



WISER CHOICE

Actor Taapsee Pannu says she didn't want to be an object of comedy, hence, shied away from sitcoms for years

LEISURE P2



BIDDING ADIEU

With tears and shouts of farewell from fans, a Japan-born panda sets off for China from Tokyo zoo

INTERNATIONAL P10



SANIA'S SHOW ENDS

Sania Mirza finishes her glorious career with a first round defeat at the WTA Dubai Duty Free Championships

SPORTS P12

Bihar man held over interstate job fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Odisha Police has arrested one more accused in connection with the multi-crore rupees job scam across 17 states.

EOW sources here said Jairam Tiwari, a native of Nayagaon under Mirganj police limits of Bihar, has been arrested under Sections 420, 467, 468, 471 and 120B of the IPC and 66C of IT Act.

Tiwari, EOW sources said, was the main associate of Dharmapal Singh, the mastermind of the racket and a native of Rupanchak under Hatua police limits of Gopalganj district in Bihar, who was arrested February 15.

Tiwari had received and misappropriated Rs 35,83,000 from the account of Gramin Rojgar Kalyan Sansthan, a fake website. He was also the co-producer of a film produced by Dharmapal from the amount received through the fake advertisements in the website.

The scamster was operating the job racket in 17 states including Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal and Assam.

26/11 plotters roam freely in Pak: Akhtar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, Feb 21: The perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks are still roaming freely in Pakistan and Pakistanis should not feel offended when India talks about the 2008 carnage, lyricist and poet Javed Akhtar has said.

In a viral video from the seventh Faiz Festival organised here in memory of celebrated Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the writer was seen making these comments in response to a member in the audience who told Akhtar to take with him a message of peace and tell Indians that Pakistan is 'a positive, friendly and loving country'.

"We are people from Mumbai, we have seen the attack on our city. They (attackers) did not come from Norway or Egypt. They are still roaming freely in your country. So if there is a grievance in the heart of a Hindustani, you should not feel offended," Akhtar said at the event.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We consider the world as one family and expect the family members not to criticise us



BATTLING ROUGH WEATHER: People use umbrellas to protect themselves during heavy hailstorm at Ridge in Shimla, Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

Stray dogs maul 4-yr-old to death

AGENCIES

Hyderabad, Feb 21: A pack of stray dogs has mauled a four-year-old boy to death in Telangana, a video of which has gone viral sending shock waves.

The clip shows the canines suddenly attacking the boy while tailing him, following which he is seen falling down. The child was apparently carrying a packet containing some food item when the dogs pounced on him, a Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) official said.

The incident, which occurred at Amberpet locality Sunday, was caught on a CCTV camera.

The boy had accompanied his father, employed in an automobile showroom, to the area.

The victim suffered serious injuries in the attack and was rushed to the hospital by his father and others where he was declared brought dead, they said.

The family hails from Nizamabad district in the state.

A dog-catching drive was undertaken in the area as per the guidelines and as many as 28 street dogs were caught for sterilisation in the last two days, but most of them were found to be sterilised,



the official said adding the dogs were subsequently released.

Telangana Minister KT Rama Rao termed the incident 'unfortunate' and said he was 'pained' over the episode while the city civic body assured of steps to prevent recurrence of such attacks.

GHMC Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi, who also termed the incident as unfortunate, told reporters that there is no negligence on the part of GHMC. Asked about the reasons for the dogs to attack the child, the Mayor said it was not exactly clear but citing preliminary information she said an elderly woman had been regularly feeding meat to four dogs in that area.

Many people took to social media and said stray dog attacks have become a menace in many cities and urged the government to immediately put an end to the issue here.

STORMY START

Budget Session of Assembly kicks off with Opposition creating ruckus over murder of minister Naba Das and 'deteriorating' law & order situation in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: The Budget Session of state Assembly began on a stormy note Tuesday, with opposition BJP and Congress creating ruckus over assassination of minister Naba Kishore Das and staging a walkout during Governor Ganeshi Lal's address to the House.

Both the opposition parties also criticised the BJD government over the broad daylight murder of Das in his home constituency of Jharsuguda and also on the prevailing law and order situation in Odisha.

As soon as the House assembled for the day, Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Narasingha Mishra stood up and targeted the state government for 'failing' to protect the life of a sitting minister following which his party MLAs rushed to well of the House.

Alleging that 'jungle raj' has been prevailing in the state, Mishra wanted to know what steps have been taken by the government for protection of members of the Assembly and public at large in the wake of the minister's daylight murder. Some Congress members sat on a dharna near the Speaker's podium.

BJP members, who were protesting by standing near their respective seats, later joined the Congress members in the well and raised anti-BJD slogans.

As the Governor went on delivering his address to the House, BJP members first walked out of the House followed by Congress



members.

"We boycott the Governor's address as he (Governor) is giving a rosy picture on the development of the state. The law and order situation has completely collapsed," said BJP chief whip Mohan Majhi.

Speaking to media outside Assembly, senior Congress member Suresh Routray said, "We have no objection to the Governor. He is a good man. But, the government narrates a wrong picture through his mouth. Therefore, we boycott the Governor's address."

The saffron party legislators then staged a sit-in at the entrance of the House holding placards.

Later, the opposition members returned to the House and participated in the obituary reference made to sitting member and minister Naba Das, and ex-MLAs Gangadhar Das and Arjun Charan Das.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik,



Leader of Opposition Jayanarayan Mishra, CLP leader Narasingha Mishra and CPI(M) leader Laxman Munda participated in the obituary reference.

Speaker Bikram Keshari Arukha announced the adjournment of the House till 10.30am of Wednesday as a mark of respect to the departed members of the House.

Commenting on the Opposition's boycott of the Governor's address, senior BJD MLA Debi Prasad Mishra said, "The Governor doesn't belong to any political party or government. He is the constitutional head of the state. It's not a good manner to boycott his address when sufficient time is there to raise various issues in the House."

Notably, the Budget Session, which began Tuesday, will continue till April 6 in two phases. Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari will present the annual Budget for 2023-24 February 24.

Mishra: Vet call records of 5T Secy, Jajpur MLA

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: Leader of Opposition (LoP) Jayanarayan Mishra Tuesday demanded to bring 5T Secretary VK Pandian and Jajpur MLA Pranab Prakash Das under the purview of the probe into the murder of former minister Naba Das and verification of their call records as well.

Mishra, the senior BJP leader who was speaking to media after he led a boycott of Governor Ganeshi Lal's address to the House, said, "I demand that Pandian Ji and Jajpur MLA Pranab Prakash Das be brought under the purview of investigation and their call records for four days before Naba Das' killing be verified. As Odisha Police is incapable of it, the case should be handed over to CBI for an impartial probe."

Don't politicise dad's death: Deepali

Naba Das' daughter Deepali Tuesday appealed to all parties not to politicise her father's death. "Our family is still in a shock. We have trust in Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik who stood by us during the crisis like a father. The case is being monitored by a retired High Court judge and we have trust in it." Opposition chief whip Mohan Majhi and Congress whip Tarapasad Bahinipati said the slain minister's daughter might have given the statement under pressure from the ruling party as she has a political future.

Comments of Pandian and the Jajpur MLA were not available as they did not respond to calls by PTI.

Putin's nuclear warning to West

Russia suspends participation in New START treaty with US

REUTERS

Moscow, Feb 21: President Vladimir Putin Tuesday delivered a warning to the West over Ukraine by suspending a landmark nuclear arms control treaty, announcing that new strategic systems had been put on combat duty and threatening to resume nuclear tests.

Nearly a year after ordering an invasion that has triggered the biggest confrontation with the West in six decades, Putin said Russia would achieve its



aims and accused the West of trying to destroy it.

In his long-delayed state-of-the-nation address, Putin said, "The elites of the West do not hide their

purpose. But they also cannot fail to realise that it is impossible to defeat Russia on the battlefield."

Alleging that the United States was turning the war into a global conflict, Putin said Russia was suspending participation in the New START treaty, its last major arms control treaty with Washington.

Signed by then US president Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev in 2010, the treaty caps the number of strategic nuclear warheads that the countries can deploy.

Ladakh in Guinness for world's highest frozen lake half marathon

'LAST RUN' REMINDS PEOPLE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE AND NEED TO SAVE HIMALAYAS

AGENCIES

Leh/Jammu, Feb 21: The Union Territory of Ladakh has created history by successfully conducting its maiden 21-km trail running event in sub-zero temperature at 13,862 feet high Pangong Tso, which was registered in Guinness World Record as the world's highest frozen lake half marathon.

Spread across the border of India and China, the 700-square kilometre Pangong Lake records a temperature of minus 30 degrees Celsius during winter, making the salt water lake frozen with ice.

The four-hour long marathon started from Lukung and ended at Maan village with no injury re-

ported to any of the 75 participants, Leh District Development Commissioner Shrikant Balasaheb Suse said.

Named as the 'Last Run' to remind the people about the climate change and need to save the Himalayas, the marathon was organised by the Adventure Sports Foundation of Ladakh (ASFL) in collaboration with Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh, Tourism department, Ladakh and Leh district administration.

"The first Pangong frozen lake half marathon is now officially registered in the Guinness Book of World Records," Suse said.

He said besides spreading the



Spread across the border of India and China, the 700-square kilometre Pangong Lake records a temperature of minus 30 degrees Celsius during winter, making the salt water lake frozen with ice

message of ecological awareness among the stakeholders through sports, the marathon was also aimed at promoting sustainable

winter tourism in border villages of eastern Ladakh to generate livelihood opportunities for residents especially in winters which

is part of 'vibrant village programme' announced by central government.

The run was flagged off by Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC (Leh) Tashi Gyalsol. Five energy stations were set up along the route, consisting of energy drinks, medical teams and oxygen support, along with mobile ambulances.

The district development commissioner said all the participants underwent six-day acclimatisation -- four days in Leh and two in Pangong -- in accordance with the SOP decided by the district administration. The participants were also subjected to medical examination to ensure that they were fit for running.

All medical centres along the route were equipped with trained personnel and equipment to tackle any medical emergencies, Suse said, adding the event saw active support from Indian Army and ITBP in terms of medical support and logistics.

Union Territory Disaster Response Force personnel and Ladakh mountain guide association personnel were deployed along the route to ensure safety of the runners. The route was decided after proper inspection and size of frozen layer of ice, the officer said.

He said the participants were allowed to run only after wearing safety equipment to avoid slipping on ice.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	60672.72 ↓ 18.82
NIFTY	17826.70 ↓ 17.90
DOLLAR	82.79 ↑ ₹0.06
EURO	88.31 ↓ ₹0.01
GOLD	₹56,276 ↑ ₹63
SILVER	₹ 66,101 ↑ ₹352

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	38.0°C	35.2°C
MIN	19.8°C	19.5°C
Humidity	83%	81%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather most likely	

leisure



DOUGLAS NEEDS GUIDANCE ABOUT MARVEL UNIVERSE

Michael Douglas still needs to seek information about stuff he has no idea about in the Marvel universe. While promoting the latest instalment *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*, the Hollywood actor confessed that he still has to get some guidance as he didn't grow up reading comic books.

STARRING IN GOLDA IS LIKE PLAYING BRITISH MONARCH: HELEN MIRREN

For Helen Mirren, playing Israel's only female Prime Minister, Golda Meir, in *Golda* was like a role as a British monarch. "In a weird way, it was a bit like playing Elizabeth I of England," said the English actor, who won an Oscar and a BAFTA award the 2006 film *The Queen*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Carry the peace sign if you have to, because today, people will literally pull you into arguments. You could even be facing some kind of litigation or trouble with peace-keeping forces, warns Ganesh. Meditate, walk, or simply seek the company of friends and loved ones.

TAURUS
Your business is going to thrive this day, says Ganesh. Your plans, projections, speculations and gambles are likely to pay off and give you good dividends. You will be admired and respected in the business world for your honesty and integrity. You will be in the right frame of mind to think about expanding your business.

GEMINI
Today, you may decide to get a little more conscious about your your health. Filled with positive drive, you may even plan to join a gymnasium or start taking a hard look at your calorie intake. Don't go overboard, though! You don't want to do it only today, and forget it tomorrow - plan and execute in a step-wise manner, so it doesn't get a bit too much.

CANCER
Not a good day for you in terms of fortune and opportunities. You will constantly find yourself in unwanted tricky situations without any fault of yours. You, however, are likely to know what to do in such situations by now, for you have been in too many of those in the past. The best course of action will be to stay out of arguments.

LEO
Working hard, or hardly working - there is a vast difference between the two. You would be wiser to be working hard today, especially if it is success that you desire, says Ganesh. Remember that there is no substitute for hard work, and the sooner you realise this, the better.

VIRGO
You may relieve all the tension and pressure inside you today, a day which will be full of light and relaxing moments. Ganesh foretells a beneficial and progressive day for you. You will receive many invitations to social gatherings and parties.

LIBRA
Letting things build up inside you is never a good idea. Learn from this as there is every possibility that today might turn out to be an aggravating and exasperating day for you. You may feel that way due to all the amassed emotions and resentments, so let it all go.

SCORPIO
Ganesh predicts today will be a day full of focus and a clear thought process. The clarity of thought you have been acquired over a period of time, says Ganesh, and that could make all the difference. A crisp application of thoughts to ideas and actions will bring much appreciation from bosses and peers.

SAGITTARIUS
The winds of fortune will usher in your dreams and make them come true. Be careful not to go overboard with your foresightedness, lest they be marked delusions, warns Ganesh. You must realise that the only thing permanent is change, and hence, you must overcome any disappointment with strong will and determination.

CAPRICORN
It may seem too far-fetched, but your boss will bank on your brilliance and unmatched abilities to get respite from the existing problems, says Ganesh. Moreover, much to the dismay of your rivals, you will have your way and gain popularity by winning the hearts of your clients.

AQUARIUS
Today, you will iron out any trouble with ease. But you may choose to play martyr and shoulder a bit of blame. That's quite a lot to do for others, even if it is done out of compassion. You may think you are setting standards for others to follow, says Ganesh, but that may not be the case.

PISCES
Needless rigidity only serves to imprison you within out-moded walls of faulty reasoning. Inculcating some flexibility will give you some much-needed wriggle room to manoeuvre things your way for good, says Ganesh.

Taapsee: Didn't want to be an object of comedy

Mumbai: Year 2023 is shaping up to be an exciting year for Taapsee Pannu, as she returns to genre of comedy, after films like *Chashme Baddoor* and *Judwaa 2* in the early years of her career. Recently, she discussed what led her to return to explore this genre by acting in movies like *Woh Ladki Hai Kahaan* and *Dunki*. She was recently quoted as saying to a publication, "Getting the joke cracked on you is not an easy task because you have to keep a straight face and behave like you didn't get what just happened, which is difficult. Likewise, when you know what is happening that's a different kind of a challenge, too." Was she away from the genre because filmmakers weren't able to view her in that light? On this the Pink actor went on to explain, "I did get approached for a few comedy films. But I didn't take up those films because I didn't want to be an object of comedy. However, I wanted to do comedy. That's what the delay was for and finally, I got something which was closest to my sense of humour."

AGENCIES



When Wamiqa surprised herself

Mumbai: Actor Wamiqa Gabbi found that working with actor Ishaan Khatter on her most recent project *Fursat*, a Vishal Bhardwaj film was more like taking a learning lesson.

In a recent interview, talking about Ishaan Khatter, Gabbi said, "I have to confess his dancing skills are something which I would like to imbibe and learn for myself. That is something which has stayed with me even days after working with him."

She added, "I'm honestly surprised of how quickly I managed to get into learning this. But I'm grateful to an amazing team. Who patiently taught me and trained me."

It was such an artistic gratification for me to learn something so out of the ordinary. And that's the beauty of getting into a character when you get to learn something brand new. I was busy shuffling between projects and I had minimal time in hand. I think I honestly surprised myself because learning a dance form as technical and complex as contemporary isn't easy. And I'm grateful I could execute this and embody it."

AGENCIES



Pathaan grosses ₹1K cr worldwide in phase one

Mumbai: Shah Rukh Khan, Deepika Padukone and John Abraham's latest action entertainer *Pathaan* has zoomed past the fabled Rs 1,000 crore gross worldwide becoming the first Hindi film to breach this milestone in phase one of its release.

The movie, on its fourth Monday, saw a solid jump again at the box office. It collected Rs 1.25 crore net in India (Hindi - Rs 1.20 crore, All Dubbed versions - Rs 0.05 crore).

Pathaan has now recorded \$45.94 million in the overseas territories alone, while net collection in India stands at Rs 516.92 crore. The total worldwide gross is an incredible Rs 1000 crore (India gross - Rs 623 crore, overseas - Rs377 crore).

The film also stars Ashutosh Rana and Dimple Kapadia.

AGENCIES

Shraddha gets stunned at Q&A session with fans

Mumbai:

Shraddha Kapoor, the popular actress who has been on a break on a break from films, is set to make a comeback to the silver screen with the upcoming romantic comedy *Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar* (*TJMM*). The movie, which is helmed by Luv Ranjan, marks the actress's first onscreen collaboration with the celebrated Bollywood actor, Ranbir Kapoor. *TJMM* is slated to hit the theatres in March, this year, and the cast and crew members are now busy with the promotions of the film.

Interestingly, Shraddha Kapoor, who recently attended the promotional event of *TJMM* in Indore, was seen having a fun interaction with her fans. The actress, who had a Q&A session with her fans, asked one of them 'Why do you think your gf is jhoothi'. However, the boy replied that he never had a girlfriend, and his hilarious reply left the actress stunned. The fun video from the *TJMM* Indore promotional event is now going viral on social media.

The romantic comedy reportedly revolves around an unconventional pair, who pretends to fall in love with each other with hidden motives.

AGENCIES

MULTILINGUAL DRAMA FEST: DAY 3



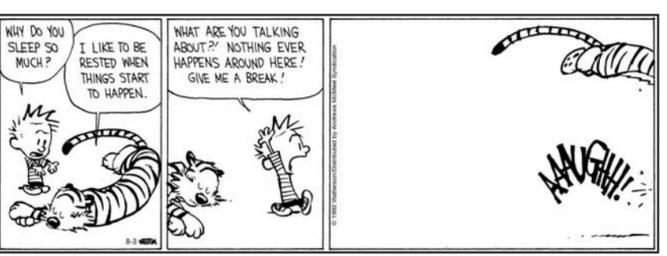
Artists of Satabdira Kalakar, the hosting organisation of five-day multilingual theatre festival Kalinga Natya Mahotsav, performed Odia play *Harmonium* Tuesday, on the third evening of the event, at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar. Adapted by Bijay Satpathy from an Odia short story of Gourahari Das, the drama was directed by Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar winner Alok Agnivesh. Woven in the backdrop of 1999's Super Cyclone, the drama told the tale of a young widow who battles life's odds with the help of music. Veteran theatre and film actor Antaryami Panda was conferred with Satabdira Kalakar Samman ahead of the show.

FUN post

PEANUTS



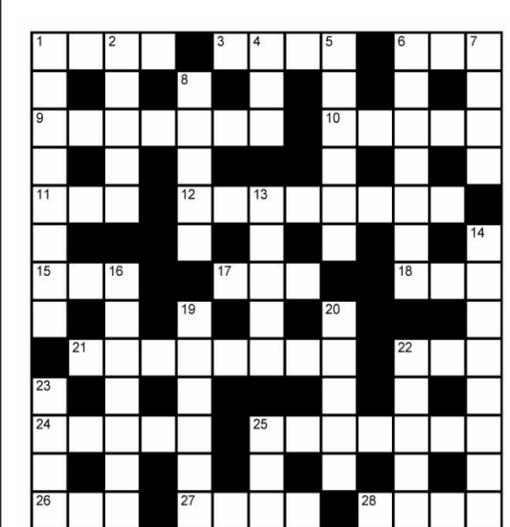
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD



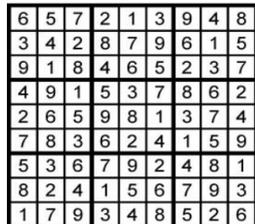
- Across**
- 1 Negative votes
 - 3 Foliage
 - 6 Light midafternoon repast
 - 9 Go before
 - 10 Deciduous tree
 - 11 Fellow
 - 12 Blend
 - 15 Possess
 - 17 Coniferous tree
 - 18 Stray
 - 21 Arrange
 - 22 Cunning
 - 24 Irritate
 - 25 Tanning apparatus
 - 26 Be in debt
 - 27 Sleeve fillers
 - 28 Hateful
 - 6 Thick dark cane syrup
 - 7 Physical pain
 - 8 Garden enclosure
 - 13 Excuse
 - 14 Become the hunter (4,4)
 - 16 Tell a story
 - 19 Snap shooter
 - 20 Hair colouring
 - 22 Debonnaire
 - 23 Canyon sound
 - 25 The final aggregate
- Down**
- 1 French pastry
 - 2 Give way
 - 4 Needle part
 - 5 Aesop's writings

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

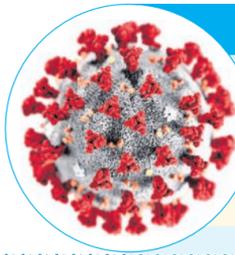


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



DISTRICT TAG CRY

'Talcher Zilla Kriyanusthan Committee' members staged a dharna at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, demanding district status to Talcher



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

Guv: State emerged as global sports hub

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: With setting up of high-performance centres and world class sports infrastructure, Odisha has emerged as one of the international sports destinations, Governor Ganeshi Lal said, while addressing the inaugural day of the Budget Session of the Assembly, Tuesday.

The Governor said Bhubaneswar was the co-host venue for FIFA Under-17 Women's World Cup India, 2022. It gave a major boost to the game of football in the state. To promote football among children, over 43,000 footballs were distributed to schools across the state, he said.

The state government has hosted the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup twice in a row. The last edition of the Men's Hockey World Cup which was held in both Bhubaneswar and Rourkela also saw the construction of world's largest fully seated Birsra Munda Hockey Stadium with 20,000 seating capacity along with other infrastructural facilities within a record 15 months, Lal pointed out.

To further boost infrastructure in the hockey heartland and nurture talent from the grassroots level, he said, 20 hockey training centres with synthetic turf are being constructed.

"My government's effort has transformed the state's sports infrastructure to nurture champions for tomorrow and promote sports in a big way," the Governor further said.

It is heartening to see players and visitors from around the globe coming to the state to celebrate their favourite sports and make their stay in Odisha memorable



HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Govt has set up more than 5 lakh MSMEs with more than ₹24,341 crore investment
- ◆ State govt has allocated more than 5% of GSDP during FY 2022-23 for continued thrust on creating quality infrastructure
- ◆ As many as 69 tourist destinations have been identified in the interior parts for development of scenic spots, says Governor Ganeshi Lal

with the hospitality, he added.

On development of state-of-the-art tourism infrastructure, Lal said his government has taken up integrated master planning of 16 priority destinations. Additionally, 69 tourist destinations have also been identified in the interior parts

of the state for development of scenic spots at less explored locations with focus on provision of basic amenities and facilities, he said.

He said the state government has allocated more than 5 per cent of gross state domestic product (GSDP) during 2022-23 for continued thrust on creating quality infrastructure.

Odisha has set up more than 5 lakh MSMEs with more than ₹24,341 crore investment, said the Governor, adding, "Our state is now ranked No.1 with lowest unemployment rate in the country with a score of 0.9 per cent, as per the report of the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy."

Besides, the state government has taken up cyclone resilient saline embankment project for raising and strengthening of 199 km of saline embankment at an estimated cost of ₹763 crore in coastal districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara and Puri, he added.

Externment order issued to criminal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: Acting tough on a dreaded criminal, Commissionerate Police has barred Amit Swarup Mahapatra of Kunjaputra Sahi in Old Town area under Lingaraj police limits from entering the Capital city for three months.

The externment order was issued Monday by the twin city police commissioner, Saumendra Priyadarshi, after Mahapatra failed to appear or present any reply in response to the show-cause notice issued to him. The Commissionerate Police had earlier sought an explanation from Mahapatra as to why externment process should not be initiated against him.

There are more than a dozen cases pending against Mahapatra at different police stations between 2010 and 2022. Five cases have been registered at Lingaraj police station while four are pending with Airport police.

Arrested by the city police several times earlier, a stubborn Mahapatra continued to indulge in criminal activities posing a threat to the family, neighbours and public.

He was earlier apprehended by the police for attempting to kill his wife and another person in two separate incidents a few years ago. Mahapatra had once escaped from the custody of Airport police in 2020.



POLITICKLE by MANJUL



City records 38 degrees C

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: Summer like weather condition was felt in the Capital city here Tuesday with the mercury touching 38 degrees Celsius.

Bhubaneswar Tuesday recorded the highest maximum temperature of the year so far in the state, said Uma Shankar Das, scientist at India Meteorological Department's (IMD) Bhubaneswar Centre.

As per prediction of different weather agencies, the temperature will remain a little high this year as compared to the previous year, Das said.

The all-time high maximum temperature in Bhubaneswar, in the month of February, was recorded in the year 1963, when the City recorded a maximum day temperature of 42.7 degrees Celsius.

In February last year, the maximum temperature recorded in the



Feb 21, 2016	-	40.9
Feb 22, 2017	-	37
Feb 3, 2018	-	38.2
Feb 23, 2019	-	39.4
Feb 19, 2020	-	33.8
Feb 27, 2021	-	40.6
Feb 28, 2022	-	34.5

state capital was 34.5 degrees Celsius.

The max temp recorded in Bhubaneswar in the month of February during past 7 years as follows (degrees C)

MLA Dibya Shankar to marry for second time

POST NEWS NETWORK

Junagarh, Feb 21: Former minister and Junagarh MLA Dibya Shankar Mishra will get married for the second time, as per a report.

Sources said that the legislator will tie the nuptial knot with Priyanka Agasti alias Pina, daughter of Bhawani Agasti of Dekota village under Golumunda block of his constituency. After the reports surfaced, the matter has gone viral on social media.

According to the sources, the marriage ceremony will be held at Puri in February last week.

This will be the second marriage for both Mishra and Priyanka, who is working as a software engineer in Bangalore.

Earlier, the MLA had married a woman of Jaipatna area but later divorced her later. The MLA's only son is now studying in Dubai, said the sources.

The former minister was in the news in connection with the sensational murder of Mamita Meher, a private school teacher at Mahaling under Kegaon police limits in Kalahandi district. Opposition BJP and Congress had demanded Mishra's resignation over his alleged links with prime accused Gobinda Sahu.

Computer-based test for Agneepath aspirants

Bhubaneswar: The Indian Army has reformed the recruitment procedure for Agneepath by introducing an Online Common Entrance Exam as the "first filter". This year onwards, aspirants will have to first appear for this computer-based test, the fee for which is Rs 250. The exams will be conducted from April 17 and to acquaint the aspirants with the new format they have to appear for a mock test on www.joinindianarmy.nic.in. The registration window for application is open from February 16 to March 15. There is also a video explaining the registration and application process for recruitment that is available on the same website.

AI algorithm to improve calamity prediction accuracy

The developed algorithm has been tested for landslides and can be applied to other natural phenomena such as floods, avalanches and other extreme weather events

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Mandi (Himachal Pradesh) have developed a new algorithm using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) that could improve the accuracy of prediction for natural hazards like landslides.

According to officials, the algorithm developed can tackle the challenge of data imbalance for landslide susceptibility mapping which represents the likelihood of landslide occurrences in a given area.

The results of their work have recently been published in the journal "Landslides".

The developed algorithm has been tested for landslides and can be applied to other natural phenomena such as floods, avalanches, extreme weather events, rock glaciers and permafrost, mapping

that tend to have very less data points, helping to estimate the risks, they claimed.

Landslides are a frequent natural hazard in mountainous areas around the world, causing significant losses of life and property.

"To estimate and eventually mitigate these risks, it is essential to identify areas that are susceptible to landslides. A Landslide Susceptibility Mapping (LSM) indicates the likelihood of a landslide occurring in a specific area based on causative factors such as slope, elevation, geology, soil type, distance from faults, rivers and faults, and historical landslide data," said DP Shukla, Associate Professor, School of Civil and Environmental Engineering at IIT Mandi.

"The use of AI is becoming increasingly vital for the prediction of natural disasters such as landslides. They can potentially predict extreme events, create hazard



maps, detect events in real-time, provide situational awareness, and support decision-making. Machine Learning is a subfield of Artificial Intelligence that enables computers to learn and improve from experience, without being explicitly programmed.

"It is based on algorithms that can analyse data, identify patterns, and make predictions or decisions, much like human intelligence. ML algorithms, however, require large amounts of training data for ac-

curate prediction. In the case of LSM, this data consists of the causative factors of landslides as mentioned earlier, and historical landslide data," he added.

Shukla explained that landslides are a rare occurrence in certain areas, leading to the unavailability of extensive amounts of training data, which hinders the performance of ML algorithms.

"For a given area, in comparison with non-landslide points (considered as negative), landslide

THE TEAM OF DP SHUKLA, ASSOCIATE PROF, SCHOOL OF CIVIL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING AT IIT MANDI, HAS DEVELOPED A NEW ML ALGORITHM THAT OVERCOMES THE ISSUE OF DATA IMBALANCE FOR TRAINING OF THE ALGORITHM

THE SYSTEM USES TWO UNDER SAMPLING TECHNIQUES, EASYENSEMBLE AND BALANCECASCADE, TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF IMBALANCED DATA IN LANDSLIDE MAPPING

points (considered as positive) are very less thus creating an imbalance between positive and negative points which affects the prediction," he said.

Shukla's team has developed a new ML algorithm that overcomes this issue of data imbalance for training of the algorithm. It uses two under sampling techniques, EasyEnsemble and BalanceCascade, to address the issue of imbalanced data in landslide mapping.

Data about the landslides that occurred in Mandakini River Basin in northwest Himalaya,

Uttarakhand, India, between 2004 and 2017 were used to train and validate the model, he said.

The results showed that the algorithm significantly improved the accuracy of the LSM, particularly when compared to traditional machine learning techniques such as Support Vector Machine and Artificial Neural Network, Shukla said.

"This new ML algorithm highlights the importance of data balancing in ML models and demonstrates the potential for new technologies to drive significant advancements in the field. It also underscores the critical need for large amount of data to accurately train ML models, particularly in the case of geohazards and natural disasters where the stakes are high and human safety is at risk," he said.

The researchers believe that this study opens up new avenues in the field of LSM and other geohazard mapping and management.

"It can be applied to other phenomena such as floods, avalanches, extreme weather events, rock glaciers and permafrost, helping to minimise the risks posed to human safety and property," he said.



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POLAVARAM PROJECT

Dispute resolution process begins

A meeting of Chief Ministers of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Telangana has been convened following the direction of Supreme Court



POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 21: Following the directions of the Supreme Court, the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti has begun the process to convene a meeting of Chief Ministers of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Telangana to resolve the dispute over multi-purpose Polavaram project.

The ministry had also circulated a letter to the Supreme Court seeking two months' time to file a report on the issue. The ministry contended that a meeting at Chief Ministers' level is required to finalise the report and thus sought two months' time.

asked the Union government to play a pioneering role to resolve the dispute and if required then convene a meeting of Chief Ministers. Subsequently, the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti convened a meeting of Chief Secretaries of all concerned states and after that a meeting of technical teams was held to resolve technical issues. All the respective states arrived on a consensus with regard to backwater study.

December 12, the Supreme Court had granted two months' time to the Union Jal Shakti Ministry to file a status report with respect to the meetings convened by it to resolve the dispute related to Polavaram project among Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Chhattisgarh with talks.

Significantly, three suits, each by Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Telangana, have been filed against the Polavaram project in the Supreme Court raising environmental concerns. Odisha, in 2018 also filed an interim application against the Union government for keeping the "stop work order" dated February 2011 in abeyance year-on-year and seeking directions that the project be stopped until a fresh environment impact assessment is carried out, including public hearing as mandated by various EIA notifications.

Earlier, the Supreme Court had the ministry had also circulated a letter to the Supreme Court seeking two months' time to file a report on the issue. The ministry contended that a meeting at Chief Ministers' level is required to finalise the report and thus sought two months' time.

Continued from P1 Mishra: Vet call...

Mishra had earlier alleged that several high profile people are involved in the minister's killing and must be investigated by CBI.

Senior BJD leader and government chief whip Prasant Muduli hit back saying, "The BJP should maintain a distance from the LoP as he has a history of criminal records and more than a dozen criminal cases are pending against him. He (Mishra) had earlier attacked the BJP state unit president. He was even caught on camera (February 16) while manhandling a woman police officer in Sambalpur. What does one expect from him?"

BJD leader Pramila Mallik, too, said Mishra is a habitual offender. "He was in jail for a long time and got bail after using the ruse of his health grounds," she said.

Ladakh in Guinness...

After the successful conclusion of the event, the runners were felicitated with medals and certificates, while cash prizes were also given to first, second and third place finishers in both men's and women's categories.

He said the event was recorded as 'Highest Altitude Frozen Half Marathon' and a certificate was issued by Guinness officials on the occasion to LAHDC Leh and ASFL. "Congratulations, we have made it to the world record. Indeed a successful event inspired by Prime Minister @narendramodi's #VibrantVillages Programme for border regions," Gyalson tweeted.

Putin's nuclear...

Due to expire in 2026, it allows each country to physically check the other's nuclear arsenal, although tensions over Ukraine had already brought inspections to a halt.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called Putin's move 'deeply unfortunate and irresponsible'.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said it made the world a more dangerous place, and urged Putin to reconsider.

The Russian leader said, without citing evidence, that some in Washington were considering breaking a moratorium on nuclear testing.

"... if the United States conducts tests, then we will. No one should have dangerous illusions that global strategic parity can be destroyed," Putin said.

"A week ago, I signed a decree on putting new ground-based strategic systems on combat duty."

It was not immediately clear which systems he meant.

Criminal wanted in firing case held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: A joint team of special squad and Laxmisagar police have arrested a notorious criminal wanted in a firing case from his hideout at Jagannath Nagar area of the City, DCP Prateek Singh said Tuesday. The accused, Manoj Behera who originally hails from Burla area in Sambalpur district is currently staying at Rickshaw colony in Kharvela Nagar police limits here. "We succeeded in arresting one dreaded criminal whom we are searching since almost a year. He was absconding after opening fire at a police station in Laxmisagar area March 27, 2022," DCP Singh added.

Singh also claimed that Behera was the mastermind in the firing incident. His associates involved in firing case at Laxmisagar are still at large.

Behera opened fire following a heated argument between petrol pump staffers and his aides in the evening of March 27 last year.



Behera has been engaged in various criminal activities since 2016. Initially he was involved in the black marketing of tickets near Shreya talkies in Bhubaneswar. In 2016, he opened fire at a person over a dispute related to the illegal sale of tickets. There are 15 criminal cases pending against Behera in connection with robbery, firing, theft, extortion and other crimes. Police have seized 7.65 mm semi-automatic pistol, two magazines and nine live ammunition from his possession.

Meanwhile, the Nayapalli police Tuesday arrested two bike lifters and recovered 11 stolen motor cycles from their possession. The accused was identified as Ashok Sahoo, 27, of Brahmagiri in Puri district and Daitary Behera, 45, of Khurda district.

INTN'L MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: On the occasion of International Mother Language Day, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik remembered the great citizens of the state who contributed significantly to the protection and preservation of Odia language.

In his official Twitter account CM said "The glorious Odia language is the unique identity of our literature, culture and nationality. On International Mother Language Day, let us resolve to work together to make our Odia language more widespread by remembering the greats who have contributed so much to the protection and preservation of its dignity."



UP IN ARMS: Members of Odisha ASHA Karmi Association staged a demonstration at PMG in Bhubaneswar seeking fulfillment of their various demands, Tuesday

AI will end tech monopoly: Chand

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: Innovate Odisha nonstop 24-hour hackathon was conducted by AIC Nalanda Institute of Technology in collaboration with Karakhana Makers Pace. The initiative was supported by Atal Innovation Mission, Startup India, Startup Odisha and many renowned industries and corporate across the country. The workshop was attended by 20 engineering colleges and 300 participants including entrepreneurs and professionals from different backgrounds.

In his address, Tapan Kumar Chand, President, Vedanta and Former CMD, NALCO said that a cluster of new generation technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IOT), Applied Robotics (AR), Metaverse, Web 3.0 and Future Mobility are ushering in Fourth Industrial Revolution. This revolution will be different from the previous one as it will be the endgame of technology monopoly. He also added that eminence of Google is likely to come down with open AI and ChatGPT giving more accurate and point to point answer to the query.

Elaborating on the impact of Industry 4.0 on human resource scenario, he informed that large industries will no more be the source for large scale employment but MSMEs will expand to take that space.

In this connection he gave example of Vedanta introducing RAP (Robotic Automation Process) bringing in hyper automation in commercial functions and helping to increase commercial maturity index. He also mentioned that Vedanta is introducing all electric vehicle fleets for transportation in mines for reducing carbon footprint.



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Khimji's Janpath store marks 14th anniversary

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: Khimji Jewellers, one of the most trusted jewellery brands of the state with a legacy of 87 years, celebrated Tuesday the 14th anniversary of its iconic 621 Janpath store here in City.

Khimji Jewellers chairman Dinesh Khimji, managing director Kishore Khimji, directors Mitesh Khimji and Sumeet Khimji along with other dignitaries attended the event organised to celebrate the anniversary.



Making the occasion merrier, the brand revealed a novel offer. "Customers can get one free gold coin on every purchase worth Rs 30,000 and a free gift voucher on every purchase. This offer is available at Khimji's Bhubaneswar, Chandrasekharpur, and Cuttack showrooms from February 21 to February 26," said a Khimji employee.

Director Mitesh Khimji expressed his excitement and gratitude saying, "We are thrilled to celebrate the 14 successful years of our iconic Saheed Nagar showroom. It has become a landmark for the people of Bhubaneswar. We are grateful to our valued customers for trusting us all these years and making it the most sought-after jewellery store in the state. Khimji Jewellers looks forward to serving more customers and continuing this journey together."

Let's make Odia language more widespread: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

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In his official Twitter account CM said "The glorious Odia language is the unique identity of our literature, culture and nationality. On International Mother Language Day, let us resolve to work together to make our Odia language more widespread by remembering the greats who have contributed so much to the protection and preservation of its dignity."

Odisha has 62 tribal groups including 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG). But for the 62 tribal groups in the state, literature and education material is available only in Santali and Ho. Also, only five tribal languages—Santali, Ho, Soura, Munda and Kui—have a written script in Odisha.

Laxmidhar Singh, national general secretary of the All India Ho Language Action Committee said that several states like Jharkhand, Assam, Goa, Tripura, J&K have officially declared more than one language as second/additional language. The state government has done commendable job by recommending Central government for

inclusion of 'Ho' Language into Constitution of India. It will be another step forward for development of 'Ho' if state government declares 'Ho' as second state language. Ramrai Munduiya national president of committee said that 'Ho' language is spoken by tribes and non tribes of Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Assam and Chatishgarh.

Wearable device that alerts when voice needs a break

The battery-powered, wireless device could be a game-changer for professional singers, teachers, politicians, call-center workers, coaches and anyone who relies on their voices to communicate effectively and make a living

A team of US researchers has developed the first smart wearable device to continuously track how much people use their voices, alerting them to over-use before vocal fatigue and potential injury set in.

Using Bluetooth, data is streamed to an app, where machine-learning algorithms distinguish singing from speaking, independent of ambient sounds.

According to Northwestern

University researchers, the battery-powered, wireless device and accompanying algorithms could be a game-changer for professional singers, teachers, politicians, call-center workers, coaches and anyone who relies on their voices to communicate effectively and make a living.

It also could help clinicians remotely and continuously monitor patients with voice disorders throughout their treatment.

"The device precisely measures the amplitude and frequency for speaking and singing," said John A. Rogers, a bioelectronics pioneer who led the device's development.

"Those two parameters are most important in determining the overall load that's occurring on the vocal folds. Being aware of those parameters, both at a given instant and cumulatively over time, is essential for managing healthy patterns of vocalization," Rogers said in a paper published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The postage-stamp-sized device comfortably adheres to the upper chest to sense the subtle vibrations associated with talking and singing.

From there, the captured data is instantaneously streamed via



Bluetooth to the users' smartphone or tablet, so they can monitor their vocal activities in real time throughout the day and measure cumulative total vocal usage.

Custom machine-learning algorithms distinguish the differ-

ence between speaking and singing, enabling singers to separately track each activity.

With the app, users can set their personalised vocal thresholds. When they are near that threshold, their smartphone, smartwatch or

an accompanying device located on the wrist provides real-time haptic feedback as an alert.

Then, they can rest their voices before pushing it too far.

"Some people, especially singers with less training or people, like teachers, politicians and sports coaches, who must speak a lot for their jobs, often don't realise how much they are pushing it. We want to give them greater awareness to help prevent injury," said Theresa Brancaccio, a voice expert who co-led the study.

The algorithm can separate singing from speaking with more than 95 per cent accuracy. When used in a choir setting, the device captures only data from the wearer and not noise from nearby singers, said the study.

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Jumbo menace on rise in Dhenkanal



FILE PHOTO

The frequent movement of the elephant herds has become a headache for Forest department officials. They are at a loss as to how to control the rampaging jumbos who are not only damaging and destroying crops and properties, but at times, are attacking and killing people. Staff shortage has also affected the work of the department.

According to residents in the district, neither the Centre nor the Odisha government is making a serious effort to control the elephant menace. The Forest department, except for preparing reports on loss of lives and properties, has failed to do its bit to contain the problem. As a result, elephant menace is rapidly turning into an alarming situation. People these days tend to take the law into their own hands whenever they see a wild elephant, officials said.

When contacted, divisional forest officer (DFO) Prakash Chand Gogineni said that they are not worried about the presence of elephants who permanently stay in Dhenkanal district. It is the tuskers from other regions that are causing all the problems, he informed. Gogineni stated that it is easy to track the movement of elephants that belong to the district. However, those from outside create the maximum problem, he added.

The elephants move from village to village after consuming food. Officials said Tuesday that a herd of 50 elephants from Dhenkanal has strayed into neighbouring Angul district after they found farmlands near Mahabirod and Parjang protected by solar fencing wires.

SHORTAGE OF FOOD IN OTHER DISTRICTS IS THE MAIN CAUSE WHY ELEPHANTS ARE COMING TO DHENKANAL, FOREST OFFICIALS SAY

As paddy harvesting is about to end, elephants from outside are entering this district in search of food. The animals turn violent whenever they face any obstacle.

The elephants can regularly be seen on National Highway No 5. After drinking water from the Brahmani river, the animals enter farmlands and backyards of villagers and destroy crops and also on many occasions attack people. However, in search of food, the elephants put their lives also in danger. On many occasions they are seen frequenting the railway tracks that run through the district.



PUBLIC RELATION DRIVE: Youths participate in a volleyball tournament at a civic action camp organised by the police near the Kotia panchayat office under Pottangi block in Koraput district, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

Wildfires hit Mayurbhanj forests

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada/Saraskana, Feb 21: Despite summer yet to set in properly, the reserve forests under Baripada division in Mayurbhanj district have been hit hard by fires, sources said Tuesday.

The Ghijodi reserve forest under Bangiriposhi range caught fire Tuesday and due to the dry weather large areas have been engulfed by the flames. On being informed, Forest department officials and personnel from the Fire department rushed to the spot and are trying to control the flames.

Officials said that with the dry leaves catching fire, the blaze is spreading at a quick pace in the forest which is close to the



Jharpokharia toll plaza on National Highway-49 in the district. Locals spotted big trees burning and informed fire personnel. Staff of the Forest department and fire per-

sonnel is trying to douse the fire with help of locals.

When contacted, Bangiriposhi forest ranger Maheswar Singh said that an area of approximately one

hectare has caught fire. He however, assured that the fire will be brought under control very soon.

In a similar development, green cover on large tracts of land has been destroyed after the Tungadhua Sagabadia reserve forest under Betonati range caught fire.

Notably, the Similipal biosphere reserve in Mayurbhanj district was ravaged by devastating forest fires in February-March, 2021. The fire had engulfed over one-third area of the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR). The fire lasted for around 10 days and seriously affected the biodiversity of the area. It was the second major fire incident in STR after 2015, when massive destruction of flora and the fauna was reported.

3 INJURED IN TUSKER ATTACK

POST NEWS NETWORK

Champua, Feb 21: Three persons suffered serious injuries when a tusker attacked them at Katulika village under Champua forest range in Keonjhar district, late Monday night. All the injured persons are farmers. They have been identified as Naveen Munda, Gobind Munda and Rohit Munda. They had gone to their farmland for watering the crops when the tusker which was separated from its herd, attacked them.

On being informed, Forest department officials led by the ranger (in-charge) Kalandi Samal rescued the three and got them admitted to the Champua hospital. While Naveen and Gobind are stated to be out of danger, Rohit has been shifted to the district headquarters hospital in Keonjhar after his condition deteriorated. Later, the forest officials drove away the tusker to Mayurbhanj district, the forest ranger said.



AWARENESS RALLY: Officials led by DFO Sudarshan Behera of North Ghumusar forest division in Bhanjanagar of Ganjam district participate in a bicycle rally, Tuesday to create awareness for forest protection

OP PHOTO

Man thrashes estranged wife in Balasore court

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, Feb 21: Tension prevailed at the Balasore family court premises here Tuesday as a man allegedly thrashed his estranged wife with a helmet. The two had come to the court to attend their divorce petition hearing.

The estranged couple was identified as Ratikant Panigrahi and his wife Rashmirekha Panigrahi of Majhikia area under Chandipur police limits in this district.

Sources said that the couple had filed a divorce petition in the family court three years ago and the two had arrived to attend a hearing. Suddenly the man and the woman got involved in an argument over payment of alimony.

Ratikant lost his cool and attacked Rashmirekha with a helmet repeatedly hitting her on the head and other parts of the body. The woman collapsed at the incessant beating and lost her senses. Police said that Rashmirekha has been admitted to the district headquarters hospital.



3 employees draw salaries despite defunct patrol boat



POST NEWS NETWORK

Paradip, Feb 21: With a boat purchased for patrolling in sea lying defunct at the Paradip fishing jetty here in Jagatsinghpur district, the staff engaged for its use have been getting their salaries without doing any work for the last three years. No one knows when the Fisheries department will buy another boat.

Sources said that the Fisheries department had purchased the boat for ₹1.5 crore in 2007. After being used for 12 years, it developed some technical snags. Substantial amounts were spent on repair work, but the boat continued to give problems. Finally it was declared defunct and non-operational after the deputy director of Fisheries department visited the jetty and conducted a review of the boat in 2019.

The Fisheries department had employed six regular staff members to operate the boat. Three of them have retired, but the three others are still in service and continue to draw salaries without doing any work. Also the department has to shell out hefty amounts when it rents boats for patrolling purposes.

AJ Rao, the driver of the boat said that the vessel was a powerful one with double engines of 325 horsepower. The boat patrolled areas from Paradip to Gopalpur and Gahirmatha. The boat was used mostly during the mating and breeding season of rare Olive Ridley turtles. It was used to implement the two-month fishing ban enforced every year by the Fisheries department. Rao added that the vessel was also used to rescue fisher-

Close shave for driver as truck catches fire

POST NEWS NETWORK

Champua, Feb 21: A truck driver had a close shave with death Tuesday when the vehicle he was driving caught fire on the middle of the road at Rajia under this police limits in Keonjhar district.

Eye-witnesses said that the

truck (No. JH-12E-2350) carrying iron ore from Joda was on its way to Jharkhand via Remuli in Keonjhar district. However, the vehicle suddenly caught fire at Rajia Square. The blaze was so intense that the fire quickly spread to the fuel tank. Sensing danger, the driver stopped the



vehicle and had just managed to jump out when the fuel tank

exploded and the entire vehicle was engulfed in flames.

Locals led by the sarpanch Santosh Kumar Naik rushed to the spot and informed the fire personnel. Later, Fire department personnel and police reached the spot and doused the fire with the help of local residents.

Temperatures set to soar to record highs

Delhi has already registered the third hottest day in Feb since 1969 with the mercury rising to 33.6 degree Celsius



REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

Kuldeep Srivastava, head of IMD's regional forecasting centre, said the lack of strong western disturbances was the primary reason for the early heat in Delhi and other parts of northwest India.

"The weather in northwest India is primarily reg-

Maximum temperatures are already showing a rising trend and the mercury may soar to 40 degrees Celsius and above in one or two meteorological sub-divisions of northwest India in the first half of March, the scientist informed.

"This higher day temperature might lead to an adverse effect on wheat as the crop is approaching reproductive growth period, which is sensitive to temperature," the IMD official stated. "High temperatures during flowering and maturing periods lead to loss in yield. There could be a similar impact on other standing crops and horticulture," Srivastava added.

A heat wave is declared if the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, at least 37 degrees in coastal areas and at least 30 degrees in hilly regions, and the departure from normal is at least 4.5 degrees.

In March last year, the warmest recorded in the country since 1901, heat caused a decline of 2.5 per cent in wheat yields.

A heat wave is declared if the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, 37 degrees in coastal areas and 30 degrees in hilly regions

ulated by western disturbances. Since there has been no active western disturbance in the region since January 29, the temperatures have gone up appreciably," Srivastava pointed out.

normal temperatures may have an adverse impact on wheat and other crops.

A senior meteorologist at the IMD said temperatures in northwest India are likely to drop by two degrees Celsius over the next two days after a western disturbance affecting the western Himalayan region recedes. However, maximum temperatures are likely to remain three to five degrees above normal in the region as well as central

and west India over the next five days, he added.

Most places in northwest, central and west India logged their maximum temperatures Monday in the range of 35 degrees Celsius to 39 degrees Celsius. Delhi recorded the third hottest February day since 1969 with the maximum temperature at the Safdarjung observatory, the national capital's primary weather station, soaring to 33.6 degrees Celsius.

EAST COAST RAILWAY	
File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/22-23/	E-Tender/154, Dt: 17.02.2023
1.Tender No. etender-CENT-KUR-426-2022, Date: 16.02.2023	Description: EXECUTION OF MISCELLANEOUS WORKS IN CONNECTION WITH UPGRADEATION AND AUGMENTATION OF ELECTRIC LOCO SHED AT ANGUL.
Approx cost of the work: ₹76.17 lakhs, EMD: ₹1.52,400/-	
2.Tender No. etender-CENT-KUR-427-2022, Date: 16.02.2023	Description: PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF OFFICE BUILDING AND OTHER ALLIED WORKS LIKE IMPROVEMENT TO STORE, CYCLE STAND, ENTRY GATE, RAIN WATER HARVESTING ETC. FOR SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (WORK)/TALCHER UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/DHENKANAL OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work: ₹56.77 lakhs, EMD: ₹1.13,500/-	
3.Tender No. etender-CENT-KUR-431-2022, Date: 17.02.2023	Description: PROPOSED AUGMENTATION OF WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM TO STAFF QUARTERS AND STATION AT DHENKANAL AND MERAMANDALI UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/DHENKANAL OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work: ₹178.47 lakhs, EMD: ₹2.39,200/-	
Completion Period of the work: 06 (Six) Months (For sl. no. 1), 07 (Seven) Months (For sl. no. 2) & 08 (Eight) Months (For sl. no. 3).	
Date & Time of Tender Closing: 10.03.2023, 1500 hrs (For All Tenderers).	
No manual offers sent by Post/ Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders, even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.	
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tenders is available in website http://www.irps.gov.in	
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 10 (ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigendum issued for this tender.	
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg./PR-1027/N/22-23) Khurda Road	

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER BHUBANESWAR (R&B) DIVISION NO II, BHUBANESWAR
eerb2_bbsr@yahoo.com

INVITATIONS FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement
Bid Identification No- C.C. (R&B) - 02
e - Procurement Notice No. 72 of 2022-23
No. Bhubaneswar the -2022

No. B-1275: The Superintending Engineer, Bhubaneswar (R&B) Division No-II, Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids for One Number Road Work to be received in online bidding, single cover system as detailed in: <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>. The details of bid documents will be available in the above website from 24.02.2023 to 5.00 P.M. of 14.03.2023. The bidders must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate of Class II or III. Bids received online shall be opened at 11.00 A.M. of 15.03.2023 in the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Bhubaneswar (R&B), Division No-II, Bhubaneswar. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Addendum / Corrigendum, if required, will be available only in the Website.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, BBSR (R&B) Division No.II, BBSR
OIPR-34088/11/0037/2223

FOCUS SOCIETY

THE ECO GENDER GAP



The fight against global warming is seen by some men as women's work. Countering this sexist narrative, and thus engaging more people in climate activism, requires moving beyond our received understanding of rationality and embracing an interdisciplinary approach to ways of knowing

goals," as the cognitive and evolutionary psychologist Steven Pinker argues in his book *Rationality: What It Is, Why It Seems Scarce, Why It Matters*. Nor is it merely a philosophical conceit to submit to logical and meta-physical examinations. Rationality has also become an overarching moral framework with deep sociopolitical implications. Our understanding of rationality can influence political strategy, shape policy design, and inform our relationship with the natural world. We can't change these domains without questioning our understanding of rationality.

lutionism to effective altruism and international development models, our world is shaped by a scientific doctrine stemming from the idea that rationality is strictly to do with data, quantification, analytics, and methodological sense-making, and that these traits are tied to whiteness, masculine identity, and separation from nature. There are other ways to think about rationality, and we need them desperately. The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, for example, distinguishes between what he refers to as "communicative rationality," which views rationality as depending on successful communication and a consensus of actors, and "cognitive-instrumental rationality," the mechanistic type of rationality that shapes modern society.

lated nightmares – perhaps the most vivid being a sudden hailstorm on a sunny summer beach. These could be described as a type of eco-poetic rationality that the political theorist Stephanie Erev refers to as "feeling the vibrations." Sure, conventional rational thought can explain unexpected weather changes, but when I learned that many others were having climate dreams, too, I could not discard this eco-poetic way of knowing as irrelevant to the broader discussion of the planetary crisis.

To be clear, I am not a relativist when it comes to knowledge. I don't believe that all ways of knowing are equal in every context. There are instances when objectivity and impartiality should be privileged, especially when questions concern scientific knowledge. But when it comes to knowledge itself, we need to embrace multiple perspectives and a pluralist approach to reduce normative biases. Even if all ways of knowing are not equal in every context, they are all relevant.

For as long as I can remember, my temperament has been informed by a need to break free of social norms. When I first started exploring feminism as a tool for doing so, I thought of these norms as structural: patriarchy, white supremacy, neo-colonialism. But I increasingly recognised that the prison was also intellectual, in the truest sense of the word: relating to what, why, and how we know. Thus, to break free from structures of oppression, one must fight for an intellectual revolution as well, by returning to the source of knowledge itself.

In a world confronting what many are calling a "polycrisis," disrupting the dominant framework of rationality with an intersectional approach to knowledge is not only a feminist ideal. As the Tate-Thunberg exchange reminds us, it is necessary for humanity and the planet to flourish.

The writer is Founder of the blog MsAfropolitan and the author of Sensuous Knowledge: A Black Feminist Approach for Everyone (Amistad, 2021). #PROJECTSYNDICATE



Minna Salami

IN A WORLD CONFRONTING WHAT MANY ARE CALLING A 'POLYCRISIS,' DISRUPTING THE DOMINANT FRAMEWORK OF RATIONALITY WITH AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO KNOWLEDGE IS NOT ONLY A FEMINIST IDEAL

A recent Twitter spat between influencer Andrew Tate and climate activist Greta Thunberg epitomised the eco gender gap. Tweeting at the activist, Tate – the epitome of a man who views saving the planet as a threat to his masculinity – boasted about the "enormous emissions" of his luxury car collection, to which Thunberg replied with a takedown that currently ranks as the fourth most liked tweet ever. As columnist Rebecca Solnit writes, "There's a direct association between machismo and the refusal to recognise and respond appropriately to the climate catastrophe."

While some may laugh off an online dispute between two high-profile individuals, the differences between how women and men respond to global warming are well documented. Recent studies have shown that only 59 per cent of men in the United Kingdom are committed to a green lifestyle, compared to 71 per cent of women, and that men are less likely than women to recycle and consume environmentally friendly products. This gap has been attributed to some men's perception of environmental justice as a feminine pursuit.

With air pollution from fossil fuels killing millions of people each year (many of whom live in the Global South), we have a clear ethical obligation to combat climate change. And since sexism evidently harms the capacity to act rationally in this regard, we need to clarify and transform the perceived relationship between climate change, gender stereotypes, and rationality.

Like all gender gaps, this one is the result of deceptive and biased thinking – the opposite of rationality. It is this, not emotion, that undermines reason. Emotions make us human, not irrational. Bias, whatever its cause, is what makes us incapable of objectivity, and it underlies the entrenched gender stereotype that women are emotional while men are rational. This stereotype is a well-known cause of gender inequality. But a point that is seldom addressed is how the stereotype relies on an idea of rationality that is limited in the first place.

Rationality is not simply "the ability to use knowledge to attain

Biden's Ukraine Visit

US President Joe Biden's visit to Kyiv February 20 at a time when the war between Ukraine and Russia is entering a crucial phase nearly a year after the Russian invasion is a dramatic and symbolic morale booster for the Ukrainian forces. Indications are that the visit was meticulously planned for months, though shrouded in utmost secrecy. The US administration had earlier denied there was any plan for the visit. President Biden did not even board the usual plane and took a train in Poland to enter Ukraine in a closely guarded secret move. Moscow had been informed of the visit only hours before Biden left for his destination so as to avoid any misunderstanding or misjudgment between the two nuclear-armed powers, according to accounts from Washington.

The question is what possibly made Biden show such solidarity with Ukraine when the US-led West has already poured into the war-ravaged country billions of dollars worth of arms, ammunition and human aid apart from announcing more sanctions against Russia in the offing. The intent, it seems, is not simply to rearm Ukraine to send a loud and clear message that the West will rally behind the country in the event of a highly likely Russian Spring offensive. Instead, the purpose is believed to be to convince Russia that the US and its Western allies are serious about what they are talking regarding the threat to Europe that Russian invasion of Ukraine poses and their resolve to ensure Russia does not succeed in its plan to take control of the country.

The urgency of the Biden visit can also be explained by the volatile situation in the former Russian state of Moldova to the south of Ukraine where Russia is accused of fomenting trouble to either invade or prop up a pro-Moscow regime. Several thousand protesters rallied in Moldova's capital February 19 to demand the country's new pro-Western government fully cover citizens' winter heating bills amid a cost-of-living crisis and skyrocketing inflation. The protest was organised by a recently formed group called Movement for the People and supported by members of Moldova's Russia-friendly Shor Party, which holds six seats in the former Soviet republic's 101-seat legislature.

The protests are part of a plan to destabilise the pro-West government. This became clear with the demonstrators calling for the resignation of the country's President, chanting "Down with Maia Sandu!" Dozens of pro-government protesters also gathered nearby to show support for Sandu's government. Sandu had on February 13 outlined what she claimed was an alleged plot by Moscow to overthrow the government in order to put the nation "at the disposal of Russia," and to derail it from its course to one day join the European Union. The pattern being followed in Moldova, says its President, was a copy of Russia's interference with Ukraine's affairs. In carrying out the plan, Russia appears to rely on several internal forces, including Shor.

Moldova is also in need of Western assistance. Earlier this month, its pro-European government resigned, unable to cope up with the crises largely fuelled by Moscow which used its economic muscle to bring it to its knees. Moldova depends on Russia for 100 per cent of its gas supplies.

It is being feared that Russia may launch its assault on Ukraine from the south using the soil and airspace of Moldova which shares 1,222 km border with Ukraine. About 1,500 Russian troops are already stationed in Moldova in the unrecognised, Moscow-backed breakaway state of Transnistria. A new Prime Minister, Dorin Recean, has been swiftly appointed and he has pledged to cement ties with Europe to pull his country out of the crisis.

Russia is desperate to win the war with Ukraine. It has failed in its objective even after fighting with the country for one full year sustaining huge losses in terms of men and material. No wonder it has branded Moldova as yet another "proxy" of the West.

Biden's surprise visit to Ukraine seems to have put a spoke in Russia's wheel. Its plan to engage in a decisive battle from the south of Ukraine using its agents in Moldova appears to be in jeopardy.

WISDOM CORNER

- "This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness." **DALAI LAMA**
- "I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen." **ERNEST HEMINGWAY**
- "Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars." **KAHLIL GIBRAN**

WORDSWORTH

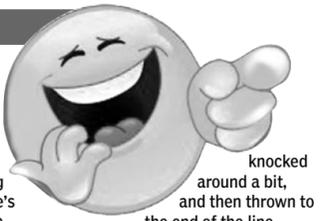
Gamification

Gamification (very occasionally spelled gameification) refers to the application of digital game technology and game design in areas of life outside games, especially marketing. Its proponents argue that traditional incentive-based marketing has had its day. If individuals are prepared to spend hours collecting intangible points in a video game, the argument goes, they could easily be encouraged to earn rewards on business and retail websites through game-style activities. For example, visitors could gain incentive points by posting comments on a site, or even by logging in, so encouraging repeat visits and customer loyalty. To encourage a spirit of competition, the visitors with the greatest number of points might be listed on a "leaderboard", be given rewards such as access to private areas of the site or become eligible for special offers. The idea is applicable, its advocates argue, to everything from global-positioning software to retailing and financial services. It would, they say, make sites easier and more pleasant to use and attract younger people who are comfortable with online games. Multiplayer games are also being tried at work to improve communication and coordination between staff, and it has even been suggested that boring tasks such as paying taxes or checking the weather might become fun. In a related sense, proponents of game-playing point out that the skills we acquire by playing video games are making us better at real-world tasks, such as playing music. There was a sudden proliferation of appearances of this word in the media in the latter part of 2010, although it is recorded from 2005 in academic and specialist publications. The linked verb gamify has also appeared. With "gamification," companies study and identify natural human tendencies and employ game-like mechanisms to give customers a sense that they're having fun while working towards a rewards-based goal (*Fortune*, 3 Sep 2010). Marketers ... have seen the potential benefits of tapping into the growing "gamification" of our lives. Airlines, hotels, and credit card companies all understand our desire to be rewarded and to achieve status and have recognised that gaming is just making it more of an adventure, and more social (*Marketing Week*, 30 Sep. 2010).

LOL

THE CROWDED STORE

It was the day of the big sale. Rumours of the sale (and some advertising in the local paper) were the main reason for the long line that formed by 8:30, the store's opening time, in front of the store. A small man pushed his way to the front of the line, only to be pushed back, amid loud and colourful curses. On the man's second attempt, he was punched square in the jaw, and



knocked around a bit, and then thrown to the end of the line again. As he got up the second time, he said to the person at the end of the line... "That does it! If they hit me one more time, I won't open the store!"

IN JEST THIS

Force yourself to eat bitter gourd



Melvin Durai

IF BITTER GOURD WERE SERVED REGULARLY IN PRISONS, SOME PEOPLE MAY DEEM IT 'CRUEL AND UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT'

During a recent "Ask Me Anything" session on Instagram, someone asked Virat Kohli about his least favourite food item.

"I am a vegetarian now," the cricket superstar said. "So, I will never eat karela (bitter gourd). I hate it."

I'm sure many Instagram users were nodding their heads at his answer, saying to themselves, "Me too, Virat. We have so much in common!"

But a few people were probably shaking their heads and muttering, "Come on, Virat, why can't you pick on a different vegetable? Think of the poor karela farmers. Karela is hard enough to sell as it is."

Indeed, let's see how Kohli's words are being received at the Kerala Karela Farmers Association (KKFA).

Reporter: "What are your thoughts on what Virat Kohli said about karela?"

KKFA president George Thomas: "Virat Kohli should stick to cricket. There is no place in India for such hate speech."

Reporter: "Why do you call it hate speech?"

Thomas: "He said he would never eat karela. That was bad enough. But then he said he hates it. That is why I call it hate speech. All our farmers have agreed that whenever Virat Kohli is batting, we will turn our TVs off. If he can boycott karela, karela farmers can boycott him."

Reporter: "You are taking it very seriously."

Thomas: "Of course, we are taking it seriously. Companies pay huge sums of money to get celebrities like Virat Kohli to endorse their products. Imagine how much we'd have to pay to get him to appear in an ad saying, 'I love karela. Ever since I started eating it, my health has improved, my batting average has increased, and my mustache has grown thicker.' If he did that, karela would be so popular; we could raise our prices. But he has done the opposite. So instead of us paying him, maybe he should pay us."

Reporter: "Are you suggesting that you might sue him?"

Thomas: "We are definitely considering it. But we would first like to give him an opportunity to retract his words and apologise for offending the sensibilities of all people who love karela. Perhaps he can say something like this: 'Karela is not my favourite vegetable, but many people love it. It has so many health benefits that if you eat it regularly, you will never need to see a doctor.'"

The health benefits are the primary reason why many people eat bitter gourd. When I was a young boy, my mother would try to persuade me to eat bitter gourd by saying that it would kill all the parasites in my body. But I was too worried that it would kill me.

It didn't make sense to me that people would voluntarily eat something so bitter. I could imagine bitter gourd being very useful, but only for certain purposes, such as getting prisoners-of-war to talk.

Captain: "If you do not tell us where your battalion is stationed, we will bring out the bitter gourd!"

Prisoner: "Please, no! Anything

but the bitter gourd. Give me the whip instead!"

If bitter gourd were served regularly in prisons, some people may deem it "cruel and unusual punishment." But others may disagree, citing all the health benefits of bitter gourd.

A blog post on an Indian website lists "11 miraculous benefits of karela." According to the post, karela helps fight diabetes, treats skin infections, detoxifies the liver, improves cardiac health, combats cancer, purifies blood, heals wounds, promotes weight loss and helps you think faster during CBSE exams. Actually, the post said nothing about CBSE exams, but it still seemed to suggest that instead of taking medicine, you can just eat karela and put all the hospitals out of business.

Of course, a lot of medicine comes in capsules. You do not have to taste the medicine – you just have to swallow. This is how bitter gourd should be marketed – tiny portions in capsules.

Even Virat Kohli might eat that.

Test milestone

Sir, Kudos to Cheteshwar Pujara on his big milestone: Joining India's select 100-test club as the thirteenth member. Ever since Pujara debuted for India in 2010 he has made the number three batting position for himself emulating former batting greats such as Dilip Vengsarkar and Rahul Dravid. Sheer hard work and an unwavering focus on the task at hand have largely contributed to the growth in his career. Though Pujara always has preferred to play second fiddle to the big names around him, the right-handed batsman's contribution to team India's cause has been more than invaluable. Good footwork and a straight bat have been his forte, but that hesitant back-foot movement of his has sometimes allowed the bowlers to gain an upper hand over him. Technique, patience, level headedness and determination have all propelled Cheteshwar Pujara to where he finds himself today. Above all, the pristine ability to iron out his flaws through perseverance and guidance has helped Pujara to emerge stronger during his career slumps.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Save pangolins

Sir, It pains to note that according to the latest study done jointly by TRAFFIC, a UK based wildlife trade monitoring network, and the World Wide Fund For Nature in India, as many as 1,203 pangolins were poached and trafficked in India in the last five years for illicit trade. In fact, this has been revealed by the Indian media on the day of February 18, 2023, a day observed as 'World Pangolin Day' to raise awareness and fight against the capture of pangolins in Africa and Asia. Reportedly, huge quantities of the scaly anteaters are constantly smuggled from these two continents despite an international trade ban on various species of pangolins that went into effect in 2017. Pangolins play a critical role in the ecosystem, providing the Earth with all-natural pest control and are fantastic soil tenders, simply through their everyday behaviours. Pangolins are threatened by poaching (for their meat and scales, which are used in traditional medicine) and heavy deforestation of their natural habitats, and they are the most trafficked animals in the world. Pangolins must be saved, and the only way to save the species is to stop harming them and return them to their natural habitat.

Ranganathan Sivkumar, CHENNAI

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

of the day quote

Mark my words, I will lawfully provide jobs as and when possible to (eligible) candidates. I never go back on my promises. But every time we make provisions for jobs, the BJP moves the court to forestall it

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

It was a pleasure to speak with the UK Secretary of State for Defence, Mr. Ben Wallace. The conversation was cordial, positive and focused on future growth of the bilateral defence relationship

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

Ours is a mission. An almost religious idea. It is worth more than all of us, more than our own lives; for this I am ready to die, if necessary, as my grandmother and father died. It's such a strong idea that my mother, a woman born in Italy, dedicated her entire life to it...Here, I will defend this idea to the end

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

SHORT TAKES

I-T dept searches Uflex premises

New Delhi: The Income Tax Department Tuesday conducted searches at multiple premises linked to packaging major Uflex as part of an investigation against the company for alleged tax evasion, officials said. Around 60-70 premises, including the Noida-based company headquarters, in Delhi, UP, Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are being covered, they said.

Three members of family killed

Mumbai: Three women of a family were found to have been killed at their house in Mangalvedha tehsil of southwestern Maharashtra's Solapur district on Tuesday evening, police said. A suspect has been detained, said an official. The women, two of them sisters, were found to have been hacked to death with an axe-like weapon, he said.

HP staff selection panel dissolved

Shimla: The Congress government Tuesday disbanded the Himachal Pradesh Staff Selection Commission whose functioning was suspended after a paper leak was detected in December last year. "The reports of departmental inquiry and vigilance bureau pointed out irregularities and papers were being leaked and sold to selective people for the past three years" following which the state government has decided to dissolve the commission with immediate effect, said Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu.



The Sun of development is shining over Arunachal Pradesh. With its rich natural resources and quality human resources, the state has full potential to become an attractive investment destination and a hub of trade and business

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT OF INDIA

VISION FOR ALL

The World Health Organisation Tuesday called for accelerated action to provide quality, affordable, integrated and people-centered comprehensive eye care for everyone to address the increasing burden of vision impairment and blindness in the WHO South-East Asia Region



NIA cracks down on gangster-terror nexus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: In a major crackdown on the nexus between gangsters, terrorist groups and drug-smugglers based in foreign countries including Pakistan and Canada, the NIA conducted raids at 76 locations across eight states Tuesday and seized a large cache of arms and ammunition and cash to tune of Rs 1.5 crores.

A National Investigation Agency (NIA) spokesperson said the raids follow three cases registered by the agency since August 2022.

Several people, including some Kabbadi players, have been identified in these cases and booked for their alleged involvement in terror and other criminal activities, including targeted killings and extortions from leading businessmen and professionals, an official spokesperson said.

Investigation shows that conspiracies for several such crimes including the sensational killing of Maharashtra builder Sanjay Biyani, and international Kabbadi player Sandeep Nangal Ambia (in Punjab last year) were being hatched in jails of different states and were executed by an organised network of operatives based abroad, the spokesperson said.

Today's raids, the fifth in the series of such crackdowns, were conducted in Punjab, Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, the spokesperson said.

These raids, focused on arms suppliers and hawala operators working with these gangs, led to the recovery of nine illegal weapons, including pistols, revolvers and rifles, and Rs 1.5 crores in cash, the spokesperson said.

Incriminating material, including documents, hard drives and mobile phones, were also seized.



THE NATIONAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY (NIA) IS CARRYING OUT RAIDS AT 76 LOCATIONS ACROSS MULTIPLE STATES IN A MAJOR CRACKDOWN ON THE GANGSTER-TERROR NEXUS

THE NIA SAID THE INVESTIGATION WILL CONTINUE TO DISMANTLE SUCH TERROR NETWORKS AS WELL AS THEIR FUNDING AND SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

The raids were conducted at 76 locations in Abohar, Bhatinda, Muktsar Sahab, Moga, Fazilka, Ludhiana, Mohali, Ferozpur, Tarn Taran, Ludhiana, Faridkot, Sangrur and Jalandhar districts of Punjab.

The raids were conducted also in Gurugram, Yamuna Nagar, Rohtak, Mahendragarh, Sirsa and Jhajjar districts of Haryana; Sri Ganga Nagar, Sikar, Jodhpur and Jaipur districts of Rajasthan; Bagpat, Bareilly, Pratapgarh, Bulanshehar, Lucknow and Pilibhit of Uttar Pradesh; Ujjain and Ratlam districts of Madhya Pradesh; Byculla in Mumbai; Gandhidham in Gujarat; and

Dwarka, Central and Outer North Districts of Delhi/ NCR.

Searches were conducted at the premises of Lakhvir Singh of Gidderbaha at Muktsar, Naresh at Abohar, Surender alias Cheeku at Narnaul in Haryana, Kaushal Choudhary and Amit Dagar at Gurugram and Sunil Rathi at Bagpat in Uttar Pradesh.

Some hawala operators, kabaddi players, weapon suppliers, gun houses, businessmen and their alleged financiers, were also raided.

The investigations have shown that many criminals, who were leading gangsters in India, had fled to countries like Pakistan, Canada, Malaysia and Australia and were planning their crimes from there in association with criminals lodged in jails in different states.

These groups were carrying out targeted killings and raising funds for their nefarious activities through smuggling of drugs and weapons, hawala and extortions.

Further investigations are on to dismantle such terror networks and their funding and support infrastructure, the spokesperson said.

JUMBO KILLS 16 IN 12 DAYS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, Feb 21: A tusker has allegedly killed 16 people in five Jharkhand districts in the past 12 days with four in a single block of Ranchi district Tuesday, forest officials said.

This has prompted the Ranchi administration to impose prohibitory order under Section 144 Cr PC in Itki block prohibiting gathering more than five people to restrict further casualties, Ranchi divisional forest officer Srikant Verma said.

Villagers of Itki block have been asked to remain inside their houses, specially during sunrise and sunset. They have also been asked not to go close any elephant, he said.

"Villagers are gathering near the elephant, which caused one death today. In a bid to stop them, Section 144 Cr PC has been imposed by Ranchi administration in Itki block today," Verma told PTI.

The forest department is taking all possible steps, including engaging an expert team from West Bengal to tackle the elephant, which is suspected to have killed 16 people in Hazaribag, Ramgarh, Chatra, Lohardaga and Ranchi districts in the past 12 days, the principal chief conservator of forest (wildlife) Sasikar Samanta said.

"We have constituted a committee comprising forest officers of four divisions and headed by the Ranchi conservator of forest. The committee will determine if the same elephant has killed all the 16 people. If the committee certifies it, we will take a decision in a day or two," he told PTI.

The elephant had reportedly trampled to death four persons, including two women, in Lohardaga district Monday and one Sunday. It appeared to have entered Ranchi's Itki block, about 25 km from the capital city Monday night and reportedly killed four persons, including two women and injured one Tuesday morning, Verma said.

Muslim men's killing: Case against Raj cops over violent raid claim



Dulari Devi, one of the accused's mother, alleged that a team of Rajasthan Police assaulted her family members, and kicked her pregnant daughter-in-law in the stomach, which caused her to have a miscarriage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur/Gurugram, Feb 21: The Haryana Police has filed a case against around 30 to 40 unnamed cops of Rajasthan Police on a complaint by a woman that her pregnant daughter-in-law was assaulted during a raid linked to the killing of two Muslim men.

Rajasthan Police has seized a Haryana-registered SUV allegedly used by cow vigilantes in the abduction and murder of two men whose charred bodies were found in Bhiwani, officials said.

The Scorpio vehicle was recovered from Haryana based on the interrogation of accused Rinku Saini in the case. A total of nine accused, including Bajrang Dal member Monu Manesar who runs a cow protection group, have been named in the case so far. The Rajasthan Police has denied Devi's allegation. DGP Mishra Tuesday said that lawful action was taken

by the Rajasthan police in the matter and his force will come out clean.

Meanwhile, a mahapanchayat organised at Manesar in Haryana in support of Monu Manesar threatened to thwart any attempt by the Rajasthan Police to arrest him without "solid proof".

Villagers claimed that two "policemen" on a motorcycle had reached the house of Mohit Yadav alias Monu Manesar but were chased away by them.

Angry protesters also blocked traffic briefly on the Delhi-Jaipur highway before police reached the spot and persuaded the villagers to withdraw. The Vishva Hindu Parishad which participated in the mahapanchayat at Baba Bhisma Temple in Haryana slammed the "inhuman behaviour" of Rajasthan Police at Srikant Pandit's house. The meeting, attended by more than 200 people from different villages and Hindu outfits, lasted around three hours.

A memorandum addressed to President Droupadi Murmu was submitted to the assistant commissioner of police of Pataudi, demanding the cancellation of the FIR against Monu Manesar registered by the Rajasthan Police and a CBI probe into the matter.

Speakers at the mahapanchayat claimed Monu Manesar was not on the run and would appear whenever the administration called.

Monu Manesar and Srikant Pandit are among the five people initially booked in the abduction-and-murder case. Four more accused were later named in the FIR. Only one of the nine accused has been arrested so far: Aftab Ahmed, Congress MLA from Haryana Nuh, raised the issue in Haryana Assembly and demanded a high-level probe, claiming minorities are feeling "unsafe" in the state.

Supreme Court begins live transcription of its hearing



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 21: The Supreme Court Tuesday, on an experimental basis, began using artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing technology for live transcription of its hearings.

The live transcription has been launched in the courtroom of Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud.

Announcing the initiative, the Chief Justice said, "We'll see how it works, especially in the constitution bench matters, because then we'll have a permanent record of ar-

guments..." He further added that it helps judges and the lawyers, "but it will also help our law colleges. They can analyse how matters are argued...It is a huge resource," said the Chief Justice.

The Chief Justice stressed that it will be done on an experimental basis for a day or two to iron out creases in transcription before be-

The live transcription has been launched in the courtroom of Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud

coming a norm. At the beginning of the hearing Tuesday, a five-judge constitution bench headed by the CJI said, "Do you see the screen? We're just trying to explore the possibilities of live transcripts..."

A constitution bench of the Supreme Court is currently considering the issues relating to the Shiv Sena rift. The constitution bench proceedings will be transcribed and given to advocates for vetting prior to uploading on the apex court website.



FESTIVE FERVOUR: Members of Toda tribal community celebrate a festival at Kandalmund near Ooty

Trains to be soon 'sealed' with digital locks

This system is commonly used by trucks where a smart lock is provided which is GPS enabled allowing live tracking of the vehicle to reduce pilferage and thefts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: An OTP-based digital locking system will soon be introduced in the Railways to guard against theft on board its freight and parcel trains, a senior official said Tuesday.

This system is commonly used by trucks where a smart lock is provided which is GPS enabled allowing live tracking of the vehicle to reduce pilferage and thefts.

Officials said that the system will be completely based on secure OTP which will be used to both



Explaining the process, the official said that when the lock gets closed an OTP is sent to the personnel concerned's mobile number. After reaching the destination the driver has to confirm the lo-

cation by pressing the button in the lock. The personnel's OTP is verified and another OTP is sent to the driver's mobile number to unlock the lock.

The train will also be tracked and the location will be recorded. If door tamper or collision occur, an alert message will be sent to the official's mobile number.

While the official could not provide data on how much goods is stolen from trains during the services, according to a January 25 statement issued by the Railways, the RPF registered 6492 cases of theft of railway property in 2022, recovering stolen railway property worth Rs 7.37 crore with the arrest of 11268 offenders under 'Operation Rail Suraksha'.

Officials said that at least three railway zones are actively working to identify companies who could provide this service in a cost effective manner to the Railways.

Sensational Mehrauli murder case remanded to sessions court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: The trial in the sensational Shradha Walkar murder case is set to begin against her live-in partner and main accused Aaftab Amin Poonawala February 24 as a magisterial court Tuesday remanded the judicial records to a sessions court.

Poonawala will now have to appear before a principal district and sessions judge at Saket here Friday. According to the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), a case pertaining to heinous offences are remanded to the jurisdictional sessions court by the concerned Metropolitan

Magistrate after filing of the chargesheet.

Meanwhile, Metropolitan Magistrate Aviral Shukla asked Poonawala, who was brought to the court physically by the Delhi Police, to file a fresh application before the sessions court after he orally sought permissions to carry religious books, pen and a notepad during future proceedings.

The Delhi Police January 24 filed a voluminous 6,629-page chargesheet, giving details of investigation and evidence and list of witnesses against Poonawala who allegedly strangled his live-in partner Walkar and chopped her body into pieces.

Bulldozers now get a new job in MP



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, Feb 21: The bulldozers, which have been either used for demolishing houses belonging to the people involved in criminal activities or for taking jibe at political opponents by the ruling BJP side, were Tuesday rolled for welcoming and garlanding state Home Minister Narottam Mishra.

This new role of bulldozers was seen in Datia district, the home town of Mishra, during 'vikas yatra', a state-wide campaign launched by the BJP-led state government on February 5 for highlighting development done during Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's tenure in the last 18 years.

Narottam Mishra, who has been busy in carrying 'vikas yatra' in his home district - Datia, on Tuesday, was given a warm welcome in a unique way by his supporters.

While Mishra was leading the march boarding on a decorated chariot pulled by a pair of horses in Mahova village, a large number of people including BJP workers welcomed him with a five-quintal flowers' garland.

As the garland was too heavy and it wasn't easy to hold it in hand, it was hung on two bulldozers standing parallelly, and a third bulldozer came into the role to take Mishra close to the garland with loud slogans in his favour and music playing in the background.

Ever since 'vikas yatra' was kicked off, Mishra has been camping in Datia, and marching in villages and holding meetings with the people.

He has arrived in Bhopal to attend cabinet meeting called by Chief Minister Chouhan to review the outcome of ongoing 'vikas yatra', a well-thought move by the ruling BJP ahead of assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh.

Earlier in the day, Mishra attacked the opposition, saying the list of Congress delegates seems more like a 'family -gate'. "All senior Congress leaders are focusing more on securing the political future of their new generation. The MP Congress now seems more like a family party," Mishra said on Tuesday.

Dalits accuse BDO of denying drinking water

THE DALIT COMMUNITY MEMBERS OF THE PANCHAYAT ALLEGED THAT THE BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER (BDO), K. JAYAKUMAR OBJECTED TO THE LAYING OF PIPELINES TO SUPPLY WATER TO THE DALIT SETTLEMENTS CITING THAT PERMISSION WAS NOT TAKEN FOR CONSTRUCTING THE WELL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 21: Even as Tamil Nadu is in an embarrassing situation after the presence of human feces in a drinking water tank that supplies water to a Dalit colony in the Pudukottai district, a Block Development Officer (BDO) in Tiruppur district is being accused of denying drinking water connection to Dalits.

The incident occurred at Mettupalayam in Tiruppur district. Eighty Dalit families were taking water from a borewell and when the water level fell, the Dalit families approached the Aranmanikkatupudur panchayat. The panchayat passed a resolution and the necessary sanction was accorded to dig a new borewell at a revenue 'Puramboke' land two km from the Dalit settlement. The well was dug two months ago.

The Dalit community members of the panchayat alleged that the Block Development Officer (BDO), K. Jayakumar objected to the laying



of pipelines to supply water to the Dalit settlements citing that permission was not taken for constructing the well.

DuraiSwamy, a resident of the panchayat and himself belonging to a Dalit community while speaking to media persons said that the

TN acts to stop kids from dropping out of schools

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 21: The Tamil Nadu school education department will be using the services of local body representatives to help stop children from dropping out of schools.

The ongoing out-of-school children survey has revealed that around 1.3 lakh kids have dropped out of schools in recent days in Tamil Nadu. According to the school education department officials, 4,04,088 students under the age of 18 years were surveyed of which 1,38,821 were not enrolled in schools.

The survey also found out that most students drop out of schools after their 10th standard. Some dropped out after failing the 10th class examinations and others as they had to support their families and opted for jobs.

However, in order to improve the quality of the survey and to convince the parents to make their wards continue in schools, the school education department has

In order to improve the quality of the survey and to convince the parents to make their wards continue in schools, the school education department has approached local body members

The local body members who are in touch at the grass root levels can influence the parents of the children who drop out of tenth class even after passing the exam and urge them to make the children continue in schools

approached local body members.

Department sources said that the state minister for school education Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi has already taken a specific interest and has communicated to his department officials to rope in local body members for the same.

The local body members who are in touch at the grass root levels can influence the parents of the children who drop out of tenth class even after passing the exam and urge them to make the children



continue in schools.

A local body member at Kanniyakumari, who is elected from a BJP ticket, while speaking to IANS said: "I am with the minister in this and will do my best to

prevent children from dropping out of school and will convince the parents of these children to make the students continue their education so that they get good opportunities in their life to achieve

and reach higher levels."

He said that the basic reason for dropping out of schools is poverty and children wants to support their parents who are not able to earn much.

The school education department is chalking out programmes so that the children are getting good counselling for continuing their education. The department has already created a central data base with the help of Education Management Information System to have a focus on potential dropouts who have not attended classes for the last 15 days.

It is also targeting students who are opting out of schools and finding out students who have migrated to other blocks and districts.

The higher officials of the department have presented a paper to the minister stating that in such cases of children moving out to other blocks and districts, the services of the local body representatives would be much useful.

TN moves SC against HC order permitting RSS march

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 21: The Tamil Nadu government has moved the Supreme Court challenging the Madras High Court order, which allowed Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to conduct a route march across the state.

The state government, through its counsel Joseph Aristotle, submitted that the march would pose a law and order problem and other problems in view of intelligence reports. The plea contended that the state government decision against the march was within reasonable restrictions on the fundamental rights under Article 19(2) of the Constitution to maintain public order.

The high court, in its order earlier this month, had said: "We are of the view that the state authorities must act in a manner to uphold



the fundamental right to freedom of speech, expression, and assembly as regarded one of the most sacrosanct and inviolable rights envisaged in our Constitution."

The state government pointed at the apprehension for disturbance of public peace against the backdrop of the ban on Popular Front

of India in September last year. It further contended that there have been instances of throwing of petrol bombs and clashes, when RSS had conducted similar events in other states.

The high court had directed the RSS to file fresh applications for carrying out the route march on three different dates and also directed the police to permit the RSS to take out route marches on any of such dates in various districts across the state on public roads.

According to sources, the state government is likely to be mentioned on Wednesday for an urgent hearing in the Supreme Court and it may seek an interim stay on the order passed by the high court. The high court had permitted RSS members to wear their uniform and play its musical band during the marches throughout the state.

ATTACK ON TAMIL FISHERMEN

TN CM Stalin urges Centre's intervention

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 21: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. K. Stalin in a letter to Union External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has requested the Union Government to immediately intervene into the "frequent attacks" on Indian fishermen by Sri Lankans.

The Chief Minister while mentioning an attack on six fishermen from Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu on February 15 in the sea, said that the Sri Lankan nationals had assaulted the Tamil fishermen who had navigated in the sea for their livelihood.

Stalin said that in the attack, the owner of the boat, Murugan, was brutally attacked and he sustained injuries in his left hand and head and others sustained internal injuries. He also mentioned that around Rs 2 lakh worth equipment including GPS, a walkie-talkie, a battery and approximately 200 kg of fish were taken away by force from the boat.

The Chief Minister in the letter mentioned that the fishermen from Tamil Nadu were subjected to frequent attacks by the Sri Lankan nationals in the sea.

MP introduces new excise policy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, Feb 21: The Madhya Pradesh government has introduced a new excise policy under which consumption of alcohol at 'ahatas' will be prohibited.

Ahata is an area attached to alcohol outlets where people can sit and consume liquor. The decision to introduce the new policy was taken during a cabinet meeting.

Following the approval of the new excise policy, 2,580 ahatas and 31 shop bars will get closed across the state. "It has been decided by the cabinet that henceforth all liquor vendors will only sell liquor. All ahatas and shop bars (allowing consumption of liquor within shops premises) will be closed," the state government's official spokesperson and home minister Narottam Mishra said, while briefing about the cabinet meeting's decision.

"Further, it has been decided that the distance between liquor shops and places of worship and educational institutions, particularly girl schools, colleges and hostels, will be increased from the present 50 metres to 100 metres," Mishra added.

He further informed that the state cabinet has also approved a proposal for making stricter provisions for the suspension of driving licenses of those who get caught for drunk driving. "Our government is committed to discouraging consumption of liquor in the state, owing to which no new liquor shop has been allowed to be opened in the state since 2010. On the contrary, many shops have been shut down. During our Chief Minister's Narmada Seva Yatra in 2016-17, as many as 64 liquor shops were closed," Mishra added.

The move comes amid senior BJP leader Uma Bharti's sustained pressure on the Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led Madhya Pradesh government to have a controlled liquor policy. Recently she tied cows and fed them with fodder outside a liquor shop in Orchha town as part of her campaign titled 'Madhushala mein Gaushal', urging people to drink milk instead of alcohol.

THE MOVE COMES AMID SENIOR BJP LEADER UMA BHARTI'S SUSTAINED PRESSURE ON THE SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN-LED MADHYA PRADESH GOVERNMENT TO HAVE A CONTROLLED LIQUOR POLICY

AHATAS ARE AREAS ATTACHED TO ALCOHOL OUTLETS WHERE PEOPLE CAN SIT AND CONSUME LIQUOR

visions for the suspension of driving licenses of those who get caught for drunk driving. "Our government is committed to discouraging consumption of liquor in the state, owing to which no new liquor shop has been allowed to be opened in the state since 2010. On the contrary, many shops have been shut down. During our Chief Minister's Narmada Seva Yatra in 2016-17, as many as 64 liquor shops were closed," Mishra added.

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Digvijaya, Scindia trade barbs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, Feb 21: A war of words between key leaders of the ruling BJP and opposition Congress in Madhya Pradesh is gradually escalating. After Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and state Congress chief Kamal Nath entered into a question war, two other leaders, Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh and Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, have followed suit.

Digvijaya and Scindia, who used to be under the Congress umbrella till March 2020, are now leaving no stone unturned to attack each other.

While talking to the media a couple of days ago, Digvijaya Singh, without taking Scindia's name, said that the Congress will from the government in Madhya Pradesh for full five year tenure because, "only trustful people are in the Congress and those who believe in sale and purchase have gone now." Singh made these remarks re-



plying on whether the Congress will remain united on the party's Chief Ministerial face?

Digvijaya also made it clear that the Congress will contest Madhya Pradesh's Assembly elections under the leadership of Kamal Nath. He made this statement after a section of senior Congress leaders raised questions on the posters projecting Kamal Nath as the Chief Ministerial candidate for the 2023 Assembly elections.

The remark "bikau" was indi-

rectly made on Scindia, whose shifting into the BJP (along with over 20 sitting Congress MLAs) in March 2020 had resulted in the demolition of Kamal Nath-led Congress government within 15 months of getting back into power after a gap of 15 years. Digvijaya and Scindia, who have strong domination in MP politics, especially in their respective areas - Gwalior and Guna districts - have always played 'checkmate' game of politics even when they were party colleagues.

Cops join NGOs to provide food to destitutes

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 21: The Greater Chennai police through its project, Kaval Karangal launched on April 21, 2021, have helped many abandoned people get food.

The police have joined hands with several NGOs and volunteers to organise food for the destitute and mentally deranged people in shelter homes who were rescued from the street and admitted to such homes.

A senior police officer said, "We have made a system wherein several people and wedding halls call us and provide us food that has come in the balance after marriage parties, birthday parties, and other celebrations. This food is collected with the help of NGOs and volunteers and we deliver it to the homes where abandoned people are sheltered."

The police have joined hands with more than 40 NGOs in Chennai



and surrounding areas and around 100 volunteers are part of this mission. J. Loganathan, additional commissioner of Police (Headquarters), told mediapersons that more than 4,000 people have been rescued from the streets, including mentally challenged people, who were roaming around.

These people are lodged in registered shelter homes.

He said that the police would conduct surprise checks in these homes to gauge the well-being of the inmates. Around 505 people who were found on the street were reunited with their families in different districts of Tamil Nadu. The

THE COPS HAVE JOINED HANDS WITH MORE THAN 40 NGOs IN CHENNAI AND SURROUNDING AREAS AND AROUND 100 VOLUNTEERS ARE PART OF THIS MISSION

AROUND 505 PEOPLE WHO WERE FOUND ON THE STREET WERE REUNITED WITH THEIR FAMILIES IN DIFFERENT DISTRICTS OF TAMIL NADU

officer said that the police department has also conducted burial of 1863 unclaimed bodies since the launch of Kaval Karangal.

The Greater Chennai Police have also received two ambulances for the homes where the abandoned people are admitted. The police have also got two e-vehicles for collecting food donated by the public. The Chennai police have received the Chief Minister's Best practice award for this and also the Skoch award which is one of the most highly respected awards in the country.



The situation in the country is very serious. ED, CBI, Income Tax are being misused continuously since 2014

DELHI GOVT TO PLANT 52L TREES

The Delhi government will plant 52 lakh trees and shrubs in the city during its mega plantation drive beginning February 26.



of the day quote

At a time when the relations between state governments and Governors are marred by controversies, Andhra Pradesh's outgoing Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan brought more decorum and dignity to his post by facilitating utmost coordination between various constitutional bodies and providing valuable guidance in development of the state

After the change of power in the state, my entire security has been withdrawn. I have no complaints over that. Such political decisions keep happening. Security of the peoples' representatives concerns the state government and the home department is competent to handle it

Today terrorists are on the run and there is a lot of pressure on them from the security forces

SC to hear Uddhav's plea against EC today

The EC Feb 17 in its final order said the party name Shiv Sena and symbol would be retained by Shinde, present Chief Minister of Maharashtra



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 21: The Supreme Court has agreed to hear Wednesday the Uddhav Thackeray faction's plea challenging the decision of the Election Commission recognising the Eknath Shinde-led bloc as the real Shiv Sena and ordering allotment of the party's original bow and arrow poll symbol to it.

ANOTHER BLOW TO THACKERAY

New Delhi: After the Election Commission gave Shiv Sena's name and poll symbol to the Eknath Shinde faction, the Uddhav Thackeray group suffered another major setback as the office allotted to Shiv Sena in the Parliament House in Delhi was given to the Shinde faction.



Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the Thackeray faction, mentioned the matter before a bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices Krishna Murari and P S Narasimha on Tuesday.

SHORT TAKES

Elephant attacks claim 10 lives in three days

Ranchi: At least 10 people have lost their lives to elephant attacks in Jharkhand in the last three days as another incident of attack by a jumbo was reported from a village in Ranchi district.

Violence in Jethuli village, 22 arrested

Patna: As many as 22 persons have been arrested by Patna Police in connection with the violence in Jethuli village, an official said Tuesday.

SAI conducts raids at several places

Srinagar: The State Investigation Agency (SIA) Tuesday carried out raids at several places in Kashmir as part of a probe into a narco-terrorism case, officials said here.

Three killed in road mishap

Ratlam: Three persons riding a motorbike were killed when their vehicle collided with a tractor-trolley in Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam district, an official said Tuesday.

Singer Sonu Nigam manhandled; FIR against MLA's son

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 21: Noted playback singer Sonu Nigam and his two colleagues were pushed allegedly by the son of an MLA during a scuffle over taking a selfie with the singer at a musical event in Mumbai, police said Tuesday.

Voice of country can't be suppressed: Cong

The ED Tuesday launched multiple searches in connection with a money laundering probe linked to alleged irregularities in Jharkhand's rural development department

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/New Delhi, Feb 21: Slamming the Enforcement Directorate raids on premises linked to its leaders in Chhattisgarh, the Congress said Tuesday that the country's voice cannot be suppressed by spreading the fear of "puppet agencies".



PURE DEVOTION: Braj artistes perform at the Taj Mahotsav in Agra, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

K'taka women civil servants transferred

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bengaluru, Feb 21: Karnataka government Tuesday transferred two female senior civil servants for indulging in public spat and causing severe embarrassment to the ruling dispensation.

Senior IPS officer D. Roopa Moudgil and senior IAS officer Rohini Sindhuri have been transferred without postings, sources said.

While Roopa served as the Managing Director at the Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited, Rohini worked in the capacity of Commissioner for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments.

Munish Moudgil, husband of Roopa, has also been shifted from

IAS VS IPS



the post of the Commissioner, Survey Settlement and Land Records to the post of Principal Secretary of Department of Administrative and Personnel Reforms (DPAR).

anti-politicians stand have continued to spat in public even as the Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai and Home Minister Araga Gnanendra warned them.

Their spat turned ugly as charges included the publication of private pictures. Roopa claimed that Rohini sent her pictures, including private ones, to IAS officers.

Rohini and Sindhuri have filed complaints against each other with the Chief Secretary Vandita Sharma. Roopa came to lime light after the arrest of Uma Bharati, then CM of Madhya Pradesh on her way to hoist the tricolour at the controversial Hubballi Idgah Maidan.

FCI CORRUPTION MATTER

CBI searches at 30 locations in Punjab

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: The CBI Tuesday launched searches at 30 locations in Punjab as part of its probe into allegations of corruption against Food Corporation of India (FCI) officials who procured inferior grains to benefit merchants and rice millers, officials said.

The CBI teams started coordinated raids at the premises of grain merchants, rice mill owners, and serving and retired officials of the FCI as part of 'Operation Kanak 2', they said.



The operation was spread across Rajpura, Sirhind, Patiala, Fatehgarh Sahib, Mohali, Moga, Firozpur, Ludhiana, Sangrur among others, they said.

This is second round of searches in the FIR pertaining to an organised syndicate of officers at the FCI, who allegedly charged bribes of ₹1000-4000 per truck unloaded at the FCI godowns from private millers per crop season for covering up lower quality grains supplied by them and other favours.

The first round of searches took place January 13, they said. The bribes were allegedly circulated to officers at every level reaching up to headquarters in a well defined percentage of cuts at each level, it alleged.

The FIR gave details of such bribe collection in many FCI depots across Punjab. Officials ranging from technical assistants to executive directors were allegedly part of a syndicate receiving bribes from private millers, they said.

ED RAIDS IN CHHATTISGARH



ED sleuths arrive to raid on the residence of Chief Engineer of Rural Development Department Birendra Kumar Ram in a Money Laundering case in Ranchi

MLA Dhanendra Sahu and former Rajya Sabha member Chhaya Verma, held a sit-in at the ED office building in Pachpedi Naka area.

There was a minor scuffle when slogan-shouting Congress members tried to enter the premises but were stopped by security personnel. "It is clearly political vendetta. It was expected. We were expecting (raids) as the Congress' plenary session is going to be held and there is an election... we are not

scared of anything," All India Congress Committee general secretary KC Venugopal said. Venugopal was in Raipur to review the final preparation for the party's 85th plenary session scheduled to be held from February 24 to 26. Assembly elections in Chhattisgarh are due this year-end. The ED Monday conducted raids at more than a dozen locations in Chhattisgarh including at premises linked to state Congress

leaders as part of an ongoing probe into the alleged coal levy scam.

Hitting out at the Centre, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said, "Prime Minister's friend Gautam Adani has been accused of embezzlement through shell companies and many other serious allegations have been levelled against him. But did you see any agency investigating this?"

Early heat may adversely affect wheat, other crops: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: Significantly high temperatures over northwest India, Gujarat, Konkan and Goa may have an adverse impact on wheat and other crops, the India Meteorological Department said.



temperatures in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi have remained five to nine degrees Celsius above normal since February 18.

"Significantly higher-than-normal maximum temperatures over northwest India, Gujarat, Konkan and Goa may be attributed to the

absence of any active western disturbance in February, a dry spell prevailing over the plains and subdued precipitation over hills," the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

It said an anti-cyclone over south Gujarat led to subsidence of air and the warming over the region.

Anticyclones are centres of high pressure from where winds blow out in every direction. The anti-cyclone over India sends warm winds from north-west to central and western India, causing heat

waves. "This higher day temperature might lead to an adverse effect on wheat as the crop is approaching reproductive growth period, which is sensitive to temperature," the IMD said.

High temperatures during the flowering and maturing periods leads to loss in yield. There could be a similar impact on other standing crops and horticulture, it

Significantly higher-than-normal maximum temperatures over northwest India, Gujarat, Konkan and Goa may be attributed to the absence of any active western disturbance in February, a dry spell prevailing over the plains and subdued precipitation over hills

INDIA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

said. The IMD said farmers can go for light irrigation if the crop appears to be under stress. "To reduce the impact of higher temperatures, add mulch material in the space between two rows of vegetable crops to conserve soil moisture and maintain soil temperature," it said.

Earlier in the day, the IMD withdrew its heatwave warning for isolated places in Kutch and Konkan regions due to sea breeze leading to a drop in temperatures. The Met office Sunday said isolated heatwave "conditions are likely over Kutch and Konkan during the next two days". Officials had said it was the earliest a heatwave alert was issued for these regions.

international

of the day quote

It's profoundly in our interest and I believe in the interest of both Greece and Turkey to find ways to resolve longstanding differences

ANTONY BLINKEN | US SECRETARY OF STATE

At the same time, we urge relevant countries to immediately stop adding fuel to the fire, stop shifting blames to China, and stop hyping up the discourse of Ukraine today, Taiwan tomorrow

QIN GANG | FOREIGN MINISTER OF CHINA

New Zealand needs to rebuild with more resilient infrastructure to cope with more frequent and intense weather events

CHRIS HIPKINS | NEW ZEALAND PM

SHORT TAKES

Israel greenlights judicial reform

Jerusalem: Israel's parliament voted on Tuesday to advance Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's contentious plan to overhaul the country's judiciary, despite widespread public opposition. After a stormy debate, the first two bills of the judicial reform passed in a first, non-binding reading, reports Xinhua news agency. Out of the 120 seats in Parliament, 63 lawmakers voted in favour of the bills, 47 against, and 10 were absent. Members of Netanyahu's new ultra-religious and ultranationalist coalition government celebrated the outcome.

1 dead, 13 hurt

Washington: One person died and 13 others were injured after an explosion rocked a metal manufacturing plant in the US state of Ohio. Fire officials previously said 13 people had been taken to the hospital and another person was treated at the site following the blast at the Bedford-based I. Schumann & Co., which produces copper alloys, reports Xinhua news agency. On Monday night, the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office confirmed to local media that one person had died.

Three missing

Sao Paulo: At least three people are missing and 20 were injured when a suspension bridge collapsed over the Mampituba river in south Brazil's Rio Grande do Sul state, local authorities said. The simple hanging bridge connecting the state's city of Torres with Passo de Torres (in Santa Catarina) gave way due to excess weight from revellers returning from Carnival celebrations, Xinhua news agency reported.

Militants kill two

Karachi: Heavily-armed militants attacked a police checkpoint and killed two security personnel in Pakistan's troubled southwestern Balochistan province, an official said Tuesday. Assistant Commissioner Mastung Barkat Baloch said militants attacked the checkpoint of Levies personnel Monday in the Babri area of Mastung district.

Woman killed

Fort Pierce (US): An 85-year-old woman was killed by an alligator while walking her dog in a senior living community on Florida's Atlantic Coast, officials said. The woman was walking her dog Monday beside a canal in Spanish Lakes Fairway near Fort Pierce when the nearly 11-foot (3.3-metres) gator attacked the dog, St. Lucie Sheriff Ken Mascara said.



When a country goes bankrupt, it has to go to the International Monetary Fund. Apart from that, there is no other organisation in the world that provides aid when a country goes bankrupt

RANIL WICKREMESINGHE | SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT

ITALY FACES NEW DROUGHT ALERT

Weeks of dry winter weather have raised concerns that Italy could face another drought after last summer's emergency, with the Alps having received less than half of their normal snowfall



N KOREA MISSILE TESTS

China, Japan, SK face radiation risks

REUTERS

Seoul, Feb 21: Tens of thousands of North Koreans and people in South Korea, Japan and China could be exposed to radioactive materials spread through groundwater from an underground nuclear test site, a Seoul-based human rights group said in a report on Tuesday.

North Korea secretly conducted six tests of nuclear weapons at the Punggye-ri site in the mountainous North Hamgyong Province between 2006 and 2017, according to the U.S. and South Korean governments.

The study by the Transitional Justice Working Group said radioactive materials could have spread across eight cities and counties near the site, where more than 1 million North Koreans live, and where groundwater is used in everyday lives including drinking.

It also said that neighbouring South Korea, China and Japan might be at risk due partly to agricultural and fisheries products smuggled from the North. The group, formed in 2014, worked with nuclear and medical experts and detectors and used open source intelligence and publicly available government and U.N. reports for the study, which was backed by the National Endowment for Democracy, a non-profit corporation funded by the U.S. Congress.

This report is significant in showing that North Korea's nuclear tests could threaten the right to life and health of not only the North Korean people, but also of those in South Korea and other neighbouring countries," said Hubert Young-hwan Lee, the group's chief and a co-author.

Telephone calls by Reuters to North Korea's diplomatic mission to the United Nations in New York went unanswered. In 2015, South Korea's food safety agency detected nine times the standard level of radioactive cesium isotopes in imported hedgehog mushrooms that had been sold as Chinese produce though their actual origin was North Korea.

China and Japan have ramped up radiation monitoring and expressed concerns over potential exposure following the North's previous nuclear tests but did not openly provide information on contaminated food. Many outside experts have raised concerns over potential health risks from contaminated water, but North Korea rejected such concerns, saying there were no leaks of harmful materials following past nuclear tests, without providing evidence.

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Revellers from Vila Isabel samba school perform during the second night of the carnival parade at the Sambadrome, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

More Trauma New quake brings fresh losses

ASSOCIATED PRESS

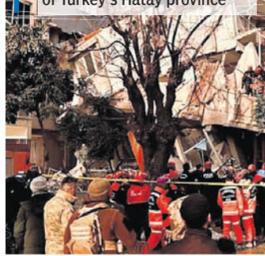
Istanbul, Feb 21: Survivors of the earthquake that jolted Turkey and Syria 15 days ago, killing tens of thousands of people and leaving hundreds of thousands of others homeless, dealt with more trauma and loss Tuesday after another deadly quake and aftershocks rocked the region.

The 6.4 magnitude earthquake that struck Monday evening had its epicenter in the Defne district of Turkey's Hatay province, which was of the area's worst affected by the Feb. 6 magnitude 7.8 quake that killed nearly 46,000 people in the two countries.

Turkey's disaster management authority, AFAD, said the new quake killed six people and injured 294 others, including 18 who were in critical condition. In Syria, a woman and a girl died as a result of panic during the earthquake in the provinces of Hama and Tartus, pro-government media said.

Monday's quake was felt in Jordan, Cyprus, Israel, Lebanon and Egypt. A magnitude 5.8 quake followed, along with dozens of aftershocks.

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The White Helmets, northwest Syria's civil defense organization, said about 190 people suffered injuries in rebel-held areas and that several flimsy buildings collapsed but there were no reports of anyone trapped under the debris. In Turkey, teacher Zuher Capar, 42, said he was mourning the loss of relatives in the original earthquake and having a meal with his aunt and uncle near the Hatay town of Samandag when they felt Monday's temblor. "It shook a lit-

tle, then it grew strong," he said. "The electricity went and there were screams everywhere. There were small children in the house. They were screaming, my aunt was crying."

On February 6, Capar rushed to try to help his cousin, the cousin's wife and the couple's small children out of the rubble of their collapsed home, but they did not survive. "We had barely overcome the sadness (from the first earthquake)," he said.

While his large family's home withstood the quake earlier in the month, it was damaged on Monday. Capar said they are too frightened to sleep there and plan to stay in a large tent and cars. "We are trying to stay strong but it is a terrifying process. The cities we knew, the memories we had, have been destroyed," he said. "When we go in the streets, there is only rubble and heavy machinery. It's like a horror movie scene."

Turkish officials warned residents not to go into the remains of their homes, but people have done so to retrieve what they can. Three of the people killed Monday were inside a damaged four-story building when the new quake hit. Aftershocks and the instability of the structure complicated the rescue effort, and it took several hours for search crews to find the bodies, Turkish news agency DHA said. Dr. Tahsin Cinar, an anesthesiologist using vacation time to help provide medical care in Hatay as a representative of the Turkish Medical Association, said earthquake survivors need serious help with their mental health.

RUSHDIE ATTACKER REWARDED

REUTERS

Dubai, Feb 21: An Iranian foundation has praised the man who attacked novelist Salman Rushdie last year, leaving him severely injured, and said it will reward him with 1,000 square metres of agricultural land, state TV reported Tuesday through its Telegram channel.

Rushdie, 75, lost an eye and the use of one hand following the assault by a 24-year-old Shiite Muslim American from New Jersey on the stage of a literary event held near Lake Erie in western New York in August.

"We sincerely thank the brave action of the young American who made Muslims happy by blinding one of Rushdie's eyes and disabling one of his hands," said Mohammad Esmail Zarei, secretary of the Foundation to Implement Imam Khomeini's Fatwas. "Rushdie is now no more than living dead and to honour this brave action, about



1,000 square metres of agricultural land will be donated to the person or any of his legal representatives," Zarei added.

The attack came 33 years after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, then Iran's supreme leader, issued a fatwa, or religious edict, calling on Muslims to assassinate Rushdie a few months after "The Satanic Verses" was published. Some Muslims saw passages in the novel about the Prophet Muhammad as blasphemous. Rushdie, who was born in India to a Muslim Kashmiri family, has lived with a bounty on his head, and spent nine years in hiding under British police protection.

Chinese provinces give 30 days' paid marriage leave

China's minimum paid marriage leave is three days, but provinces have been able to set their own more generous allowances since February

REUTERS

Hong Kong, Feb 21: Some Chinese provinces are giving young newlyweds 30 days of paid leave in the hope of encouraging marriage and boosting a flagging birth rate, the Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily Health said Tuesday. China's minimum paid marriage leave is three days, but provinces have been able to set their own more generous allowances since February. The northwestern province of Gansu and

TO BOOST BIRTH RATE



the coal-producing province of Shanxi now give 30 days, while Shanghai gives 10 and Sichuan still only three, according to the People's Daily Health.

"Extending marriage leave is one of the effective ways of increasing the fertility rate," Yang Haiyang, dean of the Social Development Research Institute of Southwestern University of Finance and Economics, was quoted as saying.

AMID CHINA THREAT

Will boost military ties with US: Taiwan

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taipei, Feb 21: A delegation of US lawmakers Tuesday met with Taiwan's president, who promised to deepen military cooperation between the two sides despite objections from China, which claims the island as its own territory.

The group was one of many U.S. delegations President Tsai Ing-wen has welcomed in recent years even as Beijing has stepped up diplomatic and military harassment of Taiwan.

China responded to foreign visits by holding large-scale military exercises seen by some as a rehearsal for a blockade or invasion. Beijing has not ruled out use of force to reunite Taiwan with mainland China, although the sides have been separated since a civil war in 1949, and most Taiwanese prefer to keep the status quo of de-facto independence. Tsai thanked the lawmakers for coming, saying it was a chance to deepen ongoing cooperation in semiconductor chip design and manufacturing, renewable energy and next-generation 5G mobile network.

"Taiwan and the U.S. (will) continue to bolster military exchanges. Going forward, Taiwan will cooperate even more actively with the U.S. And other democratic partners to confront such bold challenges as authoritarian expansionism and climate change," Tsai said.

Tensions between the US and China inflated after Washington shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon that Beijing maintains was an unmanned weather balloon. Both sides are also in opposition on the war in Ukraine, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned Sunday that Beijing could be considering providing weapons to Russia for the war.

BIDDING ADIEU

Tears, photos as Japan sends giant panda 'home' to China

REUTERS

Tokyo, Feb 21: With tears, waves and shouts of farewell from fans, a Japan-born giant panda set off for China Tuesday from the Tokyo zoo where she was raised.

A hugely popular attraction at Tokyo's Ueno Zoo since her birth there nearly six years ago, Xiang Xiang was sent to China under an agreement in which giant pandas are loaned to zoos around the world but China maintains ownership of any such loaned bears and their offspring.

Xiang Xiang was originally supposed to be returned in December 2020 but this was delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.



The zoo's first naturally-conceived panda, Xiang Xiang was also the first born there for years, enhancing her popularity. Another baby panda died shortly after birth in 2012. Her parents are still at the zoo, as are younger twin siblings born in 2021.

Xiang Xiang was originally supposed to be returned in December 2020 but this was delayed by the coronavirus pandemic

The zoo's first naturally-conceived panda, Xiang Xiang was also the first born there for years, enhancing her popularity

Some 60,000 people applied for 2,600 spots to see her on Sunday, her last day on view, with a few women last in tears as they watched her snack on bamboo

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in tears as they watched her snack on bamboo.

Media chronicled her journey as she was loaded onto a truck by a forklift bearing panda decals early Tuesday morning, with zoo personnel lining a path as she departed. Public broadcaster NHK livestreamed footage of Xiang Xiang's cage at the airport moments before it was loaded for the flight.

A crowd gathered at Tokyo's Narita Airport to snap photos, wave and shout as the plane carrying her took off. "Thank you, Xiang Xiang," one fan wrote on the zoo's Twitter page. "Your charm and winsomeness brought life to our city."



The world wants to engage with our startups because of their integrity and transparency
PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

of the day quote

India's journey towards a USD 5 trillion economy will require over 600 million people under the age of 25 years to be equipped with future ready skills.
NANDAN NILEKANI | INFOSYS TECHNOLOGIES CO-FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN

Working on the vision of reducing import dependency through indigenous production, the government is focussing on production of high value pharmaceuticals and high-end medical devices
MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION MINISTER

The infusion of additional funds will help SpiceJet normalise its obligations, unground its fleet and induct new planes into our fleet
AJAY SINGH | SPICEJET CMD

Digital transactions to soon exceed cash in India: PM

Modi along with his Singaporean counterpart Lee Hsien Loong witnessed the launch of cross-border connectivity between UPI and PayNow via video conferencing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Singapore, Feb 21: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday expressed hope that digital transactions will soon surpass cash with Unified Payments Interface (UPI) increasingly becoming the most preferred payment mechanism in the country. Modi after the launch of the cross-border connectivity between the UPI and PayNow of Singapore said about 74 billion transactions amounting to more than ₹126 trillion, which is approximately 2 trillion Singapore dollar, was done through UPI in 2022.

"Many experts are estimating that very soon India's digital wallet transactions are going to overtake cash transactions," he said. A large number of transactions via UPI demonstrate that this indigenously designed payment system is very secure, he said.

Modi along with his Singaporean counterpart Lee Hsien Loong witnessed the launch of cross-border connectivity between UPI and PayNow via video conferencing.

The facility was launched through token transactions by Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das and Managing Director of Monetary Authority of Singapore Ravi Menon using the UPI-PayNow linkage. Modi in a tweet said, "Today is a special day for India-Singapore



friendship and for our efforts to deepen collaboration in FinTech and innovation. The participation of my friend, PM @leehsienloong made this morning's programme even more special."

Prime Minister Lee said the idea of linking PayNow and UPI was first conceived in 2018, when Modi visited Singapore.

"Since then, our two central banks have been working on this in earnest. Digital connectivity was also a key topic discussed at the inaugural India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable (ISMR), which was held in New Delhi last September. So I am very glad that

the PayNow-UPI linkage has now become a reality," Lee explained.

"As we progressively add more users and use cases, the PayNow-UPI linkage will grow in utility, and contribute more to facilitating our trade and our people-to-people links," Lee said.

Cross-border retail payments and remittances between Singapore and India amount to over USD 1 billion annually.

"I hope this strong partnership between Singapore and India will continue to spawn innovative technology solutions and create more cross-border opportunities for our digital economies," Lee said.

THERMAL PLANTS ASKED TO USE IMPORTED COAL

With electricity demand expected to hit a new peak this summer, the Power Ministry has directed all thermal plants using imported coal to operate with full capacity from March 16 to June 15 so as to avoid electricity shortage. The direction under Section 11 of the Electricity Act came amid rising power demand due to higher-than-normal temperature in several parts of the country.



HPCL faces challenges paying for Russian oil

REUTERS

Barmer, Feb 21: State-run Hindustan Petroleum Corp is facing difficulties in paying for Russian oil imports following a Dec. 5 price cap imposed by Western nations as banks shy away from processing payments, a company official said Tuesday.

While Western sanctions against Moscow are not recognised by India - and purchases of Russian oil may not violate them - banks and financial institutions are cautious about clearing payments so as not to unwittingly fall foul of the measures.

HPCL is looking for alternative banking channels after some Indian banks with huge exposure to the United States and the western economies stopped facilitating payments, the source, who did not wish to be identified, told reporters on a press trip with India's energy minister. "Some banks are US affiliated," he said, and foreign banks won't "support" or "entertain" transactions concerning Russian oil. HPCL declined to comment.

Refiners in India, which rarely used to buy Russian oil because of costly logistics, have emerged as key oil clients for Russia, snapping up discounted crude shunned by Western nations since the invasion of Ukraine a year ago.

Indian refiners are buying Russian oil at below the \$60 per barrel price cap imposed by Western economies, which is necessary in order for them to access Western insurance cover and shipping.

The source said India is buying Russian oil on a delivered basis, which includes transportation



costs, and traders supplying the oil are not willing to declare the free-on-board price for the Russian oil.

Despite challenges, HPCL is continuing to buy Russian oil and has imported 40,000 barrels per day in the current financial year to March 31, the source added.

Due to the higher availability of Russian oil at discounted rates, HPCL has raised its intake of spot crude to about 30% of its overall imports in this fiscal year from 25% in 2021/22.

The source said HPCL's spot purchases in the next fiscal year from April would rise further on better availability of Russian oil. The company is also looking at buying Russian oil under a term deal, although volumes could be 'small', he added.

India's Russian oil imports in January rose to record levels after European nations stopped buying Russian oil from Dec. 5, leading to a higher intake by India.

The source said in the past HPCL had used roubles, dirhams and dollars to pay for Russian oil. Reuters reported earlier this month that Indian refiners are paying for Russian oil in dirhams.

Markets edge lower in choppy session

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 21: Benchmark Sensex and Nifty closed marginally down in choppy trade Tuesday, extending losses for a third straight day as investors remained cautious ahead of the release of minutes of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting.

The BSE Sensex edged down 18.82 points or 0.03 per cent to settle at 60,672.72 as 17 of its constituents declined while 13 advanced. During the day, it hit a low of 60,583.72 and a high of 60,976.59.

The NSE Nifty slipped 17.90 points or 0.1 per cent to end at 17,826.70 with 30 of its scrips ending in the red.

Sensex has declined over 1 per cent or 646 points while Nifty retreated by 1.36 per cent or 209 points in three sessions to Tuesday.

From the Sensex pack, Tata Motors, Sun Pharma, Wipro, Tata Consultancy Services, UltraTech Cement, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, HCL Technologies, Infosys and IndusInd Bank were the major laggards.

NTPC, Power Grid, Reliance Industries, Tata Steel, HDFC and HDFC Bank were the major winners. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge dipped 0.31 per cent and midcap index declined 0.21 per cent.

Among the sectoral indices, realty declined 1.03 per cent, IT slipped 0.83 per cent, tech dipped 0.82 per cent, oil & gas (0.52 per cent), commodities (0.48 per cent) and telecommunication (0.44 per cent).

FMCG, industrials, utilities, capital goods and power were the winners. In Asian markets, South Korea and China ended in the green, while Hong Kong and Japan settled lower.

International oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.50 per cent to USD 82.81 per barrel.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) offloaded shares worth ₹158.95 crore Monday, according to exchange data.

SHORT TAKES

HSBC India pre-tax profit jumps 15%

Mumbai: Foreign lender HSBC Tuesday reported a 15.04 per cent jump in its pre-tax profit from operations in India at USD 1.277 billion for 2022. The bank had reported a pre-tax profit of USD 1.11 billion from its operations in India, which continues to be fourth largest contributor for group profits, in 2021. It has added 1,000 people to its India headcount in 2022, to take the total employee strength to 39,000, its biggest in any market. The bank, like many peers in the foreign lenders space, has huge back office operations in India. In a statement, the bank said it has become the largest foreign lender in the country by both advances and deposits as of March 2022. It also handles 9 per cent of traded forex and 15 per cent of foreign investor custody assets.

OYO to double premium hotels

New Delhi: OYO Tuesday announced its plan to double the number of premium hotels in India with the addition of around 1,800 such hotels in 2023. Its premium hotel brands include Townhouse Oak, OYO Townhouse, Collection O and Capital O. OYO currently has about 1,800 premium hotels in India. The move is aimed at capitalising on the surge in business travel by increasing its footprints across all the major business cities. "OYO plans to add approximately 1,800 premium hotels this year," the hospitality tech platform said. It said the expansion will focus on key business cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai in South India, Delhi and Noida in North India, Kolkata in East India and Mumbai in West India. OYO's focus on premium hotels started in the last quarter of 2022.

Aditya Birla Sun Life NFO collects ₹1,574cr

New Delhi: Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC Tuesday said it has collected ₹1,574 crore through its newly launched multi-asset allocation fund. The new open-ended scheme-- Aditya Birla Sun Life Multi Asset Allocation Fund -- which invests in equity, fixed income, gold, silver and real estate investment trusts (REITs) was launched January 11. "The NFO (new fund offering) managed to garner high investor interest with investments from over 70,000 investors and collected ₹1,574 crore as on January 31, 2023," the asset management company said in a statement. The multi-asset allocation category has emerged as a popular investment option for investors seeking asset class diversification along with a stable investment solution.

Vedanta Lanjigarh's lab first to be certified for alumina testing



POST NEWS NETWORK

Lanjigarh, Feb 21: Vedanta Limited, Lanjigarh, India's premier producer of metallurgical grade alumina, has achieved a new milestone in its relentless pursuit of operational excellence. Its in-house laboratory has emerged as the first in India to be officially certified capable of testing calcined alumina on all relevant physical and chemical parameters.

The National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) has awarded the ISO 17025:2017 certification to Vedanta Lanjigarh's Quality Control and Laboratory, indicating that it meets the specialised requirements vital for competent testing.

What makes this certification especially noteworthy is that the Vedanta Lanjigarh team inde-

pendently completed the NABL accreditation process on their very first effort and within a shorter timeframe, a testament to the extensive skills and expertise of the company's technical personnel.

Sharing his views, GG Pal, Dy CEO - Alumina Business, Vedanta Limited, said, "Vedanta Lanjigarh's efforts are geared towards achieving operational and quality excellence in every aspect of the business, with a vision to establishing ourselves as one of the best alumina refineries in the world. We are achieving this through a comprehensive mix of deep technical expertise, digital innovations and augmented technologies. The ISO certification comes as an added fillip towards ensuring that our product is associated with the best available standards and industry benchmarks prevalent today."

India steel imports from Russia rise to 8-year high

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 21: India's imports of Russian steel rose to an eight-year high during the first 10 months of the financial year that began in April 2022, government data compiled by Reuters showed.

India, the world's second-largest crude steel producer, imported 281,000 tonnes of steel from Russia between April and January, nearly five times higher than the same period a year ago, the data showed.

The rising imports are the result of shift in Russian steel trade flows to Asia after Western sanctions were imposed on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine last year. The change is displacing some traditional suppliers and domestic steel producers are raising concerns about potentially losing market share to the lower priced imports.

Moscow was the fourth-biggest steel supplier to India during the April to January period, emerging as one of the top five steel exporters to the country for the first time since the 2016/17 fiscal year, the data showed.

Between April and January, about 72% of Moscow's steel shipments to India constituted hot-rolled coil (HRC) and strips.

Russia displaced Japan as the second-biggest supplier of HRC to India for the first time in at least



eight years, the data showed.

Russian suppliers sold some of their HRC to Indian buyers at around 46,000 Indian rupees (\$555.86) a tonne, at least 21% cheaper than domestic prices, said a government official with direct knowledge of the matter.

Indian steel companies have expressed concerns over cheaper Russian steel imports.

"The surge in volume and low price point is a matter of concern and needs to be contained," said Jayant Acharya, deputy managing director at JSW Steel Ltd. India remained a net exporter

of steel during the first 10 months of the 2022/23 fiscal year, the data showed, despite finished steel exports more than halving during the period because of sluggish global demand.

Russia continues to be a steady buyer of Indian stainless steel, with expectations those volumes will rise. Jindal Stainless Ltd, India's biggest stainless steel manufacturer, said it expects its exports to reach a five-year high in the next fiscal year, buoyed by increased shipments to Russia and the start of exports to South America and the Middle East.

Indians spending over \$1bn every month on foreign travel

EUROPE, INDONESIA, VIETNAM, THAILAND, AND DUBAI ARE SOME OF THE MAJOR DESTINATIONS THAT INDIANS PREFER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: Indians are spending nearly USD 1 billion every month on foreign travel which is significantly more than the pre-Covid levels, reveals Reserve Bank data on outward remittances.

During the April-December period of 2022-23, the outward remittances under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) for resident individuals towards 'travel' was USD 9.95 billion.

The corresponding spending on travel during 2021-22 was USD 4.16 billion, and USD 5.4 billion in the pre-Covid year 2019-20, according to the RBI data. The outward remittances towards travel were USD 7 billion in the entire 2021-22 financial year.

"Indians are roaming across the

world with their families or friends. Vietnam, Thailand, Europe, and Bali are some major destinations that Indians prefer," said Sapan Gupta, Partner, We3Online.

Europe, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Dubai are some of the major destinations that Indians prefer.

Akash Dahiya, Co-founder, SanKash said that with the rise of affordable travel and technological advancements, the travel industry is experiencing a massive boom in international destinations.

"Seventy-five per cent of our portfolio is now opting for international travel. We are witnessing a surge in demand for places such as Europe, Bali, Vietnam, and Dubai among Indians," he said.

Dahiya further said travellers have become accustomed to the



concept of 'travel-now-pay-later' which allows them to make booking closer to the date and pick up

a destination that otherwise is out of their pocket.

"Thus, paying for a travel expe-

rience in a monthly payment plan makes the holiday bite-size. Thus, a person looking for Goa can now go to Thailand, and a person planning for Thailand can opt for the far east and likewise," he added.

Meanwhile, the government in the Union Budget proposed to hike the TCS rate on overseas tour packages from the current 5 per cent to 20 per cent from the next fiscal.

Experts are of the view that the proposal could impact overseas travel by Indians.

According to RBI data, the spending on outward travel fell sharply to USD 3.23 billion during 2020-21 mainly due to restrictions following the outbreak of Covid-19.

The outward remittances towards travel were USD 6.95 and USD 4.8 billion in 2019-20 and 2018-19, respectively.

Wipro cuts salary offers to freshers awaiting onboarding

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 22: Wipro's move to cut salary offers to freshers awaiting onboarding by almost 50 per cent under one programme has been termed 'unjust' and 'unacceptable' by employees union NITES, which demanded that the IT company should reconsider its decision.

Wipro's decision reflects the global macro economic uncertainties and the challenges in the demand environment for tech companies, say market watchers.

The Bangalore-headquartered IT services major, Wipro, recently reached out to candidates to whom it had earlier rolled out an offer of ₹6.5 lakh per annum (LPA), and asked them if an offer of ₹3.5 in annual compensation would be acceptable to them, instead. These candidates were reportedly waiting to be onboarded.

IT sector employees union NITES has slammed the move, saying the decision is 'unjust' and "goes against the principles of fairness and transparency." NITES has demanded that the management reconsiders its decision and engages in meaningful dialogue with the union to find a mutually beneficial solution.

Wipro, in a recent communication to candidates who have successfully completed Velocity training programme, said: "Like others in our industry we continue to assess global economies and customer needs which factor into our hiring plans. We appreciate your commitment and patience as we try to identify joining opportunities for you."

Wipro went on to say that "currently we have certain project engineer roles available for recruitment with annual compensation of ₹3.5 lakh. We would like to offer all our Velocity graduates in FY23 batch an opportunity to opt for these roles."

When contacted on the issue, Wipro in response to an e-mail query said: "In light of the changing macro environment and, as a result, our business needs, we had to adjust our onboarding plans."

END OF AN ERA

NO FAIRYTALE ENDING TO TRAILBLAZER SANIA'S CAREER, BOWS OUT WITH FIRST ROUND DEFEAT IN WTA DUBAI DUTY FREE CHAMPIONSHIPS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Feb 21: A fairytale ending was not there but Sania Mirza bows out of international tennis after achieving unprecedented success and setting high benchmark for the next generation.

Sania and her American partner Madison Keys lost 4-6, 0-6 to the formidable Russian pair of Veronika Kudermetova and Liudmila Samsonova in exactly one hour at the WTA Dubai Duty Free

Championships.

Just a month back Sania played her last Grand Slam and ended with a runner-up finish at the Australian Open along with compatriot Rohan Bopanna.

Now settled in Dubai, Sania would have hoped for a dream closing at her second home but she bumped into a strong Russian pairing that cut short her stay in the final tournament of her career in which she won 43 WTA doubles titles and one singles trophy.

Success was not the only highlight of her almost two-decade long career as unwarranted controversies chased Sania through-out.

Sometimes she remained unfazed and kept going, achieving many a firsts. Sometimes she broke to the extent that she considered not playing in India.

It was when she had to prove her love and loyalty for India after being accused of disrespecting the tri-colour during the 2008

Hopman Cup in Australia.

Probably the worst jibe thrown at her was when she was called daughter-in-law of Pakistan due to her wedding with Pakistani cricketer Shoaib Malik. This was after Telangana chose her to be their state ambassador.

All this, despite her inspiring on-court success. After all, how many from India became a top-30 tennis players? How many excelled at Majors? How many became World No.1 across formats? How many won the year-end championships?

In men's tennis, just a handful and in women's tennis, it's only Sania. And no player is in sight who looks like even getting near to what Sania has achieved. The gap is huge and the best after Sania are also gradually fading.

The 36-year-old Sania, who turned Pro in 2003, walks out of competitive tennis with six Grand Slam titles, including three women's doubles with Swiss legend Martina Hingis.

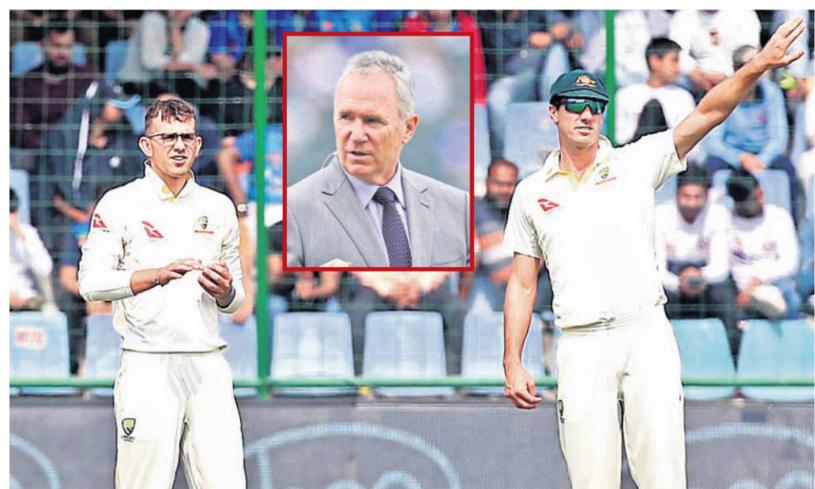
She won two of her three mixed doubles with compatriot Mahesh Bhupathi (2009 Australian Open and 2012 French Open). She won the US Open trophy with Bruno Soares.

However success eluded at the biggest stage: Olympics. She was close to winning a bronze at the 2016 Rio Games but lost the play-off with Bopanna.

In the final match of her career, the breaks were traded at swift pace in the opening set which was locked at 4-4. From there, Kudermetova and Samsonova broke the pair of Sania and Keys one more time for a 5-4 lead, placing themselves in a position from where they could serve out the set.

They did that quite comfortably, losing one point in the 10th game. Sania and her partner were broken in the very first game of the second set and it was one way traffic after that as they were bageled.

Border sympathises with Pat



Pat Cummins sets the field after giving the ball to Todd Murphy in one of the Tests against India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Feb 21: The legendary Allan Border feels Pat Cummins had a lot to worry about as the series against India was his "first real test as captain" and in the process under-bowled himself in the second Test in Delhi.

Australia conceded the four-match series for the Border Gavaskar Trophy after losing the opening two Tests in Nagpur and Delhi. Cummins, who had faced just one defeat as captain before coming to India, was the sole quick in the Australian playing XI in the six-wicket loss in Delhi. He bowled just 13 overs in the first innings and didn't bowl at all in India's second essay.

"To me, the fast bowler, it's always fraught with danger," Border told SEN Radio. "I thought Pat

grossly under-bowled himself in that Test match.

"There were opportunities when things were starting to go astray, particularly in the Indian first innings when we had them on the ropes and they formed a good partnership, a couple of blasts from him running in and bowling some short stuff for two or three overs."

Australia had reduced India to 139/7 before Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin shared a 114-run stand to take India to just one run short of the visiting team's first innings total.

"There are other guys out on the field I suppose who could go to the captain and say, 'mate, why don't you have a bowl?'" Border said. "But I just thought this is Pat's first real test as a captain, the rest has been plain sailing, you go to the sub-continent

and all of a sudden you get tested out in all sorts of areas.

"He's worried about lots of different things, he forgot about himself bowling I think. That's what can happen in those situations when your premier fast bowler is your captain."

However, Border was also sympathetic towards Cummins. "There is a lot going on, even if you're the captain in those situations and you're a batter. People don't really appreciate how tough it is, it's a really different place to play the game in the sub-continent," he explained.

"You've got to have your wits about you, that's for sure... when it's not going right and it's going south, it goes south very quickly."

Former wicketkeeper Ian Healy felt Cummins lost the "mind power" to set the field properly in the second innings. "Then the mental stress that's involved in getting your field right, he didn't seem to have that in the last innings.

"He still had men on the boundary instead of extra catchers around the bat... that takes a lot of mind power to keep it all together thinking about that and (bowling changes)."

Cummins has flown back home from the tour of India due to a "serious family illness" following the second Test. He is expected to return to India for the remaining two games of the Border-Gavaskar trophy in Indore and Ahmedabad

DAVID WARNER RULED OUT

New Delhi: Struggling Australia opening batter David Warner was Tuesday ruled out of the remaining two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy due to an elbow fracture, dealing further blow to the visiting team. Warner will head home to Sydney to recover but is expected to return to India for the three-match ODI series after the four-match Test series. The ODI series begins March 17 in Mumbai. "David Warner has been ruled out of the Test tour of India and will return home," CA said in a statement. "Warner was struck on the elbow in the second Test in Delhi and sustained a hairline fracture. After further assessment, he will require a period of rehabilitation which will preclude any further involvement in the remainder of the Test series. It is currently anticipated that he will return to India for the three ODIs which follow the Test Series."

RUDRANKKSH SECURES GOLD IN 10M AIR RIFLE



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cairo, Feb 21: Reigning World Champion Rudranksh Patil won the gold medal in the men's 10m air rifle competition of the ISSF Shooting World Cup here on Tuesday, extending India's dominance in the tournament.

India now has four medals in its kitty including three gold. World No.1 Rudranksh got the better of Germany's Maximilian Ulbrich 16-8 in the gold medal contest. Rudranksh also topped the ranking round with a total score of 262.0, with Ulbrich scoring 260.6.

Earlier, Rudranksh qualified for the ranking matches after finishing seventh in the qualification round with a score of 629.3. The other Indian shooters in the fray, Divyansh Singh Panwar and Hriday Hazarika narrowly missed out on qualification.

In the ranking round, where the top eight qualifiers face-off over five series of five single shots each to determine the top two who make it to the gold medal match, seasoned Israeli shooter Sergey Richter led after the first series by the Indian 1.2 points behind in fifth.

The champion was back in his element from the second series and a perfect 10.9 for his 10th gave

him the lead for the first time. He held on to that slender 0.2 points lead over Croat Miran Maricic till the end of the third series and by the end of the fourth, that lead had swelled to 1.1.

Israel's Richter was holding on to third. With only four shooters left in the fray, the world champion topped by a distance with a score of 262 after 25 shots. However, Maricic and Richter fell away as Ulbrich came up quietly to finish second with 260.6. Maricic managed bronze with 260.5.

The German had earned the right to fight the world champion for gold. The scores were tied 7-7 after the first seven single shots. However, Rudranksh took the next three series to lead 13-7, despite the German coach calling for a timeout after the ninth series.

Ulbrich kept fighting and earned a tie in the 11th series but Rudranksh closed it out clinically in the 12th. Monday, the Indian shooters swept the mixed team air pistol and rifle competitions.

R Narmada Nithin and Rudranksh won the 10m air rifle mixed team event to give India their first gold. Varun Tomar, who had won bronze in the individual event on Sunday, and Rhythm Sangwan then clinched the 10m air pistol mixed team competition.

Comfortable wins for Shiva, Hussamuddin

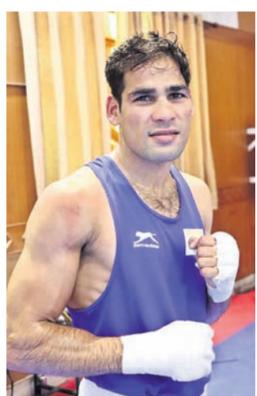
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sofia, Feb 21: Experienced pugilists Shiva Thapa and Hussamuddin began their campaign at 74th Strandja Memorial International Boxing Tournament on a winning note here Tuesday.

Thapa (63.5 kg) faced Frederik Jensen Lundgaard in the round of 32 match and started the bout with an aggressive approach. He displayed swift movements and landed some quick jabs on his opponent to gain an early lead in the first round.

The second round also went the Indian boxer's way as he dominated his opponent. Thapa used his experience and top-notch skills to dodge his opponent's attacks. He maintained a safe distance in the third round and only went into attacking mode when there was a clear opening in Lundgaard's defence.

The difference between their experience was evident in the scoreline as Thapa won the match by 5-



HUSSAMUDDIN



SHIVA THAPA

0 and progressed into the next round of the tournament. Hussamuddin (57kg) also looked confident and dominated China's Lyu Ping from the start of the bout.

The Indian boxer was in con-

trol throughout the bout, as he landed accurate punches at his opponent. He asserted dominance over his Chinese counterpart in every round and eventually registered a 4-1 victory to progress into

the pre-quarters.

Nishant Dev (71kg) went down 2-3 against Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist Aidan Walsh of Ireland and bowed out of the competition.

On the other hand, three female pugilists won their respective matches late on Monday night and progressed into the next round of the tournament.

Kalaivani (48kg) defeated Tesara Cleo of the Philippines 5-0 while Anamika (50kg) got the better of China's Chang Yuan 5-0 to progress into the next round. Vinakshi (57kg) won her bout against Azerbaijan's Hamzayeva Aghamaliyeva Mashati by 4-1.

Ankushita Boro (66kg) crashed out of the tournament after going down 1-4 against reigning World Champion Amy Broadhurst of Ireland.

The prestigious tournament is witnessing the participation of 388 pugilists, including 256 men and 142 women which is the highest ever in the competition's history.

'Fully fit' Chahar preparing for IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: After struggling with two "big" injuries last year, India pacer Deepak Chahar says he is fully fit and set to make his comeback with the Indian Premier League beginning March 31.

The 30-year-old injury-prone fast bowler had a tough time recovering from a stress fracture and more recently a quad grade 3 tear. He last played for India in the second ODI in Bangladesh where he broke down after bowling three overs.

In the whole of 2022, Chahar could only feature in 15 games for India and was also ruled out of the T20 World Cup due to injury. Having done an extensive rehab at the National Cricket Academy, Chahar is preparing for the IPL where he will represent the Chennai Super Kings.

"I working hard for the past two three months on my fitness, I am fully fit and preparing well for the IPL," Chahar told PTI.

"I had two big injuries. One was stress fracture and one was quad grade 3 tear. They are both very big injuries. You are out for months. Anyone who comes back



after the injury it takes time, especially for the fast bowlers.

"If I was a batter I would be playing way back long but as a fast bowler, when you have a stress fracture, it is very tough to get back on track. You can see other bowlers struggling with the back as well."

The Rajasthan pacer made a return to competitive cricket with a first-class game against Services last month but that was his only appearance in Ranji Trophy. Multiple injuries have pushed him down in the pecking order but he hopes to be part of the Indian team for the

ODI World Cup at home later this year. "I have lived by one rule all my life. If I am bowling the way I want, if I am batting the way I want, there is no stopping me. That was the basic rule with which I started my career."

"I don't care who is playing, who is not playing, my motive is to get fully fit and perform with the ball and bat 100 per cent. If I do that, I will get my chances," said Chahar who has also proved his value with the bat in his international career that began in 2018.

Since making his India debut in July 2018, he has managed to play in 13 ODIs and 24 T20s. The men's IPL will be preceded by the inaugural Women's Premier League and Chahar could not be more excited for his female counterparts.

"IPL changed men's cricket forever, people got a lot of opportunities. Same thing will happen with Women's Premier League. Women's cricket will grow very fast as they will face international players very early in their careers. It will also help a lot of women cricketers who have not been able to make money and will fuel competition," said Chahar.

SHORT TAKES

Junior eves pip SA

New Delhi: The Indian junior women's hockey team won 4-3 in penalty shootout against the U-21 South African side in their final match of the tour. Having won all their matches against the U-21 South African team, India is now focus on playing the 'A' team of the host country, twice in quick succession. The match, much closer than the previous encounters between the two teams, ended in a draw after both sides failed to score in regulation time, leading to a shootout that ended 4-3 in the favour of India. The South Africa Tour is part of the team's preparations for the all-important U-21 Asia Cup, which is a qualification tournament for the FIH Women's Hockey Junior World Cup.

Blow for Barcelona

Barcelona: Barcelona's spending cap has been reduced by the Spanish league because of its elimination in the Champions League. The Spanish league said Monday it set the club's limit for the season at 648 million euros (USD 692 million), down from 656 million euros (USD 700 million). Barcelona's cap remained relatively high thanks to the financial maneuvers it did to restructure its debts, though the league said the club will need to slash about 200 million euros ahead of next season, which could be done either by reducing costs within the squad or attracting new investment. Atletico Madrid and Sevilla also had their caps reduced because of their exits in the Champions League. Atletico's was at 315 million euros and Sevilla's at 191 million euros. Real Madrid remained the club with the highest spending cap in the league at 683 million euros.

Amancio dies at 83

Madrid: Amancio Amaro, who helped Real Madrid win the European Cup and nine Spanish league titles in the 1960s and 70s, died Tuesday. He was 83. Real Madrid, where Amancio was an honorary president, announced the news without giving a cause of death. It called Amancio "one of the greatest legends of our club and of world football. Always an example for Real Madrid and for the whole sporting world." The midfielder who also played for Spain when they won their first European Championship in 1964. He made 42 appearances for his country. He played 14 seasons for Madrid from 1962. In his 471 games, he scored 155 times and was the Spanish league top scorer twice.