

SHORT TAKES

Bhubaneswar to host 2nd G20 heritage meet

New Delhi: Protection and restitution of cultural heritage will be the theme for the first G20 culture track meet which will be held February 22-25 in MP's Khajuraho, Union Culture Secretary Govind Mohan informed Wednesday. He added that the second and third meetings on the same theme will be held in Bhubaneswar and Hampi, Karnataka respectively, the dates for which will be declared later.

Pyarimohan's daughter Sikta joins Congress

Bhubaneswar: Former Rajya Sabha MP, Pyarimohan Mohapatra's eldest daughter, Sikta Pati joined the Congress here Wednesday. Sikta said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' had inspired her to join the Congress. The party said on Twitter that Dr Pati is a valuable addition and her strong leadership skill will help Congress. Pyarimohan incidentally was chief advisor to CM Naveen Patnaik from 2000 to 2012 on affairs of the BJD.



BEST WISHES: A teacher blesses a student at Kendriya Vidyalaya-1 in Bhubaneswar as she enters for the Class-XII CBSE examinations that began Wednesday

Child marriage arrests creating 'havoc': HC

AGENCIES

Guwahati, Feb 15: The Gauhati High Court observed Wednesday that the arrest of a large number of people in the crackdown against child marriage has created 'havoc in the private life of people'. It also said there is no need for custodial interrogation of the accused in such cases. The high court also rapped the Assam government for slapping stringent laws like the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) and rape charges on child marriage accused, and stated that these are 'absolutely weird' allegations. A single bench comprising Justice Suman Shyam

allowed all the petitioners who had applied for relief to be released on bail with immediate effect.

"These are not matters of custodial interrogation. You (state) proceed as per law, we have nothing to say. If you find somebody guilty, file a chargesheet. Let him or her face trial and if they are convicted, then let it be so," the judge said.

"This (arrest) is causing havoc in the private life of people. There are children, there are family members, there are old people. This may not be a good idea to go for (arrests), obviously it is a bad idea," the judge added.

Contd...P2

TENSION FLARES DURING BJP STIR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Feb 15: High drama was noticed here in front of the collectorate office Wednesday as BJP MLA and Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Jayanarayan Mishra allegedly manhandled Dhanupali police station IIC Anita Pradhan. The scuffle took place when the BJP was taking out a rally against the deteriorating law and order situation in the state.

Mishra however, denied the allegation and said that it was the IIC who had manhandled him. Meanwhile women police personnel here met the Revenue Divisional Commissioner Wednesday night and lodged a complaint. They said Mishra should be punished as he is a 'serial offender'. **MORE P3**

Wildfires threaten Similipal

EVEN BEFORE THE ONSET OF SUMMER, A LARGE NUMBER OF FIRES HAVE BEEN REPORTED FROM WITHIN THE SANCTUARY, A STARK WARNING OF THINGS TO COME

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada/Udala, Feb 15: A major fire which had spread through Similipal National Park (SNP) in Mayurbhanj district in 2021 had sparked widespread concerns at the international level. This year may not be any different, as even before the onset of summer, wildfires have been raging in three places of the sanctuary. This development has sparked concern among wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers.

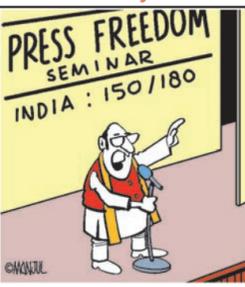


and Khandachira forest areas, the officials added.

When contacted, Podadiha range officer Madan Mohan Mahanta however, said that the fire has been controlled. He asserted that allegations about the fire spreading to the core area are false and informed that the fire is in the buffer area and that there is no threat to animals living in the forest.

Mahanta said that the flames were first detected with the help of satellite inflation, Monday night. After getting information, a large number of Forest department officials and firefighters rushed to the scene to control the flames. **Contd...P2**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We have a long way to go. 30 countries are still behind us!

Fat to fit is CP's new mantra

THE NEW GUIDELINES HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO KEEP THE COPS IN GOOD PHYSICAL AND MENTAL SHAPE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: Twin City Commissionerate Police has decided that cops in the Odisha capital will have to be physically fit and have issued a set of guidelines to put things in place. Hence bulging bellies are out while taut muscles are the order of the day as per the instructions issued.



The fitness-related instructions have been issued so that the cops belonging to urban police district (UPD), Bhubaneswar are in good physical shape. The guidelines are for policemen who are attached with APR, DPO, Commissionerate Police Headquarters, Team 60 and OSAP mobilised forces.

been taken to keep the cops in the best of physical and mental shape. "Physical and mental health are very important for every law enforcement department. Due to the hectic schedule in the lives of police personnel, mental and physical fatigue is bound to set in. The guidelines will enable cops to remain physically fit and mentally alert." Commissionerate Police said in a statement. **Contd...P2**

Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT)

Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS)

(Established U/S 3 of UGC Act, 1956), Bhubaneswar-751024, Odisha, India

STADIUMS & SPORTS FACILITIES NAMED AFTER LEGENDS

Inauguration by

Shri Naveen Patnaik

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha

in Presence of Sports Luminaries of India

17th February 2023

BIJU PATNAIK

MULTIPURPOSE INDOOR STADIUM

KIIT CRICKET STADIUM

<p>VISWANATHAN ANAND</p> <p>INTERNATIONAL CHESS HALL</p>	<p>LEANDER PAES</p> <p>TENNIS STADIUM</p>	<p>DEBASISH MOHANTY & SHIV SUNDER DAS</p> <p>CRICKET STAND</p>
<p>DILIP TIRKEY</p> <p>HOCKEY STADIUM</p>	<p>PRAMOD BHAGAT</p> <p>BADMINTON INDOOR HALL</p>	<p>MINATI MOHAPATRA</p> <p>CYCLING VELODROME</p>
<p>ABHINAV BINDRA</p> <p>INDOOR SHOOTING RANGE</p>	<p>RAHUL BOSE</p> <p>RUGBY STADIUM</p>	<p>AMIYA MALLICK</p> <p>ATHLETICS STAND</p>
<p>DUTEE CHAND</p> <p>ATHLETICS STADIUM</p>	<p>SRADHANJALI SAMANTARAY</p> <p>FOOTBALL STADIUM</p>	<p>SRABANI NANDA</p> <p>ATHLETICS STAND</p>

KIIT & KISS ARE THE ONLY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO BE AWARDED WITH

Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar 2022

Partner with FIVB for Promotion of Volleyball in Schools

World's First Nodal Centre for 'FIFA Football for School Programme'

FICCI India Sports Award 2022

Sportstar ACES Award 2022

leisure



ELVIS PRESLEY'S PRIVATE JET AUCTIONED FOR \$260K

King of Rock and Roll Elvis Presley's private jet has been purchased for \$260,000 after gathering dust in a desert. Parked at the Roswell International Air Center in New Mexico for the past four decades, the 1962 Lockheed 1329 Jetstar has now found a new home after going under the hammer.

BTS' SUGA TO SOON EMBARK ON HIS FIRST INDIVIDUAL WORLD TOUR

Suga, a member of K-pop supergroup BTS, said that he will begin his first-ever individual world tour in April. The rapper announced the news with detailed tour dates on Weverse, a K-pop fan community platform, reports Yonhap, a news agency. For the first time, a BTS member has announced a solo tour.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES
Today, you may want to wear your power suit, says Ganesh. If you notice people bending and bowing a bit, understand that your hard work has paid off! If not, then you need to get more organised. Either way, there's work to be done.

TAURUS
This is not a day when you should be fooling around with your health. Do not take your health and fitness for granted, warns Ganesh. You will be feeling lazy and listless all day long. Chances are that you could fall ill on account of carelessness. Both physical exertion as well as mental stress should be meticulously avoided.

GEMINI
An auspicious and progressive day awaits you. Along with your daily work you will also be able to tackle your personal issues as well. You will establish an emotional bonding with some person, or will feel the need to. It is a good day to ponder over issues such as partnership or marriage.

CANCER
Be ready to get into the shoes of a juggler today, says Ganesh. Multi-tasking is the need of the hour, my friend! But, no worries for you will be energetic and deft. Pending pile of work will be finished with ease. Seemingly impossible tasks will be finished in a blink of an eye.

LEO
You will be in a very good mood today. You will inspire others to achieve substantial things in life. While you have been looking to take on an extremely challenging project, you have been unable to find the right opening so far. You ought to start such projects today, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Your driving force will be a single-minded desire to take your destiny in your own hands. Your organisational abilities will be flawless, and a burning desire to succeed will motivate you to keep pegging at your tasks.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that you will be able to spend more time with your friend circle. You will be attracted to someone of the opposite sex. In the evening today you will be able to take out your beloved for a romantic evening combined with a drive and dinner at a restaurant.

SCORPIO
A happening day where a lot may happen today, suggests Ganesh. Grey hairs will teach valuable lessons, so keep your ears open to bosses and elders. Seniors will extend their best possible cooperation to you. Stay clear of courtrooms, warns Ganesh, lest the legalities sink you deep.

SAGITTARIUS
A paradigm shift in your temperament and your looks is on the cards today. Your personality will get better as you do some chic attire, jewellery and a rather loud perfume today. You're a magnet today, says Ganesh, and will charm your way through a crowd of admirers who will clamour for your attention.

CAPRICORN
Your investments, inheritance, receipts, etc. will keep your pockets filled with cash. No sooner you try to put them in safe; there will be more than one reason for some expenditure. Keeping a watch on incomes and expenses both will help you avoid any monetary problems, advises Ganesh. Your maturity, practicality and experience will come to your rescue today.

AQUARIUS
You are ambitious, and quite unapologetic about the way you pursue your goals! You will work hard and push your way through if you have to. Not just that, you will see to it that you have all the skills and competency required to make it big. Success is never served on a plate, and you know it, says Ganesh.

PISCES
For those in the creative, marketing or advertising fields, today will likely bring about an important milestone on their path to progress, says Ganesh. Your creativity and ingenuity will be at their peak.

Ruchi not hesitant to do bold scenes

Mumbai: Actress Ruchi Singh, who has been part of mythological dramas like *Santoshi*, *Maa Sunayein Vrat Kathayein 2* and *Vighnaharta Ganesh*, said that she is now interested in grabbing different kinds of roles and is not hesitant to do a bold scene if the character demands. Ruchi said: "I do feel that acting is a profession where you have to be ready to essay any kind of role, be it a negative one, positive one or a romantic one. Being in this profession, I can't create boundaries or inhibitions for myself because, nowadays, there are a lot of good projects which demand bold scenes. So, I don't believe in rejecting a project only because it has a close-proximity scene." She further added: "If I feel the scene justifies the screenplay and story

and if it enhances the role, I would love to perform it. For me, performing every scene is a part of my job, whether it's a drunken scene or bold scenes, and I don't find anything negative in this." At last, she shares that she is open to taking up any role or scene if it is the demand of the script and shot aesthetically.



Operation Apaharan launched with fanfare

Bhubaneswar: Operation Apaharan, a new Odia movie with Akash Das Nayak and Tamanna Vyas in lead roles, was launched here with much fanfare, Wednesday. Apart from the lead cast, director Amit Talukdar, producers Samaresh Routray, Subhashree Mangaraj, Premlata Routray,

Minakshi Mishra and other crew members were present on the occasion. Produced by S3 Movies Creations and Subhashree Films Initiative in association with OM Maa Kali Films, the black comedy is written by Amrita Sengupta while the dialogues are penned by Amit Talukdar. The audience will see an interesting movie after a long time which is full of twists and turns, said producer Samaresh Routray. The shooting, to be started from March, will be completed in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri and other parts of the state, he added.



'Married women should voice out their opinions'

Jammu: Jammu-born Sargam Koushal, who won the Mrs World crown for India in December last year, says it is unfortunate that women, after getting married, forget themselves and are overburdened with family responsibilities. They need to voice out their opinions and follow their dreams, added Sargam. She urged married women not to forget themselves while taking care of their families. The Mumbai-based model, 32, became the first Indian to win the crown

after Aditi Govitrikar in 2001. She also said that she would not mind joining the film industry but for now she wants to focus on educating youth against the drug menace. "I will feel good if an opportunity comes my way from Bollywood, known for its popularity and fame. I do not have any problem with that but right now there are more important things to do," Koushal told reporters here. "We are planning a campaign in May or June for

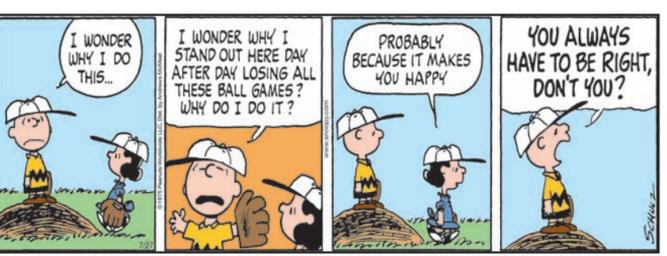
the youth to motivate them to stay away from drugs," she added. On the first visit to her birthplace after winning the beauty pageant in Las Vegas on December 17 last year, Koushal said she is totally focused on the awareness campaign to empower women and young girls.

Here's how Shah Rukh perfected that stammer

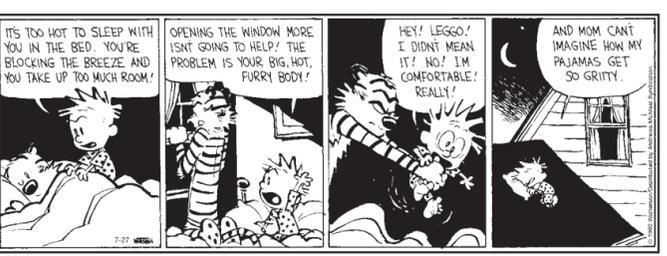
Mumbai: Top star Shah Rukh Khan has talked about how he perfected his stammer in the 1993 film *Darr* and revealed how he used to bounce off crazy ideas to nail his villainous act in the Yash Chopra blockbuster. SRK, on the docu-series *The Romantics*, said: "I had a classmate who had a stammer and then we did some little study, some BBC documentary where they talked about how people's minds become aware of one sound, and it's like a sharp current." "So, you can't say the word because you become aware of a sound. Let's make him aware of the woman he loves the most, her name. So, I only stammer on the word Kiran. It was just for that one word because he's so aware of her." He added: "I had some really fantastically stupid ideas, like I remember once going to Adi and saying, can I make this phone call hanging upside down? Adi said 'I think you did very well. So, you suggest, if I do it, he'll turn me down'. So, we were like the filters who kind of help each other with Yash Ji."



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

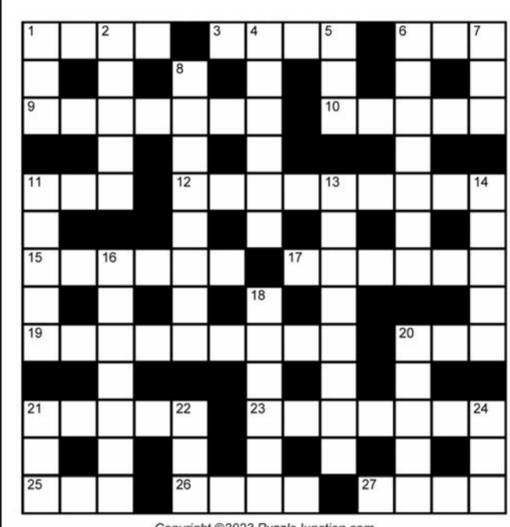


BREVITY



FUN post

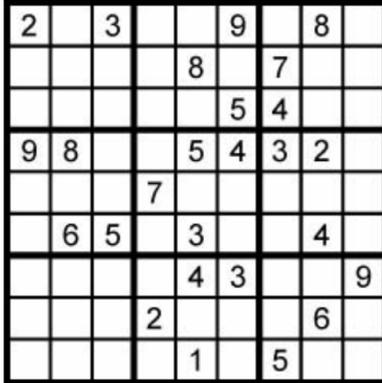
CROSSWORD



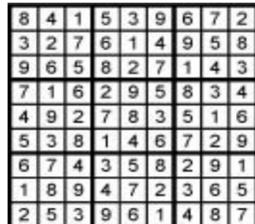
- Across**
- 1 Diplomacy
 - 3 Bluish green
 - 6 Fish catcher
 - 9 Jujube
 - 10 Railroad station
 - 11 Set
 - 12 Formerly (2,3,4)
 - 15 Showy flower
 - 17 Pure
 - 19 Red table wine (5,4)
 - 20 Aviate
 - 21 Dirigible
 - 23 Hue and cry
 - 25 Precious stone
 - 26 Cowshed
 - 27 Slide
- Down**
- 1 Two-year-old sheep (2,3,4)
 - 2 Desert transport
 - 4 Engage
 - 5 Young fellow
 - 6 Infant garments
 - 7 Famous Egyptian king
 - 8 Musician on the pipes
 - 11 Social unit
 - 13 Heavenly
 - 14 Adversary
 - 16 Corroborate
 - 18 Football game
 - 20 Woman's garment
 - 21 Implore
 - 22 Alehouse
 - 24 Fishing gear

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



TRIPURA POLLS TODAY

28.13 lakh voters including 13.53 lakh women will decide the fate of 259 aspirants in Tripura Assembly polls

TWO STATES P6



US FOR FREEDOM OF PRESS

US says it supports the importance of free press, freedom of expression and freedom of religion as universal rights

INTERNATIONAL P8



INDIA BEAT WINDIES

Deepti Sharma shines with the ball as India beat West Indies in their group match of the ICC Women's T20 WC

SPORTS BACK PAGE P1

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BHUBANESWAR | THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16 | 2023

SHRADDHA CASE RERUN

Twin murders shock the nation

23-YEAR-OLD NIKKI YADAV WAS ALLEGEDLY KILLED BY HER LIVE-IN PARTNER SAHIL GEHLOT IN SOUTHWEST DELHI

MEGHA DHANSINGH THORVI, 37, WAS ALLEGEDLY MURDERED BY HER JOBLESS HUSBAND HARDIK RAJU SHAH IN MAHARASHTRA'S PALGHAR

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Palghar, Feb 15: Two horrific cases of murder – one in southwest Delhi and another in Maharashtra's Palghar – have shaken the conscience of the people of the country, reminding the grisly murder of Shraddha Walkar by her boyfriend Aaftab Amin Poonawala last year.

In the Delhi incident, Police Wednesday retrieved the footage from CCTVs that showed 23-year-old Nikki Yadav in her rented house hours before she was allegedly killed by her live-in partner Sahil Gehlot, who stuffed her body inside a fridge in his family-owned dhaba.

Yadav's family members demanded that Gehlot be hanged to death for this gruesome act, reminiscent of the grisly murder of Shraddha Walkar by her boyfriend Aaftab Amin Poonawala who chopped her body into pieces, stored them in his refrigerator and disposed them of over a period of time.

The CCTV footage retrieved by the Delhi Police are from February 9, the day of Gehlot's engagement. Yadav allegedly called to meet Gehlot and express her displeasure



Nikki Yadav and Sahil Gehlot



Megha Thorvi & Hardik Raju

at his decision to get married.

A senior police officer said, "We are looking into the CCTV footage and also scanning for more to collect evidence and ascertain the sequence of events that unfolded on the day of the murder."

Yadav was allegedly strangled to death by her 24-year-old boyfriend who stuffed her body inside a refrigerator of his dhaba (eatery) in southwest Delhi and went off to marry another woman the same day, police said Tuesday.

Police said that the accused strangled Yadav to death in his car near Kashmir Gate, adding that he drove around 30-40 km to his dhaba along with her body in his car. The

car used in the commission of crime has been seized by the police.

Gehlot, a resident of Mitraon village in southwest Delhi, has been arrested.

Meanwhile, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Archana Beniwal granted the Crime Branch of the Delhi police custody of the accused for five days to interrogate him and ascertain the exact scene of the murder and the route he took after committing the alleged crime.

In the chilling incident of Palghar in Maharashtra, a 40-year-old jobless man allegedly killed his wife, hid her body in a bed, and sold off all household articles before trying

to flee by train, police said Wednesday. However, accused Hardik Raju Shah was nabbed 650 km away in Madhya Pradesh, a police official said.

According to police, Shah used to work in a call centre but was unemployed since the pandemic lockdown for many months, and his wife Megha Dhansingh Thorvi, 37, was working as a nurse to support the family.

The duo had met through a social media site three years ago, got married in August 2022 and shifted to a rented flat in Sitasadan Apartments in Tulinj area of Nalla Sopara town in Palghar district for the past six months.

Shailendra Nagarkar, from the Mira Bhayander-Vasai Virar Police Commissionerate said that after they got married last year, the couple fought almost daily as Shah did not get any work, leaving the entire burden of household expenses on his wife.

After one such bitter domestic brawl February 11, Shah - who is the son of a Mumbai diamondaire - allegedly assaulted and killed her in a fit of anger, dumped her body inside the bed, and planned his escape.



PRESERVING FOLK ART: Artistes performed during a cultural programme at 15th Kalinga Herbal Fair organised at Unit III Exhibition Ground in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Bird flu spreads to new countries

AGENCIES

Chicago, Feb 15: Avian flu has reached new corners of the globe and become endemic for the first time in some wild birds that transmit the virus to poultry, according to veterinarians and disease experts.

Wild birds are primarily responsible for spreading the virus, suggest experts. Waterfowl like ducks can carry the virus without dying and introduce it to poultry through contaminated feces, saliva and other means.

Outbreaks of the virus will not abate soon on poultry farms, ramping up threats to the world's food supply. Outbreak of the virus has continued in North and South America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

The United States, Britain, France and Japan are among countries that have suffered record losses of poultry over the past year, leaving some farmers feeling helpless. Farmers' best efforts to protect

flocks are falling short. They are trying unusual tactics to protect poultry, with some using machines that make loud noises to scare off wild birds, experts said

While the virus can infect people, usually those who have contact with infected birds, the World Health Organisation says the risk to humans is low.

Such infections of "resident" birds are helping the virus to persist throughout the year when it didn't previously, he said.

2,674 challans issued to vehicles without high security plates



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The State Transport Authority (STA) has issued challans against 2,674 vehicles in the last 11 days which do not have high security registration plates (HSRPs) and colour-coded stickers, an official said Wednesday.

The challans were issued from February 1 to 11 in accordance with the last date given for various series of vehicles.

Additional Commissioner Transport (Enforcement), LM Sethi said that a total of 38,49,498 vehicle owners have booked slots February 13 out of which HSRP has been affixed to 31,65,850 vehicles.

"In case a vehicle is not affixed with HSRP within the scheduled date, e-challans with a fine of ₹5,000 or ₹10,000 are being issued against the offending vehicle under the Section 192 of Motor Vehicle Act, 1988," Sethi said.

STA CRACKDOWN

◆ e-challans with a fine of ₹5,000 or ₹10,000 are being issued against the offending vehicle under the Section 192 of Motor Vehicle Act, 1988

◆ A total of 38,49,498 vehicle owners have booked slots February 13 out of which HSRP has been affixed to 31,65,850 vehicles

◆ Vehicle owners who do not have access to internet or do not have knowledge of technology were asked to apply for HSRP through nearby 'Mo Seva Kendras' or HSRP facilitation centres at RTO as per their convenience

He said, "Amongst the challans issued so far, the majority of the vehicles are two-wheelers. A penalty of ₹5,000 has been imposed on the violators. In future, stricter action will be taken against the violators."

Jatni ROB work in full swing

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The long awaited road overbridge (ROB) at Jatni near Khurda Road Railway Station is going to be completed soon, said sources at the East Coast Railway (ECoR). Bowstring girders (BGs) work on the bridge has started in the railway portion while the connecting road to the bridge has almost been completed.

Khurda Road Railway Division has launched the second BG (36 MT assembly of floor system) in position Tuesday without affecting train movements in the busy Howrah-Chennai route. This was successfully aligned within an hour, said the ECoR sources. Planned Traffic & OHE Block of all yard lines was taken without traffic disruption, they added.

The work for 48mX13m bowstring girders has started on Railway portion of the ROB. The total assembling of all the strings of girders will be targeted to complete with minimum traffic disruption. Two cranes of 400 tonne capacity were deployed for the purpose.

Railway's strategic planning and co-ordination amongst all agencies resulted in overcoming the main hurdle of lack of sufficient space in the market area for keeping the machinery and equipment.

The project had been stalled since 2013 due to heavy encroachments and extremely restricted work space among other factors.

The old FOB was earlier dismantled and new FOB of 36 m span and 3 m wide was constructed to facilitate communication between Jatni Market and Kudiary Bazaar.

DSPL - 455

BMC ICOMC TOWER

Satya Nagar, Bhubaneswar

Inauguration by
Shri Naveen Patnaik
 Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha
 16th February 2023

OIPR-13002/13/023/2223

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	61275.09	↑ 242.83
NIFTY	18015.85	↑ 86.00
DOLLAR	82.65	↑ ₹0.19
EURO	88.4570	↓ ₹0.54
GOLD	₹56,151	↓ ₹599
SILVER	₹65,360	↓ ₹891

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	33.5°C	30.6°C
MIN	15.9°C	17.0°C
Humidity	86%	86%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather most likely	

CONTINUED FROM P1

Child marriage...

Till February 14, altogether 3,031 people have been apprehended against registration of 4,225 child marriage cases. The crackdown had started February 3 with 4,004 FIRs.

When Additional Public Prosecutor D Das pointed out that cases were registered under non-bailable charges under POCSO Act and rape (IPC Section 376), Justice Shyam said, "What is the POCSO here? Merely because POCSO is added, does it mean the judges will not see what is there?"

Justice Shyam further said: "The high court is not acquitting anybody and nobody is preventing the government from investigating the cases of child marriages. However, why Section 376 of IPC? Is there any allegation of rape here? These are all weird allegations, absolutely weird."

The judge then sought the opinion of senior advocate Angshuman Bora, a well-known criminal counsel present in the courtroom for the hearing of a separate case, on the large-scale arrests of child marriage accused. Bora said, "They are not dreaded criminals. At this stage, they (state) can file the chargesheet and subsequently when the matter comes up in the court, the matter will be decided as per the law." Justice Shyam further asked, "What do you get by custodial interrogation of these people? Either he has abetted or he has not. Either it's a case of child marriage or it is not. For that, is it necessary to have custodial interrogation? What is the idea behind this?"

Fat to...

The cops have been instructed to attend regular physical training, fitness and cleanliness sessions at their respective campuses. They have been asked to ensure at least 80 per cent attendance in a month in the sessions.

Police personnel will be given a body weight target and it will be regularly monitored every two weeks. "Those who feel to achieve the target will be put up in orderly room and stress will be given to contain the use of tobacco products and alcohol," the CP notification read. Emphasis will be given to ensure that police personnel look smart and fit in uniforms and that they work actively, the notification stated. "Keeping fit will keep lifestyle-related diseases like hypertension, blood pressure, diabetes and others at bay. As a welfare measure, the guidelines have been issued. Due to heavy workload, many of our officers are ignoring their fitness. We will provide extra help like diet counselling to unfit cops," said Bhubaneswar DCP Prateek Singh said Monday.

Wildfires...

Mahanta added that in some portions the flames have been extinguished, but were still raging at other locations. Notably, Odisha reported the highest number of forest fires in India in 2021. Over 1,428 fire points in Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) had reported fires in a short span of 30 days. So it is an area that is prone to wildfires. This year for the period from February 1 to February 15, 1,939 cases of forest fires have been reported from different parts of the state. Former honorary wildlife warden Bhanumitra Acharya said that the Forest Department should formulate a plan to combat the threat of forest fires with summer about to set in.

State investing over ₹2,500cr in sports infra

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The state government is investing more than ₹2,500 crore in building sports infrastructure, which include 90 indoor stadia in urban local bodies (ULBs), sports secretary R Vineel Krishna said Wednesday at the two day Collectors' conference that commenced Tuesday.

After first day's conference in the Capital city, the gathering of officials shifted to Eco Retreat in Konark where several other departments hosted sessions and discussions on their achievements and the new projects. While the Finance department informed of its aim to enhance financial inclusion by ensuring banking availability at each gram panchayat, the Water Resources department emphasised on timely completion of projects and School and Mass Education department communicated its priority of transforming more and more schools of the state.

Tourism dept strategising to make Odisha a tourist hub

Speaking on the subject of 'Making Odisha a Tourism Hub', Tourism Additional Chief Secretary Surendra Kumar said, "We recently launched the Odisha Tourism Policy 2022 that offers a slew of incentives for investors along with two roadmaps which will act as a guiding principle for development of the tourism sector. We are strategically forging ahead to develop our state as a tourism hub that offers diverse tourism offerings such as MICE, wellness, health, eco tourism and sports tourism."

Timely completion of projects, a priority for Water Resources dept

Water Resources department Additional Chief Secretary Anu Garg along with other department officials, in a presentation on 'Rural Prosperity through Irrigation', emphasised on completion of pre-ap-



Chief Secretary Suresh Mahapatra and 5T Secretary VK Pandian present at the Collectors' conference, Wednesday



Tourism Additional Chief Secretary Surendra Kumar speaking at the conference

proved state government projects worth more than ₹40,000 crore.

Accordingly, department has targeted to complete Gangadhar Meher Lift Canal in Bargarh, Ghatakeswar irrigation project in Ganjam and Manjore project in Angul this year and projects at Lower Suktel, Kanupur, Anandapur and Subarnarekha by the end of 2024.

S&ME dept on a mission to transform more schools

Deliberating on the theme of 'Create a New Odisha: Dreams of the Gen X', School and Mass Education department Commissioner cum Secretary Aswathy S said, "After the initial success of High School Transformation Programme under 5T, the department has taken up the task of transforming another 2,324 school in the third phase. The introduction of 'new-age smart learning methods' have uplifted the learning outcomes of high school students. Odisha has seen an improvement in the PGI ranking and the recent ASER report has highlighted higher levels of student enrolment in Odisha."

MSME dept focuses on economic growth through micro industries

Briefing on the topic 'Startups and MSMEs Driving Odisha's Economy', MSME principal secretary Saswat

Mishra stressed on the significance of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in the national and state economy. Various financial and non-financial incentives available to MSMEs and startups under Odisha MSME Development Policy-2022, Odisha Food Processing Policy-2022, Odisha Export Policy-2022 and Odisha Startup Policy-2016 were highlighted for wide dissemination amongst Collectors and senior officers.

Tapped water to every rural household, goal of PR & DW dept

In the session by Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water (PR & DW) department secretary Sushil Kumar Lohani sensitized the Collectors on the massive plan of the government in providing tap connections to each rural household with a budget outlay of ₹57,000 crore. In anticipation of an early summer, Collectors were advised to take up hundred per cent preventive maintenance of functional schemes and tube wells. On sanitation, increasing the use of toilets and improving the solid waste and liquid waste management was discussed.

Finance dept wants brick & mortar bank branches at every GP

Acknowledging the lack of banking penetration at the Panchayat level, Finance secretary Vishal

Kumar Dev said, "Odisha has 6,794 gram panchayats (GP), out of which 2,630 GPs are covered by 5,695 brick and mortar branches. Rest 4,160 GPs are covered by BCs/CSPs and IPPB access points. There are four GPs in the state without any banking touch points. In order to ensure that banking services reach every nook and corner of the state, government plans to cover each GP with a brick and mortar branch. Finance department is carrying out consultation with SLBC, RBI, NABARD and controlling heads of major banks for devising a low-cost branch model to be deployed across the state so as to cover all unbanked GPs."

Commerce & Transport dept has holistic connectivity on mind

"To provide sustainable, economic, multimodal and safe transportation options for passengers and commodities across the state, Commerce and Transport (C&T) department has mandated the provision for stage carriage connectivity to all gram panchayats and rail connectivity to all districts," C&T principal secretary Usha Padhee said. Port led development of the coastal corridor of Odisha to make it one of the strongest maritime states in country is a major goal.

SAI Angan celebrates 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The 3-day SAI Angan Confluence which had commenced February 13 concluded Wednesday. Based on the theme of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', tiny tots from Playgroup to Class III made some enchanting performances.

The kids enacted the freedom fighters and in their performances depicted the journey of the nation from being 'Sone ki Chidiya' to the freedom struggle and the rise of a free nation. Trainers of national repute choreographed the string of events and encouraged the students to give their best performance.

Speaking on the occasion, SAI International Group Chairperson Silpi Sahoo said, "SAI International believes in allowing each learner to explore their inherent talents, hence each student is encouraged to participate in the annual mega event."



Sri Parthendu Ray, Advocate, at Cuttack the authorised person of Attorney holder of Sri Saroj Ranjan Mohanty, Publicly declared that ROR No.472, Plot No.1294, Area Ao.100dec. and Plot No. 1295, Area AO.262dec. total AO.362dec. and one Regd. Sale Deed vide No.3820 dt.18.05.1960, property/ies under Mouza/ Village: Bhubaneswar Sahara, Unit No.22, Bimpur, P.S.: Bhubaneswar, P.S. No. 64, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, Tahasil No.234, Dist.-Khurda and some other original documents which belongs to Sri Saroj Ranjan Mohanty have been lost/misplaced in Unit-1 Hata, at Bhubaneswar, Dist. Khurda while he was engaged with some important work. Several attempts were made to get these documents. Any person/s will get such documents may contact on 9776328828 to return the same. If any person/s with ulterior motive and malafied intention misutilise such documents then original owner of the documents shall not be held responsible and such person/s shall be liable for Criminal as well as Civil action.



COMMENDING EFFORTS: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik felicitated the members of the Organising Committee, heads and officials of the different Departments and agencies involved in the smooth and successful hosting of the Hockey World Cup at a felicitation ceremony held at the Kalinga Stadium, Wednesday OP/PHOTO

Mega blood donation camp at KIIT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: More than 4030 students, faculties and staff of KIIT family donated blood at a mega blood donation camp organised by KIIT DU as part of its ongoing silver jubilee celebration Wednesday.

The camp was organised at the KIIT multipurpose indoor stadium, making it a path breaking event of the celebration. The event was the



brainchild of the Founder of KIIT and KISS, Achyuta Samanta. "I hope this blood donation camp will be of immense success and help

people across Odisha," Samanta said, adding the camp has been organised as part of the ongoing commemoration of the University's silver jubilee celebration.

Blood bank teams from SCB Medical College Hospital, MKCG Medical College Hospital, Capital Hospital, Central Red Cross Blood Bank, Cuttack and from district hospitals of Jajpur, Dhenkanal, Kendrapada and Puri collected blood at the camp.

Lung abnormalities in patients 2 years after Covid

Chest CT scans revealed persistent lung abnormalities in patients two years after Covid-19, according to a new study. Globally, more than 600 million people have recovered from Covid-19, but concerns remain that some organs, especially the lungs, may suffer long-term damage after infection, the study said.

This is the first research paper with two-year follow-up data on Covid-19 lung effects, it said. It is published in the journal Radiology.

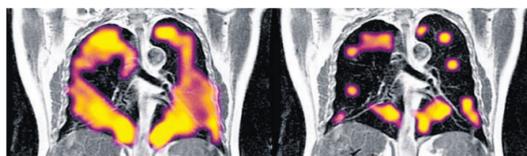
According to the paper, Qing Ye and Heshui Shi from Tongji Medical College of Huazhong University of Science and Technology in Wuhan, China, and colleagues set out to assess residual lung abnormalities in patients up to two years

post-Covid-19 pneumonia. They also looked at the correlation between residual lung abnormalities and changes in lung function, the study said.

In this prospective study, it said, 144 patients, 79 men and 65 women with a median age of 60, discharged from the hospital after SARS-CoV-2 infection between January 15 and March 10, 2020, were included.

Three serial chest CT scans and pulmonary function tests were obtained at six months, 12 months and two years after symptom onset, the study said.

Residual lung abnormalities after discharge from the hospital included fibrosis (scarring), thickening, honeycombing, cystic changes, dilation of the bronchi, and



more, the study found. The study also found that over two years, the incidence of lung abnormalities gradually decreased. At six months, 54 per cent of patients showed lung abnormalities.

On two-year follow-up CT scans, 39 per cent, or 56 of the patients, had lung abnormalities, including 23 per cent, or 33 patients, with fibrotic lung abnormalities and 16 per cent, or 23 patients, with non-fibrotic lung abnormalities, the

study reported. "In particular, the proportion of fibrotic interstitial lung abnormalities, an important precursor to idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, remained stable throughout follow-up," the authors said. "Therefore, the fibrotic abnormalities observed in our study might represent a stable, irreversible pulmonary condition, such as lung fibrosis, after Covid-19," the authors said.

The remaining 88 cases, or 61 per cent of the participants, showed no abnormalities, the study said.

Patients with lung abnormalities on CT were more likely to have respiratory symptoms and abnormal lung function, the study said.

The proportion of individuals with respiratory symptoms decreased from 30 per cent at six months to 22 per cent at two years, the study said.

At two-year follow-up, the most common respiratory symptom was exertional dyspnea or shortness of breath, observed in 14 per cent of the study group, while mild and moderate pulmonary diffusion were observed in 29 per cent, or in 38 out of 129 of the patients, the study said.

Pulmonary diffusion refers to how well the air sacs in the lungs are delivering oxygen to and removing carbon dioxide from the blood in the tiny blood vessels that surround them.

Pulmonary diffusion was regarded as abnormal when diffusing capacity of the lung for carbon monoxide was less than 75 per cent of the predicted value, the study said.

The researchers suggested that persisting residual symptoms and abnormal lung function could be related to the patient's ongoing lung damage.

"Long-term and functional consequences of chest CT findings post-Covid-19 are largely unknown," the authors said.

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3 women killed as SUV ploughs into bride's kin



POST NEWS NETWORK

Gopalpur, Feb 15: Tragedy struck a wedding event at Mandiapalli village under this police limit in Ganjam district after a speeding SUV mowed down three persons of the bride's team and rendered 13 others critical, late Tuesday night. The incident took place in Mandiapalli in Gopalpur area late Tuesday night when nearly 50 people, mostly women relatives of the bride, were waiting on the roadside for the groom. Gopalpur Police Station in-charge Sarada Prasana Das said.

The deceased were identified as B Swapna Reddy, 20, of Reddy Sahi in Lanjipalli, B Sanjukta Reddy, 24, of Mandiapalli village and P Bharati (12) of Chhatarpur.

According to sources, the mishap took place when the bride's family was waiting for the groom and his entourage for 'Batabarana' ritual of the groom S Debaraj Reddy on the roadside. Nearly 50 persons were waiting on the roadside and clicking photographs when a speeding SUV Scorpio from Karapalli end rammed into them. The mishap was so severe that several persons

After the incident, the driver of the vehicle and some other occupants fled the spot, leaving behind the vehicle, which has a Chhattisgarh registration number, Berhampur Sadar Sub-divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Siba Shankar Mohapatra said.

"While we were busy decorating the area, all of a sudden, a speeding SUV ploughed into the gathering. The driver might have been in an inebriated condition," a person undergoing treatment in a hospital said.

On being informed Gopabandhu Dash, the political secretary to the Chief Minister, met the injured persons in the hospital and gave away financial assistance to them.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed his deepest condolences to the family members of the deceased and announced ₹3 lakh financial assistance to the next of kin (NOK) of the deceased and free treatment facilities to the injured persons. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan also condoled the deaths.

Police reached the spot and started an investigation into the matter after registration of a case.

including women and children were lying scattered after they were flung away due to the impact. Police with the help of locals rushed the injured persons to the MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur where doctors pronounced three of them dead and admitted the rest of them for treatment.

Among them, health condition of three persons is stated to be critical. Critically injured CH Raju Reddy was shifted to Vishakhapatnam while Rabi Dash and P Rama Devi to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack.

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CULTURE FEST: A vendor, with his two children by his side, arranges crockery for sale at the Anandapur Mahotsav in Keonjhar district which concluded Wednesday

POCSO courts convict 2, sentence them to RI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Baripada/Berhampur, Feb 15: Two separate POCSO courts in Mayurbhanj and Ganjam districts Wednesday convicted two persons to rigorous imprisonment and slapped penalties on them for raping two minor girls.

In Baripada, the Mayurbhanj district special POCSO court judge, Sumita Jena sentenced a 41-year-old man to 20 years' rigorous imprisonment for raping an 11-year-old. The court also imposed a fine of

₹13,000 on the convict Ghana Naik and directed the Mayurbhanj district legal services authority (DLSA) to pay ₹4 lakh to the rape survivor as compensation.

The minor was raped April 23, 2022 in her house in Dhipasahi village under Badampahad police station when she was alone. An FIR was lodged with the police by her family members and a case was registered under the provisions of the POCSO Act. The man was arrested and sent to police custody.

The judgement was based on the

statement of victim, 18 witnesses and the medical report.

In Berhampur, the POCSO court convicted a 35-year-old man and sentenced him to undergo 10 years of rigorous imprisonment for raping a 10-year-old physically-challenged girl in a village in Tarsingi police station limits in Ganjam district.

The incident took place December 19, 2016 when the girl was outside her home on her own. The convicted person Purna Chandra Sethi is a farmer of the same village.

The girl's family lodged a com-

plaint at Tarsingi police station on the same day and Sethi was arrested the next day.

Judge Ganeshwar Pati also slapped a fine of ₹20,000 on Sethi. In case of non compliance he will undergo additional four months' rigorous imprisonment.

In this case also the POCSO court passed the judgement based on the statements of the witness, 18 witnesses, the police, doctor and the medical report. It directed the DLSA to pay ₹4 lakh to the survivor as compensation.

BJP's protest march turns violent

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The ongoing three-day protest of BJP over deteriorating law and order situation has turned violent in Sambalpur as Leader of Opposition Jayanarayan Mishra faced off with a lady police IIC.

When the BJP workers led by Mishra took out a huge rally from Ashapali School to gherao the Collector's office in Sambalpur, the protesters scuffled with the police. During the protest, the Leader of Opposition faced off with the lady police officer.

Ruckus ensued between the police and BJP members when Mishra and the Dhanupali IIC entered into a scuffle. Following this incident, Mishra and the police IIC Anita Pradhan blamed each other for the untoward incident. "The police were misbehaving with the female BJP members. When I went to



Ruckus ensued between the police and saffron party members when Jayanarayan Mishra and the lady IIC entered into a scuffle

the police to ask about the matter, the IIC stamped on my feet and shoved me," alleged the BJP legislator.

Mishra said he told the IIC that she is the same person, who was neck-deep in corruption. Then, she again pushed him, alleged Mishra.

"If an IIC can push the Leader of Opposition, then the highhandedness of the police department can be easily gauged," he added.

On the other hand, IIC Anita Pradhan said that the Leader of Opposition slapped her during an

altercation. Pradhan also denied the allegations and said she never raised hand on the BJP leader.

According to reports, Pradhan has filed a written complaint against Mishra at the Town Police Station in Sambalpur.

Recently, the BJP leader had given up his personal security cover questioning the capabilities of the Odisha Police following the murder of Minister Naba Kishore Das by a police ASI.

Meanwhile, the BJD sought an apology from Mishra and demanded his

removal as the Leader of Opposition in the Odisha Assembly.

BJD spokesperson Shreemayee Mishra said, "Jayanarayan Mishra is a habitual offender with 14 cases, including murder, against him for which he also had been to jail. He is known for threatening and assaulting people. Today, he again assaulted an on-duty police officer. The video of this shocking assault is there for all to see."

"Is this how the Odisha BJP and its leaders show respect and protect the dignity of women?" she questioned.

"The BJP should immediately remove him from the post of Leader of Opposition. Also, Odisha BJP and the MLA should apologise to 4.5 crore people of Odisha, especially the women, for having disrespected and denigrated the dignity of a female cop in public," she demanded.

Minor charred to death while clicking selfie atop train

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada/Tikiri, Feb 15: A 14-year-old boy was charred to death after coming in contact with a high tension wire while trying to click his selfie atop a goods train at Bhalumaska railway station in Rayagada district, Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Debendra Nayak, 14, a native of Bartibali village under Kashipur block of neighbouring Koraput district. The incident has sparked shockwaves

and mourning in the area.

Police said he had come to attend a marriage feast at Bhalumaska when he noticed an alumina laden goods train parked at the Bhalumaska railway station. He climbed upon the train to click a selfie when he came in contact with a high tension wire suspended overhead and was charred to death.

The station officials immediately informed the Government Railway

Police (GRP) in Rayagada which reached the spot and sent the body to the district headquarters hospital for post-mortem.

'Milk companies using exploitative tactics to undermine breastfeeding'

The Lancet series explains how formula milk marketing exploits the lack of support for breastfeeding by governments and society, while misusing gender politics to sell its products

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The formula milk industry's marketing tactics are exploitative and undermine breastfeeding, according to a three-paper series published in 'The Lancet'. The articles call for urgent clampdowns to tackle misleading claims and political interference. The papers suggest that industry influence - which includes lobbying against vital breastfeeding support measures - seriously jeopardises the health and rights of women and children.

This new research highlights the vast economic and political power of the big formula milk companies, as well as serious public policy failures that prevent millions of women from breastfeeding their children, said Professor Nigel Rollins, a scientist at the World Health Organisation (WHO) and author of a paper on formula milk marketing.

Actions are needed across different areas of society to better support mothers to breastfeed for as long as they want, alongside efforts to tackle exploitative formula milk marketing once and for all, Rollins said in a statement.

Globally only around one in two newborns are put to the breast within the first hour of life while fewer than half of infants under six months are exclusively breastfed, as per WHO recommendations. Currently, around 650 million women lack adequate maternity pro-



Globally, only around one in two newborns are put to the breast within the first hour of life while fewer than half of infants under six months are exclusively breastfed

tections, the papers note.

Misleading marketing claims and strategic lobbying from the dairy and formula milk industries further add to the challenges parents face by increasing anxiety around breastfeeding and infant care.

The World Health Assembly developed the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk substitutes (the Code) in 1981 and several subsequent resolutions. However, intensive marketing of infant formula continues largely unabated, with sales from these products now approaching USD 55 billion a year; WHO said in a statement.

The first paper in 'The Lancet' series documents how misleading marketing claims directly exploit parental anxieties around normal infant behaviours, suggesting that commercial milk products alleviate fussiness or crying, for instance, that they help with colic, or prolong night-time sleep.

The formula milk industry uses poor science to suggest, with little supporting evidence, that their products are solutions to common infant health and developmental challenges, said Professor Linda

Richter from the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. "This marketing technique clearly violates the 1981 Code, which says labels should not idealise the use of formula to sell more product," Richter added.

The series explains how formula milk marketing exploits the lack of support for breastfeeding by governments and society, while misusing gender politics to sell its products. This includes framing breastfeeding advocacy as a moralistic judgment, while presenting milk formula as a convenient and empowering solution for working mothers. The series further draws attention to the power of the milk formula industry to influence national political decisions and interfere with international regulatory processes.

In addition to ending exploitative marketing tactics and industry influence, broader actions across workplaces, healthcare, governments, and communities are needed to effectively support women who want to breastfeed so that it becomes a collective societal responsibility, rather than placing the onus on women, the authors said.

Newly-wed found hanging at in-laws

Jeypore: Newly-wed bride Padmini Pangti (34) committed suicide using her stole in Randapalli under Jeypore police station limits. According to police, the woman, who married Gobinda Tanti 7 months before, has committed suicide at her in-laws' place. Police rushed to the spot after being informed by the locals and registered a case of unnatural death after recovering the body and sending it for post-mortem, said the officer in charge Ishwar Tandi.

GANDHI SHILP BAZAR

SALE

Attractive Handicrafts and Handloom items from different States
Direct sale by Artisans

VENUE : Open Field Netaji Play Ground At : Potapokhari, Dist.: Cuttack

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Daily from 11A.M. to 9P.M.

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EAST COAST RAILWAY

E-AUCTION FOR PARKING STANDS

Station & Locations : (1) Khallikot - 2 Wheeler (Station building side), (2) Nirakarpur Mix-2 Wheeler - cum - 4 Wheeler (Near Circulating Area), (3) Puri Mix-2 Wheeler - cum - 4 Wheeler (Near Monumental Flag).

Auction Start Date & Time : 27.02.2023 at 1100 hrs. (for all tenders).

Auction End Date & Time : 27.02.2023 at 1130 hrs. (for Sl.No.1), at 1140 hrs. (for Sl.No.2) & at 1150 hrs. (for Sl.No.3).

E-AUCTION FOR PAY & USE TOILETS

Station & Locations : (1) Malatiapatpur - Pre Fabricated (In Circulating Area), (2) Balarani Road-Pre-Fabricated (In Circulating Area), (3) Jakhapura-Pre-Fabricated (In Circulating Area), (4) Puri- (In Tourist complex), (5) Jajpur Keonjhar Road-Pre-Fabricated (In Circulating Area), (6) Sakshigopal-Pre-Fabricated (Adjacent to 2nd class Waiting Room), (7) Khallikot- (In Circulating Area), (8) Kanas Road - Pre-Fabricated- (Opposite PRS Office).

Auction Start Date & Time : 28.02.2023 at 1100 hrs. (for all tenders).

Auction End Date & Time : 28.02.2023 at 1130 hrs. (for Sl.No.1), at 1140 hrs. (for Sl.No.2), at 1150 hrs. (for Sl.No.3), at 1200 hrs. (for Sl.No.4), at 1210 hrs. (for Sl.No.5), at 1220 hrs. (for Sl.No.6), at 1230 hrs. (for Sl.No.7), at 1240 hrs. (for Sl.No.8).

E-AUCTION FOR PAY & USE CLOAK ROOM

Station & Locations : (1) Khurda Road- (In new Station Building), (2) Palasa- (Near 2nd Class Waiting Hall), (3) Harichandrapur- (Near main entry of Platform-1), (4) Vanivihar- (Near Entry Gate), (5) Manchewar- (Near booking and PRS Office).

Auction Start Date & Time : 01.03.2023 at 1100 hrs. (for all tenders).

Auction End Date & Time : 01.03.2023 at 1130 hrs. (for Sl.No.1), at 1140 hrs. (for Sl.No.2), at 1150 hrs. (for Sl.No.3), at 1200 hrs. (for Sl.No.4), at 1210 hrs. (for Sl.No.5).

Note : Prospective bidders are advised to visit the <https://www.ireps.gov.in> and check the upcoming e-auctions leasing tab to get all required information regarding this e-auction.

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/
PR-1006/N/22-23 Khurda Road

Bank of India

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

E- AUCTION SALE NOTICE

E-Auction Sale Notice Under SARFAESI ACT, 2002

Where as the Bank acting through its Authorised Officer in exercise of its powers under-Section 13(4) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (SARFAESI) has decided to put up for E-Auction of the following property for realization of the debts due to the Bank.

Sl. No.	BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrowers / Guarantors / Total Dues	Description of the Property	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount	Date & Time of E-Auction
1.	BHUBANESWAR BRANCH, PH.: 0674-2535303/ Borrower: M/s. Sabitri Enterprises, Prop.: Mr. Nihar Ranjan Swain, S/o.: Dharanidhar Swain, At: Plot No.: H/12/2, Panchasakha Nagar, Dumduma, P.S.: Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar / Total Dues: ₹20,07,846/- as on 21.03.2021 + interest, costs and expenses from 22.03.2021, less any part amount repaid.	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Land situated over Khata No.: 432/3424, Plot No.: 737/5545, Mouza: Dumduma, Thana No.: 04, SRO: Khandagiri, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, within the registration Sub-District: Khandagiri & District: Khurda, Standing in the name of Mr. Nihar Ranjan Swain , Bounded by North: Swarnalata Khandai, South: Jharana Samal, East: Purna Chandra Sundayar, West: 13ft wide Road	₹ 23,93,000/- / ₹ 2,39,300/- / ₹ 50,000/-	06.03.2023 at 11.00 A.M. to 11.30 A.M. with unlimited extension of 10 (Ten) minutes each

Last date & time for submission of EMD & Documents: 04.03.2023 upto 4.00 P.M.

Inspection will be provided to the prospective bidders on any working day is before 04.03.2023 with prior appointment of the authorised officer

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

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

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 16.02.2023 Authorised Officer, Bank of India

Nothing, not even the darkest falsehood can stop the ultimate triumph of Truth.

THE MOTHER



China Is Dying Out

China's population decline, which the Chinese government officially confirmed in January, has led many observers to wonder if the country's current demographic trends threaten its stability.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, China's population shrank last year for the first time in 60 years, nine years earlier than government projections had anticipated. The fertility rate (births per woman) fell to 1.0-1.1, well below the official forecast of 1.8. Most notably, the number of births dropped sharply to 9.56 million, the fewest since 1790, despite China's shift to a two-child policy in 2016.

But this sharp drop in the number of births is an illusion caused by a gross exaggeration of pre-2020 numbers. For example, a sample survey from 2016 showed a fertility rate of 1.25 and only 13 million births, which was later inflated to 18.83 million. Similarly, the United Nations' World Population Prospects report, typically regarded as a reliable source for estimates and projections of Chinese demographic trends, is wrong every time, without exception. The 2022 WPP suggests that China's population began to decline last year (ten years earlier than its 2019 projection), whereas I estimate that the decline began in 2018. The latest WPP also predicted that China's population would fall to 767 million in 2100, far below its earlier forecast of 1.065 billion.

WPP projections still overestimate China's population. While the 2022 WPP puts the Chinese population at 1.43 billion people, I estimate that it is now smaller than 1.28 billion. Moreover, according to the WPP, there were 28.2 million births in China in 1990 and 17.4 million in 2000. Yet the 1990 and 2000 censuses put the number of Chinese births at 23.7 million and 14.2 million, respectively, as confirmed by the number of ninth graders in 2004 and 2014.

The 2022 WPP also exaggerates China's future population, predicting a fertility rate of 1.31 for 2023-50 and 1.45 for 2051-2100. The fertility rate among Chinese in the region suggests otherwise. Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and Chinese Singaporeans have all had average fertility rates of 1.0-1.1 – the lowest in the world – over the past two decades, despite local authorities' pro-natalist policies.

China's efforts to boost its fertility rate face three major challenges. First, the one-child policy has reshaped the Chinese economy, dramatically increasing the cost of raising children. China's household disposable income is equivalent to only 44% of its GDP, compared to 72% in the United States and 65% in the United Kingdom. The Chinese housing market was valued at four times the country's GDP in 2020, whereas the American real-estate market is valued at 1.6 times GDP.

Chinese policymakers now face a dilemma: if the real-estate bubble does not burst, young couples will be unable to afford to raise two children. But if the bubble does burst, China's economy will slow, and a global financial crisis will erupt. Likewise, raising household disposable income to 60-70% of GDP in order to increase fertility could reduce the government's power, undermining the economic foundations of its current "authoritarian at home and aggressive abroad" policy approach.

Given these difficult tradeoffs, Chinese policymakers might be more inclined to replicate Japanese policies to lower child-rearing costs, such as reducing school fees and providing convenient childcare, childbirth subsidies, and housing benefits to young couples. But Japan's approach has proved expensive and ineffective: the country's fertility rate received a temporary boost, from 1.26 in 2005 to 1.45 in 2015, before falling back to 1.23 in 2022. Moreover, because it is "getting old before it gets rich," China lacks the financial wherewithal to emulate Japan.

There are both physiological and cultural reasons for China's demographic crisis. With more women delaying marriage and childbirth, the country's infertility rate has increased from 2% in the early 1980s to 18% in 2020. From 2013 to 2021, the number of first marriages fell by more than half, and by three-quarters for 20-24-year-olds. And the one-child policy, which had been in place for 36 years, has irreversibly changed Chinese views of childbearing: having one child – or none – has become the social norm.

The more recent the cohort of Chinese women, the less willing to have children they seem to be. One recent survey found that while the average number of intended children among women in China is 1.64, the average decreases to 1.54 for women born after 1990 and 1.48 for women born after 2000. For comparison, in South Korea and Hong Kong, the average intended number of children is 1.92 and 1.41, respectively (both fertility rates are roughly half the intended figures). If this declining interest in childbearing is any indication, China will struggle to stabilise its fertility rate at 0.8, and its population will fall to less than 1.02 billion by 2050 and 310 million by 2100.

Ancient China also experienced population declines due to war and famine, but recovered quickly, similar to blood loss with normal regeneration. Modern population declines, like aplastic anemia, are hard to recover from.

Even if China succeeds in increasing its fertility rate to 1.1 and prevents it from declining, its population will likely fall to 1.08 billion by 2050 and 440 million by 2100. The country's share of the world's population, which declined from 37% in 1820 to 22% in 1950-80, will fall to 11% in 2050 and 4% by 2100.

The effects of this population decline will be compounded by rapid aging, which will slow Chinese growth and likely increase government debt. The share of Chinese people aged 65 and older will rise from 14% in 2020 to 35% in 2050. Whereas five workers aged 20-64 supported every senior citizen aged 65 and older in 2020, the ratio will continue to decline to 2.4 workers in 2035 and 1.6 in 2050. By that point, China's pension crisis will develop into a humanitarian catastrophe. Women, who live 6-7 years longer than men, on average, and are usually a few years younger than their spouses, will ultimately pay the price for this painful demographic shift.

The writer is a senior scientist in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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WISDOM CORNER

The doctor sees all the weakness of mankind; the lawyer all the wickedness, the theologian all the stupidity. **ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER**

Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you. **FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE**

I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do. **LEONARDO DA VINCI**

WORDSWORTH

Furbelow

A furbelow has nothing to do with fur. It may be a gathered strip or pleated border to an article of (usually) female clothing, or some showy ornament or trimming. The word came into English in the early eighteenth century from the French word *falbala* for a flounce, decoration or trimming on a woman's petticoat or dress. Though similar words occur in other European languages – such as the German *falbel* or Spanish *farfala* – nobody seems to know where it comes from, though it might originate in the Latin *falappa* for a valueless thing. Almost from its first appearance in English, it has had the sense of something ostentatious or showy, to be avoided by ladies of demure disposition: *The costume is simple and plain, – close-fitting upper garments, without fuss or furbelow, and plain close skirts, met at the ankles by high buttoned boots* (Lippincott's Magazine, Dec. 1885).

CAPACITY BUILDING IN ODISHA

FOCUS SKILL DEVELOPMENT

A skilled workforce is needed for strong, sustainable and balanced growth of a state. According to the International Labour Organisation, Geneva "the cornerstones of a policy framework for developing a suitably skilled workforce are: broad availability of good quality education as a foundation for future training; a close matching of skills supply to the needs of enterprises and labour markets; enabling workers and enterprises to adjust to changes in technology and markets; and anticipating and preparing for the skills needs of the future."



Sanjib Kumar Karmee

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION ALONE WILL NOT GIVE A BIG DENT TO THE PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN ODISHA



Yi Fuxian

There are both physiological and cultural reasons for China's demographic crisis



Our education system is antiquated and is not well designed to create a highly skilled labour force. Very clearly, there is a disconnect between what the industry needs and the present education system. The way forward could be establishing community colleges, and more polytechnics

In the USA, community colleges are designed to train the workforce to fulfil the needs of society as well as industries. The primary goal of such institutes is to enable upward mobility by making relevant education and training accessible at the grassroots. Very often, community colleges pay attention to the needs of local communities, industries, and economy. In addition, these institutions are highly responsive to already existing local bottlenecks in education and skill availability. The economy of many developed countries and community colleges are historically tied. To meet the needs of advancing and ever expanding industries, whenever mass amounts of workers needed to be up-skilled or re-skilled the community colleges rose to the challenge.

It is worth noting that in several industries of Odisha; particularly,

in western Odisha most of the skilled trade jobs are filled with people from outside the state. It is apparent that there is a need to open better schools to train people in occupations like plumbers, welders, bricklayers, electricians, nursing, nurse's aides, machinists, lathe operators, electricians, bookkeepers, accountants, data managers, and computer operators.

Opening myriads of Arts and Science colleges with much fanfare has become a trend in Odisha. These institutions are breeding grounds for unemployed youths. Our education system is antiquated and is not well designed to create a highly skilled labour force. Very clearly, there is a disconnect between what industry needs and the present education system. The way forward could be establishing community colleges, and more polytechnics. In a state like Odisha, community

colleges should be located in gram panchayats and should enrol students of the area in which they are located. This will facilitate a sense of comfort and ease of accessibility. To make such schools technically sound and relevant, they should be intimately connected with nearby industries, and should regularly conduct surveys of occupational needs. There must be an active collaboration between industries and community colleges in terms of sharing resources and personnel, curriculum development, provision of internships and apprenticeship. Also, it would be prudent to bring in a rule to automatically admit high school students to their gram panchayat level community college if they have not opted for further higher studies in other colleges/universities. Such an open-enrolment policy will allow students to gain access to higher education who might not be able to attend a faraway university. Graduates of these institutions can be more easily hired by industries than those who graduate from traditional universities. Additionally, students graduating from community colleges can enter universities with credits for courses taken in colleges.

Employers in various developing countries are reporting that a lack of skilled workers is a major stumbling block for their operations. In Odisha too there is a huge shortage of skilled labour force. Therefore, on a priority basis, government and private organisations should establish excellent community colleges, trade schools, and polytechnics at gram panchayat level. This will benefit students, taxpayers, and society as a whole.

The writer is a scientist. Views are personal

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

India as global leader in digital landscape

Digitalisation is reshaping economic activities, shrinking the role of cash, and promoting new digital forms of money and payments. Payments system is witnessing a sea change. The role of central banks in supporting digital infrastructure and regulating digital transactions has been crucial for developing countries.



Dasarathi Mishra

THE COUNTRY HAS MADE IMPRESSIVE PROGRESS TOWARDS INNOVATION IN DIGITAL PAYMENTS

The RBI unveiled in June 2022, the Vision Document 2025, to take the payments landscape to new heights. The document promises to further elevate our payments system towards a realm of empowering users with affordable options accessible anytime and anywhere with convenience. As this journey towards less-cash regime unfolds, concomitant expansion in the basket of digital payments options with credence and confidence would ensure sustenance of RBI's approach of facilitating users with a seamless digital payments experience. This will also reinforce India's position as global leader in digital payments domain.

India has made impressive progress towards innovation in digital payments. The present state-of-the-art payments systems that are affordable, accessible, convenient, efficient, safe, secure, and available 24x7x365 are a matter of pride for the nation. This striking shift in payments preference has been due to creation of robust

round-the-clock electronic systems such as Real Time Gross Settlement and National Electronic Funds Transfer that has facilitated seamless real time or near real time fund transfers. In addition, the launch of Immediate Payment Service and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for instant payment settlement, the introduction of mobile-based payment systems such as Bharat Bill Payment System have transformed the payments ecosystem of the country and made India a global leader in payments system landscape.

India's digital payments volume has gone up at an average annual rate of about 50% in past five years. Its expansion has been even more rapid – about 160% annually – in UPI. Transactions more than doubled, to 5.86 billion, in June 2022 from a year earlier. Values nearly doubled in the same period. In addition, the RBI in March introduced a UPI for feature phones that can potentially connect 400 million users in distant rural areas.

RBI had placed a concept note on Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) on its website 7 October 2022. The purpose of this Concept Note is to create awareness about CBDCs in general and the planned features of the digital rupee, in particular. It explains the objectives, choices, benefits, and risks of issuing a CBDC in India.

RBI Deputy Governor T Rabi Sankar, who oversees payments

systems and fintech, said in June 2022 at an IMF event: "CBDCs could actually be able to kill whatever little case there could be for private cryptocurrencies."

CBDC has been gaining momentum with 86% of central banks globally reviewing its feasibility for cross-border transactions as well as for internal benefits (2021 BIS Survey). CBDC is also an area of interest for G20 under its priority initiative to enhance cross-border payments.

The RBI announced the launch of the first pilot for retail digital rupee on 1 December, 2022. The retail digital rupee is in the form of a digital token that represents legal tender. It is issued in the same denominations that paper currency and coins are currently issued. It would be distributed through intermediaries, i.e., banks. Users will be able to transact with retail digital rupee through a digital wallet offered by the participating banks and stored on mobile phones/devices. Transactions can be both Person to Person (P2P) and Person to Merchant (P2M). Payments to merchants can be made using QR codes displayed at merchant locations. The retail digital rupee would offer features of physical cash like trust, safety and settlement finality. As in case of cash, it will not earn any interest and can be converted to other forms of money, like deposits with banks.

Eight banks have been identified

for phase-wise participation in this pilot. The first phase began with State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, IDFC First Bank and Yes Bank in four cities. Four more banks - Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, HDFC Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank will join this pilot subsequently.

The support of the finance minister in the Union Budget 2023-24 has been fabulous. The Budget emphasises that: Digital payments continue to find wide acceptance. Fiscal support for this digital public infrastructure will continue in 2023-24. As per RBI data, the number of payment acceptance devices deployed under the Payment Infrastructure Development Fund Scheme as on 31 December 2022 has been 455,415 in physical devices and 182,88,974 in digital devices.

UPI has become hugely popular for retail digital payments in India. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das in his statement of 8 February, 2023 proposed to permit all inbound travellers to India to use UPI for their P2M while they are on visit to the country. To begin with, this facility will be extended to travellers from G-20 countries arriving at select international airports. This is a progressive step in the path of digital globalisation.

The writer is a former central banker and banking regulator.

Moral from ants

Sir, The story "Ants show the way to beating traffic jams" (Orissa POST February 14) made a very interesting read. It is inspiring to note how these marching soldiers strictly move about in groups as a trail, showing the altruistic behaviour that an ant sacrifices its own well-being for the benefit of other ants. While it is a challenge for humans to maintain a smooth and efficient traffic flow, avoiding fender-benders, ants seem to have mastered the art of traffic management. Emmets can move back and forth quite efficiently between their nests and food without trying to overtake or pass each other; thereby forming a steady stream of traffic, even when their numbers increase on a path. Ants don't have road rules like humans do, and they are not exactly afraid of collisions, yet their ability to avoid bunching up by moving as a single unit has fascinated us for centuries. With self-driving cars having hit the roads, perhaps we can figure out a way to emulate ants' strategies and optimise traffic flow. If we can make our roads more like ant trails, imagine how much more efficient the world will be. Clearly, there is a moral from ants for us on how we can conduct ourselves as we move in queues or when driving on roads.

Ranganathan Sivkumar, CHENNAI

Thaw in ties

Sir, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly's India visit came at an appropriate time because the new found aggression of Canada towards China has opened fresh openings for bilateral relations. A series of hostile events led to Ottawa hardening its traditional soft stance against Beijing. Economic cooperation including trade relations, security partnership and issues of migration are said to have figured in the meeting between Joly and her Indian counterpart S Jaishankar. As Joly said investment opportunities for either country in the other has huge potential to be a game changer. Common democratic interests and long standing bilateral people-connect have always held the relation between the two countries in good stead. Therefore, the strain between India and Canada due to the apparent pro-Khalistan leaning of the ruling dispensation at Ottawa, among others, has not suffered beyond repair.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

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

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national

of the day quote

Once the JSW steel plant is set up, there will be an ecosystem developed with several ancillary units. Once the ecosystem is created, then the entire area would be transformed into a Steel City

YS JAGAN MOHAN REDDY | AP CM

Even Raghav Chadha, who has not been directly elected by Punjabis, is deciding on all civil and police postings

SUKHBIR BADAL | SAD PRESIDENT

Today is a historic day for Rewa and the Vinidhya region when we are laying the foundation stone for this airport, and it happened only because of Prime Minister Narendra Modi

JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Six killed as jeep hits truck

Patan (Guj): Six people including four women were killed and eight injured after a jeep rammed into a stationary truck from behind in Gujarat's Patan district Wednesday afternoon, police said. The incident took place near Radhanpur when the driver of the Mahindra Jeep, which was carrying some 15 passengers, lost control after a tyre burst, said Deputy Superintendent of Police K K Pandya. The jeep was heading for Varahi village, he said. The injured persons were referred to different hospitals in Radhanpur and Patan, said Pandya.

Kheri case: 8 more granted interim bail

Lucknow: The Allahabad High Court has granted interim bail to eight more accused till March 20 in the 2021 Lakhimpur violence. With this all the 13 accused in the case including Ashish Mishra, son of Union home minister Ajay Mishra alias Teni, are now on bail. A Lucknow bench passed the order Tuesday considering the Supreme Court's January 25 order allowing bail to Ashish Mishra. The bench of justice Rajesh Kumar Singh Chauhan has fixed March 20 as the next date of hearing in the case.

Fire in Mumbai building, one dies

Mumbai: A 70-year-old woman died and eight other people suffered from suffocation after a fire broke out in a 13-storey residential building in Kurla area of Mumbai Wednesday, officials said. The blaze erupted at around 7 am in the building located in Premier compound, Kohnoor City, following which some people were stranded on different floors due to smoke in the premises.

India to strengthen ITBP amid tensions with China

The government decisions come amid the India-China military standoff along the LAC in eastern Ladakh that erupted in May 2020 and scuffles in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh in December last year

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 15: Seven new battalions of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) will be raised and a 4.1-km tunnel to provide all-weather connectivity to the border areas of Ladakh built with the government giving its approval Wednesday, in a major move to bolster the country's defence along the China border.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) cleared the proposal for hiring of 9,400 fresh personnel for raising seven new border battalions apart from a new operational base for the ITBP, which guards the 3,488-km-long India-China border ranging from the Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh. The new personnel will be stationed mainly in Arunachal Pradesh.

The ITBP proposal was cleared during the CCS meeting that was chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Information and Broadcasting minister Anurag Thakur told reporters.

The new battalions and the sector headquarters are expected to be put in place by 2025-26, he said. The Union Cabinet at its meeting chaired by Prime Minister Modi gave its nod for the construction of the 4.1-km Shinkun La tunnel on the Nimu-Padam-Darcha road link to provide all-weather connectivity to the border areas of Ladakh.

Thakur said the tunnel will be completed by December 2025 at a cost of Rs 1,681 crore. The tunnel will provide all-weather road connectivity to Ladakh and this will be the shortest route to the border areas of the union territory, he said. "The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) today approved the

» The ITBP primarily guards the India-China border, stretching from the Karakoram Pass in Ladakh in India's north to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh state in the east

» Indian and Chinese troops have been involved in hand-to-hand clashes at some areas of the frontier in the past few years

Shinkun La tunnel for Ladakh area which will provide all-weather connectivity to the Ladakh region with the entire country," he added.

Sources said the tunnel project is a significant step in terms of security perspective as Nimu in Ladakh is close to Kargil as well as Leh and will help the armed forces in quicker deployment of forces and equipment in the region if there is any tense situation.

The ITBP, which has about 90,000 personnel in its ranks, was raised in the aftermath of the 1962 Chinese aggression.

According to the government sanction, the fresh manpower will be utilised for manning 47 new border posts and a dozen 'staging camps' or troops bases to be created along the LAC, largely in Arunachal Pradesh.

In order to ensure effective guarding of the LAC, these new bases were sanctioned in 2020 and now seven battalions comprising about 9,400 personnel and a new sector headquarters have been approved, a senior officer said.

Thakur said a non-recurring expenditure of Rs 1,808.15 crore is estimated to be spent for land acquisition, creation of office and residential buildings, and arms and ammunition while there will be a recurring annual expenditure of Rs 963.68 crore under the salaries and rations head for the fresh manpower.



FILE PHOTO

Army jawan beaten to death in TN

The DMK councillor and eight others thrashed the soldier, Prabhu, after an argument over washing clothes in a public tank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

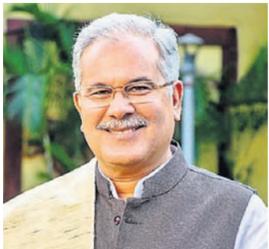
Krishnagiri (TN), Feb 15: An Indian Army soldier, who was severely thrashed by a DMK functionary and his accomplices, succumbed and six people have been

arrested in connection with the crime, said police Wednesday.

The 29-year-old Lance Naik M Prabhu was ambushed by Chinmaswamy and others and was brutally beaten up, they said. He was admitted to hospital with grievous injuries and succumbed today. On February 8, an altercation ensued between Prabhakaran and his brother Prabhu with the DMK functionary Chinmaswamy at Velampatti in Pochampally over washing clothes near the town pan-chayat's water tank. Later, in the

Whoever speaks against the central government they will be crushed. Be it Congress or any regional party, they have to face the heat of the central government for speaking against them

BHUPESH BAGHEL | CHHATTISGARH CM



ONE DEAD, 30 ILL AFTER DRINKING TOXIC WATER

A woman died, while more than 30 other persons fell ill after drinking polluted water in a village in Karnataka's Yadgir district, officials said Wednesday



Suryakiran aerobatic team of the Indian Air Force (IAF) performs during the third day of Aero India 2023, at Yelahanka air base in Bangalore, Karnataka PTI PHOTO

KANPUR DEATHS

Adityanath orders magisterial probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow/Kanpur, Feb 15: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Wednesday ordered a magisterial inquiry into the death of a woman and her daughter in Kanpur Dehat during an anti-encroachment drive, an incident which the opposition is set to raise during the assembly session beginning next week.

Pramila Dixit (45) and Neha (20) were cremated at Bithoorghat in Kanpur Dehat district with policemen deployed along the road from the victims' Madauli village. The women died after allegedly setting themselves on fire Monday in a hut in the presence of police, district administration and revenue officials who had come to the village to demolish encroachments from "gram samaj" land.

On Wednesday, Congress workers protested outside the party office in Lucknow after they were apparently not allowed to proceed towards Raj Bhavan and submit a memorandum to Governor Anandiben Patel. Police put barricades outside the Congress office and there were heated exchanges between the protesters and them. Congress state president Brijlal Khabri demanded a judicial probe into the deaths.

Ladakh groups protest in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 15: Slogans demanding statehood for Ladakh were raised at the Jantar Mantar Wednesday as a joint protest was held by the Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance in the national capital.

Representatives of social, cultural and political organisations from Ladakh, as well as hundreds of common Ladakhis gathered at the 18th-century observatory, a stone's throw away from the Parliament building, and said they hoped their voice would reach the government.

"Our traditions, ethnic identity, resources and security are at stake today. Our demand is very simple, we want democracy to be restored in Ladakh by giving it statehood, and to be brought under the sixth schedule of Constitution," said Thupstan Chhewang, a former BJP MP who resigned in 2018 accusing the party of not fulfilling promises made to the people of Ladakh.

He said Ladakh is an ecologically sensitive area and development activities without consulting locals will be harmful.

"A big solar power project has been planned, but the area earmarked is the area of nomadic people who are known for producing Pashmina. It will displace them because their rich pastures will go. In addition, it will also im-



OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, PROTESTS HAVE BEEN HELD IN BOTH LEH AND KARGIL DEMANDING PROTECTION OF THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE OF LADAKH

IN JANUARY THIS YEAR, THE HOME MINISTRY CONSTITUTED A HIGH-POWERED COMMITTEE HEADED BY MINISTER OF STATE NITYANAND RAI TO "ENSURE PROTECTION OF LAND AND EMPLOYMENT" FOR THE PEOPLE OF LADAKH

pact the environment in the area," he said. "If the people of Ladakh have a say in the decision making, we will decide what kind of industries should be set up," he said. Environmental activist and educator Sonam Wangchuk accused the BJP of reneging on its promise of including Ladakh under the sixth schedule. "In 2020, when Hill Council

elections were held, the BJP had promised sixth schedule status. We are very thankful to the BJP as they gave Union Territory status to Ladakh... Was it a promise or not? Does the election manifesto mean anything or not," he said.

"We made them win the Hill Council, they deserved it because they gave us a Union Territory. It was a promise, then they went silent on it, and now it is a crime to even talk about it. If youth in Ladakh speak of the sixth schedule, they are detained," he said. The absence of Ladakh MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal from the protest site was also pointed out by some Leader of Opposition in Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh and councillor from lower Leh, Tsering Namgail said the MP should raise their demands in Parliament.

CBSE BOARD EXAMS BEGIN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 15: The CBSE board exams for classes 10 and 12 began on Wednesday with over 38 lakh students set to appear for the examinations at 7,250 centres.

The Class 10 exam Wednesday was conducted for six subjects including Painting, Gurung, Rai, Tamang, Sherpa and Thai while the Class 12 exam was conducted for Entrepreneurship.

The Class 10 exams will be conducted in 76 subjects and will be over March 21 while Class 12 exams will cover 115 subjects and will be over April 5. According to Board officials, over 38.83 lakh students will be appearing for the exams being conducted at 7,250 centres across India and in 26 other countries.

"CBSE has made elaborate arrangements. To ensure that all the important information for the conduct of examinations is communicated to all responsible officials at the examination centres, CBSE has circulated detailed guidelines to all the stakeholders," a senior board official said.

To ensure that the students are appearing in the examinations without any stress, CBSE has fixed the timetable in such a manner that students are getting sufficient time for exam preparation in all the subjects, he said.

"As per the information collected from all the examination centres, all preparations have been completed by the centres for the smooth conduct of examinations," the official added.

INDIA, SOON TO BE WORLD'S MOST POPULOUS NATION

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 15: In two months, India is projected to become the world's most populous country with over 1.4 billion people. But for at least a year, and possibly longer, the country won't know how many people it has because it hasn't been able to count them.

India's once in a decade census, due in 2021 and delayed due to the pandemic, has now got bogged down by technical and logistical hurdles and there are no signs the mammoth exercise is likely to begin soon.

Experts say the delay in updating data like employment, housing, literacy levels, migration patterns and infant mortality, which are captured by the census, affects social and economic planning and policy making in the huge Asian

economy. Calling census data "indispensable", Rachna Sharma, a fellow at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, said studies like the consumption expenditure survey and the periodic labour force survey are estimations based on information from the census.

"In the absence of latest census data, the estimations are based on data that is one decade old and is likely to provide estimates that are far from reality," Sharma said.

A senior official at the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation said census data from 2011, when the count was last conducted, was being used for projections and estimates required to assess government spending.

A spokesman for the ministry said its role was limited to providing the best possible projec-



FILE PHOTO

tions and could not comment on the census process. The Prime Minister's Office did not respond to requests for comment.

Two other government officials, one from the federal home (interior) ministry and another from the office of the Registrar General of

KEY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO RELY ON OLD CENSUS DATA

WORLD'S LARGEST COUNTING DRILL DEPENDS ON TEACHERS AND TECH

ABSENCE OF PRECISE DATA IMPACTS ECONOMIC POLICY AT GROUND LEVEL

India, said the delay was largely due to the government's decision to fine-tune the census process and make it foolproof with the help of technology.

The home ministry official said the software that will be used to gather census data on a mobile phone app has to be synchronised with existing identity databases, including the national identity card, called Aadhaar, which was taking time.

The office of the Registrar General of India, which is responsible for the census, did not respond to a request for comment.

The main opposition Congress party and critics of Prime Minister Narendra Modi have accused the government of delaying the census to hide data on politically sensitive issues, such as unemployment, ahead of national elections due in 2024.

"This government has often displayed its open rivalry with data," said Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera. "On important matters like employment, Covid deaths etc., we have seen how the Modi government has preferred to cloak critical data."

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's national spokesperson, Gopal Krishna Agarwal, dismissed the criticism.

Tripura goes to polls today

Altogether 28.13 lakh voters including 13.53 lakh women will decide the fate of 259 aspirants of whom 20 are women

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agartala, Feb 15: All preparations for conducting free, fair and peaceful elections to the 60-member Tripura Assembly Thursday have been completed, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Gitte Kirankumar Dinakarro said.

The voting will be held under tight security between 7am and 4pm at 3,337 polling stations, out of which 1,100 were identified as sensitive and 28 as critical, Dinakarro told PTI.

The main contestants of the elections are the Bharatiya Janata Party-Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) combine, CPI(M)-Congress alliance and the Tipra Motha, a regional party formed by the scion of the northeastern state's former royal family. Votes will be counted March 2.

"As many as 31,000 polling personnel and 25,000 security personnel of central forces are ready to conduct the election in a free, fair and peaceful manner. Besides, 31,000 employees of the state armed police and the state police will be deployed to maintain law and order," the CEO said.

As part of the precautionary measures, prohibitory order has already been imposed across the state and it will remain in force



Women poll officials collect EVMs and other election material for the Tripura Assembly elections Wednesday. 97 'pink' polling booths, to be managed by all-woman staff, have been set up in Tripura for the assembly polls. PTI PHOTO

till 6am February 17, a senior police officer said.

The international and inter-state boundaries have also been sealed to prevent trouble mongers from entering the state.

Altogether 28.13 lakh voters including 13.53 lakh women will decide the fate of 259 aspirants of whom 20 are women.

Chief Minister Manik Saha is the BJP nominee from the Town Bardowali constituency, while Union minister Pratima Bhowmik is contesting from Dhanpur on the saffron party's ticket. CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Chadudhury who is the face of the Left-Congress combine, is fighting for the Sabroom Assembly seat.

Tipra Motha supremo Pradyot Debbarma is not in the fray.

The BJP is contesting in 55 seats, its ally IPFT has fielded candidates

MULTI-CORNER CONTEST IN MOST SEATS

A multi-cornered contest would be witnessed in 57 seats and a direct contest between the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress-Left alliance in three remaining Assembly segments as Tripura goes to crucial polls Thursday. Unlike the previous elections, triangular or multi-cornered contests would be witnessed in 57 seats between the BJP-IPFT alliance and the Congress-CPI(M)-led Left Front coalition. The straight contests between the BJP and the opposition alliance are on the cards in three Assembly segments -- Barjala in Agartala, Jubarajagar in north Tripura and Sabroom in south Tripura. The influential Tipra Motha Party (TMP), which is now governing the politically important Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAACD), is contesting 42 seats, 22 beyond the areas inhabited by the tribals, who constitute one third of Tripura's over four million populations. Headed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the Trinamool Congress has fielded candidates in 28 seats alone. In an interesting turn of event, TMP chief and the state's erstwhile royal scion Pradyot Bikram Kishore Manikya Debbarma, Tuesday announced that he would quit direct politics and would never attend any political platform.

in six constituencies, while there will be a friendly fight in one seat.

The CPI(M) is contesting in 47 seats while its alliance partner Congress is fighting in 13 constituencies. The Tipra Motha has candidates in 42 seats.

The Trinamool Congress has fielded nominees in 28 constituencies while there are 58 independent aspirants.

The ruling BJP has fielded the highest number of women candidates with 12.

During the campaigning, the BJP highlighted the development that has taken place in the north-eastern state in the last five years, the Left Front and the Congress stressed on "misrule and misgovernance" of the BJP-IPFT government.

The poll plank of Tipra Motha is Greater Tripaland statehood demand.

GUARDING CROPS

Bihar govt hires professional shooters to kill nilgais, boars

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Feb 15: The Bihar government has hired 13 professional shooters to kill wild boars and 'ghodparas' or nilgais to save crops, a forest official said Tuesday.

Animal lovers have opposed the move and demanded that the government find a long term solution to the problem and not allow the killing of the animals.

The state environment, forest and climate change department has sent the list of the professional shooters to the authorities concerned in all 38 districts in the state to use their services wherever required.

Districts where these two animal species are found in large numbers include Muzaffarpur, Vaishali, Sitamarhi, Bhojpur, Sheohar and West Champaran, he said.

There is no record of the number of nilgais or wild boars in the state.

"These two animal species move in herds and destroy acres of crops in a day. Farmers sit out all night to protect their ripening crops from them in some Bihar districts. Both ghodparas (nilgais) and wild boar are vermins and can be killed, but according to laid down procedures, PK Gupta, Bihar Chief Wildlife Warden, told PTI.

Efforts should be made to kill only full grown animals and the shooters have been instructed to fol-



low norms while carrying out culling operations, he said.

Gupta said besides damaging crops, nilgais also cause road accidents. Human lives have been lost due to man-animal conflict, along with loss of crops and valuable property.

The role of mukhiyas (village heads) is important in the operation beginning from the killing of the animals to their burial. All village heads will have to engage the professional shooters to kill the two species with utmost caution as and when required, Gupta said.

"As per the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, the mukhiyas have been appointed as the nodal authority to identify and allow killing of these two species with the help of professional shooters outside the protected area. The mukhiya concerned can allow the killing by

hired shooters on the basis of complaints received from farmers of his/her respective area in coordination with the officials of the environment and forest departments," he said.

Explaining the procedure, Gupta said the state government will provide a specific amount to the village heads for cartridges that will be used for killing nilgais and wild boars and Rs 700 for the burial of the animals.

"A mukhiya will issue hunting permits to shooters only after proper verification of the complaints of farmers of his or her respective area. The village heads will have to submit a monthly report of permissions and animals hunted of their respective areas to the competent authority," the chief wildlife warden said.

Reacting to the government move, the managing director for Humane Society International (HSI), India, Alokparna Sengupta, said the killing of any animal must be condemned.

HSI works round the globe to promote human-animal bond.

The state government should try to find out a long term solution and not allow the killing of these two species in this way. It is a fact that several state governments have already allowed killing of the two animals but the problem of crop damage by them still persists, Sengupta added.

Mizoram Assembly adopts resolution against any move to implement UCC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aizawl, Feb 15: The Mizoram Assembly Tuesday unanimously adopted an official resolution opposing any move to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the country.

Home minister Lalchamliana moved the resolution which said, "This House unanimously resolved to oppose any steps taken or proposed to be taken for enactment of UCC in India."

While moving the resolution, Lalchamliana asserted that the UCC, if enacted, would disintegrate the country as it was an attempt to terminate the religious or social practices, customary laws, cultures and traditions of the religious minorities, including the Mizos.

He alleged that several attempts

states that no act of Parliament in respect of religious or social practices of the Mizos, Mizo customary law and procedure, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary law, ownership and transfer of land, shall apply to Mizoram unless the state legislature by a resolution so decides.

Lalchamliana also alleged that the BJP in 2018-19 had included the implementation of UCC in its election manifesto.

Chief Minister Zoramthanga, opposition Congress leader Zodinliung, Zo People's Legislature Party leader Lalduhoma, lone BJP legislator BD Chakma and ruling MNF member C Lalmanpuia participated in the discussion on the resolution. Chakma argued that it was too early to oppose the UCC as it has not been enacted yet.

The BJP legislator said that recently Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju in a written reply to a question from Mizoram Rajya Sabha member K Vanlalvena, had informed the Rajya Sabha that no decision has been taken on implementing the UCC as of now.

Zoramthanga said that it is the right time to oppose the UCC before its enactment. He said that the UCC, if implemented, would harm the existence of the country.



FARMERS' FESTIVAL: Mishing tribal people of Assam sow paddy during the celebrations of the festival of Ali-Ai-Ligang, in Lakhimpur district, Assam, Wednesday

Election day declared paid holiday in three NE states

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agartala, Feb 15: In view of the forthcoming Assembly elections, the governments in Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya declared paid holiday on the day of polling to enable the employees of government and private organisations to cast their votes.

Officials said that in accordance with the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and in view of the Assembly elections in the three states, the polling day has been declared a paid holiday for all the employees of government, public sector undertakings, banks, financial institutions, private and all the business establishments to enable them to exercise their franchise.

This applies to all categories of employees, including the daily wage and casual workers, and also those electors working outside the constituency concerned.

However, this shall not apply to any elector whose absence may cause danger or substantial loss in respect of the employment in which he is engaged, an official said. Elections in Tripura will be held February 16, while Meghalaya and Nagaland will go to the polls February 27.

Couples throng Mountain Man's memorial

DASHRATH MANJHI, A NATIVE OF GEHLAUR VILLAGE IN GAYA DISTRICT, HAD CARVED A 110 M-LONG PATH THROUGH A RIDGE OF HILLS USING ONLY A HAMMER AND CHISEL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, Feb 15: The 'Samadhi Sthal' or the memorial of 'Mountain Man' Dashrath Manjhi is emerging as the 'Taj Mahal of Bihar' as large numbers of foreign and domestic couples come here to take inspiration from Dashrath Manjhi's love for his wife.

Dashrath Manjhi, a native of Gehlaur village in Gaya district, had carved a path 110 m long, 9.1 m wide and 7.7 m deep through a ridge of hills using only a hammer and chisel. After 22 years of work, Dashrath Manjhi shortened travel between the Atri and Wazirganj blocks of Gaya town from 55 km to 15 km.

In 2015, Director Ketan Mehta made a movie based on the life of Dashrath Manjhi. Nawazuddin Siddiqui played the lead role in the movie.

Domestic and foreign tourists who visit Gaya and Bodh Gaya also visit Gehlaur village. It is one of the major tourist attractions of Gaya district. The place is considered as a symbol of love. The young

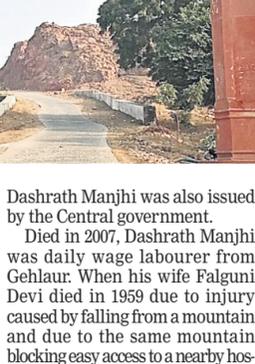


couples, especially on Valentine's Day, throng the memorial of Dashrath Manjhi in Gehlaur.

Famous personalities like Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, former Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi, actor Aamir Khan and others visited the place in the past. A postal ticket in memory of

himself in time, he decided to carve the path through a ridge of hills using only a hammer and a chisel. After 22 years of work, Dashrath Manjhi shortened travel between the Atri and Wazirganj blocks of Gaya district from 55 km to 15 km.

Following his demise, the Bihar government built a statue and a memorial of Dashrath Manjhi. It also named the road between Gehlaur and Wazirganj as 'Dashrath Manjhi Path'.



Dashrath Manjhi was also issued by the Central government.

Died in 2007, Dashrath Manjhi was daily wage labourer from Gehlaur. When his wife Falguni Devi died in 1959 due to injury caused by falling from a mountain and due to the same mountain blocking easy access to a nearby hos-

Another eviction drive in Assam to clear encroached forest land



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, Feb 15: The Assam government Tuesday launched another eviction drive in Sonitpur and Nagaon districts to clear 1,900 hectares of encroached forest land, an official said.

Over 2,000 security personnel, including paramilitary, Home Guards, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Assam Police, have been stationed in the Char-Chapori area of the Burhachapori wildlife sanctuary region for ensuring a smooth eviction drive.

At least 50 excavators and 30 tractors would be used in the eviction exercise, an official said.

Around 2,500 establishments including houses and schools have

come up on 1,900 hectares of land, a government official said.

Sonitpur district Superintendent of Police, Sushanta Biswa Sarma told IANS: "We have started the eviction and it will continue for the next three days."

According to officials, 'illegal' settlers were served notice a few days ago to vacate the encroached land.

"At least 80 per cent of the people who had earlier encroached on the land, destroyed the illegal structures by themselves and left the place. We did not face any sort of resentment while carrying out the eviction drive," a police officer said. Last month, an eviction exercise took place in the Paboi Reserve Forest area.

of the day quote

The 'bulldozer politics' of the BJP government is taking the lives of innocent poor people which is very tragic. The government should change its anti-people approach

One day there will be no media in the country... They (BJP leaders) don't care about people's mandate, their only mandate is dictatorship. (They are) more than Hitler

The proposed demolition drive in Tughlakabad village by the Archaeological Survey of India, a central government agency, will prove extremely cruel to the people living in that area for a long time and will have a very adverse impact on the people



To divert the attention from the Adani issue and the damage it has done to the economy of the country, they (BJP) don't get anything better than Jammu and Kashmir, like demolition drive

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

MANN SHUTS DOWN TOLL PLAZAS

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Wednesday announced shutting down three toll plazas, which, he said, were allowed to operate by the connivance of the Akali-BJP alliance and Congress to loot the public



SC to hear fresh PIL against Adani Feb 17

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 15: The Supreme Court Wednesday agreed to hear February 17 a fresh plea of a Congress leader seeking investigation under the supervision of a sitting apex court judge against the Adani Group of companies in light of the allegations made by the US-based Hindenburg Research.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice P S Narasimha took note of the submissions of a lawyer, representing Congress leader Jaya Thakur, that the plea needed urgent hearing.

In her plea, Thakur has alleged, "The Hindenburg report has raised serious questions about the act and conduct of respondent no 13 (Adani Group of companies) and their associates, by which they have caused huge losses to the various public sector bank and LIC by inflating the share price of shares of their group of company for obtaining loans and investment from banks and financial institution ibid."

The bench initially agreed to list the PIL for hearing February 24 and later decided to hear Friday after the lawyer pointed out that two other PILs are listed February 17.

Thakur has also sought a direction for investigating the role of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and the State Bank of India (SBI) in investing huge amounts of public money in the

FPOs (follow on public offer) of Adani Enterprises, allegedly at a much higher rate than the prevailing share price in the secondary market.

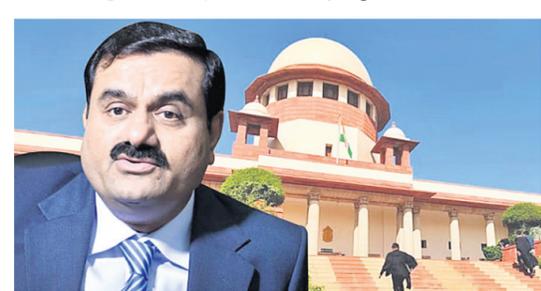
A follow on public offer is a process by which a company already listed on a stock exchange issues new shares to the investors or shareholders, usually the promoters.

On Monday, the Centre had agreed to the apex court's proposal to set up a panel of experts to look into strengthening the regulatory mechanisms for the stock market following the recent Adani group shares crash triggered by Hindenburg Research's fraud allegations.

The market regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), in its note filed in the top court indicated that it is not in favour of banning short-selling or sale of borrowed shares, and said it is investigating allegations made by a tiny short-seller against the Adani Group as well as its share price movements.

The top court seized of two petitions alleging exploitation of innocent investors and "artificial crashing" of the Adani Group's stock value.

The plea alleged that after the Hindenburg report, the FPO of Adani Enterprises was opened in January and the LIC, SBI and several public sector companies invested huge amounts at the rate of ₹3,200 per share, whereas in the secondary market, the share was prevailing at ₹1,600 to ₹1,800 per share.



WB govt presents ₹3.39-lakh cr Budget

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 15: Ahead of panchayat elections, the Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal government Wednesday presented a ₹3.39-lakh crore Budget for 2023-24, focusing on farmers, an ailing tea sector, the state's potential as a logistics hub and budding entrepreneurs.

Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya said the state GDP is projected to grow at 8.4 per cent and the industry at 7.8 per cent in the ongoing 2022-23 fiscal, both higher than the country's expected growth rates.

"I propose to provide a 3,39,162 crore Budget for financial year 2023-24," Bhattacharya said, while placing the financial statement in the assembly. She said an upcoming West Bengal Logistics Policy 2023 will leverage the state's strategic position at the cross-roads of South Asia and Asean nations to create a global logistics hub.

"It will streamline the sector and help Bengal to secure a strategic position in the global supply chain," Bhattacharya said. The development of an Industrial and

After the Budget was presented, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee lauded her colleague, claiming it covered all sections of the society

Meanwhile, the opposition BJP staged a walkout from the Assembly, protesting against the CM's statement after the Budget speech was read out

Economic Corridor with three branches --Dankuni-Haldia, Dankuni-Ragunathpur and Dankuni-Kalyani --"will provide better connectivity and create employment opportunity for about one lakh people," she added.

The minister also said a ₹350-crore fund will be set up to extend credit of up to ₹5 lakh each to 2 lakh young entrepreneurs.



A butterfly visits a common daisy at a garden in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

I-T dept survey on BBC continues for 2nd day

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 15: The Income Tax department survey operation against the BBC India continued for the second day with the sleuths understood to be making copies of electronic and paper-based financial data of the organisation, officials said Wednesday.

The tax department had launched the action Tuesday at the BBC's Delhi and Mumbai offices along with at least two linked premises as part of an investigation into alleged tax evasion against the British broadcaster in India. Sleuths knocked at the doors of the BBC around 11:30 AM Tuesday and they are still present, sources aware of the development told PTI.

The tax officials are speaking to staffers of the BBC in the finance and some other departments even as other staffers and journalists were allowed to leave Tuesday night. Some computer peripherals and mobile phones were cloned as part of the operation, officials had said.

The action, which sparked a sharp political debate with the ruling BJP accusing the BBC of "venomous reporting" and the opposition questioning the timing of the move, came weeks after the broadcaster aired a two-part documentary, "India: The Modi Question", on the prime minister and the 2002 Gujarat riots. The survey is being carried out to investigate issues related to international taxation and transfer pricing of BBC subsidiary companies, officials had said Tuesday.

While there has been no official statement from the Income Tax department on the action, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has said it was cooperating with the authorities.

"The Income Tax Authorities remain at the BBC offices in New Delhi and Mumbai. Many staff have now left the building, but some have been asked to remain and are continuing to cooperate with the



Security personnel close the gate of BBC office on the second day of Income Tax Department's survey operation

OPPOSITION LASHES OUT AT CENTRE

Condemning the Income Tax survey at the BBC's offices, the Congress Wednesday asked the what image of India is Prime Minister Narendra Modi projecting through such actions at a time when the country is hosting the G-20. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said anyone questioning Prime Minister Modi about his past is "raided" and accused the government of demolishing the fourth pillar of democracy. The Indian media has been repeatedly "strangled, muzzled and bulldozed" by the Modi government, just because some of them, a very small number, have refused to toe the line of the BJP, he alleged. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

said media is the fourth pillar of democracy and suppressing its voice is akin to suppressing the voice of the public. "Media is the fourth pillar of democracy and an attack on its freedom is similar to suppressing the voice of public. Whosoever speaks against the BJP, these people deploy CBI, ED and I-T behind him," Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi. The action, which sparked a sharp political debate with the ruling BJP accusing the BBC of "venomous reporting" and the opposition questioning the timing of the move, comes weeks after the broadcaster aired a two-part documentary "India: The Modi Question" on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the 2002 Gujarat riots.



Hindu Sena activists stage a protest outside the BBC office

ongoing enquiries," a BBC News Press Team said in an official Twitter post at 10:26 pm on Tuesday. We are supporting our staff during this time and continue to hope to have this situation resolved as soon as possible. Our output and journalism continues as normal

and we are committed to serving our audiences in India, the post added. As part of a survey the Income Tax department only covers the business premises of a company and does not raid residences and other locations of its promoters or directors.

SHORT TAKES

Rahul Gandhi hits Gulmarg ski slopes

Gulmarg (J&K): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi went skiing in Gulmarg in north Kashmir on Wednesday as he began a two-day personal visit to the valley. Gandhi, who completed his Bharat Jodo Yatra in Srinagar two weeks ago, was once again in his now-trademark T-shirt as he stopped for a brief period in Tangmarg town while on his way to Gulmarg skiing resort, 52 km from Srinagar. The former Congress president refused to take questions from the media. "Namaskar" was all he said when he was asked to comment.

6 coaches of Godavari Express train derail

Hyderabad: Six coaches of Godavari Express derailed near here on Wednesday morning, South Central Railway (SCR) officials said. No one was injured in the incident, the officials added. The train was proceeding to Hyderabad from Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. There are no casualties/injuries, it said. Passengers were being cleared by the same train by detaching the derailed coaches, the release added.

Man stabbed to death in Delhi

New Delhi: A 25-year-old man was stabbed to death allegedly by some unidentified people following an argument in west Delhi's Nangloi area, police said Wednesday. The incident took place Tuesday evening, they said. Preliminary investigation revealed that one Vishal Malik was returning from the gym when he had some argument with an RTV driver after his bike touched the latter's mini bus, police said. According to police, the RTV driver called his friends and they thrashed Vishal. An injured Vishal then reached the Nangloi police station and filed a complaint.

CBI questions Jain

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Wednesday interrogated Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain in the Tihar Jail in connection with the Delhi excise policy scam. The CBI Friday moved the Rouse Avenue District Courts seeking permission to interrogate him in the matter, and the court allowed its plea. The CBI interrogated Jain about scam accused Vijay Nair and other related things. The CBI has already filed a charge sheet in the matter, and sources said that they are in process of filing a supplementary charge sheet in the matter and hence they wanted to collect more evidence to make the case water-proof.

Having cancer not end of world: Experts

ACCORDING TO THE ICMR, APPROXIMATELY 500 CHILDREN IN BANGALORE ARE DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER EACH YEAR

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, Feb 15: The International Childhood Cancer Day (ICCD) is observed February 15 every year with the aim of creating awareness. The experts advise parents on the occasion that having cancer is not the end of the world.

"My message to the public is to have an awareness that having cancer is not the end of the world. It's just a phase that will pass and together we can be successful in making sure that children with cancer can have a normal life, free of disease," Dr Ashish Dixit, Consultant - Haematology, Haematology and Bone Marrow Transplantation, Manipal Hospital

Old Airport Road said. Dixit said that, "Most of the cancers in children are curable. Prompt recognition of cancer and the early start of the therapy holds the key to a successful outcome. One of the most common cancers in children is acute leukaemia."

Dr Vinay Munikoty Venkatesh, Consultant - Paediatric Haematology Oncology and BMT, Manipal Hospitals Yeshwanthpur said that every year nearly 4 lakh children and adolescents are diagnosed with cancer. In India alone, more than 75,000 new childhood cancers are diagnosed each year. Cure rates of childhood cancers is close to 85 per cent if diagnosed timely. A robust system of "referral to pe-

diatric oncology" centres is lacking when a child is suspected of cancer in the community. Raising the awareness in the community and amongst general physicians is the need of the hour, he explains.

Treatment advancements in childhood cancers over years has not just resulted in excellent cure rates but also has minimized the side effect profile of these treatments. Cellular therapies (CAR-T cell therapy, gene therapy etc) and immunotherapy have shown path-breaking clinical results in cancers previously considered incurable! We need to invest more in childhood cancer research to further improve, Venkatesh said.

Dr Niti Krishna Raizada, Senior Director Medical - Oncology and



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

Hemato-Oncology, Fortis Hospitals, Bengaluru said, childhood cancers refer to a group of diseases that include many different types of cancers, such as leukaemia, brain and spinal cord tumours, neuro-

blastoma, Wilms tumour, and others. Each type of childhood cancer is unique and requires specific treatment and care. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), approximately 500

children in Bangalore are diagnosed with cancer each year.

"Fatigue, discomfort, edema, and behavioural changes are just a few of the symptoms. Due to the child's developing body and symptoms that may resemble those of other disorders, diagnosis and therapy can be difficult," Raizada said.

Raizada added that many families in India struggle to afford the cost of treatment, which can run into lakhs of rupees, leading to financial ruin and severe stress. Additionally, the lack of trained paediatric oncologists and adequate treatment facilities in many parts of India results in late diagnosis and inadequate care, leading to lower survival rates for children with cancer.

international



China supports Iran in safeguarding national sovereignty and resisting unilateralism and bullying
XI JINPING | LEADER, CHINA

FOOD CRISIS IN N KOREA

A North Korean food crisis appears to have deteriorated, South Korea said Wednesday, as a newspaper reported that North Korea has cut rations to its soldiers for the first time in more than two decades



of the day quote

The era when progress was equated with westernisation is now behind us and many languages and traditions that were suppressed during the colonial era are once again finding a voice on the global stage

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

The party had changed and we are not going back, and that is why Jeremy Corbyn will not stand as a Labour candidate at the next general election

KEIR STARMER | OPPOSITION LEADER, UK

The package under consideration by the EU's 27 member countries specifically seeks to deprive Russia of military equipment it needs and cannot get anywhere else

URSULA VON DER LEYEN | PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SHORT TAKES

Anti-India graffiti

Toronto: A prominent Hindu temple in Canada has been defaced by 'Khalistani extremists' with anti-India graffiti in an apparent hate crime, prompting the Indian mission here to condemn the incident and urge Canadian authorities to take swift action against the perpetrators. The latest incident took place at a Ram Mandir in Mississauga February 13. "We strongly condemn the defacing of Ram Mandir in Mississauga with anti-India graffiti. We have requested Canadian authorities to investigate the incident and take prompt action on perpetrators," India's Consulate in Toronto tweeted.

5.7 quake hits NZ

Wellington: A magnitude 5.7 earthquake struck near the New Zealand capital Wellington Wednesday, the US Geological Survey said, as the nation grapples with widespread landslides and flooding across a sodden landscape after a cyclone. New Zealand's National Emergency Management Center tweeted that the quake was "widely felt in the North Island."

Millet at UN HQ

Washington: India has organised a special exhibition on the millets at the UN headquarters in New York to commemorate the 'International Year of Millets 2023'. The focus of the exhibition launched Tuesday by India's Permanent Mission to the UN was on the different kinds of millets grown in India, their nutritional value and health benefits, including information on calorific content.

Israel team meddled with over 30 polls across world, including India

The team was behind fake social media campaigns, mostly involving commercial disputes, in about 20 countries including the UK, US, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Mexico, Senegal, India, and the UAE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Feb 15: A team of Israeli contractors who are feared to have interfered with more than 30 elections around the world have been linked with software to operate fake social media campaigns across several countries, including India, a report said Wednesday.

In an international investigation by a journalist consortium including by "The Guardian" newspaper in the UK, a so-called "Team Jorge" unit has been linked with

allegedly offering a sophisticated software package named Advanced Impact Media Solutions (Aims) to commercial clients as one of its key services.

The unit is said to be run by Tal Hanan, a 50-year-old former Israeli special forces operative who works privately using the pseudonym "Jorge", and Team Jorge is accused of using means such as hacking, sabotage, and automated disinformation online.

When questioned, Hanan told the investigation that he denies



"any wrongdoing".

The newspaper report said Wednesday that over several months last year, along with its reporting partners on the investigation, it had tracked Aims-linked bot activity across the internet and found it was behind "fake social media campaigns, mostly involving commercial disputes, in about 20 countries including the UK, US, Canada,

Germany, Switzerland, Mexico, Senegal, India, and the United Arab Emirates".

The consortium of journalists that investigated Team Jorge includes reporters from 30 global media outlets including Le Monde, Der Spiegel, and El Pais.

The project, part of a wider investigation into the disinformation industry, has been coordinated

by Forbidden Stories, a French non-profit with a mission to pursue the work of assassinated, threatened or jailed reporters.

The investigation is part of Story killers, a collaboration led by Forbidden Stories, and was inspired by the work of Gauri Lankesh, a 55-year-old journalist who was shot dead outside her Bangalore home in 2017.

"The Guardian" notes that hours before Lankesh was murdered, she had been putting the finishing touches on an article called "In the Age of False News", which examined how so-called lie factories online were spreading disinformation in India.

In the final line of the article, which was published after her death, the late Indian journalist

wrote: "I want to salute all those who expose fake news. I wish there were more of them."

The undercover footage for the latest investigation into Team Jorge was filmed by three reporters, who approached the unit posing as prospective clients.

In more than six hours of secretly recorded meetings, Hanan and his team reportedly speak about how they could gather intelligence on rivals, including by using hacking techniques to access Gmail and Telegram accounts.

In addition to Aims, Hanan allegedly told reporters about a "blogger machine" — an automated system for creating websites that the Aims-controlled social media profiles could then use to spread fake news stories across the internet.

I-T SURVEYS AT BBC OFFICES

US stresses on press freedom



The action came weeks after the UK's public broadcaster aired a two-part documentary, "India: The Modi Question", on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's alleged role in the 2002 Gujarat riots

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 15: The US has said that it supports the importance of a free press, freedom of expression and freedom of religion as universal rights which are the "bedrock of democracies" around the world, including in India.

The remarks by State Department Spokesperson Ned Price came a day after the Income Tax department carried out a survey operation at the British Broadcasting Corporation's offices in Delhi, Mumbai and two other linked locations as part of an investigation into alleged tax evasion.

"We are aware of the search of the BBC offices in Delhi by Indian tax authorities. I would need to refer you to Indian authorities for the details of this search. Beyond this discrete action, what I'll say more broadly is the general point that I've consistently made in this context, but in a universal context as well," Price told reporters here.

"We support the importance of a free press around the world. We continue to highlight the importance of freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief as human rights that contribute to strengthening democracies around the world. It has strengthened this democracy here in this country. It has strengthened India's democracy," Price said Tuesday.

We support the importance of a free press around the world. We continue to highlight the importance of freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief as human rights that contribute to strengthening democracies around the world

NED PRICE | STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESPERSON, US

ened this democracy here in this country. It has strengthened India's democracy," Price said Tuesday.

"These universal rights are the bedrock of democracies around the world," he asserted. When asked if this action went against some of the spirit or value of democracy, Price said, "I couldn't say. We're aware of the facts of these searches, but I'm just not in a position to offer a judgement."

The action came weeks after the UK's public broadcaster aired a two-part documentary, "India: The Modi Question", on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's alleged role in the 2002 Gujarat riots. The survey is being carried out to investigate issues related to international taxation and transfer pricing of BBC subsidiary companies, Indian officials said.

Scottish leader Sturgeon to quit

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Feb 15: Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon Wednesday announced her intention to resign, saying that part of serving in politics is knowing when it is time to make way for someone else.

Speaking at a news conference at her official residence in Edinburgh, Bute House, Sturgeon said she wrestled with the decision, but that the pressure of the job was relentless and that she is a human being as well as a politician.

Sturgeon, who has led the country's devolved government and the Scottish National Party for eight years, has faced months of controversy over a law that makes it simpler for people to change their gender on official documents, the BBC reported Wednesday.

The decision caught political observers by surprise, despite the ongoing controversy over the gender recognition measure. She had vowed to take the British government to court over its decision to block the law and argued that the Conservative UK government was making a "profound mistake" by vetoing the Gender Recognition Reform Bill.

Hailed as a landmark by transgender rights activists, the bill would allow people age 16 or older in Scotland to change the gender designation on their identity documents by self-declaration, removing the need for a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria.

The legislation sets Scotland apart from the rest of the United Kingdom, where a medical diagnosis is needed before individuals can transition for legal purposes.

But the measure was only one controversy in a career where Sturgeon has been noted for rarely putting a foot wrong. She had been lauded for her response, for example, to the Covid-19 pandemic, where she won praise for her sober, straight-talking abilities. That catapulted the idea of Scottish independence from the United Kingdom — the long-held dream of Sturgeon's nationalist government — back up the political agenda. Scotland is part of the UK but, like Wales and Northern Ireland, has its own semi-autonomous government with broad powers over areas including health care.



Traditional artists perform "sevu sevu" welcome ceremony at the inauguration of 12th World Hindi Conference, in Nadi, Fiji

Russian bombers hover near Alaska

IN ITS DEFENSE, RUSSIA SAID THAT IT HAD CARRIED OUT SEVERAL FLIGHTS OVER INTERNATIONAL WATERS IN RECENT DAYS, INCLUDING IN THE BERING SEA BETWEEN ALASKA AND RUSSIA

REUTERS

Washington, Feb 15: Several Russian strategic bombers and fighter jets have been intercepted by North American air defence forces as they flew over international airspace near Alaska, the North American Aerospace Defence Command said.

The aircraft, which were identified Monday, did not enter US or Canadian airspace and did not pose a threat, the joint US-Canadian centre said in a statement dated Feb 14.

It added that the Russian flights were in no way related to the mysterious spate of airborne objects shot down by the US military over North America in the past few



weeks, the details of which remain unknown. "NORAD had anticipated this Russian activity... Two NORAD F-16 fighters intercepted the Russian aircraft," it said. Russia said Wednesday that it had carried out several flights over international waters in recent days, including in the Bering Sea between Alaska and Russia.

It said two of its Tu-95MS strategic missile carriers had flown over the Bering Sea accompanied by Su-30 jets, and that it had made similar "routine" flights north of Norway and over international waters near Russia's far east.

It did not say whether its aircraft had been intercepted.

"Long-range aviation pilots regularly perform flights over the neutral waters of the Arctic, North Atlantic, Black Sea, Baltic Sea and Pacific Ocean," Russia's defence ministry said.

BLAME GAME

US balloons flew over Xinjiang, Tibet: China

China said US balloons had flown over its airspace without permission more than 10 times on round-the-world flights since May 2022

REUTERS

Beijing, Feb 15: China said Wednesday that US high altitude balloons flew over its Xinjiang and Tibet regions, and that it will take measures against US entities that undermine Chinese sovereignty as a diplomatic dispute festered.

Washington and Beijing are locked in a tussle over flying objects after the US military this month shot down what it called a Chinese spy balloon over the coast of South Carolina. Beijing says its balloon was a civilian research vessel mistakenly blown off course, and that Washington overreacted.

This week, China countered that US balloons had flown over its airspace without permission more than 10 times on round-the-world flights since May 2022.

"Without the approval of relevant Chinese authorities, it has illegally flown at least 10 times over China's territorial airspace, including over Xinjiang, Tibet and other provinces," Wang told a regular daily briefing Wednesday.

The White House has disputed China's allegations.

Washington has added six Chinese entities connected to Beijing's suspected surveillance balloon program to an export blacklist. "The US has abused force, overreacted, escalated the situation, and used this as a pretext to illegally sanction Chinese companies and institutions," Wang said.

"China is firmly opposed to this and will take countermeasures against relevant US entities that undermine China's sovereignty and security in accordance with the law," Wang said, without specifying the measures.

The balloon dispute has delayed efforts by both sides to mend relations, although US President Joe Biden has also said that he does not believe ties between the two countries were weakened by the incident.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who postponed a planned trip to Beijing over the balloon, is considering meeting China's top diplomat Wang Yi in Munich this week, sources have said.

Rising seas risk 'death sentence' for some nations: UN

NATIONS LIKE BANGLADESH, CHINA, INDIA AND THE NETHERLANDS ARE ALL AT RISK, AND LARGE CITIES ON EVERY CONTINENT WILL FACE SERIOUS IMPACTS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

United Nations, Feb 15: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned Tuesday that sea levels will rise significantly even if global warming is "miraculously" limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius — and said Earth is more likely on a path to warming that amounts to "a death sentence" for countries vulnerable to that rise.

Every fraction of a degree counts, since sea level rise could double if temperatures rise by 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), and increase exponentially with further temperature increases, the UN chief said. He spoke at the opening of a UN Security Council meeting on sea level rise, which

was hearing from 75 countries, and said the council has a critical role in building support for actions to fight climate change.

Under any scenario, countries like Bangladesh, China, India and the Netherlands are all at risk, and large cities on every continent will face serious impacts, including Cairo, Lagos, Maputo, Bangkok, Dhaka, Jakarta, Mumbai, Shanghai, Copenhagen, London, Los Angeles, New York, Buenos Aires and Santiago, he added.

The World Meteorological Organisation released figures Tuesday, cited by Guterres, that say global mean sea level will rise by about 2 meters to 3 meters (about 6.5 to 9.8 feet) over the next 2,000 years if warming is limited to 1.5



degrees Celsius. With a 2-degree Celsius increase, seas could rise up to 6 meters (19.7 feet), and with a 5-degree Celsius increase, seas

could rise up to 22 meters (72 feet), according to the WMO.

Guterres said the danger is especially acute for nearly 900 million

Our world is hurtling past the 1.5-degree warming limit that a livable future requires, and with present policies, is careening towards 2.8 degrees — a death sentence for vulnerable countries

ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

people who live in coastal zones at low elevations, or one out of every 10 people worldwide.

The consequences are unthinkable, Guterres said: Low-lying communities and entire countries could disappear, the world would witness a mass exodus of entire populations on a biblical scale and competition would become ever fiercer for fresh water, land and other resources.

Guterres has been trying to call the world's attention to the dangers posed by climate change, to spur action. In October, he warned

that the world is in "a life-or-death struggle" for survival as "climate chaos gallops ahead" and accused the world's 20 wealthiest countries of failing to do enough to stop the planet from overheating. In November, he said the planet is heading toward irreversible "climate chaos" and urged global leaders to put the world back on track to cut emissions, keep promises on climate financing and help developing countries speed their transition to renewable energy.

The landmark Paris agreement adopted in 2015 to address climate change called for global temperatures to rise a maximum of 2 degrees Celsius by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial times, and as close as possible to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Guterres said the world must address the climate crisis as the root cause of rising seas, and the Security Council has a critical role to play in building the political will required.

business

of the day quote

Once the states agree, we will have the petroleum products also be covered under the GST. So, that's not so much of us not wanting it



NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

Climate finance was one of the issues which was discussed. The members felt that there was a need for an environment for increasing the climate financing in terms of financing farmers for adaptation measures



MANOJ AHUJA | AGRICULTURE SECRETARY

Twitter is still somewhat a startup in reverse. There's work required here to get Twitter to sort of a stable position and to really build the engine of software engineering



ELON MUSK | CEO, TWITTER

SHORT TAKES

Adani looks to repay \$500mn

Bangalore: India's embattled Adani Group is in talks with lenders to repay a \$500 million bridge loan facility it had taken to buy controlling stakes in cement companies ACC Ltd and Ambuja Cements Ltd last year, the Economic Times daily reported Wednesday. The group is looking to repay the bridge loan with cash this month, the report said, citing people aware of the matter, adding that the loan had a tenor of six months and was part of a larger \$5.25 billion financing package.

Vedanta cuts net debt by \$2 billion

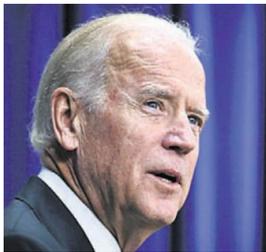
Bangalore: Vedanta Resources said Wednesday it had brought down debt significantly, seeking to allay market concerns after S&P Global Ratings last week raised doubts about its ability to meet financial obligations beyond September. The billionaire Anil Agarwal-owned company - parent of Indian resources giant Vedanta Ltd - said it had cut net debt by \$2 billion in the last 11 months, ahead of its own target.

ITR forms from April 1: CBDT

New Delhi: The Income Tax department Wednesday said the ITR forms for 2022-23 will come into effect from April 1 and have been notified well in advance to enable the filing of returns from the beginning of the ensuing Assessment Year. To facilitate taxpayers and to improve the ease of filing, no significant changes have been made to the ITR forms in comparison to the last year's ITR Forms. Only bare minimum changes necessitated due to amendments in the Income-Tax Act, 1961, have been made, it added.

US unveils deal with Tesla

Washington: Electric car giant Tesla will, for the first time, make some of its charging stations available to all US Electric vehicles by the end of next year, under a new plan announced Wednesday by the White House. The plan will make at least 7,500 chargers from Tesla's Supercharger and Destination Charger network available to non-Tesla EVs by the end of 2024, the White House said. The plan to open the nation's largest and most reliable charging network to all drivers is a potential game-changer in promoting EV use, a key component of President Joe Biden's goal to fight climate change.



The landmark Air India-Boeing deal will create up to 1 million jobs across 44 states in the US and will further deepen bilateral ties

JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

SOLAR-POWERED SPY DRONE

Drone startup Garuda Aerospace Wednesday entered the defence sector with its solar-powered unmanned reconnaissance aerial J-Glider, the company said. According to Garuda, the solar-powered glider-branded SURAJ was launched at the Aero India 2023 show being held in Bangalore



Govt push to defence firms

INDIA TO SPEND 75% OF DEFENCE CAPITAL OUTLAY FOR PROCUREMENT FROM DOMESTIC INDUSTRIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 15: India will spend 75 per cent of the total defence capital outlay for procurement from domestic defence manufacturers in 2023-24, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Wednesday in a significant decision aimed at boosting the indigenous production of various weapons and military platforms.

The move will mean setting aside around Rs one lakh crore for procurement from domestic sources out of the total defence capital outlay of Rs 1,62,600 crore announced in the Union Budget for the next fiscal, officials said on the sidelines of Aero India here. Separately, Aero India witnessed the firming up of 266 partnerships including 201 MoUs, 53 major announcements, nine product launches and three transfers of technology (ToT) pacts - worth around Rs 80,000 crore.

"If you take one step, the government promises to take 10 steps forward. You spoke of land to run on the path of development. We are providing you the full sky," Singh said at the event "Bandhan ceremony" where the pacts were formally inked.

"Earmarking three-fourths of the capital procurement budget for the local industry is a step in that direction," Singh said.



After this step, our defence industry will move forward with even more enthusiasm and will contribute to making the country's defence manufacturing sector more powerful and prosperous

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

According to official data, the value of India's indigenous defence production from 2019-20 to 2021-22 was Rs 2.58 lakh crore.

In 2020-21, the government had set aside 58 per cent of defence capital outlay for procurement from the Indian defence industry. It was increased to 64 per cent in 2021-22. The allocation was further enhanced to 68 per cent in 2022-23.

"The trust of the government and the society in our defence in-

dustry is increasing rapidly. The share of procurement from Indian vendors last year was 68 per cent. Inspired by the 'Amrit Kaal', that share has been directly increased to 75 per cent," he said.

The defence minister described the decision to enhance the allocation for the domestic industries is a "very significant" one for the overall growth of the domestic defence sector.

"It is a matter of great pleasure that Aero-India 2023 witnessed

The move will mean setting aside around Rs one lakh crore for procurement from domestic sources out of the total defence capital outlay of Rs 1,62,600 crore announced in the Budget

Aero India witnessed the firming up of 266 partnerships including 201 MoUs, 53 major announcements, nine product launches and three transfers of technology pacts - worth around Rs 80,000 crore

this unprecedented decision," he said. Singh said the Aero-India 2023 inspired all the stakeholders to take a resolution that "we will not get tired anywhere on the path of our progress".

The defence minister said that Aero India showcased to the world the 'New Defence Sector' of 'New India', which has not only grown in the last few years, but is now fully ready to walk alongside the defence sectors of leading countries.

The Defence Ministry has set a goal of a turnover of \$25 billion (Rs 1.75 lakh crore) in defence manufacturing by 2024-25 that includes an export target of \$5 billion (Rs 35,000 crore) worth of military hardware. In the last few years, the government has taken a series of measures to promote domestic defence production.

Exports dip by 6.58% in Jan; trade deficit lowest in 12-months



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 15: Contracting for the second month in a row, India's exports dipped by 6.58 per cent to \$32.91 billion in January due to slowdown in global demand, even as the trade deficit touched a 12-month low of \$17.75 billion during the month, according to official data released Wednesday.

Imports in January too contracted by 3.63 per cent, the second consecutive month, to \$50.66 billion. Cumulatively, however, during April-January 2022-23, the country's merchandise exports rose 8.51 per cent to \$369.25 billion, while imports increased 21.89 per cent to \$602.20 billion, the data showed.

The merchandise trade deficit for the April-January this fiscal stood at about \$233 billion. The country's exports had contracted by 12.2 per cent to \$34.48 billion in December 2022.

Last time, it was in January 2022, when the trade deficit touched \$17.42 billion.

Export sectors that recorded negative growth during the 10-months period of this fiscal include engineering goods, iron ore, plastic and linoleum, gems and jewellery.

Engineering exports dipped by 3.37 per cent to \$88.27 billion during April-January 2022-23. In the same period, gems and jewellery shipments declined by 0.54 per cent

to \$31.61 billion. Sectors which recorded positive growth include petroleum products, electronic goods, rice, ready-made garments of textiles and chemicals.

"The overall exports (goods and services) growth in the current financial year is about 17.33 per cent. The main engine behind this export growth is the Services sector, which has been growing at a historically high growth rate of about 30 per cent. Merchandise exports are also cumulatively growing at 8.5 per cent. We are optimistic that this growth momentum would continue despite strong global headwinds," Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal told reporters.

Gold imports during April-January this fiscal contracted by 11.26 per cent to \$29 billion, as against \$40.35 billion in the same period last year.

In the 10-months of the current fiscal, crude oil imports rose 53.54 per cent to \$178.45 billion. Similarly, imports of coal, coke and briquettes rose by 18.91 per cent to \$43.17 billion.

"In spite of global headwinds, political turmoil and recessionary trends amongst the major economies, during April-January this fiscal, the country's merchandise exports recorded a growth," said Sanjay Budhia Chairman - CII National Committee on Exports & Imports.

Edible oil imports in January 2nd highest

Record shipments of cooking oils in Nov-Jan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 15: India's edible oil imports rose 33 per cent in January to 16.61 lakh tonne, the highest since September 2021, driven by higher imports of sunflower oil, according to industry body SEA.

Import of vegetable oils (edible and non-edible oils) in January rose 31 per cent to 16,61,750 tonne from 12,70,728 tonne in the same month last year.

Edible oil imports rose to 16,61,750 tonne in January - the second highest monthly volume after September 2021 - from 12,51,926 tonnes, while non-edible oil imports fell to nil from 18,802 tonne, the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) said in a statement.

The total import of vegetable oils during the first three months of the oil year 2022-23 (November-October) rose 30 per cent to 47,73,419 tonne compared to 36,71,161 tonne in the same period last year.

Edible oil imports increased to 47,46,290 tonne during November 2022-January 2023 period of the current oil year from 36,07,612 tonne in the year-ago period, while shipments of non-edible oils fell to 27,129 tonne from 63,549 tonne.

"India's January sunflower oil imports surged to 4,61,000 tonne, nearly triple average monthly im-



ports as top exporters Russia and Ukraine seek to reduce stockpiles," the SEA said. India's monthly sunflower oil imports averaged around 1,61,000 tonne in 2021-22 oil year ended in October last year.

"The surge in sunflower oil and soyabean oil imports could dampen India's palm oil imports and weigh on palm oil prices," the association said.

SEA also expressed concern over the sharp increase in import of RBD (refined) palmolein in the first quarter of 2022-23 oil year at 6.30 lakh tonne, nearly 20 per cent of total palm oil import, affecting domestic refineries.

"India's palm refining industry is heavily suffering from very low capacity utilization due to excessive import of RBD Palmolein and getting transformed into mere packers," the association said.

The duty difference between CPO (crude palm oil) and refined palmolein/palm oil needs to be increased from the current 7.5 per cent to at least 15 per cent by increasing RBD palmolein duty from current 12.5 per cent to 20 per cent without any change in CPO duty, it demanded.

India's imports from Russia up 384%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 15: India's imports from Russia has jumped about five times to \$37.31 billion during April-January this fiscal on account of increasing inbound shipments of crude oil from that country, according to the commerce ministry data.

In 2021-22, Russia was India's 18th largest import partner, accounting for \$9.86 billion of imports.

Russia has become India's fourth largest import source during the 10-

month period of the current fiscal. India's appetite for Russian crude oil in January rose to unseen levels, continuing to remain above traditional middle eastern suppliers for the fourth month in a row, as refiners rushed to snap up plentiful cargoes available at a discount to other grades.

From a market share of less than 1 per cent in India's import basket before the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Russia's share of India's imports rose to 1.27 million barrels per day in January, taking a 28 per cent share.

Sensex, Nifty rise for second day

Market breadth was largely positive as of 3,600 stocks traded on BSE, 1,790 advanced, 1,682 declined and 128 closed unchanged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 15: Benchmark Sensex pared early losses to close 242 points higher while Nifty settled above the 18,000-mark Wednesday following gains in IT, oil and select banking stocks amid mixed global trends.

Extending gains for a second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 242.83 points or 0.40 per cent to close at 61,275.09 with 20 of its constituents ending in the green. The index opened lower at



60,990.05 but later regained foot to touch a high of 61,352.55 in day trade.

The broader Nifty of NSE rose by 86 points or 0.48 per cent to settle above the 18,000-mark at 18,015.85,

following gains in RIL, Tech Mahindra and Adani Enterprises. As many as 37 of its stocks advanced while 13 declined.

Among Sensex stocks, Tech Mahindra rose the most by 5.79 per

cent. Index major Reliance Industries spurred 2.22 per cent, while Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, Tata Steel, M&M, Nestle Industries, HCL Tech, Kotak Bank, Tata Motors, ICICI Bank and Titan also advanced.

Hindustan Unilever fell the most by 1.22 per cent. ITC, Sun Pharma, L&T, HDFC twins and IndusInd Bank were among the major losers.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap index advanced 0.69 per cent while the smallcap index rose by 0.36 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE realty jumped 1.3 per cent, Telecom by 1.27 per cent, BSE Auto by 1.09 per cent, BSE IT by 0.95 per cent, and Commodities by 0.72 per cent.

BSE Power dropped 0.73 per cent, Utilities by 0.49 per cent, and FMCG by 0.35 per cent.

Foreign Portfolio Investors were net buyers, acquiring shares worth Rs 432.15 crore Wednesday.

FLYING HIGH

Indian airlines have more than 1,100 planes on order

INDIA IS ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING AVIATION MARKETS IN THE WORLD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 15: The country's airline industry is poised for expansion with more than 1,100 planes on order by various domestic carriers.

After more than 17 years, Air India, now owned by Tata Group, Tuesday placed orders for a total of 470 planes with Airbus and Boeing. The total order, comprising wide-body and narrow-body aircraft, is the largest so far by an Indian carrier and also one of the largest single aircraft orders in the world.

The country's largest airline IndiGo has around 500 planes on order and Akasa Air has placed an order for 72 Boeing narrow-body aircraft, out of which 16 planes have been delivered. That leaves Akasa Air with 56 aircraft on order.

Go First, earlier known as Go Air, has 72 planes on order while

Vistara is to receive 17 more Boeing planes. Together, Air India, IndiGo, Akasa Air, Go First and Vistara have at least 1,115 planes on order.

Currently, there are around 700 commercial aircraft in the country, with a majority of them being narrow-body or single-aisle planes. Among others, around 470 aircraft of Airbus and about 159 Boeing planes are in commercial service in India.

Boeing Tuesday projected the country will require around 2,210 new planes in the next two decades and also pegged annual domestic air traffic growth to be nearly 7 per cent through 2041.

On February 14, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the country's growing aviation sector would need over 2,000 aircraft in the next 15 years.

Aviation consultancy CAPA February 8, said Indian carriers are likely to place orders for 1,500



to 1,700 planes in the next one to two years.

According to Air India Chief Executive Officer and Managing

Director Campbell Wilson, in addition to the 470 aircraft on firm order, the airline has secured a number of options and purchase

rights.

Air India, which is charting the revival path under the Tata Group, will acquire 250 planes from Airbus, including 40 wide-body A350 aircraft, and 220 planes from Boeing.

On February 3, IndiGo said that in the 2022 December quarter, the airline added 22 passenger aircraft (net of deliveries) to reach the 300 aircraft mark. "It is indeed a great milestone in our journey, and we will continue to take further deliveries from our large order book of 500 aircraft".

The latest Air India order is the first one by the airline in more than 17 years and second one by an Indian airline post the pandemic.

In 2005, Air India, under government ownership, had ordered 111 planes - 68 from Boeing and 43 from Airbus.

Akasa Air, which launched services in August last year, has placed

an order for 72 Boeing 737 Max planes.

IndiGo was the first airline to have placed the largest aircraft order in Indian history - 100 Airbus narrow-body aircraft - in 2005. This was followed by 180 Airbus planes order in 2011, 250 Airbus planes ordered in 2015 and 300 Airbus planes order in 2019.

Rival SpiceJet too had announced acquiring 205 planes in 2017 with 155 of them Boeing Max planes.

Wadia Group-owned domestic carrier Go First had placed an order for 144 Airbus 320 of 72 planes each in - 2011 and 2016.

In its report, CAPA said the total commercial Indian fleet of around 700 aircraft is smaller than some of the world's largest individual airlines and that given the immense potential that exists, it stands to reason that there is a need to induct more aircraft.

Deepti, Richa seal win ICC's ranking faux pas



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cape Town, Feb 15: Deepti Sharma shone with the ball before Richa Ghosh led India to a six-wicket win over West Indies in their Women's T20 World Cup Group 2 match here Wednesday.

Deepti spun a web around the West Indies batters to restrict them to 118/6 after being asked to bowl. The seasoned off-spinner (3/15) picked three wickets to become the first Indian to get to 100 women's T20 wickets.

Ghosh (44 n o) and captain Harmanpreet Kaur (33) then put up a vital 72-run stand to take India to their second victory of the tournament with 11 balls to spare.

Needing less than run a ball, India were off to an electric start with openers Shafali Verma (28) and Smriti Mandhana (10) taking the team total to 31 in four overs on the back of six fours. But India lost the momentum as slow bowling did the trick for West Indies.

Mandhana missed off-spinner

Karishma Ramharack's (2/14) ball completely, resulting in an easy stumping for wicketkeeper Rasha Williams. Last game match-winner Jemimah Rodrigues (1) became Hayley Matthews (1/12) first and only victim of the day as the skipper took a stellar catch of her own bowling.

After two low-scoring overs, Shafali tried to up the ante only to be caught at long leg and West Indies picked three wickets in quick succession.

Harmanpreet took her time to settle down before hitting back-to-back fours off Afy Fletcher (0/24) in the ninth over. The India skipper's knock came off 42 balls with the help of three boundaries.

Ghosh did what she does best - finish the game. The youngster hit five fours, including one to finish off the match in her unbeaten 32-ball innings. She took India to 119/4 in 18.1 overs.

Earlier, Pooja Vastrakar (1/21), opening with the new ball, gave India the early breakthrough, get-



RICHA GHOSH

ting rid of the dangerous Hayley Matthews (2), striking on her very first ball.

The West Indies skipper was done in by the extra bounce as Richa Ghosh completed a regulation catch. Pooja continued to put pressure on the West Indies, bowling a wicket maiden.

Shemaine Campbelle (30) hit West Indies' first boundary in the third over, slapping a Renuka Singh (1/22) delivery past square leg. The introduction of spin led to West Indies collecting 12 runs, including two fours from Rajeshwari Gayakwad's over.

West Indies were 53/1 at the halfway mark. Campbelle and Stefan Taylor (42) steadied the West Indies innings as they slowly but steadily stitched a 73-run partnership between them.

However, twin strikes from the ever-reliable Deepti led to a mini batting collapse. The off-spinner, first, punished Campbelle for going for a reverse sweep with Smriti

Mandhana completing a lovely catch at short third.

Three balls later, she trapped Taylor leg before which was initially deemed not out by the umpire but India successfully reviewed the decision and got it changed.

Chinelle Henry (2) was the next to go as Mandhana and Ghosh effected her run out. India were able to stem the flow of runs but their fielding was found wanting. Deepti dropped Chedean Nation on 3 in the 16th over.

Nation and Shabika Gajrabi (15) took West Indies past the 100-run mark. Deepti reached the 100-wicket milestone in the last over when she bamboozled Aly Fletcher (0).

BRIEF SCORES

West Indies Women 118/6 (Stefanie Taylor 42, Shemaine Campbelle 30; Deepti Sharma 3/15) **lost to India Women 119/4** (Richa Ghosh 44 n o, Harmanpreet Kaur 33, Shafali Verma 28; Karishma Ramharack 2/14) **by 6 wickets.**



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Feb 15: India Wednesday briefly claimed the top spot in the ICC Test rankings to become the number one ranked side in all three formats of the game only to drop back to number two in the longest format.

India's two had dislodged the Pat Cummins-led Australia, according to an ICC update in the afternoon. Already the top T20 side, India had reached the number one spot in ODIs last month after beating New Zealand 3-0.

However, after the latest update in the evening, India have moved back to the second spot behind Australia in Test rankings. India (115) are 11 rating points behind Australia (126) in the Test rankings.

Among individuals, India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin jumped to the second spot in the Men's Test Bowlers Rankings following his eight-wicket show against Australia in Nagpur.

Left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja, who made a successful comeback after almost five months due to a knee injury, has moved up to the 16th position, courtesy his player-of-the-match winning effort

in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series-opener.

The spin duo haunted Australia in the first Test between by sharing 15 wickets between them as India won by an innings 132 runs inside three days.

Ashwin ensured India wrapped up a stunning victory before tea on the third day, as the veteran off-spinner took 5/37 in the second innings to go with 3/42 earlier in the match.

The 36-year-old is 21 rating points behind Australia captain Pat Cummins and is contention to return to the No.1 ranking for the first time since 2017.

While Ashwin stepped up in what turned out to be the last session of the Test, Jadeja did the damage on the first day with 5/47. Jadeja then took 2/34 in the second Australian innings. Australia were bowled out for just 91.

Among other Indian bowlers, pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who too has been out of action since September last due to a lower back stress fracture, is placed fifth.

In the Test batting chart, India captain Rohit Sharma has been rewarded for his match-defining

ton in Nagpur: He gained two spots to be at number eight.

Rohit came to the crease after Australia were all out for 177 in their first innings, then made the wicket look all-but tame with an assured 120 that set the tone for the rest of the match.

Wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant, who will be out of action for an indefinite period following his horrific car accident, is the other Indian batter in top-10. He is placed seventh.

In contrast Australian openers David Warner and Usman Khawaja have paid the price for being dismissed cheaply twice. Warner has fallen six places to 20th after his scores of 1 and 10, while Khawaja has dropped two spots to 10th after only making 1 and 5 in the first Test.

Australian duo of Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith occupy the top two positions with Pakistan captain Babar Azam in the third spot.

India all-rounder Axar Patel has leaped six places to seventh in Test all-rounder rankings after coming to the crease at a tense 240/7. He hit a patient 84 for his highest score in the format.

Starc hopeful of playing 2nd Test vs India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 15: An optimistic Mitchell Starc on Wednesday said he was hopeful of returning to the Australian playing XI for the second Test against India, starting here Friday.

The pace ace missed the series opener, which Australia lost by an innings and 132 runs inside three days, due to a tendon damage to his left middle finger. He arrived in India Saturday.

"There's a few boxes to tick but it's on track. I'd like to be a little further down the road (in the recovery)," Starc told reporters. "But it's progressing - not as fast as I would have liked, but it's as planned in terms of the medical stuff. I'll do everything I can to be fully available for selection. Then it's a discussion for the rest of the group involved," he added.

Australia have been laid low by injuries to key players including Starc and all-rounder Cameron Green, who is also recovering from a finger injury. The duo trained Wednesday, bowling on a centre-wicket strip, while Green also batted for over an hour. A call on their selection will be taken Thursday.

The left-arm pacer said his finger is still not at full strength. "Still lacking a bit of strength having been in a splint for six weeks. There's still a fair bit of restriction there, it's progressing each day," said Starc.

Old boy Coman returns to hunt PSG



MIXED FEELING: Kingsley Coman raises his hands denying to celebrate his goal against PSG, Tuesday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, Feb 15: Kingsley Coman - a player who was raised by PSG - struck the only goal of the match to help Bayern Munich take a one goal advantage over his former side going into the Champions League round of 16 second leg.

Not even Kylian Mbappe's substitute appearance could end PSG's slump, as they lost 0-1 at home to

Bayern in the first leg of their round of 16 clash. A third straight loss made it five defeats in 11 games this year for PSG coach Christophe Galtier's team.

Bayern winger Coman volleyed home inside the penalty area from Alphonso Davies' left-wing cross in the 53rd minute Tuesday. The Paris-raised Coman, who PSG sold to Juventus when he was 18, held his hands up to show he wasn't cele-

brating scoring against his former club - again.

"It's the city where I was born and raised so it was difficult to celebrate here," Coman said. "Given our performance we could have done more, but at the end it was a bit difficult so we're satisfied with the win."

When Bayern won the last of their six Champions League titles in 2020, they beat PSG 1-0 with Coman heading home the winner.

The World Cup superstar Mbappe made an unexpectedly quick recovery from injury and had two would-be goals disallowed for offside after coming on in the second half. The return leg is March 8.

PSG were eliminated by Real Madrid in the last 16 last season and may need Mbappe at his best to avoid another early exit. Mbappe showed no ill effects of the thigh tear he sustained two weeks ago.

He had a shot saved by Yann Sommer in the 73rd after racing through down the left. Sommer saved Neymar's follow-up and the ball fell to Mbappe near the line, but he was well offside.

Mbappe peeled away in delight after volleying Nuno Mendes' cross from close range with 10 minutes left, but it was chalked off following a quick video review.

Bayern's defence held firm under some late pressure, although defender Benjamin Pavard received a second yellow card was sent off for a late tackle on Lionel Messi in stoppage time.

Bayern immediately generated pressure from the start against a nervous-looking PSG by closing down high up the field. PSG hadn't lost three straight games since late 2011, which was only months into the new reign of Qatari owners QSI.

The dominance of Julian Nagelsmann's team in midfield was so complete that it forced Messi to drop deep to get the ball, and Neymar was anonymous for most of the match.

BRAHIM STRIKE HELPS AC MILAN TOP SPURS



Brahim Diaz (C) reacts after scoring against Spurs, Tuesday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Milan, Feb 15: An early goal was enough for troubled AC Milan to edge Tottenham 1-0 in their first Champions League knockout match in nearly 10 years.

Brahim Diaz netted in the seventh minute on Tuesday to give Milan a slender advantage to take to London when the teams meet again in the second leg of the round of 16 March 8. But the Rossoneri could be left counting the cost of two late missed opportunities that their coach thought were going to end up in the back of the net.

It was a miserable return to San Siro for Tottenham manager Antonio Conte, who endured only his second loss against Milan in 15 matches as coach. The former Inter Milan and Juventus coach had engineered 10 victories over the Rossoneri.

It was also Spurs' second straight defeat since Conte returned to the dugout following gallbladder surgery. Spurs lost 1-4 at Leicester in the Premier League Saturday.

For Milan, it is a further sign that things might be turning around after a tough run. Milan were winless in their past seven matches, including losing their previous four matches, before Friday's 1-0 win over Torino.

The match at San Siro was Milan's first in the Champions League knockout stage since 2014. They haven't reached the quarter-finals since 2012.

And the Rossoneri got their return off to the perfect start. Theo Hernandez saw his shot parried by Fraser Forster and Tottenham's goalkeeper then did brilliantly to claw away Diaz's effort from the rebound but the Milan midfielder bundled in from point-blank range on the second attempt.

Raina inaugurates MGM SSCEC



POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 15: Former India cricketer Suresh Raina Wednesday inaugurated the MGM School of Sports & Centre of Excellence for Cricket (SSCEC) at Kapursingh, Gurudijhatia here.

Another former India cricketer and IPL governing council member Pragyans Ojha, Sports & Youth Services Minister Tusharkanti

Behera, Agriculture Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain, Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) secretary Sanjay Behera as well as OCA vice president and MGM School of Sports chief Pankaj Lochan Mohanty, among others, graced the occasion.

Raina praised development of sports infrastructures in the state. "It is good to see that sports disciplines other than hockey are also growing in Odisha. MGM Academy

will definitely encourage the local players and it will work as boost in the development of the sports in Odisha," said the former cricketer.

Ojha, on the other hand, also expressed his delight. "I used to be out of words when I was asked about the lack of Odisha cricketers in the international stage. However, the development in infrastructures in the state in past few years will certainly help the Odia players get the opportunity at the highest stage in a few years time," he said.

Notably, the centre has been built in 30 acres of land. The work of cricket ground has been completed, while the indoor facility and players' accommodation facility are likely to be completed within next six months. The project carries a budget of ₹40 crore.

Sania shakes hands with cricket, WPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 15: Indian tennis icon Sania Mirza, who played her last Grand Slam at the Australian Open last month, was roped in by the Royal Challengers Bangalore team as its mentor in the upcoming Women's Premier League.

"It is a pleasure for me to join the RCB women's team as a mentor," the winner of six Grand Slam and 43 WTA titles said in an RCB statement.

"Indian women's cricket has seen a tectonic shift with the Women's Premier League, and I am really looking forward to being a part of this re-

volutionary pitch," Mirza said in a statement issued by the franchise. "RCB and its brand philosophy perfectly resonates with my vision and outlook as that's how I have approached my playing career and it's also how I see contributing to sports post my retirement."

"RCB has been a popular team and much followed team in the IPL over the years. I am immensely happy to see them building a team for the Women's Premier League."

"It will push the women's sports to new heights in the country, open new doors to women cricketers and help make sports the first career

choice for young girls and young parents with a girl child," she added.

Sania retired from the sport after the Australian Open earlier this year, where she and her partner Rohan Bopanna finished runners-up in the mixed doubles event. She has announced that the ATP Dubai Open later this month would be her swansong tournament as she's expected to join the franchise after that.

On the appointment of Sania as mentor, Rajesh V Menon, head and vice president of RCB said, "We are glad and honoured to welcome Sania Mirza as mentor of the RCB women's team.

She is the perfect role model with her success stemming out of her sheer hard work, passion, and determination, despite many challenges in her playing career."

"Sania is someone our young generation looks up to and she can motivate, encourage our team as she herself has been an uber competitive player who understands how to overcome challenges and handle pressure at various situations at the highest level of sports."

