

India abstains on UNSC resolution condemning Russia's 'aggression'

11 countries voted in favour of the resolution while three countries, including India, abstained



Sirish C Mohanty

resolution sponsored by the US and Albania and supported by several other nations including Poland, Italy, Germany, Estonia, Luxembourg, and New Zealand.

11 countries voted in favor of the resolution while three countries, including India, abstained.

A permanent member of the Security Council, Russia used its veto power to block the resolution, as expected, but western nations said the resolution seeks to show Moscow's isolation on the global stage for its invasion and actions against Ukraine. All eyes were on how India will cast its vote on the resolution given that New Delhi has strong defence ties with



India's Permanent Representative to UN, TS Tirumurti at UNSC meeting on Ukraine

Moscow.

During a telephone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi "appealed for an immediate cessation of violence, and called for concerted efforts from all sides to return to the

path of diplomatic negotiations and dialogue."

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to discuss Russia's "premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified attack on Ukraine", the State Department said.

Blinken "stressed the importance of a strong collective response to condemn Russia's invasion and call for an immediate withdrawal and ceasefire."

India has so far refrained from condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine and a statement in the Security Council on Wednesday night, just as Putin ordered Ukraine's invasion, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador TS Tirumurti expressed "deep concern" over the developments, which if not handled carefully, may well undermine the peace and security of the region.

Ahead of the UNSC vote, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba said

in a tweet that in a call to Jaishankar, he asked "India to use all influence in its relations with Russia to force it to cease military aggression against Ukraine. He Urged India as a non-permanent UNSC member to support today's draft resolution on restoring peace in Ukraine."

The resolution condemned Russia's "aggression against Ukraine" and decides that Russia "shall immediately cease its use of force against Ukraine and shall refrain from any further unlawful threat or use of force against any UN member state."

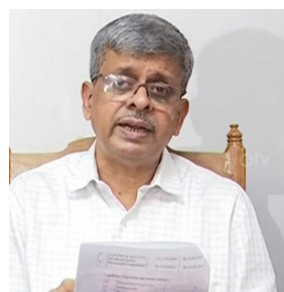
"The resolution also said that Russia "shall immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw (Page-5)

Odisha Urban Local Body Elections Schedule Out

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: As expected, the State Election Commission (SEC) on Friday announced the dates for the conduct of the urban local body (ULB) elections in Odisha.

Announcing the dates, the State Election Commissioner (SEC) Aditya Prasad Padhi said that the elections to 106 Municipalities/NACs and three Municipal Corporations will be held on March 24, 2022.

The general elections will be held for the purpose of re-constituting/constituting the 106 municipalities/NACs and three municipal corporations - Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) and Berhampur Mu-



SEC Announces Schedule For Odisha Urban Local Body Elections

nicipal Corporation (BeMC).

According to Padhi, the notice for the upcoming polls will be issued on February 28. With this announcement, the model code of conduct has come into immediate effect from today.

It is pertinent to mention here that the elections (Page-10)

War in Ukraine: Odisha Govt to Bear Expenses for Safe Return of State People

Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik announced that the State Government will bear the expenses for bringing back students and workers of Odisha stranded in Ukraine. The Chief Minister has also directed that Development Commissioner-Special Relief Commissioner Shri P.K. Jena to coordinate the overall process of bringing the citizens back. Besides, the Resident Commissioner at New Delhi will coordinate with the Government of India over this issue. The Chief Minister has also directed the district administration to collect information regarding students and



workers in Ukraine and effectively coordinate with their family members at this hour of crisis.

The Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik spoke to Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and discussed about the safe return of Odia students and workers stuck in Ukraine. Jaishankar assured the Chief Minister of

the safe evacuation of Indians stranded in Ukraine.

Earlier, the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik spoke to Union Home Minister Amit Shah over telephone this morning and requested him for the safe evacuation of stranded Odia students and labourers from the war-torn Ukraine. Shah assured the Chief Minister that Govern-

ment of India is in touch with the Ukraine government and working to bring back students and labourers from Ukraine at the earliest.

Notably, near about 3000 Odia people are stranded in Ukraine. Family members have urged the Central Government as well as the Odisha government to take necessary steps for the safe rescue. As per reports nearly 20 students from Jharsuguda, around 15 students from Dhenkanal are studying and stuck in Ukraine. Similarly, students from Sundargarh, Baleswar, Balangir, Kandhamal, Sambalpur, Bargarh are also stranded.

Elections To Sarpanch, Samiti Member Posts In Ganjam District 'Fixed', Claims ZP Aspirant

The two aspirants in the fray had entered into pre-election deal with a Samiti member aspirant to win the posts uncontested.

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: The outcome of elections for Sarpanch and Samiti member posts of Chandpur Panchayat under Rangeilunda Block in Ganjam district was pre-determined?

If a Zilla Parishad candidate of the same locality is to be believed, the two aspirants in the fray had entered into a pre-election deal with a Samiti member aspirant to win the posts uncontested. She alleged that as much as Rs 10 lakh had changed hands for the fixed match.

C. Rashmita Patra and

Priyanka Dalai have been elected uncontested as the Sarpanch and Samiti members, respectively. A Zilla Parishad candidate Kajal Patra alleged that a deal of Rs10 lakh had been struck to ensure none would contest against or oppose them (Patra and Dalai).

Prashant Behera of Sunadeipur village had intended to contest for Samiti member post from Chandpur Panchayat. Balyaram Dalai, the husband of Samiti member Priyanka Dalai, allegedly managed to persuade Behera



Elections To Sarpanch, Samiti Member Posts In Ganjam District 'Fixed', Claims ZP Aspirant

to stay away from the poll arena. And for this, the former had given an undated cheque of Rs10 lakh to the latter, it has been alleged.

"Sarpanch C. Rashmita Patra's father-in-law is also a part of this shoddy deal," alleged Kajal.

Balyaram and Prashant had

also signed an agreement on a stamp paper. The deal was finalized on January 20.

When asked, Prashant admitted that Balyaram had given him an undated cheque of Rs10lakh not to contest in the election, saying he had to accept as it was decided by the villagers.

A meeting was convened at Sunadeipur where a decision was taken that no one would contest with C. Rashmita and Priyanka. In turn, the village would receive Rs10lakh which would be utilized for laying up the village road. The amount would be returned to Balyaram after receiving funds from the government.

"What we have done is for the betterment of the village. To get a road to our village, we decided to elect them unopposed," said Sagar Sahu, a villager.

Kajal Patra demanded that the elections to the two posts should be held afresh. "It amounts to murder of democracy. I want fresh elections to be held for these two posts by declaring the recently held ones invalid,"

Kajal observed.

On the other hand, Balyaram Dalai refuted the allegations. "The cheque and the agreement are fake. Since Prashant has been working as a sub-contractor using my name, he has with him five to six such cheques of mine. It is a conspiracy to malign me," claimed Dalai.

Berhampur Sub-Collector V Keerthi Vasan said a written complaint has been made to the State Election Commission and action would be taken after a probe.

Sarpanch C Rashmita Patra's reaction is yet to be received. Notably, similar reports about the auction of the Sarpanch post were received from Bileisarda Panchayat of Bolangir district in January.

Attack On Journalists During Odisha Panchayat Polls: Condemnations Pour In, Prime Accused Held

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan took to twitter to condemn the attack on the scribes who were covering the election

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: Political leaders, cutting across the party lines, condemned the horrific attack on journalists in Binjharpur of Jajpur district while covering the third-phase voting for the ongoing Panchayat elections on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the police claimed to have arrested the prime accused involved in the attack and detained his associates.

"A number of suspects have been detained and they are being questioned. The main accused has been arrested and his associates have been detained," informed Jajpur SP Rahul PR.

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan took to Twitter to condemn the attack on the scribes who were covering the election.

In a series of tweets on his Odia handle, Pradhan



said, "Like during the first phase Panchayat polls, today also incidents of violence and attack on journalists were reported from several places. Specifically, the scenes of journalists being assaulted at Binjharpur in Jajpur district hurt me deeply."

In another tweet, Pradhan said, "Journalism is the fourth pillar of democracy. Frequent attacks on journalists do not augur well for our State. It is a matter of

regret. There are differences in politics but there is no room for violence."

Pradhan urged the State Election Commission to take the incidents of attacks on journalists seriously and take action.

Similarly, BJD State general secretary Pranab Prakash Das also condemned the assault on journalists at Binjharpur in Jajpur district in tweet in Odia. "I strongly condemn the attack on journalist at

Binjharpur. There is no room for violence in democracy. Police will take stringent action against the persons involved as per law," read the tweet.

Media advisor to the Government of Odisha Manas Mangaraj took to his Twitter handle to condemn the attack on journalists. In his tweet in Odia, he said the culprits must be brought to book.

Slamming the government, the Bharatiya Janata Party's State general secretary Golak

Mohapatra termed the attack on journalists as 'government-sponsored violence'. "The booth capturing incidents are orchestrated by the government. And when the journalists go to cover the incidents, they are attacked," said Mohapatra.

Congress Spokesperson Nishikanta Mishra and BJD MP Subash Singh also strongly condemned the attack on journalists during the ongoing Panchayat elections. "In the past, journalists were attacked too. At that time, the government had not been as serious on the miscreants as it ought to have been. This leniency is encouraging them," said Mishra.

"The journalists should not face hostility. The law will take its own course and there is no question of any compromise," said Singh.

PM Modi Condolences Death of Ex-Odisha CM, Tribal Leader Hemananda Biswal

Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday expressed grief at the death of former Odisha chief



minister Hemananda Biswal and said he worked extensively among people. "Anguished by the passing away of former Odisha CM Shri Hemananda Biswal Ji. He was active in public life for many years and worked extensively among people. In this sad hour, my thoughts are with his family and supporters. Om Shanti," Modi said. Biswal, a prominent tribal Congress leader, died on Friday while undergoing treatment for pneumonia at the age of 82, family members said. His daughter Sunita said the former chief minister breathed his last at a private hospital here. He is survived by five daughters.

Politician in economist ignores kinks in Manmohanomics



Prof. Shivaji Sarkar
Former HOD in English journalism in IIMC, Delhi

An economist strangely goes political to criticize a government that follows his Manmohanomics of liberalization, globalization, and privatization with the same devotion that the proponent, Manmohan Singh, former prime minister started.

One can understand the pressure of Singh trying to score a goal. The plunge that he took virtually exposed the kinks in Manmohanomics. It has never been a panacea for inclusive growth or pine high in a global situation that monetizes every social effort and bankises products and activities that should not be.

Rising prices were a phenomenon during Singh's UPA regime and that continues because the

nation never cared to control the prices except during a brief period of NDA-I under late Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. As a people's prime minister has been in touch with the common man scripted path-breaking reforms in telecom, road, power, and taxes. Despite sanctions following Pokharan-II in 1998 and the Kargil War in 1999, the government managed to keep economic growth above 6 percent till 1999-2000. Growth slowed in 2002-03, with drought, but recovered soon.

In the years after 1998, Vajpayee met this challenge well and according to the World Bank data, the inflation rate was 4.67 in 1999, 4.009 in 2000, 3.779 in 2001, 4.297 in

2002, 3.806 in 2003, and 3.767 percent in 2004. When Vajpayee took office in 1998, inflation was 13 plus percent.

Vajpayee had left a high GDP for his successor Manmohan Singh of the Congress. During the UPA years, 2004-2014, GDP numbers were initially high but slumped drastically towards the end of its tenure. Shockingly, few understand the enigma of electoral rejection of Vajpayee-led BJP in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections.

The new government under Manmohan Singh, data show, had GDP growth between 2004-05 and 2011-12 at 7.05 percent, 9.48 percent, 9.57 percent, 9.32 percent, 6.72 percent, 8.59 percent, 8.91 percent, and 6.69 percent for the respective financial years (according to old series). The growth was 6.05 in 2014 as per the new series.

It was nothing hunky-dory in the UPA regime. There started the problems of the country. Vajpayee led the biggest ever coalition with élan. The Left differed with him but most leaders in private praised but had a reservation on his disinvestment. The same Left alliance could not continue in Manmohan Singh's UPA government beyond 2007 as they protested Singh's anti-people decision and poor leadership. The check that the Left had on UPA was lost and it plunged into a series of scams.

Inflation was at a high since 2007 and reached a super high of 11.06 percent in 2013 giving the BJP the edge to fight against the "mahngai Dayan - inflation dragon". As per data, Singh's successor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inherited poor GDP numbers after coming to power in 2014.

However, the GDP numbers during the NDA started improving initially. In 2014-15, the GDP growth was recorded at 7.2 percent. This increased to 7.6 percent in 2015-16.

The NDA government started faltering under the heavy baggage leading to too many corrections. The economic woes it inherited with a fear of "black money" tormented it. Being under pressure Modi hurriedly decided in 2016 on a never before demonetization of 87 percent of currency notes for cleaning the economy. It theoretically was a good move but practically plunged his government and the people into unseen problems. An economy that just started booming got a shock. It hurt the businesses and the poor. Possibly never imagined impact was on political finances of the parties.

The note-ban slowed growth to 7.1 percent in 2016-17. Next year, 2018-19, this and GST introduction reduced it to 4.2 percent, and unprecedented 2020 pandemic cut it to minus 7.3 percent.

The Modi government

has got into a vortex for inheriting a poor system and also not trying to move out of the Mamohanomics. The bank NPAs soared during the UPA government as it opened coffers to incentivize rich companies. Public finances, deposited by the poor, became fodder for the fly-by-night operators. A small number of companies alone heaped over Rs 2.24 lakh crore NPA by 2014. This could not be checked and doubled to Rs 5.4 lakh crore in 2021. The recent ABG group problems also had started during that regime as were the Mallya's and Geetanjali jewelers.

Decade-long messing up of economy need heavy correction. It could not happen as the NDA remained under the "aura" of Singh. It forgot that all the major scams that happened from 1992 to 1998 were under the stewardship of Singh as finance minister. So were the post-2007-8 bank NPAs, he as PM.

The NDA is to be faulted for continuing with a liberalization that never was except for UPA's chosen business friends. Its disinvestments of PSUs never helped the country. Most profitable Navratnas were handed over on a platter to friends and many were deliberately led to losses like the MTNL, BSNL, and Air India. NDA could have instituted an inquiry to unearth the 2005 scam that forced profit-making Indian Airlines and

Air India to merge and dumped with losses for the benefit of private operators. It's shearing itself cost the exchequer almost a trillion rupees.

The NDA also faltered for various compulsions on its self-sufficient atmanirbhar Bharat. It happens sometimes in the process of governance. Now SBI has come out with a possible solution. The country has to reduce its dependence on China. Its eco wrap, economic report, says leveraging production-linked incentives can reduce dependence on China by 20 percent or an \$ 8 billion GDP gain. And it is possible to reduce it to 50 percent, a \$ 20 billion bonanza. It would add to 60 lakh jobs and production of Rs 30 lakh crore in five years in addition to what the union budget has announced.

The NDA has to implement its ideas. It has to go slow also on some like National Education Policy, bullet, and metro-type trains, review the extension of roads and too much dependence on infrastructure spending. As also has to review the causes, including many administered prices like high tolls, fees, freights, and fares that are pushing up inflation.

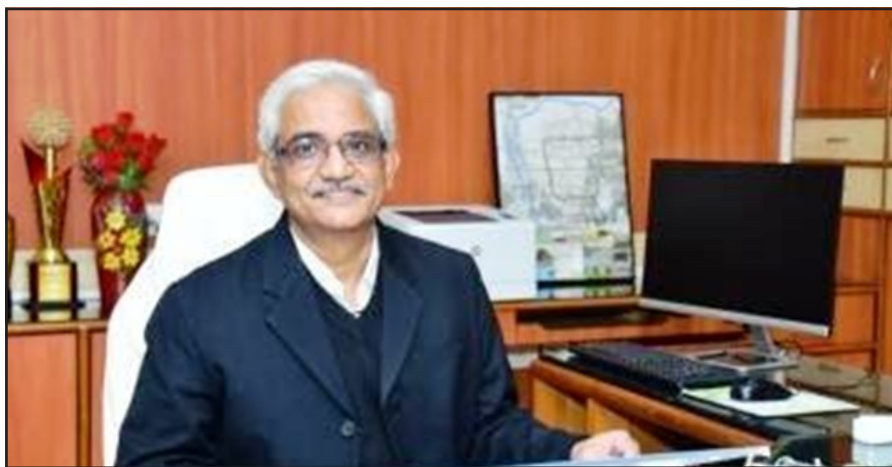
The NDA has opportunities as also prospects to ensure it frees itself from the legacy of Manmohan Singh, his Manmohanomics, and charts out a new people-centric economy.

Prof K U M Rao Appointed New Director of NIT-Rourkela

Rourkela: Prof. Karanam Uma Maheshwar Rao has been appointed as Director of NIT-Rourkela on 18th February. Education Ministry on January 25 had announced his name for the post. Before taking over the new responsibility Prof. Rao was serving as Director of NIT Surathkal (Karnataka).

Notably, this post had been lying vacant after the five-year tenure of Prof. Animesh Biswas ended in October last year. Since then, Prof. Simanchal Panigrahi was acting as in-charge Director and in-charge BOG chairman with limited power.

Prof. Rao did his graduation in Mining Engineering from Osmania Univer-



sity, Hyderabad, in 1983. Later he obtained M-Tech from the Indian Institute of Technology Banaras Hindu University (IT-BHU) in 1987.

Rao started his teaching career with the then Regional Engineering College, Surathkal, DK,

Karnataka during 1987-89 as a lecturer. In 1989, he joined the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, in the Department of Mining Engineering. He did his PhD in the field of Rock Mechanics from the institute.


He served IIT Kharagpur

in various administrative positions and was the head of the Mining Engineering Department during 2006-08 and 2010-14.

The newly appointed Director aims to improve research and innovation infrastructure with the help of faculty and students to

make NIT Rourkela a campus of the first choice. He would also work towards increasing multidisciplinary quotient in curriculum with special emphasis given to environmental and value-based education.

After assuming charge as new director Prof. Rao met with the media in which he highlighted his priorities for the institute. He said, "NIT Rourkela is the pride of Orissa. The institute's rank in the NIRF Ranking matters today. Time has come to redefine our objectives and work towards them with determination, required skills, and strategies having foresight vision for the exponential growth of the institute. Our accomplishment towards

the goal starts now." Rao added, "The expectations of the industry from the students are to have 21st-century skills and sufficient knowledge in niche areas like internet of things, artificial intelligence, big data analysis, 3D printing, and additive technology in manufacturing. These expectations have to be taken care of with a lot of involvement from the institute. It is the time for the creation of career development center instead of training and placement cell, whose objective is to create opportunities for students to upgrade their career skills, soft skills, and technical skills." 

RSP signs contract with A E L for Zero Liquid Discharge project




A contract was signed between SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP), and Messers Arvind Envisol Limited, Ahmedabad (AEL) on 18th February 2022 for the "Construction of Treatment System # 1" under ZLD (Zero Liquid Discharge) scheme at Rourkela Steel Plant. The contract also includes the operation and maintenance of the system for five years. Mr. A K Pradhan, ED (Projects) represented RSP while Messers Arvind Envisol Limited, Ahmedabad (AEL) was

represented by Mr. Dakha Rajan, Head of Business Development in the signing of the contract that was held at the Projects Conference Hall.

This Treatment System # 1 is to be set up at an expenditure of Rs. 139 Crores, will treat 1800 CUM of wastewater per hour and the same will be recycled into the makeup water system of RSP for re-utilization. It is worth mentioning here that Rourkela Steel Plant is aiming at becoming a Zero Liquid Discharge Plant soon

by gainfully reutilizing its used water. Treatment System # 1 will play a major role in achieving this objective. By taking up this project, RSP has once again exhibited its commitment to a sustainable environment and the production of green steel.

PK Sahoo, CGM (Projects-commercial), I. Rajan, CGM (Env & Utility), Rakesh Jain, Zonal Manager, AEL, A. Patel (F & A-Head) AEL, and many senior officers of RSP were present on the occasion. 

Rourkela's Efforts in Renewable Energy Earn Appreciation of Union Ministry

Rourkela: The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE), Govt of India organized a program called "New Frontiers" as part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations on 16th February 2022 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

In January 2021, India was selected as a Global Champion for Energy Transition for the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on Energy. As a part of the dialogue, Indian organizations have submitted 21 voluntary Energy Compacts (ECS) for energy access, transition, and efficiency to the UN.

Smart City Rourkela submitted Energy Compact to United Nations with a target of achieving 30% of its energy needs through clean energy sources by 2030 with the 'Solarizing Rourkela initiative'. Rourkela Smart City Limited was acknowledged, by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy for sub-


mitting and presenting Energy Compact to the United Nations High-level Dialogue on energy and contributing to India's energy transition.

Dr Subhankar Mohapatra, CEO Rourkela Smart City Limited received the token of appreciation from Shri Raj Kumar Singh, Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister for Power and New and Renewable En-

ergy, India, and Shri Bhagwanth Khutba, Hon'ble Minister of State for New and Renewable Energy & Chemical and Fertilisers, India. Shri Indu Shekhar Chaturvedi, Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable energy, Shri Alok Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Power, Shri Dinesh D Jagdale Joint Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and Dr Arunabha Ghosh, Founder-CEO, Council



ergy, India, and Shri Bhagwanth Khutba, Hon'ble Minister of State for New and Renewable Energy & Chemi-

on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) were also present in the program. 

Panchayat polls break social cohesion, owing to variation in election methods



JAGATSINGHPUR, Feb 24: Instances are glaring that Panchayat elections are being fought among the members of a family, kin, and clans in blood relations. but during the electioneering process and declaration of results, it is usually seen that political influences override the elections, contesting candidates' relationships are hampering, damaging the family rapport and social consistency, later stirring family rift and conflict are continuing for successive periods, breaking family cohesion social fabric and brotherhood.

The reasons attributed as within three-tier Panchayat system there is a variation in the

method of elections and unhealthy participation of political people in PRIs polls, who have been prompting divide people at the family level based on the party line.

The discrepancy in rural elections methods reveals as the Zilla Parishad [ZP] elections will be held on party symbol. However, polls to Sarpanch, Samiti Member, and ward member are to be held based on non-political party symbols.

Candidates contesting for the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti cannot use the symbols of any recognized political parties affiliated to either at the National or state level. Major reasons for adopting such party-less elections are to avoid poll-re-

lated conflicts and violence both during and after polls.

The legal mandate of this poll method argues that villagers know each other by face and live in harmony and cooperation. Political party-based elections to Panchayat may lead to divisions within the community on party lines, hatred, criminalization, segregation to emerge among the families, castes, and classes, these will ultimately hamper local governance and development of the village.

But practically political parties and leaders are keen to participate in Panchayat elections either directly or indirectly. Political people see the local bodies as power Centers where considerable funds are available at the Panchayat level. The political parties are keen to take an active part in the Panchayat elections with a motive to consolidate their support base at the grassroots level, strengthening the party base locally, aiming this would be useful for contesting for the ZP, state legislative assembly, and MP elections in future.

However, in turn the contestants in Panchayat polls feel that they stand to gain with political party

in power in center and state. In such a case, they can invite influential leaders to campaign for them to obtain freebies and funds for election purposes.

In reality parties are engaging star campaigners for the electioneering process, adding ministers, MPs, MLAs, party seniors, cine stars are directly campaigning for ZP seats in the Panchayat level, the contesting aspirants are accompanying them so voters are easily identifying candidates with their political affiliations and exercising their votes in the party line.

Furthermore, political parties are selecting candidates for the Sarpanch, PS member, and ward member posts non-officially even MLAs and MPs are releasing candidates' names to contest for the rural polls in their constituency.

However it is clear that the elections to Panchayat polls are not any more along with non-political basis except ZP polls, it is an empirical examination of the rule holding the Panchayat polls on the non-political party symbols.

7 miscreants arrested in Jagatsinghpur poll violence

JAGATSINGHPUR, Feb 24: After Panchayat polls violence occurred in Patasara village six km away from here, police have arrested 5 miscreants of the same village who had been indulged in a disturbance at the polling booths, assaulted polling staff, snatched away ballot box and ransacked polling station. Police informed that based on villagers'

village and forwarded them to court after conducting a brief interrogation at the police station and further investigation is proceeding. Notable to inform that few miscreants armed with weapons entered Patasara village's two polling booths created vandalism, later the elections were suspended.

Furthermore in another poll violent incident occurred in



information's that a ballot box was found near Patasara School; police rushed to the spot and recovered the missing box on Saturday. Later police arrested five persons [refused to divulge names] of the Patasara

Havelinath village under Palli Panchayat where villagers had attacked cops and damaged police vehicles on Thursday night, acting on the probe police have arrested two persons and forwarded them to court on Saturday.

From Page-1

India abstains...

all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders." The resolution said Moscow "shall immediately and unconditionally reverse the decision related to the status of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine." A senior Biden administration official had said a day before that Washington was putting forward the resolution "with every expectation that Russia will use its veto" and in doing so, "they will underscore their isolation." "First, of course, we expect that Russia will use its veto. And in doing so, they will underscore their isolation. We're not going to abandon our principles; we're not going to stand by and do nothing. It's important that we send a message to Ukraine, to Russia, and the world that the Security Council will not look away," the official said.

Anti-pro JSW supporters staged faceoff, during HC team visits to Dinkia

JAGATSINGHPUR, Feb 24: After a few weeks break violence again erupted in JSW proposed project site Dinkia village, Report said that five members of the Odisha High court team visited Dinkia village on Saturday and interacted with villagers at Phulakhai

temple inside trouble-torn Dinkia village, The visiting HC team had come to collect ground realities with regards Dinkia violence occurred between police and villager on January 14. The report said that while the HC team was interacting with villagers a local social ac-

tivist Manas Kar inclined to talk with visiting HC team which was vehemently opposed by attending villagers. Later anti JSW leader Pradeep Satapathy reached the spot and objected to Manas Kar's presence at the meeting as a consequence conformation oc-

curred between Kar's supporters and anti-JSW opponents. The report said that the meeting was abruptly closed due to tension prevailing at the spot, the pro project people were attacked Satapathy and his supporters. Later, Paradeep ASP Nimain Sethy, Erasama Tahasildar,

and police forces reached the spot and brought the situation under control. Moreover report said that the visiting HC team was noted the incident and revealed to intimate the incident to HC in their reports. Meanwhile, the Odisha HC on Wednesday has

directed its five-member appointed committee which had visited Dinkia village earlier to conduct a fresh public hearing there on the JSW steel project. The committee was asked to submit its report three days after the visit so that the next hearing of the PIL would be held on March 11.

Will SP'S Baghel emerge a dark horse against Akhilesh Yadav like Shubhendu Adhikari?

Amid shifting votes, Central UP, Ayodhya hold key to Lucknow

By Shivaji Sarkar

Amid shifting of majority votes, the next phases of polls in the central UP hold key to the fate of the state. The party winning the region reins Lucknow.

The trends in first two phases in UP and Uttarakhand turned curious. The minority votes are consolidating and majority votes are shifting. It gives jitters to contestants and is becoming out-of-the-ordinary subject of study for social scientists.

It is not easy to say if the trends would continue in the next phases. The split of majority votes finds echo in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Kalyanpur, Kanpur Dehat address. Modi called upon the "Hindus not to split their votes" deprecating Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee move to divide majority votes in Goa. Whether it changes the perception in the central UP and leads to Hindutva consolidation as BJP workers fan out or is overturned would be watched. The Samajwadi Party got 90 seats here in 2012 and a mere 12 in 2017 in centre parts of the state. The BJP also had a loss and windfall. In 2012, it got 10 seats that soared to whopping 90 of the 118 seats. BJP had a sweep in ten districts. The SP was nearly wiped off in its Yadav stronghold. The BSP has minor presence but can tilt the balance in favour of BJP.

The region is spread from Hardoi in the West, Lucknow, Kanpur - heart of the region; Farrukhabad, Kannauj, Etawah - the Yadav belt and Bundelkhand. The region understands the pulse and the party that controls the region controls UP. The BJP had no recognizable leader in the region in 2017

but the Modi wave decided the overwhelming sweep of 312 seats and another 13 for its allies.

It also has the key seat of Karhal. It will decide whether Akhilesh Yadav would be in the UP Assembly and could lead the state or not. He faces stiff resistance as BJP pits central minister Satya Pal Singh Baghel against him. The BJP has sent key organizers and strategists and hundreds of workers to the constituency. It is too prestigious for the party. High pitched contest is crucial if Baghel could emerge a dark horse like Shubhendu Adhikari who trounced Mamata Banerjee at Nandigram in Bengal.

Ayodhya is adjacent or almost a part of the region. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had considered contesting from there. But Ramjanmabhoomi temple is not a great vote attractor. In the recent Zila (district) Panchayat elections BJP could get eight of the 40 seats. The rest are with SP and its allies. Yogi quietly shifted to Gorakhpur. Chief priest of Ramjanmabhoomi temple Mahant Satyendra Das says he told Adityanath to shift as there was commotion in Ayodhya for houses and shops being demolished due to infrastructure projects in the wake of the construction of the temple. Soaring real estate prices and manipulative land deals also are issues, party workers say.

This is an aspirational region. Niti Aayog report on sustainable development puts the state at almost the lowest of the rung of sustainable development. It contributes significantly to agriculture but is poor on human development index. People want more offi-

cial support.

The decision is expected to be sharp in these 118 seats. The Yogi is harping on the issue of former chief minister Kalyan Singh who hailed from Auraiya not being given due reverence after his death by the SP. Would it help BJP get extra votes?

The region remembers covid19 bodies floating in the rivers, the difficult long migrant labourers' trek, their chemical wash, acute poverty and farmer problems. Akhilesh is contesting on the issue of an empathetic regime that can lead the state. The two major contenders have their strengths and weaknesses. Most sitting MLAs are proving liability for the BJP.

While SP campaign is measured, sharp and avoids inciting passion, the BJP is aggressive, often raising threats from "SP's goondas, Hijab and threat to the Hindus", an attempt to polarize. There are sections of the people who are heeding Yogi. But there are others who have decided to throw their flank against. As one moves around he could feel that yearning for change has its supporters.

A new social coalition is emerging. Majority community is aligning with unemployment, high prices and issues of junking of ten-year-old cars, stray cattle guzzling crops and many more.

But in the first two phases it is also observed that caste groups like Tyagis and some others were swept by the Modi and community sentiments, rashtravad (nationalism), law and order, women's safety and free food dole.

The silent voters may give jitters to perceptions and rules.

Amid euphoria there are fears too as minority voters consolidate. The political parties are apprehensive of BJP's influence on the official machinery.

In Uttarakhand and first two phases in UP, about three to four percent (65 to 59 percent) fall in polling is noticed. It is ascribed to BJP not replacing its MLAs, most who have become less popular for less than average performance and distancing them from their supporters. Some lack of enthusiasm is also being noticed among the party workers as they are given a short shrift by the leadership. Many party leaders say that they were aware of it but now they would make extra efforts to make it up in the next phases. SP leader Akhilesh Yadav is experimenting with careful distribution of tickets. Instead of selecting only minority and Yadav candidates as he did in 2017, he is having a bouquet of caste candidate mix that includes minorities, Yadav, other OBCs, Jats, Thakurs, Brahmin, Saini, Shakya, Kurmi, Gujar and other marginal castes. This constitutes about 44 percent of the total voters. He has been adventurous in pitting Thakur, Brahmin, Jat, Gujar and other candidates even in minority hotbeds in Saharanpur, Deoband and Amroha.

The bouquet, RLD leader SK Mukherjee says, is more practical than Yogi's 80-20 (percent) formula. He excludes 20 percent minorities. In lighter vein he says that he is attempting for 80 marks in an exam against Akhilesh's 100. But polls are more than arithmetic with emotions and creepy calculations.

Assembly polls a fight between dynasts and nationalists: Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi today slammed the opposition parties while campaigning for the sixth phase of the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections 2022. The prime minister said that the election is between the dynasts and the nationalists, allegedly referring to the opposition Samajwadi Party, Congress vs the BJP battle. PM Modi said that there is a difference between rashtra bhakti (devotion to nation) and pariwar bhakti (devotion to family).

"This election is between 'Rashtravadis and Parivarwadis'...Remember how you had to take your vehicles to Gorakhpur in medical emergencies because the then government didn't pay any heed to people's medical needs here. Many innocent kids died due to brain fever..." said PM Modi in Deoria while adding that the BJP government had worked to build new medical colleges in every district.

He said, "Some time ago, I laid foundation stones of 9 medical colleges in UP including Deoria's Maharshi Devraha Baba Autonomous State Medical College. This medical college could have been constructed before, but these 'Pariwardis' never prioritized you...We have made 18 new medical colleges in the state, and work is underway for 20. We also set up AIIMS in Gorakhpur. We are also trying that the poor children get to study

medical, engineering in their own language."

The prime minister also alleged that the previous governments shut sugar mills and didn't clear dues of sugarcane farmers whereas the Yogi Adityanath government modernised sugar mills and facilitated ethanol blending, which fetched about Rs 12,000 crore for the state.

Addressing a rally in Basti, PM Modi said, "The previous governments didn't focus on ethanol as fuel that can be produced from sugarcane. We are developing infrastructure to produce ethanol and biogas from cattle dung. We are also trying to become self-reliant in edible oils. For this, the government is buying oil seeds from farmers."

PM Modi said that the previous governments led by dynasts kept India dependent on foreign countries for its defence needs but the BJP government is working to make India self-reliant in the sector. "We have to modernize our armies by all means. To make the country self-reliant, one has to spend on it. This work can never be done by a family-oriented, selfish person. Those who have a history of taking a commission in defence deals, they cannot strengthen the country," alleged PM Modi.

The prime minister also visited Varanasi later where he addressed the 'Booth Vijay Sammelan' rally.

Utkal Alumina Inaugurates Enterprising Projects

RAYAGADA, Feb 22: (Jogeswar Das) : In pursuance to its pursuits in creating an enterprise ecosystem around its periphery, Utkal Alumina a subsidiary of Hindalco Industries Limited of Aditya Birla Group had achieved its first milestone under project UDYAMEE and has inaugurated 10 micro-enterprises in its periphery. Project UDYAMEE is a unique & innovative enterprise development project in the CSR fraternity launched by Utkal Alumina in partnership with Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII). Under this flagship project, Utkal Alumina has embarked on a journey of



promoting and handholding around 300 youth entrepreneurs in a span of 03 years through setting up Rural Incubation Centre.

The enterprises were inaugurated by Sri. Mazhar Beig, Unit Head & President of Utkal Alumina along with

other dignitaries Dr. Lopamudra Priyadarshini, Head CSR, CR & Sustainability, Land, R&R, PR & Communication and Sri Mukesh Jha, Head Mines operation and Dr. Subrat Biswal, Regional Head EDII. The enterprises inaugurated

are of diversified nature like Slipper Making Unit of Maha Laxmi SHG at Tikiri, Fabrication unit of Suresh Naik at Surugunja, Oil-Extraction Unit of Asis Naik at Surugunja, Mop Making Unit of Ananta Majhi at Chandragiri, Fancy Store of Biswanath Sahu Hadiguda, Fabrication Unit of Debabrata Gouda, Hadiguda and Fancy Store of Debaki Naik of Dudukabahal.

These enterprises were being promoted under project UDYAMEE and are provided with a package of business development services which includes business plan preparation, technical handholding, financial and market linkages. Speaking at the event, the unit

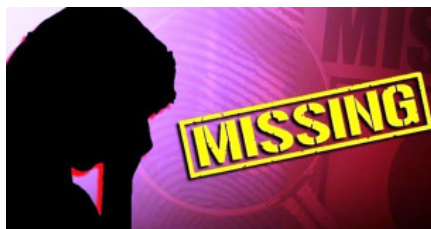
head of Utkal Alumina motivated the emerging entrepreneurs and reinstated that these entrepreneurs would become the role model for others to follow and would certainly set benchmark in the field of small and microenterprises. He encouraged UDYAMEE team to take this in mission mode and develop an entrepreneurial environment in the vicinity.

The Head CSR, CR & Sustainability of Utkal Alumina Dr. Lopamudra Priyadarsini reinstated that Utkal Alumina will always be at the forefront in devising strategies and coming up with kind of its own initiatives under its CSR Ambit for promot-

ing the rural economy through strengthening community institutions and local groups.

Dr. Subrat Biswal, the regional Head of EDII had extended the gratitude towards Utkal Alumina for the noble effort of UDYAMEE and assured to create bench mark sustainable enterprises in the vicinity. As a responsible corporate citizen, UAIL is deeply engaged in executing its CSR activities in peripheral villages in the area of education, healthcare, sustainable livelihood, and rural infrastructure and addressing the issues of social concern, overall UAIL is engaged in 84 villages serving more than 30,000 populations in Odisha.

Child sacrifice suspected in Keonjhar



Keonjhar, Feb 26: Tension prevailed at Bidyadharpur village under Hatadihi block in Keonjhar district as irate locals went on rampage in the locality suspecting child sacrifice on Thursday night.

As per reports, a seven-year-old boy, son of one Bijay Murmu, of Khanibazaar in

Bidyadharpur has gone missing since February 23. On Thursday evening, his shirt was recovered near an English medium school in the locality.

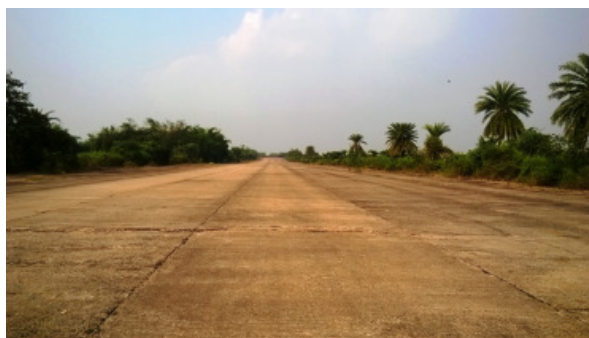
Soon after, angry locals ransacked the school suspecting that the boy was sacrificed for construction of a canal nearby. Besides, they torched two machines of a contracting agency engaged in the canal construction.

On receiving information, a firefighting team was pressed into service to douse the flames. Later, local police reached the spot and pacified the villagers.

Till the last report was filed, the missing boy was not traced.

Union Minister Makes Case For Turning Odisha's Word War-II Airstrip Into Modern Airport

The now defunct WW-2 air strip in Amarda



Baripada, Feb 15: Union minister Bishweswar Tudu last week said he is hopeful that the Centre will give its nod for turning the now-defunct Armada

Road Airstrip in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, which was operational during World War-II, into a modern airport.

Making an aggressive pitch for its revival, Tudu

said the airstrip is located 225 km from state capital Bhubaneswar and only 90 km from the Kalaikunda air force station and can be used for commercial and defence purposes.

I have taken up the matter with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia. Both of them have found the place suitable for a modern airport as it is strategically located, Tudu said earlier.

More Skeletons Tumble Out Of Fake Odisha Doctor's Closet, Fresh Cheating Case Filed

The list of cheating cases involving 'matric fail doctor' Bidhu Prakash Swain alias Ramesh Swain is piling up with each passing day. The imposter who has been arrested for allegedly marrying and duping as many as 17 women has now landed in fresh trouble.

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: The list of cheating cases involving 'matric fail doctor' Bidhu Prakash Swain alias Ramesh Swain is piling up with each passing day. The imposter who has been arrested for allegedly marrying and duping as many as 17 women has now landed in fresh trouble.

A new case has been lodged at the Bharatpur police station on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar wherein Swain has been accused of cheating 3 people including two women of lakhs of rupees on the pretext of providing them with government jobs.

As per sources, the accused, Swain, had allegedly duped the two women with assurances that he would help them in getting employment as staff nurses at the AIIMS. Another man, named Sanjay Das, who has also reportedly been cheated by the accused, was promised the job of transport manager at IFFCO.

Meanwhile, a special team led by the Bhubaneswar Additional DCP has taken Swain on remand to elicit more details on his crime syndicate.

Police sources said the accused will be taken to his Kendrapara residence following interrogation for field investigation into the series of forgery cases



Pandora's Box Of Fake Odisha Doctor Opens More Cheating Cases

against him.

Speaking on the case, one of the victims, Sanjay Das, said that the Swain won his confidence by showing a visiting card of Deputy Director, Health.

"At first, he assured to get me and others jobs in various posts free of cost. But after one month, he said that due to some changes in the recruitment policy of the Central government, we needed to pay security money and fees towards the Director and Nursing in charge. So I paid him a total of over Rs 12 lakh," said Das.

'For Russia, Ukraine is the same as Pakistan for India'



Sirish C. Mohanty

And so Russia is going to have peaceful border, and as India desires a pro-Indian Pakistan

will have to focus on the European situation and the US will not be able to change its focus to the Pacific.

And at the same time, China has its problems in Taiwan - China cannot recognize the Donetsk and Luhansk

the United States, the superpower and hegemonic. So it's natural for Russia to think as a whole India will continue its neutral line, and will keep above the situation.

Of course, there is always room for a diplomatic resolution. For example, if the Ukrainian leadership agrees to demilitarise its economy, and maybe to prohibit neo-Nazi groups, it will be enough. Then, it could talk under the Normandy format, between Europeans, the Ukrainian leadership, the Russian leadership, maybe to implement the Minsk Agreements, maybe to have a new Minsk Agreement for the federalization of Ukraine.

Putin doesn't want to incorporate Ukraine into Russia. Russia needs a political solution. The Ukrainian issue has to be decided by compromise, not by incorporation. For Russia, Ukraine is the same as Pakistan for India. And so Russia is going to have a safe border as India cherishes for a peaceful Pakistan and pro-Indian Pakistan on the border.

From the beginning, Putin had a lot of options. The main option was to escalate, demonstrate Russia's military capabilities. The main aim was to create a new security system in Europe. And Ukraine is just one piece of this puzzle. But after a month and a half of talks without results, and trying to get answers from the West, Putin thought it's all over. So Russia didn't have any solution about European security. In this situation, Putin decided to secure the southern, eastern part of the border with a friendly Ukraine.

President Vladimir Putin announced the start of the operation against Ukrainian forces for the de-Nazification and demilitarisation of Ukraine. But we do not know yet how far this will go. It means a change of leadership of Ukraine that will be friendlier to Russia. And the formal reason was Ukraine's failure to fulfill its obligations under the Minsk Agreement over the past 7 years.

So far we have seen targeted strikes on military infrastructures such as command and control centers, airfields, military depots, and fighting on the line of contact in Donbas between forces of the two republics and the Ukrainian forces. And now there are reports of the entry of Russian forces into Ukraine with practically null resistance.

How are Putin's actions going down in Russia itself, and what do Russians think about this?

It's not a full-scale invasion as yet. This is something like the Syrian campaign. And till now we see only airstrikes, targeted airstrikes - something like surgical strikes in the Indian sense. Till now, Putin does not need the people's support.

As a result of these strikes, there is no news about Ukrainian and Russian casualties. The limits of this operation will be known only by and by, and the level of the resistance from the Ukrainian forces. When you carry out airstrikes, you don't need any great



public support - the US didn't need public support in their campaign against Iraq, for example. Modi did not need public support, did not take Parliament's support for surgical strikes. So until the scale is limited, the problem of public support is not an issue, not a question for Putin.

The US and European sanctions against Russia since last year were very soft. The Russian economy did not face any problems because of these actions. If it is full-scale sanctions, problems may grow over Russian banks, it will be one thing. If these are softer sanctions, meant to find a resolution to the problem, it's different. Now, the Russian economy is quite strong, it has very low national debt, it has its system, doesn't have any great loans from the

western market.

What happens in the changing of Russia's position in the world, its relations in Europe and the world?

For the last 30 years, Russian leadership, and elites were mainly pro-Western. Some years ago it turned to the east, and it will continue. Russia will be more east-oriented after this. It will have to fix borders on the west and begin to change the focus of interests to the east, to eastern markets.

China will be in an uneasy position. China has problems with the US, and some other NATO countries, for example, the UK. For China, support of the Russian position is inevitable. China is one of those that have benefited from the European crisis because after this, the US and European countries

republics, because it can lead to the Taiwanese holding their referendum, and a Taiwanese declaration of independence, and China just now does not have any means to prevent that.

What is the Russian expectation of India?

India has quite a rich and uneasy history about the restoration of Indian writ and Indian ownership over some territories - we remember Goa, Hyderabad, the Sikkim referendum, and so on. In all these cases Russia supported India, Russia was never against India. And so Moscow understands the Indian position now - India is Russia's old good friend, and at the same time, it understands that India has no choice but to be close to

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Your editorial made a very harsh comment on the double standard & double-speak of BJP central leadership time & again. The lavish praise to Naveen Patnaik by Modi during the panchayat election is ill-timed much to the discomfort to the state leaders.

Because the state BJP will lose its forceful attack against Naveen Patnaik at that time PM is speaking high praise of Naveen Patnaik in Parliament.

Now, the belligerent BJP is fighting a winning battle, the unexpected appreciation in favor of their political enemy by the supreme leader appears confusing & intriguing.

It is difficult to be easily understood why an astute politician like Modi put a brake on the fast-rising of Odisha BJP.

As u said, it may be a political strategy, not Harakiri.

The special story is truly 'special' as it narrates the sudden appearance of a large number of wealthy actors

on the political stage during the panchayat election.

As per your correct analysis, the elected representative has a feeble voice as well as a very diminutive role in the decision-making process, & the bureaucrats are the real power players of the game.

The political parties are also controlled by a handful few by throwing the inner-party democracy into the winds.

You have sarcastically, commented that political parties

are now welcoming the self-financing candidates which happen to be rich Businessmen, industrialists & big contractors to win the election .by investing money

Then, the investors will plan suitably to fetch a good return on their investment through corruption only. Unfortunately, this unpleasant situation has compelled the ordinary dedicated party workers to take a back seat.

This trend has already polluted

& diluted the political culture & values.

Like the Bad money drives good money out of circulation, the good, honest politician will be gradually replaced by the looters, high profile rich persons & money brokers.

Therefore, time is not too far when our 'Democracy' will turn into 'Demon-crazy.'

Bharat Patra
Rtd. Banker & Social activist,
Keonjhar.

The endemic of a pandemic



Sirish C. Mohanty

People with Covid-19 will no longer legally need to isolate in United Kingdom and the tests are likely to be scaled back as part of a plan to live with Covid-19. California too has announced a shift to an endemic approach to Covid-19 that will focus on watching out for new variants and reacting quickly to outbreaks rather than issuing mandates for masking indoors.

A look at what an endemic stage of Covid-19 will look like, how the world will reach there, and what it will mean for control measures such as

number of susceptible people in the population, vaccination rates, and emergence of new variants that are able to evade the immune response.

"Endemic means that the virus will continue circulating in the population and there will be periodic ups and downs when the conditions are favourable to the virus and less favourable to humans. Take, for example, flu which goes up in the winters and when the season is changing because of lower immunity in people or dengue which goes up after monsoons because of the availability of vectors. Covid-19 also may become seasonal and cause disease in the vulnerable," said Dr Pramod Garg, director, Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI)-Faridabad.

An important determinant for whether we can "technically" say that the disease is en-



Some experts agree that precautions such as masking should remain in place.

rent variants and a neutralisation study would tell us that," Dr Singh said.

Does it mean we are safer?

A disease becoming endemic does not mean it is harmless. In an editorial in Nature, Oxford University professor on viral evolution Dr Aris Katzourakis argued, "A disease can be endemic and both widespread and deadly. Malaria killed more than 600,000

minimal control measures in some wealthy countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom - offer fertile ground for SARS-CoV-2 to take additional surprising evolutionary leaps."

How will control measures change if the disease becomes endemic?

Although experts have pushed for easing of restrictions, they say that there is a need to maintain high levels of testing and good genomic surveillance.

"We need to maintain high levels of testing and ensure that the cases get reported. Testing is quite less in smaller cities and villages and with home testing becoming available even in bigger cities like Delhi, people are not reporting if they test positive. Testing can tell us whether infections are going up or down," said Dr Singh. He also insisted on good genomic surveillance.

Talking about genomic surveillance when the disease

The UK has eased restrictions while new measures in California approach Covid-19 as being endemic. What does endemic stage mean, how far is India from getting there, and what changes in control measures?

lance consortium, said, "It is not always about the numbers. During the peak of a wave, a lot of sequencing makes no sense. It is more important in a period of lull. That is the time to not relax." The best way to find new variants, he said, was to "One, conduct a general survey; sequence probably 1% or 2% of the positive cases. Two, wherever there are more cases from an area, we should sequence immediately. Third, we need to keep a very close eye on hospitalised cases. The sample of any person admitted to the hospital with positive Covid-19 should be certainly sequenced. If they needed to come to the hospital with severe symptoms, it may be because of a new variant."

Should we continue to mask up?

"There is no real benefit in declaring that the disease is now endemic," Dr Mishra said. "What is the hurry to

cause severe disease in India but in the US it led to high rates of hospitalisations and deaths. US is a smaller country, it is a richer country. We cannot afford to do what they did. We have all suffered, let us not fall into the ditch of a new variant," he said. Other experts agreed that the precautions should remain in place.

Another concern with officially declaring Covid-19 endemic would be fewer resources being made available for measures such as vaccination. "There is a vaccine inequity; not all countries are vaccinated. If the disease is declared endemic, then the 10% vaccination rate in some countries will remain 10% nobody will take care of that," said Dr Singh.

"The more a virus replicates, the greater the chance that problematic variants will arise, most probably where spread is highest. The Alpha variant was first identified in



masking, social distancing in India and vaccination globally:

What does endemic mean, and are we there yet?

An infection becomes endemic when the rates become static in a given geographical location, meaning that the pathogen causing the disease - SARS-CoV-2 in this case - is likely to remain in circulation without causing large outbreaks as witnessed over the last two years.

Although the number of infections in India is consistently declining, experts say they cannot give a deadline on when the disease will become endemic. It will depend on the

demic would be a representative sero-survey (population-level survey of antibodies against SARS-CoV-2) and laboratory susceptibility studies, said Dr Amit Singh, associate professor, Centre for Infectious Disease at the Indian Institute of Science-Bangalore.

"We can say that the disease is endemic only after we see that a majority of the people have immunity against the infection either through previous exposure or vaccination. If a representative sero-survey shows over 90% positivity, we can assume that. But we also need to see whether these antibodies can effectively protect against the cur-

people in 2020. Ten million fell ill with tuberculosis that same year and 1.5 million died. Endemic certainly does not mean that evolution has somehow tamed a pathogen so that life simply returns to normal." He added, "Nor does it suggest guaranteed stability: there can still be disruptive waves from endemic infections, as seen with the US measles outbreak in 2019."

Researchers are also wary of new variants emerging. Another Nature article on the virus's future course said, "The sky-high circulation of the Delta variant and the rise of Omicron - aided by inequitable vaccine roll-outs to lower-income countries and



becomes endemic, Dr Rakesh Mishra, former director of Centre For Cellular And Molecular Biology-Hyderabad which is one of the ten central labs of India's genomic surveil-

remove restrictions? If we live with the new normal, we will be protecting the economy as well. We don't know when a new variant might emerge. If we look at omicron, it did not

the United Kingdom, Delta was first found in India and Omicron in southern Africa - all places where spread was rampant," Dr Katzourakis wrote in the Nature editorial.

Villagers, Incensed With Wrong Ballot Paper Folding, Throw Vote Box Into Pond



Dozens of people barged into the polling chamber and started ransacking the booth

Bhadrak, Feb 20: Tension ran high at booth no-IV of Kolha Panchayat in Bhadrak district as irate locals assaulted the presiding officer and threw the ballot box into a nearby pond during polling of votes in the third phase of Panchayat elections on Sunday.

According to sources, the voting in the area went on un-

eventfully till the closing hour, however, after 1pm, the officers at the booth were about to seal the ballot box when dozens of people barged into the polling chamber and started ransacking the booth. The incensed people also attacked the presiding officer Narendra Prasad Behera and other staff present in the booth while throwing the bal-

lot box into a nearby pond.

Wrong folding of the ballot papers is said to be the reason that exasperated the villagers.

"After the closing hour for voting, we were going to seal the ballot box, just when some 50 to 100 people entered into the booth and started attacking us. They ransacked the furniture and decamped with

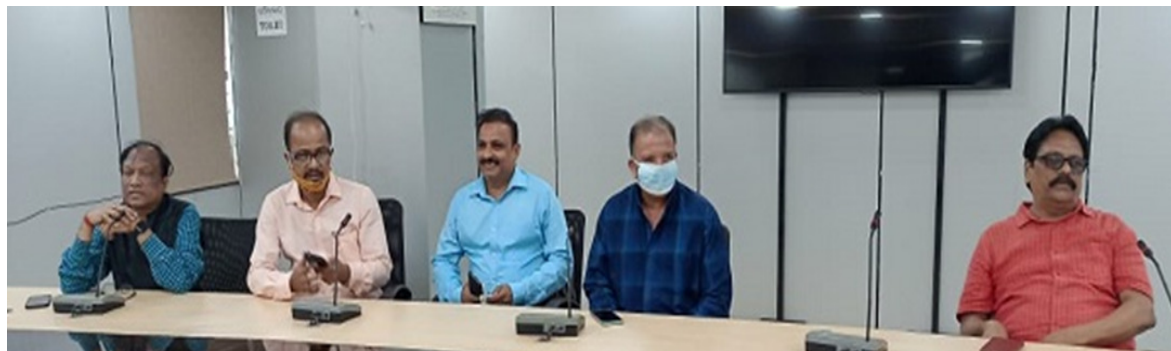
the ballot box and other documents," recounted presiding officer Narendra Prasad Behera.

Police reached the spot but failed in their attempts to pacify the enraged people. The irate people instead detained the police van. Later, administrative officers also reached the village to take stock of the situation.

Bhadrak Sub-Collector Manoj Patra said, "Due to wrong folding of the ballot papers, several votes were wrongfully cast, particularly in case of Sarpanch post. The incident was immediately informed to the district Collector who asked us to go on with the polling for all the posts except for Sarpanch post. The same was also intimated to the polling officer."

"However, angry people staged a roadblock demanding fresh poll at booth numbers - IV and V. We have recommended the same," Patra added.

Journalist delegate meets SEC, demand action



Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: A team of journalists met State Election Commissioner (SEC), Odisha over the attack on scribes and demanded stringent action against the accused persons on Sunday.

The journalists' team, which included the Chief Editors of different media houses and senior freelancers, demanded that all the accused persons should be arrested by this evening and FIRs should be filed against them under relevant IPC

sections which are usually applied while the polling officials are attacked.

The journalists' team also demanded the security of the media persons while on Panchayat election duty.

Earlier today, three journalists namely Debashis Sahoo, Gulshan Ali Nawaz and Bijay Sahoo from leading private Odia channels were brutally assaulted while covering the third phase of Panchayat polls in Jajpur district on Sunday.

Meanwhile, State Election Commissioner, Odisha AP Padhi condemned the attack on journalists during polling of votes in Panchayat Elections in Jajpur. He also directed the district administration and DG Police to arrest and take exemplary action against the accused persons.

They were beaten up when they had gone to cover the alleged loot of ballot boxes from two booths no 4 and 6 at Bachala Panchayat under

Binjharpur block of the district. The miscreants reportedly threw the boxes in a nearby pond. The vehicles of the journalists were also reportedly ransacked.

It is to be noted here that on February 16, four journalists were brutally assaulted by miscreants, who were trying to capture a booth by force, during the first phase of polling for the three-tier Panchayat elections at Badal Panchayat under Kanas block in Puri.

List of countries that have been untouched by COVID

The spread of coronavirus took us all by surprise and the speed at which it has spread all over the world is alarming. So much so that it is hard to comprehend that the world still has Covid free countries. Some countries have managed to stave off a coronavirus pandemic since it began in early 2020. Although these countries are reporting zero cases, that does not rule out that some cases may have flu under the radar.

The UN officially recognizes 193 countries out of which only four countries have not confirmed any cases of Covid-19.

List of countries without coronavirus:

North Korea, Asia:

North Korea was the first country to close its borders. North Korean authorities report zero cases of the pandemic yet.

The country closed its borders on January 21 and hasn't re-opened since. It then implemented strict measures all over the country.



Turkmenistan, Asia:

Turkmenistan is a country in Central Asia. Most of its land borders were closed a month ago and many flights were cancelled.

According to rumors, it was brought to the media's attention that the country had allegedly 'banned' the word Coronavirus. However, this wasn't exactly true.

Tuvalu, Oceania:

It is one of the least visited countries in the world. It sees fewer than 200 tourists per year. This was probably a massive help in preventing an outbreak in this country with a very small population.

Nauru, Oceania: A country with a total population of around 10,823 people is so small that one can walk the whole country in one day.

It holds the record for being one of the least visited countries in the world.

From Page-1

Odisha Urban...

to urban local bodies were overdue since December 2018 and in some cases from July 2019.

Schedule:

Issue of Notice: February 28

Filing of Nominations-From March 2 to March 7

Scrutiny: March 9

Withdrawal of nominations: Upto March 14

Voting: March 24

Counting of votes: March 26

Election of Deputy Mayor: April 8

Vice Chairperson Election: April 7

Details:

106 municipalities/NACs (47 municipalities and 59 NACs)

Total number of wards: 1731

Total booths: 3030

Total Voters: Over 27 lakh

3 Municipal Corporations

Total number of wards: 168

Total booths: 1407

Voters: Over 14 lakh

Key Highlights

There will direct elections for the post of Mayor in corporation area and chairpersons in municipalities/NACs.

-Two EVMs will be used in each booth- one to elect Mayor and another for corporators and councillors.

-There will be none-of-the-above (NOTA) option for voters in the EVMs.

Cabinet allows up to 20% FDI in LIC ahead of IPO

The decision has been taken keeping the enormous size of the IPO and feedback from issue advisors, and interests of the global investor community in mind, they said requesting anonymity.

New Delhi, Feb 27: The Union cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday allowed up to 20% foreign direct investment (FDI) in state-run Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) under the automatic route, paving the way for participation of overseas funds in one of the country's biggest initial public offerings (IPOs), expected next month, two officials aware of the development said.

The decision has been taken keeping the enormous size of the IPO and feedback from issue advisors, and interests of the global investor community in mind, they said requesting anonymity. The automatic route is non-restrictive for foreign investors as under this arrangement they do not require prior government approval.

One of the officials said the FDI provisions, however, ensure that the government's ownership and management control remain intact. "According to the LIC Amendment Act, GoI [Government of India] has to always keep majority ownership and control of 51% and above. There are also single investor restrictions in the

Act," he said.

Cabinet decisions

"In order to enable FIIs/FPIs [foreign institutional investors/foreign portfolio investors], specific enablement was necessary in FDI policy," he added. As LIC is a statutory corporation established under

tutional and retail investors, including LIC policyholders and employees, a second official said. According to analysts, the value of the IPO is estimated around ₹65,000 crore. Its embedded value is pegged at ₹5.4 lakh crore. The DRHP does not, however, disclose the

terms of its robust economic growth. Investors would like to invest in India for political and economic stability," he added.

According to the DRHP, LIC's IPO involves over 316 million shares or 5% government stake. According to the second official, all efforts are in the direction to conclude this transaction by March 31. Discounts are expected for retail investors such as policyholders of LIC, he added.

Earlier, Tuhin Kanta Pandey, secretary at the department of investment and public asset management (DIPAM), told HT that LIC policyholders are likely to get a discount to buy shares in the IPO.

LIC is India's leading insurance company, with more than ₹30 lakh crore in assets under management. The number of individuals paying premium for life policies was more than 210 million as on February 28, 2021, official data showed. Its market share in terms of the number of policies issued was 74.58% and 66.18% in terms of first-year premium income in 2020-21.



the LIC Act, 1956 with 100% government's shareholding, the law did not have any specific provision for foreign investment in the insurer. The move is in line with existing FDI norms for the insurance sector.

The government on February 13 filed the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) to sell 5% of its equity stake in LIC next month while allowing participation of all types of insti-

market valuation of LIC. According to analysts it could be about around Rs.16 lakh crore.

The Cabinet nod will pave the way for the government to launch roadshows with foreign investors in key countries, the second official said, who ruled out any significant impact of the current Russia-Ukraine crisis on the investors' sentiment. "In fact, India is better positioned both strategically as well as in

India monitoring energy market, will release crude from strategic reserves if needed



New Delhi, Feb 26: Global crude oil prices rose to \$105 a barrel, the highest in almost seven years, after Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24 over supply concerns. Crude did come off the highs but industry watchers expect the upward trend to continue on concerns over likely disruption in supply and in the situation in Ukraine.

"Government of India is closely monitoring global energy markets as well as potential energy supply disruptions as a fall out of the evolving geopolitical situation," the Centre said in statement.

"With a view to ensuring energy justice for its citizens and for just energy transition towards a net zero future, India stands ready to take appropriate action for ensuring ongoing supplies at stable prices," it said.

SPR are stockpiles of crude oil held by the government or a private industry for use in times of crisis or an emergency.

The government through Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Ltd set up SPRs at three locations in the first phase with a capacity of 5.33 million metric tonnes (MMT) at Visakhapatnam (1.33 MMT), Mangalore (1.50 MMT) and Padur (2.5 MMT).

These three reserves can together meet India's demand for 9.5 days. The government has also approved building of SPR facilities at two Chandikhol (4 MMT) in Odisha and Padur (2.5 MMT) in Tamil Nadu, which can take care of an-

other 12 days of India's needs.

"India is also committed to supporting initiatives for releases from strategic petroleum reserves for mitigating market volatility and calming the rise in crude oil prices," the government said.

A government official told Moneycontrol that the situation was being monitored to assess when and how much crude oil could be released.

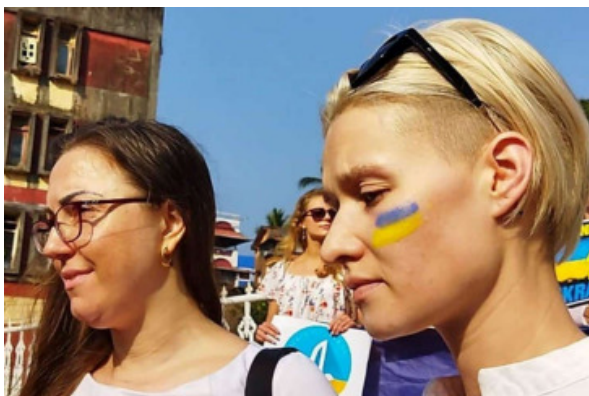
Countries release crude oil from these reserves in coordinated moves at times when prices soar due to unusual circumstances.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries has kept supply tight by cutting production and the escalating geopolitical tensions have aggravated worries of the situation taking a turn for the worst.

India meets around 85 percent of its fuel demand through imports. Costlier crude means higher import bill that can inflate the current account deficit and widen the fiscal deficit. It will also put push up inflation, increase the cost of inputs for various industries and make transportation expensive.

"In such a scenario, India, Thailand and the Philippines are the biggest losers, while Indonesia would be a relative beneficiary," analysts at Nomura Securities said in a note highlighting the risk Russia-Ukraine conflict poses to Asian countries that rely heavily on oil imports.

Stranded in Goa, Ukrainian Tourists Plead for Refugee Status from Indian Govt



Panaji, Feb 25: The protestors who were holding Ukrainian flags and had painted the national flag on their faces,

chanted slogans such as 'Stand by Ukraine' while holding 'Say No To War' banners.

Speaking to reporters, a Ukrai-

War in Ukraine: Stranded in Goa, Ukrainian Tourists Plead for Refugee Status from Indian Govt

nian national said, "India is a powerful nation in the global arena. Hence we seek India's support and help Ukraine." Commenting on the European Union (EU) led sanctions; another Ukrainian National said that more needs to be done. "My mother is in a bunker. There are bombings taking place. We need to do more than the current sanctions" she said.

Another national from Ukraine said, "We can't go back to our country. Hence we ask the Indian government to give us refugee status and also ask Russia to step back" According to the protestors, there are about 400 to 600 Ukrainian nationals in Goa but some have continued to stay back in the coastal state. The protestors included several children as well.

Russia attacks Ukraine: Modi tells Putin to end violence; Biden says US in talks with India

According to the Prime Minister's Office, Putin 'briefed Modi about the recent developments regarding Ukraine'



Ukrainian servicemen sit atop armored personnel carriers driving on a road

As a stunned world watched the Russian attack unfold in Ukraine and key US and European leaders condemned the invasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called up Russian President Vladimir Putin and "appealed for an immediate cessation of violence".

This is an important signal to the Western bloc which has been pressing on India to condemn the Russian action. US President Joe Biden has called it "unprovoked and unjustified

attack by Russian military forces" while British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has called it "barbaric" saying Putin's hands were stained with Ukraine's blood.

According to the Prime Minister's Office, Putin "briefed Modi about the recent developments regarding Ukraine".

"Prime Minister reiterated his long-standing conviction that the differences between Russia and the NATO group can only be resolved through

honest and sincere dialogue. The Prime Minister appealed for an immediate cessation of violence, and called for concerted efforts from all sides to return to the path of diplomatic negotiations and dialogue," the PMO said.

After the call, in Washington, asked by PTI if India was in sync with the US on the issue, US President Joe Biden said that "we are in consultations (with India) today, we haven't resolved that yet."

Significantly, for the first

time, India is framing the conflict as one between Russia and what it calls the "NATO group", not just Russia and Ukraine. In a statement on the call late Thursday night, Kremlin said that Putin "outlined the fundamental assessments of Kiev's aggressive actions against the civilian population of Donbass" and many years of a "destructive policy" meant to break the Minsk agreements. It added that Modi thanked Putin for the "clarification" and asked for assistance in ensuring the security of Indian citizens in Ukraine. The Russian President said that "necessary instructions" would be given, the statement said.

While India has been advocating for diplomacy for a while, its call for "immediate cessation of violence" gives a signal to the West that Delhi is not in favour of war.

Sources said the fact that the "call" and the "appeal" for "cessation of violence" was first made to Putin rather than a Western leader also signals that it's the Russian side that has initiated the war and it's

up to Putin to find a way out. This has been the position of the Western bloc led by the US as well.

The PM's call came after he chaired the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security with top ministers including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, and NSA Ajit Doval.

In his chat with Putin, Modi flagged concerns regarding the safety of Indian citizens in Ukraine, especially students, and "conveyed that India attaches the highest priority to their safe exit and return to India".

The leaders agreed that their officials and diplomatic teams would continue to maintain regular contact on issues of topical interest, the PMO statement said.

So far, India had waited and watched. But, with the PM's phone call to Putin, it has signalled to both sides its intent to dial down the temperature. Jaishankar also spoke to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and is expected to talk

to his Ukrainian counterpart as well.

Before the call, New Delhi's only statement came at 8.36 am (IST) Thursday, around the same time the attacks started, in which it expressed "regret" - a notch higher than expressing "concern" but stopping short of condemnation.

Earlier, Jaishankar got calls from European Union's High Representative on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (equivalent to Foreign Minister) and British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss in which, it is learnt, they tried to lean on Delhi.

In New Delhi, German Ambassador Walter J Lindner tweeted: "Ambassadors of G7 countries & Ukraine (UKR) in Delhi met today to express their solidarity with people of UKR & to exchange information on Russia's unjustifiable military aggression (GER currently holds G7 presidency). This is a moment to stand up for peace, rule-based order & international law!"

Rudderless BJP stares at washout

The few tribal districts including Mayurbhanj which had been favouring the BJP have also shown the door to the party

BHUBANESWAR, Feb 27: If the early trends in the counting of votes to 315 zilla parishad (ZP) zones are any indication, Chief Minister and BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik has once again demolished the dreams of the saffron party of coming to power in the State in the near future.

With the BJD heading for a clean sweep and the Congress improving its position, the BJP's claim of improving its 2017 tally has not only fallen flat but also exposed

the growing divide among the top leaders of the party. What has come as a shock to the BJP is that the BJD has made massive inroads in western Odisha and some other pockets where the saffron party had a strong base.

The few tribal districts including Mayurbhanj which had been favouring the BJP have also shown the door to the party.

"The inevitable has happened. We were no match for the BJD from the beginning. The top leaders left the

State BJP president Samir Mohanty and his team in the lurch when their assistance was needed the most," summed up a party insider.

On the poor performance of the party in western Odisha, he said this is primarily due to two reasons. There has been resentment among the people for not taking any of the MPs in the Union council of ministers. Had the State party president been from western Odisha, things could have been different.



The dominance of coastal Odisha leaders in the party structure has not gone well with them. Since key leaders from western Odisha are kept out of the decision-making process, a gulf is bound

to happen and the poll result is for everyone to see.

"The BJP fought this election without any top leaders who could match the stature of the Chief Minister. All the MPs were indif-

ferent to this election from the beginning. In a nutshell, there was no coordination among the party and its leaders," said another State functionary.

The 2017 elections were fought under the leadership of Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. The party fought the election unitedly and the booth committees, the major driving force during electioneering, worked in the most dedicated manner. This was visibly missing this time.

219 Indians land in Mumbai as Centre steps up evacuation ops

New Delhi, Feb 26: India on Saturday evacuated the first group of 219 Indian nationals from Ukraine via Romania and stepped up efforts to get out more citizens through the land borders of neighbouring countries.

The first chartered flight from

cilitate the evacuation.

The Indian embassy in Kyiv on Saturday advised Indian nationals not to move to any of the designated border posts without prior co-ordination with Indian officials deployed at these locations.

A student evacuated from Ukraine on a special flight is kissed by a relative as she exits the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai on February 26.



the Romanian capital Bucharest landed in Mumbai shortly after Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised the safety and security of Indian nationals in Ukraine during a phone call with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Modi sought facilitation by Ukrainian authorities to "expeditiously and safely evacuate Indian citizens", the external affairs ministry said. A second chartered flight from Bucharest with 250 Indians on board was set to reach New Delhi at 3 am on Sunday. A third chartered flight from the Hungarian capital Budapest was expected later on Sunday. External affairs minister S Jaishankar said in a tweet that the evacuation efforts had been named Operation Ganga. Commerce minister Piyush Goyal greeted the Indians who returned on the flight to Mumbai.

As of earlier this week, there were some 16,000 Indians, most of them students, in different parts of Ukraine. Following the closure of Ukrainian airspace after Russia's attacks on the country, Indian nationals have been asked to move to designated crossings on the borders with Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary. The Indian side is co-ordinating with authorities in these four countries to fa-

"The situation at various border checkpoints is sensitive and the embassy is working continuously with our embassies in...neighbouring countries for coordinated evacuation of our citizens," the mission said in an advisory.

The embassy said it is "finding it increasingly difficult to help the crossing of those Indian nationals who reach border checkpoints without prior intimation".

The advisory said it was "relatively safer and advisable" for Indians to stay in cities in western Ukraine, with access to food, water, accommodation and basic amenities, "compared to reaching border check points without being fully abreast of the situation".

Indian nationals in eastern Ukraine were asked to "remain in their current places of residence until further instructions, maintain calm, and stay indoors or in shelters as much as possible". The embassy asked Indians in this sector to remain patient and to avoid unnecessary movement.

"We once again remind you to exercise caution at all times, be aware of your surroundings and the recent developments," the advisory added.

Odisha panchayat polls: Ruling BJD leading, BJP distant second



Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: The counting for 315 ZPZ seats is being conducted on Saturday. The counting for another 307 ZP zones will be held on February 27 and the results of the remaining 229 ZP zones will be declared on February 28.

The 2017 panchayat elections in the state had marked the entry of the BJP as a strong contender in the state. The BJP had made inroads particularly in the western districts of the state, such as Balangir, Bargarh, Deogarh, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Nuapada,

Sambalpur and Subarnapur. The trends this time, however, show the BJP ceding ground in the western districts. The BJD maintained leads in all of the ZP zones in the said districts. For instance, in Balangir, the BJD was leading in 12 ZP zones while the BJP in two of the 34 seats. In Deogarh, the BJD was leading in three of seven ZP zone. In 2017, the BJP had managed to win 58 zones of the 111, the BJD 37 and the Congress 16. Two years later in 2019, the BJP won from all the four Lok Sabha seats in western

The ruling Biju Janata Dal is leading in 274 Zilla Parishad Zone (ZPZ) seats while BJP candidates are ahead in 20 and the Congress in 16 seats as per latest trends of Odisha panchayat polls, officials said on Saturday. The counting of votes for 315 ZPZ seats began in different block headquarters at 8am on Saturday under strict adherence to Covid-19 guidelines, State Election Commission (SEC) officials said.

Odisha - Bargarh, Sambalpur, Balangir and. But it was the BJD that dominated in the Assembly election that same year, winning 17 of the 24 seats in the region, followed by the BJP with four seats and the Congress with three.

A total of 36,523 ward members, 126 sarpanch, 326 panchayat samiti members, and one Zilla Parishad member were declared winners without contest. A total of 2.2 lakh candidates had contested in the elections.

The State Election Commission had also announced

that in case any discrepancies found between the ballot paper account prepared by the presiding officer and actual ballot papers in the ballot box, the actual ballot papers found in the ballot box shall be taken into account and accordingly counting will be done and results announced, SEC secretary R N Sahu said.

The polling was held in five different phases on February 16, 18, 20, 22, and 24. The overall voter turnout was 78.6 per cent this time, slightly better than the 78.03 per cent in 2017.

Daughter of Puri's King Ties Knot With Noted Businessman from Burdwan Royal Family

Puri, Feb 9: The marriage ceremony of Devshee Devi, the youngest daughter of Puri Gajapati Divyasingh Deb, was held at a luxurious hotel in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday. Devshee married a noted businessman Aditya Kehr, a descendant of the Burdwan Royal family.

Devshee is the youngest of the four daughters of the Puri King Divyasingh Deb and Lilabati Patta Mahadevi while the groom is the son of Gurugram's Rajiv Kehr and Nisha Mahtab Kehr. Around 80 guests from the groom's side arrived in Bhubaneswar to attend the royal wedding ceremony. Pattamudi, Tilak



Devshee is the youngest of the four daughters of the Puri King Divyasingh Deb and Lilabati Patta Mahadevi

and Handimangula rituals were performed on the eve of marriage. Prabin Parida, PS to Puri Gajapati Maharaja, said, "Nearabout 40 delegates from groom side reached here. Mahaprasad has offered to all."

Special arrangements were made at the Shree Naara

(the king's palace) and also at a hotel in Bhubaneswar. Officials of the Shree Jagannath temple administration, members of the temple management committee and temple servitors have been invited to attend the wedding ceremony at Shree Naara.

"We feel proud to perform the royal wedding ceremony. It is a memorable day for us. The ceremony performed as per the royal rituals by following the covid protocols strictly," said senior servitor Madhab Mohapatra.

All traditional events in the palace are related to the Jagannath temple and its culture. Puri Gajapati Divyasingh Deb is known as adya sevak of Lord Jagannath (1st and foremost servitor). As per the tradition and rituals, Divyasingh Deb performs chhera Pahanra (sweep rath) during the car festival both in Gundicha Yatra and Bahuda Yatra (returning festival) every year.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy, The Former Comedian Who Accidentally Became The President Of Ukraine



Over the past few days, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy who is leading his country's fightback against the invading Russian troops has won many admirers across the world.

This is something Zelenskyy, who now says he is Russia's target no 1, could not imagine a few years ago when he made his political plunge.

Who is he?

The 44-year-old, who became the President of Ukraine

in 2019, did not come from a political background and was an outsider in the power circles of the country.

Zelenskyy who was born to Jewish parents in Ukrainian, which as a part of the USSR began his career as an actor and a comedian.

Though he came from a Russian-speaking background he acted in both Russian and Ukrainian language moves and TV shows, including those produced by his produc-

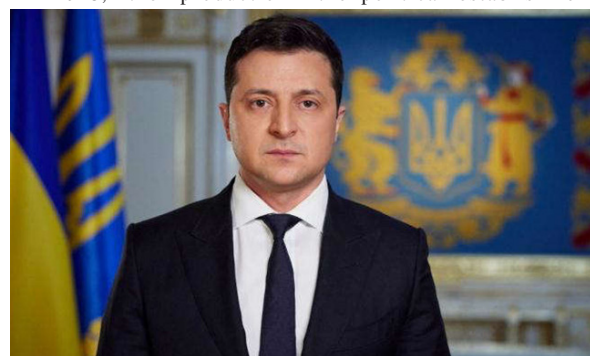
tion house.

His most notable role came in 2015 when Zelenskyy starred in the television series *Servant of the People*. In this, he played the role of a high-school history teacher then went on to win the presidential election after a viral video showed him ranting against the government of Ukraine.

In 2018, the production

house behind his hit TV series registered a political party by the same name - *Servant of the People* and on December 31, Zelenskyy announced his intention to run for President.

Though initially many did not take him seriously and felt it was a joke, Zelenskyy's populist messages and stands against the deep-rooted corruption in the political establishment



And in no time, Zelenskyy who did not even hold public political campaigns became the frontrunner in the election.



Servant Of The People

resonated with a large section of the Ukrainian people.

Won over 70% of votes

In May 2019, he defeated incumbent President Petro Poroshenko winning 73.2 per cent of the vote in the second round. Ever since the start of the war, Zelenskyy has been doing everything in his power to put up a fight back.

Zelenskyy renewed assurance Saturday that the country's military would stand up to the

Russian invasion. In a video recorded on a downtown Kyiv Street, he said he remained in the city and that claims the Ukrainian military would put down arms were false.

"We aren't going to lay down weapons. We will protect the country," the Ukrainian president said. "Our weapon is our truth, and our truth is that it's our land, our country, our children. And we will defend all of that."

Tsai Ing-wen President of Taiwan



Tsai Ing-wen, (born August 31, 1956, Fang-shan township, P'ing-tung county, Taiwan), politician who is the first female president of Taiwan.

Tsai, who was of Hakka descent, was one of nine children born to a wealthy business family. She spent her early childhood in coastal southern Taiwan before going to Taipei, where she completed her education. She received a law degree (1978) from National Tai-

wan University in Taipei and then attended Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, and the London School of Economics, earning, respectively, master's (1980) and doctorate (1984) degrees in law. Tsai then returned to Taiwan, where until 2000 she taught law at universities in Taipei.

Tsai became involved in government service in the early 1990s when she was appointed as a trade-policy adviser in the

administration of Pres. Lee Teng-hui. A significant achievement during that time was her major role in the negotiations that paved the way for Taiwan to join (2002) the World Trade Organization. In 2000, after Chen Shui-bian of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) became president of Taiwan, he appointed Tsai as chair of the Mainland Affairs Council. That organization, which was responsible for relations between Taiwan and China, faced significant challenges during Chen's administration (2000-08) because of the DPP's resistance to China and because of its advocacy of Taiwanese independence.

In 2004 Tsai joined the DPP and was elected as a member-at-large to Taiwan's national legislature. She resigned her seat in early 2006 when she was appointed vice-premier of Taiwan. She remained in that post until May 2007. In 2008, following the DPP's loss in Taiwan's presidential election, Tsai was chosen as the first woman president of the party. She successfully rebuilt the DPP after its defeat and was reelected to the post in 2010. Tsai ran unsuccessfully against Eric Chu of the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, or KMT) for mayor of New Taipei City, and she also lost the 2012 presi-

dential race against incumbent Ma Ying-jeou. Despite those setbacks, Tsai was seen as a respectable and electable candidate. Her popularity only increased during the second Ma administration as the KMT-dominated government became mired in corruption and ineptitude.

Tsai had resigned the DPP leadership in 2012 for her presidential run, but she was re-elected party president in 2014. The party again nominated Tsai as its candidate for the 2016 presidential election. Her campaign focused on the poor governing performance of the KMT, that party's increasingly cordial relations with China, and the continued poor performance of Taiwan's economy. On January 16, 2016, she soundly defeated Chu, and she was inaugurated on May 20. In addition to being Taiwan's first woman president, Tsai also became only the second person to win the presidency who was not a member of the KMT. In addition, she was the first person with ancestry in one of Taiwan's ethnic minorities (Hakka) to attain that office. Following her victory she sought to assure a concerned China that she would maintain cordial relations with the mainland.

In December 2016 the delicate

balance of Taiwan-China relations was disturbed when Tsai placed a telephone call to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, who overturned several decades of diplomatic protocol by becoming the first U.S. chief executive to speak with his Taiwanese counterpart since 1979. Their conversation appeared to belie the longstanding absence of formal diplomatic relations between Taiwan and the United States, prompting China to make a formal complaint to the U.S. government. Although Tsai and Trump would later say that their call did not indicate a policy shift, by 2019 the Trump administration had committed to major arms sales to Taiwan that included, tanks, missiles, and jet fighters. Taiwan's economy grew slowly under Tsai's stewardship, but in 2019 it was robust enough to have achieved greater growth than that of regional competitors South Korea and Hong Kong. Still, wage gains were minimal, and wealth inequality grew. Having championed unpopular reforms to Taiwan's energy and pension policies, Tsai witnessed a considerable drop in her popularity as the 2020 presidential election approached.

Her strong commitment to Taiwan's independence and sovereignty resonated loudly

with Taiwanese voters; however, as they watched huge throngs of pro-democracy demonstrators in Hong Kong push back for months against the imposition of increasingly authoritarian rule by Beijing. In the January 2020 election, Tsai won a second term by trouncing her KMT opponent, Han Kuo-yu, who advocated greater engagement with China. When the results were tabulated, some 57 percent of the total vote had gone to Tsai, about 39 percent to Han, and little more than 4 percent to James Soong, the standard-bearer for the People First Party.

Her strong commitment to Taiwan's independence and sovereignty resonated loudly with Taiwanese voters, however, as they watched huge throngs of pro-democracy demonstrators in Hong Kong push back for months against the imposition of increasingly authoritarian rule by Beijing. In the January 2020 election, Tsai won a second term by trouncing her KMT opponent, Han Kuo-yu, who advocated greater engagement with China. When the results were tabulated, some 57 percent of the total vote had gone to Tsai, about 39 percent to Han, and little more than 4 percent to James Soong, the standard-bearer for the People First Party.

India's tightrope walk between the West and Russia

India is in a diplomatic dilemma with key strategic partners on both sides

Amid the Russian attack on Ukraine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed for an "immediate cessation of violence" in his phone call to Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday and called for concerted efforts from all sides to return to the path of diplomatic negotiations and dialogue.

He expressed his "long-standing conviction that the differences between Russia and the NATO group can only be resolved through honest and sincere dialogue", the PMO said.

This was a fine balancing act as it called for "immediate cessation of violence" - something the Western bloc would appreciate. India is in a diplomatic dilemma with key strategic partners on both sides. Modi held a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security on Thursday to take stock of the situation.

Earlier in the day, India expressed "regret" - an upgrade from expressing "concern", but stopped short of condemnation of Russia's attack on Ukraine. External Affairs minister S Jaishankar got calls from the European Union's High Representative on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell and British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss.



The ambassadors of the G7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, and US) and Ukraine met in Delhi to express solidarity on what they called "Russia's unjustifiable military aggression".

With pressure piling from the western bloc, led by the US, this is a test for New Delhi to make a strategic choice - principles and values on one side, and pragmatism and interests on the other side.

Statement at UNSC

India's statement at the UN Security Council, made in an emergency meeting, said, "The Security Council had met two days ago and discussed the situation. We had called for urgent de-escalation of tensions and emphasized on sustained and focused diplomacy to address all issues concerning the situation."

At the meeting, India's

Permanent Representative at the UN T S Tirumurti said, "However, we note with regret, that the calls of the international community to give time to the recent initiatives undertaken by parties to diffuse tensions were not heeded to. The situation is in danger of spiralling into a major crisis. We express our deep concern over the developments, which if not handled carefully, may well undermine the peace and security of the region." He called for "immediate de-escalation and refraining from any further action that could contribute to a worsening of the situation".

The rest of his statement was about advocating diplomacy. The West views this as condoning Russia's actions and as double standards given that India raises the issue of "territorial integ-

rity and sovereignty" when it comes to China. Earlier this week, India had not condemned Russia's statement of recognition of the separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Partners on both sides

While there is concern about Russia's "muscle-flexing", New Delhi does not want to jeopardise the close military ties with Moscow. Although India has diversified its new purchases from other countries, almost 60-70% of its military supplies are from Russia. India has a historical relationship with Russia, spanning seven decades. While the relationship has stagnated in some areas and atrophied in others, its strongest pillar is of the defence basket.

In fact, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has held informal summits with

only leaders of two countries - Putin and China's Xi.

India can't afford to alienate Russia particularly when Indian and Chinese troops remain in a border stand-off. Russia has emerged as a key diplomatic player amid the tension. India's External Affairs and Defence ministers have met their Chinese counterparts in Russia in the last year and half. Russia is also key to India's engagements in Afghanistan.

India's ties with the West, led by the US, are crucial as well. Many American platforms have been used for reconnaissance and surveillance along the India-China border. Winter clothing for 50,000 troops has been sourced from these western strategic partners.

Russia-China axis

India is worried about the Russia-China axis too. Its purchase of the S-400 air defence system from Russia is aimed at preventing attacks from China and Pakistan. India is also conscious that the hostility between the West and Russia is likely to push Moscow further in the direction of Beijing.

The West's approach towards Russia after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 brought Moscow

closer to Beijing, and India has always felt it was the West that led to this. The Sino-Russian quasi-alliance has been possible due to anti-Chinese rhetoric from Washington, collapse of oil prices, and Russia's growing dependence on Chinese consumption.

Russia has been calibrated in its statements on issues China is sensitive to, such as Huawei's 5G rollout, Hong Kong and Covid-19. Beijing and Moscow, however, do not always see eye to eye with each other. China does not recognise Crimea as part of Russia, and Moscow, formally speaking, takes a neutral stance on Beijing's claims in the South China Sea.

Indians in Ukraine

Another concern for New Delhi is the Indian community in Ukraine, mostly medical students. The Indian Embassy in Kyiv has stated collating information on the students, as part of preparations for any hostilities. As per government estimates, about 16,000 Indian nationals are still in Ukraine - only about 4,000 students have been able to leave in the last few weeks. The government is trying to help many of them leave through land borders in neighbouring countries - Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovak Republic.

Badhaai Do



Avg. Users' Rating 4.3/5

CAST

Rajkummar Rao, Bhumi Pednekar, Chum Darang, Seema Pahwa, Sheeba Chaddha

DIRECTION

Harshvardhan Kulkarni

GENRE

Drama

DURATION

2 hours 27 minutes

cause his father died in the line of duty. He accepts the middle-class reality of not letting go of a 'government job' despite his heart not being in it. Sumi loves children and wants to be a mother. Both are lonely people at heart because they can't share their truth with their family. Their loneliness, their helplessness, as well as their angst is depicted here with great poignancy. The film points out that having a different sexual preference than what society perceives as being normal is just one facet of someone's personality. That their lives don't revolve around it. And hence they shouldn't be judged at all because of that. Those who love them should accept their reality and help them lead contented lives.

The film's treatment of romance between people of same-sex is the same follows the same tropes as most of our romantic films. A spark of attraction leads to passion, which further leads to compatibility and commitment. That's what happens in

towards love has more twists and turns but in the end, he too chances upon it.

Rajkummar Rao and Bhumi Pednekar are both sensitive actors and have essayed their roles being fully aware of the gravity of what they're representing. They're never out of sync, neither in their scenes together nor

of actors from the North-East has been minimal and let's hope she gets good roles in future as well. Gulshan Devaiah is a much-underutilised actor and one wished he had a bigger role in the film. Seema Pahwa and Sheeba Chaddha can now do caring mom/aunt roles with their eyes closed and are in their



In layman terms, a Lavender marriage happens when a gay man marries a lesbian woman to hide their respective sexual preferences from the world so that they can secretly lead a lifestyle they subscribe to. That's the basic premise of Badhaai 2. Policeman Shardul Thakur (Rajkummar Rao) gets married to physical education teacher Suman 'Sumi' Singh (Bhumi Pednekar). Shardul is gay and Sumi is lesbian. They both haven't come out to their respective parents and having crossed 30, they're under parental pressure to get married. Most of our films end with marriage, and the hero and the heroine supposedly live happily ever after. Badhaai 2 charts unknown territory in the sense that it tells you what happens after the ceremony. Shardul and Sumi start off as roommates and progress towards being friends and confidantes. They help one another out in each other's re-

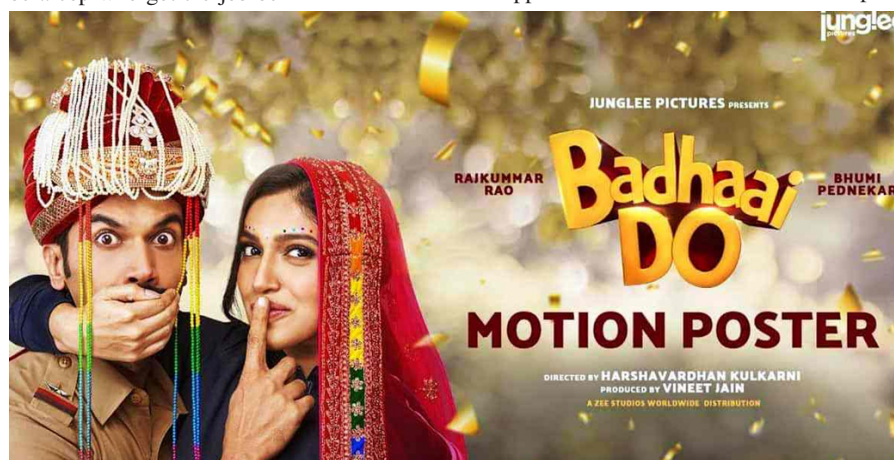
spective love stories. And become better people through this compromise. Take out the sexual bits and their relationship has all the hallmarks of a healthy marriage. LGBTQ representation in our film resorts to stereotypes. And more often than not gay characters are added for the comic effect. Thankfully, that isn't the case here. Shardul happens to be a cop who got the job be-

Sumi's life when she meets Rimjhim (Chum Darang). They fight, get jealous, make up and are there for each other in the hour of need. Shardul's path

in their individual scenes. Their characters have been written quite well. For example, Shardul is somewhat stingy and Sumi can be fiery when the mood takes her. Each individual quirk is played out well and adds to the whole. Their best scene together is a phone conversation where Shardul tells Sumi he's finally come out in front of their parents. He's crying his heart out and she too has tears in her eyes but at the same time, she's happy. In one word, both are simply brilliant. Chum Darang and later Gulshan Devaiah are the surprise elements of the film. Chum Darang makes her Bollywood debut with an unconventional role and kudos to her for that. The representation

element as usual.

The film makes a point that all kinds of love exists in the world and we shouldn't just pick one colour out of the rainbow but embrace the whole spectrum. Films are conversation starters and this sensitive film has brought out so many issues of the LGBTQ community out of the closet. It's a bold attempt, it's a healthy attempt and let's hope more filmmakers come forward to take the momentum forward. Three cheers to director Harshvardhan Kulkarni and his writing team for making us laugh and cry with the characters and not at them. And three cheers also to the producers for investing in this brave and honest effort.



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