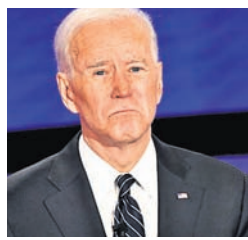




TOUGH DECISION

Actor Kirti Kulhari took to Instagram to announce her separation after 5 years with husband Saahil Sehgal

LEISURE P2



INVESTMENT PLANS

Biden unveils 'once in a generation' spending plan to upgrade America's crumbling infrastructure

INTERNATIONAL P10



WINNING STREAK ENDS

Maria Sakkari ends Naomi Osaka's 23-match unbeaten run in the quarterfinals at the Miami Open tennis tourney

SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Can't say anything about the applicable interest rates on your savings. I'll have to check with the Election Commission

SHORT TAKES

'Phalke' award for Rajinikanth

New Delhi: Superstar Rajinikanth will be bestowed with the Dada Saheb Phalke award, I&B Minister Prakash Javadekar announced Thursday. "India every year gives the 'Dada Saheb Phalke' award to a film personality. This year this selection has been made by a jury comprising Asha Bhonsle, Mohanlal, Biswajit Chatterjee, Shankar Mahadevan and Subhash Ghai. They unanimously recommended the name of Rajinikanth," Javadekar said. P2

Exports achieve healthy growth

New Delhi: India's exports jumped by 58.23 per cent to USD 34 billion, the highest ever reached in a month, in March. Key sectors such as engineering, gems and jewellery and pharmaceuticals recorded healthy growth rate during the month, according to the Commerce Ministry's provisional data. Exports during April-March 2020-21, however, dipped by 7.4 per cent to USD 290.18 billion compared to USD 313.36 billion in 2019-20, the data showed.

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	50029.83	↑ 520.68
NIFTY	14867.40	↑ 176.70
DOLLAR	73.72	↓ ₹0.42
EURO	86.23	↓ ₹0.47
GOLD	₹44,865	↑ ₹228
SILVER	₹64,564	↑ ₹750

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	39.8°C	39.2°C
TEMP MIN	25.5°C	23.5°C
Humidity	71%	85%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
		Forecast: Heat wave

INDIA, ODISHA REGISTER YEAR'S HIGHEST DAILY RISE

Steep hike in Covid cases

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, April 1: Even as COVID-19 vaccination began Thursday for people above 45 years of age, both India and Odisha registered their steepest hike of new cases in 2021. While the entire country registered a spike of 72,330 new COVID-19 cases, the figure in Odisha rose to 394. The last time the country reported more than 72,000 infections in a day was October 11, 2020.

An Odisha Health Department official in Bhubaneswar said that 231 of the new cases were in quarantine while the remaining 163 were local contacts. Khurda district with 70 patients topped the list of new infections. It was followed by Kalhandi (43 fresh infections), Nuapada (40), Bargarh (34) and Cuttack (27).

Countrywide the new infections, took India's total COVID-19 tally to 1,22,21,665 the Union Health Ministry said. India also reported 459 new fatalities, the highest in a day in 2021.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease in India surged to 1,14,74,683. The case fatality rate (CFR) has further dropped to 1.33 per cent, the Union Health Ministry data stated.

According to the ICMR, 24,47,98,621 samples have been tested up to March 31 with 11,25,681 samples being tested



SAFETY MEASURE: A person takes the COVID-19 vaccine jab in Bhubaneswar

TARGET ACHIEVED

Bhubaneswar: Odisha government's Health and Family Welfare Department said Thursday that it has been able to achieve its target of 2 lakh vaccinations per day. Vaccination of people in the age category of 45-plus began in the state Thursday like other places in India. According to the daily update, an official of the Odisha government said that 2,03,162 persons were vaccinated Thursday. The vaccination drive was conducted in 1,342 centres. The drive also registered three cases of adverse reactions from the people who got vaccinated Thursday against the pandemic.

Wednesday.

In Odisha, the death toll stood at 1,921 as no fresh fatality due to the infection has been reported since Tuesday Odisha now has 2,246 active cases, and 3,37,091 patients have recovered from the disease.

Meanwhile, COVID-19 vaccination for all people aged 45 years and above commenced Thursday. The vaccination began simultaneously in Odisha also. More than 6.5 crore vaccine doses have been administered across India so far to frontline workers, healthcare professionals, those above 60 and for people aged above 45 with specified comorbidities. The Centre also said that vaccination will take place on all days in April including gazetted holidays.

₹693 crore Kalia money transferred to 34 lakh farmers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: Celebrating Utkal Divas and the new financial year, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik transferred Thursday ₹693.94 crore to the bank accounts of over 34 lakh farmers under the 'Kalia' scheme.

Greeting the farmers on Odisha Statehood Day, Naveen said, "It is heartening to note that the Kalia scheme is having an impact in the lives of 37 lakh farmers as well as 17 lakh poor landless persons. It is the only scheme in the entire country which also helps the landless poor along with farmers."

The CM added, "It is the sacrifices and self-respect of the farmers that have enhanced the self-esteem of Odisha today. Farmers in Odisha are supplying food to other states. They have made Odisha proud. It is because of them the state has received the 'Krishi Karman Award'."

Patnaik further said that schemes such as loans with zero per cent interest and new agriculture policy have encouraged farmers. He reiterated that the state will continue its fight to implement MS Swaminathan Committee recommendations. "The MSP hike is not anyone's charity, but is a right of the farmers. We are with the farmers always," asserted Patnaik.

The CM said farmers are the force behind the economic development of Odisha. He reiterated that he has always stood with the farmers.

1800 266 266 1 (tollfree)

Some relief from heatwave expected

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: Despite marginal decrease in temperatures in some parts of Odisha, the heatwave continued elsewhere. However, people in the state capital were relieved to see the temperature go down to 39.8°C from the high of 44.2°C which was recorded Wednesday. IMD officials however said that temperatures in this city may cross the 40°C mark again Friday.

Fifteen places in Odisha reported temperatures of over 40°C and above Thursday. Angul and Talcher recorded the highest temperature of 42.7°C each while Baripada, Titlagarh and Paralakhemundi scorched at 42.2°C.

Other places where temperatures of over 40°C were reported are Malkangiri and Boudh (42 degrees), Nayagarh (41.7), Bhawanipatna (41.6), Sundargarh (41.5), Sambalpur (41.4), Sonepur (40.8), Hirakud (40.7), Jharsuguda (40.6) Jharsuguda and Phulbani (40.0).

The IMD however, said that relief is on the cards as thunderstorms are expected Friday in some districts of Odisha. It informed that the maximum temperatures are likely to fall by 3-4 degrees Celsius from April 2 at a number of places.

Thunderstorms with lightning are likely to occur in Gajapati, Ganjam, Nayagarh, Khurda, Cuttack and Jagatsinghpur districts.

HUGE FAUX PAS OVER INTEREST RATE CUTS

Govt rectifies 'oversight'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Thursday the government will rollback the steep interest rate cut on small saving schemes such as Public Provident Fund (PPF) and National Savings Certificate (NSC). She said it was an 'oversight', a move being seen as an attempt by the BJP to contain the fallout of a decision hitting the common man in the ongoing elections in West Bengal, Assam and three other states.

Wednesday's decision to cut interest rate by up to 1.1 per cent across various small savings schemes, including the NSC and PPF came a day before polling in West Bengal and Assam. The decision to rollback citing 'oversight' was taken hours after announcing the steep cuts.

"Interest rates of small savings schemes of government of India (GoI) shall continue to be at the rates which existed in the last quarter of 2020-2021, i.e. rates that prevailed as of March 2021. Orders issued by oversight shall be withdrawn," Sitharaman said in an early morning tweet Thursday.

Interest rate on PPF was reduced by 0.7 per cent to 6.4 per cent while NSC was to earn 0.9 per cent less at 5.9 per cent. The highest cut of 1.1 per cent was effected in the one-year term deposit. The new rate was brought down to 4.4 per cent as compared to 5.5 per cent.

However, once restored, PPF and NSC will carry an annual interest rate of 7.1 per



PPF and NSC will maintain the annual interest rate of 7.1% and 6.8% respectively

Fearing backlash in Assembly polls decision to withdraw rate cuts taken

cent and 6.8 per cent, respectively. Accordingly, the interest rate for the five-year senior citizens savings scheme would be retained at 7.4 per cent.

The Congress meanwhile hit out Sitharaman after she ordered withdrawal of the interest rate slashing order. It asked whether the U-turn was an 'oversight' or an 'election-driven hindsight'.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged that the small saving rates would be reduced soon after elections.

"There was already loot on petrol and diesel. After the elections end, the small saving rates will be reduced and there will be loot on the savings of the middle-class. This government is of jumbas (rhetoric) and the loot of common people," Rahul said in a tweet.

Hunter becomes the 'hunted'

MORE THAN 80% POLLING IN NANDIGRAM ASSEMBLY SEAT

AGENCIES

Nandigram (West Bengal), April 1: When was the last time one heard a chief minister raising allegations of rigging against the opposition? When was the last time when a chief minister said that legal recourse will have to be taken against the Union Home Ministry and Election Commission (EC)?

Well, West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supreme Mamata Banerjee made these allegations and many more as battleground Nandigram became the cynosure of all eyes in the second phase of Assembly polls in West Bengal. There were a number of skirmishes



An injured TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee takes a tour of Nandigram constituency, Thursday

and clashes in some other constituencies Thursday, but it was the Mamata versus former protégé Suvendu Adhikari contest that attracted national limelight.

Both Adhikari and Banerjee

appeared confident of winning, but while the former remained cool, Banerjee rattled off one allegation after the other. It was as if she was the underdog and not Adhikari. The CM alleged that the central

forces deployed in her constituency were helping the BJP under instructions of Union Home Minister Amit Shah. She also alleged that the EC was following the instructions of Shah and not acting on complaints of alleged irregularities lodged by her party. "We have so far filed 63 complaints, but no action has been taken," Banerjee told mediapersons in the afternoon. She added, she was 'worried about the future of democracy'.

On the other hand, Adhikari's car was attacked, and stones were pelted while he was visiting booths. "I am used to such protests by TMC goons. Let them do whatever they want till the results are out May 2," Adhikari told reporters. MORE ON P9

Jyothy Labs

Ordinary blues stain white clothes

Only Ujala supreme gives ultimate whiteness

For the last four decades, the only name synonymous with dazzling, spotless whites is Ujala Supreme – the whiteness expert. It instantly dissolves in water and its 'Ultra Radiance Molecules' penetrate the fabric fibres to give spotless, uniform and ultimate whiteness.

Asli Safedi, Ujala Safedi.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
You are a touchy one. People will rub you the wrong way today. But remember that getting needlessly annoyed will bring nothing but more complications. Contemplate in seclusion about the root cause of the problem. Ganesh's hint? It is closer than you imagine.

TAURUS
Today, says Ganesh, you will be likely to encounter someone who is bent upon provoking and getting on your nerves. You are urged not to retaliate and do things unbecoming of your good nature. Keep calm and unruffled.

GEMINI
Bosses will assign new responsibilities to you, predicts Ganesh. Your daytime distress, however, will transform into jubilation by the end of the day's work, as you will be able to produce brilliant results. Ganesh advises you to delay bidding for tenders by a few days.

CANCER
You may be in one of your more frivolous moods today, foresees Ganesh. Gossip, fun, laughter and some harmless flirting shall make your day interesting, yet these are not the pastimes you usually enjoy.

LEO
You will be busy on the work front today. It is a good day for those who are self-employed. Housewives will remain extremely busy with household matters. You will be able to work according to your desire though, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Close members of your family and friends will take up most of your time today. Students will have to pay more attention to studies as exams are upcoming, and they will have to learn to balance study and free time. Ganesh says today is a good time to buy property.

LIBRA
Ever heard of the phrase, "To stick one's foot in one's mouth"? Well, today you might be doing exactly the same, albeit unwittingly. You are likely to invite trouble, especially if some of those heated discussions get out of hand. A legal dispute does not seem unlikely.

SCORPIO
Your rung in the social ladder just went higher today. But be wary of green-eyed monsters and ill words. Fight tooth and nail - if necessary - to protect your reputation, says Ganesh. But also learn to find your enemies' Achilles' heel and target it ferociously.

SAGITTARIUS
You are like a new hope for your company and you are assigned with many challenging projects, today. And your hard work and efforts are appreciated when you handle the projects successfully. If you are fortunate enough, you may also gain incentives very soon, predicts Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
Duping the wisest with your extraordinary power of convincing may have been your forte, but you may have to prove yourself all over again, for Ganesh says you will be tested today. This apart, you are likely to find answers to questions lingering in your subconscious mind for long.

AQUARIUS
For a moment, it seems that you're swamped with problems. But you are brave enough to deal with any ugly issue that crops up suddenly. Ganesh hints at a romantic evening, which may just be time together in a jacuzzi, or simply preparing a meal together. Pure ecstasy!

PISCES
All the dieting that you have been undergoing will finally begin to show results, with compliments galore coming your way from your friends. Your energy and enthusiasm levels are likely to be high. A bright and beautiful day waits, says Ganesh.

Top celebs congratulate Rajinikanth on Phalke honour

Mumbai: Top film celebrities took to social media Thursday to congratulate superstar Rajinikanth, who will be honoured with the 51st Dadasaheb Phalke Award.

Taking to Twitter, **Anil Kapoor** posted: "Congratulations @rajinikanth on the prestigious honour! You are a legend and an icon and an inspiration to us all!" **Kangana Ranaut** shared: "Congratulations to Shri @rajinikanth ji."

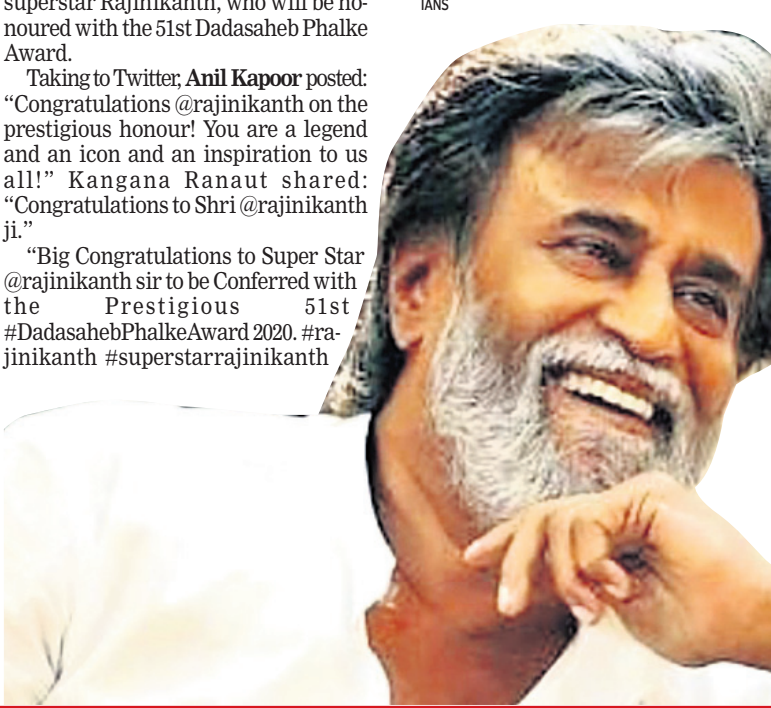
"Big Congratulations to Super Star @rajinikanth sir to be Conferred with the Prestigious 51st #DadasahebPhalkeAward 2020. #rajinikanth #superstarrajinikanth

#PrideOfIndia," shared director **Madhur Bhandarkar**.

Singer **Adnan Sami** tweeted: "Heartiest Congratulations to @rajinikanth ji for receiving the prestigious #DadasahebPhalkeAward. Truly well deserved.!"

Producer **Boney Kapoor** shared: "Congratulations @Rajinikanth Garu on being honoured with prestigious #DadasahebPhalkeAward for 2019. You truly deserved it."

"Great news .. u deserved .. congratulations @rajinikanth," tweeted director **Anil Sharma**.



Sonakshi cautions fans against complacency

Mumbai: Sonakshi Sinha Thursday took to social media and urged everyone to wear masks as Covid cases crossed 72,000 in a day.

The actress posted a picture on Instagram, where she is seen taking an elevator selfie, wearing an all-black ensemble and a mask.

"It's April. But don't be a fool. Wear your mask," Sonakshi captioned the image.

Sonakshi, who is known for her roles in the *Dabangg* series, *Lootera*, *Akira* and *Mission Mangal*, is gearing up for her next release, *Bhuj: The Pride Of India*.

Besides Sonakshi, the film will also feature Ajay Devgn, Sanjay Dutt, Sharad Kelkar, Ammy Virk, Pranitha Subhash and Nora Fatehi. The story is set against the backdrop of the Indo-Pak war of 1971.

She recently announced her next project *Bulbul Tarang*, which will have an OTT release. The film has been directed by Shree Narayan Singh and is said to be inspired by a true story. The film also features Raj Babbar and Tahir Raj Bhasin.



Natyadhara restarts with Odia play Nistabdha Sahanai



A scene from the play *Nistabdha Sahanai* staged at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Thursday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: After a gap of nearly one year Natyadhara resumed here at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Thursday. It is a three-day drama programme featuring select plays by the theatre troupes from across the state

which is organised every month by the Department of Odia Language, Literature and Culture in collaboration with Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi (OSNA) and Odisha Natya Sangh (ONS).

However, the event was postponed for about a year after a spike

in Covid-19 cases in the state.

Expressions, a city-based theatre troupe, presented the play *Nistabdha Sahanai* on the first day of the programme.

Written by Bhaskar Chandra Mahapatra, the play was directed by Debanand Nayak (Soni).

The main protagonist of the play is Sana, a Dalit shehnai player who lost his profession. Despite losing his livelihood, he is one of the most sought after persons in his village because he is a good human being. He always comes forward for a social cause and loves to sacrifice for others. Moreover, he wants to fight for justice and for those who are at the bottom rung of the ladder in an unequal society. The rebel in Sana lands him in trouble and he finds no one at his side. But he continues to fight and returns to his profession of playing shehnai.

It's a metaphorical play with Sana representing a poor common man of the society, said the play director, adding, the tunes of shehnai is the voice of the Dalits which will never be suppressed.

Actors Jaga, Biswa, Sharda, Jasmine, Soumyaranjan, Surya, Akash, Ashis and Bapi performed on the stage while OSNA Secretary Prabodh Kumar Rath, ONS president Haren Sahoo, secretary LB Roy and theatre director Abhinna Routray were the guests on the occasion.

Kirti parts ways with hubby

Mumbai: Actress Kirti Kulhari Thursday took to Instagram to announce her separation with husband Saahil Sehgal.

In a note she put out, Kirti wrote that they were parting ways "not on paper, but in life".

"A simple note to let everyone know that my husband Saahil and I have decided to separate. Not on papers, but in life. A decision that's probably harder than the decision of "being with somebody", because coming together is celebrated by everyone you love and care about," she wrote. She added: "And the decision of "not being with somebody" brings along pain and hurt to the same people. It's not easy. Guess it's not meant to be easy but IT IS WHAT IT IS."

The couple was together for a period of four years. Her contemporaries posted supportive messages on her post.



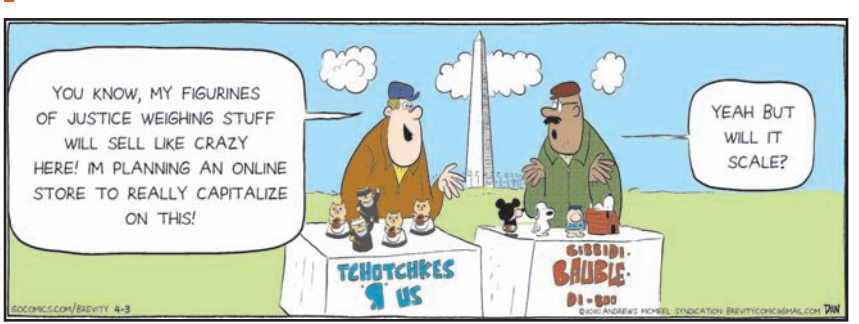
PEANUTS



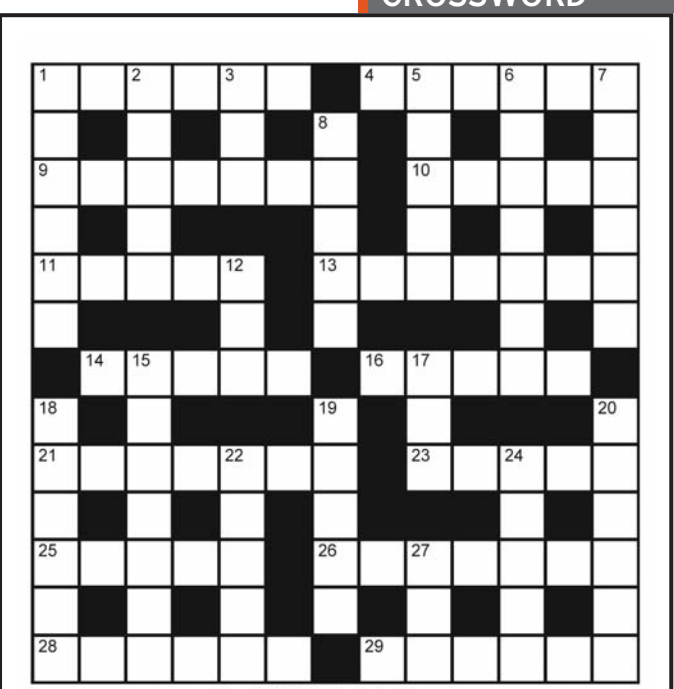
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Feeling of despair
 - 4 Edible clam
 - 9 Stone Age tool
 - 10 Bout of indulgence
 - 11 Cultural values
 - 13 Writers
 - 14 Entertain
 - 16 Tropical vine
 - 21 Snare drum
 - 23 Marina sight
 - 25 Geneva's river
 - 26 Rust
 - 28 Ancient Egyptian statue
 - 29 Chewy candy
 - 8 Sand bar
 - 12 Family girl
 - 15 Extinct elephant
 - 17 Old World vine
 - 18 Rubbernecks
 - 19 Robin Hood's projectile
 - 20 Flammable alkene
 - 22 Classic theatre
 - 24 Drop-off spot?
 - 27 Chapel vow (1,2)
- Down**
- 1 Beast of burden
 - 2 Upside-down grazer
 - 3 French pal
 - 5 Troubled
 - 6 Fishing gig
 - 7 Grunge

SUDOKU

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

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

F	R	E	I	G	H	T	M	A	P			
B	A	R	O	M	E	T	E	R				
R	S	E	A	A								
E	T	A	B	B	L	E	G	U	M			
B	O	O	O	B								
S	T	O	C	K	E	X	C	H	A	N	G	E
U	L	I										
B	R	I	C	A	B	R	A	C	A	I	L	
U	S	F		K								
R	A	H		F								
B	E	J		H								
S	A	X		O								

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Storehouse of Jain sculptures

The Jain Heritage Museum at Pratapanagari has several sculptures recovered from the locality

PRIYARANJAN SWAIN, OP

Jainism was once a popular religion in ancient Kalinga or modern-day Odisha. It is believed that Parsvanath, the 23rd Tirthankar (religious leader) of Jainism and Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankar, had preached at several places in Kalinga.

Many historians are of the view that King Kharavela, one of the powerful rulers of Kalinga, had also patronised Jainism during his reign around 1st century BC. Over the years, many Jain heritage sites have been identified in several districts of Odisha, including in Khurda, Cuttack, Puri, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Jajpur and Kendrapara. The sculptures and inscriptions of Khandagiri-Udayagiri hills in Bhubaneswar also vindicate Odisha's link with Jainism.

Even, a Jain heritage museum has been set up at Pratapanagari near Cuttack to preserve ancient Jain



Sculptures at the museum

sculptures recovered from the locality. According to villagers, at least seven Jain sculptures were found during the digging of Kakatpur branch canal in the 1970s.

Subsequently, another nine sculptures related to Jainism were re-

covered from the agricultural fields in the locality. Initially, all these sculptures were placed under a banyan tree near Goddess Dhakulei temple, located close to Kuakhai river. Later, the sculptures were taken to a few community halls of the village, locals said.

"Somehow, members of the Jain community came to know about the sculptures. The Jains urged the villagers to hand over the figures to them. However, the locals refused to part with the ancient figures. The tussle over the sculptures led to the establishment of a Jain heritage museum at Pratapanagari," narrated several villagers including Mihir Kumar Rout.

The museum was set up with allocation from both the Centre and

the state government. Members of the Jain community in Cuttack have been looking after the museum since its inauguration in 2005, sources said.

The museum has 12 sculptures of Rishabhanatha, the 1st among the 24 Jain Tirthankaras, Parsvanatha, Mahavira, Ambika and Gomeda. Most of these sculptures date back to 9th and 10th century AD.

"Perhaps, there was a Jain temple on the bank of Kuakhai river. The temple might have been demolished by natural calamities or attack from hostile forces. The sculptures or idols found from the locality had been carved from Muguni pathara (black stone)," said retired teacher Basudeb Rout.

It is learnt that Jain people from across Odisha and other states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bengal and Bihar often visit the museum to have a look at the ancient sculptures. "We used to get around 10-15 visitors daily. The footfall has come down drastically due to the Covid-19 pandemic," said Sridhar Biswal who has been engaged to look after the museum.

Despite being the storehouse of several Jain sculptures, the museum has been deprived of proper maintenance and infrastructure. "The museum is yet to have drinking water, toilet and other facilities for the visitors. The authorities concerned should take appropriate steps to attract more visitors to the museum," said a shopkeeper of the locality.



The Jain Heritage Museum

OP PHOTOS

PEACE & PROGRESS NEW IDENTITIES OF ODISHA: CM

85TH ANNIVERSARY OF STATEHOOD

PNN/ AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 1: The 85th anniversary of formation of Odisha was celebrated across the state as President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik greeted people on the occasion.

Patnaik said "peace and progress are the new identities" of Odisha now as the state has achieved new feats in different sectors. "Odisha has made significant progress in various fields. We need to turn the development process into a mass movement," the CM said. During his visit to Cuttack on the occasion, Patnaik unveiled two statues of Mahatma Gandhi and Utkalmani Gopabandhu Dash. Stating that the state will celebrate the 100th an-



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik unveils a sculpture to commemorate the centenary of Gandhiji's first visit to Odisha, at a park inaugurated in Cuttack

niversary of Odisha's statehood in 2036, Naveen said, "It should be our objective to build Odisha as a model and developed state in India as well as in the world." The CM called upon all to march ahead with unity.

He paid tributes to the legends and reformers like Utkala Gaurav Madhusudan Das, Maharaja Ramachandra Bhanjdeo, Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati, Raja Baikunthanath Dey, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Gangadhar Meher and Gourishankar Ray.

Kovind wished for the progress of the state on the occasion of Utkal Divas. "Congratulations to all, especially the people of Odisha on Utkal Day. The country is proud of the unique cultural heritage, natural beauty, architecture, handicrafts, and dance of this land, which convey the eternal message of love and peace to humanity," he said. In his message, Modi tweeted, "Greetings on the occasion of Utkala Dibasa. The people of Odisha have contributed immensely to India's progress. May the people of the state be blessed with happiness and good health."



The Chief Minister unveils a statue of Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das at the Cantonment Road in the Silver City

OP PHOTOS

Pre-convocation ceremony held at Utkal University

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: Utkal University Thursday organised a pre-convocation awarding ceremony for the academic session 2018-19. Sudhakar Panda, Director, National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER) graced the occasion as the chief guest and awarded the degrees.

The 50th convocation ceremony of Utkal University will be organised April 3 at the new convocation hall of the varsity. Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu will grace the event.

Due to the pandemic situation, the convocation ceremony could not be held last year. Hence, a pre-convocation ceremony was decided to be held to distribute awards for the pass-out students of 2019. A total of 127 PhD degrees, two DLitt, and 100 gold medals were given away at the function. University Vice Chancellor

Sabita Acharya said, "Utkal University was formed seven years after the formation of Odisha. Currently, in her 78th year, Utkal has always aimed at building morally and socially responsible citizens for the country."

Acharya also spoke about the various milestones achieved by the university including securing Rs 100 crore funding through RUSA, various MoUs signed with many international universities through the International Office. On the research scenario, she spoke about the 11 centres of excellence established under RUSA and World Bank's OHEPEE project. Last year, Utkal had secured the 96th rank and found a spot in the top 100 universities of the country in the NIRF ranking system. "We are aiming to place Utkal in the top 30 universities of the country and working tirelessly towards it," said Acharya.

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State sees record OGST collection in March

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: The state has recorded collection of ₹954.62 crore Odisha GST (OGST) in the month of March of FY 2020-21 – the highest ever monthly collection since the implementation of GST (July 1, 2017), official sources in Finance department said, Thursday.

The previous highest OGST collection stood at ₹927.60 crore during April 2019. The growth rate of OGST in March this year was 21.55 per cent with collection of ₹954.62 crore against ₹785.35 crore during March 2020.

The gross GST collection (CGST, IGST, SGST & Cess) has registered a growth rate of 25 per cent during last month with collection of ₹3285.29 crore, against ₹2641.95 crore collected in March last year. This is the highest growth rate in gross GST collection amongst the major states in the country during the month, the sources said.

The gross GST growth rate of Odisha was up by 20 per cent in December 2020, 25 per cent in January 2021 and 20 per cent February 2021 respectively as compared to the corresponding period of previous year.

As regards annual growth rate of gross GST, the state collected ₹29,852 crore in 2020-21 against ₹29,687 crore collected in the previous year. Despite the massive setback due



REVENUE BUOYANCY

THE GROWTH RATE OF OGST IN MARCH THIS YEAR WAS 21.55% WITH COLLECTION OF ₹954.62 CRORE AGAINST ₹785.35 CRORE DURING MARCH 2020

THE GROSS GST COLLECTION (CGST, IGST, SGST & CESS) HAS REGISTERED A GROWTH RATE OF 25% DURING LAST MONTH WITH COLLECTION OF ₹3285.29 CRORE, AGAINST ₹2641.95 CRORE COLLECTED IN MARCH LAST YEAR

TOTAL VAT COLLECTION (PETROL AND LIQUOR) IN MARCH WAS ₹1518.61 CRORE, WHICH WAS ALSO THE HIGHEST DURING THE CURRENT FISCAL REGISTERING A GROWTH RATE OF 36.04%

Centre releases ₹2,083Cr to Odisha

NEW DELHI: Union Ministry of Finance has released ₹2, 083 crore as additional devolution to Odisha for financial year (FY) 2020-21 owing to the revenue buoyancy seen in Q4 of FY 2020-21. With this, the total devolution to Odisha for FY 2020-21 stands at ₹27, 543 crore.

According to the ministry, a total of ₹45,000 crore has been released as additional devolution

to states in FY 2020-21, an 8.2 per cent rise over revised estimate (RE) 2020-21. As per RE 2020-21, ₹5, 49, 959 crore, 41 per cent of the shareable pool of taxes and duties, was estimated to be released to the states.

However, the Ministry of Finance has devolved ₹5, 94, 996 crore based on the initial estimates of the shareable pool that would be collected in FY 2020-21.

₹429.85 crore with gross annual collection of ₹8292.15 crore against ₹8722.00 crore during FY 2019-20. Collection of arrears tax (pre-GST period) has also grown by almost 50 per cent with a collection of ₹189 crore this year, they said.

Total VAT collection (petrol and liquor) in March was ₹1518.61 crore, which was also the highest during the current fiscal registering a growth rate of 36.04 per cent.

Out of this, collection from petroleum products registered a growth of 41.85 per cent with collection of ₹1225.93 crore in March 2021 against ₹864.26 crore in March last year. VAT from liquor also registered a growth of 16.13 per cent with collection of ₹292.62 crore in March 2021 against ₹252.01 crore in the corresponding period of previous fiscal.

to Covid, the gross GST collection has recorded a growth rate of 0.56 per cent, the source said.

Moreover, during the first quarter of 2020-21, the GST collection

stood at ₹761.19 crore due to Covid-19 which was -32.79 per cent of the 1st quarter of 2019-20.

The overall loss of OGST during FY 20-21 has come down to



DGP Abhay takes guard of honour on the occasion of 86th Odisha Police Formation Day in Bhubaneswar, Thursday OP PHOTO

DGP lauds cops for enforcing nCoV norms

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: The Director General of Police (DGP), Abhay Thursday applauded the personnel of Odisha Police for their due dedication while performing duty in various fields like law and order during Covid-19 induced lockdown and anti-Naxal operations last year.

Speaking on the occasion of 86th Odisha Police Formation Day, DGP stated that the cops across the state performed well in enforcing Covid-19 guidelines and the humanitarian works during pandemic induced lockdown in 2020.

He also commended the force for the successful operations against

Abhay also commended the force for the successful operations against the Left Wing Extremists in Malkangiri and other parts of the state during the last year

the Left Wing Extremists in Malkangiri and other parts of the state during the last year. The DGP expressed satisfaction over the performance of the state police officials to rein in rampant drug trafficking specially seizure of brown sugar and ganja.

The top cop praised the efforts of state police for tracing of missing children in last three months. The police force also recently launched application for faster passport verification. He also highlighted the launching of combined help line number '112' as a major success for the state police.

The force was strengthened through the creation of more than 900 posts in over 200 police stations and outposts across the state in 2020.

The DGP also received salute in a ceremonial parade on the occasion and distributed various trophies and cash awards to selected police officials for their exemplary services during 2020-21.

Bomb hurled in City; 2 injured

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: Unknown miscreants hurled a bomb at members of their rival faction in Azad Nagar area of Sundarpada under Air Field police limits here Thursday evening.

One youth sustained severe injuries while another escaped with bruises. According to sources, two factions of a minority community have been at loggerheads over the election of president of the village committee for the past couple of days.

The simmering animosity between both groups led to the attack as some members of one group hurled a bomb at the youths and later attacked them with sharp weapons. The victims have also lodged a complaint with the Airfield police limits in this regard. One platoon of police force has been deployed in the area.

19,416 applied for 1,297 liquor shops

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: The state government has received 19,416 applications till Thursday to lease out 1,297 shops through lottery system.

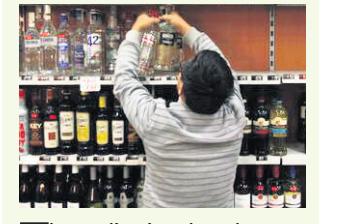
Most of the existing India Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) OFF shops as well as ENA based country liquor shops have been continuing for over 15-20 years on the basis of annual renewal. Therefore, the state government has recently decided to settle all the existing liquor shops through fresh lottery system. A total of 1,156 IMFL OFF shops and 240 country liquor (CL) shops have been out for lottery.

Accordingly, all the Collectors have floated advertisements for inviting applications for settlement of shops. The applications have been invited online and the lottery will be conducted by Collectors in presence of applicants.

The last date for submitting application for many districts was over while the last day for a few more districts is April 3. As many as 27 excise districts out of 31 have received applications in all the IMFL OFF shops. Remaining 24 shops, most of which are in Cuttack district are expected to receive applications by the last date, an official of Excise department said.

Out of a total of 19,416 applications, 18,530 have been received for

EXCISE LOTTERY



The applications have been invited online and the lottery will be conducted by Collectors in presence of applicants

The lottery in all the 31 excise districts will be over by April 9 and the licences will be issued by April 15

1,132 IMFL OFF shops. Similarly, 886 applications have been received against 165 CL shops. The remaining shops are expected to receive applications by the last date.

The lottery in all the 31 excise districts will be over by April 9 and all the licences to the fresh allottees will be issued by April 15, he said.

The official further said that the settlement of shops through fresh lottery is being done in a transparent manner and is expected to break the cartel which has developed over a period of time as majority of these shops are now being controlled directly or indirectly by a small number of players.

Kharif paddy procurement grows 18%

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: The state government Thursday said that it has achieved 18 per cent growth in paddy procurement during the Kharif season till March 31 as against its corresponding period last year.

The government claimed that a total of 62.93 lakh metric tonne paddy has been procured from the registered farmers in this Kharif season. This was against the procurement of 53.31 lakh tonne paddy till March last year.

According to government data,

The govt claimed that 62.93 lakh metric tonne paddy has been procured from the farmers in this Kharif season

11.92 lakh farmers participated in the government procurement system where the minimum support price (MSP) for the farmers is assured. Around 2 lakh more farmers sold their paddy this year. Last year, a total of 9, 56, 686 farmers had registered and sold their produce.

The government said that ₹11,756 crore was also disbursed to the farmers as MSP. The maximum procurement was done in Bargarh where around 1, 17, 843 farmers participated in the process and sold a total of 7225163.72 quintals of paddy. Kandhamal recorded the lowest procurement where a total of 2,434 farmers sold their paddy and an amount of 105279.89 quintals of the farm produce were procured.

This comes after the opposition parties created ruckus in the Assembly on the issue of irregularities in paddy procurement.

WASSUP TODAY

BHUBANESWAR

- Annual meeting of Prayas Foundation, Lohia Academy, Unit-9, 9.30 am
- Convention of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangha, Prabhuje English Medium School, VSS Nagar, 10.30 am
- Film Fest by Ayina, Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre, Jaydev Vihar, 10.30 am
- Meeting of Lulu Mahapatra Smruti Committee, Rotary Club, Chitrakoot Mutt, Unit-9, 12.30 pm
- Birth anniversary of writer Nishamani Mishra, Buddha Mandir, Unit-9, 6 pm

BALIANATA

- Devotional programme to mark Panchabati Dola Melana, Bateswar Mahadev temple, 3 pm

NIMAPARA

- Distribution of toolkits among the differently-abled people, Nimapara Town Hall, 2 pm

PURI

- Release of a book on the heritage and culture of Srikhetra, Youth Hostel conference hall, 10.30 am

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DRIEMS organises training prog



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: DRIEMS Autonomous Engineering College organised an AICTE-sponsored training programme on 'Size effect of Nanomaterials in Science and Technology' (SENSAT-2021).

In the programme, many educationists, research scholars, faculty & students from different colleges and universities participated in the programme and shared the latest development on nanomaterials and its application in Science & Technology.

Col B Venkat, Director (FDC), AICTE, New Delhi graced the valedictory session as chief guest and focused on quality and value based education system.

Cash, jewellery stolen from temple in Puri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Puri, April 1: Unidentified miscreants broke into a centuries-old shrine here and fled with valuables and cash, a police officer said Thursday.

The burglars cut through the padlock at the main gate of Mausi Maa temple Wednesday night and entered the sanctum sanctorum, where they managed to open the iron chest that had jewellery and saris.

The miscreants decamped with the valuables as well as the money from the donation box, the officer said, adding that authorities at the shrine are yet to give an estimate of the loss incurred due to the theft.

Local residents in the Pilgrim town have blamed poor security measures for the incident.

"The burglars have looted around

₹3,000 in cash. We have detained some suspects and they are being interrogated," Puri SP Kanwar Vishal Singh said.

The chief priest of the temple, Biswanath Mishra, however, said that he had taken home the major chunk of jewellery with him, and the thieves could lay their hands only on semi-precious ornaments.

Expressing deep concern over the theft at Mausi Maa temple located barely 500 metres from the 12th century Srimandir, Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb said the district administration must take necessary steps to nab the culprits at the earliest.

"The administration should work out a comprehensive and effective strategy to ensure safety and security of places of worship in the pilgrim town," he said in a statement.

BMC ROLLS OUT 'WHEEL OF KINDNESS' FOR THE NEEDY

The purpose of the initiative is to collect old clothes that can still be used and make those available to the needy for free

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Thursday, launched 'Wheel of Kindness' bus that will provide used clothes to the needy and poor especially those in slum areas.

The program, a one-of-its-kind initiative, was inaugurated by Director of Municipal Administration of the Odisha, Sangramjit Nayak, along with BMC Commissioner, Prem Chandra Chaudhary on Utkal Divas. A voluntary outfit has been given the task of collecting at least 17,500 pieces of clothes every month.

"The purpose behind this initiative is to collect old/used clothes

that can still be used and make those available to the needy free of cost. Besides, it will encourage people not to discard their wearable old clothes. Instead they can give them to us which would reach the needy and homeless people living in the city," the BMC Commissioner said.

The BMC is stated to spend about ₹1.60 lakh every month as part of the running and maintenance cost of the initiative.

A bus has been designed and decorated for display and distribution of clothes at selected points of the city. About 2 to 4 people will be engaged in the vehicle to collect old clothes and distribute them among the needy. A register will be maintained to keep the record of

beneficiaries.

Moreover, the civic authority has also set up a facility called 'The Kindness Hub', a Central Washing, Packaging and Inventory Management Centre (CWPIMC) in Madhusudan Nagar. The hub will collect clothes from people of all ages apart from bed sheets, towels, blankets and other such necessities.

The clothes collected from the donors will be washed, sorted and packed for their distribution at CWPIMC. There are two washing rooms, three rooms for display and store, one room each for office and cloth collection. Around 10 people will be deployed daily to manage the entire activities starting from collection to distribution.

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TALES ABOUT ODISHA 'HAATS'

RASHMI REKHA DAS, OP

Haats are traditional open-air markets that serve as a trading space for locals all across India. Even though online shopping has become the order of the day, the charm of 'haats' or markets still exist. It is not just that people go the 'haats' for shopping, it is also an opportunity for them to mix socially. Like many other places in

a bit less commercial. Haats have been a part of rural India since centuries. There are weekly, bi-weekly and some places even host monthly 'haats'. Before 'haats' came into being, the barter system was the most popular system of procuring goods.

HISTORY

The barter system existed all the way back

weapons and spices. Salt was the most popular item which used to be exchanged the most. When money was invented, bartering did not end, it become more organised. Due to lack of money, bartering became popular in the 1900s during the 'Great Depression'.

EXPERT SPEAK

History teacher Urmila Parida has interesting information to offer regarding 'haat' and 'barter'. "There is no such evidence which can prove that 'haat' as a system existed since a particular period. However, there are old records that prove that the barter system existed. This system has been used for centuries and long before currency was invented. Bartering still exists among people in remote areas that have no access to cash. In these places, bartering is a necessary means for survival. However, during excavations, archeologists have found many commercial sites. Aborigines used to depend on these sites for their livelihood. Thus we can say that 'haat' system was very much present since civilisation came into existence," said Parida.

"The Mandi system was there 100 years back which later took the form of haat. Before mandis came into existence, the barter system was the sole means of trading," Parida added.

However, a 'haat' is not always meant for food and edible commodities. There are various forms of 'haats' that deal with other items also and they make a fascinating tale to tell.

LABOUR HAAT

Badheibanka is a place where daily wagers converge every day to offer their services. Contractors and labourers make a beeline to this market. It is a common sight to find labourers standing in a queue at Badheibanka square under Lingaraj police limits. They offer their services at hourly rates and those who are lucky get eight-hour shifts also.

COCONUT HAAT

Sakhigopal is also famous for coconut cultivation. But many people are not aware about the coconut 'haat' that takes place twice a month there.

HANDIA HAAT

Dressed in traditional attire, a group of tribal people can be seen waiting for customers with a bowl of 'Handia' at the daily haat which takes place at Birakuti slum close to the Mancheswar railway station. The home-made handia is a source of livelihood for a large number of tribal women.



the country, Odisha too has its share of iconic 'haats'. Orissa POST takes a look at some of the iconic 'haats' in the state later in this article.

'Haats' are a traditional form of modern-day supermarkets that are

to 6,000 BC, long before 'haats' came into existence. Introduced by the Mesopotamia tribes, bartering was adopted by Phoenicians. The latter bartered goods in various cities and towns spread across the world. The Babylonians also developed an improved bartering system. Goods were exchanged for food, tea,

still exists among people in remote areas that have no access to cash. In these places, bartering is a necessary means for survival. However, during excavations, archeologists have found many commercial sites. Aborigines used to depend on these sites for their livelihood. Thus we can say that 'haat' system was very much present since civilisation came into existence," said Parida.

Fires spread in Kuldiha; forest department frets

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sajanagad, April 1: Fire has again broken out in Kuldiha sanctuary in Balasore. Fires are raging in several hills inside the forest where trees and plants have been reduced to ashes, a report said.

About two weeks ago, fires had already destroyed flora and fauna. After a lot of effort by the forest department and fire fighters, the blaze had been contained.

Now, fires are spreading in many hills with the forest department trying to douse the blaze. Locals said, fires are raging at some places over last three days.

As the fire spreads in Debagiri hill near Panchalingeswar peetha, people living in the foothill areas are panicked. Amid sweltering heat, forest fires have added to the woes of the people in the area.

Some local youths got together and tried to douse fires in the area Wednesday evening.

The fire has become a cause of concern for the forest department, which is struggling to bring it down.

Balasore DFO Sarat Chandra Behera said, "The condition is dry now. Temperatures are high. Dousing fires during the day time has been really tough. After 4 pm, forest officials are sent to different areas. They are trying to extinguish the fires with the help of locals."

Though the exact reason of the current fires is not known, it is said that some people who collect Mahua flowers to make country liquor



As fire spreads in Debagiri hill, people living in the foothill area are panicked. Fires added to their woes while mercury rises

burn the leaves in the forest every year. As the villagers move from one village to another, they carry a fire torch at night, which also causes fires inside the forest.

The inferno has now posed a threat to not only the greenery, but also to the wild animals inhabiting there. Sources said lots of valuable

trees have got reduced to ashes.

On the other hand, poachers are on the prowl inside the sanctuary. Scared by fires, wild animals wander about in the forests and face the danger of being killed by the hunters.

Forest officials arrested a hunter, seized body of a sambar, a country gun and live cartridges. Two other poachers however managed to escape. To save the forest from fires and humans from wild animals, the forest department has been trying to sensitise people about dangers of fires.

Special squads are taking action after getting the information through satellites regarding the fire spots, it is said.

Infant dies after doc gives prick using 'Google search'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, April 1: A six-month-old suffering from cold and cough died after he was administered an injection prescribed by a doctor at the Community Health Centre in Dabugaon in Nabarangpur district allegedly using 'Google search'. The deceased was identified as Sriyanshu, son of Amruta and Prasant Bisoyi of Niladriguda village under Papadahandi block in the district. The incident has sparked tension in the hospital. Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control after talking to the irate family members.

Bisoyi's son was suffering from pneumonia. He rushed his son to Dabugaon health centre after his condition deteriorated. The infant however succumbed to illness fifteen minutes after he was administered an injection by the doctor using Google search instead of what he has learned from his long years of practice. He alleged that the doctor even did not bother.

The medical officer at the Health Centre Dr Subhashis Sahu said he was unaware of the matter as he was not in the hospital at the time of the death. When contacted, Collector Ajit Kumar Mishra said he will discuss the matter with the CDMO and take action.

'Pink patrolling' in Angul for safety of women

ANGUL: On the occasion of Utkal Divas and 86th Foundation Day of Odisha Police, the Angul police Thursday launched 'pink patrolling' service for safety of women in this town. A number of vulnerable areas in Angul town were identified. Four separate patrolling teams were formed to step up surveillance in crime-prone areas. The teams will keep vigil to ensure safety of women. Each patrolling team consists of two lady police personnel and two male counterparts as well. The patrolling teams were provided with a motorcycle and a scooter, a police official said. The four teams have been linked with Emergency Response Support System (ERSS)-112 Scheme. They have also been equipped with mobile data terminals (MDTs) for integration with ERSS.

Man strangulates wife to death in Ganjam, detained

BHANJIANGAR: A man strangulated his wife to death at Sorishabili village under Sorada police limits in Ganjam district late Wednesday night. He has been detained. The deceased was identified as Rinki Swain and her husband as Dharindra Swain. According to reports, the couple used to quarrel often over last few months. They had a verbal duel Wednesday night. later, the scene turned uglier when Dharindra lost his cool and caught hold of Rinki's neck and strangulated her to death. Hearing her frantic cries for help, the neighbours rushed to Dharindra's house but it was too late. They found Rinki's motionless body lying on the ground. They immediately informed the police. A team from Sorada police station reached the spot, recovered the body for post mortem.

Boating service launched in Hirakud reservoir

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, April 1: The long awaited boating facility in the Hirakud Dam Reservoir (HDR) was launched Thursday. The facility was inaugurated by Transport Minister Padmanabh Behera and OTDC chairperson Srimayee Mishra.

Speaking on the occasion, the OTDC chief said the state government has taken a number of measures to boost tourism.

"Entrepreneurs are encouraged to invest in tourism and hospitality sector and build up various facilities. The number of tourists in the state will increase. With such facilities, tourists will be attracted to the state. The scope of employment will be created," she added.



She added that in coming days, more such projects will be undertaken. Transport Minister Padmanabh Behera said there is plenty of scope in the tourism sector in Sambalpur.

"Hirakud reservoir is famous world over. Tourists from other states and abroad visit the dam every year. The state government is doing a lot of things to attract tourists," he noted.

It may be noted here that the administration and various companies were interested for boating facility in the Hirakud reservoir earlier. But owing to security reasons, it was not being allowed.


Later, the hydropower unit was shifted elsewhere. A private company has got approval to provide boating facility.



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SRI AUROBINDO

Allow 'encroachments'

Reports about our neighbours encroaching on our territories by offering blandishments to people of border villages are dime a dozen in our state media. Every day, newspapers carry such stories. West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and even Chhattisgarh governments are accused of indulging in such overreach. Even people from Bangladesh come to districts like Kendrapara through sea and manage to secure official testimonials to show their permanent residency. Such stories of illegal entry into our state are common. In this sordid saga of encroachments, our southern neighbour Andhra Pradesh is the most active. Andhra has been trying hard to intrude into border villages in Koraput and Gajapati districts. Some villages in Kotia panchayat of Koraput have been reportedly renamed by the Andhra government. Their officials have been carrying out programmes in these villages and offering government sops to these people. No wonder, beneficiaries are showing a clear tilt to AP. A few days ago, reports came in that West Bengal was carrying out electioneering in some border villages of Balasore. Such attempts by neighbouring states to geographically encroach on our land call for condemnation. This is against the rule of the land. Our government has not shown enough character to withstand such aggression. The state government should take it up at the highest level. Cases are sub judice in the Supreme Court and the apex court is likely to give its ruling soon.

While such geographical overreach by the neighbouring states must end, there is no reason why we should stop trading or having business ties with these states. Reports of some dairy firms of Andhra Pradesh having transaction with local dairy farmers of Gajapati are a case in point. Last week, it was reported that Andhra dairy companies are buying milk from farmers in some pockets of Gajapati at higher prices. Vehicles with Andhra registration numbers are seen transporting milk from various parts of Kashinagar block. Hundreds of litres of milk are sent to the neighbouring state every day. OMFED, our state-owned dairy company, has formed a milk farmers' cooperative society and buys milk from farmers in Khandabam Budura, Hariipur, Goribandha, Bathaba, Kashinagar, Tata Kashinagar, BN Pur, Kidigam, Kaithapadar, Ranipetha, Minigram and Hatapada areas of Gajapati district. But, these farmers prefer Andhra companies to OMFED to do business with. Dairy companies from AP sell cattle feed to farmers at cheaper rates. Against ₹1200 per quintal of cattle feed that OMFED charges, Andhra dairy firms supply the same feed at ₹1000 per quintal. They also promise loans and bonus to dairy farmers. As a result of such aggressive marketing by Andhra companies, OMFED's daily milk collection has come down. The Gajapati administration has warned local dairy farmers of tough action if they do not stop doing business with Andhra company and resume selling milk to OMFED. OMFED officials have been asked to look into this and submit a report based on which farmers will be taken to task for doing business with AP companies. Such vindictive measures by the local administration will do more harm than good. While geographical encroachments of our territories should be condemned and appropriately dealt with, preventing local dairy farmers from selling milk to AP firms at higher prices is not meat and proper and may turn counter-productive. The administration has no business to stop dairy farmers from deciding whosoever they want to sell milk to. It is purely their business interests. If the state government cannot assure or protect their business interests, it cannot stop them. Instead, the government should endeavour to find out where and why our farmers are turning away from OMFED and turning to Andhra companies. OMFED should try to plug its loopholes and try to compete with AP dairy firms and the administration on its part should allow such 'encroachments' in the interest of our farmers.

WISDOM CORNER

- Why should you continue going after your dreams? Because seeing the look on the faces of the people who said you couldn't will be priceless. **KEVIN NGO**
- If you don't value your time, neither will others. Stop giving away your time and talents- start charging for it. **KIM GARST**
- Never give in. Never, never, never, never - is nothing, great or small, large or petty - never give in, except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy. **WINSTON CHURCHILL**

WORDSWORTH

Butterscotch

Don't look to me for culinary advice - I can burn boiled eggs. My books say that butterscotch is indeed a form of caramel, but made with butter and brown sugar, as you describe, plus a touch of vanilla. That's the limit of my expertise. Unfortunately, I can't do that much better with your second query. Nobody seems to know. Some argue that the second part is actually scorch, from the manner of its making. The Collins Dictionary says that it may have been called that because it was first made in Scotland. Neither suggestion is supported by evidence, though the Scottish link seems plausible because Keillers of Dundee was one firm that made butterscotch commercially. The Oxford English Dictionary's first citation (indeed, its only citation) is from 1865. It's not hard to take that back a while: the first example I can find is from The Boy's Autumn Book of 1847. Although that was published in New York it quotes a British itinerant seller of sweets. Wikipedia states that the first maker of butterscotch was Samuel Parkinson of Doncaster, in 1817. The firm did make it during the nineteenth century and Doncaster became famous for it. The Parkinson papers are deposited at the Doncaster Archives, from where Dr Charles Kelham tells me they begin only in 1848, although an article published in The Doncaster Review in September 1896 asserts that "It was on the 11th of May 1817, that the late Mr. Samuel Parkinson commenced the manufacture of butter-scotch." If he did so, it may be unlikely, from the lack of written evidence before 1847, that he called it by that name. Other writers argue that the sweetmeat has no link with Scotland. Charles Earl Funk noted in Horsefeathers in 1958: "All directions for the preparation of this candy after it is properly cooked close with some such statement as: Pour upon oiled paper or well-buttered pan and when slightly cool score with a knife into squares."

LOL SMUGGLING BICYCLES

Juan was a Mexican man riding his bike to go across the American border. He was holding two bags full of sand on his back. As soon as he got to the border, the guard stopped him and asked what was in the bags. Juan replies "sand" The guard told him that they would see about that and took the bags in to inspect them. He looked through to see if there were drugs, or if they were actually sand, but it was 100 percent sand. The guard was confused, but knew he had no proof that Juan was doing anything wrong, so he put the sand in



new bags, hefted them onto Juan's back and let him cross. This same thing happened every day for a few months, until one day, 6 months later, Juan didn't come. After a few weeks, the guard had a day off so he went to a local bar. He saw Juan sitting on a table on his own drinking beer, so he went over to him. "Hey man, I know you're smuggling something in, I just want to know, between you and me, I promise I won't get you into trouble, what are you smuggling?" Juan looked at him for a second, drank his beer then said "bicycles".

FOCUS FOOD SAFETY

FOOD A CLIMATE CHALLENGE

Climate-policy discussions often focus on who will pay the cost of achieving a zero-carbon economy, with a particular focus on industrial sectors such as steel and cement. But the overall costs are strikingly low, and our biggest challenge lies in the food system, not industrial products.

The latest report by the United Kingdom's Climate Change Committee, for example, shows that cutting UK greenhouse-gas emissions to net zero by 2050 would reduce British GDP by only 0.5%. The Energy Transitions Commission's "Making Mission Possible" report estimates a similar total cost of 0.5% of global GDP to reduce emissions from the world's energy, building, industrial, and transport systems to zero by mid-century.

These estimates are well below those produced by older studies. The seminal Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change, published in 2006, suggested costs of 1-1.5% of GDP to achieve only an 80% reduction in emissions.

This welcome change reflects the dramatic and unanticipated decline in costs for key technologies - with onshore wind electricity costs down 60% in just ten years, solar photovoltaic cells down over 80%, and batteries 85%. These costs are now so low that using zero-carbon products and services in many sectors will make consumers better off.

For example, future "total system costs" to run near-zero-carbon electricity systems - including all the storage and flexibility needed with unpredictable sources such as wind and solar - will often be below those for today's fossil fuel-based systems. And within ten years, consumers around the world will be better off buying electric autos, paying slightly less for the vehicles and far less for the electricity that powers them than they do for the diesel and petrol they buy today.

In some hard-to-abate sectors such as steel, cement, and shipping, however, decarbonization is likely to impose a significant cost. Well before 2050, zero-carbon steel could be produced by using hydrogen as the reduction agent rather than



Within ten years, consumers around the world will be better off buying electric autos, paying slightly less for the vehicles and far less for the electricity that powers them than they do for the diesel and petrol they buy today

coking coal, or by adding carbon capture and storage to traditional blast furnaces. But doing so might increase costs by 25%, or about \$100 per ton of steel. Long-distance ships could be powered by ammonia or methanol, but fuel costs might increase by over 100%, and freight rates by 50%. As Bill Gates puts it in his new book How to Avoid a Climate Disaster, in some sectors, we face a "green cost premium" versus today's carbon-emitting technology.

So it is vital to focus research and development and venture-capital investment on breakthrough technologies that might reduce this premium. But it is also important to recognize that even if the "green premium" lingers, the cost of decarbonizing these sectors will be so small that consumers will hardly notice.

Ask yourself how much steel you bought last year. Unless you are a purchasing manager, the answer is probably none directly. Instead, consumers indirectly purchase steel embedded in the products and services they consume - in

autos, in washing machines, or in health services delivered at a hospital built with steel. World Steel Association figures indicate that "true steel use per capita" is 300-400 kilograms (661-882 pounds) annually in Europe and the United States. So, if the steel price rose by \$100 per ton, consumers would be just \$30-40 worse off.

That trivial cost reflects the crucial difference between the green premium on intermediate goods and the "green consumer premium" on final products. An increase in the steel price of even 25% will add less than 1% to automobile prices. Shipping freight rates might rise by 50%, but that would increase the price of imported clothes or food by a similarly trivial amount.

But higher costs for intermediate products still pose a major policy challenge. A steel company that commits to a zero-carbon target will find itself at a crushing disadvantage if its competitors do not. Imposing a carbon price on heavy industrial sectors could overcome this problem, but only if the price is applied worldwide

or combined with border carbon tariffs against countries unwilling to impose it.

In shipping, regulation by the International Maritime Organization could ensure that all companies move in step, and the impact on consumer costs would be trivial.

By contrast, food prices and consumer food preferences are non-trivial issues. Few of us buy steel directly, but everyone buys food, which even in rich countries accounts for 6-13% of total household expenditure and much more for lower-income groups. For consumers, a 10% green premium for food would matter more than even a 100% premium for steel.

Within the food sector, moreover, meat production is highly emissions-intensive. Methane emissions from livestock and manure have a global warming effect greater than the three gigatons of carbon dioxide from steel production, and an additional five gigatons of CO2 results from land-use changes, such as when forest is converted to soybean production for cattle feed.

Here, too, technological solutions may be possible, but major challenges remain. Consumers do not care about the specific character of the steel they indirectly consume, but beef eaters have strong opinions about the texture and taste of steak, which synthetic meat production cannot yet replicate. And while the green premium for synthetic meat over animal meat is falling, it must get close to nil to avoid material impact on consumer budgets.

This could change, however, if people decided that they would be happy with less meat and more vegetable-intensive diets, which also cost less. In that case, food could become like road transport, with consumers gaining from the shift to zero carbon rather than facing a cost burden.

Adair Turner, Chair of the Energy Transitions Commission, was Chair of the UK Financial Services Authority from 2008-12. His latest book is Between Debt and the Devil.

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SPECTRUM ENVIRONMENT

A decarbonisation roadmap



Katherine Dixon

OUR CLIMATE CHALLENGE IS AN ENERGY CHALLENGE. BUT SOLVING OUR ENERGY CHALLENGE REQUIRES ACTION THAT GOES WELL BEYOND POWER GENERATION

Our climate challenge is an energy challenge. But solving our energy challenge requires action that goes well beyond power generation.

Solar and wind have revolutionized our energy system. But with the power sector currently supplying only 20% of our energy, simply producing more green electricity cannot get us to net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by mid-century. Nor will converting renewable power into large-scale supplies of green hydrogen be a silver bullet. Our ships, planes, and trains are not configured for it, and the economic incentives are not yet moving in the right direction.

Our energy challenge is also an energy demand problem. Achieving our collective climate ambitions requires rapid and deep transitions in each of the sectors that contribute to global energy demand, including not only power, but also transport, manufacturing, and steel, and chemicals. Getting these transitions on track at the required pace implies the complete transformation of our energy infrastructure. To that end, three priorities in particular will be crucial. First, we need to accelerate the

pace of innovation. Recent analysis by the International Energy Agency shows that nearly half of the emission reductions needed to reach net zero by 2050 may have to come from technologies that aren't yet on the market. Clean-energy technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines, electric cars, light-emitting diodes, and lithium-ion batteries have made it possible for us to envision a net-zero world in the coming decades. But we need giant leaps in innovation in other clean technologies - some of which are still in the lab - to get us all the way there. This is especially urgent in sectors like steel, cement, chemicals, shipping, and aviation, where emissions are the hardest to reduce and technological solutions are lagging.

The second priority is closer collaboration between government and industry. The private sector is an unparalleled engine of change. It's where the lion's share of inventors, entrepreneurs, and investors are, and their contributions will be crucial if the world is to devise and deploy green technologies at the rate required.

At the same time, government action is essential to unleash the full power of business. Left to their own

devices, markets won't bring about the rapid transformation of our global energy system that we need. In many sectors, businesses need strong government policy to enable lower-carbon technologies to flourish. They need government to support early innovation in new technologies, create niche markets that allow them to develop, and then implement effective policies that enable their diffusion - sector by sector.

Lastly, we need greatly enhanced international coordination. In a global system centered on national action, orchestrating the kind of systemic change required in many energy-consuming sectors is a major challenge. National approaches can be highly effective in some areas, especially where governments can pursue decisive policies without hurting domestic producers in sectors like power. But a rigid national approach works less well in internationally traded industries, and particularly in harder-to-abate sectors. Here, coordinated cross-border action is essential to drive the rapid adoption of new technologies.

The IEA facilitates collaboration on key energy transition technologies - an effort that involves more than 6,000 experts worldwide,

representing nearly 300 public and private organizations located in 55 countries, including many from IEA association countries such as China, India, and Brazil. But with an ever-growing consensus on the need to move toward net-zero emissions, we can and should do more.

Later this year, the IEA will set out the first comprehensive roadmap for the global energy sector, spanning power, transport, industry, and buildings - each of which we need to transform in order to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. By setting out exactly what is needed in each sector, and when, the plan will enable governments and firms to benchmark their progress, making it clear where greater focus is needed.

The next step is turning plans into action. That is why the IEA recently formed a strategic partnership with Mission Possible, a global coalition of more than 400 companies seeking to accelerate the large-scale decarbonisation of heavy industry and transport.

The writer is Chief Counselor of Transitions and Partnerships at the International Energy Agency.

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Hazards of sanitary napkins

Sir, The Centre's launching of a scheme for the promotion of menstrual hygiene among girls in the age group of 10-19 years old in rural areas to increase the use of high quality sanitary napkins and ensure their safe disposal is indeed a good move. Funds are given to states and Union Territories for obtaining sanitary napkin packs for rural girls at a rate of Re 1 for a pad. Given that less than 50% of women in the target group are using sanitary napkins, the government must be commended for putting in efforts to promote the use of sanitary napkins. Statistics show that of the 336 million menstruating women in India only 121 million use napkins. It is a fact that the sanitary napkins commonly used by women contain super-absorbent polymers which is non-biodegradable. They change into micro plastic which pollute soil, water and air. They contaminate the food that humans and animals consume. Consequently, toxins enter the bodies of humans and animals through food and cause health hazards. Two ingredients used in the non-biodegradable sanitary napkins cause serious health problems to women. Improper disposal of sanitary napkins which contain plastic has adverse consequences. Awareness programmes must be conducted to dispel such misconceptions. The government must take corrective measures for the provision of plastic-free sanitary napkins. Through continuous dialogue and consultations with experts and social organisations the government could find alternatives to sanitary napkins containing plastic. Further, it must inform the public about the importance of getting rid of pads which contain plastic.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

Draconian circular

Sir, The draconian circular slashing interest rates on small saving schemes was withdrawn with as much alacrity as it was issued in the first place. The timing of its issuance was understandably wrong with the ongoing state elections in progress, particularly West Bengal and Tamil Nadu which are the highest contributors to the National Small Savings kitty. But what cannot be digested is the Finance Minister's explanation that the circular was issued through an "oversight". Aren't due deliberations and requisite approvals needed before issuing such circulars? While retired people and senior citizens are the usual soft targets for bearing the cross of the Centre's financial and economic misgovernance, they may rest assured that this retrograde measure will hit them with a vengeance once the state elections are over.

Bhaskar Roy, NEW DELHI

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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Researchers bring nanozymes that block HIV reactivation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 1: Researchers at Indian Institute of Science (IISc) here have developed artificial enzymes that can successfully block reactivation and replication of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in the host's immune cells.

"Made from vanadium pentoxide nanosheets, these 'nanozymes' work by mimicking a natural enzyme called glutathione peroxidase that helps reduce oxidative stress level in the host's cells, which is required to keep the virus in check," an IISc statement said on Thursday.

The study, published in 'EMBO Molecular Medicine', was led by Amit Singh, Associate Professor and Wellcome Trust-DBT India Alliance Senior Fellow at the Department of Microbiology & Cell Biology and Centre for Infectious Diseases Research (CIDR), and Govindasamy Mugesh, Professor at the Department of Inorganic and Physical Chemistry.

"The advantage is that the nanozymes are stable inside biological systems and do not mediate any unwanted reactions inside the cells," Mugesh said, "They are also quite easy to prepare in the lab."

According to the statement, there



Nanozymes work by mimicking a natural enzyme called glutathione peroxidase that helps reduce oxidative stress level in the host's cells, which is required to keep the virus in check

Nanozymes are stable inside biological systems and do not mediate any unwanted reactions inside the cells. They are also quite easy to prepare in the lab

When the levels of toxic molecules such as hydrogen peroxide increase in host's cells, leading to a state of increased oxidative stress, the virus gets 'reactivated' - it emerges from hiding and begins replicating again

is currently no way to eliminate HIV from a patient's body completely.

Anti-HIV drugs are only successful in suppressing the virus as they fail at eradicating HIV from infected cells. The virus hides inside the host's immune cells in a 'latent' state and stably maintains its reservoir.

"When the levels of toxic molecules such as hydrogen peroxide increase in host's cells, leading to a state of increased oxidative stress, the virus gets 'reactivated' - it emerges from hiding and begins replicating again," it said.

A few years ago, Singh's team had developed a biosensor to measure oxidative stress levels in HIV-

infected immune cells in real-time.

"We found that to come out of latency and reactivate, HIV needs very little oxidative stress," he said.

One way to prevent reactivation is to keep the oxidative stress constantly low, which would 'lock' the virus in a permanent state of latency.

Enzymes such as glutathione peroxidase are essential for this process; they convert toxic hydrogen peroxide to water and oxygen. However, inducing the host cells to produce more quantities of these enzymes could disrupt the tightly regulated cellular redox machinery.

Around the same time, Mugesh's group had published a study showing that nanowires made of vanadium pentoxide can efficiently mimic the activity of glutathione peroxidase. Singh's lab, therefore, decided to collaborate with them.

The researchers prepared ultrathin nanosheets of vanadium pentoxide in the lab and treated HIV-infected cells with them. The sheets were found to be reducing hydrogen peroxide just as effectively as the natural enzyme and preventing the virus from reactivation.

"We found that these nanosheets were having some sort of direct effect where the expression of the host genes essential for virus re-

activation is reduced," said Shalini Singh, first author and Research Associate at CIDR.

"When the team treated immune cells from HIV-infected patients undergoing antiretroviral therapy (ART) with the nanozymes, latency was induced faster and subsequent reactivation was suppressed when therapy was stopped, indicating that combining the two was more effective," she added.

Combining ART with the nanozymes also has other advantages. According to Singh, some ART drugs can cause oxidative stress as a side effect, which can damage heart or kidney cells.

"Adding a nanozyme like this can help in reducing the side effects caused by such ART drugs." This can improve the quality of life of HIV patients undergoing treatment.

Although the nanozymes were found to be harmless to normal cells in lab tests, Mugesh said that further studies are needed to understand if they can have other effects once they are introduced inside the body.

"Where will they go? Which organs will they enter? How long will they stay in the body? We need to look at all these aspects," he added.

Tipplers helped the state by surpassing excise revenue target

AGENCIES

Bangalore, April 1: Amid the gloomy economic scenario throughout the lockdown in the previous fiscal, tipplers of Karnataka assiduously held the fort on the revenue front and helped the state surpass the targeted excise revenue.

Data shared by State Excise department showed that the targeted revenue of state excise in 2020-21 was Rs 22,700 crore, which was 1,116.04 crore above the excise revenue collection during 2019-20.

The target set by the state government seemed extremely difficult, if not impossible. However, by the end of March 31, 2021, the revenue collection was Rs 23,131.28 crore.

"The increase in revenue in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20 was Rs 1,547.33 crore," an excise official said. The achievement was despite the fact that the entire April 2020 ran dry for the tipplers due to stringent lockdown and only Rs 1.06 crore worth liquor was sold in that



month. As lockdown was lifted partially, boozers stormed liquor outlets generating a revenue of Rs 1,404.08 crore in May 2020, which was yet short of about Rs 650 crore of the monthly target. However, the situation changed from June with lockdown curbs being further relaxed.

In terms of India Made Foreign Liquor, 583.23 lakh carton boxes were sold in the previous fiscal, which was about 17.5 lakh cartons less compared to 2019-2020.

The beer sale in 2020-21 was 237.82 lakh cartons, which was about 42 lakh cartons less compared to 2019-2020. The dip in consumption of liquor did not result in the dip in revenue.

K'taka CM appeals for vaccination

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 1: As the state geared up to vaccinate everyone above 45 years of age from Thursday, Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa and Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar appealed to the eligible people to make use of this protective cover against coronavirus.

Cautioning people not to underestimate the danger posed by Covid, Yediyurappa tweeted, "Our protective cover is the vaccine against corona. Everyone over the age of 45 can get the vaccine today. Go to your nearest vaccination centre and get the vaccine. Together we can defeat coronavirus."

Health Minister Sudhakar too tweeted, "As we begin vaccinating all citizens aged above 45 years from today, 5,500 vaccination sites

■ 5,500 VACCINATION SITES WILL BE OPERATIONAL ACROSS THE STATE INCLUDING 650 PRIVATE AND 4,850 GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

■ KARNATAKA HAS IN STOCK 13.5 LAKH DOSES OF COVISHIELD VACCINE AND 1.5 LAKH DOSES OF COVAXIN VACCINE

will be operational across the state including 650 private and 4,850 government facilities."

According to him, 1.5 lakh doses of vaccine are supplied to Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike, the civic body, which is distributed to about 600 sites across the state capital.

The Health Department said in a statement that Covid-19 vaccination will continue at all primary

health centres, community health centres, taluk hospitals, district hospitals, medical colleges and private hospitals as already being done.

It added that Karnataka has in stock 13.5 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine and 1.5 lakh doses of Covaxin vaccine which have been supplied to all cold chain points across the districts as per their requirement.

"The government of India has assured the state that additional vaccine doses will be supplied regularly in the coming days as per daily coverage," the department added.

The vaccination drive covering everyone above 45 years of age started at a time when there is an alarming rise in cases in Karnataka.

The state reported 4,225 fresh cases including 26 deaths on a single day on Wednesday.

NIA raids hotel, club in Mumbai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 1: The NIA conducted searches at a hotel and a club in south Mumbai Thursday in connection with the case of an explosives-laden SUV found near Mukesh Ambani's residence and the murder of businessman Mansukh Hiran.

A team of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) reached the Soni building, where the hotel and the club are situated, at around 12.45 pm. Customers and staffers of the hotel were asked to vacate the premises, located near the Babulnath temple. "During the search, NIA sleuths also made enquiries with a few people at the club and the hotel," the official said.

The probe team left the place after over three hours. Some officials of Gamdevi police station, under



The NIA recovered a laptop, a printer, two hard disks, two vehicle number plates, two digital video recorders (DVRs) and two CPUs from the Mithi river Sunday with the help of divers

whose jurisdiction the area falls, were also present at the spot.

"Suspended Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze, whom the NIA arrested last month in connection with the security scare outside Ambani's residence, was recently brought by the agency to the Babulnath area as part of its probe into the case," he said.

"The gelatin sticks found in the vehicle near Ambani's house last month were procured by Waze," NIA sources claimed on Wednesday.

The NIA recovered a laptop, a printer, two hard disks, two vehicle number plates, two digital video recorders (DVRs) and two CPUs from the Mithi river Sunday with the help of divers.

The agency is probing the alleged role of Waze in parking the explosives-laden SUV near Ambani's residence on February 25 and the murder of businessman Mansukh Hiran.

The body of Hiran, who was in possession of the SUV, was found in a creek in Mumbai town of neighbouring Thane district March 5.

DRDO develops light weight bullet-proof jacket

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 1: The Defence Materials and Stores Research and Development Establishment (DM-SRDE), Kanpur has developed Light Weight Bullet Proof Jacket (BPJ). "The jacket weighs nine kg and meets the qualitative requirements of Indian Army," the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) said on Thursday.

According to the DRDO, the importance of this vital development lies in the fact that each gram of BPJ weight reduction is crucial in enhancing soldier comfort while ensuring survivability. The Front Hard Armour Panel (FHAP) jacket was tested at Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL), Chandigarh and met relevant BIS standards.

This technology reduces the weight of the medium sized BPJ from 10.4 kg to 9 kg.



Very specific materials and processing technologies have been developed in the laboratories for the purpose.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated DRDO scientists and the industry for developing this light weight BPJ to make the soldiers more comfortable. The DRDO Chairman, Dr. G Satheesh Reddy congratulated the DMSRDE team for the development.

Poll results in 4 states to decide course of national politics: Raut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 1: Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut Thursday said the results of Assembly polls in four states, specially Assam and West Bengal, will decide the next course of national politics.

Talking to reporters here, Raut remarked that the BJP is in power in Assam, but the Congress has put up a tough fight.

In West Bengal, even though BJP has put all its might to defeat Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress head Mamata Banerjee, she has fought like a tigress and is "sure to emerge as the winner", he claimed.

"We can also gauge the mood in Kerala and Tamil Nadu," the Rajya Sabha member said.

Banerjee wrote a letter to non-BJP leaders Wednesday, including Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, saying that time has come for a "united



Mamata Banerjee has fought like a tigress and is sure to emerge as the winner

and effective" struggle against BJP's alleged attacks on democracy and the Constitution, and that opposition leaders should try to present a "credible alternative" to the people of this country. When asked about the letter, Raut said, "The results of polls in four states, especially Assam and West Bengal, will decide the next course of national politics. After the elections, the nature of alliances will be discussed and clarity will be there."

"Even Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has

received a letter from her," he said.

Raut also said the "ongoing Mahabharat" in West Bengal is fiercer than the real Mahabharat.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said the battle of Mahabharat was won in 21 days and we will fight the war against coronavirus in 18 days and win. But, we haven't," the Sena's chief spokesperson said.

Raut said the entire country is watching West Bengal polls and people are also intelligent. "No doubt the battle is tough, but Mamata Banerjee will win," he claimed.

Raut also said the 'attack' on democracy in the country is not new. "Whenever there is an attack, people and opposition parties have fought back. This is the strength of our democracy," he said.

On differences among political parties in Maharashtra over the need for a fresh lockdown in the state, as it has seen a huge surge in coronavirus cases, Raut said there should be no politics over the fight against Covid-19.

SC stay on cutting of mangroves hailed

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 1: "Bridges can be constructed without destroying mangroves," environment activists have said while hailing the Supreme Court's decision to stay cutting of mangroves for the construction of a bridge in Andheri suburb of Mumbai.

The activists are now hopeful that the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) will redesign the project. BMC had planned to construct a bridge connecting the Yari Road junction and Lokhandwala backroad in Versova area of Andheri to reduce vehicular con-

gestion and travel time for citizens. Some Versova residents had filed a Public Interest Litigation against the project in the Bombay High Court, which dismissed the PIL in December 2020, following which they moved the SC to challenge the order.

The SC recently stayed the cutting of mangroves in the area for construction of bridge. Mumbai-based environment activist Zoru Bhatena hailed the SC's judgement and said the BMC knows that bridges can be built without destroying mangroves or causing damage to the environment.

Another environment activist Godfrey Pimenta claimed that authorities adopt shortcuts without obtaining prior permission in majority of the cases involving the environment and that they feel they are above the law.

Sawant made Sena's chief spokesperson

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 1: The Shiv Sena has appointed its Lok Sabha member Arvind Sawant as the party's chief spokesperson, in an apparent bid to keep in check its other chief spokesperson Sanjay Raut.

Sawant was earlier a spokesperson of the party. He was Shiv Sena's lone minister in the Narendra Modi-led central cabinet before he quit in 2019, after his party snapped ties with the BJP and joined hands with the NCP and Congress to form government in Maharashtra.

The Sena published a new list of its spokespersons in the party mouthpiece 'Saamana' on Wednesday.

Raut, the Rajya Sabha member and executive editor of 'Saamana', was made the party's chief



The move to appoint Sawant as Sena's chief spokesperson comes against the backdrop of Raut recently calling Maharashtra NCP leader Anil Deshmukh an "accidental home minister"

spokesperson in September last year.

The move to appoint Sawant as Sena's chief spokesperson comes against the backdrop of Raut recently calling Maharashtra NCP leader Anil Deshmukh an "accidental home minister".

The Rajya Sabha member also faced criticism from the ally

Congress in the state after he suggested that NCP chief Sharad Pawar should take over as UPA chairperson.

The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) is currently headed by senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi.

Maharashtra Revenue Minister and senior Congress leader Balasaheb Thorat on Tuesday said Raut should be careful before mak-

New biodiversity heritage site in Sindhudurg district

AGENCIES

Pune, April 1: The Maharashtra government Wednesday declared an area at Amboli of Western ghats in Sindhudurg district, where a rare freshwater fish species was discovered, as a biodiversity heritage site.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's son Tejas Thackeray, who is a wildlife researcher, along with his team had discovered the new freshwater fish species 'Schistura Hiranyakeshi' near Amboli in Sawantwadi tehsil of Sindhudurg district.

Schistura Hiranyakeshi is a rare sub-species of Schistura, a freshwater loach. The fish was named after the Hiranyakeshi river near Amboli village.

The state government on Wednesday issued a notification declaring the area as a biodiversity heritage site.

Earlier, the state government had declared the Glory of Allappali in Gadchiroli district, Landor Khori Park in Jalgaon, Ganesh Khind in Pune, myristica swamp vegetation



Schistura Hiranyakeshi is a rare sub-species of Schistura, a freshwater loach. The fish was named after the Hiranyakeshi river near Amboli village

in Sindhudurg district as biodiversity heritage sites.

Schistura is a small and colourful fish that lives in water and streams in an abundance of oxygen.

"The decision to declare the habitat of these freshwater species as the bio-diversity heritage site is taken because it is rare species, and due to fishing activities, it might have faced extinction. It was important to conserve the species," reads the government notification.

The discoveries of the freshwater fish species were published qua the International Journal of Ichthyology in the October 2020 edition by Tejas Thackeray and co-authors.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
SIGNALLING WORK
Tender Notice No. ST-SBP-TENDER-2021-05,
Dated : 31.03.2021
Name of Work : SIGNALLING ZONAL WORK
FOR ONE YEAR UNDER SENIOR SECTION
ENGINEER / SIGNAL / SAMBALPUR & SENIOR
SECTION ENGINEER / SIGNAL / BALANGIR IN
JHARSUGUDA ROAD - BADMAL SECTION OF
SAMBALPUR DIVISION, EAST COAST
RAILWAY.
Tender Value (₹) : ₹ 44,43,621/-, EMD :
Nil, Cost of Tender Document: Nil.
Date and time of closing of tender :
1500 hrs of 22.04.2021.
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/
Fax or in person shall be accepted
except such e-Tenders even if these are
submitted on firm's letter head and
received in time. All such manual offers
shall be considered invalid and shall be
rejected summarily without any
consideration.
NOTE : The prospective tenderers are
advised to revisit the website 15 days
before the date of closing of tender
to note any changes / corrigenda
issued for this tender.
Complete information including
e-tender documents is available in
website http://www.ireps.gov.in.
Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer (Signal)
PR-660/L/20-21 Sambalpur

of the day quote

To start Kerala's economy, we are proposing an idea called NYAY. It'll not only help poor people, it'll start Kerala's economy and start production of jobs

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

In Uttar Pradesh, an anti-'love-jihad' legislation has been implemented. Why is it not being implemented in Kerala? Neither the LDF nor the UDF seem to be keen to bring in the anti-love jihad law despite Kerala being targeted

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

The BJP leadership should not attempt to shut Eshwarappa's mouth and provide opportunity to other Ministers to share their opinion freely

SIDDARAMAIAH | LEADER OF OPPI IN KARNATAKA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SHORT TAKES

Lavrov to visit India

New Delhi: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will visit India from April 5 to 6 with an aim to prepare ground for the annual India-Russia summit as well as to discuss bilateral cooperation. The visit was announced by Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova in Moscow Thursday.

Wanted criminal, aide arrested

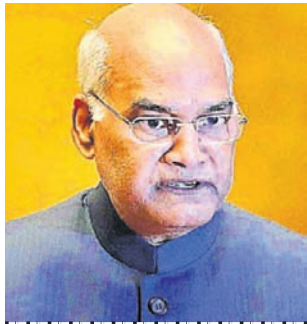
Gurugram: With the arrest of a wanted criminal and his aide, the police here claimed to have solved the murder case of a 25-year-old youth Manish, who was allegedly gunned down in broad daylight February 22. The prime accused among those arrested was identified as Sanjay Panchal (31) of Gandhi Nagar in Gurugram, the police said on Wednesday. The Haryana Police had fixed a bounty of Rs 5,000 on his head. Panchal's accomplice was Yogender alias Yogi of Bhiwani, also a resident of Gurugram.

Army rescues 450 tourists

Gangtok: The army has rescued 450 tourists, including women and children, stuck near the India-China border in northern Sikkim, following a severe snowstorm, defence officials said on Thursday. Defence spokesman Lt Col P. Khongsai said that in prompt action, soldiers rescued the tourists in 120 vehicles stuck amid sub-zero temperatures in the high reaches of Yongdi. The tourists were rescued and vehicles evacuated by creating vehicle safe lane by clearing the snow, he added.

Govt to deploy IoT devices

New Delhi: To monitor the rural drinking water supply systems in the villages, the Ministry of Jal Shakti has decided to take the digital route by using sensor-based Internet of Things (IoT) devices to effectively monitor the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in more than six lakh villages across the country. The Ministry of Jal Shakti said in a statement that Jal Jeevan Mission in collaboration with Tata Community Initiatives Trust (TCIT) and Tata Trusts has recently completed pilot projects in several remote villages of five States -- Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh.



I've been recovering well after the bypass surgery, thanks to the amazing dedication of the doctors and caregivers

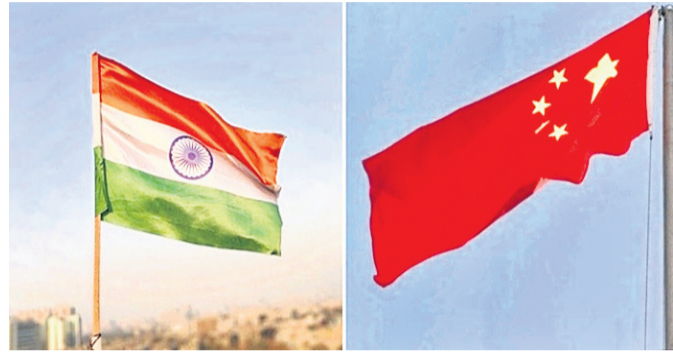
RAM NATH KOVIND | PRESIDENT

CBI BOOKS DIRECTOR, CEO OF GOLDEN JUBILEE HOTELS

The CBI has booked Arjun Singh Oberoi, director, Golden Jubilee Hotels, along with its CEO and managing director Laxmi Narayan Sharma, in connection with alleged cheating in a loan default of over Rs 1,285 crore in a consortium of seven banks led by the Bank of Baroda, officials said Thursday



Nuclear escalation between India, China unlikely: Report



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 1: Nuclear escalation between India and China was not only unlikely but also unthinkable, a Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report on 'South Asia's Nuclear Challenges', released on Thursday, said. "Among Chinese and Indian experts, there was a prevailing view that they shared the same stance on no first use, and that nuclear escalation between the two countries was not only unlikely but also unthinkable," the Swedish think tank's report said.

Some experts, the SIPRI report said, cited nuances in India's approach towards no first use and an evolving discussion in the country on its future, while others pointed to some of the past debate in China on no first use. They, however, largely disregarded these caveats when it came to escalation.

In most cases, there was a steadfast view that both countries were on the same page when it came to nuclear posture, with no first use

as just one example.

"While stabilising in the context of recent tensions at the China-India border, the assumption that both parties are operating from the same starting point merits greater attention - in relation not just to no first use but also a range of nuclear postures from de-mating to targeting," the report stated.

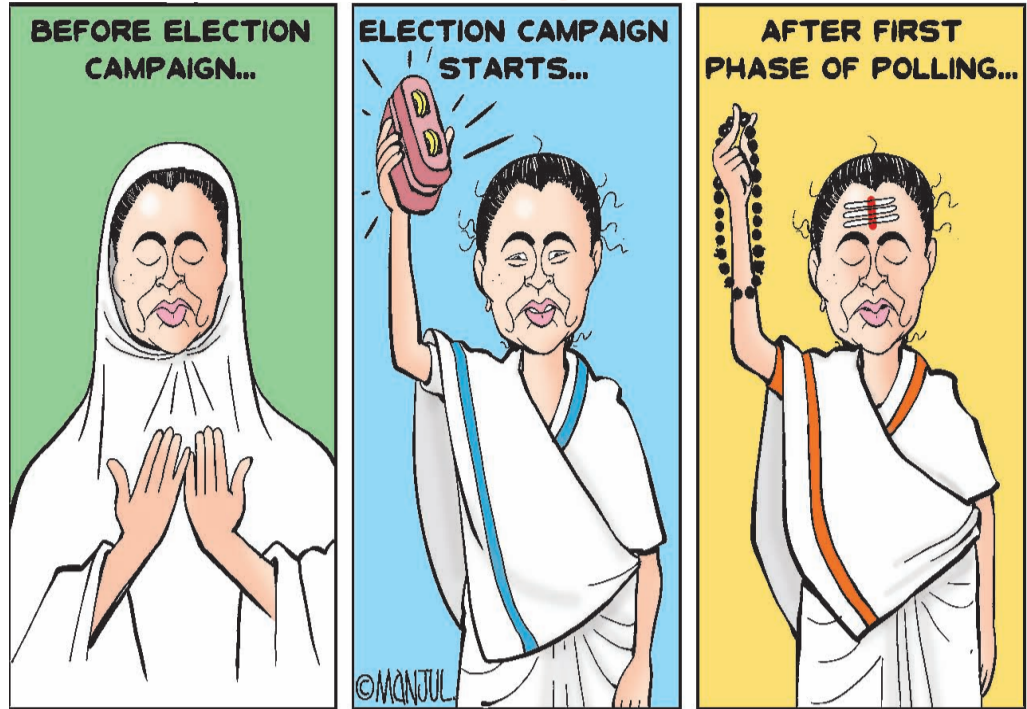
Assumptions of "postural parity" may bring stability in the short term, when altercations are largely limited to skirmishes at the border, but in the longer term -- as both China and India extend the ranges of their systems and deployments -- such assumptions may lead to misunderstandings and mis-signalling. Further, the continued dominance in Indian analyses of the concept of a "two-front" threat from China and Pakistan means that greater consideration of how deterrence operates among these three countries is needed, even if it requires more countries at the table, it said. Among Chinese and US experts, there was a strong tendency for experts from each to see the other country as playing a larger and

more destabilising role in South Asia. While much of the commentary from Chinese experts centred on India-Pakistan dynamics, when it came to external influences, the USA's role was paramount. While citing past US weapon sales to the region and the 2005 India-US nuclear deal for their role in strengthening India and freeing up its nuclear material for military aims, Chinese experts also focused on forward-looking initiatives such as the US Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, which have a focus on China as well as India.

Among US experts, China's outreach to Pakistan in terms of conventional and nuclear assistance, military training, and more recently the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) demonstrate China's far-reaching aspirations in the region, the report said.

While Chinese experts characterised China's role as stabilising, US experts were more cautious in evaluating its long-term implications. Nonetheless, they cited tensions generated by China's arms sales to South Asia and economic engagement under the BRI, combined with the most recent incidents along the China-India border, as presenting an opportunity for greater US collaboration with India. "For this very reason, however, some US experts expressed concern that the region could break into two camps, with the USA and India on one side and China and Pakistan on the other," the report stated.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Mallika Srinivasan, Adil Zainulbhai get key roles in govt

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 1: In a major move, the Central government has brought in Tafe Chairperson Mallika Srinivasan, and Quality Council of India Chairperson Adil Zainulbhai to head the Public Enterprises Selection Board and the Capacity Building Commission, respectively, in the Department of Personnel and Training. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet on

Thursday has approved appointment of Srinivasan, Chairman and Managing Director, Tractors and Farm Equipment (TAFE) Ltd, as Chairperson, Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB), for a period of three years from the date of assumption of charge, or until the attainment of the age of 65 years, or until further orders, whichever is the earliest.

This is the first time that a private sector personality has been

appointed to head the PESB which oversees all major appointments in PSUs.

The ACC also approved the appointment of Zainulbhai, who has had a long and illustrious private sector stint with McKinsey, to head the Capacity Building Commission.

Ramaswami Balasubramiam, Founder, Swamy Vivekanand Youth Movement, has been appointed Member (HR).

Kirron diagnosed with blood cancer

AGENCIES

Mumbai/ Chandigarh, April 1: BJP MP and actor Kirron Kher has been diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a type of blood cancer, and is on her path to recovery, her actor-husband Anupam Kher said Thursday. Anupam Kher released a statement, also on behalf of son Sikandar, that the 68-year-old actor is currently undergoing treatment in Mumbai.

"Just so that rumors don't get the better of a situation, Sikandar and I would like to inform everyone that Kirron has been diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a type of blood cancer. She is currently undergoing treatment and we are sure she will come out of this stronger than before. We are very blessed that she is being looked after by a phenomenal set of doctors. She's always been a fighter



and takes things head on." Anupam Kher said in the statement. He also thanked her fans for their constant support and asked them to keep praying for Kirron Kher's speedy recovery. "She's all heart and that's why she has so many people that love her. So keep sending your love to her in your prayers and in your heart. She is well on her way to recovery and we thank everyone for their support and love," he added. The family's statement comes a day after Chandigarh BJP chief Arun Sood shared Kirron Kher's diagnosis.

Maoists' 'booby traps' for forces

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 1: At a time when the number of Maoists is reducing, guerrilla militants are increasingly preferring to use 'booby traps' to ensure maximum damage to the security forces without losing even a single comrade.

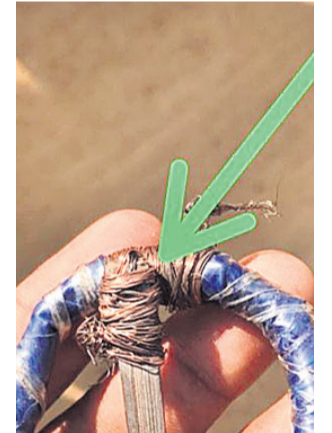
Booby trap, a mechanism often used during warfare, is a device or setup intended to kill or harm. It is triggered by the presence or actions of the victim and sometimes has some form of bait designed to draw the victim towards it. The trap may be a needle, a stone, branch of a tree lying on road or anything that cannot be expected. It can also be triggered by vehicles driving along a road, as in the case of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). With just a touch to these traps, an IED explosion would happen and kill security personnel.

MAJOR THREAT

Intelligence units of different security wings, deployed in Maoist-hit regions, recently shared inputs regarding "frequent use of booby traps". The input was circulated among the top brass as well as in paramilitary forces and state police units deployed in these regions. The input asks them to be very "careful" about these traps.

The input also mentions about the use of remote control IEDs. "Remote control IEDs and booby traps are becoming a challenging threat for the agencies in the Left-Wing Extremism hit areas," an officer, requesting anonymity, told IANS while citing the inputs shared by intelligence wings of various security forces.

The officer, privy to the developments, said that there have been many instances when such lethal booby traps



were recovered from important places through which security forces have to move: particular roads and bridges or near renowned weekly markets in far-flung Maoist areas. In Chhattisgarh's Rajnandgaon, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) averted a similar blast on

Thursday afternoon with the recovery of twin IEDs: 15 kgs and 5 kgs. The personnel of the ITBP's 40th Battalion unearthed and destroyed these IEDs on the spot soon after they detected them near Bakarkatta village in Nawagaon in Rajnandgaon district during a search operation.

"The IEDs were planted probably to target the security forces," said the ITBP, adding "it is seen that in the recent times, many IED attacks have been the main modus operandi of the Naxals in Chhattisgarh".

Apart from regular IEDs, the 95,000-personnel-strong Central Armed Police Force (CAPF), also deployed in some Maoist-affected areas apart from its mandated role to secure 3,488 km India-China border, said "the remote control IEDs and booby traps are becoming a challenging threat for agencies in the LWE hit areas".

India, Bhutan, Lanka & B'desh to hold joint military exercise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: The Indian Army will participate in a four-nation military exercise in Bangladesh from April 4 to 12 which is being organised to mark the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and 50 years of that country's liberation war, officials said Thursday.

A 30-member Indian Army team comprising officers, junior commissioned officers (JCOs) and soldiers from the Dogra regiment will

participate in the exercise 'Shantir Ogroshena' (front runner of peace), they said.

Besides armies of Bangladesh and India, the exercise will be participated by Royal Bhutan Army and Sri Lankan Army, the defence ministry said.

"The theme of the exercise is 'Robust Peace Keeping Operations'. Military observers from the US, UK, Turkey, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Singapore will also be in attendance throughout the exercise," it said.



The year 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Bangladesh and the birth centenary of Rahman.

In reflection of close ties, India

is also hosting a number of events to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1971 war that led to liberation of Bangladesh.

Around 93,000 Pakistani troops had surrendered before the joint forces of the Indian Army and the "Mukti Bahini" on December 16, 1971 that paved the way for the birth of Bangladesh.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh March 26 and 27 during which he attended the golden jubilee celebration of independence of that country.

Assaulted by humans & nature, Taj needs better care

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agra, April 1: The 17th century monument of love, the iconic Taj Mahal in Agra, is feeling the heat of abruptly rising temperature, sand blasting by seasonal dust storms and human apathy.

"The temperature has gone up steeply in the last few days and there have been a series of sand storms," said Surendra Sharma, President of the Braj Mandal Heritage Conservation Society.

Despite a series of directions by the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal, successive governments have been dragging their feet to rejuvenate the Yamuna river

by containing pollution and maintaining flow of water round the year, complained green activist Shrayan Kumar Singh.

After a brief respite during the 180-day lockdown triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic last year, the Taj is again looking pale, notwithstanding the mud therapy and other measures to beautify the monument.

Heritage conservationists in Agra say that if the monument looks pale to the visitors, the reason is the dry and heavily polluted Yamuna that once formed an integral part of the Taj Mahal complex.

Standing tall in the scorching summer sun, the monument of love



is enveloped in yellowish sand from the neighbouring Rajasthan deserts. Any discernible visitor can tell that the summer heat is taking its toll on the Taj Mahal, blasted by sand from

the dry Yamuna bed and the dust-laden winds from the Rajasthan deserts.

The gaps left by illegal mining in the Aravali ranges has raised the

SPM (suspended particulate matter) in Agra. Against a standard of 100 microns per cubic metre, it remains as high as 300, touching 500 during the summer months. The problem is that sandy particles rub against the monument and leave pox marks, making the surface rough, as has been pointed out in many studies.

However, conservationists say that the crisis the Taj confronts comes not merely from nature and pollution, but also from the people -- with too many tourists and vehicles visiting Agra.

The number of vehicles in the city has shot up from around 40,000 in 1985 when Firozabad too was part

of the Agra district, to more than a million now. The opening of the Yamuna Expressway has increased vehicular traffic. The pressure of heavy vehicles on the Delhi-Kolkata, Delhi-Mumbai and Lucknow-Agra National Highways passing through Agra has increased phenomenally.

Adding to its fatigue is the ever-increasing human load. From a few hundred tourists some decades ago, the Taj is now daily visited by thousands of people. The tourism industry that thrives on milking the Taj Mahal wants more sops for the visitors to attract them to Agra, but the conservationists want restrictions imposed to gradually reduce the human load.

national

of the day quote

There are reports that Suwendu Adhikari has claimed Mamata knew the value of every bullet that was fired and the names of those on whom they were fired on. This is the fact, we had said it then and it was correct. The truth has been exposed but it took them more than 10 years to admit this

SITARAM YECHURY | COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST) GENERAL SECRETARY

I have a personal relationship with every person in Nandigram. I am pretty confident to win the election

SUVENDU ADHIKARI | BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY LEADER

After the beautification of Chandni Chowk, tourism would get a major boost, and people coming to Delhi would be attracted to pay a visit to

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Policeman killed in Militants attack

Srinagar: A policeman was killed when militants fired upon the residence of a BJP leader in Nowgam area of the city here Thursday, police said. BJP leader Anwar Ahmad, who is the party's district general secretary for Baramulla and in-charge for Kupwara district, is safe, a police official said. The official said that the militants fired upon the guard post of the BJP leader at Arigam Nowgam in the outskirts of the city here this morning. In the firing, Constable Rameez Raja was injured and rushed to SMHS hospital in the city where doctors declared him brought dead.

Show cause notice to BJP leader

New Delhi: The Election Commission Thursday issued a show cause notice to Assam minister and BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma for allegedly making threatening remarks against opposition leader Hagrama Mohilary of the Bodoland People's Front. He has been asked to respond to the notice by 5 pm April 2. The Congress had approached the EC alleging that Sarma had threatened to send Mohilary to jail by misusing the NIA. The Bodoland People's Front is an ally of the Congress in Assam.

Fire engulfs 40 shops

New Delhi: A fire broke out at a shop and spread to 39 others in the Sabzi Mandi area of Rani Bagh in northwest Delhi Thursday, Delhi Fire Service officials said. No injuries have been reported yet, they said. A call about the fire was received around 11 am after which nine fire tenders were rushed to the spot, a senior fire official said. A short circuit is suspected to be the cause behind the blaze, he said, adding that the fire has been doused and cooling process is underway.

Man killed

Ranchi: A 70-year-old man was axed to death on charges of practicing black magic in Jharkhand's Gumla district. According to the police, the incident took place at Nawatoli village in Gumla district Wednesday night. The villagers informed the police about the incident Thursday morning, following which two persons have been arrested for allegedly killing the elderly man. The victim, who has been identified as Ranthu Munda (70), reportedly practiced sorcery. The arrested duo has been identified as Sudhir Munda and his friend Chotu.



Delhi's virtual school will be like any other regular school. It will have a school ID and dedicated staff. Students will get admitted and will be given unique IDs

MANISH SIDOSIA | DELHI BY CM

DELHI ZOO REOPENS

Delhi Zoo reopened for the public Thursday after remaining closed for almost a year due to the Covid lockdown. Excitement was palpable among the visitors but faced issues in getting online tickets while social distancing norms went for a toss at the entry gate



Mamata cries foul from Nandigram, Guv responds

AGENCIES

Kolkata, April 1: Moments after West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee Thursday dialled Governor Jagdeep Dhankar from Nandigram, from where she is contesting against BJP's Suwendu Adhikari, alleging that there is complete breakdown of law and order.

The Governor assured that the issues raised by her will be looked into by those concerned.

"Issues flagged Mamata Banerjee a while ago on phone have been imparted to the concerned. There is full assurance of the concerned to adherence to rule of law. Am confident all will act in right spirit and earnestness so that democracy flourishes," the West Bengal Governor said from his official Twitter handle.

His remarks came after Banerjee called Dhankar over phone from Nandigram and said that anything might happen at any moment.

She also informed the Governor that there is total breakdown of law and order in the key constituency from where she is up against her protegee-turned-rival Adhikari who dumped her for the BJP.

She also alleged: "People from other states are creating ruckus in Nandigram and I have lodged 63 poll-related complaints since morning, but no action has been taken by the Election Commission."

While on phone with Dhankar, the Trinamool Congress leader alleged that people who are raising slogans are outsiders and they have



PM MODI MAKES HINDUTVA PITCH

Making a strong Hindutva pitch at the hustings in West Bengal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday attacked TMC leaders for calling those wearing saffron, sporting tilak and choti as "rakshas", and declared he does not believe in "seasonal faith". He also asserted a BJP wave was blowing across West Bengal where the party will win over 200 of the state's 294 assembly seats. "Earlier, Mamata Didi had issues with chants of 'Jai Shri Ram', over immersion of Durga Idols. Now TMC has problems with people wearing saffron, sporting tilak and choti (tuft of hair), they are calling them 'rakshas' (demons)," Modi told an election rally in Joynagar.

came from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Earlier in the day, Banerjee, who has been camping in Nandigram for last few days left from her residence around 1 p.m. and reached at a polling booth. Voting in

Nandigram is underway amid multiple allegations of disruptions by the Trinamool Congress.

Earlier in the day, Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha MP and party spokesperson Derek O'Brien said, "BJP and their mind games! Won't work. It is very obvious that they are sensing defeat. And all Trinamool Congress booth agents rock solid." "Rock solid in 354 booths in Nandigram. We have registered complaints for 10 booths. All attempts by CRPF to influence or intimidate voters not working. People determined to have Mamata Banerjee as their MLA will become Chief Minister for the third time."

Despite tight security in 30 assembly segments spread across Purba and Paschim Medinipur districts, Bankura and South 24 Parganas, rival TMC and BJP supporters fought pitched battles in several places in the four districts.

"Till 5 pm, 80.43 per cent polling has been recorded in the state," EC officials said.

Congress demands resignation of Yedi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: The Congress on Thursday demanded that Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa either resign or be sacked to ensure a fair investigation against him in a 2019 corruption case wherein he allegedly tried to lure a JD(S) MLA to the BJP by offering him money.

This comes a day after the Karnataka High Court vacated a stay on investigations into the case. Congress leader Rajeev Shukla said the BJP only talks of morality and cleanliness in politics but does not act against its people accused of corruption.

"Now that the high court has vacated the stay on the probe against the chief minister and ordered an investigation, we feel a fair and independent investigation can only take place if the chief minister tenders his resignation or is sacked from his position," he told reporters. Now the BJP should solicit the resignation of Yediyurappa and the governor should order an investigation against him, he said.



Shukla noted that the issue was "very serious" and a serious investigation should be conducted. In its order on Wednesday, the high court vacated the stay on the investigation into the case registered against Yediyurappa in February 2019, when the JD(S)-Congress coalition was in power in Karnataka.

Over 74 per cent turnout in Assam



AGENCIES

Guwahati, April 1: Over 74.69 per cent of 73.45 lakh voters exercised their franchise till 6 pm in the second phase of polling in Assam Thursday, election officials said, adding that no untoward incident was reported from the 39 constituencies.

Senior election officials and police officers said that no incident of violence was reported so far from the 13 districts where the voting was underway. In a few polling stations, voting was halted for some time due to technical snags in the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), which were soon rectified.

Men, women and first-time voters queued up in front of the polling stations in large numbers well before the voting began at 7 a.m. Polling time has been increased by an hour till 6 p.m. by the election officials in view of the Covid-19 situation.

According to the Chief Electoral Officer of Assam, Nitin Khade, 73,44,631 voters, including 36,09,959 women, are eligible to cast their votes across 10,592 polling stations in the second phase that will decide the fate of candidates in 39 Assembly constituencies. As many

as 556 polling stations are being managed by women officials.

Around 31,000 Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) personnel, along with thousands of state security force personnel, have been deployed to maintain law and order during this phase in which 42,368 polling personnel are engaged.

In Thursday's polling, the electoral fate of 345 candidates, including 26 women aspirants, will be decided.

In the second phase, the fate of several ministers, including Fisheries Minister Parimal Suklabaidya, MoS for Health and Family Welfare Piyush Hazarika, Irrigation Minister Bhabesh Kalita and Deputy Speaker Aminul Haque Laskar, will be decided. Suklabaidya is contesting from Dholai for the seventh time on a BJP ticket, Hazarika from Jagiroad and Kalita from Rangia.

Former Congress minister Gautam Roy is contesting from Katigorah on a BJP ticket, while former Deputy Speaker Dilip Kumar Paul, who resigned from the BJP after he was denied a ticket and was subsequently expelled from the party, is contesting as an Independent candidate from Silchar

Rajasthan launches health insurance scheme for all



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, April 1: Rajasthan Thursday began the registration for an insurance scheme under which each family in the state can claim up to Rs five lakh every year for medical expenses.

The state began the registration for Chiranjeevi Health Insurance Scheme, announced by Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot in the state budget 2021-22. "Rajasthan has become the first state in the country, where each family will get health insurance of Rs 5 lakh each year. People can get registered and be assured of cashless treatment," Gehlot claimed in a tweet.

He said the registrations for the government's cashless treatment for all have begun in the state from today. "It is one of our biggest health care schemes aimed at providing medical relief to all residents of Rajasthan," he said.



Women security personnel stand guard at a polling station during the second phase of West Bengal assembly polls, at Kharagpur in West Midnapur. PTI PHOTO

STRICT VIGIL

NIA PROBE IN MAOIST CASE

31 LOCATIONS IN TELANGANA, AP SEARCHED

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 1: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) carried out searches at 31 locations in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in connection with its probe into the Munchingput Maoist case and recovered cash to the tune of Rs 10 lakh and several other incriminating documents.

The NIA team seized 40 mobile phones, 44 SIM cards, 70 storage devices like hard discs, micro SD cards and flash cards, 184 CDs or DVDs, 19 pen drives, tab, audio recorder, Rs 10 lakhs in cash from one accused, sickles, axe, machetes besides CPI (Maoist) flags, as well as huge number of incriminating documents, handwritten letters of CPI(Maoist) party literature, CPI(Maoist) press notes etc, an NIA spokesperson here said.

The searches were spread across eight districts of Andhra Pradesh -- Visakhapatnam, Guntur, Prakasam, Srikakulam, Kurnool, Krishna, East Godavari and Kadapa and four districts of Telangana -- Ranga Reddy, Hyderabad, Medchal-Malkajgiri and Medak.

The case relates to furthering the activities of the proscribed organisation, CPI (Maoist) in Andhra Pradesh in the guise of frontal organisations. So far six people have been arrested in the case. The official said that the case was originally registered November 23 last year by Visakhapatnam Police and was re-registered by NIA March 7 this year.

The case pertains to seizure of revolutionary literature of CPI (Maoist) and explosives substances from accused Pangi Naganna, who worked as a journalist. Naganna was intercepted by Munchingput Police in Visakhapatnam Rural during vehicle checking.

During probe it was revealed that Naganna was passing information about the police movements to the leaders of CPI(Maoist) and has also been involved in instigating the villagers to obstruct combing operations of police and prevent them from entering into the villages, besides motivating the villagers to revolt against the police parties and hold rallies against the government.

India slips 28 ranks to 140 on gender gap index

THE COUNTRY HAD RANKED 112TH AMONG 153 COUNTRIES IN THE GLOBAL GENDER GAP INDEX 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: India has slipped 28 places to rank 140th among 156 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021, becoming the third-worst performer in South Asia. According to the report, India has closed 62.5 per cent of its gender gap till date.

Noting that the decline also took place on the economic participation and opportunity subindex, albeit to a lesser extent, the report said India's gender gap on this dimension widened by 3 per cent this year, leading to a 32.6 per cent gap closed till date.

Most of the decline occurred on the political empowerment subindex, where India regressed 13.5 percentage points, with a significant decline in the number of

women ministers (from 23.1 per cent in 2019 to 9.1 per cent in 2021).

"Among the drivers of this decline is a decrease in women's labour force participation rate, which fell from 24.8 per cent to 22.3 per cent. In addition, the share of women in professional and technical roles declined further to 29.2 per cent. The share of women in senior and managerial positions also remains low: only 14.6 per cent of these positions are held by women and there are only 8.9 per cent firms with female top managers," the report said.

Further, the estimated earned income of women in India is only one-fifth of men's, which puts the country among the bottom 10 globally on this indicator, it said.

Discrimination against women is also reflected in the health and survival subindex statistics. With 93.7 per cent of this gap closed to date, India ranks among the bottom five countries in this subindex.

Wide gaps in sex ratio at birth are due to the high incidence of gender-based sex-selective practices. In addition, more than one in

four women has faced intimate violence in her lifetime, the report said.

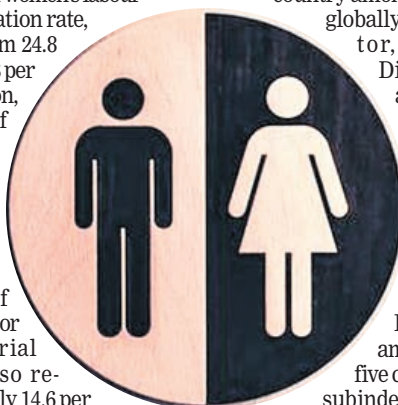
"Conversely, 96.2 per cent of the educational attainment subindex gender gap has been closed, with parity achieved in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Yet, gender gaps persist in terms of literacy: one third of women are illiterate (34.2 per cent) compared to 17.6 per cent of men," it added. Among India's neighbours, Bangladesh ranked 65, Nepal 106, Pakistan 153, Afghanistan 156, Bhutan 130 and Sri Lanka 116.

Among regions, South Asia is the second-lowest performer on the index, with 62.3 per cent of its overall gender gap closed. "Within the region, a wide gulf separates the best-performing country, Bangladesh, which has closed 71.9 per cent of its gender gap so far, from Afghanistan, which has only closed 44.4 per cent of its gap.

"India is the third-worst performer in the region, having closed 62.5 per cent of its gap. Because of its large population, India's performance has a substantial impact on the region's overall performance," the report said. In South Asia, only Pakistan and Afghanistan ranked below India.

The report stated that India, home to 0.65 billion women, has widened its gender gap from almost 66.8 per cent one year ago to 62.5 per cent this year. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, the income of an average woman is below 16 per cent of that of an average man, while in India it is 20.7 per cent, it said.

As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be felt, the global gender gap has increased by a generation from 99.5 years to 135.6 years, the report noted.



international



The regional security and economic consequences are getting worse and could deteriorate further. The influx of refugees at the Indian and Thai borders and elsewhere is ominous and likely just the beginning
CHRISTINE SCHRANER BURGNER | UN SPECIAL ENVOY ON MYANMAR

MARCH OF THE MUMMIES
The mummified remains of 22 ancient Egyptian kings and queens will be paraded through the streets of Cairo Saturday, in a royal procession to a new resting place



of the day quote

For the economy overall, it hasn't worked because Wall Street didn't build this country. You, the great middle class, built this country. And unions built the middle class. And it's time
JOE BIDEN | US PRESIDENT

BioNTech believes that the efficacy of the vaccine has not been affected, so members of the public who have taken the BioNTech vaccine need not be worried
CONSTANCE CHAN | DIRECTOR OF HEALTH, HONG KONG

The measure is intended to prevent the infections from spreading further so that we don't have to issue another state of emergency. We will do everything we can to keep the infections from becoming a big wave
YOSHIIDE SUGA | PRIME MINISTER, JAPAN

Biden proposes largest infra plan since WWII

The Prez described his ambitious plan as a "once-in-a-generation" investment to rebuild the backbone of America

Washington, April 1: President Joe Biden has unveiled a whopping USD 2 trillion investment proposal to upgrade America's crumbling infrastructure, address the challenge posed by climate change and boost the US' global competitive edge against China.

Touting his ambitious plan as a "once-in-a-generation" investment to rebuild the backbone of America, Biden said it would lead to generational progress that will generate good-paying jobs and economic growth.

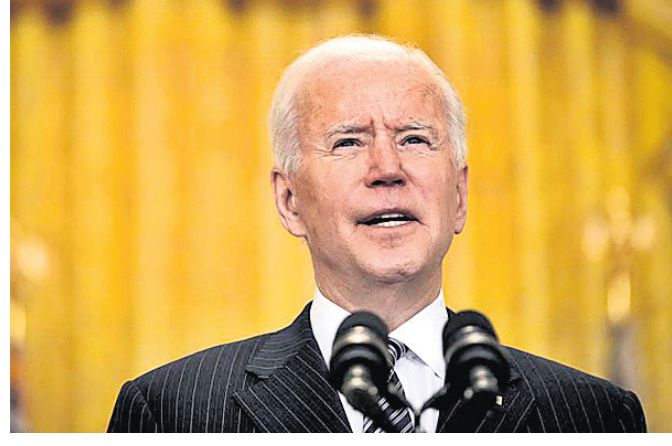
"The rest of the world is closing in and closing in fast. We can't allow this to continue. American Jobs Plan is the biggest increase in our federal non-defence research and development spending on record," Biden said in his address to the nation from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Wednesday.

"It's going to create the strongest, most resilient, innovative economy in the world," Biden said.

The plan is aimed to put the US in a position to out-compete China, which he said, along with other countries, "are eating our lunch."

He said failing to make these investments will add "to our debt and effectively puts our children at a disadvantage relative to our competitors. That's what crumbling infrastructure does. And our infrastructure is crumbling. We're ranked 13th in the world," the president pointed out.

"Our adversaries are worried about us building this critical infrastructure," he said, noting that the decline in America's gross domestic product means "the rest of the world is closing in, and closing in fast." "What I'm proposing is a one-



Trump era H-1B visa bans expire

US President Joe Biden Thursday let the ban on foreign workers visa, in particular H-1B, lapse as the notification issued by his predecessor Donald Trump expired, a move which is likely to benefit thousands of Indian IT professionals. Amidst a national lockdown and the COVID-19 crisis, Trump in June last year issued a proclamation that suspended entry to the US of applicants for several temporary or "non-immigrant" visa categories, including H-1B, arguing that these visas presented a risk to the US labour market during the economic recovery. December 31, 2021, Trump extended the order to March 31, 2021, noting that an extension was warranted as the pandemic continued to disrupt American's lives, and high levels of unemployment and job loss were still presenting serious economic challenges to workers across the US. Biden did not issue a fresh proclamation for the ban on H-1B visas to continue after March 31.

time capital investment of roughly USD 2 trillion in America's future,

spread largely over eight years," he said. The American Jobs Plan, he said will lead to a transformational progress in our effort to tackle climate change with American jobs and American ingenuity.

It will protect the community from billions of dollars of damage from historic super storms, floods, wildfires, droughts, year after year, by making America's infrastructure more secure and resilient and seizing incredible opportunities for American workers and American farmers in a clean energy future. Biden said it will generate historic job growth, historic economic growth, help businesses to compete internationally, create more revenue as well.

In fact, it's the largest American jobs investment since World War Two. It will create millions of jobs, good-paying jobs. It will grow the economy, make us more competitive around the world, promote our national security interests, and put us in a position to win the global competition with China in the upcoming years.

14K accused in B'desh protests

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Dhaka, April 1: Around 14,000 people have been accused in numerous cases filed over the violent protests in Bangladesh organised by the Hefazat-e-Islam militant group since March 26 against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka.

A total of 14 people, 10 in Brahmanbaria and four in Chittagong, were killed in the ensuing violence when the militants staged attacks on police, government and law enforcement personnel officials. For the carnage in Brahmanbaria, over 8,000 people have been accused in seven cases and 14 suspects were arrested so far, the police confirmed on Wednesday.

At least 3,000 unnamed Hefazat members were accused for their involvement in the pre-planned vandalism, arson attacks and massacre in Chittagong and Munshiganj.

March 26, when Modi arrived in Dhaka, a group of Hefazat militants attacked devotees outside the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the capital city. The same day, the militant outfit called for a day-long strike across the country March 28 and announced a country-wide protest March 27 for the deaths of its members during clashes in different districts.



In the pre-planned massacre, there was also significant damage and looting at the Anandamoyi Kali temple, the biggest temple of Asia. Besides, private property, vehicles of police and fire service, cultural establishments and government properties and all the documents of land office of Hathajari and Brahmanbaria were set ablaze.

INDO-PAK TRADE

'Pak Cabinet rejects import proposal'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, April 1: In a volte-face, Pakistan's Cabinet Thursday rejected the proposal of a high-powered committee to import cotton and sugar from India, with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi asserting that there can be no normalisation of ties until New Delhi reverses its decision to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

The somersault came a day after the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) under newly appointed Finance Minister Hammad Azhar Wednesday decided to buy the two key items from India, lifting a nearly two-year long ban on their import from the neighbouring country.

Qureshi said the issue of import of cotton and sugar from India was discussed during the Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan. "An impression is being created that relations with India have become normal and trade has been restored..." Qureshi said in a video message. "On this impression, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet had a consensus opinion that until India reviewed the unilateral actions of Aug 5, 2019, it would not be possible to normalise ties with India."

Talking to reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Minister for Science and Technology Fawad

Chaudhry said that the Cabinet discussed the issue of ties and trade with India and decided that things cannot progress until India revokes its August 5, 2019 move on Kashmir.

"We want to cooperate with India but the first condition is that it should go back to pre August 5, 2019 position in Kashmir," he said.

Finance Minister Azhar's announcement Wednesday to import cotton and sugar from India had raised hopes of a partial revival of bilateral trade relations, which were suspended after the August 5, 2019 decision of New Delhi to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. India is the world's biggest producer of cotton and the second biggest sugar manufacturer.

Azhar's decision became doubtful since afternoon but officials kept mum and finally the first confirmation came from Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari, who is known for her hawkish stand on Kashmir.

"Today Cabinet stated clearly NO trade with India," Mazari tweeted soon after the Cabinet meeting.

Mazari said that Prime Minister Khan, who chaired the first Cabinet meeting after testing COVID-19 positive March 20, "made it clear that there can be no normalisation of relations with India until they reverse" their actions viz Kashmir of August 5, 2019.

SHORT TAKES

Four killed in Calif shooting

San Francisco: At least four people were killed and two others injured during a shooting incident in the US state of California, according to authorities. The incident took place Wednesday evening in the city of Orange, 55 km southeast of Los Angeles. Xinhua news agency reported. The Orange Police Department said that they responded to reports of a shooting at around 5.30 pm and then found "multiple victims at the scene including fatalities" where shots were being fired.

Pak arrests 6 terrorists

Lahore: Pakistan's security agencies have arrested six terrorists belonging to Afghanistan-based Tehrik-i-Taliban terror group who were plotting attacks against army personnel, officials said. According to the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), four terrorists were arrested in Rawalpindi, while two were nabbed in Lahore - the two main cities of Punjab province. During an intelligence-based operation in Rawalpindi Wednesday, law enforcement agencies arrested four terrorists involved in a grenade blast.

7 HK activists convicted

Hong Kong: Seven pro-democracy advocates were convicted Thursday for organizing and participating in an unlawful assembly during massive anti-government protests in 2019, as Hong Kong continues its crackdown on dissent. The seven activists include media tycoon and founder of the Apple Daily tabloid Jimmy Lai, as well as 82-year-old Martin Lee, a veteran of the city's democracy movement. Lai had already held without bail on other charges related to his pro-democracy activities.

55k animals dead in fire

Berlin: A fire at a pig-breeding facility in northeastern Germany is believed to have killed more than 55,000 animals, the operator said Thursday. The fire broke out Tuesday at the facility in Alt Tellen, in Germany's northeastern corner. It spread quickly, in part through ventilation shafts, and destroyed the stalls where the animals were kept. The cause of the blaze remains unclear.

Europe's vax drive 'unacceptably slow'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 1: European nations' immunization campaigns against COVID-19 are "unacceptably slow" and risk prolonging the pandemic, a senior World Health Organization official said Thursday.

Dr Hans Kluge, WHO's regional director for Europe, said vaccines "present our best way out of this pandemic," but noted that to date, only 10% of Europe's population has received one dose and that only 4% have been fully protected with two doses. "As long as coverage remains low, we need to apply the same pub-

lic health and social measures as we have in the past, to compensate for delayed schedules," Kluge said.

Even those numbers hide the true scope of the problems facing the European Union's 27 nations, where only about 5.6 per cent of its people have had a first vaccine shot, according to the bloc. In Britain, that figure is 46 per cent of its population. Kluge warned European governments against having "a false sense of security" for having started their immunization campaigns. He noted that Europe remains the second-most affected region in the world in terms of new coronavirus infections and deaths.

WHO said new COVID-19 infections are increasing in every age group except those over 80, in a sign that vaccination efforts are having an impact in slowing outbreaks. But the UN Health agency said "early action" to stop the virus' spread must be taken in the absence of high immunization rates.

SILVERN SMILE



Youths, who covered themselves from head to toe in silver paint to become 'manusia silver' (silvermen), as part of their act to make a living, laugh as they ride on the back of a truck in Jakarta, Indonesia

Nepal to conduct census in pandemic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, April 1: Nepal's statistical agency is preparing to conduct the national population census from May 9 despite the coronavirus pandemic, an official has said. The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), a government-owned body under the National Planning Commission, has already concluded training for the facilitators, supervisors and surveyors for the purpose and is mobilising around 55,000 volunteers and surveyors for the census that takes place every 10 years.

The agency is spending Rs 4 billion to conduct the census this time. The ongoing corona pandemic is not going to affect the national census, said a senior officer at the CBS. "Even if there is a lockdown, the census wouldn't be affected much since only one surveyor would reach a family and the interview can be conducted outside the home in an open space by maintaining social distancing," Hem Raj Regmi, Deputy Director-General of the CBS told.

Ancient coins may solve mystery of murderous pirate

THE VILLAIN IN THIS TALE: A MURDEROUS ENGLISH PIRATE WHO BECAME THE WORLD'S MOST-WANTED CRIMINAL AFTER PLUNDERING A SHIP CARRYING MUSLIM PILGRIMS HOME TO INDIA FROM MECCA, THEN ELUDED CAPTURE BY POSING AS A SLAVE TRADER

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Warwick (Rhode Island), April 1: A handful of coins unearthed from a pick-your-own-fruit orchard in rural Rhode Island and other random corners of New England may help solve one of the planet's oldest cold cases.

The villain in this tale: a murderous English pirate who became the world's most-wanted criminal after plundering a ship carrying Muslim pilgrims home to India from Mecca, then eluded capture by posing as a slave trader.

"It's a new history of a nearly perfect crime," said Jim Bailey, an amateur historian and metal detectorist who found the first intact 17th-century Arabian coin in a meadow in Middletown.



That ancient pocket change — the oldest ever found in North America — could explain how pirate Capt. Henry Every vanished into the wind.

Sept 7, 1695, the pirate ship Fancy, commanded by Every, ambushed and captured the Ganj-i-Sawai, a royal vessel owned by Indian emperor Aurangzeb, then one of the world's most powerful men. Aboard were not only the worshippers returning from their pilgrimage, but tens of millions of dollars' worth of gold and silver. What followed was one of the most lucrative and heinous robberies of all time.

Historical accounts say his band tortured and killed the men aboard the Indian ship and raped the women before escaping to the Bahamas, a haven for pirates. But word quickly

spread of their crimes, and English King William III — under enormous pressure from a scandalized India and the East India Company trading giant — put a large bounty on their heads.

"If you Google first worldwide manhunt, it comes up as everybody was looking for these guys," Bailey said. Until now, historians only knew that Every eventually sailed to Ireland in 1696, where the trail went cold. But Bailey says the coins he and others have found are evidence the notorious pirate first made his way to the American colonies, where he and his crew used the plunder for day-to-day expenses while on the run.

The first complete coin surfaced in 2014 at Sweet Berry Farm in Middletown, a spot that had piqued

Bailey's curiosity two years earlier after he found old colonial coins, an 18th-century shoe buckle and some musket balls. Waving a metal detector over the soil, he got a signal, dug down and hit literal paydirt: a darkened, dime-sized silver coin he initially assumed was either Spanish or money minted by the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Peering closer, the Arabic text on the coin got his pulse racing. "I thought, Oh my God," he said.

Research confirmed the exotic coin was minted in 1693 in Yemen. That immediately raised questions, Bailey said, since there's no evidence that American colonists struggling to eke out a living in the New World traveled to anywhere in the Middle East to trade until decades later.

business

of the day quote

The PLI scheme will go a long way and prove to be a milestone in Indian brands reaching global shelves quickly. It will boost the manufacturing activity and boost exports in the Food and Beverage sector and lead the country to be a credible player in the global value chain soon

MOHIT SINGLA | FOUNDER CHAIRMAN, TRADE PROMOTION COUNCIL OF INDIA

The formal retail spaces, especially shopping centres are controlled spaces and have SOPs in place. They have got the ability to adhere to hygiene standards and can definitely ensure social distancing, as compared to local markets

KUMAR RAJAGOPALAN | CEO, RETAILERS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

At Mahindra we are witnessing very good momentum in demand and have a strong pipeline of bookings across our SUV range of Bolero, Scorpio, XUV300, All-New Thar and also the Bolero Pik-up. Infact Bolero volumes for March has been the highest in this financial year

VEEJAY NAKRA | CEO, AUTOMOTIVE DIVISION, M&M

SHORT TAKES

Govt notifies ITR forms for 2020-21

New Delhi: The Income Tax department has notified forms for filing I-T returns for 2020-21 fiscal, the CBDT said Thursday. "Keeping in view the ongoing crisis due to Covid and to facilitate the taxpayers, no significant change has been made to the ITR Forms in comparison to the last year's ITR Forms. "Only the bare minimum changes necessitated due to amendments in the IT Act, 1961 have been made," the CBDT notified.

Chadha takes over as L&T Tech CEO

New Delhi: L&T Technology Services Thursday said Amit Chadha has taken charge as the company's CEO and managing director. Amit Chadha has taken over as CEO and MD of LTTS, effective April 1, in line with previous disclosures made to stock exchanges dated October 19, 2020, according to a statement. Prior to his elevation, Chadha was serving as the deputy CEO and whole-time board member, it added.

IL&FS completes stake sale in China

Mumbai: Debt-laden Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS) Thursday announced completion of 49% stake sale in its Chinese road asset - Chongqing Yuhe Expressway Co Ltd (CYEC). The stake is sold to China Merchants & PingAn Infrastructure Phase 1 Equity Investment Fund (Tianjin) Co Ltd (PingAn), a fund jointly owned by PingAn Insurance and China Merchants, a release from IL&FS Group said.

Tata Power takes over in NE Odisha

New Delhi: Tata Power Thursday said it has taken over power distribution operations in north-eastern Odisha from April 1. Tata Power has taken over the management and operations of NESCO (North Eastern Electricity Supply Company of Odisha) from April 1, 2021, upon completion of the sale process, as per a regulatory filing. Now, NESCO will operate under TPNO DL.



Paytm is 30-50% larger than its competition. Dominates digital payments with over 1.2 billion monthly transactions led by growth in merchant payments

NARENDRA YADAV | VICE-PRESIDENT, PAYTM

WIPRO TO BUY OZ FIRM

Global software major Wipro has announced buying Australia-based Ampion for \$117 million (Rs 858 crore), as it provides cyber security, Dev Ops (software development and IT operations) and engineering services



GST mop-up at all-time high of ₹1.23L cr in March

THE CENTRAL GST STOOD AT ₹22,973 CRORE, STATE GST AT ₹29,329 CRORE, INTEGRATED GST AT ₹62,842 CRORE AND CESS AT ₹8,757 CRORE. GST REVENUE IN MARCH 2020 WAS ₹97,590 CRORE

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 1: GST collections remained above the ₹1-lakh-crore mark for the sixth month in a row in March, rising 27% annually to record ₹1.23 lakh crore, the finance ministry said Thursday. The ministry said the steep increasing trend in goods and services tax is a clear indication of rapid economic recovery post pandemic.

Closer monitoring against fake-billing, deep data analytics using data from multiple sources including GST, income tax and customs IT systems and effective tax administration have also contributed to the steady increase in tax revenue over past few months, it added.

The gross GST revenue collected in March 2021 stood at ₹1,23,902 crore. Of this, central GST stood at ₹22,973 crore, state GST at ₹29,329 crore, integrated GST at ₹62,842 crore (including ₹31,097 crore collected on import of goods) and Cess at ₹8,757 crore (including ₹935 crore collected on import of goods). GST revenue in March 2020 was ₹97,590 crore.

"GST revenues during March 2021 are the highest since the introduction of GST.

"In line with the trend of recovery in the GST revenues over past



five months, the revenues for the month of March 2021 are 27% higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year," the ministry said in a statement.

During the month, revenues from import of goods were 70% higher and the revenues from domestic transaction were 17% more than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year.

The GST revenues declined 41% and 8% in the June and September quarters, respectively. However, with economic recovery, the mop-up grew 8% and 14% in December and March quarters of this financial year.

GST collections, which directly reflect the state of economic activity, had plummeted to a record low of ₹32,172 crore in April 2020, after the government imposed a nationwide lockdown to curb the

spread of coronavirus.

The lockdown, categorised by several agencies as one of the strictest in the world, pummelled the economy, as demand dried up and non-essential businesses were shuttered. In the April-June quarter, the economy contracted by the steepest ever 24.4%, and 7.3% in September quarter. However, in October-December it came back in positive territory with 0.4% growth.

As restrictions were gradually lifted, many sectors of the economy were able to spring back into action although output remains well below the pre-pandemic levels.

Deloitte India Senior Director MS Mani said, "In addition to the trend of higher overall GST collections over the past six months, all major states have shown a significant increase compared to the previous year."

PhonePe crosses 1bn UPI transactions in March this year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: Fintech major PhonePe Thursday said it has hit an annual total payment value (TPV) run rate of \$388 billion dollars in March this year. The company, which competes with players like Paytm and Google Pay in the Indian digital payments market, said it has crossed the one-billion mark in terms of UPI transactions in the month of March.

"We crossed a billion UPI transactions in March, while our total transactions across all payment instruments (UPI, wallet and cards) were at 1.3 billion. We also hit an annual TPV run rate of \$388 billion in March," a PhonePe spokesperson said. TPV run rate refers to the total transaction value through the platform in a given time period.



The number of transactions through BHIM UPI more than doubled at 273 crore (2.73 billion) in March this year as against 125 crore (1.25 billion) transactions in the year-ago period, as per data from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

The value of transactions during March 2021 by way of UPI stood at ₹5,04,886 crore, while transactions worth ₹2,06,462 crore were registered in the same month last year, the data showed.

Major auto firms log robust sales in March on pent up demand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: Leading automakers Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai and Tata Motors on Thursday reported robust sales in March as a shift towards personal mobility and pent up demand continued to help companies push dispatches to their respective retail partners.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor, Honda Cars and Mahindra and Mahindra (M&M) also reported strong sales last month as compared to the year-ago period, when dispatches were adversely impacted due to the impending transition to BSVI from April 2020 and the nationwide lockdown to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India said its domestic sales stood at 1,49,518 units last month. The auto major had reported sales of 76,976 units in March 2020.

Both dispatches and production were hit last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Domestic sales in March 2020 had dropped about 48 per cent due to Covid related disruptions. It will be seen that domestic sales in March 2021 have only recovered to March 2019 levels," MSI said in a statement.

Sales of mini cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, stood at 24,653 units last month. The company had sold 15,988 units in March 2020.

Similarly, sales of compact segment vehicles, including Swift, Celerio, Ignis, Baleno and Dzire



The PV industry witnessed strong growth in the 4th quarter last fiscal on a low base with robust demand for personal mobility and new launches driving demand. The vertical posted its highest ever sales in nine years, in March and the 4th quarter

SHAIKESH CHANDRA | PRESIDENT, PV BUSINESS UNIT, TATA MOTORS

stood at 82,201 units last month. The company had reported dispatches of 40,519 cars a year ago.

Utility vehicle sales, including Vitara Brezza, S-Cross and Ertiga, stood at 26,174 units last month. The company had sold 11,904 units in the year-ago month, MSI said.

MSI said its total domestic sales dropped to 13,23,396 units in 2020-21, from 14,36,124 in 2019-20.

Rival Hyundai Motor India said its domestic sales last month stood at 52,600 units. The company had dispatched 26,300 units in March 2020 amid disruptions in sale and production activities.

BIZ BUZZ

All new BMW M 1000 RR hits the road



Bhubaneswar: BMW Motorrad India launched the all-new BMW M 1000 RR - the first M model from BMW Motorrad in India. Available as completely built-up units (CBU), the motorcycles can be booked at all BMW Motorrad India dealerships. The new model is fitted with a newly developed water/oil cooled 4-cylinder in-line engine with a displacement of 999 cc. It generates a peak output of 212 hp (156 kW) at 14,500 rpm and a maximum torque of 113 Nm at 11,000 rpm to deliver supreme level of engine power. The M RR sprints from 0-100 km in 3.1 seconds and can achieve maximum speed of 306 km/h. The motorcycle is available in two variants such as BMW M 1000 RR and BMW M 1000 RR Competition at an ex-showroom price of ₹42 lakh and ₹45 lakh respectively.

Samsung launches 5G variant Galaxy S20 FE

Bhubaneswar: Samsung India launched the 5G variant of Galaxy S20 Fan Edition in India. Galaxy S20 FE 5G is powered by Qualcomm Snapdragon 865 processor and comes with 4500mAh battery that lasts all day. It features wireless power share and wireless fast charging 2.0 and supports 25W Super-Fast charging. The Galaxy S20 FE 5G ensures end-to-end hardware and software security with enhanced Knox Security. It is IP68 certified which makes it dust and water resistant. Galaxy S20 FE 5G has 8GB RAM and 128GB storage with up to 1TB micro SD card support. The triple rear camera features powerful 30X Space Zoom that lets you get close to your subject to capture the shot. The Single Take feature allows you to capture up to 14 different formats of photos and videos in a single click.



PPT handled 114.55 MMT of cargo during FY 20-21



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: Paradip Port registered a record cargo handling of 114.55 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) cargos in FY 20-21 marking its 100 MMT of cargo handling feat for 4 consecutive years in row, said Vinit Kumar, Chairman of Paradip Port Trust.

Addressing the media, PPT Chairman said, "The achievement of highest ever cargo handling 100 MMT of cargo again in the FY 20-21, is despite two of its existing berths are not available for handling of cargo, since these are under mechanisation process."

PPT achieved all time traffic throughput of 114.55 Million Metric Tonnes during the year 2020-21 as against the previous year's traffic of 112.68 million metric tonnes exhibiting a growth of 1.65%.

PPT achieved all time traffic throughput of 114.55 MMT during the year 2020-21 as against the previous year's traffic of 112.68 MMT exhibiting a growth of 1.65%

"In the month of March, 2021 the Port has also handled highest ever monthly total of 11.64 Million Metric Tonnes, as against the previous record of 11.17 MMT in January 2021 in the current fiscal, Kumar said.

He also mentioned that the Port's profit before tax stands at ₹722 crore which is an increase 6.02% over last fiscal which stood at ₹681 crore.

The chairman also highlighted about various projects which are under different stages of implementation.

"Over ₹2000 crore worth of projects for port modernisation are under implementation. These are mechanisation of 3 existing EQ berths to 30 MMTPA capacities for handling thermal coal exports at an approximate cost of ₹1440 crore, development of a New Coal Import Berth of 10 MMTPA capacity at an approximate cost of ₹650 crore, he added.

Development of Western Dock of capacity 25 MMTPA at a cost of ₹3,005 crore has been recently approved by the Government of India and the project is now in tendering stage.

On completion, this will transform the Port with facilities to handle Cape size vessels.

DMF introduces JRPY in Sundargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: For the first time in state, Job Readiness Program for Youth (JRPY) was started at Rangiamunda, Sundargarh on the day of Utkal Divas. The District Mineral Foundation (DMF) in District of Sundargarh introduced the program to help the youth in the District, especially in the Mining Affected Areas, in enhancing their employability and self-employability by developing various competencies within them.

The program has been inaugurated at of Sewak, an authorized learning centre of OKCL by District Collector of Sundargarh Nikhil Pavan Kalyan in presence of Dr Manoranjan Puthal, Managing Director, OKCL and Amiyakanta Naik, Chairman, Sewak Computer Center.



JRPY is a unique 320 hours (comprising 4 Modules) in the context of 21st Century's emerging challenges and opportunities to enhance employability, self-employability, digital freelancing, physical freelancing, and entrepreneurship through this programme. The learners will be equipped with following skills like digital skills, english language skills, communication skills, soft skills, and freelancing skills.

'65% INTEND TO TRAVEL FOR LEISURE, ADVENTURE IN 2021'

The workation trend is also picking up steam in India with travellers looking for a change of scenery as they fulfill their work obligations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 1: With the rollout of Covid-19 vaccines, almost 65% of travellers interviewed said they are keen to travel for leisure and adventure this year in an attempt to leave behind the monotony of 2020, according to a survey.

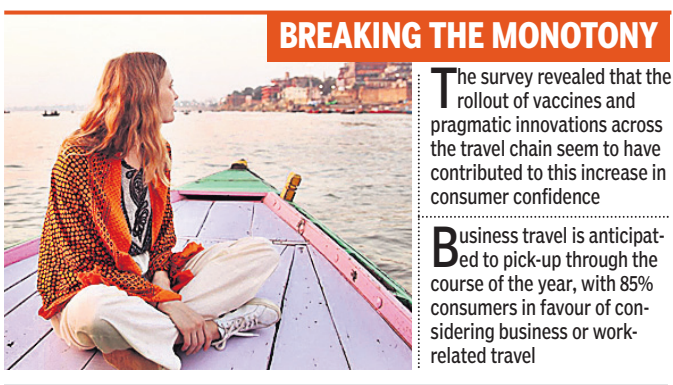
While 2020 witnessed the rise of essential travel, the new and evolved

2021 Indians are looking for adventure and are keen on exploring new destinations, in an attempt to break away from the monotony of 2020, as the pandemic restricted movement, according to InterMiles second travel survey.

The survey revealed that the roll-out of vaccines and pragmatic innovations across the travel chain seem to have contributed to this increase in consumer confidence as nearly 65% respondents showed intent to travel for leisure and adventure in 2021.

The survey is based on responses received from over 11,500 InterMiles across India in January 2021.

Further, the survey found that after spending almost a year distancing socially 54% Indians said



Given the unpredictability and arbitrary nature of the Covid-19 virus, consumers want to ensure their travel plans are as flexible as possible at minimum cost

they want to travel to meet family and friends. Business and corporate travel,

BREAKING THE MONOTONY

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eller priorities.

However, business travel is anticipated to pick-up through the course of the year, with 85% consumers in favour of considering business or work-related travel in 2021, it stated.

Meanwhile, the workation (work + vacation) trend is also picking up steam in India with travellers looking for a change of scenery as they fulfill their work obligations.

Mirroring and supporting this trend, India is already seeing the advent of several backpacking hostels, budget-friendly work-centric rentals, campervans and workation packages, it added.

Around 39% respondents said they are still not comfortable with any mode of public transport in-

cluding taxis, autos, trains and buses.

While travel post-Covid has predominantly been dependent on visual and actual assurance through safety and hygiene measures along with travel advisories issued by destinations, 'flexibility' seems to be the new buzzword on the block, the survey stated.

Given the unpredictability and arbitrary nature of the Covid-19 virus, consumers want to ensure their travel plans are as flexible as possible at minimum cost, it said.

According to the survey, 64% respondents look for flexibility to change dates before making concrete travel decisions, while 62% look for last minute free cancellations, it adds.

OSAKA'S WINNING RUN ENDS

Hazlewood opts out of IPL to keep himself fresh

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami, April 1: As Naomi Osaka's 23-match winning streak neared an end, she paused before serving to crane her neck and study the sky, as if seeking intervention from above.

Then she carried on, and so did No.23 seed Maria Sakkari, who upset Osaka 6-0, 6-4 in the quarter-finals of the Miami Open. "The more stuff like this happens, the more I'll learn from it," the No.2-ranked Osaka said.

The defeat was her first since February 2020, and it ended any chance of reclaiming the No.1 ranking this week from Ash Barty, who is in the semifinals.

Sakkari will next play No.8 seed Bianca Andreescu of Canada, who dropped serve eight times but still outlasted unseeded Sara Sorribes Tormo 6-4, 3-6, 6-3. The other women's semifinal Thursday will pit No.1-seeded Ash Barty against No.5 Elina Svitolina.

Osaka won her fourth Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in February, but in five Miami appearances she has never advanced beyond the quarterfinals. She said couldn't get comfortable on the



MARIA SAKKARI

tourament's hard-court surface. Against Sakkari, the only Greek woman ranked in the top 250, Osaka lost 15 consecutive points on her serve to fall behind and blew a 4-1 lead in the second set. She faced a break point on seven of her eight service games.

Sakkari earned her sixth career

win over a top-five opponent. She's still in the tournament only because she saved six match points in the previous round before beating American Jessica Pegula.

In men's play, 19-year-old Italian Jannik Sinner earned his first semifinal berth in an ATP Tour top-level event by beating No.32-seeded Alexander Bublik 7-6(7-5), 6-4.

Bublik smiled as he congratulated the No. 21-seeded Sinner at the net. "You're not a human, man," Bublik joked. "You're 15 years old and you play like this? Good job."

Osaka made just 41 per cent of her first serves and paid a price, because Sakkari aggressively attacked the second set. Sakkari also served well and would repeatedly extend rallies until Osaka made an error.

Osaka took a 40-0 lead in the opening game, but didn't win another point on her serve until the second set. When she ended the drought, she received a big ovation from the small crowd, which she followed up with her best stretch of tennis.

But Sakkari rallied. From 40-0 down she won five consecutive points, hitting one last thunderous return to break for a 5-4 lead. She then coolly served out the victory.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, April 1: Australia and Chennai Super Kings fast bowler Josh Hazlewood has pulled out of the upcoming edition of the IPL to take a small break from cricket and keep himself fresh for the Ashes and the T20 World Cup later this year.

Hazlewood was to depart with other Australia's IPL-bound players and join CSK but decided to skip the cash-rich league, which will start April 9 and go on till May 30, and spend time at home for the next two months.

The 30-year-old played three games for CSK in the IPL last season when the tournament was staged in the UAE in late 2020.

"It's been a long 10 months in bubbles and quarantine at different times, so I decided to have a rest from cricket and spend some time at home and in Australia in the next two months," Hazlewood was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au.

"We've got a big winter ahead. The West Indies is going to be a long tour, with Bangladesh (T20 tour) potentially thrown on the end of that. Then potentially the T20 World Cup leading into the Ashes,

so it's a big 12 months.

"As it always is with Australia, and I want to give myself the best chance to be mentally and physically ready for that," he added.

The right-arm fast bowler follows compatriots Josh Philippe (RCB) and Mitchell Marsh (SRH) in withdrawing from the IPL, while some other Australians may consider opting out also, according to the report.

Hazlewood has been under restrictions from July last year before leaving for England with Australia's limited-overs team where he was in strict bio-secure lockdown before heading to the UAE for the IPL where again safety protocols were tight.

His return to Australia in November started with two weeks in hotel isolation in Adelaide before moving into the men's international bubble along with the visiting Indians for the Test series.

The bubble with India ended in late January and Hazlewood was set to quarantine again having been named in Australia's Test squad to travel to South Africa. But that tour was postponed due to safety reasons and he has since been representing New South Wales at domestic level.

GERMANY HIT ANOTHER LOW UNDER LOEW

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, April 1: Germany's first World Cup qualifying loss in 20 years added another blemish to the final months of coach Joachim Loew's 15-year reign in charge of the team.

Germany's 35-match unbeaten run in World Cup qualifying — a streak dating back to 2001 — ended with a stunning 1-2 home loss to North Macedonia Wednesday that left the team sitting third in its group after three games. It was only the country's third ever loss in qualifying for the World Cup since since 1934, the other two coming against Portugal in 1985, when it was West Germany, and the famous 5-1 thrashing by England 20 years ago.

Loew, who led Germany to the 2014 World Cup title, is stepping down as coach after the European Championship. After exiting the World Cup in the group stage in 2018, the Euros could cause the Germans more pain given they are in the same group as reigning champion Portugal and world champion France. In November, they lost 6-0 to Spain for their worst defeat since 1931.

The road to Qatar could be bumpy, too, for Loew's successor. In Group J, Germany has slumped to third place after three games — behind North Macedonia and 99th-ranked Armenia, which beat Romania 3-2 for a third straight win having trailed after 87 minutes in Yerevan.



Goran Pandev of North Macedonia scored the opener in first-half stoppage time. Ilkay Gundogan equalised from the penalty spot but after Timo Werner missed a golden chance to put Germany ahead and potentially earn the team a 19th straight World Cup qualifying victory, Eljif Elmas scored the winner for North Macedonia in the 85th at the end of a counterattack.

Spain's 3-1 victory at home to Kosovo attracted attention because of the host country's non-recognition of the visitors, with the Spanish national broadcaster disregarding normal protocol by not mentioning Kosovo as a country and using lowercase letters for 'kos' in its graphics. Spain does not recognize Kosovo's 2008 independence from Serbia.

John Stones made amends for an embarrassing defensive blunder by setting up a late winner for fellow center back Harry Maguire as England beat Poland 2-1 to stay perfect in Group I.

Stones' heavy touch at the edge of his own area saw him get dispossessed, leading to Jakub Moder equalizing for Poland to cancel out Harry Kane's penalty — his 34th goal for England.

Redemption came for the Manchester City defender when his header at the far post kept a corner in play and Maguire swept a finish high into the net in the 85th minute at Wembley Stadium.

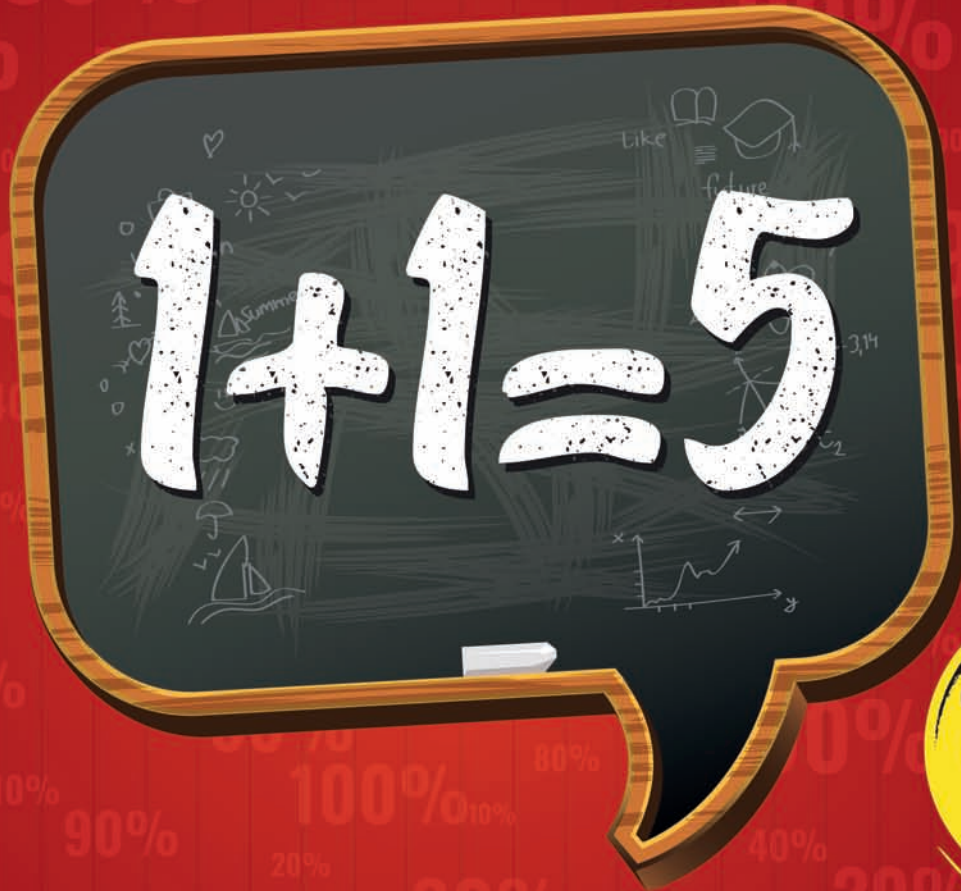
Italy's unbeaten run extended to 25 games with a 2-0 win in Lithuania as Roberto Mancini's halftime changes had an immediate impact. Substitute Stefano Sensi scored three minutes into the second half before Ciro Immobile converted a stoppage-time penalty.

France continued their recovery from an opening-round draw to Ukraine, beating Bosnia-Herzegovina 1-0 to follow up a 2-0 win over Kazakhstan Sunday.

Antoine Griezmann headed in the winner in the 60th for his 35th international goal, moving the Barcelona forward one clear of David Trezeguet and into fourth place on France's all-time scoring list.

France is four points clear in Group D, with Ukraine in second place on three points after a third straight draw, this time against Kazakhstan.

Denmark joined Italy, England and Armenia on maximum points and is the highest-scoring team in qualifying with 14 goals. That's after a 4-0 win at Austria in Group F, with the goals coming in a 16-minute spell in the second half.



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