

**KALIA: Empowering Over 64 Lakh Farmers & Landless Agricultural Households**

OIPR-15001/13/0623/2324

## Farmers call nationwide 'rail roko' March 10

**Chandigarh, March 3:** Farmer leaders Sarwan Singh Pandher and Jagjit Singh Dallewal Sunday gave a call to the farmers across the nation to reach Delhi March 6 for a protest while they also gave a four-hour 'rail roko' countrywide call for March 10 in support of their various demands.

The two farmer leaders asserted that the farmers' ongoing agitation will be intensified at the existing protest points and will continue till their demands are met by the government. They were speaking in Bathinda district's Balloh village, the native vil-



lage of a farmer who died recently during clashes with the Haryana security personnel in Khanauri.

Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) are spearheading the 'Delhi Chalo' march by the farmers to press

Haryana will continue to support the ongoing agitation at Shambhu and Khanauri border points, the farmers and farm labourers from other states should reach Delhi March 6 for a protest in the national capital in support of the farmers' demands.

"The farmers from far away states, who cannot reach on tractor trolleys, should head to Delhi by trains and by other means of transport. It will also become clear whether the government allows those farmers to enter (Delhi) who go without tractor trolleys," Pandher said addressing the gathering at Balloh. "At Shambhu and Khanauri, the ag-

itation will continue like before and will be further intensified. Our agitation will continue till the demands are met," he added.

Pandher said the two forums to spread this agitation countrywide call upon the farmers and labourers across the country that the 'rail roko' protest will be held in the country from 12 pm to 4 pm March 10 to put pressure on the government to meet the farmers' demands.

Pandher said that all Punjab panchayats should pass a resolution in support of the farmers' demands and from every village a tractor trolley must reach the protest border points.

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**Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana**

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# leisure



## KUNG FU PANDA IS MY HAPPY PLACE: JACK

Actor Jack Black, who is returning to his role as Po in the new chapter of action-comedy *Kung Fu Panda 4*, has talked about the franchise, tagging it as his 'happy place'. Black said, "*Kung Fu Panda* is like my happy place; Po and the gang are like family. It's the humour, the heart, the whole package that brings me back."

## KRISTEN CAN'T WATCH HERSELF ON SCREEN

Actress Kristen Stewart finds it a horrible idea to watch her movies, as she would want to make changes. The actress would rather watch a horror movie than go through any of her movies, reports *femalefirst.co.uk*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Since you want to examine things and carry out some research, you will get all the required equipment ready today. You will also be very irritable, and anyone posing a hurdle will face your wrath. Ganesh advises you to be more caring and considerate about the needs of your near and dear ones.

**TAURUS**  
You will be particularly warm and intimate to your friends and family members. Ganesh says that you will miss no opportunity to show them how much they mean to you. Your superiors and, back at home, your elders are likely to be unusually benign and well-disposed towards you.

**GEMINI**  
It is possible that your emotional nature is the cause of many of the problems currently plaguing you. Therefore you need to curb your emotions when reacting to any situation. You will concentrate on family matters today, and spend time with your family.

**CANCER**  
The stars look fiery today, says Ganesh. Now what does that imply? There is a definite possibility of conflicts and an outburst of anger at your workplace. Try to steer clear of arguments and sticky situations as far as possible.

**LEO**  
A beneficial day awaits those who are self-employed. You will find new and interesting projects. People working in the creative fields will also be able to make much progress. You will be filled with energy, enthusiasm and hope today, and will make efforts to achieve success, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Today will be an unusually lucky day full of unexpected things, but you will manage to tackle them all with great maturity. If someone takes you for granted, they will later regret their lack of good judgement as you don't like being pushed around. Ganesh says persistence in your attempt to find answers to long-pending issues will bear results before the end of the day.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says that today you should think before spending your money because you know and understand the importance of money. You will not hesitate to spend money on family members and on entertainment. You will be able to meet like-minded people with whom you will be able to share your experiences and knowledge.

**SCORPIO**  
Today, you may think with your brain and not with your heart. As a result, your decisions are likely to be practical and reasonable. Be careful while conversing with your seniors, as there are chances of you being misunderstood. When it comes to relationships, communication is the base of it.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
After a long long time, the day has finally come when you can your beloved on a date. Professionally, you are on a winning spree. However, keep less expectations from yourself and others and there will not be any occasion of disappointment.

**CAPRICORN**  
You are in for an exciting ride, today. Happiness and contentment will fall in your lap and you'll be delighted with this positive energy, feels Ganesh. Job requirements will keep you occupied as you need to find answers to some complicated questions at the earliest. With rise in your bank-balance and available finance schemes, you can plan to set up your own business venture, also.

**AQUARIUS**  
Mark this day on the calendar as it is going to turn out to be an important day in your life. You will experience some cash inflow and get the adequate finances for your education or business. You are in a joyous mood and everyone who interacts with you will experience your happiness as well, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
You are blessed with exceptional grasping power today, and will be able to easily imbibe whatever you see or hear today. You will also be able to speed through your routine tasks. You will be able to concentrate on the tasks you have taken up.

## Deepika on embracing parenthood

**Mumbai:** Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh, the beloved duo, trace their romantic journey back to the sets of *Ram-Leela* in 2012, where their love story first bloomed. They have always been

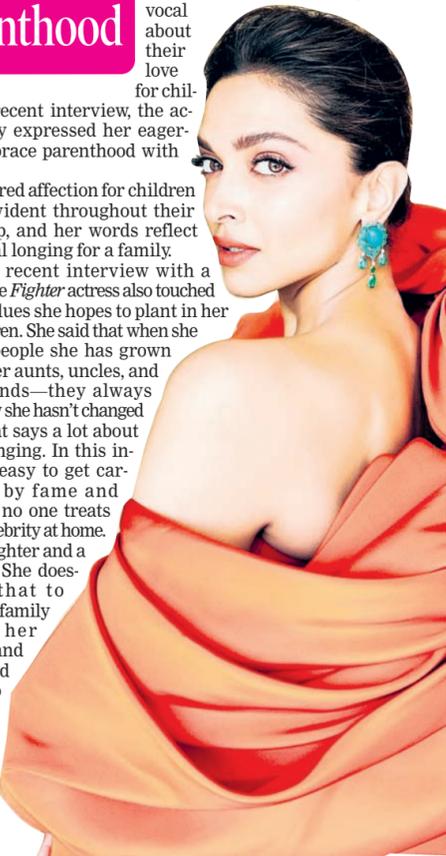
vocal about their love for children.

In a recent interview, the actress openly expressed her eagerness to embrace parenthood with Ranveer.

Their shared affection for children has been evident throughout their relationship, and her words reflect their mutual longing for a family.

During a recent interview with a magazine, the *Fighter* actress also touched upon the values she hopes to plant in her future children. She said that when she meets the people she has grown up with—her aunts, uncles, and family friends—they always mention how she hasn't changed one bit. That says a lot about their upbringing. In this industry, it's easy to get carried away by fame and money. But no one treats her like a celebrity at home. She is a daughter and a sister first. She doesn't want that to change. Her family keeps her grounded, and Ranveer and she hope to inculcate the same values in their children.

AGENCIES



## I want to be undefinable: Meenakshi

**Mumbai:** Actress Meenakshi Sheshadri, who made an indelible impression with her performances in films such as *Damini* and *Hero*, opened up about her comeback and talked about coming back to India and her passion for acting.

In a conversation with the media, she said, "I am back in India after hearing my inner voice. My family also supported me and realised that I wouldn't be getting many opportunities in the US, so I am here. Even though this is my second inning, I have come again, and I want to be absolutely undefinable."

Recalling how she started acting, Sheshadri shared, "My mom used to run singing and dancing classes. At the age of one, I learned to dance, so the kind of training I got at home in music, dance, and acting, I explored in school and in talent competitions. I won awards, and on the way, after passing 12th grade, I was chosen as Miss India that year. So the winners of beauty pageants used to get offers for modelling and acting; I too got that, and I think classical dance has a big role in getting me into acting." The actress who made her debut with *Painter Babu* said, "Manoj Kumar ji introduced me, and Subhash Ghai, his very big fan, finally decided to make me the heroine of his film. That film got so much success that even today people remember *Hero*."

Meenakshi is known for her performances in movies such as *Aandhi-Toofan*, *Meri Jung*, *Swati*, *Dilwala*, *Parivaar*, *Shahenshah*, *Mahaadev*, *Awaargi*, *Jurm*, *Ghayal*, *Ghar Ho To Aisa*, and *Ghatak*, among others.

AGENCIES

# Katrina refutes dubbing rumours

**Mumbai:** Actress Katrina Kaif has clarified recent speculations about her voice dubbing in films. Despite earlier remarks about other artists dubbing her lines, she now asserts that she has always dubbed for herself, attributing her proficiency in Hindi to sheer hard work.

Katrina's acting journey commenced in 2003 with *Boom*, followed by roles in successful films like *Sarkar* and *Maine Pyaar Kyun Kiya*. However, she faced criticism for her initial struggles with Hindi dialogue delivery.

In a recent interview with the media, the *Welcome* actress dispelled any misconceptions, stating unequivocally that she never relied on dubbing artists for her performances. She recounted how learning the Devnagri script, upon Jackie Shroff's suggestion, was pivotal in enhancing her language skills. This initiative, she emphasised, enabled her to read scripts independently and adapt seamlessly to Hindi dialogue

delivery. Acknowledging the support of her co-stars in her language journey, Kaif highlighted her unwavering determination to excel in the industry. She emphasised the importance of loving one's craft and investing wholeheartedly in honing necessary skills, be it language proficiency or dance.

While reports had previously circulated about dubbing artists stepping in for certain films, Katrina's resolve to dub her own lines strengthened after the success of *Namasteey London* and *Apne* in 2007. She expressed a preference for self-dubbing, asserting that it enhanced the authenticity of her performances.

AGENCIES



## ANANT AMBANI'S PRE-WEDDING GALA

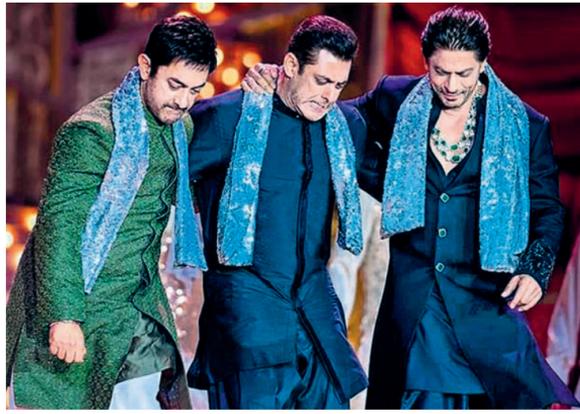
# KHAN TRIO ADDS ZING TO PARTY

**Jamnagar:** During the opulent pre-wedding festivities of Mukesh Ambani's son Anant and his fiancée Radhika Merchant, the Hindi film industry's illustrious trio, Shah Rukh, Salman, and Aamir, showcased their camaraderie on stage. To the vibrant beats of 'Naatu Naatu', the joyous Telugu track from *RRR*, they epitomised friendship and festivity.

Dressed in their finest attire, a plethora of celebrities graced the stage at a residential township near Reliance Industries Ltd's (RIL) petroleum refinery in Jamnagar.

Fans anticipating collaboration between the Khans were treated to a glimpse of their combined star power as they attempted the iconic steps of the song with Ram Charan.

Despite initial hiccups, Salman took charge, leading the trio in his towel dance from *Mujhse Shaadi*



Karogi, Soon, Aamir and Shah Rukh followed suit with their tracks, 'Masti

Ki Pathshaala' (*Rang De Basanti*) and 'Chaiyya Chaiyya' (*Dil Se...*)

The trio then delighted the audience collectively dancing to the Hindi rendition of the Telugu song.

The evening also featured solo performances by Shah Rukh and Salman, along with appearances by Deepika Padukone-Ranveer Singh, Diljit Dosanjh, Kareena Kapoor Khan-Saif Ali Khan, Sara Ali Khan, Janhvi Kapoor, Khushi Kapoor, and Ananya Panday, adding to the grandeur of the event.

PTI

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

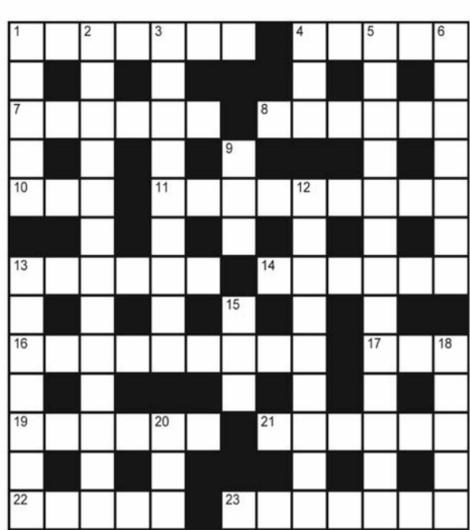


### BREVITY



### FUN post

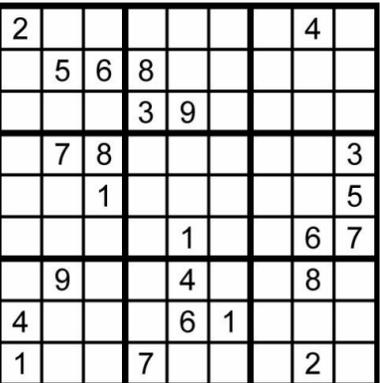
### CROSSWORD



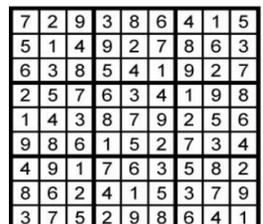
- Across
- 1 Lone wolf
  - 4 Weighty books
  - 7 Hitchcock classic
  - 8 Early spring bloomer
  - 10 Safety device
  - 11 Type of heart
  - 13 Respectful
  - 14 Strong influence
  - 16 Aztec lily
  - 17 Grimm character
  - 19 Armagnac
  - 21 Sharp
  - 22 Give way
  - 23 Bricklaying
  - 3 Diseased
  - 4 Bluejacket
  - 5 Kitchen appliance (9,4)
  - 6 Person of interest
  - 9 Utmost degree
  - 12 Peignoirs
  - 13 Man-about-town
  - 15 Pub order
  - 18 Passenger vessel
  - 20 Washout
- Down
- 1 Mature
  - 2 Former London landmark (7,6)

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



## CBI chargesheets 7

The CBI files a chargesheet against 7 in a case related to loot of arms and ammunition from the IRB in Manipur

NATIONAL | P7



## Expressing solidarity

Thousands of senior doctors rally in Seoul, to express their support for junior doctors who have been on strike for nearly two weeks

INTERNATIONAL | P8



## FPIs turnaround

Foreign portfolio investors inject over ₹1,500 crore into equities in February, reversing the massive outflows in January

BUSINESS | P9



## India at top

Two-time finalists India jump to the top of the World Test Championship standings, replacing New Zealand

BACK PAGE

## Jawan shoots himself dead at DRDO facility

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kendrapara, March 3:** A 35-year-old Army jawan allegedly shot himself dead with his service rifle at DRDO's Radar Observatory Air Surveillance unit in Odisha's Kendrapara district, police said Sunday.

The incident took place when the Army jawan, identified as Sepoy Raj Sekharan, a native of Tamil Nadu, was on duty at the facility of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) at Kiyarbanka village in Mahakalpara police station area around 2 am Sunday.

He was found lying in a pool of blood and was rushed to a nearby government-run hospital, where he was declared brought dead, a police officer said.

As per preliminary investigation, it seems to be a suicide case but further probe is underway, Inspector Bimal Kumar Mallik of Mahakalpara police station said, adding the rifle was seized and sent for examination.

## Construction workers' pension hiked by ₹500



AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday hiked the monthly pension of construction workers in the state.

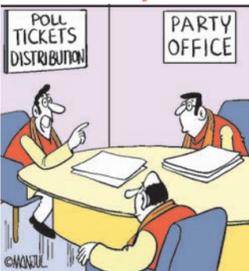
Under the revised scheme, workers aged above 60 will now receive a monthly pension of ₹1,000, up from the previous ₹500. Similarly, workers above 80 years will receive ₹1,200 per month, compared to the previous ₹700.

According to an official release, construction workers registered under the Odisha Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board are eligible for the pension.

The enhanced pension will be retroactively effective from February 2024, and the additional cost will be covered by the board's own funds.

The decision to increase the pension was based on suggestions provided by construction workers and their representatives to 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian during his visits to various districts in the state.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



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Rainfall Nil	Nil

**FORECAST**

FOG/LIGHT TO MODERATE RAIN



FULL BLOOM: Visitors at the 'Vasantotsav' 2024 flower show at Raj Bhavan lawn, in Dehradun, Sunday

## 351 Indian tent turtles rescued in Cuttack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** A total of 351 baby Indian tent turtles have been rescued in Cuttack district while they were being smuggled, a DRI statement said Sunday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) intercepted a vehicle at Manguli toll gate and rescued 351 baby turtles which were being smuggled from West Bengal to Bangalore, it said.

"Three persons from West Bengal involved in the illegal trade have been arrested while a car used to transport the turtles from West Bengal to Bangalore in Karnataka via road was also seized," Odisha Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Susanta Nanda posted on X.

The Indian tent turtle is listed in Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and is thereby provided the highest degree of protection, the statement said. The live turtles were handed over to the forest officials and the arrested persons to the state authorities for further action under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, it said.



PTI PHOTO

# New PM Shehbaz rakes up Kashmir

**SHEHBAZ SAID PAKISTAN WOULD NOT BECOME PART OF ANY "GREAT GAME" AND HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FRIENDS**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, March 3:** Pakistan's newly-elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Sunday raked up the Kashmir issue in his maiden address but pledged to improve ties with all leading nations, including the country's neighbours.

Shehbaz said Pakistan would not become part of any "great game" and his government would increase the number of friends.

He pledged to build and improve ties with all leading nations, including neighbours. "We will keep ties with neighbours on the basis of equality," Shehbaz, 72, said as he easily won the election in the National Assembly to become Pakistan's Prime Minister for a second time.

Shehbaz, however, raked up

the Kashmir issue and equated it with Palestine. "Let's all come together [...] and the National Assembly should pass a resolution for the freedom of Kashmiris and Palestinians," he added.

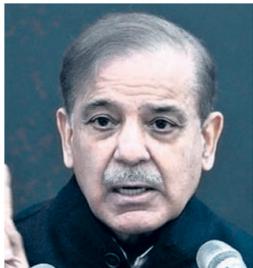
He also thanked his allies in the coalition government for putting their trust in him and making him Leader of the House.

"When my Quaid (leader Nawaz) was elected the Prime Minister thrice, the development that followed in the country is an example of its own. And it is not wrong to say that Nawaz Sharif is the one who built Pakistan," Shehbaz said in his victory speech.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president thanked his elder brother Nawaz and all the allies for putting their trust in him and making him Leader of the House. Shehbaz, who was the consensus candidate of the PML-N and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), received 201 votes in the 336-member house.

Shehbaz's challenger Omar Ayub Khan of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) secured 92 votes.

Shehbaz said that the country was facing challenges primarily



due to the fragile economy. He said that he was starting his tenure when the country was facing a budgetary deficit of more than one trillion rupees.

"How we will pay the salaries for armed forces and how to pay the civil servants," he wondered and added that reforming the economy was the biggest challenge faced by the country. Shehbaz highlighted the burden of debt paying and said that the country was required to pay billions of rupees in interest only.

He highlighted that the energy sector was crumbling due to the accumulating debt owed by the country to the power-producing companies.

He also mentioned that state-owned entities like Pakistan

International Airlines were running into losses worth billions of rupees.

He promised to put the country on the path of development and announced to overcome all hurdles.

"Though it is easier said than done, we will fulfill our task," he said. Shehbaz said that the government was determined to bring the country out of the current crisis. "I don't want to set any deadline but due to various steps we will take, the positive results will start pouring in after a year," he said.

He promised to bring investment into the country and create economic conditions that would spur economic growth. He also vowed to spread the web of "one window" export zones in all four provinces and work day and night to fulfill all these promises.

The newly-elected premier vowed to make Pakistan "self-sufficient". "We will rise and we will make Pakistan self-sufficient," said Shehbaz. "There are talented people sitting in this Parliament who can steer Pakistan's ship to the shore [...] these include journalists, intellectuals, politicians, religious leaders," he said.

# Couple, son found dead in Kendrapara

PNN & AGENCIES

**Kendrapara, March 3:** Three persons of a family were found dead at their house in Kendrapara district, police said Sunday.

Pattamundai SDPO K S Panda said that while the body of Sridam Mandal (50) was found hanging from a pole outside the house in coastal Rajendra Nagar village in Talachua marine police station area, the bodies of his wife Jayanti Mandal (45) and son Parikhit (27) were found inside their residence.

According to Panda, Sunday morning, villagers saw Sridam hanging beside the outer wall of his house and found the room locked from inside. When Jayanti and Parikhit didn't respond to the knocking on their doors by the neighbours, they informed the Talachua Marine Police Station, which rushed to the scene and broke open the door in the presence of the magistrate and found the bodies of the mother and son.

While the body of Jayanti was lying on the ground, the body of her son Parikhit was found on



the bed inside their room, which was locked from inside. A police scientific team rushed to the spot to conduct an inquiry. The bodies of the three deceased were later seized in the presence of the magistrate and sent for an autopsy.

Though the reason behind the suicide is yet to be ascertained, as per preliminary inquiry, it was suspected that they might have taken the extreme step due to a family feud. The exact reason behind the death would be ascertained after police receives the post-mortem report, the SDPO said.

Later, police informed the younger son of the deceased Sridam, who was working at Paradip, about the unfortunate incident.

# As elephant numbers dwindle, temple festivals in crisis

**Elephant owners in the southern state warn that this cherished tradition could fade into memory within the next 5-10 years due to the declining population of domesticated jumbos**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, March 3:** The vibrant and iconic temple festivals in Kerala including Thrissur Pooram, renowned for their grand procession of ornately caparisoned elephants, may soon witness a significant transformation.

Elephant owners in the southern state warn that this cher-

ished tradition could fade into memory within the next 5-10 years due to the declining population of domesticated jumbos.

N P Shyamkumar, manager of the Kidangoor Sree Subramanya Swamy Temple, one of the famous temples in Kerala, said that the lack of elephants was creating a crisis during festivals and the performance of rituals.

"There are 22 elephant processions during the ten-day festival (at the temple). The lack of adequate elephants creates a crisis for this ritual. Three elephants, which were regularly used in the temple festivals for two decades, died in the last two years," he said.

Shyamkumar further said that the cost of hiring elephants has increased more than three times



in the last five years. "An elephant, which used to cost ₹30,000 a day, today costs more than ₹1 lakh. Even if you pay this amount, you may not get an elephant on some days," he said.

He also said that the Sree Subramanya Swamy Temple,

which at one time used around nine elephants for the procession, now has only three to five elephants available at the most for the ritual. "This year, for several days, there was only one elephant available," he said.

In a state where at one time

there were more than a thousand domesticated elephants, there are only around 400 now, and not all of them can be part of temple festivals, according to elephant owners in Kerala.

P S Ravindranathan, the general secretary of the Kerala Elephant Owners Federation, said the main cause of the problem was the lack of rules for bringing jumbos from other states to the southern state.

He said that in 2003 an amendment to the Wildlife Protection Act restricted transport of elephants from one state to another. Then, in 2022, the Central government amended the Act by which the transfer or transport of a captive elephant for religious or any purpose by anybody having a valid certificate of ownership was

allowed. "Following that, states had to frame rules for taking elephants from one state to another or for change in ownership of the jumbos." But, no such step has been taken yet by the Kerala government," he said.

Rajesh Pallatt, a lawyer, an elephant owner and the state working president of the Kerala Festival Coordination Committee, said all that was required to solve the problem was a policy decision by the state government. "If they take a policy decision that elephants are required for the festivals and poorams in the state, everything else will work out after that," he said. On contacting the Culture Department of the government, officials refused to comment on whether any such policy decision was in the offing.

# Nua-O Scholarship launched in 3 dists

5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian informs that 37,160 students from 80 colleges of Kalahandi, Bolangir and Bargarh districts will get scholarship for which ₹36.81 crore has been sanctioned



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** As per the direction of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian visited Kalahandi, Bolangir and Bargarh districts, Sunday.

He attended the Nua-O Scholarship Distribution

Program at Dharmagarh in Kalahandi, Titilagarh in Bolangir and Bargarh where he interacted with the students. Speaking on this occasion, the 5T Chairman informed that as many as 37,160 students from 80 colleges of the three districts viz Kalahandi, Bolangir and Bargarh will get their scholarship for which ₹36.81 crore has been sanc-

tioned. On this occasion, he distributed Nua-O Scholarship Sanction Orders to the students.

Pandian conveyed Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's message to the youth telling them to dream big and work hard towards achieving their potential. The government will ensure that the youths are provided with the support to achieve their goals, he said.

He further said that the government's next major initiative will be to cover all the students through the launching of the futuristic Nabin Odisha Magic Card, a points system-based smart card which will engage and empower the youth and enable them towards academic development, personality development and skill development thus reducing financial burden on parents, create opportunities for their career as well as employment.

The online registration portal for the card is slated to be launched March 5. The students from UG and PG courses without any income criteria will be eligible for this facility. The card distribution event will take place August 15.



PROMOTING HANDLOOM: Models sashay down the ramp during Khadi Mahotsav fashion show at IDCO Exhibition Ground in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

# PM to unveil projects worth ₹19,600 crore

DURING HIS VISIT TO STATE MARCH 5, PM MODI WILL ALSO ADDRESS A PUBLIC MEETING AT CHANDIKHOLE IN JAJPUR DISTRICT

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Mar 3:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will unveil development projects worth over ₹19,600 crore during his visit to Odisha March 5.

The prime minister will unveil the projects from a function in Chandikhole in Jajpur district, an official statement said. He will also address a public meeting on this occasion.

March 5 also happens to be the birth anniversary of former chief minister Biju Patnaik, after whom the ruling BJD is named.

Following the official programme, he will address a rally

of the BJP in Jajpur, considered a stronghold of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

The PM will inaugurate Indian Oil Corp's mono ethylene glycol project at the Paradip Refinery.

He will also inaugurate a 344-km-long product pipeline from Paradip in Odisha to Haldia in West Bengal. He will also inaugurate 0.6 mmtpa LPG import facility at Paradip.

Modi will dedicate to the nation four-laning of the Singara-Binjabahal section of NH-49, four-laning of the Binjabahal-Telebani section of NH-49, four-laning of the Balasore-Jharpokharia section of NH-18, and four-laning of the Tangi-



Bhubaneswar Section of NH-16.

He will also lay the foundation stone for the eight-laning of Chandikhole-Paradip road.

The PM will dedicate to the nation the 162-km-long Bansapani-Daitari-Tomka-Jakhapura rail line. It will not only enhance

the existing capacity but will also facilitate efficient transportation of iron and manganese ore from Keonjhar to the nearest ports and steel plants, the statement said.

A CONCOR container depot in Kalinga Nagar will also be inaugurated by the prime minister. He will also lay the foundation stone for an electric loco periodical overhauling workshop at Narla, a wagon periodical overhauling workshop at Kantabanji and up-gradation and augmentation of maintenance facilities at Baghaura.

Modi will also inaugurate a 5-mld seawater desalination plant at Odisha Sands Complex of Indian Rare Earths Ltd. It has been built as a part of field applications of indigenous desalination technologies developed by Bhabha Atomic Research Centre.

## Cops book five for planning burglary

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** The Jatni Police Sunday claimed to have arrested five persons for allegedly attempting to commit burglary.

The arrest led to the seizure of sharp weapons from the possession of the accused including an iron sword, one iron and steel knife, mechanical pulleys for breaking doors and chilli powder. The police sources said that the arrested men were identified as Sanjay Das, Sumit Kumar Biswal, Sayad Fayaz, Sohil Khan and SK Abid. The accused were produced in a local court Sunday after being booked under Section 25 of Arms Act and Section 399 (Attempting to dacoity) and Section 402 (Assembling for dacoity).

Addressing a media presser, IIC Jatni Police Station Soumyakanta Baliarsingh said a tip-off was received from a police informer around 1am about a suspected activity near Retanga Colony. Following this, a special team in Mufti, rushed to the spot and took the men into custody.

## CLASSIFIED

### AFFIDAVIT

Dasarath Nepak, F/O Mahaveer Prasad Nepak (36), Sankarmath Street, Chatrapur, Ganjam, Odisha declared by this affidavit No.419/02.03.2024 that now onwards I shall be known as Dasarathi Nepak for all future purposes.

## LOST

I, Smt. Itishree Padhy, W/o- Sudarsan Padhi residing at Village -Siula, P.O.- Pipili, P.S.- Pipili, Dist.-Puri, stated that on 19.02.2024 due to our carelessness our original link settlement ROR on dated 13.07.1976 bearing Khata No.61, Mouza Malikabad was lost or misplaced some where and in spite of our best efforts it is still untraced. If anybody found that document please contact with our advocate. Adv-Deepak Kumar Sahoo, Contact No.-9937058785.

## DOCS PERFORM THORACIC SURGERY AT APOLLO HOSP

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Mar 3:** Marking a new era in thoracic surgery in Odisha, Apollo Hospital here successfully performed a video-assisted thoracoscopic surgery (VATS) on a 72-year-old male patient recently.

The medical team, led by senior consultant Debashish Nayak, carried out the surgery using minimally invasive technique replacing traditional open thoracotomy.

However, the patient had to be treated with utmost care as he was having diabetes with weight loss and recurrent pleural effusion.

Traditionally, such cases required extensive chest incisions, leading to prolonged hospital stays, postoperative pain, and increased risk of complications.

In this case, utilising VATS, the medical team performed a small pinhole incision through which the patient's lungs and chest were examined.

## POLITICKE by MANJUL



## Pledge to safeguard biodiversity: CM

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** Wildlife encompasses a vast array of flora and fauna and both these elements play a crucial role in maintaining the ecological balance of the planet, said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on World Wildlife Day Sunday while urging state citizens to take an oath to work towards preservation of wildlife.

Through his social media account, the CM said, "Let's celebrate the diverse wildlife of Odisha and pledge to continue to safeguard our biodiversity for a sustainable future."

As per All Odisha Tiger Estimation 2023-2024, the state's tiger population rose to 30, recording 10 more tigers than two years ago. Similipal Tiger Reserve is

### World Wildlife Day

home to 27 tigers and the state currently has eight cubs, which were not included in the tiger head count.

"This growth has resulted from strict management actions and scientific conservation practices," said an official.

Home to a wide range of wildlife species, the government of Odisha is leaving no stones unturned in its efforts to protect the animals when poaching and man-animal conflicts have emerged as the main challenges facing these efforts.

"Be it elephants, leopards and other animals, poaching tops the list of biggest threat to the wildlife animals in Odisha," said an of-

ficial of the Forest Environment and Climate Change department.

As many as 686 elephants have perished in the state in the past eight years, which works out to an annual average of 87. The majority of the deaths, during the period from 2015 to 2023, has been due to man-animal conflicts.

"Distressed elephants are entering villages for food and water by crossing major highways. This is intensifying human-elephant conflict and has caused a staggering number of elephant deaths. Restoring degraded habitats with favored elephant plant species and creating waterholes in their habitats can prevent them from crossing treacherous roads," Sangita Iyer Wildlife expert and founder of Voices for Asian Elephants said.

## MMJMM helping tribal farmers enhance household income

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** Mukhya Mantri Janajati Jeevika Mission (MMJMM) Programme, one of the state's largest livelihood promotion initiatives for indigenous communities, is helping tribal households enhance their income by adopting innovative farming techniques.

The programme is funded by the Odisha government and the state budget has earmarked ₹500 crore for initiatives for three years starting 2023-24. "It will also leverage resources from other state and central government schemes through a proper convergence mechanism to access additional funding from other schemes, to amplify scale and impact," one official said.

Operating in 13 districts and 119 tribal sub-plan (TSP) blocks,

the programme encompasses 22 ITDA (integrated tribal development agency) areas for the initial phase of 2023-24 to 2025-26.

"In the first phase, the programme aims to directly benefit 1.5 lakh tribal households. The programme, spearheaded by the ST, SC Development Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare department, is implemented by ITDAs with support of a state-level PMU by non-governmental organisation PRADAN and 16 other partner NGOs as facilitators with the ITDAs," said the official.

The programme enables collectivisation of tribal farmers through institutions for economies of scale and sustainability, encouraging them to diversify to horticultural crops, livestock and fisheries through



cluster approaches. It also enables creation of irrigation infrastructure for ensuring round-the-year crop production to enhance cropping intensity.

ST, SC Development Minorities

and Backward Classes Welfare commissioner-cum-secretary Roopa Roshan Sahoo said, "MMJMM has resulted in significant increase of farm income for beneficiaries in its ini-

tial year. In the subsequent years, as per the plan, intervened crop area under cultivation will be doubled and hundred per cent of the farm families will adopt a better package of practices due to project intervention."

The main activities of MMJMM include strengthening of Janajati Jeevika Parishads (JJP) as the community level grassroots institution and establishing the livelihood production clusters, entry point activities to build confidence of communities, development of farm clusters through critical input support and following regenerative agriculture and nonsynthetic approach of crop production and creation of suitable irrigation infrastructures to enhance crop intensity.

After 3 years, the scheme envisions fifty per cent increase

in productivity of the crops taken under cluster development programme and make sure that fifty per cent of cluster areas are under irrigation.

"While it has helped in fifty per cent increase in area under cultivation in both winter and summer season including doubling of crop intensity only forty per cent of wasteland/fallow lands/FRA lands of the clusters villages have been brought under active cultivation," the official said.

One of the beneficiaries, Ujedi Pangi (32), wife of Hari Pangi of Upper Barabandha village under Kotia Gram Panchayat in Pottangi block has taken lead in strawberry cultivation over three acres of land under the guidance of ITDA, Koraput under Mukhya Mantri Janajati Jeevika Mission, setting an example for others.

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# Huge untapped opportunity in coffee business: Das

Kruti Coffee is one of India's fastest growing specialty coffee entities and cafe chains. Learning about the plight of tribal coffee farmers from Kindiriguda village in Koraput, the brand started its journey by transforming farm management practices in the tribal coffee farms. One of the men behind this inspiring transformation is **Dr Kamakhya Das**, Co Founder of Kruti Coffee. He is member of the prestigious Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) and has completed the highest level of certification in roasting from the association. He is a doctor by academic background and holds a masters diploma in health administration from the prestigious Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. In a conversation with **Orissa POST**, Kamakhya shares his entrepreneurial experience. Excerpts...



- **Kruti Coffee is one of India's fastest growing specialty coffee entities and cafe chains. How do you see your demand in Odisha market?**
  - Kruti Coffee has established itself as the leading specialty coffee brand in Odisha. The emotional connect, growing appetite and understanding about specialty coffee among consumers from the state has led to significant growth in demand and market share for Kruti Coffee. We already have three cafes in Odisha and the fourth one is coming up at Berhampur in April 2024.
  - **How has the government's initiative helped coffee farming and the industry?**
  - There has been significant push from the Odisha government towards supporting and expanding coffee cultivation in Odisha. We also got an opportunity to showcase Kruti Coffee at Odisha pavilion in World Food India held in New Delhi in 2023. Coffee Board has been constantly complementing the efforts put by the state government. By aggressively promoting coffee from Koraput at various forums, the state government has truly empowered players from across the coffee ecosystem in Odisha to take the leap.
  - **What are the processes involved in coffee manufacturing starting from its plantation?**
  - As a truly farm-to-cup
- coffee venture, we influence the entire value chain to ensure a fine cup every time our coffee is served. Right from standardised plant management practices to picking of optimally ripe cherries, drying on raised beds, roasting with consistent profile and brewing with calibrations and equipment that match global standards, Kruti Coffee is at the forefront of specialty coffee in India. We proudly showcase coffee from Odisha as one of the best that India can offer.

  - **What are the measures necessary for development of coffee market? With a range of specialised products, what is your secret behind attracting your customer base?**
  - Developing the coffee market requires a multi-pronged approach. While as a specialty coffee venture, we can influence the value chain under our command, it's a supportive ecosystem backed by

relevant government policies that can make the growth story truly inclusive. Large-scale coffee plantation earmarked by the government is a welcome step as states like Karnataka are way ahead in production. What's required now is integrating technical expertise and enterprises early into the efforts. Our secret behind attracting customers is honesty at the farm empowerment level, roasting expertise, highly engaging cafes and unique products that are helping consumers increase their specialty coffee quotient progressively.

  - **Over the last one decade you have carved a niche for yourself in the space of specialty coffee. As the co-founder of this brand, what will be your advice for the new entrants in this business?**
  - My only advice to coffee entrepreneurs would be to maintain strong foundational values. Coffee is a highly non-forgiving business. While commerce is important, investing a few years into setting up quality parameters, coffee skill development and operations will be rewarded immensely in the long run. There is huge untapped opportunity in coffee as a business in India and specialty coffee as a differentiator so a perfect business to get into as a passionate entrepreneur or someone keen to diversify business.



## Paradip Port's capacity to reach over 300 MTPA in 2 years

**Bhubaneswar:** The Western Dock project worth ₹3,004.63 crore, part of Paradip Port's expansion work, is a crucial step towards enhancing the port's capacity to over 300 MTPA in the next two years. Official sources said the project encompasses the creation of a new dock, equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure and handling facilities, tailored to accommodate various dry bulk cargoes. It also includes deepening the inner harbour to accommodate cape vessels, necessitating draft depths of up to 18 metres. The project involves deepening and optimisation of inner harbour facilities including the development of the western dock on a build, operate and transfer (BOT) basis under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode at Paradip Port. According to Union Minister of MoPSW & AYUSH Sarbandana Sonowal, Paradip Port stands as a shining example of progress and growth. With each passing year, it sets new benchmarks in EXIM traffic management, symbolising the ministry's commitment to efficiency and excellence, he said.

# HackNITR 5.0 concludes



**Rourkela, March 3:** HackNITR 5.0, a two-day hackathon event, concluded Sunday at NIT Rourkela. This edition of the hackathon, inaugurated Saturday, received a massive response as there were over 3,200 registrations, out of which 240 participants from across the country were selected to participate. This much-awaited event is widely popular among the tech students who gather to work on solving problems using technology. The fifth edition of HackNITR is organised by the Technical Society of Student Activity Centre, NIT Rourkela in collaboration with Google Developer Student Club and OpenCode Club. Welcoming the participants during the inaugural ceremony at the BB Auditorium, Vice President of Technical Society Kaustav Chaudhury said, "Hackathon is like a marathon for ethical hackers, but instead of running, participants use their skills in programming, design, and problem-solving to come up with solutions to real-world challenges." A hackathon is an intensive team work for a set amount of time, usually a day or two, to build something new, like an app, website, or software tool. It's an exciting way for tech and coding enthusiasts to innovate, learn, and create something useful. Inaugurating the event, NIT Rourkela Director K Umamaheshwar Rao said, "The convergence of artificial intelligence (AI) with the advancements in 5G and the upcoming 6G technologies are opening up new avenues for students to address societal problems more effectively and efficiently. I am delighted to know that more than 3,000 students registered for the event demonstrating their eagerness to drive change through coding, programming or relevant tech skills."

Ritvi Mishra, Major League Hacking (MLH) Coach and Gulam Mohiuddin, software engineer at ORKES were the jury for this edition of hackathon who also mentored the participants throughout. The closing ceremony of this event was held Sunday at 5.30pm at BB Auditorium. This year the hackathon touched upon six topics - EdTech, Health and Fitness based Tech, Climate and Sustainability, FinTech, Business Tools and Solutions and Open Innovation. Participants engaged in solving real-world problems within these domains, leveraging their programming, design, AI algorithms, and tech competencies to develop innovative solutions.

## 6-month-old infant killed in bee attack; four others critical

**Jharigaon, March 3:** A six-month-old infant died Sunday, and four other members of a family who sustained critical injuries had to be hospitalised after being stung by a swarm of honeybees the previous day at Phulajhari village under Chaklapadar panchayat and this block in Nabarangpur district. The deceased infant was identified as Ambika, the daughter of Tikiram Majhi in the village. She died while undergoing treatment at the Umerkote hospital, Sunday. The health condition of rest of the family members has improved after treatment. The incident occurred when Tikiram and his wife Tula accompanied by their three daughters were collecting Mohua flowers under a tree near their house, Saturday morning. As luck would have it, a bird pricked a beehive on the tree under which they were collecting the flowers. As a result, a swarm of honeybees suddenly attacked Tikiram and his kin ran inside their house to save themselves. Villagers rushed them in an ambulance to Jharigaon community health centre where a doctor administered them treatment and referred the infant to Umerkote hospital as her condition was critical. The infant succumbed to her injuries during treatment at the hospital, Sunday.

## Cough syrup worth ₹ 1.68L seized; 1 held



**Baripada, March 3:** Kuliara police here seized smuggled cough syrup worth ₹1.68 lakh after conducting a raid at Kuchei Gangraj area in this town in Mayurbhanj district, Saturday night. Police also arrested the accused smuggler identified as Rakesh Prasad Saha, 38, a resident of Sukhuapoda area. According to reports, during night patrolling the police team got a tip-off about smuggling of cough syrup in a van and conducted a raid. Police seized eight cartons of cough syrup from the vehicle. The approximate value of the cough syrup would be worth ₹1.68 lakh, said the police. Police seized the van, ₹4,030 in cash and a mobile phone from the possession of the accused and initiated an investigation into the matter, said Public Relations Officer (PRO) Dalamani Bhoi in a press conference organised at the district police headquarters.

# 2 years of darkness

**Jajpur/Korei, March 3:** As many as 50 families at tribal dominated Gourapal village under Korei block in Jajpur district continue to reel under darkness after the lone BPL transformer in the village broke down two years back. Schoolgoing children in the village have been forced to study in the light of kerosene lamps in the absence of power supply. Residents alleged that various electrification schemes of the state government and Centre are yet to supply their village with electricity due to weak leadership and appeasement policy of political representatives. Elections are being held every five years but the fate of the village has remained unchanged, the villagers lamented. Sources said that the village in Pachchikote panchayat of Korei block is situated on the fringes of neighbouring Keonjhar district. It consists of 125 tribal families and 90 per cent of the villagers earn their living by working as casual labourers. It is alleged that the district administration, which is implementing various developmental works in other parts of the district, has been neglecting this village. The state government and Centre are implementing various projects to include Scheduled Tribe members in the mainstream but all those schemes have remained inaccessible for the villagers of this tribal village. Sources said despite passage of two years after the transformer went defunct, members of over 40 families in the village continue to reel under darkness and live a life of drudgery and obscurity. Sources said, as many as 50 BPL households had been connected with power supply under Kutir Jyoti Yojana while the rest of the villagers got power supply only after they pooled money for installation of personal transformers. However, as ill fate would have it, the BPL transformer allegedly became defunct soon due to a short circuit. The villagers visited the electricity office at Jajpur Road several times and requested the officials to install a new transformer and reconnect their houses with power supply. However, the power officials turned them away asking them to first settle the outstanding dues which run into some lakhs before a transformer could be installed. Villagers have questioned that the Kutir Jyoti Yojana is meant for whom. Even as two years have passed, the 50 households are yet to get power supply. The kerosene lamp is the only saviour for them as they continue to reel under darkness all round the year. Moreover, the rest of the 70 families are living sans electricity for the last five days as power supply has been disconnected from their houses over pending dues, villagers alleged. As a result, the whole village gets enveloped in darkness as evening descends. The villagers feel the pinch as temperatures have increased with the summer knocking on the door. The students appearing for the HSC examination are the worst sufferers. They study under kerosene lamps inhaling toxic smoke emanating from the lamps putting their health at risk. When contacted, junior engineer Sanjay Kumar Biswal of Power department said that power supply has been cut off to the village due to the outstanding dues of the villagers. The power supply will be restored only after payment of electricity dues, he said.



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## Atithi Devo Bhava

Two back to back incidents that were reported in India recently have once again raised a key question – are foreign tourists, especially women, safe in this country. In the first incident, a Dutch tourist to Puri had to spend over a month in a shelter for beggars after being robbed of his belongings, including Rs 4.5 lakh in cash, by a taxi driver in Bhubaneswar. The 72-year-old visitor had been to the Orissa capital to exchange foreign currency when the taxi driver not only robbed him, but also held him hostage for three days in a house. After the report was highlighted by the Press, the state tourism department rescued the man and shifted him to its Pantha Niwas.

In the other incident, which is shameful for the entire country, a 28-year-old Spanish woman was allegedly gang-raped by seven men in Dumka district in Jharkhand while she along with her husband was spending the night under a makeshift tent. The couple was on a bike trip to India from Bangladesh and was en route to Nepal. The woman, with bruise marks all over her face, shared her nightmarish ordeal in an Instagram post: “Something has happened to us that we would not wish on anyone. Seven men have raped me... They have beaten us and robbed us although not many things because what they wanted was to rape me.” The police have arrested three men in this connection, while the other accused are still at large.

India, formerly a popular global tourism spot, has faced growing criticism due to the distressing levels of harassment and sexual violence inflicted upon foreign travellers, both women and men. Although this problem is not exclusive to India, its widespread incidence has sparked considerable concern on a global scale. In June 2022, a British woman was allegedly raped by a local man under the pretext of giving her a massage. The incident took place right in front of her male partner near a beach in Goa. In 2014, a 52-year-old Danish woman was gang-raped by five men in New Delhi. All five rapists were convicted by a Delhi court even as the incident had drawn global attention to India’s ‘rape problem’. Many countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and Switzerland, have issued travel advisories to their female citizens travelling to India in light of this sickening trend, denting the country’s global reputation.

Frequent reporting of such gruesome crimes is indicative of the perversion prevalent in our society. Right from her arrival till departure, every foreign woman visitor to India, no matter what age, has to be cautious of everyone she encounters, be it the taxi driver, the local tout, the hotel staff, the tour guide or even someone she may meet on the streets.

According to a survey of 550 experts on women’s issues conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in 2018, India had the dubious distinction of being the most dangerous place on earth for women. India was followed by war-ravaged countries like Afghanistan and Syria. A similar disconcerting report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) had revealed that the country witnessed a four per cent surge in crimes against women throughout 2022. This included cases of cruelty by husbands and relatives, abductions, assaults, and rapes. Likewise, a staggering 28,000 women were raped in India in 2020, according to government data. Although these figures may not be indicative of the entire population, they do highlight a particular demography that promotes patriarchal values and objectifies women and above all shows our sexually depraved culture. These are hard and indisputable facts, not gossip.

This is the true ‘Indian culture’ that many try to pride themselves with. Although this mindset is more prevalent with the economically poor classes, the rich are no better when opportunity comes their way.

Attacking women when they are helpless seems to have become an integral part of the concept of ‘Atithi Devo Bhava’ (guest is equal to god).

## Putin’s Challengers

As Russia’s President Vladimir Putin is all set to win yet another term in the Presidential election barely two weeks away, two things stand out in the country’s murky politics – the funeral of the opposition leader Alexei Navalny who died in prison and Putin’s annual address which is effectively his election campaign speech.

It became clear from the gathering of mourners despite police crackdown on opposition leaders and activists that Navalny had not died in vain. Thousands of Russian citizens turned up at the funeral 1 March, disregarding fear, intimidation and massive police presence in Moscow. It was tell-tale evidence that Putin’s regime has not succeeded in totally erasing from the people’s mind the ideals for which he gave his life. The authorities had made all efforts to prevent the funeral from becoming a rallying point for the opposition. For example, Navalny’s mother had to overcome almost insurmountable difficulties in recovering his body after he had died in custody at the age of 47, on 16 February. The authorities did not allow the bereaved family and friends of the leader to find a place in Moscow where his casket could be watched over. His parents were present at the funeral, but not his widow, two children and brother, who had been forced into exile. The religious ceremony was kept to a minimum.

The majority of the crowd was unable to enter either the church or the cemetery. Yet, ordinary citizens did crowd outside the church to show their solidarity with the democratic activist who had been subjected to varied forms of repression not seen in Russia for a long time. That things in Russia are not what Putin and his regime want the rest of the world to believe became clear from the slogans that rang out at the funeral – “No to war,” “Putin, murderer,” “Russia will be free.” There is not a shadow of doubt about the crowd’s opinion of the despotic regime. What is more, over 200,000 people logged on to Navalny’s YouTube channel to watch the funeral. It only showed Putin has not quite managed to stifle dissent altogether.

Putin’s predicament is the same that many previous ‘strong leaders’ of countries from across the world had to face. People do get cowed down for a limited time. This ‘time’ may seem long for individuals but when observed on a bigger perspective, all changes have been and are taking place in one life time. History shows, over and over again, how from known events like Brutus stabbing Caesar to Benito Mussolini, Stalin, Allende, Idi Amin, Ferdinand Marcos, Pol Pot, Muammar Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein and many others, all have been forced to go ignominiously. Many of them have been murdered and ripped apart mercilessly by their own country’s common people while they were trying to run away with their amassed riches from businesses they had promoted while enjoying unquestioned power. These people had all used their governments to subdue and terrorize their own people. A few, like Alexander, Napoleon or Adolf Hitler had, no doubt, killed millions of their own countrymen but had also turned outwards and attempted to annex other lands by again butchering millions from other races or nations.

Now Putin seems to send the message across the globe that the whole country is behind him and there cannot be any opposition to his policies. The very concept that one man, no matter how twisted and capable, can outsmart and outmanoeuvre a whole nation for ever has been proven by history, again and again, to be a fallacy. All of them are destined to face their end violently and cruelly. It is just a matter of time.



Junaid Nabi

WITH RECENT STUDIES SHOWING THAT AI MODELS CAN NOW IDENTIFY EARLY SIGNS OF HEALTH COMPLICATIONS, THESE TECHNOLOGIES ARE POISED TO REVOLUTIONISE MEDICINE

On a recent international trip, I found myself running late to the airport. Not being fluent in the local language, I used a translation app that enabled me to convey the urgency of my situation to the taxi driver. The app’s camera feature also allowed me to understand the road signs, providing real-time updates.

This is just one example of how digital innovations, particularly artificial intelligence, are reshaping our world. With recent studies showing that AI models can now identify early signs of health complications such as sepsis, these technologies are poised to revolutionise medicine, too.

These rapid technological advances also underscore the urgent need for AI regulation. The European Union’s Artificial Intelligence Act, which is expected to be approved in the second half of 2024, is a prime example. This pioneering law classifies AI systems according to their risk levels and explicitly bans specific high-risk applications, such as social scoring and emotion recognition, that pose a threat to personal safety, civil liberties, and democratic governance. It also highlights the importance of transparency and explainability, so that users can access information about AI-generated decisions.

The EU’s ambitious legislation offers a good starting point for a global discussion on how not to use AI. But given these technologies’ vast potential to transform healthcare, it is equally crucial to explore how they can be used to augment the human-centric aspects of medicine.

For starters, AI has the potential to make medicine more compassionate. For example, a recent study published in JAMA Internal Medicine compared responses from ChatGPT to health-related questions with



While chatbots are unlikely to replace doctors and nurses anytime soon, AI tools are already supporting healthcare providers by improving diagnostic accuracy and facilitating more personalised, data-driven care

those provided by human doctors. Interestingly, a panel of licensed healthcare professionals preferred ChatGPT’s answers 79% of the time, viewing them as more empathetic toward patients. Previous studies have shown that greater empathy and compassion can improve patient outcomes and expedite recovery.

In recent years, healthcare providers have become increasingly overwhelmed by managerial and administrative duties, constraining their ability to establish clinical rapport with patients. This “documentation burden” often leads to burnout and undermines the quality of care. By providing automated answers to routine questions, scheduling appointments, and managing paperwork, AI-powered platforms could streamline administrative processes and free up physicians to spend more time with patients.

But AI’s applications extend well beyond rationalising administrative tasks. A growing body of clinical evidence suggests that deep-learning algo-

rithms – trained on vast datasets of medical images and patient records – can analyse X-rays, MRIs, and other medical scans with remarkable accuracy, frequently surpassing the diagnostic capabilities of human physicians. These innovations could revolutionise precision diagnostics, facilitating the early detection of diseases like pneumonia and cancer and supporting global health efforts, particularly in remote areas with limited access to specialised care.

Policymakers worldwide are increasingly recognising the importance of preventive healthcare, largely owing to its economic benefits. AI is central to this shift, interpreting data from wearable devices and sensors to identify early signs of pathology, particularly cardiac conditions, and thus preventing minor health issues from becoming catastrophic crises. Moreover, smartwatches and fitness bands use AI-powered tracking systems capable of detecting potential sleep apnea and prompting users to seek medical advice before they develop severe health

problems.

To be sure, integrating AI into health care poses significant challenges and raises numerous ethical questions. In addition to ensuring fairness, combating algorithmic bias, and maintaining data privacy and security, it is crucial to recognise that AI cannot replace the personal touch that is essential to clinical practice. Medical professionals ought to lead this transition, using new technologies to augment their skills. While chatbots are unlikely to replace doctors and nurses anytime soon, AI tools are already supporting healthcare providers by improving diagnostic accuracy and facilitating more personalised, data-driven care.

Given that persistent health challenges, especially chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension, often stem from inadequate investment in public health and a lack of social cohesion, addressing them requires more than just technological solutions. In such cases, comprehensive reform of national health policies is needed.

By adopting the emerging digital technologies in a responsible and ethical manner, we can transform the ways we diagnose, treat, and prevent diseases, ushering in an era of data-driven medicine in which health professionals and AI systems work together to deliver better care for all. But while machines can help, the ability to forge a healthier future is ours alone.

The writer, a senior fellow at the Aspen Institute, is a member of the Working Group on Regulatory Considerations for Digital Health and Innovation at the World Health Organization.

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### SPECTRUM MSP

## Centre, states should share responsibility

Albeit the longest-ever protest from the farming community, especially in Punjab and Haryana, which continued for about a year to repeal the three farm laws and ultimately culminated in their withdrawal, the demand for Minimum Support Prices (MSP) continues to simmer. Looking at the recent ongoing protest, it is amply clear that agriculture in India needs an overhaul right from policy to reforms in the agri-market.

An MSP is the minimum price set by the government at which farmers can expect to sell their produce for the season. When market prices fall below the announced MSP, procurement agencies step in to procure the crop and ‘support’ the prices.

Looking at the scenario of marketing in different countries, it can be observed that neither MSP is prevailing, nor is the government procuring any crop. But at same time, be it small or big, or developed or backward countries, the government is conscious about the price and production of farm produce.

Even in those countries which have vast natural sources such as Canada and Australia, private companies are making contracts with farmers to mitigate any volatility either in price or in output as well as for the quan-

tity to be supplied and the price to be charged. But the government is monitoring the situation in the interest of the consumer as well as of the producer to protect both in the harvest and in off-season.

Unfortunately, the situation in India is altogether different. Indian agriculture is overburdened with population, but it happens to be the profession of 60% of the population. Additionally, 95% of the holdings have less than two hectares of land, making those neither economically viable nor providing full employment.

While analysing farming in India, it can be said that though the country was facing food shortage, the initial three ‘Five Year Plans’ couldn’t solve the problem. As a result, the country was compelled to import food with several political strings attached and tapping precious foreign exchange. The green revolution, which was ushered in the late 60s, was the concatenation of a number of factors such as new varieties of seeds, more use of chemicals, installation of tube-wells, easy and cheap loans and road connectivity, but foremost of all these was the MSP along with state procurement that proved to be a boon.

Consequently, the perpetual

rise in area and output of wheat and paddy, which are covered under the umbrella of assured marketing with MSP, was witnessed. By the early 70s the country became an exporting country. Even the stores fell short of preserving the produced wheat and paddy. It is to be noted that while area and output of wheat and paddy thrived, the output of other crops either remained stagnant or dived to a low level because of lack of assured marketing.

Over the past few years, concerted efforts have been made to realign the MSP in favour of oilseeds, pulses and coarse cereals to encourage farmers to bring larger areas under these crops and adopt best technologies and farm practices, to correct the demand-supply imbalance. However, the simple announcement of MSP for 23 crops could not yield the desired results because it couldn’t be dovetailed with state procurement of those crops.

It would be ludicrous to assume that the Central government can purchase every single product throughout the country. India has 15 different agro-climatic zones, and each zone is producing different crops. Even in a state there are different zones suitable for different

crops. The state governments must collaborate with the Centre for the popular crops of the state. This is never a losing proposition. The farmers must be given incentives to produce more and more yield and the consumers should be protected with stable prices in the off-season.

The farmers producing different crops must be registered for specific areas or quantity to realise diversification. The states and even the districts should be divided into zones based on the yield of the respective crops. Only the suitable crops of the area should be procured at MSP. It has been observed that even the crops not suitable to an area are being grown only because of MSP. For example, in Punjab paddy is grown in sandy areas of Bhatinda and Fazilka only because of state procurement.

Once such a policy is adopted for different crops, the results will definitely be encouraging. However, it will be more practical and beneficial if the state governments share the responsibility with the Centre for the interests of the producers as well as consumers.

The writer is a Senior Fellow at Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi.

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SS Chhina

CONCERTED EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO REALIGN MSP IN FAVOUR OF OILSEEDS, PULSES AND COARSE CEREALS TO ENCOURAGE FARMERS TO BRING LARGER AREAS UNDER THESE CROPS

## 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, Rasulgurh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Safety first

Sir, It is often said that the first aid to the injured is safety. Safe environment at home and work invariably promotes productivity and enhances punctuality. It also cuts down absenteeism besides being an economic necessity. Anticipation and preparedness do not cost much; but treatment and rehabilitation do. Safety, health and environment (SHE) are interlinked. But the majority of Indian workers are in the dark about keeping themselves safe. Industrial safety is on the decline as evidenced by fire tragedies in establishments. Gadgets, no doubt enhance safety levels, but at the end of the day an individual – employer and employee – is his own defence. Ushering in an atmosphere helpful to safe work is not a luxury; it is an imperative. Worker education, risk assessment and risk elimination are three aspects the employers cannot do away with. National Safety Day is observed by the National Safety Council on 4 March.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

### Habitat loss

Sir, Though carnivores are notoriously maligned, both in our cultures and imaginations, they play an essential role in sustaining the planet’s biodiversity by controlling prey populations. Predators help maintain healthy ecosystems that can support a wide variety of life. Game hunting in the pre-Independence era, habitat fragmentation, construction-urbanisation and expansion towards forest reserves, loss of prey population and wildlife trade are the key reasons behind the steep decline in the numbers of leopards. According to the report published by the Ministry of Environment, India’s leopard numbers rose by 8 per cent from 12,852 to 13,874 in 2022 tally estimation. The highest count of leopard were reported in the states of Madhya Pradesh (3,907) followed by Maharashtra (1,985), Karnataka (1,879) and Tamil Nadu (1,070), whereas the state of Uttarakhand saw a sharp decline of 22 per cent in the habitat of big cats due to poaching and man-animal conflicts. Instead of laws and rules, habitat conservation should be the mandatory norm for the good health of the ecosystem.

Dimple Wadhawan, KANPUR NAGAR

# Security forces put on alert ahead of PM's Srinagar visit

This will be the Prime Minister's first visit to the Kashmir valley after the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, March 3:** Security forces have been put on alert ahead of the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is scheduled to address a public rally at the Bakshi Stadium here Thursday, officials said Sunday.

The deployment of security personnel has been increased around the renovated Bakshi Stadium with barricades set up for checking the vehicles passing through the venue of PM Modi's rally, the officials said.

Police and paramilitary forces are conducting random checking of vehicles at dozens of places in the city and elsewhere, the officials said.

Special check points have been set up at various places in the city, including the entry and exit points as a precautionary measure, they said.

The security forces have increased patrolling around the venue of the rally as part of area domination exercise to ensure a smooth and incident-free visit of the Prime Minister.

This will be the Prime Minister's first visit to the



Kashmir valley after the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019.

This will be his second visit to Jammu and Kashmir in as many months. PM Modi had visited the Jammu region last month to inaugurate several development projects. He also addressed a public rally in Jammu.

Meanwhile, the BJP's Kashmir unit Sunday said the Union territory government has arranged local transport facilities in districts of the valley to ensure 'seamless' participation in Prime Minister Modi's public rally here Thursday.

"In light of the significance of this event, the government of Kashmir has arranged local transportation facilities across districts to ensure seamless participation in the mega rally. This initiative aims to facilitate widespread attendance ensuring every Kashmiri can partake in this historic occasion," the BJP Kashmir said in a statement.

The press release was issued

after a meeting chaired by BJP's Srinagar district president Ashok Bhat to discuss the prime minister's visit later this week.

"The focal point of the discussion was the forthcoming visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Srinagar slated for the 7th of March 2024, where he is scheduled to address a historic mega rally at Bakshi Stadium," the party release said.

Bhat, according to the release, elucidated on the "strategic planning required to orchestrate a grand reception for our Prime Minister."

The statement claimed that there was excitement in every segment of the society in Kashmir as they eagerly await Prime Minister Modi's visit.

"From businessmen to students, from government officials to the common populace, there is a palpable sense of anticipation and enthusiasm. It is viewed as a stroke of luck for Kashmiris to host PM Modi in the heart of Srinagar," it added.

# Manipur urges Centre to implement NRC

Many organisations, mostly belonging to majority Meitei, in their separate letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have been demanding implementation of NRC in the state

AGENCIES

**Imphal, March 3:** The Manipur Assembly has once again adopted a unanimous resolution urging the Central government to implement the National Register of Citizens (NRC) to prevent illegal immigrants, especially from Myanmar, to settle in the north-eastern state which shares a 398-km unfenced border with the neighbouring country.

The resolution urged the Ministry of Home Affairs to implement the NRC in Manipur moved by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, who also holds the Home portfolio.

The Chief Minister posted on 'X': "Today, the Manipur Legislative Assembly took a significant step by reaffirming our resolution passed on August 5, 2022. It is our firm belief that the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Manipur is crucial for safeguarding the interests of our state and contributing to the greater good of our nation."

"The decision to urge the Central government to expedite the implementation of the NRC reflects our commitment to ensuring the security and integrity of Manipur. I urge all citizens to support this endeavour as we strive to build a stronger, more prosperous Manipur for generations to come," he said.

After coming to power for the second consecutive time in the March 2022 Assembly elections,



the BJP-led government headed by Singh, unanimously passed a resolution in the Assembly August 5, 2022 urging the Centre to implement the NRC in Manipur.

Many organisations, mostly belonging to majority Meitei, including the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) in their separate memorandum and letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have been demanding implementation of NRC in the state.

The demand further intensified after the ethnic violence broke out May 3, last year.

The COCOMI, apex body of the Meitei community, earlier on a number of occasions urged

the Prime Minister and Home Minister not to divide Manipur and to introduce the NRC for the greater interest of the state and the country.

COCOMI coordinator Jeetendra Ningomba had claimed that the foreign elements, including some of the leaders of the Kuki-Zomi militant outfits with which Suspension of Operation (SoO) pacts were signed, are directly involved in the Manipur conflict and they should either be eliminated or pushed out of the territory of India.

"To identify illegal immigrants, the NRC must be implemented in the state with 1951 as the base year. This is to deprive illegal immigrants from being citizens though they may continue

to stay as guests, if necessary, without indulging in destructive politics by creating concocted history and bombarding the media and seeking support from the left liberals to achieve what is known as a Kuki-Zomi nation (Zalengam) comprising areas from three countries," the COCOMI memorandum to PM Modi had said.

In June 2022, the Manipur government approved 1961 as the base year for identifying 'natives' and properly implementing the Inner-Line Permit (ILP) to protect the indigenous people's demography, culture and tradition.

The ILP under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873 provides a temporary travel document to the residents of other Indian states need to possess to enter the state and to live in the state for a specific period.

The ILP had been in force in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram.

December 11, 2019, it was promulgated in Manipur, to allow an Indian citizen into the ILP enforced areas for a stipulated period with the written permission of the state and competent authority. But the pro-NRC tribal organisations claimed that the ILP was not enough as Manipur could not come up with the definition of 'indigenous inhabitants'.

The NRC can effectively curb the infiltration and illegal stay of immigrants in Manipur, the organisations stated.

# Heavy rain hits traffic movement in J&K

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, March 3:** NHAI authorities Sunday stepped up efforts to resume traffic movement on Jammu-Srinagar national highway following improvement in weather, officials said.

As the 270-km highway, the only all weather link connecting Kashmir with the rest of the country, remained shut for a second day, police shifted a large number of stranded passengers, including over 200 tourists to safer places in Ramban district, they said.

The highway was closed early Saturday following landslides, mudslides and shooting stones, triggered by heavy rainfall at over a dozen places between Nashri and Banihal including Dalwas, Mehad-Cafetia and Hingni in Ramban, the officials said. A portion of the road near Panthiyal was also washed away, they said.

The traffic department said the highway continues to remain blocked and advised people to avoid journeys on the highway, also known as NH44, till

the completion of the restoration work.

With the improvement in weather this morning, the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) has stepped up efforts to ensure early opening of the arterial road.

While higher reaches experienced fresh snowfall, moderate to heavy rains lashed wide parts of Jammu and Kashmir March 1 and 2. Dozens of residential houses and other structures, including several government schools, were also damaged by strong winds and hailstorm in different parts of the Union Territory.

The police have set up control rooms in all district headquarters after incessant rains flooded the water bodies to meet any eventuality, the officials said, requesting people to stay away from the swollen rivers, rivulets, streams and ponds.

A police spokesperson said several families who were trapped in the Bowli Bazar area of Ramban due to a heavy mudslide were rescued late Saturday night.



A man walks through a snow-covered park after a fresh spell of snowfall in Srinagar, Sunday. PTI PHOTO

# Special polling stations at relief camps for displaced

**A MAJORITY OF OVER 50,000 INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE ARE CURRENTLY STAYING AT RELIEF CENTRES ACROSS FIVE VALLEY DISTRICTS AND THREE HILL DISTRICTS OF MANIPUR**

AGENCIES

**Imphal, March 3:** Special polling stations will be set up at relief camps to enable people displaced due to the ethnic strife in Manipur to cast their votes in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, an official statement said.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has issued directions in this regard, the statement issued by the state Chief Electoral Officer said.

"A large number of electors registered in several parts of the state were displaced from their native places during the conflict that started May 3, 2023. Presently, they are residing in relief camps in various districts. The displaced electors are still



enrolled at the places where they were residents before the conflict started," it stated.

"The ECI, after due consultation with the central and state governments, has directed that all such displaced persons who had to leave their native places during the conflict shall continue to be borne on the electoral rolls of the assembly and parliamentary constituencies concerned in the state," the statement said.

"As per past precedent of similar nature, the internally displaced electors shall be provided with the facility to vote at special polling stations to be set up in re-

lief camps," it added.

Voting in these special polling stations "shall be conducted using separate EVMs for each parliamentary constituency."

All rules and directions applicable for the conduct of polls at the original polling stations will apply at these special polling stations as well, it added.

Counting of votes polled at the special polling stations will be conducted by designated assistant returning officers (AROs) at the specified counting centres specially set up for this purpose with the prior approval of the Commission.

A majority of over 50,000 in-

ternally displaced people are currently staying at relief centres across five valley districts and three hill districts.

At least 219 people have been killed in the ethnic strife in the state that started May 3 last year after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley, while tribals, which include Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mainly in the hill districts.

# Over 6,000 vehicles seized for ferrying minerals illegally in J&K

AGENCIES

**Jammu, March 3:** More than 6,000 vehicles were seized for ferrying minerals illegally while an amount of Rs 16.27 crore was realised as penalty from the offenders in Jammu and Kashmir in the current fiscal, an official said Sunday.

The information was given at a meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo here Saturday to review the availability of river bed material (RBM) for the construction of infrastructure projects in the Union Territory, the official said.

He said the meeting was informed that the mining department has granted 205 minor mineral leases so far, besides identifying 60 new blocks of RBM across districts. The department has realised Rs 130.58 crore as bid amount or royalty and penalty against these mineral blocks up to January, he added.

The official said the department has also launched the e-marketplace or e-challan portal for ensuring transparency and accountability in the sale or purchase and transportation of minerals on notified rates from the source to the destination within Jammu and Kashmir.

As on March 1, more than 22.82 lakh e-challans were generated to facilitate the mineral business in the Union Territory, he said.

**MAHILA VIKAS SAMABAYA NIGAM**  
(Govt. of Odisha Undertaking)  
W&CD Complex, Plot No.483 (Pt), Unit-VI  
Ganganagar, Bhubaneswar- 751001  
Ph.No.2533223, 2533214, E-mail- mvsn\_bbsr@yahoo.com  
Ref.342/MVSN Date: 02.03.2024

**TENDER CALL NOTICE**

No.CAD- 4457:- Sealed tenders are invited from interested GST registered firms / agencies / suppliers for supply of 'Computer Desktop and UPS' for the newly recruited Block Coordinators of Mayurbhanj, Balasore and Jagatsinghpur District. The tender completed in all respect shall be submitted in the Office of Managing Director, Mahila Vikas Samabaya Nigam, W&CD Complex, Plot No.483(Pt), Unit-VI, Ganganagar, Bhubaneswar- 751001 on or before **Dt.16.03.2024 by 5 P.M.** through Registered Post / Speed Post / couriers only. The tender document containing tender schedule and other relevant information and terms & conditions of tender can be downloaded from the website- [www.wcd.odisha.gov.in](http://www.wcd.odisha.gov.in) from **04.03.2024 to 16.03.2024**. A tender fee of Rs. 1,500/- and EMD of Rs. 10,000/- are to be deposited in shape of Demand Draft in favour of Managing Director, Mahila Vikas Samabaya Nigam along with the tender document.

The authority reserves the right to modify/ cancel the tender at any point of time.

Sd./- MANAGING DIRECTOR  
MAHILA VIKAS SAMABAYA NIGAM  
OIPR-33003/11/0005/2324

**OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, BALIMELA**  
Odisha, Pin-764051, e-Mail: [eonacbalimela@gmail.com](mailto:eonacbalimela@gmail.com)  
Lt.No.390/Dev/2024 Dated:29.02.2024

**e-NOTICE**

**BID IDENTIFICATION No.EOBLM07/2023-24**

No.C-3314:The Executive Officer, NAC, Balimela, on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites for bidders of eligible class registered with the State Govt. and bidders of equivalent grade/class registered with central Govt./ MES/Railways according to norm of e-Procurement system in online mode for the work as per DTCN.

- Name of the Work : Civil Works
- Number of Work : 1 No.
- Estimated Cost : As per DTCN
- Period of Completion : As per DTCN
- Date and Time of availability : From 10.00 AM of Dt.02.03.2024 of Bid document in the Portal to 5.00 PM of Dt.13.03.2024
- Last date and time for receipt : 5.00 PM of Dt.13.03.2024 of bid in the portal
- The bid received online shall be opened on 11.00 AM of dtd. 14.03.2024
- If necessary, Lottery will be drawn on Dtd.14.03.2024
- Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid: Executive Officer, NAC, Balimela

Further details can be seen from the Procurement Portal: [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)

Sd./- Executive Officer  
Balimela NAC  
OIPR-13140/11/0018/2324

**OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, JODA**  
Phone No.06767-272214, Fax No.06767-272214  
E-Mail:[eojudamunicipality@rediffmail.com](mailto:eojudamunicipality@rediffmail.com)  
No.937 Date:02.03.24

**'e' Procurement Notice**

**Bid Identification No.JM-09/2023-24**

No.C-3316:Bid documents consisting of specification, the schedule of quantities and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in the Govt. website i.e. [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in).

- Nature of the Work : Civil Works
- No. of Works : 46 Nos.
- Estimated Cost : From Rs. 1,48,385/- to Rs. 16,56,816/-
- Bid Identification No. : 2024\_ORULB\_102004\_1 to 2024\_ORULB\_9102004\_46
- Date and Time of availability of the documents in the Portal : From Dt.02.03.2024 at 10.00 A.M upto Dt.18.03.2024 at 9.00 A.M.
- Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal : On dt.18.03.2024 upto 9.00 A.M.
- Bids received online shall be opened : On Dt.18.03.2024 at 11.00 AM
- Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Executive Officer, Joda Municipality

Further the details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal:- [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)

Sd./- Executive Officer  
Joda Municipality  
OIPR-13124/11/0022/2324



**PUBLIC OUTREACH:** Pallahara MLA Mukesh Pal (2nd from left, front row) leading a rally to a meeting of youth and student wings of ruling Biju Janata Dal at Khamar in Angul district



**SWITCHING SIDE:** Jayadev MLA Arabinda Dhali join BJP in Bhubaneswar, Sunday. Retired IAS officer Hrusikesh Panda, former BJD MLA Mukunda Sodi, BJD's Digapahandi block chairman Bipin Pradhan and others also joined the saffron party

## Blame game over alliance 'rumours'

THE DYNAMICS BETWEEN PATNAIK AND BJP'S NATIONAL LEADERS, INCLUDING PRAISE FROM PM MODI AND SHAH, HAS FUELLED THE SPECULATION, SAY SOURCES

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** The political landscape in Odisha is heating up as both the ruling BJD and the opposition BJP have accused each other of spreading rumours regarding a potential alliance between the two parties ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

While BJP's state president Manmohan Samal clarified that there were no talks or possibilities of a tie-up with the BJD, the party's election in-charge Vijay Pal Singh Tomar accused the regional party of spreading such rumours.

BJD's national spokesperson Sasmit Patra rebutted the accusation, claiming that it was the BJP who initiated the alliance rumour.

He asserted that the BJD is strong on its own and doesn't require an alliance with any other party.

"BJP is spreading the alliance rumours. In fact, there is no such need for the BJD to go for alliance with any party as the regional party is very strong with blessings of the people," Patra told reporters Saturday.

"We are unable to understand as to why they (BJP leaders) are spreading such rumours," he said.

Patra said the BJD aims to secure a significant number of seats in both the state Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, projecting confidence in Chief



Minister Naveen Patnaik's potential sixth term.

He said the BJD was optimistic to win 120 of the 147 Assembly seats and 17 of the 21 Lok Sabha seats in the 2024 elections.

Patnaik will become the Chief Minister of Odisha for record sixth time, Patra said.

Regarding the departure of some BJD leaders ahead of the elections, Patra alleged that the BJP is welcoming individuals either expelled from the regional party or unlikely to receive tickets.

On the other hand, Tomar denied any discussion of an alliance with the BJD at the national level. He claimed that it was the BJD that floated the idea of an alliance.

"I do not know what discussion was held in the BJP

Parliamentary Board meeting because I am not a member of the panel. As far as Odisha is concerned, no discussion will be held about the Assembly polls," Tomar said.

Samal also exuded confidence that the saffron party will win all 21 Lok Sabha seats and will also form the government in Odisha.

The alliance speculation gained momentum following interactions between Union Home Minister Amit Shah and VK Pandian, a close aide of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, in August last year, with subsequent instances of cooperation between BJD and BJP in legislative matters.

The dynamics between Patnaik and BJP's national leaders, including praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and

Shah, has fuelled the speculation, sources said.

Earlier, Shah had described Patnaik as the 'Popular Chief Minister'. Patnaik on his part had given right out of 10 marks to the Modi government at a public meeting in Bhubaneswar.

The closeness between Patnaik and the BJP's national leaders reached its peak when the BJD supported BJP candidate Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in the recently concluded Rajya Sabha elections.

Prime Minister Modi, who addressed a public meeting February 3, also did not make adverse comment on the BJD or its leader Patnaik.

Modi even described Patnaik as his 'Mitra' (friend) at a meeting held at IIM Sambalpur February 3.

Though both the BJD and BJP rejected the possibility of an alliance before the 2024 polls, Congress leader and MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati Sunday claimed that saffron party will go for a seat sharing arrangement with the regional party.

The Jaypore MLA claimed that Odisha is all set to witness seat-sharing between BJD and BJP for the upcoming Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

The fact that not a single candidate from Odisha figures in the list of 196 nominees announced by BJP Saturday clearly indicates that it is going to enter into a seat adjustment with the BJP in the state, he claimed.

## BANGIRIPOSHI ASSEMBLY SEGMENT

## Edge to BJD as saffron party has 3 aspirants

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bangiriposhi, March 3:** Political climate is heating up in Bangiriposhi Assembly constituency of Mayurbhanj district as the 2024 general elections draw closer. The Assembly segment will see an intense fight in the upcoming polls even though the incumbent MLA as well as state School and Mass Education Minister Sudam Marndi has an edge over other candidates.

According to sources, Marndi has already started preparations for the election as he is most likely to get the ticket from Biju Janata Dal (BJD). On the other hand, three BJP leaders have been actively lobbying for the party ticket to give a tough fight to the ruling party.

The three BJP leaders lobbying for the party ticket are: Fagu Hansda, who left Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and joined BJP, Sugada Murmu, who was defeated in the last election, and BJP youth leader Makardhwaja Murmu.

However, the ruling BJD is said to be in complete control of this reserved constituency while the grand old party Congress and tribal based party JMM have a insignificant presence in this constituency.

BJP leaders are trying to woo voters by holding meetings and highlighting welfare schemes of the Modi government for the poor and tribals. They are conducting agitations against the



SUDAM MARNDI, MAKARDHWAJA MURMU, SUGADA MURMU, FAGU HANSDA

state government through demonstrations, rallies and hartals too.

Sources said BJD's organisation is plagued by intra-party squabbles. However, the party leaders are trying to plug the loopholes and pose a united picture before the election.

In 2019 elections, Sudam defeated his nearest rival BJP's Sugada and was appointed a Cabinet minister in the state. Now, Sudam is once again lobbying for the party ticket to win 2024 election.

On the other hand, the list of aspirants in the saffron party is increasing by the day. The aspirants are moving door to door and seeking cooperation of the voters as part of their family outreach programme.

Several new faces along with veterans are trying to taste success in this election but among them youth leader Makardhwaja alias Babulu is the frontrunner for a BJP ticket. Makardhwaja, 39, born in a Santhal tribal family at Saragchhida village under

Chandua police limits, is a graduate in Economics.

He was the sarpanch of Saragchhida panchayat from 2017 to 2021 while his wife Phulamani is the incumbent sarpanch. His father Rameswar is also active in politics while Makardhwaja is developing affinity with the people in his area.

He is a core organisational man and is actively involved with right wing student organisation Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), Adivasi Chhatra Sangathan and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). He is working to make the benefits of welfare schemes of Union government available to people. He exuded confidence that he will win the election if he gets the party ticket.

Sugada Murmu, who lost the 2019 elections, is moving from village to village and trying to attract voters through party meetings and 'Pada Yatras'.

Similarly, Fagu Hansda, who left JMM to join BJP, is also lobbying hard to get the party ticket.

## 3 aspire for BJP ticket in Pipli

## BJP dropping motormouth MPs baffles many



ASHRIT PATTANAYAK, RADHAMOHAN, SAROJ PRADHAN

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Pipli, March 3:** At a time when the prominent political parties have begun preparations for the upcoming elections in full swing in Pipli-Delang Assembly segment, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is facing a triangular pressure as far as ticket distribution is concerned. For, there are three aspirants for the party ticket from this crucial seat.

According to sources, BJP's Puri district president Ashrit Pattanayak, young social activist Radhamohan and party's youth leader Saroj Pradhan are leaving no stone unturned in availing the party ticket for Pipli Assembly seat.

Ashrit has faced drubbings twice while contesting on BJP ticket and once as an independent candidate in previous elections. Nevertheless, he has a strong organisational base in Pipli block.

Similarly, Radhamohan enjoys strong support in Delang block and is said to be a strong contender for the party ticket this time around.

pendent in 2014 and polled 18,000 votes. This is the reason why Samantray got defeated by Maharathy by a huge margin.

The BJP, under the able leadership of its youth leader Janmejaya Jena, could secure 54,000 votes from six zilla parishad zones in this Assembly segment during 2017 panchayat elections.

Ashrit joined BJP in 2019, got a party ticket and polled 72,731 votes. However, he was defeated by Maharathy by 15,782 votes.

Sudden demise of Maharathy October 4, 2020 necessitated a byelection which was held in 2021. Intense fight was witnessed between

Maharathy's son Rudra Pratap Maharathy and BJP's Ashrit during the byelection. There were altogether nine candidates contesting for the seat in the bypoll.

However, Rudra Pratap defeated Ashrit by 20,916 votes.

Although it is still unclear who the BJP will choose as its candidate for the much-talked about seat, political analysts are of the view that the number of ticket aspirants may rise as the elections draw nearer.

Grapevines have it that Ashrit may get the party ticket but Radhamohan and Saroj will definitely come on his way. Supporters of these two leaders, meanwhile, feel that the party must pick a new face.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 3:** The first list of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) featuring 195 candidates left out some prominent leaders like Pragya Thakur (Bhopal MP) and a couple of sitting MPs from Delhi including Parvesh Singh Verma (West Delhi) and Ramesh Bidhuri (South Delhi), leaving many surprised. Their omission from the list left many baffled.

However, Pradeep Gupta, the country's leading psephologist and the CMD of Axis My India, told IANS that the BJP has done the 'perfect' thing by dropping the motormouth MPs as this will send a strong message to people that the lawmakers with 'tainted' image do not enjoy place in Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's priorities.

He also opined that this shows BJP's clear and tactical strategy to distance itself from 'troublemaker MPs' especially at a time when the opposition parties have ganged up against the BJP with the intent of dislodging it from power.

Notably, all three Parliamentarians have been accused of making hate speeches and inciting hatred.

Pragya Thakur, the BJP MP from Bhopal, found herself in major controversy when she was named BJP nominee in 2019 polls. Though she got elected on a BJP ticket, her brush with controversies did not stop



Her labeling of Nathuram Godse as 'patriot' left the BJP red-faced and drew stern reproval from Prime Minister himself.

"She has sought an apology, but I would never be able to forgive her fully," PM Modi had said.

BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri's series of jibes at fellow MP Danish Ali inside Parliament seems to have gone against him.

His abusive and hateful remarks created a huge row, and he also apologised later. Axis My India CMD told IANS that the BJP by omitting Bidhuri from the list, has taken high moral ground and this may cushion the adverse public backlash

to a great extent.

"By not giving tickets to the likes of Pragya Thakur and Bidhuri, the BJP is hitting the right buttons and sending across a message that PM Modi's developmental agenda remains supreme for the party and the nation's growth remains its biggest poll plank," he further said.

The dropping of Parvesh Singh Verma, a two-time BJP MP, has been most surprising.

Pradeep Gupta, also a bit surprised, says that Verma too probably faced the price of hate speech but believes that he could find a place in the larger game plan of the party for building a

groundswell of support in the run-up to the 2024 elections.

He also ruled out the growing threat of AAP-Congress combine as the reason behind the baffling BJP's Lok Sabha list for Delhi. However, in the case of New Delhi seat, represented by Meenakshi Lekhi, he did see the BJP's poor performance in MCD elections as a probable reason behind dropping her.

"Overall, the party is clear on focusing on candidates' winnability factor and also ensuring that motormouth MPs do not remain in the fray as this will give fodder to the INDIA bloc to embarrass the BJP," he said.

# national

## of the day quote

In the previous governments, people were troubled by goons and mafia. Only a few benefited from the schemes, while the majority of the public kept watching helplessly

The people who need a washing machine are leaving and going there (Joining BJP). You count the Congress leaders who have left the party, be it the Chief Minister of Assam (Himanta Biswa Sarma). All are the beneficiaries of this washing machine

The Centre is neglecting 73 per cent of the population that belongs to marginalised sections of the society

## SHORT TAKES

### EC full bench arrives in WB

**Kolkata:** The full bench of the Election Commission (EC) arrived in West Bengal Sunday to oversee the preparations for the Lok Sabha elections in the state, officials said. During the three-day visit, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar along with Election Commissioner Arun Goel will meet representatives of all political parties in the state, and hold a meeting with district magistrates and superintendents of police, they said.

### 3 killed as car rams into truck

**New Delhi:** Three men were killed and four injured after their car collided with a truck on the Badarpur flyover in southeast Delhi, police said Sunday. The accident occurred late Saturday when seven men were returning to Okhla's Sanjay Colony from a wedding in Haryana's Faridabad, they added. Officers at Badarpur police station received a PCR call at 12.48 am about an accident on the Badarpur flyover near the Honda showroom, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) Rajesh Deo said.

### CBI arrests NHAH general manager

**New Delhi:** The CBI has arrested a general manager of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAH) in a bribery case involving an amount of ₹20 lakh in Maharashtra's Nagpur, officials said Sunday. Arvind Kale, who is also a project director, allegedly received the bribe from an employee of a Bhopal-based private company, Bansal Construction Works Private Limited, engaged in the infrastructure construction business, they added. The CBI carried out searches at five locations in Bhopal and Nagpur, including residential and official premises, and recovered ₹45 lakh in cash, including the bribe amount of ₹20 lakh, the officials said.

### PM chairs Council of Ministers' meet

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday chaired a day-long meeting of his Council of Ministers as they brainstormed over the vision document for "Viksit Bharat: 2047" and a detailed action plan for the next five years. Government sources said a 100-day agenda for immediate steps to be taken after a new government is formed in May was deliberated upon during the meeting for its quick implementation.



BJP leaders make false promises. But we fight for the rights and jobs of the people of Bihar and the country  
TEJASHWI YADAV | FORMER BIHAR DEPUTY CM

### ABHIJIT GANGOPADHYAY TO 'RESIGN' TOMORROW

Calcutta High Court judge Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay, whose rulings on various education-related issues in the state stirred political debates, said he will resign Tuesday. Justice Gangopadhyay declined to comment on whether he intends to enter politics, stating that he would address all media inquiries after submitting his resignation



# INDIA ups the ante

FORMER BIHAR DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER TEJASHWI YADAV WHILE ADDRESSING THE 'JAN VISHWAS MAHA RALLY' IN PATNA'S GANDHI MAIDAN, LABELLED THE BJP AS A 'FACTORY OF LIES'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Patna, March 3:** Political temperature soared in Bihar Sunday as the INDIA bloc virtually sounded the bugle for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls when top leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, converged in the Bihar capital for a mammoth rally.

Former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav while addressing the 'Jan Vishwas Maha Rally' in Patna's Gandhi Maidan, labelled the BJP as a 'factory of lies'. The scathing attack came in the backdrop of Nitish Kumar quitting the RJD-led Grand Alliance and returning to the NDA in Bihar ahead of Lok Sabha polls.

Nitish played a key role in the formation of the INDIA bloc, though after returning to the NDA, he has been claiming that he was never happy with the way things moved forward in the Opposition coalition and that even the acronym INDIA did not have his approval.

Rahul Gandhi, who had flown down from Madhya Pradesh, taking a break from his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra', spoke before handing over the mic to AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and returning for the mass outreach programme.

The former Congress president made a brief, about 15-minute-long, speech and charged the Narendra Modi government at the Centre with 'working for only two-three super-rich people and neglecting Dalits and backward classes who comprise 73 per cent of the population'.

Kharge, after whom the 'Jan Vishwas Maha Rally' was signed



off by RJD president Lalu Prasad, lambasted Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for his recent volte-face.

Lauding Prasad's son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav for ensuring that jobs were created on a large scale during the 17-month-period the latter occupied the deputy CM's post, Kharge said "Your chacha (referring to Nitish Kumar) has done a flip-flop. He may do so again. But do not accept him henceforth."

Notably, Kumar, who heads the JD(U), had allied with RJD-Congress and Left combine in 2022, snapping ties with the BJP which he accused of trying to engineer a split in his own party.

The most caustic attacks on the Bihar CM, however, came from Lalu Prasad, his arch-rival, who signed off his speech in style, asking the crowds to "be prepared for the upcoming elections. I will be there to boost your morale as you vote to drive out Prime Minister Narendra Modi from power at the Centre".

Recalling Kumar's first volte face in 2017, the RJD president said, "I had not hurled any abuses at Nitish Kumar back then, only

called him 'palturam' (turncoat). The label has stuck to his persona by virtue of his own deeds. I can see funny videos about him on social media and wonder whether these do not drive him to shame."

The wily leader had recently fished in the Bihar NDA's troubled waters by claiming his "doors were always open" for the JD(U) boss, who has aligned with the BJP despite the party maintaining that it will pursue the ambition of forming its own government in Bihar.

Those who addressed the rally earlier included Samajwadi Party president and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, who shared a picture, on X, of himself seated with Tejashwi Yadav and Rahul Gandhi captioned "great thrones are shaken when enthusiastic youngsters come together (jab joshile naujawan mil jaate hain, bade bade takht hil jaate hain)". In his short speech, Yadav, who has reached a seat-sharing agreement with Congress in his state, said, "UP and Bihar together have 120 seats. If we ensure the BJP's rout in these two states, the party will not be able to form the government at the Centre."

### Pawan Singh changes poll tune overnight

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi/Kolkata, March 3:** Bhojpuri singer-actor Pawan Singh withdrew from the Lok Sabha poll contest from the Asansol seat in West Bengal Sunday, a day after the BJP named him as its candidate from the constituency currently represented by the TMC's Shatrughan Sinha.

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) was quick to mock the BJP by saying it surrendered the seat even before the commencement of the election campaign.



In a post on X, Singh thanked the BJP leadership for his candidature but added that he would not be able to contest from Asansol "due to some reason". Though he did not specify the reason behind his decision, his candidature had drawn criticism from the TMC, the ruling party in West Bengal, which alleged that many of his songs were crude and depicted women, including those from the state, in a vulgar way.

TMC National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee shared Singh's post on X and said, "The INDOMITABLE SPIRIT AND POWER OF THE PEOPLE OF WEST BENGAL." TMC leader Santanu Sen alleged that the BJP speaks about women empowerment but they are anti-women in reality.

# 2 Mumbai bridges have a six-foot gap

The misstep has also sparked a political row, with the Opposition asking the government whether it expects Mumbaikars to make a long jump in their vehicles to reach the other flyover



AGENCIES

**Mumbai, March 3:** Aligning and linking two important flyovers has proven to be a bridge too far for the Mumbai civic body, which is now facing ridicule for leaving a vertical gap of nearly six feet between them.

One arm of the important Gokhale Bridge, which connects Andheri East and West, was thrown open to vehicular traffic Monday (February 26) evening, with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) calling it an architectural marvel and claiming that it was built over the "country's busiest railway tracks" without disrupting local and long-distance train services.

The BMC is currently run by an administrator, who reports to the state government. The Gokhale bridge was shut for vehicular traffic from November 7, 2022 due to its dilapidated condition. Commuters expressed joy as it will now reduce their travel time. However, their excitement faded away when they found that the Barfiwala Flyover was not connected due to the height difference.

Attacking the Maharashtra government led by Eknath Shinde, Shiv Sena (Udhhav

Balasaheb Thackeray) leader Aaditya Thackeray said the height difference was a result of a corrupt regime and that the ministers had inaugurated a "half ready, embarrassingly delayed bridge".

The Shinde faction of the Sena has, however, claimed that the misalignment occurred because of the Railways' new policy, which necessitated raising the Gokhale Bridge by an additional 1.5 metres because it was being built over railway tracks.

While team Shinde assured corrective measures, commuters remain unconvinced. Expressing doubts about the efficacy of constructing a ramp, locals question whether it can rectify the significant mistake without necessitating the closure of the bridge once again.

The ongoing skepticism reflects the precarious nature of the situation.

After the misalignment, the Gokhale Bridge has turned into a national meme. People's humour is a shield for anger and disbelief. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) had earlier planned to open the bridge partially in February 2024, though the initial deadline for the bridge was November 2023.

## BISHNUPUR ARMOURY LOOT CASE

# CBI chargesheets seven

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 3:** The CBI has filed a chargesheet against seven accused in connection with the looting of arms and ammunition from the Bishnupur police armoury during the Manipur ethnic violence last year, officials said Sunday.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is probing cases related to the ethnic clashes in Manipur, recently filed its chargesheet before the court of chief judicial magistrate in Kamrup (Metro) in Assam's Guwahati.

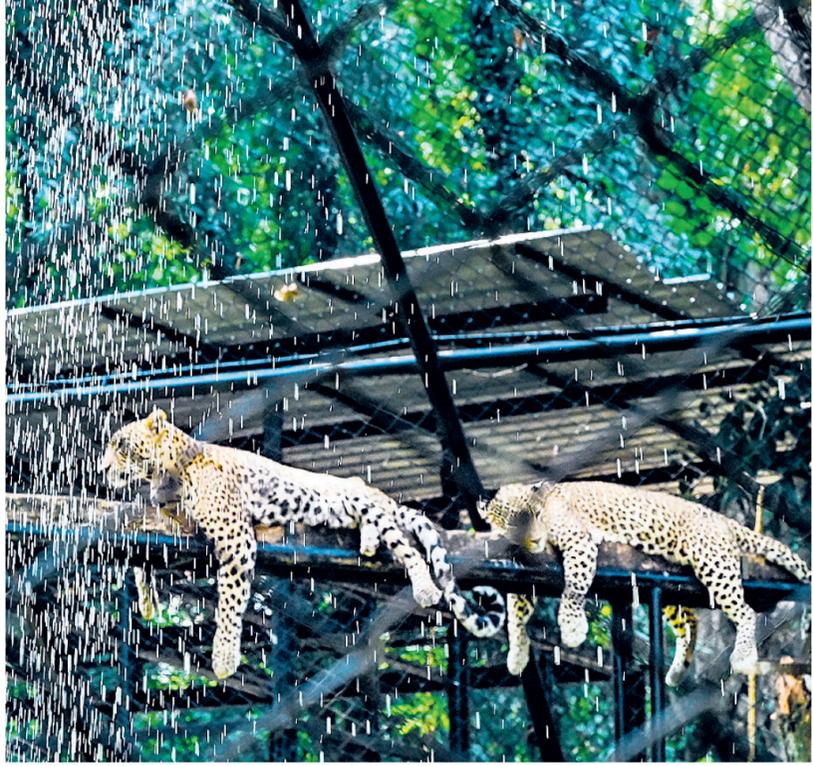
The accused named in the charge sheet are Laishram Prem Singh, Khumukcham Dhiren alias Thapka, Moirangthem Anand Singh, Athokpam Kajit alias Kishorjit, Loukrakpam Michael Mangangcha alias Michael, Konthoujam Romojit Meitei alias Romojit, and Keisham Johnson alias Johnson.

On August 3 last year, a mob looted more than 300 weapons, 19,800 rounds of ammunition and other accessories from two rooms of the 2nd Indian Reserve Battalion headquarters at Naranseina in Bishnupur.

Around 9,000 rounds of bullets of different calibres, an AK series assault rifle, three 'Ghaatak' rifles, 195 self-loading rifles, five MP-5 guns, 16 9mm pistols, 25 bulletproof jackets, 21 carbines, and 124 hand grenades, among others, were looted by the mob, the officials said.

Barring Laishram Prem Singh and Khumukcham Dhiren alias Thapka, the remaining five have been earlier charge-sheeted by the CBI in looting of police armoury at the Manipur Police Training Centre (MPTC) at Pangei in Imphal.

This incident took place May 4 last year, the day ethnic clashes between the majority Meitei community and tribal Kukis broke out in the northeast state. As alleged in the FIR, a mob stormed into the MPTC complex and looted a huge number of arms and ammunition from the armoury. Moirangthem Anand Singh is alleged to be a former member of the proscribed People's Liberation Army (PLA) of Manipur and the Kangleipak Communist Party (Noyon), while the remaining are believed to be overground workers of valley-based banned terror outfits.



Leopards at a zoo on a summer day in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The zoo authority has made special arrangement like artificial shower to help the animals and birds to negotiate the rising summer temperature  
PTI PHOTO

# IIT researchers create marine robot for underwater ops

THE STATE-OF-THE-ART ROBOT HAS BEEN DEVELOPED FOR METICULOUS UNDERWATER MONITORING AND INSPECTIONS, PROMISING HEIGHTENED EFFICIENCY, MINIMISED RISKS, AND POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 3:** Researchers at the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) Mandi and Palakkad have developed a marine robot that can cater to real-time problems and reduce maintenance cost and death risk for underwater operation scenarios.

The research which was partially funded by the Naval Research Board (NRB) of Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has been published in two journals--Journal of Intelligent and Robotic Systems, and Ocean Engineering.

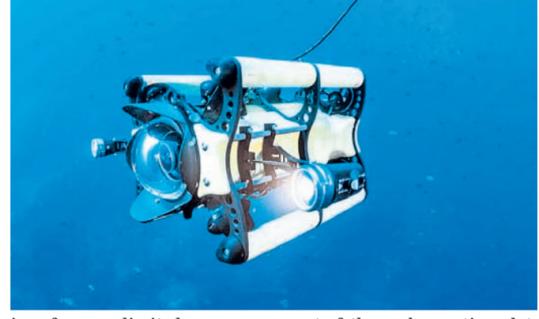
The state-of-the-art robot has been developed for meticulous underwater monitoring and inspections, promising heightened

efficiency, minimised risks, and potential cost savings, the researchers said.

The Earth's surface is covered approximately 71 per cent by water, with the oceans holding about 96.5 per cent of all the Earth's water, where only a tiny percentage of the ocean floor and the submerged ecosystem is known to man.

"As understood from history, the ocean interior has been mainly observed using instruments lowered from research ships," Jagadeesh Kadiyam, Assistant Professor, Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics at IIT Mandi, told PTI.

Kadiyam, a co-author of the study, said typical ship cruises lasted a month or two, therefore making the detailed monitor-



ing of oceans limited. "It is often said that ocean variables do not wait for the ship to come for measurements," he pointed out. "This problem of under-sampling and the relatively high

safety is a global concern with ageing dams and increased environmental stresses necessitating more advanced inspection methods. Traditional inspection approaches often involve human divers, which can be risky, time-consuming and expensive," he said.

"Integrating marine robots into dam inspection procedures offers a safer, cost-effective, and technologically advanced solution," he added.

Kadiyam explained that the recent open-water reservoir field trials signifies a considerable advancement in the maturity of underwater vehicle technology.

"Our research focuses on the prototype development and performance investigations of an

underwater vehicle for intervention and inspection applications. A novel framework has been designed and implemented to cater to the various missions in the oceans and inland waters," he said.

Several simulations and experimental outcomes have proven the system's capabilities in the presence of external disturbances such as water currents and varying payloads, the professor said. The number of submerged structures is steadily increasing due to the advent of new technologies and the rapid expansion of existing infrastructure for defence or civil purposes. Therefore, it is an essential routine to check, maintain, and repair these structures.

## of the day quote

I believe that everyone recognises that it is necessary to reach a ceasefire before Ramadan both for the security of Palestinians and due to its religious nature

It was impossible to discuss a Ukraine settlement without Moscow's participation

Iran presents a constant threat to the United States — trying to murder Americans right here within our borders, conducting a cyber-attack on a children's hospital, supporting terrorists around the world, and more

## SHORT TAKES

### Muhammad Yunus granted bail

**Dhaka:** A court in Bangladesh Sunday granted bail to Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus in a USD 2.3 million embezzlement case. Yunus, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for pioneering the use of microcredit to help impoverished people, was sentenced to six months in prison in January on a separate charge of violating labour laws. He was granted bail in that case too and has appealed. Prosecutor Mir Ahmad Ali Salam said the embezzlement case involves a workers welfare fund of Grameen Telecom, which owns 34.2 per cent of the country's largest mobile phone company, Grameenphone, a subsidiary of Norway's telecom giant Telenor.

### Six killed, dozens injured in accident

**Damascus:** At least six people were killed and dozen others injured Sunday after a bus they were travelling in overturned in Syria's Hama province, local media reported. The incident occurred near the Maarin Al-Jabal village intersection, south of Hama, said local Sham FM radio. The bus overturned on the busy highway while transporting the passengers from Lebanon to Syria's northern Aleppo province, Xinhua news agency reported. The cause of the accident is under investigation. Details are awaited.

### Jordan, US conduct joint aid airdrops

**Amman:** Jordan and the US have jointly carried out airdrops of aid to Gaza, the first time that the US participated in the multinational humanitarian effort. Two aircraft from the Jordan Armed Forces airdropped in the northern Gaza Strip, while three aircraft belonging to the US Air Force airdropped in the south, the state-run Petra news agency reported Saturday. The US Air Force said its three planes carried 66 bundles containing about 38,000 meals, Xinhua news agency reported.

### 13 shops gutted

**Dhaka:** At least 13 shops were gutted in a fire in Mohipur fishing port in Bangladesh's Patuakhali district, local media reported. The fire broke out in a fish store and later spread to nearby shops, Dhaka Tribune reported. It was spotted in Akon's fish farm after which locals attempted to extinguish it. The fire was controlled in two hours, as per Kalapara Fire Service Station Officer Ilias Hossain.



**We will not support any other sanction which will hurt more Slovakia than Russia**  
JURAJ BLANAR | SLOVAK FOREIGN MINISTER

## GROWTH IN LANKA'S TOURISM SECTOR

A Sri Lankan minister Sunday said the country's external sector performance has seen a marked improvement year on year with tourism fetching \$342 million in January 2024, an impressive 122 per cent jump from last year



## Heavy rains batter Pakistan, kill 37



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Peshawar, March 3:** At least 37 people were killed in rain-related incidents across Pakistan in the past 48 hours, authorities said Sunday. The rains that have swept across Pakistan have led to the collapse of houses and triggered landslides that blocked roads, particularly in the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, they said. Authorities advised tourists against travelling to the scenic north due to weather conditions. Last week, several visitors were stranded there because of heavy rains. Pakistan this year has witnessed a delay in winter rains, which started in February instead of November. Monsoons as well as winter rains cause damage in Pakistan every year. In 2022, unprecedented rainfall and flooding devastated many parts of Pakistan, killing more than 1,800 people, affecting around 33 million and displacing nearly eight million people. The disaster also caused billions of dollars in damage.

# Hamas in Cairo for ceasefire talks

**AN AGREEMENT WOULD BRING THE FIRST EXTENDED TRUCE OF THE WAR, WHICH HAS RAGED FOR FIVE MONTHS SO FAR WITH JUST A WEEK-LONG PAUSE IN NOVEMBER**

AGENCIES

**Cairo/Rafah, Gaza Strip, March 3:** A delegation from Hamas arrived in Cairo Sunday for crunch talks on a Gaza ceasefire, billed as a potential final hurdle towards an agreement that would halt the fighting for six weeks. Washington said a ceasefire deal was already "on the table", approved by Israel and awaiting only a sign-off from the militants. But the warring sides gave away little information on the state of any progress. After the Hamas delegation arrived, a Palestinian official told Reuters the deal was "not yet there". From the Israeli side, there was no official confirmation even that its delegation was attending.



Palestinians gather at the site of an Israeli airstrike, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip

One source briefed on the talks had said Israel could stay away from Cairo unless Hamas first presented a full list of hostages who are still alive, a demand that a Palestinian source said Hamas had so far rejected as premature. Still, a US official told reporters: "The path to a ceasefire right now literally at this hour is straightforward. And there's a deal on the table. There's a framework deal." An agreement would bring the

## Israeli military reviews Gaza aid convoy deaths

**Jerusalem:** Israel's military has completed a preliminary review of civilian deaths at a Gaza aid convoy last week, which determined that its forces did not strike the convoy and that most Palestinians died in a stampede, a military spokesperson said Sunday. The review also found that after warning shots were fired to disperse the stampede, Israeli soldiers had "responded" after being approached by looters deemed to have posed an immediate threat. Pressure has mounted on Israel over the deaths of dozens of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on Thursday in which crowds surrounded a convoy of aid trucks and soldiers opened fire, with several countries backing a UN call for an inquiry.

against the enclave's border fence. Israeli forces would pull back from some areas and allow Gazans to return to homes abandoned earlier in the war. But a deal would stop short of fulfilling the main Hamas demand for a permanent end to the war, while also leaving unresolved the fate of more than half of the more than 100 remaining hostages - including

## S Korean doctors hold massive anti-govt rally



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Seoul, March 3:** Thousands of senior doctors rallied in the South Korean capital, Seoul, Sunday to express their support for junior doctors who have been on strike for nearly two weeks over a government plan to sharply increase the number of medical school admissions. The rally came as the government said it would begin to take steps Monday to suspend the doctors' licenses of nearly 9,000 medical interns and residents for defying government orders to end their walkouts, which have disrupted hospital operations. "The government's absurd medical policy has triggered immense resistance by trainee doctors and medical students, and we doctors have become one," Park Sung-min, a senior member of the Korea Medical Association, said in a speech at the rally. "I'm asking the government: Please, stop the threats and suppression now." Protesters chanted slogans, sang and held placards criticising the government's plan. There were no reports of violence. As of Thursday night, 8,945 of the country's 13,000 med-

ical interns and residents were confirmed to have left their work-sites, according to the Health Ministry. The government had said they would face minimum three-month license suspensions and indictments by prosecutors if they didn't return by February 29. The striking doctors are a fraction of South Korea's 140,000 doctors. But they account for 30-40 per cent of the total doctors at some major hospitals, where they assist senior doctors during surgeries and other treatments while training. Their walkouts have subsequently caused numerous cancellations of surgeries and medical treatments at the hospitals. Senior doctors have staged a series of rallies backing the young doctors but haven't joined the walkouts. If they also launch strikes, observers say that would be a major blow to South Korea's medical service. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo Sunday urged senior doctors to persuade the striking junior doctors to return to work. Police said they were investigating five ranking Korea Medical Association officials accused of inciting and abetting the junior doctors' walkouts. Seoul police chief Cho Ji-ho told reporters Sunday that police had raided KMA offices as part of the investigation. The government wants to increase South Korea's medical school enrollment quota by 2,000 starting next year, from the current 3,058, to better deal with the country's rapidly aging population. Officials say South Korea's doctor-to-population ratio is one of the lowest among developed countries.



In this photo taken from video released by Russian Defense Ministry Press Service, a Yars intercontinental ballistic missile is test-fired from the Plesetsk launch pad in northwestern Russia. The Russian Defense Ministry said that the missile's practice warheads hit the designated practice targets on the Kura testing range on the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia's Far East

## TIDBITS

### Joint session of Parl to elect Pak's new Prez called March 9

**Islamabad:** Newly-elected National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq Sunday summoned a joint session of the Parliament to elect the next president of Pakistan March 9, a position that former president Asif Ali Zardari is almost certain to win again after nearly 11 years. In a notification issued today, the speaker summoned the session at 10 am, with Zardari, 68, set to face off against his rival ethnic Pashtun politician Mahmood Khan Achakzai. Zardari, who is a joint candidate of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif-led Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), is set to become the president for the second time as he is being supported by the parties that enjoy a majority in the electoral college. He also served as president from 2008 to 2013.

### Trump wins Missouri's Republican Prez caucus

**Washington:** Former US President Donald Trump Saturday won Missouri's Republican Presidential caucus, continuing his march toward the GOP nomination. Trump's victory over former US Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, in the midwestern state was another piece of good news for the former President, who previously won Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina. In Michigan, a key swing state, Trump won the Republican primary Tuesday, garnering more than 68 per cent of the vote, Xinhua news agency reported. On Saturday, he was awarded more delegates during a Republican convention, cementing his victory in the northern state.

### Malaysia may renew hunt for missing flight MH370

**Kuala Lumpur:** Malaysia's government said Sunday it may renew the hunt for missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 after a US technology firm proposed a fresh search in the southern Indian Ocean where the plane is believed to have crashed a decade ago. Transport Minister Anthony Loke said Texas-based Ocean Infinity has proposed another "no find, no fee" basis to scour the seabeds, expanding from the site where it first searched in 2018. He said he has invited the company to meet him to evaluate new scientific evidence it has to find the plane's final resting place. If the evidence is credible, he said, he will seek Cabinet's approval to sign a new contract with Ocean Infinity to resume the search.

## Houthi vow to continue sinking British ships

**Cairo, March 3:** Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi vowed on Sunday to continue targeting British ships in the Gulf of Aden following the sinking of UK-owned vessel Rubymar. The US military confirmed on Saturday that the UK-owned vessel Rubymar had sunk after being struck by an anti-ship ballistic missile fired by Yemeni Houthi militants on February 18. "Yemen will continue to sink more British ships, and any repercussions or other damages will be added to Britain's bill," Hussein al-Ezzi, deputy foreign minister in the Houthi-led government, said in a post on X. "It is a rogue state that attacks Yemen and partners with America in sponsoring ongoing crimes against civilians in Gaza." Houthi militants have repeatedly launched drones and missiles against international commercial shipping since mid-November, saying they are acting in solidarity with Palestinians against Israel's military actions in Gaza. Their Red Sea attacks have disrupted global shipping, forcing firms to re-route to longer and more expensive journeys around southern Africa, and stoked fears that the Israel-Hamas war could spread to destabilise the wider Middle East. The US and Britain began striking Houthi targets in Yemen in January in retaliation for the attacks on Red Sea shipping.

## SK bids goodbye to beloved panda before her return to China

REUTERS

**Seoul, March 3:** A South Korean zoo Sunday threw a farewell party for Fu Bao, the first giant panda born in the country, ahead of the beloved animal's scheduled return to China. Fu Bao, which means lucky treasure, has attracted a huge fan base ever since she was born in July 2020 at the Everland amusement park just south of Seoul. The panda is set to return to China's Sichuan province next month after spending a month in quarantine. Thousands of visitors queued up in the early morning chill to attend the farewell event, with many saying they will miss the panda once she's gone. "I was mentally ill three years



Giant panda Fu Bao eats bamboo at Everland amusement park March 03 in Yongin, South Korea. Fu Bao, a female giant panda born in Everland amusement park and turning four years old this year, will be transferred to the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Sichuan Province in early April under an international agreement

- Fu Bao, which means lucky treasure, has attracted a huge fan base ever since she was born in July 2020 at the Everland amusement park just south of Seoul
- The panda is set to return to China's Sichuan province next month after spending a month in quarantine

ago, but Fu Bao has helped me get through it and brought me a lot of comfort," said Kim Min-ji, a 31-year-old visitor. "It's sad to say goodbye, but we need to let her go. I wish she goes safely and will be happy." Jo Ah-hyeon, 24, said she waited more than four hours to see Fu Bao. "This is our last chance, you never know when we'll see her again so I had to come," she said. Thousands of visitors queued up in the early morning chill to attend the farewell event, with many saying they will miss the panda once she's gone. "I was mentally ill three years ago, but Fu Bao has helped me get through it and brought me a lot of comfort," said Kim Min-ji, a 31-year-old visitor. "It's sad to say goodbye, but we need to let her go. I wish she goes safely and will be happy." Jo Ah-hyeon, 24, said she waited more than four hours to see Fu Bao. "This is our last chance, you never know when we'll see her again so I had to come," she said.

## of the day quote

One learning that startups can take from BYJU'S episode is to ensure financial discipline

**KASHYAP DALAL** | CO-FOUNDER AND COO, SIMPLILEARN

Integration of entire textiles value chain right from spinning, weaving, processing, dyeing, printing and garmenting under these parks will lead to substantial reduction of logistics cost

**MITHILESHWAR THAKUR** | SECRETARY GENERAL, AEPCC

According to our internal study, the anticipated growth of the Indian used car market is set to occur at a 15 per cent CAGR, increasing from \$25 billion in 2023 to \$100 billion by 2034

**VIKRAM CHOPRA** | CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, CARS24

## SHORT TAKES

### 7 of top-10 firms' valuation climbs

**New Delhi:** The combined market valuation of seven of the top 10 most valued firms climbed ₹65,302.5 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and ICICI Bank emerging as the biggest gainers. Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 663.35 points or 0.90 per cent, and the Nifty jumped 165.7 points or 0.74 per cent. From the top-10 pack, TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and ITC were the gainers, while Reliance Industries, Infosys and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) faced erosion from their market capitalisation (mcap). In the ranking of the most valued companies, Reliance Industries continued to lead the pack, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, LIC, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and ITC.

### Vedanta Resources to deleverage debt

**New Delhi:** Vedanta Resources, the parent firm of Mumbai-based mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd, does not foresee a rollover of its loans and plans to deleverage as much as \$3 billion debt over the next three years, a senior official said at an analyst meeting. "Deleveraging is our priority. We would be deleveraging the debt of Vedanta Resources by \$3 billion over the next three years. Vedanta Ltd's cash flow pre-growth capex is estimated to be \$3.5-4 billion for the financial year 2025, sufficient for secured debt maturities of \$1.5 billion," said Navin Agarwal, Vice Chairman, Vedanta Ltd and member of Promoter Group, at a recently concluded analysts' meet, according to analysts who attended the meeting.

### Bharat Textile Expo to be annual affair

**New Delhi:** The mega textile exhibition -- Bharat Tex 2024 -- will now be held every year in the country as the first event which concluded last week witnessed participation of over 3,500 exhibitors and 3,000 buyers from 111 countries, AEPCC said Sunday. The Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPCC) said that as many as 63 agreements were announced during the expo with international institutions focusing on collaborations in research, innovation, entrepreneurship, new product development, skilling and sustainability. "The Bharat Tex expo will be an annual affair," AEPCC Chairman Sudhir Sekhri said. He said the industry is working on sustainable production practices as it would help enhance the competitiveness of the sector in the international market.



People who work on process related industry, which we traditionally used to call as BPO (business process outsourcing). Some of that runs the risk of getting replaced with an AI engine pretty quickly

**RAJESH NAMBIAR** | CHAIRMAN, NASSCOM

## IPO CRAZE CONTINUES

The primary market will see a flurry of activity in March, with at least three companies including Gopal Snacks will float their initial public offerings (IPOs) in the upcoming week to raise ₹1,325 crore collectively. The other two companies which are set to launch their maiden public issues are -- RK Swamy and JG Chemicals



# India's energy-related carbon emissions rise

India grappled with warm and dry conditions throughout 2023 and experienced a weak monsoon season, with August being the driest in at least 45 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 3:** Strong GDP growth and a weak monsoon drove up India's energy-related carbon emissions by around 190 million tonne in 2023, though the country's per capita emissions remain far below the global average, the International Energy Agency said.

Global energy-related carbon emissions grew by 1.1 per cent in 2023, increasing 410 million tonne

(Mt) to reach a new record high of 37.4 gigatonnes (Gt) in 2023, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said Friday.

It said emissions in China grew around 565 Mt in 2023, the largest increase globally and a continuation of its emissions-intensive economic growth in the post-pandemic period. Per capita emissions in China are now 15 per cent higher than in advanced economies.

However, China continued to dominate global clean energy additions.

"In India, strong GDP growth drove up emissions by around 190 Mt. But a weak monsoon increased demand for electricity and cut hydro production, contributing around one-quarter of the increase in its total emissions in 2023. Per capita emissions in India remain far below



the world average," the IEA said.

In 2022, energy-related global emissions increased by 490 Mt, representing a 1.3 per cent rise.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), countries together need to cut down emissions of planet-warming greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane by 43 per cent by 2030 to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The IEA noted that emissions from coal accounted for more than 65 per cent of the increase in 2023.

It said global hydropower capacity increased by around 20 gigawatts (GW) in 2023. Despite this increase, the global generation of hydropower saw a record decline last year. This was primarily driven by severe and prolonged droughts that impacted major hydropower regions, exacerbated by the influence of El Niño -- a periodic warming of waters in the central Pacific Ocean.

Had the availability of the hydropower plant fleet in 2023 remained consistent with 2022 levels, an additional 200 terawatt-hours (TWh) of electricity would have been generated globally.

This would have avoided the

emission of around 170 million Mt CO2 from fossil fuel-based power plants. It would also have meant that electricity sector emissions would have fallen globally in 2023, instead of rising moderately, the IEA said.

It mentioned that between 2019 and 2023, total energy-related emissions increased by around 900 Mt. Without the growing deployment of five key clean energy technologies since 2019 -- solar PV, wind, nuclear, heat pumps and electric cars -- the emissions growth would have been three times larger.

"Thanks to the growing deployment of clean energy, emissions are experiencing a structural slowdown. In the decade to 2023, global emissions grew slightly more than 0.5 per cent per year, the slowest rate since the Great Depression," the IEA said.

## BILLING POLICY

### More apps back on Play Store

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 3:** A few more apps came back on Play Store Sunday after they complied with Google's billing policy, even as the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) expressed concerns as the majority of apps removed remained delisted.

Murugavel J, founder and CEO of matrimony.Com, said that only eight of the company's apps, including Bengali Matrimony, Marathi Matrimony, Tamil Matrimony, Jodii and Bharat Matrimony were reinstated Sunday, but only after they accepted Google's terms.

A vast majority of its 100-plus apps are still not restored on Play Store, he said.

"In spite of the government's clear message on the issue, Google has not taken steps to reinstate all the apps that had been delisted by it over billing policies," Murugavel told PTI.

IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav Saturday made it clear that the removal of apps by Google was unacceptable and that "startups will get the protection they need".

Tension between Google and some Indian apps flared Friday after the tech giant removed certain apps from its Play Store in India over a dispute on service fee payments. The apps and well-known startup founders are up in arms and have called out Google for its action.

Decrying the continued delisting of the concerned Indian apps, IAMAI, in a statement, said it considers such harsh measures as unfair and disproportionate, at a time when a legal process is ongoing.

"The association is also of the view that such measures are discriminatory in reference to the practice followed by Google in other jurisdictions, where it has offered preferential terms to app developers in deference to ongoing legal proceedings or legislative developments," it said.

It is pertinent to mention here that the government is likely to meet Google and representatives of concerned apps Monday to resolve the issue.

## FIRST TRANCHE Offshore mineral auction likely by mid-2024: Joshi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 3:** The first tranche of offshore minerals auctions is likely to kick off by June-July this year, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said.

A total of 10 offshore mineral blocks have been short-listed by the mines ministry, and inter-ministerial consultations are underway to seek necessary clearances for auctions at the earliest, the Minister for Coal and Mines told PTI.

When asked about a time-frame for the auction of offshore minerals, he said the auctions are likely to kick off by June-July of 2024.

The blocks are located on the east and west coast of India, Joshi said without sharing any further information.

"Our plan is to launch more tranches of auction of offshore minerals after concluding the first one," the minister added.

The government amended the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002, to provide an auction route for awarding production leases for offshore minerals.

Offshore minerals are located deep within the earth's crust and are difficult to extract compared to onshore minerals.

India's offshore mineral reserves include gold, diamond, copper, nickel, cobalt, copper, manganese, and rare earth elements.

The offshore auctions will help increase the availability of these minerals in India and reduce dependence on imports.



## Foreign investors infuse ₹1,500cr into Indian equities in Feb

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 3:** Foreign investors made a significant turnaround and injected over ₹1,500 crore into Indian equities in February, reversing the massive outflows seen in the preceding month, primarily due to robust corporate earnings and positive economic growth.

Additionally, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) continued to be bullish on the debt markets as they put in over ₹22,419 crore during the month under review, data with the depositories showed.

"Looking ahead to March, the outlook for FPI flow appears promising, provided the current economic trajectory and corporate performance sustain their positive momentum, potentially continuing to attract foreign investment into Indian equities," Mayank Mehraa, smallcase manager and principal partner at



Craving Alpha, said. According to the data, FPIs invested a net sum of ₹1,539 crore in the Indian equities in February. This came following a net withdrawal of ₹25,743 crore in January. The latest influx can be at-

tributed to robust corporate earnings and positive economic growth trends observed during the December quarter.

Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said that improvement in the global economic environment would have prompted FPIs to invest in high growth-oriented markets like India.

Globally, the January inflation numbers in the US were in line with expectations. Though the prices moved up in January, the annual increase in inflation was the lowest in nearly three years, raising expectation of an early rate cut by US Federal Reserve.

On the domestic front too, Q3 GDP data showed strong growth,

thus attracting foreign investors, he added.

VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said inflow came despite the US bond yields ruling high with the 10-year yield at around 4.25 per cent.

In terms of sectors, FPIs were big sellers in financials and FMCG in February.

Despite perceived stretched valuations in the previous month, the compelling performance of companies justified their value, enticing FPIs to re-enter the market

**MAYANK MEHRAA** | SMALLCASE MANAGER AND PRINCIPAL PARTNER, CRAVING ALPHA

## DEBT MARKET

On the debt front, FPIs have been injecting money in the debt markets for the past few months driven by upcoming inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Index.

They infused ₹22,419 crore in February, ₹19,836 crore in January, ₹18,302 crore in December, ₹14,860 crore in November, and ₹6,381 crore in October.

JP Morgan Chase & Co. In September last year announced that it will add Indian government bonds to its benchmark emerging market index from June 2024. This landmark inclusion is anticipated to benefit India by attracting around \$20-40 billion in the subsequent 18 to 24 months.

## Patanjali promoting self-employment through IRULA: Acharya Balkrishna

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**In** collaboration with Uttarakhand State Rural Livelihood Mission (USRLM), the women self-help groups from different districts of Uttarakhand were trained in Traditional Eco Art at Patanjali's Samridhdh Gram Training Center to advance the traditional art of Uttarakhand 'Alpan' by linking it with self-employment. In this training programme, all the women were also given training for business and livelihood enhancement by joining IRULA (Indian Rural Art) hyper local model. On the occasion of closing of this programme, co-founder of Patanjali Group Acharya Balkrishna ji was also present and distributed certificates to all the women and said that the main objective of this training programme is to promote the traditional art of Uttarakhand and to bring livelihood enhancement and self-reliance in the lives of women. On the occasion, Additional CEO of Uttarakhand State Rural Livelihood Mission, Pradeep Pandey also appreciated the efforts of Patanjali. The event witnessed tremendous enthusiasm among the female trainers. It is noteworthy that in this programme women were given skill development training in art through diya, stone, saree, kurta, wooden block, canvas and wall painting.



## Rising interest rates push term deposits

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 3:** Rising interest rates seem to be driving more people to go in for term savings plans as the share of such instruments in total bank deposits increased to 60.3 per cent in December 2023 from 57.2 per cent in March 2023, according to the Reserve Bank data.

On an incremental basis, term deposits accounted for nearly 97.6 per cent of the total deposits during April-December 2023 and the shares of current account and savings account (CASA) deposits went down, said RBI's Quarterly BSR-2: Deposits with Scheduled Commercial Banks - December 2023.

"Rising return on term deposits has been driving the compositional shift in bank deposits:

the share of term deposits in total deposits increased to 60.3 per cent in December 2023 from 57.2 per cent in March 2023," it said.

RBI further said that deposits moved to higher interest rate buckets as the share of term deposits bearing over 7 per cent interest rate rose to 61.4 per cent of the total term deposits in December 2023 from 54.7 per cent a quarter ago and 33.7 per cent in March 2023.

It is almost a year that the Reserve Bank has kept the short-term lending rate or repo rate at 6.5 per cent. The benchmark interest rate was last raised in February 2023 to 6.5 per cent from 6.25 per cent due to inflation driven mainly by global developments. The repo rate was raised by 250 basis points cumulatively between May 2022 and February 2023.

# Benefits of Hospital Daily Cash in health insurance

In the ever-evolving landscape of health insurance, insurers constantly keep designing products and services that address the needs of customers and provide them with wider protection. However, many times, customers are not aware of such valuable covers or add-ons, and as an insurer, it is my constant endeavour to increase awareness about products and services that help people build comprehensive coverage. One such product is 'Hospital Daily Cash,' which adds a layer of protection during medical emergencies. Let's try to understand what it means, its nuances, and its advantages.

## What exactly is a Hospital Daily Cash Cover?

As the name suggests, a Hospital Daily Cash cover is a supplementary health insurance cover designed to provide a fixed amount for each day of hospitalisation. Unlike traditional health insurance covers that reimburse actual expenses, this cover offers a predetermined daily allowance unaffected

by the incurred charges, which makes it a benefit policy. For instance, if you opt for a cover offering ₹500 per day of hospitalisation, regardless of whether your hospital daily expenses amount to ₹800 or ₹400, you'll receive a fixed benefit of ₹500 for each day of hospitalisation. Hospital Daily Cash can be a stand-alone product or an in-built cover. If the cover is built into the policy, the daily cash limit can be a percentage of the sum insured or can have fixed amount options on per day basis. Like a typical health insurance policy, this cover also has life-long renewability in most cases. This is quite a pocket-friendly cover and is available at a nominal premium.

## Understanding the Coverage

The daily allowance limit varies from insurer to insurer, and you can choose the amount from the given option while opting for the cover. This allowance typically ranges from ₹500 (per day) onwards and can go up to a few thousand rupees. Additionally, in case of a criti-

cal issue, if hospitalisation necessitates ICU admission, the daily cash allowance is often doubled for a certain number of days, as the policy specifies. For example, if as per the policy daily cash limit is ₹1,000 in case of ICU admission, this limit will increase to ₹2,000.

## Navigating the Conditions

Similar to conventional health insurance coverages, hospital daily cash coverages come with certain conditions with waiting periods. Hospitalisation must exceed a minimum duration of 24 hours to qualify for the allowance. However, day-care procedures fall outside the cover's scope for now. The other point to keep in mind is that typically, there is a maximum cap on the number of hospitalisation days eligible for the allowance within a policy year, commonly ranging from 30 to 90 days; the same will be specified in the policy.

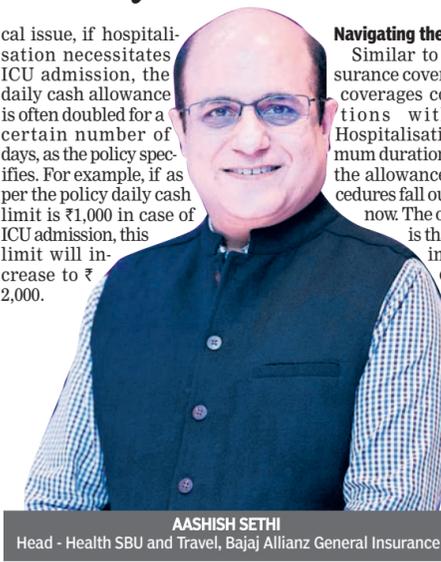
## Benefits of this cover-Covering Additional Expenses:

While your regular health insurance may cover hospitalisation expenses, certain out-of-pocket costs like surgi-

cal accessories or expenses for accompanying family members, like food or transportation, are not covered. A Hospital Daily Cash Cover provides a lump sum amount that can be utilised at your discretion, easing the burden of these additional expenses. You have the freedom to use this money as you may wish.

**Handling Extra Hospital Bills:** If a claim exceeds the sum insured by your health insurance, a Hospital Daily Cash Cover acts as a safety net, bridging the gap to some extent and ensuring you're not left with hefty out-of-pocket expenses.

The advantages of a Hospital Daily Cash Cover are evident from the above mentioned details; you can view it as a complement to your existing health insurance plan. By integrating this cover with your primary health coverage, you can effectively manage various unforeseen expenses pertaining to hospitalisation and enjoy comprehensive protection against the uncertainties of healthcare costs.



**AASHISH SETHI**  
 Head - Health SBU and Travel, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance

# India on top of WTC table

## SKIPPER SHUFFLE

# I saw talent in Rohit: Ganguly



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, March 3:** Two-time finalists India jumped to the top of the World Test Championship standings, replacing New Zealand in the latest rankings issued Sunday.

Rohit Sharma-led India, who defeated England by five wickets in the fourth Test in Ranchi to take an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series, replaced the Kiwis with a stronger points percentage of 64.58.

With five wins, two losses and one draw, India have 62 points in 8 matches, while the Black Caps have 36 from five matches (three wins, two losses) and have a point-percentage of 60.00.

Before the start of the Wellington Test, New Zealand were sitting at the top of the table with 36 points in four games and a points percentage of 75. But following their massive

**MEN IN BLUE MOVE TO TOP AFTER AS KIWIS SLIPPED TO NUMBER TWO, FOLLOWING THEIR DEFEAT TO KANGAROOS**

**AUSTRALIA CAN CLIMB TO THE TOP SPOT IF ENGLAND BEAT INDIA IN THE DHARAMSALA TEST MARCH 7**

172-run defeat, the 2021 WTC champions lost the top spot, slipping to the No 2 position with a points percentage of 60.

Third-placed Australia have closed on the gap after the Wellington Test, gaining 12 crucial points as they now have 78 points from 11 matches (seven wins, three losses and one draw). Their points percentage has also increased from 55 to 59.09.

The 2023 champions have the opportunity to surpass New Zealand and move up to the second spot if they win the second and final Test at Christchurch

from March 8.

India, however, need to win the final match of the five-match series against England, which begins March 7, to keep their position at the top of the WTC points table.

A win would leave them with a PCT of 68.51, which New Zealand won't be able to topple even if they manage to level their series against Australia with a win in the second Test.

However, if England stun India in Dharamsala and New Zealand beat the Aussies, the former WTC champions will once again rise to the top of the table.

**LYON SINKS NZ**

Nathan Lyon took ten wickets for the match and brought New Zealand's

attempted fight back in the first test to a shuddering halt as Australia completed a 172-run win Sunday and took a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

New Zealand resumed at 111-3 on the fourth day in its second innings and collapsed in the face of superb spin bowling from Lyon (6-64) to be all out for 196 a few minutes after the scheduled lunch break.

Lyon completed match figures of 10-108, his fifth 10 wicket bag, which went along with his 41 as nightwatchman in Australia's second innings.

The Black Caps were unable to sustain the stubborn fight back they had begun to produce on day three when Australia was bowled out for 164 in its second innings for an overall lead of 368.

Glenn Phillips took 5-43 to limit Australia as it tried to build on its first innings lead of 204.

Australia's win in Wellington was set up by its first innings of 383 after it had been sent in on a greenish pitch. But it was Cameron Green's unbeaten 174 and his 116-run last wicket partnership with Josh

Hazlewood that really turned the game towards the tourists.

Hazlewood that really turned the game towards the tourists.

**ROHIT REPLACED VIRAT AS THE FULL-TIME CAPTAIN OF INDIA AFTER THE LATTER STEPPED DOWN FROM HIS ROLE IN TESTS AND T20Is IN 2022**

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 3:** Former BCCI President Sourav Ganguly has opened up on his decision to replace Virat Kohli with Rohit Sharma as the captain of the Indian men's cricket team.

Rohit replaced Virat as the full-time captain of India after the latter stepped down from his role in Tests and T20Is in 2022. Back then, Ganguly was the BCCI chief and there were reports of a possible rift between him and Kohli.

Ganguly had earlier revealed that the BCCI had asked Kohli to reconsider his decision to step down as T20I captain.

On the decision to replace Kohli, the former India captain Ganguly said that he saw huge potential in Rohit, considering his record in the Indian Premier League.

Rohit took India to the World Cup final last year on home soil, only to go down in the final hurdle against Australia.

Ganguly suggested that India were the best team in the tournament and added that he was not surprised by the way Rohit led India during the showpiece event.

"Look at the way he captained in the World Cup. Taking India to the final. I think India was



**Ganguly had earlier revealed that the BCCI had asked Kohli to reconsider his decision to quit as T20I captain**

the best team in the competition till they lost the final. So he is a good captain, IPL trophies. I am not surprised by the way he led. He became the captain when I was the BCCI president, and I am not surprised by the way he has led the team. I made him the Indian captain because I saw the talent in him, and I am not surprised by what

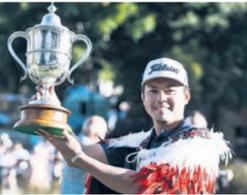
he has done," Ganguly said. Rohit recently led India to a 17th straight Test series win on home soil. After losing the series opener against England in Hyderabad, India now lead 3-1 in the series with the final game in Dharamsala from March 7.

Meanwhile, Rohit recently lost his captaincy to Hardik Pandya at Mumbai Indians. Hardik, who was with Gujarat Titans for the past two seasons, will lead the five-time champions this time around.

He was traded by MI from GT ahead of the IPL 2024 auction, with Shubman Gill set to lead the 2022 champions after his departure.

## IN HISTORY BOOKS

### Hataji wins New Zealand Open



**Queenstown:** Takahiro Hataji won his first professional tournament and became the first Japanese player to win the New Zealand Golf Open Sunday when he took out the 103rd edition of the event at the Millbrook Resort. Hataji shot a flawless 4-under final round of 67 for a four-round total of 17-under-par to win by a stroke from Australian Scott Hend. Hend came to the 72nd hole tied with Hataji in first place. He hit his tee shot on the par-3 18th to the back of the green and his putt for the championship ran past the hole. Hend's return putt lipped out, leaving with a final round 69 alone in second place. The 50-year-old Hend was bidding to overtake Kel Nagle as the oldest winner of the New Zealand Open in the modern era. Hataji became the first Japanese winner of a tournament on the Australasian PGA Tour since Isao Aoki in 1989. "It was a really tough day but I have the trophy so I am feeling very happy now," Hataji said. "I'm happy but (Hend) played very well so when his putt missed I felt a bit sorry for him too."

### Minaur secures Mexican Open title

**Acapulco:** Alex De Minaur beat Casper Rudd 6-4, 6-4 Saturday to become the first player to win back-to-back titles in the Mexican Open since 2012. The third-seeded De Minaur won his eighth ATP title to become the fourth player to repeat as champion in Mexico, the first since David Ferrer in 2010-12. The 25-year-old Australian won his 10 consecutive matches in Acapulco to break a four-match losing streak in ATP finals, including Rotterdam earlier this year. "Acapulco is becoming like a second home. I thought that it was impossible to get feel better after what happened last year, but I came back a year later to defend the title and it has been true pleasure," de Minaur said.



## Chennaiyin FC halt Odisha's win streak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, March 3:** Jordan Murray's added time strike helped Chennaiyin FC break Odisha FC's 13-match winning streak as the former champions notched a 2-1 win in the Indian Super League match here Sunday.

It is a result that will have ramifications across the points table, with Mumbai City FC (35) and Mohun Bagan Super Giant (33) with a good chance to displace Odisha FC (35) from the top.

Simultaneously, it has brought the 10th placed Owen Coyle-coached side level on points (18) with the sixth-placed Bangalore FC.

More importantly, the Marina Machans have a game in hand (17) as compared to the Blues (18), and can aspire to bridge that slender gap in their coming fixtures.

Chennaiyin FC produced one of their most coordinated performances right from the back to the front, barring a brief moment of lack of concentration that equalised scores in the 78th minute.

Ankit Mukherjee drew the first blood from a set-piece five minutes into the game,



with Rafael Crivellaro picking the fullback amidst a crowded box on the near post on the right side.

Mukherjee charged inside and beat competition from the towering Mourtada Fall to drill the ball into the back of the net.

It took the seasoned Roy Krishna to do the honours deep into the second half. Fall played decoy to a corner by Jahouh, which had a vertical loop to it. Fall's headed pass led to the unmarked Krishna, who leaped

high to nod the ball in.

But the goal didn't peg Chennaiyin FC back. It instead fuelled them to find the winner, with Faruk Choudhary and Connor Shields taking precise shots from inside of the box in the following few minutes.

The three points, however, came in their kitty through Murray, who jumped to hammer in a corner by Shields in the fourth minute of the added time of the second half to seal the game.

## Lanning, Jonassen fashion DC's triumph over Giants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, March 3:** Captain Meg Lanning's fifty and a cunning spell of left-arm spin by Jess Jonassen drove Delhi Capitals to a slick 25-run victory over Gujarat Giants in their Women's Premier League match here Sunday.

Lanning (55, 41b, 6x4, 1x6) was Capitals' guiding force to an adequate 163 for eight despite a late flurry of wickets.

The Giants' chase never grew wings, ending up with 138 for eight despite Ashleigh Gardner's well-timed 40 off 31 balls as they crashed to their fourth defeat on the bounce.

Jonassen led Capitals' bowling with a shrewd spell (3/22) and she received very good support from Radha Yadav (3/20). The win also propelled Delhi to the top of the table with six points.

The Gujarat side made a shaky start, conceding a maiden in the very first over to WPL debutant pacer Titas Sadhu.

Their beginning was further marred when experienced pacer Shikha Pandey castled Laura Wolvaardt with a delivery that



shaped in that tiny bit to beat her swat.

But the Giants too found some flow as captain Beth Mooney and Phoebe Litchfield combined to smash 15 runs in the fourth over bowled by Pandey. However, it was just an isolated spark as the Giants stumbled against Jonassen.

## Titans wicket-keeper meets with accident

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 3:** Gujarat Titans' uncapped wicketkeeper-batter Robin Minz met with a bike accident and is currently under observation. Last year, Minz had become the first player from the Adivasi community to be a part of the IPL when Titans' picked him for ₹3.6 crore in the player auction.

As per a report in News18, Minz was riding his Kawasaki superbike Saturday when he came into contact with another bike and that made him lose control of his bike, leading to bruises on right knee.

"He lost control when his bike came in contact with another bike. Nothing serious at the moment and he is currently under observation," Francis Minz, his father, was quoted as saying.

Minz had recently come home after playing for Jharkhand in the U23 Col CK Nayudu Trophy quarter-final against Karnataka, where he hit a brilliant 137, but it wasn't enough as the opposition took a first-innings lead. It is yet to be known if there's a delay in him joining the Titans' pre-season camp ahead of IPL 2024.

## AIFF terminates service of legal head after he accused Prez of corruption

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 3:** The All India Football Federation (AIFF) Sunday terminated the services of its principal legal advisor Nilanjan Bhattacharjee after he made serious "corruption allegations" against president Kalyan Chaubey, who had termed them "baseless".

In a letter written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday, Bhattacharjee said Chaubey worked out "corruption avenues" through non-transparent tender process and preferential allotment of tender.

Chaubey had said that he would "reply legally". "Inform you of the AIFF's decision to terminate your engagement as principal legal advisor with immediate effect," AIFF acting secretary general M Satyanarayan wrote in the termination letter Sunday.

The AIFF will pay Bhattacharjee for another month at the "contractually agreed rate" as a notice period of one month is required for the termination.

Bhattacharjee, on his part, said the termination of his service was on expected lines.

**I am hoping that I find justice in my communications and speaking out the truth about the ongoing corruption in the AIFF**

**NILANJAN BHATTACHARJEE | PRINCIPAL LEGAL ADVISOR, AIFF**

"I could foresee the termination letter," he told PTI.

Bhattacharjee had alleged that Chaubey made attempts to "siphon off money from the federation's exchequer" and used AIFF fund for personal expenses.

"Through coercion and at his own subservient interest, allotted numerous tenders such as broadcasting of I-League (last season), IWL, Santosh Trophy in favour of one (company; name withheld) which happens to be close to the incumbent president," Bhattacharjee wrote in the letter, which is in possession of PTI.

"Further tenders running into crores were allotted to the same service provider for broadcasting of futsal and other such tournaments," he wrote in the letter, a copy of which was also marked to Home Minister Amit Shah and Sports Minister Anurag Thakur.

## HIGHEST USGA HONOUR

# Tiger Woods bags Bob Jones Award

*The golf legend is a nine-time USGA champion, winning three straight US Junior Amateurs, followed by three straight US Amateurs, and then the US Open at Pebble Beach (2000), Bethpage Black (2002) and Torrey Pines (2008)*

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Far Hills, March 3:** Tiger Woods has been selected to receive the Bob Jones Award, the highest honour from the USGA that recognizes his commitment to sportsmanship and respect for golf's traditions.

Woods typically is honored for his performances on the course, where he has won 15 majors among his 82 career victories on the PGA Tour.

"This award goes beyond playing performance, recognizing the lasting impact of one per-



**Bob Jones was a pillar of our game because of the integrity with which he played it, and I'm truly humbled to receive the award that bears his name and join the many who have received it before me who continue his legacy**

TIGER WOODS

son's journey that has forever changed the image and growth of golf," said Mike Whan, the CEO of the USGA.

"There are very few who stand alongside Tiger Woods in terms of on-course accomplishments, and he is in a class of his own when it comes to

the impact he has made on the game and future generations who will play it."

Woods was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2022, and he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Donald Trump in 2019.

Woods is a nine-time USGA

champion, winning three straight U.S. Junior Amateurs, followed by three straight US Amateurs, and then the US Open at Pebble Beach (2000), Bethpage Black (2002) and Torrey Pines (2008).

Jones won the Grand Slam in 1930 when it was comprised of the US Open, US Amateur, British Open and British Amateur. He later co-founded Augusta National Golf Club and created the Masters.

Off the golf course, Woods launched what now is called the TGR Foundation that emphasizes educational opportunities, along with STEM-based learning at the TGR Learning Lab in California. He also has started a golf course design firm. One of his courses in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, hosted a PGA Tour event last fall.

Woods will be honored June 12 during the US Open at Pinehurst No 2 in North Carolina.

Previous winners include Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus, Mickey Wright and Ben Hogan, and former President George HW Bush.