

Urban Poll on 24 March

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Just a day after completion of the Panchayat Election,

exercise on Urban Poll since 10 February, when he met the Political Leaders to

mal notification for the election on February 28 while candidates can file their

till March 26, said the Election Commissioner.

This time there will be a direct election for the post of Mayor and Chairperson. So the indirect election for the post of Deputy Mayor and Vice-Chairperson will be conducted on April 8 and April 7, respectively.

Mr.Padhi said the tenure of maximum ULBs in Odisha ended in September 2018 while the tenure of Hindol and Attabira NACs has not been completed so far. The newly constituted NACs at Remuna, Chandbali, Dhamnagar and Bijepur will go for election for the first time, he informed.

Similarly, the tenure of three municipal corporations - Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation



the State Election Commission (SEC) on Friday presented a surprise by announcing General Election to 109 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) will be held in the State on 24 March, 2022.

While entire political parties are engaged in Rural Poll, SEC Aditya Prasad Padhi has announced the details of Urban Poll, which came as a shocker for the political lot.

However SEC was engaged in elaborate

discuss issues pertaining to conduct of Urban Poll.

Addressing a press conference here at his office, State Election Commissioner Mr.Padhi said the elections to 47 Municipalities, 59 Notified Area Councils (NACs) and three Municipal Corporations will be held on March 24. The election results will be declared on March 26, he said.

He said the Election Officer will issue for-

nominations in between March 2 and March 7.

Scrutiny of the papers will be done on March 9 and the last date for withdrawal of nominations is March 14 (excluding government holiday). The final list of candidates will be notified on January 25, said Padhi.

The Model Code of Conduct issued by the Commission will remain in force only in the jurisdictions of the ULBs from today

SC asks Centre to clear its stand on legality of Cryptocurrency trade in India

NEW DELHI(KCN): The Supreme Court on Friday asked the

Surya Kant, which was dealing with a case related to the

returns, said that the accused were booked for their involvement

cryptocurrency trade involving Bitcoin or any other such currencies is legal in India or not? What is the regime for Bitcoin trade at present?" Bhati said she would file an affidavit on the legality of the cryptocurrency trade and added that the accused, who is seeking quashing of proceedings, has not been cooperating with the investigating agency after being granted bail by the court in 2019.

She said that 47 FIRs have been registered against the accused of duping people across



Centre to make its stand clear on whether crypto-currency trade involving Bitcoin or any other such currencies is legal in India or not. A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and

quashing of multiple FIRs registered against one Ajay Bhardwaj and others for allegedly duping investors across India by inducing them to trade in Bitcoin and assuring them high

in Bitcoin trade. The bench told Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for Centre and Enforcement Directorate, "We want you to tell us on affidavit whether

Over 1,500 Odisha students stranded in Ukraine amid Russian invasion

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): Stuck in the war zones of Ukraine and spending the hours in increasing fear and anxiety, more than 1,500 students from Odisha are frantically waiting to be evacuated to the safety of their homeland.

As the situation escalated and turned grim, a majority of students from the State, who are placed in the education hubs of Kharkiv and Kyiv, were running out of food and water. With

disruption in banking, internet and communication systems, they were struggling to find food, draw cash and keep in

safe zones following the third advisory by the Indian Embassy. Most of the students are pursuing MBBS course in National



touch with their parents. However, on Thursday evening, many were shifted to bomb shelters and

Medical University at Kharkiv and Kyiv Medical University and stay in apartments. Liza Kap of

Bhubaneswar, Pankaj Kumar Mohanta of Mayurbhanj and Prasanjeet Pattnaik of Sambalpur, all fifth year students of Kharkiv National Medical University, said they heard bomb warnings and sirens thrice in the day and Indian Embassy advised them to shift to the nearest bomb shelter.

"We have shifted to the Geroiv Truda metro at Heroiv Prasti but it is chock-

Russia-Ukraine War LIVE Updates

Russia claims it controls airport near Kyiv

Russia (KCN): Vladimir Putin attacked Ukraine on multiple fronts drawing scathing criticism from major powers except for China. During a brazen invasion that has already claimed the lives of 137 Ukrainians and injured over 300



others officially, Indian PM Modi dialled Putin and sought a cessation in violence. Russia said the first day of invasion had been successful.

Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping are two of a kind. Both have bent their respective rulebooks to stay perpetually in power. They are warmongers out to crush neighbours into submission and have played the nationalism card to suit their supreme personal interests. Weaponising the cyberworld to poke their noses in the internal affairs of other nations is their favourite pastime. With the US and NATO showing no appetite for being a credible counterweight - the chaotic drawdown of troops from Afghanistan is the latest example - both are having a free run. (Read more)

Amid Russian military operations in Ukraine, the IAF said it is geared for the evacuation of stranded Indian nationals. The IAF has the C-17 Globemasters and the Ilyushin-76 transport aircraft which can go such long distances and evacuate Indian nationals from Ukraine. The aircraft are ready and whenever required, they can be sent to help the Indian citizens, IAF said.

Russia was stripped of hosting the Champions League final by UEFA on Friday with St. Petersburg replaced by Paris after Russia's invasion of Ukraine drew punitive measures in the sporting world. The final will still be held on May 28 but now at the 80,000-seat Stade de France in Paris after the decision by UEFA's executive committee. The EU has agreed to freeze European assets linked to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, three EU officials and a European diplomat said on Friday. The measures were added Friday after being raised in overnight discussions by EU leaders on a new sanctions pack-

age that EU foreign ministers from the 27-nation bloc were to validate.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy suggested to Russian President Vladimir Putin that they sit down at the negotiation table amid escalating tensions over Russia's military actions in Ukraine. "I would like to address the president of Russia once again ... let us sit down at the negotiation table to stop people dying," Zelenskyy said in a video address.

The Kremlin said President Vladimir Putin is ready to send a delegation to Minsk for Ukraine talks.

Pope Francis went to the Russian Embassy on Friday to "express his concern about the war," an extraordinary, hands-on papal gesture that came on the same day the Vatican announced he was canceling other upcoming events because of an "acute" flareup of knee pain. (READ MORE)

The Kremlin said President Vladimir Putin is ready to send a delegation to Belarus's capital Minsk for talks with Ukraine, as Russian forces approach Kyiv on the second day of Moscow's invasion.

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Russian leader was "ready" to send a high-level delegation "for talks with a Ukrainian delegation" to Minsk, the host city for previous peace talks and agreements.

The Congress accused Modi government of being incapable of safely evacuating Indians from Ukraine following a Russian military onslaught, and alleged that India's global influence and strength have diminished under the BJP. The opposition party urged

the government to send special flights and evacuate free of cost all Indians, mostly students studying in different parts of Ukraine.

Russian military says it has seized strategic airport outside Ukrainian capital; claims it cut Kyiv off from the west.

The Andhra Pradesh government on Friday said it was making every effort to safely bring back students belonging to the state stuck in war-hit Ukraine. Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy spoke to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar over phone and discussed the steps being taken to bring back the stranded students home safely.

The West Bengal government on Friday set up a control room to help students and people from the state, who are currently stranded in war-hit Ukraine. A notice issued by the state Information and Cultural Affairs Department

Taking possession of the airport in Hostomel, which has a long runway allowing the landing of heavy-lift transport planes, would mean Russia can airlift troops directly to Kyiv's outskirts.

Naveen Dials Shah

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Expressing concern over the Odia person stranded in Ukraine, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik spoke to Union Home Minister Amit Shah over telephone this morning on the issue.

The Chief Minister has requested Shah for safe

Parents of Aryaman Abhishek, an MBBS student from Cuttack district have sought help from the Government of India to initiate emergency measures to bring him back.

Abhishek has been in Ukraine for the past six years. While situations were tense on frequent

occasions, the scenario was never like what it is today, said Aryaman's mother Aruna Jyoti Biswal. Similarly, many students from Dhenkanal, Rourkela and Bolangir are studying and are stuck in Ukraine. The family members



evacuation of stranded Odia students and labourers from the war torn Ukraine.

The Home Minister has assured the CM that the Government of India is in touch with the Ukraine Government and working to bring back students and labourers from Ukraine at the earliest, it said.

A lot of Odia students and labourers have been stuck in Ukraine. Most of the stranded students are pursuing medical courses there. The students and their parents have been requesting both the Chief Minister and Prime Minister for the safe return of their children.

of Supreet Swain and Ashadipta Mohapatra, who are studying in Vinnytsia city in Ukraine, have also prayed to the Government for evacuation of their children.

Sourav Sahu, a student from Nabarangpur is also stranded in Ukraine. He had gone to pursue medical studies in Ukraine. Sourav, who was in the final year of his course, had booked a flight ticket to come to India on March 9. Now, with the beginning of war in the country, Sourav's father requested the Government for his early return.

Russia-Ukraine war: With prayer on their lips, Odisha parents watch war unfold in horror

Rourkela (KCN): A petrified Trilochan Swain and his wife Bijaylaxmi are glued to the TV in their Rourkela home, flipping through news channels since Russia launched an invasion on Ukraine. They are worried over the safety of their 19-year-old daughter Shashwati Swain, a first year student of Kharkiv National Medical University stuck in the war-torn country.



Trilochan, an assistant manager in Rourkela Steel Plant, said Shashwati left for Ukraine on January 11 as back then, they had no idea that the situation would spiral into a military conflict. For the last one week, no flight ticket is available but their daughter told them that someone from the Indian embassy is in touch with the students.

"I urge the State government to ensure safe return of Odia students at the earliest as the situation there continues to worsen with every passing hour," said a visibly-worried Trilochan. Talking to this paper on WhatsApp, Shashwati said she and her three roommates - Subhashree Sahoo, Ambika, Aakansha Mallick - stay at Oleksiivska Street in Kharkiv Oblast. Since the wee hours of Thursday, they have been hearing sounds of bombardment.

"Around 4.30 pm (Indian time), I had gone out to buy water bottles and food. On hearing sounds of explosion and firing, I hurried back to my room. We have been instructed not to go outside after 1 pm and stock water and food due to fear of disruption of gas supply in next few hours," she said.

Bijaylaxmi said around 200 students are staying at hostels meant for Odia students at Kharkiv Oblast. Odisha government should request the Centre to expedite safe return of the students, she added. Like Trilochan and Bijaylaxmi, hundreds of parents in Odisha are living in a state of panic following the Ukraine crisis. In Jajpur's Rasulpur, Kabuli Charan Panda has lost his sleep worrying about his son Soumya Ranjan's safety in Ukraine. Soumya too is an MBBS student in Kharkiv medical university and lives with two of his friends in a rented house in Kharkiv town. "Though my son says they are safe there, we are panicked with all the news on TV here," said Kabuli.

Dr Samar Biswas of Ganjam's Chamakhandi is a very worried man. Every breaking news on Russian military operation against Ukraine leaves him panicked over the safety of his 22-year-old son Suraj who is a student of medicine in the same university. "The TV footage of the devastation in Ukraine leaves my heart pounding in fear and anxiety. The cellphone is the main link with our son," he said.

Talking to this paper from Kharkiv, Suraj said, "I had booked my return ticket to India on February 26 by paying Rs 60,000 against the normal price of Rs 25,000. But all the flights have been cancelled after the start of war on Thursday."

The plight of Subrat Sahu is similar. The Berhampur resident's daughter Akankhya is a student of Dnipropetrovsk State Medical Academy. After being asked by the Indian Embassy to leave Ukraine, 22-year-old Akankhya booked her return ticket last week but it was cancelled on Tuesday, said worried Subrat, a senior advocate.

"We are in constant touch with our daughter. She says there is nothing to worry as she stays in Denipro which is over 100 km from the war zone. But we are extremely concerned about her well-being," said the father. In Dhenkanal's Govindpur, Santosh Swain and his wife Sandhyarani are making frantic calls to their son Suprit, a first year MBBS student in a medical college at Vinista, around 250 km away from the Ukraine capital Kyiv.

"Right now, we can do nothing. It is up to the Indian government to bring back my son safely," said Santosh. He will meet the Dhenkanal Collector on Friday to seek his help in bringing back the 21-year-old Suprit home. Sources said at least 15 students from Dhenkanal and Angul, who are studying in Ukraine, are stuck in the strife-torn country.

Appeal to Chief Minister Family members of 25-year-old Aryaman Avishek of Cuttack's Gandarpur are concerned over the development in Ukraine. Aryaman is pursuing MBBS in Kyiv. "Earlier, he had assured us that there was no immediate threat but today, he told us that the situation is worsening fast with Russia launching attacks. I request Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to take steps for immediate evacuation of my son and others," said Aryaman's mother Arunjoyoti Biswal. Similar is the condition of Pandava Tripathy and Rina Mishra of Hatpada in Balangir's Titilagarh. Their only son Sai Swarup Tripathy is stuck in Ukraine. Azim Aju's son Md Zaqi of Sambalpur too has been stranded in Kyiv. Zaqi took admission in Kharkiv National Medical University in December last year. "My son had booked a ticket and was supposed to arrive in India today. He reached Kyiv from Kharkiv to board the plane to India this morning but has been stranded after Russia launched an offensive. Zaqi along with few of his friends have been sent back from the Kyiv airport in view of the emerging situation."

Dambarudhar Mohanta of Karanja in Mayurbhanj has not slept after his son Pankaj's flight from Ukraine was cancelled two days back. Pankaj (25) is a student of Kharkiv National Medical University. "My son would have reached home by now but he is stuck there. I request the government to ensure safe return of Pankaj," said Dambarudhar. Sources said at least 10 students of Jharsuguda district are also stuck in Ukraine. Inputs from Prasanjeet Sarkar, Amulya Pati, Ashis Senapati, Sisir Panigrahy, BK Rout, Arabinda Panda, Sanjay Mishra, Mayank Bhusan Pani, Sukant Sahu and Raj Kumar Sharma

Panchayat polls conclude in Odisha, all eyes on results now

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): Voting for the three-tier panchayat elections concluded across the State on Thursday with the fifth phase recording more than 70 per cent turnout in the 25 districts. As seen in the earlier rounds though, the final phase was also marked by violence and rigging in many parts of the State.

VOTE COUNTING
Counting for 315, 307 and 229 ZP zones on Feb

26, 27 and 28, respectively
Counting to be held zone-wise in numerical order
CCTV cameras put up at the counting centres
Votes of ward members will be counted first, followed by that of sarpanch, samiti members and ZP candidates.
Entry to the counting centre will be regulated

CDMO Makes Surprise Visit to DHH, Khordha



Khordha (KCN): Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) Khordha, Dr. Artabandhu Nayak make a surprise visit to the District Head Quatre Hospital (DHH) Khordha here and took stock of the situation. During the visit many irregularities at the hospital came to the force. Dr. Nayak expressed dis-

pleasures over some equipments lying de-funct and see only one doctor present in outdoor instead of three doctor. The CDMO, urged the patients to avoid agents and middlemen and also suggested to the hospital authorities to take ruthless action against such persons. Dr. Nayak also inter-acted with the patients pertaining to the problems they faced at the hospital and the quality of service offered. Patients feed back was taken and discussion with doctors on requirements to improve the health systems. After taking stock of various services CDMO, Dr. Nayak also inspected the equipments and facilities

Podcast station for senior citizens launched in Bhubaneswar

Bhubaneswar(KCN): The Regional Resource & Training Center (RRTC), Odisha run by National Resources centre for Women Development (NRCWD) sponsored by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MSJ&E), Government of India organized a two-day training programme and inauguration of Agani podcast station for senior citizens under the ANUBHAV project of NISD at

Radio Bulbul cum Secretary CRAO & Shubhrasmita Mohanty, Radio Soa. Sharmillee Parida, joint secretary of NRCWD gave the welcome address whereas Sanket Mahajan from the media 4 community foundation spoke about the aims and objectives of the event. Mahajan said the Anubhav training seeks to become the awaz and voice of senior citizens across 10 pilot



Lumbini Vihar of Bhubaneswar on Wednesday in collaboration with the National Institute of Social Defence(NISD), MSJ&E, Government of India along with Media 4 community Foundation, New Delhi with Radio Bulbul. Speaker, Odisha Legislative Assembly Dr Surjya Narayan Patro joined as the chief guest and inaugurated the Podcasting station along with Sanket Mahajan, Board Member of Media 4 Community Foundation, Dr Sisir Das, President Community Radio Association of Odisha, Sheikh Mohammad Niyaz, Director

locations by creating and uploading short self-generated internet radio podcasts on uploading on i-radiolive.com platform. Anubhav Project has been conceived and designed by Dr Sreedher Ramamurthy along with Alok Verma wherein a functional sound recording booth with equipment

has been provided by NISD and executed by Media 4 Community. Nageshwar Pattnaik, Senior Journalist cum columnist presided over the meeting whereas Sukanta Kumar Parida, Secretary NRCWD gave the vote of thanks for the inaugural ceremony. The chief guest spoke in his inaugural speech that the children are not taking care of their parents in this modern advance society. They have suffered much. Keeping this situation of the modern society, the government of India has decided to set up podcast stations where the senior

citizens share their knowledge, experience etc. This is a good platform for the senior citizens where they feel pleasure. It is a constructive effort of the government. About 40 participants including senior citizens were joined in the event. Apart from that in the meantime of the inaugural ceremony, the organization was also organized online the programme through the google meet link where the interior and far distance participants were joined in the event. During the event, Dr Sreedher Ramamurthy,

opinion for encouraging senior citizens. The senior citizens participated enthusiastically and self-created four radio programmes during the training. Key members involved during the training were Geeta Praharaj, Sharmille Parida, Prerana Dash, Leeta Praharaj, Kuni Dei, Ananda Chandra Pattnaik, working president Niladri Vihar Senior citizens Association, Jogesh Chandra Nayak and Sanjuktarani Dash. During this basic but dedicated training, out of 30 participants, 15



75, who moved to Tapovan Senior Citizen's Foundation in Madhampatty, started a podcast by and for senior citizens, on the audio streaming platform I-Radiolive.Com cum Board member Media 4 Community Foundation and Dr H.C Sridhara Channakeshava Ranga Reddy, Deputy Director, NISD, Ms. Bharati Chakra, State Head, Help Age India, N.A Shah Ansari joined through google meet link and gave their

of 30 participants, 15 volunteer diverse senior citizens learnt about the various formats of podcast recording and sharing on social media, equipment used in radio programming, research, scripting, voice modulation, presenting, recording and uploading. Senior citizens are expected to contribute at least 100 podcasts over the next 1 year using the podcast booth provided. Shaikh Riyaz and Shaikh Mohammed Niyaz and their enthusiastic team at Bhubaneswar Odisha with Media 4 Community Foundation facilitated the Training Programme. Among others Basanti Behera, Coordinator, RRTC, Nirakar Dash, Sagar Routray, Rajesh Kumar Das and Subash Chandra Nayak, Santosh Kumar Behera present and coordinate the entire programme.

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Appealing to fans' inner writers, Anupam Kher offers autographed book

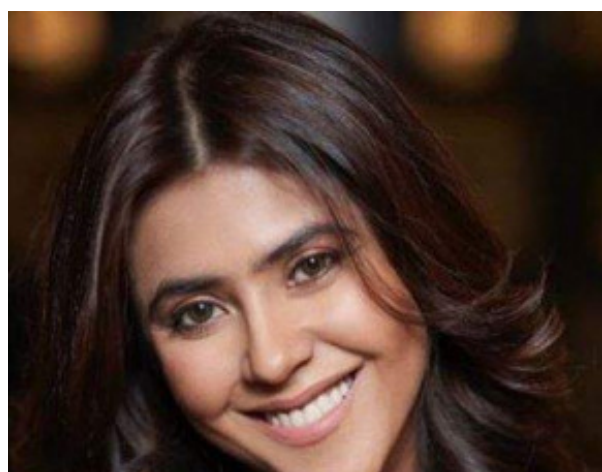


NEW DELHI: Asking his fans to rejuvenate their inner writers, veteran actor Anupam Kher, offered them to send his autographed book 'Your Best Day is Today' on Tuesday. Kher hopped on to Twitter and shared a candid picture of him. Calling on his fans to give a suitable caption for the picture, he wrote "Mujhe meri ye tasveer pasand hai. (I like this picture of mine) I will send an autographed copy of my latest book #YourBestDayIsToday to the person whose caption for this pic I like the most!" Adding to the cation, he noted "Hindi or English - apka caption kisi bhi bhasha me chalega! Chaliye! Apne andar ke lekhak ko jagaiye!! (your caption will go in any language! Let's go! Wake up your inner writer,) with Hibiscus smiling face and heart-shaped smile emoticon. Within a few hours of being posted, fans of the former Chairman of Film and Television Institute of India started coming up with innovative captions and showcased their creative skills. A day ago, the 65-year-old star shared a clip of his mother lauding PM Modi and scientist's efforts for the new COVID-19 vaccines.

SC grants Ekta Kapoor interim protection from arrest in FIR over web series

NEW DELHI(K-CN): The Supreme

leged objectionable content in her web



Court on Thursday granted interim protection from arrest to TV producer Ekta Kapoor in an FIR against her for al-

series "XXX season 2". A bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde granted interim protection to

Phenomenal experience: Riteish Deshmukh praises Anil Kapoor, Anurag Kashyap's 'AK vs AK'

NEW DELHI(K-CN): Actor Riteish Deshmukh lauded Vikramaditya Motwane's 'AK vs AK' and termed the

blown!!! #AKvsAK is a phenomenal experience - @VikramMotwane take a bow my friend," tweeted

only you could do this, you are pure gold in this film but @HarshKapoor_has outdone your entire performance in one

movie star and a film director who get into a public spat, following which the director retaliates by kidnapping the actor's



Netflix based film "a phenomenal experience". Deshmukh took to Twitter to share a poster of the movie, which features Anurag Kashyap and Anil Kapoor in lead roles. "Mind has been

Deshmukh. He then went on to heap praise on Kashyap, Kapoor, and his actor son Harshvardhan Kapoor who has a cameo in the film. "@anuragkashyap72 how good are you, @AnilKapoor Sir,

scene," the 'Housefull' actor's tweet further read. While Kapoor essays the role of a yesterday actor, Kashyap plays the role of a disgraced film director in the film. 'AK vs AK,' revolves around the story of a

daughter and films the search for her in real-time. The Netflix India Original film was released on the platform on December 24, which also happens to be Anil Kapoor's birthday.

Aakanksha Singh joins team Mayday

Ajay Devgn's Mayday has been creating a massive buzz because of its interest-

the icing on the cake is that Ajay Sir is directing the film. It's actually happening!



ing star cast, which includes Amitabh Bachchan, Ajay Devgn, Rakul Preet Singh and Angira Dhar. Talented actress, Aakanksha Singh has now joined the team. Aakanksha will essaying the role of Ajay Devgn's wife in the film. She joined the shoot yesterday. Aakanksha says, "It's like a dream come true to be a part of such a big and much-awaited film. I am so excited to share the screen with Ajay Sir and Amitabh Sir; and

It's an important role and I am lucky that the first muhurat shot of the film had me in it." Ajay Devgn took to social media to announce that the shoot had begun yesterday. "Happy to officially begin Mayday in a start-to-finish shooting schedule. Seek blessings from the Almighty and my parents. Nothing is complete without the support of all my fans, family and well-wishers. Releases on 29th April 2022 (sic)" he posted.

'Wanted to make a film on Indian Army with Shah Rukh Khan', says Director Kabir Khan

MUMBAI(KCN): Filmmaker Kabir Khan, who is gearing up for the release of his web series "The Forgotten Army: Azaadi Ke Liye", based on Indian National Army (INA), says he wanted to make a film on the subject starring Shah Rukh Khan. He added that Shah Rukh didn't charge a fee for the voiceover he gave for the series. "Shah Rukh has very graciously given the voiceover. The series is based on a true story, so there is an introduction of a few minutes before every episode along with real footage, where he has lent his voice. I talked about it with Shah Rukh earlier as well, when this was a film script. Back then, I wanted Shah Rukh to do the film. We even had a few meetings but we couldn't take it forward," said Kabir while promoting the series along with its lead actors Sunny Kaushal and Sharvari Wagh. Kabir added that Shah Rukh didn't charge a single

paisa for his voiceover assignment. "When I was making this series, I thought I should ask Shah Rukh (to be the narrator) because Shah Rukh's father had involvement with this army. His father knew General Shahnawaz Khan, who was an important part of INA. So, I knew he (Shah Rukh Khan) has sympathy and attachment with Azad Hind Fauj and I called him up. It's not an easy task to ask a superstar for a voiceover but Shah Rukh instantly agreed to do it. Usually, when you discuss a film with Shah Rukh, it's a long process, but in this case Shah Rukh literally did the voiceover for us on the second day. I don't know whether he would like me to reveal this, but he didn't take a fee from us. I think the kind of attachment he has with Azad Hind Fauj reflects in his act." Incidentally, Shah Rukh did a cameo in Kabir Khan's 2017 release "Tubelight", starring Salman Khan.

Respect for Women - the Hypocrisy must go

Multiplicity is what the fabric that a society is woven into. Variety gives it the essential beauty and makes it adorable. India has its strength in encompassing such diversities into its fold irrespective of their source and sociability. This has been the idea that we, as a nation, believed and followed. Societies, mostly patriarchal in nature across the globe, positioned themselves above the essential femininity and setting a hierarchy confining and conveniently forcing it to confess to what the patriarchy dictates. To some extent India is not different. Putting a veil around what the patriarchy believed as a safe and standard custom for the women, in a society of rigid phraseologies, we become advocates of women's rights. Lustrous vocabularies such as women rights, religious freedom, liberty and equality would decorate our debates. Lamentations on women rights will be aired to houseful audiences by channels, with no deliberations arguing on what, if someone wants to unveil themselves from the suffocating and incarcerating attire imposed on them by the same patriarchy. So, the convenience of the mighty gender is running the show. Everything can be justified and suppressed to the level of its satisfaction. Young girls choosing hijab over education in the recent tussle in Karnataka reveals this superimposed hand of an invincible patriarchy. No wonder, it can't work otherwise. The discourse is about constitutional rights being forcefully trodden to dust by a constitutional establishment, the government. The constitution, being indiscriminate on religious rights, equally blessed everybody with freedom to express and prosper. Therefore, someone's right to choose between what is professed in religion comes under religious freedom and apparently unques-



tionable. Attempts to question such practices should definitely be addressed inside the boundaries of the constitutional values. Going beyond it definitely invites unpleasant repercussions. Do religions, to what a large number of cohorts are submissive to, give them the freedom to take a breath of personal liberty, without being oppressed and persecuted by the mighty dominance of the masculine? An answer to this question will be the most unpleasant in today's tensed atmosphere. Without adequate reforms put in place, no practices, however good and astutely followed they are, will survive the storm of time. Of course, for a period of time, such suppressive and forcefully submissive choices enforced on people will run. But the efficacy and reliability and divinity of such practices will remain questioned and surfaced blowing the lid of discontent. In a democracy, the constitutional values need to be upheld as supreme while respect for individual choices is upheld. When individual choices are being caricatured as the maxim and if they bring collective negative repercussions while the orthodoxy taking center stage in retaliation, there needs to come reforms for the collective good. Religions, not open to reforms and inefficient to change as per the demand of time, remain obsolete and disturbing irrationally inviting distress in the amiability of every society. The feminine, being susceptible to such dominance remains a pitiable reality. Women across the globe are frequently forcefully pressed to silence and to what we call a family, a minute segment of the society itself, is an example for such dominance and suppression. Starting from an innocent scratch of a male toddler in the school, to the one blow she received at the face from a belligerent husband, a woman seems to be too self-ordained to be tortured. Facing an acid attack in the street to a torture inside the

M. R. LALU

confinement of a home, she is made to suffer. Considered as an object of pleasure for men, religions gleefully grant authority to them accentuating their power and ensure the subservience of women to the maximum.

Masih Alinejad, the renowned Iranian journalist is a living example to what she calls a fight against the acrimony of the religious patriarchal establishment. She, being freed herself from the veil, had to flee from her homeland and take asylum elsewhere. Her "My Stealthy Freedom" is a social media movement that attracted thousands of veiled lives. Every woman for that matter, is a silent rebellion boiling inside the four walls of the patriarchy. With more than a million followers in Facebook, world across, she raises questions on the unscrupulous and irrationally justified religious male dominance. The days to come might witness a volcanic eruption of the feminine anger against the male infringement. Legitimizing the subordination of women in the name of religion is tantamount to disrespect the constitutional values of a democracy, which is also a challenge that is thrown in advance to check the reactions. The essential point is, when personal choice and freedom are being debated at length, voices against the extent to which religions curtail the very idea of freedom for women is not heard. The silence is thickly blanketing the animosity on women, deliberately diverting the subject of discourse in the name of religious freedom. The verdict on Lucy Kalappura, a Kerala nun on being sexually harassed multiple times by a clergy found no justice for the feminine in her. As an endorsement of vote bank politics, the ruling establishment in the state is blamed to have manipulated the issue to such a level that the angel of God had to desperately sit back and shed tears. Traditions in India mostly propagated the idea of reverence for women. With a large number

of scholars being women, Vedic debates were a usual affair in the ancient education system. From house makers to scholars to rulers, the Indian society for generations flourished with women contributing for the society. The Manusmriti the Dharma sastra as ordained by the first law giver Manu, gives accounts of how feminine gender needs to be helped and respected. As the text advocates that a girl, in her childhood should be protected by her father. In her younger days, according to the text, she is supposed to be taken care of by her husband and she, no doubt, should be protected by her children in old age. This idea of protection offered by the men according to the text, does not necessarily qualify the term male dominance. Ambiguity to what it is interpreted as should not be sidelined. Indeed, it is debatable as to what extent, in which, such versus are manipulated and enforced on the women by a male supremacy. Another verse of the same text gives a profound meaning of respect and admiration for the feminine. The verse "Yatra Naryastu Pujyante Ramante Tatra Devata" is the best of accolades that a religious text can offer to the women in a society. Which tells 'where women are honored, there the deities are pleased.'

In essence and practice, it is necessary for everybody in the discourse to sit and amicably debate on the unfathomability of the hypocrisy involved while fixing narratives. Taking the issue of women rights from multiple angles, it is the women of the country, who should fearlessly stand up and set narratives. To come out or remain in the veil is their right, but to play into the hands of the hypocrisy of the patriarchy, should be taken with sensibility and courage. Lives of women like Masih Alinejad set an example for such a discourse.

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Fixing how funds flow through government systems

Public service delivery in areas like education and healthcare often fails due to ineffective payment systems. Here's what's wrong and what needs to change.



Fixing how funds flow through the government systems grabs far fewer headlines than malnutrition, problems in the education sector, or crumbling infrastructure. In this post, Charity Troyer Moore contends that payment systems are fundamental to improving these development outcomes, and challenges to them pervade government functioning across sectors, programmes, and locations. She examines the key issues, and what Budget 2022-23 can do to fix them.

India's payments infrastructure is the culprit for all sorts of State-related failures, in healthcare and beyond. For example, in 2017, nearly 100 children in a government hospital in rural Uttar Pradesh died over a short period from lack of oxygen—not because there was no oxygen available, but because the hospital was behind on payments to their oxygen vendor. During the pandemic, ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) workers have reported delayed and irregular incentive payments, despite their heroic efforts to fight Covid-19 (Behanbox, 2021).

What is wrong with these payment systems, and what can India's 2022-23 Budget—due to be announced on 1 February—do to fix them?

Issues with government payment systems This is a vital question, yet fixing how funds flow through government systems is not what most would consider a hot topic of discussion. It grabs far fewer headlines than malnutrition, problems in the education sector, or crumbling infrastructure. Yet, payment systems are fundamental to improving these outcomes, and challenges to them pervade government functioning across sectors, programmes, and locations.

Payment problems affect government workers and entities, directing effort away from the core business of serving the public good.

Delays in payments to citizens, such as MNREGA (Ma-

Charity Troyer Moore

hatha Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) workers, are well-known and ones we have seen first-hand through our research over the past decade. But the challenges do not stop there—payment problems affect government workers and entities, directing effort away from the core business of serving the public good.

These payment challenges frequently affect government employees who already hold relatively tenuous posts—for instance, contract workers that wait for a senior official's sign-off to receive a payment. They also disproportionately affect positions held by women, whose work is often perceived to be valuable simply because of the 'social good' it does. This view itself ultimately deprioritises the importance of timely, regular payments.

For example, in research with women working for their state's Rural Livelihoods Mis-



sions, SHG (self-help group) cadre members were told they would be paid incentives for completing non-SHG-related tasks. Yet, those payments were delayed for months at a time. These women paid out-of-pocket to cover travel and other costs associated with the assigned tasks, and some took out loans simply to be able to continue working. Unsurprisingly, many quit supporting these additional tasks. In one case that we tracked, approximately two-thirds left the work entirely within their first year, undermining programme delivery. What are the underlying drivers of payment challenges? Human intervention is sometimes a culprit:

District magistrates may still need to sign-off on pension or salary payments—resulting in unreliable and irregular payments—rather than processing them via automated systems. Data entry errors can result in payments being rejected, requiring them to be rerouted through the system. For example, despite impressive improvements in wage payment timelines, well over 5% of MNREGA wage transactions were rejected in some states during 2020-21, resulting in long delays. When not designed correctly, data digitisation can actually exacerbate delays, as officials who need information to make payments suddenly find themselves unable to access and operate systems they once controlled. Those in remote locations or lacking tech savvy—often located at the very beginning and end of the payment process, such as some sarpanches—can particularly struggle to navigate digital systems effectively.

Crucially, delays persist in ways data systems do not record, and therefore are difficult to identify and address. In a 2021 survey of nearly 900 sarpanches² conducted with research collaborators in one state in north India, 16% of leaders reported MNREGA wage delays were one of the top three issues their gram panchayat has faced since the pandemic began. Compare this report with administrative data, which suggest 99% of worker payments were generated in the stipulated 15 days. This disparity is consistent with other researchers who have found similar issues (for example, see Narayanan et al. (2018)).

Finally, unless data systems can 'speak' to each other across departments, payments involving more than one entity can be delayed as they make their way through convoluted systems. For example, this happens, when SHG workers conduct social audits, and making payments to auditors requires coordination across both social audit and livelihoods programmes.

Yet the good news is that improvements are possible with appropriate investments. Nearly 10 years ago, payment delays to MNREGA workers were rampant, and the government set to work to address them. At

the nadir of this crisis, in 2014-15, only 27% of wage payments were generated within 15 days of work spell completion, leaving impoverished workers to seek payday loans from local leaders, moneylenders who charge high interest rates, or wait for payments to arrive in their bank accounts. Those without the ability to do either would have to turn to other means to cope – migration, for example – since MNREGA could not help them survive the lean season.

Delays increased as payments went digital, leaving local administrators and elected leaders in the dark about where money was and when it would arrive.

Ironically, delays increased as payments went digital, leaving local administrators and elected leaders in the dark about where money was and when it would arrive. But a flurry of initiatives, notably increasing monitoring by senior officials and improving digital data trails, led to impressive reductions in time to payment. In a study of a government-supported application used by officials to process payments, additional steps to increase transparency and facilitate easy access to real-time data reduced payment timelines even further.

In short, improvements—even drastic ones—are possible. But these improvements will not occur of their own accord. This Budget season, the Finance Minister would do well to announce ambitious plans around payment systems: Digitising first- and last-mile payment steps, automating processes still controlled by humans, building in better quality controls, and linking disconnected data systems. In the long run, such investments will pay crucial dividends in terms of reliable safety nets, improved services, and increased trust in government. This piece was published pre budget 2022.

The author is director for South Asia Economics Research at Yale University's MacMillan Center. Her research examines public service delivery and governance in the bureaucracy; the drivers and potential solutions to India's low female labour force participation, with a focus on how current policy initiatives can put women on better footing as economic agents. Prior to this, Charity held multiple roles at Harvard Kennedy School's Evidence for Policy Design, where she co-founded Evidence for Policy Design (EPoD) India at IFMR.

Plastic Waste To Steel; Minister Jena on Rescue Operation

Konark(KCN): Ram Chandra Prasad Singh, Union Minister of Steel has said that research is going on to use plastic waste in steel-making. This is being explored by various Corporate Houses on the line of Vision of Prime minister Narendra Modi of creating wealth from waste.

Union Minister Mr. Singh inaugurated the "Conference of Ministers of Mines and Industries from States" being hosted by Ministry of Steel at Konark, Odisha on 25-26 February.

This Meet is organized with the objective to provide the mineral-rich states an opportunity to present and deliberate on matters related to mining leases, environmental clearance of ongoing and new mining projects.

Ram Chandra Prasad Singh, Union Minister of Steel inaugurated the conference in the presence of Faggan Singh Kulaste, Minister of State for Steel & Rural Development, Prafulla Kumar Mallik, Minister for Steel & Mines, Odisha and Rajvardhan Singh, Minister of Industrial and Investment Promotion, Madhya Pradesh.

Reiterating the importance of effective

Rehabilitation and Resettlement, He mentioned that only those companies



which can leverage social capital positively and are ready to give back to the local population will be able to gain in the long run.

Similarly, India can thrive only if a level-playing field is available for all players in the sector. A policy to encourage the secondary steel players is necessary to give direction to this vision.

Deliberations on the issues pertaining to mining, specific to steel sector, were conducted on the issues put forth by the Central and State governments leading to fruitful discussions

which were welcomed by participating delegates.

Highlighting the is-

delegates during the nearly 5-hour long session wherein relevant inputs were received from all sides and emphasized that the issues which arose from the discussions needed attention and resolution. Expressing satisfaction that PM Narendra Modi's directions on positive engagement with the state governments, more such "sammelan" will be organized by the government.

Rajvardhan Singh, Minister of Industrial and Investment Promotion, Madhya Pradesh, showcased the advantages of MP in terms of availability of land, raw material and other raw materials needed for industrial development and exhorted that the government has set up the right ecosystem for investments.

Prafulla Kumar Mallik, Minister of Steel and Mines, Odisha, thanked the cooperation of the state governments and mentioned that they looked forward to further the cooperation. Faggan Singh Kulaste, Minister of State for Steel, welcomed the discussions amongst the

Bhubaneswar(KCN): The State Government has given a crucial and sensitive responsibility of bringing back Odisha citizens from Ukraine on the shoulders of veteran Mandarin Pradeep Jena.

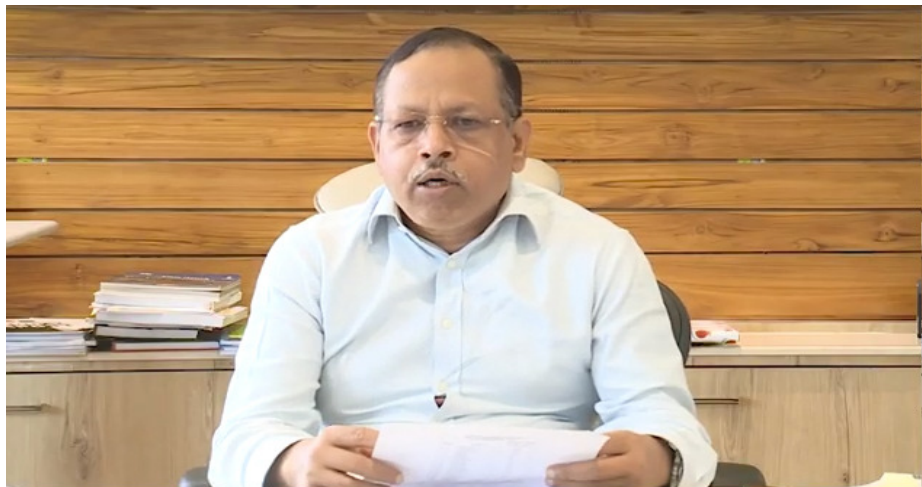
Re-imposing his faith on Mr.Jena for his ability and effectiveness to successfully manage several natural disasters including Covid-19 pandemic, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has given this responsibility to him.

Mr.Jena, serving as Development Commissioner and Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) will coordinate the overall issue of bringing back citizens from Odisha. Resident Commissioner at New Delhi, Ravi Kant, an IPS Officer, will assist him. Mr.Kant, another able Top Cop will coordinate with the

Government of India over this issue. The Chief Minister has announced that his Government

over the issue. A large number of citizens of Odisha, many of whom are students, are

New Delhi, to coordinate with Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Civil Aviation and



will bear the expenses for bringing back students and workers of Odisha stranded in Ukraine.

He has also directed the district administrations to collect information regarding students and workers in Ukraine and effectively coordinate with their family members at this hour of crisis.

Earlier in the morning, the Chief Minister had spoken to Union Home Minister Amit Shah

stranded in Ukraine. Meanwhile, the State Government has opened a special cell in New Delhi and appointed a nodal officer for safe return of the citizens from Odisha.

"To ensure the safe and early return of stranded citizens of Odisha in Ukraine, a Special Assistance Cell has been made functional in the office of the Resident Commissioner of Odisha, Odisha Bhawan,

other concerned agencies," said Home Department in an order.

Ravi Kant, Resident Commissioner, New Delhi has been designated as the nodal officer for the purpose. Those who need assistance from the nodal officer can contact on mobile/ WhatsApp — 8527580245, Landline-011-23012751, E-mail-re.odisha@gmail.com/rescm-or@nic.in, said the Home department.

Stress on Credit Application Clearance

Bhubaneswar: Even as both Union Government and State Government are harping on extending credit facilities for their flagship

program applicants, statistics reveal that the banks are reluctant in this regard as a result large number of applications are pending with banks. Accordingly, Principal Secretary Finance, Vishal Dev Thursday urged the banking institutions to immediately clear the pending applications of flagship programs lending in the State.

Addressing the State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) meeting here, Mr.Dev pointed out at the large number of pending applications for PMEGP, PMSVANidhi, SHG, MKUY, MIDH credit in the State, which is worrying. Officials said there are nearly 73,000 applications for getting loans in these flagship programs of the Government of India and State Government are pending with the banks across the State.

While as many as 59,000 SHG bank linkage case applications are pending, in case of PMSVANidhi about 7800 cases, for PMGP credit over 4700 applications are lying with banks.

So far MKUY and MIDH over 1500 applications are pending with banks.

Dev urged the banks to clear these pending applications on a priority basis as the State Government has time and again asked the banks to extend credit facilities to the beneficiaries waiting for a long time.

The Principal Secretary Finance pointed out that so far SHG Credit Linkage is concerned;

banks are extending an average loan size of Rs.2.15 Lakh, which need to be increased to Rs.4 Lakh by 2022-23.

Under the 5T mandate of Mission Shakti, the State Government has set an ambitious target to increase the loan size to Rs 4 lakh per SHG by the Financial Year—2022-23.

So far achieving annual target of Interest Subvention of Rs.200 Crore is concerned banks have so far claimed Rs.107 Crore and remaining Rs.93 Crore is yet to be claimed by the banks.

Under Mission Shakti loan – state interest subvention scheme, bank loan upto Rs 3 lakh being provided to women SHGs at 0 per cent annual rate of interest on prompt and regular repayment.

The interest subvention amount being provided by the Government is acting as a catalyst for SHGs towards taking up new challenges for setting up or scaling up their enterprises leading to strengthening of local economy, contributing more to state GDP and generating more employment opportunities. Dev also asked all the banks to go for Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Mission Shakti for engaging SHG as Banking Correspondent Agents.

Only SBI, OGB, ICICI and Yes Bank have partnered with Mission Shakti to appoint SHGs as Banking Correspondent Agents. As on date 2203 SHG Members are engaged as BCAs. Dev urged the banks to sign an MoU with Mission Shakti for engaging more SHG Members as BCA in the state.

These BCAs are serving in the non-banking areas in an effective manner and with more SHG Members appointed as BCAs, people will receive benefits of Banking Services in non-banking zones, a former General Manager of a commercial bank said.






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Finance Minister holds meeting with hospitality, tourism sectors; discusses credit-related issues

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday held a meeting with representatives from travel, tourism and hospitality sectors to discuss various credit related issues with them.



The meeting was also attended by senior finance ministry officials and heads of various public sector banks (PSBs).

"Along with the FM, the meeting was also attended by MoS Finance Shri @DrBhagwatKarad; Finance Secretary; Secretaries for Financial Services, Economic Affairs & Revenue; chiefs of PSBs & IBA, besides senior officials from @FinMinIndia," the finance ministry said in a tweet.

It is to be noted that Budget 2022-23 had proposed to open an additional Rs 50,000 crore window under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) to support hospitality and related services sector. "Hospitality and related services, especially those by micro and small enterprises, are yet to regain their pre-pandemic level of business. Considering these aspects, the ECLGS will be extended up to March 2023 and its guarantee cover will be expanded by Rs 50,000 crore to a total cover of Rs 5 lakh crore with the additional amount being earmarked exclusively for hospitality and related sectors," Sitharaman had said in the Budget speech. Besides, the Budget also proposed to extend the ECLGS by one more year till March 2023 and guarantee cover expanded to Rs 5 lakh crore from Rs 4.5 lakh crore. This was announced as part of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan package announced in May 2020 with an aim to provide relief to micro, small and mid sized firms hit the hardest by the pandemic.

Aviation, auto sector in a fix as oil hits USD 105 per barrel

NEW DELHI: The Russia-Ukraine conflict is set to have a negative impact on

Y-o-Y basis till Feb 2022. "It is mainly attributed to increase in crude oil

Consulting CEO, FAITH. While the four-wheeler industry can

hike to some extent with limited impact, it is the price-sensitive two-wheeler industry that would face maximum heat. Jet fuel price at record level in India



oil-dependent aviation and auto sector. For airlines, ATF or jet fuel accounts for up to 40% of operating costs. At Rs 90,519.8 and Rs 88,987.2 in Delhi and Mumbai, respectively, the prices of jet fuel is already at a record level and a further increase will be a very unwelcome sign for the industry as well as consumers.

"Brent crude prices have averaged at about \$90 per barrel so far in Q4, as against \$79 per barrel in Q3, and is expected to go up due to Russia-Ukraine tensions. This will have an impact on domestic airlines' CASK (cost per available seat kilometres) which has just started to see recovery from the third wave of Covid-19," said a senior aviation analyst. Rating agency ICRA in a recent note said that a major concern that continues to be a drag on the aviation sector is the aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices, which have seen a sharp increase of 59.9% on a

prices. This, coupled with relatively low capacity utilisation of aircraft fleet, will continue to weigh on the financial performance of Indian carriers in FY22," it added. However, it is the foreign airlines, especially the ones operating in Europe, which will face maximum damage. At present, they are not allowed to fly over Ukrainian and neighbouring nations' airspace. High oil price, poor passengers traffic and a prolonged war can prove to be too fatal for airlines. As for Indian carriers, only Air India and Vistara fly to Europe.

The conflict can also impact tourism sector, especially when India is about to resume regular operations of international flights. "It will not only impact charters from the region but will also impact other outbound and inbound travel from the region to India and will create an uncertain outlook in the eastern Europe region and Asia," said Aashish Gupta,

survive the price

Urban Poll on 24 March

Continued from page-1

(BMC), Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) and Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) has also been completed.

The tenure of BeMC ended in September 2018 while the period of BMC and CMC ended in January & February, 2019, respectively. Elections in the other two Corporations—Sambalpur and Rourkela have been stayed by the Orissa High Court, Padhi said.

The Housing and Urban Development Department has already notified the delimitation and reservation of seats in these 109 ULBs and the Department has also issued notification calling upon elections in these civic bodies. The final voters' list in these ULBs was also published yesterday.

Over 41 lakh voters are eligible to cast their votes in the Urban Elections. About 27 lakh voters, 3,030 booths and 1731 wards are there in 106 Municipalities and NACs while there are 14.26 lakh voters, 168 wards and 1407 booths in three Corporations.

Two EVMs will be used in each booth— one to elect Mayor/Chairperson and another for Corporators and Councillors. For the first time, there will be a none-of-the-above (NOTA) option for voters in the EVMs.

It is to be noted that there will be ballot papers of two different colours to be used in the. The colour of Ballot Papers for the Corporators/Councilor will be 'pink' and Mayor/Chairperson will be 'yellow'. The papers will be passed on to the control unit of EVM.

This time, the submission of affidavits by the candidates has been made compulsory as the non-submission will result in the cancellation of the nomination.

The candidates are required to submit two affidavits this time including a list of educational qualifications and assets while the other affidavit will have information about family (wife and children).

Recently, the SEC has increased the expenditure limit of the candidates contesting for various posts in the Urban Poll.

Bilateral payments with Russia unlikely to be impacted amid sanctions

NEW DELHI: Bilateral payments with Russia may not be impacted even as the



fence products and equipment to India mostly under government-to-government

US and other western countries have imposed economic sanctions on Moscow in the wake of the attack on Ukraine. India and Russia bilateral payments are made in Indian rupee. For both imports and exports, payments are made or received in the rupee for shipments. So, sanctions by the West may not have an impact on the payments, barring exchange rate fluctuation, sources said on Friday.

Russia is one of biggest suppliers of de-

electrical machinery and equipment, organic chemicals and vehicles.

In the past too, India had devised a mechanism to pay for imports from Iran, when sanctions were imposed on the Persian Gulf nation.

India had entered into an agreement with Iran for carrying out trade-related transactions through a rupee account maintained with a state-owned lender.

SC asks Centre to clear its stand on legality of Cryptocurrency trade in India

Continued from page-1

the country and the issue involves a trade of 87,000 Bitcoin worth Rs 20,000 crore.

The bench ordered, "We direct the petitioner to appear before the investigating officer of Directorate of Enforcement within two days and thereafter cooperate with the investigation as and when called upon to do so. The investigating officer shall file a fresh status report before this court on or before four weeks, indicating the progress of the investigation and whether there has been any cooperation on the part of the accused. List after four weeks."

The bench said the ad-interim order restraining the arrest of Bhardwaj shall continue till the next date of listing of the matter.

At the outset, Advocate Shoeb Alam, appearing for one of FIR informant Vipin Kohli, said that he has filed an application seeking cancellation of bail granted to Bhardwaj on the ground that he has not disclosed true facts of the matter to this court and concealed material in his writ petition thereby misleading this court.

The advocate said that Bhardwaj has deliberately suppressed the fact that Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Patiala House Court through court notice had issued a proclamation requiring the appearance of the accused under section 82 of Criminal Procedure Code. "These material facts were not disclosed to the court when the bail was granted to him. Hence, we are seeking cancellation of bail granted to the petitioner," Alam submitted. He said that after the grant of bail to the accused, the complainant was attacked in a hotel, which is on CCTV cameras.

The bench asked whether the grant of bail to other accused has been challenged to which the advocate replied in affirmative.

Bhati said that even the co-accused, who have also been granted bail are also not cooperating in the matter.

The bench noted in its order that a status report has been filed in July 2021 by the Assistant Director of Enforcement Directorate and Bhati has submitted that the accused has not cooperated in the course of the investigation. It noted that there is an allegation of collection of 87,000 Bitcoins (valued at approximately Rs 20,000 crores) and prayer is being made that the ad-interim order granting an interim stay of arrest be vacated.

The bench made it clear that it is testing the petitioner Bhardwaj and asked him to cooperate in the investigation and for now, it is not vacating the protection from arrest.

The allegation against Bhardwaj is that he along with other co-accused, who are mostly his family members, had induced investors to invest in Bitcoin through a "multi-level marketing scheme" on false promises of securing to the investors a 10 per cent assured monthly returns for 18 months that is total of 180 per cent profit.

It was alleged that due to the dishonest inducement, the customers invested their Bitcoins in the said business, but after making an investment they did not get the assured returns.

The FIRs also said that to escape from inevitable punishment under the law, Bhardwaj and other co-accused persons collectively, in a dishonest manner and with the deliberate intention of destroying all the evidence shut down the fake 'gainbitcoin' website through which investors made the investment.

Over 1,500 Odisha students stranded in Ukraine amid Russian invasion

Continued from page-1

a-block with people. We brought whatever food we had in our apartment but drinking water is scarce," said Liza. The students woke up at 4.30 am on the day to distant yet loud explosions. Panicking, Liza and her friends packed their bags and shifted to the ground floor for safety. The blasts continued at intervals for some time, and later in the day, the university management and Indian Embassy issued advisories asking students to stock essentials and stay put in their apartments.

"We spent almost four hours this morning trying to enter a supermarket and buy groceries. At the billing counter, it was another two hours of wait. There is a mad rush everywhere and even the bank and water ATMs are extremely crowded," said Pankaj. Since WiFi has been snapped at several locations, most of them are using mobile data for limited hours to contact their families in Odisha and receive advisories.

Stranded Odisha students plead for evacuation

Most of the Odisha students were to come back to India in the first week of March. However, with airspaces closed in Ukraine in wake of the Russian invasion, all the flights were cancelled. "Three days back, the Indian government asked all Indians to fly out of Ukraine. But, the flight tickets were selling at astronomical rates, almost double the normal prices of Rs 27,000 to Rs 30,000.

Even though we tried to book tickets, they were available only from March 3," said Akankshya Satapathy, another Odia student who stays alone in Studentska near Kharkiv Metro. The students had gone to Ukraine through an agency Global Focus Education Pvt Ltd in Bhubaneswar. Its founders Abdul Zaheer and Swadhin Mohapatra said there are around 1,600 students from Odisha studying medical, nursing and engineering.

"In the last six years, 1,300 students have gone to Ukraine through our agency to study medicine. Until yesterday, 50 had returned. The situation turned worse today but we are in constant touch with the Indian Embassy to ensure the safety of our students," said Swadhin who is in Ukraine at present. Back home, parents of these students are worried about their safety.

They have urged both the State and the Central governments to ensure their evacuation at the earliest. Labour Commissioner N Thirumala Nayak said that the State government is keeping track of the situation. The State government is constant touch with the Ministry of External Affairs on the issue of evacuating the students and citizens, she stated.

No football in Kanteerava stadium says Karnataka Sports Minister

BENGALURU(KCN): The Sree Kanteerava Stadium has been a

mat — home and away — for next season. The last two sea-

athletes train at the stadium, is not happy with how things have

match and one day before that. But on other days, we should



bone of contention between JSW-owned Bengaluru Football Club (BFC) and the Karnataka Athletics Association (KAA). And on Thursday, when the newly relaid synthetic athletics track was unveiled during an event at the venue, Karnataka's Sports Minister KC Narayana Gowda also said that the stadium will not be used for football matches. This comes at a time when there are talks of the Indian Super League reverting to the pre-pandemic for-

sons, including the ongoing one, have been held inside a bio-bubble in Goa. The minister's comment has sowed the seed of doubts for Bengaluru's home venue, but club CEO Mandhar Tamhane declined to comment, stating that he is not aware of all this (Gowda's comment). It is important to mention here that the stadium belongs to the Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports (DYES) which comes under the state government. The KAA, whose

transpired in the past when Bengaluru played their home matches here. KAA secretary A Rajavelu made it clear that the track and field athletes should be given first priority. "This stadium is not a multi-purpose stadium. They can go and play at the football stadium which is exclusively for football. Track and field athletes should be the priority at Kanteerava. With permission from DYES, JSW can use the stadium for football on the day of the

have unrestricted access to the ground. In the past, they (JSW) have created problems by not allowing us to step on the grass and such. Where will we go to practise our field events? That is not acceptable to us," he said. The athletics body has been quite active on the matter and even wrote to the state government late last year, stating that they should not give permission for football. But, a final decision has not been reached on the matter.

India vs Sri Lanka second T20I: hosts on course to wrap up series in Dharamsala

DHARAMSALA: A re-invigorated India will look to pocket their second series win in as many weeks and build on the gains made from a drastic change in their batting approach in the second T20 International against Sri Lanka here on Saturday. India were forced to look in the mirror after

he is known for in the IPL. There is no time to settle in a T20 game and India have finally realised that, allowing them to post 180 plus totals regularly. If it wasn't for Ruturaj Gaekwad's wrist injury, he could have opened with Kishan and Rohit would have dropped

his way. As Rohit indicated after the opening game, a fit again Ravindra Jadeja will continue to bat higher up the order as the team wants to optimise his significantly improved batting skills. "We want more from him that is why we asked him to bat higher.

expensive but took a couple of wickets. It would take a special effort from Sri Lanka to end India's 10-match winning streak in the spiritual home of Dalai Lama. With a misfiring top-order and the absence of frontline spinners Maheesh Theekshana and Wanindu Hasaranga, Sri Lanka struggled to compete in the first game. Even skipper Dasun Shanaka bowling after a while did not help as Indians looked unstoppable with the bat. The weather is expected to be much colder at night compared to Lucknow. With only a travel day separating the two games, the players will have little time to adjust to the conditions.



their early exit from the T20 World Cup last year but four months later, they look like a transformed unit with a bunch of youngsters being tried out in various positions and roles. It is still early days but the Rohit Sharma-led side has already figured out the core group of players that will travel to Australia for the World Cup Down Under later this year. Young opener Ishan Kishan got a massive dose of confidence in the series opener on Thursday after his struggles against the West Indies. Finding strike rotation tough in the preceding series, Kishan was able to overcome that weakness against the Sri Lankan bowlers besides flaunting the strokeplay

himself down the order like he did against the West Indies. The same could happen on Saturday if Gaekwad is able to regain full fitness. Such is Rohit's class that he has not taken any time to find his rhythm after coming from an injury break. He looked in sublime touch en route to his 44 but must be disappointed to not have carried on for longer. Shreyas Iyer made merry at number three in the absence of the rested Virat Kohli and would be aiming to repeat that for the rest of the series. When a full-strength India take the field next, he might not find a place in the playing eleven and therefore, he needs to make the most of the opportunities that come

You will see that happening more and more in the games that he plays for India. I want him to bat up the order more. "He is a very improved batter, so we will try and see if we can promote him going forward. We are very clear with what we want to achieve with him in white ball cricket," said the skipper referring to the all-rounder. Comeback man Sanju Samson did not get to bat in the opener and he will be eagerly waiting for his turn at the scenic Dharamsala ground. India are also getting better on the bowling front. They used as many as seven options, including Deepak Hooda, on Thursday and most of them did alright. Venkatesh Iyer was a tad

Squads: India: Rohit Sharma (captain), Ishan Kishan (wk), Shreyas Iyer, Sanju Samson, Ravindra Jadeja, Deepak Hooda, Venkatesh Iyer, Harshal Patel, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jasprit Bumrah, Yuzvendra Chahal, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Ravi Bishnoi, Avesh Khan, Mohammed Siraj, Kuldeep Yadav. Sri Lanka: Pathum Nissanka, Kamil Mishara, Charith Asalanka, Dinesh Chandimal (wk), Janith Liyanage, Dasun Shanaka (c), Chamika Karunaratne, Dushmantha Chameera, Praveen Jayawickrama, Jeffrey Vandersay, Lahiru Kumara, Danushka Gunathilaka, Ashan Daniel, Shiran Fernando, Binura Fernando. Match starts at 7 pm.

Odisha's former Chief Minister Hemananda Biswal dies at age 82

BHUBANESWAR(K-CN): Former Odisha Chief Minister and prominent tribal Congress leader Hemananda Biswal died while undergoing treatment for pneumonia here at the age of 82 years Friday, family members said.

He was elected to the Assembly for the first time in 1974 and continued till 1977. Later he became an MLA in 1980 and held the post till 2004 from Laikera Assembly segment. Biswal started his career from panchayat poli-



Biswal's daughter Sunita said the former chief minister breathed his last at a private hospital here. He was suffering from pneumonia and is survived by five daughters- Sabita, Sanjukya, Manjulata, Sunita and Anita. Biswal also represented Sundergarh Constituency in the Lok Sabha, and was a six-time MLA from Jharsuguda district, besides being the state's chief minister twice. He was elected chief minister for the first time for the period December 7, 1989 to March 5, 1990 and again from December 6, 1999 to March 5, 2000. He was the first tribal chief minister of Odisha.

tics after a brief stint as a school teacher in Jharsuguda district. Condolence poured in after the news broke. OPCC president Niranjana Patnaik said Congress has lost a strong fighter and a protector of tribal interest. Union Minister and senior BJP leader Dharmendra Pradhan said: "Saddened to know about Biswal's demise. Odisha lost an efficient and experienced politician." BJP MP Suresh Pujari said, Biswal's demise was a major loss for the state and western Odisha in particular.

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