



AIMING VERSATILITY

Actor Kriti Sanon says she doesn't want to be typecast as an actor who only does certain kinds of roles

LEISURE P2



PROTESTS HIT IRAN

Protesters march through the streets of multiple cities overnight amid the months-long unrest

INTERNATIONAL P10



INDIA FACE ENGLAND

India look for an improved show when they take on a formidable England side in their Women's T20 World Cup match

SPORTS P12

Eknath Shinde faction is real Shiv Sena: EC



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 17: The Election Commission Friday recognised the Eknath Shinde-led faction as the real Shiv Sena and ordered allocation of the 'bow and arrow' poll symbol to it. In a 78-page order on the protracted battle for control of the organisation, the Commission allowed the Uddhav Thackeray faction to keep the 'flaming torch' poll symbol allocated to it till the completion of the Assembly bypolls in the state.

The Commission said MLAs backing Eknath Shinde got nearly 76 per cent of votes polled in favour of the 55 winning Shiv Sena candidates in the 2019 Maharashtra Assembly polls. The Uddhav Thackeray faction's MLAs got 23.5 per cent of votes polled in favour of the winning Shiv Sena candidates, the three-member Commission said in a unanimous order.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray described as dangerous for democracy the Election Commission's decision.



BUSY BEES: Beekeepers examine honeybees in beehives at an apiary on the outskirts of Jammu, Friday

PTI PHOTO

Odisha's SS Das to head BCCI selection panel



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: With the chairman of the BCCI senior selection committee Chetan Sharma resigning from his position Friday, sources said that Odisha's Shiv Sundar Das has been named interim chairman. Das becomes the first person from Odisha to head the prestigious panel.

Chetan was forced to resign after some of his controversial comments captured during a 'sting' operation went viral on social media platforms. Sharma met senior board officials Thursday where he was told that senior cricketers of the Indian team including Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya and Virat Kohli have lost faith in him.

Das has played 23 Tests for India and four ODIs. Sources said Friday that the BCCI decided to name Shiv Sundar interim chairman of the senior selection panel keeping his experience in mind.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Days of democracy are numbered. EC expects us to follow the Model Code of Conduct

No spl category for Odisha: Sitharaman

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: Rejecting Odisha's decade-long demand for special category status (SCS), Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Friday said no more special category status will be given to any state as per the recommendation of the Finance Commission.

"The Finance Commission has said no special status can be given. However, it was considered for Telangana after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh," Sitharaman said while addressing a post-budget press conference here.

She also commented on the concerns raised by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on the reduction of allocation in the Union Budget for MGNREGA and paddy procurement.

"The fund allocation for MGNREGA has not gone down. It is a demand driven scheme and as and when the demand increases, the Centre provides money," Sitharaman said. "Budget time allocation is one thing... and the scheme itself is a demand driven scheme, as and when demand increases, we provide funds for it. This has been done in past years since 2014."

"If you look into the past years, we have added some money in the supplementary budget for MGN-



THE FINANCE COMMISSION HAS SAID NO SPECIAL STATUS CAN BE GIVEN. HOWEVER, IT WAS CONSIDERED FOR TELANGANA AFTER THE BIFURCATION OF ANDHRA PRADESH

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | UNION FINANCE MINISTER

REGA. Even during Covid pandemic, the allocation for the scheme has crossed ₹1 lakh crore," she said.

"We make an allocation during the budget estimate and throughout the year. As and when the demand goes up, we revise it and in the supplementary grants, we add more. This is in contrast with what happened between 2004 to 2014," said Sitharaman.

Commenting on funding for procurement of wheat and paddy, she said that the government has not brought it down at all.

Sitharaman said the total amount given to farmers is very high as the minimum support price has gone up. "The total amount spent on

procurement is at an all-time high now. You can be sure there is no coming down in these figures," she said.

"The quantum of procurement in the eight years compared to any time prior has gone up. And because the MSP rate is high, the total amount given to farmers after procurement is also very high," said the Finance Minister.

"Total amount spent on procurement is at all-time high now," she added. She also said there is no short-fall of fund for Ayushman Bharat Yojana. The Finance Minister also made it clear that the Centre is not going to make any disinvestment in NALCO.

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'Adani turmoil may weaken Modi govt'



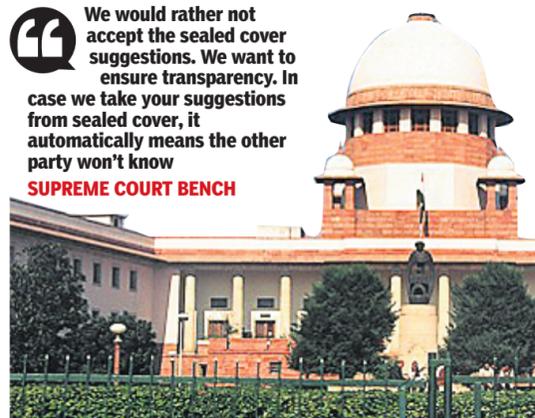
NEW DELHI: Billionaire philanthropist George Soros believes the turmoil at Gautam Adani's business empire may weaken Prime Minister Narendra Modi's hold on the government - a statement which was strongly countered by BJP as an attack on Indian democracy. Soros, in a speech at the Munich Security Conference Thursday, said Modi would "have to answer questions" from foreign investors and Parliament on allegations the Adani group is facing. His speech drew sharp reactions. Ruling BJP said Soros was not only targeting the Prime Minister but also the Indian democratic system. "Modi and business tycoon Adani are close allies; their fate is intertwined," Soros claimed. "Adani is accused of stock manipulation and his stock collapsed like a house of cards. Modi is silent on the subject, but he will have to answer questions from foreign investors and in Parliament." "This will significantly weaken Modi's stranglehold on India's federal government and open the door to push for much needed institutional reforms," he said. "I may be naive, but I expect a democratic revival in India."

No sealed cover, be transparent, says SC

ADANI ROW

We would rather not accept the sealed cover suggestions. We want to ensure transparency. In case we take your suggestions from sealed cover, it automatically means the other party won't know

SUPREME COURT BENCH



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 17: The Supreme Court Friday refused to accept in a sealed cover the Centre's suggestion on a proposed panel of experts for strengthening regulatory measures for stock markets in the wake of the recent Adani Group shares crash triggered by Hindenburg Research's fraud allegations.

Observing that it wanted "full transparency for protection of investors," the top court also ruled out the possibility of any sitting judge overseeing the functioning of the proposed panel.

"We are closing it for orders," said the bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud after hearing brief submissions by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and PIL petitioners including lawyers Prashant Bhusan and ML Sharma.

At the outset, the law officer said he had given a note on the names and "remit" (scope) of the committee in a sealed cover. "This has been given with two intentions in mind. A. A holistic view is taken and the truth comes out; B. No unintended message goes out having an impact on the security market, which is an emotion driven market," Mehta said. The bench referred to the losses suffered by the investors.

The law officer said he has no issues with regard to any judge supervising the committee.

"We would rather not accept the sealed cover suggestions. We want to ensure transparency. In case we

take your suggestions from sealed cover, it automatically means the other party won't know," said the bench, which also comprised Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala. "We want full transparency for the protection of investors. We will form a committee. There will be a sense of confidence in the court," the bench said.

"Sitting (SC) judges can hear the matter and they cannot be the part of the committee," the CJ said, adding he has been facing difficulties in setting up benches everyday.

February 10, the top court had said the interest of Indian investors need to be protected against market volatility in the backdrop of the Adani stocks rout and asked the Centre to consider setting up a panel of domain experts headed by a former judge to look at strengthening the regulatory mechanism.

The crucial hearing on the PILs Friday assumed significance in the wake of the recent developments like the Centre agreeing to the apex court's proposal to set up a committee, likely to be headed by a former Supreme Court judge, to go into the regulatory regimes.

Stressing that statutory bodies like market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) are "fully equipped" and are on job, the central government had expressed apprehension that any "unintentional" message to the investors that regulatory bodies in India needed monitoring by a panel may have some adverse impact on the flow of money into the country.

Humpback whales are singing less, fighting more

WITH THEIR POPULATION BALLOONING, THIS SHIFT IN BEHAVIOUR IS A RESULT OF NOT WANTING TO ATTRACT OTHER MALES TO A POTENTIAL MATE

AGENCIES

Brisbane, Feb 17: As eastern Australian humpback whale populations have recovered over the years, males have adapted their mating strategy in a highly strategic way, new research finds.

Researchers analysed 123 days' worth of data on Australian humpbacks (Megaptera novaeangliae), collected from 1997 to 2015, and found male humpbacks sang less and fought more as the whale population ballooned.

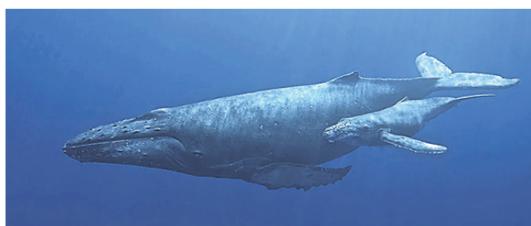
This shift in behaviour is a result of not wanting to attract other

males to a potential mate, explains the research published in Communications Biology.

Humpbacks have recovered significantly since 1965, when the species became globally protected.

One population off Australia's east coast grew from less than 500 in the 1960s and is estimated to contain at least 30,000 today. This population has provided experts with a rich dataset. The males in particular are great subjects thanks to their striking song broadcasts.

As the eastern humpback population grew, males weren't singing as much as they used to. Instead



they were increasingly opting to quietly find a female to mate with, or fighting off other male competition.

Specifically, the proportion of

singing males decreased from two in ten in 2003-2004, to only one in ten by 2014-2015. Data from 2003-2004 also show males were less likely to sing when they had a

higher proportion of males in their social circle.

And it seems the change in tactics led to a change in results. In 1997 singing males were almost twice as likely as their counterparts to be seen joining with a female and escorting her, likely to attempt to mate. But by 2014-2015, non-singing males were almost five times more likely to be seen joining a group with a female.

A species will carry out a behaviour for as long as the benefits outweigh the costs. If something changes, and the costs start to outweigh the benefits, they will stop.

Contd...P4

leisure



WILLIS DIAGNOSED WITH DEMENTIA

Bruce Willis' condition has now deteriorated into frontotemporal dementia, according to the latest diagnosis. Earlier, the family announced that the actor had been diagnosed with aphasia and would retire from acting. He was last seen in 2019's *Motherless Brooklyn* and the M. Night Shyamalan movie *Glass*.

SHAKIRA TAKES A DIG AT EX GERARD PIQUE

Singer Shakira joined a popular trend on TikTok as she seemingly took a jab at her ex-partner Gerard Pique after he went Instagram official with his new 23-year-old girlfriend Clara Chia. In the video, Shakira mopped her kitchen floor as she lip-synced to SZA's viral song *Kill Bill*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Sometimes, pressure is a good thing, as it brings out the best in you. You will outshine your colleagues in whatever you choose to do. But your expectations may far exceed the outcome. Ganesh asks that you have patience. Results take time.

TAURUS
Today might be a day of untying and getting out of the tangles, says Ganesh. You may take the blame for the actions of another. Things may get frustrating around the afternoon and your confidence levels may stoop. Work on your strength and work out your weaknesses, advises Ganesh.

GEMINI
You had better start sharing your feelings with your family today, says Ganesh. Also, it's time to tell your family about your current financial status. It will help you feel better. Your energy levels will soar and you will approach everything with renewed vigour.

CANCER
You may discuss certain serious issues with your beloved today, predicts Ganesh. Your time till afternoon will be spent in discussions and deliberations about the issue. However, this issue may not be enough in letting you off the hook on the work front.

LEO
After a long time, it seems as if the stars are aligning to bring something special for you. Call it your field day, but today, everything will go your way, says Ganesh. Expect to get appreciated for your hard work in office. As for the home front, you will get all the support you need from your family members for refurbishing your home.

VIRGO
Surf's up as you enjoy an unexpected achievement! But your joy ride today may well be spent in vexing about the problems you have. Expect to gain new money for a new venture. Your business will rise atop the highest wave today, foretells Ganesh.

LIBRA
Working for the government is always a key responsibility, says Ganesh. But today of all days proves to be fabulous and phenomenal for all those in government service. Your actions will translate into accomplishment and you may rest assured that you shall be duly recognized and rewarded for your meritorious service.

SCORPIO
Your business associates will emerge as intangible assets for you today, says Ganesh. You will probably start off an innovative joint venture without any doubt or indecision. Hard work and enthusiasm are always a good combination for achieving success.

SAGITTARIUS
It is not your nature to warm the bench, but you will wake up feeling lazy and laid-back today, says Ganesh. This may be due to the fatigue of some recent endeavours. For a change, you will try and delegate your work and responsibility to those around you.

CAPRICORN
Plans for expanding business may require you to take risks, leaving you in a dilemma on more than one occasion. In such desperate circumstances, following your instincts can lead you to success, advises Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
Amid all the boring work buzz, you will manage to sustain your sense of humour. And, why not? After all, you are an expert at inducing a laugh riot! You are in a gregarious mood and that explains it. This also makes you a welcome guest at any party you may wish to grace.

PISCES
A day wherein you will be handling responsibilities on both the home front and at the workplace awaits you, says Ganesh. Expect to be involved in home refurbishing projects, where expenses are likely to soar. Appreciation and gratitude will come your way at the end of a hard day's work.

Don't want to be a serious actor: Kriti

Mumbai: Kriti Sanon has been consistently making headlines with her ascending career graph. So far, she has played a mixed bag of roles, ranging from the girl next door in Bareilly ki Barfi to the meaningful single mother in Mimi. With the recent mild hit, *Bhediya*, *Shehzada* is the latest one to be added to her brochure. She says she doesn't want to be typecast as an actor who only does certain kinds of roles and is happy to do roles in which she has fun rather than only doing serious films.

Shehzada, which is slated for release this

Friday across theaters, is a comedy-action drama based on the 2020 film *Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo*, a huge Telugu hit. The original film has Allu Arjun playing the lead. The Hindi remake has her acting with Kartik Aaryan.

Kriti brushed aside concerns raised by her fans who complained about the bare minimum scope of a female lead in *Shehzada*. She said that while she is happy to do films like *Mimi* and *Adipurush* for the 'creative satisfaction', she also takes pleasure in playing fun roles.



Urvashi cheers for Rishabh

Mumbai: Actress Urvashi Rautela has called Rishabh Pant 'India's pride' and 'asset' after learning about his health.

Urvashi was pictured at Mumbai airport, where she was asked by paparazzi Viral Bhayani about the condition of cricketer Rishabh Pant, who is undergoing treatment after a car accident a few months ago.

The paparazzi asked her about the cricketer's post about his recovery, Urvashi, who looked drop-dead-gorgeous in a fiery red colour outfit, seemed awkward and asked: "Kaunsi photo?"

She replied: "He is an asset to our country, India's pride."

The cameraperson replied that their good wishes are with him. To which, Urvashi said: "Hamari bhi (Mine as well)." Urvashi opted for a red outfit for her airport look. After the news of Pant's accident made headlines, Urvashi had posted a cryptic note: "Praying, love Urvashi Rautela."

Earlier, Urvashi had shared a black and white photograph featuring the Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital building, where Pant was admitted for treatment.

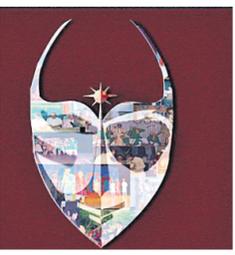


SATABDIRA KALAKAR'S KALINGA NATYA MAHOTSAV

Five-day multilingual theatre fest from Feb 19

BHUBANESWAR: Satabdira Kalakar, one of the oldest theatre troupes of Odisha, is going to organise its annual National Multilingual Drama Festival titled Kalinga Natya Mahotsav here at Rabindra Mandap from February 19 to 28. The festival, to be held in collaboration with Union Culture Ministry, Culture Department of Odisha and Sangeet Natak Akademi, will also mark the troupe's 25th iteration this year.

While the event will open with Hindi play *Court Martial* (by Ujjain-based Abhinav Rang Mandal), it will conclude with a Bengali play *Neel Piriter Phul* (By Kolkata's Ebong Amra). The host organisation will present two Odia plays - *Matula Sambad* and *Harmonium* on the second and third day of the festival. Bhubaneswar-based theatre troupe Bidyakanak Srujanasthana will stage *Sunantu He Abhimanyu Mane* on the penultimate day of the Mahotsav, informed Dhira Mallick, the general secretary of the troupe, at a presser.



Eminent theatre director Braja Kishore Mohanty, actress Nibedita Jena and theatre personality Trilochan Prasad Sahu will be conferred with Sumitra Samman, Pramila Prativa Samman and Lifetime Achievement award respectively. Several dignitaries of the state including a few officials of Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi will grace the occasion every evening. This apart, some eminent theatre personalities and journalists will also be felicitated during the festival, added Mallick who will direct the Odia play *Matula Sambad*, written by Suryamani Tripathy.

RK's Chembur bungalow sold for ₹100cr

The Indian Film and Television Directors Association had earlier appealed to Godrej to build a Raj Kapoor Museum on the site of RK Studio

Mumbai: The late legend of Hindi film industry Raj Kapoor's one-acre bungalow property in the eastern suburb of Chembur has been sold to Godrej Properties for a reported Rs 100 crore.

India's leading real estate developer plans to develop a premium residential project. According to sources, Pirojsha Godrej, executive chairman of Godrej Properties, said, "The land is one acre, and we expect revenue of approximately Rs 500 crore from the project."

The site is located at Deonar Farm Road, Chembur, and is adjacent to the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), and is considered to be an upscale residen-

tial neighbourhood in Chembur. The land was purchased from the Kapoor family, legal heirs of the late veteran.

Regarding the deal, Randhir Kapoor, the eldest son of Raj Kapoor, replied, "This property in Chembur has been of tremendous significance to my family over the many decades that RK Studios operated from there. We are excited to have chosen Godrej Properties to script a new chapter for this location and build upon its rich history."

Godrej Properties acquired the 2.2-acre RK Studios in Chembur from the Kapoors in May 2019 for around Rs 180 crore to develop a premium mixed-use project, Godrej RKS. The Indian Film and Television Directors Association had then appealed to Godrej to build a Raj Kapoor Museum on the site of the studio.

Raj Kapoor built the studio in 1948, one year after

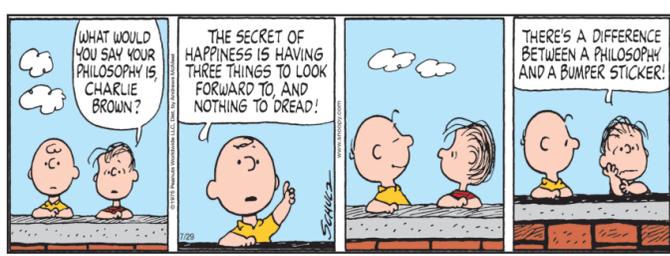
India's independence. With the pilot project Aag failing at the box office, the studio found success with Barsaat, which contributed to the studio's logo. Raj Kapoor went on to di-

rect and produce several projects under its banner over the next few decades, the last one being Rishi Kapoor's *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* in 1999.

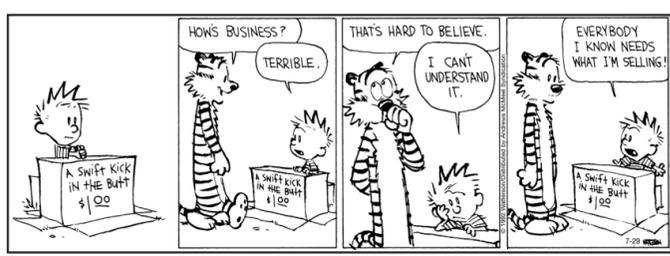
According to news reports, the Kapoor family found the cost of maintaining the studio to be too high. Some years ago, a fire that broke out at the property left a portion of the studio gutted.



PEANUTS



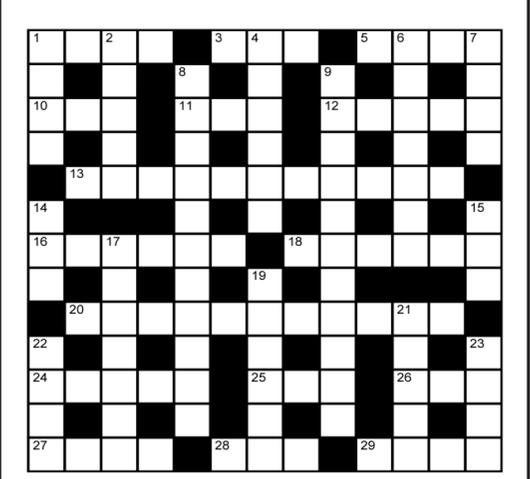
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



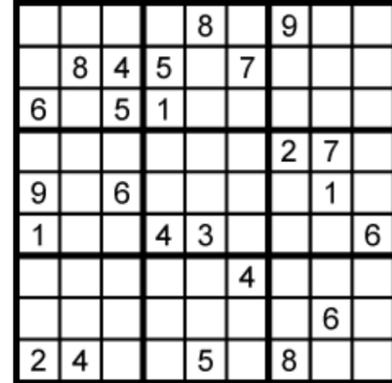
FUN post CROSSWORD



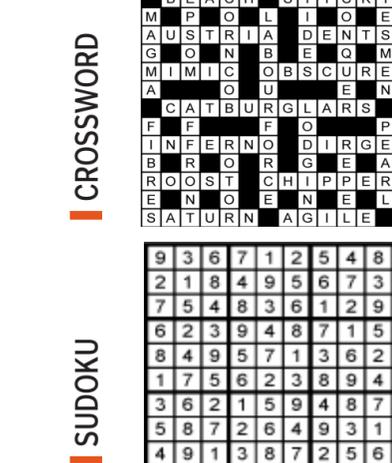
- Across
- 1 They have snake eyes, at times
 - 3 Choose
 - 5 Foil's relative
 - 10 Energy
 - 11 Corn spike
 - 12 Frequently
 - 13 Painting type (5-6)
 - 16 Journalist
 - 18 Lissome
 - 20 Mandarin orange, for example (6,5)
 - 24 Celestial path
 - 25 Greek letter
 - 26 Metal container
 - 27 Drags behind
 - 28 Mutton cut
 - 29 Vessel part
 - 7 Sicilian volcano
 - 8 Ricochet, as sound
 - 9 Source of vitamins A and D (3-5,3)
 - 14 Expend
 - 15 Car starter
 - 17 Storm follower, at times
 - 19 Ego
 - 21 Lay to rest
 - 22 Young horse
 - 23 Charles Percy ____, English author

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



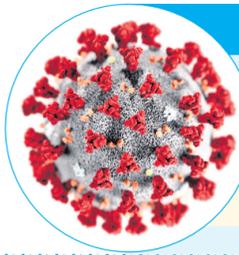
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



PORTAL LAUNCHED

Website of 'Sneha Sampoorna' ethnic brand was unveiled at Buddha Mandir in Bhubaneswar, Friday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	67,83,46,543	65,09,07,632	67,88,139
India	4,46,84,658	4,41,52,039	5,30,757
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

CM unveils KISS 2nd campus, sports infra

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday inaugurated the second campus of KISS Deemed to be University and several sports stadiums on the premises of KIIT and KISS.

The second campus has been built with an expenditure of ₹100 crore that houses academic buildings, a large library and hostels for 3,000 girls and as many boys. The programme was attended by ST/SC Development Minister Jagannath Saraka and Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das, among others.

The sports facilities inaugurated by the Chief Minister included the ₹500 crore Biju Patnaik Multipurpose Indoor Stadium; Dilip Tirkey Hockey Stadium; Abhinav Bindra Indoor Shooting Range; Rahul Bose Rugby Stadium; Debasish Mohanty and Shiv Sundar Das Cricket Stand; Viswanathan Anand Chess Hall; Leander Paes



CM Naveen Patnaik, KIIT-KISS founder Achyuta Samanta and eminent sportspersons during the inaugural occasion in Bhubaneswar, Friday OP PHOTO

Tennis Stadium; Dutee Chand Athletic Stadium; Amiya Mallick Athletic Stand; Shrabani Nanda Athletic Stand; Minati Mahapatra Cycling Velodrome; Pramod Bhagat Badminton Indoor Hall and Sradhanjali Samantaray Football Stadium.

All these legends except Anand and Bindra (who were present virtually) were present on the occasion and participated in a seminar on the sidelines of the event. They hailed the efforts of KIIT-KISS founder Achyuta Samanta, saying his decision to name the sporting

facilities after the sporting legends in a university is unique. Sports Secretary R Vineel Krishna was also present on the occasion.

"We have set an example for others by naming the sports facilities after the sporting legends. This is a historic occasion for all of us. No other place in this country has so many sporting facilities named after so many sportspersons," Samanta said, expressing his gratitude to the Chief Minister for inaugurating the sporting facilities.

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"We have set an example for others by naming the sports facilities after the sporting legends. This is a historic occasion for all of us. No other place in this country has so many sporting facilities named after so many sportspersons," Samanta said, expressing his gratitude to the Chief Minister for inaugurating the sporting facilities.

Online sales no threat to offline biz: Navpreet

Amidst global headwinds like Ukraine-Russia war, businesses have suffered a huge jolt, especially during Covid-19 pandemic. Jewellery sector has been hit severely by the rising prices of precious metals.

Navpreet Singh, director of Indera Jewels Pvt Ltd. (a franchisee of Tanishq in western Odisha), speaks to Orissa POST about the challenges and prospects of jewellery business in the state. Singh's family has been into retail business in Rourkela for five decades and their jewellery store at Rourkela was launched about 15 years ago, in Sambalpur about eight years back and in Jharsuguda three years ago



What are the major challenges faced by the jewellery industry?

Today the biggest challenge to the jewellery industry is rising prices of gold and diamonds. The never-ending war between Russia and Ukraine is adding to the uncertainty in the market.

Gold jewellery sales need trust, and touch & feel factors which are very difficult to incorporate in online business. However, in India online jewellery business has witnessed rapid growth. Do you think it would be a threat to offline sales in future?

Not really. Online jewellery purchase is mostly confined to fashion jewellery segment. It will rather be a catalyst to the brick and mortar stores. Every brand/industry wants to be present online but major sales will continue to happen in the stores definitely.

What are the trends in jewellery industry now?

With the rising gold prices, light weight jewellery is trending what we have noticed. Customers are coming with fixed budgets say for a wedding or an occasion and hence the new collection in light weight jewellery. Tanishq as a brand has added a great variety in affordable price points which is definitely going to be a treat for the customers.

Tell us about your education and work experience.

I am a B.Com (Hons.) graduate from St Xavier's College, Kolkata and also an alumnus of The Doon School, Dehradun. I started my career in Mumbai working with the audit division of Deloitte at Deloitte Haskins and Sales. Later, I moved back to my hometown Rourkela. We have an MBO dealing in apparel, saree and lifestyle products - Indera Textiles. We have franchise for Manyavar at Rourkela, Sambalpur,

Jharsuguda and Sundargarh. We also have franchise for Fabindia at the Steel city. We are business associates of Tanishq in Rourkela, Sambalpur and Jharsuguda.



Naveen launches investment projects worth ₹1,650 crore

THE CM INAUGURATES TWO PROJECTS IN PLASTIC SECTOR & LAYS STONE FOR 17 OTHER PROJECTS THAT WOULD JOINTLY CREATE 4,500 JOBS

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday inaugurated two investment projects and performed ground breaking for 17 other projects.

With an investment of ₹1,650 crore, these projects are expected to provide employment opportunities to 4,500 people across sectors like plastic, seafood processing, manufacturing, tourism, information technology (IT) and electronic system design and manufacturing (ESDM), refractory, agro and food processing, pharmaceuticals and steel downstream. The investment intent for these projects was received during Make-in Odisha (MiO) Conclave 2022.

In the plastic sector, two projects in Cuttack worth ₹202 crore - Supreme Industries Ltd and Ashirvad Pipes Private Limited - were inaugurated. A total of 470 employment opportunities are expected to be generated from these projects. In food processing sector, the government initiated the ground-breaking for six projects worth ₹803.6 crore which together are expected to provide 1,459 employment opportunities.

The government also performed the ground-breaking for three projects in the manufacturing segment. These projects will be executed with an investment of ₹293.34 crore and is likely to generate 243 employment opportunities for the youth of the state.

Speaking on the occasion, on a virtual platform, the Chief Minister said that over the years, Odisha has fast emerged as a major manufacturing hub in the country for sectors ranging from metal and minerals to chemical & petrochemicals and food processing, among others.

"We have shifted from a resource-dependent, mineral-based industrial development to more



In the plastic sector, two projects worth ₹202 crore - Supreme Industries Ltd and Ashirvad Pipes Private Limited - were inaugurated in Cuttack. These projects are expected to generate 470 employment opportunities

In food processing segment, the govt initiated the ground-breaking for 6 projects worth ₹803.6 crore which together are expected to provide 1,459 employment avenues

Ground-breaking for three manufacturing projects worth ₹293.34 crore were also performed that would generate 243 employment opportunities

rapid, broad-based and inclusive economic growth across diverse sectors," he said. Patnaik assured to provide required support to the investors looking to explore Odisha as a potential investment destination and also provide the best of opportunities for its people to grow.

"My government has always endeavoured to provide a hassle-free and prompt business environment for the investors in Odisha. Our focus on 5T philosophy in transforming the industrial sector has further strengthened the industry-led ecosystem of value addition, sustainable employment generation and revenue augmentation in the state," he added.

Conclave- 2022 was an outstanding success as the event was attended by business leaders and industry delegates from different sectors across the country, and the event could attract investment intentions of ₹10 lakh crore to Odisha, generating potential for employing around 10 lakh people in the state, Patnaik pointed out.

The Chief Minister said the vision of the state government is to enable faster conversion of investment intents to grounding and provide unmatched facilitation and support to industries.

Welcoming the industries to Odisha, Industries Minister Pratap Keshari Deb said that Odisha is slated to be the next manufacturing hub of the country.

KRUSHI ODISHA 2023

Ramp up efforts to lift paddy: Panda to FCI

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: Science & Technology and Public Enterprises Minister Ashok Chandra Panda Friday said that the Food Corporation of India (FCI) needs to step up its efforts to procure more paddy from Odisha so that daily meals for our countrymen could be ensured.

Speaking at the second day of Krushi Odisha-2023 organised by the Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment department in collaboration with Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Panda said that demand for lifting paddy from mandis across the state is rising. "To enhance the paddy procurement process, close co-ordination between the Centre and state is necessary," he stated.



BRAINSTORMING SESSION: Executive body meeting of Congress Minority Cell was organised at Congress Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Friday

I'm not Mahatma, won't offer another cheek, says Mishra

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: Rejecting the ruling BJD's demand for tendering an apology for allegedly pushing a policewoman during a protest, Leader of the Opposition Jayanarayan Mishra of the BJP Friday said he was not Mahatma Gandhi that he will offer another cheek after being slapped on one.

Mishra, who turned 60 years Friday claimed that he had pushed her in a reflex action as the policewoman, who was wearing a boot, stomped on his foot that has a slipper on.

"I am a victim of police atrocity. I am not Mahatma Gandhi that I will offer another cheek after being slapped on one," he told reporters.

The senior BJP leader was booked under various IPC sections including 354 (outraging the modesty of a woman) for allegedly pushing the cop during a protest in front of the Sambalpur district collector's office Wednesday.

"When Dhanupali police station IIC Anita Pradhan crushed my feet, it went unnoticed. The camerapersons came after that incident and shoot me pushing her... Instead of realising her mistake, she punched me. An argument ensued thereafter," he said.

Reacting over the ruling BJD's demand for his removal from the post of LoP and an apology, Mishra said, "I will tender an apology only when the chief minister issue a statement saying that the police have been given a free hand and those who can't tolerate atrocities can leave the state."

On senior BJD leader and former commissioner of Mumbai Police Arup Patnaik's assertions that had he been in charge, Mishra would have been behind the bar and faced harsh action, the BJP leader said, "I am ready to go to any place where he will beat me up."

Meanwhile, a delegation of the BJP MLAs led by opposition chief whip Mohan Majhi met Governor Ganeshi Lal and submitted a memorandum demanding action against Arup. The saffron camp legislators also filed an FIR with Capital police against Patnaik in this regard.

Goods train derails near Koraput

AGENCIES

Koraput, Feb 17: At least six wagons of a goods train Friday jumped off the track near Koraput railway station.

No loss of life or injury was reported in the accident that took place at Suku, East Coast Railway officials said.

Suku is located 6 km from Koraput railway station. The derailment has affected train service on the single line, the officials said.

The goods train was on way to Visakhapatnam from Kirandul in Chhattisgarh.

Meanwhile, senior railway officials have reached the spot and the work of clearing the track is on.

NASA pics reveal network of gas, dust in nearby galaxies

WEBB'S MID-INFRARED INSTRUMENT IMAGES SHOW THE PRESENCE OF A NETWORK OF HIGHLY STRUCTURED FEATURES WITHIN THESE GALAXIES, INCLUDING GLOWING CAVITIES OF DUST AND MASSIVE CAVERNOUS BUBBLES OF GAS THAT LINE THE SPIRAL ARMS

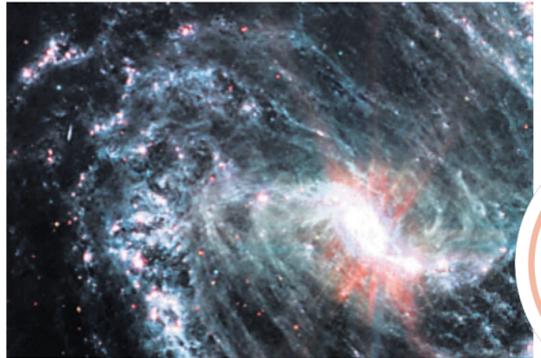
Researchers using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope have revealed the first look at star formation, gas, and dust in nearby galaxies with unprecedented resolution at infrared wavelengths.

According to NASA, the data has enabled an initial collection of 21 research papers which provide new insight into how some of the smallest-scale processes in our universe - the beginnings of star formation - impact the evolution of the largest objects in our cosmos: galaxies. The Webb observations are led

by Janice Lee, Gemini Observatory chief scientist at the US-based National Science Foundation's NOIRLab and affiliate astronomer at the US-based University of Arizona.

"The clarity with which we are seeing the fine structure certainly caught us by surprise," said team member David Thilker of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland.

Webb's Mid-Infrared Instrument (MIRI) images show the presence of a network of highly structured features within these galaxies, in-



cluding glowing cavities of dust and massive cavernous bubbles of gas that line the spiral arms.

"We are directly seeing how the energy from the formation of young stars affects the gas around them, and it's just remarkable," said team member Erik Rosolowsky of the

"Areas which are completely dark in Hubble imaging light up in exquisite detail in these new infrared images, allowing us to study how the dust in the interstellar medium has absorbed the light

The NASA observed that areas which are completely dark in Hubble imaging light up in exquisite detail in these new infrared images

University of Alberta, Canada. The American Space Agency further mentioned that this web of features appears to be built from individual and overlapping shells and bubbles where young stars are releasing energy in some regions of the nearby galaxies observed.

stars and emitted it back out in the infrared, illuminating an intricate network of gas and dust," said team member Karin Sandstrom of the University of California, San Diego.

38-year-old dupes job aspirants of lakhs; held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: The Twin City Commissionerate Police Friday arrested a 38-year-old man on charges of duping job aspirants of lakhs of rupees, an official said.

According to additional commissioner of police (ACP) (Zone IV) Subhanarayan Muduli, the accused, Ranjan Kumar Nayak of Balikuda in Gopalpur area under Cuttack Sadar police limits, targeted gullible youths, mostly from Bhubaneswar, Sambalpur, Bargarh and Kalahandi, by promising them to help land ASO jobs in Orissa High Court.

About the arrest, the ACP said that Akshaya Kumar Mahanta, who hails from Rourkela and resides in Bharatpur area of the City, approached the Pahala police February 15 alleging that he has been duped of Rs 8,02,000 by Ranjan. "Akshaya, who runs a carwash



service in Kalinga Vihar area of the City, came in contact with Ranjan in 2020. Ranjan assured Akshaya to help him get an ASO job in Orissa HC for which Akshaya paid him Rs 8,02,000 in multiple instalments between 2021 and 2022," the ACP said quoting Akshaya's police complaint.

After dillydallying for days, Ranjan provided Akshaya with a fake selection list wherein his name featured under SEBC candidate

list. "Soon, the victim realised the fraud and asked the accused to return his money. Ranjan, however, threatened him of dire consequences," the ACP said.

With no apparent way out, Akshaya approached the police which registered a case and took Ranjan into custody.

During the probe, police stumbled upon another similar case registered against Ranjan with the Pahala police. "Ranjan had also duped Dharanidhara Panda of Rs 7,68,000 on the promise of helping him get an ASO job in Orissa HC," the ACP pointed out.

Fake police uniforms and laboratory aprons were seized from Ranjan's residence. "The accused was produced before a court here that sent him to judicial custody," the ACP said, adding that efforts were on to check possible involvement of more persons in the case.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: Higher Education department principal secretary Bishnupada Sethi among dignitaries inaugurated International Conference on Contemporary Economy in Post-Covid Era at the BJB Autonomous College in Bhubaneswar, Friday

OP PHOTO

Continued from P1

Humpback whales are singing less, fighting more

In the early years of data collection, when there were fewer whales around, a male could sing and broadcast himself to nearby females quite comfortably – not having to worry about hordes of other males wanting his neck.

Now, with a more than burgeoning population, the same tactic attracts the risk of being interrupted by other males.

By the same logic, however, any species under threat that can't adapt to changing population dynamics stands to lose out. Humpbacks have managed to bounce back, but what about the other precious animals in the world?

SCRB awarded for flagship IT system



Special Report Module is a comprehensive platform for special report case supervision on a real-time basis to help in investigation and prevention of crime through use of data available in the police system

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: In an outstanding achievement, the State Crime Records Bureau (SCRB) won NCRB's prestigious 'Running Trophy for Empowering Police with Information Technology' Friday at the All India Police Duty Meet 2023 in Bhopal for its flagship SR (special report) Module System.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik took to Twitter to congratulate the team for winning this national-level award for the second time.

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) director had constituted a technical committee of officers from the agency and from NIC to evaluate IT projects from various states for the award. Odisha SCRB DIG Satyajit Naik was requested to present the state's IT project (SR Module) before the committee February 8. After its evaluation, the committee recommended Odisha's SR Module (special report) as the best among all projects.

"SR Module is a comprehensive

and integrated application platform for SR case supervision on a real-time basis in an online mode, which will also help in the efficient investigation, prevention, and prediction of crime through use of data available in the police system. It has significantly helped in improving service delivery to citizens while also increasing operational efficiency and improving e-policing," said an SCRB official.

The organisers of All India Police Duty Meet recognised the state agency's exceptional contributions to modernization of state's police force using information technology by taking a creative approach towards ensuring effective investigation and supervision keeping the safety, security and welfare of citizens in mind.

This year has been rewarding for the Odisha Police as it has won three national awards including this one such as Interlinking of ICJS with FSL (2nd prize), award for best practices for Crime Management System (CMS), and SAACAR (1st position).

SPURIOUS DRUGS CASE

Team to visit Varanasi to investigate inter-state link

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: In a significant step towards containing the sale of spurious drugs, a special expert team constituted by the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department is set to proceed to Varanasi to investigate inter-state linkages in the procurement and distribution of these drugs.

The team consists of assistant drugs controllers Sudarshan Biswal, Tushar Ranjan Panigrahi, and Dharmadev Puhana along with some police officers.

This development follows the revelations of a Special Task Force (STF) formed for drug enforcement by the state government

H&FW secretary Shalini Pandit has requested her UP counterpart to direct the officials concerned to ensure cooperation with the investigating team from Odisha

which had found inter-state transactions in the supply, distribution and sale of spurious drugs. The medicines ceased from Ashok Medical Hall of Bargarh and Amit Medical Agencies of Jharsuguda were suspected to have supply linkage with Baby Enterprises, JP Medicals and Guru Kripa Medicals

of Varanasi Uttar Pradesh.

In this regard, the H&FW secretary Shalini Pandit urged her counterpart in UP to instruct the concerned authorities there to co-operate with the investigating team from Odisha.

"You may appreciate that the matter related to spurious drugs needs to be attended to with utmost priority in larger public interest. Hence, a team of investigating officers along with police is being deputed to Varanasi. Necessary instructions may be issued to the concerned authorities in UP to extend their cooperation to the team for taking the matter to a logical conclusion," Pandit wrote.

Akshar Yoga sets three Guinness World Records

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: Adding another feather to its cap, Akshar Yoga Research and Development Centre, one of the prestigious institutions in India for yoga, has set three new Guinness World Records for most number of people performing three different yoga asanas at Mandala Yoga Festival in Bangalore.

The mega event saw participants performing Vashishtasana, Ushtrasana and Halasana under the aegis of revered yoga and spiritual mentor Himalayan Siddha Akshar February 11. Presided over by Higher Education Minister CN Ashwath Narayan, it was the largest group ever to simultaneously perform three yoga asanas to set three new Guinness World Records.

The officials inaugurated all three record attempts by the participants and declared the successful completion, with 560 successful participants for Halasana, 510 for Vashishtasana and 572 for Ushtrasana.

No spl category for Odisha: Sitharaman

Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Secretary of the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), said the Centre's divestment aim follows a calibrated strategy and "we do not want to distort the market. Divestment should be realistic."

When asked about the exposure of public sector banks to Adani group companies, Sitharaman said, "SBI had already given a statement on its exposure. You have heard it from the horse's mouth."

She also said that SEBI does not report each and every matter to the Centre. "The matter is being heard in court today, so maybe it's not right for me to comment," she said.

Finance Secretary TV Somanathan said a token amount of money has been provisioned in budget for Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana because the scheme has reached its saturation. Target set by the ministry has been achieved, Somanathan added.

PRIs key to SDG implementation: Min

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: A three-day national workshop on 'localisation of sustainable development goals (SDGs) in gram panchayats through adoption of thematic approaches', organised by Union Panchayati Raj Ministry in collaboration with the state Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department, began at the KIIT Auditorium here, Friday.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister of State for Panchayati Raj, Kapil Moreshwar Patil, said, "Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) play a key role in achieving the SDGs at the grassroots as they are real executors of schemes and programmes of the government. Development of the country mainly depends on the empowerment of the villages."

Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Pradip Kumar



Amat said that former Chief Minister Biju Patnaik had taken a historic step for empowerment of women in the state by reserving 33 per cent of seats for women in the PRIs and urban local bodies.

Later, CM Naveen Patnaik extended the reservation to 50 per cent which has revolutionised the women empowerment in state. Further, through Mission Shakti lakhs of women in state are being economically empowered, setting an example for other states.

Union Minister of Education and Skill Development Dharmendra Pradhan said that Odisha, as the holy land of Lord Jagannath, has always respected female leader-

ship. "It would not have been possible to control Covid-19 had PRI leadership, particularly women leadership, were not there at the grassroots," Pradhan said.

Basanti Hembram, Minister of State (independent charge), Women & Child Development and Mission Shakti said that interpersonal co-operation between PRI representatives, government officials and general public at the grassroots is highly required for successful implementation of the LSDGs by 2030.

Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra highlighted that Odisha is one of the pioneer states in women empowerment and development.

ICICI Foundation donates 7 dialysis machines to SUM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: The ICICI Foundation has gifted seven dialysis machines to Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS) and SUM Hospital, faculty of medicine of Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (SOA) here recently to strengthen the hospital's efforts to extend healthcare to the people.

Senior officials representing ICICI Foundation handed over the equipment to the hospital in the presence of Manojranjan Nayak, Founder President of SOA, at a function held Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Nayak praised ICICI Bank and ICICI Foundation for their efforts to improve healthcare stating they had also extended assistance to IMS and SUM Hospital when it was



fighting the Covid-19 battle.

Medical Superintendent Puspapara Samantasinghar said around 1,600 patients under treatment in the Nephrology department required dialysis support of whom over 1,000 were covered under the state government's Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY). The new dialysis machines would go a long way in catering to the growing needs, he said.

Nephrology HoD Biswaranjan Mohanty said the hospital conducted dialysis for around 80 patients daily.

Those present on the occasion included Pradosh Kumar Rout, Business Head of ICICI Bank, Sanjukta Mohapatra, Odisha Centre Head of ICICI Foundation, Sanghamitra Mishra, Dean of IMS and SUM Hospital, Sarojkanta Samal, SOA's Chartered Accountant, Prahlad Mohanty, OSD, IMS and SUM Hospital, Debaprasad Kar, Biswajit Mishra and Amrita Deo, Associate Professors in the Nephrology department, Deba Prasad Dash, Director, Corporate Communication of SOA, Pushpanjali Rout, Deputy General Manager (Operations), IMS and SUM Hospital, and others.

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Gajapati now 'child marriage-free'

Over 12,000 villages in the state have been declared free from child marriage after they fulfilled the criteria

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, Feb 17: The tribal-dominated Gajapati district was declared 'child marriage-free', becoming the second such district in the state after Ganjam, officials said.

Collector Lingraj Panda announced it Thursday after the district met all the criteria laid by the state government to get the tag.

Among these criteria are no child marriage solemnised in the last two years, village-level child protection committees meet regularly, marriage records maintained in every village and tracking girls who are absent in schools, officials said.

Panda said all 1,710 villages in 149 panchayat areas in seven blocks of the district fulfilled the criteria. The urban areas under Paralakhemundi Municipality and Kashinagar Notified Area



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

Council (NAC) also met the conditions.

Large-scale awareness drives with the help of Anganwadi and ASHA workers were undertaken over the last four years to meet the criteria, he said.

The community leaders were

also involved in the efforts, he said. During the period, the district administration prevented 103 child marriage attempts, officials said.

A team of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage also visited the district

in November to inspect the initiatives undertaken by the district administration, Panda said. Over 12,000 villages in the state have been declared free from child marriage after they fulfilled the criteria, officials said.

The government has also laid down guidelines to be followed after a village is declared 'child marriage free'.

According to the guidelines, the village-level committees should meet regularly and take stock of all awareness activities. They should monitor families identified as vulnerable, and sensitise religious heads.

Ganjam was the first district in the state to get the tag in January last year.

Ganjam was the first district in the state to get the tag in January last year

11 scientists of ISRO visit Berhampur ITI

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 17: A team of 11 scientists from Space Applications Centre (SAC) in Ahmadabad, a major centre of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), attended the Vikram Sarabhai space exhibition held at Berhampur ITI, a report said Friday.

The exhibition, where various models related to space research were put on display, was inaugurated by Berhampur University Vice-Chancellor Geetanjali Dash. The team comprising scientists Anup Dash, Chakrapani Pattnaik, Akshaya Sahu, NJ Bhat, Paresh Sarnia, four technicians and others visited the ITI and witnessed models on remote sensing, talking to scientists with the help of communication satellites, Chandrayan model in mobile bus, orbiter mission to moon and a video documentary on orbiter mission.



Students of the Industrial Training Institute (ITI) in Berhampur and over 15,000 students of various schools, ITIs and various polytechnics in Ganjam district also participated in the event and witnessed the models displayed in the space exhibition.

The visiting scientists appreciated the sculpture on the ITI premises built from scraps.

When contacted, ITI Principal Rajat Kumar Panigrahi said that visit of the scientists will encourage the students to do something better and plans are afoot to provide placements to over 40 students of Berhampur ITI in ISRO in the coming days.

Tension as youth stabbed to death in broad daylight

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Feb 17: Tension ran high after miscreants chased a youth and stabbed him to death over past enmity at Turipada under Dhanupali police limits in Sambalpur, Friday.

The victim was identified as Bharat Pradhan, 24, of the area.

A gruesome scene ensued after the fatal attack as the victim ran for 500 metre to save himself with the knife pierced to his neck and blood dripping on the road before finally collapsing in front of his house. Family members rescued and rushed him in critical condition to the district headquarters hospital where doctors pronounced him brought dead.

After the news spread, irate locals staged a road blockade at Dhanupali Square on National Highway-55 demanding capital punishment to the accused persons and compensation to the family members.

They burnt tyres and staged a demonstration claiming that the murder took place due to negligence of police in curbing illegal drug business in the area. Police rushed to the spot and tried to broker peace with the agitators but they refused to relent and continued with their road blockade.

The road blockade which continued from 1pm to 3pm threw traffic out of gear on the route as hundreds of vehicles were left stranded on both sides of the highway. The agitators, however, allowed the school vans, ambulance and other emergency vehicles to pass.

Meanwhile, state Higher Education Minister Rohit Pujari who was passing by at that time got down from his car and held talks with the agitators. The agitators



claimed that criminal activities have increased in the area due to rising drug menace while police have failed to arrest the accused persons involved in the murder in broad daylight.

They also alleged that they were forced to take to the streets as police have failed to arrest the accused persons involved in earlier murder cases.

The police pleaded with them to have trust and give them at least 24 hours to arrest the accused persons and left the place. Later, police detained a BJP worker for trying to stop the car of the state higher education minister.

Later, BJP's district president Girish Patel, party leaders Samir Ranjan Babu and Anil Behera reached the spot and held talks with the demonstrators and police. The agitators relented after the saffron leaders assured that police will arrest the accused and the matter will be taken to its logical end.

A heart-wrenching and poignant scene was witnessed at VSS Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) in Burla when police sent the body for post-mortem. With tears flowing from his eyes, the deceased's father was seen pleading with everyone not to conduct post-mortem of his son's body. Later, the body was taken for autopsy after much persuasion.

They also alleged that they were forced to take to the streets as police have failed to arrest the accused persons involved in earlier murder cases.



TIME TO UNWIND: ASHAs performed a dance at a district level ASHA and Gaon Kalyan Samiti conference held at Tapaswini auditorium in Sambalpur, Friday

Bolangir police roll out 'Mission Bulldozer'

THE DISTRICT POLICE IN BOLANGIR HAVE ADOPTED THE BULLDOZER AS THEIR LATEST ARTILLERY TO INSTILL FEAR OF LAW AMONG HISTORY-SHEETERS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Feb 17: Taking a leaf from the demolition of illegal properties of criminals in Uttar Pradesh (UP) by bulldozers as well as to instill a sense of fear among them and maintain law and order, the district police here have adopted a similar approach to crackdown on habitual offenders.

The bulldozer campaign, which started in UP and turned into a trend, has now started spreading its roots in this western town.

With the launch of 'Mission Bulldozer' the district police in Bolangir have adopted the bulldozer as their latest artillery to instill fear of law among the history-sheets.

The campaign, which started Monday, entered its fourth day as police officials demolished the



Rajivnagarpada residence of accused Sripati Singh in the presence of a magistrate, Thursday.

Directed by SP Nitin Kushalkar, a police team led by additional superintendent of police Suresh Nayak, SDPO Tophan Bag, Town police station IIC Priyanka Routray arrived at Rajivnagarpada, Thursday. The demolition of the house was carried out after tehsil-

dar Pushpanjali Panda, who was officiating as the magistrate, reviewed the situation and issued orders in this regard.

Earlier, the police team had demolished the houses of Tejraj Nanda, Niroj Harpal and Sanjay Tandi at Malgondapada. Tuesday, the police team had demolished Hotel Gajapati located along Dhumamara-Bolangir-Patnagarh

State Highway-42.

The hotel was serving as an illegal den of serial offender Bablu Mahananda. The team had demolished the crime den of serial offender Sripati Singh at RTO Office Square.

When contacted, SP Nitin Kushalkar said that the campaign will continue until the offenders refrain from criminal activities and live like common men in the society. He said that no person responsible will be spared for any breach in law and order in Bolangir town.

Notably, an uptick in criminal activities and deterioration in law and order situation in Bolangir during the last few months had sparked sharp resentment among the town residents. Things had come to such a pass that people started questioning the police raising doubts on their efficiency.

'State EV policies need better implementation mechanisms'

Odisha and eight other states have mandated the creation of charging infrastructure in new residential buildings, while only 8 states have specific targets for electrification of fleets such as last mile delivery vehicles

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 17: The early success of e-mobility in India can largely be attributed to a supportive policy landscape at the national and state level, with 26 of the 36 states and Union Territories releasing EV policies in the past five years, with 16 of them being released between 2020 and 2022, a study said.

The study 'Analysis of State Electric Vehicle Policies and Their Impact' by New Delhi-based Climate Trends has assessed the comprehensiveness of these state EV policies based on 21 parameters that cover targets and budget allocations, demand side and manufacturing incentives, and focus on fleet electrification, charging infrastructure mandates and job creation.

The study also analyses the progress of eight policies that have been active for two years or more, saying none of them are on track to meet their targets of EV penetration, charging infrastructure or investments.

With e-mobility expansion placed as one of the key pillars in achieving faster decarbonisation across the



country, the success of state EV policies is both significant and necessary for India's carbon reduction goals. It is a good sign that the majority of Indian states have EV policies, however, a successful transition to zero emission transport depends on the effectiveness of their

design and implementation, Climate Trends Director Aarti Khosla said. The process also depends on having a national transport electrification target, which currently doesn't exist in India. Our study shows that few state policies have comprehensive designs which balance EV sales,

manufacturing and overall ecosystem growth. There are gaps in implementation, leading to slower on-ground impact, which need to be addressed through better regulation, improved monitoring, mechanisms and capacity building of stakeholders across the policy value chain.

"Our study aims to facilitate peer-to-peer learning among states, identify gaps in policy design and implementation, and provide recommendations to address these when the policies are revised," said Archit Fursule, Research Associate, e-mobility, Climate Trends.

The key findings include Maharashtra, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Punjab offer the widest range of parameters, including 13 to 15 of the 21 parameters, making them the most holistic policies.

Least comprehensive policies are of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Kerala, and Uttarakhand as they offer only three to seven of the 21 defined parameters in their policies, making them the least comprehensive.

Strongest demand side incentives are of nine states and UTs - Delhi, Odisha, Bihar, Chandigarh, Andaman

and Nicobar, Maharashtra, Haryana, Rajasthan and Meghalaya - which offer five to six out of eight forms of demand-side incentives.

Weakest demand side incentives are of nine states - Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala as they offer only one or two demand-side incentives.

Strongest manufacturing incentives are of Tamil Nadu, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh, with special support to boost EV manufacturing, apart from incentives offered in the state's industrial policy.

Only nine states have mandated the creation of charging infrastructure in new residential buildings, offices, parking lots, malls, etc Chandigarh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Delhi, Maharashtra, Meghalaya and Ladakh.

Only eight states have specific targets for electrification of fleets such as last mile delivery vehicles, aggregator cabs, government vehicles. They are Maharashtra, Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Andaman and Nicobar.

Eminent linguist Mahendra K Mishra to get UNESCO award

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhawanipatna, Feb 17: Eminent linguist and folklorist Mahendra Kumar Mishra has been nominated for UNESCO's International Mother Language Award 2023 for his lifetime service for promotion of mother language in India.

In a communiqué to Mishra Director General of International Mother Tongue Institute (IMTL), Dhaka, Prof Hakim Arif has invited him to the awards ceremony.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will formally award the medal to Mishra at the institute February 21.

February 21 is celebrated as the International Mother Language Day, as declared by the United Nations in 2000.

Language Movement Day, also called Language Martyrs' Day, is observed in Bangladesh February 21 for commemorating the language martyrs of East Pakistan who fought against the imposition of Urdu and established Bangla as their official language nearly two decades before Bangladesh became an independent country.

Mishra was the state coordinator for Multilingual Education (1996-2010) and a pioneer in adopting mother tongue-based multilingual education in primary schools.

He was also instrumental in promoting endangered languages in school education and his trial in using folklore in school curriculum has been widely applied in the elementary schools of Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

The linguist had received the Odisha Sahitya Akademi Award in 1999. He was also the recipient of Veer Shankar Shah Raghunath Award, instituted by the government of Madhya Pradesh, in 2009.

He was also awarded by the Kalevala Institute, Turku, Finland for translation of Finnish epic-Kalevala- into Odia in 2001.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
e-Tender Notice No.ETCECONIBBS
2023006, Dated, 14.02.2023

Name of Work: PREPARATION OF PLAN FOR FOREST DIVERSION PROPOSAL AS PER FOREST CONSERVATION ACT, 1980 FOR FOREST LAND WITH OBTAINING STAGE-I & STAGE-II FOREST CLEARANCE FROM MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & FOREST (GOVT. OF INDIA) AND TREE ENUMERATION AND OBTAINING FOREST DEPARTMENT'S PERMISSION FOR CUTTING OF TREES IN RAILWAY LAND FOR CONSTRUCTION OF FLYOVER LINES AT BAGHUALP UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF DEPUTY CHIEF ENGINEER/JAJIPUR KEONJHAR ROAD IN EAST COAST RAILWAY.

Approx Cost of the work: ₹65.67 lakhs, EMD: ₹1,31,400/-, Completion Period of the work: 12 (Twelve) Months.

Tender Closing Date & Time: 09.03.2023, 12:00 Hrs.

No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tenders is available in website <http://www.reps.gov.in>

Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website fifteen days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-II Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered or IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.

The tenderers/bidders should read all instructions to the tenderers carefully and ensure compliance of all instructions including check lists, para 3.1 (additional check-list of Tender form (Second sheet) Annexure-I of chapter 2 of tender documents, submission of Annexure-B duly verified and signed by Chartered Accountant.

Chief Administrative Officer (Con/)
PR-172CF/22-23
Bhubaneswar

CCS NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL MARKETING (CCS NIAM)
(An Autonomous Organisation of Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Government of India)
Bambala, Tonk Road, Jaipur-302033, Rajasthan

NIAM Agri-Business Incubator (NABI) Launches
"Startup Agri Business Incubation Program" and "Agripreneurship Orientation Program"

Under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana - Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied sector Rejuvenation (RKVY - RAFTAAR)

Applications are invited for

<p>Startup Agri-Business Incubation Programme: (Prototype to MVP)</p> <p>i. Two months online/ Residential Training</p> <p>ii. Grant-in-aid upto Rs. 25 lakhs</p>	<p>Agripreneurship Orientation Programme: (Idea to Prototype)</p> <p>i. Two months online/ Residential Training</p> <p>ii. Grant-in-aid upto Rs. 5 lakhs</p>
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For last date of application and other details: Visit: www.ccsniam.gov.in; email: nabi@ccsniam.ac.in; Mob: +91 9167963551, +91 8275218220

Government of India
Ministry of Jal Shakti

Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation
Invitation of applications for the post of Director & Head of Centre, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee National Institute of Water & Sanitation (SPM-NIWAS) (erstwhile NCDWSQ), Kolkata

Applications are invited for the post of the Director & Head of Centre, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee National Institute of Water & Sanitation (SPM-NIWAS), Kolkata, an autonomous body under Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti. Details are as under:

Scale of Pay	Mode of Recruitment
Level-14 (144200 - 218200) as per 7th CPC, (Pre-revised - PB-4 Rs. 37400 -67000, Grade Pay Rs. 10000/-)	Deputation (ISTC)

2. General conditions, qualification, criteria, application form and other details are available/ can be downloaded from the website of the Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation at <https://jalshakti-ddws.gov.in/> at the link **Recruitment of Director, SPM-NIWAS**.

3. Interested and eligible candidates may send their application on e-mail as given in the above link, by 20.03.2023.

CBC 35301/11/0011/2223

FOCUS GEO POLITICS

FAULT LINES IN INT'L ORDER



As the atrocities and costs stemming from Russia's war show, the international order certainly does not need revisionism. But it does urgently need a "re-envisioning" of key institutions, processes, and frameworks, so that it can better uphold the principles upon which it was founded

cerns and cleavages, simply defending the status quo is not an option for those who want liberal-democratic rules and principles to prevail. Liberal democracies urgently must refine their own vision of the international order.

To make the liberal order more attractive to a broader global constituency, its advocates must look beyond the narrow lens of systemic competition. Though the contest between democracies and autocracies is one defining feature of global politics today, the many other divides that are shaping public opinion must not be overlooked. Only by accounting for them can liberal democracies clarify how their revised international rulebook would address people's legitimate concerns.

The Munich Security Report points to some of the key questions. How can the world trade system be reformed both to foster mutual prosperity and mitigate the vulnerabilities that come with global interdependencies? How can human-rights norms and enforcement mechanisms better square the protection of individual freedoms with more collective notions of well-being? And, most important, how could the liberal international order better represent the many countries that have hitherto been consigned to the status of rule-takers?

As the atrocities and costs stemming from Russia's war show, the international order certainly does not need revisionism. But it does urgently need a "re-envisioning" of key institutions, processes, and frameworks, so that it can better uphold the principles upon which it was founded.

Tobias Bunde is a researcher at the Hertie School's Centre for International Security while Sophie Eisentraut is Head of Research and Publications at the Munich Security Conference.

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Setback to Babus

As soon as the presence of the psychic consciousness is united with the aspiration, the intensity takes on quite a different character, as if it were filled with the very essence of an inexpressible joy.

THE MOTHER



The Centre has appointed over a dozen Governors in various states but, oddly, there's no bureaucrat on the list. The 13 include a retired Supreme Court judge, two retired Army officers and four BJP leaders. While six are newcomers, seven others have been moved from one state to another.

That not a single babu was seen as Governor material is a severe setback, no doubt, for ambitious babus who have long viewed a post-retirement sinecure almost as a de jure.

The pall of gloom in the senior ranks of babudom is palpable. Except perhaps in the Law Ministry, where the babus, sources have informed DKB, are rather pleased that some of their favourite candidates have been 'successfully placed'. Could it be that the Law Secretary has a better equation with the powers-to-be than other babus?

Still, the overall trend is distressing. Some top babus, who felt they rendered yeoman service, have been cooling their heels for long now. Expect lots of disjointed dissatisfaction from them now. But the ones maintaining stoic silence, still live in hope, in homes they're loath to give up yet.

Of late, the IAS has seen gradual erosion in its 'elevated' status, with the Modi sarkar appointing non-IAS officers to posts traditionally held by them. Now it is no longer surprising to see officers from IRS and IFS breaching the IAS bastion. Why the babus have even lost control of the prestigious Gymkhana Club to the Central government, after losing a legal battle against the Corporate Affairs Ministry. The loss of turf is real, and that should worry the current lot of babus nearing retirement and who covet a small sinecure for their services once they depart the babu corridors.

Govt steps on the pedal for IPS empanelment

There is a sense of urgency about the recent empanelment of over 29 IPS officers for the Director General (DG) or equivalent posts at the Centre. These officers are from the 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988 batches. The empanelment of these officers for DG-level and equivalent posts was considered by a Selection Committee comprising Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, PK Mishra; Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba; Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla; Secretary (Personnel) Deepak Khandekar; and Director of Intelligence Bureau Tapan Deka.

Among those whose empanelment has been cleared is Rashmi Shukla, the 1988 batch IPS officer who was amid several controversies in Maharashtra. It clears Shukla's path to either head a central force or return to Maharashtra in an important post. Sources have told DKB that since she is senior to DGP Rajnish Seth, some senior officers will have to be displaced if the government decides to send her back to Maharashtra. Two more IPS officers were also empanelled as DG: Atulchandra Kulkarni and Sadanand Date.

Date's elevation in Maharashtra has also been approved by the police establishment board, but he has yet to be assigned a DG posting, despite the fact that DG-level posts are available. Date is currently the head of the Anti-Terrorism Squad, and Kulkarni is an additional DG at the National Investigation Agency. Meanwhile, Mumbai Special Police Commissioner Deven Bharti has been empanelled as Additional DG.

As many as eight IPS officers of the UP cadre and five officers of the Punjab were empanelled at the Centre in the rank of Director General and Additional Director General.

Babus losing cool in Bihar

What's up in Nitish Kumar's Bihar? Senior IAS and IPS officers are in the news these days for their public spat rather than service.

Most recently, two Bihar IPS officers were in a stand-off that has not only played out in the public domain but also gave ammo to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's opposition to criticise his administration. Inspector General, Home Guard and Fire Services, Vikas Vaibhav, had posted a series of tweets accusing Director General Shobha Ohatkar of abusing him unnecessarily. This led to the DG rejecting his application for two-month leave and issuing a showcause notice.

This is not the first time that a senior officer has been accused of using foul language and ill-treating subordinates and colleagues. This incident followed on the heels of the episode in which senior IAS officer KK Pathak made headlines after a viral video showed him using expletives to pull up a deputy collector. Pathak later apologised but still maintained that the trainees were undisciplined.

As these incidents play out, many observers say that such controversies show that Bihar's administration is in free fall, which should worry the Chief Minister.

Share a babu experience! Follow [diliphecherian@twitter.com](https://twitter.com/diliphecherian). Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

- A mind all logic is like a knife all blade. It makes the hand bleed that uses it. **RABINDRANATH TAGORE**
- Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them. **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**
- There are three classes of people: those who see, those who see when they are shown, those who do not see. **LEONARDO DA VINCI**

WORDSWORTH

Anthropodermic

West Yorkshire Police put out a macabre appeal in April 2006. A ledger had been found in the Headrow, one of the main streets in Leeds, presumably dumped there following a robbery. It had been written in French and dated from the 1700s. The weird part is that it was bound in human skin. Surprisingly, though this is rare and remarkable, it isn't unique. Archivists even have a name for it, anthropodermic bibliopogy, which, being translated from the decent obscurity of an ancient tongue, literally means no more than the binding of books in human skin. The first word is from Greek anthropos, a human being, plus derma, skin or hide; the second is made up of biblion, book, plus pegnuna, to fix — hence the art of binding books. One news report called it anthropodermic bibliophagy, an easy mistake to make, but unfortunately suggesting that people devoured the books instead (the last element being from Greek phagein, to eat — a bibliophagist is figuratively a voracious reader). Libraries specialising in old books occasionally have examples. Anatomy texts seem to have been favourites, which were covered in skin taken from a dissected cadaver — suitably tanned first, of course. There was some slight fashion in the nineteenth century of binding the report of a murderer's trial with his skin. The most famous British example is that of William Corder, hanged in 1828 for the murder of Maria Marten (still remembered by some as the Murder in the Red Barn); the museum in Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk has an account of the trial bound in this way.

LOL

Good news, bad news

Patient: I'm in a hospital! Why am I here? Doctor: You've had an accident involving a bus. Patient: What happened? Doctor: Well, I've got some good news and some bad news. Which would you like to hear first?



Patient: Give me the bad news first. Doctor: Your legs were injured so badly that we had to amputate both of them. Patient: That's terrible! What's the good news? Doctor: There's a guy in the next ward who made a very good offer on your slippers.



Tobias Bunde and Sophie Eisentraut

AUTOCRATS ARE NOT ONLY TRYING TO ESTABLISH NEW SPHERES OF INFLUENCE; THEY ARE ALSO POSING NEW CHALLENGES TO INTERNATIONAL RULES AND NORMS CONCERNING HUMAN RIGHTS AND NUCLEAR STABILITY

While the world's powers may not agree on much these days, most recognise that the world is at a critical juncture. US President Joe Biden's National Security Strategy calls this the "decisive decade" in the contest for the future of the international order. Similarly, Russian President Vladimir Putin argues that the world is entering "the most dangerous, unpredictable, and at the same time most important decade since the end of World War II." For German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the Russian invasion marks a *Zeitenwende* (watershed), which means "that the world afterwards will no longer be the same as the world before."

But despite the widely shared perception that the international order is at a turning point, no one yet knows what it is turning toward, or which fault lines and strategic visions will most decisively shape it in the future.

Among liberal democracies, Russia's brutal war against its democratic neighbour (and China's tacit support for Russia's aggression) has reinforced the impression that autocratic revisionists represent the most serious threat to the rules-based international order. Democracies in the Indo-Pacific region fear that "Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow," as Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has put it. Autocrats are not only trying to establish new spheres of influence; they are also posing new challenges to international rules and norms concerning human rights, global infrastructure and development, energy security and nuclear stability.

But the dynamics within and between each of these domains are far more complex than a simple democratic-autocratic dichotomy would suggest. Many developing countries harbour deep grievances against what they see as an economic order that has failed to serve their interests. Open

trade (and the infrastructure that facilitates it) has come under pressure from many directions as major powers weaponise trade links and resort to protectionism. Even on human rights — an issue intimately tied to the liberal rules-based international order — democracies do not always see eye to eye, and have often failed to vote together on United Nations resolutions.

These complexities are further reflected in new data from the Munich Security Index 2023, developed by the Munich Security Conference and Kestek CNC, which is based on public-opinion surveys from across the G7, Brazil, India, China, South Africa (the BRICS except Russia), and Ukraine. When asked about the main fault line in global politics today, the greatest share of respondents (23-46%) do indeed point to the divide between democracies and dictatorships. But other geopolitical cleavages also feature prominently, including those between rich and poor countries and between states that support a rules-based international order and those that do not.

Autocrats are not alone in feeling deep dissatisfaction with existing international norms and

institutions. Many people in Asia, Africa, and Latin America associate the Western-led order with post-colonial domination, double standards, and neglect for developing countries' concerns, rather than with liberal principles and multilateralism. Still, notwithstanding many states' alienation from the existing international order and its de facto guardians, these societies do not necessarily view the world through the lens of "the West against the rest."

While revisionist autocrats have portrayed contemporary geopolitical struggles in these terms, many respondents in Brazil, India, and South Africa do not. Nor does alienation with the global order necessarily translate into support for autocratic revisionism. When asked to rate the attractiveness of rules shaped mostly by Russia and China, as opposed to the United States and Europe, respondents in India, Brazil, and South Africa show a clear preference for the latter. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, many countries seem to see the liberal, rules-based international order as the worst type — except for all the others.

With such a diversity of con-

SPECTRUM INDIA'S G-20 PRESIDENCY

R20 and Freedom of Religion or Belief

A day after taking over the presidency of G-20, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked, "Can we catalyse a fundamental mindset shift to benefit humanity as a whole"? He then called upon the world leaders to "join together to make India's G-20 presidency, a presidency of healing, harmony and hope".

The actualisation of these three aspirational ideals named by the Prime Minister can be secured, in terms of organising principle, that is, promoting the concept of pluralism in all aspects of life — technology, ideology, economy, language, religion, race and so on. Many scholars in India and Indologists from abroad have appreciated and advocated the Indian concept and practice of pluralism. The External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar writes in "The Indian Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World", India has a long tradition of diversity and co-existence. Its intrinsic pluralism helps reconcile conflicting ideas and contest collectives.

While many other aspects of pluralism are often discussed, the role of religions in society and even in politics is not. On the contrary, religion is pushed to the periphery of governance; in the so-called developed democracies of the West, by separating the church from the state, and in the largest democracy of the world, India, through a cluttered concept of secularism, which among other things, formally derecognises religion as a social or po-

litical category. In reality, however, religion is playing a big role across the world, often in a malevolent manner manifesting in radicalism, fundamentalism, majoritarianism leading to religious hatred, persecution and violence. This has to change. India needs to initiate that change at home and abroad during its G-20 presidency.

Restoring the role of religion in global discourse and governance can involve a two-fold complementary strategy. First, allowing a thorough and widespread discourse on the essence of religion that contributes to integral humanism, not fissiparous sectarianism. Only such aspects of religion should be allowed to be discussed in public domain as they are commensurate with the constitution of any country. Religion could inform the public discourse as well as the policy-making in any country that enhances the constitution of that country and does not undermine it. It should support the constitution not supplant it.

The second strategy consists of fully respecting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) which is being treated as a human right for individuals across the world. Since it is fairly a new concept in some parts of the world, a small elaboration is in order. In international law, FoRB is a fundamental human right to protect and preserve human dignity. Article 18 of the UN Universal Declaration for Human Rights stipulates, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and

religion; this right includes freedom to change their religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest their religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance". This right is endorsed by many countries by their national laws.

However, FoRB means freedom of religion as defined by and belief as held by individuals, either alone or in relation to a community. An individual's understanding of religion may conflict with the constitutional principles, or indeed, with another person's definition. In such cases, the individuals' practice and profession of their religion would remain confined to their private domain. Likewise, freedom of belief may include agnosticism, atheism and any other religious cultural practices and attitudes. Again such beliefs could be allowed as long as they do not challenge the constitutional principles of freedom, equality and justice etc.

Scholars and political actors have commented on the role and significance of religion under G-20 Religion Forum (R20). They argue that global issues like health, economy, climate and technology have been the global concerns, so have the burning issues like hatred, disharmony, violence and war etc. But the role of religion and culture in eliminating the latter problems has not been fully appreciated. Indonesia, which preceded India as G-20 President, had made a notable beginning by bringing

in religious leadership into active discourse.

Indian political and religious leadership maintain that India has the oldest religion of the world, the sanatana dharma which is timeless without a beginning and an end; many a person argues that many other religions have emerged from it. Arif Mohammad Khan, a scholar of culture and religion, present Governor of Kerala, never tires of citing sanatana dharma as the eternal religion of humanism that encompasses everyone in India and the world. In a similar vein, Mark Tully, a veteran BBC journalist spending decades in India quotes a Christian scholar Ninian Smart who wrote "World Religions: A Dialogue". Smart wrote a dialogue between a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew, and a Buddhist. In the end, Smart says to the Hindu, "You have half persuaded me to look upon doctrines in a more Hindu way. But I give notice that however Hindu I may be, I shall remain a Hindu Christian". That is the spirit of accommodation with other faiths and respect for FoRB.

At any rate, FoRB in a pluralist society and politics is essential to reinforce the role of religion in public life that mitigates hatred, divisiveness, religious violence and other tragic and evil consequences associated with it.

The writer is Prof. International Relations, JIMMC

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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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Setting an example

Sir, Ms. Sturgeon will leave office as the longest serving and first female First Minister of Scotland since the creation of Scottish Parliament in 1999. Her leadership saw a challenging health crisis as she announced a string of restrictions to prevent the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. Sadly for Ms. Sturgeon, she is standing down from the top post without being able to realise her key political ambition of securing Scottish independence. Ms. Sturgeon becomes the second high profile female leader to quit office in a month following Jacinda Arden of New Zealand. She was especially fond of the late Queen Elizabeth, whom she praised for her exceptional wisdom and dedication.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Workers in distress

Sir, The Central government's recent order to route NREGA wage payment through Aadhaar Based Payment System has added much to the distress of the workers. Prior to this, the Centre has mandated digital attendance for workers and there has been a drastic cut in their budgetary allocation. There have been various responses about the difficulties faced by poor workers in adapting to these technological changes. The government should first conduct a survey to find out if these advancements make their life easier or aggravate their problems. Welfare should reach in its true sense to the deepest part of the society, as is being promised by the current government.

Rishu Jaiswal, CUTTACK

Power of language

Sir, 21st February is celebrated as Mother Language Day to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity. Language plays an important and potential role in power politics not only in totalitarian states but in democracies as well. Language is considered a fortress of intellectual, literary and cultural power. A language exercises its domination over another one because of their political dominance. Recent global dominance of the English language is because of economic advancement through its colonies. Language is not merely a means of communication but it embodies the genius of race and culture for which people sacrifice their life. After independence, states were formed on linguistic basis. Imposition of a single language is impossible in a multilingual democracy like India. Centre's move to make Hindi as a medium of instruction in higher studies was criticised and protested by the southern states. This shows that the government hasn't succeeded in implementing its 'One nation One language' concept.

Muzakkir Khan, MUMBAI

national

of the day quote

Criticism of government schemes in social media, television and newspapers should not be ignored and if the grievances are true it should be addressed

Modi bashing by some frustrated people and institutions has now culminated into an India bashing conspiracy

In Meghalaya, 21 lakh people are benefitting from free foodgrain under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana. Around 2 lakhs farmers are getting ₹6,000 per year

SHORT TAKES

One killed

Srinagar: One person was killed in an avalanche in Machil area of J&K's Kupwara district on Friday while three others were rescued, officials said. The avalanche hit Chontiwari village of Machil. "One person identified as 26-year old Ajaz Ahmad was killed by the avalanche while 3 were rescued. The rescued persons are being treated at the hospital," an official said.

Man arrested

Guwahati: A 25-year-old man was arrested by Assam Police on Friday for allegedly raping a 12-year-old girl many times over the course of three months in the Bamunimaidan area of Guwahati. The accused, who worked as a fish vendor in the area, has been identified as Babul Ahmed. After the victim's mother left for work, the accused allegedly raped the girl as she was alone.

2 dead, 5 injured

Bhavnagar: Two labourers were killed and five persons were injured after a cold storage elevator crashed on Friday in Bhavnagar city in Gujarat, a police official said. The elevator of the Sai Cold Storage in Chitra GIDC industrial area with seven occupants crashed before it could reach the sixth floor, Deputy Superintendent of Police RV Damor said.

Mondal's judicial custody extended

Kolkata: A special court of CBI on Friday extended the judicial custody of Trinamool Congress strongman Anubrata Mondal, the prime accused in the cattle smuggling scam, by another 14 days. He will now be presented at the same court again on March 3. The CBI counsel on Friday presented to the court located at Asansol in West Bengal the details of the 346 fake bank accounts identified by the central agency sleuths that have been purportedly opened and used for diverting scam proceeds to different channels.



Where the allegations are of close, intertwined proximity between the ruling dispensation, the government of India and the Adani Group, the setting up of a committee with terms of reference proposed by the Government of India can hardly carry any insignia or reassurance of independence or transparency

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY (COMMUNICATIONS)

FROM COURTROOM TO CRICKET PITCH

For a change, the judges of High Courts from five South Indian states will be seen in action at the picturesque Wayanad Cricket ground competing in a tournament. The event begins today



Men found charred, cops grill suspects

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur/Gurugram, Feb 17: The Rajasthan police Friday arrested one of the five persons named in the FIR in connection with the death of two Muslim men from the state whose charred bodies were found in a car in Haryana after they were allegedly abducted by cow vigilantes. It also questioned some suspects, officials said.

The family members of the deceased had named five men linked to the Bajrang Dal in their complaint to the police. In a statement Friday night, the Rajasthan Police said Rinku Saini, 32, a resident of Firozpur Jhirka in Haryana's Nuh district, was arrested on the basis of interrogation and technical analysis.

Saini, a taxi driver, was involved with a cow vigilante group, the police said. The police statement added that the remaining accused will be arrested at the earliest. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot condemned the killing and promised stern action against the accused.

Nasir (25) and Junaid alias Juna (35), both residents of Ghatmeeka village in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan, were allegedly abducted on Wednesday and their bodies were found inside a burnt car in



Charred remains of a vehicle where bodies of two Muslim men were found, at Loharu in Bhiwani district, Haryana

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot condemned the incident and said police have been directed to take strict action in the matter

The family members of the deceased had named five men linked to the Bajrang Dal in their complaint to the police

Loharu in Bhiwani in Haryana on Thursday morning.

Junaid had a criminal record of cattle smuggling and five cases were registered against him at different police stations, a police officer said. The last rites of the two, who were related to each other, were conducted on Friday after authorities announced a financial aid of Rs 20.5 lakh to each of the affected families.

Minister of State for Education Zahida Khan met the affected family members and said a delegation from the village would meet the Rajasthan Chief Minister Saturday. Inspector General of Police, Bharatpur range, Gaurav Srivastava said, "Those named in the FIR are associated with the Bajrang Dal but whether they were involved in the crime or not is yet to be ascertained."

BJP hits out at Soros



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: The BJP Friday launched a frontal attack on billionaire investor George Soros, accusing him of not only targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi but also the Indian democratic system so that people "hand-picked" by him get to run the government here.

Soros, who has been associated with various causes, has said the turmoil engulfing Gautam Adani's business empire that has "shaken" the faith in India as an investment opportunity may open the door to a "democratic revival" in the country. He also alleged that PM Modi is not a democrat.

As the BJP seized on his remarks with Union minister Smriti Irani telling a press conference that a war is being mounted against India and what stands between the war and India's interests is Modi, the Congress said whether the Adani issue sparks a democratic revival depends entirely on the opposition parties and has nothing to do with Soros.

Irani suggested that critics like Soros have begun attacking the country after it emerged as the fifth largest economy. The public expression of praise for Modi from the US and French presidents and the British prime minister have rattled them as they want a "weak" India and a "weak" government here, she claimed. "India has defeated imperialistic designs earlier too and will do so again," she asserted.

Soros has announced his intention to destroy Indian democracy so that people hand-picked by him run the government here, she alleged. Designs to weaken Indian democracy will be met with the might of India under

PM Modi's leadership, she said. Calling for everyone to speak in one voice against Soros, she said any political organisation that seeks to serve India's interests will stand in solidarity with the country and against the investor. "Any political organisation which stands with George Soros will expose in front of the electorate," she said, adding that protecting India's interests is an issue on which a political party cannot have differences with another.

Irani, though, added that Soros wants a government which is pliable to his needs is more than "evident" from his statements. In the opposition party's reaction, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh added that India's Nehruvian legacy ensures people like Soros cannot determine its electoral outcomes. While Irani made no direct reference to the Congress, some BJP spokespersons, including Shehzad Poonawalla and R P Singh, questioned the party's links with Soros. Has Rahul Gandhi ever met Soros, Singh asked.

Targeting Soros, Irani said, "He wants a government that is pliable to his needs for making his nefarious plans successful. It is evident from his statements that he has declared funding of over one billion dollars particularly to 'target' leaders like PM Modi, which is significant," she said. Soros had announced that he will target India's democratic system and Modi will be at the centre of his attack, she said, adding he wants an order in the country which will protect his, and not India's, interests.



Students of Cotton University take out a cultural rally in Guwahati

PTI PHOTO

Irregularities in tax payments: I-T dept on BBC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: The income and profits shown by various BBC group entities are "not commensurate" with the scale of their operations in India and tax has not been paid on certain remittances by its foreign entities, the income tax authorities said Friday, a day after they ended a three-day-long survey operation against the British media organisation.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) issued a statement without identifying the company but said the survey was conducted at the business premises of group entities of a prominent international media company which is engaged in the business of development of content in English, Hindi and various other Indian languages, advertisement sales and market support services, etc. Officials said the statement pertains to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

The I-T department had



The I-T department had launched the survey exercise February 14 at BBC offices in Delhi and Mumbai and it ended after about 60 hours on Thursday night

The statement alleged various tax-linked irregularities against the London-headquartered company and accused it of using 'dilatatory tactics' during the course of the survey

launched the survey exercise on February 14 at BBC offices in Delhi and Mumbai and it ended after about 60 hours on Thursday night. The CBDT is the administrative authority for the tax department.

The statement alleged various tax-linked irregularities against the London-headquartered com-

pany and accused it of using "dilatatory tactics" during the course of the survey. "The survey revealed that despite substantial consumption of content in various Indian languages (apart from English), the income/profits shown by various group entities (of BBC) is not commensurate with the

scale of operations in India." "The department gathered several evidences pertaining to the operation of the organisation which indicate that tax has not been paid on certain remittances which have not been disclosed as income in India by the foreign entities of the group," the CBDT said.

The BBC, after tax teams left their premises on Thursday, said they will "continue to cooperate with the authorities and hope matters are resolved as soon as possible." According to the CBDT statement, the tax authorities found that the services of "seconded employees" were utilised by the BBC for which reimbursement has been made by the Indian entity to the foreign entity concerned.

"Such remittance was also liable to be subject to withholding tax which has not been done. Further, the survey has also thrown up several discrepancies and inconsistencies with regard to

Transfer Pricing documentation." "Such discrepancies relate to level of relevant Function, Asset and Risk (FAR) analysis, incorrect use of comparables which are applicable to determine the correct Arms Length Price (ALP) and inadequate revenue apportionment, among others," the statement added.

According to I-T rules, transfer pricing "generally refers to prices of transactions between associated enterprises which may take place under conditions differing from those taking place between independent enterprises. It refers to the value attached to transfers of goods, services and technology between related entities".

It also refers to the value attached to transfers between un-related parties which are controlled by a common entity. It said the survey has led to unearthing of "crucial evidences" by way of statement of employees, digital evidences and documents which will be further examined in due course.

Over 300 shops gutted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jorhat, Feb 17: More than 300 shops have been gutted in a devastating fire that engulfed a British-era bazaar in Assam's Jorhat district, officials said Friday.

The blaze that broke out late on Thursday evening at Chowk Bazaar, in the heart of Jorhat town, was brought under control after nearly 10 hours of fire-fighting, and efforts are still being made to douse pockets of flames, they said.

Over 50 fire tenders were rushed to the bazaar to fight the flames, which is suspected to have been caused by an electrical short circuit at a shop, the officials said. There is no report of any casualty as all shops were closed with owners and staff having left for their homes, a police officer said.

The shops that were damaged mostly sold grocery items, clothes, utensils, books and stationery items, he said. Shopkeepers, during the second half of the day on Friday, were seen rummaging through the debris to recover goods, much of which has been reduced to ashes.

A 50-year-old sobbing Montu Saikia, who owned a bell-metal utensil shop, said that he has lost everything to the fire, and the little left could only be sold as scrap items.

"We reached home around 8.30 pm after closing our shops, and half an hour later we heard that a fire broke out in the bazaar. By the time, we could reach the spot, the fire had spread far and wide," he raved.

Another shopkeeper, Rajesh Baruah, who deals in readymade garments, said that "we had already suffered huge losses due to the pandemic, but this fire has now brought us to streets".

Land subsidence in Mussoorie: Experts to carry out survey

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mussoorie, Feb 17: A team of scientists visited Mussoorie after pictures of land subsidence sparked a rerun of a Jostimath-like situation in Uttarakhand.

Geoscientists and members of the Geotechnical Land Survey Committee surveyed the Landour Bazaar and South Road areas of Mussoorie to investigate the land subsidence.

The team included Mussoorie Sub-Divisional Magistrate Shailendra Singh Negi, Wadia

Institute of Himalayan Geology scientist Swapnamita Choudhary, Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) Roorkee scientist Kishore Kulkarni, Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS) scientist Harishankar, Geological Survey of India (GSI) assistant geologist Ashish Prakash, Uttarakhand Disaster Recovery Project (UDRP) Geotech expert Venkateshwar, Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority (USDMA) geologist Sushil Khanduri and others.

Based on this survey, this team

of geoscientists will prepare a report within a week and submit it to the State Disaster Management Authority.

Following this, a decision will be taken regarding the new construction activities in Mussoorie.

The team of geoscientists reached the Landour market on Thursday. They inspected the Landour hotel, road subsidence near a Jain temple, cracks appearing in buildings as well as South Road and Tehri Bypass Road area.

Piyush Rautela, executive di-



Director of the Uttarakhand Disaster Management and Mitigation

Centre, who was also part of the team, said that a committee of of-

2022 MAHA CRISIS

SC declines to refer pleas to larger bench

The top court declined to make an immediate reference to a seven-judge bench to reconsider its 2016 Nabam Rebia judgment, which restricted the power of the Speaker to examine disqualification petitions against MLAs if a resolution for his removal is pending

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: The Supreme Court Friday declined to refer pleas related to the June 2022 Maharashtra political crisis triggered by the Shiv Sena's division to a seven-judge bench for reconsideration of the 2016 Nabam Rebia judgment.

In 2016, a five-judge Constitution bench, while deciding the Nabam Rebia case of Arunachal Pradesh, had held that the assembly speaker cannot proceed with a plea for disqualification of MLAs if a prior notice seeking the speaker's removal is pending before the House.

The judgement came to the rescue of the rebel Shiv Sena MLAs led by Eknath Shinde, now the chief minister of Maharashtra. The party's Uddhav Thackeray faction had sought their disqualification even when a notice of the Shinde group for the removal of Maharashtra Assembly Deputy Speaker Narhari Sitaram Zirwal, a Thackeray loyalist, was pending before the House.

The top court said the issue whether a reference to a larger seven-judge bench is to be made cannot be considered in an "abstract, isolated and divorced" manner.

A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said whether the 2016 Nabam Rebia judgement requires reference or not will be considered with the merits of the case February

21.

"Whether the principle formulated in Nabam Rebia has an impact on the factual position in the present case needs deliberation. The issue whether the reference of the decision in Nabam Rebia to a larger bench is warranted would be determined together with the merits of the case.

"Consequently, hearing on merits of the case will be held on Tuesday, 10:30 am," said the bench, which also comprises justices M R Shah, Krishna Murari, Hima Kohli and P S Narasimha.

Senior advocates Kapil Sibal and A M Singhvi, appearing for the Thackeray faction, had sought reference of the cases to a seven-judge bench for a relook at the Nabam Rebia judgement.

Senior advocates Harish Salve and N K Kaul, appearing for the Shinde-led faction, had opposed the reference to a larger bench. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Maharashtra governor, had also opposed any move to refer the matter to a larger bench.

The political crisis in Maharashtra had erupted after an open revolt in the Sena and, June 29, 2022, the apex court refused to stay the Maharashtra governor's direction to the 31-month-old MVA government to take a floor test in the assembly to prove its majority.

Thackeray resigned as the Chief Minister before the floor test.



GEARING UP: A replica of Kedarnath temple during Maha Shivratri celebrations by Brahmakumaris at Malad in Mumbai

PTI PHOTO

UP Assembly to get digital gallery

THE GALLERY IS EXPECTED TO OPEN WITH THE BUDGET SESSION OF THE STATE LEGISLATURE, BEGINNING FEB 20

AGENCIES

Lucknow, Feb 17: A digital gallery will open in the state Legislative Assembly complex to give a virtual tour of its history to visitors.

UP Legislative Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana said, "A digital gallery is being set up in the state legislative complex to give a virtual tour depicting its history from January 5, 1887 when it was set up as the North Western Provinces and Oudh Legislative Council to the period when the state was known as United Provinces and when the state legislative Assembly came



into existence as the Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha on March 8, 1952."

A brief history of the state legislature, as given on the state Legislative Assembly's website, indicates that the Legislative Council of North Western Provinces and Oudh was consti-

tuted with nine nominated members. It met for the first time on January 8, 1887 at the Thornhill Memorial Hall in Allahabad now renamed Prayagraj.

The Government of India Act 1935 proposed to make India a federation of the provinces and

princely states and autonomy was proposed for the provinces.

The Legislative Council functioned as unicameral legislature in the state until March 1937. The provincial part of the Act came into operation from April 1, 1937.

The unicameral provincial legislature became bicameral along with five other provinces of British India. Its two chambers were called the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council.

Now the state Legislative Assembly, the Lower House, is a wholly elected body with 403 members while the Legislative Council, the Upper House, has 100 members.

Meanwhile, the state government has directed senior officers to ensure that the information provided to the MLAs and MLCs in response to questions and issues raised in the House is factually verified and there should be no doubt about its quality.

UP GEARS UP FOR 4 BY-POLLS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 17: The Uttar Pradesh state legislature is gearing up for four by-elections in the coming weeks - two in the state Assembly and as many in the Legislative Council.

The Suar Assembly seat in Rampur has fallen vacant again with the disqualification of Abdullah Azam, son of Mohd Azam Khan, following his conviction in a 15-year-old case in Moradabad.

Bypoll will also be held on the Chhanbey Assembly seat in Mirzapur, following the demise of Apna Dal (S) MLA Rahul Kol earlier this month.

Two legislative council seats have also fallen vacant following the death of BJP legislator Banwari Lal Dohre and the resignation of BJP MLC Laxman Acharya who goes as Governor of Sikkim.

Both Dohre and Acharya were elected to the council from the UP Assembly quota. While Dohre was to retire July 6, 2028, Acharya, also



a UP BJP vice-president, had his tenure till January 30, 2027.

BJP leaders said the party will not spare any effort to ensure it victory in Suar assembly seat. Having broken Azam Khan's dominance in Rampur by winning the Rampur Lok Sabha as well as the

assembly seat in the by polls last year, BJP now has set its eye on Suar which Abdullah had been winning since 2017.

In 2022, Abdullah had defeated BJP ally Apna Dal (S) candidate Haider Ali, son of Congressman and a known baiter of Azam's family,

THE BY-ELECTIONS WILL AGAIN PIT THE BJP AGAINST THE SAMAJWADI PARTY

GIVEN ITS STRONG STRENGTH IN THE ASSEMBLY, THE BJP HAS A CLEAR ADVANTAGE AND WOULD SAIL THROUGH ITS MLC CANDIDATES EASILY

Kazim Ali Khan, by over 60,000 votes. Abdullah had won the seat in 2017 by defeating BJP's Laxmi Saini by over 53,000 votes.

But on both occasions, he faced disqualification from the UP Assembly - first because of an alleged anomaly in his birth certificate and then his conviction in the 15-year-old Moradabad incident. The Chhanbey reserved seat had been won by Rahul Kol, son of former Roberstganj MP Pakauri Lal Kol, in 2017 and 2022 on Apna Dal ticket. The Congress and BSP, sources said, may not contest the by elections.

Noida gets dedicated cyber helpline

FLANKED BY ALL TOP POLICE OFFICERS AT THE LAUNCH, THE POLICE COMMISSIONER APPEALED TO THE PEOPLE OF NOIDA AND GREATER NOIDA TO USE HELPLINE NUMBER 0120-4846100 TO REPORT CYBERCRIME

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Noida, Feb 17: Residents of Noida and Greater Noida can now report cyber crimes at a new dedicated helpline number - 0120-4846100.

Police Commissioner Laxmi Singh, who inaugurated the helpline Wednesday, said it would be a one-stop solution for people and the focus would be on resolving matters in a time-bound manner with transparency.



This round-the-clock service is a dedicated helpline at the district level for lodging complaints and is in addition to the central government's existing cyber helpline number '1930', she said.

"The new cyber helpline has been launched today in view of rising number of cases of cyber crimes, including financial and non-financial. The complaints have

been for individuals, and since Noida and Greater Noida have a lot of private companies, there have been cyber complaints from them also," Singh said.

Giving out figures to highlight the prominence of cyber crime, she said around 20,000 cases of the crime have been lodged in Gautam Buddha Nagar since 2020 and more than 8,000 were lodged in 2022 alone.

"More than Rs 1 crore of complainants has been recovered with the help of police action but this is a piecemeal amount only," the police commissioner said, noting that the pendency rate in such cases is also high.

"For using the helpline, the best thing would be to report any cyber offence at the earliest to the police so that action could be taken and the duped money be frozen at the culprit's end because usually after 24 hours, the money is withdrawn through ATMs and chances of recovery reduce," Singh said.

Maha govt launches 'copy free' campaign for exams

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 17: The Maharashtra government has decided to take steps to implement the "copy-free exams" campaign which includes shutting photocopy shops in 50-metre radius of the examination centres ahead of the Class 10 and 12 exams.

According to a presentation made by officials at a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday, the exam centres will be graded according to their 'sensitivity', and the entry of unauthorised people will be banned within 50 metres of an exam centre.

Police presence around the exam centres would also be stepped up. The education commissioner



has been appointed as nodal officer and district collectors as co-ordinating officers for the campaign.

The cabinet also passed the Maharashtra Medical Purchase Authority Bill. Under this, the governing board will be headed by the chief minister with an Indian Administrative Service officer as its Chief Executive Officer. PTI PR KRRKGG

In a first, Shivaji's birthday to be celebrated in Agra Fort

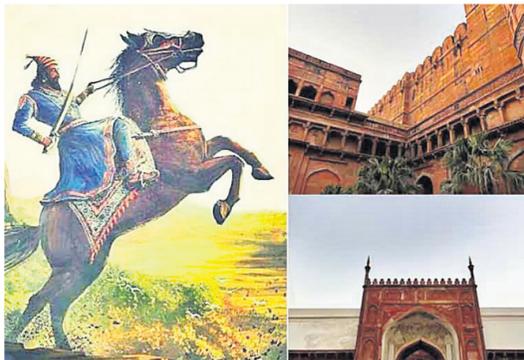
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Feb 17: For the first time the 393rd birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj shall be celebrated at the 'Diwan-E-Aam' of the Agra Fort.

The development came after years of efforts by the Maharashtra government and several social organisations after which the Uttar Pradesh Government has permitted the Shiv Jayanti celebrations in the Agra Fort.

Many social groups had urged the government to celebrate the event in a grand manner at the 'Diwan-E-Aam' in the Agra Fort but the appeal was rejected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which looks after the heritage monument.

Later, they moved the Delhi High Court, which directed the ASI to



allow the celebrations if the Maharashtra Government is involved as a co-organiser.

Accordingly, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy Chief

Minister Devendra Fadnavis wrote to the ASI and other authorities that the state government will associate with the event along with some social groups.

The development came after years of efforts by the Maharashtra government and several social organisations after which the Uttar Pradesh Government has permitted the Shiv Jayanti celebrations in the Agra Fort

In September 2020, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had decided to rename the existing Mughal Museum in the fort as 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Museum'.

Agra Fort has a special significance in the history of the Mughal and the Maratha empires which

were at loggerheads for long.

It was in the summer of 1666 that the Maratha King Shivaji was invited by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to attend his 50th birthday celebrations at the royal court in Agra. Shivaji, along with his son Prince Sambhaji, reached Agra for the birthday May 12, 1666, and in an act of deceit, the duo was held captive by Emperor Aurangzeb's troops.

Along with his band of loyal soldiers, Shivaji and Sambhaji remained captive for around three months before making their daring escape in boxes of sweets August 17, 1666.

That famous getaway became the stuff of legends and folklore that remains fresh even today while the valorous Maratha leader was crowned as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in 1674, in Raigad.



I would like to give an example of how the central government is discriminating against the states. The 15th Finance Commission increased the share of states in taxes from 32% to 42%, but the central government found a route and equalised all that was increased

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CM

REPORT DISCLOSURE

About 32 per cent mobile service subscribers do not have coverage for the majority of their day despite paying for 4G/5G services and 69 per cent of those surveyed are facing call connection and drop issues daily, a report has said



of the day quote

The central government's free telemedicine service has clocked over 10 crore teleconsultations till now



MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

The target to have 10 crore Self Help Group members by 2024 will be achieved as the ministry is working on "pro-active mode" to enrol more women 'Sakhis'



GIRIRAJ SINGH | RURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER

Suggestions are being taken from other ministers and states on the draft National Tourism Policy 2022



G KISHAN REDDY | UNION TOURISM MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Dancer gangraped

Unnao: A dancer called in to perform at a property dealer's birthday party was gangraped by six men in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao district. All the accused are absconding and a search operation has been launched to nab them, an official said.

Pythons seized

Aizawl: The Assam Rifles arrested four people and recovered six endangered Burmese pythons from their possession after these exotic animals were smuggled in Mizoram from neighbouring Myanmar, officials said on Friday.

Two nabbed

New Delhi: A 21-year-old man was arrested while a juvenile was apprehended by Delhi Police for allegedly burgling the office of BJP MLA Om Prakash Sharma, an official said Friday.

Student ends life

New Delhi: A Class 12 student died by suicide due to exam pressure in Southwest Delhi, an official said Friday. According to a senior police official, the information regarding suicide of an 18-year-old boy namely Vishnu was received at Safdarjung police station following which a police team was rushed to the spot.

Man, son shot at

New Delhi: Following an argument over parking, the father-son duo were shot at in northeast Delhi's Yamuna Vihar area in the intervening night of Thursday and Friday, said an official. The injured have been identified as Virender Aggarwal and his son Sachin Aggarwal. The father received injury near his chest while the son injured his hand. One person has been nabbed, police said.

DELHI MAYORAL POLL

Big win for AAP in SC



THE SUPREME COURT FRIDAY SAID THE NOMINATED MEMBERS OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF DELHI (MCD) CANNOT VOTE IN THE MAYORAL ELECTION

THE AAP HAD ALLEGED THAT THE MAYORAL ELECTION COULD NOT BE HELD AS THE BJP IS 'STRANGULATING DEMOCRACY AND THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA', WHILE THE SAFFRON PARTY ACCUSED THE AAM AADMI PARTY OF COMING OUT WITH EXCUSES TO STALL THE MAYORAL POLL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Friday termed the Supreme Court's order on mayoral poll a "victory of democracy" and claimed that it has proved how the "Lt Governor and the BJP" were passing "illegal and unconstitutional orders".

The BJP, however, claimed that it was the AAP which did not let the election take place in the last three sittings of the MCD House. The Supreme Court on Friday said the nominated members cannot vote in the mayoral election, and ordered issuance of a notice within 24 hours for convening the first meeting of the municipal corporation to fix the date of election to mayor.

The top court was hearing a plea moved by the ruling Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) mayoral candidate,

Shelly Oberoi, seeking an early conduct of the election. In the MCD House, presiding officer Satya Sharma, appointed by Lt Governor V K Saxena on February 6, had announced that the LG-appointed 10 members can vote in the elections for mayor, deputy mayor and standing committee members.

After a gap of over two months since the civic polls and much political bickering between the ruling and opposition parties, the SC's order on Friday boosts AAP's chances to have its mayor. Sources in the MCD said that a letter proposing a "fresh date for convening a Municipal House to hold the election for the post of mayor and others is expected to be sent to the LG by tomorrow evening".

Shortly after the apex court order, Kejriwal took to Twitter and said, "SC order a victory of democracy. Many thanks to SC. Delhi

will now get a mayor after two-and-a-half months. It has been proved how the LG and the BJP together were passing illegal and unconstitutional orders in Delhi."

The AAP had emerged as a clear winner in the December 4 polls, bagging 134 wards and ending the BJP's 15-year rule in the civic body. The BJP won 104 wards to finish second, while the Congress won nine seats in the 250-member municipal House.

After the Supreme Court, senior AAP leader Durgesh Pathak said the people's faith in the apex court has grown. Addressing a press conference, Pathak said, "We are thankful to SC. The apex court order on Delhi mayoral poll is a tight slap on the face of BJP."

"It is a victory for AAP. Delhi will get mayor and deputy mayor two-and-a-half months after the MCD polls. The BJP has got a clear direction to sit in the Opposition and the mayor will be of AAP as people have voted for our party," he added.

Welcoming the SC order, the BJP, however, blamed the AAP for the delay and alleged that they moved the apex court with an intention to postpone the poll. The BJP said it always wanted a mayor to be elected as soon as possible.

"We welcome the Supreme Court's decision. We have always wanted the elections to be held as soon as possible. It is the AAP which did not let elections take place in the last three sittings of the MCD House," Delhi BJP spokesperson Harish Khurana said.

After the apex court order, Delhi residents welfare associations said they are hopeful that the long pending civic issues will now be addressed.

Public access to ten sensitive installations removed: MHA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: Ten sensitive installations in six states and one Union territory have been declared out of bounds for the general public, with the Centre saying any information with respect to certain activities carried out at these premises may be useful to India's enemies.

Invoking the Official Secrets Act, the Union Home Ministry said in a notification that the sensitive installations are situation in Telangana, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

"...The central government is satisfied that the information with respect to certain activities carried out in the places specified... Shall be useful to an enemy And, whereas, the central government considers it expedient that special precautions shall be taken to prevent access of unauthorised persons to such places.

"Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by... The Official Secrets Act, 1923 (19 of 1923), the central government hereby declares the places specified... A prohibited place for the purpose of the said Act," the notification said. Rajasthan, MP and Bihar have two such installations each, while Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Andaman and Nicobar Islands have one each.

Underage marriages being cancelled, says Assam CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 17: Claiming that the Assam government's fortnight-long crackdown on child marriage had a "positive" impact in the state, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said several families had cancelled scheduled weddings of underage people as a fallout of the ongoing drive.

The operation started on February 3 and 3,031 people have been apprehended against registration of 4,225 cases till Tuesday.

"Reports are coming from various parts of Assam that several families have cancelled pre-scheduled marriages between underage children after our drive against such illegal practices," Sarma wrote on Twitter.

"This is definitely a positive impact of our two-week long crackdown against child marriage," he added on the micro-blogging site. Opposition parties have criticised the manner in which the drive is being carried out, terming the arrests of teenage husbands and family members as an "abuse of law" for political gain, and equating the police action with "terrorising people".

The Gauhati High Court had also come down heavily on the state government for slapping stringent laws like the Protection

Assam has a high rate of maternal and infant mortality, with child marriage being the primary cause, according to reports by the National Family Health Survey



of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) and rape charges on child marriage accused, and stated that these are "absolutely weird" allegations.

Observing that arresting a large number of people in the crackdown has created "havoc in the private life of people", Justice Suman Shyam had on February 14 said there is no need for custodial interrogation of the accused in such cases.

The plea said as an ordinary citizen of the country, the petitioner felt "disempowered" when it came to participation in the democratic process and after people cast their votes and elect representatives, there is no scope for any further participation. It said there is a complete absence of any formal mechanism by which citizens can engage with lawmakers and take steps in order to ensure that issues which are of vital importance are debated in Parliament.

"The absence of this mechanism creates a void between elected representatives and citizens. The people are disconnected from the law-making process. This distancing of the citizens to their inherent rights to fully participate in Indian democracy is a matter of grave concern and is an issue which needs to be immediately addressed," the plea said.



Visitors click pictures at the Delhi Tourism's 35th Garden Tourism Festival at Garden of Five Senses, Saket, in New Delhi

SC to hear plea allowing citizens to petition Parl

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: The Supreme Court Friday said it would hear after four weeks a plea seeking a direction to the Centre and others to take steps to create an appropriate system which empowers citizens to petition Parliament and seek initiation of deliberations on issues highlighted by them.

The petition came up for hearing before a bench of Justices K M Joseph and B V Nagarathna. The counsel appearing for the Centre sought time to file an affidavit in the matter: "Respondent number one (Union of India) seeks time to file an affidavit. List after four weeks. Affidavit be filed in the meantime," the bench said.

While hearing the plea on January 27, the apex court had asked the counsel, appearing for petitioner Karan Garg, to serve a copy of the plea on the standing counsel for the Centre. The plea has also sought a declaration that it is the fundamental right of citizens under Articles 14, 19(1)(a) and 21 of the Constitution to directly petition Parliament to seek initiation of a debate, discussion and deliberation on the issues highlighted by them in their petitions.

"The present writ petition prays that it is imperative for the respondents (Centre and others) to take substantive steps in order to ensure that citizens can have their voices heard in Parliament without facing undue barriers and difficulties," it said.

The plea said as an ordinary citizen of the country, the petitioner felt "disempowered" when it came to participation in the democratic process and after people cast their votes and elect representatives, there is no scope for any further participation. It said there is a complete absence of any formal mechanism by which citizens can engage with lawmakers and take steps in order to ensure that issues which are of vital importance are debated in Parliament.

"The absence of this mechanism creates a void between elected representatives and citizens. The people are disconnected from the law-making process. This distancing of the citizens to their inherent rights to fully participate in Indian democracy is a matter of grave concern and is an issue which needs to be immediately addressed," the plea said.

Govt bans JKGF for terror acts



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: The Jammu and Kashmir Ghaznavi Force (JKGF), which has been formed with cadres from terrorist organisations such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed, was Friday banned under the stringent anti-terror law, officials said here.

In a separate notification, a resident of Punjab, Harwinder Singh Sandhu alias Rinda, was declared a terrorist by the Ministry of Home Affairs, they said. According to a notification issued by the ministry, the JKGF has been involved in infiltration bids, narcotics and weapon smuggling, terror attacks in the Union territory, and threats to security forces.

The JKGF draws its cadres from various proscribed terrorist organisations, such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen, Harkatul-Jehad-Islami and others, the home ministry said.

Sandhu alias Rinda, who hails from Punjab but is currently based in Lahore and associated with the banned group Babbar Khalsa International (BKI), has been declared a terrorist. He is alleged to be one of the masterminds behind an attack on the intelligence headquarters of the Punjab Police in 2021.

A Red Corner Notice was also issued against Sandhu by the Interpol. The home ministry said the JKGF has been using various social media platforms to incite the people of Jammu and Kashmir to join terrorist outfits against India.

The terror group is detrimental to national security and the sovereignty of India and is involved in terrorism. It has committed and participated in vari-

ous acts of terrorism in the country, the ministry said. In exercise of powers conferred by the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the JKGF has been designated as a terror group, the notification stated.

The ban will be effective to the JKGF and all its manifestations and front organisations. The JKGF is the 43rd group to be declared outlawed under the anti-terror law. The home ministry further said Harwinder Singh Sandhu has direct links with Pakistan-based terrorist groups and is also involved in cross-border smuggling of arms, ammunition and militant hardware, besides drugs on a large scale.

He was involved in various criminal offences as well like murder, attempt to murder, contract killing, robbery and extortion in Punjab, Maharashtra, Haryana, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the ministry said. Singh is now the 54th individual to be designated as a terrorist by the government. Last month, the central government had banned two proxy organisations of the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed and declared four individuals as terrorists.

On January 5, the The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy of the Pakistan-based terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba, was declared a banned group.

DISPLAY OF F-35 JETS, BOMBERS

US TRIES TO WOO INDIA AWAY FROM RUSSIA

REUTERS

Bangalore, Feb 17: The United States brought its most advanced fighter jet, the F-35, to India for the first time this week alongside F-16s, Super Hornets and B-1B bombers as Washington looks to woo New Delhi away from its traditional military supplier, Russia. India, desperate to modernise its largely Soviet-era fighter jet fleet to boost its air power, is concerned about Russian supply delays due to the Ukraine war and faces pressure from the West to distance itself from Moscow.

The American delegation to the week-long Aero India show in Bengaluru, which ends on Friday, is the biggest in the 27-year history of the show and underlines the

growing strategic relationship between the United States and India.

In contrast, Russia, India's largest weapons supplier since the Soviet Union days, had a nominal presence. Its state-owned weapons exporter Rosoboronexport had a joint stall with United Aircraft and Almaz-Antey, displaying miniature models of aircraft, trucks, radars and tanks.

At previous editions of the show, Rosoboronexport had a more central position for its stall, although Russia has not brought a fighter jet to Bengaluru for a decade after India began considering more European and U.S. fighter jets.

Boeing F/A-18 Super Hornets have already entered the race to supply fighter jets for the Indian Navy's second aircraft carrier and



Lockheed Martin's F-21, an upgraded F-16 designed for India unveiled at Aero India in 2019, are also being offered to the air force.

A \$20 billion air force proposal to buy 114 multi-role fighter aircraft has been pending for five years,

of New Delhi's growing strategic importance to Washington.

It was "not a sales pitch" but rather a signal to the importance of the bilateral defence relationship in the Indo-Pacific region, said Angad Singh, an independent defence analyst. "Even if weapons sales aren't the cornerstone of the relationship, there is a cooperation and collaboration at the military level between India and the U.S.," he added.

The United States is selective about which countries it allows to buy the F-35. When asked if it would be offered to India, Rear Admiral Michael L. Baker, defence attaché at the U.S. embassy in India, said New Delhi was in the "very early stages" of considering whether it wanted the plane.

An IAF spokesperson did not re-

spond to a request for comment on its interest in F-35s. Ahead of the show, Russian state news agencies reported that Moscow had supplied New Delhi with around \$13 billion of arms in the past five years and had placed orders for \$10 billion.

The United States has approved arms sales worth more than \$6 billion to India in the last six years, including transport aircraft, Apache, Chinook and MH-60 helicopters, missiles, air defence systems, naval guns and P-8I Poseidon surveillance aircraft. India also wants to manufacture more defence equipment at home in collaboration with global giants, first to meet its own needs and eventually to export sophisticated weapons platforms.

international



Now is the time for the world to support the people of Turkiye (Turkey) -- just as they have stood in solidarity with others seeking assistance
ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

MISSION UNSUCCESSFUL
Japan's space agency aborted the inaugural launch of its next-generation H3 rocket Friday after the auxiliary booster engines failed to ignite, officials said



of the day quote

Those earning less than 2,640 reais (\$505) a month would be exempted from income tax and the exemption level will progress until it reach 5,000 reais (\$958)
LUIZ INACIO LULA DA SILVA | BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT

The strategic level of the two countries' (Iran, China) communication had given a strategic aspect to bilateral talks so that the two countries could pursue the issues of common interest
EBRAHIM RAISI | IRANIAN PRESIDENT

We cannot agree with the ruling. We will hold discussions with related agencies to determine our next legal step
LEE JONG-SUP | SOUTH KOREAN DEFENCE MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Madagascar braces for Cyclone Freddy

Mombasa: Two weeks after Tropical Cyclone Cheneso devastated Madagascar, killing 30 people, the Indian Ocean island nation and its neighbours are bracing for a more powerful Cyclone Freddy. Meteo France has described Freddy as an "intense tropical cyclone" and a "particularly powerful and compact tropical system, generating extreme winds near its center." The much smaller islands of Mauritius and Reunion are on high alert as Freddy — churning westward Friday about 2,000 kilometers (about 1,242 miles) east of Mauritius — was expected to cause flooding there Sunday and Monday.

Memphis officers plead not guilty

Memphis (US): Five former Memphis police officers pleaded not guilty Friday to second-degree murder and other charges in the violent arrest and death of Tyre Nichols. Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Desmond Mills Jr, Emmitt Martin III and Justin Smith made their first court appearances with their lawyers before a judge in Shelby County Criminal Court. The officers were fired after an internal police investigation into the January 7 arrest of Nichols, who died in a hospital three days later.

Floods batter Indonesia

Jakarta: Thousands of people in Indonesian city of Surakarta have been affected by flooding following the extended heavy rainfall, according to local disaster mitigation agency. The Bengawan Solo river on the island of Java burst its banks and inundated roads as well as houses in more than 16 sub districts Friday, with nearly 22,000 residents impacted, *Xinhua News Agency* reported.



ON THE BOIL: A woman holds a placard reading 'Touch my retirement, I'll cut your head off' as protesters pass by a burning trash during a demonstration against a reform aimed at raising the minimum retirement age from 62 to 64 in Lyon, central France

US Senate resolution reaffirms Arunachal as India's integral part

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 17: A bipartisan resolution was introduced in the US Senate Thursday to recognise Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of India, pushing back against Beijing's military aggression to change the status quo along the Line of Actual Control.

The resolution condemns additional Chinese provocations, including China's use of military force to change the status quo along the Line of Actual Control, construction of villages in contested areas, publication of maps with Mandarin-language names for cities and features in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, and expansion of Beijing's territorial claims in Bhutan. The resolution says that China claims Arunachal Pradesh as its own territory, which it calls "South Tibet", and has invoked these claims as part of its increasingly aggressive and expansionist policies. "The United States recognises the state of Arunachal Pradesh not as a disputed territory but as an integral part of the Republic of India, and this recognition is not qualified in any way," says the biparti-

san resolution introduced by Senator Jeff Merkley, a Democrat, and Bill Hagerty, a Republican.

Senator John Cornyn, Co-Chair of the India Caucus, has co-sponsored the resolution.

Pushing back against Chinese claims that Arunachal Pradesh is its territory, which is part of Beijing's increasingly aggressive and expansionist policies, the Senate resolution reaffirms that the US recognises the McMahon Line as the international boundary between China and the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

The line that was agreed to by Britain and Tibet as part of the 1914 Simla Accord is named after Sir Henry McMahon, foreign secretary of the British-run Government of India and the chief negotiator of settling disputes with China.

On December 9, The Indian and Chinese troops were engaged in a fresh clash in the Yangtse area of Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang sector, in the first such major flare-up after the deadly hand-to-hand combat in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.



Protests hit multiple Iran cities

THE DEMONSTRATIONS SHOW THE CONTINUING ANGER IN THE COUNTRY. AT LEAST 529 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN KILLED IN AGITATIONS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, Feb 17: Protesters in Iran marched through the streets of multiple cities overnight in the most widespread demonstration in weeks amid the monthlong unrest that's gripped the Islamic Republic, online videos purported to show Friday.

Videos showed demonstrations in Iran's capital, Tehran, as well as in the cities of Arak, Isfahan, Izeh in Khuzestan province and Karaj, the group Human Rights Activists in Iran said. The Associated Press could not immediately verify the videos, many of which had been blurred or showed grainy nighttime scenes.

In Iran's western Kurdish regions, online videos shared by the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights showed burning roadblocks in Sanandaj, which has seen repeated demonstrations since Amini's death. Hengaw shared one video that included digitally al-



The protests, which began over the September 16 death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini after her arrest by the country's morality police, have morphed into one of the most serious challenges to Iran's theocracy since the 1979 Islamic Revolution

tered voices shouting: "Death to the Dictator!" That call has been repeatedly heard in the demonstrations, targeting Iran's 83-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Other videos purportedly shot in Tehran had similar chants, as well as scenes of heavily protected riot police in the street.

Protesters also marched in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan province near Pakistan after Friday prayers, online videos showed. Anti-government demonstrations have

been happening for months as well Fridays in the restive province, which is a majority Sunni region. Its Baluch people long have complained about being treated as second-class citizens by Iran's Shiite rulers.

Iranian state media did not immediately acknowledge the demonstrations.

Over 19,700 others have been detained by authorities amid a violent crackdown trying to suppress the dissent. Iran for months has not

China's top tech banker goes missing

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hong Kong, Feb 17: Shares of the company that operates one of China's top investment banks, China Renaissance, plunged Friday after the firm said it had lost touch with its founder Bao Fan, one of the country's most high-profile bankers and a top tech-sector dealmaker.

China Renaissance Holdings said in a filing to Hong Kong's stock exchange Thursday that it had been unable to contact Bao, who has worked on major deals including e-commerce company JD.com's USD



2 billion initial public offering and the public listing of short video platform Kuaishou in Hong Kong.

The company said that it was "not aware of any information that indicates Mr. Bao's unavail-

ability" was related to the business of the group. Bao's disappearance follows a crackdown on big technology companies in the past two years that officials in China said had been wrapped up.

Shares in China Renaissance fell as much as 50 per cent Friday in Hong Kong. Bao's disappearance comes months after former China Renaissance president Cong Lin was taken away by Chinese authorities in September last year, according to Chinese news media outlet Caixin, which first reported the news.

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES SAFE, BUT NOT AT PEACE

NEARLY A YEAR HAS PASSED SINCE THE FEBRUARY 24, 2022, INVASION SENT MILLIONS FLEEING ACROSS UKRAINE'S BORDER INTO NEIGHBOURING POLAND, SLOVAKIA, HUNGARY, MOLDOVA AND ROMANIA

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Warsaw (Poland), Feb 17: Months after Russian forces occupied southern Ukraine's Kherson province last year, they started paying visits to the home of a Ukrainian woman and her Russian husband. They smashed their refrigerator and demanded possession of their car. One day, they

seized the wife and her teenage daughter, put pillowcases over their heads and led them away. The woman was locked up for days, her legs beaten with a hammer. The men accused her of revealing Russian soldiers' locations. They subjected her to electric shocks and bore down on her feet with the heels of their military boots until two of her



Ukrainian refugee rests at a refugee center in Nadarzyn, near Warsaw, Poland

toes broke. She heard screams nearby and feared they came

from her daughter. More than once, with a bag on

her head and her hands tied, a weapon was pointed at her head. She'd feel the muzzle at her temple, and a man started counting.

One. Two. Two and a half. Then, a shot fired to the floor. "Although at that moment, it seemed to me that it would be better in my head," she told *The Associated Press*, recounting the torture that lasted five days, counted by the sliver of sunlight from a tiny window in the room. "The only thing that kept me strong was the awareness that my child was somewhere around."

Across Europe, about 8 million refugees have been recorded, according to UN estimates based on data from national governments, and nearly 5 million of those have applied for temporary protection.

Experts say those numbers are fluid — some people apply in more than one country — but they agree it's the largest movement of refugees in Europe since World War II. Unlike refugees from recent conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, the Ukrainians were largely met with an outpouring of sympathy and help.

Yet while the Ukrainian refugees have found safety, they have not found peace. They suffer from trauma and loss — uprooted from their lives, separated from relatives, fearing for loved ones stuck in Russian-occupied areas or fighting on the front-line. Children are separated from fathers, grandparents, and pets. Others have no family or homes to return to.

Pakistani Taliban terrorists attack police chief's office in Karachi city

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, Feb 17: Eight Heavily-armed Pakistani Taliban militants Friday stormed the Karachi Police chief's office in the country's most populous city, sparking gunfire that killed two rebels and two others, the latest brazen assault on security forces amid an uptick in terror attacks across the country.

The attack took place around 7:10 pm local time. A spokesperson of the Karachi Police confirmed in a statement that the Karachi police chief's head office had come under attack.

"Firing is going on," the statement said. Karachi Police chief Javed Odho also confirmed in a tweet that his office was under attack but said the security forces had responded strongly. Senior Police Official, DIG South Irfan Baloch said during the standoff, two of the rebels, a policeman and a civilian were killed. He said six others, including four policemen, were also injured.

"Some of the militants entered via the backside of the building while two entered from the main gate wearing police uniforms," he said. He said the police have surrounded the terrorists inside the building and one floor of the building had been cleared. The dreaded Pakistani Taliban terror group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

of the day quote

The government is in the process of identifying mineral blocks like nickel in the sea and would gradually put them on sale

VIVEK BHARADWAJ | MINES SECRETARY

The pre-owned two-wheeler vehicle market is changing rapidly. We have been successful in launching new business models, including pre-owned model in the two-wheeler segment earlier

NARAIN KARTHIKEYAN | FOUNDER, DRIVEN

FY2023 has been a defining year for the company's real estate business in its growth journey

SAHIL VACHANI | MD & CEO, MAX VENTURES & INDUSTRIES

SHORT TAKES

Twitter shuts two offices in India

New Delhi: Amid layoffs and a severe cost-cutting, Twitter has closed offices in Delhi and Mumbai and asked staff to work from home, according to sources. The micro-blogging platform's Bangalore office that largely has engineering staff remains operational, the sources said. The Delhi and Mumbai offices shuttered a few weeks ago, with remaining staff now working from home, sources privy to the matter said. The closure of the two offices in key locations in India comes as the platform has initiated massive cost cutting drive globally, after billionaire Elon Musk's \$44 billion takeover of Twitter, last year.

GAIL to buy stake in US LNG project

New Delhi: India's biggest gas firm GAIL is looking to buy up to 26 per cent stake in a LNG project in the United States in an attempt to shore up supply sources to meet rising demand. GAIL (India) Ltd, had run into supply disruptions last year after Russia-owned Gazprom Marketing and Trading (GMTS) failed to deliver contracted LNG due to western sanctions on Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine. The company has issued a tender seeking expression of interest (Eoi) from operators of existing liquefied natural gas (LNG) liquefaction plants or proposed projects in the US that will be commissioned by 2027.

US finds a silver lining in India's Russian oil buy

INDIA, THE WORLD'S THIRD-LARGEST CRUDE IMPORTER AFTER CHINA AND THE US, HAS BEEN SNAPPING DISCOUNTED RUSSIAN OIL AFTER MANY WESTERN COUNTRIES SHUNNED IT AS A MEANS OF PUNISHING MOSCOW FOR ITS INVASION OF UKRAINE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: By driving a hard bargain with Russia in procuring crude oil at the lowest price possible, India is furthering the policy of G7 nations to reduce Russian oil revenues and Washington is comfortable with New Delhi on issues relating to energy security, a top Biden administration official has said.

Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources Geoffrey R Pyatt told PTI in an exclusive interview that there is "no contradiction at all" in India remaining one of the key global partners of the United States and the country's increasing procurement of discounted Russian crude oil.

The comments are seen as the first such clear articulation of the Biden administration's position on India's increasing procurement of discounted crude oil from Russia. Pyatt, during his February 16-17 visit to New Delhi, said India

COOLING MARKET

Reserve price of wheat slashed

Wheat production this year is projected to be at a new record of 112.18 million tonne

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: The government Friday further reduced the reserve price of FCI wheat to ₹2,150 per quintal for bulk consumers under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) in a bid to check prices.

According to the food ministry, the reserve price of fair and average quality (FAQ) wheat has been reduced to ₹2,150 while for Under Relaxed Specifications (URS) wheat to ₹2,125 per quintal. These rates will be applicable till March 31, the ministry said.

State-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) is offloading 25 lakh tonne of wheat to bulk users under the OMSS.

"Reduction in reserve price will help in reducing market price of wheat and wheat products for consumers," the ministry said.

States are allowed to purchase wheat from FCI for their own scheme at above proposed reserve prices without participating in e-auction, it added.

On February 10, the ministry had done away with freight charges and kept the reserve price of FCI wheat uniformly at ₹2,350 per quintal to bulk users pan-India through e-auction.

It had also reduced the price of FCI wheat offered to institutions like Nafed, NCCF and Kendriya Bhandar to ₹21.50 per kilogram from ₹23.50 per kg. These institu-



ON FEB 10, THE MINISTRY HAD DONE AWAY WITH FREIGHT CHARGES AND KEPT THE RESERVE PRICE OF FCI WHEAT UNIFORMLY AT ₹2,350 PER QUINTAL TO BULK USERS PAN-INDIA THROUGH E-AUCTION

RESERVE PRICE OF FAQ WHEAT HAS BEEN REDUCED TO ₹2,150 WHILE FOR URS WHEAT TO ₹2,125 PER QUINTAL

FCI HAS ALREADY SOLD 13.11 LAKH TONNE OF WHEAT OUT OF 25 LAKH TONNE

tions were offered wheat for converting the grain into flour to sell it at a maximum retail price of ₹27.50 per kilogram instead of ₹29.50 per kg.

FCI has already sold 13.11 lakh tonne of wheat out of 25 lakh tonne to traders, to flour mills etc. In the course of the first two e-auctions held during February 1-2 and 15. The next auction will be held February 22.

Last month, the government an-

nounced plans to sell 30 lakh tonne of wheat in the open market from its buffer stock under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) in order to check rising wheat and wheat flour prices.

Out of the 30 lakh tonne, Food Corporation of India (FCI) will sell 25 lakh tonne to bulk consumers like flour millers through e-auction, 2 lakh tonne will be given to states/Union Territories and 3 lakh tonne to institutions and state-

PSUs at concessional rates for converting wheat into wheat flour.

FCI, the government's nodal agency for procurement and distribution of foodgrains, had around 156.96 lakh tonne of wheat as of January 26 in the buffer stock.

On April 1, the country would have a wheat stock of 96 lakh tonne, just above the buffer norm requirement of 75 lakh tonne.

Under the OMSS policy, the government allows FCI to sell food grains, especially wheat and rice, at predetermined prices in the open market from time to time to bulk consumers and private traders.

The purpose is to boost the supply during the lean season and moderate the general open market prices.

The Centre had banned wheat exports in May last year to control prices, after a slight fall in domestic production and a sharp decline in the FCI's procurement for the central pool.

India's wheat production fell to 106.84 million tonne in the 2021-22 crop year (July-June) from 109.59 million tonne in the previous year due to heat waves in a few states. The procurement fell sharply to 19 million tonne this year from around 43 million tonne last year.

However, wheat production this year is projected to be at a new record of 112.18 million tonne. The procurement of new wheat crop would commence from March 15.

New market segment for 'expensive' power gets nod

The power regulator fixed a ceiling of ₹50 per unit of electricity (kWh)



REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 17: India's power regulator has approved a proposal to start a separate spot market segment for 'expensive' power, according to an order handed down to the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX), with record demand levels expected this summer.

The approval from the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC), given to the country's largest spot power market, is for electricity derived from costlier sources of imported coal and gas, as well as battery storage.

Other power plants operating on low-cost fuel will not be allowed to sell electricity on the new market segment, according to the order,

a move seen as ensuring increased electricity availability.

IEX expects to start the market segment by mid-March, a spokesperson said, before high temperatures begin to push power consumption higher.

The power regulator fixed a ceiling of ₹50 per unit of electricity (kWh), according to the order.

Most of the plants based on costlier fuel operate at low capacity for lack of buyers. However, until last year states purchased electricity at ₹20 per unit to meet high demand during summer months and crop sowing seasons.

The CERC had in April 2021 lowered the cap on the ceiling for all spot power market segments to 12 rupees per unit of electricity.

Budget's emphasis on capex to push growth to 7%: RBI article

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 17: The Union Budget's focus on capital expenditure is expected to crowd-in private investment and push the GDP growth rate close to 7 per cent in the next financial year beginning April 1, said a Reserve Bank article on 'State of the Economy'.

In 2023-24, capital expenditure is budgeted at ₹10 lakh crore which will constitute 3.3 per cent of GDP.

"We believe that India will decouple from macroeconomic projections of current vintage and also from the rest of the world. In our view, the instrument of decoupling will be the Union Budget by raising India's growth prospects over the period 2023-27; and raising India's potential growth," said the article 'State of the Economy' published in the RBI's February 2023 Bulletin.

It further said the Union Budget's tax, capex and fiscal consolidation proposals can take India's real GDP growth close to 7 per cent in 2023-24 if they are effectively implemented. "The Union Budget 2023-24's emphasis on capital expenditure is expected to crowd-in private in-



In 2023-24, capital expenditure is budgeted at ₹10L-cr which will constitute 3.3% of the GDP

vestment, strengthen job creation and demand, and raise India's potential growth," said the article authored by a team lead by RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra.

The Economic Survey tabled in Parliament a day head of the Union Budget projected the GDP growth at 6.5 per cent as the base.

The central bank, however, said the views expressed in the article are of the authors and do not represent the views of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

"In our view, the Union Budget 2023-24 is the seventh horse of the

India setting up \$4bn fund to backstop corporate debt mkt

During times of stress, the backstop fund could step into the market to buy relatively illiquid investment grade bonds

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 17: India is setting up a fund worth ₹330 billion (\$4 billion) to provide liquidity to its corporate debt market during bouts of stress, to help stem panic selling and ease redemption pressures, an SBI Mutual Fund executive said.

The government will provide 90% of the money for the fund, and other asset managers would contribute the rest, deputy managing director DP Singh said.

SBI Mutual Fund, a unit of India's largest state-owned lender, State Bank of India, has been tasked with administering the backstop fund, which was first proposed by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in 2020 after high-profile defaults rocked the domestic debt market.

The need for a buyer and seller of last resort for corporate bonds was highlighted by Franklin Templeton India's move to stop redemptions from six debt funds in April 2020 as investors withdrew money and the fund house was unable to sell debt investments in the market.



We have seen in the past that whenever there is a credit event, there is a run on the funds for redemption which in turn creates pressure on liquidity. This fund is being created to avoid such a situation in the future and meet the redemption pressure in any such event

DP SINGH | DEPUTY MD, SBI MUTUAL FUND

"This backstop facility fund comes out of Indian market peculiarity that the bonds are investment grade and still illiquid," said Anubhav Shrivastava, partner, Infinity Alternatives, an alternate investment fund. "The market for secondary corporate bonds is thin which is why we need the buyer and seller of last resort, the backstop fund will do this."

The fund will be operational within three months. The fund is small relative to ₹39 trillion (\$471 billion) Indian corporate bond market, but its size could be increased later.

Forex reserves dip by \$8.32bn to \$566.95bn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 17: India's forex reserves dropped by \$8.319 billion to \$566.948 billion for the week ended February 10, the RBI said Friday.

This is the second consecutive week of drop in the reserves after the \$1.49-billion decrease in the previous reporting week.

It can be noted that in October 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached an all-time high of \$645 billion. The reserves have been declining as the central bank deploys the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments.

For the week ended February 10, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by \$7.108 billion to \$500.587 billion, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement.

Gold reserves decreased for the second week running and were \$919 million down to \$42.862 billion, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were also down by \$190 million to \$18.354 billion, the RBI said.

The country's reserve position with the IMF was down by \$102 million to \$5.145 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.

BIZ BUZZ

Union Bank inaugurates ATM lobby at NIFT campus

Bhubaneswar: Union Bank of India, NIFT campus Bhubaneswar ATM lobby located near KIIT University was inaugurated by Rajesh Kumar Jha - Director, NIFT Bhubaneswar in the presence of Sarvesh Ranjan - Field General Manager Bhubaneswar February 17. On this occasion Satyaban Behera - Deputy General Manager and Regional Head Regional Office Bhubaneswar, Hareram Shah - Assistant General Manager Regional Office Bhubaneswar and Soumya Ranjan Rout - Chief Manager Patia branch along with senior officials of regional office Bhubaneswar, branch managers of nearby local branches, staff members and students of NIFT Bhubaneswar were present to grace the occasion.



BOI organises SHG loan mela

Bhubaneswar: Bank of India, Bhubaneswar Zone organised 2 self help group (SHG) loan melas at Star Krishi Vikash Kendra located at Pipili and Tangi. S Malayadas, Zonal Manager, Bank of India, Pipili Block ABDO Sailabala Tripathy, BLC, BPC and other staff members were present in the programme. Likewise, Ashok Kumar Jena, Deputy Zonal Manager, Tangi ABDO Saswat Kumar Jena, BLC, BPC and other staff members graced the occasion. Total amount of ₹6 crore were distributed to 125 SHGs. More than 300 members of SHGs were present in both the camps.



Shami, spinners restrict Oz

India need to up the ante against England



ting) at the crease. Shami's repertoire of deliveries was on full display as he struck with the new, semi-new and old ball, while Ashwin and Jadeja came up with breakthroughs just when the opposition seemed to be gaining foothold as India took the opening day's honours.

The highlight was Rahul's brilliant catch at point off a powerful reverse sweep by Khawaja. That athletic effort not just broke the 59-run sixth-wicket partnership between Khawaja and Handscomb it also halted Australia's charge.

The pitch was a typical slow turner but had better carry than the Nagpur wicket and it did help Khawaja, as he was able to hit through the line during his knock. Shami must be given credit for the way he bowled after Rohit pressed him from the other end in the first session.

Mohammed Siraj, despite going wicketless, deserves credit for softening up David Warner, who struggled during his 50-run stand with Khawaja. Shami then came wide off the crease and angled one into Warner. The line was immaculate with a fuller length and Warner could only jab at it.

Ashwin then came into the act as Australia, from a comfortable 94/1, lost Marnus Labuschagne (18) and Steve Smith (0) in the space of two deliveries.

Labuschagne got an off-break that turned quite a bit and found him plumb in front, while Smith edged one to Kona Bharat, whose amazing reflexes and good technique paid rich dividends.

In the post-lunch session, Shami bowled another probing spell getting the better of Travis Head, who came in for Matt Renshaw for the second Test. Shami came closer to the stumps and bowled one which wasn't at a drivable length and Head's thick outside edge flew to Rahul, who took a nice catch wide of second slip.

Once Alex Carey was accounted for by Ashwin, Khawaja and Handscomb forged a nice partnership. The pitch wasn't difficult to bat on and the duo comfortably negotiated the Indian spinners between lunch and tea.

In fact, Handscomb looked quite assured as he took wide front-foot strides to negate the slow turn and occasionally went on the back-foot to punch the spinners on the off side. He hit nine boundaries and,

perhaps, played the best knock in three completed Australian innings in the series so far.

But Australia's dream of a big stand lay shattered when Khawaja went for an ambitious reverse sweep off Jadeja and Rahul plucked a one-handed stunner out of thin air. Skipper Pat Cummins (33) decided to play a counter-attacking game as Handscomb accumulated runs at the other end.

At 227/6, it seemed that Australia would score 300-plus in the first essay, which would have been a decent total by any standards. But Jadeja got into action and increased the pace of his deliveries, gauging the slowness of the track.

The result was a couple of quick wickets of Cummins and Todd Murphy (0) before Shami used the good old reverse swing to clean up the tail. Nathan Lyon was cleaned up by one that tailed in on the side of the shine while debutant Matt Kuhnemann had his leg stump pegged back.

BRIEF SCORES: Australia 263 (Usman Khawaja 81, Peter Handscomb 72 n o; Mohammed Shami's 4/60, R Ashwin 3/57, Ravindra Jadeja 3/68); **India 21/0**. Match to continue.



Smriti Mandhana would look to end her poor run of form

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gqeberha, Feb 17: After being put under pressure in their previous two games, India will have no room for error when they take on a formidable England in the Women's T20 World Cup here Friday. A win against World No.2 England Friday will take the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side effectively into the knock-out stage, to be competed among top two teams from Group 1 and 2. The Indians beat arch-rivals Pakistan by seven wickets before notching a more convincing six-wicket win against West Indies earlier this week.

While the twin wins put India in a strong position to qualify for the semifinals, it was hard-hitting teenager Richa Ghosh's brilliance which pulled the 'Women in Blue' over the line on both occasions.

Against England, the top-order will have to give a better account of themselves. U-19 World Cup-winning captain Shafali Verma has been unable to convert her starts in the tournament so far, giving away her wicket at crucial junctures. Back after nursing a finger injury, Smriti Mandhana looked in imperious touch as she timed the ball to perfection but couldn't go the distance.

Jemimah Rodrigues will seek some consistency while skipper Kaur has also looked in good touch and has made useful contributions though she has not scored big so far

with 33 being her highest. They will have to navigate England's spin trio of Charlie Dean, Sophie Ecclestone and Sarah Glenn.

While the bowling department put up a much-improved show against West Indies, the Indian bowlers will have to bowl out of their skin against England, who have the likes teenager Alice Capsey who will head into the match high on confidence after notching the joint-fastest fifty in Women's T20 World Cup history.

Pooja Vastrakar has been impressive, sharing the new ball duties with Renuka Singh while the ever-reliable Deepti Sharma bowled showcased exemplary death bowling against West Indies.

The fielding too has been patchy, with mis-fields and dropped catch marring some stellar display. India can ill afford the sloppiness against England who are bound punish any mistakes.

On the other hand, firm title contenders England, like India, are also unbeaten after two games and are best-placed to qualify for the semifinals. On the same points as India (+0.590), Heather Knight and Co. Lead the group owing to a superior net run rate of +2.497.

The mix of youth and experience is doing the trick for the former champions with the likes of Capsey and Lauren Bell supporting the experience of Knight, Nat and Katherine Sciver-Brunt and Danni Wyatt.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

125b, 12x4, 1x6) made amends for a horrendous first-Test outing at Nagpur with an attractive knock while Peter Handscomb (72 n o, 142b, 9x4) played with determination at the Arun Jaitley Stadium Friday, but their efforts weren't enough as the visitors were all out in 78.4 overs.

At stumps, India were 21 for no loss with Rohit Sharma (13 batting) and KL Rahul (4 bat-



Barca, Man United play out 2-2 thriller



IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY: Marcus Rashford reacts after a goal against Barcelona at Camp Nou, Thursday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Feb 17: Barcelona and Manchester United served up a thrilling 2-2 draw in the Europa League knockout playoffs that outranked anything seen in the Champions League this week.

The former European champions traded leads in a back-and-forth second half of their first-leg game at Camp Nou Thursday.

Barcelona struck first in the 50th minute on defender Marcos Alonso's header from a corner and levelled in the 78th when Raphinha's cross from the right wing curled into the net untouched. United's defense was distracted by Robert Lewandowski's failed attempt to connect.

In between, Marcus Rashford showed just why Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez described him as one of the most dangerous forwards in Europe.

Rashford beat goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen at his near post with a shot from a tight angle in the 53rd then created United's go-ahead goal seven minutes later.

Receiving the ball at the touchline from a corner taken short, Rashford dribbled into the penalty area then fired a low cross that was flicked on by Bruno Fernandes and bounced up to ricochet into the net off defender Jules Kounde for an own goal.

United goalkeeper David de Gea preserved the lead with late saves, after Ter Stegen's best saves were in the first half to keep out shots by Rashford and Wout Weghorst.

A game of 35 attempts on goal was watched by former United manager Alex Ferguson, now aged 81, in the stadium where his team won the 1999 Champions League final. It sets up an enticing second leg at Old Trafford next Thursday with a place in the round of 16 at stake.

Barcelona have never won the second-tier European competition — never even reached the final in 52 years as the UEFA Cup then the Europa League — and their 13th attempt looks to be no easier.

A game between two former Champions League finalists saw Monaco captain Axel Disasi score with a long-range shot in stoppage time to seal a 3-2 win at Bayer Leverkusen.

Juventus were held 1-1 by Nantes, after leading in the 13th on Dusan Vlahovic's goal, and seemed sure to be awarded a penalty for a handball in the fifth minute of stoppage time. Instead, after a two-minute review and consulting the pitchside screen, Portuguese referee Joao Pinheiro awarded Nantes a free-kick for a foul by the Juventus player Bremer.

Shakhtar Donetsk's first competitive game of 2023 during the midwinter break for the Ukrainian league was a 2-1 win over Rennes in a "home" game played in neutral Warsaw.

Sevilla, the record six-time champions, eased to a 3-0 win over PSV Eindhoven, and Salzburg will take a 1-0 lead to Roma next week thanks to Nicolas Capaldo's header in the 88th.

Odisha FC inch closer to ISL play-offs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 17: Odisha FC inched closer to grabbing their first-ever play-offs spots in the Indian Super League (ISL) after a resounding 3-1 win against NorthEast United FC at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium here Friday.

Goals from Nandhakumar Sekar, Victor Rodriguez, and Diego Mauricio gave three vital points to the Juggernauts, who are now one point away from sealing the play-off qualification.

Odisha FC kicked off with Pedro Martin and Diego Mauricio up front. The attacking intent was evident, but it was NorthEast United FC who made the better start and ventured forward in the first 10 minutes.

The first attempt came from Jithin MS as the winger tried to bend one into the far post from the left flank but ended up firing it wide.

At the other end of the pitch, Odisha FC finally started challenging the NorthEast United FC



backline. Opportunities fell to the Spanish duo of Martin and Saul Crespo but neither one of them could get their attempts on target.

But in the 36th minute, the deadlock was broken and Odisha FC took a crucial lead. Raynier Fernandes and Sahil Panwar ex-

changed a couple of passes after a short corner as the latter found Nandhakumar near the edge of the box. The winger took one look at goal and put his boot through the ball to find the top right corner.

NorthEast United FC had a couple of opportunities in the first 10

minutes of the second half. From a corner aimed at the far post, Aaron Evans' header was off target. Moments later, Parthib Gogoi showed excellent awareness on the right flank as he spotted an opening at the near post. The youngster tried his luck from near the touchline and forced Amrinder to readjust his footing and palm it behind for a corner.

But Odisha FC established a two-goal cushion five minutes past the hour-mark. From the right flank, Crespo squared a low ball into the box for Rodriguez. The substitute's deft touch helped him dodge Evans before driving it past Bhattacharja seven minutes after coming on. In the last 10 minutes, Laldanmawia Ralte fouled Crespo inside the box and gave away a penalty.

Mauricio fired it straight down the middle to make it 3-0. In the second minute of stoppage time, a first clean sheet in eight games was snatched away from Odisha FC after Wilmar Gil fired one home from the spot following Shubham Sarangi's foul.

HOLDERS GUJARAT TITANS TO TAKE ON CSK IN IPL OPENER



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: Defending champions Gujarat Titans will play four-time winners Chennai Super Kings to begin the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) in Ahmedabad March 31. The Titans, led by Hardik Pandya, won the title in their debut season last year.

According to the schedule announced by the BCCI Friday, there will be a total of 52 round-robin matches. The first double-header of the season will see Punjab Kings taking on Kolkata Knight Riders in Mohali and Lucknow Super Giants facing Delhi Capitals in Lucknow April 1.

While the weekdays will feature one match, double headers are scheduled every Saturday and Sunday. The league matches end May 21, with a tie between Royal Challengers Bangalore and Titans in Bangalore.

After staging the league across Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad in the last edition, the 16th season will revert to the home and away format, where all the teams will play seven home games and as many away matches respectively in the league stage.

According to the BCCI, a total of 70 league stage matches will be played across 12 venues over the course of 52 days. The IPL 2023 will have 18 double headers, with the day games starting at 3:30 PM and the evening matches beginning at 07:30 in the evening.

Rajasthan Royals will play their first two home games in Guwahati before playing the remainder of their home matches in Jaipur. Punjab Kings will play their five home matches in Mohali and their last two home games in Dharamshala against Delhi Capitals and Rajasthan Royals respectively.

The schedule and venues for the play-offs and final will be announced later. The summit clash will be played May 28.

Convincing wins

KAKINADA: Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh registered convincing wins over their respective opponents in the 13th Hockey India Senior Women National Championships here Friday. In the day's first Pool A match, Odisha defeated Kerala 13-0, while Madhya Pradesh scored a resounding 36-0 win over Telangana in Pool G. In the third match of the day, Himachal beat Gujarat 10-1.

India enter semis

DUBAI: India staged a remarkable comeback to down Hong Kong 3-2 and qualified for the semifinals of the Asia Mixed Team Badminton Championships here Friday. Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Crasto lost 24-26, 17-21 against Lee Chun Hei Reginald and Tsz Yau NG before Lakshya Sen went down 22-20, 19-21, 18-21 against Ka Long Angus NG. The men's pair of Dhruv Kapila and Chirag Shetty pulled one back for India with a 20-22, 21-16, 21-11 win over Tang Chun Man and Yeung Shing Choi. PV Sindhu got the better of Saloni Samirbhai Mehta 16-21, 21-7, 21-9. In the decider, Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand defeated Tsz Yau NG and Wing Yung NG 21-13 21-12.

TOUGH OUTING FOR HOME TEAM



Players of Odisha and Kerala in action during their Santosh Trophy match at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Friday. Odisha went down 0-1 as Niju Gilbert's 16th minute penalty strike was enough for Kerala to bag full points. In other matches, Rohit Sheikh's brace helped Punjab beat Goa 3-1 at the 7th Battalion Ground, while Maharashtra and Karnataka played out a thrilling 3-3 draw at the same venue

PICT: BIKASH NAYAK