



PROS AND CONS

Actor Vaani Kapoor says big films attract more attention, but along with it comes a lot of scrutiny

LEISURE P2



BORDER DISENGAGEMENT

China says situation at eastern Ladakh has eased but gives no indication about pull out of troops along the LAC

INTERNATIONAL P10



INDIA SEEK SERIES WIN

India, with a 1-0 lead, look to seal the 3-game series when they face England in 2nd ODI at Pune

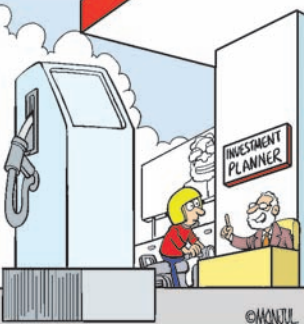
SPORTS P12

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Just imagine the kind of money you would make, saving 18 paise on every litre!

SHORT TAKES

Militants kill 2 CRPF troopers

Srinagar: Two CRPF personnel were killed and two others injured after car-borne terrorists opened fire on a vehicle of the paramilitary force at Lawaypora on this city's outskirts Thursday, officials said. According to sources, the car-borne terrorists blocked the semi-bullet proof vehicle of the CRPF and opened indiscriminate fire on it, killing two personnel and injuring two others. The injured have been rushed to the hospital. Additional forces have reached the spot, cordoned off the area and have launched a search operation to nab the attackers.

Officials shifted

New Delhi: The Election Commission (EC) has ordered the transfer of five officers, including an ADG of police, in West Bengal. It said they will not be given any poll-related assignment. The transferred officials are ADG West Zone, Sanjay Singh, DCP (South Kolkata) Sudhir Neelkantha, SP (Cooch Behar) K Kannan, SP (Diamond Harbour) Avijit Banerjee and Jhargram district election officer, Ayesha Rani.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIAION
SENSEX	48440.12 ↓ 740.19
NIFTY	14324.90 ↓ 224.50
DOLLAR	73.08 ↓ ₹0.06
EURO	85.52 ↓ ₹0.01
GOLD	₹44,701 ↓ ₹159
SILVER	₹64,900 ↓ ₹345

WEATHER

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‘BHARAT BANDH’ CALL GARNERS SUPPORT IN ODISHA

Farmers, political parties back strike

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubanewar, March 25: Different outfits in Odisha will support the 'Bharat Bandh' called Friday by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), a farmers' body comprising over 40 unions. They have demanded a complete repeal of the newly-enacted three farm laws and minimum support prices (MSP) for their produces. The bandh will be from 6.00am to 6.00pm.

"We will support the bandh across Odisha. We have planned demonstrations and chakka jam in some areas like Hanspal on National Highway 16 to register our protests against the three controversial laws," said Akshay Kumar, Convener of the Naba Kishore Kisan Sangthan (NNKS). He informed other farmers' outfits have also extended their support to the bandh.

Several political parties in Odisha also voiced their support for the farmers' protests. The bandh is being observed to mark the 400th day of farmers' protests at the Singhu, Tikri and



Ghazipur borders in Delhi. The Congress, CPIM, CPI and the Samajwadi Party have backed the agitation planned Friday. Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Niranjana Patnaik said that instructions have been sent to the districts to ensure success of the bandh.

Even though the ruling BJD in Odisha have not directly voiced their support for the bandh, it has taken special measures to counter it. The Odisha govern-

ment has issued special instructions to postpone exams besides asking the officials of the secretariat to reach office as quickly as possible. The overnment also warned that vehicular and railway movement may be affected. Late Thursday evening it announced that all educational institutions will remain closed.

Utkal University has postponed its plus-3 examinations owing to the bandh and shifted it to March 30.

SECURITY BEEFED UP TO AVOID VIOLENCE

BHUBANESWAR: The SPs of all districts in Odisha have been asked to remain alert and make elaborate security arrangements to avoid any untoward incident Friday during 'Bharat Bandh'. ADGP (Law and Order) YK Jethwa said, "We have asked the SPs and DCPs to remain alert and deploy adequate forces at sensitive places. We hope the dawn to dusk protests will go off without any incidence of violence." Umashankar Dash, DCP, Bhubaneswar informed that 20 platoons of force will be deployed in the state capital.

Senior farmer leader Balbir Singh Rajewal said in New Delhi that road and rail transport will be blocked, claiming that markets will also remain closed. "Farmers will block rail tracks in various places. Markets and transport services will be closed during the bandh. However, we will not use force to make the 'Bharat Bandh' a success," Rajewal informed.

MORE ON P4

2ND TRANCHE OF AUCTIONS

Centre to sell 14 Odisha coal blocks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 25: A total of 67 coal blocks including 14 in Odisha were put up for sale Thursday by the Centre. The coal blocks in Odisha that have been put up for sale are: Machhakata, Mahanadi, Nuagaon Telisahi, Ramchandi Promotion Block, Alaknanda, Bartap, Burapahar, dip extension of Belpahar, dip side of Chatabar, Kardabahal-Brahmanbil, Kosal West, Phuljhari East and West, Saradhapur North and Tentuloi.

"The coal mines on offer are a mix of mines with small and large reserves and spread over the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh,

Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh," the Coal Ministry said in a statement.

Termining this as a step towards 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', the ministry said this is the highest number of mines on offer in a particular tranche of auction after commencement of the auction regime since 2014.

"We are making coal the driver of economic activities in India. There are huge opportunities that the Indian coal sector is offering. Therefore, I invite investors to come and be a part of vastly untapped coal reserves in India. Grow your businesses and take India along on the growth course," Union Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi said while launching the auction.

Petition in SC opposes 'sale' of Lord's properties

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 25: A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directives to the Odisha government and Shree Jagannath Temple Administration to stop 'settling and selling of' any of the properties of Lord Jagannath'. Advocate Shashank Shekhar Jha has filed the plea in the apex court on behalf of 'Jan Swabhiman Welfare Society'.

The petitioner in the plea has requested the Supreme Court to dissolve the temple administration and constitute an interim judicial committee that would oversee creation of administrative mechanism which will decide on behalf of Lord Jagannath. The petitioner has also sought direction to the respondents to ensure that any temporary or permanent settlement on the properties of Shree Jagannath comprise only of people who adhere to the religion which worships Jagannath Mahaprabhu.

"Pass directions to constitute a judicial commission headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court and monitored by the SC to investigate the whole issue related to properties of Shree Jagannath," the petition reads.

Law Minister Pratap Jena had



said March 16 in the Assembly that the Odisha government has initiated a process to 'sell' 35,272 acre of land belonging to Lord Jagannath, in Odisha and six other states.

Giving a written reply to a question by BJP lawmaker Mohan Charan Majhi, Jena had said as per the recommendations of a committee formed under the chairmanship of then Governor BD Sharma, the government is taking necessary steps to 'sell' 35,272.235 acre of land properties of the temple.

Jena said Lord Jagannath owns 60,426.943 acre spread over 24 of the 30 districts of Odisha. Out of which, the temple administration could prepare final Record of Rights (RoR) over 34,876.983 acre. "In accordance with the recommendation of the commission, steps are being taken to sell out the land as per state government's approved Uniform Policy (Saman Niti)," the minister had said.

Petrol, diesel prices slashed for second day in succession

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 25: Petrol and diesel prices were Thursday cut for the second straight day as international oil prices cooled on prospects of speedy recovery in consumption getting clouded by second wave of COVID-19 cases. Petrol price was cut by 21 paise per litre and diesel by 20 paise, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. Petrol now costs ₹90.78 per litre in Delhi and while for diesel it is ₹81.10. Rates have been reduced across India and vary from state to state depending on the local incidence of taxation (VAT).

FUEL PRICES IN CITY

PETROL ₹91.49 (-0.21)
DIESEL ₹88.37 (-0.22)

Prices were reduced by 18 paise a litre on petrol and 17 paise on diesel in the first reduction in six months Wednesday. Prices had gone up by a record ₹21.58 per litre on petrol since the government raised excise duty in March last year. Diesel prices had increased by ₹19.18 a litre.

No decision on closure of schools, colleges: Minister

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 25: The Odisha government is yet to take a decision regarding the closure of educational institutions in the state, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash said Thursday. The minister was asked after students of various schools tested positive for COVID-19 Wednesday. The minister said that not a single student from state-run institutions and hostels have reported positive cases.

"The concerned officials have been instructed to ensure Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by the Odisha government to contain the COVID-19 outbreak," Dash informed. He added that the administration is keeping a close watch on private as well as government schools.

With a number of students from various educational institutions both in the state capital and Cuttack testing positive for COVID-19, there was an apprehension that they may be closed down again.

In a separate development Ravenshaw University authorities postponed the Under Graduate (UG)



Students of Ravenshaw University leaving the campus after new virus cases were reported Thursday



Swab sample of a KV-1 student being collected by a BMC official

Highest spike in 45 days

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha registered 214 new COVID-19 cases Thursday, the highest spike in the state since January 15, a health department official said. With the new infections, the COVID-19 caseload in the state mounted to 3,39,460. Khurda district (33) reported the highest number of cases followed by Sundargarh (27), Cuttack and Bolangir (20 each). Odisha's death toll remained unchanged at 1,919 as no fresh fatality has been reported since March 22.

and Post-Graduate (PG) semester examinations which were scheduled for Thursday after two members of the faculty and another student tested positive for the virus. It took the total number of infected persons in the university to five. A large number of hostel inmates were seen leaving the institution throughout the day. Meanwhile officials of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) visited Thursday the hostel of the private school to collect the swab samples of the boarders of the hostel in which the three infected students were staying.

MORE ON P4

Crimes against women grew during lockdown

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 25: The number of complaints of domestic violence received by the National Commission for Women (NCW) rose sharply from 2,960 in 2019 to 5,297 in 2020 during lockdown due to COVID-19 and the trend continues this year too.

The NCW received a total of 19,730 complaints of crimes against women in 2019 as compared to 23,722 in 2020, according to official data.

A year after the lockdown, the NCW continues to receive over 2,000 complaints every month of crimes against women with nearly one-fourth of them related to domestic violence, it stated. According to the NCW data, 1,463 complaints of domestic violence against women were received from January 2021 to March 25, 2021.

The nationwide lockdown was imposed March 25, last year. However, it also trapped many domestic



violence victims with their abusers.

Soon after the lockdown was imposed, the NCW reported a surge of complaints related to domestic violence. It started a dedicated WhatsApp number for reporting of just domestic violence complaints.

The number of complaints of do-

mestic violence went on increasing through the months and in July, a record number of 660 such complaints were received.

Since June, the NCW has been receiving over 2,000 complaints of crimes against women every month out of which nearly a quarter are of

25,886
COMPLAINTS OF CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN RECEIVED FROM APRIL, 2020 TILL DATE

SINCE JUNE 2020, NCW HAS RECEIVED MORE THAN 2,000 COMPLAINTS OF CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN EVERY MONTH

domestic violence, the data stated. According to the NCW data, 25,886 complaints of crime against women have been received from April, 2020 till now which includes 5,865 allegations of domestic violence. Also, the NCW received the highest number of complaints of crimes against women in six years in 2020 at 23,722 with nearly one-fourth of them victims of domestic violence.

NCW chairperson Rekha Sharma said economic insecurity, increased stress levels, anxiety, financial worry, and lack of other such emotional support of parents/family's side may have resulted in domestic violence in many instances in 2020.

Women rights activist Yogita Bhayana, who heads the People Against Rape in India (PARI), said the high rate might also be because of high awareness among women to talk about it and report it.

"There has been an increase because there is also a rise in awareness. Women are getting more proactive reporting it and talking about it. Earlier they used to suppress their grievances and the government is also spreading awareness," Bhayana said.

"Because of social media, the reporting of domestic violence has increased. Women have become more vocal and they have less tolerance, which is very good," Bhayana noted.

FRUIT 'N' NUT FANTASY



₹30*
125 mL

Amul
ICE CREAM

100% MILK
0% VEGETABLE OIL

*MRP (incl. of all taxes). Conditions Apply.

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES You may want to meet up with friends you haven't met in a long time, and the stars indicate that you will have great fun. Your enthusiasm will add a glow to whatever you do. Your sincerity in approach is what makes it special, says Ganesha.

TAURUS You will focus on nurturing the positive aspects of your life today, says Ganesha. You might exhaust yourself mentally trying to set things straight. It would be better to brainstorm with someone close to you or approach people whom you have differences with.

GEMINI You will let your personal likes and dislikes cloud your judgement today. Don't let that happen, or you may lose a worthy friend. You are likely to have a chance meeting with your soul mate or maybe even your ex-sweetheart. A romantic evening is on the anvil.

CANCER Today may not be a productive day for you. Though there may not be any major loss, you may feel a little lost and would like to be left alone. If you have kids, you may suffer from the empty nest syndrome with your kids not at home.

LEO You may wear the trendiest suit, drive the swankiest car and dine at the costliest restaurant, but if luck is not on your side, you can forget becoming a business tycoon. Fortunately, that is not the case with you today. With a favourable alignment of the cosmos, you are set for a day where your business proposals will be the hardest thing to overlook.

VIRGO Family matters. And matters of family matter more. Your negotiation skills are supreme and you shall bring harmonious ends to disputes today. Life has taught you to be balanced and level-headed, and you strongly believe that there is progression in opposition.

LIBRA Today promises to be a joy ride for your hidden gourmand side. Relish what you eat, and thank God for the good luck. Career wise, however, you may find yourself standing at a crossroads. But, the good part about that is there shall be many paths to choose from.

SCORPIO In all probability, you are likely to face another threat on your reputation. Be careful and modest, shun your ego, says Ganesha. Keep others interest before yours and only then can you achieve solace. Be a vegan, a pure soul who cares for others. Lead a simple life to avoid more difficulties.

SAGITTARIUS Providence smiles upon you today, predicts Ganesha. Catching a film with your beloved today is a very good idea. Chances are you may have a nice outing along with your friends or family. In either case, the load in your wallet is likely to lessen, steadily if not dramatically.

CAPRICORN Not many can match you when it comes to living a healthy lifestyle, and as Ganesha says, health won't be an issue today either. On the work front, you are likely to complete pending projects successfully and your boss, who may be furious because of the delay caused, will reluctantly admit that you did justice to the work and that it was worth the wait.

AQUARIUS It's family time, and your near and dear will be mighty pleased. You will pamper and fuss over them, and will even pull funny faces to make them smile. Your love and affection will undoubtedly pay off, and come back to you in more ways than one.

PISCES You have been neglecting your health of late, a fact which is hammered home by your ill-fitting trousers today! So, while you ignored the adage of prevention being better than cure, you could still make a stitch in time to save nine! Head for the gym, and watch those calories, says Ganesha.



DEPP LOSES BATTLE TO CHALLENGE 'WIFE BEATER' LIBEL RULING

Hollywood star Johnny Depp has lost the bid to overturn a British High Court ruling which had dismissed his libel claims against a British tabloid accusing the *Pirates of the Caribbean* star of being a 'wife beater' over charges of assaulting his (then) wife, actress Amber Heard.

CHRISSY TEIGEN QUILTS TWITTER

Model-actress Chrissy Teigen has quit Twitter. In a series of tweets, the 35-year-old, announced that she is leaving the micro-blogging platform after being on it for a decade. Teigen says that she is not that 'strong clap back girl'.



'Big films get you eyeballs but with it comes scrutiny'

Mumbai: Actress Vaani Kapoor credits her big films such as *War*, *Bell Bottom*, *Shamshera*, and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* for getting the eyeballs, though she says along with it comes scrutiny.

"When you do big films, while you are bound to get more eyeballs along with it comes a lot of scrutiny. I have always been clear in my head that I want to be part of films that allow me to showcase my skills as an actor," said Vaani. She added: "My next films -- *Bell Bottom*, *Shamshera*, and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* -- are films that will hopefully entertain all of India and I have given it my all."

In *Bell Bottom*, Vaani stars with Akshay Kumar, in *Shamshera* she is opposite Ranbir Kapoor, and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* will see her opposite Ayushmann Khurrana. IANS



Kapil to seek new talents for his show

Mumbai: Actor-comedian Kapil Sharma's comedy chat show *The Kapil Sharma Show*, which went off air, is all set to come back with a new season.

As the host of the show, Kapil says that he plans to add new people to the creative team. The show already stars Krushna Abhishek, Kiku Sharda, Bharti Singh, Sumona Chakravarti, Chandan Prabhakar and Archana Puran Singh. More actors and writers are expected to feature in the upcoming season.

Kapil said: "I am excited and happy to welcome new talent - actors and writers on *The Kapil Sharma Show*. Looking forward to meeting like-minded and talented individuals."

The show will be co-produced by Salman Khan Television (SKTV) and Banjay Asia.

Nadeem Koreishi, CEO, SKTV said: "We are trying every day to give the audience something new. This opportunity here for additional cast and team members has the same objective." IANS



Katrina shares her fitness mantra

Mumbai: Actress Katrina Kaif shared her recipe for being fit, on social media. She shared a stunning picture of herself where she spells out what she does in the day to be in shape.

The *Dhoom 3* actress posted the picture on Instagram Thursday. She can be seen dressed in athleisure. The actress has her hair in a braid and has sports gloves on.

"Eat, sleep, train, repeat," she captioned the image, which currently has

1.23,000 likes on the photo-sharing website. Recently, Katrina announced on social media that she has started working on a new film. However, she did not give out any details of the upcoming project.

Fans spotted the actress with superstar Salman Khan a few days back and rumour mills were abuzz that they have started shooting for *Tiger 3*.

Katrina's next release is *Sooryavanshi*, opposite actor Akshay Kumar. The film directed by Rohit Shetty will hit the screens April 30. IANS



Irrfan honoured at PGA Awards

In Hollywood, Irrfan featured in blockbusters such as 'Inferno', 'A Mighty Heart', 'Life of Pi', 'Amazing Spider-Man' and 'Jurassic World'

Los Angeles: The 2021 edition of the Producer's Guild of America (PGA) Awards honoured the late Indian star Irrfan Khan during its In Memoriam segment but got his name wrong.

The awards, considered as an Oscar bellwether, were held virtually Wednesday.

Khan was among the 21 cine personalities who were remembered during the ceremony's In Memoriam segment.

However, the pre-taped production of the awards committed a gaffe with the actor's name as it read 'Irrif Kahn' instead of Irrfan Khan, reported Variety.

Another typo was spotted when the name of Minari star Steven Yeun, who was one of the presenters at the event, was misspelled as 'Steven Yuen'.

Khan, who straddled both Indian and international cinema with equal elan, died in April 2020 at the

age of 54 following a two year-long battle with a rare form of cancer.

In Hollywood, he featured in blockbusters such as *Inferno*, *A Mighty Heart*, *Life of Pi*, *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Jurassic World*.

The In Memoriam segment of PGA Awards also paid tributes to Hollywood great Kirk Douglas, who died at the age of 103 in February 2020, and *Black Panther* star Chadwick Boseman, who passed away in August at 43 after a private four-year-long battle with cancer.

Other prominent names in the segment included Harry Brink, Sue Bruce-Smith, Allan Burns, Kevin Burns, Stuart Cornfeld, Charles Gordon, Buck Henry, Thomas L. Miller, Tom Pollock, Rebecca Ramsey, Carl Reiner, Gene Reynolds, Pamela Ross, Ronald Schwary, Lynn Shelton, Fred Silverman and Jamie Tarses.

On the other hand, Chloe Zhao's

Nomadland picked up the Darryl F Zanuck Award for Outstanding Producer of Theatrical Motion Pictures at the 32nd annual Producers Guild of America (PGA) Awards.

The victory comes right after the film's impressive run through the movie awards season.

Nomadland previously won the Golden Globe and the Critics Choice Awards. It is also up for six Oscars including Best Picture, Best Director, Adapted Screenplay and Best Editing. IANS



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

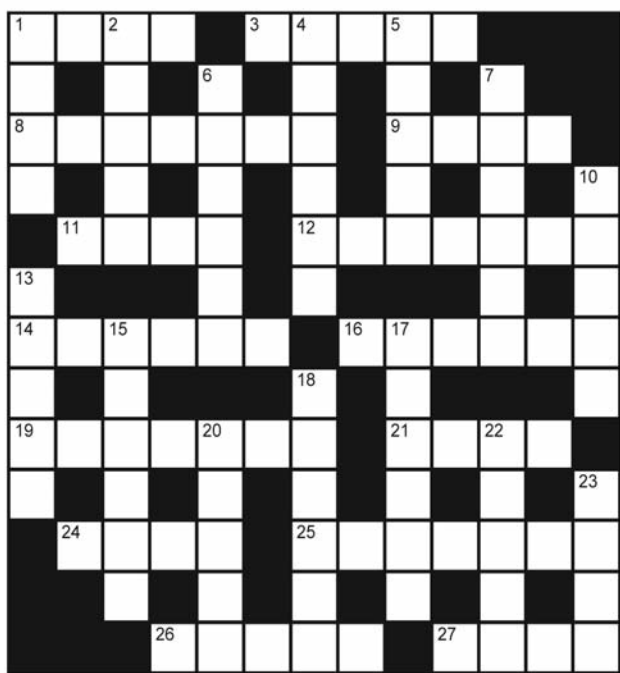


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Blow off steam?
 - 3 Matter of debate
 - 8 Atrophies
 - 9 Like a crone
 - 11 Iridescent gem
 - 12 Overshadow
 - 14 Development
 - 16 Counselor
 - 19 Execute a law
 - 2 Exercise unit (3,2)
- Down
- 1 Wolf's sound
 - 4 Modus operandi
 - 5 Ordinary
 - 6 Fanatic
 - 7 Slipshod
 - 10 Whiskers
 - 13 Cousin of a bittern
 - 15 Scandalise
 - 17 Warning, maybe
 - 18 Head count
 - 20 Jingle
 - 22 Majestic
 - 23 Sort

SUDOKU

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

			E	1				9						8	7
	8				B		A							4	C
		D				7	E						0	2	
			0	9	A		C							1	D
C	E	9	5						B						
E	D			6			7		4						
	0	8					4		C					7	D
2	6				D								9	B	
			2	4	E						D	6			0
7	3					B					0				9
		7	E		8				A	1					3
	2		1	C				5	9						
5							A		2	E				4	6
		A								6					
D	9	8		0		6	E			5	7				2

SOLUTIONS

H	A	R	B	O	R		L								
A	O	S	E				L	R	T						
S	C	A	L	P	E	L	A	B	O	D	E				
T	R	A	R				I	M	U	L					
E	N	S	U	E			C	H	A	N	N	E	L		
			Y	S				D	A						
R	E	V	I	S	E		Q	U	A	S	A	R			
E	I						T	T							
J	U	B	I	L	E	E		I	N	G	O	T			
O	R		E	N			L	A	E						
I	N	A	N	E			A	V	I	A	T	O	R		
C	T	R	N				S	E	T	E	N				
E	N	E	M	Y			T	S	E	S					

B	4	6	5	9	7	E	0	D	C	A	2	1	3	8	
1	8	0	C	A	4	9	2	B	7	3	E	D	5	6	
C	5	D	6	3	0	7	8	A	9	B	1	4	E	2	
9	E	2	8	B	D	1	C	3	5	6	4	0	A	7	
3	7	A	1	2	E	5	6	4	0	D	8	9	C	B	
6	0	1	A	E	8	4	5	C	D	2	9	B	7	3	
4	9	B	7	0	3	D	A	8	E	5	6	C	2	1	
E	A	8	9	D	6	2	1	7	3	C	B	5	4	0	
7	C	5	2	4	1	B	3	6	A	8	0	E	9	D	
2	0	3	8	C	5	E	9	4	1	7	6	8	A		
A	B	E	4	5	C	8	D	2	1	7	3	8	9		
D	3	C	E	6	9	A	7	1	8	0	5	2	B	4	
8	6	4	0	1	2	3	9	5	B	E	A	7	D	C	
0	1	9	0	7	A	8	B	E	2	4	C	3	6	5	
5	2	7	3	8	B	C	4	0	6	9	D	A	1	E	

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



ETERNAL BONDING

Idols of Radha-Krishna being taken out in a procession as part of the Dola festival in Jagannathpur area of Jatni in Khurda district, Thursday

COVID-19 TRACKER			
	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	12,56,81,630	10,14,36,763	27,59,877
India	1,17,87,534	1,12,31,650	1,60,692
Odisha	3,39,460	3,36,409	1,919

CM LAYS STONE FOR MEGA PROJECT

Kalinga Studio facelift to create 2K jobs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 25: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday laid the foundation stone for re-development of the Kalinga Studio here. Odisha Forest Development Corporation (OFDC) Chairman, Satyabrata Tripathy, who was also present during the ceremony, outlined the key infrastructure facilities at the proposed project.

Established in 1980, the studio has played a significant role in changing the face of Odia cinema. In that era, it was the only film studio with latest equipment in eastern region of the country. Thanks to the studio, the state has produced some of the finest movies. However, the industry has lost its glory primarily due to its inability to catch up with latest infrastructure and technology in film making.

Keeping this in view, the state government has approved Rs 200 crore for transfiguration of Kalinga Studio into a modern and futuristic film studio with state-of-the-art infrastructure.

The project will be executed by Idco which is expected to complete the construction and landscaping of the core support area by December 2022. The project's concept and master plan will be done



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik laying foundation stone for the facelift of Kalinga Studio, Thursday

by an international consulting firm 'M/s Grant Thornton Bharat LLP'. The studio will be developed spreading into three different zones comprising infrastructure such as multi-sized indoor shooting halls with all modern facilities, make believe shooting locales, theme based parks, studios for post-production such as dubbing and mixing, animation work station, editing suite, DI (Digital Intermediate) studio, preview theatre, directors' room, space for brainstorming, script narration,

casting, recording lab, radio and media houses etc.

Along with film production, the studio proposes to contain comprehensive fun, entertainment, and a leisure hub. The infrastructure includes live performance stage, adventure parks, kids play area, water games, castle view, snow world, iconic points etc along with boarding and lodging facilities for film crew and space for social and cultural gatherings.

The objective of the project is to preserve the heritage of state and

STATE GOVERNMENT HAS APPROVED ₹200 CRORE FOR THE AMBITIOUS PROJECT

THE OBJECTIVE IS TO PRESERVE THE HERITAGE OF STATE AND BOOST ODIA FILM INDUSTRY

IT ALSO AIMS TO PROVIDE AS MANY AS 12,000 DIRECT AND INDIRECT JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN FILM, MEDIA, AND ENTERTAINMENT SECTORS

support upliftment of Odia film industry. The infrastructure will create a film industry eco-system which would help develop not only Odia movies, but also cater to many downstream affiliates of the sector in the larger entertainment and creative services industry. The project would also catalyse employment in film, media, and entertainment industry. It envisages direct employment of around 2,000 in film, media, and entertainment sector along with indirect and induced employment generation of more than 10,000.

Moreover, the creative talent pool of Odisha who migrates to other states for livelihood will get employment in their home state.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Sundari reaches Kanha in MP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 25: The Madhya Pradesh government, as per their plan, took away tigress Sundari from Satkosia in Angul district to Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh and began the attempts of re-wilding the national animal.

This came after India's first interstate tiger relocation programme proved futile. The MP government had given a tiger named Mahavir and a tigress Sundari to Odisha in 2018 to boost the tiger population in Satkosia which turned out to be a damp squib. While Mahavir was killed in an alleged poaching attack, Sundari was kept in an enclosure after she attacked some villagers in the fringe villages. The eight-member team from Kanha National Park took away Sundari in a van.

Sundari has been released in Kanha National Park which is known to have the environment favorable for re-wilding tigers including the orphaned ones. The need of translocation of Sundari back to MP was to bolster her natural instinct which was compromised after her prolonged habitation in an enclosure.



Sundari has been released in Kanha National Park which is known to have the environment favourable for re-wilding tigers

According to Kanha National Park officials, those areas help tigers, in a natural way, grow back their natural instincts. "In our area, we are known to re-wild the tigers. We keep them in large areas and also provide them live animals to bolster their natural instinct of being predators. Its translocation would have been difficult in monsoon session

so her shifting during summers was planned," said SK Singh, Director of Kanha National Park.

SL Mondal, former Principal Conservator of Forests-Wildlife of Madhya Pradesh said, "The first such experiment of translocation of tigers from MP and Odisha failed because Odisha government failed to do community participation works like MP and the locals could not be taken into confidence and the whole experiment proved a futile experiment." Seeing the condition of the tigress, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) also approved the plan to relocate Sundari from Odisha to MP despite the initial reluctance of MP government on the same.

National Waterway- 5 to link Talcher & Bengal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 25: Transport Minister Padmanabha Behera Wednesday told the Assembly that the government has planned to use the waterways to link India's largest coalfield of Talcher with West Bengal.

He said that the works have also started on this front. The waterway - National Waterways No 5- has been planned to connect Talcher with Geonkhali in West Bengal.

The information was given by the minister when a reply was

sought from the minister on the issue of progress of works on waterways from Jokadia to Dhamra and Paradip port.

"Work has started for the first phase of 588-km National Waterways between Talcher and Geonkhali in West Bengal," he said. Behera said that works have also started between Jokadia/ Pankapal to Talcher.

The shipping ministry has collaborated between IWA and Paradip Port Trust for developing a viable navigation system on the National Waterway-5 in the state for its maiden phase (Pankapal-

Work has started for the first phase of 588-km National Waterways between Talcher and Geonkhali in West Bengal

Paradip/ Dhamra on the Brahmani Mahanadi river system) to facilitate movement of cargo vessels of economical size and viable capacity.

The development activities in Phase-I of NW-5 will include fairway development water stretch

which includes dredging, river training works, bank protection works; terminal construction with cargo handling facilities, off shore structures and related activities; and navigational aids including River Information System among others. The Paradip Port Trust under the MoU is likely to assist IWA in project management, supervision, services including planning, designing, consultancy in respect of the works related to fairway development, terminals construction and other related infrastructure works on NW-5.

SHORT TAKES

Schools, colleges closed today

Bhubaneswar: In view of Bharat Bandh, Educational Institutions under Skill Development and Technical Education (SD&TE) department including all ITIs, polytechnics and engineering colleges will remain closed March 26. Similarly, the universities and colleges of Higher Education department and all schools shall remain closed on March 26.

Plus III exams postponed

Bhubaneswar: Utkal University authorities Thursday declared that due to Bharat Bandh called by Samyukta Kisan Morcha, a coalition of farmers' unions, the Plus III fifth semester exams of Arts, Science and Commerce scheduled to be held March 26 are postponed and would be held March 30. The controller of examinations said this through a letter.

Holi holidays for schools



Bhubaneswar: The School and Mass Education department Thursday said that all the schools under it would remain closed March 28 and 29 on the occasion of Dola Purnima and Holi and there will be no teaching on these two days. Additional secretary of S&ME department Pratap Kumar Mishra directed all the district education officers (DEOs) to exclude March 28 and 29 from the teaching days.



Artistes perform Odissi at an event of Gunjan Dance Academy at Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

OP PHOTO

MGNREGA: State achieves 20Cr person days in FY 20-21

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 25: The sixth meeting of State Employment Guarantee Council, constituted under Section 10 of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 was held Thursday under the chairmanship of Panchayati Raj Minister Pratap Jena.

In the meeting, it was revealed that MGNREGA has made significant impact on livelihood security through durable assets and enhancement of income of the rural and vulnerable households by creating employment opportunities. Due to increase in work demands, the generation of person days has been increased steadily over the years. The state achieved 20 crore person days during fi-

nancial year (FY) 2020-21 providing employment to 37.01 lakh households. Achieving this milestone was possible owing to close coordination among the districts as well as line departments.

In FY 2018-19, 0.47 lakh households have completed 100 days of MGNREGS work. It increased to 1.61 lakh in 2019-20 and 3.75 lakh in 2020-21. SC/ST and Women participation touched 49 per cent and 45 per cent in FY 2020-21.

In order to address distress migration in 20 migration-prone blocks, the state government has made provision of minimum wage rate of Rs 308 per person per day by topping up Rs 101 per person per day out of state Budget over the entitled wage of Rs 207 under MGNREGS and approval of additional 200 days of work in 20 migration-



FILE PHOTO

prone blocks.

There is a significant increase in employment generation with 2.10 crore person days covering 3.35 lakh households. Besides, 70,224 households completed 100 days, 31,667 completed 150 days, 9,368

completed 200 days and 59 completed 300 days in FY 2020-21.

Similar provision of minimum wage has been made in 6 DMF districts like Sundargarh, Angul, Jharsuguda, Mayurbhanj (3 blocks), Keonjhar and Jajpur:

ENSURING LIVELIHOOD

In FY 2018-19, 0.47 lakh households have completed 100 days of MGNREGS work. It increased to 1.61 lakh in 2019-20 and 3.75 lakh in 2020-21

In order to address distress migration in 20 migration-prone blocks, the state government has made provision of minimum wage rate of Rs 308 per person per day by topping up Rs 101 per person per day out of state Budget over the entitled wage of Rs 207 under MGNREGS

During FY 2021-22, road maps for ensuring rural livelihoods and alleviating rural distress have been discussed with emphasis on natural resource management works and individual assistance with livelihood generation, and effec-

tive convergence with line departments.

The minister said, "Since MGNREGS has successfully achieved the milestone of 20 crore person days, and provided employment to migrant workers, all-out efforts should be made to implement the scheme effectively in FY 2021-22."

The line departments should co-operate in the efforts to strengthen the livelihoods of rural poor, he added. Focus activities like Renovation of traditional water bodies, Rural park, Play ground etc may be implemented.

The provision of minimum wage rate in other blocks of districts like that of 20 migration prone blocks and DMF districts may be explored for creation of more person days as well as development of the rural poor.

381 PRISONERS
FAIL TO GET
OUT OF JAILS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 25: As many as 381 prisoners have been rotting in the jails across the state, despite getting bail from the courts in the recent period. The unfortunate poor inmates have failed to produce any surety or bond for the bail to get released from prisons.

Following the orders of the Orissa High court, the prisons' directorate recently produced the details before the court. The directorate has also shared the data with the State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) and requested to issue advisory to District Legal Services Authorities (DLSA) to get appropriate revision orders by higher courts or take other legal steps for the expedite release of poor and helpless prisoners.

The prisons department is, for the first time, planning to start 'Jail Adalats' in various districts in co-ordination with SLSA and prisons authorities.

"A few states like Tamil Nadu and Jharkhand have the practice of holding Jail Adalats inside jails on plea bargaining cases and petty offences which are compoundable as per CrPC. This will help prisoners to get due court orders in petty cases inside jails. The project in Odisha is likely to start in April 2021," informed the directorate.

The directorate has also issued one laptop to each jail for smooth conduct of E-mulakat video conferencing with courts and other projects under E-prisons system. Organic compost machines, vacuum cleaners, power sprayers and washing machines have been supplied to jails across state in 2020-21.

The directorate has been taking steps for introduction of E-custody certificates to be issued to courts, after training by NIC. The state has recently sanctioned additional wards to hold 870 prisoners in 2020-21. Around 135 new staff quarters will be constructed in the state soon.

WASSUP TODAY

- BHUBANESWAR**
- Odissi dance fest by Moksha, Buddha Mandir, Unit-IX, 5.30pm
- Centenary celebrations of Gandhiji's visit to Odisha by Odisha International Centre, Soochana Bhawan, 5.45pm
- Event by Odisha Bhasha Prathisthan, State Museum, 6pm
- Concluding event of 29th Nikhila Utkala Natya Utsav, Rabindra Mandap, 6.30pm
- Book release by Amma Charitable Trust, Sailashree Vihar, 7pm

- BALIANITA**
- Astaprahara Namayagna of Maa Jageswari, Gada Bhingarpar, 9am
- Conclusion of annual yagna, Maa Bhadria Peeth, 4pm

- PURI**
- Padayatra to commemorate the centenary of Gandhiji's Puri visit, Puri railway station, 7am

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

CLASSIFIED
LOST

I, Kiran Kumar Panda (44), Khalasistreet opposition Berhampur Stadium, Berhampur, Ganjam lost my original E-RSD, Vide No.-10571201275 on dated 24.3.2021 while travelling from Chatrapur to Taratarini Temple Road. Anybody found please contact on Mobile-7008348352 or P.S. Purushottampur (GM).

Odisha MPs raise farm, railway, mining issues

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 25: Despite several disruptions in the Parliament owing to the three farm Bills and hike in fuel prices, the Odisha MPs raised a number of state specific demands ranging from railways to mining sector during the two phases of the Budget session.

Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MPs raised 702 starred/unstarred questions on different issues of state and national importance during the two phases of the Budget session. While 408 questions were asked in Lok Sabha, 294 were posed in Rajya Sabha.

BJD reiterated its demand of passing a Bill to grant 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and state legislative assemblies. BJD MPs raised the issue on several occasions during the session. The party also raised long-pending demand for reduction of GST on Kendu leaves. The MPs urged the Union government to procure surplus rice from the state and also submitted a memorandum in this regard.

Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha passed 18 and 19 Bills respectively during the Budget session. BJD has supported all the Bills except the



Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Bill 2021, which enhances the power of Lieutenant Governor in Delhi. The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill 2021, a crucial Bill from Odisha's point of view, was also supported by the BJD. However, it urged the Union government to change some provisions that empowers the Centre to auction mines and utilise the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) fund. Congress MP Saptagiri Ulaka demanded that the Bill be sent to the standing committee as it impinges upon the powers of the state gov-

ernments.

During the session, Union government refused to revise royalty on iron, bauxite and limestone.

The MPs also raised the problems faced by the people of their constituencies. Congress MP Saptagiri Ulaka and BJD MP N Bhaskar Rao reminded the Union government of problems faced by people of Odisha due to unavailability of mobile network.

Ulaka said in the Lok Sabha that students in Koraput and Rayagada have to climb the hills for getting the signal to complete their studies. He also said that children risked

END OF BUDGET SESSION

Cong MP Saptagiri Ulaka and BJD MP N Bhaskar Rao reminded the Union government of problems faced by people of Odisha due to unavailability of mobile network

BJD MPs Anubhav Mohanty and Subhash Chandra Singh and BJP MP Nitesh Ganga Deb raised concerns over non-availability of railway services in seven districts

Senior BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab sought centre's intervention in resolving Mahanadi water dispute with Chhattisgarh



their lives as wild animals could attack them. Similarly, Bhaskar Rao said in the Rajya Sabha that 69 gram panchayats are without network in the state.

Likewise, BJD's Rajya Sabha MP Sujeet Kumar raised the issue of poor banking system in the state and said that around 24 gram panchayats in Kalahandi district are having only one bank.

Jagatsinghpur MP Rajashree Mallick and Rajya Sabha MP Amar Patnaik urged the Union government to set up another AIIMS in Sundargarh.

BJD MPs Anubhav Mohanty and

Subhash Chandra Singh and BJP MP Nitesh Ganga Deb raised concerns over non-availability of railway services in seven districts even after several decades of Independence. Mohanty in Lok Sabha urged the Centre to complete pending railway projects in the state as soon as possible.

Ganga Deb sought allocation of Rs 500 crore for Talcher Bimlagarh railway project. Congress's Ulaka criticised the government over allocation to the state in railway budget.

Senior BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab sought centre's intervention in resolving Mahanadi water dispute with Chhattisgarh. He said that even after 19 hearings in Mahanadi tribunal, Odisha hasn't gained anything. BJD's Rajya Sabha MP Prasanna Acharya urged the Union government to set up fast track courts in every district to deal with crimes against women and children. Acharya also requested Centre to stop closing down of Sambalpur railway station as it bears memories of Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Odisha.

The BJD and BJP MPs met several Union ministers during the session and submitted memorandum in respect to issues faced by the state.

GOVT OF NCT DELHI BILL

BJD sheds ambiguity, takes stand against Centre

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 25: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD), which has often been called a savior of the BJP government at the Centre, was seen taking a gritty stand against the Union government over its decisions ranging from farm laws to Government of NCT Delhi bill during the budget session.

From the beginning of the budget session, the ruling party in the state took a critical stand and questioned the Union government over several issues. In his speech on the thanks motion to the President's Address, BJD MP Prasanna Acharya criticized the BJP government over farmers' protests. The BJD MP asked the Centre how much the farmers' income has increased from 2014-15 to 2021. He also said the government should give written assurance on MSP to the farmers.

The budget session witnessed a cold-war between Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and BJD MPs in Rajya Sabha over the implementation of the Swaminathan Commission recommendations. Hitting back at the Union Minister, BJD MP Sasmit Patra in the Rajya Sabha said had the Swaminathan Commission Report been implemented by the government, the minimum support price (MSP) of paddy would have been fixed at 1.5 times of Rs 1560 per quintal totalling Rs 2340 per quintal. Instead, the MSP was fixed in 2018-19 at Rs 1750, thereby clearly proving that the Swaminathan Committee re-

BJD MP Prasanna Acharya termed the Bill against the principle of cooperative federalism and said it undermines the power of a democratically elected government. However, the Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha as the Bharatiya Janata Party was having enough numbers

port has not been implemented in full," Patra said.

Though the BJD is often criticised for maintaining calibrated ambiguity on sensitive legislations, it took a clear stand against the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Amendment Bill, 2021, which seeks to enhance the power of Lieutenant Governor; and staged walk-out from the Rajya Sabha. BJD MP Prasanna Acharya termed the bill against the principle of cooperative federalism and said as the bill undermines the power of a democratically elected government, the BJD opposed it. However, the bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha as the BJP was having enough numbers.

Since the second term of the Narendra Modi government at the centre, the BJD had staged walk-out

BJD seeks release of pending RUSA funds



POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 25: A delegation of BJD MPs Thursday met Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal seeking release of Rs 129.96 crore pending central assistance for Odisha.

In the memorandum, the BJD MPs stated that central assistance to the tune of Rs 129.96 crore for Rashtriya Uchhatar Siksha Abhiyan (RUSA) for the financial year 2020-21 is yet to be released to Odisha. The regional party said that out of Rs 135 crore anticipated receipt, the state received only Rs 5.04 crore till March 8.

"As we are in the terminal month of the current financial year (2020-21) which is going to end shortly, it is requested to direct the department concerned for the release of the balance central assistance against the anticipated receipt during the current financial year without any further delay," BJD MPs submitted.

from the House for the first time. According to sources from the party, the decision to oppose the bill in the Rajya Sabha was, perhaps, taken after taking into consideration the widespread criticism the party had faced earlier: "We would have been in target from all spheres of society, if we had supported the bill in the Rajya Sabha," a source from the party said.

Earlier, the BJD had changed its stand on some major bills in both Houses. The BJD MPs had opposed the Right to Information Amendment Bill, 2019 in Lok Sabha citing that these amendments were diluting the basic architecture of the RTI Act. But surprisingly the BJD MPs in Rajya Sabha supported the bill and paved the way for its passing. It had been criticized by many social activists for supporting the Union government.

The BJD had also changed its stand on triple-talaq bill. It had opposed the criminality clause in the bill during 16th Lok Sabha but the party supported the bill in the first session of the 17th Lok Sabha with the same criminality clause. In another instance, the party had opposed the Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019 during its introduction in the Lok Sabha, saying water is a state subject and the Union government must consult with state governments before bringing such a bill. However, the party supported the passing of the bill in the house. The BJD had also supported the abrogation of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir.

Industrialist
Brahmananda
passes away

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 25: Brahmananda Behera, former president of Burma Repatriates Association and Industrialist, breathed his last March 23 at his Bakharabad residence in Cuttack City. He was 93.

He is survived by his younger brother Bibekananda Behera, three daughters and one son. His brother, all the three daughters, daughter-in-law and son were present at the time of his death. Former MP Trilochan Kanungo and many other important dignitaries paid their last respects before his mortal remains were taken for cremation at Swargadwar in Puri.

At Rangoon, he was keen on establishing a temple of Lord Jagannath.

UPPING THE ANTE



Youth Congress activists tussle with police personnel during the Yuva Aakrosh Samabesh near Assembly in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Private schools in Capital
suspend physical classes

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 25: Some private schools in the Capital city have decided to suspend physical classes for students of Class IX-XII in the wake of detection of Covid-19 cases in some educational institutions in state.

Although the School and Mass Education (S&ME) department is yet to take a decision regarding closure of educational institutions, some private schools have decided to suspend physical classes as a precautionary measure against the deadly virus, sources said.

"We have decided to discontinue physical classes for students as part of our precautionary measures to keep the virus at bay. Online classes will continue as usual. In the prevailing situation, it is a big risk to continue the physical classes," said BN Patnaik, chairman of St. Xavier International school.

BJEM School principal Sandhya Jena said they have suspended physical classes for Class-IX and XI students while the courses of Class-X and XII have been completed. "The students of Class X and XII have stopped coming to school and they are now getting ready for practical exams. We have planned to conduct the practical exams in batches of maximum 12 students in one room," Jena added.

On the other hand, SAI International School is awaiting a direction from the S&ME department in this regard.

Meanwhile, many parents are seeking vaccination for their wards. "Physical classes can continue as usual after the vaccination of school children on priority basis," said Sangeeta Sahoo.

Priyanka Singheod said face-to-

Random testing
begins in City

With spurt in Covid cases in the city, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has girded up its loins by initiating random testing all over the state capital, Thursday, to identify the spreaders. BMC Commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary stated that random testing programme would be carried out at two spots in each zone of the city. He also said that the civic authority will also be conducting about 1,600 tests daily. "Though we have a capacity to carry out 2,000 tests per day, right now we are planning to carry out 600 RTPR and 1000 antigen tests. These tests will also increase in coming weeks observing the spread of pandemic. We are also planning to carry out random testing at different malls and market places of the city in the coming days," Chaudhary said. Meanwhile, BMC also began testing of students at different institutions. Random samples were taken Trident college, Infocity, and CRPF Campus.

face teaching is vital for subjects like mathematics and science. Many students need extra attention in these subjects. "The schools can arrange physical classes for students of Class-X and XI with all precautions. But it is unsafe to hold physical classes for kindergarten, primary and upper primary kids," she added.

S&ME Minister Samir Ranjan Dash, meanwhile, said the state government is yet to take a decision regarding the closure of educational institutions in the state. He claimed that not a single student from state-run institutions and hostels has tested positive for Covid-19.

Highest one-day
Covid spike
since January 15

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 25: Odisha's Covid-19 caseload mounted to 3,39,460 Thursday after 214 people tested positive for the virus, the highest single-day spike since January 15.

"Khurda district, comprising state capital Bhubaneswar, recorded the highest of 33 new infections followed by Sundargarh (27), Cuttack and Bolangir with 20 cases each," a Health and Family Welfare official said. Malkangiri and Nayagarh have been declared coronavirus-free as no active cases exist in their jurisdiction.

After detection of over two dozen cases at a leading management institute in the city, four students, including one from Kendriya Vidyalaya-I, have tested positive in Bhubaneswar. A Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) team visited the schools to take stock of the situation and make arrangements to conduct sample tests of all students of one particular hostel.

Meanwhile, two students of a reputed university also tested positive following which the authorities postponed the undergraduate and postgraduate examinations that were scheduled to be held from Thursday.

Meanwhile, the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) has sealed a shopping complex and a coaching class in Cuttack for violating Covid norms. An enforcement squad of the civic body, led by CMC deputy commissioner Abinash Rout, sealed Hind Supermarket at Ranihaat and Chanakya Coaching Centre near Chandi Square for violating Covid norms.

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Tribals earn pittance from sale of mahua flowers in Kalahandi



LACK OF GOVT INITIATIVES

Earlier, the collection and sale of mahua flowers was under the control of the forest and excise departments. However, the government authorizing the sarpanchs to give license to the tribals for collection of mahua flowers dealt a big blow to them. The tribals were expecting that this will relieve them of their problem. But that never happened as the sarpanchs only went on giving licenses without determining the price. This only pushed the tribals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Junagarh, March 25: Tribals residing under this block of Kalahandi district have resorted to distress sale of Mahua flowers due to lack of proper markets and smuggling of the forest produce, a report said. Over 10,000 people residing in remote and tribal dominated Dundelm, Dedar, Charbhati, Budidar, and Bankapalash panchayats are dependent on this minor forest produce for their livelihood as mahua flowers are available in plenty in the forest regions near their villages. Reports said in the absence of other livelihood opportunities, collection of mahua flowers is the mainstay of tribals. They consider it to be a lucrative occupation as they earn their bread and butter, and clothes needed to maintain their families. However, the state government has no plan for marketing of this minor forest produce which is available in this part of the state. As a result, the gullible tribals are forced to sale their produce at Rs 10-12 per kg. Tribal families leave for jungle

Over 10,000 people residing in remote and tribal dominated Dundelm, Dedar, Charbhati, Budidar, and Bankapalash panchayats are dependent on this minor forest produce for their livelihood as mahua flowers are available in plenty in the forest regions near their villages

In the absence of other livelihood opportunities, collection of mahua flowers is the mainstay of tribals. They consider it to be a lucrative occupation as they earn their bread and butter, and clothes needed to maintain their families

The state government has no plan for marketing of this minor forest produce which is available in this part of the state. As a result, the gullible tribals are forced to sale their produce at Rs 10-12 per kg

at 4 am to collect mahua flowers and return home around 12 noon. The collection of mahua flowers is mostly done from the month of March till April when the weather mostly remains dry. The tribals after working for 8 to 10 hours earn Rs 60 to 80 per head. Later, they bring the mahua flowers home and dry them in their courtyard. The mahua flowers after drying get reduced to 2-3 kg which they sale mostly to hooch traders and breweries for a pittance. Observers blamed the forest department for the situation. They claimed the forest department is expected to determine the price of all minor forest produce, create adequate markets for their sale and keep a check on their smuggling.

to further exploitation in the hands of outside traders and brewery owners. Reports said the sarpanchs give them the permit for collection of flowers while the excise department gives them license for sale and storage. The tribals end up making loss instead of profit due to this faulty policy of the state government. Residents demanded that the government direct either the Odisha Forest Development Corporation or the tribal welfare department to directly procure the mahua flowers from the tribals. They claimed that the tribals will be relieved of exploitation if the government fulfills their demands.



FOLK DANCE

On the occasion of Fagu Dashami, members of the yadav community performing 'Laudi' a folk dance form at Nalconagar in Angul

OP PHOTO

Irrigation on pen and paper only

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khajuripada, March 25: The state government has laid a lot of stress on agriculture and irrigation. Crores of rupees are being spent on these heads. But it is alleged that the irrigation development has been confined to pen and paper only in Khajuripada area of Kandhamal district. According to reports, agriculture is the mainstay of Khajuripada's economy. In a bid to boost agriculture, the government has set up Pilasalunki minor irrigation project. Locals said that lakhs of rupees are being spent for its restoration and repair, but it

failed to deliver the goods. Farmers alleged that in Kharif season, dam water is not coming through canals. The district has only 27 per cent of irrigation coverage while the irrigation coverage during rabi season comes down to 10 to 12 per cent, the report said. It is claimed that 2033 hectares of farmlands are provided irrigation through Pilasalunki minor irrigation project; 1034 hectares through small irrigation projects; 9128 hectares through lift irrigation projects and 3701 hectares in water harvesting projects. In reality, the claim on irrigation coverage is quite different. In total, there are 1, 27, 790



hectares of farmlands in Kandhamal district while 96, 298 hectares are in upland areas.

Farming in most areas of the district is solely dependent of rainfall. Farmer leaders alleged that there is a need for more irrigation projects to expand the irrigation coverage in remote unirrigated areas. Farmers in remote areas are keen to take up farming as their main livelihood, but lack of irrigation facilities have become a problem. Social activists Bidyanath Behera, Mohammed Ziauddin and farmer leader Chankya Kahanr said that the state government should come forward to take up some minor irrigation projects to boost farming in a backward district like Kandhamal.

Ram Navami to be celebrated with Covid restrictions

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, March 25: The district administration has allowed celebration of Ram Navami in Bhadrak with Covid restrictions. Collector Gyana Ranjan Das presided over a meeting in this regard at Sadbhawana Hall here Thursday. The meeting was attended by SP Charan Singh Meena, ADM Indramani Nayak, sub-collector Pitambar Samal. Members of Sri Ram Mahajana Samiti, members of Chauda Mahala Muslim Jamat and police officials. It was decided that the Sri Ram Navami will be celebrated April 21 in compliance with Covid guidelines as issued for the month of April. Other activities related to Ram Navami were restricted.

Covid spreads from Ch'garh to Nuapada

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nuapada, March 25: As many as 29 persons coming out to be positive for COVID-19 from a village under Sinapali block in Nuapada district has left the district administration in cleft stick. The village shares borders with Chhattisgarh and so it is suspected that the tentacles of the disease have spread from the neighbouring state to the village. The villagers were subjected to antigen tests after they developed symptoms of COVID-19. And, 29 of them tested positive for the disease. However, the administration is mulling to do RT-PCR tests of the infected villagers. If the reports of RT-PCR also come out to be the same as those of antigen tests, the district administration will take steps for their treatment. Meanwhile, the whole village



has been sanitised. Police forces have been deployed at the two entry points from Chhattisgarh side. As a precautionary measure, the weekly market to be held Thursday has been closed. Back in the district headquarters, meetings after meetings are being convened involving admin-

istrative officials, the chief district medical officer (CDMO), block administrative officials, Sinapali tehsildar, CDPO and the senior officers of the district health department. Some officers have meanwhile returned from the village after taking stock of the situation there. During meetings, the officials are

The villagers were subjected to antigen tests after they developed symptoms of Covid-19. And, 29 of them tested positive for the disease. Now, the administration is mulling to do RT-PCR tests of the infected villagers

learnt to have discussed on declaring the village as 'Containment Zone' and carrying out tests of the villagers. The administration is now laying stress on public awareness on all Covid safety guidelines so as to ward off the virus spreading in the region, known for migration.

Stray dogs save youth's life by chasing away bear

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nilagiri, March 25: A pack of stray dogs Wednesday night saved a youth from a possible bear attack by chasing away the wild animal in Nilagiri town of Balasore district. The video of the entire episode has gone viral in the locality. The bear had come down from the nearby Swarnachuda hill and strayed into the Nilagiri town searching for food. Unbeknown about the presence of the animal, a youth was passing through the market on a motorcycle. He came face to face with the wild bear. Seeing him, the animal came running towards him. Before he could do anything, a pack of stray dogs came between



the bear and him. Barking at the animal, they started chasing it away from the area. The youth had recorded the entire incident on his mobile phone and later uploaded it on social media.

2 SUVs collide, 3 critical in Sundargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, March 25: In a road mishap Wednesday afternoon, at least 17 persons including two children sustained injuries after two sports utility vehicles (SUVs) collided head-on near Kijirima Square under Sadar police limits in Sundargarh district. The condition of the three is stated to be critical. They were shifted to the district headquarters hospital. A Bolero was on its way from Pithabhuin village under Lefripada police limits here to a marriage when another Bolero coming from the opposite direction hit the first vehicle head-on leading to the mishap.

Man absconds after impregnating girl

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, March 25: In a shameful incident, a minor girl was allegedly raped and impregnated on the pretext of marriage in Nayagarh district. The matter came to the fore Wednesday after the victim filed a report against the accused at Baniogchha police station. According to her complaint, she was a student of a school near her village. She was staying at the school's hostel. Due to COVID-19 outbreak last year, the school was closed and she had to return home. During her stay in the village, the accused befriended with the victim and they fell in love. The accused had coaxed her into physical relationship, promising marriage.



Meanwhile the school was reopened. However, it was when the girl returned to the school, the school authorities conducted mandatory medical examinations of the girl before allowing her to stay in the hostel. During the test, it was found that she was seven months pregnant. Acting on the victim's report, the police have registered a case and launched a hunt for the accused, who is absconding.

Farmers up against solar plant over damages

POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogaon, March 25: Farmers here are up in arms against a solar plant set up at Kukuarkhai under Deogaon block in Bolangir district over land compensation dispute, a report said. They alleged that the company is not paying compensation for their land as per the agreement. They warned of agitation if the district administration and the company failed to sort out the land issue soon. Though the affected famers have been approaching the company, time and again to resolve the issue, the latter is doing nothing. Farmers from Mahalai,

As per the agreement, the company was to pay villagers ₹5L per acre. ₹2L was to be paid during land registration

Kukuarakhai, Sargipalli and Katapalli have taken up the issue with the district administration. They said that the company which has set up the solar plant had signed an agreement with farmers whose lands were acquired for the project. As per the agreement, the company would pay the villagers Rs5 lakh per acre. During the registration of the land, farmers

were to be paid Rs 2 lakh, while the remaining amount was to be paid after a month. Besides, the company had agreed to pay Rs 10,000 for each sal tree felled, Rs 5,000 per mahula tree and Rs 3,000 each for other trees. Farmers' leaders like Trinath Tripathy, Premanidhi Behera, Loknath Dishri, Jagannath Tripathy, Uddhab Tripathy and Gopinath Tripathy alleged that despite all this, the company has been delaying paying the compensation dues to them. Farmers who gave their land for the project have intimated the issue to sarpanch Tanuja Sahu and sought to resolve the issue through a gram sabha.

Floating buoy barriers to check trawler intrusion

AGENCIES

Kendrapara, March 25: The Forest Department has undertaken an exercise to demarcate the Gahirmatha Wildlife Sanctuary, widely regarded as the world's largest habitat for Olive Ridley sea turtles, by installing floating buoys to ensure the safety of marine animals. The installation work of the buoys along the boundary of the sanctuary to prevent entry of fishing trawlers, is underway and is likely to be completed by March-end. As trawl fishing is attributed to be a major cause of turtle mortality, the boundary demarcation programme was initiated, said Bikash Ranjan Dash, Divisional Forest Officer, Rajnagar Mangrove (Wildlife)



SAFETY MEASURE AT GAHIRMATHA

Division. The Gahirmatha Wildlife Sanctuary is regulated by the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, where movement of boats and trawlers is prohibited up to 20 km towards the sea

from the shore throughout the year. Outside the sanctuary on other nesting beaches, the movement of mechanised boats is not allowed from September to March up to 5

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km towards sea from the shore, under the Odisha Marine Fisheries Regulation Act (OMFRA). The state government had in 1997 conferred it marine sanctuary status in recognition of ecological significance and diverse floral and faunal resources. In order to ensure the turtles' safety, sea patrol is being undertaken and 35 trawlers, which had

sneaked into the marine sanctuary for sea fishing, were seized and around 200 crew were arrested this nesting season, Dash said. This year, over 3 lakh turtles have crawled onto the Nasi-2 beach of Gahirmatha to lay eggs. An Olive Ridley turtle usually lays about 120 to 150 eggs from which hatchlings emerge after 45 to 50 days.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
e-Tender Notice No. e-Tender-Elect-G-45-20
Name of Work: COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT FOR PANTRY ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENTS IN COACHES AND PANTRY CARS OF (LHB & NON-LHB COACHES) TRAINS AT PURI COACHING DEPOT FOR A PERIOD OF 02 YEARS.
Approx Cost of the work (₹) : 30,06,545.14, **Period of Completion :** 24 Months.
Date and time of closing of tender : At 1500 hrs of 15.04.2021.
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
NOTE : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 10 days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender.
Complete information including e-tender documents is available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer(G), PR-647/L/20-21
Khurda Road

TENDER NOTICE
(Establishment of Common Facilities Centre)
Sealed tenders are invited from licensed registered civil engineers/ contractors (having minimum Three years experience in construction) for establishment of Common Facilities Centre at village: Baradeswar District: Bhadrak, State: Odisha, being facilitated by Binapani Sangeet Parishad, Baradeswar, Bonth, Bhadrak, Odisha. Tender should be submitted in separate envelopes for Technical Bid and Financial Bid along with earnest money of Rs. 3,00,000/- and can be deposited at the below mentioned address up to 02.00 P.M. of 16.04.2021. The Demand Draft of earnest money should be in the name of BINAPANI SANGEET PARISHAD (APPLIQUE & ALLIED CLUSTER BHADRAK). Tenders received will be opened before the Procurement Committee of the proposed Common Facilities on 16.04.2021 at 3.00 P.M.
Tender form can be obtained from Binapani Sangeet Parishad, Baradeswar, Bonth, Bhadrak, Odisha on any working day between 26.03.2021 to 15.04.2021 from 10.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. and up to 12.00 Noon on 16.04.2021 by payment of Rs. 500/-.
The details of works and Terms and Conditions are available in the Tender Form. President, Binapani Sangeet Parishad, Baradeswar, Bonth, Bhadrak, Odisha reserves the right to cancel any or all the Tenders without assigning any reason.
Sd/- President
Binapani Sangeet Parishad

For a happy and effective life, the essentials are sincerity, humility, perseverance and the insatiable thirst for progress.

THE MOTHER

Innoculate the youth

India is witnessing the second wave of the COVID-19. The daily count of COVID infections has ballooned to over 53,000 — the highest in past four months even as the rate of recoveries has come down. Left with no better options to stem the surge, worst-hit states such as Maharashtra, Punjab and Kerala have started re-imposing lockdowns. In our state also, night curfews have been imposed in some districts. The Malkangiri district administration re-imposed night curfew Tuesday, while the government Wednesday decided to re-impose night curfew in Nabarangpur district from March 25. More districts could be in the pipeline. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday said if cluster cases are reported, the government will not be averse to enforcing lockdowns in the affected regions. However, up till now the government is not keen to go for the jugular. The efficacy of such steps, however, remains questionable. As the lockdowns were in operation last year, there was a steady rise in the number of COVID-19 cases. The nationwide lockdowns last year had doomed the economy, leading to millions of people losing their livelihood. The economy which slipped to recession is still struggling to claw back to its pre-COVID level. There are many sectors like real estate which are still in the doldrums. If situations worsen from here on, God forbid, the government may have few options but to declare another nationwide lockdown.

The Centre Tuesday decided to allow all people above 45 years of age to be vaccinated against the coronavirus regardless of comorbidities. People in this category will no longer need medical certificates to get jabs. This decision, which should have come much earlier, has enthused sections of population. Hopes have brightened that these people, all of whom are in the working class category, can no longer wait to get anti-COVID shots. Massive restrictions imposed by the government have slowed down the vaccination programme. Had it been otherwise, we might have avoided a second wave of the pandemic. The vaccination programme in the country has been defective from the word go. First, the decision to restrict vaccinations to government hospitals only was a strategic mistake. This unnecessarily slowed down the pace of vaccination. Keeping the private sector hospitals from the vaccination programme killed the precious little time that could have staved off the second wave of the virus. Considering their state-of-the-art infrastructure and workforce, private hospitals would have certainly vaccinated more people in proportion to their number. But it was not to be. By the time the government decided to include the private hospitals, precious time was lost. The latest decision to allow people above 45 years may not be an optimum decision considering the fast spread of the virus. When you have adequate stocks of vaccines and you have roped in private players for vaccination, then why restrict the programme to 45 and above only. Why not include the younger lot as well. At least all people between 20 and 60 years of age — the core working class — should be allowed to take shots so that they could contribute to economic recovery with no fear of getting infected. These people are exposed to outside world as they come out to work. Including the younger lot will be an effective way to limit the damage caused by the second wave. The Centre should also put a ban on exports of vaccines to other countries. The other day, the Prime Minister took pride in the fact that India is sending its vaccines to 70 plus countries. While we do not deny the international obligations of the government during a global pandemic, people back home should have the priority.

WORDSWORTH

But and ben

It's a phrase steeped in Scottish history and culture, traditionally crofting but also rural life generally. It can evoke a poverty-stricken hardcrabble life that has at times been romanticised. A but and ben is a two-roomed house of one storey. There was usually only one door to the outside; this gave access to the kitchen, the public room in which everyday life took place and in which members of the family often slept. This led into a private inner room, where guests could be entertained and which — like many a front room or best room in poor but decent homes everywhere — was often furnished to a higher standard but less often used. If the family was large, however, the inner room could double up as a bedroom. The outer room was the but and the inner one the ben. Putting them together the but and ben was the whole house. Some people have guessed that ben is Gaelic or from some Norse word. But there's no evidence for either and the experts are now sure it's a dialect variant of the Middle English binne, within. (If you know Dutch or German, you will be familiar with its relative binnen with the same meaning.) But is a special instance of our everyday conjunction, which stems from the Old English be-utan and which variously meant without, except or outside. So the but was the "outside" room and the ben the room "within". This led to various phrases. Both words were used in the extended phrases but the hoose and ben the hoose for the two rooms. To be far ben with one meant to be a close friend, who was regularly admitted to the ben.

WISDOM CORNER

Smart people learn from everything and everyone, average people from their experiences, stupid people already have all the answers.

SOCRATES

No one is to blame for your future situation but yourself. If you want to be successful, then become "Successful."

JAYMIN SHAH

Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

LOL

A BLONDE AND A LAWYER

A blonde and a lawyer are seated next to each other on a flight from LA to NY. The lawyer asks if she would like to play a fun game? The blonde, tired, just wants to take a nap, politely declines and rolls over to the window to catch a few winks. The lawyer persists and explains that the game is easy and a lot of fun. He explains, "I ask you a question, and if you don't know the answer, you pay me \$5.00, and vice versa. "Again, she declines and tries to get some sleep. The lawyer, now agitated, says, "Okay, if you don't know the answer you pay me \$5.00, and if I don't know the answer, I will pay you \$500.00." This catches the blonde's attention and, figuring there will be no end to this torment unless she plays, agrees to the game. The lawyer asks the first question. "What's the distance from the earth

to the moon?" The blonde doesn't say a word, reaches into her purse, pulls out a \$5.00 bill and hands it to the lawyer. "Okay" says the lawyer, "your turn." She asks the lawyer, "What goes up a hill with three legs and comes down with four legs?" The lawyer, puzzled, takes out his laptop computer and searches all his references, no answer. He taps into the air phone with his modem and searches the net and the library of congress, no answer. Frustrated, he sends e-mails to all his friends and coworkers, to no avail. After an hour, he wakes the blonde, and hands her \$500.00. The blonde says, "Thank you," and turns back to get some more sleep. The lawyer, who is more than a little miffed, wakes the blonde and asks, "Well, what's the answer?" Without a word, the blonde reaches into her purse, hands the lawyer \$5.00, and goes back to sleep. And you thought blondes were dumb.

FOCUS ASSEMBLY ELECTION

BENGAL POLLS CRUCIAL

West Bengal elections may be a referendum for India's economic policies. It will decide whether the politics of "reformist economy" will continue or force the country to search for a new model.

The stakes are high for BJP as it is keen on perpetuating high prices to fee-toll regime and so is its eagerness to win the state. The regional Trinamool-Left forces have put up tough resistance to save their bastion. If the BJP wins, it will be an endorsement of its policies for sale of PSUs or the privatisation spree. If the TMC wins on its own or forms government with the Left-led alliance, nationally the 1991 Manmohanomics, which ushered in privatisation of national assets and severe woes on the people, would come for review.

Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee leading a fierce battle against the aggressive BJP released her manifesto promising higher financial aid to farmers, job creation, better health and education, housing to all and inclusion of more communities in the OBC category. Yes, caste has made a visible return to Bengal politics from the supposed myth of the state having risen above caste politics long back.

The dynamics are more. The TMC leader is trying hard to woo the Bengali sentiments, against the pan nationalistic cry of the BJP. The Bengali narrative since Independence has dogged the state and even led first Chief Minister Dr BC Ray allege discrimination by Delhi and consequent flight of capital from the state. Mamata has acted carefully igniting the sentiments to capture the most media footage even during the visits of the Prime Minister or other BJP leaders since January 23, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose birth anniversary bash at Victory Memorial.

In no recent election, not even in Bihar, the state parties were



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seen to be the cynosure of the media as it is being seen in Bengal. A large number of You Tube channels, certainly getting funds from different quarters, are showing events and issues that the national media miss. These not only capture popular moods but also the stark economic issues like the farmers' agitation, their campaign in the state, inflation-hit people and mid-night discussions on privatisation.

The two-day strike by bank employees and subsequent strike of insurance workers also are flashed on the social media. Bengal is discussing demonetisation, its impact on the poor and economy, GST, pushing through three laws liberalising farm markets and junking of land bill following problems in Rajya Sabha and also lockdown, social and economic devastation. The sale of PSUs is being

discussed in terms of job losses and how would the government be able to create jobs. An interesting discussion is on Mamata's high-handed style of functioning and centralisation of power in the BJP. In short, the autocratic behaviour is in question.

Inflation is hitting the people hard. The consumer prices have risen by 5 per cent in February. They are worried about administered rise of petrol and diesel prices, doubling of edible mustard oil prices to Rs 150, fish, other food items and galloping rise of non-food item prices. This seethes the voter and this ire is not turned towards Mamata.

To say that this is uniformly hitting the BJP in constituencies is also not true. It has a strong fighting machine and has captured a significant space. The Left-Congress-ISF alliance is vying

with the BJP to have the second slot if not the first. The BJP has emerged as the challenger and carefully sweeps stark economic questions under the carpet with national security issues or safety of the Hindu community facing an onslaught of highly aggressive minority population.

Muslim politics has entered a new phase with the rise of ISF of Furfura peer Abbas Siddique "to highlight their economic plight". It is breaking the mould of Muslim politics comprising about 27 per cent of the population but going high as 80 per cent in some constituencies. Even the BJP has fielded Muslim candidates. Never before, except in Jammu and Kashmir, anywhere a Muslim religious identity has been in the forefront. This may change political pattern in many states and may make BJP more relevant or not but its polarised politics may have caused the rise of a Frankenstein against an inclusive Gandhian politics. Will there be a churning also in the Congress which has an alliance with AIUDF of Badruddin Ahmed in Assam, and other parties?

This changing pattern may also influence the national economy. If the trend strengthens, political parties would have to be watchful so as not to divide resources on religious community grounds that may lead to new social strife.

Yes, politics is coercive in Bengal. The Left, TMC, BJP and others have mastered the art. It can influence the voting pattern. But be it whatever, the economy is central to Bengal elections. Even a polarised person would vote for or against the economic policies. The victory of Modi or Mamata would decide the direction. The BJP has lot at stake not only for the party but for its rich friends as well and even the much touted National Education Policy that aims at privatising the sector.

SPECTRUM INDIAN TOYS

Need to promote Indian toys



Nikunja Bihari Sahu

IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY A LOT OF ATTENTION HAS BEEN GIVEN ON THE IMPACT OF TOYS ON DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF A CHILD'S LIFE FOR BLOSSOMING HIS INNOVATIVENESS AND CREATIVITY SPIRIT

Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, in one of his Man Ki Baat programmes, emphasised the need for promoting Indian toys and called upon all the stake holders to play big role to become global manufacturing hubs to make the country self-reliant in this promising sector. The subsequent show-casing of the Toy Fair in New Delhi from February 27 to March 2, 2021 is a strong message to revisit and boost the toy sector through which our rich cultural heritage can be best reflected to the world at large.

In the lucrative global toy market, India's contribution at present, however, is unimpressive. India's toy market stands at around \$450-500 million which is about 0.5% of the world toy market of around \$90 billion value. Currently, a huge 85% of Indian toys are imported ones of which the Chinese market account for a major share.

The history of toys in India dates back to the Indus Valley Civilization around 5,000 years ago. The earliest toys included whistles shaped like birds, toy monkeys that could slide down a string and small carts which were made from materials found in nature such as wood, clay and rocks.

There was a time when toys like rattlers, pull carts, dolls, stackers, building blocks, stuffed toys, train sets were children's best friends during the long, hot and dreary summer breaks which could arouse a



child's curiosity for hours. Today, however, the market is brimming with a variety of factory-made toys engineered with modern materials and technologies. Moreover, children are now over burdened with assignments from schools so that they hardly find any time to devote to toys. Moreover, the arrival of soft games from computer and smart phone platforms had made the situation worse by getting children distracted from conventional toys.

Toys generally fuel the fancies of children as they try to manipulate them in a variety of modes to get different effects. This inculcates scientific enquiry and foster creative talents in the minds of children. A good toy should attract a child's mind and provide the

scope for exploring and extending its potentials. In this sense, a toy should be partly incomplete and should provide a scope to the children to be engaged in hands-on and minds-on activities to supplement the missing concept with one's own ingenuity. A toy should not be simply judged by its cost or source of foreign origin, rather by its impacts on the minds of children for nurturing their creative talents. An appealing toy should not subdue, veil or wither a child's imagination, rather become a part of his resourcefulness capability. Above all, the toys should be such that in their presence the childhood would bloom and smile!

In the National Education Policy a lot of attention has been given on the impact of toys on differ-

ent aspects of a child's life for blossoming his innovativeness and creativity spirit. Learning while playing, doing while learning, learning to make toys, visiting toy factories- all these have been made integral part of the curriculum.

There has been a rich tradition of local toys in our country. There are many talented and skilled artisans who possess expertise in making good toys. The dancing doll toys of Tanjavur and the Etikoppaka toys of Vishakhapatnam are to mention a few. Driven by a huge consumer base, India represents an important market in the world toy industry. Moreover, the country has a very large young mass with around half of the total population under the age of 25. The easy availability of raw materials for toy making, the vast support and service base and the large work force comprising of skilled artisans and manpower would help India become one of the leading global players in this sector. The middle class population, in particular, has shown strong consumerism demand in the country for recreational and pastime products. These have all contributed to the prospect of a flourishing toy industry in our country in days to come.

The writer is an Education Officer, Regional Science Centre, Bhopal.

Fight against system

Sir, The new Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirtha Singh Rawat has embroiled himself in a Twitter storm and controversy over his views on women wearing ripped jeans. According to him, he was shocked to see a mother wearing ripped jeans and boots while she was on a flight with her children. He also said she runs an NGO, goes out in society and has two children and wondered what values she would give them. It all starts at home. What we do, our kids follow. In my opinion his comments on this issue is correct and it should be viewed meticulously. Now the question is who serves the culture? No doubts the system in which we are living and the system controls everything covering all aspect of our life. The system is the super structure which influences our economy, culture, ethics, education, literature, society and above all our thought process. So it is not the question of ripped jeans, rather everything which are happening in our society looks ugly. It is, in fact, the gift of the rotten system. So, so long as the system exists, such type of ugly things we have to see. Like ripped jeans politicians should be shocked having seen massive unemployment, price rising, malnutrition, rape, murder etc. which are all the gift of the system. So our fight should be against the system.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Reform criminal justice system

Sir, Apropos article "When cops plant bombs", Orissa POST, March 23. It may have started with 20 loose gelatin sticks found in an abandoned SUV outside industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence, but the case has blown up, and now, the fate of state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh hangs in balance. Many questions remained unanswered in the entire episode beginning with the reinstatement of suspended police officer Vaze and his arrest to - Chief Minister Thackeray's inaction to seek resignation of his Home Minister who has been accused of indulged in extortion - and not ordering a probe, and NCP chief Sharad Pawar's defence of the Home Minister. But the issue goes beyond the immediate. No major party in the state has focused on police reforms, a possible reflection of the complicity of all actors in systemic corruption. Until the police are kept insulated from political interference, whether in terms of postings or transfers, or in terms of their investigations, the two will forever remain in quid pro quo arrangements.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Assam river island voters push for development

THE PEOPLE OF MAJULI ARE RALLYING BEHIND CHIEF MINISTER SARBANANDA SONOWAL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Majuli (Assam), March 25: Voters in the world's largest river island of Majuli have been rallying behind Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, who is seeking re-election from the tribal stronghold seat which is surrounded by the turbulent waters of the Brahmaputra.

VOTERS IN THE WORLD'S LARGEST RIVER ISLAND OF MAJULI HAVE BEEN RALLYING BEHIND ASSAM CM SARBANANDA SONOWAL

THE BJP HEAVYWEIGHT IS PITTED AGAINST THREE-TIME CONGRESS MLA RAJIB LOCHAN PEGU

MAJULI WAS 880 SQ KM IN SIZE AT THE START OF 20TH CENTURY, BUT NOW IT HAS BEEN REDUCED TO ROUGHLY 350 SQ KM

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) heavyweight is pitted against three-time Congress MLA Rajib Lochan Pegu. But the Scheduled Tribe-reserved voters of Majuli seem to have decided to bet on Sonowal for "trying to honour his commitment to the people in the past five years". Majuli will go to the polls in phase-1 on Saturday. The state has a total of 126 seats and the first phase polling will be exercised in 47, that will decide whether the BJP-led alliance retains power or the Congress-led grouping that includes the AIUDF stages a comeback. "We have decided to vote for



Sonowal again, he has done a lot for the people of Majuli since 2016, especially building roads everywhere," said Kamaleswar Noroh from the Naganchuk village. He belongs to the dominant Mising tribe, the biggest indigenous tribal community in Majuli. The Mising tribe has a significant vote bank in Majuli and it always supported Congress but they switched their loyalty to the BJP since the last Assembly polls. A hardcore Congress supporter, Srimanta Saikia from Potiyari village, said: "Sarbananda Sonowal

had given Majuli the status of district in 2016 which was the long pending demand and thus people have great respect for him but Congress is giving a tough fight to him." Majuli is shrinking fast as Brahmaputra's erosion has destroyed a significant chunk over the years and it is feared that the river island district will be a part of history by 2050. Majuli was 880 sq km in size at the start of 20th century, but now it has been reduced to roughly 350 sq km. The pace of erosion is alarmingly fast in recent years.

Majuli is always a dream destination for tourists mainly for bird watchers but road connectivity is still a huge issue as residents are largely dependent on ferry services to communicate people outside of the world. The construction work on a two-lane river bridge to connect Jorhat district which was a lifelong demand of Majuli voters is yet to begin. The ruling BJP says that all decks have been cleared for the Majuli-Jorhat bridge and 'bhoomi poojan' has already been performed and construction work would follow soon.

KANYAKUMARI TRANSHIPMENT PROJECT

Stiff opposition forces govt to backtrack from venture

In the 2019 polls, Congress candidate H Vasanthakumar had promised the people of Kanyakumari that if he was elected he would not allow the construction of the port

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, March 25: The Shipping and Port Ministry of the Government of India is backtracking from the much celebrated transshipment project in Kanyakumari amid stiff opposition from local fishermen community. The fishermen are worried that with the commencement of the project, there would be a sharp decline in the catch thus affecting their livelihood. The Port Trust has already withdrawn the expression of interest it had called for construction of the Private-Public Participatory (PPP) model of Transshipment project. The Kanyakumari transshipment project has become a major election issue in Tamil Nadu after the Tuticorin port had released advertisements in major news papers calling for Expression of Interest from private players for the construction of the port. The Union government had planned to construct an international transshipment hub in the PPP mode in the area between Kovalam and Thenthamarakulam. The Central government had initiated the process to complete the project in three stages. Several organisations including many fisherman organisations had come out on the streets against the transshipment project at Kanyakumari.



It may be recalled that an office for the proposed Transshipment project was opened in Kanyakumari before the 2019 general elections. In the 2019 polls, Congress candidate H Vasanthakumar had promised the people of Kanyakumari that if he was elected he would not allow the construction of the port. The then Union Minister of State for Shipping, Pon Radhakrishnan was the NDA candidate from Kanyakumari Lok Sabha elections in 2019. He was trounced by Vasanthakumar by a margin of around 3 lakh votes from the constituency which he had won by around 1 lakh votes in 2014. After the passing away of Vasanthakumar, Kanyakumari is facing a by-poll and Pon

Radhakrishnan is locking horns with the son of late Vasanthkumar, Vijay Vasanth who has promised the electorate that he would not allow the building of the Transshipment project. Sensing political reversals in the Kanyakumari, Colachel, Nagercoil and adjacent assembly seats, the ruling AIADMK has also distanced itself from the project with Dalavai Sundaram categorically ruling out the project in Kanyakumari. BJP leader and Lok Sabha candidate of the party for Kanyakumari by-elections Radhakrishnan told this news agency: "Projects which the people don't want will not be foisted upon them and as there is stiff opposition to this project and Government of India will not go ahead with this."

TN candidate promises moon trip, free 3-storey house with pool

AGENCIES

Chennai, March 25: A mini-helicopter and an annual deposit of ₹1 crore for every home, gold jewellery for weddings, a three-storey house - a candidate in Tamil Nadu has promised the moon to voters. A trip to the moon is also on Thulam Saravanan's list of promises. Thulam Saravanan is an independent candidate contesting the April 6 Tamil Nadu election from the Madurai South constituency. His manifesto and its outlandish promises have certainly grabbed attention in the constituency where there are 13 more candidates. "My aim is to raise awareness against people falling for freebies by political parties. I want them to choose good candidates who are ordinary humble people," the



33-year-old journalist-turned-candidate told the media. In other words, to highlight tall promises by netas, he is making them. His poll symbol is also a dustbin. The message - if you want to fall for promises that can never be met, you might as well throw your votes in a dustbin. He also promises a robot to reduce the workload of housewives, a boat for every family along with channels for boat rides, a 300-foot

high artificial snow mountain to keep his constituency cool, a space research centre and a rocket launch pad. Saravanan, who lives with his poor elderly parents and yet to marry, says he borrowed money on interest to pay the ₹20,000 deposit to file his nomination papers. He slams political parties for "turning politics into a money spinner" and ignoring people's welfare. "While in power they don't work to provide jobs, to nurture agriculture or even ensure clean air or interlink rivers. Only during election time they try to lure people by throwing money at them and not letting them decide properly. They have polluted politics and have turned it to be the preserve of the rich".

CANVASSING FOR VOTE



BJP-AGP alliance supporters during an election campaign rally in support of the candidate from Tezpur constituency Prithiraj Rabha, ahead of the state Assembly polls at Tezpur in Sonitpur district, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

Ultimate betrayal: Kamal Haasan on India not voting against SL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, March 25: Superstar turned politician and chief of Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) Kamal Haasan Thursday said India not voting in the resolution against Sri Lanka at the 46th General Council of the UNHRC was "ultimate betrayal". He said in a tweet, "Six countries, including the UK had called on the United Nations to hold a proper inquiry into Sri Lanka's human rights abuses and moved a resolution in the UN Human Rights Council against the Sri Lankan government. "The demand of the Tamil diaspora is to bring Sri Lanka before the International Court of Justice and punish them for war crimes. While the world Tamil's were expecting India to support and vote against Sri Lanka in the resolution, we abstained from voting..

Assam political parties woo tea garden workers

THE EIGHT LAKH WORK FORCE IN 850 GARDENS OF THE STATE IS, IS SEEN AS A FORMIDABLE VOTE BANK WHOSE UNSTINTED SUPPORT, THE CONGRESS HAD ENJOYED FOR DECADES SINCE INDEPENDENCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, March 25: Assam's tea garden workers are being wooed by political parties of all shades with promises of sops galore, as they comprise a hefty share of the state's electorate. In the ongoing Assembly polls leaders from the ruling BJP as well as challenger Congress besides the regional outfits - the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the newly floated Assam Jatiya Parishad - have been fanning out to the constituencies in the tea-belt areas spread across eight districts of Upper Assam. Out of the 47 constituencies, going to polls in the first phase March 27, 38 fall in the tea districts of Jorhat, Golaghat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Bishwanath and Sonitpur. The eight lakh work force in 850 gardens of the state is, is seen as a formidable vote bank whose unstinted support, the Congress had enjoyed for decades since Independence. However, in the 2014 Parliamentary elections, the BJP, with support of the RSS and its allied organisations, made winning four of its seven Lok Sabha seats from Assam in the tea-belt areas. The saffron party followed it up by winning 22 seats in the 2016 assembly polls with its ally the AGP picking up four more. Subsequently the saffron party increased its tally



In the ongoing Assembly polls leaders from the ruling BJP as well as challenger Congress have been fanning out to the constituencies in the tea-belt areas spread across eight districts of Upper Assam

in the 2019 parliamentary polls to nine Lok Sabha constituencies, retaining all the seats it had won in the earlier elections. The Congress is now making an all-out effort to regain lost ground with its election campaign focusing on increasing the daily

wages of tea garden workers to ₹365 from an existing ₹167 which appears to have caught the ruling BJP on the wrong foot placing them on the defensive. To counter it has been highlighting the various measures taken by the party during the last five years of its rule for the tea garden belt. Both the Congress and the BJP have pulled all stops to counter each other's claims on their respective contribution to the tea industry. Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra made particular efforts to woo the community with both visiting tea gardens and enjoying cups of tea and lunch with tea garden workers. The BJP fielded its national leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and party President JP Nadda,

all of whom addressed several election rallies in tea-ricj constituencies. Priyanka made a popular connect in the tea garden areas as she sat on the garden grounds, chatted with workers, sipped a cuppa, visited the home of a labourer's family and even tied the wicker basket to her head to go plucking tea leaves in a garden in Biswanath district which the BJP ridiculed as a "photo op session during the off-season when leaves are not plucked". "The BJP may make fun but it is clear that they have cheated the tea garden workers by not fulfilling any of the promises made by the party in the 2016 polls. The Congress has reached out to the workers and promised that all their long-pending issues will be addressed," Assam Congress president Ripun Bora said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in all his five election rallies so far in the state has alleged that the Congress, which ruled the state for decades, had failed to provide them with basic facilities and it was the BJP during the last five years of its rule that ensured increase in wages twice. He also underlined that the state government had sought another increase before the announcement of polls but the matter is currently in Court. Once the BJP manages to retain the state, it would try to resolve the issue amicably at the earliest.

CBI SURPRISE CHECKS FCI DEPOTS IN SOUTH ASSAM

The raids were undertaken following complaints of misappropriation of food grains and manipulation of records by the depots' officials

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, March 25: CBI teams have conducted surprise inspections at depots of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) in Cachar districts Ramnagar and Karimganj districts Badarpurghat, both locations in South Assam, following complaints of misappropriation of food grains and manipulation of records by the depots' officials. The inspection reports have revealed prima facie "truth" in the complaints made about the FCI depots. The first surprise check was conducted at the FCI depot, Ramnagar, at around 10.15 a.m. on March 19. CBI officials who were present included Niraj Kumar Singh, inspector of police, CBI, ACB, Shillong; Mukesh Kumar, inspector of police, CBI, ACB, Shillong; Shiv Kumar Singh, sub-inspector of police, CBI, ACB, Shillong; and F.A. Sangma, PC, CBI, ACB, Shillong. CBI sources say their inspection teams during the surprise check found that no staff was present in the entire depot campus on that day. Besides, the officials found many other surprising facts including unavailability of any register at the depot's entry gate, non-opera-



tional condition of most of the CCTV cameras in the sheds, absence of stack cards and palla bags in stacks of the depot's sheds, absence of depot online system at the depot's weighbridge and unavailability of updated master ledger, stack ledger and central master ledger at the depot. The team which carried out the surprise check at FCI depot, Badarpurghat included Pradeep Das, CBI, ACB, Shillong; Anil Kumar Rai, CBI, ACB, Shillong; and Shantanu Paul, manager (EM), FCI (RO), Shillong. These officials reached the depot at around 12.15 p.m. March 19 and

conducted the inspection. Sanatomba Singh told the team that the FSD Badarpurghat comprises two sheds (shed 1 and shed 2) for storage of food grains (rice and wheat). After the inspection, it was found that there was a shortage of 948 bags of rice in shed-1, while in shed-2 there was a shortage of 523 bags of rice. The number of wheat bags was found to be 1,127 whereas the number as per the records should have been 1,172. It was not known what action was taken in connection with the irregularities found in the depots, when this report was filed.

of the day quote

The TMC government has done nothing for Adivasis and the other backward communities of the state. If voted to power, we will bring in a new era of development. Every family of the Kurmi community and Adivasi community will have one member who will be provided with employment



AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

We have more than 200 video evidences of the assault in which former officers from the police department belonging to the CM's caste can be seen abusing women and assaulting male legislators in the Vidhan Sabha Tuesday. They were allowed to enter the Vidhan Sabha building to execute the conspiracy



TEJASHWI YADAV | LEADER OF OPNN IN BIHAR ASSEMBLY

This is my belief that the RSS and affiliated organisations should not be called the Sangh Parivar. In a family there are women, there is respect for elders, there is love and affection, which is not in the RSS. So now I will not call the RSS as Parivar (family)



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Coast Guard seizes drugs

Mumbai: In a major intelligence-based swoop, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Thursday said it has seized narcotics valued over ₹3,000 crore and weapons from a Sri Lankan boat, off the Minicoy Isle in the Lakshadweep Islands region.

Criminal escapes from custody

New Delhi: A fierce gunfight broke out at a government hospital in Delhi in broad daylight Thursday when a police team escorting a notorious criminal came face to face with those who came to aid his escape, leaving one assailant dead and triggering a chaos with patients and their relatives running for cover, officials said. While the prisoner managed to flee, the police nabbed one of his six associates who was injured in the gunfight at the GTB hospital here, they said.

J&K highway reopens

Srinagar: One-way traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway, which remained suspended for the last two days due to landslides, was restored in the Ramban district of Jammu and Kashmir Thursday, officials said. The highway opened in the early hours of the day after the clearance of slides, triggered by incessant rains, near Cafeteria Moh in the district.

Gangster held

New Delhi: An alleged gangster and his accomplice wanted in several cases were arrested after an encounter with police on Bhairon Marg in Central Delhi's Pragati Maidan area, police said Thursday.

Woman raped

Shahjahanpur (UP): A 35-year-old woman was allegedly raped by a man in this district of Uttar Pradesh, police said Thursday. The woman, whose husband works in Delhi, was alone at her house on Tuesday night when the 50-year-old accused barged in and allegedly raped her, Superintendent of Police (Rural) Sanjeev Bajpai said.



People have begun to rely on the Kejriwal model of governance and feel that they have a choice to vote for someone who actually works for them

MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

ANTONY SIGNALS END TO HIS PARLIAMENTARY STINT

One of Congress' tallest leaders A.K. Antony is all set to call time on his parliamentary career as he on Thursday said that he will not seek renomination after his present term in the Rajya Sabha ends next year



6 STATES ACCOUNT FOR 81% OF DAILY NEW COVID CASES



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 25: Maharashtra, Punjab, Kerala, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat are reporting a surge in daily coronavirus cases, accounting for 80.63 per cent of the new COVID-19 infections, the Union Health Ministry said Thursday. The three states of Maharashtra, Kerala and Punjab also account for 74.32 per cent the of total active cases in the country which has increased to 3.95 lakh and comprises 3.35 per cent of the total infections.

A total of 53,476 new cases have been reported in a span of 24 hours, the highest single day rise so far this year. Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 31,855 (59.57 per cent). It is followed by Punjab with 2,613 while Kerala reported 2,456 new cases, the ministry said. Ten states including Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh are displaying an upward trajectory in daily new cases, it highlighted. India's total COVID-19 active caseload has increased to 3,95,192. A net rise of 26,735 cases is recorded from the total active caseload in a span of 24 hours. "Three states, Maharashtra,

Kerala and Punjab, account for 74.32 per cent the of total active cases in the country. Maharashtra alone accounts for 62.91 per cent of the total active cases in the country," the ministry underlined. The ministry also said that over 5.31 crore vaccine doses have been administered through 8,61,292 sessions.

These include 79,80,849 HCWs (1st dose), 50,61,790 HCWs (2nd dose), 84,78,478 FLWs (1st dose) and 32,37,381 FLWs (2nd Dose), 51,31,949 beneficiaries aged more than 45 years with specific co-morbidities (1st Dose) and 2,32,55,262 beneficiaries aged more than 60 years.

The ministry said that 60 per cent of the cumulative doses (5,31,45,709) have been given in eight states --Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra.

India's cumulative recoveries stand at 1,12,31,650 with 26,490 recoveries being registered in a span of 24 hours. The gap between total recovered cases and the active cases stands at 10,836,458 as on date, the ministry stated. Also, 251 deaths were reported in a span of 24 hours.

Six states account for 78.49 per cent of the daily deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (95).

Indo-Bangla ties improving fast: Experts

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shillong/Agartala, March 25: Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day Bangladesh visit, experts and top officials of the two neighbours felt that India-Bangladesh relations are further improving as the new connectivity projects are being operationalised.

In connection with the three events, Prime Minister Modi would be visiting Bangladesh, second time in six years after 2015, Friday-Saturday at the invitation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Modi's two-day visit is in connection with the commemoration of 'Mujib Borsho', the birth centenary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, 50-years of the establishment of diplomatic ties between India and



Bangladesh and golden jubilee of Bangladesh's liberation war.

India's External Affairs Ministry's Director (Bangladesh-Myanmar) Kartik Pande said that growing connectivity projects facilitate further coming closer of the two neighbours. Participating in a virtual discussion Wednesday Pande highlighted the recently inaugurated 'Maitre Setu' over the Feni river between Sabroom (Tripura) and

Ramgarh (Bangladesh).

"Tripura would be northeast India's gateway to Bangladesh," he added. On March 9, Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually opened the 1.888 km bridge in southern Tripura's Sabroom, which is 72 km by road from the Chittagong sea port.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also virtually addressed the function organised to inaugurate the double lane Feni bridge named 'Maitre Setu' (friendship bridge).

The government owned National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) has constructed the vital bridge at a cost of around ₹129 crore and the 1,476 metre stretch of approach roads, of which 1,193 metre falls in the Indian territory and the

remaining 283 metre is in Bangladesh.

The Feni bridge would enormously facilitate transportation of goods and heavy machinery to and from the Northeastern states from various parts of the country and abroad using the Chittagong sea port, Kolkata port and other ports in India and Bangladesh.

Saying that Bangladesh lies at the intersection of India's "Act-East and Neighbourhood first policies", Pande said that the government's initiatives are on to restore the physical connectivity of pre-partition times and more such steps in this direction.

Participating in the virtual discussion, former Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Mohammad Shahidul Haque said that Bangladesh-India relationship is at the centre of Bangladesh's foreign policy.

BUSY BUTTERFLY



A butterfly is collecting honey from flowers at Lucknow zoo

UNI PHOTO

‘1st time in 5-yrns LoC is silent’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 25: The Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir has been silent for the first time in around five to six years as not a single shot was fired in March, Army Chief Gen M M Naravane said Thursday referring to the recent commitment by Indian and Pakistani militaries to observe ceasefire in the region.

The Army Chief, however, said the terror infrastructure including terrorist launch-pads on the Pakistani side remained intact, asserting that it cannot be business as usual unless the neighbouring country stops supporting terrorism.

Speaking at the India Economic Conclave, Gen Naravane said he was optimistic that the ceasefire will hold as the Pakistan Army was on board. "I am glad to inform that in the whole month of March, we have not had a single shot fired at the Line of Control (LoC) barring an odd incident. It is for the first time in about five or six years that the LoC has been silent. That really bodes well for the future," he said.

Last month, the Indian and Pakistani armies recommitted themselves to the 2003 ceasefire agreement



Last month, the Indian & Pak armies recommitted themselves to the 2003 ceasefire agreement on the LoC in J&K

on the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir. The return to the ceasefire was agreed upon by the director generals of military operations of the two countries.

"Our core issue is that they have to stop support to terrorism. Unless they stop that it cannot be business as usual," Gen Naravane said at the conclave organised by Times

Network. Asked what could have prompted Pakistan to suddenly agree to the ceasefire, Gen Naravane said the duels between the two sides had not resulted any forward movement and that Islamabad has its own internal problems.

"I feel that they have their own problems internally and from time-to-time, you have to also see whether a strategy that you are following is actually paying any dividend," he said. "Over so many years, they would have also realised that it is time to make a change and that would have prompted them to extend this olive branch," he added.

NATURAL FOREST BEING DEVELOPED IN VARANASI

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Varanasi, March 25: A natural forest is being developed by using Japan's Miyawaki method of afforestation on the outskirts of Undi village in Varanasi.

Japan's Miyawaki is a technique pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki, that helps in building dense, native forests.

The approach is supposed to ensure that plant growth is 10 times faster and the resulting plantation is 30 times denser than usual. It involves planting dozens of native species in the same area and becomes maintenance-free after the first 3 years.

This will also help in environmental protection and will also encourage eco-tourism.

Being one of the oldest cities of the country, Varanasi is dotted with hundreds of sacred temples and ghats making it a spiritual destination in Uttar Pradesh.

Varanasi Development Authority (VDA) vice chairman, Isha Duhan said that the development authority has sent a proposal for this project to the tourism department.



A natural forest will be developed in about 36.225 hectares of Undi village. The work of about 4.3 kilometres of fencing has started, which will be completed by July 2021. The proposed area is about 6 kilometres from the Jaunpur main road to the Ghazipur Road Ring Road Bypass.

In this regard, the city of Lord Shiva will be soon developed on the lines of Kyoto. The creation of an urban forest will make Kashi worth living and support its population. The wetland will also be developed to maintain environmental protection while keeping this area free from encroachment.

ASHA BHOSLE IS ‘MAHARASHTRA BHUSHAN 2020’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 25: Maharashtra Government Thursday said legendary singer Asha Bhosle has been selected for Maharashtra Bhushan award, the state government's highest honour.

A committee chaired by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray decided to select Bhosle for the award for the year 2020.

The award, instituted in 1996 by the state government to recognise distinguished work and achievements of eminent persons from the state, representing different walks of life, carries a cash prize of ₹10 lakh and a citation. Bhosle, whose sister Lata Mangeshkar won the award for 1997, said she got to know from Uddhav Thackeray that she has been selected for the award for 2020. "I thank him that he thought of choosing me for the award," Bhosle said. Born September 8, 1933, in Maharashtra's Sangli district, Bhosle was initiated into music by her father; the renowned Marathi stage actor-singer Dinanath Mangeshkar.

SC slams Army for ‘indirect discrimination’ of women officers

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 25: The evaluation criteria set by the Army for granting permanent commission (PC) to women SSC officers constituted "systemic discrimination" which has caused an economic and psychological harm and an "affront to their dignity", the Supreme Court said Thursday.

The apex court said the administrative requirement imposed by the Army authorities while considering the case of women Short Service Commission (SSC) officers for PC, of benchmarking them with the officers lowest in merit in the corresponding male batch, is "arbitrary and irrational".

A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah said this administrative requirement

"shall not be enforced" while implementing the last year's verdict of the top court which had directed that women officers in the Army be granted PC.

"A superficial sense of equality is not in the true spirit of the Constitution and attempts to make equality only symbolic," the bench said in its 137-page verdict which was delivered on a batch of pleas filed by 86 petitioners questioning the manner in which the last year verdict has been implemented.

"Based on the above analysis, we are of the view that the evaluation criteria set by the Army constituted systemic discrimination against the petitioners. The pattern of evaluation deployed by the Army, to implement the decision in Babita Puniya (last year verdict) disproportionately affects women,"



the bench said.

It said this "disproportionate impact" is attributable to the "structural discrimination against women, by dint of which the facially neutral criteria of selective ACR evaluation and fulfilling the medical criteria to be in SHAPE-1 at a belated

stage, to secure PC disproportionately impacts them vis-a-vis their male counterparts."

It said the pattern of evaluation, by excluding subsequent achievements of the petitioners and failing to account for the inherent criteria of discrimination that were

produced as a consequence of casual grading and "skewed incentive structures", has resulted in indirect and systemic discrimination.

"This discrimination has caused an economic and psychological harm and an affront to their dignity," the bench said.

It directed that all women officers, who have fulfilled the cut-off grade of 60 per cent in the Special No 5 Selection Board held in September last year, shall be entitled to grant of PC subject to their meeting medical criteria prescribed by the general instructions dated August 1, 2020 and receiving disciplinary and vigilance clearance.

It said that medical criteria stipulated in the general instructions shall be applied at the following points of time -- at the time of fifth year of service or at the time of

tenth year of service, as the case may be. "In case the officer has failed to meet the medical criterion for the grant of PC at any of these points in time, the WSSCO (Women SSC officer) will not be entitled to the grant of PC," the bench said.

The top court clarified that a WSSCO, who was in the temporary low medical category (TLMC) in the fifth or tenth year of service and subsequently met the SHAPE-1 criterion after the one year period of stabilization, would also be eligible for grant of PC.

The bench noted that SHAPE-1 has a "specific meaning" -- 'S' denotes the physiological features including cognitive function abnormalities, 'H' stands for hearing, 'A' for appendages, 'P' for physical capacity and 'E' for eye-sight.

of the day quote

It is a matter of concern that women are feeling insecure. Incidents in Pilibhit, Gonda, police atrocities in Etah and the Jhansi incident where nuns were targeted are a matter of concern and shame



MAYAWATI | BSP PRESIDENT

The government of Goa is studying the possibility of outsourcing the modern abattoir of Goa Meat Complex to private companies for the period of ten years



PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CHIEF MINISTER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on his part, has promised piped water availability in every household of the country by the end of 2024



RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Three soldiers charred to death

Jaipur: Three soldier died of burn injuries while five others sustained serious injuries when their vehicle caught fire during a training exercise in Sri Ganganagar district early Thursday. The incident took place around 1 a.m. "near Gopalsar during the night training task when unfortunately 3 fatalities were reported", said Defence PRO, Lt Col Amitabh Sharma.

Chandy gets clean chit

Thiruvananthapuram: Two-time former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy, who is busy campaigning for the April 6 Assembly elections, Thursday got a major boost when a Crime Branch Police report gave him a clean chit on the allegations raised by the solar scam accused, that she was sexually abused by the former. The Crime Branch wing of the Kerala Police had probed this case after the victim raised a complaint and on detailed probe, it has found out that the allegations raised by her had no evidence to corroborate her complaint.

HC grants bail to Deepak Kochhar

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court Thursday granted bail to Deepak Kochhar, husband of former ICICI Bank CEO Chanda Kochhar, in a money laundering case registered by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). There was no likelihood of Kochhar absconding or tampering with evidence, the court held while granting him relief. Kochhar had approached the high court after a special court in the city rejected his bail plea in December last year.



Which political party runs the government that enables these goons to harass and demand personal details of young women commuting on a train? BJP

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

345 GUJ FISHERMEN LODGED IN PAK JAILS

The Gujarat government told the Legislative Assembly Thursday that 345 fishermen from the state are languishing in Pakistani jails, of whom 248 were arrested by the neighbouring country in the last two years



Being made a 'scapegoat': Vaze

AGENCIES

Mumbai, March 25: A special court in Mumbai on Thursday extended till April 3 the NIA custody of Assistant Police Inspector (API) Sachin Vaze, the prime accused in the SUV case that pertains to the explosives-laden Scorpio with a threat note that was found abandoned near Antilia, the residence of industrialist Mukesh Ambani.

Vaze was produced before the Special NIA Court after his NIA custody ended on Thursday and the agency secured his custody for another nine days, exactly a month after the SUV was found near Antilia February 25.

Seeking extension of Vaze's custody by 15 days, Additional Solicitor-General Anil Singh, representing the NIA, said the agency had seized 62 live bullets from Vaze's home which are not yet accounted for since he was only issued 30 bullets



by the police department, of which five have been accounted for.

He argued that when Vaze had allegedly gone to plant the SUV near Antilia, he reportedly collected and destroyed some critical CCTV footages of several places, and used

fake id cards to check into a five-star hotel. The NIA has already seized around half-a-dozen high-end cars and gathered forensic evidence like burnt clothes and mobile phone, other samples and blood traces from the

vehicles which have now been sent for DNA profiling and further forensic analysis.

Seeking Vaze's extended custody, the NIA said that it wants to question him further and verify his statements by confronting him with the other accused who have been arrested in connection with the case.

In his submissions before the special court, Vaze and his lawyer Abad Ponda dismissed the NIA's contentions and urged that its plea for extending custody should be rejected, as he was innocent and was being framed in the entire matter.

"I am being made a scapegoat in this whole incident. I have nothing to do with the crime," pleaded Vaze, who was arrested on March 13, four days after the probe was handed over to the NIA on March 9 following a massive political furore.

He said that he had investigated

SUV CASE

Mehbooba Mufti questioned by ED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Machr 25: PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, who was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate for more than five hours Thursday, said while dissent has been criminalised, the central agencies like the NIA, CBI and the ED were being "misused" to silence the opposition.

She alleged that anyone opposing the current government was "hounded by trumped up charges" like sedition or money laundering. "Dissent has been criminalised in this country. The ED, Central Bureau of Investigation and the National Investigation Agency are being misused to silence the opposition tactically," Mufti said after emerging from the ED office at Rajbagh here.

"This country is not being run by the Constitution but the agenda of a particular political party," she alleged. Asked about the questions put forth to her by the ED, the PDP chief said she was asked about the sale of her ancestral land in Bijbehara area of Anantnag district and the use of the chief minister's discretionary funds.



"Questions were asked regarding the sale of our ancestral land in Bijbehara and use of the chief minister's discretionary fund. I was asked from where would come the list of widows who were receiving help from the CM's secret funds," Mufti said, adding that she had nothing to fear as her hands were clean. The former Chief Minister said her party will continue to pursue the agenda for resolution of Jammu and Kashmir's problem and restoration of its special status as it existed before August 5, 2019.

JOYFUL MOOD



Students playing Holi outside Patna Womens College in Patna

UNI PHOTO

Budget session concludes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 25: Lok Sabha was Thursday adjourned sine die, bringing an end to the nearly two-month-long Budget session which registered 114 per cent productivity.

The session started January 29 and was originally slated to end on April 8 but several members had urged Speaker Om Birla to end it early so that they can focus on electioneering in four states and Puducherry. Speaker Birla had recently tested positive for COVID-19 and was not attending the House in the last week of the session. Rajya Sabha was Thursday adjourned sine die, 13 days ahead of its scheduled date of April 8, after the conclusion of the Budget session.

Birla in a tweet also thanked for smooth conduct of the session in-



cluding panel chairpersons, all parties, ministers and others. "Several important bills were also passed during the session. I could not be present in the House during the last days of the session due to health reasons. During that time the Panel of Chairpersons conducted the proceedings smoothly. Members also contributed fully to this. Thanks to

all for this," he said.

In his observations before adjourning the proceedings sine die (indefinite period), Bhartruhari Mehtab, who was in the chair, wished Birla a speedy recovery and informed members that the Speaker was stable. In Birla's absence, a panel of chairpersons, including Mehtab, Rajendra Agrawal, Rama Devi, Meenakashi Lekhi and Midun Reddy, chaired the proceedings. The Union Budget was tabled February 1. In his remarks before adjourning the session, Mahtab said despite disruptions, Lok Sabha's productivity during the Budget session stood at 114 per cent and the members also dealt with important issues by sitting till midnight on several occasions. A total of 146 members participated in the discussion on the Union Budget for 14 hours and 42 minutes, he said.

SC quashes FIR against Mukhim



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 25: "Free speech of the citizens of this country cannot be stifled by implicating them in criminal cases", the Supreme Court said Thursday and quashed the FIR lodged against veteran journalist Patricia Mukhim for allegedly creating communal disharmony through her Facebook post.

A bench of Justices L Nageswara Rao and S Ravindra Bhat said the fervent plea made by Mukhim in her social media post for protection of non-tribals living in Meghalaya and for their equality cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be categorized as hate speech.

The analysis of Facebook post written by Mukhim shows that no case of hate speech is made out, it apex court said.

"Disapprobation of governmental inaction cannot be branded as an attempt to promote hatred between different communities. Free speech of the citizens of this country cannot be stifled by implicating them in criminal cases, unless such speech has the tendency to affect public order," the bench said.

It said India is a plural and multicultural society and the promise of liberty, enunciated in the Preamble, manifests itself in various provisions which outline each citizen's rights; including right to free speech, to travel freely and settle throughout the length and breadth of India.

Justice Rao, who wrote the verdict on behalf of the bench said: "At times, when in the legitimate exercise of such a right, individuals travel, settle down or carry on a vocation in a place where they find conditions conducive, there may be resentments, especially if such citizens prosper, leading to hostility or possibly violence.

TOURISM INDUSTRY IN RAJ TO GO RURAL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, March 25: The fortunes of villagers, artisans and folk artists in the desert state are set to change as the ailing tourism industry, fighting the Covid crisis, has decided to go rural.

Hoping to cash in on the big domestic market, the industry has worked upon interesting proposals and has forwarded them to the government, confident that they shall be passed soon.

"We, as the industry, have urged officials to list attractions and handicrafts famous in the villages on all district web sites. Also, the hoardings and milestones should carry names of such villages and famous attractions which will boost economic prospects in the local region," Rajendra Singh Pachar, Secretary, HRAR told IANS.

"Also, new hotels in village circuits must come up so that tourists can experience the feel of rural Rajasthan. We have requested the government to provide a three-phase connection to these hoteliers without extra charge. Also, bar fees, which are same in rural and tehsil areas, shall be pro-

posed so that new hotels coming in rural rajasthan will get a breather."

Randhir Vikram Singh, president, HRAR and RATO said, "For next two years, few foreign travellers will be coming to India. UK has already barred foreign travel. In such a scenario, we have big hopes from experiential tourism which can be best experienced in rural Rajasthan. Hence, we are banking on developing newer tourism products for domestic travellers. Places such as Banswara, which are quite beautiful, will also be developed as tourist attractions."

"Basically, we plan to showcase rural Rajasthan which has stories of art, craft, history, nature, lakes, mountains and what not. This will help our village population earn a sustainable livelihood, he said.

However, when asked if Rajasthan will be able to accommodate tourists coming from all over India in terms of its infrastructure and inventory, Randhir Vikram Singh said, "Rajasthan has the best infrastructure and with a mammoth amount allotted by state government, we are planning to boost it further."



Representative image

Drones to measure India's rural assets

THE SURVEY, ONCE COMPLETED, WOULD ENABLE A LARGE POPULATION OF INDIA TO VALIDATE THEIR RURAL RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY AND USE IT AS A FINANCIAL ASSET

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 25: In one of the biggest aerial surveys, over 500 high resolution drones would be deployed soon to map nearly 6 lakh villages in the country to validate the residential properties of more than 83 crore Indians.

A big force of drone pilots on the ground to measure the rural land in India stretching from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and Shillong to Somnath, would be deployed by the Survey of India (SOI). "A hi-tech drone takes around 15 minutes to map an average Indian village. We expect that by March 2024, the 'drone flying' in the country would be complete," said Sunil Kumar, the Union Secretary for the Panchayati Raj Ministry, the nodal agency for implementing the mas-



Representative image

sive land survey scheme. Almost all Indian states, except Telangana, have consented to map the entire rural properties in their respective jurisdiction.

The mega scheme, promoted by

the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, enables people in rural areas to unlock their rural assets.

"Once the survey would be complete, every owner would be given a property card. This card will en-

able countrymen to use their residential property as a financial asset... They can further be entitled to seek loans from banks," Sunil Kumar, also an IAS officer of the UP Cadre, noted. A pilot project of the drone survey has been hitherto successful as more than 40,000 villages have been covered.

The country now gears for the full and final survey to map the rural assets of people. Sources said that in Uttar Pradesh, hundreds of people have got their property cards during the pilot project. In some villages, farmers who got the validation of their houses also sought loans from the banks.

Last year, Modi had launched the pilot project for the drone survey which then covered only six states; Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh,

Karnataka and Maharashtra. Later, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh also joined hands with the Centre and consented to go for the land survey, being conducted by Survey of India.

Sources said that during one of the meeting of the group of Ministers in late 2019, the idea of land survey of rural properties was picked up by Modi.

"The Prime Minister realised that by validation of property, the survey would benefit over 68 per cent of population living in rural India. He quickly gave the go ahead. In fact, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, who also looks after Panchayati Raj Ministry, has been in touch with a team from Maharashtra which had earlier suggested the benefits of validation of rural property," the sources said.

of the day quote

This new surge of migrants we are dealing with now started with the last administration but it is our responsibility to deal with it humanely and to stop it from happening and so this increase has been consequential



JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT OF THE US

There is a strong case for us to work together with the advantage of cutting-edge technology of the US and India's cost-competitive skilled labour



TARANJIT SINGH SANDHU | INDIA'S AMBASSADOR TO THE US

Peaceful coexistence is the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy. The situation warrants that the leadership of South Asia rejects the politics of hate, prejudice and religious extremism to guide the region towards prosperity



ARIF ALVI | PRESIDENT OF PAKISTAN

SHORT TAKES

Five killed in PoK avalanche

Islamabad: At least five members of a family were killed by an avalanche that hit their home in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir Thursday. The snow slip swept away the house far away from where it initially stood in Sargan village of Neelum Valley, Radio Pakistan reported. The victims -- a woman and her four children -- were shifted to a nearby hospital where they were pronounced dead.

Lanka to buy Sputnik V vax

Colombo: Sri Lanka has decided to purchase 7 million doses of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine. The government says it will pay USD 69.65 million for the shots. Sri Lanka aims to inoculate 14 million people out of the population of 22 million. So far, over 850,000 people have received their shots using the AstraZeneca vaccine. Sri Lanka has received 1.2 million AstraZeneca doses out of at least 10 million it purchased for USD 52.5 million. It has also approved China's Sinopharm shots.

N Korea test fires 2 missiles

Seoul: North Korea Thursday fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the East Sea in its latest weapons test, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) confirmed. In a statement, the JCS said that the missiles were fired from the North's Hamju town in South Hamgyong Province, at 7.06 am and 7.25 am and flew around 450 km with an altitude of 60 km, Yonhap News Agency reported. The last time North Korea fired a ballistic missile was in March 2020. It was not immediately known whether North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un oversaw the firings.

Virginia abolishes death penalty

Washington: Virginia has become the first state in the US South to stop executions after Governor Ralph Northam signed a legislation to abolish the death penalty. The Democratic Governor signed the death penalty repeal into law during a ceremony outside the Greensville Correctional Center in Jarratt Wednesday, after touring the prison's execution chamber, where 102 people have been executed since its opening in 1991, reports dpa news agency.



Should I change my narrative? Should I become more malleable? Should I give in? Do what the vast majority is doing? If I am convinced to do otherwise, I will. But I haven't been convinced yet. We must fight against the virus, not against the president

JAIR BOLSONARO | PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL

IN A FIRST

The US Senate has confirmed former Pennsylvania Health Secretary Rachel Levine to be the nation's assistant secretary of health. She is the first openly transgender federal official to win Senate confirmation



Chinese military silent on further pullout of troops

The Indian Army has been pitching for a faster disengagement process in areas like Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang to bring down tension in the mountainous region



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, March 25: The Chinese military Thursday said the situation at eastern Ladakh has eased distinctly thanks to the joint efforts with India on the disengagement of troops from the Pangong Lake area but gave no indication about when the pull out will take place from the remaining areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two countries had completed withdrawal of troops and weapons from the North and South banks of Pangong Lake last month in line with an agreement on disengagement. But the disengagement is yet to take place in remaining areas along the LAC. The Indian Army has been pitching for a faster disengagement process in areas like Hot

Springs, Gogra and Depsang to bring down tension in the mountainous region.

At present, China and India have disengaged front-line troops in the Pangong Lake area and both countries have positively commented on the current moves, Senior Colonel Ren Guoqiang, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of National Defence said at an online media briefing.

"Thanks to the joint efforts made by China and India, the situation in the border area has been eased distinctly," he said.

Both sides have agreed to maintain communication through military and diplomatic channels to promote the settlement of other issues in the west section of the China-India boundary, Ren was quoted as saying by the Chinese military-run China Military Online portal.

Dragon opposes Quad alliance

China said Thursday that it was firmly opposed to the Quad alliance consisting of the US, India, Australia and Japan as it asked Washington to refrain from making "troubles out of nothing" and do more to contribute to regional peace and stability. Senior Colonel Ren Guoqiang, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of National Defence, made the remarks at an online media briefing when asked about the recent Quad summit and reported statement by US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan stating that Quad leaders discussed the "challenges" posed by China and they had no illusions about it. China is firmly opposed to the Quad alliance consisting of the US, India, Australia and Japan. China firmly opposed the "four-side mechanism" promoted by the US as it adheres to the Cold War mentality, Ren said.

Ren was responding to a question on reports quoting the External Affairs Ministry spokesman asking China to complete its military withdrawal at the remaining friction points along the LAC.

54 Indian fishermen arrested by SL Navy



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, March 25: The Sri Lankan Navy has arrested at least 54 Indian fishermen and seized five trawlers for allegedly poaching in the country's territorial waters, an official statement said Thursday.

The Navy arrested the fishermen Wednesday off the coast of northern and northeastern areas.

"Having considered the impact of foreign fishermen poaching in Sri Lankan waters on the local fishing community and the sustainability of fishery resources of Sri Lanka, the Navy is conducting regular patrols to curb illegal fishing activities in Sri Lankan waters", the Navy said in the statement.

The Navy nabbed a large Indian fishing vessel with 14 personnel on board, about 3 nautical miles off the coast of Kovilan in Jaffna.

Two more Indian fishing vessels with 20 personnel for engaging in trawling were arrested about 7 nautical miles off Pesalai, Mannar and 5 nautical miles off the Iranativu Island, the statement said. Two more Indian fishing vessels with 20 personnel were arrested about 7.5 and 8.5 nautical miles off Mullaitivu. The two vessels had trespassed into Sri Lankan waters about 62 nautical miles, crossing the International Boundary Line (IMBL) when the apprehension was made, the Navy said in a statement.

DIFFERENTLY-ABLED GIRL RAPED, FILMED IN PAK

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Islamabad, March 25: In yet another heart wrenching incident, a differently-abled girl has been allegedly sexually assaulted and filmed in a rural area of Pakistan's Punjab province.

As per details, the victim was repeatedly raped by at least five suspects during a span of three months. Further details revealed that the suspects not only raped the victim, but also filmed the incidents and used it to blackmail her father, a security guard, into giving them money.

The 16-year-old deaf and mute girl was raped and filmed for months, videos of which were also made viral on certain social media platforms.

The local authorities have taken notice of the incident and at least two alleged rapists have been taken into custody.

"The 16-year-old daughter of Muhammad Hassan, a resident of suburb village Kundi, who works as a security guard for a private company, was deaf and mute by birth," said Raees Ali,

Station House Officer (SHO), Lodhran City.

The two arrested suspects have been identified as Hassan and Ijaz, are also in their youth and have been accused of raping and filming the victims for months and making the incidents viral on social media.

On the other hand, the medical report of the victim proved that she was repeatedly raped.

Samples of her DNA have been sent to Lahore for further tests, while a case has been registered against five persons at the local police station on the complaint of the victim's father.

As per the details of the case, the father of the victim has alleged that the rapists blackmailed him and demanded money while making threats.

He has five children, out of which the eldest daughter (victim) and his five-year-old son were deaf and mute since birth.

Further details revealed by the father, stated that the victim entered the house in a deteriorated condition and told her parents about the assault through sign language.



RED REBEL



A member of Extinction Rebellion Red Rebel Brigade protests against fracking gas outside Government Buildings in Dublin, Ireland

'US needs to understand India's longstanding ties with Russia'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, March 25: The US needs to understand that India has had a longstanding relationship with the Russians for security co-operation and military equipment, a top American admiral told lawmakers, indicating that he would push for encouraging New Delhi to move away from Moscow rather than taking the route of sanctions for the purchase of major defence equipment.



Admiral John Aquilino, during his confirmation hearing Tuesday to be the next commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command or IN-DOPACOM, was responding to a question from Senator Jeanne Shaheen on India's decision to purchase the S-400 missile system from

Russia. Should we sanction India if they acquire the S-400 Shaheen asked. I think I would leave that to the policymakers to determine... I think we certainly should understand where we are with India and I think potentially the encouragement angle in providing alternatives might be a better approach, Aquilino replied.

India is really a terrific partner and as we've seen from the recent Quad discussions, I think the importance of India and the rest of the nations in the Quad will increase.

Suez Canal halts shipping

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ismailia (Egypt), March 25: A skyscraper-sized cargo ship wedged across Egypt's Suez Canal further imperiled global shipping Thursday as at least 150 other vessels needing to pass through the crucial waterway idled waiting for the obstruction to clear, authorities said.

The Ever Given, a Panama-flagged ship that carries cargo between Asia and Europe, ran aground Tuesday in the narrow, man-made canal dividing continental Africa from the Sinai Peninsula. So far, dredgers have tried to clear silt around the massive ship. Tug boats nudged the vessel alongside it, trying to gain momentum. From the shore, at least one backhoe dug into the canal's sandy banks, suggesting the bow of the ship had plowed into it. Canal service provider Leth Agencies said at least 150 ships were waiting for the Ever Given to be cleared, including vessels near Port Said on the Mediterranean Sea, Port Suez on the Red Sea and those already stuck in the canal system on Egypt's Great Bitter Lake.

Owner of ship offers apology

The Japanese owner of the cargo ship wedged across Egypt's Suez Canal has apologised for the incident that's imperiling global shipping. Shoei Kisen, apologised Thursday over the "tremendous worry" that the accident has caused to the other vessels and their involved parties. Shoei Kisen said it is cooperating with its technical management company and the local authorities to get the ship afloat, but "the operation is extremely difficult." It added: "We are extremely sorry for causing tremendous worry to the ships that are traveling or schedule to travel in the Suez Canal, and all the related people.

'Can I take painkillers before or after a COVID-19 vaccine?'

THE CONCERN ABOUT PAINKILLERS IS THAT THEY MIGHT CURB THE VERY IMMUNE SYSTEM RESPONSE THAT A VACCINE AIMS TO SPUR

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, March 25: Don't take them before a shot to try to prevent symptoms, but if your doctor agrees, it's OK to use them afterward if needed.

The concern about painkillers is that they might curb the very immune system response that a vaccine aims to spur. Vaccines work by tricking the body into thinking it has a virus and mounting a defense against it. That may cause temporary arm soreness, fever, muscle aches or other symptoms of inflammation — signs the vaccine is

doing its job.

Some research suggests that certain painkillers including ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin and other brands) might diminish the immune system's response. A study on mice suggests these drugs might lower production of antibodies, which block the virus from infecting cells.

Other research has found that painkillers might dampen the response to some childhood vaccines, so many pediatricians recommend that parents avoid giving children the medicines before a shot and only if needed afterward, said Dr William Schaffner, an infectious



disease expert at Vanderbilt University. The US Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention recently updated its guidance to recommend against painkillers before a COVID-

19 shot. It says they can be taken afterward for symptoms if you have no other medical conditions precluding their use, but to talk to your doctor. If you're already taking one of those medications for a health condition, you should not stop before you get the vaccine — at least not without asking your doctor, said Jonathan Watanabe, a pharmacist at the University of California, Irvine.

If you're looking to relieve symptoms after your shot, he added, acetaminophen (Tylenol) is better because it works in a different way than some other painkillers.

"If you have a reaction afterwards and need something, take some acetaminophen," Schaffner agreed. He added that the immune response generated by the vaccines is strong enough that any dampening effect by painkillers is likely slight and won't undermine the shots.

The CDC offers other tips, such as holding a cool, wet washcloth over the area of the shot and exercising that arm. For fever, drink lots of fluids and dress lightly. Call your doctor if redness or tenderness in the arm increases after a day or if side effects don't go away after a few days, the CDC says.

business

of the day quote

Inflation targeting has worked well and the government must stay with it, and the framework is going to work well in the period ahead also

D SUBBARAO | FORMER RBI GOVERNOR

The government is going to launch a national single-window for the investors. We are targeting April 15 for that launch

GURUPRASAD MOHAPATRA | SECRETARY, DPIIT

The investment climate is going well in India and the private sector should skill their workforce in the interest of its business

KV SUBRAMANIAN | CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISOR

SHORT TAKES

Starbucks forays into seven cities

New Delhi: Tata Starbucks Thursday said it is set to mark its highest expansion in the country in FY2020-21 by entering seven cities with a total of 40 new stores. India continues to remain one of the fastest-growing markets for Starbucks globally, it said in a statement. Tata Starbucks, a 50:50 joint venture between Tata Consumer Products Ltd and Starbucks Corporation, Thursday announced its foray into Kanpur, which is the 18th city for the company and second city in Uttar Pradesh.

GoAir plans ₹2,500 cr IPO early next fiscal

Mumbai: Wadia group-owned GoAir plans to come out with a ₹2,500 crore-initial share sale early next fiscal, according to sources. The no-frills airline has been working on expansion plans and an Initial Public Offer (IPO) will help in raising funds. In recent months, many companies have hit the capital market with their IPOs amid business activities slowly normalising after the pandemic blow. The carrier, which started operations in 2005, has been contemplating about going public in the last couple of years.

Garg appointed UIDAI CEO

New Delhi: Senior bureaucrat Saurabh Garg has been appointed as the CEO of Unique Identification Authority of India as part of a bureaucratic reshuffle effected by the Centre Thursday. Garg is at present serving in his cadre state Odisha. He is a 1991 batch IAS officer. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Garg as the CEO, UIDAI in the rank and pay of Addl. Secretary, an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said. Sanjeev Kumar, a 1991 batch IAS officer of Maharashtra cadre, has been appointed as the Chairman, AAI, it said.

SC to deliver judgement

New Delhi: The Supreme Court is scheduled to pronounce Friday its judgement on the cross appeals filed by Tata Sons Pvt Ltd and Cyrus Investments Pvt Ltd against the NCLAT order which had restored Cyrus Mistry as the executive chairman of the over \$100 billion salt-to-software Tata conglomerate. As per the Friday's cause list uploaded on the apex court website, a bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde would pronounce the verdict. The bench, also comprising Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, had December 17 last year reserved the verdict in the matter.



The Netherlands is a stellar example of effective AI adoption in agriculture. With just a small arable land the country has become the world's 2nd largest exporter of agricultural products by value leveraging technology and AI

DEBJANI GHOSH | PRESIDENT, NASSCOM

AGENCIES

Beijing, March 25: China's ruling Communist Party is lashing out at H&M and other clothing and footwear brands as it retaliates for Western sanctions imposed on Chinese officials accused of human rights abuses in the northwestern region of Xinjiang. The attacks began when the party's Youth League Wednesday called attention on its social media account to an H&M statement in March 2020 that it would stop buying cotton grown in Xinjiang. The Swedish retailer said it was "deeply concerned" about reports of forced labour there.

On Thursday, a party newspaper, the Global Times, cited Burberry, Adidas, Nike and New Balance as having made "cutting remarks" about Xinjiang cotton as early as two years ago. Celebrities including Wang Yibo,



a popular singer and actor, announced they were breaking endorsement contracts with H&M and Nike.

Beijing often attacks foreign clothing, auto, travel and other brands for actions by their governments to pressure companies to conform to its official positions on Taiwan, Tibet and other sensitive issues.

Companies usually apologise and change websites or advertising to

maintain access to China's populous market. But Xinjiang is an unusually thorny issue. Western brands face pressure at home to distance themselves from possible abuses.

More than 1 million people in Xinjiang, most of them from predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, have been confined to work camps, according to foreign researchers and governments. Beijing denies mis-

Beijing often attacks foreign clothing, auto, travel and other brands for actions by their governments to pressure companies to conform to its official positions on Taiwan, Tibet and other sensitive issues

treating them and says it is trying to promote economic development and stamp out radicalism.

On Monday, the 27-nation European Union, the United States, Britain and Canada jointly announced travel and financial sanctions on four senior Chinese officials blamed for abuses in Xinjiang.

China attacks foreign clothing, shoe brands over Xinjiang

RBI has major concerns on cryptocurrencies: Das

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 25: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has "major concerns" on the cryptocurrencies traded in the market and has conveyed the same to the government, its governor Shaktikanta Das Thursday said.

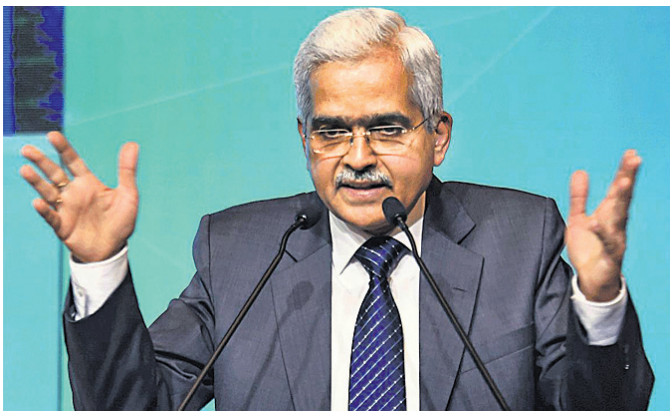
Underlining that both the government and the RBI are "committed to financial stability", Das said there are no differences between the central bank and the Finance Ministry on the matter, and "we should now await the final decision on the matter" from the Centre.

The comments come in light of what has been termed as confusing signals from the government on the cryptocurrencies.

After announcing its intent to completely ban such currencies, which are very volatile in nature without any underlying principle guiding its values, the government had shown some openness to such currencies like Bitcoin.

Speaking at an economic meet, Das said he has "reasons to believe" that the government is in agreement with the "major concerns" flagged by the RBI about the cryptocurrencies.

"Central bank digital currency is one thing. The cryptocurrencies which are traded in the market are something else. Both RBI and gov-



Underlining that both the government and the RBI are committed to financial stability, Das said that there are no differences between the central bank and the Finance Ministry on the matter

It can be noted that the RBI had first banned such currencies through an order, which was struck down by the apex court last year

ernment are committed to financial stability We have flagged certain concerns around these cryptocurrencies which are being traded in the market. We have flagged certain major concerns to the government," Das said.

He said the matter is still under

the examination of the government, and a decision on this issue will be taken by it sooner than later.

It can be noted that the RBI had first banned such currencies through an order, which was struck down by the SC last year:

The central bank's concerns stem from the non-flat nature of such currencies which are touted as the future in some quarters, and in the volatile price movements in them. The RBI had also come out with an appeal cautioning people not to trade in such currencies in the past.

After the government proposed a complete ban on such currencies in a Bill presented in January, FM Sitharaman had earlier this month said that she is all for encouraging experiments in the field.

BIZ BUZZ

Haier launches new washing machines

BHUBANESWAR: Haier, the global leader in Home Appliances & Consumer Electronics, launched new Super Drum Series - Front Load Fully Automatic Washing Machine, sporting the industry's first biggest ever drum. This new array of smart washing machines is available in 6 new variants. The washing machine incorporates an industry-first extra-large 525mm super drum which provides extra space and extra care to the garments, enhancing washing efficiency and intensity. The new washing machines features a BLDC inverter motor, which is designed to consume less energy.



Itel announces exclusive VIP offer

BHUBANESWAR: Itel announced its unique and exclusive 'VIP offer on itel Vision 1 PRO' where consumers can avail free one-time screen replacement of a broken screen within 100 days of purchase. The offer comes with the latest stock of flagship smartphone itel Vision 1 PRO that comes with a VIP card to avail the scheme. The offer is applicable pan India and users can repair the damaged or broken screen of their smartphones at all authorized Caricare service centres, without paying any additional amount. Itel Vision 1 PRO is available at ₹6899 that boasts trendy technological features.



Petroleum Min urges Centre to expedite TTPS' stage-3 expansion

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 25: Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan urged Minister of State (IC) of Power to seek his personal intervention in expediting Stage-3 expansion of Talcher Thermal Power Station in Odisha.

In his letter, Pradhan requested the minister RK Singh, "In 2010, NTPC had proposed a project for Stage-3 expansion of TTPS by 1320 MW as a state-of-the-art super-critical power station comprising of two units of 660 MW each which would provide Odisha long term power for 25 years. The project was accorded Mega Status by Ministry of Power in October 2011. Necessary clearances from the Ministry of



Environment, Forests and Climate Change were obtained by NTPC."

"Application for Government of Odisha's Single Window Clearance was filed by NTPC April 18, 2017. Being a large project it required project clearance by High Level Committee of the state government. As the approvals were getting delayed, I had sought personal intervention of Chief Minister of Odisha

for speedy approval of the project by the Committee vide letter dated September 11, 2018. Subsequently you had also written a letter to CM requesting the same at the earliest. The proposal was finally approved by a Government of Odisha High Level Committee in February 2020," he added.

According to the minister, the per-capita consumption of power in Odisha has steadily risen from 1349 KWH in 2013-14 to 1628 KWH in 2018-19 thanks to initiatives like SAUBHAGYA and DDUGJY schemes which have been successfully executed by your Ministry. He also said that, at present, Odisha has 30,000 MW of power requirement, which is likely to increase substantially in future.

Govt may launch 2nd phase of IPRS in April



AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 25: The government is likely to launch the second phase of Industrial Park Rating System (IPRS) in April with an aim to enable informed decision making for various stakeholders like investors and promote ease of doing business, an official said.

As compared to the pilot or first phase, the official said the IPRS 2.0 will widen the coverage of rating to more than 400 parks including private parks and additional 50 special economic zones.

"IPRS 2.0 is scheduled to launch in April 2021.

"The IPRS rating framework is conceptualised to be standing on four pillars of the industrial ecosystem, including internal infrastructure and utilities; external infrastructure and connectivity; business services and facilities; environment and safety," the official added. In the second phase, feedback would be taken from tenants who occupy the nominated parks and zones, in addition to the responses from developers.

IPRS 2.0 aims at enabling informed decision making for various stakeholders such as policymakers, investors and financing institutions for development of strategies for future industrialisation; and improve industrial infrastructure. It also aims to support ease of doing business reform agenda of providing transparent information, enable states to showcase their strengths and promote investment in the state industrial ecosystem, and identify gaps for interventions.

Heat stress may hurt manufacturing in India: Study

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 25: Hotter years have been routinely linked with reduced economic output in the developing countries, and one reason is that people are less productive at work and are more likely to be absent on hot days, found a new study Thursday.

The aggregate effects are large enough to significantly reduce the output of the manufacturing sector. By using several high-frequency micro-data sets of worker output and a nationally representative dataset of more than 58,000 factories across India, researchers have found that plants produce about 2% less revenue for every one-degree rise in annual temperature.

The greatest declines occurred in

labour-intensive plants.

"The effect of high temperatures on lower crop yields has been previously established. This paper shows that rising temperatures can also hurt economic output in other sectors

The effect of high temperatures on lower crop yields has been previously established. This paper shows that rising temperatures can also hurt economic output in other sectors by reducing the productivity of human labour. The damage is greatest when already warm days become hotter. If India wishes to succeed in becoming a manufacturing powerhouse using cheap labour, we need to think hard about how we can adapt to a hotter world," said Anant Sudarshan, South Asia Director of the Energy Policy



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Institute at the University of Chicago. Sudarshan co-authored this study with E Somanathan of Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi, Rohini Somanathan of Delhi School of Economics, and Meenu Tewari of University of North Carolina in the US. The authors argue that although the focus of the paper is on Indian manufacturing plants, because heat stress is a universal

physiological mechanism, there are implications for any sector where labour is important such as construction or services.

This multi-year study indicates that climate control in the workplace removes productivity declines but not absenteeism, presumably because workers remain exposed to high temperatures at home and outside.

And the fact that climate-control is expensive, makes its use limited. "We see that in the absence of climate control, worker productivity declines on hot days and we spot absenteeism even for workers in factories with cooling facilities. When you compound that with limited adoption of climate control technologies in manufacturing industries, you know that we are dealing with a complex problem here," Somanathan said.

SkY-ODI horizon likely

With series win in sight, India face England in second ODI today as Suryakumar expected to make his debut in place of injured Iyer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, March 25: The immensely talented Suryakumar Yadav is likely to get a chance to showcase his '360 degree' hitting skills when a rampaging Indian team takes on a rather clueless England, aiming to seal off another series victory in the second ODI here, Friday.

Shreyas Iyer's dislocated shoulder has once again brought Yadav in focus and his ODI debut, after a blockbuster T20 first outing, looks imminent after an all-round show by the hosts ensured an easy victory in the first game.

Iyer has been one of India's most prolific 50-over batsman before the COVID-19 enforced lockdown but such is the team's strength that a debutant looks more formidable for a World Championship opposition, who are no less menacing but seem utterly confused at this point.

Being spoilt for choices is always a good headache to have for the think-tank and skipper Virat Kohli will be more pleased than anyone else.

Kohli has not had Ravindra Jadeja's services for close to three months but neither Axar Patel in Tests, and now Krunal Pandya in the ODIs, have let the team miss their maverick from Rajkot.

Prasidh Krishna, already a household name due to IPL, looked completely at home on his ODI debut, hurrying batsmen for pace in the absence of Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami.

And come to think of it, once Jadeja and Bumrah are back, a Krunal or Krishna will either cool their heels in the dug-out or even worse, not find a place in the squad, which is a testimony to India's unimaginable depth of talent pool.

The biggest positive during the opening game was Shikhar Dhawan's return to form with a match-winning 98. He was under pressure after being benched for a large part of the T20 series.

The elegant southpaw would be



THE SQUADS

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

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

The best part was how they came back after first 15 overs of mayhem by Jason Roy and Jonny Bairstow. Shardul has been continuously playing and it won't be a bad option to try out T Natarajan or Mohammed Siraj for a bit of variation.

"One of our sweetest victories in recent past. We haven't won many good games in ODIs. I am, really a proud man right now," skipper Kohli had said after the first match as he sounded pleased with the team's effort.

Meanwhile, England will look to level the series and stay alive in the contest. England have a lot to ponder on and injuries to skipper Eoin Morgan and batsman Sam Billings, while fielding, in the lung-opener have only added to their woes. Both appear doubtful for the second game.

Bairstow was among the runs as he blazed to 94 off 64 balls as was his partner Roy (46). The two would be looking to put up another fine show and carry forward the aggressive brand of cricket, which was the cornerstone of the 2019 World Cup triumph.

However, their middle order hasn't performed up to its potential and the likes of all-rounder Ben Stokes, Jos Buttler and Moeen Ali faltered with the bat. If England have to put a big total or chase a score, the trio needs to fire in unison.

Tokyo Games' torch relay begins

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tokyo, March 25: The torch relay for the postponed Tokyo Olympics began its 121-day journey across Japan Thursday and is headed toward the opening ceremony here, July 23.

The relay began in northeastern Fukushima prefecture, the area that was devastated by the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and the meltdown of three nuclear reactors. About 18,000 died in the tragedy.

The first runner with the torch was Azusa Iwashimizu, a key player in the Japan team that won the Women's World Cup in 2011.

Wearing a white track suit, she carried the torch out of the J-Village indoor soccer training center and was surrounded by 14 other members of that 2011 World Cup squad and coach Norio Sasaki at the rear. They were also decked out in white track suits.

The ceremony was closed to the public because of the fear of spreading COVID-19 but was streamed live. "The torch of Tokyo 2020 will become a bright light for hope for Japanese citizens and citizens in the world and a light at the end of the tunnel," said Seiko Hashimoto, the president of the local organizing committee and a former Olympian herself.

Homare Sawa, the biggest star on the 2011 team, missed the ceremony. She is being treated for a condition affecting her inner ear and had to withdraw from the event.

Fans were told to social-distance along the roadside as the torch passes, and they were to refrain

NEWS IN BRIEF

SAINA ENTERS QUARTERS

PARIS: London Olympics bronze medallist Saina Nehwal advanced to the quarterfinals of the Orleans Masters badminton tournament after prevailing over France's Marie Batomene in the women's singles second round here, Thursday. Running against time to make it to her fourth Olympics, Saina recovered from the opening game reversal to see off World No.65 Marie 18-21, 21-15, 21-10 in a 51-minute clash in the Super 100 event, which is part of BWF's revised Olympic qualification period. The fourth seeded Indian will face either France's Yaelle Hoyaux or Malaysia's Iris Wang next. Ira Sharma, ranked 162, also made it to the quarterfinals after beating Bulgaria's World No.71 Mariya Mitsova 21-18, 21-13 in 32 minutes.



Runners in jolly mood as first runner Azusa Iwashimizu holds the Olympics torch marking the beginning of relay in Tokyo for the 2021 Games, Thursday

from loud cheering. Organizers have said they will stop or reroute the relay if crowding becomes a problem during the four-month parade.

Spectators cooperated in Naraha Town, just down the road from where the torch started its trip. A few hundred people stood on the roadside and were safely spread out.

Setsumi Hashimoto, a 63-year-old local resident, was emotional as the torch passed. "10 years ago there was a nuclear accident so (seeing the torch) it felt like I could really look forward to something and live," she said. "When you become my age, this is the last Tokyo Olympics and it's here. It was very touching."

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga chimed in from Tokyo with a statement. "The Olympic torch relay starting from today is a valuable op-

portunity for the people to get a real sense of the Olympics and Paralympics that are approaching," Suga told reporters.

Local organizers and the International Olympic Committee hope the relay will turn public opinion in Japan in favor of the Olympics. Sentiments expressed in polls in Japan so far are overwhelmingly negative with about 80 per cent suggesting another delay or cancellation.

The relay and the Olympics both stir fear that the events could spread the virus. There is also opposition to the soaring cost of staging the Olympics, now put officially at USD 15.4 billion. Several audits suggest it's twice that much and a University of Oxford study says these are the most expensive Olympics on record.

INDIA ADD GOLD, SILVER

NEW DELHI: The Indian juggernaut remained unstoppable at the ISSF shooting World Cup with the country's women shooters grabbing the spotlight by clinching the 25m pistol team gold medal following a silver in the 50m rifle 3 positions team event here, Thursday. Hungarian team's pullout from the men's rifle 3 position final set a summit contest between India and third-placed USA. The triumvirate of Chinky Yadav, Manu Bhaker and Rahi Sarmobat shot a total of 17 to beat Poland's Joanna Iwona Wawrzonowska, Julita Borek and Agnieszka Korejwo, who managed to score 7. The victory consolidated India's position at the top with 21 medals, including 10 gold, six silver and five bronze. Earlier in the day, India's Anjum Moudgil, Shreya Saksena and Gaayathri Nithyanadham claimed the silver medal in the 50m rifle 3 positions team event.

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