



AT RECEIVING END
Actor Adah Sharma gets trolled mercilessly after she compares herself with late music legend Bappi Lahiri **LEISURE P2**



FIRST HIJAB, NOW TURBAN
Officials ask a Sikh student to remove her turban, in Bangalore following Karnataka HC's interim order on the hijab row **NATIONAL P7**



ISHAN, IYER SCRIPT WIN
Ishan Kishan's 89 and Shreyas Iyer's unbeaten 57 help India beat Sri Lanka by 62 runs in first T20 international **SPORTS P12**

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Guv summons WB Assembly at 2am
Kolkata: In what may be a first of sorts in legislative history, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar summoned Thursday West Bengal's legislature for a session past midnight at 2.00am, March 7. Dhankhar said he was merely acting on the recommendation of the Mamata Banerjee-led Cabinet which he described as 'unusual'. However, both state government officials and Speaker Biman Banerjee said the request for calling the Assembly session at 2.00am was a case of a simple typographical error where 'PM' became 'AM'. If this really happens, it means that Dhankhar would have given his speech at an odd time.



Oil prices at a 7-year high
New Delhi: Oil prices surged past \$100 a barrel Thursday after Russian President Vladimir Putin declared war on Ukraine. The price of Brent crude hit \$105.08 a barrel at one point, the highest level in more than seven years, said a 'BBC' report. Russia is the second biggest exporter of crude oil, and is also the world's largest natural gas exporter, 'BBC' reported. Tina Teng, an analyst at 'CMC Markets' said: "We could see [oil] prices keeping the momentum." Most countries in the world are now apprehending that oil prices will increase further if the war continues.

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DEADLY ASSAULT: THREE-PRONGED ATTACK LAUNCHED BY MORE THAN 1,50,000 RUSSIAN TROOPS FROM LAND AND SEA

UKRAINE UNDER SIEGE

Indians panic as Ukraine shuts down airspace
The shifting of the Indian Embassy from Kyiv to Lviv has created problems for students as most don't have the new numbers

Modi calls Putin, seeks immediate end to violence

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke Thursday with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the Ukraine conflict. He appealed for immediate cessation of violence as well as concerted efforts from all sides to return to the path of diplomatic negotiations.



During their telephonic conversation, Putin briefed Modi about the recent developments regarding Ukraine, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement. Modi reiterated his long-standing conviction that the differences between Russia and the NATO group can only be resolved through honest and sincere dialogue, the PMO said. It added that concerted efforts are needed from all sides to return to the path of diplomatic negotiations and dialogue. Modi also sensitised the Putin about India's concerns regarding the safety of the Indian citizens in Ukraine, especially students. He conveyed that India attaches the highest priority to their safe exit and return. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, meanwhile, spoke Thursday to European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell and discussed the 'grave situation' in Ukraine.

WAR-MONGERING NATION

MOSCOW: From Chechnya to Syria, via Ukraine, the Russia of Vladimir Putin has been involved in a string of wars since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

2 WARS IN CHECHNYA
In late 1994, Moscow sent in troops to bring Chechnya to heel. But they meet fierce resistance and were withdrawn in 1996. They were again sent back in October 1999, when Vladimir Putin was PM. In February 2000, the Russian army took the Chechen capital Grozny. The guerrilla movement however, continued. In 2009 the Kremlin brought an end to its operation.

RUSSIA-GEORGIA WAR
In August 2008, Russia and Georgia went to war for five days over South Ossetia, a small separatist Georgian region. In the night of August 7 to 8, the Georgian army took control of South Ossetia. However, Russia immediately responded. It sent troops into Georgian territory and quickly inflicted a resounding defeat on the ex-Soviet republic.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE
In 2014, after the pro-European Union revolution in Ukraine which forced out Kremlin-backed leader Viktor Yanukovich, Russia retaliated by annexing the Crimea peninsula. However, the annexation is not recognised by the international community. The conflict in Ukraine has left more than 14,000 dead since 2014.

SYRIA WAR
Russia deployed its military in war-torn Syria in 2015 in support of the forces of President Bashar al-Assad. Russia's intervention, especially with its air power, changed the course of the conflict in Assad's favour.



Kyiv, Feb 24: Russian troops launched Thursday a wide-ranging attack on Ukraine, as President Vladimir Putin cast aside international condemnations and sanctions. He warned other countries that any attempt to interfere would lead to 'consequences you have never seen'. Ukrainian border guards released footage of what they said were Russian military vehicles moving in, and big explosions were heard in the capital Kyiv, Kharkiv in the east and Odessa in the west. There were claims and counter-claims regarding the casualties suffered. Ukraine claimed that it had downed eight Russian aircraft and two choppers. On the other hand, Russia said that its precision strikes have neutralised both the Ukrainian Air Force and Navy.



Volodymyr Zelenskyy | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE
If we come under attack, if we face an attempt to take away our country, our freedom, our lives and lives of our children, we will defend ourselves. When you attack us, you will see our faces, not our backs

Meanwhile the government officials said that 18 people (10 men, eight women) have been killed in Russian airstrikes in the Black Sea port city of Odessa. As the invasion gathered momentum Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy cut diplomatic ties with Moscow and declared martial law. He said Russia has targeted Ukraine's military infrastructure. After weeks of denying plans to invade, Putin justified his actions in an overnight televised address, asserting that the attack was needed to protect civilians in eastern Ukraine - a false claim the US had predicted he would make as a pretext for an invasion. Putin also claimed that Russia does not intend to occupy Ukraine but will move to 'demilitarise' it and bring 'criminals' to justice. The attacks came first from the air, but later Ukrainian border guards released security camera footage Thursday showing a line of Russian military vehicles crossing into Ukraine's government-held territory from Russian-annexed Crimea. Sources said that even the Belarusian army is helping the Russian troops. Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba described the assault as a 'full-scale invasion' and said Ukraine will 'defend itself' and will win. The world can and must stop Putin. The time to act is now. After the initial explosions in Kyiv, people could be heard shouting in the streets. Then a sense of normality returned, with cars circulating and people walking in the streets as a pre-dawn commute appeared to start in relative calm. As per last reports, Russian soldiers have captured Chernobyl after launching a fierce assault. Chernobyl lies 60km north of the Ukrainian capital and is known for its atomic plant.

JOE BIDEN: (US President) The world will hold Russia accountable for the death and destruction due to the 'unprovoked' and 'unjustified' attack on Ukraine. The US and its allies will respond in a united and decisive way. Russia alone is responsible for the death and destruction this attack will bring and certainly they will have to pay a price for it.

ANTONIO GUTERRES (UN Secretary General): This is the saddest moment of my tenure. President Putin, give peace a chance because too many people have already died and pull back your troops from Ukraine. Russia's action is unprovoked and unjustified

URSULA VON DER LEYEN (EU president): Massive and targeted sanctions will be implemented that will target strategic sectors of the Russian economy by blocking the access to technologies and markets that are key for Russia. The aim will be to weaken Russia's economic base and its capacity to modernise.

XI JINPING (CHINESE PREZ) All parties should work for peace instead of escalating the tension or hyping up the possibility of war. The United States must not harm the legitimate rights and interests of China and other countries when dealing with the Ukraine issue and relations with Russia

EMANUEL MACRON: France firmly condemns Russia's decision to wage war. Russia must end its military operations immediately

IRREGULAR by MANJUL
How can we provide him police security? He is convicted for serious crimes like murder and rape. He deserves 'Z' plus security

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	CHANGE	PREVIOUS
SENSEX	54529.91	↓	2702.15
NIFTY	16248.00	↓	815.30
DOLLAR	76.56	↑	₹1.04
EURO	84.62	↓	₹0.07
GOLD	₹52,350	↑	₹1971
SILVER	₹67,290	↑	₹2705

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	32.8°C	32.6°C
MIN	19.8°C	19.4°C
Humidity	83%	89%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Light to moderate rain

Final BMC voters' list out

A little over 7.25 lakh voters in the jurisdiction of the BMC will exercise their franchise in the upcoming ULB polls

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 24: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) released Thursday the final voter list ahead of the urban local body (ULB) elections. The elections are likely to be held after the completion of the panchayat polls in the state. As per the list, there are a total of 7,25,765 voters in 67 wards who will exercise their franchise at 705 booths in the state capital. Out of the total voters, 3,94,510 are men while 3,30,815 are women. A total of 440 voters belong to 'others' category. Sources said the list is available at all wards and the BMC office and the Office of the Additional District Magistrate (ADM), Bhubaneswar. In order to check one's name and details the person can visit the official BMC website, select voter list option and enter their/other's name along

with booth number/epic number and with the captcha. Fifteen booths in the BMC area have been identified as hyper-sensitive by the ADM and those will have web casting voting facilities. The move is aimed to ensure incident-free polls. It should be stated here that in last urban elections at least 10 hyper sensitive booths were identified. They were booths at Salia Sahi, Bapuji Nagar, Sundarpada, Raghunathpur, Khandagiri, Capital Hospital, Jayadev Vihar, Sainik School, Niladri Vihar and Patia. The State Election Commission (SEC) has already initiated preparations for the ULB polls by releasing the notification Wednesday. For the first time, the polls in all 107 ULBs (48 municipalities, 59 NACs) and three Corporations will be held simultaneously. The mayor will be directly elected by the voters. Hence, each polling booth will have two EVMs. Voters will exercise their franchise at a total of 4,584 polling booths in 1,931 wards in the upcoming civic body polls, informed SEC sources.

Violence unabated in last phase

In spite of the efforts of the State Election Commission, there were a number of incidents of rigging, booth-capturing and attacks on officials and candidates

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 24: Amid incident of violence in some places, the last phase of the three-tier panchayat elections was completed in Odisha with a polling percentage of about 74 per cent. State Election Commissioner Aditya Prasad Padhi said approximately 74 per cent out of 41.88 lakh voters exercised their franchise. However, the final figure will only be available Friday. Elections were held for 131 Zilla Parishad (ZP) seats at 13,514 booths in 975 gram panchayats (GPs) of 48 blocks in 25 districts. In spite of the best efforts of the government, incidents of violence were reported from a number of places. A ballot box was al-



legedly found unsealed while being deposited at AB High School after end of the elections in Basudevpur of Bhadrak district. Infuriated over the incident, some people attacked the three presiding officers. Six people were arrested in this connection. The injured officers were identified as Malay Ranjan Sahu, Santosh Khillar and Surendra Sethi. Disturbances were reported from nine booths of Niali block in Cuttack district after ballot boxes were allegedly thrown into a pond. Rigging allegations also surfaced in some booths of Kalahandi district. In another incident, a BJD-backed sarpanch candidate was attacked by some BJP workers at

Padhani panchayat under Dhannagar block in Bhadrak district. Candidate Sarat Chandra Sahu and some of his supporters had gone to booth No. 2 after getting information rigging was in process. Talking on the election disturbances, Padhi said action will be taken after getting a detailed report from the concerned district collectors. The Election Commissioner further said all arrangements were made for 2.79 crore voters to elect 1,06,353 representatives for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at 91,913 booths in this rural poll. He added that 36,523 ward members, 126 sarpanchs, 326 panchayat samiti members and one ZP member were elected unopposed. Over 1 lakh polling officials and nearly 40,000 police personnel were deployed for the smooth conduct of the elections. For the first time, Maoist-hit Malkangiri district recorded over 70 per cent polling in the first four phases. The polls passed off peacefully in the Maoist hot belt, Swabhimani Anchal in Malkangiri district.



BEN STILLER 'DIED INSIDE' PLAYING TENNIS WITH NADAL

Hollywood star Ben Stiller 'died inside' when he was forced to play tennis with Rafael Nadal because he knew he was trapped in a no-win situation. However, he shared the moment was a 'dream come true', reports femalefirst.co.uk.

THERON DIDN'T FEEL SAFE AFTER ON-SET ROWS WITH HARDY

Mad Max: Fury Road actress Charlize Theron said that she didn't feel safe after a huge row with co-star Tom Hardy during filming for the 2015 blockbuster. The 46-year-old actress has apologised profusely for their infamous on-set rows while shooting the 2015 post-apocalyptic blockbuster, reports femalefirst.co.uk.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

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

GEMINI
You will have an emotionally turbulent day. In the afternoon, you will be extra touchy about what others think of you. But by evening, your aesthetic sensibilities will overcome your insecurity and you will be back to your cheerful self after being witness to an exquisite display of performing arts.

CANCER
Meditation will be the order of the day. Your need to find inner peace is likely to push you to look inward and explore the alternate school of thought. You are likely to get inclined towards the mystical and the metaphysical. There may be a few health issues; Ganesh, however, wants you to understand that a certified doctor is still a better bet than a witch doctor.

LEO
Today, you shall have the unique ability to put up with any disparity and inequity, predicts Ganesh. Blessed with this, you can look forward to a seemingly endless number of favours and wonders later in the day.

VIRGO
The thinking cap is on your head, and a passionate pulse runs through you today. Expect a laid-back, cavalier attitude to grip you in the afternoon. Government officials will have an inspiringly assenting day. Your professionalism will shine through today.

LIBRA
It's not the Olympics, but for those associated with sports, today, you may come across the opportunity to stake your claim to fame. Also, expect the unexpected and be prepared for a lot of different turn of events in the afternoon. Ganesh can tell that you are brimming to the top with energy and enthusiasm in the evening. Keep it so, as it will help you strike a great balance between business and pleasure.

SCORPIO
A long, drab, dull day awaits you, says Ganesh. Business may not see any major loss today. Later, perhaps, you may feel lost and want to be left alone. The thought of people abandoning you may cross your mind many a times. But don't lose heart — every new day brings with it new tidings, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Ganesh says the day will be eventful and full of excitement. Differences in opinion might just crop up at work, but don't let them dampen your spirit. A romantic, candlelit dinner with your beloved could well be the high point of your day. You are set to make an impact on your near and dear ones.

CAPRICORN
For this one day, you will be the master of your own fate, assigning work and cleverly getting it done without having to move a muscle. Incidentally, you will put in efforts to get along well with those around you, and unknowingly impress many by dint of your stupendous management skills, says Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
This day will play an important part in your future! The much-needed funds for business or education may fall your way today. Your seamless happiness will reflect in the playful mood in which you will interact with your loved ones. Ganesh is satisfied with your priorities.

PISCES
A productive and fruitful day awaits you, says Ganesh. You are likely to meet up with old friends, or, pretty scandalously, hook up with an ex-lover. Expect to be the Queen Bee at social gatherings. Enjoy the buzz.

'DISRESPECTFUL' POST FEATURING BAPPI LAHIRI

Adah gets flak from netizens

Mumbai: Adah Sharma recently received backlash from netizens after she shared a 'who wore it better' post on Facebook featuring Bappi Lahiri.

The actress shared a collage of herself and the late singer-composer. On one side was a picture of Bappi wearing his trademark gold jewellery and on the other side was an image of Adah wearing multiple gold rings and chains. She captioned the post, 'Who wore it better?'

As soon as she shared the post, comments started pouring in from all sides. Netizens

claimed that the post was in poor taste. While one commented, 'Don't compare yourself with a legend just for 5 seconds of fame', another person added, 'This is so disrespectful.'

Bappi Lahiri passed away at a Mumbai hospital February 16. The doctor treating the late singer-composer revealed the cause of death as Obstructive Sleep Apnea. He said, "He died due to OSA (Obstructive Sleep Apnea) shortly before midnight."



The photograph that attracted criticism on social media

Conman Suresh 'proposed' to Jacqueline with diamond ring



Mumbai: Actress Jacqueline Fernandez recently made headlines after her name cropped up in conman Suresh Chandrashekhar's extortion case. According to the latest reports, Suresh gifted a Tiffany diamond ring to propose to Jacqueline.

After the Enforcement Directorate interrogated Jacqueline, it was revealed she received a lot of gifts worth crores from Suresh. It is also said that the duo was allegedly in a relationship. The new development suggests that he gave a diamond ring to the actress which had J and S as initials.

Earlier, Suresh got in touch with Jacqueline by using the name of the Home Minister through a spoofing call to influence her. He also used Pinky Irani to introduce himself to Jacqueline. Later after they got close enough, the conman offered Rs 10 cr to Pinky for sorting out differences between him and Jacqueline as they had a fight around Valentine's Day. Post which, he 'proposed' to Jacqueline by gifting a diamond ring.

During the ED investigation, it was also revealed that other actresses whom Suresh tried to influence through Pinky included Bhumi Pednekar, Sara Ali Khan, and Janhvi Kapoor. While some of them agreed to receive expensive gifts, others denied.

PURVA RANGA

Stage set for multilingual theatre festival in City

THE CULTURE AFICIONADOS WILL BE TREATED TO ONE BENGALI, FOUR HINDI AND TWO ODIA PLAYS DURING THE SEVEN-DAY EXTRAVAGANZA



A file photo of the play *Mu Chakara Kahuchi* staged by Alternative Rhythm Theatre, Dhenkanal

Bhubaneswar: Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi (OSNA) in collaboration with Department of Odia Language, Literature and Culture and Eastern Zonal Culture Centre of Kolkata will organise *Purva Ranga*, a seven-day multilingual theatre festival from March 1 here at Rabindra Mandap.

The culture lovers of the city will be treated to one Bengali, four Hindi and Two Odia plays during the theatre extravaganza, informed OSNA Secretary Prabodh Kumar Rath.

On the first evening, City-based theatre troupe Panchamveda will present *Biplabi Krutibas*, a play written by Parsuram Harichandan and directed by Haren Sahoo.

Similarly, Rangapat from Kolkata will stage the Bengali play *Dharmashok* written by Amit Maitra and directed by Dr Tapanjyoti Das on the second evening of the festival.

Four Hindi plays for the subsequent evenings are — *Sahid Udhham Singh* (Playwright -S Charan Singh Sindhra. Direction- Sudesh Sharma) by Chandigarh's Theatre for Theatre, *Saat Diwane 11 August 1942* (Story and direction- Mithilesh Singh) by Prayas of Patna, *Keral Ka Krantikari* (Playwright-Vishnu Prabhakar and Direction-Saheb Nitish) by Karmayogi Creative Group of

Bhopal and *Krantiveer Azad* (Playwright-Dev Fauzdar Direction-Manvendra Tripathy and Ravindra Rangadhar) by Rangamandal of Gorakhpur.

Alternative Rhythm Theatre (ART) of Dhenkanal will present *Mu Chakara Kahuchi*, a play written by Manmath Kumar Satapathy and directed by Dinesh Das.

"This festival, for the first time, will be a theme-based event and host seven dramas of different languages. All the troupes will stage plays based on the heroics of the freedom fighters," revealed OSNA Secretary Rath.

4TH FOUNDATION DAY CELEBRATION

Kalinga College of Art organises art expo



Art lovers took a look at the paintings displayed at the expo

Bhubaneswar: City-based Kalinga College of Art (KCA), in collaboration with Odisha Modern Art Gallery, organised an art exhibition on its fourth

Foundation day at the Buddha Temple here, Thursday. Attending the event as chief guest, noted sculptor Padma Vibhushan Sudarshan Sahoo

said, "Art is an integral part of the society without which one can't make progress in life." He also appreciated the works of the students displayed on the occasion.

Laxmikanta Mohapatra, Principal of BK College of Art and Craft, shared his experience with the students.

Gajendra Sahu, Gaurang Barik, Subrata Mallick, Panchanan Samal, Bikash Chowdhury, Siddhartha De and Niharika Patnaik were among other renowned painters of Odisha who attended the festival.

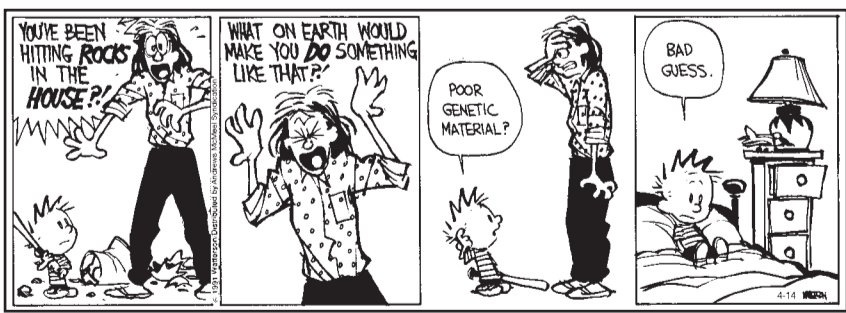
"The students are transforming their academic learning on the canvas while the college is trying to give them exposure on the contemporary global art scene," said KCA founder Tarakanta Parida.

FUN post

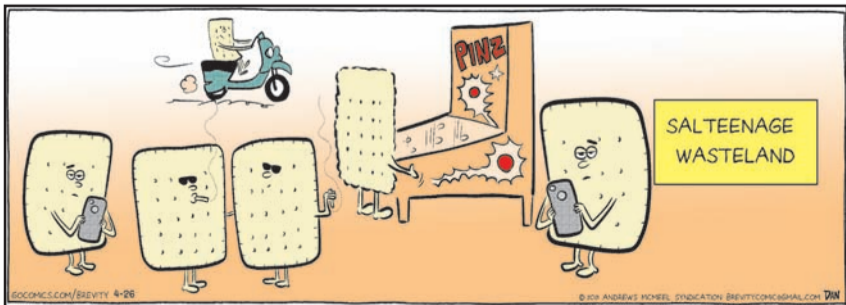
PEANUTS



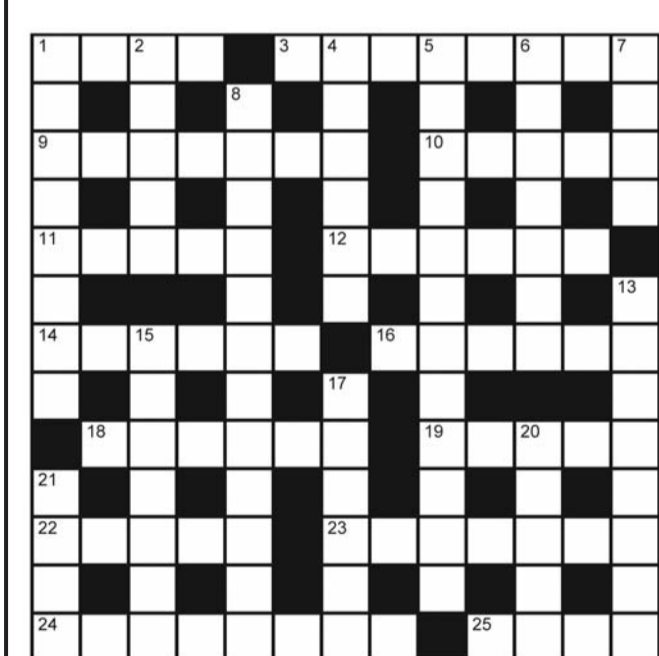
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



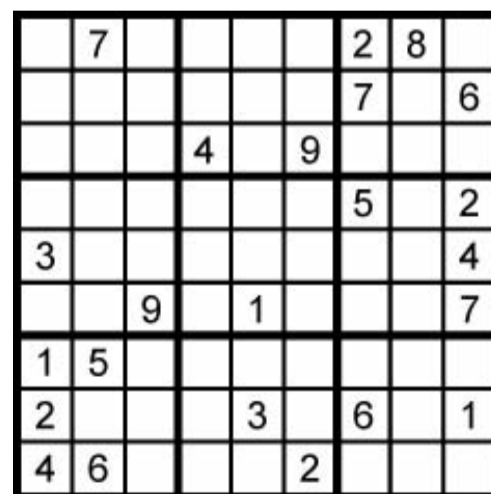
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Rubs the wrong way
 - 3 Cloudy
 - 9 Forsakes
 - 10 Melee (3-2)
 - 11 Romance, e.g.
 - 12 Free of charge
 - 14 Inherent character
 - 16 Woodland
 - 18 Smooth
 - 19 Crosswise, on deck
 - 22 Young hooter
 - 23 Provides a favour for someone
 - 24 A place to put someone you idolise?
 - 25 Desiccated
 - 5 Like warm weather in winter
 - 6 Silhouette
 - 7 Plumlike fruit
 - 8 They can be inline or quad (6,6)
 - 13 Enumerated
 - 15 Revolved
 - 17 Neighbor of Zambia
 - 20 Raring to go
 - 21 Hen housing
- Down**
- 1 Close at hand
 - 2 Mariinsky Ballet, once
 - 4 Banner or flag

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

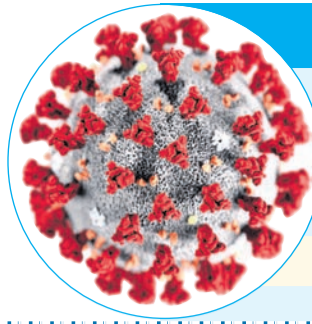


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



DEMOLITION DRIVE

Civic authorities demolish structures illegally built on government land at Patrapada in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	43,09,25,606	35,96,48,256	59,40,347
India	4,28,81,179	4,22,19,896	5,12,924
Odisha	12,83,978	12,71,843	9,045

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Fake doc: More skeletons tumble out of the closet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 24: A doctor from Assam's Guwahati Thursday approached the Mahila police here accusing Ramesh Chandra Swain, who has been arrested for cheating multiple women across the country, of duping her to a tune of Rs 23 lakh after marrying her in 2021. Sources said the ophthalmologist, 44, learnt about the fraud when she was contacted by a lady councillor of the Commissionerate Police. "She was asked to visit Bhubaneswar and file a complaint against the accused. The statements of the woman, her father and brother have been recorded under Section 164 of the CrPC," said an official.



According to the woman, it was in 2020 when she came in contact with Swain through a matrimonial website where he introduced himself as the deputy director of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Later, they tied the knot in May 2021.

The woman said Swain managed to get her debit card and withdrew Rs 23 lakh from her account without informing her. "Swain had also duped one of her staffers of Rs 12 lakh on the promise of facilitating the latter with a job at AIIMS," she said. Meanwhile, the owner of the flat in Patrapada area where Swain was staying lodged a complaint against him for executing the rent agreement with the fake name of Bibhu Prasad Swain.

With two fresh cases, the total number of cases against Swain now stands at 17. The court Thursday allowed the city police to take Swain on three more days of custodial remand. He was earlier produced before the court as his five-day remand period ended Wednesday.

Meanwhile, DCP Umashankar Dash said two special teams, comprising financial and legal experts, will be formed to probe Swain.

'Student's positive attitude will ensure altitude of his success'

Riding on the overwhelming response of students, parents and well-wishers, the Vikash Group of Institutions has made exponential progress in providing quality education to students, both from within and outside of the state. The group came out with tailor-made tools to help its students tide over the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic. D Murali Krishna, Chairman of Vikash Group of Institutions, shares with Orissa POST his future plans and strategy for the group. Excerpts from an interview



■ What are the facilities you provided during the pandemic?

We at Vikash carry the responsibility of shaping the future of this country. We thought to deal with the unforeseen situation creatively. We mobilised our resources, upgraded our faculties and brushed up our skills through training programmes. This simulated interactive sessions, discussions and virtual tours, created a fun and stress-free learning environment. Under the guidance of professional teams, we designed our own curricula for toddlers to middle-school students. Online parent-teacher meetings were organised to thank parents for their tremendous support to us. The indigenously developed VIDYA portal played a key role in the online education. Examinations were conducted, assignments were submitted and doubt clearing sessions were organised through this portal.

■ What are the major demerits of online teaching?

In comparison to face-to-face learning, online learning has certain deficiencies like lack of direct contact and absence of opportunities for collaborative learning in the peer group. This has disturbed the socialisation quotient of students. Vibrant classrooms, games and activities with peers were replaced with computer screens. Writing skills also got affected due to online learning. All these factors affected the overall development of students.

Education is not all about competence but more about motivation. We strongly believe that each child is unique and has tremendous potential to do well in life. The pandemic gave our teachers an opportunity to reach out to students with booklets, worksheets, small videos, animations and audio recordings. We provided specially-designed activities

■ How did your institute motivate students?

When we talk about education in the 21st century, there is a very important distinction. Now, students have large scope to access courses that suit their passions. Never before in history has the possibility of making a passion into a profession been so widely attainable. Apart from traditional courses, many offbeat courses are available for students where open online courses, customizable courses and virtual tools of learning have become commonplace. We at Vikash always aim at finding ways to provide diverse opportunities to our students so that they can excel in the field they want to choose. I always believe positive attitude of a student will ensure the altitude of his success.

schedule online. This brought students together and gave them exposure to various activities like morning assemblies, celebrations, career counseling and webinars.

■ What are your opinions on students of Odisha?

The students of Odisha have excelled in various fields at the national level. I strongly believe that the students of Odisha will make their presence felt in various sectors if they are provided with the right platform. We in Vikash are trying this. The success of our alumni is the best example of the potential of Odia students. Our alumni have reached the top echelons of society.

■ What is your advice for aspiring students?

When we talk about education in the 21st century, there is a very important distinction. Now, students have large scope to access courses that suit their passions. Never before in history has the possibility of making a passion into a profession been so widely attainable. Apart from traditional courses, many offbeat courses are available for students where open online courses, customizable courses and virtual tools of learning have become commonplace. We at Vikash always aim at finding ways to provide diverse opportunities to our students so that they can excel in the field they want to choose. I always believe positive attitude of a student will ensure the altitude of his success.



Odia students appeal for early evacuation from war-hit Ukraine

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda/Cuttack, Feb 24: Odia students stranded in Ukraine due to the Russian invasion have urged the Centre and the state government to evacuate them from the Eastern European country.

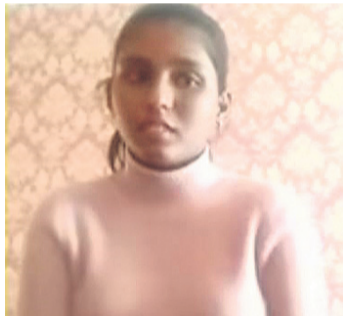
The students have contacted the Indian Embassy in Ukraine to arrange for their evacuation at the earliest.

D Alisa Kumari of the Railway Colony at Jatni is one among the Odia students stranded in the Ukrainian city of Vinnytsia. Alisa is pursuing her medical course at an institute in Vinnytsia, said her family sources.

"Around 200 Odia students are stranded in Vinnytsia due to the Russian invasion. Several explosions were reported from the city Thursday. The situation is worsening there. The Centre and the state government should take immediate steps to ensure the safe return of all Indian students," said Alisa's father D Jaykumar.

As per the available information, the city of Vinnytsia was rocked by several explosions and the residents were facing a tough situation.

"Our life is not secure here. We had contacted the Indian Embassy to arrange for our early evacuation. The embassy staff told us to move towards Western Ukraine."



D ALISA KUMARI



ARYAMAN

Our life is not secure here. We had contacted the Indian Embassy to arrange for our early evacuation. The embassy staff told us to move towards Western Ukraine. But we are unable to move anywhere due to cancellation of train and flight service. Neither the Ukrainian authorities nor the Indian Embassy has issued any advisory for our safety

D ALISA KUMARI | A STRANDED ODIA STUDENT

cuts and disruption in water supply due to the emergency situation. "We are also facing network problems to keep in touch with our family members. We appeal to the government to evacuate us at the earliest," Alisa said.

Meanwhile, Aruna Jyoti Biswal, a resident of Mahanadi Vihar area of Cuttack, has also urged the Centre and the state government to ensure the safe return of her son Aryaman Abhishek, a medical student in Ukraine. "My son has been studying in the Eastern European country for the last six years. Now, he is in the final year of his medical education. He had planned to return home February 26. The cancellation of flight service has left him stranded in the war-hit country. I am very much worried about his safety," Biswal said.

But we are unable to move anywhere due to cancellation of train and flight services. Neither the Ukrainian authorities nor the Indian Embassy has issued any advisory for our safety," said Alisa to media persons over phone.

She also informed the media persons that the residents of Vinnytsia city were facing power

SC upholds blacklisting of construction firm

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 24: The Supreme Court Thursday set aside an order of the Orissa High Court and upheld the blacklisting of Panda Infra Projects, which was executing an overbridge project near Bomikhal in Bhubaneswar that collapsed in 2017.

A two-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices MR Shah and BV Nagarathna, however, held that permanent blacklisting of the contractor firm can be "too harsh punishment" and restricted it up to five years.

"The judgment and order passed by the High Court quashing and setting aside the order dated December 12, 2017 blacklisting the contractor is hereby quashed and set aside. However, the period of blacklisting is ordered to be restricted to five years from the date of passing of the order of black-

BOMIKHAL FLYOVER COLLAPSE



listing," the bench said.

The court ruled that the Orissa High Court has erred by quashing and setting aside the blacklisting order, that too, without advertent to the serious allegations and the act of omission and commission on the part of the contractor which led to a serious incident of collapse of ten meter slab while concrete work of the deck was going on in which one person died and eleven others injured.

"It was specifically found that the safety arrangements were lacking severely in the construction work zone. It was also found that quality assurance was not emphasised as stipulated in the codes and manuals and as per the agreement. Therefore, the High Court ought to have considered the seriousness of the incident," the bench held.

The Orissa High Court had in March 2021 set aside the order passed by the state government,

banning M/s Panda Infra Projects Pvt Ltd from participating or bidding for any work to be undertaken by Government of Odisha and transacting any business with Government of Odisha, either directly in the name of proprietary bidder or indirectly under any different name or title.

It is to be mentioned here that Panda Infra Projects was awarded a contract for construction of a flyover over the railway level crossing at Bomikhal Junction in Bhubaneswar. In the year 2017, a ten meter slab of the flyover collapsed during concreting of the railway over-bridge at the level crossing, which resulted in loss of life and property. The state government had in December 12, 2017 blacklisted the construction firm with immediate effect, for intentional violation of condition of the contract leading to injuries and loss of life.

Docus can be saved through digitisation: Padhi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 24: Odia Language Literature and Culture department Additional Chief Secretary Madhusudan Padhi put emphasis upon the archives in the development of Odia literature and culture while attending the State Archives Week celebration here Thursday.

Padhi highlighted the origin and history of the Odisha State Archives at the event. "Documents can be preserved for the posterity



through digitisation," he said. Padhi also assured that the vacancies at the Odisha State Archives would be filled up at the earliest. "All of us should work together for bringing international recognition to the Paika Rebellion me-

Odia Language Literature and Culture Dept Director Ranjan Kumar Das said the Paika Rebellion has occupied a special place in the history of Odisha

morial at Khurda," Padhi said. Odia Language Literature and Culture Department Director Ranjan Kumar Das said the Paika Rebellion has occupied a special place in the history of Odisha.

STUDENTS' STIR



College students stage a demonstration at Master Canteen Square in Bhubaneswar, Thursday, to oppose offline examinations

OP PHOTO

Ex-ultra joins anti-Naxal front

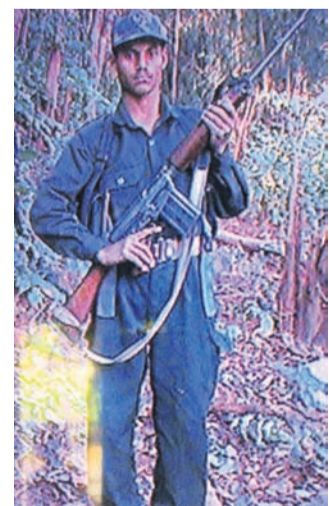
POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani, Feb 24: A former Maoist who was once dreaded by the people for unleashing violence and had surrendered before the police has joined the anti-Maoist operation, a report said.

The former ultra, Dhananjaya Gope alias Sudhir, has involved himself in the anti-Maoist operation by joining the Anti-Naxal People Peace Force (ANPPF). This was stated here in a press release issued by Bharat Bhushan, state founder of ANPPF, Wednesday.

The ANPPF is a non-governmental organisation working against the Maoist in a cover up manner. It involves itself in spreading awareness among people against the Maoists.

He said that the ANPPF has brought change in its organisational network by observing the present condition of Maoists and their counter strategy. The role



Dhananjaya Gope

has now been given to a surrendered Maoist Sudhir who will track the movement of ultras and will work against them by implementing various plans. Sudhir after his surrender was in contact with ANPPF

since a long time. He has been vested with the charge after realising his keen interest for the organisation and his leadership skills. He said that Sudhir will work under the banner of ANPPF against the dreaded Maoist outfit Peoples Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), the banned outfit of the ultras known for several attacks on security forces and people in past. Sudhir will also work towards implementation of developmental programmes in Maoist-hit areas.

Notably, Sudhir was working as the member of Andhra divisional committee of Maoists for a long time. He has over 27 cases of violence registered in his name in various states and carries a cash award of Rs 5 lakh on his head. He surrendered before the Koraput DIG, two years back. He was provided with all assistance meant for surrendered Maoists under the provisions of state government.

People's aspiration supreme in a democratic system: CS



Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra addresses judicial service probationers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 24: People are the centre of governance and their aspiration is supreme in a democratic system, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra said while addressing judicial service probationers here Thursday.

The probationers paid an exposure visit to State Lokseba Bhawan. During the visit, an interactive session was held in the state convention centre for acquainting the probationers about the structure and functioning of governance system in the state.

Inaugurating the session, the

with the basic doctrine that 'a citizen must feel that it is my government, and the government is working for me'.

Executive machinery has also the social welfare and regulatory mechanism to ensure that no citizen is left out and everybody is treated equally as per the defined regulations, said Mahapatra.

General Administration and Public Grievance Secretary Surendra Kumar advised the probationers to have inquisitiveness all through while upholding impartiality, integrity, and realistic idealism in course of their professional career.

Law secretary Pratap Kumar Patra advised probationers to work with the assumption that everybody possessed integrity unless proved otherwise.

The interactive session was held in seven sittings. The major themes discussed in these sittings included a code of conduct for government servants, Odisha government rules of business, service condition norms, major welfare programmes, developmental projects and schemes, functioning of Panchyati Raj Institutions, functioning of state secretariat, criminal justice system, 5T framework, Mo Sarkar, procedure of the State Cabinet, procedure for budget preparation, resource allocation, and utilization of the budgeted funds.

Chief Secretary said, "All four pillars of democracy work towards meeting aspirations of people. The people's representatives and the legislators are best persons to define people's aspirations as they have the direct feel of living with people. Legislation defines people's aspirations within the framework of the equality of justice, and we as public servants in the executive machinery work towards fulfilling those defined aspirations."

"We as public servants are there to provide service to people. None of us is the boss to master the people," he said. He said 'Mo Sarkar' and 5T initiative were launched

Jumbo corridors under red tape even six months after NGT fiat

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 24: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had ordered Odisha government in August, 2021 to issue a notification for the construction of elephant corridors in the state. However, no step seems to have been taken in this regard even after six months.

The NGT also insisted in its order that the government should complete construction work within the next two months.

According to sources, the state forest department said in 2010 that Odisha then had as many as 14 elephant corridors. The department had also prepared a draft notification in 2012 to send it for central government's nod, but in vain.

Human-elephant conflicts have been increasing day by day. At least 771 elephants and 881 human beings have died in last ten years due to the conflicts, a government source said.

The pachyderms usually cover a distance of around 25 kilometres in a day in search of food and water. The animals consume about 150 kilograms of leaves and 100 litres of water every day. However, the jumbos use a convenient passage for years together.

As per state forest department, four out of 14 elephant corridors are located on inter-state and the rest 10 are on inter-district borders. The four inter-state corridors include Badampahar (Mayurbhanj)-Dhoba Dhobani (Jharkhand), Badampahar (Mayurbhanj)-Karida (Jharkhand), Deuli (West Bengal)-Suliaapada (Mayurbhanj) and Karo (Keonjhar)-Karampada (Jharkhand).

Similarly, the inter-district jumbo corridors are Simlipal-Hradagarh-Kuldiha, Telkoi-Pallahara, Jiridamali-Anantpur, Kanheijena-Anantpur, Buguda-Central RF (Nayagarh division), Nuagaon-Baruni, Tala-Kholagarh, Barapahar-Tarabha-Kantamal, Kotagarh-Chandrapur and Karlapat-Urladani.

The 14 jumbo corridors cover a total area of around 870.61 square kilometres and are 420.8 kilometres in length. Regarding to this, PCCF (Wildlife) Sashi Paul said, "Fourteen elephant corridors have already been identified in Odisha. However, the state government's notification has not been issued yet."

A wildlife expert and secretary of an outfit named 'Odisha Vanyaprani Samiti' Biswajit Mohanty said, the NGT has already decreed over the elephant corridor issue, but the state government has been delaying to execute the tribunal order and issue a notification."

Rain likely in several dists

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 24: The regional centre of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) here Thursday predicted rainfall activities in parts of several districts of the state over the next two days.

The weatherman also issued yellow warning for as many as 10 districts, including Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Angul, Dhenkanal, Jajpur and Balasore for Friday. However, there will be no large change in the minimum (night) temperature over the districts of Odisha for the next four to five days, it said.

"Light to moderate rain or thundershower is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Bargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Deogarh, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj till 8.30am of February 25. Besides, dry weather is likely to prevail

over the remaining districts," it said.

Issuing yellow warning, it predicted that thunderstorm with lightning is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Sundargarh, Deogarh, Sambalpur, Angul, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, Bhadrak and Balasore from 8.30am of February 25 to 8.30am of February 26.

During the period, light to moderate rain or thundershower is very likely to occur at a few places over the districts of Sundargarh, Deogarh, Sambalpur, Angul, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, Bhadrak and Balasore and at one or two places over the rest districts of north Odisha, Sonepur, Boudh, Kandhamal, Nayagarh, Khordha, Puri and Ganjam. Besides, dry weather is very likely to prevail over the rest districts.



Voters queue up at a polling station at Balakati to exercise their franchise during the final phase of the three-tier panchayat election, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Zero Cov death in state for 1st time in a month

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 24: Odisha recorded no new COVID-19 fatality Thursday after more than a month, while 339 more people tested positive for the virus, pushing the tally to 12,83,978, the health department said.



The coronavirus death toll stood at 9,045. The state had January 12 reported no fresh fatality, it said. Odisha had logged 342 single-day cases and nine deaths Wednesday. It now has 3,862 active cases, and 12,71,018 people have recovered from the disease so far, including 797 in the last 24 hours, the department said.

The coastal state conducted 54,396 sample tests since Wednesday, it said, adding, the daily positivity rate is at 0.62 per cent.

STPI-Bhub inks pacts for nurturing state start-ups

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 24: The Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), Bhubaneswar Thursday inked separate pacts with National Aluminium Company Limited (Nalco) and Science & Technology department for promoting start-ups.

Sources said the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between STPI-Bhubaneswar and Nalco aims at nurturing start-ups and innovators at the Electropreneur Park in the City, a Centre of Entrepreneurship (CoE) of STPI, specialising in Industry 4.0 and emerging technologies like cybersecurity and advanced analytics.

Nalco would extend mentoring by experienced industry professionals of the company, extend test-bed for testing of solutions developed, provide need-based funding and seed capital support to the selected start-ups and help connect the solutions developed to the market, it was learnt.

STPI-Bhubaneswar director Manas Panda and Nalco GGM (R&D) Subrat Kar signed the doc-

The pacts will be a boon to start-ups, innovators and entrepreneurs working in Electronics System Design & Manufacturing (ESDM), industry 4.0 and biotechnology domains, says E&IT Secretary Manoj Mishra

uments on behalf of respective organisations.

On the other hand, the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the STPI-Bhubaneswar and the Science & Technology department aims at promoting biotech start-ups through the Bio-Innovation Grant Scheme.

Under the arrangement, selected biotech start-ups will be provided with funding, mentoring, prototype development assistance, product launching and go to market guidance.

STPI-Bhubaneswar Director Manas Panda and Science & Technology department deputy director Puspasree Puhan signed the documents on behalf of the respective agencies.

The pacts were signed in presence of STPI director general Arvind Kumar, who is on a two-day visit to Odisha.

Highlighting the contribution of STPI towards the software and IT services exports from India, Kumar expressed satisfaction that the pioneer agency will have eight centres in Odisha, the highest in any state.

E&IT Secretary Manoj Mishra said the pacts will be a boon to the start-ups, innovators and entrepreneurs working in Electronics System Design & Manufacturing (ESDM), Industry 4.0 and Biotechnology domains.

Nalco Director (Projects & Technical) Manasa Prasad Mishra highlighted how the start-up community as well as the ecosystem would be benefited from the coming together of organisations from different business domains and expertise.

Tribal women promote millets from farm to plate

■ *These millet-based enterprises can become a comprehensive solution in addressing malnutrition, unemployment and in motivating farmers to increase their millet cultivation area, which was once reduced due to aggressive promotion of cash crops, claim civil society organisations facilitating the implementation of OMM at the grassroots*

AGENCIES

Keonjhar, Feb 24: The Odisha Millets Mission (OMM), a flagship initiative of the state government, has supported women self-help groups (WSHG) to set up 76 'millet tiffin centres' at various community locations in 13 tribal-dominated districts.

The initiative has fortified the strength and conscientiousness of women collectives by setting up primary processing and post-harvesting units for millets in rural areas.

These millet-based enterprises can become a comprehensive solution in addressing malnutrition, unemployment and in motivating farmers to increase their millet

cultivation area, which was once reduced due to aggressive promotion of cash crops, claim civil society organisations facilitating the implementation of OMM at the grassroots.

To revive millets as "Nutri-Cereals" in the state, OMM has prioritised creating awareness about production, productivity, consumption and marketing of millet produce and including millets in the state nutrition programme.

Awareness-building activities were organised, such as food festivals, cooking competitions, and celebrating local millet food cultures. Participatory training programmes were also conducted for WSHGs on millet recipes and millet enterprises.

Millet Tiffin Centres

Millet tiffin centres were launched in rural areas to create a demand for millet recipes and ensure access to diet diversity that is locally acceptable and highly nutritious. The WSHGs entirely manage these centres. They prepare a range of millet-based hot cooked items and ready to cook products.

"We prepare pakoda, samosa, jalebi, idli, vada, kheer and kakara from ragi and little millets," Dasmati Sunani, President, Dakua WSHG in Sundargarh's Rajgangpur block, said.

"Initially, we had no idea how people would react to our tiffin centre. However, today, we are happy. The demand for our food (millet recipes) is growing. Last



month we earned around Rs 25000 as net profit," she added.

Phulbasa Barla, Dakua WSHG member, recalled that initially their tiffin centres faced some resistance from locals. "For years, it has been unheard of for women from our village to be involved in businesses. However, gradually, things are changing. Today, we are more organised as a group, and people respect us and love our food," beamed Barla.

In Sundargarh, six millet tiffin centres were established between December 2021 and January 2022. An additional 21 such centres have been approved, and the memorandum of understanding was signed among the WSHG, Project Director, Agricultural Technology Management Agency and District Social Welfare Officer. To set up these tiffin centres, the OMM has sponsored Rs.30,000 for each WSHG.

Millet Shakti Cafe

Efforts have also been made to promote millet consumption in urban areas. For instance, in the collectorate campus of Keonjhar district, a Millet Shakti Cafe was established in October 2021. Ma Mission Shakti Women Federation manages the cafe, which offers different food items made from millets such as biscuits, mixture, khurma, rose cake, laddoo and eight grain varieties, including ragi flour, sorghum flour, little and barnyard millets. The cafe also provides tea, coffee and snacks to attract customers.

"We earn around Rs 50,000 as profit per month," said Suprabha Mahanto, a federation member. As the demand for millet food recipes has been growing in the district, around 200-300 customers regularly visit this cafe per day. To expand our customer base, we are also providing home delivery serv-

ices," added Mahanto.

In Keonjhar, about 30 years ago, millet cultivation and consumption used to be widespread, recalled a retired agriculture officer in the district. "Earlier, millets were known as poor man's food," said Nalini Murmu, Secretary, Maa Padmaja Farmers Producer Company Limited. She added that people preferred commercial crops like paddy and replaced their traditional mixed method of cultivation with the mono-cropping system.

"OMM has revived people's traditional millet-based diet, which is climate-resilient and boosts immunity," highlighted Shishir Kumar Sarangi, former project coordinator, Mission Shakti, Keonjhar. He played an instrumental role in setting up the Millet Shakti Cafe. "This is a first of its kind initiative in the state. We are hopeful that more such cafes will be established in future," he said.

In the state capital Bhubaneswar, a similar initiative has been taken up by Shaktimayee Ward Women Federation members. They have established a 'Millet Outlet' in Kurshi Bhawan a range of packaged millet food items is available such as ragi and sorghum flour, ragi cookies, ragi laddoos, ragi mixture, khurma and mudki. The federation earns around Rs.3000-4000 per day from selling various millet products.

Expansion of OMM

Initially, the OMM was launched in 30 blocks in seven districts and subsequently scaled up to 84 blocks in 15 districts, covering more than

1.2 lakh farmers with 52 thousand hectares under sustainable agronomic practices. Recently, the state government has allocated Rs 2800 crore to expand the OMM to 142 blocks in 2022.

Considering its visible impact, the OMM model has received numerous recognitions from other state governments and credible institutions. Niti Aayog has pledged to facilitate the inclusion of millets in the Integrated Child Development Services, Mid-day Meal and Public Distribution Services in different states as part of Poshan Abhiyan as per the learning of OMM.

"Odisha Millet Mission is a replicable initiative," said Abhilaksh Likhri, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India. In order to popularise millets across the state and national level, there is a need to engage with multiple stakeholders, including doctors, chefs and nutritionists. Also, he emphasised that it was essential to strengthen millet farming policies and institutional interventions that are inclusive and market-oriented.

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2023 as the 'International Year of Millets'. In India, the recent announcement during the 2022-23 Union Budget of supporting post-harvest value addition, enhancing consumption and branding millets further heightens the crucial role OMM could play in reinforcing the supply chain and promoting millets from farm to plate.

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SHORT TAKES

Jajpur villagers boycott polls

Jajpur: Alleging that basic facilities and welfare schemes are eluding them, people of Bada Baunsaanta village in Sribantapur panchayat under Rasulpur block in Jajpur district boycotted elections Thursday. According to reports, 406 voters were supposed to cast their votes at booth no-18 and 19. They alleged that Bada Baunsaanta was under Jabara panchayat before 2017. After delimitation, the village was brought under Sribantapur panchayat. However, they have been facing problems of communication, drinking water, housing and old-age pension.

Missing names in list spark tension

Phulbani: Tension flared up at booth no 8 and 9 in Budaguda area under Baliguda police limits of Kandhamal district during the final phase of panchayat elections Thursday, when some voters found their names missing in the voter list. The voters insisted on exercising their franchise and warned the polling parties against leaving the booths. The Baliguda SDPO, IIC and officials from Daringbadi block rushed to the spot and tried to convince the agitating voters.

Youth held for rape

Berhampur: Sadar police here Thursday arrested a youth on charge of raping a girl on the pretext of marriage. The accused was identified as K Mahesh Reddy, 21, of Jagabandhu Bada Reddika Sahi under Bada Bazaar police limits. On the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim, a case was registered. The accused and the survivor were medically examined while the former was remanded to judicial custody after the court rejected his bail plea.

Safety of students stuck in Ukraine worries parents

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 24: Russia's invasion of Ukraine has unsettled scores of people back in India and particularly in Odisha with many of their kin now stranded in the war-torn country, a report said.

The Indian Embassy in Ukraine had directed the Indian citizens to leave for the country from February 15 but many of them including students pursuing higher studies in engineering and medical science are now stuck in Ukraine with Russia launching a full-scale attack on the European country. As many as 30 students of Silk city studying engineering and medical science are still stranded in Ukrainian capital of Kyiv and Kharkiv city. This was stated here by Asit Mishra, an MBBS student and resident of Berhampur, who returned to the city from Ukraine February 16.

Currently, social media is the only mode of communication with the stranded Indian citizens and students. Lipi Mohapatra, daughter of Umakanta Mohapatra at Vijay Vihar in Berhampur, has taken shelter along with 200 other Indian citizens at the Indian Embassy at Kyiv. Lipi and others were expected to return to India Thursday but left stranded after Kyiv was declared a no flying zone due to the Russian military strike.

When contacted, Collector Vijaya Amruta Kulange said they have no details on the exact number of students and people of Ganjam district stranded in Ukraine but have asked all the 23 tehsildars to collect the details and submit a report to him soon.

Since then, they have been under the cover of Indian Embassy. It is now testing times for the family back in Odisha as the Ukraine airspace has now been closed.

Family members of Lipi are worried about her safety after they heard about the Russian attack on Ukraine. She has been pursuing her medical degree at Kyiv. On the other hand, two other students - D Adarsh Patra and Biswambhar Badatya - have been successful in leaving Kyiv Wednesday, family members said.

The two will arrive in India in a Turkish Airline flight and will reach Bhubaneswar airport by 5pm, Friday.

Over 20 students from Rourkela, eight from Jharsuguda and one student each from Soro and Bhadrak have been stranded in Ukraine. Sangita Mohapatra of Karampur (Soro) and Madhumita Nayak of Bhatpada in Bhadrak have been stranded in Ukraine.

Another medical student, Subhalaxmi Baral of Alati village in Ramachandrapur of Keonjhar district is also stuck in Ukraine.



Asit Mishra Adarsh Patra Biswambhar Badatya

HAWK'S EYE



BSF jawans conducted patrolling in Balmela reservoir under Chittrakonda block in Malkangiri district amid fears of Maoist menace during the final phase of three-tier panchayat elections that ended peacefully Thursday

Drone cams to protect wildlife, minerals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jaleswar, Feb 24: The Forest department of Balasore will deploy drones in Jaleswar area to keep track of the movement of elephants and to keep tabs on timber and mining mafia in the forests. A pilot project has been launched in Raibania range under Jaleswar block.

According to sources, Raibania is a forested pocket sharing borders with Mayurbhanj, and West Midnapur & Nayagram of West Bengal. Every year, elephant herds from Similipal and Dalma reserve forest of Jharkhand stray into Raibania area and cause massive destruction of crops and properties.

The forested pockets of Raibania range like Baradia, Ranganatia, Patharshola, Dangarapada, Dudhiashola, Ambatumba and Janhiphulia are home to a wide range of wildlife such as elephants, leopards, deer, barking deer, birds and reptiles. The Forest department, which has been grappling with staff crunch, often fails to track the movement of wild animals and ensure their safety. Deaths and poaching of wild animals often go unreported in vast forested pockets. Sometimes, casualties come to the fore days after the mishaps.



A REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

Keeping these factors in view, the department has launched a pilot project with use of drone cameras at Baradia a couple of days ago. After successful execution of the project, it may be replicated in other forested areas of

the district and state. Balasore DFO Bimal Prasanna Acharya, who has inaugurated the project, said people of Raibania will get benefits of knowing in advance about the arrival of wild animals in their peripheries.

"Especially, the movement of elephants will be tracked through drone cameras to alert people," he added.

As for the pilot project, assistant conservator of forests (ACF) Sushant Kumar Jena said with use of drone cameras, illegal activi-

PILOT PROJECT IN RAIBANIA

The Forest department, which has been grappling with staff crunch, often fails to track the movement of wild animals and ensure their safety

Deaths and poaching of wild animals often go unreported in vast forested pockets. Sometimes, casualties come to the fore days after mishaps

Keeping these factors in view, the department has launched a pilot project with use of drone cameras at Baradia a couple of days ago

ties like timber smuggling, unauthorised extraction of minor minerals murram and stone in Raibania can be checked. The people involved in such illegal activities can be identified and action would be taken against them, he asserted.

Minor hangs self for biryani

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sajanagarh, Feb 24: A 13-year-old boy committed suicide Wednesday night as his father failed to bring 'biryani' for him.

The deceased was identified as Satyabrata Mahana, a Class VIII student and son of Manoranjan Mahana in Gobindpur village of Balasore district. As per sources, Manoranjan could not brought 'biryani' for his son as he was contesting for the ward member post and



hence busy in poll campaign. Manoranjan is working as a security guard in a private company. Sources said Manoranjan's son had been asking him for 'biryani' for the last

two days but the former could not meet his demand. The minor again pestered his father to bring his favourite dish for him Wednesday but none listened to his wish. Enraged, he hanged himself with a napkin.

Family members rushed him to Khantapada hospital in a critical condition where doctors pronounced him brought dead. Police handed over the body to his family members after conducting a post-mortem at the district headquarters hospital.

BJP worker attacked in Udala

POST NEWS NETWORK

Udala, Feb 24: In an incident of post-poll violence, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) worker was attacked allegedly by some Biju Janata Dal (BJD) workers Wednesday night in Udala area of Mayurbhanj district.

The injured BJP worker was identified as Rasananda Sahu. BJP workers met the local IIC Thursday and demanded immediate arrest of the accused.

In the complaint, the BJP workers alleged that three BJD workers brutally

attacked Rasananda while he was going with a paddy-laden truck at Canal Chhak Wednesday night. Rasananda's condition is critical and was admitted to a hospital, said sources.

The BJP workers also alleged that Rasananda, who was looking after campaign of party's candidate for zilla parishad zone-2, had been offered money to convince the BJP's ZP candidate to withdraw his nomination. However, BJD leader Srinath Soren dismissed BJP's allegation as fabricated. The persons involved in the case have no links with the BJD, he asserted.

Two drown in village pond

KEONJHAR:

A woman and her 10-year old granddaughter drowned while bathing in a pond at Bhejidih under Nayakote police station Thursday. The deceased were identified as Amrita Dangua, 56, and her granddaughter Rashmita Dangua. Sources said both went to the village pond to take bath around 2pm but did not return. Later, family members and villagers spotted the bodies floating in the pond and informed the police, who reached the spot and started an investigation. Nayakote IIC Swarna Hembram said the deaths were caused due to drowning which has been confirmed in autopsy report.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. ST-OT-ORH-RAILNET-BBS-263, DL21.02.2022

Name of Work : (i) PROPOSED REPAIR AND RENOVATION OF OFFICER'S REST HOUSE AT RAIL KUNJ, CHANDRASEKHARPUR, BHUBANESWAR. (ii) PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW OFFICER'S REST HOUSE BLOCK (06 SUITES) AT RAIL KUNJ, CHANDRASEKHARPUR, BHUBANESWAR. (iii) PROVISION OF HIGH SPEED RAIL-NET CONNECTION IN GSD MANCHESWAR. (iv) PROVISION OF TELECOM FACILITIES AT PROPOSED NEW 8 NOS. OF QUARTERS (TYPE-V) IN ONE BLOCK AT RAIL KUNJ, CHANDRASEKHARPUR, BHUBANESWAR.

Tender Value (₹) : 29,75,015.12, EMD (₹) : 59,500/-

Bidding Start Date : 01.03.2022

Date and time of closing of tender : 1100 hrs of 15.03.2022.

No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

NOTE : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender.

Complete information including e-tender documents is available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.

Divisional Railway Manager (Signal & Telecom) PR-840/M/21-22 Khurda Road

Woman dies at polling booth

SAINTALA: In a tragic incident, a woman died just before casting her vote at booth no-8 in Lachut UP School of Kermeli panchayat under this block in Bolangir district, Thursday. The deceased was identified as Gulapi Mahakur, 40, wife of Satyanarayan Mahakur, of Banaras village. She received the ballot papers from the polling officer and was going to cast her vote when she collapsed. She was rushed to the Saintala community health centre (CHC) where doctors pronounced her dead. On being informed, local tehsildar Surendra Nath Meher reached the booth with police and later visited the hospital. The deceased is from a poor family and is survived by three children including one daughter. Locals have demanded government assistance to the bereaved family members.

WOMEN SPECIAL



Women queued up before a pink booth in Umerkote area of Nabarangpur district during the final phase of panchayat elections Thursday

Viral audio: BJP leader threatens block VC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Feb 24: An audio clip of a BJP leader threatening the vice chairperson (VC) of Jujumara block in Sambalpur went viral, Thursday.

In the audio, BJP leader Debendra Mohapatra was heard threatening block vice chairman Niranjan Panda. Mohapatra had made the call to Panda on one of his supporters' cell phone.

"Some of my supporters have been beaten up in your presence. Messing up with us will cost you badly. Our supporters are being framed in false cases," the audio clip said. Panda has filed a case against Mohapatra.

Meanwhile, two supporters of Mohapatra - Subhasish Mirdha and Srikant Pradhan - have also filed a case against Panda and some of his supporters, alleging attack on them.

Mafia raise hackles of forest protectors in Keonjhar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Feb 24: Members of four women self-help groups (SHGs), who have been protecting Balisahi village forest in Keonjhar Sadar range over years, are now a worried lot as people from outside their area have been damaging the jungle.

The SHG members lamented that depletion of the forest cover has emerged as a big threat to the wildlife living in the forest.

According to sources, the forest is spread over 15 hectares of land and is rich in precious trees like sal, mahua and other timber species.

"The forest provided a good habitat for a variety of wildlife like bears, monkeys, reptiles, apart from maintaining ecological balance in the area," said the members of Maa



Some people had sneaked into the forest recently and were cutting trees. On being informed, members of the SHGs rushed to the forest but when they reached the spot, the timber smugglers had fled the scene

They alleged that some people of Baxibargaon, Balabhadrapur, Kamalanali and others are involved in the timber smuggling, but the Forest department has failed to act against the timber mafia

Laxmi, Maa Mangala, Maa Subhadra and Maa Laxmi (B) SHGs.

Some people had sneaked into the forest Tuesday and were cutting trees. On being informed, members of the SHGs rushed to the forest but

when they reached the spot, the timber smugglers had fled the scene.

"Some timber mafia have set their sight on the verdant forest. Gradually, trees are being cut away when we are away from the area," they rued.

They alleged that some people of Baxibargaon, Balabhadrapur, Kamalanali and others are involved in the timber smuggling, but the Forest department has failed to act against the timber mafia.

The women also alleged that whenever they confront the timber mafia, the latter threaten them or abuse them. They urged the divisional forest officer to take steps for protection of the forest. When contacted, range officer Bidyadhar Sahu said the matter will be taken seriously and immediate measures will be taken for the protection of the forest.

National Highways Authority of India
(Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Govt. of India)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Announcement of Award for acquisition of land for construction of National Highway for Land owners/ persons interested therein and payment of compensation amount.

Kind attention of all landowners/ interested persons is invited to the Notification dated 27.12.2019 issued under Section 3A of the NH Act, 1956 for acquisition of land for the building/ construction of a National Highway and the Notification dated 25.09.2020 issued under Section 3 D of the NH Act, 1956 and published in the following newspapers.

Sl. No.	Notification	Names of Newspapers in which published	Date of newspapers
1	Section 3 A	SAMBAD & ORISSA POST	22.01.2020
2	Section 3 D	SAMBAD & ORISSA POST	08.11.2020

It is informed that the undersigned has announced the Award in respect of the said land under Section 3 G of the NH Act, 1956 vide order dated 17.03.2021.

The land acquiring agency (NHA) has placed the requisite amount of compensation at the disposal of the undersigned. Notices are being issued to the concerned landowners/ interested persons as required under Section 3 E of the NH Act, 1956.

Accordingly, all the concerned landowners/ interested persons are hereby informed/ notified through this additional public notice that the compensation amount is hereby offered to all the landowners. Further, it may be noted that:

- The compensation amount in respect of all such landowners, who have already submitted their Bank Account details, is being credited to their respective Bank Accounts through RTGS;
- The landowners, who have not submitted their Bank Accounts details, may do so immediately in the office of the undersigned and the amount shall be credited to their accounts within one week of the receipt of such Bank Account Details;
- All other claimants entitled to receive the compensation amount may collect their amount of compensation from the office of the undersigned on any working day between 10 AM to 5.30 PM within a period of 60 days.

It may further be noted that since the amount of compensation has been determined and tendered to the concerned landowners/ persons interested therein through this additional public notice, any failure to collect the compensation amount would be to their account and the amount shall be deemed to have been paid on expiry of this period of sixty days from the date of publication of this notice.

The landowners/ persons interested therein are further called upon to surrender or deliver the possession of the subject land to the undersigned, failing which the possession of subject land will be taken with police assistance on expiry of the period of 60 days.

Sd/-
Tahasildar-cum-CALA, Bharatmata Pariyojana, Dasamantpur
Office of the Tahasildar, Dasamantpur, Dist- Koraput
Date : 25/02/2022

BUILDING A NATION, NOT JUST ROADS

FOCUS SOCIETY

MEDICALISATION OF DEATH



"The unbalanced and contradictory picture of death and dying" tells the tale of a society lost in modern medicine and unmindful of where this is taking us. It turns death into a scary prospect, and makes for not a happy way to go

networks of Kerala support people dying, caring and grieving, and call for conversations on death, dying, and grief. These are difficult conversations. Not all doctors are equipped to help or advise here. Only well-trained palliative care professionals can respond effectively by looking for a balance and guide family members, who themselves would be in a state of confusion and struggling to respond and cope with the situation.

Rather obviously, the value of time increases dramatically when someone suffers from an incurable disease. Compared to a young person with a reasonable chance of living to a life of average expectancy of 70 years, every hour is so much more precious for the person with only days, months or years to live. At this stage, any life-prolonging treatment has to be balanced against the quality of life.

The person has to be treated for pain and any other distressing symptoms and made comfortable with palliative care. Anxiety, depression, anger, guilt or other emotional issues need to be brought out into the open and resolved. The person's time needs to be filled with love, dignity and meaning.

As one of the writers here (Dr MR Rajagopal) who has contributed to the Lancet Commission report writes in that document, death is not always benevolent and beautiful. "When the physical suffering in people with diseases like cancer was extreme, no philosophising, compassion, or companionship helped enough. The suffering was excruciating. People just stood watching helplessly... (yet) the dying person and the family members were never alone in their suffering or grief." Pain relief comes from palliative care, but comfort comes from family care. These are lessons that can hopefully be taken to heart and can spread across India, where the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the horrors of separation at the time of death.

Dr MR Rajagopal is Chairman of Pallium India and Director of the Trivandrum Institute of Palliative Sciences. Jagdish Rattanani is a journalist and a faculty member at SPJIMR.

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As the pandemic recedes, some memories will not. One of the more terrible outcomes of COVID-19 was the isolation of those infected, often in a hospital ward, amid unfamiliar surroundings and with unknown people, without a loved one to touch, talk and comfort. For every death recorded as a pandemic statistic, many more were emotionally distressed, indeed torn apart. Families continue to live with memories that will haunt them for a lifetime, of not being present at the time of death of their loved ones.

But even before the pandemic, this kind of a death, in a remote location, amid the cold steel of an ICU bed and away from home, has been invading society. It has in fact become so common these days that the Lancet Commission studied it and put out a report with the rather thought-provoking title: The Value of Death. The report dated January 31, 2022, said: "Death and dying have moved from a family and community setting to primarily the domain of health systems. Futile or potentially inappropriate treatment can continue into the last hours of life. The roles of families and communities have receded as death and dying have become unfamiliar and skills, traditions, and knowledge are lost. Death and dying have become unbalanced in high-income countries, and increasingly in low-and-middle-income countries..."

What Lancet is bringing to light is precisely what palliative care teams have been struggling to highlight - that a highly medicalised death, a lingering pushed by modern technology and specialised and skilled doctors mandated to "do everything" often means prolonging the inevitable. This comes at a huge cost not only in terms of medical bills but also in terms of comfort of the patient. It robs the dying and their loved ones of dignity and of opportunities for quiet moments together, reflections, apologies, blessings and the peace of having been close as they part for ever. The critical pre-requisite for all this to happen is the ability to accept death as the inevitable consequence of life.

We had this ability, not too long ago. As recently as two generations

back, people used to be familiar with death. People used to die in their homes. Elders were familiar with the signs of dying, the changing nature of breathing, the limbs getting cold and sometimes rattling in the throat. Extended families used to pray together, achieving not only some spiritual solace, but also experiencing togetherness and the value of a fond farewell.

This has changed and is changing for more and more people. It makes for a paradox in the modern medical system, as pointed out by the Lancet report, which noted: "While many people are overtreated in hospitals with families and communities relegated to the margins, still more remain undertreated, dying of preventable conditions and without access to basic pain relief."

"The unbalanced and contradictory picture of death and dying" tells the tale of a society lost in modern medicine and unmindful of where this is taking us. It turns death into a scary prospect, and makes for not a happy way to go.

The change from dying at home to dying in a hospital has been swift and is of fairly recent origin. Even in the 1990s, intensive care was meant for those with a reasonable chance of getting back to a reasonable quality of life. That changed. Healthcare became the healthcare industry. It became high-tech. The

industry created protocols. If the oxygen saturates or the sodium level drops, as it inevitably has to in a dying person, the person is to be shifted to the ICU. This of course means separation from the family. The person is covered with tubes so that even during the five minutes of entry into the intensive care unit, the family is afraid to touch the person. There is no longer any healing touch nor any healing words that the family can carry as memories for the rest of their lives.

There is of course no question that what is treatable needs to be treated. Hospitalisation cannot be ruled out as a norm - that would be disastrous. But it does call for a careful assessment of the health condition of the patient so that hospital is not the unconsidered, natural and inevitable destination for everyone who is ailing and has little time left.



Dr MR Rajagopal & Jagdish Rattanani

THE CHANGE FROM DYING AT HOME TO DYING IN A HOSPITAL HAS BEEN SWIFT AND IS OF FAIRLY RECENT ORIGIN



Nothing, not even the darkest falsehood can stop the ultimate triumph of Truth.

THE MOTHER

Lessons from Dholpur

In 2017, Rajasthan's Dholpur district launched a programme titled 'Udaan' to educate adolescents about their sexual health and quickly ran into some stiff opposition. The immediate reactions were captured in remarks like: "You are spoiling our girls..." or "there is no need of teaching them everything in such detail," and "we won't allow this." Such responses were quite common. One of the block coordinators reported that they were threatened by school faculty and the local community. Many sessions could not be conducted as a result.

The process of change in the area of sexual health was slow but persistence, persuasion, empathetic listening and constant counselling were able to build a safe zone to deliver some of the learnings. As classes began, it also helped address doubts, clear myths, and transform resistance to acceptance. As one of the schoolteachers who had initially opposed to the programme said later: "I had my reservations as these sessions were in (graphic) detail. I thought it will mislead the students and girls might get active sexually. But when I attended the sessions, I understood how important it is to learn about these issues. We ignore adolescent health, but learnings in a school setting helped make our students future ready."

The entire Dholpur school district covered a total of 282 secondary and senior secondary schools to reach out to about 78,000 adolescents.

Dholpur is a less known success story but it holds important lessons for the rest of India and offers ideas and pathways which can help break barriers and broach a topic that is sensitive and often considered not desirable in the context of India and prevailing attitudes on sexual health.

The importance of sexual and reproductive health education for adolescents cannot be stressed enough as this is a crucial but extremely confusing time for young people. Investing in their health and wellbeing has the potential to shape their future. It is in recognition of this that the Central government launched the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (National Adolescent Health Programme) in 2014 hoping to comprehensively address the health and development of 243 million adolescents (the population then). The objectives included improved nutrition and improved knowledge, attitudes and behaviour in relation to sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Not much has been heard of the programme since then. But the government of Rajasthan has set out an example that India can and must follow.

Let us consider how Rajasthan achieved this. Young people between the ages of 10 and 19 years comprise about 23% of the Rajasthan population. Adolescence is a phase that is marked by both biological changes and mental maturation, both of which need attention. The state government simultaneously focused on their mental and physical health. Small investments at this critical time like this carry the potential to shape an entire life of the person and of a nation eventually.

In the area of health, the government has implemented a number of structural interventions under the RKSK. These include, for example, the launch of adolescent focused "Ujala" health clinics, the weekly distribution of iron and folic acid supplements, and ensuring the easy availability of free sanitary pads. However, while these structural interventions are very important, their impact can be fully experienced only if they are coupled with well-designed behavioural interventions which specifically focus on the sexual and reproductive health of these young people because often, even when these health services become available, their utilisation is low because of, among other things, social norms. Evidence shows that the knowledge levels of even the older adolescent regarding sexual and reproductive health issues is low and often inaccurate, and that behavioural interventions have the power to not only inform but also change behaviour relating to early pregnancies, gender norms, and sexual health in general. This time-period is associated with several life-altering changes in the lives of these young people. If their concerns are not properly understood and addressed this can lead to inappropriate behaviour, depression, acceptance of sexual abuse, and even attempted suicide.

While there are several venues at which these interventions may be delivered, schools represent a safe, trusted, and effective space within which they can be offered. Before schools can be chosen as an effective location for communicating these messages there are, however, a few barriers that need to be overcome, the most important one being the concerns of teachers, parents, and the community at large at how appropriate this type of education would be for these young minds and what effect it is likely to have. It is well known and reported that programmes like these do not lead to, for example, increased sexual activity but instead, by addressing their natural curiosity in a matter-of-fact way, they take away some of the fascination with these issues that can lead to inappropriate experimentation and behaviours. This evidence needs to be shared with caregivers.

High quality school-based sexual health education programmes are taught by well-trained teachers and school staff, using strategies that are relevant and engaging for all students. They can help connect students to healthcare services, and effectively engage parents and the community. There are examples of successful school-based programmes right here in India. Arpan, a Mumbai-based NGO, for example, working with teachers as educators, offers an effective Personal Safety Education programme in about 250 schools and shelter homes in three districts of Maharashtra. Evaluations have pointed out that the internalisation of these messages by the children receiving them, boosted their self-esteem and feelings of comfort with their own bodies and their personal safety. Dholpur remains a classic study in the same context, achieved with the help of the non-profit, Manjari Foundation.

The boys and girls who have participated in this programme have reported a higher sense of comfort with the natural changes occurring in their bodies, reduced feelings of inadequacy and depression, and a stronger sense of empowerment and agency allowing them to express their views more forcefully and with greater conviction. When asked, one of the boys said: "I learnt that my sister cannot live on my leftover vegetables and pickles. The programme widened my perspective."

That may be a good message to take to all our young boys and girls across India.

The writer is a former director of NABARD and former India Country Director of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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Nachiket Mor

High quality school-based sexual health education programmes are taught by well-trained teachers and school staff, using strategies that are relevant and engaging for all students

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

NDA carries on UPA legacy



Shivaji Sarkar

THE NDA IS TO BE FAULTED FOR CONTINUING WITH A LIBERALISATION THAT REALLY NEVER WAS EXCEPT FOR UPA'S CHOSEN BUSINESS FRIENDS

An economist strangely goes political to criticise a government that follows his Manmohanomics of liberalisation, globalisation, privatisation with the same devotion that the proponent, Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister, started. One can understand the pressure on Singh trying to score a political goal. The plunge that he took virtually exposed the kinks in Manmohanomics.

Rising prices were a phenomenon during Singh's UPA regime and continues because the nation never cared to control prices except during a brief period of NDA-I under late PM Atal Behari Vajpayee. As a people's PM having been in touch with the common man, he scripted path-breaking reforms in telecom, road, power, and taxes. Despite sanctions following Pokharan-II in 1998 and the Kargil War in 1999, the government managed to keep economic growth above 6 per cent till 1999-2000. Growth slowed in 2002-03, with drought, but recovered soon.

Vajpayee had left a high GDP for his successor Manmohan Singh. During the UPA years, 2004-2014,

GDP numbers were initially high but slumped drastically towards the end of its tenure. Shockingly, few understand the enigma of electoral rejection of Vajpayee-led BJP in 2004 Lok Sabha elections.

It was nothing hunky-dory in the UPA regime. There started the country's problems. Vajpayee led the biggest ever coalition with élan. The Left differed with him but most leaders in private praised him. The same Left alliance could not continue in the UPA government beyond 2007 as they protested Singh's anti-people decision and poor leadership, though the trigger was the nuclear deal. The check that the Left had on UPA was lost and the government plunged into a series of scams.

Inflation was at a high since 2007 and reached a super high of 11.06 per cent in 2013 giving the BJP the edge to fight against 'inflation dragon'. As per data, Singh's successor, PM Narendra Modi inherited poor GDP numbers after coming to power in 2014. However, the GDP numbers during the NDA started improving initially. In 2014-15, the GDP growth was recorded at 7.2 per cent. This increased to 7.6 per cent in 2015-16.

The NDA government started faltering under the heavy baggage leading to too many corrections. The economic woes it inherited with a fear of 'black money' tormented it. Being under pressure, Modi hurriedly decided in 2016 on a never before demonetisation of 87 per cent of currency notes for cleaning the economy. It theoretically was a good move but practically plunged his government and the people into unseen problems. An economy that just started booming got a shock. It hurt the businesses and the poor. The note-ban slowed growth to 7.1 per cent in 2016-17. Next year, 2018-19, this and GST introduction reduced it to 4.2 per cent and unprecedented 2020 pandemic cut it to minus 7.3 per cent.

The Modi government has got into a vortex for inheriting a poor system as also not trying to move out of the Manmohanomics. The bank NPAs soared during UPA as it opened coffers to incentivise rich companies. Public finances, deposited by the poor, became fodder for the fly-by-night operators. A small number of companies alone heaped over ₹2.24 lakh crore NPA by 2014. This could not be checked and doubled to ₹5.4 lakh

crore in 2021. Decade-long messing up of economy needs heavy correction. It could not happen as the NDA remained under the 'aura' of Singh. It forgot that all the major scams that happened during 1992 to 1998 were under the stewardship of Singh as Finance Minister.

The NDA is to be faulted for continuing with a liberalisation that really never was except for UPA's chosen business friends. Its disinvestments of PSUs never helped the country. Most profitable Navratnas were handed over on a platter to friends and many were deliberately led to losses like MTNL, BSNL and Air India.

The NDA has to go slow also on some such as National Education Policy, bullet and metro-type trains, review extension of roads and too much dependence on infrastructure spending. As also it has to review many administered prices like high tolls, fees, freights and fares that are pushing up inflation. The NDA has opportunities as also prospects to ensure it frees itself from the legacy of Manmohan Singh, his Manmohanomics, and charts out a new people-centric economy.

INFA

Welcome amendment

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Sir, As many as 11,160 children below the age of fourteen died in road accidents in 2019. Motor vehicle accidents were the top factor for unintentional deaths of children that year. On an average 31 children were killed due to road mishaps in 2020. These numbers point to the vulnerability of children to road accidents. The Centre, by amending Rule 138 of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, has taken a right step towards securing the lives of children. By this amendment, the Road Transport and Highway Ministry, has made it mandatory for all children between nine months and four years of age to sport helmets and safety harness on two-wheelers. Violating the rule will attract a fine of ₹1000 and cancellation of driving licence for three months. To be operationalised in one year, this modification has the potential to be a game changer if properly enforced. Children riding pillion with their parents, sandwiched in between, or standing in front of either parent at wheels, is disturbing as well as dangerous. By the new rule, it is possible that there will only be two people on the two-wheelers thereby adding additional safety, and comfort, mechanism. Plus, the amended rule has stipulated 40 km/hour as the maximum speed for two-wheelers. The Ministry should also pay heed to the safety of children travelling in cars and auto-rickshaws. School going children, who commute by autos, are often cramped in a limited space well beyond the permitted capacity leading to dangerous repercussions. There are school vans that ferry children, which do not inspire confidence in terms of speed and seating. It is another matter that pothole filled roads and drunken drivers equally endanger the lives of children. Rash driving near schools is another matter of concern. All such issues affect the safety of children.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

World on edge

Sir, Russia's Ukraine invasion spooked the global markets with the Sensex crashing 2,700 points, biggest in two years. The share slide followed President Putin's full-scale offensive Thursday that forced residents to flee for their lives and left several dead. Following the news, oil prices rose to \$105 a barrel, while gold hit an eight-month high. The West and the US responded to Russia's move with new sanctions. India pleaded for de-escalation of tensions but stopped criticising Moscow. Nevertheless, Russia's attack on several Ukraine facilities has put the world on edge.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

WISDOM CORNER

Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step. LAO TZU

When you are discontent, you always want more, more, more. Your desire can never be satisfied. But when you practice contentment, you can say to yourself, 'Oh yes - I already have everything that I really need.' DALAI LAMA

We humans have lost the wisdom of genuinely resting and relaxing. We worry too much. We don't allow our bodies to heal, and we don't allow our minds and hearts to heal. THICH NHAT HANH

national

of the day quote

The previous government played with the faith of people and crushed their religious sentiments. Earlier, Kanwar Yatras were stopped and Durga idol immersion was not allowed. Now there is Kanwar yatra amid chants of 'Har Har Bam Bam'. No one can dare to stop a Kanwar yatra. That gives you the picture of new Uttar Pradesh

YOGI ADITYANATH |
UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

Nearly 2,000 people from Haryana, mostly students, were stuck in Ukraine. I am in touch with Union Ministry of External Affairs on this issue

MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR |
CHIEF MINISTER OF HARYANA

I knew that Akhilesh Yadav was never serious about the sentiments of Dalits, but this open insult of Lord Buddha is an insult of India's ethos

KIREN RIJU | LAW MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

SL Navy detains 22 Indian fishermen

Chennai: The Sri Lankan Navy has detained 22 Indian fishermen from Nagapattinam and Karaikal districts of Tamil Nadu. According to fishermen leaders of Nagapattinam, nine fishermen from Keechankuppam had ventured into the sea on Wednesday. While they were fishing near the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), the Sri Lankan Navy patrolling vessel surrounded and arrested them. They were taken to Jaffna for questioning. Boat owner Chinnadurai (60) and his son Sivabharati were among those detained.

2 held for attacking sex workers

Thane: Two persons have been arrested for allegedly attacking two sex workers in the red light area of Bhiwandi town in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said Thursday. An offence under section 307 (attempt to murder) and other relevant provisions of the IPC have been registered against the accused based on a complaint lodged by the victims operating out of Hamunan Tekdi locality, an official said.

Woman hacked to death by jilted lover

Baghpat (UP): A 20-year-old girl Thursday allegedly was hacked to death by a jilted lover in the city area here, police said. Deepa, an undergraduate student, was killed when she was returning home from a market, they said. Rinku, the alleged attacker, surrendered himself at the police station confessing attacking the woman with a sharp-edged weapon on her neck. Superintendent of Police Neeraj Kumar Jadaun said. The accused also handed over the knife used in the crime to the police, he said.

Terrorist, associate held by J&K police

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir police along with security forces have arrested an active terrorist and a terrorist associate of proscribed terror outfit LeT from Central Kashmir's Budgam district, officials said Thursday. Police said acting on specific information about presence of terrorists in Aarath area of Budgam, police along with army's 2 RR arrested an active terrorist of proscribed outfit LeT identified as Yasir Mushtaq and a terrorist associate identified as Irfan Bashir, both residents of Allahpora Budgam.



Nawab Malik is a minister and will remain a minister. The BJP is not God, let them do whatever they want. We will answer it at every level

SANJAY RAUT |
SHIV SENA LEADER

FARMER FACES HUGE LOSS

A 67-year-old farmer from Nagpur district of Maharashtra lost Rs 34,000 while trying to purchase cows online through Facebook, police said. The farmer, Sukhdev Pandurang Gurve (67), a resident of Khandalva village, lodged a complaint with the police against a man, who had introduced himself as Sonu Kumar on Facebook, an official of Parseoni police station said



Oppn attacks govt on evacuation plan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 24: As Russia launched an offensive against Ukraine, Opposition leaders, mostly from the Congress, Thursday attacked the government for not making arrangements in time to bring 20,000 Indians in Ukraine back and accused it of "turning away its face" on its nationals in this difficult time.

UKRAINE CONFLICT

Some of the Congress leaders also demanded that India should take a firm stand and "unequivocally condemn" Russia's action. Attacking the government for not acting despite repeated warnings, the Congress asked why it had not made arrangements in time to bring 20,000 Indians in Ukraine



People watch the news about the ongoing crisis

PTI PHOTO

back home safely. Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said, "turning away its face in every difficult situation... And remaining silent has become a habit of the Modi gov-

ernment. Our 20,000 Indian youth in Ukraine are forced to grapple with fear, apprehension and life-threatening situations. Congress MP Vivek Tankha asked that when the US could evacuate its citizens on time, why did India fail to do so despite repeated warnings.

Former minister of state for external affairs and Congress leader Tharoor said he is receiving a number of desperate messages from families of students stranded in Ukraine and needing evacuation.

Another Congress leader and former Union minister Manish Tewari tweeted, "India should unequivocally condemn Russian invasion of Ukraine in unambiguous terms. There comes a time when you need

Indian students make tearful pleas for safe return

New Delhi: As the situation in Ukraine worsens after the Russian attack, hundreds of stranded Indian students made desperate appeals to the government to ensure their safe return. Several videos emerged on social media in which teary-eyed students urged the Indian authorities to make arrangements for their return. The videos have gone viral on social media, with several prominent personalities sharing them and calling on the government to take action. In one such video, around a dozen visibly-distressed students were seen stranded on a railway station in the capital city of Kyiv. "We are very worried. We are stuck at the railway station from last night. The embassy is not replying. We do not have anywhere to go, no taxi is available. No help from the embassy," one of the students says in the video.

Majithia sent to judicial custody



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Feb 24: Facing charges under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, senior Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia was Thursday sent to judicial custody till March 8 by a trial court in Mohali near here after he surrendered following directions of the Supreme Court.

The brother-in-law of SAD President Sukhbir Singh Badal, Majithia, who was sent to the Ropar jail during his judicial custody, applied for regular bail and his bail plea will come up for hearing on Friday.

A bench comprising Chief Justice NV Ramana and Justices AS Bopanna and Hima Kohli had directed Majithia to surrender before the trial court after the Punjab Assembly polls February 20.

BRAVE CANINE



A dog performed during a canine show for the ongoing Bihar Police week at Gandhi Maidan in Patna, Bihar

PTI PHOTO

All vacancies across tribunals almost filled, SC told

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 24: The Supreme Court on Thursday said the Attorney General (AG) K. K. Venugopal has circulated an email saying that vacancies in all tribunals across the country are almost filled.

Senior advocate Arvind Datar mentioned the tribunal vacancies matter before a bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and Hima Kohli. The Chief Justice told Datar that an email has been circulated by the Attorney General.



"The AG circulated an email saying that all the vacancies are almost filled, except few in the green tribunal and the armed forces tribu-

nal," said the Chief Justice. Citing the email, he added that the process to fill up the vacancies in National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) will be finished today (Thursday), but National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) will take some time. The Chief Justice said the court has been informed that the remaining vacancies, including the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal will also be filled soon.

On February 16, expressing its discontent with the vacancies in the tribunals, the Supreme Court said some "knee-jerk" appointments were made by the Centre to fill up

vacancies across the country, and the bureaucracy has been taking up the issue "lightly."

A bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana then observed that after a few appointments made initially, nothing substantial happened. The bench said the court is getting requests for the extension of time for National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) matters, etc. The bench said: "Some knee-jerk appointments took place and nothing happened after that. We do not know the fate of members and many are retiring". The top court emphasized that the bureaucracy

is taking the issue lightly.

Earlier, the apex court had made some strong observations in connection with vacancies in tribunals across the country. Attorney General K.K. Venugopal contended before the court that he could show the list of vacancies and the steps taken to fill them up. After a brief hearing in the matter, the top court scheduled the matter for further hearing after two weeks.

In August last year, the top court had cited data to show that around 250 posts are lying vacant in various key tribunals and appellate tribunals across the country.

1981 BEHMAI CASE HEARING BEGINS AGAIN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Feb 24: The hearing into the Behmai massacre, in which 20 people were allegedly shot dead by bandit queen turned politician, Phoolan Devi, February 14, 1981, has re-started in a special court in Kanpur Dehat.

It may be recalled that just before the verdict in the case was to be pronounced in January 2020, the hearing was postponed as the original case diary was found to be missing.

Many accused, including Phoolan have died along with all the witnesses, including the plaintiff Rajaram Singh and eye-witness Jantar Singh. The trial has been going on for 41 years.

Even after issuing warrants against Vishwanath, Mansingh and Ram Ratan, who have been absconding for nearly 30 years, the police could not arrest them. As the arguments in the case began Wednesday in the court of special judge (Dacoity) Sudhakar Rai, the district government counsel Raju Porwal told the court that the police had recovered 27 cartridges from the spot and several threatening letters left by the dacoits on the terrace of Marjad Singh's house.



Porwal also said that the dacoits assaulted 27 people and fired bullets while making them stand in a queue, in which 20 died on the spot. Seven of the injured had saved their lives by hiding among the corpses.

During the hearing, an accused Vishwanath was present in the court, while Posa, another accused, could not come from jail. The application for apology to the accused Shyam Babu was given in the court.

HIJAB ROW

A group of Muslim girls at the college who were asked to remove their hijabs protested about the Sikh girl being allowed to wear her turban

AGENCIES

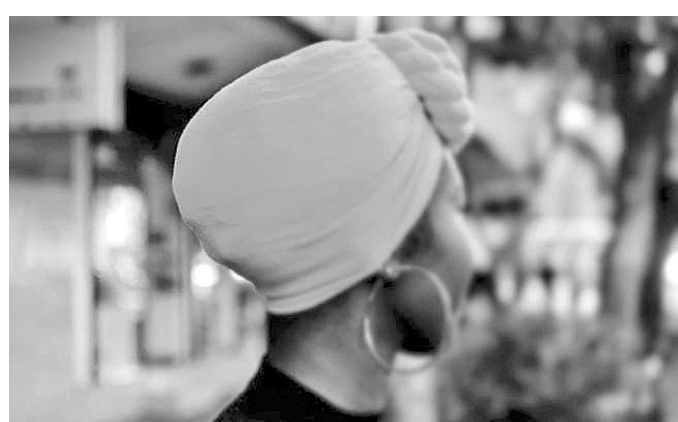
Bangalore, Feb 24: An Amritdhari (baptised) Sikh girl was asked by her college here to remove her turban, following the Karnataka High Court's interim order on the hijab row. The Karnataka High Court, in its recent interim order pending con-

sideration of all petitions related to the hijab row, restrained all the students in the State from wearing saffron shawls, scarves, hijab and any religious flag within the classroom.

The College authorities said they informed the students about the Court order when the educational institution reopened February 16.

However, the deputy director of pre-university education during his visit to the college earlier this week, on finding a group of girls in hijab, informed them about the Court order, asked them to abide by it.

These girls demanded that no girls including the Sikh should be



allowed to wear religious symbols. The college then got in touch

with the Sikh girl's father informing him about the court order

and the need to abide by it. According to sources, the girl's family is said to be of the stand that their daughter will not remove the turban and is taking legal opinion, with High Court and government order not mentioning about Sikh turban.

As protests for and against the hijab intensified in different parts of Karnataka and turned violent in some places, the government had declared a holiday for all high schools and colleges in the state from February 9, they were however reopened on February 16, following the High Court order. According to sources quoted by news agency PTI, the girl's fam-

ily has decided that their daughter will not remove the turban and is taking legal opinion. Asking a member of the Sikh community to remove their turban is widely considered highly invasive.

The controversy over the hijab erupted in Karnataka after some college students in the Udupi district were stopped from wearing the religious headscarves in classrooms. The standoff quickly spread to other parts of the state and even beyond triggering demonstrations and ugly face-offs as some Hindu groups opposed to the hijab held protests in schools and colleges wearing saffron scarves.

Nawab's arrest: MVA, BJP protest against each other

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Feb 24: A day after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested a serving Cabinet Minister Nawab Malik, the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi and Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party protested against each other across the state Thursday.

Leaders of the Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress staged a sit-in agitation near the statue of Mahatma Gandhi outside Mantralaya and all over Maharashtra to protest against Malik's arrest and the manner in which the Centre has 'unleashed' central probe agencies to harass and topple non-BJP governments in the country.

The BJP leaders demonstrated in Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Nagpur, Aurangabad and other cities alleging Malik has "mafia connections" and he must either resign from the cabinet or be sacked immediately.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, ministers Subhash Desai, Jayant Patil, Chhagan Bhujbal, Hasan Mushrif, Balasaheb Thorat, Ashok Chavan, Sunil Kedar, Vijay

The BJP leaders demonstrated in Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Nagpur, Aurangabad and other cities alleging Malik has "mafia connections" and he must either resign from the cabinet or be sacked immediately.

THE MAHARASHTRA POLICE MAINTAINED TIGHT SECURITY AT ALL THE GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION PROTEST VENUES



BJP activists, Thursday, staged a protest demanding resignation of NCP leader Nawab Malik, who was arrested by ED in connection with a money laundering case in Mumbai

Vadetiwar and other party leaders sat along with many activists. They raised slogans against the central government, flaying the 'political vendetta' through the misuse of probe agencies, harassing leaders to break or bend them to grab power at any costs.

The BJP city, state and regional leaders

organised noisy demonstrations at railway stations, bus stations or other public places demanding the resignation of Malik, accusing him "financing terror operations" through the absconder mafia don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar and his family.

The Maharashtra Police maintained tight security at all the government and opposition protest venues, as the MVA grappled with its biggest political crisis after it won the 2019 Assembly elections and the BJP lapped up its major political opportunity in the past 27 months since the latter lost power.

In an unprecedented pre-dawn development on Wednesday, the ED picked up Malik from his home, took him to the ED office around 7.30 a.m. and handed him the summons, and after 8 hours placed him under arrest on charges of alleged money-laundering case arising out of a tainted land deal nearly two decades ago. After a hearing lasting nearly 3 hours, the Special PMLA Court late on Wednesday shunted Malik to eight days' ED custody till March 3.

TN FISHERMEN ISSUE

Stalin seeks Centre's urgent intervention



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 24: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has urged the Centre to urgently engage with Sri Lankan authorities and find a permanent solution to the issue of attack on Indian fishermen, mostly from the state, and put in place functional mechanisms to stop such incidents in future.

In a letter to Union External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Wednesday, Stalin said that the fishermen of the state are under constant threat by the Sri Lankan authorities and still 29 fishers are in jail in the island nation.

Eighty-nine boats, including fishing trawlers, are in the custody of the Sri Lankan authorities and Government of India's immediate intervention is urgently required. Stalin, in the letter, said: "I request you to take up this issue with the Sri Lankan authorities at the highest level and initiate bilateral talks between the two countries to find a permanent solution to this long pending vexatious issue and put in place functional mechanisms to stop such incidents in future."

Meanwhile, the Fishermen association of Ramanathapuram has also threatened to restore the road blockade if the fishermen of the area are not released from Sri

We welcome any initiative taken by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister to solve this vexed issue but the Sri Lankan authorities won't budge unless the Government of India uses tough language. We don't have any other option but to go for an indefinite road blockade to get our fellow fishermen released from jail

S. JESUDASAN | PRESIDENT, RAMANATHAPURAM FISHERMEN ASSOCIATION

Lankan prison. S. Jesudasan, President, Ramanathapuram Fishermen association while, said: "We welcome any initiative taken by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister to solve this vexed issue but the Sri Lankan authorities won't budge unless the Government of India uses tough language. We don't have any other option but to go for an indefinite road blockade to get our fellow fishermen released from jail. The Sri Lankans are of the position that the boats and trawlers seized will not be released and this cannot be allowed. Government of India must take up these issues with the Sri Lankan authorities at the highest level and bring about a solution on the same."

FRESH LEASE OF LIFE

Tamilian heart beats in a Kashmiri woman

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 24: A heart from an 18-year-old brain dead donor has provided a fresh lease of life to a 33-year-old Shahzadi Fathima of Srinagar who was suffering from terminal heart failure. She travelled 3,000 km for her treatment, said MGM Healthcare, a private hospital.

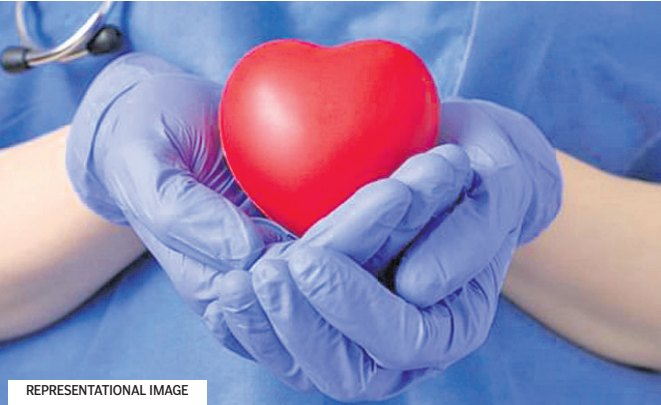
According to the hospital, the harvested heart from a brain dead youth was transported over 350 km for the transplant. Fathima had worsening heart failure symptoms due to restrictive cardiomyopathy (RCM), a condition where the chambers of the heart become stiff over time.

She became terminally ill and her only hope of survival was an early life saving heart transplant. With her condition worsening, on December 31, 2021, she was admitted with sign of severe heart failure. On January 26, 2022, a suitable brain-dead donor was identified in a private hospital in Trichy. The heart was soon rushed here through a green corridor and a high-risk heart transplantation was carried out on Fathima who soon made

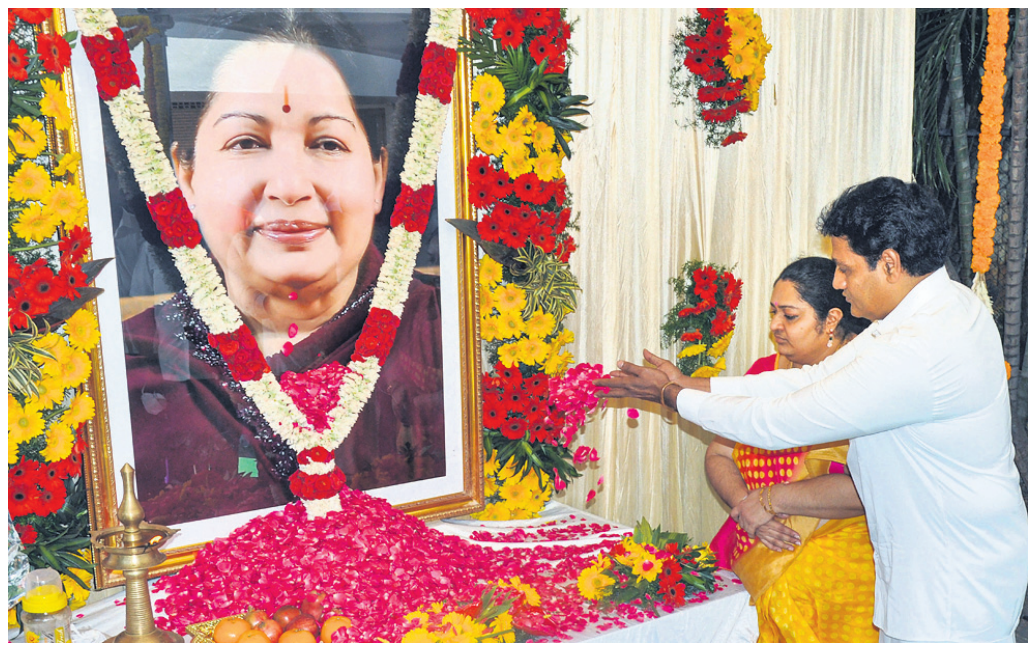
Fathima had worsening heart failure symptoms due to restrictive cardiomyopathy (RCM), a condition where the chambers of the heart become stiff over time

an uneventful recovery.

Fathima, an unmarried woman from Kashmir, lives with her brother, a daily wage earner who was not able to meet her medical expenses and the cost of the transplant. Seeing the plight of this woman, Aishwarya Trust, a non-profit healthcare organisation that supports the medical expenses of deserving patients, decided to bear the entire cost of the transplant at MGM Healthcare. According to Chitra Viswanathan, the founder of Aishwarya Trust, it was a meaningful way for Aishwarya Trust to celebrate Republic Day by funding the lady's heart transplant on January 26, 2022."



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE



Deepa Jayakumar, niece of late AIADMK supremo J Jayalalitha, along with her husband pays floral tribute to former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister on her birth anniversary, at her Poes Garden residence, in Chennai

MAN HELD FOR THREAT CALL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 24: Police have arrested a 38-year-old man for allegedly making a threat call to the Israel consulate general's office in Mumbai, an official said Thursday. The accused is mentally unstable. He had called up the offices of various other envoys also as he was denied visa by some countries, the official said.

Monday, the man called up on the Israel consulate general's office located in Lower Parel area and allegedly threatened the staffer and used abusive language, he said. Based on a complaint, an FIR was registered at the N M Joshi Marg police station against the then unidentified person. During the investigation, the caller was traced to an area in Mumbai and he was placed under arrest, he said.

Sengottai only municipality to be ruled by AIADMK

In Sengottai, of the 24 wards, DMK could win only seven seats while AIADMK won 10, PMK - 2 and BJP - 3 seats

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 24: The extent of drubbing the AIADMK has faced in the Tamil Nadu urban local body polls can be gauged from the fact that the only municipality to be ruled by the opposition party is Sengottai out of the 138 where elections were held.

In Sengottai, of the 24 wards, DMK could win only seven seats while AIADMK won 10, PMK - 2 and BJP - 3 seats. Two independent candidates could emerge victorious. Even with the support of two independents, DMK will fall short



REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

of the 13 numbers required for the municipal chairman's post. This led to Sengottai becoming the only municipality in the state where the DMK could not win.

DMK and its allies crossed the simple majority in 135 out of the 138 municipalities in the state in the urban local body elections.



The exceptions to this were Manapparai, Vandavasi, and Sengottai. In Manapparai, of the 27 wards, AIADMK and DMK won 11 wards each, and 5 went to independent candidates.

On Wednesday, DMK leader and state minister K.N. Nehru met the five independent councillors and

secured their support thus paving the way for a DMK municipal chairman and vice-chairman.

The DMK alliance won 9 seats in Vandavasi while the AIADMK and PMK could win only 3 and 2 wards respectively. Independents won 10 seats. State PWD minister E.V. Velu, who is in charge of the constituency, met the independent councillors and secured their support thus leading to a DMK municipal chairman in Vandavasi.

There are 12,818 ward member posts in Tamil Nadu from 21 corporations, 138 municipalities, and 489 town panchayats. Of these, the DMK alliance won 8,757 seats and in all the 21 corporations party candidates could win more than 50 per cent of the seats available. The DMK alliance is expected to take over the administration of 435 to 445 town panchayats out of a total of 489 town panchayats.

Tackling marine crimes

TN to form elite force

The primary objective of the force is to protect the management of the marine areas and also watch out for disasters involving marine and coastal wildlife



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 24: The Tamil Nadu government will form two units of the Marine Elite Force to combat marine wildlife crimes, including smuggling, prevention, and poaching of marine animals, especially in the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay.

Each unit will have five marine watchers who will be moving around in two deepwater boats. These units will interact with other agencies like Customs, Coast Guards as also with Indian Navy officers for intelligence gathering.

The primary objective of the force is to protect the management of the marine areas and also watch

out for disasters involving marine and coastal wildlife. Marine resources are constantly exploited for economic reasons and protected species are also hunted illegally due to the huge price they fetch in international markets.

Marine turtles, sea cucumbers, sea horses, sharks and rays, pipefishes, dugongs, and dolphins are regularly poached and hunted down for various economic benefits and hence the state government has decided to form a Marine Elite Force to tackle this down. Tamil Nadu has already sanctioned an amount of Rs 1.09 crore for establishing two units of the force.

Chandrayaan-2 detects solar proton events: ISRO

THE INSTRUMENT JANUARY 18 ALSO RECORDED CORONAL MASS EJECTIONS, A POWERFUL STREAM OF IONISED MATERIAL AND MAGNETIC FIELDS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 24: A Large Area Soft X-ray Spectrometer (CLASS), a payload on-board Chandrayaan-2 Orbiter, has detected solar proton events which significantly increase the radiation exposure to humans in space, the Indian Space Research Organisation has said.

The instrument January 18 also recorded coronal mass ejections (CMEs), a powerful stream of ionised material and magnetic fields, which reach the Earth a few days later, leading to geomagnetic storms and lighting up the polar sky with auroras, the ISRO said. "Such multi-point observations

help us understand the propagation and its impact on different planetary systems," it said. When the sun is active, spectacular eruptions called solar flares occur that sometimes also spew out energetic particles (called solar proton events or SPEs) into interplanetary space. Most of these are high energy protons that impact space systems and significantly increase radiation exposure to humans in space. They can cause ionisation on large scales in the earth's middle atmosphere, the space agency said.

Many intense solar flares are accompanied by CMEs, a powerful stream of ionised material and magnetic fields, which reach the Earth a few days later, leading to geomagnetic storms and lighting up the polar sky with auroras, the ISRO said.

magnetic fields, which reach the earth a few days later, leading to geomagnetic storms and lighting up the polar sky with auroras.

Solar flares are classified according to their strength. The smallest ones are A-class, followed by B, C, M and X. Each letter represents a 10-fold increase in energy output. This means that an M class flare is 10 times more intense than C-class flare and 100 times intense than B-class flare, the ISRO said.

Within each letter class there is a

finer scale from 1 to 9 - a M2 flare is twice the strength of M1 flare. "Recently, there were two M-class solar flares. One flare (M5.5) spewed out energetic particles into interplanetary space and the other flare (M1.5) was accompanied by a CME," the space agency said.

The SPE event was seen by NASA's Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite (GOES) orbiting around the Earth. However, the CME event was not detected by GOES. "Chandrayaan-2 Large Area Soft X-ray Spectrometer (CLASS) on-board

Chandrayaan-2 Orbiter detected SPE due to an M5.5 class solar flare that occurred on January 20, 2022," the ISRO said. "The CLASS instrument also detected a CME event as it passed through the moon due to an M1.5 class solar flare that occurred on January 18," it added. The CME travels at a speed of about 1,000 km/s and it takes about two-three days to reach the Earth.

"The signature of this event is missed by the GOES satellite, as the earth's magnetic field provides shielding from such events. However, the event was recorded by Chandrayaan-2," the ISRO said.

"The CLASS payload on Chandrayaan-2 saw both the SPE and CME events pass by from two intense flares on the Sun," it added. Planned to land on the moon's South Pole, Chandrayaan-2 was launched on July 22, 2019. However, the lander Vikram hard-landed on September 7, 2019, crashing India's dream to become the first nation to successfully land on the lunar surface in its maiden attempt. The ISRO had then said the mission achieved 98 per cent success as the orbiter continues to share data with the ground station.



of the day quote

India is going back to its roots like yoga. Bringing back the glory of millets will make the country Aatmanirbhar in three areas: Food, Nutrition & Economy

PIYUSH GOYAL | UNION MINISTER

The Election Commission is not taking action on rampant hate speeches against the minorities in different parts of the country, while the Supreme Court is not resolving the cases for more than three years against the abrogation of Article 370 from the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir

SITARAM YECHURY | CPI-M GENERAL SECRETARY

The new ICMR/DHR policy will ensure multi-disciplinary collaboration, promote startup culture and develop an innovation led ecosystem at Medical Institutes across the country by promoting Make-in-India, Startup India and Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER



1,356 persons accused in the infamous northeast Delhi riots are still in judicial custody and the investigation is still underway in several cases

RAKESH ASTHANA | DELHI POLICE COMMISSIONER

SC DISMISSES PLEA SEEKING STAY ON RELEASE OF GANGUBAI KATHIAWADI

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to entertain a plea seeking stay on the release of Hindi film industry movie Gangubai Kathiawadi. The Alia Bhatt-starrer, produced by Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Bhansali Production Private Ltd, is scheduled for release Friday



'China moving disabled satellite to another orbit a new threat'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 24: China's latest demonstration of physically moving its disabled satellite to another orbit poses a new threat in the race to weaponise the space domain, Indian Air Force Chief V R Chaudhari said Thursday. Moreover, he said no single service -- air force, army or navy -- can win wars on its own and this holds good even for the future.

Last month, China's Shijian-21 satellite physically moved a disabled Chinese satellite, altering its geostationary orbit. This capability of physically altering the orbits of a satellite has earlier been demonstrated by the US only.

"China's latest demonstration of physically moving one of its disabled satellites into the graveyard orbit is bringing in newer threats in the race to weaponise the space domain, a domain hitherto considered relatively safe," Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari said.

"The spectrum that we are looking at stretches from kinetic to non-kinetic, lethal to non-lethal and from small drones to hypersonic ballistic missiles. This vast and



Representational image

ever-changing continuum will pose significant challenges for the armed forces of the future," he added.

He said the IAF's training philosophy needs to be modern, flexible and adaptive, with a heavy dose of "jointness". A well-trained air warrior -- who is technologically sound yet able to adapt to disruptions -- would serve as a force multiplier, the IAF chief mentioned.

"The next step would be to use our doctrines and well-trained manpower to evolve employment philosophies and CONOPS (Concept of Operations)," he noted.

This would require joint planning and joint execution of plans,

Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari stressed. "No single service can win wars on its own and this holds good even for the future. This brings me to the next challenge of command and control," he said.

The primacy of who will do what cannot be determined by a pro-rata system of who has a larger mass of forces or equipment, the IAF chief mentioned. "The thought process must change and it would be important to appreciate the capabilities of each service to make two plus two equal to five," he said.

He stressed the need to develop joint command and control structures for integrated and synergised application of combat power.

Ukraine crisis: Modi chairs meeting of CCS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security Thursday evening as the crisis between Russia and Ukraine intensified into conflict.

Sources said that PM Modi is likely to speak to Russian President Vladimir Putin while External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar is expected to speak to his Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba.

Though the outcome of the meeting was not shared, it is assumed that Prime Minister Modi was briefed about the present situation in Ukraine and also about the Indians including students who have been stuck there.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Home Minister Amit Shah, and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar were seen in the meeting as well as Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Hardeep Singh Puri, though the duo were not part of the CCS.

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, PK Mishra and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval were also present in the meeting.



Meanwhile, the Indian Embassy in Ukraine shared a list of temporary bomb shelters created by the local administration with stranded Indian students. Earlier in the day, Indian Ambassador to Ukraine Partha Satpathy said the situation is "highly tense and very uncertain, and this of course is causing a lot of anxiety".

"I am reaching out to you from Kyiv. Today early morning, we all woke up to the news that Ukraine is under attack," Satpathy said. The air space is closed, railway schedules are in flux and roads are crammed, he said, requesting everyone to "stay calm and face the situation with fortitude".

The Indian embassy continues to remain open and operate in Kyiv. The Ambassador has urged the Indian nationals to stay wherever they are, in their familiar locations.

SIT to continue probe in Anis Khan murder, submit progress report in two weeks : Cal HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 24: Calcutta High Court Thursday directed that the West Bengal police SIT will continue its probe into the alleged murder of student leader Anis Khan, whose father prayed for transfer of investigation to an independent agency.

The court which was hearing a petition by Salem Khan, the father of the student leader, who prayed for investigation into the death by an independent agency, directed the special investigation team to submit a progress report in the probe in two weeks and that a second post mortem be conducted after exhuming the body.

Justice Rajasekhara Mantha, who also took up the suo motu petition initiated by the HC, said that the court is of the view that it would be too premature to say at this stage whether the probe by the SIT will be appropriate or not.

"This Court will like to first evaluate the investigation by the SIT, the adequacy of which can only be determined thereafter," the judge observed and directed the team to proceed with urgency.

Justice Mantha said it is expected that no stone will be left unturned in course of such investigation "which shall be carried out in letter and spirit and by the book" and asked the petitioner to cooperate with the TI (identification) parade.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had Monday ordered formation of the SIT into the death and asked it to file a report to her within 15 days.

The court directed Rai Chattopadhyay, the district judge of North 24 Parganas, to oversee the SIT probe in general and the second post mortem of Khan's body, examination of his mobile phone and a TI (identification) parade in particular. The court directed that the viscera be preserved by the SIT under the supervision and direction of the district judge after the second post mortem.

Suspected cooking gas leak in Noida triggers panic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Noida, Feb 24: Suspected leakage of PNG in Noida Thursday evening triggered panic in several residential sectors of the city adjoining the national capital, prompting the district administration to seek a report from the cooking gas distribution company IGL.

Indraprastha Gas Limited, the supplier of Piped Natural Gas (PNG) in the area, however, said its officials inspected the gas pipeline network and there was no leakage in its network.

Panic triggered around 7 PM when locals in sectors 137, 128 and 93 started sharing messages on WhatsApp about the foul smell, even as several called up the officials of the police, the Noida Authority and the district administration to confirm the situation.

Internal messages in some housing societies also cautioned residents against using the cooking gas till normalcy in the PNG pipeline was confirmed, according to locals.

"The alarm towards the smell was raised by the residents of housing societies in Sector 137 and the local police was alerted around 7 PM after which the gas pipeline was stopped as precautionary measure," Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Noida) Ranvijay Singh said.

The local police was out on the ground, even as the exact source of the smell was yet to be located, the officer said.

Several people in the meantime took to social media to raise the matter with the IGL, which assured them that their network was working fine.

"Our teams are in the field and have checked the pipeline network in a few sectors of NOIDA where smell has been reported. There is no leakage in PNG network of IGL & no disruption in PNG supply," IGL tweeted.

8 places selected for semiconductor project: Vaishnaw



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 24: The government will undertake a detailed evaluation of applications it has received in response to the mega semiconductor scheme and expects to complete the entire process and sign agreements with companies in next 8-10 months, Union Minister for Electronics and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw said here Thursday.

He informed that eight locations have been shortlisted already, and it is for the investors to take a final call. "About eight locations are

shortlisted already. And of course, the investor has to take the final decision. So getting the entire supply chain in place, the chemicals, all that stuff, clean water, and everything else... We are focusing purely on execution," he explained.

Vaishnaw said he is happy with the response that came in within a short period of time, when the ministry invited applications under the ₹76,000 crore semiconductor programme. Vaishnaw asserted that many other players too are 'seriously evaluating' India's semiconductor programme, and that the ministry is in discussions with several companies. "Many of the well known names in the semiconductor space are seriously evaluating India's semiconductor scheme. I hope we will get one of them in the next round. In fact, I am actually sure," said the minister. It is pertinent to mention here that the government has received five applications for semiconductor and display fabs with total investment to the tune of ₹1.53,750 crore (\$20.5 billion).

MoD signs ₹1,075cr contract with BEL

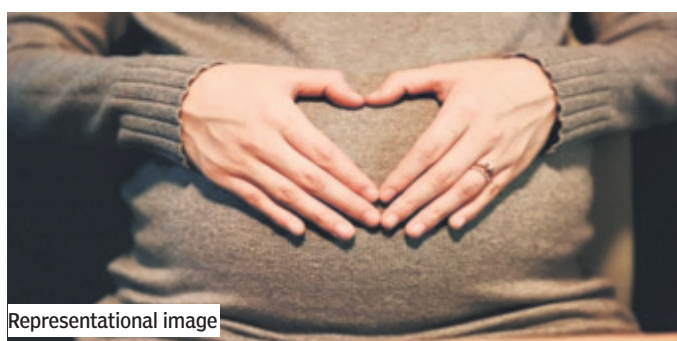
New Delhi: The Ministry of Defence Thursday signed a ₹1,075 crore contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for retro-modification of commander sight in 957 T-90 battle tanks so that they can detect targets at longer ranges, an official statement said. Commander sight is an optical observation device on a tank. Commander sight of T-90, India's premier battle tank, is presently fitted with image converter (IC) tube-based sight for night viewing, the ministry's statement noted. Based on the requirement projected by the Indian Army, the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) and BEL have jointly designed and developed an advanced mid wave thermal image (MWIR)-based sight as a replacement for the existing IC-based sight, it noted. "The new retro-modified commander sight employs a thermal imager capable of detecting the targets at 8 km during day and night and a laser ranger finder (LRF) to find the ranges accurately up to 5 km, thereby enhancing its capability to engage target at longer ranges," it mentioned.

Severe Covid may affect pregnancy outcomes

AGENCIES

New Delhi/London, Feb 24: Severe Covid-19 in pregnancy may increase the risk of pre-labour caesarean birth, a very or extreme preterm birth, stillborn birth, and the need for admission to a neonatal unit, finds a new study.

The study, published in the journal Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica, indicated that certain pregnant women with Covid-19 who are hospitalised stand a higher risk of developing serious disease. "This new analysis shows that certain pregnant women admitted to a hospital with Covid-19 face an elevated risk of severe disease," said senior author Marian Knight, FMedSci, of the University of Oxford.



Representational image

"However, it shows once again the strong protective effect of vaccination against severe disease and adverse outcomes for both mother and baby," Knight added.

For the study, the research team included 4,436 pregnant women hospitalised in the UK with symp-

tomatic Covid-19 from March 1, 2020 to October 31, 2021 (13.9 per cent of whom had severe Covid-19).

In addition to having increased risks of adverse pregnancy-related outcomes, women with severe infection were more likely to be aged around 30 years, being overweight

LET'S MAKE A SNOWMAN



Shikara-wallas make a snowman to attract tourists on the snow-covered banks of Dal Lake, after sudden heavy snowfall in Srinagar

PTI PHOTO

RETRO TAX DISPUTE

India refunds ₹7,900cr to Cairn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 24: The Indian government has paid Cairn Energy Plc ₹7,900 crore to refund taxes it had collected to enforce a retrospective tax demand, ending a seven-year-old dispute that had tarred the country's image as an investment destination.

The company, which is now known as Capricorn Energy PLC, in a statement said it has received "net proceeds of \$1.06 billion", of which nearly 70 per cent will be returned to the shareholders.

The tax department had used a 2012 legislation, which gave it powers to go back 50 years and slap



ing on stock exchanges. While the company sold majority holding in the India unit to Vedanta in 2011, it was in 2014 slapped with the tax demand notice over alleged capital gains made on the reorganisation.

The British firm contested the demand, saying all taxes due were duly paid when the reorganisation, which was approved by all statutory authorities, took place.

But the tax department in 2014 attached and subsequently sold the residual shares that Cairn held in the Indian unit. It also withheld tax refunds and confiscated dividends due to it to settle part of the tax demand.

All this totalled ₹7,900 crore. Cairn had in 2006-07 reorganised its India business, which comprised operations of prolific Rajasthan oilfields, prior to its list-

'Rise in vision-related problems among kids'

NEW DELHI: As part of the 'Illness to Wellness' campaign, the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM), an apex industry body, hosted a webinar on 'Managing Eye Care'. This also coincides with the month of February being observed as Low Vision Awareness Month. The main objective behind the event was to create awareness on prevention of low vision problems, eye-related critical diseases and blindness and maintaining overall healthy vision for life. Underscoring the rising issue of low vision in India, (Padma Shri) Dr (Prof) AK Grover, Chairman, Vision Eye Centres & Chairman, Department of Ophthalmology, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital said that the process of seeing is a gift of nature and the most structural and functional marvel organ in the body. He added: "The human eye has a resolution of 375-mega pixels. It's a natural camera with a peripheral vision and it transfers the message to the brain to figure out the colours, movements etc."

or obese, be of mixed ethnicity, or have gestational diabetes compared with those with mild or moderate infection, the study said. "This study emphasizes the im-

portance of ensuring that interventions to promote vaccine uptake are particularly focused towards those at highest risk," Knight said.

WAR RETURNS TO EUROPE

MAJOR UPDATES

Ukrainian forces battled Russian invaders on three sides after Moscow mounted an assault by land, sea and air in the biggest attack on a European state since World War Two

Missiles rained down on Ukrainian targets. Kyiv reported troops pouring across the borders with Russia and Belarus from the north and east, and landing on the coasts from the Black Sea in the southwest and Azov Sea in the southeast

Russian President Vladimir Putin said his aim was to demilitarise and "denazify" Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukraine was listening to the sound of a new iron curtain falling as Russian troops advanced across his country, and he warned that other European countries may be next

US President Joe Biden said the Group of Seven industrialized nations had agreed to move forward on "devastating packages of sanctions and other economic measures to hold Russia to account"

NATO will reinforce troops on its eastern flank but has no plans to deploy any in Ukraine, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said

European Union leaders will agree to further sanctions on Russia that would have "massive and severe" consequences for Moscow, according to a draft of their summit conclusions

Russia would respond with "tit-for-tat" measures, a foreign ministry spokeswoman said

The Chernobyl nuclear power plant has been captured by Russian forces, an adviser to the Ukrainian presidential office said

European countries began preparing to receive people fleeing Ukraine

The mayor of Kyiv imposed a curfew after Russia invaded Ukraine and the capital echoed throughout the day to the sound of gunfire, sirens and explosions

Ukraine has shut its ports

UPCOMING EVENTS

The UN Security Council is likely to vote Friday on a draft resolution condemning Russia for invading Ukraine and requiring it to unconditionally withdraw, a senior US administration official said

EU leaders were discussing further sanctions

NATO will hold an emergency summit Friday



Russia Thursday launched all-out war on Ukraine with simultaneous attacks coming from south, east and north, by land and by air. Missiles and bombs rained from the sky, tanks rolled across the border, troops parachuted down on eastern regions and explosions were seen across the country after Russian President Vladimir Putin gave the order to attack. 'Hundreds' of Ukrainian troops were killed in early clashes, and official said, as the fight came to them on all fronts at a moment's notice. Official figures put the death toll at 40, with 'dozens' wounded. Cruise missiles, guided bombs and Grad rockets took out targets from east to west - aimed at airfields, military bases, ammo dumps, and command posts including in the capital. Six Russian jets were shot out of the sky over the eastern Donbass region with 50 Russian troops killed, Ukraine claimed, before Moscow boasted of taking full control of the skies. Ukrainian border guards said

they had come under attack by heavy artillery, tanks and troops from Russia and Belarus as Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko threw his forces into the fight - though he denied taking part. Luhansk, Sumy and Chernihiv in the east of Ukraine all came under attack, while tanks battled on the outskirts of Kharkiv after paratroopers dropped in. Blasts were also reported in the west - in Zhytomyr and Lviv, close to the border with Poland. Extraordinary video footage showed what appeared to be a Kalibr cruise missile slamming into Ivano-Frankivsk airport. Meanwhile pro-Russian rebel forces pushed out from the occupied Donbass region, capturing two villages and claiming to have shot two Ukrainian jets out of the skies. The port cities of Mariupol and Odessa, where Ukraine's main naval bases are located, were also attacked. Russian tankers appeared to have blockaded the Kerch Strait, leading from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov, cutting off Mariupol.

Khan meets Putin

Moscow: President Vladimir Putin met Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan in the Kremlin Thursday in his first face-to-face talks since the start of a special Russian military operation in eastern Ukraine and the two leaders discussed the main aspects of bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on current regional topics, including developments in South Asia. Khan, who arrived in Russia Wednesday on a two-day visit - the first by a Pakistani premier in over two decades - began his engagements in Moscow by laying a wreath at 'Tomb of the Unknown Soldier', hours after the Russian President ordered a special military operation in eastern Ukraine, ignoring last-minute appeals and warnings from the West. During the meeting in the Kremlin, the leaders of the two countries "discussed the main aspects of bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on current regional topics, including developments in South Asia," said a brief statement issued by the Russian President's office - Kremlin. This was the first face-to-face talks of the Russian leader with a foreign leader since the start of a special military operation to protect Donbass. President Putin also hosted a luncheon for him.

Residents of Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, could be heard shouting in the streets when the first explosions sounded. But some kind of normalcy quickly returned, with cars circulating in the streets in the early morning commute. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy issued a video statement declaring martial law. He told Ukrainians that the United States was gathering international support to respond to Russia. He urged residents to remain calm and stay at home.



In this handout photo taken from video released by Ukrainian Police Department Press Service, Military helicopters apparently Russian, fly over the outskirts of Kyiv, Ukraine, Thursday

Ukraine's President urges calm

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In this handout photo taken from video released by Ukrainian Police Department Press Service, Military helicopters apparently Russian, fly over the outskirts of Kyiv, Ukraine, Thursday

Putin's declaration overtakes emergency UNSC session

At an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council called by Ukraine that opened just before Putin's announcement, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told Putin "Stop your troops from attacking Ukraine. Give peace a chance. Too many people have already

died." Guterres later pleaded with Putin, "In the name of humanity, bring your troops back to Russia."

When will the West impose more sanctions?

Ukraine's forces are no match for Moscow's military might, so Kyiv is counting on other countries to hit Russia hard - with sanctions. Biden Wednesday allowed sanctions to move forward against the company that built the Russia-to-Germany Nord Stream



In this handout photo taken from video released by Ukrainian Police Department Press Service, Military helicopters apparently Russian, fly over the outskirts of Kyiv, Ukraine, Thursday

What sanctions were under US consideration if Russia invaded

The Biden administration had made clear it was holding tough financial penalties in reserve in case of just such a Russian invasion. The US hasn't specified just what measures it will take now, although administration officials have made clear that all-out sanctions against Russia's major banks are among the likely options. So are export limits that would deny Russia US high tech for its industries and military. Another tough measure under consideration would effectively shut Russia out of much of the global financial system.

How is Ukraine's economy holding up?

It was Ukraine, not Russia, where the economy was eroding the fastest under the threat of war. One by one, embassies and international offices in Kyiv closed. Flight after flight was cancelled when insurance companies balked at covering planes arriving in Ukraine. Hundreds of millions of dollars in investment dried up within weeks. The squeezing of Ukraine's economy is a key

destabilizing tactic in what the government describes as "hybrid warfare" intended to eat away at the country from within.

How has the confrontation been seen in Russia?

In the build-up to the attack, Russian state media portrayed Moscow as coming to the rescue of war-torn areas of eastern Ukraine where residents were tormented by Ukraine's aggression. "You paid with your blood for these eight years of torment and anticipation," anchor Olga Skabeyeva said during a popular political talk show Tuesday morning. "Russia will now be defending Donbas." Channel One struck a more festive tone, with its correspondent in Donetsk asserting that local residents "say it is the best news over the past years of war: "Now they have confidence in the future and that the years-long war will finally come to an end," she said. Whether ordinary Russians were buying it is another question.

Ukraine attack leaves Baltics insecure

Vilnius (Lithuania): Viewed from Paris, London and Washington, the events unfolding in Ukraine may seem like a new Cold War taking shape in Europe.

From the Baltic countries, it looks much worse. To Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians - particularly those old enough to have lived under Soviet control - Russia's belligerence toward Ukraine has some worried that they could be the next target. The tensions have brought back memories of mass deportations and oppression.

propaganda. All three Baltic countries were seized and annexed by Stalin during World War II before gaining independence again with the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. They joined NATO in 2004, putting themselves under the military protection of the US and its Western allies. Ukraine is not part of NATO. Along with Poland, also a NATO member, the small Baltic countries have been among the loudest advocates for powerful sanctions against Moscow and NATO reinforcements on the alliance's eastern flank.

Ukraine attack leaves Baltics insecure

Russia's attack on Ukraine sent shockwaves through the Baltic countries Thursday. Lithuania's president declared a state of emergency and Latvia suspended the broadcast licenses of several Russian TV stations accused of spreading disinformation and

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A demonstrator holds a placard during an anti-war protest in front of the Russian embassy in Berlin, Germany

Dissatisfied with India's position: Ukrainian envoy



uation. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is among very few leaders whom President Vladimir Putin listens to and New Delhi can use its proximity with Moscow to control the situation. The envoy said Ukraine has been following India's position on the crisis and it is "deeply dissatisfied" with it. His comments came a day after Russian Deputy Chief of Mission Roman Babushkin said India has been playing a vital role as a responsible global power and it takes an "independent and balanced" approach to world affairs. At an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council on Monday night, India had called for "restraint on all sides". It stressed that the immediate priority is "de-escalation of tensions", taking into account the legitimate security interests of all countries and aimed towards securing long term peace and stability in the region and beyond.

'Scared and excited' as Ukrainians watch war arrive



Traffic jams are seen as people leave the city of Kyiv, Ukraine

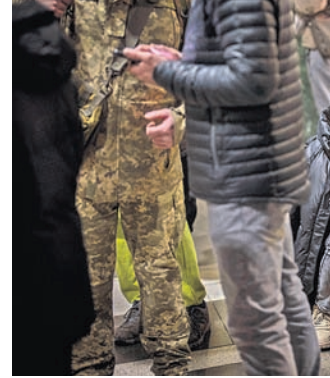
At dawn Thursday, Ukrainians' uneasy efforts at normalcy were shattered. Smoke rose from cities, even well away from the country's disputed eastern border. A morning commute turned into lines of cars waiting at fuel stations or fleeing from the gray and drizzly capital, Kyiv. People with luggage took shelter in the subway, unsure of where to go. Some panicked immediately. Others clung to routine, with irritation.

"I'm not afraid. I'm going to work. The only unusual thing is that you can't find a taxi in Kyiv," one resident complained, even as air raid sirens wailed. Many seemed unsure of how to react. Kyiv's main street, Khreshchatyk, rippled with anxiety as people checked their phones. Some walked their dogs or waved at friends.

"I'm not scared at the moment. Maybe I'll be scared later," resident Maxim Prudskoi said. As the day progressed, alarm

across Ukraine rose. People crowded grocery stores and ATMs, seeking supplies and cash. In Kharkiv, worried residents inspected fragments of military equipment strewn across a children's playground.

For weeks, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had tried to moderate expectations of aggression by Russia, even as warnings by the United States became more urgent. Zelenskyy argued that panic would lead to societal destabilization that



A woman reacts as she waits for a train trying to leave Kyiv, Ukraine

could be as much of a tactical advantage for Russia as the estimated 150,000 troops that had massed on Ukraine's borders.

On Thursday, as the president imposed martial law, Ukrainians realised with a jolt that everything might change.

"I feel panic, scared and excited. I don't know who I should ask for help," said Kyiv resident Elizaveta Melnik. "We didn't believe this situation would come."



The increasing trend of new age technology companies, which are generally loss making, accessing public market is a key challenge to the capital markets
AJAY TYAGI | CHIEF, SEBI

OLA'S EV BOOST

Softbank Group-backed Ola Electric plans to build a battery cell manufacturing plant in India with a capacity of up to 50 gigawatt hours (GWh), a source told Reuters, as part of its broader electrification push



of the day quote

Amid prolonged uncertainty, continued policy support will be crucial for sustained economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic
SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR, RESERVE BANK

I think there is a need for shared responsibility amongst companies to address social and environmental challenges and support each other in domestic manufacturing
PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

A huge market is available for surety bonds in-country and now, the onus is on the insurance fraternity to come out with products quickly. We have already initiated at authority level discussions with the insurance agencies and companies
MANOJ KUMAR | NHAI MEMBER

SHORT TAKES

New Non-Executive Chairman of HUL

New Delhi: FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd Thursday announced appointment of Nitin Paranjpe as the company's Non-Executive Chairman with effect from March 31, 2022. The company is separating the position of the Chairman of the Board and CEO & MD, according to a statement. Sanjiv Mehta will continue as the MD & CEO of the company. This is in "consonance with emerging, progressive governance trends" HUL said.

Airtel acquires stake in Aqilliz

New Delhi: Telecom major Bharti Airtel Thursday announced that it has acquired a strategic stake in Aqilliz, a "Blockchain as a Service Company". Airtel aims to deploy Aqilliz's blockchain technologies at scale across its fast growing adtech (Airtel Ads), digital entertainment (Wynk Music and Airtel Xstream) and digital marketplace (Airtel Thanks App) offerings. "Bharti Airtel...has acquired a strategic stake in Aqilliz - a Blockchain as a Service Company under the Airtel Startup Accelerator Program, subject to applicable statutory approvals," the company said in a statement.

IATA, Standard Chartered tie up

Mumbai: Global banking group Standard Chartered Thursday said it has partnered with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to launch a payment platform for airline industry in India. In addition to existing payment options such as credit cards, IATA Pay will be a new payment option that enables participating airlines to offer instant payment options such as UPI Scan and Pay and UPI Collect, Standard Chartered said in a statement.

Tata AIA Life posts 44% growth in Q3

Mumbai: Tata AIA Life Insurance Co Ltd Thursday said its individual weighted new business premium (IWNBP) jumped about 44 per cent to ₹1,193 crore during the third quarter of fiscal 2021-22. The private life insurer had stood at ₹831 crore in the year-ago period. For the nine-month period ended December 2021, it registered a growth of 32 per cent with an IWNBP income of ₹2,786 crore, compared with ₹2,110 crore for the same period of the previous financial year.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT SHELLS MARKETS

Stocks slump, rupee slides, gold turns costlier

Indian shares led sharp losses in Asia and the rupee suffered its worst session in more than 10 months Thursday, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent oil prices soaring and fanned inflation fears. Russian forces invaded Ukraine, confirming the worst fears of the West with the biggest attack by one state against another in Europe since WWII, sending global markets into a tailspin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 24: Markets were awash in red and the Indian currency plummeted against the dollar Thursday amid Russia's attack on Ukraine pushing investors to seek refuge in safe-haven assets.

Gold as well as crude oil prices surged, with the latter even crossing the \$105 per barrel mark. Markets in Asia and Europe were also deep in the negative territory.

The 30-share BSE gauge plunged about 2,850 points during the session before closing at 54,529.91, registering a massive fall of 2,702.15 points or 4.72 per cent. This was its biggest decline since March 23, 2020, and the fourth-worst fall ever in absolute terms.

Likewise, the NSE barometer Nifty nosedived 815.30 points or 4.78 per cent to end at 16,247.95.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 75.02 against the American dollar but later dropped to a low of 75.75 against the greenback. The local

It is difficult to predict the bottom of the market in a scenario like war. Events will shape the movement. The best thing for an investor is to follow asset allocation principles. This is likely to be a Buy on Dip Market albeit with a lot of volatility in the near-term

NILESH SHAH | GROUP PRESIDENT & MD, KOTAK MAHINDRA ASSET MANAGEMENT

unit finally finished at 99 paise to close at 75.60 from the previous close. Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude futures jumped 8.68 per cent to \$105.25 per barrel.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 1.02 per cent to 97.16.

Gold prices in the national capital rallied by ₹1,656 to ₹51,627 per 10 grams Thursday on the back of safe-haven buying and sharp depreciation of rupee amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict.



INDIAN STOCKS WORST PERFORMERS IN ASIA

30-share BSE gauge plunged 2,702.15 points or 4.72% to end at 54,529.91

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Likewise, the NSE barometer Nifty nosedived 815.30 points or 4.78% to end at 16,247.95

MARKET BENCHMARKS IN EUROPE AND ASIA FELL AS MUCH AS 5%

HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said, "spot prices for 24 carat gold at Delhi surged by ₹1,656 in line with gains in COMEX gold prices along with rupee depreciation."

He also said that gold prices rallied on safe-haven buying along with the dollar on geopolitical risk fearing severe sanctions on Russia

and possible disruption of supplies of commodities.

The situation in Ukraine deteriorated after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a military operation in Ukraine, triggering serious concerns over the possibility of a full-scale military confrontation between the two countries.

BRENT, WTI HIT HIGHEST SINCE 2014

Oil on boil; tops \$105

London: Oil prices jumped Thursday, with Brent rising above \$105 a barrel for the first time since 2014, after Russia's attack on Ukraine exacerbated concerns about disruptions to global energy supply.

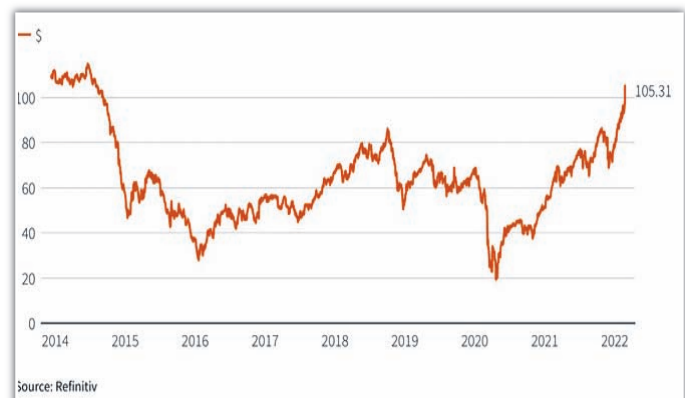
At least three major buyers of Russian oil were unable to open letters of credit from Western banks to cover purchases Thursday sources told Reuters.

Brent crude was up \$8.15, or 8.4%, at \$104.99 a barrel as of 12:21 GMT, having touched a high of \$105.79. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude jumped \$7.33, or 8%, to \$99.43.

Brent and WTI hit their highest since August and July 2014 re-

Recovery is at risk. It comes from the price of energy, from natural gas in Europe. More generally, oil from across the world. The concern is more about natural gas which is limited in supply and harder to get to the right places. There are scopes to ramp up production of oil from OPEC if Iran comes back to the fold. Right now, production is 2 million barrels a day and this is below its peak

RAGHURAM RAJAN | FORMER RBI GOVERNOR



spectively.

"Russia is the third-largest oil producer and second-largest oil exporter. Given low inventories and dwindling spare capacity, the oil market cannot afford large supply disruptions," said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo.

"Supply concerns may also spur oil stockpiling activity, which supports prices." Russia is also the largest provider of natural gas to Europe, providing about 35% of its supply. Global oil supplies remain

tight as demand recovers from pandemic lows.

Analysts are warning of inflationary pressure on the global economy from \$100 oil, especially for Asia, which imports most of its energy needs.

"Asia's Achilles' heel remains its vast import needs for energy, with surging oil prices bound to take a hefty bite out of income and growth over the coming year," said HSBC economist Frederic Neumann.

Impacts & expectations as markets spooked

Russian stocks crash; Ruble at record low

Russian assets nosedived as military attacks across Ukraine prompted emergency central bank action and investors braced for the toughest round of Western sanctions yet, wiping out as much as \$259 billion in stock-market value. The Ruble sank to a record low, the cost of insuring Russian debt against default soared to the highest since 2009, and stocks collapsed as much as 45% -- their biggest-ever retreat. The Bank of Russia said it will intervene in the foreign exchange market for the first time in years and take measures to tame volatility in financial markets.

Rupee dips 102 paise to close at 75.63/USD

The rupee tanked 102 paise to close at 75.63 (provisional) against the US currency Thursday as riskier assets took a hit after Russia launched military operations against Ukraine. Forex traders said sustained foreign fund outflows, heavy selling in domestic equities and elevated crude oil prices weighed on investor sentiment. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 75.02 against the American dollar but later dropped to a low of 75.75 against the greenback. The local unit finally finished at 75.63, down 102 paise from the previous close.

Wall Street joins global swoon; sank 2%

Stocks tumbled worldwide Thursday after Russia's attack on Ukraine sent fear coursing through markets and upped the pressure on the high inflation already hurting people and businesses around the world. The S&P 500 sank 2% to continue its dismal start of the year. It's now down almost 14% from the record high it set in early January. European markets sank even more, with the German DAX down 5%. Bond yields fell as investors sought safety and the price of oil soared above \$100 a barrel. The conflict could send prices spiralling even higher at gasoline pumps and grocery stores everywhere.

Investors' wealth slump over ₹13,44L cr

Investor wealth worth over ₹13.44 lakh crore was wiped off Thursday as the domestic equity markets tumbled along with global risk assets, after Russia launched military operations against Ukraine. The carnage on Dalal Street eroded investor wealth worth ₹13,44,488.54 crore, taking the total market capitalisation (m-cap) to ₹2,42,24,179.79 crore on the BSE. The m-cap of BSE-listed companies stood at ₹2,55,68,668.33 crore at the end of trading Wednesday. Traders said incessant foreign fund outflows also weighed on the markets. On a net basis, foreign institutional investors sold equities worth ₹3,417.16 crore Wednesday, data available with stock exchanges showed.

Gold soars ₹1,656, silver surges ₹2,350

Gold prices in the national capital rallied by ₹1,656 to ₹51,627 per 10 grams Thursday on the back of safe-haven buying and sharp depreciation of rupee amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had closed at ₹49,971 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver prices also shot up by ₹2,350 to ₹66,267 per kilogram compared with the previous close of ₹63,917 per kilogram. In the international markets, gold soared to \$1,942 an ounce while silver was also trading higher at \$25.07 per ounce.

Chance for India to export more wheat

The Russia-Ukraine crisis might give India an opportunity to export more wheat in the global markets and domestic exporters should tap this opportunity, sources said Thursday. India's central pool stood at 24.2 million tonne, twice more than the buffer and strategic needs, they said. More than a quarter of the world's wheat export comes from Russia and Ukraine. Russia is the world's largest exporter of wheat, accounting for more than 18 per cent of international exports. In 2019, Russia and Ukraine together exported more than a quarter (25.4 per cent) of the world's wheat.

Exporters fear possible impact on trade

The Russia-Ukraine military conflict will have an implication on the country's trade as it would affect movement of consignments, payments and oil prices, according to exporters. The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said they have asked exporters to hold their consignments to the region or goods that take the Black Sea route. To Russia, Ukraine and other eastern European countries, goods move from the Suez Canal and the Black Sea, FIEO Director-General Ajay Sahai said. He added that the quantity of impact on trade will depend on the duration of the war. "This is a major setback to trade as it was recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic. Exporters are cautious in dealing with their trade in that region. The war will affect both movement of goods, payments and oil prices," Sahai said.

Pharma exporters in wait & watch mode

Amid the military offensive by Russia against Ukraine, Indian pharma exporters are in wait and watch mode on dispatching fresh orders to them and some of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, industry sources said Thursday. India exported over \$181 million worth of pharmaceutical goods to Ukraine in FY 21, nearly 44 per cent growth over the previous year, while Russia contributed nearly \$591 million last fiscal year, with a growth of 6.95 per cent compared to a year before, according to Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil), a body under the Department of Commerce.

WHAT THE CONFLICT MEANS FOR WORLD ECONOMY?

Rising energy and food prices will intensify the inflationary pressures that policymakers and central banks are struggling to ease. In the estimation of Capital Economics, a worst-case scenario of an escalating conflict and sanctions could send oil prices up to as much as \$140 a barrel and force natural gas prices up, too

Just what a vulnerable world economy didn't need — a conflict that accelerates inflation, rattles markets and portends trouble for everyone from European consumers to indebted Chinese developers and families in Africa that face soaring food prices. Russia's attack on Ukraine and retaliatory sanctions from the West may not portend another global recession. The two countries together account for less than 2% of the world's gross domestic product. And many regional economies remain in solid shape, having rebounded swiftly from the pandemic recession. Yet the conflict threatens to inflict severe economic damage on some countries and industries —



damage that could mean hardships for millions of people. Russia is the world's third-biggest producer of petroleum and is a major exporter of natural gas.

Ukraine's farms feed millions around the world. And financial

markets are in a precarious spot as central banks prepare to reverse years of easy-money policies and raise interest rates to fight a resurgence of inflation. Those higher rates will likely slow spending and raise the risk of another downturn.

"I wouldn't be misled by just calculating GDP ratios...especially at a time when commodity prices are already high, inflation is already high," said Elena Ribakova, deputy chief economist at the Institute of International Finance, a trade group for banks. "It's a tricky moment now given where the global economy is."

Russia's attack could slow Europe's economic recovery by sending already elevated energy prices ever higher. Europe, an energy importer, receives close to 40% of its natural gas from Russia. A cutoff of that energy source could undercut the continent's economy. High natural gas prices have already led to higher home utility bills for both natural-gas heat

and electricity generated from gas, crimping consumer spending.

Costly gas has forced production cutbacks at producers of fertilizer and some other heavy industrial users. Annual inflation hit 5.1% in January in the 19 countries that use the euro, the highest rate since record-keeping began in 1997.

Natural gas prices, which have tended to rise on crisis news, remain about four times what they were at the start of 2021. Russia sold less gas than normal on the short-term spot market, raising concerns that the Kremlin was using gas to press for approval of its Nord Stream 2 pipeline. The pipeline has now been frozen by sanctions imposed by Germany's government.

KISHAN, IYER LIFT INDIA

COVID OUTBREAK SCENARIO Women's WC likely for a 9-a-side competition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Feb 24: Ishan Kishan gave a glimpse of his enormous potential with a 56-ball-89 (10x4, 3x6) before the bowlers joined the party in India's clinical 62-run demolition of Sri Lanka in the first T20I to take a 1-0 lead in the three-game series here Thursday. This was also India's longest winning streak in T20Is which has now gone up to 10 matches.

Asked to take first strike, Kishan was unstoppable at the top as he blasted a blistering knock, while Shreyas Iyer provided the late charge with an unbeaten 57 (28b, 5x4, 2x6) as India racked up a massive 199/2.

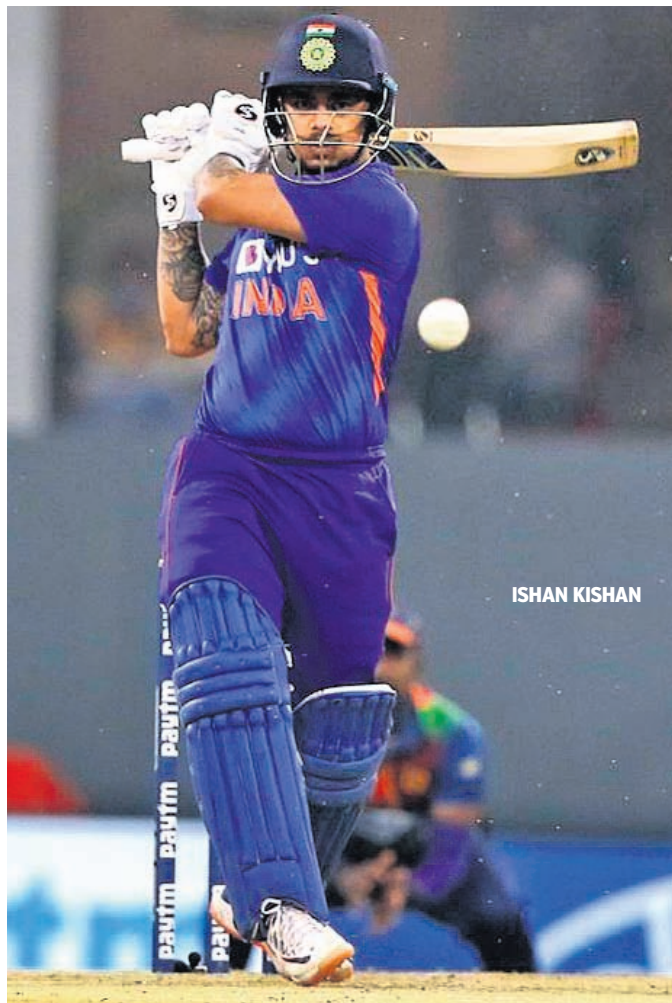
The Indian bowlers, led by Bhuvneshwar Kumar (2/9) and Venkatesh Iyer (2/36), then provided the finishing touch, limiting Sri Lanka to 137/6 in 20 overs. Yuzvendra Chahal (1/11) and Ravindra Jadeja (1/28) also claimed one wicket each.

For Sri Lanka, Charith Asalanka regained some confidence with an unbeaten 47-ball 53 (5x4) but he didn't get any support from the other batters.

Defending the total, Bhuvneshwar provided India the perfect start as he cleaned up in-form opener Pathum Nissanka (0) of the first ball of the innings before returning to remove the other opener Kamil Mishara (13) cheaply.

India's fielding was not up to the mark with Venkatesh and Shreyas spilling chances off Kamila and Asalanka in third and sixth overs respectively but it didn't matter as the Lankan batters couldn't use the chances.

Venkatesh got rid of Janith Liyanage (11), while comeback man Ravindra Jadeja had Dinesh Chandimal (10) stumped in the 10th



ISHAN KISHAN



SHREYAS IYER

over as Sri Lanka were down 51/4 in 10th over. Skipper Dasun Shanaka's (3) stay lasted six balls as Chahal overtook Bumrah to become India's leading wicket taker (67) in T20Is. With the required run-rate hovering over 20, Asalanka then provided some respectability to the chase.

Earlier Kishan, who failed to capitalise on his starts in the pre-

Rohit Sharma became the highest scorer (3307 runs) in T20Is surpassing New Zealand's Martin Guptill (3299) and teammate Virat Kohli (3296). Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal (67 wickets) have now gone past Jasprit Bumrah (66) as India's top wicket-taker in T20Is

ceding white-ball series against West Indies, finally lived up to his multi-million dollar IPL tag with a whirlwind innings.

The 23-year-old from Jharkhand forged a 111-run innings for the opening wicket with his skipper Rohit Sharma (44, 32b, 2x4, 1x6) to put India on course for a formidable total after being invited to bat

first. Iyer then grabbed the opportunity with both hands to take India to a huge total.

BRIEF SCORES
India 199/2 (Ishan Kishan 89, Shreyas Iyer 57 n.o, Rohit Sharma 44; Dasun Shanaka 1/19) beat Sri Lanka 137/6 (Charith Asalanka 53 n.o; Bhuvneshwar Kumar 2/9; Venkatesh Iyer 2/36) by 62 runs.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Feb 24: With an aim to conduct an uninterrupted tournament, the ICC Thursday said all matches at the upcoming Women's ODI World Cup in New Zealand could be played with nine players in case of a COVID-19 outbreak.

The nine-player-a-side game is already in place in the ICC guidelines related to playing conditions and has been in effect since the U-19 World Cup in the West Indies, where India won the title for a record fifth time.

ICC's head of events Chris Tetley said that the prevalent playing conditions allow teams to field a truncated side if there is a COVID outbreak in their squad, supplemented by substitute fielders from within the management and coaching staff.

"If it becomes necessary we would allow a team to field nine players as an exception for this envi-

ronment," Tetley was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

"And if they had female substitutes from within their management team, we would allow two substitutes to play - non-batting, non-bowling - to enable a game to take place."

Keeping the pandemic scenario in mind, all teams have been allowed to take along three extra players as travelling reserves, who can be brought in the 15-member main squad should there be a COVID casualty.

The ICC official also didn't rule out rescheduling of games if needed. "We'll be asking teams to show maximum flexibility and we'll be as flexible as possible if the need arises to fulfill our objective, which is to get the games on," he said.

The tournament begins March 4 with the opening match between hosts New Zealand and West Indies in Mount Maunganui.

Chirag ton puts Saurashtra in control vs Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 24: Chirag Jani (125 batting, 186b, 16x4, 4x6) helped his side recover from 84/3 to reach 325/4 at stumps on the opening day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group D match against Odisha at Ahmedabad, Thursday.

Saurashtra were off to a promising start as their openers Harvik Desai (38) and Snell Patel (24) adding 58 runs. However, they lost the momentum before being reduced to 84/3. Basant Mohanty (1/44) broke the opening stand dismissing Patel, before Jayanta Behera (2/97) got rid of Desai.

Cheteshwar Pujara's poor run of form also continued when got out cheaply off Debabrata Pradhan (1/72). However, Jani found an able ally in seasoned Sheldon Jackson (75, 112b, 12x4, 3x6) as the duo took Saurashtra past 200 adding 130 runs for the fourth wicket. Jayanta broke the stand dismissing Jackson.

However, Jani continued in same vein forging a 111-run stand together with Arpit Vasavada (51 batting, 71b, 6x4, 2x6) for the unbroken fifth wicket.

In the other Group D match, Mumbai were bowled out for 163 with Ajinkya Rahane (0) being trapped leg before by an incoming delivery from pacer Lakshay Garg (6/46) as Sarfaraz Khan's 63 was the only saving grace. Garg got good support from off-spinner Amit Yadav (4/47). Goa were 114/2 at stumps as Amogh Desai (51) and Suyash Prabhudesai (40) added 56 runs.

UEFA set to move final out of Russia



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Feb 24: UEFA will no longer stage this season's Champions League final in St. Petersburg after Russia attacked Ukraine, this news agency has learned.

An extraordinary meeting of the UEFA executive committee will be held on Friday to discuss the geopolitical crisis and when officials are set to confirm taking the May 28 showpiece game out of Russia, a person with knowledge of the process said Thursday. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private talks.

UEFA confirmed there is a meeting due at 0900 GMT Friday. "Following the evolution of the situation between Russia and Ukraine in the last 24 hours, the UEFA president has decided to call an extraordinary meeting of the executive committee. In order to evaluate the situation and take all necessary decisions," UEFA said in a statement.

The British government and fan groups had been asking UEFA to

no longer play the game in the St. Petersburg, where the stadium is sponsored by Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom.

"On this tragic day, our thoughts are with everyone in Ukraine, our friends, colleagues, members; our loved ones," the Fans Supporters Europe group tweeted Thursday.

"Given the events unfolding, we expect an imminent announcement from UEFA on the relocation of the Champions League final."

The Ukrainian Premier League suspended operations on Thursday due to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's decision to impose martial law. The league has been on a two-month winter break and was due to resume Friday. It did not give any planned date to restart.

The International Paralympic Committee said it was in talks with sports officials in Ukraine and Russia as their teams prepare to head to China for the start of the Paralympic Games next week.

"The IPC is in dialogue with both the Ukrainian and Russian Paralympic Committees ahead of the Beijing 2022 Paralympic Winter Games," the IPC said in an emailed statement.

"As a politically neutral organization, the IPC's focus remains on the upcoming Games rather than the ongoing situation."

Russia's name, flag and anthem are already barred from the March 4-13 Paralympics in Beijing over previous doping disputes. Its team is due to compete as RPC, short for Russian Paralympic Committee.

Elanga saves Man Utd's day



CRUCIAL STRIKE: Anthony Elanga (R) celebrates his goal against Atletico Madrid with Bruno Fernandes, Wednesday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Feb 24: Atlético Madrid got nearly everything it wanted against Manchester United in the Champions League - except for the win.

Atlético kept old foe Cristiano Ronaldo in check Wednesday and got a stellar performance from his Portugal teammate Joao Felix, but a defensive lapse near the end meant Diego Simeone's team had to settle for a 1-1 draw in the first leg of the round of 16.

Felix - once touted as the next Ronaldo - was the most dangerous forward and put the hosts ahead with a diving header seven minutes into the match, but substitute Anthony Elanga equalised in the 80th shortly after coming off the bench in one of the few times the Atlético defense broke down.

Atlético was in control during most of the match at the Wanda

Metropolitano and twice hit the crossbar, including with an 86th-minute shot by Antoine Griezmann. The return leg will be March 15 in England.

In the other round-of-16 match Wednesday, Benfica and Ajax drew 2-2 in Portugal.

Ronaldo, who several times ended Atlético's title hopes in the Champions League when he was with crosstown rival Real Madrid, struggled throughout the match and was visibly frustrated. Isolated up front, he was booed by the Atlético fans nearly every time he touched the ball at the Metropolitano.

Félix was much more dangerous for Atlético, constantly threatening with his quick turns and strong runs. The 21-year-old forward opened the scoring with a powerful header off a well-placed cross by Renan Lodi.

The ball came off the post before

going in to make Félix the first Portuguese player to score a Champions League goal against United since Ronaldo found the net for Juventus against the English side in November 2018. It was Félix's seventh Champions League goal in 20 appearances in the competition, and first since 2020.

With the 37-year-old Ronaldo well defended and not being able to connect with his teammates, United seemed beaten until Elanga broke free to find the net from inside the area after a nice through ball from playmaker Bruno Fernandes, the competition's assists leader with seven.

Elanga had entered the match five minutes earlier and took advantage of the rare space given up by the Atlético defense, scoring United's 500th goal in the competition previously known as the European Cup.

IPL TO KICK OFF MARCH 26, FINAL SET FOR MAY 29

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 24: The 10-team Indian Premier League (IPL) will start in Mumbai March 26 and end May 29 with around 40 per cent crowd being allowed at the start of the tournament.

"The IPL will start on Saturday, March 26," IPL chairman Brijesh Patel told this agency after the governing council meeting Thursday.

With two new teams Lucknow Supergiants and Gujarat Titans added to the roster, there will be 74 matches with 70 of them being played at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium and Brabourne Stadium along with Navi Mumbai's DY Patil ground and Gahunje Stadium in Pune.



As many as 20 games each will be held at Wankhede and DY Patil, while 15 each will be hosted at Brabourne and Gahunje Stadium.

"Spectators will be allowed as per guidelines set by the Maharashtra government and to start with, it will be 40 percent. If the COVID situation remains under control and cases decline, it might be full house at the business end," a source said.

There has been no decision with regards to play-offs but Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium is likely to host the final. It is learnt that 55 matches will be played in Mumbai, while 15 will be played in Pune.

"Each team will play same number of games at each of the stadiums. Mumbai Indians will play four games at Wankhede Stadium. We are having as many as 12 double headers and it was decided that Saturday start (march 26) allows us to host a double header on Sunday," an IPL source added.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah had earlier said that plan is to hold IPL in India and likewise BCCI were ready in earnest to host it in the country. The second option was South Africa this time but it was a distant option.

OFC deny ATKMB chance to cut gap at top of table

PNN & ISL

Goa, Feb 24: Ten-man ATK Mohun Bagan (ATKMB) squandered a chance to close the gap at the top, as they were held to a 1-1 draw by Odisha FC in the Indian Super League at the Tilak Maidan Stadium here Thursday.

It was an unhappy throwback Thursday of sorts for the Mariners who were held to a 0-0 stalemate by Odisha in the first leg as well. Redeem Tlang (fifth) opened the scoring for Odisha, who are already out of contention for a semi-final spot, but Joni Kauko (eighth) made it 1-1 from the spot.

The second half saw no goals from either side with Liridon Krasniqi finding the woodwork and Roy Krishna given the marching orders picking up two yellow cards.

The result means ATKMB remained in third place with 31 points, level with second-placed Jamshedpur FC who take on NorthEast United FC Friday, from 17 matches. Odisha too remained in seventh spot with 23 points from 18 games. A win for the green and maroons would have taken them to second spot, and cut the gap with league leaders Hyderabad FC to two points with a game in hand.

Odisha took the lead inside the first five minutes. Jerry Mawihmingthanga bombed down the right flank to send in a low cross for Tlang who got the better of Pritam Kotal to score.

Odisha's joy was short-lived as ATKMB equalised after Sahil Panwar clipped Hugo Boumous inside the area for the referee to point towards the spot. Kauko slammed home from the spot.



Indianwomen's hockey team players in action during an intra-squad match at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar Thursday, ahead of their FIH Pro League tie against Spain, February 26 and 27