



## PRIYANKA UNHAPPY

Priyanka Chopra has said there were times when she received negativity from people of South Asia

LEISURE P2



## PROTESTERS KILLED

Myanmar security forces kill 33 protesters Wednesday as other countries call for restraint

INTERNATIONAL P10



## 4TH TEST STARTS TODAY

India will aim not to lose the 4th Test against England and seal their WTC final spot

SPORTS P12

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# Similipal inferno wreaks havoc

EIGHT OUT OF 21 RANGES IN THE PARK GUTTED, STATE GOVERNMENT SENDS HIGH LEVEL TEAM TO CONTROL FIRE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** A high-level team along with PCCF Sashi Paul visited the Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district and conducted a review meeting Wednesday on the means to control and douse the raging fire. A raging inferno has engulfed parts of the park for more than a week now.



**TERRIFYING:** Flames engulf large tracts of land and plantation as the fire rages in Similipal Park. OP PHOTO

It was revealed at the meeting that 800 forest officials and 250 firefighting personnel have been engaged in bringing the flames under control and dousing it. They have been carrying out their work with help of 240 fore blowers in core and buffer zones. Forty vehicles including fire tenders are also being used in the dousing operations, a senior official said Wednesday.

## On the boil

High level team headed by PCCF reviews situation in Similipal

Large amount of forest, fauna and rare species of plants reduced to ashes

Forest department forms squads for each of the 21 divisions

More than 1,000 personnel involved in fighting the raging inferno

The fire receding in Bhanjabasa, Balinala, Barahakamuda, Jenabili, Nana, Pithabata and Dakura area. The raging flames have destroyed wild flora and fauna in large tracts, it was learnt. Lives of wild animals are also facing danger due to the raging inferno. The fire has devoured eight out of the total 21 ranges of the Similipal forest division so far which basically means that one third of the park has been destroyed.

Earlier in the day, Odisha Forest and Environment Minister BK Arukha said the state government has asked the principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF), to rush to Similipal.

"I have asked the PCCF, Wildlife to ascertain the cause of the fire, control the inferno and examine the situation. He will submit a report to the government Thursday," the minister said.

"The forest department has been taking all possible measures to douse the fire caused by humans. A high level team led by the PCCF conducted review of the fire control exercise Wednesday," said deputy director of the Similipal Tiger Reserve. However, there are no signs of

## Naveen worried

**BHUBANESWAR:** Expressing concern over the forest fire in Similipal National Park, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday reviewed the situation and asked officials to take preventive measures to control it. Additional Chief Secretary (Forest & Environment) Mona Sharma, who was present in the meeting, said that the forest fire is under control.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Yes, news website will not be allowed to run fake news anymore. But why are you worried? Yours is a news channel.

## SHORT TAKES

### Sasi quits politics

**Chennai:** Weeks ahead of Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, VK Sasikala, expelled AIADMK leader and close aide of late Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, announced Wednesday 'she will stay away from politics'. However, she would pray for the 'golden rule' of the late party supremo. "I will stay away from politics and keep praying for the establishment of the golden rule of Amma," Sasikala said in a statement, which surprised many.

### 24x7 vax drive on

**New Delhi:** COVID-19 vaccination will now be available 24x7 and the citizens will be able to take it as per their convenience, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said Wednesday. "The government has ended time constraint to increase speed of vaccination. Citizens can get vaccinated 24x7 at their convenience," Vardhan said in a tweet. "Now they can get the COVID-19 jab as soon as possible," he added.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	51444.65 ↑ 1147.76
NIFTY	15245.60 ↑ 326.50
DOLLAR	73.54 ↓ ₹0.48
EURO	87.83 ↓ ₹0.71
GOLD	₹44,757 ↓ ₹791
SILVER	₹66,395 ↓ ₹944

WEATHER	
BBSR	CTK
MAX	37°C / 36.5°C
MIN	20°C / 19.5°C
Humidity	80% / 82%
Rainfall	Nil / Nil

Forecast: Fog or mist in the morning

# BJP draws blank in MCD bypolls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 3:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) won Wednesday four of the five civic wards in the MCD bypolls. The results led Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to assert that people were desperate to bring the party to power in the three municipal corporations in the national capital. The ruling BJP however, drew blank in the MCD bypolls. "The people of Delhi have once again voted in the name of work. Congratulations to all. The people are fed up with misrule of the BJP at MCD for 15 years. People are desperate to bring the AAP to rule the MCD," Kejriwal tweeted after the party's victory.

The AAP, however, suffered a shock defeat in the minority-dominated Chauhan Bangar ward, where Chaudhary Zubair Ahmad of the Congress defeated the party's candidate



AAP candidates celebrate with their supporters after the results of the MCD bypolls were announced Tuesday. PFI PHOTO

Mohammad Ishraq Khan by a whopping margin of 10,642 votes. The BJP failed to open its account in the bypolls, being seen as the semifinal

ahead of the civic polls due in 2022. The saffron party even lost the Shalimar Bagh seat held by it to AAP. "We honour the mandate given by the

**“The people of Delhi have once again voted in the name of work. Congratulations to all. The people are fed up with misrule of the BJP at MCD for 15 continuous years”**

ARVIND KEJRIWAL - DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

people. Losing Shalimar Bagh North is a matter of introspection. The shortcomings will be removed and I am sure BJP will win the elections for three municipal corporations in 2022," said Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta.

The AAP candidates won from Kalyanpuri, Rohini-C, Triokpuri and Shalimar Bagh North wards.

According to the State Election Commission, the AAP polled the highest 46.10 per cent votes in the bypolls. It was followed with 27.29 per cent by the BJP and 21.84 per cent by the Congress.

## Kotia issue: State seeks opinion of ex-SC judge AK Pattanaik

# Odisha govt banks on boundary stones

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** After Andhra Pradesh government conducted panchayat elections in the Kotia region it has been a wakeup call to the Odisha government. Now the government has asked collectors of all border districts to verify boundary stones every year. Revenue and Disaster Management secretary Bishnupada Sethi has written letters to collectors of 14 bordering districts. The districts are - Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Gajapati and Ganjam.

"District administration is required to take up annual verification of boundary stones, specifically in those villages sharing boundary with neighbouring state(s)," Sethi said in his letter.

Sethi advised collectors to verify the boundary stones each year without fail. He told them that if any stone goes missing the concerned, the concerned Tehsildar will have to fix the stone.

Meanwhile, the Odisha government has decided to take legal opinion from former Supreme Court judge, Justice Ananga Kumar Pattanaik over its border dispute with neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. Sethi has asked Koraput collector to meet Pattanaik as soon as possible.

# K'TAKA MINISTER RESIGNS OVER SEXUAL ABUSE SLUR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, March 3:** Karnataka Water Resources Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi sent his resignation letter Wednesday to Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa following allegations of sexual harassment against him. The development comes a day after purported video clips showing Jarkiholi getting intimate with an unidentified woman, were widely aired by Kannada news channels. "The allegations against me are far from the truth, it has to be investigated at the earliest. Though I'm confident about my innocence, taking moral responsibility I'm resigning my position as the Cabinet Minister. I request you to accept it," Jarkiholi said in the letter to the Chief Minister.



According to sources, Jarkiholi tendered his resignation after directions from the party high command. BJP national general secretary in-charge of Karnataka, Arun Singh is said to have communicated the party's decision to the state leadership, keeping in mind the Assembly polls in four states and also panchayat elections in Karnataka next year.

The allegation, just ahead of the Budget session of the state legislature starting from Thursday

had come as a huge embarrassment to BS Yediyurappa-led BJP government.

There was also demand from the opposition Congress and JD(S) for Jarkiholi's immediate resignation.

Leader of Opposition and Congress leader Siddaramaiah earlier in the day said, "If that party (BJP) has shame and if they respect human values, immediately they have to take his resignation. This is national news, if the government has shame it should take his resignation. The government should register an FIR now."

Dinesh Kallahalli, a social activist Tuesday lodged a police complaint against Jarkiholi alleging sexual harassment to a job aspirant and threatening her and family of dire consequences.

# Class X student injured after knife attack by friend

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhanjanagar, March 3:** A Class X student from Borasinga School under the Gangpur police limits in Ganjam district was seriously injured when a fellow student stabbed him Wednesday. The injured, identified as Amit Nayak, has been admitted to a local hospital here in critical condition. The accused Subham Bhola was initially detained by the school authorities before being handed over to the police.

Eyewitnesses said that the stabbing incident happened out of the blue as the two were seen laughing and joking with each other. However, things got out of hand when Amit and Subham had a heated argument. Then Subham lost his temper and attacked Amit with a knife, leaving him seriously injured.

"The incident happened just after the drill class had ended. All the teachers had retired to the staff room from the field. The unfortunate incident took place then," said a teacher.

The police were later informed and a team rushed to the school and started an investigation into the incident. They also took Subham under their custody.

"I don't know anything about the incident that happened in the school. I was stunned when I came to know that my son has been hospitalised after being stabbed by a classmate," said Amit's mother Sasmita Nayak.

Police are trying to ascertain how Subham managed to enter the school with a knife. They are also inspecting CCTV footage to find out how the situation went out of hand.

# 'Dissenters' Taapsee, Anurag face Income Tax heat

AGENCIES

**Mumbai/New Delhi, March 3:** The Income Tax Department raided Wednesday premises linked to filmmakers, including Anurag Kashyap, Reliance Entertainment group CEO Shibhashish Sarkar and actor Taapsee Pannu, officials said. Kashyap had also launched the now dissolved production house 'Phantom Films'.

The searches are being carried out in over 30 locations in Mumbai and Pune, officials said. Some executives of celebrity and talent management company KWAN are also being raided.

The action is part of a tax evasion probe against 'Phantom Films',



**IN THE LINE OF FIRE:** Actor Taapsee Pannu and filmmaker Anurag Kashyap

which was dissolved in 2018, and its then promoters Kashyap, director-producer Vikramaditya Motwane, producer Vikas Bahl and producer-

distributor Madhu Mantena, the officials informed.

Sources said some inter-linked transactions between the entities

sought are under the scanner of the department and the raids are aimed at gathering more evidence to further probe tax evasion allegations.

Founded in 2011, Phantom Films produced films such as *Lootera*, *Queen*, *Ugly*, *NH 10*, *Masaan* and *Uda Punjab*. Most of these films turned out to be blockbusters.

Taapsee, 33, has worked in numerous Hindi, Tamil and Telugu movies. Some of her hit movies are *Pink*, *Mulk* and *Thappad*.

"The Income Tax department probes someone based on whatever information they get. The issue goes to court later," Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said during a BJP briefing in New Delhi.

Kashyap and Taapsee have been outspoken critics of the government. They have lent their voice to various causes, including the ongoing farmer protests against central laws. Many said that the raids are being conducted to suppress dissent shown by the two against the policies of the government.

Several ministers in Maharashtra slammed the searches by the tax department. They said the raids are taking place because Taapsee and Kashyap are outspoken celebrities. "Anurag Kashyap and Tapasee Pannu have raised their voice against the Modi government's policies. This action is an attempt to suppress their voices," Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik said.

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## TI PARADE OF BIBAN

# Anjana successfully identifies accused



Anjana Mishra coming out of prison Wednesday. OP PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** Anjana Mishra, survivor of the sensational gangrape that took place way back in 1999, identified main accused Biban Biswal during the test identification (TI) parade conducted by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) here Wednesday at Jharpura jail.

"I have identified the prime accused Biban Biswal during the TI parade. However, I will have to identify the accused in court in front of the judge once more," Mishra said after coming out of the prison premises.

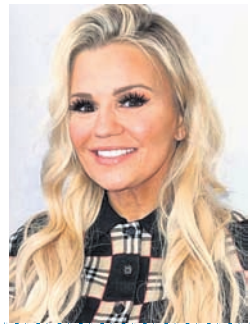
The victim said the identification parade lasted for approximately 10 minutes. "There were around 10 to 12 people of similar body structure present during the parade. However, I successfully managed to identify the main accused," Mishra told mediapersons.

The TI parade at the Jharpura jail was conducted in presence of JMFC Srujalini Mohanty and CBI officials. During the parade, which started at 2.30 in the afternoon, the victim's driver Nilakantha Rout was also present, sources said.

The special CBI court had Tuesday allowed the probe agency to take the prime accused Biban on a two-day remand for further investigation. The CBI sleuths from Kolkata will take Biban on remand Thursday for further interrogation.



# leisure



## KATONA CREDITS CURVY FIGURE FOR POP CAREER

Singer Kerry Katona, who joined the girl band *Atomic Kitten* in 1998, feels that it was her curvaceous figure that helped her make a mark. "I started my career as a topless model - that's how I got in Atomic Kitten," Katona said according to a report in *femalefirst.co.uk*.

## GAGA PUTS APARTMENT BUILDING UP FOR RENT

Singer-actress Lady Gaga's apartment is available for rent. According to a report on *people.com*, the building has one-bedroom, one bathroom, an open kitchen with stainless steel appliances, and inlaid wood flooring. This can be rented for \$2,000 a month, says a listing.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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

**ARIES**  
You are going to make full use of your silver-tongued sleekness today! Your power of expression will be appreciated, especially by the opposite sex, and you will thoroughly enjoy the attention. Ganesha advises a little meditation to help balance your inner and outer worlds.

**TAURUS**  
Today may be the beginning of an exciting relationship, predicts Ganesha. You will feel oneness with words and actions, communicating with your colleagues with ease. The spot light at whichever party you go to will be following you as you will storm the place with your enthusiasm and charisma.

**GEMINI**  
You will make diligent efforts to keep your loved ones happy and content and will expect the same from them today. However the more expectations you fulfill, the more they will rise. You need to give some time to yourself as well, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
You will be an eternal optimist today. Ganesha says that your accomplishments will motivate others to emulate you. You will spend the evening with family members and enjoy it, too, your value for family values and plans will go up to-day.

**LEO**  
You may meet people whom you haven't met in a long time, or will attempt to. New relations and acquaintances may also be formed. You will try to keep yourself busy in one task after the other. You will be able to finish all your work as per deadline, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
Your mission of finding an engrossing relationship has been fulfilled. At work, you may try to outdo other people with both your actions and words. Ganesha suggests you may go ahead and charm people with your repository of enchanting anecdotes and win their goodwill.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says you will see your hard work come to fruition today. This is a good and profitable day for all those of you who are associated with the business field. For those of you who are working professionals this will be a day when your senior officials will praise you for taking up tough tasks and completing them satisfactorily.

**SCORPIO**  
You wake up to a new ray of hope, flaunting your sunny side up, predicts Ganesha. You leave no stone unturned to fulfil your desires. With boundless optimism, you are all set to win the world. Push your limits to know your strengths.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Your role in bringing crucial and influential deals will be pivotal, says Ganesha. However, the end results may not turn up as per your expectations. But a pleasant evening with your beloved is likely to cheer you up and lighten your mood.

**CAPRICORN**  
God helps those who help themselves. So, work hard, take care of your health, and keep believing in your dreams, says Ganesha. There are fair chances of you striking an important deal on the behalf of your company, and it will certainly boost the image of your bosses and you both.

**AQUARIUS**  
It may seem that all of your plans are going haywire. It is not too late; you can still have things under control. All you need to do is focus on your work rather than helping everyone around. Because, you end up having no time for your goals, feels Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
Everyone knows your nature, but today you will feel uncomfortable by someone's progress. Ganesha knows this is unusual but you need to think about this. Anger never gives results so it is better to focus on your good qualities and hard work to achieve your goals.

## NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL - DAY 3

# Assamese troupe brings alive Kamaladevi's life on stage

Social reformer Kamaladevi married to Indian English poet and dramatist Harindranath Chattopadhyay, the younger brother of Sarojini Naidu.



A scene from Hindi play *Kamaladevi* staged at Rabindra Mandap, Wednesday

The life of ace social reformer and freedom activist Padma Vibhusan Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay came alive on the third evening of National Theatre Festival Purba Ranga here at Rabindra Mandap, Wednesday.

Several cultural institutions in India today exist because of Kamaladevi's vision, including the National School of Drama and Kendra Sangeet Natak Akademi.

Based on her autobiography, the drama *Kamaladevi* was written by Vaidehi (Kannada) and translated into Hindi by Madhavi S Bhandari.

Seagull Theatre of Assam presented the play, designed

and directed by actress-turned-director Bhagirathi Bai. "In spite of being brought up in an aristocratic environment and married into an illustrious family, Kamaladevi chose the arduous path of freedom struggle and played a major role in the Salt Satyagraha of Mahatma Gandhi," said Bhagirathi.

She feels honoured to be able to portray factions of life of such a woman in her own humble way through the play, added the director.

The five-day theatre festival is being organised by the Culture Department of Odisha in collaboration with Odisha Natya Sangh and Eastern Zonal

Cultural Centre, Kolkata. Along with present Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi (OSNA) Secretary Prabodh Kumar Rath, Akademi's six ex-Secretaries were present on the occasion.

They were - Dharendra Nath Mallick, Manmath Satpathy, Bijay Jena, Pradipta Mishra, Dr Saileswar Nanda and Sudha Mishra. Theatre director Abhinna Routray introduced the guests.

All the Akademi secretaries were unanimous in their views that being a leading organisation to promote Odia culture, OSNA should keep in touch with key cultural personalities of the state and extend its helping hand to the needy.



## Sonu to launch blood bank app

Mumbai: Actor Sonu Sood is going to launch what is expected to be India's biggest blood bank, through an app named Sonu For You. The app aims at connecting donors to those in urgent need of blood.

As per the app, a donee can reach out to donors, and on receiving a request a donor can immediately reach the hospital and donate blood. Already being hailed as the country's biggest blood bank, Sonu For You promises to help patients with rare blood groups. "Sonu For You was conceived by me and my friend, Johnson. Every time someone needs blood on an urgent basis and we share the same on social media, we receive responses from many. So we thought, why not come with an app that serves the same purpose?"

He adds: "Going to a blood bank to search for a certain blood group can take a long time especially in cases of rare blood groups. Every year, 12000 patients in India die due to lack of donated blood. With this app, we want to convey the message that our 20 minutes can save someone's life."

IAN S

# When Priyanka was left high and dry



Los Angeles: Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas in an interview has said that there have been times when people from the South Asian community have picked on her and that she felt a lot of negativity come her way.

"I do notice a sense of protectiveness from a lot of people but also a sense of cynicism and negativity from a lot of people. Picking on me for no reason," she said on the BBC Asian Network's Beyond Bollywood podcast.

"Very few brown people are in the entertainment business, you can count us on your fingers. We're trying to create more opportunity for people like us, so why is there so much negativity for us? When I started working in Hollywood I realised it's not normal to people's consciousness that a leading man or woman can be Indian in a mainstream Hollywood show." I've started noticing the difference between fans who know me and are protective of me and they are the wind beneath my wings. Also feel disheartened and discouraged by the other side," added the *Quantico* actress. IAN S

## Kajol shares her love story with coffee

Mumbai: Actress Kajol Wednesday shared her cute love story with coffee. "Once upon a time there lived a girl. She loved coffee... and they lived happily ever after. The end," she wrote on Instagram story.

Kajol keeps inspiring her fans and followers with motivational words on Instagram. In another story posted recently, the actress wrote: "Strong people break too, they just keep quiet, rebuild and keep going."

The Baazigar actress took to social media Tuesday to celebrate one year of the release date of her short film *Devi*.

Kajol was last seen in the recently-released OTT film, *Tribhanga*. The Renuka Shahane directorial also features Tanvi Azmi and Mithila Palkar.

IAN S

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

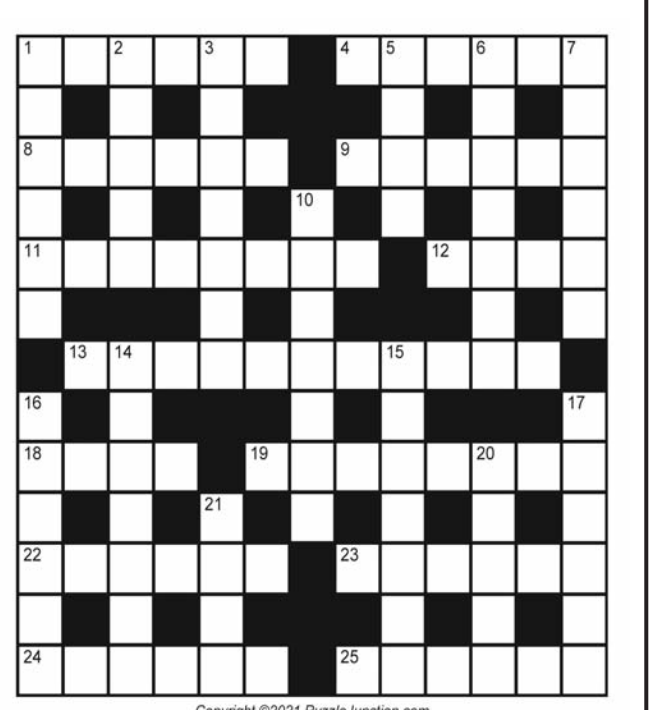


### BREVITY



### FUN post

### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Dense
  - 4 Bear witness
  - 8 Chinook or sockeye
  - 9 Rabbit warren
  - 11 Cleopatra, e.g.
  - 12 Tusked animal
  - 13 Energetic person (5,6)
  - 18 Mysterious
  - 19 Potato dish (2,6)
  - 22 Red gems
  - 23 Lissome
  - 24 Kind of artist
  - 25 Conforms
  - 6 Pierced body part, at times
  - 7 Garish
  - 10 Seaport
  - 14 Circus performer
  - 15 Got there
  - 16 Lovebird
  - 17 Ticks off
  - 20 Garden bulb
  - 21 Abysmal test score
- Down**
- 1 Expelled
  - 2 Add up
  - 3 Terrier type
  - 5 Test choice

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

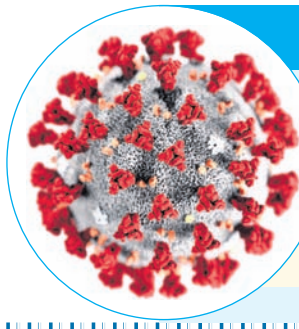
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW





**STOLEN IDOLS FOUND**

Police Wednesday recovered five idols which were earlier stolen from a temple in Pipli area of Puri district. A person has been arrested in this connection



**COVID-19 TRACKER**

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	11,54,19,485	9,12,10,888	25,62,876
India	1,11,40,122	1,08,12,044	1,57,346
Odisha	3,37,448	3,34,767	1,917

**State plans to bolster food testing capacity, manpower**

MANISH KUMAR, OP

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** The State Food Safety department which had been struggling with the shortage of staff and food testing labs has planned a facelift, aiming to bolster the food safety capacity of Odisha. The department officials told this reporter that it has started working on improving the staff strength and also increase the penetration of food testing labs in the days to come.

"We are going to recruit 35 more Food Safety Officers (FSOs) in the days to come. We plan to have adequate FSOs to boost food safety in the state. Now with more FSOs we can start having such officers at sub division levels," Dr Pradip Mohapatra, Director, Food Safety Department said. Currently, not all districts have a full time FSO. Some FSOs have been given additional charges for Koraput and Kalahandi. The department has now also planned to get four more food testing labs in the state to boost the food testing capability of the state.

"Now we're taking help of a government and a private food testing lab for testing food adulteration. We've planned to set up four new labs at Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, Sundargarh and Keonjhar," Mohapatra said. The state government has also allowed mining development funds in mining areas to boost the food safety exercise. The department, meanwhile, plans to start adding new testing equip-



An official destroys adulterated chilli & turmeric powder in Cuttack (OP FILE PHOTO)

**FACELIFT FOR FOOD SAFETY**

- Govt plans to recruit 35 more Food Safety Officers
- More full time Designated Officers for food safety soon
- Special books on food safety under process for schools
- Four new food testing laboratories planned in four districts
- More advanced equipment to be given in food testing laboratories

The new machines are likely to pave the way for testing of heavy metals, antibiotics, pesticides and virus in the food and beverage samples. The food safety director said as per the norms, the people are also entitled to get their food samples tested for adulteration or contamination on payment basis. He said that people had used the services for testing of water but now more labs can open fresh avenues. The department has also been working to bring special books on food safety in Odia language which could be distributed at schools to make the students aware of food adulteration and other related details of the same.

ment to these labs to bolster its virtues of tracing other adulterants that could not be tested earlier.

A Food Safety Officer requesting anonymity said they have also increased the raids with the help of cops.

**BJD ready for Pipli bypolls: Pramila**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leader Pramila Mallick Wednesday said her party is all set to win the Pipli bypolls in the coming days.

She said the opposition parties are likely to lose the seat with a good margin. "We are ready for the Pipli bypolls. The BJD candidate from the region is sure to win the seat. The Chief Minister will finally take a decision on who will fight from the seat," she said.

The Chief Whip of the regional party in Odisha Assembly also said, "The BJP had been making claims of winning the seat but they cannot do that. We are going to win the seat with a good margin."

The BJD MLA also said that there was no link between Sarpanch election and MLA election and it would not affect the performance of the party.

**Three places record 38.5 degrees C**

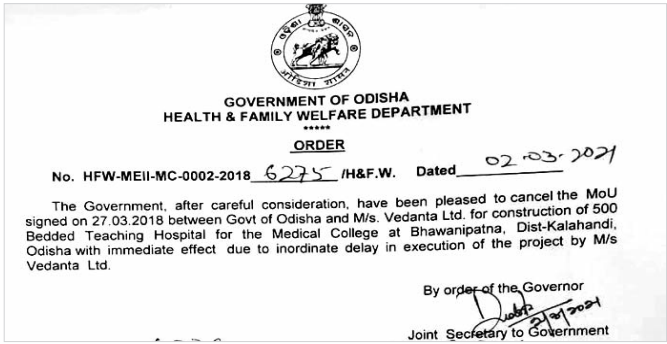
**Bhubaneswar:** Three places in state - Rayagada, Malkangiri and Sundergarh - recorded a maximum temperature over 38.5 degrees Celsius, Wednesday. As per the Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre, the maximum temperature at Nayagarh was 38 degrees Celsius while it was 37.1 degrees at both Angul and Talcher towns. Bhubaneswar recorded a day temperature of 37 degrees. It was 36.5 degrees at Cuttack city. There will not be any major change in day and night temperatures in the state during next 3-4 days.

**Vedanta MoU for med college scrapped**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** The state government cancelled a MoU signed with Vedanta Ltd for construction of a 500-bed medical college and hospital at Bhawanipatna in Kalahandi district. The agreement was cancelled as the company has delayed in executing the project.

The Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department issued an order in this regard, Tuesday. "The government after careful consideration has been pleased to cancel the MoU signed on 27.03.2018 between government of Odisha and M/S Vedanta Ltd for construction of a 500-bedded teaching hospital for the medical college and hospital in Kalahandi by 2022-2023 with a capacity of 100 MBBS



The H&FW department's order

seats. Initially, it was planned to construct a 500-bed teaching hospital, which was subsequently increased to 650 beds as per requirement of the National Medical Commission (NMC). However, the company was delaying the project despite several rounds of discussions. Therefore,

ordinate delay in execution of the project," read the order. "We have set a target for functioning of the proposed medical college and hospital in Kalahandi by 2022-2023 with a capacity of 100 MBBS

we have cancelled the MoU," H&FW Additional Chief Secretary, PK Mohapatra told **Orissa POST**. With the cancellation of the MoU, the works department has been urged to take up the project and complete the balance work, he said. "I have asked the officials to place the estimation and funds with the works department immediately," Mohapatra said, adding, the works department will continue the work on the existing infrastructure developed by Vedanta and the state will bear the required fund.

According to sources, a total of Rs 350 crore was supposed to be invested for setting up of the proposed hospital for which Vedanta had agreed to spend around Rs 100 crore.

**PUMPKIN FARMERS IN DISTRESS**



Tonnes of pumpkins are rotting on the farmlands in Sakhigopal area of Puri district as farmers are denied of remunerative price. The middlemen are reportedly offering up to ₹5 per kg even though the market price stands at ₹20. Meanwhile, the distressed farmers are demanding opening up of cold storages in the region so that the vegetables could be stored and later sold at proper price.

**NGT issues directions to states, UTs over illegal sand mining**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 3:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued a slew of directions to the Chief Secretaries of the states and Union Territories, and the Environment Ministry on a batch of applications relating to updation of enforcement and monitoring mechanism to control and regulate illegal sand mining.

Some of these applications have been pending for about seven years while others have been tagged to the pending matters later, from time to time, in view of common question of illegal sand mining.

Unsustainable sand mining practices are rampant in India. A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Adarsh Kumar Goel directed all the states and UTs to strictly follow the Sustainable Sand Management Guidelines, 2016.

"We further direct that periodic



FILE PHOTO

inspection be conducted by a five-member committee, headed and coordinated by the SEIAA and comprising CPCB, State PCB and two expert members of SEAC dealing with the subject."

At the national level, a review needs to be conducted at least once in a year by the Secretary of Environment in coordination with the Secretaries Mining and Jalshakti Ministries, the Central Pollution Control Board, the bench stated.

All the states and UTs are further directed to publish their annual reports on the subject and such an-

nual reports may be furnished to the Environment Ministry by April 30 every year, giving the status of the issue till March 31.

Based on such reports, the ministry has been asked to prepare a consolidated report and publish its own report on the subject, preferably by May 31 every year.

"We direct the Secretary MoEF to convene a meeting in coordination with the CPCB and Mining and Jalshakti Ministries of Central Government and such other experts at National level and representatives of states within three months... holding of such meetings will provide clarity on enforcement strategies and help protection of environment," it said.

In January 2020, the environment ministry came out with 'Enforcement & Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining 2020' to regulate sand mining and check illegal mining.

**OAS probationers urged to follow Mo Sarkar principles**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra Wednesday urged OAS probationers to adhere to the principles of Mo Sarkar initiatives introduced by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

While interacting with the probationers here at Gopabandhu Academy, he said, "Mo Sarkar is a very progressive and people-centric approach for a successful democracy. Let the people feel that government is their government and it is working for them only."

"Be close to the people, talk with them directly and listen to their issues caringly with empathy and respect for them", he further said.

Stating that an OAS officer can directly help people in many ways, he advised the officers to never neglect people and their issues.

**Power producers urge state to reduce water charge**

PNN/ AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** Independent power producers (IPPs), who are facing problems of rising cost and falling energy tariff, have urged the state government to reduce water charge for their thermal plants in the coastal state, an industry body official said Wednesday.

The Association of Power Producers has written to Water Resources Minister Raghunandan Das and Energy Minister DS Mishra

alleging that the bills for water have been raised on the allocation basis, instead of the actual consumption.

Water consumed by a thermal power plant in the state is around 58 per cent of the allocated quantity, the association's director general Ashok Kumar Khurana said.

"For a 1,050 MW power plant in Odisha, the allocated quantity of water is 22 million cubic metre a year, whereas the quantity consumed is only 58 per cent," he said.

Khurana also said that the unit has to bear an annual cost of Rs 13.30 crore as water charge, though the consumption of the resource in value term could be Rs 7.7 crore a year.

With the steady rise of renewable energy and falling tariff levels, IPPs have been witnessing a decline in the plant load factor (PLF) from 78 per cent in the 2009-10 fiscal to 51 per cent in 2020-21, the industry body said.

The association claimed that the

power plants located in Maharashtra are paying water bills based on consumption, not on allocation, resulting in significant cost savings.

The annual increase in water charge by 10 per cent, as per the provisions of the Odisha Irrigation (Amendment) Rules, 2015, has also led to a rise in cost from Rs 4.5 per cubic metre in FY17 to Rs 6.3 in FY21. "IPPs do not have any power to fix prices. They are locked into quoted tariffs under long term contracts," the industry body said.



**PRAKASH KUMAR BISWAL**  
**PANDEMIC PUSHED US BACK BY A DECADE**

*The white appliances market was one of the worst hit segments during the lockdowns and shutdowns in the country. With jobs either gone or salaries truncated, people turned away from electronic products. There was no demand in the market. However, with the situation gradually coming back to normal, the sector is limping back to normalcy. Raj Electronics, a household name in the state, put together an aggressive action plan to weather the vagaries of the pandemic. Prakash Kumar Biswal, Maganing Partner, Raj Electronics, gives his take on the ills being faced by the sector in general and his ideas for growth. Excerpts of an interview with Orissa POST*

**'Now customers can get easy finance up to 10 per cent cash back and benefits of zero interest and zero down payments'**

**■ How do you find the electronics retailing market?**

There is a change in customer behaviour now as compared to that during the coronavirus-induced lockdown. Now, we are getting more customers. However, the middleclass people are facing certain crisis with regard to their income. As a result, the sale of low-end products is at the bottom. The sale of high-end products is going on as usual. The market has witnessed an upward trend since the festival season. With the improvement in the market condition, the sale of low-end products will see an upward trend.

**■ There were reports that electronics products would be dearer. What is your view on this?**

A rise in the cost of raw materials is forcing companies to raise prices of electronics goods. It is expected that

the prices of electronics goods will go up by 7 to 8 per cent. Shortage of manpower is also pushing the cost of production upward. The customers should buy the products before they become dearer.

**■ How has the pandemic affected the market?**

The Covid-19 pandemic has hit the market very hard. The pandemic situation has pushed us back by a decade. All sectors of the economy have suffered. Unemployment, low income and reduction in salaries are affecting the demand.

**■ What is your take on customer relations?**

We are maintaining good relations with our



customers. I personally try to solve the issues of customers. We had introduced certain measures to keep good relation with customers soon after easing of the lockdown and the shutdown norms. A total of 17 showrooms have been opened for the customers. We have also introduced online payment system.

**■ Do you have any special offer for the customers?**

Customers can avail offers given by the companies. Our showrooms are also giving some offers. Now, customers can get easy finance up to 10 per cent cash back and benefits of zero interest and zero down payments. They can avail the services of finance companies like Bajaj Finance, HDFC, IDFC and HDB.



WASSUP TODAY

**BHUBANESWAR**  
■ Purva Ranga National Drama Festival, Rabindra Mandap, 6.30 pm

Programmes/announcements for wassup today may be sent to [downtown@orissapost.com](mailto:downtown@orissapost.com) for record, it must also carry the sender's mobile number for our verification, but not for publication.

# Sahoo blames Centre for PM-Kisan mess

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** Agriculture Minister Arun Kumar Sahoo Wednesday wrote to Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan asking him to convince his government at the Centre to weed out the obstacles faced by the farmers in availing benefits under PM-Kisan scheme.

He said that due to the alleged negligence of the Union government, the farmers of Odisha registered with PM-Kisan are not getting timely payments and are having issues during verification.

Sahoo in his letter said, "The eligible land holder farmer families are to be registered by the state government in the PM-Kisan portal. The state government does this registration after due verification including field checks. However, against a whopping 43.17 lakh registered farmers with PM-Kisan portal, only 38.65 lakh have been approved for receiving benefits.

"We seek your kind intervention in ensuring that the balance 4.52 lakh farmers are considered for support under PM-Kisan," he said.

## AGRI MINISTER'S CONCERNS



The Agriculture minister said against a whopping 43.17 lakh registered farmers with PM-Kisan portal, only 38.65 lakh have been approved for receiving benefits. Even though the entire data of the registered farmers on the PM-Kisan portal is uploaded by the state government very limited access to the portal is being given to the state government, the minister added. Thus, issues like bulk bank details correction and bulk rectification are not possible to be done by the state govt.

scheme but faced issues in getting other instalments.

The minister accused the PM-Kisan team of creating hurdles for disbursement of the aid. He also said that several hurdles could be cleared if the Odisha government was given more access to PM-Kisan portal.

"Even though the entire data of the registered farmers on the PM-Kisan portal is uploaded by the state government very limited access to the portal is being given to the state government. Thus, issues like bulk bank details correction and bulk rectification are not possible to be done by the state government," he added.

In his letter to Pradhan, the minister said, "I seek your intervention so that the constructive suggestions given by the technical team of government of Odisha, especially with regard to the full data access to the portal are accepted, in the best common interest for improving farmers' welfare leading to the doubling of farmers income."

# Naveen lays stone for Rayagada planetarium



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone for a planetarium at Rayagada and for a district science centre at Jeypore in Koraput, Wednesday.

The planetarium project will cost Rs 15 crore while Rs 6.5 crore will be spent on the district science centre project. Chief Minister laid the foundation stone through videoconferencing from Bhubaneswar.

Science and Technology Minister Ashok Chandra Panda, Principal Secretary of the Department Santosh Kumar Sarangi along with other dignitaries were present in the function at Rayagada.

The Chief Minister said that new generation should try to have scientific mindset in their life. He said, "We have plans to set up six planetariums in six districts and district science centre in each district and for that Rs 100 crore will be spent.

Panda said that planetariums in the state play a big role in en-

Other dists which would have planetariums are: Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Ganjam, Rourkela and Bolangir

couraging scientific mindset of the science and space enthusiast. "Through these planetariums and science centres, we will hopefully encourage more scientific minds of the state," he added.

At present, the state has two planetariums at Bhubaneswar and Sambalpur. Apart from Rayagada, the other districts which would have planetariums are: Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Ganjam, Rourkela and Bolangir. Each planetarium project will cost Rs 15 crore.

The 10 districts where the science centres will come up are: Jeypore, Baripada, Rayagada, Keonjhar, Ganjam, Puri, Bhadrak, Bolangir, Nayagarh and Jagatsinghpur in first phase. The government has plans to establish the district science centres in all the districts.

# Two felicitated for selfless service

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** Governor Ganeshi Lal Wednesday felicitated Bhagyashree Sahoo and Silu Nayak for their spectacular achievements and selfless service to the society.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had recently praised the duo in his monthly radio talk 'Mann Ki Baat'. Felicitating Sahoo, Lal appreciated her extraordinary talent and work in the field of fine art and crafts (Pattachitra).

The Governor awarded her with a certificate of appreciation and a cheque of Rs 1.5 lakh on behalf of Biju Patnaik University of Technology of which she is a student in Indira Gandhi Institute of Technology, Sarang.

The Governor also appreciated Nayak for his zeal, passion, selfless devotion and energy in helping rural youth realize their potential and dream of getting into the armed forces. Nayak has been providing training freely through 'Mahaguru Battalion'.

# Trains cancelled for modernisation work

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** Services of a few trains under East Coast Railway (ECOR) will be affected in view of safety-related modernisation work like yard remodelling, signalling arrangement and electrification at south side of Tirupati railway station under Guntakal Railway Division of South Central Railway jurisdiction.

Odisha-bound and related trains including Tirupati-Puri Special from Tirupati will remain cancelled March 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 12.

Similarly, Bhubaneswar-Tirupati Special from Bhubaneswar and Visakhapatnam-Tirupati Special (02707) from Visakhapatnam will remain cancelled March 6.

Tirupati-Bhubaneswar Special from Tirupati and Bhubaneswar-Tirupati Special from Bhubaneswar will remain cancelled March 7. Tirupati-Bhubaneswar Special (02072) from Tirupati will remain cancelled March 8. Lastly, Puri-Tirupati Special from Puri will remain cancelled March 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 14.

# Forestry students observe World Wildlife Day

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** The OUA Forestry students, who have been agitating here for making 4-year BSc degree in Forestry as minimum qualification for recruitment to key posts, observed the World Wildlife Day, Wednesday.

The protesting students said that as a mark of respect to our profession, in spite of sitting in dharna, we organised and celebrated the World Wildlife Day. "As forestry professionals, we know the importance of the forest and wildlife conservation and community development in a sustainable manner," students said. On the occasion, students made posters to voice the concerns regarding wildlife conservation and role of Forestry graduates in bridging the gap between people and ecosystem. Meanwhile, the protest by students of Forestry Department, OUA, reached the 10th day, Wednesday.

On Tuesday, the students staged protests by sitting blind-folded on the university campus to draw the attention of government and the varsity authorities.

# Govt plans to allow more private hospitals for vax

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** The state Health department Wednesday said it has planned to allow more private hospitals to offer COVID 19 vaccinations.

Bijoy Panigrahi, Health department director said the department has asked District Collectors to expand the vaccination centres. "Collectors have been asked to ensure verification of private hospitals where the vaccination drive could be undertaken. Based on their verification, we can notify new private hospitals where the COVID vaccination could be taken up."

He said private hospitals need to have specific criteria like adequate space, cold chain and others. Those complying with these can be notified as new vaccination centres post verification, he said. The official also said that the vaccination drive for the elderly had been going on well in the state. The drive is running in government as well as private sectors. The government claimed that no adverse reports had been reported till now.

He also said there is no lack of vaccine stocks in the state. "Currently, we have a stock of around 7 lakh COVID vaccines and we are going to use these during the

## 56,033 elderly inoculated

**Bhubaneswar:** The Health department Wednesday said that a total of 56,033 senior citizens have been inoculated during the last three days as part of the special Covid-19 vaccination drive. At the same time, 2,116 persons above the age of 45 years and living with co-morbidities have been vaccinated.

Khurda district reported the highest number of new cases at 14, followed by Sambalpur (13) and Sundargarh (11).

The coastal state's coronavirus death toll remained unchanged at 1,917 as no fresh fatality was reported, the official pointed out, adding that 53 other coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities so far.

The state now has 775 active cases, while 3,34,703 people have recovered from the disease to date. Odisha has so far tested over 83.83 lakh samples for Covid-19, including 23,047 in the last 24 hours.

# With 97 fresh cases, state's nCoV tally reaches 3,37,448

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** State's Covid-19 tally surged to 3,37,448 Wednesday as 97 more people tested positive for the infection, a senior health official said.

As many as 58 new cases were reported in quarantine centres, while 39 fresh infections were detected during contact tracing, said the official.

Khurda district reported the highest number of new cases at 14, followed by Sambalpur (13) and Sundargarh (11).

The coastal state's coronavirus death toll remained unchanged at 1,917 as no fresh fatality was reported, the official pointed out, adding that 53 other coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities so far.

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# Odisha to become maritime trade hub, says Pradhan

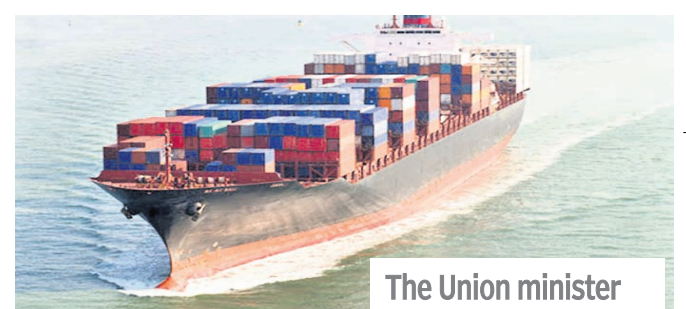
POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, March 3:** Union Petroleum and Natural Gas & Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Wednesday said that Odisha is going to be the hub of maritime trade with its natural harbours, rich resources, long coastline and skill-able and hardworking manpower.

Addressing the 'Investment Opportunities in Odisha' session in the Maritime India Summit 2021, the Union minister assured all potential investors that the Union and the state governments are working in tandem to make Odisha an attractive investment destination.

Pradhan said that Odisha has a rich maritime history and thousands of years ago navigators of the state sailed to different parts of the globe to bring fortune and glory to the state. He further said that there was a time when we were one of the most prosperous civilisations of the world and today in the 21st century, PM Modi has given a clarion call of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and \$5-trillion economy.

"Paradip is going to be the gateway of growth of eastern part of



The Union minister reiterated PM's vision of Purvodaya to drive eastern India's growth to keep pace with the growth in other regions of India

country. Kalinganagar, which is being developed as a steel hub, envisages to become a self-contained ecosystem, and will enable the potential investors for setting up value added downstream facilities. Our initiatives in the petroleum and steel sectors will provide impetus to the maritime economy in Odisha," Pradhan said.

He said that anchor industries and companies are needed for development and operations of new ports in Odisha and optimal utilisation of riverine and sea port area.

He reiterated Prime Minister's vision of Purvodaya to drive eastern India's growth to keep pace with the growth in other regions of the country and its importance in

# NCC DG lauds Cuttack cadets' social service

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, March 3:** Lieutenant General Tarun Kumar Aich, AVSM, Director General (DG) NCC visited the NCC group headquarters here Wednesday.

Aich praised the social service activities carried out by the units of the Cuttack group.

During his visit to Silver City, Aich addressed the cadets at Ravenshaw University auditorium and highlighted the importance of



NCC in grooming future leaders. He also outlined the role of NCC

in building the character of the cadets through discipline, training and social activities. The senior official appreciated and emphasised the expansion of NCC in coastal and remote areas in the state.

He urged the youth to be a part of NCC and contribute towards nation-building as well as creating awareness in society.

Aich felicitated various associated NCC officers, permanent instructor staff and cadets of Cuttack group for excellence in various fields.

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WATER DIVERSION FROM KHARASROTA RIVER TO BHADRAK

# MoEF seeks report from PCCF

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, March 3:** The Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Ministry has intervened in the mega drinking water project, which envisages to draw the water of Kharasrota river in Kendrapara and to utilize it in Bhadrak district, even as some outfits and locals have been strongly opposing the project, a report said.

The Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Ministry has directed the principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF) to look into alleged impact of the drinking water project on the biodiversity of Bhitarkanika and submit a detailed report.

The PCCF has been issued a letter in this regard. It may be noted here that Khitish Kumar Singh, a resident of Khadianga had intimated the matter to the Prime Ministers' Grievance Cell, strongly opposing the drinking water project proposed at Nuahata in Bhadrak.

The ministry took it seriously and admitted the complaint. It may be noted here that farmers and locals, united under the banner of Kharasrota Banchao Sangram Samiti (KBSS) have opposed the project several times in the past. They opposed the move to divert 146 million litres of water



The Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Ministry has asked the PCCF to look into alleged impact of the on the biodiversity of Bhitarkanika

Khitish Kumar Singh, a resident of Khadianga, had intimated the matter to the Prime Ministers' Grievance Cell, strongly opposing the project proposed at Nuahata in Bhadrak

It is said the water diversion from an already deficient river basin would lead to ingress of seawater upstream and affect agricultural activities

per day from the river to Bhadrak.

They alleged that Kharasrota river would dry up after this mega drinking water is implemented. The project is feared to gradually destroy agriculture and environment affecting 220 riverside villages with a population of around four lakh in Aul and Rajkanika blocks.

Locals demanded that the government should first build a barrage in the river to store water before diverting it to other district.

Environmentalists and locals observed that diversion of water from an already deficient river basin would lead to ingress of seawater upstream and will affect the district's agricultural activities while biodiversity of the Bhitarkanika will be affected.

The project, estimated at Rs 892 crore entails diversion of water from the river to 91 panchayats and benefit population of around five lakh of four blocks of the Bhadrak district.

## 3 die as truck hits two bikes

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, March 3:** At least three persons were killed and another sustained critical injuries after the motorcycles they were riding was hit by a speeding truck at Bareipali area in Sambalpur district late Tuesday night.

According to sources, the deceased were residents of Hirakud area in the district. The four persons were on two motorcycles when an unknown truck hit their vehicles near Bareipali at around 1.30am. Three of them died on the spot.

The injured was rescued by locals who immediately called an ambulance and sent him to the Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) at Burla. His condition is stated to be critical.

Police registered a case in this connection and launched an investigation.

Police have been scrutinising the video footages of CCTV cameras installed at a nearby petrol pump, a police official said.

## MACHINE AT WOTK



A woman farmer winnowing chaff from paddy with the help of an electric fan in Chitrakonda area of Malkangiri of PHOTO

# Admin to draw up ₹70-cr action plan for Kotia

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Koraput, March 3:** After Andhra Pradesh forcibly held panchayat elections in three villages of Kotia of Koraput district, the state government and the district administration seemingly have laid strong focus on the development of the fringe area, a report said.

According to the report, the district administration has decided to draw an action plan of Rs 70 crore for Kotia in 2020-2021 with major focus on road connectivity, life and livelihood projects, drinking water, education and health-care sectors.

A decision was also taken at a review meeting to set up Adarsh schools, Anganwadi centres and Adarsh hostels for the children of Kotia inhabitants so as to bring about a change in the life of people, who are allegedly being lured by the government of the neighbouring state with provision of some basic services under various welfare schemes.

Collector Mohammed Abdal Akhtar revealed that the mineral foundation fund (DMF) had received Rs 50 crore in the current year till date.

“Earlier, DMF fund was being utilized only for infrastructure de-



Besides, Adarsh schools, Anganwadi centres and Adarsh hostels will be set up in Kotia

A big multi-purpose godwon will also come up here with processing facility for ginger and turmeric

velopment. But this fund will be diverted and utilized for the project meant to improve the living standards and livelihood of people,” he said.

Importantly, a decision was also taken to set up a big multi-purpose godwon in Kotia. Processing of ginger, turmeric and raw material for phula jhadu brooms will be done there too.

The administration said that Anganwadi centres would be set up at different places, but their quality will be ensured.

Notably, a legal battle is going on at the Supreme Court between Andhra Pradesh and the state government over the AP's claim on Kotia. The state government has, meanwhile, sought legal opinion from former Supreme Court Judge Justice AK Pattanaik in this matter. The State Revenue & Disaster Management Department directed Koraput Collector to proceed to New Delhi with relevant documents for briefing Justice Pattanaik on Kotia issue.

## Woman's body found; girl rescued in critical condition

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, March 3:** The body of an unknown woman was found at Dwarasunighati under Bangiriposi police limits in Mayurbhanj district Wednesday. Shockingly, in another incident, a girl, aged about 9 years, was rescued in critical condition in Chadeibhola area, a report said.

The girl was admitted to SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack. The identities of the deceased and the rescued girl are yet to be ascertained.

The woman was believed to be aged between 25 and 30. The baby girl has injury marks while her mouth was bleeding.

Police with the help of scientific teams have started investigations into the incidents.

Given circumstantial evidence, preliminary investigation pointed out that the woman might have been murdered and dumped at the place.

The place where the girl was rescued is 80 km from the place where the woman was found dead. Police are investigating if the woman has any connection with the rescued girl.

SP Smith P Parmar said that an investigation is underway and what led to the death of the woman will be cracked.

## Youth held captive at gun-point for ₹8L ransom

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasure, March 3:** Some miscreants have allegedly held a youth of Balasure district captive at gun-point in Kolkata. They have been demanding a ransom of Rs 8 lakh from his family members.

The victim was identified as Tapas Mohanty of Keshpur area under Soro police limits in Balasure district. A video of the youth in captivity in Kolkata went viral on social media Wednesday.

According to sources, wife of the victim Sukanti received a video clip Tuesday, which was purportedly made by the miscreants. The youth was seen in the video with hands and legs tied to a wooden pole of a thatched house. A gun and an axe were seen lying near him.

The miscreants have threatened Tapas of dire consequences if their demands are not met, Sukanti alleged.

The woman has already sent Rs 50,000 to a bank account given by the miscreants out of fear.

Despite being given the money, the abductors did not release the youth. Upset and anxious, her wife lodged an FIR with Soro police. Police have registered a case in this connection and launched a probe. The investigation is still underway, a police official said.

His kin have urged police to take quick action for the rescue of the youth.

Notably, Tapas was earlier working in a private firm in Bengaluru. He had recently returned to his native village after several months. The youth did not return to his workplace as he apprehended imposition of lockdown, owing to surge in Covid-19 infections.

Tapas received a phone call from the miscreants February 28, who on the pretext of offering him a good job asked him to visit Kolkata. After the youth reached the city, he was taken hostage.

## Covid fears: Vedavyas mela, cultural shows prohibited



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Vedavyas, March 3:** Following the Covid prevention guidelines of the Union Ministry and the directive of the Chief Secretary, the district administration of Sundargarh has prohibited famous gathering at Vedavyas Mela on Mahashivratri on the banks of the confluence of the rivers Sankh and Koel in Rourkela.

Reports said, thousands of devotees from various parts of the state, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh throng Vedavyas fair every year to offer prayers to Lord Shiva. As there is a possibility of Covid infections

due to gatherings, Covid restrictions will be enforced.

A notification to this effect has been issued by the collectorate Wednesday. As per the notification, only priests will solemnise the puja and the rituals on the day.

No people will be allowed to enter the temple complex. The executive officer of the Vedavya Trust has been asked to ensure cleanliness and sanitation on the premises of the temple. Fair, shops and cultural programmes will not be held. Police will be deployed to maintain law and order during the puja. Only the designated priests will carry out rituals of Mahadeep.

# Returnees from 5 states under Covid scanner

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bolangir, March 3:** After a gap of months, cases of Covid infection are reportedly on the rise. Now, some parts of Maharashtra have been reporting a surge in Covid cases amid the shutdown. People who had migrated to various states after relaxation in Covid norms have been returning home in Bolangir.

As their return to villages has chances of triggering infections, the state government had alerted district administrations to keep tabs on the returnees and migrants.

Meanwhile, the district administration has stepped up vigil on the returnees at the railway stations as most of them usually take train routes from their workplaces.



Reports said, the administration has put in place strict checking of passengers coming from five states such as Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Thermal scanning of the returnees

is being conducted at Bolangir, Titlagarh, Harishankara Road, Kantabanaji, Badamal, Sainjala and Loisingha railway stations.

Besides, the administration has made provision of special tests for

the people who are showing suspicious signs of Covid.

Passengers coming from these five states are being sensitized about the need for seven-day isolation.

The administration has made it clear that the passengers who will show their negative reports of the RTPCR, conducted within 72 hours, needn't to be in isolations.

Medical staff, police personnel and RPF have been engaged in the Covid scanning exercise at the railway stations. Some senior officers have been deputed as nodal officers to monitor the exercise.

The authorities of the all the civic bodies and blocks have been asked to activate the Mo Sarkar Cells and take details of the persons returning to the district.

# A month on, forest dept fails to nab poachers



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, March 3:** A month has passed since poachers shot an elephant dead at Kandhara reserve forest under Hindol forest range in Dhenkanal district and fled with its tusks, but the forest department has failed to nab the culprits.

Meanwhile, the forest department has intensified patrolling in Kandhara forest. The department has laid a road to the spot while forest officials have been provided with guns.

The forest department has got leads about nine poachers involved in the elephant poaching. All the

## Forest ranger suspended for jumbo deaths

**SAMBALPUR:** The state government Wednesday suspended a forest official for dereliction of duty that resulted in a number of elephant deaths in Sambalpur district.

According to official sources, as many as six elephants had died between January 2019 and January 2021. The erstwhile Odisha Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) Harishankar Upadhyay had recommended the state government to take disciplinary action against the forest ranger.

The PCCF had observed that the Sadar range officer was grossly negligent in carrying out adequate pa-

trolling within his jurisdiction area which resulted in the deaths of six jumbos. “On February 6, the PCCF has initiated departmental proceedings against Sadar forest ranger Gouri Shankar Dash. Based on the reports of elephants' deaths in the previous years, the government has suspended him from the services,” Sambalpur DFO Sanjeet Kumar said.

In the absence of adequate patrolling, the elephants had died by train accidents and electrocution as well. This was the key reason behind the deaths of the pachyderms, the DFO cited.

culprits belong to Athgarh, Narasinghpur and Badamba areas in Cuttack district.

The forest department had then

claimed that more than 10 poachers were involved in it. The poachers had nine guns. Two of them were professional shooters.

Notably, a 12-year-old elephant was run over by a speeding train near Hatibari station under Sambalpur forest division December 21, 2020.

Another elephant was killed after being hit by Bhubaneswar-Rourkela Intercity Express near Gargabahal village between Jujumura and Hatibari in the district December 6, 2020.

Likewise, a female jumbo had also died after coming in contact with live electric wire on a farmland near Kansar village under Sadar forest division in Sambalpur in January.

Police and the Crime Branch officials have been carrying out raids at different places to seize the tusks and nab the culprits, but to no avail.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
**NIMAPARA IRRIGATION DIVISION, NIMAPARA**  
No.A-639:- **Notice Invitation of Tenders**  
**e-Procurement Notice No.-08 / 2020-21 on dated 24.02.2021**  
E-mail Id: [eenidnimapara@gmail.com](mailto:eenidnimapara@gmail.com)

1. Type of Works: - Restoration of Embankment and Canal
2. Total No. of Works: - 28 (Twenty Eight) Nos.
3. Estimated Cost: - Varies from Rs. 1.86 to Rs. 49.95 Lakhs
4. Period of Completion: - 60 to 120 days

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Bid Amount in Lakhs Rs.	Availability & Submission of Bids online
Executive Engineer, Nimapara Irrigation Division, Nimapara	NID- 157 / 2020-21 to NID- 184 / 2020-21	Rs. 1.86 to Rs.49.95	From 09.03.2021 10.00 A.M. to 18.03.2021 5.30 P.M.

Date of opening of the Bid: - 19.03.2021 at 10.00 A.M.  
Further details can be seen from the Govt. Website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)

**Executive Engineer**  
**Nimapara Irrigation Division, Nimapara**  
OIPR-32097/11/0009/2021

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,**  
**L.I. DIVISION, BERHAMPUR**  
e-mail : [eeolicbam@gmail.com](mailto:eeolicbam@gmail.com), e-Procurement Notice  
Bid Identification No.09 / 2020-21 OLIC (BAM) / Dt. 02/03/2021  
No. CAD-1430:- The Executive Engineer, Lift Irrigation Division, Berhampur on behalf of OLIC invites Percentage Rate bids in single Cover system to be received in Online Mode only for the work "Installation and Energisation of New LIPs / Revival of Defunct LIPs under different Blocks in Ganjam District as detailed in the table below. The Bid should be submitted by the eligible class of contractors as mentioned below registered with the State Government and contractors of equivalent grade / class registered with Central Government / M.E.S. / Railways / C.P.W.D. for execution of Civil Works with valid Electrical (H.T) License issued by ELBO Odisha as single or having joint venture with proper registration, through On-Line in the Govt. website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in). The bidders should have necessary portal enrolment (with own digital signature certificate). The registered bidders from outside Odisha can also participate in this on-line tender process after necessary portal enrolment but shall have to subsequently undergo registration with appropriate authority of the State.

1. Numbers of Package	09 Numbers
2. Estimated Cost	Rs.10.788 to 63.281 lakhs
3. Tender Cost	As per DTCN
4. Class of Contractor	As per DTCN
5. Date & time of publication	Dt 04.03.2021 from 11.00 hrs
6. Date & time of closing	Dt. 12.03.2021 at 17.00hrs
7. Date & time of opening of bid	Dt. 15.03.2021 at 12.00 A.M
8. Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Dt. 10.03.2021 at 17.00 P.M

Further details can be seen from the website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender, if any, can be seen in the said website.  
OIPR-32311/11/0009/2021 **EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**



Let us keep flaming in our heart the fire of progress.

THE MOTHER



## Don't drink milk

Artificial insemination (AI) of cattle is widely practiced in countries with intensive cattle production. In 2017, the National Dairy Plan of this government aimed at artificial insemination for 35 per cent of all fertile animals. The number of inseminations is up from 20 million to 69.29 million. There are two reasons for the government to adopt this distasteful practice: to get more female cattle pregnant from the small amount of sperm that a single cow would take in if mated naturally with a bull, and to maintain control over the sanitary and health conditions.

While the first object has partially succeeded (in quantity, not in quality: the inseminated cows are weaker and sicker in every generation), the second objective has been a health disaster.

The semen is not checked thoroughly for genetic or communicable diseases. In fact, I am told that none of the centres even have the necessary scientific equipment to check the semen and, since there is constant pressure to increase the semen output, all international norms are taken very casually. Bulls that are kept in AI centres should be checked for diseases before being taken. They should be kept in low stress, pleasant and healthy conditions. The truth is that the bulls are sick, underfed, never exercised and very rarely checked for disease. One infected bull can spread disease to thousands of cows via his artificially ejaculated semen. This diseased semen can either cause an abortion in the inseminated cow, or it can result in the foetus being infected.

Certain diseases have become endemic in the cattle population in India: for instance, the spread of tuberculosis has been linked to brucellosis in milk cattle which comes through the semen. Studies done all over the world – even in countries where cleanliness is adhered to – have shown the spread of diseases through AI. In 2020 the American Association for the Advancement of Science in New Scientist reported that Blue Tongue disease, in which cattle get fever, swelling of lips and gums, difficulty in swallowing and a swollen purple coloured tongue and which has a mortality that can go up to 90 per cent, may have been caused by infected cattle semen. In 2006, an outbreak of bluetongue diseases began in the Netherlands. It spread to 16 countries and cost billions of euros before a vaccination effort brought it to an end in 2010. In 2015, the disease re-emerged in France and this outbreak is still ongoing. To work out the source of the infection, scientists at the University of Glasgow analysed the genetic sequences of 150 samples of the virus from both outbreaks. Researchers wrote in PLOS Biology that the genome of the virus is remarkably similar to samples from the previous epidemic, and would have come through using infected cattle semen, kept in a freezer for years.

The WHO has listed several diseases as having proven importance in transmission through semen. 1) Foot and mouth disease; 2) Vesicular Stomatitis; 3) Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR); 4) Bovine Virus Diarrhoea (BVD); 5) Papillomatosis; 6) Leptospirosis; 7) Tuberculosis; 8) Paratuberculosis; 9) Mycoplasma; 10) Anaplasmosis; 11) Brucellosis; 12) Campylobacteriosis; 13) Trichomoniasis.

One hundred and thirty eight bulls of the Central AI Laboratory, Savar, Dhaka, were screened for the presence of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis in 2004. Thirty eight of 138 bulls were positive reactors to the tuberculin test and one bull was positive for brucellosis. The scientists said that the prevalence of tuberculosis was four times higher in bulls that were used to extract semen than normal bulls. Tuberculosis and brucellosis are not only detrimental to dairy production, but also a threat to human health. Tuberculosis is endemic in most livestock farms in South Asian countries.

Scientists say bovine brucellosis, spread by the bacterium *Brucella abortus* is the best known and most controversial infection of the AI bovine reproductive system. The bacterium has an affinity for the uterus and abortion is the usual sign of the disease. However, other symptoms like reduced milk production and reduced weight, are often seen. Infected cows seldom abort more than once, but calves born from later pregnancies will be weak and unhealthy. Such cows will probably continue to harbour and discharge infectious organisms, and have reduced conception rates.

In bulls the most obvious clinical sign of this disease is epididymitis or infections of the scrotum. According to the premier veterinary MSD Manual, bulls in breeding centres have a persistent inflammation of their vesicular glands, which are duct glands that add nutrients and fluid to the seminal fluid as it passes from the body. The fluid becomes putrid and contaminates the semen at AI centres. The reported incidence of vesiculitis, in the general population of bulls, is 1-10 per cent but can go up to 49 per cent in bulls housed in groups. The inseminated cow will receive the most dangerous bacteria in her uterus: *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Streptococcus* spp., *Staphylococcus* spp., *Proteus* spp., *Escherichia coli*, *Mycoplasma bovis*, and *M. bovis genitalium*. The AI centres rarely check for this, as there are no external clinical signs. The bull may stand with his back arched and have pain on defecation, or rectal examination, and show a great deal of hesitation when made to mount. But these are not signs that the doctors pay attention to.

Another dangerous disease that can be spread by AI is Leptospirosis, which is a contagious bacterial disease of animals and humans. Its signs in cattle range from mild, unapparent infections to ones that end in death. High abortion rates have been observed, bloody urine in bulls and blood-tinged milk in lactating cows. Leptospirosis is an important zoonotic disease and can lead to septicaemia, hepatitis, nephritis, abortion, stillbirth, infertility.

Bovine herpesvirus-1 (BHV-1) is usually undetected in most clinical tests. BHV-1 causes genital, respiratory and neurological diseases in cattle populations world-wide. Infected animals lose their immunity and are more susceptible to secondary bacterial infections. BHV-1 may also cause conjunctivitis, reproductive disorders and neonatal mortality (Straub; 1990, Takiuchi et al., 2005). Bovine diarrhoea virus in the semen may infect the foetus and establish a persistent infection causing enteric diseases, and making the cow vulnerable to other pathogens as she loses her immunity.

Bovine genital campylobacteriosis is a widespread bacterial disease associated with both bovine infertility and abortion. It causes vaginitis, cervicitis, endometritis. This disease, together with trichomoniasis, has the greatest importance in transmission of disease through semen (Rovay et al., 2008). Paratuberculosis, which is caused by the *Mycobacterium avium* ssp. *paratuberculosis* may cause Crohn's disease in humans (Sanderson et al., 1992; Reddacliff et al., 2010). *Histophilus somnus* bacterium causes the disease known as thromboembolic meningoencephalitis. It has been isolated from semen from apparently normal bulls (Humphrey et al., 1982).

IBR is a respiratory disease produced by bovine herpesvirus, type 1 (BHV-1). Infected animals become carriers for life (Van Oirschot, 1995.) A new type of virus, bovine herpes virus type 5 isolated from semen (BHV-5), is responsible for neurological problems in calves, and is lethal (Chowdhury, 1995.)

I would like to know whether our vets have any knowledge of these diseases, standards of health certification for AI bulls and the integrity and technical competence with which certification is performed. What are the standards of hygiene applied to collecting, processing and storing semen?

Don't drink milk.

To join the animal welfare movement contact [gandhim@nic.in](mailto:gandhim@nic.in), [www.peopleforanimalsindia.org](http://www.peopleforanimalsindia.org)

### WISDOM CORNER

- Every man dies. Not every man really lives. **WILLIAM WALLACE**
- Beauty is the promise of happiness. **EDMUND BURKE**
- The giving of love is an education in itself. **ELEANOR ROOSEVELT**

# US MILITARY & CAPITOL MOB

FOCUS AMERICA



Charles C. Krulak

**A SMALL MINORITY OF ALIENATED FORMER AND ACTIVE SERVICE MEMBERS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG IN THE AMERICA FOR WHICH THEY FOUGHT AND SACRIFICED**

Revelations that the insurrection at the US Capitol included many former and current members of America's armed forces have been met with alarm. And yet, as a 35-year veteran and retired commandant of the US Marine Corps, I saw the events of January 6 as the predictable culmination of a growing disconnect between the US military and civilian society.

It is a rift with deep historical roots. When the US emerged victorious from World War II, it had met a series of clearly articulated strategic goals. Whether or not they wore a uniform, Americans had been "all in," eagerly making the sacrifices necessary to defeat the Axis powers. When the war was over, US servicemen and women returned to a country that was proud of what they had accomplished, united, and eager to move forward.

Once home, many veterans joined organisations like the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion, where they were surrounded by like-minded people who had served, suffered, and sacrificed together. Jobs were plentiful, and Americans took pride in their country and their military. Similarly, in the Korean War less than a decade later, though America was never "all in," it nonetheless had clear strategic goals. As in WWII, US servicemen and women did a remarkable job and came home to an appreciative country.

But then came Vietnam, where most Americans never really knew what their country was fighting for. When the conflict finally came to its ignominious end in April 1975, there was no victory to celebrate (and it certainly was not fireworks that flew from the roof of the US embassy in Saigon). Unlike previous generations, those who fought in Vietnam were not honored for their service and sacrifice. Equally important, the public backlash against the war led to the end of military conscription, which fundamentally transformed the relationship between the military



**As the divide between the military and US civilian society grows, even more attention will need to be paid to weeding out extremists**

and the American people. The rift created by the shift to an all-volunteer military has grown wider ever since. After Vietnam, America's next major war was Desert Storm, in 1990. Again, clear strategic goals were met in a dramatic fashion, and US servicemen and women returned to a proud country – on the cusp of becoming the world's only remaining superpower with the collapse of the Soviet Union the following year.

Yet by the end of the Gulf War, globalisation and technological change had already begun to reshape American society. Old-line industries were being upended, and many manufacturing jobs were disappearing. Although immigration had only a minor effect on the big economic picture, it became a hot-button political issue for those who found themselves out of work. At the same time, a new wave of social-justice issues also started gaining momentum during this period. As a microcosm of America, the US military was not immune to these political dynamics.

It was against this political, social, and economic backdrop that America embarked on its "long war." Much like Vietnam, the "War

on Terror" lacks clear strategic goals and has lost public buy-in over time. Many of those who have fought it subscribe to the apocryphal refrain that while the military was at war, America was at Walmart. After serving multiple tours in Iraq or Afghanistan, servicemen and women who sacrificed years of their lives have received little recognition.

In his 1973 book, *The American Way of War*, the historian Russell F. Weigley quoted US General George C. Marshall as saying, "a democracy cannot fight a Seven Years' War," because any protracted conflict eventually will lose the support of the electorate. The longer a war runs – particularly when it becomes cross-generational – the greater the disconnect between the typical citizen and the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines who serve.

The War on Terror is an abiding case in point, helping to shed light on the unrest and extremism that burst into public view at the Capitol. A small minority of alienated former and active service members have concluded that something is wrong in the America for which they fought and sacrificed. The past two presidential elections

have fueled this discontent and convinced some that they have a duty to confront perceived domestic "enemies." Political leaders, meanwhile, have exploited these sentiments for their own advantage.

The COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to a perfect storm. As the economy shed jobs – particularly at the lower end of the income distribution – face-to-face interactions were no longer possible. With deepening social atomisation, it has become more difficult to experience solidarity. Angst or boredom have afflicted many, and some have found refuge in online communities espousing extremist ideologies. The 2020 presidential election brought the situation to a boiling point. A sitting commander-in-chief openly sought to overturn a free and fair election with lies and intimidation, and a small minority of his acolytes answered his call to action.

But Americans should have faith. Notwithstanding a few outliers, the US military is unwavering in its support of, and dedication to, the US Constitution. Those in its ranks who harbour extremist views will be discovered and dealt with appropriately. Looking ahead, recruitment methods will be strengthened to weed out extremists. Recruiters will have to look not only at candidates' social-media activity but also at their "body paint" (tattoos) and other potential indicators of extremist or racist sympathies. Interviews will need to be more pointed, and education for active members improved.

While the troubling trajectory of US military-civil relations has created fertile ground for some members to be radicalised, it is important to remember that the insurrectionists represent an exception. US military has defended American democracy for centuries and will continue to do so, in keeping with our noblest traditions.

*The writer, a retired four-star general, is a former commandant of the US Marine Corps.*  
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### SPECTRUM CLIMATE CRISIS

## Greening the 'special relationship'

COP26, the United Nations climate summit being held this November in Glasgow, is already looming large in US and UK policymaking circles. For UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the summit is a major opportunity to demonstrate what a post-Brexit 'Global Britain' can do. And for US President Joe Biden, it is an early test of his administration's ability to uphold its climate leadership promises, both at home and abroad.

The stakes could not be higher. In 2021 alone, world leaders will gather at least seven times to address global crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, its economic fallout, climate change, food systems, and biodiversity loss. In all of these discussions, the central question is how to reorient our economies and societies to protect one another and the planet.

Four years after former President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the Paris climate agreement, the Biden administration has now brought the country back in. But rejoining the accord was the easy part. Delivering on a plan to achieve carbon neutrality by mid-century poses a much greater challenge.

Fortunately, Biden and his climate chief, former Secretary of State John Kerry, recognise that US legitimacy abroad now depends on whether it can pursue bold ac-

tion at home. Kerry's stature, broad remit, and presence on the White House National Security Council indicate the seriousness with which the administration views the climate issue, as does Kerry's promise to deliver a new US climate plan by April 22.

In this pivotal year for climate action, much will depend on the updated 2030 emissions-reduction target that the US sets for itself. To meet the challenge at hand, the new target will need to be even more ambitious than the 50 per cent reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions (from 2005 levels) that is currently being floated in Washington.

As for the UK, its role as the host of COP26, and as the current G7 president, means that it will have its hand on the global climate tiller. Should the summit end in acrimony or paralysis, there is little doubt that the blame will fall on Johnson and Biden. Though China's September 2020 pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 was light on specifics, it nonetheless has insulated Beijing from climate criticism for the time being. (And India may yet make a similar announcement this year.)

With key countries already committing to carbon neutrality, the top priority in Glasgow is not to bring big polluters on board, but

rather to marshal support for the dozens of smaller developing countries. Many of these governments are eager to embrace a low-carbon economy, but they face mounting hurdles such as unsustainable debt burdens. Hence, as UN Secretary-General António Guterres has emphasised, a global debt-relief plan and a climate-finance package have become essential ahead of COP26. It is now up to the UK and the US to create the conditions for scaled-up green investment in the developing world.

Without financial support for struggling countries, any deal that emerges from COP26 will be dead on arrival. Even if many countries offer ambitious updates to their national climate plans this year, they will need the resources to meet those commitments.

The UK and the US also need to come together to push back against countries and initiatives that undermine global decarbonisation efforts. For starters, the current Brazilian and Australian governments need to be isolated in the international climate arena, with support in those countries being redirected toward willing sub-national actors. If we learned one thing from the past four years of dealing with climate deniers like Trump and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, it is the futility of

engaging with those who thrive on disruption.

We need to pursue net-zero emissions through nature-based solutions based on science, and with respect for local communities. As home to indigenous peoples and as the lungs for our polluted planet, the world's forests are precious resources. Nature must not be treated as a bargaining chip for big business and global finance as they seek to offset their carbon footprints. Success will come only through the restoration and regeneration of our natural resources.

Biden and Johnson make for strange bedfellows. But they need each other: British politicians love to wax lyrical about the UK's "special relationship" with the US, even though that idea has always been more their dream than a reality. Today, however, both countries find themselves at the same critical juncture: they must go green before it is too late. And, for their own sake and that of the planet, they must provide leadership for others to set and fulfill ambitious climate commitments.

*Rachel Kyte is a former UN climate envoy. Ana Toni is Executive Director of Instituto Clima e Sociedade. Bernice Lee is Research Director of Futures at Chatham House.*  
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## Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

**OrissaPOST**  
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### Trust deficit & India's neighbours

Sir, Close on the heels of the agreement between India and China to scale down tensions on the Eastern Ladakh border, a joint statement was issued by India and Pakistan to cease fire at the LoC. The indication of Pakistan's willingness to cease fire at the LoC raises serious doubts about its motive for the action and its intentions. The core issues India and Pakistan are seeking to address are different. For Pakistan, it cannot be anything other than Kashmir and for India, export of jihadi terror from across the LoC. Any attempt to restore peace and tranquillity along the LAC by India and China and along the LoC by India and Pakistan would help establish good relations between India and its adversaries. In fact, differences in perceptions between India and China as also between and Pakistan cannot be solved in a short time. If talks continue and ceasefire remains in place and the assets of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) remain secure and intact, it would benefit China and Pakistan and remove one threat to India. With Pakistan moving to take over Gilgit-Baltistan as a full-fledged province, the Kashmir issue could be closed. It is a fact that peace is an important necessity for nations of the region. The chief obstacle between India and China as also between India and Pakistan is the immense trust deficit. India always remains cautious as it has been stabbed in the back by both countries. India has entered into peace agreements with China as also with Pakistan several times. However, these two countries have reneged on the agreements and thereby proved to be untrustworthy. Hence, India must closely observe the developments from across the borders. It must always be on the alert. Further, it must continue to enhance its military capabilities despite working towards peace. In fact, military power is the perfect solution for securing borders and establishing peace.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

### Karna minister's misdemeanour

Sir, Karnataka Agriculture Minister BC Patil has courted controversy by getting himself inoculated at his home in Hirekerur, Haveri, in gross violation of COVID-19 protocol. Many senior citizens are queuing up to get a vaccine shot, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself went to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to get the jab. The minister's misdemeanour has come in for flak from various quarters, including the Centre.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE



# Sasikala quits politics ahead of TN elections

# Haasan expects support from Rajini

Political observers say if Rajini extends his support to Haasan, which is not an unlikely scenario, the results of Tamil Nadu elections will be unpredictable

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, March 3: Superstar and Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) supremo Kamal Haasan is expecting to get full support and blessings from southern movie icon Rajinikanth whose Rajini Makkal Mandram (fans' association) has as many as 65,000 units across the state.

Rajinikanth had earlier announced his plans for an entry into politics and was expected to align with the BJP, especially after the mega star held direct talks with the senior BJP leadership, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. However, following health issues, Rajinikanth had to shelve his plans of a political entry.

Speculations were rife after Kamal Haasan conducted a series of meetings with Rajinikanth and even

tweeted that he was willing to align with the latter, setting aside 'personal ego'. Rajinikanth did not open his mouth on this, but Kamal Haasan met the former at his Poes Garden residence and publicly announced the visits. There were unannounced visits as well.

C. Rajeev, political observer and Director of the Centre for Policy and Development Studies (CPDS), a Chennai-based think-tank, told IANS, "A Kamal Haasan-Rajinikanth combination will reap a lot of dividends in the political hemisphere for MNM and even after the tall claims of both the DMK-led front and the AIADMK-led front on seizing power. The exact picture is yet to evolve. With the moving forces of DMK and AIADMK, M. Karunanidhi and J. Jayalalithaa, passing away, the charisma and public appeal of the present lead-



ership has to be ascertained after the poll results, as this is the first Assembly elections in the state after their demise." He added, "If Rajinikanth extends his support to Kamal Haasan, which is not an unlikely scenario, the results of Tamil Nadu elections will be unpredictable. The opinion polls and the expert studies will be blown away as politics has unexpected turns and this can be one."

The RMM has more than 65,000 units across the state, and the mega star was planning to enroll more than 1.25 crore members before the

launch of his political party. He had called upon the RMM leaders to enroll 30 members in each of the 65,000 units in the state which would lead to 19 lakh members and 50,000 active members.

If each of these 19 lakh members brings in 5 to 10 members, then there will be more than 1.25 crore members. This was an ambitious plan of Rajinikanth fans but with the party not taking off, the RMM members can support any political outfit which the mega star suggests and this is exactly what Kamal Haasan is expecting.



**I will stay away from politics and keep praying my sister Puratchi Thalaivi (Jayalalithaa), whom I consider as God, and the Lord Almighty for the establishment of the golden rule of Amma**

VK SASIKALA

# BJP reaches out to Kerala's Christian community

AGENCIES

Kochi, March 3: The BJP has reached out to minority Christians in poll-bound Kerala with senior party leader and deputy chief minister of Karnataka CN Ashwath Narayan meeting a senior Catholic priest seeking to "gain the confidence" of the community.

Besides Narayan, BJP state chief K Surendran, who is leading the party's "Vijay Yatra", also met Syro-Malabar Church head Cardinal George Alencherry separately



Monday at the Bishops Council headquarters here, sources said.

Narayan said he met the Cardinal as the party wanted to sort out the communication gap with the Church. "Lot of communication gap which we want to sort out and ensure that

we gain the confidence of the Christian community," he said. Narayan, who had a personal conversation with the Cardinal, said the party wanted to "erase" whatever differences were there with the Christian community and "ensure we get complete cooperation". Sources said Surendran, who met the Cardinal ahead of Narayan's visit, had a breakfast with priests at the KCBC headquarters. He also held a personal meeting with Cardinal, they said.

The BJP's move to reach out to Christians ahead of the crucial

polls came as the community has got significant influence in a number of constituencies, particularly central Kerala. The meeting also came close on the heels of some top Catholic priests meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi in January.

Three Cardinals of the Church, including Alencherry, had an interaction with Modi January 19 during which the PM responded positively to the church's long standing demand for extending an invitation to the Pope to visit India.

# It may rain freebies in TN this poll season

From the 'three measures' of rice for Re 1 introduced by DMK founder CN Annadurai in 1967, competitive populism has been touching new heights in the state with the passage of time



Picture used for representation

menting various schemes like free laptops for students, free cattle, two wheeler purchase subsidy scheme for women and others.

"There will be several welfare schemes and more freebies. The manifesto will also promise schemes for increasing self employment for the youth. There will be promises on giving government services online," an AIADMK leader told IANS preferring anonymity.

"It is a do or die poll for Chief Minister Palaniswami. The government is facing an anti-incumbency factor. Also, the 10.5 per cent reservation for Vanniars has made other castes unhappy and this may go against the government. So, the

manifesto has to be populist," a political analyst told IANS not wishing to be named.

Continuing further he said for the DMK its manifesto has to be populist as it has to counter the loan waiver, Vanniar reservation and other decisions announced by the government. "The DMK has been saying that the state government had implemented what it has been promising the people. So, its manifesto has to be populist and different," he added.

It is learnt that the ruling party will wait for the DMK to come out with its manifesto before announcing its own.

Political analyst Kolahala

Sreenivas is of the view that the manifestoes of the two parties would be like a vision statement as they have been speaking a lot about their schemes. "The AIADMK government has done what it had promised like the loan waivers for farmers/poor/SHGs. The government also announced the 'all pass scheme' for students of 9, 10 and 11 classes," Sreenivas told IANS.

"The AIADMK government was not able to make any new announcement relating to welfare schemes. The party in its manifesto may enhance the benefits under its existing welfare schemes," Sreenivas said. According to him, the government is trying to attract

the rural votes as all its major announcements were focused on the rural populace while the DMK party seems to be focused on the youth. "The DMK was vociferous against the Tasmac (state government liquor retailing company) during the 2016 polls and promised that it would introduce prohibition. But this time around it is silent on that," Sreenivas told IANS.

Perhaps the party is silent on Tasmac as the government would need revenue to implement the populist schemes the DMK would be announcing in its manifesto.

"The DMK's stand on Tasmac will be known in its manifesto," Sreenivas said. Be that as it may, other parties are also giving the finishing touches to their manifestoes.

"We will be announcing our manifesto soon," a leader of Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) floated by actor Kamal Hassan told IANS.

The BJP is expected to finalise its manifesto soon. "We are hoping for Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to release it during the second week of March. The manifesto may contain promises like taking Hindu temples away from government control, appointment of additional hands in the subordinate judiciary and police force, a High Court bench in Coimbatore, transparency in government," a BJP leader told IANS on condition of anonymity.

From the 'three measures' (around 4.5 kg) of rice for Re 1 scheme introduced by DMK founder C.N. Annadurai in 1967, competitive populism has been touching new heights in the state with the passage of time.

# Sitharaman using officials for political needs: Kerala FM

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, March 3: A day after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) asked the chief of Kerala's flagship programme KIIFB and his deputy to appear before it, state Finance Minister Thomas Issac Wednesday went hammer and tongs after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

"She is leading from the front and using her officials for political needs. What's happening is a clear violation of the election norms. We are not going to be cowed down by such intimidatory tactics. The conspiracy of the ED against the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) has been going on for a while. Does anyone know that the head of the ED in Kerala - Manish - is the son of a top BJP leader from Rajasthan," Issac asked.

"I wish to make it very clear that strong resistance will be put up against the present arm twisting tactics of the ED. Please do not see people here as an extension of the Congress party in Rajasthan. We will deal with ED with the help of the people. ED is out to play spoilsport to the development plans of Kerala and we will strongly resist any move to put our officials under duress," added Issac.

KIIFB is a government-owned financial institution formed to mobilise funds for infrastructure development from outside the state revenue, and numerous projects are assigned funds from the KIIFB. KIIFB had gone ahead by float-



**She (Sitharaman) is leading from the front and using her officials for political needs. What's happening is a clear violation of the election norms. We are not going to be cowed down by such intimidatory tactics**

THOMAS ISSAC | KERALA FINANCE MINISTER

ing masala bonds following which the ED has registered a case against it under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), a move that has irked Issac. Incidentally, while taking part in a rally of state BJP President K. Surendran in Kochi last week, Sitharaman had slammed Issac for the role of KIIFB in his state budget and even pointed out the remarks the CAG had made.

With the crucial Assembly polls scheduled to be held on April 6 and the CPI-M led Left government making every effort to ensure it retains power, the coming days will tell to what extent the war of words between the BJP and the CPI-M top brass will go. Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to visit Kerala later this week.

# 5 new species of shrub frogs found in Kerala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, March 3: Researchers from India and the US have discovered five new species of shrub frogs from the Western Ghats, one of the globally recognised biodiversity hotspots.

While one of the new species called Raorchestes drutaahu (Fast-calling Shrub Frog) was discovered from two localities: Kadalar in Idukki and Siruvani in Palakkad, another one named Raorchestes kakkayamensis (Kakkayam Shrub Frog) was found only in the vicinity of Kakkayam dam. Raorchestes keirasabinae (Keira's Shrub Frog), a unique tree frog inhabiting the highest canopy layers, was found in Agasthyamalai and Anamalai hills. The species is named after young nature lover Keira Sabin,

in appreciation of the long-time support and commitment of the Andrew Sabin Family Foundation towards amphibian research and conservation around the world.

Raorchestes sanjappai (Sanjappa's Shrub Frog), a beautiful green shrub frog, was discovered from the Wayanad region. The species is named after Dr M Sanjappa, a renowned Indian Botanist and former Director of the Botanical Survey of India.

The Raorchestes vellikannan (Silver-eyed Shrub Frog) was discovered in the Siruvani hills and adjoining regions of the Silent Valley National Park.

The name is derived from Malayalam 'velli' (meaning silver) and 'kannu' (meaning eye), referring to its distinct silver eye colour.

# To beat fuel price blues, traders take to bullock carts

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, March 3: Small traders and businessmen from the outskirts and neighbouring villages of Chennai have started using their discarded bullock carts for transporting goods and commodities to the capital city.

Anandan Muthunayagam (31), a small trader who does business in groundnuts, is now a regular with bullock carts. He was earlier using a mini truck to transport goods to Chennai.

Muthunayagam told IANS over phone, "I do have a mini truck which I will be disposing of soon if things move like this. I was spending more than Rs 550 per day on fuel alone when I was using the mini truck for transportation of goods, but now with my old bullock cart, my expenses have come



down to Rs 150, which is the cost required to feed the bullocks."

While there have been umpteen number of protests in Tamil Nadu

organised by the truckers and auto drivers' associations, the step taken by Muthunayagam is a genuine one as he is not able to afford the

**I do have a mini truck which I will be disposing of soon if things move like this. I was spending more than Rs 550 per day on fuel alone when I was using the mini truck for transportation of goods, but now with my old bullock cart, my expenses have come down to Rs 150, which is the cost required to feed the bullocks**

ANANDAN MUTHUNAYAGAM | TRADER

fuel cost for his vehicle.

Muthunayagam said, "We can't save anything if we use the mini truck. But with the bullock carts

in place, we can at least get something to eat at the end of the day."

Rajamanikyam, a small onion trader attached to the Koyambedu market, told IANS, "Me and a few of my friends are now using bullock carts to come from the village to the Koyambedu market. I purchase onions from the market and sell them in other localities using my bullock cart for transportation. There has been a considerable dip in expenses ever since I started using the bullock cart."

Chennai recently witnessed an agitation by the truck owners' association who had staged a protest with several trucks and a few bullock carts. While that was a symbolic protest, the method adopted by Muthunayagam and Rajamanikyam has caught the attention of the city dwellers.





**When people were being told to bang empty plates, we provided the hungry millions with full thalis (plateful of meals) in that time of distress and the scheme still continues**

UDDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER

## SHOCKING REPORT

Children aged 8, 9 are engaged in dismantling and segregating e-waste at dumping yards for old electronic items in Seelampur and Mustafabad in Delhi and Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh, apex child right rights body NCPDR said in a fact-finding report



## of the day quote

India's recently concluded study on hearing loss and its causes showed that disabling hearing loss affected 2.9 per cent of the population and was noted to effect communication, education and work



HARSH VARDHAN | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

Contrary to the UP government's false propaganda on crime, every day one family or the other is screaming for justice



PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONG GENERAL SECY

Nice talking to UK Foreign Secretary @DominicRaab. Reviewed the progress in our bilateral cooperation



S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### KTR seeks apology from BJP

Hyderabad: The war of words between the ruling TRS and opposition BJP over the Information Technology Investment Region (ITIR) intensified with state IT minister K T Rama Rao Wednesday demanding an apology from the saffron party for shelving the project. Rama Rao, who is also working president of Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), hit back at state BJP president Bandi Sanjay Kumar a day after the latter shot off an open letter to Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao alleging that the TRS government advertently failed to implement the ITIR project.

### 57 students test covid+ve

Karnal: As many as 57 students of the Sainik school here have tested positive for the coronavirus, health officials said Wednesday. The officials said that three students of the Sainik school tested Covid-19 positive Monday, following which samples of 390 students and staff members of the school were collected for testing.

### National Book Trust editor booked

New Delhi: A sexual harassment case has been lodged against activist Rubin D'Cruz, editor (Malayalam) with the National Book Trust and former director of Kerala State Institute of Children's Literature. The case was filed by a Kerala woman who is presently residing in Delhi. "We have registered a case of sexual harassment against Rubin D'Cruz after the woman approached the police," DCP said.

### Chemical godown gutted

Thane: A chemical godown was gutted in a devastating fire in the powerloom town of Bhiwandi in Thane district Wednesday. However, no casualty was reported. Santosh Kadam, chief of the Thane Municipal Corporation's Regional Disaster Management Cell, said the fire broke out at the chemical godown located at Valpada at around 10 am.

### Dalit girl found raped

Aligarh: The semi-naked body of a 17-year-old Dalit girl in a village in Aligarh, with signs of sexual assault and her skin peeled away from being dragged through the fields, has been found. The Aligarh police, which had formed five teams to crack the case, has detained 12 suspects for questioning.

# Hackers lure users, install malware via Google Search

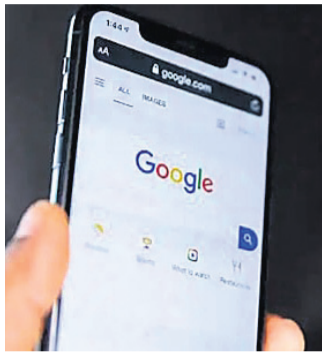
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 3: Cyber security researchers have found a new malware that is tricking Google into treating hacked websites as trustworthy sources and presenting innocent users with apparently "perfect matches" to their search queries on the platform.

The hackers are using the malware dubbed as "Gootloader" to lure "well-meaning users" into installing the malware on their devices, putting them at ransomware risk, according to the report by Naked Security, which is global cyber security firm Sophos's threat intelligence unit.

The Gootkit malware family has been around more than half a decade - a mature Trojan with functionality centered around banking credential theft.

However, in recent years, almost as much effort has gone into improvement of its delivery method as has gone into the malware itself. This is how the modus operandi works. The hackers break into hundreds of web servers and implant artificially generated content containing phrases that search engines are likely to associate with expertise in a specific field, like real estate, employment law, import/export regulations, company partnerships and more. "From time to time, the crooks get lucky and one or their hacked



sites turns up as a top hit on Google, thanks to a specific search term entered by an innocent user," the report said. There's a good chance that the user will click the Google link that shows up, because the search hit looks like a natural result, given that it's not a paid ad or a sponsored link.

If the user clicks through to the hacked server, the crooks recognise that the click came via a Google search by using the Referer in the web request. The server deliberately sends out a fraudulent web page that looks like a message board on which someone else recently asked the same thing. "To make the page look even more convincing, there's a further reply, apparently from the original questioner, thanking the administrator for their prompt and helpful answer," the report mentioned. Google was yet to react to the Sophos report.

# 'Observers will face action for laxity in duty'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 3: Ahead of Assembly elections in four states and a Union Territory in March-April, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora on Wednesday warned of strict action against the observers in case of "lax in performing duties".

The Commissioner said that the Election Commission will take swift action against such election observers, giving them instruction that "willful lapses will not be tolerated".

"EC (Election Commission of India) will act swiftly and ruthlessly in case anyone is found to be lax in performing their duties. The Commission shall not tolerate any willful lapses," Arora said while briefing a meeting organised for observers. These observers to be deployed for the forthcoming



general election to the legislative Assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal for which schedule was announced on February 26.

More than 18 crore voters would be exercising their right of franchise in these elections in which more than 80,000 polling stations have been added. The CEC further asked the observers to visit the polling booths to check due facili-

ties to senior citizens, persons with disabilities and women voters to ensure Commission's commitment to principle of inclusive elections.

More than 1,650 observers participated in the briefing meeting physically and virtually from more than 120 remote locations also.

Officers from IAS, IPS, IRS and other central services have been included to be deployed as General,

Police and Expenditure Observers.

Addressing the Observers, Arora further said that they are one of the most important torchbearers of Indian democracy. The CEC recalled that during his tenure in EC, since September 2017, he has been associated with 14 elections of state Assemblies and also the 2019 Lok Sabha General Elections wherein observers played an important role in the conduct of elections. Taking note of the exemplary work accomplished by the CEO and DEOs of Bihar despite widespread Covid concerns, Arora said Bihar Assembly elections have literally become a turning point in the history of Indian elections.

"Even the participation of voters was better than the previous Assembly and Parliamentary elections in Bihar."

# Farmers' violence: Delhi court grants bail to class 10 student, 4 others

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: A Delhi court Wednesday granted bail to five persons, including a class 10 student, in a case related to the violence on Republic Day during farmers' tractor parade against the Centre's three new agri laws, saying they cannot be kept in custody merely on the apprehension that they might again commit similar offence.

Additional Sessions Judge Sudhanshu Kaushik granted bail to Ravi, Ashish, Parvesh, Deepak Singh and Naveen, who is studying in class 10, on furnishing a bail

bond of Rs 30,000 with one surety of like amount each in the case of violence in Nangloi area.

The court noted that police alleged that the accused persons were amongst the protesters who attacked the police personnel and robbed the gas gun of the police but the same could not be recovered.

"Record shows that investigation in the matter qua the applicant (Ravi), already stands concluded. He is stated to be in custody for the last more than a month. No previous criminal involvement of the applicant has been alleged by the prosecution. "Keeping in view

all these factors, I am of the considered opinion that there is no point in keeping the accused detained in custody. He cannot be kept detained in custody merely on the apprehension that he might again commit a similar offence, more particularly when there is no record of previous involvement," the judge said in his similar order passed on the five bail pleas.

During the hearing, the counsel for the accused claimed they had been falsely implicated in the case and had come to Delhi to peacefully participate in the protest march of the farmers.

# States, UTs can't administer digital media rules: Govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: The Centre has told all states and union territories that the power to administer the new rules on digital media publications has not been delegated to them, a day after the Union government overturned a Manipur district magistrate's order issued under the recently implemented guidelines.

In an office memorandum Monday, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry said that it had announced February 25 the Information Technology (Intermediary guidelines and digital media ethics codes) Rules 2021 under the IT Act 2000.

The provisions under the new rules relate to the code of ethics for digital news publishers, setting up of a grievance redressal system and the requirement of disclosure of information to Centre, the ministry said.

However, it added, "These powers have not been delegated to state governments/district magistrates/police commissioners."

These rules have to be administered by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, government of India, it clarified. The rules provide the code of ethics to be followed by digital news publishers and the publishers of OTT content. "A three-level Grievance redressal mechanism consisting of the publisher (level 1), self-regulating body constituted by the publishers (level 2) and an oversight mechanism of the government (level 3), with time-bound grievance disposal mechanism.

"Furnishing of information by publishers to the government and periodical disclosure of information regarding grievance redressal in public domain," according to the new digital media rules.

The Centre had March 2 sent a letter to the Chief Secretary of Manipur a day after the Imphal West district magistrate, Naorem Praveen Singh, had served a notice to Manipuri talk show Khanasi Neinasi under the new media laws. The magistrate had directed the media outlet to furnish all relevant documents to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

## NATURE'S BOUNTY



A woman is purchasing flower saplings and bulbs of different varieties at a nursery in Srinagar

UNI PHOTO

# 2 IISc students die on campus in B'lore

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, March 3: In two shocking incidents at the reputed Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in this tech city, a post-graduate student collapsed and died while playing football on its campus ground while a research scholar committed suicide, an official said Wednesday.

"The M.Tech student of mechanical engineering collapsed on

Tuesday while playing football in the Gymkhana ground and doctors declared him dead when rushed to a nearby private hospital for emergency treatment," said the institute's deputy registrar Veeranna Kumar in a statement here.

In another tragic incident, a senior student doing PhD at the Centre of Nano Science and Engineering died by suicide in the century-old campus. "We have informed the parents and police

about the sudden death of the 2 bright students in our campus," said Kumar.

Meanwhile, the state-run institute urged its students to meet its officials and seek help from the 24x7 emergency call service for mental health doctor. "We also have 24x7 online counselling and support via YourDost platform, 1-on-1 counselling with counsellors and psychiatrists on the campus," added Kumar.

# 'Sea View Prison' for drug offenders

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

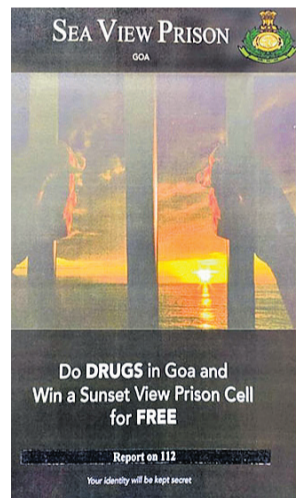
Panaji, March 3: Often at the receiving end of blunt media coverage, the Goa Police Wednesday pulled off smooth, cheeky wordplay in a print advertisement aimed at creating awareness about drug abuse in the coastal state.

A Goa Police ad published in leading newspapers, warning of a 'Sea View Prison' awaiting drug users in the state, has now gone viral, thanks to the pun spun around stereotypical ads selling real estate in the coastal state.

Speaking to IANS Superintendent of Police (Crime Branch) Shobhit Saxena said that the advert is an extension of its efforts to create awareness about the ills of drugs.

"We have been doing some or the other sort of awareness campaign urging people to stay away from drugs. We had taken the support of renowned football players of Goa like Mandar Sardesai and others in the past. We had done videos and created some posters too. This ad is a continuation of the drive," Saxena said.

The creatives of the ad, which have gone viral on social media, depict an image of the setting sun, through a barred window,



with the accompanying copy stating "Sea View Prison - Do drugs in Goa and win a sunset view prison cell for FREE".

The ad also urges people to inform the police on 112 about leads related to drug abuse in the state, with an assurance that the identity of the informer would be kept a secret.

One of the most popular beach and nightlife destinations in the country, Goa, over the last couple of decades, has also earned the reputation as a narco-tourism destination, thanks to the easy availability of drugs and other narcotics substances.

## COVID-19: A CURSE TO WORLD

# Closure of schools impacted 247 mn kids in India: Study

The UNICEF report also stated that online education is not an option for all as only one in four children has access to digital devices and internet connectivity in the country

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: Closure of 1.5 million schools due to coronavirus pandemic and the resultant lockdowns in 2020 impacted 247 million children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools in India, a UNICEF report has found. Globally, schools for more than 168 million children have been completely closed for almost a full year, it said.

The report stated that online education is not an option for all as only one in four children has access to digital devices and internet con-

nectivity. Pre-COVID, only a quarter of households (24 per cent) in India had access to the internet and there is a large rural-urban and gender divide.

"In India, closure of 1.5 million schools due to the pandemic and lockdowns in 2020 has impacted 247 million children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools. In addition, there are over six million girls and boys who were already out of school even before the COVID-19 crisis began," a statement from the UN agency said Wednesday. It also said that till date in India



REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

only eight states/UTs have opened all classes from class 1 to class 12; 11 states have reopened classes 6-12 and 15 states have only opened

classes 9-12. Three states have reopened anganwadi centers, with younger children losing out greatly on crucial foundational learning.

"It has been nearly a year since the pandemic caused schools to close and disrupt the normal routine of children throughout India. We know that the longer children stay out of school, the more vulnerable they become, with less chances of returning to school.

"Any decision to reopen schools is made with the best interests of children in mind and as schools reopen in a staggered manner with children returning to their classrooms, we must strive to support them in catching up on the learning they have missed," said Dr

Yasmin Ali Haque, UNICEF India Representative.

This is especially true for those who were not able to access digital or remote learning opportunities, Haque said, adding that the mental health and well-being of children is a crucial concern, while psychosocial support from teachers, parents and caregivers is a priority.

UNICEF, UNESCO, UNHCR, World Bank and World Food Programme developed a Global Framework for Reopening Schools which was adapted to the Indian context.



# national



**Dalit oppression and murder of a man in Hathras and ruthless killing of a Dalit RTI activist in Gujarat prove that lives of Dalits, oppressed and women are not safe under the BJP government like in previous Congress regime. The government should immediately take notice of this**  
MAYAWATI | BAHUWAN SAMAJ PARTY CHIEF

## INDIA, NORWAY TO BOOST TIES

India and Norway will work jointly in the area of marine spatial planning for the next five years, the Ministry of Earth Sciences said Wednesday



## of the day quote

The Samajwadi Party's budgets were never welfare-oriented. The party had no agenda for development and no far-sighted vision  
YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

China mobilized its conventional and cyber forces to threaten India. Government of India (GOI) buckled. Mark my words, our land in Dipsang is gone and DBO (Daulat Beg Oldie) is vulnerable. Government of India's (GOI's) cowardice will lead to tragic consequences in the future  
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

Central agencies like ED, CBI, and Income Tax are being used to target those who take an anti-government stand and speak against the policies of the regime  
NAWAB MALIK | MAHARASHTRA CABINET MINISTER

# COVAXIN EFFICACY 81%

AGENCIES

Hyderabad, March 3: Bharat Biotech Wednesday announced the first interim analysis of Covaxin, which shows the efficacy of the Covid-19 vaccine to be at 81 per cent. The Hyderabad-based vaccine maker said whole virion inactivated Covid-19 vaccine candidate demonstrated an interim vaccine efficacy of 81 per cent in its Phase 3 clinical trial. The trials involved 25,800 subjects, the largest ever conducted in India, in partnership with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Covaxin demonstrates high clinical efficacy trend against Covid-19 but also significant immunogenicity against the rapidly emerging variants," said Dr. Krishna Ella, Chairman and Managing Director, Bharat Biotech. BBV152 (Covaxin) contains a whole virion inactivated SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, which is produced in Vero cells. It is stable at 2 to 80C (refrigerated) and is shipped in a ready-to-use liquid formula-



Today is an important milestone in vaccine discovery, for science and our fight against coronavirus. With today's results from our Phase 3 clinical trials, we have now reported data on our COVID-19 vaccine from Phase 1, 2, and 3 trials involving around 27,000 participants  
KRISHNA ELLA | BHARAT BIOTECH CHAIRMAN & MANAGING DIRECTOR

tion that permits distribution using existing vaccine supply chain channels. BBV152 has a 28-day open viral policy as a unique product characteristic, thus reducing vaccine wastage by approximately 10-30 per cent, the vaccine maker said. BBV152 is based on an established manufacturing platform with a better safety profile when compared to other vaccine platforms. The inclusion of the Adjuvanted adjuvant enhances T-cell immune responses to Covid-19, leading to long-term protection. "I want to thank every one of the

participants, who volunteered to participate in this vital clinical trial, our partners, principal investigators across 25 study sites, and our team at Bharat Biotech who dedicated their time to this vaccine discovery," said Suchitra Ella, Joint Managing Director, Bharat Biotech. The Phase 3 study enrolled 25,800 participants between 18-98 years of age, including 2,433 over the age of 60 and 4,500 with comorbidities. The primary endpoint of Phase 3 clinical trial is based on the first occurrence of PCR-confirmed symp-

tomatic (mild, moderate, or severe) Covid-19 with onset at least 14 days after the second study vaccination in serologically negative (to SARS-CoV-2) adult participants at baseline. The first interim analysis is based on 43 cases, of which 36 cases of Covid-19 were observed in the placebo group versus 7 cases observed in the BBV152 group, resulting in a point estimate of vaccine efficacy of 80.6 per cent. The interim analysis included a preliminary review of the safety database, which showed that severe, serious, and medically attended adverse events occurred at low levels and were balanced between vaccine and placebo groups. The trial's conduct and monitoring are as per Good Clinical Practice guidelines and have been outsourced to IQVIA. Analysis from the National Institute of Virology indicates that vaccine-induced antibodies can neutralize the UK variant strains and other heterologous strains, which has been published in bioRxiv.

## Top Court junks plea against Farooq

# Expression of view not seditious: SC



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 3: Observing that expression of a view which is dissent from a decision taken by the Central Government itself cannot be said to be seditious, the Supreme Court Wednesday dismissed a PIL seeking action against National Conference president Farooq Abdullah over his comments on abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Hemant Gupta rejected the plea and also imposed a fine of ₹50,000 on the petitioners for making such claims and directed them to deposit the amount with the Supreme Court Advocates Welfare Fund within four weeks. "The expression of a view which is dissent from a decision taken by the Central Government itself cannot be said to be seditious. There is nothing in the statement which we find so offensive as to give a cause of action for a Court to initiate proceedings. "Not only that, the petitioners have nothing to do with the subject matter and this is clearly a case of publicity interest litigation for the petitioners only to get their names in press. We must discourage such endeavours," the bench said. The top court was hearing a plea which referred to his statement on restoring Article 370, which gave special status to Jammu and

The Apex court made the observation while dismissing a petition filed against Farooq Abdullah for his remarks on scrapping of Article 370

Kashmir, and contended it clearly amounts to a seditious act and therefore he is liable to be punished under section 124A of the IPC. The petition filed by Rajat Sharma and Dr Neh Srivastava, both belonging to an organisation Vishwa Guru India Vision of Sardar Patel, alleged that the former chief minister is trying to "hand over" Kashmir to China and thus, he should be prosecuted for Sedition. "Mr Farooq Abdullah has committed an offence punishable under section 124-A of Indian Penal Code. As he has made the live statement that for restoring Article 370 he would take help of China which clearly amount to seditious act and therefore he is liable to be punished under section 124-A of the IPC," the plea said. The petitioners also referred to a statement made by BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra to claim that Abdullah is misleading the people of Jammu and Kashmir to join China for the restoration of Article 370 of the Constitution.

## Shabnam sent to Bareilly jail

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh), March 3: Shabnam, awaiting death sentence for killing seven members of her family, has been shifted to the Bareilly jail from the Rampur prison, after her photos with some fellow inmates surfaced on social media platforms recently. Two guards of the Rampur jail have also been placed under suspension after jail authorities found that they had clicked the photos with their phones and later circulated them. Jail administration officials said that the pictures were most likely taken January 26 this year inside the jail premises. "It is a breach of security and violation of the jail manual," an official said. The death row convict, Shabnam, was brought to the Rampur district jail in 2019.

## PRECAUTIONS AMID PANDEMIC



A worker sanitizes the premises of National Zoological Park in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

## SHORT TAKES

### Digvijaya to lead farm stir in MP

Bhopal: Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh will be spearheading the farmers' agitation against the Centre's contentious farm laws, across various districts in the state, beginning from Wednesday. Singh is scheduled to hold a series of 'kisan chaupals' and 'panchayats' at many villages in the state.

### Man kills wife, 2 daughters

Bulandshahr (Uttar Pradesh): A 60-year-old mentally unstable man in Bulandshahr district bludgeoned his wife and two of his three daughters to death with a hammer. The incident took place late Tuesday night. According to Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Santosh Kumar Singh, the man's wife and two of his daughters died on the spot, while the third daughter is in critical condition and has been admitted to the hospital.

### Stalker stabs woman techie

Hyderabad: A girl was critically injured in an attack by a stalker in Hyderabad Tuesday night, police said. The victim, a techie working in an IT company in Gachibowli, was attacked with a knife by a youth at her house in Hydershah Kote in Narsangi. Locals caught the stalker who was trying to escape after stabbing the girl and handed him over to police.

### BJP MP's son shot at in UP

Lucknow: BJP MP Kaushal Kishore's son was shot at in Lucknow in the early hours of Wednesday, with the police claiming that he staged the attack on himself by his brother-in-law to falsely implicate some people in the case. Ayush (30), the son of the BJP MP from Mohanlalgarh, was shot at in the Madiaon area here around 2 am.

### Jawan shoots self

Jammu: A 24-year-old soldier shot himself dead Wednesday with his service weapon at an army camp in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, officials said. The jawan who fired shots on himself died en route to the hospital. Rajouri Government Medical College (GMC) Hospital's Superintendent told reporters that it appears to be a case of suicide.

# HOSTEL GIRLS FORCED TO DANCE NAKED BY COPS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, March 3: In a shocker, girls in a Jalgaon hostel were allegedly forced to strip naked and dance before some police personnel, the Maharashtra legislature was informed here Wednesday. Taking cognizance of the issue raised by the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Maha Vikas Aghadi government announced a time-bound probe into the incident. BJP legislator from Chikhli Shweta Mahale who raised the matter, said the women inmates who did not cooperate with the police were told to remove their clothes and dance naked. "The women in the hostel now live in sheer fear. They must be made to feel secure. The incident is a blot on the face of the state. The police who are supposed to protect have become aggressors," Mahale said. "This is a shameful incident. A video clip shows police making the girls nude. This must be thor-

## MAHA SHOCKER

The incident allegedly took place on March 1 at the government-run Ashadeep Women's Hostel in Ganeshnagar area of Jalgaon and a video of the dance party went viral. When the girls refused to do so, they were threatened with dire consequences like murder. The inmates later narrated their plight from the hostel windows

oughly investigated. We must deal with this matter sensitively," said Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis, as some members demanded sacking of the MVA government and others shouted 'shame, shame' in the House. They urged Home Minister Anil Deshmukh to order an inquiry and immediately suspend the police of-

officials involved in the incident. "This is a very unfortunate incident. We have appointed a four-member committee to probe the incident and submit its report within 48 hours. Necessary action will be taken as per the rules after the probe report is received," Deshmukh informed the House. Minister for Women & Child Development (Mrs) Yashomati Thakur said that all the evidence would be collected and probed and those found guilty would not be spared. According to the complaint, some local police personnel and others reportedly entered the hostel premises to 'investigate' certain things and coerced the women inmates to undress and dance before them. Fadnavis pointed out that it was not merely some news report, but even videos of the incident have surfaced, even as his senior colleague and ex-minister Sudhir Mungantiwar slammed the government.

## Army widow to get pension after 12-year legal battle

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 3: After a 12-year-long legal battle, a soldier's widow will finally get her dues. The regional bench of the Armed Forces Tribunal has directed the Chief of Army Staff and other respondents to provide family pension to Savita Singh, wife of a lance naik Shailendra Singh, who was invalidated from service in 2003 owing to disability. A bench of Justice U.C. Srivastava (judicial member) and Vice Admiral Abhay Raghunath Karve (administrative member) passed the order on the application of the husband, but later substituted by the wife after his death. Allowing the application, the bench cautioned the Army to give effect to the order within four months otherwise default would invite interest of 8 per cent per annum till actual payment. Further, it ordered to provide the pension from 2008, the year the husband had died. It also said

that arrears of the pension would be restricted to three years preceding the date of filing of the case before the tribunal in 2017. According to reports, Shailendra Singh was enrolled in the Indian Army on January 1, 1996 and was invalidated out of service March 17, 2003, after having rendered more than seven years in low medical category P-5 due to disability 'Recurrent Anaplastic Astrocytoma Left Temporoparietal Region' (OPTD), a rare malignant brain tumour. The bench agreed to the plea of the wife that her husband was enrolled in the Army in medically and physically fit condition and there was no note in his service documents with regard to suffering from any disease prior to the enrolment and hence any disability suffered by her husband after joining the service should be considered as attributable to or aggravated by military service and she should be entitled for family pension.

## 13K more troops cleared for Nepal, Bhutan borders, tri-junction area

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: The government has sanctioned a dozen fresh SSB battalions, comprising over 13,000 personnel for the Nepal and Bhutan borders guarding force, to "fortify" defences along these fronts including the tri-junction area in Sikkim that adjoins Bhutan and Tibet, officials said



Though the Union Home Ministry has denied creation of a new field frontier for the border force, it has allowed the SSB to create one out of three new sectors - responsible for the operations of about 5-6 battalions - and it is expected to come up in the Delhi-NCR region. The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), with an estimated strength of about 90,000 personnel, is the designated force to guard the open Indian fronts with Nepal (1,751 km) and Bhutan (699 km). SSB Director General (DG) Kumar Rajesh Chandra told PTI that the 12 new battalions will be raised in phases, three units each over the next four years. "It is very supportive of the government to have given the sanction to raise new battalions and establishments for the SSB. The new manpower will ensure that border security is strengthened," the DG said. The SSB chief added that the government has also sanctioned a total of 548 posts to the force for deployment at four ICPs (integrated check posts) along the Nepal border out of which two are already operational at Joghani and Raxaul (both in Bihar).

# Tea business all set to return in Doon valley

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Dehradun, March 3: In the vast expanses of the Harbanswala tea garden in the Doon valley, the greenery has almost returned. The nearby Arcadia tea garden is also gearing up for a green look, though the process may take a year or two, tea workers say. DTC India, which owns the two tea gardens spread in an area of 1,127 acres, claims it is trying to rejuvenate tea leaves by planting fresh saplings to give boost to its loss-making tea business. Looking for break-even in 4-5 years, the company has already set up its own nursery and bought 15,000 saplings from Siliguri in West Bengal. "The tea business is going to stay in Arcadia and Harbanswala. We have no other plan," said DK Singh,

Director of the DTC India, 74 per cent of stakes of which are being held by a Delhi-based real estate company - Logical Buidwell. For the fertilisation purpose, DTC India, a delisted company, has also built its own gigantic 3.5 lakh litre waste compost. "We are making our best efforts to produce tea leaves of high quality," said Singh. The company is currently producing 8,000-10,000 kg of green tea. Efforts are on to find a suitable brand also. After the plucking and the processing, tea leaves are sent to Amritsar which has now become a new destination for tea business. From Amritsar, tea bags are being sent to different areas of the country. There had been attempts to export tea bags to Japan and other nations directly but there was no success due



Representative image

to financial crunch faced by the company. The tea season normally begins after the month of March when tea

leaves start rejuvenating. The plucking goes one till October-November. During the past one or two decades, the tea business has taken a beat-

ing mainly due to the poor maintenance of the gardens as well as the climatic changes that are occurring in the Doon valley which is fast losing its forest cover. You often see cattle grazing in the tea gardens. Scores of unauthorised colonies which have come up on the fringes are posing threats on the gardens. Widespread weed is also destroying the tea cultivation. Few years ago, the government made roads inside the Arcadia tea garden under the local political pressure. Two decades ago, the Indian Military Academy (IMA), a training centre for the army cadets, was given a big chunk of Arcadia land which in turn considerably shrunk the tea cultivation area. There are reports that the IMA wants to acquire more land of the tea gardens now.





**Martin Luther King Jr was a disciple of Gandhi. A lot of Gandhi's teachings were put into practice by him. So it is important that our elected leaders and community leaders adapt and enrich the same partnership between African and Indian communities in Chicago and beyond**  
DANNY K DAVIS | US CONGRESSMAN

**EBOLA INFECTS 28 PEOPLE, KILLS 11 IN GUINEA & DRC**  
The African countries of Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have reported 28 Ebola virus cases and 11 deaths so far, the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says



## of the day quote

Unfortunately, it now seems clear that there is no path forward to gain confirmation, and I do not want continued consideration of my nomination to be a distraction from the president's other priorities



NEERA TANDEN | US BUDGET CHIEF NOMINEE

If I stand down from my position because of an allegation about something that simply did not happen, then any person in Australia can lose their career, their job, their life's work based on nothing more than an accusation that appears in print



CHRISTIAN PORTER | AUSTRALIA'S ATTORNEY-GENERAL

I've moved fast in London to implement the most ambitious plans to tackle air pollution of any major city in the world - showing what we can achieve if we are brave enough



SADIQ KHAN | MAYOR OF LONDON

## SHORT TAKES

### Pak holds Senate polls

**Islamabad:** Pakistan Wednesday held its Senate polls to elect 37 members of the upper house of the country's Parliament. According to a statement from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), 78 candidates are competing for the 37 Senate seats from Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Islamabad. The polling process started at 9 am, and ended at 5 pm. Senators are not directly elected by public voting in Pakistan.

### California crash leaves 13 dead

**Holtville:** An SUV packed with 25 people pulled in front of an oncoming tractor-trailer on a two-lane highway cutting through farmland near the US-Mexico border early Tuesday, killing 13 and leaving bodies strewn across the roadway. Most of the dead were Mexicans, a Mexican official said. When police arrived, some of the passengers were trying to crawl out of the crumpled 1997 Ford Expedition while others were wandering around the fields.

### Taiwan receives AstraZeneca vax

**Taipei:** The first batch of AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine has arrived in Taiwan. Taiwan has signed contracts securing 10 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, 5.05 million doses of the Moderna vaccine and 4.76 million doses of vaccines through COVAX. Wednesday's delivery had 117,000 doses, which was transported from the airport with a police escort. Health care workers, especially those who have direct contact with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases, will be the first to get the shots.

### Quake shakes central Greece

**Athens:** An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.2 has struck central Greece. There were no immediate reports of injuries. The earthquake Wednesday had an epicenter 22 kilometres west-northwest of the town of Larissa and struck just after 12:15 pm Local time, according to the European-Mediterranean Seismological Center. The quake was felt as far away as in the capitals of neighboring North Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro. Numerous aftershocks were reported.

# Junta shows no restraint, kills at least 33 protesters

*The violence came a day after foreign ministers from Southeast Asian neighbours urged restraint but failed to unite behind a call for the release Suu Kyi and the restoration of democracy*



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**The country is like the Tiananmen Square in most of its major cities**  
CARDINAL CHARLES MAUNG BO | ARCHBISHOP OF YANGON

**Yangon, March 3:** Myanmar security forces dramatically escalated their crackdown on protests against last month's coup, killing at least 33 protesters Wednesday in several cities, according to accounts on social media and local news reports compiled by a data analyst.

That is highest daily death toll since the Feb 1 takeover, exceeding the 18 that the UN Human Rights Office said were killed Sunday, and could galvanize the international community, which has responded fitfully thus far to the violence. Videos from Wednesday also showed security forces firing slingshots at demonstrators, chasing them down and even brutally beating an am-

balance crew. The toll could even be higher; Democratic Voice of Burma, an independent television and on-line news service, tallied 38 deaths. Demonstrators have regularly flooded the streets of cities across the country since the military seized power and ousted the elected government of leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Their numbers have remained high even as security forces have repeatedly fired tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds to disperse the crowds, and arrested protesters en masse. The intensifying standoff is unfortunately familiar in the country with a long history of peaceful resistance to military rule — and

brutal crackdowns. The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in the Southeast Asian nation after five decades of military rule. The Wednesday death toll was compiled by a data analyst who spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared for his safety. He also collected information where he could on the victims' names, ages, hometowns, and where and how they were killed. The Associated Press was unable to independently confirm most of the reported deaths, but several square with online postings. The data analyst, who is in Yangon, the country's biggest city, said he collected the information to

honor those who were killed for their heroic resistance. According to his list, the highest number of deaths was in Yangon, where the total was 18. In the central city of Monywa, which has turned out huge crowds, eight were reported. Two deaths each were reported in Salin, a town in Magwe region, and in Mandalay, the country's second-biggest city. Mawlamyine, in the country's southeast, and Myingyan and Kalay both in central Myanmar, each had a single death.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

## RUNWAY ROLL



An aircraft rolls to the runway as the sun sets at the international airport in Frankfurt, Germany

PTI PHOTO

# India ready to work with UN to ensure vax supply in Syria

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**United Nations, March 3:** India, which has shipped critical supplies of COVID-19 vaccines to nations globally, has said it stands ready to work with the United Nations and its agencies to ensure the doses are delivered to people of Syria facing "dire" situation compounded by the pandemic, winterisation and food insecurity. Speaking at the UN General Assembly high-level panel on the human rights situation in Syria Tuesday, India's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador K Nagaraj Naidu said India contin-



ues to stand with the people of Syria in the grave hour of need.

"The 10-year long Syrian conflict has brought about much suffering to the Syrian people. The country is facing a dire situation compounded by COVID-19, winterisation and food insecurity which is putting into peril the future of 17 million Syrians, including 6.2 million displaced people," he said. India has extended 12 million

dollars in humanitarian assistance through bilateral and multilateral channels and last July, more than 10 MT (metric tonnes) of medicine supplies have been delivered to help Syria cope with the pandemic. Earlier this month, more than 2000 MT of food supplies were delivered.

"We also stand ready to work with the UN and its agencies to ensure COVID-19 vaccines can be brought to the aid and assistance of the people of Syria," Naidu said.

UN General Assembly President Volkan Bozkir noted with concern at the session that a decade of death, displacement and destruction, has left the Syrian people with little hope.

# 2 patients die after AstraZeneca Covid jabs in South Korea

*Both the victims were 50+ and had multiple serious underlying health conditions*

AGENCIES

**Seoul, March 3:** Two patients at the long-term care hospitals in South Korea's Gyeonggi province died after receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine against Covid-19, the first cases of deaths since the country launched its nationwide vaccination programme last week.

A 50-something patient with multiple underlying diseases died at a hospital in Goyang Wednesday, just outside of Seoul's northwestern border, after receiving the vaccine shot Tuesday morning, according to health officials, Yonhap news agency reported.

The patient began to show symptoms of heart failure and difficulty in breathing by the afternoon but recovered after being put under emergency care. The symptoms recurred Wednesday morning before the patient died.

Health officials said they are yet to determine whether the patient suffered side-effects from the vaccine. The patient's preexisting conditions included heart problems, diabetes and a stroke.

The second patient, who was at a long-term care hospital in Pyeongtaek, 70 km south of Seoul, died Wednesday morning, four days after being administered with the AstraZeneca vaccine, health officials said.

The 63-year-old man with cerebrovascular disease had shown severe symptoms, such as a high fever and pantalgia, since receiving the vaccine job last Saturday. As the patient's condition worsened, he was rushed to a higher-level hospital on Tuesday, but he passed away while showing symptoms of blood poisoning and pneumonia, according to officials.



# Kremlin shrugs off impact of US/EU sanctions, but pledges retaliation

REUTERS

**Moscow, March 3:** The Kremlin Wednesday played down the impact of sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union over Moscow's treatment of opposition politician Alexei Navalny, but said it would retaliate with reciprocal measures.

In President Joe Biden's most direct challenge yet to the Kremlin, the United States Tuesday imposed sanctions to punish Russia for what it described as Moscow's attempt to poison Navalny with a nerve agent last year.

Navalny, 44, fell ill on a flight in Siberia in August and was airlifted to Germany, where doctors concluded he had been poisoned with a nerve agent. The Kremlin has denied any role in his illness and said it has seen no proof he was poisoned. Washington Tuesday imposed sanctions against seven senior Russian officials and on 14 entities. The United States acted in concert with the EU, which imposed largely symbolic sanctions on four senior Russian officials.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow would hit back in a way that best served its interests. "Of course it's impossible not to apply the principle of reciprocity," Peskov told reporters.

WASHINGTON TUESDAY IMPOSED SANCTIONS AGAINST SEVEN SENIOR RUSSIAN OFFICIALS AND ON 14 ENTITIES



"We consider such decisions to be absurd, unjustified and most importantly, they have no effect or meaning," he said. "We can only regret this and express our bewilderment."

However, Peskov said the US sanctions would have no effect on the senior officials targeted because they are not allowed to travel outside Russia, own property abroad or hold foreign bank accounts anyway because of the sensitivity of their positions.

"This is practically a duplication of the restrictions these people face under Russian law, nothing more," Peskov said, adding that sanctions targeting the entities would have more of a material effect. Regardless of their impact, Peskov warned that the sanctions would have a destruc-

tive effect on Russia's relationship with the United States and the European Union.

Maria Zakharova, a spokeswoman for Russia's Foreign Ministry, said late Tuesday that the sanctions amounted to interference in Russia's internal affairs, and that Moscow would retaliate "but not necessarily symmetrically." Russian officials have not said when Moscow will announce its reciprocal measures.

Navalny was arrested at a Moscow airport in January on his return from Germany following treatment for poisoning with what many Western countries say was a nerve agent. He was jailed last month for violating parole on what he said were trumped-up charges, an assertion Russian authorities deny.

# Rockets hit airbase in Iraq hosting US troops

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Baghdad, March 3:** At least 10 rockets targeted a military base in western Iraq that hosts US-led coalition troops Wednesday, the coalition and the Iraqi military said. It was not immediately known if there were any casualties.

The rockets struck Ain al-Asad airbase in Anbar province at 7:20 am, coalition spokesman Col Wayne Marotto said. No one claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Iraqi military released a statement saying the attack did not cause significant losses and that security forces had found the launch pad used for the rockets — a burned out truck. It was found in the al-Baghadi area of Anbar, about 8 kilometers from the base, an Iraqi military official said on condition of anonymity to dis-



cuss the attack with the media.

It was the first attack since the US Struck Iran-aligned militia targets along the Iraq-Syria border last week, killing killed one militiaman and stoking fears of a possible repeat of a series of tit-for-tat attacks that escalated last year, culminating in the US Drone strike that killed Iranian Gen Qassim Soleimani.

# Farmers in Fukushima plant indigo to rebuild devastated town

**THE MASSIVE EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI IN 2011 CAUSED THREE OF THE REACTORS AT THE NUCLEAR PLANT TO MELT AND WRECKED MORE THAN JUST THE FARMERS' LIVELIHOODS**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Minamisoma, March 3:** Because of radiation released by the Fukushima nuclear plant disaster a decade ago, farmers in nearby Minamisoma weren't allowed to grow crops for two years. After the restriction was lifted,



two farmers, Kiyoko Mori and Yoshiko Ogura, found an unusual way to rebuild their lives and help their destroyed community. They planted indigo and soon began dying fabric with dye produced from the plants. "Dyeing lets us forget the bad

things" for a while, Mori said. The massive earthquake and tsunami March 11, 2011, caused three of the reactors at the nuclear plant to melt and wrecked more than just the farmers' livelihoods. The homes of many people in

Minamisoma, about 20 kilometers from the plant, were destroyed by the tsunami. The disaster killed 636 town residents, and tens of thousands of others left to start new lives.

Mori and Ogura believed that indigo dyeing could help people in the area recover.

Mori said they were concerned at first about consuming locally grown food, but felt safe raising indigo because it wouldn't be eaten. They checked the radiation level of the indigo leaves and found no dangerous amount.

Ten years after the disaster, Mori and Ogura are still engaged in indigo dyeing but have different missions.

To Mori, it has become a tool for building a strong community in a devastated town and for fighting unfounded rumors that products from Fukushima

are still contaminated. She favours the typical indigo dyeing process that requires some chemical additives.

But Ogura has chosen to follow a traditional technique that uses fermentation instead as a way to send a message against dangers of modern technology highlighted by nuclear power.

Mori formed a group called Japan Blue which holds workshops that have taught indigo dyeing to more than 100 people each year.

She hopes the project will help rebuild the dwindling town's sense of community.

Ogura, who is not a member of the group, feels that a natural process is important because the nuclear accident showed that relying on advanced technology for efficiency while ignoring its negative aspects can lead to bad consequences. "I really suffered during the nu-

clear accident," Ogura said. "We escaped frantically in the confusion. I felt I was doing something similar again" by using chemicals.

"We seek too much in the way of many varieties of beautiful colours created with the use of chemicals. We once thought our lives were enriched by it, but I started feeling that wasn't the case," she said. "I want people to know what the real natural color looks like."

Organic indigo dyes take more time and closer attention. Ogura first ferments chopped indigo leaves with water for a month and then mixes the result with lye which is formed on the surface of a mixture of hot water and ashes. It has to be kept at about 20 degrees and stirred three times a day.

Part of the beauty of the process, Ogura says, is that it's hard to predict what color will be produced.





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**GANESHA SRINIVASAN |**  
CEO, TATA POWER-DDL

## PAYPAL TO HIRE 1K ENGINEERS IN 2021

Digital payments major PayPal says it will hire 1,000 engineers this year for its India development centres across Bangalore, Chennai, and Hyderabad



## of the day quote

By introducing swapping, we are significantly reducing downtime of our e-rickshaws and thus adding more commute hours for customers and more money into the pockets of our driver partners



**MOHIT SHARMA |** FOUNDER, OYE! RICKSHAW

With Kiger, Renault has successfully launched yet another breakthrough product, targeted at the core of India's automotive market



**VENKATRAM MAMILLAPALLE |** COUNTRY CEO & MD, RENAULT INDIA OPERATIONS

These new order wins help us to strengthen our power transmission order book in India and overseas market. Our current year order inflow has reached around ₹8,000 crore



**MANISH MOHNOT |** MD & CEO, KPTL

## SHORT TAKES

### IRCON OFS in demand

**New Delhi:** The Offer For Sale (OFS) of IRCON was over-subscribed on the first day of issue by institutional investors. The government is selling up to 16 per cent stake at a floor price of ₹88 a share in railway PSU IRCON. The issue will open for retail investors Thursday. The base issue size of the OFS is 10 per cent or over 4.70 crore equity shares, with a green-shoe option to retain over-subscription of 6 per cent or over 2.82 crore shares.

### MTAR Tech IPO over subscribed

**New Delhi:** The ₹597-crore initial public offering of MTAR Technologies was subscribed 3.68 times Wednesday, the first day of the bidding process, on overwhelming support from retail investors. The IPO has received bids for 2.67 crore equity shares against an offer size of 72.6 lakh equity stocks, translating into a subscription of 3.68 times, data available on the exchanges till 5 pm showed.

### Axis Bank ties up with WhatsApp

**New Delhi:** Axis Bank Wednesday said it will be available on popular social messaging app WhatsApp and allow basic banking services, including account balance, and transactions history. The private sector lender said the service will allow customers to seek information regarding their account balance and recent transaction, among others.

# Economy 'recovering' faster than expected

The brokerage Ecoscope report points to other positives in the Jan data that indicates towards a V shape recovery of the Indian economy

## AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 3:** The Indian economy seems to be moving on the path of faster recovery with key indicators on consumption and investment showing a sharp slowdown in contraction in January, 2021.

According to Ecoscope report of Motilal Oswal Financial Services, the country's total consumption (personal and government) contracted 4 per cent YoY in January, 2021, against 4.4 per cent YoY in December, 2020 and 3.4 per cent YoY growth in January, 2020.

On the investment front though contraction at faster pace by 4.7 per cent in January, 2021 has been seen, the overall movement since May has been positive as investment contraction has declined at faster pace.

The positive signals coming from slowdown in contraction of investment and consumption in the very first month of last quarter period of FY21 indicated that GDP growth may pick up momentum during the quarter.

After two consecutive quarters of sharp decline, the real GDP has come into positive territory in October-December quarter clocking a growth of 0.4 per cent. The GDP growth will have to be faster in Q4 to contain overall contraction to 8 per cent level as projected by the Statistics ministry now.



**Overall, aggressive fiscal spending and relatively better farm activity appear to have driven up overall economic activity in Jan'21. Additionally, as per early indicators, the growth momentum would continue in Feb'21 as well**

**THE REPORT READS**

## Services sector output increases in February

**New Delhi:** Healthy rise in new orders accelerated India's services sector output growth in February. Moreover, the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine led to an improvement in business confidence towards growth prospects. However, employment declined for the third month in a row and companies noted the sharpest rise in overall expenses for eight years. Consequently, rising from 52.8 in January to 55.3 in February, the seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index pointed to the sharpest rate of expansion in output in one year. The seasonally adjusted index reading remained above the critical 50-mark that separates growth from contraction. Besides, the latest reading extended the current growth sequence to five months. Survey participants linked the upturn to improved demand and more favourable market conditions.

The brokerage Ecoscope report pointed to other positives in the January data that indicates towards a V shaped recovery of the Indian economy. As per the brokerage's in-house Economic Activity Index (EAI) for India's real gross value-added (GVA; called EAI-GVA) posted faster growth of 4.9 per cent YoY in January, 21, v/s growth of 4.1

per cent YoY in December, 20 and 4.7 per cent in January, 20.

Faster growth in Jan'21 was led by higher growth in the Services sector and farm activity. On the other hand, growth in industrial activity moderated during the month. Additionally, while the Services sector was driven by fiscal spending, expected decline in construction activity.

# Women in biz: India ahead of global avg

## AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 3:** India ranks third in the world for women working in senior management positions, according to the Women in Business 2021 report by global accounting and consulting firm Grant Thornton.

The percentage of women in senior management for India stood at 39 per cent, as against the global average of 31 per cent, which signals the changing outlook of Indian businesses towards working women.

The percentage of women leaders across key positions in C-Suite in the country also emerged higher than the global average in the report. While globally, businesses with at least one woman in the senior management role increased to 90 per cent, the same stands at 98 per cent in India. In fact, 47 per cent of mid-market businesses in India now have women CEOs compared with 26 per cent globally.

Sharing her views on the report findings, Pallavi Joshi Bakhru, Partner, Grant Thornton Bharat, said: "Under the challenging circumstances of 2020, the boundaries between work and home have blurred. In this scenario, it is good to see action being taken by businesses to ensure employee engagement and inclusion."



As per Vishesh C. Chandio, CEO, Grant Thornton Bharat, the findings from the report reflect the willingness of businesses to adapt, innovate and create a diverse culture. "It is heartening to note India ranks higher than its global counterparts in creating a gender inclusive culture. We are third with 39 per cent women in senior management positions. With more women taking on leadership roles and diversity on board, businesses will open new opportunities for growth."

The report also covers the impact of Covid-19 in the workplace, especially on women. A total of 88 per cent respondents in India believe new working practices will benefit women's career trajectories in the long term compared with 69 per cent globally. 'Innovative', 'adaptive to change' and 'courageous to take risks' will emerge as top leadership traits in 2021.

# One last shot for loss-making PSUs

Loss making and unwanted entities may get one last attempt at strategic sale before closure

## AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 3:** The government may make one last attempt next fiscal to sell more than two dozen sick and loss making entities that have failed to secure investor interest in earlier rounds of strategic sale. Failing this, these enterprises that have eroded their net worth, would be closed and their assets including land would be sold in parcels.

Sources said that the Ministry of heavy industries, that administers several of these sick and loss making entities, will be tasked to provide a revised list of public sector enterprises that can be put up for strategic sale, some for another attempt, to the disinvestment department DIPAM that will chart out the roadmap for their sell off.

If such companies do not elicit a response from investors even in the earlier stage of the disinvestment process, the process may be ended and the company will be put up for closure. The government will also take up companies from an earlier list of over 30 entities approved for strategic sale by NITI Aayog for closure if it fails to elicit investor interest.

The department of public enterprises (DPE) is finalising revised guidelines for timebound clo-



A case in point here would be Scooters India which is already facing a legal dispute over its land with the Uttar Pradesh govt

In the event the govt decides to place the company again for strategic sale, and no buyer turns up, the company may be wound up and closed while its huge tracts of land would get transferred to the heavy industries Ministry

sure of loss-making central public sector units (CPSEs) and disposal of their assets. These guidelines would be applied for closure of the units after attempts for their sale fail. The guidelines would first be approved by the cabinet.

The guidelines would allow for delinking land holdings from the process of closing the PSU that would then be transferred to the administrative ministry for further action. Such land parcels could be sold for industrial development by the corporate sector. Some of the land parcels could also be de-

If such firms don't elicit a response from investors even in the earlier stage of the disinvestment process, the process may be ended and the company will be put up for closure

The govt will also take up companies from an earlier list of over 30 entities approved for strategic sale by NITI Aayog for closure if it fails to elicit investor interest

veloped as industrial clusters.

A case in point here would be Scooters India which is already facing a legal dispute over its land with the Uttar Pradesh government. In the event the government decides to place the company again for strategic sale, and no buyer turns up, the company may be wound up and closed while its huge tracts of land would get transferred to the heavy industries ministry. The ministry could then take up the case with the UP government and find alternate use for this land.

Other sick PSUs that may bene-

fit from such an approach are Hindustan Fluorocarbons Ltd., Bharat Pumps and Compressors Ltd. and Hindustan Prefab Ltd.

The government has a list of about 34 PSUs that have been given 'in principle' approval, some of which are still pending strategic disinvestment. These include companies such as Scooters India, Bridge and Roof Co., Cement Corporation of India, Ferro Scrap Nigam, Pawan Hans. The disinvestment process for a few such as Air India and BPCL is ongoing while THDC and NEEPCO have been taken over by NTPC.

"With a pick-up in economic activity in FY22 these could be of interest for some of the sick and loss making entities among the investors. The government would like to test strategic sale of these units again. If they fail to pass muster, closure and liquidation of assets would be done," said a government official privy to the development.

In FY19, about 70 loss-making CPSEs caused an over ₹31,635 crore loss to the exchequer. Faced with the problem of losses the government has also closed over 20 such entities including HMT Watches Ltd, Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Hindustan Fluorocarbons Ltd. between August 2013 and March 2020.

# Why spike in bond yields worries Wall St

The sharp rise in yields - which saw ten-year Treasury yields hit a one-year high of over 1.6 pc Thursday - came after a tumultuous January when some funds got burned by holding short positions in stocks caught up in the GameStop trading frenzy



ten-year Treasury yields hit a one-year high of over 1.6% Thursday - came after a tumultuous January when some funds got burned by holding short positions in stocks caught up in the GameStop trading frenzy.

"The pace and the degree of the move in yields were a bit more aggressive than people thought," said Brooks Ritchey at \$10.7 billion hedge

fund solutions group K2 Advisors, which invests client money in hedge funds. Long-short equity hedge funds don't take bets in the bond market but many failed to anticipate the spillover from the bond market, which shaved \$2 trillion from global equities, said several fund-of-funds.

Troy Gayeski, partner and co-chief investment officer at

SkyBridge Capital, which runs \$3 billion in its main fund, said that equity funds went from having a "monster month" up 4.6% with one as high as 11%, to only gaining 2.3%.

"Very similar to the back half of January, many of the longer-bias long-short managers, or equity-focused event funds gave back a large portion of their gains from earlier in the month," said Gayeski.

Comprehensive data on performance for the month is not expected until mid-month. However, HFRX data, which is made up of a small group of global funds and can be an early indicator of industry performance showed that equity-focused hedge funds ended Friday up 1.5% for the month, after gains of 4.1% in the first 19 days of February. Meanwhile, the HFRX macro index ended the month up 1.3% on Friday after performance of 2.7% between Feb. 1 and Feb. 19, the data showed. Macro hedge funds

bet on macroeconomic trends, often using currencies, bonds and commodities.

The tougher February came after a challenging beginning to the year: Hedge funds began 2021 up a modest 0.9% on average in January after several stocks, led by videogame maker Gamestop were targeted by retail investors, showed data from industry tracker Hedge Fund Research (HFR). Macro-focused hedge funds posted even smaller gains of 0.2% in January while long-short strategies made 0.78%, according to the HFR data.

Long-short "alpha", or outperformance, also showed a fall in performance amid the sharp rise in bond yields, reaching as high as 2.7% for the first 19 days of the month before falling in the last week of February, according to a note from Goldman Sachs seen by Reuters. Goldman did not respond to a request for comment.

# Mozilla & Internet Society wary of amended IT rules for social media

## AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 3:** Mozilla and the US-based Internet Society have expressed concerns over the new IT rules for social media platforms, saying the rules could harm end-to-end encryption, substantially increase surveillance, promote automated filtering and prompt a fragmentation of the internet that would hurt users.

Mozilla, the not-for-profit behind the popular web browser Firefox, cautioned that the new rules could have a series of unintended consequences on the health of the internet as a whole.

"While many of the most onerous provisions only apply to 'significant social media intermediaries' (a new classification scheme), the ripple effects of these provisions will have a devastating impact on freedom of expression, privacy and security," it said in a blogpost.

## CONCERNING AREAS

- End-to-end encryption
- Govt. surveillance
- Automated filtering
- Fragmentation of the internet

Mozilla also flagged "harsh" content take down and data sharing timelines under the new rules and said provisions on traceability could break end-to-end encryption that would "weaken overall security and harm privacy".

The regulations distinguish between 'social media intermediaries' and 'significant social media intermediaries' with 50 lakh registered users as the threshold for the categorisation. Significant social media intermediaries will have to follow additional due diligence, including the appointment of a chief compliance officer.



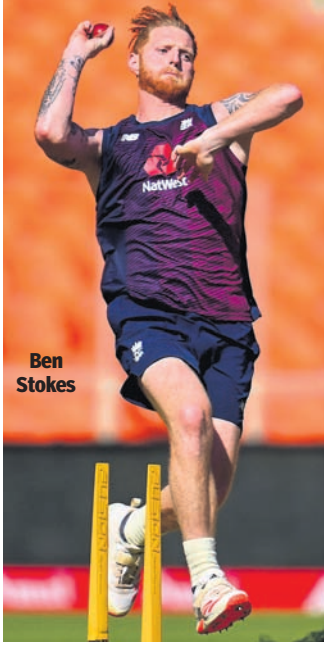
# KEEPING LORD'S IN SIGHT

INDIA LOOK FOR AT LEAST A DRAW IN THE FOURTH TEST AGAINST ENGLAND AS ONLY A DEFEAT WOULD CAUSE VIRAT & CO LOSE THEIR PLACE IN THE WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL AGAINST NEW ZEALAND IN LONDON

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, March 3:** A ruthless India will not take their foot off the pedal while taking England for another 'spin ride' in the high-stakes Test series finale starting Thursday, aiming to not just complete another dominant home performance but also realise their World Test Championship (WTC) dreams.

Virat Kohli's men need at least a draw to maintain the current 2-1 scoreline to qualify for the Lord's final against New Zealand while England at best can heal Tim Paine's January scars by letting Australia a lucky passage to the summit clash with a win.



While a draw always seems a safe option in a game like this but Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri, with their attacking instincts, wouldn't like to play a defensive game which at times can be counter-productive.

India laid a venomous trap on the refurbished Motera and with the pink ball, demolished England inside two days, messing more with their minds than getting any tangible help from the track.

Axar Patel bowled ramrod straight and England had their heads 'spinning' from the start. The ploy has worked well for the hosts since the second Test in Chennai.

Both Ajinkya Rahane and Zak Crawley felt that the track for the fourth Test looks 'similar' to what they got in the previous two matches

but the red ball which skids less off the surface compared to the pink one promises to make it a better contest between the two teams.

This is a Test match where England have little to gain save salvaging a bit of pride in a drawn series while India have everything to lose.

Despite being India's most prolific Test captain in terms of numbers, Kohli would be the first one to admit that he hasn't had the kind of success his illustrious predecessor MS Dhoni had with regards the ICC events.

While this is an ICC event of a different kind, no one more than Kohli would be itching for a course correction and build his own lasting legacy as a captain.

For that, he wouldn't pull back punches. And on another track that helps his 'snipers' Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin, Kohli would love to see an 'inflation' in their current cumulative tally of 42 wickets for the series.

With Indian spinners accounting for 49 of the 60 English wickets in the first three Tests, it was anybody's guess as how things will pan out in the final Test at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

Kohli wouldn't have any complaints with his spinners, who have delivered what was expected of them, but the batting has left a lot to be desired in the entire series. It's just that England have been worse in their last four innings.

But that is no sound explanation for Indian batsmen's failure to dominate the proceedings in their own backyard.

Rohit Sharma's 296 runs in three games is 120 runs more than second best Ashwin (176 runs), who got a hundred on a difficult Chepatuk track. Save Rohit, none of the Indian batsmen have felt too comfortable till now on the turners on offer.

Kohli, despite two fifties, hasn't had the best of times while Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara and Shubman Gill have all had only one innings of note over three Test matches.

All Kohli would want is a steady, if not exceptional performance, in games such as these where a failure can leave 'many a slip between the cup and lip'.

While there won't be any Jasprit Bumrah for the final Test, one of the finest exponents of bowling on sub-continental tracks, Umesh Yadav, is expected to be back in action. It remains to be seen



whether Ishant Sharma or Mohammed Siraj partner him.

For England, poor team selection has also contributed to their shoddy batting where Joe Root (333 runs), with his first Test double hundred, managed to maintain a fair gap (187 runs) between him and the second highest scorer Ben Stokes (146).

Not having a second specialist spinner in Motera, didn't exactly make the team management look too smart, especially after Joe Root scalped a career-best 5/8.

Jack Leach (16 wickets) has done his bit but he does have his own

### THE TEAMS

**INDIA:** Virat Kohli (C), Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Rishabh Pant (wk), Washington Sundar, Ravichandran Ashwin, Axar Patel, Ishant Sharma, Umesh Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Mayank Agarwal, Hardik Pandya, Kuldeep Yadav & KL Rahul.

**ENGLAND:** Joe Root (C), James Anderson, Jofra Archer, Jonny Bairstow, Dominic Bess, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Zak Crawley, Ben Foakes, Dan Lawrence, Jack Leach, Ollie Pope, Dom Sibley, Ben Stokes, Olly Stone, Chris Woakes & Mark Wood.

set of limitations and with his pace, which is on an average 10km less than Patel, he is unlikely to always trouble the batsman.

But he would again play a significant role on a similar sort of track and may expect Dom Bess for company. Bess was impressive in the opening Test in Chennai but since then, has cooled his heels.

## 'Too much noise' about spin tracks

**AHMEDABAD:** Stop the noise, tighten up that defence and get on with the game – a combative Indian skipper Virat Kohli said on Wednesday ahead of the fourth and final Test against England as he navigated persistent queries on the spin-friendly tracks in the country.

India annihilated England inside two days in the Pink-ball Test at Motera, days after the visitors crumbled on another spin-assisting pitch in Chennai in the second Test.

"There is always too much noise and too much conversation about spin tracks," Kohli said at the pre-match press conference ahead of the fourth and final Test starting here Thursday.

"I am sure if our media is in a space to contradict those views or present views which say that it is unfair to criticise only spin tracks, then it will be a balanced conversation."

Kohli, at the end of the third Test, had blamed the batsmen's technique for their failure on the Motera track. "But the unfortunate bit is everyone plays along with that narrative (spinning tracks) and keeps making it news till the time it is relevant. And then a Test match happens, if you win on day 4 or 5, no one says anything but if it finishes in two days, everyone pounces on the same issue," he said.

When asked what he thought were the skills required to survive on such challenging spin tracks, Kohli emphasised on having a solid defence, which, he believes, is not the strongest anymore thanks to shorter formats.

"Defence is imperative. Because of influence of white-ball cricket, Test cricket is witnessing consistent results but it is just a by-product in reference to batting that the defence part of the batting is being compromised," he said.

"That grind of playing four-five sessions is not the focus these days and everybody wants to put on 300-350 runs on the board quickly. Probably people are not focussing on defence, they have to switch to other formats, so the game is fast paced.

"So definitely the skill is required and it's not just the sweep shot. For me it's defence. This aspect of batting has gone back a bit."

Kohli cited one of India's losses



in New Zealand when the team struggled on a seaming pitch. He recalled how it was the batsmen's technique, and not the track, that came in for scrutiny.

"We lost in New Zealand on day three in 36 overs. I am sure none of our people wrote about the pitch. It was how India played badly in New Zealand.

"None of the pitches were criticised, no one came and saw how the pitch was doing, how much the ball was moving and how much grass was there on the pitch," he said.

Kohli said his team has been successful over a period of time for adapting to conditions instead of complaining about them. "The reason for our success is that we have not cribbed about any pitch we have played on and we will continue to play like that.

"We all need to be honest with ourselves what is the idea behind continuing this narrative and what purpose it serves people who keep continuing the conversation which is one-sided," he said.

Now that the contest will be played with the red ball, he was asked if the pink ball made it tough for the batsmen, Kohli retorted with a firm no.

"I don't understand why a ball or a pitch, all these things are brought into focus why don't we focus on the fact that batsmen were not skilled enough to play on that pitch properly. It was bizarre display of batting by both the teams.

"It's not (because) of change in ball-colour. It's still round, still weighs five-and-a-half ounce, so I don't know what difference it makes suddenly. The surface was different in Chennai. This track (Motera) in general had more pace and that's the result of the clay laid on the pitch.

"If you make just a ball or a pitch helping the bowler, the focus, then you are not really reading the game properly in my opinion. I don't think the red ball is going to change that whatsoever."

Kohli was also asked if it is good for the game, from a global fans' perspective, to take undue advantage of home conditions. "I would love if you ask this question to England, New Zealand and Australia. This question is irrelevant to me at this point of time."

## Rahul retains 2nd spot, Virat climbs to sixth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, March 3:** India's KL Rahul maintained his second position while his captain Virat Kohli gained one spot to be at sixth in the latest ICC T20 International rankings for batsmen issued Wednesday.

With 816 rating points, Rahul is behind England's Dawid Malan (915) who retained his top spot, while

Kohli has 697 points. Pakistan skipper Babar Azam (801) moved up one place to third while Australia's white-ball captain Aaron Finch (788) slipped to fourth place. South Africa's Van der Dussen (700) also moved up a place to be fifth in the list.

Players from New Zealand and Australia made significant gains in the rankings updated after the first two matches of the ongoing series between the two sides.

Among the bowlers, there has been no change in the top five with Afghanistan's Rashid Khan (736) leading the chart. South African Tabraiz Shamsi (733), Afghanistan's Mujeeb Ur Rahman (730), England's

Adil Rashid (700) and Australia's Adam Zampa (676) all held their position in the top five. No Indian featured in the top 10 among bowlers.

New Zealand's Tim Southee (up one place to sixth), Mitchell Santner (up two places to seventh), Ish Sodhi (up three places to 11th) and Trent Boult (up 24 places to 49th) also progressed in the bowlers' list.

## SHORT TAKES

### Kaushik in quarters

**NEW DELHI:** Olympic-bound Indian boxer Manish Kaushik (63kg) advanced to the quarterfinals of the Boxam International Tournament with a facile opening round win in Castellano, Spain. The World Championship bronze-medallist defeated Spaniard Ammari Raddouane 5-0 Tuesday night to make the last eight, where he will be up against Kazakhstan's Sufiullin Zakir – a two-time Asian silver-winner.

### Srikanth seals win

**BASEL:** Top Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth staved off a spirited challenge from compatriot Sameer Verma to make a winning start to his campaign at the Swiss Open Super 300 tournament here Wednesday. The fourth seeded Indian took a little over an hour to see off 2018 winner Sameer 18-21, 21-18, 21-11 in a hard-fought men's singles opening round match. Last night, Indian mixed doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa notched up an upset 21-18, 21-10 win over the World No.8 and second-seeded Indonesian pair of Hafiz Faizal and Gloria Emanuelle Widjaja in the opening round. Pranaav Jerry Chopra and his mixed doubles partner N Sikki Reddy lost 18-21, 15-21 to the English pair of Marcus Ellis and Lauren Smith.

## Jasoda guides RSC past Sports Hostel



A Sports Hostel player (in blue) tries to block a clearance from an RSC player

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 3:** Jasoda Munda twice hit the target to help Rising Student Club (RSC) edge past Sports Hostel 3-2 in their Odisha Women's League football match at the Kalinga Stadium here, Wednesday.

Both the sides began with attacking intent as it only took three minutes to open the scoresheet. Subhadra Sahu put RSC ahead with a wonderful finish. However, a lack of concentration cost them

dearly as Gita Kishan restored parity two minutes later.

Jasoda, however, put RSC in the lead again when she found the back of the nets in the 17th minute. The joy was short-lived though. Sports Hostel skipper Bannya Kabiraj scored the equaliser in the 26th as the first half ended 2-2.

The second half was even more entertaining despite only one goal being scored. Both sides missed quite a few opportunities, but Jasoda's 67th minute goal proved to be the decisive one.

## City too big for pack of Wolves

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Manchester, March 3:** A 15-point lead, 21 victories in a row, a club record-tying 28 games unbeaten. The extraordinary numbers are stacking up for Manchester City as Pep Guardiola's winning machine powers to the Premier League title and — whisper it — a potential quadruple.

Guardiola particularly liked what he saw in the 4-1 win over Wolverhampton Tuesday. Heading into the final 10 minutes at Etihad Stadium, City's players were in the unusual position of being held, 1-1, but there was no panic. Instead, they just stepped up a gear, overwhelmed Wolves with their pressing and scored three goals.

Gabriel Jesus scored in the 80th minute and again from close range with virtually the last kick of the game after Riyad Mahrez had made it 3-1, capping a period of incessant pressure by City after Wolves equalised in the 61st minute through Conor Coady's header — the visitors' first touch in City's box.

Leander Dendoncker had given City the lead for the first time with an own-goal in the 15th. Another test passed by City in their march to reclaiming the title from Liverpool, with Wolves having proved a tough opponent for City in recent years — winning their meetings home



and away last season, for example. City's class of 2020-21 is made of sterner stuff this season, though. The team has won every game it has played in all competitions since December 19 and now have 15 victories in a row in the league. Its unbeaten streak stretched to 28 matches — tying a club record also achieved under Guardiola in 2017. City haven't trailed for a single minute in any

## Morata helps Juventus pin down Spezia

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Turin, March 3:** Alvaro Morata made a scoring return to set Juventus on their way to a 3-0 win over Spezia and boost its faltering title defense. Fellow substitute Federico Bernardeschi set up Morata moments after they had both come off the bench. Bernardeschi then provided another assist for Federico Chiesa, nine minutes later.

Cristiano Ronaldo sealed the match late on with his 20th goal of the season. He is the first player in Europe's top five leagues to reach that figure for the 12th successive season.

Morata had missed Juve's disappointing 1-1 draw at Hellas Verona last weekend with illness. The Juventus forward had also not scored in the league since December.

Juventus goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny saved a stoppage-time penalty from Andrey Galabinov after Emmanuel Gyasi had been tripped by Merih Demiral.

Juventus moved up to third, seven points below league leader Inter Milan and three below AC Milan. Spezia remained seven points above the relegation zone.