



## DEFINING FEMINISM

Actor Paoli Dam says feminism is not about making women stronger, it's about changing the way the world perceives their strength

LEISURE P2



## BOOSTING TIES

Japan and South Korea agree to resume regular visits between their leaders and take steps to resolve trade disputes

INTERNATIONAL P10



## FLYING START

Nikhat Zareen starts defence of her title with win over Anakhanim Ismayilova in Women's World Boxing meet

SPORTS P12



**IN FULL BLOOM:** Gardeners work at Asia's largest Tulip garden on the foothills of the Zaberwan mountains overlooking the Dal Lake in Srinagar

# Task force formed to tackle drivers' protest

Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena assures agitators that their demands will be fulfilled within 3 months, asks them to call off stir immediately

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** Even as the opposition BJP and the Congress created a ruckus in the Odisha Assembly over the ongoing drivers' agitation, people in the state capital and other parts of Odisha had a different goal. They made a beeline for petrol pumps all across the state to fill up their vehicles apprehending that petrol and diesel stocks will be exhausted if the strike by commercial vehicle drivers continue.



Two-wheelers wait in long queues at a petrol pump in Bhubaneswar to get the tanks filled; (Inset): Agitators forcibly stop a truck near Tamando in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

To tackle the situation, the Odisha government formed Thursday a task force under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary, Pradeep Kumar Jena. The other members of the panel are Odisha DGP, Development Commissioner, Principal Secretaries of the Commerce & Transport, and Food Supplies & Consumer Welfare departments and Transport Commissioner. The committee which had its first meeting Thursday would meet as frequently as required and take necessary action to ensure free move-

ments of essential commodities including fuel, officials informed.

Meanwhile in a separate development, Jena met representatives of the Drivers Ekta Mahasangha and assured them that their demands will be met within three months. Jena later told mediapersons that he has requested the drivers to call off their agitation as soon as possible as it was causing inconvenience to people and creating law and order situations.

## AOBOA threatens stir

**Bhubaneswar:** More plight is in the offing for commuters as the All Odisha Private Bus Owners' Association (AOBOA) said Thursday that they will stop plying their vehicles on national highways unless the government provides security to the drivers and removes the road blocks. A total of 14,000 buses operate in the state every day. If these goes off the roads, it will create huge problems for commuters who depend on buses.

Contd...P4

## OBC survey in state from May 1

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** The much-awaited survey of the other backward classes (OBCs) across Odisha will commence May 1 and continue till May 27, an official notification said Thursday. The social and educational conditions of 208 OBC communities enlisted by the Odisha government will be collected during the survey, which will be followed by a special drive to ensure that none were left out across the state, an official said. Odisha is the second state in the country after Bihar to hold the OBC survey.

The survey will be carried out by the Odisha State Commission for Backward Classes in all 314 blocks and 114 civic body areas in the state, an official informed. "The objective of the survey is to get a picture of the present social and educational conditions of the people belonging to backward classes in Odisha," the official pointed out.

The opposition BJP and Congress said that the state government's move for the survey ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha and the Odisha assembly election is aimed at creating an OBC vote bank. The ruling BJD on the other hand maintained that the survey will be conducted to make policies more effective and ensure the socio-economic development of the backward classes. "There is no politics behind the survey," a BJD lawmaker said.

## SHORT TAKES

### Sisodia now booked in 'snooping' case

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi's jailed former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia has been booked by the CBI in a fresh case related to alleged misuse of official position and using the city government's 'Feedback Unit' for 'political snooping', officials said Thursday. Problems for the 51-year-old Sisodia aggravated after the agency registered a fresh case against him and five others Thursday for alleged criminal conspiracy and forgery, officials informed. Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal said it was a new ploy to keep Sisodia in prison for a 'long time'.

### Man critical after self-immolation bid

**NUAPADA:** A man, identified as Jagdish Chauhan of Kalyanpur village under Sadar police limits in Nuapada district, suffered severe burn injuries as he attempted self-immolation in front of a tehsil office here over land dispute, police said Thursday. He has been admitted to VIMSAR and his condition is stated to be critical. Chauhan had been unhappy with the authorities regarding a land dispute case. He had a heated argument Thursday with revenue officials after which he attempted self-immolation.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Looks like an anti-national speech to me. You haven't praised the PM even once

# Allow my speech: Rahul

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 16:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said Thursday he 'hoped' that he would be allowed to speak in the Parliament on the BJP's allegation that he insulted the country abroad by questioning the state of democracy. "But I don't think they will let me speak," Rahul told reporters, hours after his brief appearance in the Parliament. This was the first time Rahul attended the Lok Sabha since the massive row erupted over his comments in London, with at least four Union Ministers demanding his apology in and outside the Parliament.



**Congress leader ready to explain his stance in Lok Sabha, but doubts whether he will be allowed to speak**

"Today, within one minute of my coming to the House, they adjourned it... I went to Parliament with the idea of putting what I feel

on the floor of the house," Rahul said. "If Indian democracy is functioning, I will be able to say my piece in Parliament. What you are seeing is a test of the Indian democracy," the Congress leader added.

# Student dies during Matric exams

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Damanjodi, March 16:** In a shocking incident, a Class-X student died suddenly Thursday while appearing for his matriculation examination at the Saraswati Vidya Mandir examination centre in Nalco township here in Koraput district.

superintendent and school authorities after trying to revive him, immediately rushed Kuna to the Nalco hospital in an ambulance, but he succumbed during treatment, officials said.

The deceased was identified as Kuna Pujari, son of Ram Pujari, a casual employee of a consultancy firm. Kuna was a student of Malu Saunta Government Nodal High School at Mathalput near this town.

A pall of grief and mourning spread in Kuna's native place as news of his demise spread. Sources said that the boy had earlier suffered fits a number of times and also had lost his senses on a couple of occasions.

Officials said that the incident happened when Kuna was appearing for the general science test. Suddenly he complained of uneasiness and before anyone could react, fell unconscious. The centre

College and Hospital in Koraput. The exact cause of the death is yet to be ascertained and further probe is underway, Damanjodi IIC Gourahari Sahu said.

### MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	ARIATION
SENSEX	57634.84	↑ 78.94
NIFTY	16985.60	↑ 13.45
DOLLAR	82.35	↑ ₹0.21
EURO	87.60	↓ ₹0.04
GOLD	₹57,975	↓ ₹361
SILVER	₹66,716	↓ ₹583

### WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	31.6°C	29.5°C
TEMP MIN	21.6°C	22.0°C
Humidity	85%	89%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather most likely	

# Global recognition for 'Gulaabi Gang' sari

The gang came into existence in 2006 and is known for its fight against 'atrocities' against women

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, March 16:** The 'Design Museum of London', in an attempt to celebrate the movement of rural women's empowerment, has turned to the famous 'Gulaabi or Gulaab Gang' as its main theme. The museum has decided to exhibit the 'pink (gulaabi) sari' as something which symbolises 'resistance' against victimisation.



The exhibition will open in May. The 'pink sari' is a symbol of women sisterhood, popularised by the vigilante group which is still active in the states of Bundelkhand and Madhya Pradesh and is known as 'Gulaab Gang'. Because of the pink saris they wore, the group came to be known as the 'Gulaabi Gang' also. The group became so famous that even a movie was made on the gang starring the legendary Madhuri

Dixit and Juhi Chawla. This extraordinary women's movement started by Sampat Pal in 2006 has now drawn global attention. "Gulaabi Gang's fight has now reached abroad. I was happy when I was called to France for the first time in 2008. We have now grown to 11 lakh members. I am sending my sari along with the blouse and a pink stick to London by a courier to be displayed there at the exhibition," Pal said Thursday. The 'Gulaab Gang' was launched to seek justice against those accused of 'committing atrocities against women' or indulging in corruption harming the fairer sex. Contd...P4

# BUSINESS EMINENCE AWARDS

18th March, 2023

Bhubaneswar

LIVE STREAM ON 10:45 AM ONWARDS

DharitriLive OrissapostLive

DharitriNews OrissapostLive

### SPONSORS

# leisure



## BROOKE BLAMED HERSELF FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT

Brooke Shields recalls being sexually assaulted in Hollywood more than 30 years ago and how she blamed herself for the event, thinking that no one would believe her if she came out. The 57-year-old model and actress opened up about the incident in her new Hulu documentary, *Brooke Shields: Pretty Baby*, reports *femalefirst.co.uk*.

## IT'S HARD TO BE A GIRL: NICOLA PELTZ-BECKHAM

American actress Nicola Peltz-Beckham thinks it's just hard being a girl at a time when social media has made life even more difficult because it is so easy to be compared unfavourably to someone else. The 28-year-old is thankful she has a support from her friends, family, and husband Brooklyn Beckham.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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

#### ARIES

Today, you are raring to go. It's best you put that adrenaline to good use. This is the time to WORK and not plan. It's a day you can lift mountains and cross the seas. You can party hard later, says Ganesha.

#### TAURUS

Spontaneity, predicts Ganesha, is the need of the hour. Ignore the negative aspects and focus on the positive side. Your action rather than thoughts will yield results today. Listen to some light music to soothe your soul, suggests Ganesha.

#### GEMINI

God helps those who help themselves. Maybe. But He definitely helps those who help others. Support your colleagues and they will be grateful to you. This way, even your bosses will notice your talents, if they haven't already. They will shower praise on you, and favours too. An entirely enjoyable evening with your loved ones will serve as the icing on the cake, says Ganesha.

#### CANCER

You are likely to be in good spirits throughout the day. With you brimming with confidence and positive energy, others around you will also feel upbeat. The entire day, you will be looking forward to the evening, so that you could spend some quality time with your loved ones. It will be worth the wait.

#### LEO

With Lady Luck smiling down on you, today promises to be rather special, forecasts Ganesha. Expect to find favourable conditions and come out with flying colours in whatever task you undertake, especially if it happens to be something like an interview. Bask in the kudos and appreciation at work, as your performance far exceeds the expectations of the management.

#### VIRGO

There is an indication that you may assume a leadership role and dictate the agenda at work today, predicts Ganesha. You may spend your afternoon window-shopping, looking for a gift that you feel like giving to a loved one.

#### LIBRA

Ganesha predicts that today you will receive that much-awaited good news from abroad. At the workplace, you will remain completely focused. You may devise and come up with some innovative method to speed up work, much to your relief.

#### SCORPIO

It is quite likely that you will have an outstanding field day today, predicts Ganesha. At the workplace, you will possibly feel that you are stuck in the rut doing regular activities day after day. In relationship matters, evening will be full of surprises and excitement for you, expects Ganesha.

#### SAGITTARIUS

Handicraft business is likely to draw your attention. People around you will marvel at your commitment and dedication to work and family alike. Ganesha advises you to bite the apple of love and share some romantic moments with your spouse.

#### CAPRICORN

Not many know how stupendous is your wealth of wisdom; today will be a good day to make a display of it, says Ganesha. You will have your wits about you and will impress many with your show of intellect. In the social circuit, you will indulge in spreading the message of love while at work, your excellent managerial skills will ensure that everything is under control. Peace is what you will look forward to at night, and peace will come to you, indeed.

#### AQUARIUS

Today, you will speak and everyone else will listen! Your eloquence will bring you recognition. But you must take it a step further. You will also manage to impress someone, and Ganesha sees the beginning of a new relationship. But don't forget to listen sometimes.

#### PISCES

Good times are coming your way, and this could be in the form of a promotion or a pay hike, says Ganesha. You will devote time equally between your work and family, taking a little time off to take them out on a leisure trip. Enjoy!

## Paoli opens up on true feminism

Kolkata: Paoli Dam has predominantly worked in the Bengali and Hindi film industries and is known for her bold and boundless characters. She expressed that feminism isn't talking about making women stronger since women are already strong; it's about changing the way the world perceives that strength.

She was the first to declare that she doesn't have any inhibitions when it comes to work. She insists that she can 'bare it all' when the narrative demands. For the unversed, Paoli went completely nude in *Chhatrak*, a 2011 Bengali film directed by Sri Lankan director Vimukthi Jayasundara that was screened at Cannes. Then she did a bold character in *Hate Story* with the focus on the exposed body.

not the character or the role or the film, and everybody went gaga.

Paoli feels she broke the taboo, and for a Bengali middle-class urban girl, that was indeed something to cherish. After doing *Hate Story*, words like 'hot', 'sexy', and 'bold' became prefixes to her name. However, Paoli insists she takes them as a compliment because they prove that she's a familiar face, figure, and actress within the film world.

The powerhouse actress has bagged yet another meaty role in Vishal Bhardwaj's upcoming project, which is being adapted from Agatha Christie's *The Sittaford Mystery*.



## Alia likes to play central protagonist



Mumbai: Alia Bhatt has always portrayed the roles of strong female characters on the silver screen. The actress recently resumed work after welcoming her first child with Ranbir Kapoor. In an interview, the actress opened up about what she thinks before choosing such films.

She said, "I think I naturally gravitate towards parts that gave me a challenge or drove me to a place that I haven't been to before." Adding further to the discussion, she said, "I can't do the film if it does not offer a great part. Even if it's a cameo, it should be impactful. One thing I learned in the last few years is that if you have a good story, a great director, and a good understanding, a female-driven film can be a good film, be a commercial success, and be something that people remember you for. So the endeavor will always be to reach as wide as possible, and I will continue to try and broaden the horizon by doing parts where I am the central protagonist."

Alia recently wrapped up the shooting of Karan Johar's *Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani*.

## Odia girl plays Kapil's daughter in *Zwigato*

Keonjhar: With more and more young talents from Odisha proving their mettle in Hindi film industry, here comes another budding star Yuvika Brahma, a female child actor from Tangarani village under Raikala panchayat of Keonjhar district who has made debut in Kapil Sharma starrer Nandita Das' *Zwigato*. Yuvika, the daughter of Saroj Kumar Brahma and Rojalin Biswal is a standard VIII student at KIIT International School.

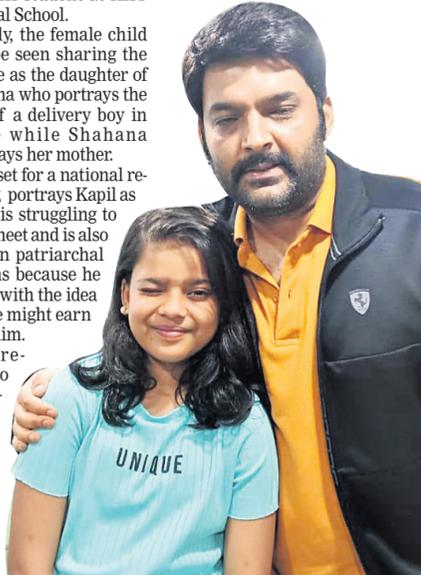
Reportedly, the female child actor will be seen sharing the screen space as the daughter of Kapil Sharma who portrays the character of a delivery boy in the movie while Shahana Goswami plays her mother.

*Zwigato*, set for a national release Friday, portrays Kapil as a man who is struggling to make ends meet and is also enmeshed in patriarchal social norms because he cannot deal with the idea that his wife might earn more than him.

While responding to some questions, the girl expressed her happiness at having her dream come true. She also wants

to watch the film with her loved ones and friends. When asked about the audition, she responded that she was chosen out of the 50 students from her school, and Nandita Das was also present during the audition. Yuvika wants to serve people by becoming a doctor. She also loves to watch Shah Rukh Khan and she liked his recent starrer *Pathaan*.

NARESH CHANDRA PATTANAYAK, OP



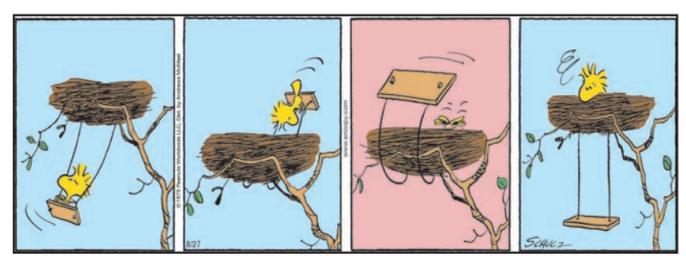
## Panchamveda's 4-day theatre fest concludes

Bhubaneswar-based Vagdevi Literature Trust presented Odia play *Odasa* (Bedbug) Thursday, on the last day of 19th Theatre Festival organised by Panchamveda at Rabindra Mandap. Written by Sharat Acharya, the play was directed by Pabitra Mohanty. Though bedbugs feed on human blood, they don't bite unless they are hungry where as human wants are unlimited, said the director in his play. Among the actors, Mamata Tripathy, Manu Pattnaik, Sunil Pattnaik and Pabitra Mohanty performed on stage.

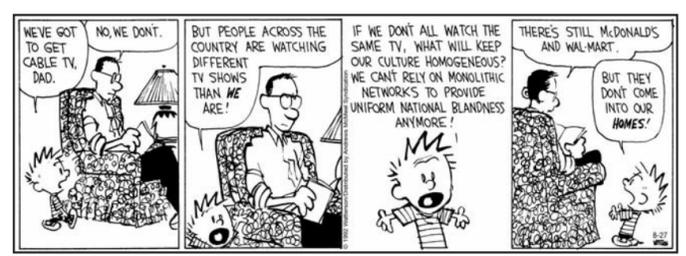


### FUN post

#### PEANUTS



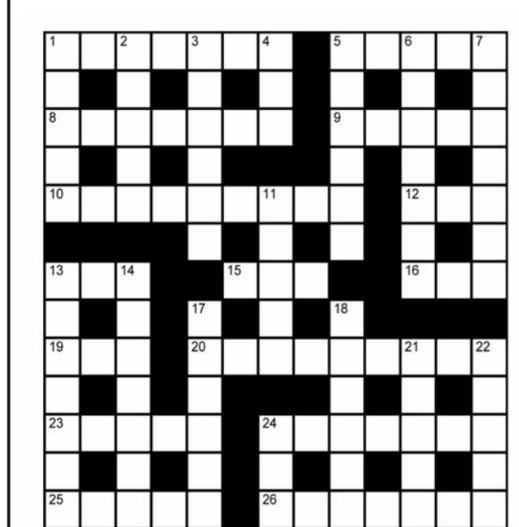
#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### BREVITY



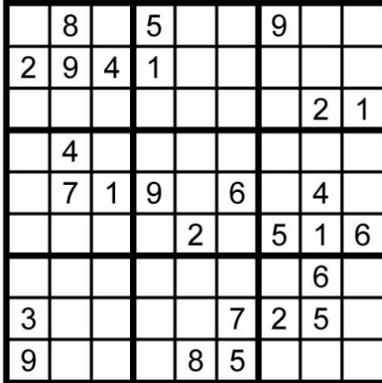
#### CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Gherkins
  - 5 Evade
  - 8 Historical record
  - 9 Plant disease
  - 10 Butcher
  - 12 Roadhouse
  - 13 Taproom
  - 15 Colliery
  - 16 However
  - 19 Mythical bird of prey
  - 20 Disassemble (4,5)
  - 23 Olfactory sensation
  - 24 Circus performer
  - 25 Luxuriously elegant
  - 26 Jungle knife
  - 6 Self-respect
  - 7 Like the dinosaurs
  - 11 Magician's offering
  - 13 Sitting room
  - 14 Retreat from a commitment (4,3)
  - 17 Inflexible
  - 18 Percule, e.g.
  - 21 Go on walkabout
  - 22 Book starter
  - 24 Fortify

#### SUDOKU

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

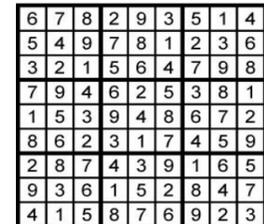


#### SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

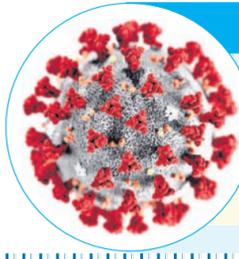


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



## NATURE'S BOUNTY

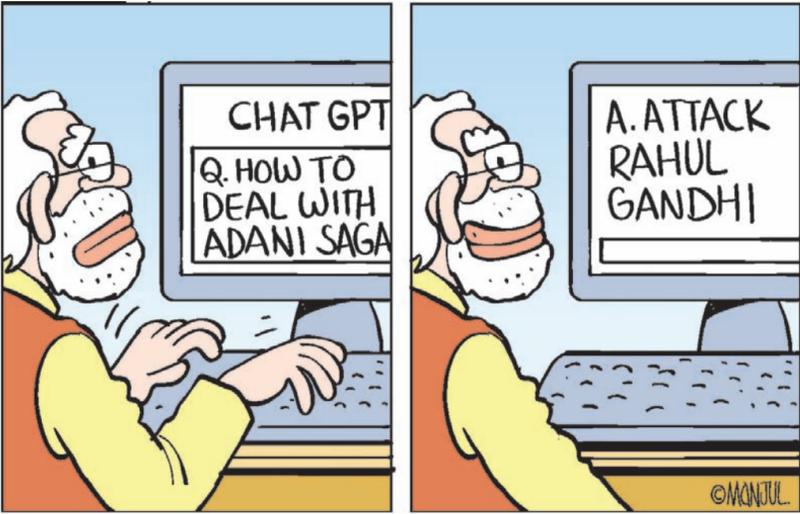
Women check sunflowers at an OUAT garden near Baramunda in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	68,21,02,022	65,50,45,761	68,15,731
India	4,46,92,710	4,41,57,297	5,30,790
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## 47,594 face music for flouting traffic rules

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** Commissionerate Police has imposed penalty against 47,594 persons for violating traffic rules in Capital city from January to March 15, 2023. The cops issued challans against 15,641 violators for fine in January this year while the number rose to 21,045 in February. The cops caught 10,908 traffic violators till March 15, 2023. Similarly, 5,899 and 7,527 persons were caught for helmetless riding in January and February respectively. Likewise, altogether 3,452 persons were fined for not wearing helmets in March so far. The police also said that 4,909 and 6,441 persons were fined for over-speeding in January and February respectively. The cops imposed fine on 2,532 commuters for over-speeding till March 15.

# Odisha most favoured investment hub: Panda

After completing higher education, he obtained his Master's Degree from Boston University of USA and joined his family business. He has not only played a crucial role in expansion of Indian Metals and Ferro Alloys (IMFA) Ltd after joining the company in 1990s, but also taken effective steps to put the leading industry of the state in a robust growth trajectory. His vision has helped IMFA emerge as a prominent industry in the state and earn international reputation. In a tete-a-tete with **Orissa POST**, managing director of IMFA and FICCI President **Subhrakant Panda** shares his thoughts about industrial outlook of Odisha and many more...



## Drivers' stir hits life for 2nd day

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** Normal life at many places across the state was hit hard as the strike by the Driver Ekata Mahasangha entered the second day, Thursday, paralysing public and commercial transports. Over 2 lakh drivers have launched a strike across Odisha from Wednesday for an indefinite period demanding social security, including pension after 60 years, accident benefits, and formation of a welfare fund. On the second day, a scuffle broke out between agitating drivers and drivers from other states at Tamando near Bhubaneswar. As per reports, the scuffle occurred after the protesting drivers tried to stop the drivers from outside the state. Police resorted to lathi charge to clear the road in the City. Buses were off the roads while goods carriages and cabs remained stranded at various locations in the state Thursday. The striking drivers gathered on national highways and state expressways and stopped vehicles inconveniencing commuters. The drivers' strike also had its echo in the Odisha Assembly which witnessed back-to-back six adjournments and remained paralysed till 4pm due to the ruckus by opposition BJP and Congress members over the issue. People bore the brunt with commuters, including tourists, waiting at bus stops, skyrocketing prices of vegetables and fruits, and non-availability of fuel at filling stations.



## 7 COPS HURT

**Gopalpur:** At least seven police officials, including Golanthara IIC Bibekananda Mohanta and Gopalpur SI Jayachandra Mallick, were injured in a clash with agitating drivers at Pukudibandha Square here in Ganjam Thursday. Sources said the agitating drivers were blocking NH-16 and 59 when police reached the Pukudibandha Square and urged them to allow the vehicles to ply. "In a bid to remove the agitating drivers from the road and facilitate movement of vehicles, the police personnel resorted to mild lathicharge. The drivers pelted stones at the police personnel, leaving seven of them injured," said an official.

In view of the hardships faced by commuters, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Thursday urged Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to initiate steps to resolve the issue.

## Cong backs agitation in House

**Bhubaneswar:** The issue of drivers' stir was raised in the Assembly by Congress Legislature Party leader Narasingha Mishra who expressed support to the striking drivers who have been demanding social security and other amenities like parking and toilet facilities along the roads. Mishra sought a ruling from Speaker BK Arukha to resolve the issue. Opposition BJP members also supported the Congress demand and trooped into the well of the House. The lone CPI (M) MLA, Laxman Munda, also joined the BJP and Congress legislators.

The opposition members raised anti-government slogans and held the state government responsible for the plight of people caused due to the drivers' strike. Unable to run the House, the Speaker adjourned the proceedings six times during which an all-party meeting was convened. Normalcy returned to the House after the Speaker in a ruling, following the all-party meeting, asked Transport minister Tukuni Sahu to hold a meeting with the striking drivers and make a statement in the Assembly Friday. The All Odisha Bus Owners' Association, Truck Owners' Association, and Auto-rickshaw Owners' Association, however, have not joined the stir. Auto-rickshaws and cabs also remained off the roads in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, and Puri for several hours Thursday as the Smart City Online Auto Association members observed a strike protesting alleged humiliation by members of the Driver Mahasangha. The auto-rickshaw and cab drivers called off the strike after getting an assurance from the twin city police commissioner that such incidents would not be allowed to recur.

Association, Truck Owners' Association, and Auto-rickshaw Owners' Association, however, have not joined the stir. Auto-rickshaws and cabs also remained off the roads in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, and Puri for several hours Thursday as the Smart City Online Auto Association members observed a strike protesting alleged humiliation by members of the Driver Mahasangha. The auto-rickshaw and cab drivers called off the strike after getting an assurance from the twin city police commissioner that such incidents would not be allowed to recur.

## How do you see the growth of industries in Odisha?

Odisha is now recognised as one of the most attractive investment destinations given an enabling environment and supportive policies. While it is blessed with immense natural resources, the focus on value addition has brought about a sea change in terms of the growth prospects for industries. This apart, the focus on diversification that is to bring about investments in other sectors is a good step. So, from that prospective, industrial growth in Odisha has been very strong especially in the last decade or so, when it has grown more than the national average reflecting a strong commitment to industrialisation.

and progressive and on behalf of FICCI we have strongly pitched for public infrastructure and capital expenditure which was reflected in the Budget with 33 per cent increase in the outlay to ₹10 lakh crore – a historic number representing 3.3% of GDP – and if you add grant-in-aid to the states, the figure goes up to around 4.5 per cent of GDP.

## Has the industry recovered from the pandemic gloom?

The government has done a commendable job in terms of heavy lifting during pandemic but now it is time for the private sector to step in which is what will be achieved. I believe this would be possible through this budget with this strong and large outlay bringing about a crowding in private investment and capital expenditure. Indian industry has certainly recovered from the pandemic gloom. I believe most of the sectors are now back on the track and even the service sector, which had been very badly impacted due to the lockdowns and shutdowns that was necessary then, has also recovered. In fact, you have to look at India's export at this point of time where the merchandise export has started slowing down a little bit on account of global headwinds. The service sector is registering very strong growth but if you look at various sectors, I think it is fair to say that we have now overcome the pandemic and can look forward to sustained growth from now on.

## Your views on state's New Industrial Policy?

This is a very progressive policy and it aims at diversifying the industrial base from the traditional minerals and materials into other sectors which are thrust and priority sectors. Odisha has a lot of potential and a progressive industrial policy which will help in bringing more investments to the state, thereby generating more jobs.



## Being the first from Odisha to become the FICCI President, what is in store for the state?

It is a matter of great pride for me to be the first Odia to head national-level institution like FICCI. I have always maintained that it is not a personal achievement but a reflection of Odisha's growing strength as an industrialised state. And, I certainly see it as a reflection of all that the state has achieved. Insofar as my role is concerned, while focus is certainly national, I have always said that Odisha will be at the forefront for FICCI in terms of action plan for this year.

## Your take on this year's Union Budget?

This is a strong and growth-oriented budget which is bold

## Birsa Munda Stadium built at ₹261.76 crore

**Bhubaneswar:** The state government has spent ₹261.76 crore on construction of Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela, Sports Minister Tusharkanti Behera said Thursday. In a written statement to a question of BJP MLA Subash Panigrahi, Behera said ₹124.94 crore from State Budget and ₹136.82 crore from DMF fund has been utilised for construction of the stadium.

# Non-transfer of IAS officers irks Opposition in Assembly

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** All the opposition parties in Assembly - BJP, Congress and CPI (M) - cornered the state government over non-transfer of officers for several years. Raising the issue during Zero

Hour, Leader of Opposition Jayanarayan Mishra said the state government should have a specific transfer policy for the officials. One officer should not continue in one department or one position for a long period, he said. The Collectors of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj have been continu-

ing in their respective positions for more than six years. Leaving his duty the Keonjhar Collector is busy doing his personal business, alleged Mishra. Similarly, Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) secretary G Mathivathanan has been holding the same position for the last nine

years while Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Secretary VV Yadav has been there since 2017, he pointed out. Yadav is also holding several other charges including chief administrator of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA), Works secretary and OBC

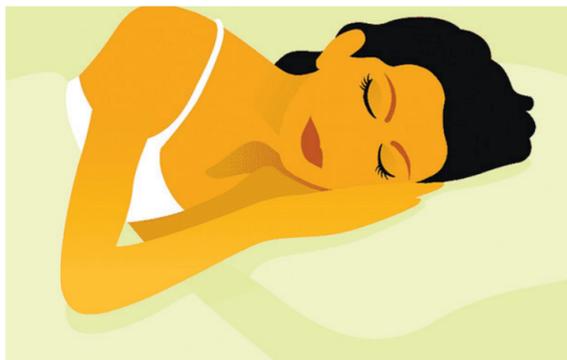
Commission member secretary, Mishra said, adding, IPS officer Arun Bothra and IAS officer Sushil Kumar Lohani are also in multiple positions. "Is it Mo Sarkar and 5T?" asked the LoP. Senior Congress MLA Narasingha Mishra said, "The H&UD secretary is continuing in

the department for nine years. He is so adamant that he never responds to the calls of MLAs." CPI (M) MLA Laxman Munda said Koinda BDO has been there for more than three years and has a monopoly in his block. Speaker BK Arukha said, "Government may take note of it."

# Less than 5-hr sleep can clog leg arteries: Study

The study suggests that sleeping 7-8 hours a night is a good habit for lowering the risk of peripheral artery disease

Sleeping less than five hours a night? Stay alert. You may be at 74 per cent risk of developing peripheral artery disease (PAD). More than 200 million people globally have PAD, where arteries in the legs are clogged, restricting blood flow and increasing the risk of stroke and heart attack. This was revealed by a study conducted by Karolinska Institute of Sweden. "Our study suggests that sleeping seven to eight hours a night is a good habit for lowering the risk of PAD," study author Shuai Yuan of the Karolinska Institute said. "Lifestyle changes that help people get more sleep, such as being physically active, may lower the risk of developing PAD. For patients with PAD, optimising pain management could also enable them to have a good night's sleep," Yuan said. The study, published in European Heart Journal-Open, included more than 6,50,000 participants to analyse the associations of sleep duration and daytime napping with the risk of PAD; and to examine causality of the associations.



Daytime nappers have a 32% higher risk of PAD as compared to those who don't nap but no causal links were found in the study

In an observational analysis of 53,416 adults, sleeping less than five hours a night was associated with a nearly doubled risk of PAD compared with seven to eight hours. This finding was supported by

further analyses in 1,56,582 and 4,52,028 individuals. In the causal studies, short sleep was associated with an increased risk of PAD. In addition, PAD was associated with an increased likeli-

hood of short sleep. "The results indicate that brief night-time sleep can raise the chance of developing PAD, and that having PAD increases the risk of getting insufficient sleep," Yuan said. Regarding long sleep, in an observational analysis of 53,416 adults, sleeping eight hours or more per night was linked with a 24 per cent higher risk of PAD compared with seven to eight hours. This finding was supported by analyses in two larger populations of 1,56,582 and 4,52,028 individuals. However, no causal relationships were found between long sleep and PAD. Similar results were reported for napping, where daytime nappers had a 32 per cent higher risk of PAD compared to those who did not nap but no causal links were found. "More studies are needed on the relationships between lengthy night-time sleep, daytime napping and PAD," said Yuan. "Although we found associations in the observational studies, we could not confirm causality."

### ଗ୍ରାହକବାଣିକ ଉପଲକ୍ଷେ

**ଓଡ଼ିଶା ମହିଳା ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ (ମୁନି)**  
(୧୯୭୭ - ୨୦୨୨)  
ଭର-ଭାଜା, ବରଗଡ଼

ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଅନର ଆହ୍ୱାନ ଶାନ୍ତି ନିମନ୍ତେ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ।

ଶୋକସମ୍ବନ୍ଧ

ସ୍ୱାମୀ: ଗୌରବରାଜ ମହାପାତ୍ର, ପୁତ୍ର: ଅଭିଷେକ ମହାପାତ୍ର (ବେନ), ଅଧିକାରୀ ମହାପାତ୍ର (ବନେ)

# ₹2,400cr for tap water in ULBs

# Minister writes to Pradhan for timely release of Poshan fund

# Handicrafts Expo in City till March 25

POST NEWS NETWORK

POST NEWS NETWORK

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** ₹2,400 crore has been allocated in the State Budget 2023-24 towards ensuring tap water supply in urban areas, said Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department Minister Usha Devi Thursday.

Addressing media on highlights of budgetary allocation to H&UD department, the minister said that the state government has allocated ₹7,914 crore in the 2023-24 Budget towards enhancing the livability and upgrading the civic amenities in 115 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

While ₹2,400 crore has been provisioned for water supply, ₹2,345 crore has been allocated for inclusive urban infrastructure. ₹1,307 crore will be spent on decentralized sanitation and drainage management, while ₹609 crore will be spent towards housing in urban areas, the minister pointed out. JAGA Mission has been imple-



mented to provide land rights to slum dwellers and transform the slums to Adarsh Colonies.

So far, more than 1.73 lakh slum dwellers have been granted land right certificates and over 1 lakh families under five municipal corporations – Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Berhampur, Rourkela and Sambalpur – will be issued land right certificates by December

2023. As many as 725 slums have so far been upgraded to Adarsh Colonies and two towns – Hinjilicut and Digapahandi – have achieved ‘slum-free’ status.

“The state is fast moving towards achieving slum-free status in all the ULBs by March 2024,” the minister said.

Under the 5T initiative, the state has been implementing the Mukhya

**The state is fast moving towards achieving slum-free status in all the ULBs by March 2024**

USHA DEVI | HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT MINISTER

Mantri Karma Tatpara Abhiyan (MUKTA), an urban wage employment scheme for urban poor which is implemented across 115 ULBs of the state through community partnership model involving the Mission Shakti SHGs and the slum dweller associations. “Over 10,000 projects will be implemented in 2023-24 for providing civic amenities and to saturate all wards in all 115 ULBs,” she added.

Around 400 Kalyan Mandaps will be constructed across all ULBs. The kutcha roads and WBM roads will be transformed to paver roads, making it motorable for all, the minister pointed out.

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** School and Mass Education minister Samir Ranjan Dash Thursday wrote a letter to Union Education minister Dharmendra Pradhan urging release of the second installment of funds under Pradhan Mantri Poshan Scheme for Odisha for the financial year 2022-23.

In the letter, Dash mentioned that in the PM Poshan scheme, which is a centrally sponsored scheme being implemented in the state, the annual budget for the state for the current financial year is ₹59,681.29 lakh and state government’s share of ₹45,290.04 lakh, in total 1,04,971.33 lakh.

Out of that budgeted amount, the Union government had September 20, 2022, released ₹27,995.25 lakh in the first installment. The remaining amount of ₹30,895.52 lakh should be released for smooth functioning of PM

Poshan in state, the minister reminded.

The minister mentioned that as the second installment of the fund has not yet been released by the Union government, the state is facing an embarrassing situation in releasing funds towards cooking cost, cost of food grain, transportation cost, honorarium to cook-cum-helpers and towards the cost of MME scheme in the state.

“Therefore, I request you to personally look into the matter and take steps for release of the matching share of the PM Poshan scheme at an early date. The school headmasters and school chairpersons are spending funds from their own arrangements with assurance from school and mass education department to reimburse the money soon,” the minister wrote.

As per report, for the last six months schools in state have not received any funds for providing mid day meals to children.

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** The Odisha State Cooperative Handicrafts Corporation Limited, known as ‘Utikalika,’ under the administrative control of Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts department is organising a national level “Handicrafts Exhibition” at Ekamra Haat in City that will continue till March 25.

The exhibition was inaugurated by HT&H minister Rita Sahu in presence of department principal secretary Arbinda Kumar Padhee and other dignitaries.

Organised with the objective to provide a marketing platform to local artisans and to display the diversity of handicrafts of state, the event is being sponsored by Union Textiles ministry Development Commissioner (handicrafts) and Director of Handicrafts, Odisha, Bhubaneswar, under marketing support scheme.

## ADANI-HINDENBURG ROW

# BJD echoes Oppn demand for summoning SEBI chief

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, March 16:** Shedding light on its stand on the allegations of stock manipulation by Adani group after a long silence, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has supported the Opposition’s demand for summoning SEBI chief and senior RBI officials during the meeting of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance.

According to sources, BJD MPs Pinaki Misra and Amar Patnaik backed the demand of senior Congress MP Manish Tewari in the meeting. The senior Congress MP demanded that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance should inquire into the allegations against the Adani Group and should summon SEBI chief and senior officials of RBI. TMC MP Saugata Roy also sup-

ported Manish Tewari.

Sources said the BJP members – former minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, Sushil Kumar Modi, SS Ahluwalia and Manoj Kishorbhai Kotak vehemently opposed the Opposition’s demand stating that the matter is sub-judice before the Supreme Court and parallel investigation can’t be done by the committee.

However, the BJD MPs said that the objection should not be mere on the ground that it is sub-judice, sources added.

Committee Chairperson and BJP MP Jayant Sinha has asked the opposition members to submit a written request attaching evidence on the matter.

To take BJD’s response on the issue, efforts were made to contact the party leaders. However, no response was received.



**AIRING GRIEVANCE:** Visually-impaired traders stage a sit-in near BMC office in Bhubaneswar to press for fulfilment of their demands, Thursday

## Online registration for common test

**Bhubaneswar:** Common Entrance Examination for recruitment to Indian Army will be held for the year 2023, said a release issued by the Information and Public Relations department. For the purpose, online registration remains open from February 15 to March 20 for the interested candidates. Director Recruiting, ARO, Cuttack has informed in this regard. The details about the Exam are available on www.joinindianarmy.nic.in.

## Sex racket busted; four detained

**Bhubaneswar:** The Commissionerate Police Thursday busted a sex racket operating at Nageswar Tangi area under Lingaraj police limits. As many as four persons including the kingpin and two customers have been detained at the police station till the last news came in. Following a tip-off, police have carried out a raid at the office of Sai Seva Trust, a Non Government Organisation (NGO) Thursday afternoon and rescued the sex worker and arrested three persons. The kingpin was identified as Naresh Kumar Rana who has been running the sex racket under the guise of the NGO.

# BSKY team rescues lonely and helpless man

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** In another example of ensuring healthcare for all, Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) team has rescued a poor, lonely and ailing 60 year-old Bharat Bhusan Naika and put him under qualitative clinical care.

Bharat of Gadapadanpur village in Nimapada block of Puri had been suffering from a wound in his right leg for over a month. Unmarried and no kin to turn to, he sheltered himself in an uncared lonely house. The wound worsened with time infecting the adjoining areas of the leg and leaving him bed ridden. With nobody to feed him, Bharat was left at the mercy of others.

BSKY team learned of such an



**Under directions of Puri Chief District Medical and Public Health Officer (CDM&PHO), BSKY team reached Bharat’s house and served him with preliminary treatment**

incident and sprang into action. Under directions of Puri Chief District Medical and Public Health Officer (CDM&PHO), the health team reached Bharat’s house February 21, served him with preliminary treatment, dressed the wounds and gave him medicine.

The members of the team counselled and shifted him to the community health centre at Nimapara February 22. Necessary examinations at the health centre revealed

that he had been deeply infected with ulcer in right leg. Basing on the severity of the infections, the patient was referred to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack for further treatment.

Despite the insistence of the health officials Bharat resisted being shifted to Cuttack and went back to his village.

As a follow up measure, BSKY team again contacted Bharat in his village and successfully con-

vinced him to receive treatment in district head quarter hospital (DHH) of Puri.

Now, the patient is being treated in the male surgery ward of DHH, Puri with Bed No-229. He is under the supervision of specialist surgeons of the hospital. Sahaya volunteers have been alerted to provide all the assistance Bharat Bhusan needs.

CDMP&HO, Puri Sujata Mishra said, “Bharat Bhusan is showing steady signs of improvement. Ulcer in his right leg has been contained. He has been given one unit of blood. Nutritious dietary provision has been made for him. All treatment, medicine and food are being provided free of cost. If necessary, his skin grafting will be done after cure of the ulcer”.



Addressing the gathering, Bagchi asked the project implementation partners and employers to pay good wages, provide good living conditions, and enhance entrepreneurial skills by collaborating with the World Skill Center to bring out the human element of the skilling eco-system in the state.

Amat in his speech congratulated Ormas for training and placement in DDU-GKY and encouraged all the employers, SSCs and PIAs to come together to bring a mutual and harmonious enrichment in efforts towards skill development.

## Task force...

It is the apprehension of shortage of fuel which is bothering people the most. People made a beeline to fill up their vehicles in all parts of the state. Utikal Petroleum Dealers’ Association general secretary Sanjay Lath informed that fuel is sent to over 1,600 pumps from depots in Paradip, Balasore, Jharsuguda and Jatani. A total of 2,000 oil tankers are used for this purpose. However, most of these have now been intercepted by the agitating drivers. Unless the pumps are refilled quickly, they will run out of stocks very soon, officials stated.

Even though the Mahasangha had earlier promised that the agitation will be peaceful, at many places its members forcibly stopped trucks and other commercial vehicles. Prasant Muduli, a member of the Drivers Ekta Mahasangha, said, “We have been requesting the drivers of all vehicles, including good carriages from other states also, with folded hands to support our strike and stop driving. As the drivers’ community is united, there is none to ferry the trucks on the roads.” Union Minister Dharmendra

Pradhan meanwhile urged Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to step in and resolve the impasse. In a series of tweets, he requested the chief minister to take the demands of the protesting drivers seriously and hold discussions with all the unions to find a solution quickly.

## Global recognition...

Pal said the invitation for displaying the saris they wore was sent a few weeks back by Priya Khanchandani, the curator of the exhibition. “Dear Gulaab Gang, I have followed your incredible work for up to a decade. I would love to include a pink sari belonging to the gang in the exhibition as an example of the sari as an object of resistance and wondered if you might be able to lend a pink sari worn by one of your members to us,” the invitation send over email read.

“I would be honoured to tell the story of the Gulaab Gang’s work to audiences here in the UK and to display the sari among a carefully chosen selection of saris reflecting the story of contemporary India today,” Khanchandani added.

## ELEPHANT CORRIDORS ISSUE

# NGT’s show-cause notice to PCCF

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued show-cause notice to the state Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Chief Wildlife Warden seeking his reply as to why punitive action may not be taken against him over non-compliance of the tribunal’s earlier order on 14 elephant corridors identified in Odisha.

The PCCF has been asked to submit his personal affidavit under Section 26 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 by the next date for hearing April 6, 2023. The act prescribes three years’ imprisonment and fine up to Rs 10 crore against any person who fails to comply with the tribunal’s order.

The NGT had earlier directed the state government to take steps for the issuance of formal notification under Section 3 of the Environment Protection Act, 1986 in connection with the 14 elephant



corridors identified in the Odisha. The government was asked to notify the corridors within a period of two months from the issue of order August 17, 2021.

As per the rules, a proposal of notification of these corridors prepared by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wild Life) of the state needs to be sent to the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

(MoEFCC), who could then notify it under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

However, the state government has reportedly not sent any proposal to the MoEFCC in this regard despite a lapse of more than two years.

“We regret to say that though we are in March 2023, no Action Taken Report has been placed before us,” remarked NGT.

The state-based organization, Wildlife Society of Orissa, recently approached the NGT seeking immediate implementation of the order.

Notably, the state government has identified 14 corridors with a total area of 870.61 square kms having a length of 420.8 km covering width of 0.08 kms to 4.6 kms on the basis of the feasibility report prepared by Bangalore-based Asian Nature Conservation Foundation (ANCF) presented. The ANCF submitted its report to the state government in 2017.

## BMC gears up for Capital Foundation Day



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) organised a preparatory meeting in its office Thursday to develop a plan of action for the observation of Capital Foundation Day 2023.

Addressing the attendees, Mayor Sulochana Das said, “This year’s foundation day is special as it marks the 75th year of the formation of the state. As decided by the state government, the event will be organised by BMC and we should leave no stone unturned to make it a grand success.”

We should prioritise community participation, giving the denizens an opportunity to enjoy and cherish the City, she added.

“All officers need to review their role during last year’s observation and outline the modifications. Each officer has to develop a personal team for chalking out strategy and ensuring coordination. After development of plan of action, micro planning and implementation strategy will be finalised,” said BMC commissioner Vijaya Amruta Kullange.

The commissioner asked the officers to make the plans climate specific as the event comes during summer. It was discussed that a committee will be formed to steer the activities from planning to implementation. Event documentation, community participation and line department coordination will be given importance for smooth implementation.

**FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS**

- Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech-Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Kruprajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookieman-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

# Quality service, commitment key to biz growth: Manish Agarwal

After completing his management studies, he took the business established by his father Shri Suresh Chandra Agarwal to new heights. He played a significant role in taking Odisha's leading and prominent outdoor advertising agency 'Ajanta Advertisers' in gaining the trust and being the most popular agency in the state. Having faced numerous challenges, he has emerged as a successful entrepreneur. **Orissa POST** had a conversation with the successful businessman Manish Agarwal of Ajanta Advertisers. Excerpts...



## How has been the journey of Ajanta Advertisers?

There have been many cherished and unforgettable moments in this wonderful and learning journey. The company was established by my father Late Suresh Chandra Agarwal and it has been providing the best of media and quality services for more than 40 years to the clients. After joining my father in the business, and following his principles and learnings, I have been giving my best efforts to the growth of the company and taking forward his legacy. In this process, the company has won the trust of all and gained huge popularity.

## How is the demand for outdoor advertising these days?

Outdoor advertising is one of the most popular and sought-after services. It is a very impactful, eye catching and cost effective media. Our company's services and media offerings have also contributed to popularising outdoor advertising in the state. In fact, clients from almost all segments of the market prefer outdoor advertising.

## How do you handle competition in the ever-growing market?

There is competition in every industry, and we are no exception to it. We offer best-in-class product and service to clients while maintaining utmost transparency and honesty. Our advertisement boards are unique and are of the latest designs which make them stand out and offer the clients huge impact. We execute the campaigns meeting tough deadlines as and when required by the clients. These

factors have contributed to the growth of the company and made us the favourite amongst the clients and helped us grow and stand out in this competitive market.

## Any expansion plan?

Although we have not yet finalised the concrete expansion plan for the coming year, efforts are on to foray into digital platform.

## How do outdoor advertisements draw in customers?

Outdoor advertisement fulfils the needs of the customers to a great extent. It is attractive to look at and creates huge impact in the area where it is displayed. Being one of the most cost-effective modes of advertisement, it not only builds brand recognition but also grabs maximum eyeballs round the clock. This results in outdoor advertisement being one of the first choice amongst the customers.

## Being a successful businessman, what will be your advice to today's youths?

As much as education is important, so are ethics, honesty, commitment, patience and hard work essential for being successful in business. In fact, it is the hard work that will help you achieve both success and reputation. Youths must identify their path and accordingly work to enhance their skills. And once the path is determined, finding a sector will not be an issue as gov-

ernment and banks are ready to support new business ideas.

## How do you spend leisurely hours?

There is hardly any scope for leisure when you are into business. However, whenever I get some time, I spend it with my family and friends. I also love getting involved in social programmes and activities.

## Who is your role model in business?

My parents are my role models in life and business. I stepped into my family business after being inspired by their ethos. I am moving ahead following the principles of my father and have learned the skill of business from him. It is God's blessings, love and support of my family and office team that has helped me gain recognition as a successful businessman.



# Plastic waste turns killer for livestock

During the necropsy, polythene materials and plastic waste were found in the livestock's stomach

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Daringbadi, March 16:** Death of 20 livestock including 10 cattle and equal number of goats allegedly after consuming polythene bags dumped during the three month-long eco-retreat festival at Daringbadi in Kandhamal district has sparked concern sending shockwaves in the area.

The eco-retreat festival which started December 1 ran for a period of three months and concluded March 1. Locals alleged that the livestock died after consuming the polythene bags and plastic waste dumped around the site during the festival. During this period,



several cattle were found dead with their carcasses and skeletal remains lying scattered around the festival site.

The matter came to the fore after veterinarians conducted post-mortem of three of the dead cattle.

During the necropsy, polythene materials and plastic waste were found in their stomach. It is suspected that the animals had died after consuming plastic waste, veterinarian Dr Deepak Kumar Pradhan of Daringbadi commu-

nity veterinarian hospital said. Meanwhile, some other animals are under treatment while a probe has been launched to ascertain the actual reason behind death of the livestock, the veterinarian said.

Meanwhile, tehsildar Ashok Kumar Das visited the spot and directed the officials to bury the plastic and other waste dumped around the eco-retreat site. The incident has sparked mild tension among the cattle owners residing at Sariping near the festival site. Locals have blamed the negligence of the administration for the animals' death. The villagers met local MLA Saluga Pradhan and informed him in this regard. Notably, over 60 cattle had died after consuming plastic waste during the eco-retreat festival in 2022.

## Work starts on open drain near Keonjhar Collectorate

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, March 16:** A day after **OrissaPOST** brought out a standalone picture showing pedestrian commuters negotiating an open drain along the busy road in front of the Collectorate here, the district administration began its repair works, sources said Thursday.

Notably, the drain on the footpath has been lying open for months. Pedestrians do not only face difficulty along the risky patch of footpath, but also meet many mishaps. Especially, the open drain near the traffic post was putting visitors to the Collectorate, bust stop and other offices in a fix. Notably, the place is also meant for protesters staging rallies and demonstrations along with deployment of police personnel. However, local residents and commuters have expressed their happiness over the development.



**SUNDARAM HOME** Regd Office: No. 21, Patullo Road, Chennai - 600 002. Corporate Office: Sundaram Towers, No. 46, Whites Road, Chennai - 600 014.

Branch Office: A/108, 2nd Floor, C/o Sundaram Finance Banadev Bhawan, Saheed Nagar, Khurda Dist, Bhubaneswar - 751 007.

### POSSESSION NOTICE

Rule 8(2) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Whereas the authorized officer of SUNDARAM HOME FINANCE LTD., under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices calling upon the Borrower and the Co-Borrower to repay the amount mentioned in the notices within 60 days from the date of receipt of the notices. The Borrower and the Co-Borrower having failed to repay the amount in full, notice is hereby given to the Borrower, Co-Borrower and the public in general that the Authorised Officer has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Section 13(4) of the said Ordinance read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The borrower's attention is invited to provision of subsection (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets. The Borrower and the Co-Borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of SUNDARAM HOME FINANCE LTD.

Sl. No.	File Nos.	Borrower's, Co-Borrower Name and Address	Date of Demand Notice/Publication	Notice Amount	Date of Possession	Total Outstanding
1	66200036	Mr. Kumar Harshabardhan Sahu (Borrower), At - Santara, Po-Dala, Jaipur Road, Bhubaneswar - 755019.	02-01-2023	Rs. 76,56,859/-	16-03-2023	Rs. 80,62,313/-
2	BBR20160020	Mr. Lalatendu Sahu (Co-Borrower), Mr. Kailash Chandra Sahu (Co-Borrower)	02-01-2023	Rs. 1,15,52,031/-	16-03-2023	Rs. 1,22,19,265/-
3	BBR20170028	Mr. Lalatendu Sahu (Co-Borrower), Mr. Kailash Chandra Sahu (Co-Borrower)	02-01-2023	Rs. 72,69,863/-	16-03-2023	Rs. 76,85,401/-
4	BBR20220001	Mr. Lalatendu Sahu (Co-Borrower), Mr. Kailash Chandra Sahu (Co-Borrower)	02-01-2023	Rs. 17,38,085/-	16-03-2023	Rs. 18,17,916/-
5	BBR20220002	Mr. Lalatendu Sahu (Co-Borrower), Mr. Kailash Chandra Sahu (Co-Borrower)	02-01-2023	Rs. 21,08,783/-	16-03-2023	Rs. 22,09,562/-
6	BBR20220006	Mr. Lalatendu Sahu (Co-Borrower), Mr. Kailash Chandra Sahu (Co-Borrower)	02-01-2023	Rs. 12,88,351/-	16-03-2023	Rs. 13,49,936/-

Schedule of Property: All that piece and parcel of property situated at Jaipur District, Sabak tahasil: Sukinda, Hal Tahasil: Vayasanagar, Mouza/Revenue Village: Chorda, under Hal Not final khata No. 120, Plot No. 280, Area Ac.0.320 dec. plot No. 284/1515, area Ac.0.330 dec, Plot No. 284 area Ac.0.255 dec and not final khata No. 120/kha plot No. 280/1516 area Ac.0.140 Dec & plot no. 284/1517 area Ac.0.075 dec having total area Ac.1.120 dec. which corresponds to Sabak Khata No. 20, Sabak Plot No. 25 measuring an area Ac.0.49 dec. i.e. Ac.0.490 dec and Sabak Khata No.103, Sabak Plot No. 26 measuring an area Ac.0.88 dec i.e. Ac.0.880 dec having total Area Ac.1.37 dec i.e. Ac.1.370 dec, KISSAM: Gharabari (Homestead). Bounded by: North: Gopinath prusty, South: Dhruva Bala & Naran Mohanty, East: Adayata Pradhan, West: Road.

Dated: 16-03-2023 for SUNDARAM HOME FINANCE LTD Authorized officer

**National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited** (A Govt. of India Undertaking)

Corporate Office : 3rd Floor, PTI Building, 4-Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001

**NHIDCL/2(14)/Rectt. LA, Fin. Legal/2023/HR** Dated: 27.02.2023

National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited has been set up by the Government of India as a Corporation under the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways to fast pace construction/ up-gradation/ widening of National Highways in the North-Eastern Region and areas that share International boundaries with neighbouring countries.

Applications are invited from dynamic, effective and experienced eligible Officers working in Central/State/UT Government Ministries/ Departments, Indian Army/Navy/Air- Force, Border Road Organization(GREF), Central/State Autonomous Bodies, Central/State Public Sector Undertakings, etc. on Transfer on Deputation basis for the following posts:

Sl. No.	Name of the Posts	No. of Vacancies*	Pay matrix Level in CDA pattern
1.	General Manager (Legal)	01	Pay Matrix Level-13 of 7th CPC [Pre-revised PB-4 of Rs.37,400-67,000/- plus Grade Pay Rs.8,700/-]
2.	General Manager (Land Acquisition)	05	Pay Matrix Level-13 of 7th CPC [Pre-revised PB-4 of Rs.37,400-67,000/- plus Grade Pay Rs.8,700/-]
3.	Deputy General Manager (Land Acquisition)	13	Pay Matrix Level-12 of 7th CPC [Pre-revised PB-3 of Rs. 15,600-39,100/- plus Grade Pay Rs.7,600/-]
4.	Manager (Land Acquisition)	18	Pay Matrix Level-11 of 7th CPC [Pre-revised PB-3 of Rs.15,600-39,100/- plus Grade Pay Rs.6,600/-]
5.	Manager (Legal)	01	Pay Matrix Level-11 of 7th CPC [Pre-revised PB-3 of Rs.15,600-39,100/- plus Grade Pay of Rs. 6,600/-]
6.	Manager (Finance)	02	Pay Matrix Level-11 of 7th CPC [Pre-revised PB-3 of Rs.15,600-39,100/- plus Grade Pay of Rs. 6,600/-]
7.	Deputy Manager (Finance)	08	Pay Matrix Level-10 of 7th CPC [Pre-revised PB-3 of Rs. 15,600-39,100/- plus Grade Pay of Rs. 5,400/-]
8.	Assistant Manager (Finance)	15	Pay Matrix Level-8 of 7th CPC [Pre-revised PB-2 of Rs.9,300-34,800/- plus Grade Pay Rs.4,800/-]
9.	Junior Manager (Finance)	20	Pay Matrix Level-7 of 7th CPC [Pre-revised PB-2 of Rs.9300-34800/- plus Grade Pay Rs.4600/-]
10.	Assistant Director (Official Language)	01	Pay Matrix Level-10 of 7th CPC [Pre-revised PB-3 of Rs.15,600-39100/- plus Grade Pay Rs.5400/-]

\*Number of vacancies in the posts may vary, depending upon the requirement. Further, NHIDCL reserves the right to prepare a panel of selected candidates for filling up the indicated and future vacancies that may arise in NHIDCL.

\*\* If sufficient number of eligible Applicants are not available for the post of Manager (Legal), in that case, applicants may also be considered for appointment/engagement in the lower Pay Scale equivalent to the posts of Deputy Manager (Pay Level-10), Assistant Manager (Pay Level-8) and Junior Manager (Pay Level-7) on Deputation or engagement on Contract, if they meet the eligibility criteria as mentioned under Para (2) of the detailed advertisement.

Last date for submission of Application: 06 (six) weeks from the date of publication of the advertisement in the Employment News. Date of Publication of the Advertisement in the Employment News shall be displayed on the NHIDCL Website www.nhidcl.com.

For Eligibility Criteria and detailed Terms and Conditions please visit-NHIDCL Website www.nhidcl.com.

Applications shall have to be submitted only in on-line mode for which link has been posted on the NHIDCL website www.nhidcl.com. No applications in any other mode like By Hand or By Post or By E-mail shall be accepted under any circumstances.

NOTE 1: Crucial date for deciding eligibility (viz. age, length of service, etc.) of the Candidates shall be 01.01.2023.

NOTE 2: Candidate submitting application on Transfer on Deputation basis shall be required also to submit his/her application through proper channel. He/she will be allowed to appear in the interview, even if shortlisted for a post, only if his/her application is received through proper channel along with copies of ACRs/APARs for last five years, No Objection Certificate (NOC) and Vigilance Clearance (VC) from his/her parent organization.

NOTE 3: Retired Officer(s) who have served in the Government and satisfy the prescribed eligibility criteria, may also apply for the post on Contract basis provided he has not attained the age of 62 years as on the crucial date for submission of applications.

NOTE 4: Any change or amendment in this Vacancy Circular will be posted on the NHIDCL Website only.

NOTE 5: Incomplete applications or those received after the prescribed date shall be summarily rejected.

CBC 37112/12/0008/2223 Dy. General Manager (HR)

**BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE, BUILDING THE NATION**

# SCHOOL RUNNING ON PAPER FOR 8 YEARS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Mathili, March 16:** A total of 40 students of Kutunipadar are yet to experience the taste of visiting school. Kutunipadar is a small village of Badadural Gram Panchayat under Khairput block in Malkangiri district. Incidentally, the school exists on paper but doesn't function at all, a report said Thursday.

Sources said that reports are being made about students studying in school, mid-day meals being provided to them. They added that on paper two teachers have also been appointed in the school, but are never seen.

Villagers of Kutunipadar informed that the school building was destroyed during the 2014 'Cyclone Hudhud'. Despite repeated pleas, nothing has



been done by the district administration to set up the school again. They added that students are missing out on basic education and staring at a bleak future.

With no school to go to, the students are now forced to do other

chores like blasting stones and collecting Kendu leaves while some are earning a livelihood by tending to cows and bullocks.

The teachers who have been appointed are also getting their salaries every month without doing anything.

Sources informed that the BDO or the Education department authorities are not aware of the developments.

When the kids were asked to comment on the situation, they said they are busy doing household work as they do not have the necessary facilities for primary education in their village.

When the president of the school committee Shankar Kandi was asked about the situation, he said that the children from Kutunipadar and the nearby village of Nuaguda were completely dependent on the school which has now gone defunct.

Kandi pointed out that among the 40 students, most are engaged in other works. He stated that the district administration has no idea about the 40 students, who are deprived of schooling.

## School girl jumps out of moving car, foils kidnap bid

**Kendrapara:** In a daring act, a 15-year-old girl student jumped out of a moving car at Pattamundai in this district and foiled a kidnap bid after she was abducted by three miscreants Thursday, police said. The incident took place when the girl came out of MN High School after writing a paper of the ongoing matriculation examination and was on her way home at around 11.20am. The girl was dragged into the car by three unidentified miscreants and was attacked with a knife for resisting them. She suffered injuries on her hands, legs and neck but she fought them valiantly and jumped out from the car after breaking a window glass. The miscreants then fled in the car. The girl was rushed to the hospital and a case was registered, the police said.

**Bank of India** DEMAND NOTICE

Zonal Office : Star House, 1/1D, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015

**Notice under Section 13 (2) of SARFAESI Act, 2002 for Enforcement of Security Interest**

The Bank has granted following various credit facilities to the under mentioned Borrower & the amount outstanding dues mentioned below has not been paid in time. Therefore Demand Notice under Sec. 13 (2) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 was issued by the Authorized Officer against the following Borrower of the **Bank of India, Sastri Nagar Branch** but the same could not be served on the below mentioned party. Therefore, the contents of the same including the amount outstanding, Loan amount and details of the secured assets are herein furnished below.

SASTRI NAGAR BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower	Nature / Limit	Date of NPA / Date of Demand Notice	Amount as per Notice under SARFAESI Act + Interest & expenses thereon	Details of the mortgaged property
Borrower : Mr. Rabindra Pradhan, S/o: Balam Pradhan, At: Badaola, PO.: Sisua, PS.: Kakatpur Police Station, Puri-752109	Housing Loan / ₹43,64,608/-	28.02.2023 / 01.03.2023	₹52,94,493.76 + Interest & expenses thereon	All that part and parcel of Land and Building situated over Khata No.: 129, Plot No.: 727, Area: Ac.0.03 Dec. out of Ac.0.010 Dec. & Plot No.: 728, Area: Ac.0.06 Dec. out of Ac.0.07 Dec., Mouza: Badaola, Thana: Astaranga No.: 113, Tahasil: Astaranga, SRO: Kakatpur, Dist.: Puri, Odisha-752109, Total Area: Ac.0.17 Dec. i.e. 7405.20sqft., Standing in the name of Mr. Rabindra Pradhan, Bounded by North: Brahmananda Sahoo, South: Izimile Road, East: Village Road, West: Rabindra Pradhan

As the above mentioned Borrower of the **Sastri Nagar Branch** have defaulted in repayment of the principal loan/ facility in installments/ interest/ both, the account has been classified as **NPA**, in accordance with the directions or guidelines issued by the RBI. In spite of our repeated demands you (borrower) have not paid any amount towards the amount outstanding in your account, you have not discharged your liabilities. Hence, we are now constrained to make this publication of Demand Notice, required u/s 13(2) of the said Act and Rule 3 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. You are hereby called upon to pay the aforesaid amount alongwith further interest, cost, Incidental Expenses, Charges etc. within a period of **60 days** from the date of Notice, failing which we will take necessary action under the provisions of sec 13(4) of the said Act. against all or any one or more of the secured assets including taking possession of your secured assets and sale them. If the dues are not fully recovered in the course of these actions against secured assets, then the Bank reserves the right to take action by filing recovery action against you before DRT/Court for recovery of the same. It may be noted that under the provisions of section 13(8) of the SARFAESI Act, right of redemption is available to you, by paying the dues of the Bank together with all cost, charges and expenses incurred by the Bank at any time, before the date of publication of notice for public auction or inviting quotations or tender from public or private treaty for transfer by way of lease, assignment or sale of the secured assets. Please take note that as per sub section (13) of the aforesaid Act, after receipt of this notice, you are restrained from transferring or creating any encumbrances on the aforesaid secured assets whether by way of sale, lease, license, gift, mortgage or otherwise. **This notice is issued without prejudice to the rights of the Bank available under any other law.**

Place : Bhubaneswar, Date: 17.03.2023 Authorized Officer, Bank of India

FOCUS NATION

# VICIOUS POLITICAL TRENDS



**Not just corruption, but centralised control in most political parties has aggravated unethical tendencies in politics. A very small coterie has been running the parties and the voice of the people goes unheard**

northern and western belts where illiteracy and ignorance are quite high. Whatever the leaders may talk in public, the focus is just to get votes by misguiding the masses and specially the youth.

With what are seen as wrong economic policies being followed with rising unemployment and underemployment coupled with inflation, the party in power has no other alternative but to motivate the youth about Hindu nationalism, leading to jealousy, hatred and community discord. The nasty political trends that are manifest today speak poorly about the government in power and its tendency to split society, just to garner votes from the majority community.

These above trends have taken unhealthy dimensions during the post globalisation era, but these are far from what our leaders believed in a democratic polity.

In the vicious political climate, it is difficult to presume that corruption would be controlled as a section of the rich are hand-in-gloves with the current dispensation and it was little different from earlier regimes. Also, whether the national or even the regional political parties are centralised or family-controlled it is indeed very difficult to come out of such a situation. The voice of the common man is not heard while mass programmes against corruption and anarchy do not have enough steam.

In such a situation, it is doubtful whether programmes like Bharat Jodo Andolan would be of any great help to consolidate the masses. What is needed is not just a change in the development perspective followed by the political parties, specially the BJP, but also a change in our outlook towards society wherein the values we just talk about like cooperation, fellow-feeling, compassion and sympathy are implemented in letter and spirit. If that does not happen, politics will take an ugly turn leading to social disintegration with resultant effects.

*The author is Sr Consultant & Guest Faculty at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kolkata.*

©INFA

The recent Adani euphoria seems to have busted with purported unethical means of inflating his stocks with what appears to be in an indirect support from the powers-that-be, including State agencies and institutions. With the Supreme Court setting up a five-member committee led by ex-SC judge to investigate the Adani group and suggest measures to strengthen the framework to protect Indian investors, it turns out to yet another case of the bane of Indian politics, of large-scale corruption having entered.

Not just corruption, but centralised control in most political parties has aggravated unethical tendencies in politics. A very small coterie has been running the parties and the voice of the people goes unheard. This is also true of the three recent elections in the north-east, wherein enemies are seen now as friends. This has led many an expert to form an opinion that democratic pluralism is virtually absent in the country.

To support this contention, one may mention here that in 2021, two of the most prestigious watchdogs of global democratic health, the Sweden-based V-Dem Institute and the US-based Freedom House, downgraded the level accorded to Indian democracy. According to Freedom House, India had slipped from a 'free democracy' to a 'partially free democracy'. The V-Dem Institute estimation was gloomier still, relegating the country from 'electoral democracy' to 'electoral autocracy'. The next year brought little change to the rankings, indicating a relatively stable consensus.

It goes without saying that it is in India's foreign policy interest to take steps to assuage concerns about its 'declining democracy' even as it formally adopts an unperturbed visage. Since democracy promotion and political polarisation have emerged as major international fault lines, the Indian political leadership might have been expected to showcase a rational, fairer, problem-solving orientation towards the world. Instead, India started the year of its G20 presidency with a raid for 'tax survey' in the euphemistic official description on BBC of

ices after the news channel broadcast a documentary questioning the role of Modi as the former CM of Gujarat and this was followed by the Adani scam.

The centralised leadership that we see at the Centre and also within state governments is symptomatic of weakening party-society linkages, influence of television and digital media, frequent single party majority mandates and so on. There are also benefits of a strong leader at the executive, but decentralised governance is obviously much better. Though PM Modi is always critical of Nehru, the latter was hardly a proponent of the dangerous personalisation or centralisation of decision making where personal vision (or vindictiveness) supersedes the imperative of national interest.

Delving into the problem from another perspective, it has been evident that though political parties emphasised on a moral ideological enterprise in the last two-three decades of the past century, winnability in elections emerged as a practical requirement for political survival. Parties began to use ideology to justify practical manoeuvring and war of positions. The 1990s was a watershed moment in this regard.

Globalisation of the Indian economy directly impacted pop-

ular representation of politics as a section of the population began to be steadily ignored and pushed to poverty and squalor. In this changed scenario, the election centric meaning of politics was interestingly redefined. People's movements in contemporary India represent a very different kind of politics. These movements raise the issues of caste, class, gender and communalism that go against the basic tenets of justice, inclusiveness and equality. The only concern of the political parties appears to be just winning of elections by hook or by crook.

Such a situation has arisen because elected representatives amass huge wealth and thus winning elections is the prime motto. Most leaders care little for people's welfare and have very little contact at the grassroots. This was not the situation say around five decades back. The declining political atmosphere has been the influence of materialism and consumerism inherited from the West.

Moreover, while the major political party has been harping on Hindu nationalism, it has very little or virtually no respect for the ethos and culture of the country. Added to this, following a policy of alienating the minority communities, is just aimed at garnering votes of the Hindus in the



Dhurjati Mukherjee

**THE ONLY CONCERN OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES APPEARS TO BE JUST WINNING OF ELECTIONS BY HOOK OR BY CROOK**



Barak Barfi

**Saudi Arabia and Iran are bitter adversaries with a century-long history of enmity and distrust. It is extremely unlikely that they will suddenly become friendly neighbours**

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught.

SRI AUROBINDO



## Hollow Agreement

The recently announced Chinese-brokered agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to restore diplomatic relations is the latest sign that China is muscling its way into international diplomacy. Some see the deal as further evidence of the United States' eroding might and influence, and of its Middle East fatigue. In fact, the agreement is less a sign of American torpor than a reflection of unique regional circumstances.

More fundamentally, the agreement is not the breakthrough it has been made out to be. Saudi Arabia and Iran are bitter adversaries with a century-long history of enmity and distrust. It is extremely unlikely that they will suddenly become friendly neighbours.

Some analysts see the deal as a testament to China's policy of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs, in line with China's own framing of the news. But while it is certainly true that the US never could have mediated between the Iranians and the Saudis, given that it has been isolating Iran with sanctions for many years, this reality also gives the Iranians a powerful incentive to take any opportunity to poke America in the eye. If they can accentuate China's diplomatic credentials and give pundits fodder with which to disparage the US, they will.

Saudi Arabia, for its part, had been a pillar of America's Middle East policy ever since the British announced their withdrawal of forces from the Persian Gulf in 1968. But when Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) took the reins of power in the Kingdom, the situation became more complicated. His approach to the US relationship has consisted of coying up to Republicans like Donald Trump, while making life harder for Democrats like Joe Biden.

This wariness of Democrats dates back to 2015, when US President Barack Obama green-lit a nuclear agreement with Iran without consulting the Saudis. He then implied that Saudi Arabia is a "free rider," and argued that the situation in the Persian Gulf "requires us to say to our friends as well as to the Iranians that they need to find an effective way to share the neighborhood." These comments clearly irked the Saudis, prompting the former Saudi ambassador to the US to write a commentary listing all the contributions his country had made to America's national security.

It is widely known that MBS disdains Biden (who previously confronted him about the murder of Saudi-born journalist Jamal Khashoggi), and maintains warm ties with those around Trump, not least his son-in-law, Jared Kushner. For both personal and political reasons, then, MBS, too, is motivated to humiliate and undercut the Biden administration at every turn.

But it is unclear how long MBS will be able to tout this victory. The new agreement is no Camp David Accords (which effectively ended war between Arab states and Israel); nor is it comparable even to the Abraham Accords (which established relations between Israel and Arab countries that had never joined a war against it). Rather, the agreement's text promises little more than a resumption of normal diplomatic ties. It is less gold than glitter. Without more concrete steps toward reconciliation, backed by external guarantees and supervision, the Chinese-brokered accord may simply represent an interregnum before the next phase of bilateral tensions.

After all, consider how abysmal the two countries' post-independence relations have been. Iran severed ties with the Kingdom in 1944 after the Saudis executed an Iranian pilgrim who accidentally desecrated a rock in Islam's holiest shrine. They reconciled in 1966. But then, in 1988, the Saudis cut ties after Iranian political demonstrations during the Hajj pilgrimage the year before left at least 402 dead.

Relations were then resumed in 1991, before being suspended again in 2016, when Saudi Arabia beheaded a Shia cleric, leading protesters to storm its embassy in Tehran. Most of these earlier reconciliations were driven by larger regional and global forces. In 1966, for example, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arab secular rhetoric pushed the Saudis to reach out to their fellow conservatives in Iran; and in 1991, both countries feared Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. By contrast, there is no common bogeyman threatening both countries today.

As such, the agreement is more analogous to a temporary ceasefire than to the durable Arab-Israeli agreements that the US has brokered. For example, in 1969, Nasser mediated an accord between Lebanon and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, granting them a fixed area of operations against Israel. But six years later, the Palestinians were at war with Lebanon's Christian factions. Similarly, in February 1994, King Hussein of Jordan brokered a deal between feuding Yemeni leaders; but by May of that year, one faction had seceded, leading to a brief civil war.

As an aspiring hegemon and regional player, China hopes its newfound diplomatic clout will enhance its military might. But the Persian Gulf is still an American sea.

The US Navy's Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain, and America's regional military operations are run out of Qatar. Notwithstanding MBS' hostility toward Biden, Saudi Arabia still hosts around 2,700 US troops and has no plans to welcome a Chinese contingent.

These countries have opened their doors to America not only because they want access to US-made advanced weapons, but also because they have faith in American security guarantees. As long as the US continues to provide these advantages, it can box out China.

Some pundits think MBS is pursuing Nasser's policy of pitting the Americans against their archrival (first the Soviets, now the Chinese). But he is more like Rick Blaine's jilted lover in Casablanca. She brings a Nazi to Blaine's club to make him jealous, but soon opts for the Free French once her date and his friends seek to impose their will on her. MBS - or his successors - will likewise return to America's side once the Saudis realise that, rather than alleviating their existential fears, embracing China leaves them beholden to its whims.

*The writer is a former research fellow at New America and a former visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution.*

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

### WISDOM CORNER

Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones; and when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace.

VICTOR HUGO

The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time.

MARK TWAIN

You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.

MAYA ANGELOU

### SPECTRUM WOMEN AT WORKPLACE

## Breaking through the invisible barriers



Shivaji Mohinta

**IN THE INDIAN CORPORATE SECTOR, THE GENDER RATIO IS STILL HEAVILY SKEWED TOWARDS MEN**

Equality is easy to say but hard to live! This quote by Christiane Giesen, CHRO, Metro AG, is apt and relevant. Although there is no denial of the indispensable roles played by women in our lives, it is also a reminder of the gender inequality, discrimination and cultural biases that still exists in our patriarchal society in several shapes and forms.

In the Indian corporate sector, the gender ratio is still heavily skewed towards men. As per the Ministry of Corporate Affairs 2020 report, women held only 14.8 per cent of board seats in the NSE listed companies. This despite the regulation introduced by the SEBI to have at least one woman director on the board of a listed company. It is estimated that women workforce constitutes roughly 21 per cent in India Inc. Although there has been progress in the last decade or so, women remain significantly under-represented in leadership positions in our country. There are several factors leading to this gender gap and Sheryl Sandberg (COO, Facebook) in her book "Lean

In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead" shares some useful insights on the plausible reasons and remedial actions to address these issues. Here are a few:

**The Confidence Gap:** Sandberg opines that women tend to underestimate their abilities and competence while men generally overestimate them. This fear creates a confidence gap amongst the women folks. She insists women to push their doubts and fears to be more confident.

**The Myth of Work-Life Balance:** Sandberg challenges the idea of work-life balance arguing that it is often an unattainable goal. Women feel guilty in not being able to manage everything perfectly in their day to day lives often deserting their career goals. She advises them to focus on their priorities which align to their aspirations and values.

**Sit at the Table:** Sandberg encourages women to "sit at the table" by taking a seat at the meetings and speaking up. Women often hold back themselves from participating in discussions for fear of being

ridiculed or humiliated, but they have valuable ideas to share, which limits their contribution. They should not let fear overpower them and instead assert themselves.

**Negotiate for Yourself:** Sandberg mentions that women often hesitate to negotiate fearing that they will be seen as pushy or difficult. She stresses the need for negotiating for themselves, be it for a raise, promotion or flexible working hours. "Practice your own pitch" is her advice to develop their own negotiation skills and become more effective advocates for themselves!

**Embrace Ambition:** Women often face double standards in the workplaces - those who are ambitious and assertive are viewed negatively while men who display those same traits are seen as strong leaders! She encourages women workers to be authentic and stay true to themselves even if it means going against societal norms. Ambition is a key factor in achieving success and making a difference in the world.

**Build Supportive Relationship:** Sandberg encourages women to

build supportive relationship with other women, through mentorship, networking or simply supporting each other in the workplace. She says that women often compete against one another and tear each other down, but the supportive relationships can help them to achieve their goals and succeed.

**Importance of Diversity:** She emphasises the importance of diverse teams which brings in more creativity and innovation. Companies with more women in leadership roles perform better financially and therefore she encourages companies to prioritise diversity and inclusion in their hiring and promotion practices.

While we celebrate the success of women in various facets of our community, we need to proactively strive to build an enabling environment to speed up the progress by eliminating invisible barriers and biases.

*The writer is a business consultant and a startup mentor. Views are personal.*

### Moment of glory

Sir, The excitement over 'Naatu Naatu' and 'The Elephant Whispers' winning Oscars in the categories of 'Best Original Song' and 'Best Documentary Short Film' respectively, has spread throughout the entire nation. The blockbuster 'RRR' movie already had the first Asian song to win the coveted Golden Globe. The movie will remain a masterpiece in the history of Telugu cinema. This is a golden moment for Indian cinema, which will be etched in the memory of Indians for years to come. This remarkable achievement will act as a benchmark to reshape the landscape of upcoming movies and documentary short films, and also empower Indian filmmakers and screenwriters to create quality-based content in upcoming films that would garner worldwide accolades in the near future. My sincere gratitude to the stakeholders involved for their outstanding work in glorifying Indian cinema on a global stage.

Bishal Kumar Saha, MURSHIDABAD

### Universal internet access

Sir, It is true that achieving sustainable development is considered as being dependent on having widespread access to the internet because it is commonly known that the internet is a crucial tool for improving social, economic, and political conditions. The United Nations has set a goal of achieving universal internet access by 2030 as part of its Sustainable Development Goals. In general, gaining universal internet access is critical for promoting equity, education, and economic growth as well as being necessary for creating a more connected and inclusive society. The number of people who use the internet continues to increase as well; according to the most recent data, the number of people who were online increased by around 100 million in the year leading up to January 2023. By the end of 2023, two-thirds of the world's population should be online, according to current trends. But still, a 2021 report from the International Telecommunication Union claims that 4.7 billion people, or about half of the world's population, lack access to the internet. People in developing nations, rural areas, and underprivileged groups are disproportionately impacted by lack of internet access. There are several initiatives underway to increase internet access and bridge the digital divide. Several technologies are being investigated to increase internet access, including mesh networks and low-earth orbit (LEO) satellites, fiber-optic internet that can provide internet connection to remote areas using decentralised, community-owned infrastructure.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

## OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

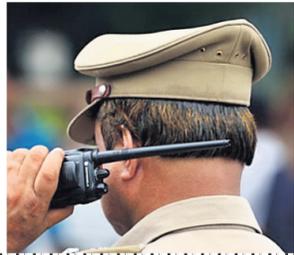
# national



For a nation like India, the fifth largest economy in the world, with a long coastline, island territories and substantial seafaring population, having a strong and modern Navy is of very high importance  
DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT OF INDIA

## SECTION 144 IMPOSED IN INDORE

In a bid to normalise the situation after the suspicious death of a 23-year-old tribal woman and death of a youth in police firing during a violent protest in Indore's Mhow, the administration Thursday imposed Section 144 in the areas falling under as many five police stations



## of the day quote

Since we did so much work in the first year, we will now shift to the second gear of progress. Big industrialists are keen to invest in Punjab, they will set up their units and it will create jobs  
BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

The Centre provided ₹8,915 crore in the last four years to improve air quality in the 131 cities covered under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)  
BHUPENDER YADAV | UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

The major promises made by the Congress ahead of the State Assembly elections are nothing but a visiting card  
BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | KARNATAKA CM

## SHORT TAKES

### Hail storm lashes parts of Telangana

Hyderabad: Heavy hailstorms and rains lashed parts of Telangana Thursday. Hailstorms, accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds, brought down maximum temperature providing relief to people from the first spell of summer. Parts of Vikarabad, Rangareddy and Sangareddy districts witnessed heavy rains and hailstorms. The hailstorm at a few places including Zaheerabad town continued for about half an hour, disrupting movement of vehicles. Drivers were forced to park their vehicles by the roadside.

### Death rap for RPF constable

Ramgarh: A Jharkhand court Thursday sentenced a suspended RPF constable to death for killing three members of a railway porter's family, including a pregnant woman, and injuring two others by opening fire on them with his service revolver after he was denied milk due to an outstanding payment. The incident had taken place August 17, 2018 in the railway colony in Barkakana police outpost area in Ramgarh district. The court of Additional District Judge-1, Ramgarh, Sheshnath Singh awarded the death sentence to Pawan Kumar Singh for killing railway porter Ashok Ram (55), his wife Leela Devi (39), pregnant daughter Meena Devi (32), and injuring Ram's another daughter Suman Kumari and son Chintu Kumar, public prosecutor R B Rai said.

### Human remains found in drain

Noida: Human body parts, suspected to be of a woman, were found in a drain near a cardboard factory in Noida's Sector 8 Thursday morning, while it was being cleaned, police said. As two legs and an arm were found during the cleaning operations by Noida authority's contractor, police was informed. A police team reached the spot and the body parts were taken out.

### Labourer dies

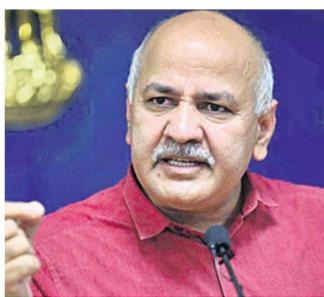
New Delhi: A 32-year-old labourer died after he fell from the third floor of an under-construction building in south Delhi Thursday, police said. The deceased was identified as Ali Usman, a resident of Jewar in Gautam Budh Nagar in Uttar Pradesh. According to police, at around 11.45 a.m., a call was received regarding a man who fell from the roof of an under-construction building on Satbari Main road. "A police team reached the spot. Rafi Usman, younger brother of the deceased was also found present there. Enquiries further revealed that the deceased was doing work of fabricating," a senior police official said.

## FEEDBACK UNIT CASE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: Delhi's jailed former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia has been booked by the CBI in a new case related to alleged misuse of official position and financial impropriety in the government's Feedback Unit (FBU) which was also used for "political snooping", officials said Thursday. Already arrested by the CBI in the excise policy case and at present in the custody of the Enforcement Directorate, the woes of 51-year-old Sisodia aggravated after the agency registered a fresh case against him and five others Tuesday for alleged criminal con-

spiracy, criminal breach of trust, forgery and under provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, they said. The agency booked Sisodia, a 1992-batch IRS officer Sukesh Kumar Jain who was then secretary of vigilance, retired CISF DIG Rakesh Kumar Sinha who was working as special advisor to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and joint director in the Feedback Unit, they said. Besides, former joint deputy director of Intelligence Bureau Pradeep Kumar Punj, who was working as deputy director of the Feedback Unit, retired assistant commandant of CISF Satish Khetrpal who was working as



feedback officer; and Gopal Mohan, advisor, anti-corruption, to Kejriwal were also booked in the case, officials said.

Sisodia has been named by the Central Bureau of Investigation in a prevention of corruption case related to a 'Feed Back Unit' (FBU) created in 2015

The agency has invoked IPC sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 403 (dishonest misappropriation of property), 409 (criminal breach

of trust by public servant), 468 (forgery), 471 (using as genuine a forged document or electronic record), 477A (falsification of accounts) besides provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act against those named in the FIR. Reacting to the development, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said, "PM's plan is to slap several false cases against Manish and keep him in custody for a long period. Sad for the country!" The case relates to FBU set by the Aam Aadmi Party to gather relevant information and actionable feedback regarding the working of various bodies under the jurisdiction of the

Delhi government and to do "trap cases" as an ears-to-ground agency to check corruption, the FIR alleged. The CBI action is an outcome of a preliminary enquiry which had "prima facie disclosed the offences" against the named accused. The preliminary enquiry was conducted by the agency on a reference from the Vigilance Department of the Delhi Government November 4, 2016. The preliminary enquiry, first step by the agency to detect prima facie criminality in the allegations, showed irregularities in the appointments made in the unit, financial misappropriation and violation at various levels.

## SC reserves judgment on Maha political row



AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 16: The Supreme Court Thursday reserved its verdict on a batch of cross-petitions of Uddhav Thackeray and CM Eknath Shinde factions pertaining to the Maharashtra political crisis.

A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud reserved its verdict after hearing arguments advanced on behalf of both Uddhav and Eknath factions and the office of the governor.

The bench, comprising Justices MR Shah, Krishna Murari, Hima Kohli and PS Narasimha concluded the hearing after senior advocates Kapil Sibal, AM Singhvi, Devadatt Kamat and advocate Amit Anand Tiwari made their submissions. The top court also heard arguments of senior advocates Neeraj Kishan Kaul, Harish Salve, Mahesh Jethmalani and advocate Abhikal Pratap Singh for Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde-led faction.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta represented the office of the governor in the matter. The five-judge constitution bench reserved its verdict after nine days of hearing which had commenced February 21.

On February 17, the top court declined to refer a batch of pleas related to the June 2022 Maharashtra political crisis triggered by Shiv Sena's division to a seven-judge bench for reconsideration of the 2016 Nabam Rebia judgement.

The 2016 judgement dealt with powers of assembly speaker and ruled that he/she cannot proceed with pleas for disqualification of MLAs if a prior notice seeking the speaker's removal is pending before the house. On June 29, 2022, at the height of the Maharashtra political crisis, the apex court re-

### 'Democracy in danger'

NEW DELHI: The Thackeray faction of the Shiv Sena made an impassioned plea before the Supreme Court Thursday for setting aside then Maharashtra Governor B S Koshiyari's June 2022 order to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to take a floor test, asserting democracy will be in danger if it is not overturned. Senior lawyer Kapil Sibal, representing the Thackeray bloc, urged a five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud to rescind the order, a day after the apex court questioned Koshiyari's conduct in calling for a trust vote merely on the ground of differences between Shiv Sena MLAs. It had said Wednesday such action by the governor can topple an elected government and that the governor of a state cannot lend his office to effectuate a particular result.

fusion to stay the governor's direction to the 31-month-old MVA government led by Thackeray to take floor test.

Sensing defeat, Thackeray resigned, catapulting to power a Shiv Sena-BJP dispensation led by Shinde.

On August 23, 2022, a three-judge bench of the top court headed by then chief justice N V Ramana formulated several questions of law and referred to the five-judge bench petitions filed by the two Sena factions which raised several constitutional questions related to defection, merger and disqualification. In a blow to the Thackeray bloc, the Election Commission last month declared the Shinde faction as the real Shiv Sena and allotted it the bow and arrow symbol of the party founded by Balasaheb Thackeray.



An Asian king vulture (*Sarcogyps calvus*), a critically-endangered species, has been sighted in the Sonaripur range of the Dudhwa National Park. The vulture has been seen after a gap of several years, officials said

## Two pilots die after Army helicopter crashes in Arunachal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Itanagar/Guwahati, March 16: Two pilots on board a Cheetah helicopter of the Army were killed when it crashed near Mandala in West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh Thursday morning, a defence spokesperson said.

The deceased officers have been identified as Lt Colonel VVB Reddy and his co-pilot Major Jayanth A, he said. Defence spokesperson Lt Colonel Mahendra Rawat said in Guwahati that the helicopter was on an operational sortie from Missamari in Assam's Sonitpur district to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. The flight encountered "inconducive weather" and was



returning to Missamari when it crashed, he said.

"The helicopter lost contact with Air Traffic Control (ATC) around 9.15 am. Five search parties of the Indian Army, SSB and ITBP were immediately launched. The wreckage of the aircraft was found near Banglajaap east village of Mandala," Rawat said. "A Court of Inquiry is ordered to ascertain the cause of the accident," he added. The Eastern Command, in a tweet, said the Army stands firm with the bereaved families.

## Maha govt bows before farmers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 16: In what is viewed as a huge victory for the farmers, the Maharashtra government Thursday evening conceded almost all demands of the agitating peasants, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said. "We had very fruitful negotiations on all issues and most have been resolved, I shall make a statement in the legislature tomorrow morning," a beaming Shinde said, after emerging from a marathon meeting with over a dozen AIKS leaders. Confirming the developments from the AIKS side, CPI-M MLA Vinod Nikole said that most pertaining to the jurisdiction of the state have been sorted out while those in the Centre's ambit have yet to be resolved. "Accordingly, we have decided to halt the 'long march' at Vasind. The agitation is not called off till the government issues the relevant orders right up to the district level to implement our demands within the next two days,"

Nikole told media persons.

He pointed out how in the past two "long march" agitations in 2018 and 2019, the then governments had made all assurances to the peasants and later nothing came out of it. "This time, we want the government to issue the GR, orders to the Divisional Commissioners, District Collectors and others down the rank to implement the decisions agreed in today's meeting. The 'long march' will disperse only after we see the execution at the local levels," Nikole declared.

He added that the marchers and their families have been calling up to ascertain the implementation aspect after the demands are accepted and the farmers will not budge from their Vasind camp till then.

Nikole cautioned that if the orders are not issued in two days to all the officers concerned, then the march will resume to reach the Maharashtra Legislature as scheduled Monday, which could create complications here.

## ADENOVIRUS ALARM

### WB health dept issues advisory

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, March 16: In wake of rising number of children admitted with adenovirus related symptoms in West Bengal, the state Health Department Thursday issued an advisory on dos and don'ts in case of children showing such symptoms.

As per the advisory, the children with such symptoms should be kept away from crowded places and the guardians should avoid sending them to schools till the time they achieve complete recovery as per doctors.

The advisory said that the common symptoms are prolonged fever for over five days with cough and cold, breathlessness, loss of appetite, drowsiness and lesser urine secretion among others. Meanwhile, the Health Department has asked the private hospitals and nursing-homes in the state to submit reports on their extent of preparedness to tackle any emergency situation on this count.

The state government has already constituted an eight-member task force to review the emerging situation of crisis.

However, questions have been raised over the absence of any specialist paediatrician in the said committee especially in view of the fact the majority admitted to adenovirus-related symptoms have been children.

## AP BUDGET ALLOCATES LION'S SHARE FOR WELFARE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati, March 16: Keeping its interests in mind ahead of the Assembly elections scheduled for 2024, the Andhra Pradesh government has allocated the lion's share of the state Budget - more than ₹54,000 crore of the total ₹2,79,279 crore - to Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) schemes, targeting potential voter segments such as pensioners, farmers, students and women.

Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath tabled the 2023-24 Budget in the Legislative Assembly Thursday.

Andhra Pradesh has for long focused on governance that balances both welfare and devel-

opment, and its budgetary allocation of as much as ₹54,228 crore for DBT schemes is in keeping with that model.

The increase of about 10 per cent in the allocation, from ₹48,882 crore in 2022-23, indicates that the government has its eye on the upcoming elections next year.

The DBT schemes include YSR Pension Kanuka (Rs 21,435 crore) for senior citizens, persons with disabilities and transgender persons; YSR Rythu Bharosa (Rs 4,020 crore), which provides financial assistance for farmers; Jagananna Vidya Devena (₹2,842 crore) that reimburses the higher education fees of students from poor economic backgrounds; and

### EYE ON 2024 POLLS



Andhra Pradesh has for long focused on governance that balances both welfare and development, and its budgetary allocation of as much as ₹54,228 crore for DBT schemes is in keeping with that model

The increase of about 10 per cent in the allocation, from ₹48,882 crore in 2022-23, indicates that the government has its eye on the upcoming elections next year

Jagananna Vasati Devena (₹ 2,200 crore), which takes care of the

hostel and mess fees of poor students who otherwise cannot afford

higher education.

Other major DBT schemes are YSR Asara (₹6,700 crore has been allocated) which provides funds to Self Help Groups; YSR Cheyuta (Rs 5,000 crore) which aids middle-aged women financially; and Amma Vodi (Rs 6,500 crore) that incentivises poor families to send their children to school.

The allocation for education in general rose by seven per cent from ₹30,077 crore in 2022-23 to ₹32,198 crore in 2023-24, with the government setting aside ₹3,500 crore separately for the Mana Badi Nadu Nedu programme launched to improve learning outcomes and reduce dropout rates.

Apart from these schemes, the

government has also earmarked ₹20,005 crore for the welfare of Scheduled Castes, ₹6,929 crore for Scheduled Tribes and ₹38,605 crore for Backward Classes. The allocation for Backward Classes has gone up by as much as 32.5 per cent from ₹29,143 crore in 2022-23.

Under welfare for other communities, the Finance Minister has allocated ₹4,887 crore for Kapu welfare and ₹4,203 crore for Minority welfare.

However, when it comes to Health and Family Welfare, there has been only a minor increase in allocation, with the amount going up to ₹15,882 crore from ₹15,384 crore in the last fiscal, a change of just three per cent.



### MAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT

## Over 70 people, 80 elephants die every year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, March 16:** More than 70 people and 80 pachyderms on average die every year in human-elephant conflict in Assam, state Forest Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary said on Thursday.

The state government has paid about Rs 8-9 crore in compensation for damages caused by the pachyderms, he said in the assembly.

Replying to a question by Congress legislator Rekiuddin Ahmed, Patowary said increasing human occupation of natural habitats of elephants has forced the animals to move out in search of food, which leads to conflict with man. They also come into conflict with humans during their natural migration process, he said.

"As a result, more than 70 people and 80 elephants are killed on an average annually, besides causing property damage," the minister said. The elephant population in the state currently is over 5,700, he said.



The minister said 1,330 elephants have died between 2001 and 2022, with the highest number of deaths reported in 2013 when 107 pachyderms died, followed by 97 in 2016 and 92 in 2014.

Among the various reasons for the deaths, 509 died of natural

causes, 261 succumbed to unknown reasons, 202 were electrocuted, 102 died in train accidents, 65 due to poisoning, 40 were poached and 18 after being hit by lightning.

Sharing information on the river dolphin, which was declared the state water animal in 2008, Patowary

The minister said 1,330 elephants have died between 2001 and 2022, with the highest number of deaths reported in 2013 when 107 pachyderms died, followed by 97 in 2016 and 92 in 2014

Among the various reasons for the deaths, 509 died of natural causes, 261 succumbed to unknown reasons, 202 were electrocuted, 102 died in train accidents, 65 due to poisoning, 40 were poached and 18 after being hit by lightning

said there were 537 river dolphins in the state in 2020, according to the latest available data. Altogether 80 river dolphins have died between 2008 and 2023, with 60 killed after being trapped in fishing nets. The minister also informed the House that the total forest land in the state is 26,836 sq km, or 34.21 per cent of the state's total area, as per Forest Survey of India's 2021 report.

A total of 14,373.913 hectares of encroached forest land has been cleared so far, he added.

## Mehbooba defends temple visit

**■ A video of the former Chief Minister offering water to Shivling inside Navagraha temple, Mandi-Ajote in Poonch Tuesday has gone viral, drawing criticism from some quarters**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, March 16:** PDP president Mehbooba Mufti Thursday defended her recent visit to a Shiv temple in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch and performing a ritual there, saying "we live in a country that is home to the Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb" and there is no need to discuss the matter further.

A video of the former Chief Minister offering water to Shivling inside Navagraha temple, Mandi-Ajote in Poonch Tuesday has gone viral, drawing criticism from some quarters.

"We are living in a secular country that is home to Ganga-



PDP president Mehbooba Mufti offers prayers at Navagraha temple in Poonch district

Jamuni Tehzeeb. The temple was built by Yashpal Sharma (former PDP leader who died last year) and his sons want me to visit the place. I went inside and someone gave me a small vessel filled with water with a lot of belief and love.

"I do not want to break his heart by refusing to pour water (on the Shivling). He asked for it and I did it (out of respect for him)," Mehbooba Mufti said here.

Asked about some Islamic schol-

ars from Deoband in Uttar Pradesh disliking it, she said she did not want to go into it and whether it is allowed or not in her religion.

"In our country, Hindus and Muslims live together and there are more Hindus offering 'Chadar' at Muslim shrines than Muslims themselves. This issue is related to myself and there is no need for further discussion over it," she said.

## ASSAM UNVEILS BUDGET



PRESENTING THE BUDGET IN THE ASSEMBLY, FINANCE MINISTER AJANTA NEOG SAID THE GOVERNMENT WILL INVEST RS 5,000 CRORE OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS TO TRANSFORM OVER 2 LAKH UNEMPLOYED YOUTHS INTO JOB CREATORS

"OUR GOVERNMENT ALREADY PROVIDED EMPLOYMENT TO ABOUT 42,000 YOUTHS ACROSS VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS... THE REMAINING 18,000 ARE AT VARIOUS STAGES OF RECRUITMENT, AND THIS WILL ALSO BE COMPLETED VERY SOON," FINANCE MINISTER AJANTA NEOG SAID

the exemption of electricity duty on renewable energy generation. "Further, I propose the extension of the tax holiday on agricultural income tax for the next three years."

Neog said the GSDP is estimated to grow to Rs 5.5 lakh crore during the next financial year from Rs 3.93 lakh crore in 2021-22. The aggregate receipts amount to Rs 3,21,742.71 crore for 2023-24, while the aggregate expenditure is estimated at Rs 3,21,081.75 crore, she said.

Thus, the transactions during the year will result in an estimated surplus of Rs 660.96 crore, she said.

"This, together with the opening deficit of Rs 1,596.19 crore will lead to a budget deficit of Rs 935.23 crore at the end of the year 2023-24," she added.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, March 16:** The Assam government Thursday presented a Rs 3.22 lakh crore budget for the 2023-24 financial year, announcing funds for promoting micro-entrepreneurship and 40,000 fresh recruitments in different departments.

Presenting the budget in the assembly, Finance Minister Ajanta Neog said the government will invest Rs 5,000 crore over the next three years to "transform" over 2 lakh unemployed youths into job creators.

For the purpose, Rs 1,000 crore was allocated in the next fiscal. Neog said 40,000 people will be recruited in various departments by May 10 to mark the completion of two years of the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led government and fulfill the BJP's poll promise of giving one lakh government jobs.

"Our government already provided employment to about 42,000 youths across various departments... The remaining 18,000 are at various stages of recruitment, and this will also be completed very soon," Neog said.

The finance minister proposed

## Question paper sold for up to ₹3,000 on WhatsApp: Police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, March 16:** Investigations have revealed that the General Science question paper of class 10 state board examination in Assam were sold for up to Rs 3,000 on WhatsApp, Director-General of Police Gyanendra Pratap Singh said Thursday.

Speaking to reporters, Singh said WhatsApp's assistance was being sought to identify the origin of the leak of the question paper. "The investigation has revealed that the question paper of the



General Science examination were sold for anything between Rs 100 and Rs 3,000. We have found that somewhere it was sold for Rs 100, somewhere for Rs 200-300, and it went up

to Rs 3,000. Assistance is being sought from WhatsApp to identify the origin of the leak," he said.

"I am happy with the investigation and the progress we made over the last three days. Hopefully, we will crack this case soon. We will send some more packets of the question paper from upper Assam to the CID headquarters for the purpose of the investigation," he added.

The General Science question paper of the class 10 matriculation exam conducted by the Board of Secondary Education, Assam (SEBA) was leaked on Sunday night,

and the exam scheduled on Monday was cancelled.

The state CID, which is investigating the case, has so far apprehended 25 people, including children, from various parts of Assam, besides interrogating several others to identify the source of the leak.

A senior official said the operations will continue till the mastermind is arrested. "We have picked up some more people and are interrogating them," he said. According to a SEBA notification, the cancelled examination will now be held on March 30.

## CMOs asked to come up with micro plan

**■ The directions were passed by Secretary Health and Medical Education Bhopinder Kumar at a meeting convened to review the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (prohibition of sex selection) Act, an official spokesman said**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, March 16:** The Jammu and Kashmir administration has directed chief medical officers (CMOs) to come up with a micro plan to improve the sex ratio in the Union Territory.

The directions were passed by Secretary Health and Medical Education Bhopinder Kumar at a meeting convened to review the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (prohibition of sex selection) Act, an official



spokesman said.

Kumar said gender bias and sex determination is a critical public health concern which can be regulated through effective implementation of the PCPNDT Act for which a comprehensive action strategy needs to be devised and monitored. Instructing the direc-

torates of health services in both divisions of Jammu and Kashmir to conduct an assessment of all the registered ultrasound clinics for their conformity to the PCPNDT Act, he said it must be ensured that all the provisions of the Act are strictly implemented in letter and spirit.

Kumar asked the CMOs to consider cancellation of those entities which are found deficient in terms of any provision of the Act. Director health services and CMOs were also asked to study the last five years of HMIS (Health Management Information System) data for district-wise trend analysis of sex ratio at birth, the spokesman said.

They were also asked to introspect and come up with a micro plan to improve the sex ratio, he said. He said director health services were asked to furnish comprehensive proposals to the administrative department in consultation with Mission Director, National Health Mission, with regard to constitution of appropriate authority and appellate authority as per the PCPNDT Act.

## Strategic Srinagar-Leh highway reopened in record time

**ZOJILLA IS A STRATEGIC PASS THAT PROVIDES A VITAL LINK BETWEEN KASHMIR VALLEY AND LADAKH, AND IT IS KEY TO OPERATIONAL PREPAREDNESS OF THE ARMED FORCES**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Zojilla Pass (J&K), March 16:** The 434-km strategic Srinagar-Leh national highway was reopened for vehicular traffic Thursday in a record time of 68 days after its closure in January this year following heavy snowfall, officials said.

A trial movement was conducted successfully and the decision to reopen the road for civilian traffic will be taken after a joint inspection by the civil administrations of the Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.

The highway was thrown open for traffic at the Zojilla Pass, situated at an altitude of 11,650 feet, by Director General of Border Roads Organisation (BRO) Lt Gen Rajeew Chaudhary

Zojilla is a strategic pass that provides a vital link between Kashmir Valley and Ladakh, and it is key to operational preparedness of the armed forces. It used to remain closed for about six months due to heavy snowfall. However, over the last few years, the BRO has been reopening it in less time. This year, it was cleared off in record time of 68 days.

Lt Gen Chaudhary said the opening of the pass has a lot of significance both from the strategic point of view as well as socio-economic point of view.



"The people of Ladakh used to remain cut off for about five-six months, but the BRO has been opening this route earlier than usual and the people can go to Srinagar for their needs or medical emergencies or even trade and commerce," he said.

He said the reopening of the pass will give an economic push to the region. "Tourism also opens up because of the opening of this route, and the people of Kargil, Drass and Leh benefit a lot from

the opening of this route," he said. He said the central government also benefits a lot because of its reopening. "For maintaining our forces deployed in Ladakh, all the supplies have to be sent by air, for which about Rs 7 crore are spent daily. We have done a calculation that we can save Rs 400-450 crore, which otherwise has to be spent for this maintenance, by reopening the road sooner," he said.

The BRO DG said the highway

was kept open till January 6 this year, after which it was closed for traffic following heavy snowfall. "The pass was open till January 6. In February, we took a decision to start clearance work on it, but keeping in mind the safety of the workers. So, we undertook the operation and in a systematic manner, cleared off the snow. Today, the traffic has started to ply on this. It has now been re-opened in record time. This is a huge achievement," he said.

Earlier, people used to think about reopening the route in the month of May. But over the last few years, the road has been reopened earlier than that. "Next year, we will try to reopen it sooner than this," he added.

Lt Gen Chaudhary said with the reopening of the Zojilla pass, "we can easily move machinery, tanks, guns, etc. If and whenever we need... So that it reaches the forces deployed in Ladakh." "This is the only route which connects Ladakh with the rest of the country. The Leh-Manali route is not open yet," he said.

The pass will be reopened for civilian traffic in the next few days after assessing the road conditions and the safety issue, he added. A civilian, Bakir Ali, said the population living on both sides of the pass was happy with its reopening.

"The pass has been thrown open sooner than earlier years. As the holy month of Ramzan is about to start, it is great that this route has been thrown open and will enable the people to take care of their daily needs. We can now bring in fresh fruits, vegetables, etc.," Ali said. The BRO has been breaking its own records when it comes to the reopening of the pass. The road was thrown open in 110 days in 2021, in 78 days in 2022 and in just 68 days this year.

## Adenovirus cases a concern in Assam

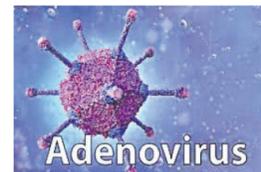
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Guwahati, March 16:** Children below five years of age landing in the ICUs of the hospital with acute H3N2 infection have been causing worry among the doctors in many states in the country. However, Assam has so far witnessed a very low number of influenza H3N2 cases in the children, but Adenovirus infections have become a major concern here in the last few weeks.

Dr Manoj Kumar Choudhury, Director of National Health Mission in Assam, told IANS, "We have got only one case of H3N2 infection across the government hospitals in the state. Therefore, at this point, we are not worried about this disease."

When asked about the measures the state health department has been taking to contain the spread of H3N2, he said, "When infections are extremely low, why should we unnecessarily create panic? We have been keeping a watch on the situation."

Meanwhile, Dr Rachna Dass Hazarika, a paediatrician in a Guwahati-based superspecialty hospital, said, "The Influenza A (H3N2) is not causing a concern here as the number of cases detected is very small. I have only got two children with H3N2 infection, and they recovered well and did not require hospitalization." But the Adenovirus infection



**The doctors have recommended that children wear masks while they go out for school or other things**

has become a point of concern in Assam. She said, "I have treated not less than 20 children with this infection, and most of them required hospitalization. Some even required high-flow oxygen therapy as there were breathing issues."

Dr. Hazarika continued, "Moreover, one child was very sick, and we had to put him on a ventilator support. After 25 days of treatment, the child got discharged from the hospital today."

According to healthcare professionals in the state, children were given the influenza vaccine after they reached six months of age. This also provides protection against the H3N2 infection. Probably, this is the reason why the Influenza A disease spread is less in Assam.

# national

## of the day quote

The BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah are turning Parliament into a deep dark chamber. They do not want the government to be accountable to Parliament and then to the people. Modi and Shah don't want to be accountable to the people so they disrupt Parliament

DEREK O'BRIEN | TRINAMOL CONGRESS MP

The government is fully cognizant and aware of various cyber security threats and is actively taking steps to combat the issue of hacking

NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

Pinjore and Kaika should be connected with Chandigarh under the metro plan as it the gateway of Himachal Pradesh and movement of a large number of people takes places towards Panchkula and Chandigarh on a daily basis. This will further strengthen the Panchkula-Chandigarh connectivity, ensuring smooth flow of traffic

MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR | HARYANA CM

## SHORT TAKES

### Varun turns down Oxford Union invite

**New Delhi:** BJP MP Varun Gandhi has turned down the Oxford Union's invite to speak at a debate on whether India is on the right path under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying he sees no merit or integrity in voicing domestic challenges at an international forum and that such a step will be a "dishonourable act". The development comes incidentally at a time of a raging debate over his cousin and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's comments in London which have been described by the ruling party as "demeaning" to Indian democracy, more so as they were made from the foreign soil.

### Lawrence Bishnoi gang member held

**Panaji:** An active member of Lawrence Bishnoi gang was held in Goa in a joint operation by the Goa and Rajasthan Police personnel, police said. North Goa Superintendent of Police said that Panaji Town Police station and Sardarpura Police station (Rajasthan) personnel nabbed wanted criminal Pavan Solanki, a native of Mandor in Rajasthan's Jodhpur. "He is an active member of Lawrence Bishnoi gang, and was absconding after commission of crime which is registered in Sardarpura Police Station, Jodhpur," he said.



**PM's plan is to slap several false cases against Manish and keep him in custody for a long period. Sad for the country!**

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

### CHANDRAYAAN-3 PASSES ISRO'S VIBRATION TESTS

Indian space agency Thursday said it had successfully completed the tests to check Chandrayaan-3 -- moon spacecraft -- to withstand the harsh vibration and acoustic environment that the spacecraft would face during its launch



## DELHI EXCISE POLICY CASE

# Kavitha skips ED summons

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 16:** BRS leader K Kavitha Thursday skipped the Enforcement Directorate (ED) summons here for questioning in the Delhi excise policy money laundering case and made a plea to defer the proceedings but it was rejected by the probe agency which asked her to appear March 20.

Kavitha, MLC and daughter of Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababoo Naidu, wrote to the ED saying it must wait for the outcome of her plea before the Supreme Court challenging the summons and seeking protection from arrest. The apex court Wednesday agreed to hear the plea March 24.

The Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) leader, who was first questioned in this case by the ED March 11 and asked to appear again March 16, sent her "authorised representative" Soma Bharat Kumar, general secretary of the BRS, in the morning with a six-page petition to the investigating officer stating she was skipping the March 16 summons as they explicitly does not require her to appear in person.

"I humbly beseech your good self that the proceedings before the Supreme Court being sacred and sacrosanct, the outcome thereof must be awaited before any further proceedings take place with respect to the subject summons."

"I once again request your good self that you may please defer the proceedings awaiting appropriate order(s) or direction(s) by the Hon'ble Supreme Court," she wrote in the letter sent to the ED. Sources in the ED said her plea was re-



**KAVITHA HAS MAINTAINED THAT SHE HAS NEVER MET SISODIA, CLAIMING THAT HER NAME WAS BEING UNNECESSARILY DRAGGED IN THE CASE**

**ACCORDING TO THE ED, KAVITHA IS ALSO ONE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF SOUTH GROUP IN THE EXCISE POLICY CASE**

jected in view of the ongoing investigations which is at an important phase including the requirement of her physical and document-based confrontation with other accused arrested/involved in the case. Kavitha has been asked to appear March 20, officials said. In her letter, Kavitha spoke about her first deposition before the ED where she said she "furnished all relevant information and answered all queries to the best of my knowledge, ability and understanding". Kavitha, however, expressed surprise and "shock" that her phone was "impounded" by the agency that day and she was not physically confronted with any arrested

accused despite the agency's earlier "categorical assertion" for the same. She also wrote to the agency that being a woman she should not be called to the ED office for questioning but this exercise should either be conducted over a video link or the investigators can visit her residence for the same.

Official sources had said that during the nine hours she spent at the ED office in Delhi March 11, she was confronted with the statements made by Hyderabad-based businessman Arun Ramchandran Pillai, an arrested accused in the case who allegedly shares close ties with her, apart from those of few others involved in the case.

# Kerala Assembly continues to fume

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, March 16:** The day's proceedings in the Kerala Assembly Thursday ended in 15 minutes time, after the Congress-led Opposition demanded action against two treasury legislators and a few Watch and Ward staff who had misbehaved with the opposition women MLAs.

On Wednesday, the opposition legislators staged a siege at the Speaker's office located next door to the floor of the Assembly, to protest against him. Following this the Watch and Ward staff were called to disperse the protesting MLAs.

In the melee a few opposition legislators were injured, which included KK Rema. On Thursday morning just before the Assembly proceedings began, Speaker AN Shamsseer held a meeting of the party leaders and requested both sides to ensure things are brought under control.

In the meeting, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Leader of Opposition VD Satheesan were engaged in a war of words with each taking on one another, leaving others amused. Satheesan said the right of the opposition to present leave for adjournment motion is being rejected outrightly to which Vijayan said it was not possible to allow the presentation of adjournment motion for anything and everything and the two continued to take on one another for



some more time. When the House assembled, Shamsseer said what happened in the House complex and before the office of the Speaker was something unheard and unseen before in the history of the Kerala Legislative Assembly.

"Such things should never happened and the happenings were shot on mobile phones and that was not acceptable. We could have used technology which is available to jam recordings in the mobile, but we did not use it. So I request all should cooperate," said

Shamsseer. Leader of Opposition VD Satheesan said, "It was true that things might have gone out of hand, but all we did was to stage a democratic protest before the office of the Speaker." "But the peaceful democratic protests were spoiled by two treasury bench legislators and a few Watch and Ward staff. We demand action against them."

## LAND-FOR-JOB SCAM

# CBI summons Tejashwi for 4th time on March 25

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 16:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Thursday issued fourth summons to Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav in connection with the land-for-job scam.

He has been asked to appear before the probe agency March 25. Tejashwi has as of now skipped three summons. Before this, he was summoned to join the investigation March 4, 11 and 14. Last time Tejashwi didn't join the probe after citing wife's health issues.

The probe agency had recently grilled former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi and former Union Railway Minister Lalu Prasad in the case. The CBI has alleged that during the investigation, it was found that "the accused in conspiracy with the then GM and CPO of the Central Railways engaged persons as substitutes in lieu of land either in their name or in the name of close relatives of the Lalu family". The CBI had registered a case against Lalu Yadav, the then Union Railway Minister, his wife Rabri Devi, two daughters and 15 others, including unknown public servants and private persons.



# Cov surge: Centre writes to 6 states to contain infection

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

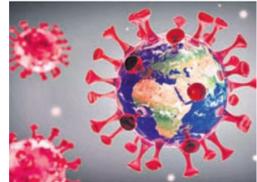
**New Delhi, March 16:** The Centre Thursday asked six states -- Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka -- to follow a risk assessment-based approach to prevent and contain the spread of Covid-19 infections, citing a possible localised spread of the virus.

"There are a few states which are reporting higher numbers of cases indicating possible localised spread of infection," Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan has said in a letter to these states.

Bhushan advised these states to examine the situation of Covid-19 at micro-level and maintain focus on implementation of necessary measures for prompt and effective management of the disease, duly ensuring effective compliance with various advisories issued by the Ministry of Health.

However, since the past few weeks a rise in cases has been noted specifically in certain parts of the country with a total of 2,082 cases being reported in the week ending March 8 and the figure rising to 3,264 cases in the week ending March 15.

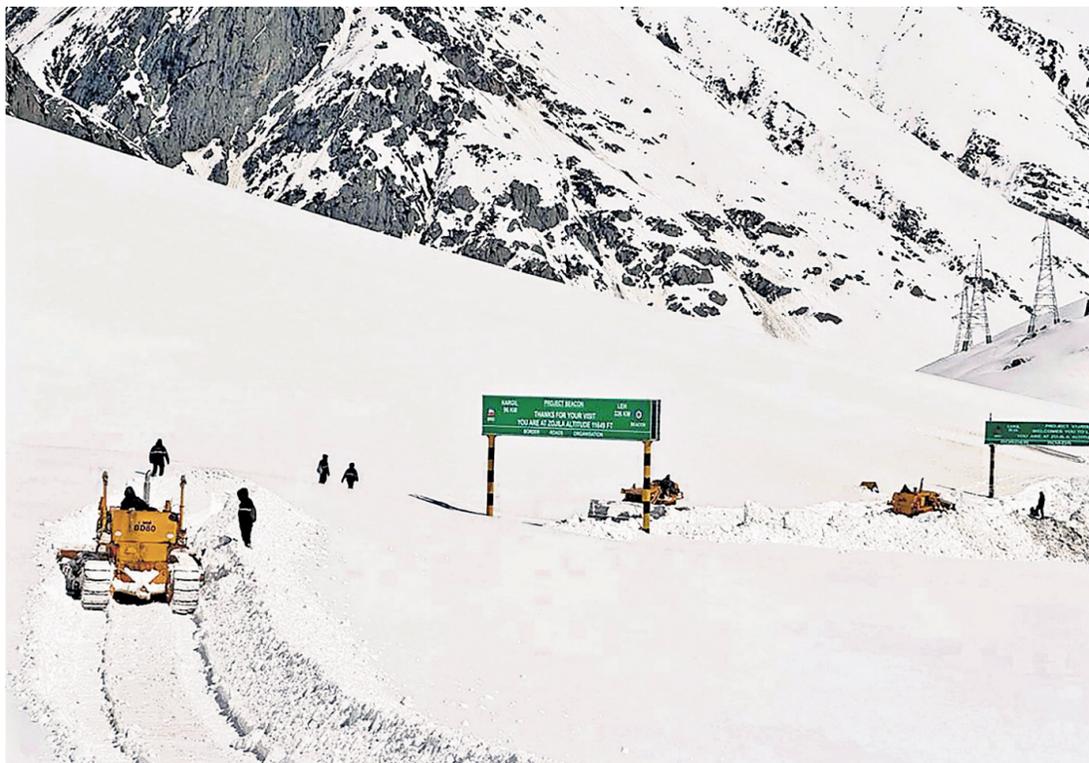
"There is a need to follow a risk assessment-based approach to pre-



Since the past few weeks a rise in cases has been noted specifically in certain parts of the country with a total of 2,082 cases being reported in the week ending March 8

vent and contain the infection, without losing the gains made so far in the fight against the pandemic," Bhushan wrote.

He stressed on monitoring new and emerging clusters of new Covid-19 cases, influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) cases in all health facilities or through dedicated fever clinics on a regular basis for detecting early warning signals of the spread of infection.



**SNOW, SNOW, EVERYWHERE:** Border Roads Organisation (BRO) personnel clear snow from the road at the Razdan Pass in the Gurez Valley, in Bandipora, Jammu and Kashmir

# 'India can achieve clean energy independence by 2047'

INDIA IS THE THIRD LARGEST ENERGY CONSUMER IN THE WORLD AND ITS DEMAND WILL QUADRUPLE IN THE COMING DECADES, THANKS TO THE RAPID ECONOMIC GROWTH

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 16:** India can achieve its vision of energy independence by 2047, according to a new study by the US Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (Berkeley Lab).

Examining India's three most energy intensive sectors -- power, transport and industry, the study, titled Pathways to Atmanirbhar Bharat, which translates to "self-reliant India", determined that achieving energy independence will generate significant economic, environmental, and energy benefits.

This includes \$2.5 trillion in consumer savings through 2047, reducing fossil fuel import expenditure by 90 per cent or \$240 billion per year by 2047, enhancing India's industrial competitiveness globally, and enabling India's net-zero commitment ahead of schedule.

India is the third largest energy



consumer in the world and its energy demand will quadruple in the coming decades, thanks to the rapid economic growth.

Currently, it must import 90 per cent of the oil, 80 per cent of the industrial coal, and 40 per cent of the natural gas it consumes. Price and supply volatility in the global energy markets, as witnessed in recent years, strain India's foreign ex-

change reserves, resulting in economy-wide inflation. "The case for clean energy has never been stronger: India has achieved the world's lowest renewable energy prices and has found some of the world's largest lithium reserves," said Nikit Abhyankar, Berkeley Lab scientist and the lead author of the study.

The study shows that India's energy independence pathway would

involve the power sector installing more than 500 GW of non-fossil electricity generation capacity by 2030, a goal already announced by the government, followed by an 80 per cent clean grid by 2040 and 90 per cent by 2047. Nearly 100 per cent of new vehicle sales could be electric by 2035. Heavy industrial production could shift primarily to green hydrogen and electrification: 90 per cent

of iron and steel, 90 per cent of cement, and 100 per cent of fertilizers by 2047.

Most of the lithium needed (estimated 2 million tons by 2040) for manufacturing new electric vehicles and grid-scale battery storage systems could be produced domestically using newly discovered reserves.

■ In addition, Indian industry must transition to clean technologies such as EV and green steel manufacturing

■ India is one of the world's largest auto and steel exporters, with their largest markets in EU countries committed to carbon neutrality and a potential carbon border adjustment tariff

■ The study finds that India has a unique advantage to leapfrog to a clean energy future since the bulk of its energy infrastructure has yet to be built

This energy transition would require significant policy support, including deployment mandates for clean technologies, financial and policy support for emerging technologies such as green hydrogen, and investment in domestic manufacturing capacity.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA  
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES  
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER  
BOUDH IRRIGATION DIVISION, BOUDH, PIN-762014  
e-mail id- eebidboudh@gmail.com, Telephone No.06841-222039  
"e" Procurement Notice No.15/2022-23  
Bid Identification No.EE BOD-15/2022-23  
No.A-1267: Bid documents consisting of work, estimated cost, cost of tender paper, EMD, time of completion, Class of Contractor, the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in e-Procurement portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in.

1	Name of the Work	Major Critical & Medium Critical Works
2	No. of Works	33 Nos. (Individual Works)
3	Class of Contractor	"C" & "D" Class (Odisha PWD or relevant class of other licensing Authority)
4	Bid Identification No.	EE-BOD-15/2022-23
5	Estimated Cost	Varies Approximately from 8.20 Lakhs to 16.40 Lakhs
6	Period of Completion	6 (Six) Calendar Months
7	Date & Time of availability of bid documents in the portal	From 18.03.2023 (10.00 AM) to 28.03.2023 (05.00 P.M.)
8	Last date/time for receipt of bids through online	28.03.2023 upto 05.00 P.M.
9	Date of Opening of Bid through online	29.03.2022 (11.00 AM onwards in the Office of the undersigned)
10	Name of the Officer inviting Bid	Executive Engineer, Boudh Irrigation Division, Boudh (Dist-Boudh)

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in said website.

Sd./- Executive Engineer  
Boudh Irrigation Division, Boudh  
OIPR-32111/11/0003/2223

# international



Germany will have to do a better job at clamping down on "irregular migration" and deporting those who don't legally reside in the country  
**OLAF SCHOLZ | CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY**

## FIRST TIME

Indian-American Ravi Chaudhary was confirmed by the US Senate as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Energy, Installations, and the Environment by a bipartisan vote of 65-29. Minneapolis native Chaudhary becomes the first Indian-American to become part of one of the top civilian leadership positions in the Pentagon



## of the day quote

I thank Putin for backing Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, noting that the Kremlin's support has remained strong despite the fighting in Ukraine  
**BASHAR AL-ASSAD | PRESIDENT OF SYRIA**

The country is seeking to deepen integration into the European energy market amid Russia's ongoing war against Kyiv  
**DENYS SHMYHAL | UKRAINIAN PRIME MINISTER**

Poland aims to become an energy hub and energy security provider for Central Europe  
**MATEUSZ MORAWIECKI | POLAND PM**

## SHORT TAKES

### Five killed in helicopter crash

**Dohuk:** A mysterious helicopter crash in northern Iraq has killed at least five people, allegedly including militants belonging to an outlawed Kurdish insurgency group, according to statements Thursday from the Iraqi Kurdish-run counterterrorism agency and the region's president. The AS350 Eurocopter crashed in the district of Chamanke in Dohuk province in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region on Wednesday night, the counter-terrorism agency said in a statement posted on social media.

### Nepal PM likely to visit India

**Kathmandu:** Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' is likely to travel to India on an official visit next month - his first foreign trip since assuming the office for the third time in December last year, a media report said Thursday. Though the official date of his visit to India is yet to be announced, boosting bilateral ties and talks on trade, energy, agriculture, culture and air service will prominently feature in his talks with Indian leaders. Sources close to the 68-year-old Prime Minister said that his visit to India in the near future is in the cards and the date would be fixed once the Prime Minister gets a vote of confidence from the House of Representatives.

### Nine detained

**Warsaw:** Polish authorities said Thursday that the nation's security services have detained members of a Russian espionage ring, alleging that they were preparing acts of sabotage in Poland and had been monitoring railroad routes used for the transport of weapons into Ukraine. Interior Minister Mariusz Kaminski said the Internal Security Agency had arrested nine people suspected of spying for Russia in the case.

## UNITED FRONT

# Japan, S Korea renew ties at summit

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Tokyo, March 16:** Japan and South Korea agreed to resume regular visits between their leaders and took steps to resolve a trade dispute as a highly anticipated summit began Thursday, a sign that the two countries are rebuilding their nations' security and economic ties as they try to overcome a century of difficult history.

The summit could revise the strategic map of northeast Asia. The two US allies, who have long often been at odds over their history, are seeking to form a united front, driven by shared concerns about a restive North Korea and a more powerful China.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol both stressed the importance of improved ties as they opened Thursday's summit, hours after a North Korean missile launch and encounters between Japanese and Chinese vessels in disputed waters.

"I'm delighted that a chance has come for us to open a new chapter of Japan-South Korea relations together," Kishida said in his opening remark. He added that their meeting will mark the resumption of regular visits between the lead-



**I'm delighted that a chance has come for us to open a new chapter of Japan-South Korea relations together**  
**FUMIO KISHIDA | JAPANESE PM**

ers, which have been on hold for more than a decade.

Yoon said Thursday's meeting "has special significance as it shows the people of both countries that South Korea-Japan relations are off to a new beginning after being plagued by various issues." He added that the two countries that share same democratic values "are partners that must cooperate on security, economic issues and global agendas."

Yoon said "the ever-escalating threat of North Korea's nuclear

missile program poses a huge threat to peace and stability not only in East Asia but also to the (broader) international community." "South Korea and Japan need to work closely together and in solidarity to wisely counter the threat," he added.

Hours before the summit began, South Korean Trade Minister Lee Chang-yang said that Japan had agreed to lift export controls on South Korea following talks this week, and that South Korea will withdraw its complaint to the World Trade Organization once the curbs are removed.

Japan and South Korea have long had disputes over the 1910-1945 Japanese colonization of the Korean Peninsula and atrocities during World War II, which in-

▶ The two US allies, who have long often been at odds over their history, are seeking to form a united front, driven by shared concerns about a restive North Korea and a more powerful China

▶ South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said Thursday's meeting has special significance as it shows the people of both countries that South Korea-Japan relations are off to a new beginning after being plagued by various issues

cluded forced prostitution of "comfort women" for Japanese soldiers, and territorial disputes over a cluster of islands. Ties reached a nadir when the South Korean Supreme Court ordered Japanese companies to pay compensation to Korean victims or bereaved relatives in 2018, and Japan imposed trade sanctions on South Korea shortly after. Japanese Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry said Japan acknowledged improvement in South Korea export controls during the talks and that as a result of Seoul's decision to drop the WTO case, Japan decided to drop restrictions against South Korea and restore the country to the status it had before July 2019.

# US releases video of Russian aircraft



**Russia said its warplanes didn't strike the drone and claimed the unmanned aerial vehicle went down after making a sharp maneuver over the sea**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Kyiv, March 16:** The Pentagon Thursday released footage of what it said was a Russian aircraft pouring fuel on a U.S. Air Force surveillance drone and clipping the drone's propeller in international airspace over the Black Sea.

The 42-second video shows a Russian Su-27 approaching the back of the MQ-9 drone and beginning to release fuel as it passes, the Pentagon said. Dumping the fuel appeared to be aimed at blinding its optical instruments and driving it out of the area.

On a second approach, either the same jet or another Russian fighter that had been shadowing the MQ-9 struck the drone's propeller, damaging one blade, according to the US military.

The US military said it ditched the MQ-9 Reaper in the sea after what it described as the Russian fighter making an unsafe intercept of the unmanned aerial vehicle. The video excerpt released by the Pentagon does not show events before or after the apparent fuel-dumping confrontation.

Russia said its warplanes didn't strike the drone and claimed the unmanned aerial vehicle went down after making a sharp maneuver over the sea. Asked Thursday if

Russia would try to recover the drone debris, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters the decision was up to the military.

"If they consider it necessary to do so in the Black Sea for the benefit of our interests and our security, they will do it," he said. Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of Russia's Security Council, said Wednesday that Moscow would try to recover the drone fragments.

U.S. officials have expressed confidence that nothing of military value would remain from the drone even if Russia managed to retrieve the wreckage. While intercept attempts are not uncommon, the incident amid the war in Ukraine has raised concerns it could bring the United States and Russia closer to a direct conflict.

Moscow has repeatedly voiced concern about U.S. intelligence flights close to the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014 and illegally annexed. The top U.S. and Russian defence and military leaders spoke Wednesday about the encounter over the Black Sea, underscoring its seriousness.

The calls between U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark Milley, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Gen. Valery Gerasimov, chief of Russian General Staff, were the first since October.

The Russian Defense Ministry said in its report of the call with Austin that Shoigu accused the US of provoking the incident by ignoring flight restrictions the Kremlin had imposed because of its military operations in Ukraine.

## ERIC IS NEW US ENVOY TO INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, March 16:** Eric Garcetti, President Joe Biden's close aide, will be the next US Ambassador to India after the Senate confirmed his nomination, ending a protracted hiatus of over two years to fill the key diplomatic position.

The Senate voted 52-42 to confirm the former Los Angeles mayor's nomination on Wednesday. Garcetti, 52, lost the votes of three Democrats but convinced seven Republicans to cross the aisle, winning him the prestigious diplomatic posting.

His nomination was pending before the US Congress since July 2021 when he was nominated by President Biden. Last week, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 13-8 in favour of his nomination.

"The relationship between India and the US is a strong one, and



one of great strategic, economic, and cultural importance. Founded on shared values, supported by growing economic and trade ties, and strengthened by the Indian diaspora here in the US, this partnership continues to hold significant promise for the future," said Senator Mark Warner, Co-Chair of Senate India Caucus.

"As co-chair of the Senate India Caucus, I am glad that there will finally be a Senate-confirmed ambassador in New Delhi," Warner said. Garcetti's nomination was not brought to the Senate floor for a vote during the last Congress as the ruling Democratic Party did not have enough support to get him through.



Israelis demonstrate during 'Day of Resistance', as they call on the US to intervene to stop Benjamin Netanyahu's nationalist coalition government to press on with its contentious judicial overhaul, outside the US Consulate in Tel Aviv, Israel

## TOSHAKHANA CASE

# JUDGE DISMISSES IMRAN'S PLEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, March 16:** A district court judge in Pakistan Thursday dismissed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's plea to suspend non-bailable arrest warrants against him in the Toshakhana case.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal on February 28 issued non-bailable arrest orders against 70-year-old Khan in the Toshakhana case about the concealment of the proceeds from the sale of state gifts. The judge directed the capital city police to bring him to court by March 18.

Khan has been in the crosshairs for buying gifts, including an expensive Graff wristwatch he had received as the premier at a discounted price from the state depository called Toshakhana and

**Khan has been in the crosshairs for buying gifts, including an expensive Graff wristwatch he had received as the premier at a discounted price from the state depository called Toshakhana and selling them for profit**

selling them for profit.

He was disqualified by the Election Commission of Pakistan in October last year for not sharing details of the sales. The election body later filed a complaint with the district court to punish him under criminal laws for selling the gifts he had received as prime minister of the country.

Announcing the judgment, Judge



Iqbal Thursday said the warrants could not be suspended on the basis of an undertaking that Khan would appear on a certain date.

He ordered the police to arrest Khan and present him on March 18 as per law. "Law is the same for everyone," the judge wrote in his judgment after three back-to-back hearings. In another case, District and Sessions Judge Faizan Haider

Gilani suspended arrest warrants against Khan in the case about threatening a female judge until March 20.

Khan, while addressing a public rally, had threatened judge Zeba Chaudhry, resulting in a case against him. Senior Civil Judge Rana Mujahid Rahim on March 13 issued arrest warrants when Khan failed to appear before the court. He had also fixed March 29 as the new date of hearing of the case. But Khan challenged the arrest orders in the same court and got relief when the court rescheduled hearing for March 20, suspended arrest warrants and asked Khan to appear before it.

Separately, the Lahore High Court ordered police to suspend its operation to arrest Khan from Lahore until Friday. The same court on Wednesday had suspended the police operation until Thursday morning.

## TikTok banned on UK govt phones

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, March 16:** TikTok will be banned from UK government phones amid security concerns around the Chinese-owned social media video app, Cabinet Office Minister Oliver Dowden announced in Parliament on Thursday.

The ban brings the UK in line with the US, Canada and the European Union (EU) and also India - which banned TikTok entirely from the country, even as the company strongly denies sharing user data with the Chinese government. Dowden told MPs that there "could be" a risk to how government data and information is used by the app.

"The security of sensitive government information must come first, so today we are banning this app on government devices," said Dowden. "The use of other data-extracting apps will be kept under re-



view Restricting the use of TikTok on government devices is a prudent and proportionate step following advice from our cyber security experts," he said.

The ban follows a security review which looked at the potential vulnerability of government data from social media apps on devices and the risks around how sensitive information could be accessed and used by some platforms.

# Macron shuns parliament to raise French retirement age

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Paris, March 16:** French President Emmanuel Macron imposed a highly unpopular bill raising the retirement age from 62 to 64 on Thursday by shunning parliament and invoking a special constitutional power.

Lawmakers were shouting, their voices shaking with emotion as Macron made the risky move, which is expected to trigger quick motions of no-confidence in his government. Riot police vans zoomed by outside the National Assembly, their sirens wailing.

The proposed pension changes have prompted major strikes and

protests across the country since January. Macron, who made it the flagship of his second term, argued the reform is needed to keep the pension system from diving into deficit as France's population ages and life expectancy lengthens.

The decision to invoke the special power was made during a Cabinet meeting at the Elysee presidential palace, just a few minutes before the scheduled vote, because Macron had no guarantee of a majority in France's lower house of parliament.

Then, as Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne tried to formally announce the decision at the National Assembly, leftist members broke into the Marseillaise, the French



national anthem, delaying her speech. The speaker had to briefly suspend the session to restore order: "Today, there's uncertainty"

about whether a majority would have voted for the bill "by just a few votes," Borne explained. "We cannot take the risk to see 175 hours

of parliamentary debate collapse ... We cannot gamble on the future of our pensions. That reform is necessary," she said.

Borne said her government is accountable to the parliament, prompting boos from the ranks of the opposition. "In a few days, I have no doubts ... There will be one or several no-confidence motions. There will actually be a proper vote and therefore the parliamentary democracy will have the last say," she added.

Lawmakers on the left and far right quickly confirmed their next moves. Marine Le Pen said her National Rally party would file a no-confidence motion, and Communist lawmaker Fabien

Roussel said a motion is "ready" on the left. "The mobilization will continue," Roussel said. "This reform must be suspended." To be adopted, a no-confidence motion needs to be approved by at least half the seats at the lower house - that is 287 now. In such case, which would be a first since 1962, the government would have to resign.

If no-confidence motions don't succeed, the pension bill would be considered adopted. Earlier Thursday, the Senate adopted the bill in a 193-114 vote, a tally that was largely expected since the conservative majority of the upper house of parliament favours raising the retirement age.

# business

## of the day quote

Even as the global turmoil continues in financial markets, the macro factors are turning better for India. The current account deficit looks below 2.5 per cent in FY 23 and going below 2 per cent in FY 24. Lower oil helps. If we walk our talk and navigate well, India can stand out in this turbulence

UDAY KOTAK | CEO, KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK

Domestic pharmaceutical industry is expected to witness a revenue growth of 6-8 per cent in FY2024 against 3-4 per cent growth in FY2023

MYTHRI MACHERLA | ASSISTANT VP & SECTOR HEAD (CORPORATE RATINGS), ICRA

With increased average ticket prices expected to remain high in the medium term, Indian companies will be exploring technologies, and should adopt smarter solutions for better cost efficiencies

MANISH KAPOOR | VP AND HEAD, GCS

## SHORT TAKES

### FCI sells 4.91L tonne wheat in open mkt

**New Delhi:** State-owned FCI has sold 4.91 lakh tonne of wheat to bulk consumers like flour millers in the sixth round of e-auction to bring down the retail prices of grain and wheat flour (atta). The Centre has announced the sale of 50 lakh tonne of wheat under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS), of which 45 lakh tonne have been earmarked for bulk users to cool retail prices. According to an official statement, the 6th round of e-auction was conducted by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) March 15.

### OneWeb, ISRO to launch 36 satellites

**New Delhi:** Bharti-backed OneWeb Thursday said it plans to launch 36 satellites with the Indian Space Research Organisation to complete its global LEO constellation. Last month, OneWeb Executive Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal said the company will be ready to provide services in India by July-August. "OneWeb, the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite communications company, will now target its launch of 36 satellites with ISRO for no earlier than 26 March, 2023.

### Vedanta repays \$250mn in loans

**New Delhi:** Mining mogul Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta Resources Ltd (VRL) has repaid \$250 million in loans that the company took from Barclays Bank and Standard Chartered Bank, according to regulatory filings. The company had earlier said it has enough means to meet debt repayment liabilities in the coming quarters as it looked to assuage investor concerns around its financial position.

### OYO's new prog for 1st-gen hoteliers

**New Delhi:** Hospitality tech platform OYO Thursday said it has rolled out an accelerator programme, which will provide financial assistance, mentorship and guidance to selected small first-generation hoteliers. Hotel owners with more than five running hotels are eligible to be a part of the accelerator programme. Over 200 properties are expected to be onboarded under this programme in key business cities, such as Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai in south India, Delhi, Gurugram and Noida in north India; Kolkata and Siliguri in east India and Mumbai in west India, OYO stated.



The global uncertainty has been rising after the recent developments in the US and governments, businesses and individuals should keep margins of safety in fiscal, corporate and savings account planning

V ANANTHA NAGESWARAN | CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISOR

### TRUECALLER OPENS 1ST OFFICE SPACE IN INDIA

Caller ID verification platform Truecaller Thursday announced the opening of its first exclusive office space outside of Sweden, in Bangalore. The office was inaugurated virtually by Union Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship & Electronics and Information Technology, Rajeev Chandrasekhar



## RUSH TO WARD OFF GLOBAL BANK CRISIS

# Credit Suisse gets \$54bn lifeline

*Credit Suisse is the first major global bank to be thrown an emergency lifeline since the 2008 financial crisis and its troubles have raised serious doubts over whether central banks will be able to sustain their fight against inflation with aggressive interest rate hikes*



Credit Suisse would continue to focus on the transformation from a position of strength, citing an improved liquidity coverage ratio and recent capital raisings

ULRICH KOERNER | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CREDIT SUISSE

the potential impact of liquidity pressures," JP Morgan said in a note Thursday.

While its shares bounced back, the cost of insuring exposure to Credit Suisse debt tumbled. Five-year credit default swaps were down 128 basis points to 1,016 bps from Wednesday's close after hitting record highs that day.

The European banking index was up 2.4% following the dramatic Swiss intervention, with big bank stocks rising and insurance protection on bonds issued by BNP Paribas, Deutsche Bank and UBS also edging back down.

Throughout most of the Asian day, stocks had wallowed in the red as investors rushed to the relative "safe havens" of gold, bonds and the dollar. While Credit Suisse's announcement helped trim some losses, trade was volatile and sentiment fragile.

The head of Japan's banking lobby said that there were no signs at the moment of the Japanese financial system being affected by a crisis of confidence in Credit Suisse, as Japanese banks are well-capitalised.

Credit Suisse's borrowing will be made under the covered loan facility and a short-term liquidity facility, fully collateralised by high quality assets. It also announced offers for senior debt securities for cash of up to 3 billion francs.

Credit Suisse to borrow \$54 billion from Switzerland's central bank

2.4% rise in company's shares after bank's announcement

Its shares led a 7% fall in the European banking index Wednesday

Meanwhile, Credit Suisse bankers in Asia contacted clients to reassure them after the latest inflow of funds. "We've been telling them to read the statements and look at the fact that we are buying 3 billion francs worth of bonds because they are so cheap," said a Hong Kong-based senior banker, who declined to be named.

### EUROPEAN EPICENTRE

The 167-year-old bank's problems have shifted the focus for investors and regulators from the United States to Europe, where Credit Suisse led a selloff in bank shares after its largest investor said it could not provide more financial assistance because of regulatory constraints.

The concerns about Credit Suisse added to broader banking sector fears sparked by last week's collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank, two US mid-size firms. Investor focus is also on any action by central banks and other regulators elsewhere to restore confidence.

# ₹70,584cr push for locally-developed military hardware



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 16:** India Thursday approved capital acquisition of a plethora of indigenously-developed military hardware including indigenous BrahMos missiles, marine diesel engine, artillery gun system, electronic warfare suits and utility helicopters at a cost of Rs 70,584 crore as part of a mega procurement plan.

Out of the total acquisition plan, the Indian Navy's proposals constitute more than Rs 56,000 crore, which largely included Shakti Electronic Warfare (EW) systems, maritime helicopters and other key equipment, officials said.

All the platforms and weapons systems are being procured from domestic sources. The other key military hardware which are being procured included long range stand-off weapon (LRSOW), K-9 Vajra-T gun system, 155mm/52 caliber advanced towed artillery gun system (ATAGS) and gun towing vehicles (GTVs) for the Indian Army.

The approval to the procurement proposals has been accorded by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister

Rajnath Singh, an official statement said.

The approval for a medium speed marine diesel engine is seen as a significant step as for the first time, India is venturing into the development and manufacturing of such engines indigenously.

The go ahead to the fresh procurement proposals came amid the nearly three-year standoff along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh with China.

The DAC accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for capital acquisition amounting to Rs 70,584 crore and all the procurement will be made under the Buy (Indian-IDDMM) category.

The total approval granted for capital acquisition in the financial year 2022-23 now stands at Rs 2,71,538 crore, out of which 98.9 per cent of the procurement will be sourced from the Indian industries, the officials said.

"To keep pace with the emerging technologies and counter the adversaries in the Western and Northern front, the necessity of the new weapons and its integration with the delivery platforms was felt by the government," the ministry said.

## VALUE-BUYING

# Sensex snaps 5-day losing streak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 16:** The domestic equity market Thursday snapped the five-day losing streak as the benchmark Sensex recouped its lost ground and closed 78 points higher on a mix of gains in banking, energy and financial stocks.

A positive opening in the European market helped investor sentiments even as clouds hovered over the health of the global banking system amid Credit Suisse woes and bank failures in the US.

Halting its five-day losing streak, the 30-share BSE benchmark rose 78.94 points or 0.14 per cent to close at 57,634.84 points, with 17 of its constituents ending in the green. During the session, it touched a high of 57,887.46 points and a low of 57,158.69 points. The 50-share NSE Nifty advanced 13.45 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 16,985.60



points. As many as Nifty 32 stocks closed in the green.

Equity benchmarks bounced back to end in the positive territory after trading lower for the most part of the volatile session.

Meanwhile, the rupee declined 13 paise to close at 82.78 against

the US dollar Thursday. International oil benchmark Brent crude gained 0.76 per cent to \$74.25 per barrel.

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) offloaded shares worth Rs 1,271.25 crore Wednesday, according to exchange data.

# Economy likely to log in tepid 6% growth: Crisil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 16:** The economy is likely to log in 6 per cent growth next fiscal, in line with consensus estimates, driven by an increased capex by the private sector, rating agency Crisil said Thursday. The private sector capex is expected to deliver double-digit revenue growth for the second year on the trot, it added.

The economy is projected to grow 7 per cent this fiscal, according to the official forecast, but many private forecasters have a lower outlook, ranging from 6.5 to 6.9 per cent. The agency also sees the economy averaging 6.8 per cent growth over the next five fiscals.

Crisil further said it expects the corporate revenue to log in double-digit rise again next fiscal.

In its annual growth forecast, Crisil Chief Economist DK Joshi said a complex interplay of geopolitical events, stubbornly high in-

The medium-term growth prospects are healthier, and over the next five fiscals, the GDP is expected to grow at 6.8 per cent annually, with the next fiscal delivering 6 per cent, driven by capital and productivity increases

AMISH MEHTA | MD, CRISIL

flation and sharp rate hikes to counter that have turned the global environment gloomier.

On the domestic front, the peak impact of the rate hikes - 250 basis points since May 2022, which has pushed interest rates above pre-Covid levels, will play out more in the next fiscal.

Retail inflation is expected to average 5 per cent in FY24 from 6.8 per cent in FY23, owing to the high-base effect and some softening of crude and commodity prices, Joshi said.

# Fuel sales plunge after Feb fireworks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 16:** India's fuel demand fell in the first half of March after posting a record growth in the previous month, preliminary industry data showed Thursday.

Fuel sales soared to the highest levels in February on the back of robust demand from the agriculture sector as well as transport picking up after the winter lull. March saw the seasonal slowdown kicking in with rise in temperatures.

Petrol sales decreased by 1.4 per cent to 1.22 million tonne in the first half of March when compared with the same period of last year. Sales fell 0.5 per cent month-on-month, the data showed.

Diesel, the most consumed fuel in the country, saw demand slip 10.2 per cent to 3.18 million tonne during March 1 to 15 when compared with 3.54 million tonne sales in the same period a year back. Month-on-month the demand was down 4.6 per cent.

# TikTok says US warns ban if Chinese owners don't sell stakes

TIKTOK CLAIMS IT HAS MORE THAN A BILLION USERS WORLDWIDE INCLUDING OVER 100 MILLION IN THE US, WHERE IT HAS BECOME A CULTURAL FORCE, ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

AGENCIES

**Washington, March 16:** The Biden administration has demanded that TikTok's Chinese owners divest their stakes in the popular video app or face a possible US ban, the company told Reuters Wednesday.

The move is the most dramatic in a series of recent steps by US officials and legislators who have raised fears that TikTok's US user data could be passed on to China's government. ByteDance-owned TikTok has more than 100 million US users.

It is also the first time under the administration of Democratic President Joe Biden that a potential ban on TikTok has been threatened. Biden's predecessor, Republican Donald Trump, had tried to ban TikTok in 2020 but was blocked by US courts.

TikTok spokesperson Brooke Oberwetter told Reuters that the

company had recently heard from the US Treasury-led Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, which demanded that the Chinese owners of the app sell their shares, and said otherwise they would face a possible US ban of the video app.

The Wall Street Journal first reported the move. ByteDance confirmed that 60% of its shares are owned by global investors, 20% by employees and 20% by its founders.

China's foreign ministry responded Thursday, saying that the United States had yet to provide evidence that TikTok threatened national security. Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told a daily briefing that the United States should stop suppressing such companies.

CFIUS, a powerful national security body, had unanimously recommended in 2020 that ByteDance divest TikTok. Under pressure



from then-President Trump, ByteDance in late 2020 unsuccessfully sought to finalize a deal with Walmart and Oracle Corp to shift TikTok's US assets into a new entity.

"If protecting national security is the objective, divestment doesn't solve the problem: a change in ownership would not impose any new restrictions on data flows or

access," TikTok's Oberwetter said in a statement.

TikTok Chief Executive Shou Zi Chew is due to appear before the US Congress next week. It is not clear if the Chinese government would approve any divestiture and the Chinese Embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Any US ban would face signifi-

cant legal hurdles and potential political ramifications, since TikTok is popular with millions of young Americans.

TikTok and CFIUS have been negotiating for more than two years on data security requirements. TikTok said it has spent more than \$1.5 billion on rigorous data security efforts and rejects spying allegations.

TikTok said Wednesday that "the best way to address concerns about national security is with the transparent, US-based protection of US user data and systems, with robust third-party monitoring, vetting, and verification."

### WESTERN BANS

US government workers in January were banned from installing TikTok on their government-issued devices.

Civil servants in the European Union and Canada are also barred

from downloading the app on their work devices.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the US government's ultimatum to TikTok came from an interagency board charged with assessing risks foreign investments pose to national security.

Time spent by users on TikTok has surpassed that spent on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter and it is closing in on streaming titan Netflix, according to market tracker Insider Intelligence.

Activists argue a ban would be an attack on free speech, and stifle the export of American culture and values to TikTok users around the world.

TikTok has consistently denied sharing data with Chinese officials, and says it has been working with US authorities for more than two years to address national security concerns.

Preparations begin as India take on Australia in the first match of the three-game series today at Wankhede Stadium

# Gujarat Giants defeat Delhi Capitals in WPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 16:** Ashleigh Gardner justified her top billing among the overseas recruits with a superb all-round performance (51 n o, 33b, 9x4; 2/19) that ensured a hard-fought 11-run victory over Delhi Capitals in a Women's Premier League match here Thursday.

After setting a below-par target of 148 for Delhi Capitals to win, Gujarat fought back well with an inspired show with the ball and in the field to bowl the second-placed team out for 136 in 18.4 overs here on a breezy night at the Brabourne Stadium.

Giants have now leapfrogged RCB once again to stay fourth in five-team table. While DC's points tally remains eight from six games, GG now have four points from six games. The victory also ensured that Giants remained in contention for a place in the playoffs.

Arundhati Reddy (25) and Shikha Pandey (8 n o) kept Delhi's hopes alive till late in the game with their 35-run ninth-wicket stand, but Gujarat managed to pull off a favourable result with Kim Garth (2/18) and Gardner producing impressive spells.

Reddy and Pandey got together when Delhi were exactly 48 runs away from win with more than five overs left and batted sensibly

but Garth eventually ended their association dismissing Reddy. Gardner took the final wicket of Yadav to seal the game.

Delhi made a shaky start losing dashing batter Shafali Verma (8) and Meg Lanning (18) inside the Powerplay, and also Alice Capsey, who was run out after a promising 11-ball 22.

Earlier in the first half of the contest, half-centuries from Beth Mooney's replacement Laura Wolvaardt (57, 45b, 6x4, 1x6) and Gardner took Gujarat Giants to a total of 147/4 in their 20 overs, after they had crawled to an ordinary 53/2 halfway through.

Harleen Deol once again got a start but could not convert it into a big score, perishing for a 33-ball 31 but the pair of Wolvaardt and Gardner did well to save the blushes for the Gujarat side.

The overseas pair of South African Wolvaardt and Australian Gardner added 81 runs for the third wicket from just 53 balls to help Gujarat recover from what had been a slow start.

The right-handed Wolvaardt struggled for timing and placement in an innings of two halves – with the other highlighting her ruthless best. Wolvaardt was also involved in a slow but steady stand of 49 runs with Deol for the second wicket.

# EYES ON ODI WWC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 16:** Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya's leadership skills and India's overall World Cup preparedness will be under focus when the home side begin their three-match ODI series against Australia here Friday.

Pandya will captain the Indian team in the absence of regular skipper Rohit Sharma, who is unavailable for the first ODI at the Wankhede Stadium due to family commitments.

The day-night match will be Pandya's first as captain in an ODI, though he is the regular India skipper in the T20 format. He is also the designated vice-captain for the ODI series.

Collectively as a team, the focus will shift from winning the four-match Test series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and qualifying for the World Test Championships final in June against the same opponents – Australia – to starting preparations for the 50-over World Cup the country is hosting later this year.

Keeping in mind that India had won the title the last time the country hosted the tournament – with MS Dhoni's team winning the trophy in 2011 – similar expectations will be from Sharma and company.

The expectations will be particularly high because the Indian team is a different beast in any format while playing at home. Moreover, the unwanted record of not doing well enough in the knock-out matches of the ICC hounding this group of players, the team will be desperate to turn things around.

India will also look to make the most of the incredible start they have had in ODIs at home this year, winning all six matches in total – against Sri Lanka and New Zealand in two separate series.

With 567 runs and three centuries in just six ODIs, and aver-



(From R): Yuzvendra Chahal, Suryakumar Yadav, Mohammed Siraj and Ishan Kishan share a light moment during India's training session, Wednesday

aging 113.40, Shubman Gill has made a cracking start to the World Cup year and Sharma's absence in the first match will put more limelight on the right-handed batter, who is coming off a quality Test century against Australia in the fourth and final match in Ahmedabad.

Batting maestro Virat Kohli had left the lean patch in white-ball cricket far behind, and his 338 runs in six matches at 67.60 indicate that the run-machine can be expected to add more to the 75 centuries that he has accumulated in international cricket so far.

Kohli's battle with Australia leg-spinner Adam Zampa is one of the

match-ups to watch out for, with the bowler having had considerable success against the star India batter.

Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal bowled in tandem in the nets during an optional training session on Wednesday here, and the two leg-spinners can form a vital weapon in India's attack given their knack of taking wickets and past record of domination in white-ball cricket. With 11 wickets in five matches, Kuldeep has so far been India's best spinner, while among fast bowlers, Mohammed Siraj is far ahead with 14 scalps in as many outings.

The Indians will be wary of the

fact that the five-time World Cup winners Australia have enough firepower in their ranks to pull off wins, despite the absence of regular captain Pat Cummins who has decided to be with his family after the passing of her mother.

Cummins' absence will be felt by the visiting team as it also looks to finalise its preparations for the World Cup in October-November this year. Like he did in the last two matches of the Test series, the wily Steve Smith will lead Australia in the ODI series as well.

While Cummins and Josh Hazlewood are not available for this ODI series, veteran batter David Warner and all-rounder Ashton

Agar, who both had returned home during the Test series, are back in India with the national squad.

Australia also have not played any ODI cricket in three-and-a-half months of this year, with their focus being trained completely on the WTC final berth. With that objective achieved, the visiting side will want to approach these three ODIs with the best possible opportunity to prepare for challenges ahead under Smith.

Australia will also draw inspiration from the fact that the last time they played here, they had handed India a 10-wicket defeat with Warner and Aaron Finch – now retired – hitting unbeaten centuries.

## Treesa-Gayatri in quarters; Lakshya, Satwik-Chirag out



Gayatri Gopichand (L) and Treesa Jolly reacts during their match

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Birmingham, March 16:** Indian women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand scripted a stunning win to progress to the quarterfinals but Lakshya Sen bowed out in the men's singles competition of the All England Championships here Thursday.

Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Treesa and Gayatri continued their rise as they shocked former world No. 1 pair of Yuki Fukushima and Sayaka Hirota 21-14, 24-22 in a pulsating contest.

The World No.17 Indian pair, which had reached the semifinals of the last edition, will next face Chinese combination of Li

Wen Mei and Liu Xuan Xuan.

Last year's finalist Sen, however, couldn't find his touch against Anders Antonsen, going down 13-21, 15-21 in 52 minutes. It was a sweet revenge from the Danish, who had gone down in straight games to the Indian in 2022.

Returning from an injury, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy paired up with his partner Chirag Shetty but their gallant fight ended with a 21-10, 17-21, 19-21 loss to China's World No.10 Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang.

Treesa and Gayatri have been in good form. In their opening round here, the Indian duo upset seventh seeds Jongkolphan Kitiharakul and Rawinda Prajongai of Thailand.

## Nikhat begins title defence in style

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 16:** Ace Indian boxer Nikhat Zareen started the defence of her title with an emphatic RSC (referee stops contest) win over Anakhani Ismayilova in the opening round of the Women's World Championships here Thursday.

Sakshi Chaudhary (52kg), Nupur Sheoran (+81kg) and Preeti (54kg) also progressed to the next round with comprehensive wins as Indian boxers dominated the proceedings on the opening day.

The tournament started with home favourite Nikhat's bout and the pugilist did not disappoint. Competing in the 50kg category, the 2022 Commonwealth Games gold medallist took her time to judge her opponent, but once she figured out the Azerbaijan boxer's game, there was no stopping her.

Nikhat, who is unseeded despite being the reigning champion, was at her aggressive best as she landed a flurry of combination punches on her opponent. Such was the Indian's domination that the referee had to give Ismayilova the 'count' thrice before stopping the contest in the second round.

On being unseeded, Nikhat said, "It's not a problem. That's the thing about draws, anyone can get any seeding. It doesn't matter but my draw is good, as the competition goes on I'll get tough opponents."

Nikhat will next face top seed, 2022 African champion Roumaysa Boualam, in the round of 32. "I know that boxer but I haven't played against her. I'm happy that India's first bout started with me and hope-



Referee raises Nikhat Zareen's hand declaring her as the winner of the bout, Thursday

fully, I will only end it."

Sakshi advanced to the pre-quarterfinals with a 5-0 unanimous decision win over Colombia's Martinez Maria Jose in the first round. Sakshi and Jose indulged in a fast-paced bout, where the Indian

jabbed her way through.

Nupur, on the other hand, proved too strong for Abiola Jackman of Guyana in the pre-quarter bout. Sakshi will now face Kazakhstan's Urakbayeva Zhazira in the next round whereas debutant Nupur

will be up against 2016 World champion Lazzat Kungeibayeva of Kazakhstan in the quarterfinals.

Like Nikhat, Preeti too notched a RSC win. The youngster beat Hungary's Hanna Lakotar. She will be up against last edition's silver medallist Lacramioara Perijoc of Romania in the second round. Jaismine Lamboria (60kg), Shashi Chopra (63kg) and Shruti Yadav (70kg) will fight in the round of 32.

Estelle Mossely (60kg) of France is scheduled to begin her campaign Friday along with some other top boxers, including Elif Guneri (75kg) of Turkey, Oh Yeon-Ji (60kg) of South Korea, and Italy's Alessia Mesiano (60kg) and Lina Wang (81kg) of China.

## Tiafoe, Medvedev reach Indian Wells semis; Coco ousted

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Indian Wells, March 16:** Frances Tiafoe defeated 10th-seeded Cameron Norrie 6-4, 6-4 to reach the semifinals of the BNP Paribas Open. The 14th-seeded American ended the 2021 champion's eight-match winning streak to earn his first semi berth in a Masters 1000 tournament.

Tiafoe hit 22 winners and had just nine unforced errors. He punctuated the victory, which was briefly interrupted by rain, by serving a love game. Tiafoe hasn't dropped a set in four matches during the tournament. Next, he'll play No. 5 Daniil Medvedev, who beat Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-3, 7-5.

Medvedev won his 18th consecutive match and improved to 23-2 this year. He hurt his right ankle in a three-set win over Alexander Zverev a day earlier.



Frances Tiafoe



Karim Benzema reacts after scoring against Liverpool at Santiago Bernabeu,

## REAL EASE INTO CL QUARTERFINALS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Madrid, March 16:** There was no historic comeback for Liverpool. Real Madrid's title defense in the Champions League rolls into the quarterfinals.

Liverpool never really came close to overcoming its three-goal deficit from the first leg against the titleholders at the Santiago Bernabeu Wednesday, losing 1-0 to end their hopes of another run to the final.

Karim Benzema scored late and Madrid advanced to the last eight for the third straight season with a

6-2 aggregate score following a 5-2 win from the first leg in England, when it rallied from two goals down early in the first half. Liverpool were trying to pull off something never done before in the Champions League – erase a three-goal loss as a visitor. Only five times the team that lost at home rallied in the second leg in Europe's top club competition.

The only time Madrid failed to advance in the CL after winning the first leg on the road was in 2019, when they were eliminated by Ajax in the round of 16. They had won six of their last seven matches

against Liverpool in the tournament, drawing another.

Napoli joined Real, AC Milan, Bayern Munich, Benfica, Chelsea, Inter Milan and Manchester City in the draw for the quarterfinals Friday.

Benzema scored from close range after a pass by Vinicius Junior in the 79th minute. The France striker, who had missed Madrid's Spanish league win against Espanyol last weekend because of an injury, has scored 13 goals in his last eight CL knockout stage matches. He limped during the goal celebration but said afterward it was just a knock.

### NAPOLI ADVANCE TO LAST 8 FOR FIRST TIME

**Naples:** Napoli beat Eintracht Frankfurt 3-0 to reach the Champions League quarterfinals for the first time in its history – and making it three Italian teams in the final eight. Victor Osimhen continued his fine scoring record with a goal in each half and Piotr Zielinski converted a penalty in the second half as Napoli advanced 5-0 on aggregate. Osimhen took his tally to 23 goals this season. It is the first time since 2006 that three Italian teams have progressed to the quarterfinals of Europe's premier club competition.

But his woes weren't over: He fell on the court and opened a cut on his thumb in the sixth game of the second set. The cut was bandaged during a medical timeout. Medvedev broke Davidovich Fokina at love to go up 6-5 before serving out the victory. Medvedev won 12 of the last 14 points.

On the women's side, No.2 Aryna Sabalenka won the final seven games of the match in defeating sixth-seeded Coco Gauff 6-4, 6-0 in the quarterfinals. Sabalenka improved to 16-1 this year, including her run to the Australian Open title.

Sabalenka said it took four days to come down from the high of winning her first major. Gauff earned just nine return points and had no break points against Sabalenka.