

BIG B HURT

Actor Amitabh Bachchan gets injured in Hyderabad while shooting an action sequence for his upcoming film Project K

LEISURE P2



TOUGH FIGHT

Ukrainian military leaders are determined to hold onto Bakhmut, Kyiv officials said Monday

INTERNATIONAL P10



LIVERPOOL ROUT MAN UTD

Liverpool humiliate Manchester United at Anfield defeating them 7-0 in their Premier League match

SPORTS P12

Gopal doesn't have any mental illness



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 6: In a shocking development, the medical board comprising four experts constituted by the state government for the psychiatric examination of ASI Gopal Das, the lone accused in Naba Das murder case, found Gopal is not suffering from any mental illness. The Additional Sessions Judge of Jharsuguda mentioned about the findings of the medical board while rejecting the Crime Branch's plea for further medical test of Gopal at NIMHANS, Bangalore.

Notably, the investigating officer in the case had requested the court to issue instructions to the jail authorities for shifting of Gopal to NIMHANS for three weeks. The Crime Branch had also taken him on remand for 13 days for interrogation.

The Directorate of Medical Education and Training (DMET),

Odisha had constituted the medical board under the chairmanship of Dr. Ajay Mishra, Professor and Head of Psychiatry department at SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack, February 4, 2023.

The board in its report submitted the next day observed, "The person is conscious, alert, cooperative and communicative. He is well groomed with eye-to-eye contact. Rapport is established. Mood and affect - appropriate to the situation. Speech is relevant, coherent and goal directed. Thought content - no abnormality, perception - no abnormality, orientation - intact, memory - immediate, recent, remote all intact,

The Additional Sessions Judge of Jharsuguda mentioned about the findings of the medical board while rejecting the CB's plea for further medical test of Gopal at NIMHANS, Bangalore

judgment - intact, intelligence - average, abstract thinking - intact, insight present. It is found nowhere in the above observation made by the medical board that the accused is suffering from any mental illness," the order reads.

The court also remarked that the authorities of Choudwar circle jail had not informed about mental illness of Gopal on the basis of the jail's doctor.

The Additional Sessions Judge rejected the Crime Branch plea March 3. Earlier, the JMFC court had rejected a similar plea of the Crime Branch February 20.



RIOT OF COLOURS: Devotees play with colours ahead of Holi festival, at Govinddevji Temple in Rajasthan's Jaipur, Monday

PTI PHOTO

FIVE DEAD IN ILLEGAL CRACKER UNIT BLAST

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 6: As many as five people were killed and three others were critically injured in an explosion at an illegal firecracker manufacturing unit at Bhushandpur under Tangi police limits in Khurda, Monday

According to sources, the incident took place at around 10 in the morning when firecrackers were being manufactured at a house for the upcoming Holi festival. The house where the illegal firecracker unit was located was completely gutted in the incident.

Four of the deceased died on the spot. Four others who sustained serious burn injuries were initially admitted to the district headquarters hospital (DHH) and later shifted to AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, where their condition was stated to be serious.

The deceased were identified as Niranjana Behera (35), Braja Behera (30) and Dolagobinda Behera (62) of Bhushandpur village, Sahadev Behera (70) of Pandabpatna village and Brundaban Sahu of Badura Bazaar in Puri. The injured included Maheswar Behera (24) and Sudarshan Behera (70) from Bhushandpur.

CDMO Artabandhu Nayak said Maheswar and Dolagobinda suffered nearly 100 per cent burns, while Sudarshan suffered 70 per

AS MANY AS EIGHT PERSONS HAVE DIED IN THE LAST ONE WEEK IN SIMILAR INCIDENTS



cent burn injuries. Later, Dolagobinda was transferred to SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack from AIIMS Bhubaneswar after his condition deteriorated. However, he succumbed to his burn injuries at SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack.

According to sources, locals heard the loud blast and informed the police. Fire Services personnel took hours to douse the blaze and rescue the people, it was learnt.

Tangi police recovered the bodies around 4pm and sent them for

autopsy to Khurda DHH. Khurda Collector K Sudarshan Chakraborty, who reached the spot with SP Siddhrath Kataria and sub-collector Dipti Ranjan Sethy, said strict action will be taken against those responsible for the incident.

"No permission was taken from the administration for manufacturing firecrackers in the house," he said adding, "A thorough probe will be conducted to find out from where they had procured the raw materials and why they were making the firecrackers in the house. Action

will be taken based on the probe report." Fire Services DG Santosh Kumar Upadhyay has ordered a high-level probe into the incident.

It is pertinent to mention that as many as eight persons have died in the last one week in similar incidents. Three persons died in a blaze which broke out at a firecracker godown and manufacturing unit at Madhuri Bazar of Ichhapur village under Balikuda block of Jagatsinghpur district February 28. The incident occurred in the afternoon when the workers were busy manufacturing crackers.

LAND-FOR-JOBS SCAM

CBI questions Rabri Devi, summons Lulu

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Patna, March 6: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Monday questioned former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi at her Patna residence and has issued notice to her husband and former railway minister Lulu Prasad in connection with the further probe in the land-for-jobs scam case, officials said.

There is no search or raid taking place, they said, adding CBI had issued notice to Rabri Devi following which she showed her availability Monday and the team visited her residence to question her.

A similar notice has been issued to RJD supreme and former Bihar chief minister Lulu Prasad as well, the officials said but remained tight-lipped during questioning.

The CBI has already filed its charge sheet in the case. The special court summoned the accused, including Prasad and his family members and others March 15.

The agency has kept the probe open into the alleged scam and the new round of questioning of Yadav family members is in connection with further investigation in the case, they said. The team might also seek some additional documents from the family of Lulu Prasad related to the case of alleged land transfer to them in exchange for appointments in Group D posts in railways during 2004-2009. Prasad's son Tejashwi Yadav alleged that CBI's action was a result of his family's "relentless opposition" to the BJP.

HOLIDAY NOTICE

The offices and press of **Orissa POST** will remain closed March 7 & 8 on the occasion of Dola Purnima and Holi. Hence, there will be no edition of the paper on March 8 & 9.

—EDITOR

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



This letter from united opposition looks fake to me. It has signature of someone from the Congress

Shah likely to visit Bhadrak March 26

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 6: Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah is scheduled to visit Bhadrak March 26 as part of the party's Lok Sabha Pravas programme.

He will attend a host of programmes in the Bhadrak Lok Sabha constituency during his one-day visit, Odisha BJP general secretary Prithiwaraj Harichandan said.

Shah will address a public rally and meet party leaders, he said.

"The union home minister will also review the assignments given to Odisha BJP leaders during his previous visit in August, 2022," Harichandan said. Shah's priority will be to interact with BJP leaders and workers at the grassroots and boost their morale ahead of the 2024 general elections and the Odisha assembly polls, he said. **Contd...P4**



ISRO set to crash old satellite back on earth

THE DECOMMISSIONED SATELLITE NAMEDLY MEGHA-TROPIQUES-1 (MT1) IS TO IMPACT AN UNINHABITED LOCATION IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN TODAY

AGENCIES

Bangalore, March 6: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is gearing up for an extremely challenging experiment of controlled re-entry of a decommissioned orbiting satellite Tuesday.

The low Earth satellite, Megha-Tropiques-1 (MT1), was launched October 12, 2011, as a joint satellite venture of ISRO and the French space agency, CNES for tropical weather and climate studies.

An uninhabited area in the Pacific Ocean between 5°S to 14°S latitude and 119°W to 100°W longitude was identified as the targeted re-entry zone for MT1, weighing about 1,000 kg. About 125 kg on-board fuel remained unutilised at its end-of-mission that could pose risks for acci-



dental break-up, an ISRO statement noted.

This left-over fuel was estimated to be sufficient to achieve a fully controlled atmospheric re-entry to impact the uninhabited location in

the Pacific Ocean.

Controlled re-entries involve de-orbiting to very low altitudes to ensure impact occurs within a targeted safe zone.

Usually, large satellites/rocket

bodies, which are likely to survive aero-thermal fragmentation upon re-entry, are made to undergo controlled re-entry to limit ground casualty risk.

However, all such satellites are specifically designed to undergo controlled re-entry at EOL. MT1 was not designed for EOL operations through controlled re-entry which made the entire exercise extremely challenging, ISRO said.

Furthermore, the on-board constraints of the aged satellite, where several systems had lost redundancy and showed degraded performance, and maintaining subsystems under harsher environmental conditions at much lower than originally designed orbital altitude added to the operational complexities. **Contd...P4**

SHORT TAKES

Sisodia to be lodged in Tihar Jail till Mar 20



NEW DELHI: AAP leader and former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia will be lodged in central jail

number 1 of the Tihar jail, officials said Monday. According to prison officials, Sisodia will be lodged in Jail number 1 after the due formalities. Asked about Sisodia seeking spectacles, Bhagawad Geeta, a diary and a pen inside the prison, which was also allowed by the court, the official said that they will also see the specific order, if any. A Delhi court Monday sent Sisodia to judicial custody till March 20 in the alleged liquor policy scam being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). **P7**

Manik Saha gets 2nd term as Tripura CM



AGARTALA: Manik Saha was named as the next chief minister of the northeastern state of Tripura at a meeting of

the BJP legislative party held here Monday. A spokesperson of the BJP informed reporters after the meeting that the selection was unanimously endorsed by all MLAs of the party. Earlier, there was speculation that Saha, who was made the CM last year in a brand renewal exercise replacing Biplab Kumar Deb, may make way for Union Minister Pratima Bhowmik as the chief minister of the sensitive border state. The swearing-in of the new chief minister will be held March 8. **P7**

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	60224.46 ↑ 415.49
NIFTY	17711.45 ↑ 117.10
DOLLAR	82.47 ↓ ₹0.01
EURO	87.20 ↑ ₹0.36
GOLD	₹55,814 ↑ ₹93
SILVER	₹64,568 ↑ ₹167

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	36.0°C	35.4°C
TEMP. MIN	19.9°C	20.0°C
Humidity	69%	76%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather most likely	

leisure



HADID CALLS HERSELF 'NEPOTISM BABY'

American model Gigi Hadid, in her own words, is a 'nepotism baby'. The 27-year-old media personality is the daughter of Yolanda Hadid and Mohamed Hadid, and she accepts that she comes from 'privilege'. However, she insists that she's worked hard for her success in the fashion industry, reports *femalefirst.uk*

ELBA ON BEING THE NEXT JAMES BOND

Actor Idris Elba is putting the 007 rumours to rest once and for all. The 50-year-old Golden Globe winner admitted that he was 'nowhere' near being cast as James Bond following Daniel Craig's exit from the franchise.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
You will focus your attention today on your beloved. You will feel very energetic, but your commitment to work will falter. So don't be surprised if your superiors are annoyed. However, Ganesh says today is a day for romantic pursuits.

TAURUS
Today, you will be as creative and competent as you can get. Your work style, the deft way you handle things will awe and amaze your colleagues and superiors. Your subordinates will be highly impressed and motivated. They will be eager and compliant and will support and assist you to the utmost.

GEMINI
You will try to think up creative ways to perform your daily routine to get a break from the boredom and the rut of your daily schedule. You need to mingle more with people and practice some humility. Guests will come visiting at your home.

CANCER
The day looks set to be so good that you may end up inviting jealousy and envy from people around you. The stars are favourable for matters pertaining to heart. In short, a great day for boosting love and relationships.

LEO
It is an important day for you. Everyone in the office will accept your capabilities and will praise you. You may incur expenses on entertainment and luxuries. Your financial difficulties will now be solved. It is better to have an eye on long term gains. A progressive day on the whole, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
An unusual dose of creativity will motivate you to make a trip to some exotic place and mingle with new people. You will have some experiences that will enrich you mentally and emotionally. But don't unpack yet, there may be another adventure on the cards.

LIBRA
Ganesh says you will be getting good news from abroad, which will make you happy. Those of you who are searching for jobs will get good news coming your way. Ganesh says that you should not expect too much or you would feel dejected and disappointed when it is not met.

SCORPIO
You are one social butterfly today. However, shunning the gossips, you spread kindness and happiness in your social groups. People will look up to you today for this reason. What goes around, comes around; spread joy and you are sure to receive joy, says Ganesh.

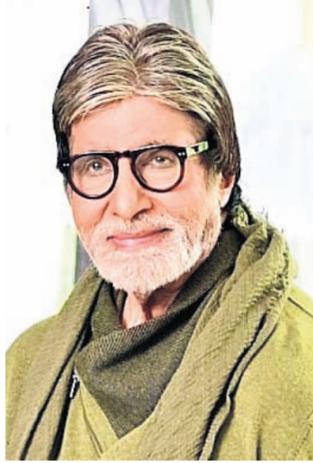
SAGITTARIUS
Suddenly, you become ambidextrous and plan to multi task today, says Ganesh. Your instincts will guide you today; trust them and move ahead. You may come across few challenges. But, anyway, who wants an easy way out, right?

CAPRICORN
You firmly believe in the concept of 'health is wealth'. You have maintained a very good health so far and it will not be an issue today, also. Successful completion of current projects seem to be a distant target, however, you will finish them off. Your boss may get upset with you for not completing the work on time. You will put monetary issues on the back burner for the day, says Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
You wish to have more than twenty-four hours in a day! You are determined to finish off your pending work but somehow you will find it extremely difficult to get the load off your shoulders. You will try everything; from canceling your vacations to postponing your dates, but nothing will seem enough, feels Ganesh.

PISCES
Ganesh asks you not to undertake any new project or business venture due to the alignment of the planets being unfavorable. You will do well in tasks that do not require too much creativity and innovation. Do not take sides when you are not required to and it make have heavy consequences in future.

Amitabh gets hurt during shooting



Hyderabad: Superstar Amitabh Bachchan was injured during the shooting of his upcoming film, *Project K*, in Hyderabad. The 80-year-old suffered a muscle tear to his right rib cage during an action sequence of the film. He wrote that after the incident the film shoot was postponed. "In Hyderabad at the shoot for Project K, during an action shot, I have got injured .. rib cartilage popped broke and muscle tear to the right rib cage .. canceled shoot .. did Doctor consult and scan by CT at the AIG Hospital in Hyderabad and flown back home .. strapping has been done and rest been advocated .. yes painful .. on movement and breathing .. will take some weeks they say before some normalisation will occur .. some medication is on also for pain .." Amitabh wrote. "So all work that was to be done has been suspended and canceled dropped postponed for the moment until healing occurs .. I rest at Jalsa and am mobile a bit for all the essential activities .. but yes in rest and generally lying around," he added. It was immediately not clear when the *Deewar* actor hurt himself.

Janhvi reveals parents' reaction to her dating life



Mumbai: Janhvi Kapoor has always been quite open about her family life at home, growing up with Sridevi and Boney Kapoor as parents. The actress recently revealed how they reacted to her dating life. In a recent interview with a film magazine the *Gunjan Saxena* actress said that her parents were quite dramatic about her dating life. According to them, if Janhvi likes a guy, she should bring him home so that they could get her married. The actress recalled telling her parents that not all crushes end up in relationships and they can chill. Sridevi retorted with, "Like chill, what does chill mean?" Janhvi has been grabbing eyeballs of late for her rumoured relationship with her ex-boyfriend Shikhar Pahariya. Reports are rife that she has rekindled romance with her ex. Ahead of her birthday Monday, the actress jettied off to an undisclosed location with her father Boney and sister Khushi Kapoor for a family vacation. What caught everyone's attention was that Shikhar also joined them. Soon, birthday messages poured in from several friends and fans for the dival who turned 26. The actress shared everyone's wishes on her Instagram Stories but it was her rumoured boyfriend Shikhar Pahariya's special post for her that caught everyone's eye. Shikhar shared a picture from the duo's last holiday together in Maldives wherein they can be seen standing side-by-side admiring the scenic ocean view under the moonlight. On the work front, Janhvi will next be seen in *Bawaal* where she will be sharing the screen space with Varun Dhawan.

Sara talks about life's worst phase

Mumbai: With COVID-19 becoming a pandemic, the year 2020 was not so eventful for many and several celebs will agree with it. Sara Ali Khan recently came forward and confessed that 2020 was the worst phase of her life while stating that it started with a breakup. For the unversed, Sara was reportedly dating her *Love Aaj Kal* co-star Kartik Aaryan. However, post the release of the Imtiaz Ali directorial, the rumoured couple parted ways. It all happened during her recent appearance on YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia's podcast *The Ranveer Show*. She candidly asserted, "2020 just got progressively worse. It started with a breakup and kept getting worse. It was a very bad year and most of it is on the internet." As the conversation progressed further, she briefly spoke about criticism of her performance in *Love Aaj Kal* and explained it didn't bother her much as she was not doing good on her personal front. Coming to the professional front, Sara was last seen in *Atrangi Re*, co-starring Dhanush. Directed by Anand L Rai, the film was released directly on the OTT platform, Disney+ Hotstar.



CURTAINS COME DOWN ON ASIM UTSAV



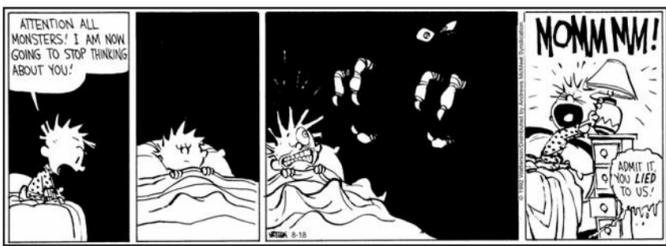
A star-studded cast led by veteran actor Kishore Khandual of Bhubaneswar-based theatre troupe Abhinaya Jagruti Institute of Theatre (AJIT) presented Odia play *Ekaa* on the final day of Asim Utsav, organised by Asim Basu Foundation (ABF) at Bhanjakala Mandap, Monday. Written by Maya Das, the drama was directed by Dipak Ranjan Pati (Aman). AJIT's other artistes who performed on stage included Upendra Pati, Jyoti, Rajesh, Pruthviraj, KP, Dipak, Dipti, Barsha and Payal. Apart from the playwright and director of the play, Odisha Natya Sangh president Haren Sahoo and dramatist Lala Biren Roy spoke to the audience on the occasion. ABF's Debadutta Pati conducted the meeting.

FUN post

PEANUTS



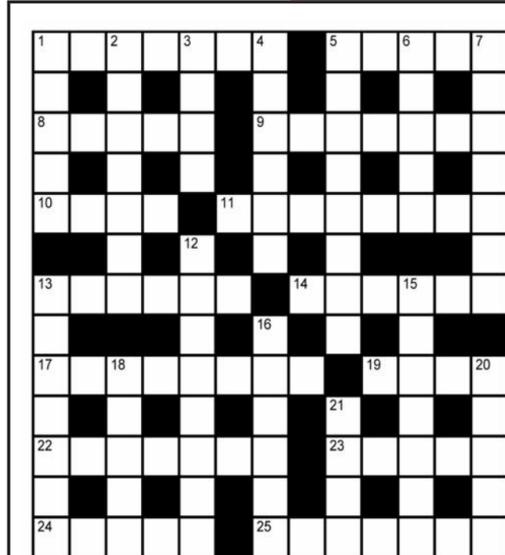
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



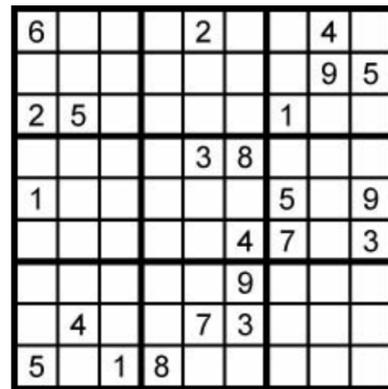
CROSSWORD



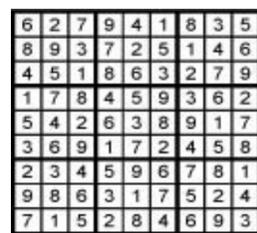
- Across**
- 1 Thug
 - 5 Precipitous
 - 8 Corpulent
 - 9 Lena River locale
 - 10 Waistcloth
 - 11 Go-between
 - 13 Athletic fields
 - 14 Clothing
 - 17 Skip over (5,3)
 - 19 Actor Mostel
 - 22 Newspaper VIPs
 - 23 Snapshot
 - 24 Genuinely
 - 25 Svelte
- Down**
- 5 Survives
 - 6 Heron
 - 7 Grassland
 - 12 Class
 - 13 Motion sickness, for one
 - 15 Frigid (3-4)
 - 16 Invitees
 - 18 Au revoir
 - 20 Stench
 - 21 Fencing sword

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

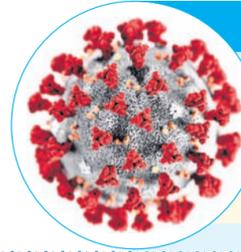


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



BOOST TO MILLET

Cuttack Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani inaugurates a Millet Extension and Sales Centre on the Collector's office premises, Monday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	68,07,21,138	65,35,92,180	68,05,474
India	4,46,88,101	4,41,54,425	5,30,775
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204



RICH TRIBUTE: People from various walks of life, including Dharitri and Orissa POST Editor Tathagata Satpathy, pay tribute to Nandini Satpathy, Odisha's only woman chief minister, during an event organised by Disha Foundation ahead of International Women's Day in Suryanagar area of Bhubaneswar, Monday

Race for fame, scores may spoil edu system: Behura

From a workers' colony in West Bengal's Durgapur to serving top posts in multinational companies in the United States and becoming the mentor and Managing Director of KT Global School in Khurda, the journey of Somdutt Behura has never been easy. In a conversation with Orissa POST, Behura speaks on a host of issues associated with today's education system. Excerpts:

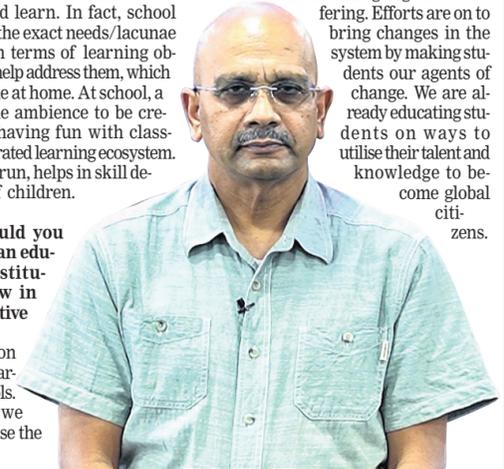


- **How different is KT Global School from other top English medium schools in Odisha?**
■ We are different. In fact, KT Global School is one-of-its-kind school in India which focuses not only on academic excellence but also on holistic development of children, fostering and sustaining creativity into their productive years as adults.
- **Your take on Indian education system?**
■ These days, it feels like it is the parents writing their exams given the level of stress and anxiety they undergo just to ensure their ward scores well. All they want from children and school is to secure good marks in exams. In order to meet this demand and earn reputational status, schools are burning midnight oil to make sure that students come out with flying colours in exams. It is high time the quality of education changed. Else, days are not far when the race for name and score will end up damaging the standard of Indian education.
- **How do you see the National Education Policy?**
■ The National Education Policy aims at fostering creativity among students in their primary classes. Besides fo-

■ **How the atmosphere of a school helps in skill development of students?**
■ After home, school is the second humble abode where a child can experiment and learn. In fact, school can identify the exact needs/lacunae of a child (in terms of learning objectives) and help address them, which is not possible at home. At school, a child gets the ambience to be creative while having fun with classmates in a curated learning ecosystem. This, in long run, helps in skill development of children.
- **What would you suggest for an educational institution to grow in this competitive market?**
■ Competition happens in market, not schools. At schools, we must recognise the

global scale and scope of learning. Good scores and big campus will not help one to survive in the system. But dedicated focus and path to creativity will. In order to succeed, we need to create atmosphere that helps develop and sustain creativity among students.

■ **About your future plans?**
■ No one has seen future, but all, including us, keep planning. We have something big in our offering. Efforts are on to bring changes in the system by making students our agents of change. We are already educating students on ways to utilise their talent and knowledge to become global citizens.



500 Mission Shakti Bazaars in 5 yrs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 6: In a move towards transforming women self-help groups (SHGs) to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the state government has decided to set up 500 Mission Shakti Bazaars across the state in the next five years.

This was revealed during a press conference on State Budget for Mission Shakti department for 2023-24 jointly addressed by Mission Shakti minister Basanti Hembram and Secretary Sujata R Karthikeyan at Geeta Govinda Sadan here Monday. Hembram said that the Mission Shakti department has transformed the lives of more than 70 lakh women by organising them into more than six lakh SHGs and empowering them through income-generating activities.

The state government has made budgetary provisions of Rs 2,554 crore for



the department for the financial year 2023-24 which is 27 per cent more over the provision made in Budget 2022-23, she said.

Mission Shakti aims to transform SHGs to SMEs. Government has approved the establishment of industrial parks for SHG entrepreneurs in each district. Rs 150 crore has been provisioned for setting up industrial parks, she said. The minister said that mobility is empowerment. A new initiative 'Mission Shakti Scooter Yojana' has been started to support community support staff and

EC members. Under this scheme, full interest subvention is proposed on bank loans up to Rs 1 lakh. A budgetary provision of Rs 50 crore has been made, she added. To propel women-led entrepreneurship at the SHG level, the government has enhanced the Mission Shakti loan-State Interest Subvention Scheme from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 5 lakh at zero per cent annual rate of interest.

Hembram said Rs 10,000 crore credit linkage target and Interest subvention benefits of Rs 220 crores provisioned. Speaking on the 2023-24 budget provision, Karthikeyan said that capacity building, comprehensive livelihood and skill development of SHGs aimed at graduation to SMEs. Karthikeyan said the state plans to provide government business worth Rs 10,000 crore to SHGs over the next five years. An outlay Rs 370 crore has been provisioned for these activities in the budget.





Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana

Jan Aushadhi medicines are available at 50% to 90% cheaper prices than the medicines available in the market

Jan Aushadhi becomes the strength of the public

Saved Rs. 20,000 crore of general public through Jan Aushadhi

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Additional financial assistance of Rs. 2 lakh to Women, Divyangjan, Ex-servicemen and applicants from Scheduled Caste and Tribe, Island Group and hilly area



cbc 02107131001412223

5th Jan Aushadhi Diwas
7th March, 2023

- Various State/UT level events are organised to promote the benefits of generic medicines
- Distribution of prizes to Jan Aushadhi Kendra operators and other stakeholders at State/UT level

Jan Aushadhi - Good and affordable

“To ensure availability of high quality medicines at low prices, thousands of Jan Aushadhi Kendras have been opened across the country, where medicines are being sold at 50% - 90% cheaper rates compared to market rates. These have greatly benefited not only the poor but also the middle class.”

Narendra Modi



Scan the QR code to download the app.

For further details visit the website janaushadhi.gov.in or call on the toll free helpline number **1800 180 8080** or download Jan Aushadhi Sugam App

LAND FRAUD

Two more cases worth ₹2.5L unearthed by EOW

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 6: A day after the arrest of two fraudsters in connection with a land fraud case, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) Monday unearthed further details about the racket. Two more victims including a havildar of Commissionerate Police who lost their hard-earned money too approached the EOW seeking action against the duo, Aditya Sahoo and Sabita Das.

"The accused Sahoo had deceived one Har Prasad Srichandan working as Havildar in SS Battalion, Commissionerate Police, Bhubaneswar. As per the complaint, an agreement towards the sale of the land was executed between accused Sahoo on behalf of fake Rangelata Swain and Ipsita Srichandan, wife of Har Prasad in the year 2022, in Bhubaneswar Court. An amount



Victims Har Prasad, havildar in CP and Harish Kumar from Gurgaon lost respectively ₹2 lakh and ₹50,000 to the fraudsters

of Rs.2 lakh was handed over in cash by the victim Har Prasad to the fraudster Sahoo as advance," said EOW sources.

However, Sahoo neither gave the land nor returned the money to Prasad.

Similarly, the accused duo also tried to sell the said land located at Bacchapur in Baranga area of Cuttack to one Harish Kumar who hails from Gurgaon, NCR. They allegedly contacted Harish and asked him to buy the land measuring around four acres valued at Rs 3 crore.

Harish paid token money of Rs 50,000 to the accused persons through Phonepay. They later sent all the land related forged documents through WhatsApp.

"However, the victim Kumar was restraint to move forward with the deal after he got the said land papers verified by his lawyer in Cuttack and found them to be fraudulent," revealed EOW sources.

The EOW may seek court's permission to take Aditya and Sabita on remand.



FITTING TRIBUTE: Governor Ganeshi Lal unveils a book on Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose published on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary at Raj Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Monday. Book's editors Harihara Mishra (L), Jyoti Ranjan Jena (3rd from L) and Jyotish Chandra Mohanty (2nd from L), one of the translators of the book, are seen

Continued from P1

Shah likely to visit...

The Union minister is scheduled to visit Odisha at a time when the ruling BJP and the opposition BJP are in a confrontation over the murder of state minister Naba Kishore Das and the law and order situation in the eastern state.

Das, 60, breathed his last January 29 evening, hours after he was shot by a policeman at Gandhi Chhak in Brajrajnagar area of Jharsuguda district, where he had gone to attend an event.

Harichandan said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president JP Nadda are also likely to visit Odisha under the BJP's Lok Sabha Pravas campaign.

ISRO set to crash...

Innovative workarounds were implemented by the operations team based on the study, deliberations, and exchanges among the mission, operations, flight dynamics, aerodynamics, propulsion, controls, navigation, thermal, and other sub-system design teams across the ISRO centres, who worked in synergy to surmount these challenges.

Since August 2022, 18 orbit manoeuvres have been performed to progressively lower the orbit. In between the de-orbiting, aerobraking studies at different solar panel orientations were also carried out to gain better insights into the physical process of atmospheric drag affecting the orbital decay of the satellite.

The final de-boost strategy has been designed after taking into consideration several constraints, including visibility of the re-entry trace over ground stations, ground impact within the targeted zone, and allowable operating conditions of subsystems, especially the maximum deliverable thrust and the maximum firing duration of the thrusters.

The final two de-boost burns followed by the ground impact are expected to take place between 1630 IST to 1930 IST March 7, ISRO said.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

I, Prafulla Bhadra S/o Late Sunakar Bhadra, MIG-3, Kananvihar, PS-Infocity, Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751024, Sworn before an affidavit, I declare that both names Prafulla Kumar Bhadra and Prafulla Bhadra refer to the same person. This is vide the affidavit dated 20/02/2023 Notarized in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Women more balanced than men: Acharya

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 6: On the occasion of International Women's Day a workshop was organised on "DigitAll: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality" at Utkal University here Monday by the School of Women's Studies.

Joining the celebrations, university VC Sabita Acharya said, "We celebrate the day every year to remind us of our goal of gender equality. It is everyone's responsibility to change the discriminatory mindset of society. The mindset is changing but it will take more time to transform. As students you all are agents of change, who can modernize the traditional system."

Women, being multitasking in na-



ture, starting from the household works, children upbringing, managing office work and contributing to the society, are more balanced than men, added the VC.

Jayanti Dora, head of the department of History and Director Women's Studies, welcomed the guests. She introduced Sangeeta V and Aditya Vashishtha, Founders of Spark of Lights, Australia, a

dedicated educational institution which aims to empower students and adults with life skills. A cash award of Rs 5,000 as 'Women Empowerment Award' was given to Amisha Dalai, a student of School of Women's Studies.

Rajashree Biswal, and art historian (Fulbright Post-Doctoral Fellow), Artistic & Curatorial Director, New Bridge India, also joined the occasion as the distinguished speaker presenting a research on the topic 'Digital Access for Women,' why it is important for girls. The gender gap in digital literacy is growing as technology becomes more sophisticated, she added.

The students of different departments and staff were present at the celebration.

CITY IN MOOD FOR ORGANIC HOLI FEST

POST NEWS NETWORK



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 6: With the Covid 19 restrictions fully lifted, vibrant celebrations are in store for the festival of Holi this year. A plethora of parties and events have been scheduled here to mark the festival of colours.

In one such event Swapna Pati Foundation, founded by Odia actress Swapna Pati will celebrate the 12th edition of its Herbal Holi at Hotel Kalinga Ashok here March 7.

"Chandan, multani mitti, and tomato juice will be used to celebrate the festival. We have planned activities like live music show, performances by visually challenged kids, colour foam dance and Odissi dance to keep the viewers engaged. Bollywood actress Amrita Rao and musical artist DJ Venus are the prime attractions of the event. We are also doing a fundraiser for people living in slums," said Pati.

Help Hands Foundation and Glamour77 have organised an event named Phal Rasiya on March 7 and March 8 at Blue Splash Water Park along Puri-Konark Marine Drive in which they will use only fruit extracts as colours.

"We shall use only extracts of orange, watermelon and milk with rose petals to celebrate the festival.

Actress Tejasswi Prakash of Bigg Boss and Naagin fame will be the star factor of the programme," said Rudra Narayan Behera of Help Hands Foundation.

Odia film actors like Priya Choudhury, Surpriya Nayak, Sasmita Panda, Manaswini, Abhijit Das and others will also be present in the event which shall feature music shows, fashion shows, games and comedy gigs, Rudra added.

Marwari Society Bhubaneswar will also celebrate Holi at Janata Maidan on March 8. The event Odisha Governor Ganeshi Lal is set to attend the celebrations as chief guest, said a member of the society.

Plenty of city hostels have also planned Holi parties permitting the use of organic colours only.

The denizens have been thronging the markets in search of colours, pichkaris, gulal, masks and hats. "After two years of setback due to the pandemic, we expect a significant boost in sales this year. So far herbal and organic colours have been popular among the masses," said Pramod Nayak a shopkeeper of the city.

Drug and Chemical Control Board, Commissionerate Police and officials of the State Pollution Board have kept vigilant eyes on sale of chemical based colours.

ECOR staff rewarded for alertness on duty

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 6: East Coast Railway (ECOR) general manager Manoj Sharma felicitated six railway employees for their outstanding performances and alertness while performing their duties.

Pointsman at Gorakhnath station Ajit Bahira, G Rambabu at Ichhapuram station under Khurda Road Division, Jagannath Rana at Lanjigarh Road station under Sambalpur Division, along with track maintainer Prasanna Kumar Tripathy of Loisinga station under Sambalpur Division and Madan Kumar Singh of Dhanmandal station of Khurda Road station were felicitated for detecting Hot Axle of running trains which could have led to major mishaps.

Apart from this, SK Mohapatra, a senior section engineer working at Sambalpur Control, received report of Hot Axle and took immediate action so that the train enroute was detained and a major mishap was prevented.

Felicitating thes ECoR employees, Manoj Sharma said that, the hard work and alertness of gangmen, trolleyman, gateman, OHE Khalasis, and other maintenance cadres who are working hard day and night in difficult conditions to ensure safe running of trains should be given proper recognition. He then appealed all the railwaymen to be sincere and to stay alert while performing duty so that passengers and trains will be saved.

ECoR additional general manager Sharad Kumar Srivastava and other senior officials were present during the felicitation programme.

'Keto-like' diet can double risk of heart attack, stroke

Looking to try weight loss by following a 'keto' diet? You could be at twice the risk of suffering heart attack and stroke, warns a study.

Researchers from the University of British Columbia in Canada showed that the popular weight-loss dietary programme, which includes very low amounts of carbohydrates and high amounts of fats, is associated with higher blood levels of 'bad' cholesterol.

It is also linked with a two-fold heightened risk of cardiovascular events such as chest pain (angina), blocked arteries requiring stenting, heart attacks and strokes, they said while presenting the study at the American College of Cardiology's Annual Scientific Session.

COMPARED WITH PARTICIPANTS ON A STANDARD DIET, THOSE ON A KETO-LIKE DIET HAD SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER LEVELS OF BOTH LDL CHOLESTEROL AND APOLIPOPROTEIN B (APOB) -- A PROTEIN THAT HELPS CARRY FAT AND CHOLESTEROL THROUGH THE HUMAN BODY

"Our study found that regular consumption of a self-reported diet low in carbohydrates and high in fat was associated with increased levels of LDL cholesterol -- or 'bad' cholesterol -- and a higher risk of heart disease," said lead author Lulia Latan, from St. Paul's Hospital and University of British Columbia's Centre for Heart Lung Innovation in Vancouver, Canada. For the study, Latan and her team



analysed 305 participants who were compared with 1,220 individuals eating a standard diet. They defined a low in carbohydrates and high in fat diet as consisting of no more than 25 per cent

of total daily energy or calories from carbohydrates and more than 45 per cent of total daily calories from fat. Compared with participants on a standard diet, those on a keto-like

diet had significantly higher levels of both LDL cholesterol and apolipoprotein B (apoB) -- a protein that helps carry fat and cholesterol through the human body.

Previous studies have shown that elevated apoB may be a better predictor than elevated LDL cholesterol for risk of cardiovascular disease, Latan said.

After about 12 years of follow-up, the team found that people on the keto-like diet had more than two-times higher risk of having several major cardiovascular events, such as blockages in the arteries that needed to be opened with stenting procedures, heart attack, stroke and peripheral arterial disease.

In all, 9.8 per cent of participants on the keto-like diet experienced a new cardiac event, com-

pared with 4.3 per cent of those on a standard diet, a doubling of risk for those on the keto-like diet.

Latan cautioned people who are considering going on an LCHF diet.

"Before starting this dietary pattern, they should consult a health-care provider. While on the diet, it is recommended they have their cholesterol levels monitored and should try to address other risk factors for heart disease or stroke, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, physical inactivity and smoking."

However, the researchers noted that their study "can only show an association between the diet and an increased risk for major cardiac events, not a causal relationship," because it was an observational study, but their findings are worth further study.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

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ITI students build Biju Babu's statue, Dakota plane with scraps

POST NEWS NETWORK
Chhatrapur, March 6: Students of the Chhatrapur Government Industrial Training Institute (ITI) in Ganjam district have built a statue of former Odisha Chief Minister Biju Patnaik and his famous Dakota aircraft from scraps, sources said Monday.
The matter came to the fore after Berhampur MP Chandrasekhar Sahu and Chhatrapur MLA Subhash Chandra Behera unveiled Monday the statue of Biju Patnaik

and the replica of the Dakota plane at the Chhatrapur ITI premises. The statue of Biju Patnaik is eight feet in height while that of Dakota plane is seven feet in height and 20 feet in width.
Officials said that the ITI students have built the statue and the replica of the aircraft from unused metals under the supervision of engineer Priyabrata Panda and other teachers. Other than the two lawmakers, many other dignitaries were present at the unveiling ceremony.



FOR A BETTER WORLD: Members of Budharaja Vana Surakshya Samiti pray for spread of green cover after playing Holi with trees at Budharaja hill in Sambalpur, Monday

BOY HELD FOR RAPING MINOR

POST NEWS NETWORK
Padmapur, March 6: Police arrested Monday a minor boy on charges of raping a minor girl under Chudamani Marine police limits in Basudevpur block of Bhadrak district. Police started searching for the boy after a complaint was lodged by the girl's family a couple of days back. However, it was difficult for the victim to identify the accused as the incident took place at night. A special team was formed under the direction of Sadar SDPO Sourav Otta following which the accused was nabbed three days after he had allegedly raped the victim.
The survivor finally identified the accused Sunday following which the latter was taken into custody Monday. Police also took the accused to the spot and recreated the crime scene. They took the survivor and the accused to the hospital and conducted a medical examination on them before handing over the girl to her family members. The accused was sent to a juvenile home.

Wildfires razing Similipal

452 CASES OF FIRE REPORTED FROM THE BIOSPHERE SINCE JANUARY THIS YEAR

POST NEWS NETWORK
Baripada, March 6: There is no let-up in wildfires at the Similipal National Park (SNP) in Mayurbhanj district. In the last three months 452 fire points have been identified, sources said Monday.



Wildfires are increasing rapidly at SNP which is the second largest biosphere reserve in Asia. Even though forest officials, firefighters and locals are dousing the fires, they have not been able to fully contain the blaze. As a result, core areas of the forest are facing the heat with fires spreading there.
There are over 1,076 types of plant species, 94 types of orchids, 604 varieties of medicinal plants, 45 species of mammals, 304 types of birds, 62 different kinds of reptiles and 20 amphibians in SNP, officials said. The wildlife sanctuary which used to be a storehouse of oxygen is now billowing out smoke-filled carbon dioxide. The worst affected are the herbivorous animals and birds.
Due to the extreme heat, the animals and birds are seeking shelters elsewhere. In the process, they are coming out of the forests

and are falling prey to poachers. Due to the wildfires, the animals and birds are facing acute food shortage.
Among the herbivorous animals, deer, sambhar, elephants, rabbits, wild boars and the livestock of people living on the foothills of SNP depend on plantations and grass inside the forest. With acres being razed, survival of these animals is at stake.
Locals pointed out that the existing fires inside SNP will be difficult to douse because summer has already set in. Local outfit 'Bhanja Sena' has warned that they will launch agitations in front of the district collectorate in

Baripada if the fire is not brought under control soon.
Sources said that the fire is spreading in SNP and the adjoining forests under Baripada, Rairangpur and Karanjia divisions under Baripada circle. According to details available from the satellite mapping conducted by the Forest Survey of India, 97 places under North and South forest divisions of Similipal Tiger Reserve are burning.
According to reports 72 points under North forest division and 25 points in South division have caught fire. The flames are rapidly spreading and in the process devouring greenery. The wildfires

have had a serious impact on the local weather conditions with temperatures crossing above 40 degree Celsius in the district.
Initially only two fire points were spotted in January. In February 157 new fire points were reported. Then there was another sharp spike and by March 5, another 293 fire points were identified.
To douse the fires, 6,432-km of fire line have been marked in North and South divisions of Similipal Tiger Reserve and in Baripada, Karanjia and Rairangpur forest divisions. Awareness programmes on wildfires are also underway at 1,167 places close to SNP while 88 fire-fighting squads have been formed to douse flames. The Forest department is also using 647 blowers under various forest ranges and has cleaned the bottom of 14,766 Mohua trees to check the spread of fires, Similipal Tiger Reserve, project director T Ashok said.
Environmentalists and nature lovers have demanded that a joint effort is required from all quarters to save the park from fire. They have said people from all walks of life should participate in extinguishing the fires.

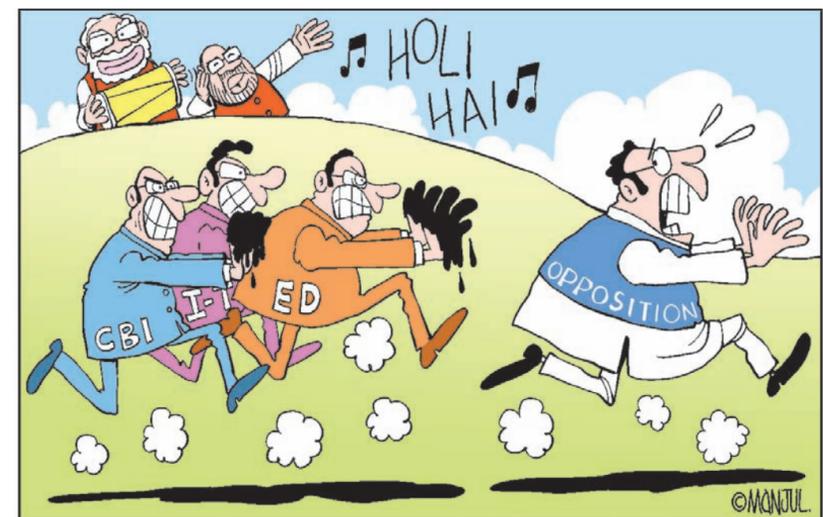
Jeypore rly station to get facelift

POST NEWS NETWORK
Jeypore, March 6: Jeypore railway station in Koraput district will soon get a facelift with plans afoot for renovation of the building. Facilities like parking slots, ramps for disabled, lift and drinking water taps will also be set up at the station, officials said Monday.
The matter came to the fore during the visit of divisional railway manager (DRM) Anup Satapathy of Waltair section to the railway station here, Monday. During the visit, Satapathy conducted a review of the station. He said that the station will be renovated under the Centre-sponsored 'Amrit Bharat Yojana'.
Satapathy also informed that 16 railway stations in Odisha have been included in the plan for renovation and Jeypore is one of them. A technical team accompanying the DRM visited various areas in the railway station and conducted review of the existing facilities and what are all required for the facelift.
The senior official said that very soon a tender will be floated for the renovation of the station building, construction of parking slots, lifts, ramps for the disabled and setting up of drinking water taps. The work will be finished within a year, Satapathy informed.
A delegation from 'Citizen's Forum Jan Kalyan Manch' also met the DRM and highlighted the



problems people are facing at the railway station. The delegation members pointed out that the Koraput-Jeypore double track work under Vishakhapatnam division is continuing for a long time and urged him to look into the matter for early completion. The DRM pointed out that the delay is because the route passes through hills and forests for which tunnels have to be built.
The delegation members also submitted a plan for construction of a 400-metre of road from the national highway to the railway station. They also requested Satapathy to provide two additional coaches to the Hirakhand Express and launching of train services between Jeypore and Puri. The DRM assured the delegation that he will keep their proposals in mind and apprise the Union government about the necessary infrastructure and other demands.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Sagasahi in Sundargarh district turns into model solar village

Bhubaneswar/Sundargarh: Adopted by Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) under its corporate social responsibility initiative, Sagasahi, the first solar village in Koida block of Sundargarh district was unveiled recently. The solarisation of the entire village was taken up by AM/NS India for promotion of green and clean energy. A holistic approach was undertaken to develop this 24x7 solar powered village covering households and public areas. In pursuance of this, an array of activities including installation of solar-based home lighting system in all 90 households, water system of 10,000 litres capacity with 12 distribution points to cover all hamlets in the village and installation of 70 solar streetlights were done. The newly-constructed Lok Vikas Kendra, a community resource centre was

also inaugurated. It will be used for village meetings, functions, and solar-based income generation activities by the women. Suranjan Sahoo, sub-collector, Bonai division inaugurated the solar village in the presence of Pallabi Raj, BDO, Koida, DS Joshi, Tehsildar, Koida and other dignitaries. Dr Vikas Yadvendu, head CSR, AM/NS India and other senior officials of the company were present on the occasion. More than 200 villagers from Sagasahi, Kalmong and Ghoraburhani also attended the function.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/22-23/
E-Tender/158, Dt.: 02.03.2023
(1) Tender No.: etender-South-KUR-433-2022, Dtd.: 24.02.2023
Description: PROPOSED CONVERSION AND REBUILDING OF 35 Nos. STONE SLAB BRIDGES INTO RCC BOX BRIDGES BETWEEN KHURDA ROAD TO KUHURI STATION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work: ₹90.74 Lakh
EMD: ₹6,03,700/-
(2) Tender No.: etender-East-KUR-438-2022, Dtd.: 27.02.2023
Description: EXECUTION OF THROUGH SLEEPER RENEWAL FOR A LENGTH OF 6.00 Kms. FROM Km 410.00 TO 416.00 ON UP LINE BETWEEN CUTTACK-KANDARPUR SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work: ₹148.21 Lakh, EMD: ₹2,24,100/-
Completion period: 15 (Fifteen) Months (For Sl. No. 1), 06 (Six) Months (For Sl. No. 2).
Tender Closing Date and Time: at 1500hrs. of 22.03.2023 (For both tenders).
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letterhead and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>
The tenders/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer(s)/bidder(s) can participate in e-tendering. All relevant papers must have to be uploaded at the time of participating in e-tendering as per instruction.
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/compendia issued for this tender.
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg),
PR-1056/N/22-23 Khurda Road

आईआरएल (इंडिया) लिमिटेड/IREL (India) Limited
Formerly Indian Railways Limited.
(A Government of India Undertaking)
CN: U15100MH1950G0100187 Website: www.irel.co.in
ISO 9001: 2015, ISO 14001: 2015 & ISO 45001: 2018 Company

Ref: ADVT. NO.22-23/23 **TENDER NOTICE** Date: 07.03.2023
IREL, OSCOM invites request for proposal for the following items / job descriptions.

Bid No.	Job/Item Description
GEM/2023/B/3181924	Sapling, Raising, Plantation & Maintenance in mined out area at OSCOM.
GEM/2023/B/3109862	TSP Product Handling
2023 IREL 146750 1	IAMC For Structural Works at Mining Plants

Bidder may download tender document from <http://irel.co.in>, <http://gem.gov.in> or CPP website. Any corrigendum / Extension to above tenders shall be hosted in above websites only.
CBC 48129/12/0095/2223 Sd./- Executive Director, OSCOM

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
"e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No.47 of 2022-23
No.O-1055:The Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Balangir on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage bid through e-Procurement in single cover system according to norm of e-Procurement system in online mode for the different work in different Blocks under Balangir District.
01. Nature of Work: Construction of Percolation well and RCC intake well & Extension of HDPE pipe line in different villages of Balangir District.
02. Total No. of Work: 04 Nos.
03. Estimated Cost: Rs. 16.50 Lakh to 28.66 Lakh.
04. Eligible Class of Contractor: "D", "C" and "B" Contractor.
05. Period of Completion: Three Months.
06. Other details

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding	
		From	To
Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Balangir	47 of 2022-23	Dt. 15.03.2023 At 11.00 Hrs.	Dt. 28.03.2023 Upto 17.00 Hrs.

Further details can be had in the DTCN available in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer
RWS&S Division, Balangir
OIPR-25033/11/0038/2223

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, MALKANGIRI
Odisha, PIN - 764045, Ph.: 06861-230244
e-Mail: malkangiri@ulborissa.gov.in
Lt. No. 454/Mpl./2023 Dated: 04.03.2023

QUOTATION CALL NOTICE
Sealed quotation is hereby invited from the Manufacturers/Suppliers/dealers for supply & Installation of Pre-casted Cement benches (4 seated) at different locations of Malkangiri Municipality. The quotationer is also required to furnish self-attested copy of valid GST registration certificate (Form - 06) and PAN Card alongwith the quotation price. The paper cost of Rs.2000/- (Non-refundable) and EMD Rs.10000/- should be deposited in shape of Bank Draft/Bankers' Cheque in favour of the Executive Officer, Malkangiri Municipality from any Nationalized/Schedule Bank and attach the same along with quotation. The quotation is required to quote the rate inclusive of all taxes, transportation etc. complete and delivery & installation at said place of the Malkangiri Municipality. The sealed cover should be super scribed with the quotation call notice No. & Date. The quotation should reach the undersigned by 13.03.2023 by Regd. Post/Speed Post and will be opened in presence of quotationer or their authorized representative. The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all quotations without assigning any reason thereof.
Sd./- Executive Officer
Malkangiri Municipality

Kendrapara farmers face water woes

Despite presence of 7 rivers and 27 distributaries, water scarcity is affecting agricultural development



POST NEWS NETWORK
Kendrapara, March 6: Agriculture is the mainstay of people in Kendrapara district but lack of proper water management has hit them hard. Over 69 per cent of the residents in this district are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. However, lack of proper irrigation facilities to their farmlands as well as drainage system has affected the growth and development of agriculture in the district.
This has happened despite seven rivers and 27 distributaries flowing through the district. There is abundance of water, but much of it is wasted due to lack of proper management, farmers alleged.
The Mahanadi-Chitropala water

project supplies water to the Kendrapara, Pattamunda and Gobarika blocks. Even then, half of the farmlands in the district do not get water during cultivation. Similarly, drainage of leftover water that ingresses the farmlands during rain, floods and cyclonic storms is a major problem.
Out of the nine blocks, Aul, Rajnagar and Rajkanika do not have any canals. The Water Resources, Agriculture, Panchaytiraj and Lift Irrigation departments have been working in these blocks to ease water scarcity. The Odisha government has also an-

nounced that it will provide irrigation to 35 per cent of the farmlands in each block. However, these departments have not shown enough promptness to fulfil the government's aim.
Reports said that out of 28,070 hectares of farmland in Mahakalpara block only 24.31 per cent of get water. In Rajnagar, out of 25,885 hectares, only 19.16 per cent of farmlands have water supply.
The district Agriculture department has said that it is providing irrigation facilities to 47,727 hectares of farmlands out of 1,54,000 hectare

through canals. Over 30,781 hectare of farmlands get water through lift irrigation points and shallow tube wells while 10,724 hectares are provided with water from other sources, it added. Farmers however, contradicted the statements of the Agriculture department.
Farmers Niranjan Parida in Kendrapara block, Susant Nayak and Tulu Pradhan (both from Rajkanika block) and Sunil Kumar Gantayat of Mahakalpara block alleged that water does not reach downstream due to heavy growth of weeds and dumping of garbage in the canals. They added that the 'Pani panchayat' formed by the Lift Irrigation department has turned into a farce while government funds are allegedly being misappropriated by some officials.
The lift irrigation points have turned defunct due to lack of power supply over outstanding electricity bills. The motors have also developed technical snags and are of no use at present, farmers said.

FOCUS ECONOMY

WHAT DEVELOPED MEANS



Currently India is among the fastest growing economies, and yet we are providing free food rations to 81 crore people

curity. The free food also adds to their "income" although it is not in the form of cash, but in kind.

Here are three metrics which are measurable and will really mean that India and her people have reached developed country status. The first is the availability of clean drinking water from a tap in the house. There is the national Jal Jeevan Mission which is focused on this. Out of 19 crore rural households, roughly 3 crore have got tap connections. But mind you, this is not merely about a tap, but availability of potable, clean water. Which will reflect in much less water-borne diseases, and less arsenic poisoning. The second metric is about the quality of the local school, be it municipal school in cities, or a village panchayat school. In a developed nation parents will happily choose the nearest public school for their kids. But the current reality is that even people living in slums prefer to send their kids to a private school and engage high-cost tuitions. Even teachers who teach in municipal or village schools prefer to send their own kids to other private schools.

The third litmus test of being a developed nation is the use of public transport. A developed country is not one in which poor people can afford cars, but where even the rich travel in public transport like buses, trains and metros. This happens when the services are of high quality, punctual, reliable and affordable. Some big cities in developed countries have made buses totally free. And the ridership has gone up. Thus, from these three "litmus tests" we can measure our progress towards becoming a developed nation. Of course, there are many other metrics too, such as air quality, worker productivity, health status, elderly care, forest cover, lowering the carbon footprint, biodiversity and so on. But the three "litmus test" goals can suffice.

The writer is a noted economist.
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the fifth largest economy and will become the fourth largest in a year or two, after it overtakes Germany. But in terms of per capita income, it is still ranked below 130. India's per capita income is about \$2200, whereas the world average is above \$12,000. The average of the OECD group of fifteen rich and developed large countries is \$42,500. The Euro area average is roughly the same. North America is \$68,000 in per capita income. This is the most recent data available from the World Bank. The average for South Asia is the same as India because it has a big weight (and incidentally the Bangladeshi per capita income is now ahead of India). The numbers look different if the dollar income is adjusted for purchasing power parity, i.e. to account for the fact that the domestic currency like the rupee in India's case, has much greater purchasing power than implied by the exchange rate. Which is to say one dollar in India will get you much more than one dollar in America. Hence \$2200 in India is actually close to \$7000 in purchasing power parity terms. Even then India's rank is 128 in the world, and 31 among Asian na-

tions. So reaching a developed nation category with per capita income of more than (say) \$30,000 is a tall order, if it has to be achieved in the next twenty-five years. This question will not go away. It has been around since Vajpayee's speech or even earlier. In 2008, at a big gathering, Amartya Sen was asked when he thought India would reach developed country status. This was when India was already clocking 9% growth. He gave a classic Amartya Sen response. The Nobel laureate said he had absolutely no interest in answering such a question!

The important point is that even if we are a fast-growing economy and manage to cross say, \$10,000 in per capita income, will it mean a "developed country" experience for all Indians? Because after all, the per capita income is simply a national average, and does not tell us anything about how that income is distributed across all sections of society. Currently India is among the fastest growing economies, and yet we are providing free food rations to 81 crore people. This is due to concerns about their food se-

India's relative fast pace of economic growth raises the question: when will India become a developed country? In 2002 then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had declared that India would be a developed nation by 2020. This was reiterated by former President APJ Abdul Kalam in several speeches. On one occasion in March 2003, he said: "We should not allow any religion or any individual fanatic to endanger our nation." He said his goal of a Developed India by 2020 was based on a detailed action plan in areas like agriculture, education, healthcare, infrastructure and information technology. In 1998, Kalam along with his colleague and scientist YS Rajan wrote a book titled India 2020 which also described a vision for India becoming a developed nation. More recently Prime Minister Modi declared in his 2022 Independence Day speech that we should take a pledge to make India a developed country by 2047, the hundredth year of our independence. From the days of the speech of Vajpayee, the goal has shifted by another twenty-seven years.

It is worth examining this question, of not just whether India can become a developed nation by 2047, but more fundamentally, what exactly is our definition of this concept. As a slogan and as a grand vision it is easy to articulate and captures the imagination of the people. It is a term used quite liberally in conversations. The World Bank has been using this term, of "developed" or "developing" countries almost from its inception. Most analysts and economists, especially those working for foreign banks, use acronyms like "DC" and "EME" all the time. These stand for "Developed Country" and "Emerging Market Economies". So just by constant usage these terms have gained acceptance.

One obvious definition, also used by the World Bank is in terms of per capita income, measured in dollars. India is currently



Ajit Ranade

PER CAPITA INCOME IS SIMPLY A NATIONAL AVERAGE, AND DOES NOT TELL US ANYTHING ABOUT HOW THAT INCOME IS DISTRIBUTED ACROSS ALL SECTIONS OF SOCIETY



Ian Buruma

To be sure, the right-wing crackdown on academic freedom is more dangerous than the left's literary allergies

Man in the world's life works out the dreams of God.

SRI AUROBINDO



The Culture-War Trap

The United States is in the midst of a book-banning frenzy. According to PEN America, 1,648 books were prohibited in public schools across the country between July 2021 and June 2022. That number is expected to increase this year as conservative politicians and organisations step up efforts to censor works dealing with sexual and racial identity.

Republican-controlled states like Florida and Utah have cracked down on school libraries in recent months, banning titles that address racial as well as gender and sexual issues, such as Ibram X. Kendi's How to Be an Antiracist and Maia Kobabe's Gender Queer: A Memoir. In parts of Florida, schools have been instructed to limit access to books on race and diversity, and they have been warned that teachers sharing so-called "obscene and pornographic materials" with students could face five years in prison. In South Carolina, Governor Henry McMaster pointed to Kobabe's book, which won the American Library Association's Alex Award for young adult literature in 2020, as an example of "obscene and pornographic materials."

Today's book bans are largely driven by right-wing populist politicians and parent groups claiming to protect wholesome, family-oriented Christian communities from the decadence of urban America. As such, a children's book featuring LGBTQ+ characters falls under their definition of pornography.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, a likely presidential contender, is arguably the leading advocate of state censorship and modern-day book bans. Last month, DeSantis and his allies in the state's House of Representatives introduced a new bill that would prohibit universities and colleges from supporting campus activities that "espouse diversity, equity, and inclusion or critical race theory rhetoric." The bill also seeks to remove critical race theory, gender studies, and intersectionality, as well as any "derivative major or minor of these belief systems," from academic curricula.

But even though there are fewer calls from left-wing progressives to ban books, they, too, can be intolerant of literature that offends them. Such classics as To Kill a Mockingbird and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn have been removed from some school reading lists because they contain racial slurs and might "marginalise" certain readers.

To be sure, the right-wing crackdown on academic freedom is more dangerous than the left's literary allergies. What is interesting, however, is how much left-wing and right-wing intolerance have in common. Right-wing populists like DeSantis tend to mimic progressive rhetoric about "inclusivity" and "sensitivity" in the classroom. White students, they claim, must be shielded from learning about slavery or the role of white supremacy in American history because it might upset them and make them feel guilty.

Progressives who want to stop teaching Huckleberry Finn in schools or demand that words like "fat" be taken out of Roald Dahl's children's books follow the same logic. They, too, do not want children to feel offended or "unwelcome." Their idea of education is akin to therapy: its purpose is to make children feel good about themselves, rather than to learn how to absorb information and think for themselves.

Right-wing mimicry of left-wing jargon can be viewed as a form of bad-faith payback. After all, the driving force behind conservative puritanism in the US has always been fundamentalism, not inclusion. But religious dogmatism is intimately linked to the fear of being offended. The controversy that followed the publication of Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses in 1988 is a case in point. In addition to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's fatwa calling for the author's death, Christian conservatives condemned Rushdie for mocking religion. Some on the left, though they did not belong to any religion, still criticised Rushdie for offending millions of Muslims.

Christian puritans do not oppose books about gay topics just because the Bible forbids homosexuality, but also (and perhaps primarily) because it violates what they believe to be the natural order. This is not so different from the sentiments of thousands of people who recently signed a letter protesting the coverage of transgender issues in the New York Times. Signatories were upset by the fact that some articles assumed that the question of gender might not be scientifically settled. One, by the columnist Pamela Paul defending JK Rowling, caused particular offense. Rowling does not hate people who have transitioned from one sex to another, but she does not believe that being a woman, or a man, is simply a matter of choice.

Progressives who call for the banning of Rowling's Harry Potter books (which are also denounced by right-wing zealots for promoting witchcraft) do not on the whole do so for religious reasons. Again, they talk about unwelcoming workplaces, marginalisation, insensitivity, and so on. But they are often as dogmatic as religious believers. They are convinced that someone born with male genitals is a woman if he/she says so. To doubt this conviction, as Rowling does, violates their view of nature.

This is not to suggest that threats from the left to students' access to books are as serious as those coming from the far right. Unlike extreme right-wing parties, including today's Republican Party, left-of-center politicians do not generally call for state-enforced legal bans. Nevertheless, some progressive rhetoric is playing into the hands of the populist right.

Bereft of a coherent economic platform, the GOP has gone all in on the US culture wars. But given that appeals by religious and social conservatives tend to gain more purchase on voters than dogmatic positions on racial and sexual identities, this is not a war the left is likely to win. Democrats, and other progressive parties in the Western world, would be well advised to concentrate less on hurt feelings and more on voters' economic and political interests.

The writer is the author, most recently, of *The Churchill Complex: The Curse of Being Special, From Winston and FDR to Trump and Brexit*.

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SPECTRUM SOCIETY

Time to criminalise marital rape



Satya Narayan Misra

A STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO CRIMINALISE MARITAL RAPE SHOULD NOT BE POSTPONED

The quest for gender parity originated in the early 20th Century as a labour movement in North America, USSR and Europe. The first feminist wave swept the world, with women demanding the equal right to vote and property rights. In the second wave which started in the 1960s, the focus changed to reproductive rights, domestic violence, and marital rape. This was a response to the obnoxious common law doctrine that a married woman is nothing but a chattel who loses her sexual agency once she enters matrimony. Such a regressive discourse was challenged in the 1960s when Lucy Stone singled out women's right to control marital intercourse as the core component of equality.

In India, the archaic law in IPC (1860) S375 makes an exception (2) to marital non-consensual intercourse as not being rape above the age of 18. India has been an outlier on this score, as most developed countries recognise non-consensual intercourse with a wife as rape. In India, the legal protection against such forcible sex is provided by the Domestic Violence Act

2005, which offers only civil remedy but no criminal culpability. Noting the serious legal gap, the Varma Commission in 2013 suggested that exceptions to the marital rape clause in IPC should be scrapped. While the Committee's recommendation on rape, acid attack, and sexual harassment at workplace was acted upon, the government did not bite this bullet on marital rape. Justice Leila Seth, who was a member of the Varma Committee, writes in her book "Talking of Justice": "Mostly men make law and men said it would spoil men. It enables a wife raped by a drunken husband not to reach out to police." Her caustic observations have been corroborated by the latest NFHS V report which notes that 70% of women whose husbands got drunk experienced sexual violence as against 23% who were not drunk. Further 90% did not seek help from anyone. Most of the victims suffer from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), fear, and severe loss of self-esteem. The Delhi High Court in May 2022 gave a split verdict where Justice Shakti Dharam Singh favoured striking down

the exception, while the other judge refused to hold it unconstitutional. The matter is now resting with the Supreme Court, where the judges surprisingly do not find any merit for an urgent hearing, while the government is buying time to formulate its stand. Incidentally, the NFHS V brings out that Assam tops the list in terms of physical violence against women (70.7%), and Kerala and Odisha are outliers with 17.6% and 12.8% respectively. Quite clearly, exception 2 to S375 of IPC violates the right to equality, and right to privacy which is now considered by the Supreme Court as a right to life (Puttaswamy Case: 2018) and a practice derogatory to the dignity of women must be scrapped like several other provisions in IPC like criminalising homosexuality, as relics of an obscurantist, patriarchal and regressive past.

The motto of this year's women's day is "DigitALL," by ensuring that there is gender equity in innovation and technology. As per available data, only 22% of women are in the field of Artificial Intelligence and 44% of men

demonstrate gender bias in a workspace. Industry 4.0, which is the buzzword globally, needs proficiency in AI, machine language, robotics & IOT (Internet of Things). Since female labour force participation is low, the major challenge would be how to expose women to the skill sets required to avail of better employment opportunities in AI-based industries. Women are also most vulnerable to economic crises like demonetisation and the recent pandemic as they work mostly in the informal sector. A report from the Niti Aayog brought out how there is a distinct gap in the skill sets required by women workers and the skill that is provided through the Skill India initiative.

The gender bias in skilling is distressing. As India is going to celebrate International Women's Day, 8 March, it's high time that it pays greater attention to gender justice. A structural change in the legal framework to criminalise marital rape should not be postponed.

The writer is Professor Emeritus at KIIT University. Views are personal.

WISDOM CORNER

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

Every existing thing is born without reason, prolongs itself out of weakness, and dies by chance. JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope. MAYA ANGELOU

WORDSWORTH

Gig

The term is usually taken to be of American origin, but the interesting thing is that the first two citations in the Oxford English Dictionary are from a London publication, Melody Maker, in 1926 and 1927. So the word in this sense has long been known in Britain. Gig is yet another of those words for which researchers can give no firm origin, and what follows is largely supposition, following the leads given by Dr Jonathan Lighter in the Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang. The oldest sense of gig was of something that whirled or turned (as in whirligig); much later it was applied to a fast two-wheeled carriage, presumably because its big wheels went around quickly, and later to a fast ship's boat. These days, gig can have a wide range of senses, including a fairly new one that refers to any short-term paying commission or job; it need not be associated with music or performance, but it does preclude permanent full-time employment.

Online vigilance must

Sir, This refers to "Bihar team satisfied with steps for workers," Orissa POST, March 6. Fake news travels faster than truth. In this modern version of the metaphorical hare and tortoise race, it is fake news that is always running ahead and the tortoise, like truth, lags behind. Tamil Nadu is experiencing just that as fake news began piling up on top of a stray incident of a Tamil man assailing a north Indian worker on a suburban train about his type of people taking away local jobs. An elaborate damage control exercise seemed to run like the tortoise as Tamil Nadu reached out to Bihar to set the record straight, but not before hundreds of guest workers took trains home, avowedly for the Holi festival. The evil effect of social media was once again highlighted. It is a fact that every Indian has right to look for employment, trade, business, or entrepreneurship in any state or UT. History has shown the success story of Mumbai as financial capital on the back of a large Tamil blue-collar labour force and of the National Capital Region whose economy was buttressed by cheap labour from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The exodus from Tamil Nadu proves the battle vis-a-vis social media can be lost in a trice whereas winning the war by rebuilding confidence takes very long. No matter how smart the tortoise is, it can't compete with the hare of fake news. Online vigilance is a price that must be paid for preserving social harmony and diversity that are so essential for peace and health of the economy.

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

A first in state

Sir, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced the establishment of a health university in the state. This is the first such university in Odisha. All the medical and allied health sciences colleges and universities will be affiliated with the new health university from the 2023-24 academic session. This will help all medical colleges to follow common instructions. This will also enhance the quality of medical education, patient care, and research in the state. It will also be good for medical students and aspirants as they will have to depend on a single authority for communication. The Odisha government has been trying to increase the number of universities in the state which will result in the growth of quality education.

Deba Prasad Nayak, CUTTACK

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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national

of the day quote

You (the Election Commission) have taken away the party name and the symbol from us, but you can't take away Shiv Sena from me

People of Maharashtra are longing for a political change and want all the Opposition parties to come together for this

With violence and militancy are happening in present times in the name of religion, the mindset of those who are involved in such activities has to be changed, and that can be done only by religious leaders

SHORT TAKES

Three boys killed

Kolkata: Three minor boys were killed in a landslide in West Bengal's Darjeeling district Monday morning while they were indulging in illegal sand mining. The bodies of the three -- Manu Kumar (16), Shyamal Sahani (15) and Rohit Chauhan (15) -- have been recovered from the riverbed. Initial investigation suggested that they were probably engaged in their assignments of sand and stone mining at Balason riverbed on early Monday morning, when landslides happened killing them.

Man arrested

Patna: A man was arrested from Bihar's Jamui district Monday for allegedly sharing on social media fake videos of alleged attacks on migrant workers from the state in Tamil Nadu, police said. The Economic Offence Unit (EOU) of the Bihar Police has booked four persons in connection with the case, they said in a statement. Those named in the case have been identified as Aman Kumar, Rakesh Tiwary, Yuvraj Singh Rajput and Manish Kashyap. Aman Kumar, a resident of Laxmipur in Jamui district, was arrested while a search is on for the rest, police said.

Woman gangraped

Jagdalpur: A 23-year-old woman was allegedly gangraped by seven persons, one of them a minor, when she had gone to a local fair in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district, police said Monday. The police have apprehended all the accused involved in the crime that took place Saturday night. The woman had gone to attend a fair in Maulipadar village under Darbha police station area, he said. The accused accosted the woman and her male relative who were having food on the outskirts of the village and threatened them, the official said.



Chhattisgarh is a mineral-rich state, but people in the state are struggling with poverty despite being talented and hardworking

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CM

RAJNATH LAUDS NAVY

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Monday said that the Indian Navy has strengthened the country's position as 'Preferred Security Partner' in the Indian Ocean Region



Sisodia sent to jail till March 20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 6: Former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia landed in Tihar jail here Monday shortly after a CBI court remanded the senior AAP leader to 14-day judicial custody till March 20 in the excise scam case amid an escalating political slugfest.

Sisodia will spend Holi in jail after the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said it did not require his custody for now. His bail plea hearing is expected to come up on March 10. Sisodia, who joins his former Cabinet colleague Satyendar Jain in jail, was produced before special judge M K Nagpal on the expiry of his seven-day custodial interrogation allowed by the court earlier after his arrest on February 26. Jain is lodged in Tihar jail since May last year following his arrest in a money laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

During the hearing, the CBI also accused supporters of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of 'politicising' the matter. It had arrested Sisodia in connection with alleged corruption in the formulation and implementation of the now-scrapped liquor policy for 2021-22.

The court allowed Sisodia to carry the Bhagavad Gita, spectacles, medicine etc.

To jail while directing the Tihar jail authorities to consider his request for being allowed to do Vipassana meditation. A Tihar jail official said Sisodia was brought to prison following the court order and he will be lodged in jail number-1 after the completion of due formalities.

As the AAP stepped up its attack on the BJP and also maintained that the CBI had no grounds to seek Sisodia's further interrogation, the Congress sought to clear the air over its stand on his arrest, asserting that the allegations in the Delhi excise policy case are serious and must be probed.

The Congress, which has largely



kept its distance from the arrest of Sisodia, however, said its stand on misuse of central agencies is clear that they are used against the Opposition in most of the cases. Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete told reporters that the Congress was "not at all confused" about its stance on Sisodia's arrest and that its stand is clear. She also said the AAP does not utter a word when central agencies act against other Opposition leaders, be it from those in Congress, those in Bihar or Maharashtra.

AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj on Sunday said the Congress never stands by the Opposition and engages in a war of words with the BJP merely to "fool" the country. At the CBI court, the counsel for the investigating agency submitted it was not seeking his custody right now which it may do later.

"An application to send the accused to judicial custody has been filed. It is submitted that the CBI custody is no longer required and the same may be sought later, if required. In view of submission made, the accused is sent to JC till March 20," the court said.

The CBI claimed that the witnesses yet to be confronted are under apprehension and terrified by the conduct of the accused.



Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav with a friendly 'Saras' crane at Mandaka village in Jamo block, Amethi

PTI PHOTO

PM reviews summer preparedness

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 6: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday chaired a high-level meeting to review preparedness for the hot weather condition in the upcoming summer season and called for preparing separate awareness material for different stakeholders like common citizens, medical professionals, local body authorities and disaster response teams.

The PMO, in a statement, said that Modi was briefed about the weather forecast for the next few months and on the likelihood of a normal monsoon and their impact on Rabi crops. He was also briefed about the preparedness of medical infrastructure, disasters related to heat and mitigation measures, it said.

The Food Corporation of India was asked to take measures to ensure optimal storage of grains in extreme weather conditions, the PMO said, noting the prime minister was also briefed about the expected yield of major crops.



Modi instructed India Meteorological Department to prepare daily weather forecasts in a manner which makes predictions easy to interpret and disseminate. TV news channels and FM radio among other media outlets could spend a few minutes daily to explain the daily weather forecast so that citizens can take necessary precautions, the statement said.

He also stressed the need for de-

tailed fire audits of all hospitals and said mock fire drills be conducted by firefighters in all hospitals. Ongoing efforts to monitor irrigation water supply, fodder and drinking water were also reviewed in the meeting, the statement said.

Modi was briefed about the preparedness of states and hospital infrastructure in terms of the availability of required supplies and preparedness for emergencies. He

Modi instructed India Meteorological Department to prepare daily weather forecasts in a manner which makes predictions easy to interpret and disseminate

Modi was briefed about the preparedness of states and hospital infrastructure in terms of the availability of required supplies and preparedness for emergencies

was also updated about various efforts underway across the country to prepare for disasters related to heat and mitigation measures in place, it said.

Officials attending the meeting were instructed to incorporate some multimedia lecture sessions in schools to sensitise children on dealing with extreme heat conditions. Modi said protocols and dos and don'ts for hot weather should be prepared in accessible formats, and various other modes of publicity like jingles, films and pamphlets should be prepared and issued.

PROTEST AGAINST GOVERNMENT

Farmer lights bonfire of onions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nashik, March 6: Distressed by the crash in prices of onions, a farmer in Nashik district of Maharashtra lit a bonfire of the crop in protest against the government's policies and to highlight the plight of growers.

The protest was held on the day of the Holi festival which is marked by the burning of bonfires in Maharashtra. Onion cultivators are battling a crisis as the prices of the kitchen staple have taken a hit at the Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) in Lasalgaon, the largest wholesale onion market in Asia, in Nashik.

The price per kilogram of onion came down to Rs 2 to Rs 4, which angered the growers, who had stopped the auction at the APMC last week for a day. Krishna Dongre, a farmer from Mathulthan village in Yeola taluka who burnt the onion crop cultivated on one-and-half acres of land, had printed an invitation card announcing the agitation which

The price per kilogram of onion came down to Rs 2 to Rs 4, which angered the growers, who had stopped the auction at the APMC last week for a day

had gone viral on social media. "The Union and state governments have left the farmers to their fate. In their power struggle, they do not pay attention to whether the farmer survives or dies. This is a black day not only for Maharashtra but also for the nation as a farmer has been forced to light the bonfire of onions," he said and blamed the policies of the government.

Farmers from nearby villages were present at the protest. The drop in onion prices has angered farmers in Nashik district as well as in the rest of the state and they are staging agitations.

Manik to be Tripura CM again

AGENCIES

Agartala, March 6: BJP leader Manik Saha Monday evening met Governor Satyadeo Narain Arya to stake his claim to be the next Chief Minister of Tripura.

Earlier in the day Saha was elected as the leader of the BJP legislative party and the next chief minister of the northeastern state at a meeting of the BJP legislative party held here Monday. A spokesperson of the BJP informed reporters after the meeting that the selection was unanimously endorsed by all MLAs of the party.

Earlier, there was speculation that Saha, who was made the CM last year in a brand renewal exercise replacing Biplab Kumar Deb, may make way for Union Minister Pratima Bhowmik as the chief minister of the sensitive border state.

The swearing-in of the new chief minister will be held on March 8. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to be present at the event. In the recently held elections, the BJP won 32 seats of the 60-member



Assembly while its ally-Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) won one seat.

Assam Chief Minister and NEDA head Himanta Biswa Sarma had visited the state on Sunday to measure the water and held meetings with the Chief Minister and sen-

PM to attend Conrad's swearing-in ceremony

Shillong: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the swearing-in ceremony of Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma and his cabinet colleagues Tuesday, officials said. Sangma, the National Peoples Party chief will take the oath of office as chief minister for the second time on Tuesday after successfully leading his party to a major victory bagging 26 of the 59 seats in the February 27 election.

Party colleagues on the possible formation of the next cabinet. Party sources said, Sarma also had a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi on Sunday over the composition of the cabinet and its leader to ensure a smooth transition. BJP national president JP Nadda and Chief Ministers of several BJP-ruled states are expected to also join the swearing-in ceremony.

Muslim couple to re-marry after 29 years

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, March 6: On International Women's Day on March 8, a unique "marriage" will be seen in Kerala's Kasargod district where a couple married for nearly 29 years will solemnise their union again - for sake of their three daughters.

Present at the marriage at the Hosdurg sub-registrar office will be their three girls besides their family members and friends. C. Shukkur, an eminent lawyer from Kasargod, married Dr Sheena in October 1994 and their wedding was conducted by Indian Union Muslim League's supreme leader Panakkad Syed Hyder Ali Shihab Thangal.

However, the marriage was under the Sharia law and according to the Muslim Personal Law, daughters get only two-thirds of the share of their father's property, with the rest going to his brothers.

The couple, in order to ensure that their hard-earned property should go to their children only, will marry again under the Special Marriage Act which states that the succession to the property of any person solemnised under it will be governed by the Indian Succession Act. Sheena is a former Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Kottayam-headquartered Mahatma Gandhi University.



Robots to replace human scavengers in Prayagraj

BANDICOOT IS A ROBOTIC MACHINE THAT IS ENGINEERED FOR CLEANING ANY TYPE OF SEWER MANHOLES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 6: There is some good news for human scavengers. In a first for the region, smart robots will soon begin cleaning clogged sewers and the project will begin from Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj.

The state government has made available three Bandicoot robotic



scavengers to Prayagraj Nagar Nigam (PNN) and Jalkal department -- the two main bodies en-

trusted with the task of upkeep of drains and sewers -- for the task. They would be pressed into full-

ledged service after Holi, officials said. Bandicoot is a robotic machine that is engineered for cleaning any type of sewer manholes.

The robot consists of two major units -- a stand unit and a robotic drone unit. The drone unit is the one that dives into the manholes for the cleaning operations or unblocking operations. The diving depth of the robotic drone is customisable according to the maximum depth needed for the job, the officials said.

General manager, Jalkal department, Kumar Gaurav said the government had provided three Bandicoot robots costing Rs 1.18 crore that will do the work of workers who were until now engaged to clean drains and sewers.

Fully automatic, the robots will

directly enter the deep sewer line through the manhole and clean it, he said. Civic officials said that the robots will prove to be a game changer as they provide a safe and efficient alternative to manual scavenging, which is not only hazardous but also compromises the dignity of sanitation workers.

Officials said that the move is part of the Swachh Survekshan-2023 and Safai Mitra Suraksha Protocol, which aims to create a clean and healthy environment for sanitation workers and the community as a whole.

Apart from Prayagraj other regions like Kanpur, Aligarh, Greater Noida in the state too have embraced these Bandicoot robotic scavengers. These robots, developed by the Kerala-based national

award-winning startup Genrobotics, are expected to be especially helpful in the light that 20 new wards have been added to the Prayagraj Nagar Nigam recently following increasing of the city limits.

These robots have an add-on feature, Nano coating that enables them to perform operation in any hazardous or corrosive sewerage environments effectively for a longer period. It has the flexibility to perform more efficient cleaning than humans in terms of time and efficiency of manhole cleaning.

The drone unit is equipped with an extendable robotic arm with four degrees of freedom to perform grabbing, shovelling and unblocking actions inside the manholes.

6 children lost lives due to adenovirus: Mamata



“So far, 19 people have died due to Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI), and out of them, 13 had comorbidities and six (deaths of children) were due to adenovirus. I urge people to start wearing face masks for the time-being”

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

Kolkata, March 6: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday said six children have so far died in the state due to adenovirus, and urged people to start using face masks again to combat the menace.

urge people to start wearing face masks for the time-being,” she said at the state assembly.

“Do not panic and see a doctor immediately if you are having fever,” the CM added. Banerjee also claimed that health services have improved a lot in Bengal compared to the Covid period.

Taking a jibe at the opposition for questioning the health infrastructure in the state, she said that during the Left Front rule, no special newborn care units existed, while at present, there are over 2,486 SNCUs at 138 hospitals. The Chief Minister had last week said ample measures are being taken by her administration to tackle with the adenovirus situation.

“We have readied 5,000 beds and 600 doctors have been tasked with the responsibility of dealing with such cases,” she had told reporters. West Bengal has been witnessing child deaths, primarily due to ARI, since the last few weeks.

Banerjee also said one of her family members has been infected by the virus, but did not elaborate on the development.

“So far, 19 people have died due to Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI), and out of them, 13 had comorbidities and six (deaths of children) were due to adenovirus. I



LET'S PLAY HOLI: Women play with colours ahead of the festival of Holi in Nadia, West Bengal

PTI PHOTO

Delhi airport cleanest in Asia Pacific: ACI

New Delhi, March 6: Delhi airport has been adjudged as one of the best airports as well as the cleanest airport in the Asia Pacific region by international grouping ACI.

The Indra Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), operated by DIAL, has bagged the award for Airport Service Quality (ASQ) best airport for 2022 in the category of over 40 Million Passengers Per Annum (MPPA). It has also been named as the cleanest airport in the Asia Pacific region by the Airports Council International (ACI). ACI is a non-profit organisation of airport operators. Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) is a GMR Airports Infrastructure Ltd-consortium.



“The ASQ programme is the world's leading airport customer experience measurement and benchmarking programme. This recognition is based on live research via surveys gathered at the airport — direct from the traveller — rating their satisfaction on the day of travel,” DIAL said in a release Monday. In a separate release, Airports Authority of India (AAI) said Tiruchirappalli International Airport has been rated the best in the Asia Pacific region in the category of under 2 million passengers by ACI.

Delhi Police makes security arrangements for Shab-e-Baraat, Holi

New Delhi, March 6: Ahead of Shab-e-Baraat and Holi this week, Delhi Police Monday said it has made elaborate arrangements for the safety of motorists and pedestrians while ensuring smooth traffic flow and preventing rash driving or stunts on two-wheelers.

More than 150 company security personnel other than police, 800 traffic police personnel and 9,000 local police will be deployed for Shab-e-Baraat, which will be observed on the intervening night of March 7 and 8, officials said.

During Shab-e-Baraat, people belonging to the Muslim community offer prayers beside the grave of their ancestors and also at mosques. According to the police, more than 600 pickets and 1,300 motorcycle patrolling teams will be deployed across the national capital. Also, 759 traffic officers will be deployed at 283 strategic locations.

Since the date of Holi and Shab-e-Baraat coincide this year, special teams of traffic police along with PCR and local police will be stationed on various roads to check drunken driving and traffic rule violations, the Delhi Police advisory stated. Radar guns will also be deployed to check incidences of over-speeding, it said.

BJP intensifies attack against AAP

New Delhi, March 6: Intensifying its attack on the ruling AAP, the BJP Monday burnt effigies of “corruption” and “liquor scam” near Hanuman Mandir here, as it reiterated its demand for resignation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal over alleged corruption in the now-scrapped liquor policy for 2021-22.

The Delhi BJP likened the effigy-burning to torching of a ‘Holika’, and has planned to burn such effigies at various locations, spanning all 70 assembly constituencies.

Virendra Sachdeva, the Delhi BJP working president, said AAP supremo Kejriwal comes to this Hanuman Mandir, near Connaught Place, to seek blessings of the Almighty before his endeavours in any election.

“With the divine blessings, he was to do good work for people and bring peace and amity in society. But, the AAP dispensation took steps that proliferated liquor vends in the city, even near religious places and schools, and incentivised consumption of alcohol,” he said in his address, soon before the burning of the effigies near the temple.



“We chose this site to burn the effigies, as Kejriwal visits this temple before beginning his electoral campaigns, and from this very place, we make the resolve of finishing his corruption. We won't wait till 2025, Kejriwal will have to resign. He will have to answer questions related to this liquid scam,” Sachdeva said.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri also slammed the AAP and alleged a “massive corruption” in the formulation and im-

plementation of the liquor policy for 2021-22.

On March 1, the Delhi BJP had staged protests at various places here, demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Kejriwal in the wake of resignations by two Delhi ministers facing corruption charges.

The saffron party had also taken its protest online, running a series of tweets with the hashtag “#Thekedar_Kejriwal_istifa_Do” in Hindi.

The BJP earlier had termed the resignation of Manish Sisodia and

Satyendar Jain from the Delhi Cabinet amid corruption allegations a “victory of truth and that of the party workers” while claiming that the chief minister would have to resign as well.

Hours before the news of the two ministers' resignations hit the headlines, the BJP had said that it would raise awareness on the “conspiracy” that was hatched to “toy” with the future of youths in Delhi by allowing the “proliferation” of liquor vends.

Kejriwal hits back

New Delhi: Conducting raids against opposition leaders and harassing them is not right, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Monday, asserting that the country will only progress when everyone works together. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the Ashram flyover extension inauguration here, Kejriwal was responding to a question about a CBI team visiting former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi's residence in Patna for questioning her in connection with the land-for-jobs scam.

22% of students enrolled for upper primary schools dropped out: CPI(M) survey

Kolkata, March 6: The CPI(M) has conducted a sample survey on the rate of dropouts in the school education system in West Bengal which has revealed that 22 per cent of the students enrolled at the upper primary level dropped out at the beginning of the secondary level.

The upper primary bracket is from Class 5 to 8, while the secondary level is of Class 9-10.

As per the sample survey conducted by CPI(M)'s West Bengal unit covering 22 schools from different geographical locations in south Bengal, it has been revealed that 22 per cent of the students who got enrolled in the Class 5, which is the entry level for the upper primary section, dropped out at the beginning of Class 9, which is the entry level for the secondary section.

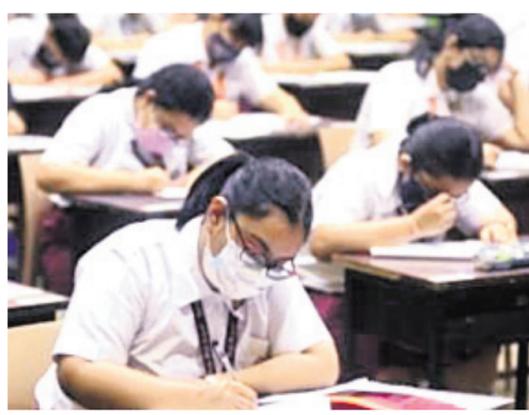
The same survey has pointed out a more alarming phenomenon, that of the total students who got enrolled in the Class 5 in the 22 schools covered under this survey, almost 42 per cent did not appear for the secondary examination conducted by the West Bengal Board of Secondary Examination (WBBSE).

As per records of WBBSE, the total number of students appear-

ing for the board-conducted secondary examination in 2023 has declined by over four lakhs compared to what it was in 2022.

An headmaster in a state-run higher secondary school in South 24 Parganas district told IANS on strict condition of anonymity that to his opinion the results of the survey seem to be extremely conservative and to his opinion the percentage of dropouts at the secondary level would be much more.

“In the school where I am headmaster, we have witnessed an almost 40 per cent dropout at the 9th standard this year. And this trend of dropout has been continuing for quite some time and the pace has accelerated after the Covid-19 pandemic. No wonder the number of students appearing for the board-conducted secondary examination declined by over four lakhs,” he said. According to CPI(M) central committee member, Sujan Chakraborty, for the state education department which is saddled with the burden of skyrocketing corruption, taking an initiative to encourage the dropouts to return to the school is not a priority. “Unless the state education department takes initiative on this ground, the future of the education system in the state is extremely bleak,” he said.



Buses to get GPS trackers by May 31



If any bus owner fails to install the device by May 31, he will be able to apply for a conditional certificate of fitness with a fine of ₹50 per day being levied till the device is installed

Kolkata, March 6: The Bengal government has decided to make panic button and Vehicle Location Tracking (VLT) devices mandatory in all commercial and passenger vehicles plying in the state.

The government Monday extended the deadline for installing location tracking devices with emergency buttons in private buses to May 31.

If any bus owner fails to install the device by May 31, he will be able to apply for a conditional certificate of fitness with a fine of Rs 50 per

day being levied till the device is installed, it said.

The earlier deadline for installing the device was March 31.

West Bengal Bus and Minibus Owners Association general secretary Pradipt Narayan Bose said the government should have provided more time for installing the devices.

“We will be installing the devices and the process has started already. But a two-month window is not enough. I doubt how many

bus operators will be able to abide by the deadline. The daily fine will further impact the earnings of the bus operators who are bleeding in the post-pandemic situation,” he told PTI.

Transport Minister Snehasis Chakraborty earlier told PTI that extending the deadline till December 31, as demanded by the bus owners, was not possible.

“Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is sympathetic to problems of every resident of the state, including the bus operators. But, they have to be a little more flexible. The devices are imperative for the safety of everyone concerned, including bus employees,” he had said.

Bose said the government has shortlisted 14 firms for procuring these devices and the association has already held discussions with them.

TMC to maintain equidistance from BJP & Congress

Kolkata, March 6: Following the below expectation performance of the Trinamool Congress in the Northeast, the party is changing its political strategy by preparing to maintain equidistance from the BJP and the Congress and seeking to form a group of regional outfits opposed to both the camps.

In Tripura, the TMC bagged less than the votes polled by NOTA, while in Meghalaya, the party's tally came down to five from 11. The Mamata Banerjee-led party also suffered a major upset in West Bengal's Sagardighi, a minority-dominated assembly constituency which was previously held by the Mamata Banerjee-led party.

“Our strategy nationally will be maintaining equidistance from

both the BJP and the Congress. We want other opposition parties who want to fight the BJP but are opposed to the Congress to come together and work as a united opposition front.

“We are already in talks with parties such as BRS (erstwhile TRS), AAP and others. This strategy will be reflected in the next Parliament session,” Leader of the TMC parliamentary party in Lok Sabha Sudip Bandopadhyay told PTI. Banerjee had also recently announced that the party would go it alone in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The decision also came after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi as well as CPI(M) leaders accused the TMC of helping the BJP by dividing opposition votes.

Veteran TMC leader and MP Sougata Roy said that as the Lok



Sabha elections are still a year away, the situation will further evolve in the days to come. “Let's see how things shape up, as four major states will go to polls this year. The political situation will

written by leaders of nine opposition parties - minus the Congress, Left parties, JD(U), DMK and JD(S) - to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on “blatant misuse” of central agencies, Roy told PTI that it is “just the beginning”.

Attacking the grand old party for its “big brother attitude”, TMC chief spokesperson Sukhendu Sekhar Roy said, “The Congress is yet to come to terms with the changing reality of Indian politics. It has miserably failed in the last nine years in fighting the BJP. So we will try to align with strong forces in their respective states,” he said.

The TMC had also abstained from voting in the Vice-Presidential polls last year. “You don't need to be a political pundit to understand the role some opposition parties like

the TMC are playing to help the BJP. The TMC is now isolated nationally as it stands unmasked as a stooge of the BJP,” he said.

CPI (M) state secretary Mohammed Salim claimed the TMC lacks credibility in the fight against the BJP. Assistant Professor of Political Science Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, Maidul Islam said the idea of bringing together regional parties is an idea which was once mulled by Communist patriarch Jyoti Basu in the name of the Third Front in the eighties and nineties and later pushed by Banerjee in with the name of Federal Front in 2014.

Political scientist Biswanath Chakraborty said any attempt to forge an opposition unity sans the Congress is destined to fail.

of the day quote

For the last four years, there has been no deputy speaker in the Lok Sabha. This is unconstitutional

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS LEADER

The Union government's flagship programme the Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Centres cannot be converted to any other scheme by state governments

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

The BJP believes that Tripura shall remain as it is today, but the issues raised by the Tipra Motha also need to be resolved. I hope the new government will surely hear the grievances. Elections are over. There is no harm in working together. The issues related to the sitting people can be heard sitting at a table

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

SHORT TAKES

Youth arrested

Bijnor (Uttar Pradesh): The police have arrested a 19-year-old man in Uttar Pradesh's Bijnor district for allegedly slitting the throat of a five-year-old girl to stop her from crying when he tried to rape her, police said.

Six injured

Meerut: Pre-Holi events took a violent turn in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut after members of two communities engaged in clashes and stone pelting. At least six persons have been injured in the incident which took place late Sunday night.

Two held

Kanpur: Two men have been arrested in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur district for allegedly luring people to change their religion, police said.

Two dead in TN

Chennai: Two men were trampled to death by a wild elephant in Tamil Nadu's Satyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR). The victims identified as Bomme Gowdar (55) and Sidhumari (65) are from the Kunri tribal village in the Kadambur forest area.

Four killed

Siliguri: Four people were killed as their taxi collided with a pick-up van in West Bengal's Kalimpong district on Monday, police said.



False cases are being framed against Samajwadi Party leaders. Injustice has been done to Gayatri Prasad Prajapati. I am confident that this family will get justice in court. Leaders like Ramakant Yadav and Azam Khan were also framed in false cases

AKHILESH YADAV | SP CHIEF

ULTIMATE TARGET

Union Minister of Law and Justice Kiren Rijju Monday said that pendency of cases in the country is increasing by the day and hence his ministry aims to make the judiciary completely paperless



UMESH MURDER CASE

Another accused killed in encounter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prayagraj/Lucknow (UP), March 6: The man who fired the first shot at Umesh Pal, a key witness in the killing of former BSP legislator Raju Pal, was gunned down in an encounter with Prayagraj police early Monday, officials said.

Vijay Chaudhary alias Usman suffered bullet injuries in his neck, chest and thigh during the encounter, police said. The encounter took place between Gothi and Belwa under the Kaundhiyara police station area around 5:30 am, Dhoomanganj Station House Officer Rajesh Kumar Maurya said.

Usman's wife Suhani has accused the police of killing him in a fake encounter after picking him up earlier Monday. Constable Narendra Pal also suffered injuries to his hand during the encounter and has been admitted to the local community health centre, Additional Director General, Law and Order, Prashant Kumar told reporters.

Police said the gang members of the gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed, the main accused in the



The encounter took place between Gothi and Belwa under the Kaundhiyara police station area around 5:30 am, Dhoomanganj Station House Officer Rajesh Kumar Maurya said

Police said Usman was the one who fired the first shot at Umesh Pal on February 24 outside his home in Dhoomanganj

2005 Raju Pal murder case who is lodged in a Gujarat jail currently, gave Vijay Chaudhary his second name "Usman". His brother Rakesh Chaudhary is lodged in Naini Central Jail and a dozen of cases, including murder, have been registered against him.

Police said Usman was the one who fired the first shot at Umesh Pal on February 24 outside his home in Dhoomanganj. While Umesh Pal succumbed the same day, his two security personnel died later during treatment. Umesh Pal

was a key witness in the Raju Pal murder case.

A video of the killing of Umesh Pal in broad daylight had gone viral on social media and raised questions about law and order in Uttar Pradesh. Following the incident, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath vowed in the state assembly that he would destroy the mafia in the state.

ADG Kumar said, "A shooter involved in the February 24 incident was injured in an encounter with police in Prayagraj. He was rushed

for treatment to a hospital, where he died." Kumar said Usman carried a reward of Rs 50,000 for his arrest, adding that a .32 bore pistol and cartridges were recovered from him.

"His video was shown in media. This is a big achievement. We have made it clear that strict action will be taken against those involved (in the killing) and those who hatched the conspiracy. Separate teams are working on the case," the ADG said.

"I want to tell that UP police is committed to arrest all those involved in this murder case and present them in the court. We will collect evidence and prosecute all those involved in this," he added.

On February 27, Arbaz, who allegedly drove the SUV of the killers of Umesh Pal, was killed in an encounter with the police in Prayagraj and one Sadakat was arrested. "Our government is determined to take strict action against those involved in this case. We will nab each and every accused and give them the strict punishment under the law," Deputy Chief Minister Brijesh Pathak said Monday.

Cops 'manhandle' war widows; Pilot condemns



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, March 6: Three war widows of Pulwama martyrs Monday met former deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot and called for justice. The widows reportedly were manhandled by police when they were pitching for their demands recently.

They were seen crying in front of Pilot. They alleged, "The police have treated us very badly. Our husbands were martyred to protect the country. Shoot us too. But don't misbehave," they added.

Former deputy CM said, "Action should be taken against those responsible for the misbehaviour with war widows. The whole country has seen how the police treated the heroines. That is condemnable. This kind of misbehaviour with the heroines is unacceptable. Agreed that it may take time to fulfil the demands, but it is wrong to misbehave with the war widows. It is not right for the police to treat women whom we respect as heroes."

Pilot said, "Those who have attained martyrdom for the country, their demands will have to be met by crossing all barriers. The promises made to them were not fulfilled. They must be fulfilled at all costs. The government, whether it is of the Centre or the State, should fulfill the demands."

He further said, "It is not right if the government says that there is no provision. When provisions for others can be changed, a way out can be found by changing the provision for these war widows too. Everything is possible if you

Those who have attained martyrdom for the country, their demands will have to be met by crossing all barriers. The promises made to them were not fulfilled. They must be fulfilled at all costs. The government, whether it is of the Centre or the state, should fulfill the demands

SACHIN PILOT | FORMER DEPUTY CM OF RAJASTHAN

have the will to work," he added.

Manju, wife of Rohtash Lamba, who was martyred in the Pulwama attack, Madhubala Meena, wife of martyr Hemraj Meena and Sundari Devi, wife of Jeetraj Gurjar, said "No one is ready to listen to our demands. Introduce us to Priyanka Gandhi. You get us justice. For the last seven days, we have been sitting without eating and drinking, but no one has taken care of us. When we started going to meet the Chief Minister, the police misbehaved with us so much that we cannot tell," they added.

On Monday afternoon around 1:45 p.m., the security personnel once tried to stop the war widows who suddenly arrived at the official residence of Pilot located in Civil Lines (behind the Raj Bhavan). Numbering around three, they had a discussion with the security personnel. After that they went inside and sat down. Pilot came out and spoke to them while sitting on the ground with them.

26 cases of H3N2 variant found in K'taka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, March 6: Karnataka Health Minister Dr. K. Sudhakar said Monday that 26 persons have tested positive for the H3N2 variant in the state, and among these two cases are reported from Bangalore.

"The children below the age of 15 years face more danger from the H3N2 variant. It also infects persons above the age of 60 years," he stated.

Addressing a press conference at the Vidhana Soudha after holding a high-level meeting over the rising Covid cases and H3N2 variant, Sudhakar also advised that pregnant women need to be careful.

Sudhakar also said that a total of 60 cases of Adenovirus, which causes acute respiratory infections (ARI), were found in Karnataka. "For six months, the staff of the Health department has not been wearing masks. Right from this day, the staff who work in hospitals and health care centres must wear masks," he said. "From January to March, a total of 20 cases of H1N1 variant have been found in the state. There is a rise in Adenovirus cases. But, there is no need to panic. All precautions have been taken. There is no shortage of medicines. As temperature soars in summer, one should take precaution," minister Sudhakar said.

"It is not appropriate for the people to take medicines by themselves. Overdose of preventive medicines is also not good. People should avoid going out often between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Otherwise, there are more chances of getting infected," the minister stated.

"The state Health department would give separate guidelines. The swab test will be done for diagnosing H3N2 virus like Covid test," he added.



Farmers with their tractors loaded with potatoes wait outside a cold storage facility in Hapur

PTI PHOTO

Strong health support for pilgrims soon: Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 6: The Centre is soon going to create a strong health support and emergency management infrastructure for the pilgrims of Char Dham yatra in Uttarakhand.

It will be a three-layer structure to ensure that the pilgrims are provided with better healthcare services during their journey, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said Monday.

He said this after a meeting with Uttarakhand Health Minister Dhan Singh Rawat, who requested for support from the Centre for developing a health and emergency infrastructure for lakhs of pilgrims who undertake the Char Dham yatra every year, a health ministry statement said.

Rawat apprised Mandaviya about the health challenges faced by pilgrims along the strenuous route, and the number of pilgrim deaths in the past few years due to health emergencies such as stroke, etc., the statement said.

It will be a three-layer structure to ensure that the pilgrims are provided with better healthcare services during their journey

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER



Many of these casualties were of pilgrims who suffered co-morbidities, the Uttarakhand health minister added. Mandaviya assured full support from the Central government and stated that "the best possible healthcare and health emergency infrastructure will be provided for the visiting pilgrims". A strong network of advance am-

bulances and stroke vans is planned to ensure that stroke management and treatment can start on way to the health facility, he said, adding these ambulances will be stationed at different points on the yatra route.

According to the statement, PG students from medical colleges from across the country are proposed to be deployed as part of

strengthened healthcare infrastructure who will act as first responders.

"This experience will also act as a skilling and capacity building exercise for the PG students," Mandaviya said. Besides, drones will also be used to provide emergency medicines in the higher locales of the yatra route. Drones have been successfully used for transportation of COVID-19 vaccines in the north-eastern region recently, the statement said.

The Char Dham - Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri and Yamunotri - are located above 10,000-ft in the Garhwal Himalayas, it said, adding that recently, AIIMS-Rishikesh started a drone service to deliver and pick medicines.

"A strong referral back-end system is being developed with AIIMS-Rishikesh, Doon Medical College and Srinagar Medical College acting as tertiary nodes for specialist care. This shall provide an end-to-end clinical treatment for pilgrims' health, the Union Health Minister stated.

Yediyurappa's chopper faces landing issues

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kalaburagi (Karnataka), March 6: The landing of the helicopter carrying Karnataka's former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa was aborted Monday as littered plastic bags came flying near the helipad in the outskirts of Jewargi town in Kalaburagi district.

The authorities said that Yediyurappa arrived in the town to participate in Vijay Sankalp yatra.

The temporary helipad was constructed to facilitate the movement of leaders.

But, as the authorities did not ensure maintenance and follow up of protocols, plastic bags came flying at the time of landing.

The pilot aborted landing and kept hovering in the air until the authorities got the helipad area filled with plastic sheets and waste cleaned.

Later, the chopper made a safe landing at the same spot, according to the authorities.

Events in Gujarat are an alternating series of frying pans and fires

Even before the frying pan event of January 29 involving the paper leak of recruitment examinations for junior clerks was to slow down to a simmer, erupts the fire that a 'fake' had managed to infiltrate the rigorous process of selection of police sub-inspectors and had been training for a month alongside the 'genuines' at the Police Training Academy at Karai in Gandhinagar.

Official sources admitted that the fake trainee-sub-inspector Mayur Tadvai had used a forged appointment letter to gain entry into the academy. The matter came to light during the processing of salary bills of the trainees when it was found that his name did not exist in the select list. The matter had remained undetected because the total number tallied up as one of the selected candidates had failed to turn up and the fake had filled the breach with a forged letter. He has been booked on charges of forgery and impersonation but his is not the only case. On January 21, a

law student had turned up with documents showing her 'recruitment' as a police sub-inspector and now finds herself facing similar charges of forgery.

In a world replete with ironies, a whistleblower of competitive exam leaks who subsequently turned an opposition politician and also pulled the plug on this one through a press conference finds mention in the official statement as one seeking to obstruct the inquiry initiated by the academy and for tarnishing the image of the government.

The Gujarat police has been in the news for all the wrong reasons and so has been its training Academy. Last December, published reports had hinted at some young serving officers being honey-trapped by a young girl who had allegedly lured them through mobile chats and selfies and subsequently into intimacy and thereon to blackmail. This news spread like wild fire in the police circles of Gujarat and thereon into the bureaucracy. It remained the reign-



ing topic of discussion among civil servants for weeks with the amount under extortion rising in direct proportion to the spread.

No complaint was filed as is usually the case involving the state administrative officialdom and its unwritten 'brotherhood' understanding akin to the Omerta, the southern Italian code of silence and honour. A discreet enquiry was undertaken and the identity of the woman in question was cracked. Thereafter an open inquiry has been ordered to be conducted by a deputy director of the training institution concerned. However, the result of this en-

quiry is anybody's guess.

The proximity of the cops to the elected leadership is a vicious circle that feeds on each other with officers dependent on their good graces for lucrative posting with all their attendant benefits and buybacks as well as the pitfalls of falling out of lines, as many have realized to their chagrin.

Thus it came as no surprise when five people were arrested by the Gujarat anti-terrorist squad (ATS) for a bid to extort Rs 8 crores from a top retired cop. The alleged 'bid' was made while the officer was still in uniform and among the five arrested was a member of the Baxi panch morma of the BJP, G.K. Prajapati who has since been suspended from the party. There was a change of guard in the Gujarat Police when Gujarat cadre IPS officer Vikas Sahay replaced Ashish Bhatia whose extended term ended February 2.

The charge was that the five had sought to extort Rs 8 crore from the top officer by circulating a 'doctored' affidavit to claim

he raped a woman at his residence in Chandkheda area of Ahmedabad, the ATS claimed. The action began after the affidavit of the woman went viral on social media. The married woman had claimed that the cop had raped her twice on the pretext of helping her in a criminal case registered against her brother. The ATS press release said that the doctored affidavit was being used in an attempt to extort Rs 8 crores from the cop. The five have been booked for criminal conspiracy and extortion, among other charges.

A case in point is that of nine Gujarat cops who have been booked over the arrest of the abduction of a person from Ghaziabad on December 26 in Uttar Pradesh to Surat. The FIR was filed after his wife knocked the doors of the judiciary January 3, failing to get a satisfactory answer from the Ghaziabad cops which directed booking the nine cops. It was only after the wife moved for contempt and the court issued notice that the UP cops relented.

international



We have taken over the position articulated by the previous cabinets on the view of history and will continue to do so
FUMIO KISHIDA | JAPANESE PM

MORE TROUBLE FOR IMRAN

A district and sessions court in Islamabad Monday rejected Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan's plea seeking suspension of the non-bailable arrest warrant issued against him in the Toshakhna case. Meanwhile, the private ARY TV news channel was taken off air Monday for airing his address a day earlier



of the day quote

People will hold us accountable if the federal government doesn't fulfil its commitments to the flood victims



BILAWAL BHUTTO ZARDARI | PAKISTAN PEOPLES PARTY (PPP) CHAIRMAN

As Prime Minister, I owe everyone, but above all the relatives of the victims, a huge apology. Both personally, and in the name of all those who ruled the country over the years



KYRIAKOS MITSOTAKIS | GREEK PRIME MINISTER

Trailblazing science and innovation have been in our DNA for decades. But in an increasingly competitive world, we can only stay ahead with focus, dynamism and leadership



RISHI SUNAK | BRITISH PM

SHORT TAKES

Estonia's pro-Ukraine PM wins re-election

Tallinn (Estonia): The centre-right Reform Party of Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, one of Europe's most outspoken supporters of Ukraine, overwhelmingly won the Baltic country's general election, while a far-right populist challenger lost seats in a vote that focused on national security and the economy. Preliminary returns from a completed ballot count showed the Reform Party, the senior partner in the outgoing three-party coalition government, received 31.2 per cent of the vote — the biggest share in Sunday's election.

PPP threatens to leave coalition

Islamabad: The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), a mainstream political force and a supporting pillar to the current ruling coalition government of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), has threatened to part ways from the federal government if it fails to meet and fulfil its promises of conducting an unbiased digital census and giving relief to the flood victims of the Sindh province. PPP leader and incumbent Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has stated that it would be very difficult for his party to retain its position as part of the coalition government as there remained many promises pending fulfilment.

Wreckage cleared

Athens: Recovery crews in northern Greece cleared the final sections of wreckage from a deadly train collision off the tracks Monday, as protests and political fallout from the country's worst ever rail disaster continued.

Ukraine unyielding in Bakhmut

Russian forces that invaded Ukraine just over a year ago have been bearing down on Bakhmut for months, putting Kyiv's troops on the defensive but unable to deliver a knockout blow

AGENCIES

Kyiv, March 6: Ukrainian military leaders are determined to hold onto Bakhmut, Kyiv officials said Monday, even as Russian forces continued to encroach on the devastated eastern Ukrainian city that they have sought to capture for six months at the cost of thousands of lives. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office said he chaired a meeting with military officials during which the country's top brass advocated strengthening Ukrainian positions there.

Intense Russian shelling targeted the Donetsk region city and nearby villages as Moscow deployed more resources there in an apparent bid to finish off Bakhmut's resistance, according to local officials. "Civilians are fleeing the region to escape Russian shelling continuing round the clock as additional Russian troops and weapons are being deployed there," Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said. More broadly, Russia continues to experience difficulty generating battlefield momentum.

Moscow's full-scale invasion February 24, 2022, soon stalled and then was pushed back by a Ukraine counteroffensive. Over the bitterly cold winter months, the fighting has largely been deadlocked. Bakhmut doesn't have any major strategic value, and analysts say its possible fall is unlikely to bring a turning point in the conflict.

Its importance has become psychological — for Russian President Vladimir Putin, prevailing there will finally deliver some good news from the battlefield, while for Kyiv the display of grit and defiance reinforces a message that Ukraine



BAKHMUT DEFENCE IS HOLDING, SAYS UKRAINIAN OFFICER

PENTAGON BOSS AUSTIN PLAYS DOWN STRATEGIC VALUE OF BAKHMUT

WAGNER BOSS SAYS AIDE BARRED FROM OPERATIONAL HQ AS ROW SWIRLS

was holding on after a year of brutal attacks to cement support among its Western allies.

Even so, some analysts questioned the wisdom of the Ukrainian defenders holding out much longer, with others suggesting a tactical withdrawal may already be underway.

Michael Kofman, the director of Russia studies at the CAN think tank in Arlington, Virginia, said that Ukraine's defence of Bakhmut has been effective because it has drained the Russian war effort, but that Kyiv should now look ahead.

Ukrainian officials have previously raised the possibility of a

tactical retreat. The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, noted that urban warfare favours the defender but considered that the smartest option now for Kyiv may be to withdraw to positions that are easier to defend.

In recent days, Ukrainian units destroyed two key bridges just outside Bakhmut, including one linking it to the nearby hilltop town of Chasiv Yar along the last remaining Ukrainian resupply route, according to U.K. Military intelligence officials and other Western analysts.

Demolishing the bridges could be part of efforts to slow down the Russian offensive if Ukrainian forces start pulling back from the city. The Bakhmut battle has also served to expose Russian military shortcomings and bitter divisions.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, the millionaire owner of the Wagner Group military company that spearheaded the Bakhmut offensive, has been at loggerheads with the Russian Defence Ministry and repeatedly

accused it of failing to provide his forces with ammunition.

On Sunday, he again criticised top military brass for moving slowly to deliver the promised ammunition, questioning whether the delay was caused "by red tape or treason." Putin's stated ambition is to seize full control of the four provinces, including Donetsk, that Moscow illegally annexed last fall. Russia controls about half of Donetsk province, and to take the remaining half of that province its forces must go through Bakhmut.

The city is the only approach to bigger Ukrainian-held cities since Ukrainian troops took back Izium in Kharkiv province during a counteroffensive last September. But taking at least six months to conquer Bakhmut, which had a prewar population of 80,000 and was once a popular vacation destination, speaks poorly of the Russian military's offensive capabilities and may not bode well for the rest of its campaign.

Bakhmut has taken on almost mythic importance to its defenders. It has become like Mariupol — the port city in the same province that Russia captured after an 82-day siege that eventually came down to a mammoth steel mill where determined Ukrainian fighters held out along with civilians.

Moscow looked to cement its rule in the areas it has occupied and annexed. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu traveled to Mariupol and toured some of the city's rebuilt infrastructure, the Defence Ministry reported Monday.

Shoigu was shown a newly built hospital, a rescue center of the Emergency Ministry and residential buildings, the ministry said.

9 policemen killed in suicide attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, March 6: At least nine policemen were killed and 13 others injured Monday when a suicide bomber rammed his motorcycle into a police van in the restive Balochistan province, in the latest attack on the security personnel in Pakistan.

The van carrying soldiers of the Balochistan Constabulary was hit by the motorcyclist laden with explosives in the mountainous region of Kunbri in Bolan, police said. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but previous such attacks have been blamed on Baloch insurgents and Islamic militants. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Mahmood Notezai said the attack took place when the policemen were returning from Sibi to Quetta. "They were returning after completing security duties for the Sibi festival which ended yesterday," the official said. Notezai said that the preliminary evidence suggests it was a suicide attack. At least nine personnel of the Balochistan Constabulary were killed and 13 were injured in the bomb attack in Bolan, Notezai said. Another police official said the militants might have tried to target the Sibi festival which is held annually but might not have succeeded in piercing the heavy security cover.



WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE: A woman checks the surrounding of her shophouse, as the floodwaters recede, in Kota Tinggi, Johor, Malaysia

Belarus sentences exiled Oppn leader to 15 years

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tallinn (Estonia), March 6: A court in Belarus Monday sentenced exiled opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya to 15 years in prison after a trial in absentia on charges including conspiring to overthrow the government, the latest move in a months-long effort by the Belarusian government

to suppress dissent.

The results of the vote triggered the largest protests in the country's history. Lukashenko unleashed a brutal crackdown on demonstrators, accusing the opposition of plotting to overthrow the government, and Tsikhanouskaya left to Lithuania under pressure. Other



key politicians and activists were either arrested or pressured to leave the country.

Tsikhanouskaya and four other opposition figures were tried in their absence in the Belarusian capital, Minsk. Photos from the courtroom, released by Belarus' state news agency Belta, showed an empty defendants' cage. The charges against

them also included creating and leading an extremist group, inciting hatred and harming national security.

Tsikhanouskaya told the Associated Press in an interview that her court-appointed lawyer hasn't been in touch with her once during the trial and has not responded to her requests to review the case files.

MERAL AKSENER REJOINS ALLIANCE AGAINST ERDOGAN

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ankara, March 6: A key opposition party rejoined Turkey's six-party alliance Monday after a compromise was found over the nomination of a joint candidate to challenge President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in elections scheduled for May.

Meral Aksener, who leads the nationalist Iyi Party, broke away



from the alliance Friday, rejecting the likely selection of Kemal Kilicdaroglu, head of the main opposition Republican People's Party, or CHP.

Aksener's split from the alliance — less than three months before the presidential and parliamentary elections — was seen as a major boost for Erdogan, whose popularity has suffered amid a weak economy as well as his government's response to a devastating earthquake last month.

Her departure left the grouping in disarray and frustrated millions of their supporters hoping for a change after two decades under Erdogan's rule.

A month after quake, survivors need shelter, sanitation

The February 6 earthquake and strong aftershocks have killed close to 47,000 people in Turkey, destroyed or damaged around 214,000 buildings and left hundreds of thousands of people homeless — making it the worst disaster in Turkey's modern history

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ankara, March 6: One month after a powerful quake devastated parts of Turkey and Syria, hundreds of thousands of people still need adequate shelter and sanitation, and an appeal for USD 1 billion to assist survivors is only 10 per cent funded, hampering efforts to tackle the humanitarian crisis, a United Nations official said Monday.

The UN estimates that the earthquake killed around 6,000 people in Syria, mainly in the rebel-held northwest. About 2 million survivors have been housed in temporary accommodation or evacuated from the earthquake-devastated region, according to Turkish government figures.

Around 1.5 million people have been settled in tents while another 46,000 have been moved to container houses. Others are living in dormitories and guesthouses, the government said.

"Given the number of people that have been relocated, given the number of people that have been injured and given the level of the devastation, we do have extensive humanitarian needs now," Alvaro Rodriguez, the UN Resident Coordinator in Turkey, told The



Associated Press. "We have some provinces where up to 25 per cent of the population — we're talking sometimes half a million people — have relocated. So the challenge we have is how do we provide food, shelter, water for these communities?" he said. The UN representative said tents are still needed even though they are not "the optimal solution" for sheltering people. He reported some cases of scabies outbreaks because of poor sanitary conditions. Last month, the

UN made a flash appeal for \$397.6 million to help Syrian quake victims and \$1 billion appeal for victims in Turkey to cover emergency needs, such as food, protection, education water and shelter; for three months. Rodriguez said the appeal for Turkey is only about 10 per cent funded.

"The reality is that if we do not move beyond the roughly 10 per cent that we have, the UN and its partners will not be able to meet the humanitarian needs," he said.

Rodriguez added: "Turkey has been a country that has supported 4 million Syrian refugees over the last few years, and this is an opportunity for the international community to provide the support that Turkey deserves."

The World Bank has estimated that the earthquake has caused an estimated USD 34.2 billion in direct physical damages — the equivalent of 4 per cent of Turkey's 2021 GDP.

The World Bank said recovery and reconstruction costs will be much higher and that GDP losses associated to economic disruptions will also add to the cost of the earthquakes.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who faces tough presidential and parliamentary elections in May, has promised to rebuild hundreds of thousands of homes for the quake survivors within a year.

More than 1.74 million refugees lived in the 11 Turkish provinces affected by the earthquakes, according to the UN refugee agency. Turkey's interior minister said 4,267 of the people killed in Turkey were Syrian nationals.

Rodriguez said that around 40,000 Syrians in Turkey have returned home to check on family or economic assets such as land or housing that may have been impacted by the earthquake there.

of the day quote

The retail market is projected to grow at 10 per cent annually to reach a whopping 2 trillion by 2032 making it the fastest growing retail market of the world

In the first nine months that have gone by, until December 2022, our export and import continue to be really very well balanced and they are both at \$15.1 billion

Our partnership with Zero Motorcycles is a significant milestone in our journey towards ushering in an era of sustainable clean technology in the mobility space

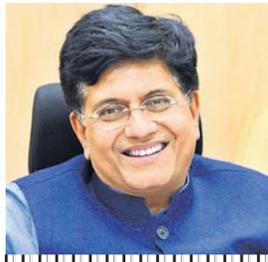
SHORT TAKES

ONGC signs MoU with TotalEnergies

New Delhi: India's top explorer Oil and Natural Gas Corp has signed a memorandum of understanding with French major TotalEnergies for exploration of deep-water blocks, the company tweeted Monday. India, the world's third biggest oil importer and consumer, ships in over 85% of its oil from overseas. The country wants to quickly monetise its oil and gas resources to reduce its reliance on costly imports. The MoU seeks to provide technical help for ONGC's push to explore and reduce green house emissions in development of deep-water blocks especially in Mahanadi and Andamans, off India's east coast. ONGC last year signed heads of agreement with US oil giant ExxonMobil Copr for deep-water exploration on the country's east and west coasts.

NTPC electricity generation up 12%

New Delhi: State-owned power giant NTPC on Monday said that it has logged nearly 12 per cent growth in electricity generation to 364.2 billion units in April-February period this fiscal compared to year ago. "NTPC Ltd registered 11.92 per cent growth in generation i.e. 364.2 BU in FY23 till February month, compared to the country's generation growth of 9.56 per cent," a company statement said. NTPC continues to demonstrate an increasing trend in coal production from its captive mines.



ONDC will help our small retail survive the onslaught of large tech-based e-commerce companies
PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

TESLA AGAIN CUTS EV PRICES IN US

Elon Musk-owned Tesla has slashed the prices of its EVs by 5-10% by 5-10% across its lineup in the US for the second time, which might be in an effort to boost sales before the end of the quarter. According to TechCrunch, the company has lowered the prices of its Model S sedan and Model X SUV



GLOBAL EV SALES LOG ELECTRIFYING RISE IN '22

With 53% rise from last year over 1.2cr EVs were sold in 2022 globally and analysts project sales to reach 1.7cr by 2023 end

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 6: The global passenger electric vehicle (EV) sales rose by 53 per cent (year-on-year) in Q4 2022 to bring the year's total to over 10.2 million (more than 1.2 crore) units, a report showed Monday.

Tesla's Model Y remained the best-selling model globally followed by China-based BYD's Song model.

During Q4 2022, battery EVs

(BEV) accounted for almost 72 per cent of all EV sales, while plug-in hybrid EVs (PHEVs) accounted for the rest, according to Counterpoint Research.

According to senior analyst Soumen Mandal, by the end of 2023, EV sales are expected to reach nearly 17 million units.

In 2022, the top three EV markets were China, Germany, and the US. The top 10 EV automotive groups, which hold more than 39 passenger car brands, contributed to al-



most 72 per cent of all EV sales in Q4 2022. "The annual total for 2022

In 2022, the top three EV markets were China, Germany, and the US

would have reached close to 11 million units had fresh Covid-19 infections not surfaced in China. The infections in China during November and December affected automotive production and sales and disrupted the component supply chain," said research analyst

Abhik Mukherjee.

Despite these headwinds, Chinese brands managed to record strong growth.

In 2022, many Chinese brands started to expand in markets like Europe, Southeast Asia and Latin America.

"Chinese brands are likely to dominate in Southeast Asia and Latin America as there are very few brands operating in these regions. But a fight for market presence is expected in Europe," Mukherjee

added. The top 10 EV models accounted for one-third of the total passenger EV sales in Q4 2022.

According to Mandal, by the end of 2023, EV sales are expected to reach nearly 17 million units.

"The end of the purchase subsidy in China might push EV manufacturers to increase their prices. BYD has already implemented one price hike in January. But these price hikes are unlikely to affect EV sales in one of the most matured EV markets," said Mandal.

ROBUST DEMAND

Auto retail sales see double-digit growth

Sales have picked up in the last two months as chip shortages eased and automakers launched new models to tap into the demand ahead of the festival and wedding seasons

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 6: Automobile retail sales in India witnessed a double-digit year-on-year growth in February driven by robust sales across segments including passenger vehicles and two-wheelers, automobile dealers' body FADA said Monday.

Total registrations across segments rose 16 per cent year-on-year to 17,75,424 units last month, as compared to 15,31,196 vehicles in February 2022.

Passenger vehicle retail sales rose 11 per cent to 2,87,182 units last month, against 2,58,736 units in the year-ago period.

Changes in emission norms from April, which would see vehicle prices increase, and automakers rolling out promotional offers in the final month of the fiscal year, should help push sales higher in March, FADA added.

"Launch of new models, continuously improving supply, coupled with healthy booking-to-cancellation ratio and wedding bells kept the momentum going for the segment," Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) President Manish Raj Singhania said in a statement.

Two-wheeler registrations rose 15 per cent last month to 12,67,233 units, from 11,04,309 units in February 2022.

"The two-wheeler category witnessed a growth of 15 per cent year-on-year but was down 14 per cent when compared to the pre-Covid month of February '20," Singhania said.

Two of India's top three listed bike makers TVSMotor Company and Hero MotoCorp beat domestic sales estimates in February as chip supply shortages eased.



The change in OBD norms which comes into effect from April along with marriage season kept the sales ticking. Overall, high inflation and poor sentiment has kept customers at bay

MANISH RAJ SINGHANIA | PRESIDENT, FADA

Sales of two-wheelers advanced 15%, while those of three-wheelers jumped 81%, passenger vehicles 11%, tractors 14%, and commercial vehicles 17%

Total registrations across segments rose 16 per cent year-on-year

Total commercial vehicle retail sales in February grew 17 per cent to 79,027 units, as compared to 67,391 units in the same month last year.

It, however, remained 10 per cent down when compared to pre-Covid month of February 2020.

Three-wheeler retail sales witnessed a massive 81 per cent jump in registrations at 72,994 units, when compared with 40,224 units in February 2022. The three-wheeler segment continued to witness robust demand after the government subsidies breached pre-pandemic levels for the first time in February, FADA said.

Similarly, tractor sales rose 14 per cent year-on-year to 68,988 units in February.

On the business outlook, Singhania noted that multiple festivals in the near-term are expected to push sales.

"On the flipside, India's chief economic advisor said that urban demand recovery is taking place at a faster pace than rural. This along with sharp slowdown in private consumption expenditure to a

two-year low suggests a softening in household spending demand amid inflationary pressure as post Covid pent-up demand starts to fade," he added.

Besides, return of El Nino conditions in the Pacific could presage a weaker monsoon in India, resulting in lower output and higher prices impacting auto sales, Singhania said.

"While the month of March looks good, on a medium-term outlook, FADA remains cautious till the time a better monsoon forecast is not announced by IMD," he noted.

FADA said it collated vehicle retail data from 1,348 out of 1,434 RTOs across the country.

Auto sales numbers are keenly watched, as they are one of the key indicators to assess private consumption and carry more than 50% weightage in calculating the country's economic growth. However, rising interest rates amid elevated inflation are seen as a sentiment dampener, with overall sales in February still below pre-Covid levels.

Daily UPI transactions jump 50% to 36cr: RBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 6: Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das Monday said payments through UPI (unified payment interface) have grown exponentially in the past 12 months with daily transactions crossing 36 crore, which is up 50 per cent from 24 crore in February 2022.

In value terms, these transactions are worth ₹6.27 lakh crore, registering a growth of 17 per cent from ₹5.36 lakh crore in February 2022, the governor told reporters while launching the Digital Payments Awareness Week at the RBI headquarters here this afternoon.

Overall monthly digital payment transactions crossed over ₹1,000-crore-mark each month during the past 3 months

"Our payment systems are talked about globally and several countries have shown interest to replicate our success story. It is a matter of pride that our payment systems have witnessed over 1,000 crore transactions every month since December 2022. This speaks volumes of the robustness of our payments ecosystem and acceptance by consumers," Das said.

In terms of volume, the number of UPI transactions exceeded 800 crore in January 2023, while NEFT (National Electronic Funds Transfer) witnessed the highest ever daily volume of 3.18 crore transactions on February 28.

The UPI was launched in 2016, and since then it has emerged as the most popular and preferred payment mode pioneering person-to-person and person-to-merchant transactions accounting for 75 per cent of the total digital payments.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 6: India, the world's second largest sugar producing nation after Brazil, can export an additional 1 million tonne of the sweetener if the domestic output reaches an estimated 33.6 million tonne this year, a senior food ministry official said Monday.

The government will take a call next month on allowing more quan-

BRAND ENDORSEMENTS

Govt issues guidelines for celebs, influencers

THE GUIDELINES AIM TO CURB MISINFORMATION ABOUT A PRODUCT OR SERVICE BY INFLUENCERS AND CELEBRITIES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 6: The Department of Consumer Affairs Monday released detailed guidelines for social media and virtual influencers as well as celebrities which are aimed at ensuring that such individuals do not mislead their audience while endorsing products or services.

The guidelines titled "Endorsements Know-hows" have also been prepared to ensure that endorsements undertaken by such individuals are in compliance with the Consumer Protection Act.

The guidelines state that endorsements must be made in simple, clear language, and terms such as 'advertisement', 'sponsored', 'collaboration' or 'paid promotion' are used clearly.

Individuals must not endorse any product or service that they have not personally used or experienced or in which due diligence has not been done by them, the guidelines noted.

The department has noted that there is confusion regarding which disclosure word should be used for what kind of partnership.

Therefore, for paid or barter brand endorsement, disclosure words like 'advertisement', 'ad', 'sponsored', 'collaboration' or 'partnership' should be used.

However, the term must be in-



dicated as hashtag or in headline text, the guidelines say.

The guidelines specify that individuals or groups who have access to an audience and the power to affect their audiences' purchasing decisions or opinions about a product, service, brand, or experience, because of the influence's or celebrity's authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with their audience, must be disclosed.

They further stated that the disclosure must be placed in the endorsement message in a manner that is clear, prominent and extremely hard to miss. Disclosures should not be mixed with a group of hashtags or links.

For endorsements in a picture, disclosures should be superimposed over the image enough for viewers to notice. For endorsements in a video or a live stream, disclosures should be made in both audio and video format and displayed continuously and prominently during the entire stream.

The guidelines advise celebrities and influencers to always review and satisfy themselves that the advertiser is in a position to substantiate the claims made in the advertisement.

It is also recommended that the product and service must actually been used or experienced by the endorser.

Govt call on sugar exports depends on output

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 6: India, the world's second largest sugar producing nation after Brazil, can export an additional 1 million tonne of the sweetener if the domestic output reaches an estimated 33.6 million tonne this year, a senior food ministry official said Monday.

The government will take a call next month on allowing more quan-

tities of sugar exports, after assessing domestic production, he said.

Sugar availability is comfortable in the country and as a result wholesale and retail prices on a decline in the last one month.

The food ministry has allowed 6 million tonne of sugar exports for the current 2022-23 marketing year (October-September). India exported a record 11 million tonnes of sugar in the previous year.

Sugar production has already reached 24.7 million tonne till February of the ongoing 2022-23 marketing year, while mills have despatched 4.3 million tonne for exports so far this year, he said.

According to the food ministry, the country's sugar production has been estimated lower at 33.6 million tonne for the 2022-23 marketing year, due to fall in production in the top three producing states.

Nannies on call, spas: India witnessing mad rush for luxury housing

MANY PEOPLE WANT TO UPGRADE THEIR HOMES AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CONFINED THEM INDOORS. WORKING FROM HOME HAS ALSO LED TO A DEMAND FOR LARGER APARTMENTS, SUPPORTED BY RISING INCOMES AND INDIA'S GROWING NUMBER OF NOUVEAU RICHE

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 6: India's DLF sold a \$1 billion upmarket residential project in 72 hours while rival Godrej Properties is offering \$3 million apartments to clients selected by invitation, two off-plan sales that are signalling a revival in luxury housing.

Property developers say spacey high-price apartments that come with add-ons like concierge services, spas, multi-level parking, large green open spaces and a heated pool have become the rage. There are no such amenities in the individual houses and old apartment blocks that dominate India's cramped and crowded cities.

DLF's Arbour project in Gurugram near New Delhi attracted more than 3,000 applications for 1,137 apartments priced at \$869,000 each, extremely high prices for the area. The booking centre was

besieged by people queuing to buy homes during the project launch weekend in February.

Supply of new luxury homes in India has been constrained in recent years, hit by an economic slowdown in 2019 and then the pandemic, which dampened sentiment in 2020 and forced developers to put brakes on new project launches.

Anarock data shows that luxury condominiums, defined as those selling above ₹15 million (\$183,000), accounted for 17% of all housing launches in 2022, touching an at least five-year high. And launches of once-popular affordable homes - those priced below 4 million rupees (around \$50,000) - halved to 20% of the total in the period.

In all, a record 65,700 luxury units were sold in 2022, three times the previous year, with Mumbai, New Delhi and Hyderabad leading sales. In 2019, before the pandemic, 18,150 units were sold.



In Mumbai, Sugee Developers last week published front-page advertisements offering sea-view residences starting at \$1.7 million in a development that will have an amphitheatre, landscape gardens

and a sky deck lobby. Godrej's "Connaught One" project near central Delhi's premier shopping district is offering apartments for \$2-\$3 million, on par with a good class bungalow in parts of

I haven't seen such a mad rush in a decade. The luxury residential market is on the path to revival

PRASHANT THAKUR | HEAD OF RESEARCH, ANAROCK

the city. "We don't want to only sell this property but create a society of the most influential," said Godrej sales manager Yuvraj Manchanda. "Millionaires and billionaires will buy this."

"We are seeing more desire for larger spaces, lifestyle upgrade from founders of listed firms, startups, lawyers. We are getting more calls and as the available inventory is low, luxury properties are being sold quickly nowadays," said Amit Goyal, India CEO at Sotheby's International Realty.

Sotheby's, whose most expensive India property listing cur-

rently is a \$20 million bungalow in New Delhi, says 61% of surveyed high-net-worth Indians plan to buy luxury real estate this year, slightly lower than 67% last year.

India's 1.4 billion people have a per capita income of just \$2,300, but the country has more than 800,000 dollar millionaires. Knight Frank estimates India will have 1.4 million millionaires by 2026, 77% higher than in 2021.

What has also changed is the propensity of the wealthy to spend, after decades of hiding away riches in a country that was socialist and frowned on ostentatious living.

Mercedes sold a record number of high-end cars in India last year and luxury goods are in high demand too. Knight Frank data for 2022 shows 53% of ultra-wealthy individuals splurged on both luxury watches and handbags, compared with an average 41% and 9% in 2020, respectively.

E-commerce, retail trade policies soon

New Delhi: The government is working to bring a national retail trade and e-commerce policy to promote the growth of the sector in the country, a senior official said Monday. Joint Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Sanjiv said that the retail trade policy would provide brick and mortar retail traders a business friendly environment, modern infrastructure facilities and easy access to credit. The Department, he said, is also working to bring an e-commerce policy for online retailers. "We want that there should be a synergy between e-commerce as well as retail traders," Sanjiv said at a conference on FMCG and e-commerce here. The Department is also in the process of formulating an insurance scheme for all the retail traders. "The government is trying to do policy changes not only in e-commerce but national retail trade policy for physical traders which will be introducing ease of doing business, providing better infrastructural facilities, providing more credit and providing all sorts of benefits to traders," he said.

HAYLEY SHOW LIFTS MI

Carey backs sweep shot for runs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, March 6: Australia wicket-keeper Alex Carey feels he has more chances of succeeding if he goes for his shots, including the sweep, rather than defending in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar trophy.

The southpaw has been impressive with his glove work on wickets offering turn from day one but has only managed 56 runs in the series so far. Carey also feels the Australian batters have their own methods to deal with rank turners and he is going to back his own in the final Test beginning in Ahmedabad from March 9.

"I had some confidence out of the first game and then getting out defending, am I happy with that? Not really," Carey told reporters here. "I think probably just sticking to my method now and understanding if you chase it too much then you might get yourself into trouble."

"So yeah, back my strength and try to score with the sweeps and manipulate a little bit more that way. In India, if you change your method too much, it goes pretty quickly. I'll continue to be positive over here."

Australia made an unexpected comeback in the series

with a nine-wicket win at the Holkar Stadium last Friday. India lead the series 2-1 going into the final game. After the Delhi debacle,

Australians did not play a lot of sweep shots but did not abandon them completely. Expect Carey to sweep at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

"We all know that our players play differently, Travis (Head) will play an aggressive nature and Peter (Handscomb) will grind out runs, and he's played beautifully. And Steve (Smith) does it his way."

"We've all got different methods and, internally, we live with that. So looking forward to another opportunity in Ahmedabad and get down and maybe get the broom out again," he said.

Carey had pulled off a sharp stumping to send back Rohit Sharma on the opening day of the third Test. The ball from Matthew Kuhnemann turned eight degrees and Rohit missed it with Carey doing the rest behind the stumps.

"Instinct takes over when you see a ball bounce like that. I don't think many of us were expecting an eight degree turning ball that early in the game. But it was nice to hold on to that and for us to get a bit of momentum."

"It was nice after we missed a couple of reviews (in the first over of the game) to get that one - I thought once the big screen showed the nick, I thought he might have settled in for a nice 150 or something like that," he added.



Alex Carey has his eyes on the ball as he shapes to play reverse sweep during nets

SMITH TO LEAD IN FOURTH TEST

Ahmedabad: Steve Smith will lead Australia in the fourth and final Test against India as regular captain Pat Cummins remains with his unwell mother back home. Smith had captained the side in Indore in Cummins' absence. Cummins had flown back home after the Delhi Test to be with his mother who is in palliative care. Three ODIs follow the final Test and a decision on Cummins' participation in those games will be taken later. Smith had captained Australia to a nine-wicket win in Indore last week sealing their World Test Championship final qualification. The website also reported that Nathan Ellis has replaced injured Jhye Richardson in the Australia squad for ODIs beginning March 17.



Nat Sciver-Brunt & Hayley Matthews

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 6: Mumbai Indians cruised to their second consecutive win in the Women's Premier League (WPL) Monday with a comprehensive nine-wicket victory over Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB), who succumbed to their second defeat in as many days.

Chasing 156, an all-round show from Hayley Matthews (77 n o, 38b, 13x4, 1x6; 3/28) helped Mumbai Indians to consolidate their position at the top of the WPL points table. The West Indian picked up three wickets and completed a fine all-round show by scoring an unbeaten half century.

Mumbai Indians, who won the first game by 143 runs against Gujarat Giants, now have four points from two matches with a net run rate (NRR) of 5.185.

Matthews yet again forged a defining partnership with England's Nat Sciver-Brunt (55 n o, 29b, 9x4, 1x6; 1/34),

with the two right-handed batters hammering the RCB bowlers all over the park to put on an unbeaten 114-run stand for the second wicket.

If Matthews produced an all-round show to help Mumbai Indians to their second win, the uncapped Saika Ishaque also impressed once again, grabbing two wickets (2/26) and taking her tally in the tournament to six.

Sciver-Brunt, who couldn't get a good start in the opening game, made up for the disappointment Monday by cracking an unbeaten half century.

'Player of the Match' Matthews seemed to have picked up from where she had left off at the DY Patil Stadium the other night, playing her strokes with power, precision and command. Matthews's knock came after she had returned superb bowling figures in her four-over spell. She accounted for RCB skipper Smriti Mandhana (23), Heather Knight (0) and Richa Ghosh (28).

Matthews might have taken her fourth wicket in her final over but Renuka Thakur thwacked the ball real hard for the bowler to take the return catch.

The only breakthrough for RCB came in the fifth over when Preeti Bose trapped Yastika Bhatia in front of the wickets for a well-made 23 off 19 balls.

The Mumbai wicketkeeper-batter, who looked out of sorts in the first match, broke the shackles with an unconventional shot that got her the first four of the innings, and she did well to help forge a 45-run first-wicket stand.

Sciver-Brunt took a liking for Shreyanka Patil in the eighth over, clobbering three boundaries to put Mumbai Indians in almost a run-a-ball situation from thereon. Sciver-Brunt and Matthews took on Patil once again, this time in the 13th over, with three fours and a six getting them 20 runs.

Earlier, RCB fought back with

useful contributions from their lower order as they recovered from a batting collapse to reach 155 in 184 overs. After a bright start provided by captain Mandhana, RCB lost four wickets in eight balls to slip from 39 for no loss to 43/4 between the fourth and the fifth over.

The damage was caused by Ishaque and Matthews, who along with New Zealand's Amelia Kerr (2/30) shared seven wickets between them. But credit to RCB batters - Ghosh (28), Kanika Anuja (22), debutant Shreyanka (23) and Megan Schutt (20) - who not only got some much-needed runs but also took the team's total beyond 150, which looked difficult at one stage.

BRIEF SCORES: RCB Women 155 (Richa Ghosh 28, Shreyanka Patil 23, Smriti Mandhana 23; Hayley Matthews 3/28, Saika Ishaque 2/26, Amelia Kerr 2/30) lost to MI Women 159/1 (Hayley Matthews 77 n o, Nat Sciver-Brunt 55 n o, Yastika Bhatia 23) by 9 wickets.

Roma beat Juve to boost hopes of a top 4 finish

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Milan, March 6: Gianluca Mancini's stunning strike was enough to give Roma a 1-0 win over Juventus in Serie A, despite the visitors hitting the woodwork three times.

Mancini struck early in the second half to help Roma move into fourth place in Serie A in a tight fight for the Champions League qualifying spots. There was further misery for Juventus as substitute Moise Kean was sent off in the final minute, seconds after coming off the bench, for violent conduct.

Roma are above fifth-place AC Milan on goal difference alone. Head-to-head is the first tie-breaker at the end of the season. Juventus are 12 points further back. They were deducted 15 points at the start of the year for false accounting.

Inter Milan bounced back from last week's surprise loss to Bologna by beating Lecce 2-0 to move back into second spot. The Nerazzurri are two points above Lazio and three above Roma and Milan.

Inter broke the deadlock in the 29th minute through Henrikh Mkhitaryan at San Siro. Lautaro Martinez struck the second for Inter

Reds inflict worst nightmare on Red Devils

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Liverpool, March 6: For Liverpool, it was the wildest of dreams. For Manchester United, the worst nightmare in what has been such a promising first season in charge for manager Erik ten Hag.

Liverpool's 7-0 rout of United in the Premier League on Sunday has the potential to have a lasting impact on both teams' ambitions this term.

It was United's worst competitive defeat in more than 90 years, having lost by the same scoreline on three previous occasions - the last time coming in 1931 against Wolverhampton. The result also eclipsed Liverpool's previous best victory against arguably their fiercest rival, which was a 7-1 win in 1895.

A landmark win could be the launchpad for a powerful finish to the campaign for Liverpool, a push for Champions League qualification and possibly more.

Ten Hag, meanwhile, must hope his players respond in the manner they did after humbling losses against Brentford and Manchester City this season, which sparked impressive undefeated runs.

A four-pronged trophy pursuit now looks highly unlikely, with third-place United 14 points adrift of league leader Arsenal. But after



HISTORIC NIGHT: Mo Salah celebrates his second goal which allowed him become Liverpool's all-time highest goal scorer in Premier League; (inset) Manchester United players look dejected after the match

winning the League Cup last week, Ten Hag's side remains in contention for the FA Cup and Europa League, in what still has the potential to be a triumphant campaign. Not that the Dutchman was in the mood to look for the positives

in the immediate aftermath of what was also his worst-ever defeat as a manager.

Ten Hag has endured his share of tough days in his first season in charge of the 20-time league champions. United lost 0-4 to Brentford

in only the second game of the campaign and was beaten 3-6 in his first Manchester derby.

Klopp has had his own problems this term as his team has struggled to cope with the departure of Sadio Mane last summer. Until re-

cently, even a Champions League qualifying top-four finish looked in doubt, with Liverpool suffering bruising losses to Brentford, Brighton and Wolverhampton since the start of 2023.

This win, however, closes the gap to fourth-place Tottenham to three points with a game in hand. It was also evidence of a growing understanding between Liverpool's new-look attack as Cody Gakpo, Darwin Nunez and Mohamed Salah all scored twice, with Roberto Firmino adding the other.

With fourth place now in sight, Liverpool fans might yet dream of an unlikely comeback in the Champions League round-of-16 game against Real Madrid later this month. While European champions Madrid lead 5-2 after the first leg at Anfield, this was the type of performance to make the Merseyside club believe anything is possible.

RECORD-BREAKING SALAH

Salah became Liverpool's all-time leading scorer in the Premier League with 129 goals in 205 appearances. The Egyptian international surpassed Robbie Fowler's Premier League tally with his second goal. Salah earlier in the week became only the second Liverpool player after Ian Rush to score 20 goals for a sixth successive season.

REAL MADRID HELD BY REAL BETIS

REUTERS

Seville, March 6: Real Madrid ended a difficult week with a frustrating 0-0 draw at Real Betis Sunday that did little to enhance their prospects of catching Barcelona in the La Liga title race.

After losing 0-1 at home to rivals Barcelona in the first leg of their Copa del Rey semifinal Thursday, Real dominated against Betis but missed several opportunities.

Barcelona are top on 62 points, nine clear of second-placed Real who have now had consecutive draws. Betis are fifth with 41 points, three points off the Champions League places.

It was a lively match in Seville that needed a goal with Real Madrid dominating the proceedings but an often dangerous Betis constantly threatening Thibaut Courtois' goal.



FRUSTRATING OUTING: Vinicius Junior looks disappointed after missing out on a scoring opportunity against Real Betis, Sunday

After a 5-2 win at Liverpool in their last-16 Champions League first-leg tie, Real Madrid have been struggling up front. They have scored once in their last three games

in all competitions - a set piece in the 1-1 draw with Atletico Madrid.

At Betis they started well but Karim Benzema's effort from a free-kick ruled out in the 12th

minute as the ball deflected off Real defender Antonio Ruediger's hand before going in. The visitors kept pushing and Federico Valverde almost scored but his thunderous strike flew just above the bar.

The tension and intensity grew in the second half, with Real going all out to get a win and Betis having chances of their own. Betis' Claudio Bravo made a brilliant save from a Benzema strike to deny Real an opener right after the break and Courtois performed his own miracle to deny Borja Iglesias from point-blank range with a one-handed save.

Rodrygo then wasted two great opportunities when he passed to Benzema instead of finishing and then missed an absolute sitter from close range after a Valverde cross. Dani Ceballos also spurned a chance and Bravo kept out close-range shots by Nacho and Benzema.

WORLD CHAMPIONS ARRIVE



The Germany men's hockey team, who won the FIH World Cup 2023 earlier this year, arrived in Rourkela Monday for the upcoming FIH Hockey Pro League 2022/23. The Mats Grambusch-led German team touched down at the Veer Surendra Sai Airport in Jharsuguda. From the Jharsuguda airport, the team travelled to Rourkela, which will host all six matches at the newly-built crown jewel of hockey - Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium, where India, Germany, Australia will clash with each other, starting March 10.

NEW FACES IN FOR INDIA'S BILLIE JEAN KING CUP SQUAD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 6: Vaidehi Chaudhary was Monday rewarded for her good form as she was named in India's Billie Jean King Cup squad for the upcoming Asia Oceania Group I competition, where seniors Ankita Raina and Karman Kaur Thandi will lead the country's challenge.

The 23-year-old Chaudhary had recently won her second ITF women's singles title in Gurugram after beating compatriot Sandeep Singh. Chaudhary, ranked 492, had won her maiden ITF title in Gwalior recently and then also reached the final in Jhajjar, where she had lost to Serbia's Tamara Curovic.

Also making it to the five-player squad is Sahaja Yamlapalli, who is the fourth-highest ranked player from India at number 454. Rutuja Bhosale has kept her place (419) in the squad even as Riya Bhatiya has been dropped by the selection panel, led by Nandan Bal.

The action in Asia Oceania Group I will begin in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from April 10. The AITA has replaced Vishal Uppal as captain and Shalini Thakur Chawla, who was the coach in the previous tie, has taken his place.

Radhika Kanitkar is the new coach of the side while Ajeeta Goel is the physio in an all-woman support staff. AITA Secretary General Anil Dhupar said there was no politics or agenda behind the move.

"We wanted to reward the youngsters for their good form that's why Vaidehi and Sahaja are there. The good thing is that all five players are almost at the same level. Vaidehi has even beaten Ankita. So in case there is an injury issue, we have ideal replacement," Nandan Bal told PTI.

Uppal said he was not informed about the decision. But Dhupar said AITA had asked Haryana State Association's Suman Kapur to communicate the decision to Uppal that he is being replaced as captain.

THE SQUAD

Ankita Raina (241), Karman Kaur Thandi (268), Rutuja Bhosale (419), Sahaja Yamlapalli (454) and Vaidehi Chaudhary (492); Shrivalli Bhamidipaty (Reserve); **Captain:** Shalini Thakur Chawla; **Coach:** Radhika Kanitkar.