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Swadeshi Jagran Manch had opposed Ilker Ayci's appointment

**Air India's CEO pick declines offer, cites 'undesirable' narrative**

PRANAV MUKUL  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

AIR INDIA'S MD & CEO-designate Ilker Ayci said on Tuesday that he has declined the Tata Group's offer to lead the airline, citing "attempts" to paint his appointment "with undesirable colours". The Tata Group is understood to have restarted the process of selecting a new CEO for Air India, including considering candidates from within the conglomerate.

"My appointment as (CEO of) Air India within Tata Group was announced earlier in February, with a start date of April 1. Since the announcement, I have been sadly following news in some sections of the media attempting to colour my appointment

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**ALL NATIONALS OUT OF KYIV: GOVT**

## Ukraine war hits home: 21-yr-old student from Karnataka is killed

Naveen S G killed in shelling in eastern city of Kharkiv: Govt



Indian students in the hostel bunker of Kharkiv National Medical University on Tuesday morning

SHUBHAJIT ROY, SOURAV ROY BARMAN & ARUN JANARDHANAN  
NEW DELHI, CHENNAI, MARCH 1

SIX DAYS into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, India's worst fears came true when a 21-year-old Indian medical student in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv near the Russian border was killed on Tuesday, marking the country's first casualty in the war.

Indian officials identified the victim as Naveen S G, a fourth-year MBBS student at Kharkiv National Medical University who hailed from Chalageri village in Karnataka's Haveri district. They said he was killed in shelling. But a former hostel mate of Naveen in Kharkiv cited other members

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**'He stayed back to help juniors... died when he went to get food'**

KIRAN PARASHAR & ARUN JANARDHANAN  
BENGALURU, CHENNAI, MARCH 1

NUMBED BY the sound of explosions outside, a group of students at the Kharkiv National Medical University in eastern



Naveen S G was a fourth-year medical student

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**Russians pound Kharkiv, head towards Kyiv in 64-km-long tank convoy**

YURAS KARMANAU, JIM HEINTZ, VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV & DASHA LITVINOVA  
KYIV, MARCH 1

RUSSIAN FORCES stepped up their attacks on crowded urban areas Tuesday, bombarding the central square in Ukraine's second-biggest city and Kyiv's main TV tower in what Ukraine's president called a blatant campaign of terror.

"Nobody will forgive. Nobody will forget," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy vowed after the bloodshed on the square in Kharkiv.

Ukrainian authorities said

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**EXPRESS NETWORK**



**GOVT PROVIDING ALL ASSISTANCE TO THOSE STUCK: CM**  
PAGE 3

## Why student's death challenges Indian evacuation, diplomacy on world stage

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

INDIA'S EVACUATION exercise faces a challenge after the death of an Indian student during shelling in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city which has been attacked by Russia. The

death also complicates New Delhi's diplomatic hand — it had been projecting itself as a neutral actor, refusing to take sides.

Suddenly, the safety and security of around 8,000 Indian nationals still there has become an issue of urgent concern. Given that half of these students are stuck

EXPLAINED

**INSIDE**

'CENTRE DIDN'T TAKE STEPS IN TIME'

ZELENSKYY SEEKS EU SUPPORT

INDIA, RUSSIA AND WEAPONS  
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HP OMEN 16 (AMD) GAMING LAPTOP REVIEW: TIME TO UPGRADE?  
I see the Omen 16 as a good general-purpose computer that also happens to be a gaming machine. But does the AMD version of the Omen 16 impress with a set of specs under the hood?



PHOTO GALLERY

BACK FROM UKRAINE  
Tears and smiles as students reunite with families



ENTERTAINMENT

EUPHORIA SEASON 2 REVIEW  
HBO's provocative teen drama is an acquired taste

EXPRESS AUDIO  
3 Indian students in Ukraine: 2 stuck, and 1 who made it back

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

We speak to three Indian students studying in Ukraine to understand what they have been going through amidst the ongoing Russian invasion.

FROM PAGE ONE

AI's CEO pick

with undesirable colours," Ayci said in a statement.  
"As a business leader who has always prioritised professional credo and more importantly, the happiness and well-being of my family above all else, I have come to the conclusion that it would not be a feasible or an honorable decision to accept the position in the shadow of such narrative," he said.

"I remain grateful to the Chairman of Tata Group, Mr N Chandrasekaran, and the Tata Group for extending to me the honour and the opportunity to lead Air India. However, at a recent meeting with Mr Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Group, I regretfully informed him and I wish to inform the public, as well, that I will decline the position," the 51-year-old Turkish national said.

The Tata Group did not respond to requests for comments. It is learnt that prior to naming Ayci for the post on February 14, the Tata Group sounded out senior officials in the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The announcement is learnt to have been made after an understanding that the selection would go through the required regulatory approvals.

However, following the announcement, the Tatas' pick from an initial list that comprised half-a-dozen European and American airline executives, saw increasing backlash, including from the RSS-affiliated Swadeshi Jagran Manch, which expressed "concern" over Ayci's alleged links with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Ayci, whose last assignment was as Chairman of Turkish Airlines, was earlier an advisor to Erdogan in the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul when the latter was Mayor of Istanbul.

Even as the choice to rope in a Turkish national to run the airline was unconventional, even going by the Tata Group's history of expatriate appointments, certain aspects weighed in Ayci's favour. These included turning Turkish Airlines around after two major incidents — the 2016 Turkey coup and the pandemic. A significant positive was the carrier's ability to see through the pandemic phase without making layoffs or taking any government bailouts. Also, Ayci's willingness to make a long-term commitment was a key advantage.

A government official said the Tata Group had made its submission to the Ministry of Civil Aviation for approval, and the file was forwarded to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for security clearance. Amid the increasing opposition to Ayci's appointment, the MHA signalled its intent to "scrupulously" carry out a background check on Ayci.

While making the announcement last month, the Tata Group had noted in its statement that the appointment was "subject to requisite regulatory approvals". As per the regulations, any top-level personnel change in an airline based in India requires the approval of the Ministry of Civil

Aviation, which, as part of its approval process, gets the candidate's security clearance from the MHA.

On Friday, SJM's convener Ashwani Mahajan had told The Indian Express: "The aviation industry cannot be equated with a chips manufacturer. This is a matter of national security. We must be very careful. His links with Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the current President of Turkey, is a matter of concern and must be thoroughly checked before arriving at a decision."

'He stayed back'

Ukraine decided it was time to leave — even if it meant a cross-country dash of over 1,500 km from their city near the Russian border to the Hungarian border in the southwest.

"One group left on Monday. But Naveen suggested that the others wait so that we can take our juniors along, too, as they had been in Ukraine for less than a year. It was his idea to leave Kharkiv on Wednesday morning," Amit Vaishyar, a final-year student, told The Indian Express over phone.

On Tuesday morning, Naveen S G, a 21-year-old fourth-year medical student from Karnataka, stepped out of the bunker, where the students had been holed up for the past six days, to buy groceries — and became the first Indian casualty in Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Whenever the curfew would be lifted, we would go out together to buy groceries. On Tuesday, I went to sleep around 3.30 am and woke up late. By 6 am, Naveen had left to bring food for all of us. The market is about 50 metres from our bunker. At 7.58 am, he sent a message to one of us, saying he was short of money and asked for some to be transferred to his account. One of us called his phone at 8.10 am, but an Ukrainian answered the call and said he was no more," Vaishyar said.

"He died when he went to get us food," he said.  
Naveen belonged to Chalageri village in Haveri district, about 300 km from Bengaluru. He is survived by his father Shekharappa Gyanagoudar, a retired private firm employee, mother Vijayalakshmi and elder brother Harsha who is pursuing a PhD.

Speaking to reporters, Shekharappa said Naveen had called the family around 10 pm on Monday. "He said the situation was really bad but he was safe. On Tuesday morning, he called and spoke to his mother. After the war broke out, he had been calling 4-5 times every day. We never thought his life was in danger," he said.

Asked why he had sent his son to Ukraine, he said: "I had no choice because studying medicine in India is very costly, and it is very hard to get a seat."

Shekharappa said that his son had scored 97 per cent in pre-university college (Plus-2). "A medical seat costs Rs 2-3 crore here so he went outside because it would

21-yr-old student from Karnataka killed

of the student community there as saying that he was hit in firing by the Russian army outside a grocery store.

Meanwhile, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said that all Indian nationals in Ukraine's capital Kyiv have been evacuated.

The Indian Express has learnt that the Government is now looking at shutting the Indian Embassy in Kyiv and moving its officials to a recently established office in Lviv, about 70 km from the Polish border, to facilitate evacuation efforts.

Some Embassy officials have already been moved to the new office, it is learnt. If the security situation in the capital deteriorates, the Embassy, which is located near the Presidential palace and other key buildings in Kyiv, will be fully vacated.

Earlier, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi confirmed the student's death. "With profound sorrow we confirm that an Indian student lost his life in shelling in Kharkiv this morning. The Ministry is in touch with his family. We convey our deepest condolences to the family," he posted on Twitter.

Addressing a late-evening press conference, Foreign Secretary Shringla said the circumstances in which Naveen was hit was "not absolutely clear". He said the body has been sent to a university morgue and the Government is making efforts to bring it back in coordination with local authorities.

Speaking to The Indian Express over phone from

Kharkiv, Naveen's former hostel mate Shridharan Gopalakrishnan said: "(He) was shot dead around 10.30 am Ukrainian time today. He was standing in queue outside a grocery store when the Russian army fired at people there. He was my hostel mate initially, and later shifted to an apartment outside."

The incident deepened anxieties in New Delhi as thousands of Indians, predominantly students pursuing medical degrees, remain stranded across Ukraine at a time Russia has intensified its offensive in the east. It came hours after the Indian Embassy urged Indian nationals in the capital to leave "urgently today" — and a day after the Government decided to send four Union Ministers to supervise evacuation efforts.

Official sources said that on Tuesday evening, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Naveen's father Shekharappa Gyanagoudar, who is a retired private firm employee. Apart from Shekharappa, Naveen is survived by his mother Vijayalakshmi and elder brother Harsha who is pursuing a PhD.

Before the announcement of Naveen's death, Modi met President Ram Nath Kovind to brief him about the situation in Ukraine, including India's evacuation efforts. Modi also spoke to French President Emmanuel Macron, European Council President Charles Michel, Hungary Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Poland President Andrzej Duda.

Foreign Secretary Shringla said that a team of Indian officials from Moscow are camping

in Belgorod, a town adjoining Ukraine's eastern border with Russia, to map possible evacuation routes, and arrange accommodation and transport for Indians stuck in Kharkiv and nearby conflict zones.

"We should be prepared either way... Evacuation from Kharkiv is now our top priority," he said, when asked if the routes will be through Russia or other borders in Ukraine.

Shringla also said that IAF transport aircraft, C-17 Globemaster, will leave for Romania at 4 am on Wednesday to repatriate Indians, and that more operations are planned. The aircraft was used for evacuation from Afghanistan after Kabul fell to the Taliban in August 2021.

According to the Foreign Secretary, the first tranche of humanitarian assistance from India to Ukraine, including medicines, was sent through Poland on Tuesday, and that the next consignment would be sent on Wednesday.

On Tuesday morning, the Indian Embassy's latest advisory indicated that the Russian invasion has entered a critical phase. "All Indian nationals including students are advised to leave Kyiv urgently today. Preferably by available trains or through any other means available," it said. The dramatic escalation in tone came against the backdrop of reports that a long convoy of Russian tanks and military equipment was headed to the Ukrainian capital.

A few hours before the advisory was issued, Union Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways and Civil Aviation Gen

(ret'd) V K Singh tweeted: "Stay where you are, don't move until you are told, and don't panic. Your country will safely evacuate you. Jai Hind."

Singh, who is among the four Union ministers who were tasked on Saturday with coordinating the evacuation, tweeted: "My message to all parents, guardians, and family members, your kids will be back with you soon." Apart from Singh, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju and Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri are in charge of the evacuation.

It was on February 15 that the Government issued its first advisory urging Indian nationals to consider leaving Ukraine temporarily. Since then, around 12,000 of the estimated 20,000 Indians in Ukraine have left that country, including those brought back under the evacuation effort titled Operation Ganga.

"Of the remaining 40 per cent, roughly half remain in conflict zones in the Kharkiv, Sumy area and the other half have either reached the western borders of Ukraine or are heading towards the borders. In other words, they are out of harm's way," Shringla said.

Kharkiv is located barely 40 km from the Russian border and has witnessed intense hostilities over the past few days. It houses one of the largest clusters of Indian students in that country, estimated to be around 5,000, owing to a number of medical colleges in the area.

(WITH KRISHN KAUSHIK IN DELHI & KIRAN PARASHAR IN BENGALURU)

Naveen was killed). We have been surviving on chocolates and biscuits. The market's supply chain has been hit and we are out of cash. We might die of hunger or be hit by Russian firing, and so have decided to take the risk and leave (for the Hungary border). It will be a 30-40 hour journey by road but we don't have a choice."

Another Indian medical student from the city, R Gowtham, who was on his way to Lviv on a train, sent a text message to The Indian Express: "Please save students in Kharkiv."

"There are about 1,500 Indian students in my college alone. There are three other major medical colleges in Kharkiv with more Indians. Since we have no assurance about an evacuation plan, several students are trying to flee Kharkiv on train or by hiring cabs. I was among 50 students who were planning to leave for Lviv (a city in the west about 70 km from the Poland border). But we returned to the bunker from the railway station after hearing about Naveen's death," he said.

Anaina Anna, a medical student in Kharkiv who hails from Mangalore in Karnataka, said: "I am inside a bunker about a kilometre from the market (where

Naveen was killed). We have been surviving on chocolates and biscuits. The market's supply chain has been hit and we are out of cash. We might die of hunger or be hit by Russian firing, and so have decided to take the risk and leave (for the Hungary border). It will be a 30-40 hour journey by road but we don't have a choice."

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STRUGGLE TO RECOVER COST DESPITE GOOD MARKET RATES

Low potato production prevents farmers in Punjab from harvesting profits

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA  
JALANDHAR, MARCH 1

EVEN AS harvesting of potato picks up amid good rate being offered in the market, the Punjab farmer is still an unhappy lot due to low production this year due to January rains.

The rates have increased from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,200 per quintal for seed potato last week to Rs 1,700-1,800 to Rs 2,000 per quintal currently. The rate of table potato is now Rs 900 to Rs 1,000 per quintal, which was Rs 700 to Rs 800 a

few days back. Farmers are happy about the increase in prices in the market, but also point out that the decreased production means they cannot make the most of it.

In Punjab, Kufri Jyoti, Pukhraj, and sugar-free potato varieties are quite popular.

Farmer Harjinder Singh from Shahkot, who does potato farming in 100 acres of land, said that his production is down from 100 to 125 quintals per acre to 60 quintals per acre.

He explained that heavy rain in the month of January, when po-



The rate of table potato is now Rs 900 to Rs 1,000 per quintal.

tato crop was just two months old, had damaged it badly.

"I along with my brother remained in the field during the rain

as we drained out the water with the help of a machine because of which we could save 50 to 60% of our crop," he said, adding that those who could not do so their yield was down to just 35 to 40 quintals per acre.

"No doubt the rates have improved in the past one week and they are even better than the last year when we were selling at the rate of Rs 1,200-1,300 per quintal but heavy loss in production would not help us to meet our expenses," he explained.

In the month of January, Punjab had received 1,604 sur-

plus rain in the first 10 days of the month. The potato belt of the state, which includes Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur and Nawanshahr, had also received excess rainfall in this period.

Kapurthala alone had received 5,963% surplus rain, while remaining three districts of the potato belt had received 1,100 to 1,700% surplus rain in the same period.

Another farmer from Malsian area in Jalandhar, Jatinder Singh, said that due to excessive rain it was not possible to drain all the excess water from the fields. He

biggest city, with a population of about 1.5 million, at least six people were killed when the region's Soviet-era administrative building on Freedom Square was hit with what was believed to be a missile.

The attack on Freedom Square — Ukraine's largest plaza, and the nucleus of public life in the city — was seen by many Ukrainians as brazen evidence that the Russian invasion wasn't just about hitting military targets but also about breaking their spirits.

The bombardment blew out windows and walls of buildings that ring the massive square, which was piled high with debris and dust. Inside one building, chunks of plaster were scattered, and doors, ripped from their hinges, lay across hallways.

"People are under the ruins. We have pulled out bodies," said Yevhen Vasylenko, an emergency official.

In an emotional appeal to the European Parliament later, Zelenskyy said: "We are fighting also to be equal members of Europe. I believe that today we are showing everybody that is what we are."

He said 16 children had been killed around Ukraine on Monday, and he mocked Russia's claim that it is going after only military targets.

"Where are the children, what kind of military factories do they work at? What tanks are they going at, launching cruise missiles?" Zelenskyy said.

A Ukrainian military official said Belarusian troops joined the war Tuesday in the Chernihiv region in the north, without providing details. But just before that, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said his country had no plans to join the fight.

Russia's goals in hitting central Kharkiv were not immediately clear. Western officials speculated that it is trying to pull in Ukrainian forces to defend the city while a larger Russian force encircles Kyiv. (ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Diplomacy

in the eastern parts of Ukraine where battles are raging, the evacuation faces a logistical challenge.

New Delhi also plans to move all Indian diplomats away from capital Kyiv since all Indians there have left and there's no saying where the shells will land if the city comes under attack. But that would mean fewer resources on the ground, as well as lack of diplomatic eyes and ears.

To convey India's concern, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla called the ambassadors of Russia and Ukraine to reiterate the demand for urgent safe passage of Indian nationals still in Kharkiv and cities in other conflict zones. Similar action is being undertaken by Indian ambassadors in Russia and Ukraine.

"We have reiterated our demand not just in Delhi but also in Moscow and Kiev to diplomatic and military authorities of both countries," Shringla said.

Sources said the "deteriorating situation in Kharkiv is a matter of grave concern" and "the safety

and security of Indian nationals in that city is of utmost priority" for the government.

"We had already taken up with the Russian and Ukrainian embassies the pressing requirement of safe passage for Indian nationals, including students, from Kharkiv and other cities in conflict zones. This demand has been repeatedly made of Russia and Ukraine since the beginning of this conflict on February 24. It has been conveyed to both their ambassadors in New Delhi as well as taken up in their capitals," sources said.

"From the Indian side, preparations for evacuation have been in place for some time now. An Indian team has been positioned in the Russian city of Belgorod, close to the Ukrainian border. However, the conflict situation in and around Kharkiv and nearby cities has been an obstacle," the sources said.

Kharkiv is about 40 km from the Ukraine-Russia border. Therefore, sources said, "it is imperative that Russia and Ukraine respond to our need for safe passage urgently".

This complicates India's diplomacy since it is caught between warring parties and now expects both sides to cooperate in evacuation of Indian nationals from the conflict zones.

Over the last one month, India has done a tightrope walk — Russia on one side, and Western partners-backed Ukraine on the other side.

The Indian government has made multiple statements at the United Nations Security Council where it abstained (echoing the Russian position), but sharpened its language by flagging concerns on "territorial integrity and sovereignty", "UN charter" and "international law" — principles seen as siding with Western partners and Ukraine.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has been chairing meetings with key ministers and officials on the evacuation process, had spoken to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, raising the issue of Indian nationals and their safety. He had also called for "immediate cessation of violence and hostilities", and for giving diplomacy a chance.

He has been speaking to leaders of neighbouring countries as well, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Slovak Republic, and has also spoken to French President Emmanuel Macron who met Russian President Vladimir Putin and spoke to him over phone after the war started.

As a fence-sitter at the UNSC, India now has to seek guarantees for the safety of its nationals. "In places where the conflict has not endangered movement, we have been able to evacuate our citizens. Around 12,000 Indian nationals have been brought out of Ukraine while a considerable number are now in safer areas," a source said. "We will continue to make utmost efforts to ensure the return of our citizens stranded in Ukraine."

harvested in February-March. Although Punjab's potato production share is just 5% of the all India production, which is nearly 50 million tonnes, the state has been meeting the demand for seed potato of the entire country as its Doaba region — Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur and Nawanshahr districts — are the best region in the country to grow seed potato. The seed potato from this belt goes to all potato growing states of the country which include Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh etc.

## Rajasthan providing all assistance to those from state stuck in Ukraine: CM Gehlot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
JAIPUR, MARCH 1

CHIEF MINISTER Ashok Gehlot on Tuesday said that the Rajasthan government is providing all possible help to those from the state stuck in war-hit Ukraine, including students, for their safe return.

In a statement, he said the state government is taking the help of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the Indian embassy in Poland as well as migrant Rajasthanis in Poland, along with a helpline number.

He said the government's aim is that every Indian student in Ukraine is transported to safe places as soon as possible and to ensure that they return to their homeland safely.

The CM also directed officials to ensure that necessary arrangements are in place for the safe return of the students by keeping in constant touch with the Indian embassy in Poland and overseas Indians.

Gehlot interacted through video-conference from the CM's residence with students from Rajasthan who reached Poland.

He thanked migrant Rajasthan entrepreneurs Amit Lath and Ashok Sevak Ramani for bringing the students to Poland safely.

The students narrated how lakhs of people are trapped on the borders of Ukraine and they have to walk long distances by risking their lives to reach the border.

Gehlot also asked the students to keep talking to their Indian friends who are still stuck in Ukraine and guide them on

how to reach Poland or other safe places.

Chief Secretary Usha Sharma also interacted with the students and assured them of all possible help.

Rajasthan Foundation Commissioner Dheeraj Srivastava said efforts are being made to provide relief to those trapped in Ukraine through migrant Rajasthanis in Poland. To help them, the state government has provided a link on its portal, along with a helpline number.

### Centre didn't take steps in time: Beniwal

Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) convenor Hanuman Beniwal on Tuesday said Indian students would not have been in trouble, if the Centre had taken steps in time to evacuate them from Ukraine.

He also said that the death of an Indian student is also part of the government's failure on timely evacuation.

"The Centre believes the elections to be more important than the lives of students stranded in Ukraine," the Nagaur MP said in a statement, referring to the on-going Assembly polls.

Rather than sending some ministers to border countries of Ukraine to 'show-off' after the situation has worsened, it would have been better that the government would have brought all the students from there on time to India, Beniwal said.

Beniwal claimed that till now, less than 2,000 students have been evacuated while over 20,000 students, including from Rajasthan, are stuck in different parts of Ukraine.

## Situation grim, students start leaving Kharkiv at 'own risk'

SHAJU PHILIP  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
MARCH 1

STUCK FOR nearly a week since the Russian invasion began, and the situation becoming "grim" by the day, several students on Tuesday started leaving the war-ravaged northeastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv at their own risk. They boarded trains headed for the western city of Lviv, expecting to cross over the border to Poland.

Many of these students said they found refuge in their hostel bunkers or underground metro stations since February 24, the day Russian forces started shelling Kharkiv, but decided to "take the risk" and escape since their supply of provisions is also dwindling, besides the situation turning worse.

"We have lost hope of being evacuated..." Hayshana, a third-year medical student at Bogomolets National Medical University, Kharkiv, said. "Today, we felt there is no sense in wait-



Father of Naveen Gyangoudar, the Indian student killed in shelling by Russian forces on Kharkiv, Ukraine, at his home in Karnataka's Chalageri village on Tuesday. ANI

ing for the embassy to help (us) in Kharkiv. We came out of the underground metro, hired a taxi to the railway station, and are travelling to Lviv, expecting to escape this war."

She said students are leaving in small groups. "Kharkiv-Lviv journey will take 15 hours; from there, we will have to go by road to reach the border near Poland," Hayshana. "There is no other way for us to escape the war

zone. We hope to get help at the international border between Ukraine and Poland."

On why they took this risk, another student said, "Even the Embassy may not be able to help, as the war is getting intense... Most students leaving Kharkiv are senior students. Several who do not have a residency card have no option but to stay back in bunkers or in underground metros in the present situation."

## Around 2,000 Indians have entered Poland: Envoy to India

RITIKA CHOPRA  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

THE EVACUATION of Indians through the Poland border, which the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had acknowledged as a "problem area", has made some headway with close to 2,000 people, mainly students, crossing over by noon on Tuesday.

Adam Burakowski, Ambassador of Poland to India, told *The Indian Express* that roughly 1,700 Indians had safely made it to Poland till 7am (Polish time). "We have received almost four-lakh people already. Poland is ready to receive anybody and any number of people trying to escape Russian aggression. We don't look at nationality," he added.

However, hundreds of Indian

### WAR IN UKRAINE

students are still stranded in freezing temperatures, especially at the Shehyni-Medyka border checkpoint. Many have alleged discrimination by Ukrainian and Polish border forces. Burakowski outrightly denied any discrimination by his country.

"This is absolutely fake. We don't make any discrimination. We receive everybody who comes. We have also allowed Indians to enter without a visa," he said.

However, the Ambassador also acknowledged that there were "logistical problems" in

evacuating a large number of people. "The situation on the ground is that there are lakhs of people (waiting at the border). Border police of both countries (Ukraine and Poland) are doing everything possible to help. But it's such a big crowd. You can't tell one-lakh people to cross over in five minutes. Yes, the waiting time is quite long, but we are doing everything we can," said Burakowski. "The space (at the border checkpoint) is limited, you know. How do you accommodate one-lakh people at a border crossing which is not meant for such numbers?"

*The Indian Express* has learned that at least two Indigo Airlines aircrafts are expected to fly out from the Rzeszow-Jasionka Airport on Tuesday evening, Polish time, and bring about 450 Indians back to the country.

## Kerala student turns out to be dog's best friend

VISHNU VARMA  
KOCHI, MARCH 1

ARYA ALDRIN is so attached to her five-month-old pet Siberian Husky that she walked nearly 20 kms carrying her in freezing Ukrainian winter after a bus dropped them near the Romanian border.

Arya, a native of Kerala's Idukki district and studying medicine at the National Pirogov Memorial Medical University in Vinnytsya in west-central Ukraine, was caught in the middle of the Russian inva-

sion in Ukraine. And like other Indian students there, when she was forced to leave the university and scurry to the safety of a neighbouring country, she decided that she was not going to leave Zaira, her Husky puppy, behind. So, while other students were engaged in finding essential food and water supplies, Arya was busy arranging documents for Zaira's safe travel to India and packing bare minimum.

And after two days of intense struggle and hardships moving from her university to the Romanian border, Arya and her dog are safe at an airport in Romania,

waiting to board an evacuation flight to India, her family confirmed.

"Both Arya and Zaira are doing fine at the airport. They are both tired from the long walk in the freezing temperatures. They received adequate food and water supplies. But we are just waiting to hear from her on whether the dog would be allowed on the flight. Since there are a lot of Indian students waiting to be evacuated, we are not sure if the officials would permit the dog to fly with her. But she's very determined that she would not fly without her," said Chitra, a cousin of Arya in

Kerala.

"She had gotten the Husky pup a few months ago through a friend and she's very close to her. And vice-versa. The dog wouldn't even eat her food if Arya is not around. So we are contacting all the important officials to somehow get the dog to fly with her back home. We are eagerly awaiting their return," she added.

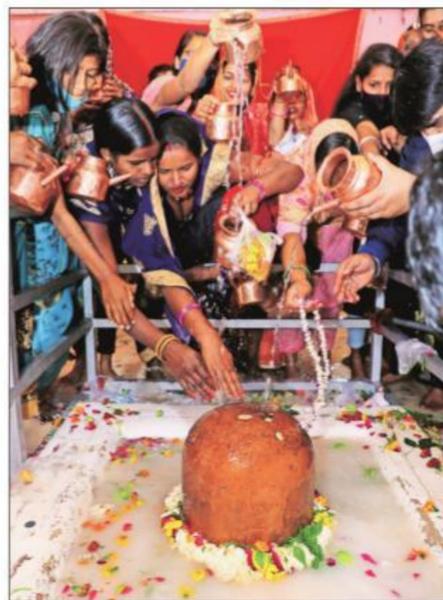
Chitra said that Arya and her friend took turns to hold the dog while walking to the Romanian border. To minimise the weight on her, Arya even abandoned most of her luggage and food packets to be able to take Zaira with her.

Shyama, a friend of Arya who lives in Kumily, said that many Indian students stranded in Ukraine have contacted her through social media platforms asking how they could similarly take their pets along with them. They were inspired to do so after reading Arya's story on news platforms.

Kerala Education Minister V Sivankutty praised Arya in a Facebook post, saying, "Without abandoning her pet dog, Arya, a native of Vandiperiyar, is on her way to India from a war-torn country. It is born out of love and the world benefits from such love."



Arya (left) and her friend with Zaira.



Devotees wait offer prayers on the occasion of Shivratri at Jharkhand temple, in Jaipur Tuesday. Rohit Jain Paras

## Three Cong leaders get cabinet minister status

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
JAIPUR, MARCH 1

THE RAJASTHAN government has accorded the status of cabinet ministers to three Congress leaders, including the vice-chairman of the Twenty Point Programme Implementation and Coordination Committee, Chandrabhan, an official statement said.

The other two are Rameshwar Dudi and former minister Brijkishore Sharma. While Dudi has been appointed as the chairman of Rajasthan State Agro Industries Development Board, former

minister Sharma has been made the chairman of Rajasthan Khadi and Village Industries Board.

The government had released the first list of political appointments on February 9, in which 58 leaders, including 11 MLAs, were appointed as presidents/vice-chairmen in 44 state-level commissions/boards/corporations. The second list was released on Monday in which 74 people were made chairman, vice-chairman and members of various commissions/boards and corporations of the state.

According to a spokesperson, "All other chairpersons will be given the status of ministers of state."

## Three arrested for ganngaping minor

Jaipur: Three people were booked for allegedly raping a minor girl in Jaipur, police said on Tuesday. The minor was allegedly gang-raped on Sunday, and the case was registered on Monday. She underwent a medical examination, after which her statement was recorded, they

said. The victim's father lodged a complaint with the police, accusing three people identified as Rahul, Rajveer and Naksh, the police said, adding that efforts are underway to nab them.

On the basis of the complaint lodged, a case was registered against the three. PTI

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CONSTITUENCY CONCERN

AS THE situation of Indian students stuck in Ukraine gets worse, parliamentarians are swinging into action connecting with their distressed constituents. Rural Development Minister Giriraj Singh on Tuesday enquired about the well-being of students from his constituency, Begusarai, who are stranded in Ukraine. He had a video call with one of the students and asked her to share contact details of the other students, who are still stranded there. Later, Singh forwarded the information to the Ministry of External Affairs for help.

GRATITUDE, IN GOLD

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's mother Heeraben stays away from the news but on Tuesday, the centenarian hit the headlines, for a different reason. A South Indian businessman, who chose to remain anonymous, donated 60 kg gold to Kashi Vishwanath Temple. According to BJP sources, the businessman suggested that part of that gold — equivalent to the weight of Heeraben — could be used to beautify the inner wall of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. This, party leaders said, was one way to express devotees' gratitude to Modi for his contribution to the temple and surroundings. The Prime Minister recently inaugurated the Kashi Vishwanath Dham corridor, a Rs 900-crore project for the development of the ancient temple. On Sunday, he visited the temple and offered prayers.

THE RELUCTANCE

ALTHOUGH THE Centre cleared the appointment of four new judges to the Delhi High Court, including that of former Union law secretary Anoop Mendiiratta, those in legal circles are still miffed about several recommendations still pending with the Centre. This disappointment is revealed in lawyers refusing to give consent for judgeship fearing the long wait and uncertainty. In fact, at least three Delhi High Court senior advocates who graduated from National Law School of India University have turned down the offer of elevation as High Court judges.

Rural polls sweep: BJD to form Zilla Parishads in all 30 districts

AISHWARYA MOHANTY  
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 1

THE BJD, led by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, has won a record 766 Zilla Parishad seats out of the total 853 in the Odisha rural elections, the results of which were formally announced by the State Election Commission Tuesday.

By winning 60 per cent more seats than what it won in 2017, (473), the BJD is set to form Zilla Parishads (ZPs) in all the 30 districts in Odisha, an unprecedented feat in the history of the three-tier panchayat elections in the state.

The BJD, which had formed eight ZPs after winning 297 seats in 2017, came a distant second with only 42 seats. The Congress came third with 37 seats, down from the 60 it had secured last time for forming two ZPs.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik congratulated his party workers and thanked the public. "My sincere thanks to all of you for helping the BJD win the three-tier panchayat elections with unwavering love. This has further strengthened our commitment to public service. My congratulations to the winning candidates and all the party activists and workers who turned the BJD into a people's movement through their dedicated hard work," he tweeted. The massive win is attributed



Dinabandhu Das (52) was elected as the sarpanch in Gandadhani panchayat, Ganjam. Express

to the groundwork the BJD launched on a war-footing in October last year when Patnaik himself visited multiple districts, especially in western Odisha, and distributed smart health cards, announced various assistance schemes related to Covid-19 and house repair and inaugurated a slew of development projects.

Odisha has a rural voter base of 2.79 crore people, of which 2.10 crore voted in this election. The BJD secured 52.73 per cent votes, the highest vote share it has had in any election in the state. The BJD got 30 per cent votes and Congress 13. The 2017 rural polls had, in a

way, marked the entry of BJP as a strong competitor to the BJD which has stayed in power for over two decades in Odisha. In the assembly and general elections which followed, the BJP managed to position itself as the major opposition party, relegating the Congress to a distant third.

The 2022 rural poll results, however, have placed the state BJP in a tight spot. The party failed to open its account in 10 of the 30 districts. In Mayurbhanj, where it had won 49 out of 56 ZP seats in 2017, it won no seat this time.

Full reports on www.indianexpress.com

J&K: 2 minors among 11 injured in hospital gas leak in Anantnag

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, MARCH 1

AT LEAST 11 persons, including two minors, were injured in a gas leak incident at the Maternity and Child Care Hospital in South Kashmir's Anantnag district, officials said Tuesday.

Deputy Commissioner Anantnag Piyush Singla has ordered an inquiry into the incident. Medical Superintendent of the Government Medical College, Anantnag, Dr Mohammad Iqbal told The Indian Express: "There was a gas leak reported at our associated hospital, MCCH at Sherbagh. The fire then engulfed a larger area. This was a commercial cylinder being used at the hospital. However, all the injured, including the minors are stable as of now. They had minor injuries."

Meanwhile, the district administration said the government will bear the cost of treatment for all those injured. Senior Congress leader G A Mir expressed anguish over the incident and demanded stern action against those found responsible.

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has urged the administration to "adequately compensate the victims".

Man gets death for rape, murder of minor girl

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
PUNE, MARCH 1

A FAST-TRACK court in Pune on Monday sentenced a 38-year-old labourer to death for kidnapping, raping and murdering a two-and-a-half-year old girl in Pune district in February 2021.

The girl was kidnapped from the premises of her home on February 15. Investigation revealed that she had been abducted by a man while she was playing in the front yard of her home.

The investigation team found out from a rickshaw driver that he had dropped a man and a child at a nearby spot. Police launched an extensive search in the area. A woman from the area further pointed the police to the direction where the man had taken the girl. The girl was found dead inside a cement pipe next to a bridge. Medical examination revealed that the girl had been raped.

Police had invoked various Indian Penal Code sections per-

taining to murder, rape and destruction of evidence and also relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. Within 48 hours of registration of the case and following an extensive probe based on technical analysis and ground-level police work, Pune Rural police arrested the accused, Sanjay Katkar (38), who had been hiding at a brick kiln in Raigad district after committing the crime.

Police probe revealed that Katkar worked at a brick kiln and had kidnapped the girl from the premises of her house while passing through the area.

Public Prosecutor in the case, Vilas Pathare, said that during the trial in the fast-track court for POCSO cases in Pune, as many as 16 prosecution witnesses were examined, along with circumstantial evidence gathered by the investigation team, including DNA analysis.

The court, in its judgment pronounced on Monday, sentenced Katkar to death penalty under Section 6 of the POCSO Act.

80-yr-old man lights his own pyre, dies

Nagpur: An 80-year-old man is suspected to have ended his life by lighting his own pyre in Nagpur district, police said. The deceased was identified as Atmaram Motiram Thawkar.

Thawkar belonged to an affluent family and was a follower of the Warkari sect, said a local police official. He had undergone a surgery in 2006 but was not cured completely. PTI

UGC DRAFT GUIDELINES

For online degrees, institutes can source up to 40% of course content externally

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

HIGHER EDUCATION institutes offering online degrees can source up to 40 per cent of their course content externally and develop the remaining 60 per cent in-house with the assistance of ed-tech companies, according to draft guidelines drawn up by the University Grants Commission.

But the ed-tech companies, described as technology service

providers in the amended draft UGC (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations 2020, shall have no right to advertise the content developed with their help as their own.

The concerned higher education institutes "shall have complete ownership of Intellectual Property Rights" relating to the contents developed in-house, states the draft regulations which have been uploaded by the UGC on its website seeking suggestions

and feedback till March 15.

UGC chairperson M Jagadeesh Kumar said the guidelines are in tune with the National Education Policy 2020, which proposes that top institutions accredited for running online and distance learning programmes be encouraged to develop high-quality online courses.

According to the guidelines, the option to source content from external sources will not be mandatory on institutions which will have the freedom to have 100

per cent in-house content development as well.

"The option to source content externally has been provided so that students do not have to put in efforts to locate good online programmes to pursue and add to their credit bank. The institutes themselves will do the research and provide options to students," a senior UGC official said.

Currently, only universities and their constituent colleges that fulfill these criteria are allowed to offer online degrees.

Now, accessing grants easier for scientists

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

THE CENTRE has relaxed compliance guidelines for scientists, making it easier for them to access grants and rope in associates for research and development projects.

"We have released new guidelines for 'Ease of doing science'. We are also developing a single common portal to apply for all grants, scholarships and fellowships across all science ministries and departments as well as science agencies in the country," said Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh. "Issued on February 26, the new guidelines aim at reducing the compliance burden and switching from research administration to research facilitation," Singh said.

The reforms include single-step approval for administrative issues such as Budget re-appropriation within the recurring head and change of principal investigator. "Salaries for the first two years will be released during the first year as 'grant-in-aid' in the project," say the new guidelines.

India likely to witness normal temperature this summer: IMD

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
PUNE, MARCH 1

THE INDIA Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday said that normal or below normal heat conditions are likely during the upcoming summer season over large geographical areas covering the southern peninsula, central India, the northern plains, east and northeast India.

In its March to May summer season temperature outlook released on Tuesday, the IMD said that normal or below normal maximum temperatures are forecast over Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

"The probability of heatwaves over west-central and northwest India will be higher during summer season," said Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, director general, IMD, whereas heatwaves will be comparatively fewer along the Indo-Gangetic plains, he said.

Scribe held on fake news charge, portal owner says media gagged

Dehradun: A local news portal journalist, who posted a video of a father accusing two men of sexually assaulting his minor daughter and her cousin, was arrested by the Pithoragarh police on allegations of promoting enmity between groups and extorting money by manufacturing fake news.

Claiming that the arrested man, identified as Kishore Ram (30), did not have any identification to prove that he was a journalist, Pithoragarh SP Lokeshwar Singh said this was not the first time Kishore had levelled false allegations and extorted money from people. Kishore claims to work for a local news portal, Janjwar.com.

Talking to *The Indian Express*, news portal owner and editor Ajay Prakash said the videos posted by them did not promote enmity and his employee was just doing his job. Calling it police brutality, he said the media was being oppressed.

According to a statement issued by the Pithoragarh police, Kishore was booked under Section 153A (promoting enmity between different groups) of the IPC and was later arrested after thorough investigation into the case. In the video, the man accused two men of luring his 15-year-old daughter and her 17-year-old cousin into their car on the pretext of taking them on a ride, but sexually assaulted them. He alleged that the two men dumped the girls on the Pithoragarh highway. ENS



MAHA SHIVRATRI

Pilgrims gather to take a dip in river Ganga on the occasion of Shivratri at Har ki Pauri, in Haridwar on Tuesday. PTI

HIJAB CASE

FIR against online forum over posts against Karnataka high court judge

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU, MARCH 1

A CASE of making statements to disrupt public peace and causing public mischief has been registered by a cyber crime police station in south Bengaluru against a social media forum "Mangalore Muslims" and an individual over derogatory posts against a Karnataka High Court judge, who is part of a bench hearing a batch of petitions on the hijab issue.

On February 23, the Bengaluru

south CEN police station registered the suo moto complaint over a post on the Facebook page of the Mangalore Muslims forum on February 9 about the HC judge and a subsequent post on the Facebook page of an individual Ateeq Shariff. The FIR was registered on the basis of a complaint filed by a police sub-inspector, Akshata Kurakundi.

The police have booked a case under section 504 and section 505 (2) of the IPC for "intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace" and "statements

conducting to public mischief" and section 66 of the Information Technology Act for use of computer devices to send offensive messages.

The three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, Justice JM Khazi and Justice Krishna S Dixit, was formed after some Muslim girls from Udipi moved the court, stating that they were denied entry to the college for wearing hijab in December last year. The court has heard the case and an order is pending on the issue.

CHHATTISGARH BJP MLA WRITES TO PM

'Probe into misuse of mineral foundation funds'

GARGI VERMA  
RAIPUR, MARCH 1

BJP MLA from Chhattisgarh's Akaltara constituency Saurabh Singh has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking an inquiry by a central agency into the alleged misuse of the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) funds in the state.

On February 26, Singh wrote to the PM, alleging misuse of the DMF money on works such as

renovation of Collector's office. The DMF is a non-profit trust, set up for the welfare of inhabitants of the areas affected by mining-related operations, says the state government website. It is funded through contributions from miners as every mining lease holder contributes a portion (not exceeding one-third) of royalty to the DMF.

"How is the money helping those affected by mining? All of the money is going in the kitty of the powerful and those whom the

government wants to oblige. I will raise this issue in the upcoming Assembly session, too," he said.

Specifying situation in Korba, Singh said, "DMF funds have become pocket money for the district Collectors." He claimed that the elected representatives were being bypassed and not consulted as they ought to be in decision making and funds use.

Speaking with *The Indian Express*, Singh said, "I have asked the PM to order an independent inquiry to bust this scam."

MLA claims signature forged, FIR lodged

Rampur MLA Nankiram Kanwar, who allegedly had disputed Singh's accusations through a letter on Monday, filed an FIR against unknown people for "using his letter pad without his consent and forging his signature". Kanwar said, "Why would I question the accusations made by my colleague? I support him and don't want to say anything else."

EXPLAINED  
E. IMD forecast

EL NINO and La Nina are the abnormal warming and cooling of the sea surface temperatures observed along the equatorial Pacific Oceans. These ocean phenomena can influence global temperatures and rainfall.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU  
WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT  
TNIAM PROJECT  
REQUEST FOR BIDS (RFB)  
(One-Envelope Bidding Process without e-Procurement)  
NATIONAL OPEN COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENT  
Bid Invitation No.:04 PBC / 2021-22 / 2022 / DATED:28.02.2022

- The Government of India has received financing from the World Bank towards the cost of the Tamil Nadu Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation Project Phase - III and intends to apply part of the proceeds towards eligible payments under the contract for construction of works as detailed below.
- Bidding will be conducted through National Open Competitive Procurement using a Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, July 2016, Revised August 2016", ("Procurement Regulations") and is open to all Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.
- Bidders from India should, however, be registered with the Government of Tamil Nadu Under class-I (State level) or other State Governments/Government of India, or State/Central Government Undertakings. Bidders from India, who are not registered as above, on the date of bidding, can also participate provided they get themselves registered by the time of contract signing, if they become successful bidders.
- The Water Resources Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu, The Superintending Engineer, WRD., Palar Basin Circle, Chepauk, Chennai-5, Chennai District, Tamil Nadu, now invites sealed Bids for the construction of work detailed below in the table. Interested bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding document at the address given below during office hours. Bidders are advised to note the clauses on eligibility (Section I Clause 4) and minimum qualification criteria (Section III - Evaluation and Qualification Criteria), to qualify for the award of the contract. In addition, please refer to paragraphs 3.14 and 3.15 of the "Procurement Regulations" setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.
- The bidding document may be purchased by interested eligible Bidders from the Office of The Superintending Engineer, WRD., Palar Basin Circle, Chepauk, Chennai-5 Chennai District, Tamil Nadu from 04.03.2022 to 06.04.2022 upon payment of a non-refundable fee (three sets) as indicated in the table below, in the form of Demand Draft (DD) on any Scheduled/Nationalized Bank in favour of the Executive Engineer, WRD, Araniyar Basin Division, Chepauk, Chennai-5 payable at Chennai for the work in SI No.1 and Executive Engineer, WRD, Lower Palar Basin Division, Kancheepuram, payable at Kancheepuram for the work in SI No.2. Bidding document requested by mail will be dispatched by courier/speed post on payment of an extra amount of Rs. 500/-. The Superintending Engineer, WRD., Palar Basin Circle, Chepauk, Chennai-5, Chennai District, Tamil Nadu will not be held responsible for the postal delay if any, in the delivery of the documents or non-receipt of the same. The bidding documents can be downloaded from the website <http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in> at free of cost. In such cases, the bidder is responsible for ensuring that any addenda on the website is also downloaded and incorporated.
- Bids must be delivered to The Superintending Engineer, WRD., Palar Basin Circle, Chepauk, Chennai-5, Chennai District, Tamil Nadu on or before 3.00 PM on 07.04.2022 and will be publicly opened on the same day at 3.30 PM, in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives. If the office happens to be closed on the date of receipt of the bids as specified, the bids will be received and opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. Late Bids will be rejected.
- All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security of the amount specified for the work in the table below, drawn in favour of the Executive Engineer, WRD, Araniyar Basin Division, Chepauk, Chennai-5 for SI.No.1 and Executive Engineer, WRD, Lower Palar Basin Division, Kancheepuram for SI.No.2. Bid security will have to be in any one of the forms as specified in the bidding document and shall have to be valid for 45 days beyond the validity of the bid.
- A pre-bid meeting will be held on 21.03.2022 at 11.00 AM at the Office of The Superintending Engineer, WRD., Palar Basin Circle, Chepauk, Chennai-5, Chennai District, Tamil Nadu to clarify the issues and to answer questions on any matter that may be raised at that stage as stated in ITB Clause 7.4 of "Instructions to Bidders" of the bidding document. Bidders are advised to obtain the bidding document prior to the pre-bid meeting in order for bidders to have a good understanding of the scope of work under this contract for discussion and clarification at the pre-bid meeting.
- Other details can be seen in the bidding document.
- The address for communication is as under: (a) Name & Designation of Officer : Er. A.Muthaiya, B.E., Superintending Engineer, (b) Official Address : Palar Basin Circle, Chepauk, Chennai-5. (c) Email : sepbcbwr@gmail.com (d) Telephone: 044-29510531 (e) Website : www.tenders.tn.gov.in (f) Fax: 044-29510531

Sl. No.	Package No.	Name of work	Approximate value of work (Rs.in Lakhs) Including GST*	Bid security (Rs.in Lakhs)	Cost of document (Rs.)	Sale of bid document	Last date of receipt of Bid and opening Date	Period of completion
1	01/TN IAMP/WRD/GMD/Works/Phase III/2020-21	Re-habilitation and Modernisation of 22 Tanks and 4 Anicuts and its Supply Channels in Gummidipondi Block and Taluk of Thiruvallur District under Gummidipondi Sub-Basin	686.15	13.75	15000+2700 (GST)	04.03.2022 to 06.04.2022	07.04.2022 at 3.00 PM and Opening at 3.30 PM onwards	18** Months
2	02/TN IAMP/WRD/VGY/Works/Phase III/2020-21	Re-habilitation and Modernisation of 15 Tanks and its Supply Channel in Vembakkam Block & Taluk in Thiruvannamalai District and 16 Tanks and its Supply Channel in Kancheepuram Block & Taluk, 1 Tank and its Supply Channel in Walajabad Block & Taluk in Kancheepuram District under Vegavathy Sub-Basin	1700.30	34.50	15000+2700 (GST)	04.03.2022 to 06.04.2022	07.04.2022 at 3.00 PM and Opening at 3.30 PM onwards	24** Months

\* GST  
\*\* Including rainy season & water regulation period  
Head of account of the Executive Engineer, WRD, Araniyar Basin Division, Chepauk, Chennai-5 for the work SI.No.1  
Cost of tender document has to be remitted under the head of account "0701-80-800-AA-29001" 0701 Major and Medium Irrigation - 80 General - 800 Other Receipts - AA - 29001 Other Receipts to be credited to The Executive Engineer, WRD, Araniyar Basin Division, Chepauk, Chennai -5 for the work in SI.No.1 and G.S.T has to be remitted under the G.S.T registration number of 33AAAGE0630D1DK  
Head of account of the Executive Engineer, WRD, Lower Palar Basin Division, Kancheepuram for the work SI.No.2  
Cost of tender document has to be remitted under the head of account "0701-80-800-AA-29001" 0701 Major and Medium Irrigation - 80 General - 800 Other Receipts - AA - 29001 Other Receipts to be credited to The Executive Engineer, WRD., Lower Palar Basin Division, Kancheepuram for the work in SI.No.2 and G.S.T has to be remitted under the G.S.T registration number of 33CHEE04728D1D3  
DIPRI/855/Tender/2022  
Superintending Engineer, WRD, Palar Basin Circle, Chennai-5.  
"சென்னை வடக்கு கரையிலும் கிடைப்பதும், கரையின் புதிது சந்திப்பும் படைப்பும்"



Home Minister Amit Shah and Manipur CM N Biren Singh at the residence of BJP leader Th. Radheshyam in Thoubal. PTI

Will talk to all insurgent groups if re-elected: Shah

JIMMY LEIVON IMPHAL, MARCH 1

THE BJP will bring all the insurgency groups operating in Manipur to the negotiating table, Home Minister Amit Shah said on Tuesday, urging voters to give his party another five years to bring "lasting peace".

was killed and his father sustained serious injuries after masked gunmen opened fire at their home. The incident took place amid escalation in the BJP-Congress rivalry. On Tuesday, Rohit's family and friends held a protest as Shah's convoy passed by. "Even the chargesheet is yet to be framed against those who were arrested for the killing," Rohit's brother Ningthoujam Roshan said. "I only wanted justice nothing else."

Congress looted Manipur, denied peace, growth: PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE IMPHAL, MARCH 1

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Tuesday accused the earlier Congress governments both in the state and at the Centre for looting the people of Manipur and keeping the state away from peace and development.

"Let us not give any chances to Congress that devastated the entire state," the Prime Minister said while addressing a public rally virtually in Khangabok, Thoubal district. Modi said the Congress party has been playing the politics of "divide and rule" in the name of hills and valleys.

Kangabok in Thoubal district is one of the few remaining strongholds of Congress whose sitting MLA Surajkumar Ibobi Okram is the son of former chief minister of the state Okram Ibobi Singh. Modi said it was former PM late Atal Bihari Vajpayee who started giving special focus to the Northeast for its development.

Unfortunately, the Northeast remained neglected after the UPA government came to power in the Centre, he added. With BJP-led government at the Centre and the state, Modi said the region had witnessed substantial development. The Act East Policy is also giving a new impetus to the development of Manipur, he added.

The PM reiterated the promise listed in the party manifesto to sanction Rs. 100 crore as fund for start-up scheme, create two special economic zones, and establish a Manipur Skilled University and AIIMS.

Maurya says his convoy attacked by BJP workers

Gorakhpur: Former BJP minister Swami Prasad Maurya, who is contesting the Assembly elections from Fazilnagar constituency in Kushinagar district on a Samajwadi Party (SP) ticket, on Tuesday accused BJP workers of attacking his convoy during electioneering.

Maurya's daughter Sanghmitra Maurya, who is a BJP MP, too, supported her father's allegation as the Samajwadi Party condemned the alleged attack by "power-protected" miscreants. Condemning the attack, SP president Akhilesh Yadav vowed to "reduce the BJP to zero in the remaining two phases of the elections".

PTI

Public Notice: I Mihlesh sharma who Tara chand sharma have decided to buy a house registered in name of Anop kamwar through Giridhar singh...

Rajnath takes swipe at Rahul, says only BJP can save nation

LIZ MATHEW RASARA, KHALILABAD, DHANGHATA, MARCH 1

PAKISTAN AND China got together to pose a threat to India's security twice, and on both occasions Congress was in power, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Tuesday, adding that only the BJP can protect the nation.

"Till the time the BJP is in power, we will not let our Bharat Mata down. The BJP is the only party that can protect this country and keep it secure," said Singh, addressing an election rally in UP's Rasara constituency. Taking a swipe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who criticised the BJP government's foreign policy in his address in Lok Sabha, saying that India had let Pakistan and China come together, which has become a threat, Singh said: "I would like to tell Rahul that India had to compromise and let Pakistan and China come together during the Congress regimes."

SP, BSP didn't fight BJP for fear of central agencies: Priyanka

MAULSHREE SETH LUCKNOW, MARCH 1

CONGRESS GENERAL secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday alleged that the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) did not fight the BJP in Uttar Pradesh in the last five years and instead worked in cahoots with the safar party fearing probes by the central agencies.

Addressing gatherings in support of her party candidates in Sidharthanagar district, the Congress leader said the BJP is making people "dependent" on it for free ration instead of making them self-reliant by providing employment opportunities.

"It is only the Congress which is fighting for the people and is in the crosshairs of the SP, BSP and BJP, all of whom want to win the elections by just playing caste and religion cards. The BJP never worked to provide employment, strengthen the agri-



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during a poll rally in UP.

Sabha, saying that India had let Pakistan and China come together, which has become a threat, Singh said: "I would like to tell Rahul that India had to compromise and let Pakistan and China come together during the Congress regimes."

"Pakistan had handed over Shaksgram valley to China when Jawaharlal Nehru was the PM. Later, Karakoram Highway was constructed through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir when Indira Gandhi was the PM. Then Pakistan Economic Corridor was started. Narendra Modiji was not the PM then, it was

Manmohan Singhji," Singh said at another rally in Khalilabad. Emphasising that he did not believe in attacking the former PMs, he said: "I do not want to talk about ex-PMs... it is a post that deserves respect. I never spoke ill of them. But I have to put the facts before the people."

Singh is on a two-day election campaign in the eastern districts of UP. Both Rasara and Khalilabad go to vote on March 3. In his rallies, the former UP CM lauded PM Modi for the welfare schemes initiated by the central government. He also praised CM Yogi Adityanath for the law and order situation in the state.

Saying the country's borders are safe under the BJP regime, Singh recalled how India had hit

back at Pakistan after the Uri and Pulwama attacks. Singh said all previous non-BJP governments in UP faced corruption allegations and were involved in scandals.

"Neither Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav came to you nor did he participate in the protests. The BSP supremo (Mayawati) did not even venture out of her house. Both of them just tweeted on social media," she claimed. It was only the Congress which remembered them, she added.

(WITH AGENCY INPUTS)

culture sector, traders or women. But they are still making claims of securing a victory," she said. "Then there is the Samajwadi Party which is saying that they will defeat the BJP. But I want to ask if there is any fight in the history of the world which has been won without fighting," she asked. Besides mentioning deaths in the protests against the CAA and the NRC in the state, Priyanka alleged atrocities against a Dalit family in Agra and the Hathras rape and murder

victim. "Neither Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav came to you nor did he participate in the protests. The BSP supremo (Mayawati) did not even venture out of her house. Both of them just tweeted on social media," she claimed. It was only the Congress which remembered them, she added.

(WITH AGENCY INPUTS)

FORM-B PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT (Regulation 12 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2016) FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE STAKEHOLDERS OF FE AAGROCHEM PRIVATE LIMITED

Table with 3 columns: Sl.No., PARTICULARS, DETAILS. Contains details of the liquidation process for Fe Agrochem Private Limited, including dates, addresses, and contact information.

Notice is hereby given that the National Company Law Tribunal Bench-IV has ordered the commencement of liquidation of the Fe Agrochem Private Limited on 21.02.2022 order received on 21.02.2022 from Hon'ble NCLT Bench-IV.

MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE LIMITED FORMERLY MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE PVT LTD. Demand Notice regarding loan repayment.

BARODA RAJASTHAN KSHETRIYA GRAMIN BANK. Demand Notice regarding loan repayment.

ADITYA BIRLA SUN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD. Notice regarding office shift.

ADITYA BIRLA CAPITAL. Notice regarding office shift.

हाउसिंग एण्ड अर्बन डेवलपमेंट कोर्पोरेशन लि. (हडको), भारत सरकार का उपक्रम. आई एस ओ 9001:2015 प्रमाणित कम्पनी.

हाडको, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय जयपुर प्रचलित अधिनियमों के तहत योग्य पंजीकृत वैद्युतों के Empanelment के लिए आवेदन आमंत्रित करता है। अधिक जानकारी के लिए हडको वेबसाइट www.hudco.org देखें।

निविदा विज्ञापन. निविदा नम्बर: 26/02/2022. विषय: 26/02/2022.

SALUTE THE SOLDIER. Martyrs of CISF on 02nd March NK RAJGIRI RAM, SCL BELAMPALLI 02-03-1996. CISF proudly remembers the supreme sacrifice of this brave-heart.

राजस्थान राज्य तिलहन उत्पादक सहकारी संघ लि. (तिलसंघ) कोटा परियोजना. राजस्थान राज्य तिलहन उत्पादक सहकारी संघ लि. (तिलसंघ) कोटा परियोजना.

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ADITYA BIRLA CAPITAL. Notice regarding office shift.



PM Modi at an event in Varanasi as part of the election campaign, on Sunday. PTI

## Modi to stay for 3 days as BJP pulls out all stops for a Varanasi repeat

LALMANI VERMA  
VARANASI, MARCH 1

FOR THREE days starting March 3, till curtains fall on the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in Varanasi. Union Home Minister Amit Shah spent Monday and Tuesday in the city. Union minister and BJP in-charge of UP Dharmendra Pradhan has been here for a week and is likely to also stay till March 5, when campaigning concludes for the final phase. BJP president JP Nadra is reported to be headed here next after campaigning ended Tuesday for the sixth phase.

In the push for Varanasi, the PM's Lok Sabha constituency which votes on March 7, the BJP is leaving no stone unturned. Apart from the message that a repeat win in eight of the eight Assembly seats in the district, as in 2017 (6 by the BJP, 2 by allies), would send, the high-decibel campaign is also meant to overcome any drag due to the anti-incumbency against two ministers from Varanasi who are part of the Yogi Adityanath Cabinet.

On Monday, Lok Sabha MP and BJP Yuva Morcha national president Tejasvi Surya, in frequent controversies over his statements, was in Varanasi.

Before the marquee names arrived, senior BJP leaders were already at work. BJP Gujarat general secretary (organisation) Ratnakar has been here since more than a month. A BJP leader

said: "Ratnakarji was party organisation secretary in Kashi and Gorakhpur units before his elevation and deployment to Gujarat around a year back. As he has links and knowledge about the Varanasi region, he is holding meetings, monitoring campaign programmes."

Senior RSS *sahsarkaryawah* Arun Kumar has also been in Varanasi for the past few days.

The BJP has brought in leaders to target specific groups. If UP Cabinet minister Ashutosh Tandon held a meeting with the Khatri community on Sunday, Rajya Sabha MP Saroj Pandey, the election co-in charge, met women workers last week. To reach out to women voters, the party has also

comes under the PM's Lok Sabha seat. A change of candidate would have given an opportunity to the Opposition to target our double-engine government," the RSS leader said, adding that Sangh and BJP workers have been reaching out to voters for support in the name of "rashtra nirman (nation building)".

RSS and BJP functionaries are also speaking personally to those unhappy over ticket distribution. Among those who have been won over is Dada Shyamdev Roy Chaudhary, a seven-time MLA from Varanasi South, who was replaced with Tiwari in 2017.

From Varanasi North, the BJP candidate is another UP minister, Ravindra Jaiswal, who is also facing anti-incumbency.

Rohania seat, won by the BJP in 2017, went to ally Apna Dal (S) this time. It has fielded its state vice-president Sunil Patel. An RSS functionary said Patel is facing a tough competition from the BSP, Congress and the Apna Dal (Kamerawadi)-SP alliance. All have fielded Patel candidates.

A message has reportedly gone out from the Sangh to Apna Dal (S) leader Anupriya Patel to step up campaigning.

Last time, the Apna Dal (S) had won Sevapuri in alliance with the BJP. This time, the BJP has fielded the same candidate, Neel Ratan Singh Patel, from the seat.

The other BJP ally that had won a seat in Varanasi last time was Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party which had won Aigara. The SBSP has now tied up with the SP.

### VOTING ON MARCH 7

started a 'Kamal Sakhi' campaign. The Varanasi Lok Sabha seat has five Assembly segments — Varanasi South, Varanasi North, Varanasi Cantonment, Rohaniya and Sevapuri. A senior RSS functionary said the BJP has been asked to focus on Varanasi South, Varanasi North and Rohania.

The BJP has fielded UP minister Neelkanth Tiwari from Varanasi South, a seat he had won in 2017. An RSS functionary said while there is strong anti-incumbency against Tiwari and a major section of party workers, including Brahmins, were upset with him, a call was taken to not replace him. "The constituency

### VOTING MARCH 3

## Record hona chahiye: Can Yogi pip great expectations in Gorakhpur

Pressure to not just win, but better BJP's 2017 record of 8 of 9 seats in dist

MAULSHREESETH  
GORAKHPUR, MARCH 1

IN THE past five years, both Gorakhpur and the Gorakhpur Mutt have enjoyed the perks of being "the CM city" and "the CM's shrine", respectively. There are new roads across town, an upcoming AIIMS, fancy streetlights, plus a new temple and open air theatre at the mutt, of which Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is the head priest.

But that legacy comes with its share of great expectations, as Adityanath is realising, in his first Assembly election ever. No one doubts that the 49-year-old will win from Gorakhpur Urban. The bets are on the scale of that victory. Gorakhpur votes on March 3, the sixth phase of UP elections.

Last time, the BJP had won eight out of nine seats in Gorakhpur district, with long-time party MLA Radha Mohan Das Agrawal retaining Gorakhpur Urban with a 60,000-vote margin. Plus, Adityanath himself is a five-time MP from Gorakhpur Lok Sabha seat. "Maharaj" (as Adityanath is referred to) must match the record or better it, locals say. Anything less would be looked at as a setback.

So even as Adityanath has been busy campaigning across the state for the BJP, an LED screen that covers an entire wall at his poll office has kept Gorakhpur in the loop, beaming his speeches and events. Volunteers head out from here carrying pamphlets proclaiming "The new Gorakhpur of a new Uttar Pradesh".

"Yahaan ki Janata MLA nahin, CM chun rahi hai (The people here are not electing an MLA, but the CM)," says Zakir Ali Warsi, 52, who has been working at the mutt now for more than a decade. He admits he often gets calls from relatives asking how it is like working with "Maharaj". "I say I have never had any issues."

Personal and religious connect apart, since 2017, Adityanath has brought to Gorakhpur UP's first Ayush University and Mahayogi Gorakhnath University; BRD Medical College that shot to national limelight in 2017 for infant deaths overnight allegedly due to lack of oxygen now has an ICMR lab for testing and research into encephalitis and extra 500 paediatric beds; and a fertiliser plant.

At least 40 institutions, including Mahayogi Gorakhnath University, are run by Maharana Pratap Shiksha Parishad, which has Adityanath as secretary in his capacity as head of the mutt.

Interestingly, more than minority votes (about 40,000), the challenge for Adityanath is coming from the Brahmin voters (about 50,000), a fact that the Samajwadi Party and Congress



### GORAKHPUR'S NINE

2017 8 BJP, 1 BSP

**Gorakhpur Urban:** BJP beat Cong by nearly 60,000 votes

**Gorakhpur Rural:** BJP beat SP by 4,000 votes

**Campiorganj:** BJP beat Cong by 30,000-plus votes

**Pipraich:** BJP beat BSP by 12,000 votes

**Sehjanwa:** BJP beat SP by 16,000 votes

**Khajani (SC):** BJP beat BSP by 20,000 votes

**Chauri Chaura:** BJP beat SP by 45,000 votes

**Bansgaon (SC):** BJP beat BSP by 22,000-plus votes

**Chillupar:** BSP beat BJP by 4,000 votes

2012: 4 BSP, 3 BJP, 1 SP, 1 NCP



CM Yogi Adityanath leaves after addressing a rally in Siddharthnagar on Tuesday. PTI

phones for a while. However, now he is campaigning for Adityanath.

Of Gorakhpur's nine constituencies — Gorakhpur Rural, Gorakhpur Urban, Campiorganj, Pipraich, Sehjanwa, Khajani, Chauri Chaura, Bansgaon and Chillupar — the BJP had failed to win only Chillupar in 2017. The seat had been taken by BSP candidate Vinay Shankar Tiwari, the son of six-term MLA and criminal-turned-politician Hari Shankar Tiwari. This time, Tiwari is contesting as the SP candidate.

The BJP has gone with a Brahmin too, Rajesh Tripathi, who had achieved the near impossible by defeating Hari Shankar from Chillupar in 2007 and 2012 on a BSP ticket. In 2017, he lost from here on a BJP ticket.

Among the voters, there is little hesitation over the overall choice. Many have a list of woes but say they will vote for the BJP as a "kartavya (duty)". Take Baldeo Ram Singh, 68, who runs a wood business. "Notebandi, CST, paisa centralised kar diya. Dhandla khatam ho gaya hai... The trader was your voter... and you have finished him," he says, adding that his vote though is for "lotus".

BRD Medical College now has a new road with proper drainage and "fancy" lights, plus a sprawling ICMR building.

On February 20, a van stops at the door of the Acute Encephalitis Ward and Pramod Yadav jumps out carrying his 18-month-old son. "He has had fever for some time and recently started vomiting. We took him to the district hospital (in Kushinagar), but doctors asked me to get him to BRD," says Yadav.

While encephalitis once killed 500 children every year in these parts, the government claims it is now down by 99%. Rushing around to get his son tested for encephalitis, Yadav, a labourer, is not really bothered about the elections. A good government, for him, would be one that ensures he doesn't have to travel 80 km for better health facilities for his child.

## A Gorakhpur hostel learns a hard politics lesson: pass the buck

SHYAMLAL YADAV  
GORAKHPUR, MARCH 1

LIKE AT other student accommodations across Uttar Pradesh, wait hangs over this hostel in Deendayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University here, home to a hundred students.

Most of them have been here a couple of years already, enrolled in various courses, and busy in "taiyyari" — a euphemism for preparation for government job recruitment exams. Tired of the wait, the residents have a suggestion: a calendar for every recruitment, like for Central and state Civil Service examinations.

Harsh Tiwari, 24, who belongs to Gorakhpur and is pursuing LLB, says: "With notification for recruitment, a complete calendar must be released, with dates of submission of applications, last date, date of exam, interview, result, joining of candidates."

With most of the students at the hostel, named after Vivekananda, pursuing law, the biggest concern is the delayed judicial appointments. Abhishek Mishra, 25, who belongs to Kushinagar, and Dharmvir Maddhesiya, 26, from Maharajganj, both LLM students, say recruitment has not been happened for four years.

While the selection keeps getting delayed for reasons such as leaks, and lately Covid outbreaks, students are also angry over the delay in reimbursement of their fees. "The reimbursement of private college students is done on priority. But most of us are from EWS or SC/ST/OBC families. Officials and university officials pass the buck to the oth-

ers," says Tiwari.

Vasisth Narayan Singh, the District Social Welfare officer who looks after these matters, denies this. "Fee reimbursement is under process. It is not delayed," he says.

Students at the hostel are largely from the surrounding districts of Deoria, Maharajganj, Kushinagar, Sant Kabirnagar.

Sandeep Kasaundhan, 23, an LLB student who belongs to Maharajganj district, is angry with all parties, and not just the BJP. "Maharajganj is undeveloped. But, in every election, parties bring some Bhojpuri folk singer to impress voters. The candidates never return after winning."

However, with the lack of jobs emerging as a prime concern, coinciding with a slowdown in the economy post-Covid, the BJP has been trying to argue that unemployment is something different. Top party leaders Amit Shah and JP Nadra told *The Indian Express* in interviews that the unemployment figures didn't reflect the lack of jobs as much as a desire for a government job.

While Tiwari believes people too are to blame, for going by caste and creed when they vote, Mishra believes there has been some change. "We laugh at leaders who claim they don't take decisions based on caste," he says, pointing out that if the BJP has allied with the NISHAD Party (its vote base Nishads), the SP has the SBSP (vote base Rajbhar).

Adds Amit Patel, "Similarly we laugh when hear leaders say they are against dynasties. In every party, if you want to join politics or get a ticket, it matters which family you belong to."

### I HEREBY DECLARE



**AJAY KUMAR LALLU**  
Tamkuhi Raj (Kushinagar), Congress

**TOTAL ASSETS:**  
₹1.45 lakh  
**MOVABLE ASSETS:**  
Self: ₹1.45 lakh  
**IMMOVABLE ASSETS:**  
Nil  
**LOANS FROM BANKS:**  
₹5.67 lakh  
**CRIMINAL CASES:** 28  
**SOURCES OF EARNING:**  
MLA salary  
**EDUCATION:** Post Graduate (2001)



**LAL JIVERMA**  
Katehari (Ambedkar Nagar), SP

**TOTAL ASSETS:**  
₹8.99 crore  
**MOVABLE ASSETS:**  
Self: ₹80.25 lakh (includes a gun, a revolver and a rifle)  
Wife: ₹85.35 lakh (includes a revolver)  
**IMMOVABLE ASSETS:**  
Self: ₹5.01 crore  
Wife: ₹2.04 crore  
**LOANS FROM BANKS:**  
Self: ₹24 lakh  
Wife: ₹7.45 lakh  
**CRIMINAL CASES:** 3  
**SOURCES OF EARNING:**  
Dairy, agriculture and MLA salary  
**EDUCATION:** MSc (1979)



### VOTE WATCH

SP leaders camp outside an EVM strong room in Ramabai Maidan, Lucknow. The party has alleged BJP may tamper with EVMs, and is staying put till March 10. *Anil Bhatnagar*

### MANIPUR MOVEMENT

## In state known for money, muscle power in polls, a youth collective's call for change

TORA AGARWALA  
IMPHAL, MARCH 1

HER TEXTBOOKS may have told her that Indian elections are the "largest festival of democracy", but Imphal's Laishram Pratima Chanu does not quite agree.

"For years, I have studied about our Constitution's provisions, about the world's largest festival of democracy where empowered voters can choose their own candidates," says Pratima, a student of Political Science at Manipur University. "But in real life, it's entirely different... at least in our Manipur."

Elections in Manipur — which is slated to see the second phase of polling on March 5 — have long been infamous for the use of money and muscle power to decide the fate of candidates.



Formed in August 2021, it has been holding awareness drives

"Votes are bought, insurgent groups issue diktats and threats, and poor voters have no choice but to listen," Pratima says.

The 25-year-old's frustration found an outlet, when recently, she recited her Meiteilon poem, *Tung gi khunaigdamak* (For the

future society) to a packed auditorium in Imphal, at an "Ethical Election" themed event organised by a group of 40-odd youngsters who call themselves the "Youth Collective Manipur" (YCM). She lost no time signing up for it.

While it was formed in August

2021 with the objective of "transforming electoral politics in Manipur", the YCM has ramped up its activities during the polls, holding awareness programmes and discussions. Apart from students, the YCM has lawyers, entrepreneurs, research scholars and journalists advising it.

"Our society is not known to be very conscious politically, but it is time things change," says Keisham Donny, 27, a political science graduate and member.

The collective recently came out with a music video, *Luchingba Khanba Heitarey* — a "lament on the inability to choose good leaders".

A month ahead of the polls, the YCM had constituted a panel to monitor its processes. In its first report issued last week, Donny says, the panel noted there had been at least 46 inci-

dents of poll-related violence till then, including four killings, 10 blasts, and 15 gun violence incidents. "Constituencies with more than one candidate with muscle and money power saw more violent incidents," the report said.

A YCM member and history student, Mutum Tennyson, 22, says that even publishing such a report in Manipur was a significant development.

Late last year, the YCM had released a "People's Manifesto", highlighting the state's experience of "rampant unemployment, corruption, constant erosion of civil liberties and heavy-handed state repression".

Tennyson concedes the YCM may not be able to fix such "structural problems" overnight. "But if we keep at it, clean elections might be a reality in Manipur by our next generation."



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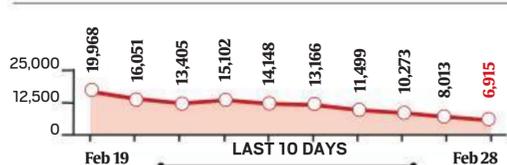
## TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

## DASHBOARD, AS ON FEB 28

729  
DAYS SINCE  
PANDEMIC  
BEGANNew cases  
6,915Active cases  
92,472Deaths  
180

Weekly CFR: 0.48% | Overall CFR: 1.20% | Total deaths: 5,14,023

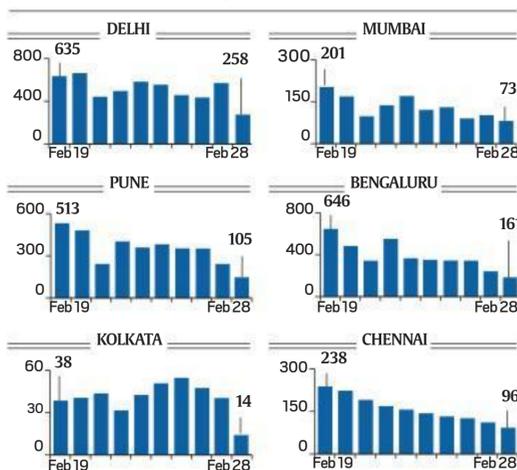
## NEW CASES, DAILY



## SURGE IN THE STATES

State	ON FEBRUARY 28			Weekly positivity
	New cases	Active cases	Deaths	
Kerala	2,010	27,362	110	8.16%
Mizoram	1,325	6,880	0	18.65%
Maharashtra	407	6,663	5	1.10%
Tamil Nadu	366	5,745	1	0.98%
Uttar Pradesh	350	3,698	3	0.27%

## CASES IN THE CITIES, LAST 10 DAYS



## TOTAL TESTS

76,83,82,993

## TESTS ON FEB 28

9,01,647

## WEEKLY POSITIVITY

1.11%

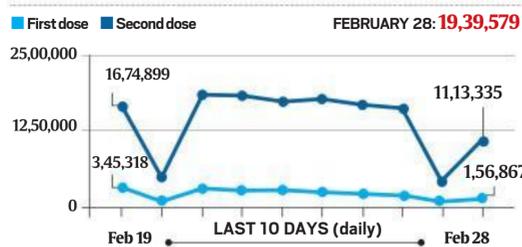
## OVERALL POSITIVITY

5.59%

## INDIA TOTAL DOSES

177,70,25,914

(Adults 1st dose: 90,93,84,217; 2nd: 76,46,79,114; 15-18 age group 1st dose: 5,48,91,370; 2nd: 2,79,76,062; Precautionary: 2,00,95,151)



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## SIMPLY PUT QUESTION &amp; ANSWER

# India's Russian arsenal

India, walking a fine line between the West and Russia, shares a decades-old defence trade relationship with the latter. A look at Russia's share in India's defence supplies, deals in progress, and supplies from elsewhere.

KRISHN KAUSHIK  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

AMID RUSSIA'S invasion of Ukraine, India has been trying to walk a fine line between its relationships with the West and its historically deep ties with Russia. How Russia views India's slowly shifting stand could have long-term implications on their relationship, particularly their defence trade going back decades.

## How strong are Indian and Russian defence ties?

Immediately after Independence, India was reliant largely on the British and other Western nations for arms imports. But by the 1970s, India was importing several weapons systems from the USSR. Moscow has been India's largest defence supplier for decades.

Although India has tried to expand the base of countries from which it buys military systems, Russia still has the lion's share. According to a working paper by Sameer Lalwani of the Stimson Center, along with other researchers, published in April 2020, the "breadth of Russian-origin platforms in the Indian military—which our analysis suggests composes 85 per cent of major Indian weapons systems rather than the 60 per cent figure often cited—have created a 'lock-in' effect, while the depth of relative support to India's technology base and strategic systems have engendered a relatively high degree of indebtedness and trust in key strategic circles."

## What is the value of these weapons?

Russia is the world's second largest arms exporter, with a 20% share in the global arms trade between 2016 and 2020, behind only the US (37%), as per the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). During 2000-20, India was the world's largest arms importer, but Saudi Arabia overtook India in the phase between 2016-20. For Russia, India is the largest defence importer, and for India, Russia is the largest exporter. Of \$53.85 billion spent by India on arms imports during 2000-20, Russia accounted for \$35.82 billion (66.5%), the US \$4.4 billion, and Israel \$4.1 billion.

According to an SIPRI report published in March 2021, Russia delivered major arms to 45 states between 2016 and 2020. "India remained the main recipient of Russian arms in 2016-20, accounting for 23 per cent of the total, followed by China (18 per cent)."

Russia's share in Indian arms imports was down to about 50% between 2016 and 2020. SIPRI noted that "India placed new orders for



India has ordered five S-400 systems, of which one has been deployed. File photo

a variety of Russian arms in 2019-20. The... deliveries will probably lead to an increase in Russian arms exports in the coming five years".

## What is Russia supplying India currently?

At the moment, there are two ongoing major deals. One is for five units of the S-400 Triumf air-defence system, among the most advanced in the world. India placed an order of around \$5 billion in 2018. The first of the five units, delivered in December 2021, has been deployed at an Indian Air Force base in Punjab. The deal has been under the threat of sanctions from the US, which has not yet decided on it; the fresh round of sanctions on Russia could sound alarm bells for the deal.

The other major deal, signed recently, is for the manufacture of around 6 lakh AK-203 rifles at a factory in Amethi.

Russia has also pitched to make six AIP-powered conventional submarines for the Navy under the P75-I project, along with four other international bidders.

## What else has Russia already provided?

Over the years, Russia has supplied nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, tanks, guns, fighter jets, and missiles.

India's first submarine was Soviet. The first Foxtrot Class submarine, bought from the USSR, entered service in 1967 as *INS Kalvari*. Of the 16 conventional diesel-electric submarines with the Navy, eight are Kilo class, of Soviet origin. India is also in talks with Russia to lease two nuclear-ballistic submarines, *Chakra 3* and *Chakra 4*, the first of which is expected to be delivered by 2025. *INS Chakra 1* and *Chakra 2*

too were Russian vessels, both returned after their leases expired. India has one indigenously manufactured nuclear ballistic submarine commissioned, of the four being built; a lot of the technology is based on Russian platforms.

The only aircraft carrier in service with India, *INS Vikramaditya* commissioned in 2013, is a Soviet-made Kiev-class vessel. India's first indigenously-made aircraft carrier is expected to be commissioned this year.

India's BrahMos missile has been developed jointly with Russia.

Russia has also been one of main suppliers of fighter aircraft, including hundreds of Sukhoi and MiG jets.

A US Congressional Research Service report on Russian arms sale and defence industry, published in October 2021, has quoted figures from the Military Balance 2021 report of the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) to say that "India's present military arsenal is heavily stocked with Russian-made or Russian-designed equipment." It said the Indian Army's main battle tank force is composed predominantly of Russian T-72M1 (66%) and T-90S (30%).

Apart from the Indian Navy's sole operational aircraft carrier, India's entire complement of fighter and ground attack aircraft are Russian-made or produced in India on licence (the Navy's fighter fleet comprises 43 MiG-29K/JUBs). Four of the Navy's 10 guided-missile destroyers are Russian Kashin class, and 6 of its 17 frigates are Russian Talwar class.

The Indian Air Force's 667-plane fighter ground attack (FGA) fleet is 71% Russian-origin (39% Su-30s, 22% MiG-21s, 9% MiG-29s).

All six air tankers are Russian-made Il-78s.

## What about arms supplied by Ukraine?

After it gained independence in 1991, Ukraine retained part of the Soviet-era arms industry base, with expertise in missiles and shipbuilding. Between 2000 and 2020, India bought weapons and other platforms worth \$533 million from Ukraine.

The main platforms include Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air R-27 missiles for the Air Force's Su-30MKI fighter jets. The first tranche of around 400 missiles was delivered in 2004, and another of around 300 missiles in 2013. In 2019 India signed a deal worth Rs 1,500 crore to buy more R-27 missiles, but from Russia.

Ukraine has delivered gas turbines for various types of Navy ships, including Talwar class frigates and Vishakhapatnam class destroyers.

A deal with Ukraine for modernisation of India's 104 An32 transport aircraft ran into hurdles in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea. The first 40 were retrofitted with new engines and other modernisation tasks were completed; for the rest, issues were resolved only in 2019, and the task is being carried out at the Base Repair Depot in Kanpur.

## Is India trying to expand its weapons import base?

According to the SIPRI report, arms imports by India decreased 33% between 2011-15 and 2016-20. "Russia was the largest arms supplier to India in both 2011-15 and 2016-20. However, Russia's deliveries dropped by 53 per cent between the two periods and its share of total Indian arms imports fell from 70 to 49 per cent. In 2011-15 the USA was the second largest arms supplier to India, but in 2016-20 India's arms imports from the USA were 46 per cent lower than in the previous five-year period, making the USA the fourth largest supplier to India in 2016-20." France and Israel were the second and third largest arms suppliers to India in 2016-20, it said.

According to the report, the "overall drop in India's arms imports between 2011-15 and 2016-20 seems to be mainly due to its complex and lengthy procurement processes, combined with its attempts to reduce its dependence on Russian arms by diversifying its network of arms suppliers."

Based on India's outstanding deliveries of combat aircraft, air defence systems, ships and submarines, arms imports are expected to increase over the coming five years, it said.

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## Why sea route Turkey controls is key for Russia

NEHA BANKA  
KOLKATA, MARCH 1

RECOGNISING THE Russian invasion of Ukraine as a "war", Turkey on Monday announced that it would implement the Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits—a 1936 international treaty that regulates maritime traffic through the Black Sea. This would limit the movement of Russian warships between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea.

### WAR IN UKRAINE

## The route &amp; the treaty

Turkey controls the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. With borders on both sides of the two straits, Turkey has almost complete control over international access to the Black Sea.

This Montreux Convention, which came into effect in July 1936, put to rest the ques-

tion of who would control these two strategic straits. During peacetime, the agreement guarantees freedom of passage for civilian vessels, including trade vessels, but battleships face certain restrictions.

Some researchers believe that the Convention has been a major driving force in Moscow's repeated demands that it be given greater control of the straits, dating as far back as the 1930s during Stalin's Soviet Union.

## Importance for Russia

These straits are the only maritime passage through which Russia's ports in the Black Sea can access the Mediterranean Sea and the waters beyond.

In a Master's thesis for Ohio State University, The Black Sea and the Turkish Straits: Resurgent Strategic Importance in the 21st Century, Andrew M Hascher writes: "Modern maritime shipping in the Black Sea and Turkish Straits is responsible for a wide



variety of goods being brought to the global market. Perhaps most notable are the energy products of Russia, the South Caucasus region, and Turkey. Oil and natural gas are brought from as far away as the Caspian Sea via pipelines, then transit the Black Sea in both ships and further pipelines."

Besides being an important global maritime shipping route, this route is directly

linked with Russia's naval power, Hascher writes. "Because Russia's only warm-water naval ports are on the Black Sea, in order to effectively project naval power the Russians must not only exert control of the sea, but also have unrestricted access to the Dardanelles and Bosphorus Straits."

## Turkey's move

Last week, Ukraine's Ambassador to Turkey, Vasyl Bodnar, in a television broadcast, appealed to the Turkish government to close its key straits to Russian warships, invoking the provisions of the Convention. On February 27, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu announced the country would now recognise the invasion as "war", which provides Ankara the grounds for implementing the Convention with regard to military vessels. Turkey's pro-government daily, the *Daily Sabah*, quoted Defence Minister Hulusi Akar as saying, "We will continue to implement the 19th, 20th and 21st articles of the Montreux Convention like we have until today..."

## China-US arm-wrestling in Nepal, played out over \$500 million grant

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE  
KATHMANDU, MARCH 1

ON SUNDAY night, Nepal's House of Representatives passed by voice vote the Millennium Challenge Corporation Nepal Compact, a \$500 million grant from the US to build power and road infrastructure projects. The biggest American financial pledge to Nepal so far, it was signed more than four years ago, but ratification was delayed by criticism that it undermined Nepal's sovereignty.

The deal was ultimately approved with an 12-point explanatory note stating that it has no military or security component and nothing to do with the US strategy in the Indo-Pacific—and that Nepal would be free to pull out if the US violated this understanding.

Two major constituents of the ruling coalition, Pushpa Kamal Dahal's Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) and Madhav Kumar Nepal's Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Socialist), did about-turns and supported the motion after Prime Minister Sher Bahadur

Deuba read them the riot act.

The PM had been warned by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), and later the US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu, that failure to ratify by February 28 could lead to termination of the grant and a possible review of the US-Nepal relationship and cooperation—and that the failure would be seen as a result of Chinese influence over Nepal's policy.

While the ratification by parliament may have given the required legitimacy to the grant, the apprehensions of certain sections of the population continue to pour out on the streets, triggering large scale arrests and curfew in some parts.

## Terms of the compact

The deal was signed in September 2017 between the acting CEO of MCC, an independent bilateral foreign aid agency established by the US Congress in 2004, and Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, finance minister in the government that Deuba then headed. MCC, which sought to help low- and

lower middle-income countries, found Nepal "qualified" for a grant of \$500 million, with the recipient having to contribute another \$130 million, for power/infra projects including a 400KV transmission line, three power substations, and 655 transmission towers along a 315-km route touching India, and a 105-km four-lane road in western Nepal.

Details of the deal were kept under wraps until July 2019, when Dr Yubaraj Khattiwada, finance minister in the KP Oli government, gave notice to the parliament secretariat for its "endorsement". Although it did not require parliamentary approval, law ministry officials wanted to play safe because of a provision that in the event of a dispute over the law of Nepal and the deal, the latter would prevail.

## Controversy over deal

Once in the public domain, the compact stirred a hornet's nest. Senior leaders of Oli's ruling Nepal Communist Party said the deal was a sell-out and undermined Nepal's sovereignty and laws by giving the US the liberty to dictate to the country.

Subsequently, barring Deuba's Nepali Congress, sharp differences emerged in all parties over the deal—its opponents asserted that besides undermining national sovereignty, the deal also went against the spirit of the non-aligned foreign policy that Nepal has been pursuing, and created conditions for the US to take advantage of the country's geo-strategic location, sharing a border with China. This view was amplified as China and the US began not-so-diplomatic exchanges on what Nepal should or should not do.

While the question of approval never came before parliament even after the July 2019 notice, it triggered intense infighting in the Communist Party. The deal, along with the clash of personalities among top leaders, ultimately resulted in a split in the party and collapse of the government.

In July 2021, Dahal's Maoist Centre and Madhav Nepal's Unified Socialists, both of which were opposed to the MCC deal when they were part of Oli's government, joined hands with Deuba's Nepali Congress to form the government. From day one, Deuba was

clear that ratifying the MCC compact was in the interest of the country, and one of his top priorities. His message to the two communist parties in the ruling alliance was clear: vote for the approval or leave the coalition.

## US, China, India

Critics point out that Nepal is often prompt in signing deals with external donors or friendly countries but does not execute them with the same urgency. An example is China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), for which Nepal signed up soon after the MCC Nepal compact, but no project of which has been executed yet, Dr Mitra Bandhu Poudel, a management expert who has studied the BRI, said. None of the three PMs of Nepal tried to dispel fears around these two deals or to build a national consensus, even as the tussle between the US and China continued.

Nepal is surrounded by India on three sides and China on the fourth. After becoming PM for the first time in September 2015, Oli took Nepal close to China, retaliating against the months-long economic blockade

launched by India to punish Nepal for refusing to defer the promulgation of its new constitution without meeting major demands of the madhesi people who have a close kinship with India.

Earlier in 2005, India mediated in Nepal by bringing all seven pro-democratic parties and the underground Maoists together against the monarchy. It recognised Maoists as true representatives of the people, and lobbied with the West for support of its initiative. In response, China, apprehending that the political and cultural void left by the exit of the monarchy might create trouble in Tibet, its soft underbelly, increased its presence in the north.

China's involvement in four key areas—energy, tourism and hospitality, post-earthquake reconstruction, and trade and investment—has increased substantially since then. In recent years, it has begun to openly exercise its influence and preferences in Nepali politics. Ambassador Hou Yanqi has been more visible than the envoys of many other countries in Kathmandu.



The Indian EXPRESS

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Modest growth signals in third quarter point to need for continuing stimulus



SAUGATA BHATTACHARYA

## HEED THE WARNING

IPCC report makes a case for building people's resilience to climate crisis. It will require multi-pronged efforts at all levels

THE IPCC'S LATEST report is, by all accounts, the gravest of all the warnings issued by the global body of experts since it began taking stock of the climate crisis about 30 years ago. With inputs from scientists in 67 countries, the report predicts that the world will be roiled by multiple hazards even if the global temperature rise is contained to 1.5 degrees Celsius in the next two decades. It's the most detailed analysis of the threats posed by climate change. The perils described in the report are, however, all too apparent. Scarcely any part of the world has been left unscathed by extreme weather events — floods, droughts, heatwaves. The marginalised, especially those in poor nations, have borne the brunt. The report warns that "even a temporary increase in the 1.5 degrees Celsius warming will result in additional severe impacts, some of which will be irreversible". The IPCC does not prescribe policy decisions. But the near inevitability of climate emergencies has pushed the expert panel to underline building people's resilience, especially that of the most vulnerable.

The study's India-related sections are sobering. Global warming will affect the country's coasts, plains, forests, rivers, groundwater and mountain systems and place demands on policymakers in diverse realms — weather prediction, agriculture and fisheries, urban and infrastructure planning, energy policy and health. It will require correcting past mistakes such as ignoring hydrology while planning towns and cities, neglecting flood alert systems, and encouraging water-guzzling crops. Sensitivity to eco-fragility, most often at a premium, will be demanded from regulatory systems. The fact that 1,700 people lost their lives due to extreme weather events last year — it's a conservative estimate — should alert policymakers to the challenges ahead. The report notes that more than 40 per cent of the country's population will have to make do with water scarcity by 2050, even as the country's coastal areas, including cities such as Mumbai, will be affected by sea-level rises. Flooding will intensify in the Ganga and the Brahmaputra basins and crop production systems will be disrupted by droughts and water scarcity. Policymakers will have to find ways to ensure that the country's food security is not adversely affected, they will have to cushion the most vulnerable from the impacts of inflation and create avenues to offset climate-induced livelihood losses.

However, climate-sensitive policymaking at the national and local levels is only a part of the solution. India and other developing countries have for long — and correctly — argued that developed countries must accept their historical culpability for climate change. But they have been consistently stonewalled, including at the COP-26 in Glasgow last year when developed countries thwarted India's case for a climate adaptation fund. The IPCC has again made a call for "equitable adaptation" efforts across the world. Its next report — slated for April — that will suggest remedies to the climate crisis is keenly awaited.

## UNWISE MOVE

Shifting to the old pension scheme might be politically expedient, but would be fiscally imprudent

A FEW DAYS ago, the Rajasthan budget, presented by Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, proposed to revert to the old pension scheme for state government employees appointed after January 1, 2004. Worryingly, Rajasthan does not appear to be an outlier. There are indications of this proposal gaining traction across the country. For instance, the Samajwadi Party has also proposed a similar move if it is voted to office in Uttar Pradesh. There are also reports of something similar being contemplated upon in Chhattisgarh. In the current environment of economic uncertainty, such populist moves may be politically expedient. However, such proposals, passed without a complete appreciation of their fiscal implications, will undermine the hard-won policy gains, and can have ruinous implications for government finances.

The NPS, a defined contribution scheme, was applicable to all employees of the central government joining on or after January 1, 2004. It replaced the defined-benefit old pension scheme under which employees would get a part of their last drawn salary as pension on retirement. The shift to NPS was undertaken due to concerns over the coverage, sustainability, and scalability of the old pension framework. As per research carried out in the early 2000s, India's implicit pension debt, owing to central (civil) employees, state government employees and the funding gap of the employees pension scheme, was reaching unmanageable, unsustainable levels. Moreover, this framework only benefited a tiny portion of the total labour force.

Considering that the rationale to shift to the NPS revolved around the need to manage the government's pension liabilities, states with limited fiscal resources at their disposal must ask themselves whether they can provide for such a scheme? The availability of funds for such a scheme when seen against competing demands that range from the provision of health and education facilities, public transport and infrastructure among others, would suggest otherwise. Then there is also their current fiscal position to contend with. State government debt has risen from 26.3 per cent of GDP in 2019-20 to 31.2 per cent in 2021-22 (budget estimate). This will need to be brought down to manageable levels. States will also have to contend with the GST compensation cess ending in its current form in the coming year. Shifting back to the old pension scheme will only further increase the burden on the state exchequer — as per RBI, the total pension expenditure of all states put together stood at Rs 3.86 lakh crore in 2020-21 (BE). Hence, states must desist from such fiscally unwise moves.

## THE PIONEER

Sonny Ramadhin was the first West Indian Test cricketer of Indian origin. His exploits paved the way for many others

WHEN SLAVERY CEASED in the British Caribbean in 1833, the sugarcane plantations, facing labour shortage, first turned to the African Americans and Chinese, before turning to India. Among those huddled in a ship to Trinidad was a man, whose grandson Sonny Ramadhin would become the first West Indian of Indian extraction to play international cricket. In his debut series, he would scythe through the formidable English team to record West Indies's first ever major series triumph over the colonial masters. Full-sleeved, buttoned at the wrist, the mystery spinner would twist out magical orbs from his raised fist, first for the native country and then the adopted land. Joyous calypsos were sung in his honour and nationalistic poems composed to celebrate his success. In a reflection of changing times, Ramadhin would live out his post-retirement life in England, married to a local lady, until his death at 92 on February 27.

Ramadhin was just 19 when he toured England in 1950. In his second Test, at Lord's, he took 11 wickets to lead the West Indies to a famous victory. In public imagination, he would forever be entwined with the then 20-year-old Alf Valentine — together they took 59 wickets in that series. The off-break was his stock ball, the leg-break and the straight one were the variations, and a slow ball that dipped rapidly the sucker punch. He would never recapture the dizzying heights of the debut series though he would finish his Test career with 158 wickets from 43 matches.

For nearly 25 years after the 1970s, the paths of pals, Ramadhin and Valentine, didn't cross. Ramadhin ran a pub in England, Valentine lived in Florida, acting as surrogate parent for abused and abandoned children of parents in prison. One day, Valentine walked into Ramadhin's pub and it was like the old times again. They remained friends till the last: Two men joined by fate, who scripted their own destiny, and lived lives that were the stuff of dreams.

THE SECOND ADVANCE estimates (2AE) of GDP, released on Monday, projected FY22 real growth at 8.9 per cent, down from 9.2 per cent in the first advance estimates released in January. However, the momentum of recovery and activity is better judged by quarter-wise growth (since this is of more immediate salience).

Real Gross Value Added (GVA) growth in the October-December quarter of FY22 was 4.7 per cent (compared to 2.1 per cent in the corresponding quarter of FY21). GDP growth was a bit better at 5.4 per cent. This growth was only modestly higher than the average growth of 3.7 per cent in the four quarters of FY20, preceding the pandemic lockdown. What does this say about the momentum of economic recovery? Given the high volatility of quarterly growth rates over the past two years, these need to be looked at carefully to separate the base effect from underlying growth.

The two sectors which contributed most noticeably towards the aggregate growth were manufacturing (0.2 per cent) and construction (-2.8 per cent). Even taking into account the base effects of fairly high growth rates in the corresponding quarter of FY21, weakness is visible. The almost flat manufacturing growth is a bit puzzling, given the 27 per cent growth of merchandise exports (by US dollar value) in the quarter, pointing to weakness in domestic demand (although some segments are doing well). Note that IIP (Index of Industrial Production) growth in the quarter was 1.2 per cent and GVA equivalent derived from financial results of manufacturing companies (deflated by the WPI inflation) had contracted by 3 per cent. Equally concerning is the construction segment, where a similar matching of the numbers suggests significant weakness, particularly in the MSME segment. Some of this is supported by weak growth in electricity output (3.7 per cent).

On the other hand, some of the services segments have printed relatively strong growth. The most striking is "Public Admin and Other Services", which includes education, health, recreation, etc. and is the universe of micro and small local services business; this segment grew almost 17 per cent (and contributed just less than half of the aggregate 4.7 per cent GVA growth).

Even on the demand side of economic activity, the trends are a concern. While private consumption grew by a decent 7 per cent, fixed capital investment rose just 2 per cent

in Q3 (on the back of a 0.6 per cent contraction in Q3 of FY21). This was despite a 13 per cent rise in the Centre's capital expenditure in Q3 (and a smaller states' capex spend). The obvious inference is that private sector capex had remained weak. Also, given that government consumption expenditure grew only 3.4 per cent, matching this with the "Public Admin" growth above suggests that the other services enterprises had recovered strongly in Q3, with the opening up of economic activity.

In nominal terms, both GVA and GDP growth in Q3 had been 15.6 per cent. This is important, since it is a signal of the distribution of consumption among household income classes. For full FY22, nominal GVA is forecast to be Rs 236 lakh crore, up from Rs 201 lakh crore in pre-pandemic FY20, an increment of Rs 35 lakh crore over two years. This is quite substantial. Apart from private sector studies and surveys on rising inequality, drilling down into company financial results shows that operating profit margins of the business to business (B2B) subset has risen more than those of business to consumer (B2C), thereby suggesting that the ability of end-consumer facing companies to pass on high input costs has been limited. This has implications for the redistributive actions of economic, particularly fiscal, policy.

What of the future? On Q4 FY22 growth, the Axis Bank Composite Leading Index, based on a set of 39 concurrent indicators and nowcasters, suggests that economic activity in February had moved up to almost the December levels (and March activity is usually seasonally strong). Yet, the path of growth and recovery for FY23 has become muddied by a host of economic, commercial, financial and now geo-economic events. The official data release implies that GDP growth in Q4 of FY22 is likely to be slower (4.8 per cent), and GVA at just 4.1 per cent; it is probable that full FY22 growth might be even lower than the currently forecast 8.9 per cent, given a likely hit on exports in March. Moreover, RBI, with its sophisticated forecasting capabilities, thinks that FY23 growth will be 7.8 per cent (lower than the 8.0-8.5 per cent predicted by the Economic Survey and 9.0 per cent by IMF).

Even assuming that the Ukraine crisis gradually settles down, the other ongoing policy actions across the world are likely to unfold over a period of many months, even years. India's external environment is likely to be less benign than FY22, and financial markets are

likely to remain volatile. As the world comes out of the pandemic and the set of extraordinary policy stimulus measures, many G-10 central banks, grappling with high, persistent inflation, are reversing their accommodative monetary policy stance. The US Federal Reserve is expected to aggressively tighten its monetary policy, to hike its policy rates at its March 2022 meeting, and thereafter start extracting the huge infusion of liquidity during the pandemic period.

Global growth is also slowing. IMF, in its January update of the World Economic Outlook, had projected that world GDP growth will decelerate from 5.9 per cent in 2021 to 4.4 per cent in 2022. China's slowing economy is expected to contribute to this slowdown, but the large developed markets are also decelerating. While logistics bottlenecks for global trade are easing, the nature of demand is also likely to shift from consumer goods towards travel, tourism, recreation, etc. WTO forecasts moderate global trade volumes, falling from 10.8 per cent in 2021 to 4.7 per cent in 2022, mostly led by a drop in emerging markets. Merchandise exports will probably not be as strong a growth engine in FY23, although services exports are likely to accelerate.

Domestic headwinds arising from risks of inflation and fiscal constraints will need deft management of further stimulus to ensure that while the recovery becomes broad-based and more durable, the economy doesn't overheat. The role of credit and financial resources for both enterprises and retail borrowers has become crucial, particularly for MSMEs. Bank credit offtake had picked up in November and December, but till mid-February remained quite robust. So has NBFC offtake, at least for the larger ones. Some part of this is a diversion from corporate bonds and commercial paper, given rising interest rates, but core credit demand (both working capital and capex loans) seems to have improved.

In short, overall economic activity is recovering at a modest pace, but many sectors and segments still seem to be constrained by demand weakness and will require continued policy support. The role of fiscal and trade policy will be dominant, but monetary policy will continue to have a crucial role in maintaining stable financial markets to reduce at least one component of uncertainty.

The writer is executive vice-president and chief economist, Axis Bank. Views are personal

## ON A GREEN TRACK

Kerala's high-speed rail project is climate-responsive, resource-efficient



V NAMASIVAYAM

THE SILVERLINE PROJECT to be built by the government of Kerala will link Thiruvananthapuram in the south to Kasargode in the north. The high-speed train will cover 530 km in four hours at a maximum speed of 200kmph. The project has received its share of criticism, much of it from political quarters, but also some academic sections.

For Kerala, with its saturated road network, the building of a fast, environmentally-sustainable high-speed rail link must surely be seen as a sound governance response. Indeed, a study of INDC (Intended Nationally Determined Contribution) plans under the Paris Climate Agreement is instructive in this context. The EU study on mobility notes that HSR is the least-cost emission option among all modes of long-distance transportation.

Critics have put forward three principal lines of argument, namely, its alleged adverse environmental impact, financial unviability, and technical unsuitability.

The most compelling environmental issue before us is climate change. Building capacities now to achieve a carbon net-neutral world over the next three to four decades is a core aspect of the national strategy of all nations. In this context, the SilverLine project scores

high with respect to India's own climate objective of achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.

The impact of HSR is no longer a theoretical expectation. We have more than 60 years of experience in Japan with Shinkansen or "bullet train" (1964), more than 40 years in Europe (France 1981), and more than a decade with the world's largest HSR network (China 2008). Let us recall the driving forces behind Japan's decision to develop the Shinkansen. In the context of the global oil crisis, energy-secure Japan wanted to develop a public transportation system that was energy-efficient and would also address national concerns with respect to imbalanced regional growth. After the Kyoto Protocol was signed, more efforts were made to increase the speed of the various series of Shinkansen to meet the objectives of energy efficiency and CO2 reductions. Trains in the current N700 series of HSRs consume half the energy consumed by the first series of trains, and run 32 per cent faster.

Recent impact assessment studies are mostly of China's HSR of around 25,000 km. A study published in *Nature* indicates that the new HSR routes have resulted in the reduction of 11.183 million tons of CO2 equivalent to GHG emissions or 1.33 per cent of GHG emissions in China's transport sector.

The creation of a modern and industrially-competitive Japan despite its minimal natural resources would not have been imaginable without a transformative transport arrangement like the Shinkansen. It is equally important to note here that the HSR programme was developed and implemented by Japan National Railways at a time when it was under immense financial stress.

Large-scale infrastructure projects are not based on short-term financial viability considerations alone. When the London Underground was conceived, it was not considered financially viable. Today, London's economic activities are inconceivable without it. Green technologies that we consider cheaper than fossil fuel technologies were not initially financially viable, and were unable to survive without government subsidies.

This notion of development should be the standard against which large projects such as SilverLine are to be evaluated. There are abundant international examples of the role played by large capital-intensive infrastructure projects in the transformation of the town and country, regions, and nations.

The writer is member for science, technology, and industry, Kerala State Planning Board

## MARCH 2, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

### INDIRA ON OPPOSITION

MRS GANDHI CAME down heavily on the Opposition in Parliament for having the gumption to criticise her government despite its failure to place a credible alternative system before the people. In speeches liberally spiced with jibes at the Opposition for the attempt to resurrect "dead bogies", Mrs Gandhi also refused the charge that the Union budget was based on the dictates of outside elements and designed to help multinationals.

### ENVOY HARASSED

INDIA HAS PROTESTED to Bangladesh

against the "intimidation and harassment" of the Indian High Commissioner M Dubey by security officials in Dacca. The Indian government has asked its Bangladesh counterpart to desist from such activities. New Delhi's aide memoire said that blatant intimidation and surveillance of the Indian High Commissioner contravened all norms of decency expected from authorities of a host country.

### BCCI'S THREAT

"WE WILL HAVE to pull out of the England tour starting on May 8 if any of those playing in South Africa is included in the England

county teams," A W Kanmadikar secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket said. He said that the English cricketers had left for South Africa without obtaining concurrence from the Test and County Cricket Board (TCCB). He said that the TCCB will move in the matter to ensure that Apartheid is kept out of cricket.

### VENUS MISSION

AN UNMANNED SOVIET spacecraft touched down on the surface of Venus and will begin taking pictures of the planet's crust. The spacecraft, launched in October last year, reached the planet after 300 million km journey.



# The heat is on

IPCC report highlights how urbanisation has generated vulnerability and exposure combined with climate change hazards. Better adaptation policies are needed for a safer, more sustainable future



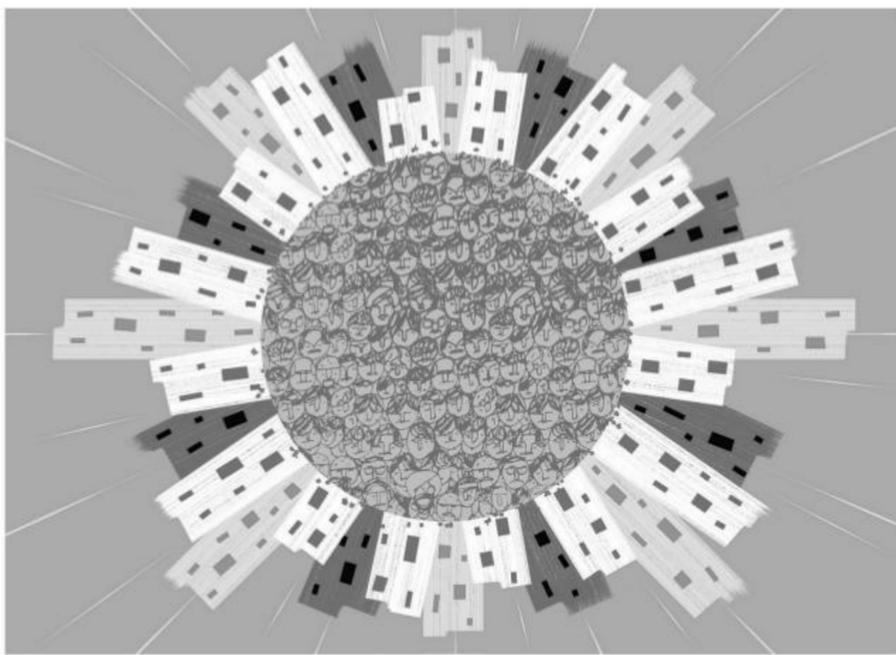
ANJAL PRAKASH

THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL on climate change (IPCC) released the second of its three-part report in the 6th assessment cycle, which focuses on the impacts of climate change and its implications on vulnerability and adaptation. With global warming of 1.1°C, some impacts of climate change are already locked in, causing disruptions in the lives of billions of people. India, which has almost all the world's agro-ecological zones, is not spared. The three major climate change hotspots are the semi-arid and arid regions, the Himalayan ecosystem and coastal zones. About half of India's landmass is arid and semi-arid, prone to impacts of rising temperatures. The sea-level extremes that previously occurred once in 100 years could happen more frequently. India has 7,500 km of coastline, which is home to 33 crore people living within 150 km from the coast, including many essential megacities. One of the most sensitive to climate change, the Himalayan region, is home to five crore people covering 13 states and union territories. The report indicates that the Indian population is one of the most vulnerable and exposed to severe climate-induced risks and disasters.

Roughly a quarter of Indians now live in urban areas. In the next 15 years, this figure is expected to reach 40 per cent, covering 60 crore Indians, adding double the population of people living in present-day America. Cities in India will experience more heat stress, urban floods and other climate-induced hazards such as cyclones. The report mentions, with high confidence, that urbanisation processes have generated vulnerability and exposure combined with climate change hazards. This has driven the urban risk and impacts.

The report has predicted that life-threatening climatic conditions will arise from extreme heat and humidity. A disproportionate level of exposure exists in regions subjected to year-round warm temperatures and higher humidity. The primary driver of increased heat exposure is the combination of global warming and population growth in already-warm cities in India. The urban heat island also elevates temperatures within cities, which will be amplified during the heatwaves. Older adults, people with comorbidities and dwellers living without much access to hygienic environments will be at a much higher risk in urban areas. A higher urban population also implies heat-induced labour productivity loss, resulting in economic impacts. The current adaptation measures largely focus on knee-jerk solutions and disaster management which has to move towards long-term planning for resilient cities.

Flood risks in settlements arise from hydrometeorological events interacting with the urban system, which exposes settlements to various types of floods. Sea level rise and increases in tropical cyclone storm surge and rainfall variability leading to a rise in the intensity of rainfall will lead to larger probabilities of cities getting flooded. The report predicts that there is evidence that changes in high-intensity short duration (sub-daily) rainfall in urban areas will increase. Places like



C R Sasikumar

Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Visakhapatnam, Goa, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and smaller coastal towns and villages are at a greater risk of being flooded. The current adaptation measures to manage flooding impacts such as stormwater management, green infrastructure, and sustainable urban drainage systems must be overhauled to prepare for such flooding in the future.

One of the significant challenges of urbanisation in the Himalayas is sprawling small towns with populations under a lakh. Due to the high growth rate, these towns are expected to become major urban centres in the next 10-20 years. The unplanned urbanisation is causing significant changes in land use and land cover, with reduced recharge areas of springs. Climate-induced changes in the physical environment include increased rainfall variability. Due to this, heavy rains are becoming frequent and are leading to more landslides. Global warming has increased the average temperature in the Himalayas, which has caused glacier melt and subsequent change in hydrological regimes of the region. One of the contributing factors of glacial decline is the deposition of black carbon, which is contributed by stubble burning, brick kilns, polluting industries. Most towns in the Himalayan region meet their water needs using supplies from springs, ponds, and lakes that are essentially interlinked systems. Water insecurity in hill towns is becoming the order of the day. India needs to re-adapt its traditional adaptation solutions.

Not everything is bleak for the climate change future in India. Better adaptation policies could lead to a safer and more sustainable future. Some examples from Indian cities cited in the report have shown that the economic benefits of adaptation are a strategy for local institutions to support adaptation action. Local governments in Surat, Indore, and Bhubaneswar linked transformation to local development needs in experiments that fa-

The primary driver of increased heat exposure is the combination of global warming and population growth in already-warm cities in India. The urban heat island also elevates temperatures within cities, which will be amplified during the heatwaves. Older adults, people with comorbidities and dwellers living without much access to hygienic environments will be at a much higher risk in urban areas.

cilitated accessing human and finance resources at different levels. Surat also stands out as a case where city-level political leadership has supported adaptation action beyond national policy.

Passive cooling technology, a widely-used strategy to create naturally ventilated buildings, can be a vital alternative to address the urban heat island for residential and commercial buildings. The report cites ancient Indian building designs that have used this technology, which could be adapted to modern facilities in the context of global warming.

For making urban India water-secure, the report cites the example of Bengaluru, where Indian communities have traditionally managed a network of water tanks of immense ecological importance. However, urban development has increasingly threatened this blue network in the last half-century. Today's Bengaluru depends on long-distance water transfers that create political conflict and a dense network of private boreholes, depleting the city's water resources. The restoration of the blue network offers a more sustainable and socially just alternative for managing water resources.

In sum, adaptation in cities and other urban areas where most of the world's population lives will depend mainly on the resilience of natural, social and physical infrastructure. The challenge for cities in India is a trade-off between long-term planning to make cities net-zero versus short-term response to protect towns from climate-induced risks and threats.

The writer is research director of Bharti Institute of Public Policy at the Indian School of Business. He was the lead author of the chapter on cities, settlement and key infrastructure and cross chapter paper on mountains in the working group II of the 6th Assessment report

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The idea of a gentle transition away from fossil fuels toward low-carbon alternatives no longer seems realistic."  
—THE GUARDIAN

# Holes in the sanctions net

It is a way of exercising control over countries, economies from afar. But Russia, China may find ways to elude it



HURICIHAN ISLAMOGLU

A SHIFT IS taking place in the business of global dominance and hegemony, from the model of expressing force through troop presence to financial sanctions. It is led by the US and has become recently visible in the US and EU sanctions on Russia.

From rule-bound globalism, there is a move to an understanding of the management of individual economies, bound together by multiple networks of investment and trade. This is a global economy of individual rivalries between countries and corporations, continually shifting alliances, and contingencies overtaking assumed structural certainties. It demonstrates the emergence of an intensive rivalry among individual countries, exposing their red lines with the potential to turn into a military confrontation — the Uyghurs and Taiwan for China; the US presence in the Pacific; Ukraine for Russia, the latter already militarised.

In Afghanistan, financial manipulations from afar in the form of sanctions may result in subjecting trading activities and investment ventures to the approval of the US Treasury through a system of licencing. If put into effect, it would give the US government the ability to exercise control over a government or its activities or both, and also over those countries or corporations trading with or investing in Afghanistan, by confronting them with the legal and financial risk of sanctions. This may give the US a say in who trades with whom, but already China has found ways of working with or around US sanctions in several countries, including Iran.

Another way of exerting control from afar is through the confiscation of foreign exchange reserves in American banks. Following the withdrawal of the American troops on August 15, the US froze Afghanistan's foreign exchange reserves of \$7 billion deposited in the New York Federal Bank. The Taliban demanded the unfreezing of the funds, much-needed in Afghanistan where, according to the UN, more than half of the population is under threat of starvation. On February 11 came the shocking news that the Biden administration will split the funds between compensation for 9/11 victims and humanitarian aid for the Afghans.

Who are the beneficiaries? The US policy of using economic tools for realising foreign policy and overall national security objectives prioritises the private sector. Sanctions are designed by the government and implemented by both profit-making and non-profit private enterprises, domestic and international NGOs (including the United Nations). As a result, private sector actors become important in "leveraging and calibrating sanctions" in the service of broader foreign policy and security ends. Meanwhile, the Afghan economy has collapsed.

What about the secondary effects of sanctions? For instance, how will China deal with

the sanctions in Afghanistan especially as the Taliban views China as its economic lifeline to rebuild the country? What about the economic lever that this gives to China in its dealings with the Taliban, to the Chinese state-owned enterprises and private corporations with an opportunity to invest in Afghanistan's infrastructure, linking it to the Belt and Road project, and in its rich mineral resources of copper, cobalt, and lithium? China could also use this as an opportunity to unite investments in Afghanistan and Pakistan, isolating India. Will all these advantages and opportunities be left to the mercy of the US Treasury? If China wants to contest this, what would be channels for contestation and negotiation?

This is not clear. But China and Russia, in concert, may provide a way out of the sanctions regime. Russian military and political escalation to re-institute control over former Soviet regions, including Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, and the rapprochement between China and Russia against the West, may open up new possibilities for China in Middle Eurasia. It may also point to a recasting of power configurations between the Western alliance, Russia and China.

Banning Russia from the SWIFT system of international payments is a problem for the global financial system. The US announcement initially banned "certain" banks. The Russian economy is more isolated, protected and less reliant on international funding than was the Afghan economy with 75 per cent of public expenditure paid by foreign donors. Russia's economy is dominated by domestic lenders. So far, the possible impact of sanctions on Russia is estimated at a 1 per cent loss in GDP.

The impact of any disruption in Russian exports of oil, gas, palladium, wheat and fertiliser at a time when those prices are barely recovering from inflationary pressures caused by Covid-19 disruptions, is likely to offset any leverage the Western sanctions may hope to gain.

Above all, the Ukraine incident shows an emerging division of labour between China and Russia, with China focusing on the economy. This leaves the Russians to attend to the political and the military aspects of keeping the US out of Eurasia while at the same time drawing a wedge between the EU and the US.

In refusing to support the Western alliance beyond general platitudes, China has risked alienating major trade partners in Ukraine, the EU and the US. By supporting Russia, Beijing is suspending its long-held position of no interference in the internal affairs of individual countries, inviting plentiful speculation about whether Putin's move in different Eurasian regions could provide Xi with a precedent in Taiwan.

A new global Great Game is unfolding before our eyes with China, confident in its global economic powers, busily manipulating its own public opinion via Weibo to ensure that the right lessons — which confirm the rights of old empires over various populations — are drawn from the Ukraine incident. In the new game, the Western alliance led by the US seems lost in a maze of sanctions, largely ineffective in a global economy, the control of which is eluding its grip.

The writer is a Visiting Fellow at Gateway House, Mumbai and a professor of Economic History, Bogazici University, Istanbul



AMRITA SHAH

## Unreliable narrators

How 'Rocket Boys' distorts history, gives Vikram Sarabhai a bad name

WHY WOULD A dramatic series claiming to be an admiring account of an eminent character from recent history diminish his reputation with invented falsehoods? I am speaking of *Rocket Boys*, a web series currently streaming on Sony Liv. The series is about the founding of modern India's technological programmes in nuclear energy and space through the lives of its founders. While the series has been publicised as the "true" story of "legendary" scientists Homi J Bhabha and Vikram Sarabhai, a disclaimer claims that it is "fictionalised".

Film reviewers have hailed it as pioneering, and educative. But as the extent of "creative liberty" taken by the series comes to light (fictionalising the real-life scientist Meghnad Saha, falsifying events and dates, making absurd scientific claims), it seems incumbent for specialists to point out at least the more egregious distortions.

As the author of *Vikram Sarabhai — A Life* (Penguin, 2007), the only full-fledged biography of the space pioneer, I am less concerned with modifications and more with what I see as a pointed misrepresentation of Sarabhai's character and significance as a whole.

In the series, Sarabhai who was married to the classical dancer, Mrinalini Swaminathan, is presented as a boorish male chauvinist who dissuades her from pursuing her dreams and leaves her languishing while he pursues his ambitions and starts an affair with a colleague.

At the beginning of the series, there is a

flash of another Vikram, a virtuous one, arguing with Homi Bhabha who wants to build or pretend to build a bomb. Vikram opposes his aggressive posturing, pointing out the horrors of nuclear war and the possibility of reprisal from global powers. The two men tussle, with Bhabha eventually asking Vikram to be "his conscience".

This is the fictitious Vikram's strongest moment, and a rare one. For much of the series, he is made to wander in an air of dreamy abstraction, indulging in well-meaning but ill-thought-out ventures. His attempt to modernise production processes in textile mills, for instance, sparks off a workers' uprising, doused with the help of his industrialist father.

A young job applicant, the fictitious A P J Abdul Kalam, finds an abandoned model rocket in his office and reminds Vikram of how he has neglected his dream. Having been brought to focus, the distracted Vikram prepares to launch his first real rocket (the first sounding rocket launch at Thumba in Kerala in November 1963 marking the beginning of the Indian space programme). But last-minute problems crop up, the remote system to raise the launcher malfunctions. Vikram loses heart and wants to call off the launch. The masterful Bhabha steps in, infuses courage in the flailing Vikram and with eager Kalam, helps him save face. All is well. Vikram even does a surprising turnaround on his position on the bomb to Bhabha's relief, without offering a reason.

How does the real-life Vikram compare

with his screen self? In real life, Vikram wholeheartedly supported his wife's career, taking over childcare when she travelled abroad frequently on dance tours, handling her stage lights and co-founding her dance institution, Darpana. In a BBC interview, he talked about his hope of enriching "the artistic and cultural life of north India" through training in south Indian dance. (In the series, a version of this enlightened sentiment surprisingly springs from Mrinalini's lips).

Vikram also ran successful family companies, founded a host of institutions including the Ahmedabad Textile Industry's Research Association, which, far from being a brash young man's vanity project as suggested in the series, was a much-replicated model for developing indigenous industrial research. "When you grow up," he told his friend and fellow scientist MGK Menon, "you don't have to walk step by step like a toddler; you can leap, run... you have to start processes, not like a gambler but like a prophet infallibly accurate as to what the consequences will be."

No problem of focus or discipline there — or of nerve. The portly Bhabha has been turned into the virile superhero in the series but in real-life Vikram fought the tough battles.

Taking charge of the Atomic Energy Commission after Bhabha's death in 1966, his nuanced position, balancing multiple considerations including India's food security and cost (wrongly seen as knee-jerk pacifism), ran counter to the jingoistic build-up in the AEC and in the country for an overt demonstration

of India's capability. His death may even have been hastened by the agonising fight he put up for his differing vision.

He had an extra-marital relationship with Kamla Chowdhry, with whom he conceived the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad. The relationship, a source of anguish to all concerned, was also unusually open and without concealment.

Initiating a sophisticated space programme in a poor country at a time when superpowers were launching chimpanzees and astronauts into space, Sarabhai steered the Indian programme firmly towards development, avoiding any temptation for "glamour" or of creating a "sham image nationally and internationally". How does a person of his mettle become the waffling, morally compromised figure in *Rocket Boys*? How does a person with his self-awareness become the inept dreamer who must be ticked off or rescued by everybody — wife, daddy, best friend, and even a callow subordinate?

Is there something more to be read into the bizarre infantilisation of the founder of the country's most successful technological programme? Or is it just a mindless idea of what constitutes a selling "story"? Whichever it is, such a rewriting of history to diminish one of the nation's great scientist-innovators cannot be taken lightly.

Shah is a Mumbai/Bengaluru-based writer and the author of *Vikram Sarabhai — A Life* (Penguin, 2007)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### TAKE A SIDE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'United against a strongman' (IE, March 1). India can no longer afford to sit on the fence and expect the global community to treat it as a responsible geopolitical actor of global significance. India has its own strategic limitations while dealing with Russia. The Chinese effort of strategic encirclement of India, and the Russian bonhomie with Indian adversaries, make the strategic options available to New Delhi more complicated, each with its repercussions. New Delhi must secure its immediate national interests, but must not be seen to be siding with powers that undermine the territorial integrity of a sovereign state.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Barasat

### ON THE FIELD

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Checkmate Russia' (IE, March 1). It is hard for sports to remain distanced from politics if the scene literally heats up as in the case of the Russian Goliath pummeling the Ukrainian David. While the economic costs of this misadventure have been imposed on Russia, all sporting events scheduled in the latter's territory have been either shifted or cancelled. With known Russian sportsmen speaking against their country's offensive, Vladimir Putin now has to contend with shrill opposition outside and murmurs of dissent inside

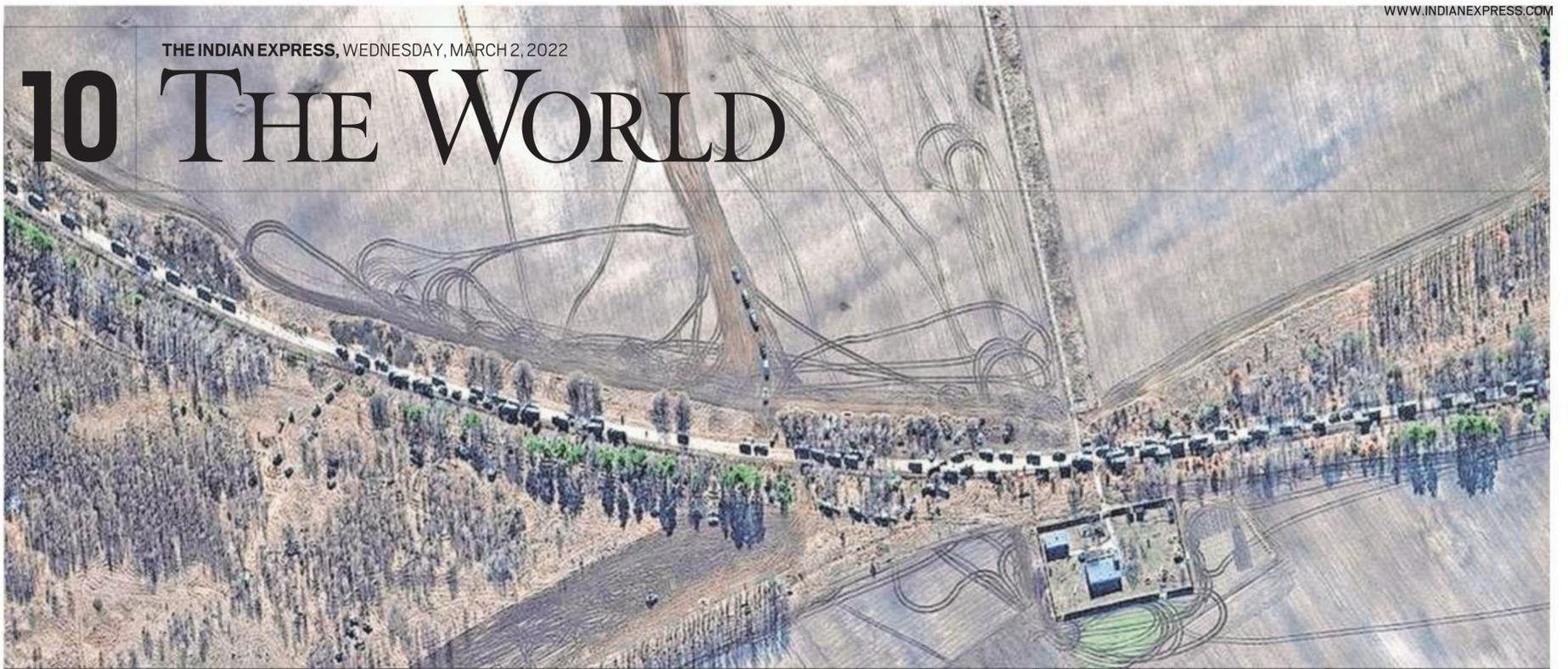
his own country. The Russian president has to now wriggle out of this complex situation of his own making. He must, before it gets too late, look for a face-saver, go for discussions with Ukraine and engage in "give and take" to end the war.

Vijai Pant, Hempur

### SPLIT OR MERGER?

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Misreading defection law' (IE, March 1). If two-third members decide amongst themselves to merge their party with another and subsequently shift from their original party to the other party, will they be shielded against disqualification by the application of paragraph 4(2)? On simple reading of the facts, this seems to be against the objective behind the anti-defection law. Should this be termed as a "split" or should it be treated as a "merger" of the party? Notably, the Hon'ble High Court while answering whether the concept of split of a political party under paragraph 3 (now deleted) of the 10th Schedule, is the same as the concept of merger under paragraph 4, held that both "split" and "merger" are different concepts. However, this answer requires more elaboration with respect to its applicability to the facts at hand. At this stage, only the challenge before the Supreme Court could shed some light on such issues.

Aerika Singh, Chandigarh



Maxar satellite image shows a Russian military convoy north of the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv that stretches for about 40 miles on Monday. Reuters

# Zelenskyy seeks EU support as lakhs flee

Prove you are with us, he says

PHILIP BLENKINSOP & INGRID MELANDER  
BRUSSELS, MARCH 1

UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged the EU on Tuesday via video link to an emergency session of the European Parliament to "prove that you are with us" in Ukraine's war with Russia, a day after Kyiv officially asked to join the bloc.

European Union lawmakers, many wearing #standwithUkraine T-shirts bearing the Ukrainian flag, others with blue-and-yellow scarves or ribbons, gave Zelenskyy a standing ovation.

"We are fighting to be equal members of Europe," Zelenskyy said in Ukrainian in a speech



Volodymyr Zelenskyy addresses the European Parliament special session on Tuesday. Reuters

translated into English by an interpreter who spoke through tears. "Do prove that you are with us. Do prove that you will not let us go. Do prove that you are indeed Europeans, and then life will win over death and light will win over darkness," he said. "The EU will be much stronger with us."

Zelenskyy has remained in Kyiv to rally his people against the invasion. As he spoke on Tuesday, a Russian armoured column was bearing down on Ukraine's capital.

The Presidents of eight central and eastern European nations on Monday published an

open letter calling for Ukraine to be granted immediate EU candidate status and for the start of formal membership talks

But Ukraine is well aware that any membership process will be long and difficult, even if it manages after the war to avoid falling back under Moscow's domination.

Charles Michel, the chairman of EU leaders, told the EU Parliament after Zelenskyy's speech that the bloc would have to seriously look at Ukraine's "legitimate" request to join.

But he added: "It is going to be difficult, we know there are different views in Europe (about further enlargement)."

According to a draft text they will vote on later on Tuesday, EU lawmakers are expected to brand Russia a "rogue state" and urge member states to agree even tougher sanctions. **REUTERS**

## Bracing for exodus of 4 mn refugees from Ukraine in coming days, weeks: UN agency

THE NEW YORK TIMES  
MARCH 1

ABOUT HALF a million refugees have fled Ukraine since Russia's invasion began last week, according to the United Nations refugee agency. About 660,000 people have fled Ukraine for neighboring countries since the invasion began, the agency said, adding that number on Tuesday, was up from a count of more than 500,000 a day earlier.

About half of them crossed Ukraine's western border to Poland. Others have gone to Hungary, Moldova, Romania and Slovakia. Ukraine enacted martial law at the beginning of the conflict that requires men ages



18 to 60 to remain in the country. For many refugees, these bordering countries could be a first stop of their journey. Romanian

authorities said about half of those who had entered the country so far had already left for other European countries. According to

the refugee agency, an additional 129,000 people have reportedly been displaced to Russia from Ukraine's eastern Donbas region since Feb. 18, when Russian-backed separatists there called for residents to evacuate.

The United Nations says it is preparing for up to four million refugees from Ukraine in the coming days and weeks. The UN also appealed on Tuesday for some \$1.7 billion to aid millions of victims of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and address the escalating destruction of critical infrastructure. "The crisis has turned very ugly, very fast," Martin Griffiths, the United Nations' emergency aid coordinator told reporters in Geneva

## IN BRIEF

### Putin ally fired as chief conductor of Munich Philharmonic

Valery Gergiev, the star Russian maestro and prominent supporter of President Vladimir V. Putin was removed Tuesday from his post as chief conductor of the Munich Philharmonic after he refused to denounce Putin's invasion of Ukraine. And Anna Netrebko, the Russian diva who is one of opera's biggest international stars, saw her upcoming engagements with the Bavarian State Opera



Valery Gergiev, NYT

cancelled, and the Zurich Opera House announced that she had withdrawn from her upcoming performances there. **NYT**

### Pak under pressure to condemn aggression

Pressure mounted on Pakistan as heads of various foreign missions in the country on Tuesday urged it to condemn "Russia's aggression against Ukraine" in the UNGA session, which has been convened to vote for a resolution against Moscow. "As Heads of Mission to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, we urge Pakistan to join us in condemning Russia and voice support for upholding UN Charter & international law," said Lis Rosenholm, Ambassador of Denmark in Pakistan. **PTI**

### Putin's statue removed from Paris wax museum

Vladimir Putin's figure has been removed from the Musée Grévin wax museum in Paris due to the "tragic and unacceptable" events in Ukraine, a spokeswoman said Tuesday. Yves Delhommeau, the general manager of the museum, told Francebleu radio that the wax sculpture had been vandalised by visitors over the weekend. It was the first time that a sculpture was removed over current events, he said. **NYT**

## Russia holds drills with n-subs, launchers

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV  
MOSCOW, MARCH 1

RUSSIAN NUCLEAR submarines sailed off for drills in the Barents Sea and mobile missile launchers roamed snow forests Tuesday in Siberia after President Vladimir Putin ordered his nation's nuclear forces put on high alert over tensions with the West over the invasion of Ukraine.

Russia's Northern Fleet said in a statement that several of its nuclear submarines were involved in exercises designed to "train maneuvering in stormy conditions." It said several warships

tasked with protecting northwest Russia's Kola Peninsula, where several naval bases are located, would join the maneuvers.

In the Irkutsk region of eastern Siberia, units of the Strategic Missile Forces dispersed Yars intercontinental ballistic missile launchers in forests to practice secret deployment, the Defence Ministry said in a statement

The military didn't say whether the drills were linked to Putin's order on Sunday to put the country's nuclear forces on high alert amid Russia's war in Ukraine. It also was unclear whether the exercises represented a change in the country's



Vladimir Putin, File

normal nuclear training activities or posture.

Putin's decree applied to all parts of the Russian nuclear triad, which like in the US, consists of nuclear submarines armed with intercontinental ballistic missiles,

nuclear-tipped land-based ICBMs and nuclear-capable strategic bombers.

The US said Putin's move unnecessarily escalated an already dangerous conflict, but so far has announced no changes in its nuclear weapons alert level.

Russia and the US have the land- and submarine-based segments of their strategic nuclear forces on alert and prepared for combat at all times, but nuclear-capable bombers and other aircraft are not. One party raising the nuclear-combat readiness of bombers or ordering more ICBM-carrying submarines to sea would ring alarm bells for another. **AP**

## Clothes, pickled food and toiletries: Volunteers keep supplies moving to Ukrainian fighters

THE NEW YORK TIMES  
LVIV, MARCH 1

WITH JARS of pickled food, arms full of clothes, gallons of water and trash bags stuffed with toiletries, the stream of volunteers came all morning on Tuesday to a Lviv arts center to offer their help in the defense of the nation.

In one sense a citizen army is no different than a traditional army:

Supply lines that keep it fed, warm and healthy are essential. So Yuri Viznyak, the director of the arts centre, now finds himself leading a logistical operation aimed at helping sustain those on the front lines — from formally trained soldiers to members of newly formed territorial defense units.

They are also helping care for those displaced from their homes by war. "We began immediately after the bombard-

ment began," Viznyak said. "Our main goal is to sort and pack all the humanitarian aid and send wherever it is needed."

Every day, more volunteers join the group as they pack and send supplies from Odessa to Kharkiv, to Kyiv to Mariupol. It is one centre in an emerging network, where volunteers and the police work together to ensure that supplies can be moved swiftly through dangerous bat-

tle zones. That includes both the front lines and the camps that are forming outside the city for those fleeing their homes. A handful of volunteers has now grown into a sizable force.

"Only today, there are already 200 volunteers," Viznyak said. By afternoon, there are usually so many people showing up to help that they have to turn people away. On Monday, more than 60 trucks were dispatched across the country.

## Address Moscow's legitimate security demands, says China

KJM VARMA  
BEIJING, MARCH 1

AS RUSSIA stepped up its military offensive in Ukraine, China on Tuesday said that Moscow's "legitimate security demands" ought to be taken seriously and properly addressed for a political settlement to resolve the Ukrainian crisis.

Refusing to criticise Russia's military action, which has entered a decisive phase with thousands of Russian troops massed on the outskirts of Kyiv, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin called for a "political settlement that accommodates both sides' legitimate security concerns, achieves common security in Europe and promotes Europe's lasting peace and stability".

"China believes that the security of one country should not come at the expense of others, still less should regional security be guaranteed by strengthening or even expanding military blocs," Wang added. He said the Cold War mentality should be discarded completely. "The legitimate security concerns of all countries should be respected. Given NATO's five



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin

consecutive rounds of eastward expansion, Russia's legitimate security demands ought to be taken seriously and properly addressed," he said.

On the mounting casualties in Ukraine, Wang said the Ukraine issue has complex historical context and realistic factors.

"The Chinese side regrets the casualties. The current situation is not what we want to see. The priority is for all parties to exercise necessary restraint to prevent the situation on the ground in Ukraine from deteriorating or even spiralling out of control," he said. On the US and EU sanctions against Russia, Wang reiterated that sanctions are not an effective solution to solve problems. **PTI**

## ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD

### Suu Kyi pleads not guilty as graft trial continues

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BANGKOK, MARCH 1

OUSTED MYANMAR leader Aung San Suu Kyi pleaded not guilty Monday to a corruption charge that alleged she had accepted \$600,000 and seven gold bars from a former political ally, a legal official said.

The case is one of 10 in which she is being prosecuted under the anti-corruption law.

She is accused of receiving the money and gold bars in 2017-18 from Phyoo Min Thein, the former Chief Minister of Yangon. He was also a senior member of her National League for Democracy party.



Aung San Suu Kyi

Suu Kyi has been detained since the army toppled her elected government in February last year, and has not been seen or allowed to speak in public since then.

All of her court hearings have been closed to the media and public. Her lawyers, before they were served with gag orders late last year, said she rejected all the corruption allegations against her as "absurd." Suu Kyi has also faced a series of other criminal charges since her arrest.

### Interpol issues red notices against two Gupta brothers who fled South Africa

FAKIR HASSEN  
JOHANNESBURG, MARCH 1

THE INTERPOL has issued red notices against Atul and Rajesh Gupta — two of the three Indian-origin Gupta brothers — who fled South Africa with their families amid investigations into their alleged looting of billions of rands from state-owned enterprises.

However, the Interpol has declined a request from the South African government to issue red notices against their wives — Arthi and Chetali Gupta.

A Red Notice is an alert to all Interpol member states that an individual is a wanted fugitive,

but is not equivalent to an arrest warrant. However, it strengthens the case of a country negotiating the extradition of wanted criminals from another state.

The Red Notice, which the South African government had applied for against the Gupta Brothers seven months ago, was issued on Monday. The three Gupta brothers — Ajay, Atul and Rajesh — are originally from Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur and now believed to be in self-exile in Dubai.

Justice Minister Ronald Lamola has described the move as "a positive development", which he hoped would allow justice to take its course.

South Africa's National

Prosecuting Authority (NPA) has been trying for several years to extradite the Gupta brothers.

Although their exact whereabouts remains obscure, South Africa last year had concluded an extradition treaty with Dubai and applied for their extradition.

The Guptas have been accused of misusing their proximity to former President Jacob Zuma to loot from parastatal companies, including the national electricity supplier Eskom, which is now severely cash-strapped, resulting in frequent load shedding across the country.

The Guptas had previously stated that their extradition was politically motivated, which has been denied by the NPA. **PTI**

### 19-year-old woman dancer shot in Pakistan

Lahore: A 19-year-old woman dancer has been shot in Pakistan's Punjab province, the second such killing of an entertainer in the last one month in the country.

Police said Ayesha, a stage dancer, was going to the theatre in Jandawala Phatak of Faisalabad city when she was shot by unidentified gunmen on Monday evening. Police said the woman's family had not named any suspect in the FIR. "Police are probing the matter on different aspects, honouring, honouring," he said. Interim reports said Ayesha, a divorcee, was in a relationship with a man from her housing locality in Faisalabad. **PTI**

### US reach 65,000 H-1B visa cap for 2022: USCIS

LALIT K JHA  
WASHINGTON, MARCH 1

THE US have received enough petitions needed to reach the congressionally mandated 65,000 H-1B visa cap for the fiscal year 2022, a federal agency has announced.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

The H-1B visa programme is the most sought-after work visa among foreign professionals, including Indians. As mandated by the US Congress, the US can issue a maximum of 65,000 H-1B visa regular cap and another 20,000

H-1B visa US advanced degree exemption categories every year.

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which screens all such applications every year, on Monday announced that it has received a sufficient number of petitions needed to reach the congressionally mandated 65,000 H-1B visa regular cap and the 20,000 H-1B visa US advanced degree exemption, known as the master's cap, for fiscal year (FY) 2022.

"The status for registrations properly submitted for the FY 2022 H-1B numerical allocations, but that were not selected, will now show: Not Selected: Not selected — not eligible to file an H-1B cap petition based on this registration," it said. **PTI**

# 11 ECONOMY

<b>GOLD</b>	<b>RUPEE</b>	<b>OIL</b>	<b>SILVER</b>
₹50,577	₹75.33	\$96.89	₹65,557

Note: Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market as of February 28, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg; Crude oil (Indian basket) as of February 25

SENSEX: 56,247.28 ▲ 388.76 (0.70%) NIFTY: 16,793.90 ▲ 135.50 (0.81%) NIKKEI: 26,526.82 ▲ 50.32 HANG SENG: 22,713.02 ▼ 54.16 FTSE: 7,403.75 ▼ 85.71 DAX: 14,212.61 ▼ 354.62

Domestic equity, currency and bullion markets were closed on Tuesday on account of Mahashivratri; International market data till 1900 IST

## LONE INDIAN BANK IN RUSSIA, COMMERCIAL INDO BANK, IN FOCUS

# Russia sanctions: RBI, banks huddle up to draw strategy

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) is likely to take stock of the situation arising from the sanctions announced by the US and many other countries on Russia and work out suitable measures to be followed by commercial banks in the coming days.

Members of the Indian Banks' Association have already discussed the impact of the sanctions on Indian banks. Finance Ministry officials are also watching the developments closely and are in touch with the RBI and top lenders.

Banks, led by SBI, have already indicated that they will not process any transactions involving Russian entities subject to international sanctions imposed on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine. However, while ongoing transactions will not be affected, fresh transactions will remain on hold, banking sources said. India exported \$3.33 billion worth of goods to Russia in 2021, including goods like pharmaceutical products, tea and coffee. When contacted, SBI did not comment on the developments.

Government sources said the geopolitical developments would impact India's import basket, and there may be a need to diversify sources of imports of certain commodities, especially petroleum



Curfew, in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Tuesday. AP

## WAR IN UKRAINE

products and agri commodities. However, the impact of sanctions movement of payments between Russia and India seems "manageable" at the moment despite trade in both US dollars and Euro becoming difficult, sources said. This is because there is always the option of conducting transactions in rupee, just like it was done when sanctions were imposed on Iran.

Trade with Iran was done via a rupee account maintained with UCO Bank, wherein Indian importers deposited payments in rupee in the vostro account of Iranian banks for importing oil. A similar

system was used by Indian exporters to receive payments for Iran. It's possible to have same kind of transaction mechanism in this case as well, sources said. The main concern, however, seems to be around a sharp spike in commodity prices, especially oil and gas due to this geopolitical crisis, which is expected to have a significant bearing on the Indian economy.

There's also talk of revival of rupee payment system for trade with Russia. On the other hand, the RBI will have to tackle the impact of rising crude oil prices on retail inflation. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has already indicated that the renewed surge in international crude oil prices will require close monitoring as they pose a risk to domestic inflation.

Meanwhile, Commercial Indo Bank LLC, the lone Indian bank operating in Russia, is in the spotlight

as the bank is a lead agent of the supporting organisations – State Bank of India and Canara Bank – that conducts operations with Indian companies that do business in Russia. SBI holds 60 per cent stake in the bank while Canara Bank holds 40 per cent. However, the impact of sanctions on Commercial Indo Bank is not clear.

According to rating firm ACRA, the bank's liabilities include corporate deposits and interbank loans. Dependence on the largest depositors is relatively high, with the largest depositor / top 10 customers accounting for 38 per cent / 84 per cent of total liabilities. "The largest creditor is the embassy of the Republic of India and ACRA believes that the relationship between the Bank and this depositor is highly predictable," it said.

As of March 1, 2021, the bank's loan portfolio amounted to 6% of its assets. The largest portion of the assets is formed by Russian sovereign bonds and financial assets held with the Bank of Russia. ACRA noted the absence of problem loans (Stage 3 under IFRS9) in the bank's loan book as of June 30, 2020. The bank's guarantee portfolio stood at RUB 247 million as of June 30, 2020. The bank's strategy includes organic growth of the loan book, expansion in mortgage lending, and higher volume of guarantees issued on government contracts, it said.

## Ukraine Crisis: Ripple effect

### Stocks slide, oil tops \$100/bbl

New York/Mumbai: Oil soared Tuesday and investors shifted more money out of stocks and into US government bonds. As of 12:04 pm ET, the S&P 500 fell 1.6%, the Dow Jones Industrial Average by 2%, and Nasdaq 1.5%. Brent crude surged 9% to \$106.82 and USWTI by 10.6% to \$105.82. Meanwhile, all members of the International Energy Agency (IEA) agreed to release 60 million barrels of oil from their strategic reserves to send a strong message to oil markets that there will be "no shortfall in supplies", the group said Tuesday. Meanwhile, the rupee rose 25 per cent against the ruble in the last fortnight. **AGENCIES & ENTS**

## SWIFT awaits bank names

London/Mumbai: SWIFT said it was waiting to see which banks authorities want disconnected from its global financial messaging system. Meanwhile, Visa Inc and Mastercard Inc said they have blocked multiple Russian institutions. **REUTERS**

## 'Meta, Google inciting war'

Moscow: Russia's Foreign Ministry said a system should be created to hold Meta and Google responsible for "inciting war". **REUTERS**

## 'BATTLE OF EGOS BEING PLAYED TO THE GALLERY OF MEDIA'

# 'Vested interests': Grover quits BharatPe ahead of board meet

SOUAMYARENDRA BARIK  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

BHARATPE CO-FOUNDER Ashneer Grover resigned as its managing director and from the company's board minutes after being notified of a board meeting scheduled to be held late Tuesday. BharatPe said its board plans to consider the report submitted by PwC on Grover's conduct in this meeting. Before he went on a "voluntary" leave of absence on January 19, Grover had said he would return on April 1.

In his resignation letter, Grover said he would continue as the single largest individual shareholder of the company. As of August 2021, Grover owned a 9.5 per cent stake in BharatPe, and as per the company's last fundraise, his stake was worth Rs 1,800-1,900 crore.

He also alleged the BharatPe board had "ousted" him for their "vested interests", adding that the recent developments related to the company seem to be a "battle of egos being played to the gallery of the media under the charade of 'good governance'". Grover also alleged the "investor template" to make an "unwanted" founder go away, is to make the founder "the villain of the piece", something he claims is being done to him.

In a statement, BharatPe said Grover's resignation came "minutes" after receiving the agenda for the upcoming board meeting "that included submission of the



BharatPe co-founder Ashneer Grover. via Twitter

PwC report regarding his conduct and considering actions based on it". It added that the board "reserves the right to take action based on the report's findings". The board had appointed PwC late last month to investigate aspects such as accounting, approval processes, expenses and hirings.

Refuting BharatPe's claims, in interviews given to the media after his resignation, Grover said he received a notice from the company about an upcoming board meeting at 11:56 pm on Monday night and that his resignation letter, sent to the company's board just a few minutes later at 12:05 am Tuesday, could not have come in such a short span of time.

Grover's resignation also comes close on the heels of his emergency arbitration plea, challenging BharatPe's decision to

conduct a corporate governance audit at the company, being rejected by the Singapore International Arbitration Centre.

Last week, BharatPe had terminated the employment of Grover's wife, Madhuri Jain Grover, over alleged "misappropriation of funds" and allegations that she used company funds to purchase beauty products and pay for family trips to the US and Dubai. The stock options vested with her were also cancelled in line with the employment contract, sources said.

BharatPe's tussle with Grover and his wife came to light in early January shortly after an audio clip — where Ashneer allegedly using expletives against a Kotak Bank staffer — surfaced, prompting the board to look into the company's practices under Grover. While he claimed the clip was fake, the bank said it would take legal action over it. Two weeks later, Ashneer went on a voluntary leave of absence until March-end, and later, Madhuri was also sent on a leave of absence.

BharatPe appointed risk advisory firm Alvarez and Marsal to conduct the corporate governance audit, whose preliminary investigation found that payments were allegedly made to "dubious" recruitment firms with crores of rupees spent on "non-existing" vendors and "questionable invoices" created to substantiate such spends. All these allegations were tied to Madhuri Jain Grover.

## 'Ukraine war may see import bills topping \$600 bn this fiscal'

The ongoing crisis in Ukraine is set to push India's import bills beyond \$600 billion this fiscal, and lead to a spike in inflation and CAD, and a falling rupee, said an Ind-Ra report

**\$5/bbl** rise in crude oil prices will translate into a \$6.6 billion increase in trade/current account deficit

**10%** rise in petroleum product prices without factoring in currency depreciation will lead to a 42 basis

points (bps) increase in retail inflation and 104 bps in wholesale inflation

**MAJOR ITEMS THAT INDIA IMPORTS:**  
 ■ Crude oil  
 ■ Natural gas  
 ■ Gems and jewellery  
 ■ Edible oils & Fertilisers



Emergency personnel at Kharkiv, Ukraine. Reuters

Source: India Ratings/PTI

## Feb GST mop-up hits ₹1.3L cr

5th straight month of collections topping ₹1.2 lakh crore

AANCHAL MAGAZINE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

GROSS GOODS and Services Tax (GST) revenue collections in February (for sales in January) rose 17.6 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1.33 lakh crore, data released by the Finance Ministry on Tuesday showed. The mop-up marks the fifth straight month of GST collections being over Rs 1.2 lakh crore and fifth instance this fiscal of being over Rs 1.3 lakh crore, coming on the back of anti-evasion measures and a pickup in economic activity.

### Rise in collections

February, being a 28-day month, usually sees lower rev-

enues lower than January. The Finance Ministry said this indicates "recovery in key sectors". In a statement, the ministry said this "high growth during February 2022 should also be seen in the context of partial lockdowns, weekend and night curfews and various restrictions that were put in place by various states due to the omicron wave, which peaked around 20th January".

This is for the fifth time the GST collection has crossed the Rs 1.30 lakh crore mark in this financial year. "Since implementation of GST, for the first time, GST cess collection crossed Rs 10,000 crore mark, which signifies recovery of certain key sectors, especially automobile sales," the ministry said. Experts said that GST collec-

tions remaining at this level indicates the revenues may cross the revised targets set for FY22 in the Budget. MS Mani, Partner, Deloitte India said, "GST collections exceeding Rs 1.33 lakh crore, despite the challenging pandemic situation in Jan 22 indicates that the collections are now on a stable trajectory and the FY22 targets would be exceeded."

### Divergence among states

While on an overall basis, the collections are 17.6% higher than the same period last year, there is significant divergence among states with GST collections raised in these states rising within the range of 2 per cent to 23 per cent among large states. Full report on [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## Auto sales stay in the slow lane

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

Semiconductor shortage continues to plague passenger vehicle (PV) manufacturers, with major players like Maruti Suzuki India, Hyundai Motor India, Toyota and Honda Cars reporting a decline in their sales in February compared with the same month last year.

Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra, however, bucked the trend by reporting a jump in sales. Maruti Suzuki's domestic sales fell 6.7 per cent to 1,37,607 units during the month, while Hyundai reported a 14.6 per cent drop to 44,050 units. "The shortage of electronic components had a minor impact on the production of vehicles which are primarily sold in the domestic market. The company took all possible measures to minimise the impact," Maruti Suzuki said in a statement.

Hyundai said, "As the industry continues to grapple with the semiconductor shortage situation, the company along with its partners is continuously exploring alternatives..."

### Maruti records 'highest ever' monthly exports

Maruti Suzuki India on Tuesday said its exports jumped over two-fold to 24,021 units as against 11,486 units in the corresponding month last year - its highest ever monthly exports, as per a PTI report. **FE, WITHPTI**

## BRIEFLY

### Nadella bereaved

New Delhi: Microsoft said its chief executive officer Satya Nadella's son, 26-year-old Zain Nadella, who was born with cerebral palsy, has died. Condolence messages poured in on social media platforms and many took to Twitter to mourn the demise.

### NPCI data

New Delhi: Cashless retail transactions on UPI platform were worth ₹8.27 lakh crore in February, slightly lower than the amount recorded in January, data from National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) showed.

### PNB cheques

New Delhi: Punjab National Bank (PNB) said high-value cheques of Rs 10 lakh and above will be cleared after reconfirmation with the issuer under the Positive Pay System (PPS) from April 4. PNB said to protect the bank customers against large-value cheque frauds, it will make the PPS mandatory from April 4, 2022. **PTI**

## How will PFRDA's return scheme benefit savers?

GEORGE MATHEW  
MUMBAI, MARCH 1

THE PENSION regulator, Pension Fund Regulatory & Development Authority (PFRDA), which operates the National Pension System, is gearing up to launch its proposed guaranteed return scheme — Minimum Assured Return Scheme (MARS) — enabling savers and salaried class another option to channelise their investments.

**What's the PFRDA's plan?** PFRDA has appointed EY Actuarial Services LLP as a consultant to help design a MARS under the NPS. This will be the first scheme from the pension regulator that will offer a guaranteed return to investors. However, only the floor is set in the proposed scheme.

**What will be the return?** The actual returns will depend

retirement. The current 1-year interest rate is assigned to each annual contribution made and is valid until retirement so that, at each point of time, there is a different minimum return. This is similar to a system in Denmark, where most of the contributions (80 per cent) are guaranteed based on the rates the ATP can obtain in the market when contributions are paid, as per a PFRDA paper. Full report on [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## FM on LIC IPO: Full-scale war ... need to go back and review

REUTERS  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

THE GOVERNMENT is open to reviewing plans for the initial public offering of state-run Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said, amid the Ukraine crisis which has hit global markets.

"If global considerations warrant that I need to look at it, I wouldn't mind looking at it again," she told *Business Line* in an interview on Tuesday, referring to the timing of the LIC listing. The Centre and LIC's management had launched virtual roadshows for India's biggest-ever public listing, aiming to float 5 per cent stake to raise about \$8 billion this month. Last Saturday, the Cabinet approved a policy amendment allowing foreign direct investment



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in an interview with Business Line. PTI file

(FDI) of up to 20 per cent in LIC, a change aimed at facilitating the listing of the state-run insurer.

Since Russia's war on Ukraine last week, domestic markets have faced volatility and government officials fear foreign and domestic investors may shy away from buying shares of the insurer. Sitharaman said the government

ideally hoped to proceed with the listing as planned. However, "now, there is a full-scale war. Therefore, I need to go back and review the situation," she added.

Sitharaman said the pressure of meeting revenue targets from the sale of government stakes in companies in the current fiscal would not be a factor for deciding the timing of LIC listing. "No, I don't think that's a factor... I have to explain it to the whole world."

## 'Most ultrahigh net worth individuals from Mumbai'

Mumbai: Mumbai reported the highest number of 1,596 ultrahigh net worth individuals (UHNWIs), or people with net worth of \$30 million and above) in 2021.

Bengaluru saw highest growth in the number of UHNWIs (17.1 per cent rise to 352), followed by Delhi (12.4 per cent to 210) and Mumbai (9 per cent to 1596) in 2021, as per Knight Frank. **ENS**

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No. 6022-63 Date: 24.02.2022

**NOTICE INVITING TENDERS FOR WORKS**  
Online tenders are hereby invited on behalf of the Hon'ble Governor of Rajasthan for the following works from eligible enlisted Contractor/Firm as per Rules. Details of this tender notification and pre-qualification criteria can also be seen in NIT exhibited on web site [www.dipr.rajasthan.gov.in](http://www.dipr.rajasthan.gov.in), <http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in>, and <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>. Tenders are to be submitted online electronic format on web site <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>. RSL Charges, tender fee and bid security shall be submitted through e-GRAS only in respective budget head. Date & time for online submission Up to 21.03.2022 (18:00 hrs)

NIT No.	Work Description	Estimated Cost
ACE/CHU/27/2021-22	Operation and Maintenance of Various Pump Houses and Sources of Urban Water Supply Scheme Churu on Private Contract Basis Under ESCO MODEL UBN No: PHE2122WLOB14653	Rs. 832.51 Lakh

SAVE WATER - SAVE LIFE Sd/- (Deepak Bansal)  
DIPR/C/2663/2022 Additional Chief Engineer (Project), PHED, Churu

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क्रमांक 1380/लेखा-12 (V)/अजमेर/2022 दिनांक 19/02/2022  
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**TUSHAR KUMAR**  
ENTREPRENEUR & FOUNDER,  
ARGASIA EDUCATION PVT LTD

**Is technology facilitating the human brain to evolve further, or is it actually paralysing the brain for its evolution?**

That's a great question, and, in fact, that's a big part of what we talk about in the book. If you just use technology in an unrestricted way, you will end up being pulled in so many different directions. So, you have to consciously put in systems on how you use it. Once you get to work within those systems, you can have a much better equation with technology.



**VISHAL SEHGAL**  
MD, NISCHAY EDUCORP PVT LTD

**You spoke about the importance of digital tech goods and public platform. There's an opportunity for Indian companies to take these technologies to a new set of countries — like UPI or ONDC or the health platform. Do you think the government should also get into it through something like an Exim Bank to create tech soft power for India in these countries?**

Oh, absolutely! And I think the government is getting at it. To start with, just the announcement this week that NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India) is launching UPI Nepal. That is an example of an export of technology built here into Nepal. A couple of weeks ago, there was an announcement that Sri Lanka was going to build an Aadhaar-like system and the governments of India and Sri Lanka signed an agreement. If you look at the digital vaccination certificate that India has, which is part of the CoWIN platform, that technology is being used in Sri Lanka, Philippines and other countries. So, you're already seeing that Indian digital technology built as public goods is going out, and the government is playing a role in that. They're offering the COVID package to countries that want to implement a vaccination platform. So, you're definitely seeing what we just said — the Indian government is promoting Indian digital public goods globally.



**JAYANTA GHOSHAL**  
CONSULTING EDITOR,  
INDIA TODAY GROUP

**There is a chapter in your book on 'How to be Together'. In this digital age, on social media, there is fake news and post-truth, so how to handle that as a community? Although you have mentioned a few things on how to handle social media networks, what about social consciousness? How to rebel without building a movement, what can be the solution to combat the fake riot in the social media, and how to protect our sense of privacy?**

There are no easy solutions. We are trying with this book to come out with a philosophy of how to operate in this intense digital world. We have tried to capture what individuals and societies can do, you can't get everything right. But we also have to bring awareness to the fact that this is a big issue and all of us have to start thinking about it. Just as we worry about the pandemic or about climate change, we also have to worry about how we create a stable interface for all of us with our technology.



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**DHARMAKIRTI JOSHI**  
CHIEF ECONOMIST, CRISIL

**There is a difficulty with becoming aware that we are falling prey to technology, and without that awareness, course correction is very difficult. It's often argued that technology firms and apps are collecting a lot of information, which you also alluded to, and which can be used to manipulate your behaviour. So, in that case, it becomes very difficult for people to wean themselves off the platform or technology. This is what (Israeli historian-writer) Yuval Harari calls 'hacking' the 'brain'. Do you think firms need to be regulated for the welfare of the society in general? Or, do people have to be discerning enough to not fall prey?**

I think it's both. Obviously people have to be discerning enough because of the business model, which originally came because there was no commerce possible. They couldn't buy things or there were no payments on the internet. The only business model that emerged was advertising, and advertising was directly linked to how much you are able to engage a person. That's why this whole attention economy has come about. Around the world, governments are much more seized of this matter. If you look at the spate of proposals in the US and in Europe, they are trying to see how to create laws and regulations to bring some moderation here. It's both on the individual and on society to deal with this.

(Clockwise) Nilekani was in conversation with Anant Goenka, Executive Director, The Indian Express Group, and P Vaidyanathan Iyer, Executive Editor-National Affairs, The Indian Express

## 'Pandemic, climate, and now third crisis is an intensely digital world'

At the recent e-Adda, Nandan Nilekani, co-founder and non-executive chairman of Infosys, spoke on technology for transformation, digital hygiene and why tech giants in India don't speak up

### On his new book

*The Art of Bitfulness: Keeping Calm in the Digital World* (Penguin Random House), which is co-authored with Tanuj Bhojwani, came out during the pandemic. During the pandemic, all of us experienced much more digital intensity in our lives. I am a big believer in technology for transformation but this kind of technology where people are just taking away all their attention needs people to have some good 'digital hygiene'. How do we use devices in a better way? We can't throw away devices. Is there a simpler pragmatic way of doing it? So it's not an anti-tech book at all. It's a pro-you book. How do you become the master of your digital technology.

### On whether technology is winning in the humanity vs technology debate

Technology has become very pervasive and the pandemic has only accelerated that. We order food digitally, we buy things digitally, we have relationships digitally, our grandmothers talk to their grandchildren digitally. The last two years have accelerated the digital role in our lives. We talk of this as a third crisis because the pandemic was one crisis where we had a virus that went exponential and we all had to lockdown, then we have the climate crisis, so this is the third one. In this increasingly digital world, how do we be on top of things, don't let technology overwhelm you, use it for your own benefit, get all the value of the fantastic things out there but don't succumb to it and become miserable?

### On how to use social media responsibly

Actually I don't use social media. I have three devices for the three modes in which I work on a computer. I have a create mode, which is where you work, and you need to be focused and you can't have distractions. There is a curate mode where you read or watch or just browse. And there is a communicate mode, which is where you talk to people through various channels. So my model is very simple. I have a laptop on which I do all my work. I have an iPad on which I do my reading and curation and watching, and I use the phone only for communication and again I only use voice and SMS. I don't use any other social media. I do use Twitter but in a broadcast mode. I want to send out a message. I don't get into discussions on Twitter. So I have a simplified model of engaging with technology, which may sound old-fashioned to some.

### On data protection and privacy

Well, obviously a law would be good and I know that law is in Parliament now. I as-

sume that it's being looked at, but it's also up to us. Finally, privacy is boundary management. How do you make sure that you define the boundaries? You can say the law will come and all but how do we take agency over these things and create approaches? That's what we're trying to address in the book.

### On digital creating inequalities

Obviously, the child who has access to a smartphone or whose parent has a smartphone has a bigger advantage over a poor family that doesn't have a device. So, the more you rely on technology, the more people who are left out of technology will be left behind. We had two years of children not going to school, so clearly that's one kind of thing. The second is the divide between the people who have jobs that they can do digitally and those who have proximity jobs. Then the third is increasingly, a lot of biotech and genomics anomalies, creating personalised health but

## QUICK QUESTIONS

### Your most millennial habit.

I don't know if it's a millennial habit, but I binge-watch.

### What's the last show that you binge-watched?

Right now, I'm watching a show called *Inventing Anna* on Netflix.

### A business leader you admire.

Globally, I met people like Bill Gates; in India, of course, Narayana Murthy, Ratan Tata and Azim Premji are all phenomenal business leaders, and of course, my good friend who passed away, Rahul Bajaj — he was an amazing person.

### The one milestone in your life that you feel most proud of.

The fact that I was able to keep my promise when I went to the government, delivered Aadhaar and came back. Now, I think the fact that in the last four years I've been at Infosys and it's become a much better situation.

### Google or Facebook, the lesser evil?

Both are amazing. What I like about Google is that the products are very useful.

### China or America, which country will end up leading the world in EVs (electric vehicles)?

In the short term, clearly China because it has invested hugely in EVs and LTP batteries. But you can never discount innovation in the US and once they unleash the innovators, they do amazing things, see what's happened with Tesla, or the new Ford Explorer for Ford.

### BJP or Congress — who used the Aadhaar better?

Congress gave me the freedom and space to build it, which I'll always be grateful for, and BJP applied it in the most efficient and effective way.

### The one government service that you wish Infosys did.

We are grateful for the opportunity to build the entire indirect and direct tax system of India, and we just want to make that better and better.

the tax of any profits made on that.

### On why tech giants in India, unlike the West, don't take positions

If there's something we have to say, we should say it behind closed doors or be quiet about it, because I don't see any value in just going public about something if you don't agree with it. I think of myself as somebody who can make a difference, but through action, by maybe convincing people about it. It's not clear to me that just taking a public position is necessarily the way to go. I'm not an activist, I'm a problem solver, and I want to use my capital to solve problems.

### On whether Infosys would want to speak up after it was called anti-national

We live in a very vibrant system with a lot of views, and what companies and individuals have to do is separate the noise from the signals and focus on doing the right thing. We are not journalists, getting into editorial opinions and so on. We have to run our business. We have to meet our obligation to society, and we have to satisfy our customers.

### On whether the huge valuations in the startup sector are sustainable

We are already seeing some value compression. As the US moves from an era of high liquidity and low interest rates to less liquidity and interest rates going up, value compression could happen. The future value discounting will be less but also as they say, the stock market in the short term is a voting machine, but in the long term, it is a weighing machine. So, in the short term, people will follow some exciting new development and calculate hopes for it. But in the long term, they look at performance, revenue, profits and cash flow. So, we are going to see that as the markets become tighter on interest rates and liquidity.

### On geopolitical tensions and the semiconductor industry

There was a time when the US was a very big semiconductor producer, but in the last 10 years, with the splitting of the design from the foundries where things are made, we have seen massive growth in semiconductor manufacturing, for example in Taiwan. As global tensions have gone up, everybody's realising that this globalised supply chain is not working, which is why you see a big push in the US to have more domestic semiconductor manufacturing.



**SHARAD SOMANI**  
PARTNER & HEAD OF  
INFRASTRUCTURE - ASIA  
PACIFIC, KPMG SINGAPORE

**What's the future of work, with Sweden going for a four-day work week, and work-from-home becoming a norm? Do you see our life moving into the Meta virtual world totally? And how does the future generation cope with this drastic societal change?**

There are a couple of dimensions to the future of work. One is where you do the work and the question is: do you do work in the office, or at home, or partly from home, partly from office — is this the hybrid model? That's one of the big issues that people are facing and we don't really know the answers. We don't know what is going to be the steady state of this work in the coming years and it's fascinating. Different companies are grappling with this. So, that equilibrium will only come post-pandemic and different companies may have different equilibrium. Some may have a third of the people in the office, some may have nobody in office. So that's all up for grabs. The second part is this metaverse stuff. So, if you're going to be working more and more remotely, how does technology make it a more immersive experience? For example, if five-six of you are in a room, how do you create a way where I can see the guy to my left, I can talk to the guy on my right. Some of them may be physically in the room, some of them may just be avatars. So, how do you create a more immersive experience to make collaborations easier? That centre is where the metaverse in the business world is going to work, so it's related. But it's all part of the fact that increasingly, work will be done in a distributed way — some of it physically in the same room, some of it with people far away in their homes or even in other countries.

**In the room:** Ashok Kela, MD, Aetek Timbex; Nilesh Shah, MD, Kotak Mutual Fund; Dilip Piramal, CMD, VIP Industries; Hemendra Kothari, Chairman, DSP; Kirit Parikh, Chairman, IRADe; Arijit Chakravorty, Founder, AI Robotics; Sanjay Pugalía, CEO & Editor-in-Chief - Media Initiatives, Adani Enterprises; Neel Raheja, Group President, K Raheja Corp; Kiran Khalap, Co-founder & MD, chlorophyll; Aakash Sachdev, MD, Foundation Holdings; Venkataraman R, Dean, Institute Building & Examinations, ICFAL Business School; Mridu Dalmia, Trustee, Dalmia Group Holdings; Krishna K Maheshwari, CEO, Marudhar Tanchem; Arvind Paranjpye, Director, Nehru Planetarium; Mahesh Munjal, CMD, Majestic Auto; NP Singh, Vice-President, Rashtriya Kisan Majdoor Sangh; Shashi Sharma, Founder & CEO, SSBC India; Vikram S Shriram, Vice-chairman & MD, DCM Shriram; Gurdeep Singh, Chairman, Kloeckner Pentaplast India; Dilip Chenoy, Former Secretary-General, FICCI; Girish Luthra, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation; Thomas Kuruvilla, Managing Partner & Board Member, Arthur D Little Middle East; Raj Chengappa, Group Editorial Director - Publishing, India Today Group; Ameya Chandavarkar, CEO (International Business) & Executive Director, FDC; Naman Pugalía, Founder, Peppo; Anu Malik, Music composer

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The Indian esports team selection process for the Asian Games begins this month.

# India's PUBG, Arena of Valor dilemma before Hangzhou Asian Games

MIHIR VASAVDA  
MUMBAI, MARCH 1

ALMOST TWO years after Chinese-owned games 'PUBG Mobile' and 'Arena of Valor' were banned by the Indian government, the gaming community is set to approach the sports ministry with a question: can they compete in these two titles at this year's Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

On Wednesday, officials from the Esports Federation of India (ESFI) are likely to meet sports secretary Sujata Chaturvedi to seek permission from the government for the participation of Indian gamers in these two games, which are medal events at the Hangzhou Asiad.

"We have to get permission from the government to participate in these events," ESFI president Vinod Kumar Tiwari said. "Can we hold a qualifier for it and go for it? We are speaking to the ministry and we will try to explain. If they give us the go-ahead, we will compete in all sports else we will compete in six."

In late 2020, amidst border tensions between India and China in eastern Ladakh, the government banned more than 100 applications owned by Chinese companies, including the two games, under Section A of the Information Technology Act, saying they were a threat to the country's sovereignty and integrity.

A year later, 'PUBG Mobile' and 'Arena of Valor' were named among the eight titles for the Asian Games to be held from September 10 to 25 in Hangzhou, which is home to some of China's biggest technology companies. This will be the first time esports will be a part of a multi-discipline event as a medal sport.

Tiwari, who is also the director of international relations at the Olympic Council of Asia, said a special Asian Games version, with less violence, of these two games has been designed to make sure there's parity among gamers. "PUBG is banned not just in India but in quite a few other countries in Asia as well. So, we have made an Asian Games edition. It's the same for 'Arena of Valor'. There's no killing in that, it's just target shooting and all those things," Tiwari said.

These developments put Indian gamers in a bind but they continued practising using alternative titles. But as the deadline to nominate teams for the Asian Games nears, clarity is sought on the issue.

The Indian esports team selection process for the Asian Games begins this month, with registrations likely to open in the first week of March. The team size for 'Arena of Valor' will be five players plus one substitute, while 'PUBG Mobile' can have four players and a substitute in a team. The playoffs for qualification are likely to be held from March 20 to April 10, when the team will be finalised.

ESFI expects more than one lakh gamers to take part in the qualification process between ultimately choosing a team of around 25. "We hope to send around 20-25 athletes," Tiwari said. "We are trying to have qualifiers for PUBG and Arena of Valor as well but before that, we have to get permission from the government." If the government gives its go-ahead for participation in these two games, 'Battlegrounds Mobile India' (BGMI) will be used as a substitute for 'PUBG Mobile' while 'Clash of Titans' will be the alternate for 'Arena of Valor'. "The gaming communities have themselves come up with these ideas," ESFI director Lokesh Suji said. "This, however, is only if we get a go-ahead."

# Fans allowed for Kohli's 100th Test in late volte face

Mohali game vs Sri Lanka was earlier slated to be played behind closed doors

NITIN SHARMA AND PRATYUSH RAJ  
CHANDIGARH / NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

IN A volte face, fans will be allowed upto 50 percent capacity inside the Punjab Cricket Association (PCA) Stadium for Virat Kohli's 100th Test match in Mohali, with India taking on Sri Lanka starting from Friday, Jay Shah, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary, confirmed on Tuesday evening that the former captain's landmark game will not be played in front of empty stands, as had been planned earlier.

"The first Test between India and Sri Lanka to be played at the Punjab Cricket Stadium in Mohali will not be held behind closed doors," Jay Shah told ANI. "The decision to allow spectators into the ground is one taken by the State Cricketers' Associations and in the present circumstances, is based on various factors."

"I have spoken with the PCA office bearers and they have confirmed that cricket fans will be able to witness the historic moment of Virat Kohli playing his 100th Test match."

Last Saturday, PCA treasurer RP Singla had said that spectators wouldn't be allowed for the match. "Apart from the people who are on duty for the Test match, we are not allowing any general spectators as per the directive of the BCCI," Singla had said.

The decision to keep fans out had attracted criticism on social media, especially after the preceding two T20I matches were played amid cheering stands in Dharamsala.

Following Tuesday's policy change, Singla said that spectators had now been allowed after the BCCI's instruction. "We got the communication from the BCCI about the allowing of fans for the first Test match. BCCI treasurer Arun Dhumal called us and informed that 50 per cent crowd will be allowed and we are now making necessary arrangements," Singla told The Indian Express.

"We will allow online sale of tickets from Wednesday onwards as it becomes crowded at the ticket counters at the stadium," Singla added. "The PCA will ensure that all Covid-19 protocols are followed."

Jay Shah said that the recent fall in covid cases had allowed hosting associations to let fans enter stadiums. "While we started off the West Indies Tour of India behind closed doors, the encouraging dip in COVID-19 cases allowed the hosting associations to permit crowds. Based on the advisories by the State Health Authorities, fans were able to witness the games in Kolkata and Dharamsala while UPCA had Lucknow T20I without crowds owing to a polling a day before the match. "I am really looking forward to Virat Kohli's



The IS Bindra PCA Stadium has a capacity of around 27,000.

Kamleshwar Singh

100th Test and wish our champion cricketer the very best. This is an occasion for our fans to savour. May he continue to represent the country in many more matches to come," Shah added.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly said, "Virat Kohli's 100th Test match will have no restrictions. BCCI asks the state associations to open up on the basis of government directives. It is as per the government norms."

"Punjab Cricket Association will have crowd as per government norms in Mohali Test. I have spoken to PCA president Rajinder Gupta and there will be no restrictions," Ganguly told ANI.

Last-minute scramble

On February 15, the Mohali district administration had permitted upto 75 percent capacity for sports complexes. "As per the Covid-19 guidelines of the state and the district, sports and all such events are open and there are no restrictions. The only restriction is the bio bubble that too only by the BCCI for the players. The PCA organises the matches and the only role we play as administration is of law and order," Mohali Deputy Commissioner Isha Kalia told this paper.

The IS Bindra PCA Stadium has a capacity of around 27,000, including ten corporate boxes that can accommodate 1,000. But with the announcement to allow fans coming only two days before the start of the match, the PCA is now running against time.

"This is absolute madness. We have been seeking approval right from the beginning. We were told to play it behind closed doors because of the third wave. Then crowds were allowed in Kolkata and Dharamsala. Earlier, we were told that only corporate boxes would be opened to accommodate players' families, sponsors, corporates, BCCI and PCA office bearers. The preparation was made accordingly; the last-minute change has caught us off-guard," a PCA source said.

Meanwhile, India vice-captain Jasprit Bumrah hailed Kohli's imminent landmark. "It is always a special achievement for a player. It is a testimony to his hard work and to his dedication," Bumrah said in a press conference on Tuesday. "To play 100 Test matches for your country is a great occasion. He has contributed a lot to the success of the Indian team and will contribute a lot more in the future as well. It is another feather in his cap. I wish him the best and congratulate him on the achievement."

**The decision to keep fans out had attracted criticism on social media, especially after the preceding two T20I matches were played amid cheering stands in Dharamsala.**

# South Africa turn tables to record big win

REUTERS  
MARCH 1

SOUTH AFRICA turned the tables on New Zealand with an emphatic 198-run victory in the second test in Christchurch on Tuesday, crushing the hosts' hopes of a maiden series win over the Proteas.

Having suffered their second-worst test defeat in the first meeting in Christchurch, South Africa rebounded superbly at Hagley Oval, dismissing the Black Caps for 227 in their second innings just after tea on day five.

Chasing a would-be world record victory target of 426 runs, New Zealand resumed on 94 for four in the morning and there was a flicker of hope of saving the match as they reached lunch at 180 for five.

However, the resistance was broken when wicketkeeper Tom Blundell (44) and all-rounder Colin de Grandhomme (18) surrendered with loose shots after the break, and the Black Caps bowed out losing 6-61.

South Africa's pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada was Man of the Match after taking eight wickets and blasting 47 runs in the second innings as the tourists piled on 354 for nine declared to set up the win.

"It's never easy playing against New Zealand and we knew what we had to do... I'm glad that we could get the job done," said Rabada.

"In the first test we completely didn't rock up... We knew we had to win this one, at least to make it 1-1."

Rabada's pace comrade Marco Jansen grabbed three final-day wickets to finish with seven for the match, while spinner Keshav Maharaj was influential with 3-75 in the second innings.

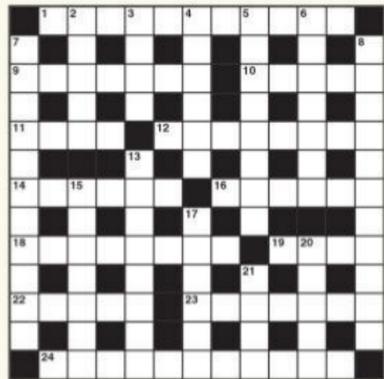
Having demolished South Africa by an innings and 276 runs in the opener, New Zealand needed only to draw the match to complete their first series win over the Proteas and end 90 years of frustration dating back to the teams' first in 1931/32.

But their top order was routed twice, leaving them chasing the game after South Africa's batsmen opened with 364 after winning the toss, having managed only 206 in total in the series-opener at the same ground.

"It's obviously not the outcome we were hoping for," said New Zealand's stand-in captain and opener Tom Latham, who was dismissed for a duck and one by Rabada in the rematch. "We knew South Africa were going to be at their best and fair credit to them, they played fantastically well."

**BRIEF SCORE:**  
**South Africa:** 364 & 354 for 9 decl beat  
**New Zealand:** 293 & 227 (Conway 92, Rabada 3/46, Jansen 3/63) by 198 runs.

## CROSSWORD 4677



- ACROSS**  
1 It swims with the current (8,3)  
9 Nothing to share but words (7)  
10 Leaps into an indiscretion (5)  
11 A pre-match fling (4)  
12 Two things a lodger may be given with the piano (8)  
14 Embarrassed coming out of purdah (4,2)  
16 A golfer won't take it lying down (6)  
18 Be on the way to appearing proper (8)  
19 Tree house? (4)  
22 Organ I have in both sides of the body (5)  
23 Ends interim arrangements (7)  
24 Does he get priceless ideas? (11)
- DOWN**  
2 Live wires taken on stage perhaps (5)  
3 Sign of minor damage in the counter (4)  
4 Wandered out of danger (6)  
5 Unusually bad cloth may make the skin tingle (4,4)  
6 Account for what is no longer clear (7)  
7 Kick the account around or pay up (4,3,4)  
8 Having no grave doubts? (4,7)  
13 Duck when beer mugs are thrown around (8)  
15 Make a successful comeback as an upholsterer? (7)  
17 Quickly take a few notes may be (6)  
20 He's forced to live off his land (5)  
21 New barn for grain husks (4)

Solutions Crossword 4676: Across: 1 Filled, 4 Ask for it, 9 Ignite, 10 Latchkey, 12 Gown, 13 Andes, 14 Sign, 17 Movable feast, 20 Stage whisper, 23 Spud, 24 Grand, 25 Onus, 28 Achilles, 29 Praise, 30 Tossports, 31 Target Down: 1 Fair game, 2 Long wave, 3 Efts, 5 Siamese twins, 6 Fact, 7 Rake in, 8 Trying, 11 Undergarment, 15 Abate, 16 Astrir, 18 Spanking, 19 Prospect, 21 Aslant, 22 Rushes, 26 Clip, 27 Aria.

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



## CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



## DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

- ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)**  
The week is almost half-way through and you still don't seem to have accomplished very much. Perhaps this is not a time for achievement in any orthodox sense. Why don't you try a change of tack? Perhaps you should forget about past delays and get on with your plans.
- TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)**  
Fortunate stars continue, favouring mainly those of you with April and early May birthdays will have to wait a little longer for their perfect planetary alignments, but can still afford to rest on their laurels. Remember, though, partners have to take the lead.
- GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)**  
Much has been said and written about your financial complications. All I can add now is a reminder that you are still fighting on several fronts, but that within a few weeks the situation will be eased. First, Mercury, your planetary ruler, has to get out of its current scrape.
- CANCER (June 22 - July 23)**  
Various planets, each in their different ways, bring you some pretty bright financial ideas. However, you must move immediately towards putting your plans into effect if you are not to meet a rising tide of opposition. But, then, a little friction may be inevitable, perhaps even useful.
- LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)**  
The long-term effect of your current stars is difficult to gauge. What we can say with some certainty is that the general drift this week is towards the clarification of certain personal issues that, until now, have remained irritatingly vague.
- VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)**  
You may be extremely pleased to hear that there could be a happy ending to a rather bizarre story. You might decide that the only way forward now is to put the past behind you and pretend that nothing happened. But then that's not really the case, is it?
- LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)**  
An extraordinary amount of planetary activity has been teaching you a firm lesson, namely that a house built on foundations of straw will not do. It is time to be more settled. In a sense, you also have to face up to the real world. And not before time.
- SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)**  
The time is fast approaching when you will have to think about terminating one particular involvement. The weekend may be a better time for taking a final decision and breaking the news than now. But some of you may decide that next week will be better.
- SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)**  
You must get a move on, or miss the boat. Mercury will not spend long in favourable and friendly parts of your chart. You should therefore do what you can over the next two weeks to splash out, experimenting with different options, however unlikely.
- CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)**  
A separation, or parting of the ways, may have left you feeling rather bruised. Yet whatever was done in the heat of the moment may still be undone, if you so wish. It's all a question of commitment. It's also a question of working out just why you feel as you do.
- AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)**  
You are renowned for your sheer inventive genius. Let's hope that teachers, employers, colleagues and relatives are now prepared to give you the space to play around with some of your more special ideas. You should take care that nobody misunderstands your real intentions, though.
- PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)**  
You have an unfortunate habit of poking your nose into other people's affairs, even when it's not wanted. Endearing as this naive quality can be, let me warn you not to push your luck as the week draws to its close. After all, someone may try and bite it off.

## JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

Decisions are made by people who have \_\_, not people who have \_\_. - Scott Adams (4, 5, 6)

MNAEE      ACEOLT  
EHITT      GIPUMN

Answers: Decisions are made by people who have **name**, not people who have **talent**.  
SOLUTION: ENEMA, TITHE, LOCATE, IMPRISON

## SUDOKU 4761

Difficulty Level 5s  
Instructions  
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

Difficulty Level  
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

## SOLUTION SUDOKU 4760

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

# Messengers of peace from Russia

BRIEFLY

## UKRAINE TO COMPETE IN PARALYMPICS

Ukraine's 20 athletes for the Winter Paralympics are expected to be in Beijing in time for Friday's opening ceremony, IPC spokesman Craig Spence said, adding that the team was heading for the Chinese capital and could arrive as soon as Wednesday. Russian athletes are set to compete in Beijing as Russian Paralympic Committee. AP

SHIVANI NAIK  
MUMBAI, MARCH 1

THE RUSSIAN hashtag Net Voynye (pr: Niyet Vaaniye) appeared sombrely on black backgrounds of a handful of Russia's most revered sports profiles on social media, as athletes from the sporting powerhouse asserted their opposition to war after the invasion of Ukraine. In what might be unprecedented public expressions in that part of the world, young champions - big names in their respective sports - weighed in on the situation, pleading for pacifism and peace and an end to violence.

### The Big statements:

"Today, I want to speak on behalf of every kid in the world. They all have dreams, their lives are just starting, so many nice experiences to come. That's why I want to ask for peace in the world, for peace between countries. Kids are born with inner trust in the world, they believe so much in everything, in people, in love, in safety, in justice, in their chances in life. Let's be together and show them that it's true, because every kid shouldn't stop dreaming."

DANIIL MEDVEDEV,  
TENNIS WORLD NO. 1

The Russian who replaced Novak Djokovic as tennis' male World No. 1 a day later, stayed authentic when addressing the situation in his social media post. Medvedev had spoken despondently of a "kid's dream ending" after he lost the Australian Open final in January. And he carried in the same vein - stepping into a child's shoes, so to speak - aware of the destruction and death that a war could bring.

"It's not about my match [or] how it affects me because what's happening is much more terrible. You realise how important it is to have peace in the world and to respect each other no matter what and to be united."

ANDREY RUBLEV,  
TENNIS WORLD NO. 6

The Russian World No. 6 imprinted "No War Please" on a TV camera lens with a marker moments after his semi-final win over Hubert Hurkacz at the Dubai Duty Free tennis championships. The video clip soon



World number 1 tennis player from Russia, Daniil Medvedev, had spoken despondently of a "kid's dream ending" after he lost the Australian Open final in January. He spoke in the same vein about war in an Instagram post. Daniil Medvedev/Instagram

after he fist-pumped was watched by millions. Russian tennis players have always been wildly expressive on court, but the 24-year-old seemed to be overcome by emotion, while stepping outside the athlete's bubble, staying poised about the big picture after reaching the final, as he said later: "In these moments, you realise that my match is not important." These are conflicted times for Russian players because in near-peace situations (as late as a fortnight ago), Rublev was winning the Marseille Open doubles title, playing alongside Ukrainian Denys Molchanov.

"Please, no more war. It doesn't matter who is in the war - Russia, Ukraine, different countries - I think we have to live in peace and a great world."

ALEX OVECHKIN,  
ICE HOCKEY GREAT, & NIKITA ZADOROV

NHL darling, who has a frenzied following back in Russia and belongs to the adored "Great Eight", while being a follower of Vladimir Putin after the Crimean invasion,

Ovechkin, 36, has been a figure of pride. Russians always saw ice hockey as more than just a game, with entire Cold War discourses having zipped on ice. But speaking to American reporters in Philadelphia earlier, Ovechkin appealed "no more war", after a reiteration of "I'm just an athlete," and not criticising Putin, as he added: "He's my President." Fellow hockey player Nikita Zadorov, 26, of Calgary Flames, wrote "no war" in red on black, and was more insistent in his captioning "Stop it."

"First of all, I only want to say that I'm totally against the war and can't get (my head) around what's happening in Ukraine. All my thoughts are with Ukrainian people. Secondly, I also want people to understand that most of the Russians only want peace and never asked for all of this to happen, we shouldn't be targets of hate just because of our origin. I know these few lines won't make a big difference to the current situation but I just wanted to share it."

PAVEL SIVAKOV  
CYCLIST

BORN IN Italy to Russian cyclist couple Alexei Sivakov and Aleksandra Koliaseva, 26-year-old Pavel, a Team Ineos Grenadiers cyclist who's won stage races at Tour of the Alps and Tour de Pologne, was quoted by cycling-weekly.com as saying "most Russians wanted peace." His tweet got RTed 700 times, and was liked by around 10,000. He holds dual Russian-French citizenship.

"What's going on! Pull up! We live in the 21st century!"

LARISA KUKLINA,  
BIATHLON EUROPE MEDALLIST

Larisa Kulkina, 31, posted an image of herself with a heart split into Russia and Ukraine flags, urging countries to come up to scratch with 21st-century sensibilities. While the International Biathlon Union withdrew events from Russia, the biathlete was left exasperated with the impending spectre.

"Personal ambitions or political motives

cannot justify violence. This takes away the future not only from us, but also from our children. Stop the violence, stop the war."

ANASTASIA PAVLYUCHENKOVA,  
TENNIS ACE

Posting on her social media, French Open 2021 finalist Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, made the most direct and pithiest comment on the situation, urging an end to violence and war. In a well-articulated statement, she penned, "I've been playing tennis since I was a kid. I have represented Russia all my life. This is my home and my country. But now I am in complete fear, as are my friends.

"But I am not afraid to clearly state my position. I am against war and violence."

It was the strongest hint at unease amongst Russian athletes.

"I will make my position clear. You cannot defend yourself on someone else's territory. Russians and Ukrainians are brothers, not enemies. Stop the war."

NIKITA VITIUGOV,  
CHESS PLAYER

A CLUTCH of top chess Grandmasters from Russia, including Vitiugov, a member of former World Championships squads, posted their dismay at Russian actions in Ukraine. GM Peter Svidler wrote "Silence made today possible. Say no to war." GM Alexandra Kosteniuk posted a blank dire black empty post, while Russian IM Alina Bivol pleaded with the world not to hate Russians for "actions of authorities."

World Championship contender Ian Nepomniachtchi called the start of the attacks, "Blacker than any black Thursdays."

### Fedor Smolov, football

Well-known Russian football player Fedor Smolov, 32, who idolised Andriy Shevchenko and George Weah as footballers, was amongst the first Russian footballers to hit Instagram and post the hashtag NotoWar. The Dynamo Moscow player, who returned to his first club after 11 years, scored the opener in a 3-0 win against FC Khimki on Saturday. The three-time Russian Footballer of the Year between 2015-18 was part of the squad that ousted Spain at the FIFA 2018 World Cup. He is rumoured to be in a relationship with Maria Shumayeva, granddaughter of Boris Yeltsin.

## National Open Jumps: Athletes shine bright amid confusion over wind gauge system

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MARCH 1

AFTER A dismal show at the Tokyo Olympics, long jumper Sreeshankar Murali is showing signs of getting his rhythm back with a gold-winning effort of 8.17m at the inaugural AFI National Open Jumps Competition in Trivandrum. The 22-year-old, who had finished 25th in the qualifying stages of Tokyo, came up with three 8m-plus jumps and nailed his best jump in the final attempt.

"This was my comeback competition and I am really pleased with my performance today. After Tokyo, there was a lot of talk about my training methods. I think I silenced them today. I am still not 100 percent but this is a good start to the season," the Kerala athlete said.

Overall six athletes, including Sreeshankar, made the cut for the upcoming Asian Games and Commonwealth Games as per the Athletics Federation of India's qualifying stan-

**The device is necessary for the performance to be considered at the world level. The result sheets did not mention any wind speed readings.**

dards. However, there was some confusion regarding the absence of a wind gauge system. The device is necessary for the performance to be considered at the world level. The result sheets did not mention any wind speed readings. Several AFI office bearers were reached out to clarify but none responded.

"When we got our reading the wind speeds were not mentioned and we thought it was a clerical error. But later we were told they didn't have a wind gauge system. It is not fair for the athletes because there were a lot of decent performances today and that

would have helped us in the world rankings leading to the World Championship," an athlete eyeing Worlds qualification said.

The men's triple jump show witnessed some stiff competition where Eldhose Paul had to come off with his career-best jump of 16.93m to stave off his Kerala state mates Karthik Unnikrishnan (16.87m) and Abdulla Aboobacker (16.81m). In the women's long jump Ancy Sojan took the honours with 6.51m was better than AFI's qualifying guidelines for CWG and Asiad.

Sreeshankar, the national record holder, received a lot of flak after his poor outing in Tokyo. His decision to train under father Murali also was criticised heavily. It is not certain whether Sreeshankar will continue to train under his father if and when the AFI appoints a foreign jumps coach. As per the Sports Authority of India statement last month, Juan Gualberto Naples Cardenas had been appointed to join as horizontal jumps coach. But as per AFI officials, Cardenas is unlikely to join the Indian setup.

## World Cup: Saurabh wins gold, maiden medal for Esha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CAIRO, MARCH 1

INDIAN SHOOTING ace Saurabh Chaudhary won the gold medal in the men's 10m air pistol event, opening the country's account in the year's first ISSF World Cup here on Tuesday.

Esha Singh bagged the second medal for the country after she won a silver in the women's 10m air pistol event. After winning multiple ISSF medals in the junior ranks for a few years, this was Esha's first medal in the India senior colours. India now top the medals tally with one gold and one silver in its kitty.

The Asian Games gold medalist Chaudhary shot 16 in the gold medal contest to finish ahead of Germany's Michael Schwald (6). The bronze in the event was bagged by Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Artem Chernousov of Russia, whose country's flag was removed owing to its involvement in the ongoing conflict with Ukraine.

The 19-year Chaudhary, an Olympian who also has a Youth Olympic gold medal to his name, was third in the men's 10m air pistol qualification stage with a total of 584 points, making it through to the elimination as one of the top eight shooters.

This was Chaudhary's third individual ISSF World Cup gold and first in the new format, dominating Germany's Schwald in the final. Chernousov topped the 92-strong qualification field with 591 points.

In the women's 10m air pistol event, Esha went down to reigning world champion and world number one Anna Korakaki of Greece 4-16 in the gold medal match.

Shooting in an 80-strong field consisting of the top two at Tokyo Olympics besides Korakaki, Esha shot a solid 578 to finish sixth in the 60-shot qualifying round to make it to the second semi-final. Esha trumped Korakaki along with the likes of Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Vitalina Batsarashkina of Russia to top the round with 41.5 points.

## Davis Cup: At 42, physio and yoga keeping Bopanna young again

GAURAV BHATT  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

ROHAN BOPANNA turns 42 on Friday, the first day of India's Davis Cup tie against Denmark. His twentieth year as a tennis pro has begun with two ATP titles, partnering with compatriot Ramkumar Ramanathan. "Absolutely loving" his tennis currently, Bopanna discussed factors behind his form and longevity.

"I think the major aspect of my longevity has been having a physiotherapist with me on the Tour. Having somebody there for warming up, cooling down, recovery while being on the road constantly," Bopanna tells *The Indian Express*. "Of course, it's an investment you have to put in for your own self, to prolong your career."

Then there's the rediscovery. Early 2020, Bopanna was on the mend from a brutal shoulder injury, before Covid-19 stopped play. Discomfort in the patella (cartilage from Bopanna's kneecaps is long lost to the grind of the upper echelons) and a cousin's advice directed him towards

lyengar yoga.

"It has really changed my body over the past two years," Bopanna says of the form of yoga that focuses on structural alignment through asanas.

"It has helped me get stronger naturally using my body weight. And that has made a difference in feeling much more healthy on the court."

Bopanna has asked his yoga teacher Mohan to join him in Delhi during the week-long Davis Cup preparations. "I've been taking a lot of classes because it's been almost two months since I have been in Bangalore. I'm going straight to the US after this tie. So I thought it'd be a good time for him to come here to Delhi and really keep that practice going," he says.

### Listening to body

The Bopanna brand of physicality hasn't been about being a gym rat or spending hours on court training. "I was always productive in terms of listening to my body. Some days, I would do 20 serves and felt everything was fine, and I'll stop," says Bopanna. "When I listen to my body, exactly



Tennis ace Rohan Bopanna has turned to lyengar yoga, which he says has helped him get 'stronger naturally'. Express

how it is feeling, I adapt accordingly. I may not even practice and just take a day off.

Now I know how much recovery the body needs, what kind of rest it needs, does it

need more practice. Just going on the court and saying, 'okay, today, I'll practise three hours every day', that's tough. The older you get, you need to listen to your body first. You've hit thousands and thousands of tennis balls. It's not like, I'm going to forget how to hit a tennis ball."

There's no designer diet either, just portion control.

"Today at breakfast, somebody was saying, 'these young kids eat so much'," Bopanna laughs. "You just watch and enjoy all these guys going through so much food. They can burn everything. You can't try and match up to them. You eat what is good for you."

### Chance pairing

Bopanna and Ramanathan are expected to get India the point in doubles rubber this weekend. In January, they won the Adelaide International and Maharashtra Open ATP 250 tournaments. The pairing consists of two natural ad-courtiers who rely on big serves and timely volleys.

The two came together for the Davis Cup tie in Finland last September (a 7-6(2), 7-6(2) loss, but the partnership truly be-

## Indian women thrash WI in World Cup warm-up game

Rangiora: India will enter the ICC Women's World Cup with their tails up after opener Smriti Mandhana's 67-ball 66 and the bowlers' disciplined show powered them to an 81-run win over West Indies in their final warm-up game here on Tuesday. Mandhana was in her element within two days from the injury, laying the foundation for India's challenging total of 258 all out in the allotted 50 overs. In reply, West Indies were stopped at 177 for nine at Rangiora Oval. India, who will face arch-rivals Pakistan in their campaign opener on Sunday, beat South Africa by two runs in their first warm-up game.

## India-Belarus match under a cloud

Mumbai: India's football friendly against Belarus later this month is likely to be called off as a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. India were scheduled to play two international friendlies in Manama this month, against Bahrain on March 23, followed by Belarus on March 26. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) secretary-general Kushal Das said they will instead try and schedule two matches against Bahrain, who are ranked 91 in the world. "Since Belarus has been suspended, we can't play them," Das told *The Indian Express*. "We have a match with Bahrain so we are trying to see if we can organise two matches with them."

## Jamshedpur qualify for ISL semifinals

Bambolim: Jamshedpur FC on Tuesday qualified for their maiden Indian Super League semifinals with a clinical 3-0 win over Hyderabad FC in a top-of-the-table clash here on Tuesday. The result saw Jamshedpur knocking Hyderabad FC off their perch in the table, besides qualifying for the semifinals for the first time. Chinglensana Singh (5th minute) scored an own goal to help Jamshedpur take the lead before skipper Peter Hartley (28th) and Daniel Chima Chukwu (65th) struck to take the game away from Hyderabad. Jamshedpur now are in pole position with 37 points from 18 matches, two more than Hyderabad (35 points) with a game in hand.

## National chess: Arjun Erigaisi beats Pranav

Kanpur: Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi defeated IM V Pranav to jump into sole lead with 7.5 points after nine rounds in the ongoing MPL 58th Senior National Chess Championship here on Tuesday. The in-form Erigaisi outlasted the Tamil Nadu player in a 60-move game to take the lead while others, who were in joint lead till the eighth round including GMs D Gukesh, defending champion Aravindh Chithambaram and P Iniyan, had to settle for draws and fell behind by half-a-point. In other ninth round matches, Gukesh was held to a draw by Iniyan and Chithambaram had to sign peace with Swapnil S Dhopade.

PTI & ENS