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Europe is making once-unimaginable decisions to counter Putin's aggression



(News Agencies) Whatever the ultimate outcome of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin has succeeded in one thing: the security map of Europe has been fundamentally altered and things will never return to the way they were before. Across the continent, and most notably within the European Union, decisions have been taken that would have been unthinkable just a few weeks ago. In the space of a few days, Brussels went further in its quest to become a geopolitical power in its own right than it had in decades.

(Contd on page 30)

Putin's war to bring Ukraine to heel unites Eastern Europe in alarm



**Full Story
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US, UK, China Leave Citizens Stranded in Ukraine As India Leads Evacuation Effort



(News Agencies) The efforts of the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Germany and several other nations, pale in comparison with the proactive and earnest efforts of Indian authorities who are currently running the evacuation programme, Operation Ganga, in full swing to bring back Indian students from different parts of Ukraine.

(Contd on page 30)

Everyday Global: What is the State of the Union Address delivered by the US President?

Joe Biden's State of the Union address, his first, was the 98th in-person Address/Annual Message in US history



(News Agencies) United States President Biden delivered his first State of the Union (SOTU) address to a Joint Sitting of Congress on Tuesday (March 1). He spoke for an hour, on both his international and domestic agendas, condemning President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine,

(Contd on page 31)

'Earth's only chance in catastrophe'

Astronomers are developing ingenious system to pulverise asteroids



(News Agencies) Astronomers are developing an ingenious system to pulverise asteroids that they believe is the "Earth's only chance in a catastrophe." "So far, humanity has been spared large-scale catastrophe as was visited upon our previous tenants, (Contd on page 31)



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Interpol Issues Red Notice Against 2 Gupta Brothers Who Fled South Africa

A Red Notice is an alert to all Interpol member states that an individual is a wanted fugitive, but is not equivalent to an arrest warrant. However, it strengthens the case of a country negotiating the extradition of wanted criminals from another state



(News Agencies) Johannesburg: The Interpol has issued red notices against Atul and Rajesh Gupta - two of the three Indian-origin Gupta brothers - who fled South Africa with their families amid investigations into their alleged looting of billions of rands from state-owned enterprises. However, the Interpol has declined a request from the South African government to issue red notices against their wives - Arthi and Chetali Gupta. A Red Notice is an alert to all Interpol member states that an individual is a wanted fugitive, but is not equivalent to an arrest warrant. However, it strengthens the case of a country negotiating the extradition of wanted criminals from another state. The Red Notice, which the South

African government had applied for against the Gupta Brothers seven months ago, was issued on Monday. The three Gupta brothers - Ajay, Atul and Rajesh - are originally from Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur and now believed to be in self-exile in Dubai. Justice Minister Ronald Lamola has described the move as "a positive development" which he hoped would allow justice to take its course. South Africa's National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) has been trying for several years to extradite the Gupta brothers.

Although their exact whereabouts remains obscure, South Africa last year had concluded an extradition treaty with Dubai and applied for their extradition. Interpol Issues Red Notice Against 2 Gupta Brothers Who Fled South Africa

Johannesburg: The Interpol has issued red notices against Atul and Rajesh Gupta - two of the three Indian-origin Gupta brothers - who fled South Africa with their families amid investigations into their alleged looting of billions of rands from state-owned enterprises. However, the Interpol has declined a request from the South African

government to issue red notices against their wives - Arthi and Chetali Gupta. A Red Notice is an alert to all Interpol member states that an individual is a wanted fugitive, but is not equivalent to an arrest warrant. However, it strengthens the case of a country negotiating the extradition of wanted criminals from another state.

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Zuma to loot from parastatal companies, including the national electricity supplier Eskom, which is now severely cash-strapped, resulting in frequent load shedding across the country. The Guptas had previously stated that their extradition was politically motivated, which has been denied by the NPA. Jacob Zuma is currently fighting the revocation of his medical parole after serving just a few months of a 15-month jail sentence imposed by the apex Constitutional Court last year because he walked out of a hearing of the commission and refused to testify further. Lawyers for the Guptas have confirmed that they had been made aware that the NPA had "temporarily succeeded" in having red notices issued against the brothers, but stated that they would be challenging these notices on the basis of "material misrepresentations by the NPA," according to local news website news24.co.za. Outgoing head of the Investigating Directorate at the NPA, Hermione Cronje, who had led the process to get the Guptas back to South Africa, has described Interpol's move as "bittersweet".

How They Boarded Train Out Of Ukrainian Capital: Indian Student Tells The Tale

The government is sending four Union ministers as the prime minister's envoys to Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Moldova to oversee the evacuation of Indians from Ukraine through its border crossings with these countries

(News Agencies) New Delhi: Devising their own stratagems to get out of Kyiv, about 100 Indian students stranded at the train station split into groups of 10 to board a train from the Ukrainian capital to city of Lviv where they would be safer, one of the students said on Tuesday.

"We realised no one is going to come to help us and it is up to us now," 20-year-old Ashna Pandita told PTI over the phone as the train took them to the western city of Ukraine, about 80 km from the Poland border, where the fighting has been relatively less. "We split into smaller groups and somehow managed to board the train," she added a day after the students from Taras Shevchenko National Medical University in Kyiv managed to escape from the back gate of their hostel and reach the Vokzal station, the capital's main train hub. Though they responded to an advisory from the Indian mission asking all students to "make their way to the railway station for onward journey to the western part", the students alleged that officials had failed

to provide any transportation to shift them to a safer location.

The advisory said "Ukrainian railways is putting up special trains for evacuation" but the reality on ground was quite different, Ashna and her brother Ansh, who studies in the same college, said. The twins are from Ghaziabad. The group of 100 odd youths, including many women, were not allowed to board a train and Ukrainian guards thrashed some of them, they alleged. After they were pushed away from many trains, the students split into smaller groups and somehow managed to get on to the train to Lviv, where the officials of many embassies are stationed. The train was crowded and they could manage only standing space during the nine-hour journey.



"At least let us reach Kyiv," Ashna said tearfully, recounting their struggles to reach the station from a city that had run out of food and cash in ATMs and then the many hurdles to get on to a train. Left to their own devices, the students said they would either try to cross over to Poland or to the Hungary border, about 570 km from Lviv. On Monday, the train station was teeming with people. The Indian students sat huddled together, holding a large tricolour aloft so they could be recognised in the crowd and also so no one from the group gets lost. The

students had also issued a video appeal. "Indian embassy, we request you to evacuate us as soon as possible," Ansh Pandita said in the video as his friends looked on. Ashna, too, sent videos to family and friends at home. One showed a train with closed doors and shuttered windows. "This train didn't let us in. They closed the door on our faces. They pushed us out," she said. In another, students can be seen being pushed and chased away by guards. Back home in Ghaziabad, Ansh and Ashna's parents Anil and Sunita are frantic with worry. "My children are suffering. They have nothing to eat and the irony is that we can't do anything sitting here other than to appeal to the government to bring everyone back," Sunita said. Their worries have escalated after an Indian student from Karnataka was killed in shelling in Kharkiv city on Tuesday morning. "With profound sorrow we confirm that an Indian student lost his life in shelling in Kharkiv this morning," the External Affairs Ministry said.

Two Indian-Origin Men Charged For Breaking Singapore's Covid Rules

Ateesh Ashutosh Rao and Shyama Kumar Sharath each face two charges in court - failing to keep a safe distance and not wearing a mask properly



(Staff Reporter) Singapore: Two Indian-origin men, were among a group of six persons, charged by a Singaporean court on Tuesday for breaching COVID-19 safety regulations during a New Year's Eve gathering, involving hundreds of people, according to a media report. Ateesh Ashutosh Rao and Shyama Kumar Sharath each face two charges in court - failing to keep a safe distance and not

wearing a mask properly, The Straits Times newspaper reported. The six charged are aged between 19 years and 23 years. They face charges ranging from having groups of more than five people, to not maintaining the mandated social distance of 1 metre at a New Year's Eve gathering in Clarke Quay, a riverside row of restaurants, pubs and bars here. Sharath and Rao intend to plead guilty. They are slated to be in court next on April 5. Two of the charged persons intend to get a lawyer and are scheduled to be in court next on March 15. The New Year's Eve gathering is believed to have involved hundreds in a countdown

party in front of Riverside Point. Videos online show a rowdy crowd cheering, singing and celebrating in what the authorities have branded a blatant flouting of COVID-19 safe management rules and a potential superspreader event.

Three other Indian-origin men, Harjaz Singh, Verma Pulkit and Kotra Venkata Sai Rohankrishna - all aged between 19 and 22 - were similarly charged in January in relation to the New Year's Eve gathering. Kotra faced an additional charge for allegedly attending a gathering in a Spider-Man costume with three others, where he interacted with

about 20 people. Earlier this month, Verma and Singh were sent to court to face an additional charge of attending the gathering for a common purpose without a reasonable excuse. Verma allegedly attended a gathering with eight others to celebrate the New Year, while Singh is accused of attending a gathering of at least six others. Those found guilty of breaching COVID-19 regulations can be fined up to SGD10,000 (USD 7,372), jailed for up to six months, or both. The coronavirus has claimed 1,019 lives and infected 724,424 people so far in Singapore. On Monday, the city-state reported 13,544 new COVID-19 cases and 12 fatalities.

Indian Student Killed In Shelling In Ukraine's Kharkiv

"With profound sorrow we confirm that an Indian student lost his life in shelling in Kharkiv this morning. The Ministry is in touch with his family. We convey our deepest condolences to the family," tweeted the External Affairs Ministry

(Staff Reporter) New Delhi: An Indian student was killed yesterday in shelling in Ukraine, the foreign ministry said as it urged Russia and Ukraine to secure safe passage for thousands of citizens stranded in the middle of war. 21-year-old Naveen Shekharappa, a final year medical student from Karnataka's Haveri, died when Russian soldiers blew up a government building on Tuesday.

"With profound sorrow we confirm that an Indian student lost his life in shelling in Kharkiv this morning. The Ministry is in touch with his family. We convey our deepest condolences to the family," tweeted the External Affairs Ministry. He added that Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla "was calling in the ambassadors of Russia and Ukraine to reiterate India's demand for urgent safe passage for Indian nationals who are still in Kharkiv and cities in other conflict zones". It is imperative



that Russia and Ukraine respond to the need for safe passage urgently, said sources. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to the student's father and called his fourth meeting in three days on the Ukraine crisis. He had earlier despatched four ministers to Ukraine's border countries to coordinate evacuations. In Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, videos showed extensive damage from Russian military assault after

it launched an invasion last Thursday. The central square of the city was shelled by advancing forces, who hit a government building, this morning. Naveen Shekharappa was standing in a queue outside a grocery store when he was hit. Pooja Praharaj, a student coordinator in Kharkiv, spoke to NDTV shortly after the student's death.

"He lived near the Governor's House and had been

standing in the queue for food. Suddenly there was an air strike that blew up the Governor's House and he was killed," Ms Praharaj said. A Ukrainian woman picked up his phone, said the student coordinator. "Speaking from his phone, she said the owner of this phone is being taken to the morgue," she shared. This morning, the Indian Embassy advised all citizens, including students, to leave Ukraine capital

Kyiv "urgently today, by trains or any other means available". "The deteriorating situation in Kharkiv is a matter of grave concern. The safety and security of Indian nationals in that city is of utmost priority to Government," government sources said.

Satellite images showed a long convoy of Russian military vehicles on roadways northwest of Kyiv. Hundreds of tanks, towed artillery, armored and logistical vehicles can be seen in the images released by a US-based space technology company. Around 16,000 Indian students are still stranded in Ukraine. Many students have shared photos and videos on social media from underground bunkers, metro stations and bomb shelters, where they have been hiding since the Russian attack started last Thursday. Around 9,000 Indian nationals have left by various special flights.

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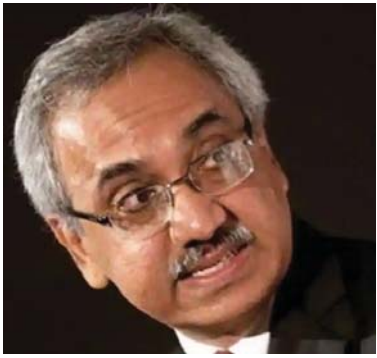
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NSE co-location scam: Former stock exchange executive Anand Subramanian arrested



(Staff Reporter) Former stock exchange executive Anand Subramanian has been arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The premier investigating agency of India said Subramanian claims that he got promoted to a highly paid job on the advice of a Himalayan mystic who may not even exist. The bizarre corporate scandal took place in 2015 when Subramanian was appointed chief operating officer of the National Stock Exchange by then CEO Chitra Ramkrishna. The high-flying woman executive was feted as the "queen of the bourse." She allegedly took business advice from a "yogi" she met by the River Ganges. Indians often consult

astrologers and spiritual leaders and the business world is no exception in the highly religious nation of 1.4 billion people. The female chief quit in 2016 after allegations surfaced of market manipulation. Now, CBI has said it has found more evidence that the mysterious "Himalayan yogi", whom then bourse chief Chitra Ramkrishna relied upon for "advice", could be the NSE's

former Group Operating Officer Anand Subramanian only. Subramanian, who has been arrested after questioning, was sent to CBI custody till March 6 after the agency told a Delhi court that they needed custodial interrogation to confront him with seized articles and others involved in the case. Subramanian, who was brought to the NSE by its then CEO and MD Ramkrishna, reportedly had access to the email ID on

which the emails were sent to the "Himalayan yogi" with whom the classified information was shared. The CBI had already opened Look Out Circular against Ramkrishna, Subramanian, and Narain, as they were deemed to be at risk of flight. It had lodged an FIR against her on the basis of the SEBI's report, accusing her of leaking classified information to

the yogi who lived in the Himalayas and is still to be found. On February 17, the Income Tax Department had conducted raids at the house of Ramkrishna in Mumbai and Chennai and said that they had recovered incriminating documents. The department scanned various transactions and digital records, and also recorded the statements of a few of her employees.

Holy Kalasams atop 1500-year-old temple's tower stolen in Tamil Nadu

Devotees in Tamil Nadu's Cuddalore were in for a shock on Tuesday, March 1, as three holy Kalasams at the top of the Virudhagireeswarar temple tower went missing. Police suspect that they were stolen to be smuggled out of India and sold on the black market

(Staff Reporter) On Tuesday, March 1, devotees at the Virudhagireeswarar temple in Tamil Nadu's Cuddalore district were in shock as the holy Kalasams atop the temple's tower were missing. As per reports, the three Kalasams, each three feet in height, were coated with gold weighing 400 grams. The Virudhagireeswarar temple at Virudhachalam is nearly 1500 years old and was built by the Cholas. The temple is considered auspicious for devotees who visit the holy land of Kasi. The temple history also includes saint poets of the Saivite clan, Thirugnanasbandar, Sundaram and Thiruvassagar. They sang hymns in the temple. On February 6,

Kumbhabhishekam rituals were performed grandly in the temple. Kumbabisheman is a temple ritual that is believed to homogenise, synergise and unite the mystic powers of the deity. Devotees were shocked when they noticed the missing Kalasams on Tuesday. Immediately, they informed the police. After reaching the spot, the police immediately collected CCTV footage from the surrounding area and initiated an investigation. The Holy Kalasams were covered with gold weighing 400 gm reportedly. Police are inquiring if they were stolen to be smuggled out of India and sold on the black market.





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PM Modi, Nepal PM Deuba virtual summit in March



(Staff Reporter) Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba are expected to hold a virtual summit in early March. The key outcomes of the summit will be a pact on delivery of fertilizers to Nepal and giving go-ahead to railway service between Kurtha-Jayanagar. The test runs for the railway service between India's Jayanagar to Nepal's Kurtha has already been conducted. Indian Railway's Konkan railway cooperation is helping Nepal railways in the establishment of the service that will help people from both sides

of the border. Meanwhile, under the 5-year fertilizer pact, Nepal aims to fulfill 30% of its annual fertilizer requirement. The talks for the pact have been going on for a long time. Both the Prime Ministers had met on the sidelines of the Glasgow climate summit last year. That was the first in-person meet between the two sides after Deuba took charge as Nepal PM in July of that year. During that meeting, Nepal had sought fertilizers, covid vaccines from India. Another key focus was the opening of new air routes connecting the two countries. Nepal PM was expected to visit India earlier this year for the Vibrant Gujarat Investor summit but that could not happen due to

Omicron covid crisis.

Ties between India and Nepal were frayed under the previous Nepal PM KP Sharma Oli who had come out with a new map of Nepal irking New Delhi. With the change of guard in Kathmandu, both sides are working to improve ties. Nepal's new foreign minister Dr. Narayan Khadka and EAM Jaishankar had met on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York a few months ago.

Meanwhile, Nepal's Parliament on Sunday ratified the \$500 million American grant under Millennium Challenge Cooperation (MCC) compact. In a show of remarkable display of political acumen, PM Deuba was able to keep his ruling

coalition intact while also able to fulfill the February 28 deadline given to Washington for ratification of MCC. Projects under the compact include transmission lines between Nepal and India. It is also expected to boost India's energy connectivity initiatives and Nepal's efforts to develop its hydropower sector for exports. Earlier this month, PM Modi had held a virtual summit with his UAE counterpart. During that summit the much-awaited India UAE free trade agreement was signed. In January, PM Modi had virtually participated in the first India-Central Asia summit, involving leaders of all five central Asian countries.

India's External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar to visit Palestine on March 8

(News Agencies) India's external affairs minister Dr. S Jaishankar will embark on a two-day visit to Palestine's Ramallah on March 8. The key focus of his visit will be the India-Palestine Joint commission meeting (JCM) which he will co-chair along with his Palestinian counterpart

Riad al-Maliki. This is Dr Jaishankar's first-ever visit to Ramallah in his capacity as External Affairs Minister. During the visit, EAM will also call on Palestine's President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh. A joint commission meet (JCM) took place in November 2016. In January 2016, the then EAM

Sushma Swaraj had visited Palestine and met President Abbas, Foreign minister Riad. During her visit, she inaugurated India Palestine digital learning and innovation center at Al Quds University, Ramallah.

During this visit as well, EAM Jaishankar is expected to inaugurate a \$5 million technopark project. While India continues to support the Palestinian cause at bilateral and international levels, New Delhi has been extending economic assistance to the Palestinian people. Two schools were built in Palestine in 2015 through Indian aid. Indian govt has set up an India-

Palestine Centre of Excellence in ICT and Innovation in Al Quds University, Abu Dis in 2015 and another ICT center in Ramallah in 2016. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had visited the de jure sovereign state on February 10, 2018. Before that, the then Indian President Pranab Mukherjee had paid a visit in October 2015. During President's 2015 visit, India had announced five projects worth \$17.79 million, which included a Palestine India Techno Park in Ramallah and Palestine Institute of Diplomacy.

Indian PM Modi has been bestowed with the highest Palestinian award of the "Grand Collar of the State of Palestine".



New Delhi has also increased its annual contribution towards UN Relief and Works Agency in the Near East (UNRWA) from USD 1.25 Million to USD 5 Million in the backdrop of the financial crisis being faced by the UN agency. The visit to Palestine will see EAM visiting other countries in the region,

with an expected in-person West Asian Quad meet on the anvil. The west Asian quad includes UAE, India, Israel, and the US, also known as I2, U2 is expected to hold an in-person meeting in Dubai. This means, US Secretary of state Blinken, Israeli FM will also visit the country. But with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, things could drastically change as worries continue over Russian President Putin's ongoing military offensive. The west Asian quad last met virtually, during EAM's Israel visit last year and since then all sides have appointed a nodal person who will coordinate from each country on various issues, primarily economic. This year, EAM has already visited, Indo Pacific region with visits to Australia, the Philippines, to Europe with visit to Germany and France. But the first visit he made this year was to Qatar, in west Asia.

Calcutta HC rejects BJP's petition to stay counting of votes for Contai municipal polls

The BJP had moved the Calcutta High Court on Monday, seeking a stay on the counting of votes for the Contai municipal polls. The high court rejected the petition on Tuesday

(News Agencies) The Calcutta High Court, on Tuesday, rejected the Bharatiya Janata Party's petition for a stay on the counting of votes polled in the Contai Municipal Corporation elections in West Bengal. The elections took place on February 27 and the results for all the 108 municipalities in the state will be declared on March 2. The BJP had moved the high court on Monday and had asked for an urgent listing of the matter before a bench comprising Chief Justice Prakash Shrivastava and Justice Rajarshi Bharadwaj. The BJP had alleged



that the police and SEC had failed to perform their role to contain rigging and

attacks, and called for "re-polling" in the state under the supervision of central police forces. The state and the State Election Commission (SEC) have not yet responded to the allegations made by BJP in its petition. Meanwhile, the high court has directed both the state and SEC to submit a report in the form of an affidavit by Monday. The SEC has also been directed to take steps to preserve the CCTV camera and footage. The next date of hearing is scheduled for March 11.

Bombay HC pulls up Kolhapur collector for destroying soybean crops to use land for Mahashivratri

Farmer Shashikala Ambade and others showed photographs of the lush green fields being trampled by JCB machines on the order of the authorities. The Kolhapur collector has said that the Mahashivratri event will be held on the public road



Mahashivratri. Farmer Shashikala Ambade and others showed photographs of the lush green fields being trampled by JCB machines on the order of the authorities.

The Collector of Kolhapur and the Chief Officer of Kurundwad Municipal Council were present before the court through video-conference. The bench noted that the officers 'tried to defend their action of destroying the soybean crop on the petitioners' field by saying that in the meeting held, a member of the petitioner's family had consented to the said action of the respondents which the

petitioners before us have especially when the denied.' The officers said that the land was taken for a period of 15 days for the Mahashivratri festivities. The court asked the Collector and the Chief Officer to produce the minutes of the said meeting and the signatures obtained from those present at the meeting. However, the officers were unable to produce any minutes of the meeting or signatures. The court then said, "We do not understand under which provision of law such an endorsement is made/allowed and how the plot of the petitioners can be taken away for a period of 15 days, especially when the petitioners are growing soybean crop on the said field. Even if this practice has been adopted in the past, the same cannot be relied upon as a precedent and the Court is required to stop such practice once it is opposed by the Petitioners." Upon hearing this, the Collector of Kolhapur informed the Court that he would ensure that the fields of the petitioners is not used for the Mahashivratri festivities scheduled next week. He said the festivities would be confined and held only on the public road. The court will further hear the case on March 10.

(News Agencies) Coming down heavily on the collector of Kolhapur and Chief Officer, Kurundwad Municipal Council, the Bombay high court has 'restrained by an order of injunction from using any part of the land/field of the

Petitioners for the festival of Mahashivratri'. The division bench of Justices SJ Kathawalla and MN Jadhav were hearing a petition filed by a farmer from Kolhapur whose soybean field was destroyed by authorities to celebrate

Fire breaks out at oil factory in Rajasthan's Bhilwara; goods worth Rs 60 lakh destroyed

A major fire broke out at an oil factory in Rajasthan's Bhilwara district on Tuesday morning in which goods worth Rs 60 lakh were destroyed. Fire tenders were pressed into service and it took five hours to douse the flames



(News Agencies) A massive fire broke out in the early morning hours of Tuesday at an oil factory in Rajasthan's Bhilwara district in Shahpura area. The fire led to a loss of around Rs 60 lakh worth raw materials. The fire broke out in the factory, located outside Kalijanrigate, at around 6 am in the morning and a smoke cloud had spread over 1 kilometer in the area, triggering panic in the area. The smoke from the fire engulfed the locality and spread to over a

kilometer. At least three fire tenders were rushed to the spot and it took five hours for the officials to douse the flames. As per the preliminary report, the fire destroyed goods and raw materials worth Rs 60 lakh and the cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. The factory, owned by Mukesh Kumar Ladda, is located near a populated area and when the incident took place, the owner was immediately informed. Upon

receiving the information, municipal corporation president Raghunandan Soni reached the spot and called the fire department officials. Since the nature of the fire was furious, two more fire tenders from Aguncha Mines and Bhilwara were roped in for the rescue operations. Three fire tenders and more than a half dozen water tankers were pressed into service to douse the flames. The officials had to rope in an

earthmover to break down the wall of the factory as the main door was locked. Tehsildar Narayanlal Jeenagar, police station in-charge Ghanshyam Singh Deora and municipal personnel also reached the spot and helped the fire officials in the rescue operation. On Monday, a big oil container was bought into the godown for clearance whose cost was around Rs 50 lakhs.

Republic Day violence: 16 other cases approved by Delhi govt for withdrawal

(News Agencies) The Delhi government has given its approval to withdraw 17 cases, including one involving the violence on Republic Day last year, registered by the police here during the anti-farm law protests, a senior government official said Tuesday. He said the file related to the cases sent by Lt Governor Anil Baijal's Office to Home Minister Satyendar Jain on January 31 were approved by him on Monday after the opinion of law department was sought. The Delhi Police had identified 17 out of

54 cases registered during November 2020 to December 2021 for withdrawal. One of the cases is related to about 200-300 protesters and 25 tractors reaching the Red Fort and entering its premises through the Lahori Gate, resulting in damage to ticket counters, doorframe metal detector and baggage scanners at the monument. Another case was registered at the Jyoti Nagar police station in Northeast Delhi against protesting farmers entering Delhi from the side of Loni border with Uttar Pradesh,

riding 150-175 tractors and allegedly obstructing policemen from discharging their duty and assaulting them. Most of the cases were registered against the protesters for the violation of Covid-19 protocols and guidelines during the over one-year-long anti-farm law stir at Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders of Delhi. The protesters, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, laid siege at Delhi borders in November 2020 demanding the Centre to withdraw three farm laws enacted by the Parliament. The protest ended in

December 2021 with the Modi government withdrawing the farm laws. The Centre had also agreed to the demand of the agitating farmers umbrella organisation Samyukta Kisan Morcha for the withdrawal of the cases registered against the protesters, between November 2020 to December 2021. The protesting farmers in convoys of tractors had entered the national capital on Republic Day last year leading to violence and vandalism on the roads as well as the Red Fort situated in walled city.

TDP chief Naidu write to MEA suggesting more flights for speedy evacuation of students from Ukraine

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief N Chandrababu Naidu wrote a letter, requesting the external affairs ministry to increase flights to ensure the speedy evacuation of students from Ukraine



stranded Indians in Ukraine. "Currently, all flights carrying Indians are terminating at Mumbai or Delhi. Considering the number of Telugu people it is requested to operate flights till Hyderabad, Tirupati, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam," he added. Naidu said that as per his data there are 1500 Telugu people stranded in the war-hit country. "At present, they are all travelling towards Uzhhorod," he informed MEA and suggested that as Uzhhorod is close to the Slovakia border and flights should be arranged from Bratislava airport for them. Earlier, Naidu held a Zoom conference with the Telugu NRI representatives settled in Ukraine and several European countries. He also spoke to the stranded students in different

parts of Ukraine. Telugu NRI Divya Raj settled in Ukraine has been coordinating transportation of Telugu students to the border areas. A special train started in Zaporizhzhya with 1,500 Indian students. Over 600 of them were Telugu students. "The train already started from Zaporizhzhia at 4 pm on Monday. They would travel for 20 hours to reach the Hungary border," said Divya who has been coordinating with the Ukraine government for the safe return of the stranded students. The NRI representatives are set to receive the Telugu students at the Hungary, Poland and Romania borders. They had urged the TDP chief to seek the help of the External Affairs Ministry and the respective Embassies in these countries for immediate air-lifting of the

students. As per the Andhra Pradesh Real Time Governance portal (RTGS), 617 students have been contacted for evacuation. Till Monday, only 32 students have reached AP in five flights at Delhi and Mumbai. As per the data received, it was observed that students got admitted to 14 universities. However, the majority of students are studying in five universities, (Zaporizhzhia State Medical University, Kyiv Medical University of UAFA, Kyiv, Odessa National Medical University, Kharkiv National Medical University, Vinnytsya O.O. Bogomolets National Medical University) Zaporizhzhia State Medical University has the maximum number of Telugu students and has witnessed minor bombing incidents.

Telangana Congress leader Reddy courts controversy with 'Bihar batch' remark

Telangana Congress president Revanth Reddy courted controversy following his statement on bureaucrats. He alleged that IAS officers from Bihar are getting top posts in KCR government

(News Agencies) Telangana Congress president and MP Revanth Reddy courted controversy after his 'Bihar batch' jibe at state bureaucrats. Addressing party workers of Secunderabad parliamentary constituency on Monday, Revanth Reddy said IAS officers from Bihar are given key posts in Telangana. Reddy said, "Telangana Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, Municipal Administration Secretary Arvind Kumar, another senior IAS officer Sandeep Sultania, Irrigation Secretary Rajat Kumar and in Charge DGP IPS Anjani Kumar all hail from Bihar. The Bihar batch is ruling the state." He alleged that IAS and IPS officers of Telangana origin are not getting opportunities in the TRS government and native IPS Praveen Kumar had to resign as 'he did not like the KCR rule'. Reddy further criticised political strategist

Prashant Kishore, after the ruling TRS hired I-PAC, the political advocacy group founded by Prashant Kishore for the next assembly elections.

He said, "KCR went to Bihar and got Prashant

Kishore as he was scared. He has brought Prashant Kishore from Bihar to ensure his victory." Reddy also claimed that chief of police DGP Mahender Reddy is being told to resign by the

CM. Revant further

alleged that even CM KCR's ancestors are from Bihar and the 'Bihar gang' is now on a mission to plunder the state. The comment received a sharp reaction from JDU leader and Bihar Minister Sanjay Kumar Jha who condemned the statement and said, "It reflects his hatred and apathy for a region that has enormously contributed to bureaucracy and nation-building."



Children among 14 injured in LPG cylinder blast in Kashmir's Anantnag

At least 14 people, including children, were left injured after an LPG gas cylinder exploded in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday. The incident took place at Maternity & Child Care Hospital in Shairbagh



(News Agencies) In a horrifying incident, at least 14 people, including children, were left injured after an LPG gas cylinder exploded in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday. The incident took place at Maternity & Child Care Hospital in Shairbagh, Anantnag. The gas cylinder exploded at the ticket section of the hospital, leaving several injured. It is suspected that a leakage in a heating gas cylinder led to the incident. At least 14 people, including children, sustained burn injuries in the gas cylinder blast that took place in Anantnag on Tuesday.

One dead, six injured in Kanpur road accident; third such incident this year

At least one person was killed and six others suffered injuries after a speeding truck rammed into an e-rickshaw in Kanpur. This is the third such incident reported this year



third such incident reported this year.

Six injured, one killed

A team of police officials rushed to the spot and immediately took the injured people to the hospital for medical treatment. The identity of the deceased is yet to be established and the injured have been identified as Ajay Kumar (25), Arun (24), Azad (18), Ali Mohammad (28), Karan (18), Mukhtar Ahmed (58). An eye-witness told India Today that an individual lost his leg in the accident and police and local people carried out the rescue operation. The eye-witness said that the truck was shifted with the crane and injured people were pulled out of the damaged truck. Meanwhile, Kanpur police said that the injured people have been admitted to the hospital for treatment and the driver was also sent for a check-up. Police said, "The condition of the driver is safe and now we will take him for medical examination to see if there is presence of alcohol content in his blood. Further investigation is underway."

(News Agencies) Days after six people lost their lives in a brutal accident in Kanpur, another horrific accident shook the city on Tuesday evening. At least one person died and six others were injured after a speeding container collided with an e-rickshaw parked on the side of the road in Chakeri's Jajmau checkpost. The tragedy happened when a truck loaded with sand which was heading towards Lucknow from Kanpur rammed into an e-rickshaw. The speeding truck trampled the passers-by on the highway. An initial probe has revealed that the steering failure could be the reason behind the accident. The truck collided with an e-rickshaw, loaded with passengers, injuring six people and killing one. On February 11, six people were injured when a speeding electric bus hit several cars and two-wheelers in the city. Earlier in January, at least five people were killed and a dozen others were injured in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur after a speeding bus knocked over people on the road. This is the

Scindia leaves for Bucharest to facilitate evacuation of stranded Indians

Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia left for Romanian capital Bucharest to facilitate the evacuation of Indians who are stranded in Ukraine, following the Russian invasion

(News Agencies) Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Tuesday left for Romanian capital Bucharest on an Air India flight to facilitate the evacuation of Indians who are stranded in Ukraine following the Russian military offensive.

Besides Scindia, Union Ministers Hardeep Puri, Kiren Rijiju and V K Singh have also



left for Ukraine's neighbouring countries as special envoys to facilitate the evacuation of Indians from the war-hit nation. "Geared up, along with the Air India crew to oversee rescue ops in Romania and Moldova, and ensure that we facilitate each and every Indian citizen's safe passage back home," the aviation minister said on Twitter just before the departure of his flight at 7.15 PM. Geared up, along with the @airindia crew to oversee rescue ops in Romania & Moldova, and ensure that we facilitate each and every

Indian citizen's safe passage back home. Puri is going to Hungary, Jyotiraditya Scindia will oversee the evacuation process in Romania and Moldova, Kiren Rijiju is traveling to Slovakia and Gen (retd) V K Singh will supervise the evacuation along the transit points with Poland. India began the evacuation of its citizens from Ukraine's western neighbours such as Romania and Hungary on February 26. Private Indian carriers have brought back 2,012 Indian nationals in nine special flights till now. Ukrainian airspace has been shut down since February 24, when the Russian government started its military operations against the country. In the first Indian casualty in the war in Ukraine, a student from Karnataka was killed in shelling in Kharkiv city on Tuesday morning.

Russia-Ukraine conflict: Edible oil prices go up, people queue up to buy petrol in Punjab

The attack on Ukraine has jolted the oil market around the world as well as in India. Distributors in Punjab believe speculation triggered a price rise for materials such as pig iron and edible oil

(News Agencies) Despite the opinion given by the industry experts that the Russia-Ukraine conflict will have least impact on the Indian economy, the rumours and speculation have already triggered a rise in edible oil, pig iron and shipping costs in the Indian markets. India imports 17 lakh tonnes and two lakh tonnes of sunflower oil from Ukraine and Russia respectively. It has not impacted the edible oil industry so far, but distributors are gaining higher profits. It was revealed that the edible oil prices are already up by Rs 15 per litre in the Punjab market.

Interestingly, while sunflower oil prices are stable, the prices of other edible oils have risen to higher levels. "Yes, the war has impacted the edible oil industry, palm oil, and soya

oil prices are up. Prices of sunflower oil (imported from Ukraine) are stable but market sources say that the prices could go up," said Mahavir Kumar, a Chandigarh-based edible oil distributor.

Another distributor, Sandeep Kumar, is hesitant to link the price rise to the Russia-Ukraine war. The prices are rising and we witnessed a rise of Rs 10 per litre, but it will not be justifiable to attribute the price rise to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Sandeep said. The speculation has also

resulted in panic buying and is not just limited to edible oil prices. People were seen crowding the petrol and diesel stations in Punjab after the rumours that the conflict could hit oil prices. "There are

rumours that petrol and diesel prices could rise. We came to fill our tractors as the harvest season is nearing," said a Faridkot-based farmer.

Meanwhile, Haryana Deputy



Chief Minister and Minister of Food and Civil Supplies Dushyant Chautala said prices in Haryana were under control and edible oil prices will be lowered after the oilseed crop reaches the

market. Interestingly, there are many industries that do not have a direct connection with Russia or Ukraine but the rising prices of raw materials in various industries such as edible oil, leather and steel are being linked to the conflict. The iron and steel industry entrepreneurs say the prices of crude iron (pig iron) have gone up during the past week. Crude iron prices have increased up to Rs 4,000 per tonne. Narinder Sagu, President of Jalandhar Focal Point Industries Association said that pig iron prices were at Rs 46 per kg before the crisis but rose to 51 during the conflict. President of the Northern chamber of medium and small scale industries, Sharad Aggarwal, claimed that the shipping costs have also increased manifold during the past week.

All Indian citizens left Kyiv, 12,000 students have returned from Ukraine, says Foreign Secretary

Foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said 12,000 students have returned from Ukraine after the first advisory was issued by the Indian Embassy. He also said that all Indian nationals have left Kyiv, the capital city of Ukraine

(News Agencies) Foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said all Indian citizens have left Kyiv, the capital city of Ukraine under attack by Russian troops. He also said that 60 per cent of total Indian nationals have returned from Ukraine. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, an estimated 20,000 Indian students were present in Ukraine when the first advisory was issued and 12,000 of them have since left the country. "All of our nationals have left Kyiv. The information with us is that we have no more nationals left in Kyiv, nobody has contacted us from Kyiv since," Shringla said. Foreign Secretary Shringla said that of the remaining 40 per cent, roughly half remain in conflict zones in Kharkiv, Sumy and the other

half have either reached the western borders of Ukraine or are heading towards the western part of Ukraine, which is considered to be a safer place. "At least 1,400 Indian citizens in Zaporizhzhia have moved to the western border and 400 students have moved to Moldova," Shringla said. Earlier this afternoon I separately called in the Ambassadors of Russia and Ukraine. I reiterated strongly our demand for urgent safe passage for all Indian nationals who are still in Kharkiv and other cities in the conflict area," Shringla added. The foreign secretary said that high level meeting began with an expression of deep regret and condolences on the tragic death of Naveen Shekharappa, the Indian student who was studying at Kharkiv



National Medical University. The PM conveyed his deep anguish at the loss of the life of an Indian national, he said. According to MEA, over the next three

days, 26 flights have been scheduled to evacuate citizens. Apart from Bucharest and Budapest, airports in Poland and Slovak Republic will also be used.

Bengal civic elections: Repoll in two booths peaceful

Repoll in two booths in two municipalities of West Bengal was completed peacefully with an average of 48 per cent voter turnout

(News Agencies) Repoll in two booths in two municipalities of West Bengal went off peacefully on Tuesday with an average of 48 per cent voter turnout recorded till 5 PM, a State Election Commission (SEC) official said. The repoll was held in booth number four of ward number 33 of South Dum Dum Municipality and booth number 7 of ward number 25 of Serampore Municipality.

"The polling was peaceful," a senior SEC official said. Opposition parties levelled allegations of malpractices by the ruling Trinamool Congress during elections to 107 municipalities across West Bengal on February 27. The State Election Commission on Monday announced repoll in the two booths on Tuesday. On that day, violence among rival party supporters and clashes between political party workers and the police were reported from various parts of the state in one of the most extensive electoral exercises since the assembly polls last year. Votes will be counted on Wednesday.

Odisha Panchayat elections: BJD sweeps rural polls with 766 seats, to form Zilla Parishad in all 30 districts

Biju Janata Dal registered a landslide victory in Odisha panchayat polls, with the party winning on 766 seats out of 852 seats

(News Agencies) Odisha's ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) registered a landslide victory in the three-tier panchayat polls. Out of 852 zilla parishads, the BJD won 766 seats, while BJP and Congress could grasp 42 and 37 seats respectively. Independents and other parties managed to win seven seats. BJD Supremo and Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik expressed his thanks to the people of the state as the ruling party won Zilla Parishads in all 30 districts in the state.

Recently, BJD general secretary Pranab Prakash Das had claimed that the party has become a "social movement". The result of the panchayat election seems to affirm Pranab Prakash's claims, as per political analysts. Meanwhile, rising prices and inflation seemingly hurt the BJP's prospects in the rural polls, with the saffron party winning just 42 seats. This is a huge blow to the party that had won 297 seats in 2017.

Talking to India Today, BJD MP Amar Patnaik said that this is a reflection of love, affection and trust that people of Odisha have for Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and the party led by him. "That is the reason, after 22 years the support and trust for him is only increasing, this is unique in India polity, nowhere ever

before has this been seen that the leadership equation with masses continues to grow," Amar Patnaik said. The BJP leader claimed that there is anger against BJP over the policies that have been followed, resulting in price rise, inflation, high price in domestic gas, which affected the women, the households, middle class suffering after the pandemic and nothing has been done for them.

Political analyst Rabi Das claimed that the Panchayat election results has proved beyond any doubt that the party led by Naveen Patnaik had developed an electoral mechanism which is unparalleled in the whole country, the way they have been winning the election since the last 22 years.

Das added that the BJP's rise in Odisha was entirely due to Narendra Modi and to some extent Dharmendra Pradhan, but now people have realized that those Ujwala cylinders, due to gas prices going up, people are not able to refill those cylinders. BJD went on a campaign to block level against the rising price, fuel hike and rise in prices of essential commodities, Das pointed out. Odisha Congress's chairman of state differently-abled cell said, "I'd like to

say that the good thing about such a massive loss is that we can only go up from here. Having said that, I think to be successful in the long run, we need to come up with an alternate vision of development and present it before the people instead of just criticizing the Naveen Government and its policies, which doesn't seem to be working in the current scenario."

BJP MLA Jaynarayan Mishra said, "We tasted a debacle as we lacked effective strategy, floor management and aggressiveness."

While BJP MP Suresh Pujaro observed, "We failed to capitalize on the failures of the State government. We failed in taking the State government's failures to the people."

Meanwhile, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) supremo and Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday thanked the people of Odisha for making his party victorious in the three-tier panchayat polls with unwavering love. Stating that this victory has further strengthened the BJD's commitment to public service, Naveen Patnaik congratulated the winning party candidate and all the activists who turned the BJD into a movement through their dedicated work.

Stating that this victory has further strengthened the BJD's commitment to public service, Naveen Patnaik congratulated the winning party candidate and all the activists who turned the BJD into a movement through their dedicated work.

China, the Line of Actual Control and India's Strategic Situation

It has historically been a difficult topic to address — the 1962 Indo-China War, India's dubious record in terms of the origins of the conflict, and its disastrous performance during the war itself (the bravery of our unsupported, ill-equipped jawans notwithstanding). Addressed it must be, if only to prevent a similarly ostrich-in-the-sand mentality from taking over India's perspective on the China question in the 21st century, more than 50 years since the two sides came to blows in the Himalayas.

China's modern innings begins only with the end of the Chinese Civil War, which followed World War II and ended in 1949. Mao's communists eventually drove Chiang Kai-Shek's nationalists onto the island of Taiwan (where their descendants thrive awkwardly today). In 1966, Mao commenced his "Cultural Revolution", which is a polite way of describing a barbaric and seemingly mindless defenestration of the flower of Chinese society. It was a genocide of intellectuals, artists, authors and anyone with the mildest of political opinions. I admit to being rather mystified by this back

when I first studied it. It seemed like such an own-goal, such a totally disastrous and counterproductive period in Chinese history that it barely survived logical examination. I think differently today but more on that later.

Let us consider the true rise of China starting in the post-Cold War world of the 1990s, during which decade incidentally both India and China "liberalised" their economies and societies and joined a global system underwritten by America and the West. China's approach — in hindsight — seems to consist of a purely tactical, instrumental use of global systems of finance, trade, politics and law to further its short to medium term goals of rapid economic, industrial and technological development. The Chinese relationship with global institutions, values and norms was purely one of convenience, transaction, relative power and pragmatic calculation. The Chinese are entirely unaffected, and unfettered, by the underlying "norms, values and ethics" that Western societies, and West-authored global institutions are supposed to be based upon and are expressing.

Using what Indians would call Chanakya-buddhi — but what the Chinese understand through Confucianism and Sun Tzu's Art of War — the People's Republic has operated along clear, long-term, sustained strategic objectives. Everything from China's domestic economy to its international trade and financing, from its strategic alliances to its global network of infrastructure, from when it decides to "pick fights" and when it decides to "play by the rules" is planned and designed to help China move ever closer to its overarching strategic national goals.

It is in this sense that India and the West have performed arguably less admirably.

Perhaps due only to what many liberal commentators call the health and raucousness of our democratic systems, there has been nothing like this level of coordination at a national level in the last three decades, from the end of the Cold War onwards. Instead, domestic politics, issues of ethics (sexuality, gender, race) have distracted from and eroded the ability of the West and India (which tries to modify and emulate the West in some sense) to compete with China. So how or why does China seem to have this advantage of being able to follow a concerted national strategy on which the entire apparatus of government and the energy of the people is focused?

It is not merely that China is authoritarian or that dissent is quickly suppressed. It is also the product of the Cultural Revolution between

Between Doklam, a few years ago and the current volatility at the LAC with China, it is important to understand these situations as part of a broader picture about global politics, the reality of China's capacities and broad spectrum tactical options and India's own strategic goals and capabilities and options.

1966 and 1976 during which Mao whitewashed China's rich, varied and natural cultural heterogeneity and brutally replaced it with a largely one-party, one-perspective cultural homogeneity. The fact that China already enjoyed significant ethno-racial homogeneity historically would have simply been a further fact in favour of Mao's eventual project. In many ways, the Cultural Revolution is what has protected China from chaos, revolution and infighting for the last few decades. This is in no way a justification of what happened in that decade — simply a stark, realistic and rather frightening logical, psychological and anthropological conclusion.

The result, both in material and tactical terms, has been that China fights where, when and how their adversaries are either weakest or absent entirely. The rest of the world and especially China's close neighbours have been reacting to pro-active Chinese strategic moves. Whether it is the Philippines and Japan that have had to face constant pressure from mid-ocean base-building on artificial islands by the Chinese, or India which has had to absorb a low-level of pressure on its disputed border with China. Between Doklam, a few years ago, and the current volatility at the LAC with China, it is important to understand these situations as part of a broader picture about global politics, the reality of China's capacities and broad spectrum tactical options, and India's own strategic goals and capabilities and options. The military-technological balance between India and China is vast and rapidly growing. China outproduces, out-innovates and out-strategises India on a daily basis. Consider the state of China's preparedness on the Tibetan Plateau, and the lateness of India's establishment of a Mountain Strike Corps. Consider the "pearl of threats" that China has tried to place around India's neck through relationship building everywhere from Bangladesh (extensive financing) to Sri Lanka (100 year lease of a naval base) to Pakistan (\$60 billion sovereignty transfer) and even the Maldives. Consider the size and sophistication of China's nuclear arsenal and its missile defence technologies.

The rising role of India in the \$100 trillion global GDP

By Susmita Ghosh

In a world that has seen the gripping effect of the pandemic and a devastating war with global repercussions in the last few years, there is a silver lining as well. An uninhabited economic development shows the ray of hope for the world. By the first quarter of 2023, the global economy is going to reach a new height while ensuring continued growth for the decade. In this journey, the Asian countries, among which, India, will play a pivotal role. The Covid pandemic, followed by the outburst of its Omicron variant, brought the world to a halt. When the

This development can be an indicator of history repeating itself. Prior to 1500 AD, the lion's share of the economy was commanded by Asia, with Europe playing a little role

world was getting its hold back onto normalcy, the European war situation complicated the situation. With various sanctions in place, the return to economic normalcy is staggered but not dead on its track. The earlier prediction was set in the year 2024, considering the pandemic effects. However, a reviving economy ensures that the goal will be reached far before. The boost for this economic growth, surprisingly, comes from China and India, two of the worst-hit countries in the pandemic. As they are turning the tide in their favour with a higher rate, the same is the trend of the global economy too. For now, the United States along with the European countries, are among the leaders in the global GDP. However, the condition in these countries are nearing the saturation point and the focus of the world GDP is set to shift towards the Asian axis.

China and Japan are already two Asian super giants who are among the world leaders. India, with planned growth and favourable conditions, can join the ranks in the coming decade too. A combined effort of China, India, Japan and South Korea has added more than \$25 trillion in 2021 to the global GDP. India is set to cross Germany to be the world's third-largest economy by 2031 and at the same time, China is predicted to replace the USA as the largest economy.

This development can be an indicator of history repeating itself. Prior to 1500 AD, the lion's share of the economy was commanded by Asia, with Europe playing a little role. Colonization and industrialization were the tools that took away to the crown and resulted in a West-side migration.

The journey to the goal, a successful realization of securing a leading position in the global GDP, is not an easy task for India. There are several setbacks and unforeseen difficulties on the way and especially the present war situation has made the circumstances more difficult. As the global economy and the share market on the whole are affected, India's economic expertise that was recovering from the post-Covid downward trend has again taken a tumble. However, the country's human resources can help to achieve the ambition. As the nation's population approaches 1.4 billion, a proper resource allocation and management system can easily help to increase India's effective annual output manifold.



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Why has Sri Lanka imposed its longest power cuts in 26 years?

Sri Lanka has announced nationwide daily power cuts, lasting up to seven-and-a-half hours. What is the reason for this? What impact does it have?

Reeling under its worst economic crisis, Sri Lanka on Tuesday (March 2) announced nationwide seven-and-a-half hour daily power cuts. This is the longest power cut announced in Sri Lanka in 26 years, according to news agency AFP. The country has been imposing sporadic power cuts amid its dwindling fuel supplies.

Sri Lanka's power and fuel shortage

According to the schedule available on the Public Utilities Commission's website, the power cuts will be imposed on a rolling basis across different sections from 8 am to 1 pm and then 6 pm to 8.30 pm, or from 1 pm to 6 pm and then 8.30 pm to 11 pm. This is the longest cut since 1996 when Sri Lanka relied on hydropower for a majority of its electricity needs and the reservoirs ran dry. While President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has asked the Treasury and Central Bank to ensure the import of fuel, the government has been



taking several measures to deal with the shortage. Public offices have been asked to run without air conditioners and conserve energy. The Commission, however, has called the ongoing crisis one of fuel

and not energy. On Tuesday the regulatory body said, "What we are facing is not an issue of electricity capacity, but a foreign exchange crisis, as the country does not have enough reserves

to import fuel." The number of buses running has reduced due to the shortage in fuel, even as Gemunu Wijeratne, President of the Lanka Private Bus Owners' Association, had warned on

Saturday that public transport will collapse if petrol is not provided. Hydroelectric dams, too, have failed at meeting energy requirements due to the ongoing drought.

Why can't Sri Lanka pay for fuel?

The island nation has been reeling under an economic crisis for a few years now. In 2019, the newly-elected Rajapaksa government had nearly halved the value-added tax to boost spending. However, the move along with the pandemic-hit tourist sector, which the Sri Lankan economy heavily relies on, have left the country in a vulnerable financial position.

On February 23, the Bank of Ceylon released \$35.5 billion to pay for a shipment of 40,000 tonnes of fuel which was kept waiting at the Colombo port for four days as the government struggled to find funds to pay for it.

(Contd on page 27)

Priceless art, medieval monuments, world heritage sites: what's at risk of destruction in Ukraine

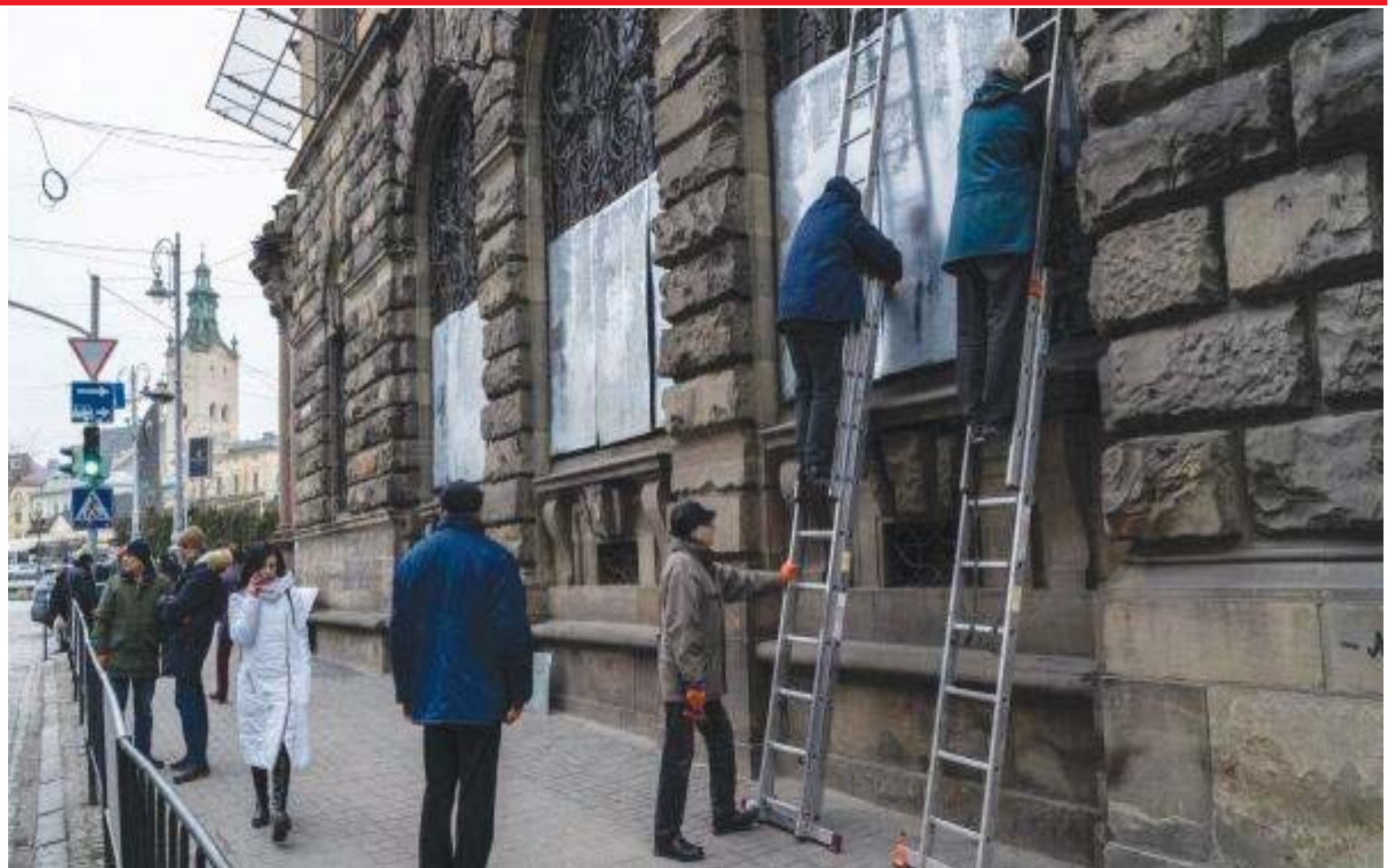
The massive Russian attack on Ukraine puts at risk priceless works of art, cultural artefacts, and monuments. What is at risk of destruction? Has something been lost already? What is being done to save Ukraine's cultural heritage?

The massive Russian attack on Ukraine puts at risk not just human lives and physical infrastructure, but also priceless works of art, cultural artefacts, and monuments. Ukraine is home to several heritage structures and historical sites, and its museums contain significant examples of Baroque and folk art.

What is at risk of destruction?

Ukraine has thousands of museums that have in its collections important works of Ukrainian and Russian art, classical and Byzantine artefacts and paintings by masters such as Giovanni Bellini, Francisco Goya, and Jacques-Louis David. The Museum of Freedom in Kyiv has a collection of around 4,000 objects that record Ukraine's pro-democracy movement. The Odessa Fine Arts Museum in the Odessa city centre has a collection of more than 10,000 objects,

(Contd on page 27)



Why West Bengal Needs To Take Lessons From Elections in Uttar Pradesh



name and face have appeared in newspapers, television channels and social media. In West Bengal, at least some lives still matter.

The state government may be on the defensive on this one. But we know this is temporary. Last year, BJP leaders had taken out a procession in Kolkata with the body of one of their candidates who had been killed in the post-poll violence. How dare you do this, the Chief Minister roared. "What if I told the municipal corporation to dump dead dogs outside your house," she added. In the recent case, that kind of swagger might be missing. Because of the religious identity of the victim, she does not have

year? I am not talking about "issues" such as Gujaratis taking over Bengal, with their alleged lack of appreciation for the great poets of the Bengali language. I am talking about real issues. Who is to blame for the collapse of industry in Bengal? Why is Bengal one of the poorest states in India? Who is to blame for the bad infrastructure, and the inability to attract investment? You could not possibly blame this on the BJP, which has not been in power even for a day. The TMC has already been in power for ten years. Even if they choose to distance themselves from the legacy of all the other "liberal" parties that have ruled the state in the past, they should talk

TMC is not a cricket team. In Uttar Pradesh, the BJP talks of "double engine ki sarkar." The BJP is asking voters to choose close cooperation between state and center, which they insist will lead to better development outcomes. Five years ago, the ruling SP went to campaign in Uttar Pradesh with the slogan "kaam bolta hai." On the other hand, Mamata Banerjee only promised to defeat the opposition parties in the election, which she already did. So she has already fulfilled her campaign promise, if you can even call it one. In 2026, the TMC can go back to the voters of Bengal and promise to defeat the opposition once again. They will have a number of cricketing slogans to choose from.

After the election results in West Bengal were announced, the Chief Minister declared that her "next" target would be economic development of the state. Next? It is heartbreaking to realize that economic development did not even come up as an issue during ten continuous years of her rule in the state. Also, note that she said this as she was trying to pivot towards national politics. In other words, the Chief Minister knows that economic growth might not be an issue in Bengal, but people of other states will surely ask about it. Whither, Bengal?

Recently, Mamata Banerjee went to campaign in Goa, seeking to establish a bridgehead for TMC there. Incidentally, Goa is the state with the highest per capita income in India, while Bengal has one of the lowest. But, Mamata Banerjee argued, Bengal is a "strong" state. This is one of the scariest things I have ever heard.

If you follow the politics of West Bengal closely, you will know that much of it is driven by a sense of superiority over people of other states. But whatever was the imaginary basis for that, it has worn thin. Our elections have hollowed out. Our intellectuals are reduced to propaganda. And the proletariat is reduced to street battles. It would make sense to become humble and try to follow better examples.

Something must be rotten in the state of Uttar Pradesh. I bet a lot of people in West Bengal must be wondering about this right now. We have already been through five phases of elections in India's most populous state. And yet, where are the political murders? Where are the milling crowds of ruling party workers who will surround opposition villages and teach them a lesson? Where is the smell of gunpowder? And why is there no smoke rising from bombs thrown in the countryside?

We get to hear a lot about unemployment nowadays. What do the unemployed in Uttar Pradesh do all day? Do they take their elections seriously or not?

Unfortunately for me and my fellow Bengalis, the answer to all of those questions about the people of Uttar Pradesh is quite distressing. They are not the weird ones, we are. Political violence during elections is not supposed to happen, nor is it common. In fact, it rarely happens anywhere else in the country. And, therefore, instead of pointing fingers at other people, we need to look within and ask ourselves some hard questions.

Incidentally, West Bengal is also having a big round of civic polls right now. The ruling party is widely expected to win around 100 percent of the seats. And perhaps even a little more than that, if possible. Leaving that aside for a moment, what matters is that these elections are happening on the usual 'Bengal model.' That means opposition party workers and leaders are being beaten, sometimes even killed. Even journalists and polling officials are

not safe. Honestly, this would have happened just as much even if we were having a clutch of college student union elections right now. Be it in the cities or in the countryside, no election is too small to turn violent in West Bengal. Who can forget what happened last year during state assembly elections in West Bengal? Let alone opposition workers,

the mobs even attacked police, CRPF and CISF personnel, even tried to snatch their weapons. What will happen to you once the central forces leave, the Chief Minister asked mockingly at one rally. For added effect, she even made a gesture showing the opposition begging for their lives. After the results came out, it seems ruling party workers proved that this was not just empty rhetoric. The 'investigations' are still going on, but we have high hopes. Right now, West Bengal is seeing a bit of stir over the death of an individual, allegedly thrown off a roof by the state police and murdered. It so happens that the deceased belonged to a certain community that is believed to have fully consolidated its votes behind the ruling party in the last elections. This means that the state government has had to take the unusual step of allowing street protests, instead of the expected brutal crackdown. Also, the deceased had links with Communist parties, which command the loyalty of large sections of the media. As a result, the media has had to do the right thing by not dehumanising the victim. His

We get to hear a lot about unemployment nowadays. What do the unemployed in Uttar Pradesh do all day? Do they take their elections seriously or not? Unfortunately for me and my fellow Bengalis, the answer to all of those questions about the people of Uttar Pradesh is quite distressing.

her usual media, intellectual and 'fact-checker' allies by her side. But they will return. They will justify themselves by saying that they are doing this to stop Modi and BJP.

But there is a deeper distinction that emerges when you compare West Bengal with Uttar Pradesh, or West Bengal to almost any other state for that matter. Every election campaign will have some empty rhetoric and some entertaining jibes at the other side. But in Uttar Pradesh, there is more than just that. The ruling BJP is contesting elections on efficient delivery of welfare schemes such as free rations, highway construction and improved law and order. They also argue that having the same party in power at the state and the center will make development work smoother. The opposition Samajwadi Party counters this by talking about jobs, promising to bring back a popular pension scheme for government employees, and more. This is what an election is supposed to be about.

Now let me ask you this. Could you name a single issue that came up during the elections in West Bengal last

about how they plan to make things better. At least in their third term!

That is when you realise what is really happening. Elections in West Bengal are a blood sport. Don't just focus on the word 'blood.' Also focus on the word 'sport.' It is only a game. The election in West Bengal does not mean anything at all.

Don't get me wrong. Ask anyone who has ever played a sport. It takes lots of hard work, dedication, and practice to beat the other team. It is fascinating to watch. Emotions run high. But ultimately, you are not actually fighting for anything. It is just entertainment.

In fact, I am not the one telling you that. The Chief Minister already told you that. Remember "khela hobe"? That is what the election in West Bengal was, a "khela." We saw two teams facing off against each other. People gathered to watch. The stronger team wrestled its opponents to the ground. We were promised entertainment and we got that.

Suppose I gave you two slogans side by side, both in Bengali. One is "korbo lorbo jeetbo re" (we will do it and we will win). Another is "khela hobe" (start the game). Could you tell which slogan belongs to the TMC and which one to the Kolkata Knight Riders?

Significantly, however, the

Putin's Aggressive Nationalism Has Run Into A Problem

Putin's cataclysmic invasion of Ukraine may have caused a setback to the global current of aggressive and domineering nationalism. In a country like the US, it could weaken Trumpism, given Donald Trump's closeness to Putin and his continuing praise of the Russian president. For India, the uncertainties surrounding the Indian students still trapped in Ukraine are of continuing concern, but the larger picture doesn't merely merit attention. It may be significant.

For a few years now, the world has been passively watching a current of aggressive nationalism, which populist and authoritarian/majoritarian leaders have warmly embraced. In several nations, elections have been won, and undemocratic rule extended, by a combination of "strong leadership" and pledges to "restore past glory", crush "anti-nationals" within the country and "sinister enemies" outside, and build gigantic militaries with awesome weapons.

Vladimir Putin, ruling Russia since 1999, was among the best-known symbols of this toxic nationalism. The final five days of February 2022 have tarnished his image.

Supposedly chaotic but democratic Ukraine and its heroic citizens have imposed brakes on Russia's mighty military juggernaut. In doing so, they have exposed, for the whole wide

world to see, the ultimate weakness of the ideology of domination on which Putin has placed his trust.

As of writing, the picture is far from clear. The US and NATO seem to have ruled out a direct military clash with Russia over Ukraine. There is suspense and dread about the dimensions of the urban war expected in great cities

like Kyiv and Kharkiv. We don't know whether casualties will rise exponentially - or whether talks might yet bring peace.

Yet some realities are



unmistakable. These include, in Ukraine, the high number of dead and wounded, and not just among the Ukrainians. In Russia, the signs are in the serious body blows to an economy dangerously dependent on oil and gas, the start of incoming body bags, and the cold wind of global isolation.

The Russian people are paying heavily for one man's sense of

grievance.

On February 21, three days before the full-scale invasion, this is what Putin said in the televised speech where he ordered Russian troops into Ukraine's pro-Russian separatist segments: "I will start with the fact that modern Ukraine was entirely created by Russia or, to be more precise, by Bolshevik, Communist Russia."

In this sentence, Putin was being sharply critical of the Bolsheviks and the Communists, although until the 1990s, he was proud to be one of them. "They detached Ukraine from Russia," he was complaining. Putin was recalling and celebrating pre-Communist Russia, the imperialist and Tsarist Russia of the 19th century and the first 17 years of the 20th century. It was the Putin the aggressive nationalist, not Putin the Communist, who was

preparing the ground for a massive invasion of his smaller neighbour. As The Washington Post put it, Putin was trying to dismiss "Ukraine as a recent creation, an obscure entity that came about after what he described as a struggle between Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin over the contours of a national state. He harshly criticized Lenin for pushing for a confederation of supposedly independent states, which then were able to become independent nations after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991." It is Ukraine's existence as an independent nation that Putin finds hard to stomach. And although he may not have openly criticized Ukraine's democracy, we can be sure that he also resents the notion that a country's rulers should be replaced from time to time, as also the allied notion that people should be free to criticise their rulers.

(Contd on page 28)

Standing with the people during crisis

India has proven time and again its capability in carrying out rescue operations overseas



For India, the Russia-Ukraine war has unfolded a crisis in the form of thousands of stranded citizens, particularly students, who are stuck in the conflict zone. Once again, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is leading from the front to ensure quick evacuation of Indians from the war zone. Immediately after the war broke out, PM Modi wasted no time in putting the Ministry of External Affairs and other ministries in top gear to carry out a multi-pronged evacuation exercise, called Operation Ganga.

Within hours, response teams of the MEA and other ministries were in place

with top officials coordinating Operation Ganga in New Delhi; and in Kyiv, Lviv, Chernivtsi in Ukraine. To speed up the evacuation process, the MEA also deployed its teams in Warsaw, Shehyni-Medyka and Krakowiec border crossings in Poland, the Zahony/Kipp Tysa border crossing in Hungary, Vysne Nemecke border crossing in the Slovak Republic and Suceava border crossing in Romania. Thanks to the quick response from PM Modi and his diplomatic skills, within 48 hours, around 1,400 Indians, mostly students, have been flown back from the war zone in

six special flights, where the entire cost of the evacuation is being borne by the government. The PM is personally monitoring the entire evacuation exercise, while Cabinet ministers like Piyush Goyal and Jyotiraditya Scindia received students and citizens at the airport.

As thousands more await evacuation from the countries neighbouring Ukraine, the Indian government has stepped up its efforts with more flights to join "Operation Ganga" in the next few days. The latest efforts also involve four senior ministers — Hardeep Puri, Jyotiraditya

Scindia, Kiren Rijiju and V K Singh — travelling to Ukraine's neighbouring countries to coordinate the evacuation mission and help stranded students and citizens. As tensions between Russia and Ukraine increased during the past months, the government started collecting information on Indians living in Ukraine in January itself. The Indian embassy in Kyiv established contacts with 19,763 Indians who were living in Ukraine, while the special focus was laid on establishing communication with student contractors.

(Contd. on page 28)

PM Modi dials Russian President Putin, discusses safe evacuation of Indians from Kharkiv

PM Modi spoke to President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, and discussed the safe evacuation of Indian nationals from the conflict areas



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday spoke to the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. They discussed the safe evacuation of Indian nationals from the conflict areas.

As per a statement released by the Prime Minister's Office read, "The two leaders reviewed the situation in Ukraine, especially in the city of Kharkiv where many Indian students are stuck. They discussed the safe evacuation of the Indian nationals from the conflict areas."

While the Russian Defense Ministry in a briefing said Russia was trying to evacuate Indian students from Kharkiv. It went on

to accuse Ukraine of taking Indian students hostage.

The ministry's official representative, Major General Igor Konashenkov, in a statement said: "According to our data, in Kharkiv, the Ukrainian authorities are forcibly detaining a large group of Indian students who want to leave the Ukrainian territory and go to Belgorod. In fact, they are being held hostage and offered to leave the territory of Ukraine through the Ukrainian-Polish border. They offer to go through the territory where active hostilities are being conducted." He added, "The Armed Forces are ready to take all necessary

measures for the safe evacuation of Indian citizens. And send them home from the territory of Russia with their military transport planes or Indian planes, as the Indian side proposed to do."

PM Modi chairs high-level meeting on Ukraine crisis

PM Modi chaired a high-level meeting on Wednesday night as India steps up its efforts to evacuate the Indian citizens stranded in Ukraine. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and

his Cabinet colleague Piyush Goyal besides senior officials attended the meeting.

Modi has held a series of meetings since Sunday asserting that it is his government's top priority to bring them back home. Indian Embassy in Ukraine tells citizens to leave Kharkiv today Earlier, the Indian Embassy in Ukraine asked all Indians to leave Kharkiv immediately "under all circumstances" as Russia

continues to bombard Ukraine's second largest city. In a series of tweets, the embassy said: "Urgent advisory to all Indian nationals in Kharkiv. For their safety and security, they must leave Kharkiv immediately." Further, it said, "Proceed to Pesochin, Babaye and Bezlyudovka as soon as possible. Under all circumstances, they must reach these settlements *by 1800 hrs (Ukrainian time) today*."

Russia-Ukraine war: What is concerning RBI, SBI, other banks in India?

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has dented investors' sentiments on the stock market in India

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has ripple effects on crucial aspects of the global economy - stock markets around the world and international oil prices. Now banks in India have started getting concerned as the conflict escalates between Moscow and Kyiv.

SBI'S BIG MOVE

The State Bank of India (SBI) has stopped processing transactions of Russian entities that have been sanctioned by the West over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. To effect this, SBI has issued a circular as it fears that any transaction with entities or sectors under sanction will invite sanction on it as well, according to a PTI

report.

WHAT THIS MEANS?

No transactions involving entities, banks, ports or vessels appearing on a US, European Union or United Nations sanctions list would be processed irrespective of the currency of the transaction.

Payments due to such entities have to be processed by other mechanism rather than through the banking channel.

SBI operates a joint venture in Moscow called Commercial Indo Bank LLC, where Canara Bank is another partner with 40 per cent stake, PTI reported.

PAYMENT ISSUE

Banks in India were scrambling after bills for imports from Russia have started bouncing and

payments for exports have been stuck in the wake of sanctions imposed by the west on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine, Reuters reported.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) met with select bankers and is trying to assess the exposure that lenders have to Russia and to Ukraine and the impact it may have on Indian banks, said another senior banking executive.

The extent of the payments that are stalled is not clear at the moment and the regulator is trying to assess it, the Reuters report stated.

Meanwhile, banks have started contacting corporate clients to understand their exposure to Russia and to Ukraine to see if

their business could be significantly impacted, resulting in delayed loan re-payments for banks, according to Reuters.

INDIA-RUSSIA TRADE

Russia is one of the biggest suppliers of defence products and equipment to India, mostly under government-to-government contracts.

Bilateral trade between India and Russia stood at USD 9.4 billion so far this fiscal year, against USD 8.1 billion in 2020-21.

India's main imports from Russia include fuels, mineral oils, pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; electrical machinery and equipment and fertilisers.

Major export items from India to Russia include pharmaceutical products, electrical machinery and equipment, organic chemicals and vehicles.

SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK

Last week, the Group of seven (G-7) major economies imposed punitive sanctions against the Russian central bank.

They also decided to remove Russian banks from the SWIFT inter-banking system -- which is intended to isolate Russia from global trade.

India has so far maintained a neutral stance on Russia attack on Ukraine asking both the countries to resolve the issue diplomatically.

Extreme climatic events may cause anxiety, depression

The IPCC report has cautioned that not eliminating emissions will cause serious harm to the world, especially South Asia



world, especially South Asia with increased unbearable heat waves, food and water scarcity and sea level rise. The report also mentioned non-climatic moderating influences which range from an individual's personality and pre-existing conditions, to social support, to structural inequities.

"Depending on these background and contextual factors, similar climatic events may result in a range of potential mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, acute traumatic stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, substance abuse, and sleep problems, with conditions ranging from being mild in nature to those that require hospitalization," the

report, approved by nearly 200 countries said.

Referring to a study, the report said that in Canada, an association was found between mean heat exposure of 28 degree Celsius within four days of exposure and greater hospital admissions for mood and behavioural disorders, including schizophrenia, mood, and neurotic disorders.

"A US study found mental health problems increased by 0.5 per cent when average temperatures exceeded 30 degree C, compared to averages between 25-30 degree C; a 1 degree C warming over five years was associated with a two per cent increase in mental health problems.

"Another study found a 1 degree C rise in monthly average temperatures over several decades was associated with a 2.1 per cent rise in suicide rates in Mexico and a 0.7 per cent rise in suicide rates in the US. A systematic review of published research using a variety of methodologies from 19 countries found increased risk of suicide associated with a 1 degree C rise in ambient temperature," the report said. It, however, said that exposure may also be vicarious, with people experiencing decreased mental health associated with observing the impact of climate change on others, or simply with learning about climate change.

Extreme climate conditions can cause mental health issues like anxiety, depression, acute traumatic stress and sleep problems ranging from mild to severe which may even require hospitalisation, said the latest IPCC report on climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group II's report titled 'Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability', released on Monday, warned that a wide range of climatic events and conditions will have detrimental impacts on mental

health. "The pathways through which climatic events affect mental health are varied, complex and interconnected with other non-climatic influences that create vulnerability.

"The climatic exposure may be direct, such as experiencing an extreme weather event or prolonged high temperatures, or indirect, such as mental health consequences of undernutrition or displacement," said the report.

The IPCC report has cautioned that not eliminating emissions will cause serious harm to the

China could get Russia to lower its tone on nukes', says international relations expert

The Russian invasion of Ukraine continues to escalate as the conflicts and bombing have killed more than 100 people so far, including children.

A United Nations agency said on Tuesday (March 1) that at least 136 civilians have been killed, including 13 children, and 400 have been injured since Russia invaded Ukraine last week.

The United States officials have said that Russian President Vladimir Putin is reportedly frustrated by the Russian army's slower than expected progress in Ukraine. As a result, according to intelligence, he could double down on his attack.

WION's correspondent Jodie Cohen spoke with Dr Yonatan Freeman, who is an national security expert from Hebrew University's Department of Political Science. Here's what he has to say on what could happen next:

Question: Now with Russia expected to increase its advance, Ukraine has applied to join the European Union. What are the implications of this? And with Russia saying its nuclear deterrent forces are on high alert, people are even talking of a third world war – how likely is

that?

Answer: The fact that Ukraine seeking to join the European Union is really a way to project itself to the world that it wants to be with the West.

But if it comes to World War II, anything

c o u l d h a p p e n . We also know that historically speaking every 80-100 years there is a very big war that causes very drastic changes in the world.

So, since World War II ended, we have reached that point in history. So it really depends on what happens next and how the world reacts to Russia.

Question: President Zelensky of Ukraine has expressed doubts that the negotiations between Ukraine and Russia will succeed. However, the two countries have announced the second round of talks. What's your assessment on their chance of

success?

Answer: It really depends on how much Ukraine keeps up its fight. I think when the war began, many thought that in a few hours, a few days Ukraine will be defeated but the Ukrainians are giving



a fight. West is betting more on Ukraine's ability to resist.

We also have to remember that Belarus, where the negotiations are happening isn't a neutral site. It's happening at a place that is currently fighting Ukraine so don't see much moving there.

Question: You've previously said that you think Israel is one of the best countries in the world right now to serve as a mediator because

of its close links to both sides. Now Israel is set to support the General Assembly resolution condemning Russia, where does this leave Israel's relations with Russia?

Answer: Israel is going to be supporting the move in UNGA.

Both know that Israel has the ear of both these countries, even the United States.

Even after all these announcements by the foreign minister, even that it is sending humanitarian aid to Ukraine, the fact that we are assisting people to leave, but still remains to be seen whether or not Israel will be a mediator.

Question: With the West tightening its sanctions, especially through SWIFT, do you think China can fill in for Russia's war chest. So far it has criticised sanctions politically.

Answer: China can assist when it comes to the economy. It has a lot of industries and it has its own. China has everything but it has plenty to lose in that case. China on one hand has been understandable but hasn't been full in support of Russian moves in Ukraine. China to get Russia on lowering its tones on nuclear weapons.

Pakistan-Afghan border reopens days after deadly clash

(News Agencies) A key border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan has reopened, officials said Sunday, days after fighting between security forces left at least three dead. Since the Taliban returned to power last year, border tensions between the neighbours have risen, with Pakistan alleging militant groups were planning attacks from Afghan soil. The Taliban deny harbouring Pakistani militants, but are also infuriated by a fence Islamabad is erecting along their 2,700-kilometre (1,600-mile) border, drawn up in colonial times and known as the Durand Line. "The border has reopened for all sort of activities," a spokesman for

Pakistan's paramilitary border force told AFP. A security source said

it came after "successful talks" between Pakistani officials and the governor of Afghanistan's Kandahar province. Mahmood Azaam, spokesman for the governor, confirmed it had reopened. Each side blamed the other for Thursday's clashes at the Chaman-Spin Boldak crossing, which locals said involved light and heavy weapons. Thousands usually cross every day, including traders, Afghans seeking medical treatment in Pakistan, and people visiting relatives.



US welcomes Nepal parliament for ratifying \$500 million MCC infrastructure aid deal

The United States Embassy in Kathmandu reiterated the strong ties shared by US and Nepal, saying that their relationship is 'broader than one agreement'

(News Agencies) The comments came after the Nepal government ratified the \$500 million-dollar Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact for Nepal. On Sunday, Nepal's parliament finally ratified the much-debated MCC compact after the ruling coalition reached a consensus. The 12-point 'interpretative declaration' paves way for the ratification of the MCC agreement.

Reacting to the development, the embassy welcomed the decision taken by the Government of Nepal, saying, "Today's decision by Parliament to follow through on its signed commitment and ratify the compact will mean more jobs for the Nepali people, a reliable supply of electricity, and lower transportation costs." The MCC pact, signed agreement in 2017, aims to modernize Nepal's energy and transportation sectors with the hope of helping more than 23 million Nepalis.

The Nepali government will now be able to continue to work towards implementing the five-year program. "The decision whether to ratify

the \$500 million-dollar Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Nepal Compact has always rested with the Government of Nepal as a sovereign democratic nation," the statement said.

Outlining the benefits of the compact, the embassy said, "In the nearly 20 years since its inception, MCC compacts have helped alleviate poverty around the world by forming partnerships with developing countries who are committed to economic freedom, investing in their citizens, and good governance, including promoting democratic principles and combatting corruption." In an effort to ratify the MCC in Nepal's parliament, US Ambassador to Nepal Randy Berry held several meetings with Nepali leaders including Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and opposition leader KP Sharma Oli. After days of high-level political meetings and discussions, the MCC-Nepal Compact was finally ratified by the House of Representatives—Nepal's lower house—on Sunday evening.

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The first signs of global warming are now clearly visible. We urgently need to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Nothing and no-one will be spared from climate change. This warning is therefore to all people, all countries and, in particular, to the Belgian Council of Ministers who, on the weekend of March 20 and 21, will have to decide what action to take regarding essential measures linked to the Kyoto Protocol.

WWF

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Myanmar junta accuses foreign media of 'persistent bias'

Myanmar's military government complained on Monday of biased coverage by foreign media, which it said was misreporting events in the country and being swayed by distorted information from "terrorists" determined to create instability

(SAI Bureau) In a rare statement, the State Administrative Council (SAC), as the junta is known, said it was a friend to the media and international community, but those were misrepresenting its efforts to ensure peace and protect its citizens. What we find troubling is the clear and persistent bias of certain foreign media towards terrorist groups. But these media are doing so without fully ascertaining the facts," its information ministry said. "The terrorists appear to have swayed sections of the foreign media who report without

checking, and repeat misinformation as truth." Myanmar has been in turmoil since a coup a year ago, with at least 1,500 civilians killed by security forces, according to activists cited by the United Nations, which the junta has also accused of bias.



The military has been battling militias allied with a parallel National Unity Government (NUG), which last year called for a nationwide revolt and has been outlawed by the junta. State media coverage of the unrest has been rare, but the military has denied

committing atrocities. The SAC on Monday said 4,338 "terrorists" had been arrested overall, but nearly 49,000 people prosecuted for joining anti-coup protests had been released. It did not mention military casualties but said 95 civil servants and 20

monks had been killed, while 525 roads and bridges, 27 hospitals, 504 schools and educational facilities had been destroyed, during 9,437 attacks.

The SAC's statement made no mention of a peace process it has committed to with its Southeast Asian neighbours, but said it would hold an election by August next year. It urged media to recognise "the return to normalcy in all major towns and cities". Nay Phone Latt, a senior member of the ruling party ousted by the military and a representative of the NUG, defended the integrity of the press and said armed resistance was justified. "The people are in a defensive war with SAC members who arrest, torture and kill civilians and burn down peoples' houses," Nay Phone Latt told Reuters.

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Taliban ban Afghans from evacuating amid massive security sweep

The Taliban have clamped down on Afghans leaving the country as, separately, their forces continue a massive security sweep, going house-to-house across the capital Monday in a “clearing operation”



(SAI Bureau) The new travel ban was announced late Sunday by Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, who packaged the restrictions as being aimed at preventing hardship for Afghans abroad. Evacuations organised by nations or non-governmental organisations have been banned, while even families attempting to leave the country by their own means now need “an excuse”, or they will be stopped by immigration. “I have to say clearly that persons who leave the country along with their families and have no excuse... we are preventing them,” Mujahid told a press conference late Sunday. Women will also not be

able to fly abroad unless accompanied by a male relative — mirroring similar domestic restrictions introduced last year which bar solo travel between cities and towns. “If they (women) want to travel abroad, they should have a chaperone,” Mujahid said. “This is the order of Islamic sharia law.” The announcement came the same weekend a search for “kidnappers, thieves and looters” kicked off in Kabul and other Afghan cities — a so-called “clearing operation” separate from the travel measures.

The new travel restrictions will alarm tens of thousands of Afghans who have

been promised asylum abroad after working with US-led foreign forces or other Western organisations during the Taliban’s 20-year insurgency. More than 120,000 Afghans and dual nationals were evacuated up to August 31 when the last US-led troops withdrew, two weeks after the hardline Islamists seized Kabul. Thousands with similar links are still in Afghanistan, however, desperate to leave and fearful they may be targeted by the Taliban as “collaborators”. The last official evacuation by air was on December 1, although organised road convoys to Pakistan have taken place as recently as last week.

Bad conditions

Mujahid said the decision to ban departures came because the Taliban had received reports of thousands of Afghans “living in very bad conditions” abroad. “The government has the responsibility to protect the people so this will be stopped until we get the assurance that their lives will not be endangered,” he said, adding that they had never promised for evacuations to continue

indefinitely. “Initially we had said that the Americans... could take people whom they had any concerns about... But this is not a continuous promise.” Since the Taliban took over Kabul in August, Afghanistan has plunged into economic crisis, pushing even those without links to the former regime to scramble for an exit.

Thousands of people daily try to cross into neighbouring Iran in search of work, or in a bid to reach Europe in the hope of asylum. The United States has seized \$7 billion in Afghan assets held abroad — reserving half for humanitarian aid that bypasses the Taliban, and half for a fund to compensate families of those who died in the September 11, 2001 attacks. Not against the common people. Meanwhile, a massive security sweep of Kabul continued Monday with Taliban fighters going house-to-house in search of weapons and criminals blamed for a recent spate of robberies and kidnappings. The “clearing

operation” has alarmed many who fear being targeted because of their association with the previous Western-backed regime or US-led foreign forces.irate residents have posted videos on social media showing homes they said had been trashed during Taliban searches, but several people told AFP their encounters had been polite and cursory.

Mujahid said authorities had discovered two kidnapped victims during the operation so far, and also freed two teenage girls who they found chained in a basement. He said light and heavy weapons, explosives, radio equipment and drones had been seized, as well as vehicles belonging to the military or government. Six people suspected of being members of the Islamic State group had been detained, he said, along with nine kidnappers and 53 “professional thieves”. “We want to assure the residents of Kabul that these operations are not against the common people,” Mujahid said. “The residents of the city should be confident the search is going on carefully.”

Jade mine landslide kills 12 in Myanmar



(SAI Bureau) At least 12 people were killed and dozens went missing when a landslide hit a jade mine in Myanmar’s northernmost Kachin state, local police said on Tuesday. “A landslide occurred late on Monday. Nearly 40 jade scavengers were buried. Twelve bodies have been found this morning and the rescue operation is underway,” the police said, Xinhua news agency reported. The death toll could be higher in the landslide that struck an old jade mining site in Mat Lin Chaung village in Hpakant township of Kachin state at 22.35 p.m. local time on Monday, a local resident said. Deadly landslides are frequent in Kachin state, especially in Hpakant mining region. Many locals make their living by scavenging jade in the region and most of the landslides are caused by partial collapse of the tailing heaps or dams. A major fatal landslide occurred at a jade mining site in Hpakant township in July 2020, leaving 174 dead and 54 others injured.

Young female dancer shot dead in Pakistan's Punjab province

A 19-year-old woman in Pakistan, who was a stage dancer by profession, was shot dead in Punjab province

(SAI Bureau) A 19-year-old female dancer has been shot dead in Pakistan’s Punjab province, the second such killing of an entertainer in the last one month in the country. According to the police, Ayesha - a stage dancer by profession - was going to the theatre in Jandawala Phatak area of Faisalabad city, 180 km from provincial capital Lahore, when she was shot dead by unidentified gunmen on Monday evening. A police official said the girl’s family had not named any suspect in the FIR. “Police are probing the matter on different aspects like whether she was killed in the name of honour,” he said. Interim reports said Ayesha, a divorcee, was in a relationship with a man from her housing locality in Faisalabad. “We will interrogate him and the ex-husband besides

her family members to get a clue on the killer(s),” he said. Last month, a male dancer



was killed when a man opened fire on a dancer girl during a performance in Rawalpindi city. Police said the performance was underway when a drunk man named Imran opened fire on Mehak Noor. Noor was unhurt, but her fellow performer Navid received bullet injuries and died on the spot.

China to exit zero-Covid strategy?

Top scientist says it cannot 'remain unchanged forever'

(SAI Bureau) In a possible sign that China's leadership is rethinking its zero-Covid strategy, top Chinese scientist Zeng Guang has said that Beijing's strategy against Covid-19 cannot "remain unchanged forever." He added that "it is the long-term goal of humanity to co-exist with the virus" at tolerable death and illness rates. Other than putting China at odds with the rest of the world and the policy is exacting a mounting economic toll. Zeng is the former chief scientist of China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention and one of the experts behind the country's initial Covid response.



Zeng said that while China's approach had prevented the early chaos of widespread infection experienced by many Western countries, its low infection rate was now a "soft spot" as far fewer people had built up natural immunity. He said Western countries were now showing "commendable courage" in exploring how to live with the virus and that China should "observe and learn" even though there was still "no need to open the country's doors at the peak of the global pandemic." "In the near future, at the right time, the roadmap for Chinese-style co-existence with the virus should be presented," Zeng said. His comments are unusual for an official in China's government, which has touted its low infection rates to the Chinese public as a sign of the superiority of its approach. "For a large country with a population of 1.4 billion, it must be said that the cost effectiveness of our country's prevention and control has been extremely high," said Liang Wannian, head of the expert epidemic prevention group at China's National Health Commission.

Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, called on China last week to "reassess" its approach, saying it had now become a "burden" on both the Chinese and global economies. But China is concerned the cost of lowering its defences could prove even higher, especially with a healthcare system that has lagged its broader development. It is also wary of the risk of new variants, especially as it refuses to import

foreign vaccines. Studies suggest China's vaccines are less effective against Omicron and it has not yet rolled out its own mRNA version. "With a large population and high density the government is rightly concerned about impacts for the spread of the virus," said Jaya Dantas, professor of international health at the Curtin School of Population Health in Perth, Australia. China had 4.7 million registered nurses at the end of 2020, or 3.35 per 1,000 people, official data showed. Wu Zunyou, chief epidemiologist at the Chinese Center For Disease Control and Prevention, warned the "insidious" Omicron could still lead to a rise in the absolute number of deaths even if it was proven to be less deadly, and China must remain patient. "China's medical capacity and standards are not as good as Britain or the United States, but the results of China's coronavirus prevention and control are far, far superior," he said in a weekend interview with the Beijing News.

'Premature optimism'

China has stepped up its health warnings, urging citizens to ignore claims that Omicron is no more serious than the 'flu and to stay vigilant. On Wednesday, the Global Times, published by the official People's Daily, also lashed out at overseas media for "mocking" China's policies, saying they saved lives. Foreign criticism was "based on unfounded or premature optimism regarding the end of the pandemic", it added. Experts in China and overseas have also cast doubt on the hope that Omicron represents the final stage of the pandemic. "SARS-CoV-2 will not magically turn into a malaria-like

endemic infection where levels stay constant for long periods," said Raina MacIntyre, head of the Biosecurity Research Programme at the University of New South Wales' Kirby Institute. "It will keep causing epidemic waves, driven by waning vaccine immunity, new variants that escape vaccine protection, unvaccinated pockets, births and migration," she said. The country where the coronavirus was first detected in 2019 is now one of the last places still clinging to a zero-tolerance approach, responding to small outbreaks with snap lockdowns and cutting off most international travel.



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United States reaches 65,000 H-1B visa cap for 2022: USCIS



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

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

Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. The H-1B visa programme is the most sought-after work visa among foreign professionals, including Indians.

As mandated by the US Congress, the US can issue a maximum of 65,000 H-1B visa regular cap and another 20,000 H-1B visa US advanced degree

exemption categories every year. US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) which screens all such applications every year on Monday announced that it has received a sufficient number

of petitions needed to reach the congressionally mandated 65,000 H-1B visa regular cap and the 20,000 H-1B visa US advanced degree exemption, known as the master's cap, for fiscal year (FY) 2022.

"We have completed sending non-selection notifications to registrants' online accounts. The status for registrations properly submitted for the FY 2022 H-1B numerical allocations, but that were not selected, will now show: Not Selected: Not selected ? not eligible to file an H-1B cap petition based on this registration," it

said. The USCIS will continue to accept and process petitions that are otherwise exempt from the cap, it said. "Petitions filed for current H-1B workers who have been counted previously against the cap, and who still retain their cap number, are exempt from the FY 2022 H-1B cap," said the federal agency.

Meanwhile, the USCIS will continue to accept and process petitions filed to extend the amount of time a current H-1B worker may remain in the US; change the terms of employment for current H-1B workers; allow current H-1B workers to change employers,

and allow current H-1B workers to work concurrently in additional H-1B positions. While the Congressional cap is 65,000; not all H-1B nonimmigrant visas (or status grants) are subject to this annual cap. Notably, up to 6,800 visas are set aside from the 65,000 each fiscal year for the H-1B1 programme under the terms of the legislation implementing the US-Chile and U.S.-Singapore free trade agreements. Unused visas in this group become available for H-1B use for the next fiscal year's regular H-1B cap.

US warns Belarus of 'serious consequences' if it continues to support Putin's aggression against Ukraine

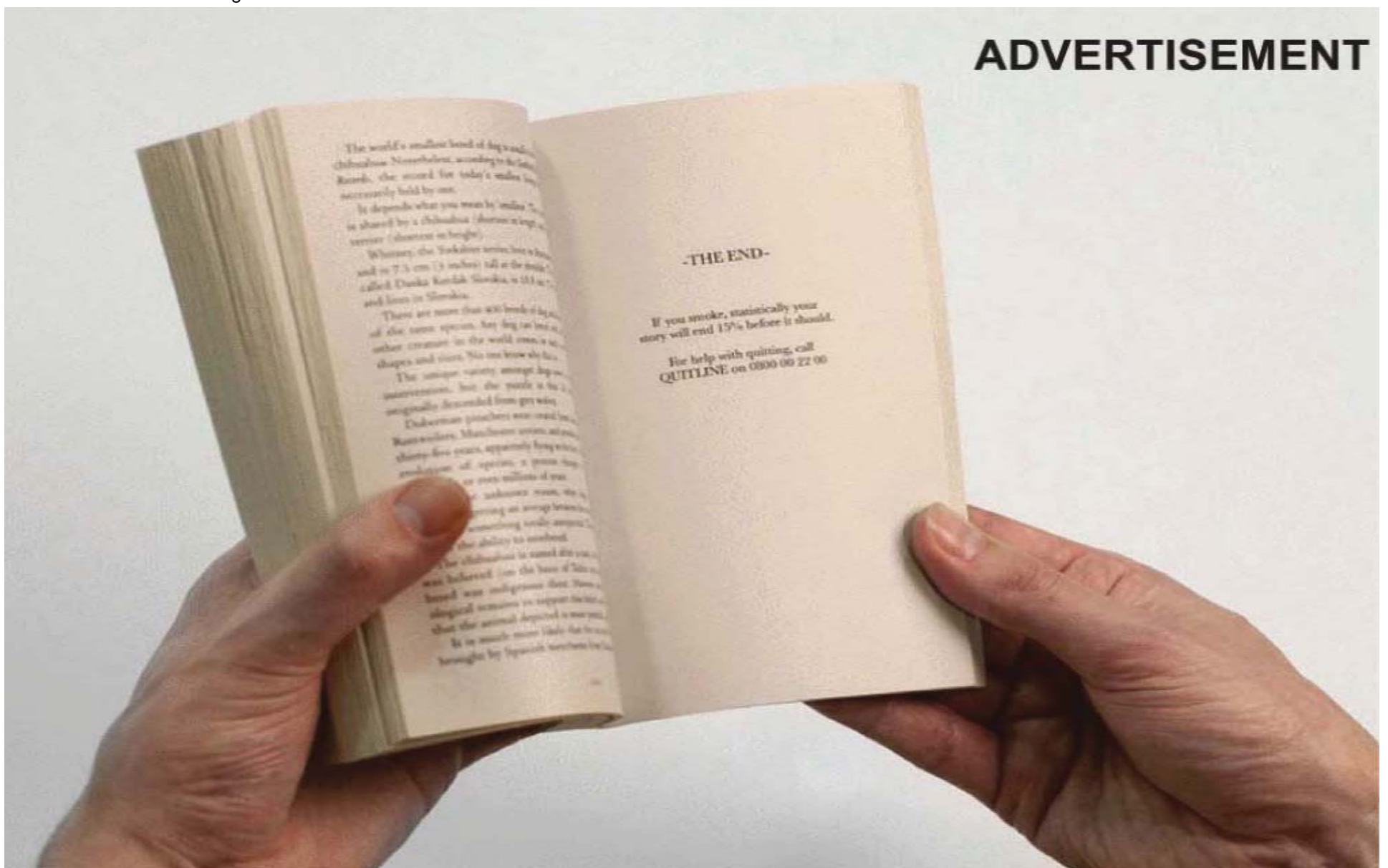
Belarus will face 'serious consequences' if President Alexander Lukashenk continues to support his counterpart Vladimir Putin's aggression against Ukraine, US State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Tuesday

(SAI Bureau) The United States has warned Belarus of facing "serious consequences" if its President Alexander Lukashenko continues to support his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin's aggression against Ukraine. Belarus will face serious consequences in case Lukashenko continues to support Putin's aggression against Ukraine," US State Department spokesman Ned Price was quoted as saying

by NEXTA TV during a briefing. On Monday, talks were held between Russian and Ukrainian officials at the Belarusian border with the aim of an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of Russian forces, the Ukrainian president's office had said. The talks are being held on the border with strong Russian ally Belarus, where a referendum on Sunday approved a new constitution ditching the country's

non-nuclear status and paving the way for Russian nuclear weapons to be placed in the country. According to The Kyiv Independent, 65.16 per cent of citizens allegedly supported these constitutional amendments. Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko has also significantly extended his executive powers. Additionally, multiple sources have said that Belarus will be joining Russia's war on Ukraine very soon.

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China opposes US, EU sanctions against Russia; says will carry out normal trade with Moscow

China is even more opposed to unilateral sanctions that have no basis in international law, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said



and mutual benefit," Wang said.

The US is joined by some European nations and Canada to remove certain Russian banks from SWIFT, the payment system used for most international financial transactions. The move is "unprecedentedly severe," but is unlikely to deal a fatal blow against Russia, not only because of the latter's long preparation but also its hard-to-replace economic value to the West, particularly Europe, China's state-run Global Times reported. China has repeatedly expressed opposition to the use of economic sanctions. On Monday, Wang said that it has long been proved that sanctions, far from solving problems, only create new ones, while warning the US against undermining China's and others' interests in dealing with the Ukraine

situation.

"We also demand that the US side should not harm the legitimate rights and interests of China and other parties when handling the Ukraine issue and its relations with Russia," Wang said at a press conference when asked whether Chinese companies such as Huawei and Xiaomi would comply with US sanctions on Russia and stop supplies to the country. Experts cautioned China to carefully balance economic support for Russia with its own interests given the likelihood of further sanctions on Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine. "China will support Russia financially and through trade as much as any Western sanctions allow," Capital Economics' chief Asia economist Mark Williams said.

"Small companies and banks may breach sanctions,

but larger firms and the government won't risk a further rupture in relations with the West," he told Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post. Michael Gasiorek, professor of economics at the University of Sussex, said some Russian trade will be redirected to China, which could be helped by Beijing potentially lowering tariffs. "About 40 per cent of Russian exports go to the EU, and 44 per cent to NATO, and 36 per cent of Russian imports come from the EU. China accounts for about 22 per cent of Russian imports, and 13 per cent of exports," he said. "A broader set of sanctions would no doubt have a substantial impact on the Russian economy. But of course this will hit the population at large as opposed to targeted companies or individuals," he told the Post.

(SAI Bureau) China, a close ally of Russia, said on Monday that it was opposed to illegal unilateral sanctions and will continue to carry out normal trade cooperation with Moscow, as the US, EU and their allies stepped up punitive measures against Russia, including the interbank messaging system SWIFT. Asked about what some have described as the "financial

nuclear option" at a regular press briefing in Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said China opposes the use of sanctions to solve problems and is even more opposed to unilateral sanctions that have no basis in international law. China and Russia will continue to carry out normal trade cooperation in the spirit of mutual respect, equality

Human rights groups, Ukraine envoy to US accuse Russia of using cluster and vacuum bombs in its invasion

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch both said that Russian forces appeared to have used widely banned cluster munitions, with Amnesty accusing them of attacking a preschool in northeastern Ukraine while civilians took shelter inside

(SAI Bureau) Human rights groups and Ukraine's ambassador to the United States on Monday accused Russia of attacking Ukrainians with cluster bombs and vacuum bombs, weapons that have been condemned by a variety of international organizations.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch both said that Russian forces appeared to have used widely banned cluster munitions, with Amnesty accusing them of attacking a preschool in northeastern Ukraine while civilians took shelter inside. Oksana Markarova, Ukraine's ambassador to the United States, told reporters after meeting with members of the US Congress that Russia had used a thermobaric weapon, known as a vacuum bomb, in its invasion of her country. "They used the vacuum bomb today," Markarova said after a meeting with lawmakers. "...The

devastation that Russia is trying to inflict on Ukraine is large." A vacuum bomb, or thermobaric weapon, sucks in oxygen from the surrounding air to generate a high-temperature explosion, typically producing

a blast wave of a significantly longer duration than that of a conventional explosive and is capable of vaporizing human bodies. There has been no official confirmation that thermobaric weapons have been used in the conflict in Ukraine. CNN reported that one of its teams had spotted a Russian thermobaric

multiple rocket launcher near the Ukrainian border early on Saturday



afternoon. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said she had seen reports but did not have confirmation that Russia had used such weapons. "If that were true, it would potentially be a war crime," she told a press briefing, noting that there are international organizations that would assess that and

President Joe Biden's administration "would look to be a part of that conversation." The Russian embassy in Washington did not respond to requests for comment. Markarova said Ukraine was working actively with the Biden administration and Congress to obtain more weapons and tougher sanctions. "They should pay, they should pay a heavy price," she told reporters after leaving the meeting. One lawmaker who attended the meeting, Democratic Representative Brad Sherman, said the Ukrainians had asked for a US-enforced no-fly zone over Ukraine but that he felt that was too dangerous because it could provoke conflict with Russia. Amnesty International said international humanitarian law prohibits the use of inherently indiscriminate weapons such as cluster munitions. Launching indiscriminate attacks that kill or injure civilians constitutes a war crime.

From US to The Netherlands: Countries sending weapons to Ukraine amid Russian invasion

Russia-Ukraine war news updates: From the US to The Netherlands, several countries have decided to supply weapons to Ukraine after it was invaded by Russia

(News Agencies) While Ukrainian forces are putting up real resistance in the face of the Russian advance, the Western countries have stepped up arms deliveries to Ukraine after its invasion. However, Ukraine says it needs more in order to resist Russia's bigger and better-equipped army.

Here are the countries which have given or have promised to provide military equipment to the war-torn nation in a major shift of policy.

GERMANY

Among those sending military aid is Germany, which has, in a major policy shift, decided to send weapons like anti-tank missiles and air defence guns to Ukraine along with other nations to boost Ukraine's capabilities to take on a superior Russia. Germany has also decided to send 14 armoured vehicles to the war-torn country. After facing criticism for refusing to send weapons to Kyiv, unlike other Western allies, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Berlin will supply Ukraine with 1,000 anti-tank weapons and 500 Stinger surface-to-air missiles from Bundeswehr stocks.

Berlin also approved the delivery of 400 RPGs from the Netherlands and a request by Estonia to pass on old GDR howitzers to Ukraine. Finland had bought the howitzers in the 90s after the fall of the Berlin wall, and later re-sold them to Estonia.

Germany has a long-standing policy of not exporting weapons to war zones, rooted partly in its bloody 20th-century history and resulting pacifism. Countries aiming to pass on German weapons exports need to apply for approval in Berlin first.

Germany has also decided to send 14 armoured vehicles to the war-torn country.

UNITED STATES

President Joe Biden instructed the US State Department to release up to an additional \$350 million worth of weapons from US stocks to Ukraine. In a memorandum to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Biden directed that \$350 million allocated through the Foreign Assistance Act be designated for Ukraine's defense. Ukraine has



been asking for Javelin anti-tank weapons and Stinger missiles to shoot down aircraft. The Javelin is one of the advanced portable anti-tank missiles in the world with a new tested range of five kilometers that is potent against tanks and armored personnel carriers that transport ground troops close to the areas of assault.

The Stinger missile is a lightweight, shoulder launched air defense system that can be rapidly deployed by ground troops. It has been used in major conflicts and is used extensively by US forces and at least 19 other countries. Its supersonic speed, agility and a highly accurate guidance and control system give the weapon an operational edge against cruise missiles and all classes of aircraft.

UNITED KINGDOM, EUROPEAN UNION

The United Kingdom has already sent anti-tank weapons to the Ukrainian military to help counter Russian forces. Last month, the bulk of Britain's C-17 transport aircraft fleet was involved in carrying thousands of NLAW anti-armour systems from Britain to Ukraine. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said that the country will send additional lethal 'defensive weapons' to the war-hit country in the coming days, TASS news agency reported. In mid-January, the UK government sent about 2,000 anti-tank missiles to Ukraine. Also, 30 military instructors arrived in the republic to train the Ukrainian military personnel to operate the

missile systems that had been delivered. Even European Union countries have agreed to provide fighter jets to Ukraine, it said in a tweet.

FINLAND

Another country to send weapons and ammunition to Ukraine in a shift of policy is Finland, Prime Minister Sanna Marin said on Monday. The shipment will include 2,500 assault rifles, 150,000 bullets, 1,500 anti-tank weapons and 70,000 food packages, Defence Minister Antti Kaikkonen added. The decision means a shift in policy for Finland, which has maintained an image of a non-aligned country since the Soviet Union in 1956 gave up a naval base it had leased in southern Finland after World War II. The Nordic state on Sunday also decided it would supply Ukraine with helmets, bulletproof vests and first aid equipment and gave Estonia permission to donate Ukraine field guns previously owned by Finland.

FRANCE, BELGIUM, GREECE

France has decided to send defensive military equipment to Ukraine to support the country against Russia's invasion, a French army spokesman said last week, adding that the issue of sending offensive arms was still under consideration. Belgium has also pledged to send 2,000 machine guns and 3,800 tons of fuel. Meanwhile, Greece will be sending defence supplies to Ukraine in response to a request from the Ukrainian government. Two C-130 military transport planes will carry the supplies to

Poland in a show of solidarity with the Ukrainian people, it said. It will then be transported across the border to Ukraine.

NORWAY

The Norwegian government will also send weapons to Ukraine, it said in a statement on Monday, the latest European nation to do so following Russia's invasion. The decision overturns a Norwegian policy in place since the 1950s of not sending arms to non-NATO countries that are at war or at risk of armed conflict. Norway will donate up to 2,000 M72 anti-tank weapons, the government said in a statement. On Sunday, Norway announced it would pull its sovereign wealth fund, the world's largest, out of Russia and promised to send helmets, bullet-proof vests and other equipment to Ukraine.

THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands will also supply air defence rockets and anti-tank systems to Ukraine, the Dutch government said in letters to parliament last week. The Dutch agreed to a Ukrainian request to rapidly ship 200 Stinger air defence rockets and 50 "Panzerfaust 3" anti-tank weapons with 400 rockets, the

letters said.

Foreign volunteers rushing to join Ukraine in fighting Russian forces Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday urged foreigners to head to Ukrainian embassies worldwide to sign up for an "international brigade" of volunteers to help fight invading Russian forces.

"All foreigners wishing to join the resistance against the Russian occupiers and protect global security are invited by the Ukrainian leadership to come to our state and join the ranks of the territorial defense forces," Zelensky said in a statement on the presidential website.

Latvia's parliament voted unanimously on Monday to allow its nationals to fight in Ukraine if willing, the parliament said in a statement.

"Our citizens who want to support Ukraine and volunteer to serve there to defend Ukraine's independence and our common security must be able to do so," said Juris Rancanis, chairman of the parliamentary defence, home affairs and corruption prevention commission, which drafted the law.

Canadians and Americans said that the Ukrainian resistance was inspiring them, despite both their countries refusing to send troops there out of concern of provoking a war. Many fear their democratic rights in the home and Europe will be under threat if they fail to act. Denmark will also let its nationals join international brigades forming to fight in Ukraine against Russian forces, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said Sunday. "It's a choice that anyone can make. This goes for all Ukrainians who live here, but also for others who think they can contribute directly to the conflict," she said in a press conference Sunday.



Why has Sri Lanka imposed its longest power cuts in 26 years?

The Public Utilities Commission is now seeking assistance from the government to pay for three ships of fuel that arrived at the port last week. According to data provided by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka on February 28, its foreign reserves dropped by 24.8 per cent to \$2.36 billion in January 2022. This puts Sri Lanka in a precarious position as it has debt totalling over \$7 billion

to be paid in 2022.

The economy's condition has raised fears that Sri Lanka might default on its loan and would have to look to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for assistance — a move rejected by the government so far.

In fact, a Bloomberg report stated that Sri Lanka saw the fastest inflation in Asia in February, with consumer prices rising by 15.1

per cent from the previous year. The Russian-Ukraine war can also worsen Sri Lanka's economy as Russia is one of its largest importers of tea, while arrivals from the warring nations form a major chunk of its tourists. With the ongoing crisis and depreciated Ruble, declining imports and tourism from the region have hit Sri Lanka hard.

How has India helped?

Sri Lanka is relying on credit lines and currency swaps with its neighbouring countries such as India, China and Bangladesh for food and medicines and building up its foreign reserves.

India in February had sent 40,000 tonnes of fuel to the country to help allay its crisis. In January, India signed off on a \$400-million credit swap facility and deferred an Asian Clearing House

settlement of \$515.2 million.

On February 2, India had extended a line of credit of \$500 million to Sri Lanka to buy petroleum products. "The Government of India (GOI) support for fuel imports by Sri Lanka from India, through the LOC of USD 500 million is in response to GOSL's urgent requirement. This critical support comes in the wake of a virtual meeting between the External Affairs Minister of India and the Hon'ble Minister of Finance, H.E. Mr. Basil Rajapaksa on January 15, 2022, during which they discussed a range of issues," the High Commission of India in Sri Lanka had stated in its press release. Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa will also be visiting India to formalise an economic relief package for the country. He had earlier visited India in December 2021 to discuss Sri Lanka's economic crisis.

Priceless art, medieval monuments, world heritage sites: what's at risk of destruction in Ukraine

including Russian and Ukrainian "orthodox icons" dating to the 16th century — artists such as Ivan Aivazovsky, Mykhailo Vrubel, Valentyn Sierov, Mykola Reryh, Zinaida Serebriakova, Kostiantyn Somov, and Vasyl Kandynskyi. The country also has seven world heritage sites, including St Sophia Cathedral, one of Kyiv's most recognised landmarks, which was founded by the Kyivan Rus' in the 12th century, and Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, or Kyiv Monastery of the Caves, an Eastern Orthodox Christian monastery that was founded in 1051. The old quarter of the western city of Lviv, located about 70 km from the border with Poland, is also a world heritage site. The eastern city of Kharkiv, under heavy attack by Russian forces, is home to a number of museums, cathedrals, and historic neighbourhoods.

Has something been lost already?

The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted on Twitter on February 28 that the Ivankiv Historical and Local History Museum, located on the northern edge of Kyiv, has been burned to the ground in the Russian assault. The museum housed among other works, 25 paintings of the celebrated Ukrainian artist Maria Prymachenko, known for her rhythmical strokes largely inspired by folk stories and fairy tales. The great Spanish master Pablo Picasso was captivated by Prymachenko's talent: "I bow down before the artistic miracle of this brilliant Ukrainian." Her work has been exhibited in countries across the world, and some appeared on Ukrainian stamps of the 1970s. UNESCO had declared 2009 as the year of Prymachenko.

What is being done to save Ukraine's cultural heritage from destruction?

The National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War, overlooking the Dnipro

river on the southern outskirts of Kyiv, is reported to have moved important items in its collection to the basement of the building. In a statement, the global arts organisation Getty quoted Fedir Androshchuk, director of the museum as saying he was attempting, along with two colleagues, to protect the museum from attack or looting. "The museum is located in the middle of a rich cultural heritage area near three fine churches, but also close to some possible targets (the Ukrainian security service and border forces)," Androshchuk wrote in an email to a Swedish academic, according to a report in The Guardian. In his email, Androshchuk said museums in Vinnytsia in west-central Ukraine, Zhytomyr in the northwest, Sumy in the northeast, and Chernihiv in the north had "managed to take down and protect their main exhibitions", The Guardian said. "In Vinnytsia, the museum building is now partly used for internally displaced people. So far I have not heard that any of the aforementioned museums has been subject to looting or attack," the report quoted Androshchuk as having written in the email.

What has been the global response so far?

Ukrainian scholars have spoken of an "unfolding cultural catastrophe" in the country, and Ukraine's Minister of Culture and Information Policy Oleksandr Tkachenko has appealed to UNESCO to deprive Russia of the status of a UNESCO member, and to take away the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee in June from Kazan.

The Getty Trust statement condemned the "cultural atrocities" being committed in Ukraine. "At risk in Ukraine are millions of artworks and monuments, including monuments representing centuries of history from the Byzantine to the Baroque periods, as well as UNESCO World

Heritage sites," it said. The United States National Committee of the International Council of Museums has said, "The current conflict has taken lives, displaced tens of thousands of residents, and destabilized the international order. That it also seeks to destroy — recklessly and intentionally —

the heritage, institutions, and access to history of a great nation and palimpsest of past cultures abrogates the reasonable expectations of civil society and the treaty obligations of which the United States, Russia, and Ukraine are all signatories."

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Putin's Aggressive Nationalism Has Run Into A Problem

As we try to stay abreast of the misery wrought hour upon hour by the invasion of Ukraine, our minds are invaded by frightening questions on what a proud, frustrated, and desperate ruler of a nation with fearsome weapons might be tempted to do. But anxiety is not the sole message. The world has seen the war's evidence that times come when the world's mighty ones, the seemingly unchallengeable ones, also quake. There's also a message about relations with neighbours. This war reminds me of a line I first came across more than six decades ago, which went something like this: "A nation's finest defence is the respect and gratitude of its neighbours." Even Russians who ardently admired Putin have surely asked themselves if invading Ukraine was the best way of earning Ukrainian goodwill. Or global goodwill. Or the goodwill of the people of Belarus

(immediate neighbour to both Russia and Ukraine), whose prolonged restiveness vis-à-vis their authoritarian ruler may have been doubled by the use of their land for the invasion of Ukraine.

The unprecedented unity with which Europe has opposed the invasion is another remarkable aspect of this developing story. Countries like Switzerland, Sweden and Finland that have prized neutrality or non-alignment for decades, if not centuries, have put their weight behind Ukraine and against Russia. The ethnonationalist and anti-democratic pulls that have marked Europe in recent years seem to have taken a hit.

As for the Ukrainians, will they ever forget the destruction of loved ones? Of buildings and landmarks next to which they have spent their entire lives? Will they ever forget the trauma suddenly forced on tens of thousands of families,

with children, women and the elderly, compelled to flee to lands across the border while the men stay put to fight the invaders?

Interviewed by Nirupama Subramanian for The Indian Express, a Moscow-based analyst of international relations, Alexey Kupriyanov, said Indians should understand that just as they would like a cooperative Pakistan next door, Russia desires a dependable Ukraine. "I am sorry for this analogy," said Kupriyanov, "but for us, Ukraine is the same as Pakistan for India."

Even if that were true, are there many Indians who think that invading Pakistan, and trying forcibly to replace its current government with one that is pro-Delhi, is the way to make Pakistan dependable? The long-term hazards of belligerent nationalism, and of the authoritarianism that invariably accompanies it, are among the things

underscored by the tragedy in Ukraine. As also the fighting spirit that love of country and love of democracy seem to nurture. At a different level, the Ukraine story invites the world's attention to the diversity that exists in almost every nation. Ukraine's ethnic diversity seemed to be one of Putin's excuses for the invasion, but how many of our world's nations, Russia included, are homogeneous in language, religion, or race?

The fact that a number of Ukrainians speak Russian (in many cases as their first language), does not mean that they want Moscow to rule over them or detach them from their Ukrainian-speaking neighbours. Nationhood does not demand homogeneity or uniformity. Nor does it require authoritarian or imperial rule by a big neighbour. These too are messages that Ukraine's horrific drama is sending.

Standing with the people during crisis

On February 20, the Indian embassy issued a strong advisory with the anticipation that the situation might worsen soon. The Indian government was quick to respond to the evolving situation in Ukraine. The air bubble limit was increased and under this, special flights were started. Under the air bubble, three flights landed between February 20 and 23, a day before the conflict started. By then, 4,000 Indians were back home.

Now the focus is on the safe return of all the remaining Indians. PM Modi has already made it very clear in the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting that his government's top priority is the safe return of every Indian at any cost. To ensure the safe and speedy return of Indians, particularly students, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke to the foreign ministers of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania, who agreed to help in the evacuation. Within the next few days, the remaining Indians are expected to return home safe.

The swift response and meticulous planning by the PM in times of crisis have once again proven that the adage "cometh the hour, cometh the man" holds very true for Modi. Under his leadership, India has

accomplished some of the most difficult evacuation exercises in Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria, besides the Vande Bharat Mission, which was launched at a global scale to bring back Indians who were stranded abroad as the Covid pandemic shook the entire world.

In August last year, when foreign troops withdrew from Afghanistan, a humanitarian crisis of massive proportions unfolded in the country. As countries struggled for the safe return of their nationals, the Modi government launched "Operation Devi Shakti", which was jointly carried out by our armed forces and the MEA. Around 700 people, including 450 Indians and 250 Afghans and some other nationals were evacuated. The world also saw how India brought back with full honour and respect the "Swaroops" of the Guru Granth Sahib (considered the "living guru") and some ancient Hindu manuscripts.

Similarly, in early 2020, India kickstarted one of the world's largest air-lift exercises under the Vande Bharat Mission covering 100 nations. A total of over 88,000 flights brought back around 70 lakh Indians stranded abroad due to the global lockdown, following the

coronavirus outbreak. Then there are other extraordinary rescue missions carried out successfully. Who can forget the Operation Sankat Mochan in 2014 when 46 Indian nurses were rescued from the clutches of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in war-ravaged Iraq or Operation Raahat of April 2015 when the Indian Navy and Air Force rescued over 4,600 Indians and over 950 nationals of 41 countries from Yemen during the military intervention by Saudi Arabia and its allies. Then, in March 2016, following the serial bombings in Brussels airport and metro in Belgium, 250 Indians were evacuated.

Rescue missions under crises and critical situations require exemplary diplomatic skills, impeccable planning, and effective implementation. India has proven time and again its capability in carrying out rescue operations overseas. When it comes to saving and securing the lives of Indians, PM Modi has always shown remarkable compassion and empathy and has always felt the pain and suffering of the people. This is why we see such urgency from him when it comes to dealing with crises and emergency situations.

'Earth's only chance in catastrophe'

but counting upon being 'lucky' is a poor strategy in the longer term," said Professor Philip Lubin from the University of California Santa Barbara.

The experiment will be conducted on Trojan asteroids that can be wanderers in the solar system or material left over from their home planet's formation. They become ensnared by the planetary gravitational grip and subsequently orbit the sun along the same path as that planet.

In short intercept scenarios, the asteroid fragments of maximum ~10-meter [about 33 ft] diameter allow the Earth's atmosphere to act as a 'beam dump' where the fragments either burn up in the atmosphere or air burst, with the primary channel of energy going into spatially and

temporally de-correlated shock waves," Lubin said.

"The effectiveness of the approach depends on the time to intercept and size of the asteroid, but allows for effective defense against asteroids in the multi-hundred-meter diameter class and could virtually eliminate the threat of mass destruction caused by these threats," Lubin explains.

"Compared to other threat reduction scenarios, this approach represents an extremely cost-effective, testable, and deployable approach with a logical roadmap of development and testing. Pre-deployment of the system into orbit or a lunar base allows for rapid response on the order of less than a day if needed," Lubin said.

"The great advantage of this

approach is that it allows for terminal defense in the event of short warning times and target distance mitigation where orbital deflection is not feasible," said Lubin.

"Even intercepts as close as the Moon with intercept times of a few hours prior to impact are viable." The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has also launched a test mission DART spacecraft that they hope will alter an asteroid's trajectory with sheer kinetic force, plowing into it at high speed to nudge the space boulder off course just enough to keep our planet out of harm's way.

The asteroid that DART is aiming for poses no actual threat and is tiny compared with the cataclysmic Chicxulub asteroid that struck Earth some 66 million years ago, leading

to extinction of the dinosaurs. But scientists say smaller asteroids are far more common and of greater theoretical concern in the near term. DART's target is an asteroid "moonlet" the size of a football stadium that orbits a chunk of rock five times larger in a binary asteroid system named Didymos, the Greek word for twin.

The team behind DART, short for Double Asteroid Redirection Test, chose the Didymos system because its relative proximity to Earth and dual-asteroid configuration make it ideal for observing the results of the impact. The plan is to fly the DART spacecraft directly into the moonlet, called Dimorphos, at 15,000 miles per hour (24,000 kph), bumping it hard enough to shift its orbital track around the larger asteroid.

Putin's war to bring Ukraine to heel unites Eastern Europe in alarm

Scattered around the forest in Poland like archaeological ruins, the crumbling concrete bunkers for decades stored Soviet nuclear warheads. Today, they store only memories — deeply painful for Poland, joyous for the Kremlin — of the vanished empire that President Vladimir Putin wants to rebuild, starting with his war in Ukraine.

"Nobody here trusted the Russians before and we certainly don't trust them now," said Mieczyslaw Zuk, a former Polish soldier who oversees the once top-secret nuclear site. The bunkers were abandoned by the Soviet military in 1990 as Moscow's hegemony over East and Central Europe unraveled in what Putin has described as "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."

Now Eastern European countries fear a catastrophe of their own could be in the making, as Putin seeks to turn back the clock and reclaim Russia's lost sphere of influence, perilously close to their frontiers. Even leaders in the region who have long supported Putin are sounding the alarm.

Warnings about Moscow's intentions, often dismissed until the Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine as "Russophobia" by those without the experience of living in proximity to Russia, are now widely accepted as prescient. And while there has been debate about whether efforts to expand NATO into the former Soviet bloc were a provocation to Putin, his assault on Ukraine has left countries that joined the U.S.-led military alliance convinced they made the right decision.

A Russian attack on Poland or other former members of the defunct Warsaw Pact that now belong to NATO is still highly unlikely, but Putin has "made the unthinkable possible," warned Gabrielus Landsbergis, the foreign minister of Lithuania, Poland's neighbor to the north.

"We live in a new reality. If Putin is not stopped he will go further," Landsbergis said. His country, bordering both Russia and its ally Belarus, has declared a state of emergency. Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki of Poland gave his own warning of perhaps worse to come. "We should be under no illusions: This could be just the beginning," he wrote in the Financial Times. "Tomorrow Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, as well as Poland, could be next in line."

Fear that Putin is capable of just about anything, even using nuclear weapons, is just "common sense," said Toomas Ilves, a former president of Estonia.

Ilves announced this week on Twitter that he was "accepting apologies" for all the "patronizing nonsense from Western Europeans" who complained that "we Estonians were paranoid about Russian behavior."

In a telephone interview, Ilves said he had not received any apologies yet but was gratified to see Russia's "shills and useful idiots getting their comeuppance."

Western Europeans who once scoffed at his dark view of Russia, he added, "have suddenly become East Europeans" in their fearful attitudes. "This past week marks the end of a 30-year-long error that we can all come together and sing kumbaya."

Memories of Soviet hegemony over what is now NATO's eastern flank — imposed after the Red Army liberated the region from Nazi occupation at the end of World War II — vary

from country to country depending on history, geography and convoluted domestic political struggles.

For Poland, a nation repeatedly invaded by Russia over the centuries, they are of humiliation and oppression. Baltic states, extinguished as independent nations by Stalin in 1940 and dragooned at gunpoint into the Soviet Union, feel much the same way. Others have fonder recollections, particularly Bulgaria, where pro-Russian sentiment has long run deep, at least until last week, and Serbia, which has for centuries seen Russia as its protector.

Putin's war to bring Ukraine to heel, however, has united the region in alarm, with even Serbia voicing dismay. On Monday, Bulgaria's prime minister fired his defense minister, who caused outrage by suggesting that the conflict in Ukraine should not be called a war but "a special military operation," the Kremlin's euphemism for its invasion.

Only Milorad Dodik, the belligerent, pro-Kremlin leader of Bosnia's ethnic Serbian enclave, Republika Srpska, has shown any sympathy for Putin's war, stating that Russia's reasons for its invasion "were received with understanding."

Outrage over Russian aggression, even in countries historically sympathetic to Moscow, has derailed years of work by Russian diplomats and intelligence operatives to cultivate allies like Ataka, an ultranationalist political party in Bulgaria that is so close to Russia that it once launched its election campaign in Moscow.

Even Hungary Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who usually delights in defying fellow European leaders and stood with Putin last month in the Kremlin, has now endorsed a raft of sanctions imposed on Russia by the European bloc. He is still blocking transport of weapons into Ukraine across Hungary's border but has curbed his previously gushing enthusiasm for Putin.

So, too, has Milos Zeman, the previously Kremlin-friendly president of the Czech Republic. "I admit I was wrong," Zeman said this week.

In Poland, traditionally one of the most anti-Russian countries in the region, the populist governing party, Law and Justice, has gone almost overnight from aligning itself with Moscow in its hostility to LGBTQ rights and the defense of traditional values to becoming one of Putin's most robust critics, offering its territory for the delivery of weapons into Ukraine and taking in more than 450,000 Ukrainians who have fled the war.

Gas stations and ATMs in southeastern Poland along the border with Ukraine have been besieged in recent days by people worried that they might need to get out fast. That possibility hit home Monday evening when missiles slammed into a Ukrainian village just a few miles from the frontier, rattling windows in nearby houses on the Polish side. Just two weeks before Russian troops poured into Ukraine, Poland's prime minister joined Orban and Marine Le Pen, the far-right French presidential candidate who has frequently spoken up for Russia, at a meeting in Madrid

focused on attacking the European Union and its liberal attitudes on immigration.

In recent days, however, Morawiecki has dropped the hostility to the European bloc to focus instead on opposing the Kremlin. He has lobbied for tough sanctions on Russia, traveling to Berlin to personally "shake Germany's conscience" and nudge it toward a dramatic U-turn in its policy toward Russia. On a recent visit to Warsaw, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin hailed Poland as "one

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of our most stalwart allies." On Friday, Poland hosted a summit meeting with nine regional leaders to rally opposition to Russia's invasion and discuss ways to help Ukraine. "We have woken up to a completely new reality," Polish President Andrzej Duda told the gathering, lamenting that it had taken a Russian invasion to interrupt "the peaceful sleep of wealthy Europeans." A nation of Slavs like Ukraine, Poland has long been viewed as a wayward family member by more messianic-minded Russian nationalists, whose views Putin channeled last week in his justification for the war. Russia's foreign minister recently sneered at Poland and other new NATO members as "territories orphaned" by the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union.

To demonstrate that Poland has no

desire to rejoin what Moscow imagines as its happy, obedient but sadly divided family, the mayor of Warsaw announced Tuesday that refugees from Ukraine would be housed in apartment blocks built during the Cold War to house Soviet diplomats and left abandoned since because of legal disputes over ownership. Few people expect Russia to try to bring Poles back into a Moscow-dominated Slavic "family" by force, as it is now trying to do with Ukrainians. Doing that, said Tomasz Smura, director of research at the Casimir Pulaski Foundation, a research group in Warsaw, "would mean that Putin has gone totally mad."

At the former Soviet warhead bunker in Podborsko, northwestern Poland, Zuk said he never really expected the Russians to try to retake their lost, Soviet-era military outposts. But he still wondered why, just before pulling out of Podobsko with its nuclear weapons, the Soviet military drew up a maintenance schedule for cranes used to lift warheads and other equipment at the facility stretching years into the future.

"It seems they did not think they were leaving forever," Zuk said, standing in a cavernous underground hall once crammed with warheads and long off limits to all but Soviet officers. In its attitude toward Poland, he added, Russia has always acted "like a master toward a servant," a relationship that it is now trying to impose on Ukraine. "I worry that Putin may want to get hold of Poland and the Baltic states, too," he said.



FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

BHADRESHKUMAR CHETANBHAI PATEL

Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution - First Degree Murder, Second Degree Murder, First Degree Assault, Second Degree Assault, Dangerous Weapon with Intent to Injure






Photograph taken April 2015

DESCRIPTION	
Alias: Bhadreshkumar C. Patel	
Date(s) of Birth Used: May 15, 1990	Place of Birth: Kantrodi Ta Viramgam, Gujarat, India
Hair: Brown	Eyes: Brown
Height: 5'9"	Weight: 165 pounds
Sex: Male	Occupation: Employee of donut shop
Nationality: Indian	

REWARD

The FBI is offering a reward of up to \$100,000 for information leading to the arrest of Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel.

REMARKS

Patel was last known to be in the Newark, New Jersey, area.

CAUTION

Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel is wanted for allegedly killing his wife by striking her multiple times with an object while they were both working at a donut shop in Hanover, Maryland, on April 12, 2015. A local arrest warrant was issued in the District Court of Maryland for Anne Arundel County on April 13, 2015, and Patel was charged with first degree murder, second degree murder, first degree assault, second degree assault, and dangerous weapon with intent to injure. A federal arrest warrant was issued in the United States District Court, District of Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland, on April 20, 2015, after Patel was charged with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution.

SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ARMED AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS

If you have any information concerning this person, please contact your local FBI office or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.

Field Office: Baltimore

Europe is making once-unimaginable decisions to counter Putin's aggression

The shock of war returning to the continent has unified the EU's 27 member states, as the bloc approved not only the strongest package of sanctions it has ever imposed, but also agreed to buy and supply weapons to the Ukrainians.

Historically, the bloc has been divided over exactly how much central control Brussels should have over foreign policy. This has stood in the way of the EU's lofty global ambitions, as policy proposals were watered down in negotiations or simply vetoed. And according to research by the UK House of Parliament, the vast majority of EU member states that are also members of NATO have not hit their 2% defense spending target for well over a decade.

"The crisis in Ukraine has shattered the illusion that security and stability in Europe comes for free," one senior European diplomat told CNN. "When there was no real threat, geopolitics seemed remote. Now there is a war on our border. Now we know we have to pay up and act together."

It isn't just Putin's aggression that has woken Europe from its slumber. The diplomat explained that in conversations with counterparts, officials had taken note of the lead that US President Joe Biden has taken in coordinating the West's response. "A big fear in European capitals:

what would have happened if Biden wasn't in the White House at the moment? No one seriously believes that Trump would have handled this well and we may have him or someone like him back in a couple of years. Effectively, that means we have to assume we are alone," the diplomat added.

Perhaps the most significant and symbolic shift in the past few days came from Germany. The EU's wealthiest and arguably most powerful member state announced it will more than double its defense spending, with its 2022 military budget expected to stand at \$100 billion.

Not long ago, most German politicians -- and a number of politicians across Europe -- were uncomfortable with the idea of the country having a large military presence for obvious historical reasons.

Again, the situation in Ukraine has changed everything.

"Based on the conversations of the last few days, most European leaders now seem comfortable with a massive German army if its anchored firmly within the EU," the diplomat says, pointing out that only a few months ago even putting the words EU and army in the same sentence would spark outrage in most of Europe's capitals. A cynic might think that Europe's unity and decisiveness has only come about because of a unique crisis and once-in-a-

generation threat to the continent's security. However, multiple European and NATO officials told CNN that there is no outcome in which Europe can simply go back to how things were.

If Ukraine does fall, then a belligerent Russia will have hugely expanded its land border with the European Union.

But were it to hold firm and force Russian troops out, then a wounded and unpredictable Putin sits and broods in the Kremlin. And as former White House adviser on Russia, Fiona Hill, told Politico this week, when asked if she thought Putin would use his nuclear weapons, in her assessment, "Yes, he would."

A senior Brussels official told CNN that even now, its member states are finding Russian influence too close for comfort. "Finland shares a huge land border with Russia. Romanian fleets share the Black Sea with the Russian navy. After months of people saying he wouldn't go into Ukraine, he did. This is a genuinely very scary situation."

The official explained that over the course of the past week, "decisions that would have taken years took a matter of days because Europe has been changed forever. We simply don't have time for inaction and complacency any more."

Another notable shift that has taken place behind the scenes in

Brussels is the attitude of the EU's so-called "neutral nations" (Austria, Ireland, Finland and Sweden). These are countries that consider themselves to be militarily non-allied, even if they are politically allied with the EU and its global allies.

"I think we now understand that making a point of being neutral and not a part of NATO doesn't mean you are safe," a senior EU adviser in foreign affairs told CNN.

One of the main reasons that the Western response, especially in Europe, has been so unusually coordinated is that the EU and NATO have operated unexpectedly well. Officials in both institutions said this is because for the first time that many of them could remember, both institutions stuck to their competences and worked in lockstep.

Firefighters work to contain a fire in the complex of buildings housing the Kharkiv regional SBU security service and the regional police, allegedly hit during recent shelling by Russia, in Kharkiv on March 2, 2022.

Brussels has resisted using the crisis to call for an EU army, something which has led to bitter arguments among the member states historically. Some believed it would undermine NATO and make Europe less safe, while others suspected that those most in favor would use it to drive a particular vision of Europe as a

federal state.

A government official from one of the EU's neutral member states said that most people now accept that there would be no "additional advantage to an EU army. Our strongest weapon is economic sanctions, whereas NATO can do the political and military strategy." They added that the "important thing for now is ensuring that the relationship between the EU and NATO continues to work well" in the following months, calling the combined response to the Ukraine crisis a "blueprint" for the future. Europe's thinking on defense, security and foreign affairs has evolved light years in the matter of a few days. It is now waking up from a decades-long dream that the stability provided by an interconnected world would prevent war breaking out and that, should the worst happen, America would sort it out. There are many painful months ahead, no matter how this crisis ends. And if Europe is to emerge from them stronger and safer, then it needs to build on the progress made in the past few weeks. If it fails to do so and returns to the wishful thinking of the past, then it might find the next crisis to befall the continent cannot be fixed by quickly putting together sanctions and throwing money at a third party as it has with Ukraine. And especially so, if that crisis happens within the bloc's own borders.

US, UK, China Leave Citizens Stranded in Ukraine As India Leads Evacuation Effort

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has left many foreigners stranded in a besieged country. The forces of Ukraine and Russia are engaged in intense fighting in parts of the north, south and east of Ukraine. Meanwhile, thousands of Indian citizens in Ukraine, most of whom are medical students are looking for a way out, while their families in India appeal for their safe evacuation and return to India. The Indian government has committed to the task and most recently, it has sent four ministers to countries neighbouring Ukraine, who are expected to coordinate with Ukrainian authorities and those of neighbouring nations to ensure the return of Indian students. While India's efforts are reminiscent of Operation Raahat in Yemen and the urgency and commitment shown by it is exemplary, other powers like the United States and China have near-about given up on evacuating their citizens from Ukraine and are bluntly stating the same, shedding

their responsibility towards their citizens. After the invasion started, a US advisory said, "The U.S. government will not be able to evacuate U.S. citizens from Ukraine." It has asked its nationals to use commercially or privately-owned transportation to cross the border. The US closed its embassy in Kyiv on the 14th of February and moved a small team to Lviv before relocating to Poland.

China, which did not issue any travel advisories to nearly 6000 Chinese students in Ukraine, has postponed its evacuation plan. On the 24th of February, it asked its citizens leaving Kyiv to display signs of identification such as the Chinese flag, but on the 26th, it redacted its statement and said that the Chinese must refrain from displaying signs of identification.

The UK has relocated its embassy from Kyiv to Lviv, a city just 80 kilometres from the Polish border and stated explicitly that British Nationals should not expect

increased consular support or help with evacuating in these circumstances. "Russia's military action in Ukraine will severely affect the British Government's ability to provide consular assistance in Ukraine." Instead, Britain has asked its nationals to follow the advice of Ukrainian authorities.

Meanwhile, Germany has shut down its embassy in Ukraine and stated that "an evacuation by German authorities is currently not possible." African students from Morocco, Nigeria, Egypt and more, are also stranded and seeking help from their countries.

Compare this with the Indian effort— India's embassy is still functional in Kyiv. Indian authorities have released phone numbers and launched other modes of contact where stranded Indian students can reach out and coordinate with Indian officials. Indian Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi, on Monday, said that out of the nearly

20,000 Indian students, over 1400 have been evacuated so far, while nearly 8000 had heeded the travel advisories and exited the country before the invasion began. India's first travel advisory urging citizens to leave Ukraine was issued on February 15th, nine days before Russia's military advance into the Eastern European country. While it has been difficult to ensure the seamless movement of citizens from the eastern parts of Ukraine to the western borders, Indian officials are coordinating efforts with Ukrainian authorities to run special trains amid intense fighting. At the border, stranded foreigners are facing long waiting periods amid sub-zero temperatures, and the Indian nationals have been advised to not travel directly to the border checkpoints without coordinating with Indian authorities. Once out of Ukraine, however, the Indian students are safely flying back to India, and the flight expenses are being covered by the

Indian government. Reports of racial profiling and violence towards non-white students at the hands of Ukrainian border guards have further made the use of diplomacy important. Four Indian ministers shall press the effort further from neighbouring countries. Jyotiraditya Scindia is tasked with coordinating OpGanga efforts from Romania and Moldova. Kiren Rijiju has been assigned to handle matters through Slovakia. Hardeep Puri will head to Hungary and General VK Singh will be managing the evacuation plan from Poland. Prime Minister Modi, meanwhile, has raised the matter of the safety of Indian students with Russian President Putin and Ukrainian President Zelenskyy.

Two countries are at war and major powers of the world are facing limitations in evacuating their citizens, but it is clear that the Indian government is leaving no stone unturned to bring Operation Ganga to fruition.

Everyday Global: What is the State of the Union Address delivered by the US President?

and assuring the American people that his administration was working for their economic and social wellbeing in the post-pandemic world.

The Address was delivered at what is a politically insecure time for the President, with 70 per cent of Americans in an AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research survey saying the US was headed in the wrong direction. Biden's own approval rating has not crossed 44 per cent in recent days, and a large number of political analysts believe the Democratic Party will lose control of both chambers by comprehensive margins in the midterm elections scheduled for November.

State of the Union: How did the tradition originate?

According to a historical note on the website of the House of Representatives, the formal basis of the State of the Union Address lies in the US Constitution.

According to Article II, Section 3, Clause 1 of the Constitution, the President "shall

from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient".

President George Washington delivered the first of these messages in 1790. From then up to 1946, the address was formally known as the Annual Message. Thereafter, until 1946, it was informally called the "state of the Union" message/address. From President Harry S Truman's message to Congress on January 6, 1947, it has been officially known as the State of the Union Address.

Where is it delivered?

Modern SOTU addresses are delivered in the chamber of the House of Representatives. A House concurrent resolution decides on the day and time for the Joint Session of Congress to listen to the President. Until 1934, the Annual Message was delivered in December; since then, the Annual Message/SOTU has been

delivered in January or February.

Biden's SOTU address, his first, was the 98th in-person Address/Annual Message in US history. Franklin D Roosevelt's 1945 address was read to a Joint Session of Congress — since the President did not deliver it himself, it is not counted as an in-person address.

What does the address contain?

Annual Messages by earlier Presidents included agency budget requests and general reports on the health of the US economy. Subsequently, as Congress required more in-depth reports on these aspects, separate from the Annual Message, the Budget Message was instituted by a 1921 law, and the Economic Report by an Act of 1946.

The practice of speaking to Congress in person was revived by Woodrow Wilson in 1913, after a gap of 113 years. Ever since, SOTU has served as a platform for the President to rally support for his agenda.

How has the address changed over time?

Calvin Coolidge's 1923 SOTU address was the first to be broadcast on radio, Truman's 1947 address was the first one to be televised, and George W Bush's 2002 address was the first that was webcast live. All these developments have allowed Presidents to speak directly to more and more Americans every year.

The longest written address has been by Jimmy Carter (33,667 words) in 1981; the longest spoken address by Bill Clinton (9,190 words) in 1995. The first address, by George Washington in 1790, was the shortest at only 1,089 words.

In the 19th century, the average address was about 10,000 words long; from the late 20th century, it has been about 5,000 words.

FDR gave 12 Messages/Addresses, the most in US history, 10 of which were in person. Zachary Taylor delivered only one address, and William Henry Harrison and James A Garfield, none.

Putin's War to Bring Ukraine to Heel Unites Eastern Europe in Alarm



PODOBORSKO, Poland — Scattered around the forest in Poland like archaeological ruins, the crumbling concrete bunkers for decades stored Soviet nuclear warheads. Today, they store only memories — deeply painful for Poland, joyous for the Kremlin — of the vanished empire that President Vladimir V. Putin wants to rebuild, starting with his war in Ukraine.

"Nobody here trusted the Russians before and we certainly don't trust them now," said Mieczyslaw Zuk, a former Polish soldier who oversees the once top-secret nuclear site. The bunkers were abandoned by the Soviet military in 1990 as Moscow's hegemony over East and Central Europe unraveled in what President Putin has described as "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."

Now Eastern European countries fear a catastrophe of their own could be in the making, as Mr.

Putin seeks to turn back the clock and reclaim Russia's lost sphere of influence, perilously close to their frontiers. Even leaders in the region who have long supported Mr. Putin are sounding the alarm.

Warnings about Moscow's intentions, often dismissed until last Thursday's invasion of Ukraine as "Russophobia" by those without experience of living in proximity to Russia, are now widely accepted as prescient. And while there has been debate about whether efforts to expand NATO into the former Soviet bloc were a provocation to Mr. Putin, his assault on Ukraine has left countries that joined the American-led military alliance convinced they made the right decision. A Russian attack on Poland or other former members of the defunct Warsaw Pact that now belong to NATO is still highly unlikely but Mr. Putin has "made the unthinkable possible," warned Gabrielius Landsbergis, the

foreign minister of Lithuania, Poland's neighbor to the north. "We live in a new reality. If Putin is not stopped he will go further," Mr. Landsbergis said in an interview. His country, bordering both Russia and its ally Belarus, has declared a state of emergency.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki of Poland gave his own warning of perhaps worse to come. "We should be under no illusions: this could be just the beginning," he wrote in the Financial Times. "Tomorrow Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, as well as Poland, could be next in line." Fear that Mr. Putin is capable of just about anything, even using nuclear weapons, is just "common sense," said Toomas Ilves, a former president of Estonia. Mr. Ilves announced this week on Twitter that he was

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At New York's first 'NFT ATM', buying digital art is as easy as buying candy



Digital art collecting platform candy bars. But there's a Neon has created the world's twist. When you buy this first non-fungible token digital art, you don't know what you're going to get. Located in a small storefront in Lower

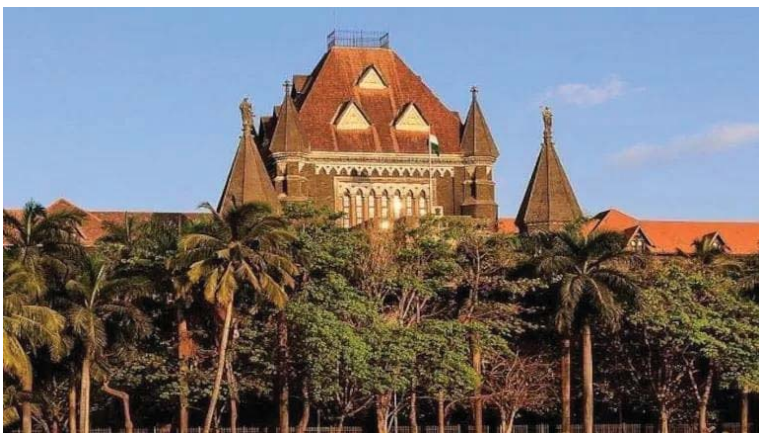
Manhattan's financial district with a sign outside reading "NFT ATM," the machine looks like a traditional vending machine but offers QR codes on slips placed in small paper boxes. Pricing ranges between \$5.99 and \$420.69. After scanning the QR code, the new piece of art can be viewed on any smartphone, laptop, or tablet. "It's the crypto curious, the people who tried to buy cryptocurrency or they were interested in buying an NFT, but they just hit too many barriers," Neon CEO Kyle Zappitell said

in an interview with Reuters, of the vending machine's target customer. The QR codes at the Lower Manhattan site lead to two categories of digital art pieces. Either a picture of a pigeon or a colour. Zappitell sees the element of mystery as a natural extension of the digital art space. "As a NFT collector, over time, one of the things you love is the randomness of, 'Which one are you going to get?'" he said. "So that's one of the exciting aspects." In the vending machine, art pieces are sold using the Solana

blockchain, which ensures carbon-neutral transactions. While digital art is mostly sold via cryptocurrency, the Neon vending machine accepts fiat currency - you can pay with a credit card. Beginning with \$3 million in seed money, Neon plans to install vending machines at malls and other public places. "That's one of the really powerful messages of this, is how it's using this old world technology to enable the adoption of new world technology," said Zappitell.

Inclined to dismiss Sachin Vaze's plea against judicial panel order, says Bombay High Court

The Bombay High Court said it was inclined to dismiss a petition filed by former Mumbai cop Sachin Vaze challenging two orders of the panel set up to probe into the corruption allegations against Anil Deshmukh



Naik, did not have it.

The court was of the view that this was deliberately being done and said that they would dismiss the petition with strictures. They gave the option to Vaze's legal team to withdraw the petition. Anturkar, however, sought time to take instructions from Vaze on whether he would prefer to withdraw the plea.

Sachin Vaze is presently in jail since his arrest in the Antilia bomb scare and businessman Mansukh Hiren death case. Following his arrest and transfer of former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh, various allegations of corruption were levelled against Anil Deshmukh by the two cops.

Following this, investigation was launched and Bharambe had authored a report on March 25, 2021.

Anil Deshmukh had presented a copy of this report before the commission and Vaze had sought to call

Bharambe before the commission, claiming that Bharambe's report is prejudicial to his interest. However, the Commission dismissed his application on January 24.

Sachin Vaze and Param Bir Singh's allegation was that Deshmukh had asked Vaze and others to extort Rs 100 crore a month from various businesses in and around Mumbai. While his statement before the Enforcement Directorate reiterated the allegation, before the committee when Vaze stood in the witness box and deposed he stated that neither Deshmukh nor any of his men had asked for the extortion.

However, on February 9, Vaze had made an application seeking to retract his statement with regard to Deshmukh.

According to Vaze's plea before the High Court, he had filed affidavit stating before the Commission stating that he

was under "immense and tremendous pressure due to his arrest" by the Mumbai crime branch. He has alleged that he was "mentally harassed and victimised so as to affect his psyche and his state of mind". In the affidavit, he has further claimed that he was "subjected to severe mental torture and harassment apparently by Deshmukh and it continued even after his resignation".

"Consequently, when the petitioner was put certain questions at the time of his cross examination before the Hon'ble One Member High Level Committee, the petitioner gave incorrect answers," his plea read.

His plea states that he is a "whistleblower" and has been "falsely implicated in a series of criminal cases consequent to political vendetta arising out of the shocking revelations disclosed by him in the public domain through his senior officer."

The Bombay High Court said Milind Bharambe for that it would dismiss a petition filed by dismissed policeman Sachin Vaze challenging two orders of the Chandiwal Committee, which is set up to inquire into the corruption allegations against former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh.

Sachin Vaze's petition challenged the "legality, validity and propriety" of two orders passed by the committee recently. Through one order, the committee had rejected an application filed by Vaze seeking to summon the Joint Commissioner of police (Crime)

examination. Through second order, the committee had refused to permit Vaze to retract his statement against Anil Deshmukh.

During the hearing on Tuesday, the division bench of Justices Gautam Patel and Madhav Jamdar said that they

had gone through the petition and an affidavit mentioned in the index of the petition was not attached to the plea. The bench even asked for the affidavit to be handed across the bar. However, Sachin Vaze's lawyers, Anil Anturkar, Yogesh Naidu and Rounak

Government to meet this week over LIC's IPO launch amid Ukraine-Russia war: Sources

The war between Ukraine and Russia has forced officials to review and prepare a plan for the launch of the initial public offering of Life Insurance Corporation, sources in the Finance Ministry told India Today TV

The government will meet this week to review and prepare a plan of action for the launch of the initial public offering (IPO) of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), sources in the Finance Ministry told India Today TV. The war between Ukraine and Russia has prompted officials to reassess the markets before launching the country's biggest-ever public offering. The Indian government is

closely watching the situation unfolding in Ukraine and any impact it may have on LIC's IPO plan, the sources further said, adding, the government may reschedule the launch keeping in mind the expectations on global investors. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in an interview Hindu BusinessLine, said that the Centre is likely to review the timing of LIC's IPO



launch amid the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. "When I last commented on this matter, the tension was building up. Now there's a full-scale war. Therefore, I need to go back and review the situation," she told the business publication. "Ideally" the

government would like to go ahead with the much awaited mega IPO. However, if global circumstances demand, it won't hesitate to look into it again, she said. The war in Eastern Europe has impacted global stock markets, including the BSE Sensex, NSE Nifty, and

international oil prices. Several experts have cautioned that global inflation levels may go up due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Last week, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi permitted up to 20 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) under automatic route in IPO-bound LIC with the aim of facilitating disinvestment of the country's largest insurer. The LIC's public issue will be the biggest IPO in the history of Indian stock markets. Once listed, LIC's market valuation will be comparable to top companies like RIL and TCS.

India to be hit by fourth Covid wave in June, this is what a study says



After being severely affected by the Omicron variant, cases in India are finally on a downhill. However, as per a recent study by IIT Kanpur, this will not be the case for a long time. A team of scientists from IIT Kanpur have said that India will witness a new Covid wave in June. The peak may start around June 22 and will peak from mid to late August. The study is yet-to-be peer-reviewed. Led by Sabara Parshad Rajeshbhai, Subhra Sankar Dhar and Shalabh of IIT Kanpur's mathematics department, the study is based on the data on Zimbabwe. It has been published as a pre-print in MedRxiv. The scientists have claimed that there is a fair chance that a new variant of this virus may have an intense impact on the findings. The authors of the study wrote, "The data indicates that the fourth wave of Covid-19 in India will arrive after 936 days

from the initial data availability date, which is January 30, 2020. Therefore, the fourth wave starts from June 22, 2022, reaching its peak on August 23, 2022, and ends on October 24, 2022."

"Apart from this fact, the effect of vaccinations — first, second or booster dosage may also play a significant role on the possibility of infection, degree of infection and various issues related to the fourth wave," they further claimed. The researchers also highlighted that many countries have already witnessed the third wave of Covid. Also, a few countries like South Africa and Zimbabwe have started to face the fourth and higher waves of the pandemic. "The third wave of Covid-19 was predicted for India using the data of Zimbabwe, and when the third wave in India is finishing, it is now clear that the forecast was correct," the authors added.

Study: Nostalgia can even shield you from physical pain



Past can be a pain but nostalgia often brings a delightful relief. Everyone likes to think of good ol' days once in a while. And this sure evokes happiness, lifts our mood and sometimes makes us meet life with a renewed vigour. But can nostalgia have real, physiological benefits? A study says yes. The study was made by Chinese Academy of Sciences. In this study, volunteers were given heat stimulus. This heat stimulus could be slightly painful at times. At the same time. They were shown images from their childhood that evokes nostalgia. They were asked to rate the pain they felt from the heat

stimulus. It was observed by the researchers that a strong nostalgia provided some sort of pain relief to the volunteers. This was especially apparent when the level of pain within the ranges decided for the study was low. The relief brought about by nostalgia did not have a profound effect, however, when the pain intensity was higher. Researchers think that this was so because pain of higher intensity took up more cognitive resources of the mind. "The more nostalgic the participants felt, the less pain they perceived," said the research team in its paper as quoted by ScienceAlert.

Manipur registers record 88.63% voter turnout for its first phase elections

Manipur registered a record voter turnout of 88.63 per cent for the first phase of the state legislative Assembly elections



Manipur registered a record voter turnout of 88.63 per cent out of a total of 12.09 lakh registered voters for the first phase of the state legislative Assembly elections for 38 assembly segments, a statement issued by the Chief Electoral Officer said. Female voter turnout at 89.96 per cent outnumbered male turnout recorded at 87.29 pc. Women "displayed more enthusiasm" at the CEO said.

Some 176 wheelchairs were also booked by physically disabled voters using IT applications. This and other measures saw 97 per cent of voters who are 100 years old and above exercising their franchise. Some 247 out of 253 ex-militants voted through postal ballot from 13 designated camps spread in Churachandpur, Pherzawl, Bishnupur and Kangpokpi.

in presence of the election observers and the polling agents and placed under a three-tier security cover, the statement said. Presiding Officers and EVM machines of seventeen polling stations of 55-Tipaimukh constituency were airlifted from Jiribam and will now be opened only on the date of counting in presence of the election agents. Scrutiny of Form-17A and other election related documents has been carried out for all Phase-I and re-poll has been assembly constituencies by the Returning Officer and the Polling Stations.

The CEO acknowledged minor incidents were reported from a few polling stations but on examination found that "none of them actually had any detrimental impact on the poll process and the votes polled are safely stored and secure in the machines." However, stray incidents of damaged EVMs have been reported and re-poll has been recommended for those

Nord Stream 2 owner considering insolvency after US sanctions over Russia invading Ukraine: Report

The owners of the firm that built the Nord Stream 2 pipeline are considering filing for insolvency ahead of the US sanction deadline for other entities to stop dealings with it. The Swiss-based company which built the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany is considering filing for insolvency, two sources familiar with the situation said, as it attempts to settle claims ahead of a US sanction deadline for other entities to stop dealings with it. The United States sanctioned Nord Stream 2 AG last week after Russia recognised two breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine prior to its invasion of the country, which has prompted a wave of economic sanctions by the West. Nord Stream 2 AG, which is registered in Switzerland and owned by Russian state-owned gas giant Gazprom, last year completed the \$11 billion project which was designed to double the capacity to pump gas from Russia to Germany. The two sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the talks about a potential insolvency are confidential, said that Nord Stream 2 AG has been working with a financial adviser on clearing some of its liabilities and could



formally begin insolvency proceedings in a Swiss court as soon as this week. Nord Stream 2 AG did not respond to requests for comment from Reuters. Gazprom declined to comment. The 1,230 km (767 mile) pipeline had not begun commercial operations because it was pending certification in Germany, which last week put this process on hold as a result of the escalating Ukraine crisis. The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control issued an executive order on Feb. 23 authorising "the wind down of transactions involving Nord Stream 2 AG" or "any entity in which Nord Stream 2 AG

owns, directly or indirectly, a 50 percent or greater interest" by March 2.

Gazprom paid half the cost of building Nord Stream 2, with the remainder of the \$11 billion pipeline project financed by British oil and gas major Shell, Austria's OMV, France's Engie and Germany's Uniper and Wintershall DEA. Shell, Engie, and Wintershall DEA did not immediately respond to requests for comment. OMV declined to comment. A spokesperson for Uniper said the company does not currently have any such information when asked about a possible insolvency filing by Nord

Stream 2 AG.

Swiss-registered Nord Stream 2 AG is also terminating the contracts of workers, the sources said. It was unclear if all entities related to Nord Stream 2 AG would be shut down or how Gazprom plans to proceed with the pipeline maintenance. Switzerland's Economy Minister Guy Parmelin said in an interview with Swiss radio service RTS on Monday that all Nord Stream staff, more than 140 employees, who worked for the company in the Swiss city of Zug had been fired. Germany, which gets half its gas from Russia, had backed Nord Stream 2 to diversify energy supplies for Europe, but the project faced opposition within the European Union and from the United States for increasing the region's gas dependence on Russia and allowing Moscow to reduce volumes through Ukraine, for which it has to pay a transit fee. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine last week, several large companies, including oil majors, said they would exit their Russian operations, including Shell, which said it will no longer be involved in Nord Stream 2 among other investments.

Standing with the people during crisis

India has proven time and again its capability in carrying out rescue operations overseas



For India, the Russia-Ukraine war has unfolded a crisis in the form of thousands of stranded citizens, particularly students, who are stuck in the conflict zone. Once again, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is leading from the front to ensure quick evacuation of Indians from the war zone. Immediately after the war broke out, PM Modi wasted no time in putting the Ministry of External Affairs and other ministries in top gear to carry out a multi-pronged evacuation exercise, called Operation Ganga. Within hours, response teams of the MEA and other ministries were in place with top officials coordinating Operation Ganga in New Delhi; and in Kyiv, Lviv, Chernivtsi in Ukraine. To speed up the evacuation process, the MEA also deployed its teams in Warsaw, Shehyni-Medyka and Krakowiec border crossings in Poland, the Zahony/Kipp Tysa border crossing in Hungary, Vysne Nemecke border crossing in the Slovak Republic and Suceava border crossing in Romania.

Thanks to the quick response from PM Modi and his diplomatic skills, within 48 hours, around 1,400 Indians, mostly students, have been flown back from the war zone in six special flights, where the entire cost of the evacuation is being borne by the government. The PM is personally monitoring the entire evacuation exercise, while Cabinet ministers like Piyush Goyal and Jyotiraditya Scindia received students and citizens at the airport. As thousands more await evacuation from the countries neighbouring Ukraine, the Indian government has stepped up its efforts with more flights to join "Operation Ganga" in the next few days. The latest efforts also involve

four senior ministers — Hardeep Puri, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Kiren Rijju and V K Singh—travelling to Ukraine's neighbouring countries to coordinate the evacuation mission and help stranded students and citizens.

As tensions between Russia and Ukraine increased during the past months, the government started collecting information on Indians living in Ukraine in January itself. The Indian embassy in Kyiv established contacts with 19,763 Indians who were living in Ukraine, while the special focus was laid on establishing communication with student contractors.

On February 20, the Indian embassy issued a strong advisory with the anticipation that the situation might worsen soon. The Indian government was quick to respond to the evolving situation in Ukraine. The air bubble limit was increased and under this, special flights were started. Under the air bubble, three flights landed between February 20 and 23, a day before the conflict started. By then, 4,000 Indians were back home.

Now the focus is on the safe return of all the remaining Indians. PM Modi has already made it very clear in the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting that his government's top priority is the safe return of every Indian at any cost. To ensure the safe and speedy return of Indians, particularly students, External Affairs

Minister S Jaishankar spoke to the foreign ministers of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania, who agreed to help in the evacuation. Within the next few days, the remaining Indians are expected to return home safe.

The swift response and meticulous planning by the PM in times of crisis have once again proven that the adage "cometh the hour,

Rescue missions under crises and critical situations require exemplary diplomatic skills, impeccable planning, and effective implementation. India has proven time and again its capability in carrying out rescue operations overseas.

cometh the man" holds very true for Modi. Under his leadership, India has accomplished some of the most difficult evacuation exercises in Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria, besides the Vande Bharat Mission, which was launched at a global scale to bring back Indians who were stranded abroad as the Covid pandemic shook the entire world.

In August last year, when foreign troops withdrew from Afghanistan, a humanitarian crisis of massive proportions unfolded in the country. As countries struggled for the safe return of their nationals, the Modi government launched "Operation Devi Shakti", which was jointly carried out by our armed forces and the MEA. Around 700 people, including 450 Indians and 250 Afghans and some other nationals were evacuated. The world also saw how India brought back with full honour and

respect the "Swaroops" of the Guru Granth Sahib (considered the "living guru") and some ancient Hindu manuscripts. Similarly, in early 2020, India kickstarted one of the world's largest air-lift exercises under the Vande Bharat Mission covering 100 nations. A total of over 88,000 flights brought back around 70 lakh Indians stranded abroad due to the global lockdown, following the coronavirus outbreak. Then there are other extraordinary rescue missions carried out successfully. Who can forget the Operation Sankat Mochan in 2014 when 46 Indian nurses were rescued from the clutches of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in war-ravaged Iraq or Operation Raahat of April 2015 when the Indian Navy and Air Force rescued over 4,600 Indians and over 950 nationals of 41 countries from Yemen during the military intervention by Saudi Arabia and its allies. Then, in March 2016, following the serial bombings in Brussels airport and metro in Belgium, 250 Indians were evacuated.

Rescue missions under crises and critical situations require exemplary diplomatic skills, impeccable planning, and effective implementation. India has proven time and again its capability in carrying out rescue operations overseas. When it comes to saving and securing the lives of Indians, PM Modi has always shown remarkable compassion and empathy and has always felt the pain and suffering of the people. This is why we see such urgency from him when it comes to dealing with crises and emergency situations.

Why the SilverLine Project makes sense for Kerala

It is an energy-efficient and sustainable solution to address transportation shortfall

The SilverLine Project to be built by the government of Kerala will link Thiruvananthapuram in the south to Kasargode in the north. The high-speed train will cover 530 km in four hours at a maximum speed of 200kmph. The project has received its share of criticism, much of it from political quarters, but also some academic sections. For Kerala, with its saturated road network, the building of a fast, environmentally-sustainable high-speed rail link must surely be seen as a sound governance response. Indeed, a study of INDC (Intended Nationally Determined Contribution) plans under the Paris Climate Agreement is instructive in this context. The EU study on mobility notes that HSR is the least-cost emission option among all modes of long-distance transportation. Critics have put forward three principal lines of argument, namely, its alleged adverse environmental impact, financial unviability, and technical unsuitability.

The most compelling environmental issue before us is climate change. Building capacities now to achieve a carbon net-neutral world over the next three to four decades is a core aspect of the national strategy of all nations. In this context, the SilverLine project scores high with respect to India's own climate objective of achieving net-zero emissions by 2070. The impact of HSR is no longer a theoretical expectation. We have more than 60 years of experience in Japan with Shinkansen or "bullet train" (1964), more than 40 years in Europe (France 1981), and more than a decade with the world's largest HSR network (China 2008). Let us recall the driving forces behind Japan's decision to develop the Shinkansen. In the context of the global oil crisis, energy-insecure Japan wanted to develop a public transportation system that was energy-efficient and would also address national concerns with respect to

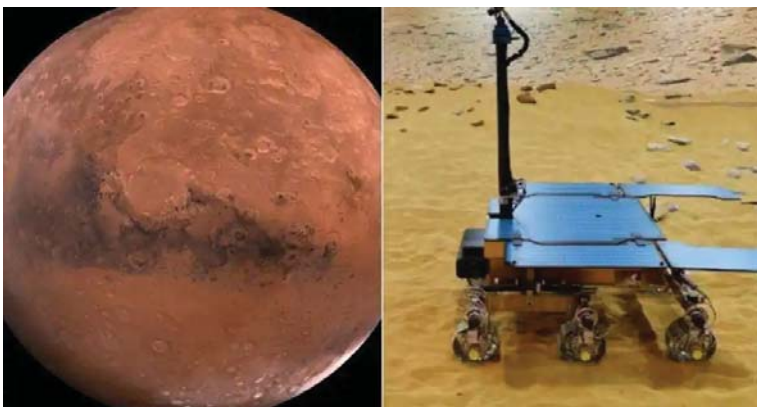
imbalanced regional growth. After the Kyoto Protocol was signed, more efforts were made to increase the speed of the various series of Shinkansen to meet the objectives of energy efficiency and CO2 reductions. Trains in the current N700 series of HSRs consume half the energy consumed by the first series of trains, and run 32 per cent faster. Recent impact assessment studies are mostly of China's HSR of around 25,000 km. A study published in Nature indicates that the new HSR routes have resulted in the reduction of 11.183 million tons of CO2 equivalent to GHG emissions or 1.33 per cent of GHG emissions in China's transport sector. The creation of a modern and



industrially-competitive Japan despite its minimal natural resources would not have been imaginable without a transformative transport arrangement like the Shinkansen. It is equally important to note here that the HSR programme was developed and implemented by Japan National Railways at a time when it was under immense financial stress. Large-scale infrastructure projects are not based on short-term financial viability considerations alone. When the London Underground was conceived, it was not considered financially viable.

Today, London's economic activities are inconceivable without it. Green technologies that we consider cheaper than fossil fuel technologies were not initially financially viable, and were unable to survive without government subsidies. This notion of development should be the standard against which large projects such as SilverLine are to be evaluated. There are abundant international examples of the role played by large capital-intensive infrastructure projects in the transformation of the town and country, regions, and nations.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine likely to delay Europe's Mars mission



Russia's 'unprovoked' invasion of Ukraine left the entire world in shock. The Western countries imposed economic sanctions on Russia, leaving the country in diplomatic isolation. The invasion has impacted land, water and air with disruptions in airspace, sea and land routes in eastern Europe, but now the crisis has affected a space programme. A Russian-European joint mission to land a rover on Mars has been impacted as it is "very unlikely" to launch the ExoMars mission this year

due to sanctions over Moscow. The European Space Agency said that the launch of the Rosalind Franklin rover, whose mission is to drill into the Martian soil to seek out signs of life, was originally planned for 2020 but postponed due to coronavirus (COVID-19) and technical delays. But in January, the ESA declared the ExoMars mission was ready to launch this September as Russia was ready to provide the launcher, descent module and landing platform. Now, in a response to the Russian invasion, the European Union imposed massive sanctions on Moscow, the ESA said "the sanctions and the wider context

make a launch in 2022 very unlikely". "We are fully implementing sanctions imposed on Russia by our member states," the ESA said in a statement on Monday (February 28). "We deplore the human casualties and tragic consequences of the war in Ukraine. We are giving absolute priority to taking proper decisions, not only for the sake of our workforce involved in the programmes, but in full respect of our European values," it added. The ESA also said it took note of the Russian space agency Roscosmos' decision over the weekend to suspend

launches and withdraw its workers from Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana, over the EU sanctions. "Regarding the Soyuz launch campaign from Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, we take note of the Roscosmos decision to withdraw its workforce from Kourou," the statement added. The space agency added that they will "consequently assess for each European institutional payload under our responsibility the appropriate launch service based notably on launch systems currently in operation and the upcoming Vega-C and Ariane 6 launchers."

After glow of a possible kilonova explosion creates a buzz

Scientists are reporting a glow of X-Ray after a mega collision between two neutron stars. The strange glow is visible more than three years after the collision that resulted in what is called kilonova explosion. This X-Ray glow has been called "uncharted territory" by scientists. It is being put for that the glow may have resulted from shockwave of the collision slamming into dust present in this region of space. Another theory is that the glow is generated due to ejecta of the explosion falling back into the new object, most likely a black hole.

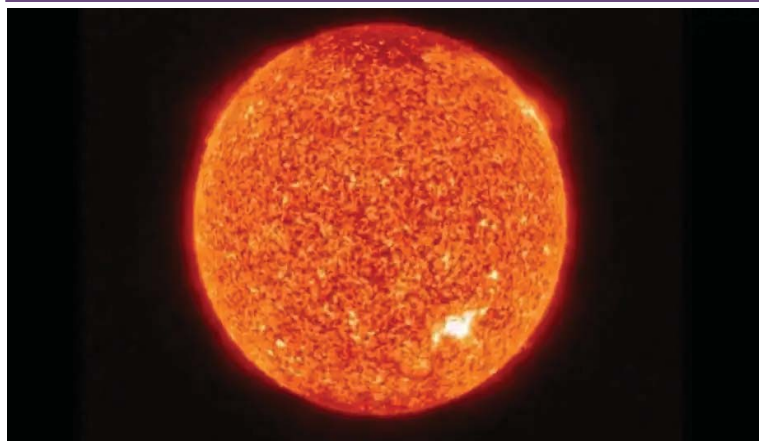


"We have entered uncharted territory here in studying the aftermath of a

neutron star merger," said Northwestern's Aprajita Hajela, who led the new study. "We are looking at something new and extraordinary for the very first time. This gives us an opportunity to study and understand new physical processes, which have not before

been observed." The merger of the neutron stars led to a massive explosion. This explosion, called a kilonova blast is 1000 times brighter than a classical nova. Using NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory, astronomers observed X-ray emissions from a jet moving very close to the speed of light produced by the neutron star merger. Starting in early 2018, the jet's X-ray emission steadily faded as the jet continued to slow and expand. Hajela and her team then noticed from March 2020 until the end of 2020, the decline in brightness stopped, and the X-ray emission was approximately constant in brightness.

New artificial intelligence model shows hidden turbulence in Sun's atmosphere



A new model of artificial intelligence has shown hidden turbulence in the atmosphere of the Sun.

The research, published in Astronomy & Astrophysics, shows multi-scale deep learning for estimating horizontal velocity fields on the solar surface.

The sun, essentially a hot ball of hydrogen and helium, is an average-sized star that formed more than 4.5 billion years ago and is roughly halfway through its lifespan.

Its diameter is about 864,000 miles (1.4 million km). Its surface temperature is about 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit (5,500 degrees Celsius). "We developed a novel convolutional neural network to estimate the spatial distribution of horizontal velocity by using the spatial distributions of temperature and vertical velocity," wrote a team of researchers led by astronomer

Ryohtaroh Ishikawa of the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan. "This led to efficient detection of spatially

spread features and disrupting satellites and concentrated features. [...] Our communications and

network exhibited a higher performance on almost all the endangering astronauts.

By comparing the results of the three convection models, we observed that the rapid decrease in coherence spectrum occurred on the scales that were lower than the energy injection scales, which were characterized by the peaks of the power spectra of the vertical velocities. This implies that the network was not appropriately trained to reproduce the velocity fields in small scales that can affect Earth, for example

"These challenges can be explored in future studies." The researchers compared data on similar stars to historical records of the sun's activity. These records included about 400 years of observational data on sunspots and about 9,000 years of data based on chemical element variants in tree rings and ice cores caused by solar activity. These records indicated the sun has not been much more active than it is now.

generated by turbulent

Startup plans to create robotic outpost near the Moon

It's been more than fifty years since man set foot on the Moon. Since then, we have made progress in space science by leaps and bounds. But humankind is focussing its gaze on the Moon again. NASA's Artemis mission is aiming to bring a human on the lunar surface again.

There are talks in the scientific world of making use of the Moon as a launching pad for future space missions. For this, we would have to have a much more comprehensive presence on and around the Moon than before. What a space start-up is doing may come handy in such an endeavour. This company, called Quantum



Space is planning to create a robotic outpost near the Moon. Quantum Space has been set-up by Steve Jurczyk. He is former associate administrator of NASA. The company was

formed in 2021. As per a report in The Verge, the robotic outpost Quantum Space plans to set up near Moon will help in providing internet capabilities on the lunar surface. It will also refuel spacecrafts, collect data and help assemble structures in lunar space.

Jurczyk says that his company also intends to make vehicles that will aid NASA in lunar missions.

NASA is planning to create an internet-like system of communications infrastructure around the Moon called LunaNet.

This would be less reliant on Earth technologies for navigation, communication, and data relays," he said as quoted by The Verge.

Did it come from space?

Archaeologists might have solved mystery around Tutankhamun's famous dagger



Tutankhamun, the king of ancient Egypt who probably flourished in the 14th century BCE, is known majorly for his intact tomb that was discovered in the Valley of the Kings in 1922.

Apart from other precious items, an iron dagger was also found in the tomb by archaeologist Howard Carter. The tomb itself was a puzzle for historians, who still study the various aspect of it. In 1925, Carter found two daggers in the wrapping of the mummy - one on the right thigh with a blade of iron and the other on the abdomen with a blade of gold.

Among all the iron objects discovered in Tutankhamun's tomb, the dagger is the one that has most attracted interest from historians and archaeologists. The mystery around the dagger's origin has intrigued experts for years because of the speculations over the origin of the metal and the employed working technology. Now, it is believed that

it came from space. As per the latest analysis, the composition and homogeneity of the blade closely correlate with that of a meteorite.

The scientists believe that the material of the dagger, which is currently displayed at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, is determined to have originated by way of a meteoritic landing. The findings were published by the researchers at the Chiba Institute of Technology in the journal of Meteoritics and Planetary Science. Daniela Comelli, the study's main author, wrote: "Meteoritic iron is clearly indicated by the presence of a high percentage of nickel." As per the findings, the high levels of cobalt also "strongly suggests an extraterrestrial origin". "They were aware that these rare chunks of iron fell from the sky already in the 13th [Century] BCE, anticipating Western culture by more than two millennia," a part of the report read.

Researchers see 'future of an entire species' in ultrasound technique

Kristin Aquilino, a scientist at the University of California, Davis, knows that expectations are just disappointments in disguise. Over the past decade, she has led the school's white abalone captive-breeding program, which aims to bring the marine mollusk back from the brink of extinction.

In June, she and her colleagues drove snails kept in captivity at Davis down the California coast to Cabrillo Marine Aquarium in Los Angeles. Others were dropped off at labs and aquariums around Southern California; all told, this was the largest spawning attempt of white abalone to date. But when she tried to get them in the mood with what she calls a love potion — a mix of seawater with hydrogen peroxide — the snails languished in their tanks occasionally emitting bubbles, but no eggs or sperm. After four hours, Aquilino called it off. (Simultaneous attempts at the other sites also failed.)

"It sucks," she said. "There's a lot of human effort involved, but there's no way they'll spawn today."

After fishermen depleted 99% of white abalone from the wild in the 1970s, the sea snails are hanging on by a slimy thread. Despite the urgency of breeding these and other endangered aquatic snails to reintroduce to the wild,



propagating more of them in a lab is still a guessing game, Aquilino says. Now, a study published Thursday in the journal *Frontiers in Marine Science* offers an improved tool for determining which abalone will be reproductive. The technique — using noninvasive ultrasound, a decades-old medical technology — could raise the prospects of successful captive-breeding efforts and ultimately help restore endangered abalone in the wild.

"If we can use this method, it could make a really big difference and we might be able to strategically target animals to induce to spawn," said David Witting, a fisheries biologist at the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration who specializes in

abalone recovery and was not involved in the study. "We'll take any more edge we can get. Getting animals to spawn is really the pinch point for the whole process of recovering them."

For Aquilino, the method offers a glimmer of hope. "When I first saw the ultrasound images of my kids, I saw the future of my family," she said. "When I see the ultrasound images of these abalone, I see the future of an entire species." Seven species of abalone — sea snails with colorful, domed shells — have historically called the west coast of North America home. The animals help the ecosystems they live in by maintaining kelp forests, feeding marine mammals and improving the health of reefs. But over much of the 20th century,

divers and fishermen depleted several species of abalone. Aside from the white abalone, black abalone succumbed to a disease called withering syndrome, and pinto abalone in the northern Pacific suffered from overharvesting and habitat degradation. In the wild, abalone are terrible at long-distance relationships: In order to reproduce, they must be within proximity of each other because the snails send their gametes into the water column to get fertilized. By the 1990s, there were so few of the endangered species that scientists realized they needed to intervene. Reproducing them in captivity, however, is a big challenge. There are no clear cues for when they're ready to reproduce. Researchers have traditionally inspected the snails visually by prying them off whatever surface they're suctioned to, then looking for the crevice between their sticky feet and shell to find a bulge, where the animal's gonad is below the milky skin. Depending on how large the gonad is, the scientists give the animal a score: plump protrusions outrank smaller ones. "That kind of gives you an idea of whether or not the animal may spawn," said Josh Bouma, abalone program director of the Restoration Fund in Washington state, who heads the captive-breeding program for the endangered pinto abalone.

How to make your "Animal Prints" stand out ?

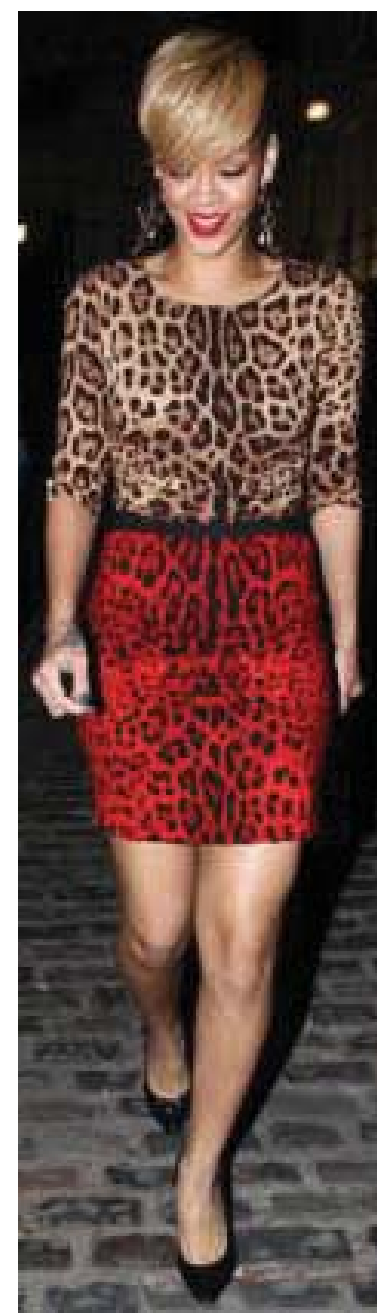


One classy piece, you can be a proud owner of, from teenage to old-age is your Animal prints accessories. Well, this makes me pause --why teenage ?, I made my twins wear animal prints right from birth -Voila! And everyone's commendation , for their accessories and dresses, made me a proud mother . They are season less , timeless , lasting trends for one and all. Year after year, Fashion Magazines screech untiringly " Animal Prints is THE TREND"

Without doubt, every woman should be a proud owner of these prints , be it a scarf , top , shoe or a bag. Challenge is not owning it !! The real challenge is , how to make these pieces stand out , be eyeeful , than looking one straight out of the zoo . Few simple rules , kept in mind go a long way, though at the end of the day it's the woman who wears them, makes the difference !

QUIETEN THE PRINT

Animal prints, go a bit wild when wearing them on leggings , pants or skirts . Best bet is to tone it down with neutral shades which blends well with the print and over all look is earthed . Solid neutral colors worn as over all top , blouse , cardigan mitigates the whole effect . Go for neutral



shoes and bags with it .

PLAY SOLO

Never try to match or over accessorise with animal prints . One solo piece, be it a top, scarf , boots or a cardigan will speak your polished style . Pairing two animal prints is doable , but on the evillest level of SUDOKU . Lots of efforts and time for right pairing is required , unless you have a personal stylist to do it for you !

COLOR SPLASH

A more fun way of wearing the trend , which is my personal favourite too , is with a splash

The Lawn Muse
by Komal Bindra

of bright vibrant colors ! Emerald green , Mustards , Wine , Burgundy , Teal satin look super Sensational .

JACKETS/COATS

For winters , it's no brainer to invest in one fine animal print jacket or coat . Fur's in animal prints are the best investments. You instantly have a million dollar look . For a more sassy look pair them with your favourite leather pants !!

SHOES/BELTS

Just add these two accessories (solo please) and the look changes instantly . Shoes preferably Pointed toes and flats . Boots try to to have solid insets rather than all animal print .

MAKE-UP

For casual day-time look go for neutrals and earth tone . For more edgy look smokey eyes with Red, Ruby , Whine shades of lipsticks.

SUNGLASSES

Super cool way to look Super Hot ! That's the only way to give a subtle touch of animal print at any age .



Stem cell donation: Essential things you must know

According to experts, several fatal blood diseases including blood cancer and disorders like thalassemia, leukemia, aplastic anaemia can be cured by transfusing blood stem cells derived from a healthy volunteer donor

If detected on time, experts say that blood cancer or leukemia is curable — and that you can help, too.

If you are a healthy individual in the age range of 18-50 years, you can become a stem cell donor by registering yourself. This means that if there is a match for a blood stem cell transplant, you can help not only a cancer patient, but also those with any blood-related disorders like Thalassemia. Well-known treatments for cancer include chemotherapy and radiation therapy. However, with advances in science and technology, novel target-specific therapies have been introduced that are based on molecular/cellular aspects of the disease.

Leading the pack in advanced therapies are stem cell therapy, gene therapy, and immunotherapy, explained Dr Pradeep Mahajan, regenerative medicine researcher, StemRx Bioscience Solutions Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai.

According to experts, several fatal blood diseases including blood cancer and blood disorders like thalassemia, leukemia, aplastic anaemia to name a few can be cured by transfusing blood stem cells derived from a healthy volunteer donor (HLA matched related/unrelated). These healthy cells replace the diseased or depleted blood stem cells in a patient and thereby give the patient a second chance at life.

"Blood stem cell donation or bone marrow donation is the only cure for many blood disorders and blood cancers. Blood stem cell donation involves the extraction of stem cells from a matched healthy individual and transplanted to a patient. Patients can opt for it after discussing their diagnosis with the treating doctor," said Sumati Misra, Head – Counseling and Transplant Centre Management, Datri Blood Stem Cell Donors Registry.

When a blood cancer patient is not able to find a close family match, they start looking at unrelated donor matches. This is where registering in a stem cell donor registry can help, said Atulaa Krishnamurthy, a commercial lawyer, in a Twitter thread as she talked about her experience of donating stem cells after four years of registering. "Bone marrow transplants are used to treat a number of blood

cancers, and require near-perfect HLA-type compatibility for donation to be viable. This is very rare, and relatives aren't always a match, which is why building a large donor registry is key," she said.

How does a blood stem cell donor registry work?

Every patient has a 25 per cent chance of finding a match within the family. But many patients do not find a suitable donor within the family. In such cases, there is a need to find an unrelated blood stem cell donor or a cord blood unit, said Datri, a not for profit organisation, which also registers blood stem cell donors.

It states that donor registries work towards creating a diverse database where the search of a life-saving donor meets a match. "There are over 80 blood stem cell donors registries and more than 30 million registered blood stem cell donors across the globe, with a very few Indians being a part of

it. This reduces the chances of finding a possible match for a patient of Indian origin. India is in real need of a functional registry with donors belonging to diverse ethnic backgrounds. A patient is more likely to find a possible match within his/her race/ethnicity, (i.e.) with people sharing the same cultural linguistic, biological traits etc.'. The website notes that the probability of finding an unrelated matched donor is 1 in 10,000 to 1 in over a million. Datri has a base of more than 4.6 lakh donors but it is less than 1 per cent of India's population, stated Misra.

How to register?

*Once you have signed up for being a donor, a series of tests are done. They also give a buccal or cheek swab.

*A small sample of blood is collected to verify the HLA typing. HLA is a protein that is part of the DNA and needs to be matched between the donor and patient.

Is there a way to benefit from a stressful situation?

Stress responses of a fast heart rate, faster breath and so on, should be used to take on any challenge since our body is biologically at its best state to handle stress



In an insightful talk, Kelly McGonigal talks about the importance of changing the narrative about how we think about stress. She had always been treating stress as a disease but owing to a latest study on stress, Kelly has redefined stress and the way we should look at it. The study analysed how people felt when they were stressed, their attitudes towards stress and then attempted to find a correlation with death. Surprisingly, the people who were stressed and actually believed that stress was detrimental to their health had a higher risk of death as compared to those people who were stressed but did not consider it harmful.

Thus, as Kelly says, the study proves that it isn't stress that causes death but our belief

system that stress is harmful and hence by changing the way we think about stress, we can change our body's response to stress as well. Explaining the common psychological concept of 'fight or flight', Kelly explains to her audience that stress responses of a fast heart rate, faster breath and so on, should be used to take on any challenge since our body is biologically at its best state to handle stress. The negative side of stress is the restriction in blood vessels that is correlated to cardiovascular diseases but when people learn to see stress as a positive phenomenon, the blood vessels do not constrict as much. Oxytocin is a hormone that is often related to relationships and is sometimes called the cuddle hormone.

Know what Ayurveda says about starting the day with a teaspoon of ghee on an empty stomach

"According to Ayurveda, it improves the absorption ability of the small intestines and decreases the acidic pH of our gastrointestinal tract," Nutritionist Avanti Deshpande said



The health benefits of consuming ghee are widely known. It not just elevates the taste of basic meals but is also a healthy fat that has numerous medicinal properties. But, did you know that Ayurveda recommends consuming ghee in the morning, on an empty stomach? Known to rejuvenate the body and give it a much-needed health boost, ghee, which is a clarified form of butter,

can do wonders if consumed regularly on an empty stomach every morning. "According to Ayurveda, it improves the absorption ability of the small intestines and decreases the acidic pH of our gastrointestinal tract," Nutritionist Avanti Deshpande said in an Instagram post, listing the many health benefits of starting your day with a teaspoon of ghee.

GST collection for February up by 18% at over Rs 1.33 lakh crore



GST collections in February stood the same month, the Finance at over Rs 1.33 lakh crore, an 18 Ministry has said. The GST per cent growth from last year for (Goods and Services Tax)

collection for February 2022 at Rs. 1,33,026 crore was 18 per cent higher than the same month last year, the Finance Ministry has said. The collection was 26 per cent higher than the GST collection in February 2020. This is the fifth time that the GST collection crossed the Rs 1.30-lakh-crore mark. Since the implementation of the GST, for the first time, GST cess collection crossed the Rs 10,000-crore mark, which signifies recovery of certain key sectors, especially, automobile sales. The gross GST

revenue collected in the month of February 2022 is Rs 1,33,026 crore of which Central GST is Rs 24,435 crore, State GST is Rs 30,779 crore, Integrated GST is Rs 67,471 crore (including Rs 33,837 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is Rs 10,340 crore (including Rs 638 crore collected on import of goods). During this month, revenues from the import of goods saw an increase of 38 per cent and the revenues from domestic transactions (including import of services) were up by 12 per cent.

Lakshadweep has seen the highest jump in GST collection. There was a whopping 74 per cent rise in GST from February 2021 to February 2022. This was followed by Ladakh which saw a 72 per cent rise in the collection. This growth in February 2022 should also be seen in the context of partial lockdowns, weekend and night curfews and various restrictions that were put in place by many states due to the omicron wave, which peaked around 20th January, it added.

Fame to failure in few months! Tracking Ashneer Grover's downfall

From a popular face of television to being at loggerheads with BharatPe officials, Ashneer Grover got mired in several controversies in past few months

BharatPe co-founder Ashneer Grover has resigned as managing director and board director, the payment startup said on Tuesday. In a scathing resignation letter, Grover cited reasons for quitting BharatPe board, even as he minced no words to hit back at officials for allegedly targeting him. From a popular face of television to being at loggerheads with BharatPe officials, Grover got mired in several controversies in past few months. BharatPe, which allows shop owners to make digital payments through QR codes, was cofounded by Grover in 2018. As BharatPe became an entrant in UPI space and started competing with Paytm, PhonePe and GooglePay, Grover was projected as one of faces of entrepreneurship in the country.

However, his rise in popularity metre chart was largely due to his

appearance in the reality show Shark Tank India. Not only did he develop quite a fiery reputation, but also netizen started to follow him on Twitter. As social media got flooded with Shark Tank India memes featuring Grover, Ashneer became a household name. The fleeting nature of fame often stings and downfall starts very quickly when reality strikes. The post-television stint has not been rosy for Grover as his wife Madhuri Jain got sacked by BharatPe due to alleged financial irregularities and money siphoning. Ahead of his resignation, Grover's petition to ward off a board investigation was also rejected by Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC). At the end, Grover announced that he was leaving head held high, notwithstanding the vilification of his personality in the public domain.

Here's a brief journey of Ashneer Grover.

SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT

Grover, in his strongly-worded resignation letter, mentioned that he is an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Delhi and Indian Institute of Management (IIM)-Ahmedabad alumnus.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER

Grover worked at Kotak Investment banking, American Express, Grofers, PC Jeweller Limited before cofounding Bharat Pe.

PUBLIC ROW WITH KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK

One of the major controversies pertaining to Grover came to the fore in the wake of a public row with Kotak Mahindra Bank over his personal investments.

BharatPe has come under intense investor and media scrutiny since Grover sought damages from bank

boss Uday Kotak, alleging Kotak Mahindra Bank declined financing for a personal investment. The bank has in turn alleged in legal documents that Grover used "foul" and threatening language towards its employees and reserved the right to take appropriate legal action against him.

BHARATPE HITS BACK

BharatPe said Grover resigned after receiving the agenda for an upcoming board meeting that included submission of an independent audit regarding his conduct, according to Reuters. "The board reserves the right to take action based on the report's findings," the company said. BharatPe did not elaborate on the findings of the report. BharatPe's statement has suggested that resignation may not bring relief for Grover, who will always be remembered as the controversy's favourite child.

Bitcoin makes largest gain in a year; check latest price

The world's most popular cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, rose over \$43,000- marke. It was up by over 14 per cent at \$43,218



Bitcoin's price rose over 15 per cent as the global cryptocurrency market

according to data on coindesk. The world's most popular

cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, rose over \$43,000- marke. It was up by over 14 per cent at \$43,218. The world's biggest and best-known cryptocurrency, was also up 26.4 per cent from the year's low of \$32,950.72 on January 24.

Bitcoin will have to remain above the 100-day moving average in order to confirm upside targetts. The lower support is witnessed at \$37,000. This could stabilize pullbacks into the Asia trading day, according to coindesk. The second largest cryptocurrency by

market capitalization Ethereum rose over 11 per cent at \$2,917. Other major cryptocurrencies were trading in the green. XRP was up by over 7 per cent, Terra rose 23 per cent, Solana gained 11 per cent, Avalanche was up by 19 per cent, Cardano gained over 10 per cent, Polkadot was up by 8 per cent. Popular alt coins such as Stellar was up by 9 per cent, Dogecoin gained over 7 per cent, Polygon was up by over 9 per cent, Shiba Inu was up by 8 per cent and Chainlink rose by 10 per cent.

Saif Ali Khan, Prabhas and Kriti Sanon-starrer Adipurush gets new release date on Maha Shivratri, check it out here

Saif Ali Khan, Prabhas and Kriti Sanon's Adipurush has a new release date. The team announced it on Maha Shivratri. Check out the new date here

The new release date of Adipurush, starring actors Saif Ali Khan and Prabhas, has been announced on Tuesday, on the occasion of Maha Shivratri. Taking to Instagram early morning, Prabhas revealed that his film will release on January 12, 2023. Sharing the poster featuring the new date, Prabhas captioned the post, "#Adipurush Worldwide Theatrical Release in 3D on 12th Jan 2023." He also tagged film director Om Raut and co-stars Kriti Sanon, Sunny Singh among others. Adipurush is said to be the adaptation of the Indian epic Ramayana that revolves around the triumph of good over evil. Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Om Raut, Prasad Sutar, and Rajesh Nair of Retrophiles are producing the upcoming film. In the film, Prabhas will reportedly essay the role of Lord Ram,



and Sunny will play Lakshman. Kriti is said to essay the role of Sita in the film while Saif will portray Raavan's role. The film will be released in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada. Earlier, Adipurush was scheduled to release

in August this year but was pushed back to accommodate the release of Laal Singh Chaddha. Last month, Aamir Khan Productions on Instagram had issued a statement regarding the same. The film's team had announced on Instagram, "This is to announce that

our film, Laal Singh Chaddha, will not be releasing on 14th April as planned. This is because we are unable to complete the film in time. The film will now be releasing on 11 Aug 2022 in theatres worldwide. We would like to thank Mr Bhushan Kumar, T Series and Om Raut and the entire team of Adipurush from the bottom of our hearts." Laal Singh Chaddha features Aamir Khan, Kareena Kapoor, Naga Chaitanya and Mona Singh. It is the official Hindi remake of the Hollywood film Forrest Gump, which starred Tom Hanks in the lead role. Apart from Adipurush, Prabhas has several projects in the pipeline including Spirit, Radhe Shyam, and Salaar. He also has Project K, directed by Nag Ashwin, that also -stars Amitabh Bachchan and Deepika Padukone in lead roles.

When Nanda and Manmohan Desai got engaged but he died before the wedding

On Manmohan Desai's 28th death anniversary, actor Nanda's brother Jayprakash Winayak has spilled beans about Nanda and Mohan's love story



Actor Nanda Khile, Gumnaam, Ittefaq, The Karnataki, who was engaged to filmmaker Manmohan Desai never got married after his sudden death following their engagement. On Manmohan's 28th death anniversary, Nanda's brother Jayprakash Winayak gave a closer look at their love story, revealing how the two met and fell in love with each other. Nanda, who appeared in films such as Chhoti Bahen, Dhool Ka Phool, Pinkvilla, Nanda's brother Bhabhi, Kala Bazar, Kanoon, Hum Dono, Jab Jab Phool

Manmohan. He said t r a d i t i o n a l again. She stopped meeting Manmohan's son with his first wedding." Jayprakash further people because she didn't want wife Jeevanprabhaji, took revealed that after Manmohan's any discussion on the same actor Waheeda Rehman's death Nanda lived a life of a topic. She largely remained at help to unite his father with widow. He said, "Didi was home. She almost imprisoned Nanda. shattered. After that day, she herself. She was passionate

Jayprakash recalled, never wore coloured clothes. about travel but after Manji, "So, Waheedaji organised a She'd say, Maine unko pati she gave up on that. She small dinner. After dinner, they maana hai aur woh hamesha stopped visiting theatres to left didi and Manji alone. Manji mere pati rahenge (In my mind watch films, something she then revealed his feelings to I was already married to him. once loved. She arranged for a didi saying, 'I want to marry He will always be my home theatre instead. She you'. Didi said she'd first have husband)'. The white libaas loved diamonds but later lost to consult her family. On her (garment) was her answer to all interest in them. 'Ab kya return that night, I was the first those who, in the coming years, rakkha hail' she'd remark. She one with whom she discussed suggested that she get married lived like a sanyasin (saint)."

In an interview with our place. didi wanted a





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