



JANHVI'S CONFESSION

Actor Janhvi Kapoor opens up on her journey in the film industry and says she was 'at a disadvantage'

LEISURE P2



INNOVATIVE SPYING

China has operated a fleet of spy balloons for surveillance in several countries including India and Japan

INTERNATIONAL P10



BATTLE ROYAL

All eyes on team combo as India face Australia in the 1st Test of the 4-match series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy

SPORTS P12



PROVIDING A LIFELINE: Fishermen try to release a whale shark Wednesday into the sea after it got entangled into a net cast by them at Shankumugham beach in Thiruvananthapuram

DEADLIEST QUAKE IN 10 YRS KILLS 11K

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gaziantep (Turkey), Feb 8: The death toll in the earthquake which has devastated parts of Turkey and Syria has crossed the 11,000-mark and currently stands at 11,200 officials said Wednesday. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is visiting the quake zone. He said the fatalities in Turkey alone have passed 8,500. He conceded shortfalls in the response during the first day but said the situation has improved since then. "We won't allow any of our citizens to be left in the streets," Erdogan said.

Thinly-stretched rescue teams worked through the night both in Turkey and Syria, pulling more bodies from the rubble of thousands of buildings toppled by the catastrophic earthquake. The death toll made the quake the deadliest in more than a decade.

The death toll in government-held areas of Syria has climbed to 2,250, with 2,054 injured, according to the Health Ministry. At least 1,280 people have died in the rebel-held northwest, according to volunteer



first responders known as the 'White Helmets', with more than 2,600 injured. The figure surpassed the 8,800 killed in a magnitude 7.8 earthquake in Nepal in 2015.

Turkey now has some 60,000 aid personnel in the quake-hit zones, but with the devastation so widespread many are still waiting for help.

Nearly two days after the magnitude 7.8 quake struck, rescuers pulled out a three-year-old boy, Arif Kaan, from beneath the rubble of a collapsed apartment building in Kahramanmaraş, a city not far from the epicentre of the quake. The boy's father, Ertugrul Kisi, who himself had been rescued earlier sobbed as his son was pulled free and loaded into an ambulance.

Contd...P4

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



What you think are abuses, I learnt those words from our parliamentarians

New repo rate jolt after budget sops

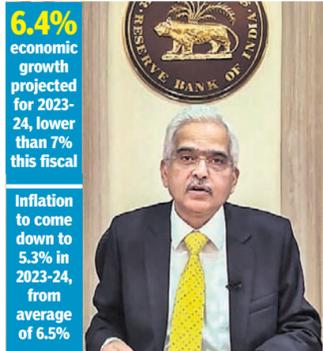
The 6th increase in interest rates by the RBI will severely affect the middle class as it will hike home and auto loan rates and existing customers will have to shell out more

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 8: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) slowed the pace of interest-rate increases for the second straight time when it Wednesday expectedly hiked borrowing costs by 25 basis points while keeping the door open for more hikes as core inflation remained high. The move to raise the rate will make loans – including housing and auto – and corporate credit expensive.

In short, whatever sops just announced in the 2023-24 Budget, will certainly be affected with the increase in repo rate. The savings the middle class was hoping to make through income tax relief will not happen anymore as loan rates are all set to pinch a big hole in pockets.

The RBI's six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted 4-2 to raise the benchmark repo rate to 6.50 per cent and retain its stance of withdrawing accommodation, which was adopted early last year. This is the sixth straight increase in interest rates since May last year,



6.4% economic growth projected for 2023-24, lower than 7% this fiscal

Inflation to come down to 5.3% in 2023-24, from average of 6.5%

Realtors unhappy

NEW DELHI: The RBI's decision to hike repo rates will increase interest rates on home loans and may impact demand for affordable and lower mid-income housing segments, according to property developers and consultants.

Commenting on the RBI policy, CREDAI president Harsh Vardhan Patodia said the continuous increase in interest rates will dampen the sentiment of borrowing for individuals and businesses alike.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	60663.79 ↑ 377.75
NIFTY	17871.70 ↑ 150.20
DOLLAR	82.64 ↑ ₹0.15
EURO	88.60 ↓ ₹0.26
GOLD	₹57,098 ↓ ₹159
SILVER	₹67,449 ↓ ₹80

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	35.4°C	33.0°C
MIN	17.2°C	18.0°C
Humidity	83%	83%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	MAINLY CLEAR SKY	

SHORT TAKES

Former Odisha CS set to join Congress

Bhubaneswar: Former Odisha Chief Secretary Bijay Patnaik is all set to join the Congress, sources informed Wednesday here. They said Patnaik will be visiting Thursday the AICC office in New Delhi where he will be formally inducted into the party in presence of president Mallikarjun Kharge. Patnaik will be accompanied by OPCC president Sarat Pattanayak. Sources said that the 1976 batch Odisha cadre IAS officer, who retired as chief secretary in 2013 has been inspired by Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra and has decided to plunge into politics.

Gopal to undergo narco, polygraph tests

Bhubaneswar: Dismissed policeman Gopal Krushna Das who allegedly shot dead former Odisha Health Minister Naba Kishore Das last month will undergo narco-analysis and polygraph tests in Gujarat, officials said here Wednesday. A court in Jharsuguda district extended the police remand of Gopal, till February 13. The court has allowed the Crime Branch probing the case to conduct the narco-analysis and polygraph tests on the dismissed policeman after the accused agreed to the proposal, Gopal's lawyer Harishankar Agarwal told reporters.

James jumps past Jabbar, creates NBA history

Los Angeles: LeBron James is the NBA's new career scoring leader. With a step-back jump shot with 10.9 seconds left in the third quarter of the match against Oklahoma City Thunder played Tuesday night, James pushed his career total to 38,388 points on Tuesday night and broke the record that Kareem Abdul Jabbar held for nearly four decades. James outstretched his arms, threw both hands in the air, then smiled. Abdul-Jabbar rose from his seat and clapped. Jabbar became the NBA's all-time leading scorer April 5, 1984 and wound up retiring in 1989 with 38,387 points.

and the cumulative hike now totals 250 bps.

The RBI raised interest rates by 35 bps in December 2022, by 40 bps in May and 50 basis points each in June, August and September, last year.

While the headline inflation print has seen a downward trajectory and has remained below the upper limit of 6 per cent in November and December 2022, the MPC continues to have con-

cerns about the core inflation, which has stayed above 6 per cent for the past 15 months.

"The stickiness of core or underlying inflation is a matter of concern. We need to see a decisive moderation in inflation. We have to remain unwavering in our commitment to bring down CPI headline inflation," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said while announcing the committee's decision.

Contd...P4

Woman 'raped', murdered in Jagatpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jagatpur/Manguli, Feb 8: A 46-year-old woman was allegedly raped before being murdered at a deserted place near the truck terminal under Jagatpur police limits in Cuttack, sources said Wednesday. Police recovered the woman's naked body with a broom inserted in her private parts late Tuesday night. According to the victim's husband, who is a truck driver and stays under Jagatpur police limits, the woman was raped before being murdered.

"I had gone to deliver a con-

signment Sunday at Paradip. Upon reaching home Tuesday evening, I couldn't find my wife. My daughter told that she had gone to market. As she did not return till late in the night, we frantically searched for her," the victim's husband said.

He further said that one of their neighbours told them about discovery of a woman's body near the truck terminal late in the night. "We reached there and found that it was my wife. Her body was found naked and a broom inserted in her private parts. She was definitely raped before being murdered," he said and added that her body

bore multiple injuries.

Jagatpur police have registered a case (67/23) on the basis of the complaint lodged by the woman's husband.

"We have sent the woman's body for autopsy. Things will be clear after the post-mortem report comes," additional commissioner of police (ACP) Arun Kumar Swain said. He said efforts were on to nab the culprits and CCTV footage of the area is being examined.

Jagatpur inspector in-charge (IIC) Rabindra Nath Meher and a forensic team were at the crime scene when reports last came in.

Covid cases 17 times higher in India: BHU

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: The actual Covid-19 infections in India may be around 17 times higher than the official figure, a study led by researchers at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) said Wednesday.

According to government data, nearly 4.5 crore people in India have been infected with Covid-19 so far. However, the study published in the 'International Journal of Infectious Diseases' (IJID) estimated that the actual coronavirus cases in India may be be-

tween 68 to 98 crore.

"The research has shown that the actual corona infection in India was at least 17 times higher. The discrepancy observed in our study is due to the overwhelming number of asymptomatic people, which was several-fold higher than the true official infection," said BHU geneticist Professor Gyaneshwer Chaubey in a release.

"Asymptomatic cases were more inclined towards the younger population," added Chaubey, who led the study. The study involved 88 scientists from 34 research institutes across India.

'TotalEnergies' puts on hold investment in Adani's H2 project

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: France's 'TotalEnergies' has put on hold a planned investment in Adani group's USD 50 billion hydrogen project pending results of an audit launched following allegations by Hindenburg Research, chief executive Patrick Pouyanné said Wednesday. This is the first occasion when a collaborator or partner has put a project on hold with Adani, since the Hindenburg Report became public.

While the partnership where the French oil giant was to take a 25 per cent stake in the hydrogen venture of the Adani group was announced in June last year, 'TotalEnergies' has not yet signed a contract, Pouyanné said at an earnings call. "Obviously, the hydrogen project will be put on hold until we have clarity from Adani group on the allegation levelled by US short-seller Hindenburg Research," Pouyanné stated.

'TotalEnergies' is one of the biggest foreign investors in billionaire Gautam Adani's empire and had previously taken stakes in the group's renewable energy venture, Adani Green Energy Ltd and city gas unit, Adani Total Gas Ltd.

As per the June 2022 announcement, 'TotalEnergies' was to take 25 per cent equity in Adani New Industries Ltd (ANIL) – the Adani group firm that is investing USD 50 billion over 10 years in a green hydrogen ecosystem that includes an initial production capacity of one million tonne before 2030. The announcement by Total certainly adds to the woes of Adani.

Pouyanné said Adani has to explain the allegations. "This project was announced but nothing has been signed... And for now it won't be signed. It makes no sense to add more (projects) until there is clarity," Pouyanné pointed out.

Teacher pays students for learning

HELPING POOR KIDS ATTAIN THEIR GOALS IS WHAT MAKES PRAFULLA NAYAK SPECIAL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, Feb 8: As a kid he struggled to reach life's goals, because he was born in a poor family. So Prafulla Nayak, belonging to the remote hamlet of Panchabatia under Banta block in Bhadrak district, decided that once he achieves his dream of becoming a school teacher he would help other aspiring students fulfill their aspirations. He wanted to create earning for students so that they can pursue their goals.

That is exactly what Prafulla, an art teacher at Nehru Government High School, does now. He is a well-known YouTuber at present. However, he has not stopped at that. Prafulla is teaching poor students animation online. He helps them out with subjects and also teaches them animation so that they can earn enough to study and run their families.

After school, Prafulla gives free



animation lessons in the evening to students. The students make animation videos, lend voices to the characters they create and upload those on YouTube. In the process, some of them have developed a substantial subscriber base and have started earning.

It is important to note that Prafulla does not charge any fees for imparting training in animation.

On the other hand, he pays the students for the videos they create. So while learning the intricacies of animation, the students also get remunerations. Prafulla's goal is quite simple. He wants to stay in his village help as many poor students he can with the hope that some of them will become famous.

"So far I have managed to build a subscriber base of six lakh. Some of

the videos we upload register hits of more than one crore," said Prafulla. "The content we upload is based on life and comedy and our aim is to educate the society," Prafulla added.

With such a large subscriber base it is quite natural that some of the videos earn good revenue. So students also benefit from it. "I lend my voice to several characters shown in the videos and also try and come up with new ideas. So I am learning and earning at the same time," said Babulu Nayak, a voice artist.

As of now, Prafulla's target is to increase the number of uploads. "Currently two-three videos are uploaded every week. If we manage to increase the number, certainly the revenues will increase," Prafulla opined.

In the modern world where earning a quick buck is the motto of life, Prafulla's deed is indeed an inspiring act.

leisure



PAM ANDERSON NOW HAS HER OWN VEGAN COOKING SHOW

Hollywood star Pamela Anderson is set to front a plant-based cooking show on Food Network Canada. The 55-year-old star has landed a new series *Pamela's Cooking With Love*, a working title, which has been commissioned by Corus Studios.

MY KIDS DON'T CARE THAT I'M FAMOUS: PAUL RUDD

Actor Paul Rudd's children don't care that he is a Hollywood star because he is 'just dad' to them. The 53-year-old actor is known for starring in the title role of the Marvel Cinematic Universe movies *Ant-Man*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
For no reason whatsoever, you may clam up today. Of course, you will give credit to others wherever they've contributed. But you need to be more generous than that, says Ganesh, and share the secrets of your success with your compatriots. Also, do you really need to buy that \$100 wallet?

TAURUS
This is a bright, rosy day for students and scholars, particular who are engaged in, or are looking forward to higher studies, specializing in a particular professional stream. This is a great day for making plans for higher studies abroad. Do not miss this opportunity. Plans made today are likely to materialize.

GEMINI
It is better for you to swim with the current in all of today's dealings, suggests Ganesh. This will help you effortlessly deal with even the most morbid state of affairs. No need to be a hero, today. Pleasure is the key word for you. Your performance will be satisfying at work, and more than satisfying back home.

CANCER
A shopping spree with your darling is likely to be the highlight of the day, even though you will be paying for almost everything. Though you have decided to be this lavish out of sheer love, your sweetheart will more than return the favour with a sweaty thank you 'return gift' in the evening.

LEO
Seems today is just one of those days when things simply refuse to go your way. It happens to the best of us, says Ganesh, and there isn't much one can do about it except slog it out and find that hidden reserve of moral support. On a brighter note, Ganesh observes the possibility of you meeting the right person who shall help you rekindle your imagination.

VIRGO
Today is the right time to start a new project, while older projects which had been postponed will be finished. Over the next week you will try to boost your energy levels. Parties will lead to a lot of entertainment and joy. Ganesh says children will bring home pride which will put you in even higher spirits.

LIBRA
The clock ticks on, but chances are it can hardly beat you in the race, thanks to your prompt and sincere efforts. Today, you shall be a paragon of excellence. However, Ganesh waves the red flag of caution: it always pays to be safe rather than sorry.

SCORPIO
Add a pinch of innovation and inventiveness to your daily working style. There shall be order in the chaotic way you perform your tasks - though not apparent to others. Revitalise yourself and plunge into work with new-found zest and vigour, advises Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Today, find yourself driving all your thoughts and actions towards your family. You will also spend some superb time with your dearest and discuss intimate matters. A relaxing day today as you spend time with your friends and family, chilling out and having a good laugh or two.

CAPRICORN
Now is the perfect time to showcase your talents and skills. You are all geared up to hit your target and do everything that is needed to be done. Your efforts will not go in vain as they will bear fruits for sure, says Ganesh. You will spend quality time with your family member and catch with old friends.

AQUARIUS
It's a day you may want to spend with yourself. But it may still not bring the desired peace and tranquility. An unpleasant situation may force you to deal with reality, says Ganesh. You now realise how much strength you derive from your devotion to God.

PISCES
Of late, the harder you try, the more it seems you have to do. You are likely to put your foot down today and spend some time taking care of yourself and playing truant with your responsibilities. Recharge your batteries fully while you are at it, says Ganesh.

Janhvi says she's at a disadvantage

Mumbai: Janhvi Kapoor spoke about being called a 'nepo baby' on the internet and being asked if she can act. In a new interview, she also said that despite getting opportunities 'more easily' than the others, she was 'at a disadvantage'.
Opening up on her journey in the film industry thus far, the *Mili* actress said that although she has 'gotten certain opportunities more easily', she felt she was 'at a disadvantage'. Janhvi also said that it hurts her when she's putting in the hard work or undergoing the mental turmoil, and 'some random, anonymous person on the internet' questions her acting skills or slams her for being a 'nepo baby'.
Janhvi is the elder daughter of

late actor Sriveidi and film producer Boney Kapoor. She made her acting debut in 2018 with *Dhadak*, which was backed by Karan Johar. Janhvi will be seen in *Dostana 2*, *Bawaal* alongside Varun Dhawan, and in *Mr. And Mrs. Mahi* with Rajkummar Rao. Her younger sister Khushi Kapoor will soon be making her debut with Zoya Akhtar's Netflix film, *The Archies*.



Kriti glad to be seen as a star-actor

Mumbai: Kriti Sanon feels there is a palpable shift in the audience's perception after the success of *Mimi*. According to her, people have started seeing her as a star-actor now.
In an interview with a news portal, Kriti spoke about the same and added that now that people have started seeing her as a star-actor, she wants the actor in her to shine brighter than the star. The actress also stated that she is glad that she has got a bit of validation.
Elaborating further,

Kriti added that choosing projects that highlight the actor in her is her top priority. According to her, she hasn't even tapped into 50 percent of her potential. At this point, she feels she can push herself to a limit and then she will need a brilliant filmmaker to push her further. Kriti feels that if she has that kind of opportunity, she can do a lot more.
When asked if she has any filmmaker she has in mind who can help push her further, Kriti said that the one offer that is still not on the table is a Sanjay Leela Bhansali film. She admitted that she would love to wear the tag of a Bhansali heroine some day.

People now root for the anti-hero: John

Mumbai: Actor John Abraham, who is currently riding high on the success of *Pathaan*, hopes that a prequel to his character Jim from the film that reveals his back story is made.
John said: "It is incredible the amount of love that I have been receiving for playing Jim in *Pathaan*! As an actor, I only work for the love of audiences and fans. Records and milestones are a huge bonus and I'm grateful that *Pathaan* is such a historic blockbuster."
"I didn't expect that people would love my character so much that they want more of Jim."

He added: "I'm astounded by the number of messages I'm getting daily on my social media about how there should be a prequel to Jim. When people almost always root for the hero, and that hero is Shah Rukh Khan in *Pathaan*, it is hugely gratifying that people are rooting for the anti-hero too!"
"I'm fortunate that my work in *Pathaan* has spoken loudly and hopefully, I have managed to give people an anti-hero that they will always remember. That was my intent when I heard *Pathaan*," said John.



PEANUTS



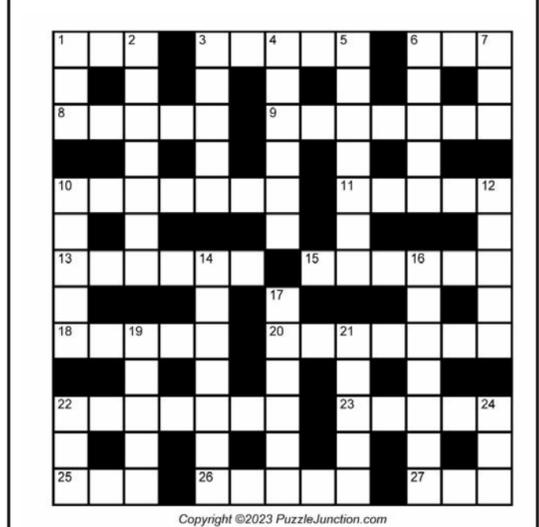
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



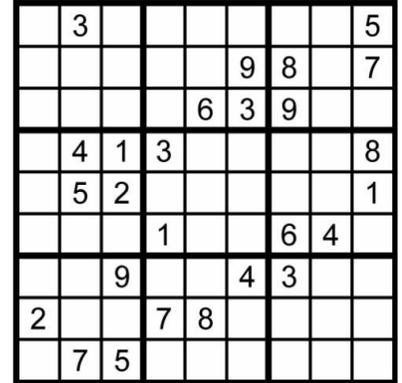
FUN post CROSSWORD



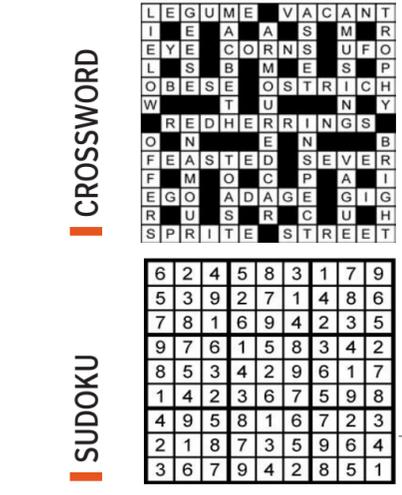
- Across**
- 1 Toast topper
 - 3 Concede
 - 6 Astern
 - 8 Loose fitting cloak
 - 9 Pictures and such
 - 10 Music hall
 - 11 Crazy bone
 - 13 Take for granted
 - 15 Bind
 - 18 Lodging facility
 - 20 Billiard table item (3,4)
 - 22 Worship, as a movie star
 - 23 Heartache
 - 25 Longing
 - 26 Become a participant
 - 27 Recede
 - 5 Cul de sac (4,3)
 - 6 Vitriolic
 - 7 Endeavour
 - 10 Type of bin
 - 12 Unicycle necessity
 - 14 Discomfort
 - 16 Probe
 - 17 Consider as true
 - 19 Rosebush feature
 - 21 Enthusiastic
 - 22 Frozen
 - 24 Watch chain
- Down**
- 1 Airplane
 - 2 Primates
 - 3 Fancy vessel
 - 4 Deported

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

BJD: Include 169 tribal communities in ST list

Inclusion of the left-out communities will give them their much-needed recognition as STs and ensure them social justice in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of India, says BJD MP Niranjan Bishi

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 8: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Wednesday urged the Union government to take steps for inclusion of 169 tribal communities in Scheduled Tribe (ST) in order to help people belonging to these communities avail benefits of the schemes meant for them.

Taking part in the Motion of Thanks to the President's address, BJD MP Niranjan Bishi said that people belonging to tribal communities - Saara, Tamadia, Bhanja Puran, Kalanga, Paharia, Jhodia, Mankidia, Dura, Chuktia Bhunjia, Paudi Bhuyan, Amanatia, Beldar Gond, Budu Kondh, Budha Kondh, Boda Savara, Bhogta, Bhokta and other communities - as proposed for inclusion are actually subsets or phonetic variations of the name of the existing ST communities, but are still deprived of the benefits availed by STs.

He further said, "Inclusion of the left-out communities will give them their much-needed recognition as STs and ensure them social justice in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of India."



ODISHA IN PARLIAMENT

■ BJD's Rajya Sabha MPs Manas Mangaraj and Sulata Deo took part in the Motion of Thanks on President's address

■ Mangaraj drew the Union government's attention to the infrastructure of the state

■ Deo reiterated the party's demand for introduction and passage of the Women's Reservation Bill

The BJD MP stated that the Union government should take steps for inclusion of tribal languages - Ho, Mundari and Bhumij

- in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

Bishi also requested for withdrawal of 18 per cent GST on Kendu leaves. He said that imposition of GST on Kendu leaves is adversely affecting tribal people as they collect the leaves as part of the forest rights.

"Fruits of development are to be shared equitably but the focus should be on weaker sections particularly Scheduled Tribes of the society on economic criteria," Bishi said.

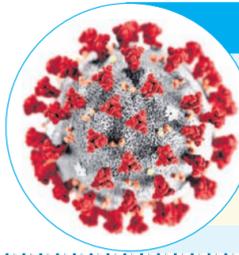
Significantly, BJD MPs Manas Mangaraj and Sulata Deo also took part in the Motion of Thanks on President's address. Mangaraj drew the Union government's attention to the infrastructure of the state. He requested the Union government to take initiatives for boosting railways and highway infrastructure in the state. He also highlighted that the modernisation of 12 stations is yet to be completed in the state.

Deo applauded the mentioning of women empowerment in the President's speech. She reiterated BJD's demand for introduction and passage of the Women's Reservation Bill.



FOOD SAFETY FIRST

A team of food safety officers raided several eateries in Baliapanda and Sea Beach areas of Puri, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	67,67,02,076	64,92,37,338	67,75,015
India	4,46,83,639	4,41,51,108	5,30,746
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204



IN MEMORIAM: Orissa POST and Dharitri Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy speaks during the inauguration of a musical programme 'Yeh Shaam Rafi Ke Naam' organised by Sushama Sangeet Sadan at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday. Cooperation secretary Sanjeev Kumar Chadha (middle), Odia Language Literature & Culture additional secretary Manaswini Sahu and noted music director and singer Laxmikant Palit are also seen

Pact inked between CSIR-IMMT, OUAT

Bhubaneswar: CSIR-IMMT and OUAT inked a pact recently for enabling collaborative research, technology development and transfer. The pact aims at catalysing knowledge exchange and translation of ideas from laboratory to industries through intervention of science & technology powered by CSIR-IMMT INTEC (Innovative Technology Enabling Centre) and IMMT-DSIR-CRTDH (Common Research & Technology Development Hub).

Gopal to undergo narco analysis, polygraph tests

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: The Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) Court in Jharsuguda Wednesday allowed the Crime Branch (CB) to conduct narco analysis and polygraph tests on dismissed assistant sub-inspector (ASI) of police Gopal Das, accused of assassinating Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das in the district January 29 this year.

The court also granted the investigating agency to take the 'killer' cop on five more days of remand for further interrogation. According to CB, which is yet to ascertain the concluding motive behind the daylight murder of the cabinet minister, Gopal agreed to go for both narco analysis and polygraph tests. The CB took the accused on remand for the third time. Earlier, the investigating agency had taken Gopal on four days remand twice—first, soon after his arrest and second, February 4 last which ended Wednesday.

Meanwhile, justice JP Das, the

The court granted the investigating agency to take accused Gopal Das on five more days' remand for further interrogation

Singers render Mohd Rafi's timeless songs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: A musical evening titled 'Yeh Shaam Rafi Ke Naam' was organised at Rabindra Mandap here, Wednesday, where multiple evergreen songs of legendary singer Mohammed Rafi were sung.

In the event organised by Sushama Sangeet Sadan, 36 songs of Rafi were performed. Singers including Laxmikant Palit, Randeep Palit, Bandish Palit, Nazia, Rashmita and others performed the timeless songs of the legendary singer.

The first song of the evening was 'O Duniya Ke Rakhwale' from the movie 'Bajju Bawra' was sung at the event by Randeep Palit.

Chief Executive of Orissa POST and Dharitri Adyasha Satpathy, Editor of the newspapers Tathagata Satpathy, Cooperation department secretary Sanjeev Kumar Chadha and additional secretary of Odia Language Literature & Culture department Manaswini Sahu among others were present.

5G in all urban areas by December

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: All urban areas in the state will get 5G connectivity by December, while 1,814 villages will get 4G network by that time, an official said Wednesday.

In Odisha, 5G connectivity was launched January 5 with services in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar through 510 BTSs (base terminal stations). Department of Telecoms deputy director-general BK Nayak

At present, 13 districts are being served with 5G services by Reliance Jio and nine districts by Airtel

said, adding that at present, 13 districts are being served with 5G services by Reliance Jio and nine districts by Airtel.

"It is in the rollout phase now to

cover all major cities by March 2023, and all cities and towns by December 2023," he said.

Altogether 1,814 villages in the state will be covered by 4G services at an approximate cost of Rs 2,000 crore with a target to complete the project by December, Nayak said.

The project is being implemented by BSNL, he said.

So far, 42,425 villages have 2G, 3G and 4G services with 25,115 towers. The state has 3.32 crore subscribers,

he said. The telecom density in the state was 80 per cent against the national average of 85 per cent. "There are 7,113 villages without 4G service," Nayak said.

In Naxalism-hit areas, 483 4G towers were being set up in nine districts at a sanctioned cost of Rs 422 crores and the project is being implemented by Reliance Jio, he said. The project will be completed by March next year and already 102 towers are in place, he added.



CAUTION THROWN TO WINDS: Tourists enjoying a bath in Puri sea as an illegal trawler is seen fishing in prohibited area, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

Substandard work alleged in Sun Temple wall

POST NEWS NETWORK

Konark, Feb 8: Locals here have alleged massive irregularities in the construction of boundary wall of the Sun Temple and demanded a thorough probe into the matter.

According to reports, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has assigned the boundary wall project under the Union government to Shasank Sekhar Nayak, a contractor, after the tender was approved.

The ASI has sanctioned Rs 20 lakh for the construction of the boundary wall. However, some intellectuals, senior citizens and culture enthusiasts of the area have raised concern over the substandard raw materials used in the construction of the wall. Poor quality steel rods, cement, stones and sand were used in the con-



POOR QUALITY STEEL RODS, CEMENT, AND LOW GRADE STONES AND SAND WERE USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BOUNDARY WALL, LOCALS ALLEGED

THE CONCERNED CITIZENS OF THE AREA HAVE DEMANDED A HIGH-LEVEL PROBE INTO THE MATTER BY A TEAM OF ASI DIRECTOR, PURI COLLECTOR AND THE SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE

struction, they alleged.

"The Black Pagoda, located on the eastern shores of the sub-continent is famous for its vibrant cul-

ture, temple architecture and art. But the substandard work has exposed the negligent attitude of the authorities," said a local. The work is not being monitored due to various reasons including the absence of ASI officials, some of the locals alleged.

Since the particular contractor gets the maximum number of projects, locals suspect that the authorities are showing undue favour to the contractor.

The concerned citizens of the area have demanded a high-level probe into the matter by a team of ASI director, Puri Collector and the Superintendent of Police.

Local ASI official Niraj Singh assured the people that a proper investigation would be conducted into the matter and legal action would be initiated if anyone is found guilty.

EXCISE DEPT BAGS CSI-SIG E-GOVERNANCE AWARD

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: The Excise department has been conferred the prestigious Computer Society of India-Special Interest Group (CSI-SIG) e-Governance Award for computerisation and IT initiatives, sources in know of the development said Wednesday.

According to sources, the digital workplace of the Excise department 'e-Abkari' has been selected for the award of recognition under project category for the 20th CSI-SIG e-Governance Award.

Officials from the state would receive the award during an event at Netaji Subhash University of Technology in New Delhi March 25, 2023. The Excise department has switched to 'eAbkari' with the technical support of National Informatics Centre in 2019-20, developing and implementing more

than 30 online modules for tracking raid spots and excise shops, it was learnt. The digital initiative helped the department bringing transparent, hassle-free, real-time and timely service delivery, eliminating physical touch points and reducing discretion while providing services at doorsteps.

Earlier, the department has bagged the prestigious 'Digital India Gold Award' for ease of doing business and the SKOCH Award for ICT intervention.

According to data shared by the department, as many as 50,028 Excise cases have been detected till January this year against 33,064 last year, registering a 51 per cent rise. At least 1,459 cases have been detected under the NDPS Act, 1985 till January this year against 646 cases during the corresponding period last year—an increase of 126 per cent, the data said.

India highest attacked country by hackers in Asia

EMERGENCE OF NUMEROUS NEW RANSOMWARE GROUPS AND PERSISTENCE OF THE OLD ONES LEAD TO AN EXPONENTIAL INCREASE IN RANSOMWARE ATTACKS

India was the highest attacked country by hackers in Asia and the second-most attacked country globally (after the US) in 2022, a report showed Wednesday.

The number of cyber attacks on India increased by 24.3 per cent last year.

Asia-Pacific remained the most targeted region globally, receiving 20.4 per cent of all attacks in 2021 and 24.1 per cent of all attacks in 2022.

The number of attacks targeting the Asia-Pacific region increased by 26.4 per cent, according to data from cyber-security firm CloudSEK.

North America, Asia-Pacific and Europe remained the most targeted regions in both the years

2021 and 2022.

However, North America witnessed a decline in targeted attacks but remained the third most targeted region in 2022 (down from second in 2021), while Europe rose to the second position, possibly due to the Russia-Ukraine war.

"2022 observed an increase in cybercrime with a surge in sophisticated and targeted cyber attacks. This can be attributed to an increase in underground activity leading to a rise in utility of malicious tools and malware," said a security researcher from CloudSEK TRIAD team.

Emergence of numerous new ransomware groups and persistence of



the old ones lead to an exponential increase in ransomware attacks.

"Sectors like electric vehicles grabbed the attention of threat actors owing to the new technologies plagued with various vulnerabilities," said the researcher.

Ransomware attacks increased drastically, going from the least

common (0.3 per cent) in 2021 to the third most common (8 per cent) in 2022. Many new ransomware operators emerged in 2022, while some prominent ransomware groups launched their new versions (such as LockBIT 3.0).

Attacks on the government sector globally accounted for 4.1 per

Ransomware attacks increased drastically, going from the least common (0.3%) in 2021 to the third most common (8%) in 2022

Many new ransomware operators emerged in 2022, while some prominent ransomware groups launched their new versions (such as LockBIT 3.0)

Attacks on govt sector globally accounted for 4.1% in 2021, which increased to 12.1% in 2022

cent in 2021, which increased to 12.1 per cent in 2022. IT and technology, e-commerce, and media, entertainment and marketing industries saw a decline in the number of attacks but remained in the top 10 industries targeted, said the report.

Traditionally produced 'brown rice' in demand

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: There has been a steady rise in the demand for traditional and healthy food among informed citizens. Husk lever pound rice, referred to as 'Dhinki Kuta Chaula' in Odia, is one of the preferred grains by the connoisseurs.

Responding to the trend, the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Sundargarh is incentivizing women from local tribal communities to produce traditional husk lever pound rice, or brown rice (whole grain rice), with a view to enhance their income avenues.

The programme is part of the 'Van Dhan Vikas Karyakram' (VDVK) which is aimed at creating substantial livelihood opportunity for members of various tribal communities by using their traditional knowledge and expertise.

Fiber-rich brown rice is sold at a premium in the market for its health benefits. ITDA is incentivizing members of tribal WSHGs by providing them husk lever pounds and weighing & packaging machines for the promotion of high-value brown rice production.

Eighteen VDKV units have been set up by ITDA Sundargarh in 9 blocks of the district. 300 women from 30 WSHGs each have been associated with every unit. So far, 600 husk lever pounds have been distributed among 4 VDKV units, benefiting 1200 women. It is worth mentioning that the red outer layer of lever pound rice is rich in nutrients like fiber, protein and iron which help maintain cholesterol level in body.



PAYING TRIBUTES: Guest observing the birth anniversary of former Deputy Chief Minister Pabitra Mohan Pradhan in a programme organised by I&PR department at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

BMC's heatwave action plan 2023 on the anvil

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: With summer soon arriving, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) met to device strategies to battle oppressive heat expected this year, Wednesday.

A map highlighting the heat spots of the City combined with temperature status of previous seasons collected from India Meteorological Department (IMD) served as reference for deciding measures to be undertaken this year.

"The planning should encompass all shades of population in the City. Line departments need to extend their support to prevent casualties. Adequate numbers of regular water kiosks need to be ready by the time. We need to come up with a casualty management plan that has to be spread among

the public to help them deal with heat cramps and strokes," said Mayor Sulochana Das. She also instructed immediate repairing faulty water ATMs, if any.

BMC Commissioner Vijay Amruta Kulange has instructed the officials to come up with respective preparatory plans and submit those in a week. "Masons, daily labourers and other folks who are involved in physical activities under the naked sun, need to be checked on. After having section-wise plan, an SOP will be prepared for citizens' awareness. Area-wise Resident Welfare Associations, Self Help Groups and social organisations will be requested to support the initiative," said Kulange.

Mainstream media, social media and mid media vehicles will be used to alert people of heatwaves and inform them about preventive measures.

Continued from P1

New repo rate jolt after budget sops

On the growth front, the RBI projected GDP growth at 6.4 per cent for the fiscal starting April 1 (2023-24), down from 7 per cent in the current year. RBI also said that global growth environment has slightly improved, with the latest global data indicating higher prospects of a soft landing.

Das said the Indian economy remains resilient in the face of considerable uncertainties on global commodity prices. "The global economic outlook does not look as grim now as it did a few months ago. However, even then, the situation is still fluid and uncertain," Das pointed out.

The RBI also lowered the consumer price inflation (CPI) forecast to 6.5 per cent for the current fiscal from 6.7 per cent. While inflation is expected to moderate in 2023-24, it is likely to rule above the 4 per cent target. The retail inflation rate eased to 5.72 per cent in December from 5.88 per cent in the previous month, falling below the RBI's upper tolerance band of 2-6 per cent for a second straight month. "Going ahead, the food inflation outlook will benefit from a likely bumper rabi harvest led by wheat and oilseeds," Das said. On the rupee, Das said it has remained one of the least volatile currencies among its Asian peers. The depreciation and volatility of the Indian rupee during the current phase of multiple shocks are far lower than during the global financial crisis and the taper tantrum.

Deworming of children Feb 10

THE PRIME OBJECTIVE OF THE INITIATIVE IS TO DEWORM ALL CHILDREN BETWEEN AGE GROUP 1-19 YEARS IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THEIR OVERALL HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE



NATIONAL DEWORMING DAY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: To combat the threat of intestinal worm among children, department of Health and Family Welfare will conduct state-wide deworming of children February 10. A deworming mop up round will be held February 17 for those children who miss their dose on the said date.

Addressing the media Wednesday, Family Welfare Director, Bijaya Kumar Panigrahy said, "This year the National Deworming day (NDD) will be held February 10. The prime

objective of the initiative is to deworm every child. Children aged between 1 to 19 years will be administered deworming tablets - Albendazole through Schools and Anganwadi centers. Through this initiative, we can prevent anemia and malnutrition which will help children to stay healthy and enhance their attendance in school which will lead to a healthy society in future."

"Presently there are 84,49,038 beneficiaries of the NDD across the state which will be undertaken in platforms like schools and Anganwadi centers with the help

of 51,782 teachers, 7515 ANMs, 72893 Anganwadi Workers, 49037 Asha Workers and 1228 Supervisors. The tablets and syrup Albendazole has no side effects and are absolutely safe for children. The doses will be administered to the beneficiaries under the supervision of teachers or Anganwadi workers" he further added.

Officials from the Directorate of Family Welfare along with UNICEF spoke on the importance of deworming and importance of awareness among parents and caregivers to ensure their children remain free of worms.

The Directorate of Family Welfare shall implement NDD along with Vitamin A supplementation programme for all children in the month of February 2023.

The prime objective of NDD is to deworm all children between the ages of 1-19 years biannually through the platform of schools and Anganwadi centres in order to improve their overall health, nutritional status, access to education and quality of life. The NDD is conducted biannually that is once in the month of February and in August.

All schools including both government and private and anganwadi centres will be the implementation sites of the NDD in all 20 districts i.e. Angul, Bargarh, Boudh, Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Jharsuguda, Kendrapada, Keonjhar, Koraput, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Nabrangpur, Puri, Sonepur, Sambalpur & Sundargarh along with children aged 1-2 years in 10 LF-MDA district i.e. Bolangir, Balasore, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Kalahandi, Khurda, Kandhamal, Nuapada, Nayagarh & Rayagada.

Deadliest quake in 10 yrs kills 11k

A few hours later, rescuers pulled 10-year-old Betul Edis from the rubble of her home in the city of Adiyaman. Amid applause from onlookers, her grandfather kissed her and spoke softly to her as she was loaded on an ambulance.

But such stories were few more than two days after Monday's pre-dawn earthquake, which hit a huge area and brought down thousands of buildings, with frigid temperatures and ongoing aftershocks complicating rescue efforts. Erdogan said 13 million of the country's 85 million people were affected. More than 8,000 people have been pulled from the debris in Turkey, and some 3,80,000 have taken refuge in government shelters or hotels, authorities said.



VOICING GRIEVANCE: Members of All India BSNL Pensioners' Welfare Association staging a sit-in protest seeking fulfillment of their various demands at PMG in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

17 Aakash BYJU'S students shine in JEE (Main)

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: 17 students of Aakash BYJU'S from Capital City secured an impressive 99 percentile and above in the first session of Joint Entrance Examination JEE (Main) 2023. The results were announced by the National Testing Agency Tuesday. This was the first out of the two Joint Entrance Exams for Engineering scheduled to be held this year.

The notable achievers from the City are Priyanka Sar, Aliv Sahoo, Sankeet Das, Priyanshu Samantary, Pratyush Kumar Swain, Debashis Patanaik, Snehil Sanjog, Sankeet

Rout, Samasthita Ghosh, Rounak Mishra, Varun Mishra, Prajwal Acharya, Suprajeet Suman, Saswat Padhy, Rishit Dutta, Armaan Pratik Pasayat and Toyaz Kavi who secured 99 percentile and above in the prestigious engineering entrance examination.

The students joined Aakash BYJU'S classroom programme to crack IIT JEE, considered the world's toughest entrance examination. They attributed their entry into the elite list of top percentiles in JEE to their efforts in understanding the concepts and the strict adherence to their learning schedule. "We are grateful

that Aakash BYJU'S has helped us with both. But for the content and coaching from the institute, we would not have grasped many concepts in different subjects in a short period of time."

Congratulating the students, Ajay Bahadur Singh, Regional Director, Aakash BYJU'S, said, "We congratulate the students for their exemplary feat. Over 8.6 lakh students registered for the first session of JEE (Main) 2023 from across the country. Their achievement as top percentile scorer speaks volumes of their hard work and dedication. We wish them all the best with their future endeavours."

SSMM-a flourishing SHG under Mission Shakti

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: Being inspired by the Odisha Millets Mission (OMM), 'Swayam Shardha Mahila Mahasanga'(SSMM), a Self Help Group (SHG) of Nayapalli, Behera Sahi has been serving millet based food at various events and occasions of the City for the past two years.

With the consent of OMM and Mission Shakti department, the SHG set up a Millet Shakti cafe on the premises of Kalinga Stadium during the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup, working tirelessly towards making the cafe a grand success. The Chief Minister had inaugurated the cafe 12th January.

The Cafe pulled off sales around Rs 25,000 to Rs 30,000 on match days and Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 on rest days. During the hockey world cup, the SHG had received sizeable orders from the



Commissionerate Police and Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC). The SHG group claims to have had business of over Rs 4 lakh in the 15 days of the event.

To prepare millet-based food, the members of the SHG received training at various hotel management institutes of the City. Besides millet-based products like chops, samosas, pasta, chowmein, pizza, pakoda, mixtures, the cafe

also delivered bakery products. Traditional odia delicacies like poda pitha, kakara pitha and others tickled the taste buds of denizens as well as foreigners.

Apart from providing the capital required to purchase raw products and setting up the cafe, Mission Shakti department counseled the SHG workers on packaging, storage and preparation of the food products. The Chief Minister had declared interest free loan up to



Rs 5, 00,000 for such SHGs. "The unforeseen response we received from the public during the hockey world cup has given us the confidence to upscale our business. We plan to take the business online in the near future. Currently there are 18 women working in the group and we plan to strengthen it further. We are extremely grateful to the Chief Minister and Mission Shakti department for all the support," said a member of the group.

Induction training of OAS officers till May 22

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: The induction training of OAS officers trainees was inaugurated at Gopabandhu Academy of Administration (GAA) Wednesday R Balkrishnan, Chief Advisor, Office of the Chief Minister (CMO) inaugurated the programme while Subroto Bagchi, Chairman, Odisha Skill Development Authority presented key-note address.

The three month long induction training is scheduled to continue till May 22. Balkrishnan, in his inaugural address, shared a few anecdotes from his long professional experience in Odisha. Highlighting the vastness and diversity of the state, he mentioned the ever-growing and glowing narratives of the state that have transformed the

support seeking state to a guiding partner to other states of the country, especially in disaster management. He also stressed upon the achievement of Odisha in multiple human development indices including women's empowerment. He also emphasized upon the importance of 5T principles that have helped in successful organization of mega events like World Cup Hockey and Make in Odisha.

Bagchi, speaking on the occasion, inspired the Officer Trainees (OTs) to imbibe principles of ethical values to lead a well composed professional and personal life. His lucid expressions, rich with vast experience, drew attention of the OTs. He advised the young officers to never compromise with their own conscience, integrity, honesty, and commitment to the cause under any circumstances.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

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

Filariasis spreads tentacles in Nayagarh

28 NEW ASYMPTOMATIC FILARIASIS PATIENTS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED IN THE DISTRICT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Feb 8: Filariasis, a parasitic disease that affects the lymph nodes and lymph vessels is spreading its tentacles in Nayagarh district which is surrounded by hills and forests.

The district has over 7,113 patients suffering from swelling in legs and 1,065 patients afflicted with swelling of their scrotum called hydrocele. Meanwhile, 28 new filariasis patients have been identified in the district who are asymptomatic till now and have not developed any clinical symptoms.

However, they are likely to develop symptoms after some days. The development has sparked concern among the residents and health officials. On being informed, the health officials have geared up to administer medicines to these new patients and help them recover from the disease.

This was stated here by Collector Rabindra Nath Sahu in the presence



of chief district medical officer (CDMO) Makarand Behura to mediapersons at a meeting held at the Sadbhavana conference hall of the district Collectorate. Concerned over the development, he said that filaria eradication programme would be launched from February 10 and continue till February 19.

During this drive, ASHAs and trained volunteers will move from door to door and will administer DEC and Albendazol tablets to the family members on the basis of

their age. Medicines will be provided free of cost by the state government and will have to be taken orally after food.

Pregnant women, children below two years of age and people ailing from a long time will not be given these tablets. The district administration has set a target to administer the tablets to 9,76,363 patients.

Among the 28 new filariasis patients, seven are from Daspalla NAC and 11 from Daspalla block. On the other hand, three patients

are from Nuagadiasahi community health centre (CHC) one under Sarankul CHC, two under Odagaon CHC, two under Mahipur CHC and two under Nuagadiasahi CHC.

According to information available from the district health department, there are 7,113 patients suffering from swelling in legs in the district. These are 1,452 patients under Badapandusar CHC, 1,029 under Bhapur CHC, 111 under Gania CHC, 160 under Madhyakhanda CHC, 1,878 under Rajsunakhala CHC, 308 under Mahipur CHC, 1,165 under Sarankul CHC and 1,010 patients under Nuagadiasahi CHC.

Similarly, the district has 1,065 patients suffering from hydrocele. They are 131 patients under Badapandusar CHC, 91 under Bhapur CHC, 39 under Gania CHC, 71 under Madhyakhanda CHC, 238 under Rajsunakhala CHC, 152 under Mahipur CHC, 245 under Sarankul CHC and 98 under Nuagadiasahi CHC.



TRIBAL CHARM: Artistes performed tribal dance at a procession for 'Kalash' and 'Nishan' Yatra organised by Maa Vaishno Devi Temple Trust at Khetrajpur in Sambalpur, Wednesday

Revenue supervisor in Vig net for taking bribe from visually-challenged woman

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Feb 8: Vigilance sleuths Wednesday nabbed a revenue supervisor of Suliapada tehsil of Mayurbhanj district on charge of accepting bribe of ₹2,500 from a visually-challenged woman to provide her an enquiry report for sanction of marriage incentive amount of ₹2.5 lakh in her favour.

The accused was identified as Sanjay Kumar Padhi, a revenue supervisor of Suliapada tehsil and a resident of Baghda Road in Baripada town.

Later, the Vigilance sleuths raided his residence and government office on charge of amassing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

A case was registered in this connection by the Balasore Vigilance department.

The complainant deserved government incentive, which is given towards marriage between a person with benchmark disability and a normal person as per provisions of state SS&EPD department.

Vigilance sources said that Devi Beshra is a visually-challenged woman and a native of Dhadangiri under Suliapada police limits. She met Padhi for grant of an enquiry report so that she could get the ₹2.5 lakh marriage incentive amount as provided by the state government.

BADAMBA CUSTODIAL DEATH

6 arrested forest officials produced in court

THREE OTHER VILLAGERS UNDERGOING TREATMENT AT BADAMBA CHC AFTER BEING SIMILARLY ASSAULTED BY THE FOREST OFFICIALS HAVE ALSO LODGED COMPLAINTS



POST NEWS NETWORK

Athagarh, Feb 8: In the wake of the death of a villager in the custody of the Forest department, six forest officials arrested by the Badamba police were produced in the special scheduled caste and scheduled tribe court at Cuttack, Wednesday.

A villager Dhaneswar Behera of Satagochhia village under Badamba police limits died during his detention in the custody of forest officials. He died after allegedly being assaulted brutally by the forest officials.

The accused were identified as Badamba forest ranger Subrat Behera, foresters Manoj Das, Deepak Sethi and

forest guard Sunayan Majhi, Kuna Behera and Prabhath Pradhan. They were arrested over the statement of auto driver Abdul Sajid Khan, the deceased widow and his elder daughter and three other villagers.

Two Mahindra Bolero jeeps (OD-25-AH-1160 and OD-02-C-5481) used by the forest officials, four sticks and the clothes (pant and shirts) used by the deceased Dhaneswar were seized from their possession.

This was stated here by SDPO Bijay Kumar Bisi at a press meet held at the Athagarh police station in Cuttack district, Wednesday.

Preliminary inquiries indicated that the deceased Dhaneswar was

picked up by the forest officials when he along with his family members and some villagers was on his way to a relative's house in an auto-rickshaw, Sunday.

A case 25/23 was registered against the six accused forest officials under Sections 341, 323, 294, 354, 365, 342 and 302 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and Section 34 of IPC, Section 25 and 27 of Arms Act and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled tribe Protection Act.

Further, two ACFs Ghanashyam Muduli and Harekrushna Mallick, a police constable, two drivers and three forest guards are being interrogated in this connection.

Three other villagers who are undergoing treatment at Badamba community health centre after being similarly assaulted by the forest officials have lodged complaint in the name of Athagarh DFO and Athagarh ranger Rabindra Kumar Nayak in the Badamba police station.

More arrests could be made after recording the statements of the injured persons and conducting further probe into the case. Police said that it will take up probe against the Athagarh DFO as his name figures in the complaint.

Police has directed the forest officials not to leave the headquarters during the period of investigation. Among others, Athagarh IIC Bamadev Swain and Tigriria IIC Suchitra Jena were present during the press meet.

5 jumbos die within 6 months in North Ghumusar div

AILING FEMALE JUMBO DIES IN GANJAM FOREST



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhanjanagar, Feb 8: There is no let-up in elephant deaths in the state despite the Centre and state government taking a host of measures for the protection of the giant animals. In the latest incident, an ailing fe-

male elephant at a jungle in Galeri forest range under North Ghumusar forest division died after battling with its illness for five days.

The animal was found to be ailing five days back. It had become weak and was unable to move due to the illness. A medical team from

Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) in Bhubaneswar visited the spot and administered treatment after tranquillising the animal.

The medical team examined the animal and found that it had some infections in its mouth. As per their advice, a team of forest officials administered medicines. However, despite all hopes on its recovery, the animal succumbed to its illness, Wednesday morning. The carcass was buried in the jungle after veterinarians conducted a post-mortem.

Notably, five elephants have died during last six months in North Ghumusar forest division. Among the deceased animals, two tuskers were killed by poachers while the reason behind the death of two other

tuskers is yet to be ascertained.

In this situation, the ailing elephant's death despite treatment has sparked concern among the animal lovers. Honourary wildlife warden Sulapani Satapathy said that the animal could have recovered if a medical team had remained at the spot and administered it regular treatment.

Notably, the Orissa High Court had come down heavily on the poaching of a tusker and later burning of its carcass by forest officials in Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district and termed the year 2022 as 'perhaps the worst year for the elephants'.

Be it for natural reason, illness or poaching, pachyderms are dying in various jungles of the state in frequent intervals.

4 children abandoned by mother rescued

Kendrapara: Four children, including three girls, allegedly abandoned by their widowed mother three months ago after the death of their father, were rescued Wednesday, officials said. The minors were living in misery and surviving on the charity of others at Charipokharia in Rajnagar block of Kendrapara district. District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) chairman Biswajit Mohanty came to know about the plight of the children and asked the authority's secretary Sumitra Sahoo to meet the children and submit a detailed report. Sahoo, along with the district child protection officer and district social welfare officer, visited the village Wednesday. The children were rescued and handed over to their paternal grandfather and the Rajnagar block development officer was asked to provide a house, pension and Rs 20,000 under National Family Benefit Scheme to him for taking proper care of the children, Sahoo said.

RSP registers best-ever performances in key areas



AGENCIES

Rourkela, Feb 8: Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP), a unit of Maharatna Company SAIL, registered the best-ever performance in key areas in the first 10 months from April- January period of the Financial Year 2022-23.

The Steel Plant produced 35,88,289 tonnes of Hot Metal, 33,75,806 tonnes of Crude Steel and 31,31,855 tonnes of Saleable Steel to clock its best April-January performance in the respective areas since inception.

The earlier best April- January performance in all these key areas were

achieved in FY 2021-22.

With an all-time high production of 58,67,840 tonnes of sinter during the 1st ten months of the current fiscal, the Sinter Plants complemented the success story.

The average Oven Pushing from Coke Oven Battery-6 also witnessed the best-ever figure of 90.2 in April-January.

The state-of-the-art Hot Strip Mill - 2 rolled 1,98,390 tonnes of HR Coils to record its best monthly performance in January 2023 thereby improving upon its earlier best monthly production of 1,97,761 tonnes achieved in December 2022.

The New Plate Mill also clocked its best January performance by rolling 83,698 tonnes of plates surpassing its earlier best January performance achieved in 2019.

RSP Director In-charge Atanu Bhowmick has urged the employees to further step up efforts in the remaining part of the current fiscal to end the fiscal on a high note.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. ST-OT-HMIS-TELE-KUR-303, Dt. 02.02.2023

NAME OF WORK: PROVISION OF LAN AND WI-FI CONNECTIVITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (HMIS) AT HEALTH UNITS AND PME (HEALTH UNITS) OVER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION. (HEALTH UNITS - BHUBANESWAR / CHANDRASEKHARPUR, PALASA, BRAHMAPUR, PURI, RTN / KHURDA ROAD, LOCO / KHURDA ROAD, CUTTACK, TALCHER, ANGUL, PARADEEP, KENDUJHARGARH AND BHADRAK, PME (HEALTH UNITS) - PALASA, CUTTACK, TALCHER, BHADRAKAND PURI.]

Tender Value in (₹) : 34,73,436.69, EMD (₹) : 69,500/-

Bidding Start Date : 10.02.2023

Date and Time of Closing of Tender : At 11:00 Hrs. of 24.02.2023.

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website : <https://www.ireps.gov.in>

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / Corrigendum issued for this tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (S&T) / Khurda Road PR-981/N/22-23

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.O-1786: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION, SUNABEDA

e-mail:eerw_sunabeda@yahoo.co.in

e-Procurement Notice for Road Works

Identification No. Online Tender/06/RWD-SBD/2022-23

Letter No.530 Date:08.02.2023

01. Name of the Work: Road Works Lamtaput Block.
02. Total Number of Works: 1 No. Work
03. Estimated Cost: From 14.83 lakhs
04. Class of Contractor : "C" & "D" Class
05. Period of Completion : 15 days
06. Other Details:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding
Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division, Sunabeda	Online Tender/06/RWD/SBD/2022-23	From 09.02.2023 at 11.00 A.M. To 20.02.2023 upto 17.00 P.M.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.

Sd./- Executive Engineer Rural Works Division, Sunabeda OIPR-25059/11/0005/2223

Government of Odisha e-Procurement Notice

Bid Identification No. Online tender/ 18/S.E.RW BOUDH/2022-23

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-procurement

E.Mail- rw_boudh@yahoo.co.in

No.O-1783:Name of the work- Road works-4 Nos

1. Estimated cost- Rs 3.33 lakhs to 20.36 lakhs (approximately)
2. Period of completion - 1 calendar months
3. Date & Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal:- From 10.02.2023 10.00 AM to 16.02.2023, 5.00 PM
4. Last date / Time for receipt of bids in the portal:-16.02.2023 upto 5.00 PM
5. Last date / Time for seeking of Tender clarification:-15.02.2023 upto 5.00 PM
6. Date & Time of opening of Tender / Bid :-17.02.2023 at 11.00 AM
7. Name & Address of the officer inviting bid :- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Boudh.

Further details , corrigendum(s) etc. can be seen from the e-procurement portal "<https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in>"

Sd./- Executive Engineer R.W. Division, Boudh OIPR-25061/11/0030/2223

Registered Office Address: Unit No.601, 6th Floor Piramal Amiti Building, Piramal Agastya Corporate Park, Kamani Junction, Opp Fire Station, LBS Marg, Kurla (West), Mumbai-400 070. CIN: L65910M11984PLC032639, Website:www.piramalfinance.com

Branch Address: Dhiraj Baug, Building "A" Ground & 1st Floor, Beside Axis Bank, Opp. Monalisa Building, Agra Road, Hari Niwas Circle, Naupada, Thane (West) - 400 602.

DEMAND NOTICE

Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement Of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited (PCHFL) (formerly known as Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd.(DHFL)) under Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to PCHFL, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to PCHFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date	Property address
(LC No. 05900001608 of Bhubaneswar Branch) Gyanendra Naik (Borrower) Suban Dei (Co Borrower 1)	27-12-2022 / ₹ 197846 / (₹ One lakh Ninety Seven Thousand Eight Hundred Forty Six Rupees) NPA (29-09-2022)	Plot No 1357/1801, Khata No 391/183, Mouza-Injana Near Patia Big Bazar, Bhubaneswar Khurda Orissa - 751024
(LC No. 05900001925 of Bhubaneswar Branch) Aruna Kumar Senapati (Borrower) Rajashree Senapati (Co Borrower 1)	27-12-2022 / ₹ 1890001 / (₹ Eighteen lakh Ninety Thousand One Rupees) NPA (30-08-2022)	Sub Plot-22, Plot No 442(P), Khata 620, Mouza Adalia, Near Nakhara Chowk, Cuttack, Nakhara Village Road Odisha Cuttack Orissa - 754001
(LC No. 05900001635 of Bhubaneswar Branch) Babu Rao Magupilli (Borrower) Tulasi M (Co Borrower 1)	29-12-2022 / ₹ 1305905 / (₹ Thirteen lakh Five Thousand Nine Hundred Five Rupees) NPA (08-11-2022)	Khata No 426/42 Mouza Narayanpur, Plot No 303 /1853 Gopalpur, Narayanpur Village Junction, Gopalpur Ganjam Orissa - 761002

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to PCHFL as aforesaid, PCHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of PCHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

Sd./- (Authorised Officer) Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited

Date : 09-02-2023 Place: Orissa

UCO BANK Zonal Office, UCO Bank Building, 2nd Floor, C-2, Ashok Nagar, Bhubaneswar-751009, Tel: 0674-2620423

Demand Notice u/s. 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 was issued by the Authorised Officer against the following Borrower/Guarantor/Legal Heirs of UCO Bank, Itamati Branch. The details are given below:

ITAMATI BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower / Guarantor/Legal Heirs	Balance due as per Demand Notice	Schedule of Mortgaged Properties	Demand Notice Date
Borrower : Kumari Weaving Factory, Prop.: Kumari Sahoo, W/o: Late Sanatan Sahoo / Guarantor: Late Sanatan Sahoo, S/o: Biswanath Sahoo / Legal Heirs of Late Sanatan Sahoo are: 1) Kumari Sahoo, W/o: Late Sanatan Sahoo, 2) Mr. Nilakantha Sahoo, S/o: Late Sanatan Sahoo, 3) Mr. Balunkeswar Sahoo, S/o: Late Sanatan Sahoo, 4) Miss Rita Sahoo, D/o: Late Sanatan Sahoo, 5) Mrs. Sanjubala Sahoo, D/o: Late Sanatan Sahoo, W/o: Subash Chandra Sahoo, 6) Mrs. Deepanjali Sahoo, D/o: Late Sanatan Sahoo, 7) Mrs. Sonali Sahoo, D/o: Late Sanatan Sahoo, All are Residing At: Tanti Sahi, P.O.: Itamati, P.S.: Itamati, Dist.: Nayagarh	₹ 15,03,097.50 as on 31.12.2022 + Interest and other expenses thereon	1) Hypothecated Assets viz. Current Assets including Stocks, Book Debts, Receivables, Consumable Stores & Spares and Hypothecated movable Plant & Machinery etc., 2) All that part and parcel of the Property Standing in the name of Kumari Sahoo, W/o: Late Sanatan Sahoo, Mouza: Itamati, Thana: Itamati, Tahasil/Dist.: Nayagarh, Khata No.: 1321/501, Plot No.: 1618 & 1619/4064, Area: Ac.0.050 Dec.(Gharabari), 3) All that part and parcel of the Property Standing in the name of Late Sanatan Sahoo, S/o: Biswanath Sahoo, Mouza: Itamati, Thana: Itamati, Tahasil/Dist.: Nayagarh, Khata No.: 1321/502, Plot No.: 1619, Area: Ac.0.060 Dec.(Gharabari)	24.01.2023

You have committed default in repayment of loan and further interest at the agreed rate availed from Itamati Branch as mentioned in the above table. The Bank has issued notice under the said Act to repay the Outstanding Amount in the above mentioned table. The Demand Notice sent to the above mentioned parties which could not be served Properly. Due to irregularity in repayment of a such due, the debt has been classified as Non-Performing Asset (NPA). You shall not transfer the above said property by sale, lease without obtaining written consent of the Bank. You are therefore, called upon to pay the dues together with interest within 60 days from the date of this notice failing which Bank will be constrained to exercise the right of Enforcement of Security Interest as against the mortgaged secured assets given in the schedule as per securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. This notice is without prejudice to any other rights remedy available to the Bank including initiation of legal action. Your kind attention is invited to the provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Place : Bhubaneswar, Date : 08.02.2023 Authorised Officer, UCO Bank

A God who cannot smile, could not have created this humorous universe.

SRI AUROBINDO



Prepare Now

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the weaknesses and lack of preparedness of health systems globally. When the virus was at its peak, many low- and middle-income countries struggled to save lives while sustaining essential medical services such as maternal health care, routine childhood immunisation, and the treatment of non-communicable diseases.

After this traumatic period, it is tempting to hope that the worst is behind us. Unfortunately, the future is likely to bring more frequent public-health crises, owing to climate change, urbanisation, deforestation, water shortages, land-use changes, the transmission of pathogens from animals to humans, and conflict-induced fragility.

To limit the impact of the coming crises on lives and livelihoods, governments must take urgent action to boost the resilience of their health systems. According to a recent World Bank report, a resilient health system is integrated, enabling more rapid identification of threats and risk factors; agile, and thus able to respond quickly to evolving needs; absorptive, to contain shocks; and adaptive, to minimise health service disruptions.

The World Bank has been working with low- and middle-income countries on this resilience agenda. Our \$34 billion global health portfolio includes more than 240 projects that help countries take a comprehensive approach to improving outcomes, especially for poor and vulnerable people, by strengthening primary care and key public-health functions. For example, in June 2022, the World Bank approved \$258 million for Pakistan's National Health Support Program, which aims to strengthen the health workforce and equip community health centers to respond better to emergencies and deliver quality services, particularly to the most vulnerable communities.

The newly created Pandemic Fund is an additional tool to fill critical gaps by helping channel much-needed financial support to developing countries as they shore up prevention and response measures and improve readiness before the next health crisis. Established with the support of the G20, the fund is governed by an inclusive board comprising representatives from sovereign donors, recipient-country governments, philanthropic foundations, and civil-society organisations. The Pandemic Fund has already secured pledges of \$1.6 billion, and the first round of funding has just been announced.

These additional, long-term resources will help countries strengthen their public health systems, raise risk awareness, improve early warning functions, and expand the number of community health workers. Strong risk communication and community engagement can increase trust and build the solid partnerships that underpin a swift and efficient crisis response.

As countries progress toward post-pandemic recovery, they face additional challenges such as inflation, debt sustainability, climate change, aging populations, a high burden of chronic disease, and challenges to socioeconomic and gender equality. Resilient health systems can mitigate the impact of these challenges by improving the readiness of services to prevent and manage other health crises and by strengthening essential functions.

Needs and approaches will vary across countries and regions. For example, Cambodia, located in a hotspot for emerging infectious diseases, plans to enhance multisectoral collaboration to incorporate human, animal, and environmental health. Kenya seeks to bolster its surveillance and laboratory capacity for infection control. And Bangladesh aims to increase the capacity of its health facilities, workforce, and microbiology laboratories for coping with future pandemics.

Around the world, robust health governance and strong public-health institutions, backed by stable legal and regulatory frameworks, will be crucial to ensure evidence-based decision-making and crisis planning. Countries will also need to create fiscal space and attract and use external resources wisely, with the understanding that investing in integrated and resilient systems will deliver the greatest impact. The most cost-effective investments strengthen public-health functions, health promotion, disease prevention, and primary health-care services, thereby minimising disruptions when shocks hit. By preventing the much larger costs associated with public health emergencies, such outlays yield long-term dividends.

Building resilience requires partnerships within and beyond the health sector; as well as engagement with civil society and the private sector, which played an important role in the COVID-19 response. Protecting against health shocks also involves boosting research capacity and embracing innovation by fast-tracking new medical technologies or expanding digital technology in health-care delivery.

The task is immense, but past crises offer valuable lessons and show what can be achieved. For example, the Ebola outbreak of 2014-16, which killed more than 11,000 people in West Africa, accelerated the establishment of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention across the continent, improving the region's surveillance and monitoring capacities.

As the COVID-19 pandemic wanes, this, too, is no time for complacency. We have all witnessed the pandemic's devastating effects. The World Health Organisation estimated that nearly 15 million excess deaths worldwide in 2020 and 2021 could be attributed to COVID-19, which has also undermined hard-won gains in poverty reduction, education, health, and gender equality.

Enhancing resilience and readiness requires decisive action. With more crises sure to come, countries that make the right political choices for lasting and sustained policies now will be in the best position to protect the health of their populations and economies.

The writer is Vice President for Human Development at the World Bank.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

- Let come what comes, let go what goes. See what remains. RAMANA MAHARSHI
- Life's tragedy is that we get old too soon and wise too late. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
- It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see. HENRY DAVID THOREAU

WORDSWORTH

■ Frigorific

Something frigorific causes cold or is chilling. The chill here is from Latin frigus, cold, a root that's also the source of refrigerate and frigid, as well as the obsolete frigor, a state of extreme coldness. A search through a database of recent newspaper articles suggests strongly that the most common appearance of frigorific is in that characteristically American phenomenon, the spelling bee. This report in the Palm Beach Post on 24 February 2004 on the finals of a regional event is typical: "And for the next 45 rounds, McDowell and Duran took turns before the microphone, battling words away with scarcely a pause. They spelled superencipherment and aerolithology, gorgonize and subaqueous, eutrophic, alpaca and frigorific". It has never been common and the examples suggest that when it has appeared, it has been in some technical or scientific context.

FOCUS FARMERS' INCOME

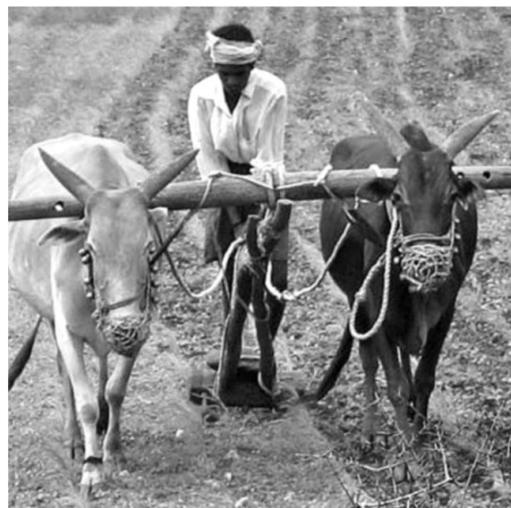
THE DOUBLING DREAM

The doubling farmers' income (DFI) agenda has been in the limelight among policymakers, academia, economists, and politicians in India since the 2016-17 Union budget, as the government of India set the goal to achieve the DFI target by 2022. Thenceforth, fourteen Inter-Ministerial Committees have been formulated. These committees have proposed many recommendations that have a durable impact on increasing farmers' income which can be delineated under the following main themes: improvement in crop productivity, increase in livestock productivity, diversification towards higher value crops, better resource efficiency, enhanced cropping intensity, improvement in real prices received by farmers and shift from farm to non-farm occupations as being significant sources of growth.

It is now pertinent to ask whether income of Indian farmers has been doubled by 2022. What policy measures have been taken to increase farmers' income in the last six years? To what extent such policies helped to raise farmers' income? And importantly, how far does the latest budgetary approach contribute to achieve the DFI target?

Surprisingly, DFI has got no mention in the recent budget speech. Although the economic survey highlights several measures taken in recent past related to agriculture sector, it provides no information on assessment of DFI. To achieve DFI targets, farmers' income needs to grow by 12% per annum (NABARD Rural Pulse, 2016). However, as per NSSO 77th Situation Assessment Survey, the real farm income declined by 1.5% per annum between 2012-13 and 2018-19. And between 2015-16 and 2018-19, it increased only by 1.7% per annum (NABARD NAFIS-2019). From these trends, it can be concluded that DFI target has not been realised yet.

Nevertheless, in recent past, the government has undertaken several policy measures - enhancing the Minimum Support Price (MSP), crop insurance scheme PMFBY and PM-KISAN scheme - that have great potential



Surprisingly, doubling farmers' income has got no mention in the recent budget speech

to raise farmers' income. PM-KISAN scheme aims to provide a cash benefit of ₹6,000 to small and marginal farmers to stabilise farm income by supplementing their financial requirements and farm investment. However, critics argue that the amount is inadequate. PMFBY provides income security for crop loss caused by unfavourable weather. However, only 11.69% of farmers adopt crop insurance, among which only 3% take it voluntarily, and the rest take it bundled with crop loans (NSSO 77th SAS). Ironically, about 60% and 72% of farmers are unaware of crop insurance and MSP, respectively.

Lastly, it is interesting to analyse the current budgetary approach towards agriculture that may help to achieve the DFI target. Although agriculture is not placed among the seven priorities 'Saptarishi', there are several measures to boost the agriculture sector under inclusive development. The current budget focuses on providing digital infrastructure for farmers. This would reduce the information gap by providing infor-

mation directly to farmers regarding agricultural market conditions and benefits of government schemes. The ANB horticulture clean plant programme would contribute to farmers' income by increasing the production of high-value horticulture crops. This is in line with the recommendation of DFI committee, which suggested crop diversification as one of the important approaches to achieve DFI.

The budget allocates ₹20 lakh crore for credit to allied activities like animal husbandry, fisheries. Shifting towards allied activities and increasing livestock productivity have great potential to contribute to farmers' income. However, farmers have limited access to institutional credit due to a lack of awareness and documentation. More than half of the farmers are indebted, though there is a slight decline in indebtedness among farmers from 57% to 51.9% during 2012-13 to 2018-19. And the majority of them are not using loans for capital investment in farm sector. A similar situation may arise in the case of credit for

livestock too. In this regard, direct provision of inputs may help to promote adoption of allied activities among farmers.

The budget also supports research in millet by "Sree Anna". It has potential to provide food and nutrition security and to provide better income to farmers. However, research in laboratory set-up may not be sufficient to benefit farmers. Moreover, indigenous knowledge of millet production already exists among farmers, which needs to be revived and encouraged. Creating awareness about the value of such crops and promoting the market for it would be helpful to ensure income for farmers.

PM-PRANAM aims at promoting environmentally-friendly alternative fertilisers. This would help to achieve the twin objectives of increasing farmers' income and improving environmental quality. Extending storage facilities to farmers is also one of the measures in the budget, which has enormous potential to increase farmers' income.

To conclude, the rose-coloured goal of DFI has not been realised in the last six years. Undoubtedly, the pandemic, which has pervasively affected economies worldwide, is one of the major causes of slower growth of farm income in the last years. Several measures have been undertaken by the government in the past and current budget, which have great potential to raise farmers' income. However, the efficacy of such policies lies in the fact that it should be implemented so that it can reach every targeted farmer. Since most of the farmers are illiterate, creating awareness among them for wide utilisation of schemes may help in this regard. The structural problems of agriculture, such as infrastructure development, especially irrigation and storage facilities, should be addressed to sustain farmers' income in long run.

Binod Kumar Behera is visiting PhD research scholar at Kiel Institute for World Economy, Kiel, Germany. Parijata Pradhan is Lecturer in Economics, Bhima Bhoi College, Rairakhol.

SPECTRUM SOCIAL SECURITY

Time to repeal NPS and restore OPS

After rendering 17.6 years of service in Defence Ordnance Factory with last basic pay of ₹56,900, while S. Sivasankaran is entitled for monthly pension of ₹28,450 plus Dearness Relief (DR) as admissible from time to time under Old Pension Scheme (OPS), he was eligible for ₹4,900 only as monthly pension under the New Pension Scheme, now National Pension Scheme (NPS). The employees under NPS despite their monthly contribution of 10% from their salary in addition to 14% by the employer are getting a meagre pension under NPS which has been introduced since 1 January, 2004 by the government of India as a part of the implementation of the new economic policy following the IMF-World Bank policy on pension reforms. It was subsequently accepted by many state governments, PSUs and autonomous bodies. The irony is that NPS was given effect from 01.01.2004 only with an Executive Order on 21.12.2003 and subsequently PFRDA Act was passed in 2013 in the Parliament and legally came into force with effect from 01.02.2014 through a Gazette Notification.

From brining the PFRDA Bill

in 2003 till converting it into PFRDA Act in 2013, the Central government didn't pay any attention either to the continuous struggle of all Central and state government employees and workers or to the historic judgement on 17 December, 1982 of the Supreme Court (SC) in DS Nakra versus Union of India case which states, "Pension is neither a bounty, nor a matter of grace depending upon the sweet will of the employer, nor an ex-gratia payment. It is a payment for the past services rendered. It is a social welfare measure rendering socio-economic justice to those who in the heyday of their life ceaselessly toiled for the employer on an assurance that in their old age they would not be left in the lurch." According to the SC's observation, pension creates a vested right subject to 1972 rules which are statutory in character since enacted in exercise of the power conferred under proviso to Article 309 of the Constitution of India.

In addition, NPS has also violated the written assurances given by the government of India in the Standing Committee meeting of National Council, Joint Consultative Machinery held on 14.12.2007 which

states inter alia, "For the employees who have entered with effect from 01.01.2004 are not likely to be worse off vis-a-vis the current pension system in force, as the replacement rate would match to the present one. Thus, NPS is a win-win situation for the employees and the Govt." This illustrates how NPS goes against the socio-economic justice assured by the SC. It violates the fundamental right of an employee.

On the other hand, the OPS is a defined benefit scheme without any contribution from the employee and guaranteeing minimum pension of 50% of the last pay drawn subject to minimum of ₹9,000 per month plus DR. There is also a benefit of getting a lump sum amount equivalent to 40% of the pension at the time of superannuation as the commutation value which is restored after 15 years. In addition, the pension amount is increased by 20% each 5 years starting at the age of 80 and doubled at the age of 100. There is neither such social security nor any guarantee of minimum pension under NPS.

Some states like Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Punjab

have issued notifications to roll-back to OPS, the Central government is not yet ready to scrap the NPS.

Meanwhile, to accelerate the protest against NPS more rigorously, all Central and state government employees have formed a Joint Forum for Restoration of OPS under the banner of National Joint Council of Action (NJCA) conducting 3 joint meetings in New Delhi on 8 December, 2022, 7 and 21 January, 2023 with a unanimous resolution to hold agitational programmes throughout 2023 for the purpose. Apart from conducting national and state level conventions, submission of online petitions to the President of India, Parliament march and Bharat Band will also be there. A decision may also be taken by NJCA to adopt indefinite strike.

It is high time the Centre realised the pain and problems of the employees and workers and took it seriously during this Budget Session to repeal NPS and restore OPS.

The writer is General Secretary, Confederation of Central Govt. Employees and Workers Odisha State Coordination Committee.



Bruhaspati Samal

NPS VIOLATES THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT OF AN EMPLOYEE

Human development

Sir, It is well known that India's position in the world rankings has dropped from 130 in 2020 to 132 in 2021, according to the United Nations Development Programme's "Human Development Index" report, 2021-22. For the first time in thirty years, the HDI score has dropped two years in a row. This is concerning because the HDI is now the best indicator of welfare and quality of life of people expressed in terms other than money and material goods. Furthermore, after national income figures, the HDI is the second most used metric for gauging economic success. The UNDP created the HDI as a tool to measure a nation's "average accomplishment in three essential elements of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a reasonable standard of living." With the exception of 2012 and 2020/21, the HDI report has been released annually since its initial publication in 1990. The three components of HDI are: health, as determined by life expectancy at birth; education, as determined by the sum of mean and expected years of schooling; and income, as determined by gross national income per capita (at PPP). The sum of the three categories' geometric means is used to determine the final score. The HDI can be used to assess the many policy decisions that governments make in relation to human development. The topic of the government's priorities may also be brought up for discussion. The HDI's objective is to offer a thorough evaluation of a nation's development based on its people and their potential. Therefore, it is crucial that the government acts right away to raise the nation's HDI and hasten its progress. The implementation of novel policies and the creation of a positive cycle of faster human growth are urgently required.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Investor confidence

Sir, The Adani group stocks appeared to have broken the Hindenburg jinx, rallying for the second day on the trot after getting a pasting for over a fortnight. Nine of the ten group stocks gained on the bourses, with shares of the group flagship Adani Enterprises climbing 10 per cent in Wednesday's trade. A series of steps initiated by the group, including prepaying \$1.1 billion of debt and pumping in over \$1 billion to release pledged shares, instilled investors' confidence. Besides, strong earnings by a few group companies pushed Adani stocks higher. Is the worst over for the Adani group?

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

national

of the day quote

India has focused on a rapid development of infrastructure along the northern borders with China for obvious strategic reasons

The I&B Ministry is taking feedback on what else can be done to stop the flow of misinformation. Reporters and many individuals are doing their bit to spread positive news

The entire Northeast is witnessing rapid development with the help of the internet. Tripura is literally running towards economic development

SHORT TAKES

Woman arrested

Bangalore: Karnataka police have arrested the woman, who mowed down a bike rider in Bengaluru with her car. During the investigation, the accused woman told police that she applied accelerator instead of the brakes, which cost a life, police said Wednesday. The car driver has been identified as Shubha, a middle aged woman from Bengaluru. The Peenya Traffic police have arrested the accused and taken up the investigation.

Three booked

Sitapur: Three persons have been booked on charges of insulting Hindu deities and desecrating idols during a programme in Uttar Pradesh's Sitapur district. SHO, Maholi, Anup Shukla said that a local resident, Puneet Mishra, informed the cops that Siyaram, Jagdev and Nisha had organised a religious event to propagate Buddhism. "The complainant said that the accused persons first began hurting Hindu sentiments by insulting the religion and later desecrated the idols of gods and goddesses," Shukla said.

Man shot dead

New Delhi: A 40-year-old man was allegedly shot dead in North Delhi, said an official Wednesday. The accused have been identified and a manhunt has been initiated to nab them, the official added. According to Sagar Singh Kalsi, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (North), on Tuesday, an information regarding the body at a shop near Mori Gate Delhi, was received following which a police team was dispatched for the spot.

Man held

New Delhi: Delhi Police have arrested a man for smuggling illegal liquor from Haryana to the national capital and recovered 5,000 bottles of alcohol from his possession, an official said on Wednesday. The 35-year-old accused has been identified as Dharmender, a resident of Sonapat, Haryana.

13 youths arrested

Modinagar: Thirteen youths were arrested for creating ruckus and disturbing traffic on the Delhi-Meerut road and the police have also seized two vehicles in connection. In a statement on Tuesday, Modinagar ACP Ritesh Tripathi said that police teams were sent to the spot after receiving information of the incident. Tripathi added that the police had to chase the accused persons before arresting them.



The BJP is against the SP's long pending demand of getting a caste census done because the exercise, when correlated with the caste representation in government departments, will expose the BJP. But the SP will continue to press for a caste census and renew its pledge to get it done in UP within three months of being voted to power

AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF

'CELEBRATE 'COW HUG DAY' ON FEB 14'

The Animal Welfare Board of India has issued a notice appealing to people to celebrate 'Cow Hug Day' February 14 to spread 'positive energy' and encourage 'collective happiness', officials said Wednesday



10 Indians stuck, 1 missing in quake-hit Turkiye: MEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: An Indian is missing and 10 others are stuck but safe in remote regions of earthquake-hit Turkiye, even as specialist teams sent by India to the West Asian country commenced their search and rescue operations, the Ministry of External Affairs said Wednesday.

India launched 'Operation Dost' to extend assistance to Turkiye as well as Syria following Monday's devastating quake that has killed over 11,000 people in the two countries. At a media briefing, Secretary (West) in the MEA, Sanjay Verma said while one Indian has gone missing in one of the affected areas in Turkiye, 10 others are stuck in some remote parts but they are safe.

He said three Indians who approached the Indian government were taken to a safe location, adding that the Indians in Turkiye are relatively safe. "We set up a control room at Adana in Turkiye. Ten Indians are stuck in remote parts of the affected areas, but they are safe. We have one Indian national missing who was on a business visit to Turkiye. He has not been traced in the last two days. We are in touch with his family and the company in Bengaluru which employs him," Verma said. "We have received calls from around 75 people asking our embassy there about information and assistance," he said. The number of Indians residing in Turkiye is around 3,000, out of which about 1,800 live in and around Istanbul, while 250 are in Ankara and rest are spread all over the country, according to the official.



INDIA LAUNCHED 'OPERATION DOST' TO EXTEND ASSISTANCE TO TURKIYE AS WELL AS SYRIA FOLLOWING MONDAY'S DEVASTATING QUAKE THAT HAS KILLED OVER 11,000 PEOPLE IN THE TWO COUNTRIES

INDIA HAS SENT RELIEF MATERIALS ON BOARD A C-130J AIRCRAFT OF THE INDIAN AIR FORCE TO SYRIA. OFFICIALS SAID INDIA IS SENDING MORE AID TO TURKIYE

"Under #OperationDost, India is sending search and rescue teams, a field hospital, materials, medicines and equipment to Turkiye and Syria. This is an ongoing operation and we would be posting updates," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar tweeted. On Tuesday, India sent to Turkiye relief materials, a mobile hospital and specialised search and rescue teams in four C-17 Globemaster military transport aircraft to support the country's rescue efforts.

India also sent relief materials on board a C-130J aircraft of the Indian Air Force to Syria. Officials said India is sending more aid to Turkiye. Verma said Turkiye had sent a message to India seeking assistance. Asked about sending aid to Syria when the country has been under US sanctions, Verma said India is following the G20 mantra of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'. "Sanctions do not cover such humanitarian assistance," he said. On Twitter, Jaishankar shared photos of teams from India's National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) commencing search operation in Turkiye's Gaziantep. "It was perhaps the furthest that we have gone in terms of HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) involving specialised teams. We tried to live up to our reputation as first responders," Verma said. At the press conference, NDRF Director General Atul Karwal said the force is ready to send more teams.

DELHI EXCISE POLICY CASE CBI ARRESTS CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: The CBI has arrested a Hyderabad-based chartered accountant, who is said to be a former auditor of BRS MLC K Kavitha, in connection with the Delhi excise policy case, officials said Wednesday.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had called the CA, Butchibabu Gorantla, to Delhi for questioning in connection with the case. He was questioned 15 times between August and October last year at the agency's offices in New Delhi and Hyderabad.

The CBI questioned Gorantla from February 1 to 4 this year too in connection with the allegations and he was confronted with the available evidence.

The officials said he concealed material facts related to the conspiracy behind the alleged offence, incriminating WhatsApp chats retrieved from his mobile phones, the role of the other accused, including public servants, as well as the trail of the ill-gotten money sent by the accused through hawala channels.

The CBI produced Gorantla before a special court here, which sent him to the federal agency's custody till February 11.

The CBI will try to unearth the larger conspiracy hatched by the suspects regarding the formulation and implementation of the Delhi excise policy; the money trail and the role of other accused, including public servants, the officials said.

The agency arrested Gorantla at around 8 pm on Tuesday as he was non-cooperative and was found to be evasive when confronted with evidence, the officials said.

Adani issue: Oppn hits out at Modi



I am not satisfied, but it reveals the truth. There was no talk of an inquiry. If he is not a friend (of Adani), he should have agreed to an inquiry. There was no probe into shell companies in the defence sector and benami money is changing hands, but the prime minister did not say anything on that. It is clear that the prime minister is protecting him (Adani)

RAHUL GANDHI | FORMER CONGRESS CHIEF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: The opposition hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday for not responding to allegations related to industrialist Gautam Adani, which they termed "the elephant in the room", with former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi accusing Modi of "protecting" the billionaire.

The opposition's attack came after Modi said the trust posed in him by crores of people is his protective shield, which cannot be breached by abuse and allegations from his detractors.

Replying to the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in the Lok Sabha, the prime minister said people know that he has come to their help in times of crisis and asked the opposition parties how would these same people agree with their abuses and allegations.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh described the prime minister's reply in Parliament as diversionary and said there was not even a word on his "links" with his "favourite businessman".

Trinamool Congress's (TMC) leader in the Lok Sabha Sudip

Bandyopadhyay said the prime minister should clearly make a statement assuring the depositors of the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) and State Bank of India (SBI) that their money is in safe hands.

Referring to the Adani-Hindenburg issue, Shiromani Akali Dal's (SAD) Harsimrat Kaur Badal said "the elephant in the room" was not addressed by the government. "It is very obvious what is on the minds of people and every member of the House, but it was not addressed. Some issues were raised and the nation deserves a reply. It is people's money that is involved and we have to make sure that the people get the answers to the questions that are arising," she said.

Rahul Gandhi said it was clear that Modi was protecting Adani as he did not order an inquiry into the allegations levelled against the industrialist by US-based short-selling firm Hindenburg Research. Talking to reporters outside Parliament after Modi's address, the Congress leader said the prime minister did not answer the questions he had posed to him.

Shivakumar's daughter receives CBI notice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shivamogga (Karnataka), Feb 8: Karnataka Congress President D K Shivakumar Wednesday said he has been asked by the ED to appear before it on February 22, while his daughter has been served notice by the CBI.

The former minister, who is currently undertaking "Praja Dhwani Yatra" as part of the party's preparations for the coming Assembly polls due by May, alleged

that the Enforcement Directorate and Central Bureau of Investigation are "directed" only at opposition leaders and not at those from the ruling party. "Everyday notices are coming, yesterday it has come to my daughter, it has come to our college, regarding fees paid, exam passed. CBI has issued the notice. What should I say? If they are questioning me about college fees payment, imagine what all they are asking. I leave it to (god)," said Shivakumar, who appeared frustrated with the developments, throwing up his hands in apparent despair. Speaking to reporters here, he

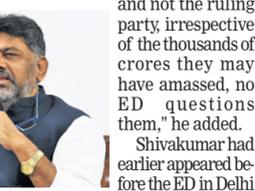
said, "I have answered to ED and come back regarding what I have given to 'National Herald', now again they are asking me to appear before ED on February 22. What to do? Should I go ahead with 'Praja Dhwani Yatra' or appear before the ED, I'm thinking."

"It (ED and CBI inquiries) is only against opposition parties and not the ruling party, irrespective of the thousands of crores they may have amassed, no ED questions them," he added.

Shivakumar had earlier appeared before the ED in Delhi

for questioning in the National Herald money laundering case. The Kanakapura MLA first got into the ED crosshairs when he was arrested by the agency on September 3, 2019 following multiple rounds of questioning in a case that emerged from an Income tax department action against him.

The Delhi High Court had granted him bail in October of that year. In May last year, the agency filed a charge sheet against him and some others linked to him in this case. He was questioned by the ED in September, in another money laundering case linked to the alleged possession of disproportionate assets.



Border Roads Organisation and District Disaster Management Authority personnel carry out a search operation at a avalanche-hit area near Chika on Darcha-Shinkula road in Lahaul and Spiti

Campaigning for Tripura polls at high pitch

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agartala, Feb 8: With around a week left before the February 16 elections to the 60-member Tripura Assembly, campaigning for the poll battle has reached a feverish pitch as parties, leaders, and candidates made all-out efforts to woo voters. All 259 candidates, including 31

women nominees, this time giving priority in door-to-door campaigns while their parties organise small, medium and big rallies and road shows to highlight their issues.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address two rallies in southern and northern Tripura February 11 and 13. Union Ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Sarbananda

Sonowal, Smriti Irani, Arjun Munda, Chief Ministers Himanta Biswa Sarma (Assam), Yogi Adityanath (UP), and N. Biren Singh (Manipur), West Bengal's Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari, MLA Agnimitra Paul, actor Mithun Chakraborty and many BJP leaders from outside the state campaigned for the party.

10 hurt in leopard attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ghaziabad, Feb 8: Ten people were injured after a leopard strayed into the district court complex here Wednesday, triggering panic and a four-hour operation to catch the animal.

"The leopard was tranquilised following a joint operation of police and the forest department," DCP (City) Nipun Agrawal said, adding that arrangements are being made to cage the animal. According to police, the leopard first attacked a cobbler on the ground floor of the court complex in the Kavinagar area of the district before heading to the first floor.

The animal's presence in the chief judicial magistrate court complex triggered panic and sent people running for their lives. While some ran towards the staircase, others locked themselves up in offices and washrooms. The leopard was running from one end of the building to another, attacking people coming in its way, officials said.



States asked to raise women's share in police force: Govt

Ladakh has the highest percentage of women in police force (28.3 per cent), followed by Andhra Pradesh (21.7 per cent), Chandigarh (21.6 per cent) and Bihar (21.2 per cent). States with least share of women in police are Jammu and Kashmir (3.2 per cent), Tripura (5.29 per cent) and Meghalaya (5.9 per cent)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: The Centre has issued multiple advisories to states to increase the representation of women in police force to 33 per cent, but their actual strength as on January 1, 2022 stood at 11.75 per cent, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Wednesday.

Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued advisories dated April 22, 2013, May 21, 2014, May 12, 2015, June 21, 2019, June 22, 2021 and April 13, 2022 to all the state



governments to increase the representation of women police to 33 per cent of the total strength.

"According to data compiled by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), as on January 1, 2022, the actual strength of women police personnel is 11.75 per cent at all India level," he said in a written reply to a question.

Ladakh has the highest percentage of women in police force (28.3 per cent), followed by Andhra Pradesh (21.7 per cent), Chandigarh (21.6 per cent) and Bihar (21.2 per cent). States with least share of

women in police are Jammu and Kashmir (3.2 per cent), Tripura (5.29 per cent) and Meghalaya (5.9 per cent).

The minister said all state governments have been requested to create additional posts of women constables, sub-inspectors by converting the vacant posts of constables and sub-inspectors. The aim is that each police station should have at least three women sub-inspectors and 10 women police constables, so that a women help desk is functional round the clock, he said.

TRIPURA POLLS

EC efforts for vigil, voting in border villages

As the India-Bangladesh areas bordering Tripura have no 'No Man's Land', several hundred families live outside the fencing but in Indian territory just along the border line

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agartala, Feb 8: The Election Commission ahead of the February 16 Tripura assembly elections has made special arrangements for voting for the people living in Indian territory but outside the barbed wire fencing erected along the international border with Bangladesh, officials said Wednesday.

As the India-Bangladesh areas bordering Tripura have no 'No Man's Land', several hundred families live outside the fencing but in Indian territory just along the border line. There are some gates operated by the Border Security Force (BSF) and whenever the villagers are required to go deep inside Indian territory or to a different location or market or any offices, the Indian villagers taking permission from the border guards move to their places.

Tripura Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Gite Kirankumar Dinkarrao said that lists of the voters living outside the border fencing have been given to the BSF authorities. "Our officials have asked the BSF



A security personnel casts his vote for Tripura Assembly elections through postal ballot, in Agartala, Wednesday

to cooperate with these voters February 16," he told the media.

Following the directive of the Election Commission, the authorities have taken strict security measures along the India-Bangladesh border in Tripura. A senior police official said that all 32 police stations along the border with Tripura are working in close coordination with the BSF to check intruders and smuggling of drugs and contraband.

The three Election Observers, who recently visited Tripura, asked the BSF officials to convene meetings immediately with their counterparts (Border Guard Bangladesh) to sensitise them to take a more vigilant approach considering the elec-

tions. The police official said that besides undertaking anti-insurgency operations against the underground elements, special measures have been taken in the mixed populated and ethnically sensitive areas.

The Union Home Ministry following the request of the Election Commission would deploy 30,000 security personnel of the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) to ensure zero poll violence. The majority of the CAPF comprising Assam Rifles, Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force, Central Industrial Security Force, have already arrived in Tripura and more are on the way.

The flag marches by the CAPF and the Tripura State Rifles have been

continued since the second week of January to ensure confidence building among the political workers for campaigning and among the citizens to cast their votes freely without any fear. The security forces are deployed well before the poll process so that they get familiar with the locality. Local police should extend necessary cooperation to the CAPF, the official said.

A large number of fixed police pickets, 3320 Naka points (check gates), installation of hundreds of CCTVs, round-the-clock patrolling, inter-state border meetings, preventive arrests, execution of warrants are some of the many measures that have been undertaken to ensure peaceful elections.

Ruckus in Bengal Assembly as Guv speech 'omits' reference to scams

"WE REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE FALSEHOOD IN THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH," THE BJP LEGISLATORS SAID AS THEY STAGED A WALKOUT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Feb 8: The West Bengal Assembly witnessed major ruckus as BJP members from the opposition bench vehemently protested against the omission of reference to the recent issues of corruption from the opening speech of Governor CV Ananda Bose Day 1 of the Budget Session Wednesday.

The BJP legislators, led by leader of opposition Suvendu Adhikari, alleged that the reference to the issues of corruption has been deliberately omitted from the Governor's speech.

The saffron party MLAs first raised 'Chor Dharo, Jail Bharo' (catch the thieves, fill up the jail) slogans before staging a walkout from the House.

In the midst of sloganeering, at times the speech of the Governor



was hardly audible. Even Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at a time was seen putting on headphones to listen to the speech. However, despite the sloganeering by the opposition MLAs, Bose completed his speech.

The protests by the BJP legislators started immediately after the Governor read out the ninth paragraph of his written speech which said that an environment of peace and secular ambience is prevailing in West Bengal under the leadership of the Chief Minister.

Immediately, the BJP legislators protested and claimed that the Governor's speech was an attempt to guard the events of rising corruption in the state. "We refuse to accept the falsehood

in the Governor's speech," the BJP legislators said as they staged a walkout.

Some of them were also spotted tossing the copies of the written speech distributed among them. After staging a walkout, the BJP legislators continued with their protests and raised slogans at the lobby of the Assembly.

Later, Adhikari told mediapersons that the Governor's speech was not a reflection of the true state of affairs in West Bengal.

"The constitutional head of the state has just resorted to praising the state administration, ignoring the burning issues facing the state. The state government has resorted to false propaganda using the Governor," Adhikari said.

Bengal to recognise Sarna, Sari as separate religions



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Feb 8: The West Bengal government has decided to recognise the tribal-centric Sari and Sarna as separate religions, and a bill for this will be moved in the Assembly during the Budget session which started from Wednesday.

The decision was taken at the all-party meeting convened by Speaker Biman Bandyopadhyay in the Assembly premises Tuesday af-

ment has decided to recognise Sari and Sarna as separate religions.

The tribal people are followers of Sari and Sarna though they are shown as part of the Hindu religion. On February 13 a special motion will be brought in the state Assembly to condemn the recent attempts by different divisive forces to divide West Bengal. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee might attend that session that day, he said.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, BJP candidates won in all the tribal-dominated constituencies in the state, and while the Trinamool was able to recover a substantial share of the lost votes there in the 2021 Assembly polls, the recovery had not been as per expectations.

Meanwhile, a perception is also there that a substantial portion of the tribal votes might again shift to the BJP again in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and the psychological factor that might play a role behind this trend is Droupadi Murmu being elected as the first Indian President from tribal background.



REDLAM IN HOUSE: Torn papers lie on the seats of BJP MLAs as they walked out during West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose's address on the first day of Budget Session of State Legislative Assembly, in Kolkata

CRACKDOWN ON CHILD MARRIAGE

'Assam govt must give assistance to victims'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 8: Assam government's decision to eliminate child marriage by penalising the perpetrators was a welcome step but the state must provide financial assistance, legal support and rehabilitation to the victims, the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation said Wednesday.

The government should immediately provide Rs 2,000 per month from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund as financial assistance to every girl whose husband has been arrested and until he gets bail, said the organisation founded by the social reformer who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

The state and district legal service authority should be directed to grant interim compensation within a week to all girls where the police have invoked sections under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) along with sections of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006, it added.

Assistance should also be given to children born out of child marriages, the foundation's Managing Director Rahul Kumar Shrawat said in a statement.

The action by the state government is the first ever stringent step by any state government in the country to protect children but we also appeal that the state government looks at the human aspects involved, it said.



■ THE ASSAM POLICE HAS ARRESTED 2,528 PEOPLE AND REGISTERED 4,074 CASES AS PART OF THE CRACKDOWN THAT BEGAN FRIDAY

■ JUSTIFYING THE ACTION, CHIEF MINISTER HIMANTA BISWA SARMA SAID TEENAGE PREGNANCY ACCOUNTED FOR NEARLY 17 PER CENT OF OVER 6.2 LAKH PREGNANT WOMEN LAST YEAR IN THE STATE

As young girls are victims of child marriage, we urge that the state government consider our proposals to provide immediate rehabilitation and compensation to the victims to reduce their sufferings, it added.

The foundation also extended assistance to the government for spreading awareness, legal aid and rehabilitation of child victims, and support to children who have suffered sexual abuse and are vic-

tims under the POCSO Act.

The Assam Police has arrested 2,528 people and registered 4,074 cases as part of the crackdown that began Friday.

Justifying the action, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said teenage pregnancy accounted for nearly 17 per cent of over 6.2 lakh pregnant women last year in the state. The opposition criticised the manner in which it was being carried out, equating the police

action with terrorising people.

Family members of those arrested have also been protesting against the operation.

The state cabinet recently approved a proposal to book men who have married girls below 14 years under the POCSO Act.

Cases under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 will be registered against those who have married girls in the age group of 14-18, the cabinet had decided.

The offenders will be arrested and the marriages declared illegal. Assam has a high rate of maternal and infant mortality, with child marriage being identified as the primary cause, according to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS).

'Insurgency down by 89% in NE'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 8: Insurgent activities in the Northeast have come down by 89 per cent and cases of civilian deaths declined by 85 per cent during the last eight years, Union Minister Anurag Thakur said Wednesday.

Addressing the concluding session of the three-day Y20 summit here, the Union Youth Affairs and Sports Minister said that peace has returned to the region, and many developmental works are being carried out at present.

Peace has returned to Jammu and Kashmir, and Northeast. In the case of Northeast, insurgency incidents came down by 89 per cent and civilian deaths are down by 85 per cent during the last eight years, he added.

Thakur said that with gradual improvement in the law and order situation of the region, the stringent Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) has been withdrawn from most parts of the Northeast.

In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, he said that the government formed district development committees, which was never done since India's Independence.

"We have got a very good response from the local people of the valley. Peace is always possible with the participation of people in developmental works," the minister said.

As part of India's G20 Presidency, the Youth20 group's first inception meeting was held at Guwahati, deliberating ideas for a better to-



Peace has returned to Jammu and Kashmir, and Northeast. In the case of Northeast, insurgency incidents came down by 89 per cent and civilian deaths are down by 85 per cent during the last eight years

ANURAG THAKUR | UNION MINISTER

'White Paper' on the five themes of Y20 was launched by Thakur, while Assam Education Minister Ranaj Pegu presented the 'Research Papers' on the five themes.

The themes were Peace Building and Reconciliation, Ushering in an Era of No War; Future of Work Industry 4.0, Innovation and 21st Century Skills; and Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Making Sustainability a Way of Life.

Shared Future: Youth in Democracy and Governance; and Health, Well-being and Sports Agenda for Youth were the two remaining themes on which Y20 delegates brainstormed in a series of sessions.

The minister said the themes were carefully chosen to be deliberated upon for a shared future for the global community and these issues present an extraordinary opportunity for the youths to create, contribute and collaborate with the development agenda of G20.

of the day quote

L-G Saxena is misleading the people of Delhi by falsely appropriating the credit for revival of 126 posts while putting the remaining 244 posts on the back-burner. The L-G claims that he approved the abolition of 244 posts based on the proposal of the education department, but can he confirm that the file was routed to him through the education minister?

MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DEPUTY CM

There is no place for violence and Left Wing Extremism ideas in the "self-reliant New India" under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

The Centre has decided to open Integrative Medicine Centres at all government medical establishments in the country especially at AIIMS

MANJUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

PU principal held for rape, murder

Raichur: A Pre-University (PU) principal was arrested for allegedly raping and killing a 17-year-old student in Lingasugur town of Karnataka's Raichur district, police said Wednesday. Ramesh, the Principal of Sir M. Visvesvaraya Pre-University sexually harassed the girl, killed her and later, got her hanged at a hostel, parents of the victim alleged. Ramesh, who was absconding after the incident, was arrested from Bijapur. The incident occurred at the hostel run by the VCB education institution.

Minor sexually assaulted

New Delhi: An eight-year-old girl was sexually assaulted by a sports teacher in Delhi's New Ashok Nagar area, a senior police official said on Wednesday. The official said that the New Ashok Nagar police station received a PCR call of the incident earlier in the day following which a police team was sent to the spot where the victim's parents said that their daughter was a class 3 student at a school in the area. "They alleged that their daughter was sexually assaulted by the sports teacher around 4-5 days ago," he said.

Worker killed

Hyderabad: One worker was killed and two others injured in an accident in a chemical factory at Jeedimetla, here on Wednesday. Three workers accidentally fell into a chemical container at the plant in the industrial area. One of them died while two others were admitted to a hospital in a critical condition. Meanwhile, a major fire broke out in a pharma company in Sangareddy district. The accident occurred at Lee Pharma plant at Gaddapotharam industrial area in Jinnaram mandal. The fire started from the drummyard on the plant premises. A multiple fire engines rushed to the spot and doused the fire.

Leopard killed

Davanagere: A leopard has been killed in a highway accident in Davanagere district of Karnataka on Wednesday. According to police, the incident took place while the leopard was crossing the road. The incident happened near Anagodu. The leopard collided with a speeding vehicle on the highway and died on the spot. Davanagere Rural police have taken up the investigation in this regard.



The current political stability and quick decision making mechanism along with 'out of box' ideas will soon make the state a front-running industrial state in the country

BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

OVER 230 DOG BITE CASES IN 2023

The union territory Ladakh's Leh district has reported over 230 dog bite cases so far this year, prompting authorities to call for an action plan, including a dog census to deal with the menace



J&K ANTI-ENCROACHMENT DRIVE

Mehbooba detained during protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti Wednesday took to streets in the national capital to protest against the ongoing anti-encroachment drive being carried out by the administration in Jammu and Kashmir.

Carrying placards reading 'Stop Bullying, Stop Bulldozing', Mufti, along with scores of supporters, gathered at the busy Boat Club area with an aim to march towards Parliament in a bid to inform the opposition parties about the on-going 'Bulldozer policy' being followed in the Union Territory.

However, police detained the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister, and took her and her party workers to Jantar Mantar. The protesters dispersed from Jantar Mantar. "We had come to inform the public, opposition parties and members of the ruling BJP about the misery faced by the public at large in Jammu and Kashmir. If we can't go to Parliament, I wonder where we should go then. Does the government want us to get our grievances redressed at the United Nations," Mufti asked.

During the protest, Mufti accused Lt Governor Manoj Sinha and the Jammu and Kashmir administration of turning the Union Territory into Afghanistan by indulging in large-scale destruction. "There is no rule of law in Jammu and Kashmir. First we were deprived of our identity, then



Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti sits on 'dharna' during a protest over the anti-encroachment drive across Jammu and Kashmir, near Boat Club in New Delhi

During the protest, Mufti accused Lt Governor Manoj Sinha and the Jammu and Kashmir administration of turning the Union Territory into Afghanistan by indulging in large-scale destruction

The Peoples Democratic Party and other political parties have denounced the anti-encroachment drive and asked the administration to stop it, claiming that it is affecting the poor

our jobs and now our homes and shops. Wonder what does this government want?" she asked.

"Jammu Kashmir ko Afghanistan ki tarah barbad kiya ja raha hai (Jammu and Kashmir is being ruined like Afghanistan)," she charged. There is no rule of law that can be seen in Jammu and Kashmir and "we came all the

way to Delhi to speak our hearts out. But it seems that the voice of the general public is muzzled here as well," Mufti alleged. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and other political parties have denounced the anti-encroachment drive and asked the administration to stop it, claiming that it is affecting the poor.

Aaditya Thackeray's motorcade attacked



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Top Sena (UBT) leaders like MP Sanjay Raut, Leader of Opposition (Council) Ambadas Danve, spokesperson Kishore Tiwari, Aurangabad leader Chandrakant Khaire, and others have strongly condemned the incident

'Shivsammvad Yatra' in several districts, and a huge crowd of aggressive miscreants attempted to lay siege to his car.

While Aaditya and Danve have pointed fingers at the 'traitors' - referring to the ruling Balasahebanchi Shiv Sena (BSS) activists for the incident, Khaire alleged that a local prominent leader of the ruling alliance had hired goons to perpetrate the attack in front of the local police team which did not rush to control the threatening mob.

Raut said it was fortunate that there were no casualties but called upon the state government to ensure that such incidents do not occur in future.



Mounted police personnel stand guard in front of Vidhana Soudha ahead of the Karnataka Budget Session in Bangalore

PTI PHOTO

3 mn people at risk of flooding by glacial lakes: Study

THE STUDY BY AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM LED BY SCIENTISTS AT UK'S NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY, UK IS THE FIRST GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF AREAS AT GREATEST RISK OF GLACIAL LAKE OUTBURST FLOODS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: Three million people in India are at risk of flooding caused by glacial lakes, the highest number of those exposed in the world, according to new study.

The study by an international team led by scientists at UK's Newcastle University, UK is the first global assessment of areas at greatest risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF). Published in the journal Nature

Communications on Tuesday, it estimates that 15 million people around the world are at risk from flooding caused by glacial lakes.

The researchers, which also identified priority areas for mitigation, said more than half the globally exposed populations are found in just four countries: India, Pakistan, Peru, and China. India and Pakistan contain the highest number of exposed people - nearly three million and two million people respectively, or one-third of the global total combined - while Iceland contains the least (260 people), they said.

As the climate gets warmer, glaciers retreat and meltwater collects at the front of the glacier, forming a lake. These lakes can suddenly burst and create a fast-flowing GLOF that can spread over a large distance from the original site - more than 120 kilometres in some cases. GLOFs can be highly destructive and damage property, infrastructure, and agricultural land and can lead to significant loss of life.

Flash floods potentially trig-



gered by a GLOF event in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district in February 2021 left nearly 80 people dead and many more missing. The number of glacial lakes has grown rapidly since 1990 as a result of

climate change. At the same time, the number of people living in these catchments has also increased significantly.

The research team looked at 1,089 glacial lake basins worldwide

Couple arrested for torturing minor maid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gurugram, Feb 8: A couple was arrested Wednesday for allegedly torturing and sexually assaulting a 14-year-old girl who worked for them as a domestic help, police said.

The accused, Manish Khattar (36) and his wife Kamaljeet Kaur (34), were produced before a city court on Wednesday. The court sent Khattar to two-day police remand while his wife was sent to judicial custody.

A joint team of police and Sakhi, a one-stop crisis centre, on Tuesday rescued the girl hired by the couple to care for their child. Several injuries were found on her hands, feet and mouth, they said.

According to the complaint filed by Pinky Malik, the Sakhi centre in-charge, the girl from Ranchi (Jharkhand) was hired through a placement agency.

The couple made her work and also beat her mercilessly daily. Along with not letting her sleep the whole night, they also didn't give her any food.

Her mouth was completely swollen while injury marks were found everywhere on her body, Malik alleged.

The girl has been admitted to a hospital in critical condition. She is still being treated in hospital, police said.

According to the police, the arrested couple - Khattar and his wife Kaur - are residents of New Colony. Kaur is a public relations officer with a private firm while his



The couple made her work and also beat her mercilessly daily. Along with not letting her sleep the whole night, they also didn't give her any food

The girl has been admitted to a hospital in critical condition

husband works with an insurance company, they said.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the couple hired the girl five months ago to take care of their three-and-a-half-year-old daughter. During this period, both the husband and the wife used to beat her daily. She was also sexually harassed, the police said.

The child used to eat leftover food thrown in the dustbin after not being given food. An FIR was registered against the couple under sections 323 (causing hurt), 342 (wrongful confinement) of the Indian Penal Code and relevant sections of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act and the POCSO Act at the New Colony police station. "We have arrested the accused couple who confessed to the crime," said Inspector Dinkar, the SHO of New Colony police station.

Protests break out as 2 die, 3 get injured

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ranchi, Feb 8: The people of Jharkhand's Hazaribagh blocked the Hazaribagh-Chatra road in protest after two people died and three were injured in a series of elephant attacks in the city.

The wild animal got separated from its herd and attacked five people in a matter of hours, from Tuesday night to Wednesday morning. The condition of two of the injured is critical. The deceased have been identified as Damodar Saav and Dhaneshwar Saav, both residents of Khirgaon.

Angered by the attacks, the people demanded compensation for the deceased's family during the protests held on Wednesday. Forest department and police officers have been trying to pacify the people.

The animal wreaked havoc in Kud-Rewali area near the city's railway station and in Khirgaon and Kumhartoli localities and is allegedly still present on the outskirts of the city. It damaged property, including a car and a wall.

international



India is the biggest friend in times of crisis
DINESH GUNAWARDENA | PM, SRI LANKA

'SMOOCH OF THE UNION'

US First Lady Jill Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris' husband, Doug Emhoff, kissed each other "on the lips", shows a video that has gone viral on internet and left several Twitter users amused. "Smooch of the Union," teased the New York Post tabloid -- zooming in on photos of what it declared without a doubt to have been a kiss on the mouth



of the day quote

India had revoked the special status for Kashmir. Now the only way forward in holding talks with India is first the Modi administration restores it

IMRAN KHAN | OUSTED PM, PAKISTAN

I hope to be able to re-set, restore, reinforce that (Iran N-talks) indispensable dialogue. Without that, things are going to get worse

RAFAEL MARIANO GROSSI | DIRECTOR GENERAL, IEA

We have focused on a rapid development of infrastructure along the northern borders with China for obvious strategic reasons

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

75th anniv of NK

Seoul: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un brought his daughter to visit troops to mark the 75th founding anniversary of the country's army as he lauded the "irresistible might" of his nuclear-armed military, state media said Wednesday. The visit came amid indications North Korea is preparing to stage a massive military parade in the capital, Pyongyang, where it could showcase the latest hardware of a growing nuclear weapons program that stokes the concern of its neighbors and the United States.

Floating cocaine

Sydney: New Zealand authorities said Wednesday they had recovered 3.2 tonne of cocaine worth more than \$300 million, believed to be bound for Australia and found floating at sea. New Zealand Police said in a statement it had collected the drugs from the Pacific Ocean in a joint operation with the New Zealand Customs Service and the New Zealand Defence Force. A police photo showed the haul, apparently before recovery, in a net supported on the ocean surface by floats.

Accident kills 30

Peshawar: At least 30 people were killed in northwest Pakistan Tuesday when a passenger bus fell into a deep ravine after colliding with a car, police said. The accident took place when the speeding passenger bus travelling from Gilgit to Rawalpindi collided with the car near the Shatial check post in Diamir district of Gilgit Baltistan. Both vehicles fell into the deep ravine, police said, adding that the dead bodies have been shifted to a nearby hospital. They said the rescuers are facing difficulties in carrying relief activities due to darkness at the accident site.

TURKEY-SYRIA QUAKE

DEATH, SUFFERING, MISERY

WITH HOPE FADING TO FIND SURVIVORS, RESCUERS IN TURKEY AND SYRIA ARE BATTLING BITTER COLD IN A RACE AGAINST TIME TO LOCATE SURVIVORS UNDER BUILDINGS FLATTENED BY THE DEADLIEST SEISMIC EVENT IN MORE THAN A DECADE



AGENCIES

Antakya, Feb 8: Heartrending scenes of a newborn plucked alive from the rubble and a broken father clutching his dead daughter's hand have laid bare the human cost of the earthquake in Syria and Turkey that by Wednesday had claimed over 11,200 lives.

For two days and nights since the 7.8 magnitude quake an impromptu army of rescuers have worked in freezing temperatures to find those still entombed among ruins in several cities either side of the border. Many are still feared trapped under the rubble.

Officials and medics said 8,574 people had died in Turkey and 2,662 in Syria from Monday's 7.8-magnitude tremor, bringing the total to 11,236.

The World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that time is running out for the thousands injured and those still feared trapped. Up to 23 million people could be affected by the massive earthquake that has killed thousands in Turkey and Syria, it said.

'CHILDREN ARE FREEZING'

Even for survivors, the future seems bleak.

Many have taken refuge from relentless aftershocks, cold rain and snow in mosques, schools and even bus shelters -- burning debris to try to stay warm.

Frustration is growing that help has been slow to arrive.

"I can't get my brother back from the ruins. I can't get my

DEADLY DESTRUCTION

TOTAL LIVES LOST: 11,236

TURKEY DEATH TOLL: 8,574

SYRIA DEATH COUNTS: 2,662



- Up to 23 million people could be affected: WHO
- Western sanctions complicating international aid
- Locals protest over slow government response
- Turkish Prez visits quake-hit areas, vows relief

nephew back. Look around here. There is no state official here, for God's sake," said Ali Sagirolu in Kahramanmaraş.

"For two days we haven't seen the state around here... Children are freezing from the cold," he said.

In nearby Gaziantep, shops were closed, there was no heat because gas lines have been cut to avoid explosions, and finding petrol was tough.

The cold temperatures have worsened conditions for survivors seeking shelter.

Sixty-one-year-old resident Celal Deniz said the police had to intervene when impatient crowds waiting for rescue teams "revolted".

About 100 others wrapped in blankets slept in the lounge of an airport terminal normally used to welcome Turkish politicians and celebrities.

"We saw the buildings collapse so we know we are lucky to be alive," said Zahide Sutcu, who went to the airport with her two small children.

"But now our lives have so much uncertainty. How will I look after these children?" Across the border in northern Syria, a decade of civil war and Syrian-Russian aerial bombardment had already destroyed hospitals, collapsed the economy and prompted electricity, fuel and water shortages.

The death count from the disaster is still rising.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Dozens of nations including the United States, China and the Gulf States have pledged to help, and search teams as well as relief supplies have begun to arrive by air.

A winter storm has compounded the misery by rendering many roads -- some of them damaged by the quake -- almost impassable, resulting in traffic jams that stretch for kilometres in some regions.

The Syrian Red Crescent appealed to Western countries to lift sanctions and provide aid as President Bashar al-Assad's gov-

Miracle baby

In the rebel-controlled town of Jindayris, even the joy of rescuing a newborn baby was tainted with sadness. She was still tethered to her mother who was killed in the disaster. "We heard a voice while we were digging," Khalil al-Suwadi, a relative, said. "We cleared the dust and found the baby with the umbilical cord (intact) so we cut it and my cousin took her to hospital." The infant faces a difficult future as the sole survivor among her immediate family. The rest were buried together in a mass grave Tuesday. Video of the rescue went viral on social media.



Braveheart sister

A touching photograph of a seven-year-old girl shielding her little brother's head while they were trapped under rubble has captured hearts on the internet. The now-viral image was shared online by a UN representative named Mohamad Safa, who stated that the duo spent 17 hours under the rubble before escaping safely. Sharing the photo, he wrote, "The 7 year old girl who kept her hand on her little brother's head to protect him while they were under the rubble for 17 hours has made it safely." Netizens were moved by the image, and many lauded the girl for her heartfelt and courageous act in the challenging circumstances.

ernment remains a pariah in the West, complicating international relief efforts.

Western sanctions have complicated international aid. Aid agencies have also asked the Syrian government to allow border crossings to be reopened to bring help to rebel-held areas.

The Turkey-Syria border is one of the world's most active earth-

quake zones.

Monday's earthquake was the largest Turkey has seen since 1939, when 33,000 people died in the eastern Erzincan province. In 1999, a 7.4 magnitude earthquake killed more than 17,000.

Experts have long warned that a large quake could devastate Istanbul, a megalopolis of 16 million people filled with rickety homes.

New British stamp with King Charles' image unveiled

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

London, Feb 8: Britain's Royal Mail Wednesday unveiled the first postage stamps to feature the image of King Charles III, following his ascension to the throne last September.

The new so-called "definitive stamp" -- intended for everyday use and consisting solely of the monarch's head, the stamp's value and a barcode -- will go on general sale from April 4.

The image, which was approved by Charles himself, is adapted from the official effigy that appears on new UK coins after he succeeded his mother, Queen Elizabeth II.

Elizabeth died September 8 following a record-breaking 70 years on the throne.

Retailers will continue to sell their existing stamps featuring the late queen, and be supplied with the new ones when current Royal Mail stocks have run out.

British artist Arnold Machin created an effigy of the queen for decimal coinage in the 1960s, and then designed the definitive stamps bearing her image which became an iconic symbol of the UK around the world.

The new design shows Charles facing left, as all British monarchs have done on stamps since the "Penny Black" was issued as the world's first postage stamp in 1840, under Queen Victoria.

The image of Charles is an adapted version of a portrait by British sculptor Martin Jennings, created for The Royal Mint for new UK coins, which are already in circulation.

Royal Mail chief executive Simon Thompson said British stamps are unique in not having the country of origin printed on them, "as the image of the monarch is sufficient".



Several nations targeted including India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 8: China has operated a fleet of spy balloons targeting several countries including India and Japan, a media report has said, days after the US military shot down a Chinese surveillance craft floating over sensitive installations in the country.

US officials have briefed its friends and allies including India on the finds of the Chinese surveillance balloon that was shot down by a fighter jet off the coast of South Carolina in the Atlantic Ocean on Saturday.

On Monday, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman briefed officials from about 40 embassies here about it.

"The surveillance balloon effort, which has operated for several years partly out of Hainan province

CHINESE SPY BALLOONS

off China's south coast, has collected information on military assets in countries and areas of emerging strategic interest to China including Japan, India, Vietnam, Taiwan and the Philippines," The Washington Post reported.

The Post's report was based on interviews with several anonymous defence and intelligence officials. Officials have said these surveillance airships, operated in part by the PLA (People's Liberation Army) air force, have been spotted over five continents, the daily reported.

"These balloons are all part of a PRC (People's Republic of China) fleet of balloons developed to conduct surveillance operations, which also violated the sovereignty of other countries," a senior defence official was quoted as saying.

I am committed to work with China where it can advance American interests and benefit the world. But make no mistake: as we made clear last week, if China threatens our sovereignty, we will act to protect our country. And we did

JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

It is not the practice of a responsible country to smear a country or restrict the country's legitimate development rights under the excuse of competition, even at the expense of disrupting the global industrial and supply chain

MAO NING | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON, CHINA



UNIQUE OUTBURST: Tractors park in front of the Grand Palais museum on the Esplanade des Invalides, Wednesday in Paris. French sugarbeet and other farmers disrupt Paris traffic with hundreds of tractors to protest an EU pesticide ban they say will devastate their livelihoods and industry

Church of England explores gender neutral God

It will come as a challenge for priests to replace "Our Father" in the Lord's prayer

REUTERS

London, Feb 8: Is God a man or woman? The Church of England will look into the use of gender neutral terms to refer to God in prayers, but the centuries-old institution said Wednesday there were no plans to abolish current services.

The issue reflects growing global awareness about the assumed usage of pronouns causing offence or upset to those who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

"Christians have recognised since ancient times that God is



neither male nor female," a spokesperson for the Church said. "Yet the variety of ways of addressing and describing God found in scripture has not always been reflected in our worship."

But he added that there were "absolutely no plans to abolish or

substantially revise" authorised services and that no changes could be made without "extensive legislation".

The comments follow an exchange in the General Synod, the Church's governing body, where a priest asked about developing

more inclusive language in authorised forms of worship and sought options for those who wish to speak of God in a "non-gendered way".

The spokesperson said there had been greater interest in exploring new language since the introduction of its forms of service in contemporary language more than 20 years ago.

Bishop Michael Ipgrave, vice chairman of the Church's liturgical commission, said the Church had been "exploring the use of gendered language in relation to God for several years".

"The fact that God is called 'Father' can't be substituted by 'Mother' without changing meaning, nor can it be gender-neutralised to 'Parent' without loss of meaning," spokesperson said. He added,

"Fathers and mothers are not interchangeable but relate to their offspring in different ways."

The deliberation is the latest attempt by the Church, central to one of the world's oldest Christian institutions, to keep up with rapidly evolving notions around gender and sexuality in recent decades.

The religious body last month set out proposals showing it would refuse to allow same-sex couples to get married in its churches, but said priests could bless them in church. It also apologised to LGBTQI+ people for the rejection and hostility they have faced.

The Church's Faith and Order Commission -- which advises on theology -- will work with the liturgical commission on looking at questions around gender terms, the spokesperson said.

Iran reveals underground air force base, 'Eagle 44'

REUTERS

Dubai, Feb 8: Iran Tuesday revealed an underground air force base, called "Eagle 44" and the first of its kind large enough to house fighter jets, the official IRNA news agency said.

The "Eagle 44" base is capable of storing and operating fighter jets and drones, IRNA said. The report did not elaborate on the location of the base.

IRNA said it was one of the country's most important air force bases, built deep underground, housing fighters equipped with long-range cruise missiles.

It said the base is dug in the mountains to protect it from ammunition dropped from US strate-



gic bombers that are capable of penetrating defences.

The unveiling, which was attended by top military officials, comes less than two weeks after the US and Israel held their largest-ever joint drill, using thousands of troops and dozens of aircraft in addition to naval vessels and artillery systems in what was widely seen as a message to Iran amid rising tensions.



For the current year 2022-23, coal demand has been assessed by the Ministry (coal) to reach 1,087 MT
PRALHAD JOSHI | COAL MINISTER

MILESTONE MOMENT BY LINKEDIN

Professional network LinkedIn Wednesday announced that it has crossed 100 million members in India. With a jump of 56 per cent growth in its member base over the last three years, India has solidified its position as the second largest market for LinkedIn globally



of the day quote

The government does not interfere or control social media intermediaries and also does not cast any fetters on freedom of expression on their users
RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR | MOS FOR ELECTRONICS AND IT

The partnership with Vultur comes at an exciting time as the country continues to aggressively embrace 5G technology and increasingly adopt digital solutions as a way of doing business
GANESH LAKSHMINARAYAN | CEO, AIRTEL BUSINESS

Our partnership with Dhoot Transmission to procure wiring harnesses for our products is a step towards ensuring vehicle efficiency and customer safety by equipping our products with durable and robust components
SOHINDER GILL | CEO, HERO ELECTRIC

Analysts see one more 25 bps hike

RBI slowed the pace of interest-rate increases for the second straight time while keeping the door open for more hikes as core inflation remained high

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 8: Analysts are of the view that after delivering the sixth hawkish policy Wednesday the central bank may pause after delivering a likely 25 basis points increase in the April review.

For Abheek Barua, the chief economist at HDFC Bank, the 25 bps repo hike and keeping its withdrawal of accommodation stance unchanged are on expected lines, the policy tone was hawkish as the RBI-MPC has recognised that they are still away from achieving their objective of durable disinflation, which still looks distant as the core inflation continues to remain sticky. "Even as headline inflation is likely to moderate over the coming months, core inflation could remain sticky, and if the RBI chooses to continue seeing signs of durable moderation in core inflation as a yardstick for policy tightening, another 25 bps rate hike in April is likely. But we see a change in stance to neutral is unlikely until the RBI pauses its rate hike cycle," Barua said.

He said that the more-than-expected hawkish stance was clear from how the market reacted -- the 10-year bond yield rose to 7.34 per cent post-policy from the last closing level of 7.31 per cent. He expects the 10-year paper to trade 7.30-7.35 per cent in the near term and the rupee to trade 82-83 levels in the near term as global risks continue to remain elevated.

Suman Chowdhury, chief analytical officer of Acuité Ratings

RISING RATES

RBI HIKES KEY RATES BY 25 BASIS POINTS
IT WAS THE SIXTH HIKE IN A ROW
RBI HAS CUMULATIVELY HIKED REPO RATE BY 250 BASIS POINTS SINCE MAY LAST YEAR
RBI RAISED INTEREST RATE BY 35 BASIS POINTS IN DEC 2022. IT WAS HIKED BY 40 BASIS POINTS IN MAY AND BY 50 BASIS POINTS EACH IN JUNE, AUG, SEPT



also feels that since the RBI has continued its stance of withdrawal of accommodation" and has maintained a hawkish tone, there is no indication of any pause in the rate hike and the likelihood of further moderate hikes in the repo rate remains, depending on the upcoming data prints.

However, Crisil sounded different saying improved inflation outlook leads to slower pace of rate increase going forward, and pointed to the smaller quantum of rate hike as a nod to moderating inflation and improved inflation outlook, while recognising the risks arising from core inflation.

We expect this to be a terminal hike in the current cycle, and the MPC to pause thereafter to assess the impact of rate hikes so far. Sticky core inflation could mean that the repo rate could remain at 6.5 per cent for longer, Crisil economists said in a note.

Sunil Sinha, the principal economist at India Ratings, also be-

lieves that from here on RBI may not raise the policy rate but will also not think of reducing it any time soon. This means the policy rate will remain at the current level at least in the foreseeable future, unless there is any adverse shock to the economy and the real rate of interest will remain positive.

State Bank chief economist Soumya Kanti Ghosh has a completely different take on the policy saying it is high time that the RBI exited from chakravyuh of the Fed because monetary policy needs to be country-specific else it could be a self-fulfilling prophecy of rate hikes chasing rate hikes.

The continuous increase in Fed rates has made the monetary policymaking for emerging economy central banks now a difficult proposition. With the US job market continuing to be significantly resilient even with the latest data, it now looks likely that the Fed will con-

tinue to hike even beyond March.

Against this background, there is an active debate on the timing and sequencing of monetary stance around the world. Therefore the April policy assumes special importance of whether we can signal an exit from coordinated monetary policy increases as otherwise it may become a self-fulfilling prophecy of central banks of emerging markets doing a continuous catch up with the Fed," he said.

Because according to him, between April 2022 and February 2023, the spread between Fed rates and our repo rate has now declined to 192 bps. Interestingly, the spread is now constant at 192 basis points since December 2022.

The RBI will release the minutes of the six-member Monetary Policy Committee meeting February 22, 2023. The next meeting of the MPC is scheduled for April 3-6, 2023.

e-Rupee to be piloted by five more banks in nine more cities soon

The retail CBDC is available for only 50,000 users now and of them 5,000 are merchants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 8: Five more banks will join the pilot on the central bank digital currency or e-rupee for retail customers and the project will be extended to nine additional cities, the Reserve Bank said Wednesday.

The Reserve Bank, which began piloting the central bank digital currency or e-rupee for retail customers in early December with eight banks in five cities, stressed that it does not want to rush with it but favours a slow and steady adoption.

The retail CBDC is available for only 50,000 users now and of them 5,000 are merchants. The service is being offered on invitation basis by eight banks across five cities now, deputy governor T Rabi Sankar told reporters Wednesday at the customary post-policy presser.

Given the glitches-free adoption so far, five more banks will be added soon on to the platform along with increasing the number of cities where the pilot service is available now from the present five to nine more, Sankar said.

"Having said on this and the risk of being right, let me just reiterate that we want the process to happen. But we want the process to happen gradually and slowly. We are in no hurry to make some-

thing happen very quickly. We have our targets in terms of users, in terms of merchants and all that. But we will go through it slowly because we don't want to do something without actually understanding what the possible impact and that impact can be," the deputy governor said.

On the volume of transaction, he said it is increasing slowly and so far it has totalled at around Rs 7.7 lakh only.

The RBI November 1, and December 1, 2022, launched the CBDC for wholesale and retail respectively. While the use case of the wholesale CBDC is limited to the settlement of secondary market transactions in government securities, the retail e-rupee is being piloted within a closed user group (CUG) comprising participating customers and merchants.

The first phase includes four banks--State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, Yes Bank and IDFC First Bank and subsequently, four banks Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, HDFC Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank joined.

The CBDC is expected to make the inter-bank market more efficient and settlements in e-rupee can reduce transaction costs by pre-empting the need for settlement guarantee infrastructure or for collateral to mitigate settlement risk.

SHORT TAKES

Adani Power Q3 profit plunges 96%

New Delhi: Adani Power Wednesday reported 96 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 8.77 crore for December quarter 2022-23 mainly on the back of higher expenses. In the year-ago period, the profit was Rs 218.49 crore, the company said in a BSE filing. Total expenses increased to Rs 8,078.31 crore in the quarter from Rs 5,389.24 crore. Total income rose to Rs 8,290.21 crore from Rs 5,593.58 crore in the same period a year ago.

Air traffic improves

Mumbai: Domestic air passenger traffic touched 1.25 crore in January this year, an increase of 96 per cent compared to the year-ago period, according to rating agency Ica. However, it said the traffic remained around 2 per cent lower compared to the pre-Covid levels -- January 2020. The traffic stood at 64 lakh in January last year.

Recognised startups

New Delhi: As many as 86,713 startups have been recognised by the government as December 31, 2022, Parliament was informed Wednesday. These startups are eligible to avail fiscal incentives under the Startup India action plan of the government. "As a result of sustained government efforts, the number of recognized startups has increased from 445 in 2016 to 86,713 in 2022 (as on December 31, 2022)," Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Som Parkash said.

Zoom sacks 1,300

Washington: The company behind the Zoom video conferencing platform -- which became a household name during the pandemic -- announced Tuesday it is laying off about 15 percent of its staff. Zoom Video Communications chief executive Eric Yuan is also taking a 98 percent cut in salary this year and forgoing his executive bonus, he said in a blog post about the job cuts. He added that members of his executive leadership team are taking a 20 percent salary reduction and also forfeiting bonuses this year.

Ola e-car by 2024

New Delhi: Electric-scooter maker Ola Electric Mobility Pvt is on track to deliver its first four-wheel vehicle in the second half of 2024, according to Chief Financial Officer GR Arun Kumar.

Most Adani Group firms' shares gain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: Shares of most of the Adani Group companies ended higher Wednesday, with the flagship firm Adani Enterprises rallying nearly 20 per cent.

Seven of the group companies ended in the positive territory while three settled in the red.

In the last two trading sessions, Adani Group companies have recovered around Rs 70,000 crore in combined market capitalisation. The group stocks have lost around Rs 8.7 lakh crore or about 45 per cent of their combined market valuation since January 24. The US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research came out with its adverse report about Adani Group.

On Wednesday, shares of Adani Ent rallied nearly 23 per cent to Rs 2,163, also its upper price band on the BSE. It later ended at Rs 2,158.65 per share, up by 19.76 per cent.

The flagship company's market valuation rose Rs 40,601.14 crore to Rs 2.46 lakh crore.

Shares of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone zoomed 8.34 per cent to end at Rs 599.45. The company's market valuation rose Rs 9,969.04 crore to Rs 1.29 lakh crore.

Adani Power closed at Rs 182, Adani Transmission at Rs 1,314.25, NDTV at Rs 227.75 and Adani Wilmar at Rs 419.35 per share. Besides, Ambuja Cements rose 0.17 per cent to close at Rs 384.35.

The 30-share BSE Sensex closed 377.75 points or 0.63 per cent higher at 60,663.79 points Wednesday. On Tuesday, six of the group companies closed in the green while four were in the red.

Ali bags 10th Shambhavi Puraskar 2023

Bhubaneswar: Dr Md Imran Ali is the winner of Shambhavi Puraskar 2023. He has dedicated himself for the cause of de-addiction, answer to cancer, drugs free childhood campaign, mission on wheels for differently-abled persons. He has been working relentlessly for tobacco free society and substance abuse prevention in Odisha. PARICHAYA of Sambalpur is selected for The Jury Commendation Certification 2023 for their notable work to help mentally challenged, rehabilitation of destitute and socially neglected people. In a meeting held February 8, eminent Panel of Jury members unanimously have decided on the above winners. Bansidhar & Ila Panda Foundation (BIPF) the CSR arm of IMFA Group, instituted the prestigious Shambhavi Puraskar in the year 2014, to recognise emerging social catalysts and thereby inspire more citizens to act as agents of change. It was instituted by BIPF in 2014 to "recognize those who act as agents of social change and motivate others to follow in their footsteps." It carries a citation and cash award of Rs 2,50,000. The Shambhavi Jury Commendation Certification carries a citation and a cash award for Rs 50,000. The recipients will be felicitated in an award ceremony on the Foundation Day of BIPE.

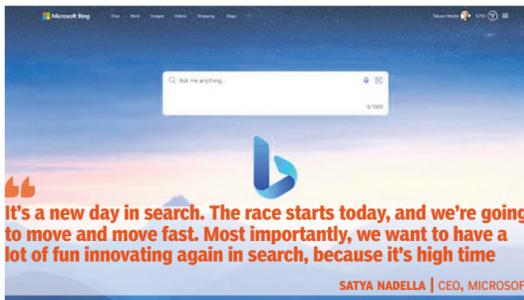
AI RACE HEATS UP

Microsoft unveils ChatGPT powered Bing

The launch of ChatGPT last year appears to have accelerated what tech giants had planned for AI, with Google and now Microsoft revealing how search engines will be freshened up by the technology

AGENCIES

Washington, Feb 8: Microsoft has revamped its Bing search engine and Edge Web browser with artificial intelligence and hopes to revolutionise the web browsing and information-searching experience with the release of a new version



of its search engine Bing, powered by the same artificial intelligence (AI) technology that is behind ChatGPT.

The Prometheus Model AI technology, as Microsoft calls it, will kickstart the AI race, according to CEO Satya Nadella. The new Bing is a result of

Microsoft's partnership with OpenAI, the creator of the language model GPT 3.5, which powers the popular chatbot ChatGPT.

The maker of the Windows operating system is staking its future on AI through billions of dollars of investment as it directly challenges Alphabet Inc's Google, which for

GOOGLE TO FOLLOW SUIT

Google said Wednesday it would soon integrate artificial intelligence (AI) capable of generating text and other content in search results, as it battles to answer the challenge of Microsoft's (MSFT.O) popular AI chatbot ChatGPT. At a launch event in Paris Wednesday, Google executive Prabhakar Raghavan said so-called generative AI would enable users to interact with information in "entirely new ways." "They might help a local baker collaborate on a cake design with a client, or a toymaker dream up a new creation," he said. "As we continue to bring generative AI technologies into our products, the only limit to search will be your imagination." Generative AI is used to make human-like creations through code, drawing on vast amounts of data to produce new pieces of text, video, or audio. Google said it would soon allow more developers and partners to test Bard.

years has outpaced Microsoft in search and browser technology.

Google unveiled Monday its own chatbot service, called Bard. Now, Microsoft is rolling out an intelligence chatbot to live alongside Bing's search results, putting AI that can

summarize web pages, synthesize disparate sources, even compose emails and translate them into more consumers' hands. Microsoft expects every percentage point of share it gains will bring in another \$2 billion in search advertising revenue.

Fundraising gets tougher, '23 challenging for startup founders

TIGHTENING FUNDING ENVIRONMENT HAS ALSO LED TO AN INCREASED FOCUS ON PROFITABILITY AND UNIT ECONOMICS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 8: Amid a deepening funding winter, only 53 per cent of startup founders had a positive fundraising experience (71 per cent of those who attempted to raise) in 2022, down from 92 per cent in 2021, a report said Wednesday.

Founders expect this year to be challenging, with 58 per cent of founders expecting a tough fundraising environment, according to the report by InnoVen Capital, Asia's leading venture debt firm.

Hiring is also expected to slow down with only 38 per cent of startup founders expecting a higher

pace of hiring predominantly in early-stage companies. The report also highlighted that hiring good talent is still a challenge for founders.

"2022 was a challenging year for the startup ecosystem with an end to cheap money, rising interest rates and a challenging geopolitical environment. The positive aspect of the slowdown has been an increased appreciation for building sustainable business models," said Ashish Sharma, Managing Partner, InnoVen Capital India.

The annual 'Start up Outlook' report gathered insights from 120 startup founders across stages and sectors such as fintech, software-



as-a-service (SaaS), direct-to-consumer (D2C), logistics, e-commerce, healthcare and others.

An overwhelming majority (85 per cent) of founders identified that focus on more sustainable business models has been the most

important impact of the current funding slowdown.

"While both growth and profitability are important, for the first time in seven years, founders had a higher bias for profitability over growth. Around 55 per cent of

2022 was a challenging year for the startup ecosystem with an end to cheap money, rising interest rates and a challenging geopolitical environment. The positive aspect of the slowdown has been an increased appreciation for building sustainable business models

ASHISH SHARMA | MANAGING PARTNER, INNOVEN CAPITAL INDIA

founders stated profitability as a bigger focus area, compared to only 17 per cent in 2021," the findings showed.

Nearly 19 per cent of founders claim to be EBITDA profitable, while 62 per cent aim to turn EBITDA profitable in the next two years, up from 51 per cent last year.

Startup founders are also increasingly looking towards a domestic IPO as the likely mode of

exit, despite the recent volatility of public market tech companies.

"Edtech was seen as the most over-hyped sector, while healthcare and agritech were chosen as the most under-hyped sector," said the report.

Founders chose fintech platform Zerodha as their most admired Indian start-up, for a third year in a row. Nithin Kamath and Nikhil Kamath, the co-founders of Zerodha, were chosen as the favorite founder.



World cricket needs these kind of rivalries (Kohli vs Lyon). It is important to have those rivalries and remember when Australia had come in 1998, it was termed Warne vs Tendulkar and I had to remind everyone that it is not Warne vs Tendulkar but Australia vs India. But everyone likes to see such rivalries
SACHIN TENDULKAR



If someone asks me what kind of pitch? Expect that. If you lose the toss, expect the ball to turn in the first session of play. That's what I want, and take it from there. My mindset would be, 'How can I beat Australia 4-0 if I'm the coach', which means day one, I want a ball to pitch on leg stump and hit off stump. I want it to rip
RAVI SHASTRI

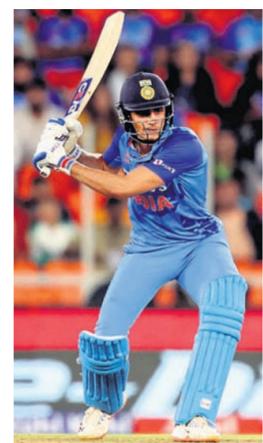
Gill achieves career-best spot in T20Is

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Feb 8: India's Suryakumar Yadav remained static at the top spot, while compatriot Shubman Gill shot up to a career-best 30th position in the batting chart of the ICC Men's T20I Player Rankings released Wednesday.

Surya continues to lead the batting list with 906 rating points. Gill achieved a career-best position after smashing a match-winning century against New Zealand in the third and final ODI in Ahmedabad recently.

Gill's 126 not out off 63 balls that contributed to India's huge 168-run victory and helped the home team seal the series 2-1, lifted him an incredible 168 slots. The 23-year-old, who has now slammed centuries in all three formats of the game, is ranked sixth in ODIs and 62nd in Tests.



Besides, Virat Kohli has dropped a rung to the 15 position among batters, while KL Rahul slid two places (27th) and skipper Rohit Sharma was further behind in the 29th spot. Young left-handed wicket-keeper batter Ishan Kishan has also dropped three places to 48th.

No Indian bowler, however, features in the top 10 T20 bowlers list. But left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh moved eight slots to reach a career-best 13th position after finishing with two for 16 in Ahmedabad. Bhuvneshwar Kumar dropped a place to 21st, while R Ashwin and Axar Patel are static at 29th and 30th spots respectively.

All-rounder Hardik Pandya, who grabbed four for 16 and smashed a 17-ball 30, has progressed in all three lists. He has moved up from 53rd to 50th among batters, 66th to 46th among bowlers and is in second place among all-rounders, only a couple of ratings points behind Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hassan.

Daryl Mitchell has gained four spots and is in joint-25th position in the latest weekly update that considers performance in the Ahmedabad match for T20Is and the final match of the South Africa-England series for the ODI rankings.

England captain Jos Buttler's match-winning 131 in Kimberley has helped him progress six places to 20th position while South Africa fast bowler Lungi Ngidi has advanced five places to reach 19th position after finishing with four for 62 in the high-scoring match.

NUMBERS GAME

(IND vs AUS in India)

50 Tests played between the two sides in India with the hosts winning 21 to Australia's 13 victories. 15 matches ended in draws while Chennai witnessed a tied game in 1986.

8 Wins for India in last 10 Tests against Australia at home, while the visitors winning one (Pune, 2017) and the other one ending in a draw

603/9 India's total at Ranchi in 2017, highest innings total in past decade, while Australia's highest of 451 coming in the same match. India's 441 in 2008 is the highest innings total at Nagpur in the series between the two sides

105 India's total at Pune in 2017, lowest innings total in past decade, while Australia's lowest of 112 coming in the same series at Bangalore. India's 185 in 2004 is the lowest innings total at Nagpur in the series between the two sides

900 Runs scored by Cheteshwar Pujara in 9 matches (16 innings) against the Aussies in India, most by any active player, while Steve Smith leading the Australian chart with 660 runs in 6 matches (12 innings)

3 Centuries scored by Smith, most by any active player in the series, while Pujara has two to his name

50 Wickets taken by R Ashwin in 8 matches (16 innings), most by any active player, while Ravindra Jadeja has 49 wickets to his name in same number of Tests. Nathan Lyon leads the chart for the Aussies with 34 wickets in 7 Tests (13 innings)

8/50 Bowling figures of Lyon at Bangalore in 2017, best spell in an innings among active players, while Ashwin's 7/103 at Chennai in 2013 is the best among active Indian players

TRIVIA

India need to win at least 3 Tests in this series to put their qualification for the WTC final beyond any doubt. And considering their win-loss record at home over the last 10 years is 42 and 2, they'll be fancying their chances. The two losses came against Australia (2017) and England (2021)

Axar Patel has 47 wickets in 8 Tests so far. If he takes 3 more in his next match, he will be the fastest Indian to 50 Test wickets, alongside Ashwin (9 Tests)

Usman Khawaja has been part of a Test squad that has toured India twice before - in 2013 and 2017 - but he is yet to play an actual game here

Australia are on top of the WTC 2021-23 standings having a winning percentage of 75.56 in 15 Tests, while India are second with a winning percentage of 58.93 in 14 Tests. Sri Lanka (53.33 in 10 Tests), South Africa (48.72 in 13 Tests) and England (46.97 in 22 Tests) complete the top 5

TEST OF BESTS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Feb 8: Rohit Sharma, a bonafide white-ball legend, will face his biggest test as India's red-ball captain against a determined Australian side which would be hungry for revenge when the much-awaited Border-Gavaskar series starts here Thursday.

It is a series that promises a lot of twists and turns, engrossing sub-plots and probably career-defining performances. It's such a high-profile rubber that non-performance could lead to end of career for some after this series.

During the hey days of Channel 9, former Australia captain Bill Lawry would often use the term "It's all happening at the MCG" during exciting games. Trust this four-Test series to throw up more surprises than one can possibly envisage.

The series, a cricket connoisseurs' delight, will throw up several topics of discussion as the caravan

moves from one destination to the other.

The back-to-back series defeats in their own den (2018-19 and 2020-21) have hurt Cummins and his players and they certainly have revenge on their mind, even though it will be easier said than done on a pitch that promises appreciable turn from first day itself.

The quality of India versus Australia Test matches since the epic 2001 series has, at times, been better than the Ashes. The journey of this batch of Australian cricketers won't be complete if they don't emulate the exploits of the Matthew Hayden, Justin Langers, Glenn McGraths or the Adam Gilchrist's of 2004. Steve Smith put it aptly, saying a series win in India will be bigger than the Ashes.

For Rohit, who has unfortunately missed all the Test matches or series against bigger teams either due to injuries (hamstring vs South Africa and split webbing vs

Bangladesh in 2022) or illness (Covid-19 vs England in the one-off game), would like to emulate his predecessor Kohli in leading the team to another World Test Championship final.

For that to happen, India will need a clear two-match victory margin and Rohit's biggest weapon of execution will be his quartet of spinners, out of which three are supposed to play. Not to forget, his batters need to rise up to Nathan Lyon's challenge. The hosts haven't been up to scratch when they play slow bowlers on rank turners.

Those who have followed the developments in Indian cricket, know that Rohit was initially reluctant to take up red-ball captaincy and is yet to face any major opposition as leader in the format. This is the series which will actually chart his legacy as a leader.

No one knows how he must have felt when the BCCI removed him from T20I captaincy after the World Cup defeat in Australia last year. But

INDIA EYE SUMMIT CLASH AT WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP, WHILE AUSTRALIA SEEK REVENGE AS THE POWERHOUSES FACE OFF FOR THE BORDER-GAVASKAR TROPHY FOUR-TEST SERIES STARTING TODAY

knowing Rohit, he will never say a word publicly though he would definitely have been hurt. The decisions he takes during the series. KS Bharat's ability as a keeper is impressive but despite a triple hundred at the Ranji level, one isn't quite sure about his capabilities as a batter while facing high-quality Test match bowling.

Ishan Kishan, with his left-handed flair, was closer to Pant in terms of batting list-set but can Rohit or coach Rahul Dravid take the risk if he misses a stumping or a low catch when the ball starts turning square on the third evening or fourth afternoon? People would be sceptical as he hasn't kept wickets in red-ball cricket.

To be some sort of a maverick, Rohit perhaps needed to drop KL Rahul straightaway, but sending him for the media conference two days before the Test was a statement that his deputy's place is non-negotiable despite a string of horrendous performances. Which effectively means that either Suryakumar or Gill, two potential match winners, will have to sit out. But the biggest decision for Rohit would be to choose between Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav, although the Gujarat man looks favourite to get the nod.

There is a theory that India might play four spinners and R Ashwin could be handed the new

ball. But on a pitch that is bone dry on both sides, reverse swing might come into play and both Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj can make that old ball deviate in the opposite direction.

For Australia, it seems, Ashton Agar with better lower-order batting abilities, will get the nod as Lyon's spin partner ahead of Mitchell Swepson, as Scott Boland prepared to share the new ball with his skipper.

The Australian team is loaded with left handers and four of them - David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Travis Head and Alex Carey - are almost certain to play. The two right handers will be Smith and Marnus Labuschagne.

For bookmakers, the series would be nightmare as odds can swing wildly in a matter of a few deliveries.

THE SQUADS

INDIA: Rohit Sharma (C), KL Rahul, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli, Shubman Gill, Ravindra Jadeja, KS Bharat (wk), R Ashwin, Axar Patel, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Kuldeep Yadav, Suryakumar Yadav, Umesh Yadav, Jaydev Unadkat, Ishan Kishan (wk).

AUSTRALIA: Pat Cummins (C), David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Alex Carey (wk), Matt Renshaw, Peter Handscombe, Nathan Lyon, Ashton Agar, Scott Boland, Lance Morris, Mitchell Swepson, Todd Murphy, Josh Hazlewood (unavailable), Cameron Green (unavailable), Mitchell Starc (from 2nd Test).

CAPTAINS' TAKES

ROHIT SHARMA

Team talk: Team Message to the boys is very clear. We are ready to play horses for courses. Whichever pitch, whoever we need, we have to bring them in. As simple as that. That is something we have spoken to the guys. We will have to assess conditions and see who are the right guys, so we are quite open with all options

Pitch: I just feel, focus is on playing the game, last series we played here, lot was spoken about pitches and all 22 are quality cricketers and not bothered about how much it is turning, how much it is seaming and all that

PAT CUMMINS

Tour assessment: This team is very different to a lot of the teams that have played here in the past. So we don't carry the wins, we don't carry the losses. We know it's tough to tour here, India are a really good cricket side, especially at home, so we are excited. And, yeah, we will give it our best shot.

Pitch: Looks a little bit dry for the left-handers and knowing how much traffic will probably go through there from the right-arm bowlers, potentially might be a fair bit of rough out there. Again, that's something we've just got to embrace. It's going to be fun. It's going to be challenging at times but our batters will relish the chance to problem-solve on their feet, and quite a few of them will get their chances to do that.

Odisha set sights on Santosh Trophy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: There will be increased eyeballs on the performance of the home side Odisha as its capital city is hosting the final round of the 76th National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy, which kicks off February 10, here.

Odisha narrowly missed out on a semifinal spot last season, pipped by Karnataka due to goal difference. "Coming so close to making it to the knockouts last time and missing out only because of goal difference, has given us a lot of motivation. It has lit a fire within the boys. Seeing something snatched away at the last instance has proved to be a catalyst to do better and leave nothing to chance," Salim Pathan, head coach of the Odisha team, was quoted as saying in a media release.

Pathan's wards will look to use that to their benefit. The 42-year-old has been in his current role for over a year now, a small fact he hopes to use to the team's benefit when the tournament begins.

Odisha has always been a close partner of the All India Football Federation and has, in the past,



hosted both editions of the Super Cup and the last edition of the Federation Cup.

The experience of hosting big-scale events is not new to anyone in the state and Avijit Pal, Joint Secretary of the Football Association of Odisha stresses on the importance they are giving to the prestigious event docking soon on their shores.

Pal is optimistic that the Santosh Trophy will draw fans in Bhubaneswar, and cites the city's history with sports as a reason to believe that the tournament will be well attended.

SHORT TAKES

Winning starts

CHENNAI: The Indian teams got off to winning starts in the 21st Asian Junior Team Squash Championship 2023, which got underway here Wednesday with the men beating Singapore and Chinese Taipei by 3-0 margins and the women blanking Sri Lanka. In the men's event where the Indians are seeded second, Paarth Ambani, Shaurya Bawa and Krishna Mishra recorded facile victories to set up a 3-0 win over Singapore. Later, the trio had no trouble breezing past Chinese Taipei by a similar margin. In the girls section, India, seeded third, began their campaign with a comfortable 3-0 victory over Sri Lanka with the highly-rated Anahat Singh outclassing Chanithma Sinaly 11-6, 11-3, 11-2.

Kuttappa returns

NEW DELHI: Dronacharya awardee CA Kuttappa has returned as the head coach of the Indian men's boxing team for a second stint, a decision made by the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) on the advice of High Performance Director Bernard Dunne. Kuttappa has replaced Army Sports Institute's Narender Rana, who was appointed as the chief coach in October 2021. Incidentally, it was Rana who had taken over from Kuttappa after BFI had made wholesale changes in the staff following the poor show at the Tokyo Olympics.

LeBron James goes past Abdul-Jabbar

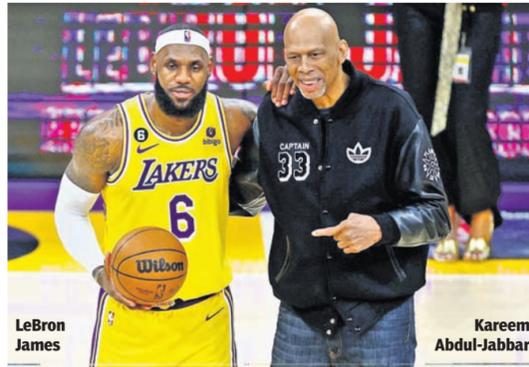
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Los Angeles, Feb 8: LeBron James got the first official statistic of his NBA career on a rebound. His next entry on the stat sheet was an assist. Even then, points weren't the priority. They never were.

Somehow, he became the most prolific scorer in NBA history anyway. It finally happened Tuesday night, the kid from Akron, Ohio, connecting on a stepback jumper to push his career total to 38,388 points and break the record that Kareem Abdul-Jabbar held for nearly 39 years.

James outstretched his arms after his 36th point of the night for the Los Angeles Lakers, threw both hands in the air, then smiled. Abdul-Jabbar rose from his seat and clapped. The game was stopped as members of James' family, including his mother, his wife and their three children, took the floor for a ceremony recognizing the moment.

"It's never gotten my juices flowing," James told The Associated Press, when asked what the scoring record means to him. "I'm there now because I never, ever thought about it. The only thing I ever thought about was winning championships, maybe a couple MVPs, maybe defensive player of the year. But scoring championships and records, I'm telling you, that was



LeBron James

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

never on my mind."

Abdul-Jabbar — a longtime Laker and one of many celebrities and sports stars who made sure they were there to see history — became the league's all-time leading scorer April 5, 1984 and wound up retiring in 1989 with 38,387 points. It was a record that some thought would last forever, with very few even coming close. Karl Malone retired 1,459 points behind Abdul-Jabbar; Kobe Bryant was 4,744 points shy, and Michael Jordan was 6,095 points away.

James passed them all, then caught Abdul-Jabbar, too. The 38-year-old — who finished with 38 points in the Lakers' 133-130 loss — did it

in his 20th season. Abdul-Jabbar also played 20 NBA seasons. "You've got to give him credit for just the way that he planned to last and to dominate," Abdul-Jabbar told TNT.

And now, King James — a moniker he's had since high school, when he was just a kid from Akron — is the NBA's scoring king, with 38,390 points and counting. "A record that has stood for nearly 40 years, which many people thought would never be broken," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said.

Abdul-Jabbar held the ball aloft, then handed it to James, the ceremonial passing of the torch. They posed for photos with Silver, then with one another. James wiped

James is behind only John Stockton, Jason Kidd and Chris Paul on the all-time assists list. None of them were, or are, close to the scorer that James is. Of that group, Paul comes closest, ranking 38th in NBA history. And Paul is 17,000 points behind the new scoring king

James is the only member of the NBA's triple-quintuple club: at least 10,000 points, 10,000 rebounds and 10,000 assists. There are 44 players to reach five digits in two of those categories

away tears from his eyes, then addressed the crowd.

At least 16 different players have, technically been the all-time leading scorer in league history — most of those coming in the opening month of the league's existence in 1946, when everybody was starting from zero and nine different players were atop the scoring list in the first 16 days.

But only six have ended a season officially as the all-time leader: Joe Fulks, George Mikan, Dolph Schayes, Bob Pettit, Wilt Chamberlain and Abdul-Jabbar.

James will be the seventh name on that list, and he's likely to stay there for a long time. No active player is within 10,000 points of James, who is under contract for two more years and is on pace to become the league's first 40,000-point scorer sometime next season.