



CLIMATE CRUSADER

Actor Dia Mirza shares a post about water scarcity in Instagram to observe World Water Day

LEISURE **P2**



INDO-PAK PEACE PLAN

India-Pakistan cease-fire marked a milestone in secret talks brokered by the UAE that began months earlier

INTERNATIONAL **P10**



1ST ODI TODAY

After winning T20I series, India look for a winning start when they take on England in the first ODI

SPORTS **P12**

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BHUBANESWAR | TUESDAY, MARCH 23 | 2021

12 PAGES | ₹4.00

Night curfew back in Malkangiri

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, March 22: The district administration Monday decided to clamp night curfew from Tuesday as part of a preventive measure to check the spread of Covid-19 following a steep rise in the number of cases in the state.

District Collector Y Vijay gave his approval to an order directing imposition of night curfew in the district. The order said the night curfew will remain in force in Malkangiri from 9 pm to 6 am from March 23 till March 31, 2021. During the enforcement of the night curfew, movement of in-



dividuals shall be strictly prohibited except for essential activities.

Notably, 146 new Covid-19 cases

were recorded in the state over last 24 hours, the maximum over last 40 days. Speculations are rife that similar measures might be extended in other parts of the state as well.

The district administration also restricted the number of people in meetings, theatres, operas and cinemas to 200 during the prevalence of the night curfew.

People were barred from participating in Dola Purnima and Holi festivals at public places scheduled for March 28 and 29 and to keep their celebrations confined. 'Dola Melans' are allowed with 50 participants with strict adherence to Covid-complaint

behaviors and norms.

The district administration has restricted the number of participants to 200 in the 'Bada Yatra' festival currently being held in the district. This apart, residents have been asked to abide by the Covid-19 restrictions of wearing face masks and maintaining a minimum social distance of 6-ft.

This apart, the SP has been asked to keep a watch on the entry and exit points of Bada Yatra festival and to ensure that devotees participating in the festival abide by the Covid-19 norms.

The temple managements in the district have been asked not to allow large assemblage of devotees on their temple premises and any violation of the order will be severely dealt with. Religious rituals in temples will continue as usual with strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols.

Earlier in the day, the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) PK Jena said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will take stock of the pandemic situation at a review meeting Tuesday to decide on the next course of action for containment of the spread.

BMC SEALS XIMB CAMPUS



BHUBANESWAR: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation on Monday sealed the campus of Xavier Institute of Management Bhubaneswar after the detection of 23 Covid-19 cases. "In the larger public interest and to contain the further spread of the virus, the entire XIMB institute campus is hereby sealed until further order," said the Bhubaneswar civic body in an order. According to the order, no one shall be allowed to move into or from outside the XIMB campus except an authorised person of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation. All the inhabitants within the campus if any shall strictly remain inside. The supply of essentials and medical requirements if required will be ensured by Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation. All other institutions located within the boundary of the campus is hereby closed forthwith, the order said. The corporation said that all the staff and students of the institution shall have to undergo mandatory Covid-19 testing on March 22. The detected positive cases are to be kept in isolation in separate rooms of a single hostel and be kept in strict observation by the institute authority. Odisha reported 146 new positive cases in the last 24 hours with Khordha registering the maximum 35 cases followed by Cuttack (25) and Mayurbhanj (13). While 87 cases have been detected from quarantine, 59 are local contracts, informed the health department.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Ministers can't resign based on corruption charges. If that's the case, there'll be none left to run govt!

SHORT TAKES

4 LeT men killed

Srinagar: Four Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants were killed in an encounter with security forces Monday in Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said. Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in Manihai area of the district around midnight, following information about the presence of militants there.

Respite for Future

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court Monday stayed the recent single bench order upholding the Singapore Emergency Award and stalling Future Retail from going ahead with the ₹24,713 crore deal with Reliance Retail. The bench also stayed ₹20 lakh fine and the show cause notice to the Biyanis. **P11**

| MARKET WATCH | | | |
|--------------|----------|-----------|-------|
| INDEX | | VARIATION | |
| SENSEX | 49771.29 | ↓ | 86.95 |
| NIFTY | 14736.40 | ↓ | 7.60 |
| DOLLAR | 73.13 | ↓ | ₹0.15 |
| EURO | 86.75 | ↓ | ₹0.33 |
| GOLD | ₹44,828 | ↓ | ₹193 |
| SILVER | ₹66,198 | ↓ | ₹1329 |

| WEATHER | | | |
|----------|--------|--------|-------------------------------|
| | BHUB | CTK | |
| MAX | 40.2°C | 39.0°C | Forecast Partly cloudy sky |
| MIN | 25.0°C | 23.5°C | |
| Humidity | 63% | 72% | |
| Rainfall | Nil | Nil | |

Central tax on fuel jumps 300% in 6 yrs

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 22: Central government's tax collections on petrol and diesel have jumped over 300 per cent in the last six years as excise duty on the two fuels was hiked, the Lok Sabha was informed Monday.

The central government collected ₹29,279 crore from excise duty on petrol and ₹42,881 crore on diesel in 2014-15 – the first year of office of the Modi government.

The collections on petrol and diesel rose to ₹ 2.94 lakh crore in the first 10 months of the current fiscal (2020-21), according to information furnished by Minister of State Anurag Singh Thakur in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha. Together with excise duty on natural gas, the central government in 2014-15 collected ₹74,158 crore which has gone up to ₹2.95 lakh crore in April 2020 to January 2021 period.

He said taxes collected on petrol, diesel and natural gas as a percentage of total revenue have gone up from 5.4 per cent in 2014-15 to 12.2 per cent this fiscal. Excise duty on petrol has been raised from ₹9.48 per litre in 2014 to ₹32.90 a litre now while the same on diesel has gone up from ₹3.56 a litre to ₹31.80. Taxes make up for 60 per cent of the present retail price of petrol of ₹91.17 a litre in Delhi. Excise duty makes up for 36 per cent of the retail price. Over 53 per cent of the retail sell-



ing price of ₹81.47 a litre of diesel in Delhi is made up of taxes.

As much as 39 per cent of the retail price comprises of central excise. "The total central excise duty (including basic excise duty, cesses and surcharge) was increased by ₹3 per litre on petrol and diesel with effect from March 14, 2020. It was revised upwards by ₹10 per litre on petrol and ₹13 per litre on diesel with effect from May 6, 2020," Thakur said. These increases took away the gain that would have accrued to consumers from a sharp drop in global oil prices. The hike in excise duty is similar to the increase in taxes the government did between November 2014 and January 2016.

Over nine instalments, duty on petrol was hiked by ₹11.77 per litre and that on diesel by 13.47 a litre in those 15 months. The government had cut excise duty by ₹2 in October 2017, and by ₹1.50 a year later. But it raised excise duty by ₹2 per litre in July 2019. The excise duty rates have been calibrated to generate resources for infrastructure and other developmental items.



Tourists on elephant safari at the Bagori Range of Kaziranga National Park in Golaghat district of Assam, Monday

Oppn demands Jena's scalp

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Targeting the state government over law and order situation in the state, the BJP and the Congress Monday demanded removal of Law Minister Pratap Jena over his alleged involvement in the Mahanga double murder case.

BJP members stalled the proceedings of the house several times throughout the day demanding removal and arrest of Jena in connection with Mahanga double murder case. Even, The BJP members

urged Speaker SN Patro not to allow Jena to participate in the proceedings. As soon as the house assembled at 10.30 am, Leader of Opposition Pradipta Naik urged the Speaker to allow him to raise the issue of Mahanga case. Patro, however, said the issue could be raised during zero hour and asked Minister of State for Home Dibya Shankar Mishra to reply to a question.

In protest the BJP members carrying posters and banners stormed into the well of the house, shouted slogans and disrupted the proceedings. As the Assembly plunged

into a chaos, the Speaker adjourned the house till 11.30 am. Naik said Jena is named as the 13th accused in the FIR lodged in Mahanga PS.

In his reply, the Speaker asked Naik to show him a rule or law that will restrict the minister from entering the house. Later, Patro clarified that a person again whom non-bailable warrant has been issued, he/she cannot enter the Assembly. Congress MLA Santosh Singh Saluja demanded removal of Jena from the ministry and cited a similar ruling by former Speaker Maheswar Mohanty in the past.

State's per capita debt burden rises to ₹23,524

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: The per capital loan burden in the state went up from ₹9,180 in 2009-10 to ₹23,524 by January-end of this year, Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari said, Monday.

In a reply to Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati's query, Pujari said the per capita debt burden was ₹9,180.06 in 2009-10 that went up to ₹23,524.82 till January, 2020-21. However, this is less than the national per capital loan and that of some of the leading states in the country.

The total loan burden of the state by January-end was ₹1,03,410.40 crore including ₹6,347.44 crore from foreign agencies and ₹53,385.92 crore from internal sources like CAMPA, OMBADC and open market.

The state government generally takes loans from international financial agencies, government of India, internal sources, provident fund and other resources, he said. As far as loans from external aided agencies are concerned, the minister said it has borrowed from agencies like World Bank, Asian Development Bank, International Fund for Agriculture Development, Japan International Cooperation Agency, KfW Development Bank, BRICS Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank for infrastructure projects. As the NABARD has launched various programmes, Pujari said the state government has borrowed ₹15,623.55 crore.

Kangana, Manoj Bajpayee and Dhanush win top honours

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 22: Kangana Ranaut was declared Best Actress for her performances in the Hindi films Manikarnika and Panga at the 67th National Film Awards that were announced in the city Monday. Manoj Bajpayee, for the Hindi film Bhonsle, and Dhanush, for his role in the Tamil film Asuran, were jointly declared Best Actor.

Director Priyadarshan's Malayalam film "Marakkar: Arabikadalinte Simham" was declared the best feature film and Sanjay Puran Singh Chauhan was named best director for Hindi film "Bahattar Hoorain" by the National Film Award jury, headed by filmmaker N Chandra,



who said they judged the movies "not as gods but as parents".

The 67th edition of the awards were organised by Directorate of

Film Festivals (DFF) of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The ceremony was scheduled to be held in May 2020 but had to be postponed owing to the Covid pandemic.

Late actor Sushant Singh Rapustar's "Chhichhore" was adjudged the best Hindi film. The award for

the best film on social issues went to Marathi film "Anandi Gopal", the Nargis Dutt award for National Integration was given to "Taj Mahal" and the best popular providing

wholesome entertainment was given to the Telugu film "Maharshi". The

NATIONAL AWARDS FOR ODIA FLICKS

BHUBANESWAR: Sabyasachi Mohapatra's Sala Budhar Badla and Nila Madhab Panda's Kalira Atita have shared the 67th National Film Awards as the Best Odia Film. Panda, in his tweet wrote, "A film I made for the planet, to create awareness about the climate crisis we have upon us. Feel extremely elated that Kalira Atita has been awarded the Best Odia Film (Shared) at the 67th National Film Awards, thank you." While 'Sala Budhar Badla' in Sambalpur dialect, released in October 2019, showcased the folk art and culture of Western Odisha, Panda's Kalira Atita is about acute water scarcity and has made an entry into Oscars race.



the best film on social issues went to Marathi film "Anandi Gopal", the Nargis Dutt award for National Integration was given to "Taj Mahal" and the best popular providing

wholesome entertainment was given to the Telugu film "Maharshi". The

Indira Gandhi award for first film went to Malayalam film "Helen" by Mathukutty Xavier.

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Today is the day for creativity, while you leave the logic for tomorrow, even when it comes to work. You are bent upon success at work, but Ganesha warns that it requires commitment and devotion. In the evening, you may want to be left alone with your spouse or a book.

TAURUS

Today your money will be burning holes in your pockets. You will be dying squander it away and get rid of it as fast as possible. You'll be tossing it around as if you owned a gold mine. Ganesha urges you to hold your horses and tighten your purse strings. Other wise you are going to regret it and feel like an idiot. Beware. You many not have any bank balance left to speak of.

GEMINI

A hectic and busy day awaits you. You need to think about how, where and in what proportion to concentrate your energies upon the numerous jobs thrust upon you. You will be able to successfully complete your tasks in the later half of the day, says Ganesha.

CANCER

You will savour a tasty meal. You will go out for dinner with your friends or family. It may so happen that you will take out time from your hectic schedule to prepare tasty food and invite friends and relatives. Your nature of helping others will make you popular and you will benefit from it, says Ganesha.

LEO

If you are the one who sets the corporate mantra each morning, then know that today, your mantra will be fabulous, and will be chanted by many in your organisation. Being a business magnate might not be the easiest thing, but you are who you are, and you are good at it. Your business-like approach shall come in handy later in the day, as you may launch new products in the market, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

Watch your step, warns Ganesha. Trouble is lurking just round the corner and waiting to waylay you. At work, you will find yourself in a high-spirited mood and will be helpful to your colleagues. You might end the day in the company of family members recollecting the happy days you have spent in each other's company.

LIBRA

Today seems like a good day to take a break and go on a pleasure trip to revitalise yourself, says Ganesha. Even on the business front, it will do you a world of good to take a break from the usual routine. This evening, you are at your best winning the heart of the opposite sex at social gatherings.

SCORPIO

Today you are likely to remain the unvarying object of emotions and sentiments, predicts Ganesha. Your inkling for performing arts may draw you to take up some lessons in classical music and traditional dance. A romantic, candlelit evening with your sweetheart may be on the cards to wrap up the day.

SAGITTARIUS

Simple living and high thinking, says Ganesha, will be your mantra today. Approach your work with devotion and honesty. Your dark days will not end until your penance is over. Be austere, honest and let your ego go. This is your time to mend all that wrongs you have done in the past.

CAPRICORN

The day will have a bundle of things to offer today, some good, some not so good. At work, you are likely to overlook the most obvious things, and come across some unexpected ones. But as dawn turns to dusk, a pleasant surprise may get you all pepped up.

AQUARIUS

It always pays to have extra cash, and in that regard, you will be a happy person today! You may carefully update and crosscheck your financial position. Of course, there are people who don't share your happiness and will try to advise you to the contrary. Ignore them, says Ganesha.

PISCES

A good day is in the offing, says Ganesha. You are likely to receive news you will be glad to share and celebrate with your family. A few pending deals are likely to be finalised in the afternoon, and there are indications you will need to go off on a short visit for business purposes later on in the day.



BELLA THORNE ENGAGED TO BENJAMIN MASCOLO

Actress-model Bella Thorne and musician Benjamin Mascolo are engaged. The 27-year-old singer took to Instagram and posted a picture of the couple, confirming the happy news. Bella and Benjamin started dating in June 2019, when they confirmed their romance on social media.

SILICON VALLEY STAR ACCUSED OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Actor Thomas Middleditch, best known for his role in the TV show *Silicon Valley*, has been accused of sexual misconduct towards a (then)-21-year-old woman on the dance floor in a now-defunct Los Angeles private club, in 2019.



Kangana thanks all for National Award

Mumbai: Actress Kangana Ranaut won the National Film Award as Best Actress for the fourth time on Monday, for her performances in *Manikarnika* and *Panga*. Shortly after the announcement, she posted a thank-you video on social media for the cast and crew of both films, saying her win would not be possible without them.

Speaking in Hindi, Kangana said: "I just got to know that the National Awards have been announced, in which I have been

awarded for my performance in *Manikarnika* and *Panga*."

About her win for *Manikarnika*, she said: "I will be forever grateful to the whole team of Manikarnika for supporting me in every possible manner and standing by me. I want to share the National Award with each one of you."

The actress also thanked her unit of *Panga* in the video, which she posted on her blue tick accounts in Twitter and Instagram.

Finally, Kangana thanked her fans and family, saying nothing would have been possible without their support.

Janhvi refuses to kiss fan

MUMBAI: Actress Janhvi Kapoor Sunday refused to kiss a fan during a virtual conversation.

Janhvi engaged in an interactive session with fans on Instagram where she responded to various queries from them.

A fan asked Janhvi: "Can we kiss". Reacting to the same, the actress posted a photograph of herself wearing mask and captioned it: "No".

Janhvi also answered several curious questions from netizens. A user asked

about her diet routine to which Janhvi replied by sharing a photo of herself with a cup of ice cream in her hand. "4 scoops a day", the actress captioned it.

Another user quizzed about her favourite memory of traveling, to which she replied: "Road tripping around the south of France a couple of years ago."

Asked who is her favourite co-star, Janhvi shared a photograph where she is seen hugging her Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl co-star Pankaj Tripathi.



Dia talks about water scarcity

MUMBAI: On the occasion of World Water Day, actress Dia Mirza took to Instagram to share a post about water scarcity.

She posted a picture of her sitting by the riverside and wrote: "1 in 4 children will live with water scarcity by 2040. Think about that. Let's keep working together to secure our forests, #ActOnClimate and #SaveWater #WorldWaterDay #GlobalGoals #ForPeopleForPlanet."

The actress married Mumbai-based entrepreneur Vaibhav Rekhi last month in a small, intimate ceremony.

She had taken to social media to inform her fans that only biodegradable and natural materials were used for her wedding ceremony. The wedding was conducted by a woman priest.

The actress was previously married to Sahil Sangha in 2014. They announced their separation in August 2019.

WORLD RECORD IN THE MAKING

Akademi to celebrate 100th anniv of Bapu's maiden Odisha visit today

Written by Shankar Tripathy, Odia play 'Gandhinka Odisha', to be directed by 30 eminent directors, will be staged in 30 cultural centres of all districts



Gandhinka Odisha, written by Shankar Tripathy, in every district of Odisha at the same time.

"The play will be staged by 30 theatre troupes at same number of auditoriums of all districts at 6.30 pm Tuesday. Prominent directors of various theatre troupes have been given the assignment to present the play," said OSNA secretary Prabodh Kumar Rath.

All performances will be recorded, aired live while Akademi has plans in place to approach Guinness World Records, Limca and India Book of records to register it as a world record, added Rath.

The play will be staged here at Rabindra Mandap and will be directed by Nabin Parida, an eminent theatre director and an ex-principal of Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalay.

BHUBANESWAR:

Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi had first visited Odisha about 100 years ago on this day. In a bid to celebrate the occasion, Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi in collaboration with Odia Language, Literature and Culture Department of Odisha, has taken a unique initiative.

As per the plan, the Akademi has decided to stage a play

SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI'S STATE LEVEL DRAMA FEST

Kosali play Nagarbar takes audience back to 18th Century

BHUBANESWAR: Bhoomika, a theatre troupe from Bolangir presented Kosali play *Nagarbar* here at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Monday, on the fourth day of state level drama festival Ranga Sangam.

The event is being jointly organised by Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi (OSNA) and the Department of Odia Language, Literature and Culture, Government of Odisha.

Designed and directed jointly by Ramchandra Sahoo and Chittaranjan Das, the 100-minute play was an adaptation of Marathi play *Basanta Sabanisa*. The play was first adapted to Hindi by Usha Banerjee from which it was made in Kosali, said Chittaranjan.

Though the original play was a

Tamasha, a form of folk theatre, some modifications have been made while being adapted to Kosali, added Chittaranjan.

The play was about a ruler of 18th Century whose inefficiency leaves his state on the brink of anarchy. His so called trusted lieutenants take advantage of the circumstances and situation deteriorates further. However, an honest havidar and a sepoy manage to foil the conspiracy and bail out the kingdom from a precarious situation. The dignitaries who attended the evening included Bolangir MLA Narasingha Mishra, eminent theatre director Gadadhar Barik from Sonepur and OSNA secretary Prabodh Kumar Rath.

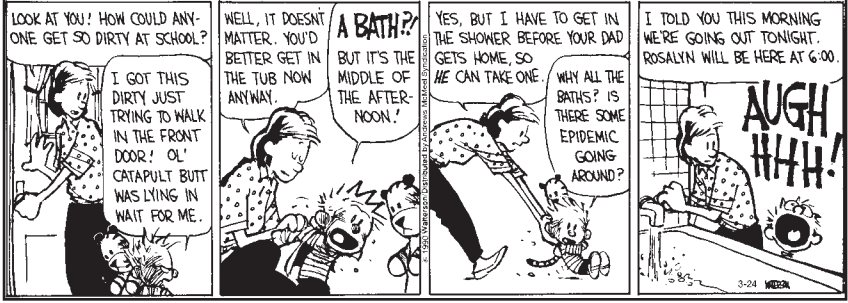


A scene from the play *Nagarbar* staged at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Monday

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

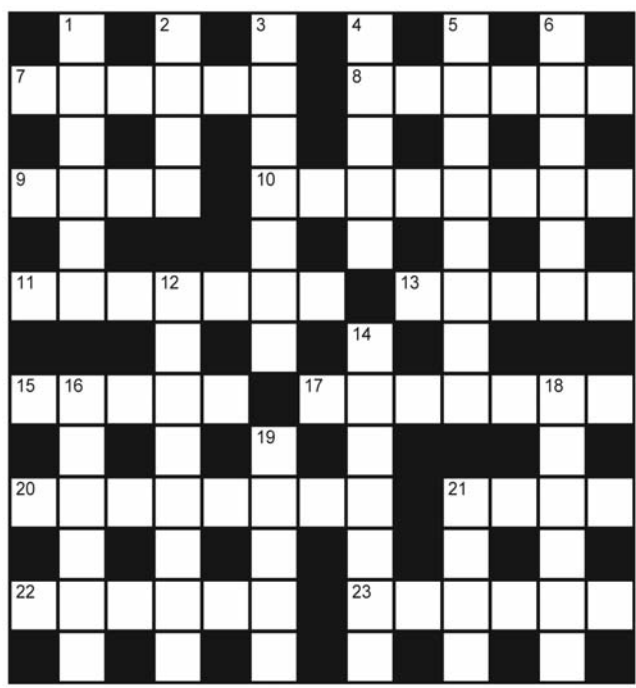


BREVITY



FUN post

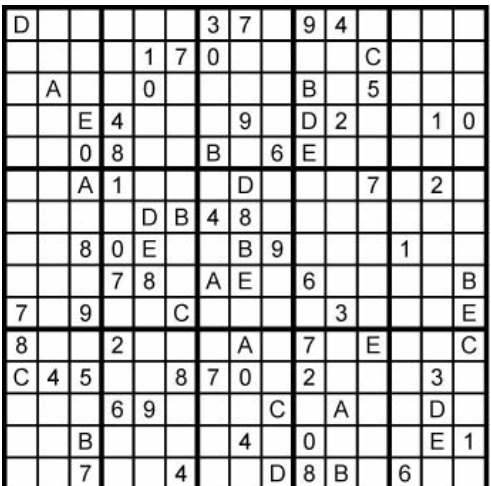
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Rollick
 - 8 Friends
 - 9 Quarry
 - 10 Working man
 - 11 Magazine issue
 - 13 Fluster
 - 15 School assignment
 - 17 Actor's wish
 - 20 Forgiving
- Down**
- 1 Bumped around
 - 2 Optimistic
 - 3 English blue cheese
 - 4 Brazilian dance
 - 5 European flatfish
 - 6 Unmask
 - 12 They're found on used car lots (5-3)
 - 14 Train depot
 - 16 Exactly right (4,2)
 - 18 Aromas
 - 19 Garrulous
 - 21 Flat floater

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.

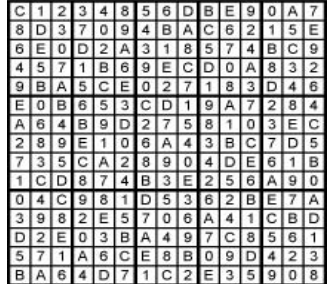


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



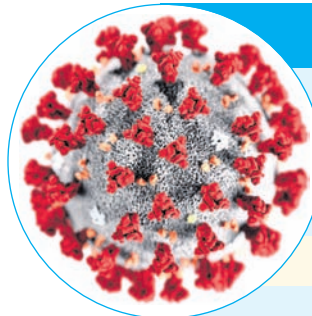
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



CENTENARY FETE

Dignitaries flag off an awareness vehicle to mark centenary celebrations of Gandhi's Odisha visit at Odisha Khadi and Village Industries Board in Bhubaneswar, Monday



COVID-19 TRACKER

| | INFECTED | RECOVERED | DEAD |
|--------|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| World | 12,39,61,575 | 9,98,82,160 | 27,29,282 |
| India | 1,15,14,489 | 1,11,51,468 | 1,59,967 |
| Odisha | 3,38,963 | 3,36,206 | 1,919 |

Prez, First Lady offer prayers at Srimandir

PNN&AGENCIES

Puri/Konark, March 22: President Ram Nath Kovind along with First Lady Savita Kovind Monday offered prayers at the Srimandir in Puri before visiting the Sun Temple at Konark on the last day of his three-day visit to Odisha.

Kovind and his wife arrived at the temple around 9:10am, accompanied by Governor Ganeshi Lal and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, and spent about 40 minutes at the 12th century shrine.

They entered the sanctum sanctorum of the temple and paid obeisance to deities – Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath. They also offered prayers to Maa Bimala and Mahalaxmi on the premises of the Srimandir.

Puri's Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb and Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief Krishan Kumar welcomed them at the Lion's Gate of the temple. The temple was decorated with flowers for President's visit and the security had been beefed up in the town. Shops and business establishments on both sides of the Grand Road were closed for security purpose. No visitor or devotee was allowed to enter the shrine 30 minutes before President's arrival.

Kovind donated Rs 1 lakh for the development of the shrine, said an



SJTA chief Krishan Kumar hands over a portrait of the Trinity to the President and the First Lady in Puri. Governor Ganeshi Lal, Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Collector Samarth Verma are also seen

OP PHOTO

SJTA official. After paying obeisance to the Srimandir deities, the President went straight to the helipad and flew to Sun Temple at Konark. They reached the Black Pagoda at 10:45am.

Puri Additional Collector Binay Kumar Das, ASI superintendent (Bhubaneswar Circle) Arun Kumar Mallick, senior police official Binay Kataria, Konark NAC executive officer M Srinivas, tourism officer Sarojkant Pradhan and inspector in-charge Ranjan Kumar Mallick

welcomed them at the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The President and the First Lady, accompanied by Governor Ganeshi Lal and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, visited the 13th century shrine in battery-operated vehicles. According to an official who accompanied the President to the shrine, Kovind appreciated the magnificent artistic skills displayed on stones by the Odia artisans 800 years ago. They watched a short documentary film

on the Sun Temple at the interpretation hall and planted a few saplings. After taking a few minutes rest at Konark Jatri Niwas, they flew back to Bhubaneswar at 4:30pm.

Over 40 platoons of police and security personnel besides 250 officers were deployed to ensure security of the President. Kovind had Sunday attended the 18th convocation of National Institute of Technology (NTI), Rourkela and also inaugurated a super specialty hospital of the Rourkela Steel Plant.



BLISTERING HEAT: Schoolgirls use umbrellas to shield themselves from scorching heat in Chandrasekharpur area of Bhubaneswar, Monday

OP PHOTO

Gastroenterology dept soon at MKCG

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Department of Gastroenterology will be opened at MKCG Medical College & Hospital in Berhampur soon.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has approved the proposal, Monday. Patnaik has approved 19 academic and non-academic posts for both surgical and medical Gastroenterology. Opening of the two super-specialty departments at the MKCG Medical College would benefit the people of whole South Odisha in particular, he said.

₹51.15Cr swindled by cybercrooks in 2 yrs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Over Rs 51.15 crore have been plundered in 3,406 cybercrime cases in the state in the last two years (2019 & 20) according to the Minister of State (MoS) Home, Dibya Shankar Mishra's statement in Assembly, Monday.

In a written reply to BJD legislator Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, the minister said 3,406 cybercrime cases amounting to Rs 51,15,28,881 have been registered in two years.

A total of 1,475 cybercrime cases involving fraud of Rs 16.08 crore were registered in 2019 while it jumped to 1,931 cases with cheating of Rs 35.07 crore in the last year, Mishra said.

He also notified that a total of 708 persons (342 in 2019 & 366 in 2020) inside and outside the state have been arrested for their involvement in the cybercrime cases. Convictions were reported against only two cases in 2019 while no conviction has been reported against the cases filed in 2020, he stated.

In another reply to the House, the minister stated that 2,984 rapes, 1,470 murders, five bank robbery and 17 ATM loot cases were reported in 2020.

Mishra said that Odisha Police has never been biased. Immediate steps are taken on receiving any information about any incident or accident and stringent actions as per law are taken against criminals. Strong legal actions are being taken against the violators irrespective of their position and status, the minister pointed out.



708 PERSONS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE STATE ARRESTED

■ CYBERCRIME CASES LEAPED FROM 1,475 IN 2019 TO 1,931 IN 2020

■ 2,984 RAPES, 1,470 MURDERS, FIVE BANK ROBBERY AND 17 ATM LOOT CASES REPORTED IN 2020



Countermeasures taken by Odisha police to pin down cyber criminals include establishment of cyber-crime cells in every district, three dedicated police stations in cities like Berhampur, Sambalpur & Rourkela, issuance of Compendium on CYBER CRIME INVESTIGATION

and establishment of Cyber Forensic Labs across the state.

100 yrs of Bapu's visit to state

Bhubaneswar: A discussion on completion of 100th year of Mahatma Gandhi's Odisha visit will be conducted in the Assembly Tuesday. Speaker SN Patro informed media persons about this after holding an all-party meeting Monday. The discussion will be conducted on the first-half through a motion, he said. Recently, the state Cabinet has decided to organise events throughout the year starting from March 23, 2021 to create awareness on ideals and principles of Gandhi.

76 IAS, as many IPS posts vacant

BHUBANESWAR: As many as 76 out of sanctioned 248 IAS officers' posts are lying vacant in the state, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik told the Assembly, Monday.

In a written reply to a question of Talsara MLA Bhabani Shankar Bhoi (BJP), Patnaik said 145 IAS officers are presently serving in the state against the sanctioned strength of 248. While 25 Odisha cadre IAS officers are in Central deputation, two are in inter-state deputation, he said. So, there are 76 vacancies in IAS officers' posts.

Apart from the above, he said, another IAS officer is working in the

state on inter-state deputation. Similarly, out of cadre strength of 195 IPS officers, 76 posts have fallen vacant in the state.

The Chief Minister said 93 IPS officers are presently posted in the state while 25 are on Central deputation and one is on inter-state deputation.

He said that the state government has promoted 27 senior OAS officers to the rank of IAS and all are working in the state.

Naveen further stated that the state government has given additional charges to some IAS officers due to the shortage of officers.

Judicial officer sans integrity threat to judiciary: HC

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 22: In a significant judgement, the Orissa High Court recently observed that a judicial officer having sound knowledge of law but lacking in integrity or having a dubious character is a great danger to the smooth functioning of the judiciary.

The High Court made the observation last week while upholding the order of compulsory retirement passed in connection with a judicial officer.

The bench of Chief Justice S Muralidhar and Justice BP Routray was hearing the case of Rama Chandra Mohanty, a judicial officer, who sought the quashing of an order of compulsory retirement and for all consequential service benefits.

While serving as a civil judge (Senior Division) at Koraput he was directed to retire in public interest with effect from March 22, 2010 vide Law department of Odisha's notification dated March 9, 2010.

During his tenure, two departmental proceedings were initiated



The HC was hearing the case of Rama Chandra Mohanty, a judicial officer, who sought the quashing of an order of compulsory retirement

against Mohanty. In the first proceeding, in the year 2003, five charges were framed relating to unauthorised retention of government quarters, deliberate delay in making payment of bills towards the purchase of law journals for Bolangir Judgeship, etc touching to gross misconduct and failure in due discharge of duties under Rules 3 and 4 of the Orissa Government Servant Conduct Rules, 1959.

In respect of other departmental proceedings, the charge against the

petitioner was that he availed a loan in the name of one of his Class IV servants without his knowledge and consent and did not repay the same till a complaint was made by the said employee.

The bench observed that judicial officers of the subordinate courts in the state are under the administrative control of the High Court in terms of Article 235 of the Constitution.

Further, the court also observed that they are different from other civil

servants and that a single blot in their service record makes them vulnerable and thus, they are expected to have a good character in all respects.

The Court further remarked, "Needless to say that the object of compulsory retirement is to weed out the dishonest, the corrupt, and the deadwood. It is true that if an honest and sincere judicial officer is compulsorily retired, it might lower the morale of his colleagues. Equally, an officer having sound knowledge of the law but lacking in integrity or having a dubious character is a great danger to the smooth functioning of the judiciary."

It also said, "What is to be weighed is the performance of the officer on an overall evaluation of his entire service period. Above all, his impartiality, reputation, integrity, as well as moral character, should be taken into account."

Apart from this, the Court perused the personal file of Mohanty and noted that the personal record does not support his contention that he had an unblemished career as a judge.

Homecoming: Jaga leaves SCB for Kandhamal

PNN/AGENCIES

Cuttack, March 22: Jaga, the first of craniopagus conjoined twins Jaga-Kalia, is returning to his own district Kandhamal after ages.

It is a matter of both joy and sorrow for Kandhamal people. They are happy about Jaga's return and remorseful over Kalia's demise.

He was discharged from SCB Medical College and Hospital, Monday and is returning home in a special ambulance. A two-member doctor team of Kandhamal DHH is accompanying him.

The conjoined twins had left their district for AIIMS, New Delhi in 2017. They were separated in a two-phase surgery. While the first phase was carried out August 28, 2017, the second phase was done October 25, the same



year. The first and second phases of the surgeries had lasted for 25 hours and 20 hours respectively. Odisha Government had then sanctioned Rs 10,00,000 for operations.

Two years after their surgery, Jaga and Kalia were discharged from AIIMS, New Delhi September 6, 2019 and they reached Cuttack the next day. They were immediately put at SCBMCH for observations. Kalia, unfortunately, breathed his last at 9.10pm, November 25, 2020.

The process of his shifting

to Kandhamal DHH started following his mother, Pushpanjali's request for the same. She cited her inability to continue her son's treatment at SCBMCH due to financial crunch.

Pushpanjali had written to Kandhamal District Collector to shift Jaga back to Kandhamal DHH. The collector had forwarded the application to the Health Department and it was approved.

The Odisha Health Directorate had asked the SCBMCH authorities, particularly the team which had been treating Jaga to begin the process of shifting him safely to Kandhamal. Team leader and Head of the Neurosurgery department, Dr Prof Sudhanshu Mishra also gave green signal for Jaga's shifting.

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OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER (HANDICRAFTS)
Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India.

CHANDRAPRABHA DEVI PASSED AWAY



Bhubaneswar, March 22: Chandraprabha Devi, wife of eminent politician and industrialist late Chandra Madhav Mishra passed away for heavenly abode at her Bhubaneswar residence Sunday night.

She was 92. A pall of gloom and mourning descended among her family members and kin after reports of her death spread. Later today her dead body was carried from her residence at Nilakantha nagar to her Sakhi Gopal home. Friends & family members paid their last tribute there.

She was religious, kind and benevolent woman and had helped many poor people. Her last rites were performed at Swargadwar crematorium in Puri where her younger son and reputed industrialist, social activist Nishikanta Mishra lit the funeral pyre. Her two elder sons Sitakanta Mishra & Srikanta Mishra, daughter Mandakini Mohapatra, Binodini Mohapatra & Bijayini Rath along with grandchildren, nephew & niece were present near her death bed.

Late Chandraprava Devi was the only daughter of famous Pre Independence famous Kabiraj Baidyaratna Purna Chandra Rath. After the news of her death broke out today MLA Ananta Narayan Jena, BJP State President Sameer Mohanty, BJD Executive president Biranchi Narayan Mahasupakara, musician Laxmikanta Palit & Debasish Mohapatra, senior journalist Girija Sankar Das, actor Pinky Pradhan & social activist Lora Mohapatra including many eminent persons paid their last tribute. Members of Team Admark, Dream Team Sahara, Team Odia, Team Jajabara Director, senior staffs mourned her death and have expressed their deepest condolences.

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RECRUITMENT FOR THE POSITIONS OF PROJECT STAFF

CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT), Bhubaneswar invites applications for about Six (06) Nos. of positions of Project Staff in its ongoing projects. The requirement covers,

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- **M.Sc.** in Physics/Applied Physics/Materials Science/Chemistry/ Nanoscience/Applied Geology with valid NET/GATE or without NET/GATE.
- **Ph.D.** in Physics/ Chemistry/ Metallurgy/Chemical Engineering with or without experience. The positions are purely temporary and co-terminus with the tenure of projects. Eligible candidates may please visit CSIR-IMMT website www.immt.res.in for the details regarding submission of application, essential qualifications, job requirement, experience, age, monthly emoluments and other terms and conditions.

Only shortlisted candidates will be intimated by e-mail for the date and time of interview through online platform.

Last date of submission of application: 05th April, 2021.

Procure 30L tonne surplus rice from state: Sasmit



POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 22: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Sasmit Patra Monday urged the Union government to direct Food Corporation of India (FCI) to immediately procure surplus rice of 30 lakh metric tonne from Odisha. The BJD MP also urged the Union government to release a pending subsidy of Rs 5,616 crore to the state.

Speaking during Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha, the BJD MP said that

Odisha is the fourth largest food supplier in the country. He said every year the state consumes 24 lakh metric tonne of rice and during this Kharif season, around 30 lakh MT rice is required to be lifted by the FCI.

"If we look at the figures till March 13 of the current year, we will find that only 6.65 lakh MT rice has been lifted by FCI. If things move at this pace, FCI will not be able to

Tap Odisha's maritime history: Amar to Centre

NEW DELHI: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Amar Patnaik Monday suggested the Union government to initiate a research on Odisha's maritime trade history and utilise the information for strengthening India's cultural diplomacy.

Speaking during the Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha, the BJD MP said that Odisha was instrumental in shaping history and culture for South-East Asia. He said Odisha played a



The impact that maritime trade of Odisha had created in the Indo-Pacific region 'then' could provide an edge for India to negotiate diplomatically 'now' in a better way...(sic)

AMAR PATNAIK | BJD MP

significant role in the evolution of Hind culture in Bali. "Kalinga had maritime trade links with South-Asian, East-African, and certain Arab countries. This maritime trade not only helped in economic development, but also led to greater socio-cultural assimilation of the whole region. The trade routes, discovered by our forefathers in Odisha, have not only

socio-cultural significance, but geo-political consequence as well, in today's day and age," Patnaik said. "The impact that maritime trade of Odisha had created in the Indo-Pacific region 'then' could provide an edge for India to negotiate diplomatically 'now' in a better way, if we develop this perspective," Patnaik said.

The BJD MP urged the Union government to promote further research and study about maritime history of Odisha as most of it remains unexplored. "Tapping into the ancient maritime culture of Odisha will provide a whole new dimension to India's strength in cultural diplomacy and soft power in harbouring greater ties with South-East Asia," Patnaik added.

The BJD MP stated that state exchequer may incur loss of Rs 4,160 crore if FCI does not procure the surplus rice. "Had the same amount of rice been procured, around 13 lakh

MT rice would still remain stored in the state leading to a situation where Odisha will incur a loss of Rs 4,160 crore to its state exchequer," Patra said.

BJD seeks inclusion of 13.95L households under PMAY-G

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 22: A delegation of BJD MPs Monday met Union Minister of State for Rural Development Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti and demanded inclusion of 13.95 lakh households under Pradhan Mantri Aawas Yojana (Gramin) (PMAY-G) permanent waitlist.

In the memorandum submitted to the minister, the BJD MPs contended that the state government has identified 13.95 lakh eligible families, who were left out from the permanent waitlist of PMAY-G prepared on the basis of Socio-Economic Caste Census, 2011.

The BJD stated that the eligible PMAY-G households need to be captured through Aawaas+ App developed by the Ministry of Rural Development. However, due to general elections in 2019, the state government could identify only 35,000 households through the app till March 7, 2019, the deadline fixed by the ministry.

"On the request of the state, the Rural Development Ministry opened the window of Aawaas+ for a period of one month only for 14 Fani affected districts. The state government identified 7.87 lakh eligible households in

Fani affected districts through Aawaas+ and along with 35,000 households of non-Fani affected districts completed geo-tagging and Aadhaar seeding as mandated by the ministry," the BJD submitted.

The ruling party of Odisha, however, said that despite the completion of all requirements for identification in respect of 8.22 lakh eligible families, they could not be covered under PMAY-G by the ministry.

The BJD submitted in the memorandum that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had also written letters to the Prime Minister and Rural Development Minister highlighting the issue.

It has also been submitted in the memorandum that the window of Aawaas+ is yet to be opened for 16 non-Fani affected districts. The BJD further submitted that the state has identified, geo-tagged and Aadhaar seeded 5.72 lakh eligible households in 16 non-Fani affected districts in the state developed portal.

"This data can easily be migrated to Aawaas+ once the ministry agrees to do so," BJD submitted.



THE BJD STATED THAT THE ELIGIBLE PMAY-G HOUSEHOLDS NEED TO BE CAPTURED THROUGH AAWAAS+ APP DEVELOPED BY THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

HOWEVER, DUE TO GENERAL ELECTIONS IN 2019, THE STATE GOVERNMENT COULD IDENTIFY ONLY 35,000 HOUSEHOLDS THROUGH THE APP TILL MARCH 7, 2019

WASSUP TODAY

- BHUBANESWAR**
- Saheed Diwas to commemorate Bhagat Singh, Master Centeen Square, 8am
- Blood donation camp, Red Cross Bhawan, 9am
- 'Pranam Bapu' programme to mark 100-yr of Mahatma Gandhi's Odisha visit, State Museum, 9.30am
- Painting exhibition on centenary celebration of Gandhi's Odisha visit, Panthaniwas, Lewis Road, 11am
- Book launch, Lohia Academy, 5pm
- Event on Odissi by Utkal Rangamancha, Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre, 6.30pm
- State-level theatre fest, Bhanja Kala Mandap, 6.30pm
- Stage play by Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi, Rabindra Mandap, 6.30pm

- PURI**
- Blood donation camp by Shreekshehra Press Club and Red Cross Society, Youth Hostel, 2pm
- Sand art expo to mark World TB Day, Lighthouse beach, 4pm

- CUTTACK**
- Annual fest of Chelitolola Cultural Academy, Sarala Bhawan, 6.30pm

Programmes/announcements for wassup today may be sent to opwassup@gmail.com for record, it must also carry the sender's mobile number for our verification, but not for publication.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Berhampur, Ganjam on 18.03.2021. I, Smt. Sangita Acharya, W/o- Sri Bibhudarsi Acharya, at C-17, Hindalco RS Colony, P.O./P.S.- Hirakud, Dist.- Sambalpur, Odisha declare that I have changed my parental name from Sangita Kumari Tripathy to Smt. Sangita Acharya. Thus I shall be known as Smt. Sangita Acharya for all purposes.

By an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Sundargarh, I, Ranjeeta Delhi, W/o- Gokula Delhi, R/o- Village/P.O.- Birbira, Dist.- Sundargarh (Odisha) declare that my husband working as a Army/Government employee. In his Service record, my date of birth is wrongly mentioned as 11.05.1992. But my actual and correct date of birth is 10.05.1991.

'Mo College' campaign boost to NEP: Utkal VC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Welcoming the 'Mo College' campaign of the state government, which was launched by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday, Utkal University Vice-Chancellor Sabita Acharya, Monday, said that this initiative will provide an opportunity to reconnect the vast network of our alumni.

She said that the best thing is that this initiative will give a boost to the alumni connect component

of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Such programmes will hugely benefit the students and educational institutions," said Sabita. Earlier, more than 110 teaching and non-teaching staff and close to 200 students of Utkal University took part in the launch of 'Mo College' programme Sunday. LED screens were set up at the New Administrative Block to facilitate live streaming of the launching ceremony. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched the programme via videoconferencing and the



launch ceremony was live streamed through Youtube, Facebook and other social media sites.

Kunja Bihari Panda, Coordinator of 'Mo College' campaign, Utkal University coordinated and organised the event. He said, "It is a welcome initiative. Mo College is being launched after the success of 'Mo School' campaign. Everyone has a unique attachment towards their Alma Mater. This programme will provide the opportunity to reconnect with their colleges and universities and such associations will benefit not only the present students and educational institutions but also society as a whole."

With 146 fresh cases, Covid tally at 3,38,963

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Odisha's Covid-19 tally climbed to 3,38,963 as 146 more people tested positive for the disease, a Health department official said Monday. Of the new cases, 87 were reported from quarantine centres and 59 during contact tracing.

Khurda district reported the highest number of new cases at 35, followed by Cuttack (25), Mayurbhanj (13), Nuapada and Sundargarh (12 each).



Several new cases were detected in an educational institute in the city, a Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation official said. "In view

of the detection of a large number of Covid-19 positive cases in Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar; the entire XIMB institute campus is hereby sealed until further order," the civic body said in a notice issued on Sunday.

BMC started collecting samples from all the people who were staying at the institute's campus. "Those who have tested positive for the disease are kept in isolation in a hostel of the institute. They will be under observation," the BMC official said. The institute has been asked to make necessary arrangements for food for students who were diagnosed with disease.

Two private educational institutes in Cuttack had reported 47 new COVID-19 cases last week. Meanwhile, three districts- Boudh, Gajapati and Malkangiri- have turned "coronavirus free" as no active case exists there.

The death toll in the coastal state remained at 1,919 as no fresh fatality was reported in the last 24 hours, the official said. Fifty-three other COVID-19 patients have so far died due to co-morbidities in the state.

Odisha now has 867 active cases, and 3,36,124 people have recovered from the virus.

The state has so far conducted over 88.14 lakh sample tests for COVID-19, including 25,315 on Sunday, and the positivity rate stands at 3.85 per cent.

CRY FOR JOB REGULARISATION



Members of Power Distribution Franchise Employees' Association stage a sit-in in front of Idco Tower in Bhubaneswar, Monday, demanding job regularisation

OUAT Forestry students shave heads in protest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: The students of College of Forestry, OUAT shaved their heads near the university premises, Monday, in a protest urging the state government to make 4-year BSc degree in Forestry as minimum qualification

for recruitment to key posts. These posts include forest range officer, assistant conservator of forests, assistant manager of Odisha Forest Development Corporation (OFDC) and junior manager of OFDC.

Earlier, the students had taken out a mock funeral procession at Lower

PMG Sunday here as part of their agitation to press for various demands.

Paralakhemundi MLA K Narayan Rao and Mohana MLA Dasarathi Gomango visited the students at Lower PMG and assured of taking to government for their demands.

Probe starts into missing RD girl

Bhubaneswar: The Commissionerate Police has launched an enquiry to trace the whereabouts of a minor student of Ramadevi Women's University here who had gone missing a few days back. The missing girl of Jagannath Vihar area under Bharatpur police limits is a Plus III first year student. According to sources, the victim was sent to a nearby shop. However, she did not return despite lapse of several hours. Later, her parents lodged a missing complaint with Bharatpur police who started a probe into the matter after registering a case.

Forester caught taking bribe

Bhubaneswar : Vigilance sleuths Monday caught a Forest official while receiving bribe from a lady Forest guard, who had approached the accused to manipulate a show-cause action initiated against her by the department. The accused was identified as Golekh Bihari Behera, working as Forester, Wildlife, Chemundia section in Nayagarh. According to sources, the accused demanded Rs 35,000 from the forest guard.

Experts' thrust on water budgeting, rainwater harvesting



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: The World Water Day was celebrated at ICAR-CIFA Kausalyaganga, Bhubaneswar Monday by organising workshop on 'Valuing of water for Life'.

Director of Soil Conservation and Watershed Development Hemant Kumar Panda emphasised on global water crisis and focussed on implementation of conservation measures including rainwater harvesting, rooftop water harvesting, integrated farm-

ing system necessary for doubling the farmers' yield.

ICAR-CIFA director Saroj Kumar Swain threw light on the current water scarcity. He also stressed upon need-based technologies for conservation and reduction in wastage of water. ICAR-CIFA is enrolled in water budgeting research work.

In the workshop, S C Rath, former Principal Scientist of ICAR-CIFA, Bhubaneswar stressed on valuation of water, saving water, implications of water crisis on daily life, water requirement for

different crops and water budgeting for different daily activities. He stated that it is imperative to follow suitable water conservation measures and spread the message of saving water.

The theme of World Water Day 2021 was 'Valuing Water'. According to the United Nations, "The value of water is about much more than its price." This day is celebrated keeping in line with Sustainable Development Goal No- 6 which is aimed to achieve water and sanitation by all for 2030.

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Lokayukta orders probe into illegal black stone quarrying at Aruha hill

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, March 22: The Director of Inquiry, Lokayukta, has been directed to conduct a probe into the illegal quarrying of black stones from Aruha hill under Dharmasala tehsil in this district, a report said. The matter came to fore after the chairman of Lokayukta recently passed an order during hearing of a case 1355/2020 on illegal quarrying of black stones from the hill. The Director of Inquiry, Lokayukta, will conduct a probe into the allegation of illegal mining on the hill under Dharmasala tehsil in exercise of the power conferred under Section 20(2) of the Odisha Lokayukta Act, 2014. The matter came up for hearing after a complaint was filed by the plaintiff Sarbeswar Behura. The Director of Inquiry will conduct a probe and submit the report within 60 days from the date of receipt of this reference. The order has come as a relief for the local residents as they hope that the probe will help in unmasking the accused leaseholder as well as the government officials who connived with the former in looting black stones from the hill. The order further stated that the state government has lost revenue worth several crores due to the un-



FACT FILE

The Director of Inquiry, Lokayukta, will conduct a probe and submit the report within 60 days from the date of receipt of this reference

A recent order passed by the Lokayukta said the state government has lost revenue worth several crores due to the unholy alliance between the district administration

ACCORDING TO A COMPLAINT, THE LEASEHOLDER JENA EXTRACTED BLACK STONE FROM THE HILL BEYOND THE PERMISSIBLE LIMITS OF LEASE AREA

holy alliance between the district administration, especially the Dharmasala tehsildar and the leaseholder Trinath Jena.

According to the complaint, the leaseholder Jena extracted black stone from the hill beyond the permissible limits of lease area. The district Collector, Dharmasala tehsildar, and Jena have filed their submissions in reply to an earlier order by the Lokayukta where they have denied any irregularities in mining of black stones. However, the reply submitted by the Collector goes to show that the Aruha black stone quarry No-1 was settled in favour of Trinath Jena in 2017-18 on lease for a period of five years.

The reply further reveals that

that there is regular enforcement of activities going on the lease area under Dharmasala tehsil and an amount ₹19,37,020.00 has been collected from royalty and penalty. This apart, 103 vehicles have been seized by the enforcement team so far, the Collector stated. In his reply, the tehsildar stated that several vehicles involved in illegal transportation have been seized. And the law has been set into motion against the wrongdoers.

The complainant has pointed out that though there are over 500 small and big quarries under the Dharmasala tehsil, royalty and penalty collected from them is less than one per cent in comparison to the illegal quarrying carried out on the hill.

Dulanga mines produce 46.75 lakh tonnes coal in 4 years

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, March 22: The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC)-owned Dulanga coal mines in this district have produced 46.75 lakh tonnes of coal during last four years, a report said. The Dulanga coal block in Ib valley was allocated to NTPC by the Union Coal Ministry in January 2006. The coal produced from Dulanga coal mines is mainly used as fuel at NTPC's 1600 megawatt super thermal power plant at

Darlipalli in the district.

The Dulanga coal mine became operational on February 28, 2018, while coal production started from the mines from September 13, 2018. Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the coal mines to the nation, September 22, 2018 following which coal transportation was resumed from the mines.

Chittaranjan Barik, the group general manager of the mines, told the media at a press meet. Barik also spoke on peripheral developments, rehabilitation and resettlement

measures for the displaced, construction of roads, drinking water supply, education and healthcare facilities and skill development training and assistance undertaken by the mines in the area for the displaced. He said that the company has paid ₹28.62 crore towards coal block allotment to the state government, ₹120 crore towards royalty and miscellaneous charges, ₹5.8 crore to district mineral foundation, ₹145 crore towards annual charges and ₹8 crore towards high-end production.

Man hacks father to death, injures mother



POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhendipada, March 22: In a shocking incident, a man reportedly hacked his father to death with an axe at Durgapur Kuda Sahi under Jarapada police limits in Angul district Monday. The accused did not even spare his mother and injured her seriously. The deceased has been identified as Batakrushna Behera and his injured wife as Rukmani Behera. The accused son, identified as Trinatha Behera, is absconding. According to the police, Natha worked as a driver and was living away from the village. He had returned home Sunday night. Natha and his father Batakrushna had a quarrel Monday

morning over some family issues. The scene turned uglier when Natha lost his cool and started attacking his father with an axe. His mother became an unwanted victim. While trying to rescue her husband, she too received injuries. Realising it that he had killed his father, Natha immediately fled from the spot. Hearing Rukmani's cries, neighbours rushed to her and sent her to Angul district headquarters hospital (DHH) by a 108 ambulance. On being informed, a team from Jarapada police station reached the spot and recovered the body for post-mortem. Registering a case, the police have launched an investigation into the matter and a manhunt for the absconding son.

Village road laying work billed 21 times in Nayagarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, March 22: Acting on allegations regarding rampant irregularities in constructing a village road under Bhapur block in Nayagarh district, the district Collector Poma Tudu recently ordered for a detailed probe. It may seem incredible, but the fact is that payment for the work has been billed 21 times. The road-laying work was carried out earlier under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). According to a source, the stretch of 850 metre-long road laying work at Gopalprasad village of Badasara panchayat in the district was re-named several times during the last three fiscals. It was billed accordingly and allegedly a sum of over ₹1,00,00,000 has been embezzled. A three-member team headed project director DRDA, Nayagarh, will conduct an official probe into the matter. Based on the report of the inquiry committee, stringent legal actions will be



In the FY 2018-19 the village road laying work was billed six times, in the FY 2019-20 it was billed nine times and in the FY 2020-21 it was billed another six times

taken against the wrongdoers, the project director Subash Chandra Ray said. Collector K Sudarshan Chakravorti said, "It was unanimously decided that the Chadak Mela will not be conducted this year. Only rituals will be performed by a handful of servants. Residents and people from outside will not be allowed during the rituals." The special characteristic of the fair is that devotees pierce their body with iron nails and dance barefoot under the scorching heat in a grand procession. It is believed that Lord Shiva is pleased with such penance and showers blessings on devotees.

No Chadak Mela this year due to Covid-19 restrictions

DEVOTEES BARRED FROM VISITING THE TEMPLE, ONLY RITUALS WILL BE HELD

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhograi, March 22: The district administration in Balasore has imposed restrictions on the celebrations of famous Chadak Mela of Baba Chandaneswarj in Bhograi of the district. The deity is worshipped at Huguli village on the fringes of the state. The famous fair, which is celebrated on the premises of Chandaneswar temple during Maha Bisuva Sankranti, attracts lakhs of devotees from in and around the state, including places like West Bengal and Jharkhand. Devotees congregate at the temple premises during the festival and pay their obeisance to the deity. This year, the festival will be held from April 2 as per Covid-19 restrictions due to sudden resurgence of the disease. The district admin-



A preparatory meeting for the Chadak Mela underway

istration has allowed the servants to only perform the rituals during the festival, while devotees have been barred from attending the festival in the temple premises. The matter came to fore following a meeting attended by Bhograi MLA Anant Das, District Collector K

Sudarshan Chakravorti, temple servants, president of Chandaneswar Trust Board and some local intellectuals. However, the district administration has allowed servants to perform rituals. Only 14 servants and trust members will perform the rit-

uals this year. "People have decided not to organise the fair this year due to resurgence of Covid-19 pandemic. As large gatherings pose threats of outbreak of the infectious virus, it was decided that only rituals will be performed to keep the age-old custom

alive," MLA Anant Das said. Awareness banners will be put up at various places urging devotees not to visit the temple during the festival. In fact, it has been decided to close the main gate of the temple to prevent entry of outsiders and devotees into the temple premises. Collector K Sudarshan Chakravorti said, "It was unanimously decided that the Chadak Mela will not be conducted this year. Only rituals will be performed by a handful of servants. Residents and people from outside will not be allowed during the rituals." The special characteristic of the fair is that devotees pierce their body with iron nails and dance barefoot under the scorching heat in a grand procession. It is believed that Lord Shiva is pleased with such penance and showers blessings on devotees.



Deities having a boat ride in the Sileru river at the start of the famed 'Bada Yatra' held every two years in Malkangiri district, Monday

OP PHOTO

Two-wheeler rider slapped ₹18,500 fine in Rayagada

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, March 22: A two-wheeler rider was slapped a fine of ₹18,500 Sunday night for flouting the traffic norms in Rayagada town under the provisions in the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019.

According to a source, the violator, named Y Sagar, was issued a challan for allegedly driving a scooter which has been registered in the name of Harish Chandra Swain of JK Pur locality in this town. During a routine checking at night, a team comprising Transport Department personnel and Rayagada police nabbed the violator while he was trying to flee the spot at DIB Chhak in Rayagada.

Sagar was issued a challan after he failed to show valid documents. The youth tried to escape in high speed but was eventually nabbed. Later, it was found that Sagar was driving the vehicle without a driving license and a helmet as well, a department official stated. "He was fined ₹18,500 under various Sections of the MV Act." Assistant Motor Vehicle Inspector Ashok Kumar Panigrahi said.

Closure of mines renders locals jobless in Sundargarh

EXPERTS CALL FOR USE OF RAINWATER IN THE CLOSED MINES TO IRRIGATE THE FARMLANDS IN KUTRA BLOCK

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kutra, March 22: Unemployment is acquiring serious proportions in Sundargarh district due to closure of several limestone and dolomite mines under this block, a report said.

The closure of mines has rendered hundreds of labourers jobless, the report said. This has led to a spurt in migration as the unemployed are leaving for other states in search of livelihood. At the same time, many, who are without work, have resorted to anti-social activities to earn a livelihood and, hence, the crime graph in the area is rising.

Reports said that the mines of owned by Tata Steel, Mishrilal Mines, Kapur Mines and OCL are lying closed due to various reasons despite the presence of several industries in adjoining Rajgangpur block. Experts, how-



ever, have a piece of advice to solve the unemployment problem. They said that the rainwater stored in the abandoned mines can be used for irrigating the farmlands in the region. This will help prevent the labourers from migrating to other states and draw them towards agriculture to earn their livelihood. However, lack of efforts on part of the district administration and agricultural authorities have spoiled the chances of using the rainwater for irrigation. Reports said that a limestone

mine of Tata Steel is lying closed for more than a year after the expiry of its lease. Hundreds of youths under the block were employed in the mine. However, they lost their jobs after its closure. It has been lying abandoned since then and large craters which have been created earlier are filled with rainwater. Residents have demanded that the district administration use motor pumps to supply the accumulated rainwater to their farmlands. It will help them to irrigate their crops and ensure a better harvest.

Tribal girl sold in Delhi rescued, 6 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, March 22: As many as six persons were arrested from various parts of this district on charges of selling a tribal girl in Delhi for ₹1 lakh, police said. The accused include four women and two men. They were arrested after police conducted raids at various places in Nabarangpur. Police said, the accused had taken the girl to Delhi on pretext of providing her job, but later they allegedly married her to a person in lieu of ₹1 lakh.

NOTICE


Notice is hereby given that the share certificate no. 10120 bearing distinctive no. 840571 - 841570 for 1,000 shares registered in the name of Mr. NAVAL NATVARLAL MANIAR under the folio no. M00130 of THE ORISSA MINERALS DEVELOPMENT CO. LTD., having its registered office at C/o, Sail Office, Ground Floor, Plot No. 271, Bidyut Marg, Unit-IV, Shastri Nagar, Bhubaneswar - 751001, Odisha, have been lost as reported by the concerned registered share holder of the same. Application has been made by the concerned registered shareholders to the company for issue of duplicate share certificate in replacement of the above. Any person having any objection to the issue of duplicate share certificate as aforesaid is required to lodge with the company at the above address or its registrars C B Management Services (P) Ltd., P-22, Bondel Road, Kolkata - 700 019 his/her/their objection thereto within 15 days from the date of the publication.

Place : Kolkata Date: 22.3.2021

OFFICE OF MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, SUNABEDA
E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
No. C-750 Date: 10.03.21
No. 703
Bid Identification No. M.C.-SBD-05/2020-21
Total No. of works : 02 Nos.
Tender Value : Rs. 1,06,47,414/- to Rs. 2,15,60,280/-
Bid Security : Rs. 1,06,500/- to Rs. 2,16,000/-
Available Period : Dt.22.03.2021 at 11.00 A.M. to 12.04.2021 at 5.00 P.M.
Opening of Technical Bid : 16.04.2021 at 11.00 A.M.
Opening of Financial Bid : 22.04.2021 at 11.00 A.M.
Bidders are requested to participate in advance with their Class - B and Class - A DSC before the closing date.
Further details please visit: <https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in>.
Sd/- Executive Officer
Sunabeda Municipality
OIPR-13076/11/0009/2021

Form No. URC-2
Advertisement giving notice about registration under Part I of Chapter XXI
[Pursuant to section 374(b) of the companies Act, 2013 and rule 4(1) of the companies (Authorized to Register) Rules, 2014]
1. Notice is hereby given that in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 366 of the Companies Act, 2013, an application has been made to the Registrar at CUTTACK that ALPS MINING SERVICES a partnership firm business entity may be registered under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Companies Act 2013, as a company limited by shares.
2. The principal objects of the company are as follows:
"TO CARRY ON BUSINESS OF TRADING, TRANSPORTATION, INCIDENTAL AND ANCILLARY ACTIVITY RELATED TO COAL AND IRON ORE AND TO PARTICIPATE IN GOVERNMENT OR NON GOVERNMENT TENDER FOR SUPPLY OF ABOVE PRODUCTS."
3. A copy of the draft memorandum and articles of association of the proposed company may be inspected at the office at PLOT NO. 866/8766, KHATA NO 559/3746 Subhashree Vihar, Near- SBI Regional Office, Ainthapali, Sambalpur- 768004 (Odisha)
4. Notice is hereby given that any person objecting to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar at (address), within twenty one days from the date of publication of this notice, with a copy to the company at its registered office.
Dated this 23rd day of 2021
Name(s) of Applicant
1. Mr. Naresh Kumar Poddar
2. Mr. Amit Singhal

“The supreme end is the freedom of the spirit.”
SRI AUROBINDO



Influx from Myanmar

The exodus of refugees from Myanmar (Burma) escaping crackdown by the military junta of that country to the bordering Indian state of Mizoram has created a diplomatic-humanitarian dilemma for India. The repression by the junta since it engineered a coup February 1 to deny power to the elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi has assumed grave proportions. The order to shoot pro-democracy supporters of Burma has forced many police and security personnel to flee the country as they have refused to open fire on their own 'brethren'. They are among about 300 refugees who have taken shelter in Mizoram. The junta has sent a missive to a Mizoram government official to deport the personnel who incurred its wrath by disobeying the shoot at sight order.

Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga has been categorical in his support to the cause of the refugees who have close ethnic ties with the dominant section of the state's population. The ruling Mizo National Front is an ally of the National Democratic Alliance and as such the CM has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi explaining why the Centre's order on 10 March to the four bordering states of Mizoram, Tripura, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, to stop entry of the refugees is unacceptable to the state. The Mizoram government's stand is that both the state and the Centre should extend all kinds of help to the refugees on humanitarian grounds till normalcy returns to Burma. These refugees are being hounded by the junta for protesting against the coup and demanding restoration of the democratic process in their country.

There has been a steady influx of refugees to Mizoram through the over 1,600 km-long porous borders between India and Burma. Realising the magnitude of the suffering of their tribe in the neighbouring country, Mizoram state government has followed a standard operating procedure (SOP) to give temporary shelter to the refugees. The MP from Mizoram told Parliament about the plight of about 300 refugees in Mizoram and urged the Centre to help as the state lacks the resources and wherewithal to provide shelter to them. However, the SOP was stopped after the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) wrote to the Assam Rifles and the four bordering states directing them to check illegal influx from that country. It cited earlier guidelines for the identification and deportation of illegal migrants. However, the Mizoram government has declined to abide by the instructions on the ground of ethnic ties between the Mizos and residents of the bordering Chin state of Burma. It insists that it can't be indifferent to their sufferings. The stand of that state government must be admired in these difficult times.

In fact, most of the refugees are from Myanmar's Chin state, which shares a 404-km border with Mizoram itself. The residents of Chin have close ethnic ties with the Mizo and Kuki tribes scattered across Mizoram and Manipur.

The Assam Rifles has, on Centre's instruction, stepped up surveillance along the border identifying 58 crossing points as being vulnerable to infiltration over the past few weeks. But, the force is caught in a dilemma as it has to rely on the local Mizos for information as well as checking illegal activities along the border, including smuggling. It obviously can't afford to antagonise the locals by being harsh with refugees having strong ethnic ties with them. In fact, the relationship has been officially recognised by both the countries in the form of a free movement regime (FMR) that allows people in border villages to trade and move freely up to 16 kilometres inside each other's territory. But the FMR has been suspended since March 2020 on account of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Centre has, however, iterated that state governments and Union Territory Administrations have no powers to grant 'refugee' status to any foreigner and India is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 protocol. The Indian government's dilemma stems from the fact that it has been getting assistance from the Myanmar junta for tackling insurgents operating in the north-east from its soil. India can't adopt an ostrich-like policy when, as the Mizoram CM pointed out to the Centre, Myanmar is in turmoil and 'innocent, hapless citizens are being persecuted and killed by the military regime' on a daily basis. Every day, terrified Burmese citizens are struggling to cross over to Mizoram in search of shelter and protection.

Just as the state government has no power to accord refugee status to any foreigner, similarly, the Centre's infrastructure to stop infiltration is woefully inadequate.

A humanitarian crisis is snowballing in the neighbouring country and the Centre should give precedence to humanitarian concerns rather than to diplomatic niceties. Bangladesh did so in the recent past giving shelter to hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees fleeing brutalities by Myanmar's military. The Indian government shut its doors to the Rohingyas because of its skewed ethno-religious policy. The mistake should not be repeated.

WISDOM CORNER

“You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.”

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

“The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity.”

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

“Cherish your visions and your dreams as they are the children of your soul, the blueprints of your ultimate achievements.”

NAPOLEON HILL

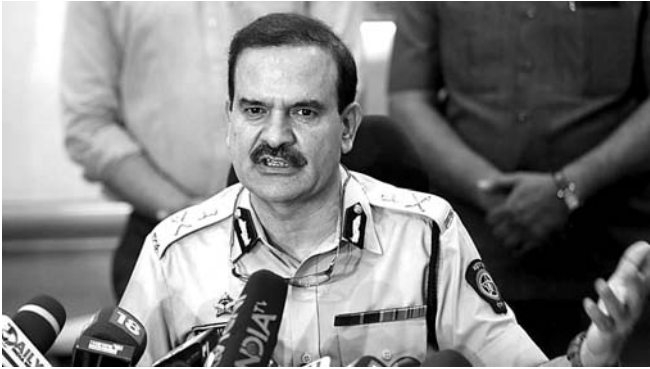
WORDSWORTH

Mimsy

This appears in some dictionaries with the sense prim or affected, over-refined or mincing. In this sense, mimsy has long been known in the British Isles, especially in Scots and northern dialects; an example is in A Rock in the Baltic, by Robert Barr (1906): “In one corner of the room stood a sewing-machine, and on the long table were piles of mimsy stuff out of which feminine creations are constructed.” It's known in other spellings, such as mimsey and mimzy; closely related is mimp; an elaborated version is miminy-piminy or niminy-piminy. Aficionados of Lewis Carroll will know a different meaning, which appears in the poem called Jabberwocky in his Through the Looking-Glass: “All mimsy were the borogoves”. Later in the book, Humpty-Dumpty explains its meaning as being a blend (he calls it a portmanteau word) of flimsy and miserable, so meaning “unhappy”. Carroll either invented it afresh or borrowed an existing English dialect word and gave it a new meaning. All forms seem to be built on mim. This little word may come from an imitation of pursing up the mouth in prudishness (a related form is mim-mouthed, affectedly prim and proper in speech, which appears in Virginius Puerisque, by Robert Louis Stevenson, published in 1881: “Mim-mouthed friends and relations hold up their hands in quite a little elegiacal synod about his path: and what cares he for all this?”) Mimsy is far from dead. It was found in the issue of The Medical Post for 6 January 2004 (which was published in Toronto, but the writer was remembering his childhood in Scotland): “Certainly if I had been drafted into the Armed Forces I would have been streets ahead of these mimsy Boy Scouts with their cowboy hats and their two-fingered apology for a salute.” It also appeared in an article by Griff Rhys Jones in the Independent on 24 October 2003: “This is food writing. Not mimsy pseudo-porn, but genuinely funny gastro-investigation driven by a slaving appetite.”

FOCUS MAHARASHTRA

WHEN COPS PLANT BOMBS



What looks like a problem of the police in Mumbai is a problem that we see across the nation, where encounters have become the preferred way to eliminate gangsters, cut short the legal process of prosecution and take cover under the plea that the people of India support the killing of gangsters



Jagdish Rattanan

THE TRUTH WILL FOR LONG REMAIN CONCEALED BEHIND A FLOOD OF ALLEGATIONS, INNUENDOES AND SURMISES. WHATEVER THE PICTURE MAY BE, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE MUMBAI POLICE WILL NOT COMMAND RESPECT

when Singh as Deputy Commissioner had Vaze in his team as an “encounter specialist”.

Singh has since been shunted out, but he has hit back saying State Home Minister, Anil Deshmukh of the NCP, had asked Vaze to collect Rs 100 crore from bars, and assorted businesses in Mumbai. Singh, of course, cries foul now but was silent all along, which in itself raises its own questions about his conduct, given that there is political rivalry also at play between the BJP-led Centre and the Shiv Sena-led State. Vaze has been arrested by the NIA, a little over one year after he was reinstated in service in a rather odd move, after being suspended and then resigning from the police force way back in 2007.

And who reinstated him? Singh headed the committee that did the deed, though Vaze was being prosecuted for the death in custody of Khwaja Yunus, a 27-year-old computer engineer, in a case now pending in courts. The reason cited for the urgent reinstatement was the need to hire more police staff in times of a pandemic! From the top to the bottom, the rot runs deep and won't be easy to clean since it is now so much a part of the system that it has created its

own efficiencies, paybacks and a way of working that keeps the machinery moving. There is another death that could be traced to Singh and Vaze's hands now – one of the cars used in the Ambani case was allegedly being parked at the Police Commissioner's office; the precise car carrying the dynamite belonged to a little-known businessman who has since died in mysterious circumstances.

The truth will for long remain concealed behind a flood of allegations, innuendoes and surmises. Whatever the picture may be, there is no doubt that the Mumbai Police will not command respect. It may well embolden other members of the force to test boundaries and further lower standards.

Controlling this slide will require a huge effort. But what looks like a problem of the police in Mumbai is a problem that we see across the nation, where encounters have become the preferred way to eliminate gangsters, cut short the legal process of prosecution and take cover under the plea that the people of India support the killing of gangsters. What this simplistic analysis refuses to see or learn is that due process is not a hurdle to be crossed but the only way in which the forces

can be kept honest, can be made to deliver on their legal mandate and to be able to truly control crime and conduct investigations bringing those truly guilty to justice.

Any approach that shortchanges due process is an invitation to disaster, as we see happening in Mumbai. Consider that if the so-called “encounters” were investigated, if Vaze and his senior Singh were held to account for their actions, this team of two would not have had the capacity to rise to the levels they have and sabotage the system in the way they have today. This writer is personally witness to how these “encounter” specialists have gone about their work, almost all of it illegal, almost a private den that is sometimes dirtier than the code with which gangs may operate. More than two decades ago, one of these “specialists” in a private conversation revealed that he had the power to listen in to any mobile conversation without due process, kept a set of guns in his locker in the office which he displayed and made no bones about admitting that he was not clean and that his team was known for being the one that made money – which was a cause of jealousy among many others!

Mumbai, and the nation, needs to put a stop to short termism when it comes to daily policing. There is only one way to control crime, maintain law & order and build confidence among the citizenry. It's the old-fashioned way of getting this right. It takes time, effort, skill and involves support for the men who live up to the pledge of the uniform. It demands exemplary punishment for those who break the rules. This is called due process, in letter and in spirit, and is the only way. Whenever it is violated, we will get the murkiness that shames the Mumbai police today. Whenever it is followed, we will get a force that makes the city proud of its work and commitment.

The writer is a journalist and a faculty member at Bhavan's SPJIMR. Views are personal @THE BILLION PRESS

SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Overcoming water scarcity naturally

Humanity's consumption of fresh water has long exceeded the rate of replenishment. Now, researchers are warning that this essential natural resource is running out. If we are to reverse this trend, investing in natural solutions is our best hope.

Less than 1% of all water on Earth is accessible or usable fresh water. Most is held in inland wetlands, including rivers, lakes, marshes, peatlands, and underground aquifers. These wetlands are nature's water harvesters, cleaners, and bankers. By capturing, purifying, storing, and releasing rain and floodwater before releasing it when needed, they enable the global water cycle that ensures a constant supply.

Worldwide, wetlands' full integration into water planning and management across all economic sectors would bring far-reaching benefits. Sufficient water supplies could stimulate economic growth, reduce conflict, and relieve environmental stress. But that requires significant sustained investment to meet surging demand.

Consumption of fresh water has increased six-fold over the last 100 years, and demand is still rising, with agriculture, industry, and en-

ergy accounting for 90% of the total. At least 55% more water will be required by 2050 to meet the demand created by economic growth, urbanisation, and a global population of nearly ten billion people.

Already, there is considerably less water per person now than there was just two decades ago. As a result, over three billion people face severe water shortages, which often fuel violent conflict. By 2050, more than half the world's people will be water-insecure; in dry regions, climate change will aggravate scarcity.

Climate change is only one threat. Pollution is also exacerbating the water crisis. Unsafe drinking water is a potentially fatal reality for people around the world. Virtually all freshwater sources are now contaminated to some extent; not even Mount Everest's snowcaps have been spared. So, why aren't we saving and protecting wetlands? Their versatility is especially relevant when considering that water crisis ranks among the World Economic Forum's top five global risks in terms of impact. Their water-harnessing capacities above and below ground – counteracting droughts, floods, and the impact of melting glaciers – are particularly important.

And yet, although they provide most of our fresh water, nearly 90% of all wetlands have disappeared since the Industrial Revolution, and the loss is accelerating in tandem with globalisation. Many remaining wetlands are critically endangered.

Wetlands are particularly vulnerable because they are frequently considered wasteland to be converted for farming and development, or disease-ridden areas to be reclaimed. This tendency highlights the lack of understanding of wetlands' critical role that underpins the world's water crisis. To ensure safe, secure, and adequate water supplies, we must focus on the connection between human dependence on water and what we do to wetlands.

Yes, there are other options for increasing our water supply, but none is ideal. Seawater desalination creates more problems than it solves. Cloud seeding raises troubling questions. And mass construction of water capture plants requires considerable investment and often disrupts local economies and ways of life. Moreover, unlike wetlands, these options cannot simultaneously provide food, medicine, income for one in seven people, a home for countless species, or mitigate climate change.

With half of global GDP dependent on ecosystem services, saving wetlands should be a top priority in crafting a green recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Chennai's revitalisation of ancient wetlands in India to prevent another 'day zero' – like the one in 2019, when the city's water ran out – offers a blueprint for others. Importantly, we must rethink and overhaul agriculture, by far the biggest consumer of water; to get more 'crop per drop'.

Industry, too, must step up as an equal partner in conservation and efficient use. Ecosystem protection and an attractive business environment might once have seemed incompatible. Today, businesses' very survival depends on a healthy natural environment.

Wetlands are the planet's best solutions to the existential issue of freshwater supply. We can have enough here on Earth without needing to search beyond Earth for it. All we must do is protect the natural solutions we already have and use them wisely.

The writer is Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands @PROJECT SYNDICATE

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Women's safety

Sir, Indian Railways issued detailed guidelines to prevent incidents of crime against women in trains and on railway premises. The guidelines include an action plan, preventive measures, sensitisation, surveillance over the identified vulnerable areas, notice for passengers and special measures. Guidelines also advise zonal railways and production units that acting proactively they may implement various other mechanisms to ensure the safety of women depending upon local conditions and circumstances. In recent years, there has been a surge in incidents of crimes against women passengers. Of the 23 million passengers who travel in trains across the railway network every day, about 4.6 million are women passengers. A majority of complaints from women related to molestation, eve-teasing, harassment, and unauthorised entry of male passengers in coaches reserved for women, among others. In addition, women passengers become victims of chain/mobile snatching, handbag lifting and other instances of thefts of luggage. The women passengers those are hesitating to travel in trains will feel comfortable to travel if all measures are taken to check crimes against women.

Hitesh Kumar Parida, PANIKOILI (JAJPUR)

Unhappy India

Sir, On March 20, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network released the World Happiness Report 2021. In the survey for 2021, 149 countries had participated. Finland emerged as the happiest country in the world for fourth time in a row. On the other hand, India is lagging behind, almost at the end in the race of happiness. To be precise, out of 149 countries, we are at rank 139. Why Indians are unhappy? Why have we scored so less in the happiness exam? These questions are a matter of concern. Everyone blames the vast population of India for its poor performance. But how far is it justified? For some wise analysts, the population would have been an incentive to boost our ranking. The most disquieted issue is the mental wellbeing of our citizens. According to a report of NCRB, our nation sees 381 suicides every day. Evidently, people are mentally depressed. This spectre must be taken seriously and it's time we Indians understand the importance of mental wellbeing. To look out for a solution, we can't be as extreme as Bhutan, to measure its development by Gross National Happiness instead of GDP. But, surely the government can allocate an exclusive council that looks after the mental wellbeing of its citizens. Let's take it seriously or we'll have to pay a huge price for it in future.

N Soumik, BHUBANESWAR

For a change, Vijayan turns media-friendly

THE CM NOWADAYS APPEARS TO BE EASILY AVAILABLE TO THE MEDIA IN CONTRAST TO HIS EARLIER IMAGE OF BEING ONE OF THE MOST INACCESSIBLE LEADERS IN KERALA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, March 22: With the April 6 Assembly polls approaching fast, Pinarayi Vijayan nowadays appears to be easily available to the media in contrast to his earlier image of being one of the most inaccessible Chief Ministers in Kerala.

All those who have been following Vijayan, right from the time he assumed office in May 2016, he went into the record books by becoming the first Chief Minister of the state to cancel the weekly post-cabinet media briefing, and he made it crystal clear that he will speak only when he wanted to and not when the media sought him.

Then came his classic act of chasing away the media by literally shouting, "Kadeku purethu" (get



out) when the media came to cover a peace meeting in the state capital.

However, this tough posture against the media at times came handy for even the media-friendly Congress-led UDF top leaders, who

used to taunt the media and escape replying by saying: "Why don't you ask like this to Vijayan. All know you are afraid of him."

A media critic on the condition of anonymity said Vijayan has al-

ways been like this and whenever he needs the support of the media, he is liberal in giving interviews.

"Even though, Vijayan and his team are claiming that they would become the first government to retain power, they have sensed that things are not rosy as they think, and hence this is the latest game plan of the Vijayan think-tank to reach out to the media as quickly and be as polite as possible. Just ahead of the 2016 Assembly polls also his PR team was chasing the media and was giving interviews at will during the course of his state-wide Yatra then. For the media, memory is short-lived and for them it's only the TRP that matters and that's also known to Vijayan, and hence he is the winner," said the critic.

Incidentally Sunday, an agitated Leader of Opposition Ramesh

Chennithala alleged that the government was influencing the media by giving advertisements worth crores of rupees.

"The recent pre-poll surveys appear to be heavily biased towards the Left and the media have been campaigning against the Congress-led UDF. The government has spent by now Rs 200 crore for advertisements. In a democracy, the opposition also has to be given time and space by the media and none should forget that the Vijayan government had to backtrack on a number of schemes, after we raised strong objections. The same company has partnered with three different media organisations to do the pre-poll survey and it should also be noted that the Vijayan government has given advertisements to newspapers in Gujarat also," said Chennithala.

CPI says no change in Sabarimala affidavit; irks Congress & BJP



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, March 22: The CPI, the second largest partner in the ruling Left Democratic Front in Kerala, Monday made it clear the Left government would continue with the "same position" on the affidavit filed by it in the Supreme Court in connection with the Sabarimala women's entry issue, triggering sharp reactions from the BJP and Congress.

On the other hand, the CPI(M) claimed that there was a deliberate attempt by someone to make Sabarimala a topic of discussion during the time of election.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said in Kottayam that some people were trying to raise the Sabarimala issue again during the election time. "No need to raise it now...Let's think about other things after the final verdict," he said, adding that his government had granted Rs 1.487 crore for improving the amenities of pilgrims at the hill temple.

While talking to a private channel, CPI state secretary Kanam Rajendran said the government has already taken a stand in its original petition on the matter and "it would be continued".

It was clearly mentioned in the affidavit that it was not the government but a panel of experts and scholars of "Hindu dharma" which should take a final decision on the entry of young women at the hilltop temple, he said.

"The state government and the Travancore Devaswom Board (which manages the shrine) have taken a stand in the original petition regarding the matter. The same position will be continued like that," Rajendran said. It was not the government to take a final decision on the customs and traditions of the temple, the Left leader said. "The government had said (in the affidavit) that a panel of scholars and experts, proficient in Hindu Dharma, should be set up and the final judgment should be pronounced after taking into account its opinion on the women's entry.

The government will continue this stand," he said. The Left leader's statement comes at a time when the opposition parties are keen to know whether the LDF government will make any change in the present affidavit in the case, pending in the Supreme Court.

Lashing out at the CPI leader over his statement, BJP state president K Surendran said Rajendran's stand that there would not be any change in the Left government's affidavit, which backs women's entry in Sabarimala, would turn the holy land into a place of riot again.

"If the CPI(M) continues its move to destroy Sabarimala, the agitation will start again. We are ready to fight from the front again for devotees," he said during an election campaign at Nariapuram.

He also said if the BJP-NDA government comes to power in the state, Sabarimala would be liberated from the clutches of politicians.

Criticising the CPI leader, senior Congress leader K Muraleedharan said the "insincere" approach of the Marxist government towards Sabarimala has been exposed through Rajendran's statement.

"Kanam Rajendran says that the LDF government will not make any change in the existing affidavit. That means, the government is still sticking to its stand of allowing young women's entry in Sabarimala. They want devotees' vote but they are not ready to change their stand," he said.

The government was giving all support to destroy the customs and traditions of the shrine, Muraleedharan, also the UDF candidate in Nemom, alleged.

Meanwhile, TDB president N Vasu said it was the government which has to take a decision on the affidavit. "There has been no issue at Sabarimala for the last three years...Festivals have been going on in a peaceful atmosphere. There has been no complaint of violation of any customs or traditions," he said, adding the present controversies would only help destroy the peaceful atmosphere in Sabarimala.

Cong confident of winning all 3 Assembly bypolls in Raj



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, March 22: All India Congress Committee general secretary in-charge for Rajasthan Ajay Maken Monday exuded confidence that the party will win the three Assembly seats going to bypolls next month.

Maken said the Ashok Gehlot government has presented an "excellent" budget and the party will be benefited by it.

"Our observers, ministers in-charge and others have been working for several weeks. We are ahead in preparations and the party will win bypolls on all seats," he told reporters at the airport. At a meeting with state Congress leaders and workers, Maken asked them to continue working on the ground to ensure that the party wins.

"We are confident that the party will deliver better results as compared to the BJP," he said.

After the meeting, Maken said party workers gave important suggestions which will be implemented.

On the alleged phone tapping issue raised by the BJP in the recently concluded Assembly ses-

Our observers, ministers in-charge and others have been working for several weeks. We are ahead in preparations and the party will win bypolls on all seats

AJAY MAKEN | AICC GENERAL SECRETARY

sion, Maken claimed the most phone tapping was done in Gujarat when Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister.

"It is the BJP which has been blamed for phone tapping," he said.

Maken said he has asked state Congress chief Govind Singh Dotasra to forward the panel of names shortlisted so that it could be sent for approval to the party high-command for finalising candidates. Bypolls will be held in Sahara (Bhilwara), Sujangarh (Churu) and Rajsamand Assembly constituencies. According to the election schedule, nominations will start with the issuance of notification March 23.

Polling will be held April 17, and counting will take place May 2.

50K students return as Kota delivers best results

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, March 22: Over 50,000 students, who went home during the Covid lockdown, have now returned to Kota, Rajasthan's education hub, and started preparations with the sole aim to crack various competitive exams and make a mark for themselves.

Despite many adverse circumstances, including lockdown and curfew throughout the year, Kota managed to maintain its credibility - preparing students for engineering and medical entrance examinations and delivering some of the best results.

While two Kota coaching students have secured 100 percentile - scoring 300 out of 300 marks in the recently released JEE-Main February result, in NEET-UG, Allen student Soyeb Aftab created history by scoring 720 out of 720.

Students studying in Kota also topped the Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana (KVPY) Fellowship 2020 Result. The highest number of students from Kota has been selected in the qualifying round of the Olympics.

As per Naveen Maheshwari, Director, Allen Career Institute, "The students and parents across the country have again expressed confidence in the Kota system and teaching methodology.

"The institutes are continuously delivering better results. Students are constantly coming here to prepare for their dream careers. Here in Covid time, we started a 31-bed hospital dedicated to students. Students' health and safety are the priority for Allen."

Ayush Goyal, HOD, Reliable



NEW IDENTITY

KOTA CREATED A NEW IDENTITY ACROSS THE COUNTRY WHEN LOCKDOWN WAS ANNOUNCED AFTER MARCH 22, 2020

MORE THAN 50,000 STUDENTS WERE SENT HOME SAFELY TO THEIR PARENTS DURING THIS PHASE IN A HEALTHY AND CLEAN ENVIRONMENT. THIS WAS THE BIGGEST HOMECOMING OF STUDENTS

EVEN TUALLY KOTA SEEMS TO BE CATCHING UP WITH THE SPEED ON THE PATH TOWARDS THE NEW NORMAL AFTER GETTING HIT BY THE PANDEMIC AS THE STREETS OF THE CITY HAVE AGAIN STARTED BUZZING WITH STUDENTS

Institute, says, "Kota is committed to the students. Kota City has made a mark across the country to fulfill students' career dreams and is tak-

ing good care of them. Due to better facilities, the students are coming to Kota, and new batches have commenced. Kota is committed to providing better care to the students," he said.

Sunil Aggarwal, President, Coralpark Hostel Association said: "We look forward to fulfilling all the needs of students. We are constantly working on providing a home-like environment for the students and ensuring that they will not face any problems while preparing for their career dream.

"For this, the guidelines of Covid-19 are being followed, and an isolation facility is also being provided to the students."

Bhagwan Birla, President, Landmark Hostel Association says, "Parents along with the students coming to Kota, are happy to see the arrangements here. They feel that a safe, healthy and clean environment, just like home, is provided in Kota.

"This is the reason that students are constantly coming here and are busy preparing for their careers," he added.

HOTEL MEALS WOOING BEARS OUT OF JUNGLES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, March 22: Bears have developed a special liking for food served in hotels!

This surprising revelation has been made in a research paper submitted by Udaipur-based researchers which was published in Cambridge University's magazine Oryx.

The research was carried out by the Mohanlal Sukhadia University's Udaipur team which included researcher Utkarsh Prajapati, Assistant Professor Vijay Kumar Koli and Nature Conservation Foundation scientist KS Gopi Sundar.

Prajapati said that a research, for the first time in the world, shows that the sloth bears have been entering the city from the forest areas.

In Mount Abu, bears visit the township scurrying for trash to eat. Now they have got accustomed to eating cooked savouries.

Balaji Curry, Deputy Forest Conservator of Forests Department, said that the incidents of bears seen in cities have increased in the last five years, while the incidents of attacks on humans have increased in the last two years.

Research also revealed that a bear attacks human when suddenly encountered, but the interesting fact is that it has been the women who have been exposed to the high-



est number of bear attacks.

If a woman comes in front of a bear with children, the bear turns aggressive.

According to Gopi Sundar, the natural habitat of the sloth bear is threatened and that is why bears are coming out of the forests more and more heading towards city limits.

The growing aggression trend in bears is also due to the dumping of food items in the dustbin. Attracted by the cooked meals found in dustbins as leftovers, the sloth bears head for cities and when they do not get this food, they become violent and attack the humans.

According to these researchers, bears are generally considered to be shy animals, but their nature has changed over the years as they are now seen shifting to urban areas from their natural habitat -

the once dense forests. This transformation has spiked the conflict between bears and humans.

Aiming to find the reason why bears started visiting populated areas, despite the availability of sufficient quantity of food in the forests, these researchers started the study and found many stunning facts such as bears, these days, have developed a liking for food cooked in hotels.

Due to their liking for meals served at hotels, they enter Mount Abu, a hill station of Rajasthan and can be seen eating food dumped across the road. The research started in December 2018 and the research paper was sent to Cambridge University.

After being reviewed by scientists, this research has recently been featured in the Oryx magazine.

Library-centric women's movement creating waves

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, March 22: Kerala's Safdar Hashmi Memorial Library, formed in 1988 immediately after the theatre artist was shot dead in Delhi, has a women's wing which is creating waves across the state through innovative methods as well as by lending helping hands to them in every possible way.

The library has over 14,000 books and is the main cultural hub of Mayyil in Kannur district, the home district of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

The women's group, which is a part of the library, is into women empowerment, women entrepreneurship, training for competitive examinations, developing financial independence among women, increasing women's participation in culture, art and theatre and developing reading habit among women.

The 'Streevedi' or the women's group has also been actively involved in spreading awareness on menstrual cleanliness and 'menstrual cup' among women. Light Emitting Diode (LED) clinics have also been conducted to spread awareness on power conservation among women. Later, the LED clinics were transformed into LED bulb making projects.

Rishna, the panchayat president of Mayyil and one of the key operators of the women's wing, told



More than a library, we have transformed this place into a cultural platform for women, promoting women entrepreneurs, financial independence of women, creating awareness among women on menstrual hygiene and environment hazards caused by sanitary napkins

RISHNA | PANCHAYAT PRESIDENT OF MAYYIL

added.

The women's wing has also conducted several dramas across the district featuring all women troupe. There is also a "travelling library" which supplies books at every doorstep and is compulsory that women of the area read a book and return it within two weeks.

The library is meeting the incidental expenses of the woman librarian who moves in a two wheeler and connects with 200 homes per week.

Another major feature of the library is the initiative to conduct group reading and reading collectives.

Rishna said, "This is to create awareness among the general pub-

lic as to how serious we are and how important reading is."

Initially, the local people were sceptical about the women centric programmes, but of late everything has changed and they now feel that what the women's group is doing is an effective step towards the society at large.

Radhakrishnan, who is from the Mayyil panchayat, told IANS, "Those women who would spend their leisure time watching serials are much advanced now. They are now reading classics, making paper bags, LED bulbs, cleaning materials and masks which are sold in the market, fetching them a good amount besides helping to make the project a huge success."

of the day quote

Rahul Gandhi talks of protecting Assam's 'asmita' (pride and identity), but today I want to ask him publicly - will Congress do it with AIUDF Chief Badruddin Ajmal on his lap?

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

The high court taking cognisance of new facts in the Hathras case and ordering an inquiry into threats to witnesses and other issues has put the UP government in the dock and the people have been forced to think as to how victims will get justice

MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

The CMs of UP and MP will sign a pact today to link the Ken and Betwa rivers. This will all but destroy the Panna Tiger Reserve in MP, a success story in translocation and revival. I had suggested alternatives 10 years ago but alas...

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Uttarakhand CM tests COVID +ve

Dehradun: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat Monday said he has tested positive for COVID-19. The chief minister took to Twitter to inform the people about his COVID-19 test report and said he has tested positive for the pandemic but he is alright and has no complications. He has isolated himself and is under the observation of doctors. Rawat also advised the people who had come into contact with him over the past few days to get themselves tested.

Maoist couple held in T'gana

Karimnagar: A Maoist couple was arrested Monday in Mancheril district for allegedly trying to reorganise 'Sikasa', a frontal organisation affiliated to the banned CPI(ML), police said. They claimed that the couple were also trying to promote the activities of the outfit in urban areas. Varanasi Subrahmanyam and his wife Vijayalaxmi were arrested at Vijayawada railway station, Mancheril Deputy Commissioner of Police G Uday Kumar Reddy told reporters.

7-year-old killed in bomb blast

Burdwan: A seven-year-old boy was killed and another child injured in a crude bomb explosion in Burdwan city in West Bengal Monday, police said. The incident happened around 11 am in Rasikpur's Subhaspally area of the city, they said. Sheikh Afroz (7) and Sheikh Ibrahim (9) were playing near their house when they hit a packet in which the crude bombs were kept, leading to the blast, Burdwan police station's inspector-in-charge Pintu Saha said.

Thunderstorms likely in MP

Bhopal: Parts of Madhya Pradesh may witness thunderstorms, gusty winds and lightning strikes in the next 24 hours, as per the yellow alert issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Monday. Isolated places in the districts of Bhopal, Jabalpur, Sagar, Hoshangabad, Gwalior and Chambal divisions are likely to see thunderstorms, lightning and gusty wind with speed reaching 30-40 kilometres per hour (KMPH), it said. Similar weather trend with gusty winds might be witnessed in ten districts Rewa, Satna, Khandwa, Khargone, Burhanpur, Ratlam, Ujjain, Dewas, Sahajpur and Agar-Malwa districts.

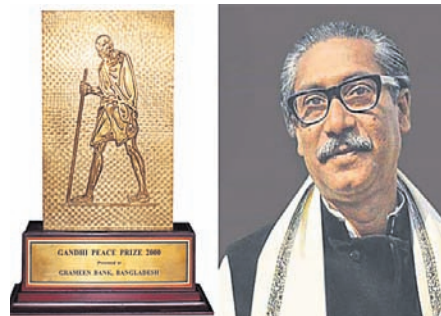


Have you seen how a cricket stadium in Gujarat was renamed after Modi? One day, they will change the name of the country. They are selling PSUs to private parties

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

GANDHI PEACE PRIZE TO 'BANGABANDHU'

The Gandhi Peace Prize for the year 2020 is being conferred on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the culture ministry said Monday. The Gandhi Peace Prize is an annual award instituted by government of India since 1995, the 125th birth anniversary commemoration year of Mahatma Gandhi



A year after 'Janata curfew', India reports highest surge this year



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: The coronavirus pandemic is on the upswing again in India which observed a 'Janata curfew' this day a year ago, having paved the way for an over two-month long strict nationwide lockdown to curb the contagion.

Millions of people across the country stayed indoors March 22, 2020 in an unprecedented and overwhelming response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for the nationwide curfew, coming out briefly at 5 pm to show their gratitude to healthcare and other essential service providers with sounds of bells, conches and claps.

This day, the country's infection tally stood at 360 and the death toll at 7. India reported its first case of coronavirus infection January 30 last year from Kerala, and the first death March 10 from Karnataka.

India crossed the grim milestone of one crore COVID-19 cases on December 19, even as the spread of the virus slowed down with almost a month being taken for the 10 lakh new infections, unlike in the period from August till mid-November when they rose at a faster rate.

The daily rise in cases fell below 30,000 since December 14 (27,071) and the lowest daily increase of 8,635 in-

fections was reported on February 2 this year. The daily rise in cases, however, started remaining above 30,000 from March 18.

India reported 46,951 new coronavirus infections in a day, the highest so far this year, taking the nationwide COVID-19 tally to 1,16,46,081, according to the Union health ministry data updated Monday. India has seen 2,60,742 cases in the last seven days.

The daily fresh cases remained below 20,000 from January 8 till March 10 after which the cases began to spike.

The national recovery rate was at its highest at 97.33 per cent February 17 which has come down to 95.75 per cent.

The active caseload was at its lowest at 1,35,926 February 12, comprising 1.25 per cent of the total infections.

Around 13 states and Union Territories (UTs) were out of the grip of COVID-19 before the Janata Curfew was announced.

India stands at number one position in terms of recovered coronavirus cases followed by Brazil, while it is in the third spot in terms of the cases after the US and Brazil, according to the Johns Hopkins University, which has been compiling global COVID-19 data.

India-Pak detente on with water-sharing talks

LAST MONTH, INDIA AND PAKISTAN ANNOUNCED A RARE AGREEMENT TO STOP FIRING ON THE BITTERLY-CONTESTED KASHMIR BORDER

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 22: India and Pakistan are to hold the first meeting in three years Tuesday of a commission on water rights from the Indus River in a further sign of rapprochement in relations frozen since 2019 during disputes over Kashmir. The Permanent Indus Commission, set up in 1960, will meet for two days in New Delhi, according to two Indian officials involved with water issues and Pakistan's foreign ministry.

Pakistan will raise objections to the technical designs of India's planned Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai hydroelectric plants, Pakistani foreign ministry spokesman Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said. The Indus River, one of the world's largest, and its tributaries feed 80



percent of Pakistan's irrigated agriculture.

The talks are the latest in both nations' tentative efforts to re-engage after a 2019 suicide bomb in Indian Kashmir that New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based guerrillas and India's move later that year to strip Kashmir's constitutional autonomy.

The Permanent Indus Commission, set up in 1960, will meet for two days in New Delhi

have played a role in secret efforts to achieve a detente.

Last month, India and Pakistan announced a rare agreement to stop firing on the bitterly-contested Kashmir border, which Bloomberg said was also the result of UAE-brokered talks. There was no immediate comment from India, Pakistan or the UAE to the Bloomberg report out Monday.

At the water-sharing talks, both sides are expected to try and narrow differences over the hydro-projects, Indian officials said.

One of the Indian officials, who asked to remain unidentified, said the Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai projects along with a couple of others - which Pakistan is concerned would hurt the flow of water downstream - were in line with the provisions of the treaty.

LOST LABOUR



A farmer inspects wheat crop affected due to rains and strong winds, at a village on the outskirts of Amritsar, Monday

LS passes GNCTD Amendment Bill

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 22: The Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 was passed in the Lok Sabha Monday.

In reply to a debate, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, AG Kishan Reddy said, "No murder of democracy is taking place with the amendments in Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) bill. No right has been taken away from the Delhi government neither any new right has been given to the Lieutenant Governor."

This amendment only seeks to remove ambiguities in governance and is in line with court judgments and it will enhance accountability, Reddy said.

Participating in the debate, Congress's Manish Tewari said, The problem with the BJP is that their stand changes on the side they are seated in Parliament.

PM launches 'Catch the Rain' campaign



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday launched 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain' campaign for conserving water and stressed that every penny of MGNREGA funds be spent on rain water conservation till the monsoon arrives.

Addressing an event at the virtual launch of the campaign on the World Water Day, Modi said it is a matter of concern that majority of rain water in India gets wasted. He said the more the rain water is conserved, the less will be the dependence on groundwater.

He also called for creating more awareness about water conservation and increased public participation in such efforts.

The prime minister also emphasised on the need for involving women in water conservation efforts, saying they understand the value of water better.

The success of campaigns like 'Catch the Rain' is very important, he said, noting that both urban and rural areas have been included in the Jal Shakti Abhiyan.

"There is still some time for the monsoon to arrive and we have to make efforts to conserve water. We should not be lacking behind in our preparedness," he said.

Before the monsoon, there should be cleaning and desilting of tanks, lakes, and wells and their capacity to conserve water must be increased. Any hindrances in the flow of rainwater should be addressed.

"For all these things, we have to put in all our efforts," he said.

Modi said India's self-sufficiency is dependent on its water resources and water connectivity, and its fast-paced development is not possible without effective water conservation.

MIZORAM PUSHES PM TO DO MORE IN MYANMAR

The border state shares close ties with parts of Myanmar. Many of the people who have sought shelter in the remote Indian state since late February are defecting policemen and their families

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 22: Mizoram, an Indian border state, into which more than 1,000 people from Myanmar have sought refuge, is pushing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration to engage with representatives of the Southeast Asian country's ousted elected government.

By calling for the restoration of democracy but unwilling to openly condemn the military, which staged



a coup Feb 1, India's federal government has taken a cautious approach towards Myanmar despite an escalation in violence.

But the chief minister of the northeastern state of Mizoram said Sunday that he had held talks with a member of a committee of ousted lawmakers in Myanmar, which is attempting to reestablish the civilian government.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with #Myanmar in these trying times," Chief Minister Zoramthanga, who uses only one name, wrote in a tweet, after talking online with Zin Mar Aung, who has been named by the lawmakers' committee as its foreign minister.

Mizoram shares close ties with parts of Myanmar. Many of the people who have sought shelter in the remote Indian state since late February are defecting policemen and their families.

A group of officials from Mizoram also held meetings with India's federal home ministry last week, asking New Delhi to help people fleeing Myanmar and urging the government to assist the pro-democracy movement.

"We have to help them in the time of need," Mizoram lawmaker K. Vanlalvena, who attended the meetings, said in an interview.

"We asked the Indian government to involve (itself) more in the local politics of Myanmar."

India's home ministry had previously directed border states to stop the influx from Myanmar and deport those who had crossed over.

The home and foreign ministries did not immediately respond to questions from Reuters.

55x renewable energy growth needed for zero emission

THE CEEW STUDY IS THE FIRST EXERCISE TO OUTLINE MULTIPLE PATHWAYS FOR INDIA TO ATTAIN NET-ZERO EMISSIONS, RATHER THAN FIXATING ON A SINGLE SCENARIO OR A SINGLE YEAR

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 22: India would need to generate at least 83 per cent of its electricity from (non-hydro) renewable energy sources by 2050, if it were to commit to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by mid-century, according to an independent study released Monday by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW).

This would mean a massive 55-fold increase in use of non-hydro renewables in electricity generation within the coming three decades, from only 160 Terawatt-hour (TWh) (10 per cent) in 2019. Further, to achieve net-zero by 2050 the share of electricity in India's industrial energy use must rise three-fold,



from 20 per cent in 2018 to 70 per cent in 2050. The share of electric vehicles in passenger car sales would also have to rise to 76 per cent in 2050 from just 0.1 per cent in 2019.

These estimates are based on CEEW's best understanding of

progress on mitigation technologies. To meet net-zero, India would need to either completely eliminate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, or balance these by sequestering GHG emissions.

The CEEW study is the first ex-

IISER, UNMC identify drug that can help treat COVID

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Bhopal and the University of Nebraska Medical Centre (UNMC) in the US have identified a drug that can be repurposed to treat COVID-19.

According to the team, 'Rapamycin' is currently being used for treating cancer patients and those who have undergone organ transplantation. Its analogues are commonly available in India and abroad.

The research was published in a peer-reviewed paper recently in the reputed International Elsevier journal, Chemo Biological Interactions. The researchers showed that the biochemical working of this drug molecule points to its promise in the treatment of COVID-19.

The development of a new drug is time-consuming and cannot be relied on as a solution in com-



bating the immediate pandemic. Drug repurposing is an attractive solution, wherein, an existing drug is used to treat another related or unrelated ailment may be tested against COVID-19, said Amjad Husain, Principal Scientist, and Chief Executive Officer, Innovation and Incubation Center for Entrepreneurship (IICE), IISER Bhopal.

Since the repurposed drug has gone through the clinical development process for the treatment of other diseases and has already been tested for toxicity, many steps in preclinical and early clinical development can be avoided and the drug can be directly tested on COVID-19 subjects in phase-II trials, he added.

ercise to outline multiple pathways for India to attain net-zero emissions, rather than fixating on a single scenario or a single year. It highlighted that India would need to reach peak emissions within this decade if it were to achieve net-zero emissions by mid-century, a pace of transition unlike anything the world has seen before. This would give India an extremely narrow window to ensure a smooth and equitable transition from a peaking year to a net-zero year.

Advanced economies, including China, Japan, the UK, and the US, will have taken at least 30, and at times well over 40 years for this transition. Advanced economies peaked emissions at much higher levels of development, slower rates

of growth and would have had longer transition periods.

The CEEW study explains why India's case is different from the net-zero pathways of China, the EU, Japan, the UK and the US. First, the per capita emissions for all other economies in their respective peaking years would be much higher than India's, even if India were to peak in 2050. Secondly, India's real GDP growth rate would be much higher than any other country post their peaking years. This indicates that India would need to put in significantly more effort to peak and subsequently reduce emissions. Thirdly, India would have a much lower per capita income to support the transition, even if it began the post-peak transition in 2050, let alone 2030.

of the day quote

The government should enact a health guarantee law and guarantee the provision of health facilities to all the people through the government. The criteria for health facilities should be decided by the government

FAUZIA KHAN | RAJYA SABHA MEMBER

The BJP will never allow the Congress party to undo the complete union of hearts and minds accomplished through untiring efforts and commitment of the BJP leadership

JITENDRA SINGH | UNION MINISTER

Like a tusker, the Congress has two sets of teeth -- one to show off and another to chew. It says something and always does the opposite... It is dividing the society

J P NADDA | BJP NATIONAL PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

5 Naxals held in Chhattisgarh

Bijapur: Five naxals, one them allegedly involved in the killing of four policemen after abducting them in 2015, have been arrested from two places in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said Monday. While four ultras, including a woman, were held near NH-63 under Nelasan police station area, another cadre was arrested nearChinger village under Kutru police station limits, a police official said. Separate teams of District Force and District Reserve Guard (DRG) were involved in these operations to arrest Naxals Sunday.

BJP's Patil, workers booked

Pune: Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrakant Patil and some 40-50 of his party workers were booked for alleged violation of COVID-19 norms during a protest held at Alka Chowk here, police said Monday. The protest demanding the resignation of state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, who is facing corruption allegations from IPS officer Param Bir Singh, was held Sunday and was led by Patil. A case was registered against Patil and 40-50 party workers Sunday night for unlawful assembly, flouting COVID-19 norms and violating orders under IPC, Disaster Management Act and Mumbai Police Act provisions, an official said.

Skeleton found in police station

Surat: Remains of a human skeleton were found on the compound of a police station here in Gujarat during a clean-up drive, police said Monday. "Sunday afternoon, when seized vehicles were being removed with the help of a crane at Khatodara police station compound, human skeletal remains were found," an official said, adding that the clean-up operation was undertaken after nearly two years.

Man held with 25 kgs of poppy

Jammu: The police Monday arrested a man and recovered 25 kgs of poppy from his possession in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district, officials said. Based on specific information, a police team stopped a truck at Jakhani area on the highway for a thorough search, they said. During the search, 25 kgs of poppy was recovered, they said. The man named Mohammad Shafi was arrested and the vehicle was seized, they said, adding that a case has been lodged at Udhampur police station.



BJP has not been able to decide who will be their chief ministerial candidate. They are not able to respect their own Chief Minister and spell out the name. If there is no stability and unity in the party, then how will it bring stability to Assam and assure the people to give a stable government?

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

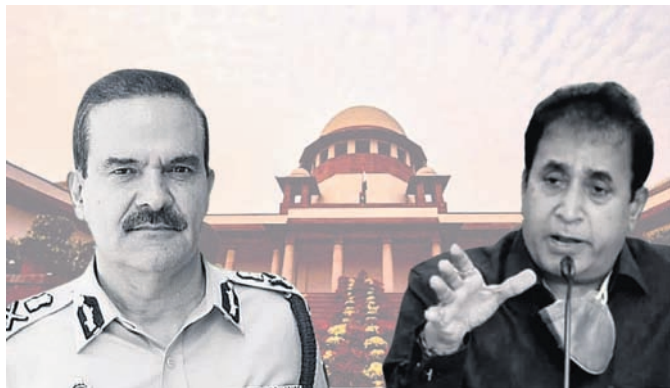
TIGER FOUND DEAD

A 10-year-old tiger was found dead with swollen neck in the Kishanpur sanctuary of the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, police said Monday. No apparent injuries were detected but the neck was unusually swollen



MUMBAI SUV CASE

Ex-top cop moves SC seeking CBI probe against Maha HM



AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 22: Former Mumbai Commissioner of Police Param Bir Singh moved the Supreme Court on Monday seeking direction for immediate "unbiased, uninfluenced, impartial and fair" CBI probe into alleged corrupt malpractices of Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh.

Singh, a 1988 batch IPS officer also sought quashing of the order transferring him from the post of Mumbai CP alleging it to be "arbitrary" and "illegal".

"The Petitioner has invoked writ jurisdiction of this Court to seek unbiased, uninfluenced, impartial and fair investigation in the corrupt malpractices of Anil Deshmukh, the Home Minister of Government of Maharashtra, before the evidences are destroyed," he said in his plea.

Singh alleged, "Deshmukh had been holding meetings in February, 2021 at his residence with police officers including Sachin Vaze of Crime Intelligence Unit, Mumbai and Sanjay Patil, ACP Social Service Branch, Mumbai, bypassing their seniors and had instructed them that he had a target to accumulate Rs 100 crores every month and had directed to collect money from various establishments and other sources".

Singh said it is reliably learnt that on or about August 24-25, 2020, one Rashmi Shukla, the Commissioner Intelligence, State Intelligence Department, had brought to the notice of the Director General of Police, who in turn brought it to the knowledge of the Additional Chief Secretary Home Department, Government of Maharashtra about corrupt malpractices in postings / transfers by Deshmukh based on telephonic interception.

He sought directions from court to safeguard him from any further coercive steps apprehended in the retaliation for laying bare the corrupt malpractices of Deshmukh.

PAWAR RULES OUT MAHA HM'S EXIT

MUMBAI: Former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh's corruption allegations against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh pertain to a period when he was hospitalised and hence the question of his resignation does not arise, NCP chief Sharad Pawar said Monday. "We got information that Deshmukh was hospitalised at that time in Nagpur. The allegation (by Singh) pertains to exactly the same period when he was in hospital. There is a hospital certificate," Pawar told reporters in Delhi, his second media briefing in as many days over an issue which has caused a flutter in state political circles. In his eight-page letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Singh on Saturday claimed Deshmukh wanted police officers to collect Rs 100 crore monthly from bars and hotels. Singh had also alleged in the letter that Deshmukh had called Mumbai police API Sachin Waze around mid-February at the ministers official residence and told him to collect Rs 100 crore a month. Deshmukh had rubbished the charges the same day.

DESHMUKH TRIED TO IMPLICATE BJP LEADERS: SINGH IN SC

NEW DELHI: Former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh has unleashed a barrage of allegations against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh in a petition in the Supreme Court, accusing him of adopting corrupt practices in posting or transfer of police officers to implicating BJP leaders in MP Mohan Delkar's suicide. The petition said February 22, Member of Parliament Mohan Delkar was found dead in his Mumbai hotel room, leaving behind a 15-page suicide note. Singh said that after initial inquiries and report, he initiated investigation in the matter and sought advice from the Police Department's Legal Cell. "The petitioner was time and again pressurised by the Minister for Home, Government of Maharashtra to probe the role of certain leaders of BJP and somehow implicate them. It is submitted that there was tremendous pressure to give the entire episode a political angle.

Delhi HC notice on plea to debar candidates flouting mask norms

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 22: The Delhi High Court has sought response from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Election Commission on a petition seeking debarment of candidates violating mask guidelines during the ensuing Assembly elections to four states and a Union Territory.

STATE POLLS

A bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh issued notice on the petition filed by Chairman of think tank Centre for Accountability and Systemic Change (CASC), Dr Vikram Singh.

Appearing for the Election Commission, advocate Pankaj Chopra opposed the issuance of notice, stating that elections were not happening in Delhi, and mask-related guidelines are to be enforced by district-level Officials of five states. He submitted that merely because the Election Commission is in Delhi, the Delhi High Court will not automatically have jurisdiction.



Appearing for the petitioner, advocate Virag Gupta submitted that the objection of Election Commission is frivolous, especially when Covid-19 is on the rise.

He highlighted by the notification issued February 26, the Election Commission had made it mandatory for every person involved in election-related activity to wear a mask.

He also relied on a separate order of the Delhi High Court in which Justice Hari Shankar took suo motu cognizance of non-wearing of masks by passengers in a Kolkata-Delhi flight.

Counsel for the petitioner submitted that when the High Court can take cognizance on non-wearing of masks in Kolkata airport, it can also entertain this petition as like the aviation regulator, the poll panel is also based in Delhi.

He submitted that Election Commission should perform its legal and constitutional obligations as per Article 324 of the Constitution.

The court thereafter issued notice and directed the Ministry of Home Affairs and Election Commission to file their reply. The matter will now be heard April 30.

DELHI LOWERS LEGAL AGE OF DRINKING TO 21

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: The Delhi Cabinet on Monday approved a new excise policy lowering the minimum age for consumption of liquor to 21 years from 25 years, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia announced. According to the new policy, no new liquor shops will be opened in Delhi and the government will not run any vend.

"The new excise policy was approved by the Cabinet today on

basis of the recommendations of the Group of Ministers. It was decided that no new liquor shops will be opened in the national capital and the government will not run any liquor shops. At present, 60 per cent liquor shops in Delhi are run by the government," Sisodia said at a press conference.

"Government will ensure equitable distribution of liquor shops so that liquor mafias are thrown out of the trade. A revenue growth of 20 per cent is estimated after the reforms in excise department," he added.

WORLD WATER DAY



Locals indulge in angling during heavy rains, in the polluted waters of Dal lake, in Srinagar, Monday

PTI PHOTO

Shri Ram Varsity to come up in Ayodhya

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 22: Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma, who also holds the higher education portfolio, has announced the setting up of a Shri Ram University in Ayodhya.

The project worth over Rs 5,000 crore has been proposed by a private player, and the university is likely to come up by 2022.

The proposed university will have Vedic maths (a collection of techniques/sutras to solve mathematical problems), Jyotish Kendra, Karma Kand (ritual services conducted by pundits) and research on Gita, Vedic and other religious scriptures, including the Ramayana.

He said, "The private player had proposed to establish the university over 50 acres of land in Ayodhya, which has been cleared by the district magistrate. Even a committee of the state universities has given a report in its favour. If all requirements are fulfilled by them, the university will open soon."

Cutting cake depicting national flag not an offence: HC

IF PERSONS ARE ALLOWED TO GIVE SUCH BROAD MEANING TO THE WORD 'INSULT', MANY WILL BECOME VERY UNCOMFORTABLE AND HESITANT TO HANDLE THE NATIONAL FLAG, SAID THE JUDGE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, March 22: Cutting a huge cake depicting the National Flag and eating it could not be construed as an offence punishable under the relevant Act, the Madras high Court ruled Monday.

Justice N Anand Venkatesh gave the ruling, while allowing a criminal original petition from a policeman in Coimbatore and held that such an act could not be construed as an offence under Section 2 of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.

At a public function organised to celebrate Christmas December 25, 2013, in Coimbatore, a cake measuring 6 ft. In length and 5 ft in breadth, the icing on which carried a tri-colour with Indian map outline and Ashoka Chakra in the cen-



tre, was allegedly cut.

It was distributed and consumed by the special guests and about 2,500 participants including 1000 children. Then Coimbatore district

Collector and a DCP also took part in the celebration.

Contending that this amounted to disrespecting the National Flag, D Senthilkumar of Hindu Public

Party, lodged a police complaint.

As there was no action, he moved the local Magistrate court, which February 17, 2017 directed registering of an FIR against the persons concerned for the offence under Section 2 of the Act and file a final report. Aggrieved, the local inspector moved the High Court with the present petition.

Allowing it, the judge observed that patriotism is not determined by a gross physical act. The intention behind the act will be the true test and it is possible that sometimes the very act itself manifests the intention behind it.

In the present case, even if the entire set of facts stated in the complaint are taken as it is, it must be seen as to what would have been the actual feeling with which the participants would have dispersed after

the function was over.

Will they be feeling great pride in belonging to this great nation, or would the pride of India have come down on the mere cutting of a cake during the celebration.

Without any hesitation, this Court can hold that the participants would have felt only the former and not the latter, the judge said.

For proper understanding, the judge cited a hypothetical case of wide participation in an Independence Day or Republic Day celebration.

During such celebrations, the participants are provided with a national flag to be worn by them. In reality, after the participants leave the venue, they do not continue to possess the flag forever and it becomes part of any other waste paper. Will this mean that each of the

participants has insulted the national Flag and should be proceeded against under Section 2 of the Act? The obvious answer is in the negative, the court observed.

If persons are allowed to give such broad meaning to the word 'insult', many will become very uncomfortable and hesitant to handle the national Flag.

The National Flag is given during the function as a symbol of national pride. Once such a feeling is created in the minds of the participants, the purpose for which the national Flag was given or used will be achieved, the judge noted.

The Flag Code does provide a mechanism to destroy flags in private, in a manner consistent with the dignity of the flag and as a responsible citizen, it should be followed in letter and spirit.

of the day quote

I came to Afghanistan to listen and learn. This visit has been very helpful for me, and it will inform my participation in the review we are undergoing here with POTUS

LLOYD AUSTIN | US DEFENCE SECRETARY

We call on the Chinese to stop this incursion and immediately recall these boats violating our maritime rights and encroaching into our sovereign territory

DELFIN LORENZANA | PHILIPPINE DEFENCE MINISTER

I'm still missing a (parliamentary) seat or two to achieve a stable government

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU | ISRAEL PRIME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Global Covid cases top 123.1mn

Washington: The overall number of global Covid-19 cases has surpassed 123.1 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 2.71 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update on Monday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 123,135,920 and 2,714,606, respectively. The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 29,818,157 and 542,356, respectively.

Iraqi intel officer shot dead

Baghdad: A senior officer of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) was shot dead by unidentified gunmen here, an Interior Ministry source said. The incident took place Sunday in Baghdad's Mansour neighbourhood. Gunmen opened fire at Mohammed Laith with their silenced weapons near the house of one of his relatives. The attack came despite repeated calls by the Iraqi government and political parties to contain the uncontrolled weapons of some armed groups in the country.

2 Aussies detained in Myanmar

Sydney: Two Australian business consultants have been detained in Myanmar while trying to leave the country which is gripped by unrest following the February 1 military coup, a local media report said Monday. They are believed to be under house arrest after trying to leave the country on a relief flight March 19. The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper named the two men as Matthew O'Kane and Christa Avery, a Canadian-Australian.

Malaysia expels all NK diplomats

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia has expelled all diplomats of the North Korean Embassy here in response to the latter's decision to sever diplomatic ties after Kuala Lumpur extradited a Pyongyang national to the US over money laundering charges. In a statement issued Sunday, Foreign Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said: Malaysia has today expelled all diplomats of the Embassy of North Korea in Kuala Lumpur in keeping with the decision for all diplomatic staff and their dependents to leave within 48 hours.



We can't be deaf and blind to what's going on outside the UK. We can't put at risk the gains of our vaccination campaign

BEN WALLACE | BRITISH DEFENCE SECRETARY

TRUMP PLANS SOCIAL MEDIA RETURN

Former President Donald Trump will set up his own social media platform and will return to posting online soon, his adviser and spokesman Jason Miller said



'UAE royals broker Indo-Pak peace plan'

AGENCIES

London, March 22: Roughly 24 hours after the Indian and Pakistan military chiefs surprised the world last month with a rare joint pledge to respect a 2003 cease-fire agreement, top diplomat of the United Arab Emirates made a quick one-day visit to New Delhi.

The UAE released an official statement on what Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed and his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar discussed February 26. It noted that the two leaders "discussed all regional and international issues of common interest and exchanged views on them."

Quoting officials, Bloomberg reports that the India-Pakistan cease-fire marked a milestone in secret talks brokered by the UAE that began months earlier. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, one official revealed that the cease-fire is only the beginning of a larger roadmap to forge a lasting peace between the neighbours, who not only boast of nuclear weapons, but also spar regularly over a decades-old territory dispute.

According to the official, the next step in the process involves both sides reinstating envoys in New Delhi and Islamabad. The



MENDING TIES

CEASEFIRE FIRST STEP OF ROADMAP FOR PEACE BETWEEN INDIA, PAK: UAE OFFICIALS

| | |
|---|--|
| Next step involves reinstating envoys in India and Pak, they said | This will be followed by talks on resuming trade and Kashmir, they added |
|---|--|

Incidentally, Pakistan army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa recently asked India "to bury the past and move forward" while saying the military was ready to enter talks to resolve "all our outstanding issues." Bajwa's comments came a day after Prime Minister Imran Khan after called for a resolution on Kashmir, which he described as "the one issue that holds us back."

Last Saturday, Modi sent a tweet wishing Imran Khan well after he was diagnosed with COVID-19 – another sign that relations between the countries are getting warmer.

The UAE, which has historic trade and diplomatic links with India and Pakistan, has taken a more assertive international role under de facto ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

envoys were pulled in 2019 after Pakistan protested India's move to end special status for Jammu and Kashmir. Following this comes the most difficult part: Talks on resuming trade and a lasting resolution on Kashmir, the subject of three wars since India and Pakistan attained Independent from Britain in 1947.

In the past, both India and Pakistan have regularly made peace proposals, but they all fell through quickly. Officials believed that it is unlikely that the current detente would achieve much beyond the return of envoys and a resumption of trade through their Punjab land border.

Nevertheless, this process seems to be the most concerted effort in years and comes at a time when the Biden administration is seeking wider peace talks on Afghanistan – where both countries have battled for influence for years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to shore up growth and focus military resources on the border with China, while Pakistani leaders are also facing economic crisis and looking to make a good impression with the US and other powers.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry didn't comment on the talks or the role of the UAE, while the foreign ministries of India and the UAE had no immediate comment.

40 killed in Niger border attack

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Niamey, March 22: At least 40 people were killed when a group of armed assailants attacked several villages in Niger's Tahoua region near the border with Mali, a government spokesperson said Monday.

Spokesperson Abdoulraman Zakaria said that soldiers were sent to the region and fought the attackers, reports dpa news agency.

It was not known who was behind the attack.

NUMEROUS ARMED GROUPS ARE ACTIVE IN NIGER AND IN THE NEIGHBOURING SAHEL COUNTRIES

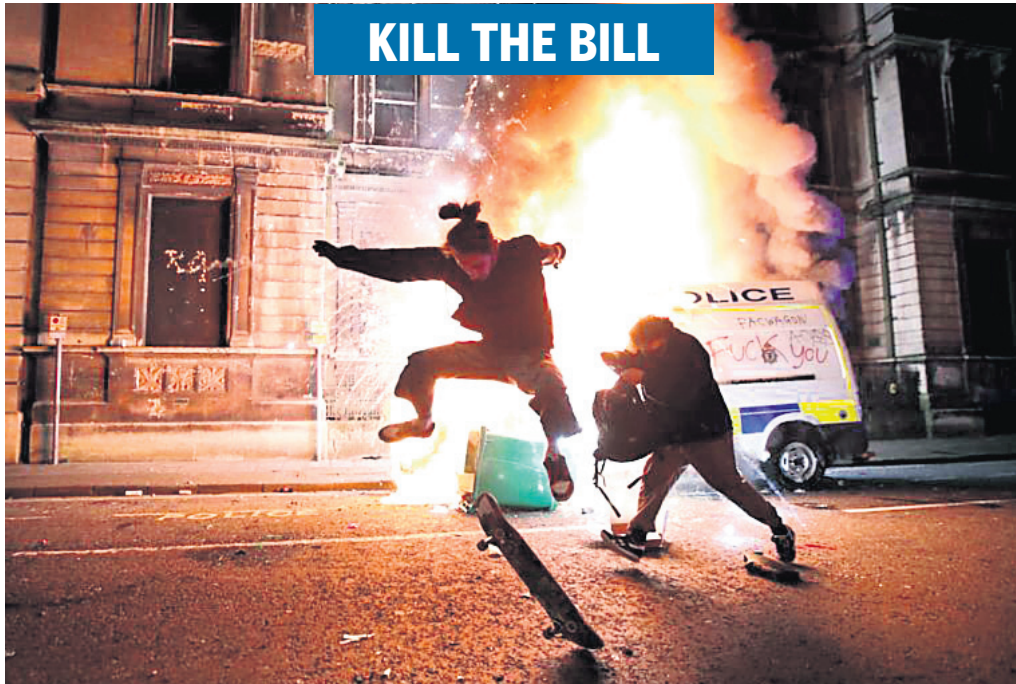
Numerous armed groups are active in Niger and in the neighbouring Sahel countries.

Some have sworn allegiance to the Islamic State terror group, while others are linked to Al Qaeda.

In the Mali border region there have been recurring attacks.

A week ago, at least 58 people were killed in an attack on market traders in the region of Tillaberi, the government said. Niger has also seen demonstrations after the recent presidential election.

At the end of February, the electoral commission declared former Foreign Minister Mohamed Bazoum, a close ally of outgoing President Mahamadou Issoufou, the winner with almost 56 per cent of the vote. Former President and opposition candidate Mahamane Ousmane slammed the result as fraudulent and claims he is the winner. The Constitutional Court on Sunday confirmed Bazoum's victory.



A demonstrator skateboards in front of a burning police vehicle during a protest against a new proposed policing Bill in Bristol, Britain

Biden aims to prevent border crossings

The Biden administration is scrambling to manage a growing humanitarian and political challenge at the US-Mexico border

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, March 22: The Biden administration is scrambling to manage a growing humanitarian and political challenge at the US-Mexico border that threatens to overshadow its ambitious legislative agenda.

With the number of migrants



surging, administration officials say Biden inherited an untenable situation that resulted from what they say was President Donald Trump's undermining and weakening of the immigration system.

But as Congress pivots to immigration legislation, stories of unaccompanied minors and families trying to cross the border and seek-

ing asylum and of overwhelmed border facilities have begun to dominate the headlines, distracting from the White House's efforts to promote the recently passed \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill.

Biden told reporters Sunday at the White House that "at some point" he would go to the border and that he knows what is going on in the bor-

der facilities. "A lot more, we are in the process of doing it now, including making sure we re-establish what existed before, which was they can stay in place and make their case from their home countries," Biden said upon returning from a weekend at Camp David.

The White House dispatched Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to four Sunday news shows in an effort to stress that it was working to get things under control.

"Our message has been straightforward — the border is closed," Mayorkas said. "We are expelling families. We are expelling single adults. And we've made a decision that we will not expel young, vulnerable children."

A transgender Islamic school in Pakistan breaks barriers

The madrasa is an important milestone for the LGBTQ community in the overwhelmingly fundamental Muslim country

REUTERS

Islamabad, March 22: A long white shawl on her head, Rani Khan gives daily Koran lessons at Pakistan's first transgender-only madrasa, or Islamic religious school, which she set up herself using her life savings.

The madrasa is an important milestone for the LGBTQ community in the overwhelmingly fundamental Muslim country, where transgender people face ostracism, even though there is no official restriction on them attending religious schools or praying at mosques.

"Most families do not accept transgender people. They throw them out of their homes. Transgender people turn to wrongdoing," Khan, 34, said, as other transgender people, their heads similarly covered, swayed back and forth behind her, reciting Koran verses. "At one time, I was also one of them."

Holding back tears, Khan re-

called how she was disowned by her family at 13 and forced into begging. At 17, she joined a transgender group, dancing at weddings and other functions, but quit it to connect with her religion after a dream in which a deceased transgender friend and fellow dancer pleaded with her to do something for the community.

Khan studied the Koran at home, and attended religious schools, before opening the two-room madrasa in October.

"I'm teaching the Koran to please God, to make my life here and in the hereafter," Khan said, explaining how the madrasa offered a place for transgender people to worship, learn about Islam and repent for past actions. She says the school has not received aid from the government, although some officials promised to help students find jobs.

Along with some donations, Khan is teaching her students how to sew and embroider, in hopes of raising



Rani Khan, a transgender woman who teaches the Koran at Pakistan's first transgender only madrasa, looks at one of her students during a tailoring lesson in Islamabad

funds for the school by selling clothing. Pakistan's parliament recognised the third gender in 2018, giving such individuals fundamental rights such as the ability to vote

and choose their gender on official documents.

Nonetheless, the transgender remain on the margins in the country, and often have to resort to beg-

ging, dancing and prostitution to make a living. The madrasa could help trans people assimilate into mainstream society, Islamabad Deputy Commissioner Hamza Shafqaat told Reuters.

"I'm hopeful that if you replicate this model in other cities, things will improve," he said.

A religious school for transgender people has opened in Dhaka, the capital of nearby Bangladesh, and last year a Christian transgender group started its own church in Pakistan's bustling southern port city of Karachi.

Pakistan's 2017 census recorded about 10,000 transgender people, though trans rights groups say the number could now be well over 300,000 in the country of 220 million.

"It gives my heart peace when I read the Koran," said one madrasa student, Simran Khan, who is also eager to learn life skills.

"It is much better than a life full of insults," the 19-year-old added.

AstraZeneca Covid vax found 79% effective in US trial

AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine received a major boost Monday after data from a large trial showed it was safe and effective



REUTERS

Frankfurt/ Taipei, March 22: AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine received a major boost Monday after data from a large trial showed it was safe and effective, potentially paving the way for its emergency authorisation in the United States as countries in Asia accelerated its rollout.

The trials in the United States, Chile and Peru showed the vaccine was 79% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 and could bolster confidence in the product after confusion over its efficacy data, dosing regimen and possible side-effects.

Many European countries halted the use of the AstraZeneca shot earlier this month after some reports that it was linked to blood clots, but have since resumed inoculation after a regional regulator said it was safe. A survey on Monday showed Europeans remained sceptical over its safety.

Leaders in Asia have sought to boost public confidence by taking the AstraZeneca shot themselves amid concerns a slowdown in the global vaccination rollout could hurt the fight against COVID-19, which has killed over 2.8 million peo-

ple worldwide.

The AstraZeneca shot was among the first and cheapest of the COVID-19 vaccines to be developed and launched at volume and is set to be the mainstay of vaccination programmes in much of the developing world.

"I have just finished getting the (AstraZeneca) injection, there is no pain at the injection site, and there is no soreness of the body," Taiwan Premier Su Tseng-chang told reporters as the island launched its inoculation campaign Monday.

Thailand's Prime Minister also became the first person in the country to be inoculated with the AstraZeneca vaccine after its rollout was temporarily put on hold over safety concerns, while Indonesia began using it Monday after suspending it last week. But Indonesia's Food and Drug agency has warned against its use on people with blood clotting disorders.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson received his first dose of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine on Friday, saying he "did not feel a thing." The European Medicines Agency regulator said Thursday the vaccine is effective and not linked with a rise in the overall risk of blood clots.

THOUSANDS OF ROHINGYA HOMES IN BANGLA REFUGEE CAMPS RAZED

REUTERS

Dhaka, March 22: A huge fire swept through Rohingya refugee camps in southern Bangladesh Monday, destroying thousands of homes, officials and witnesses said.

Video shot by a resident showed a blaze ripping through the Balukhali camp in Cox's Bazar, with people scrambling to recover their possessions amid burning shanties and tents.

Video shot by a resident showed a blaze ripping through the Balukhali camp in Cox's Bazar, with people scrambling to recover their possessions amid burning shanties

"Fire services, rescue and response teams and volunteers are at the scene to try to control the fire and prevent it spreading further," said Louise Donovan, spokesperson for UN refugee agency UNHCR in Cox's Bazar, where refugees live in ramshackle huts. Rohingya refugees in the camps said many homes were burned down and several people had died, but neither the authorities nor UNHCR confirmed there were any deaths.

More than a million Rohingya live in the mainland camps in southern Bangladesh, the vast majority having fled Myanmar in 2017 from a military-led crackdown that UN investigators said was executed with "genocidal intent", charges Myanmar denies.

of the day quote

The Audi S5 Sportback is the second product launch this year. This will further strengthen our performance in cars portfolio in India

BALBIR SINGH DHILLON |
HEAD OF AUDI INDIA

By bagging new orders, we are ensuring that we continue to contribute to the overall growth of the economy especially when India is focusing on the expansion of its pipeline network for oil and gas as well as water

RAMESH C MANSUKHANI |
CHAIRMAN, MAN INDUSTRIES

We are glad that following our previous recent agreement to foster India's circular economy, today we take another crucial step in the green economy arena partnering with a prominent and innovative player such as AEL (Adani Enterprises Ltd)

PIERROBERTO FOLGIERO |
CEO, MAIRE TECNIMONT GROUP AND NEXTCHEM

SHORT TAKES

Maruti Suzuki to hike prices

New Delhi: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) Monday said it will increase prices across its model range from next month in order to offset the impact of high input costs. Over the past year, the cost of the company's vehicles has been impacted adversely due to an increase in various input costs, the auto major said. "Hence, it has become imperative for MSI to pass on some impact of the above additional cost to customers through a price increase in April 2021," it added.

AGEL shares at 52-week high

New Delhi: Shares of Adani Green Energy Ltd were locked in upper circuit limit Monday after the firm announced that its arm has received a letter of award for 300 MW wind power project under a tender of Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI). On BSE, the scrip rose 5 per cent to its upper circuit limit and also the 52-week high of ₹1,251.05. Likewise, on NSE, the shares hit upper circuit limit and 52-week high of ₹1,252.2, rising 5%.

Google's VP steps down

New Delhi: Tech giant Google's vice-president Caesar Sengupta is stepping down, after 15 years with the company. During his tenure at Google, Sengupta played a key role in starting, building and leading initiatives such as ChromeOS, Next Billion Users and Google Pay, a company spokesperson said in a statement. "After 15 years with Google, Sengupta has made a personal decision to leave the company and start something entrepreneurial," the statement added.

Microsoft to reopen HQs

San Francisco: Microsoft Monday announced to slowly reopen its Redmond, Washington-based headquarters and nearby campuses from March 29 with a six-stage hybrid workplace strategy. The company said that while stages 4 and 5 offer limited or augmented options for workers who choose to be on-site, employees are encouraged to work remotely while their site remains in stages 1-5 and should not feel they need to return.



Continuing with our commitment to develop Chabahal Port, second shipment of equipment reaches Shahid Behesti Terminal

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA |
PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS MINISTER

MOODY'S UPS OUTLOOK

Moody's Monday revised upwards its outlook on IndusInd Bank to 'stable' from 'negative' while affirming its rating. The change in the outlook is driven by improvement in its funding and capital, and the marginal hit on asset quality during the pandemic, Moody's said



'Covid's 2nd wave delays biz normalisation'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 22: The 'second wave' of the pandemic is impacting business normalisation in the country, as coronavirus infections rise in Maharashtra and other states, a report by a Japanese brokerage said Monday.

The Nomura India Business Resumption Index dipped to 95.1 for the week to March 21 from 95.4 in the previous week as a result of the rising infections, the brokerage said.

Covid-19 infections are rising to new heights across the country and many local governments have been forced to re-introduce stricter measures

like night-time curfews and sealing off premises in order to contain the spread.

"The pandemic's second wave is now spreading to states outside Maharashtra and is starting to impact mobility. This suggests a likely sequential dip in contact-based services and a near-term delay of normalisation," it said.

The brokerage added that it expects the impact to be "more transitory and muted", as factory operations remain uninterrupted, consumers and businesses have adapted to the new normal and medium-term tailwinds like vaccinations, global growth, easy financial conditions continue.



It said as of mid-March, Google workplace and retail and recreation mobility fell by 3.7 percentage points

The Nomura India Business Resumption Index dipped to 95.1 for the week to March 21 from 95.4 in the previous week as a result of the rising infections, the brokerage said

on a week-on-week basis and 0.3 percentage points, respectively, while the more updated Apple driv-

ing index fell by 2.6 percentage points. However, power demand improved by 2.6% week-on-week after a 0.6% decline the prior week, while the labour participation rate inched up to 40.6% from 39.5%.

The knock-on effect of the second wave on mobility suggests a likely sequential dip in contact-based services and a near-term delay of normalisation, it said.

The medium-term tailwinds from the lagged impact of easy financial conditions, fiscal activism, strong global growth and continuing vaccine momentum will support real GDP growth of 13.5% in FY'22, up from a contraction of 7.4% in FY21, it said.

Parl passes insurance amendment Bill to raise FDI limit to 74%



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: The Parliament Monday approved a Bill to increase Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limit in the insurance sector from 49% to 74% with the Lok Sabha passing the proposed law by a voice vote. The Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2021 was passed by Rajya Sabha last week.

Piloting the Bill, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Monday said hiking the FDI limit in the insurance sector will help insurers raise additional funds and tide over the financial problems. The minister said the government will provide funds to the public sector insurance companies but private players will have to raise capital on their own.

Observing that insurance companies are facing solvency related issues, she said, "if growth capital is hard to come by, there will be a stress situation. In order that the stress situation is not left unattended, we need to raise the FDI limit." The Covid-19 pandemic, Sitharaman said, has further added to the woes of insurance companies.

She further said the FDI limit was being raised on the recommendations of insurance regulator IRDAI which has done extensive consultations with the stakeholders.

The FDI limit in the insurance sector, the minister said, has increased significantly after the government decided to raise the cap from 26% to 49% in 2015.

Govt introduces NaBFID Bill in LS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Monday introduced the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) Bill 2021 in the Lok Sabha to pave the way for setting up of a government-owned development finance institution (DFI) to help fund about 7,000 infra projects under the National Infrastructure Pipeline.

The proposed legislation will give effect to the Budget announcement made by the finance minister February 1. The government has proposed ₹20,000 crore to capitalise the institution. The Union Cabinet had last week approved the Budget proposal of setting up a development finance institution (DFI), which will have tax benefits to enable fund raising from investors.

The NaBFID will be set up with a corpus of ₹20,000 crore and the government will give an initial grant of ₹ 5,000 crore. The government ex-



pects the DFI to leverage this fund to raise up to ₹3 lakh crore in the next few years.

The Bill seeks to establish the NaBFID to support the development of long term non-recourse infrastructure projects located in India or partly in the country and to enable the company to borrow or raise money by way of loans both in rupees and foreign currencies.

It also provide adequate safeguards for decision making to address risk aversion and proposes establishment of other development financial institutions, in addition

to the NaBFID established under the proposed legislation. "The Institution shall have both developmental and financial objectives. Among other things, this would include developing a deep and liquid bond market of international standards for long-term infrastructure financing in India including through widening of the issuer and investor base," it said.

As per the statement of objects and reasons of the Bill, it seeks to enable the central government, multilateral institutions, sovereign wealth

BIZ BUZZ

Nykaa launches first trend store

Bhubaneswar: Nykaa, India's leading beauty and fashion destination, opened its first 'On Trend Store' in City at the Utkal Kanika Galleria Mall. This is the first 'On Trend' format in Bhubaneswar, taking the offline count to a total of two, with an existing Nykaa Luxe store at Esplanade One Mall. At the store, it offers leading brands-Nykaa Cosmetics, Huda Beauty, e.l.f, The Balm, Kay Beauty, TONYMOLY, Maybelline& many more. The store also offers a gift with purchase above ₹2,500. On the launch, Nykaa spokesperson said, "The store houses a selection of the best-selling/trending beauty and skincare products from Nykaa.com and we are elated to now extend this unique offering to Bhubaneswar. Customer satisfaction and safety being paramount, we have also implemented numerous hygiene protocols to safeguard the health of our customers and employees".



IMFA mines sets up rooftop solar plants

Bhubaneswar: Sukinda Mines (Chromite) and Mahagiri Mines (Chromite) of Indian Metals & Ferro Alloys Ltd (IMFA) have reaffirmed commitment to the "Green India Mission" by the installation of 'off-grid rooftop solar plants' to harness solar energy. One solar plant of 30 KW is installed at the rooftop of the Quality Control & Laboratory building of Sukinda Mines (Chromite) to illuminate the premises, run laboratory muffle furnace and oven. Another 40 KW solar plant is installed at the rooftop of Administration & Pit Head complex of Mahagiri Mines (Chromite) for lighting load in the premises. The green initiative taken by IMFA at its mines is in the direction of continuous process of environment friendly and sustainable mining efforts.



V Guard donates 2,000 gum boots, hand gloves

Bhubaneswar: As a part of its CSR activity, taking into safety precaution of sanitary workers, V Guard Industries Ltd. donated 2,000 pieces of gum boot and hand gloves to Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) for their sanitary workers. This activity has been carried out in the presence of BMC Commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary, Deputy Commissioner Suvendu Kumar Sahoo, Branch head V Guard Sumanta Kumar Pradhan and with V Guard team.



Strong GDP growth in FY'22 to drive logistics demand, says Ind-Ra

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, March 22: Strong GDP growth in FY'22 will drive logistics demand, India Ratings and Research said. According to the agency, strong-to-moderate recovery is already being witnessed across various logistics sub-sectors.

Besides, commissioning of the Dedicated Freight Corridor could boost volumes and efficiencies across ports as well as inland container depot/container freight station players.

As per Ind-Ra report, major ports' year-on-year volume growth has been positive for the past three months, while private ports have also reported resilient volumes in 9MFY21.

"In FY21, Ind-Ra estimates an 8% Y-o-Y improvement in volumes for India ports sector (major + private ports), post an estimated 4% y-o-y decline in FY21."

"The 8% Y-o-Y rise will be led by private ports, which in the past five years have displayed a median multiplier (vs real GDP growth rate) of '1.4x', thus outperforming growth from major ports. Historically, India's ports volumes have closely followed GDP growth, with container growth coming in '2x' of overall cargo volumes."

Besides, the report cited that domestic air travel demand, which



In FY22, Ind-Ra estimates an 8% Y-o-Y improvement in volumes for India ports sector, post an estimated 4% y-o-y decline in FY21

has continued to recover in 2HFY21, is expected to strengthen in FY22, though the risk to this view arises from fresh waves of Covid-19 recently.

"Both corporate and domestic travel demand are already showing signs of revival, which has helped support load factors and yields,

while cargo volumes are expected to rise amid stronger macroeconomic fundamentals and e-commerce push."

"Ind-Ra forecasts domestic passenger numbers to rise 10% in FY22 (over FY20) implying a GDP multiplier of '0.9x', lower than the '2.4x' (median estimate) for the FY15-FY20 period."

In terms of inland container depots, the agency forecasted a healthy pickup in volumes even though competition remains intense and realisations remain soft.

"The reduced dwell time after the commissioning of DFC and increased double stacking volume will support higher operating efficiencies."

Covid pushes back India's \$5tn GDP goal by 3 yrs: BofA

In 2017, BofA had predicted that the country would emerge as the third-largest economy in 2027-28 based on its assumption of the demographic dividend, growing financial maturity, and the emergence of mass markets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: "We now expect the domestic economy to emerge as the world's third-largest economy in FY'32, from FY'29 earlier, due to the pandemic shocks. It should touch Japan's nominal GDP in 2031 (in USD terms) if it grows at 9% and in 2030 if it grows at 10%," a Bank of America (BoFA) Securities report said Monday.

The report, however, did not ascribe a size to either the domestic economy, which stood at \$2.65 trillion in 2019-20, or to that of Japan, which in 2020 stood at \$4.87 trillion. This assumes a realistic 6% real

growth, 5% inflation and 2% rupee depreciation, the report added.

In 2017, BofA had predicted that the country would emerge as the third-largest economy in 2027-28 based on its assumption of the demographic dividend, growing financial maturity, and the emergence of mass markets. In their Monday's report, the house economist at the Wall Street brokerage said they find all these three phenomena strengthening now.

There are two other catalysts that support structural changes. For one, the RBI has effectively attained a silent revolution in re-achieving adequacy of forex re-



serves after almost eight years now. This should help stabilize the rupee by derisking the economy from global shocks.

Further, sustained policy easing is finally bringing down real lending rates that have been a drag on growth since 2016. The only main

downside risk to sustained growth is the oil prices, especially if it trends at over \$100 a barrel.

If the GDP grows at 10 per cent, as BofA assumed earlier, this will be achieved in 2029-30 and if it grows at 9%, overtaking Japanese economy will be pushed back by three years to 2031-32. "Our projection of 6% real growth is actually below the 6.5% average since 2014 and our estimated 7% potential," it said.

Also, for the growth to pick up and sustain, the credit-to-GDP ratio, a proxy for financial maturity should climb to 102 in 2031-32 from 44% in 2001-17 and 25% during 1980 and the 1990s.

100 ODIs played between India and England so far, with India winning 53 as compared to England's 42, while two games ended in ties and three with no results

48 ODIs played between these two sides in India, with the home team winning 31 as compared to England's 16, while one match ended in a tie

387/5 Highest total for India against England at home (Rajkot, 2008), while England's highest total (366/8) came in Cuttack in 2017

125 Lowest total for England against India in India (Jaipur, 2006), while India's lowest (170) came in 1993 in Bangalore – the only time the home team couldn't reach 200-run mark

Focus on Dhawan as India eye winning start in ODI series against England

CHANGE IN GEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, March 22: Struggling opener Shikhar Dhawan will be the focus in a spoilt-for-choice Indian team when they take on World Champions England in a three-match ODI series starting here Tuesday with the visitors eyeing a positive end to their tour after Test and T20 debacles.

The series is particularly important for the 35-year-old Dhawan, who failed to make an impact in the first T20 in Ahmedabad before warming the benches the remaining two games which India won.

With the management having plenty of options in (Shubman Gill) and outside (Prithvi Shaw and Devdutt Padikkal) the squad for the opening slot, it will be a litmus test for 'Gabbar' to prove himself in the lung-opener.

He is expected to open the innings along with seasoned campaigner Rohit Sharma, who was in blistering form in the T20 series and would be keen to carry on in the same vein.

The ODI format gives Dhawan the time he needs to build his innings. With loads of experience under his belt, the Delhi batsman could well return to form come Tuesday. For the Indian team, the series would be an extension of its preparations for the T20 World Cup later this year.

The 50-over-format, in general, remains low priority in 2021 with no major tournaments around the corner. Skipper Virat Kohli was back among the runs in the T20 series against England and he would look to carry the momentum into the ODIs.

It has been a while since Kohli scored a hundred in the format, his last and 43rd one coming against the West Indies (114 not out) at Port of Spain in August 2019.

He will be itching to make his good form count and end the century drought. It is also expected that both KL Rahul, who is not likely to feature at the top of the order, and Rishabh Pant, after turning things around spectacularly since the brilliant showing Down Under, would be part of playing XI.

They would have a big role in the middle-order along with the redoubtable Hardik Pandya. There could be a toss-up between Mumbaikars Shreyas Iyer and Suryakumar Yadav, for one spot in the playing XI. Yadav proved himself to be quite a power-hitter in the T20 series, notching up a blistering half century in his maiden international appearance.

The bowling attack is expected to be spearheaded by Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who picked four wickets in

the T20 series, and the new ball will be shared by Shardul Thakur. Thakur claimed eight wickets in the T20 series.

Rookie pacer Prasidh Krishna, who has already caught the eye of Kohli, is also in the squad. Krishna enjoyed a good Vijay Hazare Trophy campaign for Karnataka, claiming 14 wickets in seven matches at an average of 24.5.

Spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Washington Sundar are expected to be preferred over Krunal Pandya and Kuldeep Yadav. Also, a fit-again Pandya would be the fifth bowler, but it remains to be seen how many overs he can bowl.

On the other hand, England would also be keen to end the tour on a high after suffering defeats in the Tests (1-3) and the T20 series (2-3).

And for it to happen, skipper Eoin Morgan's role with the bat will be vital. The likes of Jos Buttler and the swash-buckling Jason Roy will have to fire in unison and all-rounder Ben Stokes will have to step up with both the bat and ball.

England pacer Mark Wood troubled the Indian batters with his pace and in the absence of an injured Jofra Archer, he would have to shoulder greater responsibility along with Chris Jordan and the young Sam Curran.

The squads:
India: Virat Kohli (C), Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant (wk), KL Rahul (wk), Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Krunal Pandya, Washington Sundar, T Natarajan, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna & Shardul Thakur.

England: Eoin Morgan (C), Moeen Ali, Jonny Bairstow, Sam Billings, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Liam Livingstone, Matt Parkinson, Adil Rashid, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, Reece Topley & Mark Wood; Covers: Jake Ball, Chris Jordan & Dawid Malan.



747 Highest match aggregate in an ODI between two sides in India as it came in Cuttack in 2017

618 Runs scored by Virat Kohli against England – most by an active Indian player – in 14 matches at an average of 56.18 with two centuries and three half centuries; Eoin Morgan has scored 267 in 8 matches – most by a player from current squad for India series

INDIA LEGENDS WIN RSWS TITLE



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Raipur, March 22: India Legends emerged champions in the first edition of the Road Safety World Series T20 after defeating Sri Lanka Legends by 14 runs in the final here.

All-rounder Yusuf Pathan starred in the team's victory with an unbeaten 62 and two wickets for 26 runs, which restricted Sri Lanka to 167/7 in 20 overs while chasing 182 Sunday night. Swashbuckling opener Sanath Jayasuriya scored 43 while skipper Tillakaratne Dilshan perished cheaply for 21.

Earlier, Yuvraj Singh and Yusuf went on a rampage, slamming half centuries to see India Legends post a competitive 181/4. Yuvraj made 60 off 41 balls with four boundaries and as many sixes, while Yusuf remained unbeaten on 62 in 36 balls, with four hits to the ropes and five sixes.

Apart from the two, legendary opener and skipper Sachin Tendulkar got a classy 30, which in-

cluded five boundaries.

For the Lankans, none of the bowlers were impressive as Rangana Herath, Sanath Jayasuriya, Farveez Maharoof and Kaushalya Weeraratne took one wicket each.

India lost their first wicket in the third over itself when Virender Sehwag was castled by Rangana Herath. In the next over, Tendulkar swept Dilshan for back-to-back boundaries, before S Badrinath was trapped in front of the wicket by Jayasuriya.

Yuvraj got a classy boundary off Dhammika Prasad before the two went silent for the next few overs. Yuvraj then smacked Dilshan for two sixes and by the end of 10th over, India were 77/2.

BRIEF SCORES

India Legends 181/4 (Yusuf Pathan 62 n o, Yuvraj Singh 60) beat **Sri Lanka legends 167/7** (Sanath Jayasuriya 43, Chinthaka Jayasinghe 40; Yusuf Pathan 2/26) by 14 runs.

India youth brigade dominates ISSF WC



MANU BHAKER (L) & SAURABH CHAUDHARY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: India's teenage shooting sensations extended their dominance in the ongoing ISSF World Cup here Monday, winning the mixed team gold medals in both the 10m air pistol and 10m air rifle events to continue their stupendous run of form. The sensational duo of Saurabh Chaudhary and Manu Bhaker notched up the 10m air pistol mixed team gold medal as the host country consolidated its top position in the overall tally.

This was after Divyansh Singh Panwar and Elavenil Valarivan produced some excellent shooting to comfortably claim the gold medal in the 10m mixed air rifle event.

The 18-year-old Chaudhary and the 19-year-old Bhaker defeated Golnoush Sebbatollahi and Javed Foroughi of Iran 16-12, making a brilliant rally after trailing 0-4 at the end of the second series to give India their fifth gold at the ongoing event. This was the pair's fifth World Cup mixed team gold medal.

The Iranians began well but once the Indians overcame their starting troubles, they were unstoppable and lived up to the huge expectations by claiming the top prize.

Also for India, Yashaswini Singh Deswal and Abhishek Verma bagged the bronze medal in the same event after getting the bet-

ter of Turkey's Sevvall Ilayda Tarhan and Ismail Keles 17-13 at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.

Earlier this morning, 21-year-old Elavenil and 18-year-old Divyansh had combined to claim the 10m air rifle mixed team gold. This was Elavenil's first at the senior level, while fourth for Divyansh at the senior World Cups.

The India duo shot a total of 16 in the gold medal match to finish ahead of Hungarian World No.1 Istvan Peni and Eszter Denes who managed 10.

The Indians shot a 10.4 each in the final shot to secure the top prize while the Hungarian pair got 10.7 and 9.9 at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range. Before that, they more or less sealed the issue with a 10.8 apiece in the penultimate attempt, even as their opponents managed 10.4 each.

Mary Carolynn Tucker and Lucas Kozeniessky (17) of the US bagged the bronze medal ahead of Poland's Aneta Stankiewicz and Tomasz Bartnik (15).

In the second qualification, Elavenil and Divyansh grabbed the top spot after shooting 211.2 and 210.1 respectively for an aggregate of 421.3. Together, Peni and Denes shot a total 419.2 in the qualification.

The other Indian pair in the event, Anjum Moudgil and Arjun Babuta, could not make the final after finishing fifth in the qualifying with a total score of 418.1.

Dest, Messi braces lift Barca



ON A ROLL: Lionel Messi and Sergino Dest rejoice after one of the Argentine's goals against Real Sociedad, Sunday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, March 22: Sergino Dest and Lionel Messi scored twice each to help Barcelona hammer Real Sociedad 6-1 in their La Liga away fixture Sunday.

Earlier, after Jan Oblak swatted the ball away with a superb penalty save in the 86th minute, Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone celebrated on the sideline as if his team had just scored a goal.

Luis Suarez had earlier scored his 500th career goal with club and country to help give Atletico a hard-fought 1-0 home win against relegation-threatened Alaves Sunday.

The victory, Atletico's third in the last seven league games, left the leaders four points ahead of Barcelona, which stayed close by routing fifth-place Real Sociedad. Messi played his 768th match for Barcelona to surpass Xavi Hernandez for the record number

of club appearances.

Seeking its first league title since 2014, Atletico will enter the international break six points in front of third-place Real Madrid, who won 3-1 at Celta Vigo, Saturday.

Suarez, who had scored only twice in the last nine matches in all competitions, put Atletico ahead with a diving header in the 54th minute after a cross by Kieran Trippier.

Oblak, who hadn't been successful on penalty kicks recently, preserved the victory by diving to his right to make a one-hand save against the late shot from the spot taken by Joselu.

Barcelona easily beat Sociedad for their fifth consecutive league win – and ninth straight away from home. Antoine Griezmann opened the scoring in the 37th before Dest netted in the 43rd and 53rd minutes for his first league goals with the Catalan club. The American right back had already scored in a Champions League game in his first season with the Spanish powerhouse.

Messi netted his league-leading 22nd and 23rd goals from inside the area in the 56th and 89th. Ousmane Dembele scored in the 71st shortly after having a goal disallowed for offside. Sociedad's lone goal was scored by Ander Barrenetxea in the 77th.

Barcelona will next host relegation-threatened Valladolid while Atletico visits fourth-place Sevilla. Seventh-place Villarreal beat Cadiz 2-1 with goals by Gerard Moreno and Carlos Bacca. Valencia beat Granada 2-1 thanks to goals from Daniel Wass and Alex Blanco.

AN INTENSE BATTLE



Players of Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy and Olympian Vivek Singh Hockey Academy vie for ball during the MP side's 5-0 win in their match of the Hockey India Sub Junior Women Academy National Championship at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Monday

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

JABAMANI, PYARI NAMED IN INDIAN TEAM

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha women footballers Jabamani Tudu and Pyari Xaxa have been named in the senior national team for the upcoming international friendly against Uzbekistan in Uzbekistan March 26-April 8 in preparation for the forthcoming AFC Women's Asian Cup 2022.



DIVYANSH SINGH PANWAR (L) & ELAVENIL VALARIVAN