



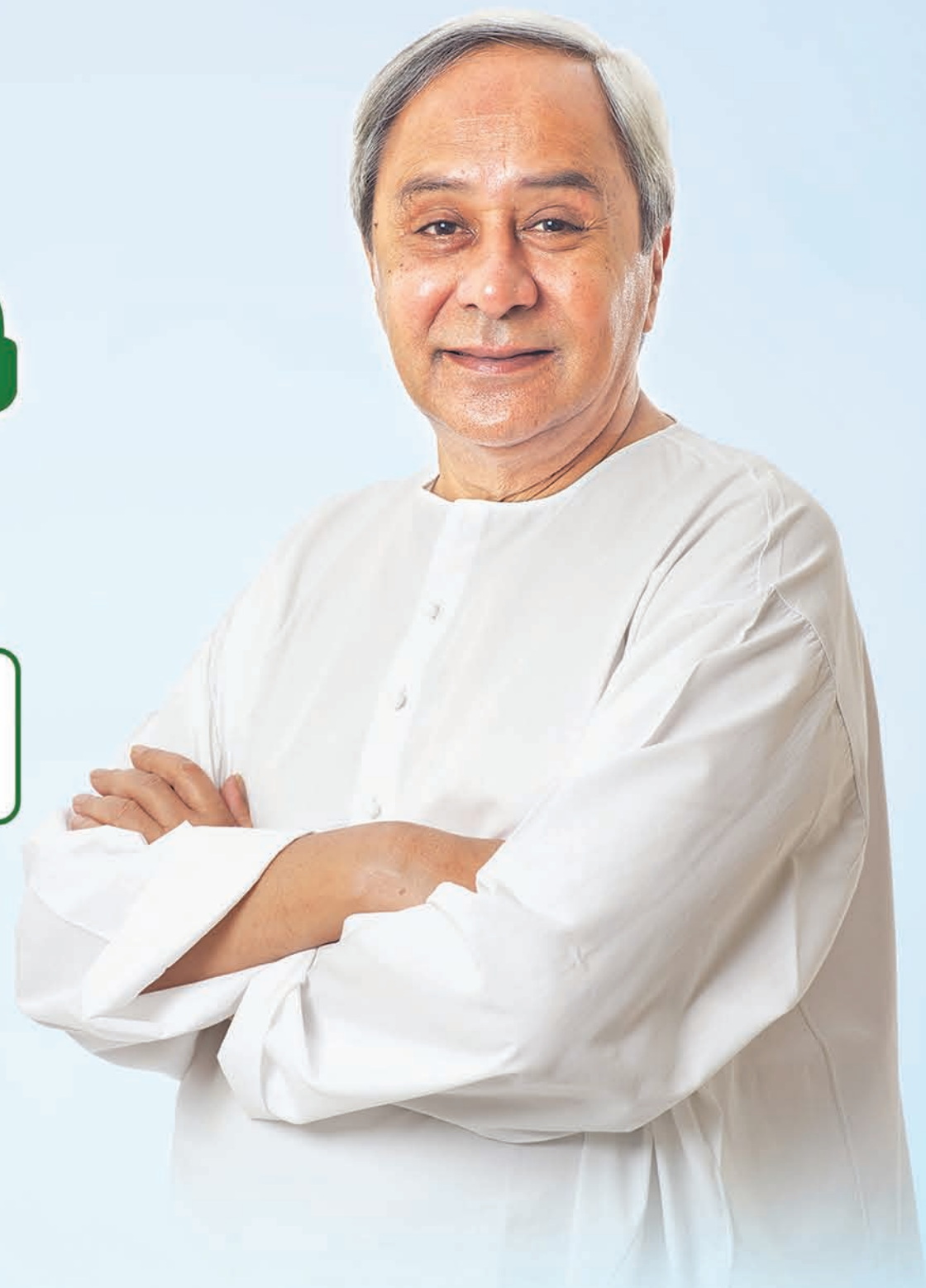
ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର



ଘରେ ଘରେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ

ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ଯୋଜନାର ପ୍ରମୁଖ ବୈଶିଷ୍ଟ୍ୟ

- ଗ୍ରାମାଞ୍ଚଳରୁ ସହରାଞ୍ଚଳକୁ ସୁନିଶ୍ଚିତ ବସ୍ ସଂଯୋଗ
 - ସୁଲଭ ଓ ନିର୍ଭରଯୋଗ୍ୟ ସେବା
- ମହିଳା, ଛାତ୍ରଛାତ୍ରୀ ଏବଂ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟକୁ ସମ୍ମାନ କରାଯିବ
- ପର୍ଯ୍ୟଟନ ଏବଂ ଆଞ୍ଚଳିକ ଅର୍ଥ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥାକୁ ପ୍ରୋତ୍ସାହନ
 - ଯାତ୍ରୀ ଏବଂ ସଡ଼କ ସୁରକ୍ଷାକୁ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱ
- ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛ ଏବଂ ବୈଷୟିକ ଜ୍ଞାନକୌଶଳ ଦ୍ୱାରା ପରିଚାଳିତ ସାଧାରଣ ପରିବହନ



ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ମାନ୍ୟବର ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ନବୀନ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଶୁଭାରମ୍ଭ

ବାଲେଶ୍ୱର | ଜଗତସିଂହପୁର
ଗଞ୍ଜାମ | ନୂଆପଡ଼ା | ବୌଦ୍ଧ

୨୧ ଫେବୃଆରୀ ୨୦୨୪



ବାଣିଜ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବହନ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

Puri-Konark rly line
Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw says PM has sanctioned ₹492 crore for construction of 32-km-long Puri-Konark railway line

DOWNTOWN | P2

Stalemate continues
There is no progress in formation of a new coalition government in Pakistan as top leaders fail to agree on a power-sharing deal

INTERNATIONAL | P8

Capex boost
Fresh round of capital expenditure by corporate sector likely to fuel next leg of growth, says Reserve Bank of India's bulletin

BUSINESS | P9

Stunning feat
Eight-year-old Ashwath Kaushik becomes the youngest-ever chess player to beat a grandmaster

SPORTS | BACK PAGE

Game change in C'garh

DEFEATED AAP CANDIDATE KULDEEP KUMAR EMERGES WINNER IN CHANDIGARH MAYORAL POLL AFTER SC INTERVENTION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: The Supreme Court Tuesday declared defeated AAP-Congress alliance candidate Kuldeep Kumar the Mayor of Chandigarh after overturning the result of the controversial January 30 poll where the BJP nominee had emerged an unlikely winner, in an unprecedented intervention to set right a brazen attempt by the returning officer to rig the election. The top court also ordered prosecution of returning officer (RO) Anil Masih, a BJP leader, for "serious misdemeanor" for making an allegedly false statement before the court that he had invalidated eight ballots because they had been defaced.

Exercising its plenary power under Article 142 of the Constitution to do complete justice, the apex court said the result declared by the RO, a nominated councillor, was clearly contrary to law.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said in such a case, the top court was duty bound, particularly in the context of its jurisdiction under Article 142 of the Constitution, to ensure that the process of electoral democracy is not allowed to be thwarted by subterfuge. The bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said the court must step in where exceptional situations develop to ensure that the basic mandate of electoral democracy is preserved.



Mayor-elect Kuldeep Kumar

lowed to be thwarted by subterfuge. The bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said the court must step in where exceptional situations develop to ensure that the basic mandate of electoral democracy is preserved.

"We accordingly order and direct that the result of the election as declared by the presiding officer (Masih) stands quashed and set aside. The petitioner (Kumar) is declared to be the validly elected candidate for election as Mayor of Chandigarh Municipal Corporation," the bench ruled. The top court said in each of the eight ballot papers, which were invalidated by Masih, the votes were duly cast in favour of Kumar.

The Congress party hailed the

Supreme Court decision on the "farical election", saying it saved democracy from the fangs of an "autocratic BJP" that resorted to dirty election manipulation. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the "institutional sabotage" is only the "tip of the iceberg in Modi-Shah's devious conspiracy to trample democracy". Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said, "Masih (the RO for the poll) is just a 'pawn' in BJP's conspiracy to murder democracy, behind which is the 'face' of Modi." The SC has saved democracy in these "difficult times", Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal said.

The BJP had won the mayoral polls January 30 defeating the comfortably placed AAP-Congress alliance candidate after the RO declared as invalid eight votes of the coalition partners, drawing accusations of tampering with ballots. BJP's Manoj Sonkar defeated Kumar after polling 16 votes against his rival's 12 to bag the mayor's post. Sonkar, however, resigned subsequently, while three AAP councillors defected to BJP. The bench said Masih had evidently put his own mark on these eight ballot papers for the purpose of creating a ground for treating them as invalidly cast.

Death before HSC exam sparks row

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Bolangir, Feb 20: In a tragic incident, a Class X student was found hanging in the washroom of his hostel in Bolangir district, just a few hours before the commencement of the High School Certificate (HSC) Examination Tuesday, even as his family members suspected foul play in the incident.

The incident took place at Viswatma S Vidyamandir in Khujenpali area of the district. The deceased was identified as Binayak Pradhan, 15, son of Ratna Pradhan from Taliudar village under Loisingha police limits. He was to appear for the examination at Bhagaban Vidya Mandir in Khujenpali. However, hostel inmates found him hanging inside the washroom Tuesday morning. School authorities rushed him to Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead, police said. Alleging that Binayak was murdered, his father demanded an impartial probe.

The death of the boy sparked tension in the hospital as his family members and villagers had a heated exchange with the school staff. "We are unable to understand the cause of his death," hostel warden Sambit Kumar said.

"We have launched a probe following a suspected murder complaint by the deceased's family," said Sadar IIC Rajkumar Biswal.



RESOLUTE STAND: Farmers near an excavator modified to shield them from rubber bullets, as they plan to resume their 'Delhi Chalo' march over various demands, including a legal guarantee on the minimum support price for crops and farm loan waiver, at Punjab-Haryana Shambhu border in Patiala district, Tuesday

Vaishnaw, Debashish, Subhasish elected

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, and BJD's Debashish Samantaray and Subhasish Khuntia were Tuesday elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha from Odisha.

Returning Officer Abanikanta Patnaik announced the names of the elected persons after the deadline for withdrawal of nominations ended Tuesday afternoon.

BJP candidate Vaishnaw was re-elected to Rajya Sabha with the ruling BJD's support. Vaishnaw had filed his paper on the last day of the nomination filing process February 15 while two BJD candidates had filed nominations February 13.

P2

Bargarh gets ₹2,149cr projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday inaugurated 62 projects, including the much-awaited ₹1,677.42 crore-Gangadhar Meher Irrigation Project, worth ₹2,149 crore and laid foundation stones for 21 projects worth ₹263 crore in Bargarh district.

Addressing a function organised at Kanapali, Patnaik said Gangadhar Meher Irrigation Project built at a cost of ₹1,677.42 crore will provide irrigation facilities to over 60,000 acre land in the western Odisha district including the agricultural land in Sohela, Bijepur Barpali and Durguripali.

The CM also inaugurated a 100-bed cancer care centre built at a cost of ₹106.06 crore in the district. He inaugurated the transformed Nrusinghnath Peeth, which

has been redeveloped with an allocation of ₹22.78 crore. These apart, Patnaik also inaugurated 59 development projects for which the state government has spent ₹342.69 crore.

The CM said under the 5T programme, 11 cancer hospitals are being built at an investment of more than ₹1,000 crore.

Moreover, Patnaik laid foundation stones for 21 projects worth ₹263.33 crore on the occasion.

Highlighting the ongoing transformation work under 5T initiative, Patnaik said the transformation of schools across the state has achieved big success, while Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana has come as a blessing for over 4 crore people of Odisha.

Interest-free loans have been provided to farmers, Mission Shakti women SHGs and youths in the state, while scholarships have been given to college students, he said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Your species might be same but till we don't ascertain your religions, you can't stay together

SHORT TAKES

PM flags off India's longest tunnel in Jammu

Srinagar: The longest transportation tunnel of the country on Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) was opened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday as he flagged off the first electrified trains of the Kashmir valley. "PM Modi was present in Jammu and he virtually flagged off two electrified trains simultaneously," a railway official said. He added that the PM also inaugurated the 48.1-km-long Banihal-Khari-Sumber-Sangaldan section.

P7

PM lays stone for CUO projects | P2

Bhubaneswar hottest at 37 degrees Celsius

Bhubaneswar: Residents of Capital city Tuesday experienced an early summer as the mercury touched 37 degrees Celsius - the highest day temperature in the state. The day started with a cold and foggy morning which later built up into a hotter day by noon. The Met department confirmed that 15 weather stations across the state recorded above 35 degrees C. Boudh remained second in the table with 36 degrees C followed by Bhawanipatna, Jharsuguda and Paralakhemundi, which recorded 35.6 degrees C each.

UNESCO honour for 'banned' Polish dance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Warsaw (Poland), Feb 20:

Once banned by rulers dispatched from Moscow, Poland's 18th century stately polonaise dance that nurtured the country's spirit even through the dark years of its partition is now honoured by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

This dance has been performed from aristocratic balls to village celebrations, inspiring composers the likes of JS Bach and Frederic Chopin. It still figures prominently in big national occasions, pre-graduation balls and weddings.

This living tradition was enshrined into the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage December 5 as a 'form of joint celebration', which 'commemorates important moments in family and community life and symbolises cooperation, reconciliation and equality'.

Poland's Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, which petitioned for the dance's inclusion into UNESCO's list, said its initiative was met with huge public support.

"Thousands of people on Facebook and on other social media were supporting the (UNESCO) entry," Joanna Cicha-Kuczynska, of the



ministry's Department of Monuments Protection, said.

She said there is a huge community, including entire families, that dance the polonaise and pass the tradition on. Performed in pairs, it is led by the first and most prominent pair which improvises various figures, such as raising

joined hands to form bridges under which other dancers can pass. This slow-paced procession dance evolved from a folk form called the 'walking dance.' By the 18th century, under the French name of 'Polonaise' - or Polish - it was widely danced among European nobility and opened royal balls.

During Poland's more than a century of partition by neighbouring Russia, Prussia and Austria, the polonaise expressed longing for the lost homeland, especially among the exiles and emigrants such as Chopin, who had emigrated to Paris. It was banned on territories that Russia took over.



INDIA'S FASTEST GROWING HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN

NOW IN BHUBANESWAR



Grand Inauguration

CHIEF GUEST

Shri. Ashok Chandra Panda Ji

Hon'ble Minister Science & Technology Public Enterprises, Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disability

GUEST OF HONOUR

Shri. Dr. Achyuta Samanta Ji
Hon'ble MP, Kandhamal Constitution

Shri. Amar Patnaik Ji
Hon'ble MP, Rajya Sabha (Odisha)

Shri. Ananta Narayan Jena Ji
Hon'ble MLA, Bhubaneswar (Central)

Shri. Susant Kumar Rout Ji
Hon'ble MLA, Bhubaneswar (North)

Smt. Sulochana Das Ji
Hon'ble Mayor, BMC, Bhubaneswar

Smt. Kabita Swain Ji
Hon'ble Corporator, Ward No. 41, BMC, Bhubaneswar

Shri. Nikhil Pavan Kalyan Ji, IAS
Hon'ble Director, Rural Development, Odisha

Shri. Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu Ji
Hon'ble MP

on FEB | 21 | WED | 2024

Ankura Hospital, Near Sisubhavan Bus Stop, Bapuji Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Odisha - 751009



WHEELS OF PROSPERITY ROLL IN 25 DISTRICTS

Odisha government's Location Accessible Multimodal Initiative (LAccMI) now covers 25 districts of the state, with Chief Minister Naveen launching the affordable bus service in five more districts – Cuttack, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Subarnapur and Kandhamal on February 19, 2024.

A fleet of 202 luxury buses will connect 700 gram panchayats (GPs) of these districts, benefitting over 44 lakh people of the region.

As many as 58 buses (46 non-AC and 12 AC) will boost connectivity across 261 GPs of Cuttack and benefit over 18 lakh people. In Sambalpur district, a fleet of 36 buses (29 non-AC and seven AC) will ensure seamless road connectivity across 97 GPs, benefitting more than seven lakh people.

It was a memorable day for Jharsuguda as the CM launched the transformative bus service in the district where as many as 19 LAccMI buses (15 non-AC and four AC) will enhance connectivity across 76 GPs, benefitting over five lakh people.

In Subarnapur, 26 luxury buses (21 non-AC and five AC) under LAccMI will benefit over five lakh people in and around 102 GPs of the district.

A fleet of 63 buses (50 non-AC and 13-AC) will boost connectivity across 164 GPs of tribal-dominated Kandhamal district and benefit over seven lakh people of the re-



LAccMI will transform our rural transport system. The buses will now connect from one village to another, improve social bonding and strengthen the rural economy

NAVEEN PATNAIK | HO'BLE CHIEF MINISTER

gion. The service was launched in Khurda, Puri, Kendrapara, Bhadrak, Jajpur and Nayagarh on February 16 and in Mayurbhanj, Bolangir, Bargarh, Keonjhar and Sundargarh on February 12.

The affordable bus service was first launched in tribal-dominated Malkangiri district on October 12, 2023. It was later extended to Gajapati district (October 20), Kalahandi district (November 1), Rayagada district (November 25), Nabarangpur district (November 30) and Koraput district

(December 14). Deogarh, Angul and Dhenkanal districts got the LAccMI bus service January 31. The state government aims at providing the affordable bus service in all the districts by February end.

FEB 19, 2024
202 buses for 700 GPs of Cuttack, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Subarnapur and Kandhamal, benefitting over 44 lakh people

Feb 16, 2024
198 buses for 1,363 GPs of Khurda, Puri, Kendrapara, Bhadrak, Jajpur and Nayagarh, benefitting over 60 lakh people

The affordable bus service was launched in
Malkangiri district on October 12, 2023
Gajapati district on October 20, 2023
Kalahandi district on November 1, 2023
Rayagada district on November 25, 2023
Nabarangpur district on November 30, 2023
Koraput district on December 14

Feb 12, 2024
425 buses for 1,457 GPs of Mayurbhanj, Bolangir, Bargarh, Keonjhar and Sundargarh, benefitting over 90 lakh people

Jan 31, 2024
117 luxury buses for 507 GPs of Deogarh, Angul and Dhenkanal, benefitting over 28 lakh people

- Promotes affordable and sustainable transportation
- Focus on providing mobility in rural areas
- Dependable and economically priced public transport
- Initially aims to provide intra-block and intra-district connectivity
- Plan for future to integrate with inter-city services
- Bridges rural-urban divide
- Empowers women, students, farmers and entrepreneurs
- Enables socio-economic development of rural areas
- 5-Star comfort

BRINGING PROSPERITY

Under LAccMI, buses will ply between panchayats and block HQs, making lives of rural people easier and bringing them prosperity. Over 1,000 LAccMI buses will run across the state by February end. The state government has so far operationalised over 800 buses in 25 districts.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Mission Shakti Self-Help Group (SHG) members are being engaged in various operation and maintenance related activities of LAccMI bus services in blocks. They are also being trained by OSRTC to manage bus stands under the 'Ama Bus Stand', a part of flagship LAccMI.

BENEFITING STUDENTS, FARMERS

The state government has introduced concessional fare for women, students, and the differently-abled travelling in buses under LAccMI. Women, students and the differently-abled will be charged a flat fare of Rs 5 and Rs 10, respectively, irrespective of the distance travelled.

BOOST TO TOURISM, LOGISTICS

The affordable bus service will give boost to tourism as it will ease the connectivity to tourist hotspots in interiors from district HQs where people would earlier find it difficult to reach for picnicking and sightseeing purposes. The service also facilitates transportation of goods.



national

of the day quote

BJP supporters should understand how the party is winning every election through 'theft and scams'. Neither the country nor the future of their own children is safe in the hands of such people

AKHILESH YADAV | SP CHIEF

Students today must think beyond competitive examinations to get a position in the government and explore other opportunities, which are now available aplenty

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | VICE PRESIDENT

Congress party cannot develop India. It cannot provide welfare to the poor

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

Maurya quits SP, to launch own party

Lucknow: A week after tendering his resignation from the post of Samajwadi Party national general secretary, Swami Prasad Maurya Tuesday resigned from the party's primary membership and the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council and announced formation of a new party. Maurya resigned as the party's national general secretary February 13, accusing the leadership of discriminating against him and not defending him over his controversial statements on the Ramcharitmanas and the Ayodhya temple consecration ceremony. Maurya said that he will form a new party and announce it Thursday in New Delhi. "I got an opportunity to work with you. But after our talks on February 12 and my resignation (as national general secretary) on February 13, no initiative of any talks with me was taken due to which I am resigning from the primary membership of the party," Maurya said in a letter to party chief Akhilesh Yadav.

FROM FARM TO PLATE

STRENGTHENING MARKETING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION UNDER PMMSY



Sagar Mehra

In the vibrant tapestry of Indian cuisine, one dietary component stands out for its nutritional richness and culinary versatility - 'fish'. Beyond its delectable taste, 'fish' holds a profound significance in the Indian context, contributing to rich cultural significance and multiple health benefits. The intricate relationship between fish and Indian culture goes beyond the plate, influencing traditions, health practices, and economic prosperity. Consumption of fish has the potential to positively impact not just individual nutritional status but also contribute to the food and nutritional security of the country.

While globally, India is a front runner in fish production and exports, enhancing domestic consumption is an important area for sustained growth of fisheries sector in the country. Various programmes and schemes have been undertaken by the Dept of Fisheries (GoI) to holistically develop the Indian fisheries sector. One of the key steps is the launch of the flagship scheme Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) on September 10, 2020 with the highest ever total investment of Rs 20,050 crore. PMMSY focuses on undertaking projects for technology adoption, addressing value chain gaps and socio-economic welfare. In addition to various outputs of increasing production and exports, the scheme focuses on creating

PM flags off India's longest transportation tunnel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Feb 20: The longest transportation tunnel of the country on the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) was opened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday as he flagged off the first electrified trains of the Kashmir valley.

"Prime Minister Modi was present in Jammu and he virtually flagged off two electrified trains simultaneously - one from Srinagar to Sangaldan in the down direction and the other from Sangaldan to Srinagar in the up direction," a railway official said.

Over 100 schoolchildren and their teachers took the inaugural trip from each side as special guests. The official added that the Prime Minister also inaugurated the 48.1-km-long Banihal-Khari-Sumber-Sangaldan section. "This longest tunnel, which is 12.77 km long and known as T-50, falls between the Khari-Sumber section," the official said.

According to the Northern Railway (NR), trains can now run from Baramulla to Sangaldan via Banihal, which used to be the last or originating station earlier. T-50 is supposed to be the most challenging of the 11 tunnels in the Banihal-Khari-Sumber-Sangaldan section.

According to railway officials associated with the project, the tunnel survey work started around 1996 but the tender was awarded in December 2013 so it took around 10 years to operationalise it. "All safety measures have been taken inside the tunnel for emergency situations. An escape tunnel has been constructed parallel to T-50 to evacuate passengers in case of any emergency," an official said.

"At every 375 metres, a connecting passage between the escape tunnel and T-50 has been



J&K's first electric train during its flagging off ceremony, at Srinagar railway station, in Jammu & Kashmir, Tuesday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually flagged off the train on the newly electrified Baramulla-Srinagar-Banihal-Sangaldan route

made so that the passengers can be brought to the escape tunnel and then, carried to their desired destinations in vehicles," he added.

The official said that in order to tackle a fire incident, water pipes have been laid on both sides of the tunnel with an opening valve provided at every 375 metres so that water can be sprayed on a train from both sides to douse the flames.

"Escape tunnels have been created for other bigger tunnels too," he said. According to NR officials, the opening of the Banihal-Khari-Sumber-Sangaldan section has brought them a step closer to achieving the dream of running a train from the Kashmir valley in the north to Kanyakumari on the southern tip of the country.

"Earlier, eight diesel trains (four each from one side) were operating between Baramulla and Banihal. Today, Prime Minister Modi not only inaugurated the extension of the Banihal route to Sangaldan via Khari and Samber but also flagged off the first electrified trains on the whole route from Baramulla to Sangaldan," the

official said.

Now, eight electrified trains have started running between Baramulla and Banihal and four of those have been extended to Sangaldan.

"The four other trains will also be extended up to Sangaldan after a couple of months," the official added. According to experts associated with the project, the first section of the USBRL - the Quazigund-Baramulla section - was operationalised by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2009. In July 2013, the Banihal-Quazigund section, which included the operationalisation of the 11.2-km-long T-80 Pir Panjal tunnel, was opened.

"Once the complete USBRL opens in the coming months, passengers will enjoy infrastructural marvels, such as the Chenab bridge, the highest railway bridge in the world, and the Anji bridge, which is the first cable-stayed bridge of the Indian Railways," an NR official said, adding that the total length of the USBRL is 272 km and the cost of the project is ₹41,119 crore.



Legal guarantee for MSP will not make Indian farmers a burden on the budget but ensure that they become drivers of GDP growth

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

Maha passes Bill to provide 10% quota for Marathas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 20: The Maharashtra legislature Tuesday unanimously passed a Bill providing 10 per cent reservation for the Maratha community in education and government jobs.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde tabled the Maharashtra State Socially and Educationally Backward Bill 2024 in the legislative assembly during the day-long special session of the legislature on Maratha quota.

The Bill, which was passed unanimously by the House, stated that the Marathas comprise 28 per cent of the total population of Maharashtra. A substantial number of castes and groups are already placed in the reserved category, getting about 52 per cent of reservations altogether. It would be completely inequitable to place the Maratha community in the Other Backward Class (OBC) category, it said.

The backwardness of the Maratha class is distinct and different from backward classes and, more particularly, OBC in the sense that it is more pervasive in terms of its coverage, it differs in its penetration and further regressive in character, the Bill said.

The Maratha quota Bill also proposed that once the reservation comes into effect, its review could be taken after 10 years. Out of the 52 per cent reservation currently existing in the state, the Scheduled Castes are eligible for 13 per cent, Scheduled Tribes 7 per cent, OBCs 19 per cent, Special Backward Classes 2 per cent, Vimukta Jati 3 per cent, Nomadic Tribe (B) 2.5 per cent, Nomadic Tribe (C) Dhargar 3.5 per cent and Nomadic Tribe (D) Vanjari 2 per cent.

After tabling the Bill in the House, CM Shinde said as many as 22 states in the country have crossed the 50 per cent reservation mark. "For instance, Tamil Nadu state has 69 per cent, Haryana 67 per cent, Rajasthan 64 per cent, Bihar 69 per cent, Gujarat 59 per cent and West Bengal 55 per cent. I can mention other states as well. The purpose of the session is to help the (Maratha) community," he said.

"We want to give reservation to the Maratha community without touching the existing quota of the OBCs in the state. The Marathas have been struggling for the last 40 years to get reservation benefits," the CM said. The Bill was later also passed unanimously in the state legislative council. It will now be sent to Governor Ramesh Bais for his assent.

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No. 503/VDU/24 Date: 19.01.2024

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Sd./- Registrar
OIPR-11133/11/0003/2324 V. Dev University, Jeypore

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, DHENKANAL, KAMAKHYANAGAR
E-Mail: rw.kamakhyanagar@yahoo.co.in

e-Procurement Notice No. 23 Road Work/2023-24

1. Name of the Work	: Road Works
2. Total No. of Works	: 5 (Five) Nos.
3. Tender Cost	: Rs.8.47 & 42.37 lakhs (Approx.)
4. Class of Contractor	: "D", "C" & "B" Class
5. Period of Completion	: 30 Days
6. Availability of Tender	: 17.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M. to 20.02.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.
7. Last date & time of seeking Tender Clarification	: 19.02.2024 upto 4.00 P.M.
8. Date & Time of opening of tender	: 20.02.2024 at 5.30 P.M.

Other details can be seen from the website <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>.

Sd./- Executive Engineer
R.W. Division-II, Dhenkanal
Kamakhyanagar
OIPR-25094/11/0025/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, PATNA
NOTICE INVITING TENDER e-Procurement
Online Bid ID No. 04-Patna (KJRW/2023-2024)
No.743 /Dev Dt.17.02.2024

No.i-621: The Block Development Officer, Patna, Keonjhar on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites online percentage rate tender through 'e' procurement to be received in online mode for the work as detailed in the Annexure to this bid notice.

Name of work	: Civil Construction Works
No. of works	: 15 (Fifteen) Nos.
Estimated cost	: Rs.308.86 Lakhs
Tender paper cost	: Mentioned in column No.6 of tender call notice
Period of completion	: 6 (Six) Calendar Months
Availability of Bid Document	: From 21.02.2024 to 01.03.2024 during office hours in website (www.tendersodisha.gov.in)
Period of receipt of bid through Online	: From 21.02.2024 to 01.03.2024 through online
Date of opening Bid Document	: At 11.00 AM on 02.03.2024 in the Office Panchayat Samiti, Patna (Conference Hall)
Date of Lottery	: At 11.00 A.M. on 04.03.2024 in the Office of Panchayat Samiti, Patna (Conference Hall)
Digital Signature Certificate of Bidder	: The bidder must possess compatible digital signature certificate (DSC) of Class-II or Class-III
Name & Address of the OIT	: Block Development Officer, Patna A/Po-Patna, Dist-Keonjhar Pin-758030. E-mail id: ori-patna@nic.in

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd./- (Sri Shiv Shankar Murnu)
Block Development Officer, Patna, Keonjhar
OIPR-19047/11/0006/2324

Enhancing domestic fish consumption

STRENGTHENING MARKETING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION UNDER PMMSY

around 16.5 lakh direct and indirect employment. In its fourth year running, impactful projects worth ₹18,000 crore (90%) have been approved pan India under the PMMSY scheme.

Traditionally, the focus of fisheries projects has been towards increase of fish production. As a cornerstone of transformation, PMMSY scheme focuses on balancing the demand and supply equation by diverting funds towards development of post-harvest infrastructure. As fish production has been consistently increasing to reach a magnificent 174 lakh tonnes under PMMSY, it offers immense potential to boost domestic fish consumption, value addition and exports.

Towards this effect, projects approved under PMMSY have ensured that 26,067 fish transport facilities including refrigerated and insulated trucks, live fish vending centres, auto-rickshaws, motorcycles and bicycles with ice box are owned by beneficiaries for accessing markets and consumers conveniently to deliver fresh and quality fish. Most popular being the motorbikes and cycles with ice boxes have ensured convenient and faster access by small scale farmers to sales points.

To ensure more availability of quality frozen and fresh fish 6733 units of fish retail points in form of markets and kiosks are being developed. States like Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana and Telangana have been at the forefront demonstrating increase of fish sales in northern India and well-planned distribution of scheme funds amongst coastal and inland states.

575 cold storage facilities have been well distributed amongst 30 states/UTs indicating post-harvest storage of fish is being done across India. 108 value added enterprises have been sanctioned for processing underlines the commitment for promoting entrepre-

neurial models, particularly emphasising hygienic fish marketing through the establishment of a chain of fish vending kiosks. The proliferation of the value-added enterprises, particularly in southern India, is also indicative of the export prominence and demand of value-added fish in form of pickles, dry salted fish, fish chips, fish balls etc.

For the last mile connect to ensure that awareness creation, outreach and extension happens in the right way 2494 Sagar Mitras for coastal states/UTs and 79 Matsya Seva Kendraspan India have been approved. The extension services are expected to be instrumental in promoting sectoral schemes and fish consumption as an 'super-food' packed with nutrition.

To benchmark and understand domestic consumption trends, GoI invested in 'A Study of the Fisheries Sector in India - An Overview of Current Demand and Future Prospect' by National Council of Applied Economic Research in March 2023. The study highlights that expenditure on fish in proportion to total food expenditure has more than doubled as compared to that in 2011-12, monthly consumption of fish has increased due to increased demand in urban areas, 77% fish consumed are fresh-water species - majorly Rohu and Calta while Sardines and Bhetki are preferred marine fishes. On a promising note, the estimated demand for fish is expected to reach 26 million tons in 2031. Hence such consumer preferences and indicators thus play a major role in defining marketing and branding strategies.

With the supply chain and distribution infrastructure at a level to handle the increased demand and sales points, the next priority step for GoI is to create awareness amongst consumers on benefits of fish eating through appropriate branding and marketing. Traditionally,

outreach events such as organising fish and seafood festivals with celebrity chefs and webinars with sector experts, celebrating Poshan Maahannually in September, launch of 75 fish recipe books to celebrate India@75 campaign under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, broadcasting of jingles on benefits of fish, installation of outdoor hoardings and digital displays at strategic locations etc. are being continuously undertaken by National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), Hyderabad.

While various digital initiatives, especially on social media platforms, have been undertaken many other initiatives are being planned for extensive outreach, mass marketing and branding. Consumer specific marketing campaigns and strategic initiatives in the Ho-Re-Ca (Hotel-Restaurants-Café) are being planned. Another critical step being prioritised is the policy framework of standards, certification, accreditation and traceability for the sector.

PMMSY thus envisages to craft a robust marketing ecosystem and strategy to bridge the gap between producers and consumers by ensuring a seamless supply chain and increased number of sales points. Consequently, this approach not only fosters overall industry growth but also positively impacts the health and nutrition of the population.

Therefore, importance of fish consumption in India extends far beyond the dinner plate. From fostering better health to driving economic growth and cultural preservation, fish plays a pivotal role in the nation's overall well-being. As India progresses, recognizing and harnessing the full potential of fish consumption will be key to unlocking a healthier, more prosperous future for all.

The writer is Joint Secretary and policy expert in the Department of Fisheries, Government of India.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION-I, MALKANGIRI
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
1st Corrigendum to Identification No. Online Tender 16/RWD-I, MKG/2023-24 dt.08.02.2024
No.O-2557:01.Name of the Work: Road Repair works (Detailed in Annexure). 02. Total Number of Works: 4 (Four) Numbers. 03. Estimated Cost: Rs.11.76 lakhs to Rs.47.90 Lakhs. 04. Class of Contractor: "B", "C" & "D" Class. 05. Period of Completion: (As per detailed in Annexure). 06. Other details.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	No. of Works	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding		Last date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date and time of opening of tender (Double Cover)
			From	To		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division-I, Malkangiri	Online Tender-16/RWD-I, MKG/2023-24	Total 4 Nos.	15.02.2024 from 11.00 A.M.	22.02.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.	21.02.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.	Bid Opening:- 23.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.

Sd./-Sujit Behera
Superintending Engineer, R.W.Division-I, Malkangiri
OIPR-25058/11/0025/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, RAYAGADA
Email: rw_rayagada@yahoo.co.in, Phone No.06856-222188

E-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No.EERWRGD-Online-10/2023-24 Date:12.02.2024

No.O-2545:1.Name of the work : Repair to road works for the year 2023-24. 2. Total No. of Works: 02 Nos (Percentage rate tender). 3. Estimated Cost: 12.15 to 12.61 Lakhs. 4. Class of Contractor: "C" & "D". 5. Time of Completion: Specified in DTCN. 6. Mode of submission of tender: Tender should be submitted only in online <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>. 7. Other details: Detailed tender condition specified in DTCN.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	No. of Works	Availability of Tender online for bidding		Date & Time of opening of tender
			From	To	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Rayagada	EERWRGD-Online-10/2023-24	02 (Two)	19.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M.	26.02.2024 at 05.00 P.M.	26.02.2024 at 5.30 P.M.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Rayagada
OIPR-25072/11/0024/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION, RAYAGADA
Email: eephd.rgda.od@nic.in, eephdrgda@gmail.com

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) NO.EEPHRRAYAGADA-74/2023-24. DT.17.02.2024

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Bid Identification No.	Estimated Cost (Rs. in Lakh)	Class of Contractor	Period of Completion	Availability of Bid document for Online Bidding	
						From	To
1	Construction of panel room at intake Well Site at Gunupur	EEPHDRAY-AGADA-74/2023-24, Dtd. 17.02.2024	16.81	'D' and 'C' Class	03 (Three Months)	27.02.2024 (11.00 Hr)	07.03.2024 (17.00 Hr)

Name & Address of Officer Inviting Bid : Executive Engineer, P.H. Division, Rayagada
Email:eephd.rgda.od@nic.in, eephdrgda@gmail.com

❖Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal <https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in>.
❖All amendments, time extension, clarifications etc. will be uploaded in the website only. Bidders should regularly visit the above website to keep themselves updated.

SD./- EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
P.H. DIVISION, RAYAGADA
OIPR-13052/11/0031/2324



Russians are taking advantage of delays in aid to Ukraine
VOLODYMYR ZELENKYY | UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT

GOV.UK LAUNCHES NEW LOGO
In a move that symbolises a new royal era for the country, the UK government has updated the logo on its official GOV.UK digital services used across all departments for official day-to-day business with the chosen crown of King Charles III



of the day quote

When there is a will, there is a way. It required a political change to finally have the presence here of the Polish justice minister

VERA JOUROVA | EUROPEAN COMMISSION VICE-PRESIDENT

As you rightly said recently, an all-out offensive on the city would be devastating for the 1.5 million Palestinian civilians there who are already on the edge of survival

HOSSEIN AMIR-ABDOLLAHIAN | IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

South Africa bears a special obligation, both to its own people and the international community, to ensure that wherever the egregious and offensive practices of apartheid occur, these must be called out for what they are and brought to an immediate end

VUSIMUZI MADONSELA | SA'S AMBASSADOR TO THE NETHERLANDS

SHORT TAKES

Greece's PM defends record on rule of law

Athens: Greece's Prime Minister insisted Tuesday that the rule of law in the country was "stronger than ever", despite mounting criticism from press freedom and human rights groups. Kyriakos Mitsotakis blamed political opponents for the criticism of his centre-right government and argued that the "country was at the centre of a slander (campaign)". He hosted Roberta Metsola, the European Parliament president, who is touring European Union capitals ahead of elections to the EU's legislative branch in June.

Oz to double naval warships

Canberra: Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles and Defence Industry Minister Pat Conroy Tuesday announced the major overhaul in Navy and said the government is committed to more than doubling the size of the nation's naval warships. With the announcement, Australia's fleet of combat-ready warships will be expanded from the current 11 to 26, Xinhua news agency reported. The government will spend an additional \$7.2 billion over the next decade to accelerate the delivery of the future fleet, which Marles and Conroy said will be Australia's largest since the end of World War II.

UN rights chief slams UK's Rwanda bill

Geneva: The UK's recent legislative moves to facilitate the removal of asylum-seekers to Rwanda run contrary to the basic principles of the rule of law and risk delivering a serious blow to human rights, the UN Human Rights Chief said. The bill would also drastically strip back the courts' ability to scrutinise removal decisions, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said Monday in a statement as quoted by Xinhua news agency report.

Unemployment rises again in South Africa

Cape Town: South Africa's unemployment rate, already the highest in the world, rose to 32.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2023, according to official government figures released Tuesday. The Quarterly Labour Force Survey reported that the number of unemployed working-age people in South Africa rose to 7.9 million after 46,000 more became unemployed in the last three months of 2023, increasing from 31.9 per cent.

STALEMATE CONTINUES

PML-N, PPP fail to agree on power-sharing deal

The fifth round of the meeting, held at the residence of PML-N senior leader Senator Ishaq Dar Monday, saw the participation of prominent leaders from both parties, who have pledged to work together in the interest of the cash-strapped country

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 20: There was no progress in the formation of a new coalition government in Pakistan Tuesday as top leaders of the PML-N and the PPP failed to agree on a power-sharing deal in their latest round of talks, indicating deepening fissures in the country's political landscape.

The fifth round of the meeting, held at the residence of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Senator Ishaq Dar here Monday, saw the participation of prominent leaders from both parties, who have pledged to work together in the interest of the cash-strapped country.

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) delegation comprised senior leaders Murad Ali Shah, Qamar Zaman Kaira, Nadeem Afzal Chan, and others, the *Express Tribune* newspaper reported Tuesday.

After a three-hour deliberation Monday, the negotiation hit a snag prompting a temporary halt, with both PML-N and PPP agreeing to reconvene at 10 pm Monday. However, the meeting did not take place.

Eventually, at 11 pm, the PML-N concluded their meeting, announcing that discussions with PPP would resume Wednesday. In an informal conversation with



reporters after the first round of the meeting, PML-N leader Azam Nazir Tarar conveyed a positive trajectory in the ongoing discussions.

"Some things have already been decided on the matter of PPP's inclusion in the cabinet," Tarar was quoted as saying by *Geo News*. The PPP is reportedly asking for key constitutional positions of President, Chairman Senate, and Speaker of the National Assembly for its support to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's PML-N. Sources said

PPP Chairman Bilawal Zardari-Bhutto was playing smartly and trying to bring PML-N to a point where it withdrew from making a coalition government and then launching himself as Prime Minister and form a government with the support of independents of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) who have now joined the Sunni

Ittehad Council. But it will not be easy for the 35-year-old former Foreign Minister as PTI has already rejected the possibility of supporting the PPP.

Meanwhile, Bilawal Tuesday said he foresees a "stalemate" in the formation of a coalition government "if someone is not ready to change their stance".

"If someone else wants to change their stance, there can be progress. If they are not ready to change it, I foresee a stalemate," he said, adding that this would not benefit democracy or the parliamentary system.

The general elections have been controversial with several serious allegations of widespread rigging to alter the results.

Over 11 days after the voting, there is still no clarity on which party would form the government at the Centre.

Though independent candidates backed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan won the maximum number of seats in Parliament, PML-N and PPP have announced that they will form a coalition gov-

ernment after the elections resulted in a hung Parliament.

However, despite multiple rounds of talks, a decision regarding PPP's inclusion in the Cabinet remained elusive.

According to sources, the powerful military, which has backed a unity government after the fractured verdict, would have to put down its foot and the PPP would have to join the coalition government with a share in the cabinet.

Otherwise, the process of forming a coalition government would be difficult.

The Parliament should meet for its maiden session by February 29 and it is hoped that the two leading parties -- PML-N and PPP -- would agree on a power-sharing arrangement by that time.

Meanwhile, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (Pakistan) pledged its support for the PML-N Monday.

Imran Khan's party Tuesday demanded Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja's immediate resignation for failing to hold "free and fair" elections after allegations of massive poll rigging emerged.

Raja, a retired civil servant, was appointed as the head of the Election Commission of Pakistan in January 2020 by the government of then Prime Minister Khan.

However, despite multiple rounds of talks, a decision regarding PPP's inclusion in the Cabinet remained elusive

Navalny's mother appeals Putin to release son's body

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, Feb 20: The mother of Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny appealed Tuesday to President Vladimir Putin to intervene and turn her son's body over to her so she can bury him with dignity.

Lyudmila Navalnaya, who has been trying to get his body since Saturday, appeared in a video outside the Arctic penal colony where Navalny died Friday. "For the fifth day, I have been unable to see him. They wouldn't release his body to me. And they're not even telling me where he is," a black-clad Navalnaya said in the video, with the barred wire of Penal Colony No. 3 in Kharp, about 1,900 kilometres northeast of Moscow.

"I'm reaching out to you, Vladimir Putin. The resolution of this matter depends solely on you. Let me finally see my son. I demand that Alexei's body is released immediately, so that I can bury him like a human being," she said in the video, which was posted to social media by Navalny's team.

Russian authorities have said the cause of Navalny's death is still unknown and refused to release his body for the next two weeks as the preliminary inquest continues, members of his team said.

They accused the government of stalling to try to hide evidence. On Monday, Navalny's widow, Yulia, released a video accusing Putin of killing her husband and alleged the refusal to release his body was part of a



Navalny's death has deprived the Russian Opposition of its best-known and inspiring politician less than a month before an election that is all but certain to give Putin another six years in power

Many Russians had seen Navalny as a rare hope for political change amid Putin's unrelenting crackdown on the Opposition

cover-up. "They are cowardly and meanly hiding his body, refusing to give it to his mother and lying miserably," she said.

Lyudmila Navalnaya and her son's lawyers went to law enforcement agencies and the morgue where the body is believed to be held in the Arctic region, but were unable to get them to turn it over or say where it is. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov rejected the allegations of a cover-up, telling reporters that "these are absolutely unfounded, insolent accusations about the head of the Russian state."

Navalny, 47, was imprisoned since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from a nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin.

Lockbit cybercrime gang faces global takedown

REUTERS

London/Washington, Feb 20: An international law enforcement operation led by Britain's National Crime Agency and the FBI has arrested and indicted members of the Lockbit ransomware gang, in an unprecedented police operation that has struck one of the world's most notorious cybercrime gangs.

The United States unsealed an indictment Tuesday charging two Russian nationals with deploying Lockbit ransomware against companies and groups around the world, the Department of Justice announced.

The indictment was made public as the NCA, US Department of Justice, FBI and Europol gathered in London to announce the disruption of the gang, which has targeted over 2,000 victims worldwide, received more than \$120 million in ransom payments and demanded hundreds of millions of dollars, the DOJ said.

Britain's National Crime Agency Cyber Division, with the US Department of Justice, the FBI and other law enforcement seized control of websites used by Lockbit in a rare international operation, the gang and US and UK authorities said.



Members of Alpha Company, 3d US Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard), give a firing demonstration on the Bowling Green of George Washington's Mount Vernon Monday, in Mount Vernon, Va. The ceremonies at Mount Vernon were held to honor George Washington's birthday February 22, and President's Day

SNIPPETS

Putin gives Kim luxury limousine

Seoul: Russian President Vladimir Putin has gifted North Korean leader Kim Jong Un a Russian-made luxury limousine for his personal use, both countries announced Tuesday, in another sign of their expanding cooperation. Observers said the shipment violates a UN resolution that bans supplying luxury items to North Korea, in an attempt to pressure the country to abandon its nuclear weapons. Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, and another senior North Korean official accepted the gift on Sunday and she conveyed her brother's thanks to Putin, the Korean Central News Agency said. Kim Yo Jong said the gift showed the special personal relationship between the leaders, the report said.

Doctors in South Korea are on strike

Seoul: South Korean trainee doctors collectively walked off their jobs Tuesday to protest a government push to recruit more medical students, triggering cancellations of surgeries and other medical treatments at hospitals. The Health Ministry urged them to return to work immediately, saying they must not endanger the lives of patients to fight the government. As of Monday night, more than half of the 13,000 medical interns and residents in South Korea had submitted resignations, according to the Health Ministry, and 1,630 left their work sites. None of the resignations have been accepted so far. More junior doctors are expected to follow suit.

Iran, SL to boost ties

Colombo: Iran and Sri Lanka Tuesday decided to strengthen their cooperation in multiple areas, including the energy sector, as the foreign ministers of the two countries met here and held "extensive discussions" on issues of bilateral and mutual interests. Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who arrived here Tuesday on a two-day official visit, met Sri Lankan counterpart Ali Sabry at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here, amidst talks of Colombo preparing to join the international coalition against the attacks by Iranian-backed Yemen's Houthis on merchant ships in the Red Sea. "We had extensive discussions on further strengthening our cooperation in multiple areas, including the energy sector. We agreed to work closely and enhance our partnership further," Sabry said in a post on X.

Black hole devouring 1 Sun a day discovered

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 20: Astronomers have discovered the fastest-growing black hole ever recorded - the most luminous known object in the universe that is devouring the equivalent of one Sun every day. The researchers at The Australian National University (ANU) noted that the black hole with a mass roughly 17 billion times that of the Sun has set a record that may not ever be beaten.

"The incredible rate of growth also means a huge release of light and heat," said study lead author Christian Wolf, Associate Professor at ANU.

"So, this is also the most lu-



minous known object in the universe. It is 500 trillion times brighter than our sun," Wolf

said in a statement. A black hole is a region of spacetime where gravity is so

A black hole is a region of spacetime where gravity is so strong that nothing, including light, can escape it

strong that nothing, including light, can escape it.

Christopher Onken, co-author of the study published in the journal *Nature Astronomy*, noted that it was a surprise that the black hole remained undetected until now, given what we know about many other, less impressive ones.

The black hole was first detected using a 2.3 metre telescope at ANU Siding Spring

Observatory near Coonabarabran in New South Wales (NSW).

The research team then turned to one of the largest telescopes in the world - the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope in Chile - to confirm the full nature of the black hole and measure its mass.

"The light from this black hole has travelled over 12 billion years to reach us," said Professor Rachel Webster from the University of Melbourne said.

"In the adolescent universe, matter was moving chaotically and feeding hungry black holes. Today, stars are moving orderly at safe distances and only rarely plunge into black holes,"

Webster said. The intense radiation comes from the accretion disc - made of rapidly rotating gas - around the black hole, which is the holding pattern for all the material waiting to be devoured, the researchers said.

"It looks like a gigantic and magnetic storm cell with temperatures of 10,000 degrees Celsius, lightning everywhere and winds blowing so fast they would go around Earth in a second," Wolf said.

"This storm cell is seven light years across, which is 50 per cent more than the distance from our solar system to the next star in the Galaxy, alpha Centauri," he added.

business

of the day quote

Indian tech companies, with the advent of Generative AI, are expanding their portfolios beyond traditional IT and business process management to include AI-driven analytics, intelligent automation, and personalised customer interactions

DEBIANI GHOSH | PRESIDENT AT NASSCOM

Rural India holds great potential for us, and through our collaboration with BLS E-Services, we aspire to deepen our presence in these markets by introducing our made-in-India, made for the world cars that are designed to cater to the unique preferences of our customers

SUDHIR MALHOTRA | RENAULT INDIA VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES AND MARKETING

Wipro's Enterprise AI-Ready Platform will allow clients to easily integrate and standardise multiple data sources augmenting AI and Generative AI-enabled transformation across business functions

NAGENDRA BANDARU | MANAGING PARTNER AND PRESIDENT, WIPRO ENTERPRISE FUTURING

SHORT TAKES

Whirlpool sells 24% stake in Indian arm

New Delhi: American home appliances major Whirlpool Corporation Tuesday offloaded 24 per cent of its stake in its Indian arm, Whirlpool of India Ltd, in a block deal, raising approximately USD 468 million, which will be used to reduce its debt. Whirlpool Mauritius Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Whirlpool Corporation, executed the sale of 30.4 million equity shares of Whirlpool India via an on-market trade, according to an exchange filing. After the sale of 30.4 million equity shares, Whirlpool Mauritius' holding in the Indian entity has reduced to 51 per cent from the previous 75 per cent, said Whirlpool Corporation in a US SEC filing, a copy of which was shared by Whirlpool of India on BSE here.

Air India-Vistara merger in progress

New Delhi: Singapore Airlines Tuesday said the proposed merger of Air India and Vistara is in progress, and is awaiting foreign direct investment and other regulatory approvals. Vistara is a joint venture between Singapore Airlines and Tata Group. The merger of Vistara with Air India under a deal, wherein Singapore Airlines will acquire a 25.1 per cent stake in Air India, was announced in November 2022. While announcing its December quarter results, Singapore Airlines said the merger will bolster its presence in India, strengthen its multi-hub strategy, and allow it to continue participating directly in this large and fast-growing aviation market. "The proposed merger of Air India and Vistara is in progress, pending foreign direct investment and other regulatory approvals."

Union Bank plans to raise ₹3,000cr

New Delhi: State-owned Union Bank of India Tuesday approved a Rs 3,000 crore share sale proposal to fund its business growth. The Committee of Directors for Raising Capital Funds, in its meeting held Tuesday, cleared the proposal for raising of funds for an amount not exceeding Rs 3,000 crore through the issue of equity shares via Qualified Institutions Placement (QIP), the bank said in a regulatory filing. This is subject to the requisite regulatory or statutory approvals, it said.



We will fully exploit the potential of AI but set up the guardrails as well to prevent misuse

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR | MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

EPFO ADDS NET 15.62 LAKH MEMBERS IN DEC

Retirement fund body EPFO recorded a net addition of 15.62 lakh members in December 2023, according to payroll data released Tuesday. An increase of 11.97 per cent has been registered in net member addition during December 2023 compared to the previous month, a labour ministry statement said.



Fresh round of pvt capex to fuel growth: RBI Bulletin

The article stresses that stable and low inflation at 4 per cent provides the bedrock for sustaining GDP expansion



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 20: Fresh round of capital expenditure by the corporate sector is likely to fuel the next leg of growth, said RBI's latest Bulletin, stressing that stable and low inflation at 4 per cent provides the bedrock for sustaining GDP expansion. The likelihood of the global economy exhibiting stronger-than-expected growth in 2024 has brightened in recent months, with risks broadly balanced, said the article on 'State of the Economy' published in the Reserve Bank's February Bulletin.

The Indian economy continues to sustain the momentum achieved in the first half of 2023-24, going by high frequency indicators, it said. "Expectations of a fresh round of capex by the corporate sector

is likely to fuel the next leg of growth," said the article authored by a team led by RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra.

Overall, investment intentions of the private corporate sector have been positive this year so far. Total cost of projects, for which loans were sanctioned by major banks/all-India financial institutions (FIs) stood at Rs 2.4 lakh crore during April-December 2023, which was 23 per cent higher than that in the corresponding period last year.

Funds raised through external commercial borrowings (ECBs) for capex and initial public offerings (IPOs) remained robust during the second and third quarters of the current financial year, though their levels were lower than such resources raised during Q1 2023-24.

The Reserve Bank has projected the GDP growth for the next fiscal at 7 per cent.

Referring to inflation, the article said consumer price index (CPI) based retail inflation came off its November-December spikes in its January 2024 reading, while core inflation is at its lowest since October 2019.

"Stable and low inflation at 4 per cent provides the bedrock for sustaining economic growth," the authors said.

CPI inflation has been projected at 4.5 per cent for the year 2024-25 by the RBI.

The RBI's rate setting panel, MPC, has noted with concern that large and repetitive food price shocks are impeding the disinflation engendered by the steady easing of core inflation, with geopolitical events and their impact on supply chains, and volatility in international financial markets and commodity prices posing upside risks.

Earlier this month, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided that monetary policy must remain disinflationary to ensure anchoring of inflation expectations and the progressive alignment of inflation outcomes with the target, while supporting growth.

The central bank said the views expressed in the Bulletin article are of the authors and do not represent the views of the RBI.

7% growth expected in FY25: FinMin report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: The outlook for the Indian economy appears 'bright' with GDP likely to clock 7 per cent growth rate next fiscal although the nation needs to keep a watch on global headwinds emanating from geopolitical tensions and volatility in international financial markets, a finance ministry report said Tuesday.

During the current financial year, the Indian economy is estimated to grow at 7.3 per cent. This would be the third year in the row when the GDP would grow in excess of 7 per cent.

Driven by a better-than-expected performance in Q2 and above 7 per cent growth projection for FY24 (by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation in its first advance estimates), many global agencies have revised India's growth projection in the upward direction, the Monthly Economic Review released by the finance ministry said.

This reflects the resilience of the Indian economy to sustain its growth path amidst ongoing geopolitical headwinds, it said, adding, the measures announced in the Interim Union Budget FY25 are expected to play a pivotal role in supporting India's growth journey ahead.

Talking about tailwinds for the next financial year, the report said prospects of healthy Rabi harvesting, sustained manufacturing profitability and underlying service resilience are expected to support economic activity in FY25.

On the demand side, household consumption is expected to

improve, while prospects of fixed investment remain bright owing to an upturn in the private capex cycle, improved business sentiments, healthy balance sheets of banks and corporates, and the government's continued thrust on capital expenditure, it said.

Improvement in the outlook for global trade and rising integration in the global supply chain will support net external demand, it said.

However, headwinds from geopolitical tensions, volatility in international financial markets, and geoeconomic fragmentation need watching, it said.

Global slowdown, it said, especially in India's major trading partners, has led to a slowdown in demand for India's merchandise exports.

At the same time, it said, there has been a decline in the overall value of imports due to a fall in international commodity prices, which spiked after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

This has led to a narrowing of India's merchandise trade deficit in the first ten months of FY24, it said, adding, a narrowing merchandise trade deficit, coupled with rising net services receipts, is expected to result in an improvement in India's current account deficit.

As far as capital account is concerned, India's strong macroeconomic fundamentals, high growth and stable business environment have boosted Foreign Portfolio Inflows (FPIs).

On the inflation, it said, pressure has moderated in January 2024 due to a fall in food as well as core inflation.

Byju's investors call for EGM to ouster founder, his family

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Amidst financial turbulence at Byju's, a group of key investors at the edtech have called for an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) Friday to oust its founder CEO Byju Raveendran and his family members over "mismanagement and failures" at what was once India's hottest tech startups, sources said.

The shareholders, who have called the EGM, collectively hold more than 30 per cent stake in Byju's.

Raveendran and family own about 26 per cent in the company.

The sources in the know said the EGM notice calls for ouster of the current board of Think & Learn, the firm that operates Byju's, composed of Raveendran, his wife and co-founder Divya Gokulnath and his brother Riju Ravindran. Detailing the reasons for seeking the ouster, the notice listed alleged financial mismanagement, erosion of value due to management's failure to enforce the company's legal rights and concealment of material information.

Earlier this month, South Africa's Prosus, Peak XV Partners (formerly Sequoia Capital), General Atlantic, Sofina, The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Owl Ventures, and Sand Capital issued a joint statement seeking change of guard at the company.

According to sources, the EGM notice detailing alleged financial mismanagement stated that the company management failed to explain about the show cause notice by ED on alleged contraventions.

Mutual funds see uptick in folios

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Mutual fund industry has seen an uptick in folios, with the addition of 46.7 lakh investors' accounts in January, fuelled by increasing awareness about the financial instrument and ease of transactions through digitisation.

Over the past year, average folio additions were 22.3 lakh per month and the latest figure was more than double this level. With this addition, mutual fund folios of the industry stood a shade away of 17 crore at 16.96 crore currently, a surge of 19 per cent from 14.28 crore registered a year earlier, latest data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) showed.

On a month-on-month basis, the industry has seen a growth close to 3 per cent in folio numbers from 16.49 crore recorded in December 2023.

Folios are numbers designated to individual investor accounts. An investor can have multiple folios.

WhiteOak Mutual Fund Chief Business Officer Prateek Pant said that factors such as high levels of digital literacy, rising disposable incomes, and increased financial literacy have



encouraged Indians to look beyond traditional financial instruments like fixed deposits and post office saving schemes, etc, and venture into mutual funds.

Over the last few years, the surge in mutual fund folios has been led by Gen-Y and Gen-Z investors. Millennials, also known as Gen Y, are typically defined as those born between 1981 and 1996. Generation Z, or GenZ, are those born between 1997 and 2012.

Interestingly, the majority of the new investors are taking the route of digital channels for entering into the mutual fund space, he added.

Of the total 46.7 lakh folios, equity-oriented mutual fund schemes experienced an addition of 34.7 lakh folios during the month under review.

Stock markets rally for 6th straight day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 20: Benchmark Sensex spurred by 349 points while Nifty scaled a fresh lifetime high on the sixth straight day of gains Tuesday, driven by buying in banking and select FMCG shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex reversed its early losses and closed higher by 349.24 points or 0.48 per cent at 73,057.40 in a volatile trade. As many as 18 Sensex shares closed in the green while 12 settled in the red.

The broader Nifty of the NSE rose further by 74.70 points or 0.34 per cent to close at a new record level of 22,196.95. Intra-day, the 50-share index touched lifetime high of 22,215.60.

The key indices opened lower but renewed buying in private lenders helped the barometers reverse losses and closed in the green for the sixth consecutive session. In six days, Nifty jumped 580 points while Sensex rallied 1,984 points.

Among Sensex gainers, Power Grid jumped the most by 4.16 per cent after its board approved an investment of Rs 656 crore in transmission projects.

Private lenders HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Kotak Bank, IndusInd



Bank and ICICI Bank were also among lead gainers. NTPC, Nestle and Hindustan Unilever also ended the session with gains.

IT pack continued to decline with TCS being the biggest loser among Sensex shares, dropping by 1.75 per cent. HCLTech, Infosys and Wipro also declined.

Kotak Mahindra Bank shares rose by 1.83 per cent after the newly-appointed managing director Ashok Vaswani announced major leadership changes at the bank.

Tech Mahindra defied a negative trend in IT shares and

closed higher by 0.86 per cent after it bought a 100 per cent stake in Orchid Cybertech Services for USD 3.27 million.

In the broader market, Zee shares closed higher by 8 per cent after market reports suggested efforts were being made by Zee and Sony to salvage their failed merger deal.

Meanwhile, Vibhor Steel Tubes had a bumper listing on stock exchanges as shares made their debut at a premium of 181 per cent over the IPO price. The stock closed at Rs 442, up 192 per cent from the issue price.

However, the BSE Midcap index dropped by 0.17 per cent and Smallcap by 0.18 per cent.

Analysts said that the decline in midcap and smallcap indices suggests that investors are continuing to exercise caution due to higher valuations.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Bankex rose the most by 1.23 per cent, followed by BSE Realty at 1.13 per cent and Financial Services at 0.87 per cent. BSE Utilities, Oil & Gas, and Capital Goods also rose up to 0.66 per cent.

BSE IT fell the most by 0.92 per cent, followed by BSE Auto (0.82 per cent) and BSE Metal (0.74 per cent).

Market breadth was positive with 1,949 shares closing in the green, 1,887 in the red and 95 settling unchanged.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies was at Rs 391.50 lakh crore (USD 4.72 trillion).

Asian shares traded mixed Tuesday. Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 0.2 per cent while the Shanghai Composite rose 0.4 per cent. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 closed 0.1 per cent lower.

Foreign Portfolio Investors were net sellers as they offloaded shares worth Rs 754.59 crore, according to exchange data.

India seeks \$26bn of private nuclear power investments

The funding would help India to achieve its target of having 50% of its installed electric generation capacity using non-fossil fuels by 2030

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 20: India will invite private firms to invest about \$26 billion in its nuclear energy sector to increase the amount of electricity from sources that don't produce carbon dioxide emissions, two government sources told Reuters.

This is the first time New Delhi is pursuing private investment in nuclear power, a non-carbon-emitting energy source that contributes less than 2% of India's total electricity generation. The funding would help India to achieve its target of having 50% of its installed electric generation capacity using non-fossil fuels by 2030, up from 42% now.

The government is in talks with at least five private firms in-

cluding Reliance Industries, Tata Power, Adani Power and Vedanta Ltd to invest around Rs 440 billion (\$5.30 billion) each, the two sources, who are directly involved in the matter, said last week.

The federal Department of Atomic Energy and state-run Nuclear Power Corp of India Ltd (NPCIL) have held multiple rounds of discussions with the private companies in the past year on the investment plan, the sources said.

The Department of Atomic Energy, NPCIL, Tata Power, Reliance Industries, Adani Power and Vedanta did not respond to queries sent by Reuters.

With the investment, the government hopes to build 11,000 megawatts (MW) of new nuclear power generation capacity by



2040, said the sources, who did not want to be identified as the plan is still being finalised.

NPCIL owns and operates India's current fleet of nuclear power plants, with a capacity of 7,500 MW, and has committed investments for another 1,300

MW. The sources said under the funding plan the private companies will make the investments in the nuclear plants, acquire land, water and undertake construction in areas outside the reactor complex of the plants.

But, the rights to build and run the stations and their fuel management will rest with NPCIL, as allowed under the law, they said.

The private companies are expected to earn revenue from the power plant's electricity sales and NPCIL would operate the projects for a fee, the sources said.

"This hybrid model of nuclear power project development is an innovative solution to accelerate the nuclear capacity," said Charudatta Palekar, an independent power sector consultant who formerly worked for PwC.

The plan will not require any amendment to the India's Atomic Energy Act of 1962 but will need a final go-ahead from the Department of Atomic Energy,

said one of the two sources.

Indian law bars private companies from setting up nuclear power plants but allows them to supply components, equipment and sign construction contracts for work outside of the reactors.

New Delhi has not met its nuclear power capacity addition targets for years mainly because it could not procure nuclear fuel supplies. However in 2010, India struck a deal with the United States for supplies of reprocessed nuclear fuel.

India's stringent nuclear compensation laws have hampered talks with foreign power plant builders such as General Electric and Westinghouse. The country has deferred a target to add 2,000 MW of nuclear power from 2020 to 2030.

HOSTS HAVE BEATEN THE NETHERLANDS IN THE LAST 2 ENCOUNTERS AND INTEND TO MAINTAIN DOMINANCE

India eye encore against Dutch

PNN & AGENCIES

Rourkela, Feb 20: The Indian men's hockey team will look to continue their recent domination over the Netherlands with an outright win when the two sides meet in the return leg match of the FIH Pro League here Wednesday. India have so far had a good run in the tournament. They have won four out of the five matches they have played in, their only loss coming against Australia in Bhubaneswar. Two of the wins have come in regulation time and the side showed enough resilience to defeat the Dutch and Spain in shootouts, games that earned them valuable bonus points.

India are currently placed fourth in the Pro League standings with 10 points from five matches. The Netherlands are leading the chart with 18 points from nine games ahead of Argentina (13 from eight) and Australia (12 from four).

However, the Dutch are not to be taken lightly. India will certainly have to up the ante if they want to finish the game in regulation time.

Even though India had to fight hard in the last three matches, vice-captain Hardik Singh said the confidence in the camp is high on the eve of the meeting against the World No.1 side.

Hardik said India's show could have been better against the Netherlands in the encounter played February 11. He pointed

Hardik Singh in action during the game against Spain played Monday at the Birsa Munda International hockey stadium in Rourkela. OP PHOTO



“The confidence is high in the camp at the moment and going into the game, we would look to continue our momentum”
HARDIK SINGH

out that in that game, India were below par. The match ended 2-2 in regulation time, before India won the shootout 4-2.

“Our performance in the first half fell short of expectations,

but we made a strong comeback in the second half, pushing the game to a shootout. We were confident about our chances from that point onwards, especially given that we have really good goalkeepers in our ranks,” Hardik stated.

“The confidence in the camp is quite high at present with the way we have been performing in back-to-back events and I am sure we will carry this momentum forward in the tournament,” Hardik added.

The good sign is that India have in the past showed consistency against the Dutch. They have beaten the Netherlands in the last two meetings. Hardik informed that the team would like to finish on a high against the Dutch in the tournament.

“We know that if we play to our full potential, we can challenge any team in the world. At this moment, our aim is achieve consistency and maintain it throughout the game,” Hardik signed off.

8-yr-old creates chess history

YOUNGEST-EVER PLAYER TO DEFEAT A GRANDMASTER IN CLASSICAL CHESS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, Feb 20: An eight-year-old Indian-origin boy has defeated Polish chess grandmaster Jacek Stopa at the Burgdorfer Stadthaus Open tournament in Switzerland. The feat achieved Sunday enabled Ashwath Kaushik to become the youngest player ever to defeat a grandmaster in classical chess, according to a *Channel News Asia* report Tuesday. Ashwath overcame Stopa, who at 37, is nearly five times older than him.

The previous record was set only a few weeks earlier when Serbia's Leonid Ivanovic, who is several months older than Ashwath, beat 60-year-old Bulgarian grandmaster Milko Popchev at the Belgrade Open.

Ashwath is currently ranked World No. 37,338 on FIDE charts, the international chess federation. Since 2017 he has been residing in Singapore, but is still an Indian citizen.

“I felt proud of my game and was worse at one point but managed to come back from that,” Ashwath said. “It was no doubt a very tough match for me, but I never gave up,” he added.

Singaporean grandmaster and CEO of the Singapore Chess Federation Kevin Goh lauded Ashwath's feat on ‘X’. “Dad is super supportive, boy is dedicated, school allows flexibility and of course he (Ashwath) has natural talent,” Goh said.

“Remains to be seen how far he can go as interests can change



Ashwath Kaushik is creating waves as the new chess prodigy

as the boy gets older. Still, we are hopeful,” Goh added.

Goh also joked that as he is only eight years old, Ashwath still ‘needs a booster cushion to reach the other side of the board’.

Goh also hoped Ashwath's success can inspire more children to pursue chess at a competitive level. “I think his achievement shows that with the right amount of talent and support, a young player has every chance of achieving success in chess at the highest level,” Goh said.

Ashwath made waves in 2022 after emerging as a triple champion in the chess variations – classic, rapid and blitz – at the

under-8 Eastern Asia Youth Championships.

Sriram Kaushik said in a post on ‘X’ that his son's upset win over Stopa is ‘one of the proudest moments of my life’.

“Special thanks to Ashwath's true pillars and his long-term, and often long-suffering coaches who have put up with him for many years through thick and thin,” Sriram was quoted as saying. “Puzzle solving certainly (is) at the core of his board success as well,” he added.

Ashwath meanwhile said that his main aim is to do well in FIDE's World Cup for youngsters later in the year.

SHORT TAKES

Kohli becomes dad for second time

New Delhi: Star India batter Virat Kohli announced Tuesday that he and his actor wife Anushka Sharma were blessed with a baby boy February 15. Kohli and Anushka are already parents of a three-year-old daughter Vamika. “With abundant happiness and our hearts full of love, we are pleased to inform everyone that on 15th February, we welcomed our baby boy Akay & Vamika's little brother into this world!” Kohli informed in an Instagram post. “We seek your blessings and good wishes in this beautiful time in our lives. We request you to kindly respect our privacy at this time,” he added. Kohli has given the ongoing Test series against England a miss to be with his family.

Lane infringement costs Gulveer gold

Tehran: India's Gulveer Singh lost his men's 3000m gold medal in the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships here after he was disqualified for ‘lane infringement’. Gulveer had clocked 8 minutes 07.48 seconds to finish on top of the podium in the 3000m final, late Monday night. He was later disqualified for lane infringement and a late night ‘appeal’ by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) was also rejected, an official said. “The jury said they have enough evidence to conclude that Gulveer made lane infringement,” the AFI official added.

Norrie advances

Rio de Janeiro: Cameron Norrie started his defense of the Rio Open tennis tournament title beating Bolivia's Hugo Dellien 6-3, 6-2 here Monday. “This is a special place for me, I won my biggest title last year here,” Norrie said. “I have another chance to work on my game and maybe enjoy the beach a little.” Norrie stunned Carlos Alcaraz in the 2023 final and both are seeded to make the final again. He will next face Chile's Tomás Barrios Vera. Alcaraz meanwhile will open his campaign against local favourite Thiago Monteiro.

TT teams qualify

Busan: The Indian men's and women's sides registered contrasting wins in their final group games to progress to the knockout phase of the World Table Tennis Team Championships here Tuesday. While the Indian women's team pulled off a thrilling come-from-behind 3-2 victory over Spain, the men's side brushed aside New Zealand 3-0. Ayhika Mukherjee Manika Batra and Sreeja Akula won a match each in the women's tie.

KIIT University emerge champions



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: KIIT University emerged as overall champions in the Odisha State Level Inter-University Athletics Meet-2023-24 which concluded Monday at the Utkal University. A total of 37 universities participated in the competition organised by the Higher Education department,

Government of Odisha. Athletes from KIIT University finished with an impressive tally of nine gold, five silver and two bronze medals to emerge as overall champions of the meet.

The athletes who won gold are Sabita Toppo (100m), Prangya Prasanti Sahoo (100m hurdles and 200m), Susmita Tigga (800m and 1,500m), Dipa Kisan (high

jump), Arpita Archana Sahoo (javelin and shot put), Maitreyi Parulekar (discuss), Jamuna Tudu (long jump), 4x100 metres relay (women) and 4x100m relay (men).

The silver medals were won by Lalu Prasad Bhoi (men's 100m and long jump), Panchu Majhi (men's high jump) and Mahendra Santa (men's 200m).

Sulochana Das, Mayor, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation, Arvind Agarwal, Commissioner-cum Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Professor Sabita Acharya (Vice-Chancellor, Utkal University) and Olympian Dutee Chand graced the prize distribution ceremony. A number of young talents managed to showcase their potential during the event.

GOLD FOR SOREN

Bhubaneswar: Sneha Soren representing Odisha and KIIT University bagged the weightlifting gold Tuesday at the Khelo India University Games-2023 which is being conducted in different states of the northeast. Soren finished on top in the 55kg category. She lifted a total of 172 Kg (Snatch 75kg and Clean & Jerk 97kg) to clinch the gold and open the medal tally for KIIT. The weightlifting competitions are being held at Arunachal Pradesh.



Cash awards for hockey players



Amit Rohidas



Deep Grace Ekka

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: The Odisha government announced Tuesday cash awards to honour the outstanding achievements of hockey players from the state. The awards have been given to recognise their stellar performances while representing India at the international level, highlighting Odisha's rich legacy in the sport, officials informed here.

Amit Rohidas, who has been the captain of the Indian team on a number of occasions, and Deep Grace Ekka have been awarded ₹3,75,000 each. This is for their their performances while representing India at the 2023 Men's Asian Championship Trophy played in Chennai and the 2023 Women's Asian

Championship Trophy held in Jharkhand respectively. The Asian Champions Trophy is a continental tournament that is held every two years.

In the men's Asian Championship Trophy, the Indians bagged the title defeating Malaysia in the final 4-3. In the women's edition of the same tournament, the eves blanked Japan 4-0 to emerge champions.

Mariana Kujur, Jyoti Chhatra and Ajmina Kujur were awarded ₹12,50,000 each for their performances while representing the Indian women's hockey team. The team won the silver medal in the first edition of the FIH Hockey 5s Women's World Cup, 2024 played in Muscat, Oman. The FIH Hockey 5s World Cup event is held every four years.

AIFF to investigate fixing allegations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: After betting and match-fixing allegations emerged in the Delhi Premier League, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) launched Tuesday an investigation across various cities of the country to get to the root of this menace with the help of government agencies.

Suspicions of betting and match-fixing came to light Monday in a Delhi League match when Ahab FC, who were winning 4-0, conceded two dubious-looking own goals late in the match against Rangers FC. Ahab FC won the match 4-2.

The video footage of the two own goals went viral after which AIFF summoned Football Delhi chief Anuj Gupta on Tuesday to seek details of the suspicious match and served him notice.

AIFF president Kalyan Chaubey said he would approach Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to undertake investigation and get to the root of the betting syndicate. “Our investigation will not be limited to Delhi. We have reasons to believe through evidences, such practice are in other cities too, and will form a wider network

“Our investigation will not be limited to Delhi over match-fixing as we believe such incidents are happening in other parts of the country”
KALYAN CHAUBEY | AIFF PRESIDENT

for our investigations,” Chaubey said in a release from the AIFF.

“The AIFF today (Tuesday) served an email notice to Delhi Soccer Association demanding clarification on the incident involving 19 February 2024 match under Delhi Premier League. AIFF officials held an emergency meeting today, in which DSA president Anuj Gupta was summoned,” the release added.

Chaubey said the AIFF would not limit its investigation to just one match. “Several incremental evidences have been found which cast serious doubts on the entire league,” he said.

“I will be meeting Joint Commissioner of Police, Anti-Corruption Bureau to help us investigate the matter thoroughly and to get to the root of this syndicate. DSA has been advised to file FIR immediately,” Chaubey added.

PANT ALL SET FOR IPL RETURN



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Rishabh Pant remains on course for a much-anticipated comeback in the IPL after taking part in a practice game organised by his franchise Delhi Capitals in Alur, Karnataka.

Pant, who met with a horrific car accident in December 2022, has been undergoing rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) and is working hard to regain match fitness be-

fore the start of the IPL in the second half of March.

“The match was part of assessing his mobility basically. He has been batting at nets for a while and playing in a practice game was more like an extension of it,” said a NCA source here.

Earlier this month, Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting had given a major update on Pant. He had stated that the game-changing cricketer was confident about his return to the IPL. However, he had also

added that Pant may not be ready for wicket-keeping duties in the competition.

“Rishabh is very confident that he's going to be right to play in the IPL. In what capacity we're not quite sure yet,” Ponting had said.

“You would have seen all the social-media stuff, he's up and about and running well. However, we're only six weeks away from the first match. So we're not sure if we'll get wicket-keeping out of him this year,” Ponting added.

IPL starts March 22

New Delhi: The much-anticipated Indian Premier League (IPL) is set to begin on March 22 and will be held entirely in the country despite it coinciding with general elections, chairman of the tournament, Arun Dhumal said Tuesday. The elections are expected in April and May and that is the main reason why the schedule for the IPL's 17th edition has not been unveiled yet. Dhumal said that to begin with, only the schedule of the first 15 days will be announced and the roster for the remaining games will be decided after the announcement of the general election dates. “We are looking at a March 22 start for the tournament. We are working closely with the government agencies and we will first release the initial schedule. The entire tournament will be held in India,” said Dhumal.

Pant is also expected to lead Delhi Capitals. David Warner had captained in his absence last year. “He's such a dynamic player. He's obviously our captain. We missed him incredibly last year,” Ponting said. The 26-year-old Pant has played 33 Tests, 30 ODIs and 66 T20s for India so far. In many of those games, he has single-handedly turned the complexion of the game in India's favour.