

Divine Homage to World Famous Swami Vivekananda and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on their Birth Anniversary celebrated as National Youth day and Gyan Yug Diwas

Two new special trains for World Cup Hockey Tournament

Bhubaneswar (KCN): Keeping in view the demands and additional rush of passengers during FIH Hockey Men's World Cup 2023 scheduled to be held in January 2023 at Bhubaneswar and Rourkela; it has been decided to run Special Train services for the convenience of passengers, especially

(05.15a.m.) and will reach at Rourkela at 1245hrs (12.45p.m.). In the return direction, this train from Rourkela will leave at 1330hrs (01.30p.m.) and will reach at Puri at 2230hrs



(10.30p.m.).

This train will have Two AC-3 Tier, Three Sleeper Class, Six Second Class Seating and Two Guard cum Luggage and Generator Car in its composition having stoppages at Khurda Road, Bhubaneswar, Naraj Marthapur, Dhenkanal, Talcher Road, Angul, Rairakhol, Sambalpur City, Jharsuguda and Rajagangpur between Puri and Rourkela.

Apart from this, 02832/02831 Bhubaneswar-Dhanbad-Bhubaneswar Special is also leaving from Bhubaneswar on every Tuesday, Friday & Sunday and also leaving from Dhanbad on every Monday, Wednesday and Saturdays. Similarly, Rourkela-Gunupur-Rourkela Rajyaran Express, Puri-Yog Nagari Rishikesh Kalinga Utkal Express, Puri-Hatia Tapaswini Express, Bhubaneswar-Rourkela-Bhubaneswar Inter City Express, Puri-Rourkela-Puri Express trains are running daily connecting Bhubaneswar and Rourkela. Apart from the above, Services of Bhubaneswar-New Delhi Rajdhani Express and Bhubaneswar-Anand Vihar Express Trains are also available between Bhubaneswar and Rourkela on weekly basis.

- ★ ECoR to run two new Special Trains, daily.
- ★ Special Trains to ply between Bhubaneswar and Rourkela during World Cup Hockey.
- ★ Apart from this, Five Regular Trains are running in this Route.
- ★ Big opportunity and facility for Hockey Lovers between Bhubaneswar and Rourkela.

Hockey lovers.

02834 Bhubaneswar-Rourkela Special will leave from Bhubaneswar at 2025hrs (8.25pm) on every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Saturday from 14th to 30th January 2023. In the return direction, 02833 Rourkela-Bhubaneswar Special will leave from Rourkela at 2325hrs (11.25pm) on every Tuesday, Thursday, Friday & Sunday from 15th to 31st January 2023. This train will have One AC-2 Tier, Three AC-3 Tier, Eight Sleeper Class, Four Second Class Seating and Two Guard cum Luggage Vans in its composition having stoppages at Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Talcher Road, Angul, Rairakhol, Sambalpur City, Jharsuguda and Rajagangpur between Bhubaneswar-Rourkela from both the directions.

02836/02835 Puri-Rourkela-Puri Hockey Special will run daily from 14th to 31st January 2023. This train will leave Puri at 0515hrs

BJP dares Odisha govt to make income generation of WSHGs public

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): BJP on Tuesday asked the state government to make the income generating report of women self help groups financed under Mission Shakti



public. "Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said that loan amounting to Rs 17,000 crore has been provided to around four lakh SHG members in the last five years. What he did not say the amount of income the SHGs generated during this period. There is nothing to hide if the women of the state are making rapid economic progress under Mission Shakti," state BJP Mahila Morcha president Smruti Patnaik told a media conference. She said the state government has been claiming to have formed seven lakh WSHGs in the state with a total member of about 70 lakh. In reality, 85,000 groups have been credit linked out of which 59,404 groups are gen-

erating income.

"We are simply asking the state government to publish a report on the economic activities of the SHGs who were provided loans under National Rural Livelihood Mission named as Mission Shakti by the BJD government," Patnaik said.

Alleging that SHGs are formed on party line, she said the state government is utilising these groups to further BJD's interest. She further claimed

that out of the Rs 125 crore interest subvention, the Central government share is `88 crore while the remaining Rs 37 crore is provided by the state government. Patnaik who later attended a meeting of party's state functionaries said that state BJP president Samir Mohanty has given a task to Mahila Morcha to go to villages and make members of all groups aware how BJD has hijacked the Central scheme claiming to be its own. Dubbing the BJD government as a 'copy and paste' government, Mohanty said the regional party is shamelessly doing this as they have nothing to their credit in the last 23 years of their governance.

IMF sees India as 'bright spot' in global economy, says PM Modi

INDORE (KCN): Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday said the International Monetary Fund (IMF) sees India as a "bright spot" in the global economy and according to the World Bank, India is in a better position to deal with the global headwinds than many other countries.

This is because of India's strong "macro-economic fundamentals", Modi said while virtually addressing the inaugural function of the 7th edition of 'Invest Madhya Pradesh-Global Investors Summit' in Indore. The theme of the two-day summit is 'Madhya Pradesh-The Future Ready State'. Modi said the optimism for India is driven by its strong democracy, young demography and political stability. Due to these, India is taking decisions that boost the ease of living and ease of doing business, he said.

"The IMF sees India as a bright spot in the glo-

bal economy while the World Bank says India is in a better position to deal with global headwinds than many

"In eight years, we have doubled the speed of construction of national highways. During this period, the number of

economy in the next 4-5 years, while the CEO of McKinsey has said this is not only India's



other countries," Modi said.

"When we talk about a developed India, it is not just our expression but it is the resolve of every Indian," he said. India has been on the path of "reform, transform and perform" since 2014, the PM said.

The Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan has imparted greater momentum to it. As a result, India has become an attractive destination for investment, he said.

operational airports in India has doubled. India's port handling capacity and port turnaround have improved phenomenally," he said. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has said India will be among the fastest-growing economies in the G20 group this year, he noted. According to Morgan Stanley, India is moving towards becoming the world's third-largest

decade, but India's century, the PM added. The key objectives of the Global Investors Summit are - showcasing the industrial ecosystem of the state, promoting the state policies, consultation with industrial organisations to formulate industry-friendly policies, collaboration opportunities, promoting export potential and buyer-seller meets and vendor development, an official earlier said.



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In search of Light

Saikat Kumar Basu

We have long been creatures of the dark,
Embedded deep in the stink mud of our sins.

But then we found a bright source of light
From a lamp that does not go off in rain or wind

The light is your teachings my Lord,
That teaches us to be true humans !
Rich in empathy and compassion
With the courage to forgive the mistake of others.

It is the light that shines out our inner divinity

It is the light that hides the darkness of evil
From the joys of selfless service to all!

378 Prince Anwar Shah Road,
Kolkata, West Bengal India



Midnight traveler

Gate is closed,
Can't enter, it's protected and
there are gate keepers!



Doors are closed,
Can't enter, it's their house, must have much
left over!

Shutters are down,
Can't enter, it's those shops, they throw away
food, after expiry dates are over!

Gates are closed,

Can't enter, it's those child care instructions,
who follow procedure!

No gate, it's railway station, it's open,
Let me wait,
Before food is thrown, some one may call.

Midnight traveler, hunger is my driver.

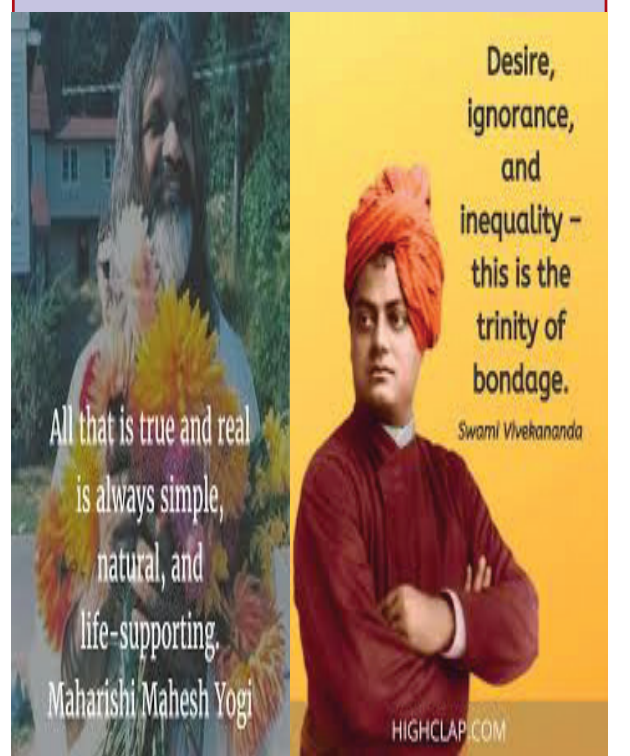
12 December 2022

LD House

Amlatola, Chaibasha

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Quotation of the Day



Odisha Culture : 10 things that you must know!

The stunning architectures, history, dialects, vibrant art music and dance forms make Odisha ever sprightly state of India. Odisha (formerly known as Orissa), the battleground for the famous Kalinga war fought by Ashoka the Great, lies on the country's east coast. When the sun rises here, it rises over a land of temples thriving on top of a solid foundation laid by heritage. Life is uncomplicated, laid back and it doesn't take much to find some hush and quiet here. As opposed to the hustle and bustle of metropolitan concrete jungles, Odisha comes as a sigh of relief to the one seeking the peace of mind. Be it the temples of the capital city Bhubaneswar, the Buddhist Shanti Stupa of Dhaulagiri Hills or exotic birds that can be spotted at Asia's largest brackish water lagoon Chilika Lake, Odisha is worth paying a visit!

Here are 10 things you should know about Odisha Culture:

1. Architecture

The finesse and grandeur of Odisha's architecture is exhibited in its temples that the Aryans left behind. Some of them are among the finest in the country. Of these, the most important are the Lingaraja Temple, Bhubaneswar (11th century), Jagannath Temple at Puri (12th century) and the great Sun Temple at Konark (13th century). And hence, the golden triangle of Odisha - Bhubaneswar, Konark and Puri contributes the maximum amount of tourism goodwill. They are primary temples built in the style of 'Kalinga' architecture.

Lingaraja Temple

The largest of all temples that the Temple



City of Bhubaneswar boasts of, it is one of the major tourist attractions of the state with over 6000 visitors on a daily basis. Here, Lord Shiva is worshipped as Harihara, a combined form of Vishnu and Shiva.



Jagannath Temple

The coastal town of Puri enshrines Lord Jagannath in this colossal temple. It is one of the Char Dham pilgrimages that one is expected to cover at least once in his lifetime. The temple is world-famous for its annual chariot festival or Rath Yatra.



Sun Temple

Designed in the silhouette of a gigantic chariot along with seven horses and twenty-four wheels, this entire temple was conceived as a chariot of the Sun God. It reflects the remarkable genius of architects that envisioned and went through with it. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the



precision and intricacy of its sculptural work is worth seeing.

2. Arts Culture of Odisha

It is impossible to list every form of visual art and craft this uber-talented state boasts of but here are some of the best-known ones:

Pattachitra (Cloth Painting)

Literally, 'Patta' translates to cloth and 'Chitra' means picture. The themes and motifs are mythological, typically revolving around the Jagannath and Vaishnava sect. Lord Jagannath and Radha-Krishna paintings are a rage among buyers. Pattachitra showing Ganesh and Shiva. Since it is a traditional art-form, the Chitrakara's (painter) very home is his own studio



where his family members act as helping

hands. The final painting is rendered in the form of a design on a canvas with decorative borders. Sometimes, palm-leaves are also used to form the canvas.

Rock Paintings

Rock art in Odisha dates back to the pre-historic period according to the earliest reports found at Viramkhol in Jharsuguda district. With the reign of Ashoka the great, Buddhist sculptural art gradually changed the degree of Odisha's artistic flair. Even today, the caves of Ratnagiri,



Lalitgiri and Udaygiri have not faltered to showcase the wonderful legacy of sculp-

tural brilliance that some of our finest carvers left behind.

Buddhist rock carvings at Ratnagiri (Source)

Sand Art

With clean, fine-grained sand and water as



its raw materials, this is an indigenous

form of art that found its origin recently if a comparison is drawn to the other forms of art. It is practised on the beaches of Puri with subjects ranging from Hindu deities to international occasions. With the help of tourism, this art-form has developed exponentially and found worldwide recognition.

Silver Filigree

Locally known as 'Tarakasi', this art form is about 500 years old. It hails from Cuttack, a.k.a the Silver City of Odisha (now you know why). The process consists



of drawing silver through a series of consecutively smaller holes to produce fine strands of wire. Usually, Tarakasi jewellery is used to embellish Durga idols during Durga Puja in Cuttack and by Odissi dancers.

Applique Work

This is a famous fabric craft originating from a village called Pipili where locals call it 'Pipili Chandua Kama'. Unknown to many, Pipili holds an entry in the Limca Book of Records for the world's largest thematic applique work.

odisha culture, culture of odisha Traditional Pipli appliqued umbrellas (Source)

Like Pattachitra, applique work also originated as temple art, essentially limited to umbrellas and canopies to be used in the annual Rath Yatra.

Nowadays, its usage is more in the household, decorative and festival products. The craft involves embroidery and stitching with occasional mirror work.

Brass and Dhokra Works

A 4000-year old craft form, Dhokra is a casting method that combines metallurgical skills with wax techniques. It is a bell metal tribal craft that uses an alloy of tin and copper or brass and zinc. Various utility items including utensils, pots and pans, lamps and even tribal jewellery are fashioned

out of it.

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This is when 'Ponniyin Selvan's' second part will release



The second part of Ponniyin Selvan is set to release on April 28, 2023, the makers announced on social media on Thursday, while sharing a small teaser of the film featuring its primary

characters. Ponniyin Selvan has been conceived as a duology, with the first part released in September. Directed by filmmaker Mani Ratnam, Ponniyin Selvan is adapted from Kalki's novel

by the same name. Backed by Madras Talkies and Lyca Productions, Ponniyin Selvan features an ensemble star cast including Jayam Ravi, Vikram, Karthi, Trisha, Aishwarya Rai,

Sarath Kumar, Prakash Raj, Aishwarya Lekshmi, Jayaram, among others. Ponniyin Selvan has music by AR Rahman, with cinematography by Ravi Varman. Sreekar

Prasad handles the editing. Like the first part, the sequel will also release in Tamil, Hindi, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada. Ponniyin Selvan has been a long-standing dream by the Tamil

cinema, from MGR to Kamal Haasan attempting to materialise it. The first part opened to positive reception and became one of the commercially successful Tamil films in 2022.

Vijay Raghavendra, Dharma Keerthiraj and Sanchita Padukone team up for a romantic crime thriller



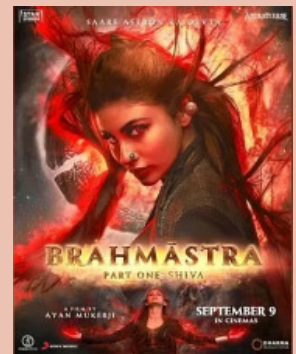
Director DG Umesh Gowda, noted for his films Navarangi and Halli Panchayati, is next helming a romantic crime thriller. Titled O Manase, the film stars Vijay Raghavendra, Dharma Keerthiraj and Sanchita Padukone as the leads. While Vijay Raghavendra plays the

role of a cop, the other two will be seen as college students. The film's shoot has already been completed, and the makers recently released its trailer. Vijay Raghavendra finds the story written by Ramesh Handrangi fascinating. "It's intriguing

how the story blends crime and love." O Manase, produced under the banner of Sri Friends Movie Makers, has cinematography by MR Seenu, and editing by Srinivas P Babu. The action-heavy film has stunts choreographed by Thriller Manju, Different Danny, and Bande Chandru.

2022 in Review: Hindi Cinema's Breakout Talents

It was a fascinating year for Hindi cinema and web series. While the old guard continued to stand tall, albeit, in spurts, it was the chance for the young brigade to find their place under the spotlight. And while all of them tried, here are some of the year's brightest talents from Hindi cinema and OTT who managed to leave a strong impression



Manish Paul (actor, Jugjugg Jeeyo) A popular TV host and comedian, Manish Paul has been doing bit parts in Hindi films for a while. His 2013 debut, Micky Virus, went largely unsung—something that is corrected by his extended comic turn in this year's Jugjugg Jeeyo. In a succession of blingy, outlandish outfits, Manish delivered

the laughs in this brassy family dramedy. His description of Anil Kapoor's resurgent libido—"ab papaji bare ho rahe hai"—is truly hilarious.

Jasmeet K Reen (director, Darlings) Jasmeet K. Reen's directorial debut Darlings is the only good Hindi film this year that is not all soft edges. The film, packaged as a noirish crime comedy, takes its time delineating the patterns of abuse. Jasmeet has a keen eye for casting and production design. It will be interesting to see what she does next—maybe helm a sprawling hinterland web series with a women-led cast.

Achint Thakkar (composer, Monica, O My Darling) Vasan Bala's Monica, O My Darling is indubitably Soundtrack of the Year. Young composer Achint Thakkar—who also worked on Scam 1992 and Rocket Boys—offers an embarrassment of winners, from retro ear-worms like 'Bye Bye Adios' and 'Suno Jaane Jaan' to the sublime 'Farsh Pe Khade Khade'.

Bollywood music directors have been looking backwards for years. Few have displayed such originality and heart.

Faisal Malik (actor, Panchayat S2) In the first season of Panchayat, the gaily Faisal Malik, as 'up-pradhaan' Prahlad Pandey, is the banter buddy of Phulera regulars. By the end of season 2, Faisal, best known for his role as the portly cop in Gangs of Wasseypur - Part 2, brings an ominous stillness to the series' general frolic. You don't want to be there when the laughter stops.

Mouni Roy (actor, Brahmastra Part One: Shiva) Mouni Roy's impassioned performance as Junoon in Ayan Mukerji's superhero fantasy epic is exemplary. As the primary antagonist, she holds her own in face-offs with seasoned actors like Shah Rukh Khan and Amitabh Bachchan. She brings conviction to a part that revels in comic-book villainy. We hope her fiery red eyes make a reappearance in Part Two.

The future of the country is in the hands of the youth

Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) has rightly said that the coming decade belongs to the youth and lauded them for believing in the system and questioning it when it does not respond properly.



12th January is celebrated as the National Youth Day every year since 1985 which has been an indelible part of India's tradition.

Incidentally, this was also the day when Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest social reformers, thinkers, and philosophers of India, was born. He was the pioneer in leading the youth to meaningful protests through associations. The philosophy, ideas, and teachings of Swami Vivekananda can justifiably be called national assets from traditional and cultural points of view. At the same time, the youth are the future of our country. He belonged to the 19th century, yet his message and his life are more relevant today than in the past and perhaps, will be more relevant in future because persons like Swami Vivekananda do not cease to exist with their physical death.

Addressing his last ['Mann ki Baat'](#), Modi said that the youth

Vinod Chandrashekhar Dixit

hate anarchy and disorder and dislike casteism, nepotism and favouritism, remarks that come in the backdrop of recent violent protests in various university campuses over the Citizenship Amendment Act and proposed NRC. Swami Vivekananda said "My faith is in the younger generation, the modern generation, out of them will become my workers they will work out the whole problem. They will spread my message from centre to centre until we cover the whole of India." He had to arise and awake a Nation which 'felt like a slave, under the shadow of the British and the west. It would be difficult to name any freedom fighter that time and afterward also, who were not influenced by the thoughts, ideals, and patriotism of Swamiji. Actually, if we analyze critically we will find that development of oneness, unity and the role of Indian became clear to everybody only after the speeches and works of Swami Vivekananda. In many places during his lecture session he said "Our country requires a hero, be a hero, stand firm like a rock. Be brave, be brave Man dies but once".

Youths are everything, they have the capability to do anything out of the box, the only thing they need is the direction or a mentor for the future of our country. Today the youth need safe spaces where they can come together, engage in activities related to their diverse needs and interests, participate in decision making processes and freely express themselves. The youth is considered to be the best asset of any country and investment in the human resource promises astonishing returns.

Swami Vivekananda's teachings and Philosophy is very much relevant today. The number of problems that the nation is facing today can be solved through his teachings. Swamiji's life and speeches are capable enough to develop in anybody the patriotic feelings and in return, the person is bound to contribute in the Nation Building. His call to the nation is: "Arise, awake; wake up yourself, and awaken others. Achieve the consummation of life before you pass off. Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached."

I would like to conclude with one of his

quotation "My hope of the future lies in the youths of character, intelligent, renouncing all for the service of others, and obedient - good to themselves and the country at large". Our elders need to understand that a little space and trust shown in them will open the doors of the opportunities for the youngsters.

Citing the cases when youth vociferously react whenever an incident of disorder takes place and make a video of it to make the culprit realise the consequence, Modi exhorted youth to give a thought to this responsibility and take on this resolve on Vivekananda's birth anniversary on January 12.

Swami Vivekananda taught us the essence of nationalism in his bold writings. He wrote: "Our sacred motherland is the land of religion and philosophy- the birthplace of the spiritual giants-the land of renunciation, where and where alone, from the most ancient to the most modern times, there has been the highest ideal of life open to man."

B-15 Jyoti-Kalash Society, Jodhpur Tekra, Satellite, Ahmedabad

Netaji and Vivekananda - An amalgam of greatness

January comes with hopes and aspirations. The festivities to welcome a New



Year accelerate a genuine thirst for jubilation and enthusiasm with expecta-

cence, kindness, love, patience and compassion.

January is also known for the birth anniversaries of two great luminaries of India. The first one is Swami Vivekananda whose birthday falls on January 12 and the second is the birthday of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on January 23. Vivekananda was

a millennium and had influenced everybody including Subhas Chandra Bose in the freedom movement. That was the spiritual heights in which he could establish his saintly persona. The sacred association of Vivekananda and Ramakrishna had a huge impact on Subhas Chandra Bose.

M. R. LALU

armed struggle against the British. Vivekananda knew the real reason that pushed a country with extraordinary cultural resonance into the perils of colonial dominance. For Bose, Vivekananda was his spiritual guru, in whom he discovered a blend of unadulterated patriotism and the purest form of spiritual decorum. Subhas Chandra Bose was not only awakened by the spiritual depth of Vivekananda but Vivekananda's unflinching patriotism got more and more engraved in his conscience as he flipped the pages of the saint's teachings. The patriot in Netaji became profound and unequivocally powerful by the insightful views of Vivekananda.

Vivekananda's call was for the youth of India and he told them to love the country unconditionally so that the fight against British dominance was possible. The influence that Vivekananda had on Netaji is reflective in his words. Netaji writes, "How shall I express my indebtedness to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda? It is under their sacred influence that my life got the first awakening." Netaji was well aware of the fact that Vivekananda's mis-

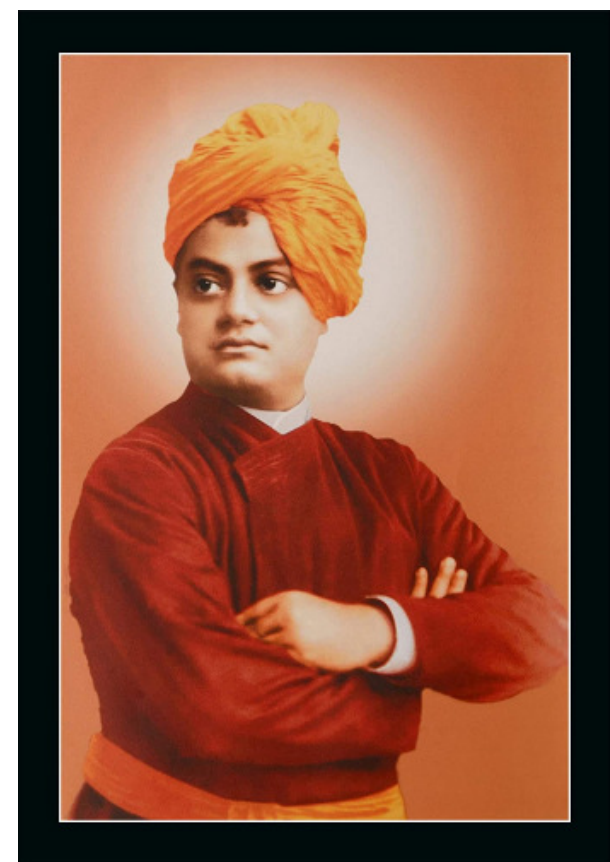
sion was not only spiritual but also to awaken the country's patriotic sensibility and turn its social intelligence towards self respect and enabling India to inch for its long awaited freedom. This came from a conviction that India's essential character was spiritual since the days of the Vedas. The country was soaked in spiritual wisdom for centuries and with the passage of time the supreme idea of spiritual evolution got settled and the essential values were mischaracterized as ethnic servitude. Colonial dominance, therefore, according to Vivekananda, was a by-product of the genetic disconnect that India was made a victim of for centuries of invasion. Though sunk in the stupor of subjugation, the people of India found immense strength coming from the patriotic eloquence of Vivekananda. Netaji was one among millions who captured the splendour of spiritual values that Vivekananda disseminated. Extremely elated by the spiritual vision of Vivekananda, Netaji writes, "If Swamiji had been alive today, he would have been my guru, that is to say, I would have accepted him as my Master. Needless to say, as long as I live, I shall be absolutely

loyal and devoted to Ramakrishna - Vivekananda." Stigmatised by the impudence of the colonial behaviour of the British, the Indian servitude was slowly but rebelliously unravelling against the colonial barbarity and craving for a fresh air of freedom. The country sprang into an arm struggle with Netaji leading it from the front. When

cluding Netaji. Historic inscriptions on the conversation between former British Prime Minister Clement Attlee and the then acting Governor of West Bengal Justice PB Chakraborty in 1956 reveals the fact that the British had to ultimately decide to leave India in 1947 because of the erosion of loyalty to the British crown among

1946, about 20000 sailors of the Royal Indian Navy serving on 78 ships are known to have mutinied against the British Empire. They went around Mumbai and Karachi with portraits of Netaji and forced the British to shout 'Jai Hind' and other INA slogans. This could be enough to illustrate the impact of Netaji on India's independence and every year January comes with memories of great patriotism that Vivekananda through his spiritual ideals and Netaji through his patriotic courage gifted to the Indian populace.

Swami Vivekananda's birthday is celebrated as National Youth Day while Netaji's birthday is celebrated as Parakram Divas. Both terms beautifully connote a vision for the youth of the world's largest democracy. The English equivalent of Parakram can be courageous and vigorous. India's Amrit Kaal is for the youth to jump into this transformation mission with Vivekananda's ideals being implemented with Netaji's courage.



Netaji chose arm struggle as a means to political liberation, Vivekananda's teachings fuelled his spiritual personality, strengthening the deep patriotic behaviour in him to rise into its Himalayan stature. With Vivekananda began India's modern spiritual renaissance and its cultural nationalism got exposed through the patriotic sacrifices made by numerous people in-

the Indian Army and Navy as a result of Netaji's military activities. To PB Chakraborty's question on Mahatma Gandhi's influence on the British decision to vacate India, Attlee is known to have replied with a sarcastic smile that Gandhi's influence was minimal. In



tions flying high hopefully bringing good fortunes and change in life. People across the globe slide into a festive mood and everywhere we can see a wind of optimism blowing with uninterrupted friendship and accommodation. The wintry mist of December tells us stories of hits and misses of the year. With every passing year we are moving one step towards our greater goals as humankind. Amid such merriment and busy festivities we need to also kindle a little benevolence, benefi-

born in 1863 and Netaji was born in 1897. By the time India's most renowned freedom fighter Subhas Chandra Bose was born, Swami Vivekananda the patriotic saint of India was almost planning to pack his bag for his return journey to eternity. Netaji was five years old when Vivekananda left his body in 1902. Within a short period of 39 years on the planet, Vivekananda, with his herculean spiritual austerity, could ignite the fire of spiritual revolution which would last for

Colonial India was a challenge and to capture the glimpse of his spiritual mission for a nation that remained in servitude for centuries was quite tiresome for Vivekananda. For an individual, spiritual awakening is a personal affair and it needs tremendous hardships to discover the eternal bliss in him. Vivekananda had to spiritually conquer a country that was shattered intellectually, emotionally and spiritually by the gruesome impact of the invasion and his mission was more strenuous than an

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1st COACH RESTAURANT of ECoR and 2nd in AP commences operations AT VIZIANAGARAM Rly Stn

Vizianagaram (KCN, Bureau): As part of providing enhanced passenger services and novel experiences to rail users, *Waltair Di-

The rail coach restaurant was opened today 11.01.2023 by Divisional Railway Manager Shri Anup Satpathy. Speaking on the occasion, DRM said that the innovative idea had been



vision* of East Coast Railway started a coach restaurant in the circulating area of

conceptualised by the Division to provide premium experience to rail commuters by



Vizianagaram railway station. The vendor modified an AC coach placed at the circulating area of the station and designed the interiors to suit the requirements.

This is the first of its kind in the East Coast Railway jurisdiction and second in the state of AP. Rail commuters and the general public will have a unique and pleasant dining experience at this Coach restaurant.

Passengers will get premium dining experience in this multi-cuisine air-conditioned restaurant with hygienic and quality food available round the clock at affordable rates. These services shall be available at the most accessible location of the city round the clock for the convenience of railway travellers. The license for the coach restaurant is given for 5 years.

utilising an old unserviceable AC coach. This restaurant not only provides hygienic and quality food to rail commuters 24X7 but also generates additional revenue to the Railways. DRM appreciated the initiative of Commercial Department lead by Shri AK Tripathi for such implementing such innovative concepts. The Rail Coach Restaurant has 36 executive chairs.

36 to 40 Customers can be accommodated inside the coach restaurant.

It is available round the clock to serve the customers.

Tiffins, Meals will be available at the dine.

Fast foods, Ice creams and packed items are also will be available to the customers. The coach can be reserved for special events like birthday parties etc.

Congress starts bus tour ahead of Karnataka assembly polls

Belagavi: Hitting the road in poll-bound Karnataka, the Congress on Wednesday began its statewide bus tour called 'Praja Dhvani Yatre', jointly led by party state unit President

ing its ideas with the people and assuring all-round development of the state, while attacking the BJP government with a "charge sheet" it has prepared, Congress leaders said.

broom and said they will "wipe out the corrupt" BJP government from the state, where elections are due by May. Siddaramaiah said, the Congress is beginning the Yatre

ment has been a "curse" for this state as "scandals are coming out every day", and to wipe it out, the Congress is taking up this yatre. "The BJP has made Karnataka the capi-



D K Shivakumar and Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Siddaramaiah.

The tour kicked started at 'Veer Soudha', a memorial where Mahatma Gandhi had presided over the Congress session in 1924, after paying tributes to the father of the nation.

AICC General Secretary In-charge of State Randeep Surjewala, and senior leaders including campaign committee chief M B Patil, were among others present.

The tour covering 21 districts will see the party shar-

As part of the bus yatra, both Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah, who are nursing chief ministerial ambitions in the event of the Congress coming to power, will travel in the same vehicle until January 29.

Thereafter, in the second week of February, two separate teams would be formed, with one headed by Siddaramaiah set to tour Assembly constituencies in north Karnataka region, while Shivakumar will be leading the way in southern districts.

Congress leaders symbolically swept the street with a

from Belagavi to "wipe out the BJP government's corruption and its misrule" from the state.

"Our intention is to place before the people a charge sheet against the BJP government in the state, because the entire government is submerged in corruption, there is growing misrule, and they are indulging in a politics of hate. If anyone questions, they are being intimidated with false cases and arrests," he said, adding that "corruption is rampant and people are fed up". Shivakumar said the BJP govern-

tal of corruption, this has to be ended and people need to be given a good administration, they should have confidence towards the government, so we are taking up this yatre with a promise of good governance," he said. Listing out "various corruption and scandals" in the state and accusing the government of giving a clean chit to those involved by filing a report in such cases, he alleged, "estimates have been doubled in PWD and irrigation contracts, everything will be looked into, all scandals and B report will be inquired into on Congress coming to power."

PM to gift Telangana Rs 7,000 cr worth of projects

HYDERABAD: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Hyderabad for the second time in less than two months on January 19 to launch the prestigious Secunderabad-Visakhapatnam Vande Bharat Express and inaugurate projects worth Rs 7,000 crore, including rail and road works, and address a public meeting at Parade Ground in Secunderabad. Incidentally, Modi's visit to the city comes just a day after Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao is scheduled to hold a BRS meeting in Khammam to demonstrate Opposition unity and solidarity against the BJP and the PM. Telangana BJP leaders have begun planning for the big day. Modi's visit

to the city also comes at a time when the state party is ramping up its programmes in Telangana in order to take on the BRS in the Assembly elections later this year. The Prime Minister will inaugurate the Vande Bharat Express, the country's eighth semi-high-speed modern train, which will run from Secunderabad to Visakhapatnam via Kazipet, Warangal, Khammam and Visakhapatnam, covering the distance in eight hours. It would reach Vijayawada in four to four-and-a-half hours. The train will leave Secunderabad in the morning and return the same day, and will have advanced features such as reclining seats, Wi-Fi, GPS-based audio-

visual passenger information system and automated doors, among others. According to Union minister G. Kishan Reddy, after flagging off the Vande Bharat from, the PM will participate in the ground-breaking ceremony for the Rs 699 crore redevelopment of the Secunderabad railway station and lay the foundation stone for the Rs 521 crore periodic railway coach overhauling factory at Kazipet. The PM will dedicate to the nation several buildings being constructed at IIT-Hyderabad at a cost of Rs 2,597 crore to accommodate 5,000 students. As Modi's visit to the city on January 19 was officially confirmed, state BJP president

Bandi Sanjay Kumar visited the Secunderabad station with Dr K. Laxman, Rajya Sabha member



and senior party leader, to discuss with the South Central Railway officials preparations for the various launches, inaugurations, and foundation stone-laying ceremonies that Modi will take part in, some of them remotely.

Sanjay addressed a meeting of the BJP leaders from the city and Ranga Reddy district, urging them to ensure

Modi's public meeting was a massive success. "Elections can come anytime in the next eight months and all of us need to be geared up. Chief Minister Chandrashekar Rao and the BRS government are going all out to

make it difficult for us in the coming days, and I alone have been slapped with 11 non-bailable cases. Remem-

ber, this is a Chief Minister who stole Central funds sent to gram panchayats, and each of us should reach out to people and explain how the KCR government cheated them," he remarked. Sanjay, the BJP MP

from Karimnagar, urged the party workers to visit "every house in Bhayanagar" and tell people about the funds the Modi government has given to the city. "Similar exercises must be taken up in all municipalities in the state," he said. Dr Laxman claimed that IT minister K.T. Rama Rao was spreading misinformation about the Modi government doing nothing for Telangana, entirely forgetting that it was the Centre that was reopening closed public sector units, such as the Ramagundam Fertilisers and Chemicals Limited. Instead of criticising the PM, the CM and his son should visit the PM's programmes and ask Modi for more financial aid to propel development in Telangana, and

demonstrate their commitment to the state's advancement. Meanwhile, SCR officials stated that while the journey from Secunderabad to Vijayawada will take four to four-and-a-half hours, the distance between Secunderabad and Visakhapatnam would be covered in eight hours, as opposed to the current super-fast trains' 12-hour journey. Each Vande Bharat trip would carry 1,128 passengers, with 72 seats in each chair car coach and an engine installed on both ends of the train. The Vande Bharat Express trains offer centralised coach monitoring and controlling systems. Each train features 16 coaches, including two executive coaches equipped with rotating seats for maximum usage of space.

ZSI Scientists Detect Bloom of Potentially Harmful Marine Algae in Digha-Bichitrapur Coastal Waters, Disrupting Fishing Operations

Kolkata(KCN): A team of researchers from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) recently investigated the phenomenon locally known as "tel fut" in the coastal waters of Digha (West Bengal) and Bichitrapur (Odisha). Some mysterious gelatinous globe-shaped substances were detected floating in the up-

per layers of the coastal waters of Digha and estuarine region of river Subarnarekha in large numbers. These aggregations were found to be blooms of colonial Phaeocystis, a kind of algal plankton. Phaeocystis occurs worldwide, both in temperate and cold polar waters with occasional appearances in tropical seas, although their blooming is mostly restricted in high latitude seas. The bloom persisted for many days, according to the fisherfolk and boat operators in Digha and Bichitrapur, and it was upon their request a team of researchers from ZSI headquarters, lead by Senior Scientist, Dr. Jasmine Purushothaman, reached the affected areas to conduct their study.



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Interestingly, the boat operators and fisherfolk also mentioned about the "glowing light in the waters" observed at night in these areas of bloom. This is the phenomenon of bioluminescence, exhibited by some plankton in the water, including Phaeocystis. Usually, Phaeocystis spp. lead a polymorphic life, alternating between free-living solitary vegetative cells (~3-9 µm) and spherical (mostly) giant gelatinous colonies (up to 5 mm diameter) comprising >10000 cells. The

balloon-like colonies produce significant amounts of DOM, rich in glucan and mucopolysaccharides in which cells are randomly distributed. This is not the first occurrence of such a bloom. The first report about Phaeocystis bloom in Indian waters was earlier reported in open waters of Arabian Sea. During the waning phase of the bloom, Phaeocystis colonies undergo disruption and release mucus, which ultimately enhances the mucilaginous condition of bloom affected waters and that would eventually cause foam formation. Although foam formation was not witnessed by the research team or the local people, one observation was a prevalent-clogged fishing net. According to the

fisherfolk in Digha coast, the mucilaginous components of the Phaeocystis colonies disrupted the fishing operations in the affected areas, damaging the fishing nets and they have stopped the fishing operations for two weeks. Such things can have far reaching consequences.

Frequency in the occurrence of Harmful Algal Blooms (commonly referred to as HABs) of high latitude species has been increasing in the tropical/subtropical coastal waters as a result of potential impacts of human induced climate change. The frequent blooming of such alien species alters the prevailing food-web structures and ecosystem functions of these coastal areas. According to the Director, ZSI, Dr. Dhriti Banerjee, these blooms not only have the capacity to potentially disrupt the pelagic ecosystem in the coastal waters, but they have also led to severely reduced fish catch, especially in the shores in operations and a huge economic loss of fisherman folks through damaging the fishing nets.

More about this phenomenon is being currently studied by Dr Jasmine and the ZSI research team.

FIH Men's Hockey World Cup '23: Show begins in millennium city today

BHUBANESWAR: The stage is set. A carnival like atmosphere has engulfed Odisha with the celebration of the game reverberating all across the state. As

groups. The captains of 16 teams taking part in the tournament will also join in virtually. The opening ceremony will feature live performances by Bollywood

culture and heritage through performances and technology. Ranveer Singh, Disha Patani and Pritam called on Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on the

traffic regulations for easy movement of fans and people to the stadium. By Tuesday evening, many fans from different parts of the state had already arrived in the city to witness the grand opening ceremony.

"It is a matter of immense pride for we the people of Odisha. We are hosting the global showpiece hockey tournament twice in a row, which in itself is a momentous achievement. The celebrations of hockey has assumed high-pitch in the nook and corner of the state. We are here to soak in the ultimate experience of the extravaganza and are thankful to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Odisha government to be leading the way in promotion of sports," said Sudhir Sahoo, a fan from Jajpur district. For those, who will not be able to visit Cuttack, can watch the ceremony from the comfort of their homes as it will be broadcast from 3 pm onwards, on Sports Odisha YouTube Channel, DD Sports and watch.hockey.com.



the curtains formally go up on the world's greatest show of hockey - the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup 2023 - on Wednesday, all roads lead to the millennium city of Cuttack, which is ready to host a glittering and star-studded inauguration ceremony at Barabati stadium. More than 50,000 people are set to converge in the stadium to soak in the dazzling and action-packed music and performances by Bollywood and Ollywood superstars along with international

stars Ranveer Singh, Disha Patani and music composer Pritam, who has composed HWC 2023 anthem, along with BLACKSWAN, the famous K-Pop band featuring Odisha's Shreya Lenka. Ollywood's power couple Sabyasachi Mishra and Archana Sahu will also feature in the celebration along with the famous Prince Dance Group and many other performers. The opening ceremony titled "Celebrating the Spirit of Hockey" will also showcase Odisha's

eve of the event. The chief minister sought the cooperation of people of Cuttack city to make the opening ceremony of the hockey World Cup a grand success. While Cuttack is buzzing with excitement over the much anticipated event, the city administration and police have made elaborate arrangement for ensuring it to be a smooth affair. Hockey's biggest show begins today. Along with high security arrangements, the Commissionerate Police have put in place

India about brotherhood and unity, that's why Bharat Jodo Yatra is successful: Rahul

Fatehgarh Sahib (Punjab): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday accused the BJP of spreading fear and

people are dividing the country, putting one religion against the other, one caste against the other, one language against the

response and it got better as it crossed from one state to the other. "There is a reason for this -- the hatred, fear and violence being

chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa, Haryana Congress chief Bhupinder



hatred in the country, even as he asserted that India stood for "brotherhood, unity and respect" and that is why his 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' was "successful".

Gandhi was addressing people at Sirhind here before beginning Punjab leg of the Yatra.

"An atmosphere of hatred has been spread in the country. The BJP and RSS

other? And they have spoiled the atmosphere of the country," he alleged.

Therefore, we thought that the country needs to show another path, which is of love, unity and brotherhood, this is why we started this Yatra, he said.

The Congress leader said the Yatra has received an overwhelming public re-

spread by the BJP people, it is not the country's way and not its history. This country is of brotherhood, unity and respect. And this is why, this Yatra is successful," he said.

During the yatra, Gandhi said he learnt a lot as he spoke to farmers, small shopkeepers, labourers and unemployed youth.

Punjab Congress

Singh Hooda, former minister Charanjit Singh Channi, among others, accompanied Gandhi in the Yatra. The Gandhi scion earlier paid obeisance at Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib before the start of the Punjab leg of the Bharat Jodo Yatra. He sported a turban and wore a half-sleeved T-shirt to the place of worship.

TS BJP to invite Modi to contest from state

HYDERABAD: As the BJP looks to expand its footprint in the south, particularly in Telangana, and thwart Chief

Delhi requesting him to contest from Mahbubnagar," he said. The state BJP believes that if Modi

Further, a survey conducted by the top BJP leadership in Mahbubnagar, according to party insiders, had revealed

announcement of numerous development initiatives, particularly rail and road projects.



Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's aspirations for a third term and a national political career, the party's state unit is steadfastly pushing for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to run from the state in the 2024 Parliament elections. Former MP from Mahbubnagar and senior BJP leader A.P. Jithender Reddy stated that he planned to formally invite Modi. "I will be giving a letter to Mr Modi during the January 16-17 BJP national executive meeting in New

runs from Telangana, and the announcement is made before the state elections scheduled in December, it will help give a major fillip to the cadre as well as bolster the party's chances of winning power here. Telangana is the gateway for the south and the Prime Minister contesting from the state will send a strong and powerful message that the BJP wants development in the southern states and would serve the people in all the southern states, he stated.

that Modi's presence from Mahbubnagar benefit the party as a whole, both in the Assembly elections later this year and in the general elections that will follow in the early half of next year. The Prime Minister has been giving the South more emphasis through an infrastructure push, the appointment of senior party leaders such as Dr K. Laxman to the parliamentary board, the holding of the national executive meeting in Hyderabad, and the

Incidentally, when Modi visits Hyderabad on January 19, among the several projects he is schedule to inaugurate is that of the doubled railway line between Secunderabad and Mahbubnagar, a Rs. 1,410 crore project. He will also lay the groundwork for a Rs. 1,850 crore national highways project that includes 103 kilometres of National Highway 167N between Mahbubnagar and Chincholi in Karnataka.

Case against NCC, 7 officials in connection with Metro structure collapse



Bengaluru: A case has been registered against Nagarjuna Construction company (NCC), five of its officials and two of Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation

Limited (BMRC) in connection with the collapse of an under-construction metro pillar here, which left a woman and her toddler son dead. NCC is named first

accused (A1), followed by its officials. A BMRC deputy chief engineer and executive engineer are A7 and A8 respectively, police sources said.

Tejaswini (30) and Vihan died after a structure at 'Namma Metro' construction site fell on them at Nagawara on the ring road here on Tuesday morning.

Startup funding in India drops 33 per cent to USD 24 billion in 2022: Report

NEW DELHI: Funding for Indian startups dropped by 33 per cent to USD 24 billion in 2022 as compared to the previous year though it was nearly double the amount recorded in 2019 or 2020, said a PwC India report on Wednesday. Global investors were still positive about the Indian startup ecosystem despite the global slowdown, as per the report titled 'Startup Tracker-CY 22'. "Funding for Indian startups in CY22 was nearly USD 24 billion, a drop of 33 per cent in comparison to CY21 but was still more than twice the funds raised in CY20 and CY19 each", it said. The startups received total funding of USD 13.2 billion in 2019, USD 10.9 billion in 2020 and USD 35.2 billion in 2021. Despite the funding slowdown, Amit Nawka, Partner - Deals & India Startups Leader, PwC India, said, "some areas like SaaS (Software as a service) and early-stage funding have remained upbeat. With significant dry power waiting to be invested, it seems likely that the funding scenario will begin to normalise after 2-3 quarters." Meanwhile, he added, many startups were using the current situation to tighten operating models and optimise cash runway by deferring discretionary spends and investments.

The report said the early-stage deals accounted for 60-62 per cent of the total funding in 2021 and 2022 in volume terms and average ticket size per deal was USD 4 million per deal. In value terms, it added, early-stage deals contributed to approximately 12 per cent of the total funding in 2022 compared to nearly 7 per cent in 2021. Growth and late-stage funding deals accounted for 88 per cent of the funding activity in 2022 in value terms, representing 38 per cent of the total count of deals. According to the report, average ticket size in growth-stage deals was USD 43 million and late-stage deal was USD 94 million during 2022. As regards the city-wise startup funding, the report said, Bengaluru, NCR and Mumbai accounted for nearly 82 per cent of total Indian startups as of December 2022. As many as 28 per cent of startups in the top three cities have raised in excess of USD 20 million. Bengaluru witnessed the highest number of unicorns, followed by NCR and Mumbai. Similar trends have been noted for other companies that have raised more than USD 50-100 million, the report said.

MG Motor India launches Nex Gen Hector

HYDERABAD: MG The Autonomous such as 6 airbags, a Motor India has on Level 2 SUV offers 360-degree HD



Monday unveiled the Next Gen Hector with a host of exciting new technologies, features and better driving comfort. The new Hector is built to enhance the on-road experience with better safety and driver convenience. Available in 5, 6 and 7-seater configurations, the Next-Gen Hector offers ample space, intelligently designed seating options with plush dual-tone argil brown and black interiors.

11 Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), features including Traffic Jam Assist (TJA) and Auto Turn Indicators for safety, and comfort. The intelligent Traffic Jam Assist (TJA) ensures minimal effort and maximum safety in a traffic jam situation by keeping the vehicle in the middle of the lane and maintaining a safe distance from the vehicle in front. The Next-Gen Hector also has other key safety features

camera, Electronic Stability Program (ESP), Traction Control System (TCS), Hill Assist Control (HAC), all four-wheel disc brakes, a 3-point seat belt for all seats, electric parking brake (EPB), and front parking sensors. It boasts of India's largest 35.56 cm (14-inch) HD portrait infotainment system along with a brand-new user interface. The technological innovation is also

manifest in the first-in-segment Digital Bluetooth Key and Key Sharing capability. In case of an emergency or loss of a key, the Digital Key can be used to lock, unlock, start, and drive the vehicle. Speaking during the launch, President and MD MG Motor India, Rajeev Chaba, said, "We are grateful to our customers for the overwhelming response to the MG Hector since its launch in 2019." "This Next-Gen Hector enhances the stance of the MG Hector through looks, interiors, and technology. It comes with the assurance of our MG Shield program which offers a hassle-free and smooth ownership experience for our customers who can experience the Next-Gen Hector for themselves at our 300 centres across India," he added.

Rupee gains 57 paise to close at 81.78 against US dollar

MUMBAI: The rupee gained 57 paise to close at 81.78 against the US dollar on Monday, the

57 paise over its previous close. On Monday, the equity market front, the 30-share BSE



rupee settled at 82.35 against the US dollar. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, advanced 0.12 per cent to 103.12. The rupee became the best performer among the Asian currencies following stop order triggers and inflows from bond selling, said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities. "The local unit witnessed the biggest single-day gains after

of 82 as the traders rushed to cover the positions," Parmar said. Parmar further noted that Spot USD/INR now has the support of 81.70, "the 50 per cent Fibonacci retracement adjoining the November 14 low of 80.51 and the January 03 high of 82.94. The near-term view remains bearish for the pair and a level below 81.70 will pave way for 81.45 while on the higher side 82.10 acts as resistance". On the domestic

Sensex declined 631.83 points or 1.04 per cent to end at 60,115.48, while the broader NSE Nifty fell 187.05 points or 1.03 per cent to 17,914.15. Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 0.13 per cent to USD 79.75 per barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital market on Monday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 203.13 crore, according to exchange data.

Make LPG affordable to poor households: Citizen group tells FM Nirmala ahead of Budget

NEW DELHI: Warrior Moms, a national citizen action group, has written to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday demanding provisions in the Union Budget 2023-24 to make cooking gas



affordable to poor households across India. The group has claimed that the letter has been endorsed by more than 20 noted personalities, including Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, TMC MP Saugata Roy, DMK MP D Ravikumar, National Conference MP Farooq Abdulla, NCP MP Vandana Chavan and Justice (retired) Anjana Prakash. "The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna (PMUY) introduced in 2016 has given over 8 crore households access to subsidised LPG connections. However, the insufficiency of the subsidy combined with the difficulty of getting a timely refill hinders millions of households from switching to LPG," the letter read. The group further mentioned in the letter that underprivileged households continue to depend on unclean fuels such as firewood and dung cakes, resulting in serious health implications. "Unable to afford cylinders now priced at over Rs 1,000 on an average, underprivileged households continue to depend on unclean

fuels like firewood and dung cakes, resulting in serious health implications such as stillbirths, asthma, bronchitis, growth stagnation, decrease in life expectancy and high infant mortality rates. It is imperative to provide all our underprivileged constituents with heavily subsidised cooking cylinders and refills," the letter stated. The group has urged the Centre to raise the subsidy amount beyond the current extension of Rs 200, along with making the distribution of LPG smoother across the country. "It is disturbing to see the obstacles that women in urban-poor and rural households face due to the exorbitantly priced LPG refills across India. Continued usage of such fuels also has disastrous consequences on their health and well-being. We urge the Government of India to take this into account and raise the subsidy amount well beyond the current extension of Rs 200, along with making the distribution of LPG smoother across the country," said Warrior Moms in a statement. The Warrior Moms network said that they have submitted around 5,000 postcards to Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Puri, urging the government to address the issue of household air pollution by ensuring access to and affordability of LPG for all poor households. Household air pollution contributes to 30 to 50 per cent of the ambient air quality in India, they said. The Union Budget for 2023-24 will be presented in Parliament by the finance minister on February 1.

Hockey World Cup 2023: Dazzling show marks inaugural ceremony as Barabati reverberates with hockey spirit

Cuttack (KCN): With the FIH Odisha Men's Hockey World Cup 2023 just a day left to start in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela, Millennium city of Cuttack hosted a glittering and

A carnival like atmosphere engulfed Odisha with the celebration of the game reverberating all across the State from the historical stadium as the curtains formally went up on the world's greatest show of hockey.

Around 35,000 spectators converged in the stadium to soak in the dazzling and action-packed music and performances by Bollywood and Ollywood superstars along with international groups. The glittering World Cup trophy was unveiled in presence of



star-studded inauguration ceremony at the historical Barabati Stadium on Wednesday. Blackswan band

Blackswan band performs at Barabati Stadium

Afghan women athletes barred from play, fear Taliban threats

KABUL: Noura's determination to play sports was so great that she defied her family's opposition for years. Beatings from her mother and jeers from her neighbours never stopped her from the sports she loved.

But the 20-year-old Afghan woman could not defy her country's Taliban rulers. They have not just banned all sports for women and girls, they have actively intimidated and harassed those who once played, often scaring them from even practising in private, Noura and other women say.

Noura has been left shattered. "I'm not the same person anymore," she said. "Since the Taliban came, I feel like I'm dead."

A number of girls and women who once played a



variety of sports told The Associated Press they have been intimidated by the Taliban with visits and phone calls warning them not to engage in their sports. The women and girls spoke on condition of anonymity for fear they will face further threats. They posed for an AP photographer for portraits with the equipment of the sports they loved. They hid their identities with burqas, the all-encompassing robes and hood that completely cover the face, leaving only a mesh to see through. They didn't normally wear the burqa, but they said they sometimes do now when they go outside and want to remain anonymous and avoid harassment.

The ban on sports is part of the Taliban's escalating campaign of restrictions that have shut down life for girls and women.

Since their takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, the Taliban have barred girls from attending middle and high school. Last month, they ordered all women thrown out of universities as well.

The Taliban require women to cover their hair and faces in public and prohibit them from going to parks or gyms. They have severely limited women's ability to work outside the home and most recently forbade non-governmental organizations from employing women, a step that could cripple the vital flow of aid.

Even before the Taliban, women's sports were opposed by many in Afghanistan's deeply conservative society, seen as a violation of women's modesty and of their role in society. Still, the previous, internationally-backed government had programs encouraging women's sports and school clubs, leagues and national teams for women in many sports.

A 20-year-old mixed martial artist recalled how in August 2021, she was competing in a local women's tournament at a Kabul sports hall. Word spread through the audience and participants that the advancing Taliban were on the city's outskirts. All the women and girls fled the hall. It was the last competition the young athlete ever played in.

Months later, she said she tried to give private lessons for girls. But Taliban fighters raided the gym where they were practising and arrested them all. In detention, the girls were humiliated and mocked,

she said. After mediation by elders, they were released after promising not to practice sports anymore.

She still practices at home and sometimes teaches her close friends.

"Life has become very difficult for me, but I am a fighter, so I will continue to live and fight," she said. Mushwanay, spokesman of the Taliban's Sports Organization and National Olympic Committee, said authorities were looking for a way to restart sports for women by building separate sports venues. But he gave no time frame and said funds were needed to do so.

Taliban authorities have repeatedly made similar promises to allow girls in 7th grade and up to return to school, but still have not done so.

Noura faced resistance her whole life as she tried to play sports. Raised in a poor Kabul district by parents who migrated from the provinces, Noura started out playing soccer alongside local boys in the street. When she was nine, a coach spotted her and, at his encouragement, she joined a girls' youth team.

She kept it a secret from everyone but her father, but her cover was blown by her own talent. At 13, she was named the best girl soccer player in her age group, and her photo and name were broadcast on television.

"All over the world, when a girl becomes famous and her picture is shown on TV, it's a good day for her and she's at the peak of happiness," she said. "For me, that day was very bitter and the beginning of worse days."

Furious, her mother beat her, shouting that she was not allowed to play soccer. She kept playing in secret but was exposed again when her team won a national championship, and her photo was in the news. Again, her mother beat her.

Still, she sneaked off to the award ceremony. She broke down in tears on stage as the audience cheered. "Only I knew I was crying because of loneliness and the hard life I had," she said.

When she found out, her mother set fire to her soccer uniform and shoes.

Noura gave up soccer but then turned to boxing. Her mother eventually relented, realizing she couldn't stop her from sports, she said.

The day the Taliban entered Kabul, she said, her coach called her mother and said Noura should go to the airport to be taken out of the country. Noura said her mother didn't deliver the message because she didn't want her to leave. When she learned of the message—too late to escape—Noura said she cut her wrists and had to be taken to the hospital.

"The world had become dark for me," she said. Three months later, someone who identified himself as a member of the Taliban called the family and threatened her. "They were saying, why did you play sports? Sports are forbidden," she recalled.

Terrified, she left Kabul, disguising herself in her burqa to travel to her family's hometown. Eventually, she returned but remains in fear.

"Even if my life was difficult, I used to have confidence in myself and knew that, with effort, I could do what I wanted," she said. "Now I don't have much hope anymore."

President Dilip Tirkey.

Hailing the State government for hosting two consecutive Hockey World Cups Thakur said, "Hopefully all the 16 teams will enjoy a health competition with sportsman spirit



throughout the showpiece event."

"Thanks to Odisha for building a grand new stadium at Rourkela for the country," said Thakur.

Speaking on the occasion, Patnaik said, "Odisha has been long known for its hospitality. I hope visitors will take a little part of Odisha with them."

The Chief Minister also thanked the Centre for extending support to host the grand tournament.

FIH President Tayyab Ikram said world hockey owes a lot to Odisha.

"Odisha is the land of hockey. Top athletes will perform at world's best stadiums in Odisha in the marquee event," said Ikram.

Bollywood star Disha Patani performs at Barabati Stadium

The opening ceremony featured live perfor-

mances by Bollywood stars Ranveer Singh, Disha Patani and music composer Pritam, who has composed HWC 2023 anthem, along with Blackswan, the famous K-Pop band featuring Odisha's Shreya Lenka. Ollywood's

power couple Sabyasachi Mishra and Archana Sahu also featured in the celebration along with the famous Prince Dance Group.

The inaugural ceremony titled 'Celebrating the Spirit of Hockey' showcased Odisha's culture-- especially 'Jagannathastakam' choreographed by Padmashree Aruna Mohanty. The heritage of Odisha was amply showcased through performances and technology.

Ranveer Singh Bollywood star Ranveer Singh performs at Barabati Stadium

The captains of 16 teams joined the inauguration ceremony virtually.

While Cuttack buzzed with excitement over the much anticipated event, the city administration and police made elaborate arrangement for ensuring the ceremony to be a smooth affair

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