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Capital sizzles at 44.2°C, highest in March

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 31: The state capital Wednesday sizzled at 44.2°C making it the hottest place in Odisha. This was the highest temperature ever recorded in this city in March, the India Meteorological

Department (IMD) said. HR Biswas, Regional Director of IMD said, “Earlier the record of maximum temperature in Bhubaneswar stood at 42.2°C which was registered March 21, 2016. This is the first time the temperature in Bhubaneswar has breached 42.2°C in March.”

Biswas also said that the highest temperature ever recorded in the state capital was 46.7°C June 5, 2012.


The met department predicted that the heat wave will continue in the city and some other districts of Odisha Thursday also.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Good bye, COVID-19!

MARKET WATCH			
INDEX		VARIATION	
SENSEX	49509.15	↓	627.43
NIFTY	14690.70	↓	154.40
DOLLAR	73.72	↓	₹0.42
EURO	86.23	↓	₹0.47
GOLD	₹44,100	↑	₹227
SILVER	₹63,375	↑	₹251

WEATHER			
	BHUB	CTK	
MAX	44.2°C	40.6°C	
MIN	25.9°C	24.4°C	
Forecast			
Humidity	80%	77%	Heat wave
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

State to review power tariff hike

Govt will urge OERC to consider rollback



Members of the youth wing of BJP protest against the hike in power tariff at Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 31: Following ruckus in the Assembly over power tariff hike, Energy Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra said Wednesday that the state government will urge the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC) to reconsider the increase in rates. His announcement came after the Opposition members demanded an immediate rollback in power tariff rates. Mishra said the government will submit a petition before the OERC and request it to reconsider its earlier order.

The OERC recently approved a minimal rise of 30 paise per unit in energy charges for domestic consumers for the financial year 2021-22 with effect from

April 4 excluding those in BPL and those using irrigation facilities.

Opposition BJP and Congress stalled the proceedings of the Assembly several times throughout the day over the issue leading to numerous adjournments.

During the Question Hour, Congress MLAs disturbed proceedings forcing Speaker Surya Narayan Patro to adjourn the House till 11.30am. After resumption of proceedings Leader of Opposition Pradipta Kumar Naik raised the matter during Zero Hour. He said the state government should ask the OERC to withdraw the hike on electricity tariff. Congress legislature party leader Narasingha Mishra also criticised the government on the issue. Normalcy returned only after the minister's assurance.

Vaccination for 45+ begins today

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 31: As India prepares to open up its COVID-19 vaccination drive to people above 45 from April 1, the Centre asked Wednesday states and Union Territories (UTs) to identify low vaccine-coverage pockets, particularly in districts reporting a surge in new infections, and take corrective action.

National Health Authority (NHA) CEO and Empowered Group on COVID-19 Vaccination chairperson Dr RS Sharma and Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan chaired a high-level meeting with health secretaries, mission directors of NHM and immunisation officers of all states and UTs during the day, a statement said.

The status and pace of the inoculation drive across India were reviewed at the meeting held through video-conferencing, as were the preparations for April 2021, when vaccination would be extended to cover everybody above the age of 45, the ministry said.

“A key theme underlying the meet was the identification of low vaccine coverage pockets particularly in districts showing COVID-19 surge and for taking corrective actions there,” the NHA said.

The Centre also advised the states and UTs to maintain vaccine wastage at less than one per cent (current National Wastage Percentage being six per cent).

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ARIES
Do something really exciting today - perhaps you could put on your trekking boots and explore unknown territories. GaneshoSpeaks™ advises you to keep busy but not to go overboard. In group activities today, everybody will focus their attention on you.

TAURUS
People around you will be surprised to witness the considerate and compassionate side of you today, says Ganesho. Problems may come knocking but you, along with support from your loved ones, will handle them with brilliant tact. Enjoy the company of near and dear ones and let your presence be felt in social outings, suggests Ganesho.

GEMINI
Your health interests will take precedence over career, says Ganesho. There are indications that you will spare more time working out at a gym. Those in the field of marketing and advertising will have a fabulous time. A good marketing strategy will bring maximum profits with minimum efforts.

CANCER
Today, you are likely to experience something life-changing. A small incident, an observation, a tragedy, a disaster, or a simple thought may change the course of your life. You, however, may not be able to take the changes well. It may have a strong bearing on your health. You may spend a lot of time with your loved ones, says Ganesho.

LEO
To many, you will seem to have got your senses back after a long time. Reason? You will finally have a definite career plan in mind. Although, it's not really a big deal for you when your mind races and years to achieve in two warring directions, it may seem quite jarring and unreal to the mere mortals. And, considering that you Leos are almost always in two minds about everything, getting a definite plan of action is quite an achievement, says Ganesho.

VIRGO
Leadership is your forte and you shall receive kudos for the manner in which you handle your team. Much awaited promotions will materialise and so will some extra cash in your wallet. Wisely enough, you didn't get all this by not effectively balancing home and work, says Ganesho. Don't slip on this tight-rope walk.

LIBRA
You never let a favour go unacknowledged, or let a ridicule pass by unanswered. So, it's time to settle those old accounts that are so important to you, feels Ganesho. This will increase chances of interesting developments that will continue to surprise you throughout the day. All in all, Ganesho wishes you a vibrant day today.

SCORPIO
You shall probably realise the fact that seeing is believing. Learn to trust your own eyes more than what you hear. Don't get lost in the crowd, warns Ganesho. Strive to stand out and be in the spotlight, advises Ganesho.

SAGITTARIUS
Your business may bring you faster growth rates than bacteria today. Moreover, banking transactions will fetch returns exceeding your expectation. Management institutes will value your expertise and experience, predicts Ganesho. All in all, a day when progressions are on the rise.

CAPRICORN
Creativity is your innate trait. But how creative can you get when dealing with day-to-day issues? You will not only answer this question with utmost modesty, but will make a great display of your creative skills by cleverly sorting out problems with your siblings, says Ganesho. You will derive pleasure by delving into knotty problems and solving them with ease. Also, you will reach out to those in need and help them in every possible manner.

AQUARIUS
Money is on your mind today! If you want to sort out financial matters, today is the day. You may have a good time with friends in the evening. You will also realise how much your friends value you and the respect you command in your wider social circle. Ganesho says maintaining it is important.

PISCES
Today, you will find yourself partitioning your time equally, and more importantly, excellently, at work as well as at home. So, while you will prove to be the right man for the job assigned to you at the office, at home you will establish yourself as the perfect family man, says Ganesho.

UTKAL DIVAS SPECIAL

Reminiscing makers of modern Odisha

Odisha Day aka Utkal Divas reminds each of us of the great sacrifices and struggles undertaken by a few Odia stalwarts that gave the state a separate political identity

POST NEWS NETWORK

Today is April 1, a glorious day in the annals of Odisha history. Under the British rule, Odisha was part of the Bengal Presidency comprising the present-day West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha. But it was 84 years ago on this day that the new province of Orissa came into existence on linguistic basis, marking the beginning of a new journey for the state.

FAKIR MOHAN SENAPATI

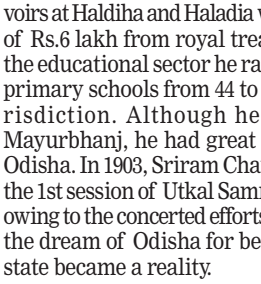
Born January 14, 1843, at Mallikashpur in Balasore, Fakir Mohan played a leading role in establishing the distinct identity of Odia language and literature. He is regarded as the father of Odia nationalism and the modern Odia literature. Fakir Mohan's story is indeed the story of the "Renaissance" of Odia literature. He is aptly called as Thomas Hardy of Odia literature.

Regarded as the Father of Odia nationalism, Fakir Mohan created a new awareness to propagate Odia language

Odisha. The four novels of Fakir Mohan, written between 1897 and 1915, reflect the socio-cultural conditions of Odisha. While the three novels, *Chhamana Atha Guntha*, *Mamun* and *Prayashchita* explore the realities of social life in its multiple dimensions, *Lachhma* is a historical romance dealing with the anarchical conditions of Odisha in the wake of Maratha invasions during the 18th Century. He has written quite a few memorable short stories, such as *Rebati*, *Patent Medicine* and *Randipua Ananta*. A great lover and a creator of new era in Odia literature, Fakir Mohan was the founder of an organisation Utkala Bhasa Unnati Bidhani Sabha in 1867 to create a new awareness among the people of Odisha and to propagate Odia language.

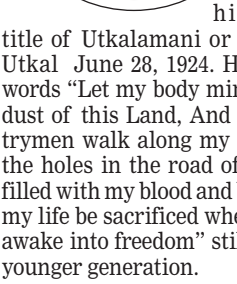
SRIRAM CHANDRA BHANJA DEO

Born in a royal family of princely state of Mayurbhanj December 17, 1871, Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo worked not only for the all-round development of his state, he played a pivotal role in unification of scattered regions of Odia speaking people. Sriram Chandra brought about significant changes in the spheres of language, health and administration. A narrow gauge railway was commissioned between Rupsa - Baripada during his reign. He constructed two major reservoirs at Haldiha and Haladia with an expenditure of Rs.6 lakh from royal treasury. Similarly in the educational sector he raised the number of primary schools from 44 to 400 in his royal jurisdiction. Although he was the king of Mayurbhanj, he had great love for the entire Odisha. In 1903, Sriram Chandra presided over the 1st session of Utkal Sammilani. Afterwards owing to the concerted efforts of this Sammilani the dream of Odisha for becoming a separate state became a reality.



UTKALAMANI PANDIT GOPABANDHU DAS

Gopabandhu Das, born October 9, 1877, was the source of inspiration and ideals for generations. He dedicated himself completely for the country to that extent that he had to lose his only son in his bid to redress the suffering of others. Recognising the noble standings of Gopabandhu, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray, the veteran scientist and patriot of Bengal conferred him with the title of Utkalamani or the Jewel of Utkal June 28, 1924. His immortal words "Let my body mingle with the dust of this Land, And let my countrymen walk along my back. Let all the holes in the road of freedom be filled with my blood and bone, And let my life be sacrificed when my people awake into freedom" still inspire the younger generation.



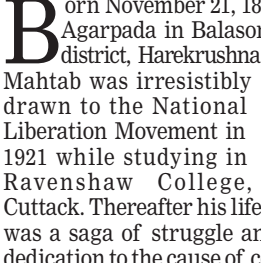
MAHARAJA SHRI KRUSHNA CHANDRA GAJAPATI NARAYAN DEO



Born April 26, 1892, Maharaja Shri Krishna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Deo of Paralakhemundi organised the annual session of the Utkal Union Conference at Paralakhemundi in 1914. He represented the case of Odisha at the Round Table Conference, London, 1930-31. Depositing before the joint Parliamentary Committee for the union of Paralakhemundi with Odisha in 1934, he placed a memorandum before the authorities and strongly advocated for a separate province for Odisha. Unarguably, Maharaja was one of the main architects behind the formation of modern Odisha.

Maharaja Krishna Chandra Gajapati deposited before the Joint Parliamentary Committee for the union of Paralakhemundi with Odisha in 1934

HAREKRUSHNA MAHTAB



Born November 21, 1899 at Agarpada in Balasore district, Harekrushna Mahtab was irresistibly drawn to the National Liberation Movement in 1921 while studying in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. Thereafter his life was a saga of struggle and dedication to the cause of country's freedom. He joined Salt Movement and imprisoned in 1930. He was the one who opened his ancestral temple to Harijans for the first time in Odisha. Mahtab participated in Non-Co-operation Movement and courted imprisonment in 1941. Even as Mahtab remained the Chief Minister and Union minister on several occasions, he is always recognised as an architect of modern Odisha for his pivotal role in the merger and integration of former princely states. He founded the state's capital at Bhubaneswar and facilitated the construction of the multi-purpose Hirakud Dam Project. Mahtab earned distinction as an accomplished writer. The compilation of his popular column *Gaon Mazlis* published in vernacular daily Prajatantra received the Kendra Sahitya Academy Award in 1983. A political leader par excellence, Mahtab towered over the time and events to lead the people of the state through years of transition during independence and thereafter.

UTKAL GOURAB MADHUSUDAN DAS

Born April 28, 1848 at Satyabhamapur in Cuttack district, Madhusudan Das was the first Odia to fetch a law degree from Calcutta University. Popularly known as Madhu Barrister, he was deeply moved seeing the discrimination, made against the Odias by administrative authorities. Madhu Babu was convinced that the Odias could not stand united only because of their annexation with three different provinces. So, he took a solid stand for the unification of the scattered Odias by organising and mobilising strong public opinion among the Odias. He also pressurised the British rulers for the unification of the scattered Odia-speaking tracts for their socio-economic and cultural growth. Madhusudan organised Utkal Union Conference to form the channel for discussions and negotiations with the authorities to solve the problems and open avenues for a new era of unification and integration. He played a piloting role in engineering the plans and programmes, pioneering the aims and objectives and championing the cause of the Odia movement.

Madhusudan was the first Odia to be the member of Legislative Council and to have the membership of Central Legislative Assembly





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Celebrating spring, the tribal way

Baha Parab or the flower festival, celebrated in the beginning of spring, revolves around man's communion with nature and the celebration of beauty

POST NEWS NETWORK

Adivasis comprise around eight percent of India's population. This makes India the largest country with maximum tribal population in the world. That said, barring a few like the Sentinelese (of Andaman and Nicobar Islands), most of these communities have adapted to the modern lifestyle and integrated themselves into mainstream society. However, they have at the same time held on to their roots and kept their identity intact, thanks to the distinct customs, rituals and festivities. Much like it does in main-

stream society, various festivals play an important role in tribal culture too.

One such festival is 'Salei Puja'. The festival is also known as 'Baha Parab' or 'Bahabong'. Celebrated in the beginning of spring, 'Salei Puja' is one of the most important events in the calendar of the tribals living in Odisha. Communities such as - Ho, Santals and Mundas celebrate the festival with much fervour. **Orissa POST** catches up with a few members from the tribal community to know more about the festival, rituals and celebrations.

'Baha Parab' is also known as the 'Festival of Flowers'. The ritual revolves



A tribal priest performs a ritual during a puja

around man's communion with nature and the celebration of beauty. In Santali and Mundari language, 'Baha' or 'Ba' means flower. The festival is celebrated in the Odia month Falguna (February and March). Since it is usually organised under the Sal tree, the festival is also known as 'Salei Puja'.

Mohan Soren, a 60-year-old from Kuliana village in Mayurbhanj district narrates the rituals of the festival they have been celebrating for a long time now. "The place where the puja is organised is called 'Jahira' and the village priest who conducts the puja is known as 'Naike' in our community. The 'Naike' takes care of all the rituals to be observed during the puja. Before 'Salei Puja' we do not touch any fruits, flowers or colours. After reaching 'Jahira', the priest first worships 'Jaher aya' followed by prayers for other gods. There is also the ritual of sacrificing a white hen or a male goat. The three-day festival is mostly connected with nature. On the first day the 'Naike' goes to the puja site and cleans the place with cow dung. The puja starts at night," Soren said.

"The second day, we celebrate and enjoy together. Each and every person of Santal community gathers at a particular place. Wearing our traditional attires, we visit the puja place dancing and singing. The priest continues the puja and gives Sal flowers to everyone. The 'Naike' and other villagers offer a Sal flower to every family of the village. A Santali woman receives flowers in the folds of her sari from the priest after she has ceremonially ap-

plied oil on his feet and then washed them. A bachelor carries a water pot on his shoulder and, after exchanging greetings with her, sprinkles it on the woman. During the festival, the women stick some flowers into their hair and the men behind their ears. The rest of the flowers are kept in the ceiling of their thatched or tiled roof. Then we sing the 'Baha' song. The men play an instrument called 'Dhumsa' and dance together. However, before dark all return to the village," Soren stated.

Soren also informed that the sacrificial animal during the puja is cooked. However, only the men are permitted to eat it. After the puja is over all are allowed to take fresh fruits for the first time in the season. He also stated that relatives are invited to the celebrations. "We love nature and we worship Mother Nature in our own way," Soren added.


Samananda Tudu, a resident of Khukundia village in Mayurbhanj, said that they are proud about their traditions and rituals. "Our forefathers were celebrating these festivals and we have continued the

trend. "At present, people are forgetting their roots, but we can't as we are the sons of this soil. This forest, the flowers, trees and nature are our identity. We can't stay apart from it. We enjoy every festival with fervour and pomp. Every mem-

ber of the community joins and celebrates the festival with our traditional dance and songs. It's our happiness and it erases all the misunderstandings when we come together to worship nature," Tudu pointed out.



Tribal men and women holding a community dance during celebration of a festival inside the forest



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Forest fires in Similipal National Park resume



A satellite report Wednesday claimed that the fires have been raging at 47 places in the south division of Similipal National Park. The heat generated by the fire and the blistering condition have made life unbearable for wild animals and humans in the area. Reports said people in the area have stopped stepping out of their houses if they have no urgent work

After a couple of week's respite, the wildfire has engulfed vast areas in the national park. This has affected several endangered species of plants and animals in the park

The raging fires in Jenabila, Naana Uttar, Podadiha, Pithabata in the south and in the tiger conservation project in the north have been captured in satellite image, sources said

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, March 31: Raging forest fires have erupted once again in the Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district Wednesday. A satellite report Wednesday claimed that the fire had been raging at 47 places in the south division of Similipal National Park. The heat generated by the fire and the

AP officials conduct meeting in Kotia village as admin stays mum

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, March 31: Illegal infiltration by Andhra Pradesh into the villages in Kotia panchayat under this block in Koraput district continues unabated with the state government failing to curb such moves, a report said. The matter came to the fore after Andhra Pradesh officials conducted a gram sabha at Tala Ganjeipadar panchayat, Monday. A team of officials comprising VRO Gumpeswar Rao of Salur block office in Vijayanagar district in Andhra Pradesh, secretary Suri Narayan of Tala Ganjeipadar panchayat and MGNREGS assistant Srinu conducted an awareness meeting and explained the benefits of various welfare schemes for the people implemented by their government. In the meeting, newly elected sarpanch Gemel Dibakar joined as chief guest and gave away land patas to 53 persons in the area. Village elders Gemel Bishu and Gemel Dasu coordinated the programme. It was alleged that the neighbouring state continues to trespass into Odisha territory due to alleged lack of action by the district administration. The neighbouring state is reportedly trying to grab three villages Ganjeipadar, Fagunsineri and Datusineri under Kotia panchayat and merge them in its territory by renaming the villages and pronouncing them as its own panchayats. The neighbouring state is playing every trick in the book to take over the Kotia panchayat by extending the benefits of welfare schemes to the residents in these villages.

PM's praise for local outfit triggers row



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, March 31: Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised the director of a voluntary outfit in his 'Mann Ki Baat' Sunday for raising a mangrove forest on 25 acres in Kendrapara district to prevent coastal erosion, a report said. The Prime Minister in his address cited the example of Bijay Kabi, the director of APWA (Action for Protection of Wild Animals) in raising a mangrove forest in Badkot of Rajnagar block which has helped prevent coastal erosion. The PM called upon social workers to come forward and raise mangrove forests as these are able to prevent the coast from erosion. However, the issue has kicked up a row in social media as 99 per cent of the saplings planted by Kabi's outfit were non-existent. Kabi's outfit has mentioned in papers to have planted saplings with the funds of Rs 10.72 lakh provided to it. The irregularities came to the fore from a reply by the local forest office available through Right to Information Act to Somanath Barik of Silapokhari village under Rajnagar block. The area of plantation is spread over four villages. However, the reply says that

The raging fires have been captured in satellite image, sources said. The fire has been raging in Jenabila, Naana Uttar, Podadiha, Pithabata in the south and in the tiger conservation project in the north. Similarly, forest fires have also been reported in the forests under Baripada, Rairangpur and Karanjia forest divisions. Four ODRAF teams comprising forest officials have been deployed in the areas to douse the fire. The exact cause behind the forest fire has not been ascertained yet. The present heatwave condition sweeping the state might have set the Similipal area on fire, a local resident suspected. Notably, the chief of the task force on wildfire Sandeep Tripathy said March 13 that the proactive steps taken by the state government to curb the spread of forest fire in Odisha has led to total control of the situation. When contacted, field director M Jagajayananda of the Similipal Tiger Conservation Project confirmed the development stating that sweltering heat wave might be the reason behind the forest fire which has caught 20 places in the national park.

more than 99 per cent of saplings were found non-existing in these villages by September 17, 2016. Only 50 per cent of planted saplings were found existing in Junusnagar village. Kabi's outfit had taken the contract to plant the mangrove saplings in Goja, Chitakhola, Debendranarayanpur and Charigharia villages under Rajnagar block under Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project programme (ICZMP) in 2015. The report over the missing saplings was earlier published by vernacular daily 'Dharitri'. The Prime Minister's praise for Kabi has surprised many when there is no sign of plantation by him. Kabi's efforts to take the credit for the plantation by local youths has become a talk of the town. He is alleged to have inflated the plantation on two acres to 25 acres. Social media users said the praise by the Prime Minister doesn't sound good. DFO Bikash Ranjan Dash said a probe has been ordered into the irregularities. When contacted, Kabi said his outfit has planted a total of 1, 05,225 saplings under ICZMP programme. However, the saplings have been destroyed due to lack of fencing around them.

POWER DEMO

SUCI activists staging a demonstration against power tariff hike outside the Kishorenagar block office in Angul, Wednesday



SUCCULENT SUCCOUR



With rising heat wave making life miserable, watermelons have been piled up for sale at Gopa haat in Kendrapara

OP PHOTO

2 youths held for setting reserve forest afire

POST NEWS NETWORK

Barbil, March 31: Even as forest fires are sporadically breaking out in various forests in Keonjhar district and other parts of the state, forest officials arrested two youths on charge of setting afire Ulliburu reserve forest under Barbil range Wednesday. The accused were identified as Shankar Munda of Barbil and Rodo Sawaya of Jharkhand. According to reports, as forest fires break out in different forests, the state government has formed a special task force to contain the blaze. Forest officials have been trying their level best to ward off fires. Patrolling was intensified in Keonjhar. Some people and hunters allegedly set forests afire to flush out wild animals and kill them. The two youths went to Ulliburu forest to smoke bidis. For fun, they ignited dry leaves with bidis, ranger Surjit Sahu said.

3 top Maoists lay down arms

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, March 31: Three top Maoists laid down their arms Wednesday before Malkangiri SP Rishikesh Dnyandeo Khilari and officers of the Border Security Force (BSF). The three were identified as Mainu alias Sambhu Dodi of Chinaterem village and Rama Apka of Ganglur village in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh and Raghu Khara of Beijing village in Malkangiri district. The SP, while talking to the media said the three were active members of the Andhra-Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee (AOB-SZC) of the ultra CPI (Maoist) faction. Mainu and Rama were carrying cash awards of Rs 4,00,000 each on their heads while for Raghu it was Rs 1,00,000 said an official. The SP said that all three ultras will be properly rehabilitated and given monetary assistance as per the 'Surrender and Rehabilitation



The SP said, all three ultras will be properly rehabilitated and given monetary assistance as per the 'Surrender and Rehabilitation Scheme' of the state government

vocational training. The ultras said they decided to lay down weapons after witnessing various developmental activities undertaken by the government. They realised the futility of violence being perpetrated by the Naxalites. Mainu and Rama had joined the outlawed CPI (Maoist) organisation in 2009. Raghu on the other hand had joined the CPI (Maoist) party in Gumma Area Committee in September 2017.

Admin vigilant on migrants from hotspot states

GANJAM COLLECTOR HAS DIRECTED THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO KEEP READY THE BEDS OF ISOLATION WARDS IN COVID HOSPITAL ON MKCG PREMISES AND OTHER HOSPITALS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, March 31: The number of Covid infections in Ganjam district was very low till recently, but for the last one week, the rate has been on the rise, leaving the administration worrying. The administration is keeping a close watch on people coming from outside. Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange held a review meeting here Wednesday. Details of migrants are being recorded in registration books at panchayat and civic body levels. Lack of awareness and violation of Covid safety guidelines are one of the factors responsible for the rise of the infection, it is said. People of the district are reportedly coming from Covid hotspot states like Gujarat and Maharashtra in trains to take part in festivals almost every day. Their return has triggered the possibility of more in-



fection rate. Given the situation, Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange asked sarpanchs, Zilla Parishad members and other officials to request those staying outside Ganjam to not visit the district at this time. Famous Tarini Yatra kickstarted from Tuesday. Public congregation and mass participation has the potential of blowing up the situation.

It was alleged that at a time when the virus has already made a comeback, people in the district don't seem to be serious. In markets and other crowded places, people are reportedly throwing the guidelines to the wind. With an objective to find out a solution to tackle the situation, the Ganjam administration has been holding meetings to review the sit-

uation. Collector Kulange attended a meeting through video conferencing. He requested people staying outside not to come to the district to take part in Tara Tarini Yatra. If they come to the district, chances are that they will put their family members in danger and at the same time cause trouble for others. Those who are coming to the district due to health issues or any other unavoidable work, it is mandatory for them to come with Covid test reports. Two wheelers and four wheelers have been banned near the Tarini temple. Police and RTO officials have intensified vehicle checking. It was decided that Taratarini Yatra and Maa Budhi Thakurani yatra will be telecast through social media so that devotees can watch it from inside their houses, the Collector said.

ROAD BLOCKADE



Members of a local outfit block NH-16 at Bamapada Chhak in Balasore over their demands like a flyover construction and repair of level-crossing roads

Villagers lay road, build bridge on their own

POST NEWS NETWORK

Semiliguda, March 31: Upset over administrative apathy, people of a remote village in Koraput got together and laid a road to their village with their own funds and efforts, setting an example of community effort. According to reports, over years, people of Lunguli under Semiliguda block of Koraput district had been suffering commuting problem in the absence of a road. Though the village is just two km from the district headquarters, the administration has turned a blind eye to the commuting issue of the village over years, villagers alleged. The village has a population of 2000. They lamented that in the absence of road connectivity, the villagers had to take a roundabout



route to the panchayat office. This alternative route, a kuchha road, is 6 km from Pakajihola panchayat headquarters. "For the last 15 years, we have been pleading with the block ad-

ministration, the MLA, the BDO, for construction of a road and a bridge so that commuting woes will be eased. But nothing was done. A creek on the outskirts of the village has been a stumbling block," said

For the last 15 years, villagers have been pleading with the block administration, the MLA, the BDO, for construction of a road and a bridge, but nothing was done, villagers alleged



villagers. They added that their repeated pleas for a road and a bridge fell flat as the administration did not pay heed to the development. "We decided to collect money from each house and build the road and the bridge. We realized that if we do nothing on our own, the ad-

ministration will never come to our rescue," the villagers added. Pasi Jani Khara, Laxman Kirsani and Jaga Kirsani led the campaign and collected Rs 100 from each household. They purchased all construction material. All the villagers, starting from children to the elderly contributed their labour to lay the road and using two Hume pipes across the creek. The villagers are happy as their united efforts removed the commuting woes.



national



I haven't come here (Assam) to lie to you. My name is not Narendra Modi. If you wish to hear him lie about Assam, farmers or any other issue, switch on the television. He lies to India 24/7. If you want to listen to the truth, hear me out
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

NCB SEIZES HEROIN, AK-47 FROM SL BOAT

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has taken custody of a Sri Lankan fishing boat and seized 300.323 kg of heroin along with five AK-47 rifles and 1,000 rounds of 9 mm ammunition



SHORT TAKES

Deve Gowda, wife test Covid-19+ve

Bangalore: Former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda Wednesday said he and his wife Chennamma have tested positive for COVID-19. "My wife Chennamma and I have tested positive for COVID-19. We are self-isolating along with other family members," the 87-year-old JD(S) patriarch tweeted. "I request all those who came in contact with us over the last few days to get themselves tested. I request party workers and well-wishers not to panic," he added. The couple are currently undergoing treatment at the city's Manipal Hospital, hospital sources said.

Spurious liquor kills 8 in Bihar

Patna: Eight persons died in two separate incidents in Bihar -- six in Nawada and two in Begusarai -- after they reportedly consumed spurious liquor in the last 24 hours. The family members of the deceased claimed that they consumed liquor on the day of Holi Monday, after which their health conditions deteriorated by the night.

Woman gangraped

Agra: A young couple has lodged a report with the police, claiming that the 19-year-old woman was gang raped by three men in the presence of her husband while they were on their way to meet relatives on Holi. The victim, in her complaint, alleged that she was dragged to a nearby jungle where she was gang raped. Her husband was beaten up by the attackers as he tried to fight them off.

Farmers plan march to Parliament in May



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 31:

Announcing their plans for the upcoming two months, farmers, who have been protesting against the new farm laws at the Delhi borders, said they will march to the Parliament on foot in May, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha said Wednesday. "The Sanyukt Kisan Morcha met yesterday, and decided that the farmers will be undertaking a march to the Parliament. The date for the march is yet to be decided." "It will be joined not just by farmers, but also by women, and unemployed individuals, and labourers who have been supporting the movement," farmer leader Gurnaam Singh Chaduni said. Addressing a press conference, he said that the march would be carried out in a "peaceful" manner, and special care would be taken that "what hap-

pened January 26 is not repeated". The leaders also shared their plans of forming a committee to control protesters if there is police action in parliament march. "We will form a committee to let the protestors know what to do in case there is police action during the march. It will also be made clear to them that SKM condemns all kinds of violence. So the protestors will know that if there is any damage of property by them, they will have to serve the penalty," a farmer leader said. Farmer leaders also announced their plans to block the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal expressway for 24 hours April 10. "We will be blocking the KMP expressway April 10 for 24 hours, that is from 11 am April 10 to 11 am on the next day. We will be doing this because the government has not been listening to us. It has been sleeping. This is to wake up the govern-

ment," another farmer leader said. An event to honour the farmers who have lost their lives during the agitation will be organised May 6. "Soil from different parts of the country will be brought to these borders and a memorial will be created for all our brothers who have lost their lives while participating in this movement," a farmer leader said. Separate events will also be organised to commemorate Ambedkar Jayanti, and Labour Day. Enacted in September, the three farm laws have been projected by the Centre as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell their produce anywhere in the country. The protesting farmers, on the other hand, have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and do away with the "mandi" (wholesale market) system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates. **SC-APPOINTED PANEL ON FARM LAWS SUBMITS REPORT:** The Supreme Court-appointed committee to study the three new controversial agricultural laws has submitted its report to the apex court March 19 in a sealed cover, one of its members said Wednesday. The Supreme Court had, January 11, stayed the implementation of the three laws till further orders and appointed a four-member panel to resolve the impasse. The committee was given two months to study the laws and consult all stakeholders.

NO RESPITE



A CISF personnel walks under an umbrella while guarding at Taj Mahal on a hot day in Agra

No news of Rohingya boat in Andamans

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, March 31: Fifty days after they sailed out of Bangladesh's coastal region of Cox's Bazar, more than 80 Muslim Rohingya refugees were reported stranded in a boat in the Andaman sea. "But there is no news from the boat in the last 10 days. The Indian coastguard seem to have snatched the one satellite phone on the boat. There are rumours that the Indians have pushed the boat into Bangladesh or Myanmar territorial waters while some say it remains anchored off the coast of northern Andamans," said Chris Lewa, director of "Arakan Project", which monitors conditions of Rohingyas both in refugee camps in Bangladesh and other parts of South-east Asia. She and other human rights activists say the Indian coast guards have provided the refugees with food, drinking water and medical attention but not allowed the boat ashore. "That is perhaps because India was negotiating with Bangladesh to take back these refugees. But since Bangladesh has refused to take them back as their boat was tracked far away from the Andamans, the fate of the Rohingyas is uncertain," said a Thailand-based human rights activist on condi-



tion of anonymity. The activists said 50 days at sea in a ramshackle boat may be a real tough proposition for anybody. Eight of the ninety Rohingyas who set sail (65 women, 20 men and 5 minors) have already died of diarrhoea and dehydration after the boat's engine developed trouble on Feb 18, a week into the journey towards South-east Asia. Eighty-one Rohingyas, mostly women, were reported to be on the boat with three Bangladesh crew members when the rights activists lost contact with the boat. The survivors confirmed eight deaths on the boat before they lost contact. "We thank the Indian Coast Guard for providing immediate relief but Delhi should either negotiate the boat's return to Bangladesh with the Rohingyas or take them ashore to a camp for better medical care. This is a humanitarian situation," the Thailand-based activist said.

Youth killed for putting colours on female relative

AGENCIES

Ballia (UP), March 31: A young man was killed in UP's Ballia district for allegedly smearing colour on a distant female relative during Holi. The body of Durgesh Paswan, 19, with stab wounds on his back and chest, was found late Tuesday night from Chhotaki Seria village. Two men belonging to the same village have been arrested in connection with the crime. According to reports, Durgesh had smeared colour on the sister-in-law of the accused, Karan, during Holi celebrations Monday after which they had a quarrel. Superintendent of Police Vipin Tada said: "On Tuesday night, Karan called Durgesh for a meeting and then killed him with the help of his friend, Sanjeev. They then dumped his body near a tube well." On a complaint filed by the victim's father, a case was registered against Karan and Sanjeev. The accused were taken into custody for interrogation during which they confessed to the crime. The SP said that Durgesh's mobile phone and the knife used in the crime have been recovered. The body has been sent for post-mortem.

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ରାଜ୍ୟ ଚିହ୍ନ

ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ ବିଭାଗ

DSPL-262

ଜନନୀ-ଶିଶୁ ସୁରକ୍ଷା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ (JSSK)

ଗର୍ଭାବସ୍ଥା ତଥା ଗର୍ଭବତୀଙ୍କ ପ୍ରସବକାଳୀନ ସେବା ଓ ପ୍ରସବ ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ (୪୨ ଦିନ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ) ଜଟିଳତା ଏବଂ ଜନ୍ମରୁ ଏକବର୍ଷ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଅସୁସ୍ଥ ଶିଶୁଙ୍କର ଚିକିତ୍ସା ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମାଗଣାରେ

ଯାତାୟତ ପାଇଁ ଆୟୁଲାନ୍ସର ସୁବିଧା

ଚିକିତ୍ସା

ସମସ୍ତ ପ୍ରକାର ଆବଶ୍ୟକୀୟ ପରୀକ୍ଷା

ସମସ୍ତପ୍ରକାର ଆବଶ୍ୟକୀୟ ଔଷଧ ଓ ସାମଗ୍ରୀ ପ୍ରଦାନ

ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ସ୍ଥଳେ ରକ୍ତ ପ୍ରଦାନ

ମା' ପାଇଁ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା

ଏହି ସବୁ ସୁବିଧା ଏସ୍.ଏନ୍.ସି.ୟୁ (SNCU) ରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ବିନା ମୂଲ୍ୟରେ ଉପଲବ୍ଧ ।

ଅଧିକ ଜାଣିବା ପାଇଁ ନିକଟସ୍ଥ ଆଶା କିୟା ସାମ୍ବ୍ୟକର୍ମୀଙ୍କ ସହ ପରାମର୍ଶ କରନ୍ତୁ ।

ନିୟମିତ ହାତ ଧୁଅନ୍ତୁ

ମାସ୍କ ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତୁ

ସାମାଜିକ ଦୂରତା ବଜାୟ ରଖନ୍ତୁ

ଯୋଗ୍ୟ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି କରୋନା ଟିକା ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ନିଅନ୍ତୁ

ସାମ୍ବ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

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OIPR-10003/13/0069/2021

Fire breaks out in Safdarjung hospital

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 31: A fire broke out Wednesday morning in the ICU of the Safdarjung Hospital here following which 50 patients were evacuated, fire officials said. No casualty has been reported in the blaze that broke out around 6:30 am, they said. Nine fire tenders were rushed to the spot. Around 50 patients were immediately shifted to other wards with the help of hospital staff, the officials said. The hospital said that the fire probably broke out due to high voltage fluctuation and a short circuit. "There was a minor fire incident in medicine ward 11 (HDU) in Safdarjung Hospital Wednesday probably due to high voltage fluctuation and short circuit. All the patients admitted in HDU and the ward were evacuated immediately to other wards by our nursing staff and security personnel. "There was no loss of life. The fire was controlled immediately by our hospital fire safety team," the spokesperson of the hospital said.

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of the day quote

There is nothing more farcical than quoting the lines of Jesus on a political stage and unleashing the prosecution on those whose lives are spent on serving the poor

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

The high polling percentage shows that people are yearning for change. (Chief Minister) Mamata Banerjee is worried as the elections were peaceful and the TMC goons could not have a field day

J P NADDA | BJP CHIEF

If there are any corrupt practices during my stewardship and on the part of the previous Congress government, a probe could be ordered by the Prime Minister instead of making off the cuff allegations at the rally

V NARAYANASAMY | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

SHORT TAKES

2 LeT terrorist associates held

Srinagar: Two terrorist associates linked with proscribed terror outfit Lashker-e-Taiba (LeT) were arrested in Jammu and Kashmir's Budgam and incriminating materials seized from their possession, police said Wednesday. Police said acting on specific inputs, Budgam police along with the army's 53 Rashtriya Rifles and the Central Reserve Police Force's 43rd Bn apprehended two terrorist associates in a joint operation at Laloo Sheshgari, Hyderpora.

Illicit liquor claims four lives in UP

Pratapgarh (UP): Four persons died in Udaypur area here allegedly after consuming spurious liquor, officials said Wednesday. The local police station in-charge has been suspended following the incident for alleged laxity, they said. Three of the deceased were from the same family and were residents of Katariya village. The fourth was from Aahar Bihar village. Four people -- Dilip Kori (48), his brother Pradeep Kori (35), maternal uncle Siddhanath (65) and one Dharmendra (45) -- consumed liquor Tuesday night. Additional Superintendent of Police Dinesh Dwivedi said.

Hottest March in Delhi since 2010

New Delhi: Delhi recorded a mean maximum temperature of 33.1 degrees Celsius this month, making it the "hottest" March in the last 11 years, the India Meteorological Department said Wednesday. Normally, the mean maximum temperature for the month of March in the national capital is 29.6 degrees Celsius, it said. This is the highest mean maximum temperature in March since 2010, when it was 34.1 degrees Celsius, said Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of the IMD's regional forecasting centre.

4 Naxals held

Dantewada: Four Naxals, one of them carrying a reward of Rs 1 lakh on his head, were arrested from two districts of Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Bastar division, police said. Cadres Mannu alias Motu Barsa (24) and Sitaram Oyam (20) were apprehended from the Barsoor police station area of Dantewada district Wednesday, while Vetti Hunga (30) and Kunjam Hadma (29) were nabbed from neighbouring Sukma district Tuesday, an official said.

FB doubles down on efforts to protect Assembly elections



The company said that it is taking steps to enhance civic engagement, combat hate speech, limit misinformation and remove voter suppression

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 31: Based on lessons learned from past elections in India and globally, Facebook has doubled down on its efforts to support and protect assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, Kerala and Pondicherry.

The company said Wednesday that it is taking steps to enhance civic engagement, combat hate speech, limit misinformation and remove voter suppression.

"To decrease the risk of problematic content going viral in these states and potentially inciting violence ahead of or during the election, we will significantly reduce the distribution of content that our proactive detection technology identifies as likely hate speech or violence and incitement," the company said in a statement.

The company said that it continues

to closely partner with election authorities, including to set up a high priority channel to remove content that breaks our rules or is against local law after receiving valid legal orders.

Facebook said that it may deploy technology to identify new words and phrases associated with hate speech, and either remove posts with that language or reduce their distribution.

"In addition to our standard practice of removing accounts that repeatedly violate our Community Standards, we will also temporarily reduce the distribution of content from accounts that have recently and repeatedly violated our policies," it added.

The company is currently working with eight partners in India who are certified by the International Fact-Checking Network, to provide people with additional context about the content they're seeing on Facebook.

In addition to English, these eight partners fact-check in 11 Indian languages including Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam and Assamese.

In 2019, led by the industry body IAMAI, Facebook had set up a high priority channel with the Election Commission of India (ECI) for Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, to receive content-related escalations.

CBI court discharges three cops in Ishrat Jahan encounter case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, March 31: A special CBI court here Wednesday discharged police officers G L Singhal, Tarun Barot and Anaju Chaudhary in the 2004 Ishrat Jahan alleged fake encounter case.

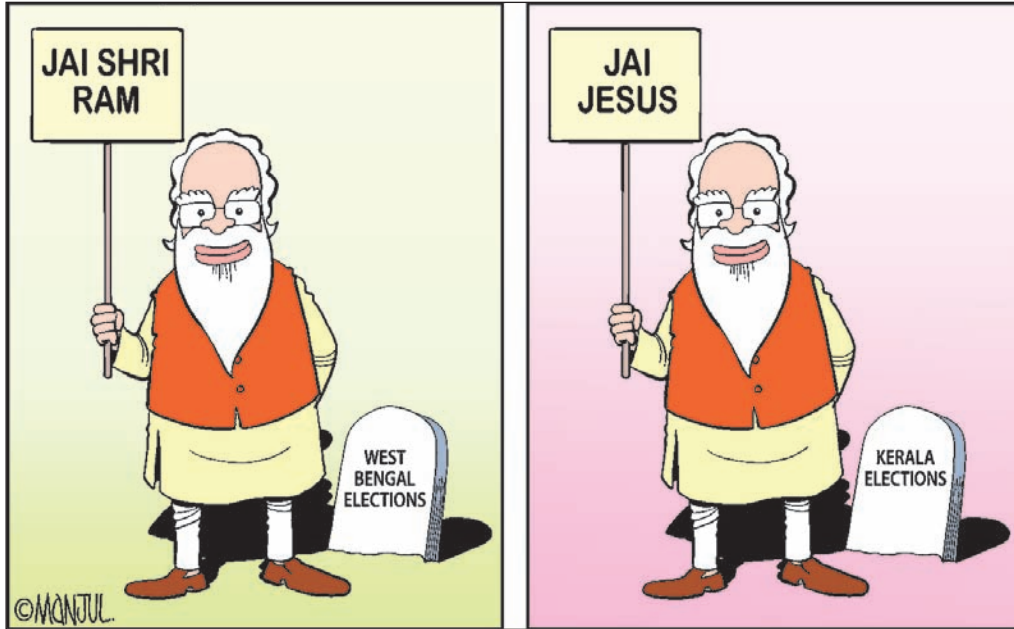
Special CBI judge V R Raval allowed the discharge applications of Singhal, Barot (now retired) and Chaudhary. "The CBI has not mentioned anything specific against the sanction order (in which the Gujarat government declined sanction to prosecute the three accused) which also leads to believe the act of applicants/accused was in discharge of official duties," the court observed.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) March 20 conveyed to the court that the state government had declined sanction for prosecution of the three accused. The court in its October 2020 order observed that they had "acted in their official duties," so the probe agency was required to obtain sanction for prosecution.

Under section 197 of the Criminal Procedure Code, sanction is required for prosecuting government servants for anything done in the discharge of official duty.

Ishrat Jahan, a 19-year-old woman from Mumbai near Mumbai, was killed along with Javed Shaikh alias Pranesh Pillai, Amjadali Akbarali Rana and Zeeshan Johar by Gujarat police in an 'encounter' near Ahmedabad June 15, 2004. The police claimed the four were terrorists who were planning to assassinate the then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi. However, a high court-appointed Special Investigation Team concluded that the encounter was fake, after which the CBI registered a case against various police officials. Inspector General of Police Singhal, retired police officers Barot and J G Parmar, and Chaudhary had filed applications before the court seeking dropping of proceedings for want of the requisite sanction to prosecute them.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



DCGI extends shelf life of Covishield from 6 to 9 months

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Mar 31: India's drug regulator DCGI has extended the shelf life of Covishield, the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, from six to nine months from its manufacturing date.

In a letter to the Serum Institute of India (SII), Drugs Controller General of India V G Somani said the SII is permitted to apply the vaccine's shelf life of nine months to unlabelled vials available on hand. Shelf life is the length of time for which an item remains fit for use.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) said it has no objection in respect of 'Extension of Shelf Life of Covishield Vaccine' in multi-dose glass vial (10 dose-5ml) from six months to nine months. "You are permitted to apply the shelf life of nine months to unlabelled vials available on hand, sub-



ject to the condition that the details of such stock, batch-wise, shall be submitted to this office and Central Drugs Laboratory, Kasauli," Somani said in the letter.

According to an update by UK drug regulator dated February 22, the shelf-life of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine is six months. Meanwhile, as many as 53,480 fresh infections pushed India's COVID-19 tally to 1,21,49,335, while 354 new fa-

talities, the highest single-day spike so far this year, took the death toll to 1,62,468, according to Union health ministry data updated Wednesday. The country had recorded 355 deaths December 17.

The active caseload increased to 5,52,566 and accounts for 4.55 per cent of the total infections. The recovery rate further dropped to 94.11 per cent, the ministry data updated at 8 am showed.

Pak-based LeT militant jailed for 10 years

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 31: Four years after his arrest, Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist Saifullah Mansoor, who infiltrated into Jammu and Kashmir

with the intention to carry out terrorist attacks at different places in India, including Delhi, has been sentenced to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment and fine.

Mansoor, alias Bahadur

Ali, along with his two associates Abu Saad and Abu Darda -- all trained Lashkar terrorists -- illegally infiltrated into the valley to carry out terrorist attacks at different places in India as per instructions given to

them by their handlers based in Pakistan or Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK).

Security forces arrested Mansoor July 25, 2016, from Yahama Mukam village in Kupwara district in Jammu and Kashmir.

Only 25% parents willing to send kids to school in April

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 31: As India experiences a fast-growing second wave of Covid-19, only 25 per cent parents are willing to send their wards to school in April, as per a survey by LocalCircles.

With B.1.1.7 known for high transmissibility within children, the majority of parents have expressed concerns.

There are 73 per cent of parents who believe that physical schools must not operate if active cases in the district are above 100.

As per feedback in the survey and given the massive surge in the Covid cases experienced in the last three weeks, the default option for the schools should be closure from April to June.

Exceptions may be taken on the basis of active case numbers in a particular district along with the variant-type reported, the daily case curve to authorize District Magistrates to permit schools to operate as

long as active cases are less than 100. As far as the scheduled Board Exams for Class 10 and 12 in the month of May is concerned, the Central and State Boards will need to make a decision based on the national situation. The feasibility of conducting the board exam both online and offline does deserve consideration.

The survey found that three data points released last week are of great concern. First, the Chief Minister of Punjab announced that of the genome testing done by the state, 81 per cent of the Covid-19 samples were found to be of B.1.1.7 i.e., the UK variant of SARS-COV2. The next day, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that the B.1.1.7, which is fast spreading in the country, is more transmissible than the original strain and is more dangerous to children and young people, and we need to put the

protection of schools more front and centre than with the original virus.

The day after she said this, the city of Bengaluru in the month of March reported approximately 500 cases of Covid in children under the age of 10.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. MCSW-GreenCo-20-21-22

NAME OF WORK: RE-CERTIFICATION OF GREENCO RATING FOR CARRIAGE REPAIR WORKSHOP, MANCHESWAR.

Advertised Value (₹): 5,41,620/-, Cost of Tender Document (₹): 2,000/-, Period of Completion: 36 Months.

Bidding Start Date : 08.04.2021, **Date and time of closing of tender :** 1500 hrs of 22.04.2021.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Complete details including e-tender documents are available at <http://www.teps.gov.in>.

By, Chief Mechanical Engineer, Carriage Repair Workshop, Mancheswar
PR-657/L/20-21

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
RURAL WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION
ORGANISATION, OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE
ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, ANGUL, AT: TALCHER**
At: Baghuabole, P.O.- Hatatota, Talcher, Dist.- Angul, PIN - 759100
(Ph. No./FAX: 06760-240762, E-mail: eerwssang@gmail.com)

**National Competitive Bidding through e-Procurement
Bid Identification No. 06/EE/RWSS/ANGUL/2020-21
Dt.26.03.2021 (DMF)**

No. O-1306: The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Angul, At: Talcher on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Item Rate/Percentage Bid through e-Procurement in Double/Single Cover System according to norm of e-Procurement System in Online mode.

Nature of Work : Rural Piped Water Supply Schemes

- No. of Tenders : 1 No.
- Tender Paper Cost : Rs.6,000.00
- Value of Work : Rs.28.98 lakhs
- Class of Contractor : "C" & "B" Class
- Date & time of availability of bid document in portal : 03.04.2021 at 13.00 hrs. to 12.04.2021 upto 17.00 hrs.
- Date & time of seeking tender : 08.04.2021 upto 17.00 hrs. clarification
- Date & time of opening of tender & verification of original document : 13.04.2021 at 15.00 hrs in the Office of the Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Angul, at: Talcher
- Time of Completion : 5 (Five) Calendar Months
- The bidders have to participate in Online bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>
- Corrigendum if any shall be publish in the above website only.

Sd/- Executive Engineer
RWS&S Division, Angul at Talcher
OIPR-25019/11/0027/2021

National Highways Authority of India
(Ministry of Road Transport & Highways)

NHAI/11012/24/Toll/Sukhuapada/2021/PIU/BLS/365
31.03.2021

PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance to the Govt. of India, Notification No.S.O.3255(E) dated 23.09.2020 of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, the user fee rates of **Sukhuapada** Fee Plaza at km.12+900 in Mayurbhanj district for the section of Jharpokharia-Baripada-Balasore from km.0+000 to km.81+257 on NH-18 in the state of Odisha for the length of 32+800 km will be applicable with effect from 06.04.2021 as per the rates given below : (in ₹)

Sl. No.	Category of vehicles	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
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.	Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	45	65	1430	20
2.	Light Commercial Vehicle, Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus	70	105	2315	35
3.	Bus or Truck (up to two axles)	145	220	4845	75
4.	Commercial Vehicles (three axles)	160	240	5290	80
5.	Heavy Construction Machinery (HCM) or Earth Moving Equipment (EME) or Multi Axle Vehicle(MAV) (four to six axles)	230	340	7600	115
6.	Oversized Vehicles (seven or more axles)	280	415	9255	140

The rates for monthly pass applicable for local non-commercial vehicles residing within a distance of 20 km from the above toll plaza for the year 2021-22 shall be Rs.285.00, subject to revision every year as per the provision of said rules. The fee rate mentioned at Column (6) is for single journey and is applicable for commercial vehicles (excluding vehicle plying under National Permit), registered within the District where the fee plaza is located.

Address for Communication: Project Implementation Unit, Balasore, Plot No.1086, Chandmaripadia Road, Sahdevkhunta, Balasore, Odisha-756001. Ph. (06782) 263366, E-mail : piubalasore@nhai.org

Sd/-
Project Director

BUILDING A NATION, NOT JUST ROADS

National Highways Authority of India
(Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Government of India)

NHAI/11012/23/Toll/Padmanavapur/2021/PIU/BLS/362
Dt: 31.03.2021

PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance to the Govt. of India, Notification No.S.O.3255(E) dated 23.09.2020 of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, the user fee rates of **Padmanavapur** Fee Plaza at km.73.425 in Mayurbhanj district in the section from Jharpokharia-Baripada-Balasore from km. 0.000 to km. 81.257 on NH-18 in the state of Odisha for the length of 33.707 km will be applicable w.e.f. 06.04.2021 as per the rates given below: (in ₹)

Sl. No.	Category of vehicles	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
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.	Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	50	80	1725	25
2.	Light Commercial Vehicle, Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus	85	125	2785	40
3.	Bus or Truck (up to two axles)	175	265	5840	90
4.	Commercial Vehicles (three axles)	190	285	6370	95
5.	Heavy Construction Machinery (HCM) or Earth Moving Equipment (EME) or Multi Axle Vehicle(MAV) (four to six axles)	275	410	9155	135
6.	Oversized Vehicles (seven or more axles)	335	500	11145	165

The rates for monthly pass applicable for local non-commercial vehicles residing within a distance of 20 km from the above toll plaza for the year 2021-22 shall be Rs.285.00, subject to revision every year as per the provision of said rules. The fee rate mentioned at Column (6) is for single journey and is applicable for commercial vehicles (excluding vehicle plying under National Permit), registered within the District where the fee plaza is located.

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Sd/- Project Director

BUILDING A NATION, NOT JUST ROADS



The inflation target for the period April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2026 under the Reserve Bank of India Act 1934 has been kept at the same level as was for previous five years
TARUN BAJAJ | ECONOMIC AFFAIRS SECRETARY

‘MOVING TO 100% RENEWABLE ENERGY’

Apple has announced that over 110 of its manufacturing partners globally are moving to 100% renewable energy for their Apple production, with nearly 8GWs of planned clean energy set to come online



of the day quote

Hyatt remains focused on thoughtfully accelerating its brand growth and momentum by transforming the hotel landscape in India with planned openings in some of the most frequented and desirable destinations in the country



DHRUVA RATHORE | VP, REAL ESTATE & DEVELOPMENT, HYATT HOTELS CORPORATION

There are just too many categories the Public Procurement Order is attempting to facilitate, without even considering the technological complexity and the time which will be required to import substitute



PAVAN CHOUDHARY | CHAIRMAN & DIRECTOR GENERAL, MTAI

We had started with just mattresses and post that, expanded into all sleep products. Last year, we expanded into the complete home solutions range. We have been fortunate to grow very fast this financial year and are on track to hit about ₹450 crore



CHAITANYA RAMALINGEGOWDA | CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, WAKEFIT.CO

SHORT TAKES

Manufacturing rebounds in China

Beijing: China's factory activity rebounded in March from a three-month slowdown as export orders rose, a survey showed Wednesday. A monthly index of manufacturing issued by the China's statistics agency and an industry group rose to 51.9 from February's 50.6 on a 100-point scale on which numbers above 50 show activity expanding.

MG to support eight startups

New Delhi: MG Motor India Wednesday said it has further extended support to eight startups with which it could explore synergies. These synergies could be in the areas of customer service, ISMART and telematics, battery management, blockchain, augmented reality and virtual reality, and autonomous technologies, the company said in a statement. "This is part of the MG Developer Program & Grant programme that aims at nurturing start-ups.

Interest rates on PPF, NSC slashed

New Delhi: A big cut in small savings schemes will deliver a blow to savers who depend on these schemes for income and social security. Conversely, this will reduce interest rates, bring down the cost of capital and spur capex and stock markets. The government revised the interest rates on small savings with effect from April 1 with a massive cut Wednesday. The interest on savings deposit will be cut from 4% to 3.5% annually, while Public Provident Fund (PPF) is down from 7.1% to 6.4%. Similarly, 1 year time deposit has been cut from 5.5% to 4.4% quarterly. The senior citizen savings schemes rate is cut from 7.4% to 6.5%.

Hitachi acquires GlobalLogic

Tokyo: Hitachi Ltd. is buying US digital engineering services company GlobalLogic Inc. for \$9.6 billion, the Japanese industrial, electronic and construction conglomerate said Wednesday. Tokyo-based Hitachi said the acquisition of the Silicon Valley company will strengthen Hitachi's digital operations.

‘India bounced back big way but not out of woods’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, March 31: India's economy has bounced back amazingly from the Covid-19 pandemic and nationwide lockdown over the last one year, but it is not out of the woods yet, according to the World Bank, which in its latest report has predicted that the country's real GDP growth for fiscal year 21/22 could range from 7.5 to 12.5%.

The Washington-based global lender, in its latest South Asia Economic Focus report released ahead of the annual spring meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), said that the economy was already slowing when the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded. After reaching 8.3% in FY17, growth decelerated to 4% in FY20, it said.



The slowdown was caused by a decline in private consumption growth and shocks to the financial sector (the collapse of a large non-bank finance institution), which

compounded pre-existing weaknesses in investment, it said.

Given the significant uncertainty pertaining to both epidemiological and policy developments, the

₹10,900 cr PLI push for food processing industry

The Union Cabinet, chaired by PM Narendra Modi, approved the scheme which will help create 2.5 lakh jobs by 2026-27, boost exports and facilitate expansion of food processing capacity



AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 31: The government Wednesday approved a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for the food processing sector, entailing an outlay of ₹10,900 crore.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the scheme which will help create 2.5 lakh jobs by 2026-27, boost exports and facilitate expansion of food processing capacity to generate processed food output worth ₹33,494 crore. The incentive under the scheme would be paid for six years ending 2026-27.

"The PLI for the food processing sector with ₹10,900 crore-incentive has been approved. The decision is a fitting tribute to our farmers," Food Minister Piyush Goyal said while briefing the media about the

cabinet decisions.

The effort is to take the country's food processing to a next level amid the rising global demand for Indian ready to eat foods, organic products, processed fruits and vegetables, marine products and mozzarella cheese, he said.

The government said the objectives of the scheme are to support food manufacturing entities with stipulated minimum sales and that are willing to make minimum stipulated investment for expansion of processing capacity and branding abroad to incentivise emergence of strong Indian brands.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar, who was also present at the briefing, said that the government in the Budget had announced a PLI scheme for 12-13 sectors. Already, PLI has been announced for six sectors.

"Today, PLI for the food pro-

cessing industries has been approved," he added.

According to the government, the first component under the scheme relates to incentivising manufacturing of four major food product segments: ready-to-cook/ready-to-eat foods, processed fruits and vegetables, marine products and mozzarella cheese.

Innovative and organic products of small-to-medium enterprise (SMEs), including eggs, poultry meat, egg products in these segments, are also covered under the first component.

The second component relates to support for branding and marketing abroad to incentivise emergence of strong Indian brands.

Highlighting key features of the scheme, Food Processing Industries Secretary Pushpa Subrahmanyam said, "The government will issue an EoI by the end of April."

LPG cylinder price to fall by ₹10 from today

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 31: State-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) will reduce the price of domestic LPG cylinder by ₹10 per cylinder from April 1. Domestic LPG cylinder will cost ₹809 per cylinder in Delhi, effective April 1.

In a statement Wednesday, OMC major Indian Oil Corporation said that prices of crude oil and petroleum products in the international market have been on a constant uptrend since November 2020.

"As India is largely import-dependent on crude oil and the prices are market-linked, the increase in



international prices resulted in increase in the domestic price of petroleum products," the statement said. "However, due to growing worries about rising Covid-19 cases in Europe and Asia and concerns over the side effects of the vaccine, prices of crude oil and petroleum product in the international market softened in the second fortnight of March 2021."

Now, book mini-trucks online through ezTruck

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 31: A new venture ezTruck has been launched Wednesday aiming at providing easy Mini Truck booking platform for commercial transportation.

The founder of the startup Kali Prasad Rath said, "We provide services such as lorry transport, professional house moving and office moving. We have also partnered with reputable and experienced drivers to ensure that your goods will be transported safely and securely to your destination."

The new initiative and first in Odisha aims to provide an experi-



ence in a new and fresh way to book moving deliveries in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

Rath said that trucks will be available on time, on-time delivery to the client, priority on safety, security, hygiene, quick recovery in case of technical/mechanical failure.

Booking will be starting from April 1 through online platform. People can download the ezTruck app



THE STEEPEST CONTRACTION

The 4.6% decline is the steepest contraction in last six months which experts said could drag the overall industrial production into negative territory

The growth rate of the eight infrastructure sectors stood at 6.4% in February this year

According to the data, coal production declined by 4.4%, crude oil by 3.2%, natural gas by 1%, refinery products by a steep 10.9%, fertilisers by 3.7%, steel by 1.8%, cement by 5.5% and electricity by 0.2%

in March 2021, which should result in a modest growth of around 2% in Q4 FY2021.

"The lead indicators such as the core sector, auto output and non oil exports have revealed a decidedly mixed trend for February 2021. Based on the available data, we expect the contraction in the IIP (index of industrial production) to deepen to 2-3 % in February 2021 from 1.6 % in January 2021," she said.

HCCB aims zero accident working environment



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 27: Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages (HCCB), one of India's top FMCG companies, has for the first time collaborated with Indo German Focal Point (IGFP), a leading non-profit organisation aimed at promoting safety, health and social protection of workers in enterprises, state and non-state institutions; in order to raise awareness on industrial safety and social security.

In line with this vision, HCCB conducted an event in association with IGFP, supported by the government of Odisha that included trainings for companies in the Khorda Industrial Estate to ensure a "zero accident" working environment.

The event was inaugurated by Niranjan Sahu, member of Odisha Public Service Commission and sub-collector, Khorda Administration, presided over by Sanat Kumar Mohanty, (OAS) Collector & DM - Khordha.

G Ganesh, Khorda Factory Head HCCB, said, "HCCB and IGFP have similar visions when it comes to ensuring worker safety and we are leveraging the synergy to relay the importance of industrial safety and social security to other players as well."

The workshop also included a virtual presentation made by Bernard Treichel, Speaker from International Social Security Association (ISSA) Geneva on "Vision zero - For a safe workplace" which focused on measures that can be implemented to ensure accident prevention and zero accidents in industries.

MoU signed by NALCO, others on 'tech development'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 31: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on "Technology development for holistic utilisation of red mud for extraction of metallic values and residue utilisation" between Research and development (R&D) organisations (CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT), Bhubaneswar; CSIR-National Metallurgical Laboratory (CSIR-NML), Jamshedpur; Jawaharlal Nehru Aluminium Research Development and Design Centre (JNARDDC), Nagpur and Aluminium Industries (National Aluminium Company Ltd. (NALCO), Hindalco Industries Ltd., Vedanta Ltd) at CSIR (IMMT) auditorium here Wednesday.

Bauxite residue (red mud) is produced in the process of alumina extraction from bauxite. Bayer's process is the principal industrial means of processing bauxite to produce alumina (aluminium oxide).

India tops in real-time digital transactions in 2020: Report

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, March 31: India retained the top spot in terms of digital payments in 2020 with 25.5 billion real-time payment transactions, showed a report by ACI Worldwide and GlobalData.

In 2020, the transaction volume share in India stood at 15.6% and 22.9% for instant payments and other electronic payments respectively, while paper-based payments had a considerable share of 61.4%, it showed. "This is poised to change by 2025 where share of volume by instant payments and other electronic payments is expected to rise to 37.1% and 34.6% respectively, leaving the volume of paper-based transactions at 28.3%," it said.

Furthermore, by 2024 the share of real time payments volume in overall electronic transactions will exceed 50%, according to the report. China followed India and held

the second spot with 15.7 billion transactions. South Korea took the third spot, followed by Thailand and the UK in the fourth and fifth.

"More than 70.3 billion real-time payments transactions were processed globally in 2020, a surge of 41 per cent compared to the previous year, as the Covid-19 pandemic dramatically accelerated trends away from cash and cheques towards greater reliance on real-time and digital payments," it said.

The second installment of 'Prime Time for Real-Time,' first launched in 2020, analyses global real-time, account-to-account payment volumes and forecasts across 48 global markets. It projects a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) for real-time payments of 23.6 per cent from 2020 to 2025.

"India's journey of creating a digital financial infrastructure has been characterized by collaboration between the government, the



regulator, banks and fintechs. This has helped to advance the country's goal of enabling financial inclusion and also provided rapid payments digitization for citizens," said Kaushik Roy, VP and head of product management, Asia, ME and Africa, ACI Worldwide.

Roy added that the pandemic has further accelerated adoption of digital payments with many first-time users adopting digital payments and significant uplift by merchants. "As the industry evolves, we expect to see increased adoption across

different users and volume growth driven by mass adoption, recurring payments, transit payments as well as cross-border transactions," he added.

As the pandemic continues to drive changes in consumer and business behaviours, banks, merchants and intermediaries

India's journey of creating a digital financial infrastructure has been characterised by collaboration between the government, the regulator, banks and fin-techs. This has helped to advance the country's goal of enabling financial inclusion and also provided rapid payments' digitisation for citizens

KAUSHIK ROY, VP AND HEAD OF PRODUCT MANAGEMENT, ASIA, ME AND AFRICA, ACI WORLDWIDE

across the payment ecosystem are responding rapidly, prioritizing the

shift to digital to protect current revenue streams, and searching for new ones through a fully digitised customer experience.

With millions of people globally having to change the way they work and live - and the way they shop and pay - mobile wallet adoption rose to an historic high of 46 percent in 2020, up from 40.6 per cent in 2019 and 18.9 per cent in 2018. Countries like Brazil, Mexico and Malaysia where many people historically relied on cash are now some of the fastest adopters of mobile wallets.

"The pandemic has cast the spotlight on the importance of digital payments and robust payment infrastructures, condensing a decade of anticipated innovation into one year and creating human behavioural changes that will not reverse as we emerge from the crisis," said Jeremy Wilmot, Chief Product Officer, ACI Worldwide.



‘LOOKING FORWARD TO ANOTHER UNBEATEN TOUR’

With their morale high after an unbeaten tour of Europe, the Indian men’s hockey team left for a competition trip to Argentina Wednesday. The six-match tour against Argentina includes four games apart from the back-to-back FIH Pro League matches April 11 and 12. “Though I missed out the Europe tour due to personal reasons, I was closely following the matches and it was very encouraging to see how the team performed against Germany and Great Britain. We are looking forward to yet another unbeaten tour,” captain Manpreet Singh said in a Hockey India press release.



Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates his goal against Luxembourg, Tuesday

CR7 scores in Portugal win

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, March 31: Belgium and the Netherlands scored 15 goals combined in big routs in World Cup qualifying, while Portugal got one from Cristiano Ronaldo in its victory against a Luxembourg team that tinkered with another shock result. Belgium crushed Belarus 8-0 to stay at the top in Group E, while the Dutch trashed Gibraltar 7-0 to go second behind Turkey in Group G, Tuesday. Minnow Luxembourg, which opened with a surprising win against Ireland, looked on its way to pulling off another upset after it took the lead against Portugal, but the visitors came from behind to stay at the top of Group A along with Serbia, which earlier defeated Azerbaijan with another double by Fulham forward

Aleksandar Mitrovic. After being held scoreless in the first two qualifiers this year, Ronaldo scored his 31st goal in World Cup qualifying early in the second half in Portugal's victory at Luxembourg. He has now scored for Portugal in every calendar year since his first international goal in 2004, and moved six away from tying the all-time scoring record for a men's national team. The record of 109 goals is held by former Iran striker Ali Daei, the only other male soccer player to surpass the 100-goal milestone. Gerson Rodrigues had put the hosts ahead in the 30th minute but Diogo Jota equalized for Portugal in the second minute of stoppage time before Ronaldo and Joao Palhinha added second-half goals. Portugal was coming off a 2-2 draw

against Serbia. Both teams are tied with seven points each from three matches. Ireland, the other Group A team, played a friendly against World Cup host Qatar and was held to a 1-1 draw, staying winless in 11 games under coach Stephen Kenny. **BELGIUM CRUISE** Hans Vanaken and Leandro Trossard both scored a pair of goals as Belgium trounced Belarus with four goals in each half. The home victory left Belgium three points ahead of the Czech Republic, which lost 1-0 at Wales thanks to a late Daniel James goal after an assist by Gareth Bale. Wales and Belarus are a point behind the Czech Republic with a game in hand. **DUTCH ROUT** Gibraltar, ranked 195th in the world,

kept the Netherlands largely at bay before the break but collapsed in the second half on the artificial turf of Victoria Stadium. The visitors added to their 1-0 half-time lead with four goals by the 64th, then got two more closer to the end. Memphis Depay had a double for the Dutch, which trails Turkey by a point after three matches. Turkey missed a chance to earn its third straight win after squandering a 2-0 lead in a 3-3 draw with Latvia. Mitrovic continued his hot streak by scoring a double in Serbia's win at Azerbaijan. He has scored five goals in the first three qualifiers. He also had a double in the opening 3-2 win against Ireland, and found the net once in the 2-2 draw against Portugal.

Barty, Medvedev rise to challenge tough Miami heat



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami, March 31: Aryna Sabalenka clearly labored in the final set of her match. Frances Tiafoe seemed to barely have the energy needed to reach the post-match handshake. Conditions were tough at the Miami Open. The top seeds, however, were up to the challenge. World No.1 Ash Barty of Australia won the final nine points to finish off the seventh-seeded Sabalenka in a three-set women's quarterfinal Tuesday, while men's top-seeded Daniil Medvedev of Russia reached the quarters with a straight-set win over Tiafoe — part of a day where the American men's contingent was pared from four to one, with Sebastian Korda the lone round-of-16 survivor for the U.S.

The 20-year-old Korda stunned fifth-seeded Diego Schwartzman of Argentina 6-3, 4-6, 7-5 for the biggest win of his career to date. And it'll make for an interesting Thursday for the Korda family: he'll be in the Miami quarterfinals that day while his sisters, Jessica and Nelly, will be playing in the first round of the first women's golf major of the year, the ANA Inspiration. Korda, whose father Petr Korda reached No.2 in the world during his stellar career, put on a show to delight the evening crowd. He was broken at 5-4 in the third to give Schwartzman hope, then responded by breaking the Argentine right back and finally serving out the match. By then, it was maybe a bit cooler than the brutal conditions that players endured in the day session — but still tough, which Korda appreciated. Korda will face fourth-seeded Andrey Rublev of Russia in

the quarterfinals. Rublev beat Marin Cilic 6-4, 6-4 on Tuesday night. After some early clouds cleared out and bright sunshine starting pounding down, the mid-afternoon temperature reached the mid-80s Fahrenheit (upper 20s Celsius) at Hard Rock Stadium and the humidity made it feel even hotter. Barty didn't wilt, ousting Sabalenka 6-4, 6-7(5-7), 6-3 for her third three-set win in four matches at the tournament. Medvedev beat Tiafoe 6-4, 6-3, and has gone 10-1 in sets against the American in their past four head-to-head matchups. Barty faced seven break points in the match and saved them all. She'll meet No.5 seed Elina Svitolina in Thursday's semifinals; Svitolina eased past Anastasiya Sevastova 6-3, 6-2 Tuesday night to make the final four in Miami for the first time. Tiafoe was a quarterfinalist at Miami in 2019 and couldn't repeat that feat, nor John Isner. He wasted a match point during a third-set tiebreak and fell to seventh-seeded Roberto Bautista Agut of Spain 6-3, 4-6, 7-6(9-7). Bautista Agut will face Medvedev in the quarterfinals. Medvedev had 11 aces and showed no signs of wear; two days after cramping in the heat during a third-round win. It was Isner's earliest Miami exit since 2017, when he lost in the third round. He won the tournament in 2018 and lost the final in 2019 to Roger Federer in straight sets. Tiafoe needed a medical time-out in the second set of his match, the heat and humidity taking its toll. He was up a break at the time, and the match simply slipped away from there. No.22 seed Taylor Fritz of the US also bowed out, falling to No.32 Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan 6-7(5-7), 6-3, 6-4. Bublik will face No.21 seed Jannik Sinner of Italy in the quarterfinals; Sinner advanced with a 6-3, 6-2 win over Emil Ruusuvuori of Finland. No.26 seed Hubert Hurkacz of Poland pulled off a mild upset, beating No.12 Milos Raonic of Canada 4-6, 6-3, 7-6(7-4). Hurkacz is off to the quarters to face No.2 seed Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece, a 6-2, 7-6(7-2) winner over No.24 Lorenzo Sonego of Italy in the final match Tuesday night.

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SIGH OF RELIEF FOR SHAMI



(From L) Mohammed Siraj, Navdeep Saini, T Natarajan and Shardul Thakur have impressed Mohammed Shami (bottom) in Australia tour



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 31: Senior India pacer Mohammad Shami says the performance of the team's 'net' bowlers in the historic triumph in Australia has shown that the transition will be smooth when the current attack walks into the sunset.

The pace quartet of Shami, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah and Umesh Yadav, arguably India's best ever, has been instrumental in the team's success overseas. However, none of them were available when India breached fortress Gabba to win their second consecutive Test series Down Under.

Someone like a Mohammad Siraj became the leader of the attack in his debut series and injuries meant that net bowlers like Shardul Thakur, T Natarajan and Washington Sundar

got unexpected opportunities which they grabbed with both hands.

"The youngsters will be ready to take over from us when our time (to retire comes). The more they play, the better they will get. I think the transition will be very smooth whenever we are done with the game," Shami, who was ruled out of the series after the Adelaide Test due to a wrist injury, told this agency.

"The team won't suffer even if one big name retires. The bench is ready. Experience is always required and the youngsters will have that in due time. The trend of carrying net bowlers in the bubble environment has helped them massively and given them valuable exposure," he added.

Barring Kartik Tyagi, all the bowlers who were part of India's jumbo squad in Australia got to play in extraordinary circumstances

with Shami, Bumrah, and Umesh getting injured during the series and Ishant not being around.

Asked what impressed him the most about the likes of Siraj and Thakur, Shami said: Whoever



comes in has an open mind, talks frankly and is supremely confident. They are ready to bowl with the new ball or old ball. The way they performed in Australia shows their character.

"Beating Australia in Australia once is a very big achievement, we were able to do it twice, that too with no senior bowlers around. It has shown we can rely on the youngsters."

Shami said the success of the current group boils down to the joy they share in each other's success. Giving his own example, Shami said he was helped massively by Ishant when he made his debut and that taught him to share his wisdom with the youngsters coming into the side.

The highly skilled Shami also shed light on his relationship with Ishant, who played his 100th Test dur-

ing the home series against England.

"What do I say about him. He is the best guy around. Doesn't give you the feeling that he has played double of what you have played. When I had come in, he had already played about 50 games.

"Since day one he never behaved like a senior. He likes mingling and laughing around. His behaviour has taught me to how to treat a youngster.

"When a youngster joins, it is imperative that an established player talks to him about everything under the sun, it lifts his confidence. If you have someone like Ishant around, I don't you think can feel down for a long time."

Talking more about the bond they share, Shami added: "It is a game of confidence and how you can execute plans. We have different skills, Ishant, Jassi and I and we keep reminding each other of our respective skills and persist with them.

"We are pushed by each other when we are tired. This fast bowling group is just wonderful. The last four five years with them have been really special. We have enjoyed each other's success and this is something you should learn from the Indian team. There are no talks behind the back."

While Shami broke his wrists while batting in Australia, he has not had any major fitness issues ever since he changed his regimen post 2014.

With the IPL and a busy international season lined up, Shami is focussing on getting fitter as a cricketer. "Skill stays with you so I just try to better my fitness. The training schedule changed massively post 2014 and the way I have changed my eating habits (no more biryani) are also a big achievement," Shami added.

Kohli on top spot in ODIs, Bumrah slips



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, March 31: India captain Virat Kohli retained his top spot in the ICC rankings for ODI batsmen, while pacer Jasprit Bumrah slipped a place to fourth position in the bowler's list released, Wednesday.

Kohli, who had scores of 56 and 66 in the first and second ODIs against England, has 870 points in his kitty. Bumrah, who was rested from white-ball series against England, slipped a place to fourth among bowlers and has 690 points.

India limited overs vice-captain Rohit Sharma is ranked third, behind Pakistan's Babar Azam, while KL Rahul has moved up from 31st to 27th spot.

All-rounder Hardik Pandya has achieved a career-best 42nd position among batsmen after scores of 35 and 64, and Rishabh Pant has entered the top 100.

Seam bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who took three for 42 in the final match, has gained nine slots to reach the 11th position, which is his best since being 10th in September 2017. Shardul

Thakur's haul of four for 67 in the same match has enabled him to move up to 80th spot from 93rd.

For England, all-rounder Ben Stokes has advanced four places to 24th, scoring 99 off 52 balls in the second ODI and is up to second among all-rounders, while Jonny Bairstow has retained the seventh place after touching a career-high 796 rating points with his player of the match effort of 124 in the same match. Moeen Ali is up nine places to 46th among bowlers.

In the T20 batting list, both Rahul and Kohli have dropped a rung and are now placed fifth and sixth respectively. No other Indian featured in the top 10 among bowlers and all-rounders in the latest T20I rankings.

In the Test rankings, spinner Ravichandran Ashwin retained his second spot behind Australia's Pat Cummins. In the ODIs' all-rounders' list, Ravindra Jadeja is ranked third with Ashwin occupying the fourth spot.

Kohli remained fifth among batsmen while swashbuckling wicketkeeper batsman Pant and Rohit shared the seventh spot.

30 COVID-19 positive in SAI at Patiala, Bangalore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 31: Thirty sportspersons and support staff across disciplines were found to be COVID-19 positive after 741 precautionary tests were conducted at the National Centres of Excellence in Patiala and Bangalore, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said Wednesday.

However, the positive results in both the centres do not include any Tokyo Olympic-bound athlete. India's men's boxing chief coach CA Kuttappa and shot put coach Mohinder Singh Dhillon are among those who have tested positive for the virus in the recent drive at the National Institute of Sports (NIS), a SAI source confirmed to this agency.

Later, SAI also issued a statement which said that 313 and 428 tests were conducted in Patiala and Bangalore respectively. While 26 were found to be positive in Patiala, the Bangalore count stood at four.

"Keeping the safety of Olympic-bound athletes,

coaches and support staff in mind, the SAI conducted precautionary RT-PCR tests at National Centre of Excellence in Patiala and Bangalore. The reports received today indicate that all Olympic-bound athletes at both centres are COVID negative," the SAI statement read.

It is learnt that out of 26 positive cases in Patiala, 16 are sportspersons and rest are support staff. The 16 quarantined sportspersons include 10 boxers and six track and field athletes, the SAI source said.

In Bangalore, a race walking coach is among those who have tested positive for the virus. "The good thing is that all positive cases are not Olympic-bound athletes. The positive athletes have been isolated and the entire campus has been sanitised."

All weightlifters housed at the premier sports institute have returned negative for the virus. The SAI source also confirmed that the positive cases in both the centres will have no bearing on the prepa-

ration of India's Olympic-bound athletes.

"There is no question of training being suspended. The COVID positive cases have been isolated separately inside the colour-coded SAI campuses and they are doing fine with no serious medical issues," the source said.

The NIS Patiala is primarily the base of Olympic-bound boxers, track and field athletes and weightlifters along with sportspersons from some other disciplines.

The boxers who have tested positive include Asian silver-medallist Deepak Kumar and India Open gold-medallist Sanjit. "Some more test results are awaited at this point," another source stated.

The Olympic Games are scheduled to be held in July-August later this year. The athletes gearing up for the big event have begun travelling outside the country for training and competition after spending several months either staying at home or being confined to their hostel rooms.

Ponting backs new skipper Pant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 31: Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting is convinced that leading the side in the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League will make swashbuckling wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant an even better player.

Pant was named the captain of Delhi Capitals for the upcoming IPL after regular skipper Shreyas Iyer was ruled

out of the tournament after he injured his left shoulder during the recently-concluded England's tour of India.

"Unfortunately that Shreyas will miss the tournament, but looking forward to seeing @RishabhPant17 grab his opportunity. It's well deserved for his recent performances and he's coming in with a lot of confidence. I'm convinced captaincy will make him an even better player," Ponting tweeted.

The highly-rated Pant has been in sensational form across formats this year. He played match-winning knocks of 97 and unbeaten 89 in the third and the fourth Test against Australia to help India clinch the Border Gavaskar Trophy Down Under.

He followed that up with a brilliant century against England in the fourth Test in Ahmedabad, forcing the selectors to include him in the white-ball squads.

Roy replaces Marsh for SRH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 31: England opener Jason Roy Wednesday replaced Mitchell Marsh in the Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) squad for the Indian Premier League (IPL) beginning April 9 after the Australian all-rounder made himself unavailable due to personal reasons.

Marsh had got injured in the

first game of the 2020 edition and could not play thereafter. "Sunrisers Hyderabad have signed up England batsman Jason Roy as replacement for Mitchell Marsh, who has made himself unavailable for the entire season owing to personal reasons," read an IPL update.

Marsh, who made his IPL debut in 2010, has played a total of 21 games. His replacement Roy made his IPL debut in 2017

playing for Gujarat Lions and later featured for Delhi Daredevils (now Delhi Capitals) in the 2018 edition.

He has played a total of eight matches and scored 179 runs with one half-century to his name. SRH have acquired Roy at his base price of Rs 2 crore. Roy showed decent form in the recent ODI and T20 series against India but was not able to convert starts.

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