



HAVING BUTTERFLIES

Actor Aditi Rao Hydari admits she still feels like a newcomer at the start of every film

LEISURE P2



ILLEGAL MINING

There is no pause on illegal mining and mineral transportation in Keonjhar despite repeated crackdown on mineral mafia

STATE P5



INT'L PANDEMIC TREATY

25 world leaders have backed a plan to draw up a new treaty on pandemic preparedness in the wake of Covid crisis

INTERNATIONAL P10

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 356 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31 | 2021

12 PAGES | ₹4.00

Centre hits red button on Covid

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 30: The coronavirus situation is "turning from bad to worse" and is a huge cause of worry especially for some states, the Centre said Tuesday while stressing that the whole country is at risk and nobody should be complacent.

It said eight of the top 10 COVID-19 high-burden districts of the country are from Maharashtra and that Delhi, taken as one district, is also on the list.

At a press conference, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said the 10 districts with maximum active COVID-19 cases are Pune (59,475), Mumbai (46,248), Nagpur (45,322), Thane (35,264), Nashik (26,553), Aurangabad (21,282), Bengaluru Urban (16,259), Nanded (15,171), Delhi (8,032), Ahmednagar (7,952).

Though technically speaking, Delhi has many districts, but it has been taken as one district, he said. NITI Aayog member (Health) VK Paul said, "COVID-19 situation is turning from bad to worse. In last few weeks, especially in some states, it is a huge cause for worry. No state, no part of the country or district should be complacent."

The fears expressed earlier regarding the spread of Covid-19 in India for the last 3-4 weeks were finally confirmed today in the Press release issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)..



PRECAUTIONS

- Avoid crowded places
- Avoid unnecessary travel
- Keep wearing your mask
- Take necessary precautions

SILENT KILLER

- We don't cough,
- No fever, it's joint pain, weakness
- Loss of appetite and Covid pneumonia

Some of the salient points mentioned in the release Tuesday: 1) IN-SACOG has detected 771 variants of concerns (VOCs) in a total of 10,787 positive samples sequenced. The distri-

butions are as follows: UK (B.1.1.7) variant - 736, South African (B.1.351) variant - 34, Brazilian (P.1) variant - 1.

These variants of concerns, which are much more infectious (2-6 times

Massive vax drive in City from April 1

BHUBANESWAR: The state health and family welfare department has decided to scale up vaccination in the state keeping in mind the threat from the pandemic and the recent spurt in Covid-19 positive cases. The department has planned to inoculate around 2 lakh beneficiaries per day from April 1 to reach out to more people across the state as the new list of beneficiaries above the age of 45 years is ready to get vaccinated. Bijay Panigrahi, state health and family welfare director, Tuesday told the media that the state government had planned to target more persons from April 1 as the drive expands its horizons. "Vaccination drive for the persons above 45 years will start from April 1. We are now planning to vaccinate around 2 lakh people every day from April 1," he said. According to the department, Odisha was able to receive a total of 40 lakh doses of Covid vaccines and used up 23 lakh of them. More supplies are likely to come to the state soon to make them ready to cover more people.



than the original Wuhan strain) are now circulating in 18 states of India. Additionally, new local variants of concerns specific to India have been detected. Sequencing has found that the fraction of samples with the E484Q and L452R mutations are much higher now.

The N440K variant that is associated with immune escape has been found in 6% samples from Kerala, 33% of samples from Andhra Pradesh and in 51% samples from Telangana.

All the above mutated strains circulating in India now make the virus much more dangerous. The muta-

tions, in addition to significantly increased transmissibility, help the virus escape our immune system, meaning that many who have been previously infected or vaccinated "might" get re-infected..

Given that these dangerous strains are now already circulating in 18 states, it is just a matter of time before the Covid-19 cases might start to increase in all states of India. Brazil has borne the brunt of the P1 strain where almost all its hospitals and health system have now collapsed, with more than 3,200 deaths every single day. We are already close to 50,000 new cases each day.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I doubt there'll be another lockdown. Our leaders have just resumed globetrotting after a long one year!

MARKETS RALLY TO 2-WEEK HIGH

MUMBAI: Benchmark Sensex rallied by 1,128 points - its biggest single-day gain in nearly two months - to close at a two-week high Tuesday as financials, IT and energy stocks advanced amid positive global cues.

Extending its gains to the second consecutive session, the 30-share BSE index ended 1,128.08 points or 2.30 per cent higher at 50,136.58 - a level not seen since March 16.

The broader NSE Nifty also logged its biggest single-day spike since February 2 to settle at a nearly two-week high of 14,845.10, showing gains of 337.80 points or 2.33 per cent. As many as 46 of its constituents closed in the green.

MARKET WATCH			
INDEX		VARIATION	
SENSEX	50136.58	▲	1128.08
NIFTY	14845.10	▲	337.80
DOLLAR	74.72	▲	₹0.89
EURO	86.90	▲	₹0.61
GOLD	₹43,960	▲	₹415
SILVER	₹63,325	▼	₹849

WEATHER			
		BHUB	CTK
TEMP			
MAX	39.8°C	40.5°C	
MIN	25.5°C	24.5°C	
Humidity	81%	81%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	
		Forecast	
		Mainly clear sky	

NO METRO TRAIN FOR TWIN CITIES TILL 2041

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: The state government doesn't have any proposal to roll out metro rail services between twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack and the project is not feasible till 2041, Housing and Urban Development Minister Pratap Jena told Assembly, Tuesday.

Replying to a question of Congress MLA Suresh Routray, Jena said a survey conducted in 2014 found that the metro rail project in the twin cities is not feasible considering the population and other aspects.

Jena said both the Centre and the state government at a meeting in 2013 had agreed to conduct a feasibility survey for the proposed project. Later, the state government entrusted the task on Balaji Railroad System. The company in association with DOHWA Engineering Co Ltd of South Korea conducted the survey, he stated.

The minister said the survey revealed that the service is not feasible on the basis of population. The Centre and the state government had given ₹12.61 lakh and ₹52 lakh to the



company, respectively.

The government, he said, has asked the companies to conduct a survey again and submit a report by extending the area of the proposed project from Bhubaneswar to Jatni. He further said a resurvey also suggested that a full scale metro service is not possible before 2041. The state government then decided not to go ahead with the project.

However, Jena agreed to the demand of members irrespective of party affiliations who requested the government to approach the Centre for another survey of metro rail extending the service from Cuttack to Chandikhole and

Bhubaneswar to Puri.

Opposition BJP and Congress targeted the state government for telling untruths to the house through Governor's speech during the first session of 16th Assembly. If the state government knew that the metro rail project was not feasible in 2014-15, why the government informed about the metro rail project through Governor, asked Leader of Opposition PK Naik.

How the BJD had promised the metro rail project in its election manifesto for 2019 polls, he questioned. Congress legislator Santosh Singh Saluja too criticized the government over the issue.

Hike in central taxes stoked edible oil rates

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Mar 30: Prices of edible oils in the state went up as the Centre increased the tax burden and hiked the diesel price, Food Supply and Consumer Welfare Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain told the State Assembly Tuesday.

Participating in a debate on the admissibility of an adjournment motion moved by the Opposition on the steep hike in edible prices, Swain said the Centre imposed 17.5 per cent agri tax on palmolein oil, 20 per cent tax on sunflower and soya bean oil.

This apart, the Centre also imposed 21 per cent import duty and 5 per cent GST on edible oil which pushed up the prices, he said. This year, Swain said, the Centre also raised the MSP of mustard seeds by around ₹200 in comparison to last year and excluded the edible oil from the list of essential commodities.

The state's requirement of edible oil is 3 lakh MT a year which included 55 per cent of palmolein, 15 per cent of mustard oil, 20 per cent sunflower and 5 per cent of other oil. The state, he said, depends upon Gujarat and Rajasthan



for mustard oil and on Indonesia, Malaysia, Canada and USA for palmolein, sunflower and soya oil. The oil prices, he said, increased as Malaysia, Indonesia and Canada raised the oil prices and export duty, he pointed out. Besides, the minister said, the diesel price hike led to increase in transportation cost.

Participating in the debate, opposition members said people suffer due to hike in oil prices, large scale adulteration and black marketing. Senior Congress member Tara Prasad Bahinipati said oil prices were hiked after the central government increased the cess and other taxes. Some middlemen were also adulterating the edible oil to make profit while the state government is not taking any initiative to check adulteration, he said.

TDS to be cut on cash withdrawals from PO schemes

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 30: The Department of Posts has issued new rules for deduction of TDS if the aggregate withdrawal from all post office schemes is more than ₹20 lakh. The provision includes withdrawals from PPF also.

As per the new provisions under Section 194N of Income Tax Act 1961, if an investor has not filed income tax returns (ITR) for the previous three assessment years then tax deducted at source (TDS) will be deducted from the withdrawal amount. The new rule is applicable from July 1, 2020.

As per the provisions, if aggregate cash withdrawal by an investor exceeds ₹20 lakh but does not exceed ₹1 crore during a financial year and he is a non-ITR filer, then TDS at the rate of 2 per cent will be deducted from the amount exceeding ₹20 lakh.

In case total cash withdrawal from all post office accounts exceeds ₹1 crore in one financial year then TDS at 5 per cent will be payable on the amount exceeding ₹1 crore.



If you are an ITR filer and cash withdrawal exceeds ₹1 crore by an ITR filer in a financial year the income tax payable will be 2 per cent of the amount above ₹1 crore. The changes have not yet been incorporated. In order to facilitate Post Offices to deduct TDS, the Center for Excellence in Postal Technology (CEPT), the technology solution provider to post offices, has identified and extracted the details of such depositors for the period from April 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020.

CEPT will provide the required details to the concerned circles. Details such as account, PAN number of the depositor and the TDS amount to be deducted will be provided by the CEPT.

The respective Post Office of the depositor will deduct TDS and the account holder will be informed about the deduction.

JSW Cement

Start Strong. Grow Stronger.

1800 266 266 1 (tollfree)

Petrol cut by 22 paise, diesel cut by 23 paise

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 30: Petrol and diesel prices Tuesday were cut for the third time within a week on the back of softening international oil prices.

Petrol price was cut by 22 paise per litre and diesel by 23 paise per litre, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. Petrol now costs ₹90.56 per litre in Delhi and a litre of diesel comes for ₹80.87. Rates have been reduced across the country and vary from state to state depending on the local incidence of taxation (VAT).

Fuel prices were reduced for the first time in six months on March 24, and thereafter on March 25 as well after international oil prices fell on

prospect of speedy recovery in consumption getting clouded by the second wave of COVID-19 cases.

FUEL PRICES IN CITY

PETROL ₹91.27 (-0.22)

DIESEL ₹88.12 (-0.25)

They had remained on freeze thereafter as global rates edged up after one of the world's most vital waterways clogged. The reopening of the Suez Canal cooled rates again. In three reductions, petrol price has come down by 61 paise per litre and diesel by 60 paise.

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.

AGENCIES

Suez (Egypt), March 30: Salvage teams Monday finally freed the colossal container ship stuck for nearly a week in the Suez Canal, ending a crisis that had clogged one of the world's most vital waterways and halted billions of dollars a day in maritime commerce.

A flotilla of tugboats, helped by the tides, wrenched the bulbous bow of the skyscraper-sized Ever Given from the canal's sandy bank, where it had been firmly lodged since March 23. The tugs blared their horns in jubilation as they guided the Ever Given through the water after days of futility that had captivated the world, drawing scrutiny and social media ridicule. "We pulled it off!" said Peter Berdowski, CEO of Boskalis, the salvage firm hired to extract the Ever Given. "I am excited to announce that our team of experts, working



in close collaboration with the Suez Canal Authority, successfully refloated the Ever Given ... thereby making free passage through the Suez Canal possible again."

Navigation in the canal resumed at 6 p.M. Local time (1600 GMT, noon EDT) said Lt. Gen. Osama Rabei, head of the Suez Canal Authority, adding that the first ships that were moving carried livestock. From the city of Suez, ships stacked with containers could be seen exiting

the canal into the Red Sea.

At least 113 of over 420 vessels that had waited for Ever Given to be freed are expected to cross the canal by Tuesday morning, Rabei added at a news conference. Analysts expect it could take at least another 10 days to clear the backlog on either end. The Ever Given sailed to the Great Bitter Lake, a wide stretch of water halfway between the north and south ends of the canal, for inspection, said Evergreen Marine

Corp, a Taiwan-based shipping company that operates the ship.

Buffeted by a sandstorm, the Ever Given had crashed into a bank of a single-lane stretch of the canal about 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) north of the southern entrance, near the city of Suez. That created a massive traffic jam that held up \$9 billion a day in global trade and strained supply chains already burdened by the coronavirus pandemic.

Rabei said an investigation would

determine why the Ever Given got stuck, and he estimated daily losses to the canal of between \$12 million to \$15 million.

"The Suez Canal is not guilty of what happened. We are the ones who suffered damage," he said. At least 367 vessels, carrying everything from crude oil to cattle, had backed up to wait to traverse the canal. Dozens of others have taken the long, alternate route around the Cape of Good Hope at Africa's southern tip — a 5,000-kilometer (3,100-mile) detour that costs ships hundreds of thousands of dollars in fuel and other costs.

The canal is a source of national pride and crucial revenue for Egypt, and President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi praised Monday's events after days of silence about the blockage. "Egyptians have succeeded in ending the crisis," he wrote on Facebook, "despite the massive technical complexity."

FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com™
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES
You spend happy times with your loved ones today. Ganesha suggests you learn to play some musical instrument as it is a good way to express emotions. Besides, it gives you a novel method to attract new people. Do it promptly before the mood changes.

TAURUS
Spontaneity yet sincerity will be the ruling emotions of the day. Keep your eyes and ears open, advises Ganesha, as trouble might be headed your way. Make it a point to read the print well before you sign any legal contract today. Prevention is better than cure, reminds Ganesha.

GEMINI
Lady Luck is likely to smile on you, foresees Ganesha. You are generally shy, but today is a different day. You will remain outgoing and will be able to freely express your feelings. This temporary change will do a lot of good to your ego, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Today, every word coming out of your sweet-heart's lips will be music to your ears. Your relationship with your relatives will be harmonious. You may steer clear of your troubles, if you learn to restrain. The best way to deal with criticism is to take them constructively.

LEO
Easy come, easy go — that is the best way to sum up money. Try holding on to it, advises Ganesha, as there is a strong possibility that you shall incur a lot of wasteful expenditures today. Always think twice before you spend your hard-earned money.

VIRGO
Today, you shall balance business and entertainment equally well. The day will be like an endless party, says Ganesha. The emptying of pockets will be proportional to the amount of time you spend doing nothing. But spend prudently, advises Ganesha, and let it not worry you.

LIBRA
Ganesha says that today will be a day where you will want to look good and feel good too. You will be able to attract people with your speech and your impressive personality today at social gatherings.

SCORPIO
Try adding an entirely new dimension to the way you approach relationships today, advises Ganesha. Being tractable will help iron out the creases in relationships with closed ones. But be wary of complete subjugation, warns Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Confidence-building measures will need to be taken up. Be the herald, and usher in new vigour and confidence in people around you. Your business is set to sky-rocket and a fair share of profits are in the offing, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
Memories of the bygone days will flash through your mind, creating a wave of nostalgia and compelling you to get in touch with old pals. On the other hand, there may be a feeling that your loved ones are demanding more than you can give, says Ganesha. But enjoying some light moments with your beloved in the evening will unburden you and charge you up for the next day.

AQUARIUS
Today will be about pleasure and pain! Plumbing, cleaning, grocery shopping, cooking... you can expect anything to weigh you down. Later, you can relax in a hot soak by candlelight, or unwind with a soothing aromatic massage. Ganesha says you'll be grateful for the pleasures only after the pain.

PISCES
In spite of the hardships that you will encounter on your way, your high spirits, enthusiasm and innate confidence will overcome all obstacles. And no matter how troubled the day starts, it ought to end on a cheerful note, says Ganesha.



RAPE SLUR: HAMMER DROPPED FROM THE BILLION DOLLAR SPY

Hollywood actor Armie Hammer is no longer a part of the Cold War thriller *The Billion Dollar Spy*. The 34-year-old actor has been dropped from the Amma Asante-directorial in the wake of rape accusation by a woman.

AQUINO HAPPY WITH MARVEL HIGHLIGHTING MENTAL HEALTH

Hollywood actress Amy Aquino is happy with the role Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) is trying to play in educating people about mental health issues. Aquino, who plays a therapist in the new series, *Falcon And The Winter Soldier*, says it is 'wonderful' and 'helpful' that the MCU is addressing mental health.



Aditi still feels like a newcomer

Mumbai: Aditi Rao Hydari has been acting in films for a decade and half now, but she admits she still feels like a newcomer at the start of every film.

"With every film, I feel like a newcomer. When I walk into the set, it's a new character; new pace, new feeling, new co-stars, new house, new set, new location — everything is new," she said.

In fact, the actress feels that she is often found clueless on the set of a new film.

"So, when I walk down the set, when they say action, I feel like I don't know what I am going to do. I have elephants in my stomach! I don't know the girl that I

am playing, if I can do justice to her or not, whether my director will be happy or not, whether I will be able to breathe life into his vision and see a smile on his face," says the Wazir actress.

However, Aditi adds that once the camera starts rolling, things fall into place.

IAN S



Nimrat hates watching her works

Mumbai: Actress Nimrat Kaur says she hates watching herself on screen.

"I hate watching my work. I never sit and watch myself on screen. I can barely watch myself when I just have to. I would come to a point where I look at myself and see that I should have done better," she adds.

On the other hand, she admits that she needs to interact with people to understand how her projects have performed.

"I absorb and understand when I

meet people. Otherwise, it is a story in my head. If I am travelling, people come and tell me. I live in a bubble and have to be informed by others that so many people love my work," says the Airlift actress.

"I rely on feedback I get from the audience directly, online or personally. It is amazing when people from different age groups or nationalities contact me. I get fan mail from different people. It's interesting to see how people react," she says.

IAN S

Taapsee goes 'down the line' for Shabaash Mithu

Mumbai: Actress Taapsee Pannu has shared a snapshot of cricket practice for her role in the upcoming film *Shabaash Mithu*. The film is a biopic of Indian women's ODI cricket team captain Mithali Dorai Raj, and Taapsee essays the protagonist.

Taapsee posted the picture on Instagram, where she is seen playing a shot. "Down the line," she wrote as caption.

Filmmaker Anubhav Sinha commented: "Ab India khelegi kya?" To this, Taapsee replied: "@anubhavsinhaa sir India ke liye toh khel rahi hu kabse. Bas field different hai."

The film has been directed by Rahul Dhoolakia and written by Priya Aven. *Shabaash Mithu* has been produced by Viacom18 Studios. Taapsee will also be seen in the films *Looop Lapeta*, *Rashmi Rocket* and *Dobaaraa*, over the next few months.

IAN S



Kids win hearts in patriotic play Baji Rout

NSD-SPONSORED CHILDREN THEATRE WORKSHOP COMES TO AN END

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: A 20-day production-oriented theatre workshop for the children concluded here at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Tuesday with stage performance of the play *Baji Rout*.

The workshop was organised by city's prominent theatre troupe Satabdira Kalakar (SK) in collaboration with National School of Drama, New Delhi.

Eminent theatre personality Dolgovind Rath, an NSD alumnus, was the workshop director while SK's founder Dharendra Nath Mallick assisted him in the project.

Baji Rout, a boat boy and one of the youngest Indian freedom fighters and martyrs, was



Kids enact a scene from the play *Baji Rout* at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Tuesday

killed at the age of 12 by British police when he refused to ferry them across the Brahmani River on a night in Dhenkanal. The play Baji Rout was a representational narrative structure based on a poetry of the same name. As

many as 27 children, aged 9-14 years, participated in the workshop and all have enjoyed the process, said Mallick.

Dishani, a Class VI student of Kendriya Vidyalaya said, "I learnt a lot of things like act-

ing, music and dance at the workshop. Most importantly, I have grown in confidence after participating in the project."

Another participant K Anureema who studies in Class V of MBS Public School, on what she learnt from this workshop, said, "Apart from confidence, this play has taught us how to work as a team. I have enjoyed the whole process and would love to work in more dramas in future."

Workshop director Rath said, "It is a rare experience to be part of National School of Drama's extension process after so many years. I am thankful to NSD as well as Satabdira Kalakar for accommodating my services. It was great to be with the kids for 20 days and live their experience."

The dignitaries who attended the event included NSD's assistant professor Arun Mallik and eminent theatre director Manoj Patnaik.

FUN post

PEANUTS



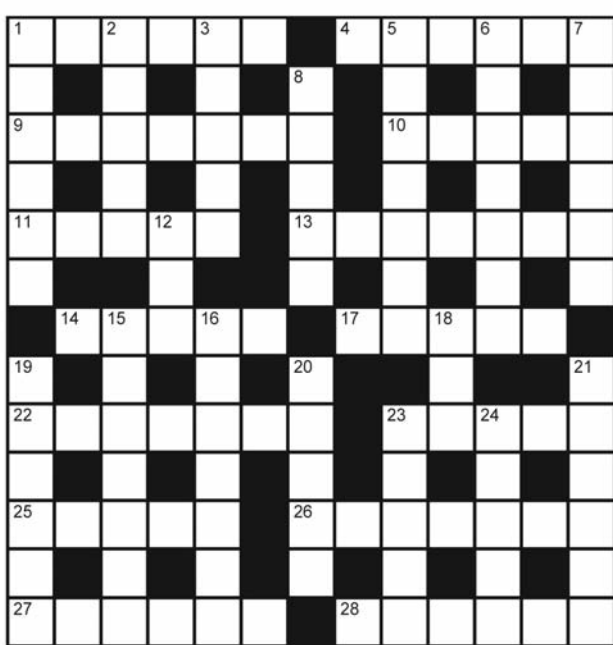
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD

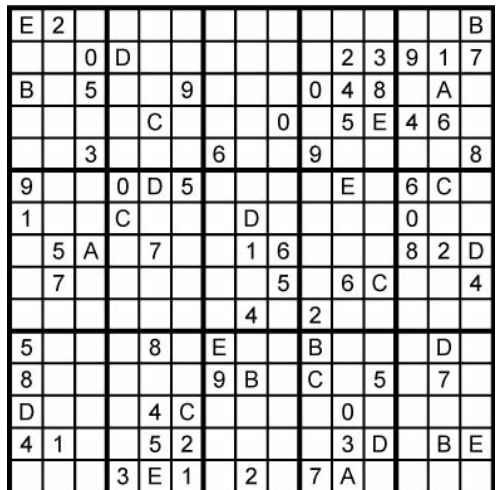


Copyright ©2021 PuzzleJunction.com

- Across**
- 1 Pungent edible root
 - 4 Estimates
 - 9 Dracula, for one
 - 10 Maxim
 - 11 Eat away
 - 13 Accelerate (5,2)
 - 14 Marsh plant
 - 17 La Scala highlights
 - 22 Synthetic resin
 - 23 Brandy flavour
 - 25 Sir or madam
 - 26 Gruesome
 - 27 Duck hunter's lures
 - 28 Allergic reaction
 - Down**
 - 1 Critique
 - 2 Disney elephant
 - 3 Pie order
 - 5 One not ready for prime time
 - 6 Nana, to some
 - 7 Treeless plain
 - 8 Terminate
 - 12 Washout
 - 15 Undependable
 - 16 Showplace for art
 - 18 Outrage
 - 19 Broke up
 - 20 Little rascal
 - 21 Chèvre, e.g.
 - 23 Ice cream flavour
 - 24 Stroll

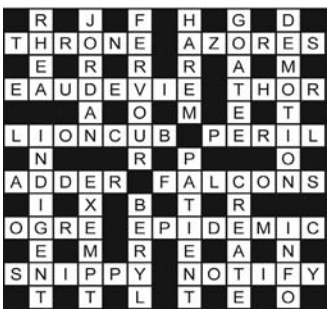
SUDOKU

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

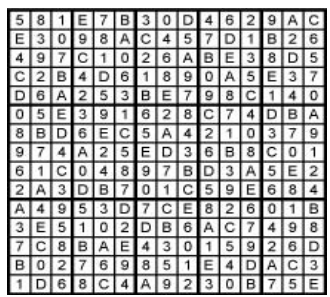


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

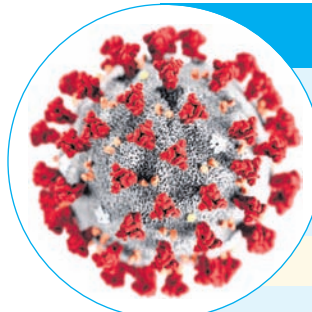


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



IN SYNC

Artistes perform Odissi at the 10th Gurushree Samman Utsav at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	12,84,08,993	10,35,73,177	28,07,211
India	1,18,46,855	1,13,93,021	1,62,114
Odisha	3,40,620	3,36,930	1,921

843 jumbo casualties in 10 yrs: Arukha

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 30: As many as 843 wild elephants have died in Odisha during 2010-2021, Forest and Environment Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha told the state Assembly Tuesday.

Replying to a question of Keonjhar MLA Mohan Majhi (BJP), the minister said the highest 93 elephants were killed in 2018-19 followed by 86 in 2015-16, 83 in 2010-11, and 82 each in 2012-13 & 2019-20.

The year 2014-15 recorded the lowest number of 54 elephant casualties while as many as 72 elephants were killed till March 22 last in 2020-21.

The state government, he said, in

‘487 apartments illegal’

The state Housing and Urban Development Minister Pratap Jena Tuesday informed the Assembly that 487 apartments in the Capital city are illegal and constructed in defiance of established rules of the government.

Jena said the City saw approval of a total of 1,643 apartments as per the site maps but 487 have been found to be built in violation of the laws.

Data given by the minister claimed that demolition orders for many of them have also been issued by the government.

₹20K cr demand for grants gets House nod

Demand for grants of Rs 20293.94 crore for Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department for 2021-22 was passed by Assembly Tuesday.

Out of the total outlay, Rs 15188.43 crore has been allocated under Programme Expenditure while Rs 522.11 crore earmarked towards Administrative Expenditure, Rs 2023.46 crore under 15th Central Finance Commission grants and Rs

association with the Union government, has taken several short-term and long-term measures to resolve the human-elephant conflicts.

He said three elephant reserves—Sambalpur elephant reserve, Mahanadi elephant reserve and

Mayurbhanj elephant reserve – and 14 elephant corridors in 16 Forest divisions have been identified.

A proposal to increase the area of Mahanadi elephant reserve from 1038.3 sqkm to 2181.521 sqkm

and the Sambalpur elephant reserve from 426.91 sqkm to 1797.048 sqkm to give more space for the movement of elephants is under consideration of the state government, he said.

1.85Cr trees felled for road expansion



Forest and Environment Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha informed the Assembly Tuesday that the state government felled around 1.85 crore trees to pave way for road constructions.

2559.94 crore under 5th State Finance Commission (SFC) grant.

During 2020-21, 3,94,468 rural houses have been completed involving Rs 4628.75 crore under various rural housing schemes.

There is a budget provision of Rs 3,000 crore for upcoming financial year. Similarly, Rs 2,000 crore has been allocated for MGNREGS and over Rs 8,000 crore for implementation of drinking water projects.



The highest 93 elephants were killed in 2018-19 followed by 86 in 2015-16, 83 in 2010-11, and 82 each in 2012-13 & 2019-20

A proposal to increase the area of Mahanadi elephant reserve from 1038.3 sqkm to 2181.521 sqkm and the Sambalpur elephant reserve from 426.91 sqkm to 1797.048 sqkm to give more space for the movement of elephants is under consideration of the state government

₹1,070.69 lakh has been spent during the last 10 years to solve the elephant-man conflict under CAMPA scheme

Arukha said during the last 10 years Rs 1,070.69 lakh has been spent to solve the elephant-man conflict under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning (CAMPA) scheme of

both the state and the Union governments. In order ameliorate the situation, Rs 11591.22429 lakh has been incurred under budget plans of the state and the Union government during the last decade.

The data was tabled by the minister in a written reply to a question posed by BJP MLA Mohan Majhi. The minister said that altogether 1,85,00,748 trees were felled in Odisha between 2010-11 to 2020-21. The highest of 62.03 lakh trees were cut in 2015-16 while 2019-20 saw felling of 26.77 lakh trees for expansion of road connectivity in the state.

The government has also spent Rs 66.17 crore on felling of trees and planting of saplings. According to the data presented by Arukha, the government, besides felling trees,

also planted a total of 29,83,573 trees. He said that these trees were felled alongside the roads for expansion of these roads. He said that the trees are felled as per demands raised by the development agencies involved in such projects.

“As per the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, the government gives the task to such agencies of planting double the trees cut down during such exercise or give the equivalent funds to the government for such losses. After the expansions are done trees are planted alongside the roads,” he said.

BJP for security to injured RTI activist Behuria

Leader of Opposition in Assembly, Pradipta Naik, Tuesday, demanded security to RTI activist Sarbeswar Behuria and his family members.

Behuria was admitted to a health-care facility with serious injuries after a few miscreants hurled bombs at him while he was returning home March 27 near Imam Nagar in Jajpur.

In the FIR, Sarbeswar's wife Rilui alleged that Dharamsala BJD MLA was behind the attack, sources said.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Naik said Behuria was attacked as he raised the issue of corruption in Dankari hill mining, PDS rice, allotment of houses under the PMAY to the poor and the breach in river embankment.

Uproar over tender process for water projects

Noisy scenes prevailed in the Assembly Tuesday over the process laid down for awarding tender to execute drinking water projects in the state.

Raising the issue during Question Hour, BJD MLA Soumya Ranjan Patnaik alleged that due to complexity of the tender process, Odisha contractors are being deprived of getting work of drinking water projects. State contractors fail to qualify for the bid for mega projects worth over Rs 50 crore. While the plumbers from Odisha particularly from Kendrapara district are providing water supply related services in various states and countries, the contractors from the state are being neglected by the state government, he alleged.

As the government is mixing some small projects and names it as ‘ega drinking water supply project’, the Odisha contractors are unable to qualify for the bid, he said, urging the Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Pratap Jena to divide the works to smaller parts for the benefit of state contractors. However, Jena refuted the allegation of Patnaik and said the contracts are being awarded as per OPWD Code and guidelines of Central Vigilance Commission (CVC).

Besides, as many 2,074 small piped drinking water supply projects are being implemented at various panchayat-level, he added.

Naik said that the law and order situation has totally collapsed in the state and said such an attack would not have been possible without the support of the ‘third floor’.

He said though the MLA was named in the FIR filed by Behuria's family, the legislator was not being brought under the purview of inquiry.

Pipli byelection: Rudra, Ajit file nominations



Ruling Biju Janata Dal candidate Rudra Pratap Maharathy (top) and Congress nominee Ajit Mangaraj Tuesday file their nomination for Pipli byelection

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Puri, March 30: Ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) candidate Rudra Pratap Maharathy and Congress nominee Ajit Mangaraj Tuesday filed their nomination papers for the byelection to the Pipli Assembly seat in Puri district.

The bypoll, to be held April 17, is necessitated by the death of Rudra Pratap's father Pradeep Maharathy in October 2020. He had represented Pipli seven times.

Accompanied by senior leaders and hundreds of supporters, Rudra Pratap filed his nomination papers in the additional district magistrate's office in Puri. Rudra and his sister Pallavi broke into tears before starting for Puri from Pipli.

“My father had always been there for the people of Pipli. I will

follow his footsteps and serve them. I am optimistic that people will bless me in the bypoll,” Rudra said.

Congress candidate Ajit Mangaraj also filed his nomination paper at the ADM's office.

He was accompanied by state Congress president Niranjana Patnaik and other senior leaders of the party, besides a large number of supporters.

“The Congress workers are excited about the upcoming election. It is going to be a good fight,” Mangaraj said.

CPI (ML-Liberation) candidate Ashok Kumar Pradhan also filed his nomination Tuesday.

BJP nominee Ashrit Pattnayak has already filed his nomination papers for the byelection.

While polling will be held April 17, votes will be counted May 2.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Gun battle with Maoists in Kandhamal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Phulbani, March 30: An exchange of fire took place between security forces and Maoists in a dense forest in Kandhamal district, a police officer said here Tuesday.

No casualty was reported from either side due to the gunfight that broke out on Monday night near Raighara village under Gochhada police station area.

Acting on a tip-off, a joint team of the Special Operation Group and District Voluntary Force of Kandhamal launched an operation, Superintendent of Police Vinit Agarwal said.

When the Maoists noticed the security personnel, they started firing at the security personnel who asked them to surrender.

As the ultras did not pay heed to the order, personnel of the joint team returned the fire, the SP said. The rebels then fled the scene leaving behind their belongings, Agarwal said.

Health minister writes to Centre for second AIIMS in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das Tuesday wrote to Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan urging him to take steps for establishing the second AIIMS of the state in Sundargarh district.

In the letter, the minister said that at present Bhubaneswar has one All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) which is a leading provider of medical courses and medical care. Not only people from the state but also people from many neighbouring states are availing the healthcare facility.

Recently, Bihar government's proposal for second AIIMS at Darbhanga Medical college campus has got the nod from the Centre. “However, our demand for second campus is yet to be considered. With the western Odisha getting densely populated, the second AIIMS hospital in Sundargarh is our demand,” said Das in his letter.



The minister added that there is a readily available infrastructure for college and hospital in Sundargarh. As a CSR initiative, an MoU has been signed between the Odisha government and NTPC to establish a medical college and hospital. The construction of the project has been completed and the process for procurement of equipment is in progress. “This available infrastructure can be utilised for setting up of the second

■ THERE IS A READILY AVAILABLE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR COLLEGE AND HOSPITAL IN SUNDARGARH

■ AS A CSR INITIATIVE, AN MOU WAS SIGNED BETWEEN THE ODISHA GOVERNMENT AND NTPC TO ESTABLISH A MEDICAL COLLEGE AND HOSPITAL

■ THIS AVAILABLE INFRASTRUCTURE CAN BE UTILISED FOR SETTING UP OF THE SECOND AIIMS

AIIMS within a short period of time. It will cater to a large tribal population in the area and help in providing quality tertiary care in the backward area of western Odisha. The location is easily accessible through road, railway and air (Jharsuguda airport),” Das said.

“Therefore, we request you to kindly grant approval for second campus in Sundargarh districts,” the minister concluded.

Heatwave warning for 2 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Severe heatwave condition is prevailing in the state with recording of a temperature of 40 degrees Celsius or above at 16 places across the state, Tuesday. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued heatwave warning for next two days.

According to IMD, Baripada recorded a maximum temperature of 44.6 degrees Celsius and became the hottest place of Odisha.

While Talcher recorded a maximum temperature of 42.7 degrees Celsius, it was followed by Boudh (42.5 degrees Celsius), Bolangir & Jharsuguda (42.2 each), Titlagarh (42), Angul (41.9), Sonepur (41.8), Nayagarh (41.7), Hirakud & Balasore (41.4 each), Sambalpur (41.3), Malkangiri, Bhawanipatna & Sundergarh (41 each) and Cuttack (40.5). The IMD made forecast that the maximum temperature (day temperature) is likely to rise by around 2 degrees Celsius during the next 48 hours and it will slide by 2-3 degree after three days in the districts of Odisha. Similarly, the maximum temperature will be above normal by 4-6 degrees Celsius at many places during the next three days.

National Highways Authority of India
Project Implementation Unit, Sambalpur
Sarlakani Chowk, Infront of St.John's School Near NH-6
Sakhipara Road, Sambalpur, Odisha-768006

11040/NHAI PIU/SBP/NH-57(OT045.750)/TOLL/387/2021
PUBLIC NOTICE
In accordance with the Govt. of India, Gazette Notification S.O. 4423 (E) dt.07.12.2020, the initial fixation of user fee rates of Fee Plaza At Ch. 15.250 near town Bolangir, in Bolangir District in the section from Bolangir to Sonepur from Km.0.00 to Km.45.750 on NH-57 in the state of Odisha for net road length of 45.750 Km. to be applicable with effect from 01.04.2021 at 08:00 Hours as per the rates given below. Accordingly, the User Fee collection will be started from 01.04.2021 at 08:00 Hours.
(in Rs.)

Category of vehicle	Fee for single journey	Fee for return journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single journeys in a month	Fee for single journey for the commercial vehicles registered within the district of fee plaza
Car,Jeep,Van or Light Motor Vehicle	35	50	1130	15
Light commercial vehicle, Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus	55	80	1825	25
Bus or Truck (Two Axles)	115	170	3825	55
Three Axle Commercial Vehicles	125	190	4175	65
HCM or EME or MAV (four to six axes)	180	270	6000	90
Oversized Vehicles (Seven or more axes)	220	330	7305	110

The rates of monthly pass applicable for local non commercial vehicle residing within a distance of 20 Km. from the above toll plaza for the year 2021-22 shall be **Rs.285/-**, subject to revision every year as per the provisions of said rules .

As FASTag is mandatory for all vehicles hence all users are requested to purchase FASTag. Ph. No. (0663) 2548966, Email: piusambalpur@nhai.org, nhaisambalpur@gmail.com

Sd/- Project Director

NOT JUST ROADS, BUILDING A NATION

National Highways Authority of India
Project Implementation Unit, Sambalpur
Sarlakani Chowk, Infront of St.John's School Near NH-6
Sakhipara Road, Sambalpur, Odisha-768006

11040/NHAI PIU/SBP/JSG-KNTR/TOLL/386/2021
PUBLIC NOTICE
Revision of user fee rate for 2021-22 in respect of Brajaraj Nagar Fee Plaza at Km.62.100 in section from Kanakatora-Jharsuguda from Km.197.300 to Km 265.300 on NH-49 (Old NH-200) in the state of Odisha w.e.f. 01.04.2021.
(in Rs.)

Category of vehicle	Fee for single journey	Fee for return journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single journeys in a month	Fee for single journey for the commercial vehicles registered within the district of fee plaza
Car,Jeep,Van or Light Motor Vehicle	50	75	1705	25
Light commercial vehicle, Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus	85	125	2755	40
Bus or Truck (Two Axles)	175	260	5775	85
Three Axle Commercial Vehicles	190	285	6300	95
HCM or EME or MAV (four to six axes)	270	410	9060	135
Oversized Vehicles (Seven or more axes)	330	495	11025	165

The rates of monthly pass applicable for local non commercial vehicle residing within a distance of 20 Km. from the above toll plaza for the year 2021-22 shall be **Rs.285/-**, subject to revision every year as per the provisions of said rules. Ph. No. (0663) 2548966, Email: piusambalpur@nhai.org, nhaisambalpur@gmail.com

Sd/- Project Director

NOT JUST ROADS, BUILDING A NATION

SNAKE VENOM RACKET IN CAPITAL CITY

WCCB to unearth possible int'l link

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), a statutory body fighting organised wildlife crime in the country, will soon assist the state Forest department officials to unearth the possible international links of the snake venom smuggling racket busted in the Capital city Saturday.

The Forest department officials seized a litre of snake venom from members of the racket.

The department officials have written to the WCCB's zonal office at Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh seeking the latter's help in the investigation into the snake venom racket. A team of officials from WCCB will soon visit Odisha for the probe, sources said.

The Forest department officials, during investigations, came across



The seized snake poison

THE FOREST DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS, DURING INVESTIGATIONS, CAME ACROSS SEVERAL VITAL CLUES REGARDING THE POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL LINKS OF THE SNAKE VENOM SMUGGLING RACKET

THE ARRESTED SMUGGLERS ARE PART OF AN INTERSTATE RACKET THAT MIGHT HAVE LINKS WITH CARTELS IN SOME NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES, LIKE CHINA AND SOME EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

several vital clues regarding the possible international links of the snake venom smuggling racket.

"The arrested members of the racket have revealed that they used to supply the venom to the cus-

tomers in Kolkata," a source in the Forest department told **Orissa POST**.

Sources also revealed that the seizure of large amount of venom indicated that the smugglers must

have collected it from outside the state. The arrested smugglers are part of an interstate racket that might have links with cartels in some neighbouring countries, like China and some European countries.

The snake venom is used as psychotropic drugs in these countries, sources said.

The Forest department is likely to seek the help of Crime Branch, the premier investigating agency of state police, to investigate the case alongside the WCCB.

Meanwhile, the officials are yet to nab Satyanarayan Das, the purported kingpin of the racket in Odisha despite several raids at different parts of the state since Saturday.

Notably, seven smugglers including the son of the kingpin from Bolangir were arrested by the forest sleuths Saturday.

DEMO OVER POWER TARIFF HIKE



BJP activists stage a demonstration at the OERC office in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, to protest against the recent hike in power tariff

Four BEd colleges to come under HE dept

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: The Higher Education department will take control over the Government BEd Training College of Kalinga in Kandhamal functioning under the ST & SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare (SSDMBC) department from June 1.

This was revealed by a Higher Education (HE) department notification issued Tuesday.

Likewise, the infrastructure and premises, created by the SS-DMBC department at Malkangiri, Nabarangpur and Rayagada to open government BEd colleges, will be taken over by the HE department in April through the Principals of Model Degree colleges of Malkangiri, Nabarangpur and Rayagada respectively, added the notification.

The taken-over infrastructure and premises shall be considered as part of the respective government degree colleges and will be re-designated as the second campuses of the said Model Degree Colleges.

Principals of the Model Degree Colleges shall send applications to National Council of Teachers Education (NCTE) for obtaining permission to start integrated BEd programme in their second campuses, said the notification.

Utkal students stir over infra devpt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Several students of Utkal University Tuesday sat on a dharna near the Vice-Chancellor's office demanding utilisation of funds received by university from the government for infrastructure upgradation.

Students of different streams alleged that the university authorities are not using the funds for the development of the infrastructure at the varsity. Many departments and classrooms don't have the necessary infrastructure. This apart, wi-fi service of the university goes kaput most of the time.

"Instead of focusing on these prob-

lems, the university officials are using the funds for the personal benefits," said a protesting student.

Mahesh Prasad, another student, said that the university is getting funds under Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) for improving access, equity and quality in higher education through planned development of higher education. However, unfortunately the university authorities have failed to utilise the fund in improving the facility for students.

Students warned that if the university authorities do not find a solution to these problems by April 5, they would intensify the protest.



Utkal University students stage a dharna on the varsity campus

Cops intensify crackdown on criminals ahead of bypoll

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pipli, March 30: Intensifying its crackdown on antisocials, especially ahead of the bypolls here, Puri police Tuesday claimed to have arrested 12 criminals in three separate incidents within the last seven days.

Delang police claimed to have nabbed four persons while they were conspiring to rob a rural bank in the locality March 28.

"Ramachandra Behera, Abhay Kumar Swain, Sushanta Mallick and Deepak Mallick have been taken into custody as they have assembled at Chhitalpur in a bid to hatch a conspiracy for robbing a bank in the locality. A few sharp weapons, crude bombs and four motorcycles have been recovered from their possession," said a police official.

The Pipli police, on the other hand, nabbed four persons after finding them of planning near Tarajaj overbridge here late March 26 night to rob commuters. "Rakesh Swain, Pabitra Behera, Jagannath Sahoo and Balaram Sahoo were arrested while conspiring to rob commuters. Although they hurled bombs on us in a bid to escape, we managed to nab the four. A sword,



The seized weapons and bombs

iron rod and a liquor bottle have been recovered from them," an official said.

In a similar occurrence, four history-sheeters were arrested late March 26 night while they were planning to rob highway commuters near Mathapadia under Satyabadi police limits in the district. "Pramod Sahoo, Chintamani Swain, Sanjay Behera and Kanhu Nayak have been arrested," added the official.

The Puri police has stepped up measures to ensure smooth conduct of the bypolls in Pipli.

"While 504 antisocials have been booked under Section 107 of the CrPC, cases have been registered against 25 history-sheeters under

Section 110 of the CrPC. Similarly, 73 non-bailable warrants have also been executed. Security checks have been intensified at the entry and exit points of the election constituency," said the official.

According to Puri superintendent of police (SP) Kanwar Vishal Singh, senior police officials including Pipli SDPO Debadatta Baral, inspector-in-charge (IIC) Gouranga Chanran Prusty, Delang IIC Rashmi Ranjan Patnaik and Satyabadi IIC Debi Prasad Patra have been supervising the security measures in the poll-bound Pipli.

"The crackdown will be intensified in the coming days," the SP pointed out.

Woman poisons children before suicide attempt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: In a shocking incident, a woman attempted suicide after making her children drink poison here recently. The lady and her daughter are currently undergoing treatment at SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack while her two sons succumbed at the Capital Hospital Sunday.

The woman, Janaki Jagaria, is a resident of Kandalei village under Chandaka police limits here. The deceased siblings were four-year-old Raju and the three-year-old Biju Jagaria.

According to sources, the lady, a daily wage, has been under severe financial stress after the death of her husband a few years back. She has been staying along with her three children and 18-year-old brother-in-law.

Sources claimed she recently had a verbal duel with her brother-in-law over a petty issue and in a fit of rage she took the extreme step. The villagers rushed Jagaria and her children to Capital Hospital where the doctors later referred the mother-daughter duo to SCB for better treatment.

Police have registered a case under Section 302 of the IPC against the lady in this regard.

WASSUP TODAY

- BHUBANESWAR**
- Demo by All India Trade Union Congress, Assembly front, 11 am
 - Aazadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav by Culture department and Odisha Sangeet Natak Academy, Rabindra Mandap, 6.30pm
- CUTTACK**
- Memorandum against power tariff hike, RDC office, 11 am
 - Demo by slum dwellers' association, RDC office front, 11 am
 - Memorandum by Odisha State Retired Employees Association, Sadar BDO office, Nuabazar, 11.30 am

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, Soumya Ranjan Das, S/o. Krushna Chandra Das, FE in Sri Ananta Multisolution Pvt. Ltd., I have lost my ID Card of HDFC Bank. ID Card No. - 200312381500019. I will not be held responsible for any misuse. 9853305030.

NHRC reprimands cops for tardy probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Tuesday reprimanded the cops of Salipur police station in Cuttack for the snail-paced investigation into an alleged dowry murder case.

Expressing displeasure over the issue, the rights panel remarked, "It is really unfortunate that the police officials on duty did not exercise the due diligence as expected of them and there has not been a fair investigation."

While hearing a plea filed by rights activist Himanshu Sekhar Nayak, the commission directed

the Principal Secretary of Home department to engage a senior officer of Crime Branch for expediting the probe into the dowry murder case. The secretary has been asked to submit an action-taken report in this regard within eight weeks.

It also asked the Director General of Police (DGP) to initiate disciplinary action against the IO, IIC and other officers for the undue delay in the probe and submit a report within four weeks.

Notably, in 2019, the relatives of one Chandana Sahoo of village Sarapada lodged a complaint with the Salipur police accusing her husband and in-laws of killing Chandana by poisoning her. They

also alleged that the parents of the deceased failed to provide a motorcycle in dowry as demanded by her in-laws.

The police allegedly arrested the accused only after the intervention of the commission while giving a clean chit to the in-laws.

The SDPO in his report claimed that the accused was arrested January 15, 2021 and the case against him was found true under Sections 498A and 306 (abetment of suicide) of the IPC. The SDPO also revealed in the report that the 'case is pending for seizure of records of treatment of victim at Sadguru Hospital, Jagatpur in Cuttack' for the last two years.

Electrification of Khurda-Nayagarh rail line completed



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Railway electrification work between Khurda Road and Nayagarh Town of the Khurda Road-Bolangir railway line project has been completed.

Commissioner Railway Safety (CRS), South Eastern Circle/Kolkata under the Ministry of Civil Aviation AM Choudhary inspected the 66-km stretch electrification work between Khurda Road and Nayagarh Town in the presence of Principal Chief Electrical Engineer (PCEE) of East Coast Railway BP Panda, Divisional Railway Manager (DRM), Khurda Road SK Singh and Chief Project Director (CPD) of Railway Electrification (RE) K Nagendra Prasad Tuesday.

On the trial run by the CRS, the special train has been hauled by electric engine from Nayagarh Town to Khurda Road with section speed of 80 kmph. About Rs 60 crore will be spent for the electrification project. The railway electrification work from Nayagarh Town to Mahipur will also be completed soon.

3.49L Olive Ridley turtles lay eggs at Gahirmatha

Last year, over 4.07 lakh sea turtles had laid eggs at Nasi-2 beach in Gahirmatha sanctuary

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Kendrapara, March 30: About 3.49 lakh Olive Ridley turtles laid eggs in the recently concluded mass nesting at Nasi-2 beach in Gahirmatha marine sanctuary.

The mass nesting commenced March 10 and concluded March 24, DFO of Rajnagar Mangrove Forest and Wildlife Division Bikash Ranjan Dash said. He said this time less numbers of endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles reported for laying eggs at Nasi-2, the favourite nesting place of the endangered species within Gahirmatha marine sanctuary.

Last year, over 4.07 lakh Olive Ridley sea turtles had laid eggs at Nasi-2, but this year the mass nesting figure remains only 3.49 lakh, he added.

Dash said an interesting fact is - a couple of sea turtles, which were tagged in 1998-99, also came to lay eggs once again to Gahirmatha Marine sanctuary, the largest rookery of the species. This proved that tagged female turtles are finding their way to Gahirmatha, where they had congregated earlier for laying eggs.

It has been now ascertained that the turtles generally come to the favourite nesting place again and again for laying eggs, the DFO said. Even, this year, the researchers of Zoological Survey of India have



tagged about 1,060 female Olive Ridley sea turtles at the Nasi-2 beach to ascertain their behaviour, migratory route and areas of foraging.

The endangered species rarely turn up in such large numbers anywhere on the planet for laying eggs. The Gahirmatha marine Sanctuary, instead of being the beacon of life, has turned into a bane of Olive Ridley turtles as more than 10 percent of eggs laid were destroyed due to over layering during the mass nesting period as turtles came to lay eggs on the same spot where other turtles earlier laid eggs.

The turtle usually dig pits with their rear flippers to lay eggs. After laying the eggs in the pits, the female turtles cover the nests with sand and return to the sea in a zigzag manner to confuse predators about the location of the nests. After laying eggs they returned into the deep sea. Hatchlings emerge from these eggs after 45-60 days and find their way to the sea creating a cacophony.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-DayalAgency-9437135727, **A.P. Tours and Travel**, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, **Aurobindo Market**-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, **Airport Road**-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, **Anish Infotech**- Tankapani Road-9861341488, **Bapuji Nagar**- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, **Baramunda Rental Colony**-Maa Ramchandra Communication-9658821469, **Baramunda Housing Board Colony**-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, **Cuttack Road**-Infotech Snacks-8984236754, **District Centre (Chandrasekharpur)**-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, **Forest Park**-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, **IRC Village**-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, **Janpath-Krupajal Book Store**-7978646669, **Jaydev Vihar**-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, **Jagannath Mobile Point**- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, **Kanan Vihar**-Auro Electronics-8260697560, **Khandagiri**- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, **KIIT Road**-Jugad Jn-9338545031, **Laxmi Sagar**-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, **Lewis Road**-Spider Web-7809186415, **Metro Satellite City**-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, **Madhusudan Nagar**-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, **Maa Santoshi travels**- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, **Nayapalli**- The Cake Room- 7873660137, **Near Mayfair Lagoon**-Cookiemana-9439491273, **Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels**-9668284823, **Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate**- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, **Net Square**- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, **Priyadarshini Market**-Astro Point-9938134346, **R.N. General Store**-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, **Sahid Nagar**- Maa Communication- 9437353424, **Sahini General Store**- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, **Satya Nagar**-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, **Samantapur**- Download Point-7504557743, **Sailashree Vihar**-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, **Saheed Nagar**-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, **Siripur**-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, **Sushree fashion**- Jagmara-9938714347, **Shree Vision**- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, **Unit-3**-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, **Unit-7**- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, **VSS Nagar**-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, **XIMB Square**-LD Books-9658061373.

RAIDS & SEIZURES FAIL TO CHECK MINERAL SMUGGLING IN KEONJHAR

POLICE SEIZE SIX VEHICLES WITH HUGE QUANTITIES OF IRON ORE, ARREST SIX

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, March 30: Despite repeated crackdowns on mineral mafia by forest, police and mines officials, illegal mining and mineral transportation has not been stopped till date. There are several instances of seizures of minerals during transits at various parts of Keonjhar in the last two months.

In most cases, police and forest officials catching such illegal activities these day while the mines department fails to get an inkling of the illegal mineral transportation.

Police seized huge quantities of iron ore loaded in five trucks at Jagdala



under Bamebari police limits and another truck at Jurudi Tuesday. Six people were arrested in this connection.

According to Bamabari IIC Rajendra Swain, police were conducting night patrolling Monday.

They first intercepted five trucks. On checking, they came to know that the vehicles were loaded with illegally extracted iron fines. Later, they came to know that another truck was carrying iron fines from Jurudi area. They arrested six people most of them were outsiders.

In most cases, police and forest officials catch such illegal activities these day while the mines department fails to get any inkling of mineral smuggling

IRON BILLET RACKET BUSTED

FOUR ARRESTED FROM JHARKHAND



BARBIL: Barbil police busted a major racket pushing illegal smuggling of iron billets and arrested four people from Jharkhand Tuesday. The racket was carrying out this illegal act by using forged number plates and documents.

Police seized four trucks in Bari area of Jharkhand.

The accused were identified as Pankaj Tiwari of Bari Atation area, two middlemen Arbinda Singh of Balia in UP, Arbind Tiwari of Siman in Bihar and Suraj Yadav of Bokarao in Jharkhand.

They were transporting about 64 tonnes of iron billets, valued at ₹30 lakh, to Patna in Bihar. By March 22, the ve-

hicles had not reached their destination. Radhakrishna Transports, a transport agency, was responsible for this transportation. It had filed a complaint at Barbil police station about missing of the vehicles on the way.

Police investigated the matter and came to know that the four had stuck a deal with Gandhi Steel Plant at Giridih in Jharkhand to sell the billets for ₹18 lakh. The accused had even received ₹5 lakh as advance from the plant.

Barbil IIC Sushant Kumar Das said that the accused were transporting iron billets by using forged number plates and transit documents.

DA case: 7-yr jail, ₹28L fine for college junior clerk

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, March 30: A Special Vigilance Court Tuesday handed down seven years of imprisonment to a junior clerk of Dharmagarh Women's College and slapped a whopping penalty of ₹28.57 lakh after convicting him in a disproportionate assets case.

Hearing the case, Special Vigilance Judge Prasanna Kumar Karna awarded the punishment after convicting Pradeep Kumar Sahu, junior clerk of the Dharmagarh Women's College, in Kalahandi district, for the offence.

He was arrested in 2014 on charges of accumulating assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

Vigilance officials had conducted simultaneous searches at Sahu's residential house at Kabedi village in Dharmagarh, the college office room at Dharmagarh and other places, July 15, 2014.

Several movable and immovable assets were found in his possession and in the names of his family members during the searches.

Money launderers lay debt traps for the poor in Nayagarh dist

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, March 30: Lending by private financial institutions and local money lenders at high interest rates to poor people has resulted in a debt trap for the latter. Such way of fleeing the poor and impoverished people caused a concern in this district, a report said.

Many of these firms do not have the permission to sanction loans and do it illegally. The business of illegal lending has been going on unabated due to lack of any strict measures in place. It is a vicious circle in which the poor and common people suffer the most and end up losing everything they had earned in their lives.

This often leads to fight and results in loss of lives. The murder of two persons recently over payment of interests on their loans at Gobindpur village under Itamati police limits and in Sathiapalli village under Nayagarh Sadar police limits is a case in this point.

The rate of interest these private firms charge varies from 3-5 per cent as well as 10-12 per cent in villages and town. Many of these firms give loan without any mortgage while some keep the gold ornaments, house pattas of the applicants as mortgage before sanctioning the loans.

It is alleged two persons lost their lives due to payment of less interest on their loans, police said. However, despite these increasing cases of violence and murders over illegal loan business the state government and the district ad-



Money laundering often leads to fight and results in loss of lives. The murder of two persons recently over payment of interests on their loans at Gobindpur and Sathiapalli is a case in point

ministration are yet to take any measures to safeguard the poor loanees. It is alleged that banks have also failed to come to the rescue of these poor people.

Reports said that poor persons and people living below the poverty line often take loans from the private chit fund firms, women self-help groups, local money lenders and money lending societies to meet the expenses of their children's marriage, to spend on their agricultural works and to meet other requirements.

The poor people often seek the help of these moneylenders, chit fund firms and women SHG groups as borrowing from is quite simple while that from a

the latter had no money to pay. He assured that he would pay fine online.

Infuriated over his reply, police picked him in his van to the police station. He had requested police to take his wife with him because she was pregnant and alone at the place. But his plea fell on deaf ears of police.

It was alleged that Bikram was detained at police station for three hours and abused.

On the other hand, Bikram's wife walked three kms in sweltering heat to the police station.

She was sick on reaching police station. Bikram's kin filed a complaint at the Udala SDPO.

Mayrubhanj SP ordered the disciplinary action and a departmental inquiry against the OIC.

“Be conscious first of thyself within, then think and act. All living thought is a world in preparation; all real act is a thought manifested. The material world exists because an idea began to play in divine self-consciousness.”

SRI AUROBINDO

Changing History

The great events of the golden jubilee celebration of the formation of Bangladesh and the birth centenary of the nation's architect, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, have needlessly got mired in a controversy. This happened due to a statement by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Dhaka during his two-day visit which began March 26. Modi claimed for himself some contribution to the birth of the country asserting he had been jailed in 1971 for participating in a “satyagraha” in support of Bangladesh, then struggling to be born.

The assertion has been widely greeted with derision as this is the first time that the people have come to know that a 21-year-old obscure man, Narendra Modi, also contributed in some way to the struggle of the Mukti Bahini. This is indeed a pathetic attempt to become part of a glorious chapter of India's post-independence history in which he had no role worth the name.

The facts are known to all. The Kalurghat Radio Station in Chittagong announced on March 27, 1971 the 'Independence of Bangladesh' following the declaration of martial law in East Pakistan even after the Awami League, based in East Pakistan, had won a majority in Pakistan's general election. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had already been arrested in Dhaka on the mid-night between March 24 and March 25, 1971 and flown to prison in Rawalpindi in April. The Pakistan army then carried out systematic mass killings, while thousands of Bangla women trying to flee the country were raped.

India's then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi moved a resolution in Parliament expressing “whole hearted sympathy and support for the people of East Bengal”. It deliberately stopped short of recognising the 'declaration of independence of Bangladesh' as it would have had international ramifications with the USA and China then taking sides with Pakistan. The PM had already taken the principal Opposition leaders into confidence holding a meeting with them on March 26, 1971 where she discussed the limited options available to India. Recorded history tells us she explained India could not afford to make public its actions in response to the unfolding situation in East Pakistan since these would not have got international support because Pakistan was a sovereign member of the United Nations.

What happened thereafter is history. India provided material, military and moral support to the people of East Pakistan. Brave Indian soldiers trained the liberation force, Mukti Bahini and fought Pakistan army disguising themselves as Mukti Bahini warriors.

However, the Indian government delayed conferring formal recognition on the Provisional Government of Bangladesh as that would have been considered an act of war by Pakistan. Instead, it sought to buy time to make proper war plans and insulate Sheikh Mujibur, in West Pakistan, from treason charges and the execution of a death sentence. At the same time it allowed the Provisional Government of Bangladesh to operate under its protection from Calcutta. It also gave shelter to about six million East Bengali refugees, including Mukti Bahini fighters, who crossed over to West Bengal.

The Indian government enlisted the support of the USSR by way of signing the India-USSR treaty of Friendship. This cushioned India against any actions from the USA and China. The US ploy was to push the region into war helping its strategic ally, Pakistan, to score over India. This was the reason why it tried to mobilise public opinion in India against the government's delay in according official recognition to the provisional government of Bangladesh.

The satyagraha in which Modi said he had participated along with supporters of the Jan Sangh, which was the BJP's previous avatar, was for demanding such recognition that would have spoiled all the efforts of India to help the formation of Bangladesh. The Jan Sangh, the RSS, and its leaders, particularly Atal Bihari Vajpayee, were clamouring for an early commencement of hostilities. It would be naive to believe that they did not know the consequences of such action.

The dismemberment of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh have been touted by the Congress as one of the biggest achievements of the Indira Gandhi government. It also gave a new lease of life to the Congress party. The BJP's anti-Pakistan policy – a key element of its polarisation politics to garner majority Hindoo votes – pales into insignificance when compared to the Indira government's role in the dismemberment of Pakistan and formation of Bangladesh. The surgical strike at Balakot although projected by the BJP as a step no less significant than the dismemberment of Pakistan is, in reality, nothing close to 1971.

The PM in his Dhaka speech didn't use a single word in praise of the Indira government for the creation of Bangladesh. On the contrary, he sought to claim credit for himself when what he had done as a young saffron parivar activist ran counter to the objectives of India and the nascent state of Bangladesh.

History does not allow itself to be perverted altogether. Especially modern and recorded history cannot be tinkered with.

WISDOM CORNER

“Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen.”

MICHAEL JORDAN

“Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.”

VINCENT VAN GOGH

“If you hire people just because they can do a job, they'll work for your money. But if you hire people who believe what you believe, they'll work for you with blood and sweat and tears.”

SIMON SINEK

WORDSWORTH

■ Butterfly

This has been suggested as a possible source of the name – the inversion is terribly seductive. There's a big problem, though. JBS Haldane once spoke sadly of “a beautiful theory, slain by an ugly fact” and I'm about to tread all over the idea with my size nine clodhoppers of evidence. The word can be traced right back to the Old English butferlege, found in a glossary of about the year 700. Nowhere along its trip from those times to today does it ever appear in the inverted form. The word does indeed seem to be butter plus fly. Words in some other European languages also contain the same idea, such as the German Schmetterling, whose ultimate root is a Czech word for cream. Why butter? We wish we knew for sure. Some authorities suggest the link comes from the insect's yellow faeces. Others point to the old belief that butterflies like to land on milk or butter left uncovered, or even that fairies and witches took on the form of butterflies at night to steal butter from the dairy. Nice stories, but lacking rather a lot on the firm-evidence front. Stephen Potter pointed out in his book 'Pedigree: Words From Nature' that the most common British butterflies around habitations are cream or pale yellow in colour, the usual colour of butter in the days before manufacturers started to add dyes to it.

LOL

NO ARGUMENT

A man and his wife were traveling down the highway when they saw the lights of a patrol car behind them. When they pulled over, the patrol man came up to the window and said, "I am going to give you two tickets. One because you were speeding and one because you didn't have your seat

belt fastened.” The man said, “I did too have my seat belt fastened. I just loosened it when you came up to the car.” The Patrol Man said to the man's wife, “I know he didn't have his seatbelt fastened. Isn't that right, lady?” She replied, “Well, officer. I learned a long time ago not to argue with my husband when he's drunk.”

Shivaji Sarkar

BOTH THE STATE AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENTS ARE IN DEBT TRAP. THE PEOPLE ARE BEING FORCED TO MANAGE IN A CASH CRUNCH ECONOMY WITH HIGH DOSES OF MULTIPLE TAXES, TOLLS, CESS, USER FEES, PENALTIES, WAGE-JOB LOSSES AND SEVERE INFLATION

IN JEST THIS

How Covid-19 changed our lives



Melvin Durai

HUMAN BEINGS ARE GOOD AT ADAPTING AND WE'VE CERTAINLY ADAPTED TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS

Human beings are good at adapting and we've certainly adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic in many different ways.

For example, before the pandemic, we would visit our friends whenever we wanted. During the pandemic, many of us have managed to stay in touch with friends, but abandoned face-to-face meetings for the safety of video calls, sometimes taking the extra precaution of wearing masks during these calls.

Some people enjoy drinks or meals with each other through video screens. Romance blossoms at some of these meetings, with words of endearment exchanged and lips pressed against screens.

Once the pandemic is over, what will happen to these online get-togethers? Will we reserve them only for friends and relatives who live far away – or will we continue to meet our local friends in this way?

If you've become used to online gatherings, you may decide that they have a permanent place in your life. Why spend money on fuel to drive to a friend's house when you can meet online in an instant?

Well, if your friend has cooked a delicious meal, that may be a good reason to visit, especially if your friend is unwilling to have it delivered to your house.

The pandemic has changed many aspects of our lives, and some of these changes have been called “the new normal” by experts. They expect the post-pandemic world to be quite different from the pre-pandemic world. But how different will it be? Here are five of the areas in which our lives may have permanently changed:

1. **WORKING:** Many people were forced to work from home during the pandemic and discovered many benefits of doing so. They didn't have to waste time commuting to work. Instead of sitting in front of a computer in an office, they could sit in front of a computer at home and get just as much work done faster at home. Employers also found benefits in keeping their staff at home. They were able to close offices, save money on rent and electricity, and could shout at employees during online meetings without having any objects thrown back at them.

On 15% reservation

Sir, According to a resolution passed in the Legislative Assembly, 15% of seats in medical and engineering schools are reserved for children studying in public schools. Undoubtedly this move is welcome. The Chief Minister also said that the number of students studying in government schools and colleges in the state has been significantly reduced since the introduction of general entrance exams like NIT and JEE at the national level. This is due to the lack of coaching facilities required for all these tests which are expensive. The question here is, will this problem be solved by reservation? The government should take up the important task of providing coaching to poor students for free or at low cost. This is because there is a need for funds that will be spent on the education budget, but the education budget is so low that it cannot be touched. Only Rs 24,370 crore has been allocated for education in 2021-22 fiscal. The second question is that if any new measures are taken without the foundation of education, the results are more likely to be negative. Moreover, the government plans to close down 5,065 schools. In fact, rather than closing these schools the government should focus on improving the quality of public schools. If the government closes down these schools who will be in the reserved category?

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

FOCUS ECONOMY

‘KNOW-ALL’ SYSTEM WON’T DO



Human tragedies refuse to die. The triple tragedy of the economy – note ban, convoluted multiple tax system and the panicky lockdown plus add to it a penalising system being built into the system, is adding to the tragedies, deepening of poverty and an unprecedented policy crisis

MSMEs are still gasping and majority of them are yet to be operational. It is becoming an electoral issue in Tamil Nadu, where nine lakh MSMEs had been shut during lockdown. Many are hit because the migrant labour force is yet to return and raw material, fuel prices and transportation costs have spurted.

Those who feel that online education is a success live in utopia. Except in some elite schools in metros it has not succeeded because the students do not have smart phone or share one phone among three to four siblings, if at all there is Internet connectivity in the rural hinterlands. The rising data cost is yet another deterrent.

Online is the biggest issue because net connectivity is more illusion than reality in three-fourths of the country. A digital system forced during the lockdown is not helping India but giving rise phenomenally to cyber phone frauds and costs on the families.

The farmer is piqued by rising cost of DAP fertilizer by Rs 300 a bag even as overall costs of farm inputs are increasing along with operational cost of diesel pump sets or other equipment due to continuous rise in petro prices causing a chain reaction on prices of all commodities. It is an irony that crude prices are falling but domestic petrol prices are being hiked.

Even the rupee is weakening and stock market is in distress as the benchmark sensex plunges and broader market is falling amid fears of fresh lockdown in India and across the globe and delay in economic recovery. Globally stocks are in bear hug as supposed COVID-19 cases are stated to be increasing. It speaks of poor industrial and finance sector recovery. Even gold and silver are losing their sheen every day. Since January the high of Rs 50,350 gold has plummeted to Rs 44,350 and silver to Rs 64,607. India needs a caring society, a

humane government and a system that can sustain all. But instead the system has become oppressive with forced introduction of schemes like Fastag, doubling the charges on non-Fastag vehicles, unnecessary HSRP car plates through an official diktat, severe hike in rail fares and reduction of train services for no rhyme or reason. These are becoming inflationary for goods, food items, edible oils and even car makers have increased the prices as their transportation costs rise.

Off and on irrational localised or regional lockdowns, penalties for not wearing masks and harassment by the administration for e-passes or sudden checks for corona or similar whimsical methods have brought the economy and society under severe strain as rent-seeking becomes a norm.

Forcing new labour code amid a distressed economic system, a 12-hour shift, changing wage rules and conditions without a discussion have accentuated the problems. Penalising people has become a passion. The latest is to announce nullifying of PAN card if it is not linked to Aadhar as also a penalty of Rs 1000 and increased income tax action on some ten-year-old violations.

Also is introduced a vehicle scrapping policy causing severe distress to individuals, who spend a lifetime of their investments and truck operators. The oppressive methods to harass citizens already hassled by an illusory disease add to the woes.

The situation is critical and the remedies are eluding. A distressed government is in a quandary. Each of its methods is stuck in poor finances, poorer vision and quagmire of rules. Unless the system takes a practical and humane view, turns the NITI Aayog into a functional planning body and parliamentarians raise the right issues the country may get into deeper crisis. Yes, institutions have become less functional and must be revived through a vibrant discussion that now is shunned. The arrogance of a ‘know-all’ system has to come to an end.

INFA



2. **SHOPPING:** While many people have continued to visit stores during the pandemic, others have switched their shopping mode to online ordering and home delivery or curbside pickup. Some of these people have not ventured into a grocery store in almost a year—they've even forgotten how to operate the shopping cart. Does it get pushed or pulled? Some of these people may eventually return to what's known as “traditional shopping,” but a few will continue to enjoy the convenience of online shopping.

3. **RESTAURANTS:** Many restaurants had to close for at least a few weeks during the pandemic. When they reopened, they found that their dining room capacity had shrunk due to social distancing requirements. To maintain their

business, they needed to rely on pickup and delivery. As a result, Uber Eats, Zomato and other delivery services thrived during the pandemic. Many customers may prefer to stay at home and have restaurant meals delivered to them, especially if they can keep the delivery driver from running over their pets.

4. **LEARNING:** While many schools switched to online learning during the pandemic, most of them have already switched back. But some students prefer to be online learners. This may even change how many students leave India to study abroad. Given the opportunity, they may choose to get an online degree from Cambridge University, while staying at home in Odisha and enjoying Mom's fish curry.

5. **YOGA AND EXERCISE:** Just as online learning has flourished during the pandemic, so have various exercise programmes. Yoga teachers in India are guiding students from all over the world. My wife loves taking a yoga class three evenings a week from the comfort of our home. It brings her peace and calm. I enjoy the peace and calm of not having to drive her anywhere.

Comic books and CBSE students

Sir, The Union Minister of Education Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' has launched more than 100 curriculum-based comic books aligned to chapters of NCERT textbooks. The books are created by more than 1,000 teachers of CBSE-affiliated schools and have been designed by NCERT based on its curriculum. The aim of this initiative is to increase the social and cultural sensitivity among children through teaching. The comic books have been developed for 16 subjects and for Classes III to XII. Each comic book comprises concise chapters followed by worksheets. They are supported by application-based examples to understand the concepts and some of the chapters cater to gender sensitivity, women empowerment and value education. The comic books are available on the government's online portal named 'DIKSHA' official website — diksha.gov.in or on 'DIKSHA' mobile application. The step, as per CBSE, has been taken in line with the National Education Policy - NEP 2020 to bring a shift from textbook learning to ensuring conceptual clarity among the students.

Hitesh Kumar Parida, JAJPUR

2nd phase poll campaigning ends in Assam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, March 30: A high-octane electoral campaign for the second phase of Assam assembly polls, spearheaded by an array of national and state leaders, came to an end Tuesday evening.

The second phase of state elections will decide the fate of 345 candidates in 39 seats going to polls April 1.

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was at the forefront of the campaign. BJP, which had maintained a studied silence on it in the run up to the first phase of voting, raised it in the Barak Valley this time as a carrot to the predominantly Hindu Bengali population, some of whom have their roots in Bangladesh.

While releasing the party manifesto for Assam polls, BJP president J P Nadda had made a reference to the CAA, mentioning that it would be implemented in time.

Union Home Minister and BJP leader Amit Shah, in his election rallies at Patharkandi and Silchar, mentioned the controversial legislation, for the first time, assuring that citizenship rights will be given to refugees, while asserting that BJP will not allow infiltrators to enter the state.

BJP was, particularly, strident in its attack on AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal accusing him of encouraging illegal infiltration, leading to encroachments of land and 'love jihad' which the party has promised to tackle.

Apart from the claims of devel-



- The ruling BJP is contesting in 34 seats and its allies, the AGP in six and the UPPL in three, with friendly contests in four constituencies-two each with the AGP and the UPPL
- The Congress is contesting in 27, its partners the AIUDF in eight and BPF in four
- The newly formed Assam Jatiya Parishad is contesting in 17 seats while 174 independents are also in the fray

A TOTAL ELECTORATE OF 73,44,631, INCLUDING 37,34,537 MALES, 36,09,959 FEMALES AND 135 OF THE THIRD GENDER, ARE ELIGIBLE TO EXERCISE THEIR FRANCHISE IN 10,592 POLLING STATIONS IN THE SECOND PHASE

opment initiatives taken for Assam by BJP's 'double-engine' governments both at the Centre and the state, the party has also attacked Congress for aligning with the AIUDF and allegedly encouraging infiltration for its "vested interest of creating a vote-bank".

After the announcement of poll dates in February end, Prime Minister Narendra Modi began his campaign from Karimganj in Barak Valley which has 15 seats in the 126-member state assembly.

Modi also held a rally at Sipajhar from where Assam Sahitya Sabha president Paramanda Rajbongshi is contesting as the BJP candidate.

J P Nadda had sounded the party's

poll bugle from Silchar in Barak Valley, nearly two months before Election Commission of India had announced the schedule for state elections in the northeastern state.

Both Modi and Nadda highlighted that the people of Barak Valley had sent party candidates to the assembly much before the saffron party made significant inroads in Assam.

All the 39 constituencies, spread over 13 districts of the Barak Valley, three hill districts, and parts of central and lower Assam, witnessed last minute canvassing by candidates and their supporters.

Among the prominent BJP leaders, who campaigned for candidates

in the second phase, are central ministers Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Narendra Tomar, Jitendra Singh, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan etc.

BJP, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) are alliance partners.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who was scheduled to address election rallies at Haflong and Bokajan during the day and interact with women at Silchar, was unable to reach due to inclement weather.

However, communicating with voters virtually, he said, "the party-led Grand Alliance will im-

ECI's notice to Assam dailies over BJP advt



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, March 30: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has issued notices to eight newspapers of Assam which carried an advertisement of BJP in the form of a headline claiming that the party will win all 47 seats where elections were held in the first phase Saturday.

Notices were sent to the newspapers following a complaint filed by Congress alleging that the advertisement violated a directive of the ECI, the model code of conduct for the election and the Representation of People Act, 1951.

In the notices, Assam Chief Electoral Officer Nitin Khade asked the newspapers to send a report clarifying their position to the Commission by 7 pm on Monday.

"The newspapers have also submitted their reports which were forwarded to the ECI," officials said. The Congress's Assam unit had filed a complaint against Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal,

party president J P Nadda and state unit chief Ranjeet Kumar Dass along with eight leading newspapers, which published Sunday an advertisement in the format of newspaper headlines claiming the party's win in all seats for which polls were held March 27. The complaint was filed at Dispur police station on Sunday night.

The advertisements have been presented in a manner on the front page of the newspapers to "prejudice the mind of the voters and this deliberate, malicious and mala fide set of advertisements is in clear violation of Section 126A of the Representation of People Act, 1951, which is punishable by two years of imprisonment and fine," he added.

The leading English, Assamese, Hindi and Bengali newspapers that published the advertisements include The Assam Tribune, Asomiya Pratidin, Aamar Asom, Niyomia Barta, Asomiya Khabor, Dainik Assam, Dainik Jugasankha and Dainik Purvodaya.

Priyanka slams BJP, RSS for 'harassment' of nuns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karunagapally (Ker), March 30: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Tuesday, slammed BJP and RSS for the alleged harassment of Nuns belonging to a Kerala based congregation during a train journey in Uttar Pradesh. She also stated that Home Minister, Amit Shah had condemned it only because of assembly polls.

Addressing a rally at Karunagapally in Kollam district, Vadra said, "It's election time. That's why when the sisters (nuns) were taken off a train in Jhansi and harassed by their own people, the union minister made a comment saying it's wrong. The rest of the time, they fully encouraged this sort of behaviour."

"Who gave the men of BJP youth wing permission and authority to harass women on a train? Who gave them the right to check the identity papers of the Nuns and two girls with them? Who allowed them to ask what their religion was? Are we to believe that in our country women cannot take a train without being harassed by someone and she is answerable to some goons about what she stands for and what she believes in?" she asked.

The Congress leader said she had spoken on the phone to the Nuns and they told her that they were worried.

"They were pulled out of the train, they were afraid and there was nobody to protect them," she said adding, "When BJP and RSS make



Goyal's remarks on nuns shameful: Vijayan

Kasaragod(Ker): Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Tuesday dubbed Union Minister Piyush Goyal's dismissal of the recent Kerala based nuns' harassment reports from UP as shameful and utter lie. Vijayan's reaction came a day after Goyal rejected the charge that the nuns and two postulants were attacked in Jhansi by some Bajrang Dal activists and said the Kerala CM was making false statements on the issue. Responding to the remarks, Vijayan said, "According to the Union minister, the nuns were not attacked and were left off after their travel documents were inspected and that the attackers were ABVP (Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad) workers was an allegation of the state government. They (nuns) had been attacked in a country, where one has all the rights to travel freely, for the sole reason that they were nuns. The action is shameful. He has justified the action of ABVP activists against the Nuns and two others." Vijayan told a press conference at Kasaragod, "A union minister is justifying the attack on the nuns, which is evidence of the RSS agenda being implemented by the Centre." He also referred to the attack on members of the minority community in the name of beef. "There was a lot of protest across the country against the attack on muslims in the name of beef. Have they changed? No. When they found some nuns, they attacked them." "Goyal was justifying the attack," he said adding, "This shows that minorities and those who want democracy in this country are not safe under the central rule which is implementing the RSS agenda." Vijayan also said that an attempt was being made to cover up for the culprits. Secular forces will fight them and Kerala will be in the forefront.

'hollow' statements about protecting women, it's a 'farce' because they don't respect women."

"Their ministers comment on women's jeans. One of their ministers said there should be a law that when women leave their dis-

tricts, they should register with the police so that they will be safe, as if women are not capable of looking after their own safety," said Vadra, who is on a two day tour of Kerala, where assembly polls are to be held April 6.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Idukki(Ker), March 30: After coming under fire for his sexually-coloured remarks against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, former MP Joyce George Tuesday withdrew his comments and expressed regret publicly, even as the national party demanded his arrest while the ruling CPI(M) distanced itself from the slur.

"Thereby unconditionally withdraw the inappropriate remarks made by me while addressing an election rally in Erattayar here on Monday. I also express regret over that," he said while speaking at a meeting in Kumaly in this high range district.

George had won as the CPI(M) supported independent during 2014 Parliamentary poll from Idukki, but lost to Congress's Dean Kuriakose in 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

As TV channels started airing the visuals of his speech in Erattayar here this morning, sharp reactions poured in from various quarters especially from the Congress-UDF fold, which strongly condemned the remarks and described it as "misogynistic".

Sensing that the objectionable remarks would give the opposition ammunition to target them during campaigns in the poll-bound state, the CPI (M) was quick to reject George's comments.

Distancing himself from the derogatory comments, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan made it clear that attacking Gandhi personally was not the LDF's stand.

"We will oppose him politically not personally", Vijayan told reporters in Kasaragod.

Soon after that, the CPI (M) state



secretariat here issued a press statement stating that the Left party does not agree with the remarks made by their ex-MP.

"The CPI (M) is opposing the political stand taken by the Congress party and Rahul Gandhi. Such remarks will only help deviate attention from the political criticism. Nobody should make such comments," it said.

Attacking the opposition i.e. Congress-led UDF and Rahul Gandhi in particular, George, during his Erattayar speech, had said Gandhi would visit only women's colleges and girls should be 'careful' while dealing with the former Congress President.

"Rahul Gandhi is a bachelor and troublemaker. So girls should be wary of him.

Do not bend down in front of him," he had said while campaigning for Power Minister M M Mani.

The former Left independent MP's remarks came days after Gandhi had given Aikido lessons at the famed St Teresa's college in Kochi based on the request of a student.



GEORGE, DURING HIS ERATTAYAR SPEECH, HAD SAID GANDHI WOULD VISIT ONLY WOMEN'S COLLEGES AND GIRLS SHOULD BE 'CAREFUL' WHILE DEALING WITH THE FORMER CONGRESS PRESIDENT.

The Congress leader had visited the women's college for an interaction with students after he arrived at the state for election campaigning.

Meanwhile, Congress leaders were up in arms against George's obscene statements against Gandhi.

Leader of Opposition, Ramesh Chennithala termed the sexually coloured remarks against Gandhi as 'unfortunate and unacceptable'. "A case should be registered

against the former MP and he should be arrested," he said.

KPCC chief Mullappally Ramachandran and former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy lashed out at the former MP and said the remarks were "highly deplorable" and "unacceptable".

"Joyce George has actually insulted the womanhood through the comments. He should apologise publicly," Ramachandran said and urged the Left women leaders to criticise their former independent MP and initiate legal action against him.

Member of Parliament and Youth Congress leader Dean Kuriakose said George might have spoken about his own character.

"The vulgarity within him has come out now. What is his merit to criticise Rahul Gandhi? He is trying to follow the footsteps of power minister M M Mani, known for making such derogatory comments," he said.

Kuriakose said through the comments, the former MP had not only insulted Gandhi but also the girl students.

He also said he would soon lodge a complaint with the Election Commission against George in this connection.

Mahila Congress activists and Youth Congress leaders took out a protest march in the state capital against the objectionable remarks.

Kerala Congress leader P J Joseph said the comments were 'immature' and wanted to know whether it was the opinion of the entire LDF.

However, minister M M Mani justified George and said he had not made any anti-women remarks and only criticised Rahul Gandhi.

264 'crorepatis' in Assam Assembly polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, March 30: A total of 264 'crorepati' candidates, comprising 27.90 per cent of the final 946 contestants, are engaged in the battle of ballots in Assam for 126 assembly constituencies in three phases. The richest candidate in the arena is the United Peoples Party, Liberal (UPPL)'s Kokrajhar West (ST) contestant Manaranjan Brahma, with total assets worth Rs 268 crore.

He is followed by independent candidate Rahul Roy from Udhlabond with assets worth Rs 136 crore and AIUDF's Jamunamukh nominee Sirajuddin Ajmal with assets worth Rs 111 crore, according to the affidavits filed by them. According to an analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), Congress has the highest 64 candidates with assets above a crore, followed by BJP with 60, the newly formed Assam Jatiya Parishad with 31, the Asom Gana Parishad -22, AIUDF-11, BPF-8 and UPPL-1.



Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Tuesday began her campaign for April 6 assembly polls in Kerala, by taking out a road show through this ancient maritime trading town in Alappuzha district

JAYARAJAN QUILTS ELECTORAL POLITICS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kannur(Ker), March 30: Senior CPI(M) leader and Kerala Industries Minister, E P Jayarajan Tuesday said that he has decided to bid adieu to electoral politics.

A three-time MLA, Jayarajan is one of the several senior leaders who did not get a ticket this time as the Left party decided not to field those who have completed two terms.

While addressing the media here, Jayarajan made it clear that he would not contest in any form of election from now onwards.

"The party has decided not to field those persons who have already completed two terms. I have completed my term. I have been elected an MLA thrice and become a minister also," he said.

Citing his advanced age and related ailments as reasons to quit electoral politics, the 70-years-old leader said he would not contest even if the party demands.

"I hope the party will accept my stand. Otherwise, I will try to con-



vince the party about my position. I am getting old and suffering from various health problems. So, I cannot contest in elections anymore," the senior leader added.

When asked about Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan who was contesting at the age of 75, Jayarajan said that he is a "great personality" having exceptional caliber and energy. Serving as the party's district secretary in politically volatile Kannur for long, Jayarajan was once known as a close confidant of Vijayan.

The Kannur strongman had to re-

sign as industries minister in October 2016 over alleged nepotism charges soon after the LDF government came into power.

He ran into rough weather after the appointment of his nephew P K Sudheer Nambiar, son of Kannur MP P K Sreemathi, as the managing director of Kerala Industrial Enterprises Ltd.

However, the vigilance and anti-corruption bureau, which probed the case, had absolved him of the charges, following which he had been reinstated in the ministry in 2018.

of the day quote

This is a historical moment for all of us. We had our first case January 30, and today after 1 year and 2 months, we have chased more than 1.2 crore COVID-19 cases



HARSH VARDHAN | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

We support a regional process to be convened under the aegis of the United Nations



S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

Where there are clusters of cases, simply quarantining individuals or families will not help. In that case, larger containment zones with clear boundaries and stringent controls must be implemented



RAKESH BHUSHAN | UNION HEALTH SECRETARY

SHORT TAKES

Dance Deewane hit by COVID-19

Mumbai: As many as 18 crew members of Madhuri Dixit Nene-judged popular dance reality show "Dance Deewane" have tested positive for the novel coronavirus, a film industry worker's union said Tuesday. A spokesperson of Colors channel confirmed that a few members on the third season of "Dance Deewane" had contracted the virus without disclosing the actual number. "Some crew members associated with our show 'Dance Deewane' have tested positive for COVID-19. They have been immediately provided with medical assistance and are currently placed under quarantine.

CBI questions Anup Majhi

New Delhi: The CBI Tuesday questioned Anup Majhi, the alleged mastermind of illegal coal mining in the Eastern Coalfields Ltd mines in West Bengal's Asansol, for nearly eight hours in connection with the case, officials said. Majhi, alias Lala, has been summoned again on April 1 to answer questions pertaining to the alleged illegal mining, they said. The case has picked up steam with the questioning of Rujira Banerjee, wife of TMC MP and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee.

Night curfew in Ch'garh districts

Raipur: Amid a spike in COVID-19 cases in Chhattisgarh, restrictions have been imposed on shops remaining open after 9 pm in several districts, including Raipur, while some areas will see night curfew from Tuesday, officials said. The order issued by the administration in various districts said the operation of all kind of temporary and permanent shops will be allowed from 6 am to 9 pm, while restaurants, dhabas and hotels can remain open between 8 am and 10 pm for indoor dining, a public relations department official said.

'Goodwill' visit

New Delhi: The French Navy's amphibious assault helicopter carrier *Tonnerre* and frigate *Surcouf* arrived in Kochi Tuesday ahead of a mega naval war game involving France and four member nations of the Quad grouping, officials said. The French ships are on a two-day 'goodwill visit' to Kochi. The ships will be sailing to the Bay of Bengal Thursday to participate in the France-led 'La Perouse' naval war game from April 5-7.



It is important to prepare for the lockdown by taking people into confidence, ensuring minimum impact on the economy and also ensuring how the chain of the coronavirus can be broken

PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

'Airports may levy spot fines if face mask rule violated'

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri also took to Twitter and said that people must wear face masks, covering their nose and mouth, and maintain social distancing in aircraft and at airports



AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 30: Aviation regulator DGCA Tuesday told airports to increase surveillance to ensure COVID-19 norms are followed and consider imposing spot fines, with the help of police authorities, on passengers who are found not wearing masks properly and not maintaining social distancing.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had asked airports and airlines March 13 to ensure that passengers wear masks and maintain social distancing at all times during air travel, and take action against those violating the norms. In a circular issued Tuesday, the regulator said, "During the surveillance of some airports,

it has come to notice that compliance (of COVID-19 protocols) is not satisfactory."

"All airport operators, therefore, are requested to ensure that the instructions on COVID-19 protocol from the standpoint of wearing face mask properly, covering nose and mouth, as well as maintaining social distance norms within the airport premises are followed scrupulously," it said. Accordingly, all airport operators can increase surveillance in this regard, the DGCA said.

"The possibility of taking punitive action, such as levy of spot fines in accordance with the law, shall also be explored with local police authorities so as to serve as a deterrent for the violation of

'LADY SINGHAM' SUICIDE CASE

MAHA SUSPENDS TOP FOREST OFFICER

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai/Amravati, March 30: The Maharashtra government Tuesday suspended a top Indian Forest Service officer five days after daring woman forest official Dipali Chavan-Mohite committed suicide at her home in Amravati, officials said.

Former Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Field Director of Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR) MS Reddy, who had suddenly gone missing, has been suspended four days after he was removed from his post March 26 and awaited a new posting.

The fast-paced developments came after Women & Child Welfare Minister Yashomati Thakur - who is Guardian Minister of Amravati - called on Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and submitted a memorandum demanding stringent action all those found involved in the matter.

On Friday, the Amravati police had arrested IFS officer B Vinod Shivkumar, as he was planning to flee from Nagpur to Bengaluru,

and later the state government suspended him as the incident triggered a massive uproar in government and bureaucratic circles.

Range Forest Officer (RFO) Chavan-Mohite, 28, who took the extreme step by shooting herself with her service revolver at her official quarters, had left behind a suicide note addressed to Reddy, in which she had virtually accused Shivkumar on various counts like sexual harassment, professional torture, causing financial losses and mental trauma, etc. due to which she suffered a miscarriage last month.

Reddy was shunted out of his prestigious posts following complaints that he reportedly failed to heed Chavan-Mohite's complaints against Shivkumar, currently in police custody. (IANS had first highlighted the late woman RFO's plight in detail last May).

Peared as the 'Lady Singham' of the forests, Chavan-Mohite was renowned for various daring acts against dreaded jungle mafias and local politicians who, in tandem with tribals or villagers, engaged in different types of illegal activities in the forests.



MOCKERY OF SOCIAL DISTANCING



People are splashed with water during Holi celebrations, amid coronavirus pandemic, in Prayagraj

PTI PHOTO

Crowded Holi events in Goa draw Oppn's ire

A total of 127 persons tested positive for Covid-19 in Goa over the last 24 hours

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, March 30: A string of packed-to-the-brim Holi parties held in Goa's night clubs and resorts Monday has provided colourful ammo to the Opposition in the coastal state, where increasing Covid-19 cases had forced Chief Minister Pramod Sawant to ban celebrations of indigenous Hindu spring festival 'Shigmo' earlier this month. Opposition MLAs accused Sawant Tuesday, of giving

a "go-ahead" to commercial events related to Holi, as videos of such celebrations went viral on social media.

"The government says it is a logistics nightmare to make Covid-19 certificates mandatory for tourists. And the move would impact the tourism industry. The same government imposed Section 144 without delay. Where has this section been implemented? Did you see any implementation of Section 144 when those Holi parties were held,

where people were dancing outside casinos and at Holi parties," former Deputy Chief Minister and Goa Forward party MLA Vijai Sardesai said in a statement.

"They (the government) are not at all serious about Covid. They are not taking preventive care. You don't have to panic in the face of a second wave. The CM is moving around inaugurating exhibitions without a mask and he preaches to people. Practice what you preach first," he added.

MATTER OF CONCERN

The rising mercury in North India and humid conditions in places like Maharashtra can again play havoc if people flout Covid guidelines, top health experts said Tuesday, admitting that the current weather conditions in the country, especially in the western part, is conducive for Covid-19 transmission



HIRAN CASE

2 accused sent to NIA custody till April 7



The Volvo car that was allegedly used in the Mansukh Hiren murder case being taken to the NIA office, in Mumbai Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, March 30: A special court here Tuesday extended, till April 7, the NIA custody of a dismissed cop and a bookie arrested in connection with the death of Thane businessman Mansukh Hiran.

The duo - jailed former cop currently on parole Vinayak Shinde and cricket bookie Naresh Gaur - was arrested by Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) on March 21 but the case was subsequently taken over by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) March 24. Seeking 10 days additional custody, NIA Special Public Prosecutor Sunil Gonsalves said that the probe agency has seized two mobile, one iPhone, 7 SIM cards, a blank cover of SIM card, a note with 14 mobile numbers mentioned including 5 in the name of arrested-suspected cop and prime accused Sachin Vaze with 'Ok' written (for activation) beside them. He said that Gaur had given those 5 numbers to co-accused Shinde who in turn gave them to Vaze and these were later allegedly used for the conspiracy and crime pertaining to the SUV

Scorpio - abandoned February 25 near Antilia building, the home of industrialist Mukesh Ambani - followed by Hiran's mystery death March 5. Gonsalves argued that Vaze and Shinde were present when the conspiracy was hatched, and Gaur has given a disclosure statement after which the NIA recovered a laptop, DVRs and other materials which were fished out from the Mithi River Sunday (March 28).

He also contended that investigators need to find 2 of the total 14 SIM cards that emerged in the probe, want to confront the accused trio with each other, and unravel the full conspiracy of the two cases even as the NIA sleuths inch closer to cracking the motive behind these sensational crimes. During their parallel probes, the ATS and NIA have seized or examined around half a dozen luxury cars used/driven by Vaze, recreated the crime scene near Antilia and the Thane Creek marshes (where Hiran's body was found), arrested the Shinde-Gaur duo, searched the Mumbai Police's Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) offices, amid other aspects of the sensitive cases.

India, US Special Forces carry out military drill

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 30: A joint special forces exercise by India and the United States, Vajra Prahar 2021, was conducted at the Special Forces Training School in Bakloh in Himachal Pradesh.

During the eleventh edition of Vajra Prahar 2021, both the countries' forces shared the best practices and experiences in areas such as joint mission planning and operational tactics.

The joint exercise by the special forces of both the countries is conducted alternatively between India and the US.

"They share best practices and experiences in areas such as joint mission planning and operational tactics as well as to improve interoperability between the special forces of both nations," the Indian Army said. Bilateral military exercises and defence exchanges are an important facet of deepening bilateral defence cooperation between friendly countries.

During such events, the armies of participating nations jointly train, plan and execute a series of operations for neutralisation of threats of varied nature with a common aim of countering threats of international terrorism through mutual training and jointness.

In February this year, soldiers from Indian and the US armies participated in a land exercise -- Yudh Abhyas -- at the Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan.

9 kids charred to death in Bihar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Araria/Bhagalpur (Bihar), March 30: Nine children have been charred to death in two separate incidents of fire in Araria and Bhagalpur districts of Bihar, officials said Tuesday.

Six children were burnt alive in Kavaiya village of Palasi police station area of Araria in the afternoon, Deputy Superintendent of Police Ejaz Hafiz said. The deceased included two girls aged four and six years while the remaining were boys in the age group of four to five years, he said. The children belonged to fam-



ilies living in the same locality and they had got trapped inside a hut made of straw when it accidentally caught fire, the Deputy SP said.

In Bhagalpur, three siblings were charred to death while their parents sustained serious burn injuries when their house caught fire Monday night while dinner was being cooked. According to Sujay Kumar Singh, the Sub Divisional Officer concerned, the tragedy struck the family daily wage earner Lal Muni Mandal in Pirpainti police station area where his five-year-old son and daughters aged three and one died in the fire. Mandal and his wife were rushed to a hospital in Bhagalpur where they were said to be out of danger. The flames were doused by neighbours which prevented the fire from spreading to adjoining houses.

Akhilesh-Shivpal: Cracks reappear in relationship

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 30: The cracks, which were carefully papered over the past few months, were thrown wide open on Holi.

The warring factions within the Yadav clan gave clear indications of their future in Etawah Monday when Samajwadi president Akhilesh Yadav and his estranged uncle Shivpal Yadav held separate Holi functions. Shivpal leads the Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party Lohia (PSPL).

This was the first time when two functions were hosted by the Yadav family in their native village Sefai.

Akhilesh Yadav, along with uncle Prof Ram Gopal Yadav, cousins

Dharmendra Yadav, Tej Pratap Yadav, Anshul Yadav, and Kartikeya Yadav and other family members, played Holi with flowers while Shivpal played with colours with his son Aditya Yadav and supporters at the Sughar Singh Memorial School compound.

When asked about Shivpal's absence from his function, Akhilesh said, "He must be playing Holi elsewhere."

However, unlike previous years, Akhilesh and his uncle Prof Ram Gopal Yadav did not make the customary speeches. Surprisingly, the party patriarch, Mulayam Singh Yadav, stayed away from Holi celebration at his native village.

Mulayam, as a rule, has never



missed Holi celebrations in Sefai and though sources said that the veteran leader could not come as he was unwell, family sources said that he

was 'fed up' with the unwillingness of his son and brother to patch up differences. "Netaji (Mulayam) is upset because the patch up is

nowhere in sight even when elections are round the corner," he said.

Akhilesh and Shivpal have been putting up a facade of unity since the past few months with Akhilesh agreeing to leave the Jaswantnagar seat for his estranged uncle.

However, Akhilesh has refused to talk about an alliance of any further adjustment with his uncle's PSPL.

The PSPL, on the other hand, has been in talks with other smaller parties like Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party and AIMIM for a larger alliance in next year's Assembly elections.

Both, SP and PSPL, are contesting the Panchayat elections separately which is bound to divide

their traditional vote base.

The development has left party cadres of both parties rather upset.

"The 2022 Assembly elections are extremely crucial and if SP and PSPL do not patch up, both will suffer. A division of votes - Yadavs and Muslims - is something we cannot afford at this stage if we are serious about returning to power," said a SP MLA, on condition of anonymity.

A PSPL leader, on the other hand, said, "Shivpal Yadav has always held out the olive branch but it is Akhilesh who refuses to relent. Efforts made by Mulayam Singh Yadav have also proved futile. We can only hope that things change before elections."

of the day quote

We'll review the Covid-19 situation and other issues today. Shortage of beds came from one or two private hospitals and that situation will be corrected



SATYENDAR JAIN | DELHI HEALTH MINISTER

The impact of remarkable changes by Modi in political work culture are being witnessed on every front - be it economy, national security, internal security and foreign affairs



MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI | UNION MINISTER

After the first phase of polling only the BJP is confident of its victory, whereas the TMC and its leaders are frustrated. As the election will progress, the trend set by the BJP in the first phase will gain momentum and with every phase of polling TMC workers will themselves realise their defeat



DILIP GHOSH | MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

SHORT TAKES

Fire breaks out at Kashmere Gate ISBT

New Delhi: A fire broke out on the sixth floor of the Kashmere Gate Inter State Bus Terminus (ISBT) here that 10 fire tenders brought under control. No one has been injured, a fire official said. "A call of fire was received at 2.26 p.m.," he said. The fire was reported from a hall located on sixth floor of the building in which furniture were gutted.

Minor girl sets herself ablaze

Hamirpur (UP): A 15-year-old girl set herself ablaze at a village in Uttar Pradesh's Hamirpur district Tuesday after allegedly being molested by a boy, police said. The girl has been rushed to Kanpur for advanced treatment as she has received severe burn injuries. Hamirpur Superintendent of Police Narendra Kumar Singh said that Monday, the girl's family had beaten up the 16-year-old boy for allegedly molesting her. The victim's family had refused to lodge a complaint.

Sharad Pawar unwell

Mumbai: Sparking fresh health concerns, Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar, who has been unwell since Sunday, was rushed to the Breach Candy Hospital here after he developed fresh abdominal pains, a top party leader said Tuesday. NCP spokesperson and Maharashtra Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik said that Pawar, who was due to be taken to the hospital Wednesday, was admitted to the hospital Tuesday "since he is experiencing some pain again".

4 Maoists held

Ranchi: Four Maoist guerrillas were arrested Tuesday along with ₹4.48 lakh levy collected by them in Jharkhand's Latehar district. According to the police, there was information regarding the presence of Maoist guerrillas belonging to the Chotu Kharwar group near the Udaipur Chowk. Based on the tip-off, the police conducted raids and arrested three Maoists who have been identified as Upendra Yadav alias Bhupesh Yadav, Niranjana Yadav and Yogendra Yadav. The police recovered ₹3.48 lakh in cash, a motorcycle, six mobile phones, seven ATM cards and seven bank passbooks from their possession.



The situation today is such that any corruption case that comes up in the name of people like Vijayan are not probed, while if anyone writes a letter against me or our leaders, it's immediately probed

RAMESH CHENNITHALA | CONGRESS VETERAN

STRICT RULE

Over 700 people were issued challans across the national capital on Holi for not wearing masks in public, police said Tuesday



TALKING HEADS



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Tamil Nadu CM Edappadi K Palaniswami during a public meeting as part of an election campaign in support of their NDA allied candidates, ahead of Tamil Nadu Assembly polls at Dharapuram in Tiruppur district

PTI PHOTO

Mehbooba's mother's passport rejected

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, March 30: The passport application of Gulshan Nazir, wife of former Union home minister and two-time Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, has been rejected following an adverse police report.

Her daughter Mehbooba Mufti's application for a passport was also rejected and the PDP president had approached the Jammu and Kashmir High Court for the document but her petition was dismissed Monday.

The mother and daughter, who had applied for fresh passports in December last year, wanted to perform 'Umrah', a pilgrimage to Mecca which can be undertaken at any



time of the year, according to some People's Democratic Party (PDP) leaders. According to a letter sent to Nazir, the Regional Passport Office informed her that the Jammu and Kashmir Police's CID department has not cleared her passport application under section 6 (2) (c)

of the Passports Act. Under this section, a passport is rejected by authorities if they feel that the applicant may engage outside India in activities prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India or the departure of the applicant from India may, or is likely to, be detri-

mental to the security of the country. A passport can also be rejected, under the section, if the presence of the applicant outside India may, or is likely to, prejudice the friendly relations of India with any foreign country.

This section can also reject an application if the central government is of the opinion that issuing a passport or a travel document to the applicant will not be in public interest. The passport officer also informed her that the CID of the Union Territory had recommended against granting a passport to her.

The letter said Mehbooba can appeal against the decision at a higher forum provided by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Indians spend 188 bn minutes on OTT amid free telco bundling

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 30: Indians spent 188 billion minutes on various OTT platforms - the highest 69 billion minutes on daily soaps followed by movies with 31 billion minutes - in the month of February as free telecom bundling helped increase the number of OTT subscriptions via smartphone users, a report showed Tuesday. Voot dominated the daily soaps genre compared to its rivals while others together grabbed 31 per cent share.

Hotstar dominated the movies genre with 33 per cent share, according to Bengaluru-based market research firm RedSeer.

"With users not willing to step



out of their houses, production houses of mainstream movies and OTT platforms started releasing new content online along with producing more originals," said Nikhil Dalal and Ujjwal Chadhury from RedSeer.

Many of the post-paid users opted for bundling options provided by their telecom operator as it benefits them in varying ways.

"Even broadband operators like JioFibre provide bundling options

for free Prime and Netflix subscriptions. Moreover, with discounts and offers on various players, users tend to opt for annual subscription packs," the analysts said in the report.

While the unique paid user growth rate was logged at 35 per cent in February 2021 (compared to April 2020), subscriptions increased by 8 per cent during the same period. The subscription revenue also increased significantly by 42 per cent in February.

Compared to last April, there has been a watch-time drop of six per cent in February, mostly because engagement dropped as users started moving out with normalcy returning and their favourite TV soaps started again.

Prez Kovind undergoes cardiac bypass surgery



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: President Ram Nath Kovind Tuesday underwent a cardiac bypass surgery at the AIIMS here, a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

The surgery was successful and his condition is stable, it said. "The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind underwent cardiac bypass

surgery today morning (March 30, 2021) at AIIMS, New Delhi. Surgery was successful. He is stable and is being closely monitored by a team of senior doctors," the statement said. The president was shifted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Saturday Kovind, 75, had undergone a health check-up at the Army Hospital (R&R) here following chest discomfort Friday morning. Union Home Minister Amit Shah conveyed good wishes and prayers for the President's speedy recovery.

"Glad to learn about Rashtrapati Shri Ram Nath Kovind Ji's successful bypass surgery at AIIMS, New Delhi. May each day bring him renewed strength. My good wishes and prayers for his speedy recovery," he tweeted.

Man dies in police custody



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, March 30: The Bihar police Tuesday suspended an SHO for the death of a person in police custody at the Barari police station in Bhagalpur district.

The police had detained Sanjay Yadav, an employee with the irrigation department, at around 10 pm Monday. The local residents alleged that the police personnel dragged Yadav to the police station and assaulted him brutally while in custody, which led to his death.

Following the incident, a large number of local residents assembled at the police station, demanding action against the police personnel responsible for Yadav's death. However, the SHO of Barari police station, Pramod Kumar, managed to escape from the spot. The angry mob pelted stones at the police station, not allowing anyone to go inside.

To bring the situation under control, a large posse of policemen led by Nitasa Guria, the ASP of Bhagalpur, went to the Barari police station and tried to calm down the agitating residents.

"We have suspended SHO Pramod Kumar for negligence and have also initiated action against the other police personnel involved in the incident," Guria said. Yadav was detained for his alleged involvement in a clash on the day of Holi in the Mayaganj area in Bhagalpur.

52% of Indian firms report cyber attack in last 12 months

AS CYBERATTACKS CONTINUE TO RISE, THE REPORT FOUND THAT MALWARE, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE/MACHINE LEARNING-DRIVEN ATTACKS AND NATION STATE ATTACKS WILL BE THE MOST SERIOUS THREATS TO ENTERPRISE CYBERSECURITY OVER THE NEXT 24 MONTHS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, March 30: About 52 per cent of Indian organisations said they fell victim to a successful cybersecurity attack in the last 12 months, according to a survey released Tuesday.

Of these successful breaches, 71 per cent of organisations admitted it was a serious or very serious attack, and 65 per cent said it took longer than a week to remediate, showed the survey by global cybersecurity firm Sophos.

The study of 900 business decision makers across Asia Pacific and Japan indicates Covid-19 accelerated period of digitisation and

was a catalyst for improving cybersecurity, but systemic security issues persist. While attacks are increasing in frequency and severity, cybersecurity budgets remained largely unchanged as a percentage of revenue between 2019 and 2021.

At the same time, India reported the highest percentage of companies that have an independent security budget.

Furthermore, they expect a rise in the median percentage of technology budgets spent on cybersecurity from 9 per cent today to 10 per cent in the next 24 months.

"Cyberbreaches are a reality that we cannot afford to ignore. Within an organisation, there will always be multiple threats that



can exploit various vulnerabilities and launch full blown cyberattacks," Sunil Sharma, Managing

Director - sales, Sophos India and Saarc, said in a statement. "The only way to stop these

threats is to actively hunt for them and neutralize them. This makes threat hunting an important function to mitigate the damage caused by cyberattacks."

Overall, 44 per cent of Asia Pacific and Japan (APJ) organisations surveyed suffered a data breach in 2020, up from 32 per cent in 2019. Of these successful breaches, 55 per cent of companies rated the loss of data as either "very serious" or "serious".

As cyberattacks continue to rise, the report found that malware, Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning-driven attacks and nation state attacks will be the most serious threats to enterprise cybersecurity over the next 24 months.

of the day quote

If the peace process in Afghanistan is to be successful, then it is necessary to ensure that the negotiating parties continue to engage in good faith, with a serious commitment towards reaching a political solution

S JAISHANKAR |
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER, INDIA

There is no influx of refugees yet. We asked those who crossed to Thailand if they have any problem in their area. When they say no problem, we just asked them to return to their land first. We asked, we did not use any force

PRAYUTH CHAN-OGCHA |
PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND

We are moving forward with the EU's help, with the construction of permanent facilities on the islands, which will mark a decisive change in relation to what was happening in the past

YLVA JOHANSSON | EU COMMISSIONER

SHORT TAKES

45 dead in stampede

Dar es Salaam: At least 45 people died in a stampede that occurred at a stadium in Tanzania's commercial capital Dar es Salaam during a mourning for late President John Magufuli, local media reported Tuesday. The stampede that took place March 21 also injured 37 people after a huge number of mourners forced their way into the Uhuru Stadium to pay their last respects to Magufuli and view his body, Xinhua news agency quoted the Citizen newspaper as saying in a report.

3 polio drive workers killed

Kabul: Attackers Tuesday gunned down three women working to administer the anti-polio vaccine in eastern Afghanistan, officials said, a day after authorities launched a new campaign against the crippling children's disease. The women were killed in two separate attacks in Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province. Fared Khan, spokesman for Nangarhar police, said two were shot and killed in police District 7 and the third was killed in District 4.

Fugitive Italian mafia boss held

Rome: A fugitive Italian mafia boss who has been linked to killings in the German city of Duisburg has been arrested in Lisbon, police said here Tuesday. The man, a member of the 'Ndrangheta crime organisation, had disappeared June 2019, shortly before he faced final sentencing by Italy's Court of Cassation to life imprisonment, reports dpa news agency. He was put on a list of most-wanted fugitives by the Italian Interior Ministry.

Mount Rushmore closed amid fires

South Dakota: Three separate wildfires in the Black Hills of South Dakota have forced evacuations of more than 400 homes northwest of Rapid City and shut down Mount Rushmore, authorities said Monday. A fire that started near Schroeder Road in the Nemo area, about 24 kilometres northwest of Rapid City, had burned as much as 11/2 square miles and was "still moving" Monday afternoon, according to the Pennington County Sheriff's Office.



The slow Pentagon removal of Turkey from the F-35 supply chain is sending the wrong message to nations like India who are exploring similar procurement opportunities with Russia
JAMES LANKFORD | US SENATOR

RARE DIAMOND TO GO ON SALE

A 15.81 carat Sakura diamond, the largest of its kind to ever appear for sale, will go under the hammer at Christie's upcoming Hong Kong Magnificent Jewels Live Auction May 23. Estimated at 25 million USD to 38 million USD, the "fancy vivid purple pink internally flawless" diamond will be the star highlight of the sale



World leaders call for int'l pandemic treaty

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Brussels, March 30: Twenty-five world leaders have supported a proposal from European Council President Charles Michel to draw up a new international treaty on pandemic preparedness in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis.

Leaders including UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha signed an opinion piece along with Michel and World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, dpa news agency reported.

In a newspaper article published across Europe, leaders including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron said COVID-19 posed the biggest global challenge since the world wars and had shown how "nobody is safe until everyone is safe".

The 'Daily Telegraph' article, also published in 'Le Monde' in France and 'El Pais' in Spain, notes that such a new global treaty similar to that reached in the wake of World War II is needed to build cross-border cooperation.

There will be other pandemics and other major health emergencies. No single government or multilateral agency can address this threat



Notable omissions from the Article's signatories include the US and China

alone, the piece, published Tuesday, said.

The article made the case for a new agreement anchored in the WHO's constitution that would improve global preparedness for pandemics and ability to respond.

A treaty would provide a framework for international cooperation to immediately exchange information at the start of possible pandemics, and channel global resources for research into possible treatments and vaccines, Michel said at a virtual press conference

with Tedros Tuesday.

The time to act is now, Tedros said, "We must not allow the memories of this crisis to fade and go back to business as usual."

Michel first put forward the idea in November, but has now won public support from heads of state or government from Indonesia, Kenya, Costa Rica, Tunisia and South Korea, among others.

However, notable omissions from the article's signatories include the US and China.

Initial reaction among the 194 WHO member countries was positive, according to Tedros, who said he hoped all would help take forward debate on the initiative ahead of May's World Health Assembly. It was too soon to say whether the

EU chief warns of domino effect

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has warned of the "domino effect" of the health crisis brought about by the raging Covid-19 pandemic. "We risk that the Covid crisis sets off a number of other crises, especially in developing countries," she said while addressing a high-level meeting on international debt architecture and liquidity Monday. Von der Leyen named those crises as a debt one, an education crisis and a crisis of rising inequalities both between countries and within countries. She called for investment and action at the global level to avert the crises, asking countries to focus on two parallel strands of work -- fighting the pandemic and pursuing a green economic recovery, with the Sustainable Development Goals at its core.

treaty could cover contentious issues such as intellectual property on vaccines or more equitable sharing of shots, the WHO chief added.

Presently, the worldwide COVID-19 death toll stands at 2.79 million, along with over 127 million confirmed cases, according to Johns Hopkins University.

MYANMAR PROTESTS

Pressure builds on junta as death toll crosses 500

REUTERS

Yangon, March 30: Myanmar faced growing criticism Tuesday over a surge in violence against opponents of military rule that killed more than 140 people in one day, with a new offer to help promote dialogue by neighbours alarmed by the crisis.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army ousted an elected government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi Feb 1, detaining her and re-imposing military rule after a decade of tentative steps towards democracy.

At least 512 civilians have been killed in nearly two months of protests against the coup, 141 of them Saturday, the bloodiest day of the unrest, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) advocacy group.

Fighting has also flared in old wars between the Myanmar army and ethnic minority insurgents in frontier regions and refugees are beginning to spill over borders.

Western countries have condemned the coup and the violence and called for Suu Kyi's release, and some have imposed limited sanctions.



Asian neighbours have been more guarded though Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore have spoken out, and Indonesia did so again Tuesday, while renewing an offer to help.

"Indonesia strongly denounces this kind of act. It is unacceptable," its foreign minister, Retno Marsudi, said while on a visit to Japan, referring to the surge in violence.

Indonesia has led efforts by members of the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Myanmar is a member, to encourage a negotiated solution, despite a bloc principle of not commenting on each other's problems.

"While continuously respecting the non-interference principle, since the very beginning ASEAN offers is assistance to Myanmar," Retno said.

China reduces elected seats in HK legislature

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hong Kong, March 30: China has sharply reduced the number of directly elected seats in Hong Kong's legislature in a setback for the territory's already beleaguered democracy movement.

The changes were announced Tuesday after a two-day meeting of China's top legislature.

The legislature will be expanded to 90 seats, and only 20 will be elected by the public. Currently, half of the 70-seat legislature — 35 seats — is directly elected.

The move is part of a two-phase effort to rein in political protest and opposition in Hong Kong, which is part of China but has had a more liberal political system as a former British colony. China imposed a national security law on Hong Kong last year and is following up this year with a revamp of the electoral process.

The crackdown comes in the wake of months of pro-democracy protests in 2019 that brought hundreds of thousands to the streets and turned violent as the government resisted the movement's demands.

China's top legislature, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, amended Hong Kong's constitution to pave the way for the changes. The Hong Kong government is now tasked with revising its electoral laws and holding an election.

In the current 70-member legislature, voters elect half the members and the other half are chosen by constituencies representing various professions and interest groups. Many of the constituencies lean pro-Beijing, ensuring that wing a majority in the legislature.

74-year-old Hindu temple ransacked

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Rawalpindi, March 30: Unidentified assailants ransacked a 74-year-old Hindu temple located in Rawalpindi's Purana Qila area.

As per the police authorities, a case has been registered at the Bani Gala station against the attack which took place early Sunday morning.

The authorities said that the temple was being restored and construction and repair work was underway since the last one month.

It was further revealed that due to the restoration process, there were no religious rituals taking place in the temple, nor were there any idols in the premises.

"Ten to 12 people came and ransacked the doors and stairs of the temple on its outer side, which affected the construction work," Syed Raza Abbas, Assistant Security Officer, Evacue Trust Property, Northern Zone, Rawalpindi, said.

SWIRL STREET



A man walks along a pedestrian street as local town halls have increased the lockdown restrictions in Santiago, Chile

Old passports not needed for OCI card holders' India travel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington/New York, March 30: People of Indian origin and the Indian diaspora having Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cards are now not required to carry their old, expired passports for travel to India, as required earlier, according to a government notification that has been welcomed by members of the community.

The Overseas Citizens of India or OCI card is issued to people of Indian origin globally which gives them almost all the privileges of an Indian national except for the right to vote, government service and buying agricultural land. The OCI card gives them a visa free travel to



India. In a March 26 press release, the Indian missions in the US said that in order to ease the travel of OCI card holders, it has been decided that the "time line for re-issuance of OCI cards for OCI card holders, who may be required to get their OCI card reissued has been extended until 31 December, 2021."

Further said, "Requirement of carrying old and new passports along with the OCI card has been

done away with. Henceforth, the OCI card holders travelling on the strength of their existing OCI card bearing old passport number are not required to carry their old passport. However, carrying a new passport is mandatory." New York-based social activist Prem Bhandari, who has been taking up the cause of OCI card holders for the past several years, welcomed the announcement. He expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs and the Government of India for not only extending the renewal up to December 31 this year but also for relaxing the guidelines and not requiring OCI card holders to carry their old, expired foreign passports.

Google Maps to start directing drivers to 'eco-friendly' routes

GOOGLE SAID THE FEATURE WOULD LAUNCH LATER THIS YEAR IN THE US AND EVENTUALLY REACH OTHER COUNTRIES AS PART OF ITS COMMITMENT TO HELP COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH ITS SERVICES

REUTERS

Washington, March 30: Google's Maps app will start directing drivers along routes estimated to generate the lowest carbon emissions based on traffic, slopes and other factors, the company announced Tuesday.

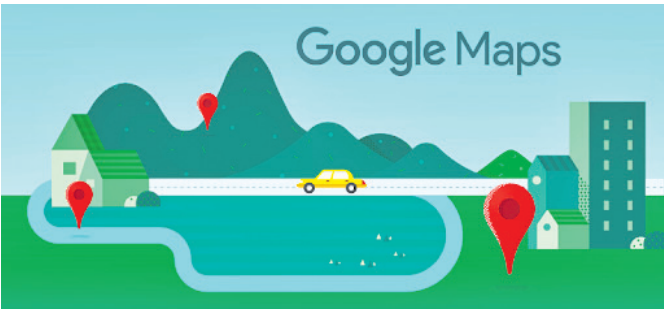
Google, an Alphabet Inc unit, said the feature would launch later this year in the US and eventually reach other countries as part of its commitment to help combat climate change through its services.

Unless users opt out, the default route will be the "eco-friendly" one

if comparable options take about the same time, Google said. When alternatives are significantly faster, Google will offer choices and let users compare estimated emissions.

"What we are seeing is for around half of routes, we are able to find an option more eco-friendly with minimal or no time-cost tradeoff," Russell Dicker, a director of product at Google, told reporters Monday.

Google said it derives emissions relative estimates by testing across different types of vehicles and road types, drawing on insights from the US government's National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL).



Road grade data comes from its Street View cars as well as aerial and satellite imagery.

The potential effect on emissions

from the feature is unclear. But in a study of 20 people at California State University, Long Beach, university researchers last year found

participants were more inclined to consider carbon emissions in route selection after testing an app that showed estimates.

Google's announcement included additional climate-focused changes. From June, it will start warning drivers about to travel through low emissions zones where some vehicles are restricted in Germany, France, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK. In the coming months, Maps app users will be able to compare car, biking, public transit and other travel options in one place instead of toggling between different sections.

of the day quote

Amid the dramatically rapid shift to remote working set up and increasing dependence on SharePoint, OneDrive, and Teams over the past year, protecting Office 365 data has turned out to be all the more crucial requirement

MURALI URS | THE COUNTRY MANAGER OF BARRACUDA NETWORKS (INDIA)

Demand is no problem, but near-term cell supply makes it hard to scale Tesla Semi. This limitation will be less onerous next year

ELON MUSK | TESLA INC CHIEF

We would work with non-profit groups to place 50,000 people in jobs that require technology skills over the next three years

BRAD SMITH | MICROSOFT PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Sensex closes over 1K pts up

Mumbai: Favourable global cues, as well as value buying, lifted India's key equity indices up Tuesday. The two indices had a gap up opening on account of favourable global cues and declining VIX. In terms of counters, most sectoral indices closed in the green. The S&P BSE Sensex was up by 1,128.08 points, or 2.30 per cent, at 50,136.58 points from the previous close. The NSE Nifty50 on the National Stock Exchange traded at 14,845.10, up by 337.80 points, or 2.33 per cent, from its previous close.

Steel sector to bounce back

New Delhi: After a brief lull in 2020 pushed by the pandemic and the lockdown that affected all industries, the Indian steel industry is expected to bounce back to a robust growth phase in 2021. Steel is regarded as an essential commodity as it is the backbone of the manufacturing industry. Recovery in demand is already visible in the construction, automobile and white goods segments. This is expected to continue in the first half of 2021 as pent-up demand will also be met. The construction sector, which includes both infrastructure and real estate, contributes about 62 per cent of the total steel demand.

Flight linking Mumbai-Maafaru

Mumbai: Maldivian, the flag carrier of the Maldives, will launch its first direct flight connecting Maafaru with Mumbai, proving a boon to Mumbai tinsel town, business and leisure travelers, an official said Tuesday. Starting April 13, Maldivian will operate three flights a week on Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays to Maafaru, with a flying time of around two-and-half hours. Maafaru International Airport is located on the picturesque Noonu atoll of north Maldives and was opened for tourism in 2019, said an official.

Rupee slumps 34p against USD

Mumbai: The Indian rupee slumped 34 paise to 72.85 against the US dollar in opening trade Tuesday as rising crude oil prices and a strong American currency weighed on investor sentiment. At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit opened at 72.85 against the US dollar, registering a decline of 34 paise over its previous close. On Friday, the rupee had settled at 72.51 against the American currency.



More focus should be given on strengthening the medical infrastructure and curbing mortality instead of imposing another lockdown

ANAND MAHINDRA | MAHINDRA GROUP CHAIRMAN

CENTRE RELEASES ₹30,000 CR GST COMPENSATION TO STATES

The Centre on Tuesday said it has released GST compensation amounting to ₹30,000 crore to states. The funds were released as part 'compensation admissible' for FY21 March 27



SC RULING ON TATA TUSSLE

My conscience is clear: Cyrus Mistry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: Ousted Tata Sons Chairman Cyrus Mistry Tuesday expressed disappointment over the Supreme Court order in the fight against the conglomerate over his ouster, but asserted his conscience was clear and he had no doubt about the direction he took regarding the generational change in leadership during his tenure.

The apex court order Friday had set aside National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) order restoring Mistry as executive chairman of the conglomerate, while allowing appeals filed by the Tata Group.

"Every member of society looks to institutions such as courts to validate and endorse the appropriateness of his or her actions and beliefs. As a minority share-



holder of Tata Sons, I am personally disappointed by the outcome of the judgement with respect to our case," Mistry said in a statement.

He further said, "Although I will no longer be able to influence the direction of governance of the Tata group directly, I hope that the issues

I have raised will cause deeper reflection and influence individuals concerned to catalyse change. I sleep with a clear conscience."

On Friday a bench of Chief Justice SA Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian allowed appeals filed by Tata Group.

India Inc raised ₹1.88L cr through IPOs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 30: Despite the entire financial year 2020-21 being overshadowed by the pandemic, Indian corporates raised an all-time high amount of ₹1.88 lakh crore through public equity markets.

This was more than double of the ₹91,670 crore that was raised in 2019-20, according to Pranav Haldea, Managing Director, PRIME Database Group, India's premier database on the capital markets. The previous highest amount raised in a financial year was ₹1.75 lakh crore in 2017-18.

According to Haldea, contrary to the despondency due to the pandemic, 30 main-board IPOs came to the market collectively raising ₹31,288 crore. This was an increase of 54 per cent from the ₹20,350 crore raised



through 13 IPOs in 2019-20. The largest IPO in 2020-21 was from Gland Pharma for ₹6,480 crore. The average deal size was ₹1,042 crore.

The overall response from the public to the mainboard IPOs of the year, according to primedatabase.com, was very good. 18 IPOs received a mega response of more than 10 times while 4 IPOs were oversubscribed by more than 3 times and the balance 8 IPOs were

oversubscribed between 1 to 3 times.

As far as retail investors are concerned, the year witnessed tremendous response from them. The highest number of applications was received by Indigo Paints (25.88 lakh) followed by Mtar Technologies (25.87 lakh) and Mazagon Dock (23.56 lakh).

According to Haldea, response to IPOs was further buoyed by strong listing performance of IPOs of the year. Of the 28 IPOs which got listed, 19 gave a return of over 10 per cent (based on closing price on listing date). Burger King gave a stupendous return of 131 per cent followed by Happiest Minds Technologies (123 per cent) and Indigo Paints (109 per cent). Moreover, 18 of the 28 IPOs (listed thus far) are trading above the issue price (closing price of 26th March, 2021).

FTSE puts govt bonds on watch for 'index inclusion'

The FTSE announcement is an acknowledgment of India's efforts to liberalise its sovereign bond market

AGENCIES

Mumbai, March 30: FTSE Russell has placed Indian government bonds on the watchlist for possible inclusion in one of its major global debt indexes, a move that may usher billions of dollars of inflows into the securities.

Indian bonds will be considered for addition to the FTSE Emerging Markets Government Bond Index and their market accessibility will be reviewed for reclassification to "1" from "0," which would put them at the minimum level needed for inclusion, the index provider said. The announcement was part of FTSE's semi-annual country classification review released Monday.

The announcement will help "ensure greater investment in debt markets and longer term, it will impose greater fiscal discipline on government finances," said Sanjay Mathur, chief economist for Asean and India at Australia & New Zealand Banking Group Ltd. in Singapore.

The FTSE announcement is an acknowledgment of India's efforts to liberalize its sovereign bond market, with the authorities seeking more foreign investment to help finance the nation's fiscal deficit.

Inclusion in FTSE's index may attract about \$10 billion of inflows into rupee securities, said Dariusz

Kowalczyk, a senior emerging-market strategist at Credit Agricole CIB in Hong Kong, adding that this was an initial estimate.

"This was not fully priced in, and often active money front runs passive money,



so I think there should be an impact on rupee and government securities today but nothing major as actual inclusion is probably years away," he said.

FTSE said global index users have shown an interest in Indian sovereign securities issued through the Fully Accessibility Route, a new category of debt sales introduced by the government last year without foreign ownership restrictions. The index provider said it will start a version of its FTSE Indian Government Bond Index that tracks these securities in coming weeks.

India is also said to be seeking to join JPMorgan Chase & Co.'s global bond indexes, with the nation looking to secure a 7% weighting in the gauges.

PAYPAL LAUNCHES CRYPTO CHECKOUT SERVICE



REUTERS

London, March 30: PayPal Holdings Inc will announce later Tuesday that it has started allowing U.S. consumers to use their cryptocurrency holdings to pay at millions of its online merchants globally, a move that could significantly boost use of digital assets in everyday commerce.

Customers who hold bitcoin, ether, bitcoin cash and litecoin in PayPal digital wallets will now be able to convert their holdings into fiat currencies at checkouts to make purchases, the company said.

The service, which PayPal revealed it was working on late last year, will be available at all of its 29 million merchants in the coming

months, the company said. "This is the first time you can seamlessly use cryptocurrencies in the same way as a credit card or a debit card inside your PayPal wallet," President and CEO Dan Schulman told Reuters ahead of a formal announcement.

Checkout with Crypto builds on the ability for PayPal users to buy, sell and hold cryptocurrencies, which the San Jose, California-based payments company launched in October.

The offering made PayPal one of the largest mainstream financial companies to open its network to cryptocurrencies and helped fuel a rally in virtual coin prices.

Bitcoin has nearly doubled in value since the start of this year,

boosted by increased interest from larger financial firms that are betting on greater adoption and see it as a hedge against inflation.

PayPal's launch comes less than a week after Tesla Inc said it would start accepting bitcoin payments for its cars. Unlike PayPal transactions where merchants will be receiving fiat currency, Tesla said it will hold the bitcoin used as payment.

Still, while the nascent asset is gaining traction among mainstream investors, it has yet to become a widespread form of payment, due in part to its continued volatility.

PayPal hopes its service can change that, as by settling the transaction in fiat currency, merchants will not take on the volatility risk.

"We think it is a transitional point where cryptocurrencies move from being predominantly an asset class that you buy, hold and or sell to now becoming a legitimate funding source to make transactions in the real world at millions of merchants," Schulman said.

The company will charge no transaction fee to checkout with crypto and only one type of coin can be used for each purchase, it said.

Credit Suisse in firing line after Archegos losses

PRESSURE WAS MOUNTING ON CREDIT SUISSE TUESDAY OVER LOSSES LINKED TO THE DOWNFALL OF ARCHEGOS CAPITAL

REUTERS

Zurich/ New York, March 30: Pressure was mounting on Credit Suisse Tuesday over losses linked to the downfall of Archegos Capital, with analysts warning its dividend and share buyback plans may need to go on hold and investors advised to vote against management pay.

Losses at Archegos, a family office run by former Tiger Asia manager Bill Hwang, sparked a sell-off in bank stocks Monday as investors feared they would be forced to take big write-downs after extending billions of dollars in leverage to the fund.

Global lenders may lose more than \$6 billion on Archegos, sources familiar with trades involving the US investment firm have said.



The logo of Swiss bank Credit Suisse is seen at its headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland

REUTERS PHOTO

Credit Suisse and Japan's Nomura are set to bear the brunt of this, according to statements from the banks and sources, with one source close to the Swiss lender saying its

losses could be as high as \$4 billion. The bank has declined to comment on the size of losses.

The brokerage arm of Japan's Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group

on Tuesday flagged potential losses of around \$300 million related to a US client at its European subsidiary, declining to comment on whether that client was Archegos.

The prospect of big losses at Credit Suisse is piling pressure on the lender's management, already reeling from the fallout surrounding collapsed supply chain finance company Greensill.

Earlier this month Credit Suisse shut \$10 billion of supply chain finance funds that held bonds issued by Greensill, and is overhauling its asset management business to deal with the scandal.

On Tuesday Ethos, which advises shareholders on corporate governance, said Credit Suisse investors should vote against board and executive pay at its upcoming annual meeting.

"These new cases add up to an incredible number of governance failures," Ethos Foundation Chief Executive Vincent Kaufmann said.

Several analysts also Tuesday flagged that Credit Suisse's share buyback programme and dividend may be at risk as a result of the scandal.

"The hits just keep coming for Credit Suisse," wrote Eoin Mullany at Berenberg.

"We believe Credit Suisse will need to suspend its share buyback while in the longer term we believe it will lead to it reassessing the way it takes and manages risk."

Credit Suisse did not respond to requests for comment on its buyback plan or dividend policy.

The bank had planned to buy back at least 1 billion Swiss francs (\$1.06 billion) worth of stock this year

Banks to decline auto pay transactions from April 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: Banks are likely to decline auto payments from April 1 as all recurring transactions using cards and prepaid payment instruments will now require an additional factor of authentication, as per an RBI circular first issued in December 2020. Transactions above ₹5,000 will require an additional one-time password. A notification will be sent to customers five days before an automatic payment is scheduled and the transaction will go ahead only if approved by the user. If banks decline automatic payments, the users will have to make manual transactions to complete their bill payments.

People use recurring mandates on debit/credit cards to pay for bills and subscription services such as OTT streaming, media, utility and postpaid services. Rejection of payment is likely to cause a huge disruption, with estimates suggesting that transactions worth about 2,000 crore could fail from April 1. UPI transactions will, however, remain unaffected by the new rule.

Third-party payment processors have also declined to share customer information with banks due to contractual agreements and this has further aggravated the problem.

The central bank has refused to extend the deadline, but the matter is expected to be resolved in the coming weeks.

Govt extends vehicle documents validity till June 2021

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 30: In an advisory to states issued by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), the government has extended the validity of vehicle documents till June 2021, in the wake of the pandemic. The validity extends to documents eligible under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, and Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989. These include the fitness, permit, driving licence, registration and other documents, whose validity could not be renewed due to the lockdown and have expired since February 1, 2020, or would expire by March 31, 2021.

The advisory issued to states is aimed to provide relief to vehicle owners and reduce footfalls and transport authority offices

"The transport ministry advised that the validity of the documents that have expired since February 1, the same may be treated to be valid till June 30, 2021. Enforcement authorities are advised to treat such documents as valid till June 30, 2021. This will help out citizens in availing transport-related services," MoRTH said in its advisory.

The validity was originally extended on March 30, 2020, in the wake of the nationwide lockdown to provide relief to vehicle owners and reduce footfall at the transport authority offices. With the rising number of COVID-19 cases, it was only logical to allow the extensions for a longer period.

ROHIT-DHAWAN ‘BEST OPTION’

Former selector Sarandeep believes the current Indian opening pair as the best combination for T20 World Cup



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: India should stick to the experienced opening combination of Rohit Sharma and Shikhar Dhawan in the T20 World Cup, feels former selector Sarandeep Singh, calling the duo the 'best option' despite skipper Virat Kohli's recent interest in the slot.

Sarandeep, whose term ended with India's historic win in Australia earlier this year, also gave his take on split captaincy, asserting the issue was never even discussed in his time as Kohli performed in all three formats.

After the T20 series win against England, Kohli had said he will open in the IPL raising the possibility of him opening with Rohit in the World Cup. Dhawan was dropped after the opening game of the series and Ishan Kishan was picked ahead

of him in one of the games. Kohli and Rohit opened in the final T20.

"It was surprising. He (Dhawan) did well in the IPL, he did well in Australia. Whenever he plays he performs. He is mentally very strong. May be they want to try out options but in my view the left-hand right-hand combination of Rohit and Dhawan is the best option for the India at World Cup," Sarandeep told PTI.

"You can't judge him on basis of one match. He did well in ODIs after that. The IPL will decide a lot of the team. There are no easy places in the team. Ishan Kishan too will need to do exceptionally well to make the team," he added.

He also said that KL Rahul should continue keeping in the ODIs and the in-form Rishabh Pant will have to wait for his turn when Shreyas Iyer returns.

The IPL, beginning April 9 will decide bulk of the spots for the World Cup squad and Sarandeep feels Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav, who became India's go to pair in the middle overs after the 2017 Champions Trophy, are no more sure starters in the T20 or ODI format. Kuldeep has also lost his place in the T20 squad.

"The two spinners can still do the job. They are proper spinners. Once Ravindra Jadeja is back from injury, the trio remains the best option in limited overs format," Sarandeep said.

"Kuldeep, for example, has not got a lot of opportunities and seems down on confidence. He needs to be backed. Chahal was also replaced in the recent T20s against England by Rahul Chahal and did not play the following ODIs.

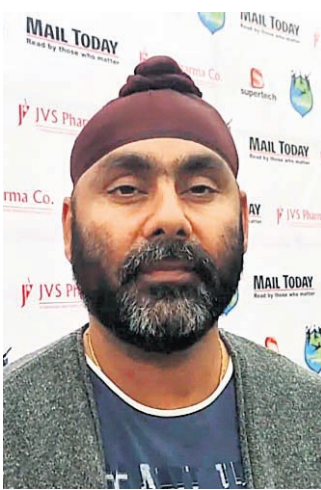
"Though there is a lot of com-

petition, Chahal and Kuldeep should play together. They have still have a lot of potential," said Sarandeep, who played three Tests and five ODIs for India.

Pant has surpassed Wriddhiman Saha as the number one keeper in Tests and has also become the preferred option in T20s following his stellar success in all three formats in the last four months.

"No praise will be enough for Pant. He had some fitness issues, worked on that and worked on his shot selection. If you expect a 21-year-old to play like a 30-year-old, it is tough to start with. You see Hardik (Pandya), the way he bats now with experience, same thing has been seen in Pant now in the last six months or so.

"He was out of the team which was good for him. There is a right time and right ball to hit. The



way he played in Australia, it shows he has gained a lot of experience. He is picking and choosing.

"He can give you 10 years in Test cricket, Saha cannot and has become the number one choice. In ODIs, Shreyas got injured so Rishabh played. When he is back, KL should be the wicketkeeper because he has been keeping wickets for a long time and is doing a fine job."

Sarandeep also believes there is no place for Krunal Pandya in the ODI team if Hardik is not bowling. "If we talk about ODIs, if Hardik is not bowling, Krunal can't be your fifth bowler. He batted beautifully but Krunal can't give you 10 overs, he is a good T20 player but when it comes to ODIs, he doesn't have the skill to challenge the batsmen.

"So, if Krunal plays, Hardik needs to bowl. If one bowler is hit or injured there is no extra option if Hardik doesn't bowl. His workload has to be managed too but you have to play proper bowlers," said the 41-year-old former off-spinner.

On the issue of split captaincy, Sarandeep said the it was not even discussed in his tenure. "Spilt captaincy is needed when your captain is not performing but he (Kohli) is the only player to average more than 50 in all formats. If he isn't performing in one format you can take the leadership pressure off him and give it to someone else.

"Just because he has not won an IPL you can't remove him from India captaincy. He is also the fittest player and captain. Rohit is there to lead the side in his absence but there is no reason to replace Virat."

Langer says not now for 'Smith as skipper'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, March 30: Steve Smith is interested in becoming Australia skipper once again if the opportunity comes but head coach Justin Langer has made it clear that the position is not available right now.

The 31-year-old Smith served a one-year ban from playing and was disqualified from leading Australia for two years because of his role in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal in which Australians were caught using sandpaper to alter the condition of the ball against in a Test against South Africa.

"I've certainly had a lot of time to think about it and I guess now I've got to a point where if the opportunity did come up again I would be keen," Smith told 'News Corp'.

Langer, however, said that the Australian captaincy is currently not available. "We have two very good captains and two important competitions coming up – an Ashes and a T20 World Cup. Our future looks good," he was quoted as saying by ABC Sport. "Despite the media chatter there is no captaincy position available," the coach added.

According to the report, the board of Cricket Australia will determine whether Smith can return to captaincy at its next meeting.

Smith's future will be on the agenda as part of discussions around succession planning, it said, adding that "privately some

on the board members have reservations".

The ball-tampering scandal led to a review of the team's win-at-all-cost approach to the game. Smith returned to help Australia win the Ashes in 2019 after his ban ended but has resolutely avoided the subject of captaincy.

"If it was what Cricket Australia wanted and it was what was best for the team at the time, it's certainly something I would be interested in now, that's for sure," Smith said.

Smith acknowledged that the scandal will forever be attached to his name and he has made peace with the damage it caused to his career and reputation. He will, however, not let it get in the way of assuming leadership again.

"I'm always going to have to live with Cape Town regardless of whether I lead again or not. It's always there," he said. "I've been through all that now. Time keeps moving forward, and I've learnt so much the last few years about myself and grown as a human being.

"I feel as though I'd be in a better place if the opportunity did come up. If it doesn't, that's fine as well and I'd support whoever is in charge the same way I've supported (Test captain) Tim (Paine) and Finchy (ODI captain Aaron Finch)."

Paine has been under fire ever since Australia lost a high-stakes Test series to an injury-plagued India earlier this year. Finch, on the other hand, has turned 34.



END OF A DECADE

Aguero to leave Man City at end of season

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, March 30: Sergio Aguero, Manchester City's record scorer, will leave the English club after 10 years when his contract expires at the end of the season.

The 32-year-old Argentina striker has 257 goals for City, the most famous being his stoppage-time winner against Queens Parks Rangers on the final day of the 2011-12 season that clinched the team their first league title in 44 years.

A key player in the growth of the Abu Dhabi-owned club as a major force in England and Europe, Aguero has struggled with injuries over the past year and been restricted to just 14 appearances in all competitions this season. The penalty he converted against Fulham March 13 was his 181st goal in the Premier League but his first in the division since January 2020.

In a Twitter post Monday to his 14 million followers, Aguero said he had a "huge sense of satisfaction and pride" about playing for City for a decade and is ready to "continue competing at the highest level."

"Sergio's contribution to Manchester City over the last 10 years cannot be overstated," club chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak said. "His legend will be indelibly etched into the memories of everyone who loves the club and maybe even in those who simply love football."

Al Mubarak said a statue of Aguero has been commissioned to stand alongside those currently being made to honor the player's former teammates, David Silva and Vincent Kompany. That trio, along with midfielder Yaya Toure, were central to City's success over the past decade.

Aguero, who joined from Atletico Madrid in 2011, scored at least 28 goals in all competitions in six straight seasons for City and will go down as one of the greatest strikers to have played in the Premier League.

He is the league's highest-scoring overseas player. His haul of 181 puts him fourth on the all-time scoring list, behind Alan Shearer (260), Wayne Rooney (208) and Andy Cole (187). Aguero also has a Premier League-high 12 hat-tricks.



Barty tops Azarenka, sails into Miami quarters

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami, March 30: Ash Barty is tough to beat under any circumstances, especially when she's on the ropes. She proved that again Monday.

The world's top-ranked player has reached the Miami Open quarterfinals, getting there by holding off 14th-seeded Victoria Azarenka of Belarus 6-1, 1-6, 6-2. It was Barty's 17th win in her last 20 three-set matches, two of those victories for the Australian coming so far in this tournament. "That's a cool stat," Barty said.

This, too, was cool: The match lived up to its showdown potential, with the reigning Miami Open champion and current World No.1 in Barty facing someone who has won the Miami title three times and a previous World No.1 in Azarenka.

Barty rolled in the first set, Azarenka in the second. But the third — as they tend to be — was all Barty, who was never in trouble in the deciding set.

No.5 seed Elina Svitolina of Ukraine needed nearly two and half hours to beat ninth-seeded Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic 2-6, 7-5, 7-5 and earn her ticket to the quarterfinals.

Barty will next face No.7 seed Aryna Sabalenka, a 6-1, 6-2 winner over No.19 seed Marketa Vondrousova. Svitolina will play



unseeded Anastasija Sevastova of Latvia in the quarters; Sevastova was a 6-1, 7-5 winner over wild-card Ana Konjuh of Croatia.

No.2 women's seed Naomi Osaka of Japan ran her winning streak to 23 matches and moved into the quarters by topping No.16 seed Elise Mertens of Belgium, 6-3, 6-3.

Osaka next meets No.23 Maria Sakkari of Greece, who won a 2-

hour, 38-minute marathon over No.29 Jessica Pegula of the US. Sakkari fended off six match points before winning 6-4, 2-6, 7-6(8/6).

Unseeded Sara Sorribes Tormo of Spain got her fourth win of the tournament, all of them three-setters. She topped No.27 seed Ons Jabeur of Tunisia 6-4, 0-6, 6-1. Next up for Tormo: either No.8 seed Bianca Andreescu of Canada or

No. 12 seed Garbine Muguruza of Spain, who were playing the last women's round-of-16 match late Monday night.

On the men's side, Sebastian Korda of the US got his second consecutive win over a seeded foe, this one a 6-3, 6-0 romp past No.17 Aslan Karatsev of Russia. Korda's reward is a matchup with No.5 seed Diego Schwartzman of Argentina in the

round of 16.

Korda is one of four US men in the round of 16 at Miami. His father, Petr Korda, played in the event 10 times at its former Key Biscayne home and made the round of 16 on four occasions.

No.26-seeded Hubert Hurkacz of Poland upset sixth-seeded Denis Shapovalov of Canada 6-3, 7-6(8/6). Shapovalov was clearly frustrated with some calls that the Hawk-Eye Live technology — the system that replaces live lines judges with cameras — saw one way and he saw another way.

No.2 seed Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece topped No.28 Kei Nishikori of Japan 6-3, 3-6, 6-1. Tsitsipas meets No.24 Lorenzo Sonneggo of Italy, a 7-6(8/6), 6-3 winner over Daniel Elahi Galan of Colombia.

In other third-round men's matchups, Schwartzman defeated 25th-seeded Adrian Mannarino of France 6-1, 6-4; 12th-seeded Milos Raonic of Canada topped 20th-seeded Ugo Humbert of France 6-4, 7-5; and 2014 US Open champion Marin Cilic of Croatia defeated Italy's Lorenzo Musetti 6-3, 6-4.

Cilic will meet fourth-seeded Andrey Rublev of Russia next. Rublev rolled past Hungary's Marton Fucsovics 6-2, 6-1 — beating him head-to-head for the third time in the last 22 days, and that doesn't even include a walkover victory over Fucsovics in Qatar in that span.

Verma retains top spot

DUBAI: Following a blistering 30-ball 60 in the final against South Africa, India opener Shafali Verma consolidated her position at the top among batters in the latest women's T20I rankings issued, Tuesday. Verma, who had regained the top position last week, garnered 26 rating points for her knock in the final and is now currently on 776 rating points. The young Indian now has a 35-point lead over Australia's Beth Mooney. Smriti Mandhana has gained one spot and is sixth. Left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad's match-winning haul of 3/9 has lifted her 12 places to a career-best 13th position among bowlers.

CR7's armband up for auction

BELGRADE: The Portugal captain's armband which Cristiano Ronaldo slammed into the ground after his apparent winning goal was disallowed in a World Cup qualifier against Serbia was put up for auction, Tuesday. A charity group which is trying to collect money for the surgery of a six-month-old boy from Serbia with spinal muscular atrophy got the armband from a stadium worker who picked it up after the match ended in a 2-2 draw Saturday in Belgrade. The group said the blue armband with the letter C will be in an online auction for three days. Ronaldo walked off the field moments before the final whistle after his injury-time goal was not allowed by officials. While heading straight into the dressing room before the final whistle, Ronaldo angrily threw down his captain armband near the touchline.

Chelsea-Porto tie in Spain

NYON: Chelsea and Porto will play both legs of the Champions League quarterfinals in neutral Spain because of travel restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic. UEFA said Tuesday the Ramon Sanchez-Pizjuan Stadium in Seville will stage the games April 7 and 13. The venue is the home of Sevilla and hosted Champions League games earlier this season. Porto is technically the home team for the first leg. UEFA has previously said the away goals rule will apply even when games are played at neutral venues. Because of travel limits between England and Portugal, Arsenal and Benfica were previously forced to play in Rome and Athens when they met in the Europa League.

Kaur tests COVID +ve

PATIALA: The Indian women's T20I team captain Harmanpreet Kaur has tested positive for COVID-19 and is experiencing mild symptoms. Kaur, who did not play in the T20Is against South Africa after injuring herself in the fifth ODI March 17, got herself tested Monday after developing mild fever. "She is self-isolating at home. She got tested yesterday and the report came positive today morning. She had mild fever since four days so thought it was best to get tested. She is doing fine and should recover soon," a source close to the player told PTI.