travel to London). He experiences a bit of pain (right quadriceps) while batting. It is to ensure that he recovers fully as he is a player that team needs long-term. "There is so much competition coming his way - IPL, he could also be in the T20 World Cup mix. Then we have some important Test series against New Zealand, and Australia later in the year. So, it is better to give him time to recover properly than rushing him," an IPL source told PTI.

It is the same quadriceps injury that had sidelined Rahul for almost four months last year. Having got injured during the IPL, Rahul returned to action with the Asia Cup in September and made instant impact. In the more recent Test tour of South Africa, Rahul was the only century maker from India in the drawn series. His absence from the final Test means Rajat Patidar will remain with the squad but the MP batter can't be sure of his place in the playing eleven, having aggregated only 63 runs in six innings. There is a possibility that Patidar will make away for Devdutt Padikkal in Dharamsala. Bumrah set to return India's premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who was rested for the Ranchi Test, is expected to lead the attack at the HPCA Stadium. The series is sealed but every Test match offers crucial World Test Championship points and Bumrah can play a big part in the cooler climes of Dharamsala. India are second in the standings with five wins, two losses and a draw. New Zealand lead the table with a winning percentage of 75 but they have only played four Tests.

Jimmy learned a few from Zaheer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: James Anderson, England's greatest fast bowler with an unparalleled longevity and nearly 1000 international wickets, says he has learned a few elements of pace bowling, including reverse swing, from Indian great Zaheer Khan. At 41, Anderson continues to lead the England attack and is two short of becoming the first fast bowler in the history of the sport to breach the 700-wicket mark. Spin legends Muttiah Muralitharan and the late Shane Warne are the only bowlers with 700 plus wickets in Test cricket. "For me, Zaheer Khan was someone I used to watch a lot to try and learn from. How he used the reverse swing, how he covered the ball when he ran into bowl, that's something I tried to sort of develop on the back of playing against him quite a few times here," Anderson told JioCinema.



Zaheer, one of India's finest seamers, played his last Test in 2014 when Anderson was at the top of his game. Among the current lot of Indian pacers, Anderson is most impressed by Jasprit Bumrah's ability, calling him a "great exponent" of reverse swing. Asked about Bumrah's match-winning performance in the second Test against England, Anderson said, "With someone of his quality you expect that standard from him. You know that reverse swing can play a big part in India and he's a great exponent of it. He's got good pace and is very accurate, very consistent. "That yorker we saw to Ollie Pope, he's got that up his sleeve as well. It's not a fluke that he's got to number one in the world. He's a world-class bowler and from our point of view we weren't surprised that he put

up a performance like that." The seasoned Englishman added, "There are not many better bowlers than Bumrah, Shami and Siraj. They're world-class bowlers. You put Ishant Sharma in there as well, and that's a really strong bowling attack." Anderson's longevity in the game can be ascertained by the fact that his current England teammates such as Shoaib Bashir and Rehan Ahmed were not even born when he made his Test debut way back in 2002. Having played 186 Tests and 194 ODIs over the last 22 years, Anderson's desire to be competitive remains intact. On comparing his longevity to other sporting legends, Anderson said, "Yeah, I guess you do look at things like that, but to be honest, I just go with the feel of me and my body. I don't feel like I'm 41 years and 200 days old. You know, I still feel young. "I can keep up with the young

guys in training. I can still bowl the speeds that I want to, I can still deliver the skills that I want to. So, for me that's the most important thing. Age is just a number and it's pretty irrelevant from my thought process." When the discussion turned to reverse swing, Anderson said the art remains relevant even in an age dominated by T20 cricket. "I don't think it's dying. Because of the growth of white-ball cricket in recent times, the focus has moved to change of pace and different deliveries like yorkers, and things like that. "But for me, in Test cricket, we've seen throughout this series already that swing can play a big part. The way Bumrah's bowled, I think, has been amazing to watch. That reverse swing spell in the second Test was one of the best you'll see. For me, I think there's still people out there wanting to learn the skills and it's not easy to do."

Kishan, Iyer dropped from BCCI's central contract list

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: Skipper Rohit Sharma and star batter Virat Kohli retained their place in the top bracket but the out-of-favour duo of Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer were excluded after ignoring the directive to play Ranji Trophy as the BCCI unveiled its centrally-contracted players for this year Wednesday. Rohit, Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja figured in the A plus category, the highest bracket of the BCCI's central contracts list. "Please note that Shreyas Iyer and Ishan Kishan were not considered for the annual contracts in this round of recommendations," said the BCCI in a statement.



Ravi Bishnoi, Jitesh Sharma, Washington Sundar, Mukesh Kumar, Sanju Samson, Arshdeep Singh, KS Bharat, Prasidh Krishna, Avesh Khan and Rajat Patidar.

The selection committee has also recommended fast bowling contracts for Akash Deep, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Umran Malik, Yash Dayal and Vidwath Kaverappa. Akash Deep had impressed on debut in the recent fourth Test against England, which India won to seal the series. In a departure from the norm, the BCCI this time has not mentioned the remuneration of the players across the four categories. Cricketers are normally paid Rs 7 crore per annum in A plus bracket, Rs 5 crore in A, Rs 3 crore in B and Rs one crore in C category, over and above their match fees.

Turmoil in HI: Tirkey, Bhola Nath deny rift

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: Hockey India (HI) president Dilip Tirkey and secretary general Bhola Nath Singh Wednesday denied outgoing CEO Elena Norman's assertion of a rift between them, saying that they are "united" and working in the best interest of the sport. Norman resigned Tuesday and in an interview to PTI she alleged that there was factionalism in the body. The 49-year-old Australian suggested that Tirkey and Singh were at loggerheads and also complained of a difficult work environment. In a joint statement, Tirkey and Singh rejected Norman's claims. "Recently there have been statements by outgoing officials published in the media, claiming that there are divisions within the organisation. This is not correct. We remain united in working together, and as always in the best interest of the sport," the two said.



"Hockey India is an autonomous and professional body dedicated to the development of Indian hockey. Our primary objective as an organisation has been and continues to remain the welfare and progress of the sport of hockey and our athletes." Norman's resignation was the second blow to HI in the last few days after the Indian women's hockey team coach Janneke Schopman resigned, also complaining of a difficult work environment. Schopman had accused HI of giving step-motherly treatment to women's hockey. Tirkey and Singh said HI has always treated all teams and players equally and also claimed to have built an environment of equality in the organisation. "We have built our ethos around equity and equal opportunities right from the grassroots levels across states as well as on a national level," their statement read. "In this spirit, our entire focus remains on growing our talent, ensuring all hosted events are conducted with utmost professionalism and our national teams are receiving the best support to support their performance at

the global stage." Norman began her tenure as the federation's first CEO back in 2011 with Narinder Batra as the head. After resigning, she stated that it was difficult for her to continue given the bickering inside HI. "There are two factions in Hockey India. There is (President) Dilip Tirkey and I and there is (Secretary) Bholanath Singh, (Executive Director) Cdr. RK Srivastava and (Treasurer) Sekar J Manoharan," she said. "There are guys who want power and then there is (HI President) Dilip (Tirkey) who is a nice guy, only after betterment of Indian hockey," she explained. Tirkey and Singh said their

focus is now on rebuilding the women's team, which failed to qualify for the Olympics, and helping the men's side that is due to compete in the quadrennial showpiece in Paris this year. "We will continue in this pursuit of excellence and rebuild the women's team with a fresh approach to providing the right infrastructure and training to enhance their performance," they stated. "In addition to this, we are cognisant of this being an Olympic year and are dedicated to aid the National Men's Team with the required support to stand on the podium yet again in the forthcoming Olympic Games in Paris this year."

Praggnanandhaa came up with a scintillating performance to grind down German Vincent Keymer in the first round of the Prague Masters Chess tournament that got underway here Wednesday. With this win Praggnanandhaa also added some more spice to the tale around the highest rated Indian as he again overtook Viswanathan Anand in live rating to clinch the top spot in the country. Nodirbek Abdusattar of Uzbekistan defeated Nguyen Thai Dai Van of Czech Republic while Parham Maghsodloo of Iran was the other player to score a full point at the expense of Bartel Mateusz of Poland. In other games of the day, D Gukesh had a chance to fight for more but had to settle for a draw with Richard Rapport of Romania, and Vidit Gujrathi split the point with David Navara of Czech Republic. Vidit Gujrathi had white pieces but Navara David was quite up to the mark in his defense. Gujrathi tried for as long as 89 moves before finally signing the peace. Gukesh faced the Sicilian Classical from Richard Rapport and looked in control. The excitement, however, was short-lived as Gukesh went for trading the queens when many felt that he should have retained. The result was a draw after 40 moves.

Navigre's fifty helps Warriorz win over MI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 28: Kiran Navigre and Alyssa Healy unleashed a remarkable assault on Mumbai Indians bowlers to power UP Warriorz to a seven-wicket win in their Women's Premier League match here Wednesday. Navigre (57, 31b, 6x4, 4x6) and Healy (33, 29 balls) added 94 runs for the opening wicket stand in just 9.1 overs as the Warriorz eased past the 162-run target in 16.4 overs to hand the defending champions their first defeat of the season. Mumbai batting suffered in the absence of skipper and in-form batter Harmanpreet Kaur, who is nursing a niggle, as a laboured 55 off 47 balls from Hayley Matthews guided them to 161 for six. It was a competitive total but the Mumbai bowlers would not have suspected a carnage like the one Navigre and



Healy unloaded on them. Navigre, who is the only Indian women batter to score a 150-plus score in senior T20s, fully exploited her promotion as opener, as Mumbai also suffered from the injury-enforced absence of lead pacer Shabnim Ismail. Healy gave a sound start to UP's chase with two successive boundaries off pacer Nat-Sciver Brunt, and they kept the mo-

mentum going from that point. Navigre, who made a slow start making five off six balls, slipped into her aggressive best against pacer Issy Wong, hammering her for four fours in the third over to collect 16 runs and it was just the beginning of the onslaught. Navigre, who was dropped on 42 by Wong near the ropes off Matthews, soon completed his fifty in just 25 balls and it came through

a thundering six off the West Indian spinner over long-on. But leg-spinner Amelia Kerr had player of the match Navigre stumped to give a bite of respite to Mumbai, who seemed to have gained a foothold as Wong dismissed both Healy and Tahliha McGrath in the 11th over. They needed 64 runs at this stage, but Grace Harris (38, 17 balls) and Deepti Sharma (27, 20 balls) made those runs with minimum fuss. Earlier, Mumbai made a sedate start to their innings and had to wait till the fourth over for the first four: Yastika Bhatia (26, 22b) gave Mumbai the much-needed acceleration when the left-hander hammered 18 runs off left-arm pacer Anjali Sarvani through a sequence of three fours and a six, which was thumped right over the bowler's head. However, Bhatia did not last long as a pull played closer to

her body off Harris ended in the hands of Rajeshwari Gayakwad. Matthews too tried to up the tempo and found the occasional big hits amid a slew of mis-time shots. Her four and six off successive balls off left-arm spinner Gayakwad were a reminder to her power and timing when in flow. Matthews, who was dropped on 43 by Deepti off Harris, reached her fifty in 44 balls but could not kick on. Her effort to clear long-on off Gayakwad did not have elevation and distance as Harris completed an easy catch. A couple of hefty blows in the final stages by Pooja Vastrakar (18, 12b) and Wong helped MI to cross the 150-run mark. **BRIEF SCORE:** Mumbai Indians: 161 for 6 in 20 overs (Hayley Matthews 55; Grace Harris 1/20) lost to UP Warriorz: 163 for 3 in 16.3 overs (Kiran Navigre 57; Issy Wong 2/30) by 7 wickets.

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