



## CONVEYING LITTLE

Actor Kangana Ranaut gives cryptic response when asked to pick up the better actor between Hrithik Roshan and Diljit Dosanjh

LEISURE P2



## NK FIRES MORE MISSILES

North Korea fires two short-range ballistic missiles toward Japan in its second weapons test in three days

INTERNATIONAL P10



## BARCA SCRIPT VICTORY

Barcelona beat Cadiz 2-0 as they extend their winning streak and lead over Real Madrid in the Spanish league

SPORTS P12

## SHORT TAKES

### 100-bed ESIC hosp in Balasore soon

**New Delhi:** The Union Labour and Employment Ministry Monday approved the proposal for setting up of a 100-bed ESIC hospital in Balasore. Union Labour and Employment Minister Bhupender Yadav, while chairing the 190th meeting of Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), also announced hospitals at Belagavi (Karnataka), Shamshabad (Telangana), Baramati (Maharashtra), Kishangarh, Ajmer (Rajasthan) and Kurnool (Andhra Pradesh) and Greater Noida (Uttar Pradesh). The Labour minister said the decision has been taken after considering the increase in the number of workers. P4

### Utkal University of Culture gets new VC

**Bhubaneswar:** Governor Ganeshi Lal Monday appointed Berhampur University professor Prasan Kumar Swain as the vice-chancellor (VC) of Utkal University of Culture (UUC) for a period of three years. Swain, who has 31 years of teaching experience, is currently serving as the head of the Odia department at Berhampur University. Swain said his top priority, as the VC, will be students' intellectual and artistic growth for which he will ensure that they get proper advantage of the university's infrastructure. P4

### SC turns down plea for uniform marriage age

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court Monday turned down a plea seeking uniform minimum age for marriage for both men and women, saying there are some matters which are reserved for Parliament and courts cannot enact a law. A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said the top court cannot issue a mandamus (an extraordinary writ) for parliament to legislate. "We must defer to the Parliament. We can't enact law here. We should not perceive that we're the exclusive custodian of Constitution. Parliament is also a custodian," the bench observed while declining to allow the plea. P3

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Keep looking busy all the time or else you'll be sent to raid an opposition leader



**AIRING GRIEVANCES:** Members of All Odisha Gram Panchayat Level Federation Mission Shakti stage a sit-in at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Monday, to press for fulfillment of their demands

# Naba Das assassination may set House on boil

Opposition readies ammo to target the ruling BJD during Budget Session of Odisha Assembly beginning today

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 20:** With Odisha Police yet to ascertain the motive behind the assassination of minister Naba Kishore Das by a policeman even after 23 days, the opposition BJP and Congress announced they will make the incident a major issue during the Budget Session of the Assembly commencing Tuesday.

The BJP Monday held its legislative party meeting, while BJD and Congress would hold their meetings Tuesday to prepare strategies for the session.

"A cabinet minister was killed in broad daylight by a police official. Although nearly a month has passed into the murder of Naba Das, the Crime Branch is yet to ascertain a conclusive motive behind the murder," said BJP chief whip Mohan Majhi. There is no law and order in the state. So, the BJP will raise the minister's murder case as its major issue in the Budget Session, he said. Apart from the murder case, the BJP will also raise farmers' plight, irregularities in Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), free rice scheme of the Centre and harassment case against Tirtol BJD MLA during the session.

Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Narasingha Mishra slammed the BJD government over the minister's murder case and said his party will raise the issue in the House. Stating the main issue for the Budget Session is deteriorating



Security checks on Assembly premises, Monday (MORE P3)

### BJP MLAs walk out of all-party meeting

**Bhubaneswar:** Opposition BJP legislators walked out of an all-party meeting convened by Assembly Speaker BK Arukha Monday, a day before the Budget Session is slated to begin. The members of the saffron party walked out of the meeting demanding that no member be allowed to attend the proceedings of the House in virtual mode. "As Covid-19 has subsided substantially and restrictions have been withdrawn, there is no need to allow any member to participate in House proceedings through virtual mode," Leader of Opposition Jayanarayan Mishra said.

law and order situation in the state, Mishra said, "How can a government, which has failed to protect its own minister, ensure safety to the people and their property?"

He said the law and order situation has collapsed in the state. The killing of Naba Das in broad daylight by a policeman showed that 'jungle raj' prevails in the state, Mishra stated. The Congress leader alleged that Das' murder was not accidental. "It did not occur all of a sudden, but as a result of a big conspiracy," claimed Mishra. He also said that the Congress party would also raise issues like rising crime in the state, mismanagement in paddy procurement, unemployment and inflation.

On the other hand, the treasury bench has decided to raise the Central neglect issue to counter the Opposition. The BJD would raise reduction of the budgetary allocation for paddy procurement and discontinuation of distribution of 5 kg free rice under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. **Contd...P4**

# MAN HURLS ACID AT ESTRANGED WIFE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasore, Feb 20:** A 21-year-old woman, along with three others, suffered serious burn injuries after her estranged husband hurled acid at them at Bhimpur under Sahadevkhunta Model Police limits in the district, Monday.

The victims were identified as Banita Singh, 21, **KIDS AMONG 4 HURT** and her sister Barsha Singh, 22, and the latter's six-year-old daughter and eight-month-old son.

According to sources, accused Chandan Rana, 28, who had parted ways with Banita a few months back, had come to visit her for some work Monday morning.

"Soon, the two had a heated exchange of words and a mountain was made out of a molehill. Chandan hurled acid at Banita. The other three, who were nearby, also suffered burns," said an official, quoting the complaint lodged by Banita's father Sahadeb Singh with Sahadevkhunta Model Police.

Banita, who suffered around 80 per cent burns, and others were rushed to a nearby hospital. A critically-injured Banita was rushed to SCBMCH in Cuttack, where she is undergoing treatment.

Asked, Balasore SP Sagarika Nath said efforts were on to nab Chandan, who is on the run after the incident.

# Biden springs Kyiv visit surprise

THE US PRESIDENT MEETS UKRAINIAN COUNTERPART IN A SHOW OF SOLIDARITY BEFORE THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF RUSSIA'S INVASION

AGENCIES

**Kyiv, Feb 20:** US President Joe Biden made an unannounced visit to Ukraine Monday to meet with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a striking gesture of solidarity that comes days before the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Biden spent more than five hours in the Ukrainian capital, meeting Zelenskyy at Mariinsky Palace, honouring the country's fallen soldiers and meeting with US Embassy staff in the war-torn country.

In his remarks with Zelenskyy, Biden recalled the fears nearly a year ago that Russia's invasion forces might quickly take city. "One year later, Kyiv stands,"



Biden and Zelenskyy embrace AFP

Biden said, jamming his finger for emphasis on his podium decorated with the US and Ukrainian flags. "And Ukraine stands. Democracy stands. The Americans stand with you, and the world stands with you."

### CHINA'S DIPLOMAT HEADS TO RUSSIA

**Hong Kong:** As US President Joe Biden touched down in Ukraine Monday to meet with his counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy Monday, China's top diplomat was travelling in the opposite direction, on his way to Russia, according to a media report. Wang Yi - who was promoted as Chinese leader Xi Jinping's top foreign policy advisor last month - is due to arrive in Moscow this week as part of his eight-day Europe tour, a trip that brings into focus China's attempted diplomatic balancing act since Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine a year ago, CNN reported. **P10**

## MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	60691.54	↓ 311.03
NIFTY	17844.60	↓ 99.60
DOLLAR	82.69	↓ ₹0.13
EURO	88.39	↓ ₹0.09
GOLD	₹56,297	↑ ₹40
SILVER	₹65,713	↑ ₹82

## WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 35.3°C	33.8°C
	MIN 20.2°C	20.6°C
Humidity	82%	85%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Dry weather most likely

# What's the safest seat on an airplane?

AGENCIES

**Queensland, Feb 20:** When you book a flight, do you wonder which seat will protect you the most in an emergency? Probably not. Most people reserve seats for comfort, such as legroom, convenience, or easy access to the toilet. Frequent flyers sometimes reserve their seat as close as possible to the front of the plane to be able to disembark more quickly.

We rarely book a flight expecting to get one of the middle seats in the last row. Well, guess what? These seats are statistically the safest on an airplane.

Air travel is safe. Before getting to the heart of the matter, let's reiterate the fact that air transport is the safest mode of transport. In 2022, there were just

under 70 million flights worldwide, with just 174 fatalities.

According to analysis of census data by the US National Security Council, the odds of dying on an airplane are approximately 1 in 205,552, compared to 1 in 102 in a car. Despite this, we pay little attention to road fatalities, but when we hear about a plane crashing, it's front page news.

Our interest in plane crashes may lie in our desire to understand why they happen, or what the chances are of them happening again. And that may not be a bad thing: our interest helps ensure that these tragic incidents are thoroughly investigated, which contributes to the safety of air travel.

There's really no need to worry about safety when boarding a

**A SURVEY BY AMERICAN MAGAZINE TIME, WHICH EXAMINED 35 YEARS OF DATA ON PLANE CRASHES, FOUND THAT THE MIDDLE REAR SEATS OF AN AIRPLANE HAD THE LOWEST FATALITY RATE— 28%, COMPARED TO 44% FOR THE SEATS FROM THE CENTRAL AISLE**

commercial flight. But if you still have that nagging question in your mind, driven by pure curiosity, read on.

In the middle, in the back. It is worth remembering that accidents, by their very nature, are not up to standard. When United Flight 232 crashed in Sioux City, Iowa in 1989, 184 of the 269 people on board survived the crash. Most of the survivors were seated behind first class, towards the front of the aircraft.

Nevertheless, a survey by the

American magazine Time which examined 35 years of data on plane crashes found that the middle rear seats of an airplane had the lowest fatality rate: 28 per cent, compared to 44 per cent for the seats from the central aisle.

It is also logical. Sitting next to a row where the exit is will always give you the quickest exit in an emergency, provided there is no fire on that side. But an airplane's wings store fuel, which disqualifies centre exit rows as the safest row option. **Contd...P4**



# leisure



## ADELE, ED SHEERAN REFUSE TO PERFORM AT CHARLES' CORONATION

Singers Adele and Ed Sheeran have declined the offer to perform at King Charles' coronation concert. The *Hello* hitmaker, 34, rejected the invitation while *The A-Team* singer Ed, 32, found it 'difficult' for him to perform at the May 7 show at Windsor Castle due to his gig in America, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.

## BELLA THORNE WILL NOT SIGN NUDE PICTURES OF HERSELF

American actress Bella Thorne recently refused to sign a naked picture of herself. The 25-year-old once shot for *GQ* magazine where she posed topless but when she was asked to sign a copy of the magazine for a man hoping to sell it, she declined as she felt it was inappropriate.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL \$5181

#### ARIES

You may have a wide circle of casual friends, but today, these associations will prove to be beneficial. Your friends will help you chase away the blues. That way, you will also understand the deeper role of friendship, says Ganesh.

#### TAURUS

Today, passionate and possessive are the two words that will define your relationship with the people you love, predicts Ganesh. You may choose to take pains for the sake of others, which seems to be highly fulfilling. Your good spirit will sky-rocket by evening. Make sure to change your disadvantage into your advantage, says Ganesh.

#### GEMINI

If you are embroiled in a legal dispute, an out-of-court settlement is likely, predicts Ganesh. You are a courageous person and you'll need a lot of it today. Don't back down from your decisions. You may have to be stern with a few people. Your resilience will pay off.

#### CANCER

Today, you will put your heart and soul into whatever task you take up. But the results may not be too forthcoming. However, that should not be a reason for you to get dejected or anxious. You will get your due sooner or later.

#### LEO

Sometimes, it takes courage to be honest and admit to your failures. Doing so only goes a long way in establishing your credentials as a real person, feels Ganesh. So understand that, while it is only human to make mistakes, it takes more than that to accept them.

#### VIRGO

A renewed zest for life will bring in a transformation in you. It is a good time to let people know how important and intelligent - yes, you can be both - are. Your eminence will be obvious as you show how things are meant to be done.

#### LIBRA

Good news! You will be a people's person today. Close friends, relatives and family - you seem to want to spend your time with all of them today, says Ganesh. Better news? Your romantic brilliance will be at its peak today as your fancy takes wings and creativity flows freely in manners that seem irresistible. Best news? The opposite sex just can't seem to keep their hands off you.

#### SCORPIO

A cascade of let-downs will dent your confidence and shake your determination, says Ganesh. But don't let these failures affect you as they are temporary. At work, your subordinates may force you to take drastic measures.

#### SAGITTARIUS

A day full of cheer and joy is in store. You will probably enrol in a part-time course and sharpen your skills. But for those in police and legal professions, you will be the lions of the jungle! Roar and stamp your authority, says Ganesh.

#### CAPRICORN

You may not get as popular as Romeo did, but your exceedingly romantic nature will earn you quite a reputation, not to forget the hypnotic effect it will have on your sweetheart, says Ganesh. On the flip side, troubles will chase you everywhere; you are likely to face problems with your business rivals and health condition, but your mind will be on guard always, giving you an edge over your opponents.

#### AQUARIUS

Today is an important day in the larger scheme of things. You may finally decide to buy a home, change your job, or marry! Sudden and unexpected profits are on the cards too. Reputation and rewards are all yours today. This acknowledgement helps you remain committed, says Ganesh.

#### PISCES

You are human enough to make mistakes, and humble enough to admit them, and it is this honesty that people admire in you. Your affectionate nature will see you excel at tending to the needs of your family members today, says Ganesh.

# All Quiet on the Western Front bags 7 top honours at BAFTAs

AUSTIN BUTLER RECEIVES BEST ACTOR'S TROPHY FOR *ELVIS* WHILE CATE BLANCHETT WAS SELECTED BEST ACTRESS FOR *TÁR*



London: The British Academy Film & Television Awards (BAFTAs) took place at the Royal Festival Hall in London, England Sunday and it was a night of sweeping victory for the German film *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which won seven awards, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Film not in English

language and a bevy of technical awards. Tied for second place in the winner's tally were *Elvis* and *The Banshees of Inisherin*, which won four BAFTAs each. With a visceral depiction of life and death in the World War I trenches, the German Film *All Quiet on the*

*Western Front* won the best picture. Edward Berger took home the title of best director for the same. Cate Blanchett, 53, who played the character of renowned conductor Lydia Tár, who is accused of sexual abuse, won the Best Leading Actress Award for her mesmerising performance in the movie *Tár*. Austin Butler won the Best Leading Actor Award for his portrayal of the iconic 'King of Rock and Roll', Elvis Presley in *Elvis*, while *The Banshees of Inisherin* cast members, Kerry Condon and Barry Keoghan won both Supporting Actor Awards (male and female). Queer director Charlotte Wells won the award for Best British writer, director, or producer for her devastating coming-of-age drama *Aftersun*, and there was barely a dry eye in the house when she emerged triumphant. *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, a favourite heading into next month's Oscar, took home only one award, for best editing.



Britain's film academy introduced changes to increase the awards' diversity in 2020. This year, there are 11 female directors up for awards across all categories, including documentary and animated films. It was seen that the participants and hosts wore blue ribbons in support of refugees and displaced people. *All Quiet, The Banshees...*, and *Everything Everywhere* are all best-picture contenders at the Oscars, where *Everything Everywhere...* has a leading 11 nominations. The prizes, officially the EE BAFTA Film Awards, are Britain's equivalent of Hollywood's Academy Awards and will be watched closely for hints of who may win at the Oscars March 12.

## Kangana's cryptic reply to question on Hrithik

Mumbai: Actress Kangana Ranaut, who stays more in the news for her controversies than for her movies, often finds herself in the eye of a storm, due to her (in) famous statements against colleagues from the industry.

Recently, the 35-year old conducted her first #askkangana session on Twitter and invited questions from her fans. She started off the session by saying, "Ok ask me questions it's lunch break on *Chandramukhi* sets, I have never done this before but why now Let's go ..."

In the session, when the *Mamirkarnika* actress was asked to choose between Hrithik Roshan (who she was allegedly involved with a few years back) and Diljit Dosanjh. The actor, staying away from making any fiery statement replied, "I thought one does action and other one makes song videos, honestly never saw them act ... can only tell if someday I see them act ... if such a thing happens do let me know thanks #askkangana".

The *Queen* actor was also asked to choose between love and truth. To which, she replied, "Truth ... you don't choose love, love chooses you, love is like sunshine it falls on you like grace you don't demand or extract it ... #askkangana".



### MULTILINGUAL DRAMA FEST: DAY 2

## Odia play *Matula Sambad* presents fascinating facts of Kurukshetra War

Bhubaneswar: Even as Lord Krishna and Shakuni represented opposite camps during the Kurukshetra War, they did have a few common goals and the interactions between the two about those formed the crux of Odia play *Matula Sambad* staged on the second evening of 25th Kalinga Natya Mahotsav here at Rabindra Mandap, Monday.

The five-day multilingual theatre festival is being organised by Satabdha Kalakar in collaboration with the Union Ministry of Culture, Culture Department of Odisha and the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

Written by Suryamani Tripathy and directed by troupe's secretary Dhira Mallick, the play told mostly the proceedings of the 12th day of Kurukshetra War. The plot presented the epic from a very different perspective which is certainly not very popular.



A scene from the play staged at Rabindra Mandap, Monday

Among the actors, Santosh Mohanty, Ashok Sahoo, Priyanka Singh, Anil Rout, Sneharanjan Parida and Manideepa Mallick played key roles in the play.

Additional Chief Secretary Satyabrata Sahoo, Bhubaneswar-DDK Director Dipti Mishra and

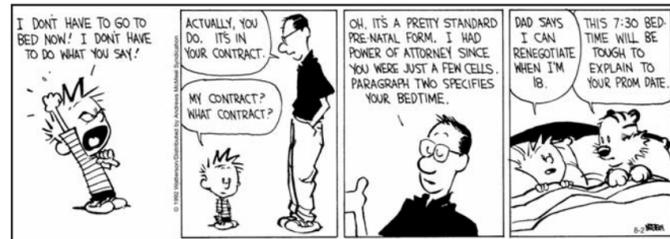
drama's playwright Tripathy and troupe's president Gourahari Das were present at the event.

Playwright Dhanurhar Mishra and photo journalist Mousam Kumar Nanda were presented with Satabdha Kalakar Samman on the occasion.

### PEANUTS



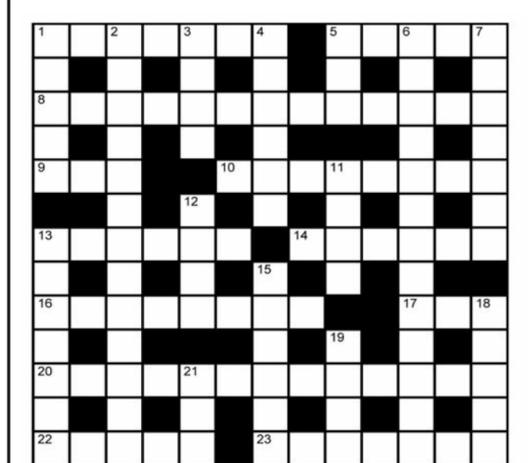
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



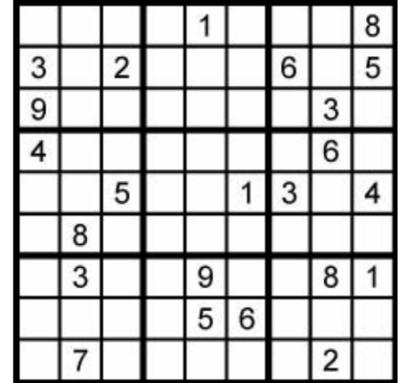
### FUN post CROSSWORD



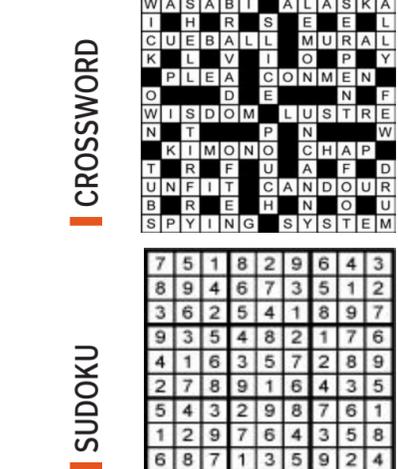
- Copyright ©2023 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Submitted a query for a job
  - 5 3rd letter of the Greek Alphabet
  - 8 Equipment, such as fishing tackle or stable gear
  - 9 Summer, in France
  - 10 Exasperation
  - 13 Neo is the hero of the movie, *The \_\_\_\_\_*
  - 14 Commence (3,3)
  - 16 Love and concern for oneself
  - 17 Petroleum
  - 20 Experimentation (5-3-5)
  - 22 Like some pub brews (2,3)
  - 23 Injured in battle
  - Down**
  - 1 Abundant
  - 2 One who searches for flawlessness
  - 3 Scamps
  - 4 More profound
  - 5 Firearm
  - 6 Calico, e.g.
  - 7 Versus
  - 11 Toward shelter, at sea
  - 12 Leaning Tower site
  - 13 Artist of consummate skill
  - 15 Very small European freshwater fish
  - 18 Shocking
  - 19 Domesticated ox
  - 21 Brim

### 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

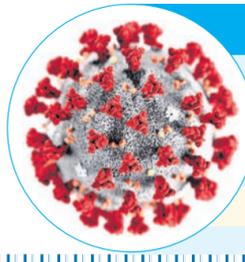


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



**DOCTORS' STIR**  
Members of RBSK Ayush Doctors' Association staged a dharna in Bhubaneswar, Monday, seeking job regularisation



COVID-19 TRACKER			
	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	67,87,40,205	65,14,48,633	67,91,316
India	4,46,85,037	4,41,52,360	5,30,7612
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

# SC turns down plea for uniform marriage age

**WE SHOULD NOT PERCEIVE THAT WE'RE THE EXCLUSIVE CUSTODIAN OF CONSTITUTION. PARLIAMENT IS ALSO A CUSTODIAN, SAYS THE APEX COURT**



**The difference in marriage age violated the principles of gender equality, gender justice and dignity of women, the petition claimed**

**New Delhi, Feb 20:** The Supreme Court Monday turned down a plea seeking uniform minimum age for marriage for both men and women, saying there are some matters which are reserved for Parliament and courts cannot enact a law. A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said the top court cannot issue a mandamus (an extraordinary writ) for parliament to legislate. "We must defer to the Parliament. We can't enact law here. We should not perceive that we're the exclusive custodian of Constitution. Parliament is also a custodian," the bench observed while declining to allow the plea. The apex court was hearing a petition filed by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay seeking equality in the legal age of marriage for men and women. Men in India are permitted to get married at the age of 21, while the marriageable age for

women is 18 years. "The petitioner seeks that women's age of marriage should be increased to 21 to be par with men. Striking down of provision will result in there being no age for marriage for women. Hence, petitioner seeks a legislative amendment. This court cannot issue a mandamus for parliament to legislate. "We decline this petition, leaving it open to petitioner to seek appropriate directions," the bench, also comprising Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala said. The petitioner said the plea was filed raising a legal question and filing a task force to look at the issue will not serve the purpose. The difference in marriage age violated the principles of gender equality, gender justice and dignity of women, the petition claimed. The plea contended, "The petition challenges a blatant, ongoing form

of discrimination against women. That is the discriminatory minimum age limit for marriage for men and women in India. "While men in India are permitted to get married only at the age of 21 years, women are allowed to get married when they are 18. This distinction is based in patriarchal stereotypes, has no scientific backing, perpetrates de jure and de facto inequality against women, and goes completely against global trends. "...It is a social reality that married women are expected to perform a subordinate role vis-a-vis the husband and this power imbalance is deeply aggravated by the age difference," it said. The younger spouse is, therefore, expected to respect and be servile to her elder partner, which aggravates the pre-existing gender based hierarchy in the marital relationship, the petition stated.

## Ex-VLW gets 2-yr RI in corruption case

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 20:** A special Vigilance court here Monday sentenced a person to two years rigorous imprisonment (RI) after finding him guilty of taking bribe to issue work order to a contractor in 2009. The convict was identified as Sushant Kumar Sahoo, former village level worker (VLW) and in-charge of the secretary of Chhamundia panchayat under Gania block in Nayagarh district. The convict has also been asked by the court to pay ₹4,000 as penalty under two different sections of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. Sushant has to serve additional imprisonment for two months if he fails to deposit the amount within the stipulated time. "One Mula Ray lodged an FIR before SP, Vigilance, Bhubaneswar 22.12.2009 alleging inter-alia that the accused Sushant Kumar Sahoo demanded bribe of ₹1800 from him for issue of work order for construction of platform of village well. A trap was laid on 22.12.2009 and the accused Sushant Kumar Sahoo was caught red-handed while demanding and accepting bribe of ₹1800 from the informant Mula Ray at Gania Block Office. The bribe money was recovered from the possession of the accused," revealed special public prosecutor Hemanta Kumar Swain. The court went through statements of seven witnesses, several documents and material objects during trial before pronouncing the judgement. The case was conducted by Swain on behalf of the Vigilance.

# Timely delivery, quality our forte, says Sanjib

Xpose Advertising is a leading advertising agency in the state. Established in 2001, it has a robust client base not only in Odisha but also in West Bengal and Chhattisgarh. In an interview with **Orissa POST**, the ad agency's owner **Sanjib Mohanty** opens up about the journey of the firm. Excerpts:



- **How has your journey been so far?**
  - When we entered the market in 2001, we were only four. And now, we are a 35-member team with a robust presence not only in Odisha but also in West Bengal and Chhattisgarh. Like every business, we too had many ups and downs. We enjoyed it.
  - **What, according to you, are the pros and cons of advertising industry?**
    - Ensuring quality work and timely delivery of projects help you stand out in the market, but fund flow, which has been more sluggish after Covid-19 pandemic, is one of the bottlenecks.
    - **What's your USP? Is there any plan to gain more traction?**
      - Transparency, fair price, and timely delivery of quality prod-

uct are the essence of our work. Human resource management is one of the areas we are working on to gain more traction.

■ **Any suggestions for newcomers?**

- Work hard and stand by your commitment to clients. By doing this one can win the confidence of clients and do well in the market.

■ **What is the growth prospective in Odisha's advertising market?**

- Even though nation is standing tall amidst global economic downturn, we expect a fall in spending on advertisements. There is definitely a



# Where is the duped investors' money: SC

**New Delhi, Feb 20:** The Supreme Court Monday adjourned the hearing on a petition seeking independent probe into the multi-crore chit fund scam and return of money to thousands of investors duped by chit fund companies in Odisha. A two-judge bench comprising Justices MR Shah and CT Ravikumar posted the matter for hearing to March 13 after counsel appearing for the Union government pleaded the court to take up the matter after a week. "Where is the money," Justice Shah asked the Union government during the hearing. The counsel appearing for the Centre submitted that the money collected by cooperative societies has been invested in private companies. He requested the court to take on record the transfer petition filed by the Centre to transfer all chit fund related cases pending at different courts to the Supreme Court. Earlier, the Supreme Court

January 16 sought suggestions from Union government, Odisha and other parties in the chit fund scam on the issue of repayment of money to the investors duped by chit fund companies. A two-judge bench of Justices MR Shah and CT Ravikumar had observed that companies are the ultimate sufferers when there is delay in investigation of chit fund cases. It also sought information from Solicitor General Tushar Mehta about the number of investors who have been repaid their money. "Everything sounds flowery. Common man only interested in his money. These are your policies. You please work on your own policies," the bench observed. The Union Ministry of Cooperation had also filed an impleadment application in the apex court to become a party in the case. The counsel appearing for the ministry had submitted that it seeks to make certain suggestions based on the status report it filed in the apex court on the issue.

**The Union govt's counsel requested the SC to take on record the petition filed by the Centre for transfer of all chit fund related cases**



**FOR A COOLER SUMMER:** A roadside vendor arranges terrakotta water pots near Barabati Stadium in Cuttack, Monday, as temperature rises slowly. Earthen and terrakotta pots are high in demand as they keep the water cool during a blistering summer

## Geetanjali Shree to get Kalinga Literary Award

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 20:** The prestigious Kalinga Literary Awards for 2023 will be conferred on eminent Hindi novelist Geetanjali Shree and educationist, playwright, and art critic Ramesh Prasad Panigrahi, with Penguin Random House and Rajkamal Prakashan getting the 'Publishing House of the Year' award, said Kalinga Literary Festival founder and director Rashmi Ranjan Parida. The awards, which were instituted in 2013, are given in three categories. From this year onwards, the festival will provide ₹1 lakh award prize to the Kalinga International Literary Award winner and ₹50,000 to the Kalinga Literary Award winner. The awards, to be conferred at the inaugural ceremony of the 9th Kalinga Literary Festival February 24, also carry a trophy and citation. While Ramesh Prasad Panigrahi is a living legend in Odia drama with 83 plays to his name, Geetanjali Shree is a Hindi novelist who won the International Booker Prize in 2022 for her novel 'Ret Samadhi', translated into English as 'Tomb of Sand'.

# Naveen inaugurates 10-day long Adivasi Mela

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 20:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the Adivasi Mela and Sanskritika Utsav-2023 at Adivasi Ground here, Monday, in a bid to propagate art, culture and tradition of tribals and market their authentic products. On this occasion, the Chief Minister visited the art and craft segment of Adivasi Mela. This year, the fair that is having 121 stalls will continue for 10 days and conclude March 1. Ten houses of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) have been constructed at the fair ground to give the visitors a feel of the tribal atmosphere in remote pockets of the state. The walls of thatched and tiled roof houses painted with traditional 'jhoti' are pulling crowd. Banana plants with bunch of plantains in the house compounds and large pumpkins hanging from



the roofs have added to the attraction. Women self help groups (SHG) of Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) and Micro Projects are selling various tribal and forest products at the Adivasi Haat set up on the fair ground. Tribal women are selling the



products collected and produced by them at 62 ITDA stalls. This apart, 17 stalls of micro projects have been allotted to SHG women. TDCC, OFSDS, Mission Shakti, ORMAS, Millets Mission, Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts department and Planning and Convergence department are selling and displaying their products in 23 stalls. To make the evenings more enjoyable, cultural programmes coupled with tribal dance are being organised. Every year 8 to 10 lakh visitors through the Adivasi Mela that clocks

# Three-tier security for smooth Budget Session

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 20:** The Director General of Police (DGP) Sunil Kumar Bansal Monday reviewed the security arrangements at the Assembly and its adjoining areas in view of the Budget Session beginning Tuesday. Director of Intelligence, Sanjeeb Panda, twin city police commissioner Saumendra Priyadarshi along with other senior police officials were also present at the spot. The Commissionerate Police has put in place a three-tier security arrangement for smooth functioning of the Budget Session. As many as 30 platoons of police force, 10 additional DCPs, 11 ACPs, 13 inspector-rank officers, 85 sub inspector and ASI-rank officers, and 160 traffic havildars & constables will be deployed in and around the Assembly.

The place earmarked for demonstrations at Mahatma Gandhi Marg will be under CCTV surveillance. Two special tactical units will be at readiness to attend any emergency call. Similarly, five control rooms have been set up to keep watch on rallies, agitations and demonstrations during the session. Speaking to mediapersons, Bansal said all measures will be taken to provide security to all the legislators. The public has been prohibited to move or go near the areas surrounding the House. PMG and Assembly areas have been sealed.

## CM: Use tech to prepare students for nat'l exams

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 20:** Expressing concern over poor performance by Odisha students at national level competitive exams, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday asked newly recruited lecturers to use technology to prepare students ready for national level exams.

The Chief Minister told this to the lecturers during an induction programme of 914 assistant professors and lecturers, who joined the services Monday.

"I would expect all of you to commit yourselves to our education system, inspire the students, help them broaden their sphere of knowledge, and make them ready to plunge into the new world with confidence," Patnaik said while addressing the programme.

Stating this is the age of technology, he expected the lecturers to use technology in education so that the students can have access to knowledge from all over the globe.

The CM urged them to encourage the students to take up research work, and understand the transformation that is happening all around.

"We also need more of our students to come out successful in all India competitive examinations. I think you can play a bigger role in preparing our students for a better future," he added.

## Vaishnav's clarification on BPN rly line project

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 20:** Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, while clarifying on the allegations of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik about the Bargarh-Nuapada railway line via Padampur, Monday said that the state government has to blame itself for the delay.

Vaishnav said, "Odisha Railway Infrastructure Development Limited (ORIDL) has been entrusted with the project to connect Bargarh - Padampur - Nuapada and it is controlled by Odisha government. Government of India has given in-Principle Approval (IPA) to ORIDL vide Ministry of Railways letter (No. 2019 / JV Cell / Odisha / Bargarh Road-Nuapada Road)." The approval of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) is under consideration with the state government, he added. Railway Minister has also appealed to the state government for its support in the execution of several projects initiated by the Union government for the overall development and improvement of railways in Odisha.

## CLASSIFIED

### AFFIDAVIT

I am Pradeep Rout, S/o-Lt. Pitambar Rout of Gobindpur, Gobindpur kutchery, Aul, Kendrapara- 755061, Odisha. I already correct my name in my School Certificate Pradeepta Rout to Pradeep Rout (Pradeep Rout and Pradeepta Rout is same and one person) for all future official purpose.

### LOST

I Sri Bhagyaban Sethi, S/o. Naku Prasad Sethi of Village, Bhawanipatna, Dist- Kalahandi declared that I have lost on Dt.25.01.2023 my Reg. Sale Deed Document No.881101753, dated 09.05.2011 I have also lodge an FIR in this regards before Bhawanipatna Town Police Station on dated 06.02.2023. If some kind hearted person found the same document they kindly inform the Mobile No. 7381024787 Mr. Sraban Kumar Agrawal (Advocate)

# Mangu Mutt petition dismissed in SC



POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Feb 20:** The Supreme Court Monday dismissed a contempt petition filed against the state government for demolishing 500 year old Mangu Mutt in a demolition drive in Puri.

A two-judge bench of Justice MR Shah and Justice CT Ravikumar dismissed the petition stating that it won't initiate contempt proceedings in the matter. "We see no reason to initiate contempt proceedings. The contempt proceedings stand dismissed," the bench said.

The contempt petition was filed alleging non-compliance of the Supreme Court order of 2019 in Mrinalini Padhi vs Union of India case over construction of Mutt around Shri Jagannath Temple in Puri.

Senior advocate Anand Grover submitted during the hearing that the Mutt was not supposed to be demolished. He submitted that Guru Nanak himself visited this shrine 500 years ago. The contempt petitioners submitted in the apex court that the state government had violated the apex court order of November 2019 by demolishing centuries-old Mangu Mutt in Puri.

**The contempt petition was filed alleging non-compliance of the Supreme Court order of 2019 in Mrinalini Padhi vs Union of India case over construction of Mutt around Shri Jagannath Temple in Puri**

The petitioners submitted that the Odisha government had filed an additional affidavit in the Supreme Court in October 2019 stating that the deities, sanctum sanctorum, gaadi, Samadhi and relics of the Mutt will not be disturbed and remain at their current place with better beautification in line with Kalinga style architecture.

However, the government had demolished the centuries-old Mangu Mutt in order to construct a security corridor around Shree Jagannath temple, the petitioner said. It was further submitted that the Sikh community gathered and started protesting against such demolition as it was harmful to their faith and rituals.

## Over 5gm brown sugar seized; 2 held

**Bhubaneswar:** Jatri police arrested two drug peddlers and seized five and a half gram of brown sugar from them, Monday. Police have filed a case (59/23) against the two culprits- Rakesh Kumar Harichand alias Dipu of Rajabazar, Khuntia sahi and Lokanath Mohapatra alias Loka of Kusumati Tangisahi. On receiving information, an independent team of Jatri police raided the Kudjari M.A. school field and caught the two peddlers with the cotrabands. The police also seized two mobile phones and one motorcycle in the raid. Further questioning revealed that the offenders bought the brown sugar from Balasore and sold it in Jatri. Of the two peddlers Lokanath has two previous cases registered against him in the Jatri police station, informed the police.



**RAZING DOWN:** An excavator deployed by CMC carrying out anti-encroachment drive at Ranihat in Cuttack, Monday

OP PHOTO

# Students' artistic growth my top priority: New UCC VC

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 20:** Governor Ganeshi Lal Monday appointed Berhampur University professor Prasan Kumar Swain as the vice-chancellor of Utkal University of Culture (UUC) for a period of three years.

Swain, who has 31 years of teaching experience, is currently serving as the head of the Odia department at Berhampur University. He has authored 10 books and has successfully guided two DLitt, 15 PhD and 56 MPhil scholars.

Speaking to **Orissa POST** Swain said that he got the job due to Lord Jagannath's blessings, adding that he will join the university as VC with an open mindset being more accommodative about suggestions from everybody including academicians and students.

He also said that his top priority



as the VC will be students' intellectual and artistic growth for which he will ensure that they get proper advantage of the university's infrastructure.

"Infrastructure development of a university like Utkal University of Culture is really crucial and as a new VC, I will focus on improvement of all the departments keeping in mind the current world standards so that the students will get knowledge that's advanced and updated." Swain said while hoping to secure collaboration of all the stakeholders for this purpose.

## Swain will take position as the new VC of UCC replacing Byomkesh Tripathy who moved to Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Madhya Pradesh

Swain will take position as new VC replacing Byomkesh Tripathy who moved to Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Madhya Pradesh. The UUC, which came into existence by virtue of an ordinance promulgated June 9, 1999, later replaced by "Utkal University of culture Act 1999," was established to preserve, promote, propagate and protect the richness of the state's cultural values through study, research, documentation and education.

## ₹690.02cr budget approved by BMC

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 20:** Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) held its first corporation meeting at new BMC-ICMOC building here Tuesday. The new building was inaugurated by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik February 16.

In the corporation meeting headed by BMC Mayor Sulochana Das, the budget for the year 2023-24 was presented and approved in the meeting. Annual budget of ₹690.02 crore for the financial year 2023-2024 was passed in the Council meeting of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Monday. The focus of the budget will be sanitation and infra development, said Das.

However, the meeting witnessed wailing out of BJP members. They alleged that their questions were not responded by the Mayor. They too slammed the Mayor for not inviting the local MP to the building unveiling function.



**FOR HEALTH INFRA:** Members of Cuttack City Congress confronting authorities of SCB Medical College and Hospital over inordinate delay in starting liver transplantation project, Monday

OP PHOTO

# Centre announces 100-bed ESIC hospital in Balasore

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Feb 20:** The Union Labour and Employment Ministry Monday approved the proposal for setting up of a 100 bedded Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) hospital at Balasore in the state.

Union Labour and Employment Minister Bhupender Yadav, while chairing 190th Meeting of ESIC, also announced Hospitals at Belagavi (Karnataka), Shamsabad (Telangana), Baramati (Maharashtra), Kishangarh, Ajmer (Rajasthan) and 30 bedded ESIC

Hospital at Kurnool (Andhra Pradesh) and 350 bedded ESIC Hospital at Greater Noida (Uttar Pradesh). The minister said the decision has been taken after considering the increase in the number of workers.

The ministry said in order to provide relief to insured workers who became unemployed during the Covid-19 pandemic, ESIC Corporation, in the meeting, agreed to the proposal of extending the benefits available under Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana (ABVKY) for two more years. ABVKY is a welfare measure in the

form of cash compensation up to 90 days once in lifetime of the worker in the contingency unemployment.

Foreseeing the considerable increase in the number of insured workers and their dependents coming under the ambit of ESIC Scheme after the implementation of Social Security Code - 2020, Bhupender Yadav directed ESIC to lay emphasis on strengthening and expanding the medical services infrastructure by adopting multipronged strategies for providing primary medical care to the IPs and their beneficiaries.

## CONTINUED FROM P1

### Naba Das murder...

The BJD will also raise the issue relating to Leader of Opposition (LoP) Jayanarayan Mishra, who allegedly manhandled a lady police officer. The regional party has been demanding an apology from the LoP for his alleged misbehaviour to a lady cop during a protest.

Government chief whip Prasanta Kumar Muduli said the ruling party is always ready to discuss any issue, which is in the interest of the state and its people.

Strategy to counter the Opposition will be decided at the BJD legislature party meeting Tuesday, he said. Meanwhile, DGP Sunil Bansal reviewed the security arrangements made for the budget session. Bansal said three-tier security cover will be put in place in and around the Assembly for the session.

The inside cordon will be looked after by the special branch, while

the Commissionerate Police will look after the outer and inner cordons, he said. Besides, five police control rooms have been set up and proper traffic arrangements also made, the DGP informed.

Police commissioner Saumendra Priyadarshi said about 30 platoons of police force including two DCPs, 10 additional DCPs, 11 ACPs, 13 inspectors will be deployed for the session. Tight security arrangements have also been made at Mahatma Gandhi Marg, where a large number of protests are being held when the Assembly is on session, he added.

The budget session will be held in two phases from February 21 and to April 6. The session will start with the address of Governor Ganeshi Lal February 21 while the annual budget for the year 2023-24 will be presented on February 24.

### What's the safest...

At the same time, being closer to

the front means you'll be hit before those in the back, leaving us with the last row that counts one exit. As for why middle seats are safer than window or aisle seats, it's, as you might expect, because of the buffer of having people around each side.

### Some crashes are worse than others

The type of accident will also determine survivability. Colliding with a mountain will decrease the chances of survival exponentially, as it did in a tragic 1979 disaster in New Zealand. Air New Zealand Flight TE901 crashed into the slopes of Mount Erebus in Antarctica, killing 257 passengers and crew.

Landing in the ocean nose forward also decreases chances of survival, as shown by 2009 Air France Flight 447, in which 228 passengers and crew perished.

Pilots are trained to minimise potential risks in the event of an emergency. They will try to avoid

hitting mountains and look for a flat place, like an open field, to land as normally as possible. The water landing technique involves assessing surface conditions and attempting to land between waves at a normal landing angle.

### Biden springs...

The Ukraine visit comes at a crucial moment in the war as Biden looks to keep allies unified in their support for Ukraine as the war is expected to intensify with both sides preparing for spring offensives.

Zelensky is pressing allies to speed up delivery of pledged weapon systems and is calling on the West to deliver fighter jets to Ukraine — something that Biden to date has declined to do.

In Kyiv, Biden announced an additional half-billion dollars in U.S. Assistance — on top of the more than \$50 billion already provided — including shells for howitzers,

anti-tank missiles, air surveillance radars and other aid but no new advanced weaponry.

Ukraine has also been pushing for battlefield systems that would allow its forces to strike Russian targets that have been moved back from frontline areas, out of the range of HIMARS missiles that have already been delivered.

Zelensky said he and Biden spoke about "long-range weapons and the weapons that may still be supplied to Ukraine even though it wasn't supplied before." But he did not detail any new commitments.

"Our negotiations were very fruitful," Zelensky added.

Biden also got a short firsthand taste of the terror that Ukrainians have lived with for close to a year, as air raids sirens howled over the capital just as he and Zelensky were exiting the gold-domed St. Michael's Cathedral, which they visited together.

Looking solemn, they contin-

ued unperturbed as they laid two wreaths and held a moment of silence at the Wall of Remembrance honouring Ukrainian soldiers killed since 2014, the year Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and Russian-backed fighting erupted in eastern Ukraine.

Biden's mission with his visit to Kyiv, which comes ahead of a scheduled trip to Warsaw, Poland, is to underscore that the United States is prepared to stick with Ukraine "as long as it takes" to repel Russian forces even as public opinion polling suggests that U.S. And allied support for providing weaponry and direct economic assistance has started to soften. For Zelensky, the symbolism of having the U.S. President stand side by side with him on Ukrainian land as the anniversary nears is no small thing as he prods the U.S. And European allies to provide more advanced weaponry and to step up the pace of delivery.

## FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

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

# Japanese encephalitis sparks panic

**FIVE KANYASHRAM INMATES TEST POSITIVE**



Director Dr Niranjan Mishra visited the spot and took stock of the situation, Sunday. A fact finding team of the district health department visited the Purubai Kanyashram and conducted a probe.

Health condition of the affected is stated to be stable, sources informed. The matter came to the fore after 27 inmates experienced fever, stomachache and headache after having their mid-day meals. Among the girls, condition of three deteriorated following which they were admitted to the Soro Hospital. They were shifted to the DHH and admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) after their health condition deteriorated further. However, one of the girls Rubina Singh, a native of Nilagiri area studying in

Class-X succumbed to the diseases during treatment.

On being apprised, a high level team led by state Public Health Director Dr Niranjan Mishra and accompanied by a medical team reached the spot and conducted a health examination of the inmates. Meanwhile, Soro municipal authorities have started fogging and cleaning the drains in and outside of the Kanyashram.

"Samples of 25 students were tested and reports of five students have come positive. They have been shifted to Balasore headquarters hospital. Other students do not have symptoms, but they are under observation," said Dr Sashank Sekhar Choudhury, Sub-Divisional Medical Officer (SDMO) who was in the fact finding committee and visited the Kanyashram for probe. It is also being examined whether any person is engaged in rearing pigs near the Kanyashram.

Notably, Japanese encephalitis is a viral brain infection that spreads by mosquito bites and belongs to the same genus as dengue, yellow fever and West Nile viruses. It is also the main cause of viral encephalitis in many countries of Asia with an estimated 68,000 clinical cases every year.

and child protection committee jointly operate the school. Over 155 girls of Class-I to Class-X study in this school.

Taking the matter seriously, the Health department has shifted the five affected students along with two other inmates to the DHH. A special team led by the Public Health



# SHG makes 'substandard' sattu; beneficiaries sell it off to traders

*A beneficiary requesting anonymity said that the sattu is of substandard quality, which is why she sold it to the traders who latter sell it as fodder for the livestock in the area*



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kesinga, Feb 20:** Sattu packets prepared by women self-help groups (SHGs) under department of Women and Child Development is being supplied free of cost to children, pregnant women and mothers.

However, substandard quality has forced the beneficiaries to sell the sattu at a price to the interested traders.

It is clearly mentioned on the sattu packets that those are 'not for sale'. However, to everyone's surprise, beneficiaries are selling off sattu packets in broad daylight at Paraling panchayat under this block in Kalahandi district.

A trader was seen moving from village on a vehicle and buying sattu packets that weigh around 4.410 kg by paying ₹50 per packet to the beneficiaries. This is not an isolated case as several traders were seen moving in villages and buying sattu from the beneficiaries. This is allegedly due to the substandard quality of sattu provided to the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries are not able to consume the sattu and selling it to interested traders.

Reports said that a packet of sattu costs around ₹60 to 70 in the open market while the packets prepared by the women SHGs are supplied free of cost to the

beneficiaries.

Sources said that a local women SHG Dibyajyoti Mahila Mandal has been allegedly preparing substandard sattu and supplying packets to beneficiaries through the Anganwadi centres under the block.

After reports surfaced, a five-member team from the district administration met the president of the women SHG Geetanjali Dash and directed her to prepare sattu as per prescribed quality and standard. However, the SHG allegedly continued to distribute sub-standard sattu without heeding to the order of the district administration.

A beneficiary requesting anonymity said that the sattu is of substandard quality for which she sold it to the traders who latter sell it as fodder for the livestock in the area.

As per instruction, sattu has to be prepared making a proper composition of chickpeas, sugar and groundnuts but the women SHG is allegedly preparing it with very less wheat and sugar.

When contacted, child development project officer (CDPO)

Mujibun Nisha said that sattu is being supplied to the beneficiaries for their consumption. She wondered what she can do if they sell it to traders. She, however, assured to send the supervisor and conduct a probe in this regard.

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
e-Tender Notice No.: e-Tender-Elect-G-71-22  
Name of Work: COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT OF 02 NOS. OF ESCALATORS PROVIDED AT PLATFORM NO. 01 (CANNY, CHINA MAKE) OF BHUBANESWAR RAILWAY STATION FOR THREE YEARS IN THE PROCESS OF SINGLE TENDER.  
Approx cost of work: ₹38,23,383/-  
EMD: ₹76,500/-, Completion period: 36 Months.  
Tender closing date & Time: 1500 hrs of 10.03.2023.  
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.  
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tenders is available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>  
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website ten days before the date of closing of tender to note any Changes/Corrigendum issued for this tender.  
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer(G)/PR-1018/N/22-23  
Khurda Road

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasore, Feb 20:** Panic gripped Purubai Kanyashram managed by Gandhi Seva Sangh at Soro after five of its inmates reportedly tested positive for Japanese encephalitis (viral brain infection), Monday.

While one of them has died, five are under treatment at the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH). The rest of the students have been admitted for treatment at the Soro Community Health Centre (CHC). The incident was earlier being suspected as a case of food poisoning.

Sources said that the samples of 29 inmates of the private residential school undergoing treatment were sent for the test, out of which five samples tested positive for the disease. State Women and Child Development department

## Man gets 20-year RI for raping minor girl



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Phulbani, Feb 20:** The special POCSCO court in Kandhamal district sentenced a man to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) Monday for raping a minor girl three years ago.

Additional district and sessions judge and special POCSCO judge Sanjiv Kumar Behera sentenced Sunil Diga of Pabingia village under Phiringia PS to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment and slapped a fine of ₹40,000 on him. In default, he will have to undergo an additional jail term of one year. An order has also been issued to provide compensation of 6 lakh to the victim.

According to sources, the accused Sunil was a driver in a private company when he met the girl in Raikia. Taking advantage of the situation while nobody else was at the victim's residence September 3 in 2019, the accused took the girl with him for a ride. Later he took the girl to his residence and raped her.

However, the girl informed her parents about her ordeal after she managed to escape and returned to her house September 12. Following the case (no 61/19), which was registered by the girl's father, the accused was forwarded to court.

## TRUCK CRUSHES CHILD TO DEATH ON NH-353

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nuapada, Feb 20:** A five-year-old girl was crushed to death by a speeding truck on NH-353 in Khariar area of Nuapada district, Monday.

The deceased was identified as Dimple Sunani, daughter of Hara Sunani, a resident of

Sanamaheshwar village under Khariar police limits.

The truck coming from Raipur hit the girl while she was crossing the street. The vehicle ran over the girl and started to speed away from the accident spot.

Villagers pursued and eventually stopped the truck. However, the driver managed to

get away.

The villagers protested over the girl's death by staging a road blockade on the route and holding demonstrations. They demanded compensation for the deceased's bereaved family.

Traffic on the route was impacted by the blockade and tension was palpable in the area.



**ON A PILGRIMAGE:** Senior citizens being welcomed at Balasore railway station before boarding a special train for pilgrimage to Rishikesh and Haridwar sponsored by the state government under Baristha Nagarika Tirtha Yatra Yojana-2023, Monday

## Kapilash ecological park getting a facelift

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, Feb 20:** With the state's investment of ₹90 lakh, the Kapilash Ecological Park is all set to get a new look this year, sources revealed. The park situated in the foothills of Kapilash is expecting more tourists this year as 10 different animals including a leopard will be added to its newly proposed acclimatisation enclosure.

Reportedly, the park already housing 247 animals including 8 elephants will get an upgraded boating facility with beautification of the garden soon to be completed. Elephant Rakesh has been staying in a special enclosure, while others are staying at the Elephant Rescue Centre inside the boundary. The present animal count of 124 includes sambar, deer and drung oxen, two bears, a large



## New tool could provide insight into powerful quakes to come

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Houston, Feb 20:** An everyday quirk of physics could be a valuable new way to investigate the causes and potential for a large, damaging earthquake to happen, according to a study.

Researchers at the University of Texas at Austin, US, discovered that a frictional phenomenon could be key to understanding when and how violently a fault - a fracture or zone of fractures between two blocks of rock - moves.

The phenomenon, which explains why it takes more effort to shove a heavy box from a standstill than it does to keep it moving, governs how quickly the fault surfaces bond together, or heal, after an earthquake, they said.

The study, published in the journal Science, shows that a fault that is slow to heal is more likely to move harmlessly, while one that heals quickly is more likely to stick until it breaks in a large, damaging earthquake.

The discovery alone won't allow scientists to predict when the next big one will strike because the forces behind large earthquakes are too complex, the researchers said.

However, it does provide a valuable new way to investigate the causes and potential for a large, damaging earthquake to happen, they said.



The same physics and logic should apply to all different kinds of faults around the world, said the study's co-lead author Demian Saffer, director of the University of Texas Institute for Geophysics at the Jackson School of Geosciences.

With the right samples and field observations we can now start to make testable predictions about how big and how often large seismic slip events might occur on other major faults, like Cascadia in the Pacific Northwest, Saffer said.

The researchers devised a test that combined rocks from a well-studied fault off the coast of New Zealand and a computer model, to successfully calculate that a harmless kind of slow motion earthquake would hap-

pen every few years because the clay-rich rocks within the fault are very slow to heal.

The rock samples they tested were drilled from about half a mile under the seafloor in a fault in New Zealand.

The researchers squeezed the fault zone rocks in a hydraulic press and found that they were very slow to heal and slipped easily.

When they plugged the rock data into a computer model of the fault, the result was a small, slow-motion tremor every two years, a near exact match with observations from the New Zealand fault.

The researchers think the clay-rich rocks, which are common at many large faults, could be regulating earthquakes by allowing plates to slip quietly past each other, which limits the buildup of stress.

The discovery could be used to determine whether a fault is prone to slipping in large, damaging earthquakes, said study co-lead Srisharan Shreedharan, affiliate researcher at the University of Texas Institute for Geophysics and assistant professor at Utah State University.

This doesn't get us any closer to actually predicting earthquakes, but it does tell us whether a fault is likely to slip silently with no earthquakes, or have large ground-shaking earthquakes, he added.

**GANDHI SHILP BAZAR**  
Attractive Handicrafts and Handloom items from different States  
Direct sale by Artisans  
VENUE : Open Field Netaji Play Ground At : Potapokhari, Dist.: Cuttack  
From 14th February to 23rd February-2023  
Daily from 11A.M. to 9P.M.  
Sponsored by: Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, New Delhi  
Organized by - Orissa Khadi & Village Industries Association

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI.), KANDHAMAL DIVISION, PHULBANI**  
Email Id: eagrlikandhamal@gmail.com  
Govt. of Odisha "e" procurement Notice  
Bid Identification No.:  
E.E (A)- KANDHAMAL Division -01/2022-23  
No.L-135:The Executive Engineer (Agril.), Kandhamal Division, Phulbani, Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate bids in Single cover system for the works in ONLINE MODE only  
1. Estimated cost: Ranging from Rs.5,00,559/-to Rs.18,09,098/- (Excluding GST)  
2. Bid Cost: Rs.4000/- to Rs.6000/Mentioned in Column - 04  
3. Period of completion: Mentioned against each work. (Column - 06)  
4. No. of works (Tender) : 9 nos  
5. Class of Contractor : C & D Mentioned in Column - 05  
6. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal: Dt.27.02.2023 at 10.00 AM upto 5.30 PM of Dt.10.03.2023  
7. Last date / Time for receipt of bids in the portal: 10.03.2023 upto 5.30 PM  
8. Date of submission of original documents: Dt.28.02.2023 at 10.30 AM to Dt.16.03.2023 upto 5.30 PM. (working days only)  
9. Date & time of opening of online bids : 17.03.2023 at 11.00 A.M. onwards  
10. If more than one bid quoted at 14.99% (Decimal up to two numbers will be taken for all practical purposes) less than the estimated cost, the tender accepting authority will finalize the tender through a transparent lottery system on dated 20.03.2023 at 11.00 AM in presence all bidders/ their authorized representatives in the office of the undersigned. If the office happens to be closed on the scheduled date of lottery, then the lottery shall be conducted on the next working day at the same time and venue. No further correspondence shall be made in this regard.  
11. Name and address of the officer inviting bid : The Executive Engineer (Agril.), Kandhamal Division, Phulbani, Odisha, Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://tendersodisha.gov.in>  
A. All the volumes / documents shall be uploaded in the portal by the Procurement Officer, Administrator and published by Procurement Officer, Publisher (Officer Inviting tender)  
B. The Tender documents published by the Tender inviting Officer (Procurement Officer Publisher) in the website "http://tendersodisha.gov.in" will appear in the Latest.  
C. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the Website "http://tendersodisha.gov.in". Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.  
Sd./- Executive Engineer (Agril) Kandhamal Division, Phulbani OIPR-01468/11/0004/2223

FOCUS ECONOMY

# RESOLVING MSME DUES



Unlocking the value in delayed payments to MSMEs can give a big productivity and positive income kick to the economy. The GST network will play a key role in this

Here comes the importance of GST. The fact is despite delayed payments, the big corporations take advantage of input tax credit paid by their vendors when they file their GST returns. Among the recent budget proposals there is an amendment to section 43 B of the Income Tax Act. This amendment disallows any deduction to the large corporate, unless the payment to the MSME has been actually done. You can't claim tax credit and not pay your vendor on time. This is a great step ahead although it needs co-operation at the state level to become fully functional. More importantly, the GST network data is a rich source of data for lenders to finance MSMEs. Since the transaction has been recorded on GSTN even if the actual payment is delayed, the lender bank can provide finance to the MSME on the basis of GSTN data. This is called cash flow-based financing and is not against any physical collateral. Since the payment is due from a large corporate the bank can get a good assessment of the payment risk. The GSTN approach has several advantages. It encourages MSMEs to come into the GST net (many were reluctant earlier). It makes the data transparent, and can also put the defaulters and delayed payments in the spotlight. It brings more formal finance and credit to MSMEs. It also encourages the MSME to go fully digital, i.e. not just for their receivables and accounts, but also for the enterprise, including inventory control, payroll etc. The cost of going fully digital using off the shelf ERP software packages is declining and is affordable. Even banks will nudge their MSME clients to go digital in this way.

Unlocking the value in delayed payments to MSMEs can give a big productivity and positive income kick to the economy. The GST network will play a key role in this.

The writer is a noted economist.  
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The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance, which consists of members from across all political parties, in its report of last April highlighted the importance of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). There are an estimated 64 million of these, and nearly 99% of them are very small, micro or tiny. These MSMEs are among the ones that employ less than five persons, and whose annual turnover may not even be ₹20 lakh. Their importance to the economy can be gauged by the following: As per the Standing Committee, the MSMEs contribute 30% to the national GDP, 45% to the national manufacturing output and 48% to exports. They together employ 11 crore people, which is 42% of all industrial workers.

Despite the economic significance of MSMEs to employment, output and exports, they only get a small share of bank credit or any formal credit. The Standing Committee says that their funding gap is ₹20-25 lakh crore. Their funding requirement is most often in the form of working capital. That's because the small businesses are mainly vendors, suppliers and ancillaries to large corporations, be they public or private sector. They may be providing some spare parts, or packaging service, or what is called "job work". These small vendor supplier businesses have complete dependency on their customer, and many have only one or two customers. For instance, the Indian Railways is supposed to have one million suppliers, and for most of the suppliers the Railways is their only customer. Think of those who supply earthen cups (kulhaad) for tea, or napkins and towels, steel fabricated parts, or food packets to railway canteens and so on. The same is the fate for most MSME's who have one or two major corporations as their customers. There is rarely a system where some advance payment is made to the supplier which can then be used as working capital. And after the product or service

has been delivered, the MSME law states that no customer can delay payments for more than 45 days to the vendor. This is a protective clause because of the extreme financial vulnerability of the MSME. But in practice it is rarely enforced. The bane of the MSME is delayed payment.

The reason the large corporation or customer can get away by not paying within 45 days, is because the invoicing is not proper, reliable or valid. It could be a proforma invoice, preliminary bill or "rough" paperwork. So technically payment delays can be indefinite. By one estimate the problem of delayed payment is as large as ₹10 lakh crore. This is the aggregate amount owed to all MSME's on a national level. Imagine if the delay is for say 12 months, then the interest cost itself is ₹1 lakh crore in the aggregate. If the delayed payment problem is addressed then it will release ₹1 lakh crore as productive capital, without any subsidy from the government to MSMEs.

How can customers be forced to pay their MSME suppliers in quick time? We don't want to unleash an inspection Raj. The problem has been recognised for quite some time. In 2018 the Reserve Bank of

India set up an online platform called the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) wherein the receivables of MSMEs can be put up "for sale" i.e. also called bill discounting. So, if an MSME has ₹100 due from say XYZ Corporation, someone can pay off ₹97 to the MSME and then go pursue the big company XYZ for the full ₹100. The transaction does not have any "recourse" to the MSME once the receivables right has transferred. The success of TReDS requires onboarding of a large number of buyers (large corporations) and sellers (MSMEs). Only then can the bill discounting business take off. But that has met with limited success, since many large companies simply do not want to come on to the platform. Even public sector companies are reluctant. Neither the RBI nor the government is able to enforce this discipline. Another method was devised in Tamil Nadu to put up names of "defaulters" on a government portal. But this requires the MSME vendor to "complain" i.e. name and shame the customer. Which right minded small vendor will want to anger their only lifetime customer in such a way? So, the name and shame method is also not working.



Ajit Ranade

DESPITE THE ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF MSMEs TO EMPLOYMENT, OUTPUT AND EXPORTS, THEY ONLY GET A SMALL SHARE OF BANK CREDIT OR ANY FORMAL CREDIT

## Democracy in Peril

Israel is now on the cusp of a change that has the potential to derail the country's democracy. The fast-paced developments there indicate the danger facing democracy when two of its pillars – the legislature and judiciary – are not properly in place, guaranteeing the system of checks and balances that alone can thwart the aspirations of individuals or groups to foist autocracy. The experience in Israel can offer an object lesson to democratic institutions across the world, including India, which are often under the threat of attempts by the executive to make the judiciary subservient to it.

Trouble stems from the fact that the changes will do away with the powers of the judiciary to scrutinise laws passed in the Knesset (parliament) and actions of the government and the Prime Minister. In other words, the executive will no longer be required to answer before the court of law for its omissions and commissions. The new political actors belonging to the ruling hawkish Likud Party of Netanyahu and the Far-right fanatics seek immunity from the judiciary so that they can do whatever they please to advance their private and partisan agenda.

However, the advocates of skewed reforms are facing a roadblock that they do not seem to have thought of. Israel is now witnessing its biggest demonstrations in years since the plans were unveiled last month. Thousands of people have taken to the streets in different cities against the proposed reforms. They fear that these changes, if passed, would curb the Supreme Court's power and give the government more say over judicial appointments. Critics say it will undermine democracy even though the government argues the reforms will strengthen it.

Among the reforms, the ability of the Supreme Court to strike down laws would be severely weakened. A simple majority in the Knesset would have the power to override court rulings. The reforms would also give the government more influence over the committee which appoints judges, including those to the Supreme Court.

Israel's Justice Minister Yariv Laviv, who introduced the plans, accused opponents - including the Attorney General and Supreme Court's Chief Justice - of seeking to "carry out a coup" against Netanyahu, after a petition was filed to the court to declare the Prime Minister unfit for office.

But, even diehard Israel backers, such as US President Joe Biden, seemed worried over the development. In an unusual step, he criticised the proposals in their current form. It is a rarity for a US leader to express an opinion on constitutional matters in Israel.

Not only that, Israel's own President, Isaac Herzog, warned that the country was on the verge of constitutional and social collapse. This is even more surprising since involvement by Israeli Presidents in political issues are also rare since the post is considered to be a politically neutral figurehead. All these are because a realisation is dawning on advocates of democracy that the reforms will end up politicising the judiciary which in turn could pave the way for an authoritarian government.

However, these reforms may not be acceptable universally in all democracies. In India too, efforts to weaken the judiciary and all other constitutionally formed bodies have become a matter of great concern in present times. In a healthy democracy, each and every decision, no matter where it emanates from, needs to be closely scrutinised by the other wings before implementation. For example, even the Indian Parliament has grave weaknesses that truly do not permit the voice of the people to be heard in the House. For instance, the ruling party, if it is singularly large enough to form the government, does not wish to pay heed to any suggestion from the non-Treasury benches. This results in lopsided and motivated laws getting passed on the floor of the House. Within Parliament, the various ministry related committees too require an unambiguously nonpartisan and non-governmental bureaucracy that will keep the Temple of Democracy on even keel. Unfortunately today, the machinery within the Parliament has also been badly mauled and therefore it is incapable of looking at government functioning objectively. Therefore India also very badly requires a judiciary that can distance itself from government and operate in a manner that will ensure laws are conducive to people's needs. For reaching this goal of impartiality, it is vital that judges are not chosen by the government nor can government reappoint judges in any post after retirement.

The US system speaks volumes about what happens when governments appoint judges. Take for example the large number of judges appointed by Donald Trump during his presidency. He brought in judges who were clear conservatives. The result was overturning the Roe Vs Wade judgement which had given American women the legal right to abortion. Less governance may be the only way out to ensure survival of democracy.

### WISDOM CORNER

The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts.  
BERTRAND RUSSELL

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.  
HENRY FORD

Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood. All is riddle, and the key to a riddle is another riddle.  
RALPH WALDO EMERSON

### WORDSWORTH

#### Galligaskins

Galligaskins were wide, very loose breeches. They were a fashion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one that eventually disappeared, as did the active use of the word, which survives in historical contexts or as a humorous word for nether garments. It's an odd-looking word, well fitted to the epithet weird. It came about through another of those cloth-eared Englishmen's attempts at getting their minds around a foreign term. They knew it was French in immediate origin, gargesque, and they knew the garments were often worn by sailors, so they assumed that the first part was galley, either from the oared ship, or from the cooking area on board ship. Similar items were known at about the same time as gally-slops or gally-breeches, so that would easily account for the conversion of the first element of the French word into something more English-sounding. (The first of these was often abbreviated to slops, a similar item; the material for them was kept on board ship in the slop-chest, though sailors' working garments called slops, at least of a later period, were loose trousers rather than breeches.) Some dictionaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suggested that the word was from Gallic Gascons, the inhabitants of Gascony. They were looking too far west – the French word was taken from the Italian grechesca, something Greek, because the fashion for loose breeches was originally from that country. Around the years 1580-1620 similar garments were called Venetians, because a comparable fashion had been imported from Venice.

### LOL

#### Don't do this while driving

A juggler, driving to his next performance, was stopped by the police. "What are those knives doing in your car?" asked the officer. "I juggle them in my act." "Oh yeah?" says the cop. "Let's see



you do it." So the juggler starts tossing and juggling the knives. A guy driving by sees this and says, "Wow, am I glad I quit drinking. Look at the test they're making you do!"

### SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

## How to prevent humanitarian crises

The world is in the midst of the worst food crisis in modern history. As a confluence of geopolitical, economic, and climate crises fuels global shortages, a staggering 326 million people in dozens of countries need humanitarian aid, with 222 million facing acute food insecurity and up to 50 million at risk of starving to death.

The poorest countries have been hit the hardest by the rise in global food prices caused by the war in Ukraine. And with the looming climate catastrophe threatening to compound the effects of conflict and supply-chain disruptions, the humanitarian sector must adopt a more proactive, anticipatory approach to the growing hunger crisis.

Until relatively recently, humanitarian organisations did not pay much attention to climate change. But the proliferation of weather-related humanitarian emergencies has caused the sector to recognise the threat that the climate crisis poses to low-income countries and to the global food system.

While the deadly floods and heatwaves that have struck Europe over the last two years have shown that even countries considered to be relatively safe are not immune to extreme weather events, developing countries are much more vulnerable.

In 2021, 94% of internally displaced people became so as a result of climate-related hazards. Last year's floods in Pakistan, which shocked the world, submerged one-third of the country, claimed more than 1,730 lives, affected 33 million people, and caused economic losses estimated at \$16.3 billion.

With climate change causing humanitarian crises all over the world, the number of people in need of aid has increased by 40% over the past year. In response to the growing need, funding for humanitarian causes has nearly doubled over the past decade, reaching \$31.3 billion in 2021. But while funding has increased, the challenge facing international agencies and NGOs today is to maximise the impact of these resources and empower local and national organisations.

As matters currently stand, two-thirds of all direct contributions to humanitarian causes go to United Nations agencies and prominent international organisations like the Red Cross and Red Crescent. While these large institutions play a crucial role, community-based initiatives often have a better grasp of local contexts. The world's largest donors and NGOs seemed to acknowledge this when they launched the Grand Bargain initiative in 2016, committing to providing 25%

of humanitarian funding to local organisations. But seven years after the agreement was announced, the figure is still less than 2%.

So far, the sector's modus operandi has been reactive. Whether it is Haiti, Ethiopia, or Pakistan, the methods are the same: a crisis emerges, a humanitarian appeal is launched, funding is raised, and assistance is delivered many days (if not months) later. But by relying on climate science, we can anticipate risks and address humanitarian needs before they become emergencies.

Anticipatory action, defined as "acting ahead of predicted hazardous events to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold," involves forecasting mechanisms and pre-agreed triggers and thresholds for releasing funds in advance. By responding to needs in this way, we can deliver aid more effectively and in a more dignified way. In 2019, for example, the Senegalese government and Start Network each purchased insurance policies against drought, allowing them to receive funding for humanitarian action and coordinate measures to protect at-risk communities.

But anticipatory action also has its limits. As a recent report by Start Network shows, not all crises

can be forecasted or modeled. Even so, adopting this approach would allow humanitarian actors and organisations to be proactive, improve efficiency, and prevent life-threatening events from developing into large-scale disasters.

The global aid system needs rapid reform. While some progress has been made in recent years, much of it has been transactional rather than transformative. To be sure, the problems we face are complicated and multidimensional, and we cannot disregard the political dimension of humanitarian action. Some may believe that necessity or desperation will force the sector to change for the better, but scaling up anticipatory and locally-led action represents a far more promising path.

The ongoing climate crisis offers a unique opportunity for evidence-based humanitarian reform. In our data-driven world, there is no reason to wait until disaster strikes. By anticipating risks and planning ahead, we can protect vulnerable communities and make the world a safer place.

The writer is Advocacy Lead at Start Network, a global network of humanitarian NGOs.  
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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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Cybersecurity must

Sir, This refers to "Cyberattacks made Indians poorer by ₹1500cr in 2 years," Orissa POST, Feb 20. From the time when COVID-19 hit India, there has been an exponential increase in digital payments frauds owing to the increased adoption of this technology. Digitisation saw a huge spike given most people preferred this channel for online shopping/payments due to the risk of infection through people or shared surfaces like cash or cards. Since a large number of people are going digital, fraudsters are using innovative ways to dupe vulnerable consumers. Many consumers are falling prey to these scams leading to disclosing their sensitive information and stealing their hard-earned money. Cybercrimes like phishing, malware, OTP frauds, fake UPI links, and several others are witnessing a surge as more people are using contactless payments. There's a dire need for mobile security since most of the apps and our private data like photos, banking apps, emails, and messages are on our mobile phones. Hence, it becomes imperative for users to take additional precautions to secure their online transactions and private information. Not following cybersecurity best practices can also expose us to threats when we make digital payments.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

### On verge of extinction

Sir, Horseshoe crabs have been present on Earth for about 450 million years. The creatures which could not be destroyed by the ice age and the changes in the seas are now on the verge of extinction due to humans. This is the only creature on whose blood pharmaceutical companies are spending crores of rupees. The great thing is that the blood of this creature is bright blue instead of red like us and other creatures. The blood of this creature is so rare that its price in the market is up to ₹11 lakh per litre. Scientists are already making vaccines, medicines and sterile liquids from the blood of this species. Their blue blood contains immune cells known as Limulus polyphemus (LAL). These immune cells are very sensitive to virulent bacteria. Scientists have been using the horseshoe crab's blue blood for at least 20 years to make vaccines and drugs against toxic bacteria. Currently, scientists engaged in the search for an effective coronavirus vaccine are using the blood of this organism in their tests. The real solution is to take appropriate action while there is time.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

# national

## of the day quote

I am the third chief minister from Jodhpur. Whatever I am today is due to the blessings of the people of Jodhpur and would never let them down. I will serve them till my last breath

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CM

All parties, including the Congress, must approach the task of forging opposition unity for the 2024 general elections with a spirit of give-and-take and humility

P CHIDAMBARAM | CONGRESS LEADER

Madhya Pradesh will play a key role to achieve the goal of net zero emissions by the year 2070 set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | MP CM

## SHORT TAKES

### Olaf Scholz to visit India

New Delhi: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz will pay a State visit to India on February 25 and 26, his first trip to the country more than a year after he took charge of the top post. Announcing the German chancellor's visit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Monday that Scholz will be accompanied by senior officials and a high-powered business delegation. He is scheduled to arrive in Delhi on February 25 and will proceed to Bengaluru on February 26, the MEA said.

### Military drill begins

New Delhi: The armies of India and Uzbekistan on Monday began a two-week military exercise in Uttarakhnad's Pithoragarh with an aim to enhance operational interoperability. The fourth edition of joint military exercise 'Dustlik' commenced in Foreign Training Node in Pithoragarh (Uttarakhand). Forty-five soldiers each from Uzbekistan and the Indian Army are participating in this exercise which is aimed at promoting positive relations between the two sides, the Indian Army said.

### 2-year-old dead

Gurugram: A 2-year-old boy was crushed to death by a speeding SUV outside his house in the Saraswati Enclave area of Gurugram, the police said Monday. During the incident, the child got stuck under the vehicle which was pulled out by the father. Farman Khan, a resident of Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh), told the police that on Sunday, his two-year-old son was playing outside the house at around 11.15 a.m. when the incident took place.

### 6 workers injured

Chandigarh: Six workers were injured in an accidental blast in a boiler at an industrial unit near Aurangabad village in Haryana's Palwal district on Monday, police said. The cause of the accident is not known. The injured have been admitted to a nearby hospital. Of the six, two have suffered grievous injuries.

### Bike lifter killed

Guwahati: A bike lifter was shot dead during a police encounter in Assam's Charaideo district, officials said Monday. The deceased has been identified as Santosh Jaiswal and the incident took place Sunday night in Sonari. Shwetank Mishra, Superintendent of the Dibrugarh police, said that Jaiswal was a seasoned bike lifter who had been convicted under the Arms Act.



They (BJP) are directly ruling Jammu and Kashmir for many years and when they had an opportunity to install a Dogra LG (lieutenant governor), they did not. They are bringing people from outside

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

## 20 VEHICLES COLLIDE DUE TO FOG

About 20 vehicles collided in an accident on the Delhi-Lucknow highway due to dense fog Monday. According to reports, the visibility was poor and many car drivers jumped onto the wrong side and ended up colliding with other vehicles



# Probe conduct of 12 Oppn MPs: Dhankhar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar has asked a parliamentary committee to investigate the alleged breach of privilege by 12 MPs from the Congress and the AAP for repeatedly entering the well of the House, shouting slogans and obstructing its proceedings.

According to a Rajya Sabha bulletin, nine of the MPs are from the Congress and three from the Aam Aadmi Party. The Congress MPs are Shaktisinh Gohil, Naranbhai J Rathwa, Syed Nasir Hussain, Kumar Ketkar, Imran Prattapgarhi, L Hanumanthaiah, Phulo Devi Netam, Jebi Mather Hisham and Ranjeet Ranjan.

The AAP members are Sanjay Singh, Sushil Kumar Gupta and Sandeep Kumar Pathak. Reacting to the development, AAP MP Singh said, "We have not done anything which amounts to breach of privilege. We have only stated the truth and exposed a scam related to crores of common people."

"When we get the notice, we will respond to it," he said. In the bulletin dated February 18, the Rajya Sabha Secretariat said, "...The Chairman...Has referred a question of alleged breach of privilege arising out of gross disorderly conduct displayed by (the MPs)...In violation of rules and etiquette of

Rajya Sabha by repeatedly entering the well of the council, shouting slogans and persistently and wilfully obstructing the proceedings of the council, compelling the Chair to repeatedly adjourn the sittings of the Council."

The Rajya Sabha saw repeated disruptions due to protests by the opposition MPs over various issues during the first leg of the Budget Session which concluded earlier this month.

According to a Rajya Sabha bulletin, nine of the MPs are from the Congress and three from the Aam Aadmi Party

The Rajya Sabha saw repeated disruptions due to protests by the opposition MPs over various issues during the first leg of the Budget Session which concluded earlier this month

tions of the Chair vis-a-vis repeated submission of identical notices under rule 267 by Shri Sanjay Singh, Member, Rajya Sabha, under rule 203 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) to the Committee of Privileges for examination, investigation and report." Sources said some members made complaints that frequent disruptions by some MPs was breach of their privilege. As members cannot directly make complaints to the privilege committee, the matter came before the Chair, who referred it to the panel to examine, investigate and report, they said.



President Droupadi Murmu being given a traditional welcome upon her arrival in Itanagar

PTI PHOTO

# Uddhav faction moves SC against EC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: The Uddhav Thackeray faction Monday approached the Supreme Court challenging the decision of the Election Commission recognising the Eknath Shinde-led bloc as the real Shiv Sena and allotting the bow and arrow' poll symbol to it.

Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi mentioned the matter before a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud for an early listing of the petition. The CJ, however, refused to pass any order. "The rule applies equally to all, whether left, right or centre. Come tomorrow through proper process," the bench said.

The plea filed by the Thackeray faction stated the points raised in the petition have a direct bearing on the issues which are being considered by the Constitution bench.

The petition contended the poll panel erred in holding that disqualification under the Tenth



Schedule and proceedings under the Symbols Order operate in different spheres and that disqualification of MLAs is not based on cessation of membership of a political party. It also submitted that the Election Commission has erred in holding that there was a split in the Shiv Sena. "In the absence of any pleadings and evidence that there was a split in a political party, the finding

The plea filed by the Thackeray faction stated the points raised in the petition have a direct bearing on the issues which are being considered by the Constitution bench

of the ECI is completely erroneous on this ground," the plea said.

The petition said the Thackeray faction has an overwhelming majority in the Pratinidhi Sabha, which is the apex body representing the wishes of the primary members and other stakeholders of the party. The plea said the poll panel has acted in a "biased and unfair manner".

"It is submitted that the ECI has failed to discharge its duties as a neutral arbiter of disputes under para 15 of the symbols order and

has acted in a manner undermining its constitutional status," the petition said.

The poll panel had on Friday recognised the Eknath Shinde-faction as the real Shiv Sena and ordered the allocation of the bow and arrow election symbol of the undivided party founded by the late Balasaheb Thackeray 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 allotted to it till the completion of the assembly by-polls in the state. The Commission said the MLAs backing Shinde got nearly 76 per cent of votes polled in favour of the 55 winning Shiv Sena candidates in the 2019 Maharashtra Assembly elections. The MLAs in the Uddhav Thackeray camp got 23.5 per cent of the votes polled in favour of the winning Shiv Sena candidates, the three-member Commission said.

# Woman kills husband, mother-in-law

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 20: A man and his mother were killed, cut into pieces, packed in polythene bags and dumped in gorges of neighbouring Meghalaya allegedly by his wife and her two "close friends", police said Monday.

The murders happened in July and August last year, and few parts of the mother's body were recovered on Sunday near Cherrapunji in Khasi Hills. "The first murder of the mother-in-law happened on July 26, while the husband was killed on August 17. We have arrested all the three accused and they are being interrogated now," Guwahati Police Commissioner Diganta Barah said.

He said the wife and one of her accomplices were arrested in Guwahati, while the third accused



was nabbed in Tinsukia district. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Diganta Kumar Choudhury said the wife had lodged a missing complaint about her husband Amarjyoti Dey (32) and mother-in-law Shankari Dey (62) on August 29 and the police started an investigation.

"In November, Amarjyoti's cousin filed another missing complaint, which raised doubts about the wife as she allegedly withdrew money from her mother-in-law's account. Then we re-started our investigation and detected the murders,"

Choudhury said. Both the cases were registered at Noonmati police station, and the murders took place at different houses in Chandmari and Narengi areas in Guwahati, he said.

Addressing a press conference later, the Police Commissioner said the wife has been identified as Bandana Kalita (32), while her two male friends are Dhanti Deka (32) and Arup Deka (27). "During interrogation, it was revealed that Bandana and Amarjyoti married around 12 years ago against the wishes of both families. The post-marital relationship between the two could not exactly be termed as cordial," he added. While Amarjyoti's mother accepted the marriage later and started supporting them financially, he was not gainfully employed and this led to frequent quarrels between the couple, Barah said.

# Niti Aayog gets new CEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Former IAS officer BVR Subrahmanyam was Monday appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Niti Aayog replacing Parameswaran Iyer, who has been named as the Executive Director of World Bank.

Subrahmanyam, a 1987-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Chhattisgarh cadre, was last year appointed as chairman and managing director, India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) on contract basis for a period of two years after his superannuation on September 30.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved Subrahmanyam's appointment for a period of two years from the date

of assumption of the charge of the post, a Personnel Ministry order said.

Iyer, who was working as Niti Aayog CEO, has been appointed as Executive Director, World Bank headquarters, Washington DC, USA for a tenure of three years, it said. He will be replacing Rajesh Khullar, a 1988-batch IAS officer, who has been repatriated to his cadre state Haryana, the order said.

Iyer was on June 24, 2022, appointed as Niti Aayog CEO for a period of two years. In another order, Rajesh Rai has been appointed as Chairman and Managing Director of ITI Limited -- a public sector undertaking -- for a period of five years. Rai is at present General Manager, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL).

# Bihar prisoner swallows phone

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gopalganj (Bihar), Feb 20: An inmate of Bihar's Gopalganj district jail reportedly swallowed a mobile phone during checking out of fear being caught by prison officers, an official said Monday.

Qaishar Ali, the prisoner, swallowed the phone Saturday during inspection.

The matter, however, came to light Sunday after Ali developed extreme pain in his stomach.

"The prisoner informed the jail authorities and narrated the sequence of events. He was immediately rushed to Gopalganj district hospital where the x-ray of the inmate revealed the presence of a foreign particle in his abdomen," Manoj Kumar, Gopalganj jail superintendent said Monday.

Salam Siddiqui, the doctor at the hospital's emergency ward said, "The prisoner was admitted in the hospital due to stomach pain. The x-ray of his stomach was taken and the presence of foreign particles was visible during the examination. There is a need to investigate it thoroughly".

A medical board was constituted by the hospital and the man was referred the prisoner to Patna Medical College and Hospital for further treatment.

Ali was arrested by Gopalganj police on January 17, 2020 under provisions of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS Act). He has been in jail for the last three years.

Use of mobile phone by inmates inside Bihar prisons has raised eyebrows over security officers' credentials.

Around 35 cellphones, seven sim cards and 17 cellphone chargers were seized during raids conducted in jails across the state in March 2021. The raids were conducted on Kathbar, Buxar, Gopalganj, Nalanda, Hajipur, Ara, Jehanabad and some other jails in the state.

# IITs step up measures to check suicides

SUICIDE BY AN IIT-BOMBAY STUDENT RECENTLY AMID ALLEGATIONS OF CASTE DISCRIMINATION HAS BROUGHT THE LIMELIGHT BACK ON THE RIGOROUS CURRICULUM AND COMPETITION AT THE PRESTIGIOUS INSTITUTES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Rattled by the suicide of an IIT-Bombay student, several Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are taking preventive measures such as counselling and mentorship for students with low grades and backlogs, reducing the curriculum load and setting up mental-wellness centres.

Suicide by an IIT Bombay student recently amid allegations of caste discrimination has brought the limelight back on the rigorous curriculum and competition at the

prestigious institutes.

IIT Bombay Director Subhasis Chaudhuri has announced that the institute is working towards changes in their undergraduate curriculum to make it "more relevant and motivating to students, and to reduce some of the stress". "We are working actively to create an inclusive campus where all students feel at home," Chaudhuri said.

The parliamentary standing committee for the welfare of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (SC/ST) has called a meeting on Tuesday to discuss the recent sui-



cide by 18-year-old Darshan Solanki at IIT-Bombay.

At IIT Guwahati, over the years several steps have been taken by the Center for Holistic Wellbeing to promote the overall wellbeing of the students on campus and help mitigate the gap between the stigma attached to counselling and accessing mental health care.

"The details of students with low CPIs (Cumulative Performance Index) and backloggers are shared by academic section with the Deans and the Chairperson of Welfare Board. The faculty advisors and counsellors are accordingly asked to get in touch with each student to understand their mental state and the reason for low performance.

"Accordingly, steps are taken up to support and mentor them either by the counsellors or faculty advisors depending upon the reason of low performance," said Bithiah Grace Jagannathan, Associate Dean, Students' Affairs, IIT Guwahati. Concerned by the cases of suicide by IIT students, IIT-Delhi had, before the COVID-19 closure, revamped its curriculum to help students tackle study pressure effectively and keep such suicidal tendency at bay. The institute is in process of further revising its curriculum.

According to the Ministry of Education data, the IITs recorded 34 suicides between 2014-2021 - 18 of the students were from SC and OBC communities. The ministry had asked all IITs in a Council meeting in 2010 to open wellness centres and seek the services of professional counsellors on a mandatory basis.

AHEAD OF CHAR DHAM YATRA

# Fresh cracks on road to Badrinath



**SOME CRACKS HAVE ALSO APPEARED ON THE HIGHWAY BETWEEN JOSHIMATH AND MARWARI WHICH IS USED FOR PILGRIMS RETURNING FROM BADRINATH**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gopeshwar, Feb 20:** As preparations begin for the upcoming Char Dham yatra, fresh fissures have appeared on the road connecting Narasingh temple in subsidence-hit Joshimath and Badrinath, according to local activists.

The road, which is a bypass of the Badrinath highway leading to the Himalayan temple, is used for taking pilgrims from Joshimath to Badrinath during the yatra season.

"Fresh cracks have appeared on the road over the past three days," Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh

Samiti (JBSS) spokesman Kamal Raturi told PTI Monday.

The Public Works Department, Uttarakhand looks after the maintenance of the road.

Some cracks have also appeared on the highway between Joshimath and Marwari which is used for pilgrims returning from Badrinath and passes through the main market in Joshimath.

However, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) which maintains the highway is repairing it, Raturi said.

To make the journey of pilgrims to Badrinath safe, the road from the

entry point of Joshimath to the gas godown on way to Auli needs to be repaired properly as early as possible, the JBSS spokesman said.

Cracks on the roads have led to concern among locals about the safety of the yatra to Badrinath which begins on April 27.

The dates for the reopening of the four Himalayan temples on Char Dham circuit after the winter break have already been announced by the Uttarakhand government.

Kedarnath portal opens April 25 while Gangotri and Yamunotri portals open April 22.

Online registration for the yatra begins from February 21.

Preparations are underway to issue a standard operating procedure for the yatra after receiving the guidelines from the Centre, Uttarakhand Tourism and Culture Minister Satpal Maharaj said.

## 28 houses on the verge of collapse in Karnaprayag

**Karnaprayag:** After Joshimath, cracks have developed in several houses in Karnaprayag in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, which are increasing rapidly now. As many as 28 houses in the area are on the verge of collapse.

Chamoli District Magistrate Himanshu Khurana, Karnaprayag SDM Himanshu Kafaltia, MLA Anil Nautiyal and disaster management officer NK Joshi inspected the affected areas in Bahuguna nagar, Subhash Nagar and Upper Bazar Sunday.

The DM was stunned after witnessing the wide cracks on the walls of houses in Bahuguna Nagar.

The residents requested the officials to make proper arrangements to guarantee their safety.

Khurana instructed the offi-

cials to shift the affected people to safer places and install crackmeters in the affected structures to monitor the cracks.

Land subsidence started in this area of the town last year during the rainy season. The residents had demanded the administration to take security measures in the disaster-prone areas, which was ignored.

Khurana said that the buildings which have developed extensive cracks will be evacuated and the people living there will be shifted to safer places.

The residents who choose to live in rented accommodations will be provided the rent amount for six months, said the official.

Khurana also directed the SDM to get a detailed survey of the structures done.



# Infra investments in hills to boost employment: PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dehradun, Feb 20:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday said large-scale investments in the hills of Uttarakhand are creating new employment opportunities for the state's youth who earlier had to migrate to big cities in search of livelihood.

Addressing a Rozgar Mela via video conferencing, he said it is an 'Amrit Kaal' of limitless possibilities for the country's youth.

The BJP government at the Centre as well as in the state is trying to ensure that every youth gets a job in accordance with his aptitude and ability, he said.

The prime minister recalled the saying, "Pahad ka pani and pahad ki jawani pahad ke kam nahin aate" - meaning the water and the youth of the hills are never of any help to them. "We have to change this old concept," he said.

"Large-scale investments in the infrastructure sector in Uttarakhand are not only boosting connectivity to remote villages but also creating new employment and self employment opportunities for local youth near their homes so that its youth can return to villages," Modi said.

The roads and railway lines being laid in the state and the growing network of internet connectivity are creating new employment opportunities for the youth in Uttarakhand's hills for which they had to migrate to big cities earlier, he said.

Loans up to Rs 10 lakh are being given to youth without any guarantee to open shops, 'dhabas', guest houses and home stays from which the youth of Uttarakhand can ben-



efit immensely, he said, adding "it is an Amrit Kaal of limitless possibilities for the country's youths."

The tourism sector is also expanding. New destinations are being added to the tourism map, he noted. At Monday's Rozgar mela, appointment letters were electronically distributed among assistant teachers.

Describing teachers as a medium for big change, the prime minister said they have to prepare the youth for a new century as per the new education policy. In June last year, the prime minister had directed various ministries and departments to fill up 10 lakh government vacancies in mission mode by December 2023.

Monday's Rozgar Mela was in the series of the initiative that was launched on October 22, 2022 when the prime minister handed out appointment letters to 75,000 people.

January 20 this year, he distributed electronically 71,426 appointment letters to recruits in different government departments, and earlier on November 22, 2022 more than 71,000 job aspirants were handed over appointment letters of government jobs.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and state education minister Dhan Singh Rawat attended the event held at the Mukhya Sevak Sadan.

# U'khand govt approves rehabilitation policy



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Dehradun, Feb 20:** The Uttarakhand government has approved a relief package including displacement and rehabilitation policy for the residents affected by cracks in houses and land subsidence in Joshimath.

In the state cabinet meeting, the policy regarding permanent displacement of the affected, along with compensation for land, commercial and residential buildings was approved.

Chief Minister Secretary R Meenakshi Sundaram and Disaster Management Secretary Ranjit Kumar Sinha, said that five slabs have been built for commercial buildings, as per which the land compensation is to be provided.

Apart from this, three options have been kept for permanent rehabilitation. 100 per cent compensation will be provided for the loss of residential buildings. For a residential building made of brick, Rs 31,031 per sq metre will be paid, whereas, for residential buildings made of beams and columns, Rs 36,386 per sq metre will be provided. Rs 39,030 per sq metre will be paid for commercial buildings made of brick and Rs 45,921 will be paid for commercial buildings

made with beams and columns. 100 per cent payment will be done for the commercial buildings costing up to Rs 5 lakh, and for the commercial buildings costing between Rs 5-15 lakh, compensation of Rs 5 lakh, along with 40 per cent will be paid.

For the commercial buildings ranging from Rs 15-30 lakh, Rs 9-15 lakh will be given along with an additional 30 per cent. For a commercial building costing between Rs 30-50 lakh, Rs 30.5 lakh will be paid for the structures costing up to Rs 30 lakh, along with an additional 20 per cent. For commercial buildings above Rs 50 lakh, Rs 17.5 lakh will be paid and an additional 10 per cent.

On loss of residential land, 75 sq metres of land will be provided. If the area of the land lost is larger than 75 sq metres, compensation will be provided for the excess. In cases of loss of commercial land, 15 sq metres land will be provided.

Along with this, Rs 2 lakh will be given to the affected person who had been running the shop on rent. Sinha said that all standards have been fixed in Joshimath under the displacement and rehabilitation policy, the process of which will start after the report of the investigative agencies.

# 'Corrupt parties hatching conspiracies against me'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ludhiana, Feb 20:** Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Monday said leaders of 'corrupt parties' are 'hatching conspiracies' against him as his government has started a crusade against corruption.

"Corruption is the enemy of Punjab and its people," he said and added that his government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy against corrupt elements in the state.

Addressing a gathering at the inauguration of Punjab's biggest sewage treatment plant (STP) here, Mann said his government has started a crusade against corruption due to which the leaders of 'corrupt parties' are 'hatching conspiracies' against him.

The CM said that "baffled by this drive, corrupt leaders are stooping too low by passing derogatory and personal comments against him but this will not deter him from wiping out corruption from the state."

Anyone who plundered the money of Punjab and its people will be made accountable for their 'sins' against the state, Mann said.

On the 'Sarkar Aapke Dwaar' scheme, the chief minister said it is aimed at ensuring that officers, especially deputy commissioners and additional deputy commissioners, maximise their field visits, particularly in villages, and interact with the people.

It is the need of the hour to facilitate the people in getting their day-to-day works done easily, besides ensuring good governance to them, Mann said.

Besides the STP, the chief minister also inaugurated other projects for cleaning and rejuvenation of the 'Buddha Nullah' here.

Mann expressed deep concern over pollution in the 'Buddha Nullah' and said this was the result of the 'callousness' of successive governments in the state.

He said he had been raising this issue as an MP too because the polluted water from the drain flows into the Sutlej river.

Villages in Jalalabad were worst affected by it but former deputy chief minister Sukhbir Singh Badal, who represented Jalalabad, never did anything to solve this problem resulting in miseries for the people, Mann said.

The STP with a capacity of 225 million litres per day will be instrumental in the cleaning of the Buddha Nullah in the city, he said.



# China-made drone seized in Punjab

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Feb 20:** The BSF and the Punjab Police recovered a China-made drone along the international border of India and Pakistan in Punjab's Fazilka district Monday, said a BSF official.

This is the second recovery of the unmanned aerial vehicle in the past 24 hours.

Acting on specific information, the teams of the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Punjab Police launched a search operation in the New Hasta Kalan village area in Fazilka at around 9.30 am.

They recovered a quadcopter - DJI Matrice 300 RTK - from an open area in the village, said the official. The BSF in coordination with Punjab Police once again captured a rogue drone, said the official.

The BSF Sunday recovered the quadcopter along with 2.730 kg heroin from a field in Ghaniake village in Gurdaspur district.

Saturday, the force recovered 20 packets of heroin and a cache of arms and ammunition after a gunfight with Pakistani smugglers along the international border in Gurdaspur.



# Dry weather in Punjab may impact wheat crop

*The dry weather is due to absence of significant western disturbances, or storm systems originating from Caspian Sea and moving across the Afghanistan-Pakistan region*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, Feb 20:** The weather has been mostly dry over Punjab and Haryana since February 1, and this may impact the wheat crop, experts said.

The dry weather is due to absence of significant western disturbances, or storm systems originating from Caspian Sea and moving across the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, the meteorological office here said Sunday.

Agricultural experts warned that the high temperatures and lack of precipitation may impact the wheat crop in both states, the country's prominent granaries.

It asked the farmers that if the crop appears to be under stress, light irrigation can be provided.

The current maximum temperature in Punjab and Haryana is 4-5 degrees Celsius above average,

whereas the minimum is 3-5 degrees above average, it said.

As per the Met office, weather is likely to be mainly dry over most parts of Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh in the next four-five days. Light drizzles are likely at isolated places over Pathankot, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur districts and adjoining areas of Punjab and



over Panchkula and adjoining area of Haryana February 21.

No large change is likely in the maximum and minimum in the next four-five days over both states, including Chandigarh.

As per experts of Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana, if this trend continues in the coming days, this might lead to adverse effects on the wheat crop.

As the crop is approaching reproductive growth period, which is sensitive to temperature, the high temperature during post-anthesis period leads to loss in yield, said the PAU.

# Migratory bird arrivals at Punjab wetland decline this season

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Harike (Punjab), Feb 20:** The arrival of migratory birds this year to Harike, northern India's largest wetland, declined 12 per cent from 2021, according to the latest census of these water birds.

The Forest and Wildlife Preservation department census counted 65,624 birds from 85 species at Harike, World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) India Coordinator Gitanjali Kanwar said.

Every winter, 90 species of migratory birds from Siberia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Russia, among others, arrive at the wetland site once the water bodies in their native places start to freeze.

In 2021, the census recorded 74,869 migratory birds from 88 species. The year before, 91,025 from 90 species were counted. There was no census in 2022 due to COVID-19.

In 2018 and 2019, 94,771 birds of 94 species and 1,23,128 birds of 83 species arrived at the wetland site, respectively.

The reason behind the decline in migratory bird arrivals this year is yet to be ascertained. Whether the drop is at a global or a regional level is yet to be seen, Kanwar said.

Punjab witnessed fewer migratory bird arrivals at all wetlands this year, she added.

Spread over 96 square kilometres at the confluence of the Sutlej and the Beas rivers in Tarn Taran,



Ferozepur and Kapurthala districts, the Harike wetland is home to rare species of migratory water

birds during winters. The birds start arriving at Harike, also known as Hari ke

Pattan, in September before setting off on their return journey by March.

"The reverse migration has already started," Kanwar said.

Among the species that arrived at Harike this season included 34,523 Eurasian coots, 8,381 greylag geese, 7,432 gadwalls, 2,262 common pochards and 1,807 northern shovellers.

Spoonbills, painted storks, ruddy shelducks, bar-headed geese, common teals and shoreline birds such as gulls, terns, sandpipers and plovers were also counted.

Kanwar said some species such as the merlin, black-necked grebe and the common merganser were spotted after a long time.

Apart from Harike, these water birds also arrive at wetlands in Keshopur Miani, Nangal, Ropar, Kanjli and the Beas river.

# Punjab govt monitors social media accounts of employees

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, Feb 20:** The Punjab government has asked administrative secretaries to monitor social media accounts of employees criticising or commenting adversely against policies of the government.

The order, signed by the Under Secretary with Chief Secretary, dated February 17 said it was observed that some government employees are openly criticising/commenting adversely on the government policies/achievements, etc., on the social media platforms.

Responding to the order, Shiromani Akali Dal MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal in a tweet Monday said: "As per our Constitution, all citizens have right to freedom of speech/expression, then how come @AAPunjab allegedly directed administrative secretaries to monitor employees who criticize govt policies?"

"If @BhagwantMann is doing no wrong, why to curb voices with such instruction?"

of the day quote

Those who said they rotted in the 25-year alliance with the BJP have now seen their party finished in two-and-half years after joining hands with the NCP, Congress (to form the Maha Vikas Aghdi post the 2019 Assembly poll results). They have been brought to the streets

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | MAHARASHTRA DEPUTY CM

The Congress, CPI(M) and BJP have joined hands to derail the development process initiated by the Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal

ABHISHEK BANERJEE | TMC NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY

The country will become powerful when the feeling of nationalism is awakened in every family

MOHAN BHAGWAT | RSS CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

Emergency landing

Lucknow: Yet another aviation incident involving IndiGo airlines took place on Monday when a flight from Delhi had to make an emergency landing in Lucknow after receiving a bomb-threat call. "Flight 6E 6191 operating from Delhi to Deogarh was diverted to Lucknow following a specific bomb threat. All necessary security protocols were followed and the aircraft was cleared for take-off later. IndiGo is following the rules of the security agencies in the probe," the airline said in a statement.

Accident claims 5

Shillong: At least five persons died after a vehicle carrying supporters of Trinamool Congress for an election rally in Meghalaya met with an accident on Monday, officials said. The accident took place in Bolmedang near the Kharkutta area of the state. The rally was scheduled in the Adokgari area. A senior police officer informed that the vehicle lost control on a hilly road and hit a nearby hill which resulted in the death of five women, while few others were injured.

Muslim leader held

Rampur: Farhat Ali Khan, chief of the All India Muslim Federation, was arrested after he broke a plaque bearing the names of Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Mohd Azam Khan and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav in Babu Mall. Farhat Ali Khan used a hammer on Sunday to break the plaque. He said that Azam Khan did not have the right to vote and that the administration should remove all plaques with the latter's name on it.

Man found dead

New Delhi: A 35-year-old man was found dead inside his house in north east Delhi's Karawal Nagar, an official said Monday. The incident took place Sunday. Police said that they have found ligature marks over the neck and an injury on the head of the deceased identified as Munna, a resident of West Kamal Vihar in Karawal Nagar.

Ex-Andaman chief secy gets bail

Port Blair: The former chief secretary of Andaman and Nicobar Islands Jitendra Narain was granted bail by the Port Blair circuit bench of the Calcutta High Court on Monday in the rape case filed by a 21-year-old woman. The bench of Justice Chittaranjan Dash and Justice Md Nizamuddin granted conditional bail to Narain.



The government will leave no stone unturned to make life easier for the people of Ladakh NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

DELHI STRICTURE

Carrying passengers on two-wheeler bike taxis bearing private registration number has been made a punishable offence in Delhi and may attract fine upto ₹10,000



GODHRA TRAIN BURNING CASE

Gujarat govt to seek death penalty for 11 in SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: The Gujarat government Monday told the Supreme Court that it will press for death penalty to 11 convicts whose sentences in the 2002 Godhra train burning case were commuted to life imprisonment by the state's high court.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala also fixed the bail pleas of several accused in the case for hearing after three weeks. It asked counsel for both sides to file a consolidated chart giving details such as actual sentences awarded to them and the period spent in jail till now.

"We will be seriously pressing for award of death penalty to the convicts whose death penalties were commuted into life imprisonment (by the Gujarat High Court). This is the rarest of rare cases where 59 people, including women and children, were burnt alive," Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Gujarat government, told the bench.

"It is consistent everywhere that the bogey was locked from outside. Fifty-nine died, including



The top court has granted bail to two convicts in the case so far. Seven other bail pleas are pending adjudication in the matter

On February 27, 2002, 59 people were killed when the S-6 coach of the train was burnt at Gujarat's Godhra, triggering riots in the state

ladies and children," he added. Giving details, the law officer said 11 convicts were sentenced to death by the trial court and 20 others granted life term in the case.

The high court upheld total 31 convictions in the case and commuted the death penalties of the 11 convicts to life term, Mehta said. On February 27, 2002, 59 people were killed when the S-6 coach of the train was burnt at Gujarat's Godhra, triggering riots in the state.

The state government has come in appeal against the commuta-

tion of death penalty into life term for 11 convicts, Mehta said. Several accused, he added, have filed pleas against the high court upholding their convictions in the case.

The top court has granted bail to two convicts in the case so far. Seven other bail pleas are pending adjudication in the matter. The bench noted that a large number of bail applications have been filed before it in the case and said, "It has been agreed that the AORs (advocate-on records) on behalf of applicants along with advocate Swati

CBI sets new date for Sisodia

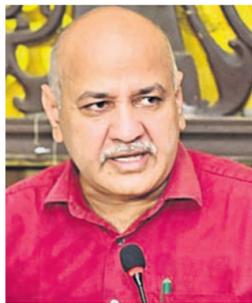
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Monday said he has been called for questioning by the CBI on February 26 in connection with the Delhi excise policy scam case. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had on Sunday deferred his questioning after he sought time from the agency citing the Delhi government's ongoing budget exercise. The agency had asked Sisodia to appear for questioning on February 19.

The senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader told a press conference that he has been called for questioning on February 26 and will appear before the probe agency.

CBI officials said that the agency has issued a fresh notice to Sisodia to appear for questioning in the case on February 26. The notice was issued on his request. He had sought deferment of his previously scheduled questioning on Sunday, they said.

The CBI had earlier accepted his application to defer the questioning and had said it will give a new date soon. Sisodia, who holds the finance portfolio in the Delhi government, had cited the ongoing budget exercise to postpone the questioning and sought a date in the last week of February, the officials said.



A woman paints earthen piggy banks in Nadia

PTI PHOTO

Owaisi's house attacked in Delhi

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 20: The All India Majlis-E-Itehadul Muslimeen chief Asaduddin Owaisi, has alleged that some unidentified miscreants pelted stones at his residence in Delhi and windows of the house were damaged.

Owaisi also shared a video of his residence at Ashoka Road in New Delhi, showing the damages. "Earlier tonight, I returned from Jaipur & was informed by my domestic help that a bunch of miscreants pelted stones that resulted in broken windows. @DelhiPolice must catch them immediately," he tweeted late on Sunday.

"It's concerning that this has happened in a so-called a 'high security' zone. I've submitted a complaint to the cops & they've reached my residence," he said in another tweet. Meanwhile, a senior police



official said that a complaint was received from the MP and Owaisi was not present at his residence when the alleged incident happened.

"The crime team has inspected the spot. One brick/stone was also found in the parking area at the back entrance. Windows were also found broken," said the official, adding that a probe has been initiated. More details are awaited.

Baby declared dead found alive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: A newborn girl was "declared dead" soon after birth at the Delhi government-run LNJP Hospital, her family members alleged on Monday, and said they found the infant alive about an hour-and-a-half later when they were making plans for her burial.

A senior doctor at the city government's largest hospital said it was a regular delivery but the mother was just 23-weeks pregnant and the pre-term baby "weighed only 490 grams". He added that the authorities had ordered an inquiry into the matter.

"Yesterday, my niece was born. She was alive but they declared her dead," Md Salman, the infant's uncle, alleged. The incident came to light on Monday after a video showing the baby in a box became



widely circulated on social media.

The family admitted that the video was shot by them after they brought the infant back to the hospital. The baby's 35-year-old mother has another daughter, aged three. The baby's father works in the business of simple toolmaking, the family said.

"The baby was handed over to us in a box and we took her to our home in New Mustafabad. We had started making preparations for

her burial and ordered to prepare a grave for her. Around 7.30 pm, when we opened the box, we saw the baby moving her legs and arms. We immediately rushed her back to hospital," an aggrieved Salman told PTI over phone.

The baby's father even called the PCR helpline but police only took some notes on a "rough piece of paper" when they came, he claimed. A senior police official said no formal complaint had been lodged by the family.

Salman, the baby's uncle, also alleged that when they reached the hospital, the doctors "shut their rooms and refused to admit the baby again." "The guards misbehaved with us. We protested and asked them to admit the child but they refused to budge. We called the police, who then intervened and got the baby admitted again," Salman said.

Data turns dormant desire into informed insights

If Jharkhand's poverty ridden backyard, Jamtara, gained notoriety as the cybercrime capital of the country. It is now the turn of Haryana's Mewat to emerge as digital India's underbelly.

This came to the fore with a recent revelation that Haryana police's cybercrime cell had blocked almost five lakh SIM cards over the year that were in use in the state's Mewat region to commit cyber frauds countrywide. Published reports point out that the SIM cards were operational in 40 villages, had led to identification of over 400 alleged cybercriminals, acting on 66,784 complaints made between January

and December 2022 that had led to a loss of Rs 301.48 crores and does not include the Rs 47 crore in fraudulent transactions that were thwarted through use of Artificial Intelligence and advanced cyber-identification tools. Also that it had managed to identify about 5 lakh mobile numbers issued from other states but put to use exclusively in this region.

The statistics are re-assuring in the strides by the cops in using emerging technologies to combat cyber-crime but stunning in the breadth of the fraudsters reach, spread and financial figures skimmed in this digital fiscal fraud.

Is India fast gaining notoriety

as the global hotbed of financial fiscal fraud through con-calls? There are reasons to believe so because illegal con-call centres have been mushrooming all over the country with their proceeds fuelling a wholly illegal, black money economy of humongous proportions and global connections, all working in tandem.

According to the eighth edition of the Truecaller Insights 2022, US Spam and Scam Report dated May 24, 2022, a staggering \$ 39.5 billion was lost to phone scams in America over the past 12 months and marked an increase of 14.9 per cent over the same

period last year. To put things into perspective, the total money lost to con-call scams is comparable to American Rescue



Plan Act's entire childcare budget of \$39 billion. In other words if this fraud is eliminated, the amount saved could fund federally subsidized child

care across US for one full year.

Importantly, published Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data shows that 20,000 US citizens lost more than \$ 10 billion to con-call fraudsters operating from India in 2022. In 2021 the amount was \$6.9 billion thus indicating a 47 per cent increase. Romance-related frauds led to a loss of Rs 8,000 crore to victims in 2021 and another Rs 8,000 crores in just 11 months of 2022, FBI website reported.

It was this rise in frauds originating from India that led to the FBI deputing a permanent representative at the US Embassy in Delhi to coordinate with Indian investigation agencies as well as

Interpol. It is unbelievable yet true that over 202 million calls were made by just one spammer in 2021. That would be 6,64,000 calls per day and 27,000 calls every hour every day.

An analysis of call centre crimes in Gujarat by Akanksha Kakhse and Dr Pavitrans Nambiar of the Gujarat Forensic Science University (GFSU) points to the use of advanced communication technologies wherein calls to US citizens are mimicked as coming from the Internal Revenue Service of the US government. In fact these emanate from fraudulent facilities clandestinely operating from various parts of India and are used to extort money.

# international



**We will build Dhaka as a Smart City. The people of the country never accepted those who came to power through vote rigging**  
SHEIKH HASINA | BANGLADESH PM

## NOBLE DEED

India Monday handed over the first tranche of the 200 kidney dialysis machines to the Government of Nepal as part of its effort to develop the health infrastructure in the Himalayan nation



## of the day quote

**Our Syrian brothers, who lost their families and places of stay in the earthquake, returned to their lands** volunt  
HULUSI AKAR | TURKISH DEFENCE MINISTER

**The most important, pressing issue today for the Ukrainian army is to have a continuous flow of ammunition**  
JOSEP BORRELL | EU FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF

**Israel has informed the US that it won't approve new settlements in the occupied West Bank in the coming months**  
BENJAMIN NETANYAHU | PM OF ISRAEL

## SHORT TAKES

### Heavy rains leave 36 dead in Brazil

**Sao Paulo:** Heavy rain caused flooding and landslides that have killed 36 people in Brazil's north Sao Paulo state, officials said Sunday, and the fatalities could rise. Sao Paulo state government said in a statement that 35 died in the city of Sao Sebastiao and a 7-year-old girl was killed in neighbouring Ubatuba. The cities of Sao Sebastiao, Ubatuba, Ilhabela and Bertiooga, some of the hardest hit and now under state of calamity, cancelled their Carnival festivities as rescue teams struggle to find missing, injured and feared dead in the rubble.

### EU targets more Iran officials, organisations

**Brussels:** The European Union Monday imposed sanctions on two organisations and 32 Iranians, including the culture and education ministers, intelligence officials and lawmakers, accused of links to Iran's security crackdown on protesters. The protests began after the September 16 death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini. At least 529 people have been killed in demonstrations.

### 12 dead, 54 hurt as bus falls into ditch

**Islamabad:** At least 12 passengers were killed and 54 others injured after a bus fell into a ditch in the Chakwal district of Pakistan's Punjab province, the rescue service said Monday. The service said that the accident took place late Sunday night on the motorway near Kallar Kahar area when the bus went off to the other side of the road due to brake failure, hit three cars coming from the opposite direction, and eventually fell off the road into a ditch.

### 43 migrants found in van

**Sofia (Bulgaria):** Bulgarian police discovered 43 migrants, including ten children, hidden in a van in the west of the country, officials said Monday, just days after authorities found the bodies of 18 migrants concealed in a lumber truck. Prosecutor Natalia Nikolova said the 43 migrants appear to be in good health, despite being squeezed into a tight space. She didn't provide the migrants' nationalities.

### Search underway

**Manila:** Philippine authorities Monday prepared to send a search mission near the crater of a restive volcano after they spotted the suspected wreckage of a small plane that went missing with four people on board over the weekend. Two Filipino pilots and two Australians were aboard the Cessna 340, which lost contact after takeoff from Albay province southeast of the capital Saturday morning on its way to Manila, the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines said.

## RUSSIA, UKRAINE WAR

# Why China's stand raising concerns

## Imran Khan gets protective bail

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Beijing, Feb 20:** Nearly one year after Russia invaded Ukraine, new questions are rising over China's potential willingness to offer military aid to Moscow in the increasingly drawn-out conflict.

In an interview that aired Sunday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said American intelligence suggests China is considering providing arms and ammunition to Russia, an involvement in the Kremlin's war effort that he said would be a "serious problem."

China has refused to criticise Russia for its actions or even to call it an invasion in deference to Moscow. At the same time, it insists that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations must be upheld. The question now is whether China is willing to convert that rhetorical backing into material support.

Here's a look at where China stands on the conflict. **DOES CHINA BACK RUSSIA IN ITS WAR ON UKRAINE?**

China has tried to walk a fine — and often contradictory — line on the Russian invasion. China says Russia was provoked into taking action by NATO's westward expansion. Just weeks before the February 24, 2022, invasion, Chinese President Xi Jinping hosted Russian President



**Beijing says it has continued a normal trade relationship with Russia, including purchases of oil and gas, as have other countries such as India**

Vladimir Putin in Beijing for the opening of the Winter Olympics, at which time the sides issued a joint statement pledging their commit-

ment to a "no limits" friendship. China has since ignored Western criticism and reaffirmed that pledge. But China has yet to confirm the visit Putin has said he expects from Xi this spring.

**HAS CHINA PROVIDED MATERIAL SUPPORT TO RUSSIA?**

So far, China's support for Russia has been rhetorical and political, with Beijing helping prevent efforts to condemn Moscow at the United Nations.

Blinken, at a security conference in Munich, Germany, said

**US PRESIDENT MAKES SURPRISE VISIT TO UKRAINE**

**WAR ANNIVERSARY SEEN AS MOTIVATION FOR RUSSIAN OFFENSIVE**

**ZELENSKY SAYS HE AND BIDEN DISCUSSED LONG-RANGE WEAPONS**

**RUSSIA TO HOST HIGH-LEVEL VISIT FROM CHINA**

they haven't crossed that line yet," Blinken told NBC Sunday.

Blinken did not specify what measures the US could take in response to Chinese military support for Russia, but efforts to put a floor under ties that have deteriorated to their lowest level in decades have so far been unsuccessful.

The US has sought to limit Chinese access to the latest microprocessors and manufacturing equipment, and has continued to challenge Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea.

For China, the most sensitive issue is US support for Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy that Beijing considers its own territory to be conquered by military force if deemed necessary. Taiwan is a major customer for US defensive arms and has hosted a growing number of prominent American elected officials, enraging Beijing.

Meanwhile, US congress members have called for the banning of TikTok and other Chinese-owned social media platforms, as well as increased sanctions on Chinese firms backed by the Communist Party, which wields ultimate control over the Chinese economy and suppresses independent media and political opposition voices.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lahore, Feb 20:** Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan Monday appeared before the Lahore High Court which granted him protective bail in a case linked to violent protests outside the election commission, amidst high drama inside the court premises where hundreds of his supporters converged to show solidarity with him.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) activists staged a violent protest after 70-year-old Khan was disqualified by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in the prohibited funding case last year.

Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh had directed Khan to appear before court for hearing of his protective bail petition in the case. Justice Najafi appreciated Khan for submitting to the law.

The judge granted him protective bail till March 3 and refrained police and any other agency from arresting him.

Khan evaded the PML-N government's plan to arrest him as he appeared before the court and secured the protective bail in the case in which he was booked under terrorism charges.

Thousands of workers of Khan's party thronged the route of his Lahore's residence to the LHC that made him cover a 10-minute distance in more than two hours.

## PROTESTERS 'FIGHT FOR ISRAEL'S SOUL'

*The standoff has plunged Israel into one of its greatest domestic crises, sharpening a divide between Israelis over the character of their state and the values they believe should guide it*

AGENCIES

**Jerusalem, Feb 20:** The Israeli opposition vowed to "fight for the soul of the nation" with fresh protests as parliament prepared to hold a first reading Monday of judicial changes promoted by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's religious-nationalist government.

Wielding 64 of the Knesset's 120 seats, Netanyahu looked likely to win eventual ratification for the first two changes, one increasing the government's sway in choosing judges and the other setting limits to the Supreme Court's ability to strike down legislation.

By noon, thousands of citizens carrying Israeli flags and STOP signs streamed to parliament to

protest the vote that was expected to be held later in the day.

Polls have found that most Israelis want the reforms slowed to allow for dialogue with critics - or shelved altogether.

The shekel was 0.6% weaker versus the dollar in midday trading. Seeing instability from the reform feud, many economists, and leaders from high-tech and banking have warned of investor and capital flight from Israel. But a key coalition figure brushed this off.

"There is no link between the justice system reforms and any blow to Israel's economy," said Knesset Finance Committee chairman Moshe Gafni and head of the ultra-Orthodox United Torah Judaism party. "Any attempt at linkage is politicised."

Opposition lawmakers protested Gafni's statement, calling the committee "a circus".

Ahead of the afternoon reading, protesters posted online videos of themselves trying to prevent lawmakers from Netanyahu's coalition leaving for the Knesset. Police said eight people were arrested for disorderly conduct and traffic rerouted after demonstrators blocked some roads.



A carnival float depicts Russia's President Vladimir Putin taking a blood bath during the traditional carnival parade in Duesseldorf, Germany. The foolish street spectacles in the carnival centers of Duesseldorf, Mainz and Cologne, watched by hundreds of thousands of people, are the highlights in Germany's carnival season on Rosemondia

## N KOREA FIRES MORE MISSILES

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Seoul, Feb 20:** North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles toward Japan Monday in its second weapons test in three days that drew quick condemnation from its rivals and prompted Tokyo to request an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

The weapons firings follow an intercontinental ballistic missile launch Saturday and North Korea's threats to take an un-

precedentedly strong response to US-South Korean military drills that the North views as an invasion rehearsal.

South Korea's military said it detected the two missile launches from a western coastal town, just north of Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, Monday morning. Japan said both missiles landed in the waters outside of the Japanese exclusive economic zone between the Korean Peninsula and Japan and that no damage involv-

ing aircraft and vessels in the area was reported.

According to Japanese and South Korean assessments, the North Korean missiles flew at a maximum altitude of 50-100 kilometers (30-60 miles) and a distance of 340-400 kilometers (210-250 miles). South Korea's military said North Korea's repeated missile launches are "a grave provocation" that undermine international peace. Japan condemned the launches as violations to the



UN Security Council resolutions and a threat to the peace and safety of Japan and the international society.

# Hasty rebuild could leave Turkey at risk of another disaster

AGENCIES

**Istanbul, Feb 20:** Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan's plan to rebuild quickly after devastating earthquakes rocked the country risks courting another disaster unless urban planning and building safety are carefully re-considered, architects and engineers say.

Days after Turkey's worst earthquake in modern history, Erdogan vowed to rebuild the southern disaster zone within a year, an undertaking conservative estimates put at \$25 billion and others expect to be far higher.

### Turkey, Syria rocked again

**Ankara:** A magnitude 6.4 earthquake struck the Turkey-Syria border region late Monday, setting off panic and damaging buildings in Turkey's Antakya city two weeks after the country's worst earthquake in modern history left tens of thousands dead. NTV television said the quake caused some damaged buildings to collapse, but there were no immediate reports of any casualties. Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency said the quake was felt in Syria, Jordan, Israel and Egypt.

Facing elections by June, Erdogan's government has endured a wave of criticism over both its response to the devastation and what many Turks say were years of policies that led to tens of thousands of buildings being so easily destroyed.

Erdogan had said the government would cover rents of those who leave quake-hit cities. But experts believe he needs to carefully enforce seismic-safety standards and build safer structures in the area, which straddles one of three faultlines criss-crossing Turkey. The quakes February 6, which also



hit neighbouring Syria, left more than a million homeless and killed far more than the latest official tally of 46,000 people in both countries. They devastated southern Turkey in the dead of winter, with overnight temperatures near freezing, leaving many emergency tents inadequate for the homeless. More than 2 million others have evacu-

ated the region that was home to more than 13 million. The earthquakes revealed the fragility of Turkey's infrastructure, experts said, given they ravaged both modern and ancient buildings including hospitals, mosques, churches and schools. Some now worry the government's ambitious timeframe leaves little time to fix past mistakes.

- ▶ Experts say Erdogan timeline is hasty
- ▶ President's quake performance under scrutiny
- ▶ Fragile infrastructure seen to threaten lives, properties
- ▶ Reconstruction bill of \$25 billion - Jpmorgan

### "FRIENDLY COMPANIES"

The bill to rebuild houses, transmission lines and infrastructure is around \$25 billion, or 2.5% of GDP, US bank JPMorgan said in a report. Another report from business association Turkonfed estimated damages to housing at \$70.8 billion. And analysts say costs could overshoot initial estimates. Over 20 years in power, Erdogan used major real estate projects to showcase Turkey's rising prosperity. Public and private builds have boosted jobs and new housing stock, and

helped his opinion poll ratings. Some critics have said the state exacerbated the crisis by awarding "friendly" companies lucrative construction contracts over the years in return for political and financial support.

**QUAKE-PROOF BUILDINGS**  
Though there is no definite data on the more than 20 million buildings in the country, former Urbanisation Minister Mehmet Ozhasaki said when in office in mid-2018 that "probably more than 50% of all buildings" contravened housing regulations.

The Urbanisation Ministry did not immediately respond to questions about current figures. Opposition politicians accuse Erdogan's government of failing to enforce building regulations, and of mis-spending special taxes levied after the last major earthquake in 1999 in order to make buildings more resistant to quakes.

# business

## of the day quote

We have set up a committee to monitor the situation arising due to increase in temperature on the wheat crop

MANOJ AHUJA | AGRICULTURE SECRETARY

We are planning to come out with a consultation paper to comprehensively address and look at further strengthening digital inclusion in the country

PD VAGHELA | CHAIRMAN, TRAI

We have bagged orders worth ₹3,185 crore across various business segments in the domestic as well as international market. We are witnessing a significant uptick in the Water and T&D business, which we believe will be a major growth driver for us going forward

MANISH MOHNOT | MD & CEO, KPTL

## SHORT TAKES

### Air traffic nearly doubles in Jan

**New Delhi:** Domestic aviation traffic has continued to witness a massive growth as passengers carried by domestic airlines during January 2023 were 1.25 crore as against 64.08 lakh during the corresponding period of previous year thereby registering an annual growth of 95.72 per cent and monthly growth of 95.72 per cent. According to data released by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Monday, the passenger load factor or occupancy of the airlines remained on the higher side in the range of 80 to 90 per cent. The newly-launched Akasa Air marked an 82.8 per cent occupancy during January. SpiceJet recorded the highest occupancy of 91 per cent, while Indigo witnessed 82 per cent. Air India and Go First followed with 87.5 per cent and 90.9 per cent of occupancy, respectively. Indigo, however, maintained its top position in On-Time Performance (OTP) in January with 84.6 per cent on an average of its flights from four key metro airports -- Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Hyderabad -- departing and arriving at their scheduled time.

### India jumps 10-spot in mobile speeds

**New Delhi:** As 5G roll-out picks up speed thanks to Reliance Jio and Airtel, India climbed 10 spots for median mobile speeds globally in the month of January, from 79th position in December to 69th, a report said Monday. The country also increased two spots in rank globally for overall median fixed broadband speeds, from 81st in December to 79th in January, according to network intelligence and connectivity insights provider Ookla. Overall fixed median download speeds in India saw a slight increase from 49.14 Mbps in December to 50.02 Mbps in January. In November, India ranked at 105th position, globally in median mobile speeds.

### EPFO demands higher pension

**New Delhi:** Retirement fund body EPFO Monday came out with a procedure to enable subscribers and their employers to jointly apply for higher pension under Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS). Earlier in November 2022, the Supreme Court had upheld Employees Pension (Amendment) Scheme 2014. The EPS amendment of August 22, 2014 had raised the pensionable salary cap to ₹15,000 a month from ₹6,500 a month, and allowed members along with their employers to contribute 8.33 per cent of their actual salaries (if it exceeded the cap) towards the EPS.



**Petrol and diesel can be taken under the GST if the GST council, which is not governed by any one government but finance ministers of all states, takes the call**

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

## UBER, TATA PARTNER TO PUSH EV

Uber Technologies will introduce 25,000 electric vehicles (EVs) in India for ride-sharing over three years, its country head said Monday, its first move to adopt clean cars. Tata Motors said it will supply 25,000 XPRES-T electric vehicle units to Uber in one of the largest deals in the green mobility space till date



## HURT BY HINDENBURG

**The conglomerate has seen an overall market value erosion of around \$200 billion from the peak of \$290 billion seen in September last year**

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 20:** Gautam Adani-led Adani Group's market capitalisation (mcap) plunged below \$100 billion Monday, falling over \$135 billion since the explosive Hindenburg Research report released late January. The selloff in most group stocks continued today, with the group's flagship company Adani Enterprises the worst performer

with as much as 9.4% drop. Adani Total Gas, which has faced the biggest brunt, has lost more than three quarters of its value since the US-based short seller report was published. According to reports, Adani Total was down by its limit today. It has done so each day since 27 January. The stock exchanges have tweaked the daily limit for the stock to 5% from 20% as the selloff worsened.

Nine of the Adani group's 10 stocks were lower in Mumbai today. Adani Green Energy Ltd and Adani Transmission Ltd also dipped by their 5% limit. Adani Group stocks have taken a beating on the bourses after Hindenburg's bombshell report made a litany of allegations, including fraudulent transactions,



ADANI GROUP HAS FALLEN OVER \$135BN SINCE HINDENBURG REPORT

ADANI DUMPS BIDS FOR STAKE IN PTC INDIA

corporate governance lapses and share-price manipulation, against the business empire. The report came just as a ₹20,000 crore follow-on share sale of the

## Adani repays ₹1,500cr in comeback strategy

Adani group firm Adani Ports & SEZ paid ₹1,500 crore loan and promised to repay more as the embattled conglomerate mapped a comeback strategy after a sellout triggered by a damning report by US-based Hindenburg Research. Adani Ports and SEZ paid SBI Mutual Funds' due amount of ₹1,500 crore Monday and will also pay another ₹1,000 crore of commercial papers due in March (as per the payment scheme), a company spokesperson said. "This part prepayment is from the existing cash balance and funds generated from the business operations," the spokesperson said. "This underscores the confidence which the market has placed on the prudent capital and liquidity management plan for the group."

conglomerate's flagship firm Adani Enterprises opened.

Meanwhile Adani Group has decided against bidding for a stake in electricity trader PTC India Ltd as the beleaguered conglomerate looks to conserve cash amid a short seller attack. Adani group's gross debt stood

at ₹2.26 lakh crore as of September 2022 and had cash of ₹31,646 crore.

Now, the ports-to-power conglomerate helmed by Adani — who used to be Asia's richest person — is hoping to claw back the narrative with this playbook and calm jittery investors and lenders.

# Vedanta's debt-cut plan hits roadblock

**CENTRE OPPOSES VEDANTA'S NEARLY \$3 BILLION HINDUSTAN ZINC ASSETS SALE, REKINDLING DEBT WORRIES**



AGENCIES

**Bangalore, Feb 20:** The government has opposed Hindustan Zinc Ltd's \$2.98 billion acquisition of assets from the flagship firm of Vedanta Resources, dealing a blow to billionaire Anil Agarwal's plans to trim down the mining giant's \$7.7 billion net debt.

The Ministry of Mines in the letter said it is writing on behalf of the government on the resolution approved by the HZL board in its meeting January 19 "for the creation of a wholly-owned overseas subsidiary of the company, funding such subsidiary to the extent of \$2.98 billion and such subsidiary acquiring the shares of THL Zinc Ltd from THL Zinc Ventures Ltd." "The proposed resolutions which envisage the acquisition of THL Zinc (a Vedanta company) by HZL (also a Vedanta company) thus being a related party transaction, we, the government of India would like to reiterate our dissent on the matter and the resolutions forming part of the agenda matter," it said. It wanted the company to explore other cashless methods of acquisition of assets.

The government, which owns a nearly 30% stake in Hindustan Zinc, is against the miner buying some Africa-based zinc assets from Vedanta Ltd - its top shareholder with a near-65% stake - as it was a "related party transaction". The development comes a week

- BLOW TO TRIM DOWN VEDANTA'S \$7.7 BILLION DEBT
- IT HAD CUT DEBT BY \$2 BILLION IN LAST 11 MONTHS
- GOVT OWNS NEARLY 30% STAKE IN HINDUSTAN ZINC
- VEDANTA HOLDS 64.92% EQUITY SHARE OF HZL

after Vedanta Resources said it had slashed net debt by \$2 billion in the last 11 months, with plans to cut it further, seeking to allay concerns after S&P Global Ratings raised doubts about the group's financial health.

S&P Global had said Vedanta Resources' ability to meet its financial obligations beyond September would depend on a planned \$2 billion fundraising as well as the proposed sale of THL Zinc Ltd, a Vedanta Ltd unit that holds zinc assets in Africa.

That deal, announced January 19, is now in doubt after the government-nominated directors on Hindustan Zinc's board opposed the acquisition and said in a letter dated February 17 that they would oppose further resolutions.

### CASH WIPEOUT

The Ministry of Mines, in its letter, urged Hindustan Zinc to "explore other cashless methods" to acquire the assets. The gov-

Flexibility comes down meaningfully if the deal doesn't go through, and the pressure on Vedanta Resources will rise because of that

ANUPAM GUPTA | ANALYST, IIFL

At current valuations, this deal would wipe out the entire cash on the books at Hindustan Zinc, which is why the government is opposing it

HEET VORA | ANALYST, JM FINANCIAL

ernment is looking to sell its entire stake in HZL as part of its efforts to replenish state coffers.

Hindustan Zinc's consolidated gross investments and cash and cash equivalents were ₹164.82 billion (about \$2 billion) as of December 31.

The deal, analysts have said, is unfavourable to HZL's minority shareholders, who have to sign off any board decision on related party deals in a meeting that Hindustan Zinc has to call within three months of announcing the deal.

The company had not yet called for a shareholder meeting but its board would consider the government's position, it said in an exchange filing Monday.

While miner Vedanta Ltd has been hit by a fall in commodity prices, Vedanta Resources is betting growth will be bolstered by its associate firms' investment in areas like semiconductors, display glass, renewables, optical fibre, and transmission.

HZL's shares have lost nearly 14.5% since the deal was announced a month ago, while Vedanta Ltd's shares have lost about 5%.

The developments follow a turbulent month at Gautam Adani's conglomerate, which has seen its group companies' shares crater after a short-seller's report on their improper use of offshore tax havens, stock manipulation and high debt levels - allegations the Adani Group has rejected.

## CASH-STARVED

# Pak CAD shrinks 90% to \$0.24bn

The deficit was recorded as import restrictions continue to persist amid a balance of payments crisis that has brought the country on the verge of default

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, Feb 20:** Cash-strapped Pakistan's current account deficit shrank 90.2 per cent to \$0.24 billion in January from \$2.47 billion in the same month last year, the data shared by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) showed Monday.

Current Account Deficit (CAD) recorded \$0.2 billion in Jan 2023 against a deficit of \$2.5 billion in Jan 2022, the central bank said in a brief statement on Twitter. The decrease in the deficit is also 16.55 per cent lower than December when the SBP announced that the deficit was \$0.29 billion.

Pakistan has a chronic balance of payments problem which has exacerbated in the last year, with the country's forex reserves declining to critical levels. As of February 10, the central bank had only \$3.2 billion in reserves, enough to cover barely three weeks of imports.

To stem dollar outflows, the government has imposed restrictions, allowing imports of only essential food items and medicines until a lifeline bailout is agreed with the



International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is seen as essential for the country to stave off default.

The latest data shows that the country's current account deficit during the first seven months of the current fiscal year stood at \$3.8 billion, which equates to a decline of 67.13 per cent compared to July-January FY-21-22.

During January, \$3.92 billion worth of goods were imported, down 7.3 per cent from the last month. On the other hand, exports also declined, clocking in at \$2.1 billion, down 4.29 per cent from the preceding month's \$2.31 billion.

Meanwhile, workers' remittances stood at \$1.89 billion, declining 9.89 per cent compared to \$2.1 billion in December, according to the paper. Pakistan faces a crippling economic crisis, with decades-high inflation and critically low foreign exchange reserves depleted by continued debt repayment obligations.

# Sensex, Nifty extend losses for 2nd day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 20:** Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty declined for a second straight session Monday, losing more than half a per cent due to selling in energy, banking and financial stocks amid lingering concerns over interest rates and inflation.

Reversing its early gains, the BSE Sensex closed lower by 311.03 points or 0.51 per cent at 60,691.54 as 18 of its scrips declined. The index opened higher at 61,112.84 and gained further 290 points to hit the day's high of 61,290.19.

However, selling in index major Reliance Industries, HDFC twins, ICICI Bank Maruti and Kotak Bank dragged down the barometer to a low of 60,607.02.



The NSE Nifty fell 99.60 points or 0.56 per cent to end at 17,844.60 as 30 of its constituents declined while 20 advanced. Nifty touched a high of 18,004.35 in early trade but later fell to a low of 17,818.40. Sensex lost nearly 317 points while Nifty declined by 91 points Friday.

From the Sensex pack, Maruti, HDFC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, Reliance Industries, Nestle and ICICI Bank

# As war's anniversary nears, it's business as usual for markets

WORLD COMMODITY PRICES AND SUPPLY CHAINS HAVE RECOVERED FROM THE WAR SHOCKS AND THINGS ARE BACK IN PLACE TO PRE-WAR AND PRE-COVID LEVELS. IT TOOK A WHILE AND A LOT OF PRICES HAD TO FALL SHARPLY BEFORE THIS WAS ACHIEVED. TODAY, THINGS ARE MORE OR LESS BACK TO NORMAL

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 20:** The Russia-Ukraine confrontation seems to be like an event which began just the other day or yesterday, but would be marking its first anniversary February 24.

When it began, it appeared as if it would be a short affair lasting a couple of weeks or maybe if stretched, a couple of months. Time flies and so has this event.

Today, except for those involved with the confrontation, Russia and Ukraine, the world seems to have forgotten the event. It's like nobody else is affected and hence not bothered.

World markets were impacted when the confrontation began. The time was just after the world had

more or less recovered from the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic and things were near normal. When the news of the war hit the world, it caused a huge upheaval in commodities availability, supply issues as prices skyrocketed.

A country like India exported some wheat in the initial stages before the government clamped down on the same. Crude prices rose sharply and Russia tweaked the way it sells crude to counter sanctions imposed on itself by the Western world.

Immediately after the outbreak of the war, stock markets globally were affected and fell. No one was sure what could be the damage and for how long. They recovered from the losses and seem to be on a roll across the world. What could



be termed as surprising or puzzling is the way European stock markets are behaving.

One thought that the war would affect Europe the most, as Russia

The big beneficiaries were China and India because they found land routes to get crude oil for their consumption, and at substantially discounted rates as well

and Ukraine are big suppliers to Europe. Oil and gas are big sources of worry for Europe. However, and contrary to expectations, markets in Europe led by FTSE, CAC and

DAX stock exchanges are trading at new highs.

It is not just the fact that there is no impact of the war, the expected recession is also missing. This probably explains why markets there are so bullish. While financial aid has been given to Ukraine along with big consignments of armaments and ammunition, it appears that the situation is nowhere near resolution. New conditions seem to be the biggest hurdle for resolution.

Indian markets made lifetime highs on the 1st of December and are less than 5 per cent away from those highs currently. We seem to be trading in a broad range of less than 2-3 per cent of the lifetime highs. Strange as it may sound, no one seems to be worried or

bothered about the war outside of Ukraine.

The US has had the worst of inflation and interest rates there have risen quite sharply. Economic data suggest that the economy is doing well and therefore one can expect that interest rate rise would continue, though at a reduced pace. The threat of recession haunts the US currently, even though there are no signs of it as yet.

What is the road ahead? Resolution of the war? Unlikely, as neither side seems to be in a hurry. Status quo seems to suit everybody. Commodity prices have returned to normal, so the pain has subsided. Markets are doing fine, so there is no cause for worry. Unfortunately, but that is the reality.

# SMRITI, RAIN GUIDE INDIA INTO SEMIS

# Clarke takes a dig at Aussies



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gqeberha (South Africa), Feb 20:** Vice-captain Smriti Mandhana stood out with a scintillating 56-ball 87 before rain, to some extent, helped India seal a berth in the semifinals of the Women's T20 World Cup, Monday.

Mandhana's knock lifted India to 155/6 against Ireland. In response, Ireland were going good until rain dashed their hopes of a win. Ireland were 54/2 in 8.2 overs when rain interrupted play. The DLS par score at 8.2 overs was 59 runs and as a result the Irish ended losing the match by five runs.

Ireland lost two wickets in the very first over. However, Gaby Lewis (32 n o, 25b, 5x4) and Laura Delany (17 n o, 20b, 3x4) played their shots keeping the required run-rate within reach. However, rain ruined their plans completely.

Earlier, on a surface that was far from ideal for batting and where most struggled to force the pace, Mandhana stood out from the pack with nine delectable fours and three sixes.

Opting bat after skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (13) won the toss, India were off to a fine start with the opening duo of Mandhana and Shafali Verma putting on 62 runs in just under 10 overs at St George's Park.

But Shafali once again got out after getting a start, caught by Amy Hunter off the bowling of skipper Laura Delany, who introduced herself into the attack after the front-line bowlers failed to get the team a breakthrough.

Harmanpreet joined Mandhana in the middle, and the two looked to build on a partnership. Playing strokes turned out to be difficult on a surface that appeared to be a bit on the slower side.

The slow nature of the wicket



Renuka Singh reacts after a wicket

notwithstanding, Mandhana maintained an excellent strike rate and reached her half century in style, hitting leg-spinner Cara Murray for a six over deep mid-wicket.

Mandhana was lucky to have survive a scare just before getting to her fifty, but Arlene Kelly could not complete the catch after the batter top-edged a tossed-up delivery from Murray towards mid-wicket.

Mandhana then struck two successive fours off Georgina Dempsey, before sending Delany over the cow corner for another maximum.

Ireland came back with the wickets of Harmanpreet and Richa Ghosh in successive balls, but Mandhana continued to attack the bowlers and hit two more boundaries off Kelly before giving the same treatment to Delany, striking her for a four and a six to help India inch towards 150.

A century was on the cards, but Mandhana's brilliant innings came to an end as she tried to take the aerial route. Jemimah Rodrigues struck two fours in the final over, before getting off in the last ball of the India innings for a 12-ball 19.

**BRIEF SCORES:** India Women 155/6 (Smriti Mandhana 87, Shafali Verma 24; Laura Delany 3/33, Orla Prendergast 2/22) beat Ireland Women 54/2 in 8.2 overs (Gaby Lewis 32 n o; Renuka Singh 1/10) by 5 runs via DLS method.



Steve Smith was dismissed (LBW) while playing a sweep shot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Melbourne, Feb 20:** Australia's wretched run on the tour of India so far has been filled with "major mistakes", reckons former captain Michael Clarke. Clarke feels the biggest mistake Australia made was not playing a tour game ahead of the four Test series that began February 9.

Instead, Pat Cummins chose to simulate Indian conditions back home before having a short camp near Bengaluru ahead of the series opener in Nagpur. Two weeks later, the visitors are 0-2 down in the series and have already lost a shot at regaining the Border-Gavaskar trophy.

"I'm not surprised by what I'm seeing because we didn't have a tour game. Major, major, major mistake. There should have been at least one game over there to get used to the conditions," Clarke said on Monday on Big Sports Breakfast.

The Australian batters' inability to play top-quality spin has been thoroughly exposed in the first two Tests. In Delhi, they tried to sweep their way out of trouble but that ploy failed miserably. Apart from that, another major mistake, according to Clarke, was not playing Travis Head in the series opener.

The southpaw top-scored for Australia in the second innings with a 43 off 46 balls before his team collapsed to 113 all out. It was



also the first time he opened in Tests.

"Selection for the first Test, major, major mistake. Second Test, blokes sweeping, we saw enough of that the first Test match. They're not the right conditions to sweep when you start your innings. And they're never going to be the right conditions to reverse sweep against the spin at the start of your innings," said Clarke.

Half of the side fell to sweep or reverse sweep on a track with low bounce. "It doesn't matter how many support staff there are around, you're playing for Australia. Surely as a batsman playing at the highest level, you calculate that risk versus reward."

"Against spin bowling on a pitch like that, you would say my 'swim between the flags' is play straight, hit with spin. Let's just stick to those two theories. Straight bat... I'm going to be playing every single ball with the spin," said Clarke.

He also added that Australia should have learned from India

on how to bat in spin-friendly conditions. "It's like we're not watching India bat," he said. "Why would you not look at that example and go, 'OK, these guys know the conditions so well, and this is how they're playing'. Why would we try and do something different when they have been so good?"

"The game was there for us to win if we make 200... And we were 1-60," he said referring to the dramatic batting collapse with Australia losing nine wickets for 52 runs. India needed to chase down 115 and they did that with six wickets in hand. Clarke also questioned Pat Cummins' field placements Sunday. "I'm not sure what happened with our tactics. We had just 100 runs on the board."

"At one stage, Patty Cummins had four blokes on the boundary. There's 2 1/2 days left in the Test match. You're either bowling India out for under a hundred or you're losing; one or the other."

"If you lose in 20 overs, or you lose in two days, it's irrelevant. So fielders get up, bat-pad off side, bat-pad leg side. If the ball turns, if the ball bounces, if the ball shoots along the ground, if you make an error in judgment, you are getting out."

"That's what Australia had to do with the ball. I know it's only a tiny run lead, but we had to still try and win the game, and we had mid-off back, mid-on back, deep point, deep square leg. What was I watching?"

# Barcelona beat Cadiz after turbulent week

# Liverpool, Real Madrid collide in CL

# ISL final to be played March 18 at Margao



**RIGHT ON THE MONEY:** Robert Lewandowski (C) celebrates his goal with Ferran Torres (L) and Gavi, Sunday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Manchester, Feb 20:** With 20 Champions League titles between them, Liverpool vs Real Madrid is a meeting of two European soccer greats.

Their round-of-16 match at Anfield Tuesday is also a repeat of last year's final in Paris, which saw Madrid win the competition for a record-extending 14th time after producing a series of improbable comebacks just to make it to the European showpiece at the Stade de France.

Madrid secured come-from-behind wins against Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Manchester City in each of the knockout rounds before beating Liverpool 1-0 in the final.

Where the Champions League is concerned anything seems possible for Madrid, which won the trophy three years in a row from 2016-18 at a time when Barcelona was dominating the Spanish title.

But if any team can rival Madrid's ability to produce the unexpected in European club soccer's most prized competition, it is Liverpool.

There was the famous comeback from 3-0 down against AC Milan in the 2005 final before going on to win on penalties. And more recently the 4-3 aggregate win against Barcelona in the semifinals in 2019 after losing 3-0 in the



first leg at the Nou Camp. Madrid, however, has felt like a step too far ever since the draw was made last November.

After all, this is a Liverpool team that faces a fight just to qualify for next season's competition, let alone win it this year. Jurgen Klopp has struggled to get his team firing after the departure of key forward Sadio Mane to Bayern Munich last summer and a host of injuries.

Ahead of the first-leg match at Anfield, Klopp can at least be encouraged by a recent upturn in



form after back-to-back wins against Everton and Newcastle in the Premier League and goals from misfiring forwards Cody Gakpo and Darwin Nunez.

Suddenly Liverpool looks in contention again for a Champions League-qualifying spot, sitting seven points off fourth place Tottenham with two games in hand.

Then there is the Anfield factor, with an atmosphere that saw Barcelona wilt in that semifinals comeback and Manchester City repeatedly fall despite dominating

English soccer in recent years.

Like Madrid's fans, the Liverpool crowd believes nothing is beyond their team when it comes to Europe after winning the trophy six times.

Joe Cole played for and against Liverpool and was part of a Chelsea team that lost in the semifinals at Anfield in 2005 and 2007. But Cole questions whether Liverpool can overcome this Madrid team, which recently won the Club World Cup. Madrid also beat Liverpool in the final of 2018 and won when the sides met in the quarterfinals two years ago.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Madrid, Feb 20:** With yet another win, Barcelona left its problems off the field after a turbulent week. Barcelona defeated Cadiz 2-0 Sunday as they extended their winning streak and lead over Real Madrid in the Spanish league.

Sergi Roberto and Robert Lewandowski scored late in the first half to give Barcelona their seventh straight league win and get their lead over second-place Madrid back to eight points. Madrid had cut the gap to five points with a 2-0 win at Osasuna Saturday.

Barcelona's home game at Camp Nou came after it became publicly known that a state prosecutor is probing Barcelona's payment of millions of dollars over several years to a company that belonged to the vice president of the Spanish federation's refereeing committee.

Barcelona has been heavily criticized but denied any wrongdoing, saying it paid for reports on referees but never tried to influence their decisions in games.

On the field, Roberto opened the scoring in the 43rd with a shot from the middle of the area after Lewandowski's header off a cross by Ferran Torres was cleared by a defender on the goal line.

Lewandowski added to the lead before halftime with a low shot from just inside the area for his league-leading 15th goal - and first overall after three scoreless matches in all competitions. It was the 17th clean sheet for Barcelona in the league this season.

Cadiz, coming off two wins in its last three matches, thought it had opened the scoring in the 19th but the goal by Roger was disallowed for offside. The club from southern Spain dropped to 17th place, two points from the relegation zone.

**GRIEZMANN THRIVES**

Antoine Griezmann made a great run from near the halfway line to score for Atletico Madrid in a 1-0 victory against Athletic Bilbao, allowing Diego Simeone's team to strengthen its hold on the final Champions League place.

The goal saw Griezmann speeding past two defenders before entering the area and firing a low shot into the net in the 73rd minute, giving Atletico their fourth win in five league matches.

The victory left the team four points ahead of fifth-place Real Betis. Atletico are two points behind third-placed Real Sociedad. Atletico are 10 points behind city rivals Real Madrid and 18 points behind league leaders Barcelona.

# ENTERTAINING ENCOUNTER



Players of Delhi (in blue) and Manipur in action during their Santosh Trophy match at the Capital Ground in Bhubaneswar, Monday. Delhi won the match 2-0. Meghalaya became the fourth and the last team to reach the semifinals, which will be played in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, along with the final March 1-4. They defeated West Bengal 2-1. In the other match, Services thrashed Railways 4-0.

# Nishant off to flying start at Strandja Memorial boxing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sofia, Feb 20:** Nishant Dev began his campaign with a commanding win over Wang Peicheng of China in 71kg category at the prestigious Strandja Memorial international boxing tournament here Monday.

Nishant was in cruise control mode throughout his bout, landing powerful and accurate punches to assert his dominance over the Chinese opponent and secure a 5-0 victory by unanimous decision.

The Haryana boxer started by showcasing his swift movement and efficiently dodging his opponent's attacks. The southpaw smartly switched gears as the bout progressed and utilized his attacking prowess to keep Peicheng at bay. He will face Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Aidan Walsh of Ireland in the Round of 16 Tuesday

In the other bout of the day, Sunita went down fighting to Patricio Shera Ma of the USA in the 54kg category, suffering a 0-5 defeat.

Record six-time Asian medallist Shiva Thapa and two-time Commonwealth bronze medallist Mohammad Hussamuddin will commence their campaign Tuesday. Thapa will take on Lundgaard Jensen Frederik of Denmark in the 63.5kg category while Hussamuddin will face Lyu Ping of China in the 57kg category.

2018 World Championships bronze medallist Simranjit Kaur's campaign will get underway against Scanlon Danielle of Australia in the 60kg category Wednesday.

The prestigious tournament is witnessing participation of 398 pugilists, including 142 women, which is the highest ever in the competition's history.