



CREATIVE COLLABORATION

Actor Taapsee Pannu says working with Anubhav Sinha, Sudhir Mishra and Bhusan Kumar is a blessed experience

LEISURE P2



BIDEN TAPS KETANJI

President Joe Biden will Friday nominate federal appeals court Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court

INTERNATIONAL P10



SECOND T20I TODAY

India look to wrap up the three-match series against Sri Lanka when they take the field for the second T20I

SPORTS P12

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Panchayat poll counting begins today

Bhubaneswar: Counting of panchayat election votes will start at block level from Saturday 8 am amid tight security. The State Election Commission (SEC) has made necessary arrangements at all voting centres across the state. The counting will be done till February 28. The counting of votes for 315 Zilla Parishad zones will be conducted Saturday while the counting of votes for 307 and 229 ZP zones will be conducted February 27 and 28, respectively. Along with the ZP post, the counting of votes will also be done for all other posts -- sarpanch, samiti member and ward member coming under the particular ZP zone.



Ex-CM Hemananda Biswal dies

Bhubaneswar: Senior Congress leader and former Chief Minister Hemananda Biswal died at a private hospital here, Friday. He was of 82. Biswal served as CM twice from December 7, 1989 to March 3, 1990, and from December 6, 1999 to March 5, 2000. Biswal, a six-time MLA, served as deputy CM and minister of several departments including home, industries, panchayati raj, general administration and health. For the first time, he was elected as MLA in 1974. He was elected as an MP from Sundargarh in 2009-14. Leaders across party lines have expressed condolences on the death of the former chief minister.

MORE P4

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K'taka HC reserves order in hijab case

Bangalore: The Karnataka High Court concluded the hearing related to the 'hijab' case Friday, but reserved its order. "Heard. Order reserved," Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi said. The court asked the petitioners to file written submissions, if any, before the Bench. The Bench, constituted February 9 and comprising the Chief Justice, Justice Krishna S Dixit and Justice Jaibunnisa M Khazi, heard on a day-to-day basis over the last two weeks a batch of petitions filed by some girls seeking permission to wear the hijab in educational institutions where a uniform has been prescribed.

MORE P9

KYIV UNDER FIRE



IN TATTERS: Natali Sevriukova, a civilian, reacts next to her house following a rocket attack in the city of Kyiv, Friday

AP/PTI PHOTO

Putin called on Ukrainian army to remove leadership in Kyiv even as their forces tried to fight off Russian troops in the capital

AGENCIES

Kyiv, Feb 25: Russian troops bore down on Ukraine's capital Friday, with gunfire and explosions resonating ever closer to the government quarter, in an invasion of a democratic country that has fuelled fears of wider war in Europe and triggered worldwide efforts to make Russia stop.

Amid growing casualties from the deadly warfare — including shelling that sliced through the facade of a Kyiv apartment building, bridges and schools — the Kremlin said Russia was ready to talk with Ukrainian officials.

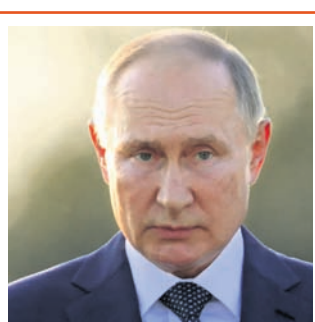
That came even as there were also increasing signs that Vladimir Putin's Russia may be seeking to overthrow Ukraine's government, in his boldest effort yet to redraw the world map and revive Moscow's Cold War-era influence.

The US and other global powers slapped ever-tougher sanctions on Russia as the invasion reverberated through the world's economy and energy supplies, threatening to further squeeze ordinary



When bombs fall on Kyiv, it happens in Europe, not just in Ukraine... When missiles kill our people, they kill all Europeans

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY | UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT



It seems like it will be easier for us to agree with you (Ukraine military) than this gang of drug addicts and neo-Nazis (leadership in Kyiv)

VLADIMIR PUTIN | RUSSIAN PRESIDENT

households. UN Officials said they were preparing for millions to flee Ukraine. Sporting authorities sought to punish Russia on global playing fields. And NATO leaders called an urgent meeting to discuss how far they can go to challenge Putin without engaging Russian forces in direct war.

Day 2 of Russia's invasion focused on the Ukrainian capital, where reporters heard explosions starting before dawn and gunfire was reported in several areas. Ukrainian authorities used armoured vehicles and snowplows to defend Kyiv and limit movement, and said Russian spies were seeking to infiltrate the city.

WORLD FINE-TUNING RUSSIA SANCTIONS

Brussels: The world has made it clear that a military intervention in Ukraine is off the books, so most countries Friday were throwing ever more punishment at Moscow — from financial to football sanctions. The European Union could yet go furthest as it was closing in on freezing the assets of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on top of a series of unprecedented measures.

Russia's military said it had seized a strategic airport outside Kyiv that allows it to quickly build up forces to take the capital.

It claimed to have already cut the city off from the west — the direction many of those escaping the invasion are heading in, with lines of cars snaking toward the Polish border. Ukrainian officials reported at least 137 deaths on the Ukrainian side and claimed hundreds on the Russian one. Russian authorities released no casualty figures.

MORE P10

Polls to 109 civic bodies March 24

The polls will be held for 1,763 wards in municipalities and NACs and 168 seats in three municipal corporations

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: The State Election Commission, Odisha Friday announced that polls to 109 urban local bodies will be held March 24, amid strict adherence to Covid protocols. Votes will be counted March 26, State Election Commissioner AP Padhi said.

The polling will be held for 47 municipalities, 59 notified area councils (NACs) and municipal corporations of Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Berhampur, he said.

"Around 41 lakh people are eligible for voting. The Model Code of Conduct will come into force immediately and be effective till March 26, the date of counting of votes. The polls will be conducted for 1,763

wards in municipalities and NACs and 168 seats in the three municipal corporations," the state election commissioner said.

Padhi also said voters will have the NOTA option for the first time in the elections to civic bodies. "Polling to the civic bodies will be held through EVMs and the MCC will be effective in areas where the elections will be conducted," he said.

The announcement of urban polls came a day after the completion of the five-phase panchayat elections Thursday.

The SEC said candidates can file their nominations between March 2 and 7, and the scrutiny of such documents will be done March 9. They can withdraw their nominations by March 14.

Altogether 4,584 booths will be set up for the elections to all the ULBs. Each polling booth will have two EVMs, one for elections of councillors and another for chairpersons or mayors.

Naveen talks to Shah for safe return of Odias

CM offers to bear transport expenses for bringing back Odias stranded in Ukraine

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: Expressing concern over Odia people stranded in Ukraine, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday announced that his government will bear the expenses for bringing back students and workers of the state.

The CM has asked Development Commissioner-cum-Special Relief Commissioner PK Jena to coordinate the overall issue of bringing back people of Odisha. Patnaik has also directed the district administrations to collect information regarding students and workers in Ukraine and effectively coordinate with their family members.

Earlier in the day, he spoke to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar over telephone on the issue. The CM has requested both the Union Ministers for safe evacuation of stranded Odia students and labourers from



the war-torn country. Both have assured Patnaik that the government is in touch with Ukraine government and working to bring back students and labourers from that country at the earliest.

Meanwhile, the state government has opened a special cell at New Delhi and appointed a nodal officer for safe return of Odias from Ukraine. Ravi Kant, Resident Commissioner, New Delhi has been designated as nodal officer. Those who need assistance from the nodal officer can contact on mobile /WhatsApp—8527580245, landline-011-23012751, e-mail-rodisha@gmail.com/rescom-or@nic.in, said Home department.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I am afraid you are little late, gentlemen. I have just joined the ruling party

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	SENSEX	55858.52	↑	1328.61
NIFTY	16658.40	↑	410.40	
DOLLAR	75.90	↓	₹0.44	
EURO	84.35	↓	₹0.24	
GOLD	₹50,319	↓	₹1,224	
SILVER	₹64,194	↓	₹1,837	

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	32.8°C	32.5°C
MIN	20.2°C	20.2°C
Humidity	93%	84%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Light to moderate rain	

19L Indian kids lost a parent to Cov

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: More than 1.9 million children in India lost a parent or caregiver due to the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a modelling study of 20 countries published in The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health journal.

Globally, the number of children estimated to have experienced the death of a parent or caregiver as a result of Covid-19 has surged to more than 5.2 million, the researchers said.

Estimates of the numbers of children affected by Covid-19-associated orphanhood and caregiver death nearly doubled in the six months from May 1, 2021 through October 31, 2021 compared with the numbers after the first 14 months of the pandemic, they said. Globally, the new study suggests, two out of three children orphaned from Covid-19 are adolescents aged



LANCET STUDY

10 to 17 years. "Sadly, as high as our estimates of orphanhood and caregiver deaths are, they are likely to be underestimates, and we expect these numbers to grow as more global data on Covid-19 deaths become available," said Juliette Unwin, lead study author from Imperial College London, UK. "Real-time updated data suggest the true totals reached 6.7 million children as of January 2022. While

our current study looked at estimates through October 2021, the pandemic is still raging worldwide, which means Covid-19 related orphanhood will also continue to surge," Unwin said.

The number of children affected in the 20 countries studied ranged from 2,400 in Germany to more than 1.9 million in India, the researchers said.

Calculations of estimated orphanhood cases per capita showed the highest rates were in Peru and South Africa, with 8 and 7 out of every 1,000 children affected, respectively, they said.

The study found that in all countries, more than three times as many children experienced the death of a father than losing a mother. Adolescents accounted for a far greater proportion of those orphaned than younger children in all countries, according to the findings.

Is this the 'Himalayan yogi'?

CBI sources say former group operating officer of the National Stock Exchange Anand Subramanian, who has been arrested by the agency, was the mysterious yogi

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 25: Former NSE group operating officer Anand Subramanian, who was arrested by the CBI earlier February 25, was the mysterious yogi who guided the actions of former CEO Chitra Ramkrishna, CBI sources have said.

The CBI has arrested former NSE group operating officer after expanding its probe into a co-location scam in the stock exchange following 'fresh facts' in a SEBI report that referred to a 'mysterious yogi' guiding the actions of



former CEO Chitra Ramkrishna, officials said Friday.

Subramanian was taken into custody late Thursday night in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, they said. He was questioned for days in Chennai early this week during which he was found to be evasive in his responses

to the sleuths which prompted the CBI to examine him in custody, the officials said.

He was brought to Delhi and produced before a special court here which sent him to CBI custody till March 6, they said.

An audit report allegedly

referred to Subramanian as a mysterious yogi, but it was dismissed by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in its report February 11, the officials said.

Ramkrishna, who succeeded former CEO Ravi Narain in 2013, had appointed Subramanian as her advisor who was later elevated as group operating officer with a fat pay cheque of ₹4.21 crore.

Subramanian's controversial appointment and later elevation, besides crucial decisions, were guided by an unidentified person who Ramkrishna claimed was a 'formless mysterious yogi' dwelling in the Himalayas, a probe into Ramkrishna's email exchanges during the SEBI-ordered audit showed. It was alleged in an audit that Subramanian was the yogi, but SEBI dismissed that claim in its final report.

leisure

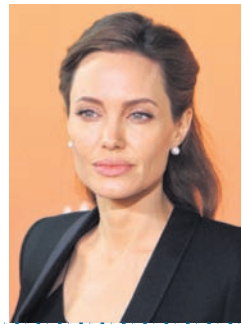


SHAKIRA REVEALS HER WEIRD SLEEPING HABIT

Hips Don't Lie hitmaker Shakira has let slip some of the bizarre habits she has, including her unusual sleeping position. Speaking on Planet Weirdo with Holly H on Amazon Music, she said: "Hmm. Well, I sleep with my legs crossed sometimes. Like a frog."

UKRAINE CRISIS: JOLIE TO HELP WITH HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS

Hollywood star Angelina Jolie says she will pitch in to help the victims in Ukraine. "My focus along with my @refugees colleagues is that everything possible is done to ensure the protection and basic human rights of those displaced, and refugees in the region," wrote Jolie in her tweet.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Today, you may want to wear your power suit, says Ganesh. If you notice people bending and bowing a bit, understand that your hard work has paid off! If not, then you need to get more organised. Either way, there's work to be done.

TAURUS

The competitive streak in you might relent today as you look for a lifestyle that is more relaxed and laid-back. The rat race is tiring and you will feel the urge to get away, far from the maddening crowd and the never-ending routine. Matters pertaining to your home may also occupy some of your time today, says Ganesh.

GEMINI

Today, the bond that you share with your friends will get stronger. You are also likely to fall in love. If you are already in a relationship, you will plan to validate your bond either through an engagement or marriage. If you are a student, this is a good phase for you.

CANCER

You will be quite sharp at work, and equally penetrating in the matters of the heart. Though, you may temporarily lose focus, your mind will bring you back to the real world. You will work at a break-neck speed, only to be able to spend as much time as possible with your sweetheart.

LEO

Few and rare are the days when creativity takes flight. After all, even Picasso couldn't make a masterpiece every day. So make the most of this auspicious day, urges Ganesh, during which your imagination peaks and touches new heights. Especially those in the media shall hit upon a new level in their imaginative capabilities.

VIRGO

You will start the day by scribbling down things to do. But don't just jot them down; instead, set realistic goals and prioritise them. Items you mark highest will demand quick actions, cautions Ganesh.

LIBRA

It's a spiritual and harmonious mood that grips you today, feels Ganesh. You may want to focus on meditation, as you essentially seek peace. This may have something to do with the fact that at work, your subordinates may attempt to throw around their weight to force you to make drastic changes. But do not let it bother you too much.

SCORPIO

It is more than likely that you will find yourself in a tricky situation today, says Ganesh. You may start the day feeling lonely and yet, at the same time, you will have some responsibility that will prevent your from showing it.

SAGITTARIUS

Stay stern, says Ganesh, as it might be necessary to exercise your grit to get the desired results today. Your presence may be dominating at the workplace, but your subordinates will find your manner pleasing as you hold them in awe of you. Do not get carried away by your success or the tables may turn, suggests Ganesh.

CAPRICORN

You will prioritise your needs, and the most critical would be the need to manage finances to save for the future. Also, the company you choose to keep will reflect the kind of person you are. So, beware of who you befriend, warns Ganesh.

AQUARIUS

Today, you will have a lot of fun with your siblings! Though generally well-organised and methodical, you will enjoy going with the flow of what your siblings and friends plan for you. Sometimes, spontaneity is a good thing, says Ganesh.

PISCES

There are indications you will be in hot pursuit of leisure today, says Ganesh. This will probably be in the form of a short trip to recharge your batteries, and is probably fuelled by your satisfaction in the realisation that the role you play within your organisation is consequential, satisfying as well as rewarding.

Taapsee shares her blessed experience

Mumbai: Actress Taapsee Pannu talks about reuniting with filmmaker Anubhav Sinha for one of the short



films which is part of his anthology movie.

She shares her experience of working with Anubhav Sinha after *Thappad* and *Mulk* and also unveils the concept of the short film directed by Sudhir Mishra with pandemic as a backdrop.

Taapsee says: "The story is unique and never done before, it's a socio-political drama that spans across two generations with the pandemic as the backdrop. I couldn't be more thrilled to be working with a brilliant filmmaker like Sudhir Sir who is so solid with his craft."

"And mostly it feels like homecoming working again with Anubhav Sir and Bhushan Sir. Anubhav Sir knows how to channel the best in me. Being surrounded by masterful filmmakers like these is a blessed experience," she adds.

"The narrative is a layered one talking about human relationships against the pandemic serving as a backdrop. I am so glad to be reuniting with Taapsee for this one. She is perceptive and brings her own to every character she plays. She is the kind of actor who infuses her roles with a lived-in experience, making the story even more relatable," says Anubhav.



OTT helps Bobby connect with new generation

Mumbai: Even though he was one of the favourites of the '90s, actor Bobby Deol has found a new generation of audience through some of his successful web films and web series in the last two years.

He made his OTT debut in 2020 with a Netflix film *Class of 83* and web series *Aashram*. Both of them were well received. His latest release on ZEE5 is a feature film titled *Love Hostel*, a Shanker Raman directorial, that also features - Sanya Malhotra and Vikrant Massey.

According to Bobby, he is also growing as a creative person because of working with youngsters. "I think the

new generation of actors, directors, writers have a very unique approach towards their work. I love that about them. Yes, at times it also makes me smile," he said.

Sharing one of such instances, Bobby said, "Before we started the shooting for *Love Hostel*, in the hostel where we were staying, one evening Sanya and Vikrant came to meet me in my room. That was the first time we were meeting. Both of them were just going on and on about how they used to dance to those songs of *Soldier, Humraaz*... They are very sweet and at the same time professional with their work. I like such enthusiasm." IANS

Alia steals hearts as Gangubai

Bhansali astutely manages to put his inimitable stamp into every frame of the film, which appears like poetry on screen, emotionally expressive and attractive

Auteur Sanjay Leela Bhansali's latest oeuvre, *Gangubai Kathiawadi* is based on the chapter, The Matriarch of Kamatipura from the book *Mafia Queens of Mumbai - Stories of Women from the Ganglands* authored by S Hussain Zaidi and Jane Borges.

This is the compelling story of Ganga Harjivandas Kathiawadi, the daughter of a barrister from Kathiawar, who with stardust in her eyes, ran away from home to become an actress only to find herself sold in the brothel of Kamatipura, a neighbourhood of Mumbai famous for flesh-trade. This film unravels Ganga's journey from a brothel worker to an activist fighting for the rights of the sex workers.

The film is loaded with admirable performances from its ace star cast.

The film is an outright Alia Bhatt's canvas where she delivers a flawless performance showcasing a gamut of emotions and her



dancing skills with aplomb. She steals the show on several counts, be it while speaking to her mother over the phone, or headbutting with Raziabai (Vijay Raaz) the eunuch who is standing for the local elections. It is impossible to take your eyes off Ajay Devgn who, in a signifi-

cantly minor role as the principled mafia don Rahimlala is intense and intimidating all at the same time. Similarly, Vijay Raaz as the eunuch Raziabai is enthralling, and Shantanu Maheshwari as Gangubai's love interest Afshan Razak is charming. Unfortunately, Huma Qureshi in a stage per-

DIRECTOR
Sanjay Leela Bhansali
CAST
Alia Bhatt, Ajay Devgn, Huma Qureshi, Seema Pahwa, Vijay Raaz and others

formance is wasted. This engaging biopic contains all the tropes of a typical SLB film. Bhansali astutely manages to put his inimitable stamp into every frame of the film, which appears like poetry on the screen, emotionally expressive and attractive. The screenplay is water-tight and engaging, keeping you riveted to the screen for over two and a half hours.

Mounted with brilliant production qualities the film is visually captivating with well-etched characters, resplendent sets, and period costumes.

Overall, *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, is worth watching on the big screen. IANS

SAMARPAN - DAY 2 Baul artistes hold music lovers spellbound



Baul artistes Vidushi Ila (L) and Ayushi Biswas performed at Rabindra Mandap, Friday

Bhubaneswar: Renowned Baul artistes of Bengal and Sufi singers from Rajasthan captivated the music lovers here at Rabindra Mandap, Thursday, on the second evening of Samarpan 2022, the 10th annual event of Bhubaneswar Music Circle. The three-day event, showcasing Sufi and devotional songs, is being organised in collaboration with Odisha Tourism.

The programme began with a Sufi number by Jenab Yar Mohammad Langa and group. Their first presentation was *Allah Ho* followed by some other traditional songs of Rajasthan. Langa was accompanied by Jenab Faruk Khan,

Yasin Khan, Bundu Khan and Shakir Khan. Yar Mohammad Langa's Sufiana Kalam also struck a chord with the audience present in the auditorium.

On the concluding segment, Baul artistes Vidushi Ila and Ayushi Biswas mesmerised the music aficionados with their soulful renditions. They were accompanied by Kanai Mandal on flute, Partha Ghosh on tabla and dhol, Bikash Sharma on harmonium and Chandan Das on dotara.

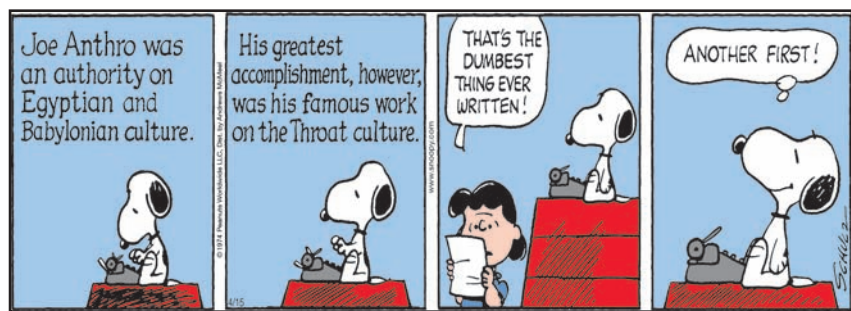
Baul singers move around different places to spread the message of universal love through this folk music. The festival will conclude Saturday. PNN



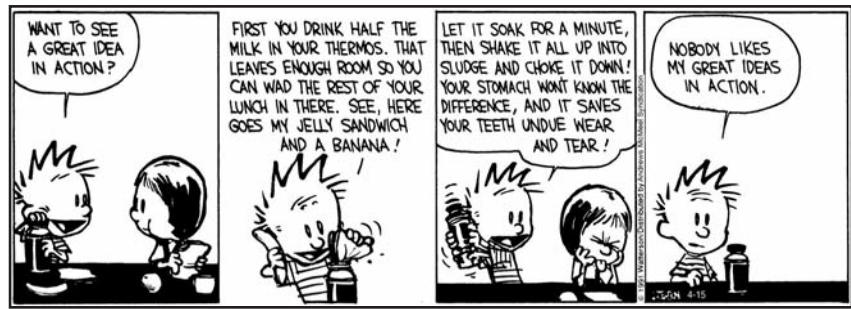
A rendition by Rajasthani Sufi singers

FUN post

PEANUTS



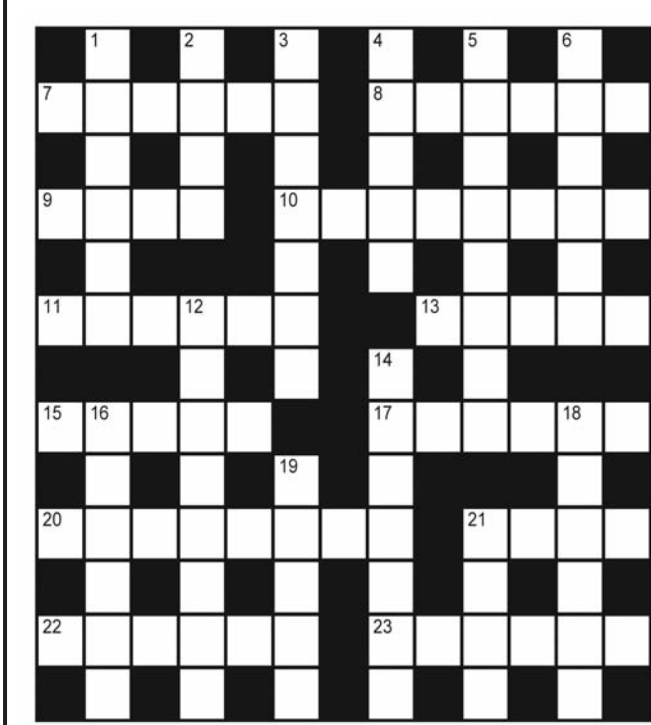
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



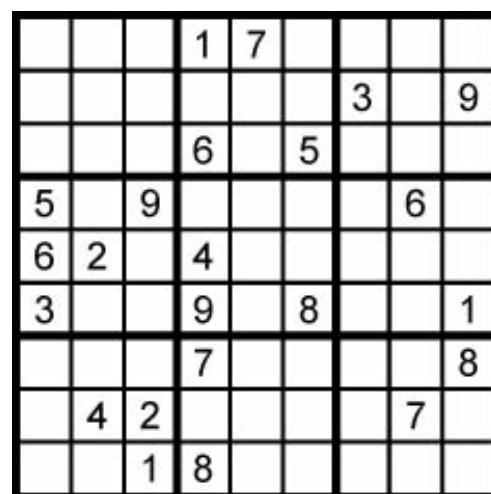
CROSSWORD



Across
7 Castle feature
8 Fresh
9 Curved molding
10 Umpires
11 Central American country
13 Bone-chilling
15 Sharp as a tack
17 Room offenders
20 Extremely hot day
21 Give as an example
22 Face cards
23 Cause chagrin
Down
1 Break into a house
2 French cheese
3 Agitated
4 Swig
5 Nourishing food
6 Sana'a native
12 Cyberspace
14 Cigar
16 Desert plant
18 Hidden
19 Great divide
21 Bistro

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



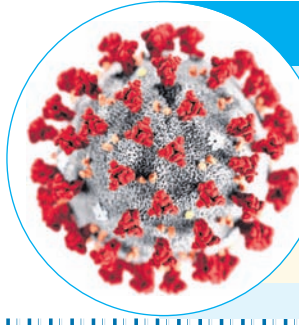
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



WORKERS' STIR

Contractual workers of NRRI in Cuttack stage a sit-in for fulfillment of their various demands, Friday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	43,27,30,690	36,20,12,517	59,50,920
India	4,28,94,345	4,22,46,884	5,13,226
Odisha	12,84,323	12,71,843	9,052

I always try to beat challenges with innovations: Gupta

Gupta Power Infrastructure Ltd (GPIL) is one of the pioneers in the manufacturing of electrical and electronic goods, cables and lighting instruments in the state. In a free-wheeling talk with Orissa POST, GPIL Chairman & Managing Director Mahendra Gupta speaks about his journey, business plans and many more things.



Can you elaborate on your involvement in the business?

I was born into a business family having links with food processing. My father Late Jagdish Raiji Gupta has always been my greatest inspiration. He was known for his integrity and commitment. He was involved in various philanthropic works across the country. I always wanted to follow in his footsteps and become a successful businessman. After completion of formal education, I was involved in our family business. Initially, I was looking after our core business of wheat processing. Thereafter, we took over Gupta Cables Private Limited (now Gupta Power Infrastructure Limited). I have been heading this business since 1974.

What were the key opportunities to take your business forward?

The economy was growing when I entered the cable business. At the time of my takeover, this unit was very small and was producing house wires. I got an opportunity to manufacture conductors as a lot of investment was coming to Odisha for improvement in power distribution. I did not look back once I started conductor manufacturing. At GPIL, we always put emphasis on constant improvement and diversification of products for our success.

What are your greatest achievements?

Receiving the Best Entrepreneur Award from the Union government for three consecutive years has been one of my greatest achievements. Apart from that, I have been presented with the Business Leadership Award by Chief Minister of Odisha. Recently,



Gupta Power was the winner of the Best Supplier of ACSR Conductor from Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd. It was awarded as Best Company in the fields of import & export.

What were the biggest challenges before you and how you overcame them?

In our business, competition is the biggest challenge. However, we focus on maintaining our quality. That's why I always try to overcome challenges with innovations. We have upgraded ourselves with cutting-edge microprocessor-based equipment, stage inspection space and computerised spectrometer for instant metal analysis. Our R&D section usually develops solutions for diverse needs. We ensure that every innovation is tested and certified for usage under the harshest of condition. This reduces production flaws and enables us to provide world-class products and services at competitive prices.

What do you love the most in your job?

I strive to set the highest standard of quality in everything. I always want to drive towards the NEXT great things! I love to break new ground. My passion for quality gives me the courage to reach beyond my comfort zone and try for innovative and unconventional ideas.

What way are you different from your competitors?

I and my team follow five principles to differentiate ourselves from our competitors. a) Product Differentiator: We always try to innovate, manufacture and market new products with new technology for remaining the frontrunner in the market. b) Price Differentiator: We believe in fair pricing and payment terms. c) Quality Differentiator: We always strive for best quality of our products, better than our competitors. d) Service Differentiator: We give utmost importance to service calls of our customers. e) Relationship Differentiator: We always believe in maintaining a harmonious relationship with our customers.

How do you maintain good relationship with your key partners and suppliers?

We and our suppliers are aware of our responsibilities to our clients and end-users. Understanding our responsibilities and maintaining open lines of communication with our suppliers is the key to our strong partnership. Product definition, price, payment terms, delivery terms, and agreement period are all included in a transparent and consistent supplier relationship agreement. We work with our suppliers to create a well-documented contract that meets the needs of all parties. As a result, there will be less uncertainty and fewer future conflicts. Both parties recognise and uphold their commitments in a positive contract relationship. The best way to ensure this is to use vendor contracts that lay out the terms of your relationship.

Integrity is the foundation for everything I do. What I always admire and preach is commitment to honesty, trust, and transparency. I tell my team to do the right thing even when no one is watching. Integrity creates trust. As an organisation, it's our most valuable asset. I believe in honesty, fairness and respect for clients and colleagues alike. Maintaining the quality of products, being friendly and helpful with the employees and above all keeping the trust of persons associated with our business have been helping GPIL to move forward.

How would you describe your leadership style?

Integrity is the foundation for everything I do. What I always admire and preach is commitment to honesty, trust, and transparency. I tell my team to do the right thing even when no one is watching. Integrity creates trust. As an organisation, it's our most valuable asset. I believe in honesty, fairness and respect for clients and colleagues alike. Maintaining the quality of products, being friendly and helpful with the employees and above all keeping the trust of persons associated with our business have been helping GPIL to move forward.

How did Covid affect your business plans and what was your response?

Covid-19 has brought a lot of trouble for the entire world. It has shattered the industry in every possible manner. But challenges often provide us opportunities. This has become true for Covid-19 also. The pandemic has resulted in exponential growth for two sectors- telecom and health. As the global economy continues to reel from the shock and the lasting impact of the pandemic, 'work from home' and 'social distancing' have become the buzzword in today's business landscape, with the telecom sector being the invisible hand driving this shift. This is why I thought to enter telecom sector and start manufacturing optical fibre cables.

Any other key points you'd like to highlight?

Yes, I would like to reveal that Gupta Power has started diversifying into manufacturing of optical fibre cable, LED/solar lights, HTLS conductors, railway signalling cables and catenary wires which are in high demand. The prime focus of the central government is on Digital India initiative. Thus IT/ICT/OFC laying projects are coming up across the country. We are already working on expanding our business in the IT/ICT/Telecom vertical. We have collaborated with Canada-based IBI Group, a pioneer in this field.

BMC to close Covid centres as cases fall

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: In the wake of a continuous drop in daily Covid cases in the capital city, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Friday decided to close down all Covid Care Centres (CCCs) under its jurisdiction from February 28.

The authorities have also decided to bring down the number of Covid beds at SUM and Aswini to 70 and 30 respectively

With the sharp drop in daily Covid cases and announcement of dates for the upcoming municipal elections by the State Election Commission (SEC), the BMC has decided to close down all CCCs to divert manpower and resources for the smooth conduct of the polls, sources said.

"We have issued notice to close down the Covid wings of Hitech and KIMS Medical College and Hospitals in Bhubaneswar. Apart from this, the authorities have also decided to bring down the number of Covid beds at SUM Hospital and Aswini Hospital to 70 and 30 respectively," said a BMC official.

It can be mentioned here that



PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

State logs 345 new cases

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar: State's Covid-19 tally rose to 12,84,323 Friday as 345 more people, including 111 children, tested positive for the infection, a health bulletin said.

The state's coronavirus death toll rose to 9,052 as seven more patients succumbed to the infection in Bargarh district. The state had logged 339 Covid-19 cases and zero

deaths Thursday.

Odisha now has 3,375 active cases, while 12,71,843 patients have recovered from the infection, including 825 in the last 24 hours. Besides, 53 other coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities so far.

The state has tested 53,640 samples for Covid-19 in the last 24 hours, it said, adding, the daily positivity rate stood at 0.64 per cent.

The civic authorities had arranged Covid care facilities at Sparsh Hospital, Kalinga Institute of Dental Sciences (KIDS), Sanjivani and Blue Wheel Hospital to reduce the burden on dedicated Covid hospitals (DCHs) as the city witnessed a sharp rise in daily cases in

January this year.

The city reported only 24 new cases Friday while 51 people recovered from the infection, BMC sources said. Only six cases were reported from quarantine centres and the remaining 18 were local contact cases, sources added.

MAHA SHIVRATRI

Devotees to be allowed from Singhadwara to Aada Katha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: Ahead of Maha Shivratri March 1, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Friday issued a set of guidelines for celebration of the festival at Lingaraj Temple in the city.

As per guidelines, the concerned servants of the temple shall perform rituals of the deity by observing COVID appropriate behavior like wearing of masks and social distancing.

"Devotees will be allowed darshan of Lord Lingaraj from Singhadwara to Aada Katha on the occasion. There will be no puja during darshan near Aada Katha by the devotees. Sahamela darshan/Garvagraha darshan will not be allowed on the day of Maha Shivratri. The devotees will have to maintain social distance at all times during the event," the guidelines said.



FILE PHOTO

The BMC also stated that the temple authorities will ensure that only those many devotees are allowed inside the temple premises so that social distancing of six feet is maintained at all times.

"All the devotees shall have to wear masks appropriately at all times during the occasion. Provision of hand washing/hand sanitizer for the devotees will be ensured by the temple authorities. Spitting inside and outside the temple premises

and chewing of pan/gutkha has been strictly prohibited," it added

Those with SARS/ILI like symptoms shall not be allowed to the temple. Other vulnerable groups of people such as persons with comorbidities, elderly persons, pregnant women and children below 12 have been advised to avoid the event. Any kind of mela/congregation of temporary vendors that will cause gathering has been prohibited outside the temple premises.

Centre releases ₹411cr to state for ULBs

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 25: The Department of Expenditure under the Ministry of Finance Friday released Rs 411 crore to Odisha for providing grants to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

Odisha is among the six states to which the Centre released an amount of Rs 1,348.10 crore for the purpose. Rs 112.20 crore was released to Jharkhand, Rs 375 crore to Karnataka, Rs 168 crore to Kerala, Rs 267.90 crore to Tamil Nadu and Rs 14 crore to Tripura, it was learnt. With this, the Centre has released Rs 822 crore to Odisha in the current financial year. The grants released were meant for non-million plus cities, including Cantonment Boards.

In its report for 2021-22 to 2025-26, the 15th Finance Commission has divided the ULBs into two categories—million-plus urban agglomerations/cities (excluding Delhi and Srinagar) and all other cities and towns with less than one million population (non-million plus cities). It has recommended separate grants for them.

Out of the total grants recommended by the commission for non-million plus cities, 40 per cent is basic (untied) grant and the remaining 60 per cent is tied grant.



With this, the Centre has released Rs 822 crore to Odisha in the current financial year. The grants released were meant for non-million plus cities, including Cantonment Boards

"Basic grants (untied) are utilised for location specific felt needs, except for payment of salary and incurring other establishment expenditure. Tied grants, on the other hand, are released for supporting and strengthening the delivery of basic services. Out of the total tied grant, 50 per cent is earmarked for 'sanitation solid waste management and the remaining 50 per cent for 'drinking water, rainwater harvesting and water recycling,' said an official.

8 in 10 Indians using mobile banking apps in pandemic

AGENCIES

More than eight in 10 Indians with a bank account in metro cities now use mobile banking apps that saw a surge amid the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a new report.

Mobile banking apps are the most popular banking channel in Asia, with 83 per cent of metro Indian and 78 per cent of metro Chinese online adults with bank accounts using their mobile banking app at least monthly, according to global market research firm Forrester.

"The pandemic has redefined how customers engage with banks and accelerated digital transformation in banking," the report added. The ATM use is in decline as digital payments soar and the Covid-19 pandemic has driven consumers towards digital payments.

Fintech and tech giants disrupt the industry by innovating with technology.

"Tech titans Amazon, Ant Group, Apple, Google, Meta, Ping An, and Tencent are using digital technologies like mobile, cloud, application programming interfaces, real-time data, and flexible architecture to enable collabora-



PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

ATM use is in decline as digital payments soar and the Covid-19 pandemic has driven consumers towards digital payments

tion and together build broader platforms and ecosystem businesses," said the report.

However, banks are struggling to transform fast. "Many banks now acknowledge that digital transformation is never-ending, with 35 per cent of global deci-

sion-makers at banks saying their organisation is expanding their digital transformation and 19 per cent saying they are currently transforming," the report mentioned.

Security is also a concern, with 25 per cent of decision makers at banks saying that security is among the biggest obstacles to execute their digital transformation.

As Covid-19 reshapes customer expectations and competition heats up, a growing number of banks have embraced end-to-end transformation, focusing more on improving their IT to promote agility and innovation, the report noted.

CLASS I TO VII REOPEN FROM FEB 28

Parent-teacher meet in schools today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: Ahead of the reopening of schools for Class I to Class VII February 28, all government and government-aided schools in the state are scheduled to conduct the parent-teacher meeting (PTM) February 26.

Since schools are reopening after almost two years, it has been decided by the state government to hold parent-teacher meetings in all schools February 26, said Odisha School Education Programme Authority (OSEPA) Project Director Anupam Saha. The main purpose of this meeting is to ensure maximum attendance of children at schools, Saha added.

The duration of the meeting shall be for one hour. Flexibility is given to the Headmasters (HMs) to decide the timing of the meeting in the scheduled date without hampering the instructional hours of the school.

The concerned HM may arrange class wise PTMs taking into account the number of participants and availability of space/hall/class room to conduct the meeting. While conducting the meeting, COVID-19 protocols like wearing of masks,

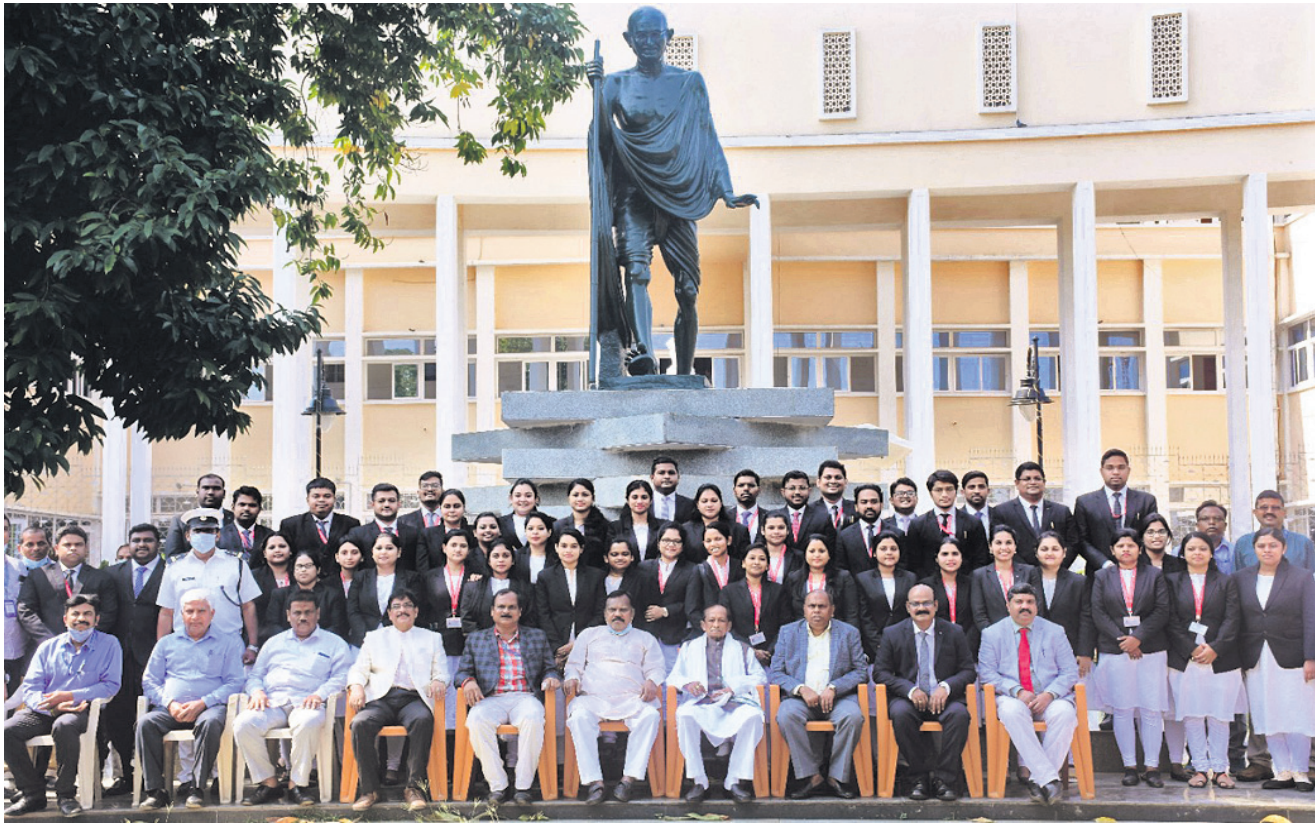
Since schools are reopening after almost two years, it has been decided by the state government to hold parent-teacher meetings February 26

maintaining social distance and use of sanitizers should be followed strictly. To ensure smooth conduct and implementation of PTMs, a detailed agenda is being given to all school HMs. The agenda of PTM meetings will have safety precautions by the schools, importance of back to school and state's plan for post school reopening.

Further, the District Education Officers are requested to form a monitoring team at district/block including DIET Principals, Sr TEs/TEs, all district/block level of officials to ensure effective PTMs conducted by the state.

The district level consolidated data of PTM (block wise) will be submitted to State Project Offices (OSEPA) positively within a week from completion of the PTM.

PHOTO-OP



Assembly Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro, along with the newly-appointed judicial officers, poses for a photo-op on Odisha Legislative Assembly premises in Bhubaneswar, Friday

'Pink Team' to probe fake doctor's frauds

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: The Commissionerate Police has constituted a 'Pink Team' to probe the crimes committed by conman Ramesh Swain, who posed as a doctor, married at least 18 women across the country and duped them of lakhs of rupees, an official said Friday.

Addressing media, police commissioner Saumendra Priyadarsi said keeping in view the varieties of crimes committed by Swain, Bhubaneswar deputy commissioner of police (DCP) has constituted a 'Pink Team' to probe the frauds. "We've included legal advisors, chartered accountants, counsellors and cyber experts in the team to help the investigating officials," Priyadarsi said, adding that an additional DCP-rank officer will monitor the probe.

The police commissioner said Swain has duped the victims to a tune of over Rs 1.50 crore through various fraudulent means. "The modus operandi followed by him



The team, which will be monitored by an additional DCP-rank officer, comprises legal advisors, chartered accountants, counsellors and cyber experts

includes cheating after marrying single or divorcee women in the age group of 40 to 50, offering lucrative jobs to the aspirants and by opening illegal clinics by impersonating a doctor," said Priyadarsi, adding that Swain was also trying to mint money through Covid management in other states.

As many as 14 cases have been registered against Swain so far. "While five related to marrying and cheating gullible women have been filed with the Mahila police, three with Khandagiri police, two each with Bharatpur and Mangalabag police and one case

with Patkura police in Kendrapara. One case has been transferred to a police station at Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh on the basis of point of jurisdiction," said the police commissioner.

Meanwhile, Swain was brought on a three-day remand for further investigation into the frauds. A team of Commissionerate Police is scheduled to visit Kamakshyanagar in Dhenkanal where Swain had an illegal clinic, it was learnt. Police sources also claimed that the investigating official will approach the court for permission to take Swain's sister on remand.

SOA holds FDP on digital transformation

Bhubaneswar: Different aspects of digital transformation and its application in various areas were elaborately discussed at a faculty development programme (FDP) organised at the Institute of Business and Computer Studies (IBCS), faculty of management sciences of SOA here recently. Around 100 participants from different parts of Odisha participated in the FDP. Prof Satyabhushan Dash of Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow, Prof Tapan Kumar Panda, Director of Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Prof BB Mishra of Utkal University and Prof Manit Mishra of International Management Institute, Bhubaneswar were the resource persons in the FDP.

AFFIDAVIT
By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Bhubaneswar. I have changed my name from Niroda Nalini Kumar to Niraja Nalini Kumar. Henceforth I shall be known as Niraja Nalini Kumar for all Purposes.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT
In my Passport my name wrongly mentioned as Biswanath Kushacharan Behera, S/o. - Kusha Behera, instead of Biswanath Behera, S/o. - Kusha Behera, by virtue of an affidavit. I declare that my actual name is Biswanath Behera, At-Kundi, P.O.-Ada, Dist-Balasore, State-Odisha, Pin-756134.

The SURNAME of my wife is wrongly mentioned as DASH instead of PANDA in the records of INDIAN AIR FORCE. By virtue of affidavit, I declare that her actual surname is PANDA and her name is KALYANI PANDA, W/o Tapan Kumar Dash, Vill/Post-Chandrapada, Via-Ada, PS-Simulia, Dist-Balasore, Odisha, Pin-756134.

LOST

Lost my original ROR Patta of MZ-Badagada, Khata- 1494/3373, Plot-4474/5594, Dec-050 name of the Ajaya Ku. Sahoo, S/o Shyama Sahoo. Issue date 20.11.2019 by Bhubaneswar Tahasildar. Contact No. 9439744661.

Protecting basic rights of people is main goal of democracy: Speaker

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: Protecting fundamental rights of people is the main goal of democracy. Justice should be given to both parties involved in the case within the purview of the law, said Surjya Narayan Patro, Speaker of Odisha Legislative Assembly, at the induction training program of 46 newly-appointed judicial officers at the new conference hall of Odisha Legislative Assembly where he also briefed them about the role of legislation.

He told new officers that they should give priority to the mother tongue because 90 per cent of the state's lawyers speak their mother tongue, Odia. Joining the event as the guest of honor, Law Minister Pratap Jena said the judiciary is

properly implementing various laws by the legislature.

Deputy Speaker Rajnikant Singh wished the academics well and said a bill becomes law after a detailed discussion and review by the legislators at the Assembly.

Committee to select best legislator

Speaker Patro had constituted a seven-member committee to select the best legislator in Odisha Legislative Assembly.

The members include Speaker as chairman, Deputy Speaker Rajnikant Singh, MLA Narasingha Mishra, MLA Debi Prasad Mishra, ex-MLA Prafulla Chandra Ghadei, ex-MLA Nagendra Kumar Pradhan and senior journalist Sriram Das.

Expo showcases 7 decades of science & tech

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: On the occasion of 75 years of India's independence, an exhibition titled "India's Achievements in Science and Technology" was inaugurated by Sudhakar Panda, Director of National Institute for Science Education and Research (NISER), Friday at Regional Science Centre, Bhubaneswar.

This exhibition is a joint initiative of National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) and Vigyan Prasara. The exhibition was organised to showcase India's achievements in science and technology in 75 years of India's Independence under the Centre's flagship programme "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav".

The exhibition takes a visitor through an absorbing journey of seven decades of science and technology in independent India with



a special emphasis on indigenous development and march towards self-reliance in a story telling mode with the help of visuals and graphic panels.

On the occasion Panda said India has a rich legacy of Science and Technology, medicine, astronomy and also pioneer of various technologies like zinc melting, urban planning, rain water harvesting. India's Sushruta is considered as a beacon of medical surgery and

Charaka first showed the healing system using medicinal property of herbal compound. India's achievement in Science and Technology during pre independence colonial era was tremendous and conducive environment for Science and Technology would produce noble laureate like C.V. Raman. On the occasion of his scientific discovery, we celebrate National Science Day on 28th February every year.

India's scientific community faced tremendous challenge immediately after independence to find solution to grow agricultural product so that it could provide food to every Indian. Science rock star of post independence era Homi Bhabha first took initiative of harnessing energy from atomic portion and Vikram Sarabhai laid the foundation stone of India's space programme. The story of exhibition is not exhaustive but indicative. Students of Bhubaneswar can benefit by having a view of the exhibition to know more about our legacy in Science and Technology.

In the inaugural programme, Chief Guest Sudhakar Panda ignited young minds through a pep talk and emphasized on the need of conceptual understanding of science. The inaugural programme was attended by school students, teachers, general visitors, press and media and dignitaries.

Govt promoting research for using plastic waste in steel-making: Min

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: Union Steel Minister RCP Singh said Friday that the government was promoting research on using plastic waste in steel-making to create an environment-friendly "waste-to-wealth" model.

Singh inaugurated a two-day conference of ministers of mines and industries from states at Konark in Odisha, according to an official release. During the nearly five-hour-long session, organised by the Steel Ministry, deliberations were held on mining, steel sector and issues put forth by the Union and state governments.

The objective of the conference

was to provide the mineral-rich states an opportunity to present and deliberate on matters related to mining leases, environmental clearance of ongoing and new mining projects.

The steel minister highlighted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of creating wealth from waste. He said research to use plastic waste in steel-making was being explored by various companies.

"We are promoting research and development using plastic waste in steel making. It will create environment-friendly 'waste-to-wealth' model," he said.

Singh held discussions on creating an environment where the states and the ministry of steel

could work together to realise India's vision of 300 million tonnes of steel production by 2030.

The minister highlighted that only those companies, which could leverage social capital positively and were ready to give back to the local population, would be able to gain in the long run.

Odisha Steel Minister Prafulla Mallik said the government was doing everything to support an 'al-ready-conducive' environment for mineral exploitation in the state. Singh also visited the Sun Temple, a Unesco World Heritage Site.

"Glad to learn that this temple is built with state of art Kalinga architecture style," he tweeted.

Truck lifters' gang busted; five held

AGENCIES

Cuttack, Feb 25: Chauliaganj police here Friday busted a truck lifters' gang by arresting five of its operatives from Bidyadharpur area.

The accused were identified as Sunil Parida, Pratap Pradhan, Rajendra Kumar Naik, Gouranga Sahu and Babu Khan. Rs 5.4 lakh cash was recovered from them.

About the modus operandi, police said after stealing a truck, the gang members would seek the help of a professional cutter to dismantle the vehicle.

Thereafter, the dismantled parts would find their way to scrap dealers. From a single truck, they would earn anything between Rs 1.6 lakh and Rs 2 lakh.

Hemananda Biswal, state's 1st tribal chief minister, dies at 82

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: Former chief minister and prominent tribal Congress leader Hemananda Biswal died while undergoing treatment for pneumonia at a private health-care facility here Friday, family members said. He was 82.

He was suffering from pneumonia and is survived by five daughters- Sabita, Sanjukya, Manjulata, Sunita and Anita.

Biswal also represented Sundargarh Constituency in the Lok Sabha, and was a six-time MLA from Jharsuguda district, besides being the state's chief minister twice. He was elected chief minister for the first time for the period December 7, 1989 to March

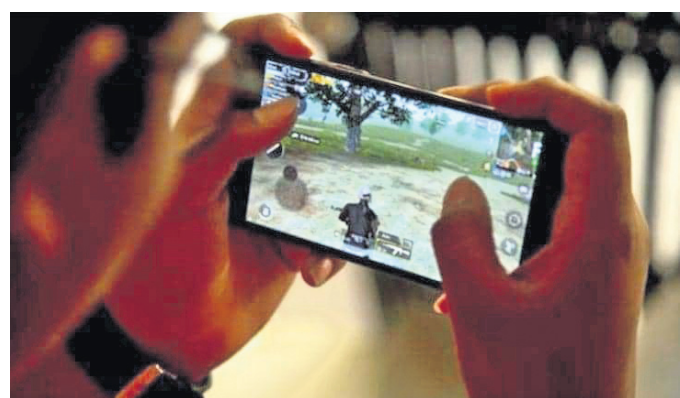
5, 1990 and again from December 6, 1999 to March 5, 2000. Biswal was the first tribal chief minister of Odisha. He was elected to the Assembly for the first time in 1974 and continued till 1977. Later he became an MLA in 1980 and held the post till 2004 from Laikera Assembly segment. Biswal started his career from panchayat politics after a brief stint as a school teacher in Jharsuguda.

Condolence poured in after the news broke. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and OPEC president Niranjan Patnaik were among those who condoled Biswal's demise.

Indian kids, teens more vulnerable than ever to smartphone threats

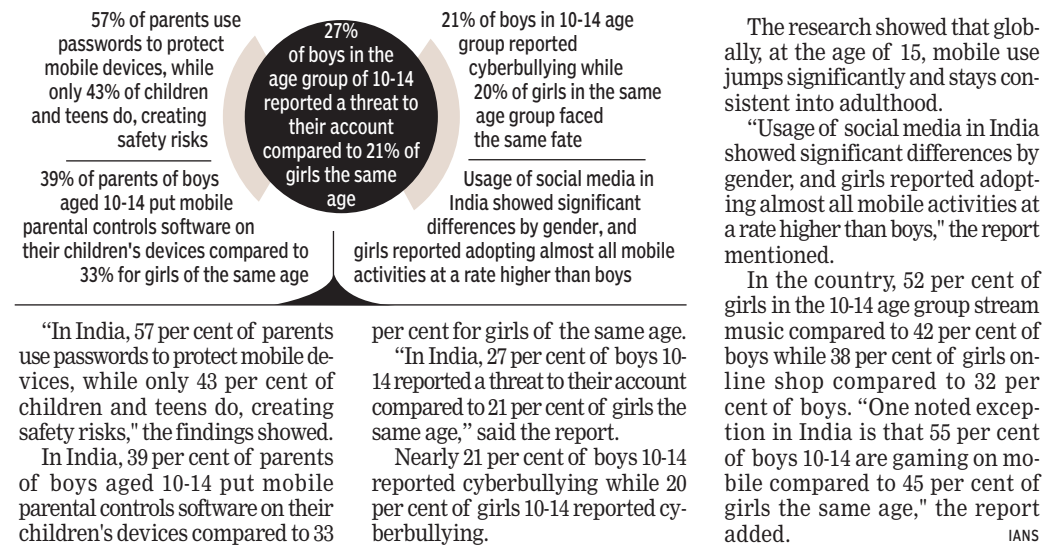
Children and teenagers are more vulnerable than ever to sophisticated mobile threats in India as the level of disconnect that exists between generations over how safe mobile devices are and how vulnerable consumers are to threats on those devices has increased significantly, a new report has shown.

As smartphones replace PCs/laptops as the primary device, a high level of trust in smartphone security exists among Indian children and teens, but is coupled with a low level of protection, even though risk is at an all-time high, revealed the '2022 Consumer Mobile Threat Report' by cyber-security research firm McAfee. "As our use of mobile devices



rapidly increases, we must remember that a mobile device is a connected device, just like a computer," said Gagan Singh, McAfee Executive Vice President, Chief

Product and Revenue Officer. In India, most children (75 per cent) think a new phone is more secure than a new computer, whereas only 71 per cent of parents agree.



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FARM MECHANISATION



A field demonstration of bullock-drawn four-row seed drill for millets was held at Karada village under Raikia block in Kandhamal district, Friday. The machine was developed by Department of Farm Machinery and Power Engineering College of OUAT, Bhubaneswar

SHORT TAKES

OMVD ASI under Vigilance scanner

Jharsuguda: Vigilance officials Friday carried out simultaneous searches at six places linked to an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) of Odisha Motor Vehicle Department (OMVD) in Jharsuguda district. The ASI was identified as Harekrushna Nayak. Raids were initiated early in the morning based on allegation that Nayak had amassed assets disproportionate to his known sources of income, said Vigilance sources. The Vigilance raids were underway in Cuttack, Puri, Jharsuguda and Ganjam districts on the strength of a search warrant issued by the Special Vigilance Judge in Cuttack.

Cash looted; ATM torched

Rupsa: Miscreants have looted cash worth lakhs from an ATM counter before setting it afire at Rajghat under Basta police limits in Balasore district late Thursday night. Some locals spotted the ATM burning in the morning and informed police who along with fire services personnel rushed to the spot and doused fire. Police said, miscreants had cut open the ATM box with gas cutters and decamped with cash.

Silk City wakes up to ghastly murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 25: In a gruesome incident, an elderly woman was found murdered by unidentified miscreants at her residence on Lane-7 of Alakapuri under Berhampur police limits early this morning. The deceased was identified as Suraja Behera, 60, wife of a retired government employee Bijay Behera, police said.



The incident has left the people of Silk City in a state of shock as the motive of the murder is yet to be ascertained

locked from outside. Later, he broke open the door with the help of his neighbours and was shocked to see her wife lying in a pool of blood on the bed. Her wrist and neck had deep injuries. Bijay immediately informed police about the incident. SP Pinak Mishra also visited the crime scene to take stock. The household articles and gold jewellery of Suraja were found to be intact, police said. After preliminary investigation, police have denied the pos-

PROBE BEGINS

It is suspected that either loot or past enmity could be the reason behind the crime. The mystery behind the murder will be unravelled once her cell phone is found, police said

their son Rashmi Ranjan Behera nearly a month ago. Rashmi is now staying in Bhubaneswar along with his wife. Thursday evening, Bijay was out for some work in the city. Later, he called his wife but did not pick up the phone. He returned home at around 9pm and was found the main door of his house

sibility of loot. However, the mobile phone of the deceased was missing. Meanwhile, the body has been sent for post-mortem and a murder case registered at Sadar police station in this regard. The mystery behind the murder will be unravelled once her cell phone is found, police said.

Human sacrifice cry as boy goes missing

The missing minor has been identified as Dibakar, 7-year-old son of late Bijaya Purti

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hatadihi, Feb 25: Hundreds of residents of Rugudia-Khani Bazaar under Soso police limits in Keonjhar Friday ransacked a school after the garments of a missing minor boy were found on its premises.

Meanwhile, family members and villagers have alleged that the child might have been killed as part of human sacrifice. The missing minor has been identified as Dibakar, seven-year-old son of late Bijaya Purti. Dibakar was staying with his paternal aunt Sunamani Purti after his mother abandoned him fol-

lowing the death of his father around four years ago. Dibakar was a student of Class II of Rugudia Primary School in the village. All of a sudden, he went missing Wednesday while playing inside the school premises. However, as the boy did not return home, the family members launched a frantic search for him at all possible locations, but to no avail. "My nephew Dibakar was at home when I went out for work. However, I found him missing when I returned home," Sunamani said. Subsequently, garments of the missing child were spotted by some locals on the school premises. This

incident stoked suspicion among the villagers that a contractor who was working in the locality and digging a canal had sacrificed the boy. Tension prevailed in Rugudia over the incident as irate villagers set afire a few machines of the construction firm. Soso police rushed to the spot and placated the villagers. Meanwhile, police have registered a kidnap case (No-29/2022) and started an investigation into the incident. "The school was earlier closed. Some workers of the construction company used to stay on the school premises," Soso IIC Upendranath Dash said.

Ganjam samiti member remains untraceable

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, Feb 25: Mami Das, samiti member of Subalaya panchayat under Ganjam block, who was elected uncontested in the freshly-concluded rural polls has gone missing. This has triggered tension in the area.

Hundreds of locals came a long way to Chhatrapur and staged protests in front of the SP office, Friday. They alleged that the chairperson of the Ganjam block is behind the missing of Das. The agitating people demanded immediate steps to rescue the missing samiti member. They also submitted a memorandum to the SP.

Now, strawberry to sweeten Kotia

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, Feb 25: Villagers in Kotia panchayat under Pottangi block of Koraput district have turned to strawberry cultivation to find sweet returns for their home and hearth, said sources.

The villagers of Doliamba under the panchayat have taken up the farming of the juicy fruit under the intervention of the district administration of Koraput.

Strawberry cultivation in Kotia panchayat assumes significance under amidst increasing threat of incursions by Andhra Pradesh officials in the panchayat. The neighbouring state is trying to encroach upon Kotia panchayat by offering various sops and through implementation of developmental projects.

At this juncture, strawberry cultivation has rekindled hopes among the villagers to live a life of dignity and fulfillment. The district administration too hopes that this cultivation done in organic method will make them self-reliant by increasing their profits manifold and in generating jobs for the villagers in coming days.



SELF-RELIANCE MOVE

The neighbouring Andhra Pradesh is trying to encroach upon Kotia panchayat by offering various sops and through implementation of developmental projects. At this juncture, strawberry cultivation has rekindled hopes of the villagers to live a life of dignity and fulfillment. The district administration too hopes that this cultivation done in organic method will make them self-reliant by increasing their profits manifold and in generating jobs for the villagers in coming days.

ious schemes in Kotia panchayat bordering Andhra Pradesh to help the villagers earn a livelihood for a better living without any dependence on the neighbouring state. Directed by Collector Abadal M Akhtar, the integrated tribal development agency (ITDA) has

about the commercial feasibility of strawberry cultivation. As the farming is new to the area, the district arranged field visits for the locals, organised shows on documentaries, prepared information brochure and provided all help for drip irrigation in the area.

"At the outset, strawberry saplings were brought from Pune and planted on five acre of land. The fruits have been harvested and efforts are being made to sell them outside at proper price," Kashi Prasad Nayak, district project coordinator of ITDA said. He said ₹35 lakh has been spent on the cultivation of strawberry which sells at ₹400-500 per kg in the market. Talks are on with various wholesalers to sell the fruit at ₹250 per kg so that the farmers will get the right price for their produce.

Meanwhile, a team of Andhra officials visited Patuineri village in Kotia panchayat Wednesday and held talks with the villagers on marketing of harvested turmeric and tamarind of the villagers. The team comprising additional project director of DRDA Y Satya, Salur block APM Jayamma and CC Nirmala assured the villagers to ensure proper price of their produce in Andhra market.

Bogus voting in Patana alleged

POST NEWS NETWORK

Patana, Feb 25: Votes have been cast in the name of some dead people and outsiders during the last phase of panchayat elections at two booths of Damahuda panchayat under Saharpada block in Keonjhar district, it was alleged Friday.

Sarpanch candidate Shibani Champia has levelled this allegation before the block election officer. She also alleged that more than 100 per cent polling was recorded at two booths Thursday. She has demanded re-polling at the two booths. She pointed out that ward no-9 has 230 voters, but surprisingly 250 people have cast their votes Thursday. Besides, ward no-10 has 214 voters while 220 people have cast their votes.

When contacted, block election officer Lambodar Khuntia said steps can be taken only after opening of the ballot boxes and ascertaining the number of ballot papers.

Sonepur samiti member candidates go into hiding

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, Feb 25: While people of Subarnapur district are eagerly waiting for panchayat poll results, many samiti member candidates have gone into hiding ahead of the election to the block chairman and vice chairman posts in the district.

Reports said, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has been trying to settle the candidates of its party as chairmen and vice chairmen in six blocks.

It is said that many samiti member candidates of Sonepur and Birmaharajpur areas have joined the camps of some hopefuls for the post of block chairpersons.

Since Tuesday, most of the samiti members with winning chances have been staying in a camp. They will stay there till results are out.

Lobbying starts for plum posts in Bargarh

MANY SAMITI MEMBER CANDIDATES WITH WINNING CHANCES ARE HOLED UP IN UNDISCLOSED LOCATIONS



RURAL POLLS

ZP CHAIRPERSONS, BLOCK CHAIRPERSONS AND VICE CHAIRPERSONS WILL BE ELECTED ON THE BASIS OF THE WINNING STRENGTH OF THE COMMANDING PARTY

POTENTIAL ASPIRANTS FOR THE POSTS OF CHAIRPERSONS AND VICE CHAIRPERSONS OF ZP, PANCHAYAT SAMITIS AND NAIB SARPANCHS HAVE STARTED LOBBYING BEFORE THE TOP PARTY LEADERS AT THE DISTRICT AND STATE LEVELS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Feb 25: With the three-tier panchayat elections coming to an end, leaders of various political parties have started calculating their winning possibilities in 34 zilla parishad (ZP) zones and 12 panchayat samitis in the district. ZP chairperson, block chairpersons and vice chairpersons will be elected by the party in commanding position on the basis of the winning strength.

Now, potential aspirants for the posts of chairpersons and vice chairpersons of ZP, panchayat samiti and naib sarpanchs have started lobbying before the top party leaders at the district and state levels.

As part of the strategy, some samiti members having winning potential have reportedly gone underground before elections to the posts of block chairpersons and vice chairpersons.

Biju Janata Dal (BJD) is hopeful of forming ZP and panchayat samitis in the district, as all the Assembly segments of the district have been under the ruling party MLAs.

In 2017, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had formed the ZP. This time too, the saffron party has not given up hopes to win maximum number of ZP seats and form the ZP, even though the rul-

ing party has its political clout and base in all the Assembly constituencies.

The post of ZP chairperson has been unreserved. Hence, the lists of hopefuls from the ruling party and the saffron party are long. Some leaders of the Congress are also in the race of lobbying, it is said.

Meanwhile, the block and district level leadership of BJD and BJP have been weighing on the leadership of some able leaders for posts of ZP chairperson, vice chairperson, block chairpersons and vice chairpersons.

Some MLAs have started lobbying for their loyal leaders for the posts of ZP and samiti chiefs to have their clout in the district. There are 12 blocks and 34 ZP seats in the district. Six posts of block chairperson each have been reserved for men and women. Attabira and Bheden blocks are reserved for SC (women) and Bargarh for SC. Jharbandh, Paikamal, Barpalli and Sohela blocks are reserved for women while Ambabhona, Gaisilet, Bijepur and Bhatli blocks are unreserved. Interestingly, most of the samiti members in all these blocks are missing from the scene. They will hold the key for elections to the block chairpersons and vice chairpersons. Similarly, there are several hopefuls in the two major parties for the post of ZP chairperson.



On the eve of counting for panchayat polls, members of various political parties kept a close watch on the strong room at Aska block office in Ganjam, Friday

Ganjam gathers info of students stuck in Ukraine

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, Feb 25: The Ganjam administration has started collecting detailed information about the students stranded in Ukraine, which is under attack from Russia.

The data collection drive will be completed in a couple of days, said Ganjam Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange at a presser here Friday.

He added that all the block development officers (BDOs), the commissioner of Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC), executive officers of the municipalities and notified area councils and labour officials have been involved in the campaign.

All these officials have been asked to contact the family members of the students stranded in Ukraine.

Champua youth stranded

Subham Kumar Sahu, a student of Champua area in Keonjhar district, is stuck in war-torn Ukraine. His father Dillip Kumar Sahu has appealed to the state and the Union governments to rescue his son from there.

Subham has been pursuing medical degree since 2018 in the National Medical University in Ukraine. He along with his friends has been staying in a flat. Though Dillip is in touch with his son over phone, Russian missile attacks on Ukraine have left him terrified.

Table with 6 columns: Name of Share Holder, Kind of Securities and Face Value, No of Securities, Folio No, Certificate No, Distinctive No. Rows include Subhash Chand Shorewala.

NOTICE TATA STEEL LONG PRODUCTS LTD. Registered Office: TATA STEEL LONG PRODUCTS LTD POST JODA, KEONJHAR DISTRICT ORISSA - 758034. EAST COAST RAILWAY APPOINTMENT OF YATRI TICKET SUVIDHA KENDRA (YTSK) OVER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

सेंट्रल इंस्टिट्यूट ऑफ पेट्रोकेमिकल इंजीनियरिंग एंड टेक्नोलॉजी (सिपेट) CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PETROCHEMICALS ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY (CIPET) CENTRE FOR SKILLING AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT (CSTS), BHUBANESWAR. INVITATION FOR QUOTATION

FOCUS EMPLOYMENT

WELCOME MIGRATION

Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi has had to withdraw his derogatory comments against migrant workers from Bihar due to opposition from the people of the State. Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray has made similar derogatory comments against immigrants and his party too has been sidelined by the people of the State. This is not exceptional because migration of workers is beneficial both for the supplier as well as the host state. In course of economic growth there arises an imbalance between the endowments of the different states. Some states have more demand for labourers where other have less and therefore migration creates a balance between them just as if one person has more rotis and the other person has more dal then exchange of some rotis and dal between them creates balance for both the persons. In this context the International Monetary Fund(IMF) has said that migration of both skilled and unskilled labourers is beneficial for both the economies.



About one-third of the engineers in National Aeronautics and Space Administration and of the United States and frontline technical companies like Microsoft are from India

they have to cater to the needs of the immigrant workers. However, I think the cost of such infrastructure development is very small compared to the benefits that the migrant workers provided to Punjab. The migrants are opposed despite these benefits mainly for short term political gains. Politicians can hype up certain emotional issues for their benefit but it is not beneficial for the people of the host states.

The main negative impact of migration is on the brain drain from the supplier states there are large number of IAS officers from Bihar who have built houses in Delhi and have permanently migrated to Delhi thus they deprived their home state of their knowledge they could have brought for the development of Bihar. Similarly, engineers in large number are migrated from India to US and depriving India of that benefit. The question is how to stem this brain drain? This brain drain take place is due to lack of good governance in the supplier states. Businessmen from Bihar today migrate to Surat and set up textile factories there. Workers from Bihar are also migrating to Surat and working in the factory that is established by a businessman from Bihar. Thus, the businessman and worker both are from Bihar yet they are not able to join together to produce something in Bihar. They have to migrate to Surat to connect with each other. This happens because of the poor governance in Bihar. The bureaucracy here is more interested in extracting money from businessmen rather than supporting them. This results in migration from Bihar to Surat. The solution is for the supplier states to improve their governance so that the businessmen and skilled workers remain within the state and contribute to the economic development of the state. It will not work for the supplier states and countries to oppose migration when their own governance is poor. We should welcome migration and focus on improvement of governance in the supplier states and countries.

The author is a former Professor of Economics at IIM, Bangalore

Most developed countries welcome high-skilled immigrant workers. One requirement for the prized H1B visa in the United States is that the applicants should have certain technical skills that are not easily available within the country. The migration of these highly skilled persons adds to the economic growth of the United States. About one-third of the engineers in National Aeronautics and Space Administration and of the United States and frontline technical companies like Microsoft are from India. Migration of unskilled workers also makes a positive contribution to the host economy. The IMF has said that the migration of low skilled workers to a developed country relieves the local people for high-skilled work. For example if a low-skilled worker from Mexico migrates to California, then he drives the tractor, picks the oranges and does other manual works. This releases the high-skilled farmer from having to do these low-skilled works and he can devote his time to doing research on the price in the mar-

ket, getting better seeds, growing vegetables and so on. Similarly, if an unskilled worker from Bihar migrates to Punjab, then he drives the tractor, harvests the paddy and does other manual work. This releases the high-skilled farmer of Punjab from having to do these low-skilled works and he can devote his time to doing research on the price in the market and so on. Another benefit is that migration of unskilled workers enables the farmers of Punjab to cultivate larger area. The immigrant workers can plough and harvest larger areas than the farmer could himself. Yet another benefit is that the wages in the host state decline. Presently the daily wages for an unskilled worker in Manipur are Rs. 1200 per day against Rs. 800 in Punjab because the workers from Bihar are less inclined to migrate to Manipur while they are more inclined to migrate to Punjab. Therefore, the wages are relatively low in Punjab. Consequently, the cost of production of goods is also less and the businesses of Punjab can compete in the national market. Thus, the migration of both skilled and unskilled workers is beneficial

for the host state and countries. Migration is equally beneficial for the supplier state or country. The unemployment is reduced. The daily wages in Bihar are today about Rs. 400 per day because large number of Bihar workers have migrated to other states and the availability of the labour in Bihar has become less. The supply of workers in Bihar would be higher and the wages would decline from the present Rs. 400 to, say, Rs. 300 if the workers had not migrated. The migrant workers also remit large amounts of money to for the upkeep of their families. For example, the economy of Kerala has become largely dependent on remittances from workers who have migrated to the Gulf countries. Therefore, the migration of workers is beneficial both for the host as well as the supplier states and countries. This is the reason that Channi had to withdraw his comments and MNS and Raj Thackeray has been sidelined by the people of Maharashtra. Indeed the migrant workers impose some load on the infrastructure of the host countries. The Punjab health and education system has been stretched because



Bharat Jhunjhunwala

THE IMF HAS SAID THAT THE MIGRATION OF LOW SKILLED WORKERS TO A DEVELOPED COUNTRY RELIEVES THE LOCAL PEOPLE FOR HIGH-SKILLED WORKS

No takers for ATS posts

The once-vaunted Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) of Maharashtra Police seems to have lost its sheen. Many senior cops in the state believe that this was brought on over the past few years by the ongoing political tussle between the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government led by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and BJP-ruled Centre. While some recent high-profile cases have been at the heart of this bitter rivalry, it seems to have led many cops in the state to lose interest in the ATS.

Feeling the pinch of several vacant posts, the state Director General of Police (DGP) Sanjay Pandey surprised many when he posted a message about two vacancies for the post of superintendents in the ATS Mumbai on Facebook. He invited interested candidates to approach the department or contact him through social media. Sources have also informed DKB that the state ATS chief, Vineet Agarwal, similarly, has written to the government seeking more manpower for the squad.

Even though the ATS is considered a prestigious posting and Pandey even dangled the carrot of 25 per cent extra salary by way of allowances, the word is that even his unconventional approach of seeking applicants on social media has failed to find an enthusiastic audience among the cops.

Kerala babu shunted out

The standoff between Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan and the Pinarayi Vijayan government has ended, for now. But for a while it did create an unprecedented situation in which Khan refused to sign the ritualistic Governor's address to the state Assembly, forcing Chief Minister Vijayan to relent to his demand. However, as often seen in such tussles, a senior babu had to pay the price.

KR Jyothilal, Principal Secretary in the state General Administration Department (GAD), has been shunted out since Khan was upset over a letter the babu had sent to Raj Bhavan with the appointment order of Hari Kartha, a BJP leader, as an additional PA to the Governor. Sources have informed DKB that this letter, which started it all, mentioned that the government had approved the appointment of Kartha as per the Governor's wish. But it also conveyed the displeasure of the Chief Minister stating that there was no precedent of appointing political leaders in Raj Bhavan.

The Governor took this as an affront, and it took the intervention of Chief Secretary VP Joy to pacify him and convince Vijayan not to escalate the issue. Jyothilal's exit from GAD is being seen as part of the attempt to end the confrontation amiably.

IAS shortage in Karnataka likely to persist

Last month, when the Centre had sought the opinions of the states on its proposal to amend the IAS Cadre rule, allowing it to pick any number of IAS or IPS officers from a state for Central deputation, Karnataka was among the 11 states that had opposed the move, initially. The state has now changed its stand obviously due to the "double engine" government in the state and at the Centre.

However, there is no denying that the state is facing a severe shortage of IAS officers with some babu watchers saying that there is a deficit of 63 officers. This has led to the unhealthy situation of the existing IAS officers discharging multiple responsibilities. Senior IAS officer Rakesh Singh is the Additional Chief Secretary to the Departments of Urban Development and Water Resources, as well as managing director of Karnataka Milk Federation. There are several others in a similar bind.

However, with the Basavraj Bommai government doing a flip-flop on its earlier stance and with the Centre aiming to persist with its proposal, the situation will only worsen, babu watchers say since the Centre is also facing a shortage of IAS officers - which inspired this proposal in the first place.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

- The world of reality has its limits; the world of imagination is boundless. Share this Quote
JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU
- When something is important enough, you do it even if the odds are not in your favour.
ELON MUSK
- I have no fear of making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own.
JACKSON POLLOCK

WORDSWORTH

Absquatulate

The 1830s - a period of great vigour and expansiveness in the US - was also a decade of inventiveness in language, featuring a fashion for word play, obscure abbreviations, fanciful coinages, and puns. Only a few inventions of that period have survived to our times, such as sockdologer, skedaddle and hornswoggle. Among those that haven't lasted the distance were blustrification (the action of celebrating boisterously), goshbustified (excessively pleased and gratified), and dumfangled (used up). Absquatulate, meaning to make off, decamp, or abscond, has had a good run and is still to be found in modern American dictionaries. It was common enough that it became a favourite bête noire of writers on style in the latter part of the century. One was Walton Burgess, who wrote Five Hundred Mistakes of Daily Occurrence in Speaking Pronouncing and Writing the English Language, Corrected, a title that was sufficient in itself to make the strongest heart quail. He included the word in a list of those to be avoided, with this evocative example: "He has absquatulated, and taken the specie with him". He remarked disdainfully that "absconded" is a more classical word". A writer in the New Orleans Weekly Picayune in December 1839 noted that the origin of the word lay in squat, to which had been added the Latin prefix ab- (from abscond), meaning "off, away", and the verb ending -ulate (borrowed from words like perambulate), so making a word meaning to get up and depart quickly. Or, as a writer in the old Vanity Fair magazine in 1875 elaborated: "They dusted, vamoused the ranch, made tracks, cut dirt, hoed it out of there".

LOL

Raccoons are not luggage

As migration approached, two elderly vultures doubted they could make the trip south, so they decided to go by airplane. When they checked their baggage, the attendant noticed that they were



carrying two dead raccoons. "Do you wish to check the raccoons through as luggage?" she asked. "No, thanks," replied the vultures. "They're carrion."

SPECTRUM CLIMATE CHANGE

The challenge of convergent crises



Muhammad Hamid Zaman

CLIMATE CHANGE FORCES PEOPLE TO MOVE TO PLACES WITH HIGH POPULATION DENSITY, INCREASED POVERTY, AND LIMITED SANITATION

Climate change is not the only slow-moving crisis to reach a tipping point thanks to corporate greed, individual bad behavior, a stalemate in international negotiations, and a prolonged lack of any sense of urgency on the part of publics and policymakers. The same factors also have contributed to a dramatic rise in antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

The extent of the threat to human health posed by AMR can hardly be overstated. Already, the loss of antibiotics' potency or effectiveness contributes to nearly 1.2 million deaths annually. That is more than either HIV or malaria.

Some scholars have noted the similarity of the difficulties in addressing climate change and AMR. But so far there has been little discussion about the damage caused by the convergence of these crises.

Around the world, people who live in urban slums face the combined challenges of climate-related pressures and drugs that no longer work. Even where there is no government monitoring of drug-resistant infections, local doctors in these communities notice the problem. Resistant strains of bacteria develop in these areas due to the

widespread availability of substandard drugs, the overuse of antibiotics, and the confluence of sewage and drinking water.

Some reports suggest that climate change leads to changes in disease dynamics and drug resistance. While more research is needed to establish the connection, it is already clear that climate change forces people to move to places with high population density, increased poverty, and limited sanitation. These environments are ideal for drug-resistant infections to emerge. In fact, some of the most serious outbreaks in the recent past have surfaced in polluted, low-income urban environments in South Asia.

It is no coincidence that poor communities suffer the most devastating effects of climate change, or that drug-resistant infections are likely to affect lower-income groups disproportionately. But climate change is not the only global problem that contributes to the growth of AMR in disadvantaged communities.

While there is some evidence (albeit limited) of a correlation between climate change and conflict, the link between conflict and drug-resistant infections is well estab-

lished. Conflict overwhelms hospitals and makes treatment inaccessible. It also poisons the environment and allows new strains of bacteria to breed. Communities in conflict zones have a high risk of infection and a low likelihood of receiving appropriate antibiotics.

Microorganisms like *Iraqibacter*, which emerged after the second Gulf war, are a reminder that conflict remains a potent and underappreciated driver of multidrug-resistant infections. Once again, its effects are felt most by those who are vulnerable and unable to move to a safer place.

If there is reason to believe that climate change and conflict are linked, it is safe to assume that communities affected by these crises also will be affected by a disproportionate burden of AMR.

As with climate change and conflict, those most at risk from antibiotic resistance are rarely part of the discussion about how to confront it. The action plans drafted in global capitals are disconnected from the realities on the ground. For example, small-scale farmers in Pakistan are aware that most of the available antibiotics no longer work for their cattle or poultry, but

they don't know what to do about it. And the authorities make no effort to engage them to develop a viable solution. Left with few options, these farmers continue to increase the doses they administer or create their own medical cocktails from available drugs.

A true global effort on AMR, fully funded and supported by policymakers at all levels, is long overdue. Recent studies provide the necessary data to bring the issue to the forefront of international discussion. But, after more than two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, there seems to be little interest in taking on another global health crisis.

Perhaps one way for the fight against AMR to gain momentum is not to talk about the pathogens alone, but to raise awareness of the combined effects of climate change, conflict, and AMR on people and the planet. The convergence of these crises poses a significant threat to the health of both.

The author is Professor of Biomedical Engineering and International Health at Boston University. ©the billion press

Ukraine witnessed bomb war

Sir, In the first biggest attack in Europe by one state against another since World War 2, Russia invaded Ukraine and issued a stern warning. Explosions and gunfire could be heard in Ukrainian cities, including the capital Kyiv. The attack has so far killed at least eight people and many injured in the attack. The assault, which was condemned by various world leaders, has caused a surge in oil prices to a seven-year high and a crash in the stock markets. Russian President Vladimir Putin revealed in a televised address that he had "ordered a special military operation" to protect people, including Russians, who had been subjected to "genocide by Ukraine", a claim which the West has dismissed in the past as absurd. It is time to understand Russian aggression. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky responded to the attack saying Russia wanted to destroy his state and asked for world leaders to provide large-scale defence support and to protect Ukrainian airspace from the aggressor. The US, the UK and the European Union vowed to impose wide-ranging sanctions against Russia. The attack took place even as the UNSC held an emergency meeting to stop the invasion. Indian PM had a lengthy talk with Putin to defuse tension in Europe as Ukraine witnessed bomb war.
MR Jayanthi, COIMBATORE

Futile exercise

Sir, This silly ICC bilateral series is just a waste of everyone's time and money. Playing with West Indies, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Ireland is all a complete waste of India's resources. These series only help average cricketers to humongously boost their averages. Instead, the BCCI should get back to N Srinivasan's Big Three or Big Four concept and give us some decent meaningful cricket following 2 years of these wretched Covid shutdowns. Series like these against West Indies and Sri Lanka will kill interest in the game. Therefore, the board should suspend these bilateral series for a couple of years. The two T-20 and ODI series against West Indies and now against Sri Lanka is not going to yield any desirable results. West Indies ranked at number 7 and Sri Lanka at number 10, and that means we are not going to achieve anything phenomenal except that we can rest some key players. The way the West Indies played was not a real exhibition of hit and run game of cricket. Sri Lanka is offering batting to team India, instead of making Team India to chase targets. Next in the line is Zimbabwe. It is indeed a futile exercise rather than raising the standard of the game in India.
CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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of the day quote

Those who fired at Ram Bhakts now move around with mace of Bajrang Bali. After tasting a loss in the elections, they will appear in Ayodhya to offer 'kar seva' with the devotees of Lord Ram



YOGI ADITYANATH
UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

Uttar Pradesh doesn't lack anything and it can leave all other states behind. You (people of Uttar Pradesh) go to Punjab, Maharashtra and other states to work as labourers in search of livelihood. Why can't you get it here



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

As the BJP is indulging in politics, we will also make some political moves



SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA LEADER

SHORT TAKES

First Caravan Park opens in Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram: The first major initiative in the post-Covid scenario for Kerala Tourism got wings when the state's first Caravan Park was opened at the scenic tourism spot at Vagamon in the hilly district of Idukki Friday. The Caravan Park features a restaurant with grilling facilities, private rest-house, housekeeping, round-the-clock individual service and campfire, among others.

MNM candidate found hanging

Coimbatore: A 57-year-old man, who had contested and lost the elections in the recently held local body polls, was found hanging at his house in Tirupur district Friday, police said. Mani, a Makkal Needhi Maiam candidate, had lost in the just-concluded municipal corporation election in Tirupur. Preliminary investigation revealed that Mani, a loadman, had borrowed Rs 50,000 cash from many persons for contesting the elections and was upset after polling only 44 votes and thereby losing the deposit.

Bomb threat to radio station

Coimbatore: A threat to bomb the All India Radio (AIR) station here was made for not broadcasting the songs of Tamil actor and former chief minister M G Ramachandran (MGR) on his birth anniversary January 17. According to police, the threat was issued Thursday through a post-card. The police said they are on the lookout for the person who sent the card and tightened security at the AIR station.

Two shot dead

Gurugram: Two persons Friday were shot dead by motorcycle-borne assailants at Khor village in Pataudi, the police said. Paramjeet Thakran (43), a former councillor, and his brother Surjeet Thakran (50), received gunshot wounds all across the body, and even as they were rushed to a hospital, the doctors declared them brought dead. The brothers were liquor merchant, and also run a school in the village.

Maoist surrenders

Ranchi: A hardcore Maoist having a bounty of Rs 25 lakh surrendered before the security forces in Jharkhand Friday, officials said. Umesh Yadav alias Vimal Yadav alias Radheshyam Yadav was a member of the Special Area Committee (SAC) of the banned CPI (Maoist), they said.



The BJP government will increase the fuel price once the Assembly elections are over

AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF

NAVAL EXERCISE - MILAN-2022

Navy ships from various friendly countries have started arriving in the port city of Visakhapatnam for the biennial multilateral naval exercise - MILAN-2022. MILAN will be conducted in two phases - the harbour phase between February 26-28 and the sea phase from March 1 to 4



Thousands of Indian students stranded in bunkers

An estimated 16,000 Indians, mostly students, are stranded in Ukraine as Russia's invasion of the east European country entered its second day Friday. Of the students, many studying medicine in Kharkiv and Kyiv, about 2,500 are from Gujarat and 2,320 from Kerala

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 25: All through the night, as Russian forces drove deeper into Ukraine, a small group of Indian medical students in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv covered in a dark basement under their apartment building, hearing a barrage of explosions. The bombardment was unabated in the morning. "Right now, all we can hear is the sound of shells," Lakshmi Devi, 21, a third year stu-



Visuals from inside a bunker in Ukraine

dent at the Kharkiv National Medical University, told Reuters via phone Friday. "We can't even count how many." Devi is among tens of thousands of foreign students trapped in Ukraine as the biggest attack on a European state since World War Two escalated. Indian students numbering about 18,000 constitute the largest group out of the nearly 76,000 foreign students studying in Ukraine, mainly in medical courses, according to official estimates. Thousands of African students are also stranded in the former Soviet Republic. In western Ukraine's Ternopil

National Medical University, fifth-year medical student Pushpak Swarnakar was among nearly 2,000 other Indians, he said, were sheltering in bunkers. Fears of being caught up in the fighting, long traffic jams and severe weather meant students were reluctant to heed the Indian government's suggestion they make their own arrangements to reach the border with Poland, Romania or Slovakia, he said. "We have stocked food and water for at least one week," Swarnakar, 25, said, after local authorities warned of power, gas and water supply outages. Modi's gov-

India steps up efforts to evacuate its nationals

New Delhi: India Friday was grappling with complexities in evacuating its citizens from Ukraine through land border crossings in view of rapidly advancing Russian troops and chaotic ground situation as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar discussed the "predicament" of the stranded Indian nationals with his Ukrainian counterpart. Notwithstanding the difficult ground situation, India managed to set up camp offices in Lviv and Chernivtsi towns in western Ukraine to facilitate the transit of Indians to Hungary, Romania and Poland, official sources said. India also positioned teams of officials at Zahony border post in Hungary, Krakowice as well as Shehyni-Medyka land border points in Poland, Vysne Nemecke in the Slovak Republic and Suceava transit point in Romania to coordinate exit of Indian nationals from Ukraine, they said.

ernment says it is trying to evacuate the students. Teams of Indian foreign ministry officials have been sent to Ukraine's borders with Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Romania to assist any fleeing Indian nationals.

Hungary said it will open a humanitarian corridor for citizens from countries like Iran or India, letting them in without visas and taking them to the nearest airport at Debrecen. But from their dank bunker in eastern Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-biggest city that lies close to Russia border, Devi and a classmate said they had no means to

travel over 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) towards the western borders. Foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said he spoke with his Ukrainian counterpart Friday, and thanked him for supporting the students' return. In Kharkiv the city's mayor told residents to shelter after more loud blasts.

For now, the students said they would keep to the relative safety of the bunker, despite a lack of any heating as temperatures dipped below freezing. Food and water were running short, with the nine of them left with some fruits and biscuits, they said.

'Poor suffer in jail, rich get bail': SC

The top court was unhappy with a deluge of petitions, where prisoners have not been granted relief by the Allahabad High Court, and asked the court to decide bail plea of all prisoners, who have served more than 10 years in jail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: The Supreme Court Friday emphasised that the government and the courts should adopt a reformative approach for those who have spent 10-14 years in prison, while serving a life term, and explore the possibility of releasing them either by granting bail or remitting their sentence.

It made these observations while granting bail to nearly two dozen petitioners, who have been languishing in jail for more than 10 years.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and MM Sundresh observed that the poor and the underprivileged suffer in the jail, however the rich and the influential can secure bail and also escape the law by fleeing from the country.

Senior advocate Ravi Prakash Mehrotra, representing 20 petitioners languishing in the jail, submitted that the criminal appeals were pending in the Allahabad High Court between 8-10 years and emphasised that a reformative approach should be taken towards people who have been sentenced to life imprisonment and have already served over 10 years.

It was informed that nearly 1.83 lakh criminal appeals are pending before the high court, and the counsel argued that there should be some policy to release prisoners who have served more than 10 years.

The top court asked the high court to prepare a separate list for



those who have undergone 10-14 years in custody along with those who have spent 10 years in custody. It added the high court should release all such prisoners at one go in a scenario where lawyers do not appear for the convict and also the state government has not objected to their plea for release.

It noted that if there is no adverse report on a prisoners' conduct, then they should be given a chance to blend with the society. "There may be cases where for whatever reasons, a lawyer is not present. But if they (the prisoners) have completed 14 years in prison, the state itself can take a stand and the high court judge can pass orders to examine the case for release," it observed.

The top court cited an example where an accused has been in prison for 17 years and bail plea was rejected by the high court. "Since counsel was not prepared, the plea was rejected, and thereafter, four times the plea was not heard even when counsel was ready," it said. It asked the high court to find a template on granting bail in such situations.

The top court granted bail to all the 20 petitioners and scheduled the matter for further hearing in the last week of March.

Ukraine crisis brings back the memories of Kuwait evacuation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25 : More than three decades ago, thousands of Indians were ferried in buses to Jordan from Kuwait, which was then under attack from Iraq, before they were flown to India, mostly by Air India.

The mass evacuation of Indians in 1990 from Kuwait, which also found a place in the Guinness World Records for the biggest evacuation by a civil airliner, might well provide an impetus for authorities as they explore ways to bring back Indian citizens stranded in Ukraine, which is currently under attack from Russia. With the Ukrainian airspace being shut for

civilian flights amid the Russian attack, India is looking to evacuate its citizens from Ukraine to neighbouring countries through land-border crossings. Indian ambassadors in countries neighbouring Ukraine such as Poland, Slovakia, Romania and Hungary have been asked to send teams from their missions to border areas with Ukraine to facilitate the exit of Indians. By road from Kyiv, it will take over 16 hours to reach Hungary's border and at least more than seven hours to reach the borders of Poland and Romania. Similarly, it will take over 11 hours to reach the Slovakia border.

There were around 20,000 Indians in Ukraine and out of them, nearly

4,000 have returned to India in the last few days.

An Air India plane en route to Kyiv returned mid-way on Thursday, due to closure of Ukrainian airspace. On February 22, Air India brought back around 240 Indians from Kyiv. Many people have also come back through flights operated by other carriers, including Ukraine International Airlines.

Apart from Kuwait, Air India has also operated flights to evacuate people from various countries, including Yemen, Lebanon, Egypt and Tunisia. Jitender Bhargava, former Executive Director at Air India, told news agency PTI that more than 1.70 lakh people were evacuated from Kuwait in 1990.

ALWAYS ALERT



Indian army soldiers patrol near the Line of Control (LOC) in Akhnoor, about 65kms from Jammu

PTI PHOTO

KASHMIR'S ROMANCE WITH 4 LAKH MIGRATORY BIRDS

The Valley has attracted and mesmerised the whole world, and these European friends are no exception. This year, 20 new and rare species have joined the party, exciting scores of bird watchers in the Valley

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, Feb 25: Kashmir's passionate affair with migratory birds is coming to an end as the winged

marvels of nature are packing bags to return home after a season's stay in the Valley's hospitable climate.

Four lakh migratory birds from Central Asian Republics, Russia, Siberia, and Turkey escape the freezing temperatures of their homelands. Few species fly in from the Philippines, Eastern Europe, and Japan.

Their arrival is marked with cackles and coos and exotic colours in the sky. They fly in by mid-October and leave for their homes by March almost with arithmetical accuracy. Along with these migratory birds, 'birds of passage' also join this annual gathering in the Himalayas.



Birds of passage like the Sandhill crane come to Kashmir from the Indian Plains before going back south in spring. These avian guests bring life to the lethargic winter days of Kashmir. The new guests this year are -- Sharpe Tailed

Sandpiper, Glossy Ibis, Dunlin, Red-Necked Phalarope, Yellow Hammer, Tundra Swan, Black-Tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank, Kentish Plover, Pacific Golden Plover, Terrek sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff, Common

Redshank, Common Greenshank, Jack Snipe, Pin Tailed Snipe, Little Stint, among others.

Kashmir houses 24 wetlands. Shalbhough, located in the Ganderbal district is the biggest wetland spread over 16 sq km while the most famous Hokersar wetland on the city outskirts is around 13.5 sq km.

Hygam wetland in North Kashmir is spread across 9 sq km. Another important wetland is Chatlam, located in South Kashmir's Pampore. Other habitat spots include the lakes -- Dal, Mansbal, and Wular, and agricultural lands and orchards. These areas sustain a large population and variety of immigrants, and also give them a

Centre extends visa, immigration modernisation scheme till 2026

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 25: With an aim to modernise and upgrade immigration and visa services, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) approved the continuation of the Immigration Visa Foreigners Registration Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme till March 31, 2026, with a financial outlay of Rs 1,364.88 crore.

With this scheme, the MHA aims to provide a secure and integrated service delivery framework that facilitates legitimate travellers, while strengthening national security through this scheme.

According to an MHA statement, "The government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the continuation of the Immigration Visa Foreigners Registration Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme beyond March 31, 2021 for a period of five years from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2026 with a financial outlay of Rs 1,364.88 crore."

The continuation of the scheme shows the government's commitment to the core objective of IVFRT, which is modernisation and upgradation of immigration and visa services, an MHA official said.

The project has a global outreach and seeks to interlink and optimise functions relating to immigration, visa issuance, registration of foreigners and tracking of their movements in India by covering 192 Indian missions across the globe, 108 immigration check-posts (ICPs) in India, 12 Foreigners Regional Registration Officers (FRROs) and more than 700 Foreigners Registration Officers (FROs), Superintendents of Police (SPs)/Deputy Commissioners of Police (DCPs) across the country, the official said.

Pharma antibiotics polluting rivers: Study

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 25: As if pollution from plastic, industrial effluents, and sewage was not enough to damage the health of Indian rivers, a new study has found that they are now prone to pollution from antibiotic residues.

Released on Friday, a new study by Toxics Link, 'Menace of Antibiotic Pollution in Indian Rivers' has raised serious concerns over antibiotic residues found in river water samples from four Indian rivers, i.e., Yamuna (New Delhi), Gomti (Lucknow), Zuari (Goa) and Cooum (Chennai).

The study finds Indian rivers contain antibiotic residues that may contribute to the growing problem of 'antimicrobial resistance' and negative effects on the ecosystem and human health.

Three antibiotics, namely, Ofloxacin, Norfloxacin, and Sulfamethoxazole were detected in these river water samples. Ofloxacin (0.71 Aug/L) and Sulfamethoxazole (0.2 Aug/L) were found in the Yamuna and Norfloxacin (0.93 Aug/L) was detected in the Zuari. Ofloxacin (0.54 Aug/L) was also present in the Gomti and Cooum.

"All the antibiotics detected are found to be 2 to 5 times higher than the draft notification limits proposed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change for the respective compounds," said Toxics Link's Programme Coordinator, Omkar Gaonkar.

breeding ground for a few months. Presently, Dal Lake has over 1 lakh birds, Hokesar and Hygam reserve has 1 lakh birds each, Shalbhough bird reserve has 50,000, Chatlam has 20,000, and Wular Lake has 30,000 birds.

Bird migration is nature's finest example of an inner compass that guides one through life. Each species independently comes together. The eldest pilot bird of the flock navigates her way through the sky and the rest follow.

They create formations and highly disciplined patterns in the sky depending upon the direction of wind and climate of land, all through instinct.

STRANDED IN UKRAINE

Bomma, Jaishankar speak on return of 346 people

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 25: The Karnataka government Friday said that 346 people from the state are stranded in war-affected Ukraine and efforts are underway to evacuate them back home. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai spoke to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar regarding the safety and evacuation of students from the war-torn country.

A total of 346 people are stranded in Ukraine, according to the district-wise update on stranded people reported at the State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC) of Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) till 3 pm Friday. As per the data, 115 among the stranded are from Bengaluru, 30 from Mysuru, 24 from Vijayapura, 22 from Bagalkote and 16 from Tumakuru followed by others. Earlier in the day, KSDMA had said 91 people were stranded and all of them are students (pursuing MBBS) in Ukraine.

The state government had issued a notification Thursday appointing senior IFS officer Manoj Rajan, Commissioner, Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority, Revenue Department (Disaster Management), as the



The KSDMA has created a web portal 'http://ukraine.karnataka.tech' to collect relevant information of stranded people in Ukraine who hail from Karnataka

The state government, after collating data on stranded students hailing from Karnataka through helpline number and web application, has shared the details with MEA control room in New Delhi and Embassy of India-Kyiv on near real-time basis

Nodal Officer to facilitate safe movement of stranded people/students from Karnataka in Ukraine to their respective destinations, and had set up a 24/7 helpline for this purpose.

"Today morning, I spoke to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. He has gathered complete details. Several students who had gone to study medicine there from Karnataka are at a place called Kharkiv among others. They

Further, the Chief Minister's Office, Chief Secretary and Nodal Officers are personally pursuing stranded cases with the MEA and Embassy in Kyiv

The MEA is making alternative arrangements in mission mode for evacuation of Indian nationals since the Ukrainian airspace is closed

are all in touch, they are told to stay in a safe place," Chief Minister Bommai said.

Speaking to reporters here, the Chief Minister said that the Government of India is making all efforts to evacuate them as Russian-speaking diplomats are being sent to Ukraine. "Efforts are being made to bring them back through land route, using diplomatic channels, as air space is closed there. There is also a thinking that peo-

Efforts are being made to bring them back through land route, using diplomatic channels, as air space is closed there. There is also a thinking that people stranded in western Ukraine can be moved, but looking at the right time and security, the Indian Embassy will give instructions in this regard, they are in touch with all students

BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | CHIEF MINISTER, KARNATAKA

ple stranded in western Ukraine can be moved, but looking at the right time and security, the Indian Embassy will give instructions in this regard, they are in touch with all students," he added.

Stating that he has requested the External Affairs Minister to make necessary arrangements like food for the stranded students, he said the state and Union governments have created helplines. "Jaishankar has instructed that until the war situation eases to an extent, every

State's growth better than national average

After the state government decided to redefine an urban centre, the present level of urbanisation in Bihar is 15.3 per cent against 11.3 per cent in 2011 census, which indicates an appreciable expansion

ECONOMIC SURVEY REPORT

ECONOMIC SURVEY

The primary sector involves all economic activities that directly use natural resources - mining, forestry, and fishing etc

The secondary sector involves manufacturing and processing to add value to natural resources, viz cotton converted into cloth

The tertiary sector helps in developing the primary and secondary sectors, viz transportation or other services

During the last five years (2016-17 to 2020-21), the primary sector in Bihar has grown at 2.3 per cent, the secondary sector at 4.8 per cent and the tertiary sector has grown at the highest rate of 8.5 per cent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Feb 25: The 16th Bihar Economic Survey Report (ESR) - 2021-22 has termed the growth performance of the state as 'better' than the national average.

It has mentioned that the agriculture and allied sectors grew at a pace of 2.1 per cent during the last five years (2016-17 to 2020-21) in the state.

Deputy Chief Minister Tarkishore Prasad, who also holds the Finance portfolio, tabled the 16th state ESR on the floor of the Legislative Assembly Friday, ahead of the Budget.

"The Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Bihar grew by 2.5 per cent in 2020-21, because of the impact of lockdown caused by Covid-19. But this performance is better than the national average, as Indian economy indeed shrank by 7.2 per cent in 2020-21. If one compares Bihar and Indian economy in the medium term (2011-12 to 2020-21), it is observed that they have grown at nearly the same rate", said the report.

At current prices, the per capita income in Bihar stood at Rs 50,555 in 2020-21, compared to Rs 86,659 for India, said the ESR. During the last five years (2016-17 to 2020-21), the primary sector in Bihar has grown at 2.3 per cent, the secondary sector at 4.8 per cent and the tertiary sector has grown at the highest rate of 8.5 per cent, it said.

The primary sector involves all economic activities that directly use natural resources - mining, forestry, and fishing etc. The secondary sector involves manufacturing and processing to add value to natural resources, viz cotton converted into cloth. The tertiary

sector helps in developing the primary and secondary sectors, viz transportation or other services.

Regarding state finances, the ESR says the year 2020-21, was a difficult year, because of Covid-19 pandemic. "The state government responded to the challenges with the best possible utilisation of its fiscal resources. The total expenditure of the state government in 2020-21 increased by 13.4 per cent over the previous year to reach Rs 1,65,696 crore, out of which Rs 26,203 crore was the capital expenditure and Rs 1,39,493 crore was revenue expenditure," said the report.

The report also pointed out that agriculture occupies a very crucial space in Bihar economy. "The growth in agriculture and allied sectors has been steady in Bihar. The Gross Cropped Area was 79.97 lakh hectares in 2019-20, with a cropping intensity of 144 per cent. During the last five years, agriculture and allied sectors grew at a pace of 2.1 per cent. Among the sub-sectors, livestock and fisheries have grown at a pace of 10 per cent and 7 per cent respectively," it said, adding the industrial development in Bihar has been promising in the recent years.

In the 2011 census, the level of urbanisation in Bihar was very low - only 11.3 per cent. "But, after the state government decided to redefine an urban centre, the present level of urbanisation in Bihar is 15.3 per cent, which indicates an appreciable expansion.

The per capita consumption of energy in the state has also increased from 203 kwh in 2014-15 to 350 kwh in 2020-21, implying a growth of 72.4 per cent in six years", it said.

Bihar student requests PM, CM for quick evac

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, Feb 25: A medical student from Bihar has appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to immediately evacuate him and other students from Ukraine as they feel that their lives are in danger.

The student, Ankit Kumar Shah, is a native of Barari block in Katihar. He has put out a video seeking immediate help from the Indian government. In the video, he says that many students like him could not return home due to expensive air tickets.

Ankit also mentioned that they are trapped in the war zone. The Russian armed forces are advancing in the Ukraine Capital Kyiv and explosions are being heard frequently in the region where he is staying. Ukraine has shut its air space and they don't know how to return home.

"We wanted to return to our country, but as the air ticket prices were very high we could not afford them. I am requesting PM Modi and CM Nitish Kumar to do

something for us; airlift or evacuate us from the war zone through other means like roads. Our lives are in danger," Ankit said.

"We are extremely worried for the safety of my son. I talked to him last night. He was extremely scared due to frequent shelling and explosions. He said that a large number of Ukrainian people have died in the air raids of Russian forces. I am appealing to our leaders to bring our children back home," said Ankit's mother Smita Shah.

The Bihar government has written to the Union government to ensure safety and security of the students. Palka Sahani, local commissioner of Bihar Bhawan in New Delhi said she is in touch with the officials of the External Affairs Ministry. "On the direction of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, we are making every effort to bring our students back home. We assure the parents of students that the government is doing its best to ensure safety and security of students and making arrangements to bring them back home," Sahani said.

BUDGET SESSION BEGINS

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar presented a bouquet to Assembly Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha during the first day of state Budget session, Friday

PTI PHOTO

42 more sand mafia under EOW scanner



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, Feb 25: After action against police officials in Bihar, now 42 sand mafias of five districts have come under the scanner of the Economic Offences Wing (EOW).

An EOW official said that an FIR has already been registered against those sand mafias and action will be initiated soon.

Ten mafias have been identified in Patna district who are involved in sand mining in Sone river. Besides, nine mafias in Bhojpur, nine in Rohtas, eight in Saran and six in naxal-affected Aurangabad districts have been identified so far, the official added.

Apart from Saran, the mafias of other four districts are involved in mining sand from Sone river. The sand of Sone river is in high demand in the construction business across Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh. In Saran district, mafias are involved in mining in Ganga river.

The EOW has already taken action against over 30 officials, including two SP rank officers, for their alleged links with sand mafias of the region. The officers have allegedly provided support to mafias

Already sought report on role of radical bodies: HC



AGENCIES

Bangalore, Feb 25: The Karnataka High Court Friday said it has called for a report from the state government on the role of radical organisations behind the Hijab controversy in the state.

The court was hearing a petition filed by Ghanshyam Upadhyay who sought an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) into the row that started from the coastal district headquarters town of Udipi and spread to different parts of Karnataka last month.

"We have already called for a report from the government and we will consider your submission," Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi told senior advocate Subhash Jha from Mumbai, who represented Upadhyay.

The full bench of the High Court comprising CJ Awasthi, Justice J M Khazi and Justice Krishna S Dixit has been hearing the case on a day-to-day basis since February 10.

Presenting his argument before the bench, Jha said the agitation pushing for wearing of Hijabs in class-rooms was the handiwork of radical organisations, which are funded by some foreign nations. "An agitation of this magnitude cannot be created overnight and therefore, this agitation is obviously engineered and funded by some organisation. This cannot start out of the blue. This is a sinister design," Jha told the bench.

The Chief Justice sought to know whether he has presented any material to show that there are some organisation and people behind this agitation.

K'TAKA HIJAB ROW



AGENCIES

An agitation of this magnitude cannot be created overnight and therefore, this agitation is obviously engineered and funded by some organisation. This cannot start out of the blue. This is a sinister design. This is a sinister design

was hearing the batch of petitions, Harsha, a Bajrang Dal activist, was killed in Shivamogga and a radical organisation's name has surfaced.

In reply, CJ Awasthi said it is not proper to draw any conclusion when the investigation is pending and the police are doing their work. "Unless police comes out with something related to this case saying that it was this organisation which is linked to the killing of that person, we cannot draw presumptions," the Chief Justice said.

The counsel said receipt of information and not the credible information is sufficient to start an investigation. "All these abundant circumstances sufficiently indicate that there is something much more than what meets the naked eyes," the lawyer argued.

Asking Jha to refrain from drawing presumption, the Chief Justice

Six-year-old Sikh boy 'denied' admission to school for turban



AGENCIES

leges in their respective constituencies and their nominee members cannot be vested with administrative powers.

Citing a case, he said out of 12 members in the CDC, 11 are the nominees of the MLAs. "An absolute power has been given to the MLAs. The college has been handed over to the MLA on the platter," Kumar contended.

He also pointed out that the elected representatives have the recommendatory role and not the administrative role.

"There is no accountability of the MLA who sits like a monarch in the college. Supposing there is financial irregularity and the committee is found involved in it, who will investigate them," Kumar said.

Senior advocate Yusuf

Muchchala argued while quoting verses from the Quran that the tradition of Islam enjoins covering head and neck.



AGENCIES

The Karnataka High Court has been hearing the matter related to Hijab since February eight. For first two days, the single judge bench of Justice Krishna S Dixit was hearing the matter.

However, he referred the matter to the Chief Justice February 9 saying a larger bench could hear the matter. Accordingly, CJ Awasthi formed the three-judge full bench and heard on a day-to-day basis in the last two weeks a batch of petitions filed by some Muslim girls seeking permission to wear Hijab in educational institutions where a uniform has been prescribed.

Minister for Education BC Nagesh clarified that the interim order of the larger bench of the High Court which is looking into the matter on the row is not applicable to Sikh students.

He said that wearing a turban is a constitutional right of a Sikh community members and HC order implies only on hijab, saffron shawls and other religious symbols.

The CWC stated that this is a knee-jerk reaction of the school au-

of the day quote

There is one year for Assembly elections, there is a conducive atmosphere for Congress to come back to power because the current BJP government came to power through operation lotus, no developmental work has happened since then. The people are cursing the government

SIDDARAMAIAH | LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION OF THE KARNATAKA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The state government would bear all the travel expenses of the people from the state who are stranded in Ukraine

MK STALIN | TN CM

A total 70 per cent has been allocated for domestic defence industry this budget

NARENDRA MODI | PM

SHORT TAKES

CRPF officer, jawan injured in IED blast

Patna: A CRPF officer belonging to its CoBRA commando unit was critically injured along with a jawan after Naxals triggered an IED blast in a forest in Bihar's Gaya district Friday, officials said. Assistant Commandant Vibhore Kumar Singh suffered serious injuries in both his legs in the blast that took place in the Chakrabandha forest, about 100 km from here. Head Constable Surendra Singh was also injured in the improvised explosive device (IED) blast. The Maoists also believed to have fired on the patrol team of the 205th Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), they said. The incident took place around 5 PM.

Man held in murder case

Thiruvananthapuram: A man who walked into a hotel in the heart of the Kerala capital Thiruvananthapuram and stabbed the receptionist to death Friday, has been arrested. The incident occurred around 8.30 a.m.

Wanted criminal arrested in Delhi

New Delhi: An active member of Mewat based interstate robbers gang, wanted in a case of attack on police in 2021, has been arrested by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police. DCP of Special Cell, Jasmit Singh, said Friday that Yunus was wanted in a sensational case of attack on police in four PCR vans while being chased by them. Recently, one of his aides was held by the Cell.

Landslide kills woman in Himachal

Shimla: A woman was killed in a landslide incident in Himachal Pradesh's Shimla district Friday, a state disaster management official said. Shimla District Emergency Operation Centre (DEOC) identified the victim as Ramla Devi of Cheog village in Theog tehsil and said she was hit by boulders during a landslide incident near Dundi Mata temple in Nerwa subdivision of Shimla district.

6 missing in J&K traced

Jammu: Six persons, who went missing in J&K two days ago, were traced Friday as officials said all of them were safe and would reach home soon. Official sources said six persons from the Marwah area of Warwan in Kishtwar district, who had gone missing on way to their home from Anantnag via Margan top, have been traced Friday morning. All six people are safe. They were spotted at the top of the Inshan area of Warwan and are on their way to their homes.



The 21st century is the Knowledge Century. Children should be prepared to face the competitive world. We should help them to utilise the opportunities and rise to international level

BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

SHOCKING INCIDENT

A bride refused to marry the groom on the wedding day after she saw him wearing a wig. The incident took place in the Bharthana area of the Etawah district Wednesday night. The groom, Ajay Kumar, had to return home without getting married



Centre asks states, UTs to relax Cov restrictions

In the guidelines, sent to chief secretaries of all states and UTs, the home secretary also emphasised that the wearing of masks, maintaining social distancing, hand hygiene and ventilation in closed spaces, as mandated in the National Directives for Covid Management, should continue to be enforced

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 25: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Friday asked the States and Union Territories (UTs) to allow further relaxations in the Covid-19 restrictions after a risk assessment based approach on the opening of economic activities, such as social, sports, entertainment, academic and religious events as well as night curfew hours in view of the substantial decline in coronavirus cases.

In a letter written to all Chief Secretaries of states and UTs, Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla said on Friday that further ease may be given for social, sports, entertainment, academic and religious events as well as night curfew hours in view of the substantial decline in coronavirus cases.

"In view of the overall improved situation, there is a need to follow a risk assessment based approach on the opening of economic activities. Accordingly, after a careful analysis of the local situation, relaxation in various activities may be considered, such as social /sports/entertainment/academic/cultural/religious/festival related gatherings; night curfew; operations of public transport; shopping complexes, cinema halls, gyms, spas, restaurants and bars;



opening of schools, colleges, offices, and other commercial activities," Bhalla said.

He also emphasised that while allowing all such activities, the wearing of masks, maintaining social distancing, hand hygiene and ventilation in closed spaces, as mandated in the National Directives for Covid Management, should continue to be enforced.

"States/UTs should continue with the testing and surveillance, clinical management, vaccination and implementation of Covid Appropriate Behaviour, for managing Covid-19," the MHA communication said.

"I would, therefore, urge you to take necessary action in line with the aforesaid MoHFW advisory,

dated 18th February, 2022 and for the enforcement of Covid Appropriate Behaviour," Bhalla said. The Health Ministry on Friday reported a decline in fresh cases of Covid-19 at 13,166 against 14,148 cases reported on the previous day while the daily positivity rate has gone down to 1.28 per cent while the weekly positivity rate was recorded as 1.48 per cent. India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark August 7, 2020, 30 lakh August 23, 40 lakh September 5 and 50 lakh September 16. It went past 60 lakh September 28, 70 lakh October 11, crossed 80 lakh October 29, 90 lakh November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of two crore May 4 and three crore June 23 last year.

Delhi to lift all Covid curbs from Monday

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 25: The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) Friday decided to lift all Covid-related restrictions in the national capital, including the night curfew and 50 per cent capacity rule at restaurants and bars from Monday.

Schools have to do away with the hybrid mode from April 1. All restrictions are likely to be lifted from April 1.

The decision was taken in a DDMA meet chaired by Lt Governor Anil Bajaj, and attended by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

"DDMA withdraws all restrictions as situation improves n people facing hardships due to loss of jobs. Schools to function fully offline from 1 Apr. Fines for not wearing masks reduced to ₹500. All shud continue following Covid Appropriate Behaviour: Govt will keep strict watch", said Kejriwal in a tweet.

The fine for not wearing the

As per the new DDMA guidelines, all online classes will be discontinued from April 1 in the city in view of the declining Covid trends

face mask has also been reduced to ₹500 in the city. However, all these restrictions are subject to Covid positivity rate remaining below 1 per cent.

The government will continue to keep watch on the Covid appropriate behaviour and surveillance on testing and vaccination.

K'taka HC reserves order in hijab case



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, Feb 25: The Karnataka High Court bench Friday concluded hearing petitions seeking the right to wear hijab while attending classes and asked all counsel to submit written submissions as it reserved its verdict.

The three-judge bench of Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, and Justices Krishna S Dixit, and JM Khazi heard arguments and counter-arguments for 11 days on a day today basis considering the urgency and sensitivity of the matter

Counsel appearing for petitioners who are college students maintained that the government order issued in this regard does not have any legal standing and it violated their fundamental right to practice of religion and thereby denied them right to education which is paramount. They also argued that the constitution of the College Development Committee (CDC), and the School Development and Management Committee (SDMC) do not have legal sanctity. They also questioned the appointment of

The girls were allegedly denied entry into a pre-university college for girls in Udipi in December last for violating the dress code

political representatives attached to an ideology being given decision-making power in an academic environment. They also noted that there is no provision to prescribe uniforms in the act. The government, through Advocate General Prabhuling Navadgi, argued that the government has no role in taking decisions on wearing of hijab, and it is left to the discretion of the CDCs and SDMCs. The AG argued that wearing of hijab is not an essential part of Islam and the government certainly has the authority to take decisions when it comes to public order, health, and morality. The bench was also informed on fundamental rights, individual in nature, being subjected to restrictions.

2 terrorists, civilian killed in encounter



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Feb 25: Two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants and a civilian were killed during an encounter between security forces and the ultras in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district Friday, police said.

"Based on specific input about the presence of terrorists at Shopian's Amshipora village area, a joint cordon and search operation was launched during the night," a police spokesman said. During the operation, a cluster of houses were cordoned off and searches were started to locate the hiding terrorists, the spokesman said.

While evacuating civilians trapped around the suspected spot, two terrorists hiding in a nearby house came out and resorted to indiscriminate firing resulting in grievous injuries to Amshipora resident Shakeel Ahmad, who was immediately

evacuated for medical assistance.

However, Ahmad succumbed to injuries. The terrorists' fire was retaliated effectively leading to an encounter, the spokesman said. "In the ensuing encounter, both the terrorists were killed and their bodies were retrieved from the site. They have been identified as Muzamil Ahmad Mir, a resident of Chatripora and Shariq Ayoub, a resident of Bonpora, Amshipora Shopian," the official said.

Both the killed terrorists were categorised and linked with proscribed terror outfit LeT

According to police records, both the killed terrorists were categorised and linked with proscribed terror outfit LeT. They were part of the group involved in several terror cases, the spokesman added.

Incriminating materials, arms and ammunition, including an AK-56 rifle, two AK magazines, a Chinese pistol, a pistol magazine and 26 AK rounds were recovered from the site of the encounter, he said.



GEARING UP

Workers dry cow dung capsules in an open field ahead of the Holika Dahan festival in Bhopal

PTI PHOTO

SC asks Centre to clear its stand on legality of Crypto trade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: The Supreme Court Friday asked the Centre to make its stand clear on whether cryptocurrency trade involving Bitcoin or any other such currencies is legal in India or not.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and Surya Kant, which was dealing with a case related to the quashing of multiple FIRs registered against one Ajay Bhardwaj and others for allegedly

duping investors across India by inducing them to trade in Bitcoin and assuring them high returns, said that the accused were booked for their involvement in Bitcoin trade.

The bench told Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for Centre and Enforcement Directorate, "We want you to tell us on affidavit whether cryptocurrency trade involving Bitcoin or any other such currencies is legal in India or not? What is the regime for Bitcoin trade at present?" Bhati said she



would file an affidavit on the legality of the cryptocurrency trade

and added that the accused, who is seeking quashing of proceedings, has not been cooperating with the investigating agency after being granted bail by the court in 2019. She said that 47 FIRs have been registered against the accused of duping people across the country and the issue involves a trade of 87,000 Bitcoin worth ₹20,000 crore. The bench said the ad-interim order restraining the arrest of Bhardwaj shall continue till the next date of listing of the matter.

CEASEFIRE COMPLETES A YEAR

Wide smiles, lush green fields, free environment at border

ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL FIGURES, THERE WERE 4,645 CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS IN 2020, 3,168 IN 2019 AND 1,629 IN 2018. IN 2020, TILL THE AGREEMENT CAME INTO EFFECT, THERE WERE 592 CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Uri (J&K), Feb 25: Children play without fear and farmers tend their fields here without any threat of shells as they mark a year of peace and calm after the Indian and Pakistan armies reiterated the ceasefire on this day a year ago.

The surprise reiteration of the ceasefire agreement by the two neighbours from the midnight of February 24 last year came as a huge relief to the people of Uri near the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir, who otherwise lived in constant fear and bore the maximum brunt of the animosity between the two countries. While the security es-

tablishment, too, has heaved a sigh of relief and expressed happiness over the ceasefire holding up, it is actually the people - the residents near the line of the divide - who appreciate and realise the true meaning of the guns falling silent.

"We know what the ceasefire actually means to us. We lived under constant fear for many years, but for the past year, we lived peacefully in our villages along with our children," Qazi Sheikh, a local, said. He said the ceasefire has provided an opportunity to the villagers to carry out their activities without any fear of explosions rocking their neighbourhood.

"Explosions and shelling used to be the order of the day, and we



lived under a constant fear day and night. Now, we roam freely, and go on with our life happily," Sheikh said.

He was of the opinion that the ceasefire be made a permanent feature and both the countries

must talk peace. "We hope the ceasefire continues. We want both the countries to maintain peace. We have suffered for long and we want to live our life normally and peacefully now," he said.

Romana Irshad, a Class II student

and a resident of Garkote in Uri, said, "We can now play in open fields because of the ceasefire. Otherwise, due to fear, we used to play in our rooms. We study with a free mind without the sound of explosions in the background." Sheikh said the ceasefire has not only saved lives but their properties as well.

"We hope the ceasefire holds so we could see our farms prosper once again," Shera, a farmer, said.

Last month, the General Officer Commanding (GoC) of the Army's 15 Corps or the Chinari Corps, Lt Gen D P Pandey, said the ceasefire along the LoC in Kashmir was holding and the Army would like it to continue for the benefit of

the people on either side of the divide. "The Army will like the ceasefire to continue only for the benefit of the people of Kashmir so that there is free movement for trade, for farming, business and schooling. So that they (the people of Kashmir on both sides) can live a life of a common citizen while the peace remains.

That is the major benefit which has gone to them," the GoC had said. However, he said, the Army was very carefully on the watch "because the enemy is very very devious".

The security forces have attributed the less infiltration attempts from across the LoC in the past year to the ceasefire as well.

international

First plant-based Covid vaccine

Canada has become the first country to authorise use of a plant-based COVID-19 vaccine. Canadian regulators said Thursday Medicago's two-dose vaccine can be given to adults aged 18 to 64, but said there's too little data on the shots in people 65 and older. The decision was based on a study of 24,000 adults that found the vaccine was 71% effective at preventing Covid-19 — although that was before the omicron variant emerged. Side effects were mild, including fever and fatigue.

QUAKE KILLS 7

A strong and shallow earthquake hit off the coast of Indonesia's Sumatra island Friday, killing seven people and injuring 85, while causing panic on the island and in neighbouring Malaysia and Singapore



GLOBAL OUTRAGE

An unthinkable number of innocent lives could be lost because of Russia's decision

JACINDA ARDERN
NEW ZEALAND PM

Japan must clearly show its position that we will never tolerate any attempt to change the status quo by force

FUMIO KISHIDA | JAPAN PM

The Chinese government is following through on easing trade restrictions with Russia and that is simply unacceptable

SCOTT MORRISON | AUSTRALIAN PM

Brussels: The world has made it clear that a military intervention in Ukraine is off the books, so most countries Friday were throwing ever more punishment at Moscow — from financial to football sanctions — anything to force President Vladimir Putin to stop the brutal invasion of Russia's neighbour and unleash a major war in Europe. Undeterred in the game of punitive sanctions, Russia started its own tit-for-tat measures, banning British flights to and over its territory in retaliation to a similar U.K. Ban on Aeroflot flights. Yet with the Kremlin's eyes fully targeted on expanding the attacks on Ukraine, almost of the action was still going one way. European Union leaders discussed until the early hours Friday any ways to hit Putin even harder

words of French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian. Seeking to buttress its eastern flank, the NATO alliance was holding a virtual summit of government leaders, including US President Joe Biden, later Friday. In terms unheard since the Cold War, threats were flying from all sides and ran through society. In a sign of papal anger, Pope Francis went to the Russian Embassy himself to "express his concern about the war", the Vatican said. It was an extraordinary, hands-on gesture, since usually popes receive ambassadors and heads of state in the Vatican. For Francis, the Vatican head of state, to leave the city state and travel a short distance to the Russian embassy to the Holy See was a sign of his displeasure.



Nuclear agency finds Chernobyl radiation rise

KYIV: Ukraine's nuclear energy regulatory agency says that higher than usual gamma radiation levels have been detected in the area near the decommissioned Chernobyl nuclear plant, after it was seized by the Russian military. The State Nuclear Regulatory Inspectorate said Friday that higher gamma radiation levels have been detected in the Chernobyl zone, but didn't provide details of the increase. It attributed the rise to a "disturbance of the topsoil due to the movement of a large amount of heavy military equipment through the exclusion zone and the release of contaminated radioactive dust into the air." Ukrainian authorities said that Russia took the plant and its surrounding exclusion zone after a fierce battle Thursday. Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Russian airborne troops were protecting the plant to prevent any possible "provocations." He insisted that radiation levels in the area have remained normal. The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency said it was told by Ukraine of the takeover, adding that there had been "no casualties or destruction at the industrial site." The 1986 disaster occurred when a nuclear reactor at the plant 130 kilometers (80 miles) north of Kyiv exploded, sending a radioactive cloud across Europe. The damaged reactor was later covered by a protective shell to prevent leaks.

'We pray for Ukraine'

Snina, Slovakia: People fleeing war in Ukraine poured into Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia Friday as Russian missiles pounded the capital Kyiv, with many waiting for hours at congested border crossings.

A day after Russian President Vladimir Putin launched an invasion, it was mostly women and children crossing, after Ukraine restricted passage for men between 18 and 60 years old. Iryna, 36, and her mother set out from Kyiv on Thursday with her two girls aged 2 and 4, before crossing into Ubla in Slovakia. "We left my husband there, so he is still there supporting our government," she said Friday at a hotel in the border town of Snina. "We pray for Ukraine and I hope everything will be fine," she said. Local media in Poland said some had waited 16-18 hours to cross into Medyka in southern Poland in freezing temperatures. Border authorities said 29,000 people had entered Poland from Ukraine Thursday, though it was unclear how many were war refugees



People and children walk at the border crossing between Poland and Ukraine, after Russian President Vladimir Putin authorised a military operation in eastern Ukraine, in Medyka, Poland

and not foreigners going home. Poland's deputy interior minister Pawel Szefermaker said Ukrainian bus drivers were unable to drive across the border as conscription-age men were being held back in Ukraine. Michał Mielniczuk, a spokesman for the southern Polish region of Podkarpackie said temporary ac-

commodation was being offered to people arriving. "The vast majority continue on to other places throughout Poland after receiving a warm meal," he told the PAP news agency. BLOOD DONATIONS, MEALS On the border with northern Romania, women were crying as

they bid goodbye to male loved ones, setting off to cross into Sighetu Marmatiei, a Reuters witness said. Long queues had formed as cars waited to board a ferry over the Danube river into Isaccea, a town between Moldova and the Black Sea, local media in Romania showed. Slovak authorities urged people to donate blood and set up hospitals with 5,380 beds assigned for the army or NATO use. Across central Europe, on NATO's eastern flank, volunteers were putting up messages on social media to organise housing and transport for people arriving from the borders. Activists were setting up food and hot drink distribution points and vets were offering to take care of pets. Bulgaria started issuing passports to its citizens in Kyiv who needed travel documents and had sent four buses to the Ukrainian capital to evacuate people. Three buses, evacuating some 130 Bulgarians will leave Odessa Friday, the foreign ministry spokesman said. Some 250,000 ethnic Bulgarians live in Ukraine.



than the two sets of sanctions that it already approved. "We are hitting the regime at all levels and we are hitting it hardest," Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said Friday. The 27-nation bloc and other Western powers like the United States and the United Kingdom had agreed on a slew of sanction hitting everything from the banking sector to oil refineries and the defense sector. And just as Russia was making a pincer movement to choke Ukraine and its capital Kyiv, Western powers were implementing measures aimed at "asphyxiating Russia's economy," in the

Action wasn't only limited to Western powers. Countries in Asia and the Pacific have joined the United States, the 27-nation European Union and others in the West in piling on punitive measures against Russian banks and leading companies. The nations have also set up export controls aimed at starving Russia's industries and military of semiconductors and other high-tech products. "Japan must clearly show its position that we will never tolerate any attempt to change the status quo by force," Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Friday while announcing new punitive measures.

5 mn Ukrainians may flee abroad: UN

Fuel, cash and medical supplies are running low in parts of Ukraine after Russia's invasion, which could drive up to five million people to flee abroad, UN aid agencies said Friday. At least 100,000 people are uprooted in Ukraine after fleeing their homes, while several thousand have already crossed into neighbouring countries including Moldova, Romania and Poland, U.N. refugee agency spokesperson Shabia Mantoo told a U.N. briefing in Geneva. "We are still trying to see which civilian infrastructure in Ukraine has been hit where," Afshan Khan, UNICEF's regional director for Europe and Central Asia, told the briefing. U.N. human rights office spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani said that it had reports of at least 127 civilian casualties in Ukraine, including 25 killed and 102 injured, "caused by shelling and air strikes". This was likely a significant under-estimate, she said.



Conflict puts kids at grave risk: UN body

The escalating conflict and ongoing military actions in Ukraine are putting children and adolescents at grave risk, said Yasmine Sherif, Director of Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the UN's global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises, Friday. The crisis is threatening the lives and wellbeing of an estimated 7.5 million girls and boys across the country, including potential profound disruptions to their education. "We call for a strict adherence to international humanitarian law for civilians to be protected from harm. In particular, students, schools, and education personnel must be protected from attacks, and education facilities must be protected from military use, in line with the Safe Schools Declaration. "There are already reports of education facilities having been damaged by heavy weapons fire along the line of contact. Since 2014, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine has destroyed, damaged or forced the closure of hundreds of schools. Girls and boys have a fundamental right to learn in safety and without fear. The children and adolescents of Ukraine deserve better. "History must not repeat itself," she said. "Together with our strategic partners across the UN system, governments and civil society, Education Cannot Wait has supported safe learning environments for girls and boys affected by the eight-year conflict in eastern Ukraine.



Sanctions won't affect ISS operations: NASA

Even as Russia's military invasion of Ukraine has sparked criticism and invoked several sanctions, it is unlikely to affect its longstanding space partnerships with the US, NASA has said. The US space agency has asserted that civil cooperation between the US and Russia in space, particularly with regard to the International Space Station (ISS), will continue, Space.com reported. NASA and Russia's state space corporation, Roscosmos, jointly operate the ISS. The orbiting space lab currently has two Russian cosmonauts, one European astronaut and four Americans. On February 24, Russia invaded Ukraine leading to sanctions by the US "on what can be exported to Russia." "NASA continues working with all our international partners, including the State Space Corporation Roscosmos, for the ongoing safe operations of the International Space Station," NASA spokesperson Joshua Finch said in an emailed statement to Space.com.



Biden taps Ketanji for Supreme Court

Washington, Feb 25: President Joe Biden Friday will nominate federal appeals court Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court, according to a person familiar with the matter, making her the first Black woman selected to serve on a court that once declared her race unworthy of citizenship and endorsed segregation. In Jackson, Biden delivers on a campaign promise to make the historic appointment and to further diversify a court that was made up entirely of white men for almost two centuries. He has chosen an attorney who would be the high court's first for-



mer public defender, though she also possesses the elite legal background of other justices. Jackson would be the current court's second Black justice — Justice Clarence Thomas, a conservative, is the other — and just the third in history.

Global warming speeding up world's water cycle: Report

Sydney, Feb 25: Rising temperatures are accelerating the world's water cycle and triggering natural disasters such as droughts and floods, according to a new report led by Australian researchers. The report, published in Nature journal, released to the public on Thursday, said that the hotter temperatures are speeding up the constant cycle of freshwater between the clouds, the land and the ocean, leading to more extreme weather conditions with the world's wet-

ter areas becoming even more soaked and the dry regions becoming even more parched. Taimoor Sohail, the lead author and a mathematician from the University of New South Wales (UNSW), said the findings "paint a picture of the larger changes happening in the global water cycle," Xinhua news agency reported. Previously, changes to the cycle had been difficult to directly observe, as about 80 per cent of global rainfall and evaporation occurs over the ocean. Sohail said his team had instead



analysed historical data from 1970 to 2014 to monitor the changing patterns of salt in the ocean, to estimate how much ocean fresh-

water had moved from the equator to the poles during that time. Their new findings showed that between two and four times more freshwater had moved than climate models had anticipated. The researchers believe the amount of freshwater that was transported from the equator to the poles during those years had exceeded predictions by up to 77,000 cubic km. "We already knew the global water cycle was intensifying," Sohail said. "We just didn't know by how much."

Jan Zika, co-author of the report and associate professor of UNSW School of Mathematics and Statistics, said evaporation in warmer regions removed freshwater from the oceans making those bodies of water saltier. In contrast, Zika said the "water cycle takes that freshwater to colder regions where it falls as rain, diluting the ocean and making it less salty." "Changes to the water cycle can have a critical impact on infrastructure, agriculture, and biodiversity," Sohail said.

FLOYD KILLING

3 US ex-cops found guilty

Washington: At least three former police officers of Minneapolis, the US state of Minnesota, accused of violating the civil rights of George Floyd, were found guilty by a federal jury Thursday. The jury found that Thomas Lane, J. Alexander Kueng, and Tou Thao all deprived Floyd of his right to medical care and that two of them failed to intervene as their colleague Derek Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes

during an arrest, leading to the African American man's death. A sentencing date for the three has not yet been set. All of them could face up to life in prison, Xinhua news agency reported. Chauvin's state trial took place last year, and he was convicted of murdering Floyd. He is currently serving a 22-year prison sentence. Floyd's death in May 2020 sparked protests across the US against police brutality and systemic racism. PTI/REUTERS PHOTOS

business



On the export front, the CEPA with the UAE will benefit the gems and jewellery industry the most. With CEPA we are confident to achieve the set target of \$52 billion gem and jewellery exports for the next financial year

COLIN SHAH | CHAIRMAN, GEPC

BOOST TO WOMEN-LED STARTUPS

Global professional services company Accenture Friday launched the Women Founders Programme in India to help early-stage, women-led Indian startups in the business-to-business (B2B) deep tech and enterprise SaaS domain grow and advance their businesses. Accenture will provide an equity-free grant of up to \$60,000



of the day quote

A lot of AI research is being done in all of our academic institutions, we still lag far behind China and the US when it comes to AI research. There are certain initiatives that have been taken but we need to go further

ABHISHEK SINGH | CEO, MGV

The post-Covid situation was like the Y2K moment for the information and technology (IT) sector, industry and startups to use the opportunity with the national data centre and cloud policy

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR | UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND IT

This is the first time, it is happening in India and it is a serious matter. After two years, when an approval has been granted and FDI has come in, can you now say that I am going to keep it in abeyance and directing to file a new form too

GOPAL SUBRAMANIAM | SENIOR COUNSEL, AMAZON

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGED AS WORLD PEACE AT RISK, SAYS FM

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman termed the Russia-Ukraine developments a challenge for economic recovery around the world, including India's rebound from the Covid-19 pandemic, and expressed the hope of peace returning at the earliest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 25: In the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Friday said that never has the globe peace faced challenges of this significance since World War-II, and India's development is "challenged" by the recent events.

She said human welfare needs a conducive environment without any disruptions or disturbances to make the post-pandemic economic recovery sustainable.

"India's development is going to be challenged by the newer challenges emanating in the world. Peace is being threatened and after the Second World War, (a) war of this significance, this impact, on the

globe probably is not felt," Sitharaman said.

She was speaking at the annual Asia Economic Dialogue organised by the Ministry of External Affairs and think-tank Pune International Centre.

"We need, for the welfare of globe and the welfare of humanity, to have this recovery sustainable and have this recovery continue without any disruption. That's my expectation with which our efforts and approach to recovery will be constantly made real-time workable, not hampered," the Minister concluded.

The comments come a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a military offensive against its neighbour Ukraine by at-

tacking the eastern European country from multiple sides.



No one country today can plan for its recovery, particularly in an age when global value chains have already brought us closer to each other. But when the value chains are facing challenges and threats

because of these kind of disturbances, our recovery, not just for India, but for countries everywhere will be severely hampered

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

Bilateral payments unlikely to be impacted amid sanctions



Bilateral payments with Russia may not be impacted even as

the US and other western countries have imposed economic

sanctions on Moscow in the wake of the attack on Ukraine.

India and Russia bilateral payments are made in Indian rupee. For both imports and exports, payments are made or received in the rupee for shipments. So, sanctions by the West may not have an impact on the payments, barring exchange rate fluctuation, sources said.

Russia is one of biggest suppliers of defence products and equipment to India mostly under government-to-government contract. Bilateral trade between

India and Russia stood at \$9.4 billion so far this fiscal year, against \$8.1 billion in 2020-21.

India's main imports from Russia include fuels, mineral oils, pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; electrical machinery and equipment and fertilisers.

While major export items from India to Russia include pharmaceutical products, electrical machinery and equipment, organic chemicals and vehicles.

CRYPTO TO THE RESCUE

Bitcoin helping Russia evade financial sanctions



According to The New York Times, Russia is legalising cryptocurrency to circumvent US sanctions

New Delhi: The increased adoption of cryptocurrencies is helping Russian President Vladimir Putin evade the first wave of financial sanctions from the West and the country may legalise cryptocurrencies in order to sustain and virtually avoid all the sanctions as it invades Ukraine, the media reported.

US President Joe Biden has announced new sanctions and limitations on what can be exported to Russia. The US will block five of the biggest Russian banks and freeze all assets they hold in

America, worth over \$1 trillion.

Earlier, the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson unveiled Britain's largest-ever package of sanctions against Russia, targeting banks and wealthy Russians.

However, those measures are becoming increasingly easy to evade, thanks in part to a surge of cryptocurrency adoption in Russia, reports CNN.

Bitcoin surged to \$39,000 in a quick rally following Biden's sanctions after dipping below \$35,000 Thursday when Putin declared war on Ukraine.

DONATIONS SOAR FOR UKRAINIAN ARMY

New Delhi: As Russia invaded Ukraine, people started donating the Ukrainian army in cryptocurrencies to support them and in the past 24 hours, more than \$400,000 worth Bitcoins have been donated to just one group. Come Back Alive, a Ukrainian NGO that raises crypto funds for the Ukrainian army, received more than \$400,000 worth of digital tokens in the past day, according to data from blockchain and crypto analytics firm Elliptic. The average amount donated is around \$1,000 to \$2,000, and the group has received at least 317 individual donations in the past two days, reports Fortune. The surge of donations in cryptocurrencies signifies that digital assets have "emerged as an important alternative funding method, allowing international donors to bypass financial institutions that are blocking payments to these groups," according to Elliptic.

SHORT TAKES

DoT writes to TRAI

New Delhi: The telecom department has approached TRAI requesting it to expedite spectrum recommendations, after the PMO urged it to work towards the initial launch of 5G by August 15, 2022 and explore possibility of obtaining requisite views from the regulator before March. The market is gearing up for roll out of 5G services that will usher in ultra high-speeds and spawn new-age services and business models.

FDI inflows drop 16% in April-Dec

New Delhi: Foreign direct investment (FDI) equity inflows into India contracted by 16 per cent to \$43.17 billion during the April-December 2021 period, according to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). The inflows had stood at \$51.47 billion during the corresponding period of the previous year. The total FDI inflows (which includes equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital) aggregated at \$60.34 billion during the nine months of the current fiscal year as against \$67.5 billion during the same period a year ago.

Forex reserves jump by \$2.76bn

Mumbai: The country's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$2.762 billion to \$632.952 billion for the week ended February 18 on a healthy rise in the value of gold reserves and core currency assets, the RBI said Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had declined by \$1.763 billion to \$630.19 billion. During the reporting week, the rise in overall reserves was on account of an increase in the foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves.

Airtel to acquire 4.7% stake in Indus Towers

New Delhi: Telecom operator Bharti Airtel Friday said it has signed an agreement to buy Vodafone's 4.7 per cent stake in Indus Towers on the condition that the proceeds will be used for investment in Vodafone Idea and clearing dues of the mobile tower company. Debt-ridden Vodafone Idea (VIL) has been unable to pay dues of Indus Towers, and both VIL and promoter Vodafone have proposed a payment plan to clear the outstanding amount by July 15.

WAR CONSEQUENCES

MUSK OUT FROM \$200BN CLUB

■ Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk lost a whopping \$13.3 billion as Russia invaded Ukraine, taking his net worth to below \$200 billion as the global markets plummeted. Musk was the second person, after Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, to reach the hallowed \$200 billion mark. The Tesla CEO's net worth was roughly \$199 billion while Bezos' net worth was around \$176 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires' index.

INDIA PLANS UREA DEAL WITH IRAN

■ India plans to pay in rupees for its first long-term urea import deal with Iran to hedge itself from global supply disruptions, higher prices and forex volatilities, sources familiar with the matter said, complicated now by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. India halted urea imports from Iran in 2019 under pressure from tough US sanctions on Tehran.

CRISIS TO FURTHER HAMPER COAL SUPPLY

■ The Russia-Ukraine military conflict, which has increased energy prices globally, will reduce the propensity to import coal by power plants and will further hamper the supply of fuel to captive power plants and industries like steel, aluminium from state-owned Coal India, ICPA said Friday. According to the Indian Captive Power Producers Association (ICPPA), amid rising energy prices globally, electricity producers will pressurise the government for more domestic coal to fulfill their demand and this will adversely affect fuel supply to the non-power sector.

GLOBAL CHIP SHORTAGE TO GET WORSE

■ The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war is set to worsen the supply of semiconductors, as both the countries are vital exporters of raw materials used in the manufacturing of various chipsets, industry players said Friday. Both Russia and Ukraine are vital exporters of raw materials used in the manufacturing of chipsets and semiconductors, like palladium, which is used in memory and sensor

SUNOIL SHIPMENT TO INDIA STUCK

■ About 380,000 tonnes of sunflower oil shipments from the Black Sea region to India are stuck at ports and with producers, and new purchases have stalled after ports suspended operations following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, said four dealers. There is no clarity when loading of the cargoes - worth \$570 million at current prices - from Ukraine and Russia will resume. India has contracts for about 510,000 tonne of sunoil from Black Sea region for shipments in February and March, but only 130,000 tonne have been loaded so far in February, dealers said.

OIL RETREATS, STILL ABOVE \$100

■ International oil prices retreated from an over seven-year high but was still above \$100 a barrel and continue to pose threat to India's inflation rate and current account deficit. While there are no supply concerns as the oil route remained open, consumers will feel the pinch when PSU oil firms start passing on the increase in international rates through a revision in petrol and diesel prices. It however retreated and fell to \$101 Friday. It was trading at \$101.93 a barrel.

Sensex, Nifty rebound over 2%

Investors' wealth surged by more than ₹7 lakh crore in the first hour of trading Friday as the broader market clawed back some of its lost ground

REUTERS

Bangalore, Feb 25: Indian shares snapped a 7-day losing streak to close more than 2% higher Friday, a day after their worst fall in over a year following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The NSE Nifty 50 index ended up 2.53% at 16,658.40, and the S&P BSE Sensex rose 2.44% to 55,858.52. Both the indexes had plunged more than 4% Thursday.

The benchmarks still fell for a third straight week, dropping more than 3% each, with the Nifty seeing its biggest weekly decline since late November.

"The bounce back in the markets

being seen today is a counter to the exaggerated reaction we saw yesterday led by the fears of fully blown out armed conflict between NATO and Russia," said Nitin Raheja, head of discretionary equities at Julius Baer. As it became obvious that NATO countries have no desire for an armed conflict and would instead take the sanctions route, the risk perception lowered globally, Raheja added.

State-run Coal India, which led gains on the Nifty 50, rose nearly 9%. The coal ministry said it was considering partnering with private companies to operate mines which had been shut by Coal India or where production had been discontinued. Apollo Hospitals Enterprise was 5.7% higher after the National Stock Exchange said it would be added in the Nifty 50 index from March 31, replacing Indian Oil Corp.

Nifty's metal index and public sector bank index were among the top gainers, rising 5.7% and 4.7%, respectively.

OKCL, TAGHIVE sign MoU over edu app in state schools

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: A Memorandum of Understanding was recently signed between Odisha Knowledge Corporation Limited (OKCL) and TAGHIVE, Samsung ventures promoted South Korean edutech start up, to implement the 'Class Saathi' app in more than 100 schools in the state.

CEO of TAGHIVE Pankaj Agrawal, an IIT Kanpur and Harvard alumni, and OKCL MD Manoranjan Puthal signed the agreement.

As per the agreement, the Class Saathi app will be implemented in more than 100 schools in the state in partnership with OKCL. It is a first of its kind clicker based app to answer questions by students. This app has been successfully running in many government schools in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, with high appreciation rate from both teachers and students.

This app has also been implemented in more than 1,000 schools in South Korea in the name of Class Key. Till date 60,000 students have solved as many as 3,30,000 questions through this app which is quite significant.

Agrawal highly appreciated the efforts of OKCL towards transforming the school education of Odisha through technology intervention and quality e-content. Manoranjan also praised the efforts of Agrawal to make technology based learning accessible and affordable for masses. This partnership will take the school education of Odisha to new heights, he expressed.

BIZ BUZZ

MSI unveils New Age Baleno



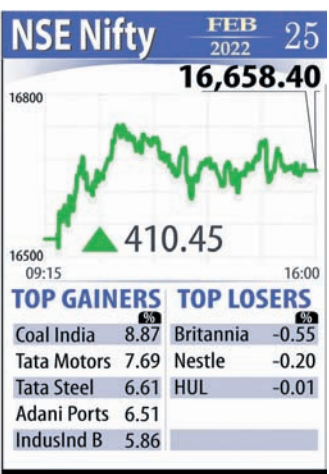
Bhubaneswar: Maruti Suzuki India Limited today announced the launch of its much-awaited technologically superior premium hatchback - the New Age Baleno. Equipped with a host of class leading technology, safety, comfort and convenience features and Nexa's new signature 'Crafted Futurism' design language, the New Age Baleno will provide an unparalleled driving experience to customers, as per the press release. The Guest of Honour for the launch was Anand Bikram, Deputy GM (Zone-1) State Bank of India, Bhubaneswar and Chief Guest was Karthik Raja, Regional Manager, Maruti Suzuki-Nexa. Avinash Singhania, Managing Director of Sky Automobiles, organised the launch.

BOM launches Project Banksakhi in state

Bhubaneswar: As a part of its initiatives towards deploying banking services in the rural areas and for people unable to access online or offline banking services in Odisha, the Bank of Maharashtra (BOM) recently announced the launch of "Project Banksakhi" in collaboration with Mahagram & Sunivesh India Finance Services Pvt Ltd for online bank account opening. This will provide door step and hassle free access to the people of Odisha for opening bank accounts, an official statement read. "We are fully committed to the government's vision of covering all unbanked areas with banking services," it added. "We look forward to serve the people of Odisha using our innovative customer friendly financial services and best in class customer experience across digital and physical touch points," read the release.

Mega blood donation camp held on Arundhati MD birthday

Bhubaneswar: The Arundhati Hero Motorbike in the Capital city has celebrated the birthday of Arundhati Group Managing Director Brahmananda Meher in yet another unique way. Making the day a memorable one, Arundhati Group collaborated with the Capital Hospital blood bank 'Mission Raktadaan' for a mega blood donation camp and collected as many as 52 units of blood. Taking into account the scarcity of blood for patients during the current Covid crisis, the group organised the blood donation camp, subsequently garnering praises and wishes for Meher from all walks of life. It is pertinent to mention here that the group has time and again come out to participate in many philanthropic programmes, thereby not limiting itself to only business.



FIH PRO LEAGUE: MEN SEEK CONSISTENCY, EVES LOOK TO MAINTAIN WINNING MOMENTUM

Spain test awaits India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: Consistency will be key for the Indian men's hockey team when they take on a lower-ranked Spain, while its women counterparts would look to carry on the momentum against same opposition during their respective FIH Pro League campaigns Saturday.

Tokyo Olympic bronze medalist Indian men started their FIH Pro League campaign on a rousing note, beating France 5-0 before being shocked 2-5 by the Frenchmen in the return leg. Against South Africa, India registered identical 10-2 wins in the two matches.

Both the ties were played in Potchefstroom, South Africa. But the result against World No.12 France in the second match of the two-leg tie was far from expectations from India, ranked fifth in the world.

The Indians were caught off guard and napping by the ever-improving Frenchmen in all aspects of the game in the second match, much to the surprise of the eight-time Olympic champions.

The mixed results in opening two Pro League ties in South Africa prompted a sharp response from Indian Olympic Association and FIH President Narinder Batra, who demanded an explanation for the setback and even met Hockey India officials and chief coach Graham Reid after their return to the country.

Considering that the pressure would be high on the coaching staff led by Reid and the players when they take on Spain and any adverse result in the upcoming matches could lead to severe consequences in a busy calendar year that includes Birmingham Commonwealth Games and the Hangzhou Asian Games, a quali-



fyng tournament for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Against Spain, the Indians would be looking to rectify the mistakes they committed in their first two matches. The Harmanpreet Singh-led side defence need to keep their structure intact when put under pressure, which was duly exploited by France in their second match.

If that was not enough, the Indians created numerous chances in the first four games but somewhere final finishing cost them dearly. To add to it, India need to make better use of penalty corners, their main strength, which was lacking in the initial games.

But going by form and world stature, India would start as

favourites against Spain, which lost 1-6 and 2-3 against England in their opening double-leg tie.

With a rousing start to their Pro League campaign, the Indian women are confident of upsetting World No.7 Spain in the upcoming two matches of the event, which they are treating as a perfect launchpad to prepare the side for two key tournaments this year – the World Cup and the Hangzhou Asian Games.

Playing for the first time in the tournament, the Indian women beat China 7-1 and 2-1 in their opening two-leg tie in Muscat, Oman earlier this year.

India captain Savita said that playing against top teams in the FIH

Pro League will be a fair assessment of their game ahead of an important 2022, which also has the Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

The Indian women's team, which finished a historic fourth in the Tokyo Olympics, carried on their good show in the FIH Pro League but in World No.7 and current World Cup bronze-medallists Spain, a tough competitor awaits them in their first home outing in the double-leg tie at the Kalinga Stadium here Saturday and Sunday.

India are currently placed third in the FIH Pro League standings with six points from two games and the skipper said they will continue to play to their strengths.

Rohit & Co on course to wrap up T20 series

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dharamsala, Feb 25: A reinvigorated India will look to pocket their second series win in as many weeks and build on the gains made from a drastic change in their batting approach in the second T20I against Sri Lanka here Saturday.

India were forced to look in the mirror after their early exit from the T20 World Cup last year but four months later, they look a transformed unit with a bunch of youngsters being tried out in various positions and roles.

It is still early days but the Rohit Sharma-led side has already figured out the core group of players that will travel to Australia for the World Cup Under later this year.

Young opener Ishan Kishan got a massive dose of confidence in the series opener on Thursday after his struggles against the West Indies. Finding strike rotation tough in the preceding series, Kishan was able to overcome that weakness against the Sri Lankan bowlers besides flaunting the stroke play he is known for in the IPL.

There is no time to settle in a T20 game and India have finally realised that, allowing them to post 180 plus totals regularly.

If it wasn't for Ruturaj Gaikwad's wrist injury, he could have opened with Kishan and Rohit would have dropped himself down the order like he did against the West Indies. The same could happen Saturday if Gaikwad is able to regain full fitness.

Such is Rohit's class that he has not taken any time to find his rhythm after coming from an injury break. He looked in sublime touch en route to his 44 but must be disappointed to not have carried on for longer.

Shreyas Iyer made merry at



number three in the absence of the rested Virat Kohli and would be aiming to repeat that for the rest of the series.

When a full strength India take the field next, he might not find a place in the playing eleven and therefore, he needs to make the most of the opportunities that come his way.

As Rohit indicated after the opening game, a fit again Ravindra Jadeja will continue to bat higher up the order as the team wants to optimise his significantly improved batting skills.

Comeback man Sanju Samson did not get to bat in the opener and he will be eagerly waiting for his turn at the scenic Dharamsala ground.

India are also getting better on the bowling front. They used as many as seven options, including Deepak Hooda, Thursday and most of them did alright. Venkatesh Iyer was a tad expensive but took a couple of wickets.

It would take a special effort from Sri Lanka to end India's 10-match winning streak in the spiritual home of Dalai Lama.

Paris to host UCL final; replaces St Petersburg

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Feb 25: Russia was stripped of hosting the Champions League final by UEFA Friday with St Petersburg replaced by Paris after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The men's final will still be played May 28 but now at the 80,000-seat Stade de France after the decision by UEFA's executive committee. "UEFA wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to French Republic President Emmanuel Macron for his personal support and commitment to have European club football's most prestigious game moved to France at a time of unparalleled crisis," European football's governing body said in a statement.

"Together with the French government, UEFA will fully support multi-stakeholder efforts to ensure the provision of rescue for football players and their families in Ukraine who face dire human suffering, destruction and displacement."

The meeting also decided that

Russian and Ukrainian clubs and national teams in UEFA competitions will have to play at neutral venues until further notice.

The Stade de France last hosted the Champions League final 16 years ago, when Barcelona beat Arsenal in the 2006 final.

The 68,000-capacity St. Petersburg stadium was originally picked in 2019 to host the final in 2021. That was postponed by one year in the fallout of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The stadium is named for Russian state-owned energy firm Gazprom, which is also a top-tier UEFA sponsor of the Champions League and European Championship. UEFA executive committee member Alexander Dyukov is the CEO of a Gazprom subsidiary.

The move comes as Russian bombs and troops pounded Ukraine during the invasion's first full day, and world leaders Friday began to fine-tune a response meant to punish the Russian economy and its leaders, including President Vladimir Putin's inner circle.

BARCA CONTINUE TO RACK UP GOALS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Naples, Feb 25: Barcelona found their scoring touch again to reach the round of 16 of the Europa League with a 4-2 win over Napoli, while Rangers knocked out Borussia Dortmund in Glasgow.

Frenkie de Jong scored with a long-range curler and newly signed striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang netted again for Barcelona, which had been held 1-1 at home in the first leg. The Spanish giant has struggled badly in its first season since the departure of Lionel Messi and was demoted to the Europa League after failing to advance to the Champions League knockout stages for the first time since 2004.

Dortmund is also a Champions League regular but couldn't come back from a 4-2 home loss in the first leg as a 2-2 draw at Rangers saw the German team eliminated in one of eight playoffs between third-place finishers in the Champions League groups and Europa League group runners-up. On a night when Europe was rocked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainian midfielder Ruslan Malinovskyi scored a couple of goals to lead Atalanta into the round of 16.

Malinovskyi netted twice in a two-minute span in the second half for a 3-0 win over Olympiakos as Atalanta advanced 5-1 on aggregate. After scoring, Malinovskyi lifted his Atalanta jersey to show a message reading "No war in Ukraine" on his undershirt.

Real Betis also advanced after a



Players of Barcelona (in yellow) and Napoli together show a banner saying 'STOP WAR', indicating Russia's invasion of Ukraine; (From R) Barcelona's goal scorers Frenkie de Jong and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang celebrate the latter's goal in Naples, Thursday

SPARTAK MOSCOW TO FACE RB LEIPZIG

Nyon: Russian club Spartak Moscow will play at Leipzig in the first leg of the round of 16 of the Europa League before needing to find a neutral venue outside the country to host the return match. The clubs were drawn to face each other Friday, about two hours after the UEFA executive committee ruled that Russian and Ukrainian teams will not be allowed to host games in their competitions. The ruling followed Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. The first legs will be played March 9 and 10, with the return games March 17. Barcelona will face Turkish club Galatasaray as it continues its quest for its first Europa League title. Six-time champion Sevilla will host West Ham in the first leg at the stadium that will also stage the final May 18. Atalanta will face Bayer Leverkusen, Braga will take on Monaco, Porto will play Lyon, Rangers will meet Red Star Belgrade and Real Betis was paired with Eintracht Frankfurt.

0-0 draw with Zenit St. Petersburg that was enough for a 3-2 aggregate victory after the Russian team had a late goal overturned by VAR. Ten-man Sevilla eliminated

Pugilists Nitu, Nikhat in finals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: Former junior World Champion Nikhat Zareen (52kg) and Nitu (48kg) stormed into the finals of the Strandja Memorial Boxing Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria after notching up brilliant victories in the last-four stage Friday.

Nitu pumelled her Ukrainian rival Hanna Okhota, who threw in the towel at the end of the second round. Zareen, on the other hand, claimed a 4-1 victory over Turkey's Buse Naz Cakioglu to make it to the final. The 25-year-old Zareen had won a gold medal in the 2019 edition of the tournament.

However, youth world champion Arundhati Choudhary (70kg) and Parveen (63kg) bowed out after losing in quarterfinals. Choudhary was outwitted 1-4 by reigning Olympic champion Busenaz Surmeneli of Turkey, while Parveen went down 2-3 to Russia's Nataliya Sychugova in the last-eight stage Thursday.

Chanu qualifies for CWG in 55kg weight category

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, Feb 25: Star Indian lifter Mirabai Chanu qualified for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in the 55kg weight category Friday by clinching the gold in the Singapore Weightlifting International here.

Competing in the 55kg weight class for the first time, Chanu lifted 191kg (86kg+105kg) to stand on top of the podium in an uncompetitive field. The second placed lifter – Australia's Jessica Sewastenko's best effort was 167kg (77kg+90kg), a whopping 24kg less than Chanu's. Elly Cassandra Englebert of Malaysia finished third with a best effort of 165kg (75kg+90kg).

The other three Indian lifters competing on day one of the event – Sanket Sagar (55kg), Rishikanta Singh (55kg) and Bindyarani Devi (59kg) – also sealed CWG berths. Having pulled out of the World

Championships in December, this was Chanu's first competitive event since the historic Tokyo Games performance last July, when she bagged India's first silver medal in weightlifting at the Olympics.

Sagar created new Commonwealth and national records in clean and jerk and total lift on his way to gold in the men's 55kg event. He lifted 256kg (113kg+143kg), edging out compatriot silver medalist Rishikanta, who had a best effort of 246kg (110kg+136kg). Sri Lanka's Dilanka Isuru Kumara took home the bronze in the event as he heaved 238kg (106kg+132kg).

Bindyarani bagged India's third gold of the day. Bindyarani lifted 196kg (85kg+111kg) in the women's 59kg. Australians Brenna Kean 190kg (82kg+108kg) and Tori Gallegos 183kg (80kg+103kg) won the silver and bronze medals respectively.

No F1 race in Russia in 2022

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Feb 25: Formula One says it is "impossible" to hold a race in Russia later this year following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. F1 had scheduled a race in Sochi September 25.

"We are watching the developments in Ukraine with sadness and shock and hope for a swift and peaceful resolution to the present situation," F1 said in a statement Friday.

"Formula 1, (governing body) the FIA, and the teams discussed the position of our sport, and the conclusion is, including the view of all relevant stakeholders, that it is impossible to hold the Russian Grand Prix in the current circumstances."

Earlier Friday, American-owned F1 team Haas dropped the sponsorship of Russian company Uralkali on its car on the final day of pre-season testing in Barcelona where Mercedes and Red Bull were the fastest in action.

10 TEAMS DIVIDED IN 2 GROUPS; 14 MATCHES PER SIDE BCCI CHANGES IPL FORMAT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: The 2022 Indian Premier League will see a tweak in format as 10 teams will be divided into groups of five but the number of matches per side will remain 14.

As per groupings released by BCCI Friday, group A comprises Mumbai Indians, KKR, Rajasthan Royals, Delhi Capitals and Lucknow Super Giants. The group B will have Chennai Super Kings, Sunrisers Hyderabad, Royal Challengers Bangalore, Punjab Kings and Gujarat Titans.

Over the years, the IPL has been an eight-team affair where each team played each other twice at the round robin league stage to complete 14 games.

However this group league format is not new in IPL as it was once used a decade back when Pune Warriors and Kochi Tuskers Kerala were part of the league.

GROUP A: Mumbai Indians, KKR, Rajasthan Royals, Delhi Capitals & Lucknow Supergiants

GROUP B: Chennai Super Kings, Sunrisers Hyderabad, Royal Challengers Bangalore, Punjab Kings & Gujarat Titans

READY RECKONER FOR FORMAT

The rows and columns of the groups (A and B) has been done as per IPL performances – number of titles and number of finals reached.

Firstly, the groupings have been done as per IPL performance where group A has MI (Team 1) with five titles as first team. Correspondingly in group B, the first team is CSK (Team 2) which has four titles.

Team 3 is again placed in group A and that is KKR with two titles and the corresponding Team 4 placed in group B is SRH with a sole title.

Team 5 again in group A is Rajasthan Royals (1 title) and its

corresponding Team 6 in group B is RCB, which has played three finals. Team 7 in group A is DC, which has one final appearance and two play-offs while corresponding Team 8 in group B is Punjab Kings with one final appearance.

Newcomers, Lucknow Super Giants is Team 9 in group A and Gujarat Titans is corresponding team 10 in group B.

14 GAMES EACH
Each team will play the other teams in its group twice, which makes it eight matches. The balance six games they play against the five teams in the other group.

So for MI from group A will play two games CSK which is its equivalent team in group B and one match against the other four teams. Similarly KKR, the second placed team in A plays SRH in group B twice and all other teams once. This is how teams attain (8+6) 14 group league games.