



FRANK ADMISSION

US-born Indian film actress Nargis Fakhri reveals why she took a break from acting a few years ago

LEISURE P2



UKR REBELS MAY JOIN RUSSIA

The head of Ukraine's Luhansk separatist region said it may hold a referendum on becoming part of Russia

INTERNATIONAL P10



EVES OUT OF WC

Indian eves bow out of Women's World Cup after three-wicket loss to South Africa in Christchurch

SPORTS P12

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India test-fires two missiles

BALASORE: India Sunday successfully test-fired two Indian Army-version Medium Range Surface to Air Missiles (MRSAMs) from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur in Odisha. The flight tests were carried out as part of live-firing trials against high-speed aerial targets, sources in the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) said, adding that the missiles intercepted the targets and destroyed those completely, registering direct hits at both the ranges. The first missile hit a medium-altitude long-range target and the second a low-altitude short-range one.



Nitish Kumar attacked near Patna



PATNA: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was Sunday assaulted by an unidentified person near Patna, in an incident that has sent shock waves across Bihar. Officials were tight-lipped about the incident though highly placed sources said it took place in Bakhtiyarpur where Kumar was meeting his old associates. The CM, who has spent his early childhood in Bakhtiyarpur, was paying floral tributes to the statue of a freedom fighter from the area. CCTV footage shows the assailant, in his late 20s or early 30s, coming from behind and landing a blow on the septuagenarian's face.

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No let-up in fuel price hike

BHUBANESWAR: Petrol price Sunday was hiked by 54 paise a litre and diesel by 59 paise in Bhubaneswar. Rates have been increased across the country and

CITY FUEL PRICES

PETROL	₹105.71/litre
DIESEL	₹95.57/litre

vary from state to state depending upon the incidence of local taxation. This is the fifth increase in prices since the ending of a four-and-half-month long hiatus in rate revision March 22. On all the previous four occasions, prices had been increased by 80 paise a litre - the steepest single-day rise since the daily price revision was introduced in June 2017. In all, petrol prices have gone up by ₹3.70 per litre and diesel by ₹3.75 in six days.



HITTING WHERE IT HURTS: Firefighters work at the site in the aftermath of the first strike that involved Russian rockets that hit an oil facility in an industrial area in the northeastern outskirts of Lviv, Ukraine, Sunday. Ukrainian Interior Ministry adviser Vadym Denysenko said that Russia has started destroying Ukrainian fuel and food storage centres, meaning the government would have to disperse stocks of both in the near future.

SHARP SPIKE IN JUMBO DEATHS

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 27: As many as 1,356 elephants have died due to various reasons in Odisha since 2000-01. While only 20 elephant deaths were reported in 2000-01, the death toll reached 77 in 2020-21. And this financial year, at least 42 jumbo deaths were reported till October.

According to data provided by the office of the Chief Wildlife Warden of Odisha in response to a RTI query, the highest number of elephant deaths (93) took place in 2018-19, followed by 86 in 2015-16 and 83 in 2010-11. Similarly, 82 jumbos died in 2012-13 and also in 2019-20.

As many as 136 pachyderms were killed by poachers, 19 due to poisoning, 33 were hit by trains, six died in road mishaps and 204 died in other accidents. As many as 206 jumbos died due to electrocution,

ALARMING FIGURES

136 killed by poachers
19 died due to poisoning
33 hit by trains

206 ELECTROCUTED

of which 106 were killed deliberately while 34 died of natural causes.

The wildlife office doesn't know the reason for the deaths of another 176 elephants as the cases were reported after the carcasses had putrefied. The rest succumbed to infections - 51 died of anthrax, seven of herpes and 334 of other diseases.

The state had 1,976 elephants, according to the last census conducted in 2017.

Work with more commitment, CM tells officers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 27: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday asked senior government officers to work with more commitment for the development and progress of the state.

Patnaik has given this instructions to the officials after his party, the BJD, registered landslide victory in the recently-concluded panchayat polls and also in the urban local body polls, whose results were declared Saturday.

In a goodwill gesture, senior state government officers, including Chief Secretary SC Mohapatra and DGP Sunil Kumar Bansal and members of a number of service associations met the Chief Minister and congratulated him for the spectacular success in both urban and rural polls.

2-DAY BHARAT BANDH

Joint forum of central trade unions' demands include scrapping of the proposed changes in labour laws, privatisation of any form and the national monetisation pipeline

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 27: Some of the essential services related to banking, transportation, railways and electricity are likely to be impacted during a two-day nationwide strike called by a joint forum of central trade unions beginning Monday.

Talking to PTI, All India Trade Union Congress General Secretary Amarjeet Kaur said, "We are expecting participation of over 20 crore formal and informal workers with mass mobilisation of workers across the country during the strike March 28 and 29 to protest against government policies." She said that the strike is expected to hit the rural parts also, where informal workers of farming and other sectors will join the protest.

The strike notices were given by workers' unions of various sectors such as coal, steel, oil, telecom, postal, income tax,



copper, banks and insurance.

Unions in railways and defence sector will carry out mass mobilisation in support of the strike at several places, the joint forum said. The unions' demands include scrapping of the proposed changes in labour laws, privatisation of any form and the national monetisation pipeline. Increased allocation of wages under MNREGA and regularisation of contract workers are also part of their demands.

Workers of roadways, transport and electricity departments have also decided to join the strike in spite of the impending threat of ESMA (Essential Services Maintenance Act) which is likely to be imposed in Haryana and Chandigarh,

Petrol pumps indecisive

BHUBANESWAR: In response to the two-day bandh call given by central trade unions against the Centre's anti-people measures and price spiral of petroleum products, Utkal Petroleum Dealer's Association (UPDA) held an emergency meeting and discussed the issue, Sunday. Secretary of UPDA, Sanjay Lath said a decision will be taken on the proposal of closing petrol pumps depending on the situation. "If the situation remains normal in the forenoon all petrol pumps and filling stations will be opened in afternoon. We will support the bandh but our businesses will continue in the larger interest of the consumers," said Lath.

the joint forum said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the power ministry Sunday advised all state-run utilities and other agencies to be on high alert and ensure round-the-clock electricity supply and stability of the national grid.

Bank employees' unions said they will support the strike. A number of public sector banks, including country's largest lender SBI, have said that their services may get impacted to a limited extent due to the strike.

SBI said it has made necessary arrangements to ensure normal functioning in its branches and offices during the strike.

'Girls targeted over hijab'

AGENCIES

Mumbai, March 27: Miss Universe 2021 Harnaaz Sandhu has appealed to the society to stop targeting girls, including on the issue of hijab, saying "Let them live the way they choose to."

A three-judge bench of the Karnataka High Court recently dismissed the petitions which sought permission to wear hijab in classrooms of educational institutions saying headscarf is not an essential religious practice and uniform dress rule should be followed in educational institutions where it has been prescribed. In a clip that has gone viral on

social media, a reporter asked Sandhu about her views on the issue around hijab. The video is part of an event held here March 17 in the honour of the Miss Universe 2021's homecoming.

Before she responded to the query, the organiser intervened and asked the reporter to abstain from asking any political questions.

The reporter responded, saying "Let Harnaaz say the same things." The Chandigarh-based model then expressed her anguish over how often girls are being targeted. "Honestly, why do you always target girls? Even now you are targeting me. Like, even on the issue of hijab the girls are being targeted. Let them (girls) live the way they choose to, let her reach her destination, let her fly, those are her wings, don't cut them, if you must (cut someone's wings) cut your own," Sandhu said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We will be a great couple. We both hate JNU, journalists, academicians,...

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	38.4°C	37.4°C
MIN	25.9°C	25.8°C
Humidity	81%	83%
Rainfall	NIL	NIL
Forecast	Partly cloudy sky	

OrissaPOST

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Chief Secretary, Govt. of Odisha

Inaugurator
Shri Naveen Patnaik
Hon'ble CM, Odisha

Chief Speaker
Shri Naveen Jindal
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HILLARY CLINTON CAST IN INTO THE WOODS

Former First Lady, US secretary of state and senator, Hillary Clinton has joined the cast of the upcoming production of the Stephen Sondheim stage musical *Into the Woods* at the Arkansas Repertory Theater, set to open in Little Rock next month, reports *Entertainment Weekly*.

BRITNEY SPEARS SAYS EUPHORIA MADE HER ANXIETY GO AWAY

Pop star Britney Spears is a fan of the hit high school drama *Euphoria* and claimed that watching it was like meditation. "Watching this and being entertained by these crazy plots I suddenly felt all my anxiety go away," she said.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Boy! Are you ambitious today or what! You plan meticulously and perform impeccably. However, you will progress at snail's pace. But don't lose heart, as Ganesh shows his blessings on you, dear one.

TAURUS
You are going to be exceptionally intense in the way you communicate your emotions and feelings. You will, no doubt, succeed in making the impact, the impression you are striving to make, says Ganesh. You will be so involved in this that you are likely to get caught in the mysterious and magical web of relationships.

GEMINI
You may come up with a precise understanding of others today, says Ganesh. You will please your sweetheart with both your presence and presents. You will browse through dozens of showrooms for that perfect, and expensive, gift for your beloved.

CANCER
Today, you and your soul mate will be rolling in the hay; there will be little time or inclination to do anything else. In fact, you will show such single-minded devotion to the act of rolling as if the future of the world lies in the haystack.

LEO
Try and put on some protective gear today – maybe a suit of armour should do fine, says Ganesh. For, you may find some need for it on this day of mixed fortunes as you miss out the expected and come face-to-face with the unexpected. Manage through the day somehow, since the day's distress will eventually give way to an evening of ecstasy and a night of pleasant surprises, portends Ganesh.

VIRGO
Today, you will be aspire to be a master of your own destiny. You have the ability to see through the façade that people put up to shield their true self. You will choose your company wisely and plan for success. Polish your presentation skills and you may need to work an extra bit to get your ideas approved, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Ganesh feels the day will be beneficial for you when it comes to transactions with the government. But you already expect that. It is more than likely that public servants will have encouraging and optimistic achievements lined up for their efforts. Your expertise may be put to test and it is your experience that will come in handy.

SCORPIO
Ganesh feels that you may be confronted with vital decisions at work. You will need to trust the opinions of your close friends and peers so that you may take informed decisions. Keep your mind away from negative thoughts and delegate responsibilities accordingly.

SAGITTARIUS
It is not your nature to warm the bench, but you will wake up feeling lazy and laid-back today, says Ganesh. This may be due to the fatigue of some recent endeavours. For a change, you will try and delegate your work and responsibility to those around you.

CAPRICORN
Plans for expanding business may require you to take risks, leaving you in a dilemma on more than one occasion. In such desperate circumstances, following your instincts can lead you to success, advises Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
The cupid may strike you today. You don't want make a wrong first impression, so wear something nice and be presentable all the time. Professionally, the day will be favourable for you to make some important decisions.

PISCES
An auspicious time for starting new projects, today will see you make substantial investments in your future. Your family is the foundation of your success, and keeping that in mind will provide you with some vital insights.

Nargis reveals why she took a break from films

Mumbai: US-born Indian film actress Nargis Fakhri has opened up on why she had taken a break from acting a few years ago. At that time, she had multiple releases but the actress said she still decided to take that break as she did not feel happy.

In a recent conversation, Nargis said, "Somewhere down the line, I realised that I was overworked and stressed. I missed my family and friends. I remember that 2016-2017 was a period of realisation for me. I felt that I wasn't doing things that made me happy. I did films back-to-back and thought there was just too much happening, and I needed to stop. I felt the need to pause to balance my mind and

body. And that's when I took the step."

The actress is back in India and will soon hit the big screen with a South movie almost after two years. After making her debut with the Ranbir Kapoor starrer *Rockstar*, she later appeared in films like *Madras Cafe*, *Main Tera Hero*, and a Hollywood film *Spy*.

Nargis was last seen in a supporting role in the 2020 OTT film *Torbaaz*, which starred Sanjay Dutt and Rahul Dev. She is currently filming the Telugu film *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* co-starring Pawan Kalyan.

AGENCIES

When Amir thought of quitting films

Mumbai: Amir Khan Saturday said there was a brief period in his career during the last two years when he thought of quitting films as it was affecting his personal life.

"When I became an actor, I thought to myself that my family is there with me only and I took them for granted and I went on a journey to win the hearts of the audience. When you are starting out, you do tend to work a lot harder, but then I was working like this for 30-35 years. I was selfish, I was thinking about myself. I have realised this now at the age of 56-57," said

Khan. He further said the moment he had this realisation, he was very angry and that anger came out towards cinema.

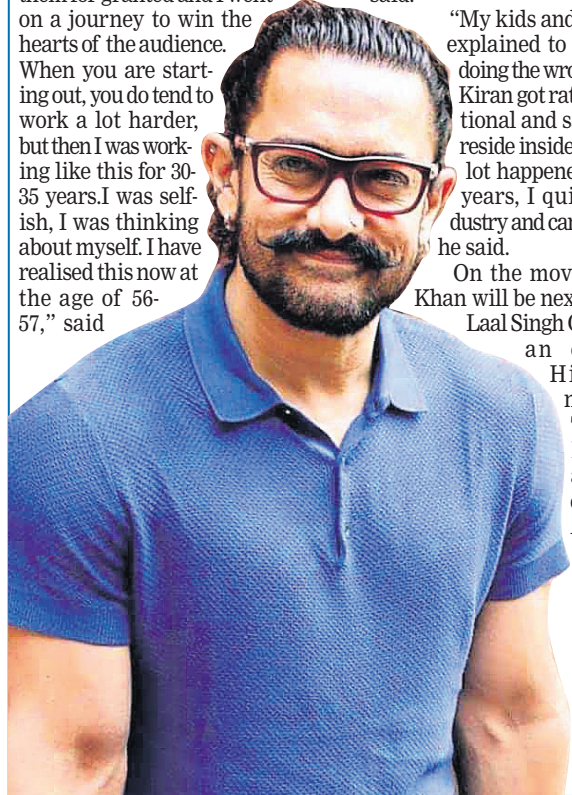
"I felt it (cinema) took me away from my family. I told my family I will quit, not act, produce films. My family was shocked," Khan said.

"My kids and Kiran ji explained to me I am doing the wrong thing. Kiran got rather emotional and said films reside inside me. So, a lot happened in two years, I quit the industry and came back," he said.

On the movie front, Khan will be next seen in *Laal Singh Chaddha*, an official

Hindi remake of Tom Hanks' acclaimed *Forrest Gump*.

AGENCIES



Theatre makes you push boundaries: Ayushmann

Mumbai: Ayushmann Khurrana feels street theatre played an invaluable hand in shaping the artiste he is today. The *Bala* actor did theatre for five years. He was also the founding member of two active theatre groups in Chandigarh.

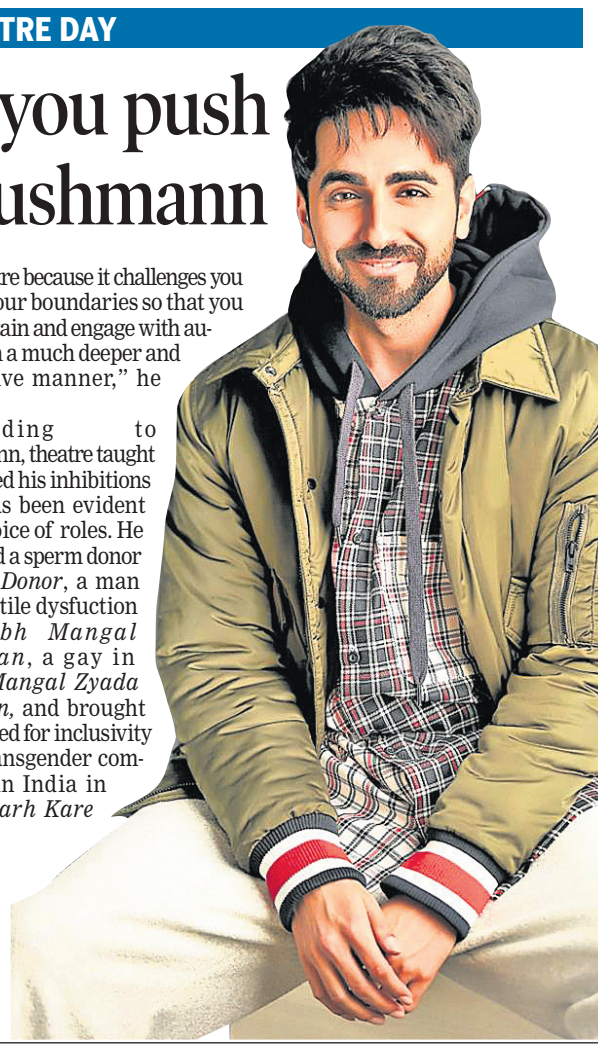
On World Theatre Day Sunday, Ayushmann says, "My tryst with acting started with street theatre and it made me hugely confident about the fact that I could entertain people with my skills. Street theatre actually set my foundation to become a fearless performer."

"Theatre, to me, can be introspective, critical about society and what we are becoming and also serve as a gateway to fantasise about a world that doesn't exist. I have learnt so much

from theatre because it challenges you to push your boundaries so that you can entertain and engage with audiences in a much deeper and interactive manner," he adds.

According to Ayushmann, theatre taught him to shed his inhibitions which has been evident in his choice of roles. He has played a sperm donor in *Vicky Donor*, a man with erectile dysfunction in *Shubh Mangal Savdhaan*, and brought out the need for inclusivity of the transgender community in India in *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*.

AGENCIES



New stills from Doctor Strange 2 out

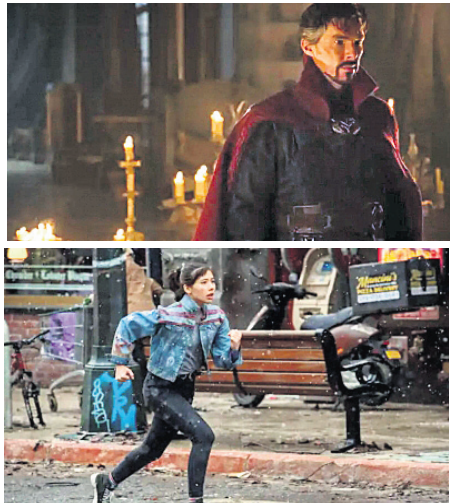
Los Angeles: Four new stills from the upcoming superhero movie *Doctor Strange In The Multiverse Of Madness* (Doctor Strange 2) were dropped by Marvel Entertainment recently.

The images in question are of the characters Strange, along with Wanda, Wong, and MCU newcomer America Chavez, reports *Deadline*.

As per agency, *Doctor Strange In The Multiverse Of Madness*, directed by Sam Raimi, written by Michael Waldron, promises the lean into horror element as the Sorcerer Supreme aims to clean up the multiverse mess he made in *Spiderman: No Way Home*.

The film stars Benedict Cumberbatch alongside Elizabeth Olsen, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Benedict Wong, Xochitl Gomez, Michael Stuhlbarg, and Rachel McAdams. The trailer shows Doctor Strange taking help from Wanda Maximoff played by Olsen as she seeks out as she's retreated from the world in the wake of her calamities with Westview on WandaVision.

The film, which was initially set for a debut March 25, will now kick off summer 2022 May 6. The move will push Taika Waititi's *Thor: Love and Thunder* from that summer kickoff date to July 8, 2022. The only other movie opening against *Doctor Strange 2* on its day or release



is Focus Features Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris', which stars Lesley Manville.

Thor: Love & Thunder looks poised to enjoy a solo release as no rival studio event films are currently dated against the Marvel film's its new date.

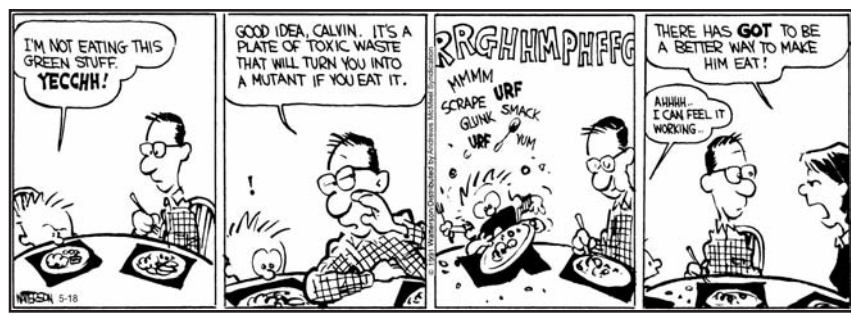
IANS

FUN post

PEANUTS



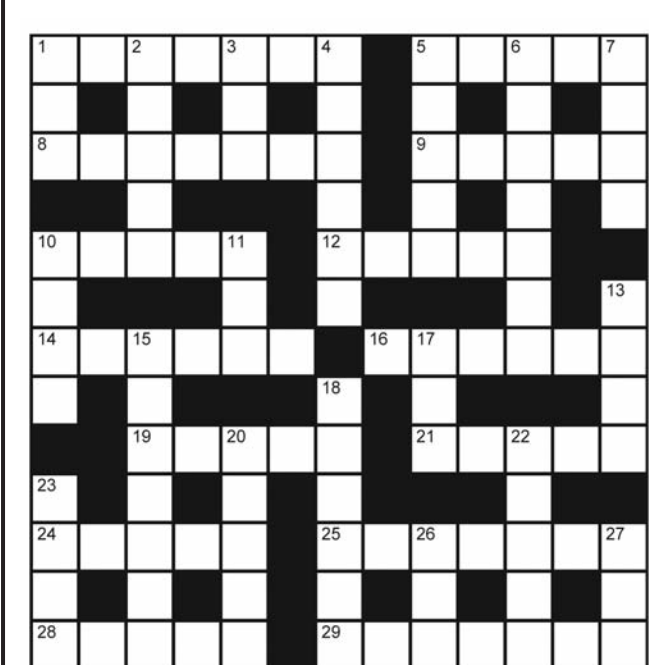
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



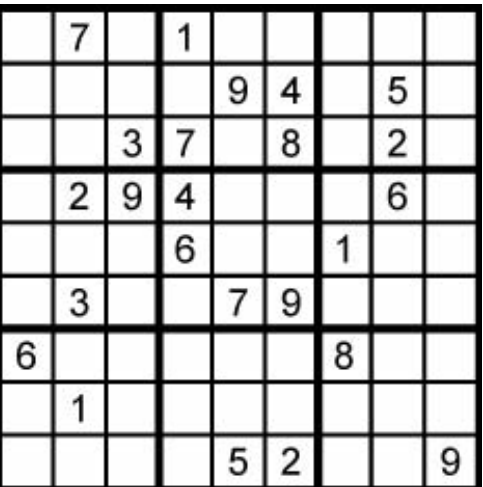
CROSSWORD



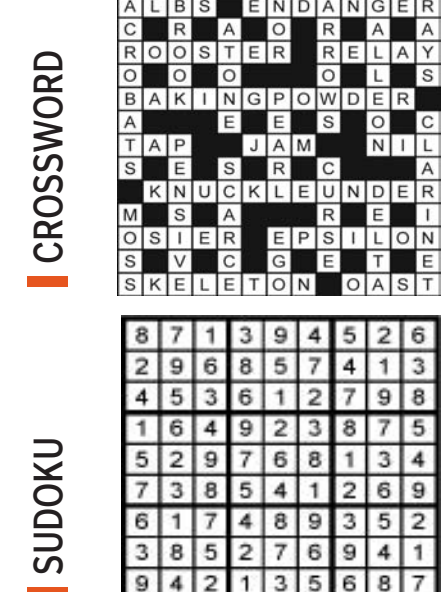
- Across**
- 1 Frog starter
 - 5 Panorama
 - 8 Risk taker
 - 9 Liveliness
 - 10 Lock site
 - 12 Close-knit group
 - 14 Mollycoddle
 - 16 Sheen
 - 19 Debonair
 - 21 Ludicrous
 - 24 Parting word, in France
- Down**
- 25 Pertinent
 - 28 Pig out
 - 29 Like some estates
 - 10 Duplicate
 - 11 Caustic chemical
 - 13 Daughter of Zeus
 - 15 Assignment
 - 17 Israeli weapon
 - 18 Criticise harshly
 - 20 Sharp as a tack
 - 22 Top dog
 - 23 Gentle one
 - 26 Seafood delicacy
 - 27 Tippler

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

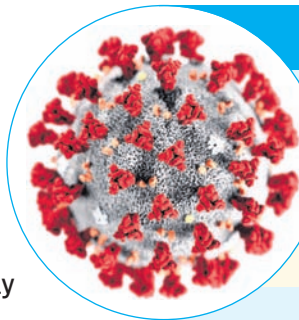


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



THEATRE SHOW

Artists during the staging of play *Daka Bangala* during the celebration of World Theatre Day by Odia Language Literature and Culture department and Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	48,15,86,357	41,58,81,544	61,47,328
India	4,30,19,453	4,24,82,262	5,21,004
Odisha	12,87,469	12,77,921	9,118

We've plans to open EV showroom in Bhubaneswar: Narayani Motors

Narayani Motors was established in Bhubaneswar in 2005. The company has been recognised as a popular brand for its products and post-sale services. Now, the company has many showrooms across the state. During an interaction with **Orissa POST**, owner of the company, **Purshotam Budhraj**, talks about his journey and future plans. Excerpts:



How has been the journey so far?

Narayani Motors started with a low budget but now it has achieved several milestones during the last 17 years. I believed in hard work to achieve success. Good relationship with our customers and fulfilling their requirements are the mantra of our company.

How did the pandemic affect your business?

We saw zero demand from the beginning of the financial year 2020-21 till October due to the pandemic and the lockdown. However,



since November 2020 business has been picking its pace.

Future business plans?

Demand for Electric Vehicles (EVs) is growing and the government is promoting this. In association with an international EV manufacturer, we'll set up an EV showroom in Bhubaneswar. This apart, we'll set up NEXA service centre in Bhubaneswar—a first in Odisha. We are also planning to expand or showrooms.

What is the USP of your company

and which models are available in your showroom?

Automobile business is a special genre of business. This is run keeping in sight the interests of families and the youth. Narayani Motors is a household name in the state. Customers have deep faith and confidence in us. That is why Narayani Motors is dedicated to the service of our customers. Our inventory has models for all categories of customers such as men, women, senior citizens and especially youth. Similarly, we sell models as per the customers' requirements.

Narayani Motors is a very popular showroom in the state. Whom do you give credit for its success?

There are a large number of people behind its success. Success should not be measured by the business volume. The showroom should have a large variety of brands to cater for all categories of customers. Good public relations, post sales service and discounts to customers are the key to drive growth. Hard work, proper planning and customers' goodwill are the major factors in our success story.

Now, customers prefer fashionable, light weight jewellery: Sourav Roy

Radha Gobinda Roy & Co Jeweller's has become a household name in gold ornaments business in Cuttack spanning over 12 decades. It is said to be the first jewellery store in Cuttack. In a freewheeling conversation with **Orissa POST**, Radha Gobinda Roy and Grandson's managing partner **Sourav Roy** speaks about the uniqueness of their ornaments, future plans and the impact of ever rising gold price on jewellery business. Excerpts:



What made you join the jewellery business?

We have been associated with the jewellery business since the days of my great grandfather Radha Gobinda Roy. In the 1990s, my father decided to open a new store at Badambadi in Cuttack. So, I had to quit my career as a chartered accountant to manage this new store as my father could not spare enough time for it.

How did you manage to run the business even though you are not a goldsmith by profession?

Our ornaments are well-known for their purity and exquisite designs. We have our own workshop to design ornaments. We design jewellery as per the requirements of the customers either through our own artisans or by hiring some skilled goldsmiths from outside.

How has been the journey so far?

Our first store was launched at Nimchouri in Cuttack in 1901. In fact, this was the first ornament shop in the city. The second one came up at Badambadi. Then, we also opened a new store—Radha Gobinda Roy and Grandson—to deal in gold and diamond ornaments during the centenary celebration of our first store. It is a matter of pride for us to craft the gold crown and ornaments for the Suna Beshar ritual of Goddess Katakchandi, the presiding deity of the Millennium City.

What are the key challenges you encounter?

A jeweller has to be very careful about the safe storing of ornaments. Our employees check each and every piece of jewellery daily. Customers tend to go for trendy and fresh designs. Therefore, we have to modify the designs of some ornaments frequently to attract customers. For this, we incur additional expenses. Round-the-clock security arrangement

and CCTV surveillance are a must for a jewellery store. One has to pump in a lot of money and offer discounts in making charges to survive in this era of cut-throat competition.

Your take on the government policy towards jewellery business.

We have been doing business according to the existing policy. Of late, transparency has been maintained due to the mandatory gold hallmarking system.

What are the top selling ornaments in the Odisha market?

Frequent spike in the yellow metal price has made a hole in the pockets of the customers. But, jewellery has a special importance in our tradition. Now, customers prefer to buy light weight and fashionable jewellery. Youngsters are going for fancy designs and diamond ornaments. But traditional designs are still in demand for weddings and other ceremonies.

What are the facilities available with you to make jewellery to meet customers' demands?

We have a group of trained artisans having expertise in filigree work, curving and stone-setting at our workshop. This apart, we are also procuring fashionable jewellery from Mumbai, Kolkata and Gujarat to hold customers' interest.

Your future plans?

We have plans in place to open stores at Bhubaneswar, Jajpur, Angul and a few other places in Odisha.

How did you manage the challenges posed by Covid-19 pandemic?

Our stores remained closed for several days due to the pandemic-induced lock-

downs and shutdowns. But, we didn't stop the salaries of our sales executives and security staff. We introduced a monthly installment scheme for the customers to boost our sales.

Any advice to the customers?

Now, jewellery stores are selling hallmarked ornaments. But, the customers should check purity marks in addition to hallmarks while buying jewellery. They should check the quality and proper certificates before buying diamond ornaments.



₹837cr SIDBI boost to state MSMEs

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 27: The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), the financial institution for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), sanctioned Rs 837-crore support package to Odisha under the SIDBI Cluster Development Fund (SCDF) scheme to help develop 18 MSME infrastructure projects.

The funding from the nation's principal financial institution for MSMEs will be to the Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO), which is the implementing agency.

The projects include development of five new MSME parks, construction of 11 workers' hostels and two projects to support MSME infrastructure.

The bank inked a pact with the state to set up project management unit in a bid to strengthen the state's MSME ecosystem



Under its cluster development fund scheme, SIDBI extends moderately priced loan assistances to the states to upgrade various existing MSME clusters and also to create new industrial infrastructure.

SIDBI chairman Sivasubramanian Ramann said the focus will be on clusters in sectors and sub-sectors which can directly benefit the MSMEs, and to bring them to the level NEXT wherein they emerge vibrant by moving higher on the value chain and remain sustainable.

Meanwhile, the bank has also launched a pilot programme in the Bargarh-Handloom Cluster via its grant support and it shall also work out a 'pain to gain' transition programme in important artisanal clusters identified in consultation with nodal State department.

He further said under the ongoing EU Switch Asia Bamboo project run by SIDBI in five districts—Balangir, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Sonepur and Angul - which aims to generate an alternative source of

livelihood as well as to promote an alternative for timber, the bank has trained 342 artisans and bankers and 229 units grounded till date.

An MOU was also signed with the state government in the presence of SIDBI CMD and top government officials for setting up of a Project Management Unit aimed at strengthening the MSME ecosystem of the state.

Ramann also held detailed discussions with state Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, Additional Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena and senior state government officials wherein he apprised them about SIDBI's plans for Odisha. He also apprised the officials about the recent financial assistance of Rs 200 crore by SIDBI owned subsidiary MUDRA to Odisha based Annapurna Microfinance Pvt Ltd.

Babus call on CM



Senior IAS and IPS officers, including Chief Secretary Suresh Mahapatra, Development Commissioner Pradeep Jena and DGP Sunil Kumar Bansal, and members of OAS officers' association meet Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in Bhubaneswar Sunday and congratulate him for his party's massive victory in the recently concluded panchayat and urban local body polls in state

PM pat for Puri man

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 27: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday was in all praise for a 22-year-old man from Puri district for his efforts to clean plastic garbage from the seashore.

In his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' radio broadcast, the PM mentioned the name of Rahul Maharana who works as a security guard after completing his graduation and removes plastic wastes from the pilgrim town Sundays, his off day.

"There is another Swachhagrahi (a volunteer who works for cleanliness) - Rahul Maharana of Puri in Odisha. Rahul goes to the pilgrimage sites in Puri early in the morning every Sunday, and clears the plastic garbage there. He has cleaned hundreds of kilos of plastic garbage and dirt so far," Modi said.

The PM also named Chandrakishore of Nashik for similar voluntary works. "Be it Rahul of Puri or Chandrakishore of Nashik, they teach us a lot. As citizens, we must carry out our duties, whether it is cleanliness, nutrition or vaccination... all these efforts also help us in staying healthy," he said.

Toshali crafts fair kicks off today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 27: The Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts (HT&H) department is all set to organise the 16th Toshali National Crafts Mela at Janata Maidan in the City with strict adherence to Covid protocols from March 28 to April 10 this year, Minister Padmini Dian told the media Sunday.

The fair provides a platform to artisans, weavers and sculptors from different parts of the country to showcase their traditional and contemporary handicraft and handloom products.

According to HT&H department commissioner-cum-secretary Shubha Sarma, as many as 390 artisans and weavers will participate in the fair this year. "While 150 artisans and weavers from outside Odisha participating in the fair will be sponsored by the Development Commissioner (Handlooms) and DC (Handicrafts) respectively, 150 artisans and 90 weavers of the state will be sponsored by the Directorate of



Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts department Minister Padmini Dian and commissioner-cum-secretary Shubha Sarma along with other officials address media in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

Handicrafts and Directorate of Textiles and Handlooms respectively," Sarma said.

This year, the 'Theme Pavilion' of the expo will showcase the development of golden grass craft artisans of Kendrapara under the 'SANKALP'. A special helpdesk with provision of wheelchair and designated parking space will be in place for smooth movement of the differently-abled and the elderly. Besides, a special baby care room will also be available, she added.

In a bid to avoid excess gathering of visitors, high scale cultural pro-

grammes are not scheduled this year. Adequate security personnel will be engaged to ensure social distancing norms. Proper care will be taken for sanitization of the mela ground at regular interval. "Use of mask and social distancing is mandatory for exhibitors/visitors and officials inside the mela ground," said an official.

Keeping in view the heatwave situation in March-April, the fair will be opened from 3:00pm to 10:00pm every day. Last year, the mela witnessed a footfall of 14 lakh people and Rs 12.38 crore businesses.

Missiles test-fired at Chandipur hit target

This MRSAM version is a surface-to-air missile developed jointly by DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) for use by the Indian Army



The flight tests were carried out with the weapon system in deliverable configuration. The performance of the weapon system was validated through the flight data captured by range instruments like radars, electro-optical tracking systems and telemetry deployed by ITR, Chandipur.

The flight tests were carried out in the presence of senior officials from DRDO and Indian Army. "MRSAM-Army missile system flight tested from ITR Balasore at around 10:30 hrs intercepting a high speed aerial target at long range. The target was destroyed by the missile in a direct hit," DRDO tweeted.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the DRDO, Indian Army and the defence industry for the successful flight tests of MRSAM-Army. He said that both the successful tests establish the capability of the weapon system in intercepting targets at critical ranges.

DRDO chairman G Satheesh Reddy complimented the teams involved in the flight trial.

As a precautionary measure, the district administration had temporarily shifted around 7,000 people from three nearby villages to safety.

cepted the targets and destroyed those completely, registering direct hits at both the ranges. The first missile hit a medium-altitude long-range target and the second one hit a low-altitude short-range target. This MRSAM version is a surface-to-air missile developed jointly by DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) for use by the Indian Army. The MRSAM Army weapon system comprises multi-function radar, mobile launcher system and other vehicles.

Balasore, March 27: India Sunday successfully test-fired two Indian Army-version Medium Range Surface to Air Missiles (MRSAMs) from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur in Odisha. The flight tests were carried out as part of the live-firing trials against high-speed aerial targets, sources in the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) said, adding that the missiles in-

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUSICAL EVENING



A band show was organised by Odisha Police at a park near the Netaji Setu in Cuttack, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Tribal youth exchange programme kicks off

Bhubaneswar: Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Odisha and Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports organised the 13th Tribal Youth Exchange Programme here in collaboration with Union Ministry of Home Affairs. The programme will conclude March 29. A total of 200 tribal participants from Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are participating in the programme that aims at an exchange of culture, traditions, food, language and education. Participants will visit historic places and meet some influential people including public representatives.

Lensman murder: CB seals Dayal Ashram



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 27: The state Crime Branch (CB) investigating the sensational murder of lensman Manas Swain Sunday sealed Dayal Ashram, an old age home on the outskirts of the City where Swain was reportedly murdered.

Before sealing the old age home, the CB sleuths along with teams of forensic experts and AIIMS officials inspected the room where Swain was murdered. They also interrogated the old age home's caretaker, it was learnt.

CB ADG Sanjeeb Panda said forensic examination of the car used in the crime was carried out by experts. "Our team visited Dayal Ashram and inspected the crime scene using 3D scanner. The team recorded the statements of a few witnesses, including the old age home's caretaker. Forensic examination of the car used in the crime was also carried out by experts," Panda said.

Panda added that teams of Chandbali police and the CB are leaving no stones unturned to nab Sharmishta Rout—the prime accused in the sensational murder case. The CB has reportedly

Our team visited Dayal Ashram and inspected the crime scene using 3D scanner. The team recorded the statements of a few witnesses, including the old age home's caretaker. Forensic examination of the car used in the crime was also carried out by experts

SANJEEB PANDA | CRIME BRANCH ADG

recovered a wooden plank from the spot.

Police have so far arrested five persons, including former Odisha Information Service (OIS) officer Niranjana Sethi, in connection with the brutal murder of the 28-year-old cameraman. However, Sharmishta, who ran a web channel in Bhubaneswar, is still absconding.

Sources said Swain was kidnapped from Bhadrak February 6 and brought to Dayal Ashram run by Sharmishta where he was reportedly murdered. His body was recovered from Badhipatna hills in Rajsunakhala area of Nayagarh March 12.

SNEH holds seminar on restorative justice

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 27: The Society for Nature, Education and Health (SNEH) organised a one-day seminar on Restorative Justice here Sunday.

Participating in this seminar, Director General of Prisons & Director Correctional Services Santosh Upadhyaya, former Additional Chief Secretary Aurobinda Behera, and former District Judge Umacharan Mishra unanimously implied that the current system of justice in the country is retributive or punitive with provision of punishing the guilty.

The state is responsible for penalising the criminal, where as the victim's needs are ignored. The restorative system of justice delivery in our country is limited to the compensation to the victims in the form of financial assistance in a few cases.

Behera stressed on the need for restorative justice to reintegrate the offender with the community as well as restoration of normalcy in the relationship with the victim.

At the outset, organisation's Advisor Subas Chandra Panda made a comparative presentation on various aspects of the punitive and the restorative justice practices. He explained how the restorative justice is a comprehensive system of justice delivery which meets the needs of all the stakeholders like the victim, offender and the community and helps in restoring the broken relationships and healing the harm caused by the crime.

The seminar was attended by 25 civil society members comprising social workers, police officers, members of judiciary and educationists.

CALL FOR SUPPORT



Members of central trade unions carry out a rally near Rajmahal Square in Bhubaneswar in support of the two-day Bharat Bandh, Sunday

OP PHOTO

ASIA EDUCATION AWARD 2022

KIIT picked India's best varsity in placements

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 27: KIIT Deemed to be University was conferred the Asia Education Award 2022 by Asia Today Research & Media in Bangalore.

In the absence of KIIT & KISS Founder Achyuta Samanta, regional coordinator Sasmita Rout received the award on behalf of KIIT from Karnataka Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot. KIIT earned the award in the category of "Best University with Excellent Placement & Campus in India".

KIIT has carved a niche for itself in the country for its outstanding contribution to the field of education. Since its inception, KIIT has been emphasising value-based education in ensuring congenial learning ambience and excellent placement to students. By virtue of these aspects, KIIT bagged this coveted award for its aesthetically appealing campus and best possible placement.

Every year, Asia Today Research & Media presents the award to institutions contributing to the field of multifarious research and analysis services.

Home to over 4.5 million people along with many rare and threatened wildlife species like the estuarine crocodile, water monitor lizard, Gangetic dolphin and Olive Ridley turtle - not to forget the Royal Bengal Tiger whose number rests at 96 on the Indian side of the Sundarbans as per counting last year - the low-lying islands are facing an existential crisis

The world's largest mangrove forest is now bearing the brunt of both climate upheavals and unabated human greed, leaving the World Heritage Site gasping for life.

Locals here lament that in the past couple of years, several islands have turned into concrete jungles, with new plush resorts and other real estate structures now distinc-

tively disturbing the natural landscape. This, coupled with massive cyclones that devastated Sundarbans forests in recent years, has left the inhabitants of 54 islands (out of a total of 102; rest being reserve forests) in constant fear of losing their livelihoods, and lives.

"The construction of embankments as a buffer against natural disasters is not yet complete in several islands. On the other hand, rampant real estate development to squeeze in more tourists has put our islands in further danger," Sayantan, 30, told IANS.

Out of nearly 10,000 sq km that these mangrove forests cover, a little over 4,000 sq km is in India and the rest is in Bangladesh. In 1987, the Sundarbans National Park was designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

In May 2020, the massive cyclone Amphan ravaged a large part of the deltaic Sundarbans region, displacing thousands of residents of the islands.

The agricultural lands and all water bodies were filled with saline water and people who earned their livelihood through vegetation, fisheries and cattle farming landed in



ROARS FADING AWAY

deep trouble. Last May, Cyclone 'Yaas' caused severe damage to the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve, and inundated breeding centres for crocodiles and a rare species of turtle.

The mismanagement of the modern embankments has led to salt water entering agricultural lands, making them unsuitable for cultivation, according to locals.

Moreover, nylon net fencing or natural barriers to prevent tigers from entering human habitations were heavily damaged during the storms, and the damage can still be seen at several places.

The straying of the Royal Bengal

Tigers into villages has not stopped and the famous man-eaters of Sundarbans now roam freely and attack humans as their own habitats are being lost to climate change and human intervention.

According to a local guide Sanjib, the nylon net fencing to keep tigers away from human-inhabited islands is not working anymore as they are no more afraid of it.

"Their brains have now adapted to this whole new world where net fencing is no more a threat to them. They easily cross those fences, left open by fishermen and people who enter core forest zones for catching crabs/prawns and honey collection. Tigers have also been drinking saline water for years which has

messed up their bodies," Sanjib told IANS.

The latest media reports say that some 43 crab catchers fell prey to tiger attacks in the last seven months in the Sundarbans. Locals fear that one day the delta may disappear from the face of the Earth if realistic steps are not taken.

The tiger attacks have increased manifold in West Bengal and the loss of tiger habitat is given as the key reason for the man-animal conflict.

To tackle the erosion of natural barriers, the West Bengal government now plans to construct a robust and ecologically sustainable 'bio-shield' along the state's coastline and the Sundarbans islands.

The plan is to build earth embankments, plant 36 species of resilient mangrove species and set up a geo-textile cover on embankments, and a second line of embankments on the east-facing concave coastline, where erosion is highest. The impact of climate change is most severe in the Bengal delta re-

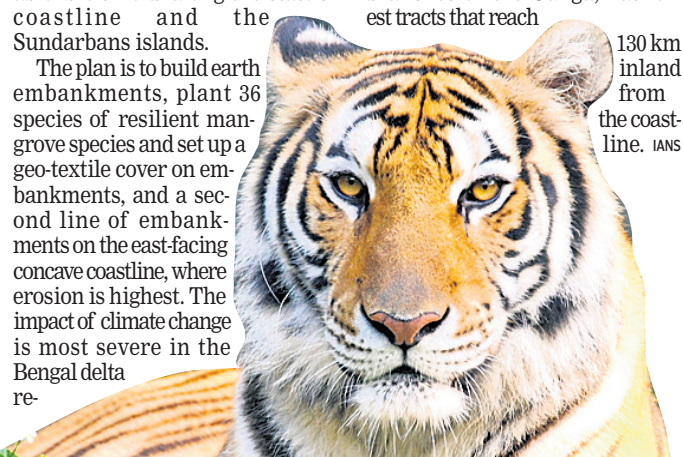
gion, where the sea level rise is the highest globally.

The global mean sea level has been rising at 3.6 mm per year between 2006 and 2015. The sea level off the coast of Bengal is rising at around 4 mm per year, according to the latest reports.

The Sundarbans is carved out of two West Bengal districts - South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas. The alluvial archipelago is formed by 56 riverine islands.

Considered to be one of the richest but most fragile ecosystems on the planet, the Sundarbans delta, formed by the myriad branches of the Ganga, has forest tracts that reach

130 km inland from the coastline. IANS



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SHORT TAKES

Former Education Minister dead

Bargarh/Barpali: Former Education Minister and senior Congress leader Ripunath Seth, 64, passed away Sunday after a brief illness. Reports said that Seth complained of illness at his Nuapada residence in Barpali of Bargarh district. Family members rushed him to a private hospital, where he reportedly died of heart attack. Born October 27, 1958, Seth started his political career by becoming the chairman of Barpali NAC in 1991. He served as the school and mass education minister, energy minister and sports minister during the Congress Government from 1995 to 2000. He was elected to the Odisha Legislative Assembly from the Bijepur Assembly Constituency in 1995. Seth had contested from the Bijepur Assembly Constituency in 2019 against Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik but was trounced in the election.

Patnagarh: BJP's fortress crumbles

Patnagarh: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has stormed into the Patnagarh NAC in Bolangir, which is said to be the fort of Bharatiya Janata Party since 1990. The ruling party has registered a massive win here in the recently concluded urban local body polls by claiming 14 seats of councillor while one seat was won by an independent candidate. The BJP and Congress failed to open their accounts. BJD's Manasi Pradhan was elected chairperson by defeating her nearest rival BJP's Budu Sabar by a margin of 3,066 votes. In ward-13, independent candidate Runu Kumbhar defeated her nearest rival BJD's Sanjukta Patel by a margin of 54 votes.

Conjoined twins die after delivery

Sambalpur: Conjoined twins born in Sambalpur district headquarters hospital died just a few hours post delivery due to health complications Sunday. The twins were born to the wife of Bipin Sahani, a native of Rengali in Sambalpur district. The baby girls were attached to each other at the abdomen and weighed around 1.85 kg. The twins had separate heads, but their bodies had been conjoined from neck downwards. They were first shifted to the SNCU in the DHH after their birth. Later, they were shifted to VIMSAR in Burla as their condition deteriorated. Unfortunately, they succumbed at the medical college.

Hooch unit busted; seven detained

Bolangir: Police busted a spurious liquor manufacturing unit at Uday Nagar area here in the district and arrested seven persons including the kingpin Pawan Kumar. The unit was operating for the last five years and was supplying spurious liquor to liquor off shops, dhabas and bootleggers in Bolangir town and its periphery. Police have sealed the house. The raid team has also seized ₹7.73 lakh cash.

Fraudulent withdrawal of ₹2.45cr from Barbil municipality a/c; 2 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Barbil, March 27: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW), with the help of Keonjhar district police and Barrackpore Commissionerate Police of West Bengal, arrested one Subas Ghising Giri in connection with a case of fraud March 24. The case pertains to a complaint filed by the Executive Officer, Barbil Municipality who alleged fraudulent and unauthorised transfer of ₹2.45 crore from the ULB's official account maintained with Bank of Baroda, Barbil by forging the cheques and the signature of the complainant.

"Giri was nabbed from Barangar in Barrackpur and was booked under Sections 420, 467, 468, 471 and 120-B of the IPC. He was produced before the ACJM, Barrackpore Court, 24 Praganas, Kolkata March 25 and brought to Odisha on the strength of transit remand," the EOW stated.

Later he was produced before the Court of JMFC, Barbil. Another accused Saiyed Shahbaaz Naqvi (a native of Raipur, Chhattisgarh)

has also been arrested in this case and produced in the Barbil court Sunday.

Investigation of the case revealed that the official account of Barbil Municipality is maintained with Bank of Baroda, Barbil and the authorised signatory of the account is the Executive Officer of Barbil Municipality.

Abhisek Panda is presently working as the Executive Officer and for any debit transaction from the accounts, his signature is necessarily required. However, the Giri and Naqvi managed to transfer/withdraw ₹2,45,60,800 from the ULB's account March 16 and 21 by forging the cheques and the signature of the EO, Panda.

"The duo was running a mule account. They had already withdrawn part of embezzled money but were nabbed before withdrawing the remaining amount. They used to get 15% of the amount for operating the mule account. The mastermind of this racket will be nabbed soon. Total ₹1.15 crore has been recovered from them and the account was frozen," the EOW stated.



An accused (middle) along with officials



Artists enacting a scene from a play 'Aakhir Basant' at Jaydev Sadan in Paradip on the concluding day of National Theatre Festival, Sunday. The drama staged by Darpan theatre group in Lucknow was directed by Subhadeep Saha

Cong cuts into BJP vote bank

BJD garnered 41.36 pc of the votes while the BJP gathered 23.53 pc and that of Congress was 22.36 pc

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, March 27: Vote percentage of the BJP has nosedived in the recently concluded urban local body elections in Baripada Municipality as Congress has cut into the saffron vote base, leading BJD's chairperson candidate Krushnananda Mohanty to a victory, political observers said.

According to reports, winners and losers of the BJP, BJD, Congress and other parties have started post-mortem of ULB results in the municipality.

BJD's Krushnananda Mohanty has polled 22,297 votes while his

nearest rival BJP's Kabi Bishnu Satapathy has got 12,688 votes. On the other hand, Congress candidate Jogesh Agrawal has got 12,061 votes – almost equal with BJP votes.

In the recently concluded panchayat elections, Congress was placed at third position while the BJP ended at fourth position. BJP's vote percentage was 31. In the ULB elections of Baripada, altogether 53,908 voters spread over 28 ward had exercised their franchise.

The BJD logged 41.36 voting while the BJP recorded 23.53 per-

cent and that of Congress was 22.36. Given this comparison, the vote percentage of the BJP has certainly come down. Its voters have gone into the kitty of Congress, leading to the win of the BJD candidate. Locals observed that Congress played a crucial role in the victory of the BJD and debacle of the BJP.

It was learnt that 13 other candidates who had thrown their hats into the rings for the post of chairperson have lost their deposits as they have failed to poll one/eighths of the polling.

BARIPADA ULB POLLS

JAJPUR, VYASANAGAR MUNICIPALITIES

NOTA votes spark concern for candidates

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, March 27: As results of elections for the urban local body polls for Jajpur and Vyasagar Municipalities poured in, the 'NOTA' (None of the above) option on electronic voting machines has garnered as many as 614 votes, a report said.

This has raised doubts on the ability of the candidates in winning the trust of the voters in this election, a report said. The large number of NOTA votes are indicative of the trust deficit of common people on the political representatives.

Among these votes, 416 NOTA

votes were polled in election to the Vyasagar Municipality while it was 198 NOTA votes for Jajpur Municipality. The large number of NOTA votes has proved that the concerned voters found none of the candidates good enough to be elected to the civic body.

The NOTA votes have also highlighted the widening gap between the common citizens and the administration as the political representatives have failed to live up to their promise. The elected representatives have an important role to play in connecting the common man with the administration and resolving his problem.

However, the political representatives are busy fulfilling their loyalists' interests once they get elected. Thus, politician and contractor nexus is growing day by day. No party is immune from this type of politics for which election has turned into a best business to invest nowadays.

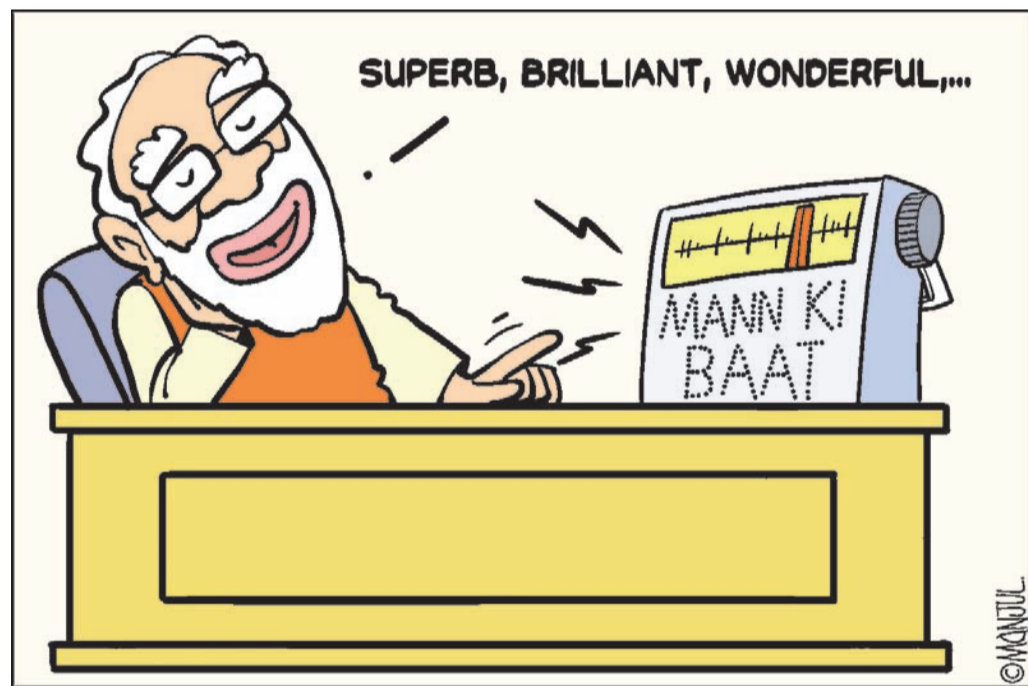
A close review of the development works undertaken in Vyasagar Municipality will reveal that no party is sincerely interested for the development of the civic body. The continuous drainage problem in the city is the main obstacle to development for over 30 years since its formation.

SELF DEFENCE



Girl students participating in self-defence training camp at Talanagar Junior College under Soro block in Balasore

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Wildfires flush animals out

Four elephant corridors – Gochha, Gumi, Buguda and Pokhari Gochha in this district – are under severe threat from wildfires

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, March 27: As summer sets in, a fire engulfed the Ratnamala reserve forest under Rukshi and Pancharida range, forcing the wild animals to stray into human settlements.

There are instances of wild animals falling prey to poachers and dogs in the area. Sources said the forest fires here are man-made disasters. Though Forest department has been carrying out awareness campaigns to prevent forest fires, there is no sign of these cases declining. Rather, wildfires are rising in some forests during the last few years. As per reports, four elephant corridors – Gochha, Gumi, Buguda and Pokhari Gochha in

this district – are under severe threat from wildfire.

Setting forests on fire is a punishable offence under Sections 27(1-A) and 3(B) of Orissa Forest Protection Act-1972. There is provision of three to seven years jail term for people committing such offence. Last year, a person was arrested for torching a forest in Pancharida range. It is said that rural populace set trees on fire to collect charcoal or clear forest floor before collecting mahua flowers. This leads to massive fires in forests, it is said. However, most people

are not aware of the provision punishment in the law. In March 2021, forest fires were reported in Pancharida range for three days. On the first day, fires were recorded at 195 locations; on the second day 384 places and on the third day 100 places reported fires.

A few days ago, Basukipathar forest under Dasapalla range had reported fires at night. Locals rushed to the forest and brought the blaze under control. Some Vana Surakhya Samitis have been protecting Basukipathar; Pitabali and Duburi forests under this range.



REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

Girl's obscene video goes viral in Malkangiri

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, March 27: Police arrested five persons including four women on charges of uploading and making viral an obscene video of a minor girl in Motu area of Malkangiri, Sunday.

According to reports, a minor girl of MV-81 village had gone to her maternal uncle's house at

MV-45 March 23. That night, Narayan Halder, Mamata Mandal and Anima Biswas went to MV-45. They abducted the girl on a bike and handed her over to Niranjana Majhi. Main accused Niranjana Majhi forcibly had physical relation with the girl. One of his relatives had recorded the act on a cell phone and made it viral. Niranjana had one-sided love for

the girl and used to force her to marry him. The accused had threatened the girl to tarnish her image. When the victim's father came to know about the incident, he filed a complaint at MV-79 police station in this regard.

Police registered a case and arrested Narayan Halder, Mamata Mandal, Anima Biswas, Madhu Halder and Krushna Barai.

Olive ridley wave sweeps Gahirmatha beach

There were apprehensions that the olive ridley turtles might skip their annual visit as the mass nesting was delayed by around a fortnight



The arrival of so many turtles is a refreshing development and this is probably the largest congregation at the nesting beach in a single day. We're expecting a large congregation for the next two-three days and the mass nesting is likely to continue at least for a week

JD PATI | DFO, RAJNAGAR MANGROVE (WILDLIFE) DIV

Mangrove (Wildlife) Divisional Forest Officer JD Pati said.

"The arrival of so many turtles is a refreshing development and this is probably the largest congregation at the nesting beach in a single day," Pati said.

"We're expecting a large congregation for the next two-three days and the mass nesting is likely to continue at least for a week," he added.

There were apprehensions that the olive ridley turtles, which de-

rive this name from the colour of the shell, might skip their annual visit as the mass nesting was delayed by around a fortnight.

Last year, 3,49,694 female turtles had turned up at the nesting grounds to lay eggs from March 9 to March 23. The females virtually invade the nesting beaches, usually at the dead of the night, for laying eggs. They usually lay around 120-150 eggs and return to the sea, another official said.

Hatchlings usually emerge after 45-60 days. Out of every 1,000 hatchlings that enter the sea, only one manages to reach adulthood, according to official data.

Illegal egg poaching, turtle harvesting and nest destruction by humans are some of the major threats these reptiles face, apart from climate change, the officials said. The Forest Department has been prioritising the safety of the nests, with wildlife staff on round-the-clock vigil to keep predators like jackals, hyenas and wild dogs at bay, they said.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kendrapara, March 27: Lakhs of olive ridley turtles have begun crowding the tranquil Gahirmatha beach in this district, as part of their annual journey to lay eggs, presenting a rare natural phenomenon and a breathtaking sight, officials said.

The Gahirmatha beach is widely regarded as the world's largest-known nesting ground of these reptiles. Apart from Gahirmatha, the turtles also arrive at the Rukhikulya and Devi river mouths for mass nesting, they said.

Around 2.45 lakh female turtles crawled onto the seashore to dig pits with flippers Friday, Rajnagar



FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

A BALKANISED WORLD



The structures supporting the global economy and the international political order are buckling under the pressure of pandemics, climate disaster, and war. To prevent a further unravelling, political leaders must update the old models of threat containment, multilateralism, and globalisation

interests. The Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons needs to be strengthened and broadened. Conventions banning chemical and biological weapons need to be made all-encompassing and verifiable. The Geneva Conventions establishing the rules of war need to be extended to cyberwarfare.

Moreover, the rules governing economic globalisation need reform. Currently, global value chains are built largely for the sake of profit maximisation. Though efforts to boost supply-chain resilience are already underway, there is little indication that they will make trade more environmentally or socially sustainable. To account for the social and environmental implications of trade (both within and across global value chains), businesses and governments should be required to report on their social and environmental impact, and trade rules should be reformed on the basis of these metrics.

Finally, we need a new multilateralism that highlights the complementarity between national and global objectives, so that we can seize on win-win (positive-sum) opportunities in the economic, social, and environmental domains. The resulting multilateral agreements should spread the gains from multilateral coordination so that all participating countries benefit.

Recognising that such multilateral agreements will be particularly difficult to achieve in this period of conflict, leaders can start by assembling "coalitions of the willing." A good example is Germany's G7 proposal for a "global climate club" to accelerate the implementation of the Paris climate agreement.

The dangers of pursuing national self-interest in the face of global problems should be obvious. To avert the Great Unraveling, we must rebuild the foundation for peace and sustainable prosperity in a beautiful but fragile world.

The writer is President of the Global Solutions Initiative.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Russia's war in Ukraine has upended what one might call the world's "peaceful progress regime." It was a regime with three ingredients: globalisation, which generates material prosperity worldwide; global collective action to address the negative effects of economic growth, not least rising inequality and climate change; and, perhaps most fundamentally, the absence of war. These components were mutually reinforcing. According to the conventional wisdom, globalisation – along with the existence of nuclear weapons and the deterrent effect of mutual assured destruction – made war increasingly untenable, and global collective action made globalisation socially and environmentally acceptable.

This regime has now been fatally undermined by Russian President Vladimir Putin's determination to redraw borders by force and reintroduce the threat of nuclear war. Moreover, many countries today have massive cyberwarfare capabilities that enable them to damage each other's critical infrastructure – from electricity and water supplies to health and emergency services. An international arms race is inevitable.

The West's response to Russia's invasion has included freezing the Russian central bank's assets, barring Russian banks from the SWIFT international financial messaging system, revoking Russia's "most-favoured nation" trade status, banning exports of technology to Russia, and much more. Together, these measures are likely to change the global financial landscape and the future of globalisation. And in the longer run, they will induce Russia, China, and affiliated countries to develop alternative systems.

The war, and the pandemic before it, has also exposed the fragility of global supply chains. In the future, governments around the world will seek supply-chain resilience through greater diversification of sources and greater self-sufficiency. As more countries pursue incompatible political goals, the world economy will become more balkanised.

There will also be a major push for energy security. This will involve major economic disruptions, as it implies accelerating the transition to renewable energy sources in some energy-importing countries and promoting nuclear energy in others. Likewise, the quest for food security – currently threatened by the Ukraine war's impact on supplies of grain and fertilizer – could lead to damaging beggar-thy-neighbor policies.

With the peace dividend vanishing and globalisation partly reversing, the world has come to a crossroads. On one hand, there is what may be called the Great Unraveling: deglobalisation, the collapse of global collective action, resurgent nationalism, environmental collapse, and the danger of large-scale wars, including one in which nuclear weapons are deployed. On the other hand, the current political crisis might mobilise a transnational collective spirit that could be harnessed for a new form of peaceful progress.

Is the "other hand" possible? At the drop of a hat, the Ukraine invasion has induced governments, with widespread popular approval,

to set aside their narrow self-interests for the sake of collective action. The UN General Assembly Resolution condemning Russia's invasion was supported by 141 countries. The challenge now is to mobilise this spirit in the interests of global problem-solving.

Countries must rise to this challenge at the G20, the G7, the United Nations, and other international forums. There simply is no alternative if we are going to address crises such as pandemics and climate change, along with the many other threats waiting in the wings: biodiversity loss, financial instability, antimicrobial resistance, water and food insecurity, digital disruption and manipulation, and so forth.

Building a new, benign world order requires reconfiguring the three pillars of peaceful progress, starting with new initiatives to maintain the international anti-war norm. Though we have entered an age of heightened geopolitical tensions, the sudden revival of nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare risks should be enough to convince all parties that threat containment is vital to their own



Dennis J. Snower

WITH THE PEACE DIVIDEND VANISHING AND GLOBALISATION PARTLY REVERSING, THE WORLD HAS COME TO A CROSSROADS

BIMSTEC Window

After a gap of about four years, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) summit is slated to be held March 30. Sri Lanka, presently the chair, is keen on organising the event as it is itself passing through dire economic crisis. Seven countries of the group in south and southeast Asia namely India, Thailand, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka, would engage in collaborative work at a time when China has been making steady inroads in the Bay of Bengal area. In fact, China has succeeded in penetrating deeply into Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Nepal through economic and diplomatic support to these countries. Meanwhile, India's diplomatic relations with its neighbours has soured because India's flawed foreign policy initiatives distanced these nations in the recent past.

As the Bay of Bengal zone returns to the limelight of strategic attention after years, its littoral countries are now keen to re-engage with one another for building a better future through collaboration. BIMSTEC could provide a natural platform to reinforce ties and explore avenues of cooperation. The summit, March 30, will get an opportunity to approve the BIMSTEC Charter, BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity and the BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters. The group will also take up the BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement and the Motor Vehicles Agreement. These instruments are vital for better integration of the Indo-Pacific region. This area has become a hot zone of muscle-flexing by China on one side and the Quad countries comprising USA, India, Japan and Australia on the other. China has been aggressively trying to establish its control in this region. The threat from the Quad group as also the new formation of Australia, the UK and the USA (AUKUS), arming Australia with nuclear-powered submarines and the advanced cyber surveillance systems, is believed to have rubbed China the wrong way. As the build-up acquires a new dimension in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the BIMSTEC countries can chart out a new path of advancing their own economic growth. India has greater stakes as well as a great opportunity in this grouping. It gets an opportunity to undo the damage it has done to itself by grossly trying to act big brotherly with the neighbours. As Pakistan is excluded from the group, this offers India a chance to make a collaborative approach unhindered by the much smarter foreign policy machinations of Pakistan, the way the latter has been scuttling the work of the SAARC (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation).

All eyes in this edition of the BIMSTEC summit will be on Myanmar, whose current leader Gen Min Aung Hlaing will be participating in a multilateral summit for the first time since the army captured power February 1, 2021, overthrowing an elected government. India was put in a tricky situation since the army coup in Myanmar. After letting China consolidate its position in Myanmar, India could ill afford to further antagonise the military junta. India stopped short of condemning it directly but only raised concerns over the democratic process trampled by the junta. At the same time, India was not disturbed by the ouster of Myanmar's democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who was sentenced to a four-year jail term by a Myanmar court. India's efforts to reach out to Suu Kyi were superficial. Therefore, when a bureaucrat like Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, instead of a high ranking politician, supposedly tried and was not allowed to meet her during his visit to Myanmar late December last year, the government claimed its efforts were frustrated.

Even though India wants to work with Myanmar's junta regime, it does not want to be seen sharing the stage with the leadership at a summit right now. This is India's dilemma. It is believed that Prime Minister Modi will only take part in the summit virtually and not physically. The event is to follow the hybrid form of both virtual and physical sessions.

Sri Lanka's desperation for hosting the summit is obvious as it cannot solely depend on China, while its economic crisis is deepening and its ethnological tension simmering. There are long queues in front of petrol stations across Sri Lanka and the people are suffering due to a steep rise in prices of essential commodities. During the past three months, India has provided assistance of US\$2.4 billion including a \$500 million loan deferment and \$1 billion credit line to enable the supply of essential commodities to Sri Lanka. Colombo has also sought help from the International Monetary Fund despite its earlier reservation of taking help from that agency.

If India can play its cards well, the BIMSTEC summit may offer a window of opportunity to try to wean its eastern, north-eastern and southern neighbours away from the influence of China and Pakistan. Given India's recent messed up foreign policy vis-à-vis its neighbours, this seems a tall order.

WISDOM CORNER

By three methods we may learn wisdom: first, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest. **CONFUCIUS**

There is no greater delight than to be conscious of sincerity on self-examination. **MENCIUS**

The ignorant mind, with its infinite afflictions, passions, and evils, is rooted in the three poisons -- greed, anger, and delusion. **BODDHIPARMA**

WORDSWORTH

Singultient

When next you see some thespian practitioner accepting an Oscar with extreme protestations of love and admiration for everyone she has ever worked with while flooding the lectern with tears of pleasure, you may describe her as singultient, among other possible adjectives, since the word refers to crying or sobbing. It would indeed be the most just, since its Latin origin lies in singultus, which can mean a speech broken by sobs. It could also refer to somebody having a fit of the hiccups, a state that can sound somewhat similar, and the Latin word sometimes appears in medical works as an alternative name for the condition. Other rare words from the same source include singult, a sob, and singultous, having the hiccups. One of the few appearances of singultient is in The Ode of Life by Lewis Morris, of 1891: "Through the wastes of silence and sleep, There is no more stillness nor Death, The great Universe wakes with a deep-drawn singultient breath." It's also in Vindiciae Academiarum, by Seth Ward and John Wilkins, dated 1654, a satirical work that mocked those who undertook a mystical search for the original "natural language" of Adam, which would be a universal language understandable by everyone.

LOL

Picking a punishment

This guy dies and is sent to hell. Satan meets him and shows him the doors to three rooms and says he must choose one of the rooms to spend eternity in. So Satan opens the first door. In the room there are people standing in cow manure up to their necks. The guy says "No, please show me the next room." Satan shows him the next room and this has people with cow manure up



to their noses. And so he says no again. Finally, Satan shows him the third and final room. This time there are people in there with cow manure up to their knees drinking cups of tea and eating cakes. So the guy says, "I'll choose this room." Satan says O.K. The guy is standing in there eating his cake and drinking his tea thinking, "Well, it could be worse," when the door opens. Satan pops his head around, and says "O.K. tea-break is over. Back on your heads!"

SPECTRUM ECOLOGY

Water for all: An ethical imperative



Harish Barthwal

THE STANDING RIVER WATER DISPUTES IN MOST REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY BROOK NO SOLUTION IN SIGHT

Ever given a thought, why such an indispensable item as drinking water in cities is getting costlier? As elsewhere, it is universally in short supply! Admittedly, about 71 per cent of the Earth's surface is water though only a small part of it (2.5 per cent) is fresh water that humans most need and miss.

Water is a natural resource and the supplies are increasingly under stress due to enhanced demand due to growing populations and industrialisation without water bodies being conserved and replenished. Water crunch is a formidable issue the world faces today. Groundwater is the source of around 99 per cent of water supplies on Earth. The amount of groundwater being harnessed to meet the consumption levels has more than tripled in the preceding three decades leading to lowering of water table, thus worsening the situation. A former vice president of the World Bank stated that "water" and not "oil" shall be the main issue in wars of the future. Human interventions, mainly industrialisation and pollution, lead to its quality degradation and depletion. In most regions, the low-

ered water table has also impinged on soil fertility and consequent reduced yields.

A major hurdle in equitable distribution of available water is that of sharing. "After the passion of love, water rights have caused more trouble than anything else to the human species," said Pulitzer winning author Alice Steinbach. People having lived in countryside have known the perennial inter-village wrangles over use of water from rivers or rivulets. The standing river water disputes in most regions of the country brook no solution in sight. Most of our rivers (Krishna, Cauvery, Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Tungabhadra, Godavari, Narmada, Mahi, Yamuna, Karmansa) are plagued by inter-state water disputes. The tribunals set up to settle the riparian state disputes on sharing of waters did not bear fruits. The bone of contention in real terms is the unwillingness to part with water for the thirsty brothers across the border, even if one state has surplus. Interlinking of rivers is under consideration not only to resolve the uneven availability of water in many states affected by draughts or deluge but also

help boost agriculture and generate power and employment. Yet the river-linking has been strongly resisted by states like Karnataka and Telangana.

Water and energy issues are not only interlinked, but also interdependent. Energy production, especially through hydro electric, thermal and nuclear power plants requires massive quantities of water. Globally about 8 per cent of the energy consumed goes for pumping water or its transportation to consumers.

Discretion also needs to be exercised in daily use of water. Drinking water problem is acute in cities since municipal bodies assigned with this task are usually short of adequate funds to procure quality water plants or get the pipelines repaired in time. Consequently water from the leaking sewage pipes often mingles with drinking water pipes causing health hazards. The governments are therefore befittingly promoting rather making installation of water harvesting plants obligatory with penalty for non-compliance. The Prime Minister's 'Catch the Rain' project launched in March last year is an excellent

initiative in this direction.

Water scarcity has far implications on the health of populations. Studies have established that waterborne and other diseases are less prevalent in areas with access to safe drinking water. An alternative to river water is rainwater.

American environmentalist-journalist Thomas Kostigen says that 50 million people the world over succumb to death due to illnesses related to water shortage, half of them below 5 years of age that amounts to death of one child every 12 seconds.

It is in the interest of mankind, as Mikhail Gorbachev advised, "To treat water as if it were the most precious thing in the world, the most valuable natural resource." His precept: "Be economical with water! Don't waste it! We still have time to do something about this problem before it is too late." Monopoly on drinking water is unethical and unwarranted. Before we lavishly spend water, let us have heart for those who are struggling for each drop of water!

The writer is a Delhi-based columnist & freelancer.

On a mission

Sir, People of Afghanistan are facing unprecedented challenges after Taliban took over Kabul. The transition has been painful. Citizens of all walks of life remain perturbed by an uncertain future. Therefore, the decision of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to extend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for a year till March 23, 2023 is to be welcomed. Humanitarian aid to Afghanistan under the Taliban regime should receive a fillip by this singular step of the United Nations. Effective and timely dialogue with the Taliban, promoting good governance and law of the land under the oppressive regime, can be bolstered by the decision. The UNAMA will take every relevant stakeholder into confidence to achieve its purpose of promoting an inclusive, responsive, representative and participatory governance. There are issues pertaining to gender equality and human rights that warrant sustained monitoring. In particular, engagement of women in important spheres of public life cannot escape the eyes of UNAMA. A change of government in Afghanistan sounded like a death knell to women's education and employment. Many Afghan women were forced to cool their heels at home. UNAMA has not lost hope; it is keen to convince the regime to allow educational centres and workplaces to embrace women. Children orphaned by violence may need extra care. Even otherwise, their schooling should proceed in the right direction. Economy in Afghanistan is in shambles. There is food scarcity, and the ensuing chaos has crippled lives of the poor. The UN has said the situation may turn from bad to worse in the coming days. Countries have consistently donated liberally to Afghan's cause. UNAMA should hold these nations together so that they do not shift their stance. It has the advantage of being widely respected and acknowledged. **Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA**

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**

OrissaPOST
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Hijab & exams

Sir, The recent judgement by the Karnataka High Court on the hijab row has put students donning hijab on a tricky wicket. With the SSLC exams set to begin from Monday, the state government stressed that students disregarding the court order would not be allowed to sit for the exams. The government also did away with the restriction of wearing masks. We may recall that several girls skipped the preliminary tests because they were not allowed to write the exams, wearing a hijab. We must strive to keep religious practices out of the ambit of education. **NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE**

national

of the day quote

In future, farmers incurring any loss from a natural disaster would be duly compensated prior to completion of assessment



BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

Children's education is of paramount importance. The students might commit mistakes. They might even be persistent. But their future must not be harmed for this. The parents need to sit and talk with them



D.K. SHIVAKUMAR | KARNATAKA CONGRESS PRESIDENT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Karnataka on April 5 to launch a slew of special programmes for the development of the state



BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | KARNATAKA CM

SHORT TAKES

Three killed

Guwahati: Three employees, including two engineers of the government-owned North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO), were killed after a turbine of the dam got flooded and exploded at Khandang hydropower project in Assam's Dima Hasao district Saturday, officials said. NEEPCO officials added that following incessant rain in the upper reaches of Meghalaya, the dam of the NEEPCO power plant flooded and several trees were uprooted killing engineer Anupam Saikia, Manager Jayanta Hazarika and another contract staffer Dimraj Johri on the spot.

Five dead

Amravati: Five members of a family were killed after a truck collided with their car in Maharashtra's Amravati district Sunday while they were going to attend a marriage function, police said. The car was completely damaged due to the impact of the collision. Two wheels of the truck also came off after the accident, which took place on Nandgaonpeth-Devalgaon ring road, they said.

Youth shot dead

Thiruvananthapuram: One person was killed and another grievously injured in gunshot firing when a man fired at them near a wayside eatery in Moolamattam of Kerala's Idukki. The incident happened late Saturday night. The deceased has been identified as Sanal Sabu while his friend Pradeep is battling for life at a private hospital in Thodupuzha. Police have arrested a person, Martin Joseph for the crime.

Flight inaugurated

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Sunday, inaugurated the SpiceJet Gorakhpur-Varanasi flight, via video conferencing. Union civil aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia participated in the function from Gwalior. Speaking on the occasion, he said that nine airports are running in Uttar Pradesh and air connectivity has vastly improved in five years. The work of connecting other countries is also going on.

Jammu breaks 76-year record

Jammu: The maximum temperature in Jammu Sunday settled at 37.3 degrees Celsius, breaking a 76-year-old record for the month of March. The previous highest day temperature of 37.2 degrees Celsius was recorded on March 31, 1945, Director Meteorological Department Sonum Lotus said.



Protecting national interests biggest duty of every citizen
VENKAIHAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

AMARNATH YATRA TO START JUNE 30

After remaining suspended for two years due to the Covid pandemic, the Amarnath Yatra 2022 will start June 30



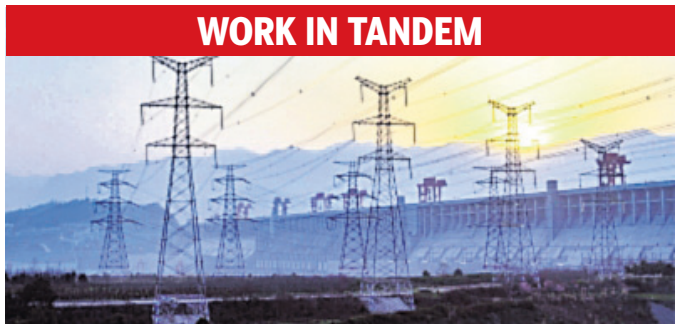
How IMD's weather watchers power the national grid

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 27: In summer time, when Delhi often simmers at 42 degrees Celsius till late evening with night temperatures hovering at 28-29 degrees, massive thunderstorms often bring down temperature by as much as 10 degrees.

While the common Delhiites are greatly relieved as the mercury plummets, the power companies used to have a tough time adjusting to the crash in power demand. However, that is a thing of the past with improved weather forecasts by the IMD.

It is but natural that the power demand fluctuates with the changes in weather -- temperature and humidity, including heat waves, rainfall / thunderstorms, snowfall, cyclones, solar radiation and wind



WORK IN TANDEM

speed -- anything and everything has a bearing on the consumers' need for power. So, the power suppliers -- both generation companies and distribution companies -- are constantly on their toes to meet this change in demand.

It is here that as part of the dedicated, customised weather forecast for Power System Operation

Corporation Ltd. (POSOCO), the power generation companies are able to plan their schedules better.

For instance, in case of expected thunderstorms as mentioned above, the power generation companies are getting alerts well in advance, starting with 72 hours, coming down to Now Cast service (which gives forecasts for next three hours). When

the companies know that the next day the power demand is likely to go down massively for a few hours, they plan their generation accordingly.

The national load dispatch centre (NLDC) and the state load dispatch centre work (SLDC) in tandem with the power generation companies and power distribution companies across India. Power distribution companies plan demand so as to avoid under-drawal as going against demand will not just invite a penalty for them but also runs a risk of disturbing the grid balance, said a power expert.

Helped with IMD alerts, it is not just the power distribution companies but also the power producing companies that can plan their output. "In case of the thunder storm prediction a day ahead, the states surrender their power de-

mand, which helps plan reduced generation at regional levels.

The Earth System Science Organisation, India Meteorological Department (ESSO-IMD), under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, and Power System Operation Corporation Ltd. (POSOCO) had signed a Memorandum of Understanding on May 18, 2015 for optimum use of weather information / forecast in the power sector.

"As part of this deal, the ESSO-IMD provides weather warnings about likely occurrences of thunderstorms, heat waves, cold waves, rainfall, fog, etc., over various states up to the next 72 hours. We provide short and extended range forecasts... We also provide state / region wise monthly / seasonal outlooks of weather conditions," said R.K. Jenamani, senior scientist at the IMD.

BIRBHUM KILLINGS

CBI INTERROGATES TMC LEADER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rampurhat (WB), March 27: CBI sleuths probing the Birbhum carnage Sunday interrogated arrested local Trinamool Congress leader Anarul Hossain and other accused persons, besides recording the statement of those who were injured in the violence.

Experts of the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL), Delhi, who arrived here on Friday, collected samples from the place of occurrence in Bogtui village, which is almost deserted following the gruesome incident on the night of March 21.

CBI officers also visited the village near here, where eight people were charred to death after their houses were set on fire, in a suspected fallout of a local TMC panchayat leader's murder. A team of CRPF personnel are providing security to the sleuths of the central agency, who are investigating the case on a Calcutta High Court order.

Earlier, a state government formed SIT was conducting an enquiry. Anarul Hossain, who was arrested by the police within hours of a directive by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday to hunt down all accused including her party workers and leaders, was



The CBI team, led by a DIG-rank officer, reached Bogtui Saturday morning following the High Court order and took charge of the investigation

A team of CRPF personnel are providing security to the sleuths of the central agency, who are investigating the case on a Calcutta High Court order

taken to the CBI camp office from Rampurhat police station in the morning and was interrogated by the agency's officers.

Hossain, a former TMC president of Rampurhat block-I, was questioned along with two others accused, a CBI officer said. The Calcutta High Court had directed the state police to hand over custody of all arrested persons in connection with the case to the CBI.

Another team of CBI officials visited the Rampurhat hospital on Sunday and recorded the statement of the four injured persons. "They spoke to the patients; I was there," Superintendent of the government hospital, Dr Palash Das, said.

The sleuths could not question a woman, who has suffered over 60 per cent burns, as her condition is still not okay to take questions. The CBI team, led by a DIG-rank officer, reached Bogtui Saturday morning following the high court order and took charge of the investigation.

"We will also interact with local people in Bogtui village. We have requested the administration to trace those who fled the village. The Central Forensic Science Laboratory personnel will continue their examinations," a CBI official said earlier in the day.

100-day annual leave plan soon



MOVE TO TACKLE STRESS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: An ambitious proposal mooted by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to allow CAPF jawans spend at least 100 days with their families is likely to be implemented shortly, with officials saying the contours for a comprehensive pol-

icy are being worked out.

The MHA has held multiple meetings, the latest being early this month, to thrash out the issues delaying the implementation of the policy. The policy aims to reduce work-related stress and enhance the happiness quotient of the about 10 lakh troops and officials who un-

derstand arduous duties in some of the most challenging environmental conditions and in remote locations. "All the central armed police forces have been directed to expedite their proposals. The home ministry is expected to take a final decision by the next month as to how the welfare measure can be implemented," a senior CAPF officer said.

Pandemic brings parole bonanza for Tihar prisoners

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 27: The Covid-19 pandemic though caged the world after its inception, yet several of the already caged got to see life outside the four walls.

Pandemic might have proved to be the worst nightmare for the world, but not for several prisoners who were incarcerated at various jails all over the country as the authorities were forced to release many of them on bail.

The Supreme Court on March 23, 2020, just one day before the nationwide 21-day lockdown was imposed, directed the state governments to constitute a high powered committee comprising the Principal Secretary (Home) and the Chairman of the state legal service authority to determine which class of convicts

or undertrials could be released on parole or interim bail.

The directions, issued by the Apex Court, were in a bid to decongest the already overpopulated jails of India. India, at that time was having four lakh inmates in different prisons of the country. As a result a total of 68,264 prisoners were released on interim bail across the country until December 14.

One year later in 2021, when the virulent second wave of pandemic struck the country, the Top Court yet again taking note of the unprecedented surge in Covid cases told the state governments to immediately release prisoners who had been granted bail or parole last year.

Director General of Delhi Prisons Sandeep Goyal informed that in 2021, as many as 842 convicted prisoners were released on emergency



parole while 4,621 undertrial prisoners were released on interim bail. Still not all prisoners were lucky enough! Reportedly, several inmates who were convicted for offences under POCSSO Act, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, offences against women, prisoners ac-



Children play in the Hooghly river on a hot day, in Nadia

PTI PHOTO

Supreme Court order. The Apex Court had in July, 2021 ordered that all prisoners, released by the High-Powered Committee (HPC) of various state governments following its May 2020 order, shouldn't be asked to surrender until further orders.

As the Covid cases have drastically plummeted in the past some time, has the time arrived that they be sent back? Certainly, the law offenders have the potential to disrupt the peace of the society. In the recent past several cases have come forth where the inmates who have been out on parole have committed more serious crimes.

Delhi Police on March 22 shared that they have arrested a dreaded criminal, already convicted in murder, robbery and attempt to murder cases, for raping a woman after

8 killed, 44 hurt as bus falls into valley

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tirupati (AP), March 27: Eight people were killed and 44 injured when an over-speeding private bus lost control while negotiating a curve on a ghat road and fell into a valley at Bhakarapet in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh late on Saturday night, police said.

The victims, all relatives, belonged to Anantapuram district and were on their way to Tirupati from Dharmavaram to attend a wedding engagement ceremony scheduled for Sunday morning, police added.

Over-speeding resulted in the accident, a senior police official said. A journalist working in a vernacular newspaper was among those killed in the accident.

As it was pitch-dark, the rescue operation took a lot of time. Chittoor District Collector M Hari Narayanan rushed to the accident spot and supervised the rescue and relief operations.

Tirupati Urban SP Ch V Appala Naidu and a team of police personnel pulled out the injured persons using ropes and shifted them to RUIA hospital in Tirupati.

The bodies of the deceased were extricated in the early hours of Sunday and the post-mortem was conducted at RUIA hospital. State Panchayat Raj Minister P R C Reddy, hailing from Chittoor district, visited the injured persons in the hospital and consoled them.

The Andhra Pradesh government announced an ex-gratia payment of Rs 2 lakh each to the kin of the deceased and Rs 50,000 each to the injured.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the deaths in the accident. "Pained by the loss of lives in a tragic bus accident in Chittoor, AP. Condolences to the bereaved families. I hope the injured recover soon," PM Modi tweeted.

Tearful adieu to 2 brothers killed in terror attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, March 27: "Mei kya ous khatah (what was my fault)," wailed the inconsolable mother of an SPO and his brother killed by militants as their bodies were brought home in Jammu and Kashmir's Budgam district Sunday.

A large number of people assembled at their home in Chadbugh locality and bid a tearful adieu to the brothers. "What was my fault? What was my fault?" the grieving mother asked as women tried to console her.

"They should have shot me in the heart... Where will I find my sons now?" she said. Militants Saturday shot dead special police officer (SPO) Ishfaq Ahmad near his home. In the firing incident, Ahmad's brother Umar Jan also received bullet injuries. Jan was taken to the SKIMS Hospital in Bemia where he succumbed on Sunday morning.

Heart-wrenching scenes were witnessed in Chadbugh as the bodies reached their residence. Men and women -- old and young alike -- could not control their tears and wailed. Women showered flowers and toffees on the coffins of the two as they were taken on their final journey and laid to rest at their ancestral graveyard.

Sawant faces tough test picking Cabinet members



With just one day to go for the swearing-in ceremony of the Sawant cabinet, the current challenge before the CM would be the selection of the knights at his government table

Sawant's foremost challenge would be the allocation of portfolios to his chief in-house rival Rane

The CM is expected to hold key portfolios like Home, Finance, Education, etc, while Subhash Shirodkar may be the BJP's candidate for the Speaker's post

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, March 27: Handpicked in 2019 by the then Chief Minister late Manohar Parrikar as his successor, Pramod Sawant, at the time the Speaker of the state Assembly, had his task pretty much cut out because the hand which blessed his credentials was the same hand which had guided the Goa BJP's destiny for nearly three decades.

In 2022, however, despite leading the BJP to a win in the state Assembly polls, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's political battles do not appear to have ended.

Sawant had to fight off challengers to the throne this time round, in the form of his former Transport Minister Mauvin Godinho and former Health Minister Vishwajit Rane. While Godinho let go his ambitions in a rather meek manner, it took a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah March 20 to hammer out the differences between Sawant and Rane and clear the former's path to the chief minister's chair once again.

With just one day to go for the swearing-in ceremony of the Sawant cabinet, the current challenge before the Chief Minister would be the selection of the knights at his government table.

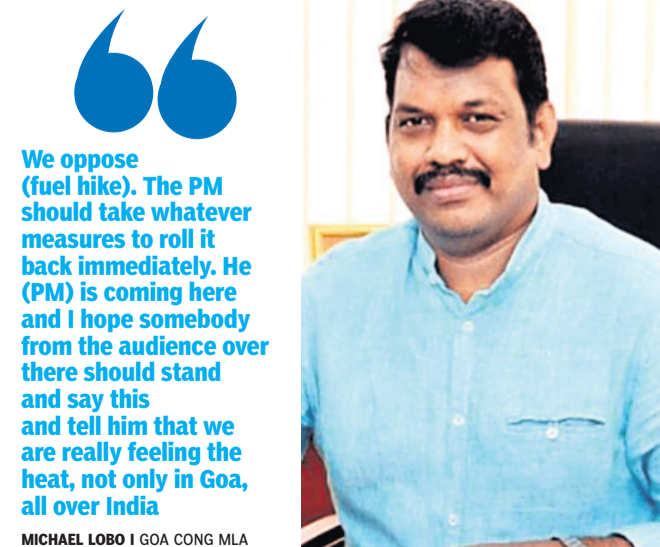
Cong MLA wants face-off with PM on fuel prices at CM Sawant's swearing-in

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, March 27: Former Ports Minister and Congress MLA Michael Lobo, Saturday, urged the attendees present at the swearing-in ceremony of Chief Minister Pramod Sawant March 28 to stand up and tell Prime Minister Narendra Modi to his face about the hardship caused by the continuous increase in fuel prices.

Lobo, a former BJP Minister, was speaking to reporters at the state legislative assembly complex here.

"We oppose (fuel hike). The PM should take whatever measures to roll it back immediately. He (PM) is coming here and I hope somebody from the audience over there should stand and say this and tell



MICHAEL LOBO | GOA CONG MLA

We oppose (fuel hike). The PM should take whatever measures to roll it back immediately. He (PM) is coming here and I hope somebody from the audience over there should stand and say this and tell him that we are really feeling the heat, not only in Goa, all over India

being told to accept Sawant's leadership, had made a pitch for a ministry more prestigious than the Health Ministry, which he had previously held from 2017-2022.

Rane may be tipped for the lucrative Finance or Public Works Department portfolios, according to a senior BJP leader, who added that the call would be dependent on how the BJP decides to factor in the support of the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party and its two MLAs. The leader of the MGP legislature party Sudin Dhavalikar has held the PWD portfolio on numerous occasions under both Congress and BJP-led alliances over two decades.

While the MGP could be considered surplus to the BJP's requirement to form a government right now, the regional party's support may be critical to the BJP's success in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Party sources said that a first-time elected independent MLA Dr Chandrakant Shetye, a well known eye specialist who has supported the BJP-led coalition, may be given the Health Ministry portfolio, while another independent MLA, a former Congress legislator Aleixo Reginaldo may also be included in the Pramod Sawant cabinet.

The Chief Minister is expected to hold key portfolios like Home, Finance, Education, etc, while the party's MLA from Shiroda Subhash Shirodkar may be the BJP's candidate for the Speaker's post.

The other MLAs who are likely to be sworn-in during the first round March 28, could include former Transport Minister Mauvin Godinho, former Revenue Minister Rohan Khaunte, former Art and Culture Minister Govind Gaude, former Power Minister Nilesh Cabral and former Congress Chief Minister and now BJP MLA Ravi Naik.

According to the BJP's Goa poll in-charge Devendra Fadnavis it is the High Command which aids the Chief Ministers when it comes to cabinet formation, but according to Sawant the decisions have yet to be made.

"That will be decided later. How can I tell you this now?" he said. State BJP president Sadanand Shet Tanavade said that he was not aware if all 11 ministers would be sworn in along with the CM March 28.

"We do not know yet. That is the CM's right. Whether it will be at a time or phase wise, a decision has not been made yet," he said.

MUMBAI MURAL



Children from the Dharavi Art Room paint a wall along with Dzia (not in the picture), a Belgian street artist to create his masterpiece in the Mahim Art District, in Mumbai, Sunday. The Kingdom of Belgium and The Republic of India joined hands to celebrate India's 75th year of independence. In commemoration, the Belgian Consulate invited Dzia, a famous Belgian street artist, to paint a mural in Mumbai

Mumbaikars lord over 'Sunday Streets'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, March 27: At the crack of dawn Sunday, the Chairman of Tata Sons and Air India N Chandrasekaran kick started a unique citizen-friendly initiative of Mumbai Police called 'Sunday Streets' inspired by Commissioner of Police Sanjay Pandey.

Chandrasekaran, along with Joint Commissioner of Police Vishwan Nangre-Patil and others, flagged-off a t-shirt run by people at Nariman Point at 6.15 am, marking the arrival of 'Sunday Streets' concept for the country's commercial capital.



The initiative envisages 'handing' over around half-a-dozen prominent roads in the city and suburbs to the people to bring them out of their homes and let them 'chill in the streets' without the fear of speeding vehicles or tiresome traffic jams. These streets were Marine Drive, Bandra, Andheri, Goregaon, Vikhroli and Mulund - over which Mumbaikars were free to 'lord' over for 4 hours - starting this Sunday morning and maybe extended further: 'It's final. #SundayStreets from this Sunday (March 27). Look forward to Mumbaikars joining in large numbers,' said Pandey, who has been interacting directly with

the citizens and social groups after he assumed charge of the coveted top police post this month.

During the four hours, the citizens can let their hair down on open roads, engage in activities like yoga, running, cycling, walking, skating, etc, without the fear of getting knocked down by zooming vehicles, or pesky hawkers and vendors creating hurdles.

Around 8 years ago, a similar 'Equal Streets' movement had been launched by some social groups but it was limited to certain suburban areas and went on the 'backstreet' during the two years of Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

Urging people to step out on the vehicles-free streets and do anything they desire on the free roads, Pandey said even the Mumbai Police band would be available to regale the citizens. Citizens and groups have welcomed the Mumbai Police chief's initiative and are demanding that more roads be converted into 'Sunday Streets' to enable people, especially women, children and seniors, to step out safely and move around freely, and there's a buzz on social media. People's groups term it as a game changer for the city, pointing out how lakhs have fallen ill remaining cooped up in their homes, especially during the pandemic, and roads are out of bounds even on weekends when the traffic increased by nearly 50 per cent.

Raut targets BJP over Mehbooba's comments

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 27: A day after Mehbooba Mufti remarked that peace would be elusive in Kashmir until the Centre holds dialogue with Pakistan and people of Jammu and Kashmir; Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut said the PDP chief could make such comments as the BJP had given people like her strength by forming government with her party in the erstwhile state.

Talking to reporters, Raut said the Multi-led People's Democratic Party (PDP) was a "friend" of the BJP at some point of time.

The PDP has been "pro-Pakistan and sympathises with terrorists" right from the beginning, he claimed.



Notably, the PDP and BJP had come together to form a government in Jammu and Kashmir in 2015. The alliance broke in June 2018. Mufti Saturday reiterated her call to the BJP-led government at

the Centre for a dialogue with Pakistan and the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Raut said Mufti had supported Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru and still, the BJP had formed a government by forming an alliance with her party in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Now, the same Mehbooba Mufti wants dialogue with Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir issue. This is a sin of the BJP, Raut alleged.

"The BJP gave strength to such people by sharing power with them... Hence, the BJP is responsible for what Mehbooba Mufti is saying," he said. The Rajya Sabha member

further said whatever is the BJP's view on the issue now, the Shiv Sena had and will always oppose the PDP's ideology.

Referring to Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrakant Patil's recent comment that Prime Minister Narendra Modi sleeps for only two hours and works for 22 hours every day, Raut claimed it was height of scyophancy.

"The prime minister has lost even his two-hour sleep hearing Patil's comments," he quipped.

The BJP gave strength to such people by sharing power with them... Hence, the BJP is responsible for what Mehbooba Mufti is saying

Maha man trots his way to work as oil boils

THE MAN SAID HE NOW TRAVELS ABOUT 30 KM EVERYDAY ON THE HORSE, AND EVEN GOES TO BUY GROCERIES AND FAMILY FUNCTIONS RIDING ON THE ANIMAL'S BACK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aurangabad, March 27: In the wake of the fuel price rise and problems in maintaining a motorcycle due to the COVID-19 pandemic-induced restrictions, a man working as a lab assistant at a pharmacy college here in Maharashtra commutes on a horse to his workplace every day.

The diesel price in Aurangabad is just a few paise short of Rs 100 per litre, while the petrol rate has crossed Rs 115 per litre.

The petrol price Sunday was hiked by 50 paise a litre and diesel by 55 paise, taking the total increase in rates since resumption of daily price revision less than



a week back to Rs 3.70-3.75 per litre. The rates have been increased across the country and vary from state to state depending upon the incidence of local taxation.

To tide over the situation, Shaikh Yusuf has put away his motorcycle and goes to his workplace, located 15 km from his home, riding a horse. He started the practice during the COVID-19-induced lockdown earlier.

Following the lockdown, garages were shut for a long time and the service and maintenance of motorcycle was a problem, even the fuel prices have been going up. So, I decided to put away my vehicle and bought a Kathiawadi horse, Yusuf told reporters here.

The man said he now travels about 30 km everyday (to and from work) on the horse, and even goes to buy groceries and

family functions riding on the animal's back.

Travelling on a horse is certainly cheaper than moving around on a motorcycle. Also, while commuting on the bike, we sometimes just roam around as it only requires a kick to start it. But, while using the horse for commuting, we think of its health and our health condition too, he said.

Sometimes, children travelling in expensive cars wave at me when I am out on my horse, and I feel happy, Yusuf said.

He also said the growing prices of various commodities can be controlled only when the fuel prices come down.

of the day quote

The MCD Bill has been brought only to delay the elections. What is the logic of reducing the number of wards? We will study the Bill and will challenge it in the court if need be

Despite repeated consultations with the Coal Ministry and NITI Aayog over the issue of non-payment of long-standing legitimate dues of Rs 1.36 lakh crore for the mining done by central PSUs, the Union government has paid no heed to the matter so far

Kashmir has been awaiting a solution for the last 70 years...there will be no peace in the region until the Kashmir issue is resolved, and for that, dialogue with Pakistan and the people of Jammu and Kashmir is imperative

SHORT TAKES

Probe ordered

Kalaburagi (Karnataka): Karnataka police has ordered a probe into the case of missing beef of 59 tonnes seized in Kalaburagi district in the state, police said Sunday. It is being alleged that the police personnel who seized the beef are involved in the missing case also. After seizure, the beef was kept at the cold storage from where it went missing. The authorities have sealed the Taj Cold Storage located in Nandur Industrial area in the outskirts of the city after finding 61 tonnes of beef stored illegally in September last year.

Maya dissolves party units

Lucknow: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati has dissolved all units of the party Sunday, except the posts of state president, assembly speaker and district president. At a meeting convened here to discuss the party's poll debacle, Mayawati announced the action. The BSP also named Guddu Jamal as their candidate for the Azamgarh bypoll. The bypoll was necessitated after Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav resigned from the Azamgarh parliamentary constituency post winning the Karhal assembly seat.

Two J&K cops arrested

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Police on Sunday arrested two policemen and attached a middle rung police officer to the district police lines (DPL) for allegedly taking money from ticket owner of the Tulip Garden in J&K's Srinagar city. Rakesh Balwal, Senior Superintendent of Police (Srinagar) told some reporters that two policemen have been arrested and the Station House Officer (SHO) Nishat police station has been attached to DPL Srinagar for allegedly taking money from the ticket owner of Tulip garden.

UP police officer suspended

Badaun (Uttar Pradesh): A station house officer (SHO) of the Uttar Pradesh Police has been suspended after a video went viral showing him in an objectionable position with a woman. Virendra Singh Rana, the SHO of Ughaiti was suspended by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) of Badaun O.P. Singh hours after his video with objectionable clips went viral on social media.



Large-scale public-private investment is needed in the social sector, especially in health and education. It is needed as the government has limited resources

NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

ARUNACHAL TURNS CORONAVIRUS-FREE

Arunachal Pradesh became a coronavirus-free state Sunday with the lone active Covid patient in Lohit district recovering from the disease, a senior health official said



K'taka witnessing unprecedented communal polarization

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, March 27: Karnataka is witnessing unprecedented communal polarization before the next Assembly elections scheduled for May 2023. Analysts have raised concerns that it is the first time in the 75 years of the post-independence period that such deep polarization is taking place in the state known for its harmony.

First it was the cow slaughter ban, then the anti-conversion bill, later the hijab row; then it was the murder of Bajrang Dal activist Harsha followed by the proposal to introduce the Bhagavad Gita in the school syllabus; strict implementation of the hijab verdict by

not allowing Muslim students wearing hijab into exam rooms; announcement on celebration of Ugadi festival as 'Dharmikadina' (religious day); ban on Muslim traders at Hindu religious fairs and temples for protesting against the High Court verdict on wearing the hijab. There was also a slew of supportive announcements by the ruling BJP on these measures, seemingly for the polarization of the majority Hindu votes in the state.

On the other hand, some organizations and students of the minority community stated that their holy book, the Quran is more important to them than the rules and guidelines. Congress leader Akram Khan had even stated that



if anyone tries to meddle with Islam they will be cut into pieces. Students who have refused to sit for exams without the hijab have also stated that religion is more important to them than education.

A few of them said religion is as important as education for them. Political thinker Basavaraj Sulibhavi said that harmony has been the heritage of Karnataka state. The revered poet Kuvempu

has described it as a peaceful garden of people of all religions. Religious harmony and composition between religions in the state is notable.

Communal polarization is not easy in Karnataka. The BJP has never got a majority in the state. Though the state witnessed communal clashes, the people belonging to different faiths share a strong bond.

Bababudangiri pilgrimage centre, Santa Shishunala Sharif and Guru Govind Bhat lineage are standing testimonials to the integration of 'Sufi', 'Sharana', 'Natha' and 'Aaroodha' streams. In Gadag district, a single trust manages a mosque, temple and church. In

north Karnataka, even though only two or three Muslim families live there, whole villages celebrate Moharram with fervour. Muslims come to Gadag Savatur Lingayat Math on Moharram and conduct namaz in the premises of the Math. All of them are served food there only Sulibhavi explained.

"Today minds are being filled with communal hatred for political gains. I don't think it will challenge the basic structure of the harmonious fabric of the state," he said.

The hijab row which started as a small protest by six students of Udupi Girl's Pre-University College is now being discussed at the international level.

Cong seeks CBI probe into Amtek insolvency

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: The Congress Sunday accused the central government of sheltering promoters of certain companies declaring insolvency through the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India, and demanded a CBI probe into the insolvency of Amtek group.

Addressing a press conference, Congress leader Sanjay Nirupam said the government must order a probe into the findings of Ernst and Young's audit report into the insolvency of Amtek Auto.

The report states that "Amtek group has carried out preferential transactions, transactions defrauding creditors, and it siphoned off more than 70 per cent of its assets and funds to 129 shell companies," Nirupam said.

"The Amtek group of companies took a loan of Rs 25,000 crore from Indian banks. The company was eventually sold for Rs 1,500 crore. Its promoters wrote off assets worth Rs 7,500 crore, and Rs 12,500 crore funds were siphoned off through shell companies," he said, citing EY report.

"The findings of the EY report are there in front of us but no action has been taken, that is our issue. Why the promoters of the company are being shielded? What connection do they have with the government?" he asked.



The Amtek group of companies took a loan of Rs 25,000 crore from Indian banks. The company was eventually sold for Rs 1,500 crore. Its promoters wrote off assets worth Rs 7,500 crore, and Rs 12,500 crore funds were siphoned off through shell companies

SANJAY NIRUPAM | CONGRESS LEADER

"No one but the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) can probe this matter because it seems Ministry of Corporate Affairs is 'hand in glove', Serious Fraud Investigation Office is short staffed, and National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) also seems to be a part of this 'scam'," Nirupam alleged.

The "swindling" by the promoters of Amtek must be probed,

he demanded. Citing official figures, Nirupam said that in the last five years, six lakh crore of banks' money has been lost.

Modi government must come out with a white paper on all such insolvency cases, Nirupam said, accusing the government of shielding promoters of several firms that have filed for insolvency recently.

Addressing the press conference along with Nirupam, Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera alleged that in the name of resolving the insolvency cases of the companies, institutional corruption is going on.

"Nirmala Sitharaman ji always says these companies took loans during the time of the UPA. But the loan defaults and the loss of money is going on under the Modi government," Nirupam said. He also compared the Amtek case with that of ABG Shipyard.

Let's make local 'global', says PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday said India achieving its export target of USD 400 billion this fiscal shows that the demand for its items is increasing all over the world, and asserted that when every Indian gets 'vocal for local', it does not take much time for the "local to become global".

In his monthly Mann Ki Baat radio broadcast, Modi also noted that the government has purchased items worth more than Rs 1 lakh crore in the last one year through Government e-Market with close to 1.25 lakh small entrepreneurs and shopkeepers having sold their goods directly to the government.

From a time when only big companies could sell goods to the government to now when even the smallest of shopkeepers can sell their produce, a new India has emerged, he said.

"She (new India) not only dreams big but also shows the courage to reach that goal, where no one has reached before. On the basis of this very courage, all of us Indians together will definitely fulfill the dream of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat, a self-reliant India



Aatmanirbhar Bharat, a self-reliant India," he said.

The prime minister also lauded the rise in the market for Ayush products and start-ups related to it and asked entrepreneurs to try to make their portals in all languages recognised by the United Nations as there are many countries where English is neither spoken nor understood much.

"Promote your information keeping such countries in mind as well. I am sure that soon, Ayush start-ups from India with better quality products will reign all over the world," he said. Hailing the potential of Indian products, he said the basis of its strength is the country's farmers, artisans, weavers, engineers, small entrepreneurs, the MSME sector and people from many different professions.

Application process for CUET from April 2

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: The application process for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for undergraduate courses in central universities will commence from April 2, the National Testing Agency has announced.

In a public notice issued on Saturday, the agency announced that the CUET will provide a single window opportunity to students to seek admission in any of the Central Universities (CUs) across the country.

The CUET (UG) -2022 will be conducted in a Computer Based Test (CBT) Mode, it said.

Aspirants should refer to the information bulletin for admission to undergraduate programmes of the desired Central Universities for admission into undergraduate programmes, it said.

Govt may drop Covid pre-call messages

Official sources said the Department of Telecommunications has written to the Union Health Ministry requesting it to drop these pre-call announcements and caller tunes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: The COVID-19 awareness pre-call audio announcements set by telecom operators at the start of the pandemic may soon become history.

After almost two years of raising awareness about the disease, the government is now actively considering the removal of the COVID-19 pre-call messages after receiving representations that audio clips have served their intended pur-



pose and are delaying critical calls during emergencies.

Official sources said the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has written to the Union Health Ministry requesting it to drop these pre-call announcements and caller tunes. It cited representations received from Cellular Operators Association of India (COA) as well as mobile subscribers.

"The health ministry is now considering removal of these audio clips in view of the improved pan-

demographic situation in the country even as other measures for spreading public awareness about the safeguards against the viral disease will continue," an official source said.

The instructions for implementation of COVID-19 pre-call announcements and caller tunes to Telecom Service Providers were issued by DoT following directions received from the Union Health Ministry. The telecom service providers (TSPs) have been playing the pre-call announcements and

caller tunes related to coronavirus to spread awareness amongst citizens and tell them about the precautions and vaccination to be taken during the pandemic." After the passage of around 21 months, these announcements have served the intended purpose of awareness creation among the citizens and serve no value now. "The message being played across networks invariably results in holding up and delaying critical calls from going through during emergencies and ends in consumption of precious bandwidth resources. This overloads the TSPs network and creates a significant delay in call connection," the DoT said in a letter written recently to the Health ministry citing the representations.

It also impacts customer experience and many have approached the TSPs to deactivate these as it is a hindrance when the customers need to make urgent calls, the letter said.

Swain observed that the India is always committed to work constructively with Sri Lanka towards resolution of issues related to fishermen and their livelihoods in a humanitarian manner.

"He also took up the issue of early release of Indian fishermen and boats currently in Sri Lankan custody," the statement said.

India expressed its readiness to work together with Sri Lanka for joint research to enhance the productivity of Palk Bay fisheries.

Both sides also discussed cooperation between Navy and Coast Guard of both countries in patrolling as well as existing hotline between the coast guards.

The related operational matters including cooperation in tracking poaching, prevention of environmental damage due to bottom trawling, addressing grievances of fishermen on either side was discussed.

The issues relating to investigation on recent deaths of fishermen and status of apprehended fishermen and fishing boats too figured in the meeting.

Kuru Kolumn: Rahul buys peace. The Congress high command is keen to buy peace with some of the G-23 leaders but not with all of them. It is learnt that a deal has been offered to senior Haryana Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda which is state specific and also to Ghulam Nabi Azad in

respect of Jammu & Kashmir. Anand Sharma may also be accommodated considering the coming election in Himachal Pradesh. But it is not confirmed. But the high command is not at all inclined to re-nominate other active G-23 leaders like Kapil Sibal, Vivek Tankha, P J Kurien. Though two Maharashtra leaders - Mukul Wasnik and Milind Deora - have not been very active lately in the G-23 meetings, it is yet not certain if any of them will get a Rajya Sabha seat from Maharashtra.

Maharashtra under PM's radar

It is now clearly emerging that the Prime Minister is personally monitoring each and every development in Maharashtra. If he is holding meetings

with former Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and other BJP central leaders regarding the state of affairs there, he is also getting feedback from the key central agencies like the CBI, Intelligence Bureau, Enforcement Directorate and others. He is hands-on Prime Minister and goes into every detail all by himself. He caused a shock the other day when he signalled that these agencies have been given a clear mandate to go whole hog against the "corrupt" leaders of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra.

Priyanka in RS!

There is a strong possibility of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra entering the Rajya Sabha. Since the Congress'

Chhaya Verma (Chhattisgarh) is retiring shortly, it is suggested that Priyanka be brought to the Upper House. There is also a likelihood that at least two leaders from the G-23 (change-seekers) may be given the ticket. The high command has virtually quelled the rebellion at the CWC for the time being by conceding its mistake in handling party affairs. There is a strong possibility that senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad may also be accommodated as part of the peace deal. The Gandhis do not want any controversy when Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's name is proposed.

PM's words haunt BJP RS aspirants

There is unease among the BJP MPs who are retiring and not sure

whether they would be re-nominated. The words of PM Modi are still ringing in their ears when they were brought to the Rajya Sabha in 2016 who gave his peace of mind to them over a felicitation dinner. Modi had told them tersely, "Don't think you got the Rajya Sabha seat because of your seniority, or hard work. There are more senior leaders and more hard working leaders who are sitting outside the Rajya Sabha." True to his word, Modi avoided re-nominating anyone from the Rajya Sabha in 2018 and 2020 including from his home state of Gujarat. Barring a handful of them like Nirmala Sitharaman, Finance Minister, Piyush Goyal, and a couple of others, none among the 20 BJP retiring MPs are hopeful of getting back into the Upper House this time.

international



Israel and the United States will continue to work together to prevent a nuclear Iran. At the same time, Israel will do anything we believe is needed to stop the Iranian nuclear programme
YAIR LAPID | ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER

COLORADO WILDFIRE INTENSIFIES
Authorities issued an evacuation order for 19,000 people Saturday near a fast-moving Colorado wildfire in rolling hills south of the college town of Boulder, not far from the site of a destructive 2021 blaze that levelled more than 1,000 homes



Ukrainian rebels may join Russia

Russian rockets struck Lviv Saturday while Biden visited neighbouring Poland, a reminder that Moscow is willing to strike anywhere in Ukraine despite its claim to be focusing its offensive on the country's east



UKRAINE INTELLIGENCE CHIEF PREDICTS GUERRILLA WARFARE
RUSSIA-BACKED REGION SIGNALS POSSIBLE REFERENDUM
UKRAINE, RUSSIA AGREE ON TWO HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS

AGENCIES
Moscow, March 27: The head of Ukraine's Luhansk separatist region said Sunday it may hold a referendum on becoming part of Russia, after Moscow sent troops into its pro-Western neighbour. "I think that in the near future a referendum will be held on the territory of the republic, during which the people will... express their opinion on joining the Russian Federation," Russian news agencies quoted Leonid Pasechnik as saying. "I am sure this will be the case," he said. Russia launched its military action in Ukraine February 24, saying it was acting in defence of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics in the country's east. President Vladimir Putin had two days earlier recognised the two regions as independent. The announcement of a possible referendum drew mixed reactions from Russian lawmakers. "I think now is not the right time for this," said Leonid Kalashnikov, a lawmaker who heads the committee on relations with

the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States in Russia's lower house of parliament. "It is hardly necessary to occupy oneself with such questions when the fate at the front is being decided," state news agency TASS quoted him as saying. But Andrei Klislias, head of the constitutional legislation com-

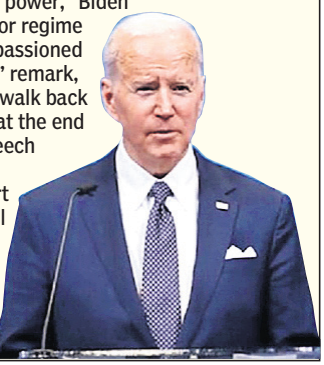
mittee in the upper house, said the breakaway regions had every right to determine their own future. "Russia has recognised the sovereignty of the Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics," he told state news agency RIA Novosti. "The authorities of these republics have the right to make any decisions in accordance with their constitutions." The industrial, mainly Russian-speaking regions broke from Kyiv's control in 2014 in fighting that has claimed more than 14,000 lives. Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine after a pro-Moscow leader was ousted in a popular uprising in Kyiv in February 2014 and a referendum was held in the southern region on becoming part of Russia.

Ukr calls for more arms

Lviv: Russia wants to split Ukraine into two, as happened with North and South Korea, Ukraine's military intelligence chief said Sunday, vowing "total" guerrilla warfare to prevent a carve-up of the country. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged the West to give Ukraine tanks, planes and missiles to help fend off the Russian forces, which the Kyiv government said were increasingly targeting fuel and food depots. After more than four weeks of conflict, Russia has failed to seize any major Ukrainian city and Moscow signalled Friday it was scaling back its ambitions to focus on securing the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine, where Russian-backed separatists have been fighting the Ukrainian army for the past eight years.

Biden slammed for his 'unscripted' declaration

Warsaw: US President Joe Biden's call for Vladimir Putin to be "removed" from power is setting off alarm bells among US foreign policy experts, who fear that it could escalate tensions even after the Kremlin scales back its war aims in Ukraine, Daily Mail reported. "For God's sake this man cannot remain in power," Biden had said in a shocking apparent call for regime change in Moscow at the end of an impassioned speech from Poland. The "unscripted" remark, which the White House scrambled to walk back as the Kremlin expressed fury, came at the end of an otherwise resolute and fiery speech rallying the free world to unite in opposition to "autocracy" and support of Ukraine. Richard Haass, the Council on Foreign Relations president, tweeted his concerns that Biden had "just expanded US war aims, calling for regime change."



Shanghai to impose phased lockdown

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
Shanghai, March 27: Shanghai will launch a phased lockdown to curb an Omicron-fuelled Covid-19 outbreak that has hit China with its highest caseloads since the early days of the pandemic, the city government said Sunday. China's biggest city will lock down its eastern half from Monday until Friday, officials said, followed by a similar lockdown of its western side beginning April 1. The metropolis of 25 million has in recent days become the leading hotspot in a nationwide outbreak that began to gain pace in early March. Although recent case numbers remain insignificant in a global context, they are China's highest since the first weeks of the pandemic, which first emerged in the city of Wuhan in late 2019.

EU envoy hopes to restore N-deal

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Tehran, March 27: A leading European Union diplomat held talks in Tehran Sunday, Iran's state-run media reported, amid hopes that an agreement to restore Iran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers could be completed. The meetings between the EU's envoy, Enrique Mora, and top Iranian officials come at a sensitive moment for talks to revive the deal, as the glimmers of a resolution to some of the thorniest issues in the negotiations have emerged. The report on the talks in Tehran gave scant detail, saying only that the diplomats discussed the latest on the nuclear agreement, with Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali

Iran gradually breached the agreement with a massive expansion of its nuclear work

Bagheri Kani repeating that Iran believed a deal was within reach if America was "realistic" in its demands. After meeting Mora, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian also cast blame on the US for the delay in reaching an agreement. Former President Donald Trump abandoned the nuclear deal in 2018 and re-imposed crushing sanctions. Nuclear talks broke off earlier this month as last-minute wrangles in Vienna coincided with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and financial sanctions imposed by the West on Moscow. But officials have

since made encouraging noises. Russia appeared to back down from its earlier demand that its trade with Iran be exempted from Western sanctions. And for the first time, Iran's top diplomat on Saturday publicly signalled flexibility over Tehran's demand that Washington stop designating the country's Islamic Revolutionary Guard, its powerful paramilitary force, as a foreign terrorist organisation. The prospect of the designation's removal had alarmed America's Mideast allies, such as Israel, which fiercely opposed the original nuclear deal and argued that easing sanctions on the Revolutionary Guard would embolden Iranian-backed militant groups from Hezbollah in Lebanon to the Houthis in Yemen.

Canada's indigenous peoples seek papal apology at Vatican

REUTERS
Vatican City, March 27: Canadian indigenous peoples meet Pope Francis this week to ask him to apologise for the Catholic Church's role in residential schools where children were abused and their culture denied. More than 30 indigenous elders, residential schools survivors and young people will meet him several times at the Vatican between Monday and Friday in what Canada's Catholic Church has called a process of healing and reconciliation. "We expect that these private encounters will allow the Holy Father to meaningfully address both the ongoing trauma and legacy of suffering faced by Indigenous Peoples to this day," Canada's bishops said in a statement. The meetings would also focus on "the role of the Catholic Church in the residential school system, which contributed to the suppression of indigenous languages, culture and spirituality," it said.

The recurring schools scandal broke out again last year with the discovery of the remains of 215 children at the former Indian Residential School in Kamloops in the Western Canadian province of British Columbia. The discovery at the school, which closed in 1978, reopened old wounds and brought new demands for accountability. Hundreds more unmarked burial sites have been found since. "This is something that is an important step," said Gerald Antoine, chief of the Dene people and regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said of the meetings. He told a news conference in Canada that the delegates would ask the pope "to visit our family and to apologise. I think this is an issue which is long overdue." Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has asked Francis to make an apology during a visit to Canada. Last October, Francis accepted an invitation from the Canadian bishops. Vatican sources say he likely will go this summer.

Jaishankar hands over Coastal Radar System to Maldives



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Male, March 27: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Sunday formally handed over the Coastal Radar System to the Maldives Chief of Defence Force Maj Gen Abdulla Shamaal as he described it as a fine example of India's SAGAR and Neighbourhood First policies. The Coastal Radar System, which is already operational and comprises 10 radar stations, will contribute in enhancing maritime security for the Maldives and for the entire region. "Handed over the expanded Coastal Radar System in Maldives to Chief of Defence Force, @CDFofMNDP Product of MEA-Navy partnership for regional security. A fine example of our SAGAR and Neighbourhood First policies. A strong statement of our Special Partnership," Jaishankar tweeted. SAGAR or "Security and Growth for all in the Region" is aimed at cooperative measures for sustainable use of the oceans in the region. The Maldives is one of India's key maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean region and the bilateral defence and security ties have been on an upward trajectory in the last few years.

Foreign powers behind 'conspiracy': Imran

The no-confidence motion against the Imran Khan-led government was submitted by the Opposition March 8



PAK POLITICAL TURMOIL

Islamabad, March 27: In a massive show of strength ahead of a crucial no-confidence motion against his government, Pakistan's embattled Prime Minister Imran Khan Sunday addressed a mammoth rally in the national capital where he claimed that foreign powers were involved in a 'conspiracy' to topple his coalition government. Addressing the rally of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Party

(PTI) titled 'Amr Bil Maroof (enjoin the good) and billed as a "historic" event at Parade Ground in Islamabad, Prime Minister Khan said foreign elements are using local politicians and money to "mend the country's foreign policy" and asserted that he has a letter as

'evidence' to support his claims. "Attempts are being made through foreign money to change the government in Pakistan. Our people are being used. Mostly inadvertently, but some people are using money against us. We know from what places attempts are being to pressure us. We have been threatened in writing but we will not compromise on national interest," Khan said in his marathon speech that lasted more than an hour and a half. General Musharraf tried to save his government and gave these thieves NRO (National Reconciliation Ordinance) and it resulted in the destruction of Pakistan," Khan was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper. Pakistan has been on the edge since

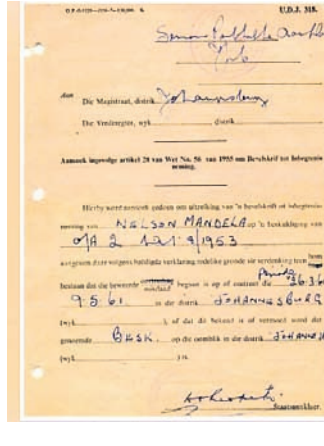
Opposition parties on March 8 sub While Khan was addressing the rally, a Baloch leader, Shahzain Bugti, announced to part ways with him. He had been given the task to hold talks with estranged Baloch nationalist leaders to bring them into the mainstream but he ended by getting estranged himself and ditching the premier. Bugti was working as special assistant to the prime minister on reconciliation and harmony in Balochistan. He said that the prime minister had promised to focus on South Balochistan and under-developed areas, "but he failed to do so". Meanwhile, an equally huge event is expected in Islamabad on Monday by the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), an alliance of the Opposition parties.



NFT of Mandela's arrest warrant auctioned for \$130K

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
Johannesburg, March 27: An NFT version of an arrest warrant for anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela has raised \$130,550 at auction, with proceeds going towards a museum preserving the history of South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle. South Africa's first democratic, black president was arrested August 5, 1962, and later jailed for 27 years. "The reserve price at the Saturday night auction in Cape Town was 900,000 rand (\$61,800), but the non-fungible tokens, or NFT, sold for 1.9

million (\$130,550) via a buyer online," Ahren Posthumus, CEO of the digital auctioneer Momint said Sunday. The buyer was a foreigner, based in the United Arab Emirates. "Proceeds for the Mandela NFT will go to Liliesleaf museum, to keep their doors open and stay afloat," Posthumus told AFP. Liliesleaf shuttered its doors in September 2021 due to financial difficulties. Selling art as non-fungible tokens, or NFTs uses the same technology as cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin. The buyer receives a verified digital token, which proves the artwork is original. "This is re-



The original document, dated 1961, now yellowed, with gnarled edges and bearing staple holes on one side, is handwritten in both English and Afrikaans

ally a unique and novel way of generating income," Liliesleaf Farm museum founder, Nicholas Wolpe told AFP. The original document, dated 1961, now yellowed, with gnarled edges and bearing staple

holes on one side, is handwritten in both English and Afrikaans. It has been kept at the Liliesleaf Farm heritage site archives in Johannesburg since around 2006, said Wolpe. Between 1961 and 1963, the landmark farm in an upscale northern Johannesburg suburb served as the secret headquarters and nerve centre of the then banned African National Congress (ANC), which led the fight against white-minority rule. Mandela hid there for some time under the guise of a farm worker, dressing in overalls, before leaving to raise funds abroad.

of the day quote

I think in India there's a huge opportunity for growth, because there's a big wealth around the Indian market, and we will see how this is developing. We had one of the highest growth in terms of percentage last year, so there are opportunities also for the future.

STEPHAN WINKELMANN
CHAIRMAN AND CEO, LAMBORGHINI

The Engineering, Telecom & Healthcare sectors are on the verge of an Industry 4.0 transformation.

There is a shift from a central industrial control system to one where smart products and processes are at the heart of their operations

SUNIL C | HEAD - SPECIALISED STAFFING, TEAMLEASE DIGITAL

DLF is expanding its retail real estate portfolio, and will develop two new shopping malls, including Mall of India Gurgaon and four neighbourhood shopping centres

SRIRAM KHATTAR | MD, DLF RENTAL BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES

McCap of 7 top valued cos falls

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 valued firms tumbled ₹1,14,201.53 crore last week, dragged down by Hindustan Unilever and HDFC twins. Last week, the BSE benchmark index declined 501.73 points or 0.86 per cent. While HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever Limited, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, HDFC and Bharti Airtel were among the laggards from the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries Limited, Tata Consultancy Services and Infosys were the three gainers.

54 top firms bid for Reliance Cap

New Delhi: Adani Finserve, ICICI Lombard, Tata AIG, HDFC Ergo, and Nippon Life Insurance are among the 54 prominent firms that have expressed interest to acquire debt-ridden Reliance Capital Ltd, promoted by the Anil Ambani Group, sources said. The last date for submission of bids for the debt-ridden firm had been extended to March 25 from March 11 earlier by the Reserve Bank-appointed administrator. Other bidders include Yes Bank, Bandhan Financial Holdings, Cholamandam Investment, OakTree Capital, Blackstone, Brookfield, TPG, KKR, Piramal Finance and Poonawala Finance, sources said.

CCPA fines Paytm Mall, Snapdeal

New Delhi: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed fine of ₹1 lakh each on e-commerce firms Paytm Mall and Snapdeal for selling non-standard pressure cookers and asked them to recall the sold items as well as reimburse the amount paid by the consumers. In two separate orders, the CCPA found Paytm Ecommerce Pvt Ltd (Paytm Mall) and Snapdeal Pvt Ltd guilty of selling pressure cookers, which did not conform to BIS standards and were non-compliant to Domestic Pressure Cooker (Quality Control) Order 2020 (QCO).

Apple logs 60% sales share mark

New Delhi: Driven by strong 5G upgrades for the iPhone 12 and iPhone 13 series, Apple reached the 60 per cent sales share mark globally last year – for the first time since 2017. According to a new report, the delayed launch of Apple devices in 2020 also pushed demand to 2021.



Spectrum pricing will play a very important role. If operators are made to buy a very expensive spectrum, naturally their cash flows will be limited, they will have to pay

RANDEEP SEKHON
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, AIRTEL

REGULAR INT'L FLIGHTS RESUME

Regular international flights resumed Sunday after a coronavirus pandemic-induced hiatus of approximately two years, with Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia calling it a "very important day". India had banned scheduled international flights March 23, 2020



AIMING CINEMA GIANT TAG

PVR, INOX announce merger

In a major twist, India's leading multiplex chain PVR, which was earlier in advanced talks with the local unit of Mexican company Cinépolis for a possible merger, has decided to combine operations with the second largest multiplex chain, INOX Leisure



The partnership of these two brands will put consumers at the centre of its vision and deliver an unparalleled movie-going experience to them. The film exhibition sector has been one of the worst impacted sectors on account of the pandemic and creating scale to achieve efficiencies is critical for the long term survival of the business and fight the onslaught of digital OTT platforms

AJAY BIJLI | CMD, PVR

As we head into the industry's revival amidst headwinds, this decisive partnership would bring in enhanced productivity through scale, a deeper reach in newer markets and numerous cost optimisation opportunities, and continue to delight cinema fans with world-class experiences and landmark innovations

SIDDHARTH JAIN
DIRECTOR, INOX LEISURE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: Leading film exhibition players PVR Ltd and Inox Leisure Ltd Sunday announced a merger deal to create the largest multiplex chain in the country with a network of more than 1,500 screens.

The respective board of directors of the two companies at their meetings held Sunday have approved an all-stock amalgamation of Inox with PVR, the two companies said in separate regulatory filings.

The combined entity will be named PVR Inox Ltd with the branding of existing screens to continue as PVR and Inox. New cinemas opened post the merger will be branded as PVR Inox, it added.

As per the agreement, Inox will merge with PVR in a share swap ratio of 3 shares of PVR for every

10 shares of Inox.

"The amalgamation is subject to the approval of the shareholders of PVR and INOX, respectively, stock exchanges, SEBI and such other regulatory approvals as may be required. Post the merger, the promoters of INOX will become co-promoters in the merged entity

along with the existing promoters of PVR," the filing said.

PVR Promoters will have a 10.62 per cent stake, while Inox promoters will have 16.66 per cent stake in the combined entity, it added.

When the merger comes into effect, the board of the merged company would be reconstituted with

Combined entity will be named PVR Inox Ltd

The merger plans to operate 1546 screens across 109 cities

INOX Promoters will have 16.66% stake, while PVR promoters will have 10.62% stake

PVR's Ajay Bijli will be appointed as the MD and Sanjeev Kumar would be appointed as the Executive Director

total board strength of 10 members and both the promoter families having equal representation on the board with two seats each.

The merger will unlock significant complementarity and growth potential and offers compelling revenue and cost synergies, the statement added.

While Inox's Pavan Kumar Jain will be appointed as the Non-Executive Chairman of the Board and Siddharth Jain would be appointed as Non-Executive Non-Independent Director in the combined entity.

PVR currently operates 871 screens across 181 properties in 73 cities, while Inox operates 675 screens across 160 properties in 72 cities.

"The combined entity will become the largest film exhibition company in India operating 1,546 screens across 341 properties across 109 cities," the filings said.

No cut in import of Russian coking coal



REUTERS

New Delhi, March 27: India is leaning toward continuing to import coking coal from Russia, the steel minister said Sunday, seeming to buck a global trend to shun Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine.

"We are moving in the direction of importing coking coal from Russia," Ramchandra Prasad Singh told a conference in New Delhi.

India plans to double imports of Russian coking coal, a key ingredient in making steel, the minister said. He said the country had imported 4.5 million tonne but did not indicate the period he was referring to.

Western countries and Japan have slapped unexpectedly heavy sanctions on the government of President Vladimir Putin and people associated with him. India, a major buyer of Russian goods from commodities to weapons, has abstained from several key United

Vessels carrying at least 1.06 MT of coking coal are set to deliver the fuel to Indian ports this month, the most since January 2020

Nations votes condemning the Feb 24 invasion.

"Smooth supplies" from Russia of coking coal have been affected, Singh said, in an apparent reference to the war. He did not elaborate.

Russia, typically India's sixth-largest supplier of coking and thermal coal, could start offering more competitive prices to Chinese and Indian buyers as European and other customers spurn Russia because of sanctions, traders say. The trade could also be boosted by a rouble-rupee trading arrangement, they said.

1ST CHARGING STATION

ATGL forays into EV infrastructure



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ATGL is India's largest private CNG and piped cooking gas distributor

New Delhi, March 27: Adani Total Gas Ltd, a joint venture of Adani group and French energy giant TotalEnergies SE, has forayed into the electric mobility infrastructure sector by launching its first EV charging station in Ahmedabad.

The charging station is located at ATGL's CNG station at Maninagar in Ahmedabad, the company said in a statement. The electric vehicle (EV) charging station "will enable quick turnaround time for EV owners with best-in-class fast charging technology and convenient use digital platforms," it said.

The company aims to expand its network by setting up 1,500 EV charging stations across the country, and has kept an expansion plan ready to move beyond 1,500 EVCS,

based on the demand generation and momentum building of the EV ecosystem in the country.

The company said it has the strategic fit to venture into electric mobility and capture a significant share of the rapidly growing EV market.

ATGL also draws its strength from the Adani Group's inherent capacity to generate renewable power, and can further leverage group level synergies for sourcing green power.

The global experience of TotalEnergies SE in the EV infrastructure space is another factor that adds competitive edge to ATGL's vision as it eyes market leadership in the space, ATGL said.

21 infra projects show cost overruns of ₹4.73 lakh crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: As many as 421 infrastructure projects, each entailing investment of ₹150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than ₹4.73 lakh crore, according to a report.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation monitors infrastructure projects of ₹150 crore and above.

Of 1,565 such projects, 421 projects reported cost overruns and 647 projects were delayed.

Total original cost of implementation of the 1,565 projects was ₹21,86,542.05 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be ₹26,59,914.61 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of ₹4,73,352.56 crore (21.65% of original cost), the ministry's latest report for February 2022 said.

FOREIGN PORTFOLIO INVESTORS FEAR THAT INDIA WOULD BE IMPACTED MORE BY COMMODITY PRICE HIKES, PARTICULARLY IN CRUDE OIL, SINCE INDIA IS A MAJOR IMPORTER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: Overseas investors have pulled out a net ₹1,14,855.97 crore from the Indian markets in the current year so far, amid heightened geopolitical tensions and inflation concerns.

Foreign portfolio investors

RBI releases booklet on frauds

Issued in public interest, the RBI booklet provides details of commonly observed modus operandi, precautions to be taken against fraudulent transactions and digital hygiene to be followed by the public

AGENCIES

Mumbai, March 27: Worried over a spurt in digital frauds in recent years, the Reserve Bank March 7, asked people to never share confidential banking information like OTP and CVV, and observe cyber hygiene practices.

In a publication titled 'BE(A)WARE - A booklet on Modus Operandi of Financial Frauds', the RBI said fraudsters have been using innovative methods to defraud the common people of their hard-earned money, especially the new entrants who are not entirely familiar with the techno-financial ecosystem.

Based on an analysis of complaints of frauds, the RBI said "sharing of confidential information by the customers, knowingly or unknowingly, is one of the major causes leading to the financial frauds." The RBI asked the public to never share confidential details like user name, password, card details, CVV and OTP with anyone, even their own family members and friends. It added that bank officials, financial institutions, RBI or other genuine entities do not ask customers to share confidential information.

Imposters, the RBI said, often pressurise and trick customers into sharing confidential details



load applications from any unverified or unknown source or on being guided by an unknown person.

"As a prudent practice before downloading, check on the publishers owners of the app being downloaded as well as its user ratings etc. While downloading an application, check the permissions and the access to your data it seeks, such as contacts, photographs, etc. Only give those permissions which are absolutely required to use the desired application," the RBI said.

ATM card users, it said, should check that there is no extra device attached near the card insertion slot or keypad of the ATM machine, before making a transaction. It is also advisable to cover the keypad with your hand while entering the PIN, the central bank said.

The RBI has also asked the public not to fall prey to unbelievable lottery offers or abnormally high returns as "nobody gives free money, especially such huge amounts of money. Do not make payments or share secure credentials in response to any lottery calls/emails." It advised the public to use virtual keyboards on public devices and frequently change passwords.

such as passwords, OTP, PIN, CVV etc by citing an urgency, such as the need to block an unauthorised transaction, payment required to stop some penalty, or an attractive discount. These credentials are then used to defraud the customers.

The RBI also asked the customers not to click on unknown and unverified links and immediately delete such SMS or email sent by unknown senders to avoid accessing them by mistake in future.

"Always go to the official website of your bank service provider. Carefully verify the website details especially where it requires entering financial credentials. Check for the secure sign (https with a padlock symbol) on the website before entering secure credentials," it said. It advised the public not to down-

INFLATION, GLOBAL CONCERNS

FPI outflow shoots past ₹1 trillion mark in 2022



(FPIs) have sold domestic equities worth ₹48,261.65 crore so far this month, taking the year-to-date tally this year to a massive ₹1,14,855.97 crore, according to depositories data.

The exodus of foreign investors was largely owing to inflationary pressures and deepening global macroeconomic conditions following the Russia-Ukraine war, experts said.

Foreign investors pulled out ₹28,526.30 crore in January, ₹38,068.02 crore in February and ₹48,261.65 crore in March so far

This is for the sixth straight month that foreign institutional investors have offloaded their holdings on a net basis in the Indian equity market

Senior EVP & Head- Equity Research, Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company.

Kurian further added that India is a net importer of crude oil and it is estimated that every 10 per cent increase in crude oil prices impacts the current account deficit by around 30 bps and CPI inflation by around 40 bps and GDP by around 20 bps, all else remaining constant.

"However, unlike the past, this time around there are a few off-sets from a domestic standpoint, which includes high forex reserves, strong FDI flows and improvement in export growth," Kurian noted.

"The Indian equity markets continue to be in a grind, influenced by and reacting to incremental news flow on the global front, especially related to the geopolitical situation and Fed rhetoric. The

two key challenges and monitorables for the markets in the near term are the persistent inflationary pressures and the rising bond yields," said Milind Muchhala, Executive Director, Julius Baer.

While the inflationary pressures have been building up over the past few months, the geopolitical situation has worsened the situation, as Ukraine and Russia are large players in the energy and several commodities, and the prices of several of these have spiked up since the beginning of the crisis, Muchhala added.

"A prolonged geopolitical situation and elevated prices will gradually start weighing on demand and profitability and can lead to a cut in growth and earnings estimates. Also, the recent rise in bond yields can have implications for flows and equity valuations," Muchhala said.

Not the ideal farewell for 'Mithu', 'Chakdaha Express'

INDIA'S DEFEAT TO SOUTH AFRICA IN THE ICC WOMEN'S WC SIGNALS THE END OF THE ROAD FOR TWO OF INDIA'S GREATEST WOMEN CRICKETERS, MITHALI AND JHULAN



TWO OF A KIND: Mithali Raj (left) and Jhulan Goswami

SAKYASEN MITTRA, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 27: They both had a dream and they both will ultimately have to bid adieu to competitive cricket with that dream not turning into reality. It will definitely be impossible for either 'Mithu' or the 'Chakdaha Express' to prolong their journeys with the target of winning an elusive World Cup winner's medal. But then their contributions for women's cricket in India will be etched in words of gold.

STAT FACTS				
JHULAN GOSWAMI				
ODIs-201	W-251	BB-6/31	Economy-3.37	5W/M-2
MITHALI RAJ				
ODIs-232	R-7805	HS-125*	Avg-50.68	100s-7
				50s-64

Both Mithali Raj and Jhulan Goswami are now a few days away from their 40th birthday. When the next women's World Cup comes around, they may well be married with their cricketing gears stored for posterity. Both chased the dream of winning the World Cup... they came

close on two occasions but then destiny conspired to defeat them. Mithali played in six World Cups, the same number Sachin Tendulkar participated in while Jhulan played in five. With India's three-wicket loss Sunday to South Africa in the ICC Women's World Cup, their jour-

ney in international cricket definitely has ended. It is the end of an era in Indian women's cricket, but then what a glorious journey it has been. They both have been largely responsible in giving women's cricket in India an identity, so much so that biopics are now being made on them.

Stats (in box) will not be the perfect judge to assess their contribution to women's cricket in India. At a time when women's cricket was ridiculed, both gave it a face. Mithali could have been a Bharatnatyam dancer but chose to display her footwork on the cricket field. Jhulan ignored sarcastic comments on local trains every day en route to the training cauldron from a non-descript town in West Bengal, Chakdaha. Today the world hails both them like never before.

Mithali got a half century in the game against South Africa while Jhulan missed the game with a side strain. They probably would have dreamt of a better farewell. However, cricket can be cruel at times. Not all including the great Sir Donald Bradman get the prizes they deserve. But even then, the game cannot ever forget their contributions and without them, WOMEN'S CRICKET wouldn't have been the game that it is today.

Shabaash Mithu and salute Chakdaha Express. Both of you have made India proud. Shabaash Mithu is the biopic on Mithali starring Taapsee Pannu while Chakdaha Express is on Jhulan with Anushka Sharma playing the lead role. There won't be anyone like them.

INDIAN EVES MISS WC SEMIFINAL BUS

Heartbreak for Women in Blue as they exit after losing to South Africa



FACES TELL THE STORY: A dejected group of Indian cricketers walks off the field after their loss to South Africa, Sunday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Christchurch, March 27: The inability to press on the accelerator at the death and an unpardonable no ball in the last over of the South Africa innings contributed largely to India's exit from the ICC Women's World Cup here Sunday. In a must-win game for the Women in Blues, they went down by three wickets to the Proteas to miss the semi-final spot.

Smriti Mandhana (71, 84b, 8x4, 1x6), Shafali Verma (53, 46b, 8x4) and skipper Mithali Raj (68, 84b, 8x4) struck half-centuries, setting the platform for India to reach a competitive 274 for seven at the Hagley Oval. Harmanpreet Kaur (48, 57b, 4x4) also got some handy runs, but then the total did not prove to be substantial at the end.

However, it must be stated here

that India could only manage 50 runs in the last 10 overs and that was their undoing. India at one stage looked like posting a score of over 300-plus, but finished well short and in the end, it proved to be a very costly lapse.

Despite India's average bowling and fielding, the match went full distance with off-spinner Deepti Sharma needing to defend seven runs in the final over. A well-set Mignon du Preez (52 n o, 63b, 2x4) was caught in the deep off the penultimate ball, raising hopes of

a memorable win for India. However, moments later the umpires ruled that Deepti had overstepped, turning India's ecstasy into agony in a matter of seconds. Du Preez eventually hit the winning runs off the final ball to see her team through and finish second in the league stage behind Australia. In possibly her last match for India, skipper Mithali Raj was left devastated along with her teammates. India were not consistent enough to make the semifinals and ended fifth in the league stage with three wins and four losses. South Africa were cruising in their run chase with the in-form Laura Wolvaardt (80, 79b, 11x4) and Lara Goodall (49, 69b, 4x4) sharing 125 runs for the second wicket. India's job became doubly difficult with Jhulan Goswami missing the game with a side sprain.

BRIEF SCORES

India: 274 for 7 (Smriti Mandhana 71, Mithali Raj 68, Shafali Verma 53; Masabata Klaas 2/38) lost to South Africa: 275 for 7 overs (Laura Wolvaardt 80, Mignon du Preez 52 n o) by three wickets.

SHORT TAKES

Windies triumph

St George's (Grenada): West Indies crushed England by 10 wickets in the third and final cricket Test here Sunday to win the series 1-0. The hosts needed only 4.5 overs on day 4 to reach the winning target. West Indies reached the winning target of 28-0 in the second innings after earlier dismissing England for 120. Skipper Kraigg Brathwaite (20 n o) and John Campbell (6 n o) finished off the job in style. Earlier England resuming on 103 for eight wickets were bowled out for 120. Kemar Roach took both wickets to fall on the day.

Medvedev shines

Miami Gardens (US): Eyeing to regain the World No. 1 ranking once more top-seeded Daniil Medvedev hammered Andy Murray 6-4, 6-2 in the second round Miami Open tennis tournament here Saturday. Such was Medvedev's dominance that he did not face a single breakpoint on his serve during the entire match. He can regain the No. 1 spot by making the Miami semifinals. "Definitely, I have a lot of motivation to try and get it back," Medvedev said after the match.

Humiliating loss

Manama: India conceded three second half goals to suffer a disappointing 0-3 defeat against Belarus in their second international football friendly match here Saturday. India had lost to Bahrain 1-2 in their first international friendly match here Wednesday. Bykau Artsem (48th minute), Salavei Andrei (68th) and Hramyka Valery (90+2) were the goal scorers for Belarus who are 10 places above India in the FIFA rankings at 94th. India did well in the first session as they kept Belarus at bay but lost way in the second session.

New MSD feat

Mumbai: Mahendra Singh Dhoni once more dazzled his fans with his 38-ball 50 during the IPL game against Kolkata Knight Riders here Saturday. In the process CSK's Dhoni at 40 years and 262 days became the oldest player to score a half century in the IPL breaking the record held by Rahul Dravid. It should be stated here that Dravid while playing for RCB, had scored a half century against Deccan Chargers when he was 40 years and 116 days old.

Sindhu cruises to 2nd title of season

PRANNOY FINISHES 2ND BEST AFTER REACHING FINAL, LOSES TO INDONESIAN CHRISTIE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Basel, March 27: Ace Indian shuttler PV Sindhu clinched her second women's singles title of the season with a straight game win over Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrunphan here Sunday. However, HS Prannoy went down fighting in the men's singles final at the Swiss Open Super 300 badminton tournament.

Sindhu, a double Olympic medalist, took 49 minutes to get the better of the fourth seeded Busanan 21-16, 21-8 at the St Jakobshalle here. However, Prannoy suffered a 12-21, 18-21 defeat against Asian Games gold medalist and fourth seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia in a 48-minute summit clash to finish runner-up.

For Sindhu, it was a moment of glory as she finally lifted the trophy after losing to Rio Olympics gold medalist Carolina Marin of Spain in the final of last edition. It was the 26-year-old's 16th win over Busanan in 17 meetings. Sindhu had won the Syed Modi International Super 300 in Lucknow in January this year.

Sindhu rode on her attack to open up a 3-0 lead but Busanan started to stay in the rallies and produced some good quality shots to make it 7-7. However, after that it was Sindhu all the way as she did not allow her opponent to take lead in the match any more.



PV Sindhu did not have any difficulty beating Busanan Ongbamrunphan of Thailand in the final of the Swiss Open

A precise return at the backline gave Sindhu four game points and she sealed the first game when Busanan went wide. Busanan struggled with her length after the change of sides to concede a 0-5 lead early on in the second game. Sindhu looked more aggressive as she troubled the Thai with her acute angle shots to dic-

tate terms. In full flow, the Indian soon cruised to a decisive nine-point advantage at the interval. She kept a firm grip on the match to gallop to 18-4, riding on her alert front court play and precise returns. She pocketed the game and the match with a cross-court smash. Prannoy, the 29-year-old from

Thiruvananthapuram has been grappling with multiple health issues after being diagnosed with a gastroesophageal reflux disease in 2018 and Covid-19 infection in 2019. In the final, Prannoy couldn't match the accuracy and power of Christie, who looked in complete control of the match right from the start with accurate shots.

At a glance	
PV Sindhu bt Ongbamrunphan	21-16, 21-8
HS Prannoy lost to Jonatan Christie	12-21, 18-21

KINGS SUBDUE ROYALS

The Punjab side chased down a huge target of 206 with six balls to spare in a thrilling high-scoring match

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Navi Mumbai, March 27: Punjab Kings beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by five wickets in the 3rd match of the IPL 2022 at DY Patil Sports Academy here Sunday.

After being invited to bat first, brilliant knocks by skipper Faf du Plessis (88 off 57), Virat Kohli (41 not out) and Dinesh Karthik (32 not out) powered Royal Challengers Bangalore to 205-2 in 20 overs.

Apart from the trio of Du Plessis, Kohli and Karthik, Anuj Rawat also made valuable contributions with the bat for RCB with his knock of 21 off 20. For Punjab Kings, Rahul Chahar (1/22) and Arshdeep Singh (1/31) took a wicket apiece.



BRIEF SCORES	
RCB: Faf du Plessis 88, Virat Kohli 41; Rahul Chahar 1/22	
PBKs: Shikhar Dhawan 43, Bhanuka Rajapaksa 43; Mohammed Siraj 2/59	

unbeaten and helped Punjab chase down the target with one over to spare and five wickets in hand.

Mohammed Siraj was the highest wicketeer as well as most expensive bowler for RCB with his figures of 2/59.

Naveen honours Jayanti, Shriyanka

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 27: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has felicitated two sportspersons from the state - shooter Shriyanka Sadangi and para-athlete Jayanti Behera - for their recent triumph in international events. Patnaik presented a cash rewards of ₹15 lakh to Behera and ₹2,00,000 to Sadangi at a function here Saturday. He lauded them for their success and for inspiring budding talents.

Sadangi had won a bronze medal at the ISSF World Cup Shooting in Cairo, while Behera clinched three medals at the World Para Athletics Championships in Dubai earlier this month.

Both the awardees hailed Patnaik's "vision and initiatives" for improving the sports infrastructure in Odisha. The felicitation of Sadangi and Behera came a day after Olympian Dutee Chand alleged that the Odisha government was only promoting hockey.

Yadav scripts win for Delhi

KISHAN'S BRILLIANT UNBEATEN KNOCK FOR MI GOES IN VAIN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 27: Lalit Yadav (38b n o, 4x4, 2x6) played the innings of his life while Axar Patel smashed an unbeaten 38 (17b, 2x4, 3x6) as a depleted Delhi Capitals (DC) started their IPL campaign with a stunning four-wicket win over Mumbai Indians (MI) here Sunday. Chasing a challenging 178, Delhi were down 72 for five but the lesser-known Delhi all-rounder Yadav stayed calm and with Patel put on an unbeaten stand of 75 runs for the seventh wicket in 30 balls to take his side home.

After an ordinary day with the ball (0/40), Patel kept his best for the run chase after Delhi lost their key batters - Prithvi Shaw (38, 24b, 4x4, 2x6), Rishabh Pant (1), Rovman Powell (0) early on. MI were also sloppy on the field as Patel made full use of his dropped catch by Daniel Sams on 15.

Sams also leaked 24 runs in the 18th over with Yadav hitting him



for back-to-back four and six, while Patel hammered a monstrous six in the final ball to seal the chase, reaching 179 for 6 in 18.2 overs.

Leg-spinner Murugan Ashwin (2/14) was the most successful bowler for MI while Jasprit Bumrah went for 43 in 3.2 overs.

Earlier, wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan (81, 48b, 11x4, 2x6) showed immense maturity as he anchored MI to a fighting 177 for five. The 23-year-old opener, who became the most expensive buy of the IPL 2022 auction at ₹15.25 crore, proved his worth. He played second fiddle to Rohit Sharma (41, 32b, 4x4, 2x6) in the opening stand of 67 runs and then opened up once the skipper had gone.

Kuldeep Yadav (3/18) was the star performer for DC with the ball as he picked up vital wickets including those of Rohit and Kieron Pollard. Brief scores: MI 177 for 5 (Ishan Kishan 81 n o, Rohit Sharma 41, Kuldeep Yadav 3/18) lost to DC 179 for 5 in 18.2 overs (Lalit Yadav 48 n o, Axar Patel 38 n o, Murugan Ashwin 2/14) by four wickets.

Lalit Yadav is all smiles after leading Delhi Capitals to a win against Mumbai Indians