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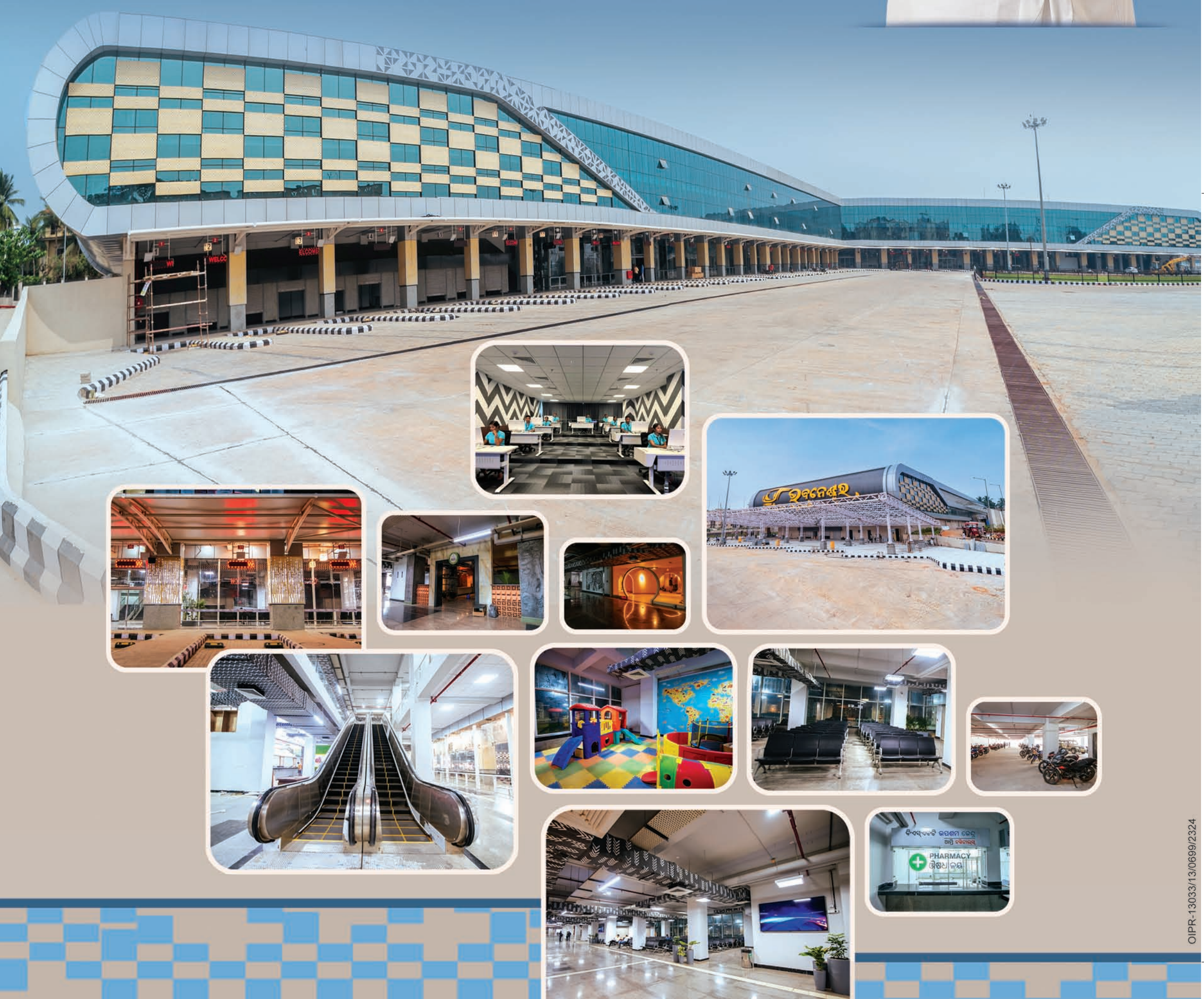
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ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ମାନ୍ୟବର ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ

ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ନବୀନ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକଙ୍କ

କରକମଳରେ ଲୋକାର୍ପଣ

୧ ମାର୍ଚ୍ଚ ୨୦୨୪ ସମୟ: ୫.୪୫ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା





KATE WINSLET: TO BE MISTAKEN FOR BLANCHETT IS AN HONOUR

Actress Kate Winslet finds it an 'honour' to be mistaken for Oscar winner Cate Blanchett. The 48-year-old actress talked about movie fans regularly mixing her up with Blanchett. Winslet told *people.com* at the American Museum of Natural History about being falsely identified as the *Tar* actress.

DIDN'T GET ENOUGH LOVE FROM PARENTS: LOPEZ

Actress-singer Jennifer Lopez went down memory lane and recalled her childhood and claimed she didn't receive enough love from her parents. It was in a candid moment in her new documentary, *The Greatest Love Story Never Told*, where she talked about her life.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today you may try to make your loved one happy, and perhaps even try to woo the person in a fresh manner. You may not be too satisfied with your friends and relatives, but, Ganesh says, you can expect to go to a party in the evening and make new friends.

TAURUS
Today, Ganesh sees your feelings and emotions running high. There is a strong possibility of an emotional encounter with someone close to you. You are likely to be swayed and influenced by the other in course of this meeting. Avoid getting into any kind of dispute or controversy.

GEMINI
You will be able to put forward your proposal and explain your feelings to someone dear to you, and can expect a positive response from them. You will come across as honest and sincere and hence will be accepted. An auspicious and joy-filled day awaits, says Ganesh.

CANCER
People will be stunned at the swift pace of your work. All your pending tasks and projects will fructify. But Ganesh counsels you not to do anything haphazardly or in any careless manner. Ganesh thinks you as an extraordinary orator.

LEO
Financial gains will make you happy today. You will have the opportunity to participate in social functions. All your work will get completed as per schedule. You will be able to channel your energy effectively, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Consumption of work and success will be the high points today, says Ganesh. You will gain the much needed appreciation for your dedication to work and your desire to succeed in whatever you do. A long-awaited promotion may materialise today, and there is also the bright prospect of some monetary arrears coming your way.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that today is going to be an unforgettable day for all those people who are in love or a romantic relationship. If you plan to propose to your beloved today is a good opportunity for it as success will come easily to you. You will be able to spend a day filled with joy, happiness and enjoyment.

SCORPIO
Today, you must spend most of the time in meditation and introspection. If you do not meditate, you will be surrounded by negative thoughts and bitterness for others. According to Ganesh, this may hinder your progress and growth in career. Simple living and high thinking may make things easier for you.

SAGITTARIUS
Your stars are mighty today and plan a pleasant day for you, says Ganesh. You are a thorough professional and garner compliments for this attitude. You also have a knack to sail through all the troubles at work.

CAPRICORN
You love your family and you will try your best to live up to the expectations of your family members. If you are student, you will finish up your existing projects and get on with some fresh assignments, foretells Ganesh. Don't block your imagination; give yourself some freedom so that you can test your creativity and talent. You don't let yourself fly too high otherwise you may lose the track of reality.

AQUARIUS
You may have to remain indoors today. But, don't think that you will get bored. You can do a lot of things, like playing cards and other board games, reading, watching the natural world around, and what not.

PISCES
You will race ahead of you competition today. No matter what field you are in, you will find yourself at an advantageous point, well ahead of your contemporaries. You will be able to complete the task at hand with lesser effort than required. Do not let this translate into arrogance as it may come to haunt you in the future, advises Ganesh.

Kareena's mantra to deal with trolls

Mumbai: Celebrities frequently encounter trolling on social media platforms, often for trivial reasons. Kareena Kapoor Khan recently discussed the issue of negativity and its impact on her, mentioning her ability to disconnect from social media when it becomes too overwhelming.

During the *ABP Ideas of India Summit 3.0*, the *Heroine* actress emphasised the importance of prioritising her happiness and mental well-being above all else.

Addressing the current landscape of social media, she remarked that individuals are under intense scrutiny, with everyone offering their opinions and reviews. She underscored her ability to manage her on-line presence effectively, knowing when to step back and not allowing herself to be overwhelmed or influenced by it.

She said, "You are being scrutinised with a magnifying glass these days. Everybody has an opinion, and everybody is writing a review. The idea is that I know how to channelise my life and know when to pull back on social media. I don't get affected or consumed by it."

On the professional front, Kareena Kapoor is preparing for the highly anticipated release of the heist thriller *Crew*, which also features Tabu and Kriti Sanon, scheduled to hit theaters March 29.

AGENCIES



Deepika, Ranveer to welcome baby in Sept

Mumbai: Star couple Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone have confirmed that they are all set to welcome their first bundle of joy in September.

Ranveer and Deepika took to their respective Instagram, where they made the announcement. They shared an e-card, which has balloons, baby onesies, lollipops and booties made on it with pastel colours.

The card has "September 2024. Deepika and Ranveer" written on it. For the caption they chose, two folded hands and evil eye emoticons.

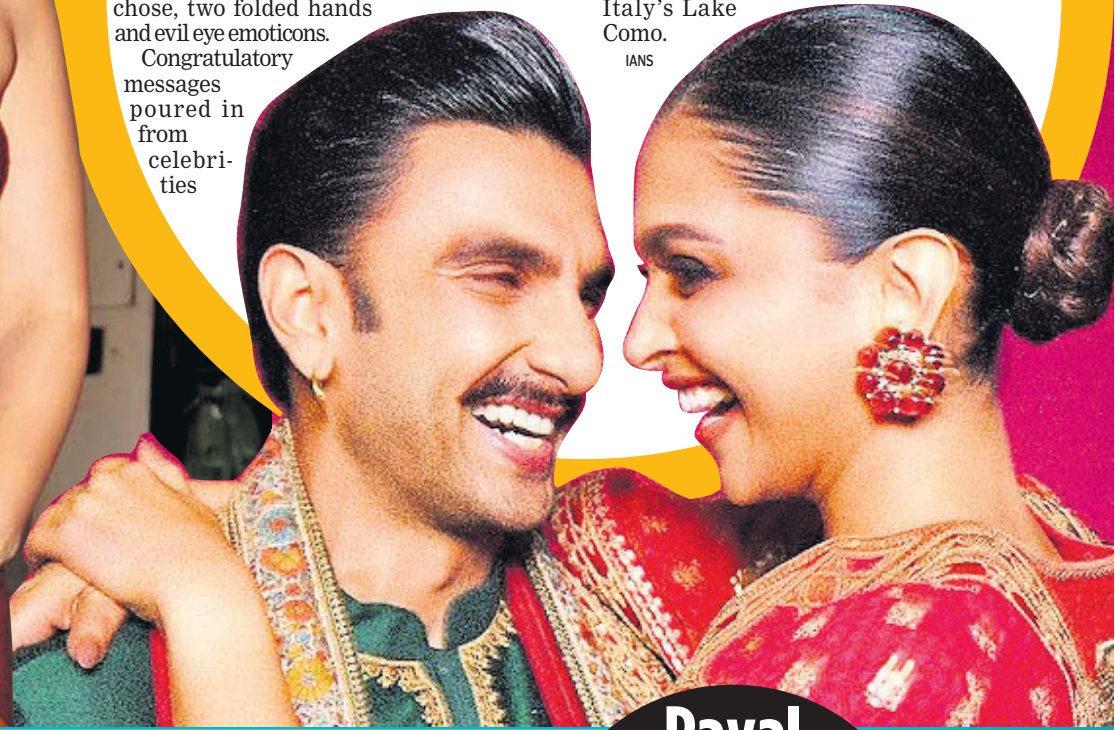
Congratulatory messages poured in from celebrities

across spectrums after the announcement.

Speculation about having their first baby went viral on the internet February 20. It was reported that Deepika is in her second trimester.

Ranveer and Deepika have together worked in films such as *Goliyon Ki Raas-Leela: Ram Leela*, *Bajirao Mastani* and *Padmavaat*. It was in 2018, when the two got married in an intimate ceremony in Italy's Lake Como.

IANS



Tiger Shroff shares his struggles with anxiety

Mumbai: Action star Tiger Shroff, who is gearing up for the release of his upcoming film *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan (BMCM)*, appeared on the sixth season of the streaming chat show *No Filter Neha* where he revealed that he battled anxiety during the outdoor shoot of *BMCM*.

He told the host Neha Dhupia that he has got a fear of flying.

He narrated his scary experience when he was travelling on a flight to shoot a sequence of the movie. "I experienced the 'worst turbulence', shared the *War* actor.

He said, "I get these anxiety attacks every now and then. Recently they've started recurring. I've got this strange fear of flying. I think it was during *BMCM*, we had to go for an outdoor and we went on this flight, which sort of had the worst turbulence and it went on for about two hours constantly. So it was just two hours of constant swaying, and my whole life flashed in front of me."

No Filter Neha Season 6, is available on JioTV and JioTV+ with new episodes dropping every Thursday.

IANS

Mumbai: Actress Payal Ghosh will essay the role of yesteryear superstar Zeenat Aman in the upcoming biopic titled as *Shaque: The Doubt*.

Zeenat, who is known for participating in beauty pageants, began her acting career in 1970 with the movie *The Evil Within*. She gained recognition for her work in movies like *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*, *Yaadon Ki Baaraat*, *Qurbani*, *Dostana*, and *Don* among many others.

The 72-year-old actress has also become a trending personality on the

Payal to play Zeenat in her biopic

photo-sharing application Instagram, on which she debuted in February 2023. She keeps on sharing her various throwback pictures, and professional updates on her social media han-

dle.

Talking about portraying Zeenat, Aman, who was last seen in *Fire of Love: Red*, said, "This is a humongous opportunity for me. I am really glad and fortunate that so much of faith has been entrusted in me that they feel I can play such an iconic personality on-screen."

"Zeenat Aman is a legend and getting to essay her on-screen is one of the biggest opportunities any actor of today's time can get. I am so excited and looking forward to doing a good job in the project," she added.

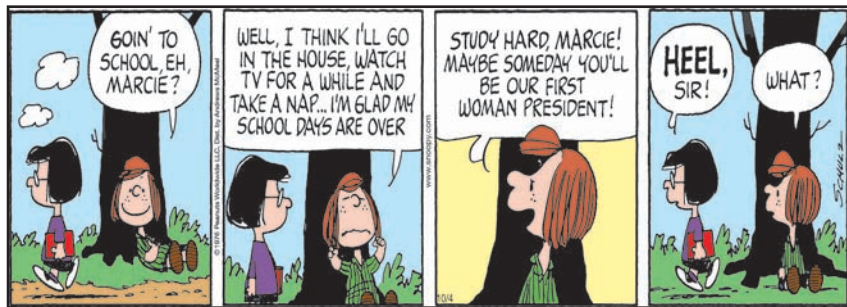
Shaque: The Doubt is directed by Rajeev Chaudhari.

IANS

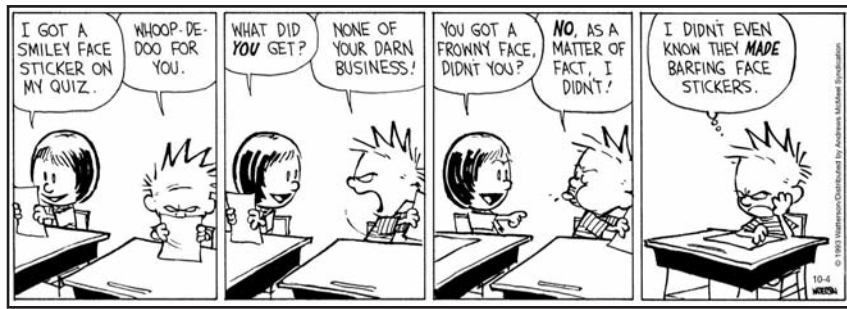


FUN post

PEANUTS



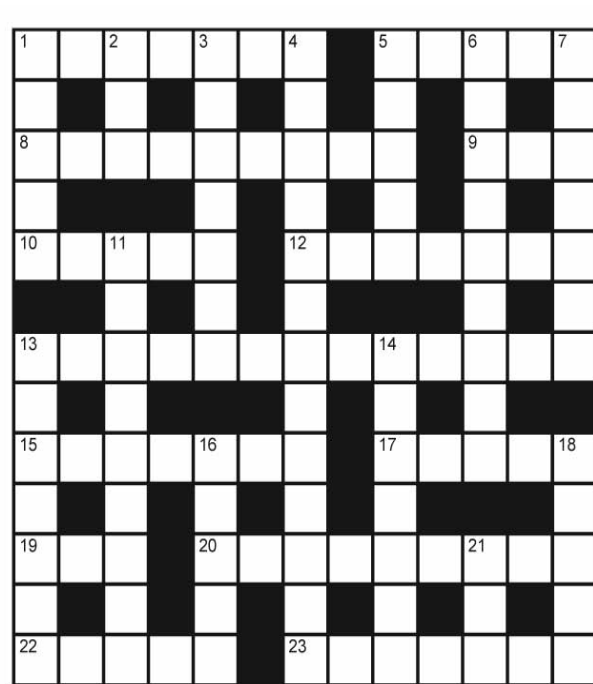
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD



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Across

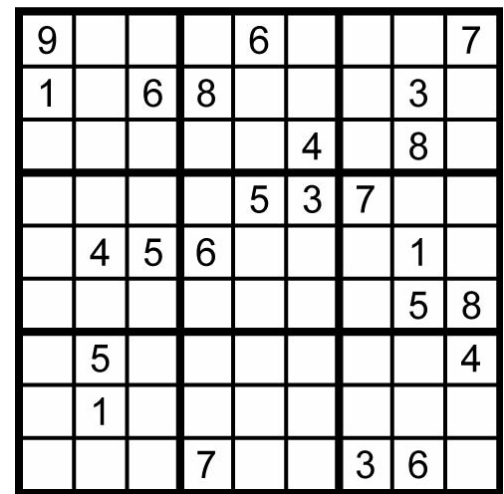
- 1 Novel by Daphne Du Maurier
- 5 Ensnare
- 8 Heart chamber
- 9 Chopper
- 10 Kind of cabinet
- 12 Bullfighter
- 13 Honeyed words (5,8)
- 15 Rocket launcher
- 17 Low-water mark
- 19 Curve
- 20 The head of a tribe or clan
- 22 Curse
- 23 Norman and Hogan, e.g.
- 4 Obliging
- 5 Delicacy
- 6 Deserted
- 7 Western NA mountain range
- 11 Influential German philosopher
- 13 Metros
- 14 Smattering
- 16 Happen
- 18 Pipsqueaks
- 21 Astonish

Down

- 1 Competitor
- 2 Container
- 3 Diadem

SUDOKU

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

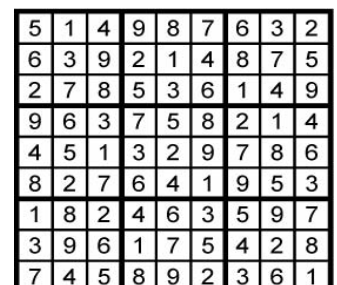


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Water Informatics Centre

Odisha govt decides to set up a Water Informatics Centre for coordination, collection and dissemination of water resources

DOWNTOWN | P3

Over 100 killed

Israeli troops kill over 100 Palestinians waiting for aid in Gaza city, bringing the death toll since the start of the war to over 30,000

INTERNATIONAL | P8

Sizzling growth

India's economic growth accelerates to 8.4 per cent in the October-December quarter of this fiscal

BUSINESS | P9

Bumrah in for 5th Test

Jasprit Bumrah to return to team for the fifth and final Test against England, while KL Rahul has been ruled out

SPORTS | BACK PAGE

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BHUBANESWAR | FRIDAY MARCH 1 2024

P1

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Six rebel HP Cong MLAs disqualified

Shimla: Himachal Pradesh (HP) Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania Thursday disqualified six Congress MLAs, who had cross-voted in the recent Rajya Sabha polls, for allegedly defying a party whip on voting for the state Budget in the Assembly. Congress' central observer DK Shivakumar said Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has taken the responsibility of party leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi's defeat in the Rajya Sabha polls and claimed that all differences have been ironed out after speaking to party MLAs. P7

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



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MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VAR.
SENSEX	72500.30	↑ 195.42
NIFTY	21982.80	↑ 31.60
DOLLAR	82.89	↓ ₹0.005
EURO	89.97	↑ ₹0.14
GOLD	₹62,610	↑ ₹361
SILVER	₹ 69,600	↑ ₹897

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	34.7°C	34.2°C
Min Temp	21.5°C	20.5°C
Humidity	85%	87%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
 DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY



FRIENDLY GESTURE: Troops of the Indian Army and Japan Ground Self Defence Force during the fifth edition of Joint Military Exercise 'Dharma Guardian' at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan

SANDESHKHALI

On run for 55 days, Shajahan arrested

Basirhat (WB), Feb 29: TMC strongman Shajahan Sheikh, accused of sexual abuse and land grab in Sandeshkhali, was nabbed by the West Bengal police in the early hours of Thursday after being on the run for 55 days that witnessed violent protests, sparking a fierce political firestorm. Sheikh was presented before the Basirhat court, which sanctioned a 10-day remand in police custody. Later in the day, TMC spokesperson Derek O'Brien declared the party's decision to suspend Sheikh for six years. Soon after, the CID took over the investigation. Sheikh, a central figure in a significant political controversy, emerged from custody around 10:40 am, escorted by law enforcement officers as he made his way to the courtroom, gesturing towards the assembled media. Following a brief hearing, he was returned to custody and subsequently transferred to Bhabani Bhawan, the state police headquarters in Kolkata, as the CID assumed control of the investigation.

Pay hike for Anganwadi workers

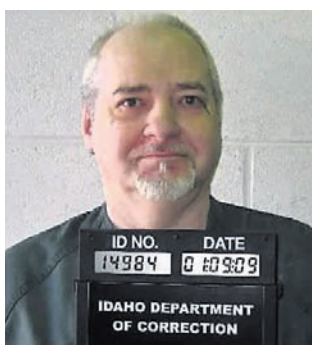
Bhubaneswar, Feb 29: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday announced a hike in remuneration of Anganwadi workers, mini-Anganwadi workers and their assistants. The monthly remuneration of Anganwadi workers has been increased from ₹7,500 to ₹10,000. While mini-Anganwadi workers will now get ₹7,250 instead of ₹5,375 per month, Anganwadi assistants will receive ₹5,000 as remuneration instead of ₹3,750 monthly. The pay hike will be effective from October 2023 and the arrear amount will be credited in their bank accounts between March 5 and 10. The state government will spend an additional ₹350 crore annually for it. The decision will benefit 1.48 lakh Anganwadi workers, mini-Anganwadi workers and Anganwadi assistants. The government also announced that ₹2 lakh will be paid in case of death or complete physical disability and ₹1 lakh for partial disability of Anganwadi workers, mini-Anganwadi workers and Anganwadi assistants. Anganwadi workers exiting jobs will now get ₹1 lakh instead of ₹40,000, mini-Anganwadi workers ₹75,000 instead of ₹30,000 and Anganwadi assistants will get ₹50,000 instead of ₹20,000.

Srimandir treasury audit panel formed

Bhubaneswar, Feb 29: Stage is set for the reopening of Srimandir Ratna Bhandar (treasury) and inventory of valuables stored in it after a gap of more than 45 years, with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday announcing constitution of a 12-member high-level committee, led by former Supreme Court Judge Arijit Pasayat, to supervise the much-awaited procedure at the 12th century shrine in Puri. Patnaik's announcement came in response to a directive issued by the Orissa High Court to the state government in this regard, September 29, 2023. With noted cardiologist Ramakanta Panda as vice-chairman, the panel also has former Allahabad Bank CMD Bidhubhushan Samal, Chartered Accountant AK Sabat, a representative of Puri's titular king Gajapati Dibyasingha Deb, a representative of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), servitors Durga Prasad Dasmohapatra, Madhav Chandra Mohapatra, Jagannath Kar and Ganesh Mekap, Puri Collector and Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Chief Administrator as its members. While disposing of a PIL filed by BJP leader Samir Mohanty, the HC had in September 2023 directed the state government to constitute a high-level panel, if approached by the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee (SJTMC), for supervising the inventory of valuables in the temple treasury. The HC, however, said that it would not interfere with the plan of work regarding inventory and repair works of the interior walls of the Ratna Bhandar as prepared in the SJTMC meeting held August 4, 2023 on advice of the ASI (Puri Circle) superintending archaeologist. Earlier, SJTMC had submitted the copy of the resolution passed by it August 4, 2023. As per the resolution, repair of the Ratna Bhandar should be taken up at such time so that both the rituals of the deities and darshan by devotees are not obstructed. As per the Jagannath Temple Act, 1955, Ratna Bhandar should be opened for inventory every three years. However, it was last opened and audited from May 13 to July 23, 1978. The state government had April 4, 2018 made an unsuccessful attempt to re-open the inner chamber of the temple treasury for a physical examination of the structure. The inspection could not be completed as the officials failed to open it after the keys were not found. Following public outcry, a judicial commission, led by retired Justice Raghuraj Das, was constituted June 6, 2018 to probe the missing keys. Meanwhile, the then Puri Collector June 13, 2018 claimed that an envelope with 'duplicate keys of inner Ratna Bhandar' written on it was found in the record room of his office. According to an affidavit filed by SJTA in HC last year, the temple treasury has approximately 149.47 kg gold jewellery and 198.79 kg silver jewellery apart from utensils. The Ratna Bhandar, situated near sanctum sanctorum of the temple, has been divided into two parts. While the outer chamber stores ornaments used by the deities on a daily basis, many precious jewellery are kept in the inner chamber.

IV insertion hiccups stall serial killer's execution

Kuna (Idaho), Feb 29: Idaho halted the execution of serial killer Thomas Eugene Creech, one of the longest-serving death row inmates in the US, after medical team members failed at least eight times to find a vein where they could establish an intravenous (IV) line to carry out the lethal injection. Creech, 73, has been in prison half a century, convicted of five murders in three states and suspected of several more. He was already serving a life term when he beat a fellow inmate, 22-year-old David Dale Jensen, to death in 1981 — the crime for which he was to be executed. Creech was wheeled into the execution chamber at the Idaho Maximum Security Institution on a gurney at 10am Wednesday. "Three medical team members tried eight times to establish an IV," Department of Correction Director Josh Tewalt said. In some cases, they couldn't access the vein, and in others, they could but had concerns



about vein quality. They attempted sites in his arms, legs,

hands and feet. At one point, a medical team member left to gather more supplies. The warden announced he was halting the execution at 10:58am. The department said death warrant for Creech would expire, and that it was considering next steps. While other medical procedures might allow for the execution, the state is mindful of the 8th Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment, Tewalt said. Six Idaho officials, including Attorney General Raul Labrador,

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OIPR-15001/13/0558/2324

Nua-O scholarship for 30,926 Balasore students



5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian informs that students from 71 colleges of Balasore district will get scholarship amount totaling ₹30.6 crore

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 29: Acting on the direction of Chief

Minister Naveen Patnaik, 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian visited Balasore district Thursday and attended the Nua-O Scholarship Distribution Programme where he announced that altogether 30,926 eligible students from 71 colleges of the district will get the scholarship.

During the programme, Pandian interacted with the students, who were apparently excited and thrilled to receive the sanction orders and also SMSes from banks confirming transfer of the scholarship money to their accounts.

Earlier, 5T Chairman announced in the meeting that 30,926 eligible students from 71 colleges of Balasore district will get their scholarship amount ₹30.6 crore.

He conveyed the message of

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who wished the students all the best for their future endeavour and said that this initiative would help achieve the dream of Nua Odisha.

Pandian said 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, skill development and employment.

Online registration portal for this card will be launched March 5, 2024. All the students, without any income criteria, of the UG and PG courses will be eligible. And the distribution of the card will be August 15.

They thanked Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and the 5T Chairman for the initiative and speedy execution of the programme.

Later, he visited the memorial for Manmath Das and Manoj Das in Bhograi. He hailed the contribution of the great souls towards the academic and literary development in Odisha. He thanked the family members for donating the land for the memorial.



REGALING POSE: Artistes perform during a classical dance event by Puri Dance Academy at Annapurna Rangamancha in Pilgrim town, Thursday OP PHOTO

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AFFIDAVIT

Epili Sandhya Rani, D/o. Epili Krushna Chandra, resident of Vill: Pochilima, P.O.: Makarjholia, P.S.: Hinjili, Dist.: Ganjam, Odisha declare by affidavit No. M-23267413 dated 12.05.2019 that's now onwards I shall be known as Sandhya Santosh Sala, W/o. Santosh Sala, Vill: B. Jagannathpur, P.O.: Borigam, P.S.: Berhampur Sadar, Dist.: Ganjam, PIN - 761001, Odisha for all future purposes.

LOST

I Bandita Das, W/o. Bijay Kumar Das have purchased a property in the Mouza: Daruthenga from Prahallad Mallick and said Prahallad Mallick was purchased this property from Jasoda alias Dosa Jena vide Regd. Sale Deed No. 2815, Dtd.16.04.2009 and after purchasing this property, he has recorded mutation RoR in respect of Khata No. 801/2460, Plot No. 3025/10088 Area: Ac 0.037 Dec. At the time of registration, Prahallad Mallick was handed over these two original documents to me but while I was travelling from KIIT Campus to Infocity on Dtd. 12.01.2024. Somewhere I was lost these documents, I have not created any charge, mortgage, lien with any financial institution. It is my humble request, If anyone get these documents, please contact for this Number - 8050379709.

7 apparel, garment units to come up in Khurda



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 29: The state government Thursday distributed project approval letters to seven apparel and garment manufacturing units which will be set up in Khurda district, entailing an investment of ₹378.98 crore.

The firms would generate employment opportunities for 18,620 people, Industries Minister Prapat Keshari Deb said during a special function here where he handed over letters to the company officials.

Last week, during the State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) meeting, these projects received approval, and the issuance of approval letters marked a formal acknowledgment of this decision, a release by the state government said.

The companies that received approval letters include Meenu Creation LLP (Rs 57.78 crore), Pooja International (Rs 55 crore), Sonu Exim Pvt Ltd (Rs 55 crore), Rainbow Fabart Pvt Ltd (Rs 52

crore), BL International Pvt Ltd (Rs 51.10 crore), Fine Lines (Rs 58 crore), and Golden Seams Industries Pvt Ltd (Rs 50.1 crore).

Following the issuance of letters, Anil Peshawari, CMD of Meenu Creation LLP, representing the group of seven industries, emphasised the cluster's commitment to growth and development.

Hemant Sharma, Principal Secretary of Industries department, Odisha, highlighted the strategic importance of fostering industrial growth and collaboration in his keynote speech.

A pivotal aspect of the event was the discussion on infrastructure development and expedited facilitation, emphasising the necessity for streamlined processes and robust infrastructure to support the burgeoning industry.

The state government release added that investors were showing keenness in Odisha due to the state's conducive business environment, stable governance, efficient approval processes, and seamless land allotment procedures.

FISHING BAN FOR TURTLE CONSERVATION

15,037 families get livelihood support

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 29: Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment and Fisheries Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain Thursday disbursed financial assistance of more than ₹22 crore to 15,037 households dependent on fishing as livelihood support during the fishing ban on account of Olive Ridley turtle conservation.

The assistance to families was provided under the government's 'livelihood support to marine fishermen during fishing ban period for Olive Ridley turtle conservation' scheme. With a total financial assistance of ₹22 crore 55 lakh, each fishing family got ₹15,000 in assistance.

Among the 15,037 families, 423 are from Jagtsingpur, 6,773 from Kendrapara, 3,450 from Puri, 3,638



from Ganjam and 753 families from Bhadrak, who are suffering livelihood losses due to the ban imposed on fishing for conservation of Olive Ridley turtles.

Addressing the meeting organised at Krushi Bhawan, Swain said that the government has introduced the state plan scheme 'livelihood support to marine fishermen during fishing ban period for Olive Ridley

turtle conservation' with an objective to provide financial assistance to affected families for strengthening their livelihood during the fishing ban period.

"Odisha is one of the most important maritime states in the country endowed with a 480km long coastline. About 5.18 lakh of marine fishers belonging to 1.15 lakh families solely depend on fishing for their liveli-

hood," said the minister.

The state's coastline is known as a breeding ground for the rare Olive Ridley turtle. Every year they come from thousands of miles to the Odisha coast to lay eggs. "To protect their spawning process, fishing restrictions are imposed from November 1 to May 31 every year near the Rushikulya river mouth of Ganjam, Dhamara river mouth of Bhadrak, Devi river mouth of Puri and Jagatsinghpur and throughout the year in the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary of Kendrapara," added the minister.

The state government has increased the livelihood assistance from time to time considering the demands made by fishermen through different forums. The amount was increased to ₹7,500 in 2017-18 and again to ₹15,000 in 2023.

Police round up inter-state burglar gang

POLICE CLAIM TO SOLVE SPACETOWN APARTMENT SERIES FLAT LOOT CASE

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 29: The Commissionerate Police Thursday claimed to have busted a nine-member gang of inter-state burglars and recovered 1.5 kg silver and gold ornaments, eight mobile phones and four motorcycles from them.



The accused, all from Ganjam district, were involved in numerous theft cases in Chhattisgarh, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Surat and Andhra Pradesh, apart from various places here and elsewhere in the state, police said.

Twin-city Police Commissioner Sanjeeb Panda said a special team, consisting of three sleuths, was tracking down the movement of the notorious gang before finally managing to round them up, Thursday. He said seven more members of the gang, who are on run, will be nabbed soon.

Panda said the kingpin of the gang, Girish Naik, would receive isolated apartments having inadequate security measures, like single-door locks, scant security guards and low boundary walls, during the day. After dark, the

gang members would strike those flats and loot gold ornaments and cash kept in those.

The miscreants are involved in more than eight burglary cases, including the four apartment thefts in Spacetown Apartment under Mancheswar Police limits, said Panda.

Police sources said Girish Naik had been booked in more than 40 cases under Ganjam Police limits in the past. The arrested have been booked under Section 457 and 380 of IPC, and were produced before a local court for remand.

Govt to conduct digital crop survey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 29: The state government has decided to conduct a digital crop survey across the state to ascertain the exact area under cultivation by farmers, a senior official said.

The survey was first piloted in four districts - Nuapada, Nayagarh, Deogarh, and Bhadrak - during the 2023-24 kharif crop seasons.

The exercise will be expanded to the remaining 26 districts, Agriculture department Principal Secretary Arabinda Kumar Padhee said.

"The survey will help us in getting accurate amounts of cul-



tivated land in different parts of the state, and in planning and policy making," he said.

The study will be conducted using a mobile application developed jointly by the Centre and the state government.

"Geo-referenced cadastral maps with Geographic

Information System (GIS) and Global Positioning System (GPS) technologies will be used to ensure the farmland position," officials said.

The digital survey will establish a clear picture of crops being sown in the farmlands during different agriculture seasons, they said. It will also provide data on damage from natural calamities, disease attacks and agro-meteor services across the country, the officials added.

In a related development, the state government said it will extend the artificial insemination programme to nine more districts after its successful imple-

mentation in Puri, said Utkarsh Vijay, vice-president at Samagra Governance, the technical partner for the project.

The nine districts where the programme will now be rolled out are Balasore, Bargarh, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Kendrapara and Mayurbhanj.

"This is a first-of-its-kind service in India, which is now being expanded to 10 districts including Puri. Initial findings show more than 50 per cent positive pregnancy diagnosis. This initiative will help in increasing productivity and income of farmers," he said.

E-vehicle gifted to Capital Hosp

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 29: The Odisha State Warehousing Corporation (OSWC) provided one 10-seater e-vehicle at a cost of ₹11.90 lakh to the Capital Hospital here out of its CSR fund in an event held in the hospital campus, Thursday.

Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak, Minister of PS & CW, Cooperation, Higher Education, presented the vehicle to Laxmidhar Sahoo, Director, Capital Hospital.

The Capital Hospital is a premier hospital, which was recently granted the status of a Post Graduate Institute, is spread

across 25 acres of land with 750 beds with about 5,500 patients coming for treatment on a daily basis. The electric vehicle will help a lot to the regular patients, PWDs, children and senior citizens for their seamless movement inside the campus, especially among different departments, to avail treatment within a short span of time.

The OSWC is providing warehousing and logistic support to the agriculture sector by operating 68 warehouses spread over 30 districts of the state. The Corporation mainly deals in scientific storage of food grains for distribution under PDS and other welfare schemes of the government.

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downtown

SWITCHING SIDE

Several leaders of Bharatiya Janata Party, Aam Aadmi Party and Congress from Kalahandi district join Biju Janata Dal at Sankha Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



AMA BANK INITIATIVE

CM opens 2K village banking outlets



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 29: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday inaugurated 2,000 CSP (Customer Service Point) plus outlets under the 'Ama Bank' initiative, aimed at providing banking services in all unbanked gram panchayats of the state.

The 'Ama Bank' programme was launched last year after it was realised that 4,373 out of the state's total 6,789 gram panchayats lacked banking outlets, causing difficulties for people to avail benefits from various schemes.

In November 2023, the state government opened 750 CSP Plus outlets, and now an additional

2,000 outlets have been launched.

Patnaik said financial inclusion is crucial for social and economic progress and empowerment of the people.

He said no country or state can achieve inclusive growth without ensuring financial inclusion for its citizens. Delivering public services to the last mile in a fair and transparent manner has been a top priority of the government, he added.

However, financial inclusion has remained a challenge in Odisha due to the limited geographical penetration of banks, with about 65 per cent of gram panchayats lacking brick-and-mortar bank branches, the CM said, adding that this resulted in

significant challenges in accessing banking services and Direct Benefit Transfers for rural residents.

To address this issue, the state government has collaborated with six public sector banks, including SBI, PNB, UBI, UCO Bank, Bank of India, and Bank of Baroda, to implement the 'Ama Bank' scheme, he added.

The Ama Bank scheme is being implemented in a phased manner to cover all unbanked gram panchayats of the state. The government of Odisha is providing rent-free banking space for 5 years along with electricity and internet connectivity. The state government is also bearing one-time expense for fixed costs and recurring expenses for three years. A provision of ₹500 Crore has been made for this purpose.

In the first phase, 750 CSP plus outlets were opened which are rendering full-fledged banking services like deposits, advances, remittances, loan, Aadhaar-Enabled Payment Systems, credit linkage to SHGs, coverage under social security schemes free of cost.

8ମାତ୍ର ପ୍ରମାଣିତ ଉତ୍ସବ



President Droupadi Murmu confers honorary D Litt on Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Pramod Kumar Mishra during the 53rd convocation ceremony of Utkal University in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

Prez confers D Litt on PK Mishra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 29: President Droupadi Murmu Thursday conferred the honorary D Litt on the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Pramod Kumar Mishra at the convocation of Utkal University here.

Murmu, who addressed the 53rd convocation of the varsity, conferred the honorary degree on the Odisha-born bureaucrat in presence of Governor Raghuraj Das, who is also its Chancellor. The degree is a fitting recognition of Mishra's exceptional leadership, unwavering commitment to public service and profound contribution to the advancement of Indian administrative service, the President said. A 1972-batch retired IAS officer of Gujarat cadre, Mishra had taken charge as principal secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September 2019.

State Water Informatics Centre soon

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 29: The state government Thursday decided to establish a State Water Informatics Centre (SWIC) for the coordination, collection and dissemination of water resources data.

Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena said this will be done with the support and guidance of the National Water Informatics Centre (NWIC).

This was among the eight proposals that received approval of the state Cabinet, headed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. The SWIC will provide a com-



prehensive repository of hydro-meteorological data for the state. It will act under the purview of the water resources department, Jena told reporters after the Cabinet meeting.

The centre will have a proficient team well-versed in water

resource management, data handling, and information technology, sourced from existing organizations or outsourced as needed, Jena said.

The Cabinet also approved the proposal for the regularisation of 504 contractual super-

visors of the Women and Child Development Department.

Regularization of their services will ensure the uninterrupted delivery of essential services and support to vulnerable children and women covered under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programs in the state, Jena added.

The state will bear an additional burden of ₹18.51 crore per annum for this.

In addition, the Cabinet approved amendments to the service rules for the multipurpose health workers, radiographers, pharmacists and nurses.

Expelled BJD MLA Jagadev joins BJP

Bhubaneswar: Another expelled BJD MLA Prasanta Kumar Jagadev Thursday joined the BJP. He was an MLA from Chilika constituency before expulsion. Jagadev, a two-time MLA, once from Begunia and currently the sitting legislator from Chilika, joined the saffron party in the presence of Odisha co-in-charge Lata Usendi, Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi and former state unit president Samir Mohanty. Jagadev is the second expelled BJD leader after Pradeep Panigrahy to join BJP this month.

Palm leaf manuscripts given to ASI

Bhubaneswar: Customs department Thursday handed over palm leaf and paper manuscripts, seized in 2019 and 2020 while being attempted to be exported to Spain and France, to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) here. Sanjay Pant, principal chief commissioner of GST, central excise and customs, Bhubaneswar zone, handed over the manuscripts to representatives of the ASI in the virtual presence of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.



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PAST RECIPIENTS

Her Excellency Mama Rachel Ruto, EGH
First Lady of the Republic of Kenya (2022)

Dr. Dansa KOUROUMA
President, National Transition Council of Guinea, Guinea (2019)

Professor Muhammad Yunus
(Nobel Laureate)
Founder, Grameen Bank, Bangladesh (2018)

His Holiness The 14th Dalai Lama (2017)
Nobel Laureate, 2005 and Spiritual Leader

Ms. Ashley Judd,
Hollywood Actor, Activist & Global Goodwill Ambassador, UNFPA (2016)

His Excellency Dr Alejandro Toledo,
Former President of Peru (2015)

Ms. Anne F. Stenhammer
Former Regional Programme Director, UN Women, South Asia Regional Office (2014)



Mr. Bill Gates, Co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Co-Founder & former CEO of Microsoft receiving the prestigious KISS Humanitarian Award 2023 from Prof. Achyuta Samanta, Founder, KIIT, KISS & KIMS, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

Madam Albina Du Boisrouvray
Founder, Association François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB International), Switzerland (2013)

His Excellency Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley
Hon'ble Prime Minister, The Royal Government of Bhutan (2012)

Rt Hon. Lord Nicholas Addison Phillips
President (Chief Justice) of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom (2011)

Rt. Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth
Eminent Social Worker & His Excellency the President of Mauritius (2010)

Dr. Ham Kee-Sun
Eminent Educationist & Physician and Hon'ble President & Founder, Hanseo University, South Korea (2009)

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5

Continents

13

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The award ceremony for the years 2020 and 2021 has not taken place due to COVID-19. The awards will be received by legendary Indian personalities soon.

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The whole world yearns after freedom, yet each creature is in love with his chains; this is the first paradox and inextricable knot of our nature.

SRI AUROBINDO



Judgment Day

Day by day, week by week, courts are increasingly becoming the front line in the struggle to preserve democracy from populists and authoritarians. In the United States, the Supreme Court recently heard oral arguments on a decision by Colorado's highest court that Donald Trump is ineligible to appear on the state's presidential ballot, owing to his role in the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol. And an appellate court has ruled against Trump's claim that presidents enjoy immunity for any action taken while in office.

Moreover, a state court in New York has just imposed a \$354 million penalty on Trump for financial fraud. That comes on top of \$83 million awarded by the jury in a case where Trump was accused of defaming a woman who had successfully sued him for sexual assault. In addition to barring him from holding any senior role in a New York-based company for the next three years, these two rulings will likely strip Trump of almost all his available cash holdings.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the United Kingdom's Conservative government has been trying to pass a migrant-relocation bill that is intended to bypass a UK Supreme Court ruling late last year overturning similar legislation. In Israel, the country's highest court recently struck down an amendment to the Basic Law that would have curtailed its own authority. And in Germany, the Constitutional Court recently ruled that public funding can be denied to the far-right, anti-democratic Die Heimat party, leading to speculation that it could consider a similar case involving the increasingly popular Alternative für Deutschland (AfD).

The ballot-eligibility case before the US Supreme Court may turn out to be one of the most important in US history. After the Colorado Supreme Court ruled that Trump's role in the January 6 insurrection bars him from holding high office, it became inevitable that the top court would have to weigh in.

Having accepted the case, the justices must decide whether they will block Trump's return to the presidency, knowing that he has promised to unleash "bedlam" if they rule against him. But even if Trump's followers cause disorder, America's system of democracy - which was designed to deter demagogues - will have held. By contrast, if the justices overturn the Colorado decision, as seems likely, the future of American democracy may well be left to just a sliver of voters in key swing states.

The courts and the law have been interwoven with American political life almost since the founding. In 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville observed that, "Scarcely any political question arises in the United States that is not resolved, sooner or later, into a judicial question." This was no exaggeration. In 1803, the Supreme Court had asserted, in *Marbury v. Madison*, its authority to review and, if necessary, strike down legislation, establishing itself as the final arbiter on the meaning and requirements of the US Constitution.

Although America has long been the world's preeminent democracy, few other countries have adopted its judicial model. Within the US, the sovereignty of the Court is taken almost for granted, with only occasional murmurs of dissent. But many observers elsewhere are troubled by the idea that a few men and women in black robes could decide on, say, the creation of a national bank or the legality of slavery. While almost every democratic country has a constitutional court, few are as politically super-charged as America's. Instead, they are expected to defer to elected officials.

And yet, populist politics has increasingly strained many countries' constitutional orders, leading to more instances of courts asserting themselves in novel ways. A good example is the right-wing Israeli administration's attempt to bar the country's Supreme Court from considering "the reasonableness of a decision of the government, the prime minister, or any other minister."

Last month, Israel's Supreme Court struck down that law. Following in the footsteps of their American counterparts, the justices determined that the Court - not the Knesset, not the government, and not the president - is the highest authority on the meaning and requirements of Israel's Basic Laws.

In the UK, where the courts have long been described as "lions under the throne," last year's ruling striking down the government's migrant-relocation law suggests that the justices will come out of the shadows when necessary. The government's attempt to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, the court ruled, amounted to a violation of both international and domestic law, because - contrary to what the Foreign Office claims - Rwanda does not qualify as a safe country for resettlement.

It is unclear what will happen if Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government manages to pass a bill declaring Rwanda to be "safe," simply because no British government has ever adopted legislation whose sole purpose is to deny reality. (In fact, Rwandans seeking political asylum in the UK already outnumber those whom the UK is trying to send to Rwanda.)

If the UK's traditional conception of parliamentary sovereignty holds, the Supreme Court will be obliged to accept this Alice in Wonderland outcome. Still, even if the justices prove unwilling to topple the constitutional apple cart in this particular case, the broader shift in judicial power is clear, both in Britain and internationally.

To survive this period of populist assaults on the democratic order, courts will need to embrace their proper role as arbiters of justice. They know that their decisions cannot rest on the emotional whims of a Trump or a Boris Johnson. They must follow reason, precedent, and law.

At a time of mounting populist pressure, the judiciary's apparent democratic unaccountability will likely prove to be one of its fundamental strengths, not a weakness. They may now be the last guarantors of democratic constitutional order.

The writer, a 2021 reconstitution fellow, edits the LSE Public Policy Review and writes on the British constitution for *The Justice Gap*.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

He who would learn to fly one day must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance; one cannot fly into flying.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

The first principle is that you must not fool yourself and you are the easiest person to fool.

RICHARD P. FEYNMAN

All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.

JRR TOLKIEN

CUSTODIAN OF DEMOCRACY

FOCUS NATION

The manifest concern for preserving democracy in India cannot be better exemplified than in the two recent verdicts of the Supreme Court, both authored by CJI DY Chandrachud. In one, a seemingly minor electoral issue in the election of the Mayor of Chandigarh, provoked the CJI to describe the abuse of authority by the Returning Officer as "a murder of democracy" when he found that the ballot papers were defaced by him so as to invalidate eight otherwise valid votes of the opposing candidate which illegally resulted in declaring the BJP candidate to be elected as Mayor. And in the second verdict, the constitutional bench of the SC headed by the CJI declared the Electoral Bonds Scheme (EBS) to be invalid and unconstitutional, violating the fundamental right of a citizen under Article 19(1)(a) by denying him information fundamental to his right to receive the same in the interest of fair and free elections to Parliament and state legislatures. The underlined theme of both these verdicts is the preservation of democracy, nothing more, and nothing less.

In 2017, the Finance Act brought about four significant amendments in laws that governed contributions to political parties by individuals and corporations. The statutes that were amended were the Representation of the People Act, 1951; the Companies Act, 2013; Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, 1961; and Section 31 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1931. The purport in all these alterations was to provide complete secrecy and anonymity to cash contributions to political parties by their donors. Contributions could be made without limit by donors on the assurance that their identities would remain secret as would the identities of political parties to whom such donations or contributions were made. By these amendments, neither the donor nor the receiving parties were required to maintain any accounts



The manifest concern for preserving democracy in India cannot be better exemplified than in the two recent verdicts of the Supreme Court, both authored by CJI DY Chandrachud

or records to show the extent of contributions made or received.

This was in stark departure from the amended provisions of law which compelled donors to disclose the parties to whom contributions were made and the amounts so contributed. Equally, political parties were bound to disclose amounts received by them in full. The consequences of not maintaining proper accounts, especially by companies, were penal in nature under the amended provisions. Quite obviously, the rationale of these amended provisions was that in the larger public interest, such contributions made to political parties were not meant as quid pro quo for favours to the donor.

These laws ensured probity in public life and contributed to keeping the institution of elections clean, free and fair. Prior to the amendment, the monopoly to issue bearer instruments which have the potential of becoming currency was with the RBI. However, by the amendment, any bank could be notified by the Central government as having the authority to issue electoral bonds. To put it plainly, the EBS was the government's way of institutionalising bribery unto itself. A PIL was filed shortly after the introduction of EBS and the principal challenge was that the secrecy attending EBS was a violation of a citizen's fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a). By well-established judicial prece-

dents, an Indian had the right to information in matters relating to governance by the State. Courts had previously traced a citizen's right to information to the values of good governance, transparency and accountability by which the citizen could hold the State liable for its actions and inactions in matters of governance.

Another facet of Article 19(1)(a) was the evolution of the jurisprudence on the right to information to a citizen. The SC had recognised the importance of information to form views on social, cultural and political issues, and participate in and contribute to discussions. This foundational basis of the challenge to EBS found favour with the SC which eventually upheld the same and declared the EBS to be unconstitutional and invalid. In the process of its judgment, the SC held that secrecy in contributions to undisclosed political parties was an obvious means of obtaining political favours by way of quid pro quo from the government in power. Previously, any contribution made in excess of Rs 20,000 by an individual or a company was bound to be disclosed and accounted for, but now a limitless amount could furtively exchange hands from the donor to the donee through the instrumentality of an electoral bond.

What further irked the SC was that when EBS was being mooted and referred to institutions such as RBI and the

Election Commission for their views, both of them expressed serious misgivings about the scheme, including alerting the government and that the EBS would provide a convenient conduit for money laundering and other pernicious practices that would hurt the democratic fabric of the nation. These concerns and objections were brushed aside contemptuously, as it were, by the government.

The SC impliedly in its reasoning upheld these concerns of RBI and EC. The Union of India in its response to the Petitioner brazenly argued, contrary to judicial precedents, that the citizen's right to information was not absolute. The Union argued that the donor was not bound to disclose his affiliation to a political party nor his contribution made to it as that would be an invasion of the donor's right of privacy. This argument was repelled by SC by holding that right of a citizen to information under Article 19(1)(a) far outweighed in importance as an inalienable democratic value to the donor's right of privacy in this regard.

The SC on a scrutiny of the defaced ballot papers held that it was obvious that the real winner was the AAP candidate and declared him as the Mayor of Chandigarh in the place of the previously "elected" BJP candidate. The SC has now issued a contempt notice to the Returning Officer and proposes to prosecute him for abuse of the electoral process and perjury.

What is of significance and runs parallel in both the above verdicts is the SC's innate concern for upholding democratic values in the Indian polity. Both the above judgments are from the heart and the intellectual flavour is just the vehicle through which the SC has done this country proud.

The writer is a senior advocate who practices in the Supreme Court and has espoused causes of public interest. He heads the Mumbai law firm Oasis Counsel and Advisory.

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Haresh M. Jagtiani

TO PUT IT PLAINLY, THE EBS WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S WAY OF SYSTEMATIZE BRIBERY UNTO ITSELF



Nicholas Reed Langen

At a time of mounting populist pressure, the judiciary's apparent democratic unaccountability will likely prove to be one of its fundamental strengths, not a weakness. They may now be the last guarantors of democratic constitutional order

SPECTRUM SOCIETY

Dismantling gender bias at workplace

Gender bias in Indian workplaces remains a critical issue, impeding the progress of women and stifling the full potential of our workforce. Despite advancements in various sectors, traditional stereotypes and cultural norms continue to marginalise women, limiting their opportunities for professional growth and contributing to a lopsided representation in leadership roles. The prevalence of gender bias not only undermines the principles of equality and fairness but also hampers organisational performance, innovation and national building. In this context, addressing gender bias in Indian workplaces is not just a matter of social justice but also an imperative for economic development and sustainable progress. By understanding the complexities of gender bias and implementing targeted interventions, we can create a workplace culture that values diversity, fosters inclusivity, and empowers women to thrive. Research consistently demonstrates that diverse and inclusive workplaces are not only more innovative and productive but also better equipped to navigate the complex challenges of today's global economy. This ar-

ticle explores innovative strategies and practical solutions to overcome gender bias, paving the way for a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

In India, gender biases are deeply rooted in societal norms and institutional structures, making them difficult to eradicate through traditional means alone. Overcoming gender bias requires innovative strategies that challenge entrenched norms, promote diversity and inclusion, and foster systemic change.

Reverse mentorship programmes should be encouraged to allow senior leaders to gain insights into the challenges women face in the workplace while providing mentorship and support to aspiring female leaders. Organisations need to implement gender-blind recruitment practices to eliminate biases in hiring process. Removing identifying information such as names and gender from resumes ensures that candidates are evaluated based solely on their qualification, merit, and experience. Workplaces should encourage employee resource groups dedicated to promoting gender diversity and inclusion. These groups provide a platform for women to connect, share experiences, and advocate for change

within the organisation.

Flexible career paths should be introduced to accommodate women's diverse needs and aspirations. Organisations should invest in targeted leadership development programmes specifically designed for women. Existing policies in workplaces need to be reviewed to ensure they are gender-inclusive and supportive of work-life balance. This may include offering parental leave for both mothers and fathers, subsidising childcare expenses, and providing resources for eldercare support. Managers should be trained to conduct performance evaluations through a gender-sensitive lens. They should encourage objective criteria and discourage subjective assessments that may be influenced by unconscious bias. Partnering with NGOs, industry associations, and government agencies can provide access to resources, best practices, and advocacy platforms.

By proactively monitoring and addressing disparities in task allocation, organisations can promote gender equity and empower women to showcase their skills and capabilities. Virtual Reality (VR) Empathy Training can help individuals develop greater empathy and under-

standing for the challenges faced by marginalised groups, including women, in the workplace and beyond. Offering flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options and flexible hours, can help women better balance their professional and personal responsibilities.

By embracing out-of-the-box strategies such as reverse mentorship programmes, gender-blind recruitment, and flexible career paths, organisations can create a more equitable and empowering environment for all employees. It is time to shatter the barriers that hold women back and build a future where gender equality is not just a goal but a reality. Today, we stand at the crossroads of history. Unless we really empower our women in all conceivable areas of social, political, economic, organisational and national life through honest implementation of proactive measures and innovative strategies, we will certainly owe an explanation to the posterity. The big question that will remain largely unanswered is "How modern is our modernity?"

The writer is a former senior banker, academic advisor, HR consultant and policy analyst.



Lakshmi Prasad Padhy

ADDRESSING GENDER BIAS AT WORKPLACE IS NOT JUST A MATTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE BUT ALSO AN IMPERATIVE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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Space mission

Sir, Kudos to the four IAF pilots named for Gaganyaan, the country's maiden human spaceflight mission set to take place in 2025. Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the names of the four astronaut-designates, including Group Captain Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair, Group Captain Ajit Krishnan, Group Captain Angad Pratap, and Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla, during his visit to the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre in Thiruvananthapuram. With extensive flying experience, the crew has undergone rigorous training for about four years. Prime Minister Modi presented the four with 'astronaut wings' on the occasion.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Income & expenditure

Sir, According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's most recent household consumption expenditure survey, per capita urban household expenditure at current prices has more than doubled, rising from Rs 2,630 in 2011-12 to Rs 6,459 in 2022-23. Similarly, rural areas have seen an increase from Rs 1,430 to Rs 3,773. Parallel to these figures is the claim that poverty has decreased by five per cent. The figure of about 23 crore people coming out of multidimensional poverty was also in the news a few days ago. Amidst all this there is also a fact that there has been no significant increase in per capita income. In rural areas, per capita monthly income is almost the same as per capita monthly expenditure. It has also been discovered that expenditure on non-food products has climbed, whilst expenditure on food grains has fallen in comparison to previous years. Expenditure on fruits, vegetables, milk, seafood, edible oil, and other items has grown. Similarly, spending on education, health, entertainment, clothing, and other vital consumer products has risen. One reason for this is that the average consumption spending in that sector has increased as a result of individuals returning from cities to villages during COVID and becoming employed in the agricultural sector. However, the same argument does not apply when raising urban expenditure. During this period, the government is always attempting to keep inflation under control. However, this does not achieve a balance between per capita income and expenditure. In most homes, there is just one earner, but she/he supports three people on average.

Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

'Learn from tribal lifestyle'

ZSI scientists discover new marine species, name it after Prez Murmu



knowledge which could be useful for the next generation," she said.

She also pointed out that there is almost no gender discrimination in tribal societies.

"The idea of women empowerment could get energy from the tribal societies," she said adding that the tribals are mostly honest and simple persons.

Simplicity is the hallmark of tribals and that makes them different from others, she said.

Interaction with Juangs

Earlier, on the second day of her four-day visit to the state, Murmu arrived at Raisuan airstrip in Keonjhar in a special aircraft and had an interaction with the Juang tribe men

and women, where she stressed on education, training, employment and health of tribals. She said tribals could be self-reliant if they become economically independent.

Asking the gathering to ensure that tribal children should not leave their studies in the midway, the President said it is the responsibility of the government to identify the dropout tribal children and impart vocational training to them.

After their training, financial assistance should be provided to the tribals so that they can earn their livelihood with dignity, Murmu said asking the District Collectors to handhold the District employed tribal youths.

She urged the tribal gathering to be aware of different government schemes and take benefit from them. She said the tribal people are now entitled to get free-of-cost rice till 2029 and one should not be worried about food for the next five years. Both tribal men and women should stress on education, training and employment.

Murmu informed the gathering that the Central government has prepared a scheme worth ₹24,000 crore for the development of 75 PVTGs in three years.

The government is also prepared to give more assistance if required, she said, adding that this scheme will look after their issues like food, drinking water, houses, roads, schools and health. She also called upon the tribal youths to become assets for their families and not liability for others.

The President during the interaction wanted to know how many Juangs are educated, how many get the PDS rice and other benefits. She was, however, informed that only five Juang families were given housing units under the government scheme while the remaining members of the community were unaware of the scheme. She said all the PVTG families should have ration card, Aadhaar card, houses and other facilities.

She also wanted to know as to how many of Juang tribes were in politics and occupying posts in the three-tier Panchayati Raj system.

PNN & AGENCIES

Berhampur, Feb 29: Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) scientists have discovered a new species of head-shield sea slug from Bay of Bengal in the Odisha-West Bengal border and named it in the honour of President Droupadi Murmu.

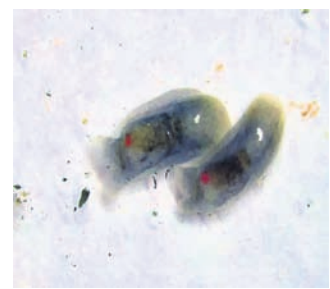
The new species was discovered from Udaipur and Digha coast of Odisha and West Bengal and named as *Melanochlamys Droupadi*, said Dhriti Banerjee, Director, ZSI.

The proposed common name of the new species is Droupadi's head-shield sea slug, said one of the scientists.

The species was confirmed by examination of morphological, anatomical and molecular characteristics. It is a small invertebrate with a maximum length up to 7 mm, brownish black in colour with a ruby red spot in the hind end, shell inside the body, hermaphrodite, normally crawling on the intertidal zone, which left the crawl mark behind them in the sandy beaches.

Their reproduction apparently occurs between November and January, said Prasad Chandra Tudu, Marine Aquarium Regional Centre, ZSI, Digha.

Melanochlamys Droupadi is a unique species with a ruby red spot on the left posterior side unlike the other species reported throughout the world, said Tudu,



who was leading the study along with SK Sajan of ZSI Kolkata, Smrutirekha Acharya and Anil Mohapatra of the ZSI's Estuarine Biology Regional Centre, Gopalpur-on-Sea.

Tudu said the distribution of this species was presently recorded only from a 3-km stretch of the Digha-Udaipur coast. The study has revealed it was the second species discovered in the country, he added.

They have collected around 145 specimens from the stretch from February 2021 to March 2023 for the purposes of the study. "After a thorough study, we confirmed the species was a new one," he added. The research paper was published in the leading molluscan journal, *Mollusca Research* in its online edition.

Tudu said the sea slugs are active marauders and rapid hunters, feeding on small animals like ribbon worms, marine worms and small fishes by sucking the whole prey into their mouths. It plays a secondary consumer role in the ecosystem, he added.

Motorcycles collide head-on; 3 killed

Baripada: Three persons were killed in a head-on collision between two motorcycles in Mayurbhanj district Thursday, police said. The accident happened near Gudialbandh on Baripada-Udala Road in Barasahi police station area, they said. The deceased were identified as Akash Bindhani (29), Laxman Singh (19) and Ranjan Singh (25), police said. The bodies were sent to the PRM Medical College and Hospital for post-mortem examinations, they said. A case has been registered, police said.

3-year jail term for ponzi firm manager

Balasure: Special Judge, OPID Court and Additional Sessions Judge Biswajit Das Thursday convicted a manager of a ponzi firm and sentenced him to three years rigorous imprisonment (RI) along with a penalty of ₹61,000. The court further ordered six more months of jail term in case the convict failed to pay the penalty. Special Public Prosecutor Pranab Panda said the accused Nimai Charan Sahu was tried under different sections of IPC including 420, 406, 120(B) and 4, 5, 6 of the Prize Chit Money Circulation Schemes (Banning) Act after a depositor Rasmita Mishra lodged an FIR with Baripada Town police in 2013. Mishra has alleged that the manager of the multi-level marketing company Utkal Women's Cooperative Society had siphoned money from the depositors giving false assurances of high returns, and loans. The chit fund outlet was closed subsequently, she alleged.

Man gets 5 years RI for killing wife

Balasure: Special Judge OPID court and Additional Sessions Judge Biswajit Das Thursday sentenced a murder accused to five years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) along with a ₹5,000 fine and six months more jail term in default of penalty. The convict Madhi Majhi, a resident of Khantapara, was arrested on the charge of killing his wife Tikili Singh by forcefully drowning her in an inebriated state in February 2022 following a complaint from the father of the deceased. The accused was convicted under section 304(I) of IPC and the court pronounced the verdict after examining 12 witnesses and 18 exhibits, said Special Public Prosecutor Pranab Panda.

24x7 control centre to monitor power supply in south Odisha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, Feb 29: The Tata Power Southern Odisha Distribution Ltd (TPSODL), a joint venture between Tata Power and the state government, has opened a centralised 24x7 power system control centre (PSCC) to oversee and monitor different power supply feeders for ensuring efficient operation.

The control centre is equipped with dedicated mobile numbers for effective communication with the respective circles, along with a management information system (MIS) on regular tripping and restoration for timely information dissemination to all internal and external stakeholders, an official of TPSODL said.

Besides, decentralised control centres have become functional at Berhampur, Jeypore, Rayagada, and Bhanjanagar.

The power distribution company has made necessary preparations to provide uninterrupted and reliable power supply during the upcoming summer season, anticipating a peak demand of 820 MW.

It has established 814 fuse call centres to attend to fuse-call complaints efficiently through the FCC 2.0 mobile application.

In addition, sub-division wise night breakdown teams have been deployed to promptly address 33 KV and 11 KV breakdowns, he said.

Besides, six mobile distribution substations have been stationed across six circles of TPSODL to address emergency requirements.

We are committed to ensuring uninterrupted and reliable power supply, especially during the summer season, the CEO of TPSODL, Amit Garg, said.

ESI official in Vig net

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 29: Vigilance sleuths Thursday trapped and caught red-handed a senior assistant working at the ESI Dispensary at Jail Road here for demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹10,000 from the complainant, an accident victim.

Sources said the accused employee identified as Abhiram Sahu was apprehended by the state Vigilance directorate for allegedly demanding ₹10,000 bribe from an accident victim for clearing his medical reimbursement claim under ESI Scheme.

The complainant, being poor, had been repeatedly requesting Sahu to process his medical claim for a long time. However, Sahu kept dillydallying and insisting on the payment of the said amount to get his work done.

Given his financial status, the complainant was expressing his inability to arrange and pay the bribe amount. Finding no other

option, the complainant informed the Vigilance authorities and narrated the harassment he was facing to get his claim cleared by Sahu.

The Vigilance sleuths soon laid a trap and asked the complainant to work as per their direction. As per the plan, the complainant paid the bribe to the ESI official and accordingly he was caught red-handed Thursday while accepting the said amount. The entire bribe money has been recovered and seized from the possession of accused Sahu.

Following the successful trap, simultaneous searches are underway at two different locations linked to Sahu to unearth disproportionate assets (DA), if any.

In this connection, a case has been registered by Rourkela Vigilance under PS Case No.04 dated 28.02.2024, U/s 7 of the PC (Amendment) Act, 2018. A detailed probe against accused Sahu is underway, Vigilance sources said.

CIL, BHEL to jointly set up ammonium nitrate unit in state

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 29: Public sector giants Coal India Limited (CIL) and Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) have signed a joint venture (JV) agreement for setting up an ammonium nitrate plant based on surface coal gasification technology in Odisha.

The Coal Ministry announcement Wednesday said the plant to come up in Lakhnapur area of Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) will initially produce 2,000 tonnes of ammonium nitrate per day.

The annual production is slated at 6.60 lakh tonnes which requires 1.3 million tonnes (mts) of coal.

The coal will be supplied by CIL. BHEL will bring to the table indigenously developed pressurised fluidised bed gasification (PFBG) technology for this purpose.

The synergy and partnership of the two corporate giants is a big step towards National Coal Gasification Mission which facilitates utilisation of chemical properties of coal, the Coal Ministry said.

Ammonium nitrate is a major ingredient in manufacturing bulk explosives which CIL uses in large quantities in its open-cast mining operations, a major source of its coal production.

The upcoming plant's backward integration would help in securing the raw material, reducing import dependence of ammonium nitrate and promoting Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.

Coal Secretary Amrit Lal Meena said that with the commitment of CIL and BHEL, this project will be a role model.

Gasification is the highest priority area for the ministry of coal.

In the next two to three years there will be sufficient coal. All the possible support required from the government is in place including financial support for viable gap funding.

Debasish Nanda, Director (Business Development) CIL and Jai Prakash Srivastava, Director (Engineering, R&D) BHEL signed the joint venture agreement on behalf of respective promoter companies.

CIL will pursue alternative uses of coal for environment friendly ventures like coal gasification in future after fulfilling the requirement of the power sector. SCG is a promising technology that converts coal into valuable Syn gas.

On further processing, this produces synthetic natural gas that can be used as alternative natural gas.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



20-yr RI to man for minor's rape



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, Feb 29: A special fast track court here convicted a man for rape of a minor and handed him down 20 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI), Thursday.

The convict was identified as Mohan Kumar Kundu, 34, a resident of Bhagibindha village under Dhamnagar police limits in this district.

Judge Minati Panda also slapped a penalty of ₹20,000 on Kundu, apart from the punishment. In default, Kundu has to undergo ad-

ditional six months of imprisonment.

This was stated here by government pleaders Batkrushna Das and Pradip Mohapatra, Thursday. The duo, who pleaded the case on behalf of the state government, said that Kundu lured the survivor with snacks and chocolates to the nearby Reba river bank and raped her over there, January 13, 2022. He had even threatened her of dire consequences if she disclosed the matter before others.

The girl returned home and narrated her ordeal before her mother, who took her to the Dhamnagar police station the next day and lodged a complaint.

Police arrested Kundu January 15 and produced him in the court. Since then he was lodged in jail as an under-trial prisoner.

Flight-test of very short range missile successful

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi/Chandipur, Feb 29: The Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) has conducted two successful flight tests of the Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) missile Wednesday and Thursday.

The tests were conducted from a ground-based portable launcher from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, off the coast of Odisha.

These tests were carried out against high-speed unmanned aerial targets under different interception scenarios. During all the test flights, the targets were intercepted and destroyed by the missiles, meeting the mission objectives.

The Ministry of Defence informed that VSHORADS is a Man-



Portable Air Defence System (MANPAD) designed and developed indigenously by the Research Centre Imarat (RCI) in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories and Indian industry partners.

The VSHORADS missile in-

corporates many novel technologies, including miniaturised Reaction Control System (RCS) and integrated avionics, which have been successfully proven during the tests.

The missile is propelled by a

dual thrust solid motor meant for neutralising low-altitude aerial threats at short ranges. The design of the missile, including the launcher, has been highly optimised to ensure easy portability.

The flight tests were witnessed by officials of the Indian Army, senior scientists from various DRDO laboratories, and industry partners.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the DRDO, Indian Army and the industry involved in the successful development trials, saying that this new missile equipped with modern technologies will give further technological boost to the armed forces.

DRDO Chairman Samir V Kamat also congratulated the entire team involved in the design and development of the missile.

सेन्ट्रल इंस्टिट्यूट ऑफ पेट्रोकेमिकल इंजीनियरिंग एण्ड टेक्नोलॉजी (सिपेट)
CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PETROCHEMICALS ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY (CIPET)
CENTRE FOR SKILLING AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT (CSTS), BHUBANESWAR
 (Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Govt. of India)
 G-3/7B, Sector - A, Zone-B, Mancheswar Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-75
 Email: cipetst@ipet.gov.in; mct@cipet.gov.in; Website: www.cipet.gov.in

INVITATION FOR QUOTATION Date: 01.03.2024

Sealed quotations are invited from reputed Manufacturers/Suppliers/Distributors/Authorized Dealers for the supply of Plastics Raw Material at CIPET: CSTS Bhubaneswar.

SL NO	Tender Number	Materials Details	Qty.
1	CIPE:CSTS/BBSR/PP REPROCESS/2023-24/05	PLASTICS RAW MATERIAL-PP REPROCESS	16,500 Kg.

Interested bidders may submit their quotation on or before 11.03.2024 at the above address. The other details are available at CIPET website - www.cipet.gov.in.
 Director & Head, CIPET: CSTS Bhubaneswar reserves right to accept or reject any/all quotations without assigning any reasons thereof.
Director & Head



LG threatened officers: Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 29: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Thursday accused Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena of threatening officers to stall various city government initiatives, including the bus marshal scheme.

There was no immediate reaction from the LG's office to the Chief Minister's claim. Speaking in the Delhi Assembly on the issue of removal of civil defence volunteers deployed as bus marshals in Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and cluster buses, Kejriwal said the scheme ran smoothly from 2015 to 2022.



"We formed the government in 2015 with a promise to ensure women's safety. We installed CCTV cameras in five years, street lights

■ There was no immediate reaction from the LG's office to the Chief Minister's claim

■ Kejriwal spoke about Saxena's open letter to him on the one-time settlement scheme for allegedly inflated water bills

were installed at dark spots and buses were equipped with CCTV cameras, panic buttons and bus marshals were deployed. There are several instances of good work by bus marshals," the Chief Minister said.

The bus marshal scheme worked well for eight years but in 2023, officers started raising objections saying civil defence volunteers could not work as

marshals, he said.

"The Lt Governor threatened officers to stall the bus marshal scheme. The LG questioned the deployment of marshals saying there were CCTV cameras and panic buttons," Kejriwal charged.

He also accused the BJP of shedding "crocodile tears" over the issue and said that he was ready to sign any paper for the reinstatement of bus marshals.

Kejriwal also spoke about Saxena's open letter to him on the one-time settlement scheme for allegedly inflated water bills. "The language of the LG's letter was filthy," he said, adding such language should not be used.

Protection bund for farmers soon



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Samba/Jammu, Feb 29: Encouraging border residents to cultivate their land ahead of border fence, a top BSF officer Thursday said the Home Ministry has approved a plan for the construction of a protection bund along the International Border for the safety of farmers and it will be completed within next five years.

Inspector General of Border Security Force (BSF), Jammu frontier, D K Boora was speaking at a function organised at Chamliyal village near the zero line in Samba district to hand over a cheque of Rs 3 lakh to a villager who helped in the recovery of a grounded Pakistani drone in January.

Samba Senior Superintendent of Police Vinay Kumar and other prominent people attended the function. "We want the farmers to tend their land ahead of the border fence as the BSF is there for your protection. We will provide you with all the assistance and if you are concerned that you won't be able to cultivate your produce, we will not allow such a situation to develop in the first place," the BSF officer said.

Boora, however, said in case the farmers on the Indian side are not able to reap their produce, the BSF will not allow the other side to cultivate as well. He said the Home Ministry has already approved a proposal for the construction of a protection bund along the IB for the safety of the farmers working in their fields ahead of the border fence.

"The protection bund will be completed within the next four to five years, depending on the availability of the funds. After the completion of the protection bund, you can carry out your work easily without any threat (from the enemy)," he said.

Boora said there are rules in place while moving ahead of the border fence and "we need to follow those rules. BSF is deployed on the borders in J&K, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram and all these areas are protected by border fences and the rules are the same everywhere."

Boora said the central government has announced many schemes for the development of border villages and the im-

portance of these schemes will be visible on the ground in the next five years.

Highlighting the importance of border residents in safeguarding the country border security is incomplete without the cooperation of the border population.

"We are proud of our border population in Jammu region who are nationalist by core," he said, adding that in neighbouring Punjab, drug smuggling from across the border is a major challenge.

"The drugs are coming by drones and other means in Punjab because there are some elements who are promoting the business. When our own people are involved in such criminal activities, it becomes difficult (for the law enforcing agencies to tackle the situation)," he said, adding that when the border residents are nationalists, the entire focus of the border guarding forces remains on the front rather than looking behind.

Highlighting the cooperation of the border residents in securing the borders of the country, he said Dass had done a very good job for which he was rewarded.

SSP Sharma said the police headquarters had announced rewards to anyone sharing information regarding anti-national activities and Dass was handed over the cheque of Rs 3 lakh for helping in the recovery of enemy drones in January this year.

He said there is also a reward of Rs 5 lakh for anyone who locates the trans-border tunnel, used by anti-national elements to tranship terrorists, explosives, and contraband consignments into Jammu and Kashmir from across the border. "People have always been supportive in providing information to the forces. The rewards were announced just to glorify, certify and celebrate such people," he said.

Dass thanked the BSF and the police for rewarding him and said it is the duty of every individual to expose the enemy conspiracies and safeguard the country alongside the forces. "I was doing spray in my agriculture land on January 17 when I found a drone lying on the ground. I immediately informed BSF who later gave me Rs 50,000," he said, thanking police for the reward of Rs 3 lakhs.

DELHI BJP STARTS CAMPAIGN FOR MANIFESTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 29: The Delhi BJP Thursday launched a door-to-door campaign for gathering suggestions of the people for its manifesto and seeking their views on 'Viksit Bharat' ahead of Lok Sabha polls.

In a press conference, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said the campaign will continue till March 15 in which the party workers will visit every household, markets and public places across the city carrying a form and boxes to gather feedback of the people.

He said the party workers will also seek suggestions of separate groups like chartered accountants, professionals, sports persons, teachers, professors and theatre actors among others during the campaign.

The party workers will provide a small form to the people in which they will write down their suggestions on developed India, a better Delhi and their expectations from Prime Minister Narendra Modi before depositing it in the box.

A phone number was also released by the party for the people to give their suggestions by recording their voice. People can also give their feedback through downloading NaMo app, Sachdeva said.

Apart from party workers, social media influencers will also join the campaign, he said. An LED van will also visit different areas of the city to encourage people to give their suggestions for developed India and a better Delhi, Sachdeva said, and added "the manifesto 2024 will be peoples' manifesto based on their expectations".

The Delhi BJP president claimed that the party fulfilled 529 of 530 suggestions provided by the people that were included in the manifesto for 2014 Lok Sabha polls. "In 2019, we delivered on 95 per cent or 222 of the 234 suggestions from people included in the manifesto," he said.

Homestays to boost border tourism in Samba

THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR ADMINISTRATION HAS RECENTLY GIVEN ITS NOD FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOMESTAYS IN THE CLOSE VICINITY OF THE FAMOUS BABA CHAMLIYAL SHRINE IN RAMGARH SECTOR TO BOOST BORDER TOURISM AMID PREVAILING PEACE ON THE BORDERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Samba (J&K), Feb 29: Former Sarpanch Mohan Singh Bhatti is ready to receive tourists at his homestay near the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district, a visible change in the ground situation after the renewed ceasefire between India and Pakistan came into effect in this month three years ago.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration has recently given its nod for the construction of homestays in the close vicinity of the famous Baba Chamliyal shrine in Ramgarh sector to boost border tourism amid prevailing peace on the borders.

Considered a symbol of Indo-Pakistan bonhomie in the past, the famous shrine of Baba Chamliyal on the zero line attracts thousands of devotees from across the country, especially on the occasion of the annual fair in the middle of the year.

Delegations from Pakistan used to come to pay obeisance at the shrine during the annual fair but the practice was stopped after cross-border firing left four BSF personnel including an Assistant Commandant dead on June 13, 2018.

Last year, a BSF jawan was killed in Pakistan Rangers firing in Ramgarh sector during the in-



tervening night of November 8-9, the first loss of life on this side after the renewed ceasefire was agreed upon by the two countries February 25, 2021.

Bhatti, who has come up with a double-storey homestay at his Dagh Channi village of Fatwal, has also constructed a well-furnished underground bunker with a twin objective to make the visitors feel living on the borders and as a safety measure to prevent any damage in case of shelling from across the border.

"On your visit to the border, you will see everything but not the bunker, which we are using during cross-border shelling. The one who had not seen this bunker (during the border visit) has seen nothing," Bhatti said.

He said they have constructed the underground bunker also to ensure the safety of the visitors in case there is firing or shelling from the other side. "As former Prime Minister A B Vajpayee had said, we cannot change our neighbour but we have to remain prepared to avoid getting caught in unwanted situations."

Samba Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma said there are many locations along the 55-km International Border in the district which have the potential to attract tourists in large numbers like Chamliyal shrine, 300-year-old temple Bamu chak, Baba Bali Karan and Baba Sidh

Goria shrines.

"Both the centre and J-K administration are focusing on the promotion of border tourism. Last year, visitors to Chamliyal shrine faced accommodation problems and to bridge this gap, we are promoting homestays," Sharma said.

He said there is an encouraging response from the border residents, especially young entrepreneurs who are ready to convert their homes into homestays. "The district administration, Municipal Committee and Central University have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide a hand-holding to the owners of 40 identified homestay owners, both in online and offline mode, to guide them and promote their business," the deputy commissioner said.

He said the people like to visit international borders and the government has come out with a border tourism promotion strategy to enhance the economy of the local population.

"The BSF has a strong coordination and communication with the administration. The BSF is also happy about people visiting border villages as it generates nationalistic fervour among the visitors as well," Sharma said.

The visitors can also witness farming along the zero line, while the administration is plan-

ning to turn community bunkers at Ramgarh and Samba into model bunkers by setting up a gym or a library as part of the campaign to ensure proper usage of the structures.

"We are seeing that the bunkers constructed for the protection of the border residents are not properly used or maintained and utilised for other purposes. We have started a campaign so that the space is properly used," the deputy commissioner said.

Om Prakash, a resident of Chamliyal, welcomed the government scheme and lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi for ensuring peace on the borders.

"Earlier, cross-border shelling was a routine but now peace is prevailing on the borders and new opportunities are opening for the villagers," he said, adding that the border residents want everlasting peace so that the people, who are mostly farmers, can tend their land on both sides without any fear.

Chairman of Baba Chamliyal shrine, Billu Choudhary also thanked the government for the step and said, "Our village is situated just two kilometres from the IB and we want the people to come in large numbers. A person coming from Delhi or Mumbai has only heard about the borders and on reaching here, he can have a feel of the ground situation."

40% pillion riders did not use helmets: AIIMS data

Most of the road accident victims were in the age group of 20 to 40 years, Dr Farooque said

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 29: Forty per cent of pillion riders on two-wheelers in Delhi did not use helmets leading to head injuries, according to data collected in 2022 at the AIIMS Trauma Centre here.

However, the data showed that nearly 85 per cent of the riders of two-wheelers used helmets while the rest did not wear protective gear leading to head injuries, which resulted in mortality or morbidity, said AIIMS Trauma Centre chief Dr Kamran Farooque. He referred to data collected at the centre between January 21 and December 22.

He further informed that according to the data, almost 82 per cent of the patients



who were brought dead to the hospital in 2022 had met with road accidents.

Dr Farooque further stated that the hospital received 53,541 trauma patients in 2022, out of which around 25 per cent were road accident victims.

Most of the road accident victims were in the age group of 20 to 40 years, Dr Farooque said. Since this age group is the most active and productive, their becoming victims of accidents has a major impact not only on their families but also on the country's economy. "So, there should be an organised system in place so that road accident victims get immediate help and treatment," he said.

'PALAASH' TO KICK OFF FROM MARCH 2

TO TANTALISE THE TASTE BUDS OF VISITORS, THE FESTIVAL WILL OFFER A SELECTION OF DELICACIES FROM INDIA'S RICH STREET FOOD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 29: A two-day festival presenting a stunning array of flowers, plants, and floral arrangements is set to begin here from March 2, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) said.

The festival will be inaugurated by Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena, officials said. "With a goal towards a cleaner and greener Delhi and raise awareness about ecological development, DDA's two-day flower festival 'Palaash' is all set to be held March 2 and 3 at DDA Greens - Shivaji Marg, Rohtak Road," the DDA said in a statement Thursday.

The agency had hosted the inaugural flower festival of



'Palaash' at Swarn Jayanti Park in the Rohini area in February 2023. This year's festival will let visitors explore different varieties of flowers from indigenous to exotic ones, beautifully arranged to create captivating display patterns, the officials said.

"Alongside floral displays, the festival will feature entertainment avenues such as DJ, ceremonial band performance, interactive selfie points and rides

for kids to tickle their hearts. These attractions will be adding vibrancy and surreal experience to the festival, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the saga of dance, music and joy," the statement said.

To tantalise the taste buds of visitors, the festival will offer a selection of delicacies from India's rich street food. From snacks to desserts, visitors can indulge in a culinary jour-

ney while enjoying the floral extravaganza. This aspect of the festival always adds a gastronomic dimension, complementing the visual and cultural experiences on offer, the DDA said.

The flower festival is organised annually as an exhibition-cum-competition event among all horticulture divisions of the DDA, vying for recognition as "the foremost custodians of DDA

parks", it said. "The objective of the festival is to promote and encourage residents of city to collaborate with the DDA towards the betterment of greens, also to foster the passion of horticulture enthusiasts towards the scrupulous upkeep of greens. The grassroot level workers get an opportunity to display their skills while a healthy competition amongst them is promoted," the statement said.

The event is named 'Palaash' after the flower butea monosperma that blooms in the capital during this time of the year, the DDA said. The DDA Greens at Shivaji Marg consists of three parts and is readily accessible from Shivaji Marg and Rohtak Road. The park, panning acres, offers a respite from the hustle and bustle of city life, inviting visitors to reconnect with nature and rejuvenate their senses, it said.

The city residents can experience lush greenery with rich landscaping which features elements like duck pond, nurseries, herbal garden, seasonal garden, amphitheatre, open playfield, and lawns along with other public amenities, the officials said.

international

of the day quote

We manage our international relations by remaining engaged with the international community and maintaining ties with as many countries as possible...This is in Singapore's national interests as a small country



VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN | MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF SINGAPORE

Australia and the Philippines need to band together against new challenges to the region's peace and stability, as they had against Japanese forces during World War II



FERDINAND MARCOS JR. | PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT

The President (Joe Biden) is incredibly proud of the progress QUAD has made over the past three years



KARINE JEAN-PIERRE | WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

SHORT TAKES

SL signs security pact with US

Colombo: Sri Lanka has signed a nuclear security pact with the United States to detect and interdict illicit trafficking in special nuclear material and other radioactive material, as part of the efforts to address the growing global security threats. The Sri Lankan Navy signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the US National Nuclear Security Administration at the Navy headquarters here Wednesday. The MoU was signed in the presence of the US Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Julie Chung and the Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, Vice Admiral Priyantha Perera, according to media reports Thursday.

Sharif takes oath as ordinary lawmaker

Islamabad: Three-time former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif Thursday took oath as an ordinary lawmaker in the 16th session of Pakistan's National Assembly, days after giving up his bid to lead the country for a record fourth time. A quirk of fate following the poor show in the electoral battle led Nawaz, 74, the supremo of the PML-N party to abandon his claim to the Prime Minister's position to his younger brother Shehbaz, 72.

Three killed

Copenhagen (Denmark): A freight train hit and killed three people at a railway crossing at a station in central Sweden after they got off another train, police said Thursday. The victims crossed the tracks without seeing the freight train approaching, Felicia Davidsson, a spokesperson for the Swedish Transport Administration, told broadcaster SVT.

ISRAEL-GAZA WAR

Death toll crosses 30K

MORE THAN 100 PEOPLE WERE KILLED THURSDAY

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rafah (Gaza Strip), Feb 29: Israeli troops fired on a crowd of Palestinians waiting for aid in Gaza City Thursday, witnesses said. More than 100 people were killed, bringing the death toll since the start of the Israel-Hamas war to more than 30,000 according to health officials.

Hospital officials initially reported an Israeli strike on the crowd, but witnesses later said Israeli troops opened fire as people pulled flour and canned goods off of trucks. Israeli officials acknowledged that troops opened fire, saying they did so after the crowd approached in a threatening way. The officials insisted on anonymity to give details about what happened, after the military said in a statement that "dozens were killed and injured from pushing, trampling and being run over by the trucks".

Gaza City and the surrounding areas in the enclave's north were the first targets of Israel's air, sea and ground offensive, launched in response to Hamas' October 7 attack. The area has suffered widespread devastation and has been largely isolated during the conflict. Trucks carrying food reached northern Gaza this week, the first major aid delivery to the area in a month, officials said Wednesday.

Aid groups say it has become nearly impossible to deliver humanitarian assistance in most of Gaza because of the difficulty of coordinating with the Israeli military, ongoing hostilities and the breakdown of public order, with crowds of desperate people overwhelming aid convoys. The



Palestinians living in Lebanon hold placards and their national flags during a protest to demand a ceasefire and support Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, in front of the headquarters of UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in Beirut, Lebanon

UN says a quarter of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians face starvation; around 80% have fled their homes.

Kamel Abu Nahel, who was being treated for a gunshot wound at Shifa Hospital, said he and others went to the distribution point in the middle of the night because they heard there would be a delivery of food. "We've been eating animal feed for two months," he said.

He said Israeli troops opened fire on the crowd, causing it to scatter, with some people hiding under cars. After the shooting stopped, people went back to

HOSPITAL OFFICIALS INITIALLY REPORTED AN ISRAELI STRIKE ON THE CROWD, BUT WITNESSES LATER SAID ISRAELI TROOPS OPENED FIRE AS PEOPLE PULLED FLOUR AND CANNED GOODS OFF OF TRUCKS

ISRAELI OFFICIALS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT TROOPS OPENED FIRE, SAYING THEY DID SO AFTER THE CROWD APPROACHED IN A THREATENING WAY

the trucks, and the soldiers opened fire again. He was shot in the leg and fell over, and then a truck ran over his leg as it sped off, he said.

Alaa Abu Daiya, another witness, said Israeli troops open fire and also that a tank fired a shell. Medics arriving at the scene Thursday found "dozens or hundreds" lying on the ground, according to Fares Afana, the head of the ambulance service at Kamal Adwan Hospital. He said there were not enough ambulances to collect all the dead and wounded and that some were being brought to hospitals in donkey carts.

One man — who gave only his

first name, Ahmad, as he was being treated at a hospital for gunshot wounds to the arm and leg — said he lay down on the ground for two hours before someone with a horse-pulled cart had room to take him to Shifa.

In addition to at least 104 people killed, around 760 were wounded, Health Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra said. The Health Ministry described it as a "massacre."

Separately, the Health Ministry said the Palestinian death toll from the war has climbed to 30,035, with another 70,457 wounded. It does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its figures but says women and children make up around two-thirds of those killed.

The ministry, which is part of the Hamas-run government in Gaza, maintains detailed records of casualties. Its counts from previous wars have largely matched those of the UN, independent experts and even Israel's own tallies.

The Hamas attack into southern Israel that ignited the war killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and the militants seized around 250 hostages. Hamas and other militants are still holding around 100 hostages and the remains of about 30 more, after releasing most of the other captives during a November ceasefire.

The increasing alarm over hunger across Gaza has fuelled international calls for another cease-fire, and the US, Egypt and Qatar are working to secure a deal between Israel and Hamas for a pause in fighting and the release of some of the hostages.

Britain is descending into 'mob rule' because of the pressures created by protests against the Israel-Hamas war

RISHI SUNAK | UK PM

BIDEN 'FIT FOR DUTY'

Joe Biden 'continues to be fit for duty' and 'fully executes' all of his responsibilities, his physician has said after an annual health checkup, asserting that the 81-year-old US President does not have any major health concerns



Putin warns West



Putin's warning came in a state-of-the-nation address ahead of next month's election he's all but certain to win, underlining his readiness to protect Russian gains in Ukraine

Putin emphasised that Russia's nuclear forces are in 'full readiness,' saying that the military has deployed potent new weapons, some of them tested on the battlefield in Ukraine

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, Feb 29: Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed Thursday to fulfil Moscow's goals in Ukraine and sternly warned the West against deeper involvement in the fighting, saying that such a move is fraught with the risk of a global nuclear conflict.

Putin's warning came in a state-of-the-nation address ahead of next month's election he's all but certain to win, underlining his readiness to protect Russian gains in Ukraine.

In an apparent reference to French President Emmanuel Macron's statement earlier this week that the future deployment of Western ground troops to Ukraine should not be "ruled out", Putin warned that it would lead to "tragic" consequences for the countries who decide to do that.

Putin noted that while accusing Russia of plans to attack NATO allies in Europe, Western allies were "selecting targets for striking our territory and selecting the most efficient as they think striking assets and talking about the possibility of sending a NATO contingent to Ukraine".

"We remember the fate of those who sent their troop contingents to the territory of our

country," the Russian leader said. "Now the consequences for the potential invaders will be far more tragic."

Speaking before an audience of lawmakers and top officials, Putin said the West should keep in mind that "we also have the weapons that can strike targets on their territory, and what they are now suggesting and scaring the world with, all that raises the real threat of a nuclear conflict that will mean the destruction of our civilisation".

"Don't they understand it?" he said, alleging that Western leaders are playing with options of deeper involvement in the conflict, as in a simulation. "Those people haven't been through any tough challenges and they have forgotten what war means."

The strong statement followed earlier warnings from Putin, who has issued frequent reminders of Russia's nuclear might since he sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022 as he sought to discourage the West from expanding its military support for Kyiv. Putin emphasised that Russia's nuclear forces are in "full readiness," saying that the military has deployed potent new weapons, some of them tested on the battlefield in Ukraine.

India attacks Pak for raking up Kashmir



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singh exercised India's Right of Reply at the ongoing high-level segment of the 55th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on Wednesday.

India exercised the Right of Reply to respond to Turkey and Pakistan after the two countries made references to Kashmir in their statements at the high-level segment. "Firstly, we regret the comment made by Turkey on a matter that is an internal affair of India and hope that it would refrain from making unsolicited comments on our internal matters in the future," Singh said.

Coming down heavily on Pakistan, India said that "we cannot pay any further attention to a country that speaks while being soaked in red - the red of the bloodshed from the terrorism it sponsors around the world; the red of its debt-riddled national balance sheets; and the red of the shame its own people feel for their government having failed to serve their actual interests."

United Nations/Geneva, Feb 29: In a strong retort to debt-trapped Pakistan after it raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir at the UN Human Rights Council, India has said it cannot pay any attention to a country which is soaked in red due to the bloodshed from terrorism that it sponsors around the world.

First Secretary in the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in Geneva Anupama



Public transport workers demonstrate at Erfurt city centre in Germany

PTI PHOTO

Pak's new lawmakers sworn in amid protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 29: Pakistan's newly-elected lawmakers were sworn in Thursday during Parliament's maiden session amid vociferous protests by the supporters of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan alleging massive vote rigging during the elections.

The National Assembly was summoned after President Dr Arif Alvi's initial refusal due to differences with the caretaker government over the issue of Khan's party-backed candidates not being allotted the reserved seats. The opening session of the 16th Parliament, headed by the outgoing Speaker of the previous Parliament, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, began after a delay of more than an hour. The general elections were held February 8 and the National Assembly should meet within 21 days after the day of polling, according to the Constitution.

Ashraf administered the oath to the newly-elected lawmakers amidst unruly scenes as 71-year-old Khan's PTI-backed lawmakers chanted slogans against alleged vote rigging in the February 8 general elections.

According to a notification issued by the National Assembly Secretariat later, the new Parliament would elect the next Prime Minister Sunday. It stated that the candidates for the election of the Prime Minister will have to submit their nomination papers by March 2 and their examination will also take place at three o'clock on the same day.

PML-N has announced the name of Shehbaz Sharif for the post of Prime Minister, who has the support of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Muttahida Quami Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) and other parties.

On the other hand, PTI announced the name of Omar Ayub Khan as the candidate to compete against Shehbaz. Earlier, outgoing Speaker Ashraf administered the oath to at least 302 members out of a total strength of 336 because the Election Commission of Pakistan has not yet decided on the allocation of reserved seats to the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) which swelled its ranks after PTI-backed independently elected members joined it.

Iran election seen as legitimacy test for rulers as dissent grows

THE VOTE WILL BE THE FIRST FORMAL GAUGE OF PUBLIC OPINION AFTER ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTESTS IN 2022-23 SPIRALLED INTO SOME OF THE WORST POLITICAL TURMOIL SINCE THE 1979 ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

REUTERS

Dubai, Feb 29: Iran holds a parliamentary election Friday seen as a test of the clerical establishment's popularity at a time of growing dissent over an array of political, social and economic crises.

The vote will be the first formal gauge of public opinion after anti-government protests in 2022-23 spiralled into some of the worst political turmoil since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Critics from inside and outside the ruling elite, including politicians and former lawmakers, say the legitimacy of Iran's theocratic system could be at stake due to economic struggles and a lack of electoral options for a

mostly young population chafing at political and social restrictions.

Iran's top authority, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has called voting a religious duty. He accused the country's "enemies" — a term he normally uses for the United States and Israel — of trying to create despair among Iranian voters.

The commander of the country's elite Revolutionary Guards, Hossein Salami, said Wednesday that "each vote is like a missile launched at the enemy's heart". But Iranians still have painful memories of the handling of nationwide unrest sparked by the death in custody of a young Iranian-Kurdish woman in 2022, which was quelled by a violent



state crackdown involving mass detentions and even executions.

Economic hardships pose another challenge. Many analysts say that millions have lost hope that Iran's ruling clerics can resolve an economic crisis fo-

mented by a combination of US sanctions, mismanagement and corruption. While establishment supporters will likely vote for hardline candidates, widespread public anger at worsening living standards and pervasive graft

may keep many Iranians at home. Prices for basic goods like bread, meat, dairy and rice have skyrocketed in past months. The official inflation rate stands at about 40%. Analysts and insiders put it at over 50%. The US 2018 withdrawal from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with six world powers, and its reimposition of sanctions, have hit Iran's economy hard. Efforts to revive the pact have failed.

Iranian activists and opposition groups are distributing the Twitter hashtags #VOTENoVote widely on social media, arguing that a high turnout will legitimise the Islamic Republic.

With heavyweight moderates and conservatives staying out of Friday's race and reformists

calling it an "unfree and unfair election", the vote will pit hardliners and low-key conservatives against each other, all proclaiming loyalty to Iran's Islamic revolutionary ideals.

The interior ministry said 15,200 candidates will run for the 290-seat parliament, with a vetting body called the Guardian Council approving 75% of initially registered hopefuls. The unelected Guardian Council, made up of six clerics and six legal experts generally within Khamenei's orbit, has the authority to scrutinise laws and election candidates. Ballots will mostly be counted manually, so the final result may not be announced for three days, although partial results may appear sooner.

of the day quote

India's nutraceutical industry with current market size of \$4 billion is growing rapidly beyond everyone's expectations

KAMALA VARDHANA RAO | CEO, FSSAI

Domestic medical devices industry should come up with cutting-edge technologies to gain leadership across global markets

VK PAUL | NITI AAYOG MEMBER

The improving return on assets over FY21-FY24 is likely to reach an inflection point with some pressure on margins and credit costs reaching multi-year lows

KARAN GUPTA | HEAD AND DIRECTOR, INDIA RATINGS AND RESEARCH

SHORT TAKES

SoftBank slashes stake in Paytm

Bangalore: Japan's SoftBank Group has further reduced its stake in beleaguered Indian payments firm Paytm to 2.83% from 5.01%, an exchange filing showed Thursday. The conglomerate, which held 17.5% stake in Paytm in September 2022, has trimmed its ownership for more than a year through multiple open market deals, with its most recent cut being in January. While some global investors like Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway and China's Alibaba Group exited the firm in 2023, others, including a Netherlands-based unit of Chinese fintech firm Ant Financial cut their stake. Shares of Paytm were down 3.4% in afternoon trade. The stock has fallen 48.5% and lost around ₹234 billion in value since the Reserve Bank of India January 31 ordered the company to wind down its banking arm citing persistent non-compliance with regulations.

Adani's EBITDA hits ₹79K-cr in 2023

New Delhi: Adani Group Thursday said pre-tax profit or EBITDA of its portfolio companies that span from apples to airports soared 34 per cent to ₹79,000 crore in the 12-month period ended December 2023 - 2.5x of EBITDA in financial year 2021. EBITDA of ₹78,823 crore in 2023 is compared with ₹58,653 crore pre-tax profit in the previous year, it said in a statement. "The growth was powered by the highly stable core infrastructure platform. Growing at 35.5 per cent, it generated ₹66,208 crore (\$8 billion) - 84 per cent of portfolio EBITDA," it said.



Of course we feel sad that some countries are still obstructing significant outcomes that could have helped less developed countries and developing countries gain confidence in the working of WTO

PIYUSH GOYAL | TRADE MINISTER

SONY WITHDRAWS AGREEMENT TO MERGE OPS WITH ZEE

Sony Group Corp is said to have withdrawn the agreement to merge its India operations with Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd from a local company court, taking the final step in scrapping a two-year-old plan that sought to create a \$10 billion media giant



GROWING ECONOMY

GDP grows sharply at 8.4%

India's economy grew by better-than-expected 8.4% in the final three months of 2023 - the fastest pace in one-and-a-half years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 29: India's economic growth accelerated to 8.4 per cent in the October-December quarter of this fiscal, mainly due to double-digit growth in manufacturing and good showing by mining & quarrying and construction sectors.

The GDP (gross domestic product) growth was 4.3 per cent in the October-December 2022 quarter, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) Thursday.

The manufacturing sector's output, as per the gross value added in the third quarter of this fiscal, grew by 11.6 per cent compared to a contraction of 4.8 per cent in the year-ago period.

Mining and quarrying grew at 7.5 per cent in the third quarter, up from 1.4 per cent a year ago. The construction sector kept the growth momentum at 9.5 per cent against the same growth rate in the year-ago period.

However, the output of the farm sector declined by 0.8 per cent during the quarter compared to a growth of 5.2 per cent a year ago.

The national accounts data showed electricity, gas, water supply, and other utility services segment has grown by 9 per cent year-on-year against an 8.7



So the actual performance of the economy has continued to defy expectations and do better than what many had projected underscoring the fact that a structural transformation of the economy is indeed underway, both in terms of physical infrastructure and digital infrastructure as well as inclusion agenda, boosting the purchasing power of Indian households

V ANANTHA NAGESWARAN | CEA

per cent rise.

The GVA growth in the services sector - trade, hotel, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting - was 6.7 per cent during the third quarter against 9.2 per cent.

Financial, real estate and professional services grew by 7 per cent in the third quarter over 7.7 per cent earlier. Public administration, defence and other services posted 7.5 per cent

growth against 3.5 per cent in the third quarter of the last fiscal.

The NSO also released the second advance estimate for the current fiscal and pegged the economic growth at 7.6 per cent against 7.3 per cent estimated in the first advance estimate released in January.

"Real GDP or GDP at Constant (2011-12) Prices in the year 2023-24 is estimated to attain a level of ₹172.90 lakh crore, against

FY24 ESTIMATE REVISED UPWARDS TO 7.6%
ECONOMY EXPANDED 8.2% IN APRIL-DEC 2023 AGAINST 7.3% YOY

India is expected to maintain its position as one of the world's fastest-growing economies amid a slowing China and a eurozone narrowly avoiding a technical recession

The first revised estimates of GDP for the year 2022-23 of ₹160.71 lakh crore. The growth rate of GDP during 2023-24 is estimated at 7.6 per cent compared to the growth rate of 7.0 per cent in 2022-23," the NSO statement said.

According to the statement, the nominal GDP or GDP at current prices in 2023-24 is estimated to attain a level of ₹293.90 lakh crore against ₹269.50 lakh crore in 2022-23, showing a growth rate of 9.1 per cent.

It stated that the GDP at constant (2011-12) prices in Q3 of 2023-24 is estimated at ₹43.72 lakh crore against ₹40.35 lakh

crore in Q3 of 2022-23, showing a growth rate of 8.4 per cent.

The GDP at current prices in Q3 of 2023-24 is estimated at ₹75.49 lakh crore compared to ₹68.58 lakh crore in Q3 of 2022-23, showing a growth rate of 10.1 per cent, it stated.

The NSO revised downward the GDP growth for 2022-23 to 7 per cent from 7.2 per cent estimated earlier.

"Real GDP or GDP at constant (2011-12) prices for the years 2022-23 and 2021-22 stands at ₹160.71 lakh crore and ₹150.22 lakh crore, respectively, showing a growth of 7.0 per cent during 2022-23 as compared to growth of 9.7 per cent during 2021-22," it stated.

The per capita income i.e. per capita net national income at current prices is estimated at ₹1,50,906 and ₹1,69,496, respectively, for 2021-22 and 2022-23. Per capita PFCE at current prices, for 2021-22 and 2022-23 is estimated at ₹1,05,092 and ₹1,18,755, respectively, it stated.

The NSO has also revised GDP estimates for the first and second quarters of this fiscal to 8.2 and 8.1 per cent from 7.8 per cent and 7.6 per cent, respectively.

15-MONTH LOW

Key infra sectors' growth slows to 3.6% in January

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 29: The growth of eight key infrastructure sectors slowed to a 15-month low of 3.6 per cent in January, on account of poor performance of sectors like refinery products, fertiliser, steel and electricity, according to the official data released Thursday.

The growth of eight core sectors - coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity - was 4.9 per cent in December.

It was 9.7 per cent in January 2023. The previous low level of growth rate was recorded at 0.9 per cent in October 2022.

Cumulatively also, the growth rate in the output of these sectors slowed down to 7.7 per cent as against 8.3 per cent in April-January 2022-23.

The output growth of refinery products and fertiliser was in the negative zone. And the pace of increase in the output of coal, steel, and electricity decelerated during the month under review.

However, crude oil, natural gas, and cement production recorded positive growth in January.

The eight core sectors contribute 40.27 per cent to the country's Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

Fiscal deficit touches 63.6% of revised aim

FOR 2023-24, GOVT'S FISCAL DEFICIT IS ESTIMATED AT ₹17.35L-CR OR 5.8% OF GDP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 29: The government's fiscal deficit at ₹11 lakh crore at January end touched 63.6 per cent of the revised annual target, according to the official data released Thursday.

In the corresponding period last year, the fiscal deficit or gap between the expenditure and revenue was 67.8 per cent of Revised Estimates (RE) of the Union Budget 2022-23.

The government's total receipts stood at ₹22.52 lakh crore (81.7 per cent of corresponding RE 2023-24 of total receipts) as of January 2024, according to the data released by Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

This comprised ₹18.8 lakh crore tax revenue (net), ₹3.38 lakh crore of non-tax revenue and ₹34,219 crore of non-debt capital receipts.

Non-debt capital receipts consist of the recovery of loans and miscellaneous capital receipts.

The total expenditure incurred by the Centre was ₹33.54 lakh crore (74.7 per cent of corresponding RE 2023-24), out of which ₹26.33 lakh crore is on

revenue account and ₹7.2 lakh crore on capital account.

As per the CGA data, ₹8,20,250 crore has been transferred to state governments as devolution of share of taxes by the central government up to this period, which is ₹1,52,480 crore higher than the previous year.

Out of the total revenue expenditure, ₹8,21,731 crore was on account of interest payments and ₹3,15,559 crore on major subsidies.

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government in the interim Budget refrained from announcing populist measures, which is expected to help it trim the fiscal deficit to 5.1 per cent of the GDP next fiscal and 4.5 per cent in FY26.

The nominal GDP growth for the next financial year has been pegged at 10.5 per cent against the 11 per cent estimated earlier.

The nominal GDP as per budget estimate 2024-25 has been projected at ₹3,27,71,808 crore, assuming 10.5 per cent growth over the estimated nominal GDP of ₹2,96,57,745 crore, as per the First Advance Estimates of FY2023-24.

While there may be some slippage in the disinvestment target and capex may trail the FY2024 RE, ICRA does not expect the revised fiscal deficit target of ₹17.3 lakh crore for FY2024 to be breached

ADITI NAYAR | CHIEF ECONOMIST, ICRA

CHIP-MAKING UNITS GET NOD

In a bid to be self-reliant in semiconductors, Union Cabinet gives green light to three chip-manufacturing units at an investment of ₹1.26L-cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

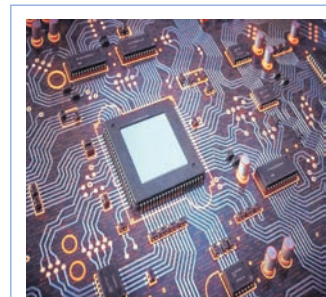
New Delhi, Feb 29: The Union Cabinet Thursday approved setting up three semiconductor-making units by firms, including Tata Group and Japan's Renesas, at an investment of ₹1.26 lakh crore as part of an attempt to cut India's dependence on imports to meet requirements of chips.

The units which will make chips for sectors including defence, automobiles and telecommunications, will begin construction within the next 100 days, Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters after the cabinet meeting.

The three units will be set up under the 'Development of Semiconductors and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem' programme that provides government support of up to ₹76,000 crore.

Tata Electronics Pvt Ltd will set up a semiconductor fab in partnership with Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp at Dholera in Gujarat. The plant will have a capacity to produce 50,000 wafers per month and will involve an investment of ₹91,000 crore.

Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Pvt Ltd (TSAT) will set up a semiconductor unit in Morigaon, Assam, at an investment of ₹27,000 crore. CG Power, in partnership with Renesas Electronics Corp and Stars



CG POWER -- IN PARTNERSHIP WITH RENESAS ELECTRONICS CORPORATION, JAPAN, AND STARS MICROELECTRONICS, THAILAND -- WILL SET UP A SEMICONDUCTOR UNIT IN SANAND, GUJARAT. INVESTMENT IN THE SANAND UNIT IS ESTIMATED AT ₹7,600 CRORE

Tata Electronics will set up a semiconductor fab in partnership with Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp, Taiwan. This unit will be constructed in Dholera, Gujarat. The plant will attract Rs 91,000 crore investment

Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test will set up a semiconductor unit in Morigaon, Assam, at an investment of ₹27,000 crore

Microelectronics of Thailand will set up a unit in Sanand in Gujarat at an investment of ₹7,600 crore.

In June last year, the Cabinet approved a proposal of Micron for setting up a semiconductor unit in Sanand, Gujarat.

The approvals are part of the Modi government's ambitions to make India a chipmaker for the world and cutting reliance on countries like Taiwan.

Vaishnaw said the Tata plant at Dholera will produce high-performance computer chips with 28 nm technology for electric vehicles (EV), telecom, defence, automotive, consumer

electronics, display and power electronics.

The unit in Assam will have a capacity of 48 million per day for automotive, electric vehicles, consumer electronics, telecom, and mobile phones. The CG power semiconductor unit will manufacture 15 million chips for consumer, industrial, automotive and power applications.

"Within a very short time, India's semiconductor mission has achieved four big successes. With these units, the semiconductor ecosystem will get established in India. India already has deep capabilities in chip design. With these units, our country will develop capabilities in

semiconductor packaging technologies including flip chip and ISIP (integrated system in package) technologies.

Renesas is a leading semiconductor company focussed on specialised chips. It operates 12 semiconductor facilities and is an important player in micro-controllers, analogue, power, and System-on-chip (SoC) products.

chip fabrication. Advanced packaging technologies will be indigenously developed in India with today's announcement," he said adding the three units will generate direct employment of 20,000 advanced technology jobs and about 60,000 indirect jobs.

These units will accelerate employment creation in downstream automotive, electronics manufacturing, telecom manufacturing, industrial manufacturing, and other semiconductor-consuming industries.

Construction of Micron's Sanand unit is progressing at a rapid pace and a robust semiconductor ecosystem is emerging near the unit, he said.

Tata Electronics' partner PSMC is renowned for its expertise in logic and memory foundry segments. PSMC has 6 semiconductor foundries in Taiwan. Power management chips the two will manufacture are high voltage, high current applications.

TSAT semiconductor is developing indigenous advanced semiconductor packaging technologies including flip chip and ISIP (integrated system in package) technologies.

Renesas is a leading semiconductor company focussed on specialised chips. It operates 12 semiconductor facilities and is an important player in micro-controllers, analogue, power, and System-on-chip (SoC) products.

FDI inflows plunge 13% to \$32 billion

FDI inflows stood at \$36.74bn during April-Dec 2023 YoY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 29: Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows in India declined 13 per cent to \$32.03 billion in April-December 2023, dragged down by lower infusion in computer hardware and software, telecom, auto, and pharma sectors, according to the latest government data.

FDI inflows stood at \$36.74 billion during the corresponding nine months of the preceding fiscal.

Inflows during the October-December quarter of the current fiscal, however, rose by 18 per cent to \$11.6 billion as against \$9.83 billion during the same quarter of 2022-23.

The total FDI - which includes equity inflows, reinvested earn-



ings and other capital - declined by about 7 per cent to \$51.5 billion during the period under review against \$55.27 billion in April-December 2022, the data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) showed.

During the nine-month period of this fiscal, FDI equity inflows decreased from major countries, including Singapore, the US, the UK, Cyprus and the UAE.

Investments fell significantly from the Cayman Islands and Cyprus to \$215 million and \$796 million, respectively, during April-December 2023 as against the two comparative figures of \$624 million and \$1.15 billion recorded in the year-ago period.

However, inflows increased from Mauritius, the Netherlands, Japan and Germany.

Sectorally, inflows contracted in computer software and hardware, trading, services, telecom-

munication, automobile, pharma and chemicals.

In contrast, construction (infrastructure) activities, development and power sectors registered growth in inflows.

State-wise, Maharashtra received the highest inflow of \$12.1 billion during the period. It was \$10.76 billion in the same period a year ago.

Overseas capital inflows in Karnataka plunged to \$3.6 billion in April-December 2023 from \$8.77 billion in the same period of previous fiscal year.

Other states/Union Territories where FDI dipped during the period under review included Delhi, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Haryana.

The inflow, however, recorded a positive growth in Gujarat, Telangana, and Jharkhand.

An official has earlier stated that hardening interest rates globally and worsening geopolitical situation impacted FDI inflows.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 29: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed with gains Thursday in a highly volatile trade amid the scheduled monthly expiry of derivative contracts.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rebounded 195.42 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 72,500.30. During the day, the benchmark oscillated between a high of 72,730.00 and a low of 72,099.32. The broader Nifty of NSE gained 31.65 points or 0.14 per cent to close at 21,982.80.

"Domestic benchmark traded near a flat-line trend throughout the session, but some buoyancy emerged by the end of the day. Investors adopted a cautious wait & watch approach on the verge of a heavy economic data week," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Among Sensex shares, IndusInd Bank, Mahindra &



Mahindra, HCL Tech, Power Grid, Maruti, State Bank of India, Titan, Asian Paints, Nestle and UltraTech Cement were the major gainers.

Reliance Industries climbed nearly 2 per cent intra-day before closing more than half a per cent higher after the company and Walt Disney announced the signing of binding pacts to merge their media operations in India to create a ₹70,000 crore behemoth.

Hindustan Unilever, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, ITC, Tech Mahindra and Axis Bank were among the laggards.

"Markets traded volatile on the monthly expiry day but managed to end marginally higher,"

said Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.84 per cent and smallcap index went up by 0.50 per cent. Among the indices, services jumped 1.46 per cent, power climbed 1.01 per cent, commodities (0.79 per cent), industrials (0.74 per cent), metal (0.74 per cent) and capital goods (0.65 per cent).

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled lower while Shanghai ended in the green. European markets were trading mostly in the green. The US markets ended marginally lower Wednesday.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹1,879.23 crore Wednesday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark fell by 790.34 points or 1.08 per cent to settle at 72,304.88 Wednesday. The Nifty slumped 247.20 points or 1.11 per cent to settle at 21,951.15.

RAHUL OUT, BUMRAH IN

Tirkey lauds outgoing CEO Norman



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rourkela, Feb 29: She might have left under acrimonious circumstances, but Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey Thursday praised outgoing CEO Elena Norman, saying that he appreciates the Australian's contribution towards the growth of the sport.

The former captain, however, rejected Norman's claim of factionalism in HI, saying all is well within the federation. "Since taking over, we have done good work and I appreciate it. We have seen the performance of the teams in the past two years. Our CEO has done commendable work for Indian hockey. We appreciate her efforts and contribution," Tirkey said here in a media interaction.

Tirkey's comments came a day after he and Singh issued a joint statement denying Norman's assertion of a rift between them.

Norman resigned Tuesday and in an interview to PTI she alleged that there was factionalism in the body. The 49-year-old Australian suggested that Tirkey and Singh were at loggerheads and also complained of a difficult work environment.

"There are two factions in Hockey India. There is (President) Dilip Tirkey and I and there is (Secretary) Bholanath Singh, (Executive Director) Cdr. R K Srivastava and (Treasurer) Sekar J Manoharan," she had said.

Norman's resignation came close on the heels of Indian women's hockey team coach Janneke Schopman's decision to quit. She also complained of a difficult work environment.



The Dutch coach had accused HI of giving step-motherly treatment to women's hockey.

But Tirkey lauded Schopman's contribution and vowed to provide all possible help to the women's team to make a fresh start. "The women's team did well in 2023. The girls have done really well. They won the 2023 FIH Nations Cup. Their performance has been good in the Asian Champions Trophy and Asian Games as well."

"They played well in the Olympic Qualifier too but it was purely bad luck. But I have been making a note where we made mistakes, and what demands we couldn't fulfil in time, we are assessing," the former India captain said.

The HI chief said the federation's main focus right now is on preparing the men's team for a



podium finish at the Paris Olympics.

"The men's team has already qualified, and we now are thinking of how they can perform better (in Paris)," Tirkey said. "Side by side, the women's team is also on our mind. We are working on how to make better future plans for them."

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 29: Senior India batter KL Rahul will not feature in the fifth and final Test against England in Dharamsala owing to an injury while pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah will return to the team, the BCCI said Thursday.

Rahul, who continues to feel sore in his right quadriceps, has travelled to London to get an expert opinion on his injury. The wicketkeeper-batter became unavailable after the series-opener in Hyderabad in January and as per the BCCI, he was 90 per cent fit before the third Test in Rajkot earlier this month.

"Mr KL Rahul, whose participation in the final IDFC First Bank Test was subject to fitness, has been ruled out of the fifth and final Test in Dharamsala. The

BCCI Medical Team is closely monitoring him and coordinating with specialists in London for further management of his issue," the Board said in a release.

Meanwhile Bumrah, who was released from the squad for the fourth Test in Ranchi in line with the team's workload management policy, will link up with the squad in Dharamsala for the final Test, beginning March 7. India have already taken an unassailable 3-1 lead, following the victory in the fourth Test in Ranchi.

Rahul's absence from the final Test means Rajat Patidar remained with the squad but the MP batter can't be sure of his place in the playing eleven, having aggregated only 63 runs in six innings. All-rounder Washington Sundar has also

been released from the squad. "He will join Tamil Nadu - his Ranji Trophy side - for their Ranji Trophy Semi-final fixture against Mumbai, starting March 2nd, 2024. He will join the India squad after the completion of the domestic fixture for the fifth Test, if need be," the BCCI said.

Rahul needs to be fully fit before the IPL where he will lead Lucknow Super Giants and is expected to bat in the middle order to bolster his chances of making the India squad for the T20 World Cup in the USA and the Caribbean.

It is the same quadriceps injury that had sidelined Rahul for almost four months last year. Having got injured during the IPL, Rahul returned to action during the Asia Cup in September last and made in-

stant impact. In the Test tour of South Africa last year, Rahul was the only century-maker for India in the drawn series.

The BCCI also said senior pacer Mohammed Shami is recovering well after undergoing a surgery February 26 for his right heel problem. "He is recovering well and will soon head to the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru to commence his rehabilitation process," the Board said of Shami.

India's updated squad for fifth Test: Rohit Sharma (C), Jasprit Bumrah (VC), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Rajat Patidar, Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel (WK), KS Bharat (WK), Devdutt Padikkal, R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohd. Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Akash Deep.

Delhi eves prevail over RCB

Rebello hands Odisha FC win over EB



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 29: Delhi Capitals braved a sensational battering from Smriti Mandhana to hand a fighting Royal Challengers Bangalore a 25-run defeat in their Women's Premier League (WPL) match here Thursday.

Mandhana fused power and grace to score 74 (43b, 10x4, 3x6) but other batters did not quite make it big as RCB, who were without indisposed star all-rounder Elysse Perry, ended up at 169/9. The Capitals made a challenging 194/5 as Shafali Varma mustered a 31-ball 50

(3x4, 4x6) after they were asked to bat first.

But that total was under severe threat when Mandhana tore into the DC attack with panache. They went off the blocks in an energetic fashion as Mandhana took it upon herself the task of leading her side's reply.

Mandhana faced 28 balls in the powerplay segment and hammered 45 runs as the home team reached an impressive 52 for no loss after six overs. Sophie Devine just had to watch all the fun from her end as Mandhana reached her first-ever WPL fifty in just 32 balls. But the Kiwi batter soon fell to pacer Arundhati

Reddy (2/38) as her top-edged pull ended in the hands of Jess Jonassen.

However, Mandhana continued her aggressive ways and smoked Marizanne Kapp (2/35) over mid-wicket for a six. But the veteran South African had the last laugh as she uprooted the off-stump with a slower delivery that beat Mandhana's tentative swish.

Thereafter the task only grew steeper for RCB as left-arm spinner Jess Jonassen (3/21) produced an excellent spell. RCB lost six wickets for 18 runs at that stage.

Earlier, Verma and Alice Capsey (46, 33b, 4x4, 2x6) added 82 runs for the second wicket as the Capitals recovered from the early loss of skipper Meg Lanning. Kapp (32, 16b, 2x4, 3x6) and Jonassen (36 not out, 16b, 4x4, 2x6) also played blunders towards the end to give a fillip to the Capitals as they added 58 runs for the fifth wicket in a little over four overs.

Verma, who was dropped on two by Shreyanka Patil off pacer Renuka Singh, and Capsey went about their task shifting seamlessly through the gears. Verma gave a lot of steam to DC innings. But she fell while pulling Shreyanka straight into the hands of Georgia Wareham at mid-wicket.

Brief scores: DC Women 194/5 (Shafali Verma 50, Alice Capsey 46, Jess Jonassen 36 n o, Marizanne Kapp 32; Sophie Devine 2/23, Nadine de Klark 2/35) beat RCB Women 169/9 (Smriti Mandhana 74; Jess Jonassen 3/21, Marizanne Kapp 2/35, Arundhati Reddy 2/38) by 25 runs.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 29: Odisha FC registered a 2-1 victory over East Bengal FC to consolidate their position at the top of the Indian Super League (ISL) table here Thursday.

The sailing wasn't as smooth for the home side though, with East Bengal FC winger Vishnu Puthiya making heads turn by notching the fastest goal by any player in the current ISL season to break the deadlock in the 33rd second of the match.

Right after the kick-off, Vishnu went dazzling down the right flank, picking the ball on the edge of the box, cutting into the middle, beating Jerry Lalrinzuala and outmanoeuvring Carlos Delgado before launching an instinctive shot beyond Odisha FC goalkeeper Amrinder Singh to put his side ahead.

East Bengal FC had a fantastic chance to sustain the pressure secured through this early lead. However, their influence in the proceedings began waning as Odisha FC recovered from the early setback by playing to their strengths, with the striking duo of Roy Krishna and Diego Mauricio sustaining pressure upfront and capitalising on their prowess from set pieces.

Mauricio had a shot from outside of the box swirling over the post in the 14th minute, but his tricky footwork came to the rescue, helping him earn a spot-kick as fullback Mohammad Rakip challenged to recover possession from him in the 38th minute.

Mauricio stepped up and drilled the ball powerfully at the



top right corner to equalise scores and bag his seventh goal of the campaign. It was also the third penalty that he converted in ISL 2023-24, demonstrating his proficiency from 12 yards out, and helping him get on the scoresheet especially during a phase of the season when his Fijian counterpart Roy Krishna has outperformed him slightly.

That momentum carried on for Odisha FC in the second essay of the game, and it was Ahmed Jahouh who swung into the thick of things to help his side bag the winner. He has been a stalwart of the ISL, securing success with three different clubs, and on Thursday night he equalled his teammate Krishna to become the player to assist the second most number of goals (24) after Hugo Boumous (32) in the history of the competition.

All of this came, courtesy of a corner kick in the 61st minute, with his delivery landing in the path of former FC Goa star Princeton Rebello, who had started the game for Odisha FC.

Rebello reached the delivery and flicked it into the back of the net from a position where Prabsukhan Singh Gill could do nothing to thwart the goal, thus resulting in East Bengal FC facing their seventh loss of the ISL campaign.

Pragg's blunder leads to his loss in second round

HOCKEY INDIA LEAGUE TO BEGIN SOON: TIRKEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prague, Feb 29: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa committed a time-pressure blunder as he suffered defeat at the hands of Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran in the second round of Prague Masters Chess tournament here. The defeat ended Praggnanandhaa's impressive 47-game unbeaten streak in Classical Chess.

The 18-year-old also lost the top ranking in live ratings among Indians - a spot reclaimed by the legendary Viswanathan Anand who is also the brand ambassador of this event.

D Gukesh, meanwhile, came up with an impressive performance with black pieces to beat Nguyen Thai Dai Van of Czech Republic.

RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

Rourkela, Feb 29: Hockey India League (HIL) is all set to return after seven years absence, confirmed Hockey India President and former India captain Dilip Tirkey during his conversation with Orissa POST.

"I can confirm to you that soon the HIL will commence. We are just waiting to find a proper window from the Federation of International Hockey (FIH) for this. Once we get that we will get started," shared Tirkey.

"We have our franchises ready and also the sponsors for the mega event. There is absolutely no problem with this. Once the clearance comes, we will be on the turf," added the hockey great from Odisha.

There will be eight teams, including the Kalinga Lancers in

the male category and there will be four women teams this time. Notably, Lancers were the champions the last time HIL was played in 2017.

However, the president was quick to add, "We are trying to increase the number of teams in the women's category and I am sure we will get those."

He was very confident that the event this time will be much better. "We have the support of the government, the ministry and also the corporate houses. There is no problem as far as sponsors are concerned. And this time there are big corporate houses, I mean the top notches of the country."

When he was asked about the recent controversy involving Hockey India and its outgoing CEO Elena Norman and coach of the women's team Jannek Schopman, Tirkey was very can-



did in his response. "See there are some issues,

which are sub judice and it will not be right comment and ex-

plain everything. But I must say both the incidents are unfortu-

nate," said the 46-year-old from Sundargarh.

Similarly, about the Schopman issue he said, "the women's hockey cannot be allowed to suffer. Under her coaching the team won many championships and qualified for the Pro League for the first time."

"I am definitely going to investigate what happened in both the cases in the interest of the game. We are getting all the support so I will definitely find out," added Tirkey, who was a defender during his playing day.

Sharing his views on his political career and his candidature from BJD in the upcoming elections, the Rajya Sabha MP said: "I am already in politics so I am playing the role of a politician. As far as my candidature is concerned, whatever duty our leader Naveen Patnaik ji will assign me I will do that without any delay."