



## KEEN OBSERVATION

Actor Kirti Kulhari has said that not big names but content matters on OTT platforms to achieve success

LEISURE P2



## SUEZ CANAL BLOCKED

A giant cargo container ship has turned sideways and blocked all traffic in Egypt's Suez Canal

INTERNATIONAL P10



## HISTORIC FEAT

Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar becomes youngest Indian ever to win gold at the ISSF World Cup

SPORTS P12

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## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Now we know why our friend is always angry and tense. His monthly target is much higher than ours!

## SHORT TAKES

### Old tribal woman killed in forest fire

**New Delhi:** A 73-year-old tribal woman was charred to death in a forest fire in Kandhamal district Wednesday, police said. The deceased was identified as Ramabati Pradhan of Bali village under Raikia police station. She came in contact with the flames while collecting 'Mahua' flower Wednesday afternoon, said Tapantaruna Behera, the IIC of Raikia police station. The victim, as she went deep into the forest, could not come out once the fire engulfed her. Locals rushed her to the hospital after rescuing her, but she succumbed to her injuries while undergoing treatment.

### Junta releases journo, students

**Yangon:** In an apparent move to placate the protesters, the military junta currently in control in Myanmar, released Wednesday journalist Thein Zaw and hundreds of people imprisoned for demonstrating against the coup which ousted elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. AP journalist Zaw was charged with violating a public order law that carries a penalty of up to three years in prison. P10

## STATE GOVERNMENT KEPT INFO UNDER WRAPS TO PREVENT PANIC

# 3 with UK strain in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** The UK mutant strain of the COVID-19 virus has been found in three persons in Odisha. The genome sequencing of the persons was done by the designated labs in India. The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) gave this information Wednesday. It also said that the UK COVID-19 strain have been detected in 736 persons from 18 states including Odisha.

The NCDC however, said that so far no strain of South African, Brazilian and Japanese strains have been detected in Odisha. The institute informed that these three major strains were responsible for the sudden rise of COVID-19 cases across India.

The information was confirmed by SK Singh, director general of NCDC. "The UK variant was linked to surge in cases in the United Kingdom. Ten labs in India worked together with ICMR and other organisations to conduct the genome sequencing of the infected samples," Singh stated.

"There were three mutant strains



People queue up for vaccination at a hospital in Bhubaneswar

OP PHOTO

which mainly came from international travellers and is believed to have caused a surge in the number of cases of the pandemic. There are evidences of increase in transmission potential from these three variants," he added.

The Odisha government however said that the strain was detected in December from patients who returned

from England. Health department Additional Secretary Pradipta Mohapatra said the incidents were reported in December and was not made public to prevent panic creeping in.

The Centre in their official briefing on COVID-19 said that Odisha is not among the top 11 states where the second dose vaccination for frontline work-

## Night curfew now in Nabarangpur

**BHUBANESWAR:** Night curfew will be imposed in Odisha's Nabarangpur district from March 25 until further orders in a bid to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Odisha reported Wednesday 170 new COVID-19 infections, the state's highest spike in the last 45 days. Of the new cases, 99 were reported from quarantine centres, while the remaining 71 were detected during contact tracing, a health department official said. The fresh cases included 27 from Nuapada, 23 each from Cuttack and Khurda and 22 from Sundargarh districts. This has prompted Nabarangpur district officials to impose night curfew (8.00pm to 6.00am) from Thursday. Movement of individuals will be strictly prohibited during the night.

ers had crossed 90 per cent. So far it is among the top nine states where 80 per cent vaccination has been completed for frontline workers.

# No royalty revision on iron, bauxite

## CENTRE ASKS STATES TO PUT MORE MINES ON AUCTION TO EARN REVENUE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, March 24:** Expressing its intention against the revision of royalty on iron, bauxite and chromite and other minerals, the Centre asked Wednesday the state governments to put up more mines for auction to earn revenue.

In response to a question asked by Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Ramesh Majhi regarding the revision of royalty on minerals in the Lok Sabha, Union Coal and Mines Minister Pralhad Joshi said that mines are the biggest source of revenue in the entire world. These are getting costly as 'we are charging 42-45 per cent tax on the mines'.

"The Central Government shall not enhance the rates of royalty more than once during a period of three years.

**In terms of auction and also in the overall mineral sector, the Odisha government have done well. They are earning a very good amount of revenue out of that**

PRALHAD JOSHI | MINES MINISTER

However, there is no provision in the MMDR Act, which mandates the Central government to revise the rates of royalty for major minerals immediately after completion of three years of last revision of rates," Joshi said.

The Union Minister also said that the ministry had constituted a study group in this regard. He informed that the

panel has proposed the reduction of royalty in the auctioned mines and to maintain the same in the non-auctioned mines.

Joshi also praised the Odisha government for its work in the mineral sector. "You have also done very well. You are from Odisha. Your government has done well. In terms of auction and also in the overall mineral sector, they have done well and are receiving a very good amount of revenue out of that," Joshi said.

Earlier, Manjhi had asked the Joshi as to when would the government decide on revision of royalty rates. Majhi had said in the House that the rates were revised last in 2014. "It's been seven years, we have been facing losses due to non-revision of royalty rates," Majhi said in the house.

## Petrol, diesel prices reduced

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 24:** In the first reduction in rates in over a year, petrol price Wednesday was cut by 18 paise per litre and diesel by 17 paise a litre as international oil prices tumbled to the lowest since early February.

Petrol price was cut to ₹90.99 a litre in Delhi from ₹91.17 per litre, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. Diesel now comes for ₹81.30 a litre in the national capital, down from ₹81.47 previously.

Rates have been reduced across India and vary from state to state depending on the local taxation (VAT). This is the first reduction in fuel prices in over a year: Prices were last reduced March 16, 2020.

## TTPS STAGE-III PROJECT

# Naveen seeks early execution

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik requested Wednesday the Centre to address concerns related to closure of Talcher Thermal Power Station (TTPS) and take steps for early execution of the Stage-III project.

Naveen wrote a letter to Union Power Minister RK Singh stating that the ministry should direct the NTPC to go ahead with the TTPS expansion project stage-III (1320 MW). The chief minister pointed out that though the TTPS Stage-III expansion project has already got the approval from the Odisha government in February last year, NTPC is yet to start the



execution of work.

The TTPS is one of the oldest thermal power stations of India commissioned in 1968. The Stage-I (240 MW) and Stage-II (220MW) of the plant were set up by Odisha government in 1968 and 1982. Later, NTPC acquired it in 1995.

In 2010, NTPC proposed to ex-

pand the capacity of the station and install two units of 660 MW each. The state-designated agency, GRIDCO Ltd promptly signed Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with NTPC in December 2010 for 660 MW, informed the chief minister.

The chief minister said the closure of TTPS from March 31, 2021 will have severe direct and indirect impact on thousands of families and the local economy. Naveen urged the Union Minister to direct NTPC to address the concerns related to the closure of TTPS. The Chief Minister also assured the Union Minister and the Centre of providing all kinds of support from the Odisha government in this regard.

## LAST MINUTE FACELIFT



An artisan puts finishing touches to decorative figures at Kathagada Sahi in Cuttack ahead of the Dola festival, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

# Unemployment fears loom as COVID-19 cases spike

## UNLOCK PHASES GAVE HOPE THAT THE ECONOMY WILL GET A BOOST, BUT APPREHENSIONS GROW WITH 2ND WAVE OF ATTACKS

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 24:** The first anniversary of lockdown will be observed Thursday. It was on March 25 last year that the nationwide lockdown was implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19. A year has passed and even though there was steady decline in COVID-19 cases, the number of new infections has suddenly picked up from the second week of March this year.

When the lockdown was first announced, India had only 500 cases and around 50 people had died due to COVID-19. The tally has gone up to 11.68 million since then according to Health Ministry figures. The death toll has reached 1,60,166.



Phased reopening started June 1, 2020 and there were signs that India was limping back to normalcy before the second wave struck again. Vaccination is continuing in a robust manner, but even then dark COVID-19 clouds are hovering on the

horizon again.

The government had imposed a lockdown to curb the spread of the pandemic, but this impacted economic and commercial activities. It also resulted in job losses and later on, the exodus of migrant workers

**O**n 1st anniversary of lockdown coronavirus continues to be a huge source of worry

**J**ob cuts may once more occur if restrictions are imposed

**U**nemployment rate highest at 9.1% in December 2020

rocked the entire nation.

According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data, the unemployment rate was recorded at 6.9 per cent in February 2021 which is slightly better than 7.8 per cent in the same month last year and 8.8 per cent in March 2020, during which lockdown was imposed.

The data showed that the unemployment rate had peaked to

23.5 per cent in April and remained at 21.7 per cent in May. It started tapering off from June onward when it was recorded at 10.2 per cent in the month and further improved to 7.4 per cent in July. However, the unemployment rate swinging like a pendulum went up to 9.1 per cent in December 2020 but then improved in January to 6.5 per cent. However, amid the sudden spike in cases, experts are apprehensive that unemployment rate may rise if restrictions are imposed once again.

Experts said the farm sector has done well which engages over 55 per cent of India's population but there is a need for improvement in hiring in urban and industrial areas.

## CJI Bobde names Justice Ramana as his successor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 24:** Chief Justice of India SA Bobde who is set to retire April 23, has recommended senior-most judge Justice NV Ramana as his successor and the 48th CJI in keeping with convention and norms of seniority, sources said Wednesday. The CJI has sent the recommendation to the government and handed over a copy to Justice Ramana.

As per norms, a written communication from the incumbent chief justice is sent a month before his retirement. If the recommendation is approved by the government, Justice Ramana will take charge April 23 as the next Chief Justice of India, April 24. He is set to retire August 26, 2022.



Born August 27, 1957 in Ponnayaram village of Andhra Pradesh's Krishna district, Justice Ramana was enrolled as an advocate February 10, 1983. He functioned as the acting Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh from March 10, 2013 to May 20, 2013. He was elevated as Chief Justice of Delhi High Court, September 2, 2013 and became a Supreme Court judge February 17, 2014.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	49180.31 ↓ 871.13
NIFTY	14549.40 ↓ 265.40
DOLLAR	73.14 ↑ ₹0.18
EURO	85.84 ↓ ₹0.11
GOLD	₹44,735 ↑ ₹89
SILVER	₹65,380 ↑ ₹408

WEATHER	
	BHUB CTK
MAX	40.0°C 38.8°C
MIN	21.8°C 21.8°C
Humidity	41% 39%
Rainfall	Nil Nil
Forecast	
Fog/mist in the morning	



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

An enterprising day. The stars say you may visit an ancient place. A museum, perhaps, or a historical place. But your health may require some attention, says Ganesha. If so, it's a good idea to spend an evening by yourself.

TAURUS

It will be a thought-provoking day with tidbits of success and rewards scattered here and there, says Ganesha. If you feel you got the short end of the stick, do not let it affect your morale. Every sunrise comes with a different promise and today is not the end of the world.

GEMINI

Your desire for a clean house will reach the level of obsession, predicts Ganesha. You may plan to wash your car, clean your yard and arrange your wardrobe. And you don't trust the housemaid with any of the chores, because no one can clean the house better than you.

CANCER

Though your thoughts and views may be quite radical, you will be largely restrained while acting on them, portends Ganesha. You will have no problems starting a new venture or love affair, and taking the required action to keep them afloat.

LEO

Time is one thing that you have in short change today, says Ganesha. There is every possibility that you shall remain extremely busy. The tasks may be small — like writing a letter to revive old contacts — but it is important that you do them.

VIRGO

Family affairs will predominate today. They will even control your thoughts to the exclusion of everything else. Things will look up on the business front. You may spend time relaxing in the evening.

LIBRA

Of late, you have been very concerned about the health of one of your close friends. Take this day to lay your fears to rest by spending time with that friend. Work can wait, as today you must prove to yourself, if not to others, that 'a friend in need is a friend indeed', Ganesha wishes you the very best.

SCORPIO

Your mind shall take over the proceedings today. And it shall, in all likelihood, draw you to the work bench and keep your nose to the grindstone. But your heart will flutter like a butterfly, and if you manage to strike the right balance, you may win over your special one and your boss too, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

Tough times do not last, but tough people do, remember this fact and move ahead in life. Try to make the complicated life simpler by your optimistic approach. Speak politely and give up your ego. Shun luxuries, suggests Ganesha.

CAPRICORN

You will have heard of many emotional fools who let sentiments rule their lives. Try not to be one of them, and if it's too difficult a task, at least pretend not to be one of them, for Ganesha says going by your feelings can leave you at a low ebb.

AQUARIUS

Today, you will experience the harmonious balance between logic and emotion. You will consequently know how to mix business with pleasure. Money wise, you are content, but trivial issues may bother you today, says Ganesha.

PISCES

The focus is firmly on career advancement today. Business deals, which have been a long time in the making, will finally come through. Those pursuing a profession can expect pay rises or promotions. Make sure your skills are up to the mark to be able to tackle your new responsibilities satisfactorily, says Ganesha.



MIRREN CAST AS VILLAIN IN SHAZAM! FURY OF THE GODS

Actress Helen Mirren has been cast as Hespera, the villainous daughter of the god Atlas, in *Shazam! Fury Of The Gods*, a sequel to the 2019 film, *Shazam*. The movie is set to release in June 2023.

TAYLOR SWIFT, MOM DONATE \$50K TO COVID-19-AFFECTED FAMILY

Singer Taylor Swift and her mother Andrea donated \$50,000 to a family of five daughters who lost their father to Covid-19 in Memphis. The singer and her mother contributed through a fundraiser called GoFundMe, according to *eonline.com*.



'On OTT, your name is not enough'

Mumbai: Actress Kirti Kulhari, who has been part of many OTT projects including *The Girl On The Train* and *Four More Shots Please*, says that OTT has changed the way showbiz works. She says that for an OTT project, a big name may garner buzz initially but after that it's just the content that matters. "If you are claiming to make content-oriented stuff, then you have to have people who do justice to it. OTT is a space where initial attraction might happen due to a popular face but at the end of it, your name is not enough. I want to see something real and valuable if I am giving my five hours to a show on OTT. Good performance is what works at the end. Rather than projects, cinema is being created in a lot of ways," says the *Pink* actress. Talking about mass entertainers that feature big male superstars, Kirti adds that most of them are produced by these stars and, hence, they have the bigger say.



Kirti Kulhari

Vicky's recipe for success

Mumbai: Actor Vicky Kaushal has shared his recipe for success. He says hard work is something that marinates over time. Vicky posted a picture on social media, where he is seen practicing archery. He also referenced author-gospel musician Kirk Franklin in the caption. "Hard-work is something you marinate over time... it's not microwaveable. #kirk-franklin," he wrote. The actor, who was last seen in the horror film *Bhoot Part One: The Haunted Ship*, is working on his next *Sardar Udham Singh*, where he plays the titular revolutionary. He will also be seen in the film *The Immortal Ashwatthama* and *Takht*, and has an untitled project with former beauty queen Manushi Chhillar.



Neha is like a daughter to me: Neetu Kapoor

Mumbai: Veteran actress Neetu Kapoor, who met singer Neha Kakkar during a recent shoot of *Indian Idol* season

12, congratulated the singer on her recent wedding. Neetu said that she has always shared a great equation with Neha, not just professionally, but personally as well. "Neha is just not a singer but a beautiful soul and she is just like a daughter to me. My blessings are always going to be with her wherever she would be," she said.



A deeply-touched Neha responded by thanking Neetu, who also gave her 'shaadi ka shagun'. "I am just speechless, receiving a blessing from such a renowned actress is the best thing that has ever happened to me in this entire journey. I will keep it with me my entire life," Neha said.

FIRST BATCH OF FILMS FIGHT TO SURVIVE

Everyone was expecting that public will come to theatres but the outpour was not as expected, says trade analyst Atul Mohan

AGENCIES

With news of theatres opening up, Hindi film producers wasted no time in announcing release dates of their films, which were in the pipeline due to lockdown. *Roohi*, *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar* and *Mumbai Saga* were among the earliest big productions to test the water as box office busi-

ness resumed. However, the business isn't off to a flying start. The audience, it seems, is still too cautious to venture to cinema halls what with number of Covid cases on the rise in many parts of India, notably Mumbai — the hub of film business. According to the website Bollywood Hungama, the Rajkummar Rao-Janhvi Kapoor starrer *Roohi* managed a first weekend collection Rs 12.58 crore (nett), after releasing March 11. A week later, the John Abraham-Emraan Hashmi starrer *Mumbai Saga* has managed a weekend collection of Rs 8.74 crore (nett). *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar*, starring Arjun Kapoor and Parineeti Chopra, opened below expecta-



A representational image

tions. As per the website, the film's first weekend collection is around 0.25 crore. "I wouldn't call releas-

made. When the release came closer, there was a sudden rapid rise in Covid cases. Everyone was expecting that public will come to theatres but the outpour was not as expected," says trade analyst Atul Mohan.

Keeping the current situation in mind, he feels that the industry "should wait, instead of taking risks", and adds: "In the current situation, when cases are multiplying, we should ideally delay by a couple of more weeks." Trade analyst Taran Adarsh points out: "There have been re-

strictions and night curfews and these factors have affected the films' box office business. Most importantly the scare of rising cases to a major extent deters the family audience and people in groups. Restrictions were not very prominent in the last week when *Roohi* released." Does the current business of films spell a word of caution for the upcoming releases? "There is a huge line-up of films are awaiting. The producers' fraternity is supporting the exhibitors. It's a wait-and-watch situation right now," he replies.



FUN post

PEANUTS



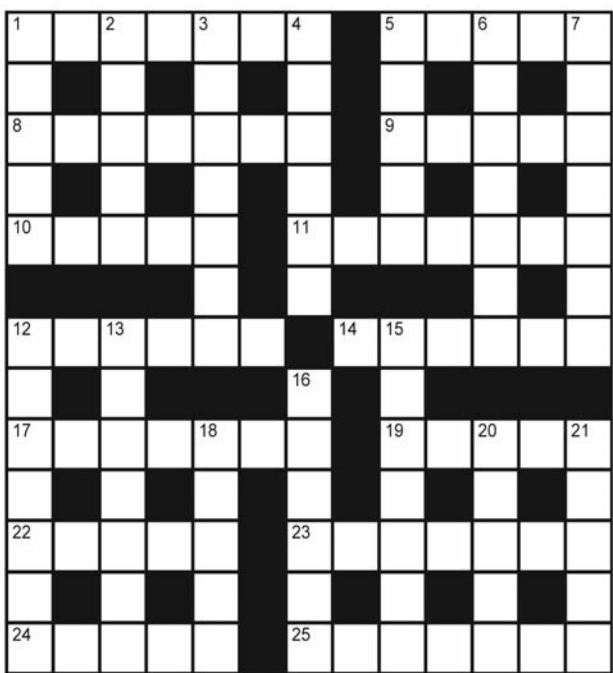
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



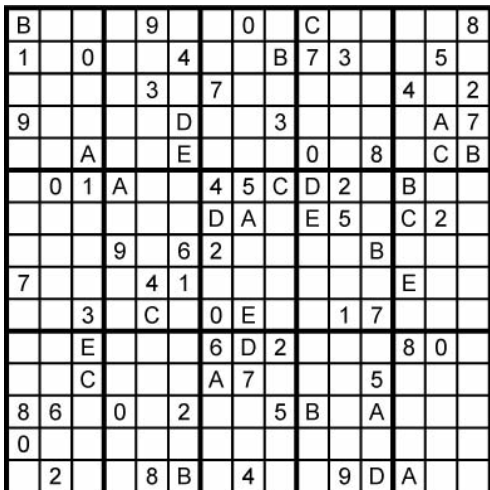
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Seaport
  - 5 Toboggans
  - 8 Surgical knife
  - 9 Dwelling
  - 10 Come to pass
  - 11 TV station
  - 12 Amend
  - 14 Celestial body
  - 17 Special celebration
  - 19 Bullion unit
  - 22 Fatuous
  - 23 Aeronaut
  - 24 Foe
  - 25 African pests
  - 5 Andean animal
  - 6 Coffee pot leftovers
  - 7 First-rate
  - 12 Be ecstatic
  - 13 Shake
  - 15 Employ
  - 16 Boarder
  - 18 On one's guard
  - 20 Airport terminals
  - 21 Sea swallows
- Down
- 1 Undue speed
  - 2 Serengeti sounds
  - 3 Fish hawks
  - 4 Antiquities

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



1. Secretary, Department of Forests, Government of Odisha, Secretariat, Bhubaneswar.
2. Chairman, Central Pollution Control Board, Parivesh Bhawan, CBD-cum-Office Complex, East Arjun Nagar, Delhi-110032.
3. Regional Officer, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, National Office (E2), A3, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar - 751023.
4. Chairman, Odisha State Pollution Control Board, Parivesh Bhawan, A/118 Nilakantha Nagar, Unit-VIII, Bhubaneswar-75 1012.
5. Member Secretary, Central Ground Water Authority, West Block -II, Wing -3, Sector I, R.K.Puram, New Delhi - 110086.
6. District Collector, Jajpur District, Odisha.
7. Guard File/Record File/Monitoring File.
8. MoEF&CC website.



BMC for antigen test of visitors

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation, Wednesday, stated that it would only focus on Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) of visitors from red-flag states to Capital city for immediate detection of Covid-19 cases. Addressing the media here after inspection of Covid preparedness at Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA), BMC Commissioner Prem Chanda Chaudhary said that the civic authority will opt for RAT testing rather RT-PCR tests in a bid to detect and efficiently track the passengers. “On-the-spot testing will only be through RAT as we need immediate results. Tracking would become difficult if we take samples and let go passengers while we wait for results through RT-PCR. However, if someone is carrying any RT-PCR reports, he/she will be exempted from testing,” the BMC Commissioner said. He also said that passengers coming from red-flag stats will have to go through RAT. It can be mentioned the state government had red-flagged 12 states and mandated a 7-day home isolation for returnees from Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal, Karnataka, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and Chandigarh. “We have requested the Government Railway Police (GRP) and local police for assistance at railway station. Additional forces will be deployed and testing will be increased, especially given the festive season ahead. Moreover, we will also begin random testing of hostels of different colleges to check spread of Covid among students,” Chaudhary added.

Gandhi Shilpa Bazaar concludes

**Bhubaneswar:** The 10-day Gandhi Shilpa Bazaar-2021 concluded at Unit-III Exhibition Ground here Wednesday. The fair organised by Odisha State Co-operative Handicraft Corporation Ltd (Utkalika) in association with Development Commissioner for Handicrafts, saw more than three lakh footfall and over Rs 80 lakh business. Artisans from 16 states showcased their products of terracotta, zari and silk work, woodcraft, blue pottery, jute work, silver art, wood inlay, handloom, stonework, tie and dye, and several such items at the exhibition.

Bhub-Bhadrak MEMU train from April 7

**Bhubaneswar:** East Coast Railway (ECOR) Wednesday announced the run of MEMU train between Bhubaneswar and Bhadrak from April 7, 2021 as per the following. The train will leave Bhubaneswar at 17:55hrs April 7 and reach Bhadrak at 21:15hrs. While returning, it will leave Bhadrak at 06:15hrs April 8 and reach Bhubaneswar at 09:50hrs. Earlier, ECOR had announced running of MEMU trains between Bhubaneswar & Keonjhar and between Puri & Angul. Apart from this, running of Special train between Hatia & Puri, Sambalpur & Puri and between Paradeep & Puri were also announced for convenience of passengers.

WASSUP TODAY

- BHUBANESWAR**
- Conference of Biju Patnaik Pharmacy Students' Association, Rotary Club of Bhubaneswar, Unit-IX, 9 am
  - Gunjan Evening by Gunjan Dance Academy, Utkal Rangamanch, 10.30 am
  - Awareness Programme by Sanjivani Diagnostic, CRP Square, 5 pm
  - Drama festival by Arohana, Rabindra Mandap, 6.30 pm
- BALIANITA**
- Kalasa Yatra to mark the 4th annual yagya of Goddess Udia, Nakhara, 12 noon
- PURI**
- Convention by Bhitamati Adhikar Manch, Bhakta Salabega Conference Hall, 6 pm
- Programmes/announcements for wassup today may be sent to [opwassup@gmail.com](mailto:opwassup@gmail.com) for record, it must also carry the sender's mobile number for our verification, but not for publication.

CS draws up plan to tackle heatwave

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** Chief Secretary Suresh Mahapatra Wednesday chaired a meeting of all departments discussing preventive measures to counter the effects of heatwave in the state and also strengthen public amenities. Special Relief Commissioner (SRC), Pradeep Kumar Jena Wednesday informed the media about decisions taken by Chief Secretary during the meeting. “Every year the state government takes decision to counter heatwave and effects of summer in the state. During this time, water woes often escalate. So, directions have been given by Chief Secretary to officials to ensure timely repair of tube-wells. The piped water supply will be maintained during the period.” He also said, “Attempts will be made to ensure electricity problems do not create inconvenience to people. For wildlife, arrangements



SUMMER WOES

Directions have been given by Chief Secretary to officials to ensure timely repair of tube-wells. Bus operators had been requested to ensure availability of adequate drinking water and ORS, ice boxes and first aid boxes in their buses. Mahapatra asked the Labour department to refrain labourers from working between 11am & 3pm to avoid their hardships.

of water availability will also be made. Awareness campaigns will be launched for the public urging them to keep water for stray animals and birds near their houses. For summer stroke, dedicated wards will be arranged in local hospitals where AC and other special medicines will be made available.” Jena said that Mahapatra asked the Labour department to refrain labourers from working between

11am & 3pm to avoid their hardships. “Several schools and colleges are closed now. In places, where the classes have started, we will try to make the classes in the morning besides empowering them with adequate arrangements like ORS and drinking water,” Jena said. The SRC said that bus operators had been requested to ensure availability of adequate drinking water

and ORS, ice boxes and first aid boxes in their buses. “Forest department has been asked to take steps to counter forest fires. Water Resources department has been asked to check the dams and release water timely. The Discoms will be asked to ensure that power supply disruptions are reduced. Electricity to hospitals and other essential services will be ensured,” Jena mentioned.

37 anti-trafficking units to tackle missing children

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** In bid to ensure safety of children with special focus on tackling missing children cases, the Odisha Police has established 37 Integrated Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) in 36 police districts and at CID-CB, Odisha. According to a release issued by the Odisha Police, the department has received Rs 3.99 crore for setting up and strengthening AHTUs throughout the state. Purchase and delivery of items are under process, said the release. Mahila and Sishu Desks (women and child desks) have been set up in 53 police stations across the state in order to receive complaints relating to children, listening to their grievance with sympathy and ensure proper legal action. As per a government notification (No.15125/CP&M, Dated 03.04.2018), the state government has also notified that police officers posted at Mahila and Sishu desks are designated as juvenile welfare officers as per provision of Section 107(1) of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015. Rs 5 crore have been received for strength-

The department has received ₹3.99 crore for setting up and strengthening AHTUs throughout the state

ening these desks at 500 police stations throughout the state. Purchase and delivery of items are under process. This apart, web portal ‘TRACK CHILD’ has been functional since January 31, 2013 for tracing the missing children. Photograph and particulars of both missing and recovered children are regularly uploaded on this portal the district officials concerned. Similarly, the release claimed that regular videoconferences are being conducted by DGP and ADGP, CID/Crime on the issues of missing/trafficked children and instructions have been given to take effective measures to prevent trafficking/missing children. Odisha Police in technical collaboration with Unicef has organised a campaign titled “PAREE PAJEN KATHATIYE” from May 28, 2018 to June 12, 2018 to sensitize the general public against sexual harassment on minor girl.

Cuttack student found dead in City hotel

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** The Commissionerate Police Wednesday recovered the body of a youth under mysterious circumstances from inside a hotel room in Sailashree Vihar here. A team of police broke open the doors of the hotel and found the youth dead. The deceased was identified as Abhishek Kumar Nayak from Urali village under Sadar police limits in Cuttack, a police official said. According to police sources, Abhishek, a third-year commerce student, had been missing since March 22. The youth was

staying in the hotel room for the last couple of days. Abhishek had gone to OMP Chhak in Cuttack at around 5pm March 22. The youth had to hand over money to the driver of a truck owned by the family. As he did not return home for a long time, his family lodged an FIR alleging that he has been murdered. Police have registered a case of unnatural death in this connection and launched a probe. The actual cause of death can be ascertained only after the post-mortem report arrives. Prima facie evidence suggests that the youth died due to poisoning, the official stated.

‘Blood transfusion safer with NAT-PCR’

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** With the inclusion of Nucleic Amplification Acid Test-Polymers Chain Reaction (NAT-PCR) in selected government hospitals in Odisha, double checking of donated blood samples against fatal infections has now become possible. A total of six hospitals in the state have started offering the advanced testing which can detect infections of HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C which, in many cases, could not be detected in the initial days of infection through conventional testing methods like ELISA. The hospitals equipped with this facility are MKCG Medical College



Six hospitals in the state have started offering the advanced testing which can detect infections of HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C

(Berhampur), Capital Hospital (Bhubaneswar), SCB Medical College (Cuttack), VIMSAR (Burla) and two others.

Odisha has a total of 57 blood banks being managed by Red Cross and Odisha government. Medical experts claim that the

advanced facility can play a key role in better scrutiny of blood bank samples. “Several advanced countries in the world are using this technology. The system can help us in protecting more lives with better scrutiny of the blood samples used in blood transfusions,” said Dr Debashis Mishra, Director, Blood Bank, Capital Hospital. State government has collaborated with Swiss firm ‘Roche Diagnostics’, India to introduce the system of advanced testing of blood samples. One out of every 200 units of blood tested in the state has infected blood (HIV or Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C). Of these, Ganjam district has a maximum of one unit of infected blood from 92 units.

BJD walks out opposing Delhi Amendment Bill

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, March 24:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Wednesday staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha opposing the ‘Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021’. The party stated that the Bill undermines the power of a democratically elected government. While speaking on the Bill in the Upper House, BJD Parliamentary party leader in the Rajya Sabha Prasanna Acharya said that this Bill will have wider repercussions in the country and the Union government should have consulted all stakeholders before introducing this Bill. “This Bill undermines the power of a democratically elected government and is also against the principles of cooperative federalism. Not only Delhi but this Bill will have its impact all over the country,” Acharya said in the House.

**This Bill undermines the power of a democratically elected government and is also against the principles of cooperative federalism. Not only Delhi but this Bill will have its impact all over the country**  
PRASANNA ACHARYA | BJD MP  
It is to be mentioned here that the Bill amends certain powers and responsibilities of the Legislative Assembly and the LG of Delhi. It seeks to ensure that the Lieutenant Governor is necessarily granted an opportunity to exercise the power in a select category of cases, in emergency. The Bill also gives powers to LG to make rules in matters which fall outside the preview of Delhi Legislative Assembly. It has a provision that all executive actions to be taken in the name of the Lieutenant Governor:

‘Healthcare practitioners must set standards’

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, March 24:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Wednesday supported the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill, 2021 and suggested that everybody who deals with patients shall have some recognition and should set standards of education and competitiveness. Speaking on the Bill in Lok Sabha, Cuttack MP Bhartruhari Mahtab informed the House that earlier treatment was considered doctor centric but this Bill makes treatment patient centric. “This Bill classifies 15 major professional categories including 53 professions in allied and healthcare streams. There is a need for a statutory mechanism for enumeration, standardisation, and regularisation of these professions as has been expressed by a number of experts. It is necessary that everybody who deals with patients has some recognition and set standards



The BJD MP told the House that earlier treatment was considered doctor centric but this Bill makes treatment patient centric

of education and competitiveness,” Mahtab said. He added that there are many allied and healthcare practitioners, who are anonymous, unchecked and underused in the healthcare system. Mahtab flagged concern over granting only 12 slots to the state council members by the Allied and Healthcare Council of India and

termed it disproportionate given the number of states in the country. He also cautioned the government that the process of granting accreditation to private institutions on a large scale opens up avenues of manipulation and corruption and that this needs to be checked. It is to be mentioned here that the Bill seeks to regulate and standardise the education and practice of allied and healthcare professionals. The Bill defines an ‘allied health professional’ as an associate, technician, or technologist trained to support the diagnosis and treatment of any illness, disease, injury, or impairment. While a ‘healthcare professional’ includes a scientist, therapist, or any other professional who studies, advises, researches, supervises, or provides preventive and curative health services.



A group of medical students stages a dharna in front of Raj Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, to press for fulfilment of their various demands

Cop ‘slaps’ senior citizen during probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khurda, March 24:** The inspector in-charge (IIC) of Chandaka police station allegedly slapped a senior citizen and hurled abuses at him while the latter was summoned in connection with a land dispute Tuesday. Victim Biranchi Narayan Mahapatra, 65, of Binjhagiri Wednesday lodged a complaint in this regard with Khurda Collector. He also sent copies of the complaint to the Police Commissioner of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, Bhubaneswar Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) and state 5T Secretary, sources said. Mahapatra, a heart patient, reached the police station at around 10am but could not find

IIC Devendra Biswal. “I contacted the IIC over phone and urged him to come to the police station at the earliest. I told the IIC that I was unable to wait for long due to health complications. However, I was forced to wait for two hours to meet the IIC,” said Mahapatra in his complaint. Upon his arrival, the IIC hurled expletives at Mahapatra and slapped him, said the complaint. “The IIC slapped me several times while enquiring about the land dispute,” Mahapatra alleged. Rubbishing the allegation, IIC Biswal said, “Mahapatra has encroached upon a piece of land and a complaint was lodged with us. We had summoned him to the police station as part of the probe. His allegation is baseless.”

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# Mangrove depletes; no end to beach erosion

BHITARKANIKA ECO-SYSTEM HAS BEEN FACING A DOUBLE JEOPARDY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, March 24:** Depleting mangrove cover and constant erosion of the beach have posed a serious threat to the eco-system of Bhitarkanika National Park in Kendrapara district, a report said.

Bhitarkanika is visited by tourists from the state and beyond not only for its diverse eco-system featuring many mangrove species, salt-water crocodile, Indian python, king cobra, black ibis, darters and many other species of flora and fauna, but also for migratory birds, rare Olive Ridley turtles and other animals.



Coastal erosion has wiped off green cover at Agarnasi island

Fact file

The forest land here has turned into a safe haven for illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. This has led to depletion of mangrove cover in the area and rampant poaching of wild animals and marine creatures

The Bhitarkanika is rich in bio-diversity. As many as 72 types of mangrove plants and 64 types of medicinal plants are found in this forest. It is home to 215 varieties of indigenous and migratory birds, salt water crocodiles and 16 types of albino crocodiles like Gori and Malli

Coastal erosion has sharply increased due to destruction of mangrove forests by the Bangladeshi immigrants. The mangrove forests are known as sea wall as they help prevent erosion of the beach due to rising tidal waves

The saltwater crocodiles, dolphins, host of medicinal plants and mangrove forests are the main attraction for the tourists.

However, with passage of time, the eco-system of Bhitarkanika has come under serious threat due to various reasons. Scarcity of fresh-water has affected the wetland, while global warming and climate change are leading to rapid erosion of the coastline.

Moreover, this forest land has turned into a safe haven for the illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. This has led to depletion of mangrove cover in the area and rampant poaching of wild animals and marine creatures. Coastal erosion has sharply increased due to destruction of mangrove forests by the Bangladeshi immigrants. The mangrove forests are known as sea wall as they help prevent erosion of the beach due to rising tidal waves.

These apart, toxic chemicals dis-

charged from the prawn gheries and industrial wastes have pushed the environment of Bhitarkanika towards destruction. This has sparked serious concern among the environmentalists, social activists and local residents.

A researcher Dr PN Gourang, environmentalist Hemant Kumar Rout, social activists Bhuban Mohan

mangrove plants and 64 types of medicinal plants are found in this forest.

It is home to 215 varieties of indigenous and migratory birds, salt water crocodiles and 16 types of albino crocodiles like Gori and Malli. Earlier, the indigenous birds used to reside in the heronry of Bhitarkanika but have now shifted to Mathadia and Lakshmiprasadadia after their habitats were threatened.

The destruction in environment has deprived the birds of a safe habitat and a reduction in number of marine creatures like dolphins. On the other hand the sea level is rising due to global warming. Moreover, discharge of toxic effluents from the prawn gheries and industries has impacted the nesting and breeding sites of Olive Ridley turtles while decline in flow of freshwater to the wetland might lead to its destruction someday, they warned.

When contacted, divisional forest officer Bikash Ranjan Dash said efforts are being made to check infiltration of Bangladeshis into the wetland, planting of mangrove saplings to spread the green cover and demolish illegal prawn gheries are being taken up at regular intervals.

The restrictions imposed from time to time, such as fishing ban, have helped check poaching of wild animals and marine creatures. However, a special survey should be undertaken to assess the reason behind constant erosion of the beach, he added.

## 7-day home isolation mandatory for people coming from outside



Police are on vigil as night curfew was imposed in Malkangiri till March 31

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Malkangiri, March 24:** As Covid cases are increasing in the country and the state, the Malkangiri administration has been on its toes. Some safety and preventive guidelines prepared by the administration have been enforced from Wednesday. Night curfew has been imposed from 9pm till midnight of March 31.

Seven-day home quarantine has been made mandatory for the people coming to Malkangiri from other districts, a report said.

Collector Dr Y Vijay has issued guidelines keeping in view the fact that a large number of peo-

ple working outside the state are coming home to take part in Badayatra.

Besides, the sudden spike of Covid cases (170 persons testing positive in the last 24 hours) in the state, has left the district administration worried.

The district administration has directed people coming from outside to remain in home isolation. It has warned of action against them in case they violate safety guidelines.

During the celebration of the ongoing Badayatra, the district administration imposed night curfew from 9 pm till midnight of March 31.

## Fire rages in Hathidhara forest

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Talagaon, March 24:** For last several days, fire has been raging in Hatidhara forest under Madhapuыр range in Boudh district. The fire has already caused massive damage to the flora and fauna while forest officials and firefighters have been trying to bring the flames under control.

According to reports, a fire broke out in the Ranihatsahi forest Monday. It was brought under control there.

In the evening, fire spread in Hatidhara, a km away from Gandapaju village. Owing to raging fire, the atmospheric temperatures have gone up, making life difficult for people living in the periphery of the forest.

Hatidhara forest is abutting to Padmatola forest. These forests are rich with valuable timber species like sal, saguan trees. It is vibrant wildlife. If the fire keeps on spreading, it may affect Padmatole forest too, locals lamented.

Locals alleged that as forest fire is spreading, wild animals stray into human habitations, thus endangering their lives.

They laid stress on public awareness on the forest protection, pointing out that as the forest department is not equipped to handle fire, it may spread to other areas.

RESIDENTS SORE OVER HIKE IN HOLDING TAX AND USERS' FEE

HC moved against BeMC

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, March 24:** The move of the Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) to hike holding tax and users' fee has triggered resistance from local residents.

Workers of various political parties like the BJP, the Congress and various labour unions have staged protests against it. Citing the move as anti-people, the Congress leader and lawyer Pitabas Panda have moved High Court against it, by filing a writ petition.

The petitioner has made the BeMC commissioner, the Collector and the state government as a party.

In the petition, it was stated that the Odisha Municipal Corporation Act has been sidelined while notification to this effect has been issued without holding a public hearing. Collection of excessive holding tax is anti-people.

The petitioner has appealed to the HC to seek replies from the state government as to why this decision was taken in a hurry: All the relevant documents related to hike of holding tax and users' fees should be sought from the state government, the petitioner said.

The BeMC is already collecting users' fees from residents for lifting of garbage. Collection of users' fees is also illegal, he observed.

The petitioner also pointed out that Berhampur Municipal Corporation's



**The petitioner has appealed to the HC to seek a reply from the state government as to why such a decision was enforced in a hurry, apart from submitting all documents about the hike**

move has issued a notification on users' fee January 7, 2021 while the term of the municipal council has expired two years ago.

The tenure of elected representatives of BeMC ended September 2018 while no elections have been held for various posts including the Mayor

since then. The Collector has been assigned the additional responsibility of the civic body's administrator.

"In this situation, hiking of holding tax and users' fee is illegal. And the management of the BeMC is vested with the state government. In this situation, hiking holding tax is a burden on people. It should be scrapped immediately," he added.

Locals said the decision to enhance taxes was taken in haste without taking into consideration the problems faced by people due to the pandemic.

Several outfits and political parties termed the move as arbitrary and urged the State government to not collect the enhanced taxes till livelihood of people, hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, is normalised.

## IN MEMORIAM



Artistes enact a play on 'Gandhinka Odisha' at Aranyaka Manch in Sambalpur Wednesday

## Chandbali MLA threatens cop

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/Bhadrak, March 24:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) legislator from Chandbali Assembly constituency in Bhadrak district Byomakesh Ray allegedly threatened a police officer over phone. An audio clip of his conversation with the cop has gone viral on social media.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Wednesday raked up the issue in the Assembly during the Zero Hour. Leader of Opposition Pradipta Naik sought the intervention of the

### AUDIO GOES VIRAL



**MLA Byomakesh Ray**

Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro and a ruling from him in this regard.

According to sources, Ray had a telephonic conversation with assistant sub-inspector of Bansada police station Gurucharan Behera.

In the audio clip, Ray was heard pressurising Behera to arrest some people in connection with a group clash. The MLA also threatened the cop to transfer him to Motu area of Maoist-infested Malkangiri in case the official fails to follow his instructions.

"You know about the political problems in the locality, but you are intentionally aggravating them. You must have heard about Motu. I will hold talks with the DG (Director General) of police and dump you there," the Chandbali MLA was heard saying in the viral audio.

Ray also warned the cop of 'staying within his limits'. Ray admitted his conversation with the cop, but declined to comment on the issue. On the other hand, the ASI said he will work with the same sincerity wherever he is posted.

## Jumbo tramples 2 labourers to death

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, March 24:** A wild tusker trampled two labourers to death at Kudhernisha village under Sadar range in Sambalpur district at Tuesday night.

The deceased were identified as Telenga Oram (50) and Jayaram Mirdha (55).

According to reports, the two were working as bamboo cutters under the forest development corporation. After doing their work, the duo was taking rest at 9 pm when the elephant barged into it and trampled them. As the tusker is on a rampaging spree in the area, locals nicknamed the animal as 'Don'.

Telenga died on the spot while Jayaram succumbed to his injuries on the way to Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) in Burla.

The forest department has provided Rs 40,000 as initial compensation to the bereaved families.

The casualties triggered tension in the village as forest officials rushed to the village. The locals have been spending sleepless nights for the last six months as elephants are on a damaging spree. In the last one year, seven people in the area have lost their lives in the elephant attack.

NOTICE

I Sambit Kumar Acharya, S/o Late Ananda Acharya, R/o W.No. 12 Mohanty Para, Bargarh, P.O/P.S./Tah./Dist.- Bargarh declared that, I have purchased an area of Ac.0.49 dec. through Regd. Sale deed vide No. 2425 dt. 20.10.1994 from Keshaba Naik, S/o- Purandar Naik of Mouza- Gopalpur, P.S/ Tah- Bhatli, Dist.- Bargarh which is duly registered before the District Sub Registrar Office, Bargarh. That, the original said R.S.D. vide No. 2425 Dt. 20.10.1994, Page No. 139 to 144, Book No. 1, Vol. 120 has been misplaced somewhere. Further I declared that I have never mortgaged the above R.S.D. in any Bank or Financial Institutions. Now I am applying for a loan from the Punjab National Bank, Bargarh Branch, P.S./Tah./Dist- Bargarh by mortgaging the same. If anybody has any objection may kindly draw notice before Punjab National Bank, Bargarh Branch within 30 days of publication of this notice. Later on no objection or Claim will not acceptable in any circumstances.

Sambit Kumar Acharya  
S/o Late Ananda Acharya  
R/o W.No.12, Mohanty Para,  
Bargarh, P.O/P.S./Tah./Dist.  
Bargarh

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA  
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES,  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,  
KALAHANDI IRRIGATION DIVISION, BHAWANIPATNA  
SEALED TENDER FOR AUCTION SALE OF STOCK, T&P,  
SURPLUS STOCK & SITE ACCOUNT MATERIALS  
AUCTION SALE NOTICE No-KLD-01/2020-21 // Dated 22.03.2021  
e-mail address: eekldbpt2008@hotmail.com

No.A-713:- Sealed tenders for auction sale on plain paper or letter pad are invited by the undersigned for disposal of the following Stock, T&P, Surplus Stock & Site account materials of Executive Engineer, Kalahandi Irrigation Division, Bhawanipatna (Odisha) now lying at different places of Kalahandi Irrigation Sub-Division, Bhawanipatna and Khariar Irrigation Sub-Division, Khariar office premises.

Sl. No.	Survey Report No.	Quantity to be disposed off	Type of materials	Total upset price	Bid security 5% of the upset price	Place of inspection	Remarks
1	01/2020-21	63	T&P	2617.00	131.00	Kalahandi Irrigation Sub Division	List of the materials can be concerned on sub-division concerned
2	02/2020-21	10	T&P	146.00	7.00	Kalahandi Irrigation Sub Division	
3	03/2020-21	08	T&P	252.00	13.00	Kalahandi Irrigation Sub Division	
4	04/2020-21	08	Surplus Stock	493.00	25.00	Kalahandi Irrigation Sub Division	
5	05/2020-21	24	Surplus Stock	537.00	27.00	Kalahandi Irrigation Sub Division	
6	06/2020-21	29	Surplus Stock	7750.00	388.00	Kalahandi Irrigation Sub Division	
7	07/2020-21	50	Surplus Stock	19099.00	995.00	Kalahandi Irrigation Sub Division	
8	08/2020-21	106	T&P	23760.00	1188.00	Kalahandi Irrigation Sub Division	
9	09/2020-21	43	Stock Store	6382.00	319.00	Kalahandi Irrigation Sub Division	
10	10/2020-21	45	Surplus	11648.00	582.00	Kalahandi Irrigation Sub Division	
11	11/2020-21	08	Site	7888.00	394.00	Kalahandi Irrigation Sub Division	
12	12/2020-21	81	Stock Store	16852.00	843.00	Kalahandi Irrigation Sub Division	
13	13/2020-21	02	T&P	16160.00	808.00	Khariar Irr Sub Division, Khariar	
14	14/2020-21	01	T&P	2400.00	120.00	Khariar Irr Sub Division, Khariar	
15	15/2020-21	02	Stock	34.00	2.00	Khariar Irr Sub Division, Khariar	
16	16/2020-21	27	Surplus	817.00	41.00	Khariar Irr Sub Division, Khariar	
17	17/2020-21	11	T&P	17068.00	853.00	Khariar Irr Sub Division, Khariar	
18	18/2020-21	27	Surplus	1285.00	64.00	Khariar Irr Sub Division, Khariar	
19	19/2020-21	01	T&P	8800.00	440.00	Khariar Irr Sub Division, Khariar	
20	20/2020-21	81	T&P	4812.00	241.00	Khariar Irr Sub Division, Khariar	

The tender form will be available for sale from 26.03.2021 to 09.04.2021 during office hours. Interested person / tenderers may see these materials on any working day. The tender form duly signed should be sealed and submitted to this office by registered / courier post only which will be accepted up to 09.04.2021 by 2.30 PM and will be opened on same day at 4.00 PM. The authority reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof. Other terms and conditions are applicable will be with the auction schedule.

Executive Engineer,  
Bhawanipatna Irrigation Division, Bhawanipatna


OIPR-32007/11/0002/2021



“

When mind is still, then truth gets her chance to be heard in the purity of the silence.”

SRI AUROBINDO



# Killer CPV

India is in the throes of a terrible viral epidemic. Much worse than the bird flu, much worse than the swine flu. It has 91% mortality and, while it is mainly dogs, it can spread to cats of all kinds as well and God knows which other animals. The killer is the deadly Canine Parvo Virus (CPV). Outbreaks have been reported from all over India. Thousands of pups have died. My own People For Animals shelters have several thousand cases admitted. Shelters from Mangalore to Siliguri have shut down and refused to admit normal accident cases as they are full of parvo-afflicted, dying, animals. Each shelter is a war zone with makeshift drip stands, or volunteers patiently holding IV fluids while they go slowly into small dying bodies. Government refuses to even acknowledge this viral epidemic. While they were quick to strangle and burn millions of birds during the bird flu epidemic, because they thought it would affect humans, they have completely ignored the Parvo Virus one – probably because they think it will not affect humans.

So, government refuses to give vaccines to poor people and to street animals, and government hospitals do not treat parvo cases because they say they do not have the budget for drips and antibiotics. 80% of all Indian vets are employed by the government and they sit idly in government clinics which open at 10 am and close at 2 pm – while lakhs of animals fall dead, untreated. If you ask the same vets to go and strangle chickens they will happily do so.

There are two prominent strains of the canine parvovirus (CPV-2a and CPV-2b) from the genus family of Parvoviridae. It spreads through infected faeces, vomit, blood, touch, surfaces, clothing etc. Shelters, kennels, clinics, public parks are prime locations where the virus lurks. Its favourite victim is the young pup, but unvaccinated dogs in general are vulnerable. Undetected or diagnosed at a later stage, it is almost always fatal within 48 - 72 hours.

There is a silent massacre going on, but government municipalities, health authorities, animal husbandry departments in every state refuse to respond with either short or long term measures. In one district only – Uttar Dinajpur – one parvo vaccination camp was held after the government dispensary received 342 cases in a week with 100% mortality, as there were no drip stands or IV fluids available! Across the country veterinary government clinics are unable to handle even this basic treatment, for lack of supplies, infrastructure, manpower and, sometimes, even basic facilities such as water supply and electricity.

Dissemination of mass public messages, to spread awareness about the disease, should have been undertaken. While we have any amount of information – and a lot of it is total rubbish – being spread about bird flu, the government is completely silent about this deadly virus – which may also prove to be zoonotic in time.

There is absolutely no government policy in any state for mandatory vaccination of all dogs for CPV. In contrast, there exists a mandate for vaccination of dogs against rabies under the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001 promulgated under The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. Protocols under the ABC Program make it mandatory to vaccinate sterilized dogs against rabies before releasing them. This is also the reason as to why the rabies vaccine for both human and animal consumption is subsidized by the government. The CPV vaccine is 14 times more costly than the anti rabies vaccine, but both the diseases are deadly. Inspite of the epidemic that is raging throughout India, CPV is a disease that has been omitted from Government budgets entirely.

But it has lethal ramifications on wildlife conservation. The mass die-off of lions, at Serengeti National Park in Tanzania in 1994, was attributed to CPV and its equally potent cousin, the Canine Distemper Virus (CDV). In 2018, Asiatic Lions at Gir National Park were afflicted by both CPV and CDV, leading to the loss of irreplaceable Protected Schedule I Animals, and shrinking their gene pool even more. Dwindling habitats and the blurring of boundaries, between urban areas and forest land, have brought wild animals in increasing proximity to domesticated and free ranging dog populations.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority has asked for a sterilization program for dogs around tiger reserves. It states the creation of 'immunization buffers' in buffer zones of the reserve, and encompasses vaccination against canine distemper along with rabies. Canine Parvo Virus is not included within its ambit. But even their original demand has not been complied with.

The vaccines are effective and immunoglobulin serum (given to CPV afflicted animals at the time of treatment) can help fight the virus. But vaccination interventions have their own set of challenges. Maintenance of cold chain supply and storage, especially during transportation, is always inadequate. The parvo virus mutates regularly, and vaccine makers often cheat in supplying old strains. So the vaccination is a mismatch between outbreak strain of CPV and the vaccine strain. Viral strains used in vaccines are not disclosed by manufacturers. The relevance of a comprehensive vaccination policy must be based on adequately addressing these challenges.

Efforts to vaccinate street and community dogs in India are largely dependent upon the goodwill of volunteers feeding animals or on non-profit animal welfare organizations. Vaccination drives against CPV, funded by the Government (Veterinary Department/ Animal Husbandry Department/ Municipal Administration) would pave the way for ensuring a healthy dog population.

A compelling case may be derived from the One Health Approach – a policy that recognises the interconnectedness between public health, animal health, and ecosystem health of our shared environment. The approach has been endorsed by the One Health Platform Initiative, represented by leading experts from Who Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (UNFAO), United States Centre For Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and World Organization for Animal Welfare (OIE).

The time has come when the world is going to lurch from one viral epidemic to another. It is time for the government to plan sensibly on how it is going to deal with each virus. In the meantime, can we please have some state dealing with this one ?

To join the animal welfare movement  
gandhim@nic.in, www.peopleforanimalsindia.org



Maneka Gandhi

There is absolutely no government policy in any state for mandatory vaccination of all dogs for CPV

Patrick Drury Byrne  
and Sylvain Broyer

THROUGH A COMBINATION OF RATE SETTING, FINANCING, AND WIDESPREAD QE, CENTRAL BANKS NOW PLAY A MORE PIVOTAL ROLE THAN IN THE PAST

## FOCUS ECONOMY

# CENTRAL BANKS' TAPER DILEMMA



Global debt was forecast to peak at 267% of GDP at the end of 2020 and is set to remain elevated as governments continue issuing debt to fund critical recovery measures. Central banks have been a cornerstone investor in many transactions, providing governments and (to a lesser degree) corporate firms with the certainty of low-cost financing

bility in 2020. They also indirectly fueled record corporate bond issuance and a 60% drop in investment-grade corporate bond spreads from their March highs.

This restoration of stability was hard won, requiring extensive quantitative easing (QE) and new or extended interventions, particularly in corporate credit markets. Through a combination of rate setting, financing, and widespread QE, central banks now play a more pivotal role than in the past.

But what is their long-term plan? Central banks could maintain QE, as the Fed has suggested and the European Central Bank has done in the past, but protracted QE can be difficult to unwind and could keep interest rates lower than they might otherwise be. Alternatively, they can seek to dial back QE, which would require a delicate balance and clear communication to avoid unnerving market participants still mindful of the 2013 "taper tantrum," a selloff triggered by signals from the Fed that it would reduce monthly asset purchases.

The task facing monetary policymakers is further complicated

by the continued need to support the economic recovery. Global debt was forecast to peak at 267% of GDP at the end of 2020 and is set to remain elevated as governments continue issuing debt to fund critical recovery measures. Central banks have been a cornerstone investor in many transactions, providing governments and (to a lesser degree) corporate firms with the certainty of low-cost financing.

Because central banks' sovereign-debt purchases are unlikely to change in the medium term, their holdings will increase further. In Europe, the stock of long-term government bonds outstanding has increased by about 25% since 2015 but the free float, or publicly tradable portion, has fallen, owing to the sharp increase in the ECB's bond holdings.

Although the ECB will not suddenly start to divest its substantial portfolio and send prices downward, concentrated bond ownership could negatively affect market structure and liquidity. This is already evident in the European covered bond market, where the ECB now holds about one-third

of all eligible bonds outstanding. A lower market free float could reduce the number of active investors, increase volatility, and reduce price discovery in future periods of stress. Consequently, a true picture of liquidity and financing conditions in certain markets will probably emerge only if and when central banks start to scale back their portfolios.

Global investors have benefited from central banks' stabilization of credit markets, and there have been fewer pandemic-related defaults to date than many participants initially feared. But low interest rates and sustained monetary stimulus have made it difficult for fixed-income investors to generate target returns, with approximately 90% of global bonds trading at a yield below 2% at the end of 2020. Recent yield-curve steepening has provided some respite, but central banks' support remains critical to the global economic recovery – and the longer it remains in place, the more it may imperil fixed-income returns.

Lower fixed-income returns have obvious consequences for pension funds and future retirees, while investors are also chasing higher yields by taking on new and longer-duration risks, or increased credit risks, which ultimately could destabilize the system that central banks worked so hard to bolster. Leveraged loan issuance by B-minus rated borrowers has risen to a record high, according to a February report by S&P Global Market Intelligence, while borrowing costs have fallen to their lowest point since the 2008 global financial crisis.

Central banks are clearly not responsible for today's investment decisions, but the longer their market support continues, the riskier the search for yield may become. Monetary policymakers and credit investors alike are facing an unenviable dilemma.

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## SPECTRUM SAVING CLIMATE

# Vaccine gap to tell upon climate



Justin Vaisse

THE PANDEMIC HAS ALREADY PUSHED BACK CLIMATE TALKS BY A YEAR, AND NOW THREATENS TO CREATE AN ADDITIONAL NORTH-SOUTH RIFT

Will negotiators from the Global South be barred from attending the United Nations' climate summit (COP26) in Glasgow in November because they are not vaccinated against COVID-19? This scenario will not arise, one hopes, because developing-country officials will almost certainly receive their shots in advance. But whether they will want to negotiate with rich economies that have been hoarding vaccines is less clear.

Welcome to 2021, where global climate negotiations could become collateral damage of vaccine nationalism. In normal times, the bone of contention between rich and poor countries was who should bear the brunt of efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. But the pandemic has already pushed back climate talks by a year, and now threatens to create an additional North-South rift.

In January, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, in his last month as chair of the African Union, lambasted developed countries for ordering vaccines amounting to "up to four times what their population needs." Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health

Organization, warned of a possible "catastrophic moral failure" owing to unequal vaccine distribution. And both the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Thabo Makgoba, and UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima have denounced the current global "vaccine apartheid."

Failure to heal divisions over vaccine availability for developing countries could poison the well of global coordination and imperil the COP26 climate negotiations. The Global South accepted the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" in addressing climate change 30 years ago. But it might view the North's vaccine selfishness as a sign of irresponsibility on the immediate vital issue of health – and refuse to engage in the necessary give-and-take in combating global warming.

The vaccine-induced erosion of collective responsibility, together with the economic impact of the pandemic, could result in countries announcing very disappointing "nationally determined contributions" to reduce CO2 emissions in the run-up to COP26. This risk is compounded by rich and poor countries' differing priorities. Whereas the developed North puts tackling

global warming first, health and development often take precedence in the Global South.

In this regard, US President Joe Biden has tasked Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen with promoting "debt relief initiatives that are aligned with and support the goals of the Paris Agreement" – in other words, green conditionality for debt reduction, restructuring, and cancellation. But developing economies that have suffered severely in the COVID-19 crisis and seen their development prospects stall might perceive such schemes as an extra burden imposed by the North.

What should be done? At their February 19 virtual meeting, G7 leaders agreed to provide an additional \$4 billion to shore up the international Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator and the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) facility which aims to ensure rapid, fair, and equitable provision of vaccines to people everywhere.

In order to prevent the North-South divide from widening further, leaders should announce the first part of that package before the April 22 international climate summit hosted by Biden. The second part could be timed to coin-

cide with the summit on financing African economies that French President Emmanuel Macron will convene in Paris May 18.

Rich countries therefore have an opportunity to provide developing economies with extra resources for both short-term vaccine procurement and long-term recovery. Financing could come from new allocations of special drawing rights (the International Monetary Fund's reserve asset) or the quick use of special instruments like vaccine bonds issued by the International Finance Facility for Immunization. Above all, developed countries must ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are widely available – and continuously adapted to new coronavirus variants – with no delay for the Global South.

Exceptional dangers call for exceptional measures. With vaccine tensions and the ongoing economic crisis threatening to undermine international efforts to save the planet, a global North-South solidarity package represents the best way forward.

Justin Vaisse is Founder and Director-General of the Paris Peace Forum

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## WORDSWORTH

### Misanthrope

A misanthrope dislikes the human race and avoids human society as far as possible. He – most people called misanthropes are male – isn't an easy person to get along with, and he would greatly prefer you didn't try. Misanthrope is from the classical Greek misanthropos. It shares with misogyny and a few other words a beginning from mis(ein), to hate. The second part is from anthropos, a human being, which we also have in words such as anthropology. From the same source, philanthropy is the opposite of misanthropy, literally a love of mankind that expresses itself in active efforts to help other people. History and fiction record many misanthropes. The best-known fictional one is Alceste, in Molière's comedy Le Misanthrope of 1666, which helped to popularise the word. The most famous real person was Timon, though strictly speaking we have to take the word of a couple of classical Greek writers that he actually existed. He is said to have lived in Athens in the fifth century BC and became known as Timon Misanthropos because he turned against people after he lost his fortune through being too generous to his friends and had to earn a living as an agricultural labourer. His story was taken up by William Shakespeare; around 1606, in collaboration with Thomas Middleton, he wrote what is probably his least popular play, Timon of Athens:

# 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)



OrissaPOST  
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### Vaccines for all

Sir, This is in reference to "All 45+ can get vaccine from April 1". Soon more number of people will get vaccinated against Covid 19. People aged 45 or above will start get vaccination from 1st April irrespective of comorbidities. As per the news, there will be no need for medical certificate showing comorbidity conditions of the patient. After the launch of the national vaccination programme, around 4.8 crore people have been vaccinated. On Monday, 32.53 lakh people including health workers, frontline workers followed by those above 60 years and people near 45 years with comorbidities were vaccinated. Union Minister Prakash Javadekar solicited all eligible citizens to get registered before having their doses.

Anshita Rochwani, UJJAIN

### Prolonged bank holiday

Sir, People who are planning to visit banks in the next week will either have to advance or postpone it as banks across the country will remain closed due to holidays and the end of the financial year from March 27 to April 4. According to the bank calendar released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the coming weeks of March and April will witness over seven days of holidays. From March 27-29, banks will remain closed due to the second Saturday and Holi. People with pending work related to the banks also need to note that there will be only two days when the banks will continue their services between March 27 and April 4 that is on March 30 and April 3. However, in Patna, banking services will remain closed even on March 30. On March 31, the banking services will remain shut as it will be the last day of the financial year (FY21). While in April, the banks will be shut to close their yearly accounts. April 2 will be a holiday on account of Good Friday while the services will be affected April 4, as it is a Sunday.

CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

### AEDs at public spaces

Sir, Emergency services in India take more time than they should and therefore, first-aid tools have a crucial role to play when it comes to saving lives. With a large population and densely crowded public spaces, there are strong indicators for growing incidences of sudden cardiac problems in the country. This makes installation of AEDs in public places important and they should be placed alongside fire-extinguishers or at similar locations. In large buildings, possibly every floor can have an AED, in markets, malls, and public places, they could be placed centrally and at entry and exits. The device may be installed at security guards' rooms and surveillance centres as well.

CKR Nathan, GHAZIABAD (UP)



# NIA slaps terror charges on Vaze

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, March 24:** In a major development in the investigation into the SUV case, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has slapped charges under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against arrested-suspended Mumbai Police 'encounter specialist' Sachin Vaze, officials said Wednesday.

**Billed as a prime accused, Assistant Police Inspector Vaze was arrested for his role in the case and sent to NIA custody till March 25**

An NIA official related to probe told IANS: "The agency has added the sections of the UA(P)A against Vaze, who was arrested March 13 in connection with Scorpio SUV with 20 gelatin sticks and a threat note, parked near Antilia, the home of industrialist Mukesh Ambani." Billed as a prime accused, Assistant Police Inspector (API) Vaze was arrested for his role in the case and sent to NIA custody till March 25. The NIA had taken over the SUV case probe March 3 after notification from the Central government.



**SUV PROBE**

The Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS), which is probing the businessman Mansukh Hiran's death aspect of the case, was planning to seek Vaze's custody on Thursday.

Earlier this week, the ATS had announced that it had cracked the

Hiran case with the arrest of two persons and was in the process of winding up the probe.

However, late last week, the MHA asked the NIA to also take over probe the mysterious death of Thane-based businessman Hiran, whose body was found from the

marshes in Thane Creek March 5.

At a hearing this afternoon, a Thane court has directed the Maharashtra ATS to hand over to NIA all the case papers pertaining to the Hiran death case, as per the Centre's directives.

## Court asks Maha ATS to stop Hiran death probe

**Mumbai:** A Thane court Wednesday directed the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) to stop its investigation into the death of businessman Mansukh Hiran and hand over case records to the NIA immediately.

Hiran was found dead in a creek in Thane March 5, days after he claimed that the Scorpio with ex-

plosives found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house in south Mumbai had been stolen from his possession. The Union home ministry handed over the probe into the Hiran case to the National Investigation Agency March 20. But the ATS continued its probe and claimed to have cracked the case two days ago.

The NIA then approached the

Thane chief judicial magistrate seeking a direction to the ATS to hand over the case, the central agency's lawyer said. The magistrate, after hearing submissions from both the agencies, directed that the ATS' investigating officer shall not proceed with the probe, and shall hand over all relevant documents and records to the NIA without any delay.

# Shah hits the streets in Kerala

*Speaking to reporters during the roadshow, he targetted Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan over the gold smuggling case, asking him to explain whether his former Principal Secretary M Sivasankar was involved in the scam*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kochi/Kanjirappally, March 24:** Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah Wednesday held a roadshow in nearby Tripunithura town as part of his election campaign for the NDA candidates contesting April 6 polls to the state assembly.

Speaking to reporters during the roadshow, Shah targetted Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan over the gold smuggling case, asking him to explain whether his former Principal Secretary M Sivasankar was involved in the scam.

Justifying the investigation by central agencies in the scam, he said if any scandal takes place in the country, it will be probed by the Indian agencies and not those from the UN.

Shah said the people of the state see BJP as an alternative for the opposition UDF and ruling LDF.

Senior BJP leader KS Radhakrishnan is the party's candidate in Tripunithura, considered as an 'A' class constituency by its leadership. The roadshow started at East fort of the town, capital of



erstwhile Kochi kingdom, culminated near the Poornathrayeesa temple.

Hundreds of sloganeering BJP workers and supporters holding party flags accompanied the open vehicle carrying Shah.

People in large numbers gathered on either side of the road cheered as the senior BJP leader greeted them from the top of decorated mini truck.

Elated by the response received from the public to the roadshow, Shah said many people have gathered in this small town to partici-

pate in the programme, which shows that the people of the state will lend their support to the saffron party to remove the alternating corrupt governments of the Congress-led UDF and the CPI(M)-led LDF.

After concluding the 30-minute programme commenced at 11.10 am, Shah left for Kanjirappally in Kottayam district for participating in a public meeting organised in Ponkunnam. Former Union Minister and Rajya Sabha MP KJ Alphonse is the party candidate in Kanjirappally constituency.

# Hallmark of Vijayan govt arrogance and corruption: Antony



AGENCIES

**Thiruvananthapuram, March 24:** Lashing out at the Left Front government in Kerala, senior Congress leader AK Antony Wednesday alleged the hallmark of the five-year rule under Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan was arrogance, ego and corruption and people of the state would not give another term for them.

Addressing a press meet here, the former Defence minister claimed the Left leaders and ministers were nowadays attempting to change their arrogant attitude and working style keeping an eye on the April 6 assembly polls.

The three-time former Congress Chief Minister AK Antony Wednesday said if Pinarayi Vijayan got a second term, it would be the end of Kerala. Antony said this to the media at the state party headquarters during his first visit to the capital in almost a year's time.

"Don't be misled and deceived by the now smooth talks of Vijayan. His ministers are now on an apology spree. This is just done to cross the bridge (Assembly polls) and if

by any chance he manages to cross it, then it would spell disaster for Kerala. Kerala will be finished if he gets a second term," said Antony. Kerala goes to the polls April 6 to elect 140 legislators, and Vijayan by now is reaching out to all with a smiling face and the tough demeanour that he often used to display is now no longer seen.

"The past five years of Vijayan can be best described as a mixture of arrogance, stubbornness and total corruption. I doubt if people will forget how Sabarimala temple issue was raked up and the hallowed tradition and culture was destroyed. Will the people forget the way the CPI-M goons brutally murdered three youths in North Kerala? Will the jobless, who are waiting for their dream government jobs, forget how the government jobs appointing authority: Public Service Commission has been made a non-entity. All these factors will be there in the minds of the electorate and we are all sure in the third week of May a new government of the Congress-led UDF would be sworn in," said Antony.

He came down heavily on the Vijayan government for taking the entire fishing community for a ride and had it not been for an agile Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala, the seas of Kerala would have been sold to a US based company.

"Can anyone forget how the office of Vijayan was misused and his own principal secretary is in jail in the gold smuggling case," added Antony.

# Holi festivities banned in Pune as Covid cases rise



AGENCIES

**Pune, March 24:** The district and civic authorities in Pune Wednesday announced that Holi celebrations in public and private places are banned amid a surge in the daily count of Covid-19 infections.

In an official order, district collector Rajesh Deshmukh said in light of the rise in cases of coronavirus, Holi celebrations in public spaces such as hotels, resorts and other public spots in the rural areas

are banned.

Housing societies are also not permitted to hold Holi celebrations on their premises March 28 and 29, the order stated.

The Pune Municipal Corporation has also banned celebrations in resorts, hotels, open spaces and housing societies within the city limits.

Strict action will be taken against violators of the order under relevant provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, it was stated.



A vendor, selling Alphonso mangoes, interacts with a customer at Crawford Market in Mumbai

## COVID IN MAHARASHTRA

# Rate of increase in cases tripled in over a month

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, March 24:** The rate of increase in coronavirus cases in Maharashtra between February 14 to March 23 was three times that recorded in the previous four months, data shows.

After a steady decline since October, the new cases surged noticeably since February 14. On March 20, Maharashtra reported over 30,000 new cases, the highest since the pandemic began.

Between February 14 and March 23, in the span of 37 days, 4,68,748 cases were added in the state, taking the caseload to 25,33,026. On average, 12,668 cases were added daily.

In preceding months, it had taken 119 days for the addition of over 4.68 lakh cases. Between October 18,



2020 and February 13, as many as 4,68,897 new cases were reported, at average daily rate of 3,940.

Maharashtra had gram panchayat elections in some 12,000 villages in January, followed by big political gatherings. Some health experts blamed the later surge in cases on these events.

"People continued flouting safety norms and during the same period the virus started mutating and became more infectious," a senior health official said.

"The new strain is more infec-

tious. We have to find out more about the strain and how it responds to the ongoing vaccination drive," he added.

The average daily fatality count, however, is lower since February 14 compared to the earlier period. The COVID-19 death toll increased by 9,414 between October 18 to February 13, at a daily average of 79.

It went up by 2,060 up to March 23, with daily average of 55, the data shows.

Addressing a press conference in Delhi, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said Wednesday the situation in Maharashtra and Punjab was of "grave concern".

"Top five districts" in Maharashtra where high number of cases are being reported are Pune, Nagpur, Mumbai, Thane and Nashik, he said.

# 'Jobless rate in Kerala higher than nat'l average'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 24:** The BJP Wednesday accused the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala of failing to fulfil the promises it had made to the people during the last assembly polls, and said that the state's unemployment rate was higher than the national average.

BJP spokesperson Gopal Krishan Agarwal said the people of Kerala are now yearning for a change after decades of rule of the LDF and the Congress-led United Democratic Front UDF.

The BJP has prepared a road map for overall development of the state, Agarwal added. Assembly



elections in Kerala will be held April 6.

Addressing a press conference

at the party headquarters here, Agarwal listed a number of promises made by the LDF in its mani-

**The state lacks infrastructure. In the last assembly elections, the LDF had promised on expanding IT park, but nothing has been done so far. Similarly for Kochi Metro, the Centre didn't get permission for three years**

GOPAL KRISHAN AGARWAL | SPOKESPERSON, BJP

festos before the last assembly elections in Kerala, and added that most of them have not been fulfilled.

"The state lacks infrastructure. In the last assembly elections, the

LDF had promised on expanding IT park, but nothing has been done so far. Similarly for Kochi Metro, the Centre didn't get permission for three years," he said.

Expressing concern over the slowdown in Kerala's economy, the BJP leader said the state is overdependent on remittances from the Gulf countries and other nations. And there are very few employment opportunities in the state itself.

"The rate of unemployment in Kerala is higher than the national average. Both the LDF and the UDF have done nothing to generate employment opportunities in Kerala," he said.





**We consider only those pan masala-chewing, tilak-sporting people sent from states like Uttar Pradesh to foment trouble in West Bengal before elections as outsider goons**  
MAMATA BANERJEE | WB CM

## SHOCKING REPORT

Despite having one of the best healthcare facilities and infrastructure, the Vijay Rupani-led government has disclosed before the state assembly that more than 18 newborns died everyday within hours of their birth in Gujarat in the past two years



## of the day quote

There are artificial medicines now, there is this latest medication invented in America. The more you age, if you take that injection, you get younger. I suggest that you take that injection. It is quite expensive. It has been invented in America it seems



ISIDORE FERNANDES | BJP MLA

The attack in UP on nuns from Kerala is a result of the vicious propaganda run by the Sangh Parivar to pitch one community against another and trample the minorities



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

During COVID times as passenger demands are not uniform over different sectors, some special trains on special charges have been introduced to meet the additional demands over different sectors as per already published fare for special trains on special charges as applicable



PIYUSH GOYAL | RAILWAY MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### T'gana defers UG/PG exams

**Hyderabad:** Authorities in Telangana have postponed all the undergraduate and postgraduate exams until further orders. The decision by the State Council of Higher Education came a day after the government ordered closure of educational institutions in view of the spike in Covid-19 cases. The state government Tuesday announced that all government and private educational institutions except medical colleges will remain closed till further orders. It said online/distance learning will continue as earlier.

### Sub-inspector shot dead

**Agra (UP):** A sub-inspector was shot dead by miscreants when a police team that had gone to Naharragaon village under Khajauli police circle in Uttar Pradesh to resolve a dispute was attacked. The sub-inspector, who has been identified as Prashant Yadav, was shot in the neck on Wednesday evening. Two police constables were with him when the incident took place. The assailants had fled from the scene.

### Five children crushed to death

**Jodhpur:** Five children, including two siblings, died while one was injured in a fatal road accident when a speeding SUV ran over them in Raniwara area of Jalore district in Rajasthan on Wednesday afternoon, police said. All the children were walking back to their homes from school.

### 3 get death sentence

**Lucknow:** A court in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr district on Wednesday sentenced three men to death in connection with the gang-rape and murder of a minor in January 2018, the state government said in a statement here. Additional District Judge (POCSO-2), Bulandshahr, Rajesh Parashar found the three guilty and sentenced them to death. The accused -- Zulfikar Abbasi, Dilshad Abbasi and Ijrael alias Malani (all residents of Sikandarabad area in Bulandshahr) -- had on January 2, 2018 abducted the girl while she was returning from tuition classes.

# LS passes Juvenile Justice Amendment Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 24:** Lok Sabha Wednesday gave its nod to a bill which seeks to strengthen the provisions relating to protection and adoption of children.

The amendment bill would address various issues flagged by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights that had looked into the working of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani said while moving it for consideration and passage.

She said the proposed law seeks to make the district magistrate a "synergising officer" for issues related to protection of children. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2021, which seeks to amend the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, proposes to increase the role of district magistrates and additional district magistrates with issues



concerning child care and adoption, she said. The minister said the panel had found various shortcomings in the implementation of the Act and the object of the proposed changes in the law is to ensure that action is taken without waiting "for a child to become a victim". Responding to the discus-

sion on the measure, Irani said there is a presumption that DMs are already overburdened and would not be able to focus on the issue of child protection. She said the DMs are already empowered to review issues related to child protection. After the bill becomes a law, their scope will go beyond review and once

they are legally ordained, they would make child rights and protection a priority area. Irani said the procedure of child adoption has a fixed timeline but often it takes longer than usual. Once the law is in place, things would get streamlined, she said.

The minister lamented that in some cases, rehabilitation of children is not a priority for childcare homes and indicated that children are kept in such institutions to get funds. Earlier, while moving the bill for consideration and passage, she said it was found that several childcare institutions in the country did not have basic facilities like beds, drinking water and toilets. A total of 90 per cent of the childcare institutions are run by NGOs, she added. The bill also seeks to categorise offences wherein the maximum sentence is more than seven years' imprisonment but no minimum sentence or a minimum sentence of less than seven years has been provided as "serious offences"

under the Juvenile Justice Act, and to remove difficulties in interpretation of the Act. "Serious offences" include offences for which the punishment under the Indian Penal Code or any other law for the time being is imprisonment between three and seven years. On the child welfare committee, the bill said no person shall be appointed as a member unless they have been actively involved in health, education or welfare activities pertaining to children for at least seven years or is a practicing professional with a degree in child psychology or psychiatry or law or social work or sociology or human development.

The bill further proposes that the appointment of any member of the committee shall be terminated by the state government after an inquiry if they fail to attend the proceedings of the committee consecutively for three months without any valid reason or if they fail to attend less than three-fourths of the sittings in a year.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, March 24:** Finance bills were on Wednesday passed amid din in the Karnataka Assembly before it was adjourned sine die as the sex scandal allegedly involving BJP leader and former Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi rocked the proceedings for the third consecutive day.



Opposition Congress members, who have been protesting from the well of the House since Monday afternoon, continued to disrupt the proceedings too with the Leader of Opposition Siddaramaiah demanding a court-monitored probe into the scandal, and to book Jarkiholi for rape.

They also demand that six ministers, who have moved the court for an injunction against the publication or broadcast of any unverified news about them, resign, saying they are morally unfit. Faced by continued disruption, the budget session of the Assembly that began March 4, was adjourned sine die five days ahead of the schedule of March 31.

According to sources, the adjournment came amid reports that the Congress had planned to hold a protest at night by spending it in the Assembly from today pressing for their demand.

Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, whose reply on the budget discussion was continuously disrupted by the protesting legislators, condemned the Congress' conduct by saying people were watching the developments and would teach it a lesson in the days to come.

As the House met for the day, Congress members trooped into the well of the House to continue with their protest by raising slogans against the government.

## Cleric refuses to solemnise weddings due to loud music

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Shamli (Uttar Pradesh), March 24:** A cleric refused to solemnise two weddings in Kairana after the wedding processions played loud music.

The incident happened on Sunday evening.

Maulana Qari Suffiyan, said he has asked the families to stop the music since it was time for 'azaa'n' but they did not comply.

"I saw the grooms dancing to the music on the roof of their vehicles. They were to marry two sisters at the same venue. When they did not stop, I informed the families that I would not solemnise the marriages," he told reporters.

The wedding procession was coming from Jagatpur in Delhi.

The families finally managed to find another cleric who agreed to solemnise the weddings. They wrapped up the ceremonies quickly and left.

Meanwhile, a Panchayat was held the following day to discuss



the issue and some of the village elders felt that the cleric had done wrong by refusing to solemnise the marriages.

However, a section of clerics said that loud music and dancing was against the tenets of Islam and people should learn to behave with restraint.

# CM Amarinder pleads for resolution to farmers' crisis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, March 24:** By delaying a resolution to the farmers' crisis, the BJP-led central government is allowing Pakistan to take advantage of the dissatisfaction emerging in Punjab, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said Wednesday.

He also termed the "growing economic and military collusion" between Pakistan and China New Delhi's "failure of diplomacy". Urging the Centre to repeal the three farm laws at least in the "interest of the nation's security", the chief minister asked, "Have you not thought of what Pakistan will do in this scenario?"

Warning that the neighbouring country will take advantage of the dissatisfaction among the youth in Punjab as they have done in the past, Singh stressed on the need to "learn from history". "Is Delhi sleeping," he asked, citing an increase in



arms smuggling into Punjab through drones since the farmers intensified their stir.

The Chief Minister, as per an official statement here, again urged the central government not to hold on to its "ego or prestige" and to withdraw the farm laws immediately. "This is not Hitler's Germany or Mao Zedong's China. The people's will has to be heard," he stressed, adding that those at the helm should understand that the agitation of the farmers is not a political issue but a matter of their survival. The

agitation is not limited to Punjab, Singh added. Pointing to his 52 years' experience in politics, the Punjab chief minister said he has seen build-up of terrorism and also the assassination of a chief minister of the state. The situation is worse now because of the economic and military collusion between Pakistan and China, which is "very ominous for India", he said. "While the Indian Army is equipped to handle any situation, the question is why the Indian government is allowing the country's two big enemies to get together," Singh asked.

"If there is a war, Pakistan and China will be in it together, and Punjab, which shares a 600-km-long border with Pakistan, will be at the battle front," he added. The Chief Minister also claimed that Pakistan army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa's offer of peace should not be trusted, and termed it Islamabad's double-faced policy.

# CCI orders probe on WhatsApp's new privacy policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 24:** Fair trade regulator CCI Wednesday directed its investigation arm to conduct a probe into WhatsApp's updated privacy policy and terms of service on prima facie finding that the firm has contravened competition law provisions through its "exploitative and exclusionary conduct" in the garb of the policy update.

A thorough and detailed investigation is required to ascertain the full extent, scope and impact of data sharing through involuntary consent of users, the regulator said.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) directed its investigation arm, the director general

(DG), to complete the investigation and submit a report within 60 days.

The order against WhatsApp LLC and parent Facebook Inc came after the Commission took suo moto cognisance of the matter on considering media reports and the potential impact of the policy and terms for WhatsApp users and the market. The fair trade regulator noted that WhatsApp has updated its privacy policy and terms of service for users. It also noted that users will have to mandatorily accept the new terms and policy in their entirety, including the terms with respect to sharing of their data across all the information categories with other Facebook companies.



"The Commission is of prima facie opinion that the 'take-it-or-leave-it' nature of privacy policy and terms of service of WhatsApp and the information sharing stipulations mentioned therein, merit a detailed investigation in view of

the market position and market power enjoyed by WhatsApp," it said.

As per WhatsApp's submissions, the 2021 update does not expand its ability to share data with Facebook and the update intends to provide

users with further transparency about how WhatsApp collects, uses and shares data. However, CCI said the veracity of such claims would also be examined during the investigation by the DG.

The Commission further said that users, as owners of their personalised data, are entitled to be informed about the extent, scope and precise purpose of sharing of such information by WhatsApp with other Facebook companies.

"However, it appears from the Privacy Policy as well as Terms of Service (including the FAQs published by WhatsApp), that many of the information categories described therein are too broad, vague and unintelligible," it said. Such opacity,

vagueness, open-endedness and incomplete disclosures hide the actual data cost that a user incurs for availing WhatsApp services, it added.

Besides, the regulator said it is also not clear from the policy whether the historical data of users would also be shared with Facebook companies and whether data would be shared in respect of those WhatsApp users who are not present on other apps of Facebook.

There appears to be no justifiable reason as to why users should not have any control or say over such cross-product processing of their data by way of voluntary consent, and not as a precondition for availing WhatsApp's services, it said.

## NATURE'S BOUNTY



Gardeners check flowers, a day before the opening of the Tulip Garden, in Srinagar

PTI PHOTO



## of the day quote

The Police Amendment Act is meant for Bihar Military Police (BMP) which is deployed at Bodhi temple in Bodh Gaya, Darbhanga airport and other important tourist and strategic places in Bihar. With this act, they have the power to arrest any person over suspicious activities

**NITISH KUMAR** | CHIEF MINISTER OF BIHAR

I want to know from Sharad Pawar that what is the reason for defending Anil Deshmukh for all the wrong reasons. First, it was said that the state Home Minister is under quarantine but he was addressing a press conference. Whom is he trying to fool

**RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD** | UNION MINISTER

As a neighbouring country, India desires cordial relations with the people of Pakistan. For this, an environment of trust, devoid of terror and hostility, is imperative

**MEHBOOBA MUFTI** | PDP PRESIDENT

## SHORT TAKES

### Raped & burnt victim dies in hosp

**Shahjahanpur (Uttar Pradesh):** A month after she was allegedly raped and set afire, a 21-year-old student of a degree college, run by former Union Minister Swami Chinmayanand, lost the battle for life in a Lucknow hospital. The victim was set on fire in Shahjahanpur district on February 22 and had sustained over 60 per cent burn injuries above the waist. In her 'dying declaration', the girl had named her friend's brother-in-law Manish and an unidentified person.

### Gunmen loot ₹2L from a bank

**Srinagar:** Unidentified gunmen looted ₹2 lakh Wednesday from a bank in J&K's Budgam district. Reports here said gunmen entered the Chandpora branch of the J&K Bank and decamped with not just the cash but also a 12 bore gun of the bank guard and the CCTV cameras at the branch. Investigations were underway.

### Huge fire in incense stick factory

**Vadodara:** A massive fire broke out in an incense sticks-making factory here in Gujarat Wednesday morning, but no casualty is reported, an official said. The blaze erupted at Shreeji Agarbatti unit located in Makarpura industrial area and spread rapidly due to chemicals stored in a godown on the top floor of the factory, he said. It took nearly four hours to bring the fire under control, the official said, adding that cooling operations are underway.

### Violence at BHU

**Varanasi:** Violence erupted in the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) premises as inmates of the Birla and Lal Bahadur Shastri hostels attacked one another with brickbats, following a clash over playing Holi on the campus. The incident took place late Tuesday and a heavy deployment of police force has been made on the campus. BHU chief proctor Prof Anand Chaudhary said that a large number of students have started leaving their hostel rooms in view of spread of Covid-19 in many hostels on campus and also in view of the festival of Holi which is March 29.

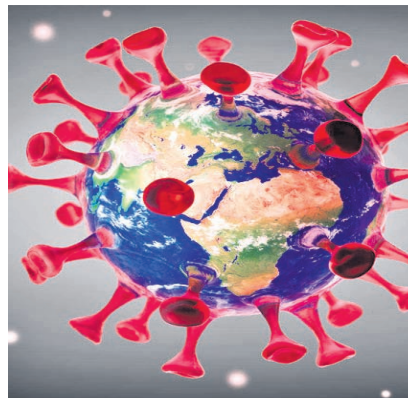
## 'Janata curfew' to vaccination: India's yr-long fight against COVID-19

## NEW DOUBLE MUTANT COVID-19 VARIANT FOUND IN INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 24:** A new "double mutant variant" of SARS-CoV-2 has been detected in India in addition to the several "variants of concern" that have already been found in at least 18 states, the Union Health Ministry said Wednesday. Some of these "variants of concern" had earlier been detected abroad. The ministry, however, said it could not be sufficiently established yet if these variants were behind the recent spike in COVID-19 cases in some states.

It said genome sequencing by Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG) has identified variants of concerns (VOCs) in several states and a new double mutant variant. Genomic sequencing and epidemiological studies are continuing to further analyse the situation.



The Union Health Ministry Wednesday expressed concern over the surge of coronavirus cases in Maharashtra and Punjab

The Ministry of Health had established on December 25 INSACOG which is a grouping of 10 national laboratories for carrying out genomic sequencing and analysis of circulating COVID-19 viruses, and correlating epidemiological trends with genomic variants. Genomic variants of various viruses are a natural phenomenon and are found in almost all countries, the ministry highlighted.

"Since INSACOG initiated its work, 771 variants of concerns (VOCs) have been detected in a total of 10,787 positive samples shared by states and UTs (union territories)."

"These include 736 samples positive for viruses of the UK (B.1.1.7) lineage. Also, 34 samples were found positive for viruses of the South African (B.1.351) lineage. One sam-

ple was found positive for viruses of the Brazilian (P.1) lineage. The samples with these VOCs have been identified in 18 states of the country," the ministry said. Genome sequencing and analysis has been carried out on samples from arriving international travellers, contacts of those positive for VOC and community samples from most of the states at INSACOG partner laboratories, it stated.

The analysis of samples from Maharashtra has revealed that compared to December 2020, there has been an increase in the fraction of samples with the E484Q and L452R mutations, the ministry said. Such mutations confer immune escape and increased infectivity. These mutations have been found in about 15-20 per cent of samples and do not match any previously catalogued VOCs, the ministry said.

"These have been categorized

as VOCs but require the same epidemiological and public health response of increased testing, comprehensive tracking of close contacts, prompt isolation of positive cases and contacts as well as treatment as per National Treatment Protocol by the states and UTs," the ministry stated. From Kerala, 2032 samples (from all 14 districts) have been sequenced. The N440K variant that is associated with immune escape has been found in 123 samples from 11 districts.

This variant was earlier found in 33 per cent of samples from Andhra Pradesh, and in 53 of 104 samples from Telangana. This variant has also been reported from 16 other countries, including the UK, Denmark, Singapore, Japan and Australia.

## All guns blazing, rifle women patrol India's borders

*Around 200 women have joined as 'rifle women' in Assam Rifles, a paramilitary establishment officered by the Indian Army, responsible for guarding the border with Myanmar and carrying counter-insurgency operations in the north east region*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Aizawl, March 24:** Breaking the shackles, women are joining the paramilitary and armed forces in huge numbers and are participating in counter-terrorism and counter-infiltration operations along the border with Pakistan and Myanmar.

The force is celebrating its 136th raising day.

Their presence has smoothened the functioning of the security forces in the sensitive locations as they have effectively dealt with the local women population.

The force was facing huge difficulty in the search of vehicles carrying women passengers at the borders areas. Now, this has been effectively being dealt by the Rifle Women. They look out for drugs, nar-



cotics, arms and ammunition.

Rifle Woman Jagriti, currently deployed in with 3 Assam Rifles in Mizoram, carries out patrolling along the Indo-Myanmar border where drugs and arms are being pushed in by insurgent groups sup-

ported by China.

Jagriti is from Aravalli district of Gujarat and has completed four years of service. "Earlier, I was deployed in Nagaland and Jammu and Kashmir and took part in counter-insurgency operations,"

As per WHO's Global Health Observatory, India succeeded in reducing premature NCD-related mortalities from 503 to 490 per 1 lakh population between 2015 and 2019  
**NARENDRA MODI** | PRIME MINISTER



exempted from the lockdown that include those involved in essential services like health and sanitary workers, police, food stores, vegetable vendors and pharmacies.

However, markets, malls, cinema halls, barbar shops, swimming polls were ordered to remain shut and there was complete ban on outdoor activities like public gatherings, visit to religious places and sports events.

## GOOD INITIATIVE

The Defence Ministry has decided to allow retired Short Service Commission (SSC) officers of the Indian Army to use their military ranks, as applicable



With stories and pictures of exhausted, hungry, thirsty people, who were desperate to reach homes even walking hundreds of kilometres, started appearing in media, government issued advisories to the state government to make arrangements for their food and shelter. The MHA even allowed the state governments to use the National Disaster Response Funds as emergency measures to help the migrant workers who were trying to travel from places like as far away Gujarat to Assam or Tamil Nadu to Uttar Pradesh. Many voluntary organisations also came out to help the migrant workers by providing them food and shelter on the way.

While some state governments arranged buses for the transport of their people, the MHA allowed the Railways to run special trains for the convenience of the migrants from their places of work to the home

states. Tragedy also struck in between as over 100 people lost their lives in road accidents while a few others, who were taking rest on the track after long walk, were mowed down by the trains. After remaining shut for six months, schools located outside containment zones were partially allowed to reopen to enable students studying in classes 9 to 12 to visit their institutions on a voluntary basis for taking guidance from their teachers in September.

The state governments and union territory administrations should strictly enforce the test-track-treat protocol in all parts of the country, ensure observance of COVID-19-appropriate behaviour by everyone and, scale up the vaccination drive to cover all the target groups, the guidelines said. All contacts have to be traced at the earliest, and similarly isolated and quarantined, it said.

## GODLY TOUCH



An artisan applying finishing touches to Holika idols at a workshop ahead of the Holi festival in Jabalpur

UNI PHOTO

## TRP SCAM

### Give 3-day notice to Arnab in case of his arrest: Bombay HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 24:** The Bombay High Court Wednesday directed the Mumbai Police to give the advance notice of three days to Republic TV's editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami if it wanted to arrest him in the Television Rating Point (TRP) scam case.

A bench of Justices SS Shinde and Manish Pitale also dismissed the submission of state counsel Deepak Thakre that Goswami had to face the investigation and could not claim any special status. The bench noted the police had been investigating the case for three months now and was yet to name Goswami as an accused in the case. Goswami is named as a suspect in the chargesheet, and therefore, the "sword" of impending arrest is left hanging over his head, it said. Goswami's counsel Ashok Mundargi had argued that the criminal law in the country did not provide for the police to name someone merely as a suspect and not name him or her as an accused in chargesheet. He had said the probe by the police against Goswami and other employees of ARG Outlier Media, which runs all Republic TV channels, was malafide.

## Police reforms recalled only when something erupts: SC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, March 24:** The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it is unfortunate that its verdict on police reforms has not been implemented so far, and when some major political situation explodes, then only is it recalled.

## PARAM BIR SINGH CASE

The observation was made during the hearing of a petition by Mumbai's former Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh seeking the CBI immediately conduct an unbiased, uninfluenced, impartial and fair investigation in the various corrupt malpractices allegedly carried out by Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh.

A bench comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and R. Subhash Reddy said: "No state has effected police reforms... Police reforms have not taken place despite Prakash Singh judgment. When something erupts, then it is recalled."

The top court's remark came following submissions from senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing Singh, citing allegations made Rashmi Shukla,

## Mumbai Police shifts out 86 Crime Branch cops

**MUMBAI:** Facing the biggest crisis of credibility in its 157-year old history, the Mumbai Police has shunted out 65 officers and 21 cops from the elite Crime Branch units to various locations, as a fallout of the allegations levelled by former Commissioner of Police Param Bir Singh, officials said. The developments late Tuesday came barely a week after Singh was transferred and Hemant Nagrale was appointed as the new Commissioner of Police as the Home Department grapples several upheavals in the past few weeks. Among those shunted out include some of the immediate juniors to the arrested-suspended Assistant Police Inspector Sachin Vaze of the Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU), mostly to side-postings. While API Prakash Hoval was moved to the Malabar Hill Police Station, API Riyazuddin Kazi was shunted to the low-profile Local Arms Division.

Commissioner Intelligence, State Intelligence Department, regarding corrupt malpractices in postings or transfers adopted by Deshmukh. Rohatgi also cited Singh's transfer in an arbitrary and illegal manner to the Home Guard Department without the completion of the minimum fixed tenure of two years, as Police Commissioner.

"Learned senior counsel also seeks to rely upon the judgment in Prakash Singh & Ors. v. Union of India & Ors. (2006) 8 SCC 1. In our view, this is only a mantra recited periodically, wherever the occasion so suits, and there has been no seriousness by all concerned to ever implement the directions en-

shrined in the judgment," the court said in its order.

The bench said these directions were based on the principle of insulating police machinery from political/executive interference to make it more efficient and to strengthen the rule of law. "It appears that none want to give up, inter alia, the control of police transfers or implement measures that would insulate the police machinery from performing its role without any uncalled-for interference," the top court said.

Justice Kaul said let us not forget the concerned parties were hunky-dory for a long period of time and then things fell apart.

spired to wear the uniform seeing other people living near her native place joining the Indian Armed Forces. "I am also deployed at mobile vehicle check posts and carry out checking of suspected local female members involved in contraband smuggling."

Similarly, Sophie Vanlalhmangaihi from Mizoram is deployed at forward locations in Jammu and Kashmir these days.

She was engaged in checking smuggling of narcotics, fake currency and weapons through the Sadhana Pass in Jammu and Kashmir. "I was told that I have to go to Kashmir along with other troops. I was happy to serve the country. We were carrying out checks along with other troops. Our focus was to check suspected women engaged into smuggling."



## of the day quote

Afghan women must be present in the room and at the table when the future of the country is decided on and any peace settlement must take into account the views of all Afghans, not just those of an elite few

DEBORAH LYONS | UN SPECIAL ENVOY FOR AFGHANISTAN

The mistrust between China and India is at an all-time high. In addition to the rupture of bilateral relations as a result of the LAC skirmish, India is deeply suspicious of Chinese activities as part of the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative

JOHN C AQUILINO | US ADMIRAL

People in our communities (Asian American) are hungry for representation that looks like them. I don't think people can see problems if they haven't lived it in the past

MICHELLE AU | US SENATOR

## SHORT TAKES

### Dubai's deputy ruler dead at 75

**Dubai:** Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, deputy ruler of Dubai and the finance minister of the United Arab Emirates, has died, his brother said Wednesday. He was 75. Sheikh Hamdan served as deputy leader of Dubai under his brother, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the hereditary ruler of the city-state who also serves as prime minister and vice president of the UAE.

### HK halts use of Pfizer vax

**Hong Kong:** Hong Kong suspended use of the Pfizer vaccine Wednesday after its Chinese distributor informed the city that one batch had defective bottle lids. The city's government said the suspension was immediate while the matter is investigated by distributor Fosun Pharma and BioNTech, the German company that created the vaccine with American pharmaceutical firm Pfizer.

### French navy seizes 6 tons of cocaine

**Paris:** The French military says it seized 6 tons of cocaine with an estimated value of up to 1 billion euros from a cargo ship travelling off the west coast of Africa. It was France's largest-ever drug seizure at sea, and involved coordination with international partners, according to a statement Tuesday from the French military. The statement said the cargo ship had travelled from South America.

### Philippine troops kill 16 militants

**Cotabato:** The Philippine military said Wednesday that its troops have killed at least 16 Muslim rebels aligned with the Islamic State group in a series of clashes over the last week that have displaced thousands of villagers in a southern province. The heaviest fighting began March 17 and lasted four days in Maguindanao province's Datu Saudi Ampatuan town, regional military spokesman Lt Col John Paul Baldomar said. He said troops killed 14 militants, from both the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and the Dawlah Islamiyah groups, and wounded another 25.



We will create safe and legal routes to enable people to come to the United Kingdom in a safe way so that they can also be resettled in the United Kingdom and that is a fundamental change we want to bring in

PRITI PATEL | UK HOME SECRETARY

## COSMIC MOUTHFUL

12 connoisseurs tasted a 5,000-euro bottle of Chateau Petrus Pomerol wine that spent a year in space and returned to Earth January



# Suez Canal blocked as massive vessel runs aground

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, March 24:** A cargo container ship that's among the largest in the world has turned sideways and blocked all traffic in Egypt's Suez Canal, officials said Wednesday, threatening to disrupt a global shipping system already strained by the coronavirus pandemic.

The MV Ever Given, a Panama-flagged container ship that carries trade between Asia and Europe, became grounded Tuesday in the narrow, man-made waterway di-

viding continental Africa from the Sinai Peninsula.

It wasn't immediately clear what caused the Ever Given to turn sideways in the canal. GAC, a global shipping and logistics company, described the Ever Given as suffering "a blackout while transiting in a northerly direction," without elaborating.

Evergreen Marine Corp., a major Taiwan-based shipping company that operates the ship, said in a statement provided to The Associated Press that the Ever Given



had been overcome by strong winds as it entered the Suez Canal from the Red Sea but none of its containers

had sunk.

An Egyptian official, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity

as he wasn't authorised to brief journalists, similarly blamed a strong wind in the area for the incident. Egyptian forecasters said high winds and a sandstorm plagued the area Tuesday, with winds gusting as much as 50 kmph.

"All crew are safe and accounted for," said Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement, which manages the Ever Given. "There have been no reports of injuries or pollution." The management company denied the ship ever lost power.

The Ever Given's bow was touch-

ing the canal's eastern wall, while its stern looked lodged against its western wall, according to satellite data from MarineTraffic.Com. Several tug boats surrounded the ship, likely attempting to push it the right way, the data showed.

An image posted to Instagram by a user on another waiting cargo ship appeared to show the Ever Given wedged across the canal as shown in the satellite data. A backhoe appeared to be digging into the sand bank under its bow in an effort to free it.

## MYANMAR PROTESTS

# Junta frees prisoners, silent strike ensues



REUTERS

**Yangon, March 24:** Myanmar's junta freed hundreds of demonstrators Wednesday arrested during its months-long crackdown on protests, while businesses in Yangon were shut and streets deserted in response to a call by anti-coup activists for a silent strike.

Several buses full of prisoners drove out of Yangon's Insein jail in the morning, said witnesses, who included lawyers for some inmates. There was no immediate word from authorities on how many prison-



ers were freed. A spokesman for the military did not answer calls.

"All the released are the ones arrested due to the protests, as well as night arrests or those who were out to buy something," said a member of a legal advisory group who said he saw around 15 buses leaving.

In the biggest city Yangon, a call by pro-democracy activists for a silent strike turned the streets eerily quiet.

"No going out, no shops, no working. All shut down. Just for one day," Nobel Aung, an illustrator and activist, told Reuters.

"The usual meat and vegetables vendors on the street didn't show up," said a resident of the city's

## The strongest storm comes after the silence, said one of the protest leaders in a Facebook post

Mayangone district. "No car noises, only birds."

A teacher in the Kyauktada district said the roads were deserted: "There aren't many people in the streets, only water delivery men."

Activists have called for a "big protest" Thursday.

"The strongest storm comes after the silence," Ei Thinzar Maung, one of the protest leaders, said in a post on Facebook.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) activist group says at least 2,000 people have been arrested in the military crackdown on the protests against the Feb 1 coup.

Among those freed Wednesday, was Thein Zaw, a journalist for The Associated Press who was arrested last month, AP reported, quoting him as saying the judge had dropped the charges because he was doing his job at the time of his arrest.

Wednesday's strike came a day after staff at a funeral service in Mandalay told Reuters that a seven-year-old girl had died of bullet wounds in the city - the youngest of about 275 people killed in the bloody crackdown, according to the AAPP.

Soldiers shot at her father but hit the girl who was sitting on his lap inside their home, her sister told the Myanmar Now media outlet. Two men were also killed in the district, it said.

The military had no immediate comment on the incident.

# EU sharpens COVID vax export rules

The move risks stoking post-Brexit tensions with London, which has warned EU against 'vaccine nationalism'

REUTERS

**Brussels, March 24:** The European Union refined its rules on the export of COVID-19 vaccines Wednesday, giving it a clearer right to block shipments to countries such as Britain with higher inoculation rates and to those not exporting their own vaccine doses.

The move risks stoking post-Brexit tensions with London, which has warned Brussels against "vaccine nationalism".

EU trade chief Dombrovskis told a news conference the export authorisation mechanism was not targeting any specific country.

The European Commission,

which oversees trade policy for the 27 EU members, set out a proposal expanding existing measures that seek to ensure planned exports by drugmakers do not threaten already reduced EU supply.

The granting of export licences will be based on reciprocity and "proportionality" - the epidemiological situation, vaccination rate and access to vaccines in the destination country.

EU officials say export restrictions could also kick in if companies do respect quarterly contracts but backload supplies at the end of the period.

Dombrovskis said the new rules did not create a detailed algorithm



on authorisations and requests would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The scheme will also widen the net to include 17 neighbouring countries, including Israel, Norway and Switzerland. Previously exempted, exports to these countries will also need authorisation.

# India, US agree to reinstate Homeland Security Dialogue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, March 24:** The Biden administration has announced the re-establishment of the Homeland Security Dialogue with India that was discontinued by the previous Trump dispensation.

This comes a day after Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas spoke with India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu Monday and ex-

pressed his desire to further strengthen the partnership between India and his department.

Mayorkas and Sandhu agreed to re-establish the US-India Homeland Security Dialogue and to discuss important issues such as cybersecurity, emerging technology and addressing violent extremism, according to a readout of the meeting issued Tuesday.

It is rare for the department to issue a readout of the secretary's

meeting with a foreign envoy.

During their discussion, they highlighted the positive engagement that has already taken place during the Biden Administration, including with the Quad, which addressed concrete commitments to cooperate on COVID-19, climate actions, and cybersecurity, said the readout. Mayorkas and Sandhu also recognised the important contributions of students and entrepreneurs that have made both countries stronger, it said.

## Netanyahu falls short of majority



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jerusalem, March 24:** The future of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the helm of Israeli politics looked uncertain Wednesday after nearly 90 per cent of votes counted, raising the possibility of a continued political impasse and even an unprecedented fifth election.

Netanyahu's Likud party has emerged as the single largest with 30 seats, but the right-wing bloc led by the 71-year-old leader still does not have the 61-seat majority needed to form a coalition in the 120-member Knesset (Israeli parliament).

The election turnout of 67.2 per cent was a drop of 4.3 per cent since last March's election when the turnout was 71.5 per cent, and the lowest of the four elections of the past two years.

The Arab communities particularly witnessed voter apathy, probably because of infighting, but it was also a shade lower among the Jews.

Some observers attributed this to election fatigue and also people choosing to engage in Passover cleaning at home in preparation for the festival over the weekend, instead of turning up to vote.

## THE EYE REMEMBERS



The London Eye is illuminated in yellow to signify a beacon of remembrance for the deceased as a national day of reflection is being organised in London to mark one year of lockdown, Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

# 'Antibodies may last from days to years, depending on infection severity'

THE RESEARCH NOTED THAT RECOVERED PATIENTS WITH LOW LEVELS OF NEUTRALISING ANTIBODIES MAY STILL BE PROTECTED FROM REINFECTION IF THEY HAVE ROBUST IMMUNITY IN THE FORM OF THE BODY'S T CELLS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Singapore, March 24:** Antibodies against the novel coronavirus wane at different rates, lasting for mere days in some individuals, while persisting in others for decades, according to a new study which says COVID-19 severity could be a deciding factor in having longer-lasting protection against reinfection.

The research, published in The Lancet Microbe journal, noted that recovered patients with low levels of neutralising antibodies may still be protected from reinfection if they have robust immunity in the form of the body's T cells.

In the study, scientists, including those from Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore, followed 164

COVID-19 patients for six to nine months, analysing their blood for neutralising antibodies against the SARS-CoV-2 virus, their T cells and immune system signalling molecules.

They then used this information to train a machine learning algorithm to predict the trajectories of people's neutralising antibodies over time.

Based on the analysis, the researchers categorised people into five groups depending on how long their antibodies lasted.

The first group, they said, included those who never developed detectable neutralising antibodies - also called the 'negative' group - and comprised 11.6 per cent of the patients in the study.

The 'rapid waning' group, which



included 26.8 per cent of the patients, had varying early levels of antibodies that waned quickly, the scientists said.

According to the researchers,

the 'slow waning' group, which included 29 per cent of the participants, tested mostly positive for antibodies at six months.

The 'persistent' group, com-

prising 31.7 per cent of the individuals, showed little change in their antibody levels up to 180 days and, they said, adding that the 'delayed response' group (1.8 per cent) showed a significant rise in neutralising antibodies during late convalescence.

"The key message from this study is that the longevity of functional neutralising antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 can vary greatly and it is important to monitor this at an individual level," said Professor Wang Linfa, from Duke-NUS' Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) Programme, a corresponding author of the study.

"This work may have implications for immunity longevity after vaccination, which will be part of our follow-up studies," Linfa added.

According to the study, patients, including those from the 'negative group', displayed sustained T-cell immunity six months after initial infection, indicating that individuals may still be protected if they have a robust T-cell immunity when the neutralising antibody level is low.

"Our study examines neutralising antibodies which are important in protection from COVID-19. We found that antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 wane in different people at different rates," said study corresponding author David Lye from the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID), Singapore.

Based on the results, the scientists emphasised the importance of public health and social measures in ongoing pandemic outbreak response.



## of the day quote

Our journey in India over the last 15 months is marked by growth, success and learning, which puts us that much closer to realising our open web dream

**SUNIL NAIR** | CEO, FIREWORK INDIA

In order to support the tourism industry, I propose to introduce the 'Tourism Trade Support Scheme' wherein all registered hotels and, travel and tour operators with Department of Tourism, will be provided with a interest subvention on working capital loans upto ₹25 lakhs

**PRAMOD SAWANT** | CHIEF MINISTER, GOA

We have successfully reached 30 million number series users globally and undoubtedly our users will find realme 8 series to be a fantastic one as well

**MADHAV SHETH** | VP, REALME

## SHORT TAKES

### SC refuses nod to NBCC resolution

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court Wednesday refused to approve the resolution plan of state-owned NBCC for the debt-ridden Jaypee Infratech Ltd (JIL) for its shortcoming in fulfilling the parameters of IBC and remitted it back to the Committee of Creditors (CoC) for its nod. The top court directed that the resolution shall be completed within a period of 45 days from the date of this judgment.

### Moody's assigns 'Ba2' rating

**New Delhi:** Moody's Investors Service Wednesday assigned 'Ba2' rating to India Toll Roads' USD secured notes. India Toll Roads (ITR) is held by a trust. "Moody's Investors Service has assigned a definitive Ba2 rating to the 3.5-year \$300 million senior secured notes issued by ITR," Moody's said in a statement. The outlook for the rating is stable, it said. The proceeds from the USD issuance are used principally to fund ITR's purchase of onshore senior secured NCDs issued by IRB Infrastructure Developers, the statement said.

### 'SC verdict not to impact banks'

**New Delhi:** Yes Securities, the broking and investment arm of Yes Bank, on Wednesday said the Supreme Court directive on loan moratorium due to pandemic has brought the much needed clarity and there will not be any financial impact on the banks as the compound interest waiver is to be reimbursed by the government. On its verdict on a batch of pleas seeking moratorium extension beyond August 31, 2020, the apex court Tuesday said it is a policy decision.

### NBFCs want govt to refund interest

**Mumbai:** Non-banking finance companies are not worried about "the minimal impact on their loan portfolios" following the apex court order asking lenders not to levy any penal costs on any loans that were not serviced during the moratorium, but they want the government to compensate them for their cost of fund. At the apex NBFC body FIDC meeting Wednesday, a day after the apex court ruling that asked the government and RBI to compensate all borrowers as against RBI's order that covered only standard loans under ₹2 crore, the industry players said.



Today, we are sending a clear message around the world that the UK will be a nation of clean energy as we build back better and greener from the pandemic

**KWASI KWARTENG** | BUSINESS AND ENERGY SECRETARY, UK

## TWITTER TO CRACK DOWN MISLEADING CONTENT

Ahead of assembly polls, Twitter has resolved to crack down on content that 'manipulates or interferes with elections' or contains 'misleading information', as the micro-blogging platform outlined a slew of election integrity measures



# 'Tesla vehicles can now be bought using bitcoin'

REUTERS

**New York, March 24:** Tesla Inc customers can now buy its electric vehicles with bitcoin, its boss, Elon Musk, said Wednesday, marking a significant step forward for the cryptocurrency's use in commerce. "You can now buy a Tesla with bitcoin," Musk said on Twitter, adding that the option would be available outside the United States later this year.

The electric-car maker said last month it bought \$1.5 billion worth of bitcoin and would soon accept it as a form of payment for cars, in a large stride toward mainstream acceptance that sent bitcoin soaring

to a record high of nearly \$62,000.

Bitcoin, the world's biggest digital currency, rose more than 4% after Musk's tweet and was last trading at \$56,429.

Musk said bitcoin paid to Tesla would not be converted into traditional currency, but he gave few other details on how the bitcoin payments would be processed. The company was using "internal & open source software", he said.

Most mainstream companies such as AT&T Inc and Microsoft Corp that allow customers to pay with bitcoin typically use specialist payment processors that convert the cryptocurrency into, say, dollars and send the sum to the com-



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pany. Like other cryptocurrencies, bitcoin is still little used for commerce in major economies, hampered by its volatility and relatively costly and slow processing times.

Musk, who regularly posts comments on Twitter about cryptocurrencies, last month criticised

conventional cash, saying when it "has negative real interest, only a fool wouldn't look elsewhere".

He had said that the difference with cash made it "adventurous enough" for the S&P 500 company to hold the cryptocurrency.

Following Tesla's investment in

# Fitch revises India's GDP growth to 12.8% for FY'22

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 24:** Fitch Ratings has revised India's GDP growth estimate to 12.8% for the fiscal year beginning April 1 from its previous estimate of 11%, saying its recovery from the depths of the lockdown-induced recession has been swifter than expected.

In its latest Global Economic Outlook (GEO), Fitch said revision is on the back of "a stronger carryover effect, a looser fiscal stance and better virus containment."

"India's second half of 2020 rebound also took GDP back above its pre-pandemic level and we have revised up our 2021-2022 forecast to 12.8% from 11%," it said. "Nevertheless, we expect the level of Indian GDP to remain well below our pre-pandemic forecast trajectory." India's GDP surpassed its pre-pandemic level in December quarter, growing 0.4% year-on-year, after contracting 7.3% in the previous quarter.

"India's recovery from the depths of the lockdown-induced recession in 2Q20 (calendar year) has been swifter than we expected," it said. "The rapid pace of expansion at the end of 2020 was powered by falling virus cases and the gradual rollback of restrictions across States and Union territories."

High-frequency indicators point to a strong start to 2021. The manufacturing PMI remained elevated in February, while the pick-up in mobility and a rise in the services PMI point to further gains in the



## BRIGHT DAYS AHEAD

In its latest Global Economic Outlook, Fitch said revision is on the back of a stronger carryover effect, a looser fiscal stance and better virus containment

services sector.

However, the recent flare up in new virus cases in some states has prompted us to expect milder growth in 2Q21. "Moreover, the global auto chip shortage could temporarily diminish Indian industrial production gains in 1H21 (first half of 2021)," it said.

The Union Budget for the fiscal year ending March 2022 (FY22) unveiled a fiscal stance more accommodative than expected.

Spending is set to be increased substantially, notably infrastructure, healthcare, and military outlays. Looser fiscal policy should support the short-term cyclical recovery, which along with stronger underlying growth momentum

prompted FY22 GDP growth forecast revision, Fitch said.

"The increase in inoculation to the most at-risk people should allow restrictions to be eased significantly towards end-2021 and in 2022," it said. "This should further support services sector activity and consumption."

The rating agency however said an impaired financial sector is likely to keep the provision of credit tight, limiting investment spending.

"We expect GDP growth to ease to 5.8 per cent in FY23, a downward revision of -0.5 percentage points since December," it said. "The forecast level of GDP remains substantially below our pre-pandemic trajectory."

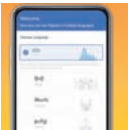
## BIZ BUZZ

### Maruti Suzuki offers new CV buying experience

**Bhubaneswar:** Maruti Suzuki's retail channel for Commercial vehicle buyers has become one of the fastest growing automobile networks with over 325 outlets in over 235 cities. Launched to redefine the buying experience of commercial segment customer, the retail channel captures specific needs of value-conscious customers. The commercial retail channel offers a diverse range of vehicles in two fuel options: gasoline and factory fitted S-CNG. Maruti Suzuki CVs bring the triple advantage of low acquisition cost, low running cost and low maintenance cost. The commercial retail network recently crossed the milestone of over 92,000 sales. Maruti Suzuki Commercial has an expanded portfolio of CVs predominately for customers involved in cargo/goods carrying businesses as well as passenger mobility.

### Flipkart, now available in Odia as well

**Bhubaneswar:** Flipkart, India's homegrown e-commerce marketplace, announced the introduction of Odia and Bengali language to support on its platform as part of its vision to make online commerce more inclusive and accessible for Indian language users. Flipkart offers an end-to-end Bengali and Odia experience to millions of customers by utilizing a judicious mix of translation and transliteration of over 5.4 million words on the platform to bring a natural language experience. This includes transliteration of terms such as EMI, delivery, filter, cart and OTP instead of simply translating them to enable better resonance with the native experience, helping users get acquainted with e-commerce terminologies. The introduction of Bengali and Odia is in line with Flipkart's aim of leveraging locally developed language solutions to help bring the next 200 million customers on board with e-commerce.



# Hurun India unveils country's Real Estate Rich List 2020

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** Hurun Report released the 4th edition of GROHE Hurun Real Estate Rich List 2020, a ranking of the most successful real estate entrepreneurs, inheritors in India, ranked by net worth proportionate to their ownership in their respective real estate businesses. The announcement was made during a webinar held, March 23.

Wealth calculations are as of December 31, 2020. The GROHE Hurun India Real Estate Rich List 2020 ranks 100 individuals from 71 companies and 15 cities.

Unveiling the report, Bobby Joseph, Leader, LIXIL, India & Subcon (GROHE, American Standard & INAX), said, "The India



Real Estate Rich List is more than a list of the wealthy in the space, it is an indicator of the overall sentiment and direction of the industry. At GROHE, we rely on this as an important climate indicator to tune our strategy & marketing efforts. Also, it is heartening to see that wealth creation in the sector continued to be robust and that there

are new entrants into the list, even in a pandemic year. The message coming out is definitely positive and uplifting."

Hurun India MD and Chief Researcher, Anas Rahman Junaid, said, "Covid-19 was the litmus test for Indian real estate sector. We sawtop developers in each city consolidating their market share.

## JSPL bags Resilient Supply Chain of the year Award



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** Renowned industrialist Naveen Jindal led India's leading infrastructure steel manufacturer Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL) has been awarded the most prestigious Resilient Supply Chain of the year -Manufacturing Award at the 6th India Logistics & Supply Chain Awards 2020 held in hotel orchid Mumbai.

JSPL shared their story at the 6th India Logistics & Supply Chain Awards 2020. The company's smart solutions & approach got recognized as 'The Resilient Supply Chain of the Year (Manufacturing)' for innovative initiatives like sourcing from local suppliers, reverse engineering, transport optimization, adherence to health and safety parameters, Competition, ensuring higher growth during the disruption.

JSPL also bagged the 'Transformational Team during Trying Times' award at the event. The Jury consisting of several industry veterans recognized JSPL for visionary leadership that ensured zero production loss, better cash velocity, high employee morale & higher profitability.

The event was organized March 19, 2021 in Mumbai by SCMP Knowledge, a division of the Institute of Supply Chain & Management Pvt. Ltd.

## Seed industry upset over govt disallowing trials of GM crops



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 24:** The seed industry Wednesday expressed disappointment over the Centre's 'regressive decision' to not allow scientific field trials of genetically modified crops, including Bt Brinjal, without considering the recommendations from states and Union Territories.

In his written reply to a query in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar had said, "It has been decided that proposals of field trials of GM crops, including Bt Brinjal, will not be taken for consideration in the GEAC without recommendation of the concerned state/UT government."

Expressing disappointment over the minister's response on transgenic crop trials, Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII) Executive Director Shivendra Bajaj said, "This further complicates the already cumbersome process of conducting field trials of transgenic crops in India."

As per the regulatory process, the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) reviews the data submitted along with the application to conduct field trials and is the only body by law to review the safety of the submitted data and grant final approval for field trials, he said.

# INTEL TO INVEST \$20BN FOR CHIP-MAKING FACTORIES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**San Francisco, March 24:** Chip maker Intel has announced to invest \$20 billion for two new manufacturing facilities in the US, along with plans to outsource more of its chip production to third-party foundries.

New Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger also unveiled a new branch of the company called Intel Foundry Services, to become a major provider of foundry capacity in the US and Europe to serve customers globally.

During the "Intel Unleashed: Engineering the Future" webcast,

Gelsinger shared his vision for "IDM 2.0," a major evolution of Intel's integrated device manufacturing (IDM) model.

"We are setting a course for a new era of innovation and product leadership at Intel," said Gelsinger.

"IDM 2.0 is an elegant strategy that only Intel can deliver - and it's a winning formula. We will use it to design the best products and manufacture them in the best way possible for every category we compete in," he said in a statement late Tuesday.

Gelsinger also re-affirmed the company's expectation to continue manufacturing the majority of its



products internally. The two new fabs (or factories)

will be built in Arizona, located at the company's Ocotillo campus.

IDM 2.0 is an elegant strategy that only Intel can deliver and it's a winning formula. We will use it to design the best products and manufacture them in the best way possible for every category we compete in

**PAT GELSINGER** | CEO, INTEL

These fabs will support the increasing requirements of Intel's current products and customers, as well as provide committed capacity for foundry customers.

The new fabs are expected to cre-

ate over 3,000 permanent high-wage jobs, over 3,000 construction jobs and approximately 15,000 local long-term jobs.

Gelsinger said he plans to announce the next phase of capacity expansions in the US, Europe and other global locations within the year.

The Intel CEO expects Intel's engagement with third-party foundries to grow and to include manufacturing for a range of modular tiles on advanced process technologies, including products at the core of Intel's computing offerings for both client and data centre segments beginning in 2023.



INDIA SEEK TO PLAY FEARLESS FOOTBALL AGAINST OMAN IN FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONTEST AFTER COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

# Blue Tigers ready to roar



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, March 24:** Talismanic captain Sunil Chhetri will not be there to inspire but a young Indian team will seek to play fearless football against a more fancied Oman in their first international match in more than a year here, Thursday.

Chhetri is not with the team for the two international friendlies here – the second one against the UAE Monday – as he is recovering from COVID-19.

But the side with an average age of just over 24 is raring to go in its first international match after November 2019 and many of them have done well in the recent Indian Super League for their respective franchises.

Head coach Igor Stimac said he has told the players to play free and fearless football as he was not expecting much from these two matches.

“We wanted to give them the experience of playing stronger teams, that will give them more confidence and fearlessness in future. I have told them there should not be any pressure on them,” Stimac said ahead of the match. “We are not obsessed with results.”

Talking about Oman, Stimac said, “I have seen their match against Jordan. They are a really physical side, well organised and really patient. We also have worked hard and we expect a good game tomorrow.”

Oman are coming into Thursday’s match after playing out a goal-less draw with Jordan Saturday. Before that, their last match was in December 2019 in the Gulf Cup where they lost to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The absence of Chhetri, the second highest international goal-getter among active players, will be felt greatly but India did pull off a

goal-less draw against Asian champions Qatar in Doha without the star striker in a 2022 World Cup qualifying round match in 2019.

“It’s a big miss, not having Chhetri bhai in the squad. But I’m sure the boys will take this as an opportunity and we have to play together as a team,” said No.1 goalkeeper and senior player Gurpreet Singh Sandhu who has led the side on many occasions.

Fortunately for Stimac, the 27-member squad is a mixture of players who have been with the team earlier and new faces like Akash Mishra, Liston Colaco, Ishan Pandita, Bipin Singh and Lalengmawia. The rookies would be especially eager to showcase their talent after making an impact in the ISL.

The likes of Amrinder Singh, Chinglensana Singh, Rowlin Borges and Lallianzuala Chhangte have been the top Indian performers for their ISL teams and they will be

propped up by experienced campaigners like Gurpreet, Sandesh Jhingan and Anirudh Thapa.

More than half of the 27 players are either new faces or have not played for India though they were in the earlier squads.

The All Indian Football Federation’s move to play international friendlies against strong teams like Oman and the UAE ahead of the joint 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup qualifying round matches in June have been hailed by Stimac and Chhetri.

It is expected to be a tough match against Oman who have beaten India in both the legs of the 2022 World Cup qualifiers in 2019.

Oman are ranked 81st in the FIFA chart while India are at 104th but Stimac’s men should take confidence from the fact that they were on equal terms with the Gulf side in the home leg match of the 2022 World Cup qualifiers in Guwahati.

In fact, India were running away with the match after Chhetri gave them the lead. Oman, however, struck two late goals to win the match. The 2017 Gulf Cup winners also won the second leg in Muscat 1-0.

History also favours Oman as they have won five times in the six matches played against India in the last decade. One match ended in a draw.

India are out of reckoning for a 2022 World Cup berth but are still in contention for qualification in the 2023 Asian Cup.

**THE SQUAD:** Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Amrinder Singh, Subhashish Roy Chowdhury, Dheeraj Singh, Ashutosh Mehta, Akash Mishra, Pritam Kotal, Sandesh Jhingan, Chinglensana Singh, Adil Khan, Mandar Rao Dessai, Mashoor Shereef, Rowlin Borges, Lalengmawia, Jeakson Singh, Raynier Fernandes, Anirudh Thapa, Bipin Singh, Yasir Mohammad, Suresh Singh, Halicharan Narzary, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Ashique Kuruniyan, Manvir Singh, Ishan Pandita, Hitesh Sharma & Liston Colaco.

# Chinky, Tomar shoot gold



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 24:** A dominant India swept the women’s 25m pistol event with Chinky Yadav winning gold after Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar’s historic top finish in the men’s 50m rifle 3 positions final of the ISSF World Cup here, Wednesday.

At 20, Tomar became the youngest Indian ever to win gold in this event when he shot 462.5 to claim the top prize ahead of Hungary’s World No.1 Istvan Peni (461.6) and Denmark’s Steffen Olsen (450.9).

After that, Yadav upstaged the experienced Rahi Sarnobat and the fancied Manu Bhaker to win gold in a 1-2-3 finish for India. The country’s overall tally swelled to 19 with 9 gold, five silver and as many bronze medals.

The 23-year-old Yadav prevailed over Sarnobat, 30, 4-3 in a shoot-off after their scores were tied at 32. Bhaker, aged only 19, shot 28 to settle for the bronze medal before being eliminated, leaving her two other compatriots to fight for the top prize at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range. All three shooters have already bagged their quotas for the Tokyo Olympics.

Yadav, who fetched the Olympic quota with a second-place finish at the 14th Asian Championships in Doha in 2019, led the pack after first 20 targets with a score of 14. She was followed by Bhaker at second with 13.

Then, the shooter from Bhopal led with a score of 21 and pulled

away from the rest, even as the seasoned Sarnobat clawed her way back into the finals after struggling in bottom half.

In the finals, Yadav shot all the five targets twice – in the first competition stage’s second series and the sixth series of the elimination stage – after beginning with two.

“I have trained in advance for tie shoots in final, I just had to do my best, not think who is in competition with me and which level they are in,” Yadav said.

Sarnobat, the most experienced of the three, had a five out of five in the third series of the first stage before shooting four targets thrice in the fourth, seventh and ninth series in elimination. The third ranked Bhaker had only one five out of five, in the fourth series.

Earlier this morning, Tomar started India’s day on a rousing note. “This will further boost my confidence ahead of the Tokyo Olympics,” he said after his maiden gold in a senior world cup.

The other Indians in the final, veteran Sanjeev Rajput and Niraj Kumar, finished sixth and eighth respectively. After an impressive start following which he led for a while, Tomar slipped in the standings but fought back strongly with a 10.4, 10.5 and 10.3 in the standing elimination stage.

Tomar is an Olympics quota-holder. He won the bronze medal in the 50 metre rifle 3 positions event at the 2019 Asian Shooting Championships to secure a quota

place for India at the Olympics.

This comes three days after Tomar combined with Deepak Kumar and Pankaj Kumar to win the silver medal in the men’s team air rifle event.

In the event, Rajput led the qualification with 1172, while Tomar and Kumar shot identical score of 1165. Istvan Peni, Aleks Leppa (Finland), Jan Lochbihler (Switzerland), Juho Kurki (Finland) and Olsen were the others to make the final, which was a 45-shot contest comprising the three series of kneeling, prone and standing.

Tomar, who failed to clear selection trials at the Madhya Pradesh Shooting Academy seven years ago, led the eight-man final at the end of the kneeling position with 155.0 and was in second place after prone with 310.5, behind Olsen (311.4) and ahead of Peni (309.9).

The gold medal is a far cry from the time when he was disqualified from his first Nationals in 2015, and then suspended for an entire year due to a technical reason. Training rigorously for a year, he returned in 2016 and in 2018, Tomar won three gold medals in the junior nationals in all three rifle disciplines.

Having made his way into the Indian junior team, Tomar shone in the events he participated in before securing the Olympic quota.

In the women’s 50m rifle 3 positions, Tejaswini Sawant was the best-placed Indian at 12th and behind her were Anjum Moudgil (16) and Sunidhi Chauhan (17).

# ‘UMPIRES’ CALL’ SET TO BE DISCUSSED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, March 24:** The contentious ‘Umpires’ Call’, which has been lambasted as confusing by India captain Virat Kohli, will be discussed by the Anil Kumble-led ICC Cricket Committee during a slew of meetings in cricket’s world governing body starting later this week.

The all powerful board meet is scheduled for March 30, the day under fire Chief Executive Manu Sawhney’s future will also come up for discussion.

Sawhney is currently on leave after an internal investigation allegedly found him to be ‘abrasive’ in his behaviour towards the employees of the organisation.

“There is ICC quarterly starting at the end of the week. Before that, the umpires call will come up for discussion. There is also Chief Executives Meet followed by the board meeting,” a senior official from one of the main board told this agency.

While Kohli, after a few debatable Umpires’ Calls, has said that the rule is ‘confusing’ and LBWs should be called decided solely on whether the ball is hitting the stumps, even if marginally.

However, the ICC has always maintained that ball hitting the stumps isn’t as linear as it seems. “The ball tracking technology as well as Hawk Eye is a Hawk and one needs to factor in the error percentage also.

“ICC Cricket committee always

takes decisions based on discussions with all stakeholders. When Cricket Committee’s recommendation was sent to the board for approval, the BCCI was also among members who agreed,” a source privy to developments said.

There is, however, some speculation about a frosty relationship between former head coach Kumble and skipper Kohli when they worked in the national team together.

The Kumble-led committee changing the points system of the World Test Championship, didn’t go down well with the Indian team which simply slipped from first to third position when percentage points system was introduced.

Coach Ravi Shastri and Kohli both were critical of the rule change even though the team performed well enough to make the World Test Championship final.

Sawhney future

The future of Sawhney, who is currently on indefinite leave, will be discussed by the board. While Sawhney has a few sympathisers within the board, majority of the influential cricket boards want his ouster.

That he had time and again threatened to take the World Cup away from India, wanted a bidding process to decide on hosting ICC tournaments, besides flagship events every year, have gone against him.

The ICC board will also take stock of preparations with regards to World T20 scheduled in India.

# Saina, Srikanth off to winning starts



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Paris, March 24:** London Olympics bronze medallist Saina Nehwal crushed Ireland’s Rachael Darragh in straight games in the women’s singles opening round to make a winning start to her campaign at the Orleans Masters here Wednesday.

The fourth seeded Indian, who is desperately seeking ranking points to make it to her fourth Olympics, took just 21 minutes to beat Rachael 21-9, 21-5 and set up a clash with France’s Marie Batomene here.

Saina had pulled out of the opening round of All England Open



Championships last week after suffering a thigh injury.

Top Indian male shuttler Kidambi Srikanth, seeded No.1, entered the third round with a 21-15, 21-10 win over compatriot Ajay Jayaram in 25 minutes. In the first round, Srikanth had received a bye, while Ajay had prevailed 19-21, 23-21, 21-16 over fellow Indian Alap Mishra.

Mixed doubles pair of Pranaav Jerry Chopra and N Sikki Reddy beat Austria’s Dominik Stipsits and Serena Au Yeong 21-7, 21-18. The Indian duo will meet Denmark’s Niclas Nohr and Amalie Magelund next.

Ira Sharma, who was promoted to the main draw from the women’s singles qualification, saw off France’s Leonice Huet 12-21, 21-14, 21-17 and will square off against Bulgaria’s Mariya Mitsova.

India’s Kiran George, Tuesday, had stunned Netherlands’ Mark Caljouw, who had reached the semi-finals of All England Championships last week, 13-21, 21-18, 22-20 in a thrilling opening round match.

Mithun Manjunath beat France’s Lucas Claerbout 21-14, 21-10 but Subhankar Dey lost 17-21, 13-21 to Denmark’s Ditlev Jaeger Holm in the opening round.

# BATSMAN LIKELY TO MISS IPL FIRST HALF TOO Injured Iyer out of England ODIs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Pune, March 24:** India batsman Shreyas Iyer was Wednesday ruled out of the ongoing ODI series against England and left in serious doubt for the first half of the IPL starting next month after dislocating his left shoulder in the opening game here.

The incident happened in the eighth over of the England innings when Shreyas dived on a drive hit by Jonny Bairstow off pacer Shardul Thakur.

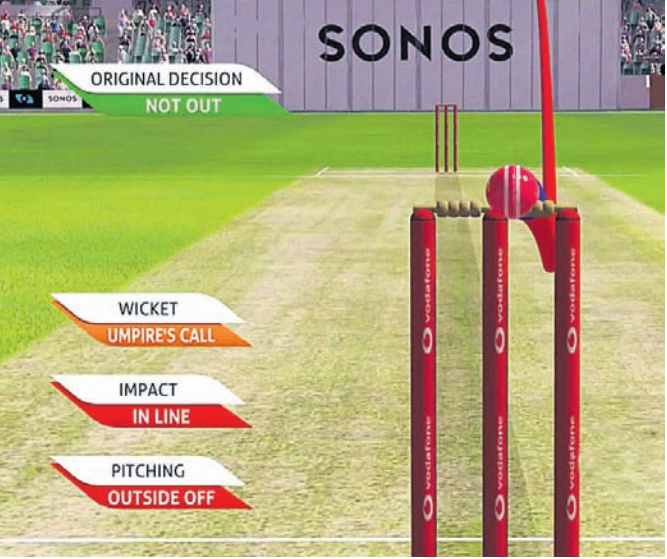
The 26-year-old looked in tremendous pain as he left the field clutching his shoulder. “It is unlikely he will play first part of IPL,” a BCCI

source told this agency.

The BCCI, Wednesday, had stated, “Shreyas Iyer subluxated (partially dislocated) his left shoulder in the 8th over while fielding. He has been taken for further scans.”

He captains Delhi Capitals in the IPL, which begins April 9. The Mumbaiaiker had perished for just 6 while batting. Shreyas had led Delhi Capitals to the final in the previous edition of the league. It could take as much as six weeks to recover from shoulder dislocation and much longer in case a surgery is required.

In his absence, the DC captaincy could be handed to either Rishabh Pant, Australian Steve Smith or senior off-spinner R Ashwin.



# SUMMIT AT TOUCHING DISTANCE

Naval Tata Hockey Academy, Odisha (NTHA) gracefully sealed a berth for the summit clash at the Hockey India Sub-Junior Women Academy National Championship at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday. The state side outplayed Roundglass Punjab Hockey Club Academy 8-0 in their semifinal contest.



PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

# CSK UNVEIL NEW JERSEY FOR 2021

**CHENNAI:** Three-time IPL champions Chennai Super Kings Wednesday unveiled a new-look jersey that features camouflage as a tribute to the country’s armed forces. Unveiled ahead of the 2021 IPL season, the jersey also has three stars atop the franchise’s logo to denote the three titles won in 2010, 2011 and 2018, besides the camouflage as a tribute to India’s armed forces. CSK also released a short video of skipper MS Dhoni, launching the new jersey on its twitter feed. The jersey has been redesigned for the first time since the inaugural edition in 2008, a CSK release said. The camouflage on the shoulders is bordered with gold bands that signify the high standards set by the team both in terms of consistency and fair play.