



**FRANK TALK**  
Actor Ankit Lokhande says she was never a good actor but has evolved over the years  
**LEISURE P2**



**TOWARDS OBTAINING OBESITY**  
India can take actions like taxation of foods high on sugar, fat and salt, and front-of-the pack labelling to tackle obesity  
**DOWNTOWN P4**



**INDIA TEAMS LOSE**  
Indian men's and women's teams lose to Spain 3-5 and 3-4 respectively in their FIH Pro League matches in Bhubaneswar  
**SPORTS P12**

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## PUTIN PUTS NUKE FORCES ON ALERT



Protesters hold up placards during a rally against Russia's invasion of Ukraine near Russian Embassy in Seoul, S Korea, Sunday

Move has raised the threat that tensions with West over invasion in Ukraine could lead to use of nuclear weapons

**Kyiv, Feb 27:** President Vladimir Putin has ordered Russian nuclear deterrent forces put on high alert amid tensions with the West over his invasion of Ukraine. Speaking at a meeting with his top officials, Putin asserted Sunday that leading NATO powers had made "aggressive statements" along with the West imposing hard-hitting financial sanctions against Russia, including the president himself.

Putin ordered the Russian defense minister and the chief of the military's General Staff to put the nuclear deterrent forces in a "special regime of combat duty." His order raised the threat that the tensions with the West over the invasion in Ukraine could lead to the use of nuclear weapons.

The Russian leader this week threatened to retaliate harshly against any nations that intervened directly in the conflict in Ukraine. The capital, Kyiv, was eerily quiet after huge explosions lit up the morning sky and authorities reported blasts at one of the airports.

Only an occasional car appeared on a deserted main boulevard as a strict 39-hour curfew kept people off the streets. Terrified residents instead hunkered down in homes, underground garages and subway stations in anticipation of a full-scale Russian assault.

"The past night was tough - more shelling, more bombing of residential areas and civilian infrastructure," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. "There is not a single facility in the country that the occupiers wouldn't

### SWIFT action to hurt Russian banks

**Washington:** In a major move aimed to cripple Russia's economy, the US along with its key allies, including EU and the UK, have decided to disconnect key sanctioned Russian banks from the global financial system SWIFT and impose restrictive measures on its central bank in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. It was also decided to launch a joint task force to hunt down assets of sanctioned Russian companies and oligarchs, according to a joint statement issued by the leaders of the US, the European Commission, France, Germany, Italy, the UK and Canada Saturday. The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) is the world's main banking messaging service which links around 11,000 banks and institutions in more than 200 countries, including India. Based in Belgium, the system is considered central to the smooth functioning of global finances and Russia's exclusion from it would hit the country hard.

consider as admissible targets." Following its gains to the east in the city of Kharkiv and multiple ports, Russia sent a delegation to Belarus for peace talks with Ukraine, according to the Kremlin. Zelenskyy suggested other locations, saying his country was unwilling to meet in Belarus because it served as a staging ground for the invasion. Until Sunday, Russia's troops had remained on the outskirts of Kharkiv, a city of 1.4 million about 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) south of the border with Russia.

### PM TO HOLD MEET

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a high-level meeting on the Ukraine crisis on Sunday, official sources said. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar was part of the meeting which was also attended by top government officials. Modi presided over the meeting immediately upon his return from UP, where he addressed rallies as part of the BJP's campaign for the state assembly polls. Many Indians, mostly students, are stranded in Ukraine.

### Odia students still stuck

Several Odia students who were stuck in different cities of Ukraine have returned to the capital city. However, there are still many who are stuck in borders of Romania and Ukraine. Many students of Odia community are still stuck in Romania border alleging no support from Indian embassy. Sources from an agency which sent students to Ukraine for medical studies said around 80 students from different cities mainly Vinnysta are stuck in Romania. We are in talk with Odisha government who is supporting us very much. Another student who is stuck in Kharkiv area said we are staying here amidst bombing. For evacuation we have to go to Romania and Poland borders but due to lack of transport we are not able to shift. ATMs are also not functioning and that is causing monetary problem for us.



A file photo of the Odisha's tableau depicting Rukuna Rath Yatra of Lingaraj Temple at 71st Republic Day parade in New Delhi

### State's per capita debt burden up by 375% in 21 yrs

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** The state's per capita loan burden has gone up more than three times during the BJD rule (2000-2021). According to sources, the state's per capita loan burden in 1999-2000 was about ₹5,000, which has increased by 375 per cent to ₹23,761.83 by the end of 2020-21. The per capita loan burden by the end of 2011-12 was ₹9,144.40. So it means the per capita debt burden has more than doubled in the last 10 years. Similarly, the total debt burden of the state has remained about ₹1 lakh crore, which is 15.7 per cent of the gross state domestic product (GSDP). As per the budget estimate, the loan burden figure will reach ₹1.22 lakh crore by March end, said an official.



The state had spent ₹42,639 crore under various poverty alleviation schemes and welfare programmes during the financial year 2015-16. The amount includes ₹10,943 crore central share and ₹31,695 crore from the state government. The spending on this sector has gone up to ₹75,000 crore in the current fiscal year. The state has made an expenditure of ₹26,639 crore for execution of its own schemes during the year 2015-16, which has increased to ₹42,874 crore in the current financial year.

While the state's per capita debt burden increases each year, the BJD government is launching one after another welfare programme to maintain its popularity - starting from one rupee rice per kg to Kalia scheme under which the government is distributing direct money on the bank accounts of the farmers.

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I am ready to pay 10 times the fare provided no minister will come and receive me once I land there

**WEATHER**

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 32.7°C	32.2°C
	MIN 20.0°C	19.6°C
Humidity	91%	85%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Partly cloudy sky	

### Lowest daily Cov cases in '22

**Bhubaneswar:** Odisha reported 251 new Covid-19 cases Sunday which was the lowest daily case log of this year so far, the health department said. Out of the total 251 new infections, 146 were reported from quarantine centres while 105 persons contracted the virus locally. Khurda district, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, registered the highest number of new cases at 33. It was followed by Gajapati with 26 new infections. The state had logged 293 cases and four deaths Saturday. There are 2,828 active cases, and 494 patients recovered from the disease in the last 24 hours in the state. The tally rose to 12,84,867, including 12,72,922 recoveries.

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## BJD wins landslide on day-2 of counting

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) led by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is leading to a landslide victory in the panchayat polls for which counting is still underway.

According to officials of the State Election Commission (SEC), counting for the 315 Zilla Parishad (ZP) zones started Saturday while counting for 305 ZP zones was underway Sunday. Counting of votes for the remaining zones will be taken up February 28. The ruling party already bagged 281 zones while it is leading in another 272 zones. The BJP and the Congress have bagged 30 zones each while seven have gone to others. The day two counting of votes commenced across the state for 307 Zilla Parishad zones, Sunday. Out of 315 ZP zones of the first day of counting, final results of 300 zones are out. Registering a landslide victory, the BJD has won 268 ZP seats while the BJP, which had emerged as the second largest party in Odisha during last rural poll in 2017, has been able to win only 14 seats in the first round. The Congress too won 14 seats. Two independent and two other



### 4 OF FAMILY WIN

**Aska:** Four members of a family have emerged victorious in the panchayat elections under Aska block. The four had contested as sarpanch and samiti member candidates under various panchayats of Aska block. The four are Harekrushna Mallick, his elder brother Bhawani Shankar Mallick, his sister Basanti Pradhan and Tutu's wife Sikha Mallick. Harekrushna won as samiti member from Benapat panchayat while Bhawani won the sarpanch post in Kendupadar panchayat. Basanti won as samiti member while Bhawani's wife Sikha also won as samiti member.

political party candidates won the ZP seats, the SEC officials said. Of the 305 ZP seats where counting was underway (till 5 pm Sunday) the BJD was leading in 253 seats, BJP in 23, Congress in 16 and others in four zones. The BJD had won 476 seats in 2017. The rural polls in Odisha were conducted in five phases - February 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24. A total of 2.2 lakh candidates were in the fray.

**DAY 2 TRENDS**

WIN/LEAD	620	ZP SEATS	851
<b>BJD</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>BJP</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>CONG</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>OTH</b>	<b>07</b>

## Classes I-VII reopen today

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** Schools for Classes I to VII will open in Odisha Monday after nearly two years with a week-long rapport building exercise. The government had announced earlier that the schools would open from February 14, but various District Collectors sought additional time for undertaking cleaning, bush cutting and minor repairs.

They cited the rural elections due to which many schools would be used as polling stations. Most of the polling personnel consisted of teaching and non-teaching staff of the school and mass education (SME) department. Therefore, the department announced the students would attend physical classes from February 28. Teachers had to come to school from February 14 to ensure proper cleaning and sanitization. The schools were closed in March 2020 after the coronavirus pandemic struck. Physical classes for

## Solatium for death in hit-&-run cases goes up by 8 times

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** The compensation to the kin of hit-and-run victims will be increased sharply by eight-fold to ₹2 lakh in case of death from April 1, according to a notification by the Road Transport and Highways Ministry.

The solatium to a person sustaining grievous injuries in a hit-and-run case will increase to ₹50,000 from the current ₹12,500. The ministry in the notification issued February 25 said that the scheme may be called the 'Compensation to Victims of Hit and Run Motor Accidents Scheme, 2022 and it shall come into force with effect from April 1, 2022. A government release stated that it has notified the scheme for compensation of victims of Hit&Run motor accidents vide notification dated 25th February, 2022 to cater to enhanced compensation (from ₹12,500 to ₹50,000 for grievous hurt and from ₹25,000 to ₹2,00,000 for death).

"This scheme will supersede the earlier Solatium Scheme, 1989 from April 1, 2022, onwards," the Road Transport and Highways Ministry said in a release. The process of application for compensation and the release of payment to victims has also been made time bound, the release stated. The ministry also published rules February 25 regarding creation, operation, sources of fund etc of the Motor Vehicles Accident Fund. "This fund shall be used for providing compensation in case of Hit & Run Accident, treatment for accident victims and any other purpose, as may be specified by the central government," the release stated. Under the scheme, the ministry has come up with the procedure for detailed investigations of road accidents, Detailed Accident Report (DAR).

## Centre rejects Odisha tableau twice

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** It was for the second consecutive year that the tableau of Odisha did not reach the Rajpath stretch at New Delhi on this Republic Day. Unlike the West Bengal government, the Odisha government did not express any opposition, strong or weak, to this decision of the Centre.

For 2022 Republic Day parade, Odisha had sent five proposals, including the Paika Rebellion, the life and times of Chakhi Khuntia and Jay Rajguru, and the developing hockey infrastructure in the state. Eminent sculptor Gajendra Sahoo, who was in-charge of the design of the tableau, told Orissa POST that the 16-member Central Selection Committee comprising ex-

perts from the fields of art, literature, culture, music and design initially liked the theme on the 1817 Paika Rebellion against the company rule in Odisha. He further said that the same got rejected at the third round. "A new member, perhaps from the ministry of culture, joined the committee during the third round. I'm not sure but perhaps this new member did not like the idea of Paika Vidroha, which was a controversy in Parliament during this time," Sahoo said. Significantly, the Centre during the Winter Session of the Parliament had rejected the long standing demand of Odisha to declare Paika Vidroha as the first war of independence. Union Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy had informed Rajya Sabha that ac-



A file photo of the Odisha's tableau depicting Rukuna Rath Yatra of Lingaraj Temple at 71st Republic Day parade in New Delhi

ording to the report received from Indian Council of Historical Research, the Paika Rebellion cannot be called as the first war of Independence. The state information and public relation department, which deals with the design, theme and showcasing of the tableau at the Republic Day parade, said they have not received any communication from the Centre regarding the rejection of the tableau. "We did not receive any communication from the central government as to why our tableau got rejected," an official of the I&PR department said. The department official, however, refused to respond to the questions on why the state government was not raising the issue with the Centre. A senior official from Union Defence Ministry said when a state government sends a proposal, the expert committee, comprising members from different fields, approves it or gives suggestions to the state on areas of improvement. **Continued on P4**



# leisure



## TEENAGE STARDOM WAS AWKWARD, SAYS AVRIL

Pop star Avril Lavigne shot to fame during her teens, after releasing her debut album *Let Go* in 2002. The singer now admits she wasn't comfortable with the attention that came her way.

## AMANDA BYNES SEEKING TO END HER CONSERVATORSHIP

American actress Amanda Bynes has requested to terminate the conservatorship of her person and estate at a court in California. The *She's the Man* star was initially placed under the conservatorship in 2013, after she was hospitalised on an involuntary psychiatric hold.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Ganesh anticipates some exciting times for you. You are likely to meet some people today who will prove to be assets in the future. You apply yourself to perfection in work, and in your thinking. Towards that end, says Ganesh, you will have to remain practical.

**TAURUS**  
This day, you can't afford to take chances with your health, says Ganesh. If there is the least sign or symptom of illness, go consult a doctor straight away. As you are going to be unusually prone to injuries and infections, it is advisable that you stay at home. Over exertion is bound to weaken you and affect your physical condition. If physical work is unavoidable, stick to light and effortless things.

**GEMINI**  
Today, you will have a tendency to remain possessive about your personal belongings, says Ganesh. You are likely to join personality development courses to achieve your ultimate goals. An unpleasant occurrence is likely to throw you off guard. But remember, there is hope when there is life.

**CANCER**  
You may have a way with words, but women somehow always have their way with you. Your problem is that while you may use your words to pull some strings, the master puppeteer, in most cases, will be a woman. So, to keep yourself happy, you may have to make the concerned woman happy.

**LEO**  
Some promises are like whispers in the wind – never meant to be realised. Today holds something similar, in that you shall be so close and yet so far from what you desire most. Ganesh advises you to be a generous winner and a graceful loser. Remember, every day is not Sunday; also, you cannot win each time. Lower your expectations in order to avoid disappointments. Wait for the winds to change – it won't take long.

**VIRGO**  
Mundane, everyday routine will get on your nerves today, warns Ganesh. Don't make a mountain out of a mole hill. All said and done, you won't let anything affect your zest for work. You will break new ground to win the hearts of others, feels Ganesh.

**LIBRA**  
If ever there was a time when that industrious nature of yours was to listen to your conscience, it is today. Call it a positive day to embark upon new business adventures, particularly for freelancers. It is mighty hard to go wrong when you listen to your inner voice and back it up with zeal. The hard work of the morning and the pressure of the afternoon will give way to pleasure in the evening. Just enjoy what you do, says Ganesh.

**SCORPIO**  
Better get down to serious business if you want to reap the benefits of your past actions. You are liable to treat subordinates as equals when deciding the best course of actions to achieve your goals. A golden favourable day for you, says Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
The horizons of your thoughts are open and serene. Forgive and forget will be your mood today – even for the most serious mistakes. Generosity was never your Achilles' heel, says Ganesh.

**CAPRICORN**  
Drag yourself out of the house, do some shopping, or better still, appoint an interior designer. You are very likely to move into a new house very soon, foresees Ganesh. This, of course, may also eat into your savings and force you to be thrifty by the end of the day, but you won't regret this once-in-a-while extravagant outing. It's all for a reason, after all.

**AQUARIUS**  
Amid all the boring work buzz, you will manage to sustain your sense of humour. And, why not? After all, you are an expert at inducing a laugh riot! You are in a gregarious mood and that explains it. This also makes you a welcome guest at any party you may wish to grace.

**PISCES**  
A day wherein you will be handling responsibilities on both the home front and at the workplace awaits you, says Ganesh. Expect to be involved in home refurbishing projects, where expenses are likely to soar. Appreciation and gratitude will come your way at the end of a hard day's work.

# 'I was never a good actor'



**MUMBAI:** Actress Ankita Lokhande, whose performances in shows such as *Pavitra Rishta* and film *Manikarnika: The Queen Of Jhansi* swept the audiences off their feet, has talked about how she has evolved as an actor since her debut in 2009.

Ankita, who today is a household name courtesy her effortless performance as Archana from the TV show, felt she was never a good actor but she learned on the sets and gained more knowledge of the craft while shooting for the film.

Talking about how she has evolved as an actor since 2009, Ankita says: "*Pavitra Rishta* has taught me so many things that I could go out and do different kinds of roles. Television teaches you so much itself. If you have done television you can do anything."

"Film and OTT people have this thing in their mind that they get scripts before anything and I was a new actor before this I was not an actor. It's not an easy job. I was never a good actor. You keep learning things."

The actress added: "So when I did *Manikarnika* after *Pavitra Rishta* I learned more things. It is a process of learning that can never stop."

IAN S

# Swaraj turns anti-hero in OYE ANJALI



Swaraj with co-actor Manvi Patel in a scene from the movie *Oye Anjali*

**BHUBANESWAR:** Swaraj Barik, the chocolate boy of Odia film industry who has charmed the audiences playing positive roles in the past, will be portrayed as an anti-hero in his upcoming movie *Oye Anjali*.

The triangular love story also features Sreyan Nayak and Manvi Patel in pivotal roles. Produced under the banner of Ayushmi Films Production, the movie is directed by Ramashankar and produced by Suman Verma. The music is scored by Prem Anand.

About his new avatar, Swaraj says "I

will be seen playing Raj who loses his ladylove and turns anti-hero to win her back. The movie is all about Raj's journey from a hero to an anti-hero. Many actors in our industry have garnered critical appraisal playing negative roles. I hope my role will help me cement my place in the industry as a good actor."

The *Love Express* actor adds, "The film has been shot extensively in Dehradun and in a first ARRI ALEXA SXT camera was used in an Odia film. Besides, technicians from six states were roped in to add grandeur to the project." PNN

# Gauahar too had a crush on Farhan



**MUMBAI:** Farhan Akhtar and Shibani Dandekar first met on a 2015 reality show *I Can Do That*. The show hosted by Farhan had Shibani Dandekar as one of the contestants. While it is said that sparks flew between the now married couple on the show, apparently several other contestants had a huge crush on the *Dil Chahta Hai* director. In a recent interaction, Gauahar Khan, who was also a contestant on the show, confessed that she too had a crush on Farhan.

Gauahar revealed that they were all crushing on Farhan at that time. "We were all smitten by him, including Shibani and I. I remember we used to talk about how good-looking he was or how amazing a person he was," she was quoted as saying.

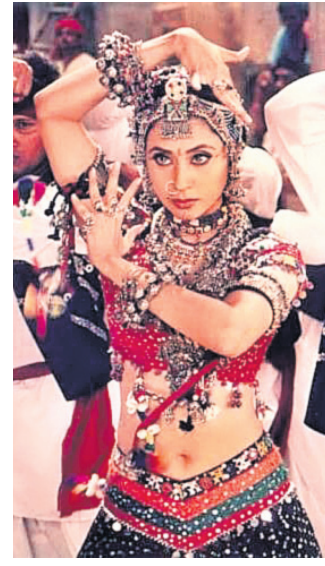
Meanwhile, Shibani, who has been head over heels in love with Farhan, is over the moon since their wedding.

AGENCIES

# Wore 15 kg of jewellery for Chamma Chamma: Urmila



**MUMBAI:** Actress Urmila Matondkar revealed how she got scratches on her body because she had to wear extremely heavy jewellery of about 15 kgs for the 'banjaran' look in the song *Chamma Chamma* and she did not have enough time to even rehearse with it.



Urmila appeared as a special guest on the singing reality show

*Sa Re Ga Ma Pa*. During the episode, Urmila was stunned after looking at the performance of contestant Ananya on the famous dance track *Chamma Chamma* from 1998 film *China Gate*, sung by Alka Yagnik and picturised on Urmila Matondkar.

Talking about the song, Urmila praised the contestant Ananya and recalled one of the anecdotes related to the song.

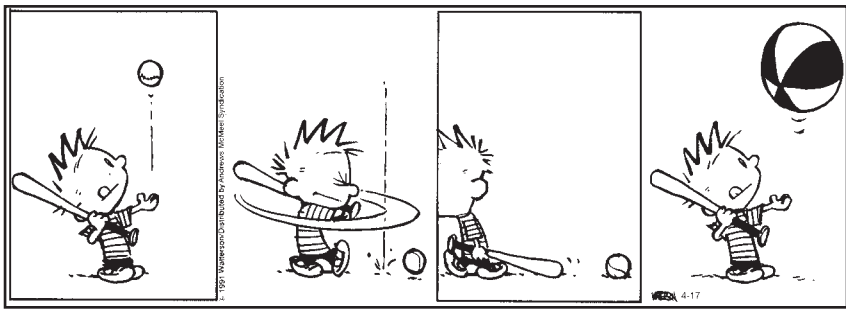
She mentioned: "Your performance was amazing. Interestingly, it reminded me of an incident while we were shooting for it. When we did a look test for this particular song, Rajkumar Santoshi Sir asked me if this jewellery was too much to handle. However, I told him I will manage with the jewellery as it is really important to maintain that banjaran look in the song," added Urmila.

IAN S

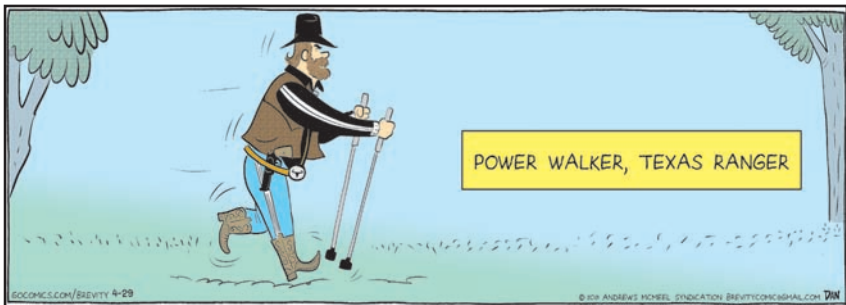
### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

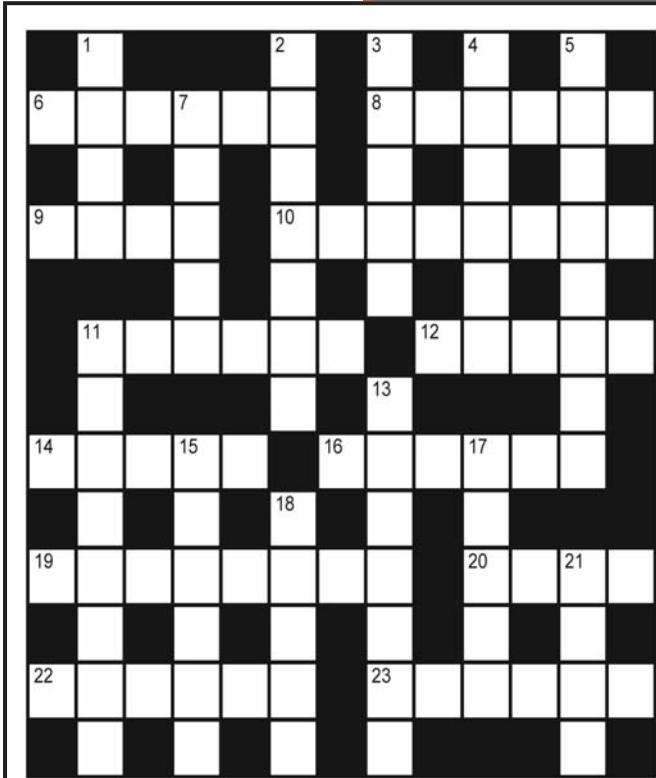


### BREVITY



### FUN post

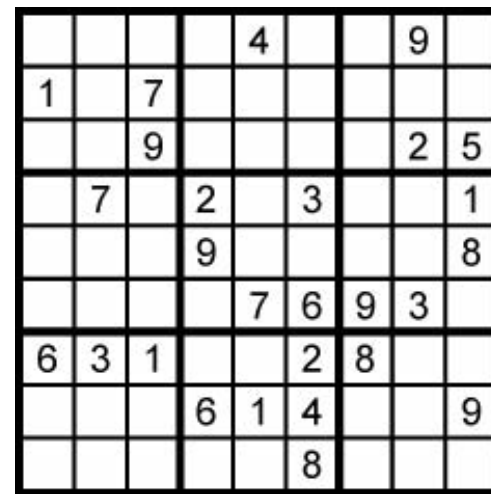
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 6 Jittery (2,4)
  - 8 Anxiety disorder
  - 9 Trade
  - 10 Like a fractious child
  - 11 Hand warmer
  - 12 Bony food fish
  - 14 Spats
  - 16 Reserved
  - 19 Drink of the gods
  - 20 Creative spark
  - 22 Igloo dweller
  - 23 Oil carrier
- Down**
- 1 Nibble away
  - 2 Enticed
  - 3 Chow chow
  - 4 Masked man with a stick
  - 5 Acme
  - 7 Station
  - 11 Sail holder
  - 13 Goes away
  - 15 Prohibit
  - 17 Non-earthling
  - 18 Fancy tie
  - 21 Water pitcher

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD

REPOSE ERASED  
E I K F E E E  
S P A N I E L N O T E S  
I N T Y E F I  
S C O O P C O W A R D S  
T O A T  
B R A I N T E A S E R  
S E E C P T  
M U D B A T H E I D E R  
A W M E R E  
C L I M B R I V I E R A  
K E N L S I S T  
S E E R E D C L A S S I S

#### SUDOKU

5 3 2 1 4 7 8 6 9  
6 9 4 8 5 2 7 1 3  
1 8 7 3 6 9 2 4 5  
8 6 5 9 1 3 4 2 7  
9 7 1 2 8 4 3 5 6  
4 2 3 6 7 5 1 9 8  
2 1 8 7 9 6 5 3 4  
3 5 9 4 2 8 6 7 1  
7 4 6 5 3 1 9 8 2

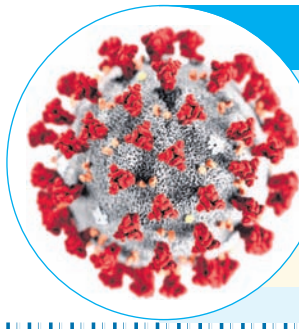
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW





## HEALING TOUCH

A veterinarian checks the health of a Siberian Husky at a camp held by Pasu Seba Sadan in Ranihat area of Cuttack, Sunday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	43,53,02,007	36,55,75,058	59,65,828
India	4,29,16,117	4,22,90,921	5,13,724
Odisha	12,84,867	12,73,304	9,064

## ZILLA PARISHAD POLL RESULTS (By 10.00PM, February 27)

District	Total Zones	Counted Zones	BJD Win/Lead	BJP Win/Lead	INC Win/Lead	OTH Win/Lead
Angul	28	16	8/7	0/1	0/0	0/0
Balasure	45	27	10/12	3/1	0/1	0/0
Bargarh	34	23	10/9	2/2	0/0	0/0
Bhadrak	28	16	7/9	0/0	0/0	0/0
Bolangir	34	28	12/10	1/2	1/2	0/0
Boudh	09	06	2/2	1/1	0/0	0/0
Cuttack	46	29	12/16	1/0	0/0	0/0
Deogarh	07	06	3/3	0/0	0/0	0/0
Dhenkanal	27	16	7/8	1/0	0/0	0/0
Gajapati	14	13	5/5	0/1	2/0	0/0
Ganjam	68	34	22/22	0/0	0/0	0/0
Jagatsinghpur	26	16	8/8	0/0	0/0	0/0
Jajpur	39	22	10/12	0/0	0/0	0/0
Jharsuguda	09	08	5/3	0/0	0/0	0/0
Kalahandi	36	26	11/12	2/0	0/1	0/0
Kandhamal	18	18	9/4	1/1	2/1	0/0
Kendrapara	32	19	9/10	0/0	0/0	0/0
Keonjhar	37	25	12/12	1/0	0/0	0/0
Khurda	30	20	9/8	1/2	0/0	0/0
Koraput	29	27	8/7	0/0	5/6	1/0
Malkangiri	15	12	6/5	0/0	1/0	0/0
Mayurbhanj	56	52	25/24	0/0	0/0	1/2
Nabarangpur	26	20	9/9	0/0	0/1	1/0
Nayagarh	24	15	8/6	0/0	0/0	0/0
Nuapada	14	10	5/5	0/0	0/0	0/0
Puri	33	22	11/10	0/1	0/0	0/0
Rayagada	22	20	9/5	0/0	2/4	0/0
Sambalpur	18	18	9/7	0/2	0/0	0/0
Subarnapur	13	12	4/6	1/0	1/0	0/0
Sundargarh	35	34	16/16	0/1	0/0	1/0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>281/272</b>	<b>15/15</b>	<b>14/16</b>	<b>4/3</b>

# Jolt to BJP, Cong as BJD surges ahead

## Moderate rains likely in N Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** The ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has left its rivals Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress far behind by winning 281 Zilla Parishad seats and establishing lead in 272 more out of the total 620 during the first two days of counting, beginning Saturday. Opposition BJP and Congress managed to win 14 seats each out of the total 315 seats, for which the counting was done Saturday. The saffron party took lead in 16 more seats while Congress candidates were ahead in 15 seats out of the total 305 seats during the second day of the counting. The counting for the remaining 229 seats would be taken up February 28.

With the resounding victory, the BJD has again proved its mettle in the polls while the saffron party has failed to retain a majority of the seats it won in the 2017 panchayat elections in state.

The BJD had won 473 Zilla Parishad seats in 2017 rural polls while BJP secured 297 seats and the Congress was the distant third with 60 seats.

The BJD had won 651 Zilla

## PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS



Counting of votes underway at Rajkanika in Kendrapara, Sunday

Parishad seats in the 2012 elections.

The BJP which performed very well in 2017 panchayat elections in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Kalahandi and Malkangiri, failed to retain the seats. The BJP, which had won 49 of 56 ZP seats in Mayurbhanj in the 2017 rural polls,

failed to live up to its expectation.

The saffron party, which had won 35 per cent of the Zilla Parishad seats in 2017, faced a major drubbing in this year's panchayat elections.

"As per the trend, the ruling BJD may win 90 per cent of the 853 Zilla Parishad seats. The BJD has

**T**HE RULING BJD HAS WON 281 ZILLA PARISHAD SEATS AND ESTABLISHED LEAD IN 272 MORE DURING THE FIRST TWO DAYS OF COUNTING

**I**T HAD WON 473 AND 651 ZILLA PARISHAD SEATS IN 2017 AND 2012 RURAL POLLS RESPECTIVELY

**T**HE BJP, WHICH HAD WON 35 PER CENT OF THE ZILLA PARISHAD SEATS IN 2017, FACED A MAJOR DRUBBING IN THIS YEAR'S ELECTIONS

strengthened its organisation at the grassroots by initiating various developmental projects. The party has succeeded in attracting all sections of the society, including women and youths, towards it in the rural polls. The people of Odisha has reposed their faith in the leadership of Naveen Patnaik," said a political observer.

The BJP, meanwhile, alleged that the ruling party has secured votes for its candidates by spending huge amount of money in the rural polls.

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** The regional office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) here has forecast light to moderate rain or thundershower at one or two places over Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore and Sundargarh districts over the next 24 hours, an official said Sunday.



While dry weather is expected over rest of the districts, shallow to moderate fog is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of coastal Odisha, Dhenkanal and Angul, during the next 24 hours, the IMD stated.

"There will be no major change in the night (minimum) temperature across Odisha over the next 4 to 5 days. The Capital City is expected to experience a partly cloudy sky with maximum and minimum temperature to be around 32 degree and 20 degree Celsius respectively," the weatherman said.

## CP to seek 5-day remand of Swain

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** The Commissionerate Police will seek the court's permission to take serial imposter and notorious conman Ramesh Chandra Swain on remand for the third time.

Informing the media, ACP of the Special Squad of City police

Sanjeeb Kumar Satapathy Sunday said that the cops will plead before the court to take Swain on a 5-day remand for further probe. Swain will be produced before the court Monday as the 3-day remand period ended Sunday.

The Commissionerate Police had taken the conman on remand February 19 for five days following the court's permission.

# Decision on board exams soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** Amid growing demand for holding Class X and XII examinations online, School and Mass Education (S&ME) Minister Samir Ranjan Dash Sunday said the state government would soon take appropriate decision in this regard.

Dash said he had a discussion with Board of Secondary Education (BSE) and the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) officials February 25 regarding conduct of board examinations and reopening of schools for Class I to VII. "The BSE and CHSE will hold discussions with the stakeholders on board examinations and submit a detailed report to the S&ME department. Based on the report, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will soon take a final call on the board exams," the S&ME Minister said.



FILE PHOTO

Meanwhile, schools for Class I to VII will reopen Monday after nearly two years with a week-long rapport building exercise.

The S&ME department has decided to organise a mega campaign at village-level to ensure 100 per cent attendance in school on the reopening day of the school.

Notably, the state government had earlier announced that the

schools would reopen February 14, but various district Collectors sought more time for undertaking cleaning, bush cutting and minor repairs.

The schools were closed in March 2020 after the coronavirus pandemic struck.

Physical classes for higher classes and other educational institutions had begun earlier.

## AIC-Nalanda presents startup 'Chef Junction'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** The Atal Incubation Centre-Nalanda Institute of Technology Foundation (AIC-Nalanda), an incubation centre for startup and entrepreneurship of Odisha, supported by Niti Aayog, recently announced the launching of a new startup venture called 'Chef Junction'.

Chef Junction is a food delivery platform which delivers home cooked foods to customers. To launch this startup, AIC-Nalanda organised the fourth chapter of 'Startup Launchpad Series' at Occasions Banquet Hall, Bhubaneswar recently. Chef Junction was incubated at AIC-Nalanda with around other 35 startups. Chef Junction started its journey in August 2020 and allowed customers to order hygienic home-cooked food prepared by handpicked home chefs.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



# After Omicron infection, risk of BA.2 is rare: Study

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**London, Feb 27:** People infected with the highly contagious Omicron variant of Covid are less likely to contract the BA.2 subvariant, according to a study.

Omicron, which has rapidly spread worldwide, carries numerous mutations in key regions and is associated with increased transmissibility and immune escape.

The variant has recently been divided into three subvariants with substantial genomic differences, in particular between Omicron BA.1 and BA.2. While Omicron is on the decline, many countries in Europe and Asia have seen an increase in BA.2 cases.

With the surge in BA.2, a large number of reinfections from earlier cases have been observed, raising the question of whether the subvariant specifically can escape the natural immunity acquired shortly after a BA.1 infection.

"We provide evidence that Omicron BA.2 reinfections do occur shortly after BA.1 infections but are



rare," said corresponding author Morten Rasmussen, from the Department of Virus and Microbiological Special Diagnostics, at Statens Serum Institut, Denmark.

While the reinfection rate appears to be low given the high number of positive SARS-CoV-2 tests dur-

ing the study period, it "still highlights the need for continuous assessment of length of vaccine-induced and/or natural immunity", Rasmussen said.

To explore, a team of several Danish and Australian researchers selected a subset of samples from more than 1.8 million cases of infections in the period from November 22, 2021, until February 11, 2022.

They selected individuals with two positive samples, more than 20 and less than 60 days apart. From a total of 187 reinfection cases, they identified 47 instances of BA.2 reinfections shortly after a BA.1 infection, mostly in young unvaccinated individuals with mild dis-

**A** team of several Danish and Australian researchers selected a subset of samples from more than 1.8 million cases of infections in the period from November 22, 2021, until February 11, 2022, and selected individuals with two positive samples, more than 20 and less than 60 days apart

**F**rom a total of 187 reinfection cases, they identified 47 instances of BA.2 reinfections shortly after a BA.1 infection, mostly in young unvaccinated individuals with mild disease not resulting in hospitalisation or death

**F**urther, the study showed that Omicron BA.2 reinfections after either Delta or BA.1 initial infections, were mainly observed among young individuals below the age of 30 and the majority of these cases were not vaccinated

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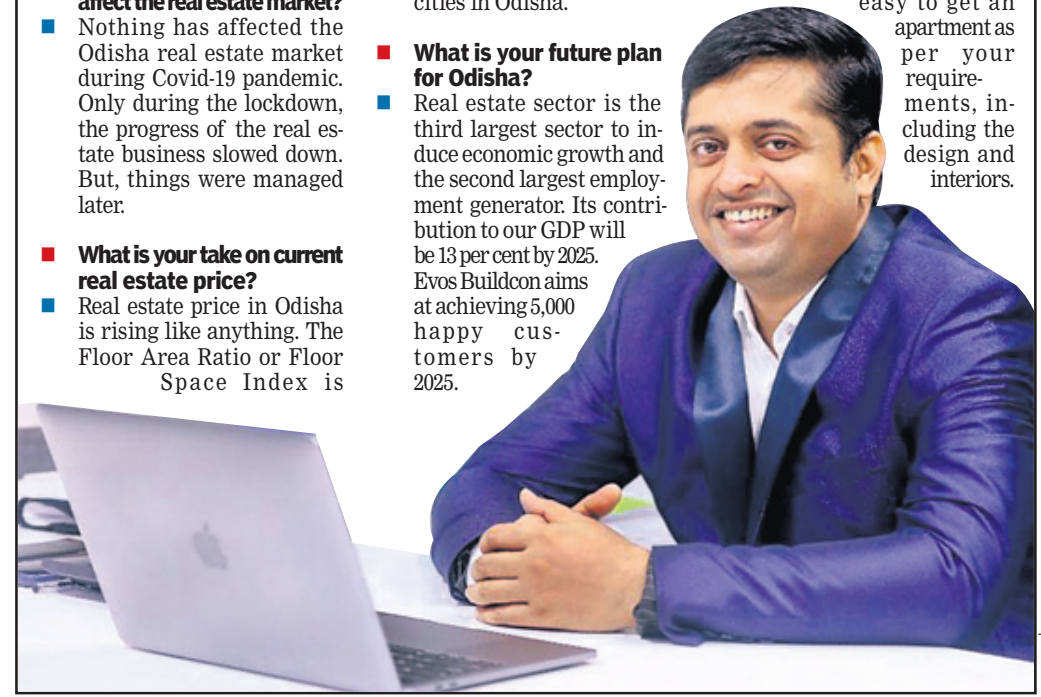
This emphasises the enhanced immunity obtained by the combination of vaccination and infection compared to infection induced immunity only Rasmussen said.

# Apartment market bigger than that of land: Rath

**Evos Buildcon Pvt Ltd** is one of the leading property developers in Odisha. Its residential portfolios include premium residences, penthouses, luxury apartments, urban studios and value homes. In an interview to **Orissa POST**, Evos Buildcon Managing Director **Kalinga Keshari Rath** speaks about the status of real estate market in Odisha, the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the sector and his future plan. Excerpt:



- **What is the status of real estate market in Odisha?** Real estate market is one of the leading and recognised sectors in Odisha. The status of the real estate market in Odisha is good and it is recognised by all and sundry.
- **How did the pandemic affect the real estate market?** Nothing has affected the Odisha real estate market during Covid-19 pandemic. Only during the lockdown, the progress of the real estate business slowed down. But, things were managed later.
- **What is your take on current real estate price?** Real estate price in Odisha is rising like anything. The Floor Area Ratio or Floor Space Index is higher in Bhubaneswar in comparison to other states.
- **Which one has the bigger market in Odisha land or apartment?** As per the recent trend, the market for apartment is bigger than that of land. As we all know, it is a challenge for a layman to acquire a piece of land and construct a building. But, it is easy to get an apartment as per your requirements, including the design and interiors.
- **How much more time will it take for normalcy to return?** Time has come. The need and mindset of the society for long term investment is growing. This is happening in Bhubaneswar and all other cities in Odisha.
- **What is your future plan for Odisha?** Real estate sector is the third largest sector to induce economic growth and the second largest employment generator. Its contribution to our GDP will be 13 per cent by 2025. Evos Buildcon aims at achieving 5,000 happy customers by 2025.



**We provide evidence that Omicron BA.2 reinfections do occur shortly after BA.1 infections but are rare. While the reinfection rate appears to be low given the high number of positive SARS-CoV-2 tests during the study period, it still highlights the need for continuous assessment of length of vaccine-induced and/or natural immunity**

MORTEN RASMUSSEN | DEPARTMENT OF VIRUS AND MICROBIOLOGICAL SPECIAL DIAGNOSTICS, STATENS SERUM INSTITUT, DENMARK



# State logs lowest ever daily nCoV cases of '22



Sunday's record of 251 infections was the lowest since December 31 when 228 cases were recorded, where as the state had logged 293 cases and four deaths Saturday

The State Pool reported 8 new cases. These are persons who have come from outside Odisha and have tested positive.

The daily test positivity rate (TPR) stood at 0.46 per cent and 83 children were among those newly infected, the Health bulletin said. Sunday's record of 251 infections was the lowest since December 31 when 228 cases were recorded. The state had logged 293 cases and four deaths Saturday.

There are currently 2,828 active cases, and 494 patients have reported recovered from the disease in the last 24 hours. The tally rose to 12,84,867, including 12,72,922 recoveries. A total of 2,92,09,724 swab samples have been cumulatively tested so far.

Meanwhile, the coastal state's Covid death toll rose to 9,064 with eight fatalities, including two each in Angul and Nayagarh. The rest four deaths were reported from Balasore, Dhenkanal, Khurda and Sambalpur districts.

**OUT OF THE TOTAL 251 NEW INFECTIONS, 146 WERE REPORTED FROM QUARANTINE CENTRES WHILE 105 PERSONS CONTRACTED THE VIRUS LOCALLY**

**KHURDA DISTRICT, OF WHICH STATE CAPITAL BHUBANESWAR IS A PART, REGISTERED THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF NEW CASES AT 33, FOLLOWED BY GAJAPATI WITH 26 NEW INFECTIONS**

**THE STATE'S DAILY TEST POSITIVITY RATE STOOD AT 0.46 PER CENT AND 83 CHILDREN WERE AMONG THOSE NEWLY INFECTED**

Koraput (5), Mayurbhanj (11), Nabarangpur (2), Nayagarh (1), Puri (3), Rayagada (1), Sambalpur (23), Subarnapur (1) and Sundargarh (11).



Babies being administered polio drops at Puri headquarters hospital, Sunday

## Special lecture on dark economy held at CUO

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** A special lecture on "Dark Economy and its impact on National Security" was organised by the Department of Economics, Central University of Odisha (CUO) in a blended mode recently.

COBRA 202 Battalion Commandant Bruno Albert spoke on the subject as a distinguished speaker. Vice-Chancellor in charge Sharat Kumar Palita delivered the inaugural address. He briefed on this parallel economy or dark economy and its devastating impact on

**The fruitful interaction session saw questions and debates posed by students on how one can become counsellor if someone close to them falls prey to this dark economy, and the fine line between grey and dark economy**

national security of any nation and advised the students to know the dark economy and its relevance in the present context.

Minati Sahoo, HoD, Department of Economics, delivered the welcome address and briefed about the topic of the dark economy and its growth.

Bruno Albert defined various components and functioning of the phenomenon. He substantiated the effects of certain illegal substances like cocaine, marijuana, cannabis, etc. He also stated the effect of drug abuse and why the dark economy needs to heal from the demand side rather than felling

its supply side. He tried to draw a picture of how magnanimous the dealings in the dark economy are. He also talked of ways to prevent drug abuse if there is anyone doing so in a family or friend circle.

There was a productive interaction session, in which questions were posed from the students about the debates on legalisation of these substances, how one can become counsellor if someone close to him falls prey to this dark economy, the fine line between grey and dark economy among others, which were nicely explained by the resource person.

## Centre rejects state tableau second time, Odisha mum

Continued from P1

He said the committee looks on many aspects while approving the proposal such as the proposal should not be in repetition. However, the official did not give any reason as to why Odisha's tableau got rejected.

"I won't be able to comment on why the tableau of Odisha got rejected. No communication means I don't know. Are they looking for a formal communication?" asked the official, requesting anonymity.

Meanwhile, Bharatiya Janata Party MP Suresh Pujari held the Odisha government responsible for the rejection of the tableau. He said that the state government should maintain cordial relations with the central government on every aspect.



Volunteers polish Naga idols on Pankaudhar Ekadashi at Astasambhu temple in Chandni Chowk area of Cuttack, Sunday

## Lack of bidders makes govt cancel ₹19,000 crore tender

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** The State-owned Bharat Broadband Nigam Ltd has cancelled a ₹19,000 crore tender, floated for connecting villages across 16 states including Odisha with an optical fibre-based high-speed broadband network, following the lack of participation of eligible bidders.

The project was approved in June last year to roll out an optical fibre network under BharatNet in 16 states in a public-private partnership model with a total expense of ₹29,430 crore.

The Centre had approved a viability gap fund of ₹19,041 crore for the project that aimed to connect 3.61 lakh villages across 16 states. The project was divided

**BHARATNET PROJECT**



into nine packages, and tenders for each of the packages were floated separately.

BBNL said February 8 that for each of the nine tenders, the tender of the corresponding package "with all its corrigenda is hereby cancelled on account of non-participation by any bidder". Also, an e-mail query sent to BBNL elicited no response. However, an official source told PTI that there was par-

ticipation from some firms; bids were evaluated; but the participants failed to qualify.

"The tender will be floated again after taking feedback from the industry. The government is committed to connecting villages with broadband at the earliest," the source, who did not wish to be named, said.

The government opted for a public-private partnership after state-owned firms faced several issues in expediting the projects and missed several deadlines.

The BharatNet project was approved in 2011 as the National Optical Fibre Network with an aim to connect all 2.5 lakh panchayats with the optical fibre network by 2013. The project now has been extended to 2025 now.

## OBVIATING OBESITY

# Niti studying proposal to tax foods high in sugar, salt

According to the National Family Health Survey 2019-20, the percentage of obese women increased to 24 per cent from 20.6 per cent in 2015-16, while the percentage for men rose to 22.9 per cent from 18.4 per cent four years earlier

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** India can take actions such as taxation of foods which are high on sugar, fat and salt and front-of-the-pack labeling to tackle rising obesity in the population, according to the annual report of the Niti Aayog.

The government think-tank is reviewing the evidence available to understand the actions India can take to tackle rising obesity in the population, the annual report 2021-22 stated.

The Niti Aayog, in its report, mentioned that the incidences of overweight and obesity are increasing among children, adolescents and women in India.

"A national consultation on the



prevention of maternal, adolescent and childhood obesity was organised June 24, 2021, under the Chairmanship of Member (Health), Niti Aayog, to discuss policy options to tackle the issue.

"Niti Aayog, in collaboration with IEG and PHFI, is reviewing the evidence available to understand the actions India can take, such as front-of-pack labeling, marketing and advertising of HFSS foods and taxation of foods high in fats, sugar and salt," it said.

Non-branded namkeens, bhujias, vegetable chips and snack foods attract 5 per cent GST while for branded and packaged items, the GST rate is 12 per cent.

According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) 2019-20, the percentage of obese women increased to 24 per cent from 20.6 per cent in 2015-16, while the percentage for men rose to 22.9 per cent from 18.4 per cent four years earlier.

The government think tank in its annual report also said that an expert committee under Niti Aayog member VK Saraswat to

## HYPERLOOP ON CARDS

The government think tank in its annual report also said that an expert committee under Niti Aayog member VK Saraswat to study the technological and commercial viability of the hyper-loop system has held four meetings so far and sub-committees have been constituted

Hyperloop is a technology proposed by inventor and businessman Elon Musk, who is behind the electric car company Tesla and the commercial space transport company SpaceX

The Virgin Hyperloop test run was conducted November 9, 2020, on a 500-metre track in Las Vegas in the US with a pod (hyperloop vehicles) travelling with passengers, including an Indian, inside an enclosed tube at more than 100mph or 161kmph

study the technological and commercial viability of the hyperloop system has held four meetings so far and sub-committees have been constituted.

"The sub-committees suggested that hyperloop system be permitted to be built, owned and operated by the private sector and the government act as a facilitator by providing certification, permissions, tax benefits and land (if possible), etc," it said.

The report said a blueprint will



The Virgin Hyperloop is among a handful of companies that are currently trying to build such a system for passenger travel

Maharashtra has approved the Virgin Hyperloop-DP World Consortium as the original project proponent for the Mumbai-Pune hyper-loop project

be prepared to develop indigenously built hyperloop technology. According to the annual report, the sub-committees also said that the government will not invest its fund and private players will take the full business risks. Hyperloop is a technology proposed by inventor and businessman Elon Musk, who is behind the electric car company Tesla and the commercial space transport company SpaceX.

The Virgin Hyperloop test run was conducted November 9, 2020, on a 500-metre track in Las Vegas in the US with a pod (hyperloop vehicles) travelling with passengers, including an Indian, inside an enclosed tube at more than 100mph or 161kmph. The Virgin Hyperloop is among a handful of companies that are currently trying to build such a system for passenger travel. Maharashtra has approved the Virgin Hyperloop-DP World Consortium as the original project proponent for the Mumbai-Pune hyper-loop project.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Man kills self

**Berhampur:** A 52-year-old man allegedly hanged himself to death from a mango tree over a family dispute near Borigaon village under Sadar police limits in Ganjam district. Even as the family members informed the police about the incident Saturday evening, the body was retrieved from the tree Sunday morning. Police registered a case of unnatural death and sent the body for post-mortem. The deceased has been identified as Apurba Das of Gurundi village. According to sources, Apurba Das resided in Berhampur and worked there. However, for some reason, he went to Borigaon Saturday evening. Later, he went to the mango tree and hanged himself to death using a plastic rope. Passers-by spotted Das' body hanging from the tree and informed the cops. Police suspect he ended his life over some family disputes. Meanwhile, a probe has been launched in this regard.

Elderly woman was murdered in loot bid: Police

**Berhampur:** The murder of an elderly woman at Alakapuri under Sadar police limits was committed for theft of cash and gold ornaments in possession of the deceased as the police cracked the murder case during interrogation of the accused, Sunday. The victim was identified as Suraja Behera, 60, wife of Bijay Chandra Behera of this area. Earlier, police had seized the mobile phone of Suraja Saturday and the blood-stained knife Saturday night. Police said that the accused Balaram was deep in debt as he had borrowed lakhs from a number of people. The debtors were pestering him for pay back for which he planned to commit the theft from the house of Bijay Behera. He had come to their house for repairing of their almirah, February 24 and had seen the gold ornaments and cash stacked in the almirah, police said. He scaled the compound wall of the house and hid himself under a tree. He committed the crime, when Bijay left the house for a walk, Thursday evening.

STF seizes 2 jumbo tusks; one arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, Feb 27:** The Special Task Force (STF) of Odisha Crime Branch Saturday managed to nab a person, suspected to be a poacher, following a raid in Patung and Kalanda area under Keonjhar sadar police limits. Two elephant tusks weighing over 5 kg have also been recovered from his possession.



The accused, identified as Ramakant Pradhan, was arrested by the STF with assistance from the officials of Karanjia forest range. Pradhan was planning to strike a deal of the elephant tusks weighing 5 kg 662 gram when he was arrested. Several incriminating materials were also recovered from his possession, the STF said in a release. "The accused person could not

The accused was planning to sell tusks weighing 5 kg 662 gram when he was arrested. Several incriminating materials were also recovered from his possession

produce any authority in support of possession of such materials, hence those were seized. The accused and the seized elephant tusks were handed over to DFO, Karanjia for necessary legal action," the STF said.

The Crime Branch STF has launched a massive operation against the illegal wildlife trade in the state.

Around 25 leopard hides, 15 elephant tusks, 7 deer skins, 11 live pangolins, 19.5 kg of pangolin scales, 2 leopard teeth, 29 leopard claws, 46 live wild parrots have been rescued so far in the special drive which has been continuing for the past two years.

As per the STF officials, a total of 59 wildlife criminals have been arrested from different parts of the state so far.

ASTRONOMICAL PRICE



Prices of Ketaki flowers went up ahead of Shivaratri festival as customers thronged near the street vendors in Berhampur Sunday. The flowers having very high demand among the devotees were sold at prices anywhere between ₹300 to ₹900 in the Silk City

BJP crumbles in Mayurbhanj

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, Feb 27:** The BJP had strengthened its foothold in Mayurbhanj in the 2017 panchayat elections and in the last general elections six MLAs along with its MP were elected from here. It was thought to be a fortress of the saffron party until the rural poll results started coming out. However, the recently concluded panchayat elections turned a nightmare for them as the BJP could not bag even a single zilla parishad (ZP) seat in the second phase of counting Sunday.

Union MoS for Tribal Affairs and Jal Shakti Bishweswar Tudu has been looking after the organisation of the BJP. However, his influence fell flat, given the election results. The ruling BJD has so far made a clean sweep by winning 25 ZP seats and is leading in 25 others. However, the JMM has managed to grab a seat (ZP zone 33) in Bisoil block.



Elected candidates of ruling BJD in Daringbadi celebrating their poll victory after the announcement of the results

In 2017, the BJP had formed council by winning 49 out of 56 ZP seats. Its outstanding performance in the panchayat elections in 2017 helped the saffron party register its win in six assembly segments out of nine segments in 2019.

It is said that after the 2017 panchayat debacle and the 2019 general elections, the BJP had been busy in settling its organisational shortcomings and piecing together the dissident factions. BJD had tried its level best to redress the issues of the people in

KANDHAMAL ZP ZONE-10

BJD wins, BJP's vote share falls

**Daringbadi:** The BJD has won zilla parishad zone-10 (comprising 12 panchayats) in Kandhamal district. BJD candidate Ranjan Kumar Pradhan defeated his nearest rival Congress' Radhakant Pradhan by 1,849 votes. The BJP ended third with 6,089 votes in its kitty. The vote share of the BJP has dipped in comparison to the 2017 panchayat elections. This has left the saffron party worried. The BJD candidate has received 12,884 votes while the BJP candidate had got 9,608 votes in 2017. BJP's district unit president Jagannath Sahu said that many people supporting the BJP had been deprived of voting, leading to a fall in the vote share.

the tribal-dominated district and their relentless efforts handed it out outstanding electoral success in 2022.

Jolt to BJD in Soro NAC as four members resign

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Soro, Feb 27:** The ruling BJD here in Balasore district received a jolt ahead of the urban local bodies elections as three former councilors of the party and a former president of its youth wing resigned from primary membership of the party.

The resigned leaders are former councilors Ranjan Das, his wife Sasmita Das, former youth wing president Lokanath Rout and his wife and former councillor Urmila Rout. Political observers feared that the resignation of these party leaders might pose trouble for the ruling party in the run up to the civic body elections.

They have informed the BJD state president and district president in writing about their resignation from the primary membership of the party. They have alleged to have resigned due to the internal indiscipline plaguing the party and the high-handedness of the MLA. However, these leaders have not given



any clear indication as to which party they will be joining in future but if reports are to be believed, they might join the saffron party in coming days.

Urmila Rout, wife of Lokanath Rout won from ward no-2 on a BJD ticket in 2013 urban local body elections. Similarly, Sasmita Das, wife of Ranjan Das won from ward no-8 of Soro NAC on a Congress ticket in the 2013 civic body election. The couple resigned from Congress a few days after the elections and joined the ruling BJD.

Faulty construction poses threat to project

ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF (RWSS) ORDERS RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ENTRY BRIDGE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, Feb 27:** The under-construction mega piped water project-2 in Sukinda mines area has major faults. The project is being funded from Odisha Mineral Bearing Area Development Corporation (OMBADC). The entry bridge of the pump house of the project has not been constructed as per the structural design. The project is being constructed by Nagarjun Construction Company.

The chief engineer-2 of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) department had directed the company authorities for reconstruction of the entry gate, February 24, 2022. It was stated that the fault in construction may pose threats to the project in future.

There is instance of irregularities during the conduction of the project-1 by this construction company. It was alleged that the construction company with motives of profit has indulged in such faulty construction.

Under OMBADC, as many as 20 mega piped water projects are being constructed in mining-affected areas of Keonjhar, Jajpur, Sundargarh and Mayurbhanj with funds to the tune of Rs 4,831 crore.

SUKINDA MEGA PIPED WATER PROJECT-2



Four private companies of southern India have been awarded the project works.

Locals have alleged that the state government has been utilising this fund at their will without consulting with the locals and civil societies in the areas.

Nagarjun Construction Company (NCC) has been awarded the work of Sukinda project-1 at a cost of Rs 54.81 crore and the Sukinda project-2 at a cost of Rs 101.24 crore.

In July, 2019, the superintending engineer of the RWSS dept had inspected the project-1 and found that the trench did not meet its prescribed depth criteria and pipes had been laid.

Poor quality steel rods were used and the vertical pillars were not constructed properly. Going by this report, the engineer-in-chief in his letter (7228/August 20, 2019) had

directed the circle superintending engineer of the RWSS to visit the project site.

The engineer-in-chief had earlier directed the senior manager of the NCC to remove the steel rods purchased from Shyam Steels. The steel was sent for testing at Cuttack central laboratory and Bhubaneswar IMMT laboratory. Its quality was okayed for reuse by the laboratories. Now, major faults have been found in the 24.4 metre bridge of the project-2.

S Krishna, project manager of NCC, said that as per direction, reconstruction work of the bridge will be started. Process had been initiated to seek permission of the Water Resources department, he added.

Hopefuls close to power corridors bite the dust

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasore, Feb 27:** Candidates fielded in the domains of heavy-weight leaders of various political parties have been trounced in the recently concluded panchayat polls in Balasore district, as per reports. Their debacle is being blamed on blunder in strategies.

It is construed that contesting candidates close to the power corridors have been left disappointed due to their defeat in the panchayat polls.

The candidates of the ruling BJD contested the polls from the zones-40 and 3 under Simulia Assembly segment under the direct supervision of state tourism and culture minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi. However, the candidates fielded by the BJP won from these two zones.

BJP candidate Ramesh Chandra Sahu from zilla parishad zone no-40 in Simulia defeated his BJD rival Kshitish Kumar Mohanty with 518 votes. Sahu received 16,307 votes. BJD candidate Gajendra Prasad Das from zilla parishad zone no-3 under Khaira

block defeated his BJD rival Jayant Kumar Rout by 470 votes. BJP's Das received 15,314 votes in the elections.

Similarly, the BJP candidate, who fought the election from the zone no-11 under Nilagiri Assembly segment under the direct supervision of party's Nilagiri MLA Sukant Kumar Nayak and MP and former Union Minister Pratap Chandra Sarangi but the candidate was defeated in the polls. BJD candidate Subarna Manjari Singh defeated her BJP rival Arjun Marndi by a margin of 3,336 votes in zilla parishad zone-11 under Nilagiri Assembly segment. Singh received 12,368 votes.

The election to zilla parishad zone no-25 under Sadar block of Balasore Assembly segment was fought under the direct supervision of BJD MLA Swarup Kumar Das but the party candidate was defeated in the polls.

BJP candidate Gayadhar Behera from zilla parishad zone-25 under Sadar block defeated his BJD rival Sanjay Kumar Das by a margin of 312 votes. BJP's Behera received 14,205 votes in the election.

TENSE MOMENT



People gathered outside a counting centre to know the results of panchayat polls in Rajnagar area of Kendrapara district, Sunday

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bargarh, Feb 27:** Bargarh, once the fort of the BJP, has crumbled in the panchayat elections with the ruling BJD making a clean sweep and heading towards zilla parishad (ZP) formation.

In 2017, the BJP had formed the ZP by winning 25 seats. Now it is time for the BJD, whose well-planned strategy worked well. The saffron party has got only one seat while the BJD has got 10 seats in the first phase of 12-seat counting.

In the second phase, the BJP is leading in only two seats while the BJD is leading by huge margins in 10 seats. Counting of 10 more ZP seats will be done Tuesday.

Such debacle of the BJP has become the talk of the town while it is being told that people are losing faith in the BJP. This has put a question mark on BJP's grassroots acceptability among people.

However, BJP secretary of the district unit, Rabinarayan Das said that the victory of the BJD is due to the money, mus-

THE SAFFRON PARTY HAS GOT ONLY ONE SEAT WHILE THE BJD HAS GOT 10 SEATS IN THE FIRST PHASE OF 12-SEAT COUNTING

IN THE SECOND PHASE, THE BJP IS LEADING IN ONLY TWO SEATS WHILE THE BJD IS LEADING BY HUGE MARGINS IN 10 SEATS

SUCH DEBACLE OF THE BJP HAS BECOME THE TALK OF THE TOWN WHILE IT IS BEING TOLD THAT PEOPLE ARE LOSING FAITH IN THE BJP

cle and machinery power of the ruling party. BJD leader Debesh Acharya said that the poll results of the panchayat elections reflect people's faith in the BJD and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for a host of welfare works. He added that the BJP leaders are leveling various allegations about the poll results and this is due to their crushing defeat.



FOCUS ASSEMBLY POLLS

# ALL EYES ON UP



Sensing the high stakes, the BJP campaign has been aggressive and highly polarising. For the first time in many decades, the Indian electorate is facing a political outfit which believes more in winning polls than governance

Charanjit Singh Channi, Rahul Gandhi will emerge as a powerful leader to return as the 87th president of the AICC. An electoral setback in Dehradun and Chandigarh would diminish Rahul Gandhi's prospects of leading a united Congress from the front. The Gandhis may have to allow "free and fair" polls (minus members of the Gandhi family in the fray).

Watching all these developments carefully are Sharad Pawar, Mamata Banerjee and Arvind Kejriwal. Pawar had twice left the Congress and twice staged a comeback. Pawar, having failed to become a non-existent UPA chairman or convenor, seems to now be trying to float a trial balloon of a 'Third Front.' Speaking about elections in five states, Pawar had recently remarked: "The country needs a third front and talks are on with different political parties over its formation. Even CPI-M leader Sitaram Yechury stated that there is a need for a third front, which is yet to take shape."

Pawar would not answer whether the UPA of 2004-2014 exists now or not. For all practical purposes, the UPA that was once headed by Sonia Gandhi and saw Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister for 10 long years is not around. For nearly eight years now, there has been no formal meeting of the UPA, while allies have come and left at will. The Congress under Rahul and Sonia, however has kept trying - be it tie-ups with Akhilesh Yadav for the Uttar Pradesh 2017 Assembly polls or a 'mahagathbandhan' with the RJD in Bihar 2020 that didn't work, or successful government participation in Jharkhand and Maharashtra. But the Congress' alliance story has been largely 'piece-meal' and guided by real-politic.

Ostensibly, there is no direct or visible link between Pawar, Mamata and Kejriwal and Congress dissidents, also known as G23. But it is known that the G23 has some kind of "Plan B". While it's not a structured formulation, Congress failure March 10 will bring back the spotlight on Pawar, Mamata and Kejriwal.

*The writer is a senior journalist. Views are personal.*  
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Rasheed Kidwai

**WHILE IT'S NOT A STRUCTURED FORMULATION, CONGRESS FAILURE MARCH 10 WILL BRING BACK THE SPOTLIGHT ON PAWAR, MAMATA AND KEJRIWAL**

March 10, 2022 would be an important day for all concerned when the results of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa and Manipur elections are declared. The centrepiece is Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous and politically significant state. In July 2022, the country will elect a new President, where the votes of every elected MLA would matter. And Uttar Pradesh scores over all the other states on that count.

As things stand, the Narendra Modi-led NDA in Parliament has an edge in the Presidential poll, having 49.9 per cent of the votes against the UPAs 25.3 per cent and that of non-NDA others' amounting to 24.8 per cent of votes. A Congress victory in Uttarakhand and Punjab would have some significance while the Samajwadi Party-RLD combine's victory in Uttar Pradesh has the potential to alter existing equations.

Sensing the high stakes, the BJP campaign has been aggressive and highly polarising. For the first time in many decades, the Indian electorate is facing a political outfit which believes more in winning polls than governance. Every electoral victory is celebrated as an endorsement of its political agenda. Some of the voices heard in Uttar Pradesh have been most disturbing. At one instance, an elected MLA was heard questioning a particular community for availing rationed food and grain when it was supposedly not voting for the ruling party! The fine distinction between the Indian State and the ruling party is being blurred. Political parties in India (with an exception of the 1984 Lok Sabha when the Congress netted over 50% of votes) have been winning polls with less than 50% of the total votes, but as governments, it was understood that they stood for and served all citizens, not the sections that voted for them.

The UP outcome will have some bearing on the internal dynamics of the BJP too. As it is often said, the road to Delhi goes via Lucknow. Incredible as it may sound, Yogi Adityanath, if he wins UP March 10, would become the first Chief Minister of a national party to com-

plete a full five-year term in Uttar Pradesh. If he loses, he'll have to resign and will fall just short of the five-year mark, since he assumed office March 19, 2017. So far, only Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav - leaders of regional parties - hold the distinction of completing an uninterrupted five-year term since 1951! Perhaps the Congress, which was calling the shots in Uttar Pradesh till the 1980s, was wary of powerful regional satraps from Govind Ballabh Pant to ND Tiwari in the decades that saw Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Ministers, so UP Chief Ministers kept changing.

An outright victory will make the 49-year Yogi Adityanath a contender for the post of Prime Minister in the post-Modi era. Uttar Pradesh is a State that sends an outsized 80 Lok Sabha MPs to Parliament. During the 2019 parliamentary polls, the BJP tally was 62 while in the 2017 state Assembly polls, it won a staggering 309 out of 403 seats.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is seen as a 'natural' successor to Modi on account of his clout within the BJP and the Sangh Parivar; his so-called acumen and his informal number two status in the Modi government. Shah is more in the Sardar Patel mode or the way LK Advani was for the Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh

Chouhan, 62, is a four-time CM of the state. However, the low key, unassuming Chouhan does not fancy himself as a contender.

Number twos, or the contenders for the top job in Indian politics, have had a chequered history. The country has had seven Deputy Prime Ministers in Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Morarji Desai, Choudhary Charan Singh, Jagjivan Ram, Yashwantrao Balwantrao Chavan, Choudhary Devi Lal and Lal Krishna Advani. Except for Morarji and Charan Singh, the others failed to make it to the top. In fact, both Morarji and Charan Singh had to fight, break parties to fulfil their ambition, which remained short-lived too. The fate of the other informal yet powerful number twos such as Pranab Mukherjee, Sharad Pawar, Arjun Singh, ND Tiwari have been dismal.

Away from UP, the rise of the AAP in Punjab and in Goa will have some repercussions for the Opposition, particularly the Congress. AAP's victory outside Delhi will pose a threat to the grand old party. Privately, many Congress leaders think an AAP victory would pose a serious challenge to the party in the next round of Assembly polls in Gujarat, Himachal, Karnataka where AAP would try to cut into Congress vote banks. On the other hand, post March 10, 2022, if the Congress wins Uttarakhnd and retains Punjab under (a Dalit) Chief Minister

## Valiant Zelenskyy

On the fourth day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, residents of Kyiv were awaiting massive onslaught February 27 from all directions as early morning reports suggested columns of about 500 Russian tanks moving fast towards the capital. News pours in of a number of towns and cities across Ukraine being destroyed, with the number of casualties rising. Missile attacks on strategic locations, airports, gas pipelines and oil tankers continued, even as Russian troops entered Kharkiv, the second largest city of Ukraine in the northeast. This has given Russia more vantage ground to target Kyiv. But, in this unequal contest between Ukraine and Russia, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy now stands out as the global face of democracy's fight against dictatorial heads of states. The defiant President urged his citizens to defend the nation as he himself refused to leave Kyiv. In response to America's offer of evacuating Zelenskyy and his family, the Ukraine President replied 'I need ammunition, not a ride.' This curt reply demonstrated his resolve to stay put and fight for his country. His determination and visibility seems to have inspired citizens to stay strong and resist Russian forces. Videos on social media show how old ladies and young children are coming forward to argue and hinder the Russian troops. A video of a single man standing up against Russian tanks is genuinely awe-inspiring. All this resistance could not have happened if the Ukraine leadership would have fled to safety reminding people of the manner in which Afghan government officials ran away deserting their country even before the Americans had completely withdrawn in August 2021. The world remembered the Afghan collapse. Now, the world is witnessing the valiant fight being put up by Zelenskyy as a leader and Ukrainians as a nation.

Russian President Vladimir Putin seems to be realising how the democracies across the world are rallying behind Zelenskyy. His spokesperson Dmitry Peskov has said for the first time Russia is ready for talks with Ukraine in Belarus. Zelenskyy spurned the offer saying he cannot hold talks in a country which acted as a springboard for Moscow's invasion.

Turkey seems to have been inspired by Zelenskyy's example and termed the Russian aggression as 'war'. Zelenskyy has appealed to Turkey to block any more Russian warships from passing toward the Black Sea from where Moscow has launched one of its incursions on Ukraine's southern coast. Noticing the global opinion going in Zelenskyy's favour for his valiant efforts to save his nation, Turkey's communication director declared: "We are witnessing yet another war in our region." Until now Turkey had been trying not to displease Putin and merely maintaining the position that "the Russian attack is unacceptable."

The European countries and the US are also intensifying sanctions against Russia. This includes cutting off a number of Russian banks from the main international payment system SWIFT (Society for Worldwide InterBank Financial Telecommunication) to further isolate Russia from the international financial system while also freezing assets of Russia's central bank, all aimed at hitting Putin's moneybag. These sanctions seem to have greatly impacted President Putin. He has now threatened pulling out of the Nuclear Treaty and alerted his nuclear deterrent forces. This might be a sham to threaten Western nations. But knowing Putin, and the way he reacts, no one can take this lightly. The way he swiftly sent his forces into Ukraine, it is quite possible he will be willing to press the button on a nuclear weapon. Media reports indicate that anti-Putin demonstrations have commenced in Russia. This might be making the Russian President shaky. This also highlights the fact that many heads of states across the world today are dictatorial in their approach. They might have come to power through the ballot but their attitudes are reprehensibly despotic. Putin and Xi Jinping of China are at the top of the pecking order of this breed of newborn dictators. Sometime ago, it seemed like these elected megalomaniacs will eventually take over the whole world. However, the cookie always crumbles when there is war. Now that Putin baked his cookie, he has to contend with a resolute Zelenskyy. The Ukraine President has managed to globalise the Russian invasion of his country by personally calling up and pleading with every country's top leader to extend support. This list included Prime Minister Modi. Such an action by the Ukrainian leader forces every nation to take a stand. Democracies world over are being compelled to help Ukraine. Those countries that stand with Russia now will not only tarnish their democratic credentials but also may face great hardships due to international isolation. After abstaining from voting against Russia in the UN Security Council, thereby showing support for Russia, India needs to think hard before taking the next diplomatic step. There is also this report on the Twitter handle of the BJP President, JP Nadda, getting hacked and a message being sent out from it asking for crypto currency donations to support Russia demonstrates the international perception about where the Indian government is heading. This is a very critical time for the world. India cannot afford to take any further wrong stands on the current war scenario. It is time for the government to go beyond consulting MEA's bureaucrats and start drawing advice from a larger canvas of leaders in this country.

**Piate**  
Tathagata Satpathy

### WISDOM CORNER

- Have a heart that never hardens, and a temper that never tires, and a touch that never hurts. CHARLES DICKENS
- The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts. BERTRAND RUSSELL
- Love recognises no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope. MAYA ANGELOU

### WORDSWORTH

#### Sciolist

Some dictionaries mark this word - meaning a superficial pretender to knowledge - as archaic, and indeed it may be so, since we can't find a recent example from a printed work. And it was always in any case a scholarly or literary brickbat to throw at a rival, one hardly likely to appear in your daily newspaper. A typical example appears in an article by Thomas Henry Huxley in the Fortnightly Review in 1878: "Judged strictly by the standard of his own time, Bacon's ignorance of the progress which science had up to that time made is only to be equalled by his insolence toward men in comparison with whom he was the merest sciolist." The word, as you might guess from the spelling, comes from Latin. It derives from the verb scire, to know, which is also the root of other English words, like prescient, science, omniscient and conscience. The immediate Latin original was the diminutive sciolus, a person who had only a smattering of knowledge. The related noun is sciolism, the practice of giving one's opinions on subjects of which one has only superficial knowledge. That is a little more common, but the only recent example was written by the American author and playwright Herb Greer in the National Review in 1998: "Tynan's awful political sciolism sparks out now and again, but not offensively." Store it in the back of your mind - you never know when it might come in handy, simultaneously showing your own word power and your opinion of your opponent. By the time he has found a sufficiently large dictionary to discover you've insulted him, you can be well away.

### SPECTRUM NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY

## Standing tall with Raman's legacy



Nikunjia Bihari Sahu

**RAMAN'S LEGACY WOULD GO A LONG WAY TO TAKE OUR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH TO NEW HEIGHTS**

The National Science Day is celebrated in India to reminisce the landmark discovery of the Raman Effect by eminent physicist Sir CV Raman February 28, 1928 and his subsequent felicitation of the Nobel Prize as the first Asian in Physics. The life of CV Raman has several important points to be chronicled that should be reflected upon and imbibed by our young generation today.

First, Raman published his first scientific paper entitled 'Unsymmetrical diffraction bands due to a rectangular aperture' in the British journal 'The Philosophical Magazine' in 1906 while he was a graduate student and only 18-year-old. This shows that inclination for path-breaking discoveries should be occupied in one's mind at the very early age.

Second, Raman contradicted with Lord Rayleigh, the eminent British physicist of that time, regarding the explanation for the blue colour of the sea which he believed was due to the reflection of the blue sky. Rather than being dogmatic in accepting the prevailing view, Raman tried to verify the theory during his voyage from Southampton to Bombay in 1921. While passing through the Mediterranean aboard the steamship SS Narkunda, he was so intrigued by

the blue colour of the sea that while most of his co-passengers were enjoying the thrilling voyage, he immediately carried out a series of improvised experiments on the deck with a few tools from his pocket to conclude that the blue colour of the sea was actually due to the predominant scattering of the blue wavelength of the sunlight by the water particles. It theoretically proved the Rayleigh explanation wrong and, hence, represented the unfolding of a revolutionary idea from the Eastern world breaking the monopoly of the scientific supremacy of the West.

Thirdly, Raman quit the lucrative post of Assistant Accountant General in 1907 held in the Indian Financial Service in Kolkata (then Calcutta) to join as the Palit Professor of Physics in the University of Calcutta for nearly half the salary just for the sheer love he had for scientific research. Fourthly, although two contemporary Russian physicists - GS Landsberg (1890-1957) and LI Mandelstam (1879-1944) were also working on the same field of scattering of light by liquid particles and had almost discovered the effect, it was Raman who mailed the paper first to the British journal 'Nature' for publication. Finally, the fact that Raman dis-

covered the effect with the help of a spectrometer that cost hardly five hundred rupees at that time proved that path-breaking discoveries in science can also be achieved even by one's own ingenuity and original approach rather than the instrumentation superiority of a country.

However, it is lamenting to note that despite this rich legacy in scientific pursuit, Indian youth currently are more attracted to careers in technology rather than fundamental research in pure science. This is the reason why the country is now lagging far behind in the field of scientific research compared to other nations. It is also shocking to note that the country has not been able to produce any world class scientist to bag the world's coveted prize even 90 years after Raman. The state of poor research in India is evident from the fact that the country has reportedly only 140 researchers per 1,000,000 population as compared to 4,651 in the US and that India ranks 34th in global spending on scientific research and development. India's Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) in Science and Technology stands around 0.7% of its GDP which is far lower compared to nations like Israel (4.6%),

South Korea (4.5%), Japan (3.2%), Germany (3%), the USA (2.8%), France (2.2%), the UK (1.7%), Canada (1.6%), China (2.1%), Brazil (1.3%) and Russia (nearly 1%). Indian research and manufacturing industries, both in private and public sectors, filed only 1428 international patent applications in 2014 as compared to 42,381 by Japan, 25,548 by China, and 13,117 by South Korea.

The dismal performance can be attributed to the poor quality of research work in India, pitiable market value for its products and the lengthy period of research by an individual.

For a country, scientific research is not just a revenue generator; but a long-term asset expected to bring about new technological innovations as a fillip to the economy. India should not only be investing more on scientific research by expanding its research base, but also should assert to its younger citizens that a career in this domain is indeed rewarding. Raman's legacy would go a long way to take our scientific research to new heights in days to come.

*The writer is Education Officer, Regional Science Centre, Bhopal. Views are personal.*

#### Time to criminalise war

**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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

Sir, The whole world has been shouting slogans against Russia which has been attacking Ukraine continuously now as part of its war with that country. The term "war" itself should be criminalised in all respects. For this, the UN should do some serious work and bring about strong foolproof rules that will unfailingly stop countries like Russia on their way from waging war against poor dependent countries. Clearly enough, such strong international rules have been totally missing from action now. That is the reason countries like Russia have been able to go for war in this 21st century. Come what may, Russia should be held accountable for all the damage inflicted on Ukraine now. Above all, the international community and the global media should support this and pitch for a strong campaign worldwide. Russia should understand that no one has the right or has been authorised to take away human lives in the world. The fact is that only economic freedom and development will make the world happy and prosperous. Russia should understand this simple fact and act accordingly. If otherwise, it has to pay a heavy price for all the damage - economic and human - caused by it. It's time to criminalise war.

P Senthil Saravana Durai, MUMBAI

#### Ukraine is bleeding

Sir, War is terrible and it is a bloody business, literally. After the onslaught of the Taliban in Afghanistan following the US troops withdrawal from that country last year, once again the world is witnessing a war, and this time Ukraine is bleeding. An image of a Ukrainian father's farewell to his cute daughter is trending on social media. Will such images move Russian President Vladimir Putin's heart? Will the image of innocent children fleeing for refuge move those politicians' and generals' hearts? In every war, it is innocent civilians who become the victims of the invading forces, while humanity is crushed for the sake of feigned glory. For those callous and hardened political leaders, power and wealth matter, and not human relations and emotions. Russia's invasion of Ukraine will presumably change the course of European and world history, but for imperialists like Putin, it will hardly teach any lesson. When can we see a world which is totally and absolutely conflict-free? Perhaps, the answer is when the power of love overcomes the love of power.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI



# national

## of the day quote

Congress workers must understand that they have already won the Gujarat Assembly election. You are just not accepting it. People of Gujarat are watching you with high hopes. The BJP has harmed the people of Gujarat more than it has harmed the Congress here

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

Malik has been booked under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and has been arrested. If a government employee faces criminal charges and is arrested, then that person is not only suspended, but also loses job. So why doesn't the same rule apply to Malik and why his boss is not seeking his resignation

CHANDRAKANT PATIL | MAHARASHTRA BJP CHIEF

In 2017, the SP was speaking about forming the government. In UP, the fight is between 80 per cent and 20 per cent. Akhilesh Yadav has become the representative of only 20 per cent of people. The criminal antics of the SP still make people feel afraid and people have not forgotten it

GIRIRAJ SINGH | UNION MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Cylinder blast destroys house

**Chikkaballapur (Karnataka):** A house collapsed in Chikkaballapur district of Karnataka Sunday morning following the explosion in an LPG cylinder. The couple residing in the house suffered serious injuries and they have been moved to the hospital. Their condition is said to be serious. According to the police, the couple had not noticed the leakage from the cylinder and when they turned on the switch in the house, the gas cylinder exploded causing fire which engulfed the entire house.

### Allungal dies

**Thiruvananthapuram:** Maoist Allungal Sreedharan, who was the mastermind of Pulpalay police station attack (Kerala) of November 24, 1968, along with Vargheese, Philip M. Prasad, and K. Ajitha, passed away Friday in Idukki district. Sreedharan had changed his name to Mavady Thankappan and was living in the high ranges of Kerala in Thodupuzha after the police station attack. He suffered brutal police beatings along with Ajitha, Philip M. Prasad, and other Maoist leaders, while Vargheese was shot dead by police in the Pulpalay forest while escaping.

### Woman arrested

**New Delhi:** A woman from Uganda was held at the Indira Gandhi International Airport by the customs officials for smuggling heroin worth Rs 7 crore. A customs official said that the woman reached at the IGI from Narobi Airport by Air India flight. Later, she was handed over to the police official. "We recovered 69 capsules weighing 946 grams filled with Narcotic substance (heroin) from her. The seized capsules are valued at Rs seven crore," said an official.

### ₹2 crore seized

**Mumbai:** The Income Tax (I-T) Department has seized around Rs 2 crore from the premises of family and associates of Shiv Sena corporator and Standing Committee chairperson of BMC, Yashwant Jadhav during raids. The I-T department had Friday (February 25) conducted search operations at the premises of Jadhav, his family members, associates and a few contractors of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).



Electric and miniaturization are the future of design and innovation in the defence sector and the dependence on fossil fuels should be reduced

M M NARAVANE | CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF GENERAL

### FISHING BOATS IN KERALA TO RUN ON LPG

Kerala government has launched an eco-friendly scheme to convert fossil fuel-run fishing boats into LPG-driven vessels



# 2,000 Indians evacuated from Ukraine: Shringla

India Sunday evacuated 688 more nationals from war-hit Ukraine on three Air India flights and said it was in touch with the other countries in that region to ensure the return of all its stranded citizens

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** India has evacuated around 2,000 of its citizens from Ukraine after the conflict began and efforts are on to facilitate the exit of the remaining stranded Indians through various border transit points to the neighbouring countries. Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said Sunday.

At a media briefing, Shringla said he held separate meetings with the ambassadors of Ukraine and Russia and shared with them the locations of the Indian citizens in Ukraine for ensuring their protection.

The foreign secretary said though the border crossings to Hungary and Romania are functioning, the exit point to Poland has been clogged with lakhs of Ukrainians and foreign nationals trying to leave the strife-torn through it. "This is a problem area," he said. Shringla said that Indians who



An Indian student with her family members, after being evacuated from Ukraine, on her arrival at the Kochi International Airport, Sunday PFI PHOTO

We are aware of a number of Indian citizens, particularly students, who continue to be in cities in the east and south-east of Ukraine. Unfortunately, these areas are live conflict areas and it is generally deemed unsafe for people to move around freely. We will try to find suitable evacuation modalities for them

HARSH VARDHAN SHRINGLA | INDIA'S FOREIGN SECRETARY

are near the borders with Hungary Romania and Slovakia are being guided towards the respective bor-

der points in phases. "We are aware of a number of Indian citizens, particularly students, who continue to be in cities in the east and south-east of Ukraine. Unfortunately, these areas are live conflict areas and it is generally deemed unsafe for people to move around freely. We will try to find suitable evacuation modalities for them," he said.

The foreign secretary said that around a thousand Indians have already been flown out of Romania and Hungary and another 1,000 have been evacuated from Ukraine through the land routes.

He said approximately 2,000 Indian citizens were in Kyiv and many of them have begun to move to the western part of the country.

# Violence mars civic polls in West Bengal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Feb 27:** Cases of violence and malpractices marred elections to 107 municipalities across West Bengal Sunday even as a voter turnout of around 76.51 per cent was recorded till 5 pm, election officials said.

Elections were scheduled in 108 municipalities. However, with TMC winning one civic body uncontested in Dinhatra in Coochbehar district, elections were held in 107 towns Sunday, a State Election Commission official said.

The opposition BJP, which dubbed the poll process as a "mockery of democracy" has called a 12-hour shutdown Monday to protest the violence. The TMC has dubbed the allegations as baseless and said opposition parties are trying to find excuses sensing defeat. Till 5 pm, 76.51 per cent of 95.6 lakh voters exercised their franchise in

more than 2,000 wards amid tight security and strict adherence to COVID-19 guidelines.

"There have been reports of sporadic incidents of violence. There have been some complaints. We noted disturbances in a few areas and took action," the senior SEC official. West Bengal DGP Manoj Malaviya said the polls have been peaceful as there have been "no reports of deaths or shot being fired". "There have been some stray incidents. But there have been no reports of shots being fired or deaths. The police have taken action, in all the cases of violence," he said.

However, widespread violence, rigging incidents and clashes with the police were reported from various parts of Bengal from North to South in one of the most extensive electoral exercises in the state since the assembly polls last year.



Citizens show their identification cards as they wait to cast their votes, during the West Bengal municipal polls, in Birbhum district, Sunday PFI PHOTO

# States sans MGNREGA ombudsperson won't get funds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** From the next fiscal, the Centre will not give funds for employment guarantee scheme MGNREGS to states that do not appoint ombudspersons in 80 per cent of their districts where the scheme has been applied, a top government official said Sunday.

As per details available with the Union Rural Development Ministry, states such as BJP-ruled Gujarat, Arunachal Pradesh and Goa, and TRS-ruled Telangana, and union territories such as Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli do not have a single ombudsperson

for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

Similarly, there are states that have appointed ombudspersons in very few districts such as Congress-ruled Rajasthan, where only four out of the 33 districts under the scheme have ombudspersons. In TMC-ruled West Bengal, ombudspersons have been appointed in four out of 23 districts under the scheme.

The situation is similar in Haryana and Punjab. Both have 22 districts each under the scheme, but only four such districts in Haryana and seven in Punjab have ombudspersons, as per data avail-



A healthworker administers polio drop to a child during the nationwide immunization drive, in Jammu, Sunday PFI PHOTO

# PM PRAISES TANZANIAN SIBLINGS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday called upon youngsters to make videos of famous Indian songs in different languages that will not only make them popular but also showcase the country's diversity to the new generation.

Modi praised Tanzanian siblings Kili Paul and Neema who, he said, have created ripples on social media by lip-syncing several Indian songs, including the country's national anthem on Republic Day.

In his monthly Mann Ki Baat broadcast, Prime Minister Modi highlighted a number of issues,

including the cases of triple talaq going down by over 80 percent following a law banning the practice, and also urged people to develop scientific temperament among children.

Even after 75 years of Independence, there are people who have dilemmas and reservations regarding their language, dress, food and drink, whereas it is not like this anywhere else in the world, Modi said.

People should speak their language with pride, he said, adding India is incomparable in its richness of languages. Noting that India recently got back an ancient idol that was stolen from Bihar a few years back, from Italy,

he said a big rise in the number of smuggled precious Indian idols being brought back to India since his government came to power in 2014 shows how the world has begun to view the country differently.

He said, "Till 2013, nearly 13 idols had been brought back to India. But, in the last seven years, India has successfully brought back more than 200 precious idols."

With the International Mother Language Day being observed recently, Modi referred to Tanzanian Kili Paul and his sister Neema and spoke of their passion for Indian songs, including their tribute to legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar.

able with the ministry.

"Ideally, states should appoint ombudspersons in all their districts under the MGNREGS. The states which don't appoint ombudspersons in at least 80 per cent of the total districts under MGNREGS, which is the minimum

threshold limit, would not get funds from the next financial year for the implementation of the employment guarantee scheme," Secretary, Rural Development, Nagendra Nath Sinha said.

Launching the Ombudsperson app for MGNREGS on Thursday, Union Rural Development Minister Giriraj Singh had expressed concerns over non-appointment of ombudspersons in various districts, and said it has been noticed that persons belonging to political parties were appointed at many places.

"The ministry would not release funds to those states which don't appoint ombudspersons as per the

As the cost will be between ₹7 to 8 lakh per hour, the total cost for a round trip will be more than ₹1.10 crore

# AI evacuation flights costing ₹7-8L per hour



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 27:** As Air India ferries hundreds of Indians stranded in Ukraine, the cost of operating a two-way evacuation flight will be more than Rs 1.10 crore and the amount will go up depending on the duration of the flights.

The airline is operating the services with wide-body Boeing 787 plane, better known as Dreamliner, from neighbouring countries of conflict-ridden Ukraine, including Romania and Hungary. It has already brought back hundreds of Indians. The flights have been chartered by the Indian government.

An airline source said that the cost of operating a chartered flight with the Dreamliner is around Rs 7 to 8 lakh per hour and the total amount will depend "on where we are going and how far we are going". The total cost will include expenses related to crew, fuel, navigation, landing and parking charges.

Also, considering that these flights are for relatively long duration, there will be two sets of crew onboard. The crew that operates the first leg of the flight will take rest in the return leg and will be replaced by another set of crew,

the source said on condition of anonymity.

Currently, Air India is operating flights to Bucharest (Romania) and Budapest (Hungary) and both are offline stations for the airline, which means it does not have scheduled services to these places.

According to flight tracking website FlightAware, the flight from Bucharest to Mumbai that landed on Saturday night was for a duration of nearly six hours. The flight from Budapest to Delhi was for about six hours and another flight from Delhi to Bucharest took over seven hours. An Air India flight from Bucharest to Delhi took over 5 hours.

As the cost will be between Rs 7 to 8 lakh per hour, the total cost for a round trip will be more than Rs 1.10 crore. The figure is calculated under the assumption that overall duration of the to and fro flight is around 14 hours.

# Jawan's wife strangled to death by lover

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kanpur (UP), Feb 27:** A CRPF jawan's wife, who went missing five days ago from Panki Ratanpur Colony in Kanpur, was strangled to death by her lover.

The woman's body was found dumped in a drain located near Bhaupur Maitha of Kanpur Dehat and the accused has been arrested. CRPF jawan Inderpal had gone to Mainpuri for election duty, while his wife Geeta Devi, 34, was at home.

On February 20, Inderpal made a call on his wife's mobile phone, but it went unanswered. Apprehending something untoward, he informed the Panki police who reached his house and found that the victim was not at home. Inderpal returned home on February 21 and lodged a missing complaint with the police station.

Investigations began and when the police checked the call detail record of the woman's mobile, the last call was received from a person named Mukhtar, a car mechanic and a resident of Rura Jamalpur area of Kanpur Dehat.

When the police grilled him, he confessed to his crime. Mukhtar told the police during interrogation that he had a love affair with Geeta. He was upset these days, as Geeta had started talking to someone else.

Mukhtar took her for a drive, strangled her to death and threw the body in the drain. Police station in-charge Anjan Kumar recovered the body from the drain in Bhaupur Maitha area.

According to the police station in-charge, it also came to the fore that apart from Mukhtar, two other people were also present in the car.



## PAGD calls BJP's claims on 'Naya Kashmir' a pack of lies

The alliance terms the Delimitation Commission's proposals as 'unconstitutional' stating that 'everything is being done under the re-organisation Act which itself is illegal'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Srinagar, Feb 27:** The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) Saturday released a white paper on BJP's claims post the revocation of Article 370 on development, peace, jobs and investments, calling these claims 'a pack of lies'.

Leaders of the PAGD, including those from the National Conference (NC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Awami National Conference (ANC) and the CPI-M, met at the high-security Gupkar residence of former Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah here Saturday.

The statement released at the end of the meeting also termed the Delimitation Commission's proposals as 'unconstitutional' stating that "everything is being done under the re-organisation Act which itself is illegal".

"We challenge to counter our white paper with facts. We will send the document to all the MPs, also to the President of India," PAGD spokesman MY Tarigami of the CPI-M said, adding that the development of August 5, 2019 (revocation of Articles 370 and 35-A) was a poison that will engulf all Indian states slowly.

"For us, the Delimitation Panel's recommendations are unacceptable. All basic parameters have been thrown to wind. Why only an increase of seven seats? Why not just one or nine? On what basis seats are being increased," asked Tarigami.

Addressing a press conference at the residence of PAGD chief Farooq Abdullah, alliance spokesman Tarigami said that all



members of the alliance including, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, ANC vice-president Muzaffar Shah, other members and he himself deliberated on certain important issues, including the fresh proposals and recommendations of the Delimitation Commission.

"We continue to stick to our stand that the re-organisation act is unconstitutional and illegal. We continue to hold that the August 5, 2019 decision of rolling back Article 370 was unconstitutional. The historic state of J&K was sliced into two halves which was nothing but a humiliation for every single citizen of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. Article 370 was rolled back amid strict lockdown, internet gag and huge deployment of forces. Even internet was snapped in Jammu," Tarigami said.

He said that they were never against delimitation as it was already agreed to have the exercise in 2026.

PAGD also issued a white paper which says that claims of Naya Kashmir made by the Centre is

based on falsehood and deceit and the BJP is doing things at its will by destroying the 'historic India'.

"It is not new Kashmir the foundation of which was laid by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah. The foundation set by Sheikh ended autocratic rule and rights were given to the real owners of land and also to the farmers," Tarigami said.

"J&K was the only and first state where education was taken up to the university level and made free for all," he added.

Tarigami said that BJP's new Kashmir narrative entails UAPA, PSA and arrests besides gagging every single voice that objects to its policies.

"Article 370 was a bridge between India and the people of J&K under the Constitution of India. Rolling back special status also hit the relation made at the point when J&K people acceded with India. Revocation of Article 370 was an assault on the Constitution of India and J&K's identity. Tomorrow, Bengal and Tamil Nadu will become another Kashmir," he added.

## Raj's dipping camel count gets a boost

**CHIEF MINISTER ASHOK GEHLOT PROPOSED A BUDGET OF ₹10 CRORE IN THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR UNDER THE NEW POLICY FOR REARING, PROTECTION, AND OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE ANIMAL**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, Feb 27:** Faced with a declining number of camels in Rajasthan, the state government has announced a 'Camel Protection and Development Policy' in its budget 2022-23.

Camel is the state animal of Rajasthan and their number is continuously decreasing.

The demand for camel protection in the state has been rising for a long time.

Considering this, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot proposed a budget of Rs 10 crore in the next financial year under the new policy for rearing, protection, and overall development of the state animal.

According to the government figures, there are now less than two lakh camels left in the state, while the number of camels in the entire country has reduced by 1.5 lakh since 2012.

There were about 2.5 lakh camels left when counted last in 2019. According to the data released by the centre in the Parliament in December, there were 4 lakh camels across India in the 2012 livestock census, and by the 2019 census their number had dwindled to 2.52 lakh.

According to the 2019 animal census, the number of camels in



### MATTER OF CONCERN

CAMEL IS THE STATE ANIMAL OF RAJASTHAN AND THEIR NUMBER IS CONTINUOUSLY DECREASING

THE DEMAND FOR CAMEL PROTECTION IN THE STATE HAS BEEN RISING FOR A LONG TIME

ABOUT 85 PER CENT OF THE COUNTRY'S CAMELS ARE FOUND IN RAJASTHAN FOLLOWED BY GUJARAT, HARYANA, UTTAR PRADESH, AND MADHYA PRADESH

ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNMENT FIGURES, THERE ARE NOW LESS THAN TWO LAKH CAMELS LEFT IN THE STATE, WHILE THE NUMBER OF CAMELS IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY HAS REDUCED BY 1.5 LAKH SINCE 2012

Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya and Nagaland officially fell to zero, while in 2012, these states had 45, 03, 07 and 92 camels respectively.

About 85 per cent of the country's camels are found in Rajasthan followed by Gujarat, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.

According to the information given in the Parliament, the number of camels in Rajasthan in 2012 was 3,25,713, which had reduced to 2,12,739 in 2019.

Livestock farmers and NGOs have welcomed the policy, but demanded changes in law related to camels.

Hanwant Singh Rathore, director of Lokhit Pashupalak

Sansthan, praised the policy but said it has to be seen how much and how it is implemented at the ground level.

Dr Ilse Kohler-Rollefson, a German scholar working for camel conservation in Pali district for the past several decades, told PTI that the current legislation of the state government was the biggest factor responsible for the declining number of camels.

She said due to the law entire camel market was destroyed and people turned away from camel rearing.

Kohler-Rollefson said an amendment in the law is necessary to encourage camel conservation and camel farmers.

The Rajasthan government had

declared camel as the state animal in the year 2014.

The very next year it came up with the Rajasthan Camel (Prohibition of Slaughter and Prohibition of Temporary Migration or Export Regulations) Act to stop its slaughter and prohibit its temporary migration out of the state.

Cattle farmers say that due to the law, camel rearing in the state reduced and led to a decline in their population.

Rathore said that the law implemented in the state proved to be a loss-making deal for the camel farmers.

The ban on taking camels out without permission, as well as many more restrictions, discouraged the cattle rearers, he said.

A camel which was earlier sold for 10,000 to 70,000 rupees, now brought only 3,000 to 8,000 rupees, he said.

The state government, earlier in response to a question in Rajasthan Assembly, had said the reason behind decline in camels' number in past 30 years was the continuous development of mechanical resources and better transport facility in villages.

## Despite high debts, Raj hopes for silver lining

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, Feb 27:** Rajasthan has joined the list of states whose debts are hovering around a precarious level of 40% of the gross state domestic product (GSDP). However, government officials say that the state's Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) has stayed under the permissible limit and a silver lining hence shall be seen soon.

Brijesh Kishore Sharma, director (Budget), Rajasthan government, said: "The FRBM in Rajasthan stays under permissible limit. There is no doubt that deficits have gone up and one of the reasons for the same is the Uday scheme. Had it not been there, revenue and fiscal deficits will not have surged. We have to pay interest of around Rs 8000 crore on loans we have taken under it. It is one of the major substantive reasons for rising deficits. Next, COVID has been one of the major reasons for shrinking revenues and rising expenditure. However, despite this pandemic challenge, we have kept the FRBM under the permissible limit. During normal times, the government has kept it at 3 per cent, then the govt increased it during the pandemic and hence we are under the permissible limit at 4.5."

In the coming time, we can see



a silver lining with normalcy returning. The virus impact is reducing and hence a boost to the economy is expected soon, he added. The state government presented its annual budget recently. As per this budget announcement, "The estimated fiscal deficit amounts to Rs 58 thousand 211 crore 55 lakh which is 4.36% of the GSDP."

The budget document says, "Fiscal variables (without COVID-19 effect) to Gross State Domestic Product in 2020-21 have touched 3.20 per cent while debt and other liabilities to Gross State Domestic

Product in 2020-21 was 40.51%." It adds that "Fiscal deficit almost remains within touch of the FRBM Act, 2005 norms."

"If the effect of additional borrowing is excluded, then the fiscal deficit (without the COVID-19 effect) remains 32,468 crore which is 3.20 per cent of 37,654 crore (3.77 per cent) for the year 2019-20. Thus, the fiscal deficit almost remains within touch of the FRBM Act, 2005 norms," says the Economic Review 2021-22 document released by the state government.

In 2017, the FRBM panel sug-

gested a ceiling for general government debt (both Centre and states) of 60% of GDP by FY23. And within this overall limit, a ceiling of 40% was adopted by the Centre, and 20% by the states. However, Rajasthan is amongst those states whose aggregate debt reached a 15-year high of 31.3% of the GDP in FY21 and is seen to be at roughly the same level in FY22.

The respective budget estimates suggest that states with the highest debt-GSDP ratio in FY22 are Punjab (53.3%), Rajasthan (39.8%), West Bengal (38.8%), Kerala (38.3%) and Andhra Pradesh (37.6%).

State BJP president Satish Poonia told IANS, "The debt on Rajasthan has been continuously increasing under the Congress government's rule due to financial mismanagement. It has, in three years, increased by Rs 4.34 thousand crore; every person of the state is under a loan of Rs 52,000."

"The Ashok Gehlot government alone took 25 per cent of the loans taken by all other governments during the last thirty years, which is affecting the governance of the state."

Speaking on the latest budget, he said, "Debt to GDP ratio has increased to 59.03%. Also, fiscal deficit has increased to 4.36% which violates the FRBM limit of 3%."

## Cong leader Ghulam Nabi Azad's nephew joins saffron party in J&K

*Mubashir Azad says he was influenced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's developmental works at the ground level*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Feb 27:** Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad's nephew Mubashir Azad joined the BJP Sunday and said he was "influenced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's developmental works at the ground level".

Mubashir Azad, the son of Ghulam Nabi Azad's youngest brother Liaqat Ali, also said his uncle was 'disrespected' by the Congress leadership which hurt him and led to him parting ways with the grand old party.

He, however, claimed that he did not discuss the plan to join the BJP with his uncle.

Mubashir Azad and his supporters were welcomed into the party fold by Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Ravinder Raina and other senior leaders, including ex-MLA Daleep Singh Parihar.

His joining the saffron party



was described Raina as a "turning point" that will pave the way for more young activists from the Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban districts of the Chenab Valley region to join the party.

"The BJP is growing fast with the joining of political leaders from opposition parties, social workers from all communities whether Hindus, Muslims, Gujjars, Bakarwals and Paharis," he said.

In April 2009, Azad's brother Ghulam Ali had also joined the BJP. Mubashir Azad said, "The (Congress) party is marred in infighting... While under the lead-

ership of Modi the work for the welfare of the people is taking place on the ground."

"The way the Congress treated (Ghulam Nabi) Azad, one of the charismatic leaders of the party and former chief minister, has hurt the sentiments of the common masses. He was praised by the prime minister for his service to the nation but was sidelined by the party," Mubashir said.

Azad was part of the G23, a group of dissenting Congress leaders who wrote to party president Sonia Gandhi in August 2020 demanding an organisational overhaul.

## Gehlot govt ignoring Muslims: Cong MLA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, Feb 27:** A Congress MLA in Rajasthan, Ameen Khan, has charged the Gehlot government with ignoring Muslims and their interests in the state.

During the budget session in the Assembly, he said, "Everyone knows that 95 per cent Muslim citizens go for polling and of them, 99 per cent vote for the Congress. But, we are sad because we don't get justice." Ameen Khan said: "The Congress has an old habit and it should change it failing which the party can suffer."

"I have studied the budget, roads have been announced in other's areas, but not an inch in my area. In the old days, people were igno-



rant, now people are aware. We look forward to special concessions for the poor," he claimed.

Ameen Khan added, "There are two Muslim Ministers in the state cabinet and none of them is having a plum portfolio."

"Saleh Mohammed has a department limited to Muslims and Zahida has a government press and we don't have to print books," he said.

## Knowledge-based cultivation crucial for farm growth

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Srinagar, Feb 27:** Nature shapes every creature and it is impossible to remain insulated from modifications when the climate is changing globally. Even the famous saffron and walnuts of Kashmir could not escape this law of nature. Only knowledge, attitude and practice - these three steps are crucial to bring in a positive result.

Jammu & Kashmir, with its immense potential for the productivity, quality, and expansion of horticulture crops such as saffron and walnuts, can act as a catalyst for the growth of these crops in India. The results achieved would be beneficial not only for these agricultural production sectors, but it could also serve as a model for other parts of the world to adapt to climate change with the right policies and measures adopted in its cul-



tivation and production to counter the effects brought on by climate change. Jammu and Kashmir is a region enriched with various agricultural production, which is also the predominant sector of its econ-

omy, supporting nearly 80 per cent of the population. Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh are the three agro-climatic zones; each has its own unique geo-climatic conditions that influence cropping patterns and

productivity (J&K Development Report). Climate change has brought in significant changes in the production and quality of these crops and in the lives of farmers who rely on these crops' produce. According to the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Jammu and Kashmir's Annual publication 2013-14, climate change has affected the production of major crops in the region such as rice, maize, wheat, barley, pulses, and oilseeds, along with various fruits.

The low precipitation and high temperature due to the rapid increase in the temperature due to climate change have brought down the produce and market of horticulture crops. Two horticulture crops - saffron and walnut - are suffering due to the adverse impact of climate change. Pampore, a small town known as India's "saffron

town/capital", has suffered badly due to climate change. Jammu and Kashmir is the major production state of walnut in India, but its production has decreased due to the region's high temperature and less rainfall.

Comprehensive knowledge of the causes and management strategies for various physiological disorders in tropical and subtropical fruits will not only help fruit growers produce higher-quality fruit, but it will also help researchers come up with new ways to control these disorders through biotechnological interventions, breeding strategies, or understanding the physiological basis to overcome them.

The threat of climate change can be converted by innovative research methods in agriculture, such as the development of heat-tolerant cultivars and adjustment in production system management.



## of the day quote

Girls outperforming boys in various examinations indicate that India is on course to become a gender-just nation in future

RAM NATH KOVIND | PRESIDENT

Indian students going abroad for study, especially in medical education, also result in hundreds of rupees exiting the country

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

In the midst of the impasse in Ukraine, the Jharkhand government will reimburse the ticket fare of the citizens returning to Jharkhand on personal expenses

HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CM

## SHORT TAKES

### 41 booked

**Varanasi:** Nearly 41 prisoners and some unidentified persons have been booked for alleged violence in Varanasi jail. The FIR was lodged on the complaint of jailor Virendra Kumar Tripathi under relevant sections of the IPC, Criminal Law Amendment Act and Prison Act. Violence had erupted in the jail following the death of prisoner Rajesh Jaiswal due to cardiac arrest. The inmates went on a rampage causing utter chaos in the district jail. They indulged in brick batting causing damage to the ambulance of the jail, among other things and also assaulted the prison guards.

### Woman ends life

**Lucknow:** The wife of a government doctor allegedly shot herself at her house, minutes after making a video call to her husband. The incident took place Saturday. The victim, Anju Verma, 49, was a teacher at a government school in Barabanki and was undergoing treatment for depression. Her husband Sameer Verma is a radiologist at Balrampur Hospital.

### Four arrested

**Banda:** Four villagers have been arrested for hunting a blackbuck in Tindwari forest area of Banda district. The accused had set a trap in the field in Ghazni village here. On a specific tip-off, the forest department team raided the spot along with the police and arrested four people. A case has been registered against them under the Wildlife Protection Act.

### Ex-forest officer commits suicide

**Lucknow:** A 67-year-old retired chief ranger in the forest department allegedly shot himself using a licensed revolver at his residence in Gomti Nagar. The police claimed that the deceased was suffering from spinal cord pain and had ended his life. Assistant commissioner of police (ACP), Gomti Nagar, Shweta Srivastava said that a suicide note was also found, in which the deceased Atibal Singh had mentioned about his 'spinal cord pain'.

### Four booked for gangrape

**Moradabad (Uttar Pradesh):** A 17-year-old girl was allegedly gangraped for the past six months in Kundarki, Moradabad district. A case has been registered against four people, including a woman. The girl was allegedly kept in the woman's house and the accused "threatened her to remain quiet after filming the sexual act".



**National Conference will contest elections whenever they are held in Jammu and Kashmir**

FAROOQ ABDULLAH | NC PRESIDENT

## HIGHWAY OPENS

After remaining shut due to landslides triggered by rains the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway opened Sunday afternoon for one way traffic, officials said



# UP polls: 54 pc voting in fifth phase

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Feb 27:** Around 54 per cent polling was recorded till 5 pm Sunday in the fifth phase of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls for 61 seats spread across 12 districts. Polling was reported to be peaceful, barring in Pratapgarh's Kunda assembly seat, where Samajwadi Party (SP) candidate Gulshan Yadav's convoy was allegedly attacked by some people, police said. Party workers claimed that Yadav sustained minor injuries in the attack. SP state president Naresh Uttam and party national spokesperson Rajendra Chowdhury have given a written complaint regarding the Kunda incident to the Election Commission.

Hours before voting began in Gonda, the Samajwadi Party candidate from the Colonelganj Assembly constituency, his brothers and supporters were booked for allegedly raping a woman and beating her up.

The police said they booked SP candidate Yogesh Pratap Singh and others on Saturday night after they allegedly barged into the residence of the woman, and assaulted her and her family members for 'supporting the BJP'.

According to the Election Commission of India, the polling percentage till 5 pm was 53.93. Polling ended at 6 pm. Around 2.24 crore people were eligible to vote in this phase.

Till 5 pm, Amethi recorded 52.82 per cent voting, Ayodhya 58.01 per cent, Bahraich 54.68 per cent, Barabanki 54.75 per cent, Chitrakoot 59.50 per cent, Gonda 54.21 per cent, Kaushambi 56.96 per



A man gets his hands sanitised before casting vote at a polling station, during the fifth phase of UP Assembly polls, in Barabanki, Sunday. PTI PHOTO

Hours before voting began in Gonda, the Samajwadi Party candidate from the Colonelganj Assembly constituency, his brothers and supporters were booked for allegedly raping a woman and beating her up

As many as 692 candidates are in the fray for this round, including Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, who is contesting from Sirathu in Kaushambi district

cent, Pratapgarh 50.20 per cent, Prayagraj 51.29 per cent, Raebareilly 56.06 per cent, Shravasti 57.24 per cent and Sultanpur 54.91 per cent, the commission said.

Some of the ministers in the fray are Siddharth Nath Singh from Allahabad West, Rajendra Singh from Patti (Pratapgarh), Nand Gopal Gupta Nadi from Allahabad South and Ramapati Shastri from Mankapur (Gonda). Raghuraj Pratap Singh, alias

Raja Bhaiya, who is the MLA from Kunda since 1993, is once again in the fray as the Jansatta Dal candidate, with his former aide Gulshan Yadav contesting against him on a Samajwadi Party ticket. Union minister Anupriya Patel's mother and Apna Dal (K) leader Krishna Patel is contesting from the Pratapgarh seat. The Apna Dal (K) has entered into an alliance with the Samajwadi Party.

Union minister Patel, heading a rival faction of the party named after her father Sonelal Patel, however, has handed over the seat to the BJP to challenge her mother Krishna Patel.

Congress Legislature Party leader Aradhana Mishra Mona is fighting from Rampur Khas of Pratapgarh.

## 'VIOLENCE' IN TRIPURA

### Congress demands probe by HC judge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** The Congress Sunday demanded an independent probe by a high court judge into incidents of violence in Tripura and said the chief minister should resign as he has failed to put a check on them.

The opposition party alleged that all such incidents of violence are being organised under the patronage of Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the northeastern state.

Congress leader Alka Lamba told reporters here that violence is being perpetrated against the workers of her party in Tripura and the BJP government in the state is seeking to suppress the voice of people by imposing prohibitory orders under section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

"You cannot suppress the voices emerging against the ruling BJP in Tripura by imposing prohibitory orders. This is the failure of the state government and we demand that a sitting judge of the high court should probe all incidents of violence," she said. "All incidents of violence in Tripura are being perpetrated by the BJP workers against the Congress and if the chief minister is unable to stop such violent incidents, he has no right to occupy the position and should immediately resign," Lamba said. She alleged that the BJP is unable to take control of the law-and-order situation in Tripura and is trying to suppress voices of dissent by force, adding that this will not be tolerated in a democracy.

Lamba cited several incidents of violence in the recent past where Congress workers and meetings were attacked by BJP "goons".

## SNOW HURDLE



Vehicles stuck on the snow-covered NH-305, which was closed due to snowfall, in Jalori Pass, in Banjar, Kullu district, Sunday. PTI PHOTO

# UP shocker: 50 cases of oral cancer in 20 days

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Firozabad (Uttar Pradesh), Feb 27:** In a shocking development, 50 cases of patients having primary symptoms of mouth cancer have surfaced in 20 days during screening at the out-patient department of the Firozabad medical college.

According to the doctors, the majority of these patients are in the age group of 30 to 50 years. They are addicted to chewing tobacco. On February 4, the dental department of the Firozabad medical college started the cancer

screening OPD. According to the doctors, the majority of these patients are in the age group of 30 to 50 years

Head of the dental department, Dr Kiran Singh, said, 50 patients suffering oral problems have been tested positive for mouth cancer till February 24. These patients were unaware of the disease. Chewing tobacco is a common



reason behind the progression of the disease in the majority of the patients.

All the patients are in the primary stage and can be cured following regular treatment.

"Mouth cancer can spread rapidly. Common signs and symptoms of the disease may include a lip or mouth sore that does not heal, white or reddish patch on the inside of your mouth, loose teeth, growth or lump inside your mouth, mouth pain, ear pain and difficult or painful swallowing. In case of persistent signs and symptoms for more than two weeks, the person must get cancer screening done," she said.

many pollsters believe this.

### PM's planned pitch

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outside the Parliament in five states. Next day, he repeated his oratory skills in Rajya Sabha and again his focus was on five poll-bound states.

### Priyanka holds fort

Even after two phases of polling in UP, Congress's star campaigner Rahul Gandhi is nowhere to be seen in the state even after the fourth phase. He has been travelling extensively in Goa, Uttarakhand, Punjab and even Manipur which goes to polls February 28 and March 5. But he is keeping himself at arm's length from campaigning in Uttar Pradesh. In fact, ever since he lost Amethi Lok Sabha seat, he has been avoiding travelling to UP and handed over the reins to his sister.

# Ragpicker killed in explosion

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Hyderabad, Feb 27:** A ragpicker was killed in a suspected chemical explosion at a garbage dump on the outskirts of Hyderabad Sunday, police said.

The incident took place in Mylardevpalli in Rangareddy district. A woman along with her husband was picking something from a garbage dump in Anand Nagar industrial area when an explosion occurred. The woman identified as Sushilamma died on the spot while her husband Rangamuni was injured.

Senior police officials of Cyberabad police commissionerate rushed to the scene. Some chemical substance is suspected to have exploded when the couple was picking it from garbage.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Jagdishwar Reddy said they were probing the cause of the explosion. The city has seen similar incidents in the past. In 2019, a ragpicker was killed when a bag he tried to open exploded. The chemical explosion had occurred on a footpath under PVNR Expressway.

# JD(U) candidate shot at in Manipur

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Imphal, Feb 27:** Incidents of violence continued in poll bound Manipur with a Janata Dal (United) candidate was shot at late on Saturday night by unknown armed persons, police said Sunday.

Police said that Wahengbam Rojit Singh, the JD(U) candidate contesting from AKShetrigao Assembly constituency, was shot at by two bike borne armed miscreants when he along with his party men was returning home after his poll related activities.

Singh, with bullet wounds, immediately shifted to a private hospital. The security forces have launched a search operation in the Imphal East district to nab the unknown perpetrators. The Kshetrigao Assembly seat is among the 38 constituencies where polling is scheduled to be held on Monday in the first phase of the two-phase Manipur Assembly elections.

In another incident on Saturday night, two people, including a child, were killed and five others injured when a bomb was exploded at a house in Gangpimual village in Churachandpur district.

Both the incidents occurred with less than 48 hours left for polling in five districts. The explosion is a major incident of violence since the schedule of the Manipur Assembly elections were declared on January 8 by the Election Commission.

In the run-up to the polls, the National People's Party (NPP), an estranged ally of the BJP-led government in Manipur, had earlier complained to the Election Commission (EC) that its candidates were being threatened by the cadres of the several militant outfits.

Earlier on February 19, NPP's Andro constituency Candidate L. Sanjay Singh's father L. Shamjai Singh was shot in the right shoulder by unidentified gunmen while he was at a campaign programme at Yairipok Yambem Leikai.

The Opposition Congress and other political parties have been repeatedly demanding the EC to further tighten the security in view of the threat of violence by the unknown miscreants or suspected militants. The elections to the 60-seat Manipur Assembly would be held in two phases on February 28 and March 5. Votes will be counted March 10.



## What's cooking in UP

Pollsters have started changing their tune with regard to UP after the second phase of polling and third phase's low polling has demoralized the alliance parties. It seems that fear factor being

injected by the BJP leadership among the voters is paying dividends. Amit Shah has even gone to the extent of saying that UP will be ruined if the SP-RLD alliance wins the polls. Shah had injected a new element in the first phase itself by saying if SP-RLD comes to power, the SP will throw RLD's Jayant Chaudhary out and induct Azam Khan instead. The BJP campaign is now moving in a different direction. It may certainly gladden the hearts of Chief Minister Yogi and his supporters who have been publicly buttressing the 80:20 thesis from day one. He is focusing on Hindutva only while Modi is talking of development. The continuous low-polling in the last three phases is an indication that there has been no aggressive anti-Yogi anti-BJP voting in UP. At least

many pollsters believe this.

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### No population explosion

India is not heading for a population explosion. On the contrary, the population growth is continuously falling. The government officially said, "The trend in population growth is towards stabilization and the concerns around a population collapse is not supported by evidence." As per the report by the Technical Group on Population Projections titled "Population Projections for India and States: 2011-36", India's population in 2036 is expected to go up to 152.20 crore. This report by the National Commission on Population had said it may increase from 121.10 crore in 2011 (Census) to 152.20 crores in 2036. India's birth rate is falling since 2003 and has come down from 24.8 per thousand to 19.7 in 2019.



# international

## MUSK ACTIVATES STARLINK SATELLITES

Tesla and SpaceX founder Elon Musk has activated Starlink, his commercial internet network, in Ukraine, with "more terminals en route". "Starlink service is now active in Ukraine. More terminals en route," Musk wrote on Twitter. According to Politico, Musk's SpaceX has thousands of Starlink satellites in orbit, which allow the company to beam broadband services around Earth, without the need for fiber-optic cables



## UKRAINE INVASION- DAY 4

- Oil terminal and gas pipeline set ablaze
- 368,000 refugees have fled Ukraine, UN says
- SWIFT curbs to be imposed on some Russian banks
- Ukraine President says Russian forces being repelled
- Russia says its troops are advancing



# Kharkiv turns a fierce battleground

AGENCIES

**Kyiv, Feb 27:** Ukrainian forces battled Russian troops pushing into the city of Kharkiv Sunday on the fourth day of an invasion that has shaken Europe's long-standing security architecture and pushed Germany to spend more on defence.

The invasion of Ukraine from three sides ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin is the biggest assault on a European state since World War Two. The attack, which Russia calls a special operation, has so far failed to topple the government in Kyiv or take major cities, but has driven hundreds of thousands of refugees, mainly women and children, into neighbouring countries.

Russian soldiers and armoured vehicles entered the northeastern city of Kharkiv and firing and explosions could be heard, witnesses said. A burning tank was visible in a video posted by the government. Ukraine's fighters repelled the at-

tack, according to authorities in the city, the country's second largest with a population of about 1.4 million people.

"Control over Kharkiv is completely ours! The armed forces, the police, and the defence

forces are working, and the city is being completely cleansed of the enemy," regional Governor Oleh Sinegubov said. The Russian troops blew up a natural gas pipeline in Kharkiv before daybreak, a Ukrainian state agency said, sending a burning cloud up into the darkness.



## UKRAINE TAKES RUSSIA TO ICJ

**Kyiv:** Ukraine has lodged a complaint against Russia at the International Court of Justice in The Hague to get it to halt its invasion, President Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday. "Russia must be held accountable for manipulating the notion of genocide to justify aggression," Zelensky declared in a tweet. "We request an urgent decision ordering Russia to cease military activity now and expect trials to start next week," he said. The ICJ, which is based in the Netherlands capital The Hague, does not have a mandate to bring criminal charges against individual Russian leaders behind the four-day-old invasion.



Both Ukraine's gas pipeline operator and Kremlin-controlled energy giant Gazprom said the transit of Russian gas via Ukraine, vital for Europe's energy needs, was unaffected. Ukraine's Western allies ratcheted up their response to Russia's land, sea and air invasion with an almost blanket ban on Russian airlines using European airspace. Putin sent troops into Ukraine after denying for weeks that he intended to do so, all the while building up a force of almost 200,000 troops along the countries' borders. He claims the West has failed to take seriously Russia's security concerns about NATO, the Western military alliance that Ukraine aspires to join. But he has also ex-

## Will not 'capitulate' to Russia: Ukraine

Ukraine will not 'capitulate' to Russia, Foreign Minister Dmitry Kuleba said Sunday ahead of negotiations, RT reported. The two delegations are due to meet at an undisclosed location in Belarus, close to the borders of both countries. "There is nothing bad in talks as such and, if the outcome of these talks will be peace and the end of war, that should be welcomed. But I want to make it very clear: we will not surrender, we will not capitulate, we will not give up a single inch of our territory," Kuleba said in Kyiv. He said that Ukraine agreed to send a delegation to the border "to listen to what Russia wants to say" and to say what Ukraine thinks of "this war and Russia's actions".

pressed scorn about Ukraine's right to exist as an independent state. Ukraine says some 200 Russian soldiers have been captured and thousands killed.

## CIVILIANS CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE



People take cover as an air-raid siren sounds



A view shows an apartment building damaged by recent shelling in Kyiv



Refugees fleeing conflict from neighboring Ukraine arrive to Zahony, Hungary



Passengers wait at the platform inside Lviv railway station in Lviv, west Ukraine. Thousands of people massed at Lviv's main train station, attempting to board trains that would take them out of Ukraine

# Ukrainians return from abroad to fight

While hundreds of thousands of refugees are leaving Ukraine amid Russia's attack on the country, some Ukrainian men and women are returning home from across Europe to help defend their homeland. Poland's Border Guard said Sunday that some 22,000 people have crossed into Ukraine since Thursday, when Russia invaded the country. At the checkpoint in Medyka, in southeastern Poland, many were standing in a line early Sunday to cross into Ukraine. "We have to defend our homeland. Who else if not us," said a moustachioed man in

front of a group of some 20 Ukrainian truck drivers walking to the checkpoint to enter Ukraine. They came from across Europe to return to Ukraine. They spoke to The Associated Press in Ukrainian and in Russian. Another man in the group said: "The Russians should be afraid. We are not afraid." Members of the group declined to give their names, or only gave their first names, citing their security and that of their families. A man in his 20s, who said his first name was Denis, said he had been working in Poland but was returning to



Ukraine where his "everything" is. "I'm on my own here in Poland. Why should I be here? So I go, for the homeland," Denis said. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

was staying in the capital, Kyiv, boosting the morale of Ukrainian fighters as Russian troops were closing in on the city and huge explosions lit up the sky early Sunday. Zelensky has banned men of military age, 18 to 60, from leaving the country. Ukrainian authorities have also called on foreign volunteers to come and fight in Ukraine's defense. At least 200,000 people have fled Ukraine into Poland and other neighboring countries in the wake of the Russian invasion, the UN Refugee agency, the UNHCR, said Sunday.

# Former-Miss Ukraine takes up arms

Kyiv has survived another 'brutal' night of shelling as Ukrainian forces prevented Russian troops from taking the city for the fourth day. Volunteers, among them the former Miss Ukraine Anastasiya Lenna, have taken up arms to fight off "Russian President Vladimir Putin's army", with "long queues" of citizens waiting to be issued weapons at recruitment centres in Kyiv. Lenna, who won the Miss Ukraine competition in 2015, posted an image of herself on Instagram as she announced she had joined the country's resistance against Russian troops. Lenna, who usually works as a public relations manager in Turkey, posted the image alongside two hashtags - stand with Ukraine and hands off Ukraine. It is not the first time she has been pictured with a gun and previous posts appear to show her training with weapons in wooded arenas and indoor training grounds, the report said.



# SWIFT BLOCK DEALS CRIPPLING BLOW TO RUSSIA

The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) is a secure messaging system to ensure rapid cross-border payments which has become the principal mechanism to finance international trade



Russian banks denied access to SWIFT will find it harder to communicate with peers internationally, even in friendly countries such as China, slowing trade and making transactions costlier. But the allies, who also vowed curbs on Russian's ability to support the rouble, have not yet said which banks would be targeted. That would be crucial to the measure's impact, said sanctions and banking experts. "The devil will be in the details," said Edward Fishman,

an expert on economic sanctions at the Eurasia Center of the Atlantic Council think tank. "Let's see which banks they select." If the list covered the largest Russian banks, such as Sberbank (SBER.MM), VTB (VTBR.MM), and Gazprombank, it would be "an absolutely huge deal," he wrote on Twitter. Sberbank and VTB have previously said that they were prepared for any developments. "The decision to kick some banks off SWIFT, though not

all, could encourage "nesting", in which Russian entities turn to non-sanctioned banks and large multinationals instead in a bid to access the global financial system, one expert said. Such a workaround for the Russians would create compliance headaches for global banks. The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) is the world's main banking messaging service which links around 11,000 banks and institutions in more than 200 countries, including India. Removing banks from SWIFT is deemed to be a severe curb because almost all banks use the system. Russia is heavily reliant on the SWIFT system for its key oil and gas exports. The joint sanctions are the harshest measures imposed to date on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has provoked condemnation from countries in the West and retali-

### What is SWIFT?

The SWIFT system stands for the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication and is a secure platform for financial institutions to exchange information about global monetary transactions such as money transfers. While SWIFT does not actually move money, it operates as a middleman to verify information of transactions by providing secure financial messaging services to more than 11,000 banks in over 200 countries. Based in Belgium, it is overseen by the central banks from eleven industrial countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, besides Belgium. Excluding Russian banks from the SWIFT platform is expected to hit the country's economy hard - and in the words of the White House, it will make the country rely on "the telephone or a fax machine" to make payments. According to former Russian Central Bank deputy chairman Sergei Aleksashenko: "There is going to be a catastrophe on the Russian currency market Monday". Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, said the decision to paralyse the assets of Russia's central bank would stop the Kremlin from "using its war chest", referring to its forex reserves.

Reactions to the latest move by the West, Russia's central bank said the financial messaging system of the Bank of Russia ensures the transfer of financial messages inside the country in any scenario.

## Nations ban Russian planes from airspace

European countries from north to south are banning Russian planes from transiting through their airspace in protest over Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Britain announces Friday an immediate ban on Russian private jets from UK airspace, in response to President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine the day before. The Czech Republic, Poland and Bulgaria each say they will ban all Russian flights from their skies, starting from midnight. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Romania follow suit Saturday. Germany says it will impose a three-month ban on all Russian flights, also from 1400 GMT Sunday. France announces it will close off its airspace from Sunday night. Belgium says it will not accept Russian aircraft either. Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Iceland say they too will not accept any Russian planes. Finland is also preparing to close its airspace to Russian air traffic. Italy and Spain, too, say they are shutting off their airspace.



## of the day quote

As we move forward, let me talk about the demand side, we have seen the GST collections at their almost highest ever at ₹1.4 lakh crore, we are seeing now pandemic wave in Omicron actually phasing out

**NIRANJAN GUPTA** | CFO, HERO MOTOCORP

In the residential segment buyer sentiment continues to be positive as witnessed with the demand in our ongoing and completed residential projects with Brigade continues to be the brand of choice for customers seeking to buy a new home

**MR JAISHANKAR** | CHAIRMAN AND MD, BRIGADE ENTERPRISES

We decided to make a foray into the franchise model to accelerate our expansion. Till date, all stores of Kalyan Jewellers are owned by us. Our initial plan to enter the franchise model of expansion was from 2025

**RAMESH KALYANARAMAN** | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KALYAN JEWELLERS INDIA

## SHORT TAKES

### FPIs pull out ₹35,506cr in Feb

**New Delhi:** Continuing the selling streak for the fifth consecutive month, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pulled out as much as ₹35,506 crore out of the Indian markets in February. FPIs have been pulling funds out of the Indian markets since October 2021 and the quantum of outflow in February 2022 is highest since March 2020 when overseas investors had pulled out ₹1,18,203 crore. During February 1-25, FPIs pulled out ₹31,158 crore from equities, ₹4,467 crore from the debt segment, according to depositories' data. However, the pumped in ₹120 crore into hybrid instruments during the same time.

### NIEFL, NIFL settle case with Sebi

**New Delhi:** Foreign portfolio investors Nalanda India Equity Fund Ltd (NIEFL) and Nalanda India Fund Ltd (NIFL) have settled with markets regulator Sebi a case pertaining to alleged breach of investment limits. They have settled the case after paying ₹73.95 lakh each towards settlement charges, Sebi said in two separate settlement orders. The orders came after the two entities approached Sebi to settle the instant proceedings initiated against them, "without admitting or denying the findings of fact and conclusions of law", through a settlement order.

### L&T's CSR spend at ₹150cr in FY'21

**New Delhi:** Engineering conglomerate Larsen and Toubro (L&T) spent ₹150 crore in FY'21 on corporate social responsibility activities, impacting 1.21 million beneficiaries. The beginning of the current year was noteworthy for L&T's efforts in corporate social responsibility (CSR) as the company's CSR team handed over two Integrated Community Development Projects (ICDPs) to the Tamil Nadu government's agriculture department at Kalangal village in Suler block, an area that till recently was one of the most water-scarce places in the state. The company said in building India's social infrastructure, the aim is to improve the quality of life, mitigate social inequalities, build self-sufficiency and help individuals achieve their true potential.



If you look at the credit cards, we moved into the market recently and we look at the market share of new customers. In the past 18 months, around 12-15 per cent of the new issuances (credit card) is happening on RuPay

**PRAVEENA RAI** | NPCI CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

## BIG SETBACK FOR ASHNEER

BharatPe co-founder and MD Ashneer Grover has lost an arbitration that he had filed against the company's investigation against him, with an emergency arbitrator holding that there was no ground to stop governance review at the fintech firm, sources said



## WEST, ALLIES CUT RUSSIA OFF FROM SWIFT

# Investors brace for volatility

The latest measures could send markets on another wild ride, as traders assess the implications for the global economy, including potentially higher commodity prices and inflation

REUTERS

**New York/London, Feb 27:** Investors were preparing Saturday for more wild gyrations in asset prices after Western nations announced a harsh set of sanctions to punish Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, including blocking some banks from the SWIFT international payments system. New measures announced by the United States, Britain, Europe and Canada also include restrictions on the Russian central bank's international reserves. The moves will be implemented in the coming days.

Investors have feared Russia would get kicked off SWIFT, the world's main international payments network, as this would disrupt global trade and hurt Western interests as well as hit Russia.

Michael Farr, chief executive of financial consulting firm Farr, Miller & Washington LLC, said of the impact on global markets. "This could be a surprise that is not taken very well if it means a slowdown in international trade."

Mohamed El-Erian, part-time chief economic adviser at Allianz and chair of Gramercy Fund Management, said excluding Russia from SWIFT "has the potential to cripple the economy there if done comprehensively."

"Inevitably there would be spillovers and spillbacks, including more of a stagflationary impetus to the global economy and greater likelihood of Russian arrears to Western companies and creditors,"



It means there is going to be a catastrophe on the Russian currency market on Monday. I think they will stop trading and then the exchange rate will be fixed at an artificial level just like in Soviet times

**SERGEI ALEKSASHENKO** | FORMER DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK

These new sanctions are likely to cause serious damage to the Russian economy and its banking system. This will most likely exacerbate ongoing bank runs...causing a sharp sell-off, and a drain on reserves

**CLAY LOWERY** | EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL FINANCE

Nobody likes uncertainty, investors certainly dislike uncertainty and we are looking at a pretty protracted conflict. It seems to me we are in the opening stages of a new Cold War and that will weigh on sentiment for a long time

**PETER KINSELLA** | GLOBAL HEAD OF FX STRATEGY, UBP

he said, in emailed comments. "SWIFT is going to be painful and the markets are going to recognize that," he said. "What you are going to get is continued volatility as all the participants are going to be adjusting their risk tolerance."

"With the central bank likely to face severe constraints on currency intervention, the rouble will struggle to find a bottom," said Karl Schamotta, chief market strategist at Corpay. "No one wants to catch a falling knife."

## Ukraine raises over \$15 million in crypto

Ukraine has raised over \$15 million in cryptocurrencies since the Russian invasion began last week. The global crypto community has also extended its support to Ukraine. Vitalik Buterin, the creator of Ethereum, tweeted that the invasion was a "crime" against Ukrainian and Russian people, adding "Glory to Ukraine." "Decentralised autonomous organisations (DAOs) have formed to support Ukrainians. NFTs have been sold to raise money for the Ukrainian people and military," The Verge reported late Saturday. The country's official Twitter account has said it accepts Bitcoin, Ethereum and Tether.



## TECH CRACKDOWN

### YouTube blocks Russian channels

Video streaming giant YouTube said that it will temporarily halt the ability of a number of Russian channels, including state-sponsored RT, to monetise their content on the platform, media reports say. YouTube will also be "significantly limiting" recommendations to those channels, the video streaming giant said in a statement. The company said the channels are affiliated with recent sanctions, and that it has restricted access to RT and other channels in Ukraine in response to a request from that country's government.



### Google blocks Russian state media

Google Saturday became the latest US tech giant to prevent Russian state media from earning money on its platforms in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. It follows similar moves by its YouTube subsidiary and Facebook. "In response to the war in Ukraine, we are pausing Google monetisation of Russian state-funded media across our platforms," a Google spokesperson said in a statement. "We're actively monitoring new developments and will take further steps if necessary," he added.



## 443 infra projects show cost overruns of ₹4.45 lakh crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** As many as 443 infrastructure projects, each entailing investment of ₹150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns totalling more than ₹4.45 lakh crore, according to a report.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation monitors infrastructure projects of ₹150 crore and above. Of 1,671 such projects, 443 projects reported cost overruns and 514 projects were delayed.

According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till January 2022 was ₹13,16,293.63 crore, or 48.76 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects. "Total original cost of implementation of the 1671 projects was



₹22,54,175.77 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be ₹26,99,651.62 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of ₹4,45,475.85 crore (19.76% of original cost)," the ministry's latest report for January 2022 said. Out of the 514 delayed projects, 89 have overall delay in the range of 1-12 months, 113 have been delayed for 13-24 months, 204 projects for 25-60 months and 108 projects have delays of 61 months and above.

## Govt to infuse funds in weak PSBs

In the Budget 2022-23, the government trimmed the capital infusion target to ₹15,000 crore from ₹20,000 crore estimated earlier for 2021-22

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** Weak public sector lenders like Central Bank of India and Punjab & Sind Bank will get the lion's share of the ₹15,000 crore earmarked for capital infusion in state-owned banks for the current fiscal.

This will help these public sector banks (PSBs) meet regulatory requirements.

The capital infusion of ₹15,000 crore would go mostly to banks which had got money through non-interest-bearing bonds in the previous year as the RBI had raised some concerns on the fair valuation of these instruments, sources said.

As per the RBI, the net present value of infusion made last year



through zero-coupon bonds is much lower than face value as they were issued at discount, the sources added. These special securities with tenure of 10-15 years are non-interest bearing and valued at par. Such bonds usually are non-interest bearing and issued at a deep discount to the face value. So, the

## Oil import bill set to top \$100bn in FY'22



Brent crude prices surged to an over seven-year high of \$105.58 per barrel February 24 on fears of supply disruptions after Russia invaded Ukraine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** India's crude oil import bill is set to exceed \$100 billion in the current fiscal year ending March 31, almost double its spending last year, as international oil prices trade at seven-year highs.

India spent \$94.3 billion in the first 10 months (April-January) of the ongoing financial year that started April 1, 2021, according to data from the oil ministry's Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell (PPAC).

It spent \$11.6 billion in January alone when oil prices had started to surge. This compared with \$7.7 billion spending in the same month last year.

In February, oil prices crossed \$100 per barrel and going at this rate, India, which imports 85 per cent of its crude oil requirements, is expected to almost double its import bill to \$110-115 billion by the end of the fiscal year 2021-2022.

The imported crude oil is turned into value-added products like petrol and diesel at oil refineries, before being sold to automobiles and other users. India has surplus refining capacity and it exports some petroleum products but is short on production of cooking gas LPG, which is imported from nations like Saudi Arabia.

Import of petroleum products in April-January of 2021-22 fiscal was 33.6 million tonne worth \$19.9 billion. On the other hand, 51.1 million tonne of petroleum products were also exported for \$33.4 billion.

Higher crude oil import bill is expected to dent the macroeconomic parameters

India's import dependence has increased owing to a steady decline in domestic output

The nation produced 30.5 million tonne of crude oil in 2019-20, which fell to 29.1 million tonne in the following year

During the current fiscal, it has produced 23.8 million tonne of crude oil so far as compared to 24.4 million in the first 10 months of 2020-21. The target for 2021-22 is 26.1 million tonne

Global LNG prices have spiralled during the past few months, leading to costlier gas imports

India had spent \$62.2 billion on import of 196.5 million tonne of crude oil in the previous 2020-21 fiscal when global oil prices remained subdued in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the current year, it has already imported 175.9 million tonne of crude oil.

In the pre-pandemic 2019-20 fiscal, the world's third largest energy importing and consuming nation had spent \$101.4 billion on import of 227 million tonne of crude oil.

India's self-sufficiency in meeting oil needs was 15 per cent in 2019-20, which increased to 15.6 per cent in the following fiscal but has fallen to 14.9 per cent in the current financial year.

India's import bill for liquefied natural gas (LNG) also increased to \$9.9 billion during the 10-month period of the current fiscal, significantly higher than \$6.2 billion worth of imports during the same period in the previous fiscal year, the PPAC data showed.

In the current fiscal, India imported 26.78 bcm of gas, majority of it on long-term contracts linked to oil prices.

## WHOPPING LOSS Equity m-cap lowest in 7 months in Feb

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** Equity market capitalisation dropped to a seven-month low in February, with the top 10 companies losing a whopping ₹3,33,307.62 crore in market valuation last week.

The total equity market capitalisation (m-cap) in February 2022 stood at ₹2,49,97,053.39 crore. The previous low was in July 2021, when the m-cap of BSE-listed companies was at ₹2,35,49,748.9 crore.

In January, the m-cap stood at ₹2,64,41,207.18 crore. During the week, equity m-cap was ₹2,57,39,712.95 crore Monday and was at its lowest Thursday, at ₹2,42,24,179.79 crore, the day Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a military operation in Ukraine.

On a weekly basis, Reliance Industries Ltd's market valuation dropped ₹94,828.02 crore to reach ₹15,45,044.14 crore.

The market valuation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) tumbled ₹1,01,760.91 crore to stand at ₹13,01,955.11 crore.

HDFC Bank's market capitalisation tanked ₹31,597.65 crore to ₹8,06,931.95 crore.

The valuation of Infosys eroded by ₹5,501.34 crore to ₹7,12,443.09 crore and that of ICICI Bank declined by ₹13,240.66 crore to ₹5,07,414.1 crore.

The market capitalisation of HDFC plunged ₹6,929.03 crore to reach ₹4,35,233.9 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) fell by ₹33,234.97 crore to ₹5,09,990.53 crore.

## RELIANCE TAKEOVER

Though Future has more than 1,700 outlets, all the 200 stores that Reliance will rebrand as its own will be Big Bazaars, which was started around two decades ago by Kishore Biyani, dubbed as India's retail king for transforming the sector

## Future Retail suspends supermarket ops

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Feb 27:** Future Retail Ltd (FRL), India's second-largest retailer, suspended most of its online and offline operations as stores remained shut Sunday, after rival Reliance bid to take over its flagship supermarkets for missed lease payments.

Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) will rebrand the Future stores after the company failed to make payments for them to Reliance, sources told Reuters Saturday, closing most outlets of the popular Big Bazaar chain. Though Future has more than



1,700 outlets, all the 200 stores that Reliance will rebrand as its own will be Big Bazaars, which was started around two decades ago by Kishore Biyani, dubbed as India's retail king for transforming the sector.

Future's stores across India remained shut Sunday as Reliance did stock-taking ahead of a rebranding, people familiar with the plans said. "We regret to inform you that currently stores are non-operational

for 2 days," Big Bazaar told a Twitter user who complained about a closure. Future's e-commerce mobile app and website were also not available for online ordering.

Reliance's move assumes significance as it follows failed efforts since 2020 to close a \$3.4 billion deal to acquire the retail assets of Future, whose partner Amazon.com Inc has blocked the transaction by citing violation of contracts.

Reliance had transferred leases of some stores of debt-laden Future to its name and sublet them to Future, but is now taking over as Future did not make payments.



# Iyer, Avesh lift India

# Spain turn tables on India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dharamsala, Feb 27:** Making full use of the opportunities, Shreyas Iyer was breathing down Suryakumar Yadav's neck as India completed a clean sweep with consummate ease, beating Sri Lanka by six wickets in the third and final T20 here Sunday.

The Indian team's last three T20 home series against New Zealand, West Indies and now Sri Lanka have ended in identical 3-0 margins.

Chasing a target of 147, it was like a walk in the park for Shreyas, who smashed an unbeaten 73 (45b, 9x4, 1x6) to complete the chase in 16.5 overs after Avesh Khan (2/23) and Mohammed Siraj (1/22) enjoyed a brilliant run in the powerplay overs.

Shreyas, whose game against the short ball was once found to be suspect, had a rubber to remember with a hat-trick of half centuries, an aggregate of 200 runs that fetched him the Player-of-the-Series Award.

Come to think of it, Shreyas is fighting for one elusive middle-order spot with Suryakumar, who was the Player of the Series against the West Indies before sustaining a hairline fracture on his right hand.

Not only in the third match but throughout the series what was evident was that Shreyas was in control of the pull shots which he had been made to practice for hours in the nets.

He is getting in line to keep the pulls down and now presents a happy headache for skipper Rohit Sharma, who became the most capped player in T20 Internationals with 125 games, one more than Pakistan's ageless wonder, Shoaib Malik.

It was a 'Super Subs' day out with India making four changes in the play-



AVESH KHAN & SHREYAS IYER (INSET)

ing XI, including Ishan Kishan due to concussion. They came up triumph without breaking much sweat.

Avesh made amends for a forgettable debut as his scorching opening spell alongside Siraj put the Sri Lankans on the back foot straightaway, as both made full use of the pace and bounce on offer on the Dharamsala track.

Even the two wrist-spinners, Ravi Bishnoi (1/32) and Kuldeep Yadav (0/25), did well enough to

bottle up the islanders on a chilly night. Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka was once again the saviour with a 74 n o (38b, 9x4, 2x6) that took his team close to 150-run mark.

But it was Avesh and Siraj, who just dismantled the Lankan top-order with pace and bounce, as they were reduced to 11/3 in the fourth over and there was no coming back from there.

Avesh, who went for 40 odd runs on debut on a Eden Gardens belter,

## Ishan misses game

**DHARAMSALA:** India opener Ishan Kishan was ruled out of the third T20 against Sri Lanka after taking a blow to his head in the last match, even as the BCCI said his CT scan reports are "normal". Kishan was admitted to a city hospital and underwent a brain scan after being struck on the head by a Lahiru Kumara bouncer during the second T20 against Sri Lanka Saturday evening. "Accompanied by a Team Doctor, he was taken to a local hospital last night for a check-up where a CT scan was conducted. The findings of the CT scan are normal," BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a statement. The BCCI said it's medical team will continue to "closely monitor his signs of concussion".

bowled much fuller from his usual back-of-length stuff and sent back Pathum Nissanka (1) and Charith Asalanka (4), both deliveries hitting the bat faster than they could have comprehended.

The skipper is spoilt for choice as he and coach Rahul Dravid are slowly building a set-up where they have multiple options for each and every position in both departments.

The only missing link in the T20 squad is the absence of a good off-spinner as the Indian team management is unlikely to go back to Ravichandran Ashwin for the T20 World Cup in Australia.

## BRIEF SCORES

Sri Lanka 146/5 (Dasun Shanaka 74 n o, Dinesh Chandimal 22, Avesh Khan 2/23, Mohammed Siraj 1/22, Harshal Patel 1/29, Ravi Bishnoi 1/32) lost to India 148/4 (Shreyas Iyer 73 n o, Ravindra Jadeja 22 n o, Lahiru Kumara 2/39) by 6 wickets.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** The Indian men's hockey team slumped to its second defeat in the FIH Pro League as it lost 3-5 to Spain in the second match of their two-legged tie at the Kalinga Stadium here Sunday.

If World No.4 India made a last-minute dash Saturday to beat Spain 5-4 in a pulsating match, the scenario was completely opposite Sunday

as World No.9 Spain were accurate with their penalty corner conversions to completely outwit the hosts.

Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist India took the lead in the sixth minute through Abhishek before Spain struck thrice through Pau Cunill (14th, 24th) and Joan Tarres (14th). Pepe Cunill (54th) and skipper Marc Miralles (59th) converted two more penalty corners to seal the issue for the visitors.

India's other goals were scored by Harmanpreet Singh (27th) and Sukhjeet Singh (51st). India had earlier lost 2-5 to France in South Africa earlier this month.

Despite registering their second defeat in the league, India are currently placed second in the standings with 12 points from six matches, including four wins. India will next play Germany in another two-legged home tie here March 12 and 13.



## EVES GO DOWN FIGHTING

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Indian women's hockey team conceded a late goal to lose 3-4 against Spain for its first defeat in the FIH Pro League here Sunday. World No.9 India had earlier defeated Spain, ranked sixth in the world, 2-1 in the first match of the two-legged tie Saturday. Xantal Gine scored the winner for Spain with just 35 seconds remaining in the match after Begona Garcia (fourth, 24th minutes) struck a brace. Maialen Garcia (15th) also registered her name in the scoresheet from a penalty corner. India's goals were scored by debutant Sangita Kumari (10th minute), Salima Tete (22nd) and Namita Toppo (49th). While it was India's first defeat in four matches, Spain registered their first win in the FIH Pro League.

# Nadal claims 91st career title

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Acapulco (Mexico), Feb 27:** Rafael Nadal said earlier in the week that he wasn't aware of his career statistics. Now, he might want to have a look at them.

The 35-year-old Spaniard defeated Cameron Norrie 6-4, 6-4 Saturday to win the Mexican Open and extend his career-best start for a season to 15-0 as he won his 91st ATP title.

Nadal, who won his third title in 2022, including the Australian Open for his record 21st Grand Slam singles title, is three victories from tying Ivan Lendl's total of 94 for third place for most championships in the Open Era. Jimmy Connors leads with 109 and Roger Federer has 103.

The Mexican Open is an ATP 500-level tournament played on hard courts and this year four of the top-five players in the world started in the draw — Daniil Medvedev (2), Alexander Zverev (3), Stefanos Tsitsipas (4) and Nadal (5).

Medvedev, who will rise to No.1 in the rankings Monday, lost to Nadal in the semifinals. Zverev was thrown out of the tournament for violently smashing his racket on the umpire's chair moments after losing a doubles match, while Tsitsipas lost to Norrie in the other semifinal.

The Spaniard won for the fourth time in Acapulco (2005, 2013 and



2020) where he is a fan favorite. He won his first title in Mexico when he was 18 and holds the record for the youngest winner in tournament history as well as the oldest at 35.

Norrie, who was on an eight-game winning streak, was trying to become the first British man to win the Mexican Open in its 29-year history. At the start of the

match, Nadal had a break in the fifth game to take a 3-2 lead and went on to win the first set in 51 minutes.

In the second set, Nadal had a break in the first game, but Norrie returned it and appeared to be back into the match, but the Spaniard added breaks in the fifth and seventh games to take home the trophy.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Barcelona, Feb 27:** Like so many times this season, when Karim Benzema and Vinicius Junior click for Real Madrid, defenses crumble against the leader of the Spanish league. Benzema scored late from an assist by Vinicius to snatch Madrid a 1-0 win at Rayo Vallecano Saturday, helping to increase the gap over second-place Sevilla to nine points.

Atlético Madrid took a stand against Russia's invasion of Ukraine before beating Celta Vigo 2-0. Before kickoff, Atlético's Wanda Metropolitan Stadium was lit with the yellow and blue colors of the Ukrainian flag and bore the message "Stop War". It then flashed the same message inside the stadium during the team introductions.

Also in the Spanish capital, the stands of Rayo's Vallecas Stadium displayed signs against the war with a Ukrainian flag hung by supporters.

The Spanish league included the message "NO A LA GUERRA" ("No to the War") next to the score at the top of the screen of all televised broadcasts of Spain's first- and second-division league games this weekend.

Spain's soccer federation said Saturday that six Spanish coaching staff — including Lluís Cortés,



Karim Benzema (3rd from L) is mobbed by teammates after scoring the winner for Real Madrid, Saturday

coach of the Ukraine women's national team — and one player, Dnipro forward Marc Gual, have been successfully evacuated from Ukraine.

Benzema and Vinicius finally unlocked Rayo's defense in the 83rd minute when a passing exchange inside a packed area between the

strike partners left the France striker clear to score the winner.

Played clear by Benzema's short throughball, Vinicius generously squared the ball back to the heart of the area after having drawn goalkeeper Luka Zidane off his line. Benzema only had to tap in the ball.

It was Benzema's league-leading 19th goal. He has scored 26 goals in 31 games across all competitions for his club this campaign. Vinicius, who is enjoying a breakout campaign at age 21, has added 13 league goals for Carlo Ancelotti's side.

# 7-STAR JADEJA HANDS ODISHA INNINGS DEFEAT

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 27:** Dharmdasinh Jadeja (7/88) bagged a seven-wicket haul helping Saurashtra hand Odisha an innings-and-131-run defeat in their Ranji Trophy Elite Group D match in Ahmedabad, Sunday.

Resuming the day's play at 115/5, Odisha lost their first wicket of the day after desperate 40-run stand between overnight batter and first innings half-centurion Rajesh Dhuper (14) and Abhishek Raut (41). Dhuper became Jadeja's fourth victim.

Jadeja dismissed Debabrata Pradhan (4) to complete his five-wicket haul, before getting rid of Raut and wrapping up the win with the wicket of Jayanta Yadav. Odisha lost wickets at regular intervals to finally being bowled out for 205.

Saurashtra had scored 501 in their only innings they batted before bundling Odisha out for 165 and enforcing follow-on. Saurashtra, thus, bagged seven points, including one bonus for defeating their opponents with an innings in hand.

# Mbappe helps PSG beat Saint-Etienne

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Paris, Feb 27:** Runaway league leader Paris Saint-Germain again relied on Kylian Mbappe as it rallied from a goal down to beat Saint-Etienne 3-1 at home.

Mbappe has rescued PSG with late goals this season and this time he scored either side of halftime, before assisting on the third goal for midfielder Danilo in the 52nd minute at Parc des Princes Saturday.

Record seven-time Ballon d'Or winner Lionel Messi set up Mbappe twice as the Frenchman tied Monaco's Wissam Ben Yedder on a league-leading 14 goals. Messi joined Mbappe as top of the passers with 10 assists.

The victory moved PSG 16 points clear of second-place Nice but it was the 13th time in 26 matches that PSG has fallen behind in a game, raising further questions about its vulnerability against quick passing and transition play.

Both sets of players stood behind a banner reading "Peace for all" before kickoff amid Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. PSG trailed in the 16th minute after a bad mistake from Danilo. He decided not to clear the ball and tried to turn into a better position, only for striker Denis Bouanga to rob the ball from him



Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe celebrate one of the latter's goals with Marquinhos, Saturday

and drill a low shot under the body of goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Messi had a free-kick saved by Paul Bernardoni, but the goalkeeper made a handling error on Mbappe's equalizer in the 42nd. Messi played Mbappe in behind

the defense with a typically astute pass, but he was still wide right and Bernardoni got a hand to his angled shot as it squirmed in. Messi's fine run and pass set Mbappe up two minutes after the break and Mbappe turned provider as Danilo headed home.

## Vlahovic lifts Juve

**Milan:** Dusan Vlahovic scored twice as injury-depleted Juventus won 3-2 at Empoli to move to within seven points of Serie A leader AC Milan. Vlahovic netted his first goal of the halftime after Szymon Zurkowski had cancelled out Moise Kean's opener for Juventus Saturday. The 22-year-old Vlahovic doubled his tally and looked to have all but sealed the result in the 66th minute before a goal from Empoli substitute Andrea La Mantia led to a nervy finale.

## Blow to Putin

**Budapest:** Vladimir Putin temporarily lost his most senior official position in world sports Sunday. The International Judo Federation cited "the ongoing war conflict in Ukraine" for suspending Putin's honorary president status. The Russian president is a keen judoka and attended the sport at the 2012 London Olympics. The IJF is rare among Olympic sports bodies for using the word "war" to describe Russia's invasion of Ukraine ordered by Putin Thursday.

## Pooja enters final

**Dubai:** Indian archer Pooja Sunday created history by becoming the first to enter the final in an individual section of the Para World Championships here. The 24-year-old came back from 0-2 down to defeat Hazel Chaisty of Britain 6-2 to assure India at least a second silver medal from the ongoing tournament. The compound mixed pair of Shyam Sundar Swami and Jyoti Balian had earlier opened India's account with a silver — the country's first medal in the World Archery Para Championships.

## Pugilists Nikhat, Nitu secure gold

**New Delhi:** Indian boxers Nikhat Zareen (52kg) and Nitu (48kg) struck gold at the 73rd Strandja Memorial Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria by notching up thoroughly comprehensive victories in their respective finals Sunday. Nitu prevailed 5-0 over Italy's Erika Prisciandaro, a former youth world championship bronze-medallist. Zareen, on the other hand, outpunched Ukraine's Tetiana Kob, a three-time European Championships medallist 4-1. While Nitu produced a wonderful counter-attacking performance, Zareen was engaged in a draining and messy bout.

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