



FOR FANS ONLY

Actor Malaika Arora has shared a video featuring what she terms as her 'daily shenanigans'

LEISURE P2



JUNTA FOR ECONOMIC REVIVAL

Myanmar's junta calls for more efforts to revive an ailing economy as Western countries mull more sanctions

INTERNATIONAL P10



3RD TEST BEGINS TODAY

A refurbished Motera ground is all set to host the third Test, a D/N one, between India and England

SPORTS P12

Fuel fire engulfs Assembly

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: Expressing concern over the rising fuel prices in the country, MLAs across party lines Tuesday engaged in a hot debate on the issue in the Assembly.

Participating in the debate on the admissibility of an adjournment motion over the issue, senior Congress leader Taraprasad Bahinipati said the BJP government at the centre is looting people as the petrol price has breached ₹100 mark in Malkangiri district for the first time.

Even during Covid-19 pandemic, both the centre and the state government increased tax on petroleum products. The government needs to decrease the tax on fuel, said Bahinipati.

Another Congress member Santosh Singh Saluja too slammed the Centre and the state government for putting the price burden on common people. When NDA government was not in power, the present Prime Minister had assured to provide petrol and diesel at ₹30 a litre when it comes to power. However, they are taking ₹30 per litre from people, Saluja said.

Earlier, BJD members hit the streets whenever there was a marginal hike in the prices of petroleum products. But, now they became silent, the Congress MLA said.



Congress MLAs Suresh Kumar Routray, Tara Prasad Bahinipati and Adhiraj Mohan Panigrahi (from L-R) cycling to Assembly Tuesday to register their protests against the unrelenting rise in petrol and diesel prices

OP PHOTO

PETROL ₹100.29/L AT KALIMELA

BHUBANESWAR: Petrol price touched an all-time high of ₹100 per litre in Odisha while diesel rate crossed ₹88-mark, Tuesday. General Secretary of Utkal Petroleum Dealers Association Sanjay Lath said fuel price has been increasing due to two reasons. The central government has increased the tax while international oil producers have reduced oil production to gain profit. At Kalimela in Malkangiri district, plain petrol rose to ₹97.14 per litre while extra premium petrol cost ₹100.29 per litre. Similarly, diesel cost ₹93.86 per litre in the south Orissa town.

Bishnu Charan Sethi, deputy leader of the BJP legislature party, said the Congress members have moved the adjournment motion on political in-

FUEL PRICES IN CITY

PETROL ₹91.64 (+0.35p)

DIESEL ₹88.61 (+0.38p)

tention. "I don't know how much power is there with the state government to reduce the fuel price. Neither any officer nor any representative from the concerned ministry is present here," Sethi said. He said the tax collected on fuel is utilised for welfare activities across the country including in Odisha.

The centre has provided 15,34,000 free gas connections in Odisha under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY). "Let the state government reduce VAT on the petrol and diesel," he demanded. Opposition chief whip Mohan Majhi said like other states, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik should set an example by decreasing the Value Added Tax (VAT) on petroleum products.

However, Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari said the state government levies less tax than the central government does and is utilising the funds on welfare activities meant for people.

SHARP RISE IN FUEL PRICES AGAIN

NEW DELHI: Petrol price Tuesday neared the ₹91 per litre mark in the national capital and diesel crossed ₹81 a litre, as fuel prices were hiked again after a two-day pause. Petrol and diesel prices were raised by 35 paise per litre each, sending retail rates to an all-time high, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The increase pushed petrol price to ₹90.93 a litre in Delhi and to ₹97.34 in Mumbai. Diesel - the most consumed fuel in the country - now comes for ₹81.32 a litre in the national capital and for ₹88.44 in Mumbai. Fuel prices had risen for 12 straight days before hitting a two-day pause button on February 21 and 22. The increase follows a spurt in oil prices in the international market, on which India is dependent to meet its 85 per cent of crude oil needs. Brent oil crossed USD 66 a barrel on Tuesday as US output was slow to return after a deep freeze in Texas shut production last week. Petrol prices went up by ₹4.63 per litre in February and by ₹7.22 in 2021. Diesel rates have gone up by ₹4.84 a litre in February and by ₹7.45 in 2021. Petrol price has already surged past the ₹100-mark in some places in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, which levy the highest value-added tax on the fuel. Retail prices differ from state to state.



DISHA RAVI GRANTED BAIL

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 23: Creation of a WhatsApp group or being editor of an "innocuous Toolkit" is not an offence, a Delhi court said Tuesday as it granted bail to 22-year-old climate activist Disha Ravi in the 'Toolkit' conspiracy case.

Ravi faces charges of conspiracy and sedition in the 'Toolkit' conspiracy case related to the farmers' agitation and was arrested from Bengaluru February 13.

The Delhi Police had contended that the Google document tweeted by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg to back the farmers' protest and then deleted, was created by Ravi and two other activists -- lawyer Nikita Jacob and activist Shantanu Muluk.

"In my considered opinion, creation of a WhatsApp group or being editor of an innocuous Toolkit is not an offence," said Additional Sessions Judge Dharmender Rana. Muluk had got transit bail from the Bombay High Court February 16 for 10 days. He, along with Ravi and another accused Nikita Jacob, was booked for alleged sedition and other charges.



SHANTANU MOVES COURT

NEW DELHI:

Shantanu Muluk who, along with Disha Ravi, is accused of being involved in sharing a "toolkit" on social media related to the farmers' protest, Tuesday moved a Delhi court seeking anticipatory bail. The application moved by Muluk may come up for hearing Wednesday before Additional Sessions Judge Dharmender Rana. Muluk had got transit bail from the Bombay High Court February 16 for 10 days. He, along with Ravi and another accused Nikita Jacob, was booked for alleged sedition and other charges.

criminal antecedents and having firm roots in the society, and send her to jail."

Ravi is already reported to have been interrogated in police custody for almost about five days and placing any further restraint upon her liberty on the basis of general and omnibus accusation would be neither logical nor legal, the Additional Sessions Judge said. The court further noted that no specific article, sought to be recovered from the possession of the accused, has been brought to notice. The resistance to the bail plea seems to be more of ornamental in nature, the judge added.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Forget WHO, let's claim our medicines are approved by NASA. It sounds more authentic.

Five die in Karn mine explosion

CHIKKABALLAPUR: Five persons died and one person injured after gelatin sticks exploded early Tuesday in a village bordering Chikkaballapur and Bangalore, the police said. Mine owners successfully hid mining blast material twice in the last fortnight while raids were to be carried out. On Tuesday fearing another round of raid, the mine owner appears to have decided to dispose of the explosives in forested area adjoining the mine, where large gorges exist. The blast occurred in the stone quarry unit situated in Hirenagavalli village in Chikkaballapur district of Karnataka. One person has reportedly sustained injuries. Hirenagavalli is a small hamlet in Chikkaballapur taluk in Chikkaballapur district of Karnataka. It is located 86 kms from tech hub Bangalore. **P9**

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		
VARIATION		
SENSEX	49751.41	▲ 7.09
NIFTY	14707.80	▲ 32.10
DOLLAR	72.45	▲ ₹0.01
EURO	88.12	▲ ₹0.07
GOLD	₹46,831	▼ ₹70
SILVER	₹69,520	▼ ₹912

WEATHER		
BHUB CTK		
MAX	37.3°C	35.4°C
MIN	17.1°C	15.4°C
Humidity	83%	68%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast		
Mainly clear sky		

Ex-MLA, aide held for assault, loot

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani, Feb 23: Town police here Tuesday arrested Debendra Kanhar, a former Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MLA of Phulbani Assembly segment in Kandhamal district and his associate on charge of an assault and loot.

The ex-MLA's aide was identified as Srinivas Kanhar, a police constable. The duo was produced in the court of sub-divisional judicial magistrate after registration of a case, public prosecutor Gouri Shankar Behera said.

The police action came after Kamakhya Behera, a resident of Kankuli village under Parjang police limits in Dhenkanal district, lodged a complaint in Town police station in Phulbani. Kamakhya accompanied by some of his friends was on his way to a relative's house at Kasinipadar village under Gochhapada police limits in the district, February 9.

He failed to find the route to Kashinipadar village and asked passersby for the road. He moved ahead and reached Katringia-Urmagarh road when Debendra and his associates waylaid them impersonating as police and asked the whereabouts of Kamkhya.

Kamakhya revealed his identity and that of his friend but Debendra asked them to accompany them to the police station. He brought them to Phulbani where he locked them up and assaulted them. Later, they snatched away ₹10,000 from Jamil, a friend of Kamakhya and forced Khalid to accompany them to an ATM where they made him withdraw ₹20,000 only to snatch it away from him.



Students and workers leave for their respective cities after the Pune administration announced partial restrictions citing an increase in Covid-19 cases in Pune, Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

FOREBODINGS

CBI may seek Biban's remand in Anjana case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: The Central Bureau of Investigation sleuths Tuesday met Commissioner of Police Sudhanshu Sarangi at his office in Police Seva Bhavan here. Sources said the two officials including the investigating officer and the lawyer discussed with the police commissioner the details in connection with the Anjana Mishra gangrape case in 1999.

However, the CBI sleuths re-

fused to share with the media details of the discussions with the commissioner. The officials told the press that the discussions were secret in nature which could not be disclosed before the press.

Meanwhile, sources revealed that the CBI will soon seek the court's permission to take the prime accused, Bibekananda Biswal, alias Biban, in remand for further investigation. The CBI will conduct a TI parade of Biban for identification by the witnesses in

Legal experts questioned the role of CBI and the state cops for failing to have the properties of Biban confiscated

the case.

The victim, Mishra, again requested the CBI to unravel the conspirators behind the heinous

crime. She reiterated her allegations about the involvement of former Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik and his lawyer friend then Advocate General Indrajit Ray in the case.

Meanwhile, legal experts questioned the role of CBI and the investigating officers of the state police for failing to request the court for the confiscation of the properties of Biban who remained absconded for 22 years despite the issuance of a warrant by the court.

As per Section 83 of the CrPC, the court can attach the property of the absconding offender if he fails to appear before the court within a certain period of time. Sources claimed that had the CBI officials taken advantage of the specific legal measure, it could have succeeded in arresting Biban.

Notably, the commissionerate police, in a secret operation, managed to arrest Biban from Aamby Valley in Lonavala area of Maharashtra February 20.

Facebook to restore news services in Australia

AGENCIES

Melbourne, Feb 23: Social media giant Facebook on Tuesday said it will restore news services in Australia after it reached a revised agreement with the government on the proposed media bargaining laws, which aim to make technology companies pay for hosting news content.

The dispute on paying news organisations for sharing journalism content came to a head last week, when Facebook banned Australians from sharing news articles. Inadvertently, some government pages and announcements, including

alerts on COVID-19, were blocked too, drawing severe backlash.

The Australian government's landmark media bargaining laws, also being called 'the code', is yet to be passed in its Parliament.

Australian government Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, who has held detailed discussions with Facebook Founder Mark Zuckerberg, on Tuesday said: "Facebook has refriended Australia. Australian news will be restored to the Facebook platform, and Facebook has committed to entering into good-faith negotiations with Australian news media businesses and seeking to



reach agreements to pay for content." Frydenberg, quoting Zuckerberg, said Facebook will sign individual

commercial deals with news publishers and that these discussions "are pretty advanced with a num-

ber of (news) parties." Similar to Facebook, internet services heavyweight Google is also expected to follow the media bargaining code. Google and Facebook can avoid the code altogether, if they can satisfy the government that enough deals with news organisations have been struck outside it.

"It has been a difficult process, but these are really important issues. Facebook is now going to engage in good faith negotiations with the commercial players," he said.

In a statement, Facebook said it was "pleased" the company was able to reach an agreement with

the Australian government.

"After further discussions, we are satisfied that the Australian government has agreed to a number of changes and guarantees that address our core concerns about allowing commercial deals that recognise the value our platform provides to publishers, relative to the value we receive from them," Facebook said.

"As a result of these changes, we can now work to further our investment in public interest journalism and restore news on Facebook for Australians in the coming days."

FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL \$5181*

ARIES

Today you are going to have a great time, but only if you plan out the right things, says Ganesha. At the work place it will be business as usual with its highs and lows. But make some good plan for the evening and you will be surprised. Try something romantic.

TAURUS

This day your reasoning, speculations and conjectures could be letting you down. You may thus feel dejected because things are not working out the way you had planned and anticipated. Be prepared and forearmed. Move away from whatever you are doing and spend as much time as you can with friends and relatives.

GEMINI

A day when you get the opportunity to show what stuff you are made of. By afternoon, you will be in your elements and will feel almost invincible. Your optimism will rub off on your colleagues and the atmosphere at the workplace will be nothing short of electrifying, says Ganesha.

CANCER

Today, your action will usher in incredible results, thanks to your forthright approach, foretells Ganesha. Later in the day, you may work on self-improvement and personality development. You may make some changes in your house.

LEO

Do not underscore your influence and importance today, says Ganesha. You hold the key to many doors, and hence, your ability to influence people is at its strongest today. In business, this means that you have a major role to play in new deals.

VIRGO

Perhaps, your artistic talents will shine out today, says Ganesha. You will be very happy with your personal belongings, which you have preserved for years. Later in the day, you may beautify your house by adding furniture and artefacts at appropriate places.

LIBRA

Some things are always remembered with fondness. Today may be one of those days when you tend to get wistful and nostalgic. Let this emotion spur you on and later in the day, you may strive hard to reconnect with your near and dear ones.

SCORPIO

You are likely to have an urge to lead a more active and healthy lifestyle today. You will focus on improving your eating habits and consider your options for exercise, says Ganesha. On the work front, you will realise that learning to enjoy work is the best way of getting things done. Darned with this realisation, you will feel complete and content.

SAGITTARIUS

Ganesha foresees a gradual weakening in your position. You are most likely to bring troubles upon yourself as the day progresses. Good economic gains are expected if you change the hub of your activities.

CAPRICORN

Nothing in the world can be as comforting as the support of your family members, and you will have that in plenty today, especially if you're setting out to refurbish your house, says Ganesha. With their support, you can win the world and achieve the impossible, but since everything comes with a price tag – even happiness – get ready to pay for a fat bill; the support of your loved ones won't come cheap.

AQUARIUS

Fame and fortune woo you today! And along with recognitions and rewards, you receive encouragement to do even better. Your bosses are pleased, but feel that you haven't really given your 100%.

PISCES

Contemplating on the source which triggered problems for you recently will be the order of the day. Identifying the source is half the work done; eliminating it is just a matter of initiative and courage, says Ganesha.



SCOTT DISICK INTRODUCES TEEN GIRLFRIEND TO KIDS

Television personality Scott Disick reportedly introduced his girlfriend, teen model Amelia Hamlin, to his three children -- Mason, Penelope and Reign -- in Miami. Scott shares custody of the children with ex-girlfriend Kourtney Kardashian.

KATE WINSLET ALMOST DIED DURING AVATAR 2 SHOOT

Actress Kate Winslet had to shoot a seven-minute underwater sequence for James Cameron's much-hyped upcoming *Avatar 2*, and she admits the experience literally scared her to death.



Malaika shares her 'daily shenanigans'

Mumbai: Malaika Arora Tuesday shared a video featuring what she terms as her daily shenanigans.

Malaika posted a clip on Instagram. In the video she is seen playing with a puppy. She dressed in a white tank top and black gym shorts, and she completes her look with white sneakers and a neat bun.

"My daily shenanigans with our precious little feisty #coco... she has my (can't say the same for Casper who is sh*t scared of coco)," Malaika wrote alongside the clip.

Malaika is an avid social media user and keeps sharing about her personal and professional life on the digital platforms.

Recently, she advised her fans to follow a routine, eat right and work hard to bring balance between their body, mind and soul and become the ideal version of themselves. IANS



Deepika is inspiration to many: Manushi

Mumbai: Miss India 2017 Manushi Chhillar is all set for a Hindi film debut in the ambitious historical drama *Prithviraj*. She stars opposite superstar Akshay Kumar who essays the title role of Prithviraj Chauhan. She feels lucky that her film is scheduled for release on Diwali, one of the most important weekends of the year.

"I'm getting a Diwali debut similar to the debut Deepika Padukone got with *Om Shanti Om*. So, I can only consider myself fortunate. Deepika is someone many girls look up to and is an inspiration to many," said, Manushi. "Growing up, I remember going to the theatre to watch a movie during Diwali. It was evident to us that one of the biggest films of the year would be released on Diwali and (watching films) was a community viewing exercise. Today, as my film



has been slated for a Diwali release, I can only be grateful that I'm getting this launch by YRF," added Manushi. *Prithviraj* has been scheduled for a release November 5. The film is directed by Dr Chandraprakash Dwivedi. IANS

23RD KALINGA NATYA MAHOTSAV

Bengali play *Sappho Chitrangada* time travels into past



Bhubaneswar: Dum Dum Shabdomugdhoo Naatyokendra of West Bengal staged its new production *Sappho Chitrangada* Tuesday, on the second day of 23rd Kalinga Natya Mahotsav, here at Rabindra Mandap. Directed by Rakesh Ghosh, the play was about how Rabindranath Tagore's 'Madan' of popular dance drama *Chitrangada* gets romantically involved with Sappho (an ancient Greek poetess) and Chitrangada (a warrior princess of Mahabharata) with the help of time machine. Ranjan Bose, Lopamudra Guha Neogi and Krishna Roy played the central characters in the drama. The dignitaries present on the occasion included Kendrapara MLA Sashi Bhushan Behera, retired IAS RN Senapati, OUA's VC PK Agarwal and Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi secretary Prabodh Kumar Rath.

Kalira Atita to be premiered at FEBIOFEST

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: After getting into the race for Oscars, *Kalira Atita* (Yesterday's Past), an Odia feature film scripted, directed and produced by filmmaker Nila Madhab Panda, has been selected for its world premiere in one of the oldest global film festivals, the 28th Prague International Film Festival, FEBIOFEST.

Scheduled from April 29 to May 7, it is the longest running and the biggest feature film festival in the world, based out of the beautiful city of Prague, Czech Republic. While releasing the movie's trailer, the filmmaker said, "We have the pleasure to inform you that the film will have another world premiere in Prague. I am happy to release the first trailer of *Kalira Atita* and I hope people will love it and share all over."

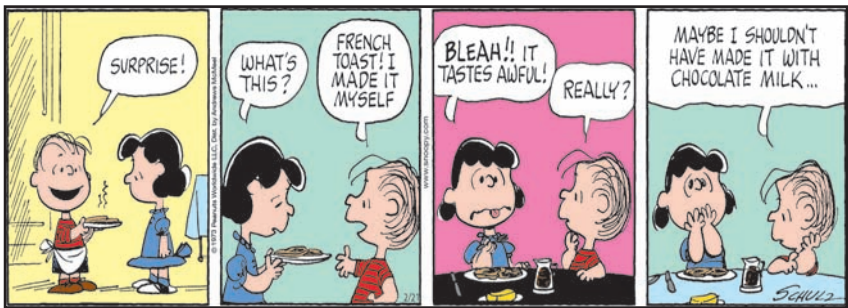
The film was also screened at the Panorama Section at IFFI in January. The journey for this film started when Nila saw a photo of a hand pump in a newspaper in 2006. He was shocked to see the pump drowned in the sea, and the picture showed the horrifying truth of sea ingress to him. Nila says that he has followed the story of sea ingress for over one and a half decades. He did not follow any screenplay or story for this film, but took his team to the affected areas in Kendrapara dis-



trict in Odisha, and shot the film without makeup, sets and lights. The film, starring Pitobash Tripathy,

is a story of the struggle between man and sea, highlighting the issue of seawater ingress.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

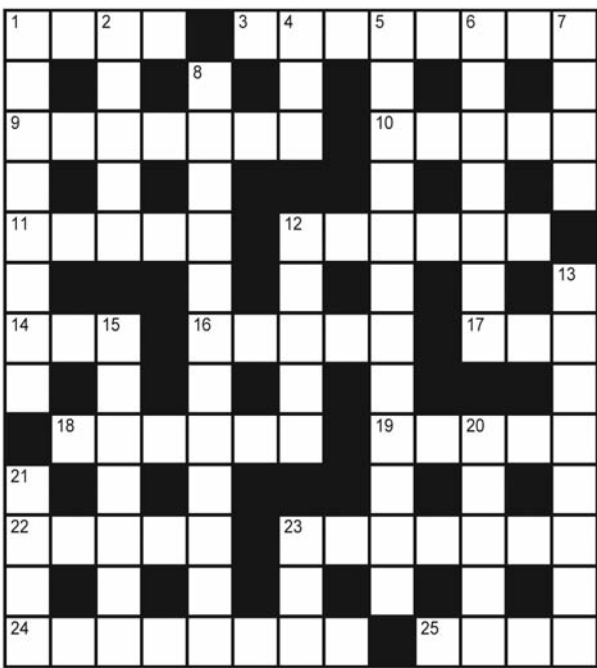


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Lacking slack
- 3 Drive away
- 9 Lobster part
- 10 Run-of-the-mill
- 11 Somewhat (Prefix)
- 12 Magician's word
- 14 Rascal
- 16 Snapshot
- 17 Chinese tea

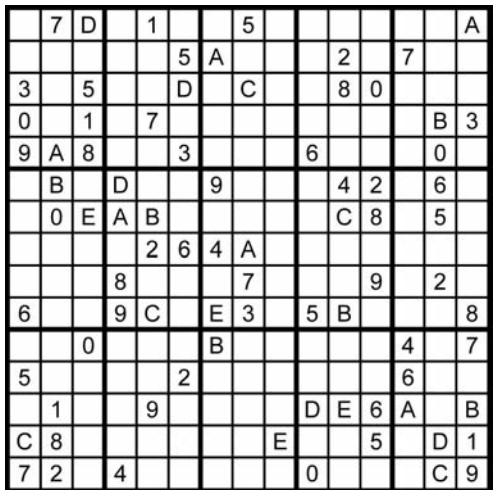
Down

- 1 Serene
- 2 Extreme
- 4 Rustic locale
- 5 Perfume (3,2,7)
- 18 Kind of code
- 19 Alpha's opposite
- 22 Leftover
- 23 Colombian coin
- 24 Egg dish
- 25 Wild hog

- 6 Like some plants and birds
- 7 Congers
- 8 Many facts are this
- 12 Move like a cat
- 13 Lover
- 15 Supermarket section
- 20 Poetic Muse
- 21 Audio effect
- 23 Simple sack

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

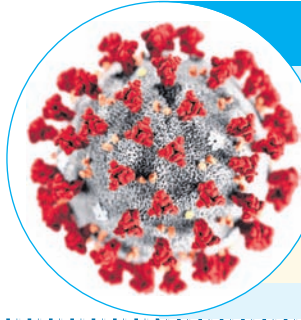


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



ELDERLY CARE

An elderly woman being provided with an identity card during a meeting between police and senior citizens in Puri, Tuesday. The meeting was organised to ensure safety and security for the elderly people



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	11,24,27,201	8,79,85,886	24,89,512
India	1,10,15,864	1,07,10,487	1,56,498
Odisha	3,36,767	3,34,243	1,914

RAJIV DUBEY

COVID AN OPPORTUNITY TO RETURN STRONGER: HERO MOTOCORP

The Covid-19 pandemic damaged every economic activity causing losses to all sectors. Amid such a crisis, **CEO of Rohan Autoriders Private Limited, Rajiv Dubey**, offers a rare glimpse into the current state of the automotive industry and Hero Motocorp's future plans. *Excerpts:*



■ Do you see sales growth post lockdown?

■ Hero MotoCorp took the pandemic as an opportunity to return stronger. We saw that heavy vehicles registered growth which signifies that the economy is on track. Two-wheelers have also registered a 15 per cent growth Yo-Y. It is expected that the industry will recover at a much faster pace. Hero MotoCorp has grown by 15-16 per cent. Odisha is also on the same track.

■ What was the two-wheeler buying trend in Bhubaneswar during the pandemic?

■ Bhubaneswar is an urban market with its demand for two-wheelers going up. Due to the pandemic, the two-wheeler market was severely affected. But post pandemic, the city has seen 60-70% of the pre-Covid sales.

■ How do you see the future of EVs in India?

■ All automobile companies are conscious about EVs. But it will take almost 15 years to set up full-fledged infrastructure. Without infrastructure, like setting up of charging centers, EV demand may not rise. The Odisha government is also aware of the matter and has provided sufficient incentive

to set up EV factories in Odisha. As a result, three EV plants are coming up in the state.

■ How do you see the taxation of two-wheelers?

■ GST on two-wheelers is very high, about 28%. The GST has to come down for the benefit of all stakeholders. Now two-wheelers have become necessary for all. Therefore, there is need for GST reduction.

■ What difficulties companies faced during BS VI implementation?

■ BS VI was a big challenge for us. The government placed a condition that all vehicles have to be registered by March 31, 2020. Now there was a big pressure on RTO. Due to registration traffic, the portal got crashed. It was very difficult to meet the deadline and to obey the Supreme Court order for the registration by March 27. The transition from BS IV to VI was a bit trouble-

some. However, Hero's BS VI vehicles were very well accepted for which we posted a good recovery. BS VI model was costlier by 15 per cent which was a big pressure on buyers, but now the market has accepted it.

■ Any suggestions to government

■ GST should be reduced on two-wheelers and the government should also take note that insurance premiums are high.

Moreover, the government should promote EVs and take steps to set up infrastructure.



CM announces ₹68Cr package for Pipli

NAVEEN APPROVES THE DESIGN OF PROPOSED ODIA UNIVERSITY AT SATYABADI

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: Ahead of the byelection, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday interacted with the people of Pipli and Delang in Puri district through a video-conference and announced projects worth ₹68 crore for the area.

A wide range of infrastructure projects including roads, irrigation, stadiums, bridges and bus stands will be constructed in the area. Naveen said that a Model School will be opened at Beraboi in Delang where Mahatma Gandhi had arrived in 1938.

As part of the celebration of 100 years of Gandhiji's first visit to Odisha in 1921, a memorial will be developed at Beraboi, he said.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister said that he has always focused on the development of the village, women and farmers. "It's the smile on the face of the poor that gives me the most satisfaction," he said.

Remembering former Pipli MLA late Pradeep Maharathy, he said, "He has been associated with the development of Pipli-Delang for more than 30 years. He was with you in all your good and bad times. He has worked throughout his life to develop Pipli and Delang."

He appreciated the work of the Mission Shakti mothers during the coronavirus-induced lockdown and the farmers who continued agri-



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik interacting with the people of Pipli and Delang through videoconferencing

OP PHOTO

BYPOLL AHEAD

A wide range of infrastructure projects including roads, irrigation, stadiums, bridges and bus stands will be constructed in the area

A Model School will be opened at Beraboi in Delang where Mahatma Gandhi had arrived in 1938

As part of the celebration of 100 years of Gandhiji's first visit to Odisha in 1921, a memorial will be developed at Beraboi

"The country's economy is alive today because of the hard work of the farmers. Therefore, I thank the women and farmers," said the Chief Minister.

During the event, ration cards were distributed to 1,761 persons in Pipli while 3,059 were given monthly pensions. Similarly in Delang, 320 people were given ration cards and 1,230 were given social security pension while tricycles were distributed to 20 persons with disabilities.

Two public meetings were organised in Pipli and Delanga where ministers Samir Ranjan Dash and Tusharkanti Behera were present.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister has also approved the design of proposed Odia University to be set up at Satyabadi (Sakhigopal) in Puri. The state government has earmarked 25 acres of land for the purpose.

It may be mentioned here that Panchasakha (five friends)-Gopabandhu Das, Krupasindhu Mishra, Harihar Das, Pandit Godabarish Mishra and Nilakantha Das- had set up Bakula Bana Vidyalaya, the first model open school of the state at Sakhigopal in 1909. Now, the state government is going to set up Odia University at the same place.

OPSC told to fill 606 asst professor posts

BHUBANESWAR: Higher Education department Tuesday wrote to Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) for recruitment of 606 assistant professors at government colleges under Odisha Education Services (College Branch) Recruitment Rules, 2020. In a letter, Higher Education department additional secretary JN Sarangi directed the OPSC to take steps for fresh requisition for recruitment of 606 numbers of assistant professors of government colleges and also directed to cancel the previous advertisement issued by the commission.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Fake cement unit busted in Cuttack



POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 23: The twin city Commissionerate Police Tuesday busted a fake cement unit operating near Khaira bridge along Kendrapara-Chandbali Road here.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team, led by ACP (Zone-I) Amarendra

Panda, raided the unit and recovered a huge quantity of adulterated cement. "The unit's owner—Sanjay Bhola—a resident of Buxibazar in the Millennium City here, however, managed to flee the scene," Panda said.

About the modus operandi, the senior police official said that

they used to mix damaged cement with good ones, pack them in bags of reputed brands before selling them in the open market across the state.

Sources said that the Silver City has virtually become a hub for manufacturing adulterated items, including food stuffs, with police officials busting fake units almost every other day.

In one such instance, the Commissionerate Police had busted another fake cement manufacturing unit at Surya Nagar under Jagatpur police limits here December 22 last year. The officials seized 1,000 bags of adulterated cement. Around 10,000 bags of damaged cement, new empty cement bags, different equipment and tools used for the production and packaging of fake cement were also seized.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: Over the years, human beings have virtually overtaken and captured the habitats of wild animals. As a result, the incidents of human-animal conflict have become a day-to-day affair and both human beings and animals are being killed in the conflicts.

As many as 689 people and 836 animals including 360 elephants lost their lives due to man-animal conflict between 2015 and 2020, Forest and Environment Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha told the Assembly, Tuesday.



In a written reply to a question raised by Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati, Arukha said 102 persons were killed in the conflicts in 2015 while it rose to 113 in 2016. Similarly, 111 people were killed in 2017, 109 in 2018, 128 in 2019 and 126 in 2020, he said.

As per the data provided by the minister, 58 elephants died in 2015 while 55 got killed in 2016, 62 in 2017, 82 in 2018, 60 in 2019 and 43 during last year.

Similarly, 199 wild boar or pigs, 84 spotted deer, 74 barking deer, 38 bears and 26 Sambars succumbed in fights with human beings during the last six years.

Besides, six pangolins, five hyenas, five jackals, five leopards, five rabbits, four bison, two black bucks, two civet cats, two chousinghas (four-horned antelope), one crocodile, a jungle cat, one monitor lizard, four monkeys, a peacock, two pythons, four rats and a wolf died due to such fights.

To prevent man-animal conflict, the state government has engaged 4,130 persons of local community



102 persons were killed in the conflicts in 2015 while it rose to 113 in 2016

58 elephants died in 2015 while 55 got killed in 2016, 62 in 2017, 82 in 2018, 60 in 2019 and 43 during last year

while 220 'Gaja Bandhus' have been deployed for monitoring the movement of elephants, the minister said. Besides, a control room has been opened at all forest divisional offices and state headquarters here, he said.

To prevent entry of animals into the human settlements, 1,047 km solar fencing and 1,250 km trench have been created during the 2014-15 and 2019-20 fiscals. Plantation activities have been undertaken inside the forest areas to feed the herbivorous animals, Arukha added.

AIR POLLUTION IN 7 TOWNS ALARMING

BHUBANESWAR: Seven places in the state have been termed as non-attainment cities due to increase in air pollution, Forest and Environment Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha told the Assembly, Tuesday. The places are: Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Balasore, Anugul, Talcher, Rourkela and Kalinganagar (Jajpur).

Replying to a non-starred query raised by MLA Prasanta Behera, Arukha said as the air pollution level is not maintained at normal level in the seven places, all have been categorised as non-attainment cities.

The presence of pollutants – PM10 and PM2.5 remained high in the seven cities and towns. However, the level of SO2 and NoX are within

the limits in the places, he informed the House.

The minister said the state government has chalked out plan to lessen the air pollution level in these locations. Air pollution has become very serious in urban areas, mainly due to automobile exhausts, industrial emissions and construction works, sources said.



OP PHOTO

A mandap near Smanas Kali temple at Khannagar in Cuttack being demolished for the construction of Netaji Bus Terminal

Left out health, frontline workers told to take vax

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: The Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department Tuesday asked all the left out health workers and front-line workers to take Covid vaccine within the timeline set by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

REFUSAL MAY POSE THREAT

Over 85% healthcare workers have so far been vaccinated in Odisha

The state secures third position in the country in terms of vaccination of healthcare workers and frontline workers said the letter

However, it has come to notice that despite repeated instructions, a few registered health workers and frontline workers have not taken the first dose of Covid vaccine

In a letter to all the district Collectors and district magistrates and commissioners of all municipal corporations, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) PK Mahapatra said that over 85 per cent of healthcare workers have been vaccinated in Odisha. The state secures third position in the country in terms of vaccination of healthcare workers and frontline workers said the letter.

“However, it has come to notice that despite repeated instructions, a few registered health workers and frontline workers have not taken the first dose of



Covid vaccine. The state has claimed Covid vaccine doses from the Centre as per the number of health workers and frontline workers registered for vaccination. If we do not utilise the vaccines allocated to us, we will be missing out on the critical opportunity to fight the pandemic. Further, those health workers and frontline workers

who remain unvaccinated will put the community in danger,” added the letter.

The letter further said, “In view of this, we hereby direct the healthcare workers and frontline workers, who have been registered for vaccination and now willfully refusing the vaccination, will henceforth cease to enjoy the privileges

CAN'T REOPEN SCHOOLS FOR CLASS I-VIII NOW: MIN

BHUBANESWAR: Setting aside speculations of reopening of schools for Class I to VIII students, School and Mass Education (S&ME) Minister Samir Ranjan Dash Tuesday clarified that there is no plan on resuming physical classes for the students as of now.

The government's decision came in the backdrop of a spike in Covid cases in a few states, including Maharashtra and Gujarat. The S&ME minister, however, clarified that the decision on resuming

physical classes will be taken later after assessing the situation.

The state government was contemplating resumption of physical classes for students of Class I to VIII from February 23. The students were to attend 60 days of physical classes before their final examinations with strict adherence to Covid-19 guidelines. Notably, physical classroom teaching for Class IX and XI students resumed February 8, while that for Class X and XII began January 8.

granted by the government in case of Covid-19 infection.”

The department directed all the Collectors and commissioners of all municipal corporations to publish the direction and take steps to

ensure that all healthcare and frontline workers are inoculated.

Notably, the state government had begun vaccination of health workers and frontline workers January 16.

62 more test Covid positive in state

BHUBANESWAR: State's Covid-19 caseload mounted to 3,36,767 Tuesday as 62 more people tested positive for the infection, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

Of the fresh cases, 37 were reported from quarantine centres and 25 during contact tracing.

Sambalpur district recorded the highest number of new cases at 12, followed by Khurda and Cuttack at seven each. Kandhamal and Nabarangpur districts have turned 'coronavirus free' as no active case exists there, the official said.

ODISHA'S CORONAVIRUS TOLL REMAINED UNCHANGED AT 1,914 AS NO FRESH FATALITY WAS REPORTED SINCE FRIDAY LAST WEEK

KANDHAMAL AND NABARANGPUR DISTRICTS HAVE TURNED 'CORONAVIRUS FREE' AS NO ACTIVE CASE EXISTS THERE

Friday last week.

As many as 53 other coronavirus patients have died in the coastal state due to comorbidities.

Odisha now has 634 active cases, and 3,34,166 people have so far recovered from the disease.

Replying to a question in the Assembly, H&FW Minister Naba Kishore Das said that the state government has spent nearly ₹389.59 crore for the treatment of Covid-19 patients since the outbreak of the disease in Odisha.

The state has so far conducted over 82 lakh sample tests for Covid-

19, including 17,392 Monday, and the positivity rate stands at 4.1 per cent.

With reports of surging coronavirus cases in some parts of the country, special relief commissioner PK Jena has asked all the district Collectors and commissioners of municipal corporations to focus on strict implementation of health safety guidelines in public places to contain the spread of the disease.

Jena also said special attention should be given to schools where physical classes have resumed.

SPL TRAIN BETWEEN DIBRUGARH, KANYAKUMARI



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: It has been decided to run a pair of special trains between Dibrugarh and Kanyakumari from February 27.

The Dibrugarh - Kanyakumari - Dibrugarh Special will leave Dibrugarh every Saturday at 7:25pm and depart from Kanyakumari (from March 4) every Thursday at 5:30pm.

This train will have halts at Bhadrak, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Khurda Road, Berhampur, Palasa, Srikakulam Road, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and Duvvada in ECoR jurisdiction and at important stations between Dibrugarh & Kanyakumari from both the directions.

Earlier, ECoR had decided to run special train between Puri & Yog Nagari Rishikesh during Mahakumbh Mela at Haridwar.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit before Executive Magistrate, BBSR, I intend to change my surname from “Haritha Mishra” to “Haritha Chakraborty” after my marriage to Mahadeb Chakraborty. Henceforth I shall be identified as Haritha Chakraborty for all purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit I Smt. Ganga Sahu and Meera Sahu (55 yr.), W/o. Benudhar Sahu, Vill- Khallikote, Tell Sahi, P.O./P.S.- Khallikote, Dist.- Ganjam, Aadhaar Card No. 837206929478 state that both Ganga Sahu and Meera Sahu are one and same person for all purpose.

JEE (Mains) underway at 17 towns in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: The Joint Entrance Examination (Mains) conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) in Computer Based Test (CBT) mode is being conducted across 331 cities throughout the country from Tuesday to February 26. In Odisha, the examination is going on at 17 towns.

These 17 places where the JEE (Mains) is being conducted are Angul, Bhadrak, Baripada, Bhawanipatna, Balasore, Berhampur, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Jajpur, Jagatsinghpur, Jeypore, Kendrapara, Keonjhar, Puri, Rourkela and Sambalpur.

The examinations will be conducted in two sittings. First sitting will be from 9am to 12pm and the second sitting from 3pm to 6pm.

The examinations are being held in adherence to Covid-19 guidelines and face mask has been made compulsory for candidates.

The Ministry of Education had announced in December 2020 that JEE-Mains for admission to engineering colleges would be held four times a year starting 2021 to offer flexibility to students and a chance to improve their scores. While the first edition of the Joint Entrance Examination-Mains (JEE-Mains) is being conducted now, the second, third and fourth editions will be held in March, April and May respectively.

BMC survey for trade licence begins

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Monday began a survey in three zones under its jurisdiction to identify traders operating without licence, an official said.

“The surveying agency will identify traders under BMC limits operating without a requisite licence. The survey will take about a month's time. The agency will collect ward-wise information along with location details for easy identification,” BMC deputy commissioner (Revenue) Srimanta Mishra said.

Mishra, however, clarified that

roadside or mobile vendors are exempted from the survey. On the basis of the agency's report, BMC will assess the revenue loss and take actions thereafter.

According to the civic body sources, the agency will mobilise 40 field surveyors for the job. The agency will reportedly get ₹47.80

per business unit surveyed.

Notably, more than 50,000 trade units have been operating within the BMC area. However, only 13,000 of them have obtained the prescribed licence. Lack of registration and fee payment has resulted in the civic body suffering a huge loss of revenue.

MATRUBHASHA DIWAS

IIT-Bhub mulls course in local language: Raja Kumar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bhubaneswar Tuesday celebrated 'Matrubhasha Diwas' to commemorate 'Fostering multilingualism for inclusion in education and society', the theme observed by UNESCO this year to promote use of mother tongues.

The Ministry of Education is celebrating it as 'Matrubhasha Diwas' with the objective of sensitising people on the need for greater use of mother tongues and other Indian languages for development and progress of the nation.

State government's Mo School initiative chairperson, Susmita Bagchi, was the chief guest of the occasion. The event was presided

Ministry of Education is celebrating 'Matrubhasha Diwas' with the objective of sensitising people on the need for greater use of mother tongues and other Indian languages for development and progress of the nation

National Education Policy 2020 has given importance to mother tongues since it encourages professional courses in mother languages to reduce the gap within, says IIT-Bhubaneswar director RV Raja Kumar

over by IIT-Bhubaneswar director RV Raja Kumar: “India is a land of rich linguistic diversity. Multilingualism in our nation extends back to several



The event in progress at IIT-Bhubaneswar

OP PHOTO

millennia. This linguistic diversity is an asset which we have inherited and it is a resource for each

one of us. Bhasha or language is not just a means for communication; it has expressions of emotions, her-

Man gets back ₹3.17L lost to fraudsters

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: The Commissionerate Police claimed to have retrieved ₹3.17 lakh cash looted by cyber criminals on the pretext of setting up mobile tower of a reputed cellular service provider company. The victim was identified as Rabindra Chattar, a resident of Angul. He has been staying with his elder brother Narayan in Balakati area on the outskirts of the city.

According to sources, Rabindra received a call from unknown cyber fraudster who identified himself as the staff of a telecom giant in India. The criminal told Rabindra that the company required place to set up mobile tower in at his house. They also informed the victim that he would get ₹12,500 as rent and he would be appointed as a security guard at the tower too. They first asked Rabindra to register him-

The victim deposited over ₹3 lakh in the cyber criminal's account in installments between Jan 23 and Feb 12

self with the company on a payment of ₹8,500 which he did.

Subsequently, he deposited more than ₹3 lakh in the cyber criminal's account in various installments between 23 January and February 12. However, he was convinced that he was trapped after the accused continued to demand more money from him.

Rabindra lodged a complaint with the cyber cell February 13 following which the cell swung into the action and blocked the money trail by informing the bank. Rabindra Tuesday received ₹3.17 lakh lost to the cyber criminals.

TiE to host 'Hall of Fame'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: In a bid to foster entrepreneurship through mentoring, networking, education, funding and incubation, TiE Bhubaneswar in association with Startup Odisha will organise 'Hall of Fame' February 25 here.

About 25 selected startups would showcase their products and services and 10 startups would be pitching before investors for funding. Top state government officials are scheduled to

attend the event. Investors from various parts of India like Bhubaneswar Angels, Mumbai Angels, Unicorn India Ventures and from 100X VC would be participating for the startups pitching session. A special session on pitching is scheduled to be held with selected startups who can pitch and get their attention and funding as well.

All participants will also get an opportunity to interact with investors in a separate Open House session.

INFRA BOOST



DGP (Fire Services) Satyajit Mohanty inaugurates a Civil Defence Training Institute at Baramunda Fire Station in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

NLUO GETS VED KUMARI AS NEW VC

NEW DELHI: Former Dean and Head of the Faculty of Law at Delhi University Prof Ved Kumari has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of National Law University, Odisha (NLU Odisha). Prof Kumari will take charge from Prof Yogesh Pratap Singh, who was serving as Vice-Chancellor in charge since October last year, following the exit of Prof Srikrishna Deva Rao, who left to become Vice-Chancellor of National Law University, Delhi. As per reports, the Search Committee comprised Vice-Chancellor of Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University (RMLNU) Lucknow Prof SK Bhatnagar; NALSAR Hyderabad Vice-Chancellor Prof Faizan Mustafa; and former Supreme Court Judge Justice AK Patnaik. This Committee recommended three names, including Prof Kumari's, to the Chancellor.

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POTATO DISTRESS SALE

Traders bank on poor storage infra

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Feb 23: Distress sale of potato has hit the farmers hard in this district due to lack of storage facilities or food processing units in the district, a report said.

Memory is still fresh when potato was selling Rs 40 a kg two months back but gone are those days as farmers now sell the staple to traders at Rs 3 a kg. Farmers in the district now feel entrapped by undertaking potato cultivation as they have been forced to sell the tuber at throwaway prices to the traders due to lack of storage facilities or any government owned mandis to sell their stock.

Sensing better returns, farmers undertook potato cultivation but there are hardly any takers leading to distress sale.

A potato farmer Bidhu Bhushan Mohapatra of Palei village under Derabish block said that this year he has spent around Rs 1 lakh on potato cultivation on his four acre of land. He has reaped a good harvest but they have been caught on the wrong foot when it comes to sell their produce.

He alleged that a kg of potato sells at Rs 6 a kg in the market but the traders are only giving Rs 300 per quintal of their produce. They are forced to sell their produce at throwaway prices due to lack of



HOBSON'S CHOICE

ONE KG OF POTATO SELLS AT RS 6 IN THE MARKET

BUT THE TRADERS ARE OFFERING RS 300 PER QUINTAL TO THE FARMERS

LACK OF COLD STORAGES AND FOOD PROCESSING UNITS LEAVES NO CHOICE FOR THE FARMERS BUT TO CAPITULATE TO THE TRADERS' OFFERS

any storage facilities in the district. He has estimated that he will suffer a loss of Rs 40,000 from the cultivation. A farmer Kalpataru Samantaray of Pattamundai said many residents living outside of the state had returned to the district due to spread of Covid-19 disease in the country. The demand for potato was then rising following which the migrants and the local farmers cultivated the tuber on 30,000 hectare of land. Their hard work bore fruits but they failed to store their produce due to lack of any cold storage in the district.

Moreover, they also failed to sell their produce to the government due to absence of any government owned mandis. With the tuber rotting in their houses, traders started flocking to them and forced them to sell their produce at throwaway prices. He said that the potato mission of the state government could

be a success if the latter takes care to open cold storages in the district to store their crops.

A young entrepreneur Ratanlal Samal said farmers are resorting to distress sale during harvest of potato and tomatoes in the district. However, this could be done away with if the state government promotes establishment of food processing units like tomato sauce and potato chips manufacturing units.

He said people interested for establishment of these units are approaching various banks and the District Industries Centre (DIC) for loans and approvals. However, these industries are yet to take shape in the district due to lack of coordination between various banks and DIC authorities, he lamented.

Farmer leader Gayadhar Dhal said that the state government launched potato mission in 2015-2016 with an aim to make the state

self-sufficient in tuber production in the state and help farmer earn profit from the cultivation and cut off the dependency of tuber on outside state.

However, the scheme implemented by the state horticulture department has been a failure due to lack of effective implementation. The state government had sanctioned Rs 20 crore under the mission in 2017-18 fiscal.

However, the CAG in its 2019 report has claimed that not a single pie has been spent for the cultivation. He added that the problem can be resolved through establishment of cold storages, food processing units and government mandis.

When contacted, Kanda Jena, assistant director of Horticulture department admitted to the claim that cold storage could resolve the problem but the district lacks any such units.



Volunteers clean the beach near Rusikulya river mouth in Ganjam as Olive Ridleys are to begin mass nesting

Guised as saints, men loot mobile shop in Bolangir

POST NEWS NETWORK

Saintala, Feb 23: Two looters in guise of saints have looted a mobile shop owner of a mobile phone and cash at Saitala bank square in Bolangir district.

The incident has been the talk of the town for the looters devising a unique way to loot the shop.

According to Ramesh Sahu, the victim shop owner, Monday, an SUV stopped in front of his shop and two saints with matted locks, garlands of beads around their necks and tilaks on foreheads got down from it. They came straight to Ramesh's shop and asked him for a glass of water. After emptying the glass, while blessing Ramesh for offering them water, one of them put a tilak of vermilion on his forehead and sprinkled holy ash on him. Then the second imposter asked him to show an android phone.

Ramesh showed him a phone worth Rs 11,490. Later taking advantages of Ramesh being inattentive to them, they managed to decamp from the spot with the mobile phone and money from the cash box.

After realising that he had been robbed of, Ramesh lodged a report at Saintala police station. Registering a case, the police have retrieved the footage captured in CCTV installed at Ramesh's shop and launched an investigation. "Our efforts are on to nab the looters," said Saintala SI Prasanna Naik.

Mother-son duo held for murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bahanaga, Feb 23: Around 11 days after killing her younger son, a woman along with her elder son was arrested from Ichhapur village under Soro police limits in Balasore district Tuesday.

The arrested mother-son duo was identified as Sukuri Jena and her son Jagabandhu Jena. They had killed Balamram Jena - the younger son.

According to the police, Balamram and Sukuri had a heated verbal duel 11 days ago. The scene turned ugly as Sukuri in a fit of rage attacked her son with a crowbar. Balamram died on the spot.

Sukuri then sought help from her elder son Jagabandhu to dump the body so as to avoid police action. Later, the mother-son duo buried



the body in their house. And then the duo remained missing for some days. In fact, they were away to perform some rituals.

The matter came to the fore when they returned to their village. Suspecting something wrong with Balamram, their neighbours informed the police. During interrogation, Sukuri and Jagabandhu confessed to their crime.

Police retrieved the body after digging up inside the house.

Compulsory retirement for 35 teachers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, Feb 23: The School and Mass Education department has given compulsory retirement to 34 teachers in Sundargarh. The move of the department has caused flutters among the teachers, a report said.

According to the report, the School and Mass Education department issued a letter- 1537m dated January 1 to the district administration to identify the teachers above 50 years neglecting their duties, being inefficient and their inability to teach. On the basis of this report, these teachers should be given voluntary retirement.

However, teachers alleged that before taking such step, they were not served with show cause notices or even informed. The teachers lamented that their service period is yet to expire.

Among these teachers are 15 of primary school and 19 of high schools.

On the other hand, district education officer Pramod Kumar Sarangi said that on the basis of observation of their conduct and activities, a report had been prepared and sent to the School and Mass Education department.

Following a directive from the School and Mass Education department, the teachers were given premature retirement. But they will be handed out salaries of three months and pension benefit, the DEO added.

Why this Bargarh village depends on Chhattisgarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Feb 23: Sukamanipur is a fringe village of Bargarh district sharing borders with Chhattisgarh. There is no border issue here, but people of this village completely depend on Jharkhand amid allegation that local residents are deprived of basic facilities which are supposed to be provided by the state (Odisha) government, a report said.

This village is in Bhandarpur panchayat under Jharbandh block. However, it is 20 km from the block headquarters.

Though we stay in Odisha, all basic facilities like education, healthcare, roads and drinking water are remote to us, the locals rued.

The tribal dominated village has a population of 436. The residents belong to tribal communities like Gond, Agharia and Sahanra. Interestingly, they speak in Laria (Chhattisgarhi language) as they have long term association with Chhattisgarh.

Agriculture is the mainstay of their livelihood, but lack of irrigation facilities is a major stumbling block for the growth of this sector. The crops are fed by monsoon rains.

For lack of a stable livelihood, most people migrate out of their area in search of work, they added.

The village has a primary school and an Anganwadi centre. There is no school or colleges around for our children to continue upper and higher studies after clearing Class



We have been carrying out efforts to redress the problems of the village. We are providing more work under MGNREGS... Scope of work is made through farm pond creation, excavation and renovation of ponds and land leveling. A tube well is in the village for drinking water

RUNU LAKRA | BDO, JHARBANDH

V. Our children go to schools and colleges in Chhattisgarh, they beemoaned. The area is beset with commuting woes in the absence of good or motorable roads.

Besides, healthcare is in mess as there are no doctors at Dabha CHC. In such cases, we go to CHCs at Raipur, Sankara and Basana in Chhattisgarh, they pointed out.

Drinking water is another problem. In summer, people have to go through

hardship due to water crisis. They alleged that PDS is in mess while market facility is absent. They depend on Sankara market in Chhattisgarh for sale and purchase of goods.

"Under PDS, a beneficiary gets seven kg of subsidised rice, apart from dal, salt and sugar. But we only get 5 kg of rice," a villager rued. They said they are citizens of Odisha and cast votes in the state, but sadly they are deprived of getting benefits of state's programmes and schemes.

"We are neglected in all sectors. Sad to say that we are in Odisha, but have to fully depend on Chhattisgarh," said Jayram Siddar, a villager.

However, Jharbandh BDO Runu Lakra said, "We have been carrying out efforts to redress the problems of the village. We are providing more work under MGNREGS in the area so that they needn't migrate to other states in search of work. Scope of work is made through farm pond creation, excavation and renovation of ponds and land leveling. A tube well is in the village for drinking water."

BSF thwarts attack in Malkangiri

Maoists want police informers to surrender by Feb 25; warn of death penalty for violators

POST NEWS NETWORK

Muniguda/Chitrakonda, Feb 23: A Maoist banner surfaced at Hanumantapur bus stand under Chandrapur police limits in Rayagada district Tuesday morning while Border Security Force (BSF) jawans thwarted a Maoist attack and recovered some explosives in Malkangiri, reports said.

The banner was found put up near Hanumantapur bus stand, triggering panic among the local residents in the area. The banner was allegedly put up by the Bansadhara-Ghumusar divisional committee of outlawed CPI-Maoists. In the banner, the Red Rebels have asked those who are working as police informers to surrender before them by February 25. Those informers who do not turn up on the said date will pay with their lives, they threatened.

After getting information, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel reached the spot and tore off the banner. An investigation has been launched, it was learnt.

Notably, a group of 15 to 20 armed members of the outlawed outfit had dragged Bhabani Shankar Patra, son of the sarpanch of Bhandarangi panchayat and Hemanta Patra, a ration shop owner, out of their houses at Gochaguda village under Belghar police limits in Kandhamal district January



THE SEIZED ITEMS



The warning poster

29 night. Later, they killed them.

As many as seven posters were found at Dimiriguda village under Ambadola police limits in Rayagada district February 20. Through these posters, the

Red Rebels hold Police DG Abhay and police intelligence chief RK Sharma responsible for the deaths of Shankar Patra and Hemanta Patra from Belghar area in Kandhamal district.

Meanwhile, reports from Chitrakonda in Malkangiri said, Border Security Force (BSF) jawans thwarted a Maoist attack. They recovered some explosives near Kadalibandha village Tuesday.

Based on intelligence inputs, the security forces had launched a search operation in Hantalguda forest under the Swabhimana Anchal of the district. During the operation, they came across a bag under a hill near Kadalibandha. The bag contained two pressure-activated landmines, a tiffin bomb, medicines, clothes and other daily use materials. The bomb disposal squad immediately reached the spot and diffused the explosives.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI
GUDVELLA, DIST.- BALANGIR
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS

Tender Call Notice No. 01/GVL/20-21, Dated: 19.02.2021

1. The Block Dev. Officer, Gudvella on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids in sealed cover in conformity with Detailed Tender Call Notice No. 01/GVL/20-21, Dated: 19.02.2021 to be eventually drawn up in State P.W.D. Form P-1 contract for the execution of works detailed in the table from eligible class of contractors mentioned against the work registered with the State Government and Contractors of equivalent Grade/Class Registered with Central Government / MES / Railways for execution of Civil Works, on production of definite proof from the appropriate authority. The bidders may submit bids for the following work.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Amount put to tender (Rs.)	Bid Security 1% EMD (Rs.)	Cost of Document (Rs.)	Class of Contractor	Period of Completion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Const. of CDPO Office Building, ICDS, Gudvella	20,74,447/-	20750/-	6,000/-	C & B	6 (Six) Calendar Months

The sale and receipt of the Bid document shall start from Dt.26.02.2021 to Dt.15.03.2021 at 4.00 P.M. during office hour in Panchayat Samiti, Gudvella and DRDA Balangir. E-mail: ori-gudvella@nic.in.

Further details can be seen from the Govt. website: www.balangir.nic.in.

Sd./- Block Development Officer, Gudvella

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, SUNDARGARH

E-mail: rw_sundargarh@yahoo.co.in, Ph.: 06622-272280 (Off.)

1st Corrigendum to Bid Identification No. Online - EESNG-12 of 2020-21

No. O-1135: Due to un-avoidable circumstances following changes has been made in the Bid Identification No. Online - EESNG-12 of 2020-21. 1. The work at SI. No. 01 of above NIT is hereby cancelled.

Sd./- Executive Engineer
R.W. Division, Sundargarh
OIPR-25046/11/0015/2021

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

No. B-773 E-mail ID: eepwdddeogarh@gmail.com

INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)

Lr. No. 624 Dtd.19.02.2021

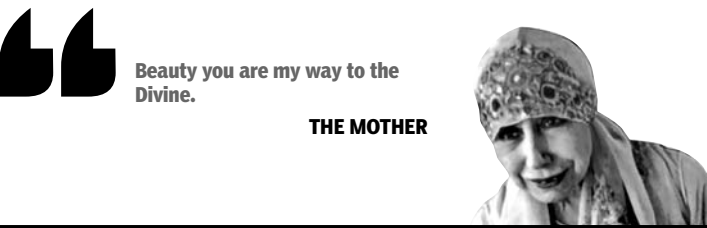
INVITATION FOR BIDS

Bid Identification No. EE PWD DGR No. 08 of 2020-21

The Executive Engineer, Deogarh (R&B) Division, Deogarh, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in Single/Double Cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for construction of building & road works as detailed below.

1.	Nature of Work	: Building & Road works
2.	No. of Works	: Building 03 Nos. & Road 03 Nos.
3.	Bid Cost	: Rs. 10,000/-
4.	Class of Contractor	: "C", "B" & "A" Class
5.	Availability of Bid documents in the website	: From Dt.25.02.2021 to 17.00 hours of Dt.12.03.2021
6.	Date of opening of Technical Bid	: Dt.15.03.2021 at 11.30 A.M.
7.	The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: https://tendersodisha.gov.in. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.	
8.		

Sd./- Executive Engineer
Deogarh (R&B) Division
OIPR-34061/11/0005/2021



Beauty you are my way to the Divine.
THE MOTHER

Learn To Question

The egregiously false claim made in the presence of Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan by Baba Ramdev that his Patanjali product Coronil is the “first evidence-based medicine for Covid-19” having World Health Organisation (WHO) certification has shocked the medical community and brought into focus the fraud and thuggery practised in the name of yoga and spiritual powers. Monks and so-called spiritual gurus exerting extra-constitutional influence on rulers, including monarchs, Prime Ministers and politicians has been a regular practice for centuries in India. However, it has become a flourishing commercial enterprise in recent times. It goes without saying political patronage has emboldened these so-called Babas to stoop to any level to satisfy their lust for power and pelf. Of course, the Union Health Minister cannot be held directly culpable for such false claims yet his presence definitely lent credibility to such baseless utterances. Baba Ramdev even had the gumption to call modern medicine a form of “medical terrorism.” The Health Minister is supposed to supervise implementation of the task of vaccinating the population against Covid-19 at a cost of ₹35,000 crore. That is why his silence in the meeting is surprising. What is more surprising is the Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan is himself a doctor of medicine.

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) is quite rightly bristling with anger at the Centre’s endorsement of “an unscientific product” as a drug that can be used as a “supportive treatment” for coronavirus. Within 24 hours of the false claim, WHO clarified that it had not reviewed or certified the effectiveness of any traditional medicine. It was Ramdev who peddled the lie while launching the product on February 19 in the presence of Dr Harsh Vardhan and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari that a team of the global health body had visited his company and given Coronil the licence for sale in more than 150 countries. He also released a “research” paper by Patanjali Ayurved on what he claimed was the “first evidence-based medicine.” This, according to him, would clear all “suspicions” surrounding Coronil.

The complicity of the Union ministers in this dangerous venture is such that the party’s spokesperson Sanju Verma tweeted that Coronil getting approval from the Drugs Controller General of India and WHO was “no less (than) a huge endorsement for Ayurveda and India’s home grown startup ecosystem that has flourished under the Modi government.”

The IMA’s letter to the Union Health Minister dated 22 February 2021, in response to these false claims should leave him red faced if he wants to rise above his party’s political creed and be true to his medical profession. “Being a Health Minister of the country, how justified is it to release such falsely fabricated unscientific product to people of the whole country and how ethical was it to promote the product in unethical, wrong and false ways,” IMA National President Jayalal asked in his letter.

The IMA showed courage to warn the government against adulterating Ayurveda “on the pretext of market gain to some monopoly corporate and create a disaster for humanity.”

The Patanjali group has been trying to make profits using the fear of people for Covid since June 23, 2020 when it first introduced Coronil. But, the government decided not to give its approval in the teeth of fierce criticism as it lacked scientific evidence regarding its efficacy.

Clearly, the phenomenal profit and global market for anti-Covid drugs or vaccines have proved to be too tempting for the group to make a second attempt to get its share in the lucrative business.

So-called spiritual mentors such as Rasputin in monarchical Russia and Dharendra Brahmachari of India had used their closeness to the powers that be to advance their personal agenda of greed. Rasputin enthralled Russia’s Emperor Nicholas and Empress Alexandra with his supposed mystic quality and hijacked the power of the throne during the early years of the last century. Dharendra Brahmachari also had Indira Gandhi under his orbit of influence during the Emergency and used his political clout for dubious ventures.

Ramdev has been using his skill in yogic exercises for advertising products from his Patanjali stable and building a multi-million dollar business enterprise. His closeness to top BJP leadership has turned out to be a boon for him.

Political patronage has spawned many funny Babas including Asaram Bapu and Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh.

It’s time the people in government refrain from putting the seal of legitimacy on such unsavoury deeds and the characters involved. While it is easy to blame politicians, the truth cannot be denied that it is the common people who flock to these Babas and make them popular. Once these Babas gain a large following, politicians notice and acknowledge them. Change in this system can only come when citizens, looking for a quick fix, also learn to question.

WISDOM CORNER

- Arrange whatever pieces come your way. VIRGINIA WOOLF
- Don’t watch the clock; do what it does. Keep going. SAM LEVENSON
- We do not remember days, we remember moments. CESARE PAVESE

WORDSWORTH

Marmalade

Most writers on food and cookery would probably be very willing to admit that they’re not as expert in etymology as they are in the culinary arts. This story proves the point. To be fair, it has been known for many years and was far from new when this appeared: Spanish oranges had been stored there, and she [Mary] made a new sort of preserve — called after herself as she told them proudly, for the cook at her grandmother’s chateau of Joinville had made it to tempt her appetite when she was ill; “Marie est malade,” he had muttered again and again as he racked his brain to invent something new for her, and “Mariemalade” they had called it ever since (The Gay Galliard: the Love Story of Mary, Queen of Scots, by Margaret Irwin, 1942). Mary’s French connections (she was at one time married to Francis, who was the Dauphin, the eldest son of the then king of France, Henri II) were enough to peg this extraordinary invention to her. This is yet another case of the way that a good story can triumph over historical veracity. As it happens, the truth is more interesting. The original food wasn’t made from oranges, but from quinces. These were cooked with honey and in the process the unpromising bitter green fruit was transformed into a sweet pink paste, which was stiff enough to be cut with a knife and be served in slices as a kind of dessert. The first of these preserves were made in Portugal and were called marmelada, from the word for quince in Portuguese, marmelo. This is from the Latin melimelum, a sweet variety of apple, in turn from the Greek, usually translated as summer-apple (an early-ripening type), which seems to have been the name for a type of apple grafted on to a quince rootstock. The product kept well and was exported to Britain in wooden cases. It was at first a luxury item (customs duty was slapped on it in the fifteenth century, so it must have been worth taxing) but English cooks later learned to make their own. The first name for it was chardecynes or char de quince, the Old French term for a pulp made from quinces, but the Portuguese alternative began to appear in the latter part of the fifteenth century; in 1524, the papers of King Henry VIII recorded a gift, which in modern English would read, “Presented by Hull of Exeter one box of marmalade.” An early English recipe called for quinces to be beaten to a pulp with a type of apple called wardens, boiled with honey until the mixture was thick and then spiced with a mixture of ginger, galingale and cinnamon. The shift to oranges happened rather slowly. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, plums, dates, cherries and other fruits were all made into preserves called marmalades. This has continued to the present day, though in the UK, as a result of EU regulations, products sold under the name of marmalade must be made from citrus fruits. In time, the link with quinces was lost and the historical link with them is preserved only in the name, leaving its origin open to ingenious storytelling.

FOCUS ANTI-DEFECTION LAW

TIME TO FIX GREY AREAS

The recent development in Pondicherry Legislative Assembly has once again brought to the fore the lacunae in the anti-defection law which needs to be fixed. In a democratic parliamentary polity changing party affiliation on part of the legislator who is elected from one political party to another subsequent to the election raises the issue of principles. If dissent is a legitimate democratic right, then the legislator shifting political loyalty is justified. But it is always a difficult task to draw the fine line between principle and political opportunism. When a legislator or a splinter group breaks away from the parent party and forms another political entity or merges with another party, it is preconceived as political opportunism, but if one looks from the other end of the spectrum, if the defecting legislator or the splinter group is not allowed to move on, then the denial stifles his democratic and political freedom.

With a view to regulating political defection, the Constitution of India was amended by the Fifty Second (Amendment Act), 1985 incorporating the Tenth Schedule in the Constitution which enumerated the provisions for disqualifications of members of legislatures, both Parliament and state legislatures on grounds of political defection. The statement of objects and reason in the Bill stated, “The evil of political defections has been a matter of national concern. If it is not combated, it is likely to undermine the very foundations of our democracy and principles which sustain it...”

But nowhere in the Constitution including the Tenth Schedule, has the term defection been defined. The Tenth Schedule, however, for the first time mentioned legislature party /political party in the Constitution.

As per the provisions of the Anti-defection Law, a member of the legislature is liable to be disqualified from the membership of the legislature by the Presiding Officer broadly on two grounds. In the first place if he ‘voluntarily’ gives up his membership of such political party; secondly if he votes or absents in the legislature to any direction issued by the political party to which he belongs or by any person or authority authorised by it in his behalf, with-

In a democratic parliamentary polity changing party affiliation on part of the legislator who is elected from one political party to another subsequent to the election raises the issue of principles. If dissent is a legitimate democratic right, then the legislator shifting political loyalty is justified. But it is always a difficult task to draw the fine line between principle and political opportunism



Rup Narayan Das

A MAJOR DRAWDOWN OF THE ANTI-DEFECTION LAW IS THE LACK OF PRECISE DEFINITION OF DEFECTION ITSELF

IN JEST THIS

Teenage boys just can’t stop eating



Melvin Durai

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MANY CALORIES RAHUL CONSUMES—HE CAN BURN THEM OFF JUST BY OPENING THE REFRIGERATOR DOOR

Letters

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

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

My 17-year-old daughter Divya needs to put two signs on her bedroom door. The first would say, “Caution: Big Mess Inside.” The second would say, “Keep out: This means you, Rahul.”

Rahul, as you’ve probably guessed, is her brother. They’re at an age where they’d prefer not to share anything with each other, not even parents. Divya is annoyed just to breathe the same air as Rahul.

If you enter Divya’s bedroom, you’ll find all kinds of things strewn about, like a tornado went through it. Her closet is just as messy, partly because she keeps not just clothes there, but also makeup and snacks. The snacks are usually boxes of crackers or bags of chips.

If you ask her why the snacks aren’t being kept in a kitchen cupboard, her answer is always the same: “He’ll eat them.”

Everyone in the family knows whom she’s referring to: her 14-year-old brother Rahul is still growing and has the appetite of a horse. While the rest of the family eats three meals a day, Rahul eats three



meals an hour. At least that’s how it seems. He is constantly eating. He will eat an entire plate of rice and curry, and go to his bedroom to finish his homework, only to return 15 minutes later and say to his Mom, “I’m hungry!”

Like any loving mother, she will say something like, “Oh my poor baby, I’m not feeding you well. What would you like to eat?” Meanwhile, I’m thinking, “How can you still be hungry? You just ate as much food as your sister eats in a month.”

It doesn’t matter how many calories Rahul consumes—he can burn them off just by opening the refrigerator door.

Part of the problem is that teenage boys don’t usually have a balanced diet. They tend to eat a lot of carbohydrates and protein, but not enough fruits and vegetables.

“They’re always hungry, and that hunger, and a lack of satiety with small portions, leads to impulsive eating and eating large portions,” Dr. Elsie Taveras, the chief of general paediatrics at Massachusetts General Hospital for Children, told the New York Times a few years ago. “And the foods they are choosing aren’t really keeping them full, since foods with high fiber levels are the kinds of foods which do keep people full.”

Before you get the wrong idea, I should emphasise that Rahul is not overweight. If anything, he is underweight. Like most teenage boys, he has a fast metabolism, partly because he’s so active. He enjoys running, not just as a sport in school but also to get around the

house as fast as possible. When I ask him why he’s in such a hurry, he gives me a look that says, “Sorry, I didn’t say a speed limit posted.”

Divya hides her snacks from her brother not because she’s greedy, but because she knows he’s a magician and can make them disappear. She has learned from experience that leaving tasty snacks in the kitchen is like leaving a gold chain on a street corner in New York City.

I have three children, so if I buy a package of nine cookies, I wouldn’t want any of the kids to eat more than three. But when Rahul sees the cookies, simple arithmetic fails him. This is what he seems to say to himself: “If I have five cookies, my sisters can have two each. And my parents ... well, they need to lose weight.”

If I complain to my wife, she’ll say something like this: “At least he didn’t eat them all himself. It was thoughtful of him to leave some for his sisters.”

Thoughtful? Oh yes, he thought he was full.

Privatisation no solution

Sir, This refers to your thought-provoking article “Privatisation no solution” (Orissa POST, February 23). Those who argue in favour of privatisation should remember that the private sector is not free from blemish. There is no economic reason to privatise government banks. One of the most adverse affects of privatisation will be the widespread economic gap. It will support the rich people of the society leaving the poor behind. Public sector banks, therefore, have a social role which is larger than their quarterly profit and loss statements. People believe in public sector banks and don’t prefer to deposit their savings in private sector banks. The PSUs have been engaged in producing goods and providing services at affordable prices. Will the government not face difficulty in providing low-cost financial services to the rural and poor sections of society? Will private sector banks be able to share the government’s social responsibilities? Will private sector banks be able to extend all types of services to customers across categories which is today the root purpose of public sector banks?

Vinod C Dixit, AHMEDABAD

Was beaten up by police: Rights activist Nodeep Kaur

23-year-old activist from Punjab claims that she was “targeted and falsely implicated” in the case as she was successful in generating support against the controversial farm laws

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 23: Labour rights activist Nodeep Kaur in her bail plea before the Punjab and Haryana High Court has claimed that she was severely beaten up at a police station after her arrest by the Sonipat police last month.

The 23-year-old activist, hailing from Punjab's Muktsar district, has also claimed that her medical examination was not conducted in violation of section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code. Kaur is currently lodged in Karnal jail in Haryana.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court Monday had adjourned the hearing on her bail plea and posted the matter for February 24.

In the bail plea filed through her counsels Arshdeep Singh Cheema and Harinder Deep Singh Bains, Kaur stated that she was falsely arraigned as accused in an FIR lodged under various sections, including 307 (attempt to murder) of the IPC.

In her petition, the labour rights activist claimed that she was “targeted and falsely implicated” in the case as she was successful in generating massive support for the on-



going farmer movement against the Centre's three new farm laws.

Kaur, who is a member of the Majdoor Adhikar Sangathan, said they mobilized people for a protest at Kundli in Sonipat district against Centre's new farm laws. The plea alleged that the mobilisation of local labourers in support of farmers annoyed the administration and a plan was devised to stifle the protest. The bail plea stated that January 12, the petitioner and MAS members marched towards a factory for demanding payment of pending wages of some workers.

The high court was informed

that they were manhandled by a group formed by the Kundli Industrial Area, an association of industrial owners.

In the meantime, a team from Kundli police station led by the station house officer reached there and immediately on their arrival, they grabbed the petitioner by her hair and dragged to the side, according to the plea.

This angered the protesters and the situation became worse when the police resorted to lathi charge on peaceful protesters. A scuffle ensued and the petitioner tried to pacify the situation but to no avail, it said. The petitioner alone was caught and arrested by police officials. She was beaten, tortured and suffered multiple injuries, it claimed.

The petitioner was taken to the police station in the absence of any woman police official and was beaten up by police officials, the plea alleged.

Kaur was arrested in Haryana's Sonipat January 12, the Haryana police had earlier said. Sonapat police officials had also said that a police team was attacked with sticks when they reached the site and some policemen sustained injuries in the incident.

AGENCIES

Ahmedabad, Feb 23: The BJP Tuesday appeared on course to retain power in six municipal corporations, winning 409 of the 474 seats where results were declared till evening.

Polling for 576 seats in Ahmedabad and five other civic corporations was held February 21. The counting of votes began Tuesday morning.

While Congress has won 43 of the declared seats so far, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), a new entrant in these elections, made impressive inroads by winning 18 seats so far. A total of 192 seats in Ahmedabad, 72 in Rajkot, 64 in Jamnagar, 52 in Bhavnagar, 76 in Vadodara and 120 in Surat were up for grabs in the elections. The AAP had fielded 470 candidates across the six corporations.

Chief Minister Vijay Rupani and Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel expressed gratitude to the voters and BJP workers for the results.

"The grand victory of the BJP in these elections is the victory of the people of Gujarat. This is a grand victory of the politics of development of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Rupani said. "The people of Gujarat have provided a subject to political analysts who can now study how the concept of anti-incumbency does not apply in the state," he said.

Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal congratulated the people of Gujarat for ushering in a new era of politics after his party registered im-



‘Results show people’s faith in politics of development’

New Delhi: With the BJP set to retain power in six Gujarat municipal corporations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday termed the victory "very special" and said for a party that has been serving in a state for over two decades to record such a phenomenal win is noteworthy. He said the results of municipal elections clearly show the unwavering faith people have in politics of development and good governance.

"Thank you Gujarat! Results of municipal elections across the state clearly show the unwavering faith people have towards politics of development and good governance," Modi said in a series of tweets. "Grateful to the people of the state for trusting BJP yet again. Always an honour to serve Gujarat," he said. "Today's win across Gujarat is very special. For a party that is serving in a state for over two decades to record such a phenomenal win is noteworthy. It is heart-

ening to see widespread support from all sections of society, particularly the youth of Gujarat towards BJP," he said.



pressive gains in the civic body polls in the state. Kejriwal will hold a road show in Gujarat February 26 to thank the people of

the state, the party said. "Heartfelt congratulations to the people of Gujarat for ushering in a new era of politics," the AAP chief said

Fresh curbs in Punjab as Covid cases rise

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Feb 23: Amid growing concern over rising Covid-19 cases in Punjab, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Tuesday ordered restriction on indoor gathering to 100 and outdoor to 200 persons from March 1, along with strict enforcement of mask-wearing and social distancing, with testing to be ramped to 30,000 a day.

Chairing a high-level virtual meeting to review the situation, he also authorised the Deputy Commissioners to impose night curfew in hotspots in their districts if needed, with micro containment strategy to be adopted.

He directed the police to ensure strict enforcement of wearing of masks, along with notification of Covid-19 monitors by all restaurants, marriage palaces, with the Department of Excise and Taxation to be the nodal agency in this regard.

The Chief Minister said a decision on reducing occupancy in cinema halls will be taken after March 1. Private offices and restaurants will be encouraged to display last tests done for all employees, he added.

Directing increased testing, Amarinder Singh ordered mandatory testing of 15 contacts per positive, with review to be undertaken by the Health Department.

The Chief Minister also took stock of the vaccination status, underlining the need to carry out an



IEC campaign to promote 100 per cent coverage of healthcare and frontline workers.

He directed the Health Department to plan for a strategic roll-out of vaccine for the elderly population and those with comorbidities.

Expressing concern over the 3.23 case fatality ratio, Amarinder Singh took note of the mortality audit findings that many of the deaths are happening within 2-14 days of hospitalisation.

He underscored the need for continued supervision of protocols for managing patients with comorbidities, especially in private facilities. Citing cases of some deaths at

home, he further directed the Health Department to ensure proper monitoring of home isolation cases, especially those with comorbidities.

Apprising the Chief Minister of measures taken by Punjab Police to enforce adherence to safety protocols, DGP Dinkar Gupta said instructions have been issued to field officers to strictly impose restrictions.

Earlier, in a brief presentation, Health Secretary Hussan Lal informed the meeting that the districts of Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Patiala, SAS Nagar and SBS Nagar had shown a spike in positivity in recent days, triggering concerns over a possible

fresh wave in the state.

On the vaccination front, he said there had so far been 61 cases of minor adverse events following immunisation, while six severe and 14 serious cases had been reported. All had since recovered, he added.

KK Talwar, who is heading the state government's expert group on Covid-19, said a detailed analysis was being done on the recent spike in positivity rate, which suggested an increase in cases among young people.

At the current rate, the positivity could go up to four per cent in two weeks, translating into 800 cases per day, he said, stressing the need for urgent preventive steps.

Delhi violence accused dares cops to arrest him in Punjab

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Feb 23: Delhi violence accused and gangster-activist Lakha Sidhana Tuesday dared the police to arrest him as he addressed a public rally he called in Punjab's Bathinda as a show of strength and to express solidarity with those facing police action for supporting the cause of the protesting farmers.

However, leaders of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha distanced themselves from the 'mahapanchayat' that saw tens of thousands of people largely comprising youths and women at Mehraj, the ancestral village of Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.

Sidhana, who is carrying a reward of Rs 1 lakh for providing information about him, has been booked by Delhi Police for instigating violence during the farmers' tractor rally at Red Fort on Republic Day.

"If Delhi Police come to arrest anyone in Punjab, villagers will gherao (surround) them," Sidhana said at the rally, indirectly referring to his arrest. After the rally, he left the venue on a motorcycle.

The rally was called to express solidarity with Deep Sidhu, Sidhana, Nodeep Kaur and other arrested people associated with the farmer



If Delhi Police come to arrest anyone in Punjab, villagers will gherao (surround) them

LAKHA SIDHANA

agitation and "to give a message that youth is upbeat and not defeated or disappointed."

Calling to intensify the agitation, speakers at the rally favoured that reins of the agitation should be handed over to the youth. They asked the farmer union leaders to show big heart by saying "they are with every youth of Punjab who are being prosecuted by Delhi Police."

The leaders should raise their voice for all such youth so that governments should know that we are one, the leaders advocated.

Earlier, in a video post, Sidhana had asked people to turn up in large numbers at Mehraj village to show their support for the protesting farmers.

"We have been agitating for seven months. Now, this protest is at its peak...we are holding a big programme in village Mehraj in district Bathinda February 23," Sidhana had said.

Lakhbir Singh alias Lakha Sidhana, named as one of the main accused for the violence on Republic Day, dreamed of making big in politics through the farmers' agitation.

Since November 25, he had been quite active in the agitation on the borders of the national capital and aggressively lobbying for the agitation to gain momentum.

Sidhana, a small-time gangster who aims to enter politics by reflecting himself a social activist, was acquitted in several cases before contesting the 2012 Assembly polls as a candidate of the People's Party of Punjab, once led by Manpreet Singh Badal, who is currently the Finance Minister in the Congress government in Punjab.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS



A farmer sows maize seeds in a field in Jalandhar, Tuesday.

PTI PHOTO

Endangered lions conquer disease to roam free

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Gir National Park, Feb 23: Three years after a deadly virus struck India's endangered Asiatic lions in their last remaining natural habitat, conservationists are hunting for new homes to help booming prides roam free.

The majestic big cats, slightly smaller than their African cousins and with a fold of skin along their bellies, were once found widely across southwest Asia.

Hunting and human encroachment saw the population plunge to just 20 by 1913, and the lions are now found only in a wildlife sanctuary in Gujarat.

Following years of concerted government efforts, the lion population in Gir National Park has swelled to nearly 700, according to an official census last year.

But just three years ago, the conservation success looked to be in danger when several lions started to die



in one part of the 1,400 square kilometre forest.

The canine distemper virus -- a highly infectious disease - was detected among dozens of the royal beasts, killing at least 11 of them.

"We picked all the lions from the area and isolated them,"

Dushyant Vasavada, the park's chief conservator of forests, told AFP. Authorities imported special vaccines from overseas and

each animal was given three doses each, followed by a booster shot.

Cattle and dogs living near the park were also inoculated as suspected carriers of the virus.

"We vaccinated the lions in captivity and successfully controlled the disease and no new outbreak has been observed," Vasavada said, adding that park rangers were still closely monitoring their health.

'VERY THRILLING EXPERIENCE'

Lions are a source of pride for India, particularly in Gujarat's Saurashtra region, where man and beast coexist.

A cattle-rearing tribe lives among the animals in the sanctuary, and it is not uncommon to see a pride of lions crossing a highway in the region as motorists wait and watch.

The king of the jungle is also a major tourist attraction, along with leopards, panthers and other big cats found in the sanctuary.

Around 550,000 people visit the park each year, riding in open-top jeeps as they try to spot the predators prowling among pale yellow deciduous trees.

"It is a very thrilling experience to see the lions from close in the wild," said forest guide Dinesh Sadiya. But the 2018 virus outbreak was a reminder that the steady growth in the animal's population cannot be taken for granted.

NEW HABITATS

The lions have low genetic diversity due to their small population size, making them more vulnerable to epidemics. A 1993 outbreak of canine distemper virus in Tanzania's Serengeti National Park killed a third of its 3,000 lions.

Wildlife biologist Ravi Chellam said that outbreak underscored the need to move a few prides to other sites nearby.

"Translocation is a risk mitigation strategy akin to us getting health or life insurance," he told AFP.

"If something happens to the population in Gir, there is always going to be an additional free-ranging population of wild lions available," Chellam said the sanctuary was also now too small for its steadily growing lion population.

"There are far more lions than what Gir can hold... these animals are not static, they are constantly moving outside and interacting with domestic animals and people," he added.

Efforts to move some lions to other states have been mired in legal wrangles with the state government, which wants to keep the animals in Gujarat.

Authorities have instead proposed finding new homes for some lions in other parts of the state.

"If a lion has not moved for 48 hours we can alert our staff," said Mohan Ram, the park's deputy conservator of forests.

The tracking collars are fitted around a lion's neck, helping rangers monitor their health and movements, reduce road and rail accidents, and lessen human-wildlife conflict.



Luring Congress MLAs has been their modus operandi in all Congress ruled states. We saw this in Karnataka, MP and now in Pondicherry. They tried it in Rajasthan but people of Rajasthan taught them a lesson
ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER

MP OFFICIALS SEAL BANK BRANCH FOR NOT GIVING LOANS

A branch of the State Bank of India was sealed in Shajapur of Madhya Pradesh Tuesday by district authorities after it reportedly failed to provide loans of ₹10,000 to applicants under the Centre's Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's Atmanirbhar Nidhi scheme



of the day quote

Climate change is a major challenge as natural disasters destroy infrastructure. India drew the attention of the world to the issue of disaster management



NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

Whenever roads will be blocked, and people would be prevented from going to work, or children to school, there will always be a Kapil Mishra to stop that



KAPIL MISHRA | FORMER DELHI MLA

Clash between BJP politicians and farmers in Soram village, several injured. If there's no talk in favour of farmers, at least have a good attitude towards them



JAYANT CHAUDHARY | RLD VICE-PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

2-year-old raped in UP's Ballia

Ballia (UP): A 12-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour in her village here, police said Tuesday. The incident took place on the night of February 18 under Gadwar police station area. The accused has been arrested, they said. According to the complaint lodged by the girl's mother, her neighbour, Pawan, called the minor to his house on the pretext of some work and raped her, Station House Officer (SHO) Rajiv Singh said.

Soldier killed in accidental firing

Jammu: An Army jawan was killed in an accidental firing during training here Tuesday, a defence spokesman said. "Gunner Sayan Ghosh of Artillery Regiment suffered fatal injury due to a firing accident while carrying out live firing training at the field firing range (in Akhnour sector)," the spokesman said. The incident occurred around 10.30 am.

Man, grandsons killed by jumbos

Sidhi: An elderly man and his two minor grandsons have been killed by a herd of wild elephants near the Sanjay Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi district, a forest official said Tuesday. The incident took place Monday night in Haiki village, about 85 km from the district headquarters, she said. After the herd of elephants entered the village, Goralal Yadav and his grandsons Ramkripal (12) and Ramprasad (13) rushed out of their house to move to a safer place.

Man dead as car falls into gorge

Bhaderwah (J&K): A 23-year-old man died Tuesday when his car skidded off the road and fell into a 800-foot-deep gorge in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district, police said. Sajjad Hussain, a resident of Sanwara village, was driving from Chilli to Malikpora when the accident occurred around 10.20 am.

6 more killed on NH-31 in Bihar

Patna: Six members of a family lost their lives and three others critically injured after an SUV rammed into a truck in Bihar's Katihar district Tuesday. This was the second major accident on NH-31. The accident took place on the Kursela bridge after the SUV collided head on with the truck.

India detects over 24K mutations in 7K Covid variants

THE SCIENTISTS PRESENTED THEIR FINDINGS OF ANALYSIS OF OVER 5,000 CORONAVIRUS VARIANTS AND HOW THEY HAVE EVOLVED OVER THE COURSE OF THE PANDEMIC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 23: The genetic diagnostic laboratories in India have detected over 24,000 mutations in the strains of SARS-CoV-2 in the last one year; top officials told this news agency Tuesday.

The officials added that the mutations have been detected in around 7,000 variants of the novel coronavirus which are under circulation in the country.

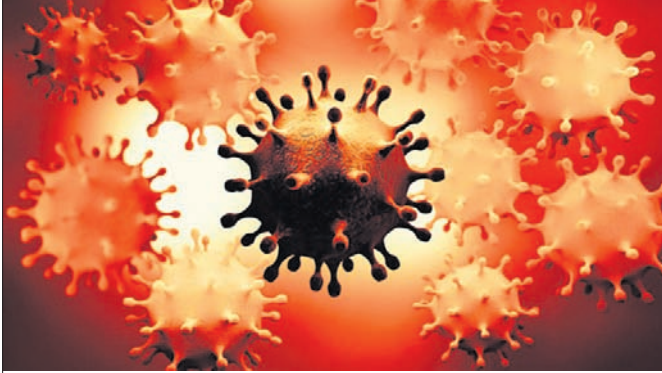
"We have detected around 24,300 mutations in 7,000 variants of the virus currently under circulation," an official who is a key member of National Task Force for COVID-19 informed. The information was also corroborated by contacts working at laboratories which are part of Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortia (INSACOG) set-up by the Union Health Ministry in December last year in the backdrop of the emergence of a newly identified variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus

in the UK, South Africa and some other parts of the world.

INSACOG is a consortium of 10 labs namely DBT-NIBMG Kalyani, DBT-ILS Bhubaneswar, ICMR-NIV Pune, DBT-NCCS Pune, CSIR-CCMB Hyderabad, DBT-CDFD Hyderabad, DBT-InSTEM/ NCBS Bangalore, NIMHANS Bangalore, CSIR-IGIB Delhi, and NCDC Delhi, formed with an overall aim to monitor the genomic variations in the SARS-CoV-2 on a regular basis through a multi-laboratory network.

The Centre-run National Centre for Disease Control is the agency of the consortium.

Sujeet Kumar Singh, Director, NCDC also confirmed that over 24,000 mutations in the virus have been recorded in India. "We have found these mutations in over 6,000 variants and submitted it to an international consortium which collects the data to predict and analyse trends of virus spread in geographical locations," he said.



Officials added that the mutations have been detected in around 7,000 variants of the novel coronavirus which are under circulation in the country

The information was also corroborated by contacts working at laboratories which are part of Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortia (INSACOG) set-up by the Union Health Ministry in December last year

One probability being mostly explored since the rise in daily infections of the COVID-19 is the presence of an undetected or multiple strains of novel coronavirus which

could be attributing to the gradual spike the country is witnessing for the last one week. While Kerala and Maharashtra continue to report a surge in cases there, a trend

Centre using ED, CBI to topple our govts: Cong

Congress lost its second govt in a year after the Pondicherry regime fell, following the collapse of the Madhya Pradesh government last year



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 23: The Congress lost its second government in a year after the Pondicherry regime fell, following the collapse of the Madhya Pradesh government last year.

Both Congress governments fell because of resignation of MLAs which reduced the strength of the party. The Congress has blamed the Union government for misusing agencies and pulling down its elected governments in states.

Puducherry Congress in-charge Dinesh Gundu Rao told this news agency, "The actions of the BJP-ruled central government using agencies such as CBI, I-T department, ED, have threatened, blackmailed and coerced our MLAs."

The party alleged that crores of rupees were used in horse trading and to topple its government.

"They know that the government worked for the people, despite the obstacles, despite the non-cooperation of the Centre."

Gundu Rao said, "the elected government has been destabilised, because of the 'mafia politics' of BJP, what they have done in different states in India, what they have done in Maharashtra, what they have done in Karnataka, in Rajasthan, in Madhya Pradesh, in northeastern states, what they are doing in West Bengal".

Family sent to quarantine despite being COVID -ve

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: A family of four including two minor children which has been sent to 7-day institutional quarantine after returning from the UK, told the Delhi High Court Tuesday that the action amounted to "illegal confinement" as they had tested negative for COVID-19.

Justice Prathiba M Singh issued notice to the ministries of civil aviation and external affairs as also the Delhi government seeking their stand on the plea moved by the family which is quarantined at Hotel Vivanta in Dwarka in Delhi.

Advocate Ganesh Chand Sharma, appearing for the fam-

ily, told the court that all the members were tested for COVID-19 when they arrived in New Delhi from the UK February 20 and despite testing negative they were "illegally and unlawfully" sent to institutional quarantine.

Sharma said the action was illegal as according to the guidelines published on the Delhi airport website, institutional quarantine was not mandatory for all the passengers arriving from the UK and was applicable only to those who tested positive for COVID-19.

The petition said that before starting from the UK, the family had undergone a COVID-19 test and they were issued a "fit-to-fly" certificate.



A tribal man dressed in his traditional attire stands with his domestic yak during Losar Panchayat Kiyato part of the Snow Festival in Lahaul- Spiti district

PTI PHOTO

Two workers die, 26 injured in Guj factory fire

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: Agro-chemical major UPL Ltd Tuesday said that two workers died and 26 were injured after a "serious fire" broke out at its Jhagadia plant in the Bharuch district of Gujarat.

Other than that, five workers were missing, according to the company. UPL said the accident might have happened due to fire/explosion in the solvent, but did not rule out a "foul play". The company meanwhile said it would offer compensations to deceased and affected workers.

In a regulatory filing, UPL said that "unfortunately, a serious fire broke out in a plant in shutdown condition in the early hours of this morning at our Jhagadia unit in Gujarat".

It further said that fire broke out at around 1.35 am, followed by "explosion at one of our plants which was shut since February 5, 2021 for its planned annual boiler inspection". Since the plant was shut, UPL said there was no chemical reaction in progress at this plant.

CBI quizzes Abhishek Banerjee's wife

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Feb 23: The officials of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Tuesday interrogated Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha MP and Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee's wife Rujira at their south Kolkata residence for over one hour. After quizzing Rujira, the federal investigation agency investigators left.

According to sources, the team of CBI investigators was constantly in touch with their higher officials at Kolkata's CBI office at Nizam Palace. They briefed the entire interrogation details to the office over phone from Rujira Banerjee's place, Shantiniketan, located at south Kolkata's Harish Mukherjee Road.

However, the CBI officials did not divulge anything about the course of interrogation. It was learnt from the sources that the Central agency sleuths asked about Rujira's suspicious banking transactions through a bank in Bangkok. They also asked about Rujira's nationality and passport related information.

Sources said that the CBI officials will meet at Nizam Palace



COAL SCAM

The CBI officials did not divulge anything about the course of interrogation. It was learnt from the sources that the Central agency sleuths asked about Rujira's suspicious banking transactions through a bank in Bangkok

to discuss about the answers given by Abhishek's wife and accordingly decided the next course of their investigation. The CBI team remained tight-lipped after emerging out of Rujira's residence which is named Shantiniketan. The interrogation continued for about one hour and fifteen minutes.

Earlier in the day, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee made an unscheduled visit to Abhishek's residence at Harish Mukherjee Road in south Kolkata, while on her way to the state secretariat Nabanno. She spent about 10-minutes with family and was seen emerging from the building accompanied by Abhishek's daughter, her grand niece.

Soon after Banerjee left the

place, the federal investigation agency officials reached Abhishek's residence to question Rujira Banerjee who was served with a CBI notice Sunday.

The CBI had also summoned Rujira's sister Maneka Gambhir for interrogation. A CBI team, along with lady officials, had reached Maneka's high-rise residential complex at Panchashyar Monday, at around 12 noon. The team, led by Umesh Kumar, had to wait at the main entrance for some time till they got the permission to go up. Maneka stays at Upohar Luxury Complex (Tower-3) near Kolkata's EM Bypass. The interrogation of Maneka also went on for about three hours Monday, sources said.

Habitat loss is leading to inbreeding of Indian tigers: Study

Indian tigers have the highest genetic variation compared to other subspecies of the feline across the world, but their populations continue to be fragmented

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: While Indian tigers have the highest genetic variation compared to other subspecies of the feline across the world, their populations continue to be fragmented by loss of habitat, leading to inbreeding and potential loss of this diversity, says a new study that may inform conservation strategies.

"As human population started expanding, so also their signatures on the land. We know that some of these signatures would result in disrupting the ability of tigers to move," Uma Ramakrishnan, co-author of the research, published in

the journal Molecular Biology and Evolution, told this news agency.

According to Ramakrishnan, molecular ecologist and assistant professor at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bangalore, this habitat loss from human activities leads to tigers being "hemmed into their own protected area."

"Now, they can only mate with the other tigers in their own population. Over time, this will result in inbreeding, they will end up mating with their relatives," she explained.

"Whether this inbreeding compromises their fitness, their ability to survive, we do not yet know," the molecular ecologist added.

While genetic diversity across a



population improves their chances of survival in the future, the study said population fragmentation of tigers can decrease this variation, and endanger them further.

Although tigers have received significant conservation attention, the scientists said very little is known about their evolutionary history and genomic variation, especially for Indian tigers.

With 70 per cent of the world's tigers living in India, the researchers said understanding the genetic diversity of tigers in the country is critical to the feline's conservation worldwide.

The results of their three-year long study offer insights into genomic variation in tigers and the processes that have sculpted it.

Based on the results, the scientists believe there have been relatively recent divergences between sub-

species, and intense population bottlenecks that may have contributed to inbred individuals.

According to the NCBS scientist, maintaining structural connectivity, enabling tigers to move between protected areas can help overcome these bottlenecks.

"This would require the right types of habitat between protected areas, for example having densely populated human settlements would not work. Further, there also needs to be functional connectivity, that tigers do actually move," Ramakrishnan added.

In the study, the scientists sequenced whole genomes from 65 individual tigers from four sub-

species of the feline, and conducted a variety of population genomic analyses that quantify genetic variability.

They investigated the partitioning of genetic variation, possible impacts of inbreeding, and demographic history, and possible signatures of local adaptation.

While the total genomic variation in Indian tigers was higher than in other subspecies, the study found that several individual tigers in the country had low variation, suggesting possible inbreeding.

According to the research, tigers from northeast India were the most different from other populations in India.

of the day quote

My Ram Bhakti is inspired by none other than Mahatma Gandhi's Ram Bhakti. His Ram Bhakti included everyone while BJP's Ram Bhakti is exclusionary, which is dangerous to the unity of the country

SIDDARAMIAIH | LOP IN KARNATAKA ASSEMBLY

What we have had in the last one year was that a very large segment of children who could not access any formal education. I think this gap that has been created is a very serious one

ATISHI MARLENA | AAM AADMI PARTY MLA

In Assam, they have established a government of double Chief Ministers, everyone knows this. So, this double-Chief Minister government or double-engine government has pushed Assam to backwardness.

RIPUN BORA | ASSAM CONGRESS CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

Four-year-old girl found dead in field

Shahjahanpur (UP): A four-year-old girl was found dead and another unconscious in a mustard field in Shahjahanpur district, police said. Both girls are cousins and were reported missing Monday. The injured girl, aged about 7 years, was immediately rushed to hospital by local police from where she has been referred to the Bareilly Medical College. It appears that the accused left the girls, presuming them to be dead, police said. The girls went missing from outside their house where they were playing on Monday evening.

6 held for cloning fingerprints

Shahjahanpur (UP): Six people have been arrested by the Shahjahanpur police that have seized nearly 500 cloned fingerprints of beneficiaries along with their Aadhaar cards and bank passbooks. The arrested persons include Gaurav, 26, a graduate who runs a photocopy shop in Kaant area. Gaurav, who learnt fingerprint cloning using glue-gun and adhesive online, has allegedly hacked nearly 500 bank accounts of the beneficiaries of various government schemes.

Student found half-burnt in UP

Shahjahanpur (UP): In a shocking incident, a student of BA second year was found in a half-burnt condition under mysterious circumstances near the highway on Nagaria crossing here, police said. The woman, in her early twenties, was found without any clothes late Monday evening. She is a student of the Swami Shukdevanand College. The local residents who saw her, informed the police. Shahjahanpur Superintendent of Police, S Anand, said that the woman has been admitted to a medical facility and is being referred to Lucknow for advanced treatment.

Drugs worth ₹14 cr seized

Imphal: In a major haul, the Manipur Police seized banned party drugs, worth ₹14 crore in the international market, in Imphal West district and arrested three persons in this connection, a senior officer said. Acting on a tip-off, a team of police personnel intercepted two trucks Sunday near the Kanglatongbi-Shantipur area and recovered around 1.4 lakhs of banned WY tablets, Imphal West Superintendent of Police K Meghachandra told reporters.

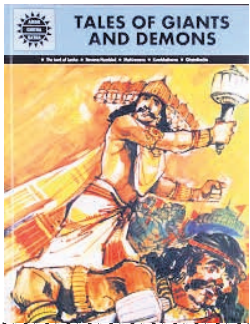


Will not allow Tamil Nadu to use surplus water from the inter-state Cauvery river and will take strong measures to protect the state's interests

BS YEDIYURAPPA | KARNATAKA CM

AMAR CHITRA KATHA COMICS TO BE PUBLISHED FOR YOUNG READERS

Publishing house HarperCollins India and Amar Chitra Katha have announced a new collaboration to publish "a first-time adaptation of popular ACK comics into a narrative format for young children"



Chinese Prez Xi Jinping may visit India for BRICS summit

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 23: China's President Xi Jinping might visit India later this year for the BRICS summit after a thaw in the ties between the two countries after months of border tensions. The development came after Beijing expressed its support for India to host this year's BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) summit later this year. Xi Jinping will visit India for the BRICS summit if the coronavirus situation improves.

Asked about India assuming the BRICS chairmanship this year, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin extended China's support to India in holding the BRICS summit.

"We support India in hosting this year's BRICS meetings and stand ready to work together with it and other members to strengthen communication and cooperation in various fields, advance the three-pillar-driven cooperation in economic, political and cultural sectors, and expand 'BRICS Plus' cooperation to realise solid, sound and sustained progress in BRICS cooperation and to contribute to the international community's efforts to defeat COVID-19, resume economic growth and improve global governance," Wang Wenbin said.

Varavara Rao gets bail in Surjagarh mine arson case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Feb 23: The Nagpur bench of Bombay High Court Tuesday granted interim bail on medical grounds to ailing poet-activist Varavara Rao in connection with a 2016 Surjagarh iron ore mine arson case.

Rao, 82, and advocate Surendra Gadling were arrested by the Gadchiroli police in Maharashtra in February 2019 in connection with the case.

Justice Swapna Joshi of the HC's Nagpur bench granted bail to Rao on similar grounds on which the principal bench of the high court on Monday granted bail to him in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case.



Rao suffers from a host of ailments, including symptoms of dementia, as per his lawyers.

His advocates Firdos Mirza and Nihalsingh Rathod said the activist had sought bail on health and medical grounds and not on merits of the case pertaining to arson at the iron ore mine at Surjagarh in Gadchiroli.

"We pointed out to the court here (Nagpur) the order passed by the division bench of Justices SS Shinde and Manish Pitale Monday, granting Rao interim bail for six months after considering his health condition," Mirza told this news agency.



■ Xi wants to visit India following the thaw in the ties between the two countries after months of border tensions

■ China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin extended China's support to India assuming the BRICS chairmanship this year

■ On February 19, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had launched India's BRICS 2021 website at the BRICS Secretariat at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan in New Delhi

nership and the positive momentum in BRICS solidarity and cooperation," he said.

On February 19, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had launched India's BRICS 2021 website at the BRICS Secretariat at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan in New Delhi.

While the Chinese Foreign Ministry did not confirm the visit, President Xi Jinping has attended all the earlier annual BRICS summits, physical and virtual meeting held last year.

FUN TIME



Boys play in the waters of Bay of Bengal at RK Beach in Visakhapatnam, Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

Signboards calling for 'Boycott BJP' come up in UP villages

AGENCIES

Bareilly, Feb 23: Days after signboards calling for boycott of BJP were put up in Shamli, similar boards came up in Sambhal, stating that the entry of BJP functionaries was restricted in the villages. Police intervened and removed the boards.

The police move, however, was condemned by BKU members who said they would now paint walls of their houses and shops with similar messages. "If police can put up iron nails and barbed fences to stop farmers, can't we put up signboards,"

asked BKU members.

The development came days after Bharatiya Kisan Union's national president Naresh Tikait suggested a social boycott of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh while addressing a mahapanchayat in Muzaffarnagar. The signboards had come up in two villages - Chandawli and Bhadravla - of Sambhal, which were later, allegedly removed by Sambhal police.

Talking to the media, BKU zonal general secretary, Sambhal, Sanjiv Gandhi, said, "On the lines of Shamli, signboards had been put up at the entrance of Chandawli and Bhadravla villages here in Sambhal

Sunday as a part of our ongoing agitation against the farm laws and BJP government. However, it is learnt that police in Sambhal removed the signboards. Since the boards were removed in the absence of villagers and farmers, there is no evidence that these were removed by the police but we are certain that the police removed the signboards."

Gandhi added, "We condemn this action of police as we were not causing any harm to anyone. It was a part of our ongoing protests and if police can put up iron nails and barbed fences to stop us, can't we put up signboards?"

6 killed in K'taka mine explosion

THE BLAST TOOK PLACE WHILE DISPOSING OF EXPLOSIVES MEANT FOR QUARRYING



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chikkaballapur(KTK), Feb 23: Six people were killed when the gelatin sticks they were trying to dispose of exploded accidentally at a stone quarry site in a village here early Tuesday, police said.

The incident comes close on the heels of a similar blast at a quarry site in Yediyurappa's hometown of Shivamogga January 22, which left six dead.

Karnataka Health Minister K Sudhakar, who represents the Chikkaballapur constituency visited the spot and said the bodies of the victims were badly mutilated and scattered all over the place.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted his condolences to the families of the victims of the blast.

"Pained by the loss of lives due to a mishap at Chikkaballapur in Karnataka. Condolences to the bereaved families. Praying that the injured recover quickly."

Expressing shock over the incident, Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa said he has ordered a thorough investigation into the case and directed the officials to take

stringent action against the guilty. "A high-level investigation into the incident is underway and stringent action will be taken against the guilty," he added.

According to police, the incident took place at Hirenagavalli near Peresandra.

Quarrying was stopped by the police on February 7 following complaints from the locals against rampant use of gelatin sticks. Yet, it continued clandestinely following which another raid was carried out a few days ago and the contractor was warned not to use gelatin anymore.

The men working there went to dispose of the explosives in the wee hours of Tuesday when it went off accidentally. The driver of the vehicle who escaped with severe injuries in the legs and hand told police that the victims took him along carrying a bag with them.

"They were holding a bag and asked me to drive the vehicle to the forest. I remained seated in the vehicle but the door was open. They went to a secluded place and suddenly the blast occurred," said the driver.

JUDGE, HEARING MURDER CASE, FEARS 'FOR LIFE'

AGENCIES

Bhopal, Feb 23: A judge in Madhya Pradesh hearing a murder trial in which the accused include relatives and the husband of a BSP MLA, Rambhai Thakur, has voiced fear of a plan to frame him and has alleged that "anything untoward" can happen to him.

RP Sonkar, an additional sessions judge in district Damoh, has alleged in a statement that the police and the accused in the murder case may be conspiring to bring up false allegations against him.

The judge was recording the police statement on action taken on an arrest warrant against Govind Singh Thakur - the BSP lawmaker's husband - when he made the statement about the police "conspiring with the accused" to malign him.

He also asked for a letter to be sent to the district sessions judge urging her to shift the murder trial to some other court. Judge Sonkar noted that the police had not followed the required procedure when it claimed it had gone to execute the arrest warrant put out for Govind Singh Thakur.

Superintendent of Police



Hemant Chauhan, asked about the allegations, refused to comment.

The case involves the murder of a Congress leader, Devendra Chaurasia, March 15, 2019, in Damoh district. Govind Singh Thakur and his aides are accused in the case. Govind Singh is also an accused in the 1998 murder of Congress leader Rajendra Pathak. Currently out on bail, granted by the Madhya Pradesh High Court, Govind Singh is known to be a strongman with much political clout.

The murdered Congress leader's son had alleged that the party had given him a free run despite proof of his crimes because the Kamal Nath government at the time needed the BSP to survive.

The Damoh district police had declared Rs25,000 reward on Thakur's arrest, but withdrew it after the accused submitted multiple applications of not being involved in the murder case.

A year on, Delhi riot victims say justice still eludes them

MANY OF THE MUSLIM VICTIMS OF LAST YEAR'S BLOODY VIOLENCE SAY THEY HAVE RUN REPEATEDLY INTO A REFUSAL BY POLICE TO INVESTIGATE COMPLAINTS AGAINST HINDU RIOTERS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New Delhi, Feb 23: The shooter shouted "Victory to Lord Ram," the Hindu god, before pulling the trigger that sent a bullet into Muhammad Nasir Khan's left eye.

Khan placed his trembling hand on his bloody eye socket and his fingers slipped deep into the wound. At that moment, Khan was sure he would die. Khan ended up surviving the violence that killed 53 others, mostly fellow Muslims, when it engulfed his neighborhood in the Indian capital 12 months ago.

But a year after India's worst communal riots in decades, the 35-year-old is still shaken and his attacker still unpunished. Khan says

he's been unable to get justice due to a lack of police interest in his case.

"My only crime is that my name identifies my religion," Khan said at his home in New Delhi's North Ghonda neighborhood.

Many of the Muslim victims of last year's bloody violence say they have run repeatedly into a refusal by police to investigate complaints against Hindu rioters. Some hope the courts will still come to their help. But others now believe the justice system under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist government has become stacked against them.

Adding to the sense of injustice is that accounts from Muslim victims as well as reports from rights



Delhi riot-affected families and victims attend a press conference on the topic of Subversion of Justice, Role of State Agencies, in New Delhi, Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

groups have indicated that BJP leaders and the New Delhi police force tacitly supported the Hindu mobs during the fevered violence.

New Delhi police did not respond to repeated requests for comment, but they insisted last year that their investigation had been fair and that nearly 1,750 people had been booked in relation to the riots - half of them Hindus. Minister for Home (State) G Kishan Reddy has likewise told Parliament that police acted swiftly and impartially.

But a letter one senior police officer sent to investigators five months after the riots appeared to suggest them they go easy on Hindus suspected of violence, prompting criticism from the Delhi High Court.

Communal clashes in India are not new, with periodic violence breaking out ever since the British partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. But in the last seven years, observers say, religious polarization fueled by the Hindu nationalist base of Modi's party has further deepened the fault lines and raised tensions.

Many believed the catalyst for last year's riots was a fiery speech by Kapil Mishra, a leader from Modi's party. On February 23, 2020, he gave police an ultimatum, warning them to break up a sit-in by demonstrators protesting against a new citizenship law Muslims say is discriminatory, or he and his supporters would do it themselves.

of the day quote

The Chinese government must know that the world is watching its strangulation of human rights – and that we must put all options on the table for holding China accountable

NANCY PELOSI | US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SPEAKER

We have been at the mercy of the coronavirus pandemic over the past year. I am concerned about people facing difficulties but I also hope of a bright future when people overcome the pandemic.

HIRONOMIYA NARUHIITO | JAPAN'S EMPEROR

In light of the court ruling, the government must respect the court order and ensure that not one of the 1,200 individuals is deported today

KATRINA JORENE MALIAMAU | DIRECTOR, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MALAYSIA

SHORT TAKES

Pak PM to visit Lanka

Colombo: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan will hold wide-ranging talks with Sri Lankan leaders on various issues such as trade, defence and technology during his one-day visit to the island nation. Khan, who is scheduled to arrive in Sri Lanka Tuesday evening, will hold deliberations with his Sri Lankan counterpart Mahindra Rajapaksa. He will meet President Gotabaya Rajapaksa Wednesday, the foreign ministry has confirmed. This is the first visit by a Pakistan prime minister to Sri Lanka since Nawaz Sharif visited the country in 2016. The bilateral talks are expected to focus on various sectors including trade, investment, health, education, agriculture, technology, defence and tourism.

Gender-reveal blast kills father

Liberty: An expectant father was killed when a device he was building for a gender reveal party exploded, police in New York have said. Christopher Pekny, 28, was assembling a device for his child's gender reveal party in the Catskills town of Liberty when it exploded just before noon Sunday, state police said. Pekny was killed. The death is the latest in a string of tragedies blamed on faulty gender reveal devices in recent years.

Dozens arrested in Greece protest

Thessaloniki: Police clashed with protesters and arrested 31 people in Greece's second-largest city during a demonstration against a new campus security law. Protesters occupied the principal's building at the University of Thessaloniki in northern Greece for several hours Monday and the clashes broke out when police entered the building to remove them. A total of 32 people who took part in the protest were fined 300 euros each for breaking the country's lockdown rules.

Five dead in boat capsized

Cairo: A boat capsized in a lake near Egypt's Mediterranean city of Alexandria, leaving at least five people dead, an official said. Alexandria's governor, Mohammed el-Sharif, Monday said three others were rescued and taken to a hospital. Rescue work was still on for others missing in Lake Mariut. He said most of the boats in the lake are working without licenses.



India's pharmaceutical sector is strong and well-established and has long played a central role in manufacturing life saving vaccines for global use. We are pleased that the US pharmaceutical industry has been coordinating with Indian companies since the beginning of this pandemic

NED PRICE | US STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESPERSON

EL CHAPO'S WIFE ARRESTED

Guzman Emma Coronel Aispuro, a former beauty queen and the wife of Mexican drug kingpin Joaquin 'El Chapo' was arrested in the United States and accused of helping her husband run his multibillion-dollar cartel



Nepal's Supreme Court reinstates dissolved House

Nepal plunged into a political crisis December 20 after President Bidya Dev Bhandari dissolved the House of Representatives at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Feb 23: Nepal's Supreme Court in a historic verdict

Tuesday reinstated the dissolved House of Representatives, in a setback to embattled Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli who was preparing for snap polls.

A five-member Constitutional bench led by Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher annulled the government's decision to dissolve the 275-member lower house of parliament, according to a notice issued by the apex court.

The court termed the dissolution of the House as "unconstitu-



tional" and ordered the government to summon the House session within the next 13 days.

Nepal plunged into a political crisis December 20 after President

Bidya Dev Bhandari dissolved the House of Representatives and announced fresh elections April 30 and May 10 at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, amidst a tussle for power within the ruling party. Oli's move to dissolve the House sparked protests from a large section of the Nepal Communist Party led by his rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', also a co-chair of the ruling party.

As many as 13 writ petitions including the one by the ruling party's

Chief Whip Dev Prasad Gurung were filed in the apex court seeking the restoration of the lower house parliament. The Constitutional bench comprising Bishwombar Prasad Shrestha, Anil Kumar Sinha, Sapana Malla and Tej Bahadur KC conducted a hearing on the case from January 17 to February 19.

Oli repeatedly defended his move to dissolve the House, saying some leaders of his party were attempting to form a "parallel government".

British Queen's kin jailed for sex assault



AGENCIES

London, Feb 23: A relative of Queen Elizabeth II was sentenced Tuesday to 10 months in prison for sexually assaulting a woman at his ancestral castle in Scotland.

Simon Bowes-Lyon, the Earl of Strathmore, had admitted assaulting the woman in a bedroom at Glamis Castle in February 2020.

Bowes-Lyon, 34, who is a first cousin twice removed of the queen, pleaded guilty last month, saying he was "greatly ashamed of my actions which have caused such distress to a guest in my home."

"I did not think I was capable of behaving the way I did but have had to face up to it and take responsibility," he said. He was sentenced Tuesday at Dundee Sheriff Court.

"Over the last year this has involved seeking and receiving professional help as well as agreeing to plead guilty as quickly as possible. My apologies go, above all, to the woman concerned but I would also like to apologise to family, friends and colleagues for the distress I have caused them," he said.

Glamis Castle, near Dundee in central Scotland, is the childhood home of the queen's late mother, who was born Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon.

Malaysia reports Myanmar migrants

AGENCIES

Kuala Lumpur, Feb 23: Malaysian immigration authorities said Tuesday they have deported 1,086 Myanmar migrants, breaking a court order to halt their repatriation following an appeal by two human rights groups.

Just hours earlier, a high court granted a one-day stay order for the deportation of 1,200 Myanmar migrants to hear an appeal by Amnesty International Malaysia and Asylum Access Malaysia, which said refugees, asylum-seekers and minors were among those being sent back.

Immigration chief Khairul Dzaimee Daud said the 1,086 had agreed to return home voluntarily on three Myanmar naval ships.

He stressed that they were all Myanmar nationals who were detained last year and didn't include any Muslim ethnic Rohingya refugees or asylum-seekers.

"All of them have agreed to return voluntarily without being forced by any parties," he said in a statement, adding that it was part of the department's normal repatriation program.

The statement didn't mention the court order or explain why only 1,086 were deported instead of 1,200.

Amnesty International called the decision "inhumane and devastating."

"It appears the authorities railroaded this shockingly cruel deportation before any proper scrutiny of the decision," it said in a statement.

Myanmar's junta chief urges economic action

REUTERS

Yangon, Feb 23: The leader of Myanmar's junta has called for energetic efforts to revive an ailing economy, state media reported Tuesday, as Western countries considered more sanctions to press the generals to shun a violent crackdown on democracy protests.

The call for focus on the economy came after a general strike shut businesses Monday and huge crowds gathered to denounce the military's Feb 1 coup and demand the release of elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi, despite a warning from authorities that confrontation could get people killed.

The Group of 7 rich countries Tuesday condemned intimidation and oppression of those opposing the coup. "Anyone responding to peaceful protests with violence must be held to account," group of foreign ministers said in a joint statement.

Protesters gathered again Tuesday though in much smaller numbers. There were also small marches in favour of the military, media reported. There were no reports of violence.

Military chief General Min Aung



Hlaing, in a meeting with his ruling council on Monday, called for state spending and imports to be cut and exports increased.

"The council needs to put its energy into reviving the country's ailing economy. Economic remedy measures must be taken," state media quoted him saying.

The army seized power after alleging fraud in Nov 8 elections, detaining her and much of the party leadership. The electoral commission dismissed the fraud complaints.

The crisis raises the prospect of isolation and investor jitters just as the Covid-19 pandemic has undermined consumption and choked off tourism. Min Aung Hlaing did not link the protests directly to economic problems but said the au-

thorities were following a democratic path in dealing with them and police were using minimal force, such as rubber bullets, state media reported. The security forces have shown more restraint compared with earlier crackdowns against people who had pushed for democracy during almost half a century of direct military rule.

Even so, three protesters have been shot and killed. The army has said one policeman died of injuries sustained during the protests.

The military has accused protesters of provoking violence but U.N. Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews said the millions who marched Monday in a "breathtaking" turnout showed they were prepared to face up to military threats.

Biden admin rolls back Trump-era citizenship test

AGENCIES

Washington, Feb 23: The Biden administration has announced the reversal of the stringent Trump-era policy by reverting to the 2008 version of the naturalisation test module to make the path to US citizenship more accessible to all eligible individuals.

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced Monday that it is reverting to the 2008 version of the naturalisation civics test beginning March 1.

The previous Trump administration had introduced some changes to the naturalisation civics test, called the 2020 civics test, which increased the number of questions from 100 to 128 and the correct answers in the multiple-choice questions had political and ideological overtones.

Announcing the reversal, the USCIS said the agency has determined that the revised civics test, applicable for individuals who had applied on or after December 1, 2020, "may inadvertently create po-

The previous admin had introduced some changes to the naturalisation civics test, called the 2020 civics test

tential barriers" to the naturalisation process.

"This action is consistent with the framework of the Executive Order on Restoring Faith in Our Legal Immigration Systems, which directs a comprehensive review of the naturalisation process to eliminate barriers and make the process more accessible to all eligible individuals," USCIS said in a statement.

"The 2008 civics test was thoroughly developed over a multi-year period with the input of more than 150 organisations, which included English as a second language experts, educators, and historians, and was piloted before its implementation. USCIS aspires to make the process as accessible as possible.

SILENT SUNSET



President Joe Biden, first lady Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Doug Emhoff participate in a moment of silence during a ceremony to honor the 500,000 Americans that died from COVID-19, at the White House, Monday

How rich is Saudi Arabia? Kingdom does the math

THE PIF'S FINANCES ARE FORMIDABLE. ITS ASSETS HAVE SWELLED TO \$400 BILLION AS OF 2020 FROM \$150 BILLION IN 2015

REUTERS

Dubai, Feb 23: Saudi Arabia wants to demystify its finances. The kingdom is working on creating a consolidated balance sheet of its assets and liabilities which will include items currently kept off the oil-rich economy's books, including the investments and debts of its powerful sovereign wealth fund.

"The main purpose of this programme is to have a financial equivalent of an MRI of the government balance sheet," a Finance Ministry spokesman told Reuters, adding that it would include assets and liabilities that are currently "off-balance sheet".

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and de facto ruler Mohammed bin

Salman has put Public Investment Fund (PIF), Saudi Arabia's main sovereign wealth fund, at the centre of reforms aimed at diversifying the economy of the world's top oil exporter away from fossil fuel.

Under the prince's chairmanship, PIF has transformed from a sleepy sovereign wealth fund into a global investment vehicle making multi-billion dollar bets on hi-tech companies such as Uber as well as other equity investments and pledging tens of billions of dollars to funds run by Japan's Softbank.

Its financial statements are not published and it does not feature in the kingdom's budget, which is publicly available.

Gulf countries don't typically publish information about their



overall debts and assets but the PIF's riskier investment profile and infusion of state funding have made its opacity an issue for some investors.

"Transfers of wealth from liquid pools of assets like central bank

reserves into PIF's less liquid (and less transparent) investments increases the overall risk profile of the public sector balance sheet," said Kirjanis Krustins, a director in Fitch's sovereign team.

"Debt investors would tend to

see the government and its key government related entities such as PIF as representing substantially the same risk. Thus the leveraging up of the broader Saudi complex could at some point impact the government's own borrowing costs," he said.

The government media office did not respond to a request for comment.

The government started working in the second half of last year on the so-called Sovereign Asset and Liability Management (SALM) framework and the spokesman said it was a 'long-term project' with no decision yet made on when and how its results would be disclosed.

"If we use benchmarks we will see countries that a couple of years to implement the consolidation

phase," he said of the project.

The PIF's finances are formidable.

Its assets have swelled to \$400 billion as of 2020 from \$150 billion in 2015, with the fund bolstered by an expected \$70 billion payday from Saudi Aramco, the state oil company, for PIF's stake in a petrochemical giant and a \$40 billion transfer from the central bank's foreign reserves.

It was also the recipient of nearly \$30 billion in proceeds from Aramco's initial public offering in 2019.

The fund has raised \$21 billion in loans between 2018 and 2019, and is finalising a new facility expected to be over \$10 billion in size, sources have said.

business

of the day quote

Spotify is deeply invested in the global audio streaming ecosystem, and aims to become the world's first true audio platform. We are here for the long term

GUSTAV GYLLENHAMMAR | SPOTIFY, VICE PRESIDENT - MARKETS AND SUBSCRIBER GROWTH

Tim's vast experience will advance TVS Motor Company's long-standing design focus to meet the rapidly changing needs of our esteemed customers in this dynamic new era

KN RADHAKRISHNAN | TVS MOTOR COMPANY DIRECTOR AND CEO

BMW Motorrad made a striking entry into the cruiser segment with the BMW R 18. Building on the success and popularity of BMW's first cruiser in India, we now present the BMW R18 Classic with a reimagined, even more iconic character

VIKRAM PAWAH | PRESIDENT, BMW GROUP INDIA

SHORT TAKES

Bol Keonjhar gets new ZM

Bhubaneswar: Umesh Kumar Rath, Deputy General Manager has joined as the new Zonal Manager of Bank of India, Keonjhar Zone. Rath started his career in the bank as Direct Recruitment Officer (DRO) in the year 1987. He has successfully worked in various key positions in Odisha over the course of his long 33 years of tenure and has also gained ample experience by working in Bank's headquarters in Jharkhand and Mumbai. Rath has extensive experience in bank's International branch as Chief Manager.

Jet employees' plea rejected

Mumbai: A top corporate tribunal has rejected the plea of Jet Airways employees seeking a copy of the resolution plan of the successful consortium of Murari Lal Jalan and Kalrock Capital. The consortium's resolution plan has been accepted to restart the now defunct airline. According to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), it noted that the statutory mandate requires that the resolution plan can only be presented to the committee of creditors (CoC) before its approval.

RIL to focus on green-energy

New Delhi: Standalone RIL's plan to foray into green energy will be also be liked by investors, brokerage Nomura said in a note. It said Reliance has indicated that it plans to build an optimal mix of reliable, lean and affordable energy using solar, wind and batteries.



Post the launch of Ape' e-City with swappable technology in 2019, we are now introducing the fixed battery technology solutions to serve the varied needs of customers

DIEGO GRAFFI | CHAIRMAN AND MD, PIAGIO COMMERCIAL VEHICLES PVT LTD

AMAZON INDIA ROPES IN MAHINDRA'S EVS

Amazon India and Mahindra Electric announce a partnership under which the e-commerce major has deployed the latter's electric vehicles in its delivery network as part of a commitment towards strengthening electric mobility



Bitcoin plummets as doubts grow over sky-high valuation

AGENCIES

London, Feb 23: Bitcoin plummeted as much as 17pc Tuesday as investors grew nervous at sky-high valuations, triggering the liquidation of leveraged bets and sparking a sell-off across cryptocurrency markets.

The world's biggest cryptocurrency was facing its biggest daily drop in a month, falling to as low as \$45,000. In choppy trading, it was last down 15.6%.

The drop took its losses to over a fifth from a record high of \$58,354 hit Sunday and underscored the volatility of the emerging asset - though it is still up around 60% this year.

"The kinds of rallies we've been

seeing aren't sustainable and just invite pullbacks like this," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at OANDA. "It was an extremely overbought market."

Ether, the world's second largest cryptocurrency by market capitalisation that often moves in tandem with bitcoin, also dropped more than 20% to \$1,410, down over 30% from last week's record peak.

Cryptocurrency markets have been running hot this year as big money managers and companies begin to take the emerging asset class seriously, piling money into the sector and driving confidence among small-time speculators.

A \$1.5 billion investment by electric carmaker Tesla this month has helped vault bitcoin above \$50,000



but may now lead to pressure on the company's stock price as it has become sensitive to movements in bitcoin.

LEVERAGED LOSSES

Rising government bond yields over recent days have hit riskier assets in traditional markets, with the caution spilling over into highly leveraged bitcoin markets, said Richard Galvin of crypto fund

The kinds of rallies we've been seeing aren't sustainable and just invite pullbacks like this; it was an extremely overbought market

CRAIG ERLAM | SENIOR MARKET ANALYST, OANDA

Digital Asset Capital Management.

Exchanges popular with cryptocurrency investors in Asia, including Binance and Huobi, accounted for about 70% of liquidations of leveraged bets over the last 24 hours, according to crypto data site Bybt. Bitcoin's losses were "compounded by the amount of liquidation that has happened in the last 24 hours", said Lan Gu of Alameda

Trade deficit with China reduces, thanks to Covid, investment curbs

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 23: The disruptions caused by Covid pandemic and additional checks on investment helped India to reduce its widening trade deficit with China in 2020.

As per official data, India's trade deficit with China declined by 19.39 per cent from \$56.95 billion in 2019 to \$45.91 billion in 2020.

The decline had largely been supported by all-time high levels of exports of goods and services by India.

While Indian imports from China dropped by 10.87 per cent and stood at \$66.78 billion compared to \$74.92 billion in 2019, Indian exports to China increased by 16.15 per cent from \$17.896 billion to reach \$20.87 billion in 2020. This is the highest level ever for Indian exports to China and the first time they have crossed \$20 billion.

But the souring of bilateral relations due to prolonged border tensions ensured that India-China bilateral trade shrank. In 2020 bilateral trade decreased by 5.64 per cent Y-o-Y and stood at \$87.65 billion compared to \$92.89 billion in 2019.



Among the top 15 Indian exports, a steep rise was witnessed in 2020 in ores (75.35 per cent), iron and steel (336 per cent), aluminium (2,023 per cent) and copper.

Iron ore exports stood at \$4 billion making India the fourth largest exporter of ores to China. Exports of iron and steel amounted to \$2.53 billion, marking a Y-o-Y increase of 336.44 per cent and making India the fourth largest exporter of iron and steel to China. Exports of aluminium and its articles registered a massive increase of 2,023.12 per cent to reach \$640 million and make India the fifth largest exporter in

this category to China (against the 21st in 2019).

Among the key agricultural commodities, including sugar, rice, oil, etc., in 2019, total exports saw an increase of 58.99 per cent from \$125.3 million in 2019 to \$199.14 million in 2020. The major contributors to this increase were cane sugar (387.5 per cent), soyabean oil (3,050 per cent), rice (184 per cent) and vegetables fats and oils (415 per cent). However, the exports of mangoes and fish oil declined dramatically to nil. Tea declined by 6.94 per cent and fresh grapes declined by 24.1 per cent.

Indian companies adopting connected Cloud strategies

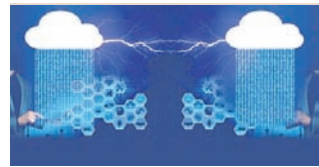
AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 23: Enterprises in India are leveraging cloud for objectives beyond business continuity and cost, and about 20 per cent of organisations in the country will adopt connected Cloud strategies by 2023, an IDC report said Tuesday.

By 2024, over 50 per cent of enterprises will replace outdated operational models with cloud-centric models that facilitate rather than inhibit organisational collaboration, resulting in better business outcomes. "The new normal will witness some of the temporary shifts become permanent like hybrid workforce, customer interactions, among others," said Rishu Sharma, Principal Analyst, Cloud and AI, IDC India.

"As businesses prioritise resiliency, agility, and efficiency, they will adopt cloud-native architectures that allow them to cater to the customer and end-user demands swiftly."

Early adopters of cloud and digital technologies have witnessed



the least impact on their business operations during the pandemic.

Through 2023, all enterprises struggle with app modernisation and data integration across Cloud silos. To gain business agility, enterprises will commit to modernizing over half of their existing applications by 2025, through use of turnkey cloud-native development and deployment services.

"Cloud continues to be the underpinning platform for digital transformation initiatives and has therefore seen an acceleration in demand. Enterprise applications and software that support and align with organizations' digital transformation strategy are critical investments," said Swapnil Shende, Senior Market Analyst, Artificial Intelligence, IDC India.

Khimji Jewellers celebrates 12th anniv

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: The jewellery brand of Odisha, Khimji Jewellers Tuesday celebrated the 12th anniversary of its iconic 621 Janpath store in the city.

As part of the celebration, the brand announced lucrative offers such as flat 50% off on making charge of hallmarked gold jewellery, flat 20% off on certified diamonds, flat 10% off on MRP of silver jewellery and flat 10% off on Silver WT. The offers are exclusively available at Khimji's Jewellers 612 Janpath and Chandrasekharpur stores in Bhubaneswar from February 20 to March 7, 2021.

Sourabh Das Gupta (CEO) Khimji Jewellers said, "We are overwhelmed to celebrate 12 successful years of our Janpath store. Since its inception, it is not only a jewellery showroom in the city but has been an iconic landmark for people of Bhubaneswar. We are grateful and thankful to our valued customers for trusting us constantly all these years and making it the most sought after jewellery store of



Bhubaneswar."

The four-storey jewellery store at Janpath has a wide range of gold jewellery product designs of national and international standards. It should be noted, the store has the largest collection of 'Bala' or 'Kangan' in Bhubaneswar. It also has a wide range of diamond, platinum and silver jewellery along with silver Wt. silver items. Apart from jewellery, the store also has wide watch collection of top international brands.

As a part of the celebration,

the brand also announced the three winners of its recently held Valentine Selfie Contest in collaboration with 92.7 Big FM under which the customers had to take selfies at 'Selfie points' of different Khimji Jewellers stores and post it in their social media tagging Khimji Jewellers official page. The winners were given away gold coins as their prizes. The names of the winners are Suraj Meher, Sonam Swain and Guru Ashish Mohanty from Bhubaneswar.

Edu budget slashed in two-thirds of poorer countries



AGENCIES

Washington, Feb 23: Despite additional funding needs, two-thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries have cut their public education budgets since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a new report.

The Education Finance Watch 2021, jointly released by the World Bank and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), said that education budgets are not adjusting proportionately to the challenges brought about by Covid-19, especially in poorer countries, Xinhua news agency reported.

In comparison, only one-third of upper-middle and high-income countries have reduced their budgets, the report showed, adding that these budget cuts have been "relatively small thus far."

"But there is a danger that future cuts will be larger; as the pandemic continues to take its economic toll, and fiscal positions worsen," it added. The annual report noted that these differing trends imply a significant widening of the "already large spending disparities" seen between low- and high-income countries.

"The learning poverty crisis that existed before Covid-19 is becoming even more severe, and we are also concerned about how unequal the impact is," Mamta Murthi, World Bank vice president for human development, said in a statement. "External financing is key to support the education opportunities of the world's poorest," said Stefania Giannini, assistant director-general for education at UNESCO.

Sebi will introduce pre-expiry margins

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 23: Seeking to strengthen the risk management framework, Sebi will put in place pre-expiry margins on cash settled contracts wherein the underlying commodities are deemed to be susceptible to possible near zero or negative prices.

The latest decision - to be effective from April 1, 2021 - is aimed at encouraging significant reduction of open interest as the contract approaches the expiry date.

The pre-expiry margin will be applicable on certain commodities under the Alternate Risk Management Framework (ARMF).

Against the backdrop of the unprecedented event of negative final settlement price in the crude oil futures markets last year, Sebi had prescribed an ARMF that would be applicable in case of near zero and/or negative prices for any underlying commodities/futures.

The matter of negative crude oil price event was deliberated upon by the Risk Management Review Committee (RMRC) of Sebi.

"In this regard, one of the suggestions of RMRC was that Indian Exchanges should consider introducing some mechanism to encourage significant reduction of open interest as the contract approaches the expiry date," the regulator said in a circular Tuesday.



US manufacturers grapple with steel shortage, soaring prices

THE BENCHMARK PRICE FOR HOT-ROLLED STEEL HIT \$1,176/TON THIS MONTH; ITS HIGHEST LEVEL IN AT LEAST 13 YEARS

AGENCIES

Chicago, Feb 23: An aerospace parts maker in California is struggling to procure cold-rolled steel, while an auto and appliance parts manufacturer in Indiana is unable to secure additional supplies of hot-rolled steel from mills.

Both companies and more are



getting hit by a fresh round of disruption in the U.S. steel industry. Steel is in short supply in the United States and prices are surging. Unfilled orders for steel in the last quarter were at the highest level in five years, while inventories were near a 3-1/2-year low, according to

data from the Census Bureau. The benchmark price for hot-rolled steel hit \$1,176/ton this month, its highest level in at least 13 years.

Soaring prices are driving up costs and squeezing profits at steel-

consuming manufacturers, provoking a new round of calls to end former President Donald Trump's steel tariffs.

"Our members have been reporting that they have never seen such chaos in the steel market," said Paul Nathanson, executive director at Coalition of American Metal Manufacturers and Users.

The group, which represents more than 30,000 companies in the manufacturing sector and downstream supply chains, this month asked President Joe Biden to terminate

Trump's metal tariffs. Domestic steel mills that idled furnaces last year amid fears of a prolonged pandemic-induced economic downturn have been slow in ramping up production, despite a recovery in demand for cars and trucks, appliances, and other steel products. Capacity utilization rates at steel mills - a measure of how fully production capacity is being used - has moved up to 75% after falling to 56% in the second quarter of 2020 but is still way below 82% in last February.

Steel shipments are up, but still below last year's levels.

A TIGHT STEEL MARKET

Steel producer Steel Dynamics last month said it can't get enough flat-rolled sheets even for its own internal operations.

"It is very frustrating," said Hale Foote, president at California-based aerospace parts maker Scandic Springs. "I am looking at great business...but I don't have any material supply." Scandic Springs faces the risk of losing a \$1 million annual contract as it can't find a domestic supplier ready to supply 240,000 pounds of cold-rolled steel.

Indiana-based Stone City Products, which supplies components to appliance and automotive companies, is also hard-pressed to procure 2 million tons of hot-rolled steel a year for a new project.

The company has seen a dramatic turnaround in business after the pandemic lows in the second quarter of 2020 when orders plunged 50%. Its order book is now 25% above pre-pandemic levels.

VENTURING INTO UNKNOWN



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Feb 23: A virgin Motera strip has become the big talking point as India captain Virat Kohli prepares the right pink ball questionnaire to trouble a spoilt-for-choice England in the day-night third Test starting here Wednesday.

Ahmedabad as a cricketing venue has been witness to a lot of cricketing feats in Indian cricket – from Sunil Gavaskar’s famous late cut to complete 10,000 runs in Tests to Kapil Dev’s best bowling figures of 9/83 and also him eclipsing Richard Hadlee’s then world record of highest wickets.

Ishant Sharma joining Kapil as the second Indian pacer to play 100 Tests would add to the momentous occasion and Kohli scoring a hundred is just what the 55,000 odd spectators, who would be allowed in, might crave for.

The refurbished Sardar Patel Stadium looks colossal under lights but the first Test match in many years would mean that even the home team wouldn’t expect a lot of advantage.

It would prefer a square turner to go 2-1 up in a high-stakes game but whether it actually gets one remains to be seen.

As senior opener Rohit Sharma was clear in team’s choice of surface – a turner that helps Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar Patel just like Joe Root would have opted for a green top at the Headingley or the Old Trafford.

There are a few more questions that would demand answers. How would the twilight period be for the batsmen as James Anderson feels that the ball swings more in that phase?

Will the extra lacquer on the ‘SG Test Pink’ make it difficult for the Ashwin-Axar combo which wreaked havoc on the Chepauk snake pit?

And with a 2:30 pm start, how much will the dew have a bearing during the final session? The ball would be difficult to grip at that point for slow bowlers and the pitch, despite grass being shaved off, might

whatsoever that by the time clock ticks 2:30 pm on Wednesday, the track will bear a bald look, similar to Chepauk.

Umesh Yadav passing the fitness test was good news for the Indian camp as Kuldeep Yadav is likely to be dropped from the playing XI.

Umesh, along with Ishant and the now injured Mohammed Shami, had polished off Bangladesh twice inside six sessions in the inaugural Pink Test match in Kolkata.

But this England team, with Joe Root, Ben Stokes, Jonny Bairstow, will pose a far greater challenge. Hardik Pandya has been kept with the Test team with an eye on his bowling workload but it’s not known whether the team thinks that he is Test match ready.

Pandya taking the load of a maximum 15 overs per innings on a turner could provide more balance to the playing XI and his big-hitting can tilt any game in India’s favour.

For England, with Moeen Ali back home as part of workload management, Dom Bess is expected to be back alongside Jack Leach in the spin department.

However, whether Anderson and Jofra Archer will have Stuart Broad or Mark Wood for company is still not clear. Also, talented batsman Zak Crawley could be back in the playing XI in place of Rory Burns while Jonny Bairstow can replace Dan Lawrence at number three.

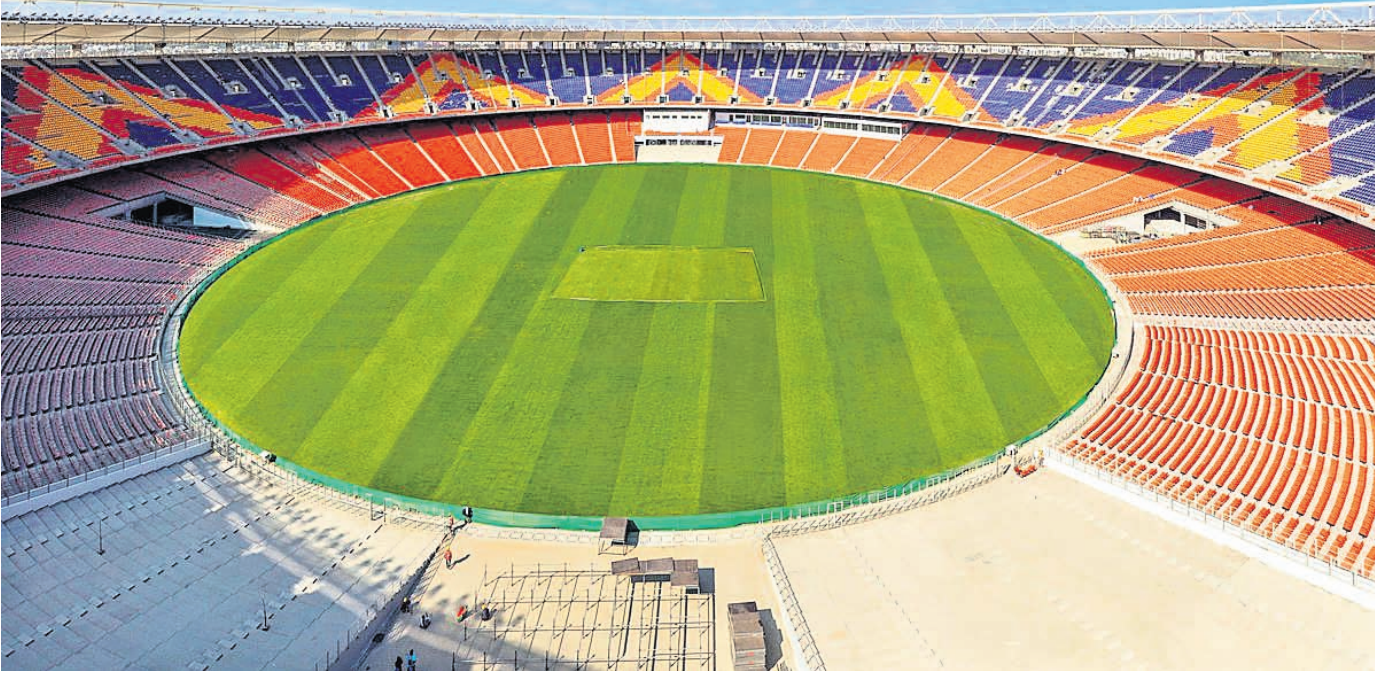


THE SQUADS

INDIA: Virat Kohli (C), Rohit Sharma, Mayank Agarwal, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, KL Rahul, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant (wk), Wriddhiman Saha (wk), R Ashwin, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj & Umesh Yadav.

ENGLAND: Joe Root (C), James Anderson, Jofra Archer, Jonny Bairstow, Dominic Bess, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Zak Crawley, Ben Foakes, Dan Lawrence, Jack Leach, Ollie Pope, Dom Sibley, Ben Stokes, Olly Stone, Chris Woakes & Mark Wood.

Third Test begins today as India, England set to play the day/night Test on an unfamiliar Motera wicket



Ronaldo brace helps Juve down Crotona



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Turin, Feb 23: Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice as Juventus got back to winning ways by beating bottom club Crotona 3-0 in Serie A. Ronaldo could even have had a hat trick in the first half.

Weston McKennie sealed the result after the break. Juventus moved up to third on the table, eight points behind Serie A leader Inter Milan, having played a match less.

It was Crotona’s fifth successive defeat and left it eight points from safety. Juventus were looking for a big win after a disappointing week. The Bianconeri lost at Porto 1-2 in the first leg of the round of 16 of the Champions League Wednesday, days after losing at Napoli 0-1 in Serie A.

Ronaldo hadn’t scored for Juventus since the start of the month. He came close on a couple of occasions before breaking the deadlock in the 38th minute when he headed in an Alex Sandro cross. Ronaldo doubled his tally in first-half stoppage time with another impressive header, this time from an Aaron Ramsey cross.

The 36-year-old Ronaldo should have had a hat trick moments later but he fired Ramsey’s pass narrowly wide of the right post.

Crotona never looked like getting back into the match and Juventus wrapped up the win in the 66th when a corner eventually came through to McKennie and he controlled it on his chest before firing into the back of the net.

Deepak in Strandja Memorial last 8

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: Asian silver-medallist Deepak Kumar (52kg) advanced to the quarterfinals with a facile win as Indian boxers got off to a mixed start at the Strandja Memorial Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Deepak defeated Kazakhstan’s Olzhas Bainiyazov 5-0 in his opening bout to make the last eight stage.

Other winners Monday included Naveen Kumar (91kg)

among men and Jyoti (51kg) in the women’s draw.

While Naveen defeated American Darius Fulghum in a close fight that ended 3-2 in his favour, Jyoti got the better of Ukraine’s Tetiana Kob 4-1.

However, Shashi Chopra (60kg), Lalita (69kg) and Sakshi (57kg) lost their opening bouts to bow out of the competition.

In the men’s competition, Naveen Boora (69kg) and Ankit Khatana (75kg) have got byes into the pre-quarterfinals of the tournament.

Bedi undergoes bypass surgery

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: Legendary spinner Bishan Singh Bedi has undergone a bypass surgery at a city hospital a few days back after he complained of heart problems and he is recovering well.

The 74-year-old Bedi underwent the procedure 23 days back and he is expected to be discharged from the hospital soon, according to a close confidant of the former India captain.

“As far as I know, he was having some heart issues and he under-

went a bypass surgery 23 days back on the advice of the doctors,” he told this agency. “He is currently doing fine and recovering from the surgery and is expected to be discharged from the hospital soon,” he added.

Bedi, a former left-arm orthodox spinner, represented India in 67 Tests and 10 ODIs between 1967 and 1979, scalping 266 and 7 wickets respectively.

In December last year, Bedi had protested against the DDCA decision to name the Feroz Shah Kotla stadium after its late ex-president and former union minister Arun Jaitley.

MCFC face Odisha FC; eye ACL berth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bambolim, Feb 23: Assured of a play-off berth, title contenders Mumbai City FC (MCFC) need nothing less than a win against bottom-placed Odisha FC in an Indian Super League (ISL) match here Wednesday in their bid to seal a place in the AFC Champions League (ACL).

With leaders ATK Mohun Bagan dropping points against Hyderabad FC, all eyes will be on Sergio Lobera’s MCFC to see if they can manage a win and take the race for the League Winners Shield to the final day of the season.

Odisha have only pride to play for, but they have a chance to spoil Mumbai City’s party. A win for Odisha or a draw will hand ATKMB the prestigious ACL slot for next season as they are on 40 points with just one match left.

A win for Mumbai City will take them to 36 points and they can top the league stage table and win the League



Odisha players go through their training drills ahead of their match vs MCFC

Winners Shield if they beat ATKMB in their final match February 28.

MCFC need to shake off the rut that they find themselves in. After being the best team for most part of the league, the wheels have come off right at the end. Lobera’s men have won just one of their last six games and are winless in their last three.

Their previous game saw them crash to a defeat to Jamshedpur FC and Lobera knows that the team needs improvement.

Former India international Steven Dias, who took charge of Odisha from interim manager Gerald Peyton, said his focus will be on the younger players ahead of the clash.

“We have really good young players. I still think that we have a very balanced team. But, we have been so unfortunate. Starting off the season, Thoiba (Singh) and Saurabh (Meher) played in the central midfield but after one or two games even coach Stuart (Baxter) didn’t get much chance to put Indian players,” he said.

NEUFC move to 4th after getting rid of SCEB 2-1

AGENCIES

Goa, Feb 23: NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) moved to fourth with 30 points in the points table, two ahead of fifth-placed Hyderabad FC (28), after scripting a 2-1 victory over 10-man SC East Bengal (SCEB) in their ISL encounter, Tuesday.

NEUFC broke the lead three minutes into the second period. Imran Khan had the ball in the middle of the SCEB half. He waited and served a pinpoint through ball to Suhair into the penalty area. Suhair shot it into the frame of the goal and the ball ended up in the back of the net.

Seven minutes later, the Highlanders doubled their advantage. Nim Dorjee crossed the ball into the box from right flank. Sarthak tried to clear the ball first time. Sadly, he sliced the ball off his shin and into the back of the net.

A crestfallen Sarthak finally made amends of his mistake in the 85th, but it was too little too late for SCEB. Surchandra Singh from the left flank took a free-kick and delivered the ball right in the middle of the NEUFC. In the crowded area, Sarthak leaped highest and headed the ball into the back of the net to redeem himself.

In between, Raju Gaikwad was sent off in the 71st. Deshorn Brown was about to get on the ball in the SCEB half. Gaikwad next to the Jamaican literally manhandled to bring him to the ground. The referee showed him his second yellow of the night, thus giving Gaikwad the marching orders.