



PC ROCKS
Priyanka Chopra flaunts her sari looks during an event which she hosted to celebrate South Asian excellence
LEISURE P2



NK TEST-FIRED ICBM
North Korea says it test-fired its biggest intercontinental ballistic missile under orders of Kim Jong Un
INTERNATIONAL P10



ITALY STUNNED AT HOME
European Champions Italy are out of FIFA World Cup for second time in a row after losing to North Macedonia
SPORTS P12

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Petrol, diesel prices hiked by 80 paise

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 25: Petrol and diesel prices were hiked by 80 paise a litre each Friday, the third increase in four days as oil firms recoup losses from holding rates during the period prior to the recently-concluded Assembly elections.

Petrol in Delhi will now cost ₹97.81 per litre as against ₹97.01 previously while diesel rates have gone up from ₹88.27 per litre to ₹89.07, according to a price notification of state fuel retailers. The increases are the steepest single-day rise since the daily price revision was started in June 2017.

CITY FUEL PRICES

PETROL	₹104.37/litre
DIESEL	₹94.18/litre

With three increases beginning March 22, petrol and diesel prices have gone up by ₹2.40 a litre.

A record 137-day hiatus in rate revision ended on March 22 with an 80 paise per litre increase in rates and similar proportion hikes have followed in subsequent days.

Prices had been on a freeze since November 4 ahead of the Assembly elections in states like Uttar Pradesh and Punjab - a period during which the cost of raw material (crude oil) soared by USD 30 per barrel.

The rate revision was expected soon after elections ended March 10 but it was put off.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



The way we won, I'd prefer taking oath in the name of God rather than the Constitution

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	57362.20	↓ 233.48
NIFTY	17153.00	↓ 69.80
DOLLAR	76.54	↓ ₹0.13
EURO	83.93	↑ ₹0.04
GOLD	₹51,885	↓ ₹193
SILVER	₹68,860	↓ ₹460

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	36.3°C	36.0°C
TEMP MIN	24.6°C	24.5°C
Humidity	81%	85%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather very likely	

HIGH DRAMA



Tension prevailed at the strongroom of BJB (Autonomous) College in Bhubaneswar over allegation of EVM tampering, Friday. (REPORT ON P3)

One nation, one electoral roll: Govt

Govt says one way of checking fraudulent voting is linking Aadhaar with the electoral roll which is voluntary as of now

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 25: The government is considering proposals for linking Aadhaar with the electoral rolls to check fraudulent voting and granting of online voting to Indians working abroad, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said in Lok Sabha Friday.

Rijiju said electoral fraud is a serious matter and the government is considering at the union law minister's level how to check fraudulent voting.

"Linking Aadhaar with the electoral roll is one of the ways. As of now linking Aadhaar with electoral rolls is voluntary. Our aim is to ensure 'one nation, one electoral roll' to check double names in electoral rolls and fraudulent voting and ensure a clean voting process," he said during Question Hour.

Replying to a supplementary on the proposal to grant voting rights to 'Pravasi' Indians, the minister said the government has suggested to the Election Commission to look into how to give voting rights to those Indians who are working abroad or whether to allow them online voting.

"But before taking any decision, we have to ensure safety and transparency of the process and that it is free from malfunctioning," he said.

When Congress member Manish Tewari asked whether the source code of the EVMs remains with the company which manufactures the EVMs or it is passed on to the EC, Rijiju said it was like appointment of judges. "The judges are appointed by the government but once they are appointed, they



become independent. No one should question the EVMs and there should not be any inference too," he said.

As Tewari insisted that he did not get the proper reply to his question, Speaker Om Birla intervened and said the world over the Indian democracy and its electoral process was being highly praised.

Birla said during his travel to many countries, people have shown very high regards for Indian democracy. He said it is the biggest democracy in the world and yet it conducts the elections so smoothly.

People say that they have not seen such a good system working in such a big country and everyone should appreciate the system, he said. Rijiju said, "We want maximum voting and a healthy system. India's election system has been termed as the best system in the world."

Replying to another question, he said there is no proposal under consideration of the government to enact any law to enforce compulsory voting in the country.

Neither the government can force those who are in jails to give votes as they are under the jurisdiction of the courts, he said. "We want maximum voting and a healthy system. People from the whole world appreciate our system," he said.

CM in House in person



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Mar 25: After a gap of nearly two years, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik attended the Budget session of Odisha Assembly which commenced here Friday amid strict adherence to COVID-19 guidelines.

Before attending the session, Patnaik also presided over a meeting of ruling BJD legislators party held on the Assembly premises and advised the treasury bench members on how to face the challenges of the Opposition parties which have earlier an-

nounced to attack the government over the alleged rise in the poll related violence and deteriorating law and order situation across the state.

"The government is prepared to debate on any issue raised by the Opposition members. The party will also raise issues like central negligence towards Odisha and price rise of essential items and fuel," said Parliamentary Affairs Minister BK Arukha.

Though Patnaik used to attend official meetings and Assembly proceedings during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic through virtual mode, the Opposition members used to criticise him for not attending the House.

The Assembly session is being held with strict adherence to the COVID-19 protocol as all the attendants had to undergo RT-PCR test and maintain social distancing in seating arrangement between MLAs. Apart from members, ministers, all the staff and media persons also underwent COVID-19 tests, a health department official said. The Budget session will be held for only seven days. The discussion on Governor's Address will take place for two days March 26 and March 28. The session will conclude March 31.

CBI TAKES OVER BIRBHUM KILLINGS PROBE

New Delhi: The CBI Friday took over the case of killing of eight people in Birbhum district of West Bengal, hours after a Calcutta High Court order. The CBI case will be monitored by a Joint Director-level officer and supervised by a DIG/SP-ranked official, they said. The agency has already dispatched a team, along with eight experts from the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) who have visited the site of crime, they said. Miscreants had March 21 set 10 houses on fire in Bogtui in Birbhum district. P7

Man beheads 8-yr-old girl

In a barbaric display of terror, the accused roamed around the village with the severed head

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, March 25: In a horrendous incident, a man Friday beheaded an eight-year-old girl and roamed around the village with the severed head.

The 35-year-old accused, the father of a child, spread a reign of terror in the village before he was finally overpowered, thrashed and handed over to the cops.

The barbaric incident has been reported from Kasada village under Jamankira police limits in Sambalpur district.

"The motive of the killer has not been ascertained yet," a senior police official said, while the body was seized. A probe into the incident has been launched. The deceased was identified as Lusi, daughter of Nabakishore Dharua. The accused was identified as Prashant Bagar.

As per reports, the minor girl had gone out to a field to attend nature's call while her parents had gone to collect 'mahua' flowers. "Lusi had gone out to a field to attend na-

SAMBALPUR SHOCKER



ture's call early in the morning. The accused came out of nowhere and attacked the girl with an axe beheading her on the spot," a senior official at Jamankira police station said.

Later, the accused went to the village holding the severed head and walked around, terrifying the inhabitants.

Palpable tension mounted in the village following the incident. Jamankira IIC Premjit Das visited the crime scene and took stock of the situation. "The accused has been arrested and will be taken for interrogation," Das said.

IIC killed as revolver goes off accidentally

POST NEWS NETWORK

Aska, March 25: The IIC of Gangapur police station in Ganjam district died after being hit by a bullet when his service revolver accidentally went off Friday.

Debkumar Gamango was rushed to Aska Community Health Centre where he was declared brought dead. Ganjam SP Brijesh Rai informed.

Gangapur police registered a case and sent the body for autopsy. The IIC was reportedly cleaning his service revolver when the loaded firearm went off accidentally.

"Gamango had taken charge as IIC about four months ago. A detailed investigation has been ordered into the case. Further details will emerge soon," the SP added.



OrissaPOST

BUSINESS EMINENCE AWARDS

Inaugurator
Shri Naveen Patnaik
Hon'ble CM, Odisha

Chief Guest
Shri Suresh Ch. Mohapatra, IAS
Chief Secretary, Govt. of Odisha

Chief Speaker
Shri Naveen Jindal
Chairman
Jindal Steel and Power

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ARIES
Your work and family will vie with each other for your attention. Merry-making will seem a good idea in the evening. Your desire for fame and fame will meet with success shortly, maybe even today! Ganesh shows his blessings on you.

TAURUS
You will win the heart of your family members today, forecasts Ganesh. Try and delay auction bids or sealed tenders. Job aspirants may look forward to belated success in interviews. Ganesh advises you to take abundant precautions in all critical matters.

GEMINI
It's time you took stock of your personal life. Is there someone you want to propose but are afraid to do so? Ganesh advises you not to let the fear of rejection stop you from making an effort. There are strong indications that you will be accepted if you speak your heart today.

CANCER
Ganesh believes that you are likely to have a heightened interest in the study of philosophy and the working of the metaphysical world. This may be mere curiosity or a part of your effort to improve your professional skills.

LEO
It's fun, fun and more fun on the horizon! Ganesh foresees you taking time out for some leisure and frolic today. Broaden your horizon with a bit of travel since you are very likely to be going on a small trip to recharge your batteries.

VIRGO
Contemplating on past successes will help you gather the resources for achieving more of it in the near future. New contacts will help you make considerable headway on the road to success. Ganesh says your amiable nature will help you in getting along easily with people.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that you need to be more careful in your work field as your enemies or your competitors will try to pull you down today. You will have to be very careful in making business agreements or negotiations regarding give and take in the business. You will see your beloved grow distant from you today.

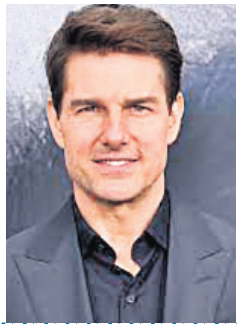
SCORPIO
Long pending task of getting your home renovated may begin today. There are a couple of object de art that have caught your eyes and you wish to decorate your home with those artefacts. You may even plan a small celebration to share your home's new look! A great day indeed.

SAGITTARIUS
Beauty therapies or a new hair do, pick one; makeover and personal grooming is on your mind. Once you decide to shop, nothing in the world can stop you. You have decided to de-stress yourself with shopping. Clothes and jewellery is what your wardrobe is awaiting for, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
Generally, it is difficult for you to maintain a cool head over your shoulders, especially during the stressful times. But, to everyone's surprise, you will display remarkable composure while dealing with challenges today, feels Ganesh. Family life will be smooth and it will enable you to fully concentrate on your career and increasing your efficiency level.

AQUARIUS
With no major highs or lows, you will have a balanced day today. You will handle everything with great efficiency and Ganesh gives you a pat on your back for that. Continue to work hard for the day as your efforts will get noticed and not only that, you will also understand the value of your hardships.

PISCES
Today will not find you in the best of spirits. You need to guard against being sad for the smallest of reasons. Pessimistic thoughts could creep in, owing to some external influences. You need to keep your will-power strong to remain positive.



CRUISE EYES MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 8 AS FINAL FILM OF THE FRANCHISE

Hollywood star Tom Cruise is seeing the end of his missions. The actor, who has portrayed Ethan Hunt since the first film, reportedly plots *Mission: Impossible 8* as the final installment of the franchise.

SEAN PENN PLANS TO HELP UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Award winning-actor Sean Penn has been filming a documentary about the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Now, he has struck a deal with Mayor of Krakow Jacek Majchrowski to supply aid to Ukrainian refugees through his charity.



PRE-OSCAR EVENT

Priyanka rocks in sari once again

Los Angeles: India-born Hollywood star Priyanka Chopra over the years has served some gorgeous sari looks in films and red carpet. She did it once again as she hosted a pre-Oscar event to celebrate South Asian excellence and nominees.

Priyanka put on display the elegance that comes with wearing a sari. She put India on the global map again by wearing a black saree paired with a strapless blouse. Her soft curls complemented her look for the day. The event was also hosted by Mindy Kaling, Kumail Nanjiani, Anjula Acharya, Bela Bajaria, Maneesh K Goyal and Shruti Ganguly. This is not the first time that Priyanka Chopra is making her presence felt at the Oscars. In her previous Oscar outings, the cross-continental queen was seen presenting awards and announcing nominees. Priyanka's latest project in Hollywood, *The Matrix Resurrections*, made a splash globally.

AGENCIES



Big B's heartfelt note to Irrfan's son

Mumbai: Megastar Amitabh Bachchan recently sent a heartfelt note to late legendary actor Irrfan Khan's son Babil.

In the fond memory of the *Madaari* actor who had passed away April 29, 2020, Big B wrote, "Life is transient and death is unfathomable, but 'Friendship' transcends death. Memories made, create a lasting impression on those left behind, and will never be forgotten. Each time we are reminded of a loved one through a phrase, a joke, an action. These are the

things that will keep us close despite death."

"Your father Irrfan was a great soul and everyone whose lives he touched, are better for having known him. He is missed dearly," Big B added.

For the unversed, Irrfan and Big B had shared screen space in 2015 comedy-drama *Piku* co-starring Deepika Padukone in the lead role.

His elder son Babil is now taking his father's legacy forward in the field of acting. He is all set to make his acting debut with *Qala* co-starring Tripti Dimri of *Bulbul* fame. AGENCIES



Mrunal's uncanny resemblance with Madhubala



Mumbai: Mrunal Thakur, who was last seen in an extended cameo in Kartik Aaryan's crime thriller, *Dhamaka* will next be seen debuting in a Telugu film opposite south sensation Dulquer Salmaan. Produced by Swapna Cinema, the film is being directed by Hanu Raghavapudi. It will be presented by Vyjayanthi Films.

What's interesting is that the actor's look from the film bears a striking resemblance with the yesteryear superstar, Madhubala.

Often called the most beautiful Indian actress of all time, Madhubala is an icon, so any

comparison to her is a huge compliment. Despite having such big shoes to fill, Mrunal seems to love the attention, "It's an honour to be told I resemble one of the most beautiful actresses, Madhubala. Ji."

The actor adds, "This film just got a whole lot special for me after being associated with such a legendary actor. Really looking forward to this one and I hope that my fans love the film as much as we loved making it!" Besides that, Mrunal Thakur will also be seen in Shahid Kapoor's upcoming sports drama, *Jersey*, directed by Gowtam Tinnanuri, releasing worldwide April 14, 2022. AGENCIES

Suryamayee has her hands full

Bhubaneswar: With several projects lined up for release and many others in the pipeline, emerging glam-girl of the Odia film world Suryamayee Mohapatra looks forward to a busy 2022.

About her upcoming projects, she says, "I am looking forward to the release of three commercial movies in April. Besides, I will be seen in two content-driven projects. It would be too early to divulge details of my projects." She is also overwhelmed with the viewer's response to her last movie *Pani* Grahan

opposite Avisekh Rath screened on Zee Sarthak, says Suryamayee.

"Apart from the positive response from the audience, the project helped me fulfill my long-held dream of working with director Chandni Parija. I also learnt a lot from senior actor Prithviraj Nayak who plays my father's role in the film," says the Mr Majnu actress.

Her *Daalcheeni* and *Samapaju Ra Raghu* were also well received by the audience with the former being screened at Shimla International Film Festival.

PNN



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

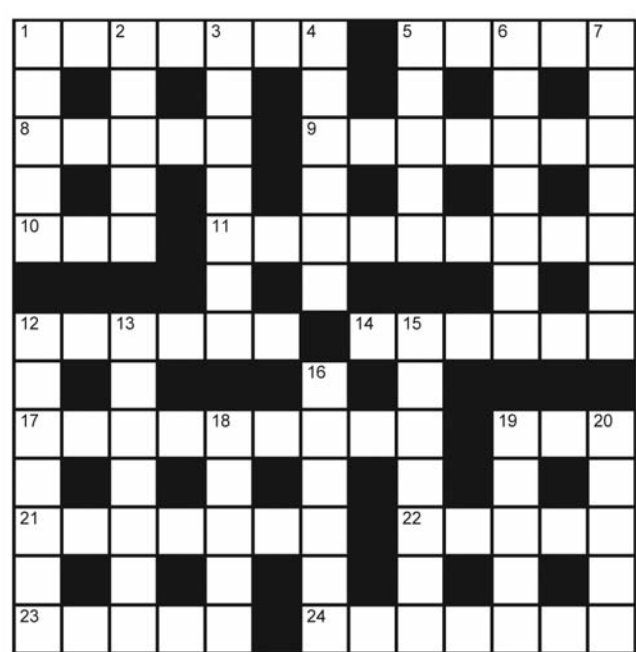


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Dessert dish
- 5 Pago Pago locale
- 8 Scimitar
- 9 Inert medication
- 10 Arles assent
- 11 Contact sport (3,6)
- 12 Saunters
- 14 Unnerve
- 17 Baked potato topping (4,5)
- 19 Stage hog

Down

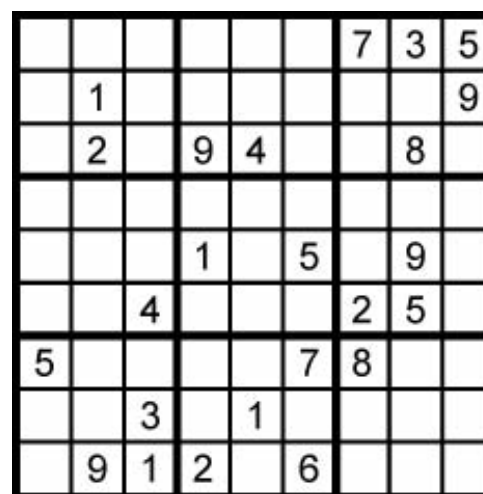
- 1 Basil-based sauce
- 2 Persian Gulf emirate
- 3 Enumerate; list
- 4 Pouched rat
- 21 Compel
- 22 Talking bird of poetry
- 23 Flower girl, sometimes
- 24 Nipper

British military hat

- 5 British military hat
- 6 Four-toed African viverrine
- 7 Altar boy
- 12 Election loser (4-3)
- 13 Curt
- 15 Popular
- 16 Veto
- 18 Upbraid
- 19 Shanty
- 20 Underground worker

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

national



Were Covid victims treated for free? No. Did the poor and workers get minimum income? No. Were small industries saved from sinking? No. The PM does not CARE!

OCT 5 TO BE CELEBRATED AS NATIONAL DOLPHIN DAY

The ministry of environment Friday announced that October 5 will be celebrated as National Dolphin Day from this year as part of the conservation campaign for the species and to generate awareness



UPSC EXAM Additional attempt not possible: Centre

New Delhi, March 25: The Centre Friday told the Supreme Court that additional attempt in the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) civil services examination is "not possible".

CBI takes over Birbhum killings probe

Kolkata, March 25: The CBI Friday took over the case of killing of eight people in Birbhum district of West Bengal, hours after a Calcutta High Court order.



Members of SFI and activists during a protest rally, after 8 people died in the violence that broke out at Bogtui village Tuesday morning, in Kolkata, Friday PTI PHOTO

Roopa Ganguly breaks down in RS New Delhi: BJP's Rajya Sabha member Roopa Ganguly Friday demanded the imposition of President's Rule in West Bengal in the wake of violence and deaths in the state's Birbhum district, leading to a massive protest by the TMC members and a brief adjournment of the House proceedings.

405 posts of HC judges vacant

New Delhi, March 25: Out of the sanctioned strength of 1,104 judges in high courts across the country, there are 699 judges, while 405 posts are vacant, the Parliament was told Friday.

Uddhav dares BJP to jail him

Mumbai, March 25: In one of the bitterest attacks till date, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray Friday accused the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party of being a 'pervert' and dared it to arrest him if it wanted to grab power in Maharashtra.

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, its leaders and their families. "I am not scared by these tactics. If you want to jail me to come to power then do it... Put me in a cell like Lord Krishna. But don't indulge in such vicious tactics to grab power. Don't harass us or our family members. We never bothered your family members," Thackeray declared.

courage to declare a public Emergency". Wondering if the ED has become the maid-servant of the BJP, especially after the arrests of former home minister Anil Deshmukh and later Nawab Malik, the Chief Minister took strong umbrage at the Opposition for linking Malik and the MVA in general with the fugitive don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar.

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Peace must for normal ties: India to China

Wang flew into Delhi from Kabul Thursday evening in an unannounced trip in the first highest-level visit to India by a Chinese leader after the border standoff in eastern Ladakh

gion since April 2020 cannot be reconciled with a normal relationship between two neighbours. At a media briefing after the talks, Jaishankar said if both sides are committed to improving ties then this commitment must find "full expression" in the ongoing disengagement talks and that relationship is best served by observing the three mutuals - mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests.

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New Delhi, March 25: India Friday pressed China hard to complete the disengagement process in the remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh quickly, asserting that bilateral ties cannot return to normal if the situation in the border areas is "abnormal". In his nearly three-hour "candid" talks with visiting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar conveyed that the frictions and tensions triggered by China's military deployments in the region...



'Need to promote youth of Kashmir by educating them'



AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 25: The Supreme Court Friday observed that it is essential to promote youth hailing from Kashmir by educating them, while observing that everybody makes mistakes in their youth. Hearing a plea by the UT government challenging the Jammu and Kashmir High Court order, directing the Jammu and Kashmir Women's Development Corporation to release further loan instalments to Mubashir Ashraf Bhat, a bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and Surya Kant said: "We need to promote the youth of Kashmir by educating them."

It added that if it were to set aside the high court order, then it would have a negative impact. As advocate Taruna Prasad, the standing counsel for J&K, contended that the matter should be heard as there was a breach of trust, the bench said that Bhat might have

committed a mistake, but it can be overlooked in this case. There is a mistake on her part, "but we all have done mistakes in our youth", it said, adding that if the appeal were to be allowed, then it may result in cancellation of loan resources available for the Kashmiri youth as it declined to entertain the appeal. Initially, the corporation released the first instalment of loan in favour of Bhat, however she was denied the subsequent instalment for changing her admission to Khwaja Yunus Ali Medical College, Bangladesh from the Community Based Medical College, Bangladesh without intimating the corporation. A single-judge bench of the high court had ruled against Bhat, but a division bench ruled in her favour. The Union Territory challenged this order before the apex court. The corporation had demanded the return of the first instalment

Properties sheltering ultras to be attached

Srinagar: In a major development, Jammu and Kashmir Police Thursday started the process of attaching immovable properties used to provide shelter to militants or where conspiracies were hatched to attack security forces and civilians. "Process has started for attachment of some immovable properties which have been used for purpose of militancy as per section 2(g) & 25 of ULP Act. Don't give shelter or harbour militants/associates. Legal action will be supplemented by property attachments as per law," Srinagar police posted on its official Twitter handle. SSP, Srinagar, Rakesh Balwal told some reporters that the houses where encounters took place, and houses where militants took shelter and planned attacks on the security forces and the civilians will be attached. "So far, during 2020-2021, over one dozen such houses have been identified in downtown, Soura, Pantha Chowk, Batmaloo, Nowgam, Harwan etc.," he said. The process of attachment of such properties is being started from Srinagar district in the Valley.

of the loan issued to Bhat and declined to approve subsequent instalments. Bhat moved the high court challenging this decision, contending that she was forced to change her admission due to non-availability of seats in Community Based Medical College.

1.42L TOURISTS VISITED J&K LAST MONTH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 25: As many as 1.42 lakh tourists visited Jammu and Kashmir during the last month, which is the highest recorded in the past seven years, the government informed Rajya Sabha Thursday. Replying to supplementaries during the Question Hour, Minister for Tourism G Kishan Reddy said the central government is helping in promoting tourism in Jammu and Kashmir and this is giving good results. The financial assistance given by the central government is highest to Jammu in the country, which includes 3,902 loans during Covid and under the emergency credit line guarantee scheme, and as many as 1,03,750 people have been helped, Reddy said.



"The situation has improved after Covid in Jammu and Kashmir. In the last month alone, 1,42,000 tourists visited Kashmir. This is the highest number of tourists in the last seven years in Jammu and Kashmir," the minister informed the Upper House of Parliament. "Since June 2021 onwards, as many as 72 lakh tourists visited Jammu and Kashmir and this has helped local people and promote their arts and handicrafts," Reddy said. In his written reply, he said as a result of the steps taken, domestic tourism is at its peak in the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

Delhi ranks 3rd in per capita income after Sikkim, Goa: Survey

ACCORDING TO THE SURVEY, DELHI'S PER CAPITA INCOME GREW 16.81 PER CENT YEAR-ON-YEAR TO ₹4,01,982 IN FISCAL 2021-22

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 25: The per capita income of Delhi is ranked at third place among the states and union territories while Goa stood at first place and Sikkim at second, according to the Economic Survey of Delhi 2021-22. As per the economic survey, Delhi's per capita income during 2021-22 at current prices has been worked out to ₹4,01,982 as against ₹3,44,136 during 2020-21 showing a growth of 16.81 per cent. Delhi Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Manish Sisodia Friday presented the Outcome Budget for the year 2021-22 in the Legislative Assembly. The Delhi government is the first to introduce the Outcome Budget in which it announces details of various projects and schemes, Sisodia said. The advance estimate of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Delhi at current prices during 2021-22 is ₹9,23,967 crore which recorded a growth of 17.65 per cent over the previous year. Delhi has maintained its consistent Revenue Surplus ₹1,450 crore during 2020-2021. However, the survey shows the revenue surplus slightly dropped by .04 per cent as



Representational image

Advance estimate of Gross State Domestic Product of Delhi at current prices during FY 2021-22 is ₹9,23,967 crore which recorded a growth of 17.65 per cent over the previous year

ing 2021-22, said the survey. The total number of motor vehicles on road in Delhi as of March 31, 2021, was 122.53 lakh, showing 3.03 per cent year-on-year growth, it added. According to the survey, the forest and tree cover area of Delhi increased to 342 sq km in 2021. It means that the share of forests in the total geographical area has increased to 23.06 per cent. It cited the latest India State of Forest Report, 2021, and said Delhi has the largest forest cover of 194.24 sq km followed by Mumbai and Bengaluru, among the seven major megacities. The income from manufacturing has increased from ₹18,907 crore in 2011-12 to ₹42,230 crore in 2021-22, the report noted. As per India Tourism Statistics-2021, Delhi secured 4th rank in total foreign tourist visits in 2020, with a total share of 9.50 per cent, it added.

UPPING THE ANTE

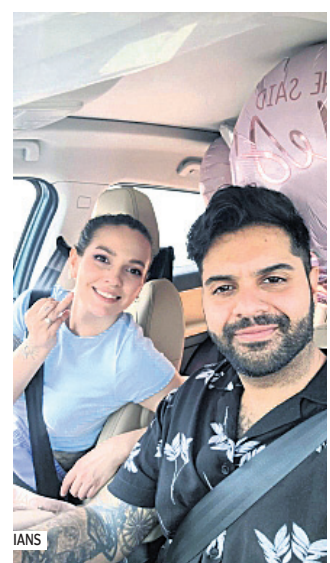


Members of Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) raise slogans during their protest over the arrival of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in front of Hyderabad House in New Delhi, Friday

LOVE WINS OVER WAR

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 25: Love transcends borders even in the time of war. This may sound like a cliché out of a romantic film's promo, but it did happen in the case of a Delhi High Court lawyer, Anubhav Bhasin, 33, who proposed to his Ukrainian girlfriend, Anna Horodetska, 29, as soon as she landed here, taking an agonisingly circuitous route from her home city Kyiv. Talking about their relationship, Anubhav said: "We have known each other for about two and a half years." Then came the second wave of Covid-19, and with it, another lockdown, yet Anubhav and Anna stayed in touch with each other. It was going according to plan till the war erupted in Ukraine. "When the war broke out February 24, Anna woke up to the sound of bombs," recalled Anubhav. "For the next three days she was in and out of bomb shelters that were close to her home. On the 27th morning she decided to move to Poland, so she packed a bag with warm clothes



and other essentials and found a cab to reach the station, from where she left with her dog and her mother." Continuing with his account of Anna's escape from war, Anubhav said: "She reached Lviv on the 27th night and stayed there overnight. On the 28th, Anna decided to take a bus to

Poland, but she learnt that there were people who had been waiting at the Polish border for more than 24 hours and not been able to get through. She finally found a bus going to the border with Slovakia and reached there around midnight, and crossed the border on foot after waiting for a couple hours." After entering Slovakia, Anna managed to find a minibus heading to Kraków, Poland, where stayed for a couple of weeks. "I had some friends there who helped her and provided her accommodation," Anubhav said. "Finally, she applied for a visa at the Indian embassy in Poland and when it was granted, she flew to India and I proposed to her at the airport." Now that Anna is in India, Anubhav says they are going to get married soon and then she will apply for Indian citizenship. As of now, she has a one-year visa. "We just need to go back to get the dog whenever the war gets over," Anubhav concluded. It may be a long time, though, before Anna gets to be reunited with her dog.

Bill tabled in LS to merge three MCDs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 25: A Bill to merge the three municipal corporations in the national capital into a single entity was introduced in the Lok Sabha Friday amid opposition claims that the move was beyond the legislative competence of Parliament. Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai introduced the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2022, dismissing the claims made by the opposition. Rai said Article 239AA gave Parliament the right to make laws with respect to any matter of Union Territory. RSP member N K Premachandran, Congress members Gaurav Gogoi and Manish Tewari, BSP member Ritesh Pandey opposed the introduction of the bill contending that Parliament lacked the legislative competence to amend the Bill. Premachandran said the Bill to trifurcate the Municipal Corporation of Delhi was passed by the Delhi Assembly and it was beyond the domain of Parliament to pass law to merge the civic bodies. Gogoi claimed that the move by



the Centre to merge the three municipal corporations into one through a law of Parliament was an attack on the federal structure of the constitution. He also questioned the rationale behind capping the number of seats in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi at 250, contending that the same should be decided after taking into account the population of the national capital. Pandey said that the Constitution granted powers to states to constitute municipal corporations. The Bill states that the 2011 trifurcation of the erstwhile Municipal Corporation of Delhi was "uneven" in terms of territorial divisions and revenue generating potential.

MATTER OF CONCERN Policy paralysis blamed for Delhi air pollution: Experts

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 25: With Delhi being adjudged the most polluted capital in the world for the fourth consecutive year in 2021, experts feel that the lack of systematic implementation of plans and policies to fight air pollution in the entire air shed has been keeping the problem alive. An air shed is the entire area over which the pollutants disperse due to meteorological and geographical factors. Air pollution levels (96.4 micrograms per cubic meter) in the capital were around 20 times above the WHO-prescribed safe limit of five micrograms per cubic meter. The reason why Delhi hasn't been able to improve its air quality all these years is the lack of a systematic and comprehensive policy implementation targeting absolute emission load reduction, Sunil Dahiya from the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air said. London and Beijing were more polluted than Delhi at one time but they improved their air quality with the systematic and coordinated implementation of policies, he said.



Despite transportation accounting for a large share in the overall emission load in Delhi, the government has shied away from capping the number of cars and setting a target to reduce the consumption of diesel and petrol. Though the Delhi government has introduced Delhi Electric Vehicles policy which aims at increasing the EV share in total vehicle sales to 25 per cent by 2024, vehicles plying in neighbouring areas also affect its air quality, Dahiya said. According to The Energy and Resources Institute, Delhi could reduce its PM2.5 concentrations by nearly 35 per cent by 2030 as compared to the 2019 emissions if efforts are made to manage pollution in the entire national capital region. Karthik Ganesan, a research fellow at Council on Energy, Environment and Water, said all industries in the national capital region are yet to switch to PNG, barring Delhi and that doesn't solve the problem. Also, public transport augmentation in Delhi has

not happened speedily. The authorities are constructing peripheral expressways but that doesn't take the fossil fuel-driven vehicles far from the city, he said. Another problem with Delhi is the multiplicity of agencies which hamper the implementation of plans and policies to curb air pollution, Ganesan rued. "The steps to reduce air pollution are all laid out in the city action plan. The authorities should now focus on their implementation," he added. Chandra Bhusan,

President and CEO of the International Forum for Environment, Sustainability & Technology, said the problem is that authorities have a very simplistic approach to deal with air pollution in India. Chandra Bhusan said the biggest step that authorities in India have taken to reduce pollution is providing LPG connection to every household. Biomass burning is the one common source responsible for a large percentage of air pollution in the country. Desertification is the second major factor for increased air pollution in Delhi over the last 15 years. We will have to restore large parcels of degraded land, restore our water bodies and plant trees, he said. Jai Dhar Gupta, founding member of Citizens Movement 'My Right to Breathe', said, "15-20 times the WHO safe level is alarming." What's more alarming is that we've known about it for years and chose to disregard it. The only explanation for those wondering why levels have moved up 15 per cent in a Covid year is that economic hardship has pushed the urban poor from LPG cylinders to using chulas with biomass.

of the day quote

The government has been taking up the matter of the return of Indian students with the Chinese authorities both in New Delhi and through our Embassy in China.

The Central government stands committed to buying whatever excess stocks of raw rice in Telangana as per the quality specified by the Food Corporation of India and as per the agreement...

According to information received from the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), in-situ measurements show the black carbon concentration over the Himalayan region is highly variable with very low values over the western Himalayas, moderate values over the eastern Himalayas and high values over the foothills of the Himalayas

SHORT TAKES

Delhi teen's body found inside bag New Delhi: A 17-year-old boy's body was found stuffed inside a travel bag Friday morning in Delhi's Mangolpuri area, an official said.

Hoax bomb threat triggers panic Gurugram: A hoax bomb threat made to the Medanta hospital in Gurugram's Sector 38 triggered panic which disturbed the operation of the facility.

One dead in Delhi fire New Delhi: A person was charred to death while another was injured after a fire broke out at a plastic factory in the national capital Friday, a Fire Department official said.

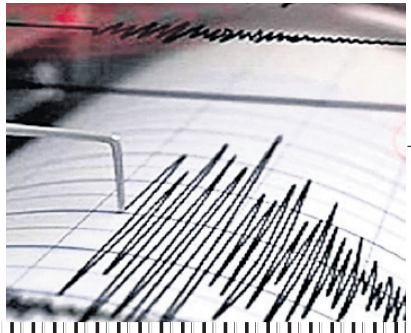
Noida builder held New Delhi: Delhi Police have arrested a notorious land mafia and interstate cheater from Maharashtra's Nashik, for duping people of ₹1,000 crore on the pretext of allotting flats in Uttar Pradesh's Noida, a senior police official said.



The current Parliament session has made it painfully clear that it is no longer possible for any minister in this government to make a substantial intervention without repeatedly invoking the virtues of the Prime Minister

BACK-TO-BACK TREMORS IN TN

In a span of less than two hours, as many as three slight earthquakes were experienced early Friday in Tamil Nadu's Dindigul region, according to the National Center for Seismology



Team Yogi takes oath

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 25: Yogi Adityanath was sworn in as the 33rd Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Friday in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union ministers and a galaxy of Chief Ministers.

Adityanath was administered the oath of office by Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel at the Ekana stadium here, with over 75,000 people from different walks of life, cheering him on.

Two deputy Chief Ministers were also sworn in along with the Chief Minister. They include Keshav Maurya -- who recently lost the election, and Brajesh Pathak. Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma in the previous government, has been dropped this time.

The new ministry sworn in Friday includes 52 ministers, including 18 in cabinet rank, and the government now has a new complexion. Five women ministers have been included.

Uttar Pradesh Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Swatantra Dev Singh has been inducted into the ministry while some senior leaders including Shrikant



Adityanath was administered the oath of office by Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel at the Ekana stadium with over 75,000 people from different walks of life, cheering him on

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Sharma, Siddhartha Nath Singh, Ashutosh Tandon, Mahendra Singh, Jai Pratap Singh, Satish Mahana and Mohsin Raza have been dropped. A much-awaited inclusion was that of former IAS officer Arvind Sharma who had quit his job in the PMO last year and was made MLC in Uttar Pradesh.

Asheesh Patel of Apna Dal and Sanjay Nishad of Nishad Party have also found a berth in the council of ministers as cabinet ministers. Daya Shankar Singh, husband of former minister Swati Singh, has also been made minister

of state. Former IPS officer Aseem Arun, who quit his job in January to join politics, has also been made minister.

However, former ED official Rajeshwar Singh, who won the election after quitting his job, has not been made minister. Among the surprise omissions in the government formation are rebel Congress MLA Aditi Singh who had contested the elections on a BJP ticket from Rae Bareilly.

Aparna Yadav, younger daughter-in-law of Mulayam Singh Yadav, who was also tipped to become a minister, was not on the list.

80-yr-old on wheelchair 'strip-searched' at airport

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, March 25: A Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) female constable was suspended after a complaint that a wheelchair bound elderly woman passenger, who had undergone a hip implant, was reportedly strip-searched at the Guwahati international airport during a security check, officials said Friday.

According to CISF sources, the woman constable has been suspended and an inquiry into the incident is underway. Thursday, taking to Twitter, the daughter of the 80-year-old Delhi-bound woman, Dolly Kikon, complained that her disabled mother was made to strip at the CISF security check at the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International (LGBI) Airport here.

The CISF also tweeted: "Security and dignity of needy passenger go hand in hand. CISF has already started enquiry in connection with the unfortunate incident at Guwahati airport. The concerned personnel has been suspended. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) CISF has spoken with the passenger."

In another tweet, Dolly said: "Met with Guwahati airport authorities and CISF officials to fol-



According to CISF sources, the woman constable has been suspended and an inquiry into the incident is underway

low up. The DIG CISF also reached out over the phone. They have assured me that the matter will be taken up. Thank you for promising to look into the case."

As per CISF sources, the woman constable had asked the female passenger to remove the clothing from her lower body as the metal detector beeped indicating metal on her body.

"As the metal detector beeped, the CISF constable requested the woman passenger to undergo thorough checking and show her the hip implant area to confirm the passenger's claim of having undergone a hip implant," a CISF officer said.

Physically-challenged can now apply for IPS, IRPFS, DANIPS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 25: The Supreme Court Friday permitted people with disabilities to apply for Indian Police Service (IPS), DANIPS and Indian Railway Protection Force Service (IRPFS) provisionally as their preferences in the civil services and asked them to submit their application forms in this regard to the UPSC by April 1.

The apex court passed the order while hearing a plea challenging the Centre's August 18, 2021 notification on the ground that it has granted a "blanket exemption" to all categories of posts under the IPS, Delhi, Daman and Diu, Dadar and Nagar Haveli, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep Police Service (DANIPS) and IRPFS from the purview of reservation required to be provided there under.

A bench of justices A M Khanwilkar and A S Oka was informed by Attorney General K K Venugopal that the government wants time for filing counter affidavit in the matter.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the bench that two-week time would be required for filing the affidavit. Senior advocate Arvind Datar, appearing for petitioner 'National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled', said the exams are over and some of these persons have cleared it.

Contending that they had to file their preferences by March 24 evening which was the last date, Datar said they want extension of time for this by a week or two since the selection process is already in progress.

He said the petitioner and similarly placed persons may be permitted to submit their application form to the UPSC and their claims can be considered subject to the outcome of the proceedings.



Members of Bihar's Anganwadi association raise slogans during a protest demanding a hike in their wages and regularisation of their jobs, in Patna

Ex-MLAs to get pension for one term: Punjab CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 25: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Friday said former MLAs will now get pension for only one term, doing away with the practice of drawing the benefit for each term served by them.

An MLA gets a pension of around ₹75,000 per month for one term. Thereafter, an additional 66 per cent of the pension amount is given for each subsequent term.

More than 250 former MLAs are getting pension at present. "Ex-MLAs in Punjab, even if they have won twice, five times or ten times, they will now get pension for one term only," said Mann in a video

message while adding that several MPs are also getting pension for remaining MLAs earlier.

The CM said money saved from it will be spent on the welfare of people. "Our political leaders, including MLAs, seek votes from you with folded hands by saying that give us a chance to serve you," Mann said addressing people. "But you will be surprised to know that several MLAs who won thrice, four times or five times and then after losing the elections or after not getting tickets for contesting the polls, get lakhs of rupees in pension per month," Mann said.

"Somebody gets ₹3.50 lakh and somebody gets ₹4.50 lakh and somebody gets ₹5.25 lakh as pension. It

Somebody gets Rs 3.50 lakh and somebody gets ₹4.50 lakh and somebody gets ₹5.25 lakh as pension. It puts a financial burden of crores of rupees on the exchequer



BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

Mann stated. Mann said he has given necessary directions to the officers concerned in this regard.

A few days ago, SAD patriarch Parkash Singh Badal, who is 11-time legislator, had said he will not accept pension as an ex-MLA. The nonagenarian had asked the Punjab government and the Vidhan Sabha speaker to divert his pension to some social work, "preferably to help some needy girl students in their education".

Had Badal decided not to forego the pension, he would have received more than ₹5 lakh per month as pension. Meanwhile, Congress MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira welcomed the decision.

"I welcome the decision of one

pension to ex-MLAs taken by @BhagwantMann particularly in view of the colossal debt of ₹3 Lac Cr on which we're paying an annual interest of ₹30 K. One pension is justified as lots of MLAs have virtually contributed their lifetime in politics," said Khaira in a tweet.

Congress MLA and former minister Pargat Singh too hailed the move. "I welcome the 'one MLA-one pension' decision of @BhagwantMann Govt. This will reduce the burden on Punjab's finances. As the main opposition, we will continue to play a constructive and responsible role. Punjab comes first to us," said the Jalandhar Cantt MLA.

Give us justice, Disha Salian's parents write to President

Satish Salian and Vasanti Salian, Disha's father and mother, say if they do not get justice, they will be left with no other alternative but to end their lives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 25: The parents of celebrity manager Disha Salian have written to President Ram Nath Kovind seeking action against Union Minister Narayan Rane, his MLA son Nitesh and others for allegedly spreading fake news about the circumstances of their daughter's death and defaming the family.

Satish Salian and Vasanti Salian, Disha's father and mother, also said if they did not get justice, they will be left with no other alternative but to end their lives. They also demanded that defamatory content about their daughter's

death be expunged from all media platforms.

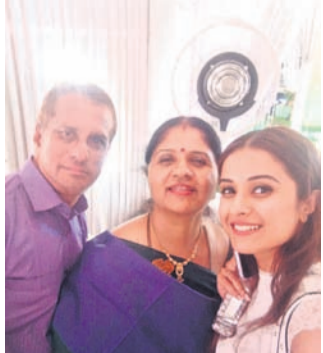
Disha Salian at one time was the manager of actor Sushant Singh Rajput. Satish and Vasanti Salian Wednesday wrote a letter to the President urging him to stop the 'harassment' by BJP leaders Narayan Rane and his son Nitesh Rane.

A criminal case has already been registered by Mumbai Police against the Ranesh for allegedly making defamatory remarks and spreading false information about Disha's death. Narayan Rane was also questioned by police in the case earlier this month.

Disha Salian (28) allegedly com-

mitted suicide by jumping from a high-rise building in suburban Malad June 8, 2020, six days before Rajput (34) was found hanging his apartment in Bandra. The Saliens, in the letter, said that after their daughter's death, some people who were active on social media started connecting the incident with the death of Rajput and started spreading "imaginary and factually incorrect information" on social media and news channels.

"Some politicians like Narayan Rane and Nitesh Rane jumped on the issue due to their rivalry with (Maharashtra Chief Minister) Uddhav Thackeray and (his son



and minister) Aaditya to settle their personal scores, and dragged us into their political battle and have made our life miser-

able," Disha's parents claimed in the letter.

"The Ranesh have no proof whatsoever and the facts are in our personal knowledge. We are well aware that they cannot give any proof, as they are liars and they are giving false excuses of giving proof to the CBI and not to the (Mumbai) police," they said.

The Saliens requested the President to issue directions to the authorities concerned to take appropriate steps to ensure that justice is done, adding that otherwise they will be left with no other alternative but to end their lives.

A case was registered against Union MSME minister Rane and

MLA Nitesh Rane at the Malvani police station here after the former, during a press conference on February 19, made certain remarks about Disha Salian's death. Disha's parents also wrote in the letter that because of the scandalous claims about the circumstances of their daughter's death, they fear stepping out of their house.

"We fear meeting new people. Even those we know have that look of suspicion towards us when we try to go out of our house and meet them accidentally. The trauma of losing our own daughter still haunts us but these people have not let us grieve properly," the letter said.

international

TALIBAN UNDER FIRE

In a joint statement, the Foreign Ministers of the UK, US, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, as well as the High Representative of the European Union, have condemned the decision of the Taliban over not reopening secondary and high schools in Afghanistan for girls, *Khaama Press* reported

CRISIS DEEPENS



300 killed in theatre attack

AGENCIES

Kyiv: About 300 people were killed in the Russian airstrike last week that blasted open a Mariupol theatre, Ukrainian authorities said Friday in what would make it the war's deadliest known attack on civilians yet.

In a vain attempt to protect the hundreds of people taking cover inside the theatre, "CHILDREN" in Russian had been printed in huge white letters on the ground in two places outside the grand, columned building to make it visible from the air.

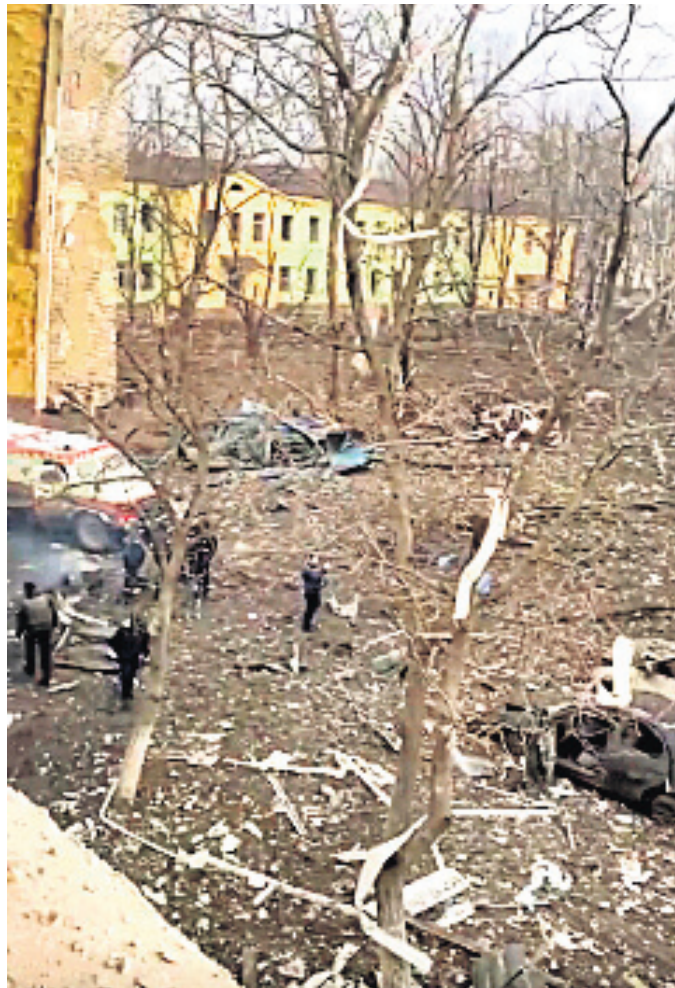
For days, the government in the besieged and ruined city of Mariupol was unable to give a casualty count for the March 16 attack. In announcing the death toll on its Telegram channel Friday, it cited eyewitnesses. But it was not immediately clear whether emergency workers had finished excavating the ruins of the Mariupol Drama Theatre or how witnesses arrived at the figure.

Still, the emerging picture is certain to fuel allegations Moscow has committed war crimes by killing civilians, whether deliberately or by indiscriminate fire. And it could increase pressure on NATO to step up military aid. The alliance has refused so far to supply warplanes or establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine for fear of getting into a war with Russia.

US President Joe Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said Friday the reaction to the theatre bombing was "just absolute shock, particularly given the fact that it was so clearly a civilian target".

He said it showed "a brazen disregard for the lives of innocent people". The scale of devastation in Mariupol, where bodies have been left unburied amid bomb craters and hollowed-out buildings, has made information difficult to obtain.

But soon after the attack, the



Bombing in Mariupol Drama Theatre

(PHOTO/IANIS)

RUSSIAN FORCES HALTED FOR WEEKS AT KYIV'S GATES
BIDEN TO ASSESS RESPONSE TO REFUGEES IN POLAND
CHINA'S SINOPEC HALTS DISCUSSION ON INVESTMENTS

Ukrainian Parliament's human rights commissioner said more than 1,300 people had taken shelter in the theatre, many of them because their homes had been de-

stroyed. The building had a basement bomb shelter, and some survivors did emerge from the rubble after the attack.

The reported death toll came a day after Biden and allied leaders promised that more military aid for Ukraine is on the way. But they stopped short of providing some of the heavy weaponry that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said is urgently needed. Zelenskyy has pleaded for planes, tanks and no-fly patrols over Ukraine.

US, EU ANNOUNCE NEW PARTNERSHIP

Brussels: The US and European Union Friday announced a new partnership to reduce the continent's reliance on Russian energy, a step top officials characterised as the start of a years-long initiative to further isolate Moscow after its invasion of Ukraine. US President Joe Biden asserted that Russian President Vladimir Putin uses energy to "coerce and manipulate his neighbours" and uses the profits from its sale to "drive his war machine". Biden said the partnership he announced jointly with a top European Union official would turn that dynamic on its head by reducing Europe's dependence on Russian energy sources, as well as the continent's demand for gas overall. The president said such a step was not "only the right thing to do from a moral standpoint" but "it's going to put us on a stronger strategic footing". Under the plan, the US and other nations will increase liquefied natural gas exports to Europe by 15 billion cubic metres this year. Even larger shipments would be delivered in the future.



HUNGER GRIPS UKRAINIAN CITIES

Kharkiv: As Russia relentlessly besieges and pummels Ukraine's cities, nearly anyone who can is trying to leave and those left behind face desperate food shortages in a country once known as the breadbasket for the world. For civilians unable to join the flood of refugees from Ukraine, the days of plenty in the country are becoming just a fading memory, as the war grinds into a second month. With Ukrainian soldiers battling Russia's invasion force to a near stalemate in many places and the president urging people to remain steadfast, the US and the European Union announced a move to further squeeze Russia: a new partnership to reduce Europe's reliance on Russian energy and slowly squeeze off the billions of dollars the Kremlin gets from sales of fossil fuels. Fidgeting with anticipation, a young girl in Kharkiv watched intently this week as a volunteer's knife cut through a giant slab of cheese, carving out thick slices — one for each hungry person waiting stoically in line. Hanna Spitsyna took charge of divvying up the delivery of food aid from the Ukrainian Red Cross, handing it out to her neighbors. Each got a lump of the cheese that was cut under the child's watchful gaze, dropped chunk by chunk into plastic bags that people in line held open like hungry mouths. "They brought us aid, brought us aid for the elderly women that stayed here," Spitsyna said. "All these people need diapers, swaddle blankets and food."



Russia is preparing to attack Poland: Envoy

Warsaw: Aggression by Russia against Poland or another European Union (EU) country is possible in the near future, said Andrii Deshchychtsia, the Ambassador of Kyiv in Warsaw. "Russia is preparing to attack Poland. Diplomatic missions, including the Russian Embassy in Warsaw, probably have this information. And they are covering their tracks," European Pravda quoted the envoy as saying. The Ambassador referred to the smoke over the Russian embassy in Warsaw. A similar smoke over the Kyiv embassy in Russia was noticed on the eve of the invasion

Half the population of Kharkiv has fled

Kharkiv: About half the population of the eastern city of Kharkiv has left, and food and other essentials are dwindling for those who stay behind. A line formed Thursday at an apartment block as neighbours waited for aid from the Red Cross. "Among those who stayed, there are people who can walk on their own, but many who cannot walk, the elderly," said Hanna Spitsyna, who distributed the food to the sound of explosions behind her. Kharkiv has been under siege by Russian forces since the start of the invasion, with relentless shelling that has forced people to sleep in metro stations and in basements. Ukraine's government said shelling on a group of people awaiting aid elsewhere in the city killed six people Thursday.

Ukraine, Russia conduct first prisoner swap

Kyiv: Ukraine and Russia have conducted the first prisoner swap since Moscow waged its war on Kiev February 24, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said here. Ten Ukrainian prisoners-of-war held by the Russian military were released in exchange for 10 Russian soldiers captured by Ukrainian forces. Xinhua news agency quoted Vereshchuk as saying in a Facebook post. Besides, Ukraine handed over 11 civilian Russian sailors, who were rescued from a sunken ship near Odessa to Russia in exchange for 19 Ukrainian civilian sailors, she added. "Under terms of exchange, the rescue ship itself will also be returned to Ukraine and will be sent to the port in Turkey."

'Evidence growing of Mariupol mass graves'

Geneva: The head of the UN human rights team in Ukraine said Friday that monitors had received more information about mass graves in the besieged port city of Mariupol, including one that appeared to hold 200 bodies. "We have got increasing information on mass graves that are there," Matilda Bogner told journalists by video link from Ukraine, saying some of the evidence came from satellite images. She did not elaborate further on the evidence, adding that it was not clear whether the dead were soldiers or civilians.

1,351 soldiers died in Ukraine, says Russia

New York: The deputy head of Russia's military general staff says that 1,351 Russian soldiers have died in Ukraine. Col.-Gen. Sergei Rudskoi also said Friday that 3,825 have been wounded. NATO estimated on Wednesday that 7,000 to 15,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in four weeks of war in Ukraine. The Russian figure did not appear to include the Moscow-backed separatists fighting in eastern Ukraine, and it was not clear whether the toll encompassed Russian forces not part of the Defence Ministry, such as the National Guard.

FOR A CHANGE



Activist Greta Thunberg takes part in a *Fridays For Future* school strike for climate and social justice march through Stockholm, Friday. Climate activists staged a tenth series of worldwide protests Friday to demand leaders take stronger action against global warming, with some linking their environmental message to calls for an end to the war in Ukraine. Climate activists staged a 10th series of worldwide protests Friday to demand that leaders take stronger action against global warming.

What made North Korea test giant new ICBM?

THE UNITED STATES ALSO IMPOSED FRESH SANCTIONS AGAINST FIVE ENTITIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN RUSSIA AND NORTH KOREA OVER TRANSFERRING SENSITIVE ITEMS TO THE NORTH'S MISSILE PROGRAMME

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul, March 25: In firing an almost cartoonishly massive intercontinental ballistic missile into space, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has turned back the clock to the "fire and fury" days of 2017 as he revives nuclear brinkmanship aimed at pressuring the US to accept his country as a nuclear power and remove crippling sanctions. Thursday's launch of the Hwasong-17 was North Korea's

most provocative weapons test since US President Joe Biden took office and underscores Kim's determination to continue building his military while diplomacy remains frozen. The North, however, may need more tests — including of nuclear bombs — in coming months as Kim tries to both perfect his technology and get a response from the Biden administration, which is distracted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and an intensifying rivalry with China.

Here's a closer look at Kim's new missile and what he may be up to next:
DOES SIZE OF MISSILE MATTER?

At around 25 metres (82 feet) long, the Hwasong-17 is by some estimates the world's largest road-mobile ballistic missile system.

North Korea revealed the missile during a military parade in October 2020, and Thursday's launch from an airport near the capital Pyongyang was its first full-range test. Kim could be seen in images released by his state media relishing the test's success as he walks past the missile wearing sunglasses and a black leather motorcycle



jacket. He leads military officials along the airport's runway in a scene reminiscent of a Hollywood action movie, at one point whipping his shades off to stare at the camera. North Korea last flew an ICBM in November 2017 when it tested the Hwasong-15. That was during a run of nuclear and missile tests that led to an exchange of insults and threats between Kim and then-US President Donald Trump, who said the North's threats against the US would be "met with fire and fury like the world has never seen".

While Hwasong-15 demonstrated the potential to reach targets in the American homeland, the latest test displayed a missile that could possibly travel even farther.

The Hwasong-17, which was fired at a high angle to avoid the territorial waters of neighbours, reached a maximum altitude of 6,248 kilometres (3,880 miles) and travelled 1,090 kilometres (680 miles) during a 67-minute flight before landing in waters between North Korea and Japan, according to North Korea's state media.

Extending its ICBM range is crucial for North Korea as it tries to build a more credible nuclear threat to target the US, said Lee Choon Geun, an honorary research fellow at South Korea's Science and Technology Policy Institute.

To strike the US mainland, North Korea's previous ICBMs would have had to pass Alaska, where

the US deploys a larger number of missile interception systems. **WILL THE WARHEAD SURVIVE?**

North Korea's development of a larger ICBM could be a reflection of a desire to eventually arm it with multiple nuclear warheads to improve its chances of defeating missile defences. It, however, may take years and major technological advancements to perfect such designs. It also remains unclear after Thursday's launch whether the North has solved the problem of ensuring that its ICBM warheads can withstand the harsh conditions of atmospheric reentry.

IS A NUKE TEST COMING?

North Korea is showing signs that it may be restoring tunnels at its nuclear testing ground that it detonated in 2018, as Kim tried to leverage his nukes for badly needed economic benefits from the US. Kim held his first summit with Trump weeks later.

The diplomacy derailed after their second meeting in February 2019, when the Americans rejected the North's demands for major sanctions relief in exchange for a limited surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

CATASTROPHE IN PALERMO

European Champions Italy to miss World Cup again after loss to minnows North Macedonia at home

Portugal move closer to World Cup with win



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Porto (Portugal), March 25: The Portugal fans at the Estadio do Dragao looked stunned when the referee returned from the video review booth and pointed to the penalty spot. Where they about to witness another late collapse at the national team's hopes of making it to the World Cup?

The 85th-minute penalty gave Turkey a chance for an equalizer after Portugal had opened a two-goal lead in their European qualifying play-off semifinal. But Burak Yilmaz's spot-kick sailed over the crossbar, letting Portugal off the hook.

The hosts went on to score again in stoppage time for a 3-1 victory Thursday that moved Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal a step closer to the World Cup.

It was a 90th-minute goal against Serbia in November in Lisbon that relegated Portugal to the qualifying play-offs to begin with, having blown a chance to finish as group winner.

Ronaldo's hopes of reaching a 10th straight major tournament will now come down to a winner-takes-all game against North Macedonia, which earned a stunning 1-0 win at Italy to end the European Champion's hopes of making it to the World Cup. The game against North Macedonia will be Tuesday in Portugal.

Otávio opened the scoring in the 15th off the rebound of a shot by Bernardo Silva onto the post, and Diogo Jota added to the lead with a header in the 42nd after an assist by Otávio.

Yilmaz pulled Turkey close with a goal from inside the area in the 65th. Portugal sealed the victory with substitute Matheus Nunes scoring on a breakaway four minutes into stoppage time.

Palermo, March 25: European champion Italy will miss the World Cup... Again. The unthinkable happened here Thursday as the Azzurri were beaten 0-1 by North Macedonia following a last-gasp goal by Aleksandar Trajkovski in their play-off semifinal.

Italy had 32 shots on goal, compared to just four for their opponent. But it was Trajkovski's effort from

outside the area as defenders closed in around him that made the difference.

It was North Macedonia's only real opportunity after a completely dominant performance by Italy, which missed a number of chances and had several others saved by visiting goalkeeper Stole Dimitrievski.

But, just like five years ago, at the final whistle the Italy players fell to the ground in disbelief and disappointment — with several of them in tears — as the opposition celebrated wildly.

Italy also failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup after losing to Sweden in a two-legged play-off the previous November. Missing two straight World Cups is an unprecedented low point for the four-time champion, especially just months after winning Euro 2020.

But Roberto Mancini, who took over as Italy coach after the last qual-

ifying failure, said on Thursday that the disappointment "was too great to talk about the future."

"I feel that just as last July was the best thing I experienced at a professional level, this is the greatest disappointment," Mancini added. "Soccer is like that, sometimes incredible things happen."

North Macedonia will play Portugal Tuesday for a spot in the tournament in Qatar after Cristiano Ronaldo's side beat Turkey 3-1. Euro 2020 is the only major tournament North Macedonia has qualified for.

Mancini was missing a number of players that helped Italy win the European Championship last summer and had to field a makeshift defence, but it was barely troubled by North Macedonia until the very end.

Italy got off to an aggressive start but struggled to find a way past the wall of red shirts. The Azzurri were gifted a great chance in the 30th minute after a horrendous kick from the North Macedonia goalkeeper left Domenico Berardi with an open goal but he scuffed his shot and Dimitrievski got back in time to make the save.

Dimitrievski did better moments later when he fingertipped Ciro

I feel that just as last July (Euro 2020) was the best thing I experienced at a professional level, this is the greatest disappointment. Soccer is like that, sometimes incredible things happen

ROBERTO MANCINI | ITALY HEAD COACH

Immobile's angled shot over the bar. Italy was getting closer and Dimitrievski had to make another save, this time to palm Lorenzo Insigne's effort around the post.

North Macedonia had its first attempt on goal on the stroke of half-time when Enis Bardi threaded a ball through for Trajkovski but his effort was straight at Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Berardi almost atoned for his first-half error early in the second period but saw one attempt well saved by Dimitrievski and curled another just past the left post.

Italy was laying siege to the goal but saw everything charged down by North Macedonia. And it was made to pay for its profligacy in stoppage time as Trajkovski fired a low shot into the bottom left corner from 25 yards, leaving Mancini looking stunned on the sideline.



Cristiano Ronaldo hugs his teammates congratulating them after their win



URUGUAY, ECUADOR BOOK WC BERTHS

Sao Paulo: Uruguay and Ecuador have secured their spots at FIFA World Cup in Qatar, joining Brazil and Argentina from South America. The third-place Ecuadorians lost 1-3 at Paraguay Thursday, but they achieved one of the four direct spots after the Uruguayans, in fourth position, beat Peru 1-0 in Montevideo, a result that also allowed them to book their flights to Qatar. Ecuador and Uruguay reached 25 points on the table and can no longer be overtaken by other teams. Brazil and Argentina had earlier secured two of the region's direct spots. Brazil humbled Chile 4-0. Neymar scored from the spot in the 44th minute and two minutes later assisted Vinicius Jr. to score his first goal for the national team. Philippe Coutinho then made it 3-0 in the 72 minute from the spot. In added time, substitute Richarlison scored his with a crossed shot.

REACTIONS

JORGINHO: We played good football, we won the European Championship last summer, but unfortunately in the last few games we made small errors and were unable to recover from them. They made the difference. It hurts when I think about it, because I do still think about it and it will haunt me for the rest of my life. Stepping up there twice and not being able to help your team and your country is something that I will carry with me forever, and it weighs on me. I'll be honest, I am still incredulous

GEORGIO CHIellini: We weren't presumptuous. We made mistakes from September until today and we paid them. I am proud of this team, it is obvious that we are disappointed and destroyed. We have to start again. A large void is now within us and we hope it can give us the strength to go forward in future. I hope it will still be with this coach, who has given so much to the Nazionale

Wales, S Korea secure victories

LONDON: Gareth Bale and Son Heung-min were stars for their respective sides as Wales and South Korea in their World Cup qualifying matches, Thursday. Bale scored two brilliant goals, including one from a direct free-kick, in a vintage individual performance to take Wales a step closer to qualifying for their first World Cup since 1958 with victory over Austria in their play-off semifinal. They beat Austria 2-1. In Seoul, Son came through with the match's first goal in the first-half injury time, and Kim Young-gwon locked down the 2-0 victory over Iran with his 63rd-minute goal.

England fans mock Italy

LONDON: Fans of England have taken to social media to poke fun at Italy after they missed out on a second successive World Cup by losing 0-1 at home to North Macedonia in their play-off semifinal. Some fans referred to Italy's inability to qualify for the World Cup as 'an incredible disaster', while Gary Lineker described their omission as an 'almighty and devastating fall'. Others sought revenge after the time Italian talisman Leonardo Bonucci goaded England fans by screaming 'It's coming Rome!' into a TV camera in the aftermath of his country's famous penalty shootout triumph in the Euro 2020 final at Wembley.

CR7 warns teammates of complacency

Lisbon: Cristiano Ronaldo has warned his Portugal teammates to continue 'respecting the opponent', knowing that North Macedonia stand in their way of a spot at the World Cup. The Manchester United star has sent a defiant message to his team to remind them that 'nothing is won, nothing is achieved' yet. In an Instagram post, Ronaldo wrote: 'The first step has been taken towards our great objective, towards the 2022 World Cup. Nothing is won, nothing is achieved. We have to continue to work in a serious and focused way, respecting the opponent but always believing in our abilities. Power Portugal! Go to Qatar!'

ITALIAN MEDIA LEFT SHELL-SHOCKED

Italian newspapers were left in dismay following their side's shock defeat by North Macedonia that dumped them out of the World Cup play-offs

There was an outpouring of grief among the popular Italian outlets, with **Tuttosport** leading with a headline of: 'Noooooo!!!', underneath an image of Giorgio Chiellini confronting goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

La Gazzetta dello Sport led with the same image with the headline reading: 'Out of the World Cup', while claiming under fire boss Roberto Mancini would have to think about resignation from his post.

Front page of **'Corriere dello Sport'** showed Chelsea star Jorginho with his face buried inside his match shirt alongside Donnarumma with a headline reading 'To Hell'. The paper also reflects on an 'elimination shock' and Mancini's 'immense disappointment' but that 'for now, he remains' in charge.

Corriere dello Sport ALL'INFERNO

NEWS IN BRIEF

Osaka scripts win

MIAMI GARDENS: Two days, two wins and making it look easy. Naomi Osaka sure seems like herself again. The former World No.1 is through to the third round at the Miami Open, easily handling 13th-seeded Angelique Kerber of Germany 6-2, 6-3 Thursday. A stunning series of results headlined by Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu defeating top-seeded Aryna Sabalenka 6-4, 6-4. Also gone: No.3 seed Anett Kontaveit. She lost to Ann Li, a 21-year-old American who got her first win over a top-10 opponent — a 6-0, 3-6, 6-4 triumph. The rest of the ousted women's seeds are No.6 Karolina Pliskova, No.11 Emma Raducanu, No.15 Elena Svitolina, No. 18 Leylah Fernandez, No.19 Tamara Zidansek.

Sindhu, Prannoy in Swiss Open semifinals

BASEL: Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and HS Prannoy stormed into the semifinals of the Swiss Open badminton tournament with straight-game victories in their respective women and men singles events here Friday. While Sindhu, seeded second in the tournament, made short work of fifth seed Michelle Li of Canada 21-10, 21-19 in 36 minutes, Prannoy beat compatriot and former Commonwealth Games gold medallist Parupalli Kashyap 21-16, 21-16 in a quarterfinal match that lasted 43 minutes. Former world champion Sindhu will meet unseeded Supanida Katethong of Thailand in the semifinals Saturday. Prannoy, on the other hand, faces the winner of the match between Sameer Verma and Anthony Sinisuka Ginting of Indonesia.

Australia beat Pakistan, clinch series 1-0

LAHORE: Pakistan failed Friday to hold out in the last session of the third and final cricket test which Australia won by 115 runs to clinch the series 1-0. The hosts were dismissed for 235 in their second innings on a worn-out wicket as Australia enjoyed a successful end to its first test series in Pakistan since 1998. Resuming on 73/0, and entering the final session at 190-5, Pakistan collapsed against veteran off-spinner Nathan Lyon, who got plenty of turn and bounce from a fifth-day wicket and finished with 5/83 from 37 overs.

IPL returns home bigger than ever

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 25: Indian cricket's crown jewel, the IPL, is back home: bigger, better and longer. It will be the first time since 2011 that 10 teams fighting it out for the most coveted T20 trophy in world cricket.

Two new entrants, Lucknow Supergiants and Gujarat Titans, fetching a combined price of approximately USD 1.7 billion shows that brand IPL keeps getting bigger. It took 14 years but the league has now well and truly gone global. The owners of the iconic Manchester United also wanted a slice of the IPL pie but lost to the RPSG Group and Britain-based CVC group on the bidding table.

With the COVID situation under control in the country, the board's top-brass can breathe easy and after a two year gap, IPL is set to be held in India in its entirety with at least 25 percent capacity of crowd allowed in stadiums this season.

The number of games have been increased to 74 from 60 with the addition of new teams, extending the IPL window to over two months.

All teams however will play 14 games each like in the past but will a longer tournament impact the intensity and quality of cricket, only time will tell.

The board has learnt from the harsh lessons of the 2021 edition when the tournament had to be suspended midway due to the raging pandemic and could only be completed in the UAE four months later.

No air travel will be required this season with all the league games to be organised in four venues in Maharashtra (three Mumbai and one in Pune).

For curators, maintaining the trueness of pitches over two months will be a challenge but at least the half of the tournament is set to be a high-scoring affair: One can expect more bounce on the red soil pitches of Wankhede, CCI and D Y Patil while the black soil surface in Pune is expected to offer more turn.

With Supergiants and Titans building their teams from scratch and the existing franchises having to release a chunk of their players before the mega auction, the 2022 edition can well be one of the most competitive in tournament history.

Ahead of the World Cup to be played in Australia later this year, the IPL will also decided fate of a few Indian players.

TODAY'S MATCH

CSK v KKR

Time: 07:30 pm

TELECAST: Star Sports channels & Hotstar