



**ANANYA OPENS UP**  
Actor Ananya Panday, while talking on infidelity, says she emphasises a lot on loyalty and trust **LEISURE P2**



**SRI LANKA CANCELS EXAMS**  
Sri Lanka cancels exams for school students as the country runs out of printing paper **INTERNATIONAL P10**



**PONTING'S SUGGESTION**  
Head coach of Delhi Capitals, Ricky Ponting wants players who have been retained to guide the youngsters **SPORTS P12**

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**Maiden ISL title for Hyderabad FC**  
**MARGAO:** Goalkeeper Laxmikant Kattimani made three stunning saves as Hyderabad FC clinched their maiden ISL title after defeating Kerala Blasters in penalty shoot-out in the summit clash here Sunday. After the game ended 1-1 in regulation time, Hyderabad won the shootout 3-1. For Hyderabad, Joao Victor, Khassa Camara and Halicharan Narzary scored while only Ayush Adhikari found the target for Kerala FC. Earlier Rahul KP's goal had put Kerala in the lead. They must have thought that the trophy was theirs till Sahil Tavora equalised for Hyderabad FC with just two minutes to go for the final whistle. Hyderabad however, were always the dominant side and they created more chances than KFC. **P12**



**2nd term for Biren Singh as Manipur CM**  
**IMPHAL:** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced Sunday that N Biren Singh would continue as the Chief Minister of Manipur for a second term. Sitharaman, who was sent to the north-eastern state as central observer, said Singh was unanimously chosen by the BJP's state legislature party as its leader. "It is a good decision taken unanimously, which will ensure that Manipur has a stable and responsible government," Sitharaman said. The BJP returned to power in Manipur by winning 32 seats in the 60-member House in the recent Assembly elections. "I will try and provide a stable government and fulfil the wishes of the people," Singh said. **P8**

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## 'Y' Category security for Hijab judges after death threats

**Bangalore, March 20:** Following death threats to the three Karnataka High Court judges, including Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, who delivered the Hijab verdict, and arrest of a person in Tamil Nadu in this regard, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said Sunday that his government has decided to provide 'Y Category' security to all the three. Bommai said that his government has taken the matter seriously and he has ordered the DGP to look into the case and take the person arrested in Tamil Nadu into custody for investigation. He also questioned the silence of 'pseudo seculars' on the matter.



**Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi**  
"There has been a case of death threat to three judges of Karnataka High Court, including the Chief Justice, in Tamil Nadu and a case has been registered. Some anti-national forces are trying to challenge the system of this country. This had never happened in the past. So we have decided to provide them with Y Category security," Bommai said. The Karnataka CM said everyone should obey the verdict of the judiciary and there is every opportunity in the system for appeal. Yet, some forces are trying to incite people against the system, which will not be tolerated and will be suppressed, Bommai said. "Also, I have ordered (the DGP) to look into the case in Tamil Nadu and take them (arrested person) into our custody, and proceed with the case by booking the guilty under stringent sections," Bommai said.

## POPULARISING PAKHALA



On the occasion of 'Pakhala Dibas' a large number of families turned out at Ekamra Haat to enjoy the standout Odia cuisine along with other delicacies **OP PHOTO**

## 17 drown during Holi

**With restrictions relaxed this year for the Holi celebrations, recklessness was noticed among a large number of people which led to the tragic loss of lives, according to officials**



**Bhubaneswar, March 20:** Holi celebrations claimed 17 lives across Odisha when the festival of colours was observed with much fanfare across the state, Friday and Saturday. This incidentally was the first time since 2020, that restrictions were relaxed during Holi as Covid-19 cases have been on the decline. The toll in the Kharasrota river tragedy in Jajpur district went up to six with another body being fished out Sunday. The deceased was identified as Biswajit Jena. He was one among the seven who was swept away while taking a bath March 18. Meanwhile officials said that 11 more deaths were reported Saturday from various parts of Odisha. Sambalpur, Keonjhar and Koraput districts reported two deaths each while Cuttack district reported one fatality. Shatrughna Behera drowned while taking bath in a pond at

Haridagotha village under Keonjhar Town Police limits. He could have been saved had he reached the hospital on time. However, the auto-rickshaw carrying him ran out of fuel. By the time Behera reached the Keonjhar district headquarters hospital in a bike, he had already breathed his last. The identity of the other deceased is yet to be ascertained. The two who died in Koraput district were identified as Anukush Nayak and Jagannath Mohapatra, while the two who perished in the Mahanadi at Kuchinda of Sambalpur district were labourers from Balarampur district in Uttar Pradesh. Meanwhile Abhijit Barik of Biribati area of Cuttack district was swept away by strong tides when he was taking a bath along with three friends in the Mahanadi at Nua Koruan ghat. His friends

tried their best to save Abhijit, but failed to do so. His body was fished out Sunday. Officials also informed that one death has been reported from Berhampur and another from Bhanjanagar in Ganjam district. The person who died Berhampur has been identified as Pappu Singh (35). A native of Jharkhand, he had come to visit his brother-in-law at Lanjinagar village. While taking a bath he slipped into the deeper part of the village pond and could not come out. By the time his body was fished out, he had already breathed his last. The identity of the deceased at Bhanjanagar is yet to be ascertained. One death each was by drowning was reported from Sundargarh, Nayagarh and Mayurbhanj districts. Sources said that reckless celebrations led to the death of a number of people.

## Pvt fuel pumps stare at closure

**Private players are buying diesel at bulk prices but are being forced to sell at pump rates to companies that are not buying directly from state-run PSUs anymore to avail of cheaper rates**



**New Delhi, March 20:** The price of diesel sold to bulk users has been hiked by about ₹25 per litre in line with a near 40 per cent rise in international oil prices, but retail rates at petrol pumps remain unchanged, sources said Sunday. Hence bulk users are queuing up at pumps to buy fuel instead of ordering di-

rectly from oil companies. This has increased the losses of the retailers. Worst hit are private retailers like Nayara Energy, Jio-bp and Shell, who have so far refused to curtail any volume despite a surge in sales. But now closure of pumps is a

more viable solution than continuing to sell more fuel at rates that have been on freeze for a record 136 days, sources with direct knowledge of the development said. Sources said that with bulk users going to pumps to fulfil their needs, the retailers' losses are widening and they may have no option but to shut operations. Price of diesel sold to bulk users has been hiked to ₹122.05 per litre in Mumbai. This compares to ₹94.14 a litre price of the same fuel sold at petrol pumps. In Delhi, diesel costs ₹86.67 a litre at pumps, but for bulk or industrial users it is priced at about ₹115. Since November 4, 2021 PSU oil companies have not raised retail prices of petrol and diesel. It is a move seen as aiding the BJP in Assembly elections, the results of which were declared March 10.

## Mayurbhanj child porn racket busted, 7 accused nabbed

**Baripada, March 20:** Mayurbhanj police arrested Saturday seven people for making viral obscene videos of a minor girl of Sulipada in Mayurbhanj district. This was stated by Superintendent of Police Rishikesh Dyandeo Khilari at a press conference here Sunday. "Seven youths were actively involved in circulating videos and photos pertaining to child pornography on social media. During detailed probe of an earlier case, police detected an absconder from Sundargarh leading to the arrest of two more youths from Balasore and four from Mayurbhanj along with the absconder," the SP informed. The accused were identified as Ranjit Kumar Nayak (35) of Kaptipada, Sourabh Sanket Parida (25) of Udala, Ranjit Kumar Bera (28), Himansu Moharana (24) of Nagpal, Gajendra Mohanty (31) of Siripur, Abinash Rout (24) of Basta (Balasore) and Sashikat Mohanty (45) of Chandipur. The key accused, the boyfriend of a minor girl residing in Suliapada locality here had allegedly secured her intimate pictures and videos. He had made those pictures viral in 2020 and used to blackmail her. Unable to bear the humiliation the girl died by suicide by consuming pesticide the same year.

## Bikes vandalised in Utkal varsity campus

**Bhubaneswar, March 20:** Tension gripped the campus of Utkal University (UU) here Sunday after unknown miscreants set three vehicles on fire after two groups had clashed Saturday evening. However, the situation turned normal after discussions between the senior members of the two groups, university authorities and police officials. However, police are yet to find out the identities of miscreants who set the vehicles ablaze late Saturday night. Sources claimed that the incident was a fall out of a clash between two groups related to the ruling BJD earlier Saturday. Members of the two groups got engaged in a heated



Police hold discussions Sunday morning with students of Utkal University (Inset): The scooter which was completely vandalised **OP PHOTOS**

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



**They all want security. They get threats from the audience. They are pretty bad film makers.**

## COUSINS WHO DID NOT VOTE FOR BJD BEATEN

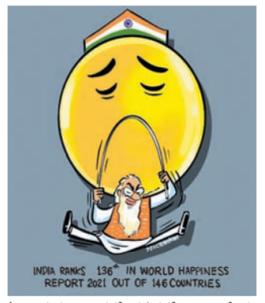
**Boudh, March 20:** Two persons were allegedly kidnapped Saturday night and assaulted for not casting their votes in favour of a Zilla Parishad (ZP) candidate, who lost in the recently-concluded panchayat elections from Sagada panchayat under Manamunda block in Boudh district. The two have been identified as Narayan Kanhara and his elder cousin Tumbeswar Kanhara of Dorasingh village. They were returning home after attending some work at Manmunda when they were kidnapped. Sources said, Boudh ZP Zone-4 BJD candidate's husband Bipin Pradhan was the brain behind the kidnapping. He and seven of his associates kidnapped Narayan and Tumbeswar and took them to

a nearby jungle and assaulted them mercilessly. They also allegedly snatched away their money. They released the two from detention after locals spotted them. "Bipin and his associates forcibly took us atop a mountain and assaulted us for not casting votes in favour of his wife Bayanti who was a BJD Zilla Parishad candidate," alleged Narayan. "They also took away our money and threatened to kill us. Somehow, we managed to escape," added Narayan. The victims have lodged an FIR at Manamunda police station in this regard. Based on the complaint, police registered a case and have launched an investigation. Efforts to get the comments of the BJD candidate, her husband and the police failed.

## Happiness missing in Indians, says report

**India is called the land of spirituality and philosophy. However, as far as happiness is concerned, India still has a lot of catching up to do**

Finland topped the charts for the fifth year in a row. Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway, Israel and New Zealand figure among the top 10 in the list of 146 nations. The report, which is in its 10th year, uses global survey data to report on how people evaluate their own lives, besides economic and social parameters. The rankings are based on average data of a three-year period of 2019-2021. Although India improved its position in the list compared to last year, it ranks lower than its neighbours such as China, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan. Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania made the biggest gains in this year's rankings, while Lebanon, Venezuela and Afghanistan saw the biggest fall in their rankings. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, one of the co-authors of the report, said



INDIA RANKS 136<sup>TH</sup> IN WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT 2021 OUT OF 146 COUNTRIES

ing hours in addition to unhealthy eating habits are also among the major reasons of unhappiness in Indians, the report states. The goal behind the report is to identify key determinants of well-being. This information is expected to help countries to craft policies aimed at achieving happier societies. Over the years, 'happiness' has become a key metric to track for not just countries but corporates as well. Several progressive workplaces, including 'Google', 'Amazon' and 'Airbnb', have appointed 'Chief Happiness Officers'. Meanwhile, India's low ranking on the 'World Happiness Report 2022' was avidly discussed by social-media users including opposition leaders. "Hunger Rank: 101. Freedom Rank: 119. Happiness Rank: 136. But, we may soon top the hate and anger charts," tweeted Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

**WEATHER**

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	37.6°C	37.2°C
MIN	21.0°C	22.6°C
Humidity	61%	58%
Rainfall	NIL	NIL

Forecast: Dry weather likely

# leisure

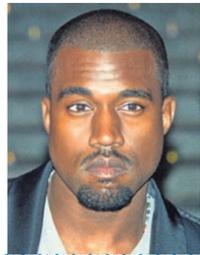


## CHER OFFERS HOME TO UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Singer Cher has called on people in her position to step up to the plate and give those fleeing their homes in Ukraine amid Russia's invasion a safe place to stay. She tweeted: "I would like to sponsor Ukrainian families in my home. They Would Be Safe Cared For."

## KANYE WEST BARRED FROM PERFORMING AT GRAMMYS

Rapper Kanye West has been barred from performing at the Grammy Awards due to his concerning online behaviour, a representative for the artiste confirmed to *Variety*. However, Academy representatives did not respond to requests for comment.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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#### ARIES

Today you may try to make your loved one happy, and perhaps even try to woo the person in a fresh manner. You may not be too satisfied with your friends and relatives, but, Ganesha says, you can expect to go to a party in the evening and make new friends.

#### TAURUS

Today, Ganesha sees your feelings and emotions running high. There is a strong possibility of an emotional encounter with some close to you. You are likely to be swayed and influenced by the other in course of this meeting. Avoid getting into any kind of dispute or controversy. Confrontation is most likely to have adverse consequences.

#### GEMINI

Lady Luck is likely to smile on you, foresees Ganesha. You are generally shy, but today is a different day. You will remain outgoing and will be able to freely express your feelings. This temporary change will do a lot of good to your ego, says Ganesha.

#### CANCER

It is likely that you will reach an important milestone in life today. Keep in mind that your success may be a cause of envy for a few people, some of whom may want to harm you. You are left with two choices: either try to help them out of their troubles and miseries, or prepare for a battle.

#### LEO

Easy come, easy go — that is the best way to sum up money. Try holding on to it, advises Ganesha, as there is a strong possibility that you shall incur a lot of wasteful expenditures today. Always think twice before you spend your hard-earned money.

#### VIRGO

Sense and sensibilities will prevail today as you address relationships. On the emotional front, you may be unclear and oscillate between what you feel and what you really expected of you. But in the end, you may well end up following your inner voice than depend on others. Your intuition is invincibly strong, says Ganesha.

#### LIBRA

The whole point of being a Libran is that you always have the tendency to be two separate things put together on a pair of scales that somehow balance. Ganesha feels that today, you'll bring to the scales the stability of being your own master and servant. It's a fine balance to maintain. But only you are capable of doing that, thanks to your extremely high-power status today.

#### SCORPIO

Retail therapy with your loved ones is a perfect recipe to have a good time! You will be more than willing to buy things of their choice. Hagging will be a trait you have clostet today as you go about being lavish in your expenses, says Ganesha.

#### SAGITTARIUS

Be ready with you bags packed as you may decide to undertake an impromptu trip today. It could be a business trip or simply travel in pursuit of pleasure. Nostalgia will grip you as you run into an old childhood friend today. Sharpen your public relation skills, which will come in handy when you deal with strangers today, says Ganesha.

#### CAPRICORN

That you are affectionate towards your loved ones will be more noticeable today than ever before, says Ganesha. In fact, you will enjoy their company and will do everything in your capacity to make them feel wanted. Long-term relationships will also thrive.

#### AQUARIUS

If you're stuck indoors today, make the most of it. There's always carrom, checkers, chess and partying! Shake yourself a bit, and you'll come up with creative ways to spend a leisurely day. You'll find that either way, life is wonderful, says Ganesha.

#### PISCES

In spite of the hardships that you will encounter on your way, your high spirits, enthusiasm and innate confidence will overcome all the obstacles. And no matter how troubled the day starts, it ought to end on a cheerful note, says Ganesha.

### National drama fest Kalinga Natya Mahotsav begins

## Play *Sahashra Dhara* evokes spiritual feelings on stage

**BHUBANESWAR:** The 24th Kalinga Natya Mahotsav, a five-day national-level multilingual drama festival organised by city's one of the oldest theatre troupes Satabdira Kalakar kicked off here at Rabindra Mandap, Sunday.

The host organisation staged Odia play *Sahashra Dhara* on the first evening of the event. Written by Sankar Tripathy and directed by Dhira Mallick, the play was based on the 15th and 16th chapter from the fourth Skanda of Odia *Bhagabata*, written by Atibadi Jagannath Dasa. It conveyed a message that discipline, soberness, honesty and integrity should be the traits of a ruler. Most importantly, he should be sympathetic

towards his subjects. The prosperity of the kingdom depends on these qualities of a ruler. In their absence, not only the state but the king also pays a heavy price, the director said in his production.

The actors who performed on stage included Dr Alok Agnivesh, Sakaleswar Pattnaik, Anil Rout, Satyaprakash Jena, Chandrakanta Mallick and Monideepa Mallick while Pratap Rout scored the music.

The dignitaries who attended a meeting ahead of the show included MLA Prafulla Samal and former Chief Secretary Sahadeva Sahoo.

Troupe's president Gourahari Das presided over the meeting, coordinated by its secretary Dhira Mallick.



A scene from the play

OP PHOTO

## Samantha's stunts to raise bar higher



**Hyderabad:** Samantha Ruth Prabhu is getting ready for her upcoming movie *Yashoda*, in which she will perform some difficult stunts.

Yannick Ben, a Hollywood stuntman, has been brought in to train and choreograph stunts for the *Oh Baby* actress.

Samantha, who had earlier worked with Yannick Ben for popular web series *The Family Man 2*, has come together with the stunt coordinator for another time. Touted to be a thriller, *Yashoda* will have Samantha essaying a titular role, for which she will now perform a few stunts. The excited actress posed with her stunt coordinator Yannick, as she begins for the high-octane sequences.

*Yashoda* is directed by debutant director duo Hari-Harish under Sridevi Movies. Produced by Sivalenka Krishna Prasad, the movie will have Tamil actress Varalaxmi Sarathkumar in an important role as well. The makers aim to release it multiple Indian languages simultaneously.

## ANANYA:

### I emphasise a lot on loyalty, trust



**Mumbai:** Ever since *Gehraiyaan* released, Ananya Panday has been on a career high. With her matured portrayal of Tia Khanna, Ananya has shown great potential to play deep, layered characters.

On her personal views about infidelity in relationships explored by in *Gehraiyaan*, the Student of the Year 2 actress says, "Honestly, the kind of person that I am, I emphasise a lot on loyalty and trust. So I don't think I would be okay with cheating. But, with this film, we've learned that we shouldn't be judgmental, if we don't know everything about a situation. So I would like to believe that I wouldn't know how I would react unless I'm in the situation. But if you asked me straight up, I would not be okay with it."

Asked what she has discovered about herself in her four-year journey in the industry, she adds, "I'm an honest person. And I'm trying to be a better actor every day."

While so many south Indian films are being remade in Hindi, the actress says she is not for it. "We are also making movies where we're kind of telling an original, braver, complex story. So, I'm kind of in that phase where I don't really want to see more remakes," concludes Ananya.

AGENCIES

## 'Stop screening 'The Kashmir Files' for free'

Showing the movie like this for free in the open is a criminal offence, says film's director Vivek Agnihotri requesting the Haryana CM to respect creative business



**Mumbai:** Movie *The Kashmir Files* has turned out to be a huge money-spinner at the box office. The film that is based on the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits collected over Rs 140 crore in 9 days and the collections are expected to grow Sunday as well as Monday. Amidst this impressive run at the ticket windows, some political figures in Haryana have arranged a

free open screening of the film. Director Vivek Agnihotri has taken to Twitter to request politicians to 'respect creative business.'

*The Kashmir Files* records second highest second Friday after *Baahubali: The Conclusion* Sharing a poster, Vivek requested the Chief Minister of Haryana Manohar Lal Khattar to stop the screening of *The Kashmir Files* in

Rewari. The free screening is scheduled to be held Sunday evening, reportedly organised by the district chief of a group called Panchnand.

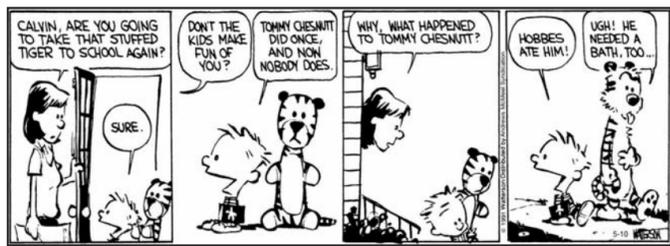
Vivek stated that screening the film in the open and for free is a criminal offence. "Showing #TheKashmirFiles like this in open and free is a CRIMINAL OFFENCE. Dear @mlkhattarji, I'd request you to stop this. Political leaders must respect creative business and true Nationalism and Social service mean buying tickets in a legal and peaceful manner."

*The Kashmir Files* stars Anupam Kher, Mithun Chakraborty, Pallavi Joshi, and Darshan Kumar, among others. It has been declared tax-free in several states including Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, Goa, Haryana, Gujarat, and Uttarakhand. AGENCIES

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

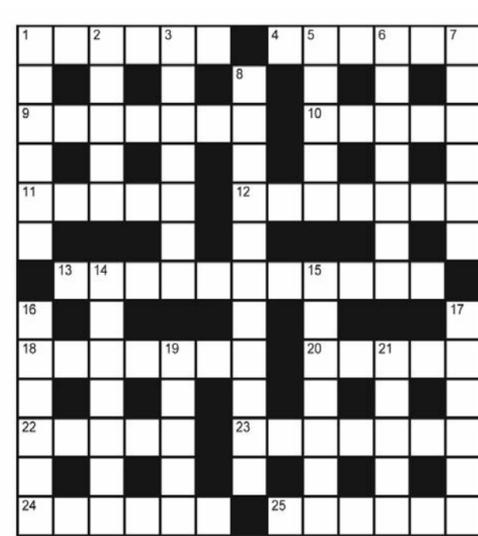


### BREVITY



### FUN post

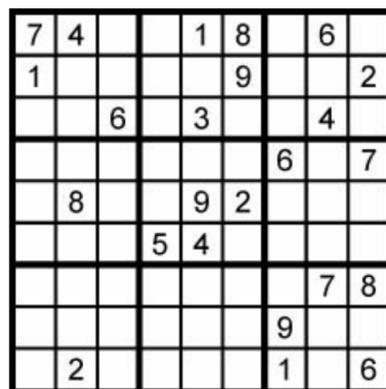
### CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Blemish
  - 4 Mexican cloak
  - 9 Ladies' man
  - 10 Military raid
  - 11 Ukrainian peninsula
  - 12 Tinned fish
  - 13 Bahrain locale (7,4)
  - 18 Adage
  - 20 Foaming at the mouth
  - 22 Antipasto morsel
  - 23 Rooming house, e.g.
  - 24 Drive away
  - 25 Like a lamb, maybe
  - 26 Before tent or mask
  - 27 Soothsayer's tool (7,4)
  - 28 Shoreline problem
  - 29 Cooking utensil
  - 30 Sang-froid
  - 31 Short-legged hound
  - 32 Decorative pitchers
  - 33 Inclined
- Down
- 1 Hunters' lures
  - 2 Physically weak instrument
  - 3 Navigational instrument
  - 5 Proposal
  - 6 Anisette de Bordeaux, e.g.
  - 7 Before tent or mask
  - 8 Soothsayer's tool (7,4)
  - 14 Shoreline problem
  - 15 Cooking utensil
  - 16 Sang-froid
  - 17 Short-legged hound
  - 19 Decorative pitchers
  - 21 Inclined

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



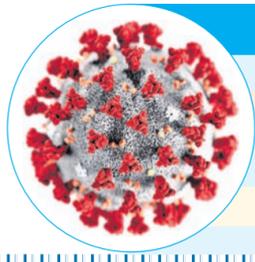
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## FESTIVE FERVOUR

People gather to witness Dola Melana Yatra at Nimpur in Cuttack, Sunday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	47,03,99,018	40,09,09,750	60,99,296
India	4,30,07,841	4,24,65,122	5,16,479
Odisha	12,87,153	12,77,424	9,116

# Pakhala tickles taste buds of Odias

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 20:** Odisha Sunday observed the 'Pakhala Dibas' marking the popularity of the state's main staple food over ages even in the age of pizza, burgers and other fast food items.

March 20 is observed as 'Pakhala Dibas' to promote the cuisine in the modern era. The initiative was started in 2015 by Odias to celebrate their traditional food worldwide. Pakhala (rice water) is the Odia term for an Indian dish consisting of cooked rice that is lightly fermented in water.

The social media platforms were busy with a large number of people posting pictures of them observing the 'Pakhala Dibas'. The particular Odia food is consumed by all from ultra-rich families to the working and labour classes.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who spent most of his youth in foreign countries before entering politics in 1997, also claimed that Pakhala is his favourite dish.

Patnaik's love for Pakhala came to the fore in 2018 when he invited national leaders like the then President Pranab Mukherjee, former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, BJP veteran LK Advani and CPI(M) stalwart Sitaram Yechury to his residence and served 'Pakhala' in the lunch.

The chief minister had shared the picture on his Twitter handle showing the dignitaries having Pakhala. "It is always a pleasure to relish Odia cuisine, especially my favourite pakhala, which I have a special liking for. Remember fondly the appreciation of guests from outside the state and country whenever we served them pakhala. Wishing you all a happy Pakhala Dibas (sic)." Patnaik had said in the social media post.



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik enjoying Pakhala with other delicacies, Sunday

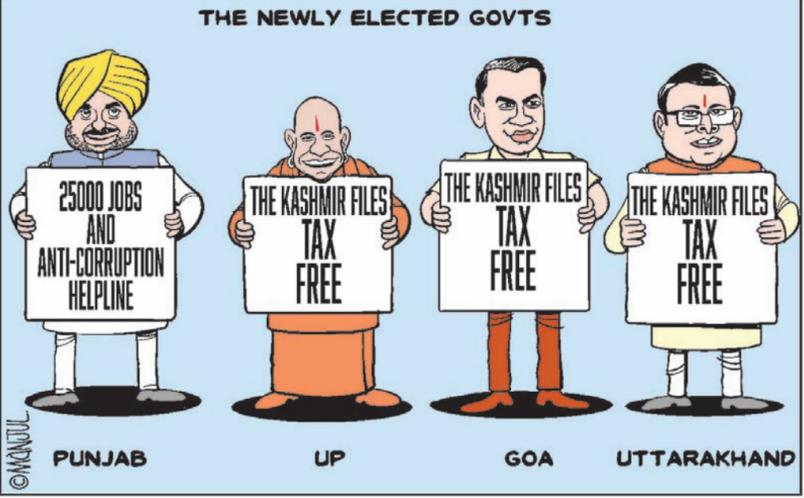
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Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan posted a picture of Pakhala and wrote in the Twitter post, "Pakhala is a meal that is a hit on every dining table and is one thing that every Odia family has in common. Greetings to all Odias and food lovers on #PakhalaDibasa. The humble, healthy & flavourful delicacy is a must-try, especially for those uninitiated to Odia cuisine (sic)."

There are many varieties of Pakhala. The deities are mostly offered 'Dahi Pakhala' (curd pakhala) after the 'Badasinghar Bhesa' (flower attire) when the Lords go to sleep at night. To make the Pakhala more delicious, people eat it with side dishes such as fried potato (aloo bhaja), fried brinjal (baigana bhaja), fried and crushed badi (badi churaa), sauted greens (saga bhajaa), fish fry (maachha bhaja) or fried pumpkin flowers (kakharu phula bhaja).

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



# Deceased lensman's mom seeks justice from CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 20:** The mother of cameraman Manas Swain, who was recently kidnapped and killed by goons allegedly hired by a lady journalist, Sunday sought Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's intervention for getting justice in the case.

The Chandabali police of shielding the prime accused and Swain's former employer, Sharmistha Rout, a journalist who has been absconding since the incident.

The Chandabali police are yet to arrest three others including Rout, one of her aides and shop owner Raj

Nayak of Khandagiri area. The police had recently carried out a raid at Nayak's rented accommodation but returned empty-handed.

The police have managed to trace Swain's mobile phone alongside a road connecting Chandikhol and Jarka. The cops are hopeful of getting vital clues on the incident during the forensic examination of the mobile phone.

Sources, meanwhile, claimed Sharmistha, patronised by one influential lady social worker in the capital city here, was engaged in various criminal activities. The mysterious social worker, reportedly

called 'Guru Maa', has links with a national level political party. She appeared on electronic media to talk on various women rights issues.

On the other hand, Sharmistha was blackmailing a doctor in another case reportedly lodged at Lingaraj police station here. The doctor had alleged that Sharmistha hatched a plan to usurp a plot owned by him in the city. She reportedly sent a lady to the doctor's clinic for treatment of throat cancer.

As per the plan, the lady brought sexual abuse charges against the doctor just after two days of treat-

## 4 detained over servitor's murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, March 20:** The police have detained four persons in connection with the murder of Srimandir servitor Khushna Chandra Pratihari March 16.

The police have detained Kalia Singhari, his son Dolagovind, Baba Mahapatra and Kulu Panigrahi in connection with the murder, sources said. Notably, Kalia Singhari is the brother of Guna Singhari, a Srimandir servitor who had been killed by miscreants in 2012. Pratihari was one of the accused in the case and he had been acquitted by a court recently. "The police have received vital clues that suggested that Pratihari was killed to avenge the murder of Guna Singhari. They will soon solve the case and arrest the accused," said a source.

# We're focusing on kidney & liver transplant: Dr Dalai

His father was a veterinarian and mother was a homemaker. He completed his school education from the Sainik School Bhubaneswar and opted for a medical career as per his parents' wish. After finishing MBBS from SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, he did MD in medicine from Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research at Burla and DM in gastroenterology from KEM Hospital in Mumbai. In an interview to **Orissa POST**, noted gastroenterologist and director of Gastro and Kidney Care Hospital, **Dr Prakash Chandra Dalai**, speaks about his health institute, fight against Covid-19 pandemic and future plans. Excerpts:



■ **What prompted you to set up an exclusive hospital for gastroenterology and kidney care?**

■ A few years ago, there was no exclusive hospital for gastroenterology and kidney in the eastern re-

gion. So, we decided to set up a special hospital for these two departments. We, a few gastroenterologist friends, together established Gastro and Kidney Care Hospital in 2014. We encountered many difficulties in the initial days. But, the cooperation from our staff and good wishes of the patients helped us to move ahead.

■ **What are the benefits being provided by the government?**

■ We cannot move forward without the help and cooperation from the government. One definitely requires more money to get treatment from private hospital. That is why we are thinking to arrange government benefits for our patients. We have applied for empanelment under the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana of the state government.

■ **Why patients would find it convenient to come to your hospital?**

■ We are providing all facilities under one roof. There is no need to move from one place to another. Besides, we have a team of good doctors and we are conducting advanced surger-

ies. These factors are attracting patients to our hospital.

■ **Your future plans?**

■ We are now focusing on kidney and liver transplant. Some health institutes in Odisha are now providing kidney transplant facility but liver transplant is a rare thing here. We are trying to conduct liver transplant in our hospital. We will set up a 250-bed multi-specialty hospital at Ghatikia near Bhubaneswar within two months. We will provide robotic surgery and other advanced healthcare at our new hospital.

■ **How challenging it was to fight Covid-19?**

■ We were providing healthcare by adhering to the guidelines laid down by the government. However, patients were really facing many difficulties to visit hospitals and avail services. We have learnt many things from this pandemic. The healthcare systems of many advanced countries collapsed during this critical time. We need to strengthen our health infrastructure to face similar challenges in future.

## Pvt schools receiving govt sops are under RTI ambit



The State Information Commission's observation came while disposing of an appeal of OPAF President Gagan Bihari Rout

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 20:** The State Information Commission has clarified that a private school, which received benefits from the state government without which it would struggle to carry on, is a public authority and that it has to furnish information sought under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

The commission's observation came while disposing of an appeal of Organisation of Parent Associations' Forum (OPAF) President Gagan Bihari Rout. Addressing the media here

Sunday, Rout, who is also the president of Unit-8 DAV Public School Parents' Association, said he had sought information on the school in the City from the Block Education Officer and Directorate of Education. The school was, however, reluctant to respond on the pretext that it was not coming under the preview of RTI Act.

Since the government has leased out 8.82 acres to Unit-8 DAV Public School in Bhubaneswar for establishment of the institution at a cost of Re 1 at a time when the present valuation of the land will be more than ₹100 crore, the school is a public authority and the appellant (Rout) is entitled to information sought by him, the commission observed February 25 this year.

The commission asked Rout to directly approach the school with Form-A and its principal shall supply the desired information within 30 days of the application.

## Ganjam NAC: Star power to local campaign

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Ganjam, March 20:** With the urban polls scheduled to be held March 24, political parties are leaving no stone unturned to woo voters. Along with political leaders, actors are also adding charm to the election campaigning.

The BJD has roped in Jeena & Subhasish to campaign for its candidates

Many political parties are roping in Odia actors to attract voters. With just four days left for the battle, celebrities are seen canvassing in favour of political parties.

The ruling BJD has roped in Jeena and Subhasish Sharma to campaign for Jhuli Patra and other BJD councillors from Ganjam NAC.

Led by BJD NAC Youth President Sudhir Kumar Padhi, the actors took out a rally from Maa Budhi Thakurani and visited different wards. Scores of people gathered to have a glimpse of the two stars.

"Naveen Patnaik is No 1 and will take Odisha to new heights. So, vote for BJD," they said while addressing the people.

# Sunday 'darshan' for devotees begins

PNN/ AGENCY

**Puri, March 20:** Almost two years after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Odisha government opened the doors of the 12th century Lord Jagannath Temple for devotees from this Sunday.

The shrine was opened for the public from Monday to Saturday on February 21, after remaining closed for almost 21 days due to a spike in coronavirus cases during the third wave in January.

The decision to open the temple on Sundays was taken keeping in view a significant decline in the number of Covid-19 cases in the state.

The temple used to remain closed on Sundays for sanitisation of the premises. Given the significant decline in Covid-19 cases across the nation and im-



provement in the pandemic situation, the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) has taken the decision to allow the entry of devotees into the temple on Sundays. Now sanitization will be done during the night and not by closing the temple, an official note said.

The devotees are allowed to pay obeisance to deities from the time of opening of 'Singhadwara' (Lion's gate) in the early morning till 'pahada' (closure of the door) every day, including Sundays.

Though most of the restrictions on devotees have been withdrawn, visitors need to follow the Covid appropriate behaviour such as wearing masks, maintaining social distance, and hand sanitization. The decision to open the temple on Sundays has come as big relief for the devotees, especially those who work in offices.

As Sunday is a holiday for them, they can now visit the temple. The SJTA has also withdrawn the restriction of producing double vaccination certificates or RT-PCR Covid negative reports for entering the shrine.

**ODISHA GRAMYA BANK**  
Regional Office: Khurda, At: Sanapalla, P.O: Pallahat,  
Dist.: Khurda, Odisha, Ph. No.: 06755-296213

**POSSESSION NOTICE**  
[Appendix-IV (Rule 8(1)) (For Immovable Property)]

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Odisha Gramya Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices, calling upon the borrower(s)/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) as noted below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice with further interest at contractual rates and rests and charges etc. till date of realization within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

1) The borrower(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower(s)/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **POSSESSION** of the property as described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the dates as indicated hereunder.

2) The borrower(s)/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the said property will be subject to the charge of the **Odisha Gramya Bank** for the amount stated below with interest thereon at contractual rates & rests as agreed, charges etc. from the aforesaid date mentioned in the Demand Notice till date of payment less repayments, if any, made after issuance of Demand Notice. The dues payable on the date of taking possession is mentioned below which is payable with further interest at contractual rates and rests, charges etc., till the date of payment. 3) **The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of the Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to them, to redeem the secured assets.**

KANTILO BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s)	Description of Immovable Properties	Dues payable as on specified date of Demand / Possession Notice	Date of Demand / Possession Notice
Borrower & Mortgagor: Mr. Lochan Biswal, S/o- Late Madan Biswal / Guarantors: 1) Mr. Pradeep Kumar Das, S/o- Late Kirtan Das, 2) Mr. Prabhat Behera, S/o- Hari Behera, all belongs to At: Pathardwara, P.O: Benagadia, Dist.: Nayagarh, PIN-752077	All that part and parcel of the property (Land & Building) consisting of Khata No.: 587/53, Plot No.: 1831/4325, Area: Ac.0.040 dec., Khasam: Homestead, Mouza: Pathardwara, Dist.: Nayagarh, Declared Owner- Mr. Lochan Biswal.	₹ 2,12,182/- as on 15.09.2021 / ₹ 2,25,691/- as on 11.03.2022 + further interest at contractual rates & rests, charges etc. till date of payment.	15.09.2021 / 11.03.2022

Date: 11.03.2022, Place: Khurda

Sd/- Authorised Officer, Odisha Gramya Bank

# Man nabbed from Noida for duping bizman of ₹2.35cr



The accused cheated the victim of ₹2.35 crore in the guise of paying the latter ₹3 crore from the Centre under the Pradhan Mantri Rahat Kosh Yojana against his insurance policy

senior government officials and persuaded the complainant to transfer cash through RTGS and bank accounts.

Being persuaded, Rout, during the period from November 19, 2019 to February 4, 2021, transferred around Rs 2.35 crore in instalments.

However, even after lapse of time, when no amount was returned to the complainant, Rout doubted their activities and found all the mobile numbers (from which he had received calls) were switched off.

All letters and images of two bank demand drafts in favour of the complainant amounting to Rs 1.27 crore and Rs 70.81 lakh were found to be fake and forged, the EOW said.

It was found that the accused is one of the members of the gang which is involved in many such cases in various states. The police said they are making efforts to arrest other members of the gang.

Max New York Life, using the forged & manipulated documents.

During the investigation, the EOW found that Rout is holding one policy in Max New York Life Insurance Company since March 2012. He got a call in October 2019 from a person who introduced himself as AK Walia, Fund Releasing Head, Ministry of Finance posted at Hyderabad.

The caller informed that the complainant's insurance policy has been selected under Pradhan Mantri Rahat Kosh Yojana and that the government of India will release an amount of Rs 3 crore in his account, the officials said.

As he remained silent for some days, Rout received several letters, communications and calls from the fraudsters, who impersonated

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 20:** The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) arrested Himanshu Bhandarion for cheating Rs 2.35 crore from a businessman, officials said here Sunday. Himanshu was arrested from Noida, Uttar Pradesh. The arrest was made against a case registered on the basis of a complaint filed by Pramod Kumar Rout, a businessman of Joda in mineral-rich Keonjhar district of Odisha, the EOW officials said.

As per the allegation, the accused and others cheated Rout to the tune of Rs 2.35 crore in the guise of paying him Rs 3 crore from the Government of India, under Pradhan Mantri Rahat Kosh Yojana against his insurance policy with



LEAVING NO STONE UNTURNED

BJD's Ward-37 corporator nominee and BJP's corporate candidate (bottom) for Ward-35 take out election rallies in their respective wards of the City, Sunday

OP PHOTOS



## Rainfall likely in several districts

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 20:** Several districts of Odisha are likely to experience light to moderate rainfall from March 21 to 24, the Regional Meteorological Centre here said.

It also predicted that there would be no large change in maximum temperature (day temperature) during the next 4-5 days over the districts of Odisha. Light to moderate rain or thundershower very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada and dry weather likely to prevail over the rest districts March 21.

On March 22, light to moderate rain or thundershower very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Rayagada and Malkangiri.

## ULB polls: Civil society groups release people's manifesto



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 20:** As political parties are leaving no stones unturned to woo voters ahead of civic body elections in Bhubaneswar, multiple civil society groups have jointly released a people's manifesto to make election contestants accountable to their poll promises.

The manifesto has been prepared in consultation with slum dwellers, local leaders, urban rights experts and social activists, sources said. Issues like safe drinking water, sanitation, hygiene and electricity find places in the manifesto.

This apart, the manifesto sought right to work for slum dwellers as it is not easy to find employment opportunities for unskilled labourers living in various slums. It also

**Among other demands, the manifesto sought right to work for slum dwellers as it is not easy to find employment opportunities for unskilled workers living in various slums of the City**

sought a grievance redressal centre for better coordination between elected representatives and community members.

The manifesto pleaded for a labour facilitation centre for helping the slum dwellers in getting benefits from government schemes. Moreover, the manifesto sought study centres for

slum children. Members of the civil society organisations are also running a campaign to urge the contestants to implement these programmes upon their victory in the polls.

"We welcome this initiative by the civil society groups. Elected representatives are always blamed for deviating from their poll promises. So, this will make us conscious about what we need to deliver after winning the poll. I have signed the pledge and announced that I would continue highlighting these issues even if I faced a defeat in the election," said Jyotsnarani Nayak, a corporator contestant from Ward No 17.

Notably, the civic body polls in the city would be held March 24 and the results would be announced March 26.

## Uterine tumour removed by laparoscopic surgery

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 20:** The Obstetrics and Gynaecology (O&G) Department of Apollo Hospitals here has performed a difficult laparoscopic surgery and removed a large non-cancerous uterine tumour from a 52-year-old woman, hospital sources said Sunday.

Apollo Hospitals-Bhubaneswar O&G Department senior consultant JP Pani said the woman approached them with a huge non-cancerous uterine tumour (fibroid).

"As it was huge, removing it laparoscopically was a Herculean task for us. However, we took it as a challenge and removed the 5.5 kilogram worth fibroid with la-

paroscopic surgery that lasted for 3-4 hours," Pani said, adding that as the patient was doing well, she was discharged from hospital the next day.

While highlighting the advantages of laparoscopic surgery, Pani advised women over 40 years of age to go for routine gynaecological checks, at least once a year, so that many diseases can be detected at an early stage.

Congratulating Pani, Apollo Hospitals-Bhubaneswar COO and DMS Alok Srivastava said they aim at reducing length of patients' stay in hospital by increasing precision in surgery.

Apart from already established laparoscopy surgeries, Apollo Hospitals will launch robotic programs soon, Srivastava added.

## State reports lowest fresh Covid cases since May 2020

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 20:** The count of fresh COVID-19 cases in Odisha Sunday was the lowest in nearly two years as 45 more people tested positive, pushing the tally to 12,87,153 cases, the Health Department said.

The coastal state had logged 23 single-day cases May 12, 2020.

The death toll remained at 9,116 as no new fatality was recorded for past three days, the department said in a bulletin.

Odisha now has 627 active cases, while 12,77,357 people have recovered from the disease so far, it said.

The state tested 38,498 samples for COVID-19 since Saturday, and the daily positivity rate stood at 0.12 per cent, the bulletin added.

## CLASSIFIED

LOST

I Sri Gopinath Mishra, S/o. Natabar Mishra, Vill- Nilakanthapur, PO- Kundapatana, PS- Dharmasala, Dist-Jajpur declare that I have lost original Deed bearing 2677, Khata No.177, Mouza- Nilakanthapur, Plot No.1472, area 3 decimil while travelling between Cuttack to Jaraka and could not track out on date 03.03.2022.

## LEGAL NOTICE

ଏକସ୍ତରା ସମସ୍ତ ସର୍ବସାଧାରଣଙ୍କୁ ଜଣାଇଅଛି ଯେ, ଗୋର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଶ୍ରୀ ବିଶ୍ଵନାଥ ସାହୁ, ପିତା-ସ୍ଵର୍ଗତ ଭାବର ସାହୁ, ସା./ନରେନ୍ଦ୍ରକୋଶ, ଶକ୍ତିବିହାର ଭେନ, ଥା./କୁମ୍ଭାରପାଳା, ପୋ/ବି-ସୁରା, ଗୋର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ କିଛି ବିନ ହେବା ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ହୋଇ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭାବରେ ପାଗର ପ୍ରାୟ ହୋଇଯାଇଛନ୍ତି, ତାଙ୍କ ନାମରେ ଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ମୌଜାର ଖାତା ନଂ.-3157/1596, ପୁତ୍ର ନମ୍ବର-2208/6726, ଯେ କୌଣସି ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କୁ ବିକ୍ରୟ କରିଦେବା ପାଇଁ ବେଶ୍ଵା କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ଉପରୋକ୍ତ ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି ଆମର ବିନା ଅନୁମତି ସିଦ୍ଧ କ୍ରୟ କରିବେ ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଆମେ ଦାୟୀ ହେବୁନାହିଁ, ଉକ୍ତ ବିକ୍ରୟ ବାଣିଜ୍ୟ ସବୁ କାରାରେ ଅବିବେକ ହୋଇଣା ହେବ । ମାମିନା ସାହୁ, ଫୋନ-9438469536

## Shortness of breath could signal heart attack with worst survival rate: Study

**SHORTNESS OF BREATH MAY BE A SIGN OF HEART ATTACK AND LEAD TO LESS SURVIVAL THAN THOSE WITH TYPICAL SYMPTOMS OF CHEST PAIN, ACCORDING TO A STUDY**

The researchers from Braga Hospital in Portugal, showed that just 76 per cent of heart attack patients with dyspnoea or fatigue as their main symptom are

alive at one year compared to 94 per cent of those with chest pain as the predominant feature.

"Patients presenting with shortness of breath or fatigue had a worse prognosis than those with chest pain. They were less likely to be alive one year after their heart attack and also less likely to stay out of hospital for heart problems during that 12-month period," said Dr. Paulo Medeiros from the Hospital.

"Dyspnoea and extreme tiredness were more common heart attack symptoms in women, older people and patients with other conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney disease and lung disease," Medeiros added.

Chest pain is the hallmark presentation of myocardial infarction



but other complaints such as shortness of breath, upper abdominal or neck pain, or transient loss of consciousness (blackouts) may be the reason to attend the emergency department.

The study focused on non-ST-elevation myocardial infarction (NSTEMI), a type of heart attack in which an artery supplying blood to the heart becomes partially blocked. The study included 4,726

patients aged 18 years and older admitted with NSTEMI between October 2010 and September 2019.

Patients were divided into three groups according to their main symptom at presentation. Chest pain was the most common presenting symptom (4,313 patients; 91 per cent), followed by dyspnoea/fatigue (332 patients; 7 per cent) and syncope (81 patients; 2 per cent). Syncope is a temporary loss of consciousness caused by a fall in blood pressure.

Patients with dyspnoea/fatigue were significantly older than those in the other two groups, with an average age of 75 years compared with 68 years in the chest pain group and 74 years in the syncope group.

Those with dyspnoea/fatigue were also more commonly women (42 per cent) compared to patients

with chest pain as the main symptom (29 per cent women) or syncope (37 per cent women).

Compared to the other two groups, patients with dyspnoea/fatigue as their main symptom were more likely to also have high blood pressure, diabetes, chronic kidney disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

"This study highlights the need to consider a diagnosis of myocardial infarction even when the primary complaint is not chest pain. In addition to the classic heart attack symptom of chest pain, pressure, or heaviness radiating to one or both arms, the neck or jaw, people should seek urgent medical help if they experience prolonged shortness of breath," Medeiros said. IANS

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SHORT TAKES

7 critical in group clash during Holi

**Padmapur:** At least seven people were seriously injured following a group clash during Holi celebration at Balasahi village under Basudevpur block in Bhadrak district. However, sources said, the clash was mainly due to political rivalry. A police platoon was deployed in the village as palpable tension continued to prevail in the village. According to a complaint by Kashyap Nayak, a few villagers were carrying out road work without any information plaque. When objected, the group attacked Nayak with sharp-edged weapons. On the other hand, the other group alleged that the clash occurred due to inappropriate behavior during Holi celebration. Three separate cases have been registered in this connection.

3 kids fall into tar tank, hospitalised

**Keonjhar:** Three children accidentally fell into an open tar-filled cauldron while playing at Kankana village under Bamebari police limits in Keonjhar district Sunday. Reportedly, an open tar-filled cauldron was left on the road-side for black-topping work at Kankana village Sunday morning. One of the three children, while playing there, accidentally fell into the tar container. Tar was not hot. Immediately, two other children jumped into the cauldron to rescue him. All the three went unconscious. Villagers spotted and rescued the kids in the nick of time and admitted them to a hospital.

Couple critical after having curry

**R. Udayagiri:** A couple was hospitalised after consuming a dish made of cauliflower grown in their backyard in Halapanka village under Mohana block in Gajapati district. The couple Jabitra Gomango and his wife Namita Gomango, after three days of sprinkling a pesticide 'Anaconda', cooked some cauliflower and prepared food for the family. Soon after eating, the couple started vomiting. Subsequently, neighbours admitted them to Mohana Community Health Centre (CHC).

Middleman arrested for illegal sale of temple land

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, March 20:** Police busted a fraudulent land sale racket Thursday as it arrested a middleman on charge of selling an endowment land through land conversion at Lakshmipasi mouza under Sadar tehsil in this town.

The accused middleman identified as Kailash Chandra Parida was arrested three years after the victim Umesh Chandra Jena filed an FIR over the illegal land deal. Police produced him in court, Thursday.

Four others including Kishore Kumar Barik, Prasanna Kumar Barik of Lakshminarayanpur Sahi and Ashok Chakra of Buladuar Sahi of Keonjhar have been absconding after the incident.

The land was fraudulently sold in 2013-14. However, the land buyer Umesh Chandra Jena lodged a complaint in the Town police station in 2018 after he came to know about the fraud. Police registered a case 273, dated-October 3, 2018 on charge of fraud and other relevant sections of IPC.

However, police dilly-dallied in arresting the accused which raised doubts in the minds of public over the attitude of police. The accused were allegedly found roaming scot free in Keonjhar town and again

getting involved in illegal land deals.

Reports said Jena purchased six decimal of land on plot no-8 and khata no-6 in Lakshmipasi mouza from Kishore Kumar Barik in 2013-14. Jena purchased the land after going through the land documents shown to him by Barik's agent Kailash Chandra Parida.

Jena paid three cheques amounting to ₹1.80 lakh to Parida and ₹50 lakh to the son of Barik in 2013. However, when he examined the land papers in 2014, he found that he had been duped. He discovered that the land he had purchased is in the possession of a temple shrine, Sri Sri Raghunathjew Bijje, Nijagad.

The accused persons had fraudulently carried out conversion of the land without the prior sanction of the endowment authorities and had sold it to Jena in the name of Odisha government. Jena lodged complaints in various forums and finally at Town police station, October 9, 2018.

An advocate Ashok Das said that several mysteries regarding fraudulent land deals in the area will be unraveled if the involvement of Sadar tehsil office and the district sub-registrar office is examined during investigation.

TRADITIONAL FEST



Members of Yadavs' association organised a 'Kalash Sovayatra' on the occasion of Dola Purnima at Balimunda panchayat under Basudevpur block in Bhadrak

Poll violence: High drama in Jeypore

- LOCAL LEADER ABDUCTED AMID GUN SHOTS, ASSAULTED; TENSION PREVAILS IN JEYPORE
- SCORES OF LOCALS LED BY JEYPORE MLA GHERAO POLICE STATION, BLOCK NH-26
- SP SAYS FOUR ARRESTED AND THREE TEAMS FORMED TO ARREST SEVEN OTHERS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jeypore, March 20:** Ahead of the urban local body elections in Koraput, some miscreants abducted and brutally assaulted a local leader identified as Kartika Nag of Gobindanagar in Jeypore town Saturday. Later, they abandoned him in a serious condition near Kumuliput. The miscreants also fired shots while abducting Nag. The incident has triggered palpable tension in Jeypore town.

Following the incident, Nag's supporters led by local MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati staged a



Locals led by Jeypore MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati staged protests

demonstration in front of Jeypore Town police station and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits, Sunday.

Bahinipati alleged that the BJD is behind this incident. "During the polls, the goons carry out violence in the area to intimidate the locals. This matter should be taken up seriously by the police," said Bahinipati.

Angry locals also blocked the

rest of the miscreants.

He told mediapersons that such an incident should not be politicised.

Later, addressing a presser here, SP Barun Gunthpalli said that four people were arrested in connection with the incident.

He added that Kartik Nag's sister Sabita Rajputa has filed an FIR, alleging that Sanay Suna, Prince and Goutam Takari of Umuria area fired at her brother, but it missed the target. The three had abducted her brother in a Scorpio vehicle, brutally assaulted and dumped him near Kumuliput.

On being informed, police later rescued Nag and admitted him to a local hospital.

Over 10 people are involved in this incident, the SP said, adding that the four arrested persons were identified as Chadrasai Sagaria (42) of Lingaraj Nagar, Prashant Khara (29), Ajay Harijan (25) of Kumuliput and Rakesh Das (30) of Koraput LIC Colony.

Three teams have been formed to arrest the seven others, the SP added.

UMERKOTE MUNICIPALITY POLLS

Voters' focus on qualification, not candidate's party



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Umerkote, March 20:** Umerkote municipality in Nabarangpur district comprises 14 wards with 23,718 voters. Most of the voters are reportedly weighing the educational qualifications of the contestants for the post of chairperson rather than their party affiliations.

The post of chairperson is reserved for women of scheduled tribe category. The BJD has fielded Radha Bhatra; BJP has given ticket to Rinki Ganda; Congress to Damayanti Disari and BSP to Santoshi Majhi.

Over the years, the people of the civic body have been suffering in the absence of some necessary civic amenities. Locals and intellectuals observed that if an educated candidate is elected to the post of chairperson, she can carry forward various developmental works.

They said, "Drains are clogged and sanitation is poor. New road projects take years for completion. The civic body authorities have failed to maintain its properties. They have failed to make the city beautiful and clean. Traffic problem has worsened over years."

They also pointed out that there has been no effort for renovation of the river that originated from

Bhaskel dam.

The BJD nominee Radha Bhatra has been carrying out door-to-door campaign and trying to woo voters to her side by highlighting various welfare measures and projects undertaken by the BJD government.

"If elected, I will definitely take up more developmental works in the municipality. The BJD has always been working for the people," she said.

BJD's Nabarangpur MP Ramesh Majhi said that like the panchayat elections, the BJD will excel in the urban local body elections.

BJP is trying its level best to counter the BJD. BJP nominee Rinki Ganda accompanying Umerkote MLA Nityananda Ganda has also been doing the door-to-door campaign.

"The BJD is doing nothing for the people and is misleading people on pretext of various schemes. Voters will repose faith on the BJP. And the BJP will win," Rinki said.

Congress candidate Damayanti Disari slammed the BJD and the BJP over price spirals and unresolved civic problems. She said that both the BJD and the BJD have been misleading people. If elected she would do a lot of works, she added.

Youth murdered on Holi

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Polsara, March 20:** In a shocking incident, a youth was killed in an organised attack over past enmity on the day of Holi festival at Mukhtamaladeipur Sasan under Polsara police limits in Ganjam. The deceased was identified as Amit Acharya. A group of four people reportedly chased Amit through a farmland and attacked him with sharp weapons. Police found circumstantial ev-

idence about the murder. They seized two pairs of slippers, a motorcycle, blood-stained cloth and a cell phone from the farmland.

A case was registered in this regard. During investigation, police collected blood samples. However, they are yet to find the exact reason for the murder.

On the other hand, the father and brother of the deceased alleged that the murder was fallout of his past enmity with a group. Police have sent the body for post-mortem.

Two held for attacking PEO on poll duty

**Buguda:** Police arrested two persons on charge of assaulting a panchayat executive officer (PEO) posted on poll duty at Buguda Square in Ganjam district, February 26 night. The accused were identified as Purna Chandra Bhuyan, a BJP candidate for zilla parishad zone no-42 and Prakash Maharatha, son of BJP supported winning sarpanch of Goudiaborda panchayat. The two were accused of attacking Pramod Chandra Sethi, PEO of Golia panchayat when he was returning home after counting of votes. Sethi had sustained critical injuries in the incident and was admitted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital. Finally, Buguda police arrested Prakash from Chennai and Purna from Phulbani and produced them in court, Sunday.

ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLY



A speaker making a point on the utility of house sparrows at a programme organised at Butiguda High School in Malkangiri on the occasion of 13th World House Sparrow Day, Sunday

Illegal sand mining: State loses over ₹100cr revenue

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, March 20:** The state government has allegedly lost over ₹100 crore due to illegal extraction and transportation of sand from two quarries on the Budhabalanga river in Mayurbhanj district.

The matter came to the fore after the eastern zone bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) at Kolkata sought reply from the Union and state governments on the issue.

The bench comprising Justice B Amit Shihalekar and expert member Saibal Dasgupta issued the order over a complaint filed by Radha Mohan Singh. Over 16 senior officials of state and Union governments have been made parties in the case.

The bench also directed to constitute a four member committee and undertake investigations and submit a report before it within a month.

The committee will comprise a senior scientist of State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (EIAA), a senior scientist of State Pollution Control Board (SPCB), the district Collector or his authorised representative and the district mines officer.

All the members have been directed to visit the two sand quarries and review the charges and submit a report before the tribunal within a period of one month. The matter is scheduled for next hearing April 22.

Reports said that the two sand quarries on Budhabalanga river are Dingira and Arapata quar-



A bench of NGT has sought reply from the Union and state governments on the issue and directed to constitute a four-member committee and submit a probe report within a month

Allegedly, miners at Dingira and Arapata quarries on Budhabalanga river under Badasahi tehsil continued mining sand despite expiry of the environmental clearance

The petitioner has further stated that the miners have extracted 240 times more sand than the permissible limits

ries under Badasahi tehsil. Both the quarries have been given out on lease for five years. The

environmental clearance valid till March 2021 had been given for excavation of 9 CUM sand

from 16.12 acre of land in Dingira quarry.

However, the miners continued mining sand from the quarry despite expiry of the environmental clearance, the complainant has mentioned in his petition.

The petitioner has further stated that the miner is permitted to extract 20,00,00 CUM of sand annually as per contract. However, they are illegally extracting 2,295 CUM sand daily from the riverbed with the help of heavy equipment which is 240 times more than the permissible limits.

As a result, the state government has lost ₹43.68 crore as revenue due to illegal mining in this quarry.

Similarly, the environmental clearance for mining of 10 CUM

of sand is valid till March 31, 2021 on Arapata quarry of Budhabalanga river. The illegal mining from the quarry continues unabated even after expiry of the environmental clearance. The miner has been directed to annually extract 2,200 CUM of sand from a depth of 1,000 feet.

However, the miner has been illegally extracting 2,970 CUM of sands daily from the quarry in violation of the order. The total extraction of sand is 240 times more than the permissible limits.

As a result, the state government has lost precious revenue worth ₹53.26 crore, the complainant has mentioned in the petition. Taken together, the state government has lost precious revenue worth over ₹100 crores from these two quarries.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, March 20:** A pregnant woman was dragged on the road by family members and assaulted in presence of public on Gangapada road under Pattamundai police limits in this district, Sunday.

Locals rescued the woman and admitted her to the district headquarters hospital. Locals said the woman of a minority community is a native of Binjharpur area in Jajpur district, fell in love with a truck driver Kuna Jena and married him two years back. The woman after her marriage came to stay at her in-laws' house where her in-laws allegedly started torturing her. The woman decided to end her life and lied on the state highway near Gangapada.

There is no greater courage than that of recognising one's own mistakes.

THE MOTHER



# Unhappy Countries

The World Happiness Report 2022 has just got published. India ranks 136th in this list indicating it is among the unhappiest countries of the world, a few notches ahead of Afghanistan which is at the bottom of the report released by the UN. Totally, 146 countries are covered by this report. The report makes it clear that the countries which are at the bottom are found to be living in societies that suffer from conflict and extreme poverty. This presents a stark reminder of the "material and immaterial" damage that social conflict and war cause to its many victims and the fundamental importance of peace and stability for human well-being.

Among the South Asian nations, Nepal's rank is 85 against Bangladesh's 94, Pakistan's 121, Sri Lanka's 127, China's 72 while Taliban-ruled Afghanistan is the lowest at 146. Finland tops the list for the fifth time in a row. Published by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the World Happiness Report makes an assessment of the levels of happiness using the parameters of GDP, social support system, personal freedom and levels of corruption in each nation. The claims made by the ruling dispensation of India that it is managing the country's economy and inclusive growth far better than previous governments fall flat when viewed in the context of the UN report. For, whatever official statistics on the country's economy are put forward by the government, the undeniable fact is that unemployment level has gone up. So also, poverty has increased after demonetisation and continuous social strife has undermined the sense of individual security and freedom. The government's record of social support is highly discouraging, to say the least, as less and less funds are being provided for schemes intended to support the weaker sections of society.

What is significant is that the rating comes at a time when the ruling party at the Centre has swept the polls in four states clearly indicating that the people in these states spread across the country appear to be happy with the way the government is running the country. The top leadership of the ruling party, including the Prime Minister, has exulted over the poll results claiming that they reflected the faith of the people in the ability of the "double engine" government, meaning the government run by the BJP at the Centre and the four states, to bring the fruits of development to them. But the Happiness report states that India is one among the countries that witnessed over the past 10 years a sharp fall in life evaluations. The report's measurement of subjective well-being relies on three main well-being indicators - life evaluations, positive and negative emotions. Happiness rankings are based on life evaluations as the more stable measure of the quality of people's lives. Special attention was given to specific daily emotions to better track how COVID-19 has altered different aspects of life.

The report also provides food for thought as to whether election results are at all a faithful indicator of government's performance in raising the level of the quality of life. Managing elections and media headlines is one thing and ensuring happiness of people is another.

Finland has been named the happiest country and it is followed by Denmark, Iceland and Switzerland. A key finding is that the Scandinavian countries have fared well because their governments are found to be relatively free from corruption, while the people in general lay more emphasis on better social relations than on material prosperity and higher GDP growth. The concept of 'hygge' emanates from Scandinavia. This Danish word refers to a mood of coziness and comfortable conviviality with feelings of wellness and contentment. This 20th century concept focuses on cherishing the little things in life as opposed to joining the rat race for material gains.

The United States rose three places to 16th, one ahead of Britain, while Canada fell 10 spots - from fifth last year to 15th this year. France climbed to the 20th, its highest ranking yet. Warring neighbours Russia and Ukraine have been ranked 80 and 98 respectively. The rankings of the report, however, were compiled before Russia launched the invasion in Ukraine.

An important feature of this year's report is that it used data from social media to compare people's emotions before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors found "strong increases in anxiety and sadness" in 18 countries but a fall in feelings of anger. The bright light that the report has found in the state of happiness across the globe in this troubled time of war and pandemic is that there has been an increase in social support and benevolence. The pandemic has not only brought pain and suffering, but has created a situation in which people have buried their differences so as to help one another tide over the unprecedented crisis. The report notes with satisfaction that as humans battle the ills of disease and war, they have also displayed the universal desire for happiness and the capacity of individuals to rally to each other's support in times of great need.

That appears to be a much needed silver lining in the quest for happiness in the gloomy times of the crisis of a century, war-mongering and divisive politics.

## WISDOM CORNER

- When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight. **KAHLIL GIBRAN**
- Loss and possession, death and life are one, There falls no shadow where there shines no sun. **HILAIRE BELLOC**
- Only by joy and sorrow does a person know anything about themselves and their destiny. They learn what to do and what to avoid. **JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE**

## WORDSWORTH

### Shindig

Many researchers have theories about the origin of this interesting little word, but few can supply firm facts. With a bit of guesswork, though, we can get somewhere near the source. The usual spelling today is without the hyphen, shindig, and means a noisy or merry dance or party, often one that is celebrating something (to define it, the OED uses the informal British English phrase knees-up for a similar sort of party, taken from the music-hall song Knees Up, Mother Brown). Shindig is a modification of the older shindy, which could equally be a noisy party or gathering, but in its first examples instead referred to a commotion, ruckus or brawl, as in to kick up a shindy. In that form it dates from the 1820s; an example from later in the century is in Jerome K Jerome's Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow, published in 1886: "I always do sit with my hands in my pockets except when I am in the company of my sisters, my cousins, or my aunts; and they kick up such a shindy - I should say expostulate so eloquently upon the subject - that I have to give in and take them out - my hands I mean." This idea was often taken over into shindig, as you can tell from Stephen Crane's Active Service of 1899: "You have noted that there are signs of a few bruises and scratches? ... Well, they are from the fight. It seems the people took us for Germans, and there was an awful palaver, which ended in a proper and handsome shindig." You can see how the idea of a ruckus could have become modified into that of a noisy party. It's less obvious how shindy turned into shindig. An entry in Bartlett's Dictionary of Americanisms gives the clue, because it says that shindig was used literally in the Southern states to mean a kick to the shins. You can see how popular etymology could have added that to the sense of a brawl and created shindig from shindy. That leaves us only to explain the origin of shindy. Here we get on to shaky ground. It is possible that it's from the Scots game of shinty or shinney, a bit like hockey and likewise played with a bent stick, a cousin of Irish hurling that some say is also the origin of ice hockey. If that's so, shindy may be from the Gaelic sinterag, a bound or leap, or possibly from one of the rude cries uttered in the game, such as shin ye, shin you, shin t'ye. By all accounts it was a rough game, often with 100 or more men on each side and no holds barred in the quest for supremacy. The Penny Magazine of 31 January 1835 described it with muted horror: "Large parties assemble during Christmas holidays... In the struggles between the contending players many hard blows are given, and more frequently a shin is broken, or by rarer chance some more serious accident may occur."

## FOCUS INDIA

# THE ILLUSION OF SIZE

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has upended the liberal international order, forcing India to reassess its security and economic strategies. The government's decisions will be shaped by its assessment of the country's military and economic strengths, but it should resist the temptation to equate them with India's size.

True, India's economy is undeniably large. According to the International Monetary Fund, India is the world's third-largest economy in purchasing-power-parity terms, with a GDP of \$10 trillion, behind China (\$27 trillion) and the United States (\$23 trillion). At market exchange rates, its GDP of \$3 trillion makes it the sixth-largest economy, behind the US, China, Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

But India's economic size has not translated into commensurate military strength. Part of the problem is simple geography. Bismarck supposedly said that the US is bordered on two sides by weak neighbours and on two sides by fish. India, however, does not enjoy such splendid isolation. Ever since Independence, it has been confronted on its Western frontier by Pakistan, a highly armed, chronically hostile, and often military-ruled neighbour.

More recently, India's northern neighbour, China, also has become aggressive, repudiating the territorial status quo, occupying contested land in the Himalayas, reclaiming territory in the east, and building up a large military presence along India's borders. So, India may have fish for neighbours along its long peninsular coast, but on land it faces major security challenges on two fronts.

Despite these challenges and its sizable economy, India has struggled to generate adequate military resources. Defence expenditure is notoriously difficult to estimate, especially for China and Pakistan, which have opaque political systems. But annual combined defence spending by India's two adversaries is likely to be three times the \$70-75 billion that India spends. And the effective gap is probably even larger, because India's politically driven emphasis on military manpower has crowded out spending on military technology. In short, India



India's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine is more a consequence of weakness than an expression of independence. For now, Indian policymakers should avoid succumbing to the illusion of size, and reconcile themselves with their country's current status as a middling power

may have a large economy, but dangerous geography and domestic politics have left it militarily vulnerable.

Then there is the question of market size. As Pennsylvania State University's Shoumitro Chatterjee and one of us (Subramanian) have shown, India's middle-class market for consumption is much smaller than the \$3 trillion headline GDP number suggests, because many people have limited purchasing power while a smaller number of well-off people tend to save a lot. In fact, the effective size of India's consumer market is less than \$1 trillion, far smaller than China's and even smaller relative to the potential world export market of nearly \$30 trillion.

But you wouldn't know it from India's current economic strategy. As we have pointed out elsewhere, India has actually turned inward in the past few years, increasing tariffs, subsidising favoured firms, and staying out of regional integration agreements in Asia, the most dynamic part of the world economy.

Strikingly this inward turn was not the result of economic failure. Since the 1990s, when trade was

liberalised, India's economy has grown by an average of 6.5 per cent per year, propelled by a 13 per cent average annual increase in exports of goods and services in dollar terms, a rate surpassed by only China and Vietnam. But this success has proved to be an orphan, abandoned in favour of a tried-and-tested policy that (in more extreme form) failed miserably for three decades after 1950. One possible explanation for the government's decision is that it has succumbed to the illusion of size. It has repeatedly claimed that India's economic promise is based on the "3Ds": democracy, demography, and demand. And it has concluded that domestic and foreign investors can be lured into tapping this ever-elusive demand through subsidies and protection.

The temptation of size is also evident in the security domain, where India has refused to condemn explicitly Russia's invasion of Ukraine, despite the humanitarian tragedy it has unleashed. This has created an awkward irony: Democratic India has implicitly aligned itself with an authoritarian axis, two of whose members, China and Pakistan, are hostile

neighbours. But India has calculated that, because it is indispensable to addressing the rise of China, its stance toward the Russia-Ukraine conflict will have no serious consequences for its relations with the West.

In reality, however, India's response to Russia's invasion is more a reflection of weakness than an expression of independence. If India were truly free to choose, it would uphold the inviolability of territorial sovereignty, especially that of weaker countries.

Finding a way out of this unenviable situation will require considerable effort. Most obviously, India will need to depend less on Russia for arms supplies. Russia itself will be too damaged to, and too dependent on China to be willing, to remain a reliable, trustworthy supplier. More subtly, it will need to augment its defence resources by encouraging faster economic growth and maximising the value of military spending. The latter will entail addressing key shortcomings such as the inefficiency of domestic defence manufacturing, the paralysis of procurement decision-making since the scandals of the 1980s, and the imbalance in resource allocation that favours personnel over sophisticated hardware.

On the economic front, India should look beyond its borders and set its sights on the global market - and recent developments are creating an exceptional opportunity for it to do so. The Russia-Ukraine war will heighten investors' sensitivity to the nature of the political regimes in countries where they operate, which will intensify existing pressures to shift production out of China. India is uniquely positioned to grasp this opportunity, if the country would only pivot to seize it.

India needs to accept, and act in line with, its current status as a middling power. Over time, rapid and sustained economic growth could make India the major power it aspires to be. Until then, it must look past the illusion of size and reconcile itself with strategic realities.

Arvind Subramanian is a senior fellow at Brown University. Josh Felman is Director of JH Consulting. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

## SPECTRUM ENERGY

# The case against biodiesel

The war in Ukraine has led to an increase in price of fuel oil. There is a lurking danger that the price may increase yet more in the coming times if the war continues. This makes it necessary for us to look for alternative ways of ensuring our energy security. We are dependent on imports for the three major sources of energy, namely, fuel oil, coal and uranium. One alternative being suggested is to promote biodiesels which can be produced either from sugarcane directly or from seeds of tatropha that can be grown on degraded land. Indeed it is possible to produce biodiesel from such use of land. However, the same land has alternative uses. The question, therefore, is not whether we can and must produce biodiesel. We have to compare which of the alternative crops is more beneficial for us.

The production of biodiesel is hugely water intensive. Sugarcane uses about 20 times more water per hectare of land than the cultivation of wheat. Our water resources are already depleting. The

ground water table has been declining rapidly across the country. In such a situation, if we draw out more quantities of water to produce sugarcane, the water table will decline further and it will again imperil our food security.

The case for biodiesel is actually made by the policymakers because it serves the rich. A paper published by the World Bank titled "Review of Environmental, Economy and Policy Aspects of Biofuels" says that the demand for biofuels is largely from the richer sections of society. Here we have a clear admission that biodiesel is used mainly by the rich; whereas, the biomass such as straw is used more by the common man. The cultivation of paddy and wheat provides straw which is fed to the livestock, which leads to the production of milk, which is then fed to the children. I did a study in Rajasthan and found that the health of children of farmers producing cash crops deteriorates because less cash income is used for milk and other nutritious foods. The production of

sugarcane for biodiesel may indeed provide more cash to the farmers but that cash is used for buying goods like bikes and television sets rather than for milk. The result is that the cultivation of cash crops leads to poor health of the common man. It appears that biodiesel is being promoted not because it is beneficial for the country but because it is beneficial for the rich who use most of the biodiesel that is produced.

The experience of Brazil is often invoked in favour of biodiesel. Indeed, Brazil is producing large amounts of sugarcane and directly producing biodiesel from the same. However, the land and water availability in Brazil is much more than in India. Brazil has 32.5 hectares of land per one thousand persons while India has only 1.48 hectares. Brazil has 29,006 cubic meters of renewable sources of water per person against only 1,152 cubic meters in India. This means that while Brazil can divert some of its lands and water for the production of biodiesel without affecting its food security, we cannot do the same

because we do not have enough land to continue to produce food after diverting land for the production of biodiesel. Another argument in favour of biodiesel is that the production of bagasse after extracting juice from the sugarcane can be used to produce electricity. This argument does not hold because the cultivation of wheat and paddy also leads to the production of straw, which can be used not only as a fuel for production of electricity but has multiple uses such as for feeding livestock as well as manufacturing paper and other goods.

Therefore, production of straw is more useful since it has diverse uses. It is time that the government reviews its policy of promoting biodiesel and focuses more on reducing our energy consumption so that we do not put unnecessary pressure on the environment and imperil our food security.

The writer is a former Professor of Economics at IIM Bangalore. Views are personal.



Bharat Jhunjhunwala

THE PRODUCTION OF BIODIESEL IS HUGELY WATER INTENSIVE

## Justice under threat

Sir, It has been reported that an FIR has been registered against an unknown person by the Vidhana Soudha police in Bangalore for allegedly issuing a life threat to the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court for delivering judgement on the hijab issue and an accused, Coal Rahmatullah, a resident of Coimbatore, has been arrested by the Tamil Nadu police, after a video went viral on social media and local channels. Lawyers and judges have been killed in the past when the judgements have gone against the expectations of the killers. It is no secret, sometimes judgements have gone wrong. It is for this reason that a system has been evolved all over the world wherein a judgement delivered in a lower court can be appealed or challenged in a higher court if the petitioner or defendant is aggrieved by the judgement in lower court. We are not living in a society where jungle law is prevailing. In the case of the hijab issue or any other issue, if a Chief Justice can be threatened, who else can be safer if the culprit is not punished at the quickest possible time? It can be neatly and conveniently construed that the threat to the Karnataka High Court Chief Justice has another angle also. This is a veiled threat to the Supreme Court against any judgement going against the wishes of the petitioner(s)/defendant(s) or their supporters. If judges are under threat, justice will be under threat. Judges cannot deliver judgements without fear or favour in an atmosphere of this kind. Exemplary punishment has to be meted out to the persons proven guilty for issuing threats. The law must act swiftly. **KV Seetharamaiah, BANGALORE**

## Holistic wellbeing

Sir, One of the most important activities in our life is sleep. Sleep is one of the three pillars of a healthy lifestyle, along with good nutrition and regular exercise. Getting sufficient sleep on a regular basis can improve physical and mental health, enhance performance, and promote safety. Nowadays, many people do not get enough sleep at night, mostly because of so many terrible habits. Insomnia is a sleep disorder that affects 35 per cent of adults. Researchers believe that some individuals are more vulnerable to stress-induced sleeping problems. Insufficient sleep can affect your hormones, brain function, immune system, and psychological health and can increase the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, stroke, and diabetes. Ensuring quality sleep is an integral part of holistic wellbeing. **Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD**

# Letters

## TO THE EDITOR

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

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# national

## of the day quote

We have to work as a team. If we work as a team, leave behind our personal ambitions, then Punjab will progress

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | AAP NATIONAL CONVENOR

Ukraine & Russia account for nearly 30 per cent of the world's wheat, 17 per cent of corn and over half of sunflower seed oil exports. These have been drastically reduced by war. Worse, @FAO estimates that 20-30 per cent of this year's crop won't be planted because of war. A global food crisis looms

SHASHI THAROOR | CONGRESS LEADER

CRPF is not only a central armed police force but every child of the country loves it for its bravery and courage. Whenever riots happen anywhere in the country, the deployment of the CRPF gives satisfaction to the people. The love and respect earned by the CRPF, the country's largest paramilitary force, is due to the sacrifices, dedication and devotion of its personnel

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Two dozen injured

**Agra:** Nearly two dozen passengers were injured after a bus plunged into a 12-foot-deep ditch near the Jamalnagar Bhains village in Agra, police said. According to the police, the driver of the bus, which was coming to Agra from Jalesar, apparently lost control of the vehicle, leading to the accident on Saturday evening.

### Female cop dies

**Lucknow:** A 23-year-old trainee woman constable was killed after being hit by a stray bull in Uttar Pradesh's Hardoi district. The victim, Upasana Kushwaha, was riding with her father on a bike when they were hit by the bull. Upasana was referred to KGMU Trauma Centre where doctors declared her brought dead. Her father Shyam is undergoing treatment at Hardoi district hospital.

### Two youths dead

**Chennai:** Two youths from Kerala's Malappuram district, who were riding to Goa to watch the finals of the Indian Super League (ISL) died in a road accident on early Sunday morning. The accident happened at Uduma in Kasargod district of Kerala. The youths, Jamsheer and Mohammed Shabir, were travelling in a two-wheeler when a mini lorry hit their vehicle from behind killing the two on the spot. Malappuram is regarded as the soccer capital of Kerala with umpteen number of football tournaments.

### Man killed

**Unnao:** A man was allegedly beaten to death during a dispute amid Holi celebrations in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao district. The incident took place Saturday in the Akbarpur Dabholi village. Holi, this year, was celebrated for two days - Friday and Saturday. According to reports, the dispute escalated to such an extent that there was a fierce fight between the two sides in which one person sustained serious injuries.

### 12 hurt in clash

**Kanpur:** Twelve people were injured in a group clash which took place over the rivalry in the recently-concluded Uttar Pradesh Assembly election. Panic spread in the Gambhirpur village of Bithoor after the two-sides resorted to stone pelting and also indulged in firing.



BJP promoting 'The Kashmir Files' with eye on Assembly polls in Gujarat, Rajasthan  
SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA MP

## CISF TO INSTALL BODY SCANNERS

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is going to install body scanners at major airports in the country including Delhi and Mumbai



# Indian nurse on death row in Yemen counts days

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 20:** As the Centre's mediation being the last resort for Kerala nurse Nimisha Priya, who was awarded death sentence by a Yemeni Court, in connection with the murder of a local citizen five years ago, legality to save her from the foreign land that follows a different set of laws is challenging.

March 7, a Yemen court had dismissed the appeal of Nimisha Priya in the murder case of Yemeni citizen Talal Abdo Mahdi, in which she, along with another person, is the prime accused.

Advocate Subhash Chandran K.R. representing 'Save Nimisha Forum', a collective working for Nimisha's release, said that a copy of the judgment is yet to be received

and the limitation for appeal before the Supreme Judicial Council is 40 days only. If the appeal before the Supreme Judicial Council is dismissed, execution may take place any time as per the Yemeni law.

The only possibility of any reprieve for Nimisha is if the family of Talal pardons her for blood money - compensation paid by an offender or his kin to the family of the victim - in accordance with the Sharia law and diplomatic intervention, he says.

### The intervention of the Delhi High Court

March 14, the Delhi High Court had sought the Central government's stand on the plea by the 'Save Nimisha Forum', seeking direction to the Centre to facilitate negotiations with the family of the victim

## EYES ON CENTRE'S MEDIATION



on behalf of the nurse to save her life by paying the 'blood money'.

In its response, the Centre said it will institute an appeal before the next appellate forum in Yemen challenging the death penalty awarded

to Nimisha Priya and the consul present in Yemen shall extend all co-operation and facilitate the travel of her family. Centre's counsel Anurag Ahluwalia informed that the government is providing miscellaneous amounts to the Indian citizen for her daily expenses inside the foreign prison. On the blood money, the Centre's counsel said it will only be facilitating the travel and will not be involved in the negotiations.

### Intervention by politicians

Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan extended the government support to save Nimisha reiterating the Centre's stand in the High Court. Meanwhile, the family of Nimisha met Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. The Chief Minister also offered all

possible help to bring back the woman, said her family after the meeting. Idukki MP Dean Kuriaakose, in the Lok Sabha, raised the issue and also urged the Ministry of External Affairs to intervene in the matter and immediate release of Nimisha Priya from Yemen Jail. However, due to the socio-political situation in Yemen, travel to the Western Asian country is not allowed and there is no way for her family or well-wishers to visit Yemen and pay the 'blood money' to secure her release.

### Case in a nutshell

Nimisha, a nurse from Kerala, had been working in Yemen when travel to and from the country was banned in 2016 due to the Civil War. Her husband and daughter returned to India in 2014, but she couldn't due

to her job. In 2015, with the help of a Yemeni national Talal Mahdi, she set up a clinic.

Soon, differences cropped up between her and Mahdi and she had alleged abuse, torture by him and taking away her passport, making her trip back to her home state impossible. Mahdi also misrepresented himself as her husband to the Yemeni authorities, due to which she couldn't get any aid from them, as per her statement. On July 25, 2017, she injected Talal with sedatives with the aim of sedating him and taking her passport back and fleeing.

But things went awry and he collapsed a while after she administered the sedative. Realising that Mahdi has died, with another person's help, she disposed of his body, which was cut into pieces in a water tank.

# I-T dept detects ₹224-cr black income after raids

The searches were launched March 9 at the firm's 23 premises in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 20:** The Income Tax department has detected "undisclosed" income of more than Rs 224 crore after it recently raided Maharashtra-based unicorn start-up Infra.Market, officials said Sunday.

The searches were launched on March 9 at the firm's 23 premises in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

The CBDT said the group, founded by Souvik Sengupta and Aadiya Sharda in 2016, is "engaged in wholesale and retail (business) of construction materials and has a pan-India presence with an annual turnover exceeding Rs 6,000 crore."

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) is the policy-making body for the I-T department. Officials identified the searched entity as the Infra.Market group.

The construction materials marketplace had in August last year said that it had raised USD 125 million (about Rs 928.1 crore) in funding from Tiger Global. The company has been identified as a unicorn, a financial term for a business entity that has achieved a valuation of over USD 1 billion.

The CBDT said "unaccounted" cash worth Rs 1 crore and jewellery worth Rs 22 lakh have been seized till now. The CBDT statement said it was found that the group has booked "bogus" purchases, made huge unaccounted cash expenditure and obtained accommodation entries, aggregating to the tune of over Rs 400 crore.

The directors of the group, who were confronted with these evidences, "admitted under oath this

modus operandi, disclosed additional income of more than Rs 224 crore in various assessment years, and consequently offered to pay their due tax liability," the CBDT claimed.

It was found that the group obtained huge foreign funding via the Mauritius route by issuing shares at an "exorbitantly" high premium. A "complex" hawala network of some shell companies based in Mumbai and Thane was also unearthed, the CBDT said.

"These shell companies exist on paper and were created only for the purpose of providing accommodation (bogus) entries. Preliminary analysis has revealed that the total quantum of accommodation entries provided by these shell entities exceeds Rs 1,500 crore," it said.

## UTTARAKHAND MLAS TO TAKE OATH TODAY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 20:** Newly-elected members of the Uttarakhand Assembly will take oath Monday and a meeting of the BJP's legislative party will be held in the evening to elect a new Chief Minister of the state. The newly-elected BJP MLAs, however, are clueless about the meeting of the legislative party.

The BJP leadership, meanwhile, continues to deliberate upon the names for the post of chief minister of Uttarakhand in the national capital.

A meeting was held to discuss the formation of BJP government in Uttarakhand at the residence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah. After the meeting, another meeting of the Uttarakhand BJP leaders was held at the residence of former Chief Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' here.

A newly-elected Uttarakhand BJP MLA told the IANS that he has no information about the legislative party meeting. "Till now, I am only aware of the oath of new members which will start at 11 a.m. on Monday. I have no information about the BJP's legislative party meeting. When the party leadership finalises the legislative party meeting they will inform the MLAs accordingly," he said.

The Uttarakhand BJP president Madan Kaushik has said that all the newly-elected MLAs will take oath at 11 a.m. Monday.

# Reduce Covishield dose gap: NTAGI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 20:** India's apex body on immunisation NTAGI has recommended administering the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine Covishield between eight and 16 weeks after the first dose, official sources said Sunday.

Presently, the second dose of Covishield is given between 12-16 weeks after the first dose under the National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy.

The National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) has not yet suggested any change in the schedule of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, whose second dose is administered 28 days after the first dose.

The recommendation for Covishield is yet to be implemented in the national COVID-19 vaccination programme.

"The latest recommendation of NTAGI is based on recent global scientific evidence derived from programmatic data," said an official source. "According to it, when the second dose of Covishield is given eight weeks onwards, the antibody response generated is almost similar when administered at an interval of 12 to 16 weeks," the source explained.

The decision will lead to accel-



PRESENTLY, THE SECOND DOSE OF COVISHIELD IS GIVEN BETWEEN 12-16 WEEKS AFTER THE FIRST DOSE UNDER THE NATIONAL COVID-19 VACCINATION STRATEGY

THE RECOMMENDATION FOR COVISHIELD IS YET TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE NATIONAL COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME

erated administration of the second dose of Covishield to the remaining six to seven crore individuals amid rising cases in several countries, the source said.

The government had on May 13, 2021 extended the gap between the first and second doses of the Covishield vaccine from 6-8 weeks to 12-16 weeks based on the recommendations by NTAGI.

NTAGI provides guidance and advice to the Union Health Ministry on immunisation services for the effective control of vaccine-preventable diseases in the country.

# Telangana man dials 100 to say wife not cooking mutton

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Hyderabad, March 20:** The phone number 100 is for the people to reach out to police in emergencies but a man in Telangana found himself behind bars after he repeatedly dialled it to complain that his wife has not cooked mutton curry.

The bizarre incident took place in Nalgonda district on the occasion of Holi. Naveen of Cherla Gowraram village in Kanagal mandal dialled 100 not once but six times to lodge a complaint against his wife. Naveen was in an inebriated condition when he picked up the phone and dialed 100 on Friday night. He was angry that his wife had refused to cook mutton on festival day.

The police initially ignored it as a prank call but when Naveen

continued making the calls, the police officer in-charge of handling the calls informed his superiors, who decided to take action against him.

The police traced the caller and the next morning a few police personnel reached his house and took him into custody.

A police officer said the man has been booked under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 290 (public nuisance) and 510 (misconduct in public by a drunken person).

Naveen had returned home drunk on Friday night. He had brought with him some mutton and wanted his wife to cook it. The wife, who was annoyed with his bad habits, refused to follow his order. He then picked up the phone and called the police.

## GEARING UP



NDRF personnel airlifted to Andaman Nicobar Islands in view of Cyclone 'Asani', in Arakonam, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

# By asking Gandhis to step aside, did Sibal cross the red line?

The Congress has an unwritten rule since Sonia Gandhi took over in 1998 that nobody questioned her leadership whether she lost or won in the elections

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

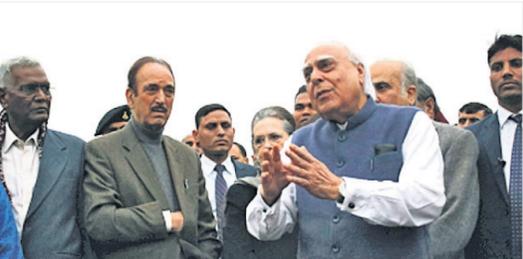
**New Delhi, March 20:** As Sonia Gandhi takes the responsibility of reaching out to the dissidents and has partially succeeded in convincing them to fight the BJP jointly, the statement from Ghulam Nabi Azad that there is no question over the leadership of Sonia Gandhi has come as a relief to the loyalists. However, one man, Kapil Sibal, will be worried as he had demanded that the Gandhis should step aside.

Azad after meeting Sonia Gandhi distanced himself and the group from the views of senior party leader and fellow G-23 leader Kapil Sibal on a leadership change. Azad noted that Sonia Gandhi's offer to step back has been rejected by all the groups, including the one he be-

longed to, and "we wanted her to continue".

The Congress has an unwritten rule since Sonia Gandhi took over in 1998 that nobody questioned her leadership whether she lost or won in the elections. After the 2019 loss, Rahul Gandhi took the blame and resigned from the party presidency. After the latest poll debacle Sibal misjudged the sentiments of the party and targeted the Gandhis who still command majority support in the party. Despite frantic calls, only 18 people came to the meeting at Azad's residence and even Mukul Wasnik who is a signatory to their statement kept a distance.

The Congress ginger group is highlighting the names of Sachin Pilot and Mukul Wasnik as prob-



able replacements but both may not go against the Gandhis as Pilot has his own goals in Rajasthan and Wasnik has been close to the family.

The 'G-23' group, which is seeking an overhaul of the party, including the revival of the parlia-

mentary board and an elected CWC and CEC, seems to have toned down its demand for a leadership change with its senior leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who had met party chief Sonia Gandhi on Friday, saying there is no vacancy right now for the post of President and nobody

has asked her to quit.

"Nobody said Mrs Gandhi should quit there is no question on leadership, we will fight unitedly against the BJP", he said. "She is the Congress President, we are leaders of the party, the feedback which is given to restructure the organisation is not meant for the public... there is no question on the leadership, when Mrs Gandhi offered (to step back), we all rejected it." When the party will go for organisational polls, then there will be deliberations.. at that time it will be decided," Azad told media persons after the key meeting, which lasted for over an hour. "There is no vacancy of the Congress President."

His remarks bolster indications that the Congress' internal battle

seems heading towards a truce as the Gandhis have been proactively reaching out to the dissenters with senior party leader Rahul Gandhi, who has not been having a good equation with former Haryana Chief Minister Bhopinder Singh Hooda, meeting him Thursday and listening to his grievances. Later, Hooda met the G-23 leaders.

Similarly, the Gandhi family is reaching out to each person in the G-23 group, who have been demanding a drastic overhaul of the party's functioning, either personally or through an emissary.

The 'G-23' met Wednesday and issued a statement calling for the Congress organisation to be revamped and accountability of the people involved in the election process be fixed.

## Factionalism grows in Raj BJP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 20:** A year before the Assembly polls, putting an end to infighting in the Rajasthan unit is turning out to be a major challenge for the BJP. The party is trying hard to end the infighting between former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje and others.

Fighting over the party faces for next year's election has already started and all the camps are asserting their claim to lead the BJP in the 2023 Rajasthan Assembly polls.

The saffron camp believes that there is strong anti-incumbency against the Ashok Gehlot government and everything is moving in the right direction for the BJP's victory in next year's polls. However, there is anxiety among the cadre that the infighting may affect the party's prospects.

"There is strong anti-incumbency against the Gehlot government. No government in the history of India has faced so much anti-incumbency before completing the first half of its tenure and it is growing day by day. The BJP is on the ground among the people and will dislodge this corrupt and incompetent government next year," a party insider said.

But the main challenge is turning out to be putting up a united



**WIDENING RIFT**  
The rift between former CM Vasundhara Raje and Rajasthan BJP president Satish Poonia is an open secret

There is anxiety among the cadre that the infighting may affect the party's prospects

Despite all this she has been appointed BJP national vice president and still wields strong influence in the Rajasthan unit of the party

front in the next Assembly polls. Explaining the situation in the Rajasthan BJP, a party leader said: "Our main concern is not the Congress party but the factionalism and infighting within. Infighting among supporters of both the camps is damaging the party more than the Congress."

As Raje is not on the same page

as the state leadership, her supporters are running a parallel organisation by launching the 'Vasundhara Raje Samarthak Manch Rajasthan' in a show of strength and organising events to put the party in an awkward position. On the other hand the BJP state leadership is taking action against her supporters on grounds

of indiscipline to send a message in her camp.

Raje held one such show of strength on her birthday March 8. Her supporters are trying hard to force the Central leadership to announce her as the party face in the Rajasthan Assembly polls scheduled for end 2023.

The opponents of the former chief minister are leaving no stone unturned to end her one-upmanship in the party and show their strength from time to time.

The rift between Raje and Rajasthan BJP president Satish Poonia is an open secret in the state. Poonia had also celebrated his birthday in October last year to show his strength. The Poonia camp claimed that a majority of the party MLAs, a number of former MLAs and around a dozen MPs turned up for the event.

After Raje's birthday celebration, Rajasthan BJP in-charge, Arun Singh had said: "Celebrating a birthday is OK but one should remember that the party is supreme and everyone comes later."

Citing the example of the party's defeat in last year's by-polls, a leader said that there are a few reasons for the BJP's defeat in the by-polls but the main reason was infighting and lack of unity.

## N Biren Singh: From footballer, BSF jawan & scribe to 2-time CM

*The 61-year-old has been widely credited with bringing peace and bridging the divide between the people of the valley and the hills, in this insurgency-hit, multi-ethnic state*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Imphal, March 20:** Nongthombam Biren Singh managed to win the approval of his party Sunday to get a second term as chief minister of the strife-torn state of Manipur. Singh who led his party to a spectacular victory earlier this month, started out life as a footballer and was recruited into the Border Security Force on the strength of his ability with the ball.

However, he soon metamorphosed into a journalist to become editor of a vernacular daily 'Naharolgi Thoudang'. The move into journalism soon saw him foray into the world of politics some two decades ago as an MLA from the Democratic Revolutionary People's Party. A move into Congress followed soon after

and a reward in the form of a cabinet berth in 2003, placed him as a 'go-to' person in Imphal. He became one of the then chief minister Iboi Singh's trusted lieutenant and after retaining his assembly seat in 2007 election, was given charge of the heavy portfolios of Irrigation & Flood Control, Youth Affairs & Sports, and Consumer Affairs & Public Distribution. Although he retained his seat again in 2012 for a third consecutive term, Biren Singh had a fallout with Iboi Singh against whom he eventually led a revolt.

Eventually finding it difficult to continue, he resigned from the Congress and joined BJP in October 2016. Elections in March 2017 and the inability of the Congress which emerged as the single largest party but without a clear majority to

swing sufficient numbers its way, saw BJP cobble together a coalition government with Biren Singh as the new chief minister. The journey since then has been upwards though not without hiccups. The 61-year-old has been widely credited with bringing peace and bridging the divide between the people of the valley and the hills, in this insurgency-hit, multi-ethnic state during his tenure as chief minister in the past five years.

His initiatives - 'Go to hills', 'Meeyamgi Numi' (People's Day on 15th of every month) and 'Hill Leaders' Day' - have made it easier for people in far flung hamlets to access their elected leaders and top bureaucrats. While he managed to last the five year term, he too faced internal challenges with Thongam Biswajit Singh also eyeing the chief minister's post.

The challenge by Biswajit Singh saw both of them rushing twice to Delhi for adjudication within the last ten days. However, support from the central leadership which weighed in with him as well as from state unit stalwarts like A Sharda Devi, the state BJP chief, eventually saw Biren fending off the challenge and unanimously being chosen as chief minister of the state.

## After success in Punjab, AAP sets its eyes on Raj

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, March 20:** Buoyed by its resounding win in Punjab assembly polls, the AAP is now focusing on Rajasthan with the party holding a two-day convention in Jaipur to 'strengthen' the organisation in the state where elections are due next year.

According to the AAP, party's state in-charge and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh will hold discussions on ways to make people aware of the welfare policies of the party during the event March 26-27.

Party leaders also said that Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) legislator from Dwarka and former MP Mahabul Mishra's son Vinay Mishra can be given the responsibility of Rajasthan during the convention.

The AAP is going to hold a two-day convention - 'Vijay Utsav' - and all party leaders and workers will



take part in it to strengthen the organisation in Rajasthan, AAP's state co-in-charge Khemchand Jagirdar said.

"The party has started preparation for assembly election in Himachal Pradesh. Rajasthan is a neighbouring state of Punjab and is close to New Delhi. So to strengthen the organisation in the state, the party is holding a two-day convention," Jagirdar said.

The party will soon announce

the name its state president in Rajasthan, he added.

The AAP will also conduct a membership drive soon to give people an alternative to mainstream political parties in the state, party leaders said.

In the 2018 Rajasthan assembly elections, AAP had fielded 142 candidates on the 200 seats and managed only 0.4 per cent of votes, without being able to win even a single seat.

## 'Solution to Naga political issue soon'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kohima, March 20:** The Nagaland government has been making every endeavour as a facilitator of the Naga political issue (NPI) so that all the negotiating parties arrive at an honourable, acceptable and inclusive solution, Governor Prof Jagdish Mukhi said Saturday.

In his address on the first day of the week-long budget session of the Assembly, the governor appreciated coming together of all MLAs to form the United Democratic Alliance (UDA), an opposition-less government to pursue an early solution to the NPI.

He termed it as "one of the most beautiful illustrations of everyone putting the interest and welfare of the people and the state above anything else".

The Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) and the BJP had formed the government in 2018. The NPF joined the ruling dispensation in September last year and formed the UDA.

"I also hear and echo the voice of the people of the state for an



early settlement of the NPI, which continues to take centre stage in our minds and hearts. We are aware of the significant positive developments that have taken place in the past few years," Mukhi said.

The union government has been holding two separate parleys with the NSCN(IM) since 1997 and Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) comprising of seven organizations since 2017. The Centre signed a framework agreement with the NSCN(IM) on August 3, 2015, and also entered into an agreed position

with PGs in December 2017.

However, the final solution is yet to see the light of the day mainly because of the unwillingness of the government to accept the NSCN(IM)'s persistent demand for a separate flag and constitution.

The governor said, "The state government, as always, has been making every endeavour as a facilitator (of the NPI) so that all the negotiating parties are able to appreciate each other's position and arrive at a solution which is honourable, acceptable and inclusive."

Mukhi expressed confidence that with the deepest concern being shown by everyone, the long-cherished solution will soon become a reality. Referring to the killing of 14 civilians at Oting village in Mon district December 4 last year involving security forces, he said the event which is painful and unfortunate, caused outrage.

The government formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) which completed its inquiries, he said.

The Army has also constituted a Court of Inquiry on the matter and it is also expected to complete its investigations soon, the governor said. On the issue of the interstate border tension with Assam, he expressed happiness that the Assembly has constituted a committee headed by the Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio to find ways for amicable settlement of the issue.

Mukhi said he was delighted to note that the state government is also taking steps to resolve the issues concerning oil and petroleum exploration.

The Budget session will conclude March 25.

## Rural women pave way for farm innovations

*Women farmers currently helm around 20 government-approved startups in Rajasthan*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jodhpur, March 20:** Women in rural Rajasthan are leading the way in building innovative solutions in agriculture. They currently helm around 20 government-approved startups in the state in this field - five in organic farming, two in dairy and 13 in other agro-based industries. This is in keeping with the momentum across the country, wherein women lead 173 agricultural startups.

"In collaboration with the NITI Aayog last year, 150 female entrepreneurs from Rajasthan were involved in a brainstorming session to discuss startups," said Tapan Kumar Sharma, joint director of the Department of Information and Technology, Jaipur.

"Besides training, the startups receive seed funding from the government along with a sustainability and marketing allowance. This figure is expected to rise gradually."

Santosh Pachar, a resident of Jhigar Badi village in Rajasthan's Sikar district, may have studied only till class VIII, but she's received the President's Award twice (in 2013 and 2017) for her innovation with carrot seeds. Pachar, who owns around of 30 bighas of farmland, started advanced organic farming in 2002.

"At first, I didn't know what an agricultural officer was, but once I began attending agricultural fairs, I learned a lot from them," said Pachar, the only female farmer from Rajasthan to participate in a



15-day training seminar for progressive farmers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

From the desert areas of Rajasthan to the tribal belt, women aren't just participating in the agriculture sector but also doing well for themselves. Jayesh Joshi, Secretary of the Vagdhara Sansthan, said: "There are 3.60 crore women involved in agricultural work. Women are promoting organic farming, and community-based activities are raising awareness to take this further and see the launch of more startups. Many women are also employed in the food processing sector. In the tribal area of Banswara, we've developed nurseries that are run by women."

Santosh Khedar, also from Sikar district, is a master in pomegranate cultivation. It all started when her husband worked as a home guard and saw a pomegranate tree while on duty. He got the idea of

planting a pomegranate garden and shared it with his wife, who readily agreed. She managed to collect money from various sources to install a tubewell in her garden and spent three years irrigating it until her first yield of pomegranate.

"I did not know how much money I'd get, but eventually, the hard work paid off and I doubled our income," Khedar said.

Today, Khedar also runs a nursery, selling pomegranate, lemon, apple, Kinnow oranges and mango saplings to other farmers. Through horticulture, the family now earns an annual income of Rs 25 to 30 lakh. Interestingly, both Prachar and Khedar's husbands were involved in traditional farming earlier. Their earnings, however, were meagre in comparison, with crops often failing and leading to mounting debts.

In Barmer, the Elchi Bishnoi

tribe is familiar to such success stories, albeit with the production of dates. Here, they not only grow dates on the sandy banks of Barmer, but also process and sell them. While date palms were not cultivated in the region earlier, the women of Sedwa tehsil started the trend by planting a thousand saplings and increasing their annual income from farming from Rs 60,000 to Rs 6-7 lakh.

BR Choudhary, vice chancellor of Jodhpur's Agricultural University, said: "There are many examples of progressive female farmers from Barmer, Sirohi, Pali and Nagaur. Women here are doing exceptionally well in agricultural startups with the help of technology. Although in the early stages, they are forging ahead, which is a good sign. They are given regular training in farming techniques, animal husbandry, dairy and other agro-based works."

## Mizoram to move from 'jhum' to 'green' farming

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Aizawl, March 20:** To shift the farmers from the unscientific 'jhum' or slash-and-burn method of cultivation to viable and environment friendly farming, the 'Green-Ag' project of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) is being implemented in Mizoram, ensuring conservation of biodiversity and forests.

The project is being implemented in two Mizoram districts - Mamit and Lunglei - to improve the rural livelihoods and meet the food and nutrition security of the farmers and rural people by ensuring conservation of biodiversity and forests. Lunglei's District Agriculture Officer C. Malsawmkima said that the 'Green-Ag' project would harmonise priorities and investments between India's agricultural and environmental sectors. This will be done so that national and global environmental benefits can be fully realised without compromising India's ability to provide and develop rural livelihoods and meet its food and nutrition security and social (particularly gender) goals.

"Various technical and other formalities, awareness and motivation have been done since the government decided to implement the 'Green-Ag' project in Mizoram three years ago. The actual implementation of the project would start within the next two to three months," Malsawmkima told IANS. He said that the FAO funded 'Green-Ag' project is expected to fulfil all the basic requirements including foodgrains of the farmers and the rural people and to shift the



**SLASH-AND-BURN METHOD**

Tribals in the northeastern states traditionally practice the 'jhum' or slash-and-burn method of cultivation, which greatly harms the forests, environment and the soil of the mountains

Tribals constitute 27 per cent of northeast India's 45.58 million people and they are the majority in four of the eight northeastern states - Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh

farmers from the unscientific 'jhum' cultivation to viable and long-lasting farming.

Tribals in the northeastern states traditionally practice the 'jhum' or slash-and-burn method of cultivation, which greatly harms the forests, environment and the soil of the mountains.

This shifting form of farming usually involves cutting down entire forests in the hills and allowing the slashed vegetation to dry on mountain slopes prior to burning. Rice is grown along with vegetables, maize, cotton and mustard, among others. Tribals constitute 27 per cent of northeast India's 45.58 million people and they are the majority (70 to 95 per cent) in four of the eight

northeastern states - Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

The development of sustainable agriculture practices like organic farming in place of 'jhum' cultivation would lead to a 'Green North East', said environment expert Apurba Kumar Dey.

Dey told IANS: "A Green-Ag project-like mission could serve a dual purpose - meet the food and nutritional requirements of the rural people and protect and prosper the forests and environment."

The 'Green-Ag' project is being implemented under the GEF-6 cycle of the FAO in five Indian states - Mizoram, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttarakhand.

of the day quote

The news of SBSP joining hands with the BJP is baseless. Neither did I go to Delhi, nor meet anyone. We are with the Samajwadi Party, and have started preparations for the upcoming urban local bodies' elections in the state

OM PRAKASH RAJBHAR | SUHELDEV BHARATIYA SAMAJ PARTY CHIEF

People are yearning for their democratic, constitutional and human rights, which have incessantly been abridged since 2019

FAROOQ ABDULLAH | NATIONAL CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

Centuries of colonial rule taught us to look upon ourselves as an inferior race. We were taught to despise our own culture, traditional wisdom. This slowed our growth as a nation. The imposition of a foreign language as our medium of education confined education to a small section of the society, depriving a vast population of the right to education

M VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

J&K LG's advisor Farooq resigns

Jammu: Farooq Khan, an advisor to Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, submitted his resignation Sunday evening, officials said here. Khan, a retired IPS officer who was instrumental in curbing terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir in the 1990s, is being given "important assignment" in the BJP, the officials said. He is likely to be assigned the responsibility of preparing the party for elections in the Union Territory. He had earlier served as a national secretary of the BJP.

Man arrested

New Delhi: The Economic Offence Wing of Delhi Police has arrested a person for duping 55 investors of approximately ₹13 crore on the pretext of providing them flats in Rewari, Haryana and further diverting the funds for his personal gain, an official said Sunday. The accused, identified as Dinesh Sharma, a resident of Hisar, Haryana, was earlier declared proclaimed offender in two cases registered by the EOW. Furnishing details, Joint Commissioner of Police (Economic Offences Wing) Chhaya Sharma said the accused through his Company Asian Developers Pvt Ltd advertised for the booking of flats/shops at Sector-2, Bawal, Rewari, Haryana in 2012.

Woman held

New Delhi: A 49-year-old woman was arrested in west Delhi with 23 grams of heroin, valued at over ₹20 lakh in the international market, police said Sunday. The accused was identified as Surekha, a city resident, and previously involved in 27 cases of the Excise Act, one case of the Gambling Act, and two cases of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

3 youths attacked

Kushinagar (Uttar Pradesh): Three Hindu youths were gravely injured in a knife attack while they were exiting the cinema hall after watching the movie, 'The Kashmir Files'. The incident took place in Fazilnagar in Kushinagar district. The victims have been identified as Sachin, Krishna and Rahul. The youths had gone to the cinema hall to watch the last show of 'The Kashmir Files' on Friday night.

COAL SCAM CASE

Abhishek to be grilled again

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 20: Abhishek Banerjee, the Trinamool Congress MP and nephew of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and his wife Rujira Banerjee will Monday join the investigation in a Prevention of Money Laundering case pertaining to alleged coal scam being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The anti money laundering agency had asked Banerjee and his wife to join the investigation on March 21 and 22. Banerjee had earlier September 6 recorded his statement before the ED officials. He was interrogated for around six hours, but the probe agency was not satisfied with his answers and he has been issued fresh summons again along with his wife.

In September last year Banerjee and his wife, through their counsel, had moved a plea before the Delhi High Court against the ED summons, but they didn't get any relief. Their plea was dismissed by the High Court on March 11.

Abhishek and his wife had sought relief on the ground that they are residents of West Bengal. However, their contention was challenged by Tushar Mehta, the Solicitor General, who was appearing for the ED. He told the court that the ED is not confined by any area under the PMLA.

Sharad, Lalu back together after decades

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 20: Asserting that nationwide opposition unity is imperative to defeat the BJP, former Union minister and socialist leader Sharad Yadav Sunday merged his party Loktantrik Janata Dal with Rashtriya Janata Dal and pitched for coming together of all forces fighting the ruling party.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav welcomed the veteran leader, who had fought some of the keenest Lok Sabha poll battles against his father Lalu Prasad Yadav in the 1990s, into his party's fold, saying it is a message for the anti-BJP parties to unite to take on the ruling dispensation.

The young RJD leader alleged that the Constitution and democracy are in danger and all parties standing for secularism and social justice must join hands. In an apparent swipe at the BJP over its leaders' support to Hindi film 'The Kashmir Files', he said people are in distress due to price rise and unemployment, and debate should be over these issues instead of some movie setting agenda.

The movie, which seeks to highlight the violent trauma Kashmiri Pandits underwent leading to their exodus from the Valley over three decades back, has been accused by critics, including leaders of opposition parties, of fomenting "hate and division" with its alleged negative portrayal of Kashmiri Muslims.



THE MOVE BY SHARAD YADAV (74), WHO HAD BEEN KEEPING LOW AFTER BATTLING HEALTH ISSUES FOR MONTHS, IS SEEN AS AN EFFORT TO REHABILITATE HIS COLLEAGUES AND OTHER ASSOCIATES AS HIS LJD COULD NEVER BECOME A SERIOUS FORCE AFTER ITS LAUNCH FOLLOWING HIS SEPARATION WITH JD(U) LEADER AND BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER NITISH KUMAR

WOMEN FIREFIGHTERS IN TN!

The Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue services will induct women as firefighters in its force. Braj Kishore Ravi, Director General of Police and Director of the department in a statement said that the department has already sent a proposal to the government in this regard



BJP to stake claim in Goa today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji, March 20: The BJP will meet the Goa governor Monday and stake a claim to form the next government, state unit resident Sadanand Shet Tanavade said Sunday.

The much-awaited BJP legislature party meeting will also be held Monday to select the leader of the House, who will be the next Chief Minister.

"BJP president J P Nadda has informed that the legislature party meeting would be held Monday after which party leaders will meet Governor P S Sreedharan Pillai and stake a claim to form the next government," Tanavade told a press conference.

The legislature party meeting will begin at 4 pm Monday. BJP's observer Narendra Singh Tomar and co-observer L Murugan, Goa election in-charge Devendra Fadanavis, desk in-charge C T Ravi will attend the legislature party meeting, Tanavade said.

He said the date of swearing-in of the new government would be decided after meeting the governor on Monday.

In the recently-held elections in Goa, BJP won the majority by bagging 20 of the total 40 seats. Three Independents and two MLAs of the Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) have already extended their support to BJP.

No alliance with AIMIM: Uddhav

Saturday, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) MP Imtiaz Jaleel caused a stir stating that his party can ally with the Shiv Sena-led MVA to prevent the BJP from coming to power

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 20: Asserting that Shiv Sena is a "Hindutvavadi" party, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray Sunday rejected AIMIM's offer for an alliance calling it a "conspiracy" by the opposition BJP to defame the Sena, which heads the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government.

Addressing Shiv Sena MPs and other functionaries via video link, Thackeray, who heads Shiv Sena, dubbed Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM as the "B" team of BJP. He lashed out at BJP, the former ally of Sena, on Hindutva and other issues and also referred to purported statements of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on V D Savarkar and Sangh's purported move to set up



'shakhas' in Muslim-dominated areas.

"The Shiv Sena will never ally with the AIMIM, which is the 'B' team of the BJP. The BJP is using Hindutva only for political gains," Thackeray alleged. "Who has sought an alliance with the AIMIM? This is a game plan and conspiracy of the BJP. The AIMIM and the BJP have a tacit understanding. The BJP has ordered the AIMIM to defame the Shiv Sena, to raise questions on Shiv Sena's Hindutva. Accordingly, the AIMIM leaders are making the offer of alliance," he claimed.

Saturday, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) MP Imtiaz Jaleel caused a stir stating that his party can ally with the Shiv Sena-led MVA to prevent the

The Shiv Sena will never ally with the AIMIM, which is the 'B' team of the BJP. The BJP is using Hindutva only for political gains

UDDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CM

BJP from coming to power, evoking sharp reactions from Sena.

Thackeray asked the Sena's rank and file to combat the BJP's approach of wanting to rule the entire country from the panchayat level to the Parliament, which he said "portends dictatorship".

The Sena chief said the party will launch 'Shiv Sampark Mohim' from March 22 in Marathwada and Vidarbha regions.

He asked party leaders to highlight "the illusion and confusion" the BJP seeks to create in the minds of the people on various issues.

JOY RIDE



A toy train runs on the Kalka-Shimla heritage railway track, in Solan district, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

Spectators injured during football match recovering

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, March 20: Many spectators who were injured when a temporary gallery collapsed in Kerala's Malappuram district during a football match Saturday are recuperating at hospitals, officials said Sunday.

According to the Malappuram police, around 200 people were injured and five persons were said to be serious. The temporary gallery collapsed during a football match at the football-crazy Malappuram district. Around 2,000 people were present on the ground. Mohammed Rafeeq, a spectator who was present at the stadium, said: "The organisers had taken ₹100 as ticket charge per head. The temporary bamboo gallery came down as it was unable to bear the weight of the large number of spectators... it was above its capacity. The greed of the organisers resulted in the gallery collapse." The incident occurred around 9.30 pm. at Poongudu in Malappuram district Saturday.

Israeli PM to visit India to boost ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Jerusalem, March 20: Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has said that he will be visiting India in the first week of April to mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The maiden visit of Bennett who became Prime Minister in June last year also aims to expand the cooperation between the two

I am delighted to pay my first official visit to India at the invitation of my friend, Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi, and together we will continue leading the way for our countries' relations

NAFTALI BENNETT | ISRAELI PM

"I am delighted to pay my first official visit to India at the invitation of my friend, Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi, and together we will continue leading the way for our countries' relations," Bennett said.

"Modi restarted relations between India and Israel, and this is of historic importance. The relations between our two unique cultures — the Indian culture and the Jewish culture — are deep, and they rely on deep appreciation and meaningful collaborations," he said.



Double whammy for Congress

After drubbing in the Assembly elections, Congress is now staring at huge loss of seats in the Rajya Sabha. As many as 15 of its 34 sitting MPs are retiring and it will be struggling to get eight seats only. Though it won't lose the status of Leader of the Opposition. But the party's strength will go down. The Congress strength in Rajya Sabha is

set to come down to 27 which is lowest in its 40-year history. Among the stalwarts retiring are Anand Sharma (Himachal Pradesh), Kapil Sibal (UP), Ambika Soni, Pratap Singh Bajwa & Shamsheer Singh Dullu (Punjab) and Pradeep Tamta (Uttarakhand). None can return to Rajya Sabha unless shifted to other states.

BJP rattled

Modi is upset with Meghalaya Governor Satyapal Malik who has given a clarion call for a regime change in 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The BJP was embarrassed when Malik called upon farmers to teach Centre a lesson if three farm bills were not withdrawn. He kept a low-profile after these bills were withdrawn. Now he fired another salvo calling for a change of regime in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The BJP leadership was baffled when Malik was appointed as Governor without its

knowledge. In fact, be it Satyapal Malik, Jagdeep Dhankar (West Bengal) and Arif Mohammad Khan (Kerala); all were the personal picks of the Prime Minister. Malik, according to sources close to him, wants the PM to sack him so that he can join active politics and lead farmers who have no national leader.

Rare honour

Prime Minister Modi has given a rare honour to late External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj when he named Pravasi Bhartiya Bhawan in the heart of Lutyens Delhi after her. The Sushma Swaraj Bhawan will be the venue of the prestigious G-20 Summit hosted by India in 2023. The work is going on a war-footing basis to make the State-of-the-Art building to host world leaders, officials and media from around the globe in time. Earlier, the Foreign Service Institute was also renamed as Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service.

Who will be the next CDS?

It is now clearly emerging that a new Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) will be appointed within the next few weeks as Assembly polls are over. The current Chief of Army Staff, General Manoj Naravane, is likely to succeed Gen. Bipin Rawat. Naravane is also the senior-most of the three service chiefs.

Focus on Maharashtra

A belligerent BJP high command wants to form a government in Maharashtra before the Gujarat Assembly polls. It has 105 MLAs and is capable of mustering the support of at least 17 other MLAs. It needs the support of 28 MLAs in the 288-member Assembly. It cannot afford to allow the state to rot under the "corrupt regime" where every fifth MLA of the ruling alliance is facing probe by the CBI, ED, Income Tax or Narcotics Control Bureau and looking for a relief. Feelers may go soon to the Shiv Sena to fall in line. The power-sharing

formula could be discussed. If Uddhav Thackeray is still reluctant, then a couple of Shiv Sena MLAs including prominent leaders like Eknath Shinde may go to the extent of rocking the boat. The BJP is not averse to realign with the 53-member NCP again.

BJP keeping fingers crossed

The BJP leadership is keeping its fingers crossed as to what action it should take against its own Pilibhit Lok Sabha MP Varun Gandhi. His mother and Sultanpur MP Maneka Gandhi visited Sultanpur and Amethi and sat next to PM Modi's election rallies, Varun Gandhi had been posting almost one tweet a day critical to government policies and its decisions. Varun Gandhi has 1.10 million (11 lakh) followers on twitter which no other sitting BJP Lok Sabha MP can claim. Secondly, the RSS also has a soft corner for him. When contacted, a top BJP functionary said on the condition of anonymity that Varun Gandhi's conduct is being "examined".

# international



Again this week, missiles, bombs, rained down on the elderly, children and pregnant mothers in Ukraine. I feel great pain for those who don't even have the chance to escape. There is no justification for this

POPE FRANCIS | HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

**IMRAN WANTS TO EMULATE INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY**  
 Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan Sunday lauded India for having an "independent foreign policy" that was favourable to its own people, *Express Tribune* reported. He maintained that like India -- which imported oil from Russia despite American sanctions and despite being an ally of the US -- his foreign policy would also favour the people of Pakistan, the report said. "I haven't bowed before anyone and will not let my nation bow either," Imran said.



## Life amid chaos

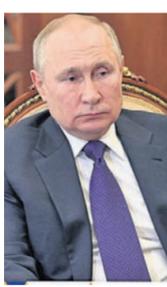
# 'WW III if talks fail'

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that he is "ready for negotiations" with Russian President Vladimir Putin but warned that if they fail "that would mean that this is a third World War."

"I'm ready for negotiations with him," Zelenskyy told *CNN* in an interview. "I was ready for the last two years. And I think that without negotiations, we cannot end this war."

"I think that we have to use any format, any chance in order to have a possibility of negotiating, possibility of talking to Putin. But if these attempts fail, that would mean that this is a third World War," the Ukrainian president added.

Ukrainian authorities said Sunday that Russia's military bombed an art school sheltering some 400 people in the embattled port city of Mariupol, where Ukraine's president said an unrelenting Russian siege would



be remembered for centuries to come. It was the second time in less than a week that city officials reported a public building where residents had taken shelter coming under attack.

A bomb hit a Mariupol theatre with more than 1,300 believed to be inside Wednesday, local officials said.

There was no immediate word on casualties from the reported strike on the art school. Ukrainian officials have not given an update on the search of the theatre since Friday, when they said at least 130 had been rescued.

Mariupol, a strategic port on the Azov Sea, has been under bombardment for at least three weeks and has seen some of the worst horrors of the war in Ukraine.

At least 2,300 people have died, some of whom had to be buried in mass graves, and food, water and electricity have run low. In recent days, Russian forces have battled their way into the city, cutting it off from

the Azov Sea and devastating a massive steel plant. The fall of Mariupol would be an important but costly victory for the Russians, whose advance is largely stalled outside other major cities more than three weeks into the biggest land invasion in Europe since World War II. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appealed to Israel for help pushing back the Russian assault on his country.

## At least 902 civilians killed: UN

Zurich: At least 902 civilians have been killed and 1,459 injured in Ukraine as of midnight local time March 19, the UN human rights office (OHCHR) said Sunday. Most of the casualties were from explosive weapons such as shelling from heavy artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems, and missile and air strikes, OHCHR said. The actual toll is thought to be considerably higher since OHCHR, which has a large monitoring team in the country, has not yet been able to receive or verify casualty reports from several badly hit cities including Mariupol, it said.



During a video link address to the Israeli parliament, Zelenskyy questioned Israel's reluctance to sell its Iron Dome missile defence system to Ukraine. It was the latest in a series of appeals he has made for help from abroad. Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has held numerous calls with both Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin in recent weeks to try to end the conflict.

## Russian elites want to eliminate Putin?

KYIV: A group of influential people who oppose President Vladimir Putin and who plan to assassinate him, is forming among the Russian business and political elite, according to the Chief Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine.

The goal of this group is to remove Putin from power as soon as possible and restore economic ties with the West, destroyed by the war in Ukraine. "A part of Russia's political elite sees Federal Security Service Director Alexander Bortnikov as Putin's successor. It is Bortnikov who has recently fallen out of favour with the Russian dictator."

"The official reason for the FSS leader's downfall is fatal miscalculations in the war against Ukraine", Ukraine intelligence has said, *Ukrayinska Pravda* reported. It was Bortnikov and his department who were responsible for analysing the views of the Ukrainian population

and the capacity of the Ukrainian army. It is known that Bortnikov and some other influential members of the Russian elite are considering various options for removing Putin from power. In particular, poisoning, sudden illness, or other "accident" is not excluded, the intelligence said. It is possible that these processes are connected with the recent "leak" of the location of Chechen units in the north of Kyiv.

According to intelligence, this leak may have been intended both to weaken Kadyrov's influence and as an attempt to establish cooperation with the Ukrainian authorities in advance, bypassing the current leadership of the Russian Federation, the report said.

According to the Ukrainian intelligence, the Russians are sending another terrorist group to Ukraine to eliminate the country's leadership.

### SHORT TAKES

**6 killed as car hits revellers**

Brussels: A car slammed at high speed into carnival revellers in a small town in southern Belgium early Sunday, killing six people and leaving 10 more with life-threatening injuries. Several dozen were more lightly injured. "What should have been a great party turned into a tragedy," said Belgian Interior Minister Annelies Verhulst. The prosecutor's office said that in the early stages of the investigation there were no elements to suspect a terror motive, and two locals in their thirties were arrested at the scene in Strépy-Bracquegnies, some 50 kilometers south of Brussels.

**Russia claims use of hypersonic missile**

Moscow: The Russian military says it has carried out a new series of strikes on Ukrainian military facilities with long-range hypersonic and cruise missiles. Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj Gen Igor Konashenkov said Sunday that the Kinzhal hypersonic missile hit a Ukrainian fuel depot in Kostiantynivka near the Black Sea port of Mykolaiv. The strike marked the second day in a row that Russia used the Kinzhal, a weapon capable of striking targets 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles) away at a speed 10 times the speed of sound. The previous day, the Russian military said the Kinzhal was used for the first time in combat to destroy an ammunition depot in Dilyatyn in the Carpathian Mountains in western Ukraine.

**Oz bans alumina exports to Russia**

Canberra: Australia has imposed an immediate ban on exports of alumina and aluminum ores, including bauxite, to Russia, the government said Sunday as part of its ongoing sanctions against Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine. "Russia relies on Australia for nearly 20 percent of its alumina needs," the Australian government said in a joint statement. It added that the move will limit Russia's capacity to produce aluminium, which is a critical export for Russia. "The Government will work closely with exporters and peak bodies that will be affected by the ban to find new and expand existing markets," the statement said.

**Europe's biggest steel works 'destroyed'**

Kyiv: One of Europe's biggest iron and steel works, Azovstal, has been badly damaged as Russian forces lay siege to the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, officials said Sunday. "One of the biggest metallurgical plants in Europe destroyed. The economic losses for Ukraine are huge. The environment is devastated," tweeted Ukrainian lawmaker Lesia Vasylenko. Vasylenko posted a video of explosions on an industrial site, with thick columns of grey and black smoke rising from the buildings.

**North Korea fires artillery into sea**

Seoul: North Korea fired suspected artillery pieces into the sea Sunday, South Korea's military said, days after the North's latest missile launch ended in failure amid the country's recent burst of weapons testing activity. South Korea's military suggested North Korea's midair missile explosion last Wednesday involved parts of the Hwasong-17 missile, its biggest weapon. On Sunday, South Korea's Defense Ministry said it detected firings likely from multiple rocket launch systems off North Korea's west coast. The ministry said the military closely monitors North Korea moves and maintains its readiness. South Korea's presidential office said in a separate statement it held an emergency national security council meeting to discuss what it called the North's "short-range projectile launches." Council members worked to analyse details of the firings in close coordination with the United States, it said.

### 25TH DAY OF GRUESOME CONFLICT

#### Fighting

- Russia's military bombed an art school sheltering some 400 people in the embattled port city of Mariupol.
- Russia says its forces have broken through Mariupol's defences and are now inside the besieged city.
- More than 8,000 people are attending an open-air concert in the German capital to express their support for Ukraine.
- The mayor of the encircled northern city of Chernihiv says dozens of civilians have been killed by "indiscriminate artillery shelling", and that a hospital has been hit.

#### Diplomacy

- After US President Joe Biden warned China of "consequences" if it provided material support to Russia's war effort, foreign minister Wang Yi said Beijing "always stood for maintaining peace and opposing war" and that "time will prove that China's claims are on the right side of history."
- Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy slams Russia's siege of Mariupol as a "war crime" as Russian forces push deeper into the city.
- Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida urges Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take a tougher line on Russia's invasion but a joint statement after talks in New Delhi falls short of condemning Moscow's actions.

#### Humanitarian crisis

- More than 3.3 million refugees have fled Ukraine since the invasion, while nearly 6.5 million are thought to be internally displaced, UNHCR says.
- Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk says seven humanitarian corridors will open Sunday to enable civilians to leave front-line areas.
- The UN warns that humanitarian needs are becoming ever more urgent across eastern Ukraine, with a potentially fatal lack of food, water and medicines in besieged cities such as Mariupol and Sumy.

#### Economy, markets

- Ukraine may not produce enough crops to export if this year's sowing is disrupted by the invasion, presidential adviser Oleh Ustenko said.
- Zelenskyy has urged Switzerland to crack down on Russian oligarchs who he said were helping to wage war on his country from the safety of "beautiful Swiss towns".
- Poland has called once again for a total trade ban between the EU and Russia.

## SL cancels school exams over paper shortage

Colombo, March 20: Sri Lanka cancelled exams for millions of school students as the country ran out of printing paper with Colombo short on dollars to finance imports, officials said.

Education authorities said the term tests, scheduled a week from Monday, were postponed indefinitely due to an acute paper shortage as Sri Lanka contends with its worst financial crisis since independence in 1948.

"School principals cannot hold the tests as printers are unable to secure foreign exchange to import necessary paper and ink," the department of Education of the Western Province said. Official sources said the move could effectively hold up tests for around two thirds of the country's 4.5 million students.

Term tests are part of a continuous assessment process to decide if students are promoted to the next grade at the end of the year.

A debilitating economic crisis brought on by a shortage of foreign exchange reserves to finance essential imports, has seen the country run low on food, fuel and pharmaceuticals. The cash-strapped South



Asian nation of 22 million announced this week that it will seek an IMF bailout to resolve its worsening foreign debt crisis and shore up external reserves.

The International Monetary Fund on Friday confirmed it was considering President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's surprise Wednesday request to discuss a bailout.

Around \$6.9 billion of Colombo's debt needs to be serviced this year but its foreign currency reserves stood at about \$2.3 billion at the end of February.

Long queues have formed across the country for groceries and oil with the government instituting rolling electricity blackouts and rationing of milk powder, sugar, lentils and rice.

Sri Lanka earlier this year asked China, one of its main creditors, to help put off debt payments but there has been no official response yet from Beijing.

**School principals cannot hold the tests as printers are unable to secure foreign exchange to import necessary paper and ink**

DEPT OF EDUCATION OF THE WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

## China fully militarised isles, says US admiral

Over the South China Sea, March 20: China has fully militarised at least three of several islands it built in the disputed South China Sea, arming them with anti-ship and anti-aircraft missile systems, laser and jamming equipment and fighter jets in an increasingly aggressive move that threatens all nations operating nearby, a top US military commander said Sunday.

US Indo-Pacific commander Adm John C. Aquilino said the hostile actions were in stark contrast to Chinese President Xi Jinping's past assurances that Beijing would not transform the artificial islands in contested waters into military bases. The efforts were part of China's flexing its military muscle, he said.

"I think over the past 20 years we've witnessed the largest military buildup since World War II by the PRC," Aquilino told *The Associated Press* in an interview, using the initials of China's formal name.

# business

## of the day quote

India is now our number two market around the world in terms of volume points. It's our fastest growing market in the world. We think India is on track to one day becoming our largest market worldwide

**JOHN O AGWUNOBI** | CEO, HERBALIFE NUTRITION

The Modi government is spending large sums of money on welfare schemes, including the free food scheme and all the rest of it. But government finances are in a mess. The fiscal deficit has touched abnormal proportions

**YASHWANT SINHA** | FORMER FINANCE MINISTER

We are pre-paying our lenders to further strengthen our balance sheet and we want to become a net debt-free company by FY23 through accelerated deleveraging

**VR SHARMA** | MD, JSPL

## SHORT TAKES

### Gold ETFs log ₹248cr outflow

**New Delhi:** Gold exchange traded funds (ETFs) witnessed a net outflow of ₹248 crore in February, making it the second consecutive month of withdrawals as investors preferred equities over other segments on record SIP flows. Net outflows from the gold ETFs were at ₹452 crore in the month of January. Prior to that, the asset class had seen a net investment of ₹313 crore, according to the data of Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi).

### Maize exports up 28.5% in Apr-Jan

**New Delhi:** Maize exports increased by over 28.5 per cent to \$816.31 million during April-January this fiscal, against \$634.85 million in the same period last financial year, the commerce ministry said Sunday. Neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Nepal are the major importers of maize from India, it added. Bangladesh has imported maize worth \$345.5 million in the first ten months of the current fiscal, while Nepal's import stood at \$132.16 million during this period.

### SBI lines-up 12 NPAs for sale

**New Delhi:** Country's largest lender SBI has lined-up a dozen non-performing assets (NPAs) on sale to recover loan dues of over ₹820 crore, as per the bank's notifications. In terms of the bank's policy on sale of financial assets, in line with the regulatory guidelines, SBI said it has placed these accounts for sale to asset reconstruction companies (ARCs)/banks/Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)/financial institutions (FIs), on the terms and conditions indicated there against.

### RRVL buys 89% stake in Clovia

**New Delhi:** Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL) Sunday announced the acquisition of a majority 89 per cent equity stake in Clovia, an industry leader in the bridge-to-premium intimate wear category, with an investment of ₹950 crore. RRVL has acquired 89 per cent equity stake in Purple Panda Fashions Pvt Ltd, which owns and operates the Clovia business, through a combination of secondary stake purchase and primary investment, said a joint statement.

## Suzuki Motor to invest ₹10,445cr for EV production

On Saturday, Japanese PM Fumio Kishida announced an investment target of five trillion yen (₹3,20,000 crore) in India over the next five years, as the two sides concluded a raft of agreements and collaborations to further expand their special strategic and global partnership

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 20:** Japanese automaker Suzuki Motor Corporation Sunday said it will invest around 150 billion yen (about ₹10,445 crore) by 2026, for local manufacturing of Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) and BEV batteries in Gujarat.

The company has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to this effect with the Gujarat government.

It was signed "on March 19, 2022 at the India-Japan Economic Forum held in New Delhi, India, in the presence of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Suzuki Motor Corporation said.

**Suzuki's future mission is to achieve carbon neutrality with small cars. We will continue active investment in India to realise Self-reliant India (Atma-nirbhar Bharat)**

**TOSHIHIRO SUZUKI** | REPRESENTATIVE DIRECTOR AND PRESIDENT, SUZUKI MOTOR CORPORATION

Under the MoU, the company's wholly-owned arm Suzuki Motor Gujarat Pvt Ltd (SMG) will invest ₹7,300 crore for the construction of a plant for BEV batteries at a land neighboring to SMG's existing plant by 2026.

Also, SMG will invest another ₹3,100 crore for increasing the production capacity for BEV manufacturing by 2025, the statement said.

At present, for manufacturing of conventional internal combustion engine vehicles, the Suzuki group has a cumulative production capacity of about 22 lakh units per annum across two facilities of its main subsidiary, Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) in Haryana, along with SMG's facility in Gujarat.

SMG, which supplies vehicles exclusively to MSI, has an additional installed production capacity of 7.5 lakh units per annum. In the statement, SMG further said another group firm Maruti Suzuki Toyotsu India Pvt Ltd (MSTI) will make an investment of ₹45 crore on the construction of a vehicle recycling plant by 2025.

Last year in November, MSTI - the joint venture between the Maruti Suzuki and Toyota Tsusho Group - commenced operations of the vehicle dismantling and recycling unit at Noida, in Uttar Pradesh.



The government has taken a policy decision that BBNL is going to be merged into BSNL. This means all work of BBNL at the pan-India level is going to come to BSNL

**PK PURWAR** | CHAIRMAN AND MD, BSNL



## LEXUS GEARS UP TO DRIVE IN EVS

Having established its presence in the country, luxury carmaker Lexus is now looking to chart its next phase of growth in India as it looks to consolidate sales network and drive in new models, including fully electric cars in the country, according to a top company official



## HIGHEST SINCE DEC 2020

# Feb oil imports surge

Local fuel sales in India, the world's third biggest oil importer and consumer, has been rising since the government lifted Covid-19 induced curbs as infections subsided

REUTERS

**New Delhi, March 20:** India's crude imports rose in February to 4.86 million barrels per day (bpd), their highest since December 2020, preliminary data from trade sources showed, as refiners cranked up runs to meet increasing demand on better refining margins.

Oil imports by Asia's third-largest economy rose 5% from January and were up 24% from a low base in February 2021, when a refinery at Bathinda in northern India was fully shut for maintenance, data showed.

Indian refiners typically buy oil two months ahead of processing.



### IMPORTS DATA

Iraq remains as the top oil supplier followed by Saudi Arabia, UAE and US

Share of grades from Canada and US surged 14% to their highest in a year

Share of African oil rose to a four-month high in February

Opec's share of oil imports drop to record low

Refiners are raising runs to cash in on high margins to offset some of the losses incurred for selling fuels in the local markets.

Some Indian refiners have also deferred maintenance shutdowns of units to gain from exports, while meeting rising local fuel demand.

India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer, ships in more than 80% of its crude needs and relies heavily on the Middle East.

Its reliance on the Middle East is, however, declining as refiners diversify their sources of oil imports

to buy cheaper barrels from elsewhere to boost margins, a move that has cut the OPEC's share in India's oil imports to record low.

Last month, the share of grades from Canada and the United States in India's oil imports surged 14% to their highest in a year, while purchases from the Middle East grew the least since October 2021.

The share of African oil rose to a four-month high in February, the data showed.

Iraq continued to be the top oil supplier to India followed by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States. Kuwait emerged as the fourth-biggest supplier to India, replacing Nigeria, which slipped to number 6 as Canada took number 5 spot.

## Russian oil to India quadrupled in March

**London:** Russian oil exports to India have quadrupled this month in a sign of the vast reshaping of global energy flows since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Financial Times reported. Russia has exported 360,000 barrels a day of oil to India in March so far, nearly four times the 2021 average. The country is on track to hit 203,000 b/d for the whole month based on current shipment schedules, according to Kpler, a commodities data and analytics firm. Alex Booth, head of research at Kpler, said India typically buys CPC, a blend of predominantly Kazakh and Russian crude, but the big increase in March was for Russia's flagship Urals crude, suggesting Indian buyers weighed up significant discounts against public opinion. "Already committed oil cargoes from Russia that can't find buyers in Europe are being bought by India," he said, FT reported. "Indian companies weren't sourcing much from Russia given high shipping costs," said Vivekanand Subbaraman, research analyst at Ambit Capital. "This appears to be changing now."

## NOW, IRAN OFFERS OIL

Iran is ready to meet India's energy security needs, its ambassador to India was quoted as saying, as negotiations continue between the world powers and Tehran on the lifting of sanctions against the OPEC-member.

Iran used to be the second largest oil supplier to India but New Delhi had to halt imports from Tehran after former US President Donald Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal with Iran and re-imposed sanctions on its oil exports.

"Rupee-rial trade mechanism can help companies from both the countries to deal with each other directly and avoid third party intermediation costs," Ali Chegeni



was quoted as saying.

India and Iran had devised a barter-like mechanism to settle trade where Indian refiners were paying for Iranian oil in rupees to a local bank and the funds were used by Tehran to pay for imports

**Rupee-rial trade mechanism can help companies from both the countries to deal with each other directly and avoid third party intermediation costs**

**ALI CHEGENI** | IRAN AMBASSADOR TO INDIA

from India. Due to sanctions, the India-Iran trade declined sharply from \$17 billion in the fiscal year to March 2019 to less than \$2 billion in April-January, the first 10 months of this fiscal year.

Chegeni said, "If both countries launch rupee-rial trade mechanisms, the bilateral trade could grow to \$30 billion."

## INFLATIONARY PRESSURES

# FMCG cos mull 10% price hike

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has added another blow to FMCG makers as they expect a rise in the prices of wheat, edible oil and crude

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 20:** Consumers may have to pay more for their daily essential items with Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies mulling another round of price hike to offset the impact of an unprecedented level of inflation in commodity prices such as wheat, palm oil and packaging materials.

Companies such as Dabur and Parle are watching the situation and will undertake calibrated price increases to mitigate the inflationary pressures.

According to some media reports, makers such as HUL and Nestle have increased the prices of food products last week. "We are expecting a 10-15 per cent hike by the industry," Parle Products Senior Category Head Mayank Shah said. Shah further noted that the prices are witnessing high fluctuation and hence it would be difficult to tell about the exact increase due to volatility of price.

The price of palm oil had increased



to ₹180 per litre and now has come down to ₹150 per litre. Similarly, crude oil prices had risen to nearly \$140 a barrel and has now slipped below \$100 per barrel, he added.

"Everybody is currently talking about a price hike of 10-15 per cent, although the input cost has gone much more than that," he said.

Expressing same concerns, Dabur India CFO Ankush Jain said inflation remains unabated and is a cause of concern for the second year in a row. "The inflationary pressures and

resultant price increases have led to consumers tightening their purse-strings and relooking at discretionary purchases, while also downtrading to smaller packs. We are closely watching the situation and will undertake calibrated price increases to mitigate the inflationary pressures," he said.

Commenting on the situation, Edelweiss Financial Services Executive VP Abneesh Roy, said FMCG makers are passing high inflation to consumers.

## STEEPEST IN 2 YEARS

# Forex reserves dip by over \$9.6 billion

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, March 20:** India's foreign exchange reserves have plunged by over \$9.64 billion during the week that ended March 11.

Accordingly, the Reserve Bank of India data showed that India's forex reserves fell to \$622.275 billion from \$631.920 billion reported the previous week. According to analysts, a likely intervention by the Reserve Bank of India to arrest the sharp fall in rupee value against the US dollar depleted the reserve.

According to reports, the latest decline in forex reserves is the steepest in nearly two years. The country's forex reserves comprise foreign currency assets (FCAs), gold reserves, SDRs, and the country's reserve position with the IMF.

On a weekly basis, FCAs, the largest component of the forex reserves, edged lower by \$11.108 billion to \$554.359 billion. However, the value of the country's gold reserves increased by \$1.522 billion to \$43.842 billion. The SDR value fell by \$53 million to \$18.928 billion.

In addition, the country's reserve position with the IMF slipped by \$7 million to \$5.146 billion.

# Govt working to classify cryptos under GST law



Currently, 18 per cent GST is levied only on service provided by crypto exchanges and is categorised as financial services

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 20:** The government is working on classification of cryptocurrency as goods or services under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) law, so that tax can be levied on the entire value of transactions.

GST officers are of the view that cryptos, by nature, are similar to lottery, casinos, betting, gambling, horse racing, which have 28 per cent of GST on the entire value. Besides, GST at 3 per cent is levied on the entire transaction value in case of gold. "There is a clarity needed in regard to levy of GST on cryptocurrencies and whether it has to be levied on the entire value. We are seeing whether cryptocurrencies can be classified as goods or

services and also removing any doubt on whether it can be called an actionable claim," an official said.

Another official said that if the GST is levied on the entire transaction of cryptocurrencies then the rate could be in the range of 0.1 to 1 per cent. "Discussions are in a nascent stage on the rate of tax, whether it would be 0.1 per cent or 1 per cent. First a decision on classification will have to be finalised and then rate will be discussed.

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) law does not clearly state about classification of cryptocurrency and in the absence of a law on regulating such virtual digital currencies, the classification has to take into account whether the legal framework classifies it as actionable claim.

# Startups get up to 10 years for converting debt into equity

Earlier the option of changing convertible notes into equity shares was allowed for up to five years from the day when initial convertible note was issued

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 20:** The government has extended the timeline up to ten years for startups to convert debt investments made in the company into equity shares, a decision which is likely to give a relief to budding entrepreneurs to deal with the impact of Covid-

19 pandemic, according to a press note of the DPIIT.

Earlier the option of changing convertible notes into equity shares was allowed for up to five years from the day when initial convertible note was issued. Now that timeline has been extended to ten years.

An investor can invest in a startup through convertible notes, which is a kind of debt loan instrument. But in this investment, the investor is given the option that if the startup performs well or achieves some performance milestones in future, the investor can ask the startup to issue equity shares of the company against the money that they had initially invested as loan debt.

Convertible note means an in-



strument issued by a startup company acknowledging receipt of money initially as debt, which is repayable at the option of the holder, or which is convertible into such number of equity shares of

such startup company, within a period not exceeding ten years from the date of issue of the convertible note, upon occurrence of specified events as per the other terms and conditions agreed to

**Extending such optionality to 10 years will help ease the burden on startups to prove the concept to early stage investors without triggering mandatory pre-mature exits**

**SUMIT SINGHANIA** | PARTNER, DELOITTE INDIA

and indicated in the instrument, the note has said.

According to experts, convertible notes have increasingly emerged as attractive financing instruments for early stage funding of startups since its inception in 2017.

Unlike convertible debentures debts, convertible notes offer the flexibility of optional conversion

into equity without having to determine the conversion ratio upfront (and fewer regulatory covenants), Sumit Singhania, Partner, Deloitte India, said.

Rudra Kumar Pandey, Partner, General Corporate, said that it seems that the government wishes to extend the flexibility to the startup companies for appropriate valuation and conversion of the convertible note by additional five years until the startups are able to secure its next round of funding and to save them from the impact of Covid and liquidity issues.

Startups operating across the sectors will be benefited out of this change, and particularly the startups in financial, educational and retail sectors, Pandey said.

ALL ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS FINAL

ISL CONCLUDES

# Lakshya misses the mark

Sen is only the fifth Indian after Prakash Nath (1947); Prakash Padukone (1980, 1981); Pulella Gopichand (2001) and Saina Nehwal (2015) to reach the final of the prestigious tournament

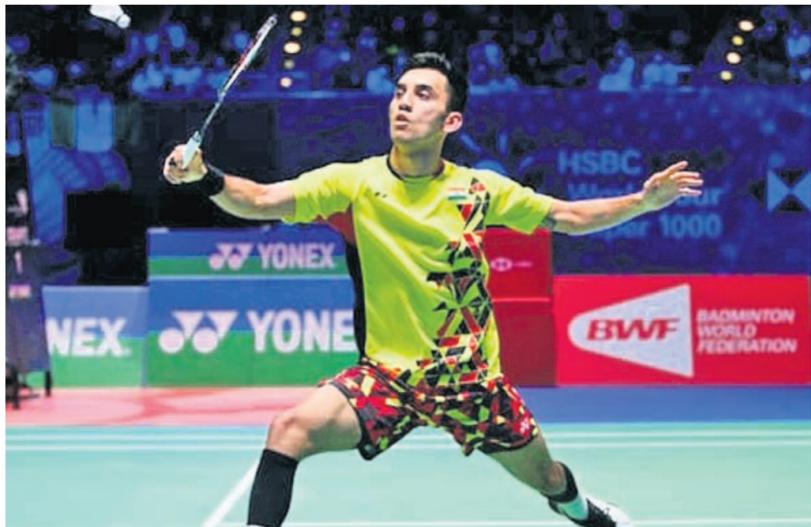
AGENCIES

**Birmingham, March 20:** World Championships bronze medalist Lakshya Sen's dream run at the All England Championships ended with a heartbreaking straight-game loss against world number one and Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen in the men's singles final, continuing India's 21-year-long agonising wait for the coveted trophy.

After four days of sensational badminton, the 20-year-old Sen faltered on the cusp of history as he committed too many errors to go down 10-21 15-21 to former champion Axelsen in a lop-sided summit clash that lasted 53 minutes at the Barclaycard Arena. On the other hand, the world No 1 was phenomenal in this tournament and didn't drop a single game on his way to the top of the podium.

The world No1 brought his A-game to the final. He found his rhythm early into the match and carried it through the opening game. There were moments of brilliance from Sen, but those weren't enough to challenge the former world champion, who won the first game convincingly.

In the second game, Axelsen used his powerful smashes to dominate Sen. The young Indian tried hard to defend but long rallies took a toll on him. Sen won three points on the trot to make a comeback but Axelsen showed his class and eventually won the second game and title.



On Saturday, Sen had become only the fifth Indian after Prakash Nath (1947); Prakash Padukone (1980, 1981); Pulella Gopichand (2001) and Saina Nehwal (2015) to reach the final of the prestigious tournament after outwitting defending champion Lee Zii Jia in a grueling semifinal. Notably only two Indians - Prakash Padukone and Pulella Gopichand - have won the prestigious title.

A week back, Sen had recorded his first win over former world

champion Axelsen en route to his final appearance at the German Open but he couldn't sustain his craft on Sunday as his highly-fancied rival returned the favour, claiming his fifth overall win against the Indian.

While 2020 winner Axelsen claimed the men's singles title for the second time, Japan's Akane Yamaguchi won the women's singles crown, beating South Korea's An Seyoung 21-15 21-15 in the final. Despite the loss, it has been a

credible performance for Sen, who is still in his early days in elite-level badminton. A product of the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy in Bangalore, Sen has been in sensational form in the last six months.

He secured his maiden world championships bronze in December last, before winning his first Super 500 title at India Open in January and finishing runner-up at the German Open last week.

# Hyderabad FC beat Kerala Blasters on spot kicks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Margao, March 20:** Goalkeeper Laxmikant Kattimani made three stunning saves as Hyderabad FC clinched their maiden Indian Super League title after defeating Kerala Blasters in penalty shoot-out in the summit clash here Sunday. Hyderabad beat Kerala 3-1 in the shoot-out after the match ended 1-1 in the regulation and extra time.

For Hyderabad, Joao Victor, Khassa Camara and Halicharan Narzary scored while only Ayush Adhikari found the target in the shoot-out as Kerala suffered heartbreak for the third time in the finals.

It was Kattimani's day as he heroically saved the spot kicks from Mark Leskovic, Nishu Kumar and Jeakson Singh.

As soon as Narzary's spot kick sent Kerala goalkeeper Prabhukhan Gill the wrong way, the Hyderabad dug out and supporters at the stands erupted with joy while it was heartbreak for the passionate Kerala fans as spectators returned to the stadium to watch an ISL match after two years.

Earlier in the match, 22-year-old Rahul KP's goal in the 68th minute put Kerala ahead, but Sahil Tavora equalised for Hyderabad with a stunning volley in the 88th minute.

There was not much to differentiate between the two teams till Rahul broke the deadlock in the 68th minute with a stunning right-footed shot from outside the box. Rahul came charging towards the goal and struck a blinder of a shot, to which rival custodian Kattimani



only got a hand before hitting the net. Kerala must have thought they would lift their maiden ISL title but Tavora broke their hearts as he struck with a breath-taking right-footed volley from the edge of the box with just two minutes left for the final whistle.

The two sides failed to produce a winner in the extra-time as the game went to penalty shoot-out.

Hyderabad midfielder Souvik Chakrabarti had a shot early in the match but Kerala goalie Prabhukhan Singh Gill was upto the task to deal with it. In the 14th minute, Harmanjot Khabra whipped a cross for striker Jorge Diaz, who was free inside the box, but the Argentine could not connect it.

In the 23rd minute, Lalithanga Khawlhing got the ball on the left

flank, skipped past Chakrabarti and passed it to Alvaro Vazquez, but the Hyderabad defenders did it well to not let the ball sneak behind the backline.

Kerala skipper Luna attempted a dipping shot from outside the box in the 30th minute but rival custodian Laxmikant Kattimani collected it with ease.

Hyderabad had a chance to score when Javier Sivero, who replaced Joel Chianese, headed on target from a free-kick, but Gill made a wonderful save before Thounaojam Jeakson cleared the ball for the corner even as both the sides were locked 0-0 at half-time.

After the change of ends, Hyderabad started on the front foot and had a couple of chances in quick succession.

FIH PRO LEAGUE

# India beat Argentina 4-3; avenge shoot-out loss in first leg

In a dramatic finish, Mandeep deflected a long pass into Argentina goal with 26 seconds left for the final hooter to break the visiting side's hearts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 20:** Mandeep Singh scored a last-minute decisive goal after drag-flicker Jugraj Singh's two powerful penalty corner strikes as the Indian men's hockey team beat Argentina 4-3 in a drama-filled second match of its FIH Pro League tie and avenge its first leg shoot-out defeat here.

Jugraj scored in the 20th and 52nd minutes after Hardik Singh struck in the 17th minute - that too from a penalty corner - before Mandeep deflected a long pass into Argentina goal with just 26 seconds left in the match.

Argentina's goal-scorers were hockey Della Torre Nicolas (40th), Domene Tomas (51st) and Ferreiro Martin (56th).

After Sunday's win, India remained at second spot in the league standings with 16 points from eight matches, behind Netherlands. Argentina remained at fourth spot with 11 points from six matches.

After a barren first quarter, India upped the ante in the second and pumped in two goals in the space of three minutes at the Kalinga Stadium here.

From a penalty corner, Varun Kumar's drag-flick was saved by the Argentine goalkeeper but the ball fell to Hardik who slammed home to give India the lead.



Three minutes later, captain Amit Rohidas won another PC after he was stick-checked by an Argentine player. Jugraj Singh stepped up to take the PC and his powerful drag flick beat the Argentine goalkeeper all ends up.

The referee awarded a penalty stroke to Argentina during the second quarter but the decision was reversed after India took a review.

Argentina pressed hard in the third quarter and were rewarded with a goal from a PC through Nicolas in the 40th minute. India's Sumit also wasted a decent chance in the third quarter as he could not take a shot at Argentina goal under pressure.

The dramatic fourth quarter yielded four goals. India were leading 2-1 but Tomas drew parity, scoring from a penalty stroke in the

51st minute.

India replied immediately and took the lead again within one minute with Jugraj Singh's rocket-like drag flick hitting the roof of Argentina net in the 52nd minute.

India thought they had scored their fourth goal and Jugraj's third of the match from a penalty corner but the decision was reversed after an Argentina review. It was ruled that the ball had not crossed the circle before Jugraj took the shot.

Martin added salt to India's wound by scoring a field goal in the 56th minute to level the scores 3-3.

But in a dramatic finish, Mandeep deflected a long pass into Argentina goal with 26 seconds left for the final hooter to break the visiting side's hearts but to the celebration of the home side dug out. India will play England in their two-legged tie April 2 and 3 here.

# Dicka's brace helps Aizawl defeat Indian Arrows 2-0

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Naihati, March 20:** Striker Dipanda Dicka scored a brace as Aizawl FC beat Indian Arrows 2-0 in their I-League match here Sunday. Dicka (43rd and 49th minutes) struck on either side of half time to give his side the win.

The first chance of the game fell for Sibajit Singh of Indian Arrows in the fourth minute, but he wasn't able to convert the opportunity. The All India Football Federation's developmental side created another chance in the 11th minute, but Taison Singh headed it wide. Aizawl slowly grew confidence in the game and started dominating the midfield battle.

The first goal came against the run of play in the 42nd minute for Aizawl. Full back Vanlalngenga played a superb cross-field pass to Dicka and the Cameroonian striker made no mistake in putting it past the keeper to break the deadlock.

As soon as the half began, Aizawl struck again to double their lead in the 49th minute when Dicka got on the end of a beautiful ball from Samuel Lalmuanpuia and placed it calmly to the bottom left corner.

Indian Arrows upped the ante in search of goals but lack of a finishing touch became clearly visible even after creating some decent chances.

In another match played at Kalyani stadium, Sreenidi Deccan defeated Sudeva Delhi 1-0 to move into the top four in the standings. David Castaneda Munoz scored the all-important goal in the 39th minute.



# Nadal outlasts teen Alcaraz



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Indian Wells, March 20:** Rafael Nadal faced down the future and emerged victorious, outlasting Spanish teenager Carlos Alcaraz 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 to reach the BNP Paribas Open final and improve to 20-0 this year.

The 21-time major champion threw his head back, smiled and raised both arms in triumph after escaping an aggressive Alcaraz.

However, the 18-year-old never appeared rattled playing his vaunted countryman, who had the crowd, a 17-year advantage in age and loads of experience in his favor. Nadal's perfect record is the third-best start to a season since 1990.

Nadal staved off three break points on his serve in the fifth game of the third set and then broke Alcaraz with a forehand volley winner to go up 5-3. Nadal served out the match with a love game, punctuating the 3-hour, 12-minute struggle with a 95-mph ace.

He will meet Taylor Fritz in the final Sunday. Seeded 20th, Fritz is the first American man to make the final since John Isner in 2012 and he will try to be the first to win the title since Andre Agassi in 2001.

Fritz ended No 7 seed Andrey Rublev's 13-match winning streak

with a 7-5, 6-4 victory in the other semifinal. The Russian had won 13 consecutive matches since February 14, including back-to-back titles at Marseille and Dubai.

After holding to go up 4-3 in the third, Nadal called for a trainer, who appeared to give the soon-to-be 36-year-old star a chiropractic adjustment.

Alcaraz outdueled Nadal in a second set that featured five service breaks, including four in a row. Tied 4-4, Alcaraz broke Nadal in a game that lasted 19 minutes, 42 seconds. Nadal's errant forehand gave Alcaraz the advantage on the seventh break point of the game. The teenager tossed up a topspin lob near the baseline that Nadal could not catch up to and Alcaraz led 5-4. He served out the set, 6-4.

Alcaraz got Nadal's attention from the start, breaking him in the first game of the match. The teen survived a six-deuce game on his serve to go up 2-0. Alcaraz was gutsy throughout, charging the net on break points and often coming up with winners.

As the match went on, the wind grew so strong it blew the players' white towels nearly onto the court and rattled Nadal's perfectly aligned drink bottles that he sets facing the court. Ball kids chased items that weren't anchored down.

In the first semifinal, Fritz came out strongly in front of a supportive crowd at the tournament where he's been coming since he was a kid from his home near San Diego. He served a love game to open the match and then promptly broke Rublev and held again for a 3-0 lead.

"I was not the favorite in today's match and so I was able to play a little freer. Everything was definitely flowing for me," said Fritz, a semifinalist here five months ago when the event was held in October because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fritz held at love to go up 4-1. He had a chance to serve out the first set leading 5-2, but the Rublev won the next three games to tie it, 5-4. Fritz took a 6-5 lead with a 112-mph ace. He broke the big-hitting Rublev after a seven-deuce game to win the set.

"He gave a huge, huge serve, which gives him a lot of advantage. On top of that, he gave good strokes from both sides, forehand and backhand," Rublev said.

The Russian reacted by hitting a ball into the sky and repeatedly punching his racket strings with his right fist. Rublev needed a medical timeout before the start of the second set to tend to a bloody hand. He later said he hurt his hand "a little bit."

In the second set, Fritz came up with a big hold at 5-4, firing an ace down the T after fighting off two break points. The men stayed on serve until the 10th game. Rublev saved eight of the 11 break points he faced, but he missed an easy forehand volley on top of the net to give Fritz his first match point. Fritz bashed a return of Rublev's serve to take the pivotal break and the match.

"I was just like so much relief and I just couldn't believe it. Those moments are the reason why I wanted to be an athlete, wanted to play professional tennis. It's the best part of it all," Fritz said.

# Ponting wants retained players to guide new mates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 20:** Having bought a lot of new faces at the IPL mega auction this year, Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting stressed that players who have been retained by the franchise now have a responsibility to guide the youngsters in the team.

The Capitals had retained four players - skipper Rishabh Pant, opener Prithiv Shaw, spin all-rounder Axar Patel and South Africa pacer Anrich Nortje - ahead of the auction and the coach is trying his best to get to know the rest of the squad ahead of the league which begins March 26.

"I have told the boys to keep their doors open when they are in



their rooms and get to know each other. I am going to have breakfast, lunch and dinner with all the younger guys that I don't know," Ponting was quoted as saying in a media release.

"When you show love towards the younger guys as a coach or a senior player, you know that they are going to give it back," the head coach added.

"The guys who have been in the Delhi Capitals camp for a while definitely have the responsibility of guiding the youngsters in the team. Rishabh's captain, so he's going to do that anyway, but guys like Prithvi, Axar and Nortje will also have their roles and responsibilities within the team," Ponting said.

The head coach was impressed with the energetic vibe around the group of players when he attended his first training session with the team. "At the moment, we need to really focus on what we need to do to get ready for game one. I had a great first session with the players. There's an energetic vibe around the team, which is what we always strive for," Ponting said.

# Family, friends bid Warne farewell at private funeral

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Melbourne, March 20:** Shane Warne's family and friends attended a private funeral in his hometown of Melbourne to pay their final respects to the cricketing legend.

Warne's three children, parents and friends including retired Test captains Mark Taylor and Allan Border and former England skipper Michael Vaughan, were among about 80 guests at the service Sunday.

Warne was widely regarded as one of the top players of all time. He died March 4 while on vacation with friends on Samui Island in southern Thailand. An autopsy report said the 52-year-old Warne died of a suspected heart attack.



His remains were repatriated from Bangkok, Thailand to Melbourne

just over a week ago. A state memorial at the

Warne, widely regarded as one of the top players of all time, died March 4 while on vacation with friends on Samui Island in southern Thailand

Melbourne Cricket Ground - the scene of many of Warne's iconic bowling moments including a hat-trick against England in 1994 and his 700th test wicket on Boxing Day in 2006 - will take place March 30 and will be open to the public. The ground's Great Southern Stand will also be renamed in Warne's honour.