

Zelenskyy addresses US Congress, appeals for help

WASHINGTON(KCN): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will address the US Congress, the actor-

lic strategy in which he has invoked Winston Churchill, Hamlet, and the power of world opinion in his fight to stop Russia.

istration has stopped short of providing a no-fly zone or the transfer of military jets from neighbouring Poland

would bring the total announced in the last week alone to \$1 billion.

It includes money for anti-armor and air-defence weapons, according to the official, who was not authorised to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Appearing in his now-trademark army green T-shirt as he appeals to world leaders, Zelenskyy has emerged as a heroic figure at the centre of what many view as the biggest security threat to Europe since World War II.

ALSO READ: Zelenskyy appeals for help from Canada in emotional speech. Almost 3 million refugees have fled Ukraine, the fastest exodus in modern times.

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turned-wartime leader's latest video speech as he uses the West's great legislative bodies as a global stage to orchestrate support against Russia's crushing invasion.

Zelenskyy's live-streamed address Wednesday into the US Capitol will be among the most important in a very pub-

Nearing the three-week mark in an ever-escalating war, Zelenskyy has used his campaign to implore allied leaders to "close the sky" to prevent the Russian airstrikes that are devastating his country.

It has also put Zelenskyy at odds with President Joe Biden, whose admin-

as the US seeks to avoid a direct confrontation with Russia.

Instead, Biden will deliver his own address following Zelenskyy's speech, in which he is expected to announce an additional \$800 million in security assistance to Ukraine, according to a White House official. That

BJP on backfoot ahead of Cuttack Municipal Corporation urban polls

CUTTACK(KCN): The BJP which was once considered a dominant party in Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) polls is struggling to

Large-scale discontentment is brewing among the party workers who alleged that the views of the cadre have been ignored in the selection

Congress had bagged 13 wards and BJD finishing third with only 11. Six corporators had won as independent candidates. BJP's Nibedita

59. At that time, BJD had won in 36 wards and Congress in nine, while BJP managed to get only three. As many as 10 independent candidates were



bring back its glory days. The saffron party failed to touch two digit numbers in the last two CMC elections and is in no better situation now. Political observers feel it would be difficult for BJP to reverse its decline in the civic body election since 2009 as it continues to be mired in organisational disarray and deep factionalism. Open dissent over the selection of candidates for the forthcoming polls is not helping its cause.

of candidates. Candidates who are not even primary members of the party have been put up in many seats, which has resulted in dissidents contesting independently.

In 2004, the Cuttack municipality became a Corporation with the abolition of the chairman post and the creation of the Mayor post. In the same year, CMC election was conducted with 48 wards. The BJP had won highest 18 corporator posts while

Pradhan was elected as first Mayor of CMC, while BJD's Madhu Sudan Sahu became the deputy Mayor. In 2009, the number of wards in Cuttack increased to 54, but the BJP was able to win in only two wards, Congress got eight, while the BJD won absolute majority and formed the council alone by winning 37 wards.

The CMC election in 2014 was conducted with the number of wards increasing to

elected. Meanwhile, for the upcoming urban polls, the party is yet to pick a candidate for the corporator post in Ward No 38 after its nominee Sobha Pandey withdrew her candidature. "We are looking for a suitable candidate to give support after our candidate lured by the ruling BJD withdrew her nomination paper," said senior BJP leader Nayan Kishore Mohanty.

Russia says Ukraine talks progressing as onslaught continues

KYIV(KCN): Both Russia and Ukraine projected optimism ahead of another scheduled round of talks Wednesday, even as Moscow's forces rained fire on Kyiv and other major cities in a bid to crush the resistance that has frustrated Kremlin hopes for a lightning victory.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, meanwhile, went before the US Congress via video and, invoking Pearl Harbor and 9/11, pleaded with America for more weapons and tougher sanctions against Russia, saying: "We

need you right now." With Moscow's ground advance on the Ukrainian capital stalled, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey

becoming "more realistic".

Kyiv residents huddled in homes and shelters amid a citywide curfew that

by shrapnel.

Russian forces also continued pounding Mariupol, the encircled southern seaport of 430,000 that



Lavrov said a neutral military status for Ukraine was being "seriously discussed" by the two sides, while Zelenskyy said Russia's demands for ending the war were

runs until Thursday morning, as Russia shelled areas in and around the city. A 12-story apartment building in central Kyiv erupted in flames after being hit

has been under attack for almost all of the three-week war in a siege that has left people struggling for food, water, heat and medicine and has

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Sonia discusses reasons for poll debacle in Punjab with Congress MPs from state

NEW DELHI(KCN): Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday held a meeting with party MPs from Punjab and sought their views on the party's debacle in the just-concluded assembly polls. Sources said the MPs stressed that infighting and indiscipline led to the party's poor performance at the hustings and this

must come to an end.

views expressed by

and was learnt to



Gandhi heard the

the parliamentarians

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Axe on six more

Bhubaneswar: The State Government on Wednesday gave compulsory retirement to six more officials on grounds of corruption and inefficiency. The six government servants include three engineers, a police

ficer (ACSO) and district welfare officer (DWO). With this, the State government has sacked 158 corrupt and inefficient officials, so far. The executive engineers are Saroj Kumar Das, Dayanidhi Samal and

der the Public Health Engineering Organisation (PHEO) of the housing and urban development department. Mr.Das and Mr.Samal have been given compulsory retirement for their inefficiency and unsatisfactory performances, while action has been taken against Mr.Ghadei as he is facing a corruption case and his performance was also not satisfactory, the State Government said in a statement. Similarly, Ratnakar Mallik, a police inspector of Angul district, has been removed from service for his incompetence whereas Ratnakar

Sethi, ACSO of Nuapada district, has been sacked on corruption charges. Mr.Sethi is facing two corruption cases. Vigilance had seized disproportionate assets of Rs 6.5 crore from possession of Mr.Sethi following raids and sent him to jail. Moreover, the government said it has taken such action against Charulata Mallick, a former district welfare officer of Angul for involvement in corruption practices. Ms.Mallik was put under suspension after vigilance caught her red handed while accepting a bribe.



inspector, an additional civil supply of-

Karunakar Ghadei. They are serving un-

The Battle

Amiya Kumar sahu, OAS

In kurukshetra battle, Arjun broke down
When weapons are to be shown
He was in utter confusion
Overwhelmed by emotion
Looking at Bhishma and Dronacharya as opposition



By overly drive by emotion
Need to stand up and think about Arjun
Face life's challenges with conviction
Remember the Lord's powerful instruction
Start our journey in right direction
We are here to be happy and awaken
For development, fulfilment and contribution

His thinking and judgement got clouded
Rationality, logical side, decisiveness got arrested
The celebrated hero sat down and crumbled
In the grip of despondency, he crumbled
Lord Krishna intervened and explained
The frailty of heart was controlled
Arjun came into term and the war got started

Virus of life is deadly than anybody
Always waging a war inside the body
I think the present virus is not our worst enemy
As we can turn a problem into possibility
A challenge into certainty
If start thinking Divinity and Divinity
And Maa Durga will give us the victory
Vijaya Dashami shall free humankind from adversity
Let's look inward consistently
Joint Secretary, Revenue Department Government of Odisha

We find ourselves in confusion
While dealing life's transaction
Slipped into helplessness and frustration

All power
is within
you; you
can do
anything
and
everything.



Classical Dance-A slice of Indian culture through the Art of watercolour paintings

Probing through the everyday neighbourhood places in your city for work, shopping or any other purposes, you are not just prone to experience the scent and distinct flavour of your place, but you pass through years and years of culture and tradition, which has made your city what it is today. Each city of India has its own influence on history through the rich customs and traditional art, transcended

these elegant art forms.

Sahaya Denish

The stellar bond between Artwork, Nature and Indian Classical Dance The mesmerizing rhythm and the impulses of the natural world have always encapsulated artists, hypnotizing them with its beauty.

In fact, the first nature-art pact started with cave paintings, where humans used earthly pigments to illustrate their

worldly thoughts. However, art evolved with time and artists began to explore the marvels of nature through breathtaking landscapes and also began to dig deep into the vast complexities of the human mind for a direct connection with the Nature. Without

several artists over the years who have closely followed the evolution of Indian Classical dance.

With widely prevalent painting techniques out there, the bond between art, nature and Indian classical dance forms a full circle through the rich and organic Watercolour paintings on the conventional dance forms of India.

Exploring splendid watercolour paintings on Indian Classical Dance

Watercolour is known as the master medium due to the fact that it brings instant involvement through the emotional quotient of the subject, artistically represented using pigment colours. Most eminent artists agree that Watercolour paintings are the best way to go about describing nature and the cultural variations in every country. In fact, Watercolour paintings play an important role in the diversity of arts.

1. Getting Started

To begin with, Dance is a very old tradition of India, which infuses the principle of celebration through spiritual-

from different States in India are Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Odissi and Kathakali from Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Odisha and Kerala respectively.

Bharatanatyam, which is based on the celestial rhythm of Carnatic music, along with Kuchipudi and Odissi are charismatic disciplines used to devote oneself to their supreme belief through the realms of Art. Kathak and Kathakali, both the dance forms are incredible tools of storytelling as they portray rooted tales of their place of origin.

For example, the animated Indian Folk dance painting of the "Namaskara" pose in Bharatanatyam is always a treat to watch for all Indian art enthusiasts. Similarly, the amazing Kathak watercolour paintings mostly capture the magnificent swirl with a dynamic splash of colours.

The best part about these classical dance forms are the varied attires and ornaments they use to propagate their art. Efficient artists who recreate these salient features in their paintings elevate the visual sense in the viewers for a rich profusion of emotions.

3. Discovering the inner beauty Indian classical dance forms are nothing but expositions of the Divine in human form through various styles and storytelling techniques. The physical, spiritual and esoteric nature of these dance forms are complex in nature that they invoke a holistic effect on the viewer.

Watercolour painting on Indian Classical Dance seizes the moment by bringing out various untold emotions conveyed through eyes, hands and facial movements, allowing us to retrospect the hidden inner beauty that is absolutely enlightening.

Impact of Indian Culture on Art

It is very evident that the Indian Culture has impacted the entire Art spectrum positively with numerous mosaic fragments on the ever glorious history of the country.

To put it differently in an even more precise manner, there can be no better way to understand India's true colours other than exploring these radiant art works.

Having said that, whenever you feel far away from your culture and traditions in this constantly evolving modern world, feel free to purchase a watercolour painting on Indian classical dances or any other art form of your choice, for there is nothing like a Indian Wall Art that can take you back in time, allowing you to steer your own version of a satisfying alternate reality.

Author is a co-founder of Indianartzone.com

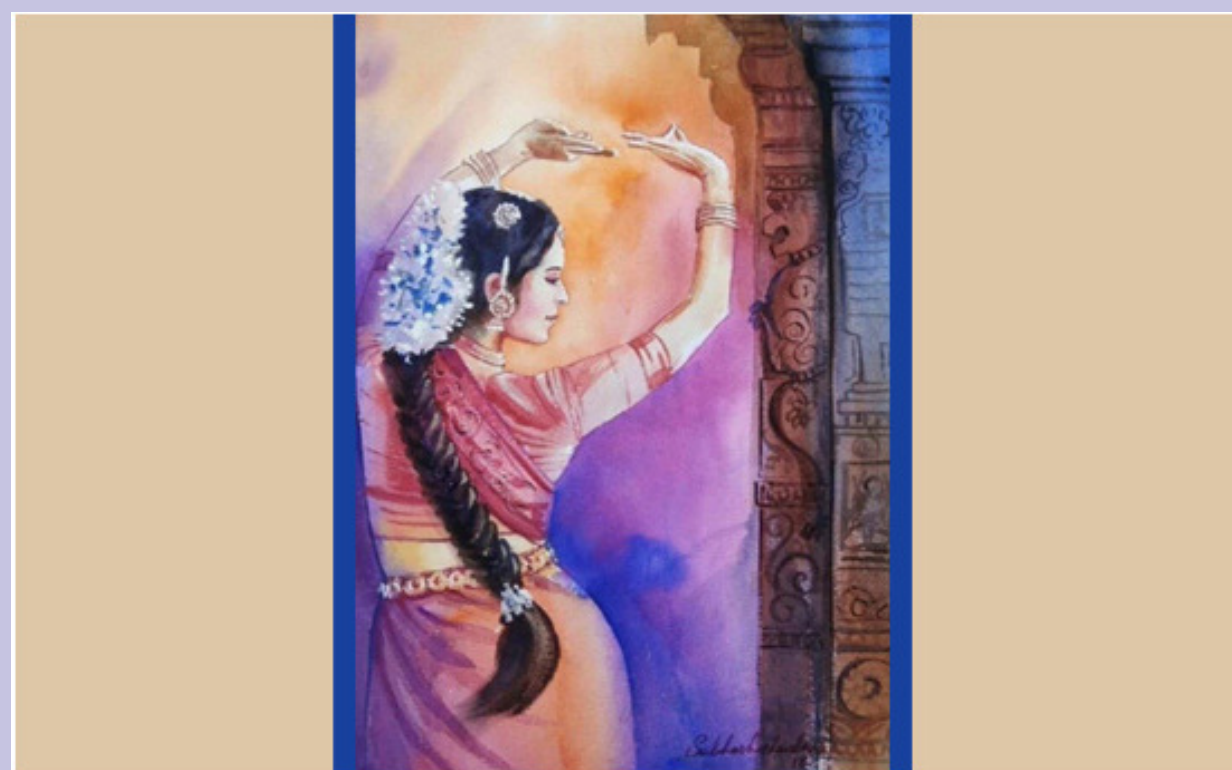


from one generation to another. If you are someone who regrets having missed all these deeply-etched impressions of civilization around you in this fast paced world, there is a way to consume the glorious heritage in its true form and essence without using a time machine.

Artistic depiction of Indian culture India is a land where various traditions, culture, religions, languages, music and much more merge seamlessly, while also securing a well-crafted place for themselves in the dazzling aesthetic history of India. But what really integrates the ethnic beauty and the traditional identities of each Indian State and Union territories?? The sparkling manifestations of Art. Indian Art brings in various folds of art forms like painting, pottery, sculpture, weaving and much more under its wing for a stunning representation of Indian glory. While these art forms record the lively cultural diversity in India, they also become a part of the country's movement that intensifies the creative sensibilities of the masses. Putting the spotlight on Indian painting, the artistic expression found its way to the surface through channelled inspirations of individual artists.

As a matter of fact, Indian paintings have seen the light since the Indus valley civilization period, after which most artwork during the Kings' era was focused on murals and miniatures. At a time when classical melodies and divine dance forms took the centre stage, India's artistic excellence multiplied at every turn with enthralling strokes, capturing the brimming essence of

any doubt, Nature has been the first inspiration for all art forms to take birth



in this world.

One such art form with a rich legacy is the Indian classical Dance that has been here for more than 2000 years.

Classical art forms in India have always been universal in their approach, opening the profound gateways of positivity through spiritualism. On the same note, Indian classical dance forms are no different and are built on the same principle to create a transcending effect on human lives through the portrayal of nature.

For example, in the famous composition called Chaliye Kunjan in Bharatanatyam, the Nayika demands her beloved partner to spend time with her by elaborating the propositions of nature. Such striking dance patterns and variations have been captured by

ity. Most of the Indian classical Dance forms largely rely on devotional scriptures to narrate philosophical tales that enhance the quality of human life.

These watercolour paintings are so emotionally absorbing that you get connected to the abstract world of Dance instantly.

With time, India saw the development of ethnic dance forms and styles through a dedicated platform with institutionalised procedures at the helm.

2. The blend of different cultures Although there are only eight classical dance forms officially recognized in India, every State has its own dance culture, filled with different folk history and traditions. Some of the prominent classical dance forms originating

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Jacqueline Fernandez requests media to respect privacy after picture with alleged conman surfaces



MUMBAI: Actor Jacqueline Fernandez has requested the media to not circulate pictures that intrude on her privacy after a new image of her with alleged conman Suresh Chandrashekhar went viral. Fernandez has previously appeared before the Enforcement

Directorate in connection with a money-laundering investigation involving Chandrashekhar and others. On late Saturday evening, an intimate picture of the 36-year-old actor with Chandrashekhar surfaced on the Internet. Fernandez, whose

mother reportedly suffered a heart stroke earlier this week in Bahrain, shared a statement on Instagram, writing that she is going through a tough time and would appreciate people drawing a boundary. "This country and its people have always

given me tremendous love and respect. This includes my friends from the media, from whom I have learned a lot. I'm currently going through a rough patch but I'm sure that my friends and fans will see me through it. "It is with this trust that I would request my media

friends to not circulate images of a nature that intrude my privacy and personal space. You would not do this to your own loved ones, am sure you would not do this to me either. Hoping that justice and good sense prevails. Thank you," the Sri Lankan actor said in the state-

ment. Last year, Fernandez was grilled by the ED multiple times as the agency suspects she is a "beneficiary" of the proceeds of crime allegedly generated by Chandrashekhar after conning and extorting money from some high-profile people.

'My mother advised me to discuss politics and religion only at home': Danish Sait

Danish Sait is back as Nograj, albeit on a different platform. The anchor, presenter, stand-up comedian, television host, radio jockey, actor, and writer is someone who needs no introduction, and the same holds good for one of his most iconic characters Nograj.

The character, which was first introduced by Danish through a radio show, had a hugely successful run in cinema too. The first film, Humble Politician Nograj, which was released in 2018, enjoys almost cult status. There is an equal expectation in the upcoming socio-political satire web series, which will stream on Voot Select. The 10-episode series produced by Applause Entertainment and Firstaction Studios marks the digital debut of Danish and director Saad Khan. The actor and director speak to CE, ahead of the release of this original web series, which will be out on January 6. Danish admits that he is tired, even if in a good way, with bringing to life the role of Nograj. "I am glad that I got an opportunity to use Nograj to entertain audiences for many years, but on the flip side, I feel, with age and experience, my interest is getting changed, and so have been my career goals. I haven't figured out the future of Nograj yet," explains Danish, who also revealed to us that during this year's IPL season, when he had to get into Mr Nag's character on the field, he did discuss with the team whether he wanted to play this character next year as well. "I feel it is tiring, and at the same time I can't give a final answer," he adds.

What is it about Nograj that made the character such a people's favourite? Is it the magic of the character or Danish's exemplary performance? "I feel it is Nograj that catches all the attention. I am funny on screen and in front of the camera. Otherwise, I am a simple boring boy. So it is the character 'Nograj'. The look, the moustache, the craziness in the eyes, the roller coaster ride that he takes to become an MLA, and his dreams to become the CM, it is all this and much more that people like about the character," he says.

Danish, the actor, has also written the script of Humble Politician Nograj along with director Saad Khan. Does the multifaceted per-

sonality who has worked in different mediums, find the process of making a web series more liberating? "No. It has the same process as what we do with cinema. You have SMPs and lawyers sitting and watching the show. I don't think there are many liberties except for the fact that one can tell a story by taking as



much time as we want. Unlike cinema, the time constraints are a lot more flexible, and as long as the content is tight, we can work around the time factors," he explains, and further clarifies that there are no separate set of audiences for OTT and theatres, and the basic requirement for all audiences is the expectations of entertainment.

Apart from Danish, who plays the titular role, the series also has Vijay Chendror as Manjunath, Prakash Belawadi, Disha Madan, Varun Thakur, Shalini Narayan, and Geetanjali Kulkarni in pivotal roles. The political satire traces the life and times of MLA Nograj who harbours ambitions of becoming the CM. It deals with the power play involved, and re-stor politics.

There is a buzz that the film's topic touches upon coalition governments, and Danish quickly says, "Humble Politician is fictional, and it has got nothing to do with actual political scenarios. Of course, the situations and the central incident could have taken place in some other places. But it is important to un-

derstand that it is just a comedy show, where a lot of things are products of our creativity. Danish is honest when he says that his knowledge about politics is minimal. "Even if I have an opinion, I discuss it with my wife, and life moves on. As a child, my mother had advised me that politics and religion should be dis-

cussed only at home, and I have always followed that" he says. Danish Sait and Saad Khan have travelled together for almost eight years, and are associated with various creative works. Coming to Humble Politician Nograj, the director sheds more light on the kind of equation he share with Danish. "We have been friends for many years, and we have managed to maintain a good rapport. With Danish's popularity whatever he is doing in the lockdown has helped this webseries come out so well. We did get a good response for our film, which was out in 2018, and I hope we get the response for this web series. There is a positivity that comes from Danish, and he has delivered his signature style as Nograj. With an ensemble cast to boot, this web series will definitely be a powerhouse for entertainment. Saad had observed people in different situations to help the director craft the story and the various characters. "I have never taken any influence from any politician, and my inspirations are from the common people," he signs off.

Why are women and female entrepreneurs denied equal opportunities in boardrooms and the corporate world?

On March 8, the auspicious occasion of International Women's Day, several opinions and perspectives came to light about the numerous successful accomplishments of women across the globe. It was indeed refreshing news to come across. But one aspect that seemed to have not been mentioned was that now women are triumphantly climbing the corporate ladders and snagging peak positions.

The appointment of Nishi Vasudeva as the Chairman and Managing director of state-owned Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), and Alka Mittal as Interim Chairman and Managing Director of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) indicates that women are now given favorable opportunities to lead from the top in the prestigious public sector undertakings called Navratnas.

That was the first time a woman was made the head of the country's largest oil and gas producer. It was no ordinary instance. Alka Mittal holding a postgraduate degree in economics and a doctoral degree in commerce became the first woman to be on the ONGC Board on November 27, 2018. However, it also has to be accepted that women professionals will have to work hard and struggle to take their rightful part in the corporate world.

According to recent studies, only 18 percent of the Board of companies listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange consist of female participants. It will take some time before this rises to 45-50 percent. Until a few years ago, even this estimate would have been considered wishful thinking. Today, women are constantly making strides in the corporate world. Whether it be a small business or a large multinational, one can find many women professionals and entrepreneurs.

There is an abundance of notable examples in our society. For instance, Madhavi Puri Buch has taken over as the head of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). Buch is the first female to become the Chairperson of SEBI. She is also the

first non-bureaucrat to hold this esteemed position in the past few years. The government has appointed her as the SEBI chief for a period of three years.

R.K. Sinha

because there was an influx of a tsunami of opportunities. Here it would be appropriate to mention Falguni Nair, the Founder of the

ranking positions in top-tier companies. All this was possible

position and was behind bars for the crime of money laundering. Chanda Kochhar is accused of giving loans by bypassing the rules too. At present, she is out on bail. Thinking in retrospect, one will understand that the doors for women have remained



One cannot deny that there wasn't much space or opportunity for women in corporate India until recently. They weren't considered fit enough for trivial posts such as typist-clerk or private secretary. The Tata conglomerate has been a true trailblazer in the corporate world of India. It has also played a significant role in the process of nation-building. Despite this, even during the era of the renowned JRD Tata, the most inspirational man of this group, no female professional was given the command of any subsidiary company. Similarly, hardly any woman got a place on the Board of any other company.

In the era of JRD Tata, AjitKerker (Taj Hotel), F.C. Sehgal (TCS), eminent jurist Nani Palkiwala (ACC Cement), and Russi Modi (Tata Steel) were the key faces of the Tata group. The reasoning behind this example is to hint at the fact that women in the Tata group did not get their lawful rights, let alone the rest. The winds of economic liberalization that started sweeping across the country post-1991 started transforming the face of the corporate world.

Subsequently, women became entrepreneurs and were appointed to high-

renowned beauty start-up, Nykaa. She has recently achieved the ground-breaking distinction of India's richest self-made female billionaire. A while ago, Nykaa witnessed a remarkable listing, and their IPO was warmly welcomed by the stock market. Currently, Nair controls half the ownership of her company, and her net worth stands at around \$6.5 billion following the rise in the price of the firm's shares by up to 89 percent. It is the first woman-led company in India to enter the stock exchange.

Meanwhile, there is an alternate view that even though we have many women occupying important positions in the corporate world, disparities persist in terms of female participation in the company boardrooms. However, Arundhati Bhattacharya in the State Bank of India, Shikha Sharma in Axis Bank, and Chanda Kochhar in ICICI Bank being the managing directors can be considered a milestone. That reiterates a solid message regarding the opportunities given to women at the best banks. But it is imperative to mention that Chanda Kochhar, former Managing Director, and CEO of ICICI Bank, also faces grave allegations of abuse of her

shut when it came to the Company Boardrooms. That was not only unfair but also gave a clear indication of the rampant patriarchy that existed in the corporate world. In a nation that worships women as goddesses, it is indeed shameful to deny women equal opportunities in the workspace. The decisions regarding promotions, advancements, and hires should be based solely on merit and capabilities.

There was a time when the promoters of our companies placed their wives, daughters, daughters-in-law as mere showpieces in the boardroom and believed that they had sparked a revolution. By doing the bare minimum, they felt that they had given women the lawful rights that they should have gotten in the first place. Women contribute towards half of the world's population. The onus of ensuring that they get the opportunities they are entitled to falls on the entire society. We can ensure equality in the workspace by improving their involvement in boardrooms, where they have ample decision-making power necessary to bring about changes.

(The writer is a senior editor, columnist, and former MP)

Best Biz Brains float cloud consulting platform to Catch'em Small

All of them worked with some of the best known large conglomerates across the world, but now, for them, the new mantra is 'small is beautiful'. They have, therefore, joined hands from different parts of the world, to bring up medium and small companies and even start-ups and taken them to the next level. The cloud-based consulting platform floated by them and christened as AGD PRO, has come up with the apt tagline (reflecting their mission): Connect, Collaborate, Create and it promises to bridge the digital and physical divide across the globe to bring the best possible, in-time support and services for their clients, thereby allowing them to bridge the knowledge and process gap that might exist between them and industry leading organisations. "We are an empowered and passionate



group of practitioners with significant track records, experts and industry veterans globally, who use their domain knowledge, expertise, experience to provide comprehensive support to entrepreneurs, businesses and start-ups to enable them scale up, improve business processes, efficiency and competitiveness and succeed in a fast changing and disruptive environment," said Aniruddha G Dastidar, Founder & CEO, AGD PRO. There are as many as 38 practitioners-all industry veterans from across the world, most of them are alumnus of IITs, IIMs and world's premier B-Schools, who have joined hands to strengthen this cloud-based platform. The list includes Arup K Paul, who served companies like Martin Burn, ICI Explosives, Indian Oxygen (BOC), MHD LLC, Oman, Linde AG, L'Air Liquide, France, Praxair, US, Shankar Bose, who served Price Waterhouse,

Ritwik Mukherjee

Chloride India, Tatas, The Bahwan Group, Hill K Nandi, who served companies like Bricmont, Comp Analysis, FurnXpert, Aniruddha Bose, formerly with Coopers and Lybrand, Standard Chartered Bank Nepal, International Association of Credit Portfolio Management, New York, Shakti Ghoshal, who served Indian Railways, Voltas, FeddersLloyd, Saud Bahwan Group, Chandra Kumar Bose, formerly with Tata Steel, Bose Information Technology (Hamburg, Germany), Natasha Malhotra B, formerly with Pfizer, Merck, former chairperson for the White House Initiative for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI), Rina Mitra, Jishu Gupta, Dr Sharmistha Roy Chowdhury, Air Commodore Tapan K Chatterjee, Ex-Defence Attache to France, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg for government of India, to name a few.

"As a consulting platform for small, medium and large enterprises, the key aspirations and consequent challenges revolve around scale, efficiency, visibility, competitiveness, financial resilience, talent and governance. Therefore such enterprises we serve, need guidance, mentoring, hand-holding, connections and external help that go beyond mere consulting and advisory. This is what makes our philosophy and approach refreshingly different, unique and success-driven. We do not merely advise-we diagnose, challenge and participate in finding the right answers and solutions that work for a specific enterprise in the context in which it operates and then work with them to execute and deliver. Our engagement is intense and bespoke and we remain committed to empower a business and ensure its success," said Dastidar.

Author is a Kolkata based Freelance journalist.

1500 Cr Spending On KDR-BLNG Rail

New Delhi: The Government of Odisha has signed two

new line projects. Informing about the Khurda Road-

financial year 2021-22, he said. So far, 92 km length

completed, informed the Minister.

Further, the State Government has to acquire 829 acre land and diversion of 1674 acre forest land, he said.

Similarly, speaking about the Jeypore-Nabarangpur project, he said the project was included in Budget 2016-17 and the it was sanctioned on cost sharing basis with the State Government of Odisha in which State Government of Odisha has to provide land free of cost and has to share 50 per cent construction cost of the project.

Mr. Vaishnav said the latest cost of the project is Rs 748 crore. An outlay of Rs 15.70 crore has been provided in the Budget 2021-22.

The railway project involves land acquisition of 772.19 acre private land, 87.77 acre Government land and forest land diversion 9.70 acre. Land acquisition work has been taken up, he added.



Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the Ministry of Railways to provide land free of cost for two ongoing new railway line projects, Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnav told Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

In a written reply to a question of BJP MP Basanta Panda, the Railways Minister said the State Government has signed the MoU to provide land free of cost for the Khurda Road-Bolangir (289 km) and Jeypore-Nabarangpur (38 km)

Bolangir project, Mr. Vaishnav said the anticipated cost of this project is Rs 3792 crore. The Odisha Government has to provide land free of cost and share 50% cost of the project from km 112 to km 289 from Khurda Road.

The Railway has taken up the work on Khurda Road—Bolangir New Line (289 km). An expenditure of Rs 1497 crore has been incurred on the project upto March 2021 and an outlay of Rs 1000.50 crore has been provided in the

Khurda Road to Mahipur (77 km) and Bolangir to Bichupalli (15 km) of the project has been commissioned. Work has been taken up in Mahipur-Nuagaon-Buguda (45 km), Purunakatak-Boudh-Sonepur (65 km) and Sonepur-Jahrtarbha-Bichupalli (37 km).

The one of the biggest railway projects in Odisha involves acquisition of 6,162 acre land and diversion of 1844 acre forest land, out of which 5333 acre land has been acquired and diversion of 170 acre forest land has been

Only way forward for Cong to adopt model of collective, inclusive leadership: 'G-23' leaders

NEW DELHI: The leaders of the Congress's "Group of 23" on Wednesday said the only way forward for the grand old party is to adopt a model of collective and inclusive leadership and decision making at all levels.

In a statement, they also urged the Congress leadership to initiate talks with like-minded forces to create a way for a credible alternative in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

The G-23 leaders met at the residence of former Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad over dinner on Wednesday to work out the grouping's future strategy and discuss the Congress's debacle in the just-concluded Assembly polls in five states.

Sources said the grouping had earlier planned a dinner at Kapil Sibal's residence, but it was changed at the last minute.

Among the leaders who attended the meeting were Sibal,

Anand Sharma, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Prithviraj Chavan, Manish Tewari, Shashi Tharoor, Vivek Tankha, Raj Babbar, Akhilesh Prasad Singh and Sandeep Dikshit.

The ambit of the G-23 grouping increased this time as some more leaders - Patiala MP Preneet Kaur, former Gujarat chief minister Shankar Singh Vaghela, former Union minister Mani Shankar Aiyar, former Rajya Sabha deputy chairman PJ Kurian and former Haryana speaker Kuldeep Sharma joined the dinner meeting.

The grouping had given an open invite to other Congressmen to join them at the dinner meeting.

The sources said the meeting was convened to apprise all the G-23 members of the decisions taken at the crucial Congress Working Committee (CWC) meet on Sunday.

Two prominent G-23 members -- Azad and Sharma -- were to apprise the other members of the developments at the CWC meeting and what they said on strengthening the party in the wake of its drubbing in the Assembly polls, they said.

The performance of the Congress in these states was poor as it failed to win any of the four BJP-ruled states -- Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Uttarakhand and Manipur -- while it lost Punjab to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

The G-23 grouping has been critical of the Congress leadership.

It has been demanding an organisational overhaul, after they wrote a joint letter to party president Sonia Gandhi in 2020.

The sources said invitations were also extended to the Congressmen who do not constitute the bloc but feel that changes are required, including at

the leadership level, to revive the party's electoral fortunes.

The decision to convene a meeting of the G-23 came a day after Gandhi sought the resignation of the Congress presidents of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur and Goa.

Sibal, in his latest salvo targeting the leadership had said the Gandhis should step aside and give some other leader a chance to helm the party, provoking a backlash from the Gandhi family loyalists, who accused him of speaking the language of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

The G-23 has, however, got weakened over time with senior leader M Veerappa Moily distancing himself from the group, Jitin Prasad joining the BJP and Mukul Wasnik not attending its meetings in recent times.

UK says 2 detained dual nationals returning to UK from Iran

LONDON (AP): Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian dual national who has been detained in Iran for nearly six years, is at Tehran's airport preparing to leave the country, a U.K. lawmaker said Wednesday. Iranian state media reported that Britain had "settled a long-overdue debt" of \$530 million. Zaghari-Ratcliffe was given back her British

passport over the weekend, raising hopes that her long ordeal was coming to a close.

"Nazanin is at the airport in Tehran and on her way home," tweeted U.K. lawmaker Tulip Siddiq, who represents Zaghari-Ratcliffe's constituency and has tirelessly pressed for her release. "I came into politics to make a difference, and right now I'm feeling like I have."

Boris Johnson in UAE, Saudi Arabia to press for more oil

DUBAI: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson arrived in the Gulf on Wednesday for meetings in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia aimed at eas-

on Russian oil, gas "Because of Europe's reliance on Russian oil and gas, Putin has been able to blackmail the West to hold Western economies to ransom," he said.

blames Russian oil 'addiction' for Ukraine invasion The deal, led by Saudi Arabia and Russia, calls for gradually increasing production levels

in place between OPEC producers and Russia, according to a Saudi readout of the call.

ALSO READ: British PM Boris Johnson offers UK visas to



ing skyrocketing gasoline prices, as the West grapples with economic headwinds from Russia's war in Ukraine.

Johnson will be seeking greater investments in the UK's renewable energy transition and ways to secure more oil to lessen British dependence on Russian energy supplies.

His visit, though, is also about pressing these two major OPEC producers to pump more oil, which would have an immediate impact on Brent Crude prices that nearly touched \$140 a barrel in trading last week. Prices have eased to around \$100 in recent days, in large part due to new pandemic lockdowns in China. Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to invade Ukraine is "causing global uncertainty and a spike in the price of oil," Johnson told reporters in Abu Dhabi ahead of his meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed. "Everybody can see the effect of the increase in gas prices that are coming through," he added.

ALSO READ: UK PM Boris Johnson calls on world to wean off dependence

"We need independence," Johnson added.

Pressing for more oil is a tall order to ask of Abu Dhabi and Riyadh, which are benefiting richly from high energy prices that boost their revenues and spending powers.

Moreover, ties between Western governments and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman remain tarnished by the killing of Saudi writer Jamal Khashoggi. The prince has yet to hold a direct call with US President Joe Biden, who is trying to revive Iran's nuclear accord to the frustration of some Gulf states and Israel. Biden ordered a US ban on Russian oil imports after the war and cautioned that Americans will feel pain, too — at the gas pump. Yet, he declared, "Defending freedom is going to cost."

The Covid pandemic pushed demand for oil down, with Brent Crude prices averaging around \$42 a barrel in 2020 before climbing to \$70 last year on the back of a deal by major oil producers to drastically curb production.

ALSO READ: British PM Boris Johnson

each month as economies recover, but it did not account for the impact of the war in Ukraine, launched by Russia three weeks ago.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have the spare capacity to pump more oil, but they've so far been unwilling to change course from the deal forged with Russia. The UAE's energy minister as recently as last week said the country is "committed to the OPEC+ agreement and its existing monthly production adjustment mechanism".

His statement followed a conflicting comment from the UAE's ambassador in Washington, who seemed to suggest the UAE was in favor of releasing more oil on the market. Western leaders have signaled that current wartime energy security demands that allied nations pump more.

The Biden administration dispatched two officials last month to Riyadh to talk about a range of issues — chief among them global energy supplies.

In a call with Biden prior to the visit, King Salman doubled down on "the importance of maintaining the agreement" that is

Ukrainian relatives "The reason for coming here is that it's not just that they've got oil. They're also some of the biggest investors here, in the Gulf, in UK renewables," Johnson said in Abu Dhabi.

Many UK lawmakers, including those in Johnson's own Conservative party, have questioned the decision to turn to Saudi Arabia, citing its recent mass execution of 81 people on Saturday.

The UN human rights chief said that just over half were Saudi Shiites who had taken part in anti-government protests a decade ago, calling for more rights. Some were executed after trials that failed to meet due process guarantees, said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet.

Boris said he's raised human rights issues many times and will raise them again during this trip. "But we have long, long-standing relationships with this part of the world and we need to recognize the very important relationship that we have and the strength of that relationship," he said.

A Book on Collection of Odia Poetries Released

Kolkata(KCN): The book titled "Pherijibara Bela" a collection of Odia Poetries written by Mrs. Anita Acharya (Pradhan) was launched at the Utkala Auditorium of Jagannath temple, Kidderpore. The programme was started with a devotional musical performance followed by the lighting of the inaugural lamp by the guests.

Noted Odia writers Prof. Dr Krushana Chandra Bhuinya, Prof. Bipin Bihari Biswal, Mr. Rajendranath Giri, Mr. Kamal Kanta Mohanty and

Bengali Writers Mr. Sudhir Dutta and Academician Biswarup Roy were invited as guests. After releasing the book, guests delivered their speeches by encouraging the writer and audiences to contribute more in the field of Odia Poetries by reading and writing. Total event was hosted by Mr. Sushanta Kumar Panda and Dr Gyaneswar Mishra. The Vote of thanks was presented by Mr. Safalya Nandi. The Programme come to an end with the distribution of Maha Prasadam of Lord Jagannath.

Two days training for CCI functionaries on CPS held at Puri

Puri (KCN): Two days training for Child Care Institutions functionaries was conducted by District Child Protection Unit, Puri on 14th & 15th March 2022. The training was started after inaugural address by Mr. Pradip Kumar Sahoo, Additional District Magistrate, Puri, Mr. Mahavir Rudra Narayan Sahu, Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee, Puri and Mr. Saktipad Mishra, Member, CWC, Puri. As per the planned agenda of the training, Mr. Subhanarayan Satapathy, POIC deliberated on brief overview on ICPS, Biju Sishu Surakhya Yojana, Green Passage and Mr. Manoj Kumar Tripathy, DCPO imparted training on minimum standard of care in the institution and role and responsibility of CCI staff. Mr. Santosh Kumar Sahu, LPO imparted training on Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection Act 2015 and POCSO Act thoroughly. Ms Mehedia Rezbwi, Consultant Unicef taught in



detail on Counselling, its approach and role of counselors in CCIs. Similarly, Ms. Sumita Ghosh, District Consultant, Action Aid deliberated Individual Care Plan, Prohibition of child marriage. Ms Snigdharani Sahoo, PONIC & Mr. Akashya Kumar Chaudhury discussed on Non Institutional Care, Ashirvad Scheme and Mo Sishu, PFMS respectively. The programme was coordinated and organized by District Child Protection Unit, Puri where total 35 participants including newly joined staff of CCIs were participated from 8 CCIs of Puri District. At last Participants were submitted their valuable feedback and opinion. Ms. Rojalini Patra, Counselor and Ms Sakuntala Rath, ORW of DCPU, Puri were supported for organizing the training programme.

Storm over bay of Bengal

Bhubaneswar(KCN): A low pressure area brewing over central parts of south Bay of Bengal, which will intensify into a cyclonic storm over the Bay of Bengal around March 21. However, the system will have no impact on Odisha, the IMD said on Wednesday. The low pressure area lay over central parts of south Bay of Bengal. It is likely to move east-northeastwards & become a well marked low pressure area over southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining south Andaman Sea around March 19 morning, the IMD said. Thereafter, it is likely to move north-

northwestwards initially along & off Andaman & Nicobar Islands, intensify into a depression by morning of March 20 and further intensify into a cyclonic storm around March 21. It would then continue to move north-northwestwards till March 22, it said. Thereafter, it will move north-northeastwards and reach near



Bangladesh and adjoining north Myanmar coast by morning of March 23, the Met Department further said. Thereafter, the cyclone system will move north-northeastwards and reach near Bangladesh and adjoining north Myanmar coast by morning of March 23. Once the system intensifies into a cyclone, it will be named as Asani, which is a name suggested by Sri Lanka. Sea condition is very likely to become rough over southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining south Andaman Sea on Thursday and Friday. The weather office has

advised fishermen not to venture into central parts of south Bay of Bengal and adjoining Equatorial Indian Ocean on Wednesday and into southeast Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea area on Thursday and Friday. It has also advised fishermen not to venture into Andaman Sea and along and off Andaman and Nicobar Islands during between Saturday and Tuesday. Andaman and Nicobar Islands are expected to experience squally winds on Sunday which were likely to intensify to gale winds with speeds reaching 70-80 km per hour, gusting to 90 kmph the next day.

Best performance in MEP Field Er. Basant Rout Awarded

Cuttack Sadar(KCN) : Leading social organisation Utkal Youth Trust(UYT) Bangalore,Cuttack Branch coordinator youth



social worker Er. Basant Rout awarded by The Muhan Sahitya Sansad Mumbai as several types of social work for the betterment of Society,Corona Awareness,In science & Engineering technology development at Odisha basically in the field of MEP(Mechanical-Electrical-Plumbing),National Safety week observation,safety training sessions with teaching to workers improve of safety in all spheres of life.Er. Basant Son of Sj. Ballava Charan Rot,Mother Sanjukta Rout the Villagers of Sogal,Kishore Nagar Thana,Salipr Block & District Cuttack.For his grand suc-

cess some of eminent personalities like Sr.Journalist Er. Dushmantra Patra, Er. Parthasarathi Panda,Er.Sandip Saha, Er. Sinha Sir, Er. Rabindra Roul, Bishnu Charan Rout, Ashok Sethi,Youth Social Worker Udaya Ranjan Das,Blood Donor Hemanta Das, Er.Susanta Behera, Er. Sevak Srikant, Natyakar Ashok Pattanik,Corona Worriers Aviram Sahoo are paid congratulations & pray God for his long life.

Man swindles Rs 15 crore from people, held

DHENKANAL: Sadar police on Tuesday arrested a 32-year-old man of Badasingha village on charges of defrauding several people across the state to the tune of Rs 15 crore on pretext of investing in the share market. The scam came to light after one Kamalakanta Sahoo of Karigarsahi in Dhenkanal lodged an FIR accusing the fraudster, Satyaranajan Hota of duping him of Rs 1 crore. Sadar SDPO Bikash Behura said Hota left his job in Merchant Navy and formed a company named Purple Cualbs Financial Ltd in 2018 with head office at Bhubaneswar. After appointing his wife Pallabi Mishra and Kolkata-based doctor Uttam Lenka as directors of the company, he engaged several persons to collect money from people to invest in share market.Initially, people believed him as they were getting Rs 25,000 per month by investing Rs 5 lakh at a time. This helped Hota in expanding his business across Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Jajpur and other states like West Bengal. This way, he collected more than Rs 15 crore. Raids conducted at Hota's Patia office after receiving the complaint blew the lid off the scam.

Campaign for Municipal election at Barbil in full swing

Barbil(KCN): The municipal election in Barbil municipality is in full swing. The



election is being held directly for the post

of chairman and being unreserved, people of all category are participating in competing for this office. Similarly, 35 councilors are competing from 15 wards in Barbil. All political parties including independent have already started door to door campaign. Though the campaign were in peaceful norm ,a case of misconduct of a candidate against Opposition groups has come in the lime light .As per information, Shub-hsh-reeRinarani Mahant, a councillor candidate of ward number 2 has lodged a written complaint with the Election Commission and Barbil police station alleging that some supporter of another candidate Babiranimahant of the same ward are hacking them while doing campaign at Sirazuddinhutting. As per information no more such incidents has observed other than this incident in the area.




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Oil importers India, Thailand to be hit hardest by Ukraine crisis among APAC nations



NEW DELHI: Large oil importers like India and Thailand will be the most affected among Asia-Pacific countries by the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, S&P Global Ratings has said. S&P estimates the Indian economy to grow 7.8 per cent in the next fiscal year beginning April 1, 2022. Besides, the economy is expected to grow 6 per cent and 6.5 per cent in 2023-24 and 2024-25, re-

spectively. It projected inflation at 5.4 per cent in the current fiscal year. It said banks in Asia-Pacific (APAC) region have small direct exposure to Russia which will soften the impact of the conflict, but proximate downside risks, in particular, actual and potential secondary economic and other risks lie ahead.

ALSO READ | UK PM Boris Johnson calls on world to wean off dependence

on Russian oil, gas "The biggest risk of the Ukraine conflict is market volatility and higher commodity prices; emerging economies with large energy imports are most at risk," S&P said in a report. India relies on overseas purchases to meet about 85 per cent of its oil requirement, making it one of the most vulnerable in Asia to higher oil prices. International oil prices had climbed to

a 14-year high of near USD 140 per barrel last week on fears of supply disruption following Russia's invasion of Ukraine beginning February 24. Rates have since eased to around USD 100 per barrel. ALSO READ | India buying discounted oil from Russia will not be US sanctions violation

"India and Thailand are large oil importers and will be the most affected among large Asia-Pacific countries," S&P said.

FMCG cos should increase margins for Kirana stores: METRO Cash & Carry India MD

NEW DELHI: FMCG makers, earning higher profits on their products, should consider increasing the margins for small retailers selling their goods, said METRO Cash & Carry India MD & CEO Arvind Mediratta.

The margins for the retailers have not changed for the past several years and the FMCG companies still call the shots in this, said Mediratta suggesting a proper equitable distribution of margins.

"FMCG companies are making record profits year-on-year, the volume growth is four per cent and profits have grown 40 per cent. "Why is that because they have kept the margins of the traditional retailers fixed and unchanged over the past 30 years," said Mediratta while speaking at a panel discussion in a programme organised by industry body FICCI and ICPRG. This is one of the problems that the small retailers are facing as margins are the same but their operating cost is increasing, he added. "Everything has gone up, salaries have gone up but the margins have not gone up. It has actually come down in some cases," he said suggesting them to negotiate collectively better terms of trade with FMCG makers. Some companies have magical price points, which have remained the same despite successive hikes.

"What they have done over a period of time is to reduce the product quantity and ingredients, and reduced the optimised packaging as far as possible. Now, the only thing they can do is to reduce the retail margin," said Mediratta, who is also the chairperson for retail and internal trade of industry body FICCI.

ALSO READ | Amazon threatens legal proceedings against Future Retail According to him, the future of retail is converging of physical and digital, and the government should provide easier access to loans to the small retailers, who lack resources for their modernisation. Mediratta also pointed out that some retailers are losing billions of dollars and cross-subsidising the product to distort the competition and push the kirana and local stores out from the trade.

"Some of them have more loss than their turn-overs," he said while speaking on 'Shaping the future of small retail in India'. While, on the other hand, the kirana shops cannot survive even for a month without losses. A lot of kirana stores can get out of the business, if this continues for another 12 months and beyond.

"We need a retail policy. For the last many years, FICCI, CCI and RAI are working. We have a draft retail policy, which has been

tabled to the government but it has not been formalised yet," he said adding that "that is one of the critical needs of the hour".

This should be one integrated policy for the retail sector and not separate for e-commerce, small retailer and large retailers.

"Right now, for a retailer, it is not easy to do a business. We need a lot of things for ease of doing business. We need 30-40 licences to open a store and then their lot of compliances also," said Mediratta. However, he also added that a lot of changes are also happening at the customers level, which is now digitally influenced, having details of the products and expects a faster delivery in hours.

Sonia discusses reasons for poll debacle in Punjab with Congress MPs from state

Continued from page-1

have admitted that some mistakes were made in the state, where the party lost power to the Aam Aadmi Party.

Among the MPs who attended the meeting in the Parliament Complex were Preneet Kaur, Manish Tewari, Ravneet Singh Bittu, Shamsher Singh Dullo, Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Santokh Singh Chaudhary and Amar Singh. Mohammed Sadique and Ambika Soni were, however, not present in the meeting which lasted about an hour.

Incidentally, Manish Tewari and Preneet Kaur attended a meeting of leaders of the G-23, which has been critical of the party leadership, later in the evening at Ghulam Nabi Azad's residence.

The MPs, the sources said, are learnt to have told Gandhi that the party must remain united and efforts should be made to bring everyone together to strengthen it further.

They said some MPs blamed the Punjab leadership, including Navjot Singh Sidhu, Harish Rawat, Harish Chaudhary and Sunil Jakhar, for the poll debacle.

The Congress could win only 18 seats in the 117-member assembly in the just concluded polls.

Some MPs also said that some leaders proved to be liabilities and infighting between top leaders cost the party dearly.

An MP reportedly told the Congress chief that projecting Charanjit Singh Channi as the Dalit chief ministerial face also did not help and proved counter-productive as other sections got alienated from the party.

Russia says Ukraine talks progressing as onslaught continues

Continued from page-1

forced the digging of mass graves.

Hopes for diplomatic progress to end the war rose after Zelenskyy acknowledged in the most explicit terms yet Tuesday that Ukraine's goal of joining NATO is unlikely to be met. Russian President Vladimir Putin has long depicted Ukraine's NATO aspirations as a threat to Russia.

Lavrov welcomed Zelenskyy's comment and said "the businesslike spirit" starting to surface in the talks "gives hope that we can agree on this issue".

A neutral status is being seriously discussed in connection with security guarantees, "Lavrov said on Russian channel RBK TV. There are concrete formulations that in my view are close to being agreed."

Russia's chief negotiator, Vladimir Medinsky, said the sides were discussing a possible compromise idea for a future Ukraine with a smaller, non-aligned military.

Prospects of a diplomatic breakthrough were highly uncertain, however, given the gulf between Ukraine's demand that the invading forces withdraw completely and Russia's suspected aim of replacing Kyiv's Westward-looking government with a pro-Moscow regime.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak denied Russian claims Ukraine was open to adopting a model of neutrality comparable to Sweden or Austria.

Podolyak said on Telegram that Ukraine needs powerful allies and "clearly defined security guarantees" to keep it safe.

Another source of dispute is the status of Crimea, which was seized and annexed by Russia in 2014, and the separatist-held Donbas region in eastern Ukraine, which Russia recognises as independent. Ukraine considers both part of its territory.

In going before Congress, Zelenskyy said that Russia "has turned the Ukrainian sky into a source of death for thousands of people."

Appealing to President Joe Biden directly, he said that, "being the leader of the world means to be the leader of peace."

Biden has resisted Zelenskyy's requests to send warplanes to Ukraine or establish a no-fly zone over the country because of the danger of triggering a direct war between the US and Russia. The fighting has sent more than 3 million people fleeing the country, by the United Nations' estimate. The UN reported that 726 civilians have been confirmed killed but that the real number is higher.

The head of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, arrived in Ukraine to try to obtain greater access for aid groups and increased protection of civilians.

Amid the vast humanitarian crisis caused by the war, the Red Cross has helped evacuate civilians from besieged areas and has delivered 200 tons of aid, including medical supplies, blankets, water and over 5,200 body bags to help "ensure the dead are treated in a dignified manner", Nowhere has suffered more than Mariupol, on the Sea of Azov.

Local officials say missile strikes and shelling have killed more than 2,300 people. Bodies have been buried in trenches, and more corpses lie in the streets and in a hospital basement.

With humanitarian aid unable to get in amid the constant bombardment, people burn scraps of furniture to warm their hands and cook the little food still available.

An estimated 20,000 people managed to escape the city on Tuesday in 4,000 vehicles via a humanitarian corridor, according to Zelenskyy's office.

But local authorities said Russian forces had taken hundreds of people hostage at a Mariupol hospital and were using it as a firing position. Officials said the troops forced about 400 people from nearby homes into the Regional Intensive Care Hospital and were using them and roughly 100 patients and staff as human shields.

Kyiv regional leader Oleksiy Kuleba said Russian forces had intensified fighting in the Kyiv suburbs and a highway leading west, and across the capital region, "kindergartens, museums, churches, residential blocks and engineering infrastructure are suffering from the endless firing."

Ukraine also appeared to have successes, with satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC analyzed by The Associated Press showing helicopters and vehicles ablaze at the Russian-held Kherson International Airport and Air Base after a suspected Ukrainian strike on Tuesday.

Meanwhile the prime ministers of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia returned to Poland after a risky visit by train to Kyiv to show support for Ukraine.

Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala said massive supplies of military equipment must be delivered quickly by as many countries as possible. "We have to realize that (the Ukrainians) do also fight for our independence, for our freedom," Fiala said. "That's the reason why we travelled there, to show them they're not alone."

Zelenskyy addresses US Congress, appeals for help

Continued from page-1

Invoking Shakespeare's hero last week, he asked the British House of Commons whether Ukraine is "to be or not to be."

On Tuesday, he appealed to "Dear Justin" as he addressed the Canadian Parliament and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Zelenskyy called on European Union leaders at the start of the war to do the politically unthinkable and fast-track Ukraine's membership and he has continued to push for more help to save his young democracy than world leaders have so far pledged to do. "I know he will ask for more help," said Sen Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.

Biden has insisted there will be no US troops on the ground in Ukraine and has resisted Zelenskyy's relentless pleas for warplanes as too risky, potentially escalating into a direct confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia. "Direct conflict between NATO and Russia is World War III," Biden has said.

US defence officials say they are puzzled by Zelenskyy's demand for more warplanes.

They say Ukraine isn't often flying the planes it has now while making good use of other weapons the West is providing, including Stinger missiles for shooting down helicopters and other aircraft.

While officials are anticipating that Zelenskyy may once again call on the US and the West for fighter jets or help to establish a no-fly zone, the Biden administration is looking to send Ukraine "more of what's been working well," according to an official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

ALSO READ: US Congress passes budget including \$14 billion for Ukraine

Already the Biden administration has sent Ukraine more than 600 Stinger missiles, 2,600 Javelin anti-armor systems, an unmanned aerial system tracking radars; grenade launchers, 200 shotguns, 200 machine guns, and nearly 40 million rounds of small arms ammunition, along with helicopters, patrol boats, satellite imagery, and body armor, helmets, and other tactical gear, the official said.

Even though Zelenskyy and Biden speak almost daily by phone, the Ukrainian president has found a potentially more receptive audience in Congress. This won't be the first time he has appealed directly to members of the House and Senate, who have remained remarkably unified in their support of Ukraine. Nearly two weeks ago, Zelenskyy delivered a desperate plea to some 300 lawmakers and staff on a private call that if they could not enforce a no-fly zone, at least send more planes.

"We think the United States needs to do more," said Sen Roger Wicker, R-Miss, returning from a weekend visit with other lawmakers to Poland.

Congress has already approved \$13.6 billion in military and humanitarian aid for Ukraine, and the newly announced security aid will come from that allotment, which is part of a broader bill that Biden signed into law Tuesday. But lawmakers expect more aid will be needed.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Zelenskyy asked for help in rebuilding his country when they spoke last week.

ALSO READ: Russia steps up assaults as Ukraine appeals for more help

It was in that call that Zelenskyy asked to address the US Congress, something the Democratic leader readily agreed to.

"The Congress, our country, and the world are in awe of the people of Ukraine," said Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer in a statement Monday announcing the address.

They said Congress "remains unwavering in our commitment to supporting Ukraine as they face Putin's cruel and diabolical aggression."

Zelenskyy's next stop could be Spain. The speaker of Spain's Congress of Deputies has invited the Ukrainian president to address Spanish lawmakers via video link.

In a letter to Zelenskyy, Speaker Meritxell Batet wrote that the address "it'll be a magnificent opportunity for the chamber, all Spanish people and the thousands of Ukrainians living in Spain to listen to your message and express our firmest support."

China replaces North Korea in FIFA women's U-17 World Cup in India

KUALA LUMPUR: China will feature in the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup to be held in India from October 11 to 30 as it was named on Wednesday as replacement of North Korean team which has

pulled out of the age-group showpiece. The AFC's Women's Football Committee had on October 14 last year decided that in the case of withdrawals from the FIFA competitions, the next highest ranked team

from the respective qualification events would represent Asia accordingly. "The AFC notes the inability of the DPR Korea Football Association's national age-group teams to compete in the FIFA U-17 Women's World

Cup India 2022 and FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup Costa Rica 2022 respectively," the Asian Football Confederation said on Wednesday. "China PR, who finished third in the AFC U-16 Women's Championship

Thailand 2019, will join Japan and host India as the AFC's three representa-

Championship in 2019, will replace North Korea and join Japan and

India was originally selected to host the 2020 FIFA U-17 Women's World

Asia will be represented by host country and two other countries in the 16-team tournament.



ICC Women's World Cup: Familiar frailties with bat come back to haunt India

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: If one has a close look at India's up-and-down campaign in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, there seems to be a pattern which has come up. The top-order hasn't been scoring runs and often, India have been guilty of losing

134. "There are no solutions like that (for batting collapses). There is a process. Some days, top-order will work, some days middle-order won't work. In bowling also, one day bowlers will not bowl well, some other will come and support. That's

first two matches, Mithali moved up to No. 3, primarily as a move to break the monotony of three left-handed top-order batters and take time to get a big total. But none of that has happened yet. It seems that Mithali hasn't got the start she needed and, in search

batting runs. The duo's stunning centuries against the West Indies covered up for India's batting flaws at Hamilton but when the duo tried to replicate the same act against England at Bay Oval, it just didn't happen. Though Richa Ghosh and Goswami herself

tives at the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup India 2022 scheduled to take place from October 11 to 30." Australia, who finished fourth in AFC U-19 Women's

South Korea as Asia's three representatives at the 2022 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup in Costa Rica, which will be held from August 10 to 28.

Cup but the tournament was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, India was announced as host of the next edition of the tournament in 2022.

New Zealand has also qualified as representative of Oceania Football Confederation. The qualifying tournaments of other continents are either going on or yet to take place.



wickets in a cluster, a phenomenon which has been happening in the showpiece event consistently. A day before losing by four wickets to England on Wednesday, vice-captain Harmanpreet Kaur had mentioned about India being wary of losing wickets in a cluster. "Sometimes, we are losing back-to-back wickets and if we can work on that... otherwise, things are the way we want them." In this campaign, the wobbles have made constant appearances. Against Pakistan, they were 114/6 before Sneha Rana and Pooja Vastrakar saved the day. When facing New Zealand, they were 95/5 and eventually lost by 62 runs. Against West Indies, India were 78/3 before Harmanpreet and Smriti Mandhana slammed centuries for an emphatic win. In Wednesday's match, India was tottering at 86/7 and were bowled out for

the way this game has been played. Everyday we try to address certain issues. We will definitely solve and come back stronger in the next game," were veteran pacer Jhulan Goswami's assuring words after the match. But what has been a glaring issue in the Indian top-order collapses have been the lack of runs from Mithali Raj and Deepti Sharma. Sharma has made scores of 40, 5, 15 and 0 in four matches, twice at No. 3 before moving to No. 4 in the last two games. Mithali, the highest run-getter in ODIs, in particular, has been off-colour in the World Cup. Before the mega event, Raj had scores of 59, 66 not out, 23, 30 and 54 not out in the bilateral series against New Zealand. But in the ongoing mega event, she's registered scores of 9, 31, 5 and 1. Moreover, after batting at No. 4 in the




of getting a springboard or release shot to get going, she's consuming a lot of dot balls, hasn't rotated the strike much and therefore, is yet to find her groove. "I don't think it's a concern. Who is batting at number three? It's Mithali Raj, she is just one big knock away from a start. In the past series also, she was batting fantastically against New Zealand and is just one big knock away in this tournament. I don't think we have issues. I think Deepti also did a pretty decent job and at number five, Harman is playing. So, I don't think we have an issue. It's just one bad day that we as a batting unit couldn't perform well," insisted Goswami. The lack of runs from the top-order and wickets falling in a heap meant that Harmanpreet and Smriti Mandhana have been shouldering the majority of

hit some big shots, a meagre total of 134 was the result of top-order failure. "Honestly speaking, yes, at this moment, the top-order hasn't fired the way we had thought. But I am sure we will be very positive about that because they have done really well in the past. I am very much hopeful they will come back hard in the next game because everyone wants to do well and no one will get a bigger platform than this," stated Goswami. With six-time champions Australia coming up on Saturday followed by Bangladesh and South Africa in the coming week, India have just three days in hand to sort out their top-order conundrum as well as losing wickets in a cluster. As the race for the semifinals of the World Cup intensifies, India will be mindful of avoiding their all-familiar frailties with the bat.

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