



## GENDER BIAS

Actor Huma Qureshi says a male actor in the film industry doesn't have to prove himself by doing a male-centric movie

LEISURE P2



## UKRAINE REJECTS ULTIMATUM

Ukraine rejected a Russian ultimatum to surrender the besieged southern city of Mariupol

INTERNATIONAL P10



## INDIA FACE BANGLADESH

An inconsistent India take on a spirited Bangladesh side in their must-win ICC Women's World Cup match today

SPORTS P12

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## SAWANT GOA CM, DHAMI UTTARAKHAND

**Panaji/Dehradun:** Pramod Sawant was unanimously elected as the Chief Minister in Goa while Pushkar Singh Dhama will continue as the Uttarakhand Chief Minister, the BJP said Monday. Sawant's name for the top post was cleared at a meeting of the newly-elected BJP MLAs and senior party leaders in Panaji Monday evening. Dhama, under whose leadership the BJP had contested the February 14 Assembly polls, was the frontrunner for the CM post. The BJP's dilemma on the choice of a Chief Minister for Uttarakhand was caused by Dhama's loss in Khatima, a seat he had been winning since the 2012 Assembly polls. The party had won 47 of the 70 seats in the Assembly polls, the results of which were announced March 10.

## LIC IPO: GOVT UPDATES DRAFT PAPERS

**New Delhi:** The government has filed updated draft papers with market regulator Sebi for an initial public offer of LIC, incorporating December quarter financials of the insurance behemoth, an official said Monday. In the run-up to the mega IPO February 13, the government had filed the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) with the regulator giving details of financial results till September. The DRHP got Sebi approval early this month. As per the updated financials, the Life Insurance Corporation reported a net profit of ₹235 crore in the October-December quarter. The net profit in April-December, 2021, increased to ₹1,671.57 crore from ₹7.08 crore a year ago.



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# KOTIA SETBACK FOR ANDHRA

Apex court rejects AP plea to declare 21 villages of Kotia group as part of Andhra

POST NEWS NETWORK



FILE PHOTO

**New Delhi, March 21:** The Supreme Court Monday refused to entertain a petition seeking a declaration that the disputed Kotia group of villages belongs to the state of Andhra Pradesh.

A two-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices DY Chandrachud and Surya Kant rejected the prayer of declaring 21 villages of Kotia group as part of Andhra Pradesh after recording the submissions of the Odisha counsel.

During the hearing, advocate Sibo Sankar Mishra, appearing for the state of Odisha, submitted that an original suit under Article 131 of the Constitution and a contempt petition are already pending before the Supreme Court. The Odisha counsel also submitted that Odisha had held panchayat election this year in the villages and the voter turnout was over 75 per cent. He contended that Andhra Pradesh has never held elections in the villages and only selected

panchayat representatives.

The petition was filed by five people who claimed to be sarpanchs of the disputed villages. They also sought injunction on the polls held by Odisha in the Kotia group of villages. Petitioners were aggrieved by the action of Odisha in issuing a notification to conduct panchayat samiti elections in the disputed villages.

The petitioners contended that the 21 villages are tribal villages with a population of over 5,000 and a majority of the residents of these villages speak Telugu and culturally follow the same customs, traditions as of the residents of Andhra Pradesh.

Earlier, the Supreme Court March 16 held that it will first decide the original suit filed by the

state of Odisha under Article 131 of the Constitution against Andhra Pradesh over Kotia border dispute.

Earlier, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court comprising Justices AM Khanwilkar and CT Ravikumar had given liberty to both the states to mention the contempt petition, which was filed by Odisha in 2020 against Andhra Pradesh, in the event of any change in situation.

Significantly, Odisha had filed a fresh original suit in the apex court over the border dispute with Andhra Pradesh in January this year. The state pleaded the Supreme Court to declare that Odisha has absolute right to administer and possess Kotia group of villages and also pleaded to strike down or read down the Article 131 of the Constitution.

## LENSMAN MURDER

# Ex-I&PR Dir held

Niranjan has close links with prime accused Sarmistha Rout and he visited Dayal Ashram, where Manas was murdered, at least twice a week, say cops



Former I&PR director Niranjn Sethi

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chandbali, March 21:** Chandbali police arrested two more persons including a former I&PR director in connection with the sensational murder of lensman Manas Swain. The accused duo was arrested from Cuttack by the Chandbali police.

They were identified as Niranjn Sethi, an Odisha Information Service officer and former director (technical) of state Information and Public Relations (I&PR) department and Ranjan Nayak, proprietor of Raj Communication at Khandagiri in the capital city.

They were taken for medical examination and later produced in court, said SDPO Devi Shankar Pratap and Chandbali IIC Karunakar Rout during a presser here Monday. They were arrested for their alleged involvement in the crime, police said.

Bhadrak police claimed both Niranjn and Raj were involved in the conspiracy to kidnap Swain and disposal of his body after the gruesome murder. They were also present at Dayal Ashram in Bhubaneswar where Swain was brutally assaulted, leading to his death. Sources claimed Niranjn had beaten the deceased at the Ashram too.

"Niranjan has close links with the absconding prime accused Sarmistha Rout, the owner of a news portal and former employer of Swain. Niranjn used to visit Dayal Ashram two to three times a week. Why a senior officer like Niranjn would visit the residence of a non-empanelled magazine owner?" SDPO Devi Shankar told this newspaper.

Niranjn during his tenure as I&PR director empanelled Sarmistha's magazine 'Sampurna' and ensured it gets government advertisements at high rate. Bhadrak police also revealed that Swain was murdered by the accused following a dispute over a memory chip in a video camera. Police are yet to recover the chip that would help crack the mystery behind the murder.

Police hope to fetch vital clues from Swain's mobile which had been recovered recently from Chandikhol area. The deceased was a native of Nuapalli Godipokhari village under Ranpur police limits in Nayagarh. He had been to Nalagunda Palaspur village in Chandbali to attend a marriage ceremony. He was abducted from Palaspur Square February 7 while returning from the marriage venue.

## 132 feared dead in China plane crash

AGENCIES

**Beijing, March 21:** A Chinese passenger plane with 132 people on board crashed in the southern Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Monday, the regional emergency management department said, in the worst air disaster in over a decade in the country.

The Boeing 737 aircraft of China Eastern Airlines, which flew from Kunming to Guangzhou, crashed in Tengxian County in the city of Wuzhou, causing a mountain fire, the department said. Hopes to find the survivors in the thick forests in the mountainous region receded as the night fell making efforts by scores of rescuers difficult.

State television showed teams of rescuers armed with search lights scurrying through the sprawling area in the forests on the remote mountainous region as darkness enveloped the forest region.

The 132 people included 123 passengers and nine crew members, the Civil Aviation Administration of China said on its website.

While the airline has announced that no foreigners were on board, families of some crew members from the crashed Eastern Airlines flight have arrived in the company's branch office in Yunnan Province and they were being assisted to "work on follow-up issues", CGTN-TV reported.

A "shocked" Chinese President Xi Jinping ordered "swift action to identify the cause of the crash and to strengthen the safety overhaul of the civil aviation sector to ensure the absolute safety of the sector and people's lives".

MORE P10

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# BUSINESS EMINENCE AWARDS

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## LETO URGES PEOPLE TO BE THANKFUL FOR MARVEL FILMS

Hollywood star Jared Leto has said that people should be thankful for Marvel movies. Stoking controversy, he recently claimed that the comic book blockbusters were the only thing keeping cinemas open, leading to other films being shut out.

## UKRAINIAN ACTRESS MARIA RYABOSHAPKA TO MAKE HER TELUGU DEBUT IN SK20

Ukrainian actress and model Maria Ryaboshapka is making her debut in Telugu films. The actress has been finalised to play opposite Tamil star Sivakarthikeyan in director Anudeep KV's upcoming film, tentatively titled SK20.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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#### ARIES

The ruling emotion today will be passion. You will feel like chatting with your beloved the whole day. However, you will incur expenses and Ganesh advises you to remain balanced. But if you have decided already to go the whole hog, make fully sure you are in the right trappings.

#### TAURUS

The fates smile on you this day, assures Ganesh. You have a great chance of going for a new car, may be an SUV and go for a long spin. If that, for some reason doesn't materialize, you are sure to board a luxury bus and take a tour. Financial gains are strongly indicated.

#### GEMINI

A day filled with love, tenderness and delight – the kind of day when babies are born, families reunite, and good news never stops pouring in. However, the afternoon may be a little rough on a day, which will be, otherwise, high on happiness. Get ready for a surprise from your sweetheart.

#### CANCER

For Crabs, this day brings good tidings for job, business as well as love life. The home is where your heart is. Today, you'll get to spend quality time at your most preferred place with your beloved. Just ensure that you remain loyal to your loved ones.

#### LEO

You may blame the weather, but it still doesn't change the fact that today, you shall be more or less in the doldrums, with little prospect of feeling strong and spirited, says Ganesh. This, coupled with other things, may lead to confrontation and quarrels with peers on the work front.

#### VIRGO

Fortune will favour you today. You will be able to pull off anything you try your hand at today, says Ganesh. In some cases, despite poor expectations, you will receive good news in the form of great results. Bend and budge when you need to, flexibility and adjustments will win you the favour of others.

#### LIBRA

Handling people was never so easy, points out Ganesh, as today, you do extremely well in the area of public relations. You have the answers to satisfy all, and keep them that way. So, do not be surprised if you happen to find yourself assigned to some sort of a probing and demanding job at work. When you are the best, you always seem to get the raw deal.

#### SCORPIO

Your tolerance level is sky-high, and your optimism, boundless. Professionally, you are like Iron Man – heart of gold, nerves of steel (without the red and gold costume, of course). Academic pursuit in the arts will take you to new horizons. Remember the lessons of life by heart – they will help you to serve society better.

#### SAGITTARIUS

Your role in bringing around important and influential deals will be pivotal indeed, says Ganesh. However, at work, the final result may not actually be up to the standards you expected. But a pleasant evening with your beloved will clear all such shadows and lighten your mood.

#### CAPRICORN

The day will find you in an exceedingly good mood and you will be all energetic and geared up to take on challenges as and when they come, says Ganesh. A number of business activities will command your attention, and agreements and contracts you will take hold of as a consequence may get you a fortune.

#### AQUARIUS

Today, you decide not to mix business with pleasure. A wise decision, says Ganesh. Your commitment to work increases and you don't want to harm your prospects. However, you reserve the evening only for your loved ones, who are more than happy to have you with them.

#### PISCES

You will need to get your priorities right if you wish to be able to successfully deal with the increased responsibilities that will be heaped on your plate today, says Ganesh. Try not to let your frustrations burst through.

## Heritage film posters to go under hammer

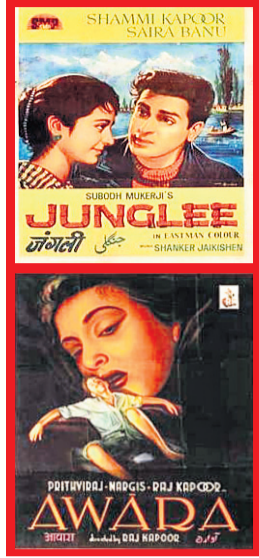
New Delhi: Online Auction House deRivaz & Ives has announced what is said to be the largest collection of first-release original Indian film posters.

Exactly 20 years after the groundbreaking The ABC Series, which introduced and established a credible financial market and respectability for Indian film publicity material and memorabilia, this collection of rare first-release original film posters from India's vast cinematic history, includes many designs that are still not available on the global internet.

Various live events and exhibitions will be held in



Mumbai and Delhi in the coming months to pay tribute to many Indian film legends and superstars, including Satyajit Ray, Dilip Kumar, Bimal Roy, Dharmendra, Rajesh Khanna and Saira Banu.



Little will change unless the Indian film community takes a greater responsibility for preserving and re-viving our paper-based cinematic heritage. Aamir Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Anil Kapoor, Anupam Kher, Dia Mirza, and a few others have previously purchased Osian's auctions, but an irreversible change requires a much larger and collected interest. "We hope you will take this delicate art form to the next financial level," Ambassador (Retd.) Niranjan Desai, Chief Spokesperson-deRivaz & Ives, stated. The auction is to be held online on www.derivaz-ives.com 8th and 9th April, 2022. IANS

### KANYE'S NEW GIRLFRIEND OPENS UP

## No similarities between me & Kim: Chaney Jones



Los Angeles: Rapper Kanye West's new girlfriend Chaney Jones has been in the news since the duo started going out. Amid their outings, several fans have claimed that Jones has a similarity to Kim Kardashian and her fashion as well. However, the former denies the claims.

Asked if she sees the resemblance between herself and Kim, Jones said, "No, not really." While stating that she doesn't see any physical similarities between her and Kardashian, Chaney also opened up on whether Kanye and her talk about his ex. She said, "No, (Kanye and I), we don't speak about (Kim)." In the meantime, West was recently suspended from Instagram for 24 hours after he shared an offensive post related to Trevor Noah after The Daily Show host commented on his ongoing feud with Kim Kardashian on his show. The rapper was also reportedly removed from performing at Grammys 2022 in light of his online posts about Trevor Noah who is set to be hosting the ceremony.



## Huma talks about sexism in showbiz

A MAN DOESN'T HAVE TO PROVE HIMSELF BY DOING A MALE-CENTRIC FILM, SAYS THE BADLAPUR ACTRESS ON GENDER BIAS

Mumbai: Actress Huma Qureshi is on a roll this year with back-to-back hit films and web series to her credit. Apart from work, the actress is also quite vocal about the representation of women in the film industry and the gender

pay gap. Sharing her thoughts, the *Mithya* actress says, "A man doesn't have to prove himself by doing a male-centric film, but sometimes a female has to prove it by doing a female-centric film and say that this is the audience that she has pulled in." Regarding pay parity, she adds,

"I would definitely say that if a woman is asking for what she deserves, I think it is because she deserves it. That is her market thing and she deserves what she is asking for."

On one wish she wants to fulfill as a woman, the actress said, "My one wish is that I want to change and bring a positive impact on body positivity. I want every girl in this world to love her body as it is. A woman is so much more beautiful and complex than just being judged by a number on a scale." IANS

### MULTILINGUAL THEATRE FEST KALINGA NATYA MAHOTSAV: DAY 2

## Mr Right highlights right-wing atrocities

Bhubaneswar: Ashok Nagar Natya Mukh, a theatre troupe from West Bengal, presented Bengali play *Mr Right* on the second evening of the 24th Kalinga Natya Mahotsav, a five-day national-level multilingual drama festival organised by Satabdita Kalakar here at Rabindra Mandap, Monday.

The play, written by eminent playwright Mohit Chattopadhyay at the beginning of 21st

century, was directed Abhi Chakraborty it represented the extremism of the right-wing groups of the 20th century. The unusual representation of the play held the audience spellbound till curtains came down on the stage.

Among the actors, Sumit Roy, Sangeeta Chakraborty, Sukanta Paul, Asim Das, Shreya Sarkar, Smrutilata Mondal and Abhi Chakraborty played important roles.

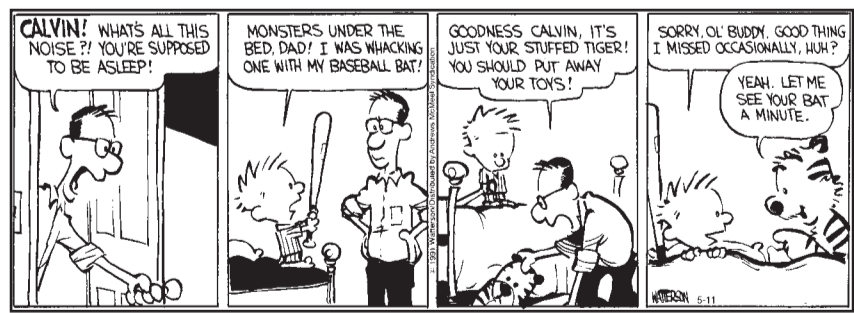
Two books – *Bidambana* written by Upendra Nayak and *Adhyatma Ramayan* by Jaykrushna Rath – were released while artistes Bijay Patnaik and Kailash Panigrahi felicitated on the occasion by the dignitaries including retired IAS RN Senapati and Er. Manoj Mohanty. Troupe's president Gourahari Das presided over the programme coordinated by secretary Dhira Mallick. PNN



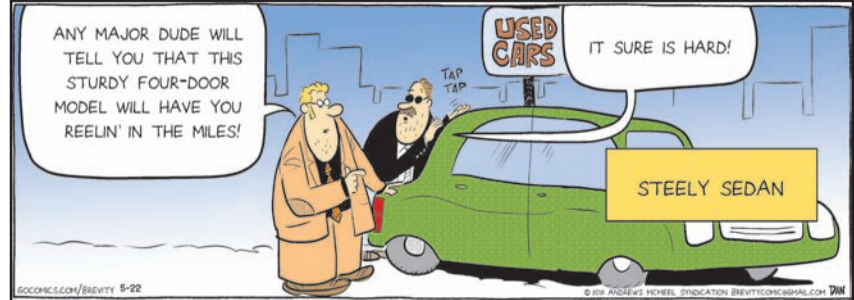
### PEANUTS



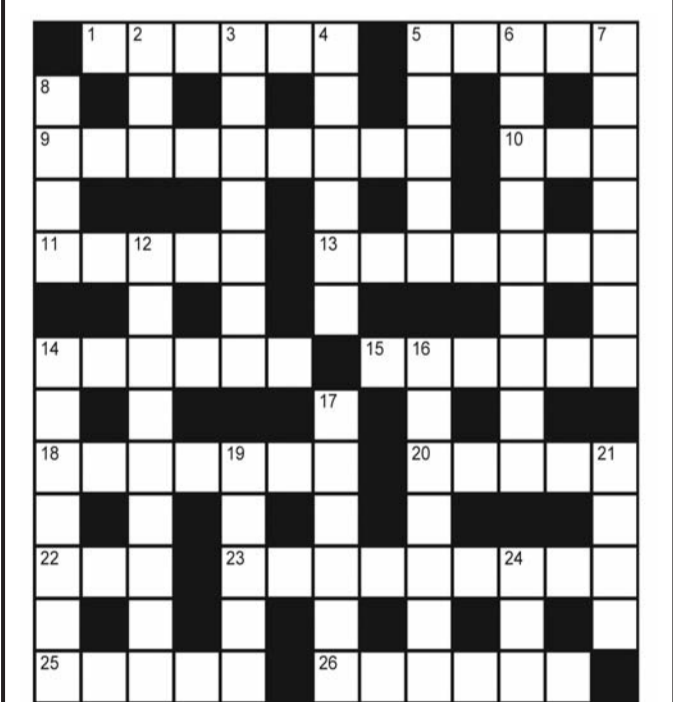
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



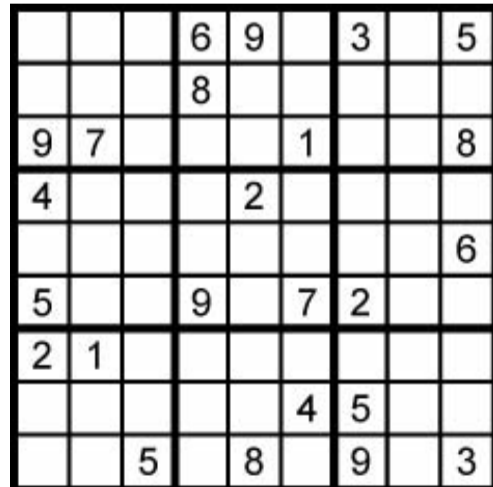
### FUN post CROSSWORD



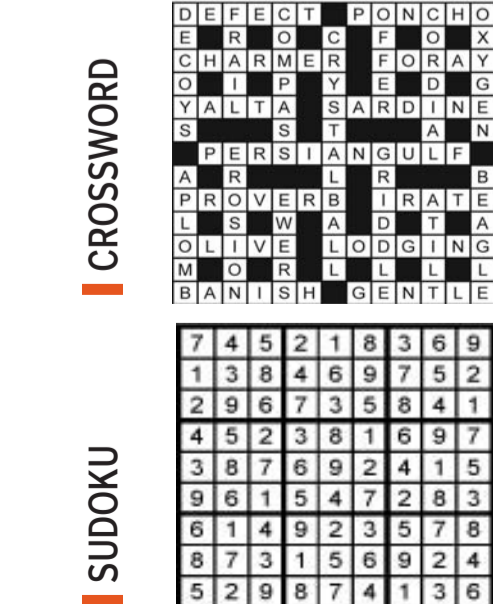
- Across
- 1 Lunatic
  - 5 Floral leaf
  - 9 Dangerous outlaw
  - 10 Address book abbr.
  - 11 Musical exercise
  - 13 Italian city
  - 14 Challenge
  - 15 Chic
  - 18 Geometric figure
  - 20 Draws nigh
  - 22 Yellowfin tuna
  - 23 Nips and tucks, e.g. (4-5)
  - 25 Visual perception
  - 26 High regard
  - 6 Part of Argentina and Chile
  - 7 Cradlesong
  - 8 Chances
  - 12 Sanctioning
  - 14 Forays
  - 16 Curlicue
  - 17 Subconscious mind
  - 19 Suit
  - 21 Mediocre (2-2)
  - 24 Enemy

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



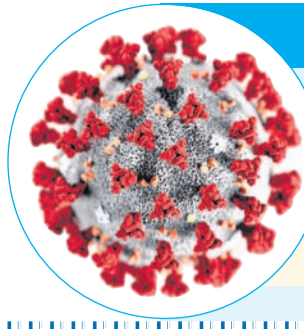
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## RESPIRE FROM HEAT

A newly-built shed for devotees on Grand Road in Puri, Monday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	47,14,16,738	40,76,72,152	61,02,474
India	4,30,09,390	4,24,67,774	5,16,510
Odisha	12,87,193	12,77,497	9,116

# Success is always a process and never an event: Mala

She hails from a bureaucrat's family. Her father served as a Chief Secretary of Odisha. An avid dramatist during her college & university days, Mala Mishra participated in myriad cultural and youth events. An accomplished Odissi dancer and wife of industrialist Mahimananda Mishra, Mala, along with her husband, envisioned Odisha's "first school of holistic learning" - "DPS Kalinga" in 2003. In an exclusive chat with **Orissa POST**, Mala Mishra, Pro Vice Chairperson, DPS Kalinga, speaks about various challenges during the pandemic and her advice to students. Excerpts:



### What facilities did you provide to ensure classes during the pandemic?

The pandemic posed an unforeseen challenge globally. Every sector was hit, education included. This called for a shift to digital approach to continue the pedagogical process and minimise the disruptions in education across all age groups. At DPS



ural instinct. In these challenging times, moving from the real to the virtual world had

was missing. Children's social skills have been stymied as they tend to choose their personal devices to communicate virtually than real people who are sitting right in front of them.

### Opinion on students in Odisha

Just like all over the world, students in Odisha are no different. They are bright, motivated and, given right opportunities, they can create a successful life for themselves. Being part of the educational fraternity, we have to symbiotically provide the optimum opportunities to reinforce the education process. In my experience, in the last 20 years, as an educational entrepreneur, I have witnessed a limiting ideology among parents and students that only science students have a successful career progression as compared to those pursuing commerce or humanities. Children are coerced into coaching from middle school onwards irrespective of their aptitude. Can we imagine a world without teachers, photographers, designers, architects or even culinary professionals? Every profession has its importance to run society.

### Advice for students

Children are most often blinkered to focus on achieving a particular goal which reduces their field of vision. These days, children are not just the summation

of their grades on their report cards but require various life skills to be successful. I would advise students to invest in their talent and dreams as their career is not just working or a job or a deadline to be met but a passion. Students should remember that success is always a process and never an event. Similarly, failure is always an event and never a person. Be a lifelong learner, if I may use the term, "Osmotic Learner". So, you unconsciously absorb from experiences and people you encounter. Be wise with your homework, the person who doesn't read books has no advantage over one who can't read them. So read, read & read! That's the window to a progressive mind.

### How would you motivate students?

Education is your passport to future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. Identifying your key interest areas will help catapult you into a different league of thinkers. Be optimistic in your perspective and have conversations with people which will broaden your horizon. Keep in mind, fortune favours the bold. To quote an example of a success story of a switch in the career of Falguni Nayar who was an investment banker for 20 years and today she is the CEO of India's largest cosmetic retailer Nykaa or the example of Rajnikanth from a humble bus conductor to India's megastar. The idea is to remain confident and well informed and remember no decision has to be permanent unless you want it to be.

Kalinga, we too embraced the online teaching mode. We extended lesson plans beyond textbooks to the use of online resources with virtual activities for children, even lab activities were done online. We used multiple student assessment techniques. The curriculum was planned using audiovisual aids. These apart, we had activities including children in group presentations to enhance their academic, literary and cultural skills.

its merits and demerits. Although the process of education continued online, learning was in isolation as students stared into screens from their homes trying hard to concentrate and decipher what the teacher was saying. Added to the difficulties were network issues. Also, the increase in screen time and misuse of devices for activities other than studies was an issue. There also was a lack of personalised feedback due to improper communication from both the students and teachers. Physical classroom teaching is largely dependent on non-verbal cues from teachers to students and vice versa which

### What are the demerits of online teaching?

'Man is a social animal', said Aristotle. Being sociable is a nat-

# ₹4,013cr infra boost to state by NABARD

With the sanction made in the current year, the NABARD's total cumulative sanction since the inception of RIDF has crossed ₹32,100 crore for Odisha

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhubaneswar, March 21:** The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has sanctioned Rs 4,013 crore to the Odisha government during the financial year 2021-22 under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF), officials said Monday.

This financial allocation is also the highest in the country under RIDF during the financial year; the NABARD officials said.

During this fiscal year, a major thrust has been given to improvement in the rural connectivity sector in the state under RIDF and an assistance of Rs 2,568 crore (64 per cent of total sanction of the state) has been released for construction of rural roads and bridges, Chief General Manager of NABARD (Odisha region) C Udayabhaskar said in a statement.

Road projects of a total length of 2,000 km and bridges of 17.13 km length have been constructed and upgraded through RIDF funding



### IN A NUTSHELL

NABARD has sanctioned financial assistance of Rs 840 crore for 9 mega piped water supply projects aimed at providing safe drinking water at doorstep to about 17 lakh rural population in Odisha

Similarly, funds to the tune of Rs 605 crore have also been extended to the state for the development of various agri-allied and irrigation infrastructures

Some of the notable projects sanctioned during the year include Kusumi irrigation project and livestock vaccine production unit at Berhampur

**This sanction is on the line of priority fixed by the state government for developing critical rural infrastructure for drinking water supply, irrigation and rural connectivity**

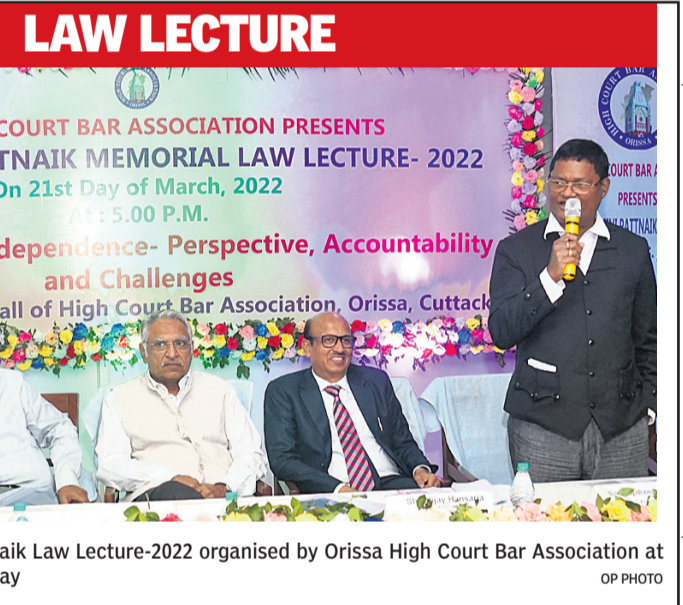
during the current year. These projects are expected to benefit more than 10 lakh people in the state, he said.

The CGM said NABARD has sanctioned financial assistance of Rs 840 crore for 9 mega piped water supply projects aimed at providing safe drinking water at doorstep to about 17 lakh rural population in Odisha. Similarly, funds to the tune of Rs 605 crore have also been extended to the state for the development of various agri-allied and irrigation infrastructures, he added.

Some of the notable projects sanctioned during the year include Kusumi irrigation project and livestock vaccine production unit at Berhampur.

This sanction is on the line of priority fixed by the state government for developing critical rural infrastructure for drinking water supply, irrigation and rural connectivity (road and bridge).

With the sanction made in the current year, the NABARD's total cumulative sanction since inception of RIDF has crossed Rs 32,100 crore for Odisha, officials said.



## LAW LECTURE

THE HIGH COURT BAR ASSOCIATION PRESENTS  
**SUDAMINI PATTNAIK MEMORIAL LAW LECTURE- 2022**  
On 21st Day of March, 2022  
At 5:00 P.M.  
Topic : **Judicial Independence- Perspective, Accountability and Challenges**  
Venue : Convention Hall of High Court Bar Association, Orissa, Cuttack

Dignitaries at the Soudamini Pattnaik Law Lecture-2022 organised by Orissa High Court Bar Association at HC convention hall in Cuttack, Monday

# 22k poll officials, 195 platoons of force on urban election duty

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 21:** Around 22,000 polling officials and 195 platoons of security forces will be deployed for smooth conduct of the urban polls in the state, State Election Commissioner Aditya Prasad Padhi said Monday.

The elections to 109 urban local bodies (ULBs) including three municipal corporations of Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Berhampur, are scheduled to be held March 24 while results will be declared March 26.

Speaking about poll arrangements, Padhi said one presiding officer and four polling officers will be engaged in each booth. In total, 22,000 polling officials will be deployed and they will reach their respective booths by March 23 afternoon, he said.

Padhi said elaborate security arrangements have been made to ensure smooth conduct of the elections. As many as 195 platoons of police force will be deployed for the poll, of which 30 platoons will be deployed for Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), 20 platoons for Cuttack Municipal Corporation and 10 platoons for Berhampur Municipal Corporation.

This apart, 300 mobile parties will be engaged. Out of 300 parties, 109 units will be deployed in the three corporation towns during the election, Padhi said.

He further informed that a constable/havildar/armed police will be deployed in each booth. "However, for sensitive/hypersensitive booths, a constable/havildar along with one armed police personnel will be engaged. Moreover, 1/4th force led by a

police officer will be present there to guard one cluster booth," Padhi added.

He said 6,411 candidates are in the fray for election. While 569 candidates have remained in the battle field for the post of chairperson and mayor, 5,842 are there for the election to councillor and corporator seats. The election will be held at 1,672 wards in 106 municipalities and notified area councils (NACs) and 165 wards in three municipal corporations. Over 40.55 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their franchise in the election for which voting will be done between 8 am and 5 pm, he said, adding that there will be 2,989 booths in 106 municipalities and NACs and 1,384 booths in three corporations.

The State Election Commissioner further said three corporators of BeMC and 58 councillors of different NACs and municipalities have been elected unopposed. Besides, no candidate has filed nomination for the post of councillor in one ward in each of Pattamundai Municipality, Kamakhyanagar NAC and Purushottampur NAC. As per norms, the state government can nominate persons for the vacant posts, he said.

There are 16 candidates in the race for the post of mayor in CMC and chairperson in Baripada municipality whereas 18 candidates are in fray for the Jeypore municipality chief's post. Two ballot units will be given in all booths in these ULBs, said Padhi. Two EVMs will be used in each booth- one to elect mayor/chairperson and another for corporators and councillors. For the first time, there will be a none-of-the-above (NOTA) option for voters in the EVMs.

# Vendetta behind servitor's murder

**2 KEY CONSPIRATORS AMONG 6 ARRESTED; ₹30 LAKH SUPARI REPORTEDLY GIVEN**

PNN & AGENCIES

**Puri, March 21:** Police Monday claimed to have cracked the sensational murder case of Srimandir servitor Krushna Chandra Pratihari with the arrest of six persons including two conspirators.

Pratihari, a member of Suar-Mahasuar Nijog, was shot dead by miscreants here March 16.

"As of now, we have arrested six persons in connection with the murder of Krushna Chandra Pratihari, while three accused involved in the murder are yet to be arrested. They will be arrested soon," Puri SP Kanwar Vishal



File photos of Kalia Singhari and Dalgobinda Singhari

Singh said addressing the media. The arrested were identified as Kalia Singhari, his son Dalgobinda Singhari, Kalu Panigrahi, Munna Patra, Baba Mohapatra and Sandeep Jena. Kalia is the brother of Guna Singhari who was murdered in 2012, it was learnt.

"Kalia and Dalgobinda are the main conspirators of the crime. They engaged Kalu Panigrahi, a

lodge manager, to arrange other people and execute the crime," Singh said.

Speaking about the motive of the crime, the SP said, "As of now, the investigation revealed that they killed Pratihari just to take revenge of Guna Singhari's murder. However, other angles are also under investigation."

Singh said the accused had ear-

lier made an attempt to eliminate Krushna Chandra Pratihari, but the plan could not materialise.

Munna Patra of Sadar area here had supplied weapons for the murder while Baba Mohapatra was on the spot to inform about the deceased. Sandeep Jena managed the hideout plan.

"Of the arrested persons, some will be taken on remand to recreate the crime scene. Based on sufficient evidence, we are trying to bring the case to a logical conclusion," the SP added.

As per preliminary investigation, a deal of Rs 30 lakh was finalised for the murder.

"The accused have been arrested under Sections 302, 120B and 34 of the IPC apart from 25 and 27 of the Arms Act of a case (90/2022) registered with the Town police," said an official, adding that Rs 1.5 lakh has been recovered from them.

# Dire warning for Great Barrier Reef amid bleaching

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Canberra, March 21:** Targeting net zero by 2050 wouldn't be enough to slow the rising ocean temperatures in a bid to protect the Great Barrier Reef (GBR), a new report from Australia's Climate Council said Monday.

The report, released by the Climate Change Communications Organisation, said if emissions continue at the current pace, coral bleaching could occur every two years by 2034 and annually by 2044.

"Already at around 1.1 degree of global warming, we see tropical coral reefs suffering an enormous amount of damage," research director at the Climate Council and one of the authors of the report Simon Bradshaw told Xinhua news agency

"The Great Barrier Reef has had massive bleaching events a number of times now in close succession, with very little time for the reef to recover. If warming rises to over 1.5 degrees, then it may be impossible for tropical coral reefs to survive," he said.

The report found 2021 was the warmest year on record for the world's oceans and the 2,300km World Heritage site could not survive under those conditions.

"If the Great Barrier Reef is in this much trouble, it means that coral reefs worldwide are in a lot of trouble," Bradshaw said.

To avoid a climate catastrophe and best protect the Great Barrier Reef, the Climate Council recommends Australia triples its efforts and takes bold measures to



reduce its national emissions 75 per cent by 2030, and reach net zero by 2035.

As a first step, the Australian government should match key allies and commit to halving emis-

sions this decade, the report said.

"It's very clear that the world as a whole needs to half emissions this decade. And for a wealthy developed country like Australia, we have to be going further than

that," Bradshaw said. The report came as a UN reef monitoring delegation touched down to assess the condition of the Great Barrier Reef.

The monitoring visit comes ahead of a World Heritage Committee meeting in June, which will consider listing the Reef as "in danger".

Surface waters off south-eastern Australia are currently warming at nearly four times the global average, leading to changes in the distribution of species, species collapse and a decline in biodiversity.

Bradshaw said the new recommended scale of action is achievable, "if we're to give the Great Barrier Reef a fighting chance".

# LS mulls special tag for schools handling differently-abled kids



Local MP Aparajita Sarangi asked if the edu ministry, in sync with rehab council of India, is mulling a plan by which institutes may encourage more special educators to come up

suggested that the government consider ensuring representations from students with disabilities for facilitating policies under the National Education Policy. He said that this would ensure better understanding of the problems and thereby, lead to better policies.

To this, Dharmendra Pradhan replied that the house is witnessing a healthy discussion and has seen consensus on related issues. He assured that the government is working on the same and that all suggestions by the MP would be noted.

According to me, the population in this category of different kind of disability is around 10 per cent. Handling this is a challenge. We all have to work together. We all have to face this challenge collectively. Experts are working on how to create more such schools and trainers

together," said Pradhan. "We all have to face this challenge collectively. Experts are working on how to create more such schools and trainers," he added.

New Delhi, March 21: The Lok Sabha Monday took up for discussion the issue of special recognition for schools dealing with differently-abled children. Raising the issue, BJP Member from Bhubaneswar Aparajita Sarangi asked whether the Education Ministry, in association with Rehabilitation Council of India, is mulling a strategy by which a large number of institutes may be given recognition to encourage more special educators to come up.

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | UNION EDUCATION MINISTER

## HITTING THE STREETS



Vocational trainers stage a demonstration near OSEPA office in Bhubaneswar, Monday, to press for fulfilment of their demands, including of job regularisation

# State logs 40 Cov cases; lowest since May 2020

Bhubaneswar, March 21: The daily coronavirus cases in Odisha Monday were the lowest in nearly two years for the second consecutive day as 40 people tested positive for the pathogen, the state Health department said in a bulletin.

Currently, there are 600 active Covid-19 cases in the coastal state and there were no new deaths for the fourth straight day, it added. Sixty-seven patients have recuperated from the highly contagious disease in the last 24 hours, according to the Health bulletin.

The state's daily test positivity rate (TPR) stood at 0.12 per cent and eight children were among the newly-infected. The infections were detected out of 33,234 sample tests, it added. The cases were lower than the current single-day count May 12, 2020, when the state had logged 23 infections.

There were 45 cases Sunday. The toll remained at 9,116 and these have been confirmed as Covid deaths after an audit. Fifty-three other coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities so far, according to data. The state has logged 12,87,193 Covid-19 cases, out of which 12,77,424 people have recovered so far.

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS

# State gains 893sqkm green cover in 2 yrs

Bhubaneswar, March 21: The current recorded forest area and tree cover in Odisha is 57,160sqkm which works out to 36.71 per cent of the total geographical area of the state. This is 3.71 per cent more than the national goal of 33 per cent of geographical area of the country, a forest official said during the state-level celebration of International Day of Forests at Soochana Bhawan here Monday.



2019 to 2021 as per the Forest Survey of India report. "In order to preserve the perennial flow of our river systems, massive plantations have been taken up on government and private lands stretching on the banks of Mahanadi with its tributaries Tel & 1b, Brahmani, Baitarani, Rushikulya and Vamsadhara under the Green Mahanadi Mission," a forest official said. The official added that about 4,605 Vana Surakshya Samitis have been roped in to restore forests under the 'Ama Jungle Yojana'. About 14,260 women self-help groups (SHGs) have been linked with various income generating activities under the ambitious scheme, which also benefited 4.2 lakh households in Odisha.

On the other hand, over 16,500 Vana Surakshya Samitis and Eco Development Committees have been constituted in the state for considerable improvement of over 13,600sqkm of degraded forest area in the state, it was learnt. A brochure 'Highlights of Odisha Forestry Sector 2021', highlighting the activities under different programmes and schemes of the state forest, was unveiled by the dignitaries. In order to recognize the meritorious work by forest field staff and encourage people's participation, the state government has enhanced the award money for outstanding work in the field of forest, wildlife and environment from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000. The number of awardees was also raised from 20 to 40, it was learnt. In consideration of the livelihood needs of the people, the state government has allowed Vana Surakshya Samiti members for working in bamboo forest in the state from 2022. In 2021-22, 3.65 crore seedlings have been planted covering 1.09 lakh ha area under different programmes and schemes, including avenue plantation.

# No decision yet for disinvestment of Nalco, says Union Minister Joshi

Bhubaneswar, March 21: The Union government has not taken any decision for the disinvestment of the National Aluminium Company (Nalco), Union Minister of Mines and Coal Pralhad Joshi told Rajya Sabha Monday. While replying to a query of BJD member Prasanna Acharya, Joshi said the Bharat Aluminium Company Limited (BALCO) and Hindustan Zinc Limited (HZL) are the two Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) under the Ministry of Mines which have already been privatised through disinvestment. However, no decision has been taken by the Government for disinvestment of Nalco, he informed. As the Government of India is the major shareholder of Nalco since its inception, there has been dividend contribution to national exchequer. However, as the state government is not having any shareholding, there has been no div-



idend contribution to the state exchequer, he said. Informing about the dividend paid by company for the last five years to the Union, the Minister said Nalco has paid Rs 511.73 crore in 2016-17, Rs 546.95 crore in 2017-18, Rs 545.92 crore in 2018-19, Rs 265.38 crore in 2019-20, and Rs 236.4 crore in 2020-21. Similarly, the foreign exchange earnings of the Central PSE were Rs 3,277.32 crore in 2016-17, Rs 3,573.75 crore in 2017-18, Rs 4,647.38 crore in 2018-19, Rs 3,442.97 crore in 2019-20 and Rs 5,060.72 crore in the last financial year. Established in 1981, Nalco is a Navaratna company under the Ministry of Mines and has been the top most CPSEs, producing and exporting high quality alumina and aluminium for the last 40 years. As per reports, the Union government is planning to implement 100 per cent strategic disinvestment in Nalco by way of privatisation. There is widespread resentment among people of Odisha and workers of the company towards the move.

## PARIS ACCORD GOAL ON 'LIFE SUPPORT'

# Don't let Russia crisis fuel climate destruction: Guterres

A SEPARATE REPORT, RELEASED LAST MONTH, FOUND THAT HALF OF HUMANITY IS ALREADY AT SERIOUS RISK FROM CLIMATE CHANGE AND THIS WILL INCREASE WITH EACH TENTH OF A DEGREE OF WARMING

Berlin, March 21: Countries scrambling to replace Russian oil, gas and coal supplies with any available alternative may fuel the world's "mutually assured destruction" through climate change, the head of the United Nations warned Monday. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the all-of-the-above strategy now being pursued by major economies to end fossil fuel imports from Russia because of its invasion of Ukraine could kill hopes of keeping global warming



below dangerous levels. "Countries could become so consumed by the immediate fossil fuel supply gap that they neglect or knee-cap policies to cut fossil fuel use," he said by video at an event organised by the Economist weekly. "This is madness. Addiction to fossil fuels is mutually assured destruction." Germany, one of Russia's biggest energy customers, wants to increase its supply of oil from the Gulf and speed up the building of terminals to receive liquefied natural gas. In the United States, White House spokesperson Jen Psaki earlier this

Germany, one of Russia's biggest energy customers, wants to increase its supply of oil from the Gulf and speed up the building of terminals to receive liquefied natural gas

White House spokesperson Jen Psaki earlier this month said the war in Ukraine was a reason for American oil and gas producers to "go get more supply out of the ground in our own country"

is "on life support" because countries aren't doing enough to drive down emissions. With temperatures already about 1.2°C higher now than that before industrialisation, keeping the Paris target alive requires a 45 per cent cut in global emissions by 2030, he said. But after a pandemic-related dip in 2020, emissions rose again sharply last year. "If we continue with more of the same, we can kiss 1.5 goodbye," he said. "Even 2°C may be out of reach. And that would be catastrophic." Guterres urged the world's biggest developed and emerging economies to make meaningful emissions cuts, including by swiftly ending their dependence on coal - the most polluting fossil fuel - and holding private companies that continue to support its use to account.

MARKET WATCH table with columns for INDEX and VARIATION, listing SENSEX, NIFTY, DOLLAR, EURO, GOLD, and SILVER.

WEATHER table with columns for BHBUB and CTK, listing MAX, MIN, Humidity, and Rainfall.

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SHORT TAKES

25 hurt in bus mishap

**Sambalpur:** At least 25 passengers were injured after a bus they were travelling in met with an accident near Gargadahal railway overbridge under Jujumara police limits in Sambalpur Monday evening. The injured have been rushed to Jujumara CHC. According to reports, the bus 'Garuda' (OR 15H 1919) was en route to Sambalpur from Angul when the steering of the vehicle got locked, leading to the mishap. Police, Fire Service personnel and local people helped in rescuing the passengers. Similarly, a youth died while two others sustained injuries after an ambulance hit their motorbike from rear near Birunha bridge in Dhamnagar of Bhadrak.

₹20L looted from petrol pump

**Keonjhar:** At least six masked miscreants allegedly looted Rs 20 lakh from a petrol pump at Padmapur under Sadar police limits in Keonjhar district, Monday. Sources said the incident took place at around 4:30am at Reliance petrol pump located at Putulia. "As many as six masked miscreants reached the petrol pump in two motorcycles posing as customers. After filling petrol in their vehicles, the miscreants pointed guns at the petrol pump's manager and later decamped with Rs 20 lakh cash," an employee said.

Snake rescuer falls prey to cobra

**Kendrapara:** A 65-year-old snake rescuer, credited with rescuing over 4,000 snakes in the last three decades, died after being bitten by a cobra in Kendrapara district, police said Monday. The incident occurred at Baspur in Derabish block on Sunday afternoon. The incident was captured by locals on their mobile phones. In the video, Sheikh Suleiman was seen holding the cobra he had caught, but the poisonous snake bit him suddenly. He was taken to the DHH in Kendrapara, where doctors declared him dead.

No 'Chadak Mela' this year too

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhograi, March 21:** In what came as a bad news for devotees, the district administration and the Trust Board have decided to cancel the 13-day Chadak Mela at Chandaneswar temple here in Balasore district this year too due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.



The 13-day long Chadak Mela has been cancelled for the third year in a row. An emergency meeting of the district level officials, temple servitors, trust board members and some intellectuals was held at the block conference hall.

As per the decision, entry of devotees will be banned but rituals will be conducted as usual. "As large gathering poses threat to the outbreak of Covid-19, it has been decided that only rituals will be performed to keep the age-old custom alive," an official said.

Worth mentioning, thousands of devotees from various parts of Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal through the shrine to take part in North Odisha's biggest festival which is traditionally observed from April 1 to 13 every year.

The famous fair, which is celebrated on the premises of Chandaneswar temple during Maha Bisuva Sankranti, attracts lakhs of devotees from in and outside the State.

The special characteristic of the fair is that devotees pierce their body with iron nail and dance barefoot under the scorching heat in a grand procession.

It is believed that Lord Shiva is pleased with such penance and showers blessings on devotees.



A battery-operated speedboat was launched in Bhitarkanika National Park under Rajnagar block in Kendrapara district to ferry tourists around the wildlife sanctuary

FOR TOURISTS' DELIGHT

SUKINDA CHROMITE MINES

Forest land conversion nod rekindles job hopes

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, March 21:** The Centre's consent for conversion of 66.20 hectare of forest land for expansion of Jindal chromite mines at Sukinda in Jajpur district has rekindled the hopes of employment and revival of several ancillary businesses in the region.

The matter came to the fore after the forest advisory committee issued notice in this regard. The consent for conversion of forest land for expansion of the mines was given at the meeting of Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Ministry February 21. This will pave way for reopening of mines which are lying closed for the last three years.

The Centre's decision will help in re-employment of over 500 employees of the mines that have remained closed since March 2019. The decision will also help in generating livelihood for scores of people and revival of several industries and business enterprises lying closed for a long period.

Reports said the Jindal Stainless



PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

Steel owned Kaliapani chromite mine was shut down March 9, 2021.

The decision to close down the mines was taken under Section-75 (A) of Industrial Dispute Act, Central Rules-1957 and Section 25 (C) of Compensation Act of the government. Prior to that, Jindal Stainless Steel had submitted a proposal for conversion of 66.20 hectare of forest land August 2, 2016.

Later, the Supreme Court issued order for collection of 100 per cent penalty from the defaulting mine owners for irregularities in the

mining operation.

As a result, the district mines department had estimated to collect more than Rs 4,798 crore from 13 mining leaseholders in Jajpur district. Many mining owners had moved the Supreme Court and managed to get stay order on collection of the penalty.

However, the Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change ministry refused to give environmental clearance to the defaulting leaseholders to operate their mines. As a result, the con-

The Centre's decision will help in re-employment of over 500 employees of the mines that have remained closed since March 2019

cerned leaseholders have stopped extracting minerals from the mines after expiry of their lease periods.

On the other hand, government-owned Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) is accused of selling chromites at an exorbitant rate to various industries. This has led to a decline in their profits as they pay a very high price to purchase the minerals.

This has also led to closure of Mesco Steel at Kalinganagar while Maithan Ispat and Nilachal Ispat have been sold off. The closure of industries has resulted in loss of livelihood for scores of people and workers and deterioration of the local economy.

ULB POLLS AHEAD

DGP reviews security in Maoist-hit districts

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Korapur/Nabarangpur, March 21:** Director General of Police (DGP) Sunil Kumar Bansal Monday visited Maoist-hit districts of Korapur, Nabarangpur and Rayagada. His visit comes at a time when the three Maoist-affected districts are gearing up for the ULB polls.

He also took stock of the Left-wing extremism (LWE) and crime situation in these three districts.

During his visit, the top cop held a meeting with other senior officers and reviewed the preparedness for the ensuing urban local body (ULB) elections in these affected districts.

He was accompanied by Special DGP Special Armed Police (SAP), Director Intelligence, ADGP Law & Order, IGP Operations, IGP Border Security Force (BSF), and DIGP Special Intelligence Wing (SIW).

The ultras have mostly relocated to other places after security forces have established their domination in these three districts, which was



once a stronghold of the outlawed CPI-Maoists.

The DGP appreciated the efforts of the security forces, local police and the local police.

"Police, BSF and local people have been working in tandem to bring changes in these districts. The transformation is visible," the DGP said.

Apart from Malkangiri, Korapur, Rayagada and Nabarangpur are some of the worst affected districts in Odisha recording major Maoist-related incidents.

Now, the presence of the forces has inculcated a sense of security among the local population and helped implementation of government's developmental schemes.

Any other senior officials of the BSF and Odisha police were also present at the meeting.

HEALTH FIRST



People get their health checked at a camp organised at Hariharnagar in Berhampur, Monday

Jumbo deaths rock Kuldiha sanctuary

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sajanagad, March 21:** Death of two elephants in Kuldiha wildlife sanctuary under Nilagairi subdivision of Balasore district within 24 hours has raised concern among the forest officials and wildlife lovers.

As per reports, the carcass of an adult elephant was recovered near Phatabaturi on the foothills of Debagiri near Guhalia and Juania villages under Baunsabania panchayat of the sanctuary Sunday.

On the same night, a baby elephant was also found dead a few metres away from the place where the carcass of an adult elephant was recovered.

Earlier, forest officials had recovered the carcass of an adult elephant inside the sanctuary January 15. However, forest officials came to know about it 10 days after the animal's death.

With these three jumbo deaths, the Kuldiha sanctuary has become vulnerable to pachyderms, ruid locals and the environmentalists.

Forest officials conducted a post-mortem of the carcasses and buried it inside the sanctuary.



On being informed, forest officials rushed to the spot and took stock of the elephant deaths. Balasore DFO Bimal Prasanna Acharya, ACFO Sushant Jena, Kuldiha forest ranger Ananta Jena and Panchalingewar forester Bhagyashree Dwibedi and a veterinarian Dr Piyush Soren also reached the spot and joined the investigation. Sniffer dogs were also pressed into service which went around the villages near the sanctuary searching for clues.

The Forest officials said the animals might have died due to some medical condition while the locals of Guhalia alleged that the ani-

mals were killed by poachers as their tusks were missing.

Locals claimed to have heard the loud trumpeting of the animals on the day of the incident. Later, they came to know about the carcass of an elephant lying in the forest. They again came to know about the carcass of another baby elephant recovered by the forest officials which they claimed to be the handiwork of some poachers.

Locals held the forest officials responsible for the elephant deaths. They claimed it have happened due to incompetency of the forest officials.

Specially-abled Rabindra in race for Hinjili councillor post

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, March 21:** All eyes are now set on the upcoming urban polls which are scheduled to be held March 24 for which the parties have intensified their campaigns. However, it is Rabindra Panigrahi, a wheelchair-bound differently-abled man, who has caught the attention of all the voters.

Panigrahi, who is contesting for the post of councillor from ward no-10 of Hinjilicut Municipality in Ganjam district, is winning hearts with his determination and willpower to serve the people of the locality.

Panigrahi was born with his legs paralysed. But, as he grew up, his determination overpowered his disability. "Disability cannot be a disadvantage if my determination is strong and I am committed to the cause of the local people," said Panigrahi. He wants to prove that physical deficiency is no hindrance to serving the people.

"One can move mountains, all that he/she needs is faith in self," he added.

"I would like to fight for the rights of the physically challenged. At the same time, I will take up the ward's problems if people elect me. My disability is not my weakness, it is my strength," he stated.



BREAKING BARRIERS

Sitting on a tricycle, Panigrahi is campaigning for himself moving door to door

A small crowd and his well-wishers accompany him as he moves on the dusty lanes of Hinjilicut town

Sitting on a tricycle, Panigrahi is campaigning for himself moving door to door. A small crowd and his well-wishers accompany him as he moves on the dusty lanes of Hinjilicut town.

"Voters are impressed with his guts and self-confidence. Initially, we thought he would confine himself to his house because of his immobility. But, now people are beginning to appreciate his zest and willpower after he began campaigning on the wheelchair," a local resident said.

"Rabindra's entry in the election field has added a refreshing air into the poll firmament. He has become a living example that nothing is impossible," another voter said.

Ganjam village shows way for sparrow conservation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Berhampur, March 21:** Sighting of house sparrows is a rarity these days in many places. But not in Baghajhari of Ganjam that has come forward to conserve these threatened species for the past few years.

One can hear the chirping of the little birds and view their flight from one artificial nest to another, which was installed by a local outfit in front of some of the houses in the village in Ganjam district.

Around a decade ago, the Anchalika Bikash Parishad (ABP) collaborated with the Forest department to start an awareness drive on conservation of the house sparrows in the village, 175 km south of Bhubaneswar.

"The population of house sparrows in the village has increased



FILE PHOTO

from only five to around 200 presently in the village," ABP president Sagara Patra said.

Earthen pots and artificial nests were distributed among the villagers and the items were hung in front of their houses to attract

the sparrows.

Besides Baghajhari, villagers of Lanjia and Gunthabandha and some others in the district decided to lend a helping hand in the movement.

"Now, we've installed around 200 eco-friendly artificial nests

The population of house sparrows in the village has increased from only five to around 200 presently in the village

SAGARA PATRA | ABP PRESIDENT

and feeder boxes in different places of Ganjam and Gajapati districts," Patra said.

After the installation and participation of the people in conservation, the population of the birds has increased manifold, according to Patra.

On Sunday, the organisation observed the World Sparrow Day at Lanjia by distributing artificial nests and earthen pots.

Berhampur Divisional Forest Officer Amlan Nayak and Shankar Narayan Bez, the district coordinator of eco-clubs, and several others attended the event.

World Sparrow Day, which was started by an NGO named the Nature Forever Society, is celebrated March 20 every year to underscore the need to conserve sparrows and the urban biodiversity.

House sparrow or the 'passer domesticus' is listed as 'least concern' in the Red List of Threatened Species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Their population has declined rapidly as the cities are no longer a suitable habitat due to the pollution caused by microwave towers, pesticides, besides green spaces giving way to more concrete constructions, according to the WWF India.

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR CLOSURE OF MANNED LEVEL CROSSING GATE BETWEEN KAIPADAR ROAD - TAPANG STATIONS

THE UNDER MENTIONED MANNED LEVEL CROSSING GATE OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION IS GOING TO BE CLOSED AFTER COMMISSIONING OF CONNECTING ROAD FOR PUBLIC. HENCE, THE USE OF THE UNDER MENTIONED MANNED LEVEL CROSSING GATE FOR PUBLIC IS TO BE CLOSED WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT.

Route	Between Stations	LC No.	Railway Kilometer	Year of Census	Train vehicles Unit
B	Kaipadar Road - Tapang	210	469/27-29	Sept., 2021	5809

COLLECTOR/KHURDAVIDE LETTER NO. 16403/Judl., DATED 03.11.2020 HAS PERMITTED FOR THE CLOSURE OF ABOVE MENTIONED MANNED LEVEL CROSSING GATE. PRINCIPAL CHIEF ENGINEER / EAST COAST RAILWAY / BHUBANESWAR HAS ALSO ACCORDED ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL FOR THE SAME VIDE LETTER NO. W-4/351/A/PL/VIII/6544, DATED 17.12.2021.

REASON FOR CLOSURE : CONSTRUCTION OF CONNECTING ROAD FROM LC NO. 210 TO 209.

THIS IS FOR THE INFORMATION OF ALL CONCERNED.  
PR - 907/M/21-22 Sr. Divisional Engineer (South) / Khurda Road  
EAST COAST RAILWAY

**FOCUS WAR CRIMES**

# PROSECUTE PUTIN NOW



**As Russian forces continue their indiscriminate attacks on Ukrainian civilians, pressure is growing globally to create a special tribunal to prosecute Russian President Vladimir Putin and his inner circle for the crime of aggression. Justice demands that this process begin immediately**

Court of Justice has resigned, saying, "Enough is enough. It's become impossible for me to represent a country that so cynically despises the law."

Putin's crimes are so grave that all investigations are both essential and welcome. But the priority now is to move fast. The world needs to send a message to the people of Ukraine that the world will act, and to Russia's current leadership that anyone helping to sustain Putin's war of aggression will not escape with impunity and would do well to distance themselves from the regime and start turning over evidence.

A decision on a special international tribunal has been requested by Ukraine, and we need European governments to support that call. But we could already establish an interim office to investigate all incidents that may constitute the crime of aggression.

An interim prosecutor could be appointed to compile the evidence and consider the basic questions – the nature of prosecution, the issue of immunity, and the rules of procedure. This operation would preferably be based in The Hague, and it need not involve more than ten staff members. With financial support from one or two governments, it could work closely with the ICC in their respective but complementary investigations.

The crime of aggression is a relatively straightforward offense to investigate and prosecute. It applies to all those who plan, initiate, influence, or shape an overall policy of aggression. A group of American lawyers has already done impressive work documenting what they consider to be acts of aggression committed by Putin, starting with his 2014 decisions to seize Crimea and to de-

ploy troops in Ukraine's Donbas region.

Putin's crime of aggression against Ukraine does not end with the invasion that began February 24. It has continued with each deliberate attack on Ukrainian cities and towns, with his targeting of innocent civilians, with his refusal to honour humanitarian corridors and ceasefires, and with his use of nuclear power stations to extort the Ukrainian government.

When war crimes committed in Yugoslavia and Rwanda were on the agenda 30 years ago, US President Bill Clinton led a bold initiative to create special tribunals that were eventually endorsed by the UN Security Council. The justifications given then are no less relevant today. The Americans saw a need for moral leadership. A tribunal was not there to favour any one race, religion, or ethnic group, Clinton explained. But it would, as he said then, draw a line between those who had decided to wield a clenched fist and those who were willing to extend an open hand. That, he said, is ultimately the one dividing line that really matters.

Our task today is the same. We must draw a line between those who see the world as a never-ending struggle between 'us' and 'them,' and those who would embrace our common humanity. By beginning the process of investigating, documenting, and prosecuting Russia's international crimes, we can give the people of Ukraine – and the world – a realistic hope that justice will be done and our common humanity acknowledged.

*The writer, a former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, is United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education.*  
©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Gordon Brown

**WE MUST DRAW A LINE BETWEEN THOSE WHO SEE THE WORLD AS A NEVER-ENDING STRUGGLE BETWEEN 'US' AND 'THEM,' AND THOSE WHO WOULD EMBRACE OUR COMMON HUMANITY**

The world has responded to Russia's invasion of Ukraine with sanctions, travel bans, and deliveries of humanitarian and military aid, all of which have been stepped up as Russian President Vladimir Putin's war crimes claim more lives every day. Now, with the Ukrainian people's courage and solidarity having stirred the collective conscience of Europe and much of the world, pressure is growing to complement these measures with criminal indictments of Putin and his closest associates.

The momentum is global. Some 140 prominent jurists and former leaders have issued a declaration of support for a "special tribunal for the punishment of the crime of aggression against Ukraine" – an idea first proposed by Philippe Sands of University College London. Indeed, Ukraine's lead prosecutor has announced that she is already compiling evidence of war crimes committed by Putin and his forces, and legal authorities in Germany and Poland are launching investigations of their own. In Spain, a magistrate has been building a case upon which to issue international arrest warrants for Putin's inner circle, as was done 20 years ago to arraign Chile's former dictator, Augusto Pinochet.

Moreover, following requests from at least 39 countries, the lead prosecutor of the International Criminal Court is opening an investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine (though the ICC cannot prosecute Russia for the specific crime of aggression). And Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has announced that a UN Human Rights Council commission of inquiry will compile a dossier documenting crimes against humanity, war crimes, and aggression.

Meanwhile, Russia's own hired legal gun at the International

## China's Warning

Yoga is a generic name for any discipline by which one attempts to pass out of the limits of one's ordinary mental consciousness into a greater spiritual consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO



China's Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng equated Indo-Pacific groupings such as Quad and AUKUS with the NATO at a programme in Beijing. This comes only a day after a two-hour-long video session between US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping late last week on the Ukraine crisis. Le's utterances could be an indication of China's anxiety over international efforts to checkmate its advances in the Indo-Pacific region. This stand comes after China's persistent refusal to criticise Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It had so long been suggesting a negotiated settlement and urging the US and the European Union to appreciate Russia's position. But, now a top Chinese leader has taken a clear position on the ongoing war in Ukraine and squarely blamed the NATO for the situation. Le did not mince words and compared NATO's actions in Europe to those of the US in Asia and warned that a crisis similar to that of Ukraine could follow in Asia too. China through its official organs and analysts blames NATO's move to offer its membership to Ukraine as the root cause for the crisis there. Its Foreign Minister Wang Yi also said Russia had reasons to be concerned about NATO's real intentions in Ukraine.

In a way, Le's detailed response to the crisis is a departure from the position China had taken till now. Call it nervousness or the proverbial crying wolf. Le's utterances show China is concerned it may meet Russia's fate in Ukraine and even be put in a far more serious predicament, if groupings like Quad comprising the USA, India, Australia and Japan and AUKUS formed by Australia, UK and the US, equipped with nuclear-powered submarines, take it on. NATO could not directly engage in Ukraine which is not yet its member. But, the Quad countries have the ability to train their fire power on China. That is why Le has been fielded not to articulate China's position on the Ukraine crisis as much as the threats to its hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region. Significantly, Ukraine had urged China a couple of days back to use its influence on Russia to restrain the latter from pounding the country with ruthless shelling. China has both economic and political interests in Ukraine. Even then, it has not yet responded to the appeal as it is more concerned about its own interests in the Indo-Pacific than in Ukraine.

In the characteristic Chinese way, Le took the line of offence as the best defence and threatened dire consequences if Quad and AUKUS countries 'gang up' against China in the Indo-Pacific region. He warned that going against the trend to pursue the Indo-Pacific strategy, provoke trouble, put together closed and exclusive 'small circles or groups' and get the region off course toward fragmentation and bloc-based division are as dangerous as the NATO strategy of eastward expansion in Europe. He went further to warn that if allowed to go on unchecked, it would bring untold consequences and ultimately push the Asia-Pacific over the "edge of an abyss." This is almost a war cry when there is no war in sight at the moment. China is looking at the Ukraine crisis as a dress rehearsal of the US-led blocs to use their combined arsenal to curb China's maritime aspirations in the Indo-Pacific region.

Only recently, China's Foreign Minister Wang spun the same theory and explicitly mentioned the formation of Quad as a key element of that strategy. China is convinced these groupings aim at establishing an "Indo-Pacific version of NATO."

Predictably, India took up the position along with its Quad partners that there is not an iota of truth in China's suspicion and claims the grouping is for broad-based cooperation, including vaccines and supply chains. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar sought to buttress India's position with the argument that no treaty has been signed nor is there any structure or secretariat. However, India, willy-nilly, seems to be on the Chinese side in its position on the Ukraine crisis. It has internationally been grouped as among the very few countries that are pro-Russia at this juncture.

Chinese propagandists brand NATO as 'the most serious war machine' that violates international law and endangers the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries. As the US and EU allege China is ready to supply arms and other material support to Russia during the invasion of Ukraine, China rubbishes it and says it is all cooked up to divert the world's attention from the West's plan to intimidate China.

This is war time and all sorts of theories and propaganda are being circulated. China is no stranger to this game. It seems it fears its plan for invading Taiwan will face stiff challenge from the Quad and AUKUS groupings for which it has started the campaign to discredit them and portray them as NATO clones. However, China nibbling away at Indian territory may not get an enthusiastic response from countries like Japan and the US, important members of Quad, due to India's stand on the Ukraine crisis.

**WISDOM CORNER**

- However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. **STEPHEN HAWKING**
- All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence, and then success is sure. **MARK TWAIN**
- Success is a science; if you have the conditions, you get the result. **OSCAR WILDE**

**WORDSWORTH**

**Shoestring**

Everybody who has investigated the various idioms in shoestring seems to have come away almost as puzzled as when they started. Its meaning is obvious enough to native English speakers: to do something on a shoestring is to manage on an insufficient budget (a shoestring budget) or undertake a project with limited resources. Hence the range of travel guides that include the phrase in their titles (Southeast Asia on a Shoestring), or this usage from a UK newspaper: *The Sports Council for Wales has launched its new campaign, Shape up on a Shoestring, to help you slim down your waistline without slimming down your wallet. -- South Wales Echo, 11 Nov. 2009.* For most English speakers shoestring was long ago replaced by either shoelace or bootlace. It survives almost exclusively in this set phrase. That suggests the idiom is fairly old and in fact it's recorded from rather more than a century ago, with exactly the same meaning as it has now: *The whole fabric of business erected by those people was based on a shoe string, and when trade became dull it had to collapse. -- The Wall Street Journal, 25 Mar. 1897.* But why a shoestring? The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms records an attempt to explain it: "One fanciful theory is that debtors in British prisons would lower a shoe by its laces from a window so as to collect funds from visitors or passers-by." Obvious folk etymology, you may say. Well, up to a point. Jonathon Green records in the Chambers Dictionary of Slang that the debtors' ward in Newgate Prison was called the Shoe because its inmates begged in just this way. However, the story must be irrelevant because the idiom is definitely American and appears after the period in which Newgate was such a notorious place of incarceration. There is, however, a slightly earlier US usage, known from 1887, in reference to a disreputable group of men who were called shoestring gamblers, seemingly because they played only for small stakes. (Or did they, perhaps, wear very thin ties? perhaps a fashion guru might elucidate?) Shoestring by itself has often been used as a qualifier, but almost always in the sense of something long and thin. A US Congressional district was once called the shoestring district because of its shape on the map; a number of plants with long, thin stems or roots have it in their names, such as the prairie shoestring; shoestring potato consists of narrow strips of fried potato. However, it's in other qualities of this humble item that we must surely find the origin. Shoestrings were common and cheap and also thin and fragile. The former pair of words implies a small amount of money, the latter slender resources. By putting them together we are supplied with an image of getting by on less than is really required.

**SPECTRUM WORLD WATER DAY**

## Time for water security planning



Bikash Kumar Pati

**GROUND WATER IS THE LAST HOPE FOR A WATER-STARVED POPULATION**

Considering low visibility and lesser management cost, dependency on ground water is substantially high in comparison to surface water. Besides, when majority of rainfall occurs during monsoon over a few odd days, ground water resources sustain us for rest of the year. Probably that is why more than 90 per cent in rural areas still depend on ground water for drinking and domestic purposes.

All these years, emphases have been primarily on harnessing surface water – not ground water, leading to inadequate initiatives for sustainable use and augmentation of ground water resources. The policy of looking at ground water as an infinite resource started after food scarcities of 1960s, while policies were tailored towards increased irrigation coverage. Suddenly, users of drinking water and irrigation, a singular entity till then, became two distinctly different categories frequently at loggerheads with each other. As a result, extraction of ground water for irrigation rapidly increased. While drinking water sector was cautious of over-exploitation, irrigation sector went on promoting sources through huge subsidies in the name of irrigation efficiency. Third major claimant for ground water emerged when small, medium and large industries were

set up in the name of industrialisation and liberalisation.

Besides, considering our changing lifestyle, more concrete structures came in using ground water in an unregulated manner. Inclination towards urbanisation has created huge concrete structures in peri-urban areas, which are completely dependent on ground water – during and post construction use. An increase in concrete structures always minimises natural recharge zones for ground water and intensifies surface runoff causing flash flood, which many urban units are facing now a days.

Various studies have revealed that rainfall pattern is changing drastically. Around one third of annual precipitation is taking place within a span of 3-4 days, which is causing severe flood and drought in subsequent days. This has led to drastic reduction in flow of rivers, with major rivers remaining dry for about two-third of a year. This has been forcing all to further depend upon ground water to meet their requirements. While dependency on ground water has increased significantly, efforts to augment it have been lacking. Changes in rainfall and land use pattern are increasingly affecting percolation of rainwater into ground. Even if we get sufficient rainfall, that hardly makes any contribution as it flows away as

high velocity runoff. Due to change in pattern of rainfall, people have started shifting from rain-fed agriculture to irrigated high-yielding agriculture. This is again increasing pressure on ground water.

Everybody believes that there is plenty of water inside the ground. But nature has taken lakhs of years to build up its ground water reserves. Rainwater first goes into soil and then moves underground. It is not static, but dynamic – an on-going process. If this process is disrupted – whether by reduction in amount of water going into soil, disruption in underground movement of water or over-extraction – there will be depletion of resources. Even if water is artificially sent into ground, it takes its own time to reach ground water aquifer. The current situation gives serious indications that the water cycle is disturbed and it will reduce not only availability of water, but also its quality. Poor quality water is as good as no water or even worse. Artificial recharge has its own limitations in addressing immediate ground water situation. Still that is the most important avenue available before us to mitigate serious damage to ground water cycle.

Despite focus on rain water harvesting, definite steps are awfully lacking in this direction. Water harvesting and water recharge are

yet to be mandatorily enforced.

Though under the current flagship programme for drinking water – 'Jal Jeevan Mission', water harvesting measures are taken up seriously, this is all about handling supply side of it – augmenting ground water source. But step towards handling demand side – reducing load on ground water use is lacking. This warrants a prudent 'water security planning' involving the community. This will not only look into structural intervention for recharging ground water, but also will look into regulating ground water extraction at community level, shifting their lifestyle and livelihood from water intensive practices to water sensitive practices, and most importantly helping communities move ahead with conjunctive use of water – not just dependent on one source i.e. ground water.

Ground water is the last hope for a water-starved population. It is like a bank account, where only withdrawal takes place, without deposit. Of course, there is a limit after which our withdrawal request will be refused. Hope that time does not come!

*The writer works with the WaterAid India, Bhubaneswar. Views are personal.*

## Letters

**TO THE EDITOR**

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

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**Communal education**

Sir, Close on the heels of the Karnataka High Court verdict upholding the ban on wearing hijab on the premises of educational institutions, the Karnataka government has made a decision to introduce the Bhagavad Gita in school syllabus in the next academic year. The government's decision has sparked off another controversy in the state. True, the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita have enormous significance. However, it cannot be included as a subject in the school syllabus. It is a sacred book of the Hindus like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. What is the logic of introducing it schools where students belonging to other religions also study? Is it right to force them to study the teachings of the Gita against their will? Education must not be mixed with religion. Education must inculcate secularism in students, not communalism. India is a country of religious pluralism. Education is imparted for character formation and personality development. It widens students' outlook and develops positive attitude in them. While people have the right to follow religions of their choice, it must not become a part of studies in schools. Religions and holy books are meant for making people morally good whereas education is not meant for developing faith in students. It develops scientific temper in students and enables them to perceive things properly and develop good perceptions. Developing religious feelings among school children is a dangerous idea. Sanctity of educational institutions must be preserved, they must never become centres of communalism. **Venu GS, KOLLAM (KERALA)**

**Indo-Japan ties**

Sir, The 14th annual summit between Japan and India has concluded with some major deals. This was the first visit to India for the Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. The last summit between the two countries was held in 2018 in Tokyo. The two-day visit marked some new feats in bilateral relations between the two countries. One of the major decisions taken during this meeting is that Japan will invest around 5 trillion Yen (\$42 Billion) in India over the next five years. Both the countries also agreed to extend partnership in EVs, green hydrogen, net-zero carbon emission pathways. This 14th summit between India and Japan, who are also part of the Quad, will provide an opportunity for both sides to strengthen their bilateral, diplomatic, and strategic ties. This relation between the two economic powerhouses will bring stability in global geopolitics. **Deba Prasad Nayak, CUTTACK**

# national

## of the day quote

In a democratic setup, no one will say not to have Chief Ministerial aspirations. Ultimately the elected MLAs will decide and the high command will finally give their stamp of approval

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has helped develop unity among the CMs of the northeastern states, who now jointly strive for the growth of the region

A total of two people have died due to air accidents in India during 2021 and 2022

## SHORT TAKES

### Eight injured

**Srinagar:** Eight people were injured Monday when a snowslide hit a passenger vehicle in J&K's Kupwara district. Officials said eight passengers of a vehicle were swept away by a snow slide into a gorge along the Sadhna Top in Kupwara district. The injured have been rescued in an injured condition. The injured include three members of a family and five minors.

### Woman duped

**Lucknow:** A woman in Uttar Pradesh was robbed off her ornaments by two men who posed to be policemen. According to reports, the miscreants, claiming that women are not allowed to move around wearing jewellery, asked the victim, Ram Kumari Rastogi of Keshav Nagar in Aliganj, to take them off and put it in a packet. "One of them asked me to pay ₹5,000 as fine for violation of the rule while the other one asked me to take off my ornaments and keep it in a sachet to avoid being fined," she said.

### Boy found dead

**Prayagraj:** A 35-year-old ward boy was found brutally murdered in his room in the premises of the Motilal Nehru (MLN) Medical College in Prayagraj. The deceased has been identified as Pankaj Patel and the motive behind the murder is yet to be ascertained. Deputy SP (Colonelganj) Ajeet Singh Chauhan said that the case came to the fore when neighbours complained of an odour coming from the victim's one-room residence and informed the police. The DSP added that initial investigations revealed that the body had been in the room for two days.

### Two booked

**Etawah:** The Etawah police have booked two persons, including a journalist, for making a video containing objectionable remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The video went viral on social media Sunday. An FIR has been lodged at Chaubiya police station against the two persons under the IT Act and investigation in the case has begun.

### Civilian shot dead

**Srinagar:** Militants Monday shot dead a civilian and injured a non-local vendor in two separate incidents in Budgam and Pulwama districts of Jammu and Kashmir, police said. "Around 7:20 pm, terrorists fired at and injured a civilian, Tajamul Mohiuddin Rather, near his residence in Gothpora area of Budgam in central Kashmir," a police official said.



The ancient gurukul system of education has played a remarkable role in the holistic and well-rounded development of individuals

M VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

## 22,500 INDIANS RETURNED FROM UKRAINE: VK SINGH

Around 22,500 Indian nationals returned to India from Ukraine between February 1 and March 11, Minister of State for Civil Aviation VK Singh said Monday



# G-23 leaders likely to get vital roles

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 21:** Congress president Sonia Gandhi has reached out to the disgruntled G-23 group and sources say that its senior leaders will be adjusted in the party's decision-making body and are likely to be given important roles in the party.

Sources say that during the meet with senior leader Ghulam Nabi Azad Friday, Sonia Gandhi assured him that prominent roles will be given to the leaders and nobody will be ignored, as she will be meeting leaders of election-going states starting from Himachal Pradesh.

According to the sources, Azad is likely to be sent to the upper house while Anand Sharma, whose term expires April 2, will be given important role in the Assembly polls.

The other leaders who are considered for key roles included former Haryana Chief Minister



ACCORDING TO SOURCES, AZAD IS LIKELY TO BE SENT TO THE UPPER HOUSE WHILE ANAND SHARMA, WHOSE TERM EXPIRES APRIL 2, WILL BE GIVEN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE ASSEMBLY POLLS

SIMILARLY MANISH TEWARI AND SANDEEP DIKSHIT MAY ALSO BE ACCOMMODATED IN THE PARTY ORGANISATION

Bhupinder Singh Hooda, who is likely to be made the state party chief, while Kuldeep Bishnoi - who is not a G-23 member, could be the legislative party leader.

Similarly Manish Tewari and Sandeep Dikshit may also be accommodated in the party organisation. Azad, after meeting the party chief Friday, had toned down the group's demands, saying that there is no question on the leadership, and that there is no vacancy

right now. "Nobody said Mrs Gandhi should quit. She is Congress President, we are leaders of the party, the feedback which is given to restructure organisation is not meant for public... there is no question on the leadership, when Mrs Gandhi offered (to step back), we all rejected it. "When the party will go for organisational polls, then there will be deliberations. At that time it will be decided," he had said.

# 7 of 11 Punjab ministers face criminal cases: ADR



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 21:** Seven of the 11 newly sworn-in ministers in Punjab have declared criminal cases against themselves, with one of them facing a murder case, poll rights group Association for Democratic Reforms said Monday

The 11 ministers include Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. Punjab Election Watch and the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) analysed affidavits of all 11 ministers, including the CM. The ADR said seven ministers (64 per cent) have declared criminal cases against themselves. Four of them (36 per cent) have declared serious criminal cases against themselves.

According to the ADR report, serious criminals cases meant those offences which carry punishment of five years or more. Mann is among the four ministers facing serious criminal cases. The other three are Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer, Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal and Harpal Singh Cheema.

While Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal is facing a murder case, the other three have been booked in the past for allegedly voluntarily causing hurt to deter a public servant from doing his duty. Of the 11 ministers, nine are crorepatists and the average of their assets is ₹2.87 crore. The minister with the highest declared total assets is Bram Shanker

## Mann keeps Home, Cheema gets Finance

**Chandigarh:** Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Monday allocated portfolios to his Cabinet members, keeping the Home Affairs and Justice Departments with himself while giving Finance to Harpal Singh Cheema. Ten ministers were inducted into the Mann-led cabinet Saturday. Mann kept with himself 27 departments, including the Vigilance, Personnel, Housing and Urban Development, Industries and Commerce, Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Horticulture, Parliamentary Affairs, Employment Generation and Training, New and Renewable Energy Sources and Information and Public Relations. Two-time MLA from Dirba Harpal Singh Cheema has been given the Finance, Planning, Programme Implementation, Excise and Taxation and Cooperation, according to an official release.

(Jimpa) from Hoshiarpur. He has assets worth ₹8.56 crore. Lal Chand from Bhoja (So) constituency has the lowest declared total assets worth ₹6.19 lakh. Nine ministers have declared liabilities.

The minister with the highest liabilities is Bram Shanker. He has liabilities worth Rs 1.08 crore. The ADR said five ministers (45 per cent) have declared their educational qualification to be between Class 10 and 12 while the rest are graduate or above.

## Mandatory for central varsities to use CUET scores

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 21:** UGC chairman M Jagadeesh Kumar Monday said the central universities will have to use Common University Entrance Test (CUET) scores to admit students to undergraduate programmes this year.

He said the CUET, in all likelihood, will be conducted in the first week of July. This means that apart from the eligibility criterion of different universities, Class 12 board examination marks will not have any bearing on the admission of the students.

"From the 2022-23 academic year, the National Testing Agency will be conducting the CUET for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. All the central universities will have to consider CUET scores for admissions to their programmes," Kumar said at a press briefing. There are 45 central universities funded by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

The syllabus of the CUET will be mirrored with the Class 12 model syllabus of the NCERT, Kumar said. The CUET will have Section 1A, Section 1B, general test and domain-specific subjects. Section 1A, which will be compulsory, will be in 13 languages and candidates can choose the language of their choice.

The options are English, Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Section 1B is optional and for students who want to opt for another language apart from the ones that are a part of Section 1A. Some of the languages on offer are French, Arabic, German, etc, he added.

Under the domain-specific subjects, a candidate can choose up to a maximum of six domains that they wish to pursue at the undergraduate level, Kumar said. There are some universities that have general test as eligibility criteria for admission to even domain-specific courses so that is a part of the CUET, he said.

## TEARFUL JOURNEY



A truck carries the mortal remains of Naveen Shekharappa Gyanagoudar, the medical student who was killed in Ukraine, during his funeral procession at Chalageri village in Haveri district

PTI PHOTO

# Dhami: Lost own seat, gets to play 2nd innings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dehradun, March 21:** Before the Uttarakhand assembly polls, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had compared Pushkar Singh Dhami to cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni. Dhami, he said, was a "good finisher", suggesting that he will get the BJP the runs it needed to win the election.

While making the cricketer analogy Rajnath Singh reportedly said Dhami was working relentlessly as the CM and needed also to play a test match. Monday, the Bharatiya Janata Party picked him for the CM's post again, this time for the longer version of the game. It was a difficult decision as Dhami had failed to win his own seat even as the party scored big in the hill state.

Dhami was plucked out of obscurity by the BJP last July and made the Uttarakhand Chief Minister, with just months to go before the state elections. He also happened to be the third leader to occupy the CM's post during 2021.



Dhami was plucked out of obscurity by the BJP last July and made the Uttarakhand Chief Minister, with just months to go before the state elections

Earlier in the year, Trivendra Singh Rawat had to make way for Tirath Singh Rawat.

Dhami seemed to have justified the party's confidence in him. The BJP won Uttarakhand again, the first time in the state's 21-year history that a party has come to power for a second term in a row.

But in his own Khatima constituency, Dhami lost by a slim margin of about 6,500 votes. At 45, he was the state's youngest chief minister when he first took over in

July. The state was then grappling with a series of problems and with elections just round the corner Dhami had little time to prove himself.

The state's economy was battered by Covid, the Char Dham priests were agitating against a new regulatory board, and a massive Covid testing scam had hit the headlines earlier. Like other BJP chief ministers, Dhami styled himself as the one who executed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

"grand vision" for the state's development through a "double-engine" government.

Dhami is often regarded as a protégé of Maharashtra Governor and former Uttarakhand chief minister Bhagat Singh Koshyari, whom he served as an Officer on Special Duty (OSD) and an adviser.

He began his political career in 1990 with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student wing of the BJP and was the state president of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha twice. He campaigned for reservation of jobs in industries for the local youth.

Dhami's father retired as a subedar in Army. He was born in Pithoragarh's Tundi village, after the family shifted there from its ancestral village Harkhola. When he was in class 5, they moved to Khatima, which was to become Dhami's 'karmabhoomi' later. He won the assembly polls from there twice. He graduated from Lucknow University in Human Resource Management & Industrial Relations, and also has a degree in law.

# HC junks PIL for recovery of 'debt' Pak owes India

THE COURT DISPOSED OF THE PETITION BY OM SEHGAL WHO ARGUED THAT PAKISTAN HAS BEEN USING INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S MONEY TO REPEATEDLY ATTACK INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 21:** The Delhi High Court Monday refused to entertain a PIL seeking recovery of "Rs 1 trillion" debt owed by Pakistan to India since the time of partition, alleging that the central government was not taking any steps to recover the amount.

A bench of Acting Chief Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Navin Chawla said it was a government policy matter and no directions can be issued by the court in this regard. The bench said the govern-

ment was cognisant of the issue and will take whatever steps it wants and the court cannot issue any direction.

The court disposed of the petition by Om Sehgal who argued that Pakistan has been using Indian government's money to repeatedly attack India, including Kashmir, and countless Indian soldiers have lost their lives in the wars waged by the neighbouring country.

Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Chetan Sharma, representing the central government,



said the petitioner may be right in his sentiments but the issue is a matter of policy and should be left to the government.

The petitioner placed on record several documents including statement of accounts while claiming that ₹300 crore has been loaned by India to Pakistan both pre and

post-independence and now the amount comes to around ₹1 trillion by adding the interest.

He urged the court to direct the Ministry of Finance to take up the matter immediately with the Pakistani government for repayment of the debt.

"There are over 100 pages in-

cluding papers documenting the fact that Pakistan owes India about one trillion rupees. Irrespective of this, I know when files of pre-partition debt were misplaced from the Ministry of Finance. I have over 100 letters confirming my statement," he said.

The petitioner further submitted, "This money belongs to the people of India. Justice should prevail. Just after partition, around ₹20 crore was given by India to Pakistan and with that money they attacked Kashmir. Thousands of people were killed but our money is still with Pakistan. It has now come to around ₹1 trillion. In Pakistani currency it comes to ₹2.5 trillion. Each bullet that our soldiers face is paid by our money. I can't say anything about political parties who are in government but request the court to pass directions."

# 'Charges against Rao could attract death penalty'

CENTRAL PROBE AGENCY URGES THE BOMBAY HIGH COURT TO DISMISS THE PERMANENT MEDICAL BAIL PLEA FILED BY THE POET-ACTIVIST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 21:** The National Investigation Agency Monday urged the Bombay High Court to dismiss the permanent medical bail plea filed by poet-activist Varavara Rao, an accused in the Elgar Parishad Maoist links case, saying charges against him were "very, very serious," and, if proven, could attract the death penalty.

Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, who appeared for NIA, told HC Rao (83) seemed to be suffering from "regular old age related issues," and the probe agency was willing to give an undertaking that requisite medical aid would be provided to him in prison or in a government hospital whenever required. "This is a very very serious offence that concerns national security. Besides, the charges (against Rao) can even attract the maximum punishment of death penalty," Singh said. "We aren't experts and are totally relying on doctors' reports. He was granted temporary medical bail last year by HC following a doctor's report that said he needed continued medical care. Now that he is fit for discharge, where is the question of a permanent medical bail? Does this



mean he will continue to be on bail till the entire trial is over," Singh asked. A bench of Justices SB Shukre and SM Modak, however, pointed out that Section 437 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) does provide for permanent bail in special circumstances, including when an accused person is ill. Singh, however, argued that doctors at the state-run JJ Hospital were competent enough to treat any ailment and Rao would be provided adequate care there whenever required. "All other prison inmates are taken to JJ Hospital. They get the

same treatment. While a humanitarian view must be taken, he can't be set free (by grant of permanent medical bail)," Singh told court. Rao's counsel, senior advocate Anand Grover, reiterated that the 83-year-old Telegu poet had recently been clinically diagnosed as showing signs of "early Parkinson's disease". He said Rao's health condition and facilities at Taloja prison, where Rao was lodged as an undertrial until he was granted temporary medical bail by HC last year, were not compatible with each other.

"All is not hunky dory. Rao's clinical reports show he has early Parkinson's and the road from here goes only downhill. There is a risk of a blood clot. Can we allow that? Either the NIA has not read that report or it doesn't understand the seriousness of such risk," Grover said. "How will you manage or monitor this condition at Taloja where you don't even have an allopathic doctor," Grover asked, adding that it was not the ultimate objective of all parties and the courts to ensure Rao remained fit enough to stand trial in the case.

"I want to stand trial as I am confident (of charges remaining unproven). How long should I wait? Should I die before that? One person (co-accused) Stan Swamy is already dead," Grover said.

The HC closed all arguments on three pleas filed by Rao, one seeking extension of the temporary bail granted to him in February 2021, another seeking modification of his bail conditions to allow him to go back to his Hyderabad home while on bail, and the third plea seeking permanent medical bail. HC also said Rao needn't surrender before Taloja prison authorities until the final order is passed on his three pleas.

# After Yogi, now MP CM uses bulldozers against criminals

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhopal, March 21:** Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan seems to have taken a leaf out of UP CM Yogi Adityanath's book to punish the wrongdoers in the state. It is evident from the recent order of demolition of several houses in two districts, Sheopur and Raisen of Madhya Pradesh.

Sunday, bulldozers were used to demolish the house of a rape accused in Sheopur district. The action came after a minor girl was allegedly gangraped by three persons, which sparked tension in the district. As per the police, the accused Mohisin, Riyaj and Shahwaz were arrested for alleged gangrape of a minor girl. The incident led to communal tension in the district. Subsequently, the Chief Minister asked the district administration to demolish houses of the accused involved in the gangrape. Their houses, according to the district administration, were built on government land. The houses were demolished using bulldozers in the presence of heavy police force and the officials of the district administration. "Chief Minister Shivraj Singh



Chouhan ordered Sheopur district administration to take strict action against those involved in the gang-rape of a minor girl. Their houses were demolished in the presence of police. People in the district have welcomed the government's action," a statement from the office of the Chief Minister said. A similar action was initiated in Raisen district where a violent clash broke out between two communities recently. During the clash, one person was reported dead and over 50 persons were injured. The deceased, succumbed to bullet wounds, has been identified as Raju Adivasi. The incident had occurred in a

village under Silwani tehsil in Raisen district. Several injured persons have been shifted to Bhopal's Hamidia hospital for treatment. Chouhan visited them in hospital Sunday. According to the police, FIR has been registered against over 200 people from both the communities, out of which 15 have been arrested. Subsequently, an order was issued by the Chief Minister for strict action against those involved in creating communal disharmony. Following the Chief Minister's order, the district administration along with the local police used bulldozer to demolish several houses.

# Bicycles to become part of Indore public transport system

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Indore, March 21:** Aiming to reduce air pollution in the country's cleanest city Indore, 3,000 cycles will be added to the public transport system in phases.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan virtually inaugurated the first phase of this project costing Rs 10 crore Monday. Officials said that this project named "Indore Public Bicycle System" will be operated on a public-private partnership (PPP) basis and state-of-the-art bicycles will be provided to the common people on rent. "With the addition of cycles to the public transport system of Indore, the environment will be protected, the consumption of petrol and diesel will be reduced and the people will also stay healthy," the chief minister said. Officials said the local administration will provide 3,000 bicycles on rent to the general public at city transport bus stops and other major public places in a phased manner. He said that the lock of these cycles would open and close with the help of a mobile application and

With the addition of cycles to the public transport system of Indore, the environment will be protected, the consumption of petrol and diesel will be reduced and the people will also stay healthy  
SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | CM

these cycles would be equipped with GPS so that the local administration would keep an eye on their movement. Officials said that such a cycle will be available to the common people for 10 hours for just Rs 10. The monthly rent for these bicycles is Rs 349. Chouhan also inaugurated via video link the newly-constructed building of the Sarvateb bus stand in the city. Built at the cost of Rs 14.80 crore in an area of 7,878 square meters, the new terminal will operate 500 buses daily. Chouhan also laid a foundation stone for two water-treatment plants, to be constructed with an estimated cost of Rs 79.33 crore. The facility will treat sewage water to make it reusable.



## NAVROZ MUBARAK



A Parsi family visits a fire temple on the occasion of Navroz, the Parsi New Year, in Mumbai, Monday.

# Spare govt, civic buses from 'bulk' diesel price hike: NCP to PM

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, March 21:** The Nationalist Congress Party Monday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding that the Centre should exempt all state government and municipal bus services from the steep hike of Rs 25/litre to bulk users.

The government has increased the price of diesel sold to bulk users by around Rs 25/litre in tune with the almost 40 per cent hike in international oil prices though the retail rates at fuel stations are not changed. Maharashtra NCP chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said that the Centre's move to hike the diesel prices for bulk users has been implemented due to the increase in diesel prices owing to the Russia-Ukraine war that has shot up the prices of crude oil in the international markets.



"I take this opportunity to request your good self to kindly exempt all state government and municipal bus services which fall in the bulk users category from this

hike in the diesel prices," he said. Tapase pointed out that the decision of oil marketing companies to include the state government and municipal buses in the list of

bulk users would have adverse financial implications on such public transport services and "must be immediately rolled back". In view of the Centre's move, state bus transport services and civic bodies operating city bus services, like Mumbai's BEST, are now contemplating a hike in freight rates and passenger fares, which would further hit the consumers already reeling under runaway inflation, officials said. Some government transport agencies, including the BEST, are planning to line up their bus fleets outside petrol pumps during night hours to avoid paying the extra Rs 25/litre. However, many private transporters with large fleets of trucks or buses may not be affected by the new hike as they continue to avail their requirements directly from the fuel pumps, the officials pointed out.

# MBBS students to double as mentors of MP's tribal children

With their parents being illiterate or having only basic education, children from the tribal communities in most parts of Madhya Pradesh are deprived of proper guidance at home

children to improve their standard of education. With their parents being illiterate or having only basic education, children from the tribal communities in most parts of Madhya Pradesh are deprived of proper guidance at home, which is why they often flock to other states to prepare for competitive exams. Divisional Commissioner Rajiv Sharma has launched an initiative to ensure that these children stay in their hometown and get better guidance. The 12th grade students, who aspire to become doctors, will be prepared for the NEET exam by medical students studying MBBS



at Shahdol Medical College. Talking to IANS, Sharma said: "I have prepared a plan for the

better results of these children studying in class 12. I have also discussed my proposal with the dean

and professors at the medical college, after which I interacted with the school education department. The medical students are ready to guide the school children." According to Sharma there is abundance of talent in Madhya Pradesh, but due to lack of guidance, these tribal kids are unable to achieve their goals. "Keeping this in mind, I have planned to guide the school students for the NEET exam. Efforts will also be made to provide timely guidance to the children studying in class 8 and 10, in the future," he said. Sharing details of the scheme, Sharma said that March 23, a di-

alogue between the class 12 science students and the MBBS students will be held at the Shahdol Medical School auditorium, after which the medical students will spread across various schools for tutoring them. This will help the capable kids to acquire the skills required to ace NEET. "It is being considered a new beginning at the administrative level. We are also planning to guide students of 8th and 10th standard for competitive examinations, so that these children feel confident in achieving their goals and begin working towards them from a very young age," Sharma said.

# Leopard strolls into Mercedes-Benz plant in Pune, rescued after 6-hr operation

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Pune, March 21:** A leopard which strayed inside the sprawling Mercedes-Benz factory was rescued after the plant had to be partially evacuated and operations halted for nearly 6 hours, here Monday.

In an unusual incident, workers at the Chakan plant were rattled to notice an adult leopard prowling on the luxury car manufacturing factory premises around dawn today and sounded an alarm. After the initial panic subsided, a team of Maharashtra Forest Department arrived and took charge of the situation on the 100-acre production facility. A Wildlife SOS Team from the Manikdoh Leopard Rescue Centre was also called in with reinforcements and veterinarians to help trap and rescue the big cat. Meanwhile, as a precautionary measure, the workers in the immediate vicinity were evacuated to a safe spot on the advice of the local police. In the operation lasting around 6 hours, the teams comprising Dr



Shubham Patil and Dr Nikhil Bangar located the leopard hidden on the shop floor of one of the factory sheds and then secured the area. The two teams successfully managed to lure and trap the distressed feline, shot a tranquilliser dart from a safe distance and numbed it before it was captured around 11.30am, nearly 6 hours after it was sighted. MFD Range Forest Officer Yogesh Mahajan said that the leopard was shifted to a special transportation cage and taken to a facility in Junnar where it continues to remain under medical observation before release into the wild. Dr Bangar, the Wildlife Veterinary Officer with the Wildlife SOS, said that the leopard is a male, aged around 2-3 years. After the successful rescue, the Wildlife SOS CEO K. Satyanarayan said that due to rapid habitat loss, leopards of Maharashtra are being compelled to venture into human dominated areas. "Our team is trained to ensure that such situations are handled with the utmost caution, keeping in mind the safety of the leopard as well as humans," said Satyanarayan. Following the successful operation, the relieved workers returned to their workplaces and normalcy resumed by noon, said the police.



of the day quote

The BJP is pushing the country towards another division by dividing people on religious lines

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

The Congress will be wiped out politically in India

JAI RAM THAKUR | HIMACHAL CM

Forces inimical to peace and brotherhood in Jammu and Kashmir are peddling a "false narrative", and there is a need to counter it with facts

OMAR ABDULLAH | NC VICE PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Malik's judicial remand extended

Mumbai: A Special PMLA Court Monday extended the judicial custody of Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik by 14 days till April 4.

AAP appoints office-bearers

New Delhi: Riding high on its stupendous victory in Punjab, the Aam Aadmi Party Monday took the first step towards its nationwide expansion and appointed new office-bearers for nine states including those going to assembly polls this year and in 2023.

SC to hear Sidhu case March 25

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Monday said it would hear March 25 the plea seeking review of the sentence awarded by it in May 2018 to cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu in a 1988 road rage case.

Abhishek grilled

New Delhi: TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) at its office here for about eight hours Monday in a money laundering case linked to an alleged coal scam in West Bengal.



They (AIMIM) can talk about alliances but the parties they are talking about should accept such proposal in the first place

SHARAD PAWAR | NCP PRESIDENT

JOINT DRILL

India and Seychelles defence forces will carry out joint exercise aimed to enhance tactical skills in combating hostile forces in a semi-urban environment from Tuesday



FARM LAWS

Panel was against repeal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: The Supreme Court-appointed panel was not in favour of total repeal of the three controversial farm laws and instead had suggested leaving procurement of crops at a specified price to the states and scrapping of Essential Commodities Act, one of the three members of the panel said Monday while releasing the committee's report.

Pune-based farmer leader Anil Ghanwat said he had on three occasions written to the Supreme Court for releasing the report of the committee but in the absence of a response, he was releasing it on his own.

According to him, the committee had said that a "repeal or a long suspension of these laws would be unfair to the silent majority who support the farm laws."

The other two members - economist Ashok Gulati and agri-economist Pramod Kumar Joshi - were



Around 85.7 percent of the farmer organisations, representing more than 3.3 crore farmers, supported the laws

The three farm laws were repealed by the Modi government in November last year, ahead of Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab

not present at a hurriedly called press conference here. The panel had submitted its recommendations on the three farm laws, which among other things, allowed farmers to sell agri produce to private entities outside the government mandis, on March 19, 2021.

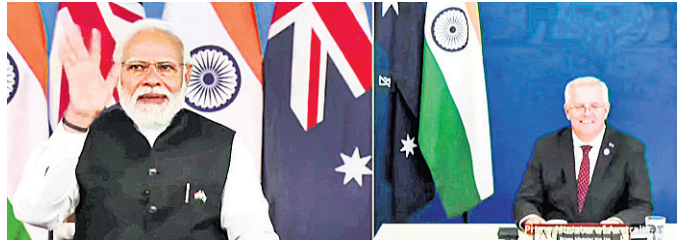
The three farm laws were repealed by the Modi government in November last year, ahead of assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. Addressing the press conference, Ghanwat said the committee had also suggested many

changes in the laws, including giving freedom to states to make Minimum Support Price (MSP) system legal.

The panel had also suggested that the open-ended procurement policy should be discontinued and a model contract agreement should be formulated. The report has no relevance now as the laws have been repealed but it would help in making policies for the agriculture sector in future, said Ghanwat, who is the President of Swatantra Bharat Party.

Besides feedback from those who made personal depositions, the panel also received comments on the three laws through an online portal where around two-thirds of the respondents favoured the legislations. The feedback received through e-mails also showed that a majority support the laws.

PM Modi, Morrison discuss Ukraine, China, Indo-Pacific



AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 21: Russia must be held accountable for the tragic loss of lives in Ukraine and care must be taken to ensure that such "terrible events" never occur in the Indo-Pacific region, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Monday at a virtual summit with PM Narendra Modi.

At a media briefing after the summit, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said Morrison expressed understanding of India's position on the issue of Ukraine and that there was a clear sense that conflict in Europe "should not be a reason for us to divert our attention from the Indo-Pacific region".

Noting that there was "serious concern" about the conflict and humanitarian situation in Ukraine, the foreign secretary said Modi and Morrison spoke about the need for a cessation of hostilities and violence.

In his opening remarks, Morrison said the summit is taking place in the "very distressing" backdrop of the war in Europe

and referred to a recent discussion by the Quad leaders on the "implications and consequences" of Russia's "unlawful invasion" of Ukraine for the Indo-Pacific.

Modi did not make any reference to the crisis in Ukraine in his opening remarks and said the Quad's success is very important for regional and global stability, noting that the cooperation between India and Australia reflected a common commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

He said he was happy over the establishment of a mechanism of the annual summit between the two countries as it ensures a structural system for regular review of the ties. "The tragic loss of life underlines the importance, of course, of holding Russia to account. But cooperation between like-minded liberal democracies is key to an open and inclusive and resilient and prosperous Indo-Pacific, and I welcome your leadership within the Quad to keep us focused on those important issues," Morrison said.

In his comments, the Australian

29 antiquities repatriated to India

New Delhi: As many as 29 antiquities, including on the themes of Lord Shiva and his disciples, Lord Vishnu and the Jain tradition, have been repatriated to India by Australia and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has thanked his Australian counterpart Scott Morrison for returning them, the government said Monday.

Prime Minister also said that the Indo Pacific region is facing "increasing change and much pressure." "While we are obviously distressed at the terrible situation in Europe, our focus, of course, is always very much on what is occurring in the Indo-Pacific and ensuring that those events could never occur here," Morrison said.

On his part, Modi apprised his Australian counterpart about the situation in eastern Ladakh and emphasised that peace and tranquility in the region is an essential prerequisite for the normalisation of India's ties with China.

It was the second time in the last three days that India asserted that the relationship with China depends on the resolution of the pending issues in eastern Ladakh.

TOP HONOUR



President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Padma awardees at Rashtrapati Bhavan

AAP's mixed bag for RS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 21: The Aam Aadmi Party has nominated former cricketer Harbhajan Singh, Lovely Professional University founder Ashok Mittal, AAP MLA Raghav Chadha, IIT Delhi faculty Sandeep Pathak and industrialist Sanjeev Arora for the March 31 Rajya Sabha polls.

All the five party nominees filed their nomination papers at the Punjab Vidhan Sabha complex here. The term of five Rajya Sabha members from Punjab - Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa (Shiromani Akali Dal), Partap Singh Bajwa (Congress), Shwait Malik (BJP), Naresh Gujral (SAD) and Shamsheer Singh Dullu (Congress) - will expire April 9.

Harbhajan Singh was a former spinner while Mittal is founder of Phagwara-based Lovely Professional University (LPU). Chadha is co-in-charge of AAP's political affairs in Punjab and also sitting MLA from Rajinder Nagar in Delhi whereas Pathak is assistant professor at IIT Delhi and Arora is a Ludhiana-based textile businessman.

All the five candidates are set to be elected to the upper House of parliament as AAP has won 92 of 117 seats in the recently held state assembly polls. After filing his papers, Harbhajan said he will strive to take sports forward.

Reacting to over four from Hindu community and one Sikh member figuring in the AAP list for Rajya Sabha, Congress leader and sitting MLA Sukhpal Khaira tweeted,



"If this list of probable Rajya Sabha candidates by @AamAadmiParty is true its most saddening news for Punjab n will be the first discrimination for our state. We'll oppose tooth n nail any non punjabi being nominated. This is also a joke with AAP workers who have worked for d party"

Meanwhile, SAD leader Harcharan Bains also criticised the AAP for its Rajya Sabha nominations. "A lot was said about @AAPunjab respecting caste and religious sensitivities in cabinet formation. While this criterion is debatable, but if it was applied, then what abt AAP's Rajya Sabha faces? 4 Hindus, 2 of them non-Punjabis and one Sikh. No Jatt, no Dalit, no Muslim or Christian," Bains tweeted.

The last date for filing nominations is Monday, while scrutiny of nominations will be done on Tuesday, according to an official release. The last date for withdrawal of candidature has been fixed on March 24. The elections to fill 13 Rajya Sabha seats across six states will be held March 31. Counting of votes will also be held on the same day.

BIREN SINGH SWORN-IN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, March 21: Nongthombam Biren Singh was Monday sworn-in as the Chief Minister of Manipur for the second consecutive term, a day after he was named as the leader of the newly-elected BJP legislators in the state.

Singh was administered the oath of office by Governor La Ganesan at a ceremony at the Raj Bhavan in Imphal.

Besides the Chief Minister, five newly-elected MLAs of the BJP and its ally Naga People's Front



(NPF) were also sworn-in. The five ministers comprised

India puts Boeing 737 fleets on 'enhanced surveillance'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: The DGCA has put the Boeing 737 fleets of Indian carriers on "enhanced surveillance" after a China Eastern Airlines aircraft of the same make crashed on Monday with 132 people on board, its chief Arun Kumar said.

Three Indian carriers - SpiceJet, Vistara and Air India Express - have Boeing 737 aircraft in their fleets. When asked what steps the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is taking following Monday's crash, Kumar said, "Flight safety is serious business and we are closely studying the situation. In the interim, we are focusing on enhanced surveillance of our 737 fleet."

A Boeing 737-800 aircraft of China Eastern Airlines, which was on way from Kunming to Guangzhou, crashed in Tengxian County in the city of Wuzhou. China Eastern Airlines - one of China's three major air carriers - has grounded all of its Boeing 737-800 aircraft after the crash on Monday.

There were no foreigners among the 132 people - 123 passengers and nine crew members - on board the Chinese passenger plane which crashed, official media reported. Boeing 737 Max aircraft is an advanced version of Boeing 737-800 and both belong to the 737 series.

Two Boeing 737 Max aircraft were involved in accidents in the six month period between October 2018 and March 2019, killing a total of 346 people.

India captures only 8% of 4K billion cubic meters of rain

In India, a major portion of the population does not have a reliable and constant means of getting water for their daily needs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 21: Many historians and archaeologists believe that the Indus Valley Civilisation that existed about 2,500 years ago mysteriously lost its existence and disappeared suddenly due to catastrophic water scarcity caused either by shifting rivers or by drastic climate change.

In India, a major portion of the population does not have a reliable and constant means of get-

ting water for their daily needs. About 70 per cent of our sources are contaminated and country's major rivers are dying because of pollution. In June 2019, a report suggested that 65 per cent of all reservoirs in India reported below-normal water levels, and 12 per cent were completely dry.

A NITI Aayog report of 2018 clearly stated that nearly half of India's population, about 600 million people, is all set to face extreme water stress in coming years. NITI Aayog also estimated that 21 major cities, including Delhi, would run out of groundwater by 2030.

With time, India has become the world's largest extractor of groundwater, accounting for 25 per cent of the total available water. Agriculture consumes over 85 per cent of water in India, contrary to the popular belief that domestic usage or industrial usage captures most of the



water. With only 40 per cent assured irrigation, the farmers depend heavily either on rains or on groundwater for their needs.

Surprisingly, the irony is, the

barely get 30 days of heavy rainfall in all, India has not put-in much required efforts to wishfully capture this abundance of rainwater.

India needs a maximum of 3,000 billion cubic meters (BCM) of water a year while it receives 4,000 billion cubic meters of rains. The country captures only 8 per cent of its annual rainfall, which is amongst the lowest in the world. This also means that rain water harvesting and replenishing the ground water, and also conserving the available water resources seems to be one of the most efficient and doable solution, that has scope and opportunity to resolve water scarcity.

There are many lessons in traditional water harvesting system in India too. One of the most popular rainwater conservation practices has been raindrop conservation. Water from the rooftops was collected during the rains and

stored in tanks. Water in community areas was collected and stored in artificial wells. Another method was harvesting monsoon water by diverting water from overflowing streams to be stored in water bodies.

The traditional procedures for saving water had their own methods too. The PATS of Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh are irrigation panels. These irrigation panels are fed using water that is diverted from fast moving hill streams. Then there is JAUHAD, the earthen check dams that were meant to collect rainwater. Because of their earthen nature, water percolated easily into these systems. This resulted in tremendous rise of the groundwater levels. SANJHA KUWAN are wells built on a partnership basis. With multiple users, these SANJHA KUWAN were primarily used for irrigation.

# international

## SRI LANKA REQUESTS \$2.5BN FROM CHINA

Days after India announced a \$1 billion line of credit to financially strapped Sri Lanka, China Monday said that Beijing is studying Colombo's request for a \$2.5 billion financial assistance. Chinese Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Qi Zhenhong said new request for \$1 billion financing facility and \$1.5 billion buyer's credit were raised by Sri Lankan government to Chinese government recently.



## LIFE IN RUINS

AGENCIES

**Kyiv:** Ukraine has rejected Russia's offer to provide a safe passage for civilians to evacuate from Mariupol if Kyiv surrendered the strategic port city, which has been one of the hardest hit since the invasion began 26 days ago, the media reported Monday. On Sunday, Colonel-General Mikhail Mizintsev, Director of the Russian National Centre for Defence Management, laid out the country's offer under which Ukraine had until 5 a.m. (Moscow time, about 7.30 A.M. IST) Monday morning to accept the terms, the BBC reported. Under the proposal, Russian troops would have opened safe corridors out of Mariupol from 10 a.m. (Moscow time), initially for Ukrainian troops and "foreign mercenaries" to disarm and leave the city. After about two hours, Russian forces would have then allowed humanitarian convoys with food, medicine and other supplies to enter the city safely, once the demining of the roads was complete.

# UKRAINE'S MARIUPOL SNUB TO PUTIN

But, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk rejected the offer, saying her country would not stop defending the strategic port city where around 3,00,000 people are believed to be trapped with supplies running out. "There can be no question of any surrender, laying down of arms," she was as saying on Sunday night by Ukrayinska Pravda. Since Russia began its invasion February 24, the city has witnessed some of the most intense fighting in all of Ukraine. The location of Mariupol, on the Sea of Azov, is strategic for Russia, as it would help it create a land corridor between the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk,



controlled by Russian-backed separatists, and Crimea, the peninsula it invaded and annexed in 2014, the BBC reported. The authorities in Mariupol have said that at least 2,500 people have been killed in the city so far.

## AMMONIA SCARE

**Lviv:** An ammonia leak at a chemical plant in the eastern Ukrainian city of Sumy has contaminated an area with a radius of more than 5 kilometers (3 miles), officials said early Monday. Sumy regional governor Dmytro Zhyhytskyi didn't say what caused the leak. The Sumykhimprom plant is on the eastern outskirts of the city, which has a population of about 263,000 and has been regularly shelled by Russian troops in recent weeks. Authorities urged people in Sumy to breathe through gauze bandages soaked in citric acid.

## DAY 26 OF THE RUSSIAN INVASION

### UK blames Russia for hoax calls to ministers

**London:** The UK government Monday accused Russia of deploying distraction tactics and outright lies as part of a disinformation campaign around the Ukraine conflict, including making hoax calls to British ministers. UK Home Secretary Priti Patel and Defence Secretary Ben Wallace had referenced receiving such fake calls over social media last week. *Downing Street* has confirmed that they were targeted alongside Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries and accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of trying to hide the scale of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. "The Russian state was responsible for the hoax telephone calls made to UK ministers last week," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesperson at 10 *Downing Street* told reporters.

### 'Russian prisoners will be castrated'

**Moscow:** Russian soldiers captured by a Ukrainian volunteer medic unit will all be castrated, its founder and commander declared on Ukraine's national television. The combat medic, whose volunteer team has been described as "medical angels" by the Western media, said "cockroaches" don't deserve the right to procreate, RT reported. The shocking declaration came from Gennadiy Druzenko, a constitutional lawyer-turned-volunteer frontline medic in Ukraine. Speaking to Ukrainian media in a live interview, he condemned the US for its reluctance to go to war with Russia on Ukraine's behalf, before commenting on the Russian military.

### US not optimistic about Ukraine talks

**Washington:** Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the US Ambassador to the UN, has warned that there was little immediate hope of a negotiated end to the war in Ukraine, as pressure continued to build on American President Joe Biden ahead of a crucial NATO summit in Europe this week, the Guardian reported. Biden, who faces growing dissatisfaction over his approach to the war, will travel to Brussels Thursday and then on to Poland, it was announced Sunday night. He will hear a proposal from Poland for NATO to send a peacekeeping force into Ukraine, something Thomas-Greenfield said was unlikely, according to the Guardian reported. The Ambassador said she saw little chance of a breakthrough.

### Ukraine extends martial law

**Kyiv:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has signed a bill extending the martial law in the country as Moscow's invasion of Kyiv was nearing a month. According to Parliament, the legislation extended the current martial law for 30 days starting from 5.30 a.m. on March 26, reports Xinhua news agency. On March 14, Zelensky had submitted a draft bill in Parliament calling for the extension. The President had first declared the martial law on February 24 after Russia launched its military invasion of Ukraine. In a televised address to the nation, the President announced that all able-bodied men from 18-60 years old were not allowed to leave Ukraine as the country began a general mobilisation of all reserve forces.

### Russia court bans Insta, Facebook

**Moscow:** A Moscow court Monday banned Facebook and Instagram as "extremist" organisations, after authorities accused US tech giant Meta of tolerating "Russophobia" during the conflict in Ukraine. The Tverskoi district court said it had agreed to a request from prosecutors for the two social media platforms to be banned for "carrying out extremist activities", but that Meta's WhatsApp messenger service would not be prohibited because it is not a public platform.

## SHORT TAKES

### Shanghai Disneyland closes as virus rises

**Shanghai:** Shanghai Disney Resort said that it will be temporarily closed from Monday amid a Covid-19 resurgence. The closed areas will include Shanghai Disneyland, Disneytown and Wishing Star Park. *Xinhua* news agency quoted a notice issued by the resort as saying. The resort will notify guests as soon as it has a confirmed date to resume operations, the notice said.

### 4 terrorists, 3 civilians killed

**Peshawar:** At least four terrorists and three civilians were killed in a gunbattle between militants and security forces in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the Army said. The gunbattle took place when terrorists attacked the security forces in the province's Bajaur tribal district, the Army's media wing Inter Services Public Relations said in a statement. Two soldiers were also killed, it said, adding that the security forces seized explosives and weapons. The security forces launched a massive search operation in the area to nab the culprits, it added.

### Pak govt moves SC

**Islamabad:** The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government Monday, through a presidential reference in the Supreme Court (SC), asked "what measures and steps could be taken with existing constitutional and legal framework to curb, deter and eradicate the cancerous practice of defection, floor crossing and vote buying", *The Express Tribune* reported.

## Delhi to Doha flight makes emergency landing in Karachi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Karachi/New Delhi, March 21:** A Qatar Airways flight from New Delhi to Doha made an emergency landing early Monday in Pakistan's southern city of Karachi after it developed a "technical fault", according to officials. Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) spokesman Saifur Rehman confirmed that Qatar Airways' flight QR-579 had landed safely at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport. Within hours, all 283 passengers were flown out to Doha on an alternative aircraft sent by the airline. Rehman said the Doha-bound flight of Qatar Airways QR-579 had taken off from New Delhi at 3.20 (India time) and made an emergency landing in Karachi around 5.30 in the morning.

"The captain declared an emergency after detection of smoke in the aircraft's cargo hold," Rehman said. He said the aircraft crew and passengers all disembarked and were taken to the airport lounge and provided emergency services at the Jinnah International Airport and left safely on the relief flight. "The pilot requested to make an emergency landing and the control tower and CAA personnel responded immediately given the nature of the problem," he said. As the runway was cleared for emergency landing, a flight from Doha, bound to land in Karachi, had to continue circling overhead for a while. Several other flights, including Air Lanka's UL-183, flying to Karachi, had to wait before landing due to the emergency situation, officials said.

## US dubs Rohingya repression a genocide

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Washington, March 21:** Violent repression of the largely Muslim Rohingya population in Myanmar amounts to genocide, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Monday, a declaration intended to both generate international pressure and lay the groundwork for potential legal action. Authorities made the determination based on confirmed accounts of mass atrocities on civilians by Myanmar's military in a widespread and systematic campaign against the ethnic minority, Blinken said in a speech at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. It is the eighth time since the Holocaust that the US has concluded a genocide has occurred, the secretary of state said, noting the importance of calling attention to inhumanity even as horrific attacks occur elsewhere in



the world, including Ukraine. "Yes, we stand with the people of Ukraine," he said. "And we must also stand with people who are suffering atrocities in other places." The government of Myanmar, also known as Burma, is already under multiple layers of US sanctions since a military coup ousted

the democratically-elected government in February 2021. Thousands of civilians throughout the country have been killed and imprisoned as part of an ongoing campaign of repression against anyone opposed to the ruling junta. State Department experts have documented instances of

**M**ore than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled from Buddhist-majority Myanmar to refugee camps in Bangladesh since August 2017, when the Myanmar military launched a clearance operation in response to attacks by a rebel group. Myanmar security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and the burning of thousands of homes.

Myanmar's military razing villages and carrying out rapes, tortures and mass killings of civilians since at least 2016. The determination that a genocide has occurred could lead to additional international pressure on the government, which is already facing accusations of genocide at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

# HOPES OF SURVIVORS IN CHINA'S PLANE CRASH RECEDE

AGENCIES

**Beijing, March 21:** Hopes to find the survivors among the 132 people travelling by the crashed Chinese aircraft in the thick forests in the southern Guangxi province on Monday receded as the night fell making efforts by scores of rescuers difficult. The Boeing 737 aircraft of China Eastern Airlines, which flew from Kunming to Guangzhou, crashed in Tengxian County near the city of Wuzhou, causing a mountain fire in the worst air disaster in the country in over a decade. The 132 people included 123 passengers and nine crew members, the Civil Aviation Administration of China said on its website. While the airline has announced that no foreigners were on board, families of some crew members from the crashed Eastern Airlines flight have arrived in the company's branch office in Yunnan Province and they were being assisted to "work on follow-up issues", state-run *CCTN-TV* reported.



Emergency personnel travel to the site. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has promptly mobilised rescue forces in the city of Wuzhou to the crash site of the China Eastern Airlines flight, the Southern Theater Command said Monday. According to the official media, the plane sharply descended onto the mountainous area and crashed. Footage shot by locals in their phones showed the area of the crash was engulfed by massive mountainous fire with explosions heard in the background. There is no official word here yet on the number of casualties or survivors except speculation about the unlikelihood of survivors. The crash shattered China's airlines record of over 100 million continuous hours of safe flight as of February 19. The last domestic fatal air accident was in 2010, when an Embraer passenger plane

## 'GOOD RECORD'

- Aviation data provider OAG said this month that state-owned China Eastern Airlines was the world's sixth-largest carrier by scheduled weekly seat capacity.
- The 737-800 has a good safety record and is the predecessor to the 737 MAX model that has been grounded in China for more than three years after fatal crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia.
- China's airline safety record has been among the best in the world for a decade.
- Investigators will search for the plane's black boxes - the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder - to shed light on the crash.
- The US Federal Aviation

Administration said it was ready to assist with China's investigation if asked. According to Aviation Safety Network, China's last fatal jet accident was in 2010, when 44 of 96 people on board were killed when an Embraer E-190 regional jet flown by Henan Airlines crashed on approach to Yichun airport. In 1994 a China Northwest Airlines Tupolev Tu-154 flying from Xian to Guangzhou crashed, killing all 160 on board in China's worst-ever air disaster, according to Aviation Safety Network. Chinese President Xi Jinping said that he was "shocked" to learn about the crash and ordered an "all-out search" and rescue efforts.



crashed in Yichun, Heilongjiang province, killing 42 people. As soon as the plane crashed in the forest area, Chinese officials

rushed hundreds of fire brigades as well as rescue teams to find the survivors before the night fell. The fire has been put out and the res-

cue operation is underway, said Chen Jie, an official with the regional emergency management department.

# business

## of the day quote

With our distinct pure-play engineering services proposition, our vision on sustainability is to have organisational level involvement to better realise the goals for our global customers

AMIT CHADHA | CEO AND MD, L&T TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

We are reliable partners, we are people who look for a long term relationship. There are no political strings attached when you deal with Austrian businesses, I can assure you that

ALEXANDER SCHALLENBERG | AUSTRIAN MINISTER FOR EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

It's a great way for us to launch something (NFT) which is very topical, which is very new... And to be able to do that in our industry, in association with one of the biggest firms of the year RRR, I think it is very exciting

SANJEEV KUMAR BULLI | JOINT MD, PVR LTD

## SHORT TAKES

### Rupee plunges by 34 paise

Mumbai: The rupee slumped by 34 paise to close at 76.18 against the US dollar Monday as rising crude oil prices and a lacklustre trend in domestic equities weighed on investor sentiment. Expectations of aggressive rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve to control inflation also weighed on the local unit. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened lower at 76.08 against the American currency, later lost further ground to settle at 76.18, down 34 paise from the previous close.

### AGEL raises \$288mn for RE projects

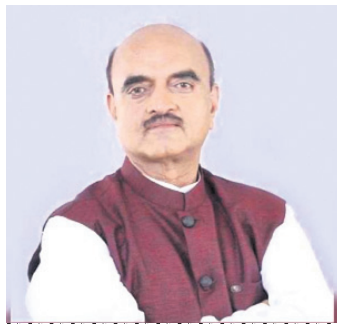
New Delhi: Adani Green Energy has raised \$288 million (about Rs 2,188 crore) for the construction of its renewable energy projects. "Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) has extended its Construction Financing Framework to \$1.64 billion by raising a \$288 million facility for its under-construction renewable asset portfolio through definitive agreements signed with a group of leading international lenders," a company statement said. In March 2021, AGEL had closed a \$1.35 billion construction revolver facility in one of Asia's largest project financing deals, it added.

### NDTV hits 10% upper circuit

New Delhi: Shares of NDTV Monday hit the 10 per cent upper circuit. Since the start of 2022, the shares of the news outlet gained 98 per cent, exchange data showed. Monday, it closed the day at the upper circuit at Rs 227 per scrip. In early January, 2022, the shares were at around Rs 115. December 1, 2021, the company entered into a 10-year deal with Taboola, a global leader in powering recommendations for the open web, helping people discover content as they may prefer. The decade-long deal is expected to bring in revenue of Rs 750 crore.

### Future tanks 7.88%

New Delhi: Shares of Future group of companies were under pressure Monday with Future Lifestyle Fashions and Future Retail tanking the most in tandem with a weak broader market. Future Lifestyle Fashions Ltd tumbled 9.08 per cent while Future Retail Ltd tanked 7.88 per cent. Similarly, Future Consumer Ltd declined 3.48 per cent, Future Supply Chain Solutions dipped 2.37 per cent and Future Enterprises Ltd went lower by 0.13 per cent on the BSE.



The government is holding roadshows for IDBI Bank privatisation and will come out with EoI after assessing investor interest

BHAGWAT KARAD | MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE

## AIRBUS IN TALKS WITH AI FOR NEW AIRCRAFT

European aircraft manufacturer Airbus is in talks with Tata Group and Indian carriers for a deal regarding the procurement of its wide-bodied A350XWB planes, president and MD of Airbus India & South Asia, Remi Maillard said Monday



# No fears of stagflation: RBI Guv

Das, while addressing an industry meet organised by CII, said the RBI will continue to ensure adequate liquidity to support the economy, which is facing many headwinds in the form of soaring crude oil and key commodity prices following the Russian invasion of Ukraine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 21: There is no prospect of the economy falling into a stagflation vortex and retail inflation is expected to moderate going forward, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das said Monday, notwithstanding fears of imported inflation given the massive spike in commodity prices, especially crude oil, after Russia invaded Ukraine last month.

Already retail inflation has risen to 6.07 per cent in February, crossing the upper band of the Parliamentary mandate. This is the second consecutive month in 2022 when retail inflation has crossed the 6 per cent mark having hit 6.01 per cent in January. The previous high was 6.26 per cent in June 2021.

"There is no prospect of the economy falling into a stagflation vortex," Das told an industry gathering organised by the CII here.

Stagflation or recession-inflation is a situation in which prices rise too high but the economy slows or falls into a recession like situation and also unemployment jumps. With rising tensions between Russia and Ukraine, disrupting supply chain and increasing inflation, experts are warning that it can impart a "stagflationary impulse to the



We are comfortably placed to deal with any challenges with regard to financing the CAD, and the RBI stands committed to deal with any challenges on this front

SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR, RBI

SINCE THE PANDEMIC, THE CENTRAL BANK HAS PUMPED IN A WHOPPING RS 17 TRILLION INTO THE ECONOMY

BANKS CAPITAL ADEQUACY RATIO AT 16 PER CENT, AND GROSS NPAS FALLING TO A RECORD LOW OF 6.5 PER CENT

THE RUPEE HAS BEEN THE WORST PERFORMER AMONG THE EMERGING MARKET PEERS

rupee vigorously earlier this month by selling close to \$10 billion from the reserves, making it the highest forex intervention by the monetary authority in a decade.

Under the agreement with the government the Reserve Bank has to ensure that CPI inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

Similarly wholesale price inflation in February rose to 13.11 per cent on hardening of prices of crude and non-food items, even though food articles softened.

According to the CPI data the rate of price rise in the food basket was 5.89 per cent in February, up from 5.43 per cent in the preceding month. In the food basket, inflation in cereals moved up to 3.95 per cent; meat and fish to 7.45 per cent, while for eggs, the rate of price rise was 4.15 per cent during the month.

The RBI has retained the retail inflation projection for FY22 at 5.3 per cent, with March quarter at 5.7 per cent on account of unfavourable base effect. The central bank has projected retail inflation for FY23 at 4.5 per cent.

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economy". He was also quick to add that he expects retail inflation to moderate going forward. In a similar manner, the governor also expects the rupee to remain stable.

The rupee has been the worst performer among the emerging

market peers since Russia's invasion of Ukraine and plunged to a low of 77.27 early this month. Analysts expect it to test 78 to a dollar by June if the war escalates or lingers on.

According to the latest RBI data, the central bank defended the

# Crypto loses can't be set off, clarifies govt



Chaudhary also said that currently cryptocurrencies are unregulated in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: In a major setback for crypto investors and trading platforms, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in the Lok Sabha March 21 that losses incurred from one kind of virtual digital assets (VDAs) cannot be set off against the gains from any transaction involving another VDA while computing tax.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Chaudhary said the government will come out with a definition of Virtual Digital Assets (VDAs) with a view to levy 30 per cent tax on income from the transfer of such assets.

The 2022-23 Budget has brought in clarity concerning the levy of income tax on crypto assets. From April 1, a 30 per cent I-T plus cess and surcharges will be levied on such transactions in the same manner as it treats winnings from horse races or other speculative transactions.

The minister said that while computing the income from transfer of VDA, no deduction in respect of any expenditure (other than the cost of acquisition) or allowance is allowed.

"The (Finance) Bill also proposes to define VDA. If any asset falls within the proposed definition, such virtual asset will be considered as VDA for the purposes of the Act and other provisions of the Act will apply accordingly," he said.

Further, he said, "infrastructure costs incurred in the mining of VDA (eg. Crypto assets) will not be treated as cost of acquisition as the same will be in the nature of capital expenditure", which is not allowable as a deduction under the I-T Act.

Nangia Andersen LLP Partner Sandeep Jhunjhunwala said since intra-head adjustment of losses, ie. Set-off of loss arising from one VDA with the income from another VDA would not be permitted, such losses would be a sunk cost for the investors, causing a double whammy - paying taxes on gains and no offset of losses.

"This would lead to a situation where losses, say on account of transaction in altcoins (one VDA class) would not be permitted for set-off against gains on another VDA class, say any other programmable token or bitcoin," he said.

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## CRUDE CRISIS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: Oil minister Hardeep Singh Puri Monday allayed fears of short supply of crude oil amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict and said that crude oil imports from Russia are minuscule at just 0.2 per cent of total such imports till January this fiscal.

"About the increased oil import concerns... We require total of five million barrels per day. Sixty per

# Puri allays fears of short supplies

cent of it comes from Gulf. We have imported from Russia, just 0.419 million metric tonnes... That is 0.2 per cent of total requirement (during April-January this fiscal)," Puri said in the Rajya Sabha.

"We are monitoring the situation. As far as oil imports are concerned from Russia, contrary to what played up in media, it is minuscule," the minister said.

According to the written reply tabled in the House, in FY 2020-21,

Crude oil imports from Russia are minuscule at just 0.2 per cent of total such imports till Jan this fiscal

Imports from US are likely to go up from 14 MT to 16.8 MT or a value of about \$10 billion of crude oil

India imported 85 per cent of its crude oil requirements and 54 per cent of its natural gas requirement

According to Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell (PPAC), India's major sources of crude oil imports

are Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Nigeria and the US. Indian Oil & Gas Public Sector Undertakings had imported approximately less than 1 per cent of its total crude oil import from Russia in the year 2021-2022 (till January).

India imported only 0.419 million metric tonnes (mmt) of crude oil from Russia, as compared to overall crude oil imports of 175.900 mmt (in April-January this fiscal).

## JSPL feted for Covid relief work

Bhubaneswar: Leading Steelmaker Jindal Steel & Power Ltd (JSPL) has been honoured with CSR Excellence Award for its multidimensional initiatives in supporting the community and government to fight the Covid-19 pandemic in India. The prestigious award was presented by Honourable Governor of Maharashtra Bhagat Singh Koshiyari to Prashant Hota, President & Group Head (CSR), JSP at the fourth edition of the CSR Journal Excellence Awards 2021 held at Yashwantrao Chavan Centre, Nariman Point, Mumbai March 20, 2022. Amit Upadhyay, Editor in Chief, CSR Journal was also present on the occasion. "The Award is dedicated to all frontline Covid-19 warriors and to the inspiring leadership of Naveen Jindal, Chairman, JSP and Shalju Jindal, Chairperson, JSPL Foundation and to the Partnering Community," said Hota on receiving the Award. He thanked the CSR Journal and the Jury for the Award.



## Union Bank holds Rajbhasha Seminar for executives

Bhubaneswar: Union Bank of India, which is the 5th largest public sector bank in the country, today organised Rajbhasha Seminar for executives (Scale IV & above) at its Field General Manager Office, Bhubaneswar in which executives from Bhubaneswar attended the seminar physically while those from Balasore, Berhampur, Sambalpur & Rayagada regions attended online. Ramakanta Pradhan, Field General Manager, inaugurated the seminar. He, while addressing the executives of Bhubaneswar Zone, said that Union Bank of India has implemented Hindi & regional languages in its Finacle/CBS software thereby facilitating customers to receive account statements, passbook, thanks letters, loan overdue reports, provisional interest certificates, LG confirmation letters etc in 13 Indian languages. Bibekananda Sarangi, Dy, Zonal Head of Bhubaneswar Zone proposed a vote of thanks while Akhilesh Kumar, Manager (OL) from FGMO-Bhubaneswar conducted the programme. Kundan Bhagat, Manager (OL) from RO-Cuttack and Preeti Shaw, Manager (OL) from RO-Bhubaneswar welcomed the executives.



## COIN MELA

Bhubaneswar: Coin Mela was organised by Central Bank of India, Bhubaneswar Region March 21, 2022, which was inaugurated by Keshab Korkora, General Manager, RBI Bhubaneswar in presence of Senior Regional Manager, Pradeep Kumar Samantaray at Bhubaneswar Branch. Korkora distributed coins among customers of the Bank & emphasized on use of coins for convenience. The Mela was coordinated by Mihira Tripathy, Chief Manager, RO Bhubaneswar & vote of thanks was delivered by PK Sahu, Manager, Currency Chest, Jatni. Coins of various denominations amounting to a total of Rs 11 lakh were distributed across the branches under active supervision of Currency Chests, Jatni & Mahatab Road.

## Coin Mela organised by Central Bank

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# Pressed to choose sides on Ukraine, China trade favours the West

BASED ON TRADE FLOWS ALONE, BEIJING HAS A LOT AT STAKE FOLLOWING BIDEN'S NEARLY TWO-HOUR VIDEO CALL WITH XI FRIDAY, WITH THE WHITE HOUSE CONFIRMING THAT SANCTIONS ON CHINA WERE AN OPTION

REUTERS

Washington, March 21: US President Joe Biden's warning of

"consequences" for any aid China may give to Russia's Ukraine war effort could force Chinese President Xi Jinping to choose between a long-standing lucrative trade relationship with the West and a growing strategic partnership with Moscow.

Despite growing trade ties to Southeast Asia and an economy that is less dependent on trade over the past decade, China's economic interests remain heavily skewed to Western democracies, trade data reviewed by Reuters showed.

Siding with political ally Russia would make little economic sense for China, according to analysts, as the United States and European Union still consume more than a third of China's exports.

China's ambassador to the United States, Qin Gang, Sunday emphasized China's close relationship with Russia.



"China has normal trade, economic, financial, energy cooperations with Russia," Qin told the CBS program "Face the Nation" when asked if Beijing would provide financial support to Moscow. "These are normal business between two sovereign countries, based on international laws, including WTO (World Trade Organization) rules."

Targeting Beijing with the type of broad economic sanctions that

being has diminished.

However, China is still more dependent on trade, at about 35% of GDP, than the United States at 23% or Japan at 31%.

The share of China's exports to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, with which China recently has forged new trade agreements, has doubled to about 15%, eclipsing Japan in importance.

But China's January-February 2022 trade data showed that exports to the European Union grew the most at 24%.

OIL FOR CELLPHONES Russia's overall trade with China

has grown since the West first imposed sanctions on Moscow in response to its annexation of Crimea. But China's exports to Russia have remained between 1% and 2% for the past 20 years.

Russian imports from China track those of many other countries, with electronics and consumer goods including cellphones, computers, apparel, toys and footwear topping the list.

China exported 10 times as many cellphones, by value, to the United States alone, at \$32.4 billion in 2020, based on UN Comtrade data.

China's imports from Russia are dominated by oil. At \$27 billion in 2020, crude oil and other petroleum dwarfs all other imports from Russia, mainly commodities including copper, softwood lumber, liquefied natural gas, coal, metals and ores.

On the pure economic question, if China were to have to make the choice - Russia versus everyone else - I mean, it's a no-brainer for China because it's so integrated with all of these Western economies

CHAD BOWN | THINK TANK, PETERSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS

24-year old American ends 21-time Grand Slam winner's 20-match winning streak to be crowned champion at Indian Wells

# Fritz stuns Rafa for title



**TWO SIDES OF EMOTION:** Taylor Fritz is in a jolly mood after lifting the winner's trophy at Indian Wells, while a dejected Rafa Nadal acknowledges the champion, Sunday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Indian Wells (US), March 21:** Hours from playing in the biggest final of his young career, Taylor Fritz was in severe pain. The prospect of having to withdraw against Rafael Nadal nearly had him in tears.

His coach urged him not to potentially risk damaging his sore ankle further. Fritz stubbornly refused to bow out. His faith in himself paid off. Fritz upset Nadal 6-3, 7-6(7-5) Sunday to win the BNP Paribas Open and snap the 21-time major champion's 20-match winning streak this year.

"It was a complete non-issue, didn't feel it at all, didn't hinder me at all," said Fritz, who tweaked his ankle late in his semifinal win over

No.7 seed Andrey Rublev. Blue medical tape could be seen above his high sock and he had it numbed before the final.

Nadal had his own health issue. He came into the match bothered by painful breathing that he first experienced in a three-set semifinal win. He took two medical timeouts during the final. The first one came after he lost the first set. Nadal went inside with a trainer after taping his upper left chest. He got treatment on court after falling behind 5-4 in the second set.

"When I try to breathe, it's painful and it's very uncomfortable. It's like a needle all the time inside. I get dizzy a little bit because it's painful. It's a kind of pain that limit me a lot," said Nadal, who turns 36 in June.

"The thing that worries me now, it's about what's going on there, what I have to do now to recover and

how long going to take." Nadal's 20-0 start to the year included the Australian Open, his

21st major championship that broke a tie with Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer. He also won titles in Melbourne and Acapulco.

Fritz didn't waste any time in attacking Nadal, racing to a 5-1 lead in the first set with two breaks. Nadal got a break back in closing to 5-3, but his backhand error gave Fritz another break and the set.

Nadal fought off a match point on his serve with a forehand winner to tie the second set 5-all. He had two break points on Fritz's serve in the next game, but the American held for a 6-5 lead. Nadal held to force the tiebreaker.

Nadal sent two straight forehands well wide to set up Fritz's second match point. Another Nadal error sent Fritz to the biggest victory of his career not far from where he grew up near San Diego. Fritz's parents, Guy Fritz and Kathy May, are former tour players.

Fritz dropped his racket and collapsed on his back after clinching the title on his second match point. He got up smiling with a look of disbelief on his face. He became the first American man to win Indian Wells since Andre Agassi in 2001.

Fritz is projected to rise from No.20 to a career-high 13th in Monday's ATP Tour rankings and will become the top-ranked American player. Nadal moves up to No.3.

Nadal had already decided to skip next week's tournament in Miami and head home to Spain to prepare for the French Open that begins May 22. Fritz is scheduled for a MRI on his ankle Monday and isn't sure whether he'll be able to play in Miami.

## SWIATEK REIGNS SUPREME AMONG WOMEN

**Indian Wells:** In an error-filled women's final, Iga Swiatek defeated Maria Sakkari 6-4, 6-1. The 20-year-old Polish player and Fritz earned USD 1.2 million each for their victories. Swiatek will rise from fourth to a career-best No 2 in the world in Monday's WTA Tour rankings, trailing top-ranked Ash Barty, who skipped Indian Wells. Sakkari will move from sixth to No.3, the rising Greek star's highest ranking yet. She equals countryman Stefanos Tsitsipas, who reached No.3 in the ATP Tour rankings. Swiatek lost each of the first three times she played Sakkari, all last year. Last month, the 20-year-old Polish player beat Sakkari in the semifinals at Doha and went on to win the title. Swiatek has five career titles, including the 2020 French Open. She's 5-0 in her last five finals, losing only a combined 16 games. Her new ranking equals the highest ever by a Polish player, matching Agnieszka Radwanska. Swiatek improved her record to a WTA Tour-leading 20-3 this year, including 11 matches in a row.



# Eves take on Bangla in a must-win game



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hamilton, March 21:** An inconsistent India will have no room for errors when they take on a spirited Bangladesh in their must-win ICC Women's World Cup league match here Tuesday.

India's problems have compounded over the course of their campaign, which has seen them win two games and lose three, including back-to-back defeats against England and Australia.

The heavy fluctuations in the batting performance was already a concern and with the ease Australia chased down a record 278 in the previous game, the Indian bowlers also need to step up.

The bowling looked rather flat against the Aussies, who attacked and put pressure from ball one. The move to drop an extra bowling option in Deepti Sharma and bring back batter Shafali Verma also did not work.

Harmanpreet Kaur, who roared back to form with the bat, is yet to be used as an off-spinner in the competition. It remains to be seen if Shafali will be persisted with for the crucial contest and Yastika Bhatia returns at the top to open alongside Smriti Mandhana.

One positive from the Australia game was captain Mithali Raj get-

ting back among runs. After a couple of quiet games, Mandhana will also be expected to score big Tuesday.

India find themselves in a tricky spot as they have not gelled as a unit so far and it is something they would have to correct against Bangladesh, who have shown a lot of promise in their maiden ODI World Cup appearance.

"The atmosphere remains positive. After a loss you do feel down but we are in good headspace ahead of the game tomorrow (Tuesday). We will play to win, net run rate remains secondary," said all-rounder Sneha Rana, adding that they can't afford to take Bangladesh lightly.

"Bangladesh have reached here by performing. They are always improving. There are no easy games in this World Cup," she added. Bangladesh have run most of their opponents close in the four games they have played so far and that includes a memorable win over Pakistan.

Ahead of the India game, captain Nigar Sultana said the more they play at this level, the better they will become. Bangladesh failed to chase down 141 against the West Indies in their last game after a brilliant bowling performance and batting is one area they will need to improve significantly.

# Barca special at Bernabeu

XAVI'S MEN HAND REAL MADRID 0-4 HAMMERING TO END A 5-MATCH LOSING RUN AGAINST THEIR ARCH RIVALS



**TRIOKA'S NIGHT OUT:** Barcelona's goal scorers Ferran Torres (L) and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang join Ousmane Dembele, who set up two goals against Real Madrid Sunday, after the visitors open the account at Santiago Bernabeu

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Madrid, March 21:** Barcelona's losing run against Real Madrid finally ended as the Catalan club enjoyed a stunning 4-0 win at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium and showed its title hopes in the Spanish league may not be over yet.

Barcelona kept its recent momentum going under coach Xavi Hernandez in the last 'Clásico' of the season Sunday. The win ended Barcelona's five-match losing streak to its rival and maintained an outside chance of fighting for the title after a difficult start to its first season without Lionel Messi.

The victory was its first against Madrid since 2019 and came in style — like a few others Barcelona enjoyed with Messi in his prime.

It was Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang who thrived this time, scoring twice to continue his great streak since being signed in the final minutes of the winter transfer window. Ronald Araujo and Ferran Torres added a goal each to give Barcelona its seventh win in

the last eight matches in all competitions.

The result moved Barcelona within 12 points of league leader Madrid with nine rounds to go, and it could further cut the gap to nine points if they win their game in hand against Rayo Vallecano.

Barcelona is level on points with fourth-place Atlético Madrid and is three points behind second-place Sevilla, which was held 0-0 at home against Real Sociedad earlier Sunday for its third straight draw in the league.

Madrid, which badly missed the injured Karim Benzema, was unbeaten in its last eight games in the league, with six wins. It had beaten its Catalan rival 2-1 at Camp Nou in their first league game last year. It was Madrid's first home loss in 24 league games, since losing to Levante in January 2021.

Barcelona has been revitalised by Xavi and its attack has been red hot, outscoring opponents 24-5 in its last eight matches, with Aubameyang and Torres combining for 15 goals since arriving at the club this year.

Aubameyang has now scored nine goals in his 11 appearances since arriving from Arsenal. He opened the scoring with a close-range header after a cross by Ousmane Dembélé in the 29th minute, and sealed the victory with a nice flick over goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois in a breakaway in the 51st.

Araujo had added to the lead with a header off a corner kick in the 38th before Torres scored the third in the 47th after a clever flick-pass by Aubameyang as the Madrid defense collapsed yet again.

Barcelona had several other significant scoring opportunities throughout the match, with Aubameyang, Torres and Dembélé among those missing good chances.

Benzema, the league's top scorer with 22 goals, couldn't play because of a left-leg injury sustained in the league match against Mallorca.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti did not replace Benzema with another striker, instead using Luka Modric in a false-nine position at the top of the attacking line along with Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo.

# FA CUP: MEETING OF FAMILIAR FOES

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**London, March 21:** Manchester City and Liverpool just can't be kept apart this season. Engaged in yet another tight tussle for the Premier League title, the two rivals from northwest England must now squeeze an FA Cup semifinal meeting into their busy end-of-season schedules.

Both won away matches in the quarterfinals Sunday — City outlasted Southampton 4-1 and Liverpool edged past second-tier Nottingham Forest 1-0 — and were paired in the draw for the last four.

It means the top two teams in the country will clash in the league at City's Etihad Stadium on April 10 — City currently leads Liverpool by one point in a fascinating title race — and then in the FA Cup semifinals at Wembley Stadium on the weekend of April 16-17.

In and around those games are a pair of Champions League quarterfinal legs for each of them, with City taking on Spanish champion Atletico Madrid and Liverpool facing Benfica.

It could be a make-or-break period of the season, with squad strength and player rotation proving key. The other FA Cup semifinal match will be a London derby between Chelsea and Crystal Palace,



Manchester City players rush to Phil Foden (L) after the Englishman's goal against Southampton, Sunday

which thrashed Everton 4-0 Sunday to reach the last four for the first time since 2016.

City is in the semifinals for a fourth straight season but only after a flurry of second-half goals against Southampton, which again caused problems for Pep Guardiola's team, having already drawn twice in the league.

Frustration was building for City at 1-1 when the visitors won a penalty that was converted in the 62nd minute by Kevin De

Bruyne, before goals by substitutes Phil Foden and Riyad Mahrez in the space of four minutes from the 75th added gloss to the scoreline at St Mary's Stadium. City defender Aymeric Laporte's own-goal had cancelled out Raheem Sterling's opener in the first half. City has lost in the semifinals in the past two seasons, to Arsenal then Chelsea.

Liverpool's improbable bid for a quadruple of trophies remains on course thanks to Diogo Jota's 78th-minute winner against Forest.

## PREMIER LEAGUE

Harry Kane and Son Heung-min were at it again. The most lethal attacking partnership in Premier League history combined for all three of Tottenham's goals in a 3-1 win over West Ham in a big result in the race for Champions League qualification.

Kane set up Son for the second and third goals at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, having already sent in the cross that West Ham defender Kurt Zouma turned into his own net under heavy pressure from Son.

# Lakshya 'living a dream'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 21:** Top Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen Monday said he is "living a dream" by bringing laurels for the country at the world stage and he "gave it all" during his maiden final against Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen at the All England Championship.

The 20-year-old from Uttarakhhand has been simply sensational en route to his final appearance at Birmingham but he couldn't go the distance, going down in straight

"I owe everything to Prakash sir and Vimal sir and PPBA who have mentored me throughout this journey. Without them, this would just not be possible. Thanks to Vivek Kumar sir and the world class PDCE where I train

games to World No.1 Axelsen. "It's been a long journey for me from Almora to the All England

Lakshya pulled out of the Swiss Open Super 300 tournament to get some rest after two weeks of gruelling badminton

Open. I gave it my all on the court in the final yesterday vs Viktor but it wasn't meant to be," Sen wrote in a post shared on his twitter handle.

"For me, getting the chance to represent my country means every-



thing to me. I am living my dream and I will always give my 100 percent on court."