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DAFOE MADE EMMA SLAP HIM 20 TIMES

According to sources, it's been revealed that William Dafoe asked to be slapped by Emma Stone repeatedly for a scene about 20 times for the upcoming film *And*, in which he does not even appear on the camera. The details of the plot are still under wraps.

BILLIE EILISH STEPS BACK FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

American singer-songwriter Billie Eilish has stopped looking at social media. The 21-year-old singer admitted she has deleted a number of apps from her phone to avoid the temptation to keep mindlessly scrolling when she could be doing other things.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

With your substantial interpersonal abilities, you will accomplish a great deal today, says Ganesh. Your power of expression will impress many people. Financial rewards are on the cards, but be cautious about minor accidents and illnesses.

TAURUS

You have a very pleasant day ahead. Though you are, by nature, restless and excitable you will be very steady and focused in whatever you do today. So says Ganesh. Later you will desire to enjoy the company of your friends and will call them over to chat and gossip with them.

GEMINI

You will spend your day fulfilling the demands made upon you by your family members and colleagues. You will need to devote time to matters at home. Pay attention to the needs of your relatives for they will be helpful to you in the near future, says Ganesh.

CANCER

A wondrous beginning of the day! A unique vibrations in romantic life. Ties with life partner will be cordial. Blissful moments of married life are indicated. Peace and happiness prevail in the family.

LEO

You may have arguments with your family members today. You need to adopt an accommodating attitude today, since it is not a very promising day for you. Otherwise nothing may go in your favour. You will have to work harder than usual in the office, says Ganesh.

VIRGO

Ganesh suggests that you take a much-needed break from the daily rigmarole. Introduce an element of the exotic in order to replace all the mundane work that fills up your day. You may attend private and social get-togethers, and Ganesh advises you to mingle with other people to keep your spirits high.

LIBRA

Ganesh says you shall pay more attention to your family and family issues. You will want to renovate and change the interior of your house or go in for purchasing new gadgets and décor for the home. You will spend time today with your family members. Ganesh says his best wishes are with you always.

SCORPIO

You nearly emerge as a superhero today, as you have the knack of balancing home and work just perfectly. Intellectual discussions and brainstorming with peers would provide food for thought today. You may look forward to merry-making and soiree with family and friends in the evening.

SAGITTARIUS

Whatever you take up today, you are on a winning spree, foresees Ganesh. A leader, you will guide and instruct your subordinates when they seek your advice. In a way, you even encourage and motivate them. All in all, you are a happy soul at the end of the day!

CAPRICORN

The hassle and bustle around you will not disturb you today. You've been holding your emotions in your heart and they have started suffocating you. Such an uncomfortable situation may hamper your logical reasoning power and make you feel trapped. But, this too shall pass.

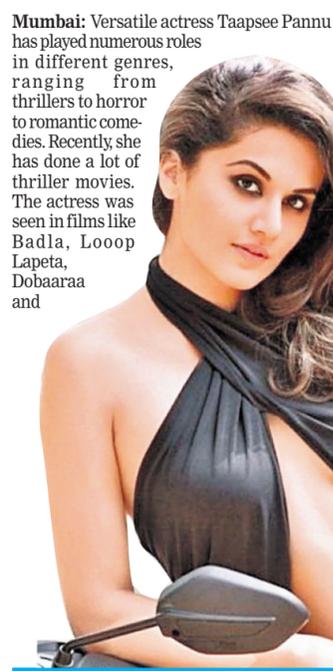
AQUARIUS

Flash warning signals to your arch rivals as you will be in a mood to prove you metal and give them a run for their money. Doubts and inhibitions - all will vanish in the air and you will be determined to make your mark, feels Ganesh. While on your path to success you will win the hearts of one and many.

PISCES

There is a thick chance that your day will be profitable on the monetary front. Money may pour in from business or even through overseas investments. Your knack for good public relations and networking will work to your benefit and good deals will come from far and unexpected sources as well.

'Actresses are cast to add glam in comedy movies'



Mumbai: Versatile actress Taapsee Pannu has played numerous roles in different genres, ranging from thrillers to horror to romantic comedies. Recently, she has done a lot of thriller movies. The actress was seen in films like *Badla*, *Loop Lapeta*, *Dobaaraa* and

Haseen Dillruba among others belonging to the genre.

This year, the actress returns to comedy with *Dunki*, starring Shah Rukh Khan, and *Woh Ladki Hai Kahaan* with Pratik Gandhi. About working in the comedy film *Woh Ladki Hai Kahaan*, she said, "I think I enjoy cracking jokes a little more. Comedy is a whole new experience. I know I haven't done many comedy movies. Usually in comedy films, actresses are cast to add glamour to the story and not really play the comic part. But this film takes care of that. My character gets to do comedy with my co-actor Pratik Gandhi's character. I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience."

Adding the experience from *Dunki*, the actress said, "In *Dunki*, too, I enjoyed doing a lot of comedy. I am sure people will have a lot of fun watching these films because I had a lot of fun making them."

Future of India is female: Bhumi

Mumbai: Actor Bhumi Pednekar is known for her socially conscious and progressive efforts towards gender awareness. As she inspires young women with her personal choices and decisions to portray women as fierce forces of nature through her films, she has been roped in by Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) in G20 by Niti Aayog to address women entrepreneurs of India.

A collaboration with leading women entrepreneurs from across India, this platform will facilitate digital transformation and digital inclusion for women-led businesses through various initiatives. The WEP is aligned with G20 goals and Bhumi has highlighted the importance of these global goals consistently on social media.

Bhumi will address the women entrepreneurs attending this event. She says, "The future of India is female. I have believed in it and I have done whatever it takes to try and further this vision. WEP will bring information, ways to find finance or funding support and help women find partnerships to take forward their entrepreneurial ambitions. I'm looking forward to meeting the young minds that will lead this transformation for our country."

Bhumi is also a Climate Warrior who has been working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) towards India's climate change goals.



BECAME VICTIM OF STARDOM: SHATRU

MUMBAI: With the release of most recent talk show, *The Invincibles*, actor-producer Arbaaz Khan is becoming more well-known. The six-part talk series' next guest is Shatrughan Sinha. In the recent episode, the actor revealed how he became a victim of stardom and cut off all contact with Poonam Singh (his wife). He recalled his love story in the latest episode.

When Arbaaz brought up that he and his wife Poonam Sinha hadn't spoken in three years, they made the decision to be married, Shatrughan said, "Yes, we had stopped talking. It was my decision. It was thought at the time that there was something else happening in my life, but I wouldn't want to dwell on that. But it was my fault. I was looking for an exit strategy, and one day, I told her, 'You're too good for me, and I can't be with you.'"

He further added, "It was my mistake. I got carried away, I became a victim of stardom. I used to think that no woman would ever be interested in me, and then, when they were, it's human nature to lose control."

OSCARS 2023

Deepika joins as presenter

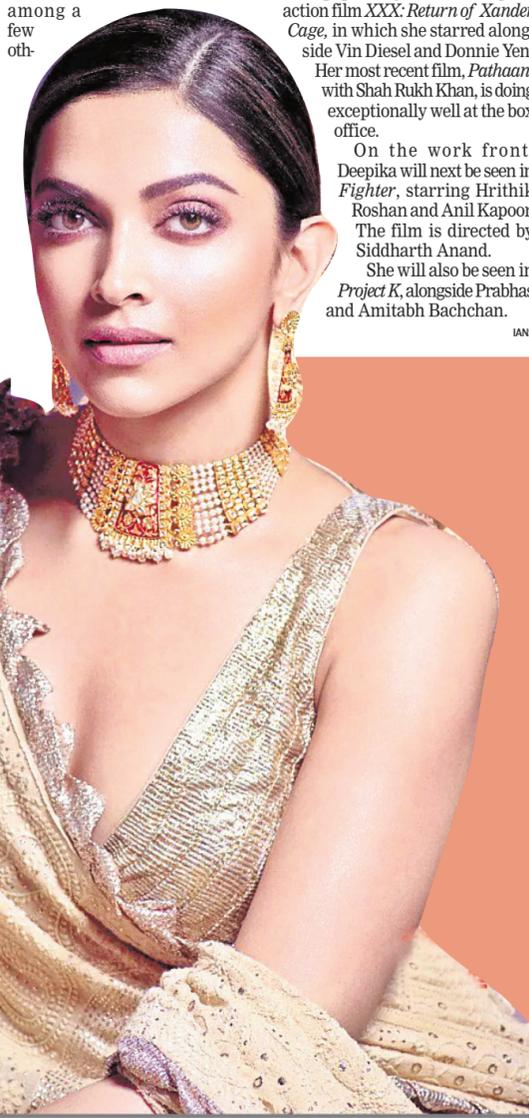
Mumbai: Actress Deepika Padukone is one of the chosen few from around the world who will be presenting an award at the Oscars 2023 ceremony.

Deepika joins the likes of Emily Blunt, Samuel L Jackson, Dwayne Johnson, Michael B Jordan, Janelle Monae, Zoe Saldana, Jennifer Connelly, Riz Ahmed, and Melissa McCarthy, among a few others.

The 95th Oscars will air live on ABC March 12, 2023. Many seem to believe that her inclusion on the presenters' panel and the *RRR's Naatu Naatu* nomination at the Oscars will surely draw global attention to the Indian film industry.

Deepika has risen to prominence in recent years. She gained worldwide popularity with the English action film *XXX: Return of Xander Cage*, in which she starred alongside Vin Diesel and Donnie Yen. Her most recent film, *Pathaan*, with Shah Rukh Khan, is doing exceptionally well at the box office.

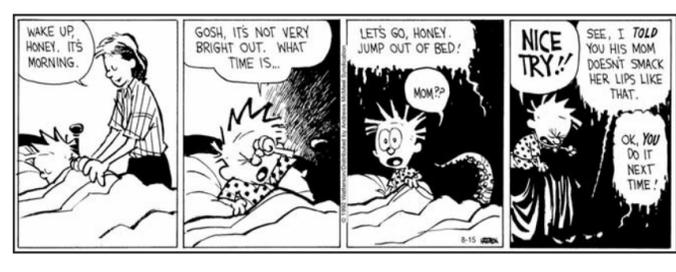
On the work front, Deepika will next be seen in *Fighter*, starring Hrithik Roshan and Anil Kapoor. The film is directed by Siddharth Anand. She will also be seen in *Project K*, alongside Prabhas and Amitabh Bachchan.



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

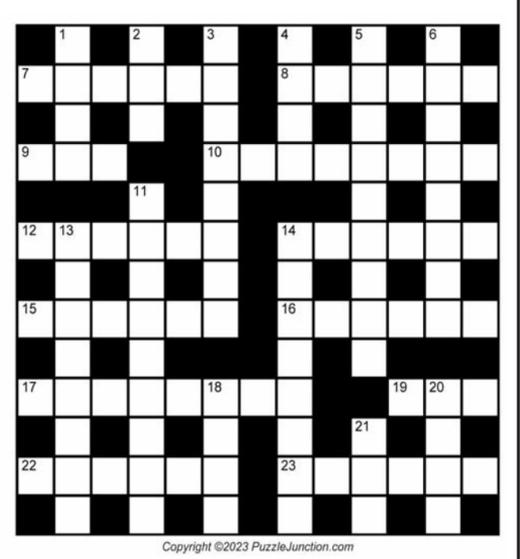


BREVITY



FUN post

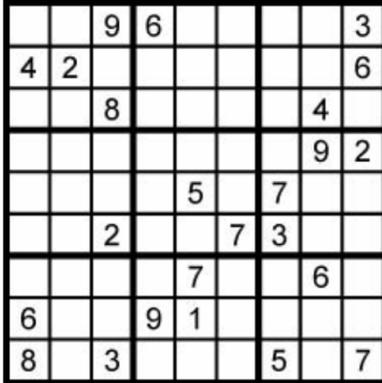
CROSSWORD



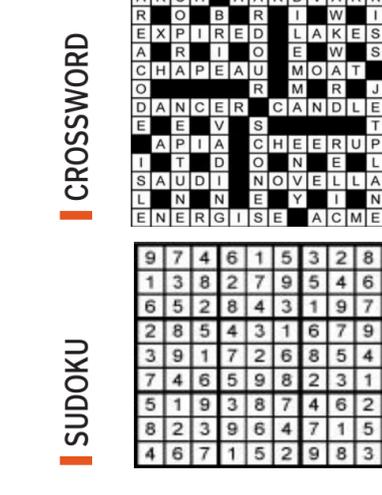
- Copyright ©2023 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 7 Large spotted feline
 - 8 Larder
 - 9 Wild ox
 - 10 Savings accounts (4,4)
 - 12 Small quantity
 - 14 Toast
 - 15 Sentries
 - 16 Esoteric
 - 17 Noms de plume (3,5)
 - 19 Appear in a play
 - 22 Elaborate strategy
 - 23 Typical
 - Down**
 - 1 Tibetan or Mongolian priest
 - 2 Merriment
 - 3 Bane of many women
 - 4 Chooses
 - 5 Mental faculty
 - 6 Terrify
 - 11 Alienated, as a married couple
 - 13 Great wealth
 - 14 The last hurrah (4,4)
 - 18 Docile and submissive
 - 20 Outer garment
 - 21 Express sorrow

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

NABA DAS MURDER CASE

Court blow to CB

Jharsuguda district court rejects Crime Branch's plea for further mental evaluation of Gopal Das at NIMHANS, on technical grounds

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 3: In a blow to the state Crime Branch (CB), Jharsuguda district court Friday rejected the investigating agency's plea to examine the mental condition of Gopal Das, prime accused in health minister Naba Das murder case, at National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) in Bangalore.

According to sources, the CB had sought permission of the District and Sessions Court, Jharsuguda to send the accused to the NIMHANS, Bangalore to undergo various psychological tests.

However, the court rejected the plea of the CB on technical ground, sources said. The court made it clear that the investigative agency may move the Orissa High Court for the approval.

The Jharsuguda JMFC court-1



File photo of Naba Das being shot at

had rejected the same prayer of the CB February 20 this year. On the other hand, the state government has also initiated a process to rope in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the United States of America, as they have the best expertise in behavioural analysis in such cases.

"We have requested the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to facilitate an evaluation of the behaviour of the accused by the behavioural support unit of the FBI of the USA," Chief Minister Naveen

BJP LODGES COMPLAINTS AGAINST 'POLICE EXCESS'

Bhubaneswar: Protesting the police excess on its youth wing activists during a recent rally, the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) Friday lodged complaints in different police stations across the state. To counter it, the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) staged a demonstration here over the LPG price hike. **P2**

Patnaik had said in the Assembly while making a statement on the murder case. The Crime Branch wants to conduct a comprehensive psychological evaluation of accused Gopal Das at NIMHANS. In a media statement, CB had earlier said that the accused had a prolonged history of mental illness for which a special medical board was constituted consisting of four psychiatric experts. **Contd...P2**



RIOT OF COLOURS: Girls take a selfie while playing Holi during 'Dola Melan' on Bhubaneswar outskirts, Friday **OP PHOTO**

Crorepatti officials in Vigilance net

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 3: Vigilance sleuths Friday raided multiple locations related to a Mines department official and an engineer of KBK's Minor Irrigation Circle on charges of amassing disproportionate assets (DA) running upto crores.

During the searches, the Vigilance sleuths claimed to have found four buildings and five plots in prime locations of Bhubaneswar and Keonjhar belonging to Umesh Chandra Jena, additional director of the Directorate of Mines. ₹1 crore in cash was also found from his possession. The officials said they have traced two posh flats in Bhubaneswar, as many buildings and five plots in Angul belonging to Kandarpa Pradhan, additional chief engineer of KBK's Minor Irrigation Circle during the raids. **More P2**

₹6cr in cash seized from BJP MLA's son

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, March 3: Lokayukta sleuths recovered unaccounted cash of more than ₹6 crore from the house of BJP MLA K Madal Virupakshappa's son Prashanth Madal close on the heels of his arrest after allegedly accepting a bribe of ₹40 lakh.

Prashanth, the chief accountant of the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board, was caught red-handed Thursday evening while accepting the bribe from a contractor at the Karnataka Soap and Detergents Limited (KSDL) office.



The incident is seen as an embarrassment to the ruling BJP in Karnataka, where Assembly elections are due in May

The MLA is the Chairman of KSDL, makers of 'Mysore Sandal' soap. In the FIR that has been registered, Virupakshappa is the accused number one and his son is the second accused. Within hours of the trap, a team of Lokayukta officials raided his house and recovered the unaccounted cash. **Contd...P2**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



For better results, instead of elections, we should focus on by-elections

SHORT TAKES

SC to set up bench on Karnataka hijab row

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court Friday said it will set up a three-judge bench to hear a plea of Muslim girl students to sit for examinations in Karnataka government schools while wearing hijab. "I will create a bench," said a bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala when a woman lawyer sought urgent hearing of the plea saying girls are on the verge of losing another academic year as the exams are being held in government schools which are not permitting wearing of headscarf.

Mild quake in Koraput

BHUBANESWAR: A mild earthquake of 3.8 magnitude on the Richter Scale occurred in Koraput district Friday morning, according to the National Centre for Seismology. The earthquake took place at 5:05am at a depth of 5 km. The epicentre was 129 km east of Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh, it said. However, there was no report of any casualty or damage to properties. According to the Koraput district administration, tremors were felt in Narayanpatna, Laxmipur and Bandhugaon areas and people came out of their houses in panic.

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₹57K crore for tap water to all



ilies by 2024.
"It includes 207 mega drinking water supply projects based on surface water at a cost of ₹42,000 crore. Till date, 10 projects have been completed, 163 projects are in progress and tender process for 34 projects is on," said the PR&DW principal secretary.

Out of 88,56,387 rural families, 50,71,000 have been provided with tap connection. A state level, 30 district level and 46 sub-district level (total 77) water testing laboratories have been set up and are operational for determining drinking water quality," said Lohani.

In line with its objective of 'Shelter Security to All', the state government will build 9.59 lakh houses under PMAY(G), including 1.42 lakh houses towards FANI affected, during 2023-24. There is a budgetary provision of ₹5,933.70 crore under PMAY(G).

The state has allocated ₹25 crore for starting a new scheme 'Implementation support to ORMAS' for skill, livelihood and marketing during 2023-24 for Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Koushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), said Lohani. ₹70 crore has been allotted for capacity building of PRI members and officials under the centrally-sponsored Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) scheme during 2023-24.

as state support to MGNREGS in a bid to provide employment in existing 20 migration-prone blocks of Bolangir, Bargarh, Nuapada and Kalahandi districts. "In this financial year, it is proposed to extend this support to few more blocks, where rural people migrate out of distress," he said.

PR&DW Principal Secretary Sushil Kumar Lohani said 13,930 PWS projects and 4,77,537 tube wells have so far been installed in the state.

Lohani said that there is a budgetary provision of ₹5,750 crore under JJM, ₹3,750 crore under BA-SUDHA and ₹1,000 crore under RIDF for 2023-24. ₹57,000 crore will be spent under different schemes to provide safe tap water to all fam-



REWARD FOR HARD WORK: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik felicitates a woman after launching the week-long state-level celebration of International Women's Day at Lok Seva Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Friday

Tech can remove gender inequality: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 3: Innovation and Technology can remove gender inequality and bring a transformation in society, said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik here Friday.

Patnaik said this while inaugurating a week-long programme organised by the Women and Child Development department for the International Women's Day. He said that women's empowerment is not just a slogan but a reality today.

"Today, the mothers of Odisha are the bearers of transformation.

A huge organisation of 70 lakhs of women is transforming from SHG to SME today. Now, mothers have embarked on a journey to become entrepreneurs," said the Chief Minister.

Patnaik further said, "Mothers have created a special place for themselves in society with their talents and skills. They have proved that daughters are no longer a burden for the family today, but they are gems."

Speaking on the theme "Innovation and Technology for Gender equality", he said the rights of women could be protected and the violence against women would

be prevented through innovation and technology in the field of education and employment.

Dedicating the day in honour of women who have kept their struggle on in their day today life and created a niche for themselves, the Chief Minister stressed on the need for use of innovation and technology more and more and appealed to give equal rights to women in all fields and to work in the direction of the formation of a just society.

"Violence and discrimination against women can be prevented through gender equality, thereby establishing a fair society," he ob-

served. On this occasion the Chief Minister launched the youth mascot KUNI of the Women and Child Development department. The Mascot will work to create awareness among the young about their education, rights and in other sectors.

The new child policy "Prarambha" was also unveiled on the occasion. A case study booklet based on the success story of women, MIS portal of the Ashirwad Yojana and one stop centre were also unveiled.

The Chief Minister also awarded the best Anganwadi and Mission Shakti workers for their contribution to society on the occasion.

Continued from P1

₹6cr in cash seized from BJP MLA's son

Prashanth was allegedly receiving 'first installment' of the bribe on behalf of his father, according to Lokayukta sources.

Facing the heat, Virupakshappa, MLA from Channagiri constituency in Davangere district, Friday tendered his resignation from the post. In his resignation letter to the Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, he said there is no "relation" between him and the Lokayukta raid which he termed as a conspiracy against him and his family.

"Despite that since an allegation has been levelled against me, I am taking moral responsibility and submitting my resignation from the post of KSDL Chairman," he said.

Karnataka Lokayukta Justice (Retd) BS Patil said ₹2.02 crore was recovered from the KSDL office during the search and ₹6.1 crore from Prashanth's house, totally.

"Five persons have been apprehended and they have been taken into custody," he said, adding an FIR has been registered.

Others named in the FIR are office accountant Surendra, and Prashanth's relative Siddesh and, Albert Nicola and Gangadhar who are field workers in the 'Karnataka Aromas Company'.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said the trap was proof that the Lokayukta has been "revived" to check corruption unlike the previous Congress regime which created a separate anti-corruption bureau apart from the Lokayukta institution to cover up their wrong deeds.

Court blow to CB

After examining the accused, the board opined that there is a need to have a detailed examination of the accused to come to a definite conclusion about his mental health. Accordingly, the CB moved from one court to another to get permission for Das's mental evaluation at NIMHANS.

Now, questions are being raised why the police are trying so hard for further examination of the mental health of Gopal Das. Either the police are trying to prove Gopal as a mentally retarded person or it deliberately wants to delay the investigation. Notably, health minister Naba Kishore Das was killed by sacked police ASI Gopal Das January 29, 2023. The former cop had fired a bullet on the chest of the minister from a very close range.

Though the police nabbed the accused from the spot, it is yet to find out the motive behind the high-profile murder case. Das, the sole accused in Naba Das murder case, is currently lodged at Choudwar Circle Jail in Cuttack.

TENDER SCAM

CBI books 4 ECoR officials, others

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 3: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has lodged an FIR against six persons, including four officials of the East Coast Railway (ECoR), for allegedly accepting bribes in lieu of passing a railway tender in the favour of an accused firm.

A senior CBI official said that in 2015, a tender was floated for the execution of signalling and telecommunication works and supply of critical materials in connection with the railway electrification work in the Angul-Sambalpur section in Sambalpur division of East Coast Railway in Odisha. The tender was given to a Jaipur-based firm - Kiran Infra Engineers Limited - which quoted a value of ₹7,10,87,7901.

"Four officials of the East Coast Railway - Subhas Chandra Das, Jalasutra Sumurti, Sanjib Kumar Sahoo and Gopabandhu Bhoi - obtained undue pecuniary advantage to the tune of ₹13,32,0001 from B.K. Enterprise and Raj Kumar & Co through banking transactions in their names as well as in the names of their family members, without consideration from the concerned person (Sorabh Dhanuka), with whom they had official transaction," the CBI said.

The CBI has lodged the FIR under the relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Prevention of Corruption Act against the accused persons.

Guv's lecture at LVPEI enlightens audience

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 3: Governor Ganeshi Lal delivered the 13th Bijayananda Patnaik Lecture on "Karma Yoga - The Essence of Life" at the LV Prasad Eye Institute's Mithu Tuli Chanrai Campus in Bhubaneswar. The lecture was focused on the philosophy of 'Karma Yoga' and 'non-attached attachments' of life.

The lecture was attended by people from across the LVPEI network, the donors, and their family members, as well as members from other partner organisations. On the occasion, Mithu Tuli Chanrai Campus head Srikanth Sahu expressed gratitude to the governor for accepting the institute's invitation and providing such an insightful interpretation of Karma Yoga. He also informed the audience the significance of the Bijayananda Patnaik Lecture series and how it is an integral part of LV Prasad Eye Institute's legacy.

The Bijayananda Patnaik Lecture



is a memorial lecture series started in honor of Bijayananda Patnaik, a staunch supporter of the eye institute in its efforts to provide quality eye care in Odisha. The lecture series brings together prolific speakers and personalities to share their knowledge on various topics, ranging from science to arts to philosophy. A number of people have benefited from it over the years, and they have gained insights into how to look at things from variety of perspectives.

Addl director of Mines in Vig net

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 3: The Vigilance sleuths Friday unearthed cash worth more than ₹1 crore during a raid at the residence of Umesh Chandra Jena, the Additional Director of Directorate of Mines here. The anti-corruption sleuths Friday carried out simultaneous raids at 13 places related to Umesh in Khurda and Keonjhar districts on the charges of amassing assets disproportionate to his legal sources of income.

The sleuths carried out raid at five locations in Capital city area, Umesh's native house at Sirispal, the house his relatives at Ghasipura, building located at Gamaharia area and five other places in the Keonjhar district. The 13 teams carrying out searches were led by 10DSPs, seven inspectors and other officials of vigilance.

The officials found Umesh and family possessing one multi storeyed building in Bhubaneswar; three buildings at Keonjhar; five plots in prime area of Keonjhar; cash approximately 1 crore, Gold jewellery approx 650 grams, one four wheeler, two 2-wheelers. The

cops are estimating the actual amount of deposits and investments in banks, insurance policies and other securities.

"During the search, the son of Umesh, a businessman, told the sleuths that he owns seven firms and the wife of Jena also claimed earning commission income from insurance agency. These claims are under verification," informed vigilance sources. On the other hand, teams of vigilance department unearthed movable and immovable properties worth several crores during simultaneous raids at eight different places related to Additional Chief Engineer, Minor Irrigation Circle, KKB, Bhawanipatna in Kalahandi district.

The vigilance teams were led by four DSPs, ten inspectors and other officials.

The cops found one 3BHK and two 2BHK flats in Capital city, two single storeyed buildings and five plots in and around Angul Town. "The measurement and valuation/assessment of the above flats/buildings, plots are being done by Vigilance Technical Wing. Bank and deposits are under verification," vigilance official claimed.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I Sayed Arfe Rasool (34), S/o- Sayed Ale Rasool, Vill.- Mirzapur, P.O./P.S.- Purunabazar, Dist.- Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The spelling of my name is in previous Aadhaar card wrongly mentioned Sayad Arife Rasool. Before I used to recognized my name Sayad Arife Rasool, but now it has been to the name Sayed Arfe Rasool. I declare that Sayed Arfe Rasool and Sayad Arife Rasool is same and one person.

MARKET WATCH		VARIATION	
INDEX			
SENSEX	59808.97	↑	899.62
NIFTY	17594.35	↑	272.45
DOLLAR	82.48	↓	₹0.19
EURO	86.65	↓	₹0.60
GOLD	₹55651	↓	₹88
SILVER	₹64130	↑	₹96

WEATHER		FORECAST	
	BHUB	CTK	
TEMP	MAX 37.8°C	36.2°C	Forecast Dry weather most likely
	MIN 22.2°C	22.0°C	
	Humidity 90%	81%	
	Rainfall Nil	Nil	

'Fairytale' project nears completion

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 3: The Fairytale project of the real estate company DN Homes is approaching completion, the company announced here Thursday.

"A first-of-its-kind residential project, DN Fairytale is expected to be completed within the stipulated time, marking a major success for the company. What further highlights this success is that the company has managed to achieve this despite Covid and cyclone Fani," said a company spokesperson.

The journey started three and a half years ago when DN Homes decided to develop a residential society near the upcoming 730-acre Info Valley, one of the fastest de-



veloping growth corridors in the state, added the spokesperson.

The residential complex will offer children-centric homes with around 75 per cent open area. Moreover, it has been designed to provide premium lifestyle to its residents with 54 amenities including a dedicated clubhouse, swimming pool, kids' school, amphitheater, jogging track, and 3-tier security system.

SC dismisses Dara Singh's plea to modify sentence

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 3: The Supreme Court Friday dismissed a petition filed by Dara Singh, a convict in murder of Australian missionary Graham Staine and his two minor sons and catholic priest Arul Doss, seeking modification of the life sentence awarded to him.

A two-judge bench of Justices S Ravindra Bhat and Dipankar Datta dismissed the petition.

During the hearing, the counsel appearing for Dara Singh submitted that he has already under-

gone more than 20 years in jail without regular bail or payroll. Considering his long custody, the counsel requested the court to modify his sentence to such period undergone. January 22, 1999, a mob led by Dara Singh had set ablaze a station wagon in which Graham Staines and his two sons (minors) were sleeping. All three were charred to death, with the mob preventing their escape from the fire.

August 26, 1999, Dara Singh had attacked the Rahaman with an axe as latter refused to pay 'Chanda'. The victim was later burnt alive in

his garment shop after Singh and his accomplices had looted the shop. September 1, 1999, Dara along with 20 other associates had raided the Catholic Church at Jamabani village and set it ablaze. Father Arul Doss, the pastor, was attacked with bows and arrows, who later succumbed to his injuries.

A local court in Bhubaneswar had handed out capital punishment to Dara Singh. Subsequently, the Orissa HC commuted the sentence to life imprisonment. The Supreme Court later upheld the Orissa HC's decision.

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FESTIVE BIZ: Vendors selling colours and water sprayers wait for customers at Gole Bazaar in Sambalpur, Friday ahead of Holi

OP PHOTO

Plans afoot to foray into new markets: TP Mohanty

Maintaining positive outlook is key to succeed in business, says **Tarini Prasad Mohanty**, managing director of Naibuga Iron and Manganese Mines in Keonjhar, in an interaction with **Orissa POST**. Excerpts:



■ Mining industry is at a sweet spot and witnessing growth year-on-year. How has your journey been so far?

■ It is a complex journey of attempts, activity and sincerity. I applied for Naibuga Iron and Manganese Mines in Keonjhar district in the year 1991. It took almost two decades for a grant of the lease and I got it in the year 2009. After two consecutive years of preparation and formalities, extraction of the minerals started in 2011. The journey has never been easy.

■ What steps are being taken to boost production and growth?

■ Appropriate steps are being taken to improve production by increasing our efficiency in labour, equipment and teamwork besides many other factors big and small. We focus on proper mine planning and growth of efficiency through technology for operational excellence and an increase in production. When a new process is adopted, we measure, monitor and optimise it.

■ Are there any expansion plans?

■ At the onset of our mining operation, our business was limited to the country. Slowly we expanded it and entered into export. Outlook comes with experience which is very important in business. We are

expanding ourselves in various components of business like market study, marketing strategy, organisation and management. We also focus on purchasing new assets with new technology, entering into new markets, increasing average transaction value and retaining customers' frequency of business deals. Attention is being given to improve our online presence. A proper roadmap that defines our business strategy and expansion is being followed.

■ What would be your advice for the newcomers?

■ It is high time to introduce modern technology in the mining sector. One should follow the mining rules and regulations very strictly to avoid setbacks and sincerely address challenges pertaining to climate, environment and geopolitics.

■ Mining companies are facing a lot of difficulties in recent times like environmental concerns. What do you think needs to be done to ensure smooth functioning?

■ It has now become the issue of human survival. To minimise dust generation with wet drilling is practical. Dust suppression system is fitted to drilling machines. We try to main-

tain sustainability by adopting new mining techniques, eco-friendly equipment, regulated use of water and electricity and very carefully using it as a non-renewable resource. As a major concern of human interest, water sprinkling on roads and regular plantations in the locality and around selected places are routine duties beyond any doubt.



Ganja smuggling in garb of wedding card distribution

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, March 3: In a big success, the Excise sleuths here raided two separate places and seized a total of 108 kg ganja, Friday.

Six persons were detained in this connection along with the seizure of a car and a Bolero involved in smuggling of the contraband.

The Excise department acted on a tip-off they received regarding smuggling of cannabis from Boudh to Balasore district.

48 kg of the banned substance was seized from a car at Boinda



chowk and another 60 kg of the contraband from a Bolero near Mundasahi chowk. Three accused in the vehicle were arrested.

Interestingly, the smugglers had tried to mislead the officials telling that they were distributing wedding cards, but failed to fool the sleuths.

Elephant population on the wane in Kuldiha sanctuary

ANOTHER TUSKER FALLS SICK, ANTHRAX SUSPECTED



POST NEWS NETWORK

Nilagiri, March 3: Death of as many as six elephants within a period of last 14 months has sparked concern over safety and wellbeing of the pachyderms at Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary under this sub-division in Balasore district, a report said Friday.

The issue assumes significance as a tusker in the sanctuary was found ailing Tuesday, just two days after the death of a female elephant Sunday in Kuldiha sanctuary which has over 100 elephants.

The ailing tusker stated to be within forty years of age is suspected of having contracted anthrax, forest officials said. It is undergoing treatment by a veterinarian Dr

Death of six elephants in the sanctuary within last 14 months has sparked concern among the animal lovers

Muktikanta Sethi at Khumkut near Panchalingeshwar in the sanctuary under the supervision of Kuldiha ranger Anant Kumar Jena.

However, the exact reason behind its illness remains to be ascertained while members of Wildlife Trust of India on a visit to Similipal toured Kuldiha and took stock of the animal's illness.

Death of six elephants within last 14 months has sparked concern among the animal lovers. They alleged that Kuldiha sanctuary, once a habitat of over 100 elephants, is no longer a safe place for the pachyderms to live. It is evident from the frequent death of the animals in such quick succession, they added. Local intelligentsia has ascribed the deaths to poaching while the concerned officials are yet to say anything on the contrary.

Among the six dead elephants, the decomposed carcass of a female elephant was found Hatikulia forest section under Mangalpur forest beat of the sanctuary, January 15 last year.

Later the carcass of a female elephant was recovered from Guhalia in Tenda reserve forest, March 20 and that of a tusker from the backyard of a villager in Baragadia village under Nilagiri sub-division, July 18.

The carcass of an elephant calf was recovered from Chemchata jungle July 27 and that of another female elephant was found in Kadamshola at Siadimal panchayat under Babandh forest beat of the sanctuary, December 10.

The carcass of a four-year-old female elephant was recovered from jungle near a temple under Panchalingeshwar forest beat, February 27.

Woman makes suicide attempt at collectorate

Dhenkanal: A woman attempted to end her life on the collectorate premises here, Friday. On being informed, Town police reached the spot and rescued the woman. A matchbox, a kerosene bottle and a bottle of poison were recovered from her. The woman has been identified as Kamala Jena, wife of Srikanth Jena of Balarampur village. According to Kamala, she has been attacked repeatedly in recent days by some of her neighbours over land dispute. Reportedly, she had earlier approached the local police and also the SP several times. She even pleaded for justice at the Collector grievance cell, but to no avail. Kamala said she decided to take the extreme step after failing to get any kind of help.

NO RESPITE TO NAGADA Alarming spread of skin disease sparks concern

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kaliapani, March 3: Nagada hilltop villages under Sukinda block in Jajpur district which shot to ill-fame for all the wrong reasons are again in the news over alarming spread of skin diseases among children and women.

The back-to-back deaths of 20 children are yet to be erased from the villagers' minds while spread of skin diseases among the children and women has sparked fresh concern in the three Nagada villages. The children used to die in regular intervals due to malnutrition but the matter came to the fore in July 2016.

Several children and women residing in Upper Nagada, Middle Nagada and Lower Nagada villages have been afflicted with

skin diseases like scabies and boils. Boils are seen on the heads of many children in Nagada villages and the boils are giving out a foul smell after getting burst.

The Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) conducted a health camp in Nagada Tuesday and distributed medicines and ointments to the villagers. The locals, however, alleged that they were not able to use them as the doctors did not inform about the use and application of the medicines.

Locals Katakia Padhan, Mangalu Padhan and Daman Padhan also alleged that the doctors from Sukinda community health centre (CHC) visit Nagada twice in a week. They conduct health check-ups and distribute medicines to the villagers but do not administer any proper treatment to them.

31 STOLEN IDOLS RECOVERED

3 from Uttar Pradesh among 4 arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, March 3: As many as 31 idols which were stolen from various temples of Jajpur district have been recovered along with the seizure of a pistol and a bike without number plate. Police arrested four persons in this connection and produced them in court Friday.

The accused have been identified as Arvind Kumar Singh (43), Babur aka Javed (40), and Bijay Kumar Sukla (51) from Uttar Pradesh along with Sasidhar Naik (49) from Nilagiri area of Balasore district, Jajpur Superintendent of Police (SP) Vinit Kumar Agrawal informed in a presser:

While theft of idols has been continuing in the district actively for the last two decades, the police have finally traced its root in Uttar Pradesh. On the other hand, it remains to be ascertained if there are multiple others complicit in idol theft and illegal trading. While the police are trying to catch hold of the mastermind, it is suspected that the idols are being smuggled abroad.

Notably, four idols were stolen from a temple in Krushnachandrapur under Jenapur police limits, February 20 night. Further, as many as 19 idols of Raghunath Jew Temple in this town were stolen February 19 night. Cases



regarding the theft were registered at Jenapur and Jajpur Town police stations and investigation was on. Idols were also stolen from Siddha Baladevajew Temple at Patapur in

Dharmasala area and complaints were registered at Dharmasala PS. A team was formed by Jajpur police and on getting reliable information a raid was conducted. The three

accused from Uttar Pradesh along with the one from Balasore were nabbed and total 31 numbers of idols were recovered from their possession apart from a pistol and bike.

All the idols of Krushnachandrapur temple and Raghunathjew temple have been recovered and their involvement in Dharmasala case was established.

"It is suspected that they are involved in a number of idol theft cases in other districts also. Their involvement in other districts is being verified. Investigation is underway to nab the other accused and recover the remaining stolen idols," Agrawal said.

Temple artisans of Odagaon in high demand

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, March 3: Temple artisans of Odagaon block in Nayagarh district are in high demand having carved a niche for themselves apart from propagating Jagannath culture in the country and abroad.

In the last twenty years, national capital Delhi has witnessed the construction of more than 12 Jagannath temples, of which 10 are already established and others are soon to be completed. There are two existing temples in the Green Park and Tyagrajagar area, which were built many years ago.

Places under National Capital Region (NCR) like Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurugram, Bhiwandi, Faridabad, Jhilmil, Bahadurgarh, Haryana's



Sohna along with Haridwar in Uttarakhand are witnessing the

construction of more than 12 Jagannath temples.

Notably, Krushna Chandra Barad, Ramachandra Bishoi, Ranjan Nayak, Sanatan Subudhi, Dilip Pradhan, Prakash Pradhan, and Santosh Pradhan are some of the prominent names among hundreds of temple artisans of Odagaon. Seven to eight artists are working on a single temple. The temples are being constructed in a way that they will resemble Srimandir in Puri.

Apart from the main temple, temples for the side deities, 'Jaga-Mohan', 'Nata Mandir', and 22 steps are also being built like the original one in Puri showcasing the tradition of Srimandir and Jagannath culture of Odisha.

Asked about temple works, chief artisan Krushnachandra Barad says

that the building of more than a hundred temples in NCR region has given steady income source for many temple artisans making them financially independent. The budget of a single temple varies from ₹30 lakh to ₹1 crore.

The establishment of the Jagannath temple situated in Sector-24 of Rohini took 12 years to complete and was inaugurated recently. The inaugural ceremony started February 20 on the premises of Shree Jagannath Sewa Sangha (Rohini). President Rakesh Kumar Gupta and Secretary Pawan Jain along with other members ensured smooth conduct during the event. The consecration process of the temple was performed by vedic pundits under the guidance of Ashok Kumar Padhi from Ganjam.

NOTICE

I Sri Karna Biswal Age 47 years, S/o.Muralidhar Biswal, At/PO- Tamamura, PS-Dunguripali, Dist-Subarnapur, Odisha. Declared that I am the recorded owner of Khata No.107/1139, Plot No.711/3044, 711/3043, Area- 0.26 Decimal Kizam Gharabari of Mouza-Dulkibandh, P.S.-Kalampur, Dist- Kalahandi, Odisha. The aforesaid land is my self acquired property being purchased through registration sale deed vide RSD No. - 10901200067/2012, Dt.17.01.2012 and RSD No.10901200068/2012, Dt.17.01.2012 that I have lost the said original RSD, At-Khalabandha, PS-Kalampur, Dist- Kalahandi one month ago. Further I declared that I have never mortgaged the above land/ RSD in any bank or financial institution. Now I am applying for a loan from the SME SBI Bargarh Branch, Dist-Bargarh by mortgaging the same. If any body has any objection may kindly draw notice before STATE BANK OF INDIA SME Branch, Bargarh. Mob:- 9437018960 within 15 days of publication of this notice later on no objection or claim will not acceptable in any circumstances.

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1	Name of the Work	:: Building Work
2	Estimated Cost	:: Rs.13.26 Lakh
3	Period of Completion	:: 3 (Three) Months as per Annexure
4	Date & Time of availability of Bid documents in the Portal	:: 04.03.2023 at 11.00 A.M. to 13.03.2023 upto 2.30 PM
5	Last Date/Time for receipt of Bids in the Portal	:: 13.03.2023 upto 2.30 PM
6	Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid	:: Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Ganjam, Berhampur

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal tendersodisha.gov.in/ncg/app.

Superintending Engineer, R.W.Division-II, Ganjam, Berhampur
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Our best friend is he who loves us in the best of ourselves and yet does not ask of us to be other than we are.

THE MOTHER



Exodus of Babus

In Punjab, the Ajnala episode, the re-emergence of the dreaded 'K'-word and the rise of another radical ideologue have raked up memories of a past best forgotten. The situation is fluid and it does not help that the administration has been shown up as meek and submissive. Further, the senior babus in the state, be they IAS or IPS officers, are not sending encouraging signals to the public – at a time when the Bhagwant Mann government needs to show that it is still in charge.

Sources have informed DKB that there is a sort of stampede among senior IAS and IPS officers to leave Punjab and move to the Centre on deputation. Reportedly, at least seven IAS officers have applied for central deputation, whereas five-six officers have already left the state and gone on deputation. These include Sabin C (2005 batch), Kumar Saurabh and B. Srinivasan, both of the 2011 batch.

Among the IPS officers already on Central deputation are Dinkar Gupta (NIA head), Samant Goel (Raw Chief) and Harpreet Sidhu, who was earlier the head of STF. Apart from these, ex-DGP VK Bhawra and some other IPS officers have also applied for Central Deputation.

For the unversed, it is important for every IAS officer to go on a central deputation for at least 2 years so that there is no hindrance in the upcoming promotions. Some officers also prefer to go on a central deputation at a time when they are not on good terms with the serving state government. Is that the reason for this current stampede to the exit door?

On NITI and some abrupt changes

The announcement to replace NITI Aayog CEO Parmeshwaran Iyer with former Commerce Secretary BVR Subramanyam came as a surprise to many babu observers. Iyer was appointed to the post in July of last year, so his abrupt removal after a mere eight months is difficult to decode. But there are those who claim to have read the coffee grounds. Some believe that there was some degree of unease inside NITI Aayog after the completion of Amitabh Kant's tenure. Whatever, there has to be a compelling reason behind this move.



BABUDOM BYTES

Dilip Cherian

Iyer now moves to Washington, DC, as Executive Director, World Bank, for a period of three years, replacing a prematurely repatriated Rajesh Khullar. While some believe that Iyer had wanted to relocate to the US, others say that the Haryana government was keen to utilise Khullar's services in the state. Make of that what you will. Meanwhile, for BVR the Centre's decision is a clear sign that he has not fallen out of favour as presumed by many babu watchers after he had turned down the chair of the India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO) when he was about to retire last year.

The entire episode, however, underlines the view that in the Modi sarkar, a favourite babu will always remain a favourite, and the government will do whatever it deems necessary to place the right person in the right place. And quite likely we will see similar moves in the days and weeks to come.

Agri babus ensure success of PM's kisan initiative

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the 13th instalment of financial benefits worth ₹16,800 crore to over eight crore eligible farmers under the PM-Kisan scheme earlier this week, it continues what is seen as a major shift in direct support by the government to the country's farmers. The Agriculture Ministry has ensured that the scheme, which was launched in February 2019 but is being implemented since December 2018, was able to transfer benefits to more than three crore beneficiaries, even during the worst moments of the coronavirus pandemic.

Sources say that babus in the ministry, particularly Agriculture Secretary Manoj Ahuja, have largely been successful in providing significant benefits to farmers to boost their incomes and contribute to agricultural growth. Of particular significance is the creation of a farmer-centric digital infrastructure that has ensured the benefits of the scheme reach all the farmers, primarily small and marginal farmers, across the country without any involvement of the middlemen. While the Modi sarkar will inevitably laud its own policy for its positive benefits for farmers, the babus at the Agriculture Ministry deserve credit for its success.

WISDOM CORNER

Beware of false knowledge; it is more dangerous than ignorance
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

We don't have the time to completely be ourselves. We only have the room to be happy.
ALBERT CAMUS

There are times when one's life appears to be a stage. People come, people go. They come in order to go.
VIJAY TENDULKAR

WORDSWORTH

Apoptosis

The process by which cells naturally self-destruct in the body, also known as programmed cell death. An understanding of the mechanisms by which cells are instructed to remain alive or die has profound implications for finding cures for cancerous conditions and auto-immune diseases. Recently researchers have found the genes which cause cell death in some simple organisms and New Scientist has reported on research which shows how the drug cisplatin cures testicular cancer by blocking repair mechanisms that prevent apoptosis. It is also becoming clear that the lifetime of a cell is linked to the presence of lengths of genetic material called telomeres, a short section of which is lost each time a cell divides. Apoptosis is formed from the Greek prefix apo-, "off, from, away; at an extreme", which turns up in words like apocalypse and apogee; this is linked to the Greek ptosis, "a falling in or upon (something)" which appears as a word by itself in medical language for a prolapse and in a few other rather rare compounds, including Samuel Becket's panpygoptosis for Duck's disease.

Woebegone

Woebegone is first recorded in The Romance of Guy of Warwick, of about the year 1300. At that date, people would say things like "me is woe begun", grief has beset me. Notice the word order, with me as the indirect object of the sentence, but put first. The verb here is bego, which has been obsolete for something like four hundred years, but which in medieval times had a variety of senses, such as to go round, surround or beset. Over time, the link between woe and begone, the past participle of bego, became so close that they fused into a single adjective, so tightly linked that they survived shifts in language and the loss of the verb bego. For some centuries it retained this sense of "afflicted by grief", oppressed with misfortune, distress, sorrow or grief. We're now a long way from that medieval romance, but in continuing to use the word we retain a small vestige of middle English as a linguistic fossil. Several other archaic forms in woe have also survived, such as "woe is me" and "woe betide you", presumably because there's a continuing need for formulaic lamentatory utterances.

LOL

Were you ever arrested?



A lawyer was filling out a job application when he came to the question: "Have you ever been arrested?" He answered no to the

question. The next question, intended for those who answered the preceding question with a yes, was "why?" Nevertheless, the lawyer answered it "Never got caught."

SLIPPERY SLOPE OF OCCUPATION

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

The only thing to celebrate on the first anniversary of Russia's war is the scale and courage of the Ukrainian resistance, which has surprised everyone, including Ukraine's allies and maybe even the Ukrainians themselves. Through self-defence, Ukraine is achieving self-transformation.



Slavoj Žižek

IF THE WEST BANK SIMPLY BECOMES PART OF ISRAEL, SHOULDN'T THE NEARLY THREE MILLION PALESTINIANS WHO LIVE THERE BECOME ISRAELI CITIZENS WHO CAN VOTE IN ISRAELI ELECTIONS?

"People's desire for justice at home has not diminished," the Ukrainian journalist Kateryna Semchuk observes. "If anything, it has got stronger – and rightly so, since most citizens are risking their lives to fight the genocidal threat posed by Russia. People have such a personal stake in Ukraine's future, they are more sensitive than ever about what kind of country they are becoming, and how things should be after the war."

Apropos of this new mood, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy recently fired several top officials who were suspected of graft and other offenses. But it remains to be seen if Ukraine's anti-corruption campaign will grow into a more radical questioning about "how things should be after the war."

Will Ukraine simply play catch up with the West's liberal democracies and allow itself to be economically colonised by big Western corporations? Will it join the populist backlash to globalisation and free markets, as Poland did? Or will it take a long shot and try to resuscitate old-style social democracy?

These questions are bound up with the mixed international response to Russian aggression. To condemn Russian colonialism properly, one must be consistent and also condemn other examples of colonial subjugation, not least Israel's oppression of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

True, Israel's occupation of the West Bank is not the result of a military offensive or invasion. Rather, it is a legacy of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, which Arab states lost. Moreover, one always must tread carefully in discussions of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, given how commonly it is used to foment anti-Semitism – a growing



The Western media is full of praise for Ukraine's "heroic resistance," but mute on the issue of West Bank Palestinians who resist a regime that is becoming ever more comparable to South Africa's defunct apartheid system

problem in the West. Tremendous care is even more necessary now, when violence by Israelis and Palestinians is surging once more.

Still, it is an undeniable fact that most West Bank Palestinians today were born under occupation, and after almost six decades have no clear prospect of ever gaining real statehood. On the contrary, they are forced to watch helplessly as their land is gradually appropriated by Israeli settlers. The Western media is full of praise for Ukraine's "heroic resistance," but mute on the issue of West Bank Palestinians who resist a regime that is becoming ever more comparable to South Africa's defunct apartheid system.

Now that the new Israeli government, led by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, is engaged in a de facto annexation of the West Bank, the parallel to Russia's treatment of Ukraine, with President Vladimir Putin's denial of Ukrainians' very right to exist as a people, has become harder to deny. In December 2022, the Israeli government stated explicitly that "the Jewish people have an exclusive and indisputable right to all parts of the Land of Israel," including Judea and Samaria – that is, the West Bank.

Nor did Netanyahu's coalition stop there. According to an assessment by Just Security, an initiative based at NYU School of Law, "the new government's founding documents indicate a clear and dramatic pivot in the organising normative framework with which it is administering the territories: from the law of occupation – to an application of Israeli domestic law." In practice, this amounts to "annexation in all but name." Hence, a change to the enemy property law will return property in the West Bank to Israelis who held it prior to 1948. Not surprisingly, this change runs in only one direction: property in Israel previously held by Palestinians will not be similarly "released."

In principle, such a change could be a progressive act, since it implies that the enforcement of different legal regimes for Israelis and West Bank Palestinians – a core component of the apartheid charge – can no longer be justified. But we know that Israel's new government is anything but progressive. So, how will the annexation be managed? If the West Bank simply becomes part of Israel, shouldn't the nearly three million Palestinians who live there be-

come Israeli citizens who can vote in Israeli elections?

Obviously, that outcome would be unacceptable to Netanyahu and his right-wing allies. Yet they have only two options for preventing it. They can either expel as many Palestinians as possible from the annexed territories, or they can impose what Just Security describes as "an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over another, with the intention of maintaining this regime, otherwise known as apartheid."

Over the past couple months, Israel has been shaken by demonstrations against the Netanyahu government's effort to subordinate the judiciary to its will. But the hundreds of thousands of liberal, freedom-loving Israelis who have taken to the streets have more or less ignored the plight of the Palestinians (including the Arabs who constitute 20% of Israel's population), even though it is they who will suffer most from the new government and its illiberal reforms. Indeed, the proposed legislation has been treated as an internal Jewish affair.

A true act of protest would recognise what is really at stake. To preserve Israeli democracy and the rule of law, liberal Israelis should forge a large democratic coalition that includes representatives of the Palestinians. Yes, this would be a radical and risky move, because it would break an unwritten rule of Israeli politics – namely, that Palestinian Israelis must not decide the country's fate.

But such radicalism may now be the only way to prevent Israel from becoming another religious-fundamentalist – even racist – state. That would be a travesty. It would be an abandonment of Jews' historically deep attachment to enlightenment and the pursuit of justice – and another victory for forces devoted to darker ideals.

The writer is International Director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities at the University of London

PROJECT SYNDICATE

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Discoms dump heavy losses on states



Shivaji Sarkar

THE RESERVE BANK OF INDIA CRITICISES THE STATES FOR DOLING OUT HIGH SUBSIDIES WITH JHARKHAND, KERALA, ODISHA, TELANGANA AND UTTAR PRADESH TOPPING THE LIST IN LAST THREE YEARS

The Reserve Bank of India has red flagged states' debt touching a critical high of ₹76.10 tr (trillion) and classified debt liabilities of five states – Bihar, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, and West Bengal – which is no longer sustainable.

While calling for deep introspection and immediate corrective steps, the RBI has lambasted the practice of infusing capital and giving subsidies to the Discoms. At least three major states have bailed out Discoms. Indirect bailing out and taking over their losses is usual. The Power sector, it finds is mismanaged and has become a major liability. The RBI warning on power situation apparently is in the context of moving every activity on electricity from railways, buses, and cars to many others.

The highest debt-infested states are Haryana ₹2.87tr; Uttar Pradesh ₹7.1 tr; West Bengal ₹6.08 tr; Kerala ₹3.91 tr and Punjab ₹3.05 tr; Maharashtra 6.80 lakh cr; Karnataka 5.35 Andhra Pradesh ₹4.42 tr; Gujarat 4.23 tr; Rajasthan ₹5.37 tr; Bihar 2.86 lakh cr; Jharkhand ₹1.29 tr. The debt-GSDP ratio of the stressed states is to fall beyond 35 per cent by 2026-27.

States such as Bihar, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, and West Bengal are classified as the most stressed in

terms of their finances and liabilities. The tax revenues of some of the 10 states, including Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, have been declining.

The lowest debts are with North-East states -- Assam ₹1.21 tr, Arunachal Pradesh ₹15917 crore, Meghalaya ₹17433 crore, Mizoram ₹12991 crore, Nagaland ₹16562 crore, Sikkim ₹12982 crore and Tripura ₹26446 crore.

The Central bank criticises the states for doling out high subsidies, particularly free electricity, free water, free public transportation, waiver of pending utility bills and farm loan waivers. The RBI has not included corporate doles in its de-liberations. As per CAG, state subsidies grew at 12.9 per cent in 2021-22 and 11.2 per cent during 2020-21, after contracting in 2019-20. Gujarat, Punjab and Chhattisgarh spend more than 10 per cent of their revenue on subsidies. Average subsidies are at 8.2 per cent in 2021-22 having risen from 7.8 per cent in 2019-20.

Committed expenditure like interest payments, pensions and administrative expenses, accounts for a significant portion (over 35 per cent) of the total revenue expenditure in states like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala and Punjab, leads to lower expenses on developmental activities.

State finances are vulnerable to a variety of unexpected shocks that might alter their fiscal outcomes, causing slippages in their overall performance. Among the five most indebted states, Punjab and Rajasthan appear to be most vulnerable to fiscal shocks arising out of realisation of contingent liabilities.

Taking into account the warning signs flashing from all the indicators, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Punjab exceeded both debt and fiscal deficit targets for 2020-21 set by the 15th Finance Commission (FC-XV). Kerala, Jharkhand and West Bengal exceeded the debt target, while Madhya Pradesh overshot the fiscal deficit target.

According to the RBI, the debt level will remain higher than Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) stipulated 20 per cent. The states are anticipating an increase in non-tax revenue, which is generated from sources such as fees, fines, and royalties. The report notes that states are expecting to see an increase in revenue from various sources such as GST, excise duty and other taxes.

The RBI has also proposed to establish a fund that would be used for buffer capital expenditure during periods of strong revenue growth. The state governments

must restrict their revenue expenses by cutting down expenditure on non-merit goods in the near term. In the medium term, the states need to put efforts towards stabilising debt levels.

In competitive politics, fiscal responsibility is largely ignored. Votes are better off than fiscal prudence. Of late, the spree of infrastructure spending has caused a heavy burden on meager finances. The need for infra is there. The governments, however, have become reckless spenders even for ill-designed roads and retro-specification is passé. Lobbies work to rob the states and the pressures created are a bit hard for the state governments to resist. This leads to many duplication, irrational constructions.

For transport linkages, the metro, its space guzzling stations and other paraphernalia drain the states out. At least 11 cities' metros remain unutilised and have failed. Easier and inexpensive options are shunned because of factors of rent seeking. More expensive a product, the higher the rent. An immediate review and pause on infra can help the states cut debt. Even the RBI has chosen to ignore it.

The writer is former senior editor, The Financial Express and Professor, Indian Institute of Mass Communication. INFPA

Cricketing farce

Sir, India's abject capitulation at Indore to a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Aussies and the completion of the first three test matches of the present series within three days have once again brought to the fore several problematic concerns afflicting Indian cricket in general, especially the role of BCCI. The mandarins of the world's richest cricketing board certainly owe an explanation to a cricket-hungry nation as to why 'doctored & spinner-friendly tracks' were laid out to make a sheer mockery of the longest format, overriding the interests of millions of avid cricket fans and the intrinsic charm & niceties of Test Cricket? Is winning by dubious means to ensure a berth in the ICC World Test Championship Final the sole guiding yardstick for playing the game? How, all of a sudden, the much-vaunted bench strength of the Indian team has vanished into thin air? In an era of dwindling spectator interest, how does one rekindle fresh interest in the gentleman's game if test matches are reduced to purely shambling spectacles? Test cricket has already lost its sheen to the other formats of the game and the misadventures on rank turners at Nagpur, Delhi and Indore have done an incalculable damage to India's reputation as the powerhouse and mainstay of international cricket. Isn't it high time that we had 'neutral curators' of impeccable standing and proven expertise to stop this farce of low-scoring test matches? For the game to thrive is it not the bounden duty of the respective boards to accord primacy to the 'spirit of the game' above other considerations?

Amit Banerjee, NEW DELHI

Wakeup call for Congress

Sir, Present day Voters are no more the ones who were gullible, easy-to-be exploited type and a could-be-beguiled lot but have taken to serious thinking before casting the vote. They have started to show their likes and dislikes and that too diligently while choosing their candidate. The grand victory by the BJP and its alliances in the North eastern states shows that people are ready to support if they find leaders and the party or alliance they support are ready to voice for the commoners. As for the congress, they have to understand that 'yatras', 'pilgrimage' during election times and freebies will never win the hearts of voters. A strong panel of trustworthy, hardworking, out of the box thinking leaders to cooperate and coordinate is the need of the hour.

M Pradyu, KANNUR

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

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national

of the day quote

The Centre wants to keep the pot boiling in Jammu and Kashmir to garner more votes in elections

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP CHIEF

Modi's statement is an overambitious statement. People who live here know the trials and tribulations of the minority communities and also know who is responsible for it. The minority communities here, who are under duress from the Sangh Parivar, just cannot take a pro-BJP stand. If there are stray incidents where some for vested interests make compromises, it should not be a generalised and if done it is going to be a big blunder

PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

Protecting animal habitats is a key priority for us and we have seen good results in that. The year gone by will always be remembered as the year we welcomed cheetahs to our nation

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

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NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Girl ends life

Palghar: A 14-year-old girl allegedly hanged herself to death at her house in Vasai taluka of Maharashtra's Palghar district, with the police recovering a "suicide note" in which she accused her father of sexually abusing her, an official said. The girl ended her life three days back at her family residence in Valiv and the note was found on Thursday, he said. After her death, the minor's body was sent to a government hospital for post-mortem and a case of accidental death was registered. "In the suicide note purportedly written by the girl, she alleged that her father sexually abused her. It also said that although she raised the issue with her mother, the latter failed to take any action on it," an official said.

Accident claims 8

Chandigarh: Eight passengers were killed and four others injured Friday when a private bus they were travelling in met with an accident with a trailer in Shahzadpur of Haryana's Ambala district. The bus was on its way from Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh to Baddi in Himachal Pradesh. Six bodies were sent to Civil Hospital in Naraingarh town, while two to Panchkula town. The injured were referred to the PGI in Chandigarh.

ED seizes ₹1.27cr in cash after raids

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Friday said it seized Rs 1.27 crore in cash after it raided two West Bengal-based companies as part of a money laundering probe against them linked to alleged chit fund fraud in which investors were duped of more than Rs 790 crore. The raids were launched on March 1 at 15 premises in Kolkata, Siliguri and Howrah in West Bengal apart from Agra in Uttar Pradesh. The companies that faced the action were identified by the ED as Pincon Group and Tower Infotech Ltd.

Naxalites torch three vehicles

Gadchiroli: Suspected Naxalites set on fire three vehicles engaged in bridge construction work in Gadchiroli district of eastern Maharashtra, police said Friday. The incident took place on Thursday night in Ettapalli taluka, they said. This is the second such incident in the district this week, the police said.

NCPDR seeks action against Raut, Atishi

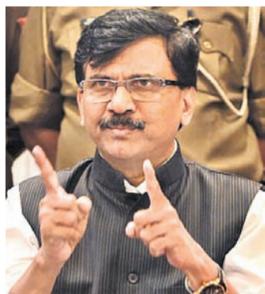
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) has written to the Delhi Police seeking inquiry and necessary action against Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut and AAP's Raghav Chadha and Atishi for allegedly posting a "picture of minor" on Twitter in "furtherance of political agenda".

In its letter, the commission also observed that the image allegedly uploaded by the leaders was in order to divert attention in the ongoing/pending investigation by CBI against Manish Sisodia. While Chadha and Raut are Rajya Sabha members, Atishi is an MLA of the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi.

Sisodia, who had 18 portfolios in the Delhi government, including education, resigned from the Cabinet following his arrest by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in connection with alleged corruption in the formulation and implementation of the now-scrapped liquor policy for 2021-22.

The apex child rights body said it has received a complaint regarding social media posts of Raut and Chadha who have uploaded images on their Twitter



Sisodia's bail hearing today

New Delhi: A city court is likely to hear the bail application of Delhi's former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, arrested in a corruption case related to the alleged Delhi excise scam, on Saturday when he is scheduled to be produced before the judge on expiry of his five-day CBI custody. The application was filed before Special Judge M K Nagpal, who posted the matter for hearing on Saturday, his advocate Rishikesh said.

handles wherein AAP leader and state education minister Manish Sisodia is seen with minor children in schools. "To initiate inquiry and take necessary action against Shri Sanjay Raut and Shri Raghav Chadha for posting 'picture of minor' on Twitter in furtherance of political agenda" was the subject of the letter to the Delhi Police commissioner with a copy also addressed to the Delhi chief secretary. The commission has asked the Delhi Police to take appropriate action under the Juvenile Justice Act. "It is alleged that the said image is uploaded by Sanjay Raut and Raghav Chadha in order to divert attention in the ongoing/pending

investigation by CBI against Manish Sisodia in Delhi liquor policy case in furtherance of their personal

We are not against development. It should be sustainable. If development is one eye, then concern about climate change should be another eye. So, both the eyes are needed for development

MK STALIN | TN CM

SONIA HOSPITALISED

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi has been admitted to the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital due to fever, doctors said Friday. According to a health bulletin issued by the hospital, her condition is stable



Indian democracy under attack: Rahul



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London/New Delhi, March 3: Indian democracy is under attack and several politicians, including himself, are under surveillance, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi alleged during a lecture at Cambridge university, drawing sharp reactions from the BJP that accused him of maligning the country's image on foreign soil after facing successive electoral setbacks.

Rahul Gandhi delivered the lecture 'Learning to Listen in the 21st Century' at the Cambridge Judge Business School on Tuesday evening as a Visiting Fellow, a video recording of which was posted on Twitter by Congress leader Sam Pitroda, ex-adviser to former prime minister Manmohan Singh.

Referring to the controversial Pegasus snooping issue, Rahul Gandhi alleged that the Israeli spyware was installed on the phones of a large number of politicians, including him. "I, myself, had Pegasus on my phone. A large number of politicians have Pegasus on their phones. I've been called by intelligence officers who say please be careful what you say on the phone because we are sort of recording this stuff. So, this is a constant pressure that we feel," the 52-year-old former Congress chief claimed.

The BJP on Friday also made light of Rahul Gandhi's allegation that he was being snooped upon, saying that the Congress leader was "hallucinating" and makes such claims as he wants to create headlines wherever he goes.

The former Congress president listed five key aspects of the alleged attack on Indian democracy - Capture and control of media and judiciary; surveillance and intimidation; coercion by federal law enforcement agencies; attacks on minorities, Dalits and tribals; and shutting down of dissent.

"Everybody knows and it's in the news a lot that Indian democracy is under pressure and under attack...The institutional framework which is required for a democracy: Parliament, a free press, the judiciary and just the idea of mobilisation, these are all getting constrained. We are facing an attack on the basic structure of Indian democracy," he said.

Hitting back on Rahul Gandhi, Union Minister Anurag Thakur wondered what prevented Rahul Gandhi and other Congress leaders from submitting their phones to a Supreme Court-appointed technical committee that probed the Pegasus snooping issue.

"We can understand his hatred towards the Prime Minister, but the conspiracy to malign the country on foreign soil with the help of foreign friends raises questions on the agenda of the Congress," Thakur, the Information and Broadcasting minister said in Delhi. Thakur said Rahul Gandhi was aware of the electoral rout the Congress was facing in the Assembly elections and had resorted to levelling allegations from foreign soil.

Thakur said Rahul Gandhi was aware of the electoral rout the Congress was facing in the Assembly elections and had resorted to levelling allegations from foreign soil.

300 stones removed from farmer's kidney

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, March 3: Doctors at the Asian Institute of Nephrology & Urology (AINU), Hitech City here have successfully removed 300 stones from the kidney of a 75-year-old farmer.

While formation of stones is a common phenomenon in this part of the world, presence of stones in such large numbers often challenges the urologists who operate on such patients.

According to doctors, Ram Reddy, a native of Karimnagar district, had been suffering from severe discomfort in the back and flank region for the past few months, until he was referred to and presented at AINU Hitech City. Ultrasound and Computerized Tomography (CT) scans indicated the presence of a massive stone of more than 7 cms size in the right kidney.

Dr. Md. Taif Bendigeri, Consultant Urologist, AINU, said that while 7 mm to 15 mm sized stones are commonly found among patients, more than 7 cms was too large and pos-



sibly quite painful for the patient. Advanced age of the patient, along with co-morbidities and chronic ailments like diabetes, hypertension, and cardiac issues, turned the process more complex. However, the team led by Dr. Mallikarjuna C., conducted proper due diligence, and took all necessary precautions, and performed a keyhole surgery using advanced LASER technology, he said.

"The clearance of the stone burden of more than 7cms was carried through a key-hole incision of merely 5mm in size. The large stone was comprised a massive stone load of more than 300 multiple stones. At the end of a challenging procedure, all 300 stones were cleared. The patient was diagnosed normal without any complications and was discharged on the second day after surgery," added Dr. Taif.



Women dance and sing to celebrate Rangbhari Ekadashi in Agra

PTI PHOTO

CONRAD STAKES CLAIM TO FORM GOVT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shillong, March 3: National People's Party (NPP) president Conrad K Sangma Friday called on Meghalaya Governor Phagu Chauhan and submitted to him the letter of support of 32 MLAs, while staking claim to form the government in the northeastern state.

Sangma, the outgoing chief minister, said he has the support of BJP, HSPDP and two Independent MLAs, while asserting the total tally may go up in the coming days as he is in touch with other parties as well.

He said the oath-taking ceremony will take place at 11 am on March 7 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given his consent to be present on the occasion.

"I have submitted to the governor the letter of support of different parties. In all, we have the support of 32 MLAs. Apart from

Sangma, the outgoing chief minister, said he has the support of BJP, HSPDP and two Independent MLAs, while asserting the total tally may go up in the coming days as he is in touch with other parties as well

The NPP supremo claimed that different parties to support the government led by his party. He, however, said the name of the new alliance has not been decided yet

NPP's 26 legislators, two each are from the BJP and HSPDP, besides two Independent lawmakers," Sangma said. "All of them have signed the letter. We are talking to some more parties and their MLAs. So, the number is likely to go up in the coming days," he said.

The NPP supremo claimed that different parties have approached him to support the government

led by his party. He, however, said the name of the new alliance has not been decided yet. Asked about opposition charges that HSPDP MLAs were "hijacked" by the NPP, Sangma, "Nobody has hijacked anyone. We have their full support."

Earlier in the day, high drama was witnessed as various parties including the Trinamool Congress, Congress, UDP, PDF



and VPP, held parleys on staking claim to form a 'non-NPP, non-BJP'

government. TMC leader Mukul Sangma said they were trying to "save Meghalaya from corrupt leaders".

UDP president Metbah Lyngdoh said the party did not receive any invitation from the NPP to join hands to stake claim to form the government. The two HSPDP MLAs who swore allegiance to the Sangma-led bloc were conspicuous in their absence in the meetings of the non-BJP, non-NPP parties.

The NPP emerged the single-largest party in Meghalaya, bagging 26 of the 59 seats that went to polls on February 27. The BJP, HSPDP and the PDF won two seats each, while two Independent candidates also emerged victorious.

The UDP, which was NPP's ally in the Conrad K Sangma government, emerged as the second-largest party, winning 11 constituencies.

In Gulmarg, stray dogs are soldiers' 'early warning' friends

In high-altitude areas, covered by snow and accessible only by foot, soldiers share their limited supplies of biscuits and water with the canines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gulmarg, March 3: Dogs in high-altitude areas of Jammu and Kashmir's Gulmarg, may be just strays for locals and the army establishment, but for soldiers, who patrol the LoC, the canines are not

only their companions, but also their "early warning system".

Snow or sun, they are always with the men patrolling the Line of Control (LoC), said a soldier. Temperatures in Gulmarg can drop to minus 10 degrees Celsius during the winters, and harsh winds and several feet of snow makes patrolling a daunting task, but soldiers said the dogs are always there to accompany them and their barks warn them of the dangers ahead.

"If there is anything untoward ahead, they act as an early warning system for us. They are very helpful to us," the soldier said as a



AFP PHOTO

small pack of dogs walked ahead of him and his group going for a ski-patrol of the forward area along the LoC with Pakistan.

"These dogs are with us today; tomorrow they will be with the next unit (which will be posted in the area)," he said. Irrespective of the weather condition, these canines lead the way for soldiers and sometime follow them back to their camps.

The soldiers care for these canines as if they were a part of their families, an officer said. In high-altitude areas, covered by snow and accessible only by foot, soldiers

share their limited supplies of biscuits and water with the canines, highlighting the nature and strength of their bond, he said.

Major General Ajay Chandpuria, General Officer Commanding of the Army's 19 Infantry Division, said there was nothing unusual in the friendship between the soldiers and the canines.

"Dogs are supposed to be man's best friend and that's true especially in winter. When the situation gets adverse and when there is a lot of snow, they are the best companions in winters," Maj Gen Chandpuria said.

By-poll results lesson for both BJP & MVA: Political observers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 3: The results of bypolls to two Assembly seats in Maharashtra's Pune district serve as a lesson to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to get its act together and introspect, and to the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) to unite for better electoral prospects, political observers feel.

Two Assembly segments in Pune district - Kasba Peth and Chinchwad - voted February 26 in by-polls necessitated due to the death of sitting BJP MLAs Mukta Tilak and Laxman Jagtap, respectively. In the results declared Thursday, the Kasba by-poll was won by the Congress, a constituent of the MVA.

Congress candidate Ravindra Dhangekar defeated BJP's Hemant Rasane to win this seat, which had been with the BJP since 1995.

However, BJP candidate Ashwini Jagtap, wife of late MLA Laxman Jagtap, won the Chinchwad Assembly constituency. She defeated Vitthal alias Nana Kate of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). Talking to PTI, senior Congress leader Ratnakar Mahajan said the Kasba bypoll result inspires the MVA, which comprises the Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray), to stay united. The result is people's verdict on local and state issues. There is nothing more to read into it, he said.

"It also shows that common voters are devoid of caste and religious considerations and are concerned about contemporary issues like price rise and unemployment that they have to deal with in their daily life," he said. There is a misconception that Kasba is a Brahmin-dominated constituency, Mahajan said, adding that there are 13 per cent Brahmin voters, while 60 per cent belong to the Other Backward

Classes (OBC). "BJP leader Girish Bapat won five times from Kasba because of his connect with the masses and not due to his caste and there was no leader in the Congress to counter him," Mahajan said. There is no logic in thinking that the BJP lost because members from the Lokmanya Tilak's family were ignored. Late Mukta Tilak, who represented the constituency, belonged to the family. Congress candidate Rohit Tilak, who also belongs to the same family, was defeated from this Assembly segment twice, he added. On the Chinchwad seat, the Congress leader said this constituency is a mix of outsider and local population because it is an industrial area.

Sitting MLA Laxman Jagtap was a local leader with strong mass connect. A builder by profession, he was with the NCP till 2014 and shifted to the BJP.

Two Assembly segments in Pune district - Kasba Peth and Chinchwad - voted February 26 in bypolls necessitated due to the death of sitting BJP MLAs Mukta Tilak and Laxman Jagtap, respectively

Rahul Kalate, the independent candidate who finished third in the Chinchwad bypoll, was earlier with the NCP and later with the Shiv Sena. Former CM Uddhav Thackeray personally intervened to persuade him to withdraw from the race, but Kalate did not budge, he said.

Mahajan said sympathy factor worked for Ashwini Jagtap in Chinchwad, but it did not work in Kasba even as sitting Pune MP Girish Bapat, who is critically ill, had to step out to campaign for his party and for casting his vote. Senior BJP leader Madhav Bhandari termed his party's defeat in Kasba Peth as an "accident".

NCP leader Jitendra Awhad felt the Kasba election result showed that people shouldn't be taken for granted. Awhad said if Rahul Kalate was not in the fray in Chinchwad, NCP nominee Nana Kate would have won. Kalate and the NCP candidate together polled more votes than the BJP candidate who won.



IS IT AUDIBLE?: BJP leader Vijay Goel with party leaders raises slogans during a protest against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal following the arrest of his deputy Manish Sisodia by CBI in the excise policy case in New Delhi

Traffic snarls reported in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: Traffic snarls were reported in parts of Delhi Friday due to special arrangements made for the movement of dignitaries attending the G20 meeting here.

Traffic movement was most affected at Dhaula Kuan where vehicles moved at a snail's pace for quite sometime, a commuter said. Some other areas where traffic was affected include the stretch between Brar Square to Moti Nagar, Punjabi Bagh to Raja Garden, Rajeev Chowk, Inderlok and Munirka, officials said.

"I was getting late for my office. I started from my house in Dwarka at my usual time but it took me 20 minutes to pass through the stretch. All vehicles were moving at a snail's pace," one of the commuters said.

According to officials, adequate police personnel were deployed to regulate the traffic on the stretch. Several routes have been made for the dignitaries of G20 meeting so that no inconvenience is caused to public, they said.



'Homelessness a global issue'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 3: Homelessness is a global issue but people living on streets are also human beings with the same footing as everyone else, the Bombay High Court said on Friday refusing to pass any order directing removal of such persons in south Mumbai.

A division bench of Justices Gautam Patel and Neela Gokhale was dealing with an application filed in a petition taken up suo motu (on its own) by HC on the issue of unauthorised vendors and hawkers occupying the city's footpaths and sidewalks.

The application filed by the Bombay Bar Association said several persons live and sleep on the footpaths and sidewalks near the Fountain area in south Mumbai. The application said letters were also written to the city police and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) seeking action on it. Problem solved. The construction then goes on for years. It is an ideal solution," Justice Patel quipped. The court, however, noted that the concern raised in the application was distinct and not tied to the issues of hawkers and vendors in the suo motu petition.

Sathe then said the association would consider filing a separate petition or public interest litigation on the issue of homeless persons. The court agreed and said if a separate petition or PIL is filed then necessary directions could be passed.



The application filed by the Bombay Bar Association said several persons live and sleep on the footpaths and sidewalks near the Fountain area in south Mumbai

"They (homeless persons) are also human beings. They may be poor or less fortunate but they are still human beings and that makes them to be on the same footing as everybody else before us in court," Justice Patel said. The association's counsel Milind Sathe suggested that night shelters be made available for such persons occupying pavements and sidewalks. The bench said that was one solution the authorities could consider.

In a satirical remark, the court said the BMC's simplest solution to such challenges would be to start construction at the spot or build a Metro station. "Start digging and everyone will go away. No one gets to use the footpath then. No pedestrian can walk on it...No car can drive there...No one can live

Attack on MNS leader starts political slugfest in Maha

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

'If political leaders are attacked what must be common man's plight,' asks NCP MLA Rohit Pawar



MNS leader Sandeep Deshpande

Mumbai, March 3: Soon after the Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) spokesperson Sandeep Deshpande was attacked by some unidentified persons during his morning walk, a fresh political ruckus started with finger pointing at each other, here Friday.

According to a MNS functionary Santosh Dhuri, the assault with a rod and cricket stumps took place at around 6 a.m. when Deshpande was out for his regular walk at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Park in Dadar West.

He suffered grievous injuries in his arms and legs, including fracture, and was rushed by locals to the nearby Hinduja Hospital for treatment where his condition is described as "stable".

A few hours later, Deshpande, 50, was discharged after treatment, with an arm in a sling, was taken in a wheelchair to his car, and interacted briefly with the media.

"I am not scared by this assault... Everybody knows who is behind it," a defiant Deshpande said without taking names. Dhuri claimed that

the sudden assault, the motive of which is not clear, was well-planned one as the assailants, believed to be around four, sported face masks and had come prepared with the weapons to isolate and fatally harm Deshpande. Earlier, MNS President Thackeray, his son Amit and other senior leaders visited the hospital to enquire after the condition of Deshpande - known for his fiery view on various issues.

Fighting the attack, MNS leader Amey Khopkar demanded a probe into the alleged role of Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders Aditya Thackeray and MP Sanjay Raut behind the assault on Deshpande.

"The police must investigate the involvement of Aditya Thackeray and Sanjay Raut and if anything is found against them, they should be arrested," demanded Khopkar.

Nationalist Congress Party's Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar took a swipe at Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, and said "this is what can be expected in a government of the common masses".

Fresh allegations against Kejriwal

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 3: Another letter by incarcerated alleged con-man, Suresh Chandrashekhar has now surfaced, which is addressed to the media and social media pages, making fresh allegations against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain.

Chandrashekhar, who is lodged in the national capital's Mandoli jail, has alleged in his five-page letter that Sisodia's arrest by CBI is just a starting and that he has "looted commissions" in every department that he was heading as being a Deputy Chief Minister. "All that matters to them (AAP leaders Kejriwal, Sisodia and Jain) is commission," he wrote. Referring to a tablet scam, Chandrashekhar has alleged that he had bought tablets (for distribution to children) from a Chinese company, which the Kejriwal government decided to hand over the tender to someone else in exchange for 20 per cent extra commission.

He said that every single decision in terms of commission and kickbacks were always discussed in Kejriwal's presence and were finally decided and proved by him (Kejriwal).

Chandrashekhar has claimed that kickbacks more than a "1000 odd crore" were decided and routed to Kejriwal through various person's nationally and internationally.

'Urban mass transit systems essential for economic growth'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DMRC Managing Director Vikas Kumar termed the Delhi Metro as one of the most successful urban rail system not only in India but across the world



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: Experts Thursday pitched for integration of urban mass transit systems, saying it will not only stimulate economic growth but also ease commute amid increasing population in cities.

They shared their views at an urban rail seminar on "Success Stories of India and South East Asia" organised by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) in association with UTPP-International Association of Public Transport.

The Delhi Metro has become an integral part of the city's urban landscape, connecting different parts of the national capital, and it has also reduced travel time significantly, he said.

Kumar attributed the success of the Delhi Metro to its commitment and focus on sustainability, holistic approach, inclusivity, timely execution of projects, safety, reliability and punctuality. "Today around 5.2

million journeys are there on a daily basis. We are almost limping back to pre-Covid era...I can proudly say that the Delhi metro has made a significant impact on the local economy by creating jobs, stimulating economic growth of the region," he said.

"It has made easier for people to commute to work and market places, leading to increased productivity and economic activities...We have become the very lifeline for the people of NCR (National Capital Region)," Kumar said while addressing the seminar at the Metro Bhawan.

Railway Board's Member Operations and Business Development Jaya Varma Sinha stressed on integration of different urban mass transit systems to provide effective mobility services. Principal Secretary-cum-Commissioner of Transport of the Delhi government Ashish Kundra said an effective urban transport system is essential for cities.

Delhi to host bird festival at Sanjay Van tomorrow

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: Nature walks to spot resident and migratory birds, interaction multimedia exhibits and workshops have been planned as part of a bird festival that will be hosted in the Sylvan Sanjay Van Sunday.

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and WWF-India have joined hands for this festival, the DDA announced Friday, coinciding with the World Wildlife Day.

"Delhi is the second most bird-rich capital city in the world. Home to a staggering diversity of resident bird species, the bustling metropolis also welcomes winter and summer visitors and passage migrants who stop by on their incredible journeys," according to an official statement. Sanjay Van, a reserve forest in the heart of Delhi, supports over 200 species of birds, it said.

WWF-India has curated the 'Sanjay Van Bird Festival' as a series of events for the people of Delhi to experience and celebrate birds in the city. This is an extended commemoration of the World Wildlife Day (March 3), organisers said.

"We have a lot to learn from birds - patience, resilience, re-



The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and WWF-India have joined hands for this festival, the DDA announced Friday, coinciding with the World Wildlife Day

sourcefulness, teamwork, perseverance, adaptability, vigilance and creativity. The Sanjay Van Bird Festival is an endeavour to work with nature, rather than against it. We have successfully held a Moth Festival, Dragonfly

Festival as well as numerous nature trails on flora and fauna with experts in the Sanjay Van," Peush Kumar, Deputy Director (Landscapes), DDA, was quoted as saying in the statement.

Launch of a first-of-its-kind publication showcasing select resident and migratory species of birds in Sanjay Van will also be a part of the event.

Karan Bhalla, COO, WWF-India said, "With over 200 bird species at Sanjay Van, witnessing the festival will be an enriching journey involving the city's residents of all ages, in knowing and protecting the wonderful natural habitats in our midst."

Delhi govt likely to increase number of revenue dists in city

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: Delhi government is likely to increase the number of revenue districts in the city for better governance and quick redressal of problems of people, officials said.

The number of revenue districts in the national capital has remained unchanged at 11 since 2012 while other administrative and law enforcement bodies have more districts.

The civic bodies are divided in 12 districts (zones) while the Delhi police has 15 districts under its jurisdiction.

Officials said a proposal has been floated to increase revenue districts, keeping in mind the increasing population of the city.

Delhi's population is nearly two crore but the number of revenue districts has remained 11. People have to battle long-waiting time in some areas, specially the trans Yamuna area, to get their issues resolved, an official said in a statement.

The revenue districts form a crucial cog in the governance wheel as they maintain land revenue records, are involved in social welfare measures like providing pensions, marriage registrations, and survivor certificate.

of the day quote

The state government has set a goal to ensure 100 per cent renewable energy usage across all sectors by 2050

PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CM

The officials must make sure that no community is enraged by the actions of the other especially when processions are taken out during festivals

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

The BJP government in Haryana has ensured equitable development of all assembly constituencies without any discrimination

MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR | HARYANA CM

SHORT TAKES

Shanties gutted

New Delhi: Around 200 shanties were gutted and eight people sustained minor injuries after a massive fire broke out in a slum cluster at Delhi's Sultanpuri area, said a fire department official Friday. According to Atul Garg, the Director of Delhi Fire Service (DFS), a call regarding a blaze in jhuggi at Sultanpuri wali Gali in Pooth Kalan area was received around 12:013 a.m. "A total of 21 fire tenders were rushed to the site and the fire was under control by 4:19 a.m.," said the DFS chief.

Ten injured

Bangalore: Ten persons, including five children, were injured in a gas cylinder explosion in a house in Bangalore's Mariyappanapalya Friday. According to police, the condition of four persons is critical. The police said that the incident took place as the family members forgot to turn off the gas stove after cooking dinner. When they went to cook in the kitchen in the morning the gas exploded.

Three arrested

Gurugram: A crime branch team of the Gurugram Police has arrested three men for allegedly shooting at a man after he passed comments over an illegal dog fight incident. The police said the incident took place on February 26 near Pataudi's Baspadamka village when the victim, Rajkamal, had gone to the village to witness a dog fight with his two friends. The arrested were identified as Hitesh alias David (23), Anand Kumar (26), and Bhupender alias Bhim (30), who allegedly assaulted the victim, and one of them shot him in his hand and stomach.

Groom dies

Sitamarhi: A young groom died while the wedding rituals were underway in Sonbarsa block of Bihar's Sitamarhi district. The incident took place in Indarwa village on Wednesday night. The deceased has been identified as Surendra, who hailed from Manikthar village of the same district. Sources said that the wedding rituals were underway after the baraats arrived at the venue. After the Jayamala (garlanding) ceremony, Surendra suddenly collapsed on stage and was rushed to a hospital, where he was declared dead at arrival.

Visit postponed

Kochi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Kerala's Trissur on March 5 address party's rally has been postponed, said state BJP president K.Surendran. All arrangements for his visit and the party programmes had been finalised when the change in plans came.



The Shiv Sena and BJP have identified what went wrong in the Kasba Peth bypoll and the government will win over the people of the constituency in 2024 when Assembly elections are to be held in Maharashtra

EKNATH SHINDE | MAHARASHTRA CM

INVESTIGATION ON

A day after nabbing two youths from Gujarat's Surat for allegedly trespassing into the iconic 'Mannat' bungalow of Shah Rukh Khan in Mumbai, Bandra cops are probing the 'motives' of the duo's action, official sources said Friday



Quad FMs set up working group on counter-terrorism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: The foreign ministers of Quad countries Friday reaffirmed the grouping's commitment for a free and open Indo-Pacific and said it strongly supports the rule of law, sovereignty, territorial integrity and peaceful settlement of disputes, in comments seen as an oblique message to China.

After External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, his Japanese counterpart Yoshimasa Hayashi and Australia's Penny Wong met, it was announced that a Quad working group on counter-terrorism would be established to explore measures to counter new and emerging forms of terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism.

The ministers vowed to work closely to align and complement Quad's agenda with Japan's presidency of the G7, India's presidency of the G20 and the United States' APEC (Asia-Pacific

The ministers vowed to work closely to align and complement Quad's agenda with Japan's presidency of the G7, India's presidency of the G20 and the United States' APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) "host year" in 2023



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong at a meeting in New Delhi

Economic Cooperation) "host year" in 2023.

Following the meeting, the four ministers attended a session at the

Raisina Dialogue and spoke largely about the convergence of interests of the Quad member nations. "For us the future is so

much in the Indo-Pacific. Our engagement throughout the region, both through the Quad and in other ways, is as comprehensive and as deep as any time I can remember," Blinken said.

While Blinken and Wong were in India to attend the G20 foreign ministers' meeting, Hayashi came to Delhi to participate in the Quad meeting. In a joint statement after the Quad meeting, the ministers said the meeting reaffirmed the Quad's "steadfast" commitment to supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific, which is inclusive and resilient.

The Quad foreign ministers also "unequivocally" condemned terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and denounced the use of terrorist proxies and financial or military support to terrorist organisations which could be used to launch or plan terrorist attacks, including

transnational and cross-border strikes.

They reiterated their condemnation of terrorist attacks, including 26/11 Mumbai strikes, which claimed lives of citizens from all Quad countries, and Pathankot attacks. "We strongly support the principles of freedom, rule of law, sovereignty and territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes without resorting to threat or use of force and freedom of navigation and overflight, and oppose any unilateral attempt to change the status quo, all of which are essential to the peace, stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and beyond," the statement said.

The foreign ministers said the Quad is acting as a "force for regional and global good", and it will be guided by the priorities of the Indo-Pacific region through its positive and constructive agenda.

NIA ATTACHES TERRORIST'S PROPERTY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, March 3: In its ongoing action against terrorists operating from Pakistan, the NIA Friday attached a property of the Resistance Front (TRF) operative Basit Ahmad Reshi in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district.

The action follows the sealing of a Srinagar-based property of the founder and self-styled chief commander of the Al-Umar Mujahideen, Mushtaq Zargar alias 'Latram', on Thursday.

Reshi, a "listed terrorist" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), has been operating from Pakistan after his exfiltration there. He has been found funding terror activities and acts in the Kashmir Valley, a National Investigation Agency (NIA) spokesperson said.

The official said Reshi had joined militant ranks in 2015 and was involved in planning and executing an attack on a police guard post in Sopore that killed a constable and injured others.

He was earlier associated with banned terrorist outfit Hizbul-Mujahideen and at present, is involved in terror activities of the TRF, managing supplies of arms and ammunition as well as funds for the terror group from across the border, the spokesperson said.

The NIA said Reshi's agricultural land measuring 9.25 marlas has been attached under the provisions of the UAPA with the assistance of revenue and police officials.

Till date, the agency has attached the properties of five designated terrorists - US-based Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, Canada-based Hardeep Singh Nijjar, and Pakistan-based Mushtaq Zargar, Basit Ahmad Pir and KCF (Panjwar) member Paramjit Singh alias 'Panjwar'.

Recently, the NIA also attached under the UAPA, the Hurriyat's office in Srinagar, which was owned in part by Nayeem Khan, an accused chargesheeted by the NIA in the Hurriyat terror funding case.

Uzbekistan syrup deaths: 3 arrested

Marion Biotech had come under the scanner in December last year for its cough syrup Dok-1 that is suspected to have led to the death of 18 children who consumed it in Uzbekistan after which the CDSCO launched a probe into the matter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Noida, March 3: Three employees of a city-based pharmaceutical firm, whose cough syrup is alleged to have led to the death of 18 children in Uzbekistan last year, were arrested on charges of manufacturing and sale of adulterated drugs, officials said.

The arrests were made after an FIR was lodged late Thursday night against five officials of Marion Biotech, including two of its directors, over a complaint by a drugs inspector of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO), they said.

Police said the directors are at large and a search is underway to apprehend them. Central and Uttar Pradesh drug authorities had checked samples of Marion Biotech products and found 22 of them to be "not of standard quality" (adulterated and spurious), according to the complainant drug inspector.

"Three people associated with Marion Biotech, which is located in Sector 67, were today arrested by the local Phase 3 police station officials. These people were engaged

in preparation and sale of fake drugs which caused serious harm to public," Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central Noida) Rajiv Dixit said.

"Besides the three suspects who have been arrested, there are two more directors of the company for whom searches are underway and they will also be arrested soon. With their act, these people were endangering human life and human health," Dixit said.

The officer added that a comprehensive legal investigation in the case will be carried out. Phase 3 police station in-charge Vijay Kumar said those arrested have been identified as Tuhin Bhattacharya, head operation; Atul Rawat, manufacturing chemist; and Mool Singh, analytical chemist.

The absconding directors of the firm who have been booked are Jaya Jain and Sachin Jain, Kumar said. The FIR was registered under Indian Penal Code sections 274 (adulteration of drugs), 275 (sale of adulterated drugs), 276 (sale of drug as a different drug or medical preparation) as well as under section 17 (misbranded drugs) and related violations of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

Marion Biotech had come under the scanner in December last year for its cough syrup Dok-1 that is suspected to have led to the death of 18 children who consumed it in Uzbekistan after which the CDSCO launched a probe into the matter.

The production licence of the firm was suspended in January after inspections at its site by the central and the state drug authorities in the wake of the controversy.



MINOR'S CHEEK BURNT WITH CIGARETTE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: The police have lodged a case after a seven-year-old boy alleged that his cheek was burnt with a cigarette by his cousin in south Delhi's Neb Sari area, officials said on Friday.

The incident was reported to the police on February 28, they said, adding that a case under relevant sections of the Juvenile Justice Act has been registered. Police said since the boy's parents are going through a divorce procedure, the child stays alternatively with his mother and father for a period of three months each as per court orders.

After conducting the medical examination, the boy was counselled and produced before the Child Welfare Committee which gave his custody to his mother, according to the police.

Presently, the boy is staying with his mother at Madangiri here, they added.

ISSUANCE OF PASSPORT TO MEHBOOBA

Decide in 3 months: Delhi HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: The Delhi High Court Friday asked the passport authority to take a decision within three months on issuing a fresh travel document to PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti.

Justice Prathiba M Singh noted the issue has been pending for two years and, following an appeal against the rejection, it has now been remanded to the passport officer concerned for reconsideration. "Considering that the matter is remanded back to the passport officer and the initial rejection was two years ago, let the passport officer concerned take a decision expeditiously and in any case within three months," ordered the judge.

The court's order came on a petition by Mufti seeking a direction to the authorities to take an early decision on her appeal regarding the issuance of a new passport. The former Jammu & Kashmir chief minister said in her plea there was considerable delay in



issuing a new passport to her despite reminders. She said no decision was being taken on her appeal.

The central government counsel informed the court that an order was passed on the appeal on March 2 and the matter has been sent to the passport officer in Jammu & Kashmir for fresh reconsideration. In view of the Centre's stand, the court observed, the petition was infructuous and no further orders were required.

Last month, Mufti had sought the intervention of External

The court's order came on a petition by Mufti seeking a direction to the authorities to take an early decision on her appeal regarding the issuance of a new passport

Affairs Minister S Jaishankar for the issuance of passport, saying she has been waiting for it for the past three years to take her 80-year-old mother on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

In a letter to the minister, she had said the renewal of her passport was pending after the Jammu and Kashmir CID gave a report that issuing the travel document to her will undermine national security. In March 2021, Mehbooba and her mother were denied passports after the Jammu and Kashmir Police cited an "adverse report".

Childhood obesity may rise over 9% annually by 2035: Study

THE REPORT PUBLISHED BY THE WORLD OBESITY FEDERATION PREDICTS THAT MORE THAN HALF THE GLOBAL POPULATION WILL BE OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE WITHIN 12 YEARS IF PREVENTION, TREATMENT AND SUPPORT DO NOT IMPROVE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: Childhood obesity in India is likely to see an annual rise of 9.1 per cent by 2035, if prevention, treatment and support do not improve, according to a global study released ahead of World Obesity Day.

Observed every year on March 4, the goal of World Obesity Day is to stimulate and support practical actions that will help people achieve and maintain a healthy weight and reverse the global obesity crisis.

The report published by the World Obesity Federation predicts that more than half the global population will be overweight and

obese within 12 years if prevention, treatment and support do not improve.

In India, around 11 per cent people will be obese by 2035, with an annual increase in adult obesity between 2020 and 2035 to be 5.2 per cent, it noted. The report 'World Obesity Atlas 2023' shows that in 2020 boys in India had a 3 per cent obesity risk, but by 2035 the risk will likely go up by 12 per cent and for girls the risk was 2 per cent in 2020, but in the next 12 years, it will rise to 7 per cent.

The report also shows that Indian women in 2020 had an obesity risk of 7 per cent, which will rise to 13 per cent by 2035. Men had a risk of



4 per cent in 2020, which will rise to 8 per cent in 12 years.

The study predicts that continuing failure to improve prevention

and treatment could contribute to a total economic impact of USD 4.32 trillion by 2035 - nearly 3 per cent of global GDP. The likely impact on India's national GDP will be 1.8 per cent, the report shows.

The main reasons for rising obesity prevalence in lower income countries include shift to highly processed foods, greater levels of sedentary behaviour, weaker policies to control the food supply and food marketing, and less well resourced healthcare services to assist in weight management and in health education.

"This year's Atlas is a clear warning that by failing to address obesity today, we risk serious reper-

cussions in the future. It is particularly worrying to see obesity rates rising fastest among children and adolescents," said Professor Louise Baur, President of the World Obesity Federation.

"Governments and policymakers around the world need to do all they can to avoid passing health, social, and economic costs on to the younger generation." That means looking urgently at the systems and root factors that contribute to obesity, and actively involving young people in the solutions. If we act together now, we have the opportunity to help billions of people in the future," Baur said in a statement.

international



Policy decisions will be taken bearing in mind the need to fully operate the National Ayurveda Research and Training Centre and intensify research on indigenous herbs

PAKISTAN TO RECEIVE \$1.3BN FROM CHINA

Pakistan will get another \$1.3 billion from all-weather ally China to shore up its fast-depleting forex reserves, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said, days after the cash-strapped country received \$700 million from Beijing



of the day quote

Pakistan's Punjab province will go to polls on April 30

New Delhi has to choose a side in the Ukrainian war at some point

I will introduce a plan to curb inflation and support trade with other Latin American countries

SHORT TAKES

Significant storm system to hit US

Washington: A significant storm system will bring severe thunderstorms, including tornadoes, and heavy rain which may produce flash flooding to the central US, according to the latest forecast by the National Weather Service (NWS).

UN chief names new envoy for Haiti

United Nations: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed Maria Isabel Salvador of Ecuador as his new special representative for Haiti.

Army blocks Israeli rally

Hawara (West Bank): Israeli troops fired stun grenades and blocked hundreds of Israeli left-wing activists from staging a solidarity rally Friday in a Palestinian town that was set ablaze by radical Jewish settlers earlier this week, protesters said.

Illegal refinery blast in Nigeria kills 12

Abuja: An explosion and fire near an illegal oil refinery site in Nigeria's Niger Delta region killed at least 12 people Friday, police said, although local residents reported a much higher death toll in the fire raged on for hours.

Najib acquitted in latest 1MDB trial

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian former Prime Minister Najib Razak was acquitted Friday in the latest trial in response to the multibillion-dollar looting of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad state fund.

Battle for Bakhmut rages

REUTERS

Chasiv yar, Ukraine, March 3: Russian troops and mercenaries rained artillery on the last access routes to the besieged Ukrainian city of Bakhmut Friday, bringing Moscow closer to its first major victory in half a year after the bloodiest fighting of the war.

The head of Russia's Wagner private army, speaking in a video recorded some 7 km (4 miles) north of Bakhmut, said the city, which has been blasted to ruins, was now almost completely surrounded with only one road still open for Ukraine's troops.

Reuters observed intense Russian shelling of routes leading west out of Bakhmut, an apparent attempt to block Ukrainian forces' access in and out of the city. A bridge in the adjacent town of Khromove was damaged by Russian tank shelling.

Ukrainian soldiers were working to repair damaged roads and more troops were heading towards the frontline in a sign that Ukraine was not yet ready to give up the city. To the west, Ukrainians were digging new trenches for defensive positions.

The commander of Ukraine's ground forces, Oleksandr Syrskyi, visited Bakhmut on Friday for briefings with local commanders on how to boost the defence capacity of frontline forces.

"The enemy is not giving up its hope of capturing Bakhmut and continues to build up forces to occupy the city," the press service said. Victory in Bakhmut, with a pre-war population of about 70,000, would give Russia the first major



WAGNER CHIEF SAYS ONLY ONE ROUTE OUT OF BAKHMUT LEFT OPEN

UKRAINE NATIONAL GUARD SAYS SITUATION THERE 'CRITICAL'

UKRAINIAN FORCES DIGGING TRENCHES WEST OF THE CITY

BIDEN, SCHOLZ TO DISCUSS WEAPONS FOR KYIV

prize of a costly winter offensive, after it called up hundreds of thousands of reservists last year. It says it would be a stepping stone to capturing the surrounding Donbas region, an important war aim.

Ukraine says the city has little intrinsic strategic value but that the huge losses there could determine the course of the war: It recaptured swathes of territory in the second half of 2022 but its forces have now been on the defensive for three months.

The commander of a Ukrainian drone unit active in Bakhmut, Robert Brovdi who goes by the

name "Madyar", said in a video posted on social media that his unit had been ordered by the military to withdraw immediately. He said he had been fighting there for 110 days.

Both sides say they have inflicted devastating losses in Bakhmut. Kyiv has said its forces are still holding out there, while acknowledging that the situation has deteriorated this week.

Volodymyr Nazarenko, a deputy commander in the National Guard of Ukraine, told Ukrainian NV Radio the situation was "critical", with fighting going on "round the clock".

MORE US ARMS

The past few days have seen alarm in Russia at its own potential vulnerabilities after Moscow reported a number of drone attacks on targets deep within Russia, followed by what it said was an armed cross-border raid Thursday. President Vladimir Putin was shown on television Friday telling his Security Council to step up "anti-terrorism measures".

China slams Quad meeting



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshimasa Hayashi and Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong before the Quad Foreign Ministers Meeting in New Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, March 3: China Friday renewed its criticism of the Quad grouping comprising the US, India, Australia and Japan, saying that state-to-state cooperation should be consistent with the trend of peace and development, rather than putting up "exclusionary blocs."

The meeting came against the backdrop of growing global concerns over increasing Chinese assertiveness in the strategically-vital region.

A joint statement issued after the meeting reaffirmed the four-nation grouping's commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific and said it strongly supports the principles of rule of law, sovereignty and territorial integrity and peaceful settlement of disputes. Responding to the Quad statement at a media briefing here, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said China has stated its position on QUAD on multiple occasions.

In November 2017, India, Japan, the US, and Australia gave shape to the long-pending proposal of setting up the Quad to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence. US President Joe Biden hosted the first-ever summit of the Quad leaders in the virtual format in March 2021 that vowed to strive for an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, inclusive, anchored by democratic values, and unconstrained by coercion, sending a subtle message to China.

Beijing claims almost all of the 1.3 million square miles of the South China Sea as its sovereign territory. China has been building military bases on artificial islands in the region also claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. On China's reluctance, along

The Quad foreign ministers carried out a comprehensive review of the situation in the Indo-Pacific at a meeting in New Delhi Friday

Presided over by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, the meeting was attended by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, his Japanese counterpart Yoshimasa Hayashi and Australian foreign minister Penny Wong

with Russia, to endorse a joint statement on the Ukraine war at the G20 Foreign Ministers meeting in New Delhi on Thursday, spokesperson Mao said G20 is a premier forum for international economic cooperation.

The G20 foreign ministers' meeting in New Delhi was unable to come out with a joint communique due to a bitterly increasing rift between the US-led Western powers and Russia over the Ukraine conflict despite consistent efforts by host India to bridge the differences.

China believes that the G20 should work to follow through on the leaders' consensus, focus on its mandate and main function, and contribute to promoting stable, inclusive and sustainable economic recovery, she added.

About China's views on the outcome of the New Delhi meeting of the G20 Foreign Ministers, she said: It was an important event, especially considering the uncertainties and challenges facing today's world.

The members represent around 85 per cent of the global GDP, over 75 per cent of the global trade, and about two-thirds of the world population. The grouping comprises Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the UK, the US and the European Union.

King Charles chooses France, Germany for 1st overseas State Visit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, March 3: Britain's King Charles III will undertake his first overseas State Visit as monarch to the neighbouring European countries of France and Germany towards the end of this month, Buckingham Palace announced Friday.

The King, 74, and Queen Consort Camilla, 75, will travel to Paris, where they will be hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron, and then head to Berlin and Hamburg to be hosted by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

In Berlin, King Charles will address the Bundestag, making him the first British monarch to make a speech in the German parliament. "The visit will celebrate Britain's relationship with France and Germany, marking our shared histories, culture and values," the palace statement said.

"It will also provide an opportunity to look forwards and demon-



strate the many ways the UK is working in partnership with France and Germany, whether that be to tackle climate change; respond to the conflict in Ukraine; seize trade and investment opportunities or share the best of our arts and culture," it said.

The choice of the countries is being seen as significant in the wake of Brexit to reiterate the UK's bilateral relations with the European Union (EU) member-states. "As well as speaking to the strength of the U.K.'s bilateral relationships with France and Germany, their Majesties' visits will include engagements highlighting the importance of sustainability and community - key themes which have been embraced by citizens of all our countries."

"There will also be opportunities to reflect on the sacrifices and challenges of our shared past, out of which has come an enduring legacy of cooperation and reconciliation," Buckingham Palace added. The visit, between March 26 and 31, will include state banquets and several ceremonial events in both countries, including the opening of the British Consulate in Bordeaux and meeting Ukrainian refugees displaced by the conflict with Russia.



FOR A CAUSE: Farmers with their tractors light tires on fire as they block traffic on a road leading into the center of Brussels, during a demonstration, Friday. Hundreds of tractors driven by angry farmers protesting a plan to cut nitrate levels drove into Belgium's capital city Friday causing major traffic disruption

Alex Murdaugh faces 30 years to life for murder of wife, son

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Walterboro, March 3: South Carolina attorney Alex Murdaugh was back in a courtroom Friday this time facing the judge as a convicted murderer looking at 30 years to life in prison for killing his wife and son.

Prosecutors indicated in earlier court filings that they will ask for a life sentence to hold Murdaugh responsible for what they say are decades of lying, stealing and using his family's considerable clout in their tiny county to his advantage. Any sentence would have no chance of parole. Prosecutor Creighton Waters said none of the victims of the crime - members of Alex



Murdaugh's family and the parents and relatives of his wife - wished to speak on behalf of the prosecution before sentencing.

As Murdaugh stood before the judge to learn his fate, he was in the same courtroom on the circuit where his father, grandfather and great-grandfather tried cases as the elected prosecutor for more than 80 years.

Boris may have misled UK Parl: Panel

The 58-year-old ex-PM, whose exit from 10 Downing Street last year had been hastened by the party gate scandal, repeatedly denied Covid lockdown rules were broken within government quarters when asked in the Commons

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, March 3: An influential UK parliamentary committee examining former British prime minister Boris Johnson's conduct related to the party gate scandal of

PARTY GATE SCANDAL



Covid lockdown law-breaching parties at Downing Street said on Friday that he may have misled the House of Commons multiple times.

The House of Commons Privileges Committee has published a summary of its findings and called in Johnson to give oral evidence later this month before de-

cisively concluding whether he knowingly misled Parliament and submitting its complete findings to Parliament. "The evidence strongly suggests that breaches of guidance would have been obvious to Johnson at the time he was at the gatherings," reads the cross-party committee's report.

"There is evidence that those who were advising Mr Johnson about what to say to the press and in the House were themselves struggling to contend that some gatherings were within the rules. The Director of Communications stated in a WhatsApp January 25 last year to a No. 10 official in relation to the gathering of June 19 in 2020 that: 'Haven't heard any explanation of how it's in the rules,'" it notes.

Nobel winner Bialiatki jailed for a decade, sparking outcry

REUTERS

London, March 3: Nobel Peace Prize winner and human rights activist Ales Bialiatki was sentenced to 10 years in prison on Friday by a court in his native Belarus which found him guilty of financing protests in a ruling condemned by Germany as a "farce".

Bialiatki, 60, was awarded the Nobel prize in October for his work promoting human rights and democracy in a country which President Alexander Lukashenko, a staunch ally of Russia, has ruled with an iron hand for nearly 30 years, violently locking up his op-

ponents or forcing them to flee. Footage from the cramped Minsk court showed Bialiatki, who co-founded the Viasna (Spring) human rights group, looking sombre, his hands cuffed behind his back, as he and his co-defendants watched proceedings from a courtroom cage.

Bialiatki, who was arrested in 2021, and three co-defendants were charged with financing protests and smuggling money. Belarusian state news agency Belta confirmed the court had handed down long jail sentences to all the men, including a decade in prison for Bialiatki. He denied the charges against him, calling them politically motivated.



Ales Bialiatki receives the 2020 Right Livelihood Award at the digital award ceremony in Stockholm, Sweden December 3, 2020

Exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya said Bialiatki and three other activists

GROUP OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

FINDS NOBEL PRIZE WINNER GUILTY OF FINANCING PROTESTS

OPPOSITION LEADER SAYS VERDICT IS APPALLING

GERMANY CALLS THE TRIAL A FARCE AND DISGRACE

The other three men convicted were Valentin Stefanovich, sentenced to nine years, Vladimir Labkovich, who got seven years, and Dmitry Solovoy, who received eight years but was not present in court.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock called the trial "a farce". "The Minsk regime is fighting civil society with violence and imprisonment. This is as much a daily disgrace as Lukashenko's support for (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's war (in Ukraine)," she wrote on Twitter.

of the day quote

The sugar production is going down by about 9 lakh tonne, that is our estimate from the previous year. So keeping that in view, as of now there is no proposal to increase the export quota

SANJEEV CHOPRA | UNION FOOD SECRETARY

In the next two-three years, we are aiming to take the revenue from products and platforms to \$1 billion in the newly carved out division of products and platforms in the next two years

CP GURNANI | CEO AND MD, TECH MAHINDRA

Over 60 per cent of employers in India Inc are planning to hire more due to the PLI scheme over the next couple of years

SUMIT SARABHAI | BUSINESS HEAD (EMERGING VERTICAL), TEAMLEASE SERVICES

SHORT TAKES

Amazon Pay fined ₹3.06cr

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India Friday said it has imposed a penalty of over ₹3.06 crore on Amazon Pay (India) Private Limited for non-compliance with certain provisions related to Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs) and Know Your Customer (KYC) direction. "It was observed that the entity was non-compliant with the directions issued by RBI on KYC requirements," the RBI said in a statement. The RBI had issued a notice to Amazon Pay (India) advising it to show cause as to why penalty should not be imposed for non-compliance with the directions. "After considering the entity's response, RBI concluded that the aforesaid charge of non-compliance with RBI directions was substantiated and warranted imposition of monetary penalty," it said.

Govt issues price for Gold Bond

Mumbai: The issue price for the next tranche of Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2022-23, which will open for subscription for five days from Monday, has been fixed at Rs 5,611 per gram of gold, the Reserve Bank of India said Friday. The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2022-23 - Series IV will be open for subscription during March 06-10, 2023. Government of India, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India, has decided to offer a discount of Rs 50 per gram less than the nominal value to those investors applying online and the payment against the application is made through digital mode. The RBI issues the Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) on behalf of the government of India.



We are trying to reintroduce Sensex-30 derivatives, and have started the consultation process by taking the feedback of market participants

SUNDARAMAMAN RAMAMURTHY | MD & CEO, BSE

PRODUCTION FEAT BY TATA MOTORS

Tata Motors Friday said it has crossed 50 lakh cumulative passenger vehicle production milestone. The auto major achieved the 10 lakh production mark in 2004 and the 20 lakh milestone in 2010. It crossed 30 lakh units in 2015 and 40 lakh units in 2020



FASTEST PACE

Services activity at 12-year high



- PMI Business Activity Index rose from 57.2 in Jan to 59.4 in Feb
- It was above the 50-mark separating growth from contraction for a 19th straight month, its longest stretch of expansion since June 2013
- Input prices increased at the slowest pace in nearly two-and-a-half years and output charge inflation softened to a 12-month low
- Degree of optimism recorded was the lowest for seven months

The robust report could fuel hopes for Asia's third-largest economy, whose growth slowed to an annual 4.4% in Oct-Dec from 6.3% in July-Sept as pent-up demand eased and weakness in the manufacturing industry continued

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 3: The Indian services sector expanded at the strongest rate in 12 years in February supported by favourable demand conditions and new business gains, a monthly survey said Friday.

The seasonally adjusted S&P Global India Services PMI Business Activity Index rose from 57.2 in January to 59.4 in February - its highest level in 12 years.

For the 19th straight month, the headline figure was above the neutral 50 threshold. In Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

"The service sector more than regained the growth momentum lost in January, posting the sharpest expansion in output for 12 years as demand resilience and competitive pricing policies underpinned the joint-best upturn in sales over the same period," said Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

On the prices front, there was substantial moderation in cost pressures as input prices increased at the slowest pace in nearly two-and-a-half years and output charge inflation softened to a 12-month low, enabling firms to raise prices

charged at the weakest rate in a year. If that trend continues, overall inflation, which rose to 6.52% in January, could ease over the coming months and might provide some breathing space for the Reserve Bank of India.

New orders placed with service providers rose further in February, with several firms suggesting that competitive pricing boosted sales, the survey said. Still, capacity pressures remained mild and jobs rose only marginally, it added.

"Despite the strong upturn in new business intakes, service providers noted only mild pressure on their capacities and, as a result, a large proportion of firms left payroll numbers unchanged," Lima said, adding that hiring growth was also dampened by a lack of confidence in the business environment.

The degree of optimism recorded in February was the lowest for seven months and below the historical trend as some companies doubted demand would remain this resilient. Others displayed concerns surrounding fierce competition for new work.

Meanwhile, the S&P Global India Composite PMI Output Index - which measures combined services and manufacturing output - rose from 57.5 in January to 59 in February, highlighting a sharp and stronger rate of expansion.

"Services firms also recorded a faster upturn in new business than their manufacturing counterparts. At the composite level, sales expanded at the joint-quickest rate in 11 years," the survey said.

The S&P Global India Services PMI is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to a panel of around 400 service sector companies. The panel is stratified by detailed sector and company workforce size, based on contributions to GDP. Data collection began in December 2005.

Investors' wealth climbs ₹3.43L-crore

SENSEX RALLIES NEARLY 900 POINTS; NIFTY JUMPS OVER 272 POINTS ON FIRM GLOBAL TRENDS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

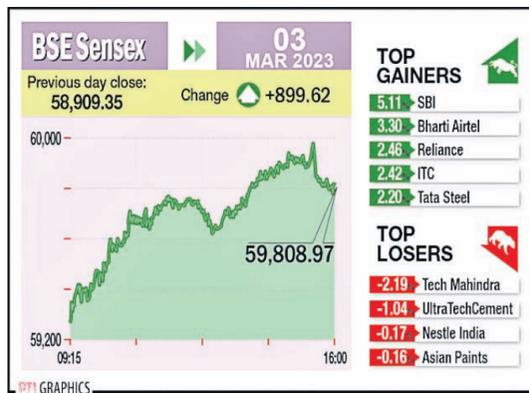
New Delhi, March 3: Equity investors became richer by ₹3.43 lakh crore Friday amid an overall positive trend in the market and the benchmark Sensex jumping nearly 900 points.

The BSE Sensex zoomed 899.62 points or 1.53 per cent to settle at 59,808.97 points. During the day, the benchmark rallied 1,057.69 points or 1.79 per cent to 59,967.04 points.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms rose ₹3,43,173.59 crore to ₹2,63,42,218.11 crore.

"The market had more reasons to cheer today than to worry about concerns regarding inflation. PSU banks led the sectoral rally as reports of foreign investments in Adani stocks helped the sector in recouping the dampened sentiment. The sentiment was further lightened as FIIs turned in strong buyers," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

The rupee appreciated by 63 paise



to close at a one-month high of 81.97 against the US dollar. Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) bought shares worth ₹12,770.81 crore, as per exchange data.

From the Sensex pack, State Bank of India, Bharti Airtel, Reliance Industries, ITC, Tata Steel, IndusInd Bank, HDFC Bank, Tata Motors, ICICI Bank, HDFC and

Titan were the major gainers. Tech Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Nestle and Asian Paints were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Japan, China and Hong Kong ended in the green. Equity markets in Europe were trading in the positive territory. The US market had ended higher Thursday.

World Bank commits \$1bn for India's healthcare infra

ONE OF THE LOANS WILL PRIORITISE HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY IN SEVEN STATES INCLUDING ODISHA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: The World Bank and India Friday signed two complementary loans of \$500 million each to support and enhance the country's healthcare infrastructure.

Through this combined financing of \$1 billion (about ₹8,200 crore), the bank will support India's flagship Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM), launched in October 2021, to improve the public healthcare infrastructure across the country, the multilateral funding agency said in a statement.

In addition to the national-level interventions, one of the loans will prioritize health service delivery in seven states including Andhra Pradesh, Kerala,



The Covid-19 pandemic brought to the fore the urgent need for pandemic preparedness and health system strengthening around the world and was a stark reminder that pandemic preparedness is a global public good

AUGUSTE TANO KOUAME | DIRECTOR, WORLD BANK

Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh, it said.

The agreement was signed by Rajat Kumar Mishra, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs and World Bank India country director Auguste Tano Kouame, it said.

The two projects are supporting India's decision to increase the resilience and preparedness of the country's health systems against future pandemics, it said, adding, this will be of great benefit for the population of the states participating in the projects and will generate positive spillovers for other states.

India's performance in health has improved over time. According to the World Bank estimates, India's life expectancy - at 69.8 in 2020,

up from 58 in 1990 - is higher than the average for the country's income level.

The under-five mortality rate (36 per 1,000 live births), infant mortality rate (30 per 1,000 live births), and maternal mortality rate (103 per 100,000 live births) are all close to the average for India's income level, reflecting significant achievements in access to skilled birth attendance, immunizations, and other priority services.

Despite these advances in the health of the Indian population, Covid-19 has underscored the need for revitalizing, reforming, and developing capacity for core public health functions, as well as for improving the quality and comprehensiveness of health service delivery, it said.

Forex kitty falls for 4th week in a row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 3: India's foreign exchange reserves dropped \$325 million to \$560.942 billion as of February 24, making it the fourth consecutive week of decline in the kitty, the Reserve Bank of India said Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had declined \$5.68 billion to \$561.267 billion.

In October 2021, the forex kitty reached an all-time high of \$645 billion. The reserves have been declining as the central bank deploys the reserves to defend the rupee amid pressures due to various factors, mainly global developments.

For the week ended February 24, the foreign currency assets, a

major component of the reserves, decreased \$166 million to \$495.906 billion, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves decreased for the fourth week running and were down \$66 million to \$41.751 billion.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) also fell \$80 million to \$18.187 billion.

The country's reserve position with the IMF was down \$12 million to \$5.098 billion in the reporting week, as per the RBI data.

BoI inaugurates SMEUC at Cuttack

Cuttack: Odisha being a fast developing state with ease of doing business offer ample scope for development. To cater the needs Bank of India (BoI) decided to open a new SMEUC at Cuttack (Ranihat Branch). The SMEUC was inaugurated by NBG Odisha GM Bikram Keshari Mishra, Zonal Manager S Malaydas & DZM Ashok Kumar Jena along with Chinmaya Panigrahi (CM, SMEUC), Hara Jena (CM, Ranihat Branch), NBG - staff, zonal office staff and branch heads of different branches were also present. The inauguration of a new SMEUC has marked a significant milestone for the community. The centre aims to offer customized financing solutions to meet the unique needs of SMEs. With a team of experienced professionals, the centre provides a range of financing products, including working capital loans, term loans, equipment financing, and trade finance to 38 branches of Cuttack, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur district. The centre is committed to providing SMEs with the necessary support and guidance they need to grow and thrive. It aims to support entrepreneurs who are driving innovation and creating new opportunities. The centre's launch is a promising development for the local economy, as SMEs play a vital role in creating jobs and driving growth.



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SOCIAL SECTOR SPENDING BY ULTRA RICH CONTRACTS

DESPITE 9.2% INCREASE IN WEALTH, ULTRA HIGH NETWORTH INDIVIDUALS' SOCIAL SECTOR SPENDING DROPS BY 5% IN FY22

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 3: The ultra high networth individuals' (UHNIs) social sector spending declined by 5 per cent in FY22, despite a 9.2 per cent increase in their wealth and the persisting inequities in India, a report said.

Giving by the UHNI segment declined to ₹4,230 crore in FY22, if one were to exclude the contributions of Wipro's Azim Premji, the report said.

Amid the clampdown on foreign funding of non-profits, the report by consulting firm Bain & Company and Dasra said international funding also declined in FY22. Private foreign giving dipped

by about 3 per cent to ₹15,000 crore in FY22 as compared to the contributions in the year-ago period, the report said, adding that their contribution to overall giving reduced further to 14 per cent as compared to 15 per cent in FY21 and 21 per cent in FY17.

Overall, the private giving remained flat in FY22 at ₹1.05 lakh crore compared to FY21, the report said, adding that the corporate social responsibility spends grew during the fiscal year on the back of the government mandate for top countries to donate towards social causes.

Going forward, the private philanthropic giving in India is estimated to grow at 11 per cent per



annum and reach 1.86 lakh crore in FY27, the report said.

It attributed this handsome growth to spending by the gov-

ernment, pointing out that the state's share in the overall social spends has inched up to 95.4 per cent now as against 93.5 per cent five

In the last five years, total social sector expenditure in India has seen an annual growth of 15 per cent per annum from \$135 billion (₹11.1 lakh crore) in FY17 to \$276 billion (₹22.6 lakh crore) in FY22, the report said

years ago.

Despite the growth, India is still significantly short of NITI Aayog's estimation of the total annual funds needed at about 13 per cent of the GDP as against 9.6 per cent in FY22

to achieve UN SDG (sustainable development goals) commitments by 2030, it said.

"With an expanding budget deficit, higher debt burden because of the pandemic, and increased crude oil prices, government finances are likely to be restricted," it said, adding that private philanthropy will have to play a greater role to help the needy.

Going ahead, it said, CSR spends situation is "promising", but there is a need for companies to adopt a "need-based spending".

"As India emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, ecosystem stakeholders must come together to strengthen community resilience," it said.

Adani shares rally

Shares of all listed Adani Group companies rallied Friday, with Adani Enterprises jumping nearly 17 per cent after the group sold minority stakes in four of its listed companies to US-based GQG Partners for ₹15,446 crore. In three trading sessions, the combined market valuation of the ten listed firms has jumped more than ₹1.42 lakh crore. Shares of Adani Enterprises zoomed 16.97 per cent to settle at ₹1,879.35 on the BSE. During the day, it jumped 18.56 per cent to ₹1,905. Besides, stocks of Adani Ports rallied 9.81 per cent, Ambuja Cements climbed 5.70 per cent, ACC advanced 5.11 per cent, Adani Transmission jumped 5 per cent, Adani Green Energy rose 5 per cent and Adani Total Gas gained 5 per cent. Shares of Adani Power jumped 4.99 per cent, Adani Wilmar climbed 4.99 per cent and NDTV went up 4.98 per cent. Most of the group firms also hit their upper circuit limits in morning trade.

INVESTORS SUMMIT

Investments worth ₹13 lakh-cr to AP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Visakhapatnam, March 3: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy Friday said the state has received investment proposals worth ₹13 lakh crore with an employment opportunity for six lakh people.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the Global Investors Summit 2023 being held here, the Chief Minister said MoUs worth ₹11.85 lakh crore will be signed today and the rest would be formalised Saturday. He also said the investment proposals are from Reliance, Adani Group, Aditya Birla group, ReNew power, NTPC and Aurobindo Group among others.

Among the major investors, NTPC signed three MoUs with an investment of ₹2.35 lakh crore which will generate employment for 77,000 people.

JSW Group signed six MoUs, involving an investment of ₹50,632 crore which will generate employment for 9,500 people.

Aurobindo Group signed five MoUs with an investment of ₹10,365 crore which will generate employment for 5,250 people.

Adani Green Energy has signed two pacts and an investment proposal of ₹21,820 crore potential to generate 14,000 jobs.

Reliance Industries Ltd announced plans for setting up a 10 gigawatt solar plant in Andhra Pradesh. The group is also investing ₹40,000 crore for rollout of ultra-high speed 5G telephony network in the state.

LIC recoups losses as Adani shares rise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: State-owned Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) has recouped losses on its investment in Adani Group stocks after shares of the apple-to-airport conglomerate rose for the third consecutive session.

LIC holds shares in seven out of the 10 listed companies of the Adani Group. The shareholding ranges from 1.28 per cent in Adani Green Energy Ltd to 9.14 per cent in Adani Ports & SEZ Ltd, according to information available on stock exchanges.

The rout in the Adani Group shares that followed US short seller Hindenburg Research releasing a damning report January 24 led to LIC's investments turning negative a week back.

Against a purchase price of ₹30,127 crore, the value of shares LIC held in the Adani Group dropped to ₹29,883.13 crore February 24. But the rally in the Adani Group stocks after investors poured in money has reversed the situation.

The value of LIC's shareholding in the Adani Group stocks has risen by about ₹9,000 crore since and at Friday's closing price, it stands at ₹39,068.34 crore, according to information available on the stock exchanges. The fall in Adani Group stocks had led to some questioning LIC's investment decision.

WAKE UP CALL FOR INDIA!

Rohit slams critics, backs turning tracks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, March 3: Rohit Sharma has had enough of the incessant talk about the pitches in India. He maintains that turning tracks remain the team's strength and wants the struggling batters to find a way to score on them.

Speaking to media shortly after India's nine-wicket thrashing at the hands of Australia on a pitch that turned square from the first hour, Rohit strongly indicated that another turner awaits both teams in the final Test in Ahmedabad from March 9.

His logic to play on spinning wickets is simple. The team has won 15 straight series at home and remains favourites to win the ongoing one having already retained the Border-Gavaskar trophy.

"Before every series we usually decide what kind of pitches we would like to play on. It was our call to play on pitches like these. I don't think we are putting pressure on the batters. When we win all seems well. We are not asked about our batting."

"It is talked about when we lose. We have decided to play on pitches like these, and we know we can be challenged, but we are ready for that. Honestly the pitch talk is getting too much, every time we play in India focus is only on the pitch."

We focus too much on the pitch in India. I don't think that is necessary," said the India skipper.

The surfaces in Nagpur and Delhi too attracted attention but the one in Indore copped the most flak. Dilip Vengsarkar, Matthew Hayden and Mark Waugh were among the former cricketers who thought the pitch was not good for Test cricket. For the third straight time, the match ended inside three days.

"Former cricketers, I don't think they played on pitches like these. So I don't know honestly. Like I said, this is the kind of pitches we want to play on. This is our strength. So when you are playing at home, you always play to your strength and not worry about what people are talking about."

"Our strength is spin bowling and batting depth. Other teams use home advantage when we travel overseas. What is wrong in that? Especially when we are getting the results."

"If we were not getting the results I would think otherwise. We are getting the results. Some batters are under pressure but that is okay. You can't have all members of your team in good form. Few will go through a rough patch but that is okay," said Rohit, who staunchly defended the team's tactics.

Games are not lasting for five days outside India as well. Yesterday (Thursday) the game got over in three days in South Africa. It is about skills. People have to adapt to skills. If pitches are helping the bowlers, the batters need to try and test their skills

ROHIT SHARMA

Australia crush India by nine wickets to qualify for World Test Championship final after home team batters exposed to rank-turner



AGGRESSIVE APPROACH: Travis Head plays a lofted shot during his match-winning knock in the second innings in Indore, Friday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, March 3: There was no twist in the tale as Australia turned the tables on India with an emphatic nine-wicket win in the third Test on a track that offered wicked turn and variable bounce, confirming their place in the World Test Championship (WTC) final here Friday.

Travis Head (49 n o, 53b, 6x4, 1x6) and Marnus Labuschagne (28 n o) survived some anxious moments before taking Australia home in 18.5 overs as the match got over in little over two days.

Wins in India are rare for the visiting teams and it is no different for Australia, who recorded their first victory on Indian soil in six years. For India, it was only their third defeat in the last 10 years and they will need to rework their plans ahead of the final Test, beginning in Ahmedabad from March 9.

The pitches in the series have also come under scathing criticism but, going by Rohit Sharma's views on the subject, one can expect a raging turner to be dished out at the Narendra Modi Stadium. India's batters have been found

India's World Test Championship final fate

Humbled in Indore, an outright victory in Ahmedabad will seal India's place in the WTC final against Australia but if the hosts lose or play a draw, their fate will depend on the outcome of the Sri Lanka-New Zealand series

Australia are sitting atop the WTC table with 68.52 percentage points (PCT). Even if Australia lose the fourth and final Test against India, they would still remain on top with 64.91 PCT

India's PCT is 60.29 so far. If India win the last Test, their PCT will go up to 62.5. They will then retain their second position and will qualify for final. However, in case of a defeat, India's PCT will drop to 56.94, while Sri Lanka's PCT will drop to 58.79 and 59.72 in case of a draw or tie, respectively. So in case of loss, draw or tie, Sri Lanka's series against NZ will decide India's fate

Sri Lanka's only shot at the final qualification will depend on a 2-0 victory in NZ. Sri Lanka's current PCT is 53.33 and it will go up to 61.11 in case of their 2-0 series win. But if Sri Lanka draw even one game and win 1-0, their maximum PCT will be 55.55 which will be less than what India (56.94) will have even if they lose the final Test

wanting against the spinning ball and Rohit wants them to raise their game and find a way to score runs. The hosts managed only 109 and 163 in their two innings here, with the top-order letting the team down again.

Considering the way Australia had collapsed in second innings of Nagpur and Delhi, 'anything' was

on the cards Friday morning.

Chasing a meagre 76, Australia were favourites but R Ashwin raised hopes of a miracle by getting Usman Khawaja caught behind in the second ball of the day. The ball turned sharply and took a faint tickle on way to the wicketkeeper. The wicket added to the nervousness in the Australian dressing room.

Labuschagne eased some of those nerves by square cutting Ravindra Jadeja for the first boundary of the day. Both Labuschagne and Head, who is known for his attacking approach, were looking to defend in the first 10 overs, with Australia reaching 13/1.

However, the momentum changed decisively in favour of Australia after the ball change following the 10th over: Ashwin was not happy even after the change of ball and that reflected in his bowling. Head smashed the star Indian spinner for a four and six over mid-on in the 11th over as the premier spinner was guilty of bowling too full.

Head took the attack to Jadeja in the following over, hitting one straight over the bowler's head, and that also gave confidence to Labuschagne who went for the sweep in the same over to take the score to 35/1 in 12 overs.

After that, there was no looking back for the Australian duo who had gained enough confidence to go for their shots. Labuschagne hit the winning runs, a four over mid-wicket, to complete a memorable victory.

Batters actually didn't do justice to their talent. If you look at the Indian wickets, you will find it is the Indian batters who got themselves out, playing some shots anticipating that this is what the pitch is going to do. They let the pitch overtake them. It was the pitch that actually started to play on their minds, even in the first innings but more so in the second innings

SUNIL GAVASKAR

The key was to bowling India out cheaply in the first innings. Once they (Australia) did that they gave themselves a chance to get a decent lead. It wasn't a huge lead but a decent and useful one. And then, in the second innings only having to chase a low score. So for me the key was getting India cheaply in the first innings and that took a lot of courage to turn things around from what had happened in the first two Tests

IAN CHAPPELL

This is what a little complacency, a little bit of overconfidence can do where you take things for granted, you drop guard and this game will bring you down. I think it was a combination of all these things when you actually cast your mind back to the first innings, see some of the shots played, see some of the over-eagerness to try and dominate in these conditions. You reflect back, take a step back or two to analyse

RAVI SHASTRI

ICC RATES INDORE TRACK AS 'POOR'

INDORE: The ICC Friday rated the pitch used for the third Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test match at the Holkar Stadium as "poor" after Australia beat India by nine wickets in a little over two days. The poor rating also earned Indore, three demerit points and will remain active for five years rolling period. "ICC Match Referee Chris Broad submitted his report to the ICC expressing the concerns of the match officials and after consulting with captains of both teams. Following the assessment, the venue has received three demerit points," the ICC release stated. The report has been forwarded to the BCCI, who now have 14 days if they wish to appeal against the sanction. Broad said: "The pitch, which was very dry, did not provide a balance between bat and ball, favouring spinners from the start. The fifth ball of the match broke through the pitch surface and continued to occasionally break the surface providing little or no seam movement and there was excessive and uneven bounce throughout the match."

'Captaining in India is like a game of chess'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, March 3: Steve Smith loves captaining in India and likens it to a game of chess, pushing one to stay a step ahead of the match.

Australia's batting mainstay, who was their skipper in the previous tour back in 2017, also prefers playing on spin-friendly tracks rather than placid wickets that takes the game to full five days. Reflecting on the win in the most challenging of circumstances, Smith said he could not be more proud of his team, which fought back after losing the first two Tests inside three days.

"They are pretty hard to come by. For us to get on top in this game particularly after losing the toss, it shows the talent in our group and the belief we have got in ourselves. We screwed it

up in Delhi, letting that slip, but we had a good break and good preparation coming here.

"It was about getting our mental state right. It was about trusting ourselves and our methods. It was about having faith that we will succeed and taking the result out of play."

"We are pleased to have qualified for the final of the WTC, which has obviously been on our radar for a little while. To tick that off is worth celebrating for this team," said Smith after Australia won their first Test in India in six years.

Smith is among the shrewdest thinkers of the game and that shows in his decision making on the field. In Cummins' absence, Smith said he has done his bit and relished the responsibility.

All the wickets have spun, haven't they? We haven't got three days yet. That shows there has been spin from day one in all Tests. I prefer to play on these wickets than a genuine flat one that goes five days and... It can be boring in stages

STEVE SMITH

"No, my time is done. It's Paddy's (Pat Cummins) team now. I'm glad I'm able to stand in this week in the circumstances obviously with Paddy going home. Our thoughts are still with him back home as well."

"Look, India is a part of the world

I love captaining. It's a game of chess, every ball means something. It's good fun moving people and trying to make the batter think and something different and just playing games with them. It's probably my favourite place in the world to captain."

Captaining back home is much easier, he said. "You think back home in Australia, you generally play with a third slip or putting a square leg up or back or pulling a third slip to cover... There's not much that goes on, you sort of stick to the same game plan and trust what you are trying to do there."

"In this part of the world, you have to be very proactive. Every ball is an event and that ball can dictate what happens the ball after. Something that I really love. I thought I did it well this week and it was good fun," he said.



(From L): Cheteshwar Pujara, Nathan Lyon, Steve Smith and Usman Khawaja catch up after the match

Barca edge past Real Madrid at Santiago Bernabeu

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, March 3: Barcelona triumphed in the first battle against rival Real Madrid. The Catalan club won 1-0 win at the Santiago Bernabeu in the first leg of the Copa del Rey semifinals Thursday — the first of three matches between the Spanish powerhouses in the next few weeks.

Barcelona took the victory with an own-goal by Madrid defender Eder Militao in the first half. The rivals will also meet in the Spanish league March 19 in Barcelona and in the return leg of the Copa semifinals April 5. Osasuna defeated Athletic Bilbao 1-0 at home Wednesday in the first leg of the other semifinal.

It was also the first match between the rivals since it became public Barcelona paid millions of euros over several years to the vice president of the country's refereeing committee. A banner by Madrid



Barcelona players celebrate their goal against Real Madrid, Thursday

fans at the Bernabeu said: "Clean and white, never tarnished."

It was an even match at the Bernabeu, with the teams struggling

to create significant scoring opportunities. Madrid controlled possession but couldn't break through the Barcelona defense,

ending the match without any shots on target.

The visitors took the lead in the 26th when the ball careened off Militao after a run into the area by Barcelona midfielder Franck Kessie. The goal came after Madrid midfielder Eduardo Camavinga lost possession near midfield. It was initially disallowed for an offside by Kessie but later got confirmed after video review.

Madrid thought they had opened the scoring with Karim Benzema in the 12th but he was offside. Kessie came close to adding to Barcelona's lead in the 74th but his shot from the middle of the area was inadvertently deflected near the goal line by teammate Ansu Fati.

Barcelona got the win despite playing without some of their top scorers because of injuries — Robert Lewandowski, Ousmane Dembele and Pedri, a trio that has combined for 40 goals this season,

with 25 coming from Lewandowski.

Xavi also couldn't count on central defender Andreas Christensen because of an injury. He started with Marcos Alonso in Christensen's place and Ronald Araujo was improvised in the right back position.

Barcelona were coming off a 0-1 loss at Almeria in the Spanish league, which marked the first time the Catalan club failed to score since October. Before that, they were eliminated by Manchester United in the Europa League play-offs. They lead Real by seven points in the league.

Barcelona defeated Madrid 3-1 in the Spanish Super Cup final in January but had lost by the same score in the first 'clasico' of the season in a league match at the Bernabeu last year. Barcelona also got the best of Madrid the last time they met in the Copa, advancing in the 2019 semifinals with a 3-0 win in the second leg at the Bernabeu.

Fulton named new chief coach of Indian men's hockey team



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: India Friday named South Africa's Craig Fulton as the new chief coach of the men's national hockey team that finished a disappointing ninth in the World Cup at home.

Fulton, who has nearly 25 years of coaching experience, replaces Australian Graham Reid, who quit after India's dismal show in the World Cup.

"It is an honour to be appointed in the role of chief coach for the Indian men's hockey team. India has

a deep history and legacy of the sport and I look forward to taking this forward with the current team which has some very promising talent," Fulton said in a press release.

Fulton's rise to fame started with a stint with the Irish men's team as its head coach between 2014 to 2018 when the team qualified for the Rio Olympics in 2016. That was the Irish team's first Olympic qualification in 100 years. The historic feat also won him the FIH Coach of the Year in 2015.

Fulton also worked as assistant coach with the reigning Olympic champions Belgium en route to the gold medal in Tokyo. He was also part of the Belgian coaching staff during their 2018 World Cup win in Bhubaneswar. Fulton was named Belgium Coach of the Year this year.

Fulton is expected to join in the middle of the upcoming Pro League matches against Australia and Germany in Rourkela next month.