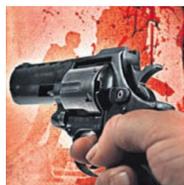




LIVING IN MOMENTS

Actor Rakul Preet Singh says she doesn't think much about her past as she always lives in the present

LEISURE P2



ENCOUNTER KILLING

UP police gun down accused in February 24 killing of a prime witness in BSP MLA murder case

TWO STATES P8



OLI PULLS OUT

Oli's CPN-UML withdraws its support to PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'-led government

INTERNATIONAL P10

COURT SENDS SISODIA TO 5-DAY CBI CUSTODY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: A special court sent Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia to five-day CBI remand Monday after the agency sought his custody for effective interrogation to unravel the alleged scam in the now-scrapped excise policy for 2021-22.

Special Judge MK Nagpal passed the order on a plea of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which produced the AAP leader before him a day after his arrest and sought his five-day custody.

There was a heavy security presence in and outside the Rouse Avenue Courts premises.

During the more-than-an-hour-long hearing, Sisodia's counsel said that it was the lieutenant governor who had approved the changes in the excise policy and that the central probe agency was going after the elected government.

"I (Sisodia) am the finance minister. I've to present the budget... What changed yesterday that the finance minister was to be placed under custody? Was he not available for next days? Or was this arrest done for ulterior motive? This case is an assault on an individual as well as the institution. Remand will send a message, this is a fit case for declining remand," Sisodia's counsel told the court.



TIDYING UP: Workers clean a fountain at the Taj Mahal complex, in Agra, Monday

PTI PHOTO

Odisha bags 'Best State for Promotion of Sports' award



POST NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai, Feb 27: Odisha has been awarded as the 'Best State for the Promotion of Sports' at the 2023 Sportstar Aces 2023 Awards. The state won this prestigious award for the fourth time. The recognition comes as a result of the state's unique sports model, which is built around the pillars of partnership for sporting excellence, competition, coaching, and infrastructure for meritorious athletes.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik received the award from Suresh Nambath, Editor, The Hindu and legendary cricketer Sunil Gavaskar Monday at a ceremony in Mumbai.

The awards jury comprised an eminent panel of champions with former Indian Cricket team Captain Sunil Gavaskar at the helm. Other members include Abhinav Bindra, Aparna Popat, Anjali Bhagwat, Bhaichung Bhutia, MM Somaya and Viswanathan Anand. Thanking Sportstar for awarding Odisha as the best state in sports promotion, Patnaik dedicated the award to the people of Odisha. **Contd...P4**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



If we come together and form a political party, we can rule this country for ever

'Gold reserves found in 3 Odisha districts'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: In a fresh ray of hope for the people of the state, surveys have indicated presence of gold reserves in at least three districts of Odisha.

Gold deposits have been found in various parts of Deogarh, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts. Steel and Mines Minister Prafulla Kumar Mallik told the Assembly Monday.

Replying to a question of BJD MLA Sudhir Samal, the minister said as per a preliminary survey conducted by the state Directorate of Mines and Geology and the Geological Survey of India (GSI), presence of gold reserves has been found in the Adas area of Deogarh and Gopur, Gazipur, Kusakala, Adal, Saleikana, Dimirimunda and Karadanga area of Keonjhar district.

Deposits of the yellow metal are also found in Jashipur, Suriaguda, Ruansi, Ladelkucha, Maredihi, Suleipat and Badampahar area of Mayurbhanj district, he said.

The Minister's statement about the presence of gold in the three



districts has brought about an excitement in the state.

As per the latest survey conducted by GSI, 1.685 kg of gold is estimated to be present in copper ore at G2 level in Adas area, Mallik said.

In addition to it, he said, 6.67 million tonne of copper, 0.638 million tonne silver and 0.10 million tonne nickel have been estimated to be present in copper ore in the region.

The first surveys in these areas were conducted by the Directorate of Mines and Geology and the

GSI in the 1970s and '80s, but the findings were not made public. A survey was again conducted over the last two years by the GSI, the Minister said.

The Mines Minister further said two gold-carrying quartz veins were found in Gopur area during a survey conducted by the state Mine and Geology Directorate from 1977-83 and 1989-96. The survey found the presence of 1 gram gold in one tonne of ore. The presence of gold was found 30 to 60 metre below the surface of the earth.

The presence of gold has also been confirmed in Saleikana in Quartz vein on the southern side of Gopur and in Saleikana area. As per a survey conducted during 1970-71, the gold reserve in Saleikana has 1 gram gold per tonne of ore, he said.

A survey conducted in the Jashipur-Suriaguda-Ruansi area of Mayurbhanj district by the state Directorate of Mines and Geology found the presence of 0.1 to 2.6 grams of gold per tonne and 0.1 to 0.8 grams of gold per tonne in 2.3 km conglomerate horizon spread over Dhusuri hill, he added.

SC raps Defence Ministry

Apex court January 9 had granted time till March 15 to the Centre for payment of total arrears of OROP to all eligible pensioners of the armed forces

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 27: The Supreme Court Monday slammed the Defence Ministry over its January 20 communication in connection with the payment of arrears of One Rank-One Pension (OROP) in instalments to the eligible pensioners of the armed forces.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and comprising justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala told Additional Solicitor General N Venkataraman, "Here, you are not fighting a war. Here, you are fighting a battle under the rule

of law, you better set your house in order. This is not the way for the Ministry of Defence to go about it."

Venkataraman, representing the Ministry of Defence, submitted, "Eight lakh pensioners, one tranche of ₹2,500 crore has already been credited and we have given undertaking that for family... it will be before March 31... balance, we are paying... we are not saying that we are not paying."

The top court took exception to the letter issued by the secretary in the ministry, and directed him to file

a personal affidavit in the matter. The Chief Justice said, "You tell the secretary that we will take action against him for issuing that communication January 20, he better withdraw it before the next date... the sanctity of the judicial process has to be maintained. Either the secretary withdraws that communication or we will issue a notice of contempt... no business to take law in your hands."

Venkataraman urged the bench to give some time to the ministry to carry out the exercise as per the court's order. **Contd...P4**



MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	59288.35 ↓ 175.58
NIFTY	17392.70 ↓ 73.10
DOLLAR	82.70 ↓ ₹0.15
EURO	87.59 ↑ ₹0.17
GOLD	₹55,426 ↓ ₹6
SILVER	₹63,050 ↓ ₹383

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	35.3°C	34.6°C
TEMP MIN	21.0°C	21.5°C
Humidity	84%	90%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	

PABLO ESCOBAR



A taxidermied bear on display at Kentucky Fun Mall in Lexington is the same one known as 'Cocaine Bear' or 'Pablo Escobear'.

A bear ate cocaine once; rest is a 'movie'

Since the trailer first debuted last year, the very loosely based-on-a-true-story R-rated comedy has stoked a rabid zeitgeist. And now after release, 'Cocaine Bear' is mauling the likes of Marvel's 'Quantumania'

AGENCIES

New York, Feb 27: The legend of 'Pablo Escobear', a black bear that died after overdosing on cocaine dropped into the Georgia woods from an airplane, is getting a push from the movie 'Cocaine Bear'.

"Investigators searching for cocaine dropped by an airborne smuggler have found a ripped-up shipment of the sweet-smelling powder and the remains of a bear that apparently died of a multi-million-dollar high," the Associated Press reported from Blue Ridge, Georgia December 22, 1985.

Police found a sad scene. A 175-pound black bear dead near a duffel bag and some \$2 million worth of cocaine that had been opened and scattered over a hillside.

The parachutist Andrew C Thornton II, a former Kentucky narcotics investigator, thought he had found his calling as the leader of a local drug-smuggling ring. Now he was in the middle of his most ambitious drug run yet as he made up his mind to parachute from a twin-engine plane in the dead of night to smuggle the \$15 million worth of Colombian cocaine that was strapped to his body into the United States.

But when Thornton opened his parachute too late September 11, 1985, the free fall from thousands of feet sent him crashing into a backyard in Knoxville, Tennessee, instantly killing him. His unmanned airplane crashed into a North Carolina mountain. Back in Georgia, the bear, examiners said, had overdosed.

The story is in many ways too much. Too absurd. Too '80s. Even the screenwriters of the 'Fast & Furious' movies would think it far-fetched. The stranger-than-fiction tale quickly receded from the headlines and, before some began to stoke the myth of 'Pablo

Escobear', it mostly stayed buried in news media archives until now.

That changed when screenwriter Jimmy Warden delivered to producers Phil Lord and Christopher Miller a script titled 'Cocaine Bear'. They were on board from page one.

Yes, 'Cocaine Bear' is a real movie. Since the trailer first debuted for Elizabeth Banks' very, very loosely based-on-a-true-story R-rated comedy has stoked a rabid zeitgeist.

Little on the movie calendar has captured the public imagination quite like 'Cocaine Bear.' Its trailer, watched more than 25 million times, immediately went viral. **Contd...P4**

Failure in NEET drives youth to commit suicide

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: A 21-year-old youth committed suicide in the state capital following several unsuccessful attempts to clear the medical entrance examination National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET). The deceased was identified as Yash Pradhan, who was staying along with his family in an apartment at Sundarpada under Airfield police limits.

Sources claimed that while Yash's father is a reputed author, his mother works as an assistant professor in a law college in Aurangabad, Maharashtra. Yash had earlier appeared for the examination thrice but failed to clear the test every time. He was already in depression over the repeated failures and came under further pressure for the upcoming NEET examination.

Sunday afternoon, Yash was alone at his house as both his father and twin sisters had gone to their native place in Berhampur. He committed suicide by hanging himself with a rope from the ceiling.

His father and sister both tried to contact him over phone for several times but to no avail. They immediately left for Bhubaneswar and reached here in the evening. After breaking into the house, they found Yash's body hanging from the ceiling. The body was handed over to the family after post-mortem Monday.

leisure



WAYNE: DON'T KNOW WHAT MCDONALD'S SMELLS LIKE

The American rapper Lil Wayne hasn't eaten fast food in more than two decades. According to *femalefirst.co.uk*, the rapper revealed that he can't even remember what a McDonald's smells like, emphasizing his healthy eating habits as he has had a personal chef since he was 19.

MALALA TURNS EXECUTIVE PRODUCER WITH JOYLAND

Activist Malala Yousafzai has turned executive producer with *Joyland*, a movie that brings human rights issues to life. Malala believes that the theme of the movie, which centers around transgender issues in Pakistan, will resonate with people all around the world. The film was in the race for an Academy Award in 2023.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
Today you will land up in a tricky or hazardous situation. You will feel compelled to wade against the tide, which may not be such a productive thing, says Ganesh. Nothing seems to be going your way. Take some time off for yourself to relieve the stress.

TAURUS
A short trip could be in the offing today, says Ganesh. Before proceeding, you may, however, be compelled to make changes in your itinerary. If you are not too happy with the new schedules and decide to stick to your original plans, you are likely to feel disturbed, uneasy at the end of the day.

GEMINI
You will feel out of sorts today. This could result in distances between you and your loved ones. You may fall into the wrong sorts of debates on account of your ill-temper. You need to keep a curb on your emotions to perform better, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You are most likely to appear edgy and hypercritical to others, says Ganesh. Remain your typical poised self. Try not to be harsh to others, if you wish to save your relationships and sustain a reputable image. Avoid clashes with your superiors and colleagues.

LEO
Agreed that home is where the heart is. But today, your home is where your troubles will be. The faster you try to run away from them, the quicker they seem to catch up with you, says Ganesh. So, scooting off may not be the best solution. Some people around you may try to blow things out of proportion; the best way to keep them in check is with a smile.

VIRGO
Open the mind gates and let your imagination flow, says Ganesh. At your creative best, you will pursue innovation and creativity today. Luck will be on your side and even those things that you took a risk on may lean your way.

LIBRA
There is a very strong possibility of major improvements in your public standing and image today. But it all depends so much upon your personal character, and, therefore, you must guard it zealously, even with your own life. Those who seek to malign or dent your reputation will be disappointed, says Ganesh.

SCORPIO
Today promises to be an exceptional day for those involved in business. With sheer brilliance, you will steer deals right to your door step, and will display great finesse in negotiations and bartering. Bring out the leader in you and take charge when you introduce new products or market them in business, suggests Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
As Ganesh foresees, you will be religiously inclined today. Listening to soft, instrumental music will soothe your nerves. You also feel like going back to school days and dig into detective and suspense stories of Nancy Drew or Hardy Boys. It was fun being kid, isn't it?

CAPRICORN
If you are planning to fly to foreign shores for further studies, start documentation and other preparations today, says Ganesh. Whether you are a student or not, on this favourable day, all you need to do is to make a priority list, follow it and finish off your work one by one. If you are associated with Stock Market, expect an advantageous day ahead.

AQUARIUS
Cooperative and supportive, your colleagues will help you improve your performance at work. Also, your creativity will win you praises from one and all, foretells Ganesh. The day will have a perfect end as you will spend quality time with your friends and family.

PISCES
You are going to be very emotional today. You will be able to express your love to your wife or other loved ones in a very unique and dramatic way. It is not a good day for putting forth marriage or love proposals, and if you do it could be disappointing. Ganesh says that professionally you will be very successful in all tasks.

I always live in present: Rakul

Mumbai: Rakul Preet Singh clocked in five releases in 2022 and one at the beginning of 2023. It's obviously a busy time in her career.

Asked about the factors that have worked in her favour, the *Doctor G* actress said, "I don't put much thought into what I have done right because I always live in the present. The moment my films release, it becomes the past. My energies are always on what I need to do next and how I can

do better projects and grow as an actor."

Lately, there has been a lot of debate about the content of South films being better than those produced in Mumbai. On this she says, "We are creating a debate where there is none. South Indian cinema has been celebrated for the longest time on Hindi general entertainment channels, where people watch these films. It's the influx of too

much consumption during the pandemic, which is why it became a talking point." She was glad because those films needed to be celebrated, concluded Rakul.

AGENCIES



LIPSA MISHRA GETS HITCHED

Bhubaneswar: Well-known Odia film and television actress tied the knot with Akash Acharya, a mechanical engineer and MBA in marketing, here at a City hotel, Monday. Akash currently handles his family business.

The actor looked stunning in a Sabyasachi ensemble, becoming the first celebrity in the industry to wear the fashion label on her most important day. Sabyasachi is known for his exquisite craftsmanship, striking designs, and colours that complement his brides perfectly.

Akash too wore a cream Sabyasachi sherwani and topped

it up with a gem studded heavy border dupatta on silk fabric.

For the unversed, Lipsa became a household name in Odisha after appearing in mega serial *Kichhi Luha Pi Jae Otha* followed by several others in various TV channels. Later, she made her debut in films through Odia movie *Maya*. Her notable films include *Pilata Bigidigala*, *Samaya Bada Balban*, *Tokata Fasigala*, *4 Idiots*, *Queen* and *Adrushyam*.

The actress, who has featured in several Hindi and Odia music videos, also owns a production house.

PNN

Acting teaches you patience: Masaba

Mumbai: Fashion designer turned actor Masaba Gupta says acting has taught her patience, a skill that serves her well in her business and fashion endeavours. The designer made her acting debut with *Masaba Masaba* in 2020 and followed it up with the Prime Video series *Modern Love Mumbai* (2022).

Be it as an artist or a businesswoman, Masaba said that she is realistic in her approach and doesn't believe in making 'brash decisions'.

Highlighting the importance of patience in her life, the actor said, "I have a practical approach to acting and the business I run. I am not delusional or unrealistic about the opportunity in that

(acting) industry, nor am I making brash decisions in the business that I am in. Acting does teach you patience, which comes in great use when you are a businessperson, and vice versa. But I have a different personality when it comes to playing both of these roles."

The daughter of actress Neena Gupta and former West Indies cricketer Vivian Richards recently tied the knot with actor Satyadeep Mishra in a civil ceremony.

AGENCIES



The Romantics to be on FTII curriculum

Mumbai: The Netflix streaming docuseries *The Romantics*, which is a tribute to the legacy of late director-producer Yash Chopra, will be screened for the students of Harvard University.

Additionally, the Film Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune has decided to make the series a part of their curriculum.

The Oscar-nominated filmmaker and director of the series, Smriti Mundhra, said, "As a former film student, I studied the work of auteurs from all over the world. It always bothered me that we weren't taught about the great Indian filmmakers."

She further elaborated, "*The Romantics* is my attempt to shed light on the craft, journey, and global impact of one of our most revered directors, Yash Chopra, and the generation of filmmakers and moviegoers he influenced."

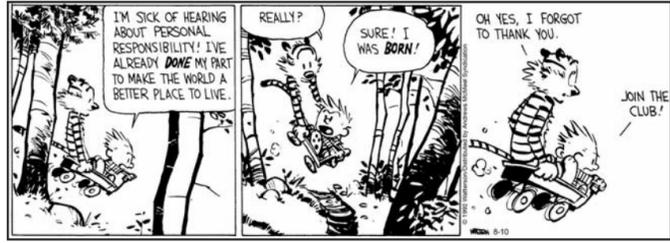
The director added, "I'm so pleased to join two of the world's top-most institutes, Harvard and FTII, for a screening and robust discussion of *The Romantics* with students and to put Yash Chopra in his rightful place as one of the world's great auteurs."

IANS

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

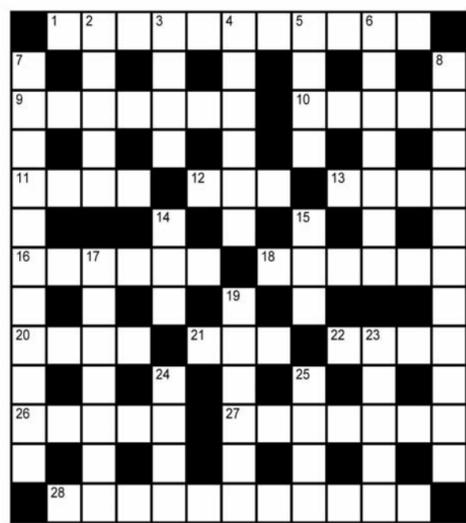


BREVITY



FUN post

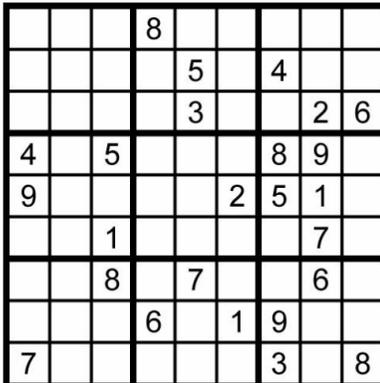
CROSSWORD



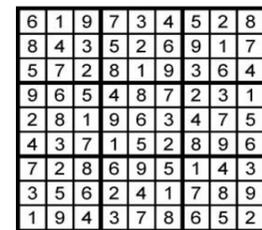
- Across
- 1 Pseudonym (3,2,6)
 - 9 Antediluvian
 - 10 Dreadful
 - 11 Garner, as wages
 - 12 Not many
 - 13 Amphibian
 - 16 Alibi
 - 18 Decline
 - 20 Particular
 - 21 Repair
 - 22 Fencing sword
 - 26 Poetry
 - 27 Songbird
 - 28 Paving material
 - 7 Imagined or unreal (4-7)
 - 8 Aircraft carrier features (6,5)
 - 14 Cigar residue
 - 15 Golf aid
 - 17 Parting word
 - 19 Handy with a cold
 - 23 Serengeti, e.g.
 - 24 Roadway feature
 - 25 Vesicle

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



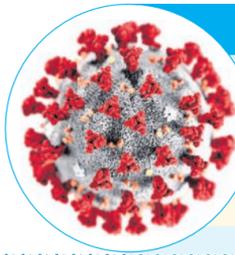
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



COLOURS IN MIND

An artisan of Kathagada Sahi in Cuttack, Monday, gives finishing touches to figurines for Dola Melan in the Silver City



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	67,97,67,596	65,25,92,855	67,98,868
India	4,46,86,202	4,41,53,203	5,30,770
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204



ATTRACTING INVESTMENT: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik met Reliance Industries chairman and managing director Mukesh Ambani as part of Odisha Investors Meet in Mumbai, Monday. 5T Secretary VK Pandian was present

Crimes up 65% in 5 yrs

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: Criminal cases in the state have risen by more than 65 per cent in a span of five years from 2018 to 2022, the Assembly was informed Monday.

While 1,07,408 criminal cases were registered in 2018, the figure was 1,78,190 in 2022, Minister of State (MoS) for Home TK Behera said while replying to a question from BJP member Kusum Tete.

The minister said that while the number of cases in 2019 was 1,21,525, it increased to 1,34,230 in 2020 and 1,55,420 in 2021.

Of the total number of cases in 2022, he said, 1379 were related to murder; 626 dacoity, 2998 robbery, 5467 burglary, 14893 theft, 5352 swindling, 2248 rioting, 3184 rape, 11663 vehicle accident and 1,30,380 miscellaneous.

Among these five years, the maximum of 1,470 murder cases were filed in 2020 while the maximum of 3,327 rape cases were recorded in 2021.

Of the 1,07,408 cases registered in 2018, the numbers of murder, dacoity, robbery, burglary, theft, swindling, rioting, rape, and motor vehicle accident cases were 1378, 558, 2125, 3713, 9069, 2794, 2120, 2502 and 11262 respectively.

However, there was a drop in rape and murder cases in the state in 2022 as compared to the previous year. Murder cases came down to 1,379 in 2022 from 1,394 cases in 2021. Similarly, rape cases came down to 3,184 in 2022 from 3,327 in 2021.

NABA DAS ASSASSINATION

Gopal got rewards, one promotion: Tusharkanti

Bhubaneswar: Gopal Das, who killed former health minister Naba Kishore Das, had received one promotion and several rewards including citations 18 times during his service in the Police department.

This was revealed by Minister of State (MoS), Home, Tusharkanti Behera in the Assembly Monday.

Naba Das was killed by the now sacked police ASI Gopal Das January 29. He had fired a bullet at the chest of the minister from a very close range. Though the police arrested the accused from the spot, it is yet to ascertain the motive behind the murder.

While replying to a question of Sundargarh MLA Kusum Tete (BJP), Behera said Gopal Krishna Das had joined the police as a constable in Berhampur July 8, 1982.

He was promoted to assistant sub-inspector post in 2009. After his promotion, Das served in different police outposts and police stations in Jharsuguda district for 13 years.

The MoS said Gopal was promoted once and received letters of appreciation 18 times and monetary rewards nine times.

Meanwhile, replying to a question of Congress MLA Narasingha Mishra, Behera said the Crime Branch (CB) has been investigating the murder of Das from all possible angles, including rivalry or conspiracy

In a written reply to a query of Cong MLA Narasingha Mishra, Behera said the Crime Branch has been investigating the murder from all possible angles, including rivalry or conspiracy

sible angles, including rivalry or conspiracy Behera said the CB investigation was being done in a professional and transparent manner. In order to maintain transparency, fairness and absolute impartiality in the investigation, on the request made by the government of Odisha, Justice (retired) JP Das has been nominated by the Orissa High Court to monitor the investigation, Behera said.

On Mishra's question on the appointment of the retired Orissa High Court judge, the minister said, "Recently, Supreme Court had appointed Justice Rakesh Kumar Jain, a former Judge of Punjab and Haryana High Court to monitor the investigation in Lakhimpur Kheri incident in Uttar Pradesh on similar lines which may be treated as a precedence."

During investigation, it was reported that the accused was suffering from some mental illness and hence the documents pertaining to the same were collected and verified. Later, a psychiatric evaluation of the accused was carried out by a team of doctors, he added.

Tractor market grew by 50% in 20 years: Pradeepta Badajena

They say ideas come from curiosity. And it holds true for Pradeepta Badajena, managing director of Modern Agro Motors and Tractors Private Limited, as well. As a child, he would often enquire about vehicles, and growing up, he learnt the nitty-gritty of the automobile industry. After higher studies, he went on to become an entrepreneur. Badajena took some time out of his busy schedule to speak to **Orissa POST** on a host of issues. Excerpts:



How's the demand for tractors in Odisha?

■ About 70 per cent of the population of Odisha, which is primarily an agrarian economy, earns its livelihood through agriculture and allied activities. Modern equipment like tractors have replaced traditional farming methods involving draught animals, thanks to technological innovation. These days, tractors are also used for non-agricultural activities like transportation of goods. The market for tractors has expanded by 45-50 per cent during the last 20 years.

What's the role of branding in your business?

■ Brand obviously helps you stand out in the market. However, customer relationship is the key to growth. Chances of a customer choosing your product over the other in a category depend on your engagement with the consumer in terms of sales and after-sales services.

Any expansion plan?

■ Production and sale of tractors have nosedived since Covid-19 struck

the country in 2020. Hence, as of now, there is no such big expansion plan. However, efforts are on to intensify consumer-connect initiatives. Our units in Puri and Khurda are being renovated for better customer experience.

What are your major areas of thrust that help business expansion?

■ As said earlier, branding and customer satisfaction are the key areas in today's highly-competitive market. Your reach to consumers, especially farmers, defines your business. Our well-trained customer care executives have been offering round-the-clock assistance. Moreover, we are leaving no

stone unturned to ensuring quality product and service.

How do you spend leisurely hours?

■ There is nothing called leisure when you are into business. However, whenever I get some time out of the busy schedule, I spend it with family and friends. Foreign trips and social activities also fascinate me.



Land sharks target owners staying outside

CRIME BRANCH ARRESTS TWO PERSONS INCLUDING THE MASTERMIND BEHIND THE LAND FRAUD RACKET INVOLVED IN ILLEGAL SALE OF PLOTS IN CAPITAL CITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: The Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch has arrested two persons including the mastermind behind the land fraud racket involved in the illegal sale of plots posing as the real owners in the City.

The EOW sleuths arrested the mastermind Antaryami Senapati and his aide Ananta Kumar Pradhan February 25, 2023. Senapati works as a Moharir or advocate-clerk while Pradhan is a land broker. The accused were arrested in EOW police station case (7/23) registered on the basis of a complaint lodged by Lipika Das.

Lipika alleged in the complaint that she is the bona fide owner of a plot at Malipada Mouza which was sold to Haladhara Dash, an official of Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), by executing a fraudulent sale deed without her

■ The accused were arrested in EOW police station case (7/23) registered on the basis of a complaint lodged by Lipika Das

■ Lipika alleged that she is the bona fide owner of a plot at Malipada Mouza which was sold to Haladhara Dash, a BMC official

■ The EOW has so far come across involvement of the racket in the illegal sale of eight plots without the knowledge of the bona fide owners

knowledge. The EOW found that an organised racket led by Senapati and other accused persons allegedly sold several such plots using forged documents and impersonating the real owners. They used to target gullible owners who own plots in Capital city but reside outside.

The EOW has so far come across the involvement of the racket in the illegal sale of eight plots in the city without the knowledge of the bona fide owners.

Chandra Pattnayak of Bhanjanagar respectively by preparing fake sale deeds by using forged documents and impersonating the real land owners. They misappropriated the amount of ₹18 lakh towards purchase of the plots. In this connection, Badagada PS case No. 426 dt.12.12.2021 has been registered," revealed the EOW sources.

The accused persons also cheated Ajaya Kumar Senapati, an army man, by fraudulently selling a plot of 2,600 sq ft by impersonating the actual land owner Sarat Kumar Sanabada. Similarly, the fraudsters sold the plot of Satyabhama Das of Dimiri in Govindapur to Damayanti Das, wife of accused Haladhara

"Whoever has approached Antaryami Senapati or Haldhar Das in connection with land purchase or selling please contact our investigating officer as it is possible that they might have been duped," urged the EOW.

The cops also advised the prospective buyers to check details like age band, gender, state and the last three digits of mobile number of an Aadhaar holder by visiting the website, (<https://myaadhaar.uidai.gov.in/verifyAadhaar>) before the purchase.

The EOW also advised the buyers to check the genuineness of the Aadhaar card through Aadhaar QR scanner app. "A QR code is put on every Aadhaar card. This code comprises the Aadhaar number holder's name, gender, date of birth, and address, as well as a photograph. The QR code can be read using the Aadhaar QR scanner app, which is available on Google Play and the App Store," the EOW advised.

ସହରାଞ୍ଚଳ ବସ୍ତି ବିକାଶ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଏକ ପ୍ରୟାସ

ମହିଳା ଆରୋଗ୍ୟ ସମିତି

ବସ୍ତିର ୫୦-୧୦୦ ଘର କିମ୍ବା ୫୦୦ ଜନସଂଖ୍ୟାକୁ ନେଇ ଏକ 'ମହିଳା ଆରୋଗ୍ୟ ସମିତି' ଗଠନ ।

ମହିଳା ଆରୋଗ୍ୟ ସମିତିର ଭୂମିକା

୧. ଖୁର୍ଚ୍ଚ ବା ବସ୍ତିର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସମସ୍ୟା ଚିହ୍ନଟ କରିବା
୨. ଚିହ୍ନଟ ସମସ୍ୟାର ସମାଧାନ ପାଇଁ ଯୋଜନା ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ କରିବା
୩. ମାତୃ ଓ ଶିଶୁ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ସେବା, ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ ସେବା, କିଶୋରୀମାନଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟସେବା, ପୁଷି, ପରିମଳ ଓ ସୁଛତା ବିଷୟରେ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଜାଗରଣ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିବା
୪. ବସ୍ତି ବାସିନ୍ଦାଙ୍କୁ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସଂକ୍ରାମକ ରୋଗ ଠାରୁ ଦୂରେଇ ରଖିବା ନିମନ୍ତେ ସଚେତନତା ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିବା
୫. ସୁସ୍ଥ ଖୁର୍ଚ୍ଚ, ସୁସ୍ଥ ସହର, ସୁସ୍ଥ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଗଢ଼ିବାରେ ମିଳିତ ଉଦ୍ୟମ କରିବା ।

ସମିତିର ସଦସ୍ୟା (୧୧-୧୫ ଜଣ)

- ଆଶା କର୍ମୀ
- ଅଜ୍ଞାନତ୍ୱ କର୍ମୀ
- ସ୍ୱୟଂ ସହାୟକ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀର ସଦସ୍ୟା
- ସଂପୃକ୍ତ ବସ୍ତିରେ ରହୁଥିବା ଆଗ୍ରହୀ ମହିଳା

ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ସେବା ଓ ସଚେତନତା ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ସମିତିକୁ ବାର୍ଷିକ ୫୦୦୦ ଟଙ୍କାର ପାଣ୍ଠି ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ।

ଅଧିକ ଜାଣିବା ପାଇଁ ନିକଟସ୍ଥ ସହରାଞ୍ଚଳ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟକେନ୍ଦ୍ର / ଏ.ଏନ.ଏମ୍ ବା ଆଶାଙ୍କ ସହ ଯୋଗାଯୋଗ କରନ୍ତୁ ।

ଜାତୀୟ ସହରାଞ୍ଚଳ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ମିଶନ୍
ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

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CONTINUED FROM P1
SC raps...

Citing the apex court judgment in the matter, senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, representing the petitioner, submitted that court directed implementation within three months, that is they have to implement by June 15, 2022 and this amount was supposed to be paid by November 2019, and they already got extension and all arrears had to be cleared by 2019. After hearing arguments, the top court scheduled the matter for further hearing after the Holi vacation. Last year in March, the apex court had delivered a judgment on the plea filed by the Indian Ex-servicemen Movement (IESM) through advocate Balaji Srinivasan against the Centre's formula. The apex court January 9 had granted time till March 15 to the Centre for payment of total arrears of OROP to all eligible pensioners of the armed forces.

A bear...

The movie, itself, is like a meme sprung to life — a kind of spiritual heir to "Snakes on a Plane" crossed with a Paddington Bear fever dream. Everything about it is propelled by a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor and can-you-believe-this-is-a-real-movie wink. "I'm the bear who ate cocaine," reads one of the film's official tweets. "This is my story." The film, itself, takes the basis of the real story and imagines what might have transpired if the bear didn't quickly die but went on a coke-fueled rampage through a national forest, terrorizing park wardens, campers and drug dealers seeking the lost shipment. After an initial taste, the bear goes after more cocaine with all the zeal of the ultimate party animal.

Odisha bags...

Patnaik lauded the hard work and commitment of the athletes. He also commended Sportstar for their work in recognising the efforts of athletes across India. He said, "This event serves as a wonderful platform to celebrate their (athletes) contributions to the world of sports and to inspire future generations to pursue their passions. Athletes are the true ambassadors of our country, and it is our duty to support and encourage them in every way possible." Patnaik further added, "We are making huge investment in sports, which is investment in youth and therefore investment in our future. We have increased our budget for sports by more than 10 times in last five years. In the coming year, our sports budget is more than 1200 crores. We have successfully hosted many global events including the recent Hockey World Cup. It's the collective dream of all Indian to see the national flag fly high at the Olympics. We should all work together and make it a reality."

Erroneous news on HAL
Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) refutes the news item "Data leak: Two HAL staffers in CBI net" published February 12, 2023. It says a government agency had requested the management of HAL, Koraput Division, for interaction with one of its workman employees in connection with a matter personal to the employee. The HAL management had consented to the request of the government agency and along with the workman deputed a senior officer of the Division to facilitate the interaction of the workman with the government agency.

CLASSIFIED
LOST

I Rakesh Chandra Sahoo, S/o- Kailash Chandra Sahoo, Jayabada, Jagatsinghpur had lost one sale deed & ROR of Prabhasini Nayak sale deed No.- 551/1995 & Khata No.-48/59 while traveling from Jagatsinghpur to Cuttack on 24.02.2023 FIR has been lodged in Jagatsinghpur Police Station vide S.L No.-012. Please inform about the said document within 7 days in the below mentioned Mobile Number- Dipak Kumar Sahoo, 9937058785.

Seventy years ago, James Watson and Francis Crick discovered the shape of DNA and how the ACGT code fitted together. All living things are identifiable by reading their DNA code, or in some organisms their RNA, known as their genome. In the 1970s Frederick Sanger developed a method, known as sequencing, to read that code. The first reading of a human's DNA was laborious; it took around 10 years to read the majority of the three billion letters. Now, sequencing is performed regularly for many purposes, from pathogen detection to determining drug resistance to understanding how a disease works. The amount of data a sequencer can produce has become exponential: one platform is able to sequence the whole genome of eight people in 72 hours or less. In 2022's report, the Sanger Institute has sequenced 243,633 human genomes in a record 3.5 years. The enormous data yield has helped to drive sequencing cost to as little as USD\$600 per

State evolving into a sports hub: Min



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: Skill Development and Technical Education department minister Pritiranjan Gharai inaugurated Polytechnic and ITI FEST 2022 at Kalinga Stadium Monday, citing the festival as an attempt to strengthen the personality of students and upgrade their poten-

tial. The Polytechnic and ITI FEST 2022 will conclude March 2. Addressing the gathering he said, "Health is wealth and through sports you can achieve good health and also develop team work, discipline, creativity and focus and this festival is one of those attempts. Through this festival we will try to create a strong personality and upgrade the student



potential," he added. The minister asserted that having hosted two consecutive hockey world cups, Odisha was evolving into a sports hub and the government was focused on development of sports in the state. Polytechnic and ITIs played key role in strengthening the state economy and creating employment, he said.

CM pays tribute to Manoj Das on his birth anniv

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik paid tribute to late author Manoj Das on his birth anniversary Monday. Through his twitter account he said, "My tributes to eminent literary man Manoj Das on his birth anniversary. He has established unique achievements by composing literature in both Oriya and English languages. The imprint he left on many timeless composers will forever immortalize him." On the occasion, Utkal University also paid tribute to his memories in a special function organised in the auspices of the

'Manoj Das Reading Room' housed in the fifth floor of Parija Library of the university. Vice Chancellor Sabita Acharya, who joined as the chief guest, fondly remembered her brief meeting with Das at Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, and encouraged the university community to come forward in making the Manoj Das Reading Room more vibrant with literary and creative activities. She also said that the students should not only take inspiration from him as an epitome of Odia literature but also learn from his marvelous lifestyle. An exhibition with the entire collection of literary creations of Das was held in the reading room.

OUAT-ICAR join forces for agri devpt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: To facilitate collaborative activities in the field of agricultural education, research and extension, Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with 11 Indian Council of Agriculture and Research (ICAR) institutes operating in the state on the inaugural day of the OUAT Farmers' Fair-2023, organised in the OUAT main campus at Siripur Monday. "This agreement is unique in the country and would definitely impact and boost the agriculture development in the state," Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment department prin-



cipal secretary Arabinda Kumar Padhee said. He emphasised on developing each farmer of the state as a farm entrepreneur. "Government of Odisha is having a number of farmer oriented programmes and projects for supporting this ini-

effect of technology and support of government policies have helped the state in achieving increased production and income from agriculture. There is a strong need for continuous upgradation of farmers' knowledge, skill and innovation system." Farm mechanization, entrepreneurship development and promotion of farmers' organisations in the state would help us to scale new heights in the future, he added. KVEs, All India Coordinated Research Projects of OUAT, ICAR Institutions, Farmers' organisations, Farm entrepreneurs and Private agri-input manufacturers & suppliers exhibited their technologies, products, practices and success stories in 50 exhibitions stalls in the fair.



VENTING ANGER: AAP workers staging a demonstration at Ram Mandir Square to register their protest against Manish Sisodia's arrest by CBI in Bhubaneswar, Monday

9 countries, 16 states display items at 18th India Int'l Mega Trade Fair

AGENCIES

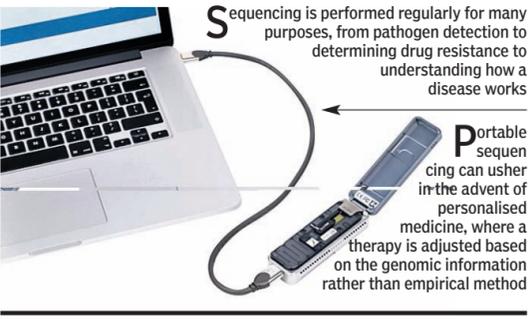
Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: As many as nine countries and 16 states, including host Odisha, are exhibiting their products in 10 hangars in the ongoing 18th Home and Decor Exhibition and 18th India International Mega Trade Fair here. The biggest hangar is dedicated for the real-estate operators to display their products located in various parts of Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Puri. The event, which started February 25 and will continue till March 6, was inaugurated by Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) Minister Usha Devi. Exhibitors from countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Dubai, Iran, Malaysia, Thailand and Egypt are the partners to the 18th India International Mega Trade Fair. Indian state partners are from Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan and Jharkhand and

The event which started February 25 will continue till March 6

Odisha, the host partner. CREDAI Bhubaneswar president PK Biswasroy said there is a vast scope for real-estate business in the state. Though the state government over the years had brought a number of reforms in real-estate policies, there exist a lot more lapses in the system, he said, requesting the government to resolve them. Home financiers like SBI and ICICI are also present to explain about easy home loan procedure and loan amount. In addition to this, allied products on real-estate, home appliances, lifestyle items, interior decoration items and modern furniture are also on display in the exhibition and trade fair.

Portable sequencers could stop pandemics in their tracks

Cheap, portable sequencers in poor countries could be key to identifying and halting emerging diseases before they have a chance to become a pandemic. The cost to decode the entirety of someone's genes has dropped dramatically, paving the way for improved disease surveillance. The lower cost has made this technology accessible for people living in poorer economies giving hope that emerging diseases will be spotted and characterised sooner. The human body is an information keeper: Each of our 30 trillion cells, give or take, keeps information on how body machinery works and passes the information to the next generation in strings of code using only four letters, ACGT. Each stands for a type of molecule called nucleotide. The string has a total length of around 6 billion letters, condensed into 23 pairs of chromosomes that make up the DNA. Seventy years ago, James Watson



and Francis Crick discovered the shape of DNA and how the ACGT code fitted together. All living things are identifiable by reading their DNA code, or in some organisms their RNA, known as their genome. In the 1970s Frederick Sanger developed a method, known as sequencing, to read that code. The first reading of a human's DNA was laborious; it took around 10 years to read the majority of the three billion letters. Now, sequencing is performed regularly for many purposes, from pathogen detection to determining drug resistance to understanding how a disease works. The amount of data a sequencer can produce has become exponential: one platform is able to sequence the whole genome of eight people in 72 hours or less. In 2022's report, the Sanger Institute has sequenced 243,633 human genomes in a record 3.5 years. The enormous data yield has helped to drive sequencing cost to as little as USD\$600 per

sequencing is performed regularly for many purposes, from pathogen detection to determining drug resistance to understanding how a disease works. Portable sequencing can usher in the advent of personalised medicine, where a therapy is adjusted based on the genomic information rather than empirical method

the presence of the genes of disease-causing agents such as bacteria or viruses in a sick person or even a person with no symptoms. Whether or not a pathogen will be resistant to a drug can be determined by reconstructing the pathogen's genome post-sequencing. Information about drug-resistance can be obtained in less than half a day. Compare this with the standard process of identifying drug resistance for tuberculosis that needs two weeks to obtain the results. Drug resistance in falciparum malaria parasite is very important nowadays as it has developed resistance to nearly all antimalarial drugs. As the parasite cannot be reared in the laboratory for traditional drug resistance tests, identifying the mutation-causing resistance with sequencing is vital. The additional benefit of the portable sequencer to read long sequences of DNA is the ability to construct the whole genome of

a pathogen, even without prior knowledge of the infecting organism. And it is not limited to infectious disease. Although portable sequencing does not have the capability to output a complete human genome, by using targeted sequencing, in which the signal from a particular gene or genes can be amplified beforehand, mutations or alterations in a human gene can be investigated. In non-small-cell lung cancer, mutation at an amino acid level of a gene can render resistance to specific inhibitors. The fastest way to identify the prospect of failure is by detecting the mutations and modifying the therapy based on this information. Portable sequencing can usher in the advent of personalised medicine, where a therapy is adjusted based on the genomic information rather than empirical method. Every clinic now has the power to perform sequencing.

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Path cleared for 250 MBBS seats at MKCG

NMC TEAM EXPRESSES SATISFACTION OVER FACILITIES AVAILABLE



and infrastructure. Prof Dr Anil Shiba Shankar Rahul of the Anatomy department of Telangana Government Medical College, Prof Dr Nitin John of Physiology at AIIMS, Hyderabad, Prof Dr Deboji of Pathology department of Gandhi Medical College in Secunderabad, Prof Dr D Srihushan Raju of Nephrology department at the Nizam Institute of Medical Sciences, Hyderabad, Prof Dr Shivaling M of Urology department at the Bangalore-based Institute of Nephro-Urology, Dr Deepa Gupta of Anatomy department, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation Medical Education Trust and College and Prof Dr N Nageshwar Rao belonging to the Mental Health department, Venkateshwar Medical College at Tirupati were the members of the NMC delegation.

Three members of the team also conducted verification of the available infrastructure for PG seats in other departments. Earlier, PG courses had started in the Anatomy and Mental Health departments.

MKCG Medical College superintendent Prof Dr Santosh Kumar Mishra, Principal Dr Abanikanta Mishra and other officials accompanied the NMC team during their visit.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 27: A seven-member team of National Medical Commission (NMC) visited Monday the MKCG Medical College and Hospital here to conduct a survey of the infrastructure and other facilities available for 250 seats for MBBS students. Sources said that the team expressed satisfaction and gave the go ahead for setting up of the seats.

The team after arriving at the hospital conducted a verification of facilities. The NMC officials also held discussions with Head of the Department of Urology over opening of post graduate courses. Earlier, the MKCG authorities had pro-

posed to the NMC for admitting three students for post graduation in urology. The visiting team members also held discussions over renewal of permission for admission in PG courses in the Anatomy and Mental Health departments.

The team members had earlier verified whether the medical college had adequate classrooms, laboratory and library facilities for 250 students. Team members also checked as to whether sufficient number of teachers is available and whether there are proper hostel facilities for accommodation of the students. Sources said that the NMC team members expressed satisfaction after checking out the facilities



PROTEST MARCH: Farmers take out a rally demanding waiver of power bill on farmlands in Sohela of Bargarh district, Monday

Drones to check Rayagada forest fires

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bissam Cuttack, Feb 27: With forest fires starting to rage all across the state even before proper summer sets in, Forest officials across Odisha are concerned. They are now thinking about ways and means to contain the wildfires. Fires have also started to rage at the Bissam Cuttack forest range under Muniguda division in Rayagada district and are posing serious threat to flora and faunas. Forest department officials announced Sunday a slew of measures to contain the fires.

Drone cameras will be used to spot forest fires. Stringent action will be taken against people responsible for starting forest fires in Rayagada district, officials informed. They can be sentenced to three to seven years in prison, officials added.

The drones can play a crucial role in detecting, containing, and extinguishing forest fires, officials pointed out. The drones will be



used to gather situational awareness, which then can be used to direct the firefighters in locating and controlling hot spots. Just like urban fires, wildfires also require monitoring so that firefighters know what they are dealing with.

Giving these informations here, divisional forest officer (DFO) Prasanna Kumar Mishra of

layers are voluntarily helping the officials to douse the fires and they will be given wages, Mishra added.

Mishra said that persons responsible in setting forests on fire will be charged with non-bailable offences. Other than the prison term mentioned above, they will also be penalised with a fine of ₹10,000. Moreover, the identity of the informants will not be revealed and they will be rewarded if they provide correct news.

Mishra also urged people from all walks of life including politicians, public representatives, police and Army personnel to join hands and save forests from being razed. He said that mushrooming of brick kilns, clearing the jungle for mohua collection, shedding of tender kendu leaves and stubble burning on harvested farmlands are some of the reasons for the spread of wildfires in Muniguda forest division areas. He called upon people to stay away from setting the jungles on fire.

Woman succumbs to hubby's acid attack



Balasure, Feb 27: An acid attack victim died Sunday at the SCB Medical and Hospital in Cuttack. The victim, Banita Singh had suffered serious burn injuries along with three others, when her husband had allegedly poured acid on her February 20.

Sources said that the alleged accused Chandan Rana owns a jewellery shop at Santaragadia of Nilgiri block in Balasure district. He had entered into a relationship with Banita who was a divorcee with two kids from her first marriage. The two got married last year.

However, Banita came to know later that Chandan was already married and was a father to two kids. She left Chandan's house with her children and moved in with her sister. Chandan persuaded her to come back, but Banita refused to do so.

On the day of the attack, Chandan and Banita were having a heated argument when the former threw acid on her. Trying to save Banita, her kids and sister also suffered injuries. Police have arrested Chandan.

Man held with fake notes worth ₹7K

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khaprakhol, Feb 27: Acting on a tip-off, Khaprakhol police in Bolangir district seized fake currency notes Monday worth ₹7,000 from a person and arrested him.

The accused was identified Brahma Meher, 32, of Pipalbahal village under Lathore police limits. The breakthrough came when Meher tried to purchase provisions from two stores buy paying with fake currency notes at Kapsipali

and Khaprakhol markets. The store owners alerted the police who arrived and arrested him.

Police seized eight notes of ₹500 denominations, seven of ₹200 denominations and 11 of ₹100 denominations. Later, police raided the house of the accused and seized a fake note of ₹500. They also recovered ₹31,300 in cash comprising real currency. A case was registered in this connection and the accused produced in the court, police said.

Jackfruit farmers forced into distress sale

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Feb 27: In the absence of adequate marketing facilities and cold storages, jackfruit farmers of Rayagada district have been forced to resort to distress sale, sources said Monday. After pineapple and custard apple, jackfruit in Rayagada district is in high demand across India. According to an estimate, over 20,000 quintals of raw jackfruit is transported to the western part of the country every year.

The Niyangiri hills which are home to the Dongria tribe, alone produce 9,000 to 10,000 quintals of jackfruit. Raw jackfruit is available from January to March while the ripe variety is available from mid-March.

Traders from Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh take the district to buy jackfruits during the spring season between February and March. However, as the district lacks storage facilities, the farmers have to sell their produce at throwaway prices with very little profit to show for their efforts.

On the other hand, traders who



arrive here from various parts of India buy the jackfruit and store it because they have the facilities in their respective states. They make huge profits from the product. Hundreds of trucks transport jackfruits to the four states mentioned above on a daily basis.

Local farmers here however, suffer because of the lack of storage facilities and a proper supply chain. So they have to sell a piece of jackfruit weighing 2kg-3kg for a meagre ₹5 to ₹7. The same material is sold at more than ₹15 to ₹20 per kilogram in other states.

Sources said that the fruit is grown mostly in the hilly and forested regions of Ramnaguda, Kalyansinghpur, Bissam Cuttack, Kolnara and Rayagada blocks that have an abundance of jackfruit

intervene and ensure proper marketing facilities and cold storages for jackfruit.

ORMAS official Manoj Patra pointed out that whole sellers from outside the district pay approximately ₹20 per kilogram of jackfruit. In the local market here the price varies between ₹25 to ₹30 per kilogram. Patra added that if the locals have any grievance regarding the price, the matter will certainly be looked into.

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RWS & S DIVISION, BARGARH**

Email :- eervssbgh@nic.in. Ph (O):-06646 233220, FAX :- 06646 234626
No.612 Date:27.02.2023

1st CORRIGENDUM OF BID ID NO. 09 OF 2022-23 & TENDER CALL NOTICE NO. 364 DT. 07.02.2023

No.O-1918: The last date of receipt of the tender documents closing and opening of tender is here by changed to 03/03/2023 upto 5:00 PM and 04/03/2023 at 11:00 AM instead of 27/02/2023 upto 05:00 PM and 28/02/2023 at 11:00 AM as per bid ID no 09 of 2022-23 & tender call notice No 364 dated 07.02.2023 of the Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division.

**Sd./- Executive Engineer, RWSS
OIPR-25157/11/0015/2223**

CENTRAL WAREHOUSING CORPORATION
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)

Regional Office- Maurya Lok Complex, Block-A, 2nd Floor, Dakbungalow Road, Patna-800001
Phone No.-0612-2225949 E-mail-rmpat@cewacor.nic.in

**NO. CWC/RO PAT/ENGG/PN/2022-23
PRESS NOTICE
(E NIT_RO-PAT/ENGG/22-23/13)**

CWC invites on-line tenders from the contractors for the following work:

SL	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs. Lakh)	Last date of on-line submission
1	Re-Construction of Office Block alongwith repairing of potholes in internal road at CW, Balijipada (Odisha).	35.76	04.03.2023

Detailed Tender Notice along with Conditions of Contract and Notice Inviting E-Tender may be seen and downloaded from the CWC's website www.cewacor.nic.in or e-tender website www.cwceprocure.com or CPP Portal <http://eprocure.gov.in/publish/app>.

Further Corrigendum/Addendum to this Tender, if any, will be published on above websites only. Press advertisement in Newspapers shall not be issued for the same. **Executive Engineer**

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No.: 72-KUR-TRD-OT-2022-23

Name of Work: PROVISION OF FEEDER WIRE OVER PARADEEP (PROP) YARD IN CONNECTION WITH IMPROVEMENT OF POWER SUPPLY ARRANGEMENT OF PARADEEP (PROP) YARD IN KHURDA ROAD (KUR) DIVISION.

Advertised Value : ₹1,02,07,086.39, EMD: ₹2,01,000/-, Period of Completion : 365 days, Validity of Offer (Days): 60

Bidding Start Date : 06.03.2023 Tender Closing Date & Time : at 1300 hrs. of 20.03.2023.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Complete details & tender documents will be available at website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), Khurda Road
PR-1038/N/22-23

New hope for kids with rare diseases

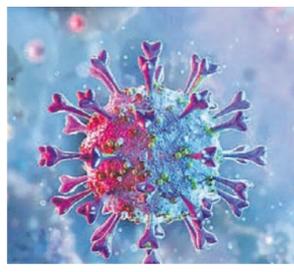
Imagine living with a disease that your doctor has never heard of, or only ever read about as a few sentences in a medical textbook. Imagine it took decades to get a diagnosis, or never getting one at all. Imagine if there were no treatments, no new drugs in clinical trials, and no medical or social services.

For more than 400 million people worldwide, this is their reality. With around 7,000 different rare diseases, they are collectively very common, affecting more people than have diabetes.

As we approach the 70th anniversary of 'Crick and Watson' figuring out the double helix structure of DNA, an unprecedented opportunity exists to change this bleak picture at global scale. One that could see sustainable health systems, offer new employment opportunities and deliver better lives for all of us.

One of the most exciting developments in genetics in recent years is the significant decrease in the cost of DNA screening and profiling, which has the potential to revolutionise the way we diagnose and treat rare and undiagnosed genetic conditions and diseases.

Rare diseases affect children disproportionately and can be considered the biggest global paediatric public and



precision health challenge.

More than 200 million children live with a rare disease globally, including tens of millions across the Asia Pacific. Rare diseases are also the biggest killer of kids, taking more children than cancer and trauma combined.

Rare diseases are also the biggest hospital cost and the medical domain with the biggest direct and indirect costs when factoring in things like unemployment and lost productivity. In high-income countries, they account for two in three dollars spent on in hospital care and nearly one in two dollars in adults.

Cheaper DNA profiling has the potential to change the outlook for rare dis-

ease patients by allowing more accurate and efficient diagnosis of people with rare genetic conditions.

In the past, a person may have had to go through a series of expensive and invasive tests in order to receive diagnosis. With cheaper DNA profiling, doctors now have the potential to quickly and more easily identify the genetic mutations associated with a particular disease, which can lead to more effective treatment options and better lives.

Cheaper DNA profiling can also make a national and global difference in the field of newborn screening and treatment of kids. Newborn screening is a process in which all babies are screened for a set of rare, and mostly genetic disorders, shortly after birth.

These screens can detect serious conditions that, if left untreated, can cause significant health problems or even death. In the past, these screens were limited to a small number of conditions that were considered the most common, severe and treatable of the rare diseases.

However, as the cost of DNA sequencing has decreased, it's become possible to screen for a much wider range of conditions. This provides the potential for further life-saving treatment of kids and adults.

Chola
Enter a better life

CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED
Corporate Office : 1st Floor, 'Dare House', No. 2, N. S. C. Bose Road, Chennai - 600 001
Branch Office : Annapurna Complex, 559, Lewis Road, Cuttack-Puri Road, Bhubaneswar - 751014

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

E-auction Sale Notice for the Sale of Immovable Assets under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, read with Proviso to Rule 8(6) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and particular to the Borrower / Co-borrower / Mortgagee that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to the Secured Creditor, the **Symbolic Possession** of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of **Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited**, the same shall be referred herein after as **Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited**. The Secured Assets will be auctioned on **31.03.2023** on "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS", and "WHATEVER THERE IS" basis through E-Auction. It is hereby informed to General public that we are going to conduct public E-Auction through website <https://bankauctions.in/>

Sl. No.	Account No. and Name of the Borrower / Co-borrower / Mortgagee	Date & Amount as per Demand Notice U/s 13(2)	Description of the Secured Assets (Immovable Property)	a) Reserve Price (RP) b) Earnest Money c) Deposit (EMD) d) Bid Increment Amt.	e) E-Auction Date and Time f) EMD Submission Last Date g) Inspection Date h) Date Possession (Status of Possession)
1.	Loan A/c. No. : X0HECUK00003066381 and X0HECUK00003773530 Borrower / Co-borrower / Mortgagee : 1. Debasish Routray Nuapada, Madhupatana, Cuttack, Odisha, Cuttack Sadar, Odisha - 753004. 2. Sushila Pattanaik 3. Jay Hanuman Industries 4. Itispita Swain All are at (2, 3 & 4) : Shantinagar, Nuapada, Cuttack Sadar, Odisha, Pin - 753004.	11.11.2022 Rs. 67,09,683.00 as on 05.11.2022 together with further interest, penal interest, costs and charges thereon till the date of payment	District - Cuttack, Tahasil - Cuttack, SRO - Cuttack, P. S. - Cuttack Sadar, P. S. No. 55, Mouza - Nuapada, Mutation Khata No. 639, Plot No. 479, Area Acre 0.050 Decimal with Status - Dakhala Satwya Bisista, Kisam - Gharabari (Homestead) which corresponding to Sabak Khata No. 190, Sabak Plot No. 397, Area Acre 0.050 Decimal out of Area Acre 0.100 Decimal. Physical Bounded by: North - Plot No. 484, South - Plot Nos. 480, 481, East - Road, West - Plot No. 483	a) Rs. 65,00,000.00 b) Rs. 6,50,000.00 c) Rs. 50,000.00	a) 31.03.2023, 11.00 A. M. to 1.00 P. M. (with unlimited extension of 5 min. b) 30.03.2023 (up to 5.00 P.M.) c) 23.03.2023 and 24.03.2023 (10.00 A.M. to 1.00. P.M.) d) 21.01.2023 (Symbolic Possession)

1. All interested participants / bidders are requested to visit the website <https://bankauctions.in/>. For details, help, procedure and online training on E-auction, prospective bidders may contact M/s. 4 Closure; Contact : U. Subbarao, Contact Number : 8142000061, Odisha : 9835622775, 7978744193
E-mail id : subbarao@bankauctions.in, bharathi@bankauctions.in

2. For further details on terms and conditions please visit <https://bankauctions.in/> to take part in e-auction.

THIS IS ALSO A STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT RULES 2002)

Date : 28.02.2023
Place : Cuttack, Odisha
For M/s. Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited
Authorised Officer

There is no better way to become friends than to laugh together.

THE MOTHER



Farewell to Russia

It has now been a year since Russia, my birthplace, invaded Ukraine. For 365 days, we have been waking up to news of Russian missile strikes, bombings, murders, torture, and rape. It has been 365 days of shame and confusion, of wanting to turn away but needing to know what is happening, of watching Russians become "ruscists," "Orks," or "putinoids." For 365 days, the designation "Russian-American," previously straightforward, has felt like a contradiction in terms.

For those in my situation, some methods of adapting to the new circumstances have come easier than others. Russian books still crowd my bookcase, but I no longer have any wish to re-read them. Chekhov and Nabokov cannot be blamed for the aggression against Ukraine, but it nonetheless has stolen their magic and their capacity to teach. These authors were my friends, as were the old-country rituals like Russian Easter vigils and New Year's screenings of the Soviet classic *Irony of Fate*. I feel the loss acutely, but perhaps it is for the better. It helps me concentrate on the present.

Other changes have required more soul-searching. Every Russian in the West used to feel like an envoy of a great culture and a great country. Though things had gone badly wrong with Bolshevism and the Gulag, Russia had managed to straighten itself out and rejoin civilisation by the end of the twentieth century, offering its own "special" virtues for everyone else to behold. In the West, the romantic appeal of Russia's stated priorities – communal over individualistic, socialist over capitalist, spiritual over material, heart over head – was so strong that I, too, became convinced of Russia's hidden goodness, even though I had left the country as soon as I could in the 1990s.

Now, I am reminded why Russia is special, but mainly in the sense that it is uniquely capable of destroying, in a matter of days, what took centuries to build. From Tchaikovsky's harmonies to Pushkin's verses, Russian culture has been besmirched by people whose atrocities have negated their ancestors' achievements. Russia has been dragged back to the barbaric customs of Muscovy, as if the nineteenth century had never happened.

As someone who was shaped by Russian and Soviet literature, I have been made to feel like an unwilling partner to Russian crimes. That is why, since last February, I have abandoned any pretense of being a cultural envoy. I have been an envoy of nothing – just another immigrant who came to America in search of a better life. In some ways, it has been liberating. I now know that one's search for meaning need not – and sometimes must not – be confined to any cultural tradition.

Still, it isn't easy questioning your own past. Flipping through family albums, we used to see our grandfathers as heroes who had survived the great terror, won the great war, and built a great country. Their lives were the stuff of legends – a perfect twentieth-century tale of sacrifice and fortitude. They suffered so that their grandchildren could live in peace (and "they," of course, included Ukrainians).

But those sacrifices have been squandered. We now must consider the possibility that our grandparents' achievements merely extended the life of a totalitarian monster, imparting to it the legitimacy that it craved. How should we think about the 23-27 million Soviet citizens who died in the twentieth century's war against fascism? Many of them were the grandparents of the twenty-first century's own fascists.

This answer wasn't so straightforward just a few years ago. After the end of the Cold War, Russia seemed like the freest country in the world. It was also believed to be a country capable of repentance. The fact that nobody was called to answer for the communist regime's crimes was viewed as proof of our collective desire for national healing, rather than as a deliberate effort by the new authorities to clear themselves of any blame.

Today, Putin's war on Ukraine is being directed, supplied, and supported by Russians who, like me, lived through perestroika and glasnost. They have wasted that era's promise and built another prison "on the ruins of despotism." What felt like a conscious national choice in the 1990s turned out to be an aspiration of the few. The very idea of "national choice" seems like a hollow concept now. Russians exist only as subjects, their society an atomized mass where some just try to survive, and others cheer on the regime's crimes so that they can forget about their own misery for a while. Those brave few who stand up to defy the system end up being swallowed by it.

To be Russian today is to be culturally hollowed out. For those of us with half our lives behind us, it is not as though we can simply adopt a new set of favourite books, movies, or holiday traditions. You can read Gogol and explore Ukrainian folk songs, but you cannot adopt a Ukrainian identity, because it would feel immoral even to try. All you can do is dissolve into the background and hope nobody asks where you got your accent. When you cheer for Ukraine, you do it quietly from the sidelines.

What are we to do with our memories, family sagas, and earlier exalted perceptions of our place in the "historical process" (as the Marxists used to put it)? Since the past cannot be canceled, it must be either repressed or deglamorized for the sake of the present and the future. Everything now hinges on the outcome of the war. If Ukraine wins and Putin's regime falls, it may still be possible for Russia to rehabilitate itself someday – as Germany once did.

That will be a task for every decent person – Russians and everyone else – to advance when the time comes. But even with a hoped-for Ukrainian victory, there will be no return to the past, when Russia existed as a unique civilization. That Russia, real or imagined, expired on February 24, 2022. Let us drink to the departed.

The writer is the author of *Putin's Playground: Empire, Revolution, and the New Tsar* (Callisto Media, 2016).

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WISDOM CORNER

Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time. **THOMAS A. EDISON**

It is far better to be alone, than to be in bad company. **GEORGE WASHINGTON**

People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude. **JOHN C. MAXWELL**

WORDSWORTH

Gazebo

A gazebo is a small building, usually in a garden, with a good view. This word is surrounded by more mystery than an earnest etymologist would like. It appears in 1752 without any warning or antecedent in part four of a book by William and John Halfpenny with the title *New Designs for Chinese Temples*, an influential work that was aimed at the then new English fashion for the oriental in design and architecture. Little is known about William Halfpenny, who called himself an architect and carpenter, not even if this was his real name (another architectural writer of the period, Batty Langley, said he was actually called Michael Hoare), nor whether his collaborator John Halfpenny was his son, as some have assumed, or even existed. The word gazebo is equally mysterious. A lot of people have assumed that – like the temples described in the book – it must be of oriental origin. If it is, nobody has found its source. Failing that, etymologists make an educated guess that he named the structure tongue-in-cheek, taking the ending -ebo from the Latin future tense and adding it to gaze, so making a hybrid word that might mean "I will look".



Jagdish Rattanan

THE IDEA OF THE EMINENT ELITE IS ANTITHETICAL TO THE IDEA OF EMPATHY



Anastasia Edel

To be Russian today is to be culturally hollowed out

FOCUS SOCIETY

ROAD TO EMPATHY

The Chief Justice of India, Justice DY Chandrachud, has made some very timely and significant comments on the state of our elite institutions in the light of the suicide of a Dalit student at IIT Bombay on February 12 and an Adivasi student at NLU Odisha last year. Delivering the silver jubilee lecture combined with the 19th convocation address over the weekend at National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NAL-SAR) University of Law, Hyderabad, the CJI said: "The incidents of suicide of students from the marginalised communities are becoming common. These numbers are not just statistics, they are stories sometimes of centuries of struggles." The CJI asked for institutes of empathy rather than institutes of eminence, setting the tone for what must become a national debate on the State and indeed role of education in modern-day India. This must open questions on how and why the Indian education system has largely failed to deliver graduates informed on ideas of equity and equality, and larger ideas of service, community and values.

Broadly speaking, eminence in the system itself is in doubt, given that many questions have been raised about the readiness of the large number of technically qualified graduates that pass through the system every year to give us, for example, the world's largest scientific and technical manpower. But that only enhances the appeal of a smaller, elite pool that many Indians still think highly of. An example is the IITs that have escaped critical scrutiny on the road to building a supposed scientific temper in India that has been encashed by many a graduate to mean a one-way flight to the United States – often for a job and only sometimes an entrepreneurial venture.

The economist Ashoka Mody in an insightful book (*India is Broken*) notes, for example, that IITs and other elite places have brought a "shambolic mess." Mody, an IIT graduate, writes: "Rich Indians and senior civil servants sent their children to privileged pri-



The problems India faces in areas of caste and various other forms of discrimination will not go away in a hurry. Yet, strong messages and regular reminders can help

ivate high schools, whence they either travelled abroad for university or launched into elite liberal arts colleges, the IITs, and the best medical colleges. From there, they joined the civil services, found scarce high-paying private sector jobs, or went abroad to work." This meant "millions of Indian geniuses remained undiscovered" and the best of Indian institutions were starved of faculty and funds, an example being Allahabad University, once considered the "Oxford of the East." Over the years, more jobs have opened up but the imbalance cited by Mody hasn't been fixed; it only got worse.

It is the lasting misfortune of this nation that entrenched privilege of all kinds, caste being a particularly pernicious variety, delivers more privilege, exclusivity and elitism that is normalised in an India sleepwalking into a disaster of our own making. It is this system that the CJI has spoken against and his framing is particularly useful – institutes of empathy rather than mere eminence – at a time disregard for empathy is killing humanity and indeed everything else progressive and valuable that the India of tomorrow should stand for.

The idea of the eminent elite is antithetical to the idea of empathy. In so far as empathy opens doors to the hearts and minds of the

other, it helps make for better inquiry, more openness and adds the missing element of humanity and values to a scientific endeavor that otherwise can go berserk, remain narrow focused with the tendency to bring solutions that are worse than the disease. That makes empathy a good value, indeed a prerequisite, for building a scientific temper. It is a good antidote to the hegemony of mechanistic science, a way out of the reductionist approaches that have landed us in the Anthropocene, and opens the doors to the world of Systems Thinking that tells us that all systems are intelligent and interconnected, and that the earth is alive. This is at the heart of the very Indian idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam – or that the world is one family. This is a very different approach from Francis Bacon's "torture of nature" to force her to reveal her secrets at the start of the Scientific Revolution.

In the immediate context in which the CJI spoke, empathy is the bedrock of social justice. "Societies that empathically attend to the needs of their more vulnerable members are societies that are good for everyone. Data now shows that when empathy levels fall in a society, violence increases, economic inequality increases, instability infiltrates the

social institutions, health conditions worsen and educational systems are short-changed... Individual well-being and communal stability suffer under conditions of low empathy and significant economic inequality," to quote the highly-regarded Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research.

The unfortunate part is that the conversations among common Indians, anecdotally speaking, appear not to grasp the deep damage that is being done to the nation by a language that speaks of power, control, growth, confidence and a 'biggie-ness' that celebrates some short-term numbers while the real assets in people and their concerns are trivialised or ignored. There is a culture that refuses to understand the pain of an entire class of population subjugated over the centuries, a harshness that translates in general to every other aspect of Indian life, superimposed on which is the ever-present threat of violence (State and non-State) that makes the claim of a nation that stands for non-violence hollow.

These are big issues that need more debate. What does not need debate is some quick fixes that can answer the immediate problems in our society. As Justice Chandrachud noted in his speech, there is no reason why hostels should be allotted on the basis of marks of students, or results be declared or grades calculated in a manner that can make a set of students feel small. There is no reason why disrespect is tolerated on campuses and in our workplaces. These practices, guided by well written codes of conduct, can be put to an end with clear guidelines and a clear-headed leadership. The problems India faces in areas of caste and various other forms of discrimination will not go away in a hurry. Yet, strong messages and regular reminders can help. In that light, Justice Chandrachud's speech is an important milestone and will be referred to for a long, long time.

The writer is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR. Views are personal.

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SPECTRUM DEVELOPMENT

New front line of education crisis

Pakistan's catastrophic floods last year not only reminded us of the perils of climate change. They also exposed the fact that tens of millions of children are being systematically betrayed. The torrential monsoon rains destroyed as many as 27,000 schools and brought students' education to a halt. Worse, despite diligent efforts by United Nations agencies and NGOs, millions of children remain out of school to this day. And with millions of young Pakistanis already excluded from access to education before last year's disaster, the Indian subcontinent now has the largest out-of-school population in the world.

The link between climate change, forced displacement, and education has never been more glaring. Climate change is increasingly displacing populations on a massive scale, with devastating knock-on effects in the form of school closures and other interruptions to education.

Even though developing countries have contributed very little to climate change, it is their children who will suffer the most from it. Almost half of the world's children live in the 33 countries clas-

sified as being at "extremely high risk" of being severely affected by climate change. Entire generations face the threat of being uprooted by floods, droughts, or wildfires, all of which will result in a loss of learning and potentially a loss in their lifetime prospects.

In 2021, 95% of all internal displacement occurred in countries on the front line of climate change. In Somalia, for example, drought and famine-like conditions have forced some 2.9 million people from their homes, triggering conflicts over access to food, water, and livelihoods, and adding to the critical need for psychosocial and mental health support. Nor is Somalia alone. Millions more are being affected in similar ways elsewhere.

Official figures tell us that prior to the recent floods in Pakistan, weather-related events were already affecting ten million children around the world each year. But some estimates have painted an even bleaker picture, putting the number at nearly 40 million per year.

Children displaced because of climate change thus represent a growing share of the 222 million crisis-hit boys and girls who require

educational support. These children are increasingly missing out on a quality education, and thus are left without basic literacy or numeracy skills, let alone the additional qualifications they will need to enter the workforce.

The rapidly worsening education crisis challenges us to develop more innovative strategies for ensuring that all children are in school and learning. We will need to devise better, more imaginative ways to deliver education to people on the move. For example, curricula and other materials should be tailored more for a mix of online and in-person delivery, and school buildings should be used more efficiently by introducing double shifts. We also should encourage more safe-school initiatives like those pioneered in Nigeria after the kidnapping of hundreds of schoolgirls.

Once proven effective, these creative solutions will then need to be replicated and scaled up to support refugees and displaced children everywhere. To that end, we also will need to mobilise sufficient financing for vehicles like Education Cannot Wait, the UN's global fund designed specifically to address the link between climate change, forced dis-

placement, and education. ECW has successfully rolled out education programmes in dozens of crisis-affected countries in recent years, and it remains fully committed to addressing "the obstacles that have prevented humanitarian and development actors from delivering quality education in humanitarian crises." To help reach the 222 million young people whose learning has been affected by conflicts and disasters, ECW aims to raise \$1.5 billion for the 2023-26 period – a mere rounding error compared to what governments spend on arms and fossil-fuel subsidies.

To have any hope of achieving SDG4, progress toward returning internally displaced and refugee children to school is essential. With millions of children's futures hanging in the balance, we must ensure access to education in emergencies and support a global fund that works.

The writer, a former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, is Chair of Education Cannot Wait's High-Level Steering Group.

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Gordon Brown

THE LINK BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE, FORCED DISPLACEMENT, AND EDUCATION HAS NEVER BEEN MORE GLARING

Aggressive dogs

Sir, This refers to "Outcry over order to remove stray dogs from road," *Orissa POST*, Feb 27. The recent news of many children and adults being injured or killed in stray dog attacks across the country has been upsetting. This problem can only be solved by effectively running sterilisation campaign. People who have been bitten by dogs are forced to get rabies shots to protect themselves. Although the vaccine is inexpensive in government hospitals and dispensaries, private hospitals charge ₹1,500-2,000 per dose, which is prohibitively expensive for the poor. It is alleged that the state is not effectively implementing sterilisation campaign for stray dogs. Fast sterilisation campaigns are being recommended as a viable approach by experts. By the way, it's worth wondering why the dog, who has long been a buddy of man, has turned hostile. Dogs have been affected by changes in our dietary patterns. Their gathering can frequently be observed in front of stores that sell meat. Second, they become more hostile due to increasing temperature. If we were to gauge society, we would see a significant increase in the noise produced by vehicles and other machinery. This animal has an acute acoustic sensitivity. Over time, aggressive behaviour develops in dogs that have been beaten or otherwise mistreated by people on city or town streets. Unquestionably, the only way to address this issue is with the aid of nonprofit groups dedicated to raising public awareness about animal conservation and social issues.

Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

Indo-German ties

Sir, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz ended his two-day India visit. He was accompanied by senior officials and powerful business delegations. The prime focus of the visit was to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries, building green and sustainable development partnerships and economic partnerships. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Scholz also held talks on defence ties and the war in Ukraine. The Indian side agreed to contribute in any possible way to the peace talk between Russia and Ukraine. India also seeks support from Germany in countering crossborder terrorism and reforms in multi-lateral institution like UNSC. Germany is one of the most developed economies in the world and also holds a powerful position in European Union. So this visit will lead to EU-India free trade. India's good relations with Germany will also bring revolution in energy and technology sectors.

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

of the day quote

If you have to save Jammu and Kashmir and the country, you have to stand up and fight for your rights without getting misled by any slogan

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

Even when Balasaheb Thackeray was alive, the BJP used to make such efforts. They kept trying to destroy Shiv Sena

ARVIND SAWANT | SENIOR SHIV SENA LEADER

The condition of roads in UP was not good before the year 2014. After the Narendra Modi government came to power, National Highway has increased from 7,643 km to 13,000 km in the state

NITIN GADKARI | UNION ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Three killed in road accident

Kota (Rajasthan): A 40-year-old woman and her two minor children were killed while six others of the family suffered injuries in a head-on collision between a vehicle and a tractor trolley in Bundi district in Rajasthan, a police officer said Monday. The injured, including the woman's eldest son and two other children, were admitted to the Bundi district hospital. The accident occurred on the national highway-148D near Durgapura village in the Dablana police station area late Sunday night when the family from Undaliya Ki Dingri in Bundi city was returning home from Swai Madhopur district after attending a family function.

TN Budget March 20

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu Budget for 2023-24 would be presented March 20 in the Assembly by Finance Minister Palaniivel Thiaga Rajan, Speaker M Appavu said here Monday. The Budget presentation would begin at 10 AM that day and following that, the Business Advisory Committee shall meet and decide on the duration of the Assembly session, Appavu told reporters here.

Drugs worth over ₹23 crore seized

Diphu/Guwahati: Drugs worth over ₹23 crore were seized in Assam, police said Monday. Acting on a tip-off, a joint team of the state police and CRPF seized 5 kg brown sugar from a person travelling in a bus to neighbouring Nagaland, Karbi Anglong's Superintendent of Police Sanjiv Saikia said. The bus was intercepted at the Bokajan area, and the person arrested was identified as Sunil Kumar, a native of Siwan district in Bihar, he said. The value of the seized drug in the international market is over ₹15 crore. In a separate incident, heroin worth ₹8 crore was seized in Guwahati and three persons were arrested, police said.

SISODIA ARREST

AAP holds protests; Oppn slams BJP

Sisodia's arrest, one of the high-profile actions against an Opposition leader, came about eight months after that of Satyendar Jain, Delhi's then Health Minister, in June last year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: AAP leaders and workers Monday held protests in several states against the arrest of Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia by CBI, with the party alleging that it was done to divert the public attention from the Adani issue.

"The leader who has been working hard for the development of poor children has been arrested by the CBI. Manish Sisodia's house was thoroughly raided but nothing was found. This is happening to divert the attention of the public from the outrage over Adani," AAP national spokesperson Sanjay Singh told reporters here.

However, BJP leader Gaurav Bhatia said that with its drama, the Aam Aadmi Party is signalling that it won't let probe agencies do their work. Bhatia described the AAP as "Arajak (anarchic) Apradh (crime) Party" and said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal seems to have taken oath on the Constitution to destroy it.

As the protesters led by senior AAP leaders Saurabh Bhardwaj and Atishi tried to march towards the BJP headquarters at DDU Marg, police prevented them by deploying personnel and erecting barricades.

However, when they tried to jump over the barricades, police swung into action and detained several of them, officials said. While pushing protesters back, some police personnel briefly entered the AAP office, said party leaders who also raised slogans



Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia being taken to Rouse Avenue court by CBI officials in the excise policy case in New Delhi

BESIDES DELHI, PROTESTS WERE HELD IN CHANDIGARH, BHOPAL, JAIPUR, SRINAGAR, JAMMU, KOLKATA, MUMBAI AND OTHER CITIES

IN DELHI, ABOUT 80 AAP PROTESTERS WERE DETAINED

THE DELHI POLICE SET UP BARRICADES ON SEVERAL ROADS

against the police. Several party leaders, including Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema and Transport Minister Laljit Singh Bhullar, were later taken into preventive custody by the Chandigarh police.

Speaking to reporters, Cheema accused the BJP of targeting the elected governments of political rivals in the states and booking their leaders in false cases. Goa



We are Congress persons standing under the shade of the tricolour, who freed the country by defeating 'Company Raj', and will never allow the country to become 'Company Raj'

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

ITALIAN PM TO VISIT INDIA

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will pay a two-day visit to India beginning Thursday to bolster bilateral engagement in areas of defence and security, economy and technology



Delhi HC dismisses pleas against Agnipath scheme



THE COURT DISMISSED A BATCH OF PETITIONS ASSAILING THE VALIDITY OF THE SCHEME WHILE TERMING IT A "WELL-THOUGHT" POLICY DECISION OF THE CENTRE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: The Centre's Agnipath scheme for recruitment into the armed forces was formulated in the national interest, with a laudable objective of maintaining national security, the Delhi High Court said Monday

while making it clear that it will not interfere with policy decisions.

The court dismissed a batch of petitions assailing the validity of the scheme while terming it a "well-thought" policy decision of the Centre.

Besides the pleas challenging the Agnipath scheme, the court also rejected a bunch of petitions relating to the recruitment process in the armed forces under certain previous advertisements while clarifying that such candidates do not have a right to seek recruitment.

Dismissing the pleas relating to the previous advertisements, the bench said the Agnipath scheme is in "public interest" and the aspirants cannot claim any right to seek recruitment on account of their participation in the processes initiated under notifications issued prior to the introduction of the new policy.

A bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad said it does not find the scheme to be "arbitrary capricious or devoid of reason" and policy decisions with regard to national security are taken after a careful consideration of the country's socio-political scenario, along with the socio-

political scenario of the neighbouring countries.

It said policy decisions with wide-ranging implications on the nation's health and security should be decided by bodies best suited to do so and it appears that the government has been considering for long the possibility of creating armed forces that consist of more youthful, agile and physically-adept individuals.

Dealing with 23 petitions, the bench said the government's objective is neither discriminatory nor mala fide or arbitrary, and the court finds no reason to interfere with it.

According to the rules, those aged between 17-and-a-half and 21 years are eligible to apply and they would be inducted for a four-year tenure. The scheme allows 25 per cent of them to be granted regular service subsequently. After the scheme was unveiled, protests against it erupted in several states.

Subsequently, the government extended the upper age limit to 23 years for recruitment under the scheme in 2022.

"We have extensively gone through the Agnipath scheme and can conclusively state that this scheme was made in national interest to ensure that the armed forces are better equipped," the bench said.

Regarding the petitions on the previous advertisements for recruitment, the bench observed that the court cannot bind the government to its earlier policy decision and a recruitment process can be changed midway if public interest is involved.

The Agnipath scheme, unveiled June 14 last year, lays out the rules for recruitment of youngsters into the armed forces

MUMBAI POLICE ON HIGH ALERT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Feb 27: Soon after the National Investigation Agency (NIA)'s caution on a "dangerous man", the Mumbai Police switched into a high alert mode, official sources said on Monday.

The Mumbai Police have initiated the drills of strategic road blocks, random checks of vehicles, tabs on suspicious persons or movement, and keeping eyes and ears open to detect any unusual activities, besides prodding their informers on the same.

The NIA alert came in an email to Mumbai Police, informing that the person, identified as Sarfaraz Memon of Madhya Pradesh's Indore is reportedly trained in Pakistan,



China and Hong Kong, and could pose a serious threat to the Mumbai's law and order situation.

The central agency, which is tracking him, said that Memon had reached Mumbai and advised the police here to be more alert as he is an "enemy of the state".

The NIA also passed on the "dangerous" suspect Memon's critical details like driving licence, Aadhaar card, passport and other documents with Mumbai Police, which in turn is seeking more dope on him from Indore police.



PURE DEVOTION: Devotees perform Maha Aarti at 108 Kundiya Shivshakti Maha Yagya in Gurugram

PTI PHOTO

Shinde attempts to corner Thackeray group

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Feb 27: Attempting to corner the Shiv Sena (UBT) group of MLAs - sitting in the Opposition benches - the ruling Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has issued a Whip to all the party legislators to remain present during the month-long Budget Session of Maharashtra Legislature which started here Monday.

Shiv Sena's Chief Whip Bharat Gogawale issued the Whip for his party's 40 MLAs and the remaining 16 belonging to Sena (UBT), in

the Legislative Assembly.

"We have issued a Whip to all the MLAs to be present full time in the House during the session, failing which they can face action," said Gogawale.

The Sena (UBT) MLAs were unfazed and their senior leaders like Bhaskar Jadhav and Sunil Prabhu said they had not received any Whip from Gogawale.

"We are not worried or frightened of the Whip... when we were not scared at the manner in which Thackeray's chair (as CM) was snatched away after they (Shinde



fact) joined forces with the BJP, why should we feel bothered about this Whip. They are free to issue whatever they want, we shall not follow the Whip," the duo declared. The Thackeray group's 16 MLAs

sat in the Opposition benches along with the other major parties like Congress, Nationalist Congress Party, etc on the first day of the Budget Session 2023-2024.

However, in the Legislative Council, all the 12 MLAs are with Sena (UBT), including Thackeray who was not present on the first day Monday.

The development came 10 days after the Election Commission allotted the 'original' Shiv Sena name and its 'Bow-and-Arrow' symbol to the Shinde group - which the Thackeray faction has challenged in the Supreme Court.

Opposition disrupts Kerala Assembly session

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 27: The Kerala Assembly was Monday disrupted following heated exchanges between the ruling Left front and the opposition UDF on an adjournment motion by the latter to discuss the alleged police brutality recently against youth wing workers of the Congress and IUML.

Initially the session was stopped by Speaker A N Shamseer for nearly half-an-hour after several MLAs from both the ruling Left front and UDF refused to heed his directions to maintain order in the House by returning to their seats.

The disruption began with several ruling front MLAs interrupting the walkout speech of Leader of Opposition in the state assembly V D Satheesan after the adjournment motion moved by the UDF was rejected by the Speaker in view of the explanations given by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

As the LoP's walkout speech was continuously disturbed despite the Speaker's direction to the contrary, several opposition MLAs trooped into the well of the House and raised slogans, placards and banners in front of Speaker's dais.

Subsequently, the House proceedings were stopped briefly and when it recommenced after around 30 minutes, Satheesan was allowed to continue his speech.

SC JUNKS PLEA ON RENAMING ROADS, PLACES

The top court took an exception to the petitioners' naming a particular community as 'barbaric foreign invaders'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 27: The Supreme Court Monday dismissed a plea seeking direction to the Central government to appoint a renaming commission to rechristen cities and places named after foreign invaders.

A bench of Justices KM Joseph and BV Nagarathna also observed that there is no bigotry in Hinduism as it told petitioner-advocate Ashwini Upadhyay: "Don't dig up the past which will only create disharmony... Can't have the country on the boil..." "What are you trying to achieve by all this... see

our country has so many other problems to attend to and you want the Home Ministry to constitute a renaming commission, to go on renaming places and roads in the country... it is a historical fact that this country has been invaded..." it added.

During the hearing, the bench stressed that India is a secular country and the history of the past cannot be allowed to haunt the present generation. "India is a secular country, this is a secular forum. We are supposed to protect the Constitution and all sections," it said. As Upadhyay argued that it is a matter of dignity



for Indians, Justice Joseph replied: "You are revisiting the past selectively and India today, after the adoption of the Constitution, is a secular country and you are point-

ing fingers at a particular community and you call them barbaric..."

"You run down a certain section of the community which is

completely against secularism, India is secular and this is a secular forum."

Justice Nagarathna said: "Hinduism is a way of life and it is not really a religion and because Hinduism is a way of life, India has assimilated everybody, whether an invader or a friend... and because of that we are able to live together... the divide and rule started only with the Britishers and that has brought about the chasm in the society..."

She emphasised that let us not break it up again by such kind of petitions. Justice Joseph said: "Your concern is about the past. You want to dig it up and place it on the plate of the present generation... to look at what had happened in the past and re-agitate things which should

be buried. Don't bring disharmony into the society."

The petitioner sought a direction to the Union Home Ministry to set up a "renaming commission" to find out original names of ancient historical cultural religious places, called after "foreign invaders".

Citing the importance of renaming, the plea argued that it is necessary in order to maintain sovereignty and to secure a right to dignity, right to religion and right to culture guaranteed under Articles 21, 25 and 29 of the Constitution.

The petitioner cited several examples of hundreds of such cities, and places, and sought a direction to the Archaeological Survey of India to research and publish the initial names of ancient historical cultural religious places.

Ateeq Ahmad is Yogi's new target

THE CHIEF MINISTER HAS DIRECTED OFFICIALS TO ENSURE A 'COMPLETE CRACKDOWN ON ATEEQ AHMAD AND HIS EMPIRE'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 27: Mukhtar Ansari can step aside. Ateeq Ahmad is now the target of the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh.

Ahmad, 62, has over 100 criminal cases lodged against him, including the latest one lodged with the Dhoomanganj police station in Prayagraj Friday in connection with the murder of Umesh Pal, the main witness of the murder of BSP MLA Raju Pal in 2005.

He is presently lodged in Sabarmati jail in Ahmedabad in Gujarat since 2019.

In the Umesh Pal murder case, Ateeq's two sons Umar and Ali, his wife Shaista Parveen, brother Ashraf have also been booked.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to ensure a 'complete crackdown on Ateeq Ahmad and his empire.'

"Mafia ko mitti mein mila denge," the chief minister said in the UP Assembly Saturday.

A senior police official, who spoke to IANS on condition of anonymity, said, "The Umesh Pal murder will prove to be the proverbial last nail in the coffin for Ateeq who has already been under the scanner. His ill-gotten wealth and properties have been seized. To have even dared to plan and execute the murder of Umesh Pal in this government, shows his sense of bravado. We have been asked to demolish the Ateeq Ahmad empire completely."



Ateeq Ahmad had stepped into the crime world in 1979 after being named as accused in a murder case. He became active in politics in 1989 and made his debut in representative politics in the same year, winning the Allahabad West assembly seat as an Independent.

Later, he retained the Allahabad West seat twice - 1991 and 1993 - as an independent candidate. However, in 1996, he contested on the same seat as SP candidate and won.

After the SP showed him the door in 1998, he joined the Apna Dal (AD) in 1999 and contested from Pratapgarh but lost. He again won the Allahabad West seat in the 2002 Assembly elections on Apna Dal ticket. In 2003, Ateeq returned to the SP fold and in 2004, he won from the Phulpur Lok Sabha constituency - the seat once held by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Ateeq hit the headlines in January 2005, when BSP MLA Raju Pal was shot dead in broad daylight in Prayagraj. A by-election was held on the seat in 2005 and Ashraf won the election defeating BSP candidate Puja Pal, the widow of Raju Pal. In the 2007 elections, Ashraf again contested the Assembly polls from the SP but lost to Puja Pal of BSP. Ashraf was accused in Raju Pal murder and is presently in Bareilly jail.

Five years later, in the 2012 Assembly elections Ateeq again tried his luck from Apna Dal from

the same seat but lost to BSP's Puja Pal by a margin of 8,885 votes. He also contested the Lok Sabha elections in 2014 from Shravasti on SP ticket but lost.

In 2019, while he was still in jail, Ateeq filed nomination from the Varanasi constituency against Prime Minister Narendra Modi but managed to get only 855 votes.

According to police records, of the 100 FIRs lodged against Ateeq, 54 cases are under trial at various courts in the state.

In the sustained drive against gangsters under the Yogi Adityanath government, property worth over Rs 150 crore belonging to Ateeq and his family members under the Gangster Act, has been attached. At one time, Ateeq wielded total control over real estate dealings in Prayagraj, Kaushambhi, Noida, Lucknow and other parts of the country.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has been unearthing details about properties and ill-gotten wealth of the family. The Prayagraj district police and Special Task Force of the UP Police are also working overtime to compile details of the cases registered against family members of Ateeq across the state.

As per the police records over 40 criminal cases were pending against Ashraf. In January this year, Ateeq's wife Shaista joined the BSP in presence of senior party leaders and even announced to contest urban

Umesh Pal killing: Accused gunned down in encounter

Prayagraj: Uttar Pradesh police Monday gunned down one of the accused in the sensational February 24 killing of a prime witness in the 2005 murder case of then BSP MLA Raju Pal in an encounter here, an official said. Police claimed that they retaliated when he opened fire at them. Deputy Commissioner of Police Navendu Kumar told PTI that Arbaaz, who was the driver of the white SUV used by the assailants to attack witness Umesh Pal, was surrounded by police teams following an intelligence input. He opened fire on the police and was injured in the ensuing encounter in Nehru Park under Dhoomanganj police station at around 3 pm, Kumar said. He was taken to hospital where doctors declared him dead, the officer said. "Arbaaz was accompanied by two or three other people who managed to escape from the spot. We are trying to track them," the officer added. Umesh Pal and his police security guard Sandeep Nishad were shot dead Friday outside his home in Dhoomanganj area of Prayagraj. Another security personnel Raghvendra Singh, who was injured in the attack, was admitted to SRN Hospital in critical condition and was referred to Lucknow Sunday.

civic polls. However, her future in the BSP now seems uncertain after Mayawati advocated strong action against the guilty in the Prayagraj killing in which unidentified assailants shot dead Umesh Pal and his security personnel.

"Attention will move away from Mukhtar Ansari who took care not to commit any major crime during the Yogi Adityanath regime. Ateeq Ahmad's dare-devil attitude in this murder will cost him dear," said a senior police official.

Valley's Pandit employees reiterate relocation demand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 27: Scores of protesting Kashmiri Pandit Prime Minister's Package employees Monday reiterated their demand for relocation outside the valley, saying their worst fears have come true with the latest killing of a community member in Pulwama.

The protesters assembled outside the relief commissioner's office in Jammu and staged a protest against the killing of Sanjay Sharma (40), a bank ATM guard who was shot dead by terrorists in the Achan area of the south Kashmir district Sunday.

"We were apprehensive about something like this, being fully aware of the ground realities. The latest killing has dealt a severe blow to our confidence and further increased our concern over our community members' safety in the valley," Yogesh Pandita, one of the protesters, told reporters.

Reiterating their demand for relocation outside the valley, he said the government's claim about a secure atmosphere for their return to join their duties stands exposed. "The administration choked us financially by stopping our salaries to force us to rejoin our duties. We are afraid of working there given the continued targeted killings," Pandita said.

Hundreds of Prime Minister Package employees belonging to the Kashmiri Pandit community shifted to Jammu in May last year following the killing of their colleagues, Rahul Bhat and Rajini Bala, by terrorists.

While Bhat was shot dead inside his office in central Kashmir's Budgam district May 12, Bala, a school teacher, was gunned down in south Kashmir's Kulgam May 31 last year.

Another protester, Ruban Sapru, said the lieutenant governor-led



We were apprehensive about something like this, being fully aware of the ground realities. The latest killing has dealt a severe blow to our confidence and further increased our concern over our community members' safety in the valley

YOGESH PANDITA

Union Territory administration needs to hold talks with them rather than compelling them to rejoin their duties in the valley.

"One more Kashmiri Pandit sacrificed his life for the nation, despite repeated assurances by the government that it has worked out a plan for the security of the community. We acknowledge the efforts of the administration in providing security to them but there is a need to restore our shaken confidence and trust," he said.

Sapru appealed to LG Manoj Sinha not to force them to resume their jobs in the valley after Sharma's killing and to accept their demand for relocation elsewhere. "We can perform our duties only when we are alive. The government can utilise our services in

Jammu as well," a woman protester said, adding that they do not feel safe in the valley.

Meanwhile, activists of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Shiv Sena Dogra Front and Rashtriya Bajrang Dal separately staged protests against targeted killings and demanded adequate security arrangements for the safety of the minority community members in Kashmir. Chanting anti-Pakistan and anti-terrorism slogans, BJP workers staged a protest at Kachi Chawni, the Shiv Sena Dogra Front at Rani Park and the Rashtriya Bajrang Dal near the city bus stand. The protesters burnt effigies of Pakistan for sponsoring terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Dogra Sadar Sabha president and former Jammu and Kashmir minister Gulchain Singh Charak raised questions over the frequent targeted killings in Kashmir despite claims of normalcy. He demanded special security arrangements for the safety of people and adequate compensation to the bereaved family.

The migrants' wing of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) also condemned Sharma's killing and demanded an end to targeted killings.

Thousands join drive to clean Yamuna

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agra Feb 27: The vanishing ghats of the Yamuna were cleaned and the river bed was made litter-free by scores of volunteers of the Nirankari Mission in Agra.

The dry and polluted river, without any fresh water, continues to remain a major threat to the Mughal monuments along its banks. River activists said the state and the successive Union governments showed no sense of urgency to desilt and dredge the river to revive it and support its aquatic life.

The volunteers, men, women, and children armed with gloves, spades, baskets and tractor trolleys, spent several hours picking up the garbage, mostly used polythene, plastic waste, and leather cuttings. Several tonnes of litter were cleared and transported to the municipal dump yards, the organisers said. The action started early at the Etmauddaula viewpoint park, Balkeshwar Ghat,



Hathi Ghat, Poiya Ghat and Kailash under the supervision of the Mission's zonal chief Kanta Mahendru.

"Our hearts should be clean and also our surroundings, the rivers, the wells, and ponds," she said.

Over the years, Yamuna has been reduced to a vast 'sewage canal' as all the freshwater is consumed by Haryana and Delhi.

"What flows down the river as it enters Uttar Pradesh is a combination of sewer, industrial effluents, and discharges from the drains. In Agra alone, more than a hundred drains open into the river, though

the Supreme Court and the NGT have directed the local authorities to divert or tap the drains," lamented environmentalist Devashish Bhattacharya.

Agra's drinking water problem has been largely solved by the 130 km long pipeline from Bulandshahar district, which brings 150 cusecs of Ganga water. Ten cusecs of water go to Mathura while Agra gets 140 cusecs.

But the Yamuna is crucial to Agra, not only as it's the city's lifeline, but also to sustain monuments like Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Etmauddaula, Ram Bagh.

'Who killed Pandit if militancy has ended'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Feb 27: PDP president Mehbooba Mufti Monday said Kashmiri Muslims are ashamed over the killing of a Kashmiri Pandit and hit out at the government for claiming that normalcy has been restored in Jammu and Kashmir.

Sanjay Sharma (40), who worked as an ATM guard, was shot in the chest at point-blank range by terrorists barely 100 metres from his residence in the Achan area of Pulwama district at around 11 am on Sunday. He was rushed to a hospital by passersby but succumbed to the injuries.

"The government claims to have ended militancy. If that were the case, who killed him (Sharma)? What is the government doing?" Mufti asked while talking to reporters after visiting Sharma's residence in Pulwama.

The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister said Kashmiri



Muslims are ashamed over Sharma's killing.

"We are the same people who put everything at stake in 1947 to protect the Kashmiri Pandits,

Hindus and Sikhs living in the valley when the subcontinent was reeling under communal riots," she said.

The People's Democratic Party

(PDP) chief said Kashmiri Muslims are helpless today.

"Today, the Kashmiri Muslims are trapped. On one hand, there are government excesses and thousands of youngsters have been put in jails in the name of ending militancy. On the other hand, houses are sealed, NIA and ED raids are being carried out," she said.

Mufti said Sharma has left behind a young widow and three kids. "The government should provide a job to his widow," she said.

The Jammu and Kashmir unit chief of the BJP, Ravindra Raina, also visited the bereaved family to offer condolences.

"The killers of Sharma have put humanity to shame. This is a heinous crime, the killing of an innocent person. This is the height of injustice. A poor orphan who was living cordially with the people in this Pulwama village has been killed. The land of Kashmir has turned red again," Raina said.

Barsana set to celebrate 'Lathmar Holi' today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mathura (UP), Feb 27: Historical town Barsana - the land of Radha Rani - will witness a spectacle Tuesday when menfolk will drench womenfolk with colours with the women wielding batons 'playfully' hitting the men to drive them away.

Every year, thousands of devotees and tourists are attracted to the town here to witness 'Lathmar Holi', the festival that honours the couple, Radha and Krishna.

"Holi in Barsana virtually is a repeat of Holi representing the 'Dwaapara' age with menfolk trying to drench womenfolk with colours and women preventing them through baton attacks. The men protect themselves by carrying leather shields," Raas Bihari, a priest of Ladli temple in Barsana, said.

Legend has it that when Krishna visited Barsana to spray colours on his beloved, Radha and her friends 'playfully' hit him with sticks and drove him out of the town. Lathmar Holi seeks to recreate that.

"Holi in Mathura is celebrated for around 25 days. It is celebrated at different locations in different ways. On Friday, we organised 'Phoolo kee Holi' (Holi of flowers)



at Ramanreti in Gokul. On February 28, we are having 'Lathmar Holi' in Barsana, the next day we have

Lathmar Holi in Nandgaon. After that we have Rangbharni in Vrindavan. So, there are different

ways of celebrating Holi in different parts of the district. Together it is called Rangotsav," District

Snow marathon held in J&K



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jammu, Feb 27: A maiden snow marathon was organised Sunday from Baderwah to Guldandi at Bhadwewah in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district, officials said.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Doda, Vishesh Paul Mahajan, along with SSP, Abdul Qayoom, CO 4RR, Rajat Parmar and other officers of the district administration and office bearers of Real Sports India NGO flagged off the marathon at 10 a.m.

Around 100 runners participated in the full, half and quarter marathon. The marathon was organised by Real Sports India (NGO),

in collaboration with the Centre's Tourism Department, J&K Tourism Department, Indian Army 4RR, District Administration Doda and Amazing Baderwah Tourism Association.

The marathon was held in three categories - full marathon (25 km), half marathon (10 km), and a 5-km run.

The DC Doda said that hosting the maiden snow marathon in Baderwah is a proud moment for the district and it will definitely contribute to promoting adventure and eco-tourism in the district.

He said that the marathon and adventure activities would be made a regular feature in the district in the future.

national

of the day quote

The arrest of @msisodia by CBI is another example of how @BJP4India misuses the Union Government's agencies to intimidate the opposition. It's a blatant abuse of power and an attack on democracy. Such repression undermines the very foundation of our nation and should be resisted

PINARAY VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

This is (Sisodia's arrest) yet another brazen attempt to attack and suppress voices of democratically elected state governments which are working hard for people especially the marginalised and their issues

HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CM

In the light of the state's rising population, 75,543 additional posts have been created in the police force. In an unprecedented move, appointment letters were issued to 10,459 police recruits at a function organised by the state government at the Raj Bhavan

RAJENDRA ARLEKAR | BIHAR GOVERNOR

SHORT TAKES

Kashmiri Pandit cremated in J&K

Srinagar: A day after he was shot dead by terrorists, Kashmiri Pandit bank guard Sanjay Sharma was cremated in his native village in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district Monday, with his Muslim neighbours lending a helping hand to his grief-stricken family. Lieutenant Governor (LG) Manoj Sinha condemned the killing and said those behind the "extremely unfortunate incident" will be taken care of by the security forces. Sharma was shot dead by terrorists on Sunday morning barely 100 metres from his home in Achan in Pulwama when he was on his way to the local market. He was rushed to a hospital by passersby but he succumbed to the injuries.

Farmers stop onion auction

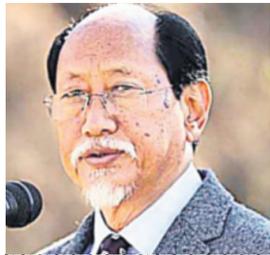
Nashik: In the wake of a consistent drop in the onion prices, angry farmers stopped the auction of the key kitchen staple Monday at Maharashtra's Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC), Asia's biggest onion market. The price per kilogram of onion came down to ₹2 to ₹4, which angered the growers.

Tremors hit Kutch, Amreli

Ahmedabad: Two tremors of 3.8 and 3.3 magnitude hit Gujarat's Kutch and Amreli districts respectively Monday, officials from the Institute of Seismological Research (ISR) said. There was no report of any casualty or property damage, as per the district authorities. A tremor of 3.8 magnitude was recorded at 10.49 am in Kutch district. Its epicentre was 62 km north-north east of Lakhpat town in Kutch, at a depth of 15 km, they said.

Girl gangraped

Ranchi: The Jharkhand police Monday arrested five persons, including two minors accused of gang raping a minor girl when she was returning from a wedding in Dewaki village of Gumla district. Three of the accused have been sent to jail while the two minors have been sent to juvenile home on the complaint of the victim lodged at Ghaghra police station. The incident took place late Sunday night, when the girl was returning home from the wedding with a female and male friend.



Naga people want solution to the decades-old Naga issue, lasting peace and development
NEIPHU RIO | NAGALAND CM

MASSIVE ROAD-SHOW

With Assembly polls in Karnataka round the corner, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday held a massive road show in this district headquarters city, waving at a large number of enthusiastic crowd, who had lined up on both sides of the route



EPFO extends deadline to opt for higher pension to May 3



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) Monday set May 3 as the deadline for subscribers to opt for a higher pension. The Supreme Court November 4 allowed another change for employees who were existing EPS members as September 1, 2014, to contribute up to 8.33 per cent of their actual salaries - as against 8.33 per cent of pensionable salary capped at ₹15,000 a month - towards pension. The apex court gave a four-month window to enable opting for higher pensions. The deadline accordingly should have been around March 3, 2023, but EPFO only last week came out with the proce-

cedure for opting for higher pension under the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS). "The joint option for employees who were in service prior to September 1, 2014, and continued to be in service on or after September 1, 2014, but could not exercise joint option under the Employees' Pension Scheme can do so now on or before May 3, 2023," EPFO said on its website. At present, both employees and employers contribute 12 per cent of the employee's basic salary, dearness allowance and retaining allowance, if any, to the employee provident fund or EPF. The employee's entire contribution goes to EPF while the 12 per cent contribution by the employer is split as 3.67 per cent to EPF and 8.33 per cent to EPS. The Government of India contributes 1.16 per cent to an employee's pension, while employees do not contribute to the pension scheme EPFO said, "online facility for filing joint option is coming soon". Earlier, there were apprehensions that March 3, 2023, will be the last date for opting for a higher pension.



TOILING HARD: A labourer works at a salt pan at Vedaranyam in Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu. The daily salt production usually begins in the first two weeks of February and lasts till the start of October, when the Monsoon arrives. Local residents have raised concerns over the centres' decision to float tenders for salt pans instead of renewing the existing contract

Bypolls in 3 Assembly seats held peacefully

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: Bypolls in three Assembly constituencies in as many states passed off peacefully Monday with around 63-70 per cent turnout, though some technical glitches in EVMs were reported in Tamil Nadu and the ruling TMC in West Bengal alleged that the CRPF was "influencing" voters. A voter turnout of more than 63 per cent was recorded till 3 pm in the by-election to West Bengal's Sagardighi assembly constituency in Murshidabad district while over 67.96 per cent voting was registered till 5 pm in the Ramgarh assembly constituency bypoll in Jharkhand. Around 70.58 per cent of the voters cast their ballots till 5pm in the bypoll to Tamil Nadu's Erode East by-election, EC officials said. No untoward incident was reported during the voting at the three places, Election Commission officials said. In West Bengal, the ruling TMC accused the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) of trying to influence the electors to vote for the BJP. The opposition BJP, however, charged the TMC with trying to create an issue out of a non-issue. The TMC, which has been winning the seat since 2011, had won it in 2021 too by a margin of nearly 50,000 votes, securing more than 50 per cent of the



The EC had in January announced that bypolls to the Lakshadweep Lok Sabha seat, along with six Assembly seats spread over five states -- Maharashtra, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu -- would be held February 27

total votes polled, whereas the BJP and the Congress-Left alliance had bagged 24 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively. Candidates of the ruling Trinamool Congress, the opposition BJP and the Congress-Left alliance are the main contestants. The bypoll was necessitated after the death of its three-time TMC MLA and state minister Subrata Saha in December last year. In Jharkhand, polling for the by-election began at 7 am amid tight security arrangements. Though 18 candidates, including 14 Independents, are in the fray, the contest will be mainly between the Congress, an ally of the ruling JMM-led coalition, and the AJSU Party, which has tied up with the BJP for the bypoll. The by-election was necessitated after the disqualification of

Congress legislator Mamta Devi, following her conviction in a criminal case. A few alleged technical glitches were reported from Erode East in Tamil Nadu during the by-election, prompting authorities to suspend voting at two booths. While no untoward incidents were reported, the AIADMK complained to the returning officer that some DMK men were distributing cash at Asokapuram, but when authorities rushed to the spot, they did not find anyone there, they said. At Veerapanchathiram, complaints were received that votes were not recorded for the intended candidate after pressing a particular button on the electronic voting machine (EVM). At Brough Road, some people complained that the EVM did not function properly. At both the places, officials suspended voting for sometime, before resuming after addressing the glitches. Candidates of the ruling DMK-backed EVKS Elangovan of the Congress and AIADMK's K S Thennarasu among others cast their vote early morning. The election was necessitated due to the death of Elangovan's son and Congress legislator E Thirumahan Everaa in January this year. While 77 candidates are in fray, the battle is likely confined between the Congress and AIADMK.

Cong ready for BJY 2.0

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nava Raipur, Feb 27: Their bags are packed and they're ready to go, waiting just for a signal to begin walking the breadth of India. With Bharat Jodo Yatra 2.0 appearing a distinct possibility, several Congress leaders and workers say they are raring to get back on the streets to quickly take forward the gains from the first one. "The Bharat yatras, as those who completed the entire journey are known, are ready. Our bags are packed and we will leave as soon as we get orders from the party," said Vaibhav Wallia, AICC delegate and one of those who walked 4,000 km from India's southern tip to Kashmir. "All Congress workers and many of us now wish for a second phase of the yatra so it can go to states it hasn't been to," Wallia told PTI. Lhinkim Haokip Shingnaisui of Manipur, the only woman from the northeast who participated as a Bharat yatri in the Bharat Jodo Yatra, said there is a lot of enthusiasm among the people in the northeast after Rahul Gandhi's comments Sunday. "People are calling me to ask how they can join. There is tremendous anticipation for another yatra," Shingnaisui, called Kim by her Congress colleagues, told PTI. And yes, she added, she would definitely join the march that might be from the



There has been talk of another Bharat Jodo Yatra ever since the Kanyakumari to Kashmir campaign ended in Srinagar last month. The buzz escalated Sunday when former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi appealed to party president Mallikarjun Kharge at the plenary session here to formulate a new plan to carry forward the "tapasya" (penance) undertaken through the march northeast to the west of the country. Gandhi's comments Sunday, saying he and the entire country would participate in the "tapasya", were widely taken as an indication that another such initiative could be in the offing in the near future. After his remarks, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh told PTI that the Congress is considering a Pasighat-to-Porbandar yatra (east to west), but said its format could be a bit different from the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Apex court refuses pleas for NEET-PG postponement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: The Supreme Court Monday refused to entertain pleas seeking postponement of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET)-PG 2023, which is scheduled for March 5, saying there is nothing in this world to prevent somebody who has not made it to try again. The apex court was dealing with two petitions seeking postponement of the postgraduate medical entrance test. The petitioners had sought postponement of the exam,

saying they did not get adequate time to prepare for the exam and that the counselling has to be conducted after August 11 since the cut-off date for internship has been extended to that date. A bench of Justices S R Bhat and Dipankar Datta was informed by Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the National Board of Examinations (NBE), that admit cards for the exam have been issued Monday as per schedule and the counselling may commence from July 15.

Top court extends interim bail to Khera

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: The Supreme Court Monday extended the period of interim bail granted to Congress leader Pawan Khera in a case related to his alleged objectionable remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi till March 3. The Assam Police arrested Khera in connection with the case last week. A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud took note of the submissions made by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who appeared in the court on behalf of the Assam government, that the state police

wanted to file its reply. Additional Advocate General Garima Prasad, appearing in the matter for the Uttar Pradesh government, said she will also file her response in the matter. The bench took note of the submissions and fixed Khera's plea for hearing on March 3, making it clear that the interim bail, granted to him February 23, will remain in force till then. "List Friday. The counter-affidavits (replies of the Assam and Uttar Pradesh governments) to be filed.... Ad-interim protection (interim bail) granted to extend till the next date of hearing," the bench,



also comprising justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala, said in its order. Khera was arrested from the Delhi airport after he was de-boarded from a plane that was supposed to take him to Raipur in connection with his alleged re-

marks against Modi made at a press conference in Mumbai February 17. The Congress leader obtained bail from a magisterial court here February 23 after the CJ-led bench granted him the interim bail during an urgent hearing earlier in the day. "In order to enable the petitioner (Khera) to apply for regular bail before the jurisdictional court, upon the FIRs being transferred to one jurisdiction, we direct that the petitioner shall be released on interim bail by the court of the competent magistrate at Delhi where he is to be produced this evening," the apex court had said.

BUDGET TO KEEP GUJARAT AT FOREFRONT

"Blessed are the young for they shall inherit the national debt", said Herbert Hoover, the 31st President of the United States who faced the brunt of the 1929 stock market crash and the Great Depression. The context of his message remains out of reach but the parable of mounting public debt nearer home sure arouses concern. Gujarat's budget proposals for the financial year 2023-24 have brought home with stunning accuracy that its allocations stand outpaced by its spiraling public debt. On February 24, the Bhupendra Patel led BJP government in Gujarat presented its first budget after being re-elected with a record breaking

steam roller margin. Finance Minister Kanu Desai presented a ₹3.01 lakh crore budget proposals for the financial year 2023-24. This figure stood outstripped by ₹80,000 crores with its public debt projection slated to stand at ₹3.81 lakh crores over the same period. Though the fiscal deficit of Gujarat remained below the prescribed three per cent of GDP, the projected deficit for the 2023-24 stood at 1.75 pc which is slightly higher than the 1.64 per cent in 2022-23. Last year this figure was ₹4,50,000 crores. All is well, as the saying goes. Lost in the welter of verbiage is the fact that when the BJP first came to power in the state in

1995, the state's public debt was around ₹10,000 crores. By the time Narendra Modi became Chief Minister in 2001-2002, the debt had risen to ₹45,301 crores. In 2014 when Modi left Gujarat to takeover as Prime Minister in New Delhi, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) put the total public debt of the state at

₹2.21 lakh crore. It had ballooned to an all-time of ₹3.2 lakh crore in 2021-22, higher than the annual of ₹2.4 lakh crore for 2022-23. Last year the CAG had warned that the state was headed for a debt trap because it has to pay back 61 per cent of the debt of over ₹3 lakh crores over the next seven years. In layman's terms, it must repay ₹1.87 lakh crores by 2028. The same report had also pointed out that while the GSDP had grown at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.2 per cent between 2016 and 2021, public debt has grown at a CAGR of 11.5 per cent. Official statistics say that the state paid ₹20,293 crores as interest and ₹16,701 crores as principal amount

in 2019-20, while in 2020-21, interest paid stood at ₹22,099 crores and the principal was ₹17,918 crores. In the run-up to the Gujarat elections last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had warned against the rising rash of 'revadis' (freebies at state cost). The pulpit preaching, however, seems to have gone waste in his own home state with his own party government for the 23 per cent increase in budgetary allocation this year is matched by a 19 per cent increase in the quantum of subsidies provided in matching time. The budget documents put this figure at ₹26,511 crores. The crowning irony is that the industrial sector which has been availing incentives and subsidies all

along successive budgets including ₹2300 crores in the preset one, have ₹57,394 crores in pending tax dues, some as old as a decade! The state seems trapped in a vicious cycle. It borrows to build, then splurges in incentives, subsidies and freebies. It first creates public sector undertakings (PSUs), then over time, renders these establishments sick through mismanagement and thereafter sells the sick shells to stem the rot and 'recoup' in peanuts. The cycle is unending-borrow-build-splurge-sell-and all at public cost. Thus it is that Gujarat has decided to follow the Centre by disinvesting state run companies to meet capital expenditure targets.



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international

of the day quote

The sanctions have no basis in international law or authorization from the Security Council, and are typical illegal unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction

MAO NING | CHINA FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON

After overcoming the hardships of the past two decades, Iraq is ready to focus on improving everyday life for its people. Those hardships included years of resistance to foreign troops, violence between Sunnis and Shiites, and attacks by Islamic State group extremists who once controlled large areas, including Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul

ABDUL LATIF RASHID | IRAQI PRESIDENT

South Korea's military support will help Ukraine in the war against Russia

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYI | UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

New quake hits Turkey, one dead

Ankara: A magnitude 5.6 earthquake shook southern Turkey Monday — three weeks after a catastrophic temblor devastated the region — causing some already damaged buildings to collapse and killing at least one person, the country's disaster management agency, AFAD, said. Another 69 people were injured as a result of the earthquake which was centred in the town of Yesilyurt in Malatya province, AFAD's chief Yunus Sezer said. More than two dozen buildings collapsed.

Slain model's in-laws detained

Hong Kong: The ex-husband and former in-laws of a slain Hong Kong model were detained Monday on charges in her killing after police found body parts in a refrigerator and a pot. The case has gripped many in a Chinese territory where any violent crime is rare. Ex-husband Alex Kwong, his father Kwong Kau and his brother Anthony Kwong were charged with murdering model Abby Choi a day earlier. Alex Kwong's mother, Jenny Li, faces one count of perverting the course of justice. None of the four was granted bail.

Japan to ease Cov border measures

Tokyo: Japan is easing its coronavirus border measures for tourists from China beginning Wednesday by testing only random passengers, a top government spokesman said Monday. Since December, Japan has been testing all travellers from mainland China at four designated airports on grounds of surging infections in that country and a lack of information. Visitors from China are also required to show a proof of pre-boarding negative test. Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told a news conference that as of Wednesday, only random testing will be carried out on passengers from China.

10 workers killed

Damascus: Land mines left behind by the Islamic State group in central Syria went off in two different locations on Monday, killing 10 workers as they were collecting truffles in the countryside and wounding 12, state media reported. According to Syria's state news agency SANA, the two mines exploded east of the central town of Salamiyah. All the casualties were taken to a hospital in the town, the report added.



Of course, the pumping in of weapons can continue ... and prevent any possibility of reviving negotiations

DMITRY MEDVEDEV | DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL OF RUSSIA

CRACK DOWN ON FORCED MARRIAGE

A new law raising the legal age for marriage in England and Wales to 18 years has come into force Monday, aimed at protecting vulnerable young people from being forced into weddings against their will



NO END IN SIGHT

'Massive' rights violations in Ukraine: UN chief

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Geneva, Feb 27: Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has triggered "the most massive violations of human rights" in the world today, the head of the United Nations said Monday, as the war pushed into its second year with no end in sight and tens of thousands dead.

The Russian invasion "has unleashed widespread death, destruction and displacement," UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in a speech to the UN-backed Human Rights Council in Geneva. After failing to capture Kyiv in the opening weeks of the invasion on Feb. 24 last year and suffering a series of humiliating setbacks during the fall, Russia has stabilised the front and is concentrating its efforts on capturing four provinces that Moscow illegally annexed in September — Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia.

Ukraine, meanwhile, hopes to use battle tanks and other new weapons pledged by the West to launch new counteroffensives and reclaim more of the occupied territory. Guterres said "attacks on

We aren't seeing any conditions for a peaceful settlement now

DMITRY PESKOV | KREMLIN SPOKESMAN



The Russian offensive aimed at securing control of eastern Ukraine has effectively become bogged down while losing huge numbers of weapons and ammunition

OLEH ZHDANOV | UKRAINIAN MILITARY ANALYST



civilians and civilian infrastructure have caused many casualties and terrible suffering."

The intense fighting for territory in eastern Ukraine was in sharp focus Sunday at a Ukrainian field hospital treating wounded from the intense battle for the city of Bakhmut, which is devastated. A constant flow of battered and exhausted soldiers came in on

stretchers. Anatoliy, the chief of the medical service, said his team treats dozens of soldiers every day and barely has time to eat. "My medics work practically non-stop. Before the full-scale invasion we had 50-60 wounded in a nine-month rotation, and now sometimes we have more (than that) in one day," he said. He provided only one name for security reasons.

The Russian invasion has unleashed widespread death, destruction and displacement, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in a speech to the UN-backed Human Rights Council in Geneva

Guterres cited cases of sexual violence, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and violations of the rights of prisoners of war documented by the UN human rights office

Guterres' remarks came as the Ukrainian military said that Russia launched attacks with exploding drones on several regions of the country from late Sunday until Monday morning, killing two people. Guterres cited cases of sexual violence, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and violations of the rights of prisoners of war documented by the UN human rights office.

TECHNICAL GLITCH

SpaceX cancels rocket launch

REUTERS

Cape Canaveral, Fla., Feb 27: NASA and SpaceX Monday postponed the launch of a capsule containing two US astronauts, a Russian cosmonaut and a United Arab Emirates crewmate minutes before scheduled lift-off from Florida on a flight to the International Space Station.

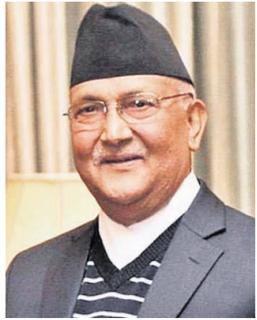
The U.S. space agency and SpaceX, the private rocket company founded by billionaire Elon Musk, cited a technical glitch concerning the ignition fluid used to start the spacecraft's engines.

The countdown had seemed to be progressing smoothly until about two and a half minutes before blastoff, when NASA announced on its live webcast that the launch of the four crew members on a six-month science mission would be postponed. The SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket topped with a Crew Dragon capsule had been scheduled for liftoff at 1:45 a.m. EST (0645 GMT) from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. The first backup launch opportunity for the mission was set for early Tuesday, about 24 hours from the initial attempt to get the rocket off the ground.

POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Oli's party pulls out of Nepal govt

The prime reason for the break-up of the alliance between Prachanda and former Prime Minister Oli was because the Maoist leader decided to support senior Nepali Congress (NC) candidate Ram Chandra Paudel for the President's post



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Feb 27: Nepal's second largest party in Parliament - CPN-UML - Monday withdrew its support to Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda"-led government following a rift over backing the main opposition party's candidate for the presidential poll, plunging the Himalayan nation to another spell of political instability.

"A high-level meeting of the party held under the leadership of party chief KP Sharma Oli on Monday decided to quit the government and withdraw the party's support to the Prachanda-led government," Bishnu Rijal, deputy chief of the party's central publicity committee, said.

The prime reason for the break-up of the alliance between Prachanda and former Prime Minister Oli was because the Maoist leader decided to support senior Nepali Congress (NC) candidate Ram Chandra Paudel for the President's post.

Paudel is from the Nepali Congress, an opposition party, and from outside the ruling alliance. Nepal's Presidential election will be held on March 9. The exit of CPN-UML may not immediately affect the Prachanda-led government, which is supported by the Nepali Congress (NC) which has 89 lawmakers in the House.

As Prime Minister Prachanda violated the December 25 agreement while forming the seven-party coalition government and betrayed the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (CPN-UML), the party took the decision to leave the government, Rijal said.

The UML ministers, including Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Bishnu Poudyal and Foreign Minister Bimala Rai Poudyal, submitted their resignations to the Prime Minister. There were eight UML ministers including Deputy Prime Minister in the Prachanda-led incumbent government and all of them are resigning en masse.

Sunak, Leyen seal deal to fix EU trade spat

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Feb 27: The UK and the European Union ended years of wrangling on Monday, sealing a deal to resolve their thorny post-Brexit trade dispute over Northern Ireland.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen signed off on the deal at a meeting in Windsor England. Afterwards Sunak said the pair would hold a news conference on Monday. The government had previously said that would only happen if a deal was struck.

The agreement could end a dispute that has soured U.K.-EU relations, sparked the collapse of the Belfast-based regional government and shaken Northern Ireland's decades-old peace process. Fixing it is a big victory for Sunak — but not the end of his troubles. Selling the deal to his own Conservative Party and its Northern Ireland allies may be a tougher struggle. Now Sunak awaits the judgment of Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party, which is boycotting the region's power-sharing government until the trade arrangements are changed to its satisfaction.

Sunak is due to make a statement by Sunak to the House of Commons later setting out details of the deal. Von der Leyen is due to have tea with King Charles III at Windsor Castle, 20 miles (32 kilometers) west of London. Buckingham Palace said the meeting was taking place on the government's advice, leading critics to accuse Sunak of dragging the monarch, who is supposed to remain neutral, into a political row.



Members of Palestinian security forces loyal to Hamas, take part in a graduation ceremony in Gaza City

ITALY MIGRANT TRAGEDY Death toll at 62; dozens missing

At least 80 people survived, but more were feared dead given survivor reports that the boat, which set off from Turkey last week, had carried about 170 people

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Steccato Di Cutro (Italy), Feb 27: The death toll rose to 62 in the migrant tragedy off Italy's southern coast after rescue crews recovered three more bodies on Monday, driving home once again the desperate and dangerous boat crossings of people seeking to reach Europe.

Dozens more were believed to be missing. Children were among the dead after a wooden boat broke up in stormy seas on the reefs near the Calabria coast on Sunday.

At least 80 people survived, but more were feared dead given survivor reports that the boat, which set off from Turkey last week,



Members of Italian coast guard searched the sea north to south off Steccato di Cutro while a helicopter flew overhead and a four-wheel vehicle patrolled the beach.

There were only a few life jackets scattered amid the debris. The UN and Doctors Without Borders, which had crews on the scene, said many of the victims were Afghans, including members of large families, as well as

Pakistanis and Iraqis. Afghans were the second top nationality to seek asylum in the European Union last year, and have increasingly fled the spiralling security, humanitarian and economic troubles that followed the Taliban takeover in August 2021.

On Monday, two coast guard vessels searched the seas north to south off Steccato di Cutro while a helicopter flew overhead and a four-wheel vehicle patrolled the beach.

A strong wind whipped the seas that still churned up splinters of the boat, gas tanks, food containers and shoes.

Firefighters confirmed three more bodies had been recovered on Monday morning, but held out little hope for finding survivors. "I think no, because the sea conditions are too difficult," said provincial fire Cmdr. Roberto Fasano.

US ENERGY DEPT FOLLOWS FBI'S PATH

Covid likely came from lab leak in China: Report

THE PANDEMIC'S ORIGIN HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF VIGOROUS DEBATE AMONG ACADEMICS, INTELLIGENCE EXPERTS AND LAWMAKERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 27: The virus that drove the COVID-19 pandemic, killing close to 7 million people globally, most likely emerged from a laboratory leak in China, according to a US media report, citing a classified intelligence report recently provided to the White House and key members of

Congress. The Huanan market in central China's Wuhan city was the epicentre of the pandemic. From its origin there, the SARS-CoV-2 virus rapidly spread to other locations in Wuhan in late 2019 and then to the rest of the world.

The pandemic's origin has been the subject of vigorous debate among academics, intelligence experts and lawmakers. The findings of the US Department of Energy — a departure from previous studies on how the virus emerged — came in an update to a document from the Office of National Intelligence director Avril Haines, the Wall Street Journal reported on Sunday.

The new report highlights how different parts of the intelligence community have arrived at disparate judgments about the pandemic's origin. The Energy



Department now joins the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in saying the virus likely spread via a mishap at a Chinese laboratory. Four other agencies, along with a national intelligence panel, still judge that it was likely the result of natural transmission, and two

are undecided.

The Energy Department's conclusion is the result of new intelligence and is significant because the agency has considerable scientific expertise and oversees a network of US national laboratories, some of which conduct ad-

vanced biological research, the report said.

The Energy Department made its judgment with "low confidence," according to people who have read the classified report. The spread of COVID-19, just one in a line of infectious coronavirus to emerge, caught global health bodies unawares in early 2020. Close to 7 million people have died worldwide, according to the World Health Organisation.

US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan on Sunday said that the intelligence community is divided on the matter while noting that President Joe Biden has put resources into getting to the bottom of the origin question.

Sullivan said that Biden had directed the national laboratories, which are part of the Department of Energy, to be brought into the assessment. "Right now, there is not

a definitive answer that has emerged from the intelligence community on this question," Sullivan told CNN.

"Some elements of the intelligence community have reached conclusions on one side, some on the other. A number of them have said they just don't have enough information to be sure." The deadly virus has also disrupted the global economy, trade as well as travel.

The FBI previously came to the conclusion that the pandemic was likely the result of a lab leak in 2021 with "moderate confidence" and still holds to this view.

The National Intelligence Council, which conducts long-term strategic analysis, and four agencies, which officials declined to identify, still assess with "low confidence" that the virus came about through natural transmission from an infected animal, according to the updated report.

business

of the day quote

There is a need for influencers and celebrities to disclose any material connections with advertisers that may affect the credibility of their representation

ROHIT KUMAR SINGH | CONSUMER AFFAIRS SECRETARY

These next-generation made-for-India vehicles with their strong engineering underpinnings and sophisticated design aesthetics are a milestone not just for us, but for the entire electric mobility category

S RAVIKUMAR | CHIEF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, BAJAJ AUTO LIMITED

Our (Physics Wallah-Utkarsh Classes) collaboration will help us better serve students across India and make their learning experience more enriching

ALAKH PANDEY | FOUNDER AND CEO, PHYSICSWALLAH

SHORT TAKES

SpiceJet hives off cargo business

Bangalore: Low-cost carrier SpiceJet said today it would transfer its cargo business to a unit for Rs 25.56 billion (\$308.32 million), and raise another Rs 25 billion in fresh capital by issuing securities to qualified institutional buyers. The cash-strapped airline said it will also convert its dues to aircraft lessor Carlyle Aviation into shares worth \$29.5 million. The transaction will wipe out over \$100 million debt of SpiceJet, thereby strengthening its balance sheet for future expansion. The move will substantially deleverage the company's balance sheet. Following this transaction, Carlyle Aviation Partner will have over 7.5 per cent equity stake in SpiceJet Ltd.

Fertiliser imports surge 3.9% in Jan

New Delhi: The country's fertiliser imports rose by 3.9 per cent to 19.04 lakh tonne in January this year compared to the year-ago period, according to the Fertiliser Ministry data. The country imported 18.33 lakh tonne of fertilisers during January 2022. According to the latest data, of the total imports of 19.04 lakh tonne, 10.65 lakh tonne of urea, 5.62 lakh tonne of Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP), 1.14 lakh tonne of Muriate of Potash (MoP) and 1.63 lakh tonne of complexes were imported.

SoftBank, Ant to sell Paytm stake

Mumbai: China's Ant Group and Japan's SoftBank Group Corp are seeking to sell their stakes in digital payments firm Paytm in the open market, reports said Monday. The companies had earlier approached Bharti Airtel founder-chairman Sunil Mittal to sell their stakes in Paytm's parent One 97 Communications, but those talks did not make much headway, as per reports. A secondary sale to financial investors in the open market through a block deal is, however, still a possibility, the Economic Times reported. Ant has a nearly 25% stake in Paytm, while SoftBank owns about 13%.

Grovers' new app

New Delhi: Former BharatPe Co-founder and Managing Director Ashneer Grover and his wife Madhuri Jain Grover are apparently ready with their new startup, this time in the sphere of fantasy sports with a new app called CrickPe, the media reported Monday. According to leading startup covering portal Entracker, citing sources, CrickPe is expected to be launched in the "next few weeks".

LAYOFF WINTER

The start of 2023 has turned jittery for job seekers and more layoffs are in the offing

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 27: The year 2023 is set to become the worst year for tech employees as in just two months, 417 companies have laid off more than 1.2 lakh workers globally. In comparison, 1,046 tech companies - from Big Tech to startups - laid off more than 1.61 lakh employees in 2022, as per the data by layoffs tracking site Layoffs.fyi.

In January alone, close to 1 lakh tech employees lost jobs globally, dominated by companies like Amazon, Microsoft, Google, Salesforce and others.

In total, nearly 3 lakh tech employees have now lost jobs in 2022 and till February this year.

Banks' credit growth doubles in Dec qtr

REUTERS

Mumbai, Feb 27: Indian banks' credit growth doubled to 16.8% in the October-December quarter from a year earlier, data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Monday showed.

Bank credit had expanded by 8.4% in the quarter ended December 2021 and 17.2% in the quarter ended September 2022, as per the data.

The growth in credit was led by bank branches in metropolitan centres, which accounted for nearly 60% of the total credit by banks, the RBI said. Urban, semi-urban and rural centres also recorded double-digit credit growth, it added.

The growth of state-owned lenders' credit portfolios jumped, rising by 15.7% during 2022 as compared with 4.7% in 2021. Corresponding growth for private banks remained higher, however, at 19.1%, from 13.1% in 2021.

With India's economy on the mend following the Covid pandemic, credit uptake has improved and most banks now expect double-digit credit growth for the current financial year ending in March 2023.

Deposit growth, on the other hand, has lagged credit growth for most banks, despite the RBI's rate-setting panel increasing the policy repo rate by 250 basis points since May last year.



Banks' aggregate deposits increased by 10.3% year-on-year in the December quarter, up from 9.6% in the same quarter of the previous year, led by growth in term deposits.

Deposit mobilisation by state-run banks recorded an 8.8% year-on-year growth in the December quarter, lower than the 13.2% growth in deposits with private sector banks, the RBI said.

Banks' credit-deposit ratio rose further to 75.9% in the December quarter, up from 74.8% in the previous quarter and 71.6% in the quarter ended December 2021.



Corrosion affects all walks of our life; from the safety of infrastructure and loss of capital investment to contamination of ingestible and pollution precipitation. As per estimates, every year, corrosion costs India about 4 per cent of its GDP

ABHYUDAY JINDAL | MD, JSL

AIRTEL MARKS UNIQUE 5G MILESTONE

Telecom operator Bharti Airtel Monday announced that it has crossed the 10 million unique 5G user mark on its network. In November 2022, Airtel became the first and only operator to have 1 million unique customers on its network within 30 days of its commercial launch. It is pertinent to mention that high speed 5G services were launched in the country, October 1, 2022



Over 1.2L techies axed in '23 so far



Twitter hands more pink slips

Twitter Inc has laid off at least 200 employees, or about 10% of its workforce, the New York Times reported late Sunday, in its latest round of job cuts since Elon Musk took over the micro-blogging site last October. The company has a headcount of about 2,300 active employees, according to Musk last month. The latest job cuts follow a mass layoff in early November, when Twitter laid off about 3,700 employees in a cost-cutting measure by Musk, who had acquired the company for \$44 billion.

Cloud infrastructure provider DigitalOcean is laying off about 11 per cent of its workforce, or nearly 200 employees.

As more and more Big Tech companies continue to sack employees, they listed various reasons behind the move - over-hiring, uncertain global macroeconomic conditions, strong tailwinds from the Covid-19 pandemic and more. According to reports, Meta (formerly Facebook) is set for another big round of layoffs - similar to the one it announced in November last year - as early as next month once the performance bonuses are paid out.

Meta has reportedly given thousands of employees "subpar ratings" in a latest round of performance reviews, setting the stage for more layoffs at the company. Swedish telecom gear-maker Ericsson is laying off about 8 per cent of its workforce, around 8,500 employees, to cut costs in the ongoing global macroeconomic conditions. Global consulting firm McKinsey & Co is reportedly planning to slash about 2,000 jobs in one of the largest layoffs.

Another major consulting firm KPMG is laying off 2 per cent of its workforce that will impact about 700 employees in the US, owing to a

sharp slowdown in its consulting business".

MARKET MAYHEM

Investors' wealth dips

Concerns over more rate hikes by developed economies, weak global equity markets and fresh foreign fund outflows from the domestic market have dented investor sentiments



7 SESSIONS IN RED

Equity investors have lost ₹10.42 lakh crore

Sensex tumbles more than 2,000 points

Adani group's mcap plunges to ₹6.81L-cr

Stocks of nine out of ten listed firms of the Adani Group closed in the red Monday, with the flagship Adani Enterprises tumbling over 9 per cent as investors continued to desert the counters. All the ten listed firms have together lost Rs 12.37 lakh crore (Rs 12,37,891.56 crore) in market valuation since the US short-seller came out with its report January 24. The group's combined market capitalisation is now at Rs 6.81 lakh crore, down from Rs 19.19 lakh crore January 24. The conglomerate, whose business interests span from seaports to airports, edible oil and commodities, energy, and cement to data centres, has taken a drubbing on the bourses following a report by US short-seller Hindenburg Research labelling charges of stock manipulation and accounting fraud.

Bears continued to wreak havoc in the domestic market as the latest data releases from the US heightened the existing worries of aggressive rate hikes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: Seven consecutive sessions of decline in the equity market has eroded the wealth of investors by a whopping ₹10.42 lakh crore and the benchmark Sensex has tumbled more than 2,000 points during this period.

On Monday, the BSE Sensex dropped 175.58 points or 0.30 per cent to end at 59,288.35 points, marking a decline for seven straight trading sessions.

The Sensex has tumbled 2,031.16 points or 3.31 per cent since February 16. During this period, the combined market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms has eroded by ₹10,42,790.03

₹2,57,88,195.57 crore.

On Monday, Tata Steel, Infosys, Tata Motors, Tata Consultancy Services, Mahindra & Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Larsen & Toubro, Bharti Airtel, Wipro and Bajaj Finance were the biggest laggards in the Sensex pack.

Power Grid, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and State Bank of India were among the gainers.

Financial services, banks and realty were the gainers. A total of 2,593 firms declined while 956 advanced and 186 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The rupee depreciated by 4 paise to close at 82.79 against the US currency Monday as a stronger dollar

in the overseas market and forex outflows from capital markets weighed on the local unit.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets Monday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 2,022.52 crore.

On the domestic macroeconomic front, India's forex reserves dropped by \$5.681 billion to \$561.267 billion in the week ended February 17, the RBI said Friday.

JSP honoured with CSR Journal Excellence Award

Bhubaneswar: Leading steelmaker Jindal Steel & Power (JSP) was declared as the Winner of the prestigious CSR Journal Excellence Award 2022, under the category of Education and Skill Development for its Special Education Programme "Asha - the Hope" programme for DiyangJan, held at Mumbai February 25. Eknath Sindhe, Chief Minister of Maharashtra graced the event and applauded the corporates for various inclusive development programme under their CSR initiatives. On behalf of the company and its CSR arm JSP Foundation Prashant Hota, President & JSP's Group Head CSR & Education received the award in National Stock Exchange Auditorium, Mumbai. Congratulating the Team CSR for receiving the prestigious award, Chairperson of JSP Foundation Shalju Jindal said, "Asha the Hope, the flagship programme of JSP Foundation for rehabilitating and mainstreaming the DiyangJan is close to my heart. We chase our dream for an Inclusive India where none should be left out from the basic needs of life. Education is the building block of civilizations and I strongly believe that our Diyang children and citizens will continue to be nation builders, if we all discharge our responsibility to support them with inclusive measures, appropriate rehabilitation and special education. I am thankful to the jury for recognizing our work and selecting us as the winner of this prestigious CSR Journal Excellence Award." Asha the Hope programme, run by JSP Foundation in Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, is a flagship CSR initiative of JSP.



Essar to invest \$3.6bn in energy shift in UK, India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 27: The Essar group Monday announced a \$3.6 billion investment in low carbon energy transition projects in the UK and India including the production of green hydrogen and ammonia over the next five years, as it looks at a new phase of growth.

Essar Group, invested in energy, metals and mining, infrastructure and technology sectors, announced "the formation of Essar Energy Transition (EET) to drive the creation of the UK's leading energy transition hub in North West England."

"EET plans to invest a total of \$3.6 billion in developing a range of low carbon energy transition projects over the next five years, of which \$2.4 billion will be invested across its site at Stanlow, between Liverpool and Manchester and \$1.2 billion in India," the company said in a statement.

The projects will include 1 gigawatt of blue hydrogen project being pursued by Vertex Hydrogen in the UK, a 1 GW of green ammonia facility targeted at the UK and international markets, and developing 1 MT of low carbon biofuels.

Vertex is building a hydrogen manufacturing unit at Essar's Stanlow refinery complex in the UK. The joint venture, in which Essar Oil UK holds 90 per cent, will produce 1 gigawatt (GW) of hydrogen per year from two units from 2026.

Nokia changes iconic logo to signal strategy shift

WHILE NOKIA STILL AIMS TO GROW ITS SERVICE PROVIDER BUSINESS, WHERE IT SELLS EQUIPMENT TO TELECOM COMPANIES, ITS MAIN FOCUS IS NOW TO SELL GEAR TO OTHER BUSINESSES

REUTERS

Barcelona, Feb 27: Nokia announced plans Sunday to change its brand identity for the first time in nearly 60 years, complete with a new logo, as the telecom equipment maker focuses on aggressive growth.

The new logo comprises five different shapes forming the word NOKIA. The iconic blue color of the old logo has been dropped for a range of colours depending on the use.

"There was the association to smartphones and nowadays we are a business technology company," Chief Executive Pekka Lundmark told Reuters in an interview.

He was speaking ahead of a business update by the company on the



eve of the annual Mobile World Congress (MWC) which opens in Barcelona Monday and runs until March 2.

After taking over the top job at the struggling Finnish company in 2020, Lundmark set out a strat-

egy with three stages: reset, accelerate and scale. With the reset stage now complete, Lundmark said the second stage is beginning.

"We had very good 21% growth last year in enterprise, which is currently about 8% of our sales, (or

India is our fastest growing market that has lower margins - this is a structural change

PEKKA LUNDMARK | CEO, NOKIA

2 billion euros (\$2.11 billion) roughly," Lundmark said. "We want to take that to double digits as quickly as possible."

Major technology firms have been partnering with telecom gear makers such as Nokia to sell private 5G networks and gears for automated factories to customers, mostly in the manufacturing sector.

Nokia plans to review the growth path of its different businesses and consider alternatives, including divestment.

"The signal is very clear: We only

want to be in businesses where we can see global leadership," Lundmark said.

Nokia's move toward factory automation and datacentres will also see them locking horns with big tech companies, such as Microsoft and Amazon.

"There will be multiple different types of cases, sometimes they will be our partners... sometimes they can be our customers... and I am sure that there will also be situations where they will be competitors."

The market to sell telecom gear is under pressure with macro environment denting demand from high-margin markets such as North America, being replaced by growth in low-margin India, pushing rival Ericsson to lay off 8,500 employees.

Oz focus on orthodox cricket ALL EYES ON RAHUL, GILL



Marnus Labuschagne (L) and Travis Head during Australia's training session in Indore, Monday

Indore, Feb 27: Ravichandran Ashwin's enviable record in Test matches at the Holkar Stadium could make the Australian batters rethink their strategy of playing the high-risk sweep shots, which brought about their downfall in the first two games. Ashwin has 18 wickets in the two Tests he has played at this venue at an average of 12.5 runs.

Australia, who arrived here a week after their second-innings surrender in Delhi, turned up for the net session before their scheduled time.

They were slammed for their

tactics against Indian spinners at the Ferozeshah Kotla with half of the side falling to the poorly-executed sweep shots on a slow and low surface.

Having lost the chance to regain the Border-Gavaskar trophy, Australia looked keen to learn from their mistakes in their three-hour-long training session.

Rather than going for the sweep shot, Steve Smith and Co concentrated on front-foot defence against the spinners besides stepping out to hit down the ground.

Smith and Usman Khawaja were the first ones to hit the nets and batted for more than an hour against Nathan Lyon and Matthew

Kuhnemann.

One of the best batters against spin in the Australian set-up, Smith's performances have been underwhelming so far and he will be keen to correct that in the game beginning Wednesday.

Lyon troubled both Khawaja and Smith as the duo looked determined to firm up their defence. Most of the aerial hits came off rookie Kuhnemann.

It was an hour of madness at the Kotla that cost Australia the game despite fully understanding the implications of the sweep shots on those Indian pitches offering low bounce.

They will need to trust their

defence a lot more and step out regularly to unsettle Ashwin and Co. Such was their frame of mind Monday that Khawaja and Smith returned to the nets for a second stint after all the batters had finished training. This time Khawaja and Alex Carey, who has been dismissed four times playing the same shot with a very low degree of success, concentrated on playing the sweep shot.

Marnus Labuschagne, Travis Head and Peter Handscomb faced off-spinner Murphy and leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson, who has reunited with the squad following the birth of his child.

Handscomb, who has looked the most comfortable against the spinners so far on the tour, came down the pitch every time Murphy and Swepson gave the ball some air.

Head, the most aggressive of the Aussie batters in Delhi, was particularly harsh on Swepson as he slog swept with the spin.

Starc bowls full tilt

Left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc, who missed the first two Tests due to a finger injury, will replace skipper Pat Cummins in the playing eleven for the third Test with the latter back in Australia to be with his ailing mother.

Starc said he is not 100 per cent fit yet but bowled to Cameron Green for close to an hour and generated good pace. Lance Morris bowling alongside him and beat Green with his pace and movement on multiple occasions.

Green, who also had a bowl later in the session, is set to play his first game of the series after missing the first two Tests due to a finger injury. With Cummins and David Warner out of reckoning, Green and Starc look like automatic choices to fill the slots.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, Feb 27: There were no definite cues but it seemed like an audition when the struggling KL Rahul and the much younger Shubman Gill batted simultaneously during a training session Monday ahead of the third Test against Australia.

Stripped of India vice-captaincy following his prolonged lean patch in the five-day format, Rahul put in the hard yards in what could possibly be the final training session before the game, beginning Wednesday.

The selection of Rahul, who averages an ordinary 33.44 after 47 Tests, at the expense of Gill, who is a superstar in the making, has divided opinions in the cricketing fraternity.

Both batted in adjacent nets for around 30 minutes under the

supervision of head coach Rahul Dravid. Rahul has got an extended run as the team management has immense faith in his abilities but with every failure, the pressure is mounting on the stylish opener.

Gill, on the other hand, has had a coming-of-age season across formats and his supporters, which include former cricketers, believe there is no better time to draft him into the playing eleven.

While Gill was more attacking in his approach, Rahul bided his time and focused on his defence. Rahul left and blocked the first 18 balls he faced before practicing the aerial hits down the ground off spinners. He then traded places with Gill to face R Ashwin and there also, he looked to play everything with a straight bat.

Before batting alongside Rahul, Gill was the first member of the team to hit the nets as other un-

derwent warm-up and fielding drills. After their stint in the main nets, both Gill and Rahul moved to the other side of the ground to face a few throwdowns.

Both Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli looked in fine touch in the Delhi Test but were not able to convert starts. Walking into the nets together, the star batters displayed an aggressive approach against the spinners. While Kohli targeted the straight boundaries against left-arm spinners, Rohit played strokes all over including the pull, sweep and reverse sweep.

After he was done bowling, Ashwin, who has been brilliant with both bat and ball in the series, worked on his sweeping skills in the centre square. Axar Patel, who has excelled as a batter in the first two Tests, also faced throw downs with full intensity.



KL Rahul (L) and Shubman Gill bat at adjacent nets during India's practice session in Indore, Monday

Mbappe, Messi help PSG thrash Marseille



Paris, Feb 27: Kylian Mbappe scored twice setting up one and Lionel Messi got the other goal setting up the other two as the World Cup final stars combined to give French league leader Paris Saint-Germain a 3-0 win at title challenger Marseille.

Mbappe tops the league's scoring charts outright with 17 goals, and he matched Edinson Cavani's PSG club-record tally of 200 in the process Sunday.

What better place to do it than at bitter rival Marseille, where PSG lost in the French Cup earlier this month without the injured Mbappe in the team? This time, PSG were without the injured Neymar but didn't miss the Brazil star.

A win would have moved second-place Marseille within two points of defending champion PSG. Instead, Marseille trails by eight points with only 13 rounds remaining.

Galtier is from Marseille and played for the club as a gritty defender, which means some Marseille fans are simply unable to understand why he is coaching PSG. Galtier had to be restrained after the final whistle as he went over to confront an irate Marseille fan leaning over and heckling him near the dugout.

After Nuno Tavares missed a great chance for Marseille, an exquisite pass from Messi near the halfway line sent Mbappe sprinting through for a typically clinical finish in the 25th minute.

Four minutes later Mbappe found space down the left and picked out Messi — who saved PSG with an injury-time free-kick in a 4-3 win against Lille last weekend — for a close-range finish.

Having scored his 12th league goal, Messi set up Mbappe again with a looping pass in the 55th, moments after veteran striker Alexis Sanchez missed a great chance to pull a goal back for Marseille.

Harmanpreet to lead India in Pro League matches

New Delhi, Feb 27: Drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh will lead the 20-member Indian men's hockey team against reigning World Champions Germany and World No.4 Australia in the upcoming FIH Hockey Pro League matches in Rourkela.

Harmanpreet will be assisted by mid-fielder Hardik Singh. The squad includes experienced goalkeeper PR Sreejesh and young Pawan, who replaced Krishan Bahadur Pathak, who has sought leave for his marriage. The defence will be led by Harmanpreet, Jugraj Singh, Nilam Sanjeev Xess, Jarnanpreet Singh, Sumit, Manjeet, and Manpreet Singh.

The midfielders include Hardik, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh, Vishnukant Singh, Dilpreet Singh, Shamsher Singh and Raj Kumar Pal. Young S Karthi, Sukhjeet Singh, Abhishek and Gurjant will form the fulcrum of the strike force.

Australian David John and BJ Kariappa have been named as the interim coaches along with Shivendra Singh for the upcoming matches. "At the FIH Hockey Pro League in Rourkela, the team will play under interim coaches until Hockey India announces the new chief coach," said Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey in a statement.

India will take on Germany in the first match March 10, followed by Germany playing against Australia March 11. India and Australia will go head-to-head March 12, while India will play against Germany for the second time the next day.

'Indomitable' Aussies lauded; SA win hearts

The cricket fraternity hailed the all-conquering Australian women's team for winning an unprecedented sixth T20 World Cup title, a feat that might not be surpassed in near or distant future. The peerless Meg Lanning led Australia to another global title when they defended a score of 156/6. Hosts South Africa put up a brave fight with opener Laura Wolvaardt scoring a combative 61 but eventually they lost the title clash by 19 runs. Let's take a look at some of the reactions from cricket fraternity...



TWO SIDES OF EMOTION: Australian players begin celebration after the match as a South African batter looks down in despair, Sunday

MICHAEL VAUGHAN: Australia's Women's team are absolutely fantastic

IAN BISHOP: Australian women's team are an indomitable force, and have been for so long. Deserved champions once again. What has been pleasing is to see that South Africa are heading in the right direction

POMMIE MBANGWA: What a day! Awesome atmosphere at Newlands.

Congratulations and kudos to Australia

AHMED RAZA (FORMER UAE CAPTAIN): Australia's dominance is so evident when you watch them play in these big tournaments & you gotta have a flawless day to beat them. Commiserations to South Africa, they were brilliant throughout the tournament after the first loss

ALEXANDRA HARTLEY: Australia

showing yet again why they are the greatest sporting team of all time. Congratulations Australia. South Africa, you've created history, that is enough to be proud of

MARINA IQBAL (FORMER PAK CRICKETER): Formidable Aussies — Meg Lanning reigning again. Congrats AusWomenCricket. ProteasWomenCSA deserve every bit of appreciation for playing clinical cricket on home soil

'Beth Mooney is Australia's Stokes'

Much credit for the Australia's success was due to their World ranked No. 2 batter Beth Mooney who top-scored with an unbeaten 74 to lead the side to a winning total. She was adjudged the Player-of-the-Match. Drawing parallel with premier English all-rounder Ben Stokes, former spinner Monty Panesar wrote: "What does Beth Mooney and Ben Stokes have in common, they are players for the big occasion and World Cup finals. In Mooney, the Australian Women's Cricket team trust," remarked Lisa Sthalekar, the former World Cup winning Australian captain. South Africa's heartbreak meant that the nation's wait for a senior ICC World Cup title win continues. But some excellent individual performances, a capacity crowd and a superb tournament overall was a huge step forward for both the Proteas and women's sport in South Africa as a whole. Former South Africa captain Graeme Smith was all praise for his team. "Our @ProteasWomenCSA did South Africa proud, gave it everything against an incredible Australian team. Congratulations Australia T20WomensWorldCup," Smith wrote to which the great AB de Villiers replied: "Proud!!!!" "Thank you South Africa. This was special to be part of. I will miss this tournament," South African sports broadcaster Natalie Germanos wrote.

Barcelona stunned by Almeria in La Liga



Ferran Torres reacts after missing out on a scoring opportunity against Almeria

Barcelona, Feb 27: Three days after exiting the Europa League, Barcelona had a rare setback in the Spanish league after losing at Almeria 1-0.

Barcelona headed to southern Spain after second-place Real Madrid were held 1-1 by Atletico Madrid Saturday and had the chance to add to its seven-point lead at the top over their fierce rival. Instead, Barcelona flopped to their first-ever loss to Almeria in their 16th meeting.

The leaders were unable to mount a credible fightback despite having ample time to respond to striker El Bilal Touré's goal in the 24th minute. For Barcelona coach Xavi Hernández, his team's "worst game of the season" came just when it could have dealt a serious blow to Madrid's

bid to defend their Spanish title. Barcelona hadn't lost in 13 league games, with only one draw and 12 wins going back to their last defeat at Madrid in October.

The unexpected defeat Sunday came after a 1-2 loss at Manchester United which eliminated Barcelona from the Europa League — after it had failed to advance from the Champions League group phase for a second consecutive year.

The exit from Europe's second-tier competition left Barcelona with the Spanish league and domestic cup titles to play for as they try to make good on their investment in new players last summer using cash it generated from the sale of future television revenues and other assets.

Barcelona will now have to regroup for Thursday's visit to Real Madrid in the semifinals of the Copa del Rey. Almeria moved out of the relegation zone after earning one

of its biggest wins.

After a complacent start by Barcelona, Almeria struck on a quick attack after an inspired Rodrigo Ely tackled Gavi in the hosts' area and booted a long ball forward for Touré to control. The 21-year-old Mali forward exchanged quick passes with Luis Suárez and blasted a powerful strike over Marc-Andre ter Stegen and in off the crossbar.

Almeria pressed the initiative and almost got a quick second goal when Leo Baptista hit the post in the 27th. Xavi sent Raphinha on at halftime, with Araujo and Marcos Alonso soon following, but his team did not play much better as Almeria held firm in defense. Gavi's shot blocked by Ely in the 59th and a shot by substitute Pablo Torre in the 82nd easily grabbed by Fernando ended up being the most that a disappointing Barcelona could muster.

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