



REMEMBERING TOUGH TIMES

Actor Nitu Chandra, who recently made her Hollywood debut, says she did item songs for survival

LEISURE P2



BACK ON TRACK

After almost two years of lockdown, students head back to schools in Maharashtra

NATIONAL P7



KAUR CREDITS BAVARE

Cricketer Harmanpreet Kaur credits team psychologist Mugdha Bavare for helping her to come out of her 'shell'

SPORTS P12

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Ukraine rejects talks offer



Charred remains of Russian armoured vehicles and tanks outside Kyiv

- China 'extremely concerned' over civilian deaths
- UK bans Russian ships from using its ports
- Russia says it has lost 498 soldiers while over 1,500 have been injured
- More than 2,000 civilians killed, says Ukraine

Russia's eagerness for talks may be on account of the pinch it is feeling due to the sanctions that are being imposed on the country

AGENCIES

Kyiv March 2: Ukraine said Wednesday that talks with Russia won't take place unless assault stops with immediately.

Earlier in the day, even as Russian assault continued on the cities of Kyiv and Kharkiv, a Kremlin spokesman said that a delegation is ready to resume talks with Ukrainian officials about the war.

evening, we will be in place to await Ukrainian negotiators'.

The development comes as sanctions continue to pile up against Russia. President Joe Biden announced Tuesday that the United States is closing its airspace to Russian planes. He asserted that this along with other punitive measures would weaken Russia. It's economy is reeling and President Vladimir Putin alone is to blame, Biden added.

Russia meanwhile said that its forces had seized the Southern city of Kherson which the Ukrainian government denied. Meanwhile in a message posted on Facebook, the Ukrainian State Emergency said more than 2,000 civilians have been killed in Russian attacks in addition to the defenders of the nation. Russia meanwhile said 2,870, Ukrainian soldiers have been so far killed in the conflict.

EVAC OPS GAIN PACE

Modi speaks to Putin again for safe evacuation of Indians from the conflict-hit areas of Ukraine. Putin assures safety corridor for Indians

New Delhi: Russian Ambassador-Designate Denis Alipov to India said Wednesday that his country is working 'intensely' to create a 'human corridor' for safe passage of Indians from strife-torn Ukraine. At a media briefing here, Alipov informed Russia is in touch with India on the issue of safety of Indians and that the 'passage' will be put into place 'as soon as possible' so that those stuck in Kharkiv, Sumy and other conflict zones can return home safely.

Meanwhile government sources stated here Wednesday that the Centre has planned 31 flights to bring back over 6,500 Indians stranded in countries neighbouring Ukraine. Twenty one flights will be operated from Romania, four each from Budapest and Rzeszow in Poland and one from Kocise (Slovakia). External Affairs Minister S



KISS OF LIFE: An Indian student from Ukraine is greeted by her mom on arrival at the IGIA in New Delhi, Wednesday

Jaishankar said Wednesday that six flights under 'Operation Ganga' have departed for India in the last 24 hours. He informed that approximately 6,000 Indians have been brought back. The IAF also joined the rescue operation with two C-17 Globemaster aircraft leaving Wednesday morning for Romania

OVER 6,000 INDIANS BROUGHT BACK SAFELY 31 FLIGHTS IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS

2ND INDIAN STUDENT DIES

New Delhi: Another Indian medical student from Barnala in Punjab breathed his last Wednesday in the city of Vinnytsia in Ukraine. However, it was not due to Russian shelling. Chandan Jindal (22), who was studying at Vinnytsia National Pyrogov Memorial Medical University, had reportedly suffered an Ischemic stroke February 2 and was under treatment. His parents had gone February 7 to Vinnytsia and had returned Monday.

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Petrol, diesel rate escalation on cards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: The 'Acche Din' for consumers is over with petrol and diesel price hikes likely to resume after state elections get over next week to bridge the ₹9 per litre gap created by international oil prices soaring past USD 100 a barrel. International crude oil prices shot above USD 110 a barrel Wednesday for the first time since mid-2014. The basket of crude oil India buys rose above USD 102 per barrel March 1, the highest since August 2014. When petrol and diesel prices were frozen early November last year, India was buying crude at USD 81.5 per barrel.

restart across both gasoline and diesel," JP Morgan said in a report.

State-owned fuel retailers IOC, BPCL and HPCL are making a loss of ₹5.7 a litre on petrol and diesel. This is without taking into account their normal loss margin of ₹2.5 per litre. India imports 85 per cent of its oil needs and prices have not been revised for a record 118 days in a row.

"We expect a combination of small excise duty cuts (Rs 1-3 per litre) and retail price hikes (Rs 5-8 a litre) to reflect the pass-through of USD 100 per barrel oil," the report said.

Russian supplies account for a very small percentage in India. India imported 43,400 barrels per day of oil from Russia in 2021 (about 1 per cent of its imports).

BharatPe co-founder Grover sent packing

NEW DELHI: Payment startup 'BharatPe' has stripped its co-founder Ashneer Grover of all positions for his alleged 'misdeeds'. It may take legal actions, including clawing back of some of his shareholding. 'BharatPe' in a statement Wednesday said Grover resigned after receiving the agenda for an upcoming board meeting that included submission of an independent audit regarding his conduct. "The Grover family and their relatives engaged in extensive misappropriation of company funds. They grossly abused company expense accounts in order to enrich themselves and fund their lavish lifestyles," BharatPe said in a statement. The company said Grover resigned Tuesday after being called for the meeting.

BJP decimated in WB civic polls too

KOLKATA: Ten months after its landslide victory in West Bengal Assembly polls, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) steamrolled Wednesday the entire opposition in the civic elections, bagging 102 of the 108 municipalities, an SEC official said. The victory was much on the lines of what the BJD did to the BJP and Congress in Odisha in the panchayat polls. The BJP and Congress failed to win a single civic body in West Bengal, while the CPI(M) bagged one. Chief Minister and TMCsupremo Mamata Banerjee thanked the people of West Bengal for giving a massive mandate to her party. "The TMC has won 102 municipalities. The Left Front has won one civic body, and Hamro Party has won one. Four municipalities have hung board," a State Election Commission (SEC) official said.

NAVEEN'S MISSIVE FOR PARTY LEADERS

BJD supremo asks top officials to be alert against negative campaign by the Opposition

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Odisha Chief Minister and BJD president Naveen Patnaik advised Wednesday other leaders of the party to remain cautious about the negative campaign which the opposition will resort to in the build up to the urban local body polls (ULB) scheduled for March 24. Patnaik made this observation during a video conference meeting with his party MPs, MLAs, district presidents and observers. He was finalising the party's strategy for the upcoming ULB polls. The results will be declared March 26.

"The opposition told people fabricated stories and resorted to negative politics to defame my government during the panchayat polls. They will again do the same thing. It is the responsibility of every BJD worker to expose them before the public," Naveen said.

"We believe in positive politics. Transformative governance and empowerment of people is the hallmark of BJD. A lot of development work has been taken up for the urban areas. 'Jaga Mission' has created a new benchmark in urban areas," the Odisha CM added.

Various welfare measures taken up by

Cong names Cuttack Mayor candidate

Cuttack: With few days left for the ULB polls, Congress announced Wednesday its candidate for the post of Mayor for Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC). The party has nominated Giribala Behera, the vice-president of OPMC, as its candidate for the top post of CMC. Behera had earlier been elected as a corporator to the CMC.

MORE P3

the government for urban areas include setting up of street lights, drinking water supply, modern waste management, indoor stadium and online government services. These should be the focus of BJD's campaign during the elections, Naveen told party leaders. He thanked the workers for their hard work during the panchayat polls and people of the state for reposing confidence in his party.

Naveen pointed out that his party has created a new record in the panchayat polls through democratic process. "In a democracy, the people's voice is supreme and we respect it. Their verdicts in all the panchayats are clear and unambiguous," Naveen pointed out.

Meanwhile, filing of nomination papers for the civic body elections in Odisha also began Wednesday. The last date for filing of nominations is March 7.

Gold worth ₹16cr seized, 4 detained

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Thirty-two kilograms gold jewellery worth over ₹16 crore were seized by the GRP at the railway station here Wednesday. Four persons have been detained in this connection and they have been identified as Dixit Hasamukhlal Jain, Mahesh Uma Sare, Suresh Sahadev Khabe and Dipak Ananta Padel.

All accused are residents of Mumbai, informed Chandrasekhar Sahu, SDPO, Khurda Road railway zone. They were bringing the gold from Mumbai to here by the Konark Express, Sahu informed. This incidentally is the largest seizure of gold in the city, he added.

"They (accused) have evaded tax payment and not mentioned the buyers' names. As their movement was suspicious, we detained the accused. The detained persons have claimed that they brought these jewellery items to sell in



local shops in Bhubaneswar and nearby areas," Sahu stated. He informed that total amount of gold seized is to the tune of 32.8kg.

The senior cop informed that the officials of the Income Tax Department and GST have joined the probe. "They are checking the documents found in possession of the accused," Sahu said.

FAKE CURRENCY RACKET BUSTED

Bhubaneswar: Commissionerate Police seized Wednesday fake Indian currency notes with a face value of over ₹7,00,000 from here and arrested the two main accused identified as Satya Narayan Prusty and Bhula Pradhan. The two have so far duped people of ₹24 lakh on the pretext of providing them job, said Arun Swain, inspector-in-charge, Kharavela Nagar police station. Police have seized a laptop, colour printer, ink jet and other materials used for printing the fake notes from the accused.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Your air quality metre has gone bad. There are no cars or factories around. This place only holds poll rallies of top leaders

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	55468.90 ↓ 778.38
NIFTY	16606.00 ↓ 187.90
DOLLAR	76.25 ↑ ₹0.33
EURO	84.36 ↓ ₹0.48
GOLD	₹51,623 ↓ ₹193
SILVER	₹67,144 ↑ ₹145

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	32.7°C	33.4°C
MAX	32.7°C	33.4°C
MIN	18.5°C	19.4°C
Humidity	54%	50%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Partly cloudy sky	

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ARIES
Are you a science and technology geek? Well, today you may have a chance to use your knowledge and zoom ahead of everyone! Ganesh says even students will excel in their studies. Housewives, try your own new recipe, the oven will not blast!

TAURUS
This is not one of those easy and carefree days. You are in for a lot of mental anguish. The mental pressure you feel, you will realise, is of your own making. Unless you make radical changes in your basis outlook, mental tensions are likely to become an everyday affair. You need to face and accept things as they are. Try to be more realistic. Yoga and meditation are sure to help.

GEMINI
Emotions, not acidity, will be the cause of your uneasiness. Something important is going on in your life and you are nervous. It can be related to a matter concerning law, ethics, prejudice, education, or social customs. You are, however, likely to win admiration from all quarters for your fine taste in arts, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Today, you will be at the centre of all your plans. Your responsibilities at home are likely to be unnecessary digressions for you, with your help-yourself-only attitude. However, you may feel that you are not getting enough returns of your hard work. Ganesh advises you to become more responsible at home, and your family's love and affection will make up for the insufficient returns.

LEO
Love, respect and quality time together – this might just be the perfect recipe for a happy family life, says Ganesh. So on this day, make it a point to spend time with your loved ones, and show them just how much you care for them and what they mean to you. It may be a small gesture, but the returns you get in the evening will be priceless, says Ganesh. Meanwhile, you will continue to bask in salutations as you dazzle your associates at work with your business brilliance.

VIRGO
Pay due attention to your innate feelings. A small tour may be in the offing. You will get along famously with people today, says Ganesh. Your loved ones will receive your sincere feelings and emotions. Work your magic to improve relationships more.

LIBRA
All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy! You don't want to be Jack, now, do you? It's high time you took a break from your busy work schedule. Go on a vacation to recharge your batteries. There are chances that evening could bring with it some hurtful remarks from loved ones. Don't be too sensitive to everything that's said, advises Ganesh.

SCORPIO
There is nothing more enchanting and alluring to you than some passionate time with your love interest. The only problem that Ganesh sees here is that there may be too many love interests. Your chosen partner, though, may get to see a different side of you in the evening. The Scorpio in you can make anyone fall on their knees, begging for your love. Today, this side of you shall be dominant. Professionally, you will be able to resolve nagging issues.

SAGITTARIUS
Friendship with a few like-minded people is likely to develop today. You shall spend a large share of your time discussing issues like attitude, beliefs and values. Those with whom you will enjoy sharing their ideas and opinions, and casting them in a new mould.

CAPRICORN
Your grand orchestration may not come to fruition, and even your best-laid plans may go awry, says Ganesh. Squabbles with people over petty issues will add to your growing vexation; keep calm and you'll handle all of it just fine.

AQUARIUS
Finally, you've decided to clean up the mess! And you will do a fine job, whether it's your workspace, your bills, your finances, or even your closet. And now that you're inspired, you might as well sort out your mental clutter too, chuckles Ganesh.

PISCES
Financially, you have bright prospects awaiting you today. You will be able to deal with the mind-numbing financial jugglery required to take stock of your monetary matters with precision. You might be dealing with people who secretly have an axe to grind against you, cautions Ganesh.



SUPERSTITION MADE COX SELL HER HOUSE

Hollywood actress Courtney Cox sold her house because she believes that it was haunted and she received multiple complaints about spirits from guests and former owner Carole King.

LINDSAY LOHAN TO STAR IN TWO NEW NETFLIX MOVIES

Actress Lindsay Lohan is expanding her partnership with Netflix, signing a deal to star in two new films for the streaming service. The news comes ahead of Lohan's leading role in Netflix's upcoming holiday-centric romantic comedy *Falling for Christmas*, which will premiere later this year, reports *variety.com*.



Did item songs for survival: Nitu

MUMBAI: Actress Nitu Chandra has made India proud with her Hollywood debut *Never Back Down: Revolt* in which she plays one of the two leads.

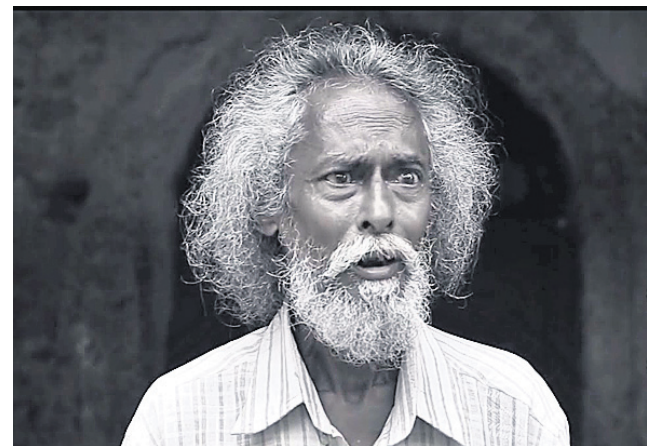
However, her journey to the top was not easy. She even had to do item songs for her survival. During a recent interview when she was asked how she survived during her lean phase, the actress said, "Financially survivals were item songs, to be very honest. If you see me dancing here and there, you understand that I needed money. This is not rocket science, everyone needs a financial background for survival and I have never taken a single penny from my parents after 10th standard."

"At that time the work was not much, so I started doing item songs. I thought I'll do shows and all but I never did any bad movie for money. Once you start doing bad movie, that will be a stab in your career for a long time. So I never did any bad movie for money, but did item songs and shows for money. I've done appearances, ribbon cuttings for it because these are the events which are not a part of your career. It doesn't enhance or support your career; it just gives you money and I needed it, that's how I survived," added the actress. **IANS**



Odia movie *Adieu GODARD* selected for int'l film fests

The Amartya Bhattacharyya directorial recently won several top honours at *Siphontum Arthouse International Film Festival, Italy*



Actor Choudhury Bikash Das in a scene from the movie

BHUBANESWAR: Odia feature film *Adieu GODARD*, has been officially selected to be screened at the 20th Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) and 13th Bengaluru International Film Festival (BIFFES).

The movie will be screened March 5 and 7 at Pune while the schedule for Bangalore festival is yet to be published.

Written and directed by Amartya Bhattacharyya, a National Award winning filmmaker and produced under the banner of Swastik Arthouse in collaboration with FilmStop Entertainment and Les Films de la Haute-Vallée, the movie had a world premiere last

year at Moscow International Film Festival.

Then it was screened at several other events including Split (Croatia), MISAFF (Canada), San Jose (Costa Rica), Bayamon (Puerto Rico), KIFF (Kolkata, India). Besides, it also won top awards (Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Actor) at Siphontum Arthouse International Film Festival, Italy.

The movie also made it to the list of Top 20 films of World

Cinema by filmmaker, festival director and critic Arshad Khan. The list had some of the finest names from world cinema like Steven Spielberg, Dennis Villeneuve and Asghar Farhadi among others.

The film has an ensemble cast that includes Choudhury Bikash Das, Dipanwit Dashmohapatra, Sudharsri Madhusmita, Swastik Choudhury, Choudhury Jayaprakash Das, Shankar Basu Mallick and Abhishek Giri. **PWN**



Prabhas reveals why he isn't married yet!

HYDERABAD: Prabhas, who joined his *Radhe Shyam* team at a grand event in Mumbai, revealed why he isn't married yet.

When asked about predicting love, Prabhas' witty response made everyone laugh out loud.

As Prabhas interacted with the media Wednesday in Mumbai, he was quizzed about dialogue from the recent trailer of *Radhe Shyam*. Prabhas plays a famous palmist in the movie, who predicts

the future accurately. A media person questioned Prabhas, "There is a dialogue in the movie, which says your prediction about love is not so accurate. What about your prediction in real life?"

Prabhas, who gave a witty reply, said, "My love predictions have always been wrong. That is why I am not yet married."

This funny answer from the *Baahubali* actor has drawn much attention, making everyone admire Prabhas' wit. Radhe Shyam on the other hand, is inching towards its worldwide release soon, and hence the makers had organised a trailer launch event in Mumbai, kickstarting the promotions.

Radhe Shyam is releasing in Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Chinese, and Japanese March 11. **IANS**

Bengali play *Dharmashoka* highlights the predicament of Emperor Ashoka

BHUBANESWAR: Rangapat, a theatre troupe from Kolkata presented Bengali play *Dharmashoka* here at Rabindra Mandap, Wednesday, on the second evening of national multilingual theatre festival *Purva Ranga*.

The week-long event is being organised by Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi (OSNA) in collaboration with the Department of Odia Language, Literature and Culture (OLL&C) and Eastern Zonal Culture Centre of Kolkata.

Written by Amit Maitra and directed by Dr Tapanjyoti Das, the play told how Mauryan emperor Ashoka didn't get the support from his council of ministers during his transformation from 'Chandashoka' to 'Dharmashoka'. Ashoka vigorously promoted Buddhism and the mental dilemma and administrative dif-



A scene from the play

ficulties he faced formed the crux of the play.

Actors who played pivotal roles in the drama included Tapanjyoti Das, Suman Saha, Sanjeev Sarkar, Kamal Brahma, Sunayana Bhoomik, Panna Mandal and Mandira Chakraborty. The music was scored by Srujan

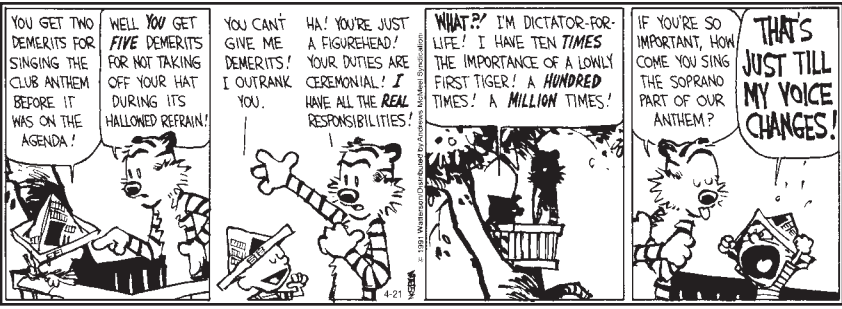
Chhatopadhyay while Nilay Sengupta took care of the choreography.

Noted theatre personality Dhira Mallick, OSNA Secretary Prabodh Rath and Additional Secretary of OLL&C Manaswini Sahoo, among others, attended the events as guests. **PWN**

PEANUTS



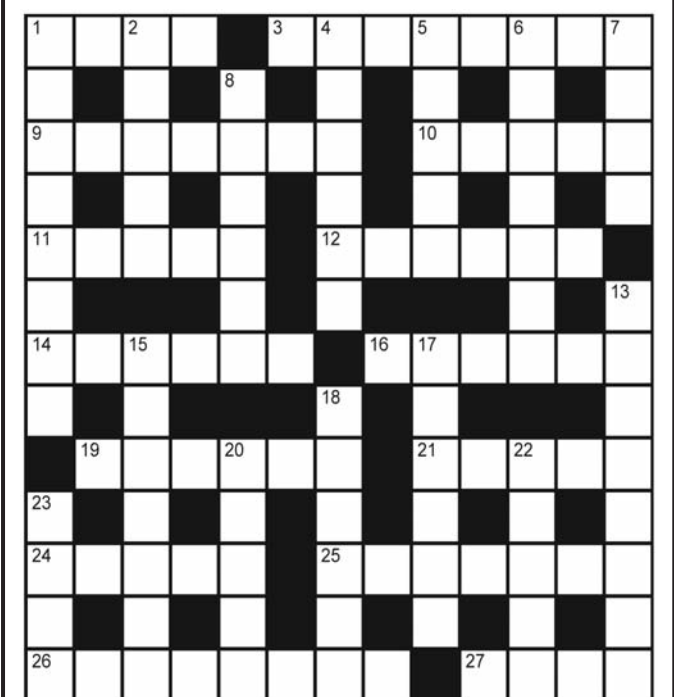
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD



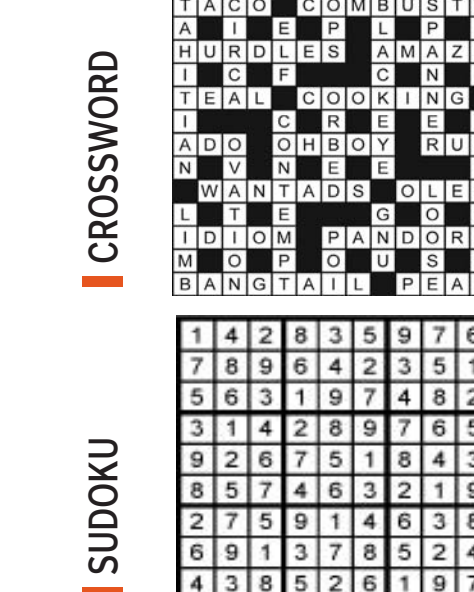
- Across**
- 1 Hair care device
 - 3 Holiday spot
 - 9 Yearn (4,3)
 - 10 Absolute
 - 11 Basra native
 - 12 Oration
 - 14 Saddle part
 - 16 Confuses
 - 19 Black mark
 - 21 Blacksmith's block
 - 24 Freight
 - 25 It usually doesn't make a splash
 - 26 Antiquated
 - 27 Water blockers
 - 5 Pasta topper
 - 6 Kind of illusion
 - 7 Emerald Isle
 - 8 Place of business
 - 13 Sets apart
 - 15 Ages
 - 17 Wyvern
 - 18 Brigand
 - 20 Body snatcher
 - 22 Europe's longest river
 - 23 Audio effect
- Down**
- 1 Muse of epic poetry
 - 2 Kind of ray
 - 4 Means of escape

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



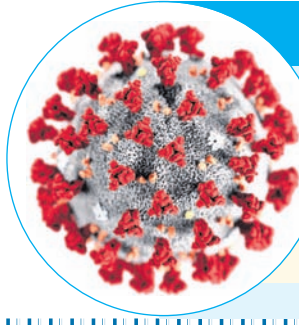
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



FESTIVAL AFTERMATH

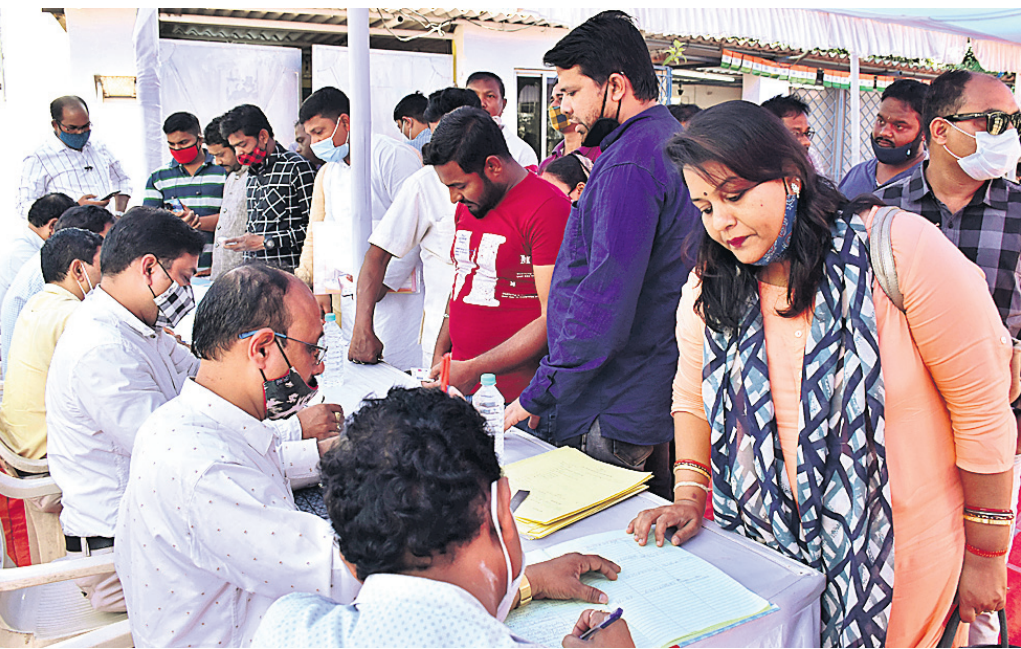
Piles of garbage litter the surroundings of Lokanath temple in Puri, Wednesday, a day after the Mahashivratri festival



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	43,94,33,260	37,20,59,923	59,87,073
India	4,29,38,599	4,23,38,673	5,14,246
Odisha	12,85,349	12,74,426	9,085

Nomination filing for urban polls begins



People buying forms for filing of nominations for the urban polls in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

available at the EO office in 47 municipalities, 59 Notified Area Councils (NACs).

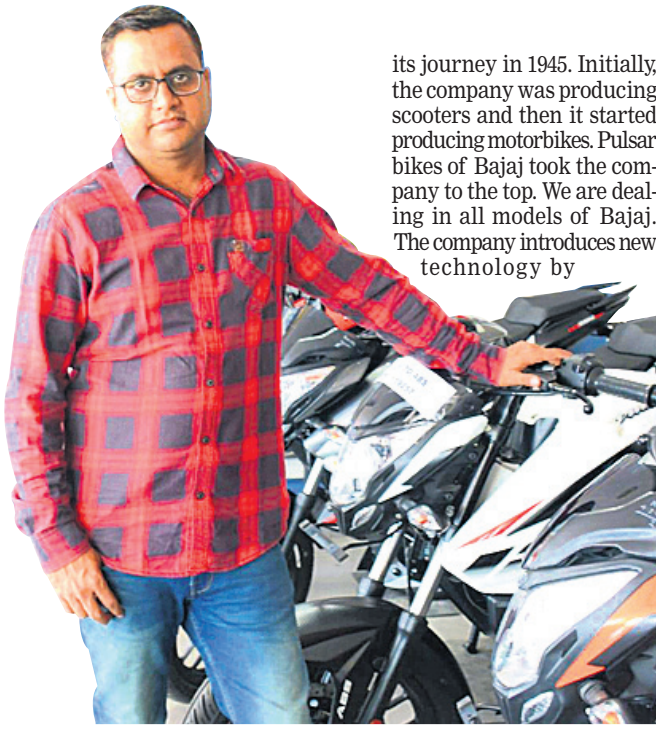
Scrutiny of the papers will be done March 9 and the last date for withdrawal of nominations is March 14 (excluding government holiday). The election will be held March 24 while the results will be declared March 26. The Model Code of Conduct issued by the commission will remain in force till March 26.

This is the first time that there will be a direct election for the post of mayor and chairperson. Following which the elections will be conducted for the post of deputy mayor and vice-chairperson, April 8 and April 7, respectively.

Over 41 lakh voters are eligible to cast their votes in the urban elections. About 27 lakh voters, 3,030 booths and 1731 wards are there in 106 municipalities and NACs while there are 14.26 lakh voters, 168 wards and 1407 booths in three municipal corporations.

Our focus will be shifting to electric bikes: Sharma

The automobile and several other sectors have been badly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, there is some improvement in the situation and the demand for two-wheelers is slowly going up. In an interview to **Orissa POST**, Sambalpur-based Ujjwal Bajaj's partner **Deepak Kumar Sharma** speaks about the status and the future of the automobile sector. Excerpts:



its journey in 1945. Initially, the company was producing scooters and then it started producing motorbikes. Pulsar bikes of Bajaj took the company to the top. We are dealing in all models of Bajaj. The company introduces new technology by

customers have reposed their faith in us. Bajaj company has been introducing new technologies based on customers' requirements. We have won the hearts of customers by providing hassle-free service.

What is your opinion on Budget 2022?

There is nothing for the middle class in the Budget. The Covid-19 pandemic, high fuel price and around 30 per cent rise in the prices of motorbikes in recent days have discouraged people to buy new motorcycles. The government should give relaxation in GST for automobile sector to boost the demand.

What are your plans for 2022-23 fiscal?

We will move forward in keeping with the future plans of Bajaj. Our focus will be shifting to electric bike. Now, the BS6 models are in circulation in market. However, the prices of electric vehicles are quite high. The government should provide more rebates on electric vehicles and create awareness in this regard among people. Besides, steps should be taken for arranging charging points along roads and at fuel stations for the benefit of electric bike users.

How has been the journey of Ujjwal Bajaj so far?

We entered the automobile business in 2005 and opened our showroom in Sambalpur. Apart from Sambalpur, we have now Bajaj showrooms at Jharsuguda, Sonepur, Boudh and Debagarh.

taking into account the requirements of customers. It has carved a niche for itself in motorbike production. Now, Bajaj bikes are sold in 70 countries across the globe. The Centre is now putting emphasis on electric bike. The company aims to introduce electric bikes by 2023.

What is your USP and what models are available in your showrooms?

Bajaj is an indigenous company. The company had begun

To whom will you give credit for your success?

I would like to give credit for our success to customers. The

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Mar 2: Filing of nomination papers for election to various posts in 109 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) began in the state, Wednesday.

Candidates and their proposers were seen buying nomination forms at the office of the Electoral Officer (EO) in the state capital and at other places. Special arrangements have been made in these offices for this purpose. Interested candidates can file their nominations till March 7.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT THERE WILL BE A DIRECT ELECTION FOR THE POST OF MAYOR AND CHAIRPERSON

OVER 41 LAKH VOTERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO CAST THEIR VOTES IN THE URBAN ELECTIONS

It can be mentioned that nominations are being made for the posts of Mayors and Corporators in three Municipal Corporations, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Berhampur while nominations for chairperson and councillors are

Giribala Cong's CMC mayor pick

CUTTACK: With the stage set for the urban local body (ULB) polls, the state unit of the Congress Wednesday picked up Giribala Behera, the vice-president of Odisha Pradesh Mahila Congress, as its candidate for the mayor post of Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC).

Barabati-Cuttack MLA Mohammed Moqim made the announcement during a press meet at the party office at Purighat here. The Barabati-Cuttack MLA said the party (Congress) is ready to face the ULB polls.

"We have chosen Giribala Behera as the CMC mayor candidate following the recommendation of the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee. Like 2019, this time too we will contest the polls in coalition with CPI and CPI(M). Of the 59 wards here, CPI and CPI(M) will contest in one seat each," the Congress leader said.



Giribala Behera

Behera, who is also the president of the party's city unit, had played a key role during the 2019 Assembly elections, sources said. Moqim also announced the party's corporator candidates to as many as 11 wards under the civic body.

While the Congress has chosen Bhanumati Senapati to contest for corporator post in Ward 1, Gayatri Lenka will fight for the Ward 2. Pradosh Das is the corporator candidate for Ward 3, Nirupama Mohanty for Ward 4, Saloni Nayak for Ward 5 and Susama Majhi for Ward 7.

Similarly, the grand old party has chosen Ajit Kumar Behera for Ward 8 corporator, Asutosh Das for Ward 9 and Chinmayee Jena for Ward 12. While Pradeep Kumar Dwivedi has been picked up as the corporator candidate for Ward 13, Liza Rani Rout will fight for Ward 15.

Senior party leader Suresh Mohapatra, who was present at the media briefing, brushed aside the allegations of infighting in the Congress. Notably, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) were yet to announce their candidates.

Odia students share horrific experience

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Odia students, who were evacuated from war-torn Ukraine, Wednesday recounted their horrific experience in the east European country.

The students claimed that they had not imagined that Russian forces would launch a full-scale war against Ukraine.

"We took the Russian invasion threat casually and did not expect that Russian forces would launch a war against Ukraine. The situation deteriorated when Russia declared to launch a war against Ukraine February 23. The government issued an advisory and asked us to move to safer places with adequate essential commodities," said Subhasmita Priyadarsini, a medical student at Ukrainian city of Vinnytsia, to **Orissa POST**.

Subhasmita and a few of her friends arranged a bus February 27 to reach Romania border for evacuation. "Vinnytsia turned into a war zone immediately after we left the city. Our problem did not end by reaching the Romania border: We were forced to wait for 24 hours in the bone-chilling cold. We did not get any help from Indian government to reach Romania," she said while expressing concern over her future. "I am yet to finish my study there. I would face severe difficulties if the war continued for more days. The Indian student, who was killed in Kharkiv, was our senior.



The evacuated students upon their arrival at Bhubaneswar airport, Tuesday

His death has saddened us very much," she added.

Aman Kumar of Balasore claimed that they did not think it proper to leave Ukraine ahead of the Russian invasion as their medical institutes were quite strict about the students' attendance. "We discussed the issue with our institutes and Indian embassy several times since the beginning of February but could not get any clarity in this regard," he said.

The Ukrainian government closed the airport February 27. That is why Indian students were forced to arrange buses to reach Romania border, Kumar said.

"We faced harassment from local officers at Romania border and the extreme weather condition also caused innumerable pain to us. We heaved a sigh of relief after entering Romania. At least 400 Odia students are still stuck on the Romania border," he added.

Odia student Madhusudhan Mishra, who is still stuck in the shelter house in Romania said, "The External Affairs Ministry and the Indian embassy have registered the names of students and assured us to inform the updates regarding the evacuation flights."

Subhasmita's father Srikant Patra said, "We were quite apprehensive about her safety in the war-torn country. We are very much thankful to the government to evacuate our children from the war zone."

SEA RITUAL OF LORD



Sagara Bijee ritual of Amabasya Narayan, a subsidiary deity at Srimandir, being performed near Puri beach, Wednesday

Six bids received for Utkal B1, B2 coal mines

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 2: The Ministry of Coal has received six bids for Utkal B1 & B2 coal mines situated in Odisha. The ministry also received one bid each for Alaknanda and Rampia & Dip Side of Rampia coal mines. The ministry said it has received 26 bids for 11 coal mines that have been put for sale under the fourth tranche of auction.

"The process of the fourth tranche of the auction of coal mines for sale of coal was launched by the Nominated Authority, Ministry of Coal December 16, 2021. The last date for submission of technical bids was February 28, 2022. As part of the auction process,



technical bids comprising online and offline bid documents were opened here Wednesday (March 02, 2022) at 10 am onwards in the presence of the bidders," the Ministry of Coal said in a statement. "The online bids were decrypted and opened electronically in the presence of the bidders. Subsequently sealed envelopes containing offline bid documents were also opened in the presence of bidders. The entire process was displayed on the screen for the bidders," it said.

Can painkillers lead to hearing loss? Find out how

If you are in the habit of regularly consuming ibuprofen, acetaminophen or aspirin, and such over the counter painkillers, you may be at risk of hearing loss.

Gaurav Upreti, 45, a bank executive, was living life normally when after a brief ailment in 2016, he began taking painkillers.

The next year he began facing hearing loss, but he managed with several hearing aids until 2020 when he suffered a permanent hearing loss. Hearing impairment drastically affected his communication skills, married life as well as career. It is then he underwent bilateral cochlear implantation on the advice of doctors.

Cochlear implant surgery is effective on patients who are congenitally deaf and those who lose hearing due to various external factors including drug induced hearing loss and infections.

"Upreti's is a classic example where the use of painkillers led to hearing loss. Excess drug abuse, use of painkillers, patients on dialysis, or anti-cancer drugs, persistent noise pollution are high-



EXPERTS SAY: Using medications mindfully and limit their use as much as possible is the key

risk factors of losing the hearing ability if not addressed timely," said Sumit Mrig, Principal Consultant and Head ENT, Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital, who conducted the surgery.

"Sometimes, patients reach a stage when no hearing aids help them and then only cochlear implants are the solution. The message is that one should not rely on over-the-counter pain relievers that may cause hearing loss," he added. Upreti has significantly improved since his surgery and rehabilitation, the doctor said.

A recent study, published in the

THINK TWICE BEFORE POPPING A PILL

Gaurav Upreti, 45, a bank executive, was living life normally when after a brief ailment in 2016, he began taking painkillers

The next year, he began facing hearing loss, but he managed with several hearing aids until 2020 when he suffered a permanent hearing loss

Hearing impairment drastically affected his communication skills, married life as well as career. It is then he underwent bilateral cochlear implantation on the advice of doctors

Cochlear implant surgery is effective on patients who are congenitally deaf and those who lose hearing due to various external factors including drug induced hearing loss and infections

Journal of General Internal Medicine, found that people who frequently used over-the-counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or acetaminophen had an almost 20 per cent increased risk of developing tinnitus.

According to Dr Atul Kumar Mittal, Director, Ear Nose and Throat,

Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram, drug related hearing loss is known as ototoxicity.

"It causes sensorineural hearing loss where the hair cells of the hearing nerve get affected. It can cause a sudden hearing loss or gradual progressive hearing loss," said Mittal.

Upreti's is a classic example where the use of painkillers led to hearing loss. Excess drug abuse, use of painkillers, patients on dialysis, or anti-cancer drugs, persistent noise pollution are high-risk factors of losing the hearing ability if not addressed timely

SUMIT MRIG | PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT & HEAD ENT, MAX SMART SUPER SPECIALITY HOSPITAL

"However, ototoxicity is caused only if painkillers are taken in higher doses for a prolonged period of time," he added.

Few drugs, especially some antibiotics and chemotherapy agents, are also very well known to cause ototoxicity. But it is usually found to be reversible after stopping medication, Mittal said.

In another study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, researchers at Harvard University speculated that the pain relievers may be damaging the cochlea, the snail-shaped hearing mechanism in your inner ear.

"Ibuprofen can reduce blood flow to the cochlea, which could result in cellular damage and cell death. Acetaminophen may deplete the antioxidant glutathione, which protects the cochlea from damage," said Dr. Sharon Curhan, instructor in medicine at Harvard Medical School.

But does this mean one should think twice before popping a pill for headache or back pain? Using the medications mindfully and limit their use as much as possible, is the key, the experts noted.

First finish wildlife management, then do mining near Kuldiha: SC

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 2: The Supreme Court Wednesday refused to allow stone mining activities in the vicinity of Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary in Odisha's Balasore till implementation of the Comprehensive Wildlife Management Plan by the state government as approved by the standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL).
A two-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices L Nageswara Rao and BR Gavai directed the state government to expedite the process of declaring the traditional elephant corridor as conservation reserve as per Section 36A of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
"The state of Odisha is directed to implement the Comprehensive Wildlife Management Plan as suggested by the standing committee of NBWL before permitting any mining activity in the eco-sensitive zone. The mining operations of 97 quarries shall be permitted



only thereafter," said the bench.
In February 2020, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had banned mining activities in and around Similipal-Hadgarh-Kuldiha-Similipal Elephant Corridor. In September 2020, the applicants, who got lease for the stone quarry in the eco-sensitive zone around the Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary from the state government in 2017, filed a batch of appeals in the SC against the NGT order.
During the hearing, the Advocate General of Odisha submitted that the mining operations will be permitted only after implementation of the Comprehensive Wildlife Management Plan. He stated that

compliance of Section 36A of the Act for declaration of the elephant corridor as conservation reserve is in the advanced stage of consideration by the state government.
The apex court noted that following the state government's proposal to operate 97 stone quarries at a distance of 2km from the boundary of Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary, the standing committee of NBWL agreed to recommend the proposal subject to the implementation of a Comprehensive Wildlife Management Plan in the region, for mitigation of impact which would be caused by operation of all quarries and transportation of materials.
It was noted in the plan that 97 stone quarries are located immediately south to the Hadgarh-Kuldiha Elephant Corridor which is a part of the traditional Similipal-Hadgarh-Kuldiha Elephant Corridor. It was also stated that the corridor between Hadgarh and Kuldiha is used round the year for movement of elephant, herbivores and cats.



People under the banner of Mahanagar Nagarika Anusthan stage a silent protest near Cuttack SP office, Wednesday, demanding expeditious evacuation of Indian students from war-hit Ukraine

Govt to train midwives for better care to pregnant women

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 2: The state government has launched a specialised course-Nurse Practitioner Midwifery (NPM) to train midwives professionally so that they can provide high quality healthcare to pregnant women.
The 18-month duration course will be provided at the College of Nursing in SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) in Cuttack with technical guidance from the Fernandez Foundation of Hyderabad.
At least 30 staff nurses from Capital Hospital in Bhubaneswar and the district headquarters hospitals (DHHs) of Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Bolangir and Malkangiri have been selected for the first batch of the NPM training. The candidates have been selected through a written test followed by an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE).
This trained cadre of midwives will support the pregnant women



Dignitaries at the launch of NPM course in Cuttack, Wednesday

during antenatal and postnatal periods and conduct normal deliveries at the DHHs. A 'Midwife-led Care Unit' has been established at the Obstetrics and Gynaecology department of SCBMCH, sources said.
With more than 90 per cent of deliveries in Odisha taking place at institutional facilities, trained midwives would be an important ad-

dition to improve maternal and newborn services. Additionally, this highly-skilled cadre of professional midwives would help the state to meet the shortages of human resources in health services. The state government is expected to train more numbers of midwives in the coming years and place them in different hospitals across Odisha to provide quality

The 18-month duration course will be provided at the College of Nursing in SCBMCH in Cuttack with technical guidance from the Fernandez Foundation of Hyderabad
At least 30 staff nurses from Capital Hospital in City and DHHs of Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Bolangir & Malkangiri have been selected for the first batch of training
The trained cadre of midwives will support the pregnant women during antenatal and postnatal periods and conduct normal deliveries at the DHHs

care for mothers and newborn.
Luigi D'Aquino, Chief of Health Section, UNICEF India, congratulated the state government for becoming the second state in the country to roll out the NPM course. "It has become evident that while the coverage of services has significantly increased over the years, ensuring quality health care remains a challenge

State logs 143 fresh Cov cases, 6 new fatalities

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The state reported lowest daily spike in Covid-19 cases in two months as 143 people tested positive Wednesday, including 28 children. The Covid-19 tally rose to 12, 85,349, the health department said.
Six more people succumbed to the infection, pushing the death toll to 9,085, the department added. Khurda reported highest two (02) deaths followed by Cuttack, Ganjam, Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh districts with one (01) each.
Out of total 143 new infections, 86 were reported from quarantine centres while 57 persons contracted the virus locally. The state had registered 168 cases of coronavirus infections Tuesday.
Gajapati district registered the highest number of new cases with 20 persons testing positive for the disease, followed by Kendrapara with 13 new infections.

Other districts that reported fresh Covid-19 cases are: Angul (8), Balasore (11), Bargarh (1), Bhadrak (2), Bolangir (1), Boudh (3), Cuttack (8), Ganjam (2), Jagatsinghpur (1), Jajpur (4), Jharsuguda (10), Kandhamal (1), Khurda (8), Koraput (6), Mayurbhanj (7), Nabarangpur (4), Nayagarh (2), Puri (2), Rayagada (1), Sambalpur (11), Subarnapur (6) and Sundargarh (9).
The state pool reported 2 new cases. These are persons who have come from outside Odisha and have tested positive. The daily positivity rate stands at 0.28 per cent as 50,481 samples were tested in the last 24 hours.
Notably, the daily cases are lowest since December 27, when the state had logged 123 cases. It had registered 168 cases and eight deaths Tuesday. Worth mentioning, the state now has 2,163 active cases, while 12, 74,048 people have recovered from the disease so far, including 314 in the last 24 hours.

STF SEIZES LEOPARD SKIN IN GAJAPATI

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The Special Task Force (STF) of the state Crime Branch Wednesday claimed to have nabbed a person who was possessing leopard skin.
The man identified as Pabitra Lima of Khamari Sahi under R Udaygiri police limits in Gajapati district was nabbed by a joint team of the STF and personnel of Ramgiri Forest Range.
The sleuths laid a trap on the road between Machaghara and Khamari Sahi villages near Mahendragarh and were successful in nabbing Lima with the leopard skin.
As Lima could not produce any authority in support of the possession of leopard skin, he was detained and handed over to Ramgiri forest officials for necessary legal action, an official of STF said.
The skin will be sent to Wild Life Institute of India in Dehradun for chemical examination, added the official.

21-yr-old Nuapada youth in Guinness World Records

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Sachin Behera from Nuapada district has brought laurels for the state by getting his name in the Guinness Book of World Records for third time. He performed the record 104 knee strikes in one minute.
The 21-year-old youth from Lakra village under Boden block of Nuapada district broke a record set by Pakistan's Muhammad Rashid. Sachin Behera is son of Laxmi Prasad Behera and Arati Behera. It is worth to mention that Rashid had set the record of performing 100 full contact knee strike wearing five kg ankle weights using alternate legs in one minute in male category on June 6, 2021. At an event in Bhubaneswar, Sachin

The youth from Lakra village under Boden block of Nuapada broke a record set by Pakistan's Muhammad Rashid
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Self-defence training to 320 girls in city slums

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The Bhubaneswar Smart City Ltd (BSCL) has decided to impart self-defence skills to more than 300 young girls living in the slums of the state capital thereby including them in strategic planning goals of the smart city.
Aiming to promote women empowerment, the BSCL has invited proposals from experienced agencies for providing self-defence training to approximately 320 adolescent girls and young women for duration of 10 months. The agency selected will provide self-defence training, non-residential in nature, as per the agreed module of the BSCL Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited.
"The initiative is designed to boost women's self-esteem. The



training programme will help them deal with risky and threatening situations reducing dependence on others. It will also aid them live a healthy and active lifestyle. The names of interested girls sponsored for self-defence training will be provided by the BSCL. The partner NGO will coordinate the process on behalf of BSCL," said BSCL CEO, Sanjay Kumar Singh.
It can be mentioned that the BSCL has collaborated with United

Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to strengthen the social components of Smart City. The project is being implemented in 100 slums and in various educational institutions of Bhubaneswar. Humara Bachpan Trust is the implementing partner for the project and the community level interventions are being managed by them.
Sources said that the training period is expected to be around 10 working days with batch size typ-

ically consisting of 35-40 numbers of participants/ candidates with about four trainers per batch. The agency selected will also be responsible to undertake medical screening to ensure the participants are fit to undertake the training prior to the initiation of the training program as per norms. It will also provide first aid support for minor injuries during training program, if necessary.
"The agency will also organize sessions in collaboration with police, lawyers and Women's Commission for each batch to create awareness on legal issues. All necessary uniform and training materials to the participants shall also be offered by the agency. After completion of training, the participants will be provided with certificates by the BSCL," a BSCL official said.

Explained: Why exercise gets harder the less you do it

CLASSIFIED LOST

By virtue of an affidavit, I Ratan Roy, resident of MV-42 (Jayanagar), PO- Malkangiri, state that I lost my Sale Deed Document No.- 69/2004, on 20.02.2022 around 9.00 AM at DNK Market Malkangiri and could not trace. I swear this affidavit before IIC, Model P.S.- Malkangiri to issue missing certificate.

Doing less exercise could deactivate a vital protein in the body causing further inactivity and making exercise more difficult, new research suggests.
Scientists at the University of Leeds have discovered that deactivating the Piezo1 protein, a blood flow sensor, reduces the density of capillaries carrying blood to the muscles.
This restricted blood flow means activity becomes more difficult and can lead to a reduction in how much exercise is possible, the team found.
The results, published in the Journal of Clinical Investigation, may help to explain the biology of why exercise becomes harder the

less you do it.
Exercise is known to protect against cardiovascular disease, diabetes, depression, and cancer.
"Unfortunately, many people fail to exercise enough, for reasons such as injury and computer usage. This puts people at more risk of disease. The less people exercise, the less fit they become, often leading to a downward spiral," said lead author Fiona Bartoli, a Postdoctoral Researcher in the University's School of Medicine.
Although many responses to exercise are known, how the benefits of exercise are initially triggered at a molecular level has remained mysterious.
"Our study highlights the crucial link between physical activity and



physical performance made at this level by Piezo1. Keeping our Piezos active by exercising may be crucial in our physical performance and

Scientists at the University of Leeds have discovered that deactivating the Piezo1 protein, a blood flow sensor, reduces the density of capillaries carrying blood to the muscles
This restricted blood flow means activity becomes more difficult and can lead to a reduction in how much exercise is possible

control group, and a group whose Piezo1 levels had been disrupted for 10 weeks.
Walking, climbing, and running wheel activity was observed, with the Piezo1 mice showing a striking reduction in activity levels. This suggests an important role for Piezo1 in sustaining normal physical activity.
The researchers considered whether the Piezo1 mice were less interested in exercise, but they found no differences in the amount or duration of activity between the two groups.
Instead, there were fewer running wheel revolutions per exercise session, and slower running speed, suggesting a lowered ability to exercise, without a lesser desire. JMS

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SHORT TAKES

Baliapal youth stuck in Ukraine

Langaleswar: A youth from Srirampur village under Baliapal block of Balasore district studying medical science in Ukraine has been stuck in the war-torn country. The student was identified as Vivekananda Patra, son of Bhuban Mohan Patra in the village. He is a third-year MBBS student in Ukraine. He had left home in 2019 to study medical science at Kharkiv but has been stranded in the country after Russian invasion of the European nation. There is no food left with him. He is extremely scared as Russian missiles are raining down near his apartment, his family said. His parents have also stopped taking food and are in a state of panic after learning about their son's ordeal. His parents and villagers have pleaded before the government to bring him back safely.



Poll rout: Congress fort crumbles after 60 years



POST NEWS NETWORK

Padmapur, March 2: A panchayat under Basudevpur block in Bhadrak district that has been a Congress bastion for the last 60 years has voted for Biju Janta Dal (BJD) during the recently-concluded rural polls.

As per sources, people of Balimunda panchayat had been electing sarpanch and samiti members from Congress, but this time the voters changed their mind and handed out electoral success to the ruling BJD.

BJD-backed sarpanch candidate Namita Das and samiti mem-

Basudevpur legislator Bishnubrata Routray thanks people for bringing about a change in the panchayat elections

ber Chhabirani Maiti have emerged victorious, providing a shot in the arm to the ruling party here.

Sarpanch candidate Namita Das defeated her nearest rival Congress-supported Pratima Bhuyan by a margin of 296 votes while samiti member candidate Chhabirani Maiti routed Congress-backed candidate Laxmipriya Bori by a margin of 119 votes.

Exuding electoral success for the party, Basudevpur MLA Bishnubrata Routray said people of this panchayat had long been wishing for a change and have now given a chance to the ruling party candidates to serve them. He thanked people for such success after 60 years.

MAKESHIFT CLASSROOM



INFRA CRUNCH: Students studying under an asbestos roof at Pedipathar Primary School under Athamallik block in Angul district Wednesday

OP PHOTO

Defeated sarpanch candidate cuts roads

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, March 2: A sarpanch candidate, who faced debacle in the recently-concluded panchayat elections, has allegedly tried to exact revenge on the villagers and cut off the roads in Gajapati district Wednesday.

The incident was reported from Gangabada panchayat under Raigad block in Gajapati district bordering Andhra Pradesh. The defeated sarpanch candidate was identified as Barik Sabar. In his bid to settle scores with the villagers over his defeat, Sabar allegedly dug up the roads to the villages and also put up boulders on roads to disrupt communication.

The matter came to the light after the newly-elected sarpanch, Haribandhu Karji, lodged a complaint against Sabar at Garabandh police station. Acting on the complaint, police visited the spot and removed the boulders from the roads Wednesday. They also directed



SETTLING SCORES!

It was alleged that Sabar, after his drubbing, is conspiring to stall implementation of all developmental works in the village on the provocation of some leaders of Andhra Pradesh

Sabar dug up roads at some places and put up boulders in some other places to disrupt communication to Pachidia, Sagadia, Labha, Motasahi and Kantakumbha villages in the panchayat bordering Andhra Pradesh

to fill the roads dug up by Sabar. Meanwhile, the supporters of the defeated candidate were found hurling abuses at the police personnel conducting a probe. Karji alleged that Andhra Pradesh's unsuccessful bid

to stall the panchayat polls provoked Sabar to disrupt communication to the villages.

When contacted, Garabandh PS inspector in-charge (IC) Sarbeswar Samantaray said, "A probe is un-

derway and action will be taken after evidence is found."

However, an attempt to get the response of the defeated candidate Sabar was unsuccessful.

Reports said three candidates - Haribandhu Karji, Barik Sabar and Pradip Kumar Bhuyan - were contesting for the post of sarpanch in Gangabada panchayat.

The panchayat has a total of 1,515 voters out of which 1,324 voters exercised their franchise. While Karji polled 590 votes, Sabar got 394 votes and Bhuyan bagged 243 votes.

Karji alleged that Sabar, after his drubbing, is conspiring to stall implementation of all developmental works in the villages on the provocation of some leaders of Andhra Pradesh. Sabar dug up roads at some places and put up boulders in some other places to disrupt communication to Pachidia, Sagadia, Labha, Motasahi and Kantakumbha villages in the panchayat bordering Andhra Pradesh late Tuesday night.

BJD on lookout for young ZP chief in Mayurbhanj

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, March 2: After the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) won back its fort in Mayurbhanj in the panchayat elections, exercise has started to form the panchayat samitis and zilla parishad (ZP), amid a huge number of hopefuls for the ZP chairperson post.

The party has won 53 out of 56 ZP seats. Now, the party is dealing with the hopefuls for ZP chairman post. The number of aspirants for the plum post is increasing by the day, a report said.

However, the frontline leaders, MLAs and MP in touch with state leadership have been brainstorming on who will be seated on the chair. The ZP chairman post, which has been reserved for scheduled tribe (ST) candidate, will go to polls March 13.

The leaders of east and west organisational units in the district have started buzzing names of various ZP members as possible nominee for the top post.

However, it was learnt that a decision to choose chairman for the ZP will be taken as per the instructions from the high command of the ruling party.

This time, 32 ST candidates have been elected as ZP members. Some of them have secured hat-trick wins while some others have won



THE ZP CHAIRPERSON'S POST, WHICH HAS BEEN RESERVED FOR SCHEDULED TRIBE (ST) CANDIDATES, WILL GO TO THE POLLS MARCH 13

by huge margins. However, speculation is rife that leadership experience, organisational ability and education will be taken into consideration while picking up a right candidate. It was said that if a right candidate acceptable to all is not chosen, possibility of bickering can't be ruled out later. Notably, the BJP which had formed ZP council by bagging 49 seats in 2017 has failed to get a seat this time. JMM has managed to get three seats while Congress got none.

BJD, BJP pay price for railway project delay in Gunupur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Gunupur, March 2: Delay in implementation of Gunupur-Therubali railway project has reportedly proved costly for the ruling BJD and opposition BJP as the Congress has bagged two zilla parishad (ZP) seats under the block in Rayagada district.

The BJD had to bite the dust in the panchayat polls here even though it registered landslide victory in other parts of the state. The performance of BJP was also disappointing while the Congress party won two ZP zones.

This has sent the chatters abuzz here as the local intellectuals attributed the electoral loss to neglect of Gunupur-Therubali railway project. The two parties lost the polls despite senior and heavy-weight party leaders campaigning for their candidates in the two zones.

Heavyweights like Rajya Sabha member N Bhaskar Rao, state advisor of Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) Sudhir Das, Gunupur MLA Raghunath Gamang campaigned for the ruling party but the party candidates lost in these two zones.

Similarly, former Chief Minister



The debacle has sent the chatters abuzz here as the local intellectuals attributed the electoral loss to neglect of Gunupur-Therubali railway project

The BJD had to bite the dust in the panchayat polls here even though it registered landslide victory in other parts of the state

The performance of BJP was also disappointing while the Congress party won two ZP zones

Giridhar Gamang and BJP's state party in-charge D Purandeswari campaigned for the candidates of the saffron party, but to no avail.

On the other hand, Koraput MP Saptagiri Ulaka and former ZP chairperson Bijay Gamang campaigned for the Congress candidates. The Koraput MP has raised the delay in implementation of Gunupur-Therubali rail route project in Parliament and in various forums on a priority basis. This perhaps endeared him to the masses for which Congress managed to win in these two zones in Gunupur.

The fate of the Gunupur-Therubali rail route is stuck between the state government and Centre while dates for the elections to the urban bodies are drawing closer.

The demand for construction of rail route between Gunupur and Therubali is not new but is of decade old. However, the state government and Centre not giving two hoots to its implementation has sparked sharp resentment. With dates for civic body polls drawing closer, it remains to be seen how the issue is going to impact the voters.

Farmers decry delay in irrigation project

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bant, March 2: An inordinate delay in launch of a cluster shallow irrigation point at Binayakpur under Bant block of Bhadrak district has left the farmers worried.

According to reports, farmers have cultivated vegetables in 25 hectare of land. "We cultivated vegetables with the hope that the project will commence soon, but the crop will perish soon as there is a delay in operation of the project," they lamented.

Though the farmers have apprised the officials concerned about the need for its execution, the latter have failed to take steps in this direction.

Reports said, under Jananidhi

Yojana (Phase-II), the Odisha Lift Irrigation Corporation had started construction of the cluster shallow lift irrigation point at a cost of ₹19.47 lakh in February 2021 and its work was completed in June.

The contractor concerned had conducted a trial run of the project in August. However, some electrical instruments had not been installed. Since then, the project has not been executed. Farmers, who had cultivated vegetables banking on the project, are disappointed as crops have started wilting due to lack of water.

SDO of Bhadrak lift irrigation division Dillip Kumar Sahu said steps will be taken to execute the project after taking stock of the project status.

Incomplete bridge draws ire

Baripada: Many locals here Wednesday expressed their anguish over an inordinate delay in construction of a bridge though more than six years have passed since the work had started. "The bridge at Domuhani over Baitarani River was aimed at connecting Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts. The project was taken up under Biju Setu Yojana. However, due to the apathy of the officials concerned, the project is yet to be completed. Commuters cross the river by using a makeshift bamboo bridge, risking their lives," the residents rued. The construction work was taken up by Rural Development department of Keonjhar, the sources added. Domuhani, which is 3km from the famous shrine at Khiching, is the confluence of Baitarani and Khairi rivers.

Recounting of votes sought

POST NEWS NETWORK

Udala, March 2: A samiti member candidate along with her supporters staged a dharna outside Udala block office in Mayurbhanj district Wednesday alleging irregularities in counting of votes for rural polls.

Reports said Basudha Singh had contested as samiti member in Patasanipur panchayat.

There was tough fight between Basudha and her rival Snehalata Singh. She alleged that officials after counting votes had first announced Basudha as the winner but later Snehalata won by a margin of 16 votes. Basudha alleged that officials had botched up the vote counting in favour of her rival.

She and her supporters warned of intensifying the agitation if no step is taken for recounting. They met Udala BDO and submitted a memorandum in this regard.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
1. Tender Notice No. ST-OT-TELE-ZONAL-JKR-265, Dated : 25.02.2022
Name of Work : TELECOM ZONAL WORK EACH COSTING Rs. 5,00,000/- OR LESS IN THE SECTION UNDER JURISDICTION OF SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER TELECOM / JAJUPUR KEONJHAR ROAD OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION OF EAST COAST RAILWAY FOR 12 (TWELVE) MONTHS.
Tender Value (₹) : ₹ 49,10,117.08.
EMD : ₹ 98,200/-
2. Tender Notice No. ST-OT-TELE-ZONAL-KDR-265, Dated : 25.02.2022
Name of Work : TELECOM ZONAL WORK EACH COSTING Rs. 5,00,000/- OR LESS IN THE SECTION UNDER JURISDICTION OF SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER TELECOM / KENDUJHARGARH OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION OF EAST COAST RAILWAY FOR 12 (TWELVE) MONTHS.
Tender Value (₹) : ₹ 40,99,706.54.
EMD : ₹ 82,000/-
Bidding Start Date : 07.03.2022, Date and time of closing of tender : 1100 hrs of 21.03.2022
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
NOTE : The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender.
Complete information including e-tender documents is available in website http://www Ireps.gov.in.
Divisional Railway Manager (Signal & Telecom) / PR-852/M/21/22 Khurda Road/

NH-53 hub for illegal furnace oil trade

Making things worse, police personnel responsible for patrolling and raids here are allegedly hand in glove with the illegal operators

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, March 2: National Highway-53 that crosses through Jajpur district has turned out to be a hub for illegal transportation and black marketing of furnace oil, petrol and diesel, reports said.

Making things worse, the police personnel responsible for patrolling and raids here are allegedly hand in glove with the illegal operators. The persons who operate these depots are informed ahead of the raids. So, they have ample opportunities to shift the furnace oil in con-

tainers to safer places. In return, the police, mostly from Jajpur, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur districts, allegedly get a hefty cut. This has become a source of earning for both the cops and other people involved.

According to sources, NH-53 connects Jajpur's Kaliganagar. Hundreds of tankers transport spurious furnace oil on NH-53 from Paradip area to different places in Odisha like Kaliganagar, Keonjhar, Rourkela, Angul and Jharsuguda via Jajpur.

According to the source, furnace



oil is being adulterated at PPL Road, Bauria Palanda, Balijhara and Kali temple locality, which are located within 5 km radius of the port and under Paradip police limits.

Sources said that traders involved in smuggling of furnace oil are earning handsome amounts. The total turnover of this trade is over ₹1 crore per month, they pointed out. They also said these traders work in collusion with some police officials. At times, they do conduct raids on the oil depots. However, the raids are nothing but an eyewash for public.

The valuable furnace oil is transported by tankers from IOCL oil refinery in Paradip to different industrial units in the state. These tankers are often halted midway. Gallons of pure furnace oil are removed from the tankers and in turn filled with oil-like substitutes.

The stolen furnace oil is then loaded into tankers previously parked by the illegal traders along the highway. The tankers are then sent to different locations. The sources said that each tanker carrying furnace oil fetches approximately ₹10 lakh in the open market.

WORKS DEPARTMENT No. B-1023
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, ROURKELA (R&B) DIVISION, UDITNAGAR, ROURKELA
E-Mail Id - eepwdrk@gmail.com
Government of Orissa "e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No: 50/2021-2022 Dated: 14.02.2022
1. Number of works: 18 (Eighteen) number of Works
2. Estimated cost: Rs. 54.64 Lakhs to 99.94 Lakhs
3. Period of completion: 3 (Three) to 6 (Six) calendar months
4. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal: Dt 22.02.2022 at 11.00 A.M.
5. Last date/ Time for receipt of bids in the portal: Dt 03.03.2022 up to 05.00 P.M.
6. Date of opening of Bid: Dt.04.03.2022 at 11.30 A.M.
7. Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid: Superintending Engineer, (R & B) Division, Rourkela, Uditnagar.
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>
Sd./- Superintending Engineer, R & B Division, Rourkela
OIPR-34068/11/0027/2122

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

MUNICH TO MOSCOW



Adolf Hitler's formula for destroying democratic Czechoslovakia began with a threat to invade in order to incorporate into the Reich border districts with a German-speaking population. Russian President Vladimir Putin's attack on Ukraine began in a similar way

itor of 'Novaya Gazeta', one of Russia's last remaining independent newspapers, posted a video in which he called for Russians to rise up against the war, saying that: "Only the anti-war movement of Russians can save life on this planet." Yelena Kovalskaya, director of the state-run Meyerhold Theatre Center, resigned in protest against the attack on Ukraine, saying, "It is impossible to work for a murderer and receive a salary from him." More than 150 scientists and science journalists signed a letter, published on a Russian science website, lamenting that Russia has condemned itself to isolation and the status of a rogue state. A similar number of municipal deputies from many cities signed a letter condemning the attack as "an unprecedented atrocity," adding that, "hopes for a good life in Russia are crumbling before our eyes."

What is also needed now is for Russian soldiers in Ukraine to stop fighting an unjust war. Unconfirmed reports indicate that some have already refused to go into Ukraine. Russians have access to a wide range of information beyond the propaganda of their state-run media, so they should know that they are part of a war of aggression. Intentionally killing people without sufficient cause is murder, and that is what Russian soldiers will be doing if they obey orders to target Ukrainians with lethal weapons. Obeying orders is no excuse, just as it was no excuse for those under Hitler's command.

From now on, as long as Putin remains Russia's leader, the country must be seen as an international pariah. Sanctions must be strong enough to ensure that Russians do see their hopes for a good life crumble. This is especially unfair to those who have publicly opposed the war. But how else can they hope to replace Putin with someone who is prepared to abide by moral principles and international law? Sometimes the vanquished come to view their suffering as liberation. Just ask today's Germans.

The writer is Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University.
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Russian President Vladimir Putin's justification for invading Ukraine was not very original. As others have noted, his claim that it was necessitated by the "genocide" carried out against ethnic Russians in the Donbas region recalls Hitler's strategy for destroying democratic Czechoslovakia in the run-up to World War II.

Hitler threatened to invade Czechoslovakia in order to incorporate into the Reich border districts with a German-speaking population. He did not have to invade, because the leaders of the United Kingdom, France, and Italy with the carnage of the Great War still in everyone's memory, acceded to his demands at the 1938 Munich conference. Within six months, however, the Nazis violated the Munich Agreement, established the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in the Czech lands, and created a nominally independent Slovak puppet state. Hitler then began making claims to a slice of Poland.

Putin's attack on Ukraine began in a similar way, with the seizure of Crimea and the establishment of two Kremlin-backed statelets in the Russian-speaking eastern Donbas region in 2014. This was a flagrant violation of the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, according to which Ukraine, along with Belarus and Kazakhstan, gave up the nuclear arsenals they had inherited from the Soviet Union. In return, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States gave assurances that they would respect the sovereignty and independence of all three countries within their existing borders.

Just as the UK and France took no serious action when Hitler progressively tore up the Treaty of Versailles, so no country did anything serious enough to make Russians regret the wildly popular annexation of Crimea and encouragement of separatism in Donbas. Hitler's claim to Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland was, he said at the time, "my last territorial claim in Europe." But anyone who had read 'Mein Kampf' should have known about his ambitions to create 'Lebensraum' for

Germans in Eastern Europe. Similarly, we can reasonably suspect that Putin, who has described the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a disaster, wants to restore Russian dominance over former Soviet territory. If Putin can get away with occupying Ukraine and installing a puppet regime, will the ex-Soviet Baltic states, especially Estonia and Latvia, with their large Russian-speaking minorities, be next?

Putin has one great advantage that Hitler fortunately lacked: nuclear weapons. Putin has warned off countries that might attempt to interfere in Russia's "military operation" in Ukraine by testing a nuclear-capable missile shortly before launching the invasion, and saying that any country that intervenes would face "consequences that you have never seen." Four days after the invasion began, he put Russia's nuclear forces on alert.

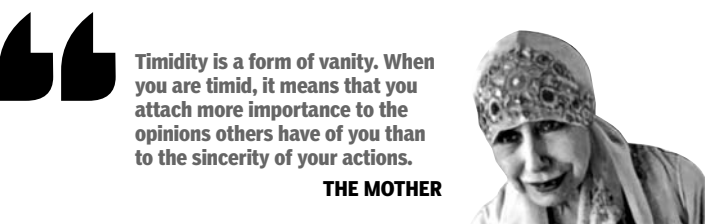
How, then, can Putin be stopped? Economic sanctions are already being imposed, airspace is being closed to Russian aircraft, and boycotts of Russian goods are beginning. Neighbouring countries, especially Poland, should also

close land routes to Russian trucks. These measures, regrettably, will hurt all Russians, including those who oppose the war. But is there any other way to stop Putin from achieving his aims?

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has bravely remained in Kyiv, rallying Ukrainians to fight the advancing Russians. If they can inflict significant costs on Russia's forces, that could help to stop Putin, though most military experts believe that a Russian military victory is inevitable.

Perhaps recognising this, Zelensky has called on the Russian people to stop the war. Many Russians are trying to do just that. After the invasion was announced, there were protests in roughly 55 cities across Russia. An independent monitoring organisation says that 5,000 people have been arrested for participating in protests without prior permission, but many more are continuing to protest. At the time of writing, more than one million courageous Russians have put their names to a "Stop the War" petition.

The protests haven't stopped there. Dmitry Muratov, the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize winner and ed-



Democratic Dividend

During my years as a policymaker in India and at the World Bank, one of the few leaders I met whom I came truly to respect was Madeleine Albright. The former US secretary of state was a master strategist, but behind the strategising lay empathy and a moral compass. That is why we should take seriously her recent essay on the need for urgent global action to fight authoritarianism, which the all-out invasion of democratic Ukraine by Russia's autocratic leader, Vladimir Putin, only serves to underscore.

History is replete with grotesque forms of human oppression, including slavery, racism, and oligarchies crushing people's aspirations. Today, the continued rise of authoritarianism in countries such as Brazil, Turkey, and of course Russia highlights the need to shore up democracy. What is new is that this effort now must be global.

Even as the shadow of authoritarian misrule spreads, there is a growing aspiration for democracy among ordinary people seeking greater freedom and dignity. A Pew Research Center survey of 17 advanced economies in 2021 shows disaffection with the lack of individual freedom in authoritarian states at an all-time high. Additionally, according to the survey, a median of 74% of people in these countries had no confidence in Putin doing the "right thing in world affairs."

There is also hope in Albright's interesting observation that leaders with totalitarian inclinations tend to rise and fall in waves. Force out one, and others may tumble, too, as happened when the end of authoritarian rule in the Philippines in 1986 was followed by similar developments in Chile, South Africa, Zaire, and Indonesia over the next decade or so. This should encourage responsible governments today to initiate the process of reviving global democracy.

Sadly, the record of the United States is far from clean in that regard. A recent study by the Roosevelt Institute's Kyle Strickland and Felicia Wong points to how America's neoliberal economic policies fueled discrimination and inequity in many countries. Moreover, in Chile, Cuba, Central America, and elsewhere, America has intervened, often brutally, not to support democracy but to protect US corporate interests. Providing leadership to isolate authoritarian regimes and nurture democracy will thus require the US to break with significant aspects of its past and take on this responsibility as its moral obligation to chart a new course for the world.

But to rely wholly or substantially on the US would be folly. To be sure, some US Presidents – notably, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Jimmy Carter, and Barack Obama – have possessed a strong sense of global responsibility. Fortunately, many prominent Americans, including current political leaders, take a similar stance. Yet, as Donald Trump demonstrated, a US leader can be elected by promising to "make America great again," and, once in office, define "America" as his friends, family, and cronies.

While many justify the need for democracy as a means to other desirable ends, I believe that democracy is necessary in itself. If it were the case that democracy slowed economic growth, we should be prepared to grow a little less in order to let equality and freedom flourish. This is because the commitment to treat all human beings as equals, as democracy requires, is an ethical axiom. As Abraham Lincoln put it in a handwritten note in 1858, "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy." That said, the evidence suggests that democracy is a key ingredient of economic advancement. By creating the space for dissent, criticism, and change, democracy nurtures creativity and innovation, and, through that, economic flourishing. Economic progress in countries that succumb to religious fundamentalism or authoritarianism almost invariably stalls. China seems to be an exception, but it is worth noting that democratic Taiwan's GDP per capita is nearly three times that of China.

One of the best examples of what democracy can do is post-independence India, one of the world's most audacious experiments in creating and nurturing an open society. The country undoubtedly made some economic-policy mistakes over the last 75 years, and its annual growth rate in the early decades after independence remained low, at around 3%. But the democratic investment meant that, despite being a poor country, India did well in higher education, research, the arts, and other creative fields.

The pickup in India's economic growth from the early 1990s onward had many causes, but it also reflected the democratic dividend. Because of the country's political openness and freedom of speech and criticism, the services sector, which relies on creative human capital, began to bloom, fostering the growth of firms like Infosys, Wipro, and Tata Consultancy Services. By 2005, India was among the world's four or five fastest-growing economies. Its sophisticated policy had made the country a global success story, poised for a remarkable run.

This success has come under a cloud in recent years with an increase in restrictions on free speech and the media. Not surprisingly, India's GDP growth decelerated each year from 2017 to 2020. The close connections between democracy, creativity, and economic progress are subtle and long-term, but they are real. And they demonstrate clearly the need to encourage democratisation worldwide.

The writer, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University.
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WISDOM CORNER

- The greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change his future by merely changing his attitude.** —OPRAH WINFREY
- There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self.** —ALDOUS HUXLEY
- When something is important enough, you do it even if the odds are not in your favour.** —ELON MUSK

WORDSWORTH

Scot free
Scot is from an Old Norse word that meant a payment or contribution and which is linked to the modern French écot, a share of communal expenses, as in payer son écot, to pay one's share. It is a close relative of shot, which at one time could have the same meaning of a contribution or a share of expenses. The expression scot free derives from a medieval municipal tax levied in proportional shares on inhabitants, often for poor relief. This tax was called a scot, as an abbreviation of the full term scot and lot, where scot was the sum to be paid and lot was one's allotted share. (This tax lasted a long time, in some places such as Westminster down to the electoral reforms of 1832, with only those paying scot and lot being allowed to vote.) So somebody who avoided paying his share of the town's expenses for some reason got off scot free. Scot was also used for a payment or reckoning, especially one's share of the cost of an entertainment; when one settled up, one "paid for one's scot". Again, someone who evaded paying their share of the tab got off scot free. It's been suggested that this usage may have come from the old habit of noting purchases of drinks and the like by making marks on a slate, or scotching it, but the evidence suggests this is just a popular etymology.



Peter Singer

PUTIN HAS ONE GREAT ADVANTAGE THAT HITLER FORTUNATELY LACKED: NUCLEAR WEAPONS



Kaushik Basu

One of the best examples of what democracy can do is post-independence India, one of the world's most audacious experiments in creating and nurturing an open society

SPECTRUM CLEAN ENERGY

Green hydrogen gets big fillip



Dhurjati Mukherjee

THE INTRODUCTION OF CLEAN HYDROGEN FUEL WOULD BRING A TRANSFORMATION IN INDIA'S ENERGY POLICY AND SAVE URBAN AREAS FROM POLLUTION

With the first part of the National Hydrogen Policy notified, the government is targeting production of 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2030. In the much awaited policy, green hydrogen and ammonia manufacturers can purchase renewable power from the power exchange or set up renewable energy capacity or through any other developer, anywhere in the country.

In the recent Asia Economic Dialogue, RIL Chairman, Mukesh Ambani observed that India must aim to end its dependence on coal and oil in the next two-three decades. He said clean energy exports from India could rise to half a trillion dollars in 20 years. In the Jamnagar oil refining complex, the plant currently converts petroleum coke into synthesis gas to produce blue hydrogen for \$1.2-1.5 per kg. This is much lower than green hydrogen produced with renewable resources, which costs between \$3-6.55 per kg, according to the European Commission's July 2020 hydrogen strategy.

Though there has been lot of emphasis on solar energy for the past few years, green hydrogen is acknowledged by experts to be an equally convenient and acceptable

option, keeping in view environmental pollution. It is understood that the government would provide open access – connectivity to transmission lines for renewable energy – within 15 days of the receipt of the application. Manufacturers can store their unconsumed renewable power, up to 30 days, with the distribution company, the policy stated.

Hydrogen generated entirely by renewable energy or from low carbon power can emerge as a game changer with its potential to curb greenhouse gas emissions by 15 to 25%. Several leading independent power producers are willing to set up GH production units in India for supplying end customers. Domestic GH will also address India's energy security to significantly reduce India's import of oil, gas and coal.

Clean electric energy is a critical input for GH production and such affordable energy has to be made available. Ambitious targets must be set for rapid expansion in electrolyser capacity while R&D has to be incentivised. This will enable development of automated and efficient manufacturing processes and adoption of technological advancements.

Regarding manufacture, the

cheapest way to do so is from natural gas but this releases a lot of carbon dioxide, negating the benefits of zero emission vehicle. While this dirty hydrogen is cheap at \$1 a kg, the clean type made through the electrolysis of water, using renewable energy, is five times costlier.

With experiments in full scale, it is a matter of time before the greener kind of hydrogen made with solar or wind energy becomes cheap and abundant. Researchers at McKinsey see this happening by 2030. Morgan Stanley analysts say green hydrogen will be competitive in 2-3 years. India is also in the global green hydrogen race now and Mukesh Ambani, pledging a massive investment of \$80 billion, stated recently that Reliance would bring down the cost of green hydrogen below \$1 per kg in a decade from \$3 presently.

While the political establishment appears to be quite sincere in propagating green hydrogen and starting its manufacture at the earliest, it is expected that in the second phase the government would mandate the use of green hydrogen and green ammonia by plants in a phased manner. The introduction of clean hydrogen fuel would bring a transformation in India's energy

policy and save urban areas from pollution. The policy has spelled out clearly that the Centre would play a role in the pricing of green hydrogen, which brings hope of this fuel being affordable.

With great emphasis on renewables, green hydrogen and even nuclear power, India would be able to tackle the criticism of the West as regards environmental pollution. Moreover, it would be in a better position to balance development with environmental concerns as at no cost can the development process in the country be stalled. One cannot deny the fact that the developed world has achieved all this over the years, not with clean energy, and it is only in recent years that they are talking about this when they are both technologically and financially strong to make the necessary shift.

The induction of green hydrogen would obviously be a trend setter but all depends on how quickly the process of manufacture, transportation and storage is available in the country. As it is, this may start from next year and we would eagerly await encouraging news in this matter within a year or so. But the emphasis on renewables as well as electric power should be maintained.
INFA

Focus on agendas

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

Sir, 'Opposition unity' seemed like a cliché till the other day. All discussions about a united Opposition centered around a few ambitious leaders wanting to make it big. Not an easy task at all considering the man these leaders desire to see the back of is Narendra Modi. That being said, some non-BJP chief ministers are flexing their muscles to keep hopes alive among the Opposition ranks. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee took the first step in tying loose ends up. Though she started off well, buoyed by a massive win in the West Bengal Assembly elections, that critical push to the singular cause was lacking. Perhaps the Congress' aversion to Mamata has stopped her from going the whole hog because despite cynics targeting the Congress, there is no dearth of friends for the grand old party. No 'united front' or 'third front' can afford to go to town on its aims and objectives by leaving the Congress behind. Therefore, when Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao met his Maharashtra counterpart Uddhav Thackeray to 'discuss' the Opposition unity, both leaders were cautious in their words. Instead, KCR went ballistic at Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It was expected, but Mamata, KCR and Uddhav have to exercise restraint over their words and emotions because Modi is known to strike back when the chips are down. It is important for the Opposition leaders to ensure they focus on agendas.
Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Fight against polio

Sir, National immunisation days (NIDs) are observed across India twice a year, with the government set out to give two doses of oral polio vaccine (OPV) to every child in the country under the age of five. As part of the 'Mission Indradhanush', over 15 crore children under five years of age will be vaccinated in the coming months. Though our country is declared 'polio-free', we should remain vigilant and continue vaccination since our neighbouring countries are still not polio-free. Polio is a life-threatening disease caused by a contagious poliovirus that mainly affects children under five years. The virus is transmitted by the fecal-oral route and by aerosol droplets. There is no cure for polio, and it can only be prevented by immunisation. Childhood vaccination against polio began in the 1950s and has been the most effective tool in eradicating the disease. The OPV is safe, effective and, an essential tool available to protect children against polio. We have to extend our support to the government to motivate the parents to vaccinate their children to ensure a polio-free world.
Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

national

of the day quote

Good to see huge relief in the faces of our students who have reached Slovakia from Ukraine. All of them are given proper care and kept near Košice in Slovakia

KIREN RIJU | UNION LAW MINISTER

Why did Niti Aayog declare that Bihar is at the bottom on every front? If crime is under control, why is the NCRB saying that crime is high in the state? Why is the constitution under threat? Why are farmers not satisfied with this government?

TEJASHWI YADAV | LEADER OF THE OPPN IN THE BIHAR ASSEMBLY

The findings of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up to probe the killing of 14 civilians by army para-commandos in December last year in Nagaland can be made public once the Centre gives permission to prosecute the culprits

NEIPHUI RIO | NAGALAND CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

TN to receive very heavy rainfall today

New Delhi: The low pressure area that had formed over southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining areas of south Andaman Sea and equatorial Indian Ocean has already formed into a well-marked low pressure area and is likely to intensify into a depression by Thursday, bringing heavy downpour in Tamil Nadu and neighbouring areas, the IMD said. The well-marked low pressure area over central parts of south Bay of Bengal and adjoining equatorial Indian Ocean and the associated cyclonic circulation extending up to 5.8 kms above mean sea level continued to persist at 9 p.m. Wednesday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Four suffocate to death in Pune

Pune: Four labourers suffocated to death while cleaning a clogged septic tank at a residential complex in Loni Kalbhor on the outskirts of the city, police said here Wednesday. The tragedy occurred at the Kalamvak Vasti's Malhar building around 11.30 a.m. when the four workers descended into the septic tank. Officials said that while two of the men went inside first, the other two followed to assist them, but following a commotion, they were pulled out.

IT raids 18 places

New Delhi: The Income Tax Department is conducting raids at 18 places in National Capital Region (NCR), belonging to real estate developer Gaursons in connection with alleged tax evasion. IT teams are conducting raids in Ghaziabad, Noida and Delhi against Gaursons directors. The teams are scanning various ledgers and account information. It will also record the statement of the employees of the firm. The sources have suggested that they might be calling the CAs of the company to inquire them about the business associates of the firm.

Woman found dead

Gurugram: A 44-year-old woman was found dead with no injury marks on her body Wednesday morning in Kanhai village of Gurugram, police said. Police recovered the body after they were alerted by the deceased's neighbours about the incident. Meanwhile, the woman's live-in partner Surender has been absconding, which has prompted the police to suspect his role in the incident.

Pressure grows to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 2: India's opposition Wednesday stepped up pressure on the government to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a day after an Indian student died during shelling in the eastern city of Kharkiv.

India is yet to criticise long standing arms supplier Russia publicly, instead urging both sides to cease hostilities, causing frustration among its other allies including the United States.

Thousands of Indian students remain trapped in Ukraine, leading to calls for the government to step up pressure on Russia to assist evacuation efforts.

"The Government of India should stop its verbal balancing act and sternly demand that Russia stop immediately the bombing of key cities in Ukraine," said P. Chidambaram, a lawmaker from the opposition Congress party, in a tweet.

India abstained in a United Nations Security Council vote condemning the invasion last week, though in recent days it has subtly shifted tone.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi "stressed upon the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations" during a call with Polish president Andrzej Duda, a statement by India's foreign ministry said late Tuesday.

In addition, India has taken a critical stand privately with Russian president Vladimir Putin, an Indian foreign ministry source said.

Exports of Sputnik vaccine at risk

India's production and exports of Russia's Sputnik Covid-19 vaccines are expected to slow further following US sanctions on Russia's sovereign wealth fund that promotes the shot globally, as per three Indian pharmaceutical industry sources. The Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) had billed India as one of Sputnik's biggest production hubs and markets, though local sales have stagnated at 1.2 million doses out of 1.8 billion doses of various vaccines administered in the country.

Russia has long supported India internationally on critical issues including Kashmir, a territory disputed between India, Pakistan and China, as well as provided the bulk of its military capability.

New Delhi has for decades attempted to lessen its reliance on Russian-made weapons, while keeping the relationship close enough to avoid Moscow aligning more with rival Asian power China.

"India is increasingly uncomfortable with the position that Russia has taken, but it is very difficult for it to voice it in public," said Harsh Pant, a defence and geopolitical analyst at the New Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation. Some 60% of India's military hardware is still Russian-made, Pant said, and a relationship with Moscow is essential to maintain equipment and source spare parts.



Members of All India Students' Association (AISA) hold placards and banners during a protest demanding Indian government to bring back stranded Indian students from Ukraine, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi

Centre defends PMLA provisions in SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: The Centre Wednesday defended the PMLA provisions in the Supreme Court saying if a person "knowingly" becomes a party or is actually involved in any activity connected with the proceeds of crime, then such an individual is prima facie guilty of the offence of money laundering.

Referring to the 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and the international covenants, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told a bench headed by Justice A M Khanwilkar that even the name of the legislation is self-explanatory and any attempt, with the knowledge to launder proceeds of crime, constituted an offence



under this law. The apex court is hearing arguments on a batch of pleas concerning the interpretation of certain provisions of the PMLA. During the day-long arguments, the law officer also gave the illustration of prosecution of certain bank officials in the Punjab National Bank scam, involving jeweller and designer Nirav Modi and others.

India is adopting a calibrated approach on international developments keeping in view the country's national interests and everyone should speak in one voice to protect the country's interests and not voice anything that will be detrimental to India

M VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

22 GHARIALS SIGHTED IN GANGA

Twenty-two adult gharials have been sighted at the Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary in the just-concluded census conducted on the 170-km-stretch between the Bijnor and Narora barrage



RAISING VOICE



Members of All India Democratic Students Organisation (AIDSO) take out a march to Lalbazar (Kolkata Police Headquarter) in protest over the Anish Khan murder case in Kolkata

NDRF SENDS RELIEF MATERIAL TO UKRAINE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 2: The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Wednesday sent relief material to Ukraine.

"The India's disaster mitigation force has provided relief material including blankets, sleeping mats, and solar study lamps etc for the people of Ukraine", the Ministry of Home Affairs said.

They also said that they will send more relief materials if directed by the government.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, it was estimated that nearly 17,000 Indian nationals have left Ukraine since the initial advisories were issued. Fights under Operation Ganga have been increased and during the last 24 hours, six flights have landed in India taking the total number of flights to 15. Out of these, eight flights were from Bucharest, five from Budapest and two from Rzeszow.



Union Minister Gen VK Singh Wednesday visited the Budomierz on the Poland-Ukraine border and met the stranded Indian students and distributed food and water to them. These students will be facilitated entry to Poland soon and will be sent to India.

Singh who visited Budomierz on Poland-Ukraine border to take stock of the situation on the border along with India's Ambassador to Poland, Nagma Mallick as the

Indian authorities have planned to evacuate the stranded Indian nationals from Western Ukraine.

The officials of the Indian Embassy in Warsaw (Poland) have identified a new entry point at Poland border for the Indian nationals stuck in western Ukraine.

Meanwhile, other Union Minister and Special Envoy Kiren Rijju has reached Kosice airport near the Ukraine border in Slovakia to oversee the evacuation of stranded Indians.

Around 17,000 Indians have left Ukraine border, says MEA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 2: Around 17,000 Indian nationals have left war-torn Ukraine through its different borders since the Indian Embassy in Ukraine issued advisories, the Ministry of External Affairs said Wednesday.

Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "We now estimate that nearly 17,000 Indian nationals have left Ukraine borders since our advisories were issued in the last week of January."

He further said that the Embassy in Kiev has been asked to set up a temporary office in Lviv to facilitate border crossing by Indian nationals.

Bagchi said that a mechanism has been established for issuing emergency certificates to those who lost their Indian passports, which will help many Indian students.

The MEA spokesperson said that "substantial segment of our Embassy team is now at Lviv for this purpose".

"We are exploring options to reach eastern Ukraine to assist the evacuation of citizens who are stuck there. We are seeing if our teams can reach there, it's not easy because the route is not open all the time," Bagchi said in a statement.

He also expressed deep condolences over the death of Chandan Jindal, an Indian student from Barnala in Punjab, who died in Ukraine of natural causes.

Bagchi added that an advisory has been issued by the Indian Embassy urging Indian nationals to leave Kharkiv by 6 p.m. local time based on "information from Russia", adding that they should take any method to leave, including "on foot".

"We have issued this advisory based on inputs from the Russian side. We haven't chosen the time. We haven't chosen the location," he said in a statement.

Indians want warning labels on packaged food items: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: Majority of Indians want 'high in style' warning labels on the front of packaged food and beverages that have excessive levels of salt, sugar or fat, a pan-India AIIMS study said.

The survey covered 2,025 respondents out of which 93 per cent said 'front of pack label' (FOPL) on packaged food will be helpful in conveying nutritional information.

Also, 40 per cent said warning labels are quicker to understand and easy to recognise which in turn will help them buy healthier food products.

The AIIMS study comes at a time when India is deliberating on an FOPL policy and public

health experts across the world are keenly watching the country's choice of label design.

An FOPL is regarded as the most effective policy solution which can inform consumers in an easy-to-understand manner about high levels of sugar, sodium and saturated fat that may be present in packaged food and beverages and discourage their purchase.

Sanjay Rai, Professor, Community Medicine at AIIMS Delhi and president of the Indian Public Health Association (IPHA), said, "People are ready to shift to healthier decisions regarding purchase of packaged and processed food and this perception study has shown that warning labels have the widest appeal."

2 yrs after lockdown, India surges back to normal life

India's daily coronavirus infections rose by less than 10,000 for a third straight day Wednesday, a level last seen in late December before the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, data from the Health Ministry showed

REUTERS

Bangalore, March 2: Almost two years after India went into the world's biggest lockdown to slow the spread of Covid-19, students headed back to school in Maharashtra state Wednesday, a sign of normal life resuming as infection rates fall.

India's daily coronavirus infections rose by less than 10,000 for a third straight day Wednesday, a level last seen in late December before the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, data from the health ministry showed.

Last week, Maharashtra state

minister Aaditya Thackeray said schools in the state's largest city, Mumbai, would resume pre-Covid attendance, reinstating all activities in view of declining cases.

"Essentially it is more to do with the kind of severity India has seen, both amongst adults and children infected with the Omicron variant," said Uma Chandra Mouli Natchu, a professor of infectious diseases at St John's Research Institute in Bangalore.

"It appears the disease is significantly milder for both vaccinated individuals as well as for children, even if they are unvaccinated," Natchu said.



India has fully vaccinated more than 765 million of its 940 million adult population and about 28 million teenagers aged 15-18, but has

not started vaccinating children younger than 15.

In Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat, bazaars were back in full swing after a long hiatus.

Patrons streamed in to enjoy dinner and late-night snacks following the lifting of a curfew last week at Ahmedabad's popular Manek Chowk, a market that transforms into a hawkers centre after dusk.

Similar signs of life resuming its normal pace abound across the country. Roads and trains are once again congested as people return to offices, movie theatres

are reporting a surge in foot traffic, and in the city of Gurugram near the capital, New Delhi, restaurants and gaming parlours are packed.

"There is hope that people will continue maintaining social distancing and wearing masks as much as possible," said Rijo John, a health economist at the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences in Kochi. "There is absolutely no reason to keep the economy under any kind of lockdown or restrictions - it is just the behavioural aspect of the people that needs to be observed and enforced as much as possible," he said.

TMC decimates Oppn in civic polls

The BJP, which has emerged as the main Opposition party in West Bengal after winning 77 seats in the assembly polls last year, failed to win even a single civic body

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 2: Ten months after its landslide victory in the West Bengal assembly polls, the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) Wednesday steamrolled the entire opposition in the civic elections, bagging 102 of the 108 municipalities in the state, an SEC official said.

The TMC secured Kanthi Municipality, the bastion of Leader of Opposition and Nandigram's BJP MLA Suwendu Adhikari, while Hamro Party, a new entrant in hill politics, trounced TMC, GJM and BJP to win Darjeeling Municipality.

The CPI (M)-led Left Front won Taherpur Municipality in Nadia district. The BJP, which has emerged as the main opposition party in West Bengal after winning 77 seats in the assembly polls last



TMC supporters celebrate with colours after the party's lead during the counting of votes of West Bengal Municipal elections, at Uluberia in Howrah district, Wednesday

year, failed to win even a single civic body. The Congress, too, was unable to win a single civic body, although the parties have won a few wards in some towns.

The TMC has won 102 municipalities. The Left Front has won one civic body, and Hamro Party has won one. Four municipalities have hung board, the State Election Commission (SEC) official said.

The TMC has reduced the op-

position's tally to zero in 27 municipalities, securing all the wards. At least four municipalities – Beldanga in Murshidabad, Jhalda in Purulia, Champdani in Hooghly and Egra in Purba Medinipur district – are hung, with no party securing a clear majority. Independents hold the key to board formation in these civic bodies.

Suwendu Adhikari and his family faced a massive setback as the

Mamata thanks people

Kolkata: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday thanked the people of West Bengal for giving a massive mandate to the ruling Trinamool Congress in the civic elections, and called upon winning candidates and supporters to work with humility. "Heart-felt gratitude to Ma-Mati-Manush for according yet another overwhelming mandate to us. Congratulations to the winning candidates of All India Trinamool Congress in the Municipal Elections," she tweeted. "Let victory enhance our responsibility and dedication. Let triumph impart humility. Let us together work for peace, prosperity and development of the state. Jai Bangla," she said in another tweet.



TMC snatched Kanthi Municipality, considering Adhikari family's backyard for the last four decades. The LoP's father Sisir Adhikari was the municipality's chairman for 25 years from 1971-2009, except for five years from 1981-86.

AIMIM working to build leadership in other states as well

Celebrating the 64th anniversary of AIMIM's revival, Akbaruddin recalled how his grandfather Maulvi Abdul Wahed Owaisi strove hard to protect the rights of Muslims and other minorities enshrined in the Indian Constitution by reviving the party on this day in 1958 with a new party constitution



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, March 2: The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) Wednesday celebrated the 64th anniversary of its revival with party leader Akbaruddin Owaisi hoisting the party flag at Darussalam, the party headquarters here.

With party chief and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi busy in the campaigning for the ongoing Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, his younger brother and party leader in the Telangana assembly did the honours in the presence of party legislators, leaders and workers.

Speaking on the occasion, Akbaruddin recalled how his grandfather Maulvi Abdul Wahed Owaisi strove hard to protect the rights of Muslims and other minorities enshrined in the Indian Constitution by reviving the party on this day in 1958 with a new party constitution.

He said undeterred by the atmosphere of fear and misery among the Muslims in the aftermath of Police Action in 1948, he took up the onerous task of organising the community and gave it a new hope.

Akbaruddin paid rich tributes to his grandfather and father and former MP Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi and said it was due to their hard work and sacrifices that AIMIM grew into a major political force today and is now expanding across the country.

The AIMIM legislator said without the sacrifices of Abdul Wahed Owaisi and Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi, AIMIM would not have built a chain of medical and educational institutions and would not have reached to this stage.

Dismissing the allegation of AIMIM's critics that it is a communal party, he read out a resolution that was passed at the first public meeting of the party March 2, 1958, which condemned communal politics and stressed on the need for Hindu-Muslim unity. Claiming that the party strongly

believes in the nation's secular democracy, Akbaruddin Owaisi said it continued to protect and enhance its quality by effective representation from local to national level.

He made it clear that the assets built by the party over last six decades are owned by Muslims of Deccan and that Asaduddin Owaisi and other leaders are mere custodians of these assets.

Akbaruddin Owaisi listed out the achievements of the party during last six decades and also the help rendered by it to victims of riots and natural calamities in various parts of the country. He also mentioned the works undertaken by the party to help poor during Covid-19 pandemic.

He claimed that no other political party in the country can show even one per cent of the work undertaken by AIMIM in the areas of education and healthcare.

AIMIM was working to build leadership in other states of the country to raise the voice of the oppressed and try to solve the problems of poor and weaker sections of society.

Akbaruddin Owaisi slammed Narendra Modi government for failing to fulfill its promises of creating jobs and for delivering 'acchey din'.

He voiced concern over the hatred being spread across the country in the name of 'Hijab'. "Every Indian has right to wear what he or she likes. Similarly, Muslim women and girls have right to wear hijab," he said.

Referring to recent attack on Asaduddin Owaisi in Uttar Pradesh, Akbaruddin Owaisi said the history of the party show that its leadership is not scared of such attempts. Stating that Muslims are equal partners in the country, he said AIMIM was leading the democratic fight to ensure that Muslims get their due rights enshrined in the Constitution of India.

He slammed the so-called opposition parties which need votes of Muslims but are not willing to work for their upliftment.

Left regaining significance in Bengal, claims CPI (M)



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 2: After the Left Front managed to win one municipality out of 107 civic bodies in West Bengal despite widespread rigging in the elections, senior CPI (M) leader Sujan Chakraborty Wednesday asserted that the Left parties are making a comeback in the state.

Chakraborty claimed that the BJP's vote share is receding in the state where it had made significant gains since the 2018 panchayat polls. The Left parties, which had become almost insignificant in the electoral scenario of the state, are regaining significance, he told reporters. Neither Parliament nor the state assembly now has any member from the Left parties.

The Left Front secured Taherpur Municipality in Nadia district. More than 100 of the civic bodies were won by the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress while the

BJP did not win any municipality.

That the Left parties are making a comeback in the state despite widespread rigging is evident from the results as in places where people could exercise their franchise we got a fair share of the votes polled, Chakraborty said.

Alleging electoral malpractices by the ruling dispensation in the municipal elections held on February 27, he claimed that in some places, even TMC candidates or their relatives found their votes had been cast before they reached their booths.

A TMC candidate in Kamarhati Municipality and the daughter of another candidate in North Dum Dum (Municipality) could not cast their votes, the former Lok Sabha MP said. Alleging that the ruling party supporters indulged in false voting, the CPI (M) leader claimed that this shows that the TMC is losing the faith of people as they were not allowed to exercise their franchise in many places.

IMPASSE IN VISVA-BHARATI

3 days on, Registrar locks self in office; students deny gherao

The agitation by more than 200 students crossed 48 hours Wednesday morning, with Registrar Ashis Agarwal still inside his office even as students claimed they haven't gheraoed him and he may leave if he wishes to. The official, however, said he will leave his chamber only when the protestors withdraw their stir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 2: Stalemate continued in the prestigious Visva-Bharati University Wednesday as students demanding the reopening of hostels and conducting of on-line examinations refused to withdraw their sit-in demonstration outside the registrar's office till their demands were met.

The registrar, on the other hand, also refused to leave his chamber till the students lifted their stir.

In the midst of the university crisis, heads of departments held a meeting Wednesday to discuss the ongoing situation even as Vice-chancellor Bidyut Chakraborty issued a notice announcing that doors of the central office and library and other departments will be closed for visitors.

The agitation by more than 200 students crossed 48 hours Wednesday morning, with Registrar Ashis Agarwal still inside his office even as students claimed they



haven't gheraoed him and he may leave if he wishes to. The official, however, said he will leave his chamber only when the protestors withdraw their stir.

High drama was witnessed Tuesday as the registrar attempted to come out of his room to offer puja on Maha Shivaratri but the agitating students refused to let him go alone, and offered to accompany him. After this incident, he retreated to his office and refused to leave it till the agitators left the place.

The agitating students spent Tuesday night out in the open. They demanded that hostels be reopened for students, hailing from across West Bengal and other states, who have to spend huge sums on accommodation in Bolpur town.

They also sought that pending semester examinations of undergraduate and post-graduate students be held online as the curriculum was taught in that mode for the last two years.

The university said that it will take decision on reopening of hostels, which are shut since March 2020 due to the Covid-19 outbreak, at an appropriate time by weighing all options.

The protesting students had agitated

inside registrar's office on Monday morning to press for their demands.

"The registrar wants us all to leave the place as a precondition for him leaving his office. We have informed him that we will stay put till the hostels are reopened. We have been repeatedly asking him to leave since 10 AM Tuesday but he is not leaving," SFI leader Somnath Sow told media.

Visva-Bharati University Faculty Association has expressed solidarity with the agitating students, and urged the authorities to get down from the high pedestal and take a considerate humane approach to the issue as the students are like their children.

While the VC and registrar could not be contacted, a university official said that some students are creating anarchy, disrupting normal academic functioning. Another official of the institute said that denying basic rights to the registrar was shocking.

Visva-Bharati University was founded by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan in Bengal's Birbhum district in 1921. It was given the status of a central university in 1951.

Telangana municipal body vice-chairman held for rape

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, March 2: Police in Telangana's Nirmal town Wednesday arrested Nirmal Municipal Council Vice-Chairman Sajid Khan, who was absconding after being booked for allegedly raping a minor girl. His driver Jaffer and conduit Anuradha were also arrested by the police.

Nirmal DSP Upendra Reddy said Khan has been booked under POCSO for kidnap and rape of the 15-year-old girl. Khan was absconding since February 27 when he and two others were booked on a complaint by the victim.

The police officer said the accused was involved in some other cases as well. He said the police will open a rowdy sheet against him.

Ruling Telangana Rashtra



Samithi (TRS) had suspended Khan from the party Monday, a day after police registered a case against him under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO).

The accused allegedly raped the 15-year-old girl in Hyderabad last month. The victim told police that the accused took her there along with the help of Anuradha, who is

the owner of the house where the girl's family resides.

The victim, a class 8 student, had approached a child helpline and through them lodged a complaint against the municipal vice chairman.

After medical examination of the victim and preliminary investigation, a case under section 376 of the Indian Penal Code and relevant sections of POCSO was booked against him. The house owner and car driver were also booked in the case.

The victim told the police that she was taken to Hyderabad on the pretext of a function and the accused perpetrated the crime at a hotel.

The girl later revealed this to her parents, who approached the child helpline and subsequently the police to lodge a complaint.

BOON FOR BIBLIOPHILES



A book stall decorated with different masks at the 45th International Kolkata Book Fair, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO



To avert further tragedy, GOI must share: How many students have been evacuated. How many are still stranded in Ukraine. Region-wise detailed evacuation plan. We owe a clear strategy & communication to the families involved

CENTRE'S VAX REPORT

The Centre Wednesday informed the Supreme Court that 96.8 per cent of India's adult population have been administered with first dose of the Covid vaccine and 81.3 per cent have been administered the second dose



of the day quote

The evacuation operation has been intensified by the Indian government. As many 26 aircrafts will be pressed into service in the coming two-three days to bring back Indian students

Earlier, illegal weapons were made in Uttar Pradesh, which were used to scare or kill people. Today, shells and missiles are being made here, which are used to protect India. This change has come during the BJP government

The BJP calls itself the biggest party in the world. If its five years' work and the dreams it had shown is analysed, it would be found that the BJP is the biggest liar party in the world

SHORT TAKES

Aland communal clash: FIR against 60

Kalaburagi (Karnataka): Karnataka police have lodged FIRs against more than 60 persons and taken 150 persons in custody for questioning Wednesday in connection with the clash between two communities in Aland town of Kalaburagi district of Karnataka.

Car hits Rajasthan CM's Mercedes

Jaipur: Former Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje's Mercedes was hit by a car in Jaipur Wednesday. However, no one suffered any injury in the mishap.

6 killed in T'gana road accidents

Hyderabad: Six persons died and over 10 were injured in four separate accidents in Telangana since Tuesday night. According to police, rash driving and negligence resulted in the accidents which happened.

CRPF trooper commits suicide

Srinagar: A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) trooper committed suicide by shooting himself Wednesday in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar district.

Two arrested, 880 grams gold seized

Chennai: Two persons including a woman were arrested by Customs officials for trying to smuggle in gold into India, said Commissioner of Customs, Chennai International Airport.

Couple fleeing Ukraine crosses from 'cruelty to hospitality'

REUTERS

Corbeanca, Romania, March 2: Harsh Panwar and his girlfriend Reva Shrivastava slept soundly for the first time in a week at a shelter in a wedding venue near the Romanian capital Bucharest, after fleeing Ukraine to the sound of sirens warning of Russian air strikes.

met and fell in love while studying medicine at a university in western Ukraine.

After the Russian invasion began, they and many of their compatriots joined long queues of Ukrainian women and children and other foreigners streaming across the border into neighbouring Romania.

"It was just like crossing the border from cruelty to hospital-



REUTERS PHOTO

yelling amidst the confusion. Some non-Ukrainians, including some African citizens who were in the country, have complained of poor treatment by border guards as they tried to get out.

In response to the criticism, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said in a tweet late Tuesday that everyone should have equal opportunities to get back home.

From the Romanian border, the couple joined a large group of foreign students driven to villages near Bucharest's main airport from where they were waiting to fly home.

'Walk if no vehicle, but leave Kharkiv': Embassy to Indians



Prime Minister Modi held another high-level meeting as the four union ministers sent to Ukraine's neighbouring countries coordinated the stepped-up rescue efforts with the deployment of planes by the Indian Air Force

While the first advisory was put out on Twitter at around 1:40 PM (5 PM IST) the second one was issued at around 2:40 PM (6 PM IST). Bagchi said India is also exploring the option of reaching the eastern part of Ukraine to help in the evacuation of Indian nationals but added that it's not easy as the route is not open at all times.

Separately, Russian Ambassador-designate Denis Alipov said his country is working "intensely" to create a "humanitarian corridor" for safe passage to Russian territory of Indians stuck in Kharkiv, Sumy and other conflict zones in Ukraine.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 2: As fighting intensified in Kharkiv, India Wednesday asked its nationals to leave the second-largest Ukrainian city urgently to three nearby places "even on foot", while Russia promised to create "humanitarian corridors" for evacuation of Indians from the conflict zones.

In an urgent advisory, the Indian embassy in Ukraine asked the Indians to reach the Ukrainian towns of Pesochyn, 11 km away from Kharkiv, Babai (12 km) and Bezlyudivka (16 km) by 6 PM local time (9:30 PM IST).

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said at a media briefing that the Indian embassy asked the nationals to leave Kharkiv immediately on the basis of information from the Russian side.

It is learnt that the Russian side informed India about the possible increase in intensity in fighting in Kharkiv and suggested that all Indians should leave the city.

Alipov said Russia is in touch with Indian authorities on the issue of Indians stuck in Kharkiv, Sumy and in the areas northeast of Ukraine which are witnessing intense conflict. He hoped that the humanitarian corridors will be out in place "as soon as possible".

As India shored up efforts to evacuate its citizens, four C-17 17 Globemaster aircraft of the Indian Air Force with approximately 800 evacuees from Ukraine are slated to land at the Hindon airbase Thursday, sources said.

On Wednesday morning, a C-17 aircraft left for Romania carrying humanitarian aid to Ukraine. At the media briefing, Bagchi said the cities in eastern Ukraine remained areas of concern and that some Indian students were able to board trains out of Kharkiv yesterday night and this morning. About the evacuation mission, Bagchi said flights under 'Operation Ganga' have increased sharply and that six flights have landed in India in the last 24 hours taking the total to 15.

India abstains from UN resolution on 'Russia's aggression' again

United Nations: India Wednesday abstained on a UN General Assembly resolution that strongly deplored Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the third abstention in less than a week by the country in the world body on resolutions on the escalating crisis between Moscow and Kyiv.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: A total of 148 aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) will demonstrate their capabilities at Exercise Vayu Shakti that will take place at Pokharan range in Jaisalmer March 7, a senior official said Wednesday.

The Rafale aircraft will participate in this exercise for the first time and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the chief guest, the IAF official noted. The Indian Air Force (IAF) conducts Exercise Vayu Shakti at Pokharan range every three years to demonstrate its readiness to conduct full spectrum operations. The last one took place in 2019.

Out of the 148 aircraft participating in the exercise this year, 109 will be fighter jets, the IAF official said. The official added that 24 helicopters, seven transport aircraft and four remotely-piloted aircraft will also take part in the exercise March 7.

The event will begin with 17



IAF's fighter jets such as Jaguar, Sukhoi-30, MIG-29, Tejas, Rafale and Mirage-2000 will participate in this exercise

Jaguar aircraft flying in a "75 formation", the official said. It will end with three jets - Rafale, Tejas and Sukhoi-30 - conducting "trans-

former aerobatic display", the official noted.

IAF's helicopters such as Apache, Chinook, Mi17V5, Mi35, ALH MkIV and LCH will also take part in the March 7 exercise, the official said, adding that the event will begin at 10.30 AM and end at 12.30 PM. The capabilities of Aakash missile system and Spyder missile system will also be shown at the exercise, the official said. Transport aircraft C17 and C130J will also participate in the event, the official added.



SHOW OF STRENGTH: Sea phase of MILAN 2022 begins, in the Bay of Bengal, Monday. 26 ships, 21 aircraft and a submarine will take part in the multilateral naval exercise

Ker HC upholds Centre's ban on Media One

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, March 2: The Kerala High Court Wednesday upheld the Centre's ban on Malayalam news channel Media One by denying it security clearance, saying certain aspects mentioned in the intelligence reports about the channel had a bearing on public order

on national security. A bench of Chief Justice S Manikumar and Justice Shaji P Chaly said the single judge was earlier "right" in declining to interfere with the Centre's January 31 decision to ban telecast of Media One. The court said it went through the files, placed before it by the Ministry of Home Affairs,

and found that in relation to the application for uplinking and downlinking permissions for 'Media One Life' and 'Media One Global', "certain aspects relating to the security of the state are mentioned to the effect that Madhyamam Broadcasting Ltd has some linkages with certain undesirable forces, which is stated to be a

security threat". Likewise, in relation to the application for the renewal of the uplinking and downlinking of Media One news channel also the court found that "there are certain serious adverse reports by the Intelligence Bureau against Madhyamam Broadcasting Ltd and its Managing Director".

WORLD BIRTH DEFECTS DAY

WHO calls for awareness to prevent birth defects

Six member states - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar and Nepal - continue to provide high-quality data to a WHO-supported online surveillance database, which by the end of 2021, had registered more than 4 million births, including around 45,000 babies born with birth defects

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: On the World Birth Defects Day, the WHO and its member States in the South-East Asia Region and globally have called for increasing awareness about all birth defects and improve access to quality care and treatment.

In 2019, birth defects accounted for more than 5,30,000 deaths globally, including more than 1,17,000 deaths in the region - around 22 per cent of the global total, said Dr

Poonam Khetrpal Singh, the WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia said. They were the third most common cause of child mortality in the region, and the fourth most common cause of neonatal mortality, constituting 12 per cent of all neonatal deaths, she said. In addition to mortality, birth defects can cause long term morbidity and disability, which in low and middle-income countries, can strain health system, social and family resources, Khetrpal



Singh said. In all countries of the South-East Asia Region, the WHO will continue to intensify efforts to increase birth defect prevention,

surveillance, care and research, accelerating the World Birth Defects Day (WBDD) movement, she said. She said amid the Covid-19 re-

sponse, the WHO continues to support all countries of the region to protect, defend and advance progress in all areas of health, including to accelerate reductions of maternal, neonatal and under-five mortality - since 2014, a flagship priority.

She said all member States have in place national action plans to prevent and control birth defects, and have initiated hospital-based birth defects surveillance. As part of region-wide efforts to

eliminate measles and rubella by 2023 - another flagship priority - all countries of the region have introduced rubella vaccination of girls, reporting an average 83 per cent coverage, she said.

For the region to achieve key targets and goals - including a 35 per cent reduction in folic acid-preventable neural tube defects, a 50 per cent reduction in thalassemia births, and to eliminate congenital syphilis - several priorities must be addressed, Khetrpal Singh said.

Aryan Khan not cleared of drug charges: NCB

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, March 2: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Wednesday dismissed as 'speculation' some reports suggesting that the agency has cleared Aryan Khan, son of Bollywood megastar Shah Rukh Khan, who was nabbed in a drugs case in October, though few found it credible.

Soon after certain reports surfaced, NCB Deputy Director-General Sanjay Singh and the Special Investigation Team (SIT) issued a statement claiming that "the media reports are not true and they are just speculations", since "the investigation is not yet complete".

Singh added that "these reports were not cross-checked with the NCB, and it would be premature to say anything at this stage".

However, few in Maharashtra believed the agency's contentions, as state political leaders whacked the NCB, reiterating how "central probe agencies" are being "grossly misused" by the BJP against the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government.

The ruling MVA allies - Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress - said now it is clear that though there was no evidence against Aryan Khan, he was deliberately "framed" by the former NCB Mumbai Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede.

The media reports claimed that the NCB-SIT ostensibly found no evidence to link Aryan Khan with the larger drugs conspiracy or an international drugs syndicate, besides pointing at the glaring lapses in the high-profile raids on the luxury ship Cordelia Cruise on October 2, 2021 in full media glare.

international

RUSSIAN MOMS ASKED TO TAKE BACK THEIR SONS

Ukraine Wednesday invited the worried mothers of Russian troops captured on the battlefield to come and collect their sons, in an apparent attempt to embarrass Moscow. A decision has been taken to hand over captured Russian troops to their mothers if they come to collect them in Ukraine, in Kyiv, the defence ministry said in a statement



UKRAINE RESISTS

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has killed more than 2,000 Ukrainian civilians and destroyed hundreds of structures including transport facilities, hospitals, kindergartens and homes, Ukraine's emergency service said Wednesday

REUTERS

Washington/Kyiv/Kharkiv, March 2: Ukrainians said they were fighting on in the first sizeable city Russia claimed to have seized, while Moscow stepped up its lethal bombardment of major population centres that its invasion force has so far failed to tame.

With Moscow having failed in its aim of swiftly overthrowing Ukraine's government after nearly a week, Western countries are wor-

ried that it is switching to new, far more violent tactics to blast its way into cities it had expected to easily take.

The most intensive bombardment has struck Kharkiv, a city of 1.5 million people in the east, whose centre has been turned into a bombed-out wasteland of ruined buildings and debris.

Russian paratroopers landed in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-biggest city, triggering clashes in the streets, Ukrainian forces said.

The roof of a police building in the centre of the city collapsed as it was engulfed in flames. Authorities said 21 people were killed by shelling and air strikes in the city in the past 24 hours, and four more Wednesday morning.

They don't know a thing about Kyiv, about our history. But they all have orders to erase our history, erase our country, erase us all
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY



A civilian trains to throw Molotov cocktails to defend the city, in Zhytomyr, Ukraine REUTERS



Russia blasted the main television tower near a Holocaust memorial, in Kyiv, Tuesday

AP PHOTO

Russia said it had sent delegates for a second round of peace talks in Belarus near the border, but Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russia needed to stop bombing if it wanted to negotiate peace.

Moscow said Wednesday it had captured Kherson, a provincial capital of around a quarter of a million people on the southern front, but Ukraine disputed the claim.

On Wednesday an adviser to Zelenskiy said street fighting was going on in the port, which sits at the Dneps river's exit into the Black Sea.

"The city has not fallen, our side continues to defend," said the adviser, Oleksiy Arestovych.

Also in the south, Russia is putting intense pressure on the port of Mariupol, which it says it has surrounded in a ring around the entire coast of the Sea of Azov. The city's mayor said Mariupol had been under intense shelling since late Tuesday and was unable to evacuate its wounded.

But on the other two main fronts in the east and north, Russia so far has little to show for its advance, with Ukraine's two biggest cities, Kyiv and Kharkiv, holding out in the face of increasingly intense bombardment.

In Kyiv, the capital of 3 million people where residents have been sheltering at night in the underground metro, Russia blasted the main television tower near a Holocaust memorial Tuesday, killing bystanders. Five people were killed in the attack on the tower at Babi Yar, the site of a Nazi massacre in which over 33,000 people were killed -- most of them Jews.

WW III will be nuclear & devastating: Lavrov

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov Wednesday warned that a third World War, should it break out, will be nuclear and devastating, amid spiralling tensions with the West over Moscow's ongoing massive military operation against Ukraine.

"A third World War would be a devastating nuclear war," Russia's longtime top diplomat said in an interview to the Al Jazeera television channel, according to state-owned TASS news agency.

Also, Lavrov stressed US President Joe Biden's remark that a third World War would be an alternative to Washington's tough sanctions against Moscow.

Lavrov said that Russia was ready for sanctions that were imposed against it but was surprised that the penalties affected athletes and journalists.

"We were ready for sanctions but did not expect that they would

affect athletes, intellectuals, actors and journalists," he said, referring to the ban and sanctions by Western countries.

Lavrov said the special operation against Ukraine was launched with the aim preventing Kyiv from obtaining nuclear weapons, the Qatar-based news channel reported.

The military operation in Ukraine, including Kiev, is aimed at disarming the Ukraine. Russia will not let Ukraine obtain nuclear weapons, he was quoted as saying by the channel.

Lavrov said that Russia is ready for the second round of talks, but the Ukrainian side is delaying the process under command from the Americans.

Earlier Tuesday, Lavrov said that the

West should not establish military facilities on the territory of former USSR states that are not members of NATO.

Russia has long resisted Ukraine's move towards the European Union and the West's defensive military alliance, NATO.



Cyber resistance

A Ukrainian cyber guerrilla warfare group plans to launch digital sabotage attacks against critical Russian infrastructure such as railways and the electricity grid, to strike back at Moscow over its invasion, a hacker team coordinator told Reuters. Officials from Ukraine's defense ministry last week approached Ukrainian businessman and local cybersecurity expert Yegor Aushev to help organise a unit of hackers to defend against Russia, Reuters previously reported. On Monday, Aushev said he planned to organize hacking attacks that would disrupt any infrastructure that helps bring Russian troops and weapons to his country. Aushev said his group has already downed or defaced dozens of Russian government and banking websites, sometimes replacing content with violent images from the war. He declined to provide specific examples, saying it would make tracking his group easier for the Russians.

Belarus orders more troops

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said Tuesday he had ordered more troops to the south of the country, by the border with Ukraine, the Belta news agency reported. But forces of Belarus, a close ally of Russia, would not be taking part in the attack on Ukraine, he added. On the sixth day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Lukashenko told a meeting of his security council that he would be sending five tactical battle groups to protect the south. These battle groups will comprise hundreds of soldiers equipped with armoured vehicles and artillery. Helicopters and warplanes were already protecting the southern border, he told the meeting. Explaining his decision not to send troops into Ukraine itself, he said: "That's not our job."

ICJ hearings March 7, 8

The International Court of Justice said it would hold hearings March 7 and 8 over the war in Ukraine as fighting intensifies. The International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, will hold public hearings in the case concerning Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation) Monday 7 and Tuesday 8 March 2022, the court said in a statement.

THE UKRAINIANS STRIKE BACK

Losses inflicted on the Russian invaders by the Ukrainian armed forces and the reservists and irregulars supporting them



RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIA

- Canada announced Tuesday a ban on Russian ships and fishing boats from its internal waters and ports, the latest in a string of Canadian measures levelled against Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine
- Tech giant Apple announced Tuesday a halt in all product sales in Russia, the latest fallout over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine
- The European Union banned Russian state media outlets RT and Sputnik from broadcasting in the bloc, the EU's presidency said Tuesday, following a move

by video-sharing platform YouTube to block the outlets' content in the EU

Planemakers Boeing and Airbus have halted supply of parts and support to Russian airlines as the effects of sanctions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine ripple across the global aviation industry

The United States said late Tuesday that it would follow the European Union and Canada in banning Russian flights from its airspace in a move that is likely to trigger Russian retaliation

WB's \$3 billion emergency aid to Ukraine

The first tranche of the aid will be submitted to the Board for approval this week, followed by \$200 million in fast-disbursing support for health and education, World Bank President David Malpass said in a joint statement with IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank in recent days had pledged to provide further support to Ukraine and have moved quickly to put that promise into motion. The IMF, which has an ongoing \$2.2 billion financing program with the country through June, will consider the country's latest request for emergency financing as early as next week, the statement said.

ZELENSKY GIVES INTERVIEW UNDER SIEGE

THERE WAS NOTHING PLAYFUL ABOUT ZELENSKY'S MESSAGE, AND NO THEATRICALS IN THE UNUSUAL SURROUNDINGS AWAY FROM THE IMPOSING BANKOVA PRESIDENTIAL BUILDING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE HISTORIC CITY OF KYIV

REUTERS

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has often done away with the trappings of office in his dealings with the media - offering access to reporters who beat him at table tennis and holding lengthy peacetime press conferences in a food court.

On Tuesday afternoon, the extraordinary circumstances of his interview with Reuters and CNN were by necessity, not choice.

Reuters reporters were driven to the venue in the capital in a van. The building appeared to be a non-descript, Soviet-era administrative office teeming with mostly young, heavily armed soldiers.



Sandbags blocked the bottom of windows, the blinds were pulled down and the bright lamps from television crews shone through the

gloom. A Ukrainian flag and presidential standard were moved closer so they would appear in the background.

Zelenskiy and his entourage appeared along a corridor, and, after greeting journalists with a handshake and a smile, he stood on the first step of a small flight of marble stairs to deliver his message.

Unshaven and tired, but impassioned and gesticulating throughout, the 44-year-old urged the international community to do more to support Ukraine.

He wore an olive-coloured T-shirt, trousers and combat shoes, just as he has done throughout his social media appearances since the

invasion began seven days ago.

This was a president at war, convinced he was the number one target of invading Russian forces that are encroaching on the capital. Asked about his daily regime, he replied: "I work and I sleep."

Mostly business-like and defiant, emotion did show through as Zelenskiy addressed the plight of Ukraine and its younger generation, and the fact that he had not seen his own children for two days.

Asked how long his country would hold out, Zelenskiy replied: "We do not hold out, we fight, and our nation will fight to the end. This is our home, we are protecting our land, our homes. For the sake of our children's future."

'MILES TO POLISH BORDER'

Sean Penn flees Ukraine on foot

KYIV: Days after visiting the Ukrainian capital Kyiv to film scenes for his documentary on Russia's invasion, Hollywood actor-director Sean Penn found himself among thousands of refugees fleeing to Poland, joining the exodus on foot. Penn, 61, posted a photo to his Twitter feed Monday showing the movie star wearing a backpack and toting a piece of luggage on wheels as he trudged along the shoulder of a road beside a line of cars stretching into the distance. Myself & two colleagues walked miles to the Polish border after abandoning our car on the side of the road, Penn said in a caption tweeted with the picture. Almost all the cars in this photo carry women & children only, most without any sign of luggage, and a car their only possession of value. The tweet did not explain why the Academy Award-winning actor and his companions were forced to abandon their vehicle. A spokesperson in Los Angeles, Mara Buxbaum, told Reuters by email Tuesday that Penn had made it out of Ukraine safely. She declined to answer other questions about his whereabouts or the circumstances of his departure from Ukraine.



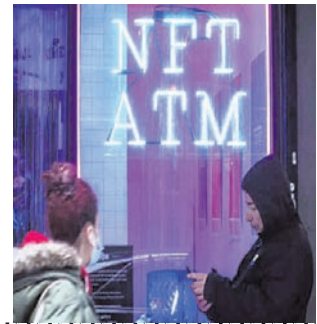


The e-Bill will shut any small window available for misuse in terms of rent-seeking. Put your claim with digital signatures, and you do not have to come to government offices. Your payment reaches (to you) as soon as your claim reaches with a digital signature

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

NFT ATM IN NEW YORK

Digital art collecting platform Neon has launched the first in-person non-fungible token (NFT) vending machine in New York City, aiming to make online art pieces as easily available as soda or a candy bar. "It's the crypto curious, the people who tried to buy cryptocurrency or they were interested in buying an NFT, but they just hit too many barriers," said Neon CEO Kyle Zappitell referring to his target customers



of the day quote

Infrastructure advancement is related to technology, even public delivery systems are being connected to digital platforms. Technology will play a crucial role in building Aatmanirbhar Bharat

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

We are starting something in the Railways soon. In another 7-8 days, we will launch a new policy where private sector R&D would become an integral part or rather major part of railways R&D budget

ASHWINI VAISHNAW | UNION MINISTER

If India has to develop, we have to see that Bharat also develops. Bharat can only develop through cooperative way of doing business because that model only takes care of small people

RS SODHI | MD, AMUL

SHORT TAKES

Exports rise 22.36% to \$33.81bn in Feb

New Delhi: India's exports rose by 22.36 per cent to \$33.81 billion in February on account of healthy growth in sectors like engineering, petroleum and chemicals, even as the trade deficit widened to \$21.19 billion, according to preliminary data released by the commerce ministry Wednesday. Imports during the month too jumped by about 35 per cent to \$55 billion. The trade deficit, the difference between imports and exports, stood at \$13.12 billion in February 2021. India's merchandise export in April 2021-February 2022 was \$374.05 billion, an increase of 45.80 per cent over \$256.55 billion in April 2020-February 2021.

Religare becomes debt-free company

New Delhi: The financial services company Religare Enterprises Wednesday announced the company has become debt-free after repaying ₹185.5 crore to its subsidiary Religare Finvest. "We are pleased to announce that REL is completely debt free now. As a holding company, REL is providing the necessary growth capital to all its businesses and REL is all set to expand in new BFSI verticals, having synergies with existing businesses," Rashmi Saluja, Chairperson of the company said.

UCO Bank extends pact with Fisdom

New Delhi: State-owned UCO Bank has extended the fintech partnership with Fisdom to include demat account and stockbroking services, pension funds and tax filing, with an objective to offer customers a three-in-one personal banking experience. The extension suite will be offered through UCO Bank's mobile banking application, UCO mBanking Plus, and will gradually be accessible through its internet banking platform also, Fisdom said.

Urban Company to award shares

New Delhi: In an industry-first move globally to bring gig workers into the mainstream, online home services marketplace Urban Company Wednesday announced Partner Stock Ownership Plan (PSOP) for its service providers where it will award stocks worth ₹150 crore to thousands of service partners over the next 5-7 years. The company has already got board approval for the first tranche of ₹75 crore worth of stocks, to be disbursed over the next 3-4 years.

COST OF WAR

Oil prices breach \$111 mark

The western sanctions on Russia have made several traders opt out from Russian oil. The market is rallying on lower supply despite oil release from IEA yesterday, as release of 60 million barrels will account for only 6 days of Russian supply

REUTERS

London, March 2: Oil prices surged Wednesday as supply disruptions mounted following sanctions on Russian banks amid the intensifying Ukraine conflict, while traders scrambled to seek alternative oil sources in an already tight market.

Brent crude futures rose by nearly \$9, touching a peak of \$113.94 a barrel, the highest since June 2014, before easing to \$111.35, up by \$8.10 or 6.08% a barrel.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures jumped more than \$9 to \$112.51 a barrel, hitting the highest since August 2013 before losing some steam to trade up \$7.74 or 7.5% to \$111.15 a barrel.

HIGHEST IN 8 YRS

Date	Price (US\$ per barrel)	Change %
02-03-2022	111.35	6.08%
01-03-2022	104.97	3.94%
28-02-2022	100.99	3.12%
25-02-2022	97.93	-1.16%
24-02-2022	99.08	2.31%
23-02-2022	96.84	0.00%
22-02-2022	96.84	1.52%

The recent spike in oil prices may now held for ₹20 per litre hike in domestic petrol prices if OMCs decide to raise fuel prices

TAPAN PATEL | SENIOR ANALYST (COMMODITIES), HDFC SECURITIES

Trade in Russian oil was in disarray as producers postponed sales, importers rejected Russian ships and buyers worldwide searched elsewhere for crude as Western sanctions and pullouts

by private firms squeezed Russia. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Russia and allies, together known as OPEC+, agreed to again raise their monthly output by 400,000 barrels per day. In a move likely to exacerbate global supply tightness, buyers are avoiding oil from the CPC pipeline originating in Kazakhstan, source of over 1% of the supply, due to sanctions concerns.

Exxon exits Russia; ONGC Videsh in a fix

Exxon Mobil Corp's decision to exit Russia has put India's flagship overseas firm ONGC Videsh in a fix as it is a partner in the global energy giant-operated Sakhalin-1 oil fields in Far East Russia, sources said. ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) and three other state-owned Indian firms hold 49.9 per cent stake in a separate Vankor oilfield in west Siberia but that investment will not be impacted as they repatriated their dividend income from last year in January 2022 and would not immediately face issues because of Russia being cut off from the global payment system SWIFT over its Ukraine invasion. ExxonMobil holds 30 per cent stake in the Sakhalin-1 offshore oil assets, where ONGC Videsh Ltd -- the overseas investment arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) -- has a 20 per cent interest.

Sensex snaps two-day gains as war escalates



Company	Change
Tata Steel	5.54
Reliance	1.67
Nestle	1.06
Axis Bank	1.03
Maruti Suz	-6.00
Dr Reddys	-5.14
Asian Paints	-4.53
ICI Bank	-3.74
HDFC	-3.70

Mumbai: Reversing their two-session rising streak, equity benchmarks buckled under selling pressure Wednesday as the Russia-Ukraine war hammered investor confidence and roiled financial markets globally.

A sharp depreciation in the rupee, unabated selling by foreign investors and lacklustre macro-economic data added to the gloom, analysts said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex opened weak and plunged about 1,200 points in intra-day trade, before recovering some lost ground. It finally ended 778.38 points or 1.38 per cent lower at 55,468.90.

On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty shed 187.95 points or 1.12 per cent to close at 16,605.95.

Maruti Suzuki was the top loser in the Sensex pack, tumbling 6 per cent, after the country's largest carmaker reported subdued sales and production figures for February, hit by the ongoing global semiconductor shortage. Other auto stocks too bore the brunt of heavy selling.

THE RUPEE DEPRECIATED BY 38 PAISE TO CLOSE AT 75.71 AGAINST THE US DOLLAR

MARKET BREADTH WAS NEGATIVE, WITH 23 OF THE 30 SENSEX CONSTITUENTS CLOSING IN THE RED

SURGING CRUDE PRICES AND FOREIGN CAPITAL OUTFLOWS WEIGHED ON INVESTOR SENTIMENT

Rouble dips to new low

The rouble plunged to a record low in Moscow Wednesday of 110 to the dollar and the stock market remained closed as Russia's financial system staggered under the weight of Western sanctions imposed over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. The rouble fell 4.7% to 106.02 against the dollar in Moscow trade, earlier hitting 110.0, a record low. It has lost about a third of its value against the dollar since the start of the year. It had shed 2.6% to finish the day at 115.40 to the euro.

Bankers push govt to defer LIC IPO

MUMBAI: Bankers advising Indian state-run Life Insurance Corp (LIC) on its IPO have pushed the government to defer the launch of the stock offering in the wake of the market jolt caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, two sources familiar with the talks told Reuters. In what will be the biggest stock offering in India, the government has plans to raise about \$8 billion by selling 5% of LIC's stake this month before the

the Indian government that launching LIC's stock offering would make sense in the coming months when investors are more confident

fiscal year ends March 31. But two bankers familiar with dis-

cussions said the investment banks on the deal were piling pressure on the government and raised concerns in a recent closed-door meeting to delay the IPO by saying market conditions were no more conducive due to volatility caused by Russia-Ukraine tensions. If the IPO is delayed, it will add to the growing list of planned offerings being put on hold as the war dampens investor appetite for risk assets.

Record 10GW solar capacity added in '21

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: India installed a record 10 gigawatt (GW) of solar capacity during calendar year 2021, registering a year-on-year rise of 212 per cent, according to Mercom India Research.

The country had made 3.2 GW of solar capacity installations during 2020, the research firm said in its latest report. Cumulative solar installed capacity in India was approximately 49 GW at the end of December 2021, the report titled 'Annual 2021 India Solar Market Update' said.

"India added a record 10 GW of solar in 2021, the highest ever in a year. Solar accounted for 62 per cent of new power capacity additions in 2021, the largest share of power capacity ever," it said.

During the year, large-scale solar projects accounted for 83 per cent of installations and saw a 230 per cent year-on-year surge. Rooftop installations registered a YoY increase of 138 per cent in 2021.

According to the report, the average project cost was also higher in 2021 due to higher module, raw



Rajasthan, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh were the top three states for cumulative large-scale solar capacity accounting for 50% of the installations

material prices and freight charges. "In 2021, solar tenders dipped 4.3 per cent y-o-y and auctions fell 2.6 per cent compared to 2020. The delay in signing power-sale agreements (PSA) and lack of clarity regarding applicable duties were some of the reasons for the slow-down in tender and auction activity," the report said.

INFLATION A CONCERN

Manufacturing PMI rises to 54.9%

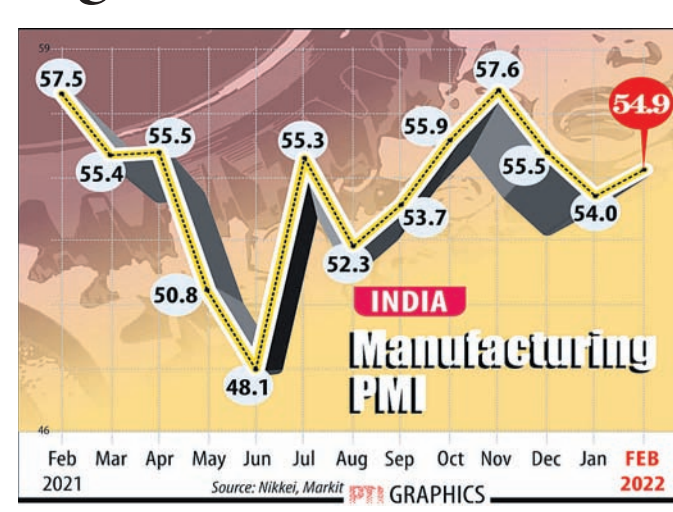
Feb PMI data pointed to an improvement in overall operating conditions for the eighth straight month. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: India's manufacturing sector activities expanded in February as output and new orders grew at accelerated rates, supported by favourable demand conditions, a monthly survey said Wednesday.

The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) was at 54.9 in February, up from 54.0 in January, signalling a stronger improvement in the sector's health.

Sustained sales growth supported the upturn in manufacturing sector output in February. Moreover, firms responded to strong increases in new work intakes by lifting production, input buying and stocks of



purchases, the survey said. "Latest PMI data for India's manufacturing sector revealed an improvement in operating conditions in February. Output and new orders expanded at stronger rates, while buying activity continued," said Shreya Patel, an economist at IHS Markit.

Patel, however, noted that sustained increases in backlogs could lead to higher employment levels in the months ahead, should capacity pressures continue.

On the price front, strengthening demand for raw materials led to another marked rate of input price inflation. Input price inflation softens to a six-month low.

According to official data, India's GDP growth slowed to 5.4 per cent in October-December 2021. Asia's third-largest economy is projected to grow 8.9 per cent in the fiscal year ending March 31, slower than previously anticipated 9.2 per cent, according to the data released by the Statistics Ministry Monday.

World's major cos lag on climate, some markets regress since Paris

In two markets, Germany's DAX 40 and India's BSE 30, the percentage of companies on course with their emissions reductions toward meeting that 1.5-degree target has actually regressed in the six years since the Paris Agreement was signed



REUTERS

London, March 2: The corporate world remains far from being aligned with global climate goals, and in some countries has gone backwards since a landmark agree-

ment to cap global warming was signed in 2015, data shows. Limiting the world's temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial average by mid-century was crucial in order to avoid irreversible damage to the planet,

TO REACH GLOBAL TARGET, EMISSIONS NEED TO DROP BY AROUND 45% BY 2030; YET, THEY CONTINUE TO RISE

ON AVERAGE, ONLY ABOUT A FIFTH TO A QUARTER OF COMPANIES ACROSS THE MARKETS WAS ON COURSE TO HIT THE GLOBAL TARGET

warned UN climate scientists. The corporate world was not moving fast enough towards this

target by reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, warned Arabesque, a corporate sustainability data firm and asset manager, in an annual analysis of the world's main markets.

In 2015, 29% of German companies were aligned with the 2050 climate target, dropping only slightly to 28% in 2021. In India, alignment dropped from 25% to 24%, whilst in Britain, the figure remained the same, at 21%.

There were signs of progress

in the United States, where alignment in companies on the benchmark S&P 500 index rose to 22% from 14%. Japan's Nikkei rose to 30% from 24%; and China's SSE 50 edged higher to 4% from 0%.

"It's increasingly important that capital shifts to those companies which are really delivering, versus companies that have the right ambition but which don't show the right progress," Arabesque Chief Executive Daniel Klier said.

The figures for the analysis were created by scientifically modelling corporate climate data collated in the 'ESG Book', a digital source of sustainability data backed by some of the world's top investors, regulators and companies.

Broadly across the world, there's not a lot of progress. If we want to maintain a world that is liveable, we need to deliver a 1.5 degree pathway. At the moment there are only really 20-25% of companies that fulfil the criteria

DANIEL KLIER | CEO, ARABESQUE

