

**NO REGRETS**  
 Actor Kareena Kapoor Khan says she has thoroughly lived and enjoyed every phase of her life  
**LEISURE | P2**

**CHINA'S STATEMENT**  
 China, India have encountered 'some setbacks' in the bilateral relations in recent years, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said  
**NATIONAL | P7**

**PRAMOD STRIKES GOLD**  
 Pramod Bhagat bags gold medals in all three events he participated in the Spanish Para badminton International II meet  
**SPORTS | P12**

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**2 die as van carrying wedding party rams into tree in Sonepur**  
 POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sonepur, March 7:** Two persons of a marriage party were killed while 13 others sustained grievous injuries after a van carrying them rams into a tree near Badarkarle village under Rampur police limits in Subarnapur district Sunday night.  
 According to sources, the marriage party was on their way back to Bargarh from Sonepur after attending the function.



The driver lost control over the vehicle which collided with a tree. Two persons identified as Biranchi Mallick (60) from Malipali village and Jitendra Bagh (25) from Grindola village of Bargarh district died on the spot, an eye-witness stated.  
 On being informed, police reached the spot and rescued the injured with the help of locals and shifted them to Dunguripali Community Health Centre (CHC). Health condition of some of them is stated to be critical. Rampur police have initiated a probe into the mishap.  
 Bodies of the two deceased persons were recovered and sent to hospital for post mortem.  
 Rampur police have initiated a probe into the mishap after registering a case. The vehicle has been seized while the driver is absconding. A manhunt was launched to nab the absconding driver.

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**  
**AIRPORT**  
**I evacuated hundreds of Indian students stranded in Ukraine. I provided them a ride from the airport to their homes**

**MARKET WATCH**

INDEX	VALUE	VIATION
SENSEX	52842.75	↓ 1491.06
NIFTY	15863.20	↓ 382.20
DOLLAR	77.90	↑ ₹0.95
EURO	83.83	↓ ₹0.16
GOLD	₹53,270	↑ ₹711
SILVER	₹69,875	↑ ₹715

**WEATHER**

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	34.4°C	33.8°C
TEMP. MIN	22.0°C	21.4°C
Humidity	85%	80%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik interacts with Odia students at Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar upon their arrival from war-torn Ukraine, Monday. ST Secretary VK Pandian is also seen

## Putin assures India safe evac

**Russian military is making every effort to ensure evacuation of Indian citizens from Sumy: Putin**  
 AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 7:** As the Russia-Ukraine war entered its 12th day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and sought their support in the safe and quick evacuation of the Indian students stuck in Ukraine's embattled Sumy city.  
 Noting that India has always stood for peaceful resolution of issues, Modi during his separate conversations with Putin and Zelenskyy suggested direct conversation between them, saying it may "greatly assist" the peace efforts. In the last few days, India has been particularly focusing on the evacuation of around 700 Indian students from Sumy, and also strongly pressed both the Russian and Ukrainian govern-



Local residents cross a destroyed bridge as they evacuate from the town of Irpin, after days of heavy shelling on the only escape route used by locals, while Russian troops advance towards the capital in Irpin, near Kyiv, Monday

ments through multiple channels for an immediate ceasefire in the region for their safe exit from there.  
 During his 50-minute phone conversation with Putin, Modi stressed the importance of safe evacuation of Indian citizens from Sumy "at the earliest" and the Russian President assured him of all possible cooperation to safely get them out of the city, official sources said. A Russian readout of the Modi-Putin talks said the Russian President informed Modi about the decision of his armed forces to "establish a ceasefire and open humanitarian corridors today amid the worsening of the humanitarian situation". It said the Russian military is making every effort to ensure the evacuation of the Indian citizens from Sumy and that Modi expressed gratitude to the Russian side for the measures taken for their exit. "Prime Minister Modi conveyed his deep concern for the safety and security of the Indian students remaining in Sumy. President Putin briefed the PM about the ongoing measures," the PMO said.

**US vows NATO shield to Baltics**  
**Riga (Latvia):** US Secretary of State Antony Blinken Monday assured Lithuania and Latvia of NATO protection and American support as he made quick visits to two of the three Baltic states that are increasingly on edge as Russia presses ahead with its invasion of Ukraine. Along with Estonia, which Blinken will visit Tuesday, the former Soviet republics are NATO members, and the Biden administration is aiming to calm any fears they have about their security in the event Russia chooses to expand its military operations.

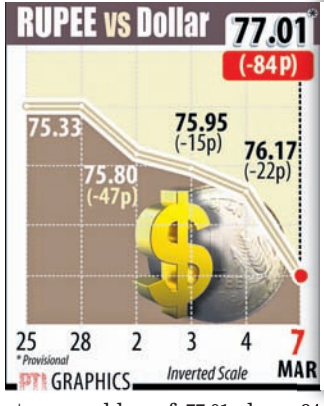
every effort to ensure the evacuation of the Indian citizens from Sumy and that Modi expressed gratitude to the Russian side for the measures taken for their exit. "Prime Minister Modi conveyed his deep concern for the safety and security of the Indian students remaining in Sumy. President Putin briefed the PM about the ongoing measures," the PMO said.

## Exit polls predict BJP win in UP, AAP's in Punjab

**New Delhi, March 7:** Several exit polls Monday forecast a clear majority for the BJP in Uttar Pradesh and the Aam Aadmi Party in Punjab with some of them giving an edge to the saffron party in Uttarakhhand, Goa and Manipur.  
 Exit polls on CNN News 18, Times Now, Republic TV and News X channels showed the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) getting anywhere between 211 and 277 seats and its main challenger in the Samajwadi Party-led alliance getting anywhere between 119 and 160 seats in the 403-member Uttar Pradesh Assembly.  
 CNN News 18-Matriz predicted 262-277 seats for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and allies and 119-134 for the Samajwadi Party (SP) and allies in Uttar Pradesh. Times Now-Veto predicted 225 and 151 seats for them respectively.  
 Most of them were also unanimous in predicting a big win for Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab, with India Today-Axis projecting up to 76-90 seats in the 117-member Assembly.  
 A few exit polls also forecast a hung assembly in Punjab, the only poll-bound state where the Congress is in power, while giving a clear edge to the AAP. News 24-Today's Chankaya predicted a wave in the AAP's favour in Punjab.

## ₹ battered, Brent \$125, mkts tank

**Mumbai, March 7:** The rupee tanked 84 paise to close at its lifetime low of 77.01 (provisional) against the US dollar Monday as intensifying geopolitical risks due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict pushed investors to safe haven assets.  
 Forex traders said escalating tensions between Russia and Ukraine kept crude oil prices at an elevated level and heightened worries about domestic inflation and wider trade deficits. Sustained foreign fund outflows and a lacklustre trend in domestic equities also weighed on investor sentiment.  
 At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 76.85 against the American currency but lost ground and settled for the day at a record low of 77.01, down 84 paise from the previous close.  
 On Friday, the rupee fell by 23 paise to close at 76.17 - its lowest closing level since December 15, 2021. "The Indian rupee has plummeted to a lifetime low against the US dollar as the deepening Russia-Ukraine conflict has sapped risk appetite in the market while prompting safe-haven flows into the US dollar," said Sugandha Sachdeva.



**GOLD JUMPS ₹1,298**  
 Gold in the national capital Monday rallied by ₹1,298 to ₹53,784 per 10 gram in line with strong international precious metal prices and sharp rupee depreciation, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had in the previous trade finished at ₹52,486 per 10 grams. The Sensex plunged 1,491 points while the Nifty slumped below the 16,000-mark Monday, mirroring a deep sell-off in world stocks after oil prices soared to multi-year highs amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict, stoking fears of hyper-inflation and sluggish growth.

## CBI granted 7-day custody of Chitra

**New Delhi, March 7:** A Delhi court Monday granted CBI 7-day custodial interrogation of former managing director and chief executive officer of National Stock Exchange (NSE) Chitra Ramkrishna in NSE co-location scam case.  
 Special Judge Sanjeev Aggarwal passed the order after hearing arguments from CBI and the counsel appearing for accused. The probe agency had sought her 14-day custodial interrogation.  
 The CBI arrested the accused Sunday after her anticipatory bail application was dismissed by the



court Saturday. In its application before the court, the CBI alleged that the electronic devices recovered are being analyzed and would be used for conducting further examination of Ramakrishna.  
 It alleged that she was evasive and has continuously misled the Investigation Officer and gave wrong statements. The CBI alleged that her custodial interrogation was needed to unearth the criminal conspiracy and the role of other NSE officials and brokers in the company.

## Sanctions: Tech giants as influential as nations

**Ukraine has lobbied major tech companies in the same way it sought assistance from the European Union, NATO and the US government**  
 AGENCIES

**Sydney, March 7:** The world's five leading tech companies - Google (now Alphabet), Apple, Facebook (now Meta), Amazon and Microsoft - have taken steps to impose significant and (mainly) voluntary sanctions on Russia, in response to its invasion of Ukraine. But the decisions didn't come unprompted. Ukraine has lobbied the major tech companies in the same way it sought assistance from the European Union, NATO and the US government.

Facing the largest military action in Europe since the World War II, Ukraine appealed directly to big tech companies as though they were nation states. It's a reminder that in today's world, these giants are major players on the geopolitical stage. So what impact could the tech-related sanctions have?  
 Google's response to the crisis has come in two parts. The first has been finance-related. The company has limited the use of Google Pay in Russia for customers or merchants that use a sanctioned bank.  
 It has also stopped selling on-line advertising in Russia across its services, and has removed the ability for Russian state media outlets Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik to monetise content on YouTube (which is owned by Google). RT and Sputnik have also been blocked in Europe. Foxtel has removed RT in Australia, but it's still available on YouTube, with ads in the livestream. That means RT can earn direct revenue from advertising in Australia, but no advertising revenue from YouTube. Google Search and Maps both remain available in Russia.  
 Apple has gone several steps further than Google. The company has suspended all product sales in Russia, and Apple Pay and other services have been limited. It has also blocked RT and Sputnik from the Apple App Store everywhere outside of Russia.



# leisure

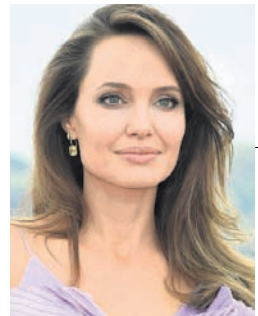


## REGINA HALL EXCITED, NERVOUS TO HOST OSCARS

American actress Regina Hall is excited and nervous about hosting the Oscars with Amy Schumer and Wanda Sykes later this month. "I'm kind of excited and nervous and everything! But I think it's gonna be a fun night," she told *Entertainment Tonight*.

## ANGELINA JOLIE ASSISTING REFUGEES IN YEMEN

Actress Angelina Jolie has flown to Yemen to offer aid to refugees in the country, which has been involved in a civil war since 2014. The Original Sin actress is in the capital city of Aden with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to provide aid to people who need peace.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
You may cause some heart-breaks today, so be careful! Apart from this, Ganesh says, your love life is stable and you are ready to make a commitment to your loved one. If you are married, your relationship will become more intense and attachment will strengthen.

**TAURUS**  
Unless you mind your moods and manners today, you are likely to hurt, and lose, a lot of friends, fears Ganesh. Your thoughts and feelings will be unduly unsteady and unpredictable. It may not always be possible to maintain your calm, to stay in control. A change of scene could be the right way to deal with the situation.

**GEMINI**  
You will be able to divide your attention between personal and professional life. Workplace will become pretty exciting during the afternoon. By evening, you will get plenty of opportunities to shower your affection on your loved ones, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
Today, you may get to spend a wonderful time with your loved ones, foresees Ganesh. Besides pleasure, the day will also fare well for business. As an entrepreneur, you may be able to see important deals and ventures coming through. You may go on a tour for business purposes in the later half of the day.

**LEO**  
It is always a small world till you dream big! Ganesh foresees chances of you transcending your regular boundaries as you combine forces with people and conceive interests larger than what most people dream of. This route is not the easiest, in that it may be hard to convince people who see differently, especially conservative bosses.

**VIRGO**  
The way you feel today will bring about many changes in your behaviour, says Ganesh. You will probably make some choices that will involve some high expenditure. In the afternoon, you may entertain relatives and friends at home, says Ganesh.

**LIBRA**  
For all purposes intact, Ganesh foresees chances that today you may have an overwhelming urge and desire to renovate your home. It may be the small things, but even a new showpiece can go a long way in adding to the general décor of the house. So go ahead and jazz it up a bit.

**SCORPIO**  
Today will be a favourable day to conclude transactions in houses or vehicles, foresees Ganesh. On the business front, you will possibly get lesser profits than expected. At work, your negotiating skills will save your money from being swindled by others. Sincere efforts and hard work will help you stay ahead of competition.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Ganesh foresees signals of you being calm and in control to safeguard the sentiments of your dear ones. The afternoon is scheduled to be either the time for a business meet or for some fun and frolic. However, the evening may be heavy on your pocket as you may spend a lot to improve your appearance.

**CAPRICORN**  
Ambitions give direction to life. You will harbour quite a few today, says Ganesh. At work, you will strive for perfection and watch out for every minute detail that can ruin the expected results. Also, you will be brilliant with executing ideas and ensuring coordination among team mates. At the end of it all, you can expect to get positive results for your day's work.

**AQUARIUS**  
Wake up! Things are moving quickly and you want to keep pace. Today, your ideas find a place in the sun, and you will bask in all the attention you garner. You need to decide quickly about certain matters, but leave the big decisions for now, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
Your honesty is your hallmark, and it will reap bountiful rewards for you today, both at the workplace on account of your integrity, and in relationships on account of your sincerity, says Ganesh. Financially also, it promises to be a good day.

### KAREENA'S NOTE ON BODY POSITIVITY

## 'Have enjoyed every phase of my life'

**Mumbai:** Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan, who welcomed her second baby boy last year in February, is a fitness enthusiast. She is often seen inspiring her fans with her pictures from Yoga sessions. Monday, she took to Instagram and penned a note on body positivity.

In her post, Bebo revealed that she gained 25 kgs during her pregnancy but she never let it interfere with doing the things she loved. Sharing pictures from a brand shoot, Kareena wrote, "Whether a messy hair day or a glammed up outing, or going from size 0 to size 16, I have thoroughly lived and enjoyed every phase of my life." She further also urged all the girls to make their own decisions. She added, "So to all the girls reading this... it's your life and your decisions are the only ones that matter... Always."

Meanwhile, Bebo and Saif Ali Khan's second baby boy, Jeh Ali Khan recently turned one. An intimate birthday party was hosted by the couple at their house. Ibrahim and Sara Ali Khan were also seen attending the bash.

On the work front, Kareena will be seen in *Laal*

*Singh Chaddha* with Aamir Khan. The film was supposed to release in April but the makers have now postponed it to August this year.

IAN S



## Rhea speaks on self love

**Mumbai:** Actress Rhea Chakraborty is known for dishing out major fashion goals with perfection. Along with that, the actress is known for sharing thought-provoking quotes on her social media handle.

Having said that, she recently took to her Instagram handle to drop a bunch of breathtaking pictures. The photos were also accompanied by a little note which read, "Find yourself and you will find strength, fortitude, grit, compassion and love". In the pictures, Rhea looked drop-dead gorgeous in an off shoulder red dress paired with matching heels. Chunky statement earrings tied her whole look together.

On a professional note, Rhea recently returned to work after 2 years. Sharing her video from the studio she wrote, "Yesterday, I went to work after 2 years. A big thank you to all the people who stood by me through my toughest times. No matter what, the sun always shines..NEVER GIVE UP! #rhenew #gratitude." She was last seen in Romy Jafry's *Chehre* opposite Amitabh Bachchan and Emraan Hashmi.

AGENCIES



### INT'L WOMEN'S DAY TODAY

## Sushmita's Naari depicts the journey of women

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar:** As the world celebrates International Women's Day today, renowned singer Sushmita Das has come up with her music video *Naari* to mark the occasion.

Talking about her album, released on YouTube Sunday, she says, "The video tells multiple stages of women and celebrates the unbridled flights of fantasy of a woman right from adolescence through various phases of life. Although she is generally tied down, she desires to stand tall as a tree rooted to earth, swim like a fish into the depths of oceans and fly like a bird to unfathomable heights,

all at the same time."

Elaborating more, the singer adds, "Every woman goes through physiological and psychological transitions. With the onset of puberty, she feels clumsy which often affects her dreams. On stage-2, she is thrilled at her power to create a life and diverse emotions of motherhood. The final stage is of a lady at the dusk of her life when she struggles with the restraints that blur her dreams."

Produced by Auromira Entertainment, Biyot Projna Tripathy has penned its lyrics while Sumit Dikshit has composed the lines. Peehu Agnihotri, Cookies Swain and actress Anu Choudhury have essayed three different stages of a woman.

### WEEK-LONG NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL PURVA RANGA CONCLUDES

## Revolutionary Chakara Bisoi stages a comeback

**Bhubaneswar:** Ghumsar Rising, a resistance by the tribal Kondhs in south Odisha against British imperialism, is a thrilling episode of India's struggle for Independence. Ahead of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, the zamindars and their subjects raised their voice against the British and fearless Kondh leader Chakara Bisoi led the resistance from 1836 to 1857. At one time, the colonial rulers were so afraid of Bisoi's organising skills, war strategy and guerilla warfare that they offered a ceasefire proposal to him. However, Bisoi rejected it and continued to fight the outsiders.

The struggle and bravery of Bisoi came alive on stage in the Odia play *Mu Chakara Kahuchi*



A scene from the play *Mu Chakara Kahuchi*

staged at Rabindra Mandap, Monday, on the 7th and last evening Purva Ranga, a national multi-lingual theatre festival. Dhenkanal-

based theatre troupe Alternative Rhythm Theatre presented the drama, written by Manmath Kumar Satpathy and directed by Dinesh Das.

Madhab Hembram, Kamakhya Prasad Rana, Manohar Satpathy, Debakanta Mishra, Bijay Kumar Mishra were among the actors who enacted the play on stage.

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 the festival focused on episodes of India's freedom struggle.

Among the dignitaries OLL&C director Ranjan Kumar Das, OSNA vice-president Manmath Kumar Satpathy and Secretary Prabodh Rath were present on the occasion. PNN

### FUN post

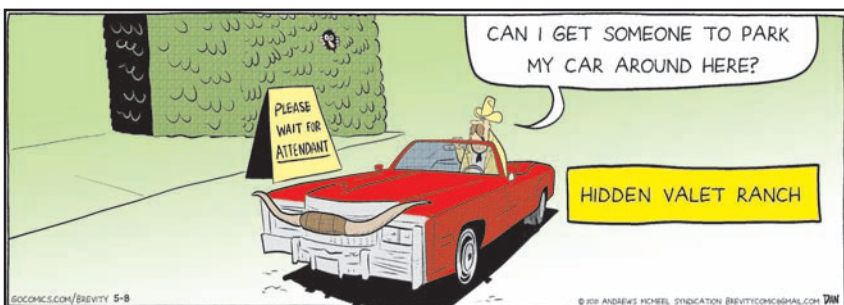
### PEANUTS



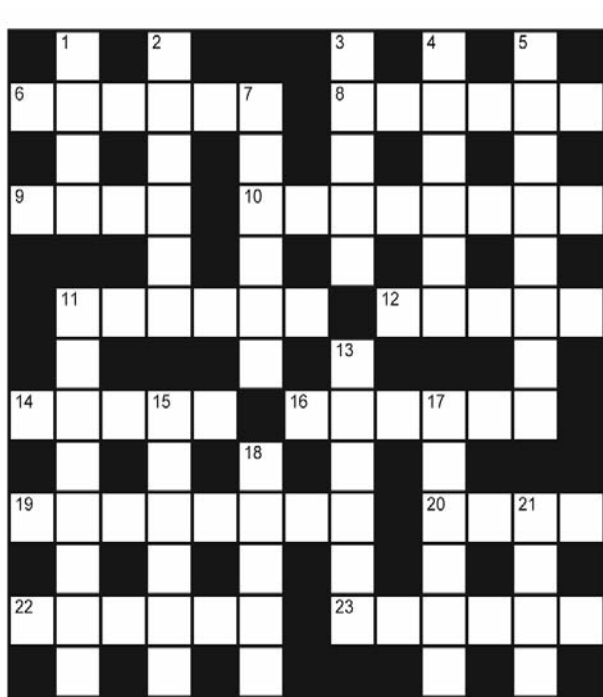
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



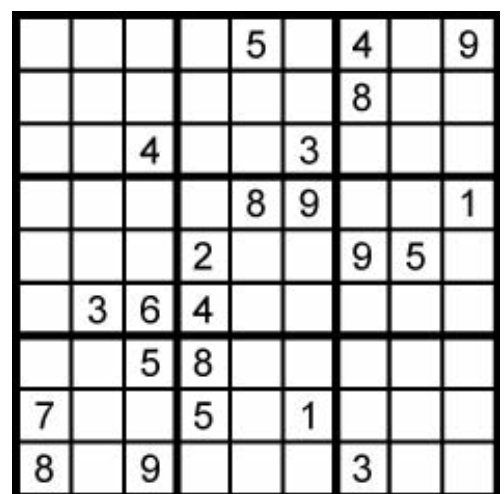
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 6 Make happen
  - 8 Well-seasoned stew
  - 9 Knock for a loop
  - 10 Legal oyster
  - 11 Play parts
  - 12 Inedible orange
  - 14 Pace
  - 16 Cry of disappointment
  - 19 Precise
  - 20 Norton Sound port
  - 22 Attack suddenly
  - 23 Materialise
  - Down**
  - 1 Make a sweater
  - 2 Acid-tasting pear-shaped fruit
  - 3 Sink part
  - 4 Playing marbles
  - 5 Exhausted (3,2,3)
  - 7 English cathedral city
  - 11 Collie, for one (5,3)
  - 13 Latin dance (3-3)
  - 15 They're nuts
  - 17 Shade provider
  - 18 Frequently
  - 21 "Beowulf" beverage

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

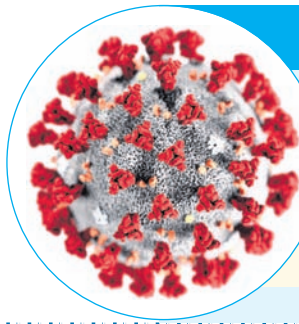
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## INT'L WOMEN'S DAY

Guests and awardees pose for a photo at an event to mark International Women's Day by Rays Foundation at Mahanadi Bhawan in Cuttack, Monday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	44,72,86,672	38,04,46,997	60,22,826
India	4,29,67,315	4,23,98,095	5,15,102
Odisha	12,86,009	12,75,767	9,101

# Team to boost export of non-Basmati rice

CS asks officials to create conducive eco-system for production of export-quality rice in the state

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 7:** With an aim to enhance export of rice from Odisha, the state government has decided to constitute a resource team in the Agriculture department to explore ways to increase exports of non-Basmati rice.

This decision was taken at a meeting held recently under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra. Principal Advisor to Chief Minister Asit Tripathy along with senior officers from Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) of India, agricultural scientists and rice exporters participated in the deliberations.

Mahapatra asked the department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment to constitute a resource team for boosting rice export. It was also decided that the team would visit Andhra Pradesh for gaining exposure to the actual practices adopted in export of non-



Basmati aromatic varieties.

The CS directed the department to frame a plan with the suggestions from the technical session of the seminar and inputs from the resource team so that those could be carried forward.

Considering the paddy production potential in the state's agro-climatic zones, existence of huge genetic diversity of aromatic germplasm, traditional skills of farmers, and availability of port facilities for foreign trading,

Mahapatra asked officials to create a conducive eco-system for boosting export of non-Basmati aromatic rice from Odisha.

Further, he sought to adopt a cluster approach in promotion of non-Basmati aromatic varieties of paddy cultivation. He directed to identify agro-climatic zones more suitable for cultivation of such varieties.

"The state government is committed to enhancing farmers' income by boosting the rice export and

state will provide all possible support for the purpose," he assured.

Addressing the meeting, Tripathy said, "Odisha, as a rice surplus state, has bumper availability for export. There are rice aggregators in Odisha who can be trained and mobilized towards export oriented operations".

Tripathy advised APEDA and Directorate of Agriculture to organise ground-level workshops with rice aggregators, food exporters, and farmer producer organizations to infuse confidence in farming community for production of export quality paddy.

The requirements like establishment of laboratory network in Odisha, creation of a rice warehouse at Paradip Port, creation of awareness about Indian and global food practices among farmers, extension of necessary agri-inputs and technical support to the farmers for production of the non-Basmati aromatic paddy were also discussed in the meeting.

# Fulfilling aspirations of students, parents our prime goal: MITS chief

When it comes to science, engineering and agriculture education, MITS Group is a household name in Odisha. In an interview to **Orissa POST**, its chief executive **Sriram Panda** speaks about how the group has an edge over other institutions, its initiatives during Covid-19 pandemic besides pros and cons of online learning. Excerpts:



- How has MITS Group been catering to the educational needs of students?
- Our institutions offer courses primarily in science, engineering and agriculture. MITS Group has four educational institutions—Majhighariani Institute of Technology and Science, MITS Institute of Professional Studies, MITS School of Engineering and MITS School of Biotechnology. We give due attention to the needs of the students and ensure they get quality education at affordable cost. Our dedicated team of experts works throughout the year to provide 100 per cent placement assistance to students.

alumni wish for our prosperity.

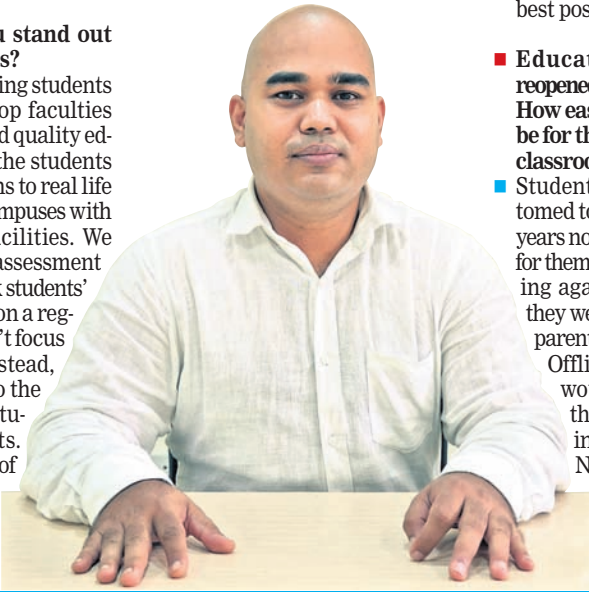
- What was your strategy to ensure classes during the pandemic?
- By the time Covid struck us in March 2020, we had fortunately developed online modules for almost all the courses. It was nothing less of a boon for us. With the announcement of lockdown, we started imparting lessons online. Now, students can use the study materials available online and clear their doubts anytime.

- What are the pros and cons of online education?

When classroom teaching was suspended due to Covid pandemic in March 2020, online classes came to the rescue. We have to work towards developing such online contents or teaching methodologies which would help students grasp concepts better. Though eager, some students often shy away from asking questions during in-person classes. For them, online learning is very helpful. On the other hand, without on-campus interactions with educators and friends, many students feel isolated and lazy. Hence, we can say that 'there is no substitute to blackboard education, but online education is one of its best possible alternatives'.

■ Educational institutions reopened after nearly two years. How easy or difficult would it be for the students to adapt to classroom teaching again?

■ Students had become accustomed to online classes for two years now. It will be challenging for them to join classroom teaching again. It's no secret that they were taking the help from parents during online exams. Offline classes and exams would definitely trouble them but things will fall in place as time goes by. Now, parents and teachers need to encourage the students to attend offline classes.



## Scholarship application deadline extended

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 7:** The Higher Education department has announced further extension of the deadline for online application and validation for all categories of 'e-Medhabruti' and 'Vyasaakabi Fakir Mohan Bhasabruti' scholarship for 2021-22.

The last date of online application has been extended till April 5, 2022 while the deadline for online validation by heads of institutes/principals concerned has been extended till April 20, 2022.

This is the second time the higher education department has granted extension to the scholarship application process.

# 34% rise in women drivers in 5 yrs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 7:** The state has witnessed a 34 per cent rise in female drivers in the last five years with 33,666 women having received driving licenses until 2021 as compared to 25,086 until 2017, a Transport official said Monday.

Experts, however, said the rise in figures in Odisha is slower as compared to other states.

"We need to encourage more women to come forward and take up driving. Women gain confidence by learning to drive, making them independent for their daily commute," said Joint Transport Commissioner (Road Safety) Sanjay Biswal.

With an aim to empower women and make them self-reliant, the Transport department has been



facilitating free professional driving training to women at Driving Training School (DTS) in the city and Heavy Motor Vehicle (HMV) Driving Training Institute (DTI) at Chhatia, sources said.

An increase in number of women trainees in both the institutes has also been observed over the years. While 25 women trainees were reported in 2016-17, the DTS now has 90 women who are taking lessons to drive commercial vehicles.

The Transport department has been facilitating free professional driving training to women at the Driving Training School in Bhubaneswar and Heavy Motor Vehicle Driving Training Institute at Chhatia

Similarly the enrolment of women has been steadily increasing at HMV DTI at Chhatia as well. "Around 60 women have been trained in the last three to four years at Chhatia. The institute provides livelihood and job placement support to the trainee drivers. Some of them are placed with private and government agencies after successfully completing the course. There are lady trainers in the institute who teach driving regularly along with soft skills," said the Chhatia institute's principal Sadiq Hussain Syed.

# 7,152 CANDIDATES FILE NOMINATIONS FOR URBAN LOCAL BODY POLLS

**BHUBANESWAR:** As many as 7,152 candidates have filed their nominations for polls to various posts in the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) since March 2, an official said Monday. The filing of nominations began March 2 and ended Monday, it was learnt.

According to the State Election Commission (SEC), 693 candidates have submitted their nominations for the post of chairperson and mayor, while 6,459 candidates have filed papers for the post of councillor and corporator in the civic bodies.

On the last day—Monday, the highest of 5,045 candidates have filed their nomination papers. Of which, 4,541 were for councillor/corporator posts and the remaining 504 were for chairperson/mayor posts.

Meanwhile, the mayoral candidates of all three major political parties—BJD, BJP and Congress—have filed their nomination for Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Cuttack Municipal



BJD mayoral candidate Sulochana Das and BJP's pick for the coveted post in BMC Suniti Mund file nominations

Corporations (CMC) and Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC). Many rebel aspirants of BJD have also filed

their nominations independently. As per the schedule announced by the SEC, scrutiny of the nomi-

nation papers will be done March 9. The candidates can withdraw their nominations till March 14.

# MDA 2nd round begins in 7 dists

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 7:** In a bid to eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis, the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department in collaboration with Global Health Strategies flagged off the second round of the Mass Drug Administration (MDA) in seven districts of Odisha, Monday.

Following Covid-19 protocols, trained health workers will



visit every house in Bargarh, Keonjhar, Kandhamal, Mayurbhanj, Sonepur, Sundargarh and Sambalpur districts from March 7 to 16. "During the MDA rounds,

we'll ensure all eligible beneficiaries of the districts take anti-filaria drugs in the presence of the health workers," said Niranjan Mishra, state Public Health Director.

He said, "Our focus is to ensure community participation in order to make MDA rounds successful. It is imperative for the communities to consume the drugs, in order to protect themselves and their families from Filariasis."

# Regular physical activity enough for healthier brain, says expert

**W**orried that you are unable to hit the gym? A moderate physical activity like taking a stroll in the park or using steps instead of lifts done regularly may keep your brain healthy, according to a UK expert.

Professor James Goodwin, director of science and research impact at the Brain Health Network, in the UK said while diets like Mediterranean regimen that are low on meat and high in plants, pulses, nuts and fish are given much importance, exercise habits deserve more attention.

"An active lifestyle (weaving regular movement and exertion into the structure of your daily life, such as taking the stairs instead of the lift) as well as purposeful exercise' (like brisk walking to increase heart rate) is key," Goodwin was quoted as saying to the Sydney Morning Herald.

"Exercise itself - like being in the gym - is not an antidote to living a couch-potato lifestyle. We know



that if you sit for over 10 hours a day, you can go to the gym all you like - those benefits are undermined by that inactivity. You've got to do both," he added.

In a nine-year study examining the link between fitness and Alzheimer's risk, researchers at the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) found that those with the highest levels of cardiorespiratory fitness were 33 per cent less likely to develop the disease than those who were least fit.

But 10 kilometre sprints and spin classes aren't essential.

"For the middle-aged and the elderly, the highest level of fitness can be achieved by walking briskly most days, for two and a half hours or more per week," the researchers said. Moderate exercise can not only slow ageing but can also turn back the years.

"If you do enough moderate to intense exercise, you can reverse the ageing of the brain," Goodwin said.

Further, Goodwin stressed that the relationship between adequate brain function and exercise is fundamental.

# No new Cov deaths

PNN/AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 7:** Odisha reported 120 new Covid-19 cases Monday, taking the tally to 12,86,009, while the toll remained unchanged at 9,101 as no new fatality was recorded, the state Health department said in a bulletin.

Of the 120 new cases, 26 are children, the bulletin added.

The single-day caseload was lowest since December 26, 2021 when 112 cases were registered. The state had logged 129 infections and three deaths Sunday.

Out of the new infections, 69 were reported from quarantine centres while 51 persons contracted the virus locally.

Sambalpur district registered the highest number of fresh cases with 23 persons testing positive for the disease followed by Gajapati with 15 new infections. Keonjhar is the only district that has no active case at present, the bulletin said.

The state currently has 1,313 active cases while 12,75,542 people have recovered from the disease, including 314 Sunday. So far, 53 other coronavirus patients have died due to co-morbidities.

The coastal state's Covid's daily test positivity rate (TPR) stood at 0.27 per cent Monday, while it was 0.26 the day before. The state conducted 44,152 sample tests for Covid-19 in the past 24 hours, the Health bulletin added.

यूनियन बँक Union Bank of India		REGIONAL OFFICE: Cuttack	GOLD AUCTION NOTICE
M-14, Baramunda Housing Board Colony, Bhubaneswar- 751003			
This is to inform the public that in spite of repeated reminders the following gold loan borrowers have not repaid their loan. If they do not repay their outstanding debts before the auction, their gold ornaments we hold as collateral will be auctioned to the premises of our Adhalia Branch & Sompur Branch on 22.03.2022 at 11.00 A.M. and Cuttack OSBC Branch & Paradeep ECB Branch on 24.03.2022 at 11.00 A.M. The Bank will not be liable for any inconvenience or loss to the borrowers and the Bank will take legal action against them if the Bank loses where necessary. Borrowers can take their Jewellery by repaying the outstanding debt before the auction take place.			
Sl. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower(s)	Outstanding Amount as on 07.03.2022 + interest thereon	Net Weight (in Gram)
<b>ADHALIA BRANCH (19971), Adhalia, Near DPS Adhalia Road, Nakhara, P.O.: Phulnakhara, Dist.: Cuttack, PIN-754001, Mob.: 7751844389</b>			
1.	Prasanta Kumar Giri, S/o: Gouranga Giri, Kilapot, Buxi Bazar, Cantonment Road, Cuttack-753001	₹ 38,089/-	17.00
<b>CUTTACK OSBC BRANCH (20802), Odisha State Bar Council, Highcourt Premises, Kacheri Road, Cuttack-753002, Mob.: 9763541231</b>			
1.	Nirmal Chandra Sahoo, At: Bidanasi, CDA Road, Cuttack-753014	₹ 1,09,493/-	33.00
<b>PARADEEP ECB BRANCH (15812), Paradeepgarh, Near Paradeep Police Station, Paradeep, Dist.: Jagatsinghpur, Odisha, Mob.: 6206220377</b>			
1.	Srikanta Rout, S/o: Sridhar Rout, At: Salikanta (Nagaripada), P.O.: Chanchol, Via: Danapur, Dist.: Kendrapara-754210	₹ 80,729/-	25.70
<b>SOMPUR BRANCH (2531), Sompur, Dist.: Cuttack, Odisha, Mob.: 7873301333</b>			
1.	Sarada Prasanna Behera, S/o: Nilamani Behera, Bodhapur, Cuttack-754130	₹ 45,725.70	18.00
2.	Kasinath Biswal, S/o: Kamalakanta Biswal, At: Paikana, Sompur, Cuttack-754130	₹ 56,754.87	25.00
<b>Person willing to participate in the auction should obey the following rules:</b>			
1) Person willing to participate in the auction must deposit Rs.1,000/- in the form of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) two hours before the scheduled auction time.			
2) After depositing the EMD, person who willing to participate in the auction can inspect the ornaments.			
3) The person who make the highest offer shall have to deposit 25% of the said offer immediately in the Bank. After making the highest offer, if the person unable to deposit the 25% of the said offer, then his EMD will be forfeited and that person will not be allowed to participate in the auction process further.			
4) Auction for another account will begin only after the auction and amount deposit of one account have been completed.			
5) The bank is not completed to accept any auction calls. The bank may cancel the auction without assigning any reason therefor.			
6) The person whose highest bid will be accepted by the Branch Office of the Union Bank of India will be compelled to deposit the remaining 75% of the auction amount within 3 days of receiving the notice of confirmation of the auction. Otherwise 25% of the deposited amount and the EMD deposit will be forfeited.			
7) If Union Bank of India, Branch Office cancel/postpone any higher Bid, then the 25% deposited amount, EMD amount will refunded to the depositor without any interest.			
8) Union Bank of India will not held responsible in any manner for the quality, weight and purity of the ornaments pledged for auction.			
9) Bank will forfeit the EMD Deposit Amount if any person does not obey the above rules.			
<b>Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 07.03.2022</b>		<b>Authorised Officer, Union Bank of India</b>	

# STF moves competent body to attach fugitive pusher's assets

THE COMPETENT AUTHORITY AND ADMINISTRATOR OF NDPS ACT, KOLKATA, WHICH IS A QUASI-JUDICIAL AUTHORITY UNDER THE NDPS ACT, HAS BEEN REQUESTED FOR FORFEITURE OF THE ILLEGALLY ACQUIRED PROPERTY



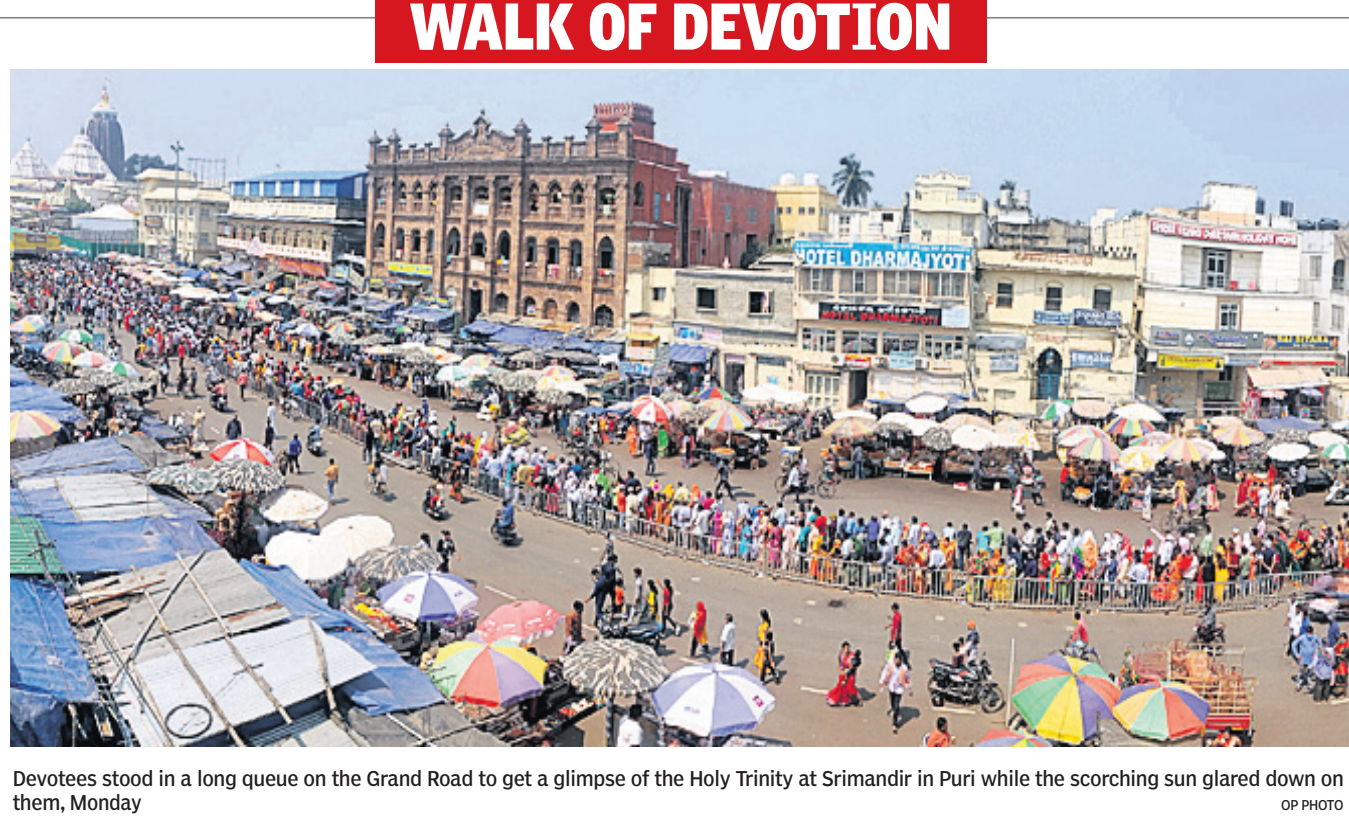
the STF official said. The Competent Authority and Administrator of NDPS Act, Kolkata, which is a quasi-judicial authority under the NDPS Act, has been requested for forfeiture of the illegally acquired property, he said. On August 13, 2021, about 10 quintals of contraband ganja, a truck and other incriminating documents were seized. The seized properties of the fugitive drug peddler also include a palatial three storied building having a swimming pool, 33 plots and bank deposits, the official said. The cost of the building has been evaluated by the PWD and Roads and Buildings department at around Rs 1.5 crore. The valuation of other properties is in process, the official said. Pointing out that Anil Kumar Pandi is one of the most wanted drug traffickers having multiple cases in Gujarat and Odisha, the official said that his brother Sunil Pandi had earlier been arrested by the Gujarat police. Anil is absconding and a non-bailable warrant has been issued against him. The STF has also announced a cash reward for information about the fugitive drug peddler. "Whoever gives any actionable information leading to arrest of this person shall be suitably rewarded. His/her name will remain secret. The information should be given only to the mobile number i.e. 7894423610 and not on any other platform," the STF official said.

**THE SEIZED PROPERTIES OF THE FUGITIVE DRUG PEDDLER ALSO INCLUDE A PALATIAL THREE STORIED BUILDING HAVING A SWIMMING POOL, 33 PLOTS AND BANK DEPOSITS**

**THE COST OF THE BUILDING HAS BEEN EVALUATED BY THE PWD AND ROADS AND BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT AT AROUND ₹1.5 CRORE, AND THE VALUATION OF OTHER PROPERTIES IS IN PROCESS**

During the investigation of a NDPS case, properties worth at least Rs 2 crore acquired by one Anil Kumar Pandi of Chhachina village in Ganjam district out of illegal Ganja business had been seized, he said. "It is also suspected that he might be having such properties in Gujarat and Maharashtra too,"

the STF official said.

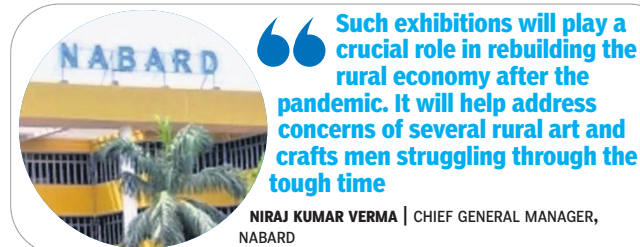


Devotees stood in a long queue on the Grand Road to get a glimpse of the Holy Trinity at Srimandir in Puri while the scorching sun glared down on them, Monday

# Nabard prog for post-Cov rural economy boost

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore/Bhubaneswar, March 7:** Aimed at giving a push to rural economy hit by the pandemic, Nabard's Karnataka Regional Office is organising an annual event "Grameena Habba", to provide marketing platform for rural artisans from different states including Odisha to sell handicraft and handloom products here between March 10 and 14. Artisans from Odisha, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Chhattisgarh are expected to participate in this rural festival alongside more than 25 artisans from Karnataka. "The prevailing Covid-19 has undoubtedly created havoc on the entire economy, especially the



Such exhibitions will play a crucial role in rebuilding the rural economy after the pandemic. It will help address concerns of several rural art and crafts men struggling through the tough time

NIRAJ KUMAR VERMA | CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER, NABARD

rural economy. Such exhibitions will play a crucial role in rebuilding the rural economy after the pandemic. It will help address concerns of several rural art and crafts men struggling through the tough time," stated Niraj Kumar Verma, Chief General Manager of Nabard, Monday. The exclusive products of Karnataka, including GI products like Udipi sarees, Kasuti work, Aari embroidered fabrics,

Channapatna toys, Mysore's unique rosewood inlay, Kohlapuri chappals, crafted home decors, organic food products, and products from other parts of India like ornaments of Odisha; Jaipuri quilt; lac bangles of Bhopal; Maheswari silk of Madhya Pradesh; Aarni silk of Tamil Nadu; Ikat sarees of Telangana; Kosa silk sarees of Chhattisgarh; spices and temple crafts of Kerala; and bedsheets of UP will be available.

Rural artisans, weavers, farmers and tribes across the country and several districts of Karnataka will showcase handmade arts, crafts, handloom sarees, hand-woven dress material, home decors, tribal products, natural beauty products, organic food products, jewellery and accessories during this festival. Nabard Grameena Habba is scheduled from March 10-14 at Mantri Square Mall in Bangalore. The exhibition and sale will showcase thousands of exclusive products from across India at competitive prices. Nabard sponsors the artisans, weavers and self help groups (SHGs) for the Grameena Habba to showcase their unique products for 5 days. The income that they earn from selling these products will directly reach the artisans.

# Rheumatology spl clinic at City AIIMS



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 7:** In a bid to provide dedicated care to people suffering from arthritis and various immunological disorders, a rheumatology special clinic has been set up at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhubaneswar, an official said Monday. A team of doctors, led by General Medicine head Anupam Dey, will be available at the clinic on Fridays from 2pm to 5pm, it was learnt. "Musculoskeletal disorders are prevalent in 15-20 per cent of Indian population. Arthritis affects more than 180 million people in India. It is estimated that almost 10 lakh people in India suffer from rheumatoid arthritis. Rheumatological diseases can affect all age groups and require prolonged therapy because of their chronic nature and relapsing course," Dey said. Day care services will be provided to patients requiring injectable biological/immunosuppressant medications. Patient education and counselling will be done, added Dey.

# GOVERNING BODY MEET



The governing body meeting of District Athlete Association was held at Barabati Stadium conference hall in Cuttack, Monday

OP PHOTO

# JSPL drive for skill development and education of women, girls

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 7:** On the occasion of International Women's Day, JSPL Foundation, the CSR arm of Jindal Steel & Power, launched a special programme 'Jindal Swyam Sampanna Nari' on women's skill and education in Odisha and Chhattisgarh. The objective of the programme is to support girl children/women from poor and underprivileged sections and make them self-reliant. The programme focuses on girl children/women who are unable to complete their studies or could not undertake further studies due to financial constraints. Launching this special programme, JSPL Foundation Chairperson Shallu Jindal said, "On this International Women's Day, let us join together to ensure gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow. Investing in the skilling and education of women is the foremost priority in social de-

velopment programmes. I am sure the programme will certainly go a long way in augmenting the employability of women and thereby empowering them sustainably. The programme will be implemented in Odisha and Chhattisgarh."

Women and girls with poor socio-economic backgrounds, who are under the age group of 16 to 30 and have secured 60 per cent or more in Class X board examination can apply for financial assistance for the vocational courses. Girls who have completed higher secondary education with 65 per cent and graduation with 55 per cent can seek financial assistance for graduation and post-graduation courses, respectively. The family income ceiling is two lakh rupees per annum for eligibility under the programme. Interested girls can apply by March 25 through foundation website [www.jsplfoundation.com/education.html](http://www.jsplfoundation.com/education.html), and e-mail [idawards@jsplfoundation.com](mailto:idawards@jsplfoundation.com).

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

# Can drinking cow milk help fight Covid infection?

*Bovine lactoferrin found in cow milk has bioactive characteristics against many microbes, viruses, and other pathogens*

A study says cow milk contains proteins that have virus-inhibiting capabilities, which can help prevent Covid-19 from reproducing in a person's body and causing infection. Lactoferrin is a protein found in the milk of most mammals. Bovine lactoferrin, which is found in cow milk, has bioactive characteristics against many microbes, viruses, and other pathogens said researchers from the University of Michigan. It has also been found to inhibit

SARS-CoV-2 infection under experimental conditions by blocking the ability of the virus to enter target cells, as well as by supporting cells' antiviral defense mechanisms. "Bovine lactoferrin has shown antiviral activity in human clinical trials," said lead investigator Jonathan Sexton, from the varsity's Department of Internal Medicine. "For example, orally administered bovine lactoferrin has been shown to improve the severity of viral infections, including rotavirus and norovirus. Given the broad antiviral efficacy and safety, minimal side effects, and commercial availability of bovine lactoferrin, several review papers have suggested using it as a preventive or post-exposure treatment for SARS-



CoV-2 infection," he added. The findings are described in the Journal of Dairy Science. With the goal of improving clinical relevance and translatability, the team tested bovine lactoferrin against some of the most common

SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern from around the world, including the WA1 variant representative of the US outbreak in 2020, the B.1.1.7, B.1.351, and P.1 variants, and the Delta variant. Jonathan further explained

**Bovine lactoferrin has shown antiviral activity in human clinical trials, for example, orally administered bovine lactoferrin has been shown to improve the severity of viral infections, including rotavirus and norovirus. Given the broad antiviral efficacy and safety, minimal side effects, and commercial availability of bovine lactoferrin, several review papers have suggested using it as a preventive or post-exposure treatment for SARS-CoV-2 infection**

JONATHAN SEXTON | LEAD INVESTIGATOR, DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Each of these variants includes modifications to the SARS-Cov-2 spike protein that reduce the efficacy of newly produced vaccines. Furthermore, each of these strains shows reduced neutralisation by vaccination sera."

A key benefit of the broad antiviral efficacy of lactoferrin is its potential for the prevention or treatment of emerging diseases.

"This is especially important when there are limited treatment options, or when the treatment options are too costly for widespread use. An orally available therapeutic that covers emerging strains would be ideal for treating SARS-CoV-2 in areas without widespread vaccination or if new strains escape the vaccine," Sexton said. IANS

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SHORT TAKES

Youth held for raping minor



**R Udayagiri:** A youth was Monday arrested for raping and impregnating a minor girl at Guluba village under Adaba police limits in Gajapati district. According to the complainant, the youth abducted the Class X girl while she was returning from school and raped her in a forest in 2017. Since then, the accused had been raping the girl at gunpoint. He later forced her for abortion after she was impregnated. Unable to bear the torture, the girl informed her parents who then sent her to her uncle's place at Buguda village near Paralakhemundi town. She stayed at her uncle's place for five years and returned March 1, 2022 for Maha Shivratri. However, the accused again abducted the girl while she was on her way to a temple and raped her again. Family members first informed the village committee and later lodged a complaint with Adaba police.

Youth drowns in Ib river

**Sundargarh:** A youth drowned while crossing the Ib river near Ghoghar village under Talsara police limits in Sundargarh district, Monday. The deceased was identified as Rupesh Kumar, a native of Patna in Bihar and an employee of Bhushan Steel in Jharsuguda. Rupesh along with two of his friends were on a visit to the spot when the incident occurred. While his friends were able to swim across, Rupesh slipped his legs and drowned. On being informed, fire personnel launched a rescue operation and fished out the body from the river. Notably, a girl while picnicking last year had drowned after slipping her legs at the same place.

Woman kills self

**Malkangiri:** A woman allegedly committed suicide at MV-35 village under Kalimela police limits in the district Saturday night over suspected dowry torture. The deceased was identified as Babita Saha, wife of Bijay Saha. According to Babita's family, she had married Bijay seven months back. However, her in-laws allegedly tortured her over various demands. "My daughter was being tortured by her in-laws and was murdered in the process," Babita's father Manoranjan Haldrar said. However, Bijay's father Jugai Saha dismissed the allegations and said it was a case of suicide. Kalimela police seized the body and sent it for autopsy. Further investigation is in progress, the police said.

Jaraka stretch of NH-16 turns into deathtrap

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dharmashala, March 7:** With at least 29 mishap deaths and over 50 injuries during the last two years, a stretch on National Highway-16 passing through Jaraka Market under this block of Jajpur district has turned into a death zone for commuters.

The never-ending expansion work, going on for over two years, has been causing several mishaps on the stretch. The highway has witnessed many untimely deaths owing to accidents in the last two years as the expansion work has been pushed to uncertainty. Moreover, construction of a flyover is adding to the woes of commuters.

The half-built service road of the NH now poses serious risk to the commuters. It is alleged that an accident occurs there almost every day.

Recently, a newly-wed woman was crushed to death under a Hywa near Deuli square March 1, 2022. Similarly, a woman died after being hit by a speeding truck March 4.

Sources said the construction company has dumped chips and mud on the road which further pose threat to the commuters. Huge holes that have been dug up on the road have further made it an accident-prone area.

Furthermore, a thick blanket of dust is always seen on the stretch of the under-construction road adding to the air pollution in the region.



OP PHOTO

CONSTRUCTION WOES

The never-ending expansion work, going on for over two years, is responsible for several mishaps on the stretch

A newly-wed woman was crushed to death under a Hywa near Deuli square March 1, 2022. Similarly, a woman died after being hit by a speeding truck March 4

The construction company has dumped chips and mud on the road which further pose threat to the commuters. Huge holes that have been dug up on the road further make it an accident-prone area

tion road adding to the air pollution in the region.

In 2019, the district administration had demolished many shops alongside the NH for its expansion. A blueprint was also prepared. However, now uncertainty looms over the completion of the expansion work. On the other hand, those whose shops were demolished are yet to be rehabilitated and given compensation. Repeated demands for completion of the NH project have yielded no result. The construction company engaged in the expansion work cannot be blacklisted from the project as it might further delay the work, locals said.

The administration has to appoint a new agency by floating a fresh tender but that will further delay the work, they added.

Angry locals have tried to bring it to the notice of the Jajpur Collector and the NHAI authorities.

WEAPON EXPO



A weapon exhibition was organised at CRPF group centre near Goshala in Sambalpur, Monday, as part of the celebrations of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' OP PHOTO

RAGGING IN VSSUT: JR STUDENT BEATEN UP

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, March 7:** A junior student of Burla-based Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology (VSSUT) was allegedly ragged and beaten up by some seniors in the university hostel here in the district.

The matter came to the fore after some junior students reported the incident to the hostel warden Monday. However, VSSUT vice-chancellor Professor Bansidhar Majhi has quashed the reports.

"There is no chance of ragging in the university. I haven't received any such

complaint," he said refuting the allegations.

According to sources, a group of seniors from a hostel barged into another hostel late Saturday night and allegedly beat up a junior student. They also snatched his mobile phone and smashed it after deleting all the data.

CRISIS DEEPENS

No takers for Cong ticket in 14 wards of BeMC

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, March 7:** The Congress party is facing its worst ever existential crisis in recent years as it failed to get candidates for 14 out of 42 wards under Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) on the last day of filing of nominations for the urban local body (ULB) polls, Monday.

As a result, only 28 candidates from the grand old party filed their nominations for as many wards leaving aside the rest 14 wards in the city, the district vice-president of the party said.

The party could not field any candidates in the remaining 14 wards as none showed any interest in contesting from the party.

The party faced serious difficulties in selecting candidates for various wards after its worst debacle in the three-tier panchayat polls.

The inability of the grand old party in getting proper candidates to contest the ULB polls has sent the chatters abuzz in the city.

Meanwhile, Manju Rath, party's candidate for the post of Mayor Berhampur Municipal Corporation, filed her nomination on the last day of filing of papers before the election officer-cum-sub-collector, Monday.

A woman leader, who had recently resigned from BJP, and Rath were interested for the mayor post. However, the PCC picked Rath.



The party faced serious difficulties in selecting candidates after its debacle in the three-tier panchayat polls

After filing her nominations, Rath said she has been in social service for a long time and has come to know people from various walks of life. She feels elated and motivated after the Congress nominated her as the candidate for the mayor post, Rath stated.

She will make every effort to solve the basic needs of city residents if she gets elected, Rath said. She will also try to resolve the long standing water problem and continue her efforts in resolving the problems of roads and drainage facilities, she added.

Notably, there will be direct elections to the mayoral post and Rath would face a tough fight from BJD and BJP.

3 poachers held with leopard hide

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Deogarh, March 7:** Acting on a tip-off, a special squad of Deogarh police arrested three hunters from Tuhilamal forest under Reamal police limits in this district Monday.

The squad also seized a leopard skin, a sharp-edged knife and mobile phones from their possession.

The three accused were identified as Pati Behera of Jadagola village, Tikei Behera and Rajan Naik of Kainsar village.



"The three were planning to sell the leopard hide. A special team led by sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Pratyush Kumar Mahapatra, under the garb of buyers, approached them and made the arrest," SP Rajkishore Paikray said while addressing a press meet here.

Also present during the press meet were SDPO Mahapatra, DSP DSP Pradip Kumar Kerketa, Deogarh IIC Surendra Kumar Nayak and Reamal IIC Lalita Pradhan.

Robbers' gang busted; 6 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, March 7:** Baripada Town police led by inspector in-charge (IIC) Birendra Senapati Monday busted a robbers' gang and arrested six persons here in Mayurbhanj district.

Huge quantity of ammunition, 20 gram gold ornaments, 250 gram silver, 10 mobile phones and bikes were seized from them, Baripada Sadar SDPO KK Hariprasad revealed at a presser.

The accused have been identified as Badal Mukhi, 22, of Kalikapur, Abhishek Patra, 20, of Debendrapur, Mangulu Mukhi, 25 and Raja Mukhi, 22, from Takhatpur area, Manoj Kumar Das, 20, from VRP Colony and another minor. Accused Badal has at least 36 cases pending against his name, while Mangulu has five, Raja seven and the minor has five cases against him.

According to police, the six were involved in several loots, chain snatching and robbery in Baripada town. All the six have been forwarded to court, SDPO added.

**EAST COAST RAILWAY 'E' PROCUREMENT SYSTEM**  
Tender Notice No. PCMM/EP/2021-22/58, Dt. 04.03.2022  
The following tenders have been uploaded on website www.ireps.gov.in

SI.No.01, Tender No. 03221626, Short Description of item: HIGH CAPACITY HYTREL LOWER PRESSURE, Quantity: 12000 Nos.
SI.No.02, Tender No. 03221664, Short Description of item: HYDRAULIC SHOCK ABSORBER (900 KG), Quantity: 360 Nos.
SI.No.03, Tender No. 03221069, Short Description of item: SET OF HIGH TENSILE BOLT, Quantity: 360 Set.
SI.No.04, Tender No. 03221794, Short Description of item: HYDRAULIC SHOCK ABSORBER (600 KG), Quantity: 1650 Nos.
SI.No.05, Tender No. 05215407, Short Description of item: SMPS BASED IPS, Quantity: 2 Set.
SI.No.06, Tender No. 03223928, Short Description of item: SET OF BRAKE PAD FOR DISC BRAKE, Quantity: 4111 Set.
SI.No.07, Tender No. 01225032, Short Description of item: SPRING SINGLE COIL, Quantity: 228 Nos.
SI.No.08, Tender No. 02221102, Short Description of item: KIT FOR E-70 BRAKE CONTROL UNIT, Quantity: 13 Set.
SI.No.09, Tender No. 03223906, Short Description of item: FLEX BALL CABLE COMPLETE SET, Quantity: 23 Set.

Tender Opening Date: 23.03.2022 for SI.No. 01, 24.03.2022 for SI.No. 02, 28.03.2022 for SI.No. 03 to 05, 29.03.2022 for SI.No. 06, 04.04.2022 for SI.No. 07 to 09.  
Regarding detailed notice, EMD, Purchase restrictions and detailed tender conditions, please visit website www.ireps.gov.in and www.eastcoastrail.indianrailways.gov.in.  
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Bhubaneswar PR-868/M/21-22

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER R.W. DIVISION, ANANDAPUR**  
e-Procurement Notice for Road & Building works Identification No. On line- 16 /EERW/AND/20-21, E-mail address: eerw\_anandapur@yahoo.co.in. No.2036, Dt.07.03.2022

No.O-1793-1.Name of the work : Fixing of Sign Board & Road Furniture for Pkg. No.9 (172 nos of road) for the year 2021-22. 2.Total No. of works : 01 (One) No. (Percentage rate Tender). 3.Estimated cost : Approx. Estimate Cost 29.29 Lakhs. 4.Class of Contractor : 'B' Class & 'C' Class. 5.Other Details.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding From To	Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender Office of the Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Anandapur	Date & Place of receipt of bid cost & bid security
1	2	3	4	5	6
Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division, Anandapur	On line 16/ EERW/ AND/ 2020-21	09.03.2022 at 10.00 A.M. upto 15.03.2022 at 5.00 P.M.	14.03.2022 upto 5.00 P.M.	16.03.2022 at 11.00A.M.	The bidder shall transfer online the cost of bid and EMD in column No-4 & 6 in Annexure-I, respectively through a process as mention in DTCN.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in & www.tenders.ori.nic.in.  
Sd/-Superintending Engineer, R.W.Division, Anandapur OIPR-25055/11/0023/2122

**ODISHA LIFT IRRIGATION CORPORATION LTD. OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER LIFT IRRIGATION DIVISION, BOUDH**  
e-mail id- eolicboudh@gmail.com  
'e' Procurement Notice  
Bid identification No.-OLIC-BOUDH-09/2021-22 No- 1314 /Date- 07-03-2022

The Executive Engineer, Lift Irrigation Division, Boudh on behalf of OLIC invites Percentage Rate bids in single cover system to be received in Online Mode only for the work Installation and Energisation of 14 No. New Lift Irrigation Projects under Boudh, Harbhanga & Kantamal Blocks in Boudh District as detailed in the table below. The Bid should be submitted by the eligible class of contractors as mentioned below registered with the State Government and contractors of equivalent grade / class registered with Central Government / M.E.S. / Railways / C.P.W.D. for execution of Civil Works with valid Electrical (H.T) License issued by ELBO, Odisha through On-Line in the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in. The bidders should have necessary portal enrolment (with own digital signature certificate). The registered bidders from outside Odisha can also participate in this on-line tender process after necessary portal enrolment but shall have to subsequently undergo registration with appropriate authority of the State.

1.Name of the Works:- Installation & Energisation of River Lift Irrigation Projects-14 Nos with supply of all materials on Turnkey basis. 2.Total Nos of Package:-14. 3.Approximate Estimated Cost:-Rs. 20.79 Lakhs to Rs.29.27 Lakhs. 4. Class of Contractor:- As mentioned against each package. 5. Period of Completion:- 120 Days for all projects from the date of issue of work order. 6.Other details as follows-

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No	Availability of Tender On-Line for Bidding From To	Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of Opening of tender in the office of the Executive Engineer, L.I.Division, Boudh
1	2	3	4	5
Executive Engineer, L.I.Division, Boudh	OLIC/Boudh/ 09/2021-22	11.03.2022 at 11:00 Hrs. upto 21.03.2022 at 17:00 Hrs.	17.03.2022 at 17:00 Hrs.	24.03.2022 at 11:00 Hrs.

\* Details can be seen from the Website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.  
\* Any corrigendum/Addendum will be displayed in the above website only.  
Sd/-EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, L.I. DIVISION, BOUDH

Hectic parleys begin for Ganjam ZP chair

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, March 7:** With the BJD getting absolute majority in Ganjam zilla parishad (ZP) by securing 67 out of 69 ZP seats, hectic parleys have started for election to the chairperson's post which is scheduled for March 13.

Though it is Chief Minister and BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik who would take the final call, several aspirants vying for the post, which is reserved for women, has made the issue a tricky affair.

Sources said BJD candidates have set a record by winning as many as 67 out of the total of 69 zones.

In past, the district was governed by Ganjam Zilla Board which had enormous powers even after the formation of independent state of Orissa (now Odisha).

All policy decisions relating to development of Ganjam district were then being taken and programmes were being chalked out by the board. Eminent freedom fighter like late Dibakar Pattanayak and Dinabandhu Behera as well as the former royal of Khallikote Ramachandra Mardaraj Deo had become the chairmen of the Ganjam Zilla Board.

Ganjam zilla parishad was formed in 1997 when the first elections to the



post of members and chairperson were held with party symbols and the post of chairperson was reserved for general category women candidates.

Despite having majority, Congress party had lost the election to the post of chairperson due to factionalism.

Keeping in mind the then existing political equations, a coalition was formed between erstwhile Janata Dal, BJP and CPI. With the support of an independent candidate, Janata Dal candidate Renubala Pradhan, who had won from Digapahandi block, became its first chairperson.

The post of chairperson has been reserved for women candidates again after a gap of 25 years. As 41 women have won from BJD, many of them are

vying for the post. In the first election held under BJD rule for the Ganjam ZP in 2002, the party had single largest majority. Rebati Mohan Nayak, who had won from Buguda block under Polsara Assembly segment and former Jagannathprasad Assembly segment, was elected as the chairperson.

In the second election held in 2007, a young BJD leader elected from Rangeilunda block under Gopalpur Assembly constituency was made the ZP chairperson. Eventually, he lost the post in a no-confidence motion moved against him. In a by-election, Kamaraju Sethi elected from the same block became the chairperson.

Similarly, in 2012, as BJD emerged as the single largest majority party in the panchayat polls, its candidate Surath Pradhan elected from Kabisuryanagar Assembly segment was elected as the chairperson. In 2017, BJD candidate Subash Chandra Behera from Chhatrapur Assembly segment became the chairperson. Behera resigned from the post after he got elected as MLA from Chhatrapur Assembly segment in 2019 general elections. In a by-election held for the post, Sonam Palei elected from Khallikote block was made the ZP chairperson. This time, she has again won from the same zone.

Currently, women candidates, who have won Hinjili, Bhanjanagar, Sanakhemundi, Chikiti, Aska, Sorada and other zones are vying for the post. Now, all eyes are on the party chief as to whom he will appoint as the ZP chairperson.



When we have passed beyond knowings, then we shall have knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO



# Diplomatic Dump

The hurriedly called Quad meeting late last week has expressed concern over the possibility of a déjà vu of the Russian type invasion of Ukraine in the Indo-Pacific region too. This is not simply an attempt by the four-nation group comprising the USA, Japan, Australia and India to use its platform to condemn Russia's violation of the sovereignty of Ukraine. The dominant players of the group knew well India would not be on the same page with the other members on the issue for its dependence on Russia on many matters, especially the supply of arms and other defence hardware. So, they cleverly brought in the concerns for peaceful coexistence in the Indo-Pacific region to make India rethink its position on unquestioned support to Russia. For, if China emulates Russia's example and forces its way into Taiwan or occupy Indian territories more aggressively than it has, so far, been doing, India would be in serious trouble. Should that happen, it is quite possible India may not get support from its Quad allies and the international community for its silence on Russian adventurism in Ukraine.

The differences among the Quad partners came out in the open with India refusing to condemn Russia or its aggression against Ukraine. Predictably, US President Joe Biden made a strident pitch against Russia, while Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was no less vocal in the group's aim of upholding territorial sovereignty and integrity. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison took a clearer position and supported tough sanctions on Russia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, however, was non-committal on condemnation of Russia's aggression. During the Quad meet, Japanese PM Kishida was the most vocal against Russia. He directly raised the issue of unilateral changes to the status quo by force or coercion "like the recent Russian aggression against Ukraine" and said such violation of the rights of a sovereign and independent country is not acceptable. The joint statement at the end of the meeting did not contain a word of condemnation of Russia's continued actions in Ukraine. This reflected the differences among the partners of the group, while the failure to speak in one voice against Russia is likely to encourage China to follow the Russian model hoping to escape with impunity after similar adventures in Taiwan or on Indian territories.

Indian diplomacy is now being tested to its limits. For, India's silence on the entire issue through its abstentions from voting against Russia at the United Nations is already sending wrong signals to China, which may boomerang on New Delhi. India has been routinely abstaining from voting against any resolution that seeks to punish Russia for its actions. It broke away from 149 countries that voted a resolution critical of Moscow. This came on the back of a similar stand at the UN Security Council (UNSC). What would be a real cause for worry for India, should Ukraine fall and the ongoing war is clinched in Russia's favour, is that China may be emboldened to launch similar offensives against Taiwan and, very probably even India, with which it is already engaged in a tough border standoff that had resulted in the killing of 20 Indian soldiers in June 2020.

Seen in this light the differences in Quad does not augur well even for its agenda of having a rules-based world order aimed at curbing China's territorial ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region. Obviously, China is watching and letting Russia go berserk in Ukraine.

In a way Indian diplomacy is setting a dangerous trend by merely expressing concern for humanitarian crisis in war-torn Ukraine. It is unlikely to get others to stand up for it when faced with Chinese aggression. China is obviously watching how far the USA and others can go in checkmating Russia. It will surely calculate its moves vis-a-vis Arunachal Pradesh on the basis of Russia's fate in Ukraine.

The Quad at the present juncture, maybe, cannot afford to alienate India, a critical partner in the global-strategic plan to balance the rise of China as a potential Asian superpower. Yet, India will find it difficult to defend its position should Russian occupying forces begin committing war crimes and human rights violations in contravention of the Geneva Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other related global treaties.

The only aspect in which the Quad spoke unitedly was to send humanitarian aid and assistance to the people of Ukraine. India supported it unequivocally as it had no direct reference to condemnation of Russia's actions. But, the strategy of playing safe may prove counter-productive. India needs to think out of the box as the world order is changing and it cannot afford to have limited strategic options. Just as India cannot alienate Russia for the latter's time-tested friendship and support in times of danger coming from its foes and the USA's bullying tactic, so also, it has to respond to the new international reality. Also, recent history has demonstrated that Putin's Russia is not overtly pro India. It has carried out military exercises with Pakistan Army in conjunction with the PLA of China recently. Indian leadership has to understand that the Communist leaders of the erstwhile Soviet Union and present day Russian leadership are not to be viewed as the same. India used to harp on the Non-Aligned Movement which had many other nations involved at that time. As the old USSR has changed, so also has the Non-Aligned Movement of yesteryears that India used to lead once upon a time.

The danger to India is now far greater than before as China is much stronger and more ambitious than in the past. In addition, Russia and China have closed ranks and are unitedly taking on the US and allies as their common enemy. If Russia manages to eventually take over Ukraine and no armed disputes continue, China, to the detriment of India, will be emboldened. If Russia loses the war and gets no visibly clear control of Ukraine then India loses all remaining goodwill of the entire Western world. The precursor to such a situation is visible in the demand of British MP Johnny Mercer recently urging Prime Minister Boris Johnson to stop foreign aid worth more than 50 million pounds being sent to India because of its repeated abstention in resolutions at the UNSC against Russia for invading Ukraine. Mercer claims there are far worthier causes now. Even Israel, playing a mediator's role today, will be forced to keep away from India.

Going forward, India has to plan for a friendless world.

## WISDOM CORNER

Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Whatever your life's work is, do it well. A man should do his job so well that the living, the dead, and the unborn could do it no better.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Let us realize that the privilege to work is a gift, the power to work is a blessing, the love of work is success!

DAVID O. MCKAY

## WORDSWORTH

### Scutching

Before machines took over much of the hard work, the process of making linen from flax was both protracted and arduous, but it bequeathed us an interesting set of words: pulling, rippling, retting, and scutching. At harvest time in August, flax plants were pulled up by the roots rather than cut to ensure that the fibres were long and unbroken. The stems were then rippled by drawing them through a comb to take out any seeds. The next stage was retting, in which bundles of the stems were immersed in water in a pond, lake or stream for a couple of months to soften and partly rot them. If no body of water was available, they were instead laid out in a field to let the rain do the job; this was sometimes called dew-retting and the field the retting-ground. Then came scutching, in which the stems were beaten to remove the useful fibres from the plant material around them. Though the process is ancient, the English word for this final step appears only at the end of the eighteenth century. It derives from old French escoucher, from Latin excutere, to shake out. The word also turns up in situations unconnected with linen-making, as here in Laddie by Gene Stratton Porter: "I heard father tell him he'd give him a scutching he'd remember to the day of his death."

## FOCUS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

# BREAK THE BIAS



India's poor ranking in the Gender Inequality Index is largely because of consistently poor parliamentary representation, abnormally high maternal mortality rate, and very low women's participation in workforce

Simone de Beauvoir, the French philosopher wrote in her seminal book 'The Second Sex' (1949): "You are not born a woman, you become one," to underline the fact that gender distinction is the fundamental source of women's oppression, premised on a wrong assumption that existence precedes essence. But the seeds of women's reproductive rights were sown by Margaret Sanger when she opened the birth control clinic in 1916. She viewed birth control as a free speech issue rather than a feminist issue. She sparred with Mahatma Gandhi when she visited him in 1935, as he was against birth control. While the first wave of feminist movement focussed on political and legal equality (Suffragette Movement), the second wave swept in when Betty Friedman wrote the magnificent read 'The Feminine Mystique' in 1963, to debunk the ideas that women find fulfillment only in childrearing and homemaking. She urged women to "suff off their domestic duties and grab the economic reins of power."

The strident 60s segued into momentous 70s, when Gloria Steinem asserted right of woman over her body by observing: "If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament. The US Supreme Court also chipped in with its celebrated and controversial judgement in Roe Vs Wade (1973), where it upheld women's right to abortion and struck down criminalisation of abortion as it violated women's constitutional right to privacy. The same year also witnessed a metamorphic tennis match between Billy Jean King and Bobby Riggs September 20, 1973 when King beat Riggs. President Obama who watched this match as a 12-year-old amongst 50 million viewers writes: "I have two daughters. It has made a difference in how I raise them." Billie Jean wrote: "It was not about tennis. It was about history and social change."

The US Supreme Court judge, who really made a transformational change in terms of enactment and gender sensitivity was Ruth Bader Ginsberg who died two years back. Without being strident and shrill, she ensured that the male only

admission policy of Virginia Military Institute was changed to include women as it offended equal protection clause of 14th amendment to the US Constitution. The United States Vs Virginia judgement (1996) took the lid off male only policy in military establishment. This judgement found its resonance in India when Justice Dhananjay Chandrachud ruled in 2021 that the government must give Permanent Commission to Women in the Indian Army. Justice Ginsberg wrote: "Exceedingly persuasive justification would be required for a classification based on sex." She also gave a dissenting judgement in Ledbetter Vs Good Year case (2007), which became an act in 2009, ensuring that women win pay discrimination cases and the Fair Pay Act is observed in letter and spirit.

This year's International Women's Day theme could not have been more apt: "Breaking The Bias" and "Taking action for Equality." The Indian Constitution frowns upon gender discrimination and implores upon the State to make special provisions for women (Art 15(3)). Besides equal pay for equal work (Art 39(d), maternity relief (Art 42) and renouncing practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Art 51A (e)) are part of the Constitutional construct to usher in a gender sensitive society. It's time to take stock of our achievements with reference to these lofty Constitutional expectations.

The Gender Inequality Index is generally considered the most definitive template for measuring gender inequality. It takes in to account maternal reproductive health, parliamentary representation and female workforce participation. The HDR (2020) gave India a GII ranking of 123 out of 162 countries. This is largely because of consistently poor parliamentary representation (11.6%), abnormally high maternal mortality rate (174 out of one lakh) and very low women's participation in workforce (23.5%) as against 81.6% for men. This clearly shows the bias against female workforce participation in the country's growth agenda. In the latest Global Gender Gap Report India has slipped in its position from 112 in 2020 to 140 out of 156 countries. It notes with concern how in terms of female workforce participation it has come down from 24.8% (2020) to 22.3% now. The largest disparity is manifest in political empowerment.

In response to the Constitutional mandate, India has embarked upon a number of programmes like Integrated Child Development Scheme, Poshan, Ujjwala, Matru Vandana to improve nutrition, curtail anaemia, provide smoke-free cooking fuel and financial support during pregnancy and childbirth. However, the Rapid Survey of Children Report by UNICEF (2014) has brought out how only 37% of girls were found to be of normal health, while se-

verely thin and thin girls accounted for 62%. The recent NFHS Report (2020) has brought out how more than 50% of adolescent girls are anaemic. In contrast the percentage of men in the age group of 15-49 who are anaemic is around 22%. Quite clearly, there is a dietary preference in favour of boys in most of the impoverished families. This has serious implications on Infant Mortality Rates (41 in 1000), as anaemic mothers would be prone to such debilitation during childbirth.

India took a watershed decision by reserving 33% seats for women in PRIs through the 73rd Constitutional amendment in 1993. Quite a few states like Odisha have reserved 50% seats in panchayats for women. Most of the findings show that women have been playing a very pioneering role in furthering education, access to drinking water and healthcare as representatives of such grassroots level democracy. Sadly, such reservation for women in state Assemblies and Parliament is caught in the cobweb of OBC caste politics.

Eleanor Roosevelt who oversaw the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) wrote: "A woman is like a tea bag. You never know how strong she is until she gets into hot water." The history of women's movement is testimony to this quiet smouldering revolt of women. However, there is visible rift in the movement of late, as many traditional women abhor the attempt of Western women to foist their cultural values in the former. Anton Gramsci had warned against such attempt at universalisation of Western values and cultural homogenisation. The quest for gender parity, equality must take note of such fissiparous tendencies that is seriously affecting the cause of gender justice. However, the need of a girl child to have proper nutrition, quality education and for women to have greater participation in workforce and higher political representation has a universal sweep and is not to be brushed under the carpet through rhetoric and tokenism.

The writer teaches Constitutional Law. Views are personal.

## SPECTRUM URBAN REVOLUTION

# Building the cities of tomorrow



Carlo Ratti

FEW OTHER PLACES IN THE WORLD ARE AS FUTURE-ORIENTED AS DUBAI

"Connecting minds, creating the future," the slogan of World Expo 2020, is everywhere in Dubai. The ongoing event, which opened a year late in October 2021, is the first of its kind since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Few other places in the world are as future-oriented as Dubai. But what kind of future does Dubai want? The city has established itself as a model for the emerging urban centers of Asia and the Middle East, so its choices today could have far-reaching consequences in the future.

Unlike many of its neighbours, including in the United Arab Emirates, Dubai's wealth is not built on oil. In fact, only 1% of the city's GDP comes from hydrocarbons. Not long after oil was first discovered in the emirate in the 1960s, its ruler, Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, decided that the emirate's economy should not rely on it exclusively. Instead, he pushed Dubai to become a center for global business, based on its favourable geographical position and its pro-market orientation. The city's planners lived by the credo: "If you build it, they will come."

Thanks to this mentality, Dubai has run like a start-up, continu-

ously betting on new technologies and innovations. Prominent leaders are devoted to emerging fields: the young Omar Al Olama is Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence; Mohammad Al Gergawi, the right hand of current ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, is both Cabinet Chief of Staff and Minister of the Future.

Gergawi was involved in the construction of Dubai's Museum of the Future, a building that towers over the city's main boulevard. An inspiring quote from Al Maktoum is engraved on its metal facade: "The future belongs to those who can imagine it, design it, and execute it. It isn't something you await, but rather create."

A similar spirit led Dubai to host the World Expo. Delayed by one crisis – the pandemic – the event is focused on solving others, such as climate change. But some contradictions become apparent. For example, the Expo has a district devoted to sustainability, but the lush, green exposition site was created from 440 hectares of desert through carbon-intensive water desalination. Much of the infrastructure will remain after the fair.

As part of the team that designed

the Expo's Italian Pavilion, I thought a lot about how to manage these contradictions. After considering the context, our team decided that the pavilion would demonstrate the principle of circularity. We created a building in which all the components are either recycled or recyclable. The shimmering walls are constructed from two million plastic bottles. The floor is made of coffee grounds and orange peels. The roof consists of the hulls of three upside-down boats, which can be flipped over and set to sea after the event. We also chose an environmentally friendly process to cool the building, relying on a ventilation system that circulates air through the permeable walls and cools it through evapotranspiration. Dubai as a whole faces sustainability challenges. Most trips in the emirate are made by car, on highways like the 16-lane Sheikh Zayed Road. And separate trash and recycling collection is not widespread. According to some estimates, only 20% of waste is recycled.

Per capita energy consumption is among the world's highest. The city has discarded the genius loci of Arab low-rise construction, perfected over centuries to mitigate high temperatures, in favour of an

international architectural style born in the climes of mid-twentieth century Chicago and New York. Its competing skyscrapers' unshaded glass walls absorb every ray of the scorching sun. Life inside, therefore, requires significant air conditioning, intensifying energy consumption.

In other words, behind Dubai's eagerness to build the city of tomorrow loom some of the values of yesterday. While young people around the world are ready to travel by train or bicycle to follow in the austere footsteps of Greta Thunberg, their Emirati peers seem to aspire to cruise around in bombastic internal-combustion cars – just like last century's kids.

Yet for an entire region undergoing massive urban growth, Dubai has become the model to emulate. So, where will Dubai lead its followers? If the city can combine its ability to innovate with the imperatives of sustainability, it will do more than "connect minds" and "create the future." It will help to build a more livable one.

The writer is Director of the Senseable City Lab at MIT.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

## Help returnee medicos

Sir, This refers to the news story "Facilitate returnee medicos' education: Patnaik to Modi," Orissa POST, March 7, 2022. The National Medical Council – the apex body to regulate medical education in India – has decided to amend some rules for the incoming medical students from war-torn Ukraine. The authority has announced that these foreign medical graduates with incomplete internships will be given the chance to finish their training in India. At a glance, the move seems welcoming. However, while describing the entire procedure, the National Medical Council ends up asking for "documentary evidence certifying successful completion of physical training or internship during the medical qualification equivalent to MBBS." Such evidence may not be available with the students considering they have been evacuated from a war. Students have pointed out that they are coming back without any documentary proof in hand from the war-torn country. They don't have any documents and even their professors might have flown out of the country. For such students, the National Medical Council's move may not make any sense. Going forward, the current regulations under the National Medical Council do not allow migration of medical students from one college to another. It means if a student has been enrolled in an MBBS course in one college, they must complete the course from the same college. While the rationale is to complete the curriculum in an uninterrupted manner from one college – which includes different books, study material, exam pattern apart from fees – the rules must consider emergency scenarios or genuine circumstances beyond the students' control, a glaring instance being the ongoing war.

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

## Global concern

Sir, This is in reference to the article "Where India stands," Orissa POST March 4, 2022. The article is praiseworthy and the subject matter is important. The invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces has shaken the international community. The war has caused death and widespread destruction of property in Ukraine. Now, the most urgent need is to end the war. Further, the International Criminal Court (ICC) is also urgently required to take action against those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the eastern European country.

Uditewar Das, BHUBANESWAR

# Letters

## TO THE EDITOR

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

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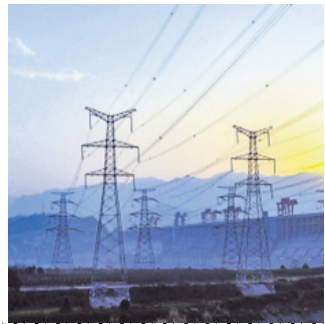


**It is good that the Central government has rescued Indian students stranded in Ukraine. But what is their future? It is impossible for these students to return to Ukraine to continue their studies. Media is showing that the Russian army has destroyed educational institutions, including universities**

HD KUMARASWAMY | FORMER KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

## POWER BREAKDOWN HITS MUMBAI

For the second time in a week, large parts of south Mumbai were hit by a massive power failure Sunday night, with many areas without electricity for over 12 hours. The BEST said that 3 11KV faults occurred in Colaba which affected 19 Distribution Sub Stations, but power supply was restored to 70 per cent of the affected regions by late night



## of the day quote

It would be a first of its kind initiative when a special budget will be presented for children



MANGUBHAI PATEL | MADHYA PRADESH GOVERNOR

The huge Himalayan geo-resources are yet to be fully explored and can contribute to the development of the Himalayan region as well as the country



DR JITENDRA SINGH | UNION EARTH SCIENCES MINISTER

What type of nationalism is this that you have cheated sons of farmers, posted at the country's border? This is a hollow nationalism. This is a nationalism practised from the political dais. All the organisations and institutions which the Congress had made to provide jobs (to the people) have been sold to their friends



PRIVANKA GANDHI | CONGRESS GENERAL SECY

## SHORT TAKES

### Family quarrel claims 3 in Delhi

**New Delhi:** A 43-year-old man in the national capital was arrested for shooting his wife and three other family members, an official said Monday. Three among the four injured succumbed to their injuries. The accused was identified as Hitendar, resident of Yadav Market in northwest Delhi's Shakurpur. Furnishing details about the incident, DCP Usha Rangnani said a PCR call was received Sunday at Subhash Place police station regarding a firing incident in Shakurpur Delhi.

### Woman gangraped by jawan, 4 others

**Muzaffarnagar (UP):** A 22-year-old woman was picked up from her college in Muzaffarnagar on the pretext of dropping her home March 3, locked in a room in Delhi for nearly 48 hours and allegedly gang-raped by an Army jawan and four of his friends. The police said that the victim and the main accused, the son of the village pradhan, knew each other well. According to sources, the 24-year-old jawan had joined the Army in 2020 and was currently posted at Fatehgarh.

### Srinagar grenade attack toll rises

**Srinagar:** The woman injured in a grenade attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar city succumbed to injuries in the hospital Monday taking the death toll to two. "20-year old Rafiq of Hazratbal, who had suffered multiple injuries in yesterday's grenade attack, has succumbed today in the hospital." The death toll in this explosion has reached two, police said.

### Farmer ends life

**Chennai:** A farmer in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu ended his life after loan agents of a private finance company seized his tractor and insulted him and family in front of neighbours. Chinnadurai (23) and his brothers, Suresh 33 and Bhaskaran 28, all farmers in Gingee had bought two tractors by taking a loan of Rs 6.30 lakh from a private finance company.

### Woman killed over dowry

**Patna:** A woman was killed by her in-laws over dowry in Sitamarhi district of Bihar, an official said Monday. After the crime, the accused tried to cremate the body but failed as the victim's family reached the cremation ground and pulled it out from the pyre. The body has been sent for post-mortem.

# 'China, India encountered some setbacks in recent yrs'



The eastern Ladakh border standoff between the Indian and Chinese militaries erupted following a violent clash in the Pangong lake areas and both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry

The tension escalated following a deadly clash in the Galwan Valley June 15, 2020

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process in Gogra as well as in the north and south banks of the Pangong lake last year

India and China held the 14th round of Corps Commander-level meeting January 12 during which the two sides agreed to maintain dialogue through military and diplomatic channels to work out a "mutually acceptable resolution" of the remaining issues of the standoff at eastern Ladakh

AGENCIES

**Beijing, March 7:** China and India have encountered "some setbacks" in the bilateral relations in recent years, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Monday as he called for managing their differences over the boundary issue through equal footing consultations for a "fair and equitable" settlement.

Addressing his annual press conference on the sidelines of the Chinese parliament, Wang also said that some forces have always sought to stoke tensions between China and India, in an apparent reference to the US. "China and India relations have encountered

some setbacks in recent years which do not serve the fundamental interests of the two countries and the two peoples," Wang said in response to a question asked by PTI on the boundary issue and ties between the two neighbours.

"As regards the boundary question, it is left over from history. China has all along advocated managing differences through equal footing consultation and actively seeking a fair and equitable settlement and meanwhile not letting it affect or interfere with bigger picture of bilateral cooperation," he said. China and India should be "partners rather than rivals", said Wang, who is also the State

# Malik gets 14 days' judicial custody

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, March 7:** A Special PMLA Court Monday remanded Maharashtra Minorities Affairs Minister Nawab Malik to judicial custody till March 21 in an alleged money-laundering case arising out of a tainted land deal nearly 20 years ago.

Arrested February 23, Malik was produced before the Special PMLA Judge R.S. Rokade after his extended custody with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for the past 12 days ended Sunday.

At the previous hearing, the ED had informed the Special Court that Malik had allegedly taken only Rs 5 lakh - and not Rs 55 lakh as stated earlier - which was paid to Haseena Parker between 1999-2005, for a property deal in Goawala Compound of Kuria.

The Special Judge extended Malik's custody as the ED argued that they could not interrogate the Minister as he was ill and hospitalised.

The ED in February raided the homes of the kin of absconding

mafia don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar, including his deceased sister Haseena Parker and interrogated his nephew Alishah Parker, in connection with the alleged money-laundering case.

Among other things, the ED had contended that Malik was allegedly involved in a conspiracy hatched with Dawood's gang members to usurp the ancestral property of one Muneera Plumber, with a current estimated market value of Rs 300 crore, which the central agency was a crime under the PMLA.

Later, Malik moved the Bombay High Court challenging his 'illegal arrest' by the ED and seeking immediate release from custody.

He contended that the ED had violated PMLA and CrPC sections by first detaining him from home in the early hours of February 23 and then serving him with the summons at the agency's office.

Malik denied any links with the mafia and argued that the PMLA could not be applied for the alleged offence which was completed over 20 years ago, when the Act did not exist.



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi/Geneva, March 7:** The introduction of SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing Covid-19 infection, to wildlife could result in the establishment of animal reservoirs, which may, in turn, result in the emergence of a new virus variant, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said Monday.

The WHO made the statement jointly with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). It called for prioritising monitoring of SARS-CoV-2 infection in wildlife and preventing the formation of animal reservoirs. Although the Covid pan-

demic is driven by human-to-human transmission, the SARS-CoV-2 virus is also known to infect animal species.

Current knowledge also indicates that wildlife does not play a significant role in the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in humans, but spread in animal populations can affect the health of these populations and may facilitate the emergence of new virus variants.

But, besides domestic animals, free-ranging, captive or farmed wild animals such as big cats, minks, ferrets, North American white-tailed deer, and great apes have been observed to be infected with SARS-CoV-2. In addition, farmed mink and pet hamsters

# SC warns against fake death certificates for Covid compensation

Councilor. Last month, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said that India's relationship with China is right now going through a "very difficult phase" after Beijing violated agreements not to bring military forces to the border.

Speaking at a panel discussion at the Munich Security Conference (MSC) 2022 in Germany, Jaishankar had said that India was having a problem with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Wang said some forces have always sought to stoke tension between China and India and division between regions. "Their attempts have put more and more thoughtful people in reflection and on alert," he said.

"More and more people have come to realise that for China and India, both major countries with a population of over one billion, only by staying independent can we firmly grasp our own destiny and realise our goals of development and rejuvenation," Wang said.

Noting that China and India have a combined population of over 2.8 billion and account for one-third of humanity, and when the two countries active stability and prosperity and living in peace and harmony, global peace and prosperity will have a solid foundation, he said.

China has described as "positive and constructive" the latest round of military-level talks with India and said Beijing will work closely with New Delhi to "properly handle" the border issue, even as it refuted the US allegation of "intimidating" neighbours.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 7:** The Supreme Court Monday expressed concern over fake Covid death certificates being issued by doctors for ex-gratia compensation and observed that it might order a probe into the issue.

A bench of Justices M R Shah and B V Nagarathna also said that there should be some time limit for claims seeking compensation. "What is worrying is the fake certificate given by doctors... It is a very serious thing", the bench observed.

The apex court said that there must be some time limit, otherwise, the process will go endlessly. "Please suggest how can we curb the issue of fake certificates being issued by the doctors. It may take away someone's real opportunity", the bench said. At the outset, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta submitted that there should be an outer time limit for submitting claims.

The Solicitor General submitted that the top court has ordered that an RT-PCR certificate was not

The SC had earlier directed all states govts and UTs to appoint a dedicated nodal officer to coordinate with the member secretary of the state legal service authority (SLSA) to facilitate payment of ex gratia compensation to family members of Covid-19 victims

necessary for compensation and the same can be allowed based on a doctor's certificate. "This relaxation is being misused", he said. The bench sought suggestions on the issue and posted the matter for hearing March 14. The top court had reiterated that applications seeking compensation should not be rejected on technical grounds and if any technical glitch is found, the states concerned should give them an opportunity to cure defects as the ultimate goal of the welfare state is to provide some solace and compensation to victims. The top court was hearing a batch of pleas filed by Gaurav Bansal and intervenors, represented by advocate Sumeer Sodhi, seeking ex-gratia assistance to family members of Covid-19 victims.

# Centre focus on expeditious framework for Black Money Act

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 7:** Considering the objective of the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015 (BM Act), the assessment is to be completed at the earliest possible without keeping the same pending till the time barring date, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said in a set of guidelines issues earlier.

Before passing the assessment order, show cause notice would be issued by DDIT (Inv)/ADIT (Inv)/AO concerned to the assessee within 30 days of receipt of substantial information from all sources including relevant foreign jurisdiction(s) and completion of such further inquiries as may be required.

Thereafter, the DDIT (Inv./ADIT (Inv) concerned as AO should put up a draft of the assessment order for administrative approval of Addi DIT(Inv)/JDIT(Inv) concerned within 30 days of receipt of the assessee's reply or elapse of the time allowed for the assessee's reply under the show cause notice where there is no response from the assessee's side, whichever is earlier, the guidelines said.

Focus of the BM Act is on criminal consequences i.e. prosecutions as the options of compounding and ITSC, which are there in the Income-tax Act, are not there in the BM Act.

An undisclosed asset located outside India shall be charged to tax on its value in the previous year in which such asset comes to the notice of the Assessing Officer.

## LAST MINUTE REVISION



Students of Class X revise their lessons before appearing for the first exam of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE) outside an examination centre in Kolkata

# Over 65pc polling till 5pm in Majuli by-poll

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, March 7:** An estimated 65.16 per cent of 1,33,227 voters exercised their franchise in the by-election to Majuli (ST) assembly constituency till 5 pm Monday to decide the fate of three candidates, the state election office said.

The turnout was expected to rise as people who had entered the

polling stations by 5 pm will cast their vote. The final poll percentage was expected to be available by tonight or Tuesday.

Polling was peaceful with no untoward incident reported from any of the 203 polling stations with the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel maintaining a strict vigil in Majuli, the world's largest river island. Brisk voting

continued through the day with the officials ensuring that strict Covid protocols were maintained.

The by-election to the constituency was necessitated after former Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal resigned from the assembly.

Sonowal was elected to the Rajya Sabha on September 27 last year and is now serving as Union

minister for ports and shipping. The former Chief Minister was elected to the state legislative assembly from Majuli constituency for two consecutive terms in 2016 and 2021.

Wearing of masks and social distancing at polling stations were made mandatory. Thermal scanning facility was available at each booth.

# Cov in wildlife threatens emergence of new virus variant: WHO

CURRENT KNOWLEDGE ALSO INDICATES THAT WILDLIFE DOES NOT PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE SPREAD OF SARS-COV-2 IN HUMANS, BUT SPREAD IN ANIMAL POPULATIONS CAN AFFECT THE HEALTH OF THESE POPULATIONS & MAY FACILITATE THE EMERGENCE OF NEW VIRUS VARIANTS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



Representational image

The WHO made the statement jointly with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). It called for prioritising monitoring of SARS-CoV-2 infection in wildlife and preventing the formation of animal reservoirs. Although the Covid pan-

demic is driven by human-to-human transmission, the SARS-CoV-2 virus is also known to infect animal species.

Current knowledge also indicates that wildlife does not play a significant role in the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in humans, but spread in animal populations can affect the health of these populations and may facilitate the emergence of new virus variants.

But, besides domestic animals, free-ranging, captive or farmed wild animals such as big cats, minks, ferrets, North American white-tailed deer, and great apes have been observed to be infected with SARS-CoV-2. In addition, farmed mink and pet hamsters

have shown to be capable of infecting humans with the Covid

while a potential case of transmission between white-tailed deer

and a human is currently under review.

The FAO, OIE and WHO called on all countries to take steps to reduce the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission between humans and wildlife "with the aim of reducing the risk of variant emergence and for protecting both humans and wildlife".

The organisations urged authorities to adopt relevant regulations and recommend personnel working closely with wildlife to be trained to implement measures that reduce the risk of transmission between people and between people and animals. The guidelines include the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and good

hygiene practices around animals, including good hygiene practices for hunters and butchers.

While there is no evidence to back that eating meat can cause Covid, hunters should not track animals that appear sick or harvest those that are found dead, the statement read.

"Appropriate butchering and food preparing techniques, including proper hygiene practices, can limit transmission of coronaviruses, including SARS-CoV-2, and other zoonotic pathogens," it added. The organisations also urged countries to suspend the sale of captured live wild mammals in food markets as an emergency measure.

BAJRANG DAL ACTIVIST MURDER CASE

TN GIRL'S SUICIDE

# UAPA invoked against 10

HARSHA, A 28-YEAR-OLD BAJRANG DAL ACTIVIST, WAS HACKED TO DEATH FEB 20, TRIGGERING VIOLENCE IN THE DISTRICT OF SHIVAMOGGA



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, March 7:** The Karnataka government has invoked the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) against 10 accused persons in Bajrang Dal activist murder case, police sources said Monday. The government is also considering handing over the case to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), once the local police complete their probe.

The UAPA is invoked in cases involving threats to national security and national integrity. The police after considering larger conspiracy behind the murder of Harsha have decided to invoke UAPA. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said it is a case of more than a murder and there is more than what meets the eyes. The UAPA enables the police to secure the custody of the accused for 30 days and provides time to the investigating officer to file the charge sheet in 180 days instead of 90 days in normal cases. Harsha,

a 28-year-old Bajrang Dal activist was hacked to death February 20, triggering violence in the district of Shivamogga.

Meanwhile, Karnataka Home Minister Araga Jnanendra clarified that there is no proposal before the government to ban the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) and Popular Front of India (PFI). BJP leaders and Hindutva activists have vehemently demanded that these two organisations should be banned.

The Karnataka government has handed over compensation of ₹25 lakh to the family of Harsha. Police sources say Harsha was hacked to death with an agenda. The deceased was in the forefront with Hindutva related activities and actively posted messages on social platforms against wearing of hijab. Though, the police maintained that there is no connection with the hijab row with the murder, later, Home Minister Araga Jnanendra stated that the angle is being probed by the agencies.

## K'taka CID to probe 'celebratory' posts

**Dakshina Kannada:** The Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the special investigation agency of the Karnataka Police, has taken over the probe of 'Mangalore Muslims' Facebook page case, on which posts surfaced celebrating the murder of Bjarng Dal activist Harsha in Shivamogga district last month. The decision to transfer the case to CID was taken after considering the law and order implications and the involvement of individuals in other states and other countries. The CID will have no jurisdictional issues as well as it will have infrastructure to deal with the case.

The miscreants had also posted threatening messages to a news anchor and made a derogatory statement against a sitting state minister. The posts have gone viral and post Harsha murder, the messages raised tensions all over the state. The local Cyber, Economics and Narcotics Crimes (CEN) police filed a case in this connection.

The local police have sought details from Facebook regarding the page. The police department had taken two police constables into custody for liking the page and later released them. The case

was also booked against the 'Mangaluru Muslims Page' in 2016 for posting derogatory messages on Goddess Kateel Sridevi. Then, the police approached the Mumbai office of Facebook and after getting consent from the court, the page was blocked.

The miscreants have changed the name of the page from Mangaluru Muslims to Mangalore Muslims and continued to post objectionable posts. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Hariram Shankar has confirmed that the case has been handed over to CID.

Karnataka Police have established a social media monitoring center at the Mangaluru Police Commissioner's office to monitor social media posts and accounts which cause disharmony, provoke people in the society in coastal Karnataka region.

The cell has taken shape in the backdrop of hijab row, which has led to publish provoking messages causing communal disharmony, especially in the communally sensitive coastal region comprising Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada and Udupi districts with focus to Mangaluru city. The cell is already monitoring more than 1,000 social media accounts.

# NCPCR PROBE FINDS SCHOOL, COPS GUILTY

The NCPCR had received around 3,545 complaints regarding the matter to initiate a probe and bring out the truth

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 7:** The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has found shocking facts in its probe conducted in connection with the suicide of a 17-year-old class 12 student of Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu. The school authorities allegedly tried to conceal the real reason that she was being forced to convert to Christianity.

The NCPCR has found that there was a possibility of tampering with the evidence by the school authorities and the crime scene was not sealed. The warden of the building, an accused, was not taken there to recreate the crime scene. It was a major lapse of the police.

There might exist a possibility of tampering with the evidence in the absence of proper compliance with due procedure of law. It was also observed that the alleged crime scene was not sealed and cordoned off for the purpose of the investigation by the local police, read the report of the NCPCR accessed by IANS.

The report read that the police had failed to identify the person who sold the girl the chemical substance. The NCPCR officials found that the school did not have any separate rooms and accommodation for the stay of children and that the hall in which the deceased girl was



The probe has also raised questions about the intentions of the Tamil Nadu Police

staying had been cleaned and necessary items like furniture, books, clothes, belongings of children etc were not there. The NCPCR report has suggested that the local police didn't do a fair probe and did not follow due procedure.

The Children Home where the girl stayed, didn't take her to hospital and waited for her parents. Before she was allowed to be taken to a hospital, the school authorities collected the fee from her mother, said a source quoting the report.

The NCPCR got to know that the school was cooking up stories that the deceased was having a step mother who forced her to take extreme step.

The NCPCR was made aware how the minor girl was made to do official work of the CCI (school committee) by the warden like book keeping, accounting, store management etc and other work like

cleaning the premises, washing toilets, opening the door etc. It was observed that the investigating authorities were somewhere trying to conceal material facts pertaining to the care given to the child while she was staying in the CCI and also ignored all the pleas made by the family to investigate regarding the minor being forced to convert to Christianity, read the report.

The NCPCR had January 20, written a letter to the DGP, Tamil Nadu to initiate a probe into the matter and take action against the guilty persons. But the Tamil Nadu police didn't respond to the NCPCR. The NCPCR had received around 3,545 complaints regarding the matter to initiate a probe and bring out the truth.

The NCPCR formed a committee of three officials which visited Thanjavur, in the last week of January. The team gathered relevant documents from the authorities and parents of the girl. The CBI had February 15 lodged an FIR in the case. The victim in an unverified video had alleged that she was being forced to convert to Christianity by her school authorities.

# ASSEMBLY SESSION TO RESUME, GOVT TO TABLE ANTI-CONVERSION BILL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, March 7:** The ruling BJP government is all set to table the controversial anti-conversion Bill in the Karnataka Assembly session, which will resume Monday. The Bill is likely to be tabled in the last leg of the ongoing session. The Budget Session, which began March 4, will continue till March 30.

The anti-conversion Bill, which was tabled and passed in the state Legislature Assembly, is yet to be presented before the Legislative Council. The BJP attempted to present it on the last day of the winter session in Belagavi, however, as the opposition raised a strong objection for presenting the bill in the council without bringing it first on the agenda. The council session ended after witnessing a high drama.

The government, though prepared to get the Bill passed in the session held in February, the plan was dropped after the Congress resorted to day-night protest in the midst of the session demanding sacking of the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister KS Eshwarappa for his remarks on hoisting saffron flag



on the Red Fort.

However, BJP is all set to present and get the Bill passed in the council this time. The Bill is likely to be passed in the council, as BJP has sufficient numbers. Meanwhile, the opposition Congress and JD(S) are all set to swoop down on the government during the discussion on the Budget in the state Assembly.

The Congress, which completed the Mekedatu Padayatra, is claiming that it has forced the BJP to allot ₹1,000 crore for building the reservoir. The opposition party is demanding BJP to reserve ₹5,000 crore for the project. CM Bommai, who had presented the maiden Budget, is expected to face a litmus test in the assembly facing the opposition in the election year.

# PMK urges Stalin to call all-party meet

This is following Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai's recent statement of his efforts to construct a dam at Mekedatu at a cost of ₹1,000 crore

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, March 7:** Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) Youth Wing leader and former Union Minister Anbumani Ramadoss has urged Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, MK Stalin to convene an all-party meet with immediate effect to discuss the Mekedatu dam issue. This is following Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai's recent statement of his efforts to construct a dam at Mekedatu at a cost of ₹1,000 crore.

Ramadoss in a statement said that the Karnataka Chief Minister had already issued a statement that he was travelling to New Delhi to meet Union Water Resources Minister Gajendra Shekhawat in this regard and get approval for the project.

Ramadoss said that the statements of Karnataka Chief Minister Bommai and that of



Union Water Resources Minister in the past few days mean that some moves have been made regarding the Mekedatu dam.

He also said that even as the Mekedatu Dam issue is under consideration of the Supreme Court of India, the statements of Karnataka Chief Minister and Union Water Resources Minister are not in the right spirit. He called upon the Tamil Nadu government to take cognizance of the matter.

The former Union Minister also cited the example of Karnataka

## MEKEDATU DAM ISSUE

constructing a dam across 'Thenpennai river' even though they did not have the right to do so.

The construction of a dam across Cauvery river at Mekedatu has been a bone of contention between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka with the former moving the Supreme Court against the proposed construction. An all-party delegation led by Tamil Nadu Water Resources minister, S Duraimurugan had met Union Minister for Water Resources Gajendra Singh Shekhawat against the proposed dam.

## COVID CRISIS

# Pvt schools not to press for branded shoes & uniforms

There are 19,645 private schools in the state in which 45.71 lakh students are enrolled. Classes for 2022-23 academic year are slated to commence from May 14

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, March 7:** Associated managements of private schools in Karnataka (KAMS) have decided not to force parents to purchase branded shoes and school uniforms like earlier for their children to give them a relief from financial strain in the wake of Covid-19 crisis.

At the same time, it has also decided to support the 'Make in India' concept.

D Shashikumar, KAMS General Secretary, told IANS Monday that the decision was taken at the office-bearers' meeting. Until now, the private schools insisted on purchasing uniforms, shoes and other materials from the prescribed showrooms or agencies only.

Most of the times, the schools recommended the purchase of big brands which caused additional burden to parents. This has even led to confrontation between school managements and parents as well. However, school managements have decided not to pressure the parents considering the financial crisis in the current scenario.

Shashikumar stated that the parents this time would be encouraged to purchase indigenous products which are much reasonable than the branded ones. A few

schools have themselves come forward with the proposal of loosening their rigid stand and we encourage it. They have realised the situation after Covid and it is a good gesture.

There are 19,645 private schools in the state in which 45.71 lakh students are enrolled. Classes for 2022-23 academic year are slated to commence from May 14.

Shashikumar has stated that the schools which come under KAMS are not supposed to direct parents to make purchases from the prescribed agency or shop. The school managements, which have already started offline classes in a full-fledged manner, are gearing up for the next academic year. Many schools have decided to cut short summer holidays to make up for the learning loss caused during Covid pandemic in the last two years. The decision of KAMS has been welcomed by parents.



## GREEN BRICK INITIATIVE

# Deposit plastic waste & pocket money in Coimbatore

CCMC officials said that the idea evolved after the Vellalore dump yard in Coimbatore district crossed the 1,000 tonne-mark

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, March 7:** The Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation (CCMC) has come up with a novel idea to dispose of plastic waste - deposit 'Green Bricks' and earn money.

The corporation in association with NGOs like Resident Awareness Association of Coimbatore (RAAC) and Rotary Club of Coimbatore Texcity has launched the 'Green Brick Initiative'.

A senior official of the CCMC said that to make a 'Green Brick',



crush and stuff dry plastic wrappers in a one or two-litre plastic bottle and push the waste to the bottom of the bottle until it becomes rock solid. Bottles that are less than one litre are rejected.

Interestingly each 'Green Brick' that weighs around 4 to 5 kg fetches ₹5.

The CCMC has opened 12 collection centres across the city and people can drop the 'Green Bricks' at these centres every Saturday till February 26, 2023.

The CCMC officials said that the idea evolved after the Vellalore dump yard in Coimbatore district crossed the 1,000 tonne-mark. The

Each 'Green Brick' that weighs around 4 to 5 kg fetches ₹5

CCMC has opened 12 collection centres across the city and people can drop the 'Green Bricks' at these centres every Saturday till February 26

The 'Green Bricks' would be used for building benches and compound walls across the city

'Green Bricks', according to the officials, would be used for building benches and compound walls across the city.

Rajagopal Swaminathan, Secretary, Kovai Green initiative, an NGO based out of Coimbatore said, "This is one of the best measures taken by the CCMC and this would lead to a lot of plastic waste

being concentrated into one place and can be value-added for making benches and compound walls. The menace of plastic waste can be reduced by this novel concept."

People of the area are also happy as they can dispose of the waste and get a small amount of money in return.

Madhumitha, a student of Class 12 in a government school of Coimbatore told IANS, "I have collected plastic waste, including rappers and such other wastes and filled bottles with it converting into a 'Green Brick'. Coming Saturday I will put 20 green bricks in the collection centre and will get ₹100 as pocket money. It's interesting."

The Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation is planning to have more collection centres and has already roped in a few corporates to fund the project from their CSR support initiatives.



## of the day quote

Some of my friends had advised me that he could become the President or Vice President so I should keep quiet. But, I told them I don't care about these positions

SATYA PAL MALIK | MEGHALAYA GOVERNOR

The government has comprehensively ensured there is cohesive and consistent engagement with institutes of higher learning across the country so that more and more scientific minds, particularly women, find enough capital and mentorship support for scientific discovery

SMRITI IRANI | UNION MINISTER

The Aam Aadmi School Clinics are an extension of Mohalla Clinics and have been started with the aim of providing biannual health checkups to our school students. Apart from this, for the first time, the focus will be laid on mental well-being along with physical health. A healthy mind will contribute to a healthy society and ultimately a healthier nation

MANISH SIDOSIA | DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Priyanka meets Ashok Gehlot

**Jaipur:** Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra arrived in Jaipur Monday to discuss the post-poll scenario with Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, ahead of the Assembly poll results in five states March 10. The Congress general secretary, who was accompanied by party leader Rajeev Shukla, was received by Gehlot, state Congress chief Govind Singh Dotasra and others at the airport here. Asked about speculation that the party might shift some of its leaders who would emerge victorious in the five state Assembly polls to Jaipur to prevent them from being "poached", Gandhi sought to downplay it, saying it is a matter of the future.

### Maoist leader nabbed in Assam

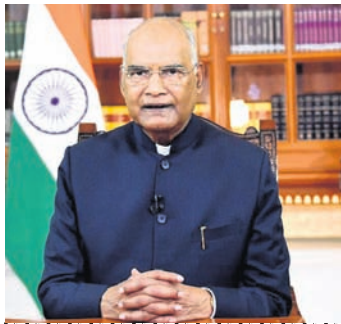
**Guwahati:** Veteran CPI (Maoist) leader and a member of its central committee, Arun Kumar Bhattacharjee, known by his nom de guerre 'Kanchan Da', was arrested in Cachar district of Assam, a top police officer said Monday. He was nabbed from a tea garden under Udharbond police station on Sunday evening along with one of his associates Akash Orang alias Rahul, Guwahati Police Commissioner Harmeet Singh told a press conference here.

### UP polls: 54.18% voting recorded

**Lucknow:** Over 54 per cent voter turnout was recorded till 5 pm in the seventh and last phase of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections for 54 seats Monday. Voting started at 7 am. It ended at 4 pm in Chakia (Chandauli), Robertsganj and the Duddhi (Sonbhadra) seats, while in the rest of the segments, it continued till 6 pm. The districts where polls are underway in this phase are Azamgarh, Mau, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Chandauli, Varanasi, Mirzapur, Bhadohi and Sonbhadra.

### 2 miners rescued in coal mine mishap

**Hyderabad:** Two of the five people, who were trapped after the roof of an underground coal mine run by Singareni Collieries Company Ltd in Peddapalli district collapsed Monday, were rescued. An over man and an operator were rescued, company sources said.



**We must give our sisters and daughters opportunities to realise their potential and hence contribute in nation-building**  
RAM NATH KOVIND | PRESIDENT OF INDIA

## MADE FOR EACH OTHER

The country's youngest Mayor, Arya Rajendran got engaged to Kerala's youngest legislator, Sachin Dev Sunday at the state headquarters of the ruling CPM, AKG Centre



## UKRAINE CRISIS

# War to cost India's military capabilities dearly

*The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine and the sanctions imposed on Russia by Western and European Nations to delay the delivery of critical projects Indian armed forces were looking upon to enhance its capabilities*



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 7:** The war between Russia and Ukraine is likely to cost India's military capabilities dearly with delivery of many platforms like nuclear powered submarine, Grigorovich class frigates, Fighter jets, Triumph S-400, AK 203 assault rifle and others are expected to be delayed.

As soon as the war began February 24, both India and Russia maintained there would be no delays with respect to deliveries of critical platforms but with sanction im-

posed and the possibility of the war continuing for long, it will have a major impact.

India decided to upgrade its military infrastructure when the country was locked in a major faceoff with China along the Line of Actual Control in July 2020. The threat of two-front war - from China and Pakistan - has made India to go for large scale arms deals.

According to Swedish think-tank - Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report in 2021, Russia is still one of India's largest arms suppliers.

India's defence ministry has recently reviewed the status of the current deals with Russia and how the war is going to impact the Indian military capabilities.

In December 2021, India and Russia signed more than two dozen deals across a variety of sectors and had also inked a 10-year defence co-operation pact.

Back then, in a joint statement, India and Russia stated they intend to "upgrade the defence co-operation, including facilitating joint development and production of military equipment, compo-

ment and spare parts, enhancing the after-sales service system, progress towards mutual recognition of quality control and regular joint exercises of the Armed Forces of the two countries".

One of the deals with Russia is the Triumph S-400 air defence system. India signed a \$5 billion deal with Russia in October 2018 to buy five units of the S-400 surface to air missile system. Russia has stated that it will deliver on time. However, the war will delay the same.

S-400 air defence system is a mobile long range surface to air missile system which is considered one of the most lethal in the world. It can take down multiple targets up to a range of 400 km.

Indian Army had also inked a deal with Russia to jointly develop the AK 203 assault rifle worth Rs 5,000 crore. The production of 6.71 lakh AK 203 rifles in Korwa, Amethi in Uttar Pradesh as part of a joint venture with Russia under the Make in India project will face further delays despite the deal having faced hurdles and delays earlier.

In 2019, India signed a \$3 billion

deal with Russia for leasing a nuclear-powered submarine. The Chakra III, Akula class submarine is expected to be delivered by 2025 for a period of 10 years. This will be the third nuclear submarine India will take on lease from Russia, the other two being in 1988 for a period of three years and then in 2012 for 10 years. The lease for this will end this year.

The deal to get four Grigorovich class frigates was signed between Russia's state-run arms exporter Rosoboronexport and Goa Shipyard Ltd in 2018. Two frigates for the Indian Navy worth \$1 billion were to be manufactured in Russia and the other two in Goa. The delivery was supposed to start within four years of signing of the contract.

The arms and ammunition deals with Russia also includes procurement of additional 21 MiG-29 for the Indian Air Force (IAF), upgradation of existing 59 MiG-29 aircraft at an estimated cost of Rs 7,418 crore and purchase of 12 Su-30 MKI aircraft for Rs 10,730 crore to be built at the state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

## Indian student who was shot in Kyiv arrives in Delhi



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 7:** Indian student Harjot Singh, who was shot in Ukrainian capital Kyiv a few days ago, landed at the Hindon airbase here Monday evening, with his family heaving a sigh of relief after seeing him alive.

The 31-year-old student, who had received four bullets, including one in chest, was immediately taken to the Army Hospital (Research And Referral) in an ambulance from the airport. His family members, who came to receive him at the Hindon airbase with bouquets, followed the ambulance in their car.

Minister of State for Civil Aviation V K Singh, who was in Poland to facilitate the evacuation of Indian students, told reporters, "The Indian embassy in Ukraine evacuated Harjot and his condition is stable. Harjot has been sent to the Army Hospital (Research And Referral) as no one is better than Army in treating bullet wounds."

In a tweet, he said, "I am happy to inform you that we have landed at Hindon Airforce Station. All 205 Indian students are back safe and sound. Harjot is under transfer to the Army Hospital (R&R). I thank the crew for taking care of us." At the airport, anxious family members of Harjot Singh heaved a sigh of relief after catching a glimpse of him.

On February 27, Harjot, along with his two friends, boarded a cab for the western Ukrainian city of Lviv in a bid to escape Kyiv. He received four bullets. He contacted his family four days later.

The Ministry of External Affairs Friday announced that the government had decided to bear the medical expenses of Harjot Singh.

# HIGH DRAMA IN WB ASSEMBLY



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, March 7:** High drama was witnessed on the first day of the budget session of the West Bengal assembly Monday as Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar was forced to table his inaugural address with BJP MLAs staging a protest in the House over alleged violence in the recently concluded civic elections in the state.

Dhankhar, who arrived at the assembly at 2 PM to deliver the inaugural address, could not do it as BJP legislators carrying posters and photographs of alleged victims of civic poll violence came down to the well to stage a protest.

The governor was seen pleading with the BJP MLAs to let the proceedings begin but the saffron MLAs remained adamant. They raised 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' slogans. As the governor was about to leave the House, ruling party MLAs including Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee requested him to stay, following which Dhankhar again urged the BJP lawmakers to calm down, but in vain. TMC members also raised anti-BJP slogans from 2.26 PM onwards.

Irritated over the protest,

Dhankhar thrice tried to leave the House but his way was blocked by TMC legislators. The high drama and disruption of proceedings continued till 3 PM.

Following repeated requests by the treasury bench, Dhankhar tabled his speech and left.

Later, the Chief Minister said that the BJP's protest was aimed at creating constitutional unrest but it was averted as the governor accepted her request to table his speech. "What BJP did today in the assembly is a shame for democracy. It is unprecedented. The saffron party wanted to create a constitutional crisis. We requested the governor to read at least one line from his speech and table it in the House. He kept our request. We are thankful to him," she told reporters.

LoP and BJP's Nandigram MLA Suvendu Adhikari said that opposition members wanted to register their protest against alleged incidents of violence and rigging during the civic polls. In July last year, Dhankhar was forced to cut short his inaugural address to the newly constituted assembly amid protests by opposition BJP against alleged post-poll violence in the state.

## JOVIAL MOOD



Women celebrate with colours, a day before International Women's Day in Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

# Maha passes Bills to postpone civic polls sans OBC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 7:** In a major political development, the Maharashtra Legislature Monday unanimously passed two bills to defer the upcoming elections to the civic and local bodies till the OBC quotas are restored in the state.

The two bills are the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act, the Maharashtra Municipal Corporations Act, the Maharashtra Municipal Councils, Nagar Panchayats & Industrial Townships (Amendment) Bill 2022, and the Maharashtra Gram Panchayats Act, 1959, and the Maharashtra Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samitis (Amendment) Bill 2022.

Under these amendments, the



Maharashtra State Election Commission (SEC)'s powers to delimit and fix the wards is proposed to be cancelled and the government shall be empowered to decide delimitation of wards and fix the number of members in these bodies. The SEC will decide the poll schedules for the civic and

local bodies elections in consultation with the state government.

With the new amendments, a majority of the civic bodies whose tenures are ending will be handed over to Administrators, who will govern till the elections are held.

The development came after the Supreme Court March 3, rejected

the Maharashtra State Backward Classes Commission's interim report recommending restoration of the 27 per cent political reservations to the OBC communities, proving a setback to the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government of Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress. The move, supported by the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, assumes significance as 15 top civic bodies including BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), 25 Zilla Parishads, and 232 Municipal Councils were slated to go for elections shortly. The bills are likely to get the Governor's assent immediately considering the interests of the OBCs and since the ruling and Opposition have also jointly supported it.

# Indian students stranded in Sumy see 'no ray of hope'

AROUND 700 INDIAN STUDENTS ARE STRANDED IN SUMY, WHICH HAS BEEN WITNESSING INTENSE FIGHTING BETWEEN RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN TROOPS FOR DAYS NOW

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 7:** "It has been 10 days (since) we have been waiting here but there is no ray of hope (as to) when we will be evacuated," says a distraught Indian medical student stranded in the embattled northeastern Ukrainian city of Sumy in a video message.

There is no power, no water supply and shops are refusing to accept cards, even though ATMs have run out of cash, said the Sumy State University student.

"We are not able to buy even food and essential items," she said. Another Indian student stranded in Sumy, Aashiq Hussain Sarkar, told PTI, "Our willpower is going down. We are feeling demoralised. We are still waiting for an update." Ajith Gangadharan, a fourth-



year medical student, said, "We were almost ready to leave on foot. The government asked us to stay put and not take any risk so we stayed back. But for how long?"

Exasperated, the Indian students in Sumy had Saturday posted a video clip announcing that they

had decided to risk the walk to the Russian border in biting cold amid the fighting, raising fears about their safety in the corridors of power in New Delhi. Soon after the video went viral, the Indian government asked the students to remain in shelters and assured

them they will be rescued soon.

Melting snow to slake their thirst and fast running out of supplies, hundreds of Indian students trapped in Sumy stand on roads every morning hoping "today is the day" when they will be rescued from the savagery of the war that has engulfed Ukraine.

The wait, however, has got longer as fierce fighting blocks their way to safety across the Russian border. Over the last few days, the students have been sending SOS messages and posting videos on social media, pleading for their urgent evacuation.

The Indian embassy in Ukraine has said a team from the mission has been stationed in Poltava city to coordinate the safe passage of the Indian students in Sumy to western borders via Poltava, and ad-

vised them to be ready to leave at short notice.

The war in Ukraine has gone on for over 10 days without any indication of humanitarian corridors getting created for the passage of foreign nationals to safety.

To evacuate its citizens from war-hit Ukraine, the Indian government has launched 'Operation Ganga' under which thousands of stranded people, mostly students, have been evacuated from nations bordering Ukraine's western frontiers. However, the evacuation from the eastern part remains a challenge.

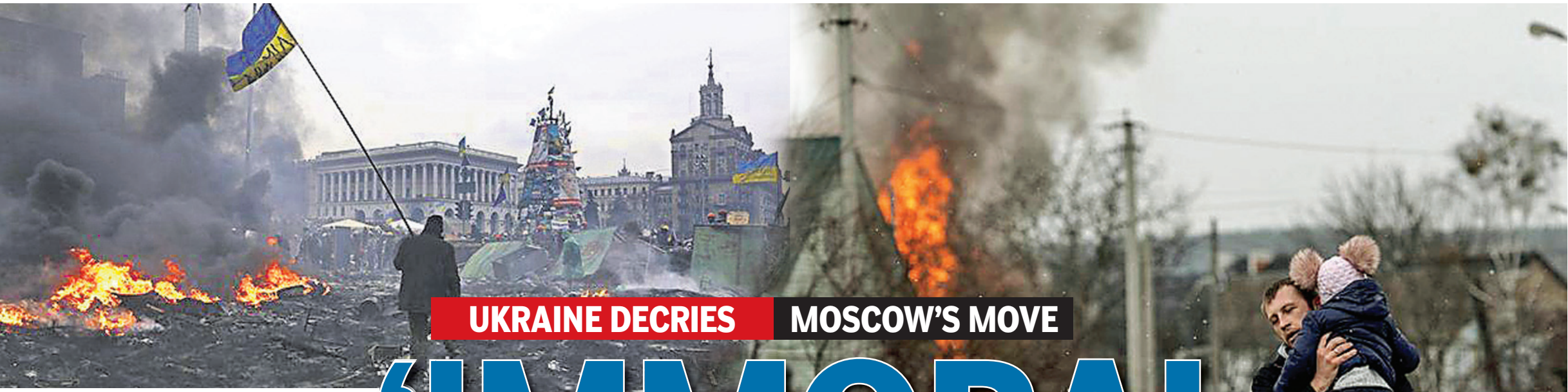
Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday sought to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and sought his "support" in evacuation of Indian students stuck in Sumy.

**POLAND TO SET UP \$1.75 BILLION FUND**

The Polish government plans to create an 8 billion zloty (\$1.75 billion) fund to help war refugees from Ukraine, a government official said Monday. The United Nations estimates more than 1.5 million people have fled Ukraine since Russia attacked its neighbour Feb 24. More than 1 million have crossed the border into Poland. Many thousands have been hosted across the country, but the aid effort has been predominantly shouldered by non-governmental organizations, volunteers and municipalities



# international



**UKRAINE DECRIES MOSCOW'S MOVE**

# 'IMMORAL STUNT'

Russia's invasion of Ukraine entered its 12th day following what Ukrainian authorities described as increased shelling of encircled cities and another failed attempt to start evacuating hundreds of thousands of civilians from the besieged southern port of Mariupol. The United Nations' human rights office said Monday it had confirmed the deaths of 406 civilians, including 27 children since the beginning of invasion. Russia has acknowledged nearly 500 deaths among its soldiers

REUTERS

**Lviv/Kyiv, March 7:** Russia announced new "humanitarian corridors" Monday to transport Ukrainians trapped under its bombardment - to Russia itself and its ally Belarus, a move immediately denounced by Kyiv as an immoral stunt.

The announcement came after two days of failed ceasefires to let civilians flee the besieged city of Mariupol, where hundreds of thou-

sands of people are trapped without food and water, under relentless bombardment and unable to evacuate their wounded.

The new "corridors" would be opened at 10 am Moscow time (0700 GMT) from the capital Kyiv and

**This is one of the problems that is causing the humanitarian corridors to break down. They seem to agree to them, but they themselves want to supply humanitarian aid for a picture on TV, and want the corridors to lead in their direction**

SPOKESPERSON FOR UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

the eastern cities of Kharkiv and Sumy, as well as Mariupol, Russia's defence ministry said.

According to maps published by the RIA news agency, the corridor from Kyiv would lead to Belarus, while civilians from Kharkiv would be permitted to go only to Russia. Russia would also mount an airlift to take Ukrainians from Kyiv to Russia, the ministry said.

"Attempts by the Ukrainian side to deceive Russia and the whole civilised world ... are useless this time," the ministry said.

Talk of humanitarian corridors comes after failed cease-fires

Ukraine says Russian forces preparing assault on Kyiv

Zelensky warns next big target could be Odessa, an historic Black Sea port of 1 million people

A spokesperson for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called the move "completely immoral" and said Russia was trying to "use people's suffering to create a television picture".

"They are citizens of Ukraine, they should have the right to evacuate to the territory of Ukraine," the spokesperson told Reuters.

Russia's invasion has been condemned around the world, sent

more than 1.5 million Ukrainians fleeing abroad, and triggered sweeping sanctions that have isolated Russia to a degree never before experienced by such a large economy.

Russia denies deliberately targeting civilians. It calls the campaign it launched Feb 24 a "special military operation" to disarm Ukraine and remove leaders it calls neo-Nazis. Ukraine and its Western allies call this a transparent pretext for an invasion to conquer a nation of 44 million people.

The general staff of Ukraine's armed forces said Russian forces were "beginning to accumulate resources for the storming of Kyiv", a city of more than 3 million, after days of slow progress in their main advance south from Belarus.

## Kremlin: Will stop 'in a moment' if conditions met



**IT WAS THE MOST EXPLICIT RUSSIAN STATEMENT SO FAR OF THE TERMS IT WANTS TO IMPOSE ON UKRAINE TO HALT WHAT IT CALLS ITS "SPECIAL MILITARY OPERATION" IN UKRAINE**

**LONDON:** Russia is demanding that Ukraine cease military action, change its constitution to enshrine neutrality, acknowledge Crimea as Russian territory and recognise the separatist republics of Donetsk and Lugansk as independent territories, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. Peskov told Reuters that Russia had told Ukraine it was ready to halt its military action "in a moment" if Kyiv met its conditions. He said Ukraine was aware of the conditions. "And they were

told that all this can be stopped in a moment."

On the issue of neutrality, he said: "They should make amendments to the constitution according to which Ukraine would reject any aims to enter any bloc. This is possible only by making changes to the constitution."

The Kremlin spokesman insisted Russia was not seeking to make any further territorial claims on Ukraine.

"We really are finishing the demilitarisation of Ukraine. We will finish it. But the main thing is that Ukraine ceases its military action. They should stop their military action and then no one will shoot," he said.

"They should make amendments to their constitution according to which Ukraine would reject any aims to enter any bloc. We have also spoken about how they should recognise that Crimea is Russian territory and that they need to recognise that Donetsk and Lugansk are independent states. And that's it. It will stop in a moment," Peskov told Reuters.

## RUSSIA DECLINES TO ATTEND WAR HEARING AT UN COURT



AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE

**The Hague:** Russia declined to attend a hearing at the UN's top court Monday at which Ukraine is asking for an immediate order to halt the conflict, the

head judge said.

"The court regrets the non-appearance of the Russian Federation in these oral proceedings," International Court of Justice President Joan Donoghue said.

The Russian ambassador to the

Netherlands, Alexander Shulgin, wrote to the court and "indicated that his government did not intend to participate," she said.

Ukraine's representative at the court in The Hague, Anton Korynevych, criticised Russia for not showing up at the ICJ's Peace Palace headquarters.

"The fact that Russia's seats are empty speaks loudly. They are not here in this court of law, they are on a battlefield, waging aggressive war against my country," he said. "This is how Russia solves disputes." Kyiv lodged an urgent case at the ICJ February 27, saying that Russia had illegally justified its war by falsely alleging genocide in Ukraine's Donetsk and Lugansk regions.

Ukraine has asked the court to take provisional measures ordering Russia to "immediately suspend the military operations", pending a full judgment that could take years.

Korynevych added that the court "has a responsibility to act."

### Are we your slaves: Pak PM

Pakistani PM Imran Khan hit out Sunday at Islamabad-based Western envoys who last week urged Pakistan to condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine. The heads of 22 diplomatic missions, including those of European Union member states, released a joint letter March 1 urging Pakistan to support a resolution in the UN General Assembly condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The move to release the letter publicly was rare. "What do you think of us? Are we your slaves...that whatever you say, we will do," Imran Khan said while addressing a political rally. "I want to ask the European Union ambassadors, did you write such a letter to India?" Imran Khan said, noting that Pakistan's arch-rival had also abstained.



### UK rejects opening borders

Prime Minister Boris Johnson rejected calls Monday for Britain to ease visa demands on Ukrainian refugees fleeing conflict, saying Britain was a generous country but it needed to maintain checks on who was arriving. The British government has been condemned by charities, opposition lawmakers and France after its insistence that refugees first acquire a visa meant some Ukrainians have been stuck in the French city of Calais, unable to enter Britain, and provoking a diplomatic row.



### A marriage on battlefield

The war in Ukraine has killed thousands, and uprooted millions from their homes. Amidst this chaos, the story of a couple getting married on the frontlines, donned in military uniform and serenaded by soldiers, is winning the internet. Videos circulating on social media platforms show the pair - Lesya and Valeriy - who are with the territorial defence, celebrating the nuptials near Kyiv. Lesya can be seen holding a bouquet of flowers and both have champagne flute glasses in their hands.



### Violinist plays in bomb shelter

Ukrainians have been living underground since the invasion began. Now, a powerful video has surfaced, which shows a violinist performing in a bomb shelter amid the attacks. The video has moved the social media users, who claimed that the young girl is playing Ukrainian song "Nich Yaka Misyachna (what a moonlit night)". This is yet another video showing how Ukrainians are overcoming the fear of bombing and living their lives. The users on social media have called the video of the violinist "hauntingly powerful" and it has been viewed 1.3 million times on Twitter.



## Ukraine, we won't desert you!: Protests sweep Europe

Moscow's assault on its pro-Western neighbour February 24 has sparked global condemnation and an outpouring of solidarity with Kyiv as the West inflicts harsh sanctions, some directed against Russian President Vladimir Putin himself

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Brussels:** Thousands of demonstrators Sunday took to the streets in cities across Europe for the second weekend running to protest against Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Rallies were again organised across



the continent following demonstrations Saturday to denounce Russia's actions and demand an end to the conflict.

In Brussels, police said around 5,000 people took part in a rally marked by a sea of Ukrainian flags and chants of "Russians, go home!", "No to war" and "Europe, be brave, act now!".

Protesters in the French city of Toulouse - which is twinned with Ukraine's capital Kyiv - assembled behind a large yellow and blue banner, holding portraits showing a bloodstained Putin and labelling him an assassin.

Cries of "close the airspace" and "Let's protect Ukraine's sky" re-

### Over 4,300 detained in Russia

Police detained more than 4,300 people Sunday at Russia-wide protests against President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, according to an independent protest monitoring group. Thousands of protesters chanted "No to war! and Shame on you!", according to videos posted on social media by opposition activists and bloggers. Dozens of protesters in the Ural city of Yekaterinburg were shown being detained. One protester there was shown being beaten on the ground by police in riot gear. A mural in the city showing President Vladimir Putin was defaced. Russia's interior ministry said earlier that police had detained around 3,500 people, including 1,700 in Moscow, 750 in St Petersburg and 1,061 in other cities. The interior ministry said 5,200 people had taken part in the protests. The OVD-Info protest monitoring group said it had documented the detention of at least 4,366 people in 56 different cities.

sounded through the city, a reference to Kyiv's demand that NATO establish a no-fly zone to prevent Russian aircraft contributing to Moscow's onslaught.

Around 5,000 people also gathered in the northern city of Caen by a memorial commemorating the 1944 D-Day landings, a key turning point in the battle against Nazi Germany in World War II.

"People of Ukraine, we won't desert you! Democracy, freedom, peace," read one placard.

In Spain, protests unfolded in the capital Madrid, Barcelona and other cities across the country.

Authorities said about 800 people congregated in Barcelona's central square with banners saying "Close the sky, not your eyes", "NATO, protect Ukraine's sky" and "Stop Putin, stop the war".

Around 100 people came out in support of Ukraine in Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia. Gatherings were also reported in Britain, Germany, Bulgaria and Montenegro Sunday.

Thousands of protesters descended on the streets of cities across the world, including in Paris, New York, Rome and Zurich, Saturday to demand an end to the conflict.

## of the day quote

As South African businesses land on Indian shores, we are excited to be introducing our partners and consumers to a host of value-driven and thoughtfully crafted adventures

**NELISWA NKANI** | HEAD (MEISEA), SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM HUB

Reforms will make the coal sector more vibrant for consumers of the dry fuel but there will be chum in mining activities. I think Coal India will not have the luxury to drag on loss-making mines and continue with financially inefficient mines

**AK JAIN** | COAL SECRETARY

May I suggest four focus areas for strengthening the India-Bangladesh relationship. Can we look at uninterrupted resilient supply chains, which is the need of the hour, we need to give more impetus to joint production of defence equipment, and explore potential areas of investments like textiles, jute, leather, footwear, medical equipment, and electronics

**PIYUSH GOYAL** | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### RBI shares booklet on financial frauds

**Mumbai:** Worried over a spurt in digital frauds in recent years, the Reserve Bank Monday asked people to never share confidential banking information like OTP and CVV, and observe cyber hygiene practices. In a publication titled 'BE(A)WARE - A booklet on Modus Operandi of Financial Frauds', the RBI said fraudsters have been using innovative methods to defraud the common people of their hard-earned money, especially the new entrants who are not entirely familiar with the techno-financial ecosystem.

### Agri, processed food exports rise

**New Delhi:** Exports of agricultural and processed food products rose over 23 per cent to \$19.7 billion during April-January 2021-22 as compared to the year-ago period's, the commerce ministry said Monday. The exports stood at \$15.97 billion in the ten-month period a year ago. Export of rice was the top forex earner at \$7.7 billion during the period under review, it said. Similarly, shipments of wheat increased to \$1.74 billion during the period.

### Red chilli pepper prices on the rise

**Mumbai:** The prices of red chilli peppers are surging as output in top exporter India is set to drop by a fifth from a year ago, hit by an invasive pest attack and damage from unseasonal rain in key southern producing states. Lower production has boosted prices by 80% in four months to a record high and prices are likely to stay high through the year, forcing overseas buyers to shell out more at a time when the prices of fuel and other food ingredients are also soaring.

### Hero Electric to deploy 10K e-2Ws

**New Delhi:** Hero Electric Monday announced its new partnership with SUN Mobility, a leading provider of energy infrastructure and services for electric vehicles (EVs), to deploy electric two-wheelers integrated with the latter's smart-swappable battery technology. As part of the partnership, Hero Electric and SUN Mobility will start the deployments in the next three months with a target of around 10,000 electric two-wheelers by the end of this year.



**“We plan that maybe in the next three to four years, we should become a net-zero company. We have a lot of land, we can install solar parks in our area of operations and use that energy, and that would help us in a big way to become a net-zero company”**

**PRAMOD AGRAWAL** | CHAIRMAN, COAL INDIA

## AIRTEL & AXIS PARTNER FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES

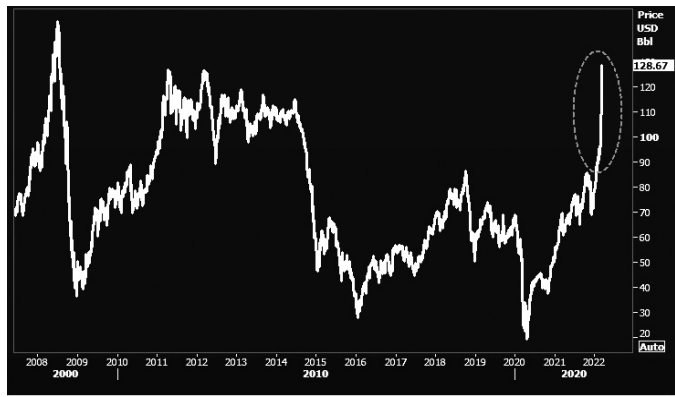
Bharti Airtel and Axis Bank Monday announced a collaboration for offering financial services, starting with a co-branded credit card for subscribers of the telecom services company. Under the partnership, the companies will provide pre-approved instant loans, 'buy now pay later' offerings, and other services



## GLOBAL CATASTROPHE

# Oil spikes to highest since 2008

*Oil prices spiked drastically Monday as the United States and European allies weighed a Russian oil import ban and delays in the potential return of Iranian crude to global markets fuelled supply fears*



- Brent crude reached \$139.13 a barrel
- US WTI hit \$130.50 in early trade
- US, Europe discuss banning Russian oil imports
- Iranian nuclear talks clouded by Russian demands
- US and Venezuela discussed oil sanctions

**London, March 7:** Oil prices spiked to their highest levels since 2008 Monday amid market supply fears as the United States and European allies considered banning Russian oil imports and prospects for a swift return of Iranian crude to global markets receded.

International oil benchmark Brent crude surged 6.08 per cent to \$125.3 a barrel. Brent crude reached \$139.13 a barrel and US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) hit \$130.50 in early trade, both

**“We consider \$125 per barrel, our near-term forecast for Brent crude oil, as a soft cap for prices, although prices could rise even higher should disruptions worsen or continue for a longer period. A prolonged war could see Brent moving above the \$150 per barrel mark”**

**GIOVANNI STAUOVO** | UBS COMMODITY ANALYST

benchmarks striking their highest since July 2008 before paring the gains. By 1437 GMT, Brent was up \$3.54, or 3%, at \$121.65 per barrel and WTI up \$1.93, or 1.7%, at \$117.61.

Global oil prices have spiked more than 60% since the start of

2022, along with other commodities, raising concerns about world economic growth and stagflation. China, the world's No 2 economy, is already targeting slower growth of 5.5% this year.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Sunday the United States and European allies were exploring banning imports of Russian oil, while the White House was coordinating with Congressional committees to move forward with a US ban.

Analysts at Bank of America said if most of Russia's oil exports were cut off, there could be a 5 million barrel per day (bpd) or larger shortfall, pushing prices as high as \$200.

Russia is the world's top exporter of crude and oil products combined, with exports around 7 million bpd, or 7% of global supply. Some volumes of Kazakhstan's oil exports from Russian ports have also faced complications.

Meanwhile, talks to revive Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers were mired in uncertainty

## Europe gas prices at all-time high

**New Delhi:** Gas prices in Europe skyrocketed Monday, reaching over \$3,600 per 1,000 cubic meters for the first time in history. The April futures at the TTF hub in the Netherlands soared to \$3,639.1 per 1,000 cubic meters, or nearly \$350 per megawatt-hour in household terms, according to data from London's ICE exchange, RT reported. Prices continue to grow as market players fear the outcome of the ongoing Russian military offensive in Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russian state energy giant and major gas exporter Gazprom said Monday it continues to routinely supply Russian gas for transit to Europe through the territory of Ukraine.

after Russia demanded a US guarantee that sanctions it faces over the Ukraine conflict would not hurt its trade with Tehran. China also raised new demands, sources said.

Separately, US and Venezuelan officials discussed the possibility of easing oil sanctions on Venezuela but made scant progress toward a deal in their first high-level bilateral talks in years, five sources familiar with the matter said, as Washington seeks to separate Russia from one of its key allies.

## GLOBAL COAL PRICES AT NEW RECORD HIGH



**New Delhi:** The ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia is likely to have a bearing on the supply of thermal coal, while direct or indirect sanctions from the western countries are also expected to put an upward pressure on its prices. Currently, international coal prices are at their lifetime high at above \$400 per tonne. Russia accounts for around 20 per cent of the global thermal coal exports.

Thus, for the power sector, there are no concerns from the higher international coal prices, but the non-power sector is expected to face the

maximum impact. Even though India doesn't import coal from Russia, the surge in its prices globally will have a cascading effect on the price discovery front in those origins where it imports from.

As per reports, India ships in high-grade coal from Indonesia, Australia, and South Africa. Currently trading at \$459 per tonne, with all the global economies opening up (sans geo-political worries), coal prices are seen shooting up towards \$478-\$505 per tonne in the near-term, said N.S. Ramaswamy, Head of Commodities at Ventura Securities.

## Rouble hits record low

**London:** Russia's rouble tumbled to a fresh record low in thin offshore trade Monday, with local markets closed for trading until at least Wednesday. The rouble weakened to 133.5 to the dollar after closing at 121.037 Friday, according to Refinitiv data. On the EBS trading platform, the rouble weakened as far as 141.00 to the dollar. Bid/offer spreads were between 10 and 15 cents, pointing to an increasingly illiquid market. The rouble has lost more than 40% of its value against the greenback since the start of the year, with losses sharply accelerating since Russia invaded Ukraine Feb 24, which sparking sweeping sanctions from Western capitals.

## Microsoft unveils 4th data center

**New Delhi, March 7:** Microsoft Corp unveiled its fourth data centre in India Monday, betting on rising digital consumption in one of its fastest-growing markets.

Microsoft India head Anant Maheshwari said the company was making long-term investments in the country, although he declined to confirm reports by local media of a \$2 billion price tag for the latest centre.

"A public cloud data center is not a one time investment, it is a continuous investment that we have," Maheshwari told Reuters. "In the last two years, we doubled the capacity in the existing three data centers."



The overall Indian public cloud services market is expected to reach \$10.8 billion by 2025, according to research firm IDC.

India's government has been nudging foreign tech companies to store more of their data locally, a move seen as New Delhi's attempt to gain stricter oversight of Big Tech firms.

Maheshwari said Microsoft was continuing to grow its workforce in India from 18,000 currently "both

through the pandemic and going forward." "We already serve more than 340,000 companies in the country," Maheshwari said. The new data centre is located in India's southern state of Telangana.

The company's business model, which relies on partners building additional services on top of its cloud platform, Azure, generated business worth about \$10 billion in the last five years, Maheshwari said.

Competitors are joining the race in India. Key rival Amazon announced in late 2020 it would spend \$2.8 billion to build its second data centre in the country, while Adani Group last year announced plans to build six data centre parks across the country.



**Maruti Suzuki Arena** unveiled its all new Wagon R at Narayani Motors Pvt Ltd, Bhubaneswar Monday. The launch was graced by Bipin Sethi (Sales Manager, Narayani Motors Pvt Ltd), Kaushik Ojha (GM, Narayani Motors Pvt Ltd), Kumar Sanjib (Divisional Manager, Canara Bank) and Sanjib Mohanty (Sales Manager, Narayani Motors Pvt Ltd)

## 'Exports may reach \$410bn this fiscal'

**New Delhi:** India's exports are likely to reach around \$410 billion this fiscal irrespective of geopolitical disturbances, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said Monday. The country's merchandise exports during April-February 2022 stood at \$374.05 billion, an increase of 45.80 per cent over \$256.55 billion in the year-ago period. "So I do believe that irrespective of problems we have in the northern parts of Asia (and) Europe, we are well on track not only to achieve \$400 billion, I am hoping closer to \$410 billion (during this fiscal)," Goyal said while addressing Assocham's annual session. He also said services exports would cross \$250 billion.

## "THE SHOPS ARE GONE"

# Reliance stunned Amazon in battle for Future Retail

**RELIANCE'S TAKEOVER BEGAN WITH UTMOST STEALTH ON THE NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 25 WHEN ITS STAFF BEGAN ARRIVING AT FUTURE STORES. MANY IN FUTURE'S MANAGEMENT WERE IN THE DARK ABOUT THE PLANS AS STORE EMPLOYEES FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY FRANTICALLY BEGAN TO CALL, ACCORDING TO PEOPLE WITH DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF THE MATTER**

**REUTERS**

**Mumbai, March 7:** At a large Future Retail supermarket in Mumbai last week, workers were unloading hundreds of bright blue grocery crates belonging to India's biggest retailer Reliance.

Prospective customers were turned back by security, disappointed at the closed state of the store that still carries the signage of Future's biggest brand, Big Bazaar, but which will likely soon be rebranded as a Reliance outlet.

Across India, similar scenes are being played out as Reliance Industries, India's biggest conglomerate run by Mukesh Ambani, the country's richest man, presses ahead with a shock de facto takeover

of prized retail real estate that Amazon.com Inc has been keen to take part-ownership of.

The high-profile bitter dispute between corporate titans in which Amazon has sought to block Reliance's planned \$3.4 billion purchase of Future Group's retail assets is currently before Supreme Court.

At a Future store in Sonapat town in Haryana, announcements were made asking customers to leave as Reliance seized control, one source said. In Vadodra in Gujarat, Future employees arriving for work the next morning were asked to go back home with no explanation, said another source.

Citing unpaid payments by Future, Reliance has taken con-



trol of operations of some 200 Big Bazaar stores and has plans to seize another 250 of Future's retail outlets. Combined, they represent

the crown jewels of Future's retail network and around a third of all Future outlets. Although Reliance had not played

a large public role in the legal dispute, it had, according to sources, for some months assumed many of the leases held by cash-strapped Future, India's number two retailer and Amazon's estranged business partner.

Reliance's sudden possession of the stores appears to have landed what some analysts are calling a coup de grace that spoils Amazon's chances of untangling the transfer of Future's assets to Reliance. That's despite a series of legal battles won by the US e-commerce giant to date blocking the 2020 deal announced between the two Indian companies.

"What will Amazon fight for now?" said a source close to the US company with knowledge of

the legal dispute. "The shops are gone." Thursday, six days after Reliance's move, Amazon at a Supreme Court hearing unexpectedly called for cordial talks to end the dispute - a proposal Future agreed to.

"People have taken over shops... let's at least have a conversation," Amazon's lawyer Gopal Subramaniam said. Discussions are expected to begin soon.

Whatever the outcome of the talks, analysts say Amazon had gravely underestimated Reliance. "If anybody should have seen this coming, it should have been Amazon and they should have prepared against it," said Devangshu Dutta of retail consultancy Third Eyesight. "Clearly, they didn't."

# PSG HEAD TO MADRID

# Barca continue to move up in La Liga

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**London, March 7:** English clubs Liverpool and Manchester City are in commanding positions. Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich still have some work to do.

The first four spots in the quarterfinals of the Champions League are up for grabs this week, with most of the competition's title favorites in action.

A look at the second-leg matches in the round of 16:

## REAL MADRID v PSG (0-1)

Real Madrid enters the second leg against PSG with coach Carlo Ancelotti having to figure out a way to set up his midfield. Casemiro is suspended and Toni Kroos and Federico Valverde are listed as doubtful because of health issues. Valverde is more likely to be available after missing Saturday's Spanish league game against Real Sociedad because of flu symptoms, but Kroos is expected to be out because of a muscle injury.

Casemiro was key in Madrid's 4-1 win over Sociedad, when he played alongside young Frenchman Eduardo Camavinga and Luka Modric. Left back Ferland Mendy also is out due to suspension.

PSG prepared for the trip to Spain by losing for only the third time in 27 French league matches this season — to second-place Nice.

Coach Mauricio Pochettino will be hoping to have right back Achraf Hakimi (thigh), Argentina midfielder Leandro Paredes (groin), Spanish midfielder Ander Herrera (eye infection) back to face Madrid. A makeshift backline looked vulnerable against Nice.

Pochettino clearly had the European game in mind as he rested defenders Presnel Kimpembe and Nuno Mendes. Kylian Mbappé didn't play due to suspension so will be fresh to bring his electric pace



**CONTRASTING VISITS:** Lionel Messi and Neymar will return to their former rivals' home - Santiago Bernabeu, while Kylian Mbappe will visit Madrid expecting a warm welcome considering his very-much-likely move to the Spanish capital coming summer

back to face Madrid and link up with Lionel Messi. Reaching the final just like in 2020 is where PSG wants to be in May — and winning the Champions League, for the Qatari ownership, for the first time.

## LIVERPOOL v INTER MILAN (2-0)

There is increasing talk about a possible quadruple of titles for Liverpool, which has already won the League Cup, is in the quarter-

finals of the FA Cup and has closed in on Manchester City in the Premier League title race.

The Reds' involvement in the Champions League should stretch into next month after late goals by Roberto Firmino and Mohamed Salah at the San Siro gave Liverpool a handy advantage to bring back to Anfield, where Liverpool is notoriously hard to beat — especially on big European nights.

Liverpool is unbeaten in all competitions in 2022 and perhaps has its strongest squad in Jürgen Klopp's reign, with the German coach having plenty of options in attack.

Klopp's big decision might be who to start out of Diogo Jota and new signing Luis Diaz alongside Sadio Mane and Salah. Inter's defeat to Liverpool started a run of four straight matches without a

goal for the Nerazzurri.

They went more than 400 minutes without scoring before ending their goal drought in spectacular style on Friday with a 5-0 win over last-place Salernitana. Lautaro Martinez scored a hat trick in that match but he hasn't netted in the Champions League since 2020.

## BAYERN MUNICH v SALZBURG (1-1)

Thomas Muller's first own-goal in his long Bayern Munich career has disturbed what should have been relatively straightforward preparation for the visit of Austrian champion Salzburg Tuesday.

Muller scored in the wrong goal for Bayer Leverkusen to draw 1-1 in his 407th Bundesliga appearance Saturday, when it was evident that communication among the German league leaders is an issue.

Salzburg, which held Bayern to a 1-1 draw in their first game, warmed up for the return in Munich with a comfortable 4-0 win at SCR Altach. Bayern struggled with the Austrian team's pace in the first leg before Kingsley Coman rescued a draw for the Bavarians in the last minute.

## MANCHESTER CITY v SPORTING (5-0)

Holding a big lead from the first leg, City has the luxury of being able to rotate its players amid a busy run of fixtures in three competitions as the season reaches the business end.

City will reach the quarterfinals for the fifth straight season unless something sensational is produced by Sporting, which is more likely to come into the match in damage-limitation mode after its thrashing three weeks earlier in Portugal. Since then, Sporting had a home loss to rival Porto in the first leg of the Portuguese Cup semifinals.



**SUPER SUB:** Memphis Depay commits to his trademark celebration after converting the penalty for Barcelona's inner at Elche, Sunday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Madrid, March 7:** Barcelona displayed their offensive depth, resorting to goal-hungry substitutes to salvage a victory and keep their momentum in the Spanish league. Ferran Torres and Memphis Depay came off the bench to score second-half goals as Barcelona rallied to beat Elche 2-1 to continue its upward move in the standings.

The victory moved the Catalan club up a spot to third place, level on points with fourth-place Atlético Madrid, which beat Real Betis 3-1. Barcelona finished the round in the top three for the first time since the opening round.

Moving even higher will prove more difficult. Barcelona is 15 points behind league leaders Real Madrid, which routed Real Sociedad 4-1 Saturday. Second-place Sevilla, which was held goalless at Alavés Friday, is seven points ahead of Barcelona. Barcelona has a game in hand on both Madrid and Sevilla.

The hosts opened the scoring just before halftime after Pedri's clearance inadvertently turned into a pass to Elche forward Fidel

Chaves, who entered the area and fired a low shot into the far corner.

Barcelona equalised in the 60th with a close-range goal by Torres, who came in for Gavi Paez at half-time. Ousmane Dembele, back on good terms with the club after refusing to leave in the winter transfer window, helped set up the goal with a cross from the right side.

Depay, who replaced Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, scored the winner by converting an 84th-minute penalty kick called after a video review because of a handball.

Elche later loudly complained about a similar handball inside the area against Barcelona that was not called near the end of the game.

Joao Felix scored twice and Thomas Lemar added another goal as Atlético Madrid won 3-1 at Real Betis to move into fourth place and the final Champions League spot. It was the third league win in a row for Diego Simeone's team, which trails Barcelona on the head-to-head tie-breaker. Betis, which Thursday reached the Copa del Rey final, dropped to fifth place with its second consecutive league loss.

# 3 gold medals for Bhagat Sunny regrets over comment on Warne

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 7:** Tokyo Paralympics champion Pramod Bhagat struck gold in all the three categories that he participated in at the Spanish Para badminton International II tournament in Vitoria, Spain.

Sukant Kadam, who is World No.4, also continued his good run and ended his campaign with a gold and a silver in the tournament that ended Sunday.

In the singles, World No.1 Bhagat defeated Kumar Nitesh 17-21, 21-17, 21-17 in a hard-fought final which lasted for 1 hour and 1 minute to claim the yellow metal.

In the mixed doubles, World No.1 pair of Bhagat and Manoj Sarkar outwitted fellow Indians Kadam and Nitesh 21-19, 11-21, 21-11 in the summit clash for another gold.

Bhagat then paired up with his mixed doubles partner Palak Kohli and secured a thrilling come-from-behind 14-21, 21-11, 21-14 win against the Indian pair of Rutchick Ragupathi and Manasi Girishchandra Joshi for his third gold medal of the tournament.

"This is a special victory for me as it is the first victory for me after a gap of two tournaments," Bhagat said. "I have worked really hard and this is the stepping stone. Now my focus is on the Grade 1 tournament which starts in 3 days and I would like to repeat what I achieved today," added the men's singles SL3 Paralympic champion.



On the other hand, World No.4 Kadam had a relatively easy outing against Marcel Adam, beating the German 21-13, 21-18. This victory is Kadam's third gold medal in as many tournaments. In the men's doubles, Kadam had to settle for silver after being defeated by World No.1 pair Bhagat and Sarkar.

"This is my third gold medal in as many tournaments and I am quite excited about the same. This victory will make me push harder and train tougher for the upcoming tournaments," Kadam, who competes in the SL4 category, said. "The focus now has shifted to Grade 1 tournament which starts in 3 days and my goal will be to repeat my display."

In SL3 classification, athletes with lower limb impairment are allowed to compete. In SL4 class, shuttlers have lower limb impairment/severe and they play standing.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 7:** Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar Monday expressed regret for refusing to call the late Shane Warne as the greatest of all time while discussing his legacy, saying it was not the right time for the comparisons he made.

"In hindsight, that question should not have been asked and I should not have answered as it was not the right time for any comparison or evaluation," Gavaskar posted on Instagram reacting to criticism of his statement.

"Warne was one of the greatest players to ever grace the game. Rodney Marsh was also one of the best wicketkeepers. May their souls rest in peace," he added.

Gavaskar said all he meant to do was give an honest opinion when the question was asked of him. "On TV, I was asked by an anchor whether Warne was the greatest spinner and I gave my honest opinion," he said.

Gavaskar had earlier said that while Warne sent down "magic deliveries" and mastered a difficult craft during his career; he wasn't the greatest spinner of all time as his performance in India was criticised as ill-timed in some sections of the media Down Under.

Warne, since making his debut in 1992, played 145 Tests for Australia, picking up 708 wickets with his leg-spin. In his 194 ODI appearances, he snared 293



scalps. But when Gavaskar was asked if the Australian was the greatest spinner he has seen, the former India captain said he rated India's spinners and former Sri Lanka bowler Muttiah Muralitharan higher than Warne. "No, I wouldn't say that no. For me, the Indian spinners and Muttiah Muralitharan were certainly better than Shane Warne," Gavaskar said on 'India Today'.

"Because look at Shane Warne's record against India. It was pretty ordinary. In India, he got five wickets only once in Nagpur, and that too because Zaheer Khan swung wildly against him to give him a lifer."

Warne, 52, died of a heart attack on Friday in Koh Samui, Thailand, sending shockwaves around the cricketing world. "Because he did not have much

# WARNE DIED OF 'NATURAL CAUSES'

Bangkok: Police in Thailand said Monday that an autopsy conducted on the body of Australian cricket star Shane Warne has concluded that he died of natural causes, ruling out foul play. A police statement said the opinion issued by the doctor who carried out the autopsy has been conveyed to Warne's family and the Australian Embassy. It said the family did not have any doubt that the 52-year-old cricketer, widely considered one of the sport's greatest spin bowlers, died of natural causes. A senior police officer explained the findings at a news conference held after the statement was issued. "There are no reports of missing items. There were no signs of a struggle," said Assistant Police Commissioner General Gen. Surachate Hakparn. "The director of the hospital said from the autopsy that he died of natural causes. His father had said that he (Warne) had suffered tightness in his chest and planned to have a medical checkup when he returned from his holiday. The cause of death is natural, not a murder."



success against Indian players who were very good players of spin, I don't think I would call him the greatest," Gavaskar said. "Muttiah Muralitharan with a greater success he had against India, I would rank him over Warne in my book," he added.

Gavaskar's criticism of Warne's record in India led to some sharp reactions Down Under, forcing the batting maestro come out with an explanation. Gavaskar's ill-timed comment on Warne was ridiculed by the Australian media. "Honestly... It's not the time: Indian legend slammed for 'shameful' Warne claim," read the headline of 'Fox News'.

"Gavaskar's call was more head-scratching as it came after he admitted Warne's leg spin was the toughest art to master as a bowler,"

said a news.com.au in its report.

The report also carried a tweet of British journalist Jack Mendal, who said, "Honestly, Sunny, it's not the time... Could have just sidestepped it. The body isn't even cold yet."

The 72-year-old Gavaskar was also lavish in his praise for Warne and acknowledged that he perfected a difficult craft and worked up magic on the field.

# Young boxers Vishwanath, Raman sail into semifinals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 7:** Indian boxers Vishwanath Suresh (48kg) and Raman (51kg) entered the youth men's semifinals of the Asian Youth and Junior Boxing Championships in Amman, Jordan Monday.

Vishwanath got the better of Tajikistan's Meroj Zoidov by a split 4-1 decision to secure his second successive medal at the prestigious continental championships. On the other hand, Raman outpunched Jordan's Yazan Albitar in an impressive 5-0 win.

Vishwanath and Raman will now take on Uzbek boxers Miralijon Mavlonov and Khujanazar Nortojev respectively in the semifinals Friday.

Later tonight, five more youth boxers - Anand Yadav (54kg), Ayush (57kg), Rudra Pratap Singh (60kg), Vanshaj (63.5kg) and Anjani Kumar Mummana (67kg) - will fight it out

in the quarterfinals. In the junior boys' section, three Indian boxers, Jayant Dagar (54kg), Chetan (57kg) and Yashwardhan Singh (60kg) made their way into the last-four stage while Lovepreet Singh (50kg) exited after enduring a loss against Kazakhstan's Bek Zholdasbek with an RSC verdict.

While Chetan outclassed Iraq's Murtadha Hamad by unanimous margin, Jayant had to work hard during his close 3-2 win over Pansher Aliakhmed of Kyrgyzstan. Yashwardhan was given a walkover by Kuwait's Mohammad Alenzi.

The prestigious continental tournament has been witnessing a strong competition in presence of 352 boxers from 21 countries including India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The finals will be held March 13-14.

# Chhetri ruled out of India's friendlies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 7:** The Indian football team was dealt a huge blow Monday as its talismanic captain Sunil Chhetri was ruled out of the upcoming international friendly matches against Bahrain and Belarus due to injury.

The 37-year-old forward had been named among the 38-member probable by coach Igor Stimac for the matches to be played in Manama March 23 and 26.

"I was really looking forward to the two friendlies against Bahrain and Belarus and it's a shame I'll be missing out," Chhetri told the All India Football Federation (AIFF) website. "It's been a long, tough season and I've suffered a few small injuries that need time to heal. I will be doing all I can to recover in time for the preparatory camp in May," he added.

As many as eight new faces figured in the list of 38 probable named for the preparatory camp



ahead of the friendlies. "The potential this squad possesses is immense, and a lot of the lads are riding high on confidence on the back of good performances in the League season.

"I'm certain we'll put out best foot forward. I'm wishing the team all the luck," said Chhetri who did not specify the nature of injury.

Goalkeepers Prabhshukhan Gill and Mohammad Nawaz, defend-

ers Deepak Tangri and Roshan Singh, and midfielders Vikram Partap Singh, VP Suhair, Aniket Jadav and Jerry Mawihmingthanga got their maiden national camp call-up for the two matches.

The AIFF said midfielder Ashique Kuruniyan, who was also named for the preparatory camp, is under rehabilitation.

The players, along with the head coach and the staff, will assemble

in Pune March 10, for the camp with practice starting from next day onwards. The players whose clubs would be playing in the semifinals of the ongoing ISL will be joining the camp as and when their club commitments end.

The contingent will be flying to Bahrain March 21. The Blue Tigers are scheduled to play Bahrain March 23, and Belarus March 26, with both matches kicking-off at 9.30pm IST.

There is still a cloud of uncertainty whether India will play against Belarus as the AIFF had said on Tuesday that it was trying to "avoid" playing against the east European country which had extended support to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

FIFA has suspended Russia but has not announced any such measure for Belarus as yet. Last week, European football governing body UEFA barred Belarus from hosting international games but it will have no impact on India's international friendly.

# Axar in, Kuldeep out for 2nd Test

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, March 7:** Fit-again all-rounder Axar Patel has replaced left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav for India's second Test against Sri Lanka, beginning here Saturday. The Indian team management has released Kuldeep from the squad. Axar had been recovering from a shin injury that had forced him to miss the South Africa tour and the T20 series against West India. He had also tested positive for COVID-19 recently.

"Axar was the first choice but had to undergo recovery and hence Kuldeep was a back up," a BCCI source told this agency. "Now Axar is fit and back so Kuldeep has been released," the source added.

At the time of announcing the squad for the two-Test series against Sri Lanka, the BCCI had said Axar was expected to be fit for the second game. Kuldeep last played a Test in February 2021.