



GOING GLOBAL

Actor Urvashi Rautela announces collaboration with American singer Jason Derulo for upcoming music single

LEISURE P2



PAK PM IN TROUBLE

A main ally of Pakistan PM Imran Khan quits ruling coalition after reaching a pact with opposition seeking to oust him

INTERNATIONAL P10



CSK TAKE ON LSG

Ravindra Jadeja would look for the first win as CSK skipper when they lock horns with new entrants LSG

SPORTS P12

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DA OF CENTRAL EMPLOYEES HIKED BY 3 PER CENT

New Delhi: The Union Cabinet Wednesday hiked Dearness Allowance (DA) and Dearness Relief (DR) by 3 per cent to 34 per cent to compensate for the price rise, benefitting over 1.16 crore central government employees and pensioners. The additional instalment will be effective from January 1, 2022, said an official release after the Cabinet meeting. "The Union Cabinet...Has given its approval to release an additional instalment of DA to central government employees and DR to pensioners W.E.F. January 1, 2022, representing an increase of 3 per cent over the existing rate of 31 per cent of the Basic Pay/Pension, to compensate for price rise," an official statement said. The increase is in accordance with the accepted formula, which is based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission, it added.

BJP wants to kill Kejriwal: AAP



Footage from a CCTV camera installed at the Delhi CM's residence shows the protesters dismantling barricades as they huddled outside the house

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 30: Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia alleged Wednesday that after its poll defeat in Punjab, BJP wants to 'kill' Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal. The Aam Aadmi Party leader also said they will lodge a complaint in this connection.

He was addressing a press conference after a protest at Kejriwal's residence earlier by the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), the youth wing of the BJP, during which CCTV cameras and barriers were allegedly damaged by the protesters.

He said the 'life-threatening attack' on Kejriwal was 'pre-emptively planned.'

The activists of BJYM, led by its president Tejasvi Surya, staged a protest near Kejriwal's residence at Civil Lines here, demanding an apology from him for allegedly mocking Kashmiri Pandits, with the AAP alleging vandalism during the demonstration.

The BJP and AAP have been engaged in a word of war over 'The Kashmir Files' movie, with Kejriwal recently attacking the party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Delhi Assembly over the issue.

The BJP leaders and workers have been assailing Kejriwal and accusing him of 'mocking' the pain of Kashmiri Pandits and terming the movie based on their 'genocide' in Kashmir a lie.

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MORNING CLASSES IN SCHOOLS FROM APRIL 2

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: In view of the increase in day temperature across the state, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash Wednesday announced the beginning of morning classes in schools from April 2 for the safety of students.

The new timings for Classes I to VIII will be 6:30 am to 10 am, while for Classes IX and X will be from 7 am to 11 am. This decision was taken after witnessing a steady rise in temperature, the school and mass education minister said.

The regional meteorological centre Wednesday issued a heat wave warning for several districts of Odisha for March 31 and

April 1. It forecasted that the maximum temperature (day temperature) is very likely to rise gradually by 2 to 3°C during the next two days and there will be no large change thereafter. Maximum temperature (day temperature) is very likely to be above normal by 3 to 5°C at many places over the districts of interior Odisha during the next three to four days.

Minister Dash said: "Looking at the heat wave situation that is likely to prevail in the state in the coming days, we have decided to change the class timings for school children."

The schools for Classes I to VII opened in the state February 28 after nearly two years with a week-long rapport building exercise.

₹1.06L cr for 4 months

Government opts for vote-on-account instead of regular budget in view of the model code of conduct imposed due to recent rural and urban elections in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Finance Minister Niranjan Puari Wednesday presented a vote-on-account budget of ₹1.06 lakh crore in Assembly to meet the expenditure for the first four months (April to July) of the next financial year 2022-23. The government has opted for a vote-on-account instead of the regular budget in view of the model code of conduct imposed due to the recent rural and urban elections in the state, said Puari.

The vote-on-account would cover 100 per cent of budget estimates for calamity and election related expenses and 50 per cent of budget estimates for all other schemes, he said.

"We are grateful to the people of the state for having reposed their faith in us in the recently held rural and urban elections. This has motivated us to continue with our vision of building a new Odisha-empowered Odisha," he said.



Finance Minister Niranjan Puari presents the state budget in Assembly Wednesday

Stating the budget estimates for the entire year of 2022-23 envisage an expenditure of ₹2 lakh crore, he said total administrative expenditure is estimated at ₹89,620 crore including ₹29,248 crore for salaries, ₹18,221 crore for pensions, ₹8,467 crore for interest payment and ₹5,856 crore for maintenance of capital assets.

The total programme expenditure outlay for the financial year 2022-23 will be ₹1,10,000 crore, which is 33 per cent higher than that of 2021-22. Similarly, the outlay for disaster response funds will be ₹3,210 crore while transfers from state to the local

MAJOR ALLOCATIONS

₹12,241 cr HEALTH	₹26,492 cr EDUCATION
₹33,203 cr - SC/ST DEVELOPMENT	
₹20,344 cr AGRICULTURE & ALLIED SECTOR	₹8,523 cr IRRIGATION SECTOR
₹3,210 cr DISASTER MANAGEMENT	₹2,255 cr RURAL, URBAN WATER SUPPLY

bodies will have an outlay of ₹7,170 crore, he pointed out. The capital outlay for the next financial year will be ₹40,011 crore, which is about 5.6 per cent of GSDP. This is a 56 per cent jump over the current year's allocation, he said.

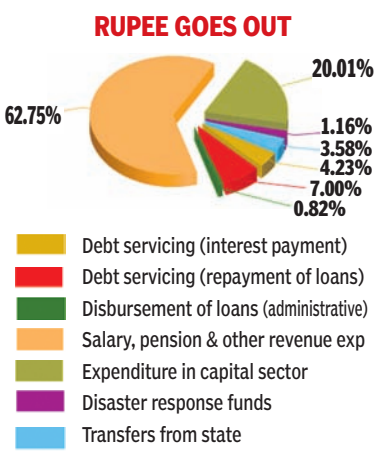
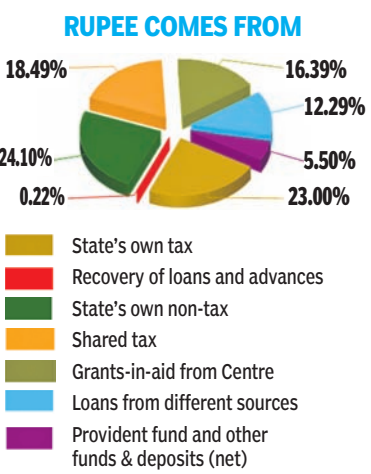
The revenue receipt of the financial year 2022-23 has been worked out at ₹1,63,967 crore and the revenue expenditure estimated at ₹1,44,349 crore. The estimated revenue surplus is of the order of ₹19,618 crore, which would be 2.7 per cent of GSDP. The estimated fiscal deficit of ₹21,588 crore would amount to 3 per cent of GSDP, Puari said in his budget speech.

Provision of ₹12,241 crore has been made for overall health spending of the state, while ₹2,000 crore has been allocated for Mission Shakti programme and ₹26,492 crore for education sector during 2022-23.

Similarly, ₹20,344 crore has been estimated for different schemes in agriculture and allied sector, which includes ₹1,874 crore of direct benefit transfers under Kalia scheme, ₹688 crore under crop production management, ₹907 crore of interest subvention to farmers, ₹600 crore of premium subsidy under PM Fasal Bima Yojana and ₹8,523 crore of total outlays for different schemes under irrigation sector.

MORE ON P3

INTERIM BUDGET



IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Oh! What a slap on face...Wait, it's not about your future...This clip from Oscars is everywhere!!

NEWS IN BRIEF

Penalty for non-linking of PAN with Aadhaar

New Delhi: Taxpayers not linking PAN with Aadhaar by March 31 would be required to pay a penalty ranging from ₹500 to ₹1,000, the I-T department has said. The last date for linking PAN with Aadhaar is March 31, 2022. Not adhering to the deadline will lead to PAN becoming inactive. In a notification, the Central Board of Direct Taxes said delayed intimation of Aadhaar will attract a late fee of ₹500 in cases where it is linked within the next three months or by June 30, 2022. Thereafter, ₹1,000 would have to be paid by taxpayers as penalty.

Increase in petrol, diesel prices goes on unabated

New Delhi: Petrol and diesel prices were Wednesday hiked by 80 paise a litre each, taking the total increase in rates in the last nine days to ₹5.60 per litre. Petrol in Delhi will now cost ₹101.01 per litre as against ₹100.21 previously while diesel rates have gone up from ₹91.47 per litre to ₹92.27 according to a price notification of state fuel retailers.

CITY FUEL PRICES

PETROL	₹107.79/litre
DIESEL	₹97.52/litre

Man burns wife alive over feud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kuchinda, March 30: In a gruesome crime, a man allegedly burnt his wife alive at Fatatagar village under Mahulapali police limits in Bamra block of Sambalpur district over a domestic dispute, Tuesday night.

The deceased was identified as Lilima Rana (35), wife of Raghu Rana (45). Police registered a case and arrested Raghu under Section 302 of IPC over an FIR lodged by the



woman's brother. The incident was the result of a feud between the couple, sources said. Police said the couple returned home Tuesday afternoon after collecting 'mahua'

flowers from a nearby jungle. The accused consumed liquor after arriving at home and picked up a quarrel with his wife. This resulted in a heated altercation between the two as Raghu started assaulting his wife. Unable to bear the torture, Lilima left home and went to her parental house.

Lilima's father convinced her to return to her husband's house in the village and dropped her back at around 11 pm. However, the issue did not resolve and took an ugly turn

when Raghu, under the influence of liquor, dragged his wife to a room and set her ablaze by dousing kerosene on her.

Hearing her screams, neighbours rescued and rushed her in an ambulance to Kuchinda hospital. However, she succumbed to burn injuries during treatment, late Tuesday night. Mahulapali police reached Fatatagar village and launched a probe while arresting the accused. The body was sent for post-mortem and a further investigation was on.

OrissaPOST

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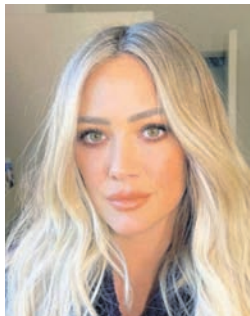


ACADEMY PROMISES ACTION OVER WILL SMITH INCIDENT

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has sent a letter to its members addressing the incident that occurred at the Oscars ceremony, when Hollywood star Will Smith slapped comedian Chris Rock after the comedian made a joke about the appearance of Smith's wife, Jada Pinkett Smith.

HILARY DUFF MOURNS LOSS OF FURRY FRIEND

Hilary Duff is mourning the loss of her pet dog after almost 20 years of having her beloved Yorkshire terrier Jak by her side. She took to Instagram to reveal the heartbreaking news that he had passed away.



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ARIES
The yogis have finally succeeded in impressing you. Was it a stint in a Art of Living course? Ganesha gives you the thumbs-up and suggests you join that music or dance class you have been wanting to. Generally a nice day, and success is on the cards.

TAURUS
Today is a day of closure. You may find yourself on the winning side of things, says Ganesha. Pending projects will reach completion and you will achieve satisfaction and success in education. With a little extra effort, you can build a castle from stone. Ganesha wishes you a cheerful and colourful day.

GEMINI
Today, you are likely to rack your brains to get things done. But your modesty will not do you any good. You will have to show that you are the boss, even if you are not. Your extraordinary brilliance will translate into exceptional performance and will save the day.

CANCER
Today, you are likely to be brimming with love and compassion. However, certain negative thoughts will spoil all your good work. But don't fret! Your efforts won't go wasted and you will get the desired results sooner or later, says Ganesha.

LEO
Working hard, or hardly working — there is a vast difference between the two. You would be wiser to be working hard today, especially if it is success that you desire, says Ganesha. Remember that there is no substitute for hard work, and the sooner you realise this, the better.

VIRGO
Today, your soul mate will both give and demand pleasant surprises, says Ganesha. Your business partners may bring in some good news. Take responsibility of your past mistakes and make plans for the days to come. Do not be shy of the advice of loved ones, as it will help you more than hinder.

LIBRA
Today, you will be in a mish-mash of emotions and feelings. Also, there are chances of accumulated feelings finding an outlet. Your capacity for emotional display may take people by surprise. However, you will also enjoy the higher responsibilities reposed on you, predicts Ganesha.

SCORPIO
Ganesha predicts today will be a day full of focus and a clear thought process. The clarity of thought you have has been acquired over a period of time, says Ganesha, and that could make all the difference. A crisp application of thoughts to ideas and actions will bring much appreciation from bosses and peers.

SAGITTARIUS
Setting for a new, better employment will help you fast-track your career growth. A telephonic interview might ring in a new offer. A lucrative deal with an MNC would serve well. Your dedication and devotion to work will also peak today, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
It's going to be a day of pleasant surprises. You will try your level best to help people around you, and will find it exceedingly frustrating when the results won't be as expected, says Ganesha. In fact, this may even dampen your spirit and shake your self-confidence. But try and transform your weaknesses into strengths — it will help you develop a more positive approach to life.

AQUARIUS
Eat, drink, and make merry. But watch out: don't empty your pockets in one go. Also, guard your reputation. A lot depends on your behaviour, and the big daddies may be watching you. You have a lot at stake, and there should be no regrets later.

PISCES
You are likely to be grinding yourself under at the workplace today. A turning point will arise in romantic liaisons, though if the evening awaiting you is anything to go by, it is something you should welcome wholeheartedly, says Ganesha.

Salman's ex-flame Somy Ali warns 'Harvey Weinstein of Bollywood'

Mumbai: Former actress Somy Ali, has sent out a warning to the 'Harvey Weinstein of Bollywood' that he will be exposed! Taking to her Instagram handle, the *Anth* actress shared a silhouette still from a Hindi film music video.

Besides saying that the women he abused will share their stories, she also named Aishwarya Rai Bachchan. "The Harvey Weinstein of Bollywood! You will be exposed. The women you abused will come out one day and share their truth. Just like @aishwaryarai Bachchan, arb," Somy wrote in her post.

Interestingly, the picture in question was a still from the Salman Khan and Bhagyashree's hit love track Aate Jaate Haste Gaate from the film *Maine Pyar Kiya* while sending out the warning.

It is unclear why she picked the particular picture. Somy was in a relationship with Salman for several years in the '90s. She recently went public about her split from the star, saying that they broke up as they were 'not happy'.



LOSS OF FACE FOR 'BHAIJAN'

In a big setback to Salman Khan, Laka Bhaijan, a Mumbai court has rejected his interim plea for a 'gag order' in a defamation suit against his NRI neighbour, along with costs.

Referring to the alleged utterances against Salman by viewers on social media, the court said the plaintiff failed to explain that these pertained to him or how they related to him.

The judge also said on perusal of some of the social media posts/videos transcripts, he found that

they were not 'entirely not defamatory per se'.

The court referred to some of the posts like 'rapists of nature', 'white terror', 'naked dance by Miya Salman Khan', 'mega-corruption' etc. purportedly tweeted by Kakkad, and statements by some journalists comparing Salman with the Taliban, how the actor was 'mafia', 'bully terrorising the locals', 'fudging records', etc. that were produced by the actor's team.

In contrast, the verdict noted that Kakkad had placed on record evidences like complaints and show-cause notices to Salman about the allegations of encroachments by the latter in his Panvel property, the 100-acres Arpita Farms, in public interest as a 'whistle-blower'.

Incidentally, Kakkad has already complained about these to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other bigwigs in Maharashtra, but had got no respite nor allowed to enter his property which is adjacent at a higher level with Salman's Arpita Farms since the past few years.



Nushratt's hack to avoid marriage

Mumbai: Nushratt Bharuchcha, who has been making noise with the trailer of her latest movie *Hurdang*, recently revealed how she has managed to dodge questions about marriage all this while. Yes, there is a trick for all those singles out there who want to dodge the 'marriage' question.

Nushratt's mother had revealed to the media that her daughter has avoided the marriage question for quite some time now.

Giving her advice as an expert, Nushratt said, "Best tip I can give anyone is don't fight it. The more you fight it, the more chaos there will be and more they will force you to do something you don't want to do."

Nushratt also revealed that she has been meeting boys as per her parents' choice, but the conversation doesn't go anywhere after she is done with meeting them. The actress said, "So I say, 'Yeah, let's go meet the boy, go to dinner, go to the best places, pick your own top five restaurants.' After meeting them, I don't take it forward from my end."



Urvashi collaborates with Jason Derulo

Mumbai: Actress Urvashi Rautela has announced collaboration with popular American singer, songwriter and dancer Jason Derulo, known for belting out hits such as *Talk Dirty to Me*, *Wiggle Wiggle*, *Swalla* and *Trumpets* among many others, for their upcoming music single.

Urvashi had shared a glimpse of it on her social media and has made it official on her collaboration for the song.

Jason Derulo, on working with Urvashi, said: "It was a pleasure working with Urvashi Rautela in Jaanu. She's a shining example of raw Indian beauty, and more importantly, Urvashi Rautela is not just the first, but also the second most beautiful woman in

the world. "She is an excellent and outstanding actor and performer. She is the ultimate global icon. The only Bollywood film person I know of after Shah Rukh Khan is Urvashi Rautela. She is very famous. I cannot comment on the industry, but I like the emotions and dance that Indian movies involve."

On the work front, Urvashi will also be seen in the Jio studios web series *Inspector Avinash* opposite Randeep Hooda in a lead role.



Panchamveda's state level theatre fest: Day 3



Bidyakanak Srujanusthan, a City-based theatre troupe Wednesday staged the play *Bhinna Drusti* at Biju Natya Kendra, Bhubaneswar. Written by Manoj Mishra, the drama was directed by Sounika Sahoo. Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi vice-president Manmath Kumar Satpathy, noted theatre director Subodh Patnaik and playwright Fakir Singh were the guests of the evening. The event is being organised in collaboration with Odia Language, Literature and Culture Department of Government of Odisha.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

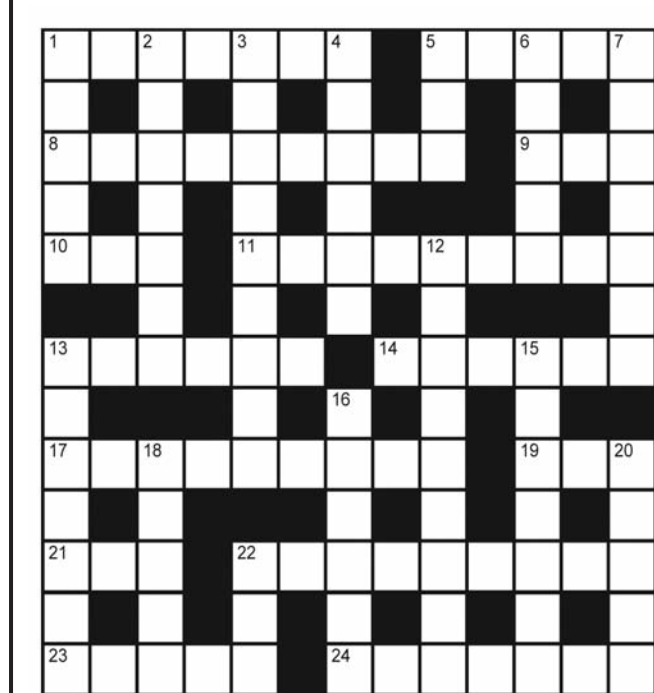


BREVITY



FUN post

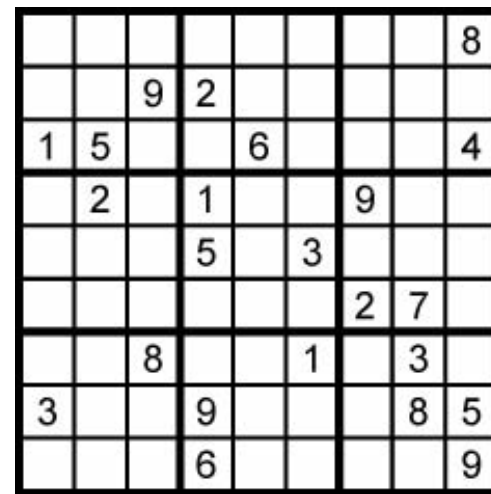
CROSSWORD



- Across**
1 Dracula, e.g.
5 Coffee order
8 Friendly Islands locale
9 Veto
10 Lobster coral
11 Track event (5,4)
13 Guru's forte
14 Artful
17 Sweepstakes
19 River inlet
- Down**
1 Puff adder
2 Polo gear
3 Shoe part
4 Canvas holders
5 Extinct flightless bird
- 21 Sphere
22 Steep cliff
23 Hard wood
24 Garden-variety
- 6 Latin American dance
7 The jitters
12 Pudding type
13 Type of mat
15 Napoleon Bonaparte's birthplace
16 Picture house
18 It's a no-no
20 Narrow ridge
22 Take care of the bill

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

PORT FRECKLES
L E G A U A E
A L L E R G Y C A R V E
Y A T I K C D
B O X I N G G L O V E S
I D E O N C
L A D T O N I C Y E A
L R O R L P
M A D A M E B O V A R Y
C G H C P B
A R O M A B A K L A V A
L O L A S R R
F I N E T U N E E T N A

SUDOKU

1 9 5 6 2 3 7 8 4
8 7 3 4 5 9 6 1 2
2 4 6 7 1 8 9 3 5
6 8 4 5 7 2 1 9 3
7 3 2 1 9 4 8 5 6
5 1 9 3 8 6 4 2 7
4 5 8 9 3 7 2 6 1
3 2 7 8 6 1 5 4 9
9 6 1 2 4 5 3 7 8

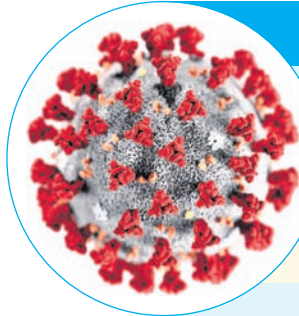
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



THEATRE FEST

A cultural event was organised at the concluding ceremony for World Theatre Day at Annapurna theatre in Puri, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	48,62,81,628	42,14,70,430	61,59,276
India	4,30,23,215	4,24,87,410	5,21,101
Odisha	12,87,608	12,78,035	9,120

'Success is a journey, not a destination'

He has not only made a fortune in the automotive business, but also created job opportunities for scores. His passion for bikes made him enter the two-wheeler business. In a tête-à-tête with **Orissa POST**, Super Sales Motors Managing Director **Shloke Sen** speaks his mind out. Excerpts:



What made you choose business over job?

I always dreamt of becoming an entrepreneur as it would not only provide me with a source of income but also create employment opportunities for many. My passion for bikes made me enter the two-wheeler business. The decision has proven right so far.

Please share your journey with Suzuki and Super Sales Motors.

My family was planning to enter the two-wheeler business when we got an offer from Suzuki. My grandpa started Super Sales Motors, Suzuki's Bhubaneswar market, in 2006 while I joined it in 2016. I believe customers are happy with our sales and after-sales services. Although public relation and market competition is crucial to stay afloat in any business, we prioritise customers' satisfaction as we have a long way to travel.

Who would you thank for the success?

I believe success is a journey, not a destination. Hence, I never claim to have achieved it. However, my journey so far is because of God's grace, the support from my family, especially of my mother, and love and affection of our employees as well as customers. Patience is the key to excel. And I have learnt it from my mother who always

showed us the way.

The auto industry has suffered heavily from the Covid-19 pandemic. How have you been managing it?

Not just during the pandemic, the automobile industry is often troubled by something or the other. The pandemic has only added to the woes. The global semiconductor shortage and rising costs of raw materials, especially after trade restrictions with China, have dealt a blow to the Indian automobile sector. Both vehicle manufacturers and customers have suffered a lot. Thanks to the quality products by Suzuki and Jawa and best in class sales as well as service that helped us live up to the customers' satisfaction.

What is the market demand for Suzuki and Jawa models?

Both the makers have separate segments of customers, so are the sales figures. Currently, Jawa bikes sell 40 per cent faster than the Suzukis. Both the brands have a host of models for all age groups.

What's the role of GST and RTO in vehicle sales?

Both taxation and the Transport department are instrumental in vehicle sales. The introduction of GST has helped businesses pay tax hassle-free.

The digitisation of various services of the Transport department has made the RTO work faster. Ultimately, it adds to vehicle sales.

How do you spend leisure hours?

There is no room for leisure in business. However, whenever I get some time, I try spending it with my family and friends. I go on bike rides with my friends on Sundays.



OSL: Will raise cargo capacity at Gopalpur Port to 45MT in 5 yrs

Paradip and Gopalpur ports in Odisha have immensely contributed to the development of maritime transport. The Orissa Stevedores Limited (OSL) has been handling all types of cargo at all the major and minor ports on the east coast of India for last several years. This apart, the OSL Group has been associated with shipping, mining, logistics, exports, hospitality sector, automobile dealership, FMCG sales, education and luxury merchandise retail. Speaking to **Orissa POST**, OSL Group director **Charchit Mishra** reveals about his journey, future plans and many more. Excerpts:



How did you begin your career in OSL Group?

I had joined OSL in 2001. I began my career as a supervisor of the company at Vizag even though my father Mahimananda Mishra is the chairman of OSL Group. I did not even have a chamber at Vizag.

How did you learn the basics of business and entrepreneurship at an early age?

I started learning the basics of a successful business venture from my father. We used to discuss various issues related to entrepreneurship while having our breakfast or lunch. I gained field experience from our branch manager and other senior officials at Vizag.

As OSL Group is associated with several sectors, how do you manage the responsibilities as the director of the company?

We have a professional setup. We hire professionals from various fields and encourage them to work

efficiently and achieve the targets. We run the company with active cooperation from our professionals.

What are the major issues in stevedoring business?

The OSL Group was basically a stevedoring company and we were handling cargo at various ports. Later, we forayed into shipping, mining, logistics, exports and other sectors as cargo handling business is on the decline. We were instrumental in the setting up of Gopalpur Port.

Has Gopalpur Port achieved its objectives?

Paradip Port was set up in 1960s. The port was handling around 30 to 35 million tonne cargo per annum till 1990s. It took almost 60 years to handle 120 million tonne cargo annually. On the other hand, the work for Gopalpur Port was started in 2006. The berth operation at Gopalpur began in 2012. The project suffered extensive damage during cyclone Phailin in 2013. The

reconstruction work was completed in 2016. Now, the port is handling 15 million tonnes of cargo per annum. We have a target to raise the cargo handling capacity of Gopalpur Port to 45 million tonnes in five years.

What prompted you to open a dealership for BMW cars in Odisha?

Initially, we had a BMW dealership in Kolkata. In those days, only 50 luxury cars were sold in the entire eastern region. We had managed to sell 70 BMW cars in 2008. Now, we are selling around 150 BMW cars in Odisha market in a year.

Your future plans?

We hope that OSL Group comes out with flying colours. Many families are

dependent on this company for their livelihood. Profit-making is not our sole motive. OSL Group will remain as a people's company.



Nothing new in Budget, says Oppn

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Soon after Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari presented an interim budget in the Assembly Opposition BJP and Congress said there is nothing new in the budget statement.

BJP chief whip Mahon Majhi said the state government has failed to bring a full-fledged budget. There is nothing new in the budget. No new scheme or new plan has been announced in the budget. There is no effort to enhance the revenue collection, he added.

The government has not made any provision for the socio-economic development of the poor people, he alleged.

Terming the budget as anti-poor and anti-youth, senior Congress MLA Narasingha Mishra said the state government is taking all credits without doing anything on the ground.

There is inadequate allocation for the education sector and the government doesn't have any inten-

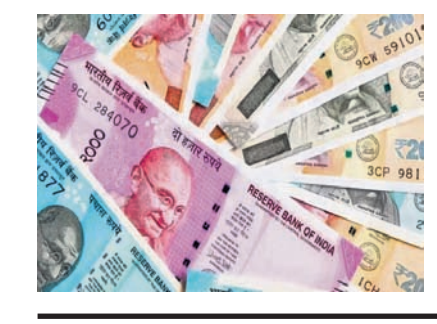
₹1,688 cr allocated for Biju Setu Yojana

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: The interim Budget, tabled by Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari in the Assembly Wednesday, has allocations for all major schemes of the state government.

The Finance Minister has allocated Rs 300 crore under Biju Expressway, Rs 178 crore under State Capital Project (including capital road), Rs 1,408 crore for ABADHA at Puri, Rs 200 crore for EKAMRA, Rs 200 crore for SAMALEI and Rs 150 crore for Integrated Development of Heritage, Monuments & Tourist Destinations during the next year.

Similarly Rs 1,688 crore has been allocated under Biju Setu Yojana, Rs 1100 crore under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Rs 675 crore under Mukhya Mantri Sadak Yojana, Rs 150 crore for Connecting Unconnected Villages in Difficult Areas, Rs 150 crore for Connection of Missing Road Links and Rs 340



The state government has made provision of ₹2,255 crore for rural and urban water supply under Basudha scheme

crore Transferred Road Improvement Programme.

Apart from the capital creation, the state government has made provision of Rs 2,255 crore for rural and urban water supply under Basudha scheme, Rs 6,000 crore under Jal Jeevan Mission in convergence with extra budgetary resources like OMBADC and DMF under the State Saturation Plan to fulfil the target.

Similarly, allocation of Rs 33,203 crore made for development of SCs and STs for identified schemes in

INTERIM BUDGET EVOKES MIXED REACTIONS

The government allocated Rs 26,492 crore for the education sector during 2022-23 including Rs 521 crore under Mo School Abhiyan, Rs 439 crore for Smart Class Rooms in select 100 schools of excellence, Rs 1,109 crore of GIA to Non-Govt High Schools, Rs 420 crore for Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya, Rs 1,283 crore of GIA to Non-Govt Colleges, Rs 3,552 crore under Samagra Sikshya, Rs 165 crore for Infrastructure Development of Universities and Colleges, Rs 258 crore for strengthening of Higher Education in Odisha under the World Bank project, and Rs 182 crore under Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA). I am not satisfied on this education budget. This is an aimless budget. No provision to stop dropout of rural students, migration of parents to other states, smart class room in only 100 schools out of 15k schools will not fulfill our students demand. No budget for research oriented programs for education sector but to manage the entire sector. We can say it's a bad education budget for Odisha.

BASUDEV BHATTIA | EDUCATIONIST

The interim budget on expenditure has laid full emphasis on calamity related expenses and half of expenditure for

all other schemes. The government's priority has been sectors like health, agriculture, education, skill development, water supply and housing, which is justified. However, in the full-fledged budget to be presented subsequently, we expect priority also has to be given to environment related fields, including the energy sector, keeping in view the growing menace of pollution, global warming, climate change, increased flood and drought, natural calamities and coastal erosion, deforestation and environmental degradation

JAYA KRUSHNA PANIGRAHI | ENVIRONMENTALIST

The Finance Minister presented a working budget to the Assembly. Despite repeatedly calling on the state government to form a Border Area Development Council within the framework of the Western Odisha Development Council to protect state borders, the budget does not appear to be in place today. The Utkal Conference hopes that the Finance Minister will pay attention to it during the full budget.

DILIP DASH SHARMA | LAWYER

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	58683.99	↑ 740.34
NIFTY	17498.30	↑ 173.00
DOLLAR	76.4125	↓ ₹0.16
EURO	84.8700	↑ ₹0.51
GOLD	₹51,180	↑ ₹367
SILVER	₹67,562	↑ ₹615

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	34.8°C	38.1°C
TEMP MIN	25.8°C	26.0°C
Humidity	82%	85%
Rainfall	00	00

Forecast: Dry weather very likely

GRACEFUL MOVES



Artists perform Odissi at Pallavi Sandhya organised by Gunjan Dance Academy at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Sarmistha used Bengal SIM cards to evade arrest: CB

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Sarmistha Rout, the prime accused in sensational murder case of cameraman Manas Swain, had left her mobile phone in her flat and used to communicate with relatives through new Sim cards purchased in West Bengal to mislead the police, Crime Branch Wednesday claimed in a press note.

The Crime Branch in its press note detailed how Sarmistha and her close aide Jhuna Bhoi fled to West Bengal after Bhadrak police intensified probe into the murder of Manas.

Sarmistha informed the sleuths during interrogation that she along with Jhuna left Bhubaneswar March 7 and went to her in-laws house at Koipasi village under Kaliapani police limits in Jajpur. Sarmistha stayed there for three days lying to her mother-in-law that she had come to do some Puja for reuniting with her husband.

On March 10, the duo along with Sarmistha's mother-in-law reached Agarapara in Bhadrak, where they purchased a new Sim card. The duo stayed at Sarmistha's sister-in-law's house at Purusanda near Agarapara till March 13. The duo

later fled Kolkata by bus from Kupari Bus stand. Sarmistha along with Jhuna stayed at different places in West Bengal including Kalyani in Nadia district, Mayapuri and Jalpaigudi. They used to stay in the houses of different acquaintances including Asima Das, known to Sarmistha's brother.

When the duo ran out of the savings, they returned to Odisha and were arrested en route Bhubaneswar Monday. The Crime Branch also confirmed that Manas died due to chest injury inflicted by the accused persons.

Oppn fumes as Speaker allows Mishra to speak on law & order

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Opposition Congress and BJP members Wednesday created uproarious scenes in the Assembly soon after the Speaker SN Patro rejected their request to not allow Minister of State for Home DS Mishra to make a statement on an adjournment motion on the law and order situation in the state.

Congress legislator Taraprasad Bahinipati said the murder of lady teacher Mamita Meher would find a place during the adjournment motion. As there were certain allegations against Mishra, the Speaker should not allow him to make a statement in the House, Bahinipati said.

The Congress MLA urged the Speaker to instruct Parliamentary Affairs minister Bikram Keshari Arukha to make the statement in the place of Mishra.

The Congress MLAs trooped into the Well of the House and raised slogans against the state government after the Speaker rejected their plea.

Amid uproarious scene, the Speaker allowed Mishra to make a statement on the law and order situation. Protesting this, the Congress MLAs staged a walkout and sat on a dharna near the Gandhi statue in the Assembly premises.

Later, the Congress legislators led by their leader Narasingha Mishra met Governor Ganeshi Lal and informed him about the incident.

"The Winter Session of the Assembly was completely washed out due to the agitation over teacher Mamita Meher murder case. Today, the Speaker permitted the tainted minister to make a statement in the House," Mishra told reporters.

Main opposition BJP too supported Congress party's stand on



The newly-elected office bearers of Bhubaneswar Bar Association pose for a photo after the oath-taking ceremony, Wednesday

UPROAR IN ASSEMBLY

- The Congress MLA urged the Speaker to instruct Parliamentary Affairs minister Bikram Keshari Arukha to make the statement in the place of Mishra
- The Congress MLAs trooped into the Well of the House and raised slogans against the state government after the Speaker rejected their plea
- The BJP members participated in the debate but they staged a walkout when the Minister of State for Home started delivering his statement on the law and order situation

the issue. The BJP members participated in the debate but they staged a walkout when the Minister of State for Home started delivering his statement on the law and order situation.

Participating in the debate, BJP chief whip Mohan Majhi said the law and order situation in the state has collapsed.

There was large-scale violence during the panchayat and urban local body elections, he said while alleging the involvement of the ruling party members in the violence.

"Incidents of loot, snatching, rape, murder have become a regular feature and people feel insecure during the BJD rule. The violence reported after panchayat and ULB elections indicated that Odisha is going the West Bengal way," he said.

He also targeted the BJD government over the Banapur incident, where at least 22 people were injured after a suspended MLA of the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) allegedly rammed his car into a crowd.

On the other hand, the MoS for Home claimed that the law and

order situation was peaceful during 2021 & 22, and there has been no significant incident regarding communal violence and student unrest in the state.

The panchayat election was conducted peacefully in state, he claimed.

Commenting on Mamita Meher case, the minister said prime accused Govind Sahu and his associates were arrested and the police have submitted the final chargesheet to the court within stipulated time period. The case is sub-judice now, he added.

Protection of women, children and weaker sections was among the top-most priorities of the state government. A special wing has been formed the state Crime Branch to look into the incidents of violence against women and Children, he said.

Mishra further claimed that the Left Wing Extremism (LWE) situation has improved substantially in the state. Out of 15 LWE affected districts, five districts—Angul, Boudh, Deogarh, Nayagarh and Sambalpur—have not recorded any incident of violence by the ultras, he added.

NEW START



The newly-elected office bearers of Bhubaneswar Bar Association pose for a photo after the oath-taking ceremony, Wednesday

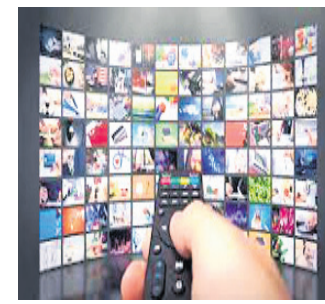
BJD SEEKS CENSORSHIP ON OTT, WEB CHANNELS

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 30: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Prasanna Acharya Wednesday asked the Centre to bring a law to censor obscene scenes and content spreading religious hatred on OTT platforms and web channels.

Speaking during the Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, the BJD MP said the OTT platforms had gained unprecedented viewership during the Covid-19 pandemic while traditional entertainment sources were severely affected by the pandemic-induced restrictions.

"Taking advantage of this, some web channels are showing obscene pictures and using objectionable language. This is having a very bad im-



vision, this would not have happened. "There is a censor board for films but not for web channels. In the name of creativity and freedom of expression, we cannot encourage debauchery and exploitation of women. We should also be careful about the religious sentiment of people," he said.

The senior BJD MP also mentioned about the Delhi High Court's recent strictures against mifepristone on Twitter for allowing objectionable comments against religious communities.

"There should be a law to impose censorship on the web channels who are taking undue advantage of not being censored and spreading hatred among religions and communities," he added.

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"There should be a law to impose censorship on the web channels who are taking undue advantage of not being censored and spreading hatred among religions and communities," he added.

Man gets 20-yr RI for sexually abusing minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: A Fast-Track Special Court here dealing with POCSO cases Wednesday sentenced a man to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) after holding him guilty of sexually abusing a 16-year-old girl in Dhauli area of the City in March last year.

The court also slapped a penalty of Rs 30,000 on the convict identified as Ranjit Naik of Naranpur area under Sadar police limits in Dhankanal and who was residing in Dhauli area.

The court also directed the state government to pay Rs 5 lakh to the victim as compensation under Section 33(8) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

According to the case details, Naik had allegedly abducted the minor from near her residence March 2, 2021.

After a few days, her family traced the duo and managed to bring back the girl to Bhubaneswar. Upon arrival, the girl revealed before her parents that Nayak had sexually abused her.

On March 13, 2021, the minor's mother lodged a complaint with Dhauli police in this regard. Police registered a case in this regard and arrested the accused March 15 the same month.

The court convicted Nayak after taking into account the statements of 10 witnesses.

Special Public Prosecutor (POCSO) Rajib Sasmal conducted the trial on behalf of the victim.

NSS told to use Odia language

Bhubaneswar: The Higher Education department Wednesday directed all the programme coordinators of National Service Scheme (NSS) Bureau in the state to use Odia language in NSS banners and signboards from April 1, 2022 to imbibe the spirit of NSS activities among the students as well as the community. However, bilingual scripts (Odia and English) may be used wherever necessary. Higher Education department deputy secretary Ramesh Chandra Behera instructed all the principals and NSS POs to use Odia in NSS banners and signboards from April 1.

CLASSIFIED

LOST

I, Sri Manas Ranjan Swain, S/o. Late Gokulananda Swain, resident of Plot No.3349, Jayadev Vihar, Bhubaneswar. I have purchased a land from Late Bhikari Behera, vide Plot No.806 (P) New 3349, Khata No.50, Mouza-Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar bearing sale deed No.4982, Dt.30.5.1983 my said original sale deed has been lost somewhere while I was coming from Saheed Nagar to Jayadev Vihar, Bhubaneswar on Dt.04.02.2022. I have not created any charge, mortgage with any financial institution by depositing the same original sale deed. I want to take loan from SBI by mortgaging the property. This above statement is true, if proved false bank may take legal action against me. If anyone found the document please contact SBI, RACPC, Bhubaneswar.



Scouts and guides perform at an event in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

IN SYNC

40% bat species in Asia still unidentified, may host new viruses

There are nearly 40 per cent unknown species of horseshoe bats in southeast Asia and China, according to a study. The study, led by researchers at Chinese Academy of Sciences and University of Hong Kong, identified 44 potential cryptic horseshoe bats (Rhinolophidae) species within 11 species of *Rhinolophus* sensu lato in Southeast Asia and south China.

In the paper published in *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, the team highlighted the need for further work to describe species across the region and better understand their cryptic diversity, and underscoring the unappreciated cryptic diversity in the group. Horseshoe bats (Rhinolophidae)

are considered the reservoir of many zoonotic viruses - which jump from animals to people - including the close relatives of the viruses that caused severe acute respiratory syndrome and Covid-19.

Identifying bat species correctly might help pinpoint geographical hotspots with a high risk of zoonotic disease, Shi Zhengli, a virologist at the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China, was quoted as saying to Nature.

Better identification of unknown bat species could also support the search for the origins of SARS-CoV-2 by narrowing down where to look for bats that may harbour close relatives of the virus, added study co-author Alice Hughes, a conservation biologist at the



University of Hong Kong. The closest known relatives of SARS-CoV-2 have been found in Rhinolophus affinis bats in Yunnan province, in southwestern China, and in three species of horseshoe

bats in Laos, the report said.

To better understand the diversity of bats in southeast Asia and find standardised ways of identifying them, Hughes and her team captured bats in southern China and southeast Asia between 2015 and 2020.

They took measurements and photographs of the bats' wings and noseleaf - "the funky set of tissue around their nose", as Hughes describes it - and recorded their echolocation calls. They also collected a tiny bit of tissue from the bats' wings to extract genetic data.

To map the bats' genetic diversity, the team used mitochondrial DNA sequences from 205 of their captured animals, and another 655

sequences from online databases - representing a total of 11 species of Rhinolophidae.

The researchers found that each of the 11 species were probably actually multiple species, possibly including dozens of hidden species across the whole sample.

Hidden, or "cryptic", species are animals that seem to belong to the same species but are actually genetically distinct. For example, the genetic diversity of *Rhinolophus sinicus* suggests that the group could be six separate species, the report said.

The findings corroborate other genetic research suggesting that there are many cryptic species in southeast Asia, the report said.

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Andhra-Odisha villages lock horns over forest land



Pottangi, March 30: People of two villages – Sunabeda under Pottangi block of Koraput district in Odisha, and Tekapar in Vishakhapatnam district of neighbouring Andhra Pradesh – have locked horns over a patch of forest land in the fringe area, as per a report.

According to the report, a woodland sprawling around Musapar hill near Sunabeda village belongs

to Odisha as per revenue records. Scores of people of Sunabeda have been cultivating the forest land over generations. However, some people of Tekapar grabbed the land and started farming activities there, triggering protests from the people of Sunabeda. Thereafter, Bhoi Ramchandra and Tamal Potana, residents of Andhra Pradesh, had attacked Bhanja Gemel, a resident of Sunabeda, Tuesday.

Following the incident, people of two other villages like Jamuguda and Nuaguda also opposed the land grab act by Andhra people. The people of the three villages took up the issue with zilla parishad members Laichan Khara and Daudu Dora and Sambhai sarpanch Kishore Chandra Khara before Bhanja filed a complaint at Pottangi police station in this regard.

They also submitted a memorandum to Pottangi BDO Soumyasarthak Mishra.

Notably, the same patch of forest land had triggered controversy in October 2020. The district administration had to intervene in the matter. Then Collector Madhusudan Mishra along with revenue officials of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh had demarcated the land as per the Madras Presidency map. The dispute was settled then.

LEARNING MARTIAL ARTS



Girls of Panchayat Samiti Women's Higher Secondary School at Nahanga under Khaira block in Balasore district participated in self-defence training camp, Wednesday

SHORT TAKES

Woman's half-burnt body recovered

Junagarh: Half-burnt body of a woman was recovered from a farmland near Meriabandhali village under this police limits in Kalahandi district under mysterious circumstance, Wednesday. The matter came to the fore after locals spotted the body and informed the police who reached the spot and started an investigation. However, the police failed to identify the woman when the last report came in. "A scientific team from Nuapada was also pressed into service," Junagarh IIC Uttam Sahu said. The deceased woman is believed to be in her 40s and a vein flow used to administer saline to patients was found attached to her hand.

Man shot at with arrow, critical

Thakurmunda: An elderly man sustained grievous injuries after he was attacked with an axe and shot at with an arrow by a man of neighbouring village over land related dispute at Dhadikidaha village under Mahuldiha police limits in Mayurbhanj district, Wednesday. The injured was identified as Kathia Madhei, 70. Family members rescued him in a critical condition and rushed him to Anandapur sub-divisional hospital which later shifted him to Cuttack.

Three NH plazas take heavy toll on locals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 30: The National Highways Authority of India's (NHAI) trick to mop up more tolls by bifurcating National Highway-215 and installing three toll gates around the Keonjhar town has sparked anger among the locals and commuters as well, a report said.

The move in a poor and tribal dominated district like Keonjhar has drawn criticisms from every quarter.

Residents claim that establishment of three toll gates following bifurcation of NH-215 is burning a hole in their pocket. They demanded immediate removal of Banajodi toll gate near Padmapur on the outskirts of Keonjhar town.

The residents were hopeful that the toll gates will be removed after Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said in the Parliament that the toll plazas can operate only within 60-km distance on the highways. However, nothing of this sort happened.

Shailabala Palei, a member of Yuva and Shram Vikash Manch, has termed the move as 'unfortunate'. She said if the NHAI authorities do not remove the toll gate, they will be held responsible for any situation that may arise in future.

Reports said NH-215 connecting Panikoli in Jajpur district with Rajamunda in Sundargarh district



NH BIFURCATION IN KEONJHAR

Residents claim that establishment of three toll gates following bifurcation of NH-215 is burning a hole in their pocket

They demanded immediate removal of Banajodi toll gate near Padmapur on the outskirts of Keonjhar town

The residents were hopeful that the toll gates will be removed after Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said in the Parliament that the toll plazas can operate only within 60-km distance on the highways. However, nothing of this sort happened

was the first highway passing through Keonjhar district. The highway was the lifeline for the residents as it helped them get easy access to major cities in the state.

Soon, it was allegedly split into two highways with a hope of collecting more tolls. One of the highways connecting Panikoli with Rimuli was renamed as NH-20 and another connecting Rimuli with Rajamunda as NH-520.

Later, one toll gate was established at Hasanpur, which is only 33km from Panikoli, while another toll gate was established on the highway between Hasanpur to Khantaghar (near Dhenkikote) which is 58.9km from the first toll gate. The third toll gate was established at Banajodi on the highway which is 42km from the second toll gate.

Meanwhile, those travelling from Anandapur to Cuttack or Bhubaneswar are paying tolls at three toll plazas – Hasanpur, Panikoli and Tangi. The distance between toll gates at Tangi and Panikoli is around 50 km. So, as per Gadkari's statement, Panikoli toll plaza must cease to operate, said sources.

Govt employee draws wages under MGNREGA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, March 30: Projects being executed under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) have been marred by irregularities in this district, a report said. A government employee allegedly withdrawing wages by posing as a job card holder is a case in point.

Locals said this is just the tip of the iceberg and there are many fake job card holders under Bhapur block.

The matter came to the fore after complaints were lodged before the Chief Minister. The irregularities were found to have been committed in 2017, 2020 and 2021.

Bhapur BDO Janmejaya Sahu, however, feigned ignorance on the development but assured to speak on the issue later.

The incident comes amid non-issuance of job cards to hundreds of workers who are really eligible to work as labourers under the rural

job scheme. However, undue favour is being shown to those who are in government service and being handed over job cards to work as labourers under the poverty alleviation scheme.

According to the complaint, Rabindra Behera, a native of Padmabati village and a fourth grade employee rural water supply office at Bhapur block headquarters, has violated norms and taken a job card in his name despite being a government employee. Moreover, he has also taken a job card even in the name of his wife.

During probe, he was found to have worked as a job card holder in the upgradation of Prahallad College playground at Padmabati in 2017, a farm pond project of a villager Krushna Chandra Sahu in 2020, cattle shed construction of Madhusudan Behera in 2021, a farm pond project of BJD's block women's president Sailendra Sahu. He was also found to have withdrawn wages under the same project in the name of his wife.

AGAB fund 'misuse' in Bhapur sparks row

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, March 30: Funds to the tune of Rs 4 lakh sanctioned under 'Ama Gaon Ama Bikash' (AGAB) scheme has allegedly been misappropriated in Bijipur under Bhapur block of Nayagarh district.

Residents of the village have taken up the issue with Bhapur block development officer (BDO). They pointed out that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had allocated Rs 4 lakh for redevelopment of Maa Sanjaidevi Shrine in 2018-19 fiscal. The fund was supposed to be utilised for construction of two buildings for opening community centres, but those got contract for building construction only constructed one room and remaining funds were siphoned off. As the scam came to the fore, it triggered tension in the area. Locals had staged protests over the issue.

Bandh bleeds Silk city banks of ₹70 crore

BERHAMPUR: Public sector banks in Silk city suffered around Rs 70 crore loss in two-day Bharat Bandh called by the joint forum of trade unions, a report said. Moreover, the bank employees also faced two-day pay cut for their participation in the strike. Several public sector banks and private banks have branches and regional offices in the Silk City. Banks like Union Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Bank of India, Canara Bank, UCO Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, Central Bank of India and cooperative bank like Utkal Grameen Bank participated in the two day agitation.

MISSILES MEANT FOR ARMY TEST-FIRED SUCCESSFULLY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Balasore, March 30: India Wednesday successfully flight-tested two more rounds of medium range surface-to-air missiles (MRSAMs) off the Odisha coast, proving the nation's capability, DRDO sources said.

The MRSAMs during the flight tests scored direct hits against high speed aerial targets at Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur here. These MRSAMs are meant for use by the Army.

The launches established the accuracy and reliability of the weapon system against targets covering the sea skimming and high altitude functionality within the envelope, DRDO said.

Performance of all weapon systems



tem components including missile, weapon system radar and command post have been validated during these trials. The flight tests

were carried out in the presence of senior officials from Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Army.

With the conclusion of flight trials for different ranges and scenarios, the system has completed its development trials, they said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh complimented DRDO, Indian Army and the defence industry units involved for the successful launches of MRSAM-Army and said the successful launches have once again proved the reliability of the system. Secretary Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO Dr G Satheesh Reddy congratulated the teams associated with the successful test firings of the weapon system.

HUGE FOOTFALL



After a two-year hiatus due to Covid-19 pandemic, over 2 lakh people took holy dip in Rushikulya river at Pratappur village under Purusottampur block in Ganjam district on the occasion of 'Mahabaruni Snan' and made offerings to their ancestors, Wednesday

Blackbuck protection: Ganjam villagers lead by example

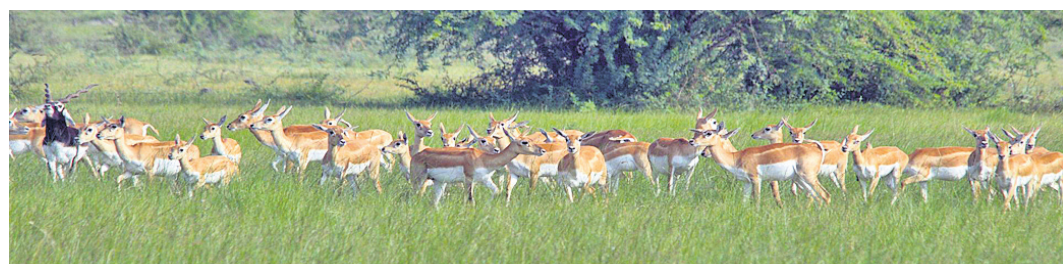
POST NEWS NETWORK

Aska, March 30: Population of endangered Indian antelopes (blackbucks) is increasing in Ganjam district, thanks to the tireless efforts of the villagers around Aska forest range under Ghumusar forest division.

The villagers here are pulling out all the stops to protect the rare species, which are generally found in Rajasthan, owing to their religious beliefs.

From providing food, growing plants, protecting the herbivores from poachers, to guarding the forest, the villagers are leaving no stones unturned to save this Antelope Cervicapra, also known as Krushnasara or 'Baliharina' and even 'Kala Barisia' in different pockets of the district.

In Ganjam district, this kind of



Indian antelope is found in the areas of Bhetnoi in Aska block and Balipadar of Buguda block. Besides Aska and Buguda, this animal is also found in Polsara, Khallikote and Jagannathprasad blocks.

Blackbucks live on fresh tender leaves, grass, crops, cereals, vegetables and shrubs. They feed for a long time, and select succulent grasses, tender shoots of crops and plants, which help them maintain

The villagers here are pulling out all the stops to protect the rare species, which are generally found in Rajasthan, owing to their religious beliefs

From providing food, growing plants, protecting the herbivores from poachers, to guarding the forest, the villagers are leaving no stones unturned to save this Antelope Cervicapra

water balance in their bodies. They can survive without drinking water for a day to a week.

Locals with the help of the Forest department have constructed more than 10 ponds in order to meet the drinking water need of the blackbucks. Every year, the Forest department cultivates grass on both government and private lands for the blackbucks to feed on them.

The belief that presence of black-

bucks in paddy fields brings prosperity to the villagers has greatly contributed to the conservation of these species. The villagers do not kill the animal even if it strays into the fields and grazes on their crop.

As the story goes, over a century ago, there was a long spell of drought in the area. During this period, a small herd of blackbucks appeared here after which it rained and the drought spell was broken. Since then, people have started protecting these animals religiously as they feel that their fate is linked with these blackbucks.

The Forest department and 70 villagers in the district collectively have formed a committee named as 'Blackbuck Conservation Committee' to protect the endangered species. However, road accidents often turn fatal for the animals.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

e-Tender Notice No. e-Tender-Elect-G-59-21
DESCRIPTION OF WORK :
ELECTRIFICATION IN CONNECTION WITH PROVISION FOR ELECTRONIC INTERLOCKING AT PARADEEP FOR POWER OPERATION OF ADDITIONAL POINTS AND SIGNAL IN CONNECTION WITH INTERLOCKING OF BOT LINES, PEQCTPL, ADDITIONAL LINES OF EXCHANGE YARD AND IFFCO/CONCOR SIDING.
Approx. Cost of the work (₹): 11,19,651.11, EMD (₹): 22,400.00
Completion period : 06 Months
Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 19.04.2022
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : <http://www.reps.gov.in>
Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigendum issued for this tender.
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G), PR-932/M21-22, Khurda Road

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER BALASORE (ROADS & BUILDINGS) DIVISION - II

At/P.O.: Bhaskarganj, Balasore, Contact No.: 06782-263149
No. B-1073 E-Mail ID: eepwdbils2@gmail.com

SHORT TENDER CALL NOTICE

BID INVITATION NO. SE (R and B) BLS-II-52/2021-22

The Superintending Engineer, Balasore (R&B) Division-II, Balasore on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids to be received in ONLINE MODE only for Roads & Buildings Works.

1	No. of Work	: 1 No.
2	Nature of Work	: Road Work of Balasore (R&B) Division-II
3	Class of Contractor	: B & A Class of Contractor
4	Approx. Value of Work	: Rs.41.10 lakhs
5	Tender Cost	: 6000.00 as per work
6	Availability of Bid Documents in the website	: From 10.00 hours of Dt.04.04.2022 to 16.00 hours of Dt. 11.04.2022
7	Date of Opening of Bid	: Dt. 11.04.2022 at 16.30 hours.
8	Other details can be seen in the bidding documents from the website: https://tendersorissa.gov.in .	
9	Supersintending Engineer Balasore (R&B) Division-II OIPR-34155/11/0001/2122	

FOCUS RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

FAULT LINES OF HIJAB VERDICT



In 2004 the Supreme court ruled that the Tandav dance of Anand Margis was not an essential rite of Anand Margi faith as Anand Marg was founded in 1955 while the Tandav dance was introduced in 1966

judgement has not taken any cognizance of such religious rights of the minority in the landmark Emmanuel Case. By rejecting the doctrine of reasonable accommodation, the court has failed to take note that in a pluralist society, a class room must reflect social diversity without undermining the sense of equality. Further the court has ignored the classic test of proportionality as per which the court determines 'if the restriction imposed by the state has 'any reasonable nexus between the objective sought to be achieved and means used'. If the purpose of the uniform is to allow for no difference, every exhibition of faith in the classroom needs to be stamped out, religious marks on the foreheads of Hindus. By targeting the hijabs of Muslim women, the Court has failed to upbraid the state from its blatant act of discrimination on religious grounds (Art 15 (1)) of Muslim women. The other important issues are on what ground govt. can restrict persons for exercising their free choice on what to wear. On the face of it the state should not impose any religious authority on our lives. They must be protected from the artifice of coerced sameness. What it means to be an Indian is to feel secure and comfortable not only in our own home but when we step out, without having educators and judges dictating how we express ourselves. India's civilisational strength is its unique jugalbandi of religious expression and liberalisation. The schools and colleges should foster diversity. Our differences should not lead to social, religious separateness. Justice O Chinnappa Ready had presciently observed: "Our traditions teach tolerance, our philosophy teaches tolerance, let's not dilute it". By diluting the spirit of tolerance and upholding uniform as a badge of honour and uniformity, the Karnataka high court has done a disservice to the spirit of impartiality and objectivity which is expected from the guardians of fundamental rights.

The writer teaches constitutional law. Views are personal.

On March 15, the Karnataka High Court decreed that wearing the hijab is not an essential practice of Islam and upheld the state government order on adhering to uniform in educational institutions. In this invidious process, which has engineered severe backlash, the court has paid no heed to arguments like 'reasonable accommodation', 'test of proportionality' and most importantly thrown to the winds the ideals of a pluralist liberal society like India. The court has observed that allowing women to wear hijabs in the class room will hinder the constitutional spirit of "positive secularism". It also observed that as per Muslim Scriptures wearing of hijab is only recommendatory and not mandatory. Further the court has observed that it is impossible to instill scientific temper into the young minds (Article 51A (h) as long as wearing hijab is considered religiously sacrosanct. The school regulation prescribing dresscode as one homogeneous class serves the objective of 'constitutional secularism'. It also dismissed the argument of reasonable accommodation by observing that two category of girl students would bring a sense of social separateness which is not desirable. In the opinion of the court, freedom of conscience and right to religion are mutually exclusive.

The doctrine of essential religion practice was mooted by the Supreme Court in Shiru Mutt case (1954), where the court felt that it should ascertain what constitutes essential part of the religion with reference to the doctrines of that religion itself. In Dr. Faruqui vs Union of India (1994) case, the court observed that 'a mosque is not an essential part of practice of religion for offering Namaz and prayers'. However, the defining case in this regard is COP vs Avadhuta case in 2004 when the Supreme court ruled that the Tandav dance of Anand Margis was not an essential rite of Anand Margi faith as Anand Marg was founded in 1955 while the Tandav dance was introduced in 1966. The

Shyara Bano Vs Union of India case in 2017 brought in a paradigm shift in the approach to the concept of essential religious practice. In a split verdict (3-2), the Supreme Court struck down the practice of the practice of Triple Talaq as unconstitutional. Justice Joseph who gave the majority verdict quoted scriptures to bring out how Triple Talaq is not an essential religious practice and goes against basic tenets of Quran and thus violates the Shariat. A practice that is merely permitted or not prohibited by a religion cannot be considered an essential tenet sanctioned by the particular religion. However, the dissenting judges had observed that "religion is a matter of faith and not of logic. It is not open to a court to assert an egalitarian approach over a practice which is an integral part of religion". Many scholars also find it uncomfortable that the court undertakes a theological study instead of the Imams. They believe that it is not the role of the court to determine true intricacies of faith.

The constitution provides in Article 25(1) that everyone can pursue freedom of conscience and have a right to profess practice

and propagate religion. Further, Article 25(2)A mandates that the State can regulate / restrict any economic financial & political activity associated with religious practice. It may be recalled that the right to freedom of speech and expression under Art 19(1) is not absolute but subject to reasonable restriction like public order, decency and morality under Art 19(2). The overwhelming refrain of our Courts is that unless a certain religious activity is disrupting public order, morality and health there should be no restriction of such religious activity. In fact, the Supreme Court went a step further in Bijoe Emmanuel 1986 case where it allowed the Jehova witnesses not to participate in singing of the national anthem. To quote: to compel each pupil to join in singing of the national anthem despite his genuine and conscientious religious objection would contravene the rights guaranteed by Art 19(1) (a) and 25(1) of the constitution. "The real test of a true democracy is the ability of even an insignificant minority to find its identity under the country's constitution", wrote Justice Reddy. Sadly, the Karnataka High court



SN Misra

THE SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES SHOULD FOSTER DIVERSITY. OUR DIFFERENCES SHOULD NOT LEAD TO SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS SEPARATENESS



Kaushik Basu

The severe sanctions that the West has imposed on Russia may be justified to defeat Putin, but they have escalated economic warfare to an unprecedented level

Economic Warfare

The use of economic weapons during war has a long history. But the rise of globalization and cross-border supply chains has given these nonviolent munitions unprecedented power. While economic and financial sanctions may not strike with the immediacy of an artillery shell, their impact can nonetheless be devastating.

Economic warfare in a globalized world is so novel that we do not yet fully understand it, and few rules regulate it. There is no well-defined list of punitive instruments, much less credible estimates of the direct and collateral damage each is likely to cause. So, when Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, Western policymakers were suddenly confronted with quandaries for which they were not prepared. US President Joe Biden's administration and America's NATO allies rightly decided to contain Putin and prevent the war from escalating into a nuclear conflict, by using sanctions instead of troops.

But now Western governments face the enormous task of using all the new data and information available to analyze the efficacy of these tools. And the world needs to introduce some rules to govern economic warfare before the next great-power conflict erupts.

The immediate concern is how to use economic sanctions more effectively to defeat Putin. Cutting off Russia from trade and financial interactions with the United States, Europe, and other advanced economies has hurt the Russian economy, but not as much as one might have initially thought. For example, the US embargo on Russian oil caused the price of Brent crude to shoot above \$100 per barrel, accompanied by a sharp depreciation of the ruble against the US dollar. But the ruble did not fall as much as many may have expected and has recently recovered somewhat.

It is easy to see why this happened. Consider a market with several buyers and sellers, in which a major buyer, U, says it will no longer purchase oil from a major seller, R. There will be an initial shock as U seeks to buy from other sellers, causing prices to rise. But, over time, this effect will dissipate because R can sell to someone else, say, X, and suppliers that previously sold to X can now divert some of their oil to U.

True, the price of oil will still be higher than it was before the sanctions, because longer supply routes will cause delivery costs to increase. But, as in one of those old Hollywood musical sequences where the dancers switch partners, supply relationships will change, causing much of the initial shock to wear off.

The show must go on. There may be another mitigating factor helping Russia. The oil-price spike triggered by the US embargo means that, even if Russia's oil exports decline, its overall income may not fall. The ruble's partial recovery signals that this may be happening. To ensure that Russia cannot easily get around the US oil embargo, America needs to use "triadic threats" more effectively - sanctioning not just Russia but also those who buy its oil.

The US is a master when it comes to triadic sanctions and has used them in unethical ways against small countries. In 1973, for example, President Richard Nixon cut off food aid to Bangladesh in the middle of a famine on the grounds that the country was trading with Cuba. While Nixon's move was unethical and had no legal basis that changed with the 1996 Helms-Burton Act, a Machiavellian piece of federal legislation designed to isolate Cuba. In my book Prelude to Political Economy, I discuss how the US used this law to throttle Cuba via triadic sanctions.

Similarly, the US used rigorous strategic analysis to steer the world away from the brink of nuclear war during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. It is important that America deploy similar analytical precision today as NATO confronts a tyrant like Putin at its border. To defeat the threat, the US should communicate more clearly that its sanctions against Russia are meant only for Putin and his cronies, and that America will help to restore the Russian economy fully as soon as the Kremlin's current ruling cabal is gone. This is a message that needs to reach all Russians.

The other long-run matter deserving attention, as Raghuram G Rajan recently emphasized, is the need to set the rules of engagement for economic warfare. In today's globalized world of complex multinational value chains, large and powerful states can use a variety of techniques - including cutting off the supply of some vital input - to flatten another country's economy.

Likewise, a major power in a conflict with a developing country can spark hyperinflation within weeks simply by printing the local currency and showering the notes on cities and towns. Unless such actions are formally prohibited, someone is bound to resort to them. The severe sanctions that the West has imposed on Russia may be justified to defeat Putin, but they have escalated economic warfare to an unprecedented level. Just as we have rules governing conventional warfare, such as a prohibition on targeting civilians, we will need to create rules for what is permitted and what is forbidden in economic conflict.

The writer, a former chief economist of the World Bank and chief economic adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University and a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

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WISDOM CORNER

- The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated. **MAHATMA GANDHI**
- Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind. **RUDYARD KIPLING**
- Love is more pleasant than marriage for the same reason that novels are more amusing than history. **NICOLAS CHAMFORT**

WORDSWORTH

Adoxography

Few dictionaries, not even the Oxford English Dictionary, give room to this word, so it is left mostly to non-lexicographers to define it, which they often do in terms such as "good writing on a trivial or base subject". Near, but not quite right. It's a modern word to describe an ancient way to train young people in the art of rhetoric. They would be challenged to compose a speech praising an unpleasant idea such as poverty, ugliness, drunkenness or stupidity. So a better definition would be "rhetorical praise of things of doubtful value". The root is Latin adoxus, paradoxical or absurd, but not from the classical language. It was first used by the Dutch scholar Erasmus around 1536, who took it from an identical ancient Greek word that meant inglorious. It was based on the root doxa, opinion or belief, which is also the basis of doxology, a formula of praise to God, and also of paradox.

SPECTRUM HEALTH INFRA

More medical seats, doctors critical

Dr Oishee Mukherjee

THOUGH PRIVATE COLLEGES CHARGE SAY AROUND ₹20 LAKH OFFICIALLY, IT IS LEARNT THAT STUDENTS MAY HAVE TO COUGH UP COUPLE OF MORE LAKHS TO GET A SEAT

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya recently told Rajya Sabha that the Modi government has taken a number of steps to increase medical seats as well as availability of doctors in the country. However, the question that needs to be addressed is what about the commercialisation of medical education which has accelerated and needs to be checked.

At the same time, while it's encouraging that medical seats have risen, these continue to be meagre compared to the increasing number of students opting for the profession.

The steps taken to increase the number of medical seats, as per the government, include a centrally-sponsored scheme for establishment of new medical colleges by upgrading district/referral hospitals, under which 157 new medical colleges have been approved and 71 are already functional. Additionally, there is a centrally sponsored scheme for strengthening or upgradation of existing State or Central government medical colleges to increase the MBBS and PG seats, and a central sector scheme for upgradation of government medical colleges by construction of super specialty

blocks. A total of 75 projects have been approved and 55 completed. Under the Central sector scheme for setting up new AIIMS, 22 AIIMS have been approved and under-graduate courses have started in 19 of these. Further, for rapid growth in the number of allied medical seats, the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions (NCAHP) Act, 2021 has been enacted and an interim commission has been notified.

Way back in 2018, the Union Cabinet had approved a Rs 10,700 crore plan for 24 new medical colleges with 10,000 under-graduate and over 8,000 post-graduate seats. The Health Ministry had earlier implemented a plan to set up medical colleges attached to 58 district hospitals.

Recently, the National Medical Commission (NMC), the apex regulatory body for medical education and ensuring lower the cost of medical education to encourage more students to pursue careers in healthcare, announced that half the seats in private medical colleges will be charged at par with government medical colleges. If implemented, nearly 22,000 seats would become more affordable and if added to over 46,000 government col-

lege seats would take the total number of relatively affordable seats to over 68,000 or about three-fourths of the 90,675 MBBS seats currently available.

However, while the NMC, has also laid down guidelines for fee fixation for remaining 50 percent, the Act does not allow regulation of 100 percent. Even before the NMC's decision, most States already had fee regulatory committees headed by retired high court judges to fix fees for private medical colleges. But this did not cover deemed university medical colleges, which evaded regulation with court orders upholding their position that State committees have no power over them being directly under the UGC.

The NMC proposal may thus motivate private medical colleges to charge whatever they wish for half the seats. Members of the All India Forum Medical Graduates estimated, given the high costs, about 30,000 to 40,000 students enroll annually in under-graduate courses in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, China and other countries. Private colleges in India charge MBBS students around Rs 10 to Rs 16 lakh fees annually across the five-year course, whereas students pay about Rs 30 lakh for the entire MBBS course in the above countries.

The government's response to this is that while a large number of Indian students go abroad to pursue MBBS and obtain foreign medical qualifications, they still need to clear the Foreign Medical Graduate Examination to be registered as a medical practitioner in the country.

Besides, it has come to light that State regulatory committees are quite ignorant of what fee is actually taken by private medical colleges. The undersigned was informed by a student that the only private medical college in Kolkata refused to accept the test he had taken and sought a total of Rs 80 lakh for getting admission to an MBBS course! A survey by the Health Ministry would do well to get a reality check.

Besides, it's critical that deserving candidates get access to these seats and that private medical colleges are checked from 'selling' seats by ensuring strict regulations and vigil.

While strides have been made in the health sector, the government would do well to fine tune the new system under NMC. It could consider raising further by 10 per cent the medical seats to ensure more qualified post-graduate specialists are available in the country.

INFA

Didi is desperate

Sir, Mamata Banerjee is trying to woo non-BJP CMs to her fold in an effort to upset the ruling party at the centre. Her efforts to unite the opposition failed to yield any result in the past. Even Telangana CM tried this trick earlier and failed miserably. Mamata has called for a meeting of progressive forces to discuss the strategies to take on Saffron forces. Her urge to everyone to come together appears for vested interests as she aspires to become the Prime Minister. The deliberation to find out the ways and means for a future course of action is just a beginning. But the move may fail miserably because all the opposition leaders aspire to lead the country and that will be just a day dream in the present circumstances. Leading a state and leading the country is a different cup of tea. Modi led Gujarat for a considerable time, had rich experience as an able administrator and then switched over to national politics. Didi is desperate to occupy the PM's chair and that will be a tough task in the light of poor back up she received from the other like minded parties. **MR Jayanthi, COIMBATORE**

Inefficient Khan

Sir, Apropos the editorial, **Orissa POST**, Mar 30. For many decades, cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan nursed a burning ambition to become Pakistan's Prime Minister (PM). Those dreams came true in the general election of 2018, when the tacit backing of the military establishment ensured a mandate for Khan. Presently, he is perilously close to losing his grip on power and being unseated in a vote of confidence in the National Assembly, thanks to a united Opposition that has closed ranks with dissidents in Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party. His failure was largely brought on by his hubris. It appears that once his grand plan to become PM was achieved, he really did not know how to deliver on virtually any front, be it governance, national security or the economy. On the other hand, the military has had enough of the poor administrative abilities of the government, especially after Khan sought to hold up the appointment of a new Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief last year in an apparent attempt to influence the choice of the next army chief. The Pakistan army, which has never covered itself in glory on its role in politics, appears to be staying neutral. But even the exit of Khan will not mean the end of Pakistan's current woes. The Opposition, if it forms a government, will have its hands full coping with a wide array of challenges. **N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE**

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
B-15, Rusalgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010



We had to import cancer medicines but now India is capable of manufacturing them. We have introduced PLI scheme under which the manufacturing of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) required for making cancer medicines have also started in India

BIZARRE INCIDENT

A thief broke into a house in Raghunathpur village in Uttar Pradesh's Ballia district but dozed off after gulping one bottle of alcohol. When the house owner woke up to see a stranger sleeping in the couch, he called the police and the drunk thief landed in the lock up Wednesday



of the day quote

If anyone is being harassed anywhere, then definitely raise your voice there. It is our duty towards the society and also towards the nation

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

'Shaadi Mahals' which have been established for conducting the marriages of the poor people belonging to the minority communities would be closed

BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | KARNATAKA CM

Now we are also facing the situation of a full-blown war in Ukraine which is not some war in some corner of the world but it seems to be having an impact on all countries like the way the pandemic has

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

2 ultras killed, one of them had press card

Srinagar: One of the two terrorists killed in an encounter between terrorists and security forces at Rainawari area in Central Kashmir's Srinagar district was carrying a press card, officials said. The firefight between terrorists and security forces took place after a joint team of the police and the security forces cordoned off the area and launched a search operation on the basis of specific information about presence of terrorists. Earlier police said two terrorists were killed in the encounter and incriminating materials including arms and ammunition recovered from them.

Man dies after being hit by car

New Delhi: A 39-year-old man died Wednesday morning after being hit by a rashly-driven car in central Delhi Janpath area, police said. The deceased has been identified as Girdhari, they said. The information about the accident was received at Parliament Street police station, a senior police officer said. Girdhari was shifted to RML hospital where he was declared brought dead, Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Amrutha Guguloth said. A case under sections 279 (rash driving) and 304A (causing death by negligence) of the Indian Penal Code has been being registered, the DCP said.

Pb bars pvt schools from increasing fee

Chandigarh: Days before the next academic session begins, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Wednesday directed all private schools not to increase fee or compel children to buy books, uniform or stationery items from select shops. "Parents want to impart quality education to their children but their pockets don't allow it," he said in a video message, adding that it forces them to discontinue studies of their children.

Heat wave in parts of WB for next 2 days

Kolkata: Heat wave conditions are likely to prevail at one or two places in some districts of south Bengal over the next two days, the Met department said here Wednesday. Bankura recorded the maximum day temperature Wednesday at 40 degree Celsius. The weatherman said that one or two places in the districts of Jhargram, Purulia, Paschim Medinipur and Bankura will be experiencing heat wave.

India to lead security pillar of BIMSTEC



India has been making concerted efforts to make BIMSTEC a vibrant forum for regional cooperation as initiatives under SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) were not moving forward for a variety of reasons

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The BIMSTEC countries Wednesday adopted a much-awaited charter and a connectivity roadmap at a virtual summit with its leaders approving a major reorganisation of the grouping while entrusting India to helm its security pillar.

Participating in the summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a \$1 million ad-hoc grant for the operational budget for the BIMSTEC secretariat and another \$3 million assistance to revive the grouping's centre for weather and climate.

The BIMSTEC summit, hosted by Sri Lanka, finalised three documents that will facilitate having a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT), setting up a centre for technology transfer in Colombo and providing for cooperation among diplomatic academies of the member nations. Shortly after

RS passes Bill to remove Bhogta caste from SC list

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The Rajya Sabha Wednesday approved a Bill that seeks to remove the Bhogta caste from the list of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and include certain communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) for Jharkhand.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2022 was introduced in the Upper House of Parliament February 7. It was passed by a voice vote Wednesday.

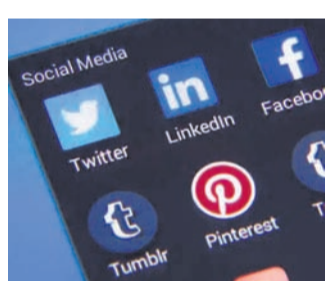
Replying to the debate on the Bill, Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda said, "We will bring such amendments related to more states in the House. We have done (such amendments for) Arunachal Pradesh and Karnataka. Now, it is being done in case of Uttar Pradesh, Tripura and Jharkhand. We are doing research on Odisha. We have completed the work in Chhattisgarh, but we are working on some observations given on that by the law ministry."

the summit concluded, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the adoption of the BIMSTEC charter has given the grouping an "international personality" and reflected its "significant evolution". Rudrendra Tandon, an additional secretary in the MEA, said at a media briefing that the signing of the BIMSTEC charter and finalisation of the transport connectivity roadmap was the main outcome at the summit.

"Henceforth, the BIMSTEC co-operation activities will take place in seven pillars. Each pillar will be led by one of the member states who will be primarily responsible for furthering cooperation," he said.

Tandon said it was decided that India will lead the security pillar. Referring to Modi's participation, he said the Prime Minister's approach was to propose to the leaders that there was a need to accelerate the pace of cooperation and that the grouping should not rest after signing the charter. Tandon

Not making social media users' verification mandatory: Centre



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The government does not intend to make social media users' verification mandatory in view of the privacy issue, Minister of State for Electronic and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar told Lok Sabha Wednesday.

To ensure that internet is open, safe, trusted and accountable to all users, the government notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules in February last year, he said during the Question Hour.

"And we will continue to expand the scope of those kinds of rule to ensure that internet is safe and trusted," he added.

said Modi also spoke about the need to move forward in areas of connectivity, disaster management, marine cooperation and economic integration agenda.

He said the security agenda is a "central prerequisite" for any sort of development cooperation. Asked about cooperation under the security pillar, Tandon said the activities will be based on the potential and capacities of the platform.

"Currently, our approach on the security pillar is to try two things - firstly establish the highest quality norms for combating terrorism and transnational crimes and at the same time put in place all the legal mechanisms required to enable our law enforcement agencies to collaborate as closely as possible," he said. He said trade facilitation could play an important role in economic integration.

On the transport master plan, Tandon said it will have a "multiplier effect" on logistics and that various connectivity plans will join up if the member countries follow the framework.

Asked about Myanmar's participation at the summit as it is being ruled by the powerful military that grabbed power in a coup last year, Tandon said that country is an important member of the grouping.

In view of the special commitment that India has to develop the BIMSTEC platform further, Modi used the occasion to make announcements on some Indian initiatives which we hope will further the BIMSTEC agenda in a more accelerated manner, Tandon said.

TOGETHER IN JOY



Blackbucks playing inside an enclosure of Sarthana Nature Park and Zoo in Surat, Gujarat

PTI PHOTO

LAVROV TO VISIT INDIA TODAY: MEA

It would be the highest-level visit from Russia to India after Moscow launched its military offensive against Ukraine February 24



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: Military operations in Ukraine, sale of Russian crude, rupee-ruble denominated payment method, arms deals are a few issues which Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov will discuss during the first high-level visit to India since Russia went to war with Ukraine.

Lavrov is arriving on a two day visit to India March 31. "The Russian Foreign minister Sergey Lavrov will pay an official visit to New Delhi March 31-1 April 2022," the Ministry of External Affairs said. RUPEE-RUBLE PAYMENT METHOD: Following the US-led sanctions and a few Russian banks being removed from the SWIFT messaging system, Lavrov will deliberate on the rupee-ruble denominated payment method for crude which Russia has offered to India.

New Delhi is not averse to buying Russian oil at a discounted rate. The government recently informed Parliament that it is examining offers from that country to buy cheap crude and an inter-ministerial committee is working on an alternate payment plan.

It is also stated that Reserve Bank of India senior officers are

meeting their Russian counterparts to discuss the rupee-ruble payment. Since the start of the war, India has been facing pressure from the West and its allies to take a stronger stand against Russia. DEFENCE DEALS: The war between Russia and Ukraine will cost India's military capabilities dearly with the delivery of many platforms like a nuclear powered submarine, Grigorovich class frigates, fighter jets, Triumf S-400, AK 203 assault rifles and others expected to be delayed. Indian leaders will hold discussions with Lavrov on the issue.

As soon as the war began February 24, both India and Russia maintained there would be no delays with respect to deliveries of critical platforms but with sanctions imposed and the possibility of the war continuing for long, it would have a major impact. India decided to upgrade its military infrastructure when the country was locked in a major face-off with China along the Line of Actual Control in July 2020. The threat of a two-front war - from China and Pakistan - has made India go for large scale arms deals and Russia is still one of India's largest arms suppliers.

LS nod to Bill to merge three MCDs

New Delhi: Lok Sabha Wednesday passed a Bill to merge three municipal corporations of Delhi into a single entity. The Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill seeks to unify the three municipal corporations into a single, integrated and well equipped entity to ensure a robust mechanism for synergised and strategic planning and optimal utilisation of resources. Home Minister Amit Shah said. The Bill was passed by a voice vote and various amendments moved by the Opposition members were rejected.

India to procure 15 light combat copters at ₹3,887cr

LIGHT COMBAT HELICOPTER LIMITED SERIES PRODUCTION (LSP) IS AN INDIGENOUSLY DEVELOPED COMBAT HELICOPTER CONTAINING AROUND 45 PER CENT INDIGENOUS CONTENT BY VALUE WHICH WILL PROGRESSIVELY INCREASE TO MORE THAN 55 PER CENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: In a significant move, the Prime Minister-led Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) Wednesday approved the procurement of 15 indigenously developed Light Combat Helicopters (LCH) at a cost of ₹3,887 crore.

The defence ministry said 10 helicopters will be for the Indian Air Force and five will be for the Indian Army.

"The CCS has approved procurement of 15 Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) Limited Series Production at the cost of ₹3,887 crore along with infrastructure sanctions worth ₹377 crore," it said. Light Combat Helicopter Limited Series Production (LSP) is an in-

digenously developed combat helicopter containing around 45 per cent indigenous content by value which will progressively increase to more than 55 per cent.

The state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) produces the helicopter.

The decision to procure the helicopters came in the midst of the three services focusing extensively on enhancing their overall combat capabilities in view of India facing myriad security challenges including along the borders with China.

The LCH is equipped with requisite agility, manoeuvrability, extended range, high altitude performance and all-weather combat capability to perform a range of roles including combat search and



rescue (CSAR), destruction of enemy air defence (DEAD) and counter-insurgency (CI) operations, according to the ministry.

It said the helicopter can also be deployed in high altitude bunker-busting operations, counter-in-

surgency operations in the jungle and urban environments and for supporting ground forces.

The helicopter can also be used against slow-moving aircraft and remotely piloted aircraft (RPAs) of adversaries.

The ministry said it would be a potent platform to meet the operational requirements of the Indian Air Force and the Indian Army.

"State of the art technologies and systems compatible with stealth features such as reduced visual, aural, radar and IR signatures and crashworthiness features for better survivability have been integrated into the LCH for deployment in combat roles catering to emerging needs for the next three to four decades," the ministry said in a statement.

"Several key aviation technologies like a glass cockpit and composite airframe structure have been indigenised. The future series-production version will consist of further modern and indigenous systems," it said.

The ministry said India is continuously growing in its capability to indigenously design, develop and manufacture advanced cutting edge technologies and systems in the defence sector under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan'.

"The manufacturing of the LCH by the HAL will give a further push to Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative and boost indigenisation of defence production and the defence industry in the country," it said.

"The production of LCH will reduce import dependence for combat helicopters in the country. Light Combat Helicopters are already in the import embargo list. With its versatile features built-in for combat missions, LCH has the export capability," the ministry said.

Now, campaign for ban on halal products in Karnataka

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, March 30: Amid hijab row and call of ban on Muslim merchants in temple fairs, the right wing groups are now demanding ban on halal products in Karnataka. A social media campaign is going on to boycott purchase of meat from Muslim traders in the state.

Hindu Jagruthi Samithi, Srirama Sene, Bajrang Dal and other right wing groups have called for removal of halal certification from the sign boards of meat selling shops. They have also urged Hindus not to buy meat which is halal cut. Instead they have advised the Hindus to buy meat which is cut as per the Hindu traditional method called 'Jhatka'.

Pramod Muthalik, Founder of Sriram Sene Wednesday said that halal cut meat should be boycotted in the state as well as the whole country. "The money given for halal products is used for anti-national activities. The money collected here will be used to bring out jailed criminals of terrorist organisations."

"One of the Popular Front of India (PFI) leaders got Rs 15 crore transferred to his account during the Shaheen bagh protest. Akbar and Aurangzeb (Muslim kings who ruled India) had taxed Hindus," he maintained.

Meanwhile, Hindu Jagruthi Samithi members have got sign boards which said 'halal cut avail-



Stand after studying objections: Bommai

After calls for ban on halal products in Karnataka grew, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai Wednesday said that the state government would spell out its stand after studying the issue. In the latest campaign targeting Muslims, Hindu organisations and BJP leaders in the state have begun raising objections to sale of halal meat to Hindus. The development comes in the wake of the recent ban calls made by the right wing groups on Muslim shops and stalls at Hindu religious fairs and temple premises in the coastal regions of Karnataka. The issue has to be studied in its entirety, Bommai told media persons Wednesday. The Chief Minister said that the state government will examine the serious objections raised in some quarters over the issue. There are no rules as such. It was a practice that was going on. Now, serious objections are raised. We will look into it, he said. Bommai refused to be drawn into the controversial calls for boycott of halal meat, being raised by Hindu right wing groups in the state. Pointing out that similar campaigns have been organised, "We'll respond to those who need a response," he said.

able' removed from three shops in Vijayanagar of Bangalore. At Nelamangala, in the outskirts of Bangalore, banners have been put up to eat only at Hindu restaurants.

Endorsing the call, BJP National General Secretary and MLA CT Ravi has said that if Muslims can give a call saying they will only have to use halal cut meat, what is wrong if others choose not to use the halal cut meat? The communal harmony is not one-sided. It should come from the other side also, he said.

Mandating halal is economic jihad, it is devised to make Muslims purchase only with traders of their religion and not to transact with others, Ravi underlined. Since meat is consumed on a large scale as village festivals are celebrated post Ugadi in Karnataka, the call to ban halal cut meat is going to create a problem in the state.

Hindu organisations are making appeals through videos and campaigns on social media. The videos are going viral.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, March 30: The Class 12 English exam of the Uttar Pradesh school board was cancelled in 24 districts Wednesday after the question paper was leaked, prompting CM Yogi Adityanath to order invoking the stringent National Security Act in the case.

The Ballia police have detained 11 people for questioning, a senior official said.

The CM also ordered the Special Task Force (STF) of the Uttar Pradesh Police to probe the case. An official has also been suspended. The English paper cancelled in 24 districts will now be held April 13, an official statement said here.

Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar said the Ballia DM and SP got information Wednesday morning that the second shift paper has been leaked.

The exam was to be held at 2 pm. It appears the English question paper of Class 12 was leaked in Ballia. The matter is being looked into and strict action will be taken against the guilty, UP Secondary Education Minister Gulab Devi said.

Asked why the exam was cancelled in only 24 districts, she said it was done in only those districts where the leaked paper was distributed.

The English paper with series 316 ED and 316 EI was leaked before the exam that was to begin at 2 pm. The incident was treated with seriousness by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. DIO (District Inspector of Schools) of Ballia Brajesh Kumar Mishra has been suspended and the STF has been asked to investigate the matter, the statement said.

It said the stringent National Security Act (NSA) will be slapped against those found involved in the incident.

CLASS XII ENGLISH PAPER LEAKED

EXAM CANCELLED IN 24 UP DISTRICTS



The NSA allows preventive detention for months if the authorities feel that someone is a threat to national security or law and order.

The exam in 24 districts will be held on April 13 in the first shift between 8 am and 11.15 am.

The state government has also launched helplines and asked students to reach out to the UP board in case of any difficulty.

Additional Chief Secretary, Information Department, Navneet Sehgal, told PTI that the CM's NSA order was in line with the state government's warning before the start of the board exams that the stringent law will be imposed if anyone is found involved in a ques-

tion paper leak.

Ballia SP R K Nayyar said 11 people, including some teachers, have been detained for questioning.

The question paper was found in mobile phones of the some of the detained people, he said.

The suspects were detained by STF teams. They are being questioned, he said.

The English exam was cancelled in Agra, Mainpuri, Mathura, Aligarh, Ghaziabad, Bagpat, Badaun, Shahjahanpur, Unnao, Sitapur, Lalitpur, Mahoba, Jalaun, Chitrakoot, Ambedkar nagar, Pratapgarh, Gonda, Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Ballia, Varanasi, Kanpur Dehat, Etah and Shamli districts.

Oppn slams govt

With the incident occurring close on the heels of the start of second innings of the Adityanath government, the Opposition seized the opportunity to hit out at the BJP regime.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav accused the Adityanath government of not wanting the exam to be completed as it failed in providing employment. The business of paper leak continues even in the second term of the BJP government. The youth are saying the government doesn't want any exam to be completed because it has failed in providing employment, Yadav tweeted.

"The BJP government should run paper bulldozers on paper mafia, at least for show," said Yadav, who is also the Leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly.

BSP president Mayawati tweeted, "After the paper leak, the examination had to be cancelled in 24 districts, including Gorakhpur and Varanasi. Is it right to play with the lives of children again and again?"

7.8 LAKH DROPOUT FROM BOARD EXAMS IN 4 DAYS

LUCKNOW: Nearly 7.8 lakh students have dropped out of the ongoing Class 10 and 12 examinations of the Uttar Pradesh Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad (UPMSP), also known as the UP Board. On Monday, a whopping 2.9 lakh class 10 and 12 students skipped their exams. Class 10 and 12 students had Computer and Geography exams respectively Monday. According to official sources, the 7.8 lakh figure surpasses the total dropouts recorded in 2020 (4.8 lakh) and 2019 (6.5 lakh). There were no exams in 2021 due to Covid-19 pandemic. The UP Board exams began March 24. In fact, the number of students skipping the exam so far is the highest in almost a decade. The UP Board 2022 examinations saw 4.1 lakh students missing the examinations on day one when Hindi exam was slated for both Class 10 and 12. The UPMSP saw over 70,200 students not attending their languages paper which was held March 26. The languages include Urdu, Tamil, Bengali, Assamese, Gujarati, Punjabi, Nepali, etc. The high numbers have now forced officials to probe the reasons for dropouts.

RAMADAN PREP



A worker prepares vermicelli, used in traditional sweet dish sheer khurma, popularly consumed ahead of the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, at a factory, in Prayagraj, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

HIJAB ISSUE

40 girls shun PU exams in Udupi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mangaluru, March 30: Forty Muslim girl students from Udupi district of Karnataka abstained from appearing for the first pre-university examination on Tuesday as they were apparently hurt by the recent High Court verdict against wearing of hijab inside classrooms.

The students decided to not appear for the examination without wearing the headscarf as they were hurt by the March 15 order, sources said.

The Karnataka High Court on March 15 had dismissed petitions seeking permission to wear hijab inside the classroom, saying the headscarf is not a part of the essential religious practice in Islamic faith and also stated that the uniform dress rule should be followed in educational institutions where it has been prescribed.

Those who shunned the examinations on Tuesday include 24 girl students from Kundapur, 14 from Byndoor and two from Udupi



Government Girls PU college, who are involved in the legal fight over wearing of hijab in classrooms. The girls had earlier boycotted the practical examinations also. At the RN Shetty PU college, 13 out of 28 Muslim girl students appeared for the examination. Though some students reached the examination centre wearing hijabs, they were denied permission. Four out of five girl students appeared for the examinations at Bhandarkar's college in Udupi, while all the girl students of Basru Sharada college attended the examinations. Six among the eight girl students of Navunda Government PU College abstained from the examinations.

7 suspended for allowing girls in hijab to exams

GADAG (KARNATAKA): The Karnataka Education Department has suspended 7 teachers including 2 superintendents for allowing hijab clad students to take SSLC (class 10) exams in Gadag district. The department has also ordered an inquiry on the suspended persons. These teachers and superintendents allowed hijab clad girls to write exams Monday at the CS Patil Examination Centre in Gadag. Meanwhile, Sriram Sene Kalaburagi District President, Ninganna Gouda Patil has lodged a complaint with the Block Education Officer of Kalaburagi demanding the suspension of Mohammad Ali, the teacher of Jjeri Urdu School in Jevargi taluk for allowing a student to write exams wearing hijab. In his complaint he has warned that if action is not taken, protest will be staged.

Water wastage now an offence in UP's Pilibhit

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Pilibhit, March 30: With the possibility of summer being harsher this year, the Pilibhit district administration in Uttar Pradesh has announced that wastage of water at automobile service stations and public places will now be a state offence.

Pilibhit has become the first district in the state to have announced such a move. The penalty for flouting the rule will be decided soon, said officials.

Chief Development Officer (CDO), Prashant Srivastav, said that the administration will also impose a ban on the plantation of eucalyptus in the district since it absorbs large amounts of groundwater. Uttar Pradesh has ranked first in the entire country in the sphere of water conservation and management and we wish to continue with our efforts, he said.

He further said that notices are being issued to automobile service stations in the district, making it mandatory for them to use soak pits for recharging water that they use in large quantities for cleaning cars and bikes every day.



Amitabh Agnihotri, Vice President of NGO Wildlife Biodiversity Conservation Society, said, "A single automobile service station can use up to 10,000-12,000 litres of water in a day. Most of this water is groundwater, which is drinkable. There is a pressing need to keep a check on such wastage."

The setting up of any new service station would also now need prior permission from the minor irrigation department. It would be subject to the compulsory provision of a soak pit, the CDO said.

In public places, the administration plans to keep a check on issues such as broken water pipelines and overflowing taps.

Prohibition on the cultivation of summer paddy would be made more rigorous for the conservation of groundwater, the CDO added.

Lucknow's 183-yr-old Nawabi kitchen gears up for Ramzan

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 30: More than 600 families in Lucknow will now get an Iftar spread from Saturday when Ramzan begins.

Owing to the pandemic, the 183-year-old Nawabi kitchen at Chhota Imambara was shut for two consecutive years.

The Nawabi kitchen has a tradition of providing Iftar, the meal served to those who observe fast, at 13 mosques under the Husainabad and Allied Trust (HAAT) and also to around 600 poor families.

The Asafi Masjid at the Bara Imambara, Shahi Masjid at Chhota Imambara, mosque at Shahnajaf Imambara and Jama Masjid in Husainabad are among the 13 mosques that receive Iftar meal from the 'Shahi Bawarchi khana'. Food is given out to around 600 poor families from the Chhota Imambara at night for 30 days.

The tradition, according to sources, was started in 1839 by the third king of Avadh, Muhammad Ali Shah, and 3,000 poor families have been continuously provided



Owing to the pandemic, the 183-year-old Nawabi kitchen at Chhota Imambara was shut for two consecutive years

food under the trust fund put in by the king.

Habibul Hasan, an official in HAAT, said, "The tender has been

Questions leave UP students stumped

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 30: Ever thought of an antonym for 'tree' or the opposite of 60? The students in the state-run schools in Uttar Pradesh are facing weird questions in their ongoing annual examinations.

A Hindi question paper in a Prayagraj school asked the Class 5 students the opposite of 'ped' (tree), while an English question paper in Bhadohi district asked the Class 7 students to write the opposite of 60. Class 5 students in Prayagraj were asked to identify the rectangle among the figures in an English question paper.

While it was bizarre to have a mathematics question in an English paper, the fact that the choices for this question had no figures. The issue has now snowballed into a major controversy and a probe has now been ordered into the matter.

Director General, school education, Anamika Singh said, "Despite Covid and elections, we managed to hold annual examinations after two years. I have directed the UPBEC secretary to examine issues related to ques-



tions and take appropriate action on the same."

The responsibility to prepare question papers for the exams is given to the basic shiksha adhikari (BSA) who rope in teachers at the District Institute of Education and Technology (DIET) for paper setting.

Ideally, the papers should be prepared on the model prepared by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT).

Over 1.6 crore students, enrolled in 1.3 lakh schools recognised by UPBEC, are appearing in these examinations. An error-free question paper can ensure proper evaluation. Even though no student can fail till Class 8, these silly errors point fingers at the standard one is setting before the students and teachers, said a senior education official. He added that question papers should be moderated to ensure accuracy.

of the day quote

However, for the first time, the budget focuses on employment opportunities. Delhi government budget talks about creating 20 lakh employment opportunities

The unfathomed energy and talent of the youth would be optimally tapped so that they could become ideal citizens of society

The internal complexity of the SP and BJP in Uttar Pradesh is widely known

SHORT TAKES

Goa CM presents 1st Budget after polls

Panaji: Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant Wednesday presented a Rs 24,467.40 crore Budget with no additional taxes while putting stress on plugging revenue leakages. The Budget was presented in English and Konkani by the chief minister who was sworn in Monday after the BJP under his leadership retained power in the Assembly elections. His government's focus was stopping revenue losses instead of levying new taxes, he said.

Four killed after falling into sewer

New Delhi: Taking suo-motu cognizance into the death of four persons -- who lost their lives after falling into a sewer, in the national capital, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Wednesday sought a detailed report in the matter within four weeks from Delhi Chief Secretary, Commissioner of Police and MTNL Chairman. Four persons lost their lives after they fell into a sewer in the national capital Tuesday evening.

Delhi: Four held in gangrape case

New Delhi: Four swimming instructors from Gurugram near Delhi have been arrested for the alleged gang rape of a 22-year old nurse here, police said. According to police, one of the accused Rajat Suresh befriended the woman on a dating app and took her to a hotel March 24. Later, he took her to his room that he had shared with three of his friends, who have been identified as Yogesh Kumar, Shiv Rana and Dev Saroha. The survivor alleged in her complaint to the police that the four men raped and assaulted her.

Leopard rescued

Mumbai: An adult leopard, which had strayed into a village in adjoining Palghar district four days ago, was rescued Wednesday, a forest department official said. The wild animal, whose one of the legs had injury marks due to entanglement in a snare, was rescued by the forest department in collaboration with a team from Mumbai's Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) from Kashid Kopar village, the official said.

Trader shot dead

Patna: After the murder of a Janata Dal (United) leader, a prominent trader of the Patna City was gunned down Wednesday morning. The deceased is a son of Pramod Bangla, a prominent gram flour (Sattu) trader. The unidentified assailants opened fire on him in the Mirchi Gali of the Patna City locality around 9 a.m. Two other persons also sustained gunshot injuries.



People are suffering due to sharp hike in fuel prices and the BJP is harping on stray incidents to divert attention from core issues and also give West Bengal a bad name

SINGLE USE PLASTIC MAKES UP 50% OF MARINE LITTER

More than 50 per cent of marine litter was contributed by single use plastics, it was found out under the pan-India coastal monitoring and beach clean-up activities from 2018-2021 undertaken by the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), Chennai at regular intervals, the Parliament was informed Wednesday



Penalty for non-linking of PAN with Aadhaar

After March 31, 2023, the PAN of taxpayers who fail to intimate their Aadhaar, as required, shall become inoperative and all the consequences under the Act for not furnishing, intimating or quoting the PAN shall apply to such taxpayers



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The Income Tax Department Wednesday said non-linking of PAN with Aadhaar by March 31 would attract penalty of up to Rs 1,000, but such PAN will remain functional for one more year till March 2023, for filing ITR, claiming refunds and other I-T procedures.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), which is the apex decision making body on direct taxes, has extended the deadline for linking Permanent Account Number (PAN) with Aadhaar many times and the last date now is March 31, 2022. As per a circular issued by CBDT on Wednesday, PAN, not linked to Aadhaar, would become "inoperative" after March 31, 2023. Those taxpayers who link their PAN with biometric Aadhaar by June 30, 2022, would be required to pay late fees of Rs 500. Beyond that, the penalty would rise to Rs 1,000.

In order to mitigate the inconvenience to taxpayers, as per no-

tification dated March 29, 2022, a window of opportunity has been provided to taxpayers up to March 31, 2023 to intimate their Aadhaar to the prescribed authority for Aadhaar-PAN linking without facing repercussions, the CBDT said, adding such intimation would have to be accompanied by late fees.

"However, till 31st March, 2023 the PAN of the assesses who have not intimated their Aadhaar, will continue to be functional for the procedures under the Act, like furnishing of return of income, processing of refunds etc," the CBDT statement said.

As per data available, till January 24, 2022, more than 43.34 crore PANs have been linked with Aadhaar. Over 131 crore Aadhaar cards have been issued so far. PAN-Aadhaar linkage would help in eliminating duplicate PAN and curbing tax evasion. AKM Global, Tax Partner, Amit Maheshwari said "It is ad-

visible for taxpayers to check their income tax portal and ensure that Aadhaar and PAN are linked. NRIs may have some concerns since in some cases they do not have Aadhaar." Nangia Andersen LLP Partner Neeraj Agarwal said, while PAN is used for various transactions like opening a bank account, purchase of immovable property or proof of identity, inactive PAN will trigger domino effect and individual who have not linked their Aadhaar may face multiple challenges. "Once your PAN becomes inactive, the person will be restricted from doing financial transactions (where quoting of PAN is mandatory like mutual funds), subjected to TDS at higher rates and penalty under section 272B," Agarwal said. For those who do not have access to income tax portal, the linking process is made available through SMS also, he added.

BIRBHUM KILLINGS

BJP team claims 'mafia rule' in WB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Darjeeling, March 30: A BJP fact-finding team Wednesday submitted its report to party chief J P Nadda on the recent massacre of nine people in West Bengal's Birbhum, claiming "mafia rule" prevailed in the state with the connivance of police and political leadership, provoking sharp reaction from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who said the report will "weaken and interfere" with the CBI probe in the case.

The BJP team, including four former IPS officers, demanded central intervention for restoration of the "collapsed" law and order situation in the state.

The party had constituted a five-member team in the aftermath of the violence in Bogtui village in Birbhum district, where eight people were burnt alive, while one more succumbed to the injuries a week later, after a mob set some houses ablaze allegedly in retaliation for the killing of a ruling TMC leader Bhadu Sheikh March 21.

The panel comprised Rajya Sabha MP and former Uttar Pradesh police chief Brajlal, Lok Sabha MP and former Mumbai police commissioner Satyapal Singh, Rajya Sabha MP and former IPS officer KC Ramamurthy, a national spokesperson for the party, former West Bengal cadre IPS officer Bharati Ghosh and state BJP chief Sukanta Majumdar. The law and order machinery has totally collapsed in West Bengal under the TMC rule and there is a rule of the mafia in the state that's run with the connivance of police and the political leadership, the report said.

West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC boss Mamata Banerjee reacted with expected outrage and alleged that the BJP wants to arrest all those who are against it. Lashing out at the saffron party, Banerjee said the report mentions the name of TMC Birbhum district president Anubrata Mondal, which "clearly shows the vindictive attitude of the BJP".



Chirag evicted from bungalow allotted to father Ram Vilas Paswan



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: Chirag Paswan, Lok Sabha MP and son of former Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan, is being evicted from the bungalow allotted to his late father, sources said. The government has sent a team to the premises at 12 Janpath Road and Chirag Paswan's belongings are being removed.

The process of moving furniture and household goods from the bungalow in Janpath in Lutyens' Delhi started shortly after a team from the Directorate of Estates, which comes under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, reached the property, official sources said.

Two loaded trucks drove out of the 12 Janpath bungalow, which was the official address of the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), while three more were parked in front.

The bungalow is earmarked for Union ministers and the occupants of the government accommodation have been asked to vacate it, officials said.

The LJP split into two following differences between Chirag Paswan and his uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras after the death of former Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan. Both are locked in a power tussle for the LJP's leadership.

Doctor's suicide in Raj: Oppn raises questions on system

AGENCIES

Jaipur, March 30: The suicide by a gynaecologist Archana Sharma in Rajasthan after being booked under Section 302 (murder) has snowballed into a political controversy with the opposition claiming it to be the death of the system while the government promised to conduct a fair investigation into the matter.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot Wednesday expressed grief over the incident. In his tweet, he said, "We treat doctors as God. Every doctor does his best to save the life of the patient. But it is not justified to accuse the doctor as soon as any unfortunate incident happens. If doctors will be intimidated like this, then how will they be able to do their work with confidence. We all should think that in the time of Covid pandemic or in case of suffering from other ailments, the doctors served everyone by risking their lives. How can such treatment be meted out to them."

Gehlot said that the whole matter is being investigated seriously. The guilty will not be spared. Former Chief Minister and BJP leader Vasundhara Raje said that there should be a fair investigation into this incident.

State health minister Parsadi Lal Meena said that the incident is sad. This should not have happened. This is the negligence of the administration.

Govt: India eyes global satellite launch market



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: India is eyeing a share in the global satellite launch market and has secured four dedicated launch service contracts with foreign customers, the government told Lok Sabha Wednesday.

"With the emergence of global broadband communication needs, NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) envisages launches of several of these foreign satellites onboard ISRO's SSLV, PSLV and GSLV-MkIII," Minister of State in PMO Jitendra Singh said in a written reply.

Singh said NSIL, a central public sector enterprise under Department of Space, has earned a foreign exchange revenue of 35 million dollars and 10 million euros

during the last three years - 2019-21, through launching satellites of various private and international agencies.

He said NSIL has already launched 45 international customer satellites on-board ISRO's PSLV during the last three years and has secured four dedicated launch service contracts for foreign satellite customers.

Singh said NSIL, through participation in various international conferences and exhibitions, is ensuring a better footprint of ISRO's expertise in building earth observation and communications satellites, providing launch and mission support services including establishment of ground segments for foreign customers to ensure enhanced foreign exchange rev-

The Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) is India's newest launch vehicle to put smaller satellites in low earth orbit. Its first developmental flight is expected in May

Earlier this month, ISRO had successfully carried out the ground testing of the newly developed solid booster stage (SS1) for SSLV

enue earnings for the country. In reply to a separate question, Singh said as part of reforms, the government has opened up the space sector for private participation to carry out end-to-end activities.

The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) shall act as the agency to promote, handhold and authorize private sector activities in the sector, besides enabling sharing of technical facilities and expertise from ISRO, he said. With the operationalization of IN-SPACe, the progressively evolving regulatory environment and creation of space industries association in the form of Indian Space Association, a greater private sector participation in end-to-end space activities is expected, which may result in increased share of India in the global space economy, Singh said.

FEARLESS ACT



An Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel shows his skills during celebrations of Diamond Jubilee of IAFs Chetak helicopter

ARE FOREST FIRES IN INDIA INCREASING?

MORE THAN 36 PER CENT OF INDIA'S FOREST COVER HAS BEEN ESTIMATED TO BE PRONE TO FREQUENT FIRES. NEARLY FOUR PER CENT OF THE FOREST COVER IS EXTREMELY PRONE TO FIRE WHEREAS SIX PER CENT IS FOUND TO BE VERY HIGHLY FIRE PRONE, THE FSI REPORT SAID

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 30: As the visuals of IAF choppers carrying large buckets of water to douse the forest fire in Sariska Tiger Reserve went viral on social media Tuesday, several people linked it with the prevailing heat wave conditions in northwest India, including large parts of Rajasthan.

Still many others said that the changing climatic conditions are bound to increase such forest fires in India. But is it the case?

Two IAF helicopters flew more than 10 hours Tuesday dispensing more than 33,500 litres of water over the affected area in Sariska, and the operation that continued on Wednesday, following which the Rajasthan government said

Wednesday that as much as 80 per cent of the fire has been controlled. The cause of the fire has not yet been ascertained.

But Sariska is neither the only place nor Rajasthan the only state that saw forest fire. According to the Forest Survey of India (FSI) report, the forest fire season in the country is normally from November to June and with majority fires being caused due to man-made reasons.

During the forest fire season 2019-2020, the number of hotspots detected by two satellite sensors was 22,447 and 1,24,473 while in the fire season 2020-21, the total hotspots were 52,785 and 3,45,989 respectively.

In 2020-21, among the states, the maximum number of fire detections were observed in Odisha



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

(51,968) followed by Madhya Pradesh (47,795), and Chhattisgarh (38,106); Rajasthan does not even figure in the top 10.

The FSI issues pre-fire alerts using overlaying factors such as rainfall, rather the deficit of rain, inputs from the Meteorological Department, satellite data from

NASA and the forest cover layer etc. "Apart from these pre-fire alerts, we also issue a Fire Danger Rating System. After the pilot that started in 2016, we started for all India from 2019-20," said Sunil Chandra from the FSI.

Heat wave & Climate Change Since mid-March, large parts of

Rajasthan, including Alwar district - home to Sariska Tiger Reserve - have been witnessing heat wave conditions.

"The forest fires in the Sariska Tiger Reserve look like a case of extreme heat exacerbating the fire. The intensity and increasing frequency of forest fire also points to the dangers this poses for biodiversity and the decades of efforts which have gone into wildlife conservation. These temperatures are much ahead of any predicted seasonal heat waves and speaks to non-linear impacts of climate change in some ways," said Aarti Khosla, Director, Climate Trends, an advocacy non-profit.

This was echoed Ravi Chellam, a member of Biodiversity Collaborative, a network of insti-

tutions and individuals promoting biodiversity research and conservation.

"Forest fires are part of the natural ecology of many ecosystems across the world. In fact, there are many habitats and species which are fire dependent. (But) It is the increasing frequency, intensity and scale of these fires which is aided and exacerbated by climate change and that too in the context of accelerating loss, fragmentation and degradation of habitats which is the problem."

Forest fire is not a new thing either for Sariska or Rajasthan but the extent to which fire spread this time is larger, he said, adding, the bigger animals are hardly affected but damages ground nesting and smaller animals.

international



It is a worrying sign but it also probably shows you how dependent they have become on other fighters because of the weakness and fragility of the professional forces
DOMINIC RAAB | DEPUTY PM, UK

HISTORIC TIPU SULTAN PAINTING SOLD IN UK

A vividly illustrated painting depicting a historic victory of Mysore ruler Haider Ali and his son Tipu Sultan over the East India Company in 1780 went under the hammer in London Wednesday for whopping 630,000 pounds



of the day quote

Taking real climate action that is not only ambitious, but also achievable, is key to building a strong economy in the 21st century



JUSTIN TRUDEAU | PM, CANADA

Ending slavery's legacy of racism is a global imperative for justice. This imperative implicates us all. We are all responsible to stand up and speak out in solidarity against racism wherever, whenever we encounter it



ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

In order to have peace we have to prepare for war. The current situation in the Baltics is not sufficient for a credible defence. We need more NATO ships patrolling the Baltic sea



KAJA KALLAS | PM, ESTONIA

SHORT TAKES

Lavrov in China

Beijing: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov arrived in China Wednesday to take part in the third meeting of the foreign ministers of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries being organised by Beijing, amid the Ukraine crisis. Lavrov arrived in Tunxi, east China's Anhui Province, for the third meeting of foreign ministers on Afghanistan. While the purpose of Lavrov's visit to China is to take part in the meeting on Afghanistan, significance is attached to his visit as Beijing, a close ally of Moscow has backed Russia's war on Ukraine even though it walked a fine-line calling for peaceful resolution.

Covid casualties surge by 40%

Geneva: The number of people killed by the coronavirus surged by more than 40% last week, likely due to changes in how COVID-19 deaths were reported across the Americas and by newly adjusted figures from India, according to a World Health Organisation report released Wednesday. In its latest weekly report on the pandemic, the UN health agency said the number of new coronavirus cases fell everywhere, including in WHO's Western Pacific region, where they had been rising since December.

Chopper crash kills UN peacekeepers

Islamabad: Six Pakistan Army soldiers were among eight UN peacekeepers killed in a helicopter crash while on a UN peace mission in Congo, according to a statement here Wednesday. The Pakistan Army helicopter was deployed on peacekeeping duties with the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and it crashed during a reconnaissance operation March 29, Foreign Office said.

12-year-old killed by younger sibling

St. Louis: A 10-year-old boy fatally shot his 12-year-old brother as the two played with a gun they found inside a St. Louis home, police said. The shooting happened Tuesday night in a north St. Louis neighbourhood, KMOV-TV reported. Police said the boys were with a parent who was getting a haircut in the home when the older boy was shot in the face. The death follows a spate of shootings in St. Louis involving children handling guns. On Friday, two young cousins who were live streaming from a St. Louis apartment died when one child fatally shot the other before killing herself.

DESPITE PLEDGES TO SCALE DOWN

Russia pounds Ukraine cities

Around a quarter of Ukrainians has been driven from their homes by the biggest attack on a European country since World War II. The United Nations said Wednesday that the number who have fled the country had risen above 4 million. More than half of those refugees are children and the rest mostly women



UK SAYS SOME RUSSIAN UNITS LEAVE UKRAINE TO REGROUP | US ON LOOKOUT FOR MAJOR OFFENSIVE ELSEWHERE | 'UKRAINIANS ARE NOT NAÏVE' SAYS ZELENSKY

REUTERS

Lviv, March 30: Russian forces bombarded a besieged city in northern Ukraine Wednesday, a day after promising to scale down operations there, and Kyiv and its Western allies dismissed a pull-back near the capital as a ploy to regroup by invaders taking heavy losses.

Nearly five weeks into an invasion in which it has failed to capture any major cities, Russia said it would curtail operations near Kyiv and the northern city of Chernihiv "to increase mutual trust" for peace talks.

But Chernihiv's Mayor Vladyslav Astroschenko said Russian bombardment had only intensified over the past 24 hours, with more than 100,000 people trapped in the city with just enough food and medical supplies to last about another week.

"This is yet another confirmation that Russia always lies," he told CNN in an interview. "They actually have increased the intensity of strikes," with "a colossal mortar attack in the centre of Chernihiv" Wednesday wounding 25 civilians.

In an overnight address, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made clear he took noth-

ing Moscow said at face value. "Ukrainians are not naive people," he said. "Ukrainians have already learned during these 34 days of invasion, and over the past eight years of the war in Donbas, that the only thing they can trust is a concrete result."

Zelenskyy advisor Oleksiy Arestovych said Moscow was shifting some forces from northern Ukraine to the east, where it was trying to encircle the main Ukrainian force there. Some Russians would stay behind near Kyiv to tie Ukrainian forces down, he said.

The past week has seen Ukrainian forces make substantial gains, recapturing towns and villages on the outskirts of Kyiv, breaking the siege of the eastern city of Sumy and pushing back Russian forces in the southwest.

The Pentagon said Russia had started moving very small numbers of troops away from positions around Kyiv, describing the move as more of a repositioning than a withdrawal.

"We all should be prepared to watch for a major offensive against other areas of Ukraine," US spokesman John Kirby told a news briefing. "It does not mean that the

Poland set to end all Russian oil imports; Germany warns on gas

Warsaw: Poland will take steps to end all Russian oil imports by the end of 2022, the Prime Minister said Wednesday, as Germany triggered an early warning level for natural gas supplies and called on consumers to save energy amid Russia's war in Ukraine. Poland has already largely reduced its dependence on Russian oil, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said. Morawiecki told a news conference that Poland was launching the most radical plan among European nations to wean off Russian energy sources. Poland said Tuesday it was banning imports of Russian coal. Morawiecki said he expects gas imports will be cut in May. In Germany, the government triggered an early warning level for natural gas supplies and called on consumers to save energy amid concerns that Russia could cut off deliveries unless it is paid in rubles. Economy Minister Robert Habeck said the move was a precautionary measure as, so far, Russia is still fulfilling its contracts. But he appealed to companies and households in Germany to start reducing their gas consumption.

threat to Kyiv is over." The British defence ministry, in an intelligence briefing, said the announcement that Moscow was now focusing on the southeast was "likely a tacit admission that it is struggling to sustain more than one significant axis of advance".

Pak teacher killed for blasphemy

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Islamabad, March 30: A teacher at an all-girls religious school was killed by a woman colleague and two students who accused her of blasphemy, Pakistan police said Wednesday, the latest murder in the country related to the hugely sensitive issue.

Few issues in Pakistan are as galvanising as blasphemy, and even the slightest suggestion of an insult to Islam can supercharge protests and incite lynchings.

The latest incident took place Tuesday in Dera Ismail Khan in the country's ultra-conservative north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province that borders Afghanistan.

Police said two students and a teacher ambushed Safoora Bibi at the main gate of the school and attacked her with a knife and stick. "She died after her throat was slit," police official Saghir Ahmed told AFP.

The main suspect is a colleague who planned the crime with two nieces studying at the Jamia Islamia Falahul Binaat school, police said.

Shooting in Israel leaves five dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, March 30: At least five people were killed in a shooting Tuesday evening in a suburb of Tel Aviv in the third such attack in Israel over the last seven days, bringing the total number of Israeli deaths to eleven in the recent terror attacks.

In a stern message following the attack, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett vowed to deal with such attacks with an "iron fist", prompting the Israeli police to go to the highest level of alert.

"Israel is facing a wave of murderous Arab terrorism...The security forces are at work. We will fight terrorism with persistence, diligence and an iron fist", Bennett said.

"They will not move us from here. We will prevail," the Israeli PM vowed. A police spokesman said that the shooting took place in two different areas in Bnei



Brak near Tel aviv.

One of the victims is said to be a police officer who was trying to stop the attacker, while the rest were civilians.

Israeli Prime Minister Bennett held a security consultation Tuesday evening to discuss the chain of events in the terrorist attacks in Bnei Brak and Ramat Gan earlier, the PM's foreign media adviser said in a statement.

"The immediate operational steps to be taken by the security forces were also discussed," the statement said. Bennett will convene the Ministerial Committee on National Security Affairs (the Security Cabinet) Wednesday.

HISTORIC SUMMIT

Jordan, Israel leaders meet

REUTERS

Amman, March 30: Jordan's King Abdullah called for calm following a historic summit with Israeli President Isaac Herzog Wednesday after the sharpest spike in street violence in years stoked fears of a wider escalation ahead of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan.

Abdullah told Herzog after receiving him in the Husseinia Palace in the first official visit by an Israeli head of state that peace was more pressing now to end a conflict that he said had "lasted too long".

A palace statement said the king condemned "violence in all its forms" including the latest attack Tuesday in which an Arab gunman killed at least five people in a Tel Aviv suburb.

"This conflict has lasted for very long and the violence it is has resulted in continues to cause much pain and creates a fertile soil for extremism," the monarch was quoted as saying in the statement.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including Israel's nearly 55-year-old occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, has long weighed on relations between Israel and Jordan, who have been peace partners since 1994.

An Israeli statement said Abdullah offered Herzog his condolences to the victims' families amid fears in both countries of a surge in assaults in the run-up in April to the holy month of Ramadan.

NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION

Imran loses majority as key ally joins Oppn

REUTERS

Islamabad, March 30: A main ally of Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan quit his ruling coalition Wednesday after reaching a pact with opposition parties seeking to oust him, signalling Khan may be running out of options as he tries to stay in power.

Former cricket star Khan, 69, is battling a series of defections from his ruling alliance and an increasingly united opposition trying to force him from office in a no-confidence vote due Monday.

Khan's ouster would likely mean another round of instability in the nuclear armed country, in which the military has a long record of intervening in politics.

"We have sent our resignations to the prime minister," Amin-ul-

Imran Khan has now lost his majority. He is no longer the Prime Minister. The parliament session is tomorrow. Let's hold voting tomorrow and settle this matter. We can then start working on transparent elections and the journey towards restoration of democracy and an end to economic crisis can then begin

BILAWAL BHUTTO ZARDARI | OPPOSITION LEADER



Opposition parties accuse Khan of mismanaging the economy, foreign policy and resorting to heavy-handed measures against critics

Haq, a member of Khan's cabinet from the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), told reporters.

Khan's party does not have a simple majority in the National Assembly by itself and needs the support of coalition allies and the MQM, based in the southern port city of Karachi, has been his biggest ally in parliament.

Earlier, the MQM said it was joining an opposition bid to oust Khan in a no-confidence.

Senior MQM member Nasreen Jalil told reporters her party and those opposed to Khan had reviewed their agreement and they would announce details later in the day.

"The MQM coordination committee has endorsed the agreement with the joint opposition," she said.



PROTEST AGAINST VIOLENCE

Demonstrators pose for a photograph during protests demanding that the government of Prime Minister Ariel Henry do more to address gang violence including constant kidnappings, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti March 29, 2022. The signs read "France is a double-edged sword" and "USA is a double-edged sword"

10-HOUR POWER CUTS

Lankan economic crisis deepens

A critical lack of foreign currency has left Sri Lanka unable to pay for vital imports, leading to dire shortages in everything from life-saving medicines to cement

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Colombo, March 30: Sri Lankans faced 10-hour power cuts Wednesday and warnings of longer blackouts Thursday, as a deepening economic crisis roiled markets and the electricity regulator urged more than a million government employees to work from home to save fuel.

The island nation has been unable to pay for fuel shipments because of a foreign exchange shortage, and is poised to seek assistance from the International Monetary Fund. "We made a request to the government to allow the public sector,



which is about 1.3 million employees, to work from home for the next two days so we can manage the fuel and power shortages better," Janaka Ratnayake, Chairman of the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka, told Reuters.

Power cuts would be extended to 13 hours Thursday, Sri Lanka's power regulator said.

Amid the country's worst economic crisis in decades, foreign exchange reserves have fallen by 70% in the past two years and were down to a paltry \$2.31 billion as of February, leaving Sri Lanka struggling to import essentials, including food and fuel.

The drawn-out power cuts Wednesday were partly caused by the government's inability to pay \$52 million for a 37,000 tonne diesel shipment that was awaiting offloading, Ratnayake said.

Lynching now a hate crime in US under Biden's new law

Anyone convicted under the new law will face up to 30 years in prison, ending a history of impunity over what researchers say were thousands of lynchings -- often unpunished -- between the end of the Civil War in 1865 and 1950

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, March 30: US President Joe Biden Tuesday signed into law a bill finally making racist lynchings a federal hate crime, ending more than a century of delays in outlawing the symbol of what he called "pure terror."

Anyone convicted under the new law will face up to 30 years in prison, ending a history of impunity over what researchers say were thousands of lynchings -- often unpunished -- between the end of the Civil War in 1865 and 1950.

The bill is named after Emmett Till, a 14-year old African American whose brutal murder galvanized the US civil rights movement in the 1950s.

Biden was joined at the Rose Garden ceremony by Vice President Kamala Harris, the first Black woman in the post, and Michelle Duster, the great-granddaughter of pioneering Black journalist and anti-lynching campaigner Ida B. Wells.

"Lynching was pure terror," Biden said, recounting the horrific practice of public vigilante killings of mostly African Americans, often in front of en-



thusiastic white crowds in the post-slavery United States.

Biden, however, warned that "racial hate isn't an old problem.

It's a persistent problem" and that "hate never goes away, it only hides."

And Harris warned that "lynching is not a relic of the past. Racial acts of terror still occur in our nation". The Senate unanimously passed the bill earlier this month, with Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer saying that the long delay in agreeing on a federal measure had been "a stain on America."

Till was abducted and murdered in August 1955 while visiting relatives in the southern state of Mississippi. The boy's mutilated body was found three days later in

a local river. This came days after a white woman, Carolyn Bryant, alleged that he had propositioned her in a store and touched her on the arm, hand and waist.

Till's mother famously insisted that her son's remains be displayed in an open casket to show the world what had been done.

Two white Mississippi men, Roy Bryant, Carolyn Bryant's husband, and JW Milam, his half-brother, were charged with murder but acquitted by an all-white jury. The pair later admitted in a magazine interview that they had killed the boy.

of the day quote

As we recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, the global macroeconomic uncertainties have increased due to the war between Russia and Ukraine. However, it is too early to even predict its impact on the Indian economy

PINAKI CHAKRABORTY | EMINENT ECONOMIST

Our new ABB Innovation Center, along with the one in Hyderabad, is instrumental in developing products and solutions, which deploy new-age technologies such as AI, ML, data analytics, edge, and cloud solutions for companies here and globally

SANJEEV SHARMA | COUNTRY HEAD & MD, ABB INDIA

This investment is a testimony not only to Games24x7's performance, but also to India's immense potential as an online skill gaming market

TRIVIKRAMAN THAMPY | CO-FOUNDER AND CO-CEO, GAMES24x7

SHORT TAKES

Telecom operators owe ₹1.65L crore

New Delhi: Telecom operators owe over ₹1.65 lakh crore to the government in adjusted gross revenue up to financial year 2018-19, Parliament was informed Wednesday. According to data shared by Minister of State for Communications Devusinh Chauhan, liability of telecom operators has increased compared to the previous order with calculation for full financial year 2018-19. The fresh calculation shows AGR liability on Bharti Airtel was ₹31,280 crore, Vodafone Idea ₹59,236.63 crore, Reliance Jio ₹631 crore, BSNL ₹16,224 crore, MTNL ₹5,009.1 crore up to financial year 2018-19.

Tata Coffee shares rally over 9 percent

New Delhi: Shares of Tata Coffee rallied over 9 per cent Wednesday after Tata Consumer Products announced the merger of all businesses of the company with itself as part of a reorganisation plan. Tata Coffee shares zoomed 9.32 per cent to settle at ₹214.55 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it jumped 12.91 per cent to ₹221.60. The stock of Tata Consumer Products also gained 3.05 per cent to settle at ₹765.95 apiece. During the day, it rallied 5.28 per cent to ₹782.50.

V-Guard Industries on expansion mode

New Delhi: V-Guard Industries plans to expand in northern, eastern and western regions of the country as it aims to garner over 60 per cent revenue from these regions in the next five-six years, a senior company official said Wednesday. Currently, these regions contribute around 42 per cent of the business of the company, which is into manufacturing consumer electrical and electronic goods. The Kerala-based company is also investing in manufacturing and is setting up new plants in Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Hyderabad. It is investing more than ₹400 crore over a period from 2019 to 2024.

FarMart raises \$32 million

New Delhi: Food supply startup FarMart Wednesday said it has secured \$32 million (over ₹240 crore) funding in a round led by General Catalyst. Existing investors -- Matrix Partners India and Omidyar Network India -- also participated in the Series B round.



We are examining all options and will do what is in the national interest. We are studying the work that MMTC, STC, PEC are doing and we will take appropriate steps to protect the national interest and protect the country's needs

PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

FII STOCK OWNERSHIP DIPS TO 19.9%

After the record \$23 billion of additional investments in the domestic equities in FY21, foreign funds have massively slashed their fresh exposure to the country to \$3.7 billion in FY22, also pairing down their holdings in NSE500 to 19.9 per cent or worth \$582 billion, down from their peak of 21.4 per cent, shows a brokerage report



BONANZA FOR RELIANCE INDUSTRIES, ONGC

Gas price set to double this week

The government sets the price of gas every six months -- April 1 and October 1 -- each year based on rates prevalent in gas surplus nations such as the US, Canada and Russia in one year with a lag of one quarter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: In a bonanza for gas producers, Reliance Industries is set to get a record price of around \$10 per MMBtu for the KG gas, while state-owned ONGC is likely to fetch more than double the rate for its Mumbai High and other fields, sources said.

The government-dictated price for natural gas produced in the country is to be revised April 1 and factoring in the spike in energy prices witnessed last year, the rate paid for gas produced from fields given to state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) on nomination basis is likely to rise to \$5.93 per million British thermal units from current \$2.9.

Simultaneously, difficult fields like the ones in Reliance and its partner bp plc operated D6 block in KG basin, are likely to get \$9.9-10.1 price compared to the current rate of \$6.13, two sources aware of the matter said. These are the highest rates for administered/regulated fields (like ONGC's Bassein field off the Mumbai coast) and



The sources said the increase in gas price is likely to result in a rise in CNG and piped cooking gas rates in cities, such as Delhi and Mumbai

It will also lead to a rise in the cost of generating electricity but consumers may not feel any major pinch as the share of power produced from gas is very low

Similarly, the cost of producing fertiliser will also go up but as the government subsidises the crop nutrient, an increase in rates is unlikely

free-market areas (such as the KG basin).

Also, this will be the second increase in rates since April 2019 and comes on the back of firming benchmark international prices. So, the price for April 1 to September 30 is based on the av-

erage price from January 2021 to December 2021. This is the period when global rates shot through the roofs.

The volume-weighted average of the price prevalent in a 12-month period in US-based Henry Hub, Canada-based Alberta gas, UK-

India cuts coal supply, halts auctions

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 30: India has cut coal supplies to the non-power sector and put on hold plans for some fuel auctions for utilities without supply deals due to a slump in inventories, even as the country battles a seasonal jump in demand for electricity.

The supply cuts come months after India's most crippling coal shortage in the recent years led to power cuts lasting up to 14 hours in some states and amid worries gruelling summer temperatures will exacerbate shortages.

Coal inventories at state government-owned utilities, which account for a third of all coal-fired plants, have slipped to 22% of mandated quantity, the lowest this year. Inventory levels below 25% are considered "critical".

State-run Coal India, which accounts for more than 80% of domestic output, has slashed supplies to the non-power sector - which includes aluminium smelter and steel mills - to 275,000 tonne a day, according to an internal company note seen by Reuters, 18.3% lower than February and 29.8% below March 2021.

Coal India told Reuters that its supplies to the non-power sector were in line with its average over the "past few years", without elaborating.

Among other measures to tighten supply, the federal coal ministry has put on hold a plan to conduct three coal auctions for utilities over the next three months and will organise one auction for the quarter instead, saying the methodology to conduct three auctions was "under process".

South Eastern Coalfields, a unit of Coal India, has extended the due date for payment for auctions conducted March 11, thereby delaying supply, and also cancelled another auction scheduled for March 21, according to notices on its website.

Ind-Ra cuts FY23 GDP hope to 7-7.2%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 30: India Ratings has lowered its GDP growth forecast for FY23 to 7-7.2 per cent, from 7.6 per cent earlier citing the rising uncertainty over Russia-Ukraine war and the resultant dampening of consumer sentiment.

Since the duration of the war continues to be uncertain, in the first scenario crude oil prices could remain elevated for three months, and in the second case for six months, Ind-Ra said.

"If crude prices remain high for three months, FY23 GDP could grow by 7.2 per cent; in case it lasts longer, then growth will be 7 per cent, down from 7.6 per cent projected earlier," its chief economist Devendra Pant and principal economist Sunil Kumar Sinha said Wednesday.



They said the size of the economy in FY23 will be 10.6 per cent and 10.8 per cent lower than the FY23 GDP trend value in these two scenarios, respectively. Tuesday, Icrs had also pencilled in a similar rate of growth for the economy.

Noting that consumption demand, as measured by private final consumption expenditure, has been subdued in FY22, despite sales of select consumer durables showing signs of revival during the festive season, the report doubts the same to pick up or remain where

VALIDITY EXTENDED ECLGS scheme enhanced

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 30: The 'Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme' (ECLGS) has been extended beyond March 2022, till March 2023.

Accordingly, the ECLGS extension and enhancement announcement which was made by the Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Union Budget 2022-23 was put into effect by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Wednesday.

Further, the coverage, scope and extent of benefits under ECLGS 3.0 pertaining to hospitality, travel, tourism and civil aviation sectors has been expanded, said the Union Finance Ministry.

"New borrowers in the sectors covered under ECLGS 3.0 who have borrowed after March 31, 2021 and

up to January 31, 2022 will also now be eligible to avail of emergency credit facilities under ECLGS 3.0," the ministry said in a statement.

"The extent of emergency credit facilities that may be availed of under ECLGS 3.0 has been increased for eligible borrowers in all sectors covered under ECLGS 3.0. Eligible borrowers in all such sectors (other than the civil aviation sector) are now permitted to avail up to 50 per cent of their highest fund based credit outstanding... This is subject to the existing maximum of ₹200 crore per borrower."

As per the statement, keeping in view the high proportion of non-fund based credit in the overall credit of the civil aviation sector, eligible borrowers in the civil aviation sector are now permitted to avail of non-fund based emergency credit facilities as well under ECLGS 3.0.

CCI raids 3 tyre firms

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 30: India's antitrust agency Wednesday raided offices of tyre companies including Germany's Continental AG and India's Apollo Tyres and CEAT in a case of suspected competition law violations, four sources told Reuters.

Shares of Apollo, one of India's biggest tyre makers, fell as much as 3% after Reuters first reported the raids, while CEAT dropped 2.2% in the Mumbai market, which was trading higher.

Shares in Continental, which is a relatively small player in India, fell about 3.5% in morning trade in Frankfurt.

In a statement after the Reuters report was published, Continental confirmed that officers of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) had visited its office near New Delhi.

Axis Bank to buy Citi's India biz for \$1.6 billion



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: Citi Bank Wednesday joined the list of foreign banks that have exited the retail banking business in India as the US-based banking giant announced selling its consumer banking portfolio to Axis Bank for an estimated ₹12,325 crore.

In a mega-deal announcement Wednesday, Axis Bank and Citibank said their boards have approved acquisition of Citibank's consumer businesses in India by Axis Bank.

Under the deal, the US-based Citi will sell consumer banking businesses of Citibank India, which includes credit cards, retail banking, wealth management and consumer loans.

Citi's scaling down of operations in India is part of its strategy to exit retail businesses in 13 markets to conserve capital and focus on higher-yielding revenue streams. It had entered India in 1902 and started the consumer banking business in 1985.

Earlier in 2012, British banking major Barclays massively scaled down India operations by closing a third of its branches located in the non-metro areas. Shrinking its operations in India was part of the UK based bank's strategy to move away from retail banking to concentrate more on the corporate banking, investment banking and wealth management verticals.

In 2016, Commonwealth Bank of Australia exited India operations saying the decision was taken after a careful evaluation of its India op-

Global banking majors such as ANZ Grindlays, RBS, Commonwealth Bank of Australia have scaled down their operations in India

erations alongside its refocused strategy.

The same year, Royal Bank of Scotland Plc (RBS) too decided to wind up its corporate, retail, and institutional banking business in the Indian market as it wanted to reduce its global footprint.

Australia and New Zealand Bank had in 2000 wound up domestic operations here after selling its Grindlays Bank unit to Standard Chartered for \$1.34 billion. However, it re-entered the Indian market in 2011 by opening a new branch in Mumbai. ANZ was in India since 1984 through its presence as Grindlays Bank.

In 2011, Deutsche Bank sold its credit card business to IndusInd Bank. In 2013, UBS exited India operations while, Morgan Stanley surrendered banking license while continuing investment banking business.

Likewise, Merrill Lynch, Barclays and Standard Chartered scaled down their operations in 2015. Among others, HSBC shut down two dozen branches and reduced its presence in 14 cities in 2016 and BNP Paribas shut down its wealth management business in India in 2020.

Hackers steal over \$600 million in major crypto heist

THE HAUL WAS VALUED AT \$545 MILLION WHEN IT WAS STOLEN ON MARCH 23, BUT WAS WORTH ABOUT \$615 MILLION BASED ON PRICES TUESDAY, MAKING IT ONE OF LARGEST THEFTS EVER IN THE CRYPTOCURRENCY WORLD

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

San Francisco, March 30: Hackers stole cryptocurrency worth over \$600 million from a digital ledger used by players of the popular online game Axie Infinity, in a major digital cash heist revealed Tuesday.

Interest in cryptocurrency has boomed, along with its values, but the money has also become an attractive target for tech savvy thieves.

Ronin Network said the attack targeting its blockchain netted 173,600 ether and \$25.5 million worth of stablecoin, a digital asset pegged to the US dollar. The haul was valued at \$545 mil-

lion when it was stolen on March 23, but was worth about \$615 million based on prices Tuesday, making it one of largest thefts ever in the crypto world.

"Most of the hacked funds are still in the hacker's wallet," Ronin said in a post revealing the theft.

The team at Sky Mavis, maker of battle and trading game Axie Infinity, discovered the security breach on Tuesday after a user was unable to withdraw ether, according to the company.

Ronin was still investigating the hack, but said that hackers got hold of private "keys" to withdraw digital funds.



"We know trust needs to be earned and are using every re-

source at our disposal to deploy the most sophisticated security

measures and processes to prevent future attacks," Ronin said.

"We are working with law enforcement officials, forensic cryptographers, and our investors to make sure there is no loss of user funds."

In Axie Infinity, players participate in battles using colorful blob-like Axies, and are mainly rewarded "Smooth Love Potion" (SLPs) that can be exchanged for cryptocurrency or cash - or invested back into the game's virtual world Lunacia.

About 35 percent of Axie Infinity traffic - and the biggest share of its 2.5 million daily active users - comes from the Philippines, where

high proficiency in English, strong gaming culture and widespread smartphone usage have fuelled its popularity, according to Sky Mavis.

To play the game, players first have to purchase at least three Axies.

An Axie is an NFT - a unique, non-fungible token, with a particular set of abilities and characteristics. Like NFT pieces of art, they are stored on the blockchain - a digital ledger that cannot be changed.

Axies can be bought, sold or rented to other players. Owners can also breed them to create new Axies that provide more value.

Hasaranga slays Knights

CSK, LSG look for first win of season

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Navi Mumbai, March 30: Royal Challengers Bangalore batters overcame some nervy moments after leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga (4/20) spun his way to a four-wicket haul to register a three-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders in a low-scoring IPL match here Wednesday.

Hasaranga lived up to his Rs 10.75 crore price tag as his four-wicket burst helped RCB dismiss KKR for 128. The Sri Lankan was ably supported by the pace trio of Akash Deep (3/45), Harshal Patel (2/11) and Mohammed Siraj (1/25) after RCB won the toss and elected to bowl at DY Patil Stadium here.

In reply, Sherfane Rutherford (28), David Willey (18) and Shahbaz Ahmed (27) played crucial innings as RCB survived some anxious moments before overhauling the target, scoring 132/7 in 19.2 overs after Tim Southee (3/20) and Umesh Yadav (2/16) blew away their top-order.

Yadav and Southee troubled the top-order batters with their pace and bounce, leaving RCB at 17/3 at one stage. While Anur Rawat (0) got a thick outside edge off Umesh, Faf



Wanindu Hasaranga (L) celebrates a wicket with his teammates during their match against Kolkata Knight Riders, Wednesday

Dinesh Karthik (14 n o) blasted a six and a four in the first two balls of the last over to take the team home.

Earlier, KKR batters struggled with the extra bounce and went for shots too many despite losing wickets at regular intervals. None of the batters could capitalise on the starts as KKR lost six wickets for 57 runs to slip from 44/3 to 101/9 in 14.3 overs.

Big-hitting West Indies all-rounder Andre Russell was the highest scorer for KKR with a 18-ball 25, while Umesh Yadav (18) and Varun Chakravarthy (10) added 27 runs, the fourth-highest for the 10th wicket in IPL history, to provide some respectability to the total.

Venkatesh Iyer was the first to be dismissed with Akash Deep striking on his first delivery, while Ajinkya Rahane's shaky start ended when he was holed out in the fifth over off Siraj as KKR slipped to 32 for 2.

Nitish Rana too perished quickly with David Willey producing a stunning catch as KKR slipped to 44/3 in the first six overs. Skipper Shreyas Iyer then paid the price for an irresponsible shot, hitting straight to Du Plessis at long-on for Hasaranga's first wicket.

Despite the match situation, West Indies all-rounder Sunil Narine went for his shots, sending Akash Deep across mid-off before top-edging him for a maximum. However, Hasaranga came back to strike twice in two balls as KKR slumped to 67/6 in 9 overs.

Sam Billings slammed a six before making his way back to the hut with a miscued pull which was comfortably held by Kohli at long-on. Russell then smashed three sixes and a four before edging Patel to Karthik, while Tim Southee mistimed one to Du Plessis to become Hasaranga's fourth victim.

BRIEF SCORES
Kolkata Knight Riders 128 (Andre Russell 25, Umesh Yadav 18; Wanindu Hasaranga 4/20, Akash Deep 3/45, Harshal Patel 2/11) **lost to Royal Challengers Bangalore 132/7** (Sherfane Rutherford 28, Shahbaz Ahmed 27; Tim Southee 3/20, Umesh Yadav 2/16) **by 3 wickets.**



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 30: Chennai Super Kings (CSK) will welcome the return of star all-rounder Moeen Ali as they eye a much improved batting performance in the IPL clash against Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) here Thursday.

Both the teams come into the game after a loss in their respective opening matches. A common factor in their defeats was the failure of the top-order and they would be looking to correct that at the Brabourne Stadium.

It is still very early days in the two-month long IPL but the toss is already playing a significant role in the game's outcome. With the second innings dew in mind, teams are preferring to put the opposition in.

The losses for CSK and LSG came after batting first at the Wankhede. Conditions are not expected to be very different at the nearby CCI ground with heavy dew likely to set in the second half of the game.

Lucknow skipper KL Rahul and star opener Quinton De Kock had a forgettable outing on Monday and they would be keen to get some runs under their belt. Rahul needs to lead from the front with the IPL presenting a big test for his captaincy skills.

Seasoned campaigner Manish Pandey and Evin Lewis, who is a hard-hitting batter, on their day can take any attack to cleaners, had a forgettable outing and the team management would hope that they come to the party.

Lucknow would be pleased that their middle-order comprising Deepak Hooda, debutant Ayush

Badoni and Krunal Pandya clicked when their top-order collapsed and the trio would again need to shoulder the responsibility.

But it was the Lucknow bowling, which would need to quickly forget the hammering they received at the hands of Gujarat. While pacer Dushmantha Chameera was right on the money, co-pacer Avesh Khan leaked 33 runs in 3.4 overs. Also the role of spin trio of Ravi Bishnoi, Hooda and Krunal, could decide the match's fate.

CSK would also look to put up a much better show with the bat after they managed only 131 in the first game. With Moeen, a pinch-hitter available for selection alongside Dwaine Pretorius, they would indeed heave a sigh of relief.

In the first game, save a vintage Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the other batters faltered – be it Ruturaj Gaikwad, Robin Uthappa, Devon Conway or Ambati Rayudu.

New skipper Ravindra Jadeja would also be keen to get a big score individually and ditto for Shivam Dube, who is racing against time to prove his worth on the IPL stage. But it remains to be seen who CSK leave out to include Moeen, who can come in at number three.

While all-rounder Dwayne Bravo claimed three wickets against KKR, others leaked runs and all of them would need to fire in unison.

TODAY'S MATCH

CSK vs **LSG**

Time: 07:30 pm

TELECAST
Star Sports channels & Hotstar

Rajapaksa seeks Virat tips on fitness issues

NEW DELHI: Skills "come first" for Bhanuka Rajapaksa but the Sri Lankan batter has realised that survival in modern-day cricket is not possible without attaining required fitness standards.

Dropped from the national team over fitness issues, Rajapaksa now wants to have a conversation with a supremely-fit Virat Kohli, who he calls the 'Cristiano Ronaldo of cricket'.

The 30-year-old announced his international retirement this January and withdrew it a week later on the insistence of authorities. However, he still missed the plane to India due to the same fitness issues, last month.

"IPL is the best league in the world and with every teammate of yours you get to learn a lot about the game, so I am loving picking the brains of Shikhar Dhawan. I get

along very well with Mayank Agarwal as we played U-19 together," Rajapaksa told this agency in an interview.

"Outside of the team Virat Kohli is always someone I could speak to and get some advice on fitness. He's at another different level when it comes to fitness.

"To me, he is the Cristiano Ronaldo of cricket for sure. The work he puts in you can obviously see the results. You can compare him to anyone when it comes fitness or even skills wise. He plays so hard and you can learn a lot by talking to him," he said.

On the 'fitness versus skills' debate, Rajapaksa has a clear view. "As a player you need your fitness but it could be different from person to person. For me, of course, skill comes first. And then the fit-

ness, but if you are not fit enough you definitely can't perform.

"I'm actually working hard on my fitness. Whenever I get a free day I hit the gym early in the morning. That there are some fitness requirements to represent the country and with fitness, my international career would be longer.

"I'm hoping to play for the next three to four years at least and do the best for the country because after my resignation I had to withdraw it back because I had a couple of conversations with the technical committee and the Sports Minister as well. They wanted me to reconsider my retirement and I decided to withdraw it," he said.

Rajapaksa feels he is now doing "all the right things" as he looks to extend his international career by at least three to four years.

Du Plessis (5) got a leading edge to the point fielder and Virat Kohli (12) paid the price for playing away from the body.

Willey and Rutherford then tried to rebuild the chase with a 45-run stand but Sunil Narine broke the partnership in the 11th over as he had the former caught at mid-wicket.

Coming to the crease, Shahbaz pulled Andre Russell for two maximums as RCB amassed 15 runs to ease the pressure. Needing 36 off 30 balls, Shahbaz hit another six off Chakravarthy before being deceived by the bowler as RCB slumped to 101/5.

With pressure mounting, Rutherford went for a slog only to be caught behind off Southee. Needing 17 off last two overs, Harshal smashed two fours, while

Manika-Archana settles for bronze

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Doha, March 30: India's Manika Batra and Archana Kamath signed off with a bronze medal after losing the women's doubles semifinals to Li Yu-Jhun and Cheng I-Ching at the WTT Star Contender Doha 2022 here Wednesday.

The higher-ranked Indian duo failed to reproduce the form they showed Tuesday and lost to Li and Cheng 8-11, 6-11, 7-11.

Both Manika and Archana, ranked 6th, did well in the first game to stretch the Chinese Taipei duo a little longer; but once the latter had the measure of the Indians, they combined splendidly to shut them out in the second and third game without much ado.

Both G. Sathyan and Manika also lost their respective singles in the pre-quarterfinals to end India's campaign in the Star Contender events. Sathyan lost to Kristian Karlsson of Sweden 11-5, 8-11, 7-11, 4-11 in the men's singles pre-quarterfinals. Sathyan could not match up with the Swede.

Manika, too, lost her women's singles pre-quarters to Ying Han of Germany meekly. The 48-ranked Indian was no match for the 17-ranked player of Chinese origin, who won 11-5, 11-2, 11-4.

Amit keeps captaincy, Xess makes comeback



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Amit Rohidas was retained as captain, while defender Neelam Sanjeev Xess made a comeback in India's 22-member squad for the upcoming FIH Pro League double-header against England here this weekend.

Neelam was part of India's team in the Asian Champions Trophy in December last year at Dhaka where they finished third with a 4-3 win over Pakistan. The 23-year-old comes in at the expense of Varun Kumar in the only change to the squad announced by Hockey India Wednesday.

The Rohidas-led side recently lost 2-2 (1-3 SO) and won 4-3 against Argentina. "It has been quite exciting to see how some of the

younger players are grabbing the opportunity to play in the Pro League and have been showing great potential," chief coach Graham Reid said in a release issued by Hockey India.

"It is good for us to have these options, we have been using this platform to try out different combinations. England has a talented squad and no doubt the matches this weekend will be quite exciting."

India (16 points) are placed second behind Germany (17) after eight matches in this season of Pro League. The Indian team has beaten South Africa at home (10-2, 10-2) while they won a game and lost a game against France (5-0, 2-5) which was also held in South Africa. At home, they won a game and lost one to Spain (5-4, 3-5) and Argentina.

2nd gold for Jayanti, Debaraj bags silver



JAYANTI BEHERA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Sprinter Jayanti Behera continued her impressive form as she secured her second gold medal in the 20th National Para Athletics Championship at the Kalinga Stadium here, Wednesday.

Jayanti bagged the yellow metal, fifth medal for Odisha, in the 400m T-47 race with a timing of 1:00.42. Earlier Tuesday, she won the gold medal in the women's 100m of T-47 category.



Debaraj Behera (L) and his guide runner Sagar Kumar Swain

Debaraj Behera added a silver to Odisha's medal tally. He, along with his guide runner Sagar Kumar Swain, brought the fourth medal for the hosts as they settled for silver medal in the 400m men's T-11 category, finishing the race with a timing of 1:03.52.

Earlier Tuesday, Rashmi Ranjan Mallick had secured a gold medal for Odisha in 100m after visually-impaired cricketer Pankaj Bhue opened the host state's medal count with a bronze – also in 100m in a different category.



Odisha girl Shivani Yadav had to settle for silver medal at the IWL Youth, Junior & Senior National Weightlifting Championships in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday. She lifted total of 160 kg in the women's junior 87kg category.



SPORTS HOSTEL FINISH RUNNERS-UP
Sports Hostel, Bhubaneswar had a tough outing in the Khelo India U-21 Women's Hockey League final as they went down 0-5 against Pritam Siwach Hockey Academy, Sonapat at the Sports Authority of India National Centre of Excellence in Lucknow, Wednesday. They were awarded a cash prize of Rs 3,00,000.

CR7 has another shot at World Cup

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, March 30: Cristiano Ronaldo will get another shot at lifting the World Cup. Portugal beat North Macedonia 2-0 in a European play-off Tuesday, securing a fifth World Cup appearance for the leading men's international scorer. It was one of seven spots in football's premier tournament decided on the day.

Thirty-two teams, including the hosts, will play in Qatar starting November 21. As of Tuesday, 27 teams had qualified with two additional spots to be determined Wednesday. Two intercontinental playoffs will be held in June along with two games to determine the final European berth.

Portugal's win finalized the eight seeds for Friday's draw: Qatar, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, England, France, Portugal and Spain. Pot two



Cristiano Ronaldo (R) and Bruno Fernandes celebrate the latter's goal, Tuesday

will include Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland and Uruguay; and if the teams qualify Wednesday, Mexico and the USA.

While the 37-year old is a lock for his team's roster in Qatar, fellow in-

ternational star Mohamed Salah will miss out after Egypt fell to Senegal.

Senegal advanced on a penalty shootout for one of Africa's five berths after fans shone lasers in Salah's face while he stepped up to

take Egypt's first penalty kick. He blasted his attempt over the cross-bar while he had green-colored lasers pointed at his face and body. Salah's Liverpool teammate Sadio Mané struck the winning penalty after the teams drew 1-1 on aggregate, sending Senegal to its third World Cup.

Ghana qualified after a 1-1 draw with Nigeria to advance on away goals. Algeria won its first leg, vying to qualify after missing out on the 2018 World Cup, but Cameroon came back with a 2-1 victory. Morocco downed the Democratic Republic of the Congo 4-1 to secure its spot 5-2 on aggregate.

Robert Lewandowski converted a penalty in the 50th minute and Poland secured its second straight World Cup berth with a 2-1 victory over Sweden. The Asian region teams that qualified are Iran, South Korea, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

Medvedev closes in on No.1 ranking

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami Gardens, March 30: Daniil Medvedev is one win away from returning to No.1. And Naomi Osaka is two wins away from being a tournament champion again.

Shaking off a slow start, the top-seeded Medvedev reached the quarterfinals of the Miami Open Tuesday by defeating Jenson Brooksby of the US 7-5, 6-1. He'll face No.8 seed and defending Miami champion Hubert Hurkacz in the quarters – and if Medvedev prevails there, he'll be assured of No.1 ranking.

Hurkacz prevailed over Harris 7-6(7-3), 6-2 and improved to 11-1 all-time in Miami. No.2 Alexander Zverev of Germany and No.6 Casper Ruud of Norway will meet in another quarterfinal. Zverev beat Thanasi Kokkinakis of Australia 6-4, 6-4, while Ruud ousted 10th-seeded Cameron Norrie of Britain 6-3, 6-4.



No.9 Jannik Sinner of Italy also advanced, beating Nick Kyrgios of Australia 7-6(7-3), 6-3. Sinner will play Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina in the quarterfinals. Cerundolo beat No.28 Frances Tiafoe of the U.S. 6-7(2-7), 7-6(7-3), 6-2 Tuesday.

The fourth men's quarterfinal will see No.14 Carlos Alcaraz against unseeded Miomir Kecmanovic – both of whom pulled off upsets Tuesday. Alcaraz beat No.3 Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-5, 6-3. Kecmanovic ousted

No.13 Taylor Fritz 3-6, 6-1, 6-4.

In women's quarterfinal play, the unseeded Osaka made quick work of No.9 Danielle Collins of the U.S. The former world No. 1 needed only an hour to overpower Collins 6-2, 6-1 and make the Miami semifinals for the first time.

Next up for Osaka: No.22 Belinda Bencic, who, like Osaka, continued her roll through the tournament. Bencic entered the semifinals with a 6-1, 6-2 win over Daria Saville.