



SCATHING ATTACK

Actor and former beauty queen Sushmita Sen slams the paparazzi culture saying privacy is a myth for celebrities

LEISURE P2



RUSSIA-CHINA RELATIONS

President Vladimir Putin says Chinese Premier Xi Jinping will soon visit Russia and relations will reach 'new frontiers'

INTERNATIONAL P10



INDIA FACE AUSTRALIA

Harmanpreet Kaur-led India face mighty Australia for a place in the final of ICC Women's T20 WC today

SPORTS P12

SHORT TAKES

8 new health centres to come up in Odisha

Bhubaneswar: Odisha government's Health and Family Welfare Department will set up eight new urban primary health centres (UPHC) in different districts of the state under the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM), officials said Wednesday. According to a notification issued by the department, two such centres will be set up in Jajpur district (Jajpur and Vyasanagar). The other centres will come up in Rairangpur of Mayurbhanj district, Malkangiri town in Malkangiri district, Soro in Balasore district, Rajagangpur in Sundargarh, Angul in Talcher and Cuttack town in Cuttack district. Officials said that these centres will go a long way in providing proper healthcare to the people.

Emergency landing for Air India flight

New Delhi: An Air India flight from Newark to Delhi, carrying 292 passengers, made an emergency landing Wednesday in Stockholm due to an oil leak in one of the engines. Aviation regulator DGCA will probe the incident, according to senior officials. A DGCA official said the flight (No. AI 106), operated with a Boeing 777-300 ER aircraft, had an oil leak in one of the engines. Following this, the engine was shut down, and later the aircraft made an emergency landing in Stockholm. Other than the passengers, there were 15 crew members and four pilots on board the aircraft. The airline said the aircraft is being thoroughly checked to address the technical issue.

2 dead, 53 missing in China mine collapse

Beijing: A vast portion of an outdoor opencast mine in China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region collapsed Wednesday. So far two persons have died, but the toll may rise as 53 are reportedly missing, officials said. They added that the rescue work has been hampered by darkness. The incident happened in Inner Mongolia autonomous region's Alshaa and the authorities were at work to rescue those trapped inside. Six persons have been brought out from the mine, but their condition is stated to be serious, officials informed.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Who else can she sing about? Catch her! She is certainly singing against the govt

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	60431.84	↓ 250.86
NIFTY	17770.90	↓ 85.60
DOLLAR	82.55	↓ ₹0.09
EURO	88.48	↑ ₹0.40
GOLD	₹56,657	↓ ₹84
SILVER	₹66,312	↓ ₹352

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	37.9°C	36.8°C
MIN	22.7°C	19.5°C
Humidity	82%	91%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
		Forecast Dry weather most likely



DANCING FEET: Members of the Portela School perform a samba routine during the second night of the carnival Tuesday in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil PHOTO REUTERS

9 DEAD IN TWO ROAD MISHAPS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada/Keonjhar, Feb 22: A total of nine people were killed Wednesday while five others were injured in two different road mishaps in the districts of Rayagada and Keonjhar.

In the first accident six persons died on the spot and two others suffered serious injuries when a truck rammmed into an auto-rickshaw near Rayagada. All the persons in the auto-rickshaw were residents of Andhra Pradesh. They had come to attend a marriage function in Rayagada and were returning to Kamarada village in Andhra Pradesh when the accident occurred. Among the dead were four women.

Five of the deceased were identified as Meleka Sharada (31), Meleka Amudu (44), Huika Laxmi (45), Huika Narasama (42) and Meleka Venkat (59). The identity of the sixth deceased is yet to be ascertained. The two injured have been shifted to a hospital in Vizianagaram as their conditions deteriorated.

Police said that a truck coming



The mangled auto and the injured

from Parvathipuram hit the auto near Cholapadar. The collision was so hard that the three-wheeler was completely mangled. Among those injured is the driver. Police have launched a probe to ascertain the cause of the accident.

In another accident reported late in the evening Wednesday three persons lost their lives and three others suffered serious injuries after an SUV rammmed into the rear of a stationary truck on Barabanka road under Rugudi police limits in Keonjhar district. Among the deceased were two men and a woman and all were occupants of the SUV. The injured have been shifted to the Keonjhar DHH.

Not CBI, but FBI: CM

Naveen Patnaik told the Opposition that the Crime Branch is taking help from FBI in the Naba Das murder case as it has expertise in behavioural analysis

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Speaking for the first time on the brutal murder of former Odisha Health Minister Naba Kishore Das, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said Wednesday that the state Crime Branch is seeking the help of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the US, as they have the best expertise in behavioural analysis in such cases. Patnaik made the announcement following a ruckus by the Opposition BJP and Congress in the Assembly.

"We have requested the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to facilitate an evaluation of the behaviour of the accused by the behavioural support unit of the FBI," the chief minister said.

Das was gunned down January 29, by now dismissed ASI of police, Gopal Das. In view of the sensitive nature of this incident, a Crime Branch investigation was ordered immediately. To ensure transparency in the investigation, the Orissa High Court has nominated retired judge JP Das to monitor the probe as per the request of the government.

Patnaik said that the Crime Branch has been asked to do a thorough and scientific investigation to establish the truth in the case. To examine whether the accused is telling the truth or is being deceptive, several tests including psychiatric evaluation, narco-analysis, forensic psychological assessment and layered voice analysis of the accused were conducted. Patnaik informed the Assembly. He assured the Assembly



NO LET-UP IN OPPN DEMAND

BHUBANESWAR: For the second consecutive day, the BJP and Congress continued to create ruckus in the House over the murder of former Health Minister Naba Kishore Das. While the BJP demanded a CBI probe into the murder, the Congress wanted a SIT probe monitored by the sitting judge of Orissa HC. BJP Chief Whip Mohan Majhi alleged that the murder of Das was government sponsored. LoP Jayanarayan Mishra said, "After 24 days, the CM has woken up and read out a piece of paper. However, he has not uttered a single word on conspiracy." Congress Legislature Party leader Narasingha Mishra alleged that the killing of Das was a pre-planned crime. P3

that no stone will be left unturned in ensuring a full, fair and open investigation in the case.

Patnaik, however, strongly criticised the Opposition, especially the BJP for politicising the sensitive case. "In the aftermath of this terrible incident, the manner in which this very sensitive case is being politicised has shocked me as well as the people of Odisha. It is disturbing to see the baseless and malicious allegations that are being made. The level of political discourse, in this case, is disturbing," Patnaik said.

Patnaik alleged that the Opposition has no other agenda except politicising heinous crimes and demoralising Odisha's police force. "Assaulting a lady police officer on duty by a person holding high constitutional post is deplorable and disgraceful. Odisha has always respected its women and will never forgive this shameful behaviour," Patnaik asserted while launching a veiled attack on LoP Jayanarayan Mishra. Contd...P4

AAP triumphs in Delhi MCD mayoral elections

After 3 failed attempts, the polls were finally held as the SC wanted to expedite the matter as quickly as possible

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 22: Nearly two-and-a-half months after the civic body polls, Delhi got Wednesday its mayor with Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) candidate Shelly Oberoi defeating BJP's Rekha Gupta in the much-anticipated election.

The AAP, led by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, termed the results as a victory of Delhiites and hit out at the BJP, saying 'goons' were defeated. The winning mar-



My thanks to the Supreme Court, because of whose order the mayor election was held today peacefully

SHELLY OBEROI | MAYOR

ginn was 34 votes. The arithmetic in the mayoral poll was favouring

the AAP which had 150 votes against the BJP's 113 out of the total of 274 votes. There were two votes of independent councillors. However, Oberoi received all the votes accounted for by her party, while the BJP got three votes extra against its total strength. Officials said the BJP candidate got the votes of two independent councillors and one from the Congress.

The Electoral College comprised the 250 votes from the elected councillors, seven BJP Lok Sabha members and three AAP Rajya Sabha members from Delhi and 14 MLAs, including 13 from the AAP and one from the BJP.

Oberoi, a Delhi University teacher, is the first mayor of the unified Municipal Corporation of Delhi. Contd...P4

Harassed SI wants to quit

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Feb 22: A sub-inspector (SI) of Odisha police has written to the Jajpur SP alleging constant mental torture by his senior and has offered to resign from his job, officials said Wednesday.

SI Radhanath Das posted at Dharmasala police station in Jajpur district dashed off the letter Tuesday to Jajpur SP police Vineet Agarwal. Das alleged that the inspector-in-charge (IC) of the police station, Rakesh Tripathy has been harassing him mentally and threatening to put him in trouble during his tenure at the police station.

Congress-led alliance will come to power in 2024, says Kharage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 22: The Congress will lead an opposition coalition that will unseat the BJP in the 2024 national elections, party chief Mallikarjun Kharge said while addressing an election gathering in Nagaland. Kharge stated that the 137-year-old outfit was in talks with 'every' other party to unseat the BJP.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has several times said, 'I am the only man who can face the country. No other people can touch me.' No democratic man says this. You are in a democracy, you should remember you are not an autocrat. You are not a dictator. You are elected by people and people will teach you a lesson," Kharge told the gathering.

"In 2024, the alliance government will come to the Centre, Congress will lead. We are talking with other parties because otherwise the democracy and constitution will go. Therefore, with every party now and then, we are calling, we are talking, we are sharing our views. The BJP will not get a majority if all the other parties come together," Kharge added.

The Congress president's attack on the BJP comes as it gears up for a tough fight against the saffron party and its allies in the northeast, where Meghalaya and Nagaland will vote Monday. Tripura, which voted last week, saw the Congress team up with its long-time rival the Left.

Turkey in tears as Indian teams leave

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 22: 'Operation Dost' initiated by the Indian Army to help the quake-affected people in Turkey became a huge success with a special bond developing between the victims and the rescuers. So the parting was filled with sadness and despair as people in the quake-hit regions are still living in fear.

Tears in eyes, warm affection and a deep sense of gratitude – this is how emotionally moved Turkish citizens bid farewell to a medical and an NDRF team of the Indian Army when they were departing after rendering humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The 99-member self-contained team that successfully set up and ran a fully equipped 30-bedded field



Members of the NDRF team that was involved in rescue work in quake-hit Turkey

hospital in Iskenderun, Hatay Province, has returned here to a hero's welcome.

Among those who returned were members of the NDRF team also who were involved in rescue work. They pulled out many people from the rubbles of the earthquake hit

Despite language barriers, Turkish people had immense faith in us and were always turning to us for help

VIVEKANANDA DEHURI

areas as 'Operation Dost' became a fond name among the people of Turkey. Among them was Odisha's Vivekananda Dehuri. Narrating his experience, Vivekananda recounted the horror the people of Turkey had to go through.

"We received order from Army headquarters February 7 to move to Turkey immediately for rescue operations. We flew with the required medicines and 30 beds within eight hours. It was heart-wrenching to see the situation there. We took shelter in a partially-collapsed

DURING ITS 2-WEEK TENURE IN HATAY REGION, THE MEDICAL TEAM OF THE INDIAN ARMY TREATED CLOSE TO 4,000 PEOPLE AND CARRIED OUT MANY LIFE-SAVING SURGERIES

school and started the rescue operations immediately," Vivekananda said Wednesday.

The Odia jawan was quick to point out that initially people had apprehensions of coming to the Indian team for help. "However, that soon turned into trust as we worked round the clock," Vivekananda informed. "Initially 40-50 people used to come to the hospital, but that soon increased to 800-900 per day as word about our work spread," he added. Contd...P4

leisure



HOLLYWOOD ALLOWS PEOPLE TO BE DIFFERENT: BELLA THORNE

American actress Bella Thorne thinks Hollywood welcomes different kinds of people, despite its reputation. "I think that Hollywood's probably actually one of the more out-of-the box places where people can be applauded for being different, for being scarred or traumatised, all these things," she explained.

KELSEA BALLERINI DIDN'T WANT TO MARRY MORGAN EVANS

Pop star Kelsea Ballerini married singer and songwriter Morgan Evans despite thinking it wasn't the right thing to do. The two got divorced towards the end of 2022 after almost five years of marriage. Recently, she admitted she was just making other people happy by tying the knot.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
Today is a bright day, and the stars foretell success for you. If you find yourself in a creative mood, indulge in some activity that will satisfy the urge. But, Ganesh says, if you are driving alone, exercise a great deal of caution to be on the safe side.

TAURUS
Fortune favours the brave and you will wake up feeling gutsy. Your performance will peak today and you will reap the benefits of real estate and construction business. Your peers and boss will extend all the support you need.

GEMINI
Maintaining the image you have created in the minds of people, as well as upholding your reputation in society will give you some anxious moments today. You will work hard to improve your social standing, and will get results by the end of the day. It is an auspicious and lucky day for you, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Today, you are likely to be brimming with love and compassion. However, certain negative thoughts will spoil all your good work. But don't fret! Your efforts won't go wasted and you will get the desired results sooner or later, says Ganesh.

LEO
Do not be surprised if you find yourself today in a situation that somehow feels like a landmark moment in your life. Whether it is a personal matter or something related to work, that you must wait to find out, you will need all your grit and diplomacy to sail through.

VIRGO
The bulb of ideas will burn bright today. A possible see-saw between your contractual obligation and current duties may baffle you. New contacts will stand you in good stead. Blood will prove thicker, and family and friends will consolidate their place in your life.

LIBRA
Your instincts are at their peak today. Generally, this means a lot of good, but for you, it may also mean having to put up with the trouble of small things bothering you in a big way. So, it becomes highly important for you to remain balanced and focused.

SCORPIO
Investing in real estate could yield maximum profits today, says Ganesh. An unusual gain from speculative trade is also on the cards. But you may need to spend time in the waiting room, before a more profitable opportunity comes by. You may just reinvent yourself to a happier self and savour every moment of life, predicts Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
You are on a high today and a feeling of ecstasy surrounds you. You are performance driven and shall give you best in anything you take up. Listen to your inner voice, it will guide you to the correct path. Ganesh showers His benevolent blessings on you. Make the most of this day.

CAPRICORN
You will be overpowered with nostalgia and may long to get in touch with old pals. And as Ganesh says, chances are that you may take a liking to your ex-lover, while simultaneously strengthening your social standing.

AQUARIUS
You will be on a spending spree today. But, make sure that your desire to enjoy life doesn't burn a hole in your pocket. Watch your words and steps, as people are observing your every move. You have put all of your eggs in one basket, so make sure that you don't mess up and lose everything that you have, advises Ganesh.

PISCES
Some conflicts could crop up in the morning on the domestic front. However, they will cease to be a cause of annoyance as the day progresses. Come evening and you will be in as fine a mood as you ever were, ready to spend time basking in the affection of your near and dear ones, says Ganesh.

Pap culture wasn't for me: Ileana



Mumbai: Ileana D'Cruz recently opened up on disliking the remarks people made about her not being seen. Ileana stated that she had not vanished and was still alive, but in contrast to many other famous people, she wasn't frequently seen on camera. Ileana gave her reasons for not thinking the paparazzi lifestyle was for her.

"I hate it when people say that! I don't vanish! I am right here. You don't see me getting papped, because I don't share my whereabouts. I did get the taste of the pap culture a while ago, but I realised it wasn't meant for me. So, yes, I have been doing good work, but doing it very quietly with my head down."

Ileana also discussed whether she worries that, aside from red carpet appearances and film events, filmmakers may pass her by. She said, "I would be lying if I said, 'Oh, I don't think about it'. Of course, I do. I even gave it a shot. I tried doing the whole PR thing, thinking I needed to be seen more. But at the end of the day, I didn't really see too much of a difference." AGENCIES

Shriya excited, nervous to work with Chinni Prakash

Mumbai: Actress Shriya Saran, who is gearing up for her upcoming film *Underworld Ka Kabzaa*, was both excited and nervous when she got to know that she will be working with veteran choreographer Chinni Prakesh for *Namaami Namaami*.

Elaborating on the same, the actress said: "Chinni Prakesh sir is a legend. From Madhuri Dixit to Salman Khan everyone has that one signature move that has been choreographed by him. When I heard that Chinni sir will be choreographing me for *Namaami Namaami*, I was very excited and nervous at the same time to be under his guidance. But I am really happy that the audience loved my performance in the song. It felt like I've made my Guru proud."

Since the actress is a trained dancer, the shoot for the song and the rehearsals were a cakewalk: "I am a trained Kathak dancer and after 2 hours of practice and 3 days of the shoot we were done with the song and I truly enjoyed the choreography of Chini Sir."

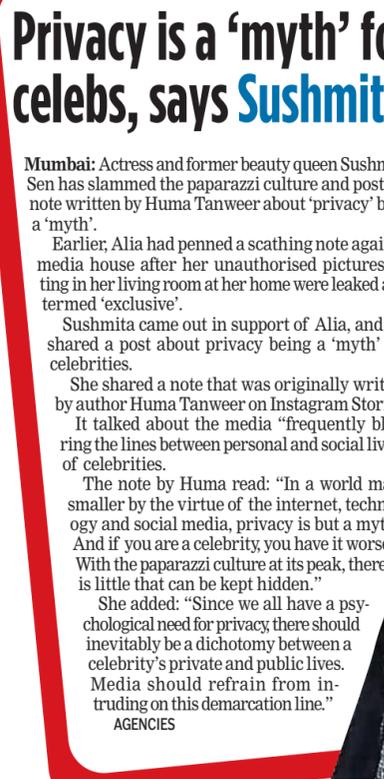
Underworld Ka Kabzaa, produced by Anand Pandit Motion Pictures in association with Sri Siddeshwara Enterprise and Alankar Pandian, has been directed by R Chandru. IANS

25th Kalinga Natya Mahotsav: Day 4



A scene from Odia play *Shunantu He Abhimanyumane*, staged by Bhubaneswar-based theatre group Bidyakanak Srujanasthan at Rabindra Mandap, on the fourth day of multilingual theatre festival organised by Satabdira Kalakar. Written by Hemendra Mahapatra, the metaphorical play to motivate today's Abhimanyus was directed by Sounika Sahoo. Journalists Bijay Mandal (Orissa POST) and Anita Das (News 7) were presented with *Satabdira Kalakar Samman* on the occasion by the dignitaries.

Privacy is a 'myth' for celebs, says Sushmita



Mumbai: Actress and former beauty queen Sushmita Sen has slammed the paparazzi culture and posted a note written by Huma Tanweer about 'privacy' being a 'myth'.

Earlier, Alia had penned a scathing note against a media house after her unauthorised pictures sitting in her living room at her home were leaked and termed 'exclusive'.

Sushmita came out in support of Alia, and re-shared a post about privacy being a 'myth' for celebrities.

She shared a note that was originally written by author Huma Tanweer on Instagram Stories. It talked about the media "frequently blurring the lines between personal and social lives" of celebrities.

The note by Huma read: "In a world made smaller by the virtue of the internet, technology and social media, privacy is but a myth. And if you are a celebrity, you have it worse. With the paparazzi culture at its peak, there is little that can be kept hidden."

She added: "Since we all have a psychological need for privacy, there should inevitably be a dichotomy between a celebrity's private and public lives. Media should refrain from intruding on this demarcation line." AGENCIES



Akshay smashes world record with 184 selfies in 3 minutes

Mumbai: Actor Akshay Kumar has broken a Guinness World Record for the most self-portrait photographs (selfies) taken in three minutes at a meet-and-greet with fans in Mumbai for the promotion of his upcoming movie *Selfie*.

The Khiladi actor is now the title holder with 184 selfies. He has broken the previously held world record of 168 self-portrait photographs (selfies) taken in three minutes by James Smith (USA) aboard the Carnival Dream cruise ship January 22, 2018. Earlier to this, in 2015 global icon and Hollywood actor Dwayne Johnson held this record with 105 self-portrait photographs (selfies) in three minutes at the premiere of *San Andreas* in London.

Akshay said: "I am ecstatic at breaking this unique World Record and sharing this moment with my fans! Everything that I have achieved so far and where I am at this moment of my life, is due to the unconditional love and support of my fans everywhere."

"This was my way of paying a special tribute to them, of acknowledging how they have stood by me and my work in my entire career."

Selfiee is all set to release February 24. IANS



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

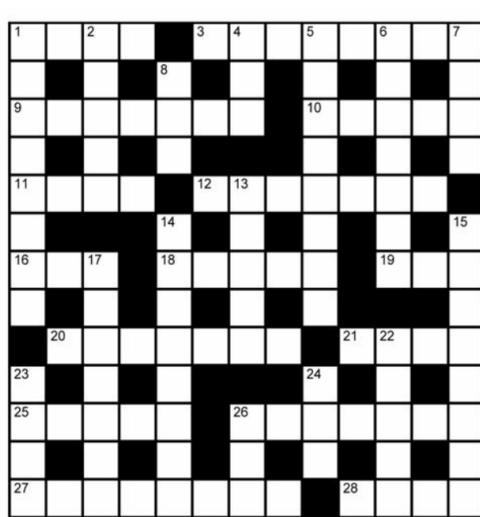


BREVITY



FUN post

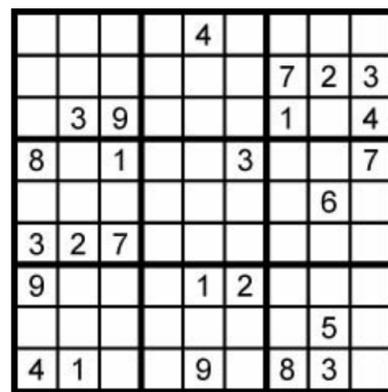
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Chess piece
 - 3 Enjoyment
 - 9 Genteel
 - 10 Recurring sequence
 - 11 Funeral flame
 - 12 Free from distress
 - 16 Furrow
 - 18 Delete
 - 19 Brazilian port
 - 20 Copy
 - 21 Piquancy
 - 25 Chuckle
 - 26 Gin cocktail
 - 27 Child's companion
 - 28 Wight is one
- Down**
- 1 Sweat
 - 2 Thin crisp cake or cookie
 - 4 Guided
 - 5 Historical records
 - 6 Remove the lid
 - 7 Symmetrical
 - 8 Roadhouse
 - 13 Precise
 - 14 Welsh terrier
 - 15 The hare's racing partner
 - 17 Japanese dish
 - 22 Takes one's leave
 - 23 Turn, like a pancake
 - 24 Attempt
 - 26 Ran into

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

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



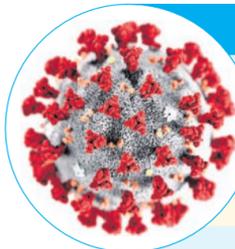
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



HANDLOOM FAIR

Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das admires a saree on the inaugural occasion of 7th Mega Handloom Fab Mela at Exhibition Ground in City, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	67,90,21,063	65,17,81,846	67,92,989
India	4,46,85,257	4,41,52,560	5,30,762
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

Consumer relations key to popularity: Swain

A scholar from a small village once dreamt of running a business in Bhubaneswar. Braving all odds, he became a successful entrepreneur who is now playing a crucial role in generating new business talent in the state. To get a glimpse of his journey so far and to understand his future plans, Orissa POST sat down with Jayadurga Home Care Products Pvt Ltd managing director Baburam Swain:



How was the journey from studying chemical engineering to running a chemical products business?

Generally, youths prefer to get a good government job that will offer them modest income and job security when they complete higher education. But when I finished my engineering course, I wanted to start my own business. And, because I was a student of chemical engineering, I had a weakness towards chemical products manufacturing. So, initially I started sourcing different types of raw materials from Kolkata and then in 1999 I started Smile Plus brand to formally run a chemicals business.

Can you tell us about the current state of chemicals manufacturing market?

Minor chemical products business has existed before and it will continue to exist in future too. But there is a lot of importance given to the business environment and processes as well as the consumer demand as the market is large and sustainable in long run. And specifically in Odisha, the demand is always higher because these chemical products are used everywhere, from households to laboratories and from industries to social sector. Similarly, market leaders in this sector always enjoy the lion's share of profit. So, to survive in the industry, you have to prioritise good cus-

tomers relationship.

What changes do you see in the demand for minor chemical products before and after Covid?

Before Covid in Odisha, approximately 40 per cent of the population used different chemical products manufactured for household use. But after Covid, it has increased to 75 to 80 per cent because of the panic created by the pandemic. People have started spending more on phenyls, bleaching and hand washes. Similarly, though the demand for minor chemical products is high, rise in import cost and raw material cost have pushed the price up.

What are your plans for expanding the business in future?

We have plans to survive in the current competitive environment but none to expand the business. But we are constantly taking steps to change our business strategy to come closer to the customers. Smile Plus brand is now selling many minor chemical products while Jayadurga Chemicals, Jayadurga Pet Industry and Smile Gold are running other businesses.

Tell us the secret behind the popularity gained by the com-

pany's brands.

Altogether four brands are doing business under Jayadurga Home Care Products Private Limited. Though the company has focused on chemicals and chemical-based products, steps have been taken to bring other businesses to limelight. I believe by not compromising with the quality of products and services, and by ensuring good post-sales service, the business and brand can gain wider popularity. Since we are prioritising capacity development programmes, hundreds of youths are being imparted skills training and are becoming successful entrepreneurs. Through these initiatives, the company and the brand have gained wider publicity and reach.



House din for second straight day

While BJP demands CBI investigation, Congress seeks a court-monitored SIT probe into the murder of former health minister Naba Kishore Das

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Opposition BJP and Congress, for the second consecutive day, Wednesday, continued to create ruckus in the House over the murder of then Health Minister Naba Kishore Das.

The Assembly adjourned thrice throughout the day including the last one till Thursday. Even though the Chief Minister has made a statement in the House on the issue and Speaker held an all-party meeting, the Opposition members continued their protest in the well of the House.

As soon as the House assembled

NABA DAS MURDER



IN THE HOUSE

Opposition members trooped into the well of the House and raised slogans against the government describing the murder of Naba Das as government sponsored

Treasury bench members stood up on their seats and shouted slogans against the Central negligence towards the state

for the day, opposition members carrying placards trooped into the well of the House and raised slogans against the government describing the murder of Naba Das as government sponsored.

Speaker BK Arukh wanted to run the business ignoring the furore in the House and asked Agriculture Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain to reply to a question posed to him but the BJP and Congress members intensified their demand for

a CBI probe into the murder case. Treasury bench members then stood up on their seats and shouted slogans against the Central negligence towards the state. The House soon plunged into a chaos.

The Speaker appealed to the opposition members to raise their issues during the Zero Hour and allow the Question Hour to complete but the agitated opposition members did not pay any heed to the Speaker's request forcing him to adjourn the

House till 11:30am without transacting any business.

When the House reassembled at 11:30am, the opposition members again rushed into the well and shouted slogans against the government. In the melee, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik made a statement on the murder of Naba Das which was not audible.

After completion of CM's statement, the Speaker adjourned the proceedings till 4pm and called an all-party meeting.

The situation remained the same in the second half also. While the BJP demanded a CBI probe into the murder of Das, Congress wanted an SIT probe monitored by the sitting judge of Orissa High Court. Both the parties alleged that there is a deep-rooted conspiracy behind the murder and stated that the Crime Branch probe ordered by the government will not unravel the truth.

BJP Chief Whip Mohan Majhi alleged that the murder of Das was government sponsored and the BJD members were trying to suppress the matter by raising the Central negligence issues which they have been doing for the last 15 years.

Leader of Opposition Jayanarayan Mishra said, "After 24 days, the Chief Minister has woken up to read out a piece of paper given by his officials. However, he has not uttered a single word on conspiracy and motive behind the crime." On the other hand, Congress Legislature Party leader Narasingha Mishra alleged that the killing of Das was a pre-planned crime. However, the state government does not want to unravel the conspiracy behind the crime.

Mishra, who is also a senior lawyer, said Minister Das could have been murdered due to personal, political and business reasons.

Remove Mishra as LoP: BJD woman legislators

BHUBANESWAR: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) woman lawmakers of Assembly Wednesday demanded removal of BJP MLA Jayanarayan Mishra from the post of Leader of Opposition (LoP) in view of his alleged misbehaviour with a lady police inspector in Sambalpur.

The group of BJD MLAs led by Snehangini Chhuria met Assembly Speaker BK Arukha and placed the demand for removal of Mishra from the post of LoP.

"We do not feel secure in the House in presence of Mishra. He has the habit of committing crime and his recent act of manhandling a woman police inspector in

Sambalpur had added to our fear. So, we want his removal from the Constitutional post," Chhuria told reporters after meeting the Speaker.

Chhuria also alleged that Mishra is capable of shoving and slapping a woman cop, chasing a policeman with a sword and attacking his party colleague, and a person with such a criminal bent of mind gives jitters...

She claimed that women MLAs are finding it difficult to even accept him as an MLA.

The Assembly has 17 woman MLAs of which 16 belong to ruling BJD while BJP has a lone female lawmaker, Kusum tete from

Sundargarh. Of the 16 BJD women MLAs, five are ministers.

The other BJD woman MLAs are Sabitri Agarwal, Latika Pradhan, Alaka Mohanty, Barsha Singh Barla, Suryamani Baidhya, Snehangini Chhuria, Minakshi Mohanta, Sunanda Das, Manjula Swain, Padmini Dian and Simarani Nayak.

On February 15, Mishra had allegedly pushed a woman police officer during a protest in Sambalpur. Mishra, however, dismissed the charge and instead alleged that the Dhanupali Police Station Inspector in-charge Anita Pradhan had pushed him. Both had lodged police complaints against one another.

Nurture leadership in students: Dash

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: School and Mass Education (S&ME) Minister Samir Ranjan Dash Wednesday instructed the teachers to groom the students so that they can lead in each and every sector by 2036.

The minister said this while addressing the concluding day of a capacity building programme for the principals of government vocational higher secondary schools organised by the Directorate of Higher Secondary Education under department.

Dash said that vocational education helps students in becoming self-dependent.

Stating that education sector is witnessing a revolution in Odisha, the minister asked the officials to take concrete steps to bring about qualitative improvement in vocational teaching.

On the occasion, S&ME secretary Aswathy S directed the school principals to chalk out plans for improving quality of education and set targets for the coming year. She said, "We must follow countries like Singapore and Germany to focus on development of vocational studies."

Oppn, BJD cross swords over minister's killing

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Even as the Crime Branch (CB) is groping in the dark to ascertain the motive behind now sacked cop Gopal Das killing minister Naba Das January 29, BJP, Congress and ruling BJD Wednesday engaged in mudslinging over the issue.

Attacking the BJD, which dragged 5T Secretary VK Pandian and BJD organisational secretary Pranab Prakash Das Tuesday into the murder case, the ruling dispensation Wednesday alleged that Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Leader of Opposition (LoP) Jayanarayan Mishra had threatened the now slain minister during the Padampur bypoll.

Hinting towards senior BJD leader and former minister Susanta Singh, the state Congress, on the other hand, alleged that an influential (bahubali) leader of western Odisha is behind the sensational killing.

Speaking to reporters outside the House, BJD MLA Rudra Pratap Maharathy alleged that Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and the LoP may have involvement in the minister's murder.

"During the Padampur byelection, Das (Naba) had told me that Pradhan

and Mishra were using force and intimidating him. They were asking him to stay off the Padampur bypoll," alleged Maharathy.

Stating that Das had played a key role in the Padampur byelection, the BJD legislator said that BJD won the bypoll with a huge margin, thanks to Das. He demanded that both Pradhan and Mishra should be brought under the purview of investigation.

Reacting to Maharathy's allegation, BJP MLA Suryabanshi Suraj, said, "Naba babu was a senior leader. Why should he discuss these stuffs with Maharathy? If he was scared, he could also have taken up the matter with the Election Commission and sought intervention of the police."

Commenting on the Chief Minister's statement in the House on the murder, BJP MP Suresh Pujari said, "It's evident that the CB probe has completely gone off track. It's unfortunate that instead of reposing faith in the CBI, they (state government) are now seeking the help of a foreign agency (FBI)."

Meanwhile, Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati alleged that 'bahubali' leader of western Odisha is behind the assassination, which has sent shockwaves across the state.

Remove stray dogs from roads: Minister

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Animal Resources Development Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain Wednesday directed the chief district veterinary officers (CDVOs) of all 30 districts to stay vigilant and remove stray dogs from roads. The veterinary officers have also been instructed to take immediate and proper action in this regard.

The instructions from the minister came after the horrifying incident of a pack of stray dogs mauled a 4-year-old boy to death in Telangana, a video of which has gone viral on social media.

The clip shows the canines suddenly attacking the boy while chas-

TELANGANA HORROR AFTERMATH



ing him, following which he is seen falling down. The child was apparently carrying a packet containing some food items when the dogs pounced on him, a Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) official said. In his Twitter account, Swain said,

"Seeing this horrifying incident at Hyderabad, I have directed respective CDVOs of all 30 districts of Odisha to be strictly vigilant and remove stray dogs from roads. CDVOs have also been instructed to take immediate & proper action regarding this."

The state government had last year launched a state animal helpline number and a tele veterinary service for protection of stray and abandoned animals.

The toll-free helpline will extend veterinary service through animal ambulance in 11 urban areas of the state. The helpline will be functional round the clock. Citizens can dial 1962 or 155333 to avail all necessary help pertaining to stray animals.

ଠିକ୍ ସମୟରେ ସଠିକ୍ ଟୀକାଦେଇ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଶିଶୁକୁ ସୁରକ୍ଷିତ ରଖନ୍ତୁ ।

୫ ବର୍ଷରେ ୭ ଥର ଟୀକା ନେବାକୁ ଭୁଲନ୍ତୁ ନାହିଁ କୌଣସି ଥର

ବୟସ	ଟୀକା
ଜନ୍ମ ସମୟରେ	ବିଭିଜି, ଓପିଭି, ହେପାଟାଇଟିସ୍-ବି (ଜନ୍ମ ମାତ୍ରା)
୬ ସପ୍ତାହ (ଦେଇ ମାସ)	ଓପିଭି-୧, ପେଣ୍ଟାଭାଲେଣ୍ଟ-୧, ଏଫଆଇପିଭି-୧, ଆର୍ଭିଭି-୧, ପିପିଭି-୧
୧୦ ସପ୍ତାହ (ଅଦେଇ ମାସ)	ଓପିଭି-୨, ପେଣ୍ଟାଭାଲେଣ୍ଟ-୨, ଆର୍ଭିଭି-୨
୧୪ ସପ୍ତାହ (ସାତେ ତିନି ମାସ)	ଓପିଭି-୩, ପେଣ୍ଟାଭାଲେଣ୍ଟ-୩, ଏଫଆଇପିଭି-୨, ଆର୍ଭିଭି-୩, ପିପିଭି-୨
୯-୧୨ ମାସ	ଏଫଆଇ-୧, ଭିଟାମିନ-କ***, ପିପିଭି ଦୁଇଟି, କେଲ-୧**, ଏଫଆଇପିଭି-୩
୧୬-୨୪ ମାସ	ଏଫଆଇ-୨, ଭିଟାମିନ-କ***, ଡିପିଟି ଦୁଇଟି-୧, ଓପିଭି ଦୁଇଟି-୧, କେଲ-୨**
୫-୬ ବର୍ଷ	ଡିପିଟି ଦୁଇଟି-୨
୧୦ ବର୍ଷ	ଟି.ଡି
୧୬ ବର୍ଷ	ଟି.ଡି
ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱବତୀ ମହିଳା	ଟି.ଡି-୧, ଟି.ଡି-୨, ଟି.ଡି ଦୁଇଟି*

* ଯଦି ୩ ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ଚିଡି/ଚିଡି ଚିକାର ଦୂରତ ମାତ୍ରା ନେଇଥିବେ ।
** କେବଳ କେଲ ପ୍ରଦାନ କିମ୍ବା ମାନକ ନିମନ୍ତେ
*** ଭିଟାମିନ-କ ୯ ମାସରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇ ୫ ବର୍ଷ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ପ୍ରତି ୬ମାସ ବ୍ୟବଧାନରେ ଦିଆଯାଏ ।

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Minimum age for Class I admission to be 6 years

FOUNDATIONAL STAGE CONSISTS OF 5 YEARS OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN (BETWEEN 3 AND 8 YEARS) THAT INCLUDES 3 YEARS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION FOLLOWED BY CLASSES 1 AND 2



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 22: The Ministry of Education has directed all states and Union Territories to fix the minimum age for admission in Class I as six years, officials said Wednesday.

According to the new National Education Policy (NEP), the foundational stage consists of five years of learning opportunities for all children (between 3 to 8 years) that includes three years of

tions to align their age to admission with the policy and provide admission to class I at the age of six years and above," the official added.

The Supreme Court had last year observed that children should not be sent to schools at a very young age keeping in mind their psychological and mental health.

The MoE officials said the most important factor at the foundational stage is the availability of qualified teachers who are especially trained in the age and develop mentally-appropriate curriculum and pedagogy.

The ministry has also advised states to initiate the process of designing and running a two-year diploma in preschool education (DPSE) course in their respective jurisdiction.

"The course is expected to be designed by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and run or implemented through District Institute of Education and Training (DIETs) under supervision and hold of SCERTs," he said.

preschool education followed by Classes 1 and 2.

"The policy thus promotes seamless learning and development of children from pre-school to class 2. This can only be done by ensuring accessibility to three years of quality preschool education for all children studying in Anganwadis or government, government-aided, private and NGO-run preschool centres," a senior MoE official said.

"The ministry has directed state governments and UT administra-



AIRING GRIEVANCES: Members of All India Kishan Sabha Odisha State Council staging a protest rally at PMG in Bhubaneswar seeking fulfilment of their 10-point charter of demands, Wednesday

10 Aahaar Kendras get ISO certification

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Ten Aahaar Kendras managed by Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) got ISO 9001:2015 quality certification.

The Aahaar Kendras in Rasulgarh, Nayapalli, Sainik School road, AIIMS Hospital, Museum Square, Unit II Ashok Nagar, Capital Hospital, Sum Hospital, AIIMS Hospital and City Bus stand Master Canteen were found to be operating in compliance with quality

management system.

The Aahaar centres provide subsidized meal to needy people under the flagship programme 'Food for All'.

BMC Mayor Sulochana Das said that it is a proud moment to announce that 10 Aahaar Kendras managed by BMC got ISO certifications.

In 2016, BMC had formed City Aahaar Society to look after engagement of agencies, maintenance of infrastructure and fund-

ing for Aahaar scheme that provides meal at Rs 5 to people.

Under the Aahaar initiative, which was launched April 1, 2015, the state government serves over one lakh meals to the people daily.

The government of Odisha introduced a revolutionary food subsidy scheme, called Aahaar Yojana in urban areas. This scheme is set to improve the lives of millions of urban poor by providing them lunch at a very affordable price. The scheme aims to make sure

that people who can't afford to buy a proper meal get one for just Rs 5 every day.

The Housing and Urban Development Department which manages the Aahaar programme expressed satisfaction over the achievement. "Maintaining the quality and standard of all 158 Aahaar centres across the state has been a priority of Housing and Urban Development Department," the Department stated on Twitter.

ILS discovers drugs for malaria

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Institute of life sciences, (ILS) Bhubaneswar continues to make significant progress in research and development and addressing social issues. This process had taken pace and shape during the able stewardship of late Ajay Parida, Ex-Director, ILS.

In a predominant development ILS scientist Arun Nagraj and his team have discovered therapeutic interventions which can prevent cerebral and severe malaria mortality. This would be a milestone achievement for the malaria prone area of the state and for the society as a whole.

Malaria remains a major global health concern causing 247 million infections and 619,000 deaths in 2021. The most vulnerable populations include children under five years of age and pregnant women. In spite of the intense global efforts to roll back malaria, there is no significant reduction in the global incidence since 2015 and rather, there is a considerable increase. This is further worsened by the emergence of drug resistance in parasites and insecticide resistance in mosquitoes.

Falciparum malaria is the deadliest one responsible for more than 90 per cent of infections and deaths. The mortality due to cerebral and severe malaria occurs despite treating the patients with WHO-recommended artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs). The last resort is intravenous administration of anti-malarials - artemisinin or quinine, along with supportive therapies. Therefore, there is a need of adjunct therapy to prevent malaria mortality. Heme is required for various cellular functions and malaria parasite makes its own heme.



SKILLFUL HANDS: A woman making handicraft items using bamboo strips near Jobra Ring Road in Cuttack, Wednesday

Samantray elected president of APSI

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: ENT surgeon Kabikanta Samantray has been elected as the president of Association of Phono Surgeons of India (APSI) at the 18th PhonoCon held at Thiruvananthapuram, Wednesday becoming the first Odia to get to this coveted position. Having previously served the APSI in various capacities, he will now be in charge of the association for next three years.

Head of the department of ENT (Otorhinolaryngology) at Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS), Samantray is a well-known ENT surgeon of the state. Trained under renowned Otorhinolaryngologists of the world, he is currently working as Additional Medical Superintendent at the hospital with many research

publications to his credit.

In another achievement for KIMS, Professor Khageswar Rout of ENT department has been elected as an executive member to the association at the 18th PhonoCon.

Founder of KIIT & KISS Achyuta Samanta congratulated both professors on their success.

The APSI is a professional body of ENT surgeons, with special expertise in voice disorders and their management. It provides a common platform for the exchange of knowledge and ideas among ENT surgeons and Speech-Language Pathologists. It also creates awareness about various voice disorders and voice care among the commoners. The association was formed in November 2003 during the phono surgery workshop held in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.

Stir at Bamra station hits train services

Bhubaneswar: In view of an agitation at Bamra railway station in Rourkela-Jharsuguda Railway Section, several trains under East Coast Railway (ECOR) jurisdiction have either been cancelled or short-terminated or diverted, Wednesday. Bamra Railway Action Committee, several political parties and other organisations of Sambalpur district demanded halt for 12 trains at Bamra station under Chakradharpur Railway Division of South Eastern Railway, for the ease of local commuters. The agitation disrupted rail traffic in the region, said sources.

Working women are more desired as potential partner

Shaadi.com, presents its first-ever edition of India's Most Eligible Shaadi report. The version contains perceptive and fascinating information about what qualities a spouse should have and don't have. The matrimonial platform, which has amassed over 50 million users to date and has more than 20 years of expertise in the lucrative matchmaking industry, is the source of this exhaustive almanack.

The study's foundation differs depending on things like profession, age, income, and location. The study effectively covers all of India, from metropolises to small towns and rural areas, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari to Assam to Ahmedabad.

The research highlights the following elements that influence someone's desirability in the context of finding a life partner: The research is based on a sample of 2.5 million users who actively used Shaadi.com between December 1, 2021, and December 31, 2022, of



whom 1.6 million are men and 0.9 million are women. The study's subjects are all Indians who have used the platform actively for at least one week in the previous 12 months, making the research's conclusions particularly current and pertinent.

Key Highlights (all factors are comparative to the common average):

Government jobs still rule the roost: India's most eligible female is a Law Enforcement Officer, while

India's most eligible male works in the Civil Services.

Financial independence is important among men and women: Men making 30L+ p.a. are 190 percent more desired, whereas women making 30L+ p.a. are 17 per cent more desired.

Age hits men first: Contrary to popular narratives, age hits men harder in matchmaking and men

after the age of 34-35 yrs find it hard to find matches. There are over 6,500 active members on the platform, who are aged 60+ yrs and are keen to give love a second chance. In fact, the oldest members are 79 yrs (Male) and 72 yrs (Female).

Jobs in Civil services and Tech are most desired among men, while Aviation professionals and Architects are most desired among women. Men in civil services and tech are 2x more desired as compared to men in other professions, whereas women in aviation are 47 percent more desired vs women in other professions.

Increase in average age of singles seeking matchmaking: The average age of starting the matchmaking journey has gone up by 2 yrs in the past decade, with men's age going up by 2.5 yrs and women's by 1 yr.

Working women receive more love: Non-working women are 31 percent less desired vs average, breaking the myth of Indian men seeking home-makers.

Expanding on the findings, Adhish Zaveri, AVP Marketing, People Interactive Pvt Ltd., adds, "This study indicates that as a nation, while we're moving in the right direction for gender equality in marriages, we still have a long way to go in terms of truly balanced relationships. Who we find desirable is really the first point of establishing what this equation would look like after the Shaadi and the insights we've uncovered in this study are an honest reflection of India's view on desirability in the context of finding a life partner. Aspects such as higher desirability for working women and specifically those with higher income are early indicators that we are making important strides in bringing and retaining women in the workforce."

Continued from P1

Not CBI, but...

The BJP and Congress continued to create ruckus in the Assembly over the murder case from the beginning of budget session Tuesday. They continued to do so Wednesday even after the chief minister's statement forcing the Speaker to adjourn the proceedings.

Meanwhile giving a fresh twist to the controversy surrounding the murder of Das, BJD's Pipili MLA Rudra Pratap Maharathy alleged Wednesday that Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and LoP Jayanarayan Mishra may have involvement in the minister's murder case and demanded an enquiry in this regard.

Turkey in tears...

Other members of the medical team shared their experiences and challenges, and spoke of the warmth and cooperation they received from Turkish people, despite a language barrier. "They (Turkish citizens) were crying when we were leaving. It was a very emotional moment for us as well. They hugged us to say thank you, it was a humbling experience," said a member of the medical team.

The medical team of 60 Para Field Hospital provided assistance to quake-affected people in Turkey from February 7-19. The field hospital treated about 3,600 people, conducted numerous major and minor surgeries, including one amputated and life-saving surgery," informed General Maonj Pandey.

AAP triumphs...

Delhi got its mayor on the fourth attempt since the earlier elections were stalled amid ruckus over voting rights being given to the LG-appointed nominated members.

Last week, Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena gave his nod to convene the municipal House for holding the mayoral election following the Supreme Court order.

The top court February 17 ordered the issuance of a notice within 24 hours for convening the first meeting of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to fix the date of elections for the mayor, the deputy mayor and the members of the standing committee of the civic body. The court issued the order after hearing a plea moved by Oberoi.

In a shot in the arm for the AAP, the apex court also held that the members nominated to the MCD by the Lt Governor cannot vote to elect the mayor.

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DISTRESS SALE

Potato Mission lets farmers down

Absence of storage facility in Kendrapara has forced the tuber growers to sell off their harvest at throwaway prices

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Feb 22: Just two months back, potato was being sold at ₹25 to ₹30 per kg in Kendrapara district. However, much has changed within these two months with prices of the tuber dropping to an unbelievable low.

Things have come to such a pass that farmers are forced to resort to distress sale. They are now selling the tuber at just ₹4 per kg to the traders, who are selling it at ₹7 per kg in the open market.

Undertaking potato cultivation has been a let-down for farmers as the district neither has storage facilities nor government mandis to store or sell their harvested potatoes respectively. Lack of storage facilities in the district has forced farmers to sell off their harvest at throwaway prices.

A potato farmer Bidhubhushan Mohapatra of Palei village under Derabish block said that he has cultivated potato on four acre of farmland and also reaped a good harvest. However, all the farmers who have undertaken potato cultivation are encountering problems to store or sell off their produce. Mohapatra apprehends that he will face a loss of ₹40,000 in the



The state government had sanctioned ₹20 crore in 2017-18 FY for the mission but not a single pie has been spent under the scheme which finds mention in the 2019 CAG report

cultivation.

Another farmer Kalpataru Samantaray of Pattamundai said that the local farmers have cultivated potato on over 30,000 hectare of farmland. However, they are unable to store their left-over stocks anywhere for sale later. Moreover, they are forced to sell their harvest to the local traders due to lack of any government mandi, he added.

The state government's ambitious Potato Mission will succeed

only if the government takes care to resolve these problems, he added.

A local entrepreneur Ratanlal Samal said that farmers are forced to resort to distress sale during harvest of tomato and potato. Realising the problem, many aspiring youths are interested to set up food processing industry for manufacturing of potato chips and tomato sauce.

They have been contacting various banks and the district industry centre to get a loan. However,

no such industry has been established yet in the district due to lack of coordination between the banks and the district industry centre, he rued.

Farmer leader Gayadhar Dhal said that the state government launched Potato Mission in 2015-16 to achieve self-sufficiency in potato production. The mission implemented by the state Horticulture department aimed at making the farmers self-reliant through potato cultivation and reducing dependency on outside states for the essential tubers.

The Potato Mission however has failed to achieve any success. The state government had sanctioned ₹20 crore in 2017-18 FY for the mission but not a single pie has been spent under the scheme which finds mention in the 2019 CAG report.

The problem could be resolved only through establishment of food processing units, cold storages and government mandis, he said.

When contacted, Debadas Dutta, assistance director of Horticulture department said that the problem can be resolved with construction of cold storages but the district lacks even a single cold storage.

Sand mafia attack Derabish tehsildar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Derabish, Feb 22: Sand mafia are indiscriminately lifting sand illegally from various riverbeds in state posing great danger to the environment. Furthermore, things have come to such a pass that every now and then they are attacking officials during raids.

Days after the shocking attack on Balasore Sub Collector, sand mafia Wednesday assaulted the tehsildar of Derabish in Kendrapara district during a raid at Gualsingh ghat.

Derabish tehsildar Akshay Kumar Parida sustained serious injuries in the attack and has filed an FIR at Kendrapara Sadar police station in this regard.

Acting on a tip-off, the revenue inspector of the area and Derabish tehsildar conducted a raid during the illegal lifting of sand and stopped a sand-laden truck February 17. Irked over the development, the driver called three others. The miscreants then attacked the tehsildar and injured him in the process.



"After checking the documents, we came to know that the vehicle was not authorised from Mangalpur ghat to Mahakalapara. However, the vehicle owner was clearly flouting the rules. Date and time were

also not mentioned in the documents. We asked the driver to stop the vehicle. However, he drove the vehicle towards the owner's house," said Parida.

"Then we called up the police. Irked by the development, the vehicle owner threatened us with dire consequences. Subsequently, he called some people and the miscreants tried to snatch documents from me. They also attacked me and I have been badly injured in the process," he added.

Parida alleged that the sand mafia also took their vehicle under their control in a bid to prevent them from leaving the place. The attackers even threatened to mow them under the vehicle.

Parida received treatment at Kendrapara hospital and then lodged a complaint at Kendrapara Sadar police station.

Over 500 kg ganja from Ganjam seized in Greater Noida

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Noida, Feb 22: More than 500 kg of cannabis brought from Odisha's Ganjam to be smuggled into the National Capital Region has been seized by the police in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida, officials said Wednesday.

The consignment is pegged at worth more than ₹1 crore in black market and two persons have also been arrested in connection with the case, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Greater Noida) Saad Miya Khan told reporters.

Khan said the police have been continuously targeting gangs and people involved in drug trafficking and narcotics smuggling.

"Some gangs have been busted in the past also and in one such case in which around 500 kg of cannabis was seized, a suspect identified as Ratan Singh, who is a native of Hapur district, was absconding and a reward also announced on his arrest," Khan said.

"Today, a consignment of the same Ratan Singh has been seized by the officials of the Knowledge Park police station and the SWAT team. The total recovery is 539 kilograms of cannabis which was concealed in a canter truck," the DCP said.

Besides Ratan Singh, a person identified as Sadashiv Mishra, who hails from Ganjam district in Odisha, has also been arrested, the officer said.

Khan said the estimated value of the seized cannabis is worth more than ₹1 crore, and the consignment had started from Ganjam in Odisha and was meant to be smuggled in Noida and other parts of the NCR.

An FIR is being lodged at the Knowledge Park police station and further legal proceedings are underway, the officer said, adding that a reward of ₹20,000 has been announced for the police teams involved in seizing the cannabis.

'Bargarh weavers to shift to newly-built Bunakar Bazar'



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: During a visit to Bargarh district Wednesday, chairman of Western Odisha Development Council (WODC) and principal advisor to CM Asit Tripathy directed the district administration to shift the 'Bunakar Bazar' to a newly-constructed space after witnessing that the weavers were not using the place anymore.

This exclusive market constructed by the Textiles and Handlooms department with an estimated cost of ₹5 crore is equipped with all modern amenities. Tripathy also enquired about the reasons behind the weavers

not shifting to the newly-constructed Bunakar Bazar.

Sources revealed that indigenous designs developed by Sambalpur designers are getting imitated by manufacturers from other states. Also, non-handloom sarees and dress materials of the same patterns with lesser prices are thronged into the market resulting in reduction in their products' demand.

Tripathy also directed the Collector to arrange an All India Weavers' Convention at Bargarh which is to be funded by WODC to create a blueprint towards resolving critical issues. Tripathy also visited the memorial of renowned poet Gangadhar Meher at Barpali and declared funds of ₹1.19 crore for the facelift of the spot. The proposed site development by WODC includes construction of the statue, sitting arrangements, cafeteria and others.

He also visited the construction site of Biju Patnaik Multi-Purpose Hall adjoining the Govt High School playground at Barpali to take stock of the work. Sports and Youth Services department of Odisha has sanctioned funds amounting to ₹6 crore for the indoor stadium, gymnasium and other indoor sports facilities in an area of 5,000 square feet.



CIVIC APATHY: Traffic from Jail Square to Bhutapada Square in Sambalpur was seriously hit after the road was dug up for LPG pipeline laying works, Wednesday

Fire line to contain forest fires in Keonjhar district



POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Feb 22: At a time when Similipal wildlife sanctuary in Mayurbhanj district continues to battle wildfire, forest officials in Keonjhar have launched efforts to ensure that the district's forests do not fall prey to the blaze.

They are using 'forest fire line' to prevent fire breaking into the forest from one compartment to another. The collected litter, which is mostly dry leaves, was burnt in isolation. Reports said that the fire spreads only if there is continuous supply of dry vegetation along the path of fire.

The forest officials in Palashpanga forest section under Sadar forest range in Keonjhar forest division have launched efforts to contain the forest fire with the involvement of women self-help groups (SHGs) and the local Vana Suraksha Samitis (VSSs) comprising the vigilant villagers in the area.

Learning from past experiences, the forest officials are leaving no stone unturned to ensure no forest fire takes place in the jungle. The programme will soon be extended to other parts of the district, sources said.

Meanwhile, awareness meetings on forest fires have been organised by the Vana Suraksha Samitis at Aharpasi, Kandrapasi, Amunipur, Naigaon, and Sandiapasi villages under Palshpanga forest section. The women members joined the programme and completed the work on the fire lines.

They have roped in the members of 16 women SHGs and undertaken clearing of vegetation and controlled burning of the of the same to create bald patches of land across the boundary line of the forest to prevent the fire from spreading further into other areas in the jungle. Meanwhile, the programme is underway at Baulamala and Kashirapatna areas where the forest officials with the assistance of Vana Suraksha Samitis are completing the work on fire lines with the active involvement of women SHGs.

Attending a programme organised by Baulamala Vana Suraksha Samiti, Palashpanga forester Jaikrushna Das, forest guard Subhasini Giri and members of Vana Suraksha Samiti explained the role of villagers in containing forest fires. Later, the participating villagers also took a pledge to protect the forest from fire and other threats.

MAN IN TROUBLE FOR KEEPING 30 CATS IN CHHATRAPUR

CHHATRAPUR: In a strange occurrence, a police complaint was filed against Basanta Biswas Ray Wednesday for keeping more than 30 pet cats in his residence situated near Sankarmatha Street in Chhatrapur of Ganjam district. Some women from his neighbourhood reportedly filed the complaint when the situation went out of control. According to the allegation, Ray has kept roughly 30 pet cats at his residence. Also, a neighbour requesting anonymity stated that a foul smell engulfs the street as the cats roam freely. Moreover, guests are reluctant towards visiting the nearby houses because of the cats, Ray's neighbours complained. There is also a possibility of an outbreak of plague-like disease, said a neighbour. Residents were alarmed by the cat problem and approached Ganjam SP, requesting him to take immediate action against the owner of the pet cats. The owner of the pet cats has been charged, and an inquiry into the event has begun, according to Chhatrapur police. The inquiry has been handed to ASI S Khuntia.

National Entrance Screening Test (NEST) 2023

Admission to 5-year Integrated MSc Programmes in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physics at NISER (Bhubaneswar) and UM-DAE CEBS (Mumbai) (Autonomous institutions under the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India)

The National Entrance Screening Test (NEST) is a compulsory test for admission to the 5-year Integrated MSc programme in basic sciences - Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics - at National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER), Bhubaneswar and University of Mumbai - Department of Atomic Energy Centre for Excellence in Basic Sciences (UM-DAE CEBS), Mumbai. NEST 2023 will be conducted in around 120 towns and cities all over India on **June 24, 2023 (Saturday)**.

The candidates admitted to the programme are eligible to receive an annual scholarship of Rs.60,000 through DISHA program of Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India. In addition, the scholarship recipients receive a grant of Rs.20,000 per annum for summer internship. Candidates selected by DST for the INSPIRE-SHE program are endorsed for INSPIRE scholarship by NISER and CEBS.

For detailed information on NEST 2023 application procedure and previous years' question papers please visit NEST 2023 website: www.nestexam.in

Application:

Through ONLINE portal ONLY.
Visit www.nestexam.in to apply.
Online portal opens on Feb. 27, 2023, & closes on May 17, 2023

Examination:

ONLINE/computer based ONLY.
Date of examination: June 24, 2023 (Saturday)
Time: 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM (1st session)
2:30 PM - 6:00 PM (2nd session)
Results announcement : July 10, 2023

Address for correspondence :
The Chief Coordinator, NEST 2023
NISER Bhubaneswar,
P.O.: Jatni, Dist. Khurda,
Odisha - 752050, India
E-mail: nest-exam@niser.ac.in
Website: www.nestexam.in

Fees structure and mode of payment :
Male (General and OBC categories): **Rs.1200/-**
Male (SC and ST categories) : **Rs.600/-**
Female (all categories): **Rs.600/-**
Diversity candidates: **Rs.600/-**
Pay ONLY via Net banking/ Credit card/ Debit card

No. A-42018/5/2023-Estt.

Government of India
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)
(Establishment Section)

5th Floor, B-1 Wing, Pt. Deen Dayal Antyodaya Bhawan,
CGO Complex, New Delhi-110003

NOTICE

Applications are invited for engagement of Legal Consultant initially for a period of one year, purely on contract basis. Detailed information regarding eligibility criteria and other terms and conditions may be seen at our website: www.disabilityaffairs.gov.in. Interested and eligible candidates may send their applications in the prescribed proforma within 30 days from the date of publication in the Employment Newspaper to the undersigned. Applications are to be sent in single Pdf document via mail at vacancyconsultant20@gmail.com.

(Anupam Shukla)
Under Secretary to the Government of India
CBC 38117/11/0060/2223

No.O-1887:

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, KENDRAPARA
eerw_kendraparat@yahoo.co.in

'E' PROCUREMENT NOTICE NO.RWD-I/KPD-04/22-23, DATED 21.02.2023

1. Name of Work : Road works in the District of Kendrapara for the year 2022-23.
2. Total No. of Work : 1 No. Road
3. Estimated Cost : Rs.18.64 Lakhs(Approx.)
4. Period of Completion : 20 Days
5. Class of Contractors : C & D Class
6. Cost of Tender Paper : Cost of tender paper is to be remitted ONLINE as specified in column-3 of the Annexure
7. Detail Projects : As specified in the Annexure
8. Decision to conduct lottery : If required to decide the agency, transparent lottery shall be conducted on dt.10.03.2023 at 12.00 P.M. in Office Chamber of the undersigned.

Other details as follows:

- a) Procurement officer : Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Kendrapara
- b) Availability of tender online & submission of bid : 27.02.2023 at 11:00 AM to 06.03.2023 upto 5:00 PM
- c) Last date & time of seeking of tender clarification : 04.03.2023 upto 5:00 PM
- d) Opening of Tender : 07.03.2023 at 11:00 A.M.

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

Sd/- Executive Engineer
Rural Works Division-II, Kendrapara
OIPR-25098/11/0006/2223

EAST COAST RAILWAY

E-AUCTION FOR PARKING STANDS

No. SDCM/KUR/Parking/E-auction/
Publication/934, Date: 20.02.2023

Station & Locations: (1) Baitarani Road-2 Wheeler (Near Circulating Area), (2) Jajpur Keonjhar Road-MIX-2 Wheeler-cum-4 Wheeler (Near Platform-1), (3) Kendujhargarh-MIX-2 Wheeler-cum-4 Wheeler (At Platform-1 side), (4) Dhenkanal-MIX-2 Wheeler-cum-4 Wheeler (Near RPF office), (5) Cuttack-MIX-2 Wheeler-cum-4 Wheeler (At Platform-1 side), (6) Mancheswar-MIX-2 Wheeler-cum-4 Wheeler (Near Station Building), (7) Bhadrak-MIX-2 Wheeler-cum-4 Wheeler (At Platform-1 side), (8) Delang-2 Wheeler MIX-2 Wheeler-cum-4 Wheeler (Near Station Building).

Auction Start Date & Time: 03.03.2023 at 11:00 hrs. (for all locations).

Auction End Date & Time: 03.03.2023 at 11:30 hrs. (for sl. no. 1), at 11:40 hrs. (for sl. no. 2), at 11:50 hrs. (for sl. no. 3), at 12:00 hrs. (for sl. no. 4), at 12:10 hrs. (for sl. no. 5), at 12:20 hrs. (for sl. no. 6), at 12:30 hrs. (for sl. no. 7) and at 12:40 hrs. (for sl. no. 8).

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

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/
PR-1030/N/22-23 Khurda Road

One who loves God finds the object of his love everywhere.
SRI AUROBINDO



Broken State

The town of Joshimath may be nestled 6,000 feet (1,800 meters) above sea level in the Himalayas, but it is sinking fast. In early January, large cracks split homes, hotels, and roads, leaving the town's future hanging in the balance. Joshimath is a grim metaphor for India's woefully unaccountable state.

Joshimath is located in a seismically active zone of landslide debris and sediment layered over a weak assemblage of rocks. Such terrain naturally sinks and slides, but the problem is made worse by deforestation. Moreover, because the Alaknanda River (a tributary of the Ganges) has eroded the northwestern toe of the slope on which Joshimath stands, the formation does not have a high load-bearing capacity, as has been known since the 1930s.

Cracks appeared in Joshimath's roads in the 1970s. In 1976, a committee appointed by the government of Uttar Pradesh (of which Joshimath was then a part) reiterated the risk of subsidence (sinking) and advised that construction be undertaken only in areas determined to be stable. This official warning went unheeded, and local activists fought unsuccessfully to forestall unsafe construction.

The problem grew worse following the economic liberalisation of the early 1990s, when the state endorsed and supported a form of unregulated capitalism, which often centered around lucrative construction contracts and featured a total disregard – even contempt – for the environment. Joshimath's current troubles began innocuously in 1993, when Auli, a neighbouring town, began construction of a ski-resort ropeway. That was the opening salvo in a much broader construction programme.

State authorities soon launched ambitious plans for hydroelectric dams to harness the energy from Himalayan runoff. The 400-megawatt Vishnuprayag plant became operational in 2006, and construction of the more controversial 520 MW Tapovan-Vishnugad dam began the same year. To generate electricity from the project, a tunnel had to be built under the Joshimath hillslope, directly below the Auli ski resort. In 2009, a tunnel-boring machine punctured an aquifer in the mountain, depleting the groundwater on which Joshimath and other nearby towns depended. Sediment then filled the gaps left by the receding water, which some experts and activists believe added to the area's subsidence tendency.

In June 2013, a disastrous flood killed more than 4,000 people in the area, leading to legal proceedings in which the Supreme Court expressed grave concerns over the "mushrooming" of dams in the region. The court was aghast that the authorities had not scientifically assessed "the cumulative impact" of the dams and the associated blasting, tunneling, muck disposal, mining, and deforestation. Under a court order, the government appointed an expert committee headed by the noted environmental scientist and activist Ravi Chopra.

The Chopra Committee concluded that the Himalayan mountains, rivers, and communities were in "a crisis" exacerbated by global warming. The government's "rampant development" approach, the committee said, would cause more deforestation and biodiversity loss alongside "unpredictable glacial and paraglacial activities." Warning that this explosive combination would invite even greater disasters in the future, the committee proposed halting work on 23 dams.

When a second committee endorsed the Chopra Committee's judgement, the government appointed a third committee that gave the go-ahead for more dams, and in July 2020, the authorities invited bids for the Helang-Marwari bypass road through a fragile landslide zone near the foot of the Joshimath hill. Construction of the bypass began two years later as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ecologically damaging programme to ease travel to the holy shrines in the Himalayas.

Disasters continued to take lives. In February 2021, another flood killed a few hundred people, mainly around Tapovan-Vishnugad and another dam site. The dams themselves were almost irreparably damaged, and activists called on the Uttarakhand High Court to halt dam construction. The court threw out the case, reprimanding the petitioners and fining them for wasting its time.

After unusually heavy rains in October 2021, the cracks in Joshimath reached a tipping point. By January 2023, the threat of collapsing structures had made large parts of the town uninhabitable. Hundreds of residents have been herded into shelters, and the government has halted the rehabilitation of the Tapovan-Vishnugad dam and construction of the Helang-Marwari bypass.

Yet with calamity looming, credible information has become hard to come by. National authorities recently ordered the Indian Space Research Organisation to unpublish satellite images that reveal the pace at which Joshimath is sinking, and officials are now prohibited from speaking to the media about the matter.

Joshimath is hardly alone. Many other towns and roads throughout the Himalayan range are showing similar signs of stress. This should surprise no one. It is yet another symptom of Indian authorities' criminal lack of accountability. More tipping points loom as forests are being cleared; lakes, wetlands, and natural water reservoirs are being built over; urban areas are contending with mountains of garbage; and rivers have been almost irreversibly polluted. Education, healthcare, the judicial system, and city services work mainly for the privileged.

The practice of embellishing data, integral to the lack of accountability, extends to macroeconomic management. GDP growth jumped inexplicably after a data revision in 2015. In 2018, the government rejected its own survey when it showed that poverty had increased. The finance ministry reports absurdly unrealistic unemployment figures, despite a jobs crisis. The decadal census that was due in 2021 has been postponed until some unknown future date.

India's elite, with its "see-no-evil" approach to economic discourse and policy, has blotted out Joshimath's fate as an aberration of nature. Instead, world-class electronic-payment systems and technology-based startups have fed a global narrative of an imminent "Indian century." Make no mistake though: Joshimath is a microcosm of the brazen unaccountability corroding Indian politics and society. It should be a reality check, not a footnote.

The writer, Visiting Professor of International Economic Policy at Princeton University, previously worked for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.
©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

Realise deeply that the present moment is all you will ever have.
ECKHART TOLLE

The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.
MARK TWAIN

The real question is not whether life exists after death. The real question is whether you are alive before death.
OSHO



Vappala Balachandran

EVEN AMERICA HAS A BIG PROBLEM BY WAY OF FARMER SUICIDES



Ashoka Mody

Joshimath is a microcosm of the brazen unaccountability corroding Indian politics and society. It should be a reality check, not a footnote

SPECTRUM NATION

The ever-widening disparity

It was enlightening to hear Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while assuming the G20 presidency, that: "Though all of history, humanity lived in scarcity. We fought for limited resources because our survival depended on denying them to others. Confrontation and competition – between ideas, ideologies and identities – became the norm." He went on to assert: "Unfortunately, we remain trapped in the zero-sum mindset even today. We see it when countries fight over territory and resources."



Dhurjati Mukherjee

THE BOGEY OF ULTRA NATIONALISM AND OTHER IDEOLOGICAL VICE HAS NO MEANING FOR THE SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY BACKWARD SECTIONS

One is inclined to point out here that Mahatma Gandhi as an egalitarian propounded the 'basic needs' approach of development, in which he clearly stated that development should ensure reasonable food and a minimum standard of living for the poorest of the poor. Unfortunately, economic liberalisation has expanded India's middle class but failed to uplift the poor and the economically weaker sections as the Gandhian model of self-reliance, grassroots development and rural-oriented approach has not been followed. Modi's euphoria, as of previous governments, does not match the developments in the country as the NDA government is seen as decidedly pro-rich and, while there are encouraging speeches, there is not much the government has shown

on the ground to improve the lot of the poor: The reduced allocation of resources for the rural sector, even in the recent Union Budget, is testimony to this. It is disheartening that the government remains oblivious to the ever-widening disparity between the rich and the poor, between the urban and rural sectors and between the organised and unorganised sector workers.

Another point highlighted by the Prime Minister was that "some may argue that confrontation and greed are just human nature" but he refuted this proposition. To back his view, he pointed to the spiritual traditions pursued by human beings as evidence of the higher instincts that lie embedded in human beings. While many Indian political leaders have focussed on the path of diplomacy, dialogue and negotiation instead of taking recourse to violence and war to resolve inter-state disputes, Modi sought to provide a theoretical underpinning to his view on the causes of wars between states and that past reasons for war are no longer applicable due to technological advances.

This is indeed a laudable observation, but on the other hand his government has not denounced the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Obviously, the economic factor may have stood in the way of India tak-

ing a bold stand. It needs to be mentioned here that apart from the economic factor, ancient prejudices and the desire to correct historical wrongs are also reasons for hostility. Social notions of superiority despite the political acceptance of equality cannot be wished away. These too, lead to conflict within states and between states. And in India, this is very much evident as the present establishment is in process of re-writing history and correcting the so-called wrongs of the Mughals.

The resultant violence among communities, especially Hindus and Muslims, has affected our social fibre and life and has impeded the process of development. Caste had always been a crucial factor for political parties to garner votes and now the present dispensation is exploiting religion for political gains. This does not augur well for a developing country like India with professed secular ideals. The bogey of ultra nationalism and other ideological vice has no meaning for the socially and economically backward sections.

One may refer to a book recently released by Prof. Ranabir Samaddar which pointed out that the existing networks of solidarity based on family, religious community, kinship and workplace ties weakened, the interventions of the State weakened with the increasing "finan-

cialisation of the economy in the wake of globalisation." Thus, the disparity between the rich and the poor has grown to unthinkable proportions and will continue to do so in the coming years with government policies remaining unchanged.

Another important development of recent years is rampant corruption across the country and all those who are involved are directly or indirectly linked to political bigwigs. Economists have attributed these developments to the growth of crony capitalism and following Western models of materialism in trying to develop the country without thinking of the grassroots. The value system in society is lost and the young generation has an uncertain future. The lack of jobs, the deteriorating social atmosphere and the corruption in society along with promotion of Hindu nationalism have further pushed them to a precarious situation. The huge population of the country poses a challenge to development, but a serious concern of how to bring the poor into the mainstream of life and activity, which is connected, goes largely unanswered. Much more needs to be done.

The writer is Sr. Consultant & Guest Faculty at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kolkata. ©INFRA

The writer is a former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat. His latest book is 'Intelligence Over Centuries'. ©THE BILLION PRESS



The Commonwealth Fund, a private US research organisation for healthcare said in their annual report for 2020 that the US has the 'highest suicide rate of any wealthy nation'

to pay for mental health treatment.

It was a revelation to me, when I studied this subject further; that even America has a big problem by way of farmer suicides. There are many reasons. On March 9, 2020, USA Today published that US farmers were "saddled with near-record debt, declaring bankruptcy at rising rates and selling off their farms amid an uncertain future clouded by climate change and whipsawed by tariffs and bailouts." During 2014-18, more than 450 farmers had committed suicide across nine mid-western states. The paper said that the toll could be more as all states had not provided data.

According to this paper's survey, the main reasons were plummeting commodity prices by about 50% since 2012, farm debts jumping about by a third from 2007 and reaching levels last seen in the 1930s. Also, bad weather, which prevented farmers from planting nearly 20 million acres in 2019 alone, and political reasons like the US soybean exports to China dropping by 75% from 2017 to 2018 amid trade tensions.

On November 27, 2019, Time Magazine wrote that the "picturesque American family of small farms" had been declining for generations and remained only on holiday greeting cards. They were affected by foreign policy tensions like trade wars, climate change, falling

commodity prices, new technologies, globalisation and corporate farming. "Chapter 12 farm bankruptcies" had gone up by 12% in the Midwest from July of 2018 to June of 2019 and up to 50% in the Northwest. This is a special legal provision for farmers (a version of the "Chapter 11 bankruptcy" for non-farmers) to retain ownership provided they reorganise their finances within a stipulated period of time. As a result, thousands of small farms just stopped their farming as they felt that they would not be able to reorganise their business through this route. Thus, the US lost more than 100,000 farms between 2011 and 2018, with 12,000 between 2017 and 2018 alone.

On 9 March 2019, The Guardian (UK) went to the root of the problem, which was "factory farming" or what we call "corporate farming." One feels proud of our farmers that they had stood defiantly steadfast to prevent such a situation in India during 2020-21.

It all began in 1970 when the then Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz pushed the idea of large farms and asked the small farmers either "to get big or get out." It said that President Richard Nixon "plucked him out of Purdue's agriculture department and planted him in the USDA-Department of Agriculture."

No end in sight

Sir, This refers to the editorial, "Biden's Ukraine visit," Orissa POST, Feb 22. The strategic visit by US President Joe Biden to Kyiv, days before the first anniversary of the Russian war on Ukraine, has only hardened the battle lines and made it obvious that America is in no mood to facilitate an early resolution of Europe's biggest conflict since World War II. Also, the US State Department announced an additional \$460-million aid to Ukraine, including artillery ammunition, anti-armour systems and air defence radars. With this, Ukraine is set to receive large supplies of Western weaponry over the next few months in an attempt to sharpen its counteroffensive, leaving no room for doubt that this war is not going to end anytime soon. Biden is busy doing chest-thumping and sabre-rattling on European soil; in his opinion, Russian President Vladimir Putin was 'dead wrong' in presuming that 'Ukraine was weak and the West was divided.' A defiant Putin has reaffirmed that sanctions-hit Moscow is ready for the long haul, even as he has accused the US-led West of stoking a global war to destroy Russia. Given the geopolitical complications, the volatile situation is inevitably going to worsen. It is clearly evident to the international community that the US is no peacemaker and can never be one. However, countries such as India, the current G20 president, need to play a proactive role in bringing both sides to the negotiating table and calling out the nations that are hell bent on prolonging this mutually destructive war and jeopardising world peace.
N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Cheetah translocation

Sir, 12 cheetahs from South Africa have arrived at Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh under the Indian government's efforts to reintroduce cheetahs in India after their extinction for seven decades. This is the second time in six months that cheetahs have arrived in the Kuno National Park from an African country. Last year in September cheetahs from Namibia was translocated to India. The last cheetah died in the year 1947 and India declared cheetah an extinct species in the year 1952. India has recently signed an MoU with South Africa to bring more than 100 cheetahs over the next few years. This reintroduction programme is the world's first intercontinental translocation project of wild animals. The success of the project will depend on how the African cats adapt themselves to the Indian conditions and how well they will breed.
Deba Prasad Nayak, CUTTACK

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

national

SHIV SENA SYMBOL ROW

No SC relief for Uddhav

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 22: In a jolt to the Uddhav Thackeray camp, the Supreme Court Wednesday refused to stay the Election Commission order recognising Maharashtra Chief Eknath Shinde-led bloc as the real Shiv Sena and allotting the party's original 'bow and arrow' poll symbol to it.

The top court, while issuing notice to the Shinde group on the appeal against poll panel's decision, permitted the Thackeray faction to use 'Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray)' name and 'flaming torch' as poll symbol in state byelections scheduled for February 26.

"Issue notice...Senior advocates N K Kaul, Mahesh Jethmalani and Maninder Singh (for Shinde) receive notice... Counter affidavit, if any, be filed within a period of two weeks. Pending further orders, the protection (on use of party name and flaming torch symbol) and which has been granted in paragraph 133 (IV) of the impugned order of the Election Commission dated February 17, 2023 shall continue to remain in operation," ordered the bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud.

It, however, did not grant any relief to the Thackeray camp despite its vehement submissions that the assets of the party and its bank accounts be saved from being taken over by the Shinde faction.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, assisted by lawyer Amit Anand Tiwari, urged the court on Thackeray's behalf that a status quo order on party properties and bank accounts be granted as the Shinde faction is taking over everything on the ground that now they are the real Shiv Sena.

Does the (EC) order contain any direction with regard to bank accounts and properties? asked the bench, which also comprised Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala. "No, no," replied Sibal, adding, "but, they will say that they are the real party and will take

YEDI BIDS ADIEU TO K'TAKA ASSEMBLY

In what probably is his "farewell speech" in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly of which he was a member for decades, state BJP strongman and former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa Wednesday said, till the last breath of his life he will honestly strive towards building the party and bring it to power



over everything. Rather, they are doing that". "Mr Sibal, if something is part of the Election Commission order we can certainly look at. This does not form... The EC order is confined to the allotment of symbols. Now for us to go beyond is not possible... Equally, now they have succeeded after hearing before the Election Commission, we cannot pass an order which has the effect of staying the order without hearing them," the bench said.

There was some positive outcome for the Thackeray faction as senior advocate N K Kaul, appearing for the Shinde bloc, assured the bench it will not take steps like issuing whip or initiation of disqualification proceedings against lawmakers - MLAs, MLCs and MPs - of the Thackeray faction for the time being.

The assurance came after senior advocate A M Singhvi, also appearing for Thackeray, raised apprehension, saying "Tomorrow, if they issue a whip or a letter and if we do not do it then we will be disqualified. Now they are the party. I have no protection. Your lordships should give us the status quo at least."

This led the bench to ask: "If we take this (petition for hearing) after two weeks, are you in the process of issuing a whip or disqualifying them." "No, no," responded Kaul.

The bench, while refusing to grant the interim relief of status quo on prop-

erties and bank accounts, said though it was entertaining the plea of Thackeray it cannot "stay an order at this stage as they have succeeded before the EC."

Sibal also sought the liberty to move the court again if the Shinde faction takes any action to precipitate the situation by taking over properties.

"That is independent of the EC order. Ultimately that is a contractual relationship within a political party. Any further action is not based on the Election Commission order," the bench said, adding the Thackeray group will have to "exhaust other remedy".

At the outset, the Shinde group raised preliminary objections on maintainability of the plea, saying the petition against the EC decision should have been filed in the high court.

The poll panel said that even for recognition of a political party, the number of votes, number of lawmakers are taken into account, and as there was no democratic set up in the organisation, the majority in the legislative wing was considered, Kaul said countering Sibal.

The Sena chief elects members of the electoral college and they, in turn, elect the party 'pramukh', he said, adding this led the EC to take note of the majority in the legislative wing of the party while deciding which group is the real Sena.

MHA gives nod to prosecute Sisodia in snooping case

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 22: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has given sanction to prosecute Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia under the Prevention of Corruption Act in connection with the alleged 'Feedback Unit (FBU) snooping case'.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will now lodge a fresh case against Sisodia.

The CBI in its preliminary inquiry report has found that the FBU formed through a Delhi cabinet decision September 29, 2015 indulged in gathering political intelligence.

Delhi Lt. Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena had also given his approval to the CBI to file a case against Sisodia and six others over allegations that the AAP government created a Feedback Unit under the vigilance department to collect political intelligence.

"From the careful perusal of the



Sisodia is already facing a CBI case for alleged favours extended to liquor traders in the formulation of the now-scrapped Delhi Excise policy of 2021-22. He is to appear before the probe agency Feb 26

note, it can be ambiguously observed that there was a concerted effort by the state government to create an agency that was outside its mandate and not within the constitutional scheme of Governance." "There seems to have been a well conceived attempt to establish an extraneous and parallel covert agency with over-arching powers of snooping and trespass, without any legislative, judicial or executive oversight whatsoever," L-G Saxena has observed in his order.

Centre, states directed to install CCTVs in police stations within a month

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 22: The Supreme Court has directed the Centre and state governments to comply within a month with its directions on mandatory installation of CCTV cameras in police stations and offices of investigation agencies.

A bench headed by Justice BR Gavai asked the governments to file their compliance affidavits till March 29, while warning in case of non-compliance, it will be compelled to take necessary steps against the officials concerned.

"If the directions are not complied with, we shall be compelled to take such steps as necessary against the Union home secretary and chief secretaries and home secretaries of respective state governments," said the bench, also comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sanjay Karol, February



21. The top had in 2020 directed installation of CCTV cameras and recording equipment at the offices of investigating agencies, including the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Enforcement Directorate and National Investigation Agency, which conduct interrogations and have the power of arrest. Senior advocate Siddhartha Dave, who has been appointed amicus curiae (friend of court) in the matter, submitted that 25 states and union territories were yet to file compliance reports in terms of the earlier directions which had initially set a deadline of six weeks for putting in place CCTVs in police stations across the country.

Stray dog menace continues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, Feb 22: In another incident of street dogs targeting children in Hyderabad, a four-year-old boy playing outside his house in Chaitanyapuri here has been attacked by canines, leading to bleeding injuries.

The boy's mother told media that a pack of four to five dogs Tuesday chased three children, and attacked her son resulting in scratches and bleeding injuries to him. He was taken to hospital for treatment, according to the woman.

She said her neighbours were feeding the stray dogs despite objections by some residents there. "Earlier also, stray dogs attacked the locals and complaints were made to municipal authorities then and they caught the dogs. But the neigh-

bours, who were feeding them got these dogs released and they are attacking the children," the woman claimed.

The woman said after noticing the dogs attacking her son, she along with some other locals rescued her child. She demanded the municipal authorities to immediately take away the stray dogs from the area as they are pouncing on children and others.

A police official, however, said they have not received any complaint over the incident. This comes close on the heels of the gruesome instance of a pack of stray dogs attacking and killing a four-year-old boy in Amberpet in the city February 19. 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 was caught on CCTV camera and the footage went viral provoking public outcry.

In a high-level meeting, Special Chief Secretary Arvind Kumar Wednesday directed the officials to pay special attention on controlling the stray dog menace in GHMC limits. The senior bureaucrat chaired the meeting to chalk out an action plan on a war-footing to prevent the menace of stray dogs in the civic body's limits along with other municipalities in the state, an official release said.

He instructed GHMC officials to immediately carry out Animal Birth Control (ABC) sterilisation operations. Municipal authorities have been directed to restrict the hotels, restaurants, function halls, meat markets within the GHMC limits from dumping waste on the streets.

Union Bank of India advertisement for a regional office in Balasore. It includes a 'SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE/MOVABLE PROPERTIES' section with multiple listings. Each listing provides details such as the name and address of the borrower/guarantor, the amount due, and the type of possession. The listings are organized into several branches: BHADRAK BRANCH-1, BHADRAK BRANCH-2, BHADRAK BRANCH-3, BALASORE BRANCH-2, DHAMARA BRANCH, DUBURI BRANCH, KALIAPANI BRANCH, KESHADURAPAL BRANCH, KEONJHAR BRANCH-3, and UDALA BRANCH-2. The advertisement concludes with the date of the e-auction (10.03.2023) and the website for more details.

In a first, tiger spotted in Himachal

Spotting of tiger in Himachal assumes significance as there are plans by the NTCA for reintroducing tigers in the western part of Rajaji from the eastern landscape

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shimla, Feb 22: A fully grown tiger caught on a camera-trap in Himachal Pradesh's 27.88-sq-km Simbalbara National Park, which supports dense Sal forests with grassy landscape and diverse wildlife and bird species, has sent foresters and wildlife conservationists into a tizzy as they say the wild big cat was captured for the first time in the state.

The news comes as a major boost for state wildlife wing as elephants are the sporadic visitors to the Simbalbara National Park in the Paonta Valley in Sirmour district that lies in the Shivalik hills, adjacent to Haryana's Kalesar National Park.

On the spotting of the tiger, Divisional Forest Officer (Wildlife) N Ravisankar told IANS Wednesday that its pugmark was spotted on the periphery of the national park January 16. "Since then our teams led by Range Officer Surender Singh were constantly working to trace the whereabouts of the tiger. We have installed eight camera traps at various locations in the park to record its presence," he said.

"A clear picture of the tiger has been seen four days ago in one of the cameras in which the tiger is seen sauntering in the park,"



The Shimla Wildlife Division has shared a tweet that contains the image of the first ever tiger found in the territory of Himachal Pradesh. The division also said that this is the first camera trap image of a tiger recorded in Himachal Pradesh.

Ravisankar added.

Forest department officials believe the movement of the tiger is likely between the Simbalbara National Park and the adjoining Kalesar National Park in Haryana, both parks support diverse prey species.

But they are certain that the tiger has come from the Rajaji National Park in Uttarakhand over a month and a half months back.

"The Simbalbara National Park and its surrounding areas have reported tiger sightings over the decades, but no conclusive evidence of their presence was ever found. This is the first documentation in the park, of course, big cat spotting brings cheer," a wildlife conservationist told IANS.

"The tiger is rare in Himachal Pradesh. In such a situation, the presence of tiger in the state is con-

sidered a good sign for both biodiversity and eco-tourism," he said.

"In the footage, the tiger seems healthy, a clear indication that the park supports enough prey species to sustain it with no chance of conflict with another predator," said another official.

After the spotting of the tiger's pugmark, the department claimed that it started removing 'Lantana camara' in the park, so that the tiger does not have difficulty in moving. Invasive lantana grass threatens the tiger habitats.

For tracking the movement of the tiger, the Forest department took assistance of the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, to install eight camera-traps.

According to the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), the Simbalbara National Park is the only conservation area in Himachal

Pradesh where the occurrence of tiger and elephant has been reported.

In a faunal survey by the ZSI in 2005 and 2006, tiger pugmarks and scats were observed in two instances. One scat sample collected was composed of pure soil with abundant undigested ants, while another scat sample composed of digested bones in the form of powdery calcareous substance along with undigested hairs.

Although Simbalbara supports a good prey base for large carnivores, its smaller size is not suitable for a tiger to reside permanently, says the ZSI.

In November last, a herd of elephants was spotted in Simbalbara National Park, which is now renamed as Sher Jung National Park.

On the habitat of the elephants, the ZSI says since grass is the major food item for elephants, the smaller size and deciduous vegetation of Simbalbara, without much grassland, cannot sustain an elephant herd for a longer period. Hence the park is not an attractive habitat for the elephant.

On the tiger's presence in Simbalbara, Ravisankar said the water flow in the Yamuna river is minimised during winter and there "is possibility that it reached up to Simbalbara from the Rajaji National Park in neighbouring Uttarakhand".

Upbeat over the spotting of tiger, wildlife experts say this is good to know that a tiger is able to reach up to Simbalbara. They say the contiguity of Rajaji-Kalesar-Simbalbara makes the landscape extremely important and worth protecting.

Simbalbara, originally the hunting ground for the Maharaja of Sirmour, is home to the sambhar, spotted deer (cheetal), barking deer, wild boar, the blue bull and many other prey mammals.

The park shares a boundary with the Darpur, Majra and Nagli reserve forests with seasonal and perennial streams.

The spotting of tiger in Himachal Pradesh assumes significance as there are plans by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) for reintroducing tigers in the western part of Rajaji from the eastern landscape.

Previously, the Simbalbara National Park, the Kalesar National Park and the Rajaji National Park were well-connected tiger corridors.

The Simbalbara National Park, located along the Nahani-Ponta Sahib road, is some six km from Puruwalla. Ponta Sahib is about 18 km from the national park.

Yogi gov't presents state's biggest ever Budget for FY 23-24



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Feb 22: The Uttar Pradesh government Wednesday presented the Budget FY24 with an aim to lay the foundation for a self-reliant Uttar Pradesh and focus on the all-around development of the state for making it a USD 1 trillion economy.

The budget of ₹6,90,242.43 crore for FY24 was the biggest in the state's history.

"This budget was for 'Atmanirbhar Uttar Pradesh'. It will prove to be a milestone for making the state's economy USD 1 trillion," Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, adding that in the past six years, the government ensure 'sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas, sabka prayas' (Together, everyone's development, trust and effort).

He said his government's first budget in 2017 was dedicated to farmers, budget in 2018 for infrastructure and industrial development, 2019 for women empowerment, 2020 for youth power, employment and infrastructure development, 2021 for self-reliance and empowerment, 2022 'from antyodaya' to 'atmanirbhar' (self-reliance).

He said that while Ayodhya will be developed as a model solar city, the number of active airports in the state will go up to 21 in the days to come.

For the metro in Varanasi, Gorakhpur and other cities, a provision of ₹100 crore has been made, while construction work of expressways will also be accelerated, he noted. For farmers, in the past budget, the government gave them a subsidy of 50 per cent in electricity for irrigation and this will be increased to 100 per cent in a systematic way in future.

The government will also provide one cylinder free to beneficiaries of the Ujjawala scheme, he said, adding that the first night safari will come up in Kukulrai in Lucknow.

The chief minister also said the exports from the state rose to over 1.60 lakh crore from over ₹86 lakh crore in 2017-18. And in the past six years, per capita income and GDP have doubled.

Earlier, finance minister Suresh Kumar Khanna tabled the budget in the state Legislative Assembly.

Targeting youths, the budget made provision of ₹1,050 crore under the 'Chief Minister Kanya Sumangala Yojana', ₹4,032 crore

This budget was for 'Atmanirbhar Uttar Pradesh'. It will prove to be a milestone for making the state's economy USD 1 trillion

YOGI ADITYANATH | CHIEF MINISTER, UP

for destitute widows and ₹600 crore for the 'Samuhik Vivah' scheme for the marriage of girls of all classes.

The finance minister proposed ₹150 crore for the marriage grant scheme for daughters of poor people belonging to other backward classes.

For providing tablets and smartphones to eligible students under Swami Vivekananda Youth Empowerment Scheme, a provision of ₹3,600 crore has been made in the budget for the financial year 2023-24.

On the infrastructure front, the finance minister proposed a provision of over ₹21,159 crore for the construction of roads and bridges, and ₹6,209 crore for their maintenance.

Khanna said ₹3,473 crore is proposed for the work of bridges and roads for agricultural marketing facilities and ₹1,525 crore for roads in rural areas.

While ₹1,700 crore is proposed for the construction of railway overhead bridges and ₹1,850 crore for other bridges, the budget proposed ₹2,588 crore for widening/strengthening and new works of state highways.

A provision of ₹2,538 crore is proposed for widening/strengthening and new works of major/other district roads, Khanna said. With religious tourism in mind, the budget proposed ₹1,000 crore for the development of 'Dharmarth Marg' (roads to religious places). The budget also proposed ₹3,000 crore for maintenance of roads and ₹2,500 crore for construction from the State Road Fund, Khanna said.

The finance minister has set an investment target of ₹10 lakh crore and the creation of 20 thousand jobs in the next 5 years under the new Uttar Pradesh Tourism Policy 2022.

A budget provision of ₹7,248 crore was also proposed for the old age/farmer pension scheme, while ₹1,120 crore was set aside for Divyang Pension Yojana.

Yellow rust found on wheat plants in Hamirpur villages

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hamirpur, Feb 22: Yellow rust has been found on the wheat crop in various parts of the Hamirpur district of Himachal Pradesh, according to officials.

A team of the agriculture department visited yellow rust-prone villages of Nadaun block Tuesday and surveyed the crop, they said.

Symptoms of yellow rust were found in the crop in villages Bahal, Sadhwan, Lahar Kotlu and Sera. These symptoms are in the initial stage in some places where the incidence of the disease is 2 to 3 per cent, said Deputy Director, Agriculture Atul Dogra, adding that officers inspected the fields of the farmers in villages of Bahal, Sadhwan, Lahar Kotlu, Sera, Jasai, Khatroud, Balduhak, Bada, Rangas, Rail and Faste.

Yellow Rust disease appears as yellow stripes of powder or dust on leaves and leaf sheaths of the wheat crop. This yellow powder comes



VIBRANT HUES: Workers dry up 'Gula' (coloured powder) for upcoming Holi festival, in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

'Mahabharat' movie-to-museum project on lines of GoT Museum

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 22: The Uttar Pradesh government has received a proposal to start a 'movie-to-museum' project in the state.

The investor wants to shoot a film on the epic, 'Mahabharat', in the state for which he will build larger-than-life sets.

After the shooting, the sets will be converted into a museum where the film's accessories like costumes, armours, mannequins and other materials will be show-cased. This will be comparable to the 'Game of Thrones Museum' in North Ireland and the Ramoji Rao Film City in Hyderabad.

"In principle, the Uttar Pradesh government and our company have agreed to take the idea forward. The MoU was signed during the

Mumbai roadshow, ahead of the UP Global Investors Summit. We have requested for allotment of land at a place where sets can be placed for shooting purpose. We will leave behind the set up as a museum for people to visit at a nominal cost," said Rajiva Ranjan of the investing company, EN Communication Pvt Ltd.

The state government was represented by additional chief executive officer, Invest UP, Prathamesh Kumar.

The company has agreed to make an investment of ₹1,500 crore for the purpose. The partnership was mobilised with the help of UP Development Forum (UPDF).

The idea has immense potential as the Mahabharat has a universal appeal. The film made on it will create buzz.



Eye on AI future at Lucknow G20 meet

The system developed in 2021 is now running in Madhya Pradesh's Vidisha and 1,100 people have been screened so far

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 22: Logy.AI, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) enabled healthcare platform has developed an AI and Whatsapp-based system which will help detect eye diseases such as Cataract.

This new technology mode was recently displayed in the exhibition held at the G20 summit in Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow.

Priyaranjit Ghosh, co-founder of this startup, said that people in rural areas often have eye problems, but their problems increase due to the lack of timely doctor's advice and treatment.

In such a situation, through WhatsApp, any health worker can easily discern the eye disease of these patients, by taking a photo of their eye.

On the basis of which, the patient can visit the doctor, take advice

CATARACT CARE VIA WHATSAPP



and seek treatment.

Ghosh added that the system was developed in 2021 and is now running in Madhya Pradesh's Vidisha and 1,100 people have been screened so far.

Logi.AI Director Nivedita Tiwari said that the application has been attached with WhatsApp, as it is accessible to almost everyone and the app will be launched later.

"A number has been created in WhatsApp, which is called a contact. We have integrated our technology, referred to as Artificial Intelligence Cataract Screening Solution in the contact," said Tiwari. She added that the contact is

sent to the users by adding it to WhatsApp.

A WhatsApp bot gets basic details of the patients such as name, gender, etc., among others.

After giving the information, the patient, who is guided by the bot, has to send a picture of the affected eye.

The bot assesses the picture and lets the patient know if they have cataract and if it is mature or of a lesser degree.

Following which the patient can get medicines and surgery if needed by the doctor. The whole process is automatic.

AI technology copies human

senses. Health care data is used to create this technology.

The method of testing is similar to that of a doctor and 91 per cent accuracy was achieved in its trial done with about 100 patients, said Tiwari.

She apprised that about 50 people had been trained in Vidisha for the same.

At present, it is being run as a pilot project in Madhya Pradesh. Tiwari said that positive results had emerged from the G20 and will be used soon in UP.

Vidisha District Magistrate Umashankar Bhargava said that AI is powered by WhatsApp and has been started as a pilot project in Nateran block of Vidisha and its basic objective is to raise awareness among people.

Termining the initiative as a great thing for remote areas, Bhargava said that the people in the block are being made aware and the patient is tracked from there to be operated upon by the doctors.

Senior eye surgeon Dr Sanjay Kumar Vishnoi said that the database is especially effective for remote areas where most facilities are not available.

of the day quote

The question arises that the government of India is saying the situation is normal in JK. The delimitation process has been completed. If elections are held everywhere, why not in Jammu and Kashmir?

FAROOQ ABDULLAH | NATIONAL CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

The Leader of Opposition (K Palaniswami) is saying we have not implemented anything. What have we not. One or two may be pending but that is due to paucity of funds

M K STALIN | TAMIL NADU CM

Victory of democracy... congratulations to the people of Delhi...salute to Arvind Kejriwal ji's spirit of fighting for the rights of people

BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

SHORT TAKES

5 killed as tempo collides with car

Lunawada: At least five persons were killed and nearly 15 injured when a tempo turned turtle in Gujarat's Mahisagar district following a head-on collision with a car on Wednesday afternoon, a police official said.

Major fire in Dharavi slum

Mumbai: A major fire broke out in some structures in Dharavi, the biggest slum in Mumbai, in the wee hours of Wednesday, but there was no report of injury to anyone, officials said.

GJM, Hamro party 'suspend' bandh

Darjeeling / Kolkata: The pro-Gorkhaland parties Wednesday suspended the planned 12-hour bandh in Darjeeling hills February 23 for the time being, citing the class 10 West Bengal board exams which are starting on that date.

Newly-married couple found dead

Raipur: A newly-married couple was found dead with stab injuries on their bodies inside a room at their house just before their wedding reception in Chhattisgarh's capital Raipur, police said Wednesday.



TMC can develop Meghalaya...Change this government...Nothing is here. Not a medical college, not a good health system for treatment, no development but the scandal is there

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

SHARMILA APOLOGISES

YSR Telangana Party leader YS Sharmila Wednesday apologised to transgenders, a day after the latter staged a protest against her for allegedly insulting them



KARNATAKA HIJAB BAN

GIRLS MOVE SC FOR PERMISSION TO TAKE EXAM IN HEADSCARF

Following the SC's split verdict on the issue of ban on sporting the Islamic headscarf in educational institutions in Karnataka, girls in hijab are not being permitted to take the exams scheduled to begin from March 9, a bench headed by CJI DY Chandrachud was told

PNN/AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 22: The Supreme Court said Wednesday it will take a call on listing a plea for allowing Muslim girl students to sit for examinations in Karnataka government schools while wearing the hijab.

"They are wearing headscarf. If they are wearing headscarf they are not allowed inside the examination hall. Only on that limited aspect, the court may consider listing it on Monday or Friday," said lawyer Shadan Farasat.

He told the bench, also comprising Justice P S Narasimha, that a few girls have moved to private institutions because of the prohibition on wearing hijab but have to take their exams in government institutions. They risk losing another year if not permitted, he said. "I will take a call," the CJI said.

Due to the split verdict, the high court's judgement still holds. The split verdict October 13 last year held off a permanent resolution to the

hijab row as both judges suggested placing the matter before a larger bench for adjudication.

The top court had said last month it will consider setting up a three-judge bench to adjudicate the case related to the ban on wearing the Muslim headgear in Karnataka government schools.

While Justice Hemant Gupta, since retired, had dismissed the appeals challenging the March 15, 2022 judgement of the Karnataka High Court which had refused to lift the ban, Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia held there will be no restriction on wearing hijab anywhere in the schools and colleges of the state. Permitting a community to wear its religious symbols to schools will be an "antithesis to secularism", Justice Gupta had said, while Justice Dhulia insisted that putting on the Muslim headscarf should simply be a "matter of choice".

Earlier, a full bench of the Karnataka High Court March 15 had dismissed a batch of petitions filed by Muslim girls studying in pre-university colleges in Udupi seeking the right to wear hijab in classrooms. The high court had stated that wearing the hijab is not an essential religious practice in Islam and that the Freedom of Religion under Article 25 of the Constitution is subject to reasonable restriction.

During the arguments in the apex court, a number of counsel appearing for the petitioners had insisted that preventing Muslim girls from wearing the hijab to the classroom will put their education in jeopardy as they might stop attending classes.



Oppn leaders slam Jaishankar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 22: Opposition leaders Wednesday lashed out at External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar for his remarks on China and the BBC documentary on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with many of them pointing to his father's reported comments against the then Gujarat dispensation following the 2002 riots.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete also alleged that foreign policy has been reduced to photostops and a chest-thumping exercise and is being used to secure contracts for a businessman.

The opposition party's attack came over the minister's reported remarks urging people to not buy the narrative that somewhere the government is on the defensive or is being accommodative on the China issue. Jaishankar also re-

portedly hit out at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) over its documentary on Modi and called it "politics by another means". Slamming Jaishankar, TMC's Rajya Sabha MP Jawahar Sircar said, "Strange - that Jaishankar discovered his angst against the Gandhis - after serving them most loyally and taking the best of postings under them? Is it Amnesia or is he just cuddling up to BJP for his unprecedented promotion as

Experts concern over rise in colorectal cancer

COLORECTAL CANCER IS AN UMBRELLA TERM FOR COLON, ANUS OR RECTUM CANCER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 22: Cancer of the large intestine, called colorectal cancer, is on the rise in India and although there has been a decline in the death rate, experts stress on early screening, especially of those aged 45 and above, and a healthy lifestyle to prevent fatalities.

According to experts, while it is common to think that having a family history makes it difficult for one to keep cancer at bay, the disease is quite often lifestyle driven and even in hereditary cases, prevention and early diagnosis can improve outcomes. "Cancer is being caused by multiple factors. Genes do play a

role, but only 1-2 per cent cases are genetic. The rest are lifestyle driven. It takes just a faulty inner or outer environment to switch the bad genes on," Dr Vivek Mangla, a Gastro-intestinal, Hepato-Pancreatico-Biliary and Colorectal surgeon, said. "As the saying goes prevention is better than cure, it is advisable that people seek preventive screening for colorectal cancer. Any person aged above 45 years should go for it," he added, more so if there is a family history of cancer.

"The polyps can be mostly removed endoscopically, sometimes requiring surgery which can be done laparoscopically, or by robotic surgery. These are minimally invasive procedures which shorten the length of a patient's stay in the hospital." However, if the polyp turns cancerous, one might need to have those removed surgically - mostly laparoscopically, or by robotic surgery," Dr Mangla said.

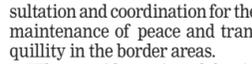
According to him, there is no need for one to be worried or over-



whelmed following a colorectal cancer diagnosis. Stage I and II colorectal cancer can be cured in more than 90 per cent of cases and stage III in about 70-75 per cent.

About 40 per cent of patients with Stage IV but resectable colorectal cancer can be cured despite the disease having advanced to stage four, the doctor said.

"In early stages of rectal tumours, we usually avoid attach-



India, China meet over border affairs

The two sides discussed the proposals at an in-person meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) in Beijing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 22: India and China Wednesday held diplomatic talks in Beijing and discussed proposals for disengagement in the remaining friction points along the LAC in eastern Ladakh in an "open and constructive manner", but there was no indication of any breakthrough.

During the meeting held under the WMCC framework, the two sides agreed to hold the 18th round of military talks at an early date to achieve the objective in accordance with the existing bilateral agreements and protocols, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

The Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) was established in 2012 as an institutional mechanism for con-

sultation and coordination for the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

"The two sides reviewed the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Western Sector of India-China border areas and discussed proposals for disengagement in the remaining areas in an open and constructive manner, which would help in the restoration of peace and tranquillity along the LAC in Western Sector and create conditions for the restoration of normalcy in bilateral relations,"

Army chief visits northern Army HQs

Jammu: Army Chief General Manoj Pande Wednesday visited the northern army headquarters at Udhampur and reviewed the operational preparedness and security situation, an official said.



Foreign Minister?" TMC MP Mahua Moitra tweeted, "So Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs currently moonlighting as Minister

of Doublethink & Newspeak. Clearly seems to have forgotten his son worked for Aspen Institute funded by George Soros!"

ACCORDING TO DOCTORS, ONE OF THE COMMON SYMPTOMS OF POLYPS AS WELL AS COLORECTAL CANCER IS A CHANGE IN THE PERSON'S TOILET FREQUENCY. IF SOMEONE FINDS HIMSELF FREQUENTING THE TOILET, MAYBE FOUR TO FIVE TIMES, AS OPPOSED TO ONCE DAILY IN THE PAST AND IF THE INDIVIDUAL DOES NOT FEEL RELIEVED EVEN AFTER THAT, IT MAY BE A SIGN OF WORRY

THE OTHER COMMON SYMPTOMS INCLUDE STOMACHACHE, ANAEMIA, AND RECTAL BLEEDING

In a significant proportion of patients, even those with distal rectal cancer, we try to avoid permanent colostomy," Dr Mangla said.

Studies suggest that a sedentary lifestyle and faulty food habits are making this variant of cancer common, even among the young, Dr M D Ray, Professor at the department of Surgical Oncology at

NIKKI YADAV MURDER CASE

Court sends Sahil to judicial custody



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 22: A metropolitan court here Wednesday remanded Sahil Gehlot, accused of killing his secretly married wife Nikki Yadav and stuffing her body into a fridge, in 12-day judicial custody.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Police have invoked fresh charges against Gehlot and others in the case, his lawyer said. Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Archana Beniwal passed the order for sending Gehlot to jail.

Gehlot along with five other co-accused will now be produced in court March 6. Gehlot's father, two cousins and two friends were arrested in the case. DS Kumar, the counsel for Gehlot, said while the FIR was initially registered under Sections 302 (murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence, or giving false information to screen offender) of the IPC, police have now invoked sections 120 B (criminal conspiracy), 34 (common intention), 202 (intentional omission to give information of offence by person bound to inform) and 212 (harbouring of offender) of the penal code.

Earlier Monday, a court had extended the police custody of Gehlot (24) by two days, while other five co-accused were remanded in 14-day judicial custody.

AIIMS, Delhi said.

Over the last five years, the disease has doubled to four out of one lakh people from 2-3 in 1 lakh people, he stated.

Although this number may seem insignificant, because of the huge population of India, which has become the most populous country in the world, it adds up to a huge disease burden.

No wonder that colorectal cancer, which was the seventh most common cancer to affect Indians, has shot up to third place.

"If a member of your family had this cancer before turning 40 or 50, the risk of this disease for you is high. You should get a colonoscopy done around 20 years of age. After that, undergoing colonoscopy every 1 to 3 year, depending on the molecular variety of the cancer, is advisable under the guidance of the concerned expert," Dr Ray stated. He also added that 80 per cent of cancer is preventable and even curable if detected early.

international



Putin wasn't interested in negotiating before the war. He's still not interested in negotiating
JOHN SULLIVAN | FORMER US AMBASSADOR TO RUSSIA

S KOREA'S GRIM MILESTONE

South Korea's fertility rate dropped last year to a record low, data showed Wednesday, in yet another grim milestone for the country with the world's lowest number of expected children for each woman. The average number of expected babies per woman over her reproductive life fell to 0.78 in 2022 down from 0.81 a year earlier



of the day quote

Biden has repeatedly vowed publicly that he does not seek a new Cold War and has no intention of conflict with China. We hope that he can keep his word and practise what he preaches, instead of saying one thing and doing another

WANG WENBIN | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN, CHINA

India believes that UN peacekeeping missions should not exist in perpetuity. Exit strategies should be part of the mission planning process from inception

RUCHIRA KAMBOJ | INDIA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO UN

I am appalled by the Iranian regime's continuing threats to the lives of UK-based journalists and have today summoned its representative to make clear this will not be tolerated

JAMES CLEVERLY | FOREIGN SECRETARY, UK

SHORT TAKES

Nord blast probe: Russia, West clash

United Nations: Russia clashed with the United States and other Western nations Tuesday over the Kremlin's call for a UN investigation of last September's sabotage of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines from Russia to Western Europe. Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told the UN Security Council that Moscow has "no trust" in the separate investigations being carried out by Denmark, Sweden and Germany, but it does "fully trust" UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to establish an independent international investigation of the explosions.

UK govt supports BBC over I-T row

London: The British government has strongly defended the BBC and its editorial freedom in Parliament after the Income-Tax department's survey operations on the UK-headquartered media corporation's New Delhi and Mumbai offices over three days last week. David Rutley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of the FCO, pointed to a "broad and deep relationship" with India which meant the UK was able to discuss a wide range of issues in a "constructive manner".

China approves \$700mn for Pak

Islamabad: In a boost to the forex reserves, Pakistan Finance Minister Ishaq Dar announced Wednesday that the Board of China Development Bank has approved a \$700 million facility for Pakistan, The News reported. "This amount is expected to be received this week by State Bank of Pakistan which will shore up its forex reserves!" tweeted finance minister Dar, adding that the formalities have been completed. However, according to official sources, two more commercial loans were expected, including \$500 million and \$800 million.

'Jail Bharo Tehreek'

Lahore: Over 60 workers, including six senior leaders, of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party were arrested Wednesday following its mass court arrest movement over what it called the violation of fundamental rights, abuse of the Constitution and the economic meltdown. The party, however, claimed that between 500 and 700 workers and leaders have been picked up by the Lahore police.

TEAMING AGAINST WEST

Russia-China ties at new frontiers: Putin

THE GROWING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHINA AND RUSSIA IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE WAYS THE WAR HAS SPREAD INTO PERILOUS NEW TERRAIN

AGENCIES

Moscow, Feb 22: President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday that China's Xi Jinping would visit Russia, saying relations had reached "new frontiers" amid US concerns that Beijing could provide material support to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Chinese weapons supplies to Russia would threaten a potential escalation of the Ukraine war into a confrontation between Russia and China on the one side and Ukraine and the US-led NATO military alliance on the other.

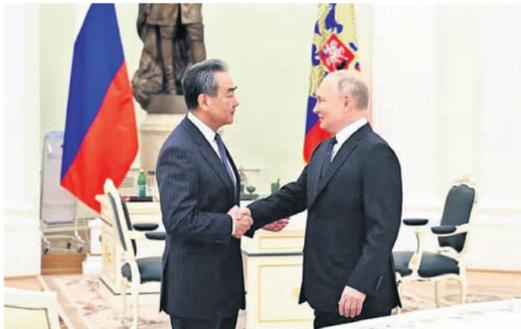
Putin welcomed China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, to the Kremlin, telling him that bilateral trade was better than expected and could soon reach \$200 billion a year, up from \$185 billion in 2022.

"We await a visit of the President of the People's Republic of China to Russia, we have agreed on this," Putin told Wang. "Everything is progressing, developing. We are reaching new frontiers," Putin said.

Wang told Putin that relations between the two countries had withstood the pressure from a volatile international situation and that crises offered certain opportunities.

The relationship between China and Russia, Wang said through an interpreter, was not directed against any third party but equally would "not succumb to pressure from third parties" - a clear jab at the United States.

"Together we support multipolarity and democratisation in international relations," Wang told Putin. "This fully meets the course of time and history; it also meets the interests of the majority of countries."



XI, PUTIN'S SELF-INTEREST

For Putin, China's big-power support amid the biggest confrontation with the West since the height of the Cold War allows him to cast Russia's isolation in the West as a tilt towards Asia

For Xi, Russia is now more dependent on China than ever. Once the leader in the global Communist hierarchy, Russia after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union is now a junior partner to a resurgent China which already leads in many 21st century technologies

Wang earlier met Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, saying that he looked forward to clinching new agreements during his visit to Moscow. There were no details on the agreements.

When Xi met Putin face to face just before Russia sent troops into Ukraine, they sealed a "no limits" partnership that triggered anxiety in the West.

China has pointedly refused to criticise the invasion of Ukraine - echoing Moscow's claim that the US and NATO are to blame for provoking the Kremlin while blasting the punishing sanctions imposed on Russia. Russia, in turn, has staunchly supported China amid tensions with the US over Taiwan.

The two nations have held a series of military drills that showcased their increasingly close defence ties.

The rapprochement has worried the West, leading US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to warn that any Chinese involvement in the Kremlin's war effort would be a "serious problem."

Relations between Russia and the West are at their lowest point since the Cold War, and ties between China and the US are also under serious strain. Moscow suspended its participation in the last remaining nuclear arms control treaty with Washington this week.

And the US expressed concern in recent days that China could provide arms and ammunition to Russia.

Second Indian-American enters 2024 US prez bid

Vivek Ramaswamy is the second Indian-American to enter the Republican presidential primary after Nikki Haley



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, Feb 22: Indian-American tech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy has launched his 2024 presidential bid with a promise to "put merit back" and end dependence on China, becoming the second community member to enter the Republican Party's presidential primary after Nikki Haley.

Ramaswamy, 37, whose parents migrated to the United States from Kerala and worked at a General Electric plant in Ohio, made the announcement during a live interview on Fox News's prime time show of Tucker Carlson, a conservative political commentator.

Earlier this month, two-term former governor of South Carolina and former US Ambassador to the United Nations, Haley announced that she will contest against

her former boss and ex-US President Donald Trump for the Republican Party's nomination.

"We are in the middle of this national identity crisis, Tucker, where we have celebrated our differences for so long that we forgot all the ways we are really just the same as Americans bound by a common set of ideals that set this nation into motion 250 years ago," Ramaswamy said.

A second-generation Indian American, Mr Ramaswamy founded Roivant Sciences in 2014 and led the largest biotech IPOs of 2015 and 2016, eventually culminating in successful clinical trials in multiple disease areas that led to FDA-approved products, according to his bio.

Seattle becomes first US city to ban caste discrimination

MANY INDIAN-AMERICANS FEAR THAT CODIFYING CASTE IN PUBLIC POLICY WILL FURTHER FUEL INSTANCES OF HINDUPHOBIA IN THE US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 22: Seattle has become the first US city to outlaw caste discrimination after its local council passed a resolution, moved by an Indian-American politician and economist, to add caste to its non-discrimination policy.

The resolution moved by Kshama Sawant, an upper-caste Hindu, was approved by the Seattle City Council by six to one vote. The results of the vote could have far-reaching implications on the issue of caste discrimination in the US.

"It's official: our movement has won a historic, first-in-the-nation ban on caste discrimination in Seattle! Now we need to build a movement to spread this victory around the country," Sawant, a

city council member, said soon after the resolution was voted.

Hours ahead of the vote, Indian-American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal lent her support to the move.

"Caste discrimination has no place in society anywhere in the world, including here in America. That is why some colleges and universities have banned it on campuses, and workers are fighting for their rights and their dignity in cases involving caste discrimination," she said.

Equality Labs, the brain behind the anti-caste discrimination resolution in Seattle and which has been spearheading a nationwide campaign said: "Love has won over hate as Seattle has become the first in the nation to ban caste discrimination. We have braved rape



threats, death threats, disinformation, and bigotry."

It has created a coalition of some 200 organisations in support of its efforts over the issue.

"Central to this coalition is a network of more than 30 anti-caste Ambedkarite organisations," Equality Labs said. Among them are the Ambedkar King Study Circle, Ambedkar International Center, Ambedkarite Buddhist

Association of Texas and Boston Study Group.

The Hindu American Foundation, which had campaigned against the resolution, said singling out South Asians and the addition of 'caste' to the non-discrimination policy violates the very policies it now amends.

"The City of Seattle has voted to treat South Asians (and Southeast Asians and African) in a manner that



He also banned the purchase of all luxury items, including new cars till June 2024. The prime minister said that the colonial period palatial official accommodation by district officers would be put to better use.

Other measures include the opening of government offices at 7.30 am in summer and starting a one-dish policy at government functions. The policy will not apply to events held for foreign guests.

The measures came as the country bent its back to get \$1.1 billion from the IMF under a \$7 billion loan package to avoid a default on

foreign payments.

The PM also said talks with the IMF Fund were at the "last stage" and hoped that "matters would be settled in a few days" to get the agreement.

Pakistan has been severely impacted recently by the floods that put one-third of the country under water.

The cataclysmic floods inundated a third of the country, displaced more than 33 million and caused economic damages to the tune of \$12.5 billion to Pakistan's already teetering economy. The devastating floods last year killed 1,739 people.

no other ethnic or racial community is treated under the guise of non-discrimination. It has voted yes to discriminating against ethnic minorities, repeating the ugliness of nativists in the state nearly a century ago," Suhag Shukla, co-founder and executive director of the Hindu American Foundation said.

In passing this resolution, Seattle is now in violation of the US Constitution's guarantees of equal protection and due process that prohibit the state from treating disparately people on account of their national origin, ethnicity, or religion, and implementing a vague, facially discriminatory and arbitrary category, Shukla alleged.

"Seattle has taken a dangerous misstep here, institutionalising bias against all residents of Indian and South Asian origin, all in the name of preventing bias," said HAF managing director Samir Kalra.

"When Seattle should be protecting the civil rights of all its

residents, it is actually violating them by running roughshod over the most basic and fundamental rights in US law, all people being treated equally," Kalra said.

Many Indian-Americans fear that codifying caste in public policy will further fuel instances of Hinduphobia in the US.

Over the last three years, ten Hindu temples and five statues, including those of Mahatma Gandhi and Maratha emperor Shivaji, have been vandalised across the US as an intimidation tactic against the Hindu community.

Indian-Americans are the second-largest immigrant group in the US. According to data from the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS), which is conducted by the US Census Bureau, there are 42 million people of Indian origin residing in the United States.

IFJ suspends Russian union

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brussels, Feb 22: The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has suspended with immediate effect the Russian Union of Journalists over its action since Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its role in annexed Ukrainian territories.

The IFJ, which represents more than 600,000 media workers across the world, said the Russian union's membership was suspended following an investigation then a vote by its global executive committee Wednesday. The vote was held after the union refused to reconsider its decision to set up branches in four regions annexed by Russia, the federation said. "The Russian Union of Journalists' actions in establishing four branches in the an-



nexed Ukrainian territories have clearly shattered... Solidarity and sown divisions among sister unions," said IFJ President Dominique Pradalié.

The Kremlin in September illegally annexed the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions, where it claims its rule is welcomed. Pro-Moscow separatists have controlled part of Donetsk and neighbouring Luhansk province since 2014.

The IFJ said it will continue to support independent journalists inside and outside Russia while providing aid to its Ukrainian affiliates. According to the federation, Ukraine was the deadliest country for journalists in 2022, with 12 media workers killed while doing their work.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

Pak PM announces austerity measures

Shehbaz emphasised the need for all citizens, including government officials, to do their part in addressing the country's economic challenges, urging them to embrace a culture of frugality

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 22: Pakistan Wednesday announced a raft of austerity measures like Cabinet ministers and advisors not drawing salaries and not staying at five-star hotels during foreign trips, as a desperate government attempt to pull the country out of its economic morass amidst mounting criticism against the ruling elite.

Pakistan, which is in dire need of funds as it battles a wrenching economic crisis, has received financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the past and is presently in discussions with the organisation to resume its loan programme.

An agreement on the ninth review of the programme would release over \$1.1 billion. A resumption of the IMF programme would also unlock other avenues of funding for Pakistan.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced the decisions agreed upon in the Cabinet meeting which after a detailed discussion approved the measures to cut official expenditures.

"All Cabinet members and advisors have voluntarily decided that they will not draw salaries or any other benefits from the state treasury and also pay their utility bills," he said.

He said that Cabinet members would stop the use of luxury cars and travel in economy class and would not stay in five-star hotels during foreign trips. It would also apply to all government officers.

The premier also announced a gross 15 per cent reduction in the current expenditure of each federal government department and urged the provinces to follow the suit and cut expenditures. He also banned the use of luxury cars by cabinet members.

no other ethnic or racial community is treated under the guise of non-discrimination. It has voted yes to discriminating against ethnic minorities, repeating the ugliness of nativists in the state nearly a century ago," Suhag Shukla, co-founder and executive director of the Hindu American Foundation said.

In passing this resolution, Seattle is now in violation of the US Constitution's guarantees of equal protection and due process that prohibit the state from treating disparately people on account of their national origin, ethnicity, or religion, and implementing a vague, facially discriminatory and arbitrary category, Shukla alleged.

"Seattle has taken a dangerous misstep here, institutionalising bias against all residents of Indian and South Asian origin, all in the name of preventing bias," said HAF managing director Samir Kalra.

"When Seattle should be protecting the civil rights of all its

of the day quote

The government has approved the Quality Control Order for mandatory certification of cotton bales to augment the supply of good quality cotton to the textile industry

PIYUSH GOVAL | MINISTER OF TEXTILES

The cost of compliance has increased substantially of late and so is the cost and the instances of the non-compliance and resultant increase in the number of litigations. So the only way out, I feel, is to increase self-governance

VS SUNDARESAN | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SEBI

The changes in customs duty as announced in the recent budget has resulted in an increase in input costs of our petrol mid-hybrid models. This has resulted towards marginally increasing the price of our mild hybrids

JYOTI MALHOTRA | MD, VOLVO CAR

SHORT TAKES

ADB proposes \$25bn to India

New Delhi: The Asian Development Bank's (ADB) president has proposed up to \$25 billion development support to India over 5 years in a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday, a statement from the bank said. "ADB will provide multifaceted support for India's key priorities," the statement quoted ADB president Masatsugu Asakawa as saying. This includes support for an infrastructure push under a connectivity plan, support for building cities, mobilising domestic resources and strengthening basic services in disadvantaged districts, the statement added.

Adani firm repays ₹1,500 crore loan

New Delhi: Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone has repaid ₹1,500 crore loan and will repay another ₹1,000 crore in commercial papers due in March. The Adani Group firm paid ₹1,000 crore to SBI Mutual Fund and ₹500 crore to Aditya Birla Sun Life Mutual Fund on commercial papers that matured Monday, as scheduled. An SBI MF spokesperson said it has no further exposure. "SBI MF had an exposure of around ₹1,000 crore to Adani Group, which has been repaid on maturity. We have no further exposure to the Adani Group," he said.

IBS Software acquires AFLS

Thiruvananthapuram: IBS Software, a leading SaaS provider, has acquired Accenture Freight and Logistics Software (AFLS) that provides technology platforms to help airline and ocean transportation companies manage their freight operations. The completion of the acquisition process was announced by IBS, which provides Software as a Service (SaaS) to the travel industry around the world, a release issued by it Wednesday said.

Home-style meal service by Zomato

New Delhi: Food delivery platform Zomato Wednesday said it has launched 'Everyday', home-style meal service under which its food partners will collaborate with home-chefs. "Zomato Everyday will bring you closer to home by serving you meals that make you feel at home," company's Founder Deepinder Goyal said in a blog-post. Goyal informed that Zomato Everyday is currently available in select areas of Gurugram only.



India's goal of adding 500 gigawatts of clean energy in the next seven years is a powerful statement of intent. As one of the largest investors in renewables, the UAE will explore all opportunities for partnership with India

SULTAN AL-JABER | CLIMATE ENVOY, UAE

BAIDU JOINS AI CHATBOT RACE

Baidu Inc, one of China's biggest search and artificial intelligence firms, said Wednesday it plans to implement its artificial intelligence chatbot Ernie into its search services from March. Baidu, which is known for its search engine and autonomous driving technology, leads China's efforts to create an equivalent of OpenAI's ChatGPT chatbot



CARNAGE ON D-STREET

Losses in global equities and across-the-board selling ahead of the monthly expiry of derivatives also hit the investor sentiment, dragging down the key indices for a fourth straight day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 22: Benchmark Sensex tanked 927 points while the broader Nifty settled at a four-month low Wednesday due to an intense selling in heavyweight stocks triggered by geopolitical and inflation concerns.

The BSE Sensex tumbled 927.74 points or 1.53 per cent to settle at 59,744.98, the lowest closing level since February 1. As many as 29 of the Sensex stocks declined. During the day, it tanked 991.17 points or 1.63 per cent to 59,681.55.

The 50-issue NSE Nifty declined 272.40 points or 1.53 per cent to end at a four-month low of 17,554.30 with 47 of its constituents ending in the red. As many as 2,592 stocks declined while 884 advanced and 130 remained unchanged. Also, 266 firms hit their 52-week low levels on the BSE.

The rupee depreciated by 9 paise to settle at 82.88 against the US dollar Wednesday. Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) sold shares worth ₹579.82 crore.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined by 1.16 per cent and smallcap index fell by 1.09 per cent. From the Sensex pack, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Reliance Industries, Wipro, HDFC Bank, HDFC, ICICI Bank and Tata Steel were the major laggards. ITC was the lone winner in the Sensex pack.

"Following negative global mar-



Awaiting the release of Fed and RBI minutes are the other major elements that kept investors on the side lines

VINOD NAIR | HEAD OF RESEARCH, GEJOIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

- SENSEX TANKS 927 PTS TO CLOSE AT 3-WEEK LOW
- NIFTY ENDS NEAR 17,500; LOWEST IN FOUR MONTHS
- 266 STOCKS HIT THEIR 52-WEEK LOW LEVELS ON BSE

kets, Indian equities opened lower on the day before monthly expiry and were under pressure for the whole day. Traders seem to be cautious ahead of the FOMC minutes due tonight as well as the RBI monetary policy meeting minutes, also due later today," said Om Mehra, Equity Research Analyst, Choice Broking.

All the sectoral indices ended lower, with utilities tanking 2.26 per

cent, commodities (2.15 per cent), power (2.09 per cent), realty (1.80 per cent), financial services (1.71 per cent), metal (1.65 per cent) and energy (1.53 per cent).

In Asian markets, South Korea, Japan, China and Hong Kong ended lower. Stock exchanges in Europe were quoting in the negative territory. The US markets had ended significantly lower Tuesday.

International oil benchmark

FDI equity inflows dip 15% in Apr-Dec FY23

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 22: Foreign direct investment (FDI) into India declined by 15 per cent to \$36.75 billion during the April-December this fiscal, according to the latest Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade data.

The FDI inflows stood at \$43.17 billion during the corresponding period of the previous year.

The total FDI inflows, which includes equity inflows, re-invested earnings and other capital, declined to \$55.27 billion during the nine months of the current fiscal year as against \$60.4 billion in the year-ago period.

During April-December 2022-23, Singapore emerged as the top investor with \$13 billion FDI. It was followed by

SINGAPORE EMERGED AS THE TOP INVESTOR WITH \$13BN FDI
COMPUTER SOFTWARE, HARDWARE SECTOR ATTRACTED HIGHEST INFLOWS

Mauritius (\$4.7 billion), the US (about \$5 billion), the UAE (\$3.1 billion), the Netherlands (\$2.15 billion), Japan (\$1.4 billion), and Cyprus (\$1.15 billion), the data showed.

The computer software and hardware sector attracted the highest inflows of \$8 billion during the nine-month period of this fiscal. It was followed by services (\$6.6 billion), trading (\$4.14 billion), chemicals (\$1.5 billion), automobile industry (\$1.27 billion) and construction (infrastructure) activities (\$1.22 billion).



GEOPOLITICAL WOES

Inflation top concern for MPC

Two of the three external members on the RBI MPC were not in favour of raising the key interest rate this month with one of them saying it was "not warranted" as inflationary expectations were diminishing and economic growth remained a concern

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 22: Majority of members of the high-powered Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank were concerned about heightened inflation even as two panellists raised objections against an increase in the benchmark interest rate, according to the minutes of the meeting released Wednesday.

Following the recommendations of the MPC, the RBI increased the rate by 25 basis points February 8, taking the repo rate to 6.5 per cent. It was the sixth straight hike since May 2022.

"The fight against inflation is complicated by the global outlook. There is some consensus growing around a milder slowdown than earlier feared, although geographical disparities complicate the prognosis. Be that as it may, the outlook for global inflation is turning more uncertain than before," Patra



opined as per minutes of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das, who heads the six-member MPC, also said overall, there is considerable uncertainty at this stage on the evolving inflation trajectory due to ongoing geopolitical tensions, global financial market volatility, rising non-oil commodity prices, volatile crude oil prices and also weather-related events.

He also said a 25 basis points rate increase provides space to calibrate future monetary policy actions and stances based on evolving macroeconomic conditions.

The six-member MPC comprises three RBI officials -- Governor Shaktikanta Das, Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra, and Executive Director Rajiv Ranjan; and three government-nominated external members -- Shashanka Bhide, Ashima Goyal and Jayanth R Varma. Ranjan, as per the min-

'BRIGHT SPOT'

India to contribute 15% of global growth in 2023, says IMF MD

IMF MD expects India to witness fastest growth rate among major economies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 22: India continues to remain a relative "bright spot" in the world economy and will alone contribute 15 per cent of the global growth in 2023, International Monetary Fund (IMF) managing director Kristalina Georgieva said.

While digitisation pulled out the world's fifth-largest economy from pandemic lows, prudent fiscal policy and significant financing for capital investments provided in the next year's budget will help sustain the growth momentum.

"India's performance has been quite impressive. For this year, we expect India to retain a high growth rate, 6.8 per cent for the year that ends in March. For FY 2023/24 (April 2023 to March 2024) we project 6.1 per cent, a bit of slow down like the rest of the world economy, but way above the global average. And in that way, India is providing about 15 per cent of global growth in 2023," Georgieva told PTI in an interview. That is the fastest growth rate among major economies.

India remains a bright spot at a time when the IMF is projecting 2023



to be difficult with global growth slowing down from 3.4 per cent last year to 2.9 per cent in 2023, she observed.

"Why is India a bright spot? Because one, the country has done really well to turn the digitalization that has been already moving quite well into a major driver of overcoming the impact of the pandemic and creating opportunities for growth and jobs," the Managing Director noted.

"Second, because India's fiscal policy has been responsive to economic conditions. We have seen the new budget presented, and it signals the commitment to fiscal consolidation, while at the same time provides significant financing for capital investments. And three, because India didn't shy away to learn the lessons from the pandemic and to implement very strong policies to overcome what has been really a difficult time for a number of months," she said.

FCI sells 5.08L-tonne wheat in 3rd round of e-auction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 22: State-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) sold 5.08 lakh tonne of wheat to bulk consumers like flour millers in the third round of e-auction held Wednesday.

In the first two rounds, nearly 13 lakh tonne of wheat have been sold under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) to bulk users as part of steps to cool down retail prices of the foodgrain and wheat flour. The next weekly e-auction will be held March 1.

About 5.08 lakh tonne of wheat has been sold to bulk consumers under the OMSS today, FCI Chairman and Managing Director Ashok K Meena told PTI.

The government January 25 announced that it will offload 30 lakh tonne of wheat in the open market.

Wheat is being offloaded under the OMSS to cool down the retail prices of wheat and wheat flour (atta). To further soften the retail wheat prices, the government recently reduced the reserve price of FCI wheat offered to bulk users and also announced the sale of an additional 20 lakh tonnes of wheat in the open market.



After the announcement of the OMSS policy, the food ministry has said that prices of wheat and atta have come down but still inflation figure for January 2023 was at a three-month high of 6.52 per cent.

As per the government data, the average price of wheat across major cities stood at ₹33.09 per kg on Wednesday, while the average price of atta (wheat flour) stood at ₹38.75 per kg.

Last week, the ministry reduced the reserve price of fair and average (FAQ) quality wheat to ₹2,150 per quintal, while for Under Relaxed Specifications (URS) wheat to ₹2,125 per quintal. These new reserve prices were applicable from the third sale of wheat through e-auction.

No economic 'knockout' yet from West's sanctions on Russia

Russia is now the world's most heavily sanctioned country, according to US officials. The ruble did in fact take a temporary dive and has been slipping again in recent months. But as the war nears its one-year mark, it's clear the sanctions didn't pack the instantaneous punch that many had hoped

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Feb 22: One month into the invasion of Ukraine, President Joe Biden stood in the courtyard of a grand Polish castle and laid out the punishing economic costs that the US and its allies were inflicting on Vladimir Putin's Russia, declaring that the ruble is almost immediately "reduced to rubble."

Russia is now the world's most heavily sanctioned country, according to US officials. The ruble

did in fact take a temporary dive and has been slipping again in recent months. But as the war nears its one-year mark, it's clear the sanctions didn't pack the instantaneous punch that many had hoped.

The ruble trades around the same 75-per-dollar rate seen in the weeks before the war, though Russia is using capital controls to prop up the currency. And while Russia's economy did shrink 2.2% in 2022, that was far short of predictions of 15% or more that Biden administration officials had showcased.



This year, its economy is projected to outperform the UK's, growing 0.3% while the UK faces a 0.6% contraction, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The West's export controls and financial sanctions appear, instead, to be gradually eroding Russia's industrial capacity, even as its oil

and other energy exports last year enabled it to keep funding a catastrophic war.

Large American multinationals like McDonald's and General Electric fled the country, and some of the country's richest citizens are forbidden from traveling to the US but if Muscovites can't get a latte

at Starbucks, there's an imitation waiting for them at the knockoff Stars Coffee as Russia has adapted.

US Treasury Deputy Secretary Wally Adeyemo stressed in an interview that the Western sanctions are only one "tool as part of a larger strategy" and that the US continues to adjust its sanctions to outmaneuver Russia's own shifts in strategy.

"You look at the exodus, the brain drain from Russia," Adeyemo said. "The Russian economy is far smaller, far more closed and will look more like Venezuela, North Korea and Iran than like a major G-7 economy."

Still, a December Congressional Research Service report drew an underwhelming conclusion from all the economic parrying, stating that "the sanctions have created challenges for Russia but to date, have not delivered the economic knockout that many predicted."

MIGHTY OZ TEST AWAITS EVES

'No psychological edge over India'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cape Town, Feb 22: Australia skipper Meg Lanning believes her side will not go into the Women's T20 World Cup semi-final against India with a psychological edge, saying past results don't matter against a strong team.

Australia will take on India for a place in the World Cup final, after defeating Harmanpreet Kaur's side 4-1 in the five-match T20I series last December and also the 2022 Commonwealth Games final in Birmingham, besides triumphing in the 2020 T20 World Cup final at MCG.

"I don't think so (Australia will have a psychological advantage)," said Lanning on the eve of the semifinal here. "Both teams start at the same level tomorrow when we come out and play. What's happened in the past doesn't make a difference. We need to come out and play our best cricket and play the way that we want to."

"And in India, we look to do the same. So, as I said, it's going to be an incredible game, two world-class teams going at it. And it's about putting out your best performance on the day," added Lanning.

The captain also said beating India in the five-match series last December in Mumbai doesn't make Australia firm favourites, given that the opponents are an "incredible side" and are not relying on just a couple of players to win them games.

"I'm not sure (Australia are favourites), to be honest. We obviously both know each other very well. They're (India) an incredible side. They've got some match winners and world-class players and it's going to be a cracking game."

"Obviously, we came here to be part of a game like this and we're expecting to have to play at our best to win. And that's something that I know this group is up for and we're certainly very much looking forward to it."

She also added that India now have a strong group which bats deep and is able to deliver in high-ticket events. "I think that they've shown that they're not relying on one or two players. They've got



MEG LANNING

some great depth as well. So, for us as a team, we've had to prepare for all their players to do well.

"And I think when you get to that point as a squad, you know you're going to be in most games because T20 cricket, some things work out, some things don't. And sometimes it's not going to be your day. But as long as someone steps up, then that's the most important thing. And that's what they've shown to be able to do."

"They've really created that real strong group of players who have played a lot of cricket together now. And they're able to deliver. So, we know they're strong. And that sort of just makes the challenge even greater and something we look forward to."

Meanwhile, star Indian keeper-batter Richa Ghosh feels that her side would need to put up at least 180 on board to challenge the depth of Australian batting line-up.

"Australia is comfortable chasing because they bat deep, we do too, but toss is not in anyone's hand. So whatever the situation, we will have to go through with it. We have plans," Ghosh, India's best finisher by a distance, said on the eve of the semi-finals against Southern Stars.

"We don't know how the pitch will behave tomorrow but it looks

nice. We can target 180 on this if all our batters click and while bowling we will try to restrict them to 140-150 because they have a good batting line up," Ghosh said.

Australia has been India's bogey team in recent years but Ghosh is confident that Meg Lanning's team is a beatable one. Australia have been a dominant force in the format since winning the last edition in 2020 at home.

"Australia are beatable, in the our last series we beat them and we have also done it before. They are a strong team but we can beat them," Ghosh stated. "We are trying to improve our mindset. Everyone has the game but the team that is mentally strong will win. We have been working on that," said Ghosh.

"We know the weak spot of Australia and we are planning against it but I will not say what that (weakness) is because then they will come prepared."

The hard-hitting Ghosh said India will play an attacking game similar to Australia Thursday. "They attack a lot. So, whatever happens to them, even if the batter is out, they don't leave the attacking. Because they have batters from top to bottom. We also have batter from top to bottom. So, we will play an attacking game."



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cape Town, Feb 22: Having put up a patchy performance in the Women's T20 World Cup thus far, India will have to lift their game drastically against nemesis Australia in the first semifinal here Thursday.

India, who have been among the top teams over the last five years but unable to win a major trophy, have expectedly made the semifinals of another ICC event. However, they have been guilty of self-destructing in the past especially in a knock-out game against England or Australia.

Australia beat India in the previous T20 World Cup final at home and more recently at Commonwealth Games gold medal match in Birmingham last year.

Women's cricket in India has grown massively since the final appearance at the ODI World Cup in 2017 and now it is high time the team converts its promise into performance by stepping up in a do-or-die game like the one on Thursday.

Though the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side won three of its four games in the group stage, not one per-

THE SQUADS

INDIA	AUSTRALIA
Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Yastika Bhatia, Richa Ghosh, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol, Deepti Sharma, Devika Vaidya, Radha Yadav, Renuka Thakur, Anjali Sarvani, Pooja Vastrakar, Rajeshwari Gayakwad and Shikha Pandey.	Meg Lanning (C), Alyssa Healy, Darcie Brown, Ashleigh Gardner, Kim Garth, Heather Graham, Grace Harris, Jess Jonassen, Alana King, Tahlia McGrath, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Annabel Sutherland, Georgia Wareham.

formance could be called convincing including the game against Ireland. Their sole loss came against England.

Considering the way India have played so far, one can only hope that somehow they are able to fix all their issues for the big game, whether it is the inconsistent top-order; the inability to hit sixes barring Richa Ghosh or the high dot ball percentage.

Opener Shafali Verma made her international debut more than three years ago and though still a teenager, she has not been able to learn from her mistakes, mainly her inability to rotate the strike and her susceptibility against the short ball.

Skipper Harmanpreet herself will be under tremendous pres-

sure to perform having not done anything of note so far in the World Cup. She is one of the few batters who can hit the ball long but has been inconsistent for far too long. Another loss in a World Cup knock-out game could end her captaincy tenure.

Jemimah Rodrigues has done alright in the tournament but needs to do more to help the team's cause. Star batter Smriti Mandhana has been among the consistent performers and once again she will be critical to the team's chances against Australia, who are known to raise their game in a big game to 'invincible levels'.

The Meg Lanning-led side would be carrying a 22-match T20 winning streak into the semifinal.

Australia have lost just two official matches in any format since dropping a T20 game to New Zealand in March 2021, but notably, both of those defeats have come against India. In December, they outplayed India 4-1 in the series played in Mumbai.

In the bowling department, pacer Renuka Thakur has been India's best bowler in the event with seven wickets so far, including a five for 15 against England.

Deepti Sharma went for runs in her one over against Ireland, but she has been the most consistent in the spin department. The likes of Pooja Vastrakar, Rajeshwari Gayakwad and Radha Yadav will have to be much more accurate against the rampaging Aussies.

Australia opener Beth Mooney is wary of India's challenge though going by past results, they should win comfortably.

Harmanpreet said though her team lost the home series, the players got a lot of confidence out of the high scoring five games.

Although wicket-keeper Alyssa Healy missed Australia's final group game against South Africa with quad soreness, the opener is fit for Thursday's match.

Real leave Reds red-faced at Anfield

LIVERPOOL SQUANDER TWO-GOAL ADVANTAGE TO SUFFER A HUMILIATING 2-5 LOSS AGAINST LOS BLANCOS AT HOME GIVING THE SPANIARDS MASSIVE ADVANTAGE AHEAD OF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ROUND OF 16 RETURN LEG



A MATCH FOR HISTORY BOOKS: Vinicius Junior reacts after scoring one of his goals; (inset top) Karim Benzema celebrates his goal; (inset bottom) Liverpool players looks disappointed at Anfield, Tuesday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Liverpool, Feb 22: While both Real Madrid and Liverpool are rightly considered Champions League royalty, there can only be one king. Down by two goals after 14 minutes at Anfield, defending champion Madrid came back to win 5-2 Tuesday and take a commanding lead into the second leg of the round of 16 matchup.

Vinicius Jr and Karim Benzema scored two goals each to stun the hosts — Liverpool conceded four goals in a home European match for the first time — and confirm the Spanish giant will take some stopping in their defense of the trophy.

If anything, this Madrid team look more complete than the one that beat Jurgen Klopp's team in last year's Paris final. Yet this win echoed the memorable comebacks that led to that record-extending 14th Champions League title.

There was the chaotic defending that allowed Liverpool to race into a 2-0 lead as Darwin Nunez struck with a backheel in the fourth minute and Mohamed Salah doubled the advantage thanks to Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois' blunder. Then came the rousing fight-

back, led by one of European football's emerging stars in Vinicius and sealed by an aging icon in Benzema. Eder Militao was also on the score-sheet when he headed Madrid into a 3-2 lead just after halftime.

The 22-year-old Vinicius became the youngest player to score two goals against Liverpool at Anfield since Johan Cruyff for Ajax in 1966 when the Dutch great was 19. The Brazil international is establishing himself as Madrid's star player and, in the face of a typically daunting Anfield atmosphere, he rose to the occasion.

Just as the visitors looked in danger of buckling under the pressure, Vinicius produced a moment of magic with his first goal in the 21st. Exchanging passes with Benzema just inside the box, there didn't look to be any obvious danger until he flashed a low shot through a crowd of legs and into the bottom corner.

Vinicius evened the score in the 36th when Alisson's attempted kick rebounded straight off him and looped into an empty net. While the goal was a moment of good fortune, it was also a measure of the panic he sparked in Liverpool's defense that Alisson was rushed into

making the mistake.

Two minutes after halftime, Madrid took the lead when Militao headed in Luka Modric's free-kick from the left. It went from bad to worse for Liverpool as the 35-year-old Benzema, the inspiration for Madrid's triumph last year, got in on the act. His shot was deflected off Joe Gomez in the 55th to make 4-2 and he added and fifth when rounding Alisson in the 67th.

Napoli beat Frankfurt
Victor Osimhen scored again to help Napoli to a 2-0 win at Eintracht Frankfurt in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie. The Nigeria forward scored his 10th goal in his last eight appearances across all competitions, opening the scoring in the 40th minute.

Napoli captain Giovanni Di Lorenzo scored the second goal in the 65th by finishing a wonderful team move with a sweeping, curled shot inside the far post after Kvaratskhelia back-heeled the ball into his path. Frankfurt's hopes of mounting a comeback were dealt a major blow minutes before when forward Randal Kolo Muani was sent off for catching Anguissa with his open sole as both went for the ball.

VIDIT STUNS CARLSEN AT PRO CHESS LEAGUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 22: Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi became the fourth Indian to stun Norwegian chess wizard Magnus Carlsen, in a Pro Chess League online match. Playing for team Indian Yogis, Gujrathi capitalised on a mistake committed by World No.1 Carlsen, who missed a checkmate late Tuesday.

Carlsen was playing for Canada Chessbrahs in the Pro Chess League, an online tournament for teams from all over the world. The event features 16 teams playing rapid games and has a USD 150,000 prize fund.

This was Gujrathi's maiden victory over the reigning World Champion. Significantly, Gujrathi won the match with black pieces as he exploited a tactical oversight from his famous opponent.

The 28-year-old Gujrathi thus



joined the likes of fellow Indian GMs R Praggnanandhaa, D Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi to defeat Carlsen. The trio had earlier pulled off wins over the Norwegian superstar in various events last year.

"It is an amazing feeling to de-

feat the GOAT (Greatest of All Time) of chess and I couldn't have asked for a better moment," Gujrathi said.

In the Pro Chess League match, the Indian team led by Gujrathi and comprising Vaishali, Raunak

and Aronyak won against Carlsen, Aryan Tari, Razvan Preotu and Jennifer Yu to go into the final round with deficit of just one point.

As per the format, the team that scores 8.5 first wins the game. And the Yogis simply turned the tables by winning on all the four board with Gujrathi leading the pack on the top board.

"Striking victory at the crucial moment and the team winning on all four boards even makes it more special. I've come very close on a few occasions to edge over Magnus (Carlsen) but couldn't capitalise on it," Gujrathi said.

"Glad that I've finally done it. Credit to all the players, team and our coach RB Ramesh. After yesterday's amazing performance, everyone's mood in the team is very high, and hopefully, we make it big this time."

SHORT TAKES

Rankings improve

DUBAI: India's Ravichandran Ashwin rose a place to second, while his compatriot Ravindra Jadeja jumped seven rungs to be among the top 10 bowlers in the latest ICC Men's Test Player Rankings issued here Wednesday. Jadeja has progressed to the ninth position after his 10-wicket match haul in the second Test against Australia in New Delhi, the first time that he had broken in the top-10 since September 2019. Injured pacer Jasprit Bumrah is the other Indian bowler in top 10, as he occupies the fifth spot. Veteran England seamer James Anderson leads the list but Australia captain Pat Cummins has dropped to third.

Drall stretches lead

KOLKATA: Amandeep Drall had two contrasting streaks in her second round but still managed the day's best card of 1-over 71 that extended her lead to five shots with one round to go in the fourth leg of the Women's Professional Golf Tour (WPGT) at the Tollygunge Club. On a difficult day for scoring, there were no under-par scores and, after 36 holes, only Amandeep is even par. With 69-71, Amandeep is now even-par 140 and five shots ahead of Seher Atwal, who added 73 to her first-round 72. Seher was tied second with Khushi Khanijau (71-74) and Vani Kapoor (70-75).

Aishwary bags ISSF WC gold



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cairo, Feb 22: Olympian Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar claimed the gold medal in the men's individual 50m rifle 3 positions competition at the ISSF World Cup here Wednesday as India continued their dominance in the tournament. This was the Indian's second individual World Cup gold, the first coming in South Korea.

This was India's sixth medal, including four gold, in the tournament as the country strengthened its position at the top of the medals tally. The 22-year-old Tomar, who had also won a gold in the Changwon

World Cup last year, won 16-6 in the gold-medal contest to comfortably beat Austria's Alexander Schmir. Tomar was placed second in the ranking round, with a total score of 406.4, while Schmir was at the top with 407.9.

Earlier, the Indian had topped the qualification after aggregating 588 over the three stages of kneeling, prone and standing. Akhil Sheoran, another Indian participating in the event, was second in the qualification with 587.

Tomar first topped the qualification round with a score of 588 after 20 shots each in the kneeling, prone and standing positions. He had teammate Sheoran for com-

pany in the ranking round. The Indian duo began slow in the ranking round with Tomar sixth and Sheoran eighth after the first five kneeling position shots.

After the end of the allocated 10 shots in the second prone position however, both had moved up with Sheoran in second and Tomar in fifth. All the while the Austrian Schmir was leading the match and did so till the end of the ranking round.

It changed dramatically after the first five standing position shots, as India number one Tomar got up to second, just 0.5 behind Schmir who was still leading.

Sheoran was down to fifth and eventually bowed out in seventh place after 30 shots. After 40 shots both the Austrian and the Indian held on to the top two positions to set up a gold medal clash.

In the gold medal round, which is basically a race to 16 points with two points being awarded to the winner of each single-shot series, Tomar took the first series.

However, it remained tight with the scores reading 4-4 and then 6-6 before the Indian broke away with some sensational shooting to close out the match. A timeout taken by the Austrian at 6-12 did nothing to break Tomar's momentum.