



### RARE ACCOMPLISHMENT

Deepika Padukone has joined the list of Young Global Leaders (YGLs) compiled by the World Economic Forum

LEISURE P2



### FIRST QUAD SUMMIT

Leaders of the US, India, Australia and Japan will meet for the first QUAD summit Friday in a virtual meet

INTERNATIONAL P10



### CHANGE OF VENUE

ICC formally announces that Southampton will host the inaugural WTC final between India and NZ in June

SPORTS P12

# China yet to vacate Indian positions along LAC: US

US statement contradicts declaration made by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh

AGENCIES

Washington, March 10: China still hasn't withdrawn from 'several forward positions' it seized during clashes with Indian forces along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), top US military official, Admiral Philip S Davidson told lawmakers at a congressional hearing Tuesday. Davidson leads the

US military's Indo-Pacific Command. He also informed that the US had helped India during the border conflict by providing information, cold-weather clothing and other equipment.

"The PLA has not yet withdrawn from several forward positions it seized following the initial clash. The consequent escalation of tensions between the People's Republic China (PRC) and India has resulted in casualties on both sides," Davidson said in prepared remarks at a Senate hearing on the US Indo-Pacific Command.

The Chinese and Indian Armed Forces have completed the withdrawal of their respective troops from certain parts of the disputed border in



Ladakh – around Pangong Tso – in late February after protracted negotiations. However, even then the Chinese troops are yet to vacate certain areas which they occupied last year in June, Davidson further stated. He also warned that the PRC will continue to use force to 'achieve their desired outcome'.

Recent activities along the LAC with China have opened India's eyes to what cooperative effort with others might mean for their own defensive needs, asserted Davidson. He observed that New Delhi, in the very near future, will deepen its engagement with the Quad.

It should be stated here that February 11, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had told the Parliament the sustained talks with China have helped to an agreement between the two countries regarding disengagement of troops along the north and south banks of Pangong Lake. However, the US declarations are completely contradictory to what the Indian government has said.

### ROBUST STRATEGY

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian Army has adopted a robust counter infiltration strategy focusing on a mix of technology and human resources to effectively check infiltration in border areas, the government said Wednesday. Among the measures taken include boosting surveillance architecture and intelligence gathering, Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik said in the Lok Sabha. Naik said the 'innovative' deployment of troops, proactive use of surveillance and monitoring devices have enhanced the ability to detect and intercept terrorists attempting to infiltrate into India along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir.

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



What development? The fight here is between Ram bhakts, Shiv bhakts and Durga bhakts?

### Mamata 'assaulted' after filing papers

**Haldia (West Bengal):** West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo Mamata Banerjee filed Wednesday her nomination from the high-profile Nandigram Assembly seat. However, later in the evening she said that she had been manhandled by four-five persons when she was campaigning in the evening. "I was standing outside my car and praying at a temple. Some people came and pushed the door of my car hard on to my leg for which I suffered a sprain, the chief minister said and added she is feeling 'feverish' due to the assault. **P8**

### Bharat bandh against farm laws March 26

**New Delhi:** Farmer unions Wednesday called for a Bharat bandh March 26, when their protest at Delhi's borders against the Centre's three new farm laws completes four months. Farmer leader Buta Singh Burjigill said farmers along with trade unions will protest the hike in fuel prices and privatisation of Railways March 15. "We will observe a complete Bharat bandh March 26, when our protest against the three farm laws completes four months. The bandh will remain effective from morning till evening," Burjigill told reporters at the Singhu border, the farmers will observe 'Mandi Bachao-Kheti Bachao' day March 19, he said. Burjigill also informed that the unions will also observe Shaheed Divas of Bhagat Singh and Rajguru. **P9**

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	51279.51 ↑ 254.03
NIFTY	15174.80 ↑ 76.40
DOLLAR	73.52 ↓ ₹0.01
EURO	86.69 ↑ ₹0.11
GOLD	₹44,803 ↓ ₹54
SILVER	₹67,425 ↓ ₹55

WEATHER	
	BHUB CTK
MAX	35.6°C 35.0°C
MIN	22.5°C 21.8°C
Humidity	89% 81
Rainfall	Nil Nil
Forecast	
Mainly clear sky	

## PROJECTS WORTH ₹2,337 CRORE INAUGURATED BY CHIEF MINISTER

# CM lights up Nuapada

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** Visiting Western Odisha for third time this year, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated Wednesday a slew of developmental projects in Nuapada district including the much-awaited 'Lower Indra Dam'. The total cost of the projects is to the tune of ₹2337.15 crore. Naveen had earlier visited Kalahandi district in January and Sundargarh last month.

"Water containing fluoride is a major problem in Nuapada district causing health problems. Earlier people had to walk miles to get clean drinking water. However, now 55% of the households get clean and hygienic drinking water in the district," Naveen said. "Over 1000 fluoride removal plants have been installed and about 900 villages have been fully freed from fluoride-contaminated water," the chief minister added.

"All households of the district will get healthy and piped drinking water by 2022. At an investment of ₹700 crore a large number of piped water supply projects are being implemented in the district," Naveen further said.



**BOON FOR NUAPADA:** Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurates the Lower Indra dam project Wednesday as other dignitaries look on

OP PHOTO

Speaking during the inauguration of the Lower Indra dam, Naveen thanked all those who gave their land for the project. "Due to your sacrifice, about 1.80 lakh people in 200 villages of Komna and Khariar blocks of Nuapada and Bangomunda, Muribahal and Titilagarh blocks of Bolangir district will be ben-

efited," Naveen informed. "A total of 7,500 acre of land can be irrigated with the water from the dam," Naveen said. He also announced that a Science Park and Museum will be developed at the site for which rupees three crore will be spent. Naveen also announced another mega lift irrigation project in

■ **ALL HOUSEHOLDS IN DISTRICT TO GET HYGIENIC DRINKING WATER BY 2022**

■ **TWO STADIA TO BE BUILT IN DISTRICT TO PROMOTE SPORTING ACTIVITIES**

the district and said it will be completed by this December. This project will provide irrigation facility to 18,000 acres of land in Komna, Nuapada, Sinapali and Boden blocks.

Odisha has recently become the sports hub of India and the CM said Nuapada district will also become a centre for sporting activities. Two indoor stadiums will be built at Nuapada and Khariar while a sports facility will be developed in Khariar Autonomous College. It will enable talented sports persons to shine, Naveen pointed out.

Naveen also praised the facilities available at the Nuapada district headquarters hospital (DHH) and said that it can be compared to most of the modern medical facilities in the state. He also pointed out that the infant mortality rate in the district has dropped drastically.

## ₹202 CR BUDGET FOR SRIMANDIR IN FY 21-22

PNN & AGENCIES

**Puri, March 10:** As the finance committee of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) approved ₹202 crore annual budget for 2021-22 fiscal, the temple authorities said Wednesday they have set a target to enhance the corpus fund to ₹1,000 crore by 2023. This was stated by SJTA chief administrator Krishan Kumar after presiding over the finance committee meeting here.

Kumar said the temple's earning has declined to a low this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Efforts should be made to enhance the income. The temple presently has a corpus fund of ₹650 crore which

■ **₹5 crore earmarked for the servitors welfare fund including medical expenses**

■ **Allocation of ₹11 for the 2021 Rath Yatra in the budget**

need to be enhanced to meet the expenditures.

Kumar informed other measures like putting donation boxes at airports and railway stations will be undertaken. This apart, the temple's stone quarries should be auctioned for mining which could fetch good revenues, the SJTA chief administrator said. Kumar said about ₹10 crore could be generated in the current year by granting stone quarry leases.

### IN FULL GLORY



Amaraswar temple at Buxi Bazar in Cuttack looking colourful after being decked up with lights ahead of Mahashivratri

## MEGHAN'S ALLEGATION REGARDING MIXED-RACE HERITAGE OF SON ARCHIE, DRAWS IRE

# Queen promises prompt action against racial slur

AGENCIES

**London, March 10:** Breaking its silence over Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's explosive interview with Oprah Winfrey, the Buckingham Palace said Tuesday it has taken 'very seriously' their revelations and those will be addressed by the family privately. On the couple's reference to unnamed royals raising concerns over their son Archie's mixed-race heritage, the palace said issues of race would be addressed privately as a family matter.

"The whole family is saddened to learn the full extent of how challenging the last few years have been for Harry and Meghan," Queen Elizabeth II said in a statement is-



**IN HAPPIER TIMES:** Queen Elizabeth II with Prince Harry and Meghan Markle

sued by the Buckingham Palace Wednesday. "The issues raised, particularly that of race, are concerning. Whilst some recollections may vary, they are taken very se-

riously and will be addressed by the family privately. Harry, Meghan and Archie will always be much loved family members," she added. The statements came a day

“The issues raised, particularly that of race, are concerning. They have been taken very seriously and will be addressed by the family privately”

QUEEN ELIZABETH II

after the interview was aired in the UK and sent the palace into turmoil, with crisis talks addressing the damaging claims around Meghan's suicidal thoughts as a newly-married Duchess of Sussex.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson had earlier said that he had no comments to offer regarding the interview of Harry and Meghan. However, opposition Labour leader

Sir Keir Starmer said allegations made in the interview should be taken 'very, very seriously'.

"It is really sad to see the family in turmoil like this. The issues that Meghan has raised of racism and mental health are really serious issues," said Starmer. "It is a reminder that too many people experience racism in 21st-century Britain. We have to take that very, very seriously," he asserted.

However, the 'racism' allegations have attracted the ire of many of the 54 countries that form the Commonwealth. Former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull cited it as another reason for the country to sever its constitutional ties to the British monarchy.

## No Sunday classes for X, XII students from April onwards

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** The state government Wednesday decided to discontinue classroom coaching on Sundays for Class X and XII students from April 1.

School and Mass Education (S&ME) Minister Samir Ranjan Dash said that classes for revision of courses will begin April 1 as syllabi have almost been covered. "Attendance of students has witnessed a sharp decline as they have been focusing on self study. It's time for revision of courses. There's no need of holding regular classroom coaching anymore," the S&ME minister said.

Notably, after a gap of almost nine months, schools across Odisha reopened for Class X and XII January 8, amid strict adherence to COVID-19 guidelines. The decision to reopen schools was taken by the government keeping in mind the larger interest of Class X and XII students so that they can appear timely for all India competitive tests, said a source.

The Odisha government had planned to impart a 100-day classroom teaching even Saturdays and Sundays to compensate the losses incurred by the students due to COVID-induced lockdown. In a bid to ease the burden on students, the government has reduced the syllabus by 30 per cent apart from facilitating a special exam guide 'Pariksha Darpan'.

The board exams for Class X students is scheduled to begin May 3, while the Council of Higher Secondary Education will hold exams for Class XII students from May 18.

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## 3-member central panel formed to fight forest infernos



POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, March 10:** The Union Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change formed a three-member expert team Wednesday to help the Odisha government to control and prevent forest fires in the state. Union Environment and Forest Minister Prakash Javadekar informed that the team will go to Odisha soon and will provide expert technical advice and handholding towards early and effective dousing of forest fires. The expert team consists of Dr Amit Mallick, IGF, National Tiger Conservation Authority, New Delhi, Subratt Mahapatra, DDG, MoEF & CC Regional Office, Bhubaneswar and Arti Chaudhary, Head, Silviculture – ICFRE (as

fire expert).

According to the ministry, the panel will do the assessment of the status of fire incidents in Odisha, Similipal Tiger Reserve/Biosphere Reserve in particular. Further, it will give expert and technical advice to the state government for containment in control of fire in forests and will examine the status of loss of forest and wildlife and its relationship with poaching, if any. "The team would be working till the state attains a normal situation with respect to fire incidents," the ministry informed.

Earlier in the day a BJP delegation from Odisha led by Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had met Javadekar and sought his help in containing forest fires in Odisha.



## FORTUNE FORECAST

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### ARIES

Set today aside for your hobbies and pass-times. Ganesha says doing things that you like will put you in high spirits, and it will show up in the way you behave with people you love. You may not be able to fully involve yourself in work but your seniors will be understanding.

### TAURUS

It is quite likely that grandparents will shower love at home and seniors will shower favours at work, says Ganesha. You will probably collect certain overdue payments in the afternoon. Later in the day, a gamble you took in business may pay rich dividends, expects Ganesha.

### GEMINI

Today, resolving issues will be a tough task, but you will be able to accomplish it nonetheless. It may take time, but don't lose hope. Persistence and hard work will be rewarding. The grind will increase your understanding of the things happening around you.

### CANCER

Today, in all likelihood, is going to be a challenging and complicated day for you, says Ganesha. You are likely to be a little short on confidence; either that, or you may be feeling a little subdued. You may not be as assertive as required on certain issues.

### LEO

You may want to carry some aspirin with you today, suggests Ganesha. For, there are strong indications that you shall be up against a lot of stress and tension at work. This headache-inducing factor aside, you have the uncanny knack of beating your opponents at their own game.

### VIRGO

Settling and resolving issues will be a long-drawn process today, says Ganesha. However, keep at it because the results will be well worth the efforts you put into it. You will feel more capable to look at things from others' perspective today.

### LIBRA

Ganesha foresees that today you will chart out your future course of action, so that any steps you take from thereon leads only to success. Sudden and unexpected profits are also on the cards as on the professional front, increased reputation and rewards knock on your door.

### SCORPIO

Today will consist of varying highs and lows at work and in confrontations, predicts Ganesha. At work, you may end up quarrelling with your peers. You will be reasonable in your views and still you will find yourself on the receiving side of the argument. Evening will compensate for the tough day as you kick back and relax in the company of loved ones.

### SAGITTARIUS

Today is most likely to be a day of mixed fortunes for you, predicts Ganesha. At the workplace, you may have a hectic afternoon, burdened with more work than you can handle. In the evening, a loved one will understand your needs, and try to bring back cheer with a home-cooked meal for dinner.

### CAPRICORN

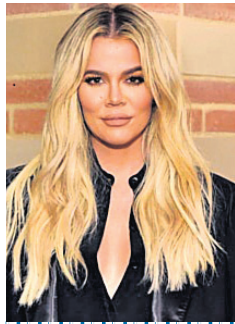
Whether or not your business will prosper will depend on how decisive you are, says Ganesha. Besides, it's time to test the potential of subordinates you have appointed, and see if they can deliver their best. And if they meet your standards, you can expect quick returns by the end of the day.

### AQUARIUS

You may not want to, but you have to pay the bills! Okay, so you can't even remember what you bought, and are cursing the loony credit cards. However, this may persuade you to be a bit more organised. There is no harm in taking ideas from others, suggests Ganesha.

### PISCES

A turning point in romantic liaisons is likely today, says Ganesha. In love, as at the office, you will discover that there is no substitute for hard work. However, evening promises bountiful pleasure to make up for all the sweat and tears.



## COVID-19 DELAYS KHLOE'S PLAN FOR SECOND CHILD

Television personality Khloe Kardashian says the Covid-19 forced her to postpone her plans of having more babies. She adds that she has always wanted to avoid a big age gap between kids but everything has been delayed thanks to the pandemic.

## CHRISSY TEIGEN'S AWKWARD ENCOUNTER WITH KEATON

Model Chrissy Teigen has spoken about her awkward encounter with actor Michael Keaton at the Golden Globes ceremony, where she mistook Keaton as someone serving drinks. "I'm so embarrassed by it still, I could die. But I just took it, I drank it and I left," she said.



## Deepika among WEF's new Young Global Leaders

**New Delhi:** Actress Deepika Padukone and several Indian citizens and India-origin persons Wednesday joined the list of the Young Global Leaders (YGLs) compiled by the World Economic Forum.

Announcing its 2021 class of YGLs, the WEF said these are the world's most promising 112 tomorrow's leaders under the age of 40 and are involved in activities ranging from advocating for public healthcare to campaigning for inclusivity in medical research.

They join a group of Nobel Prize recipients, Pulitzer winners, heads of state and chief executive officers committed to improving the state of the world, said the Geneva-based organisation that describes itself as an international organisation for public-private cooperation.

Others on the list include Aditi Avasthi (founder and CEO of Indiavidual Learning, India), Gazal Kalra (co-founder of Rivigo, India), Hitesh Wadhwa (vice-president for strategic initiatives at Tech Mahindra, India) and Hriday Ravindranath (chief technology and information officer; Global Services at BT Group, India).

IAN S

## Adarsh Gourav nominated at BAFTA alongside Boseman

**London:** Indian actor Adarsh Gourav has been nominated in the Leading Actor category for his role in *The White Tiger* at the BAFTA Awards 2021. The British Academy of Film and Television Arts announced its list of nominees for the year Tuesday, which includes a record breaking number of female directors.

This year also sees the most diverse set of nominations. Notable nominees include ones in the Leading Actress category- Radha

Blank for *The Forty-Year-Old Version*, Maria Bakalova for *Borat Subsequent Film* and Dominique Fishback for *Judas And The Black Messiah*. In the Leading Actor, Adarsh Gourav will compete with late actor Chadwick Boseman for *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and Anthony Hopkins for *The Father*. *The White Tiger* also received nomination for Ramin Bahrani in the Best Adapted Screenplay category.

IAN S



## PC gets into Nick's Spaceman groove

**Mumbai:** Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas took to social media to give a push to husband Nick Jonas' new album, *Spaceman*.

Priyanka posted a video on Instagram stories, where she uses an astronaut filter, and grooves on a track.

"#Spaceman #NickJonas," she wrote, along with a skeleton and astronaut emoji.

*Spaceman* is Jonas' fourth studio album and is scheduled to release March 12. The album is also his first solo release as a singer since 2016.

Priyanka recently shared a picture dressed in a sweater knitted by her mother Madhu Chopra, adding that her family is her greatest blessing. She also had Sunday announced her own restaurant in New York, which offers Indian cuisine for foodies.

IAN S

## Treat for city theatre lovers

Panchamaveda to organise 5-day comedy play fest; Odia plays, painting expo at Asim Utsav

POST NEWS NETWORK

**BHUBANESWAR:** The city auditoriums, after remaining closed for nearly a year, are set to entertain the culture aficionados on a regularly basis. Close on the heels of the National Theatre Festival Purva Ranga, two more drama festivals are on the offing here.

Panchamaveda, a city-based theatre troupe, is organising a five-day state level comedy play festival from March 14 at Bhanja Kala Mandap here, said troupe's secretary Prakash Maharana.

Dynamic Platform, Bhubaneswar, will stage *Abhinetri* on the first day of the festival. The other plays to be staged during the festival are - *Highway Kila* by Kalinga Kala Parishad (Rourkela), *Ali Alok Albert* by Bidyakanak Srujanusthan (Bhubaneswar), *Hata Bahuda* by Srasta (Balasore), *Somaras* by Magic Theatre (Bhubaneswar), said the organisers.

Nrusingha Mohanty, a famous theatre and film personality of Odisha, will receive



3rd Amiya Patnaik Smruti Samman in the memory of troupe's founder Amiya Patnaik. Similarly, Pramod Satpathy (actor and astrologer), Hemendra Mahapatra (Playwright), Sudhanshu Dwivedi (Play director), Manmath Mishra (Music director) and Namita Bhattacharya (Actress) will be honoured with Panchamaveda Samman-2021 on the

concluding day of the festival, said troupe's president Anupam Patnaik and working president Haren Sahu.

On the other hand, Asim Basu Foundation (ABF), a cultural organisation formed in the memory of eminent actor, painter and director Asim Basu, will present two original Odia plays and organise a painting exhibition from March 12 at Rabindra Mandap during Asim Utsav.

On the first day, Uttar Purusha, among city's oldest theatre troupes, will stage *Sababahakamane* (The Pallbearers), a famous play written by late Bijoy Mishra about 50 years back, to be directed by Chakradhar Patra. On the second day, the artistes of ABF will enact *Cycle*, a novel written and dramatised by Chittaranjan Chiranjit. The play will be directed by Debadutta Pati, said ABF's secretary Pabitra Mohan Kar.

Works of 16 female artists will be on display during the painting exhibition, curated by visual artist and art historian Firdausi Tabassum, it was learnt.

## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

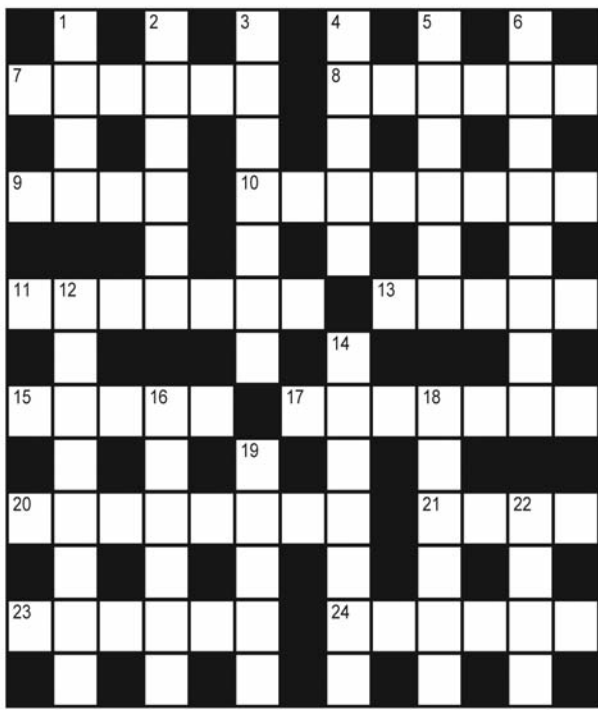


## BREVITY



## FUN post

## CROSSWORD



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- |                                  |                              |                            |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Across</b>                    | <b>20</b> Movie extras (5-3) | <b>4</b> Hibachi           |
| <b>7</b> Duel participant        | <b>21</b> Diversify          | <b>5</b> Buffalo           |
| <b>8</b> Rank                    | <b>23</b> Shirt part         | <b>6</b> Pub (4,4)         |
| <b>9</b> Spheres                 | <b>24</b> Cracks up          | <b>12</b> Screen test      |
| <b>10</b> Squid dish             |                              | <b>14</b> Comfort          |
| <b>11</b> Bewails                |                              | <b>16</b> Declares invalid |
| <b>13</b> Coffee order           | <b>Down</b>                  | <b>18</b> Enjoy            |
| <b>15</b> Spiral-horned antelope | <b>1</b> Lightly burn        | immensely                  |
| <b>17</b> Crumbs                 | <b>2</b> Creamy dessert      | <b>19</b> Unit of petrol   |
|                                  | <b>3</b> Instruct            | <b>22</b> Rhine tributary  |

## SUDOKU

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

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

## SOLUTIONS

### CROSSWORD

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

### SUDOKU

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

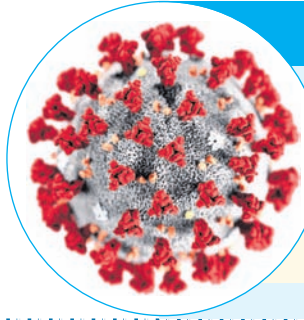
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW





## PREP FOR SHIVRATRI

Police personnel participate in a meeting in Puri, Wednesday, for the smooth conduct of Mahashivratri festival at Sri Lokanath temple



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	11,83,33,234	9,39,70,561	26,24,984
India	1,12,62,707	1,09,20,046	1,58,063
Odisha	3,37,929	3,35,250	1,917

# WE DELIVER EMOTION, HAPPINESS TO OUR CUSTOMERS: METRO GROUP

The real estate sector in the state is yet to come on its feet post pandemic. There are issues like demand and red-tape nagging the industry, the sector would do well if the government brings in a single window clearance system. Yet, Metro Group, a frontline real estate company in the state, has set much store in the govt's pro-industry focus. The company has put together an aggressive plan to provide housing to different genres of buyers, especially the middle-class. **Sofia Firdous, Director of Metro Group**, talks about various initiatives of the real estate company. Excerpts of an interview with **Orissa POST**



### ■ How do you see the growth of real estate industry in the state?

■ Yes, after the implementation of RERA Act, we see the growth of organised real estate industry and the organised players are launching good projects. However, because of the limited growth of population in cities where there is a good demand such as Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Berhampur, we find limited scope on growth.

### ■ The demand for houses among the middle class is high. How do you meet the demand?

■ We always try to introduce projects in sync with demand. We have luxurious projects, township projects, and prime projects in the City. Therefore we have a variety of projects for different genres of buyers so that they have an option to chose their dream house.

### ■ How many projects have you done? Any upcoming projects?

■ Now our major focus is quality product. We have now Metro 100 acre township project which is happening in phases. We are going to launch a big project in Cuttack and we are working on another project which is into its second phase in Trisula.

### ■ Tell us about the company's customer-centric initiatives

■ A buyer's emotion is always attached to his home. We respect this emotion as they invest their lifelong savings in that. We always think like we are delivering emotion and happiness to our customers. So, we are determined to deliver best quality products at any given time.

### ■ How did you contribute to society during pandemic?

■ We provided food and daily requirement to our 300 labourers working in our projects. We also delivered daily rations and dry food under Moquim Foundation.

### ■ What are the challenges the real estate sector is facing?

■ Real estate itself is a challenge. Starting from land procurement to handling on-site issues, labour management, liaisoning with different departments for approval and occupancy, there are multiple challenges. The state government gave a boost to the real estate sector by introducing ODA Rules 2020. We have requested the government to introduce a single window clearance for ease of doing business, reduction in stamp duty, on time RERA registration. Such initiatives will boost the growth of the sector.

### ■ Suggestions to young entrepreneurs

■ Nothing is impossible if you have the passion and love for your job. There is no shortcuts to success and you have to work hard. People often judge that real estate is for men. But it's been seven years and I feel very fulfilling.

### ■ Does the state need a special law for real estate industry?

■ We already have the BDA to regulate the approvals and no objection certificates. Also, the projects having more than 500 sqm or eight flats are registered under RERA.

### ■ Any advice to buyers

■ Buyers should ensure that builders have a good credibility and they should make sure projects are RERA registered.

### ■ What are the buying range for a middle income group?

■ In today's time, there is a huge demand for middle class group flats which are in the range of Rs 40-60 lakh.



# DIGITAL BROADBAND IS THE NEED OF THE WORLD: WEFE

The pandemic pushed every firm to switch to a work from home mode. In such emergencies, hassle free internet services play a vital role.

**Prashant Agarwal, director of WEFE Technology (P) Limited** spoke with **Orissa POST** highlighting the challenges faced during the pandemic. Excerpts



### ■ What is the scope of digital broadband in a Smart City?

■ Digital is the current era. Everywhere we can see the power of digitalisation. Today every business is digitalised and everyone knows that through digitalisation we can perform our task in a smarter and better way. Broadband is a connectivity that is part of the digital world. Covid-19 taught us that the world never stops. Even during Covid-19, most of us were working from homes. Even students were attending classes online. So digital broadband is definitely the need of the present world. And our Smart City is also a part of that.

### ■ What is the current state of internet connectivity here?

■ In our industry, we believe in doing innovations. We always accept new things for keeping us updated. So you can say today or everyday our industry is improving the quality of services by introducing innovations. Ten to 12 years back, 2Mbps speed was calculated as the one of the fastest internet speed and now-a-days the simple FTTH connection offers up to 1000Mbps of Speed. So you can understand the difference and how fast the industry is improving.

### ■ What are the challenges you think may come up during your work?

■ As I said our industry is moving very fast. Everyday there are better technology products coming to the market. So, old technology is getting outdated. And investment cost of old technology is also becoming zero.

ment cost of old technology is also becoming zero.

### ■ What are your plans for the City?

■ Our motto has always been to provide highly reliable internet service to Odisha and we are focused on that. We came with Giga fiber concept to Odisha for the first time and made Bhubaneswar the First Giga City of Odisha.

### ■ How ready are Indian ISPs and internet exchanges for the surge in internet traffic following the coronavirus?

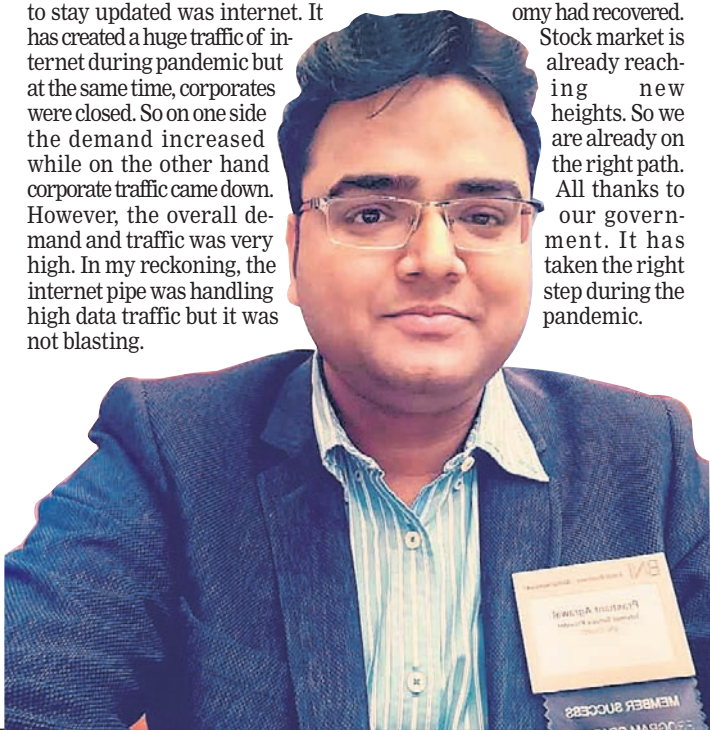
■ As during pandemic everyone was at his home and the only way to stay updated was internet. It has created a huge traffic of internet during pandemic but at the same time, corporates were closed. So on one side the demand increased while on the other hand corporate traffic came down. However, the overall demand and traffic was very high. In my reckoning, the internet pipe was handling high data traffic but it was not blasting.

### ■ Anything interesting that came up after this pandemic you'd like to share?

■ I think during pandemic, everybody learnt something new in their life. It was either the approach of seeing the life or business. Pandemic was really a bad phase of everyone's life. But at the same time it has taught us a lot. We are nothing in front of nature. So save nature and save lives.

### ■ Your take on post Covid-19 Indian economy and business revitalisation

■ As you can see, the Indian economy had recovered. Stock market is already reaching new heights. So we are already on the right path. All thanks to our government. It has taken the right step during the pandemic.



# Similipal blaze under control: Govt

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** Timely intervention and engagement of additional resources have helped in containing the ongoing fire at Similipal Tiger Reserve totally and only 24 fire points were there in the forest area, said Sandeep Tripathi, chairman of state task force on forest fire.

Timely action taken through different agencies has resulted in containment of the ongoing forest fire in the state to great extent and the situation is well under control, he said. Tripathi claimed that the forest fire points in entire state have been come down to 268 Wednesday from 290 reported Tuesday.

He said the fire in Similipal is totally contained and only 24 points are detected, which are being attended in the field.

The Similipal Tiger Reserve is spread over 2,750 sq km of which 2306.6 sq km is sanctuary. The entire area is divided into 209 beats. To abate the fire, in addition to 750 regular staff, protection assistants, 800 additional fire watchers have been pressed into service, Tripathi said.

Two Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) teams of 25 members each have been engaged along with 20 fire service personnel in Similipal area while another four teams have been sent. Around 400 leaf blowers have now been deployed in Similipal.

In a little respite, light to moderate rainfall measuring 1mm occurred in



ODRAF personnel in action at Similipal

Mayurbhanj district including the forest area. However, how much it helped in controlling the fire has not been ascertained till last report came in from the field.

Most of the reported fire points are

being attended to and abated within 24 hours of reporting. No damage to wildlife or human has so far been reported from the field, he further said.

Another four teams of ODRAF have been deployed in Rayagada, Deogarh,

Timely action taken through different agencies has resulted in containment of the ongoing forest fire in the state to great extent and the situation is well under control

To abate the fire, in addition to 750 regular staff, protection assistants, 800 additional fire watchers have been pressed into service

In a little respite, light to moderate rainfall measuring 1mm occurred in Mayurbhanj district including the forest area

Ganjam and Nuapada districts to attend forest fire incidents.

Mass awareness drive is being taken up conducting about 600 awareness meetings on forest fire prevention involving members from Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), Mission Shakti, local tribal leaders and volunteers in Similipal landscape. All the staff, squads, ODRAF teams, fire personnel VSS, PRI members are in the field with full preparedness, he said.

Sub-collectors, BDOs, tehsildars and IICs have started public sensitization programmes in fire prone areas. These concerted efforts have led to containment of fire in Similipal. The state government appealed to local public to cooperate with the forest staff to abate the forest fire and assist in dissuading miscreants from setting fire in or around forest areas.

## 2 of family killed as vehicle hits culvert in Puri

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sakhigopal, March 10:** In a tragic road mishap Wednesday morning, at least two persons of a family were killed and 12 others critically injured after a vehicle in which they were travelling in hit a culvert at Chanagorada area on Bhubaneswar-Puri NH-316.

The fatal road mishap took place near Sakhigopal under Satyabadi block in Puri

district. The deceased were identified as 58-year-old Laxmipriya Rana and four-year-old Lipika Priyadarshini.

According to an eyewitness, the family was on its way to Puri Srimandir in a Bolero from Begunia Patana area of Keonjhar district when the mishap occurred. The family had to observe the Mundan (tonsuring) ceremony of Lipika in Puri.

On being informed, Satyabadi police

station IIC Debi Prasad Patra rushed to the spot. A police team rescued the critically injured and sent them to Sakhigopal hospital for treatment.

Later, the injured were shifted to Capital Hospital after their conditions deteriorated. Satyabadi police registered a case in this connection and launched a probe. Police also recovered the bodies and sent them to Puri district headquarters hospital (DHH) for post-mortem.

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# State targets 1L vaccinations per day

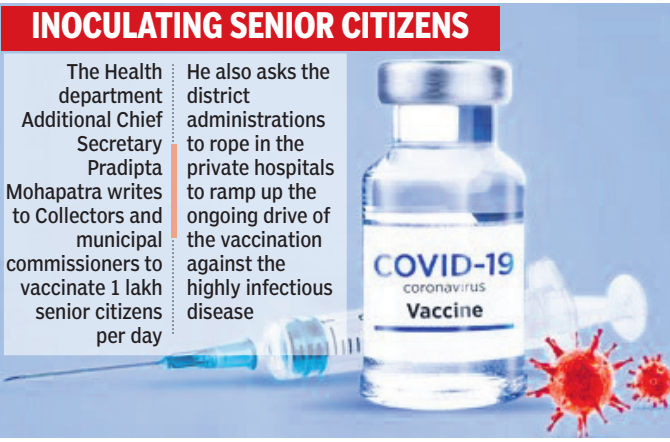
POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** The Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department Wednesday decided to inoculate around 1 lakh elderly people per day in the ongoing Covid-19 vaccination drive.

The Health department Additional Chief Secretary Pradipta Mohapatra Wednesday wrote to all the district Collectors, municipal commissioners and others asking them to take steps to scale up the vaccination coverage for the senior citizens.

"I am to reiterate that the pace of vaccination drive for the elderly persons needs to be accelerated in all districts and urban areas. It has been decided to vaccinate one lakh elderly persons per day," the letter from the health secretary to the district Collectors and other officials read.

The official also asked the district administrations to rope in the private hospitals to ramp up



**INOCULATING SENIOR CITIZENS**

The Health department Additional Chief Secretary Pradipta Mohapatra writes to Collectors and municipal commissioners to vaccinate 1 lakh senior citizens per day

He also asks the district administrations to rope in the private hospitals to ramp up the ongoing drive of the vaccination against the highly infectious disease

It was followed by Cuttack where the per-day target has been fixed at 6,256 as the total target in the district stands at 2,89,642.

## PIPLI BYPOLL

### BJD to declare candidate at right time: Samir Das

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Wednesday announced that it has intensified preparations for Pipli bypoll, even before declaration of the party candidate.

BJD leader Samir Ranjan Das Wednesday told the media that the preparations have started from panchayat level itself. He said, "You all know that our party and our leaders take right decisions at right time. We will be announcing our candidate for Pipli bypoll on time. I am going to Pipli to see the preparations there. Our party has started preparing for the

polls in the region."

He also said, "In each panchayat we have formed our committees to campaign for our party and make our presence stronger. In Delang block and Pipli NAC, senior leaders of the party have been given responsibilities to take care of the party affairs."

The Congress, meanwhile, has also formed a panel to find the right candidate to take on the opposition parties in the upcoming poll.

The BJP, on the other hand, also started its internal meetings and getting feedback from local leaders to prepare a blueprint of their game plan.



## WASSUP TODAY

### BHUBANESWAR

- Shivaratri by Brahmakumaris at Omm Niwas, Bayababa Mutt Road, 8am
- Foundation day of National Archives of India, Eastern Regional Record Centre, M-79, madhusudan Nagar, Unit-IV, 10.30am
- Observance of classical language status to Odia by Odia Language, Literature and Culture department, Sanskruti Bhawan, 11am
- Gurudakshina Day by Kalashrama, Rabindra Mandap, 6pm

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.

## KVK LAUNCHES TWO FARMER PRODUCER COS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** Krishi Vigyan Kendra-Khurda, ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture and Promotion and Stabilisation of Farmer Producer Organisation (PSFPO) jointly launched two Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) 'Divyalok' and 'Sambali' at Balipatna block, Wednesday.

The FPCs are spread over 17 gram panchayats of Balipatna block consisting of 500 farmers in 25 farmer interest groups.

Shiba Shankar Giri, KVK-Khurda head, stated that under the Union government's initiatives and support, more such FPOs will be created in agriculture sector in the district which would help small, marginal and landless farmers to enhance their income.

Padma Shri Sabaramatee of Sambhav, a resource centre for farmers across the country to learn organic farming techniques, while inaugurating the 'Divyalok' Horticulture and Allied FPC Limited underlined the role of organic farming in agriculture for income generation and health of the consumer.

## CLASSIFIED

### LOST

I, Sri Pitabas Mishra, S/o. Late Fakir Mohan Mishra, At/P.O.- Balighat Road, Puri have lost my file with Sale Deed No. 3014 dated 20.06.2001 and No. 2496 dated 02.06.2006 while coming from Gundicha Temple to Balighat Road on 03.03.2021. Anybody found please contact to Phone: 9583509003.

## NSG SET TO APPRAISE SRIMANDIR SECURITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** The elite National Security Guard (NSG) will reconnaissance March 18, the world-famous Shree Jagannath temple in Puri, official sources said Wednesday. The reconnaissance is part of NSGs security inspection at major pilgrimages and other sensitive places being done to pre-empt possible attacks.

A five-member team of the NSG comprising two officers and two personnel will conduct the mock drill along with the Odisha police officers at the 12th-century shrine. In a letter to the Odisha Chief



Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, the NSG has urged the state police to brief it about the security measures around the temple.

The NSG team has also requested Odisha police to provide necessary

- Odisha Police has been asked to brief NSG about the security measures put in place
- Reconnaissance is part of NSG's security inspection at major pilgrimages to pre-empt possible terrorist attacks

assistance including accommodation, transportation and food. The state police have also been asked to give a liaison officer for better coordination with the reconnaissance commander, the letter said.

## IMD predicts light rain for three days

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Wednesday said light to moderate rainfall would occur at some places across the state for next three days.

A few places in Keonjhar, Angul, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Gajapati and Ganjam districts would receive light to moderate rain Thursday while one or two places in Bargarh, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Sambalpur, Deogarh and Angul districts would witness light shower the next day, said the IMD.

Light to moderate rain or thundershower is very likely to occur

at one or two places in Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Balasore, March 13 (Saturday). The rest of Odisha will continue to witness dry weather, it said.

Wednesday, at least 10 places recorded a maximum temperature of 38 degrees or above. State's highest temperature of 39 degrees Celsius was recorded at Sundergarh while the maximum temperature was 38.8 degrees at Sambalpur.

Jharsuguda and Hirakud each recorded a day temperature of 38.6 degrees Celsius, whereas, it was 38.5 degrees at each of Angul, Talcher, Titlagarh and Malkangiri. The temperatures at Bolangir and Sonepur were 38.3 degrees and 38 degrees respectively.

## Two nabbed for laptop, mobile theft in Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, March 10:** CDA Phase-II police Wednesday claimed to have arrested two persons in connection with theft of a laptop and a mobile phone from the locality January 18.

Police also seized five laptops, three LED TVs, 10 mobile phones, four wrist watches and a digital camera from accused Krushna Chandra Maharana, 26 and Sagar Das, 33, of Imam Nagar at Jagatpur, said Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Prateek Singh.

Maharana was earlier involved in several theft cases in the city. He had been booked in three cases by Lalbag police, 10 by CDA Phase-II police, two by Markatnagar police and one by Bidanasi police. Das had purchased the booty from Maharana, Singh added.



Ravenshaw University students demonstrate in front of the Registrar's office in Cuttack highlighting several issues at the varsity's hostel, Wednesday

## Congress, BJP take a dig at govt over Nuapada projects

POST NEWS NETWORK



**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** Opposition parties Wednesday took a potshot at the state government on the issue of alleged delay in several pending projects when the Chief Minister dedicated new projects to the people of the western Odisha district.

Congress legislature party leader Narasingha Mishra said, "The state government had been adopting step-motherly attitude to western Odisha. The BJP government has ruled the state for more than two decades but hardly enough attention was given to the area. Tell me when the Indra irrigation project was started and how much delay has been caused to Suktel irrigation project."

He also said, "There has been massive delay in execution of the project due to the apathy of the government. The government is yet to complete the pending projects,

**The BJD government has ruled the state for more than two decades but hardly enough attention was given to the area. Tell me when the Indra irrigation project was started and how much delay has been caused to Suktel irrigation project**

**NARASINGHA MISHRA | CONGRESS LEGISLATURE PARTY LEADER**

earlier announced in the area. What is the use of announcing new projects then? It is better for the CM not to sell new dreams to the people of the region."

The BJP also fired salvos at the government when the party leader Pradeep Purohit said, "Many people in Nuapada are suffering due to irregularities

## Sexual assault: NHRC seeks report in 6 weeks

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, March 10:** The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has served a notice on Puri Superintendent of Police (SP) in connection with the alleged sexual assault on a minor girl in Delang area of the district March 4.

The rights body has asked Puri SP to submit an action-taken report on the incident within six weeks.

As per the petition, the minor girl, a resident of Satyabadi area, was sexually assaulted by a college lecturer.

The victim had lodged a complaint in this regard with Delang police.

However, police are yet to arrest the accused, who has been absconding.

A petition filed with the NHRC sought the rights body's intervention in arrest of the accused and compensation to the victim.

## 90% epileptic women can live healthy life

**E**pilepsy is one of the most common neurological problems in India. However, women population from the country often bear the brunt of the ailment more than their male counterparts.

Starting from social stigma, hurdles in marriages to suspicion over their child bearing capacity, the Indian women living with the disease often face more discrimination and neglect from the society at large.

However, most of these assumptions are far from reality. More than 90 per cent of women with epilepsy have healthy babies. Most women with epilepsy lead healthy and active lives. Marriage rates for women with epilepsy are lower than those of men with epilepsy. Many women with epilepsy are subjected to abuse and violence in every manner (i.e. sexual, emotional, physical, financial or social).

In the past, marriage and child-rearing were seen as inappropriate activities for women with epilepsy. These unfortunate and misguided attitudes were often based on the following mistaken ideas like- epilepsy is always inherited, the behaviour of people with epilepsy is unpredictable, hence unsuitable for child-rearing. Most of these have been challenged by the medical science.

When it comes to women, the manifestation of the disease dif-

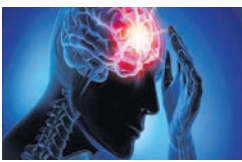
fers from males. Issues in women with epilepsy can range from puberty to menopause. Women with epilepsy have many unanswered queries ranging from sexual development, menstrual cycle, contraception, fertility, and reproduction.

The female hormones of estrogen and progesterone have known influence on seizures. As the hormones fluctuate with monthly menstrual cycles, puberty, pregnancy, and menopause, women often find that the changes in hormonal levels do affect their seizures. Sometimes there is a change in the frequency or pattern of seizures related to menstruation. When seizure occurrence is linked to the menstrual period, it is diagnosed as catamenial epilepsy.

It is the right time for everyone to join hands on this occasion of International Women's Day to spread awareness that 90 per cent of such women can live a normal life, can conceive and give birth to normal healthy children and can work and lead a successful life.

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) is a condition which consists of disturbance in the menstruation cycle, infertility and changes in metabolic profile. Unfortunately, women who have epilepsy are at a higher risk of having polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS).

**Dr Mithalee Kar, Consultant Neurologist at Care Hospital, Bhubaneswar**



**Many women with epilepsy are subjected to abuse and violence in every manner, says the health expert**

## Sandalwood worth ₹10 lakh seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, March 10:** The twin city Commissionerate Police Wednesday claimed to have arrested a 45-year-old man after recovering around 91kg illegal sandalwood from his possession at Tangi under Choudwar police limits here.

Briefing the media on the crackdown, Cuttack deputy commissioner of police Prateek Singh said that acting on a tip-off, a police team, led by Choudwar sub-inspector Partha Preetam Beura, raided a secluded place at Biswanahakani in Tangi and made the arrest.

"Rasananda Sahoo has been taken into custody after 22 illegal sandalwood logs weighing around 91.65kg were recovered from his possession. The seized logs would fetch around Rs 10 lakh in the open market," Singh pointed out.

## Mo Bus registers 1L ridership again

**Bhubaneswar:** The Mo Bus run by Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT) Tuesday re-registered the daily ridership of about 1 lakh passengers which had earlier plummeted to less than 10,000 owing to Covid. Taking to Twitter, CRUT said that Mo Bus registered daily ridership of 1.02 lakh passengers, that had gone 'to the bottom zero during lockdown.'

**Mo Buses to run till midnight on Shivratri**

With the Lingaraj temple administration gearing up for Maha Shivratri celebrations, the CRUT, Wednesday, announced that Mo Bus service on route no 32 will be available till midnight on Thursday.

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# Several hills in Kuldiha on flames

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sajanagad, March 10:** Even as fires have been raging for the last six days in Kuldiha sanctuary in Balasore district, the forest department is leaving no stone unturned to bring the blaze under control. Thousands of trees, plants, herbs and insects have been reduced to ashes over acres of forest land in various hills. Herbivores have been badly affected by the raging fires. They are pushed to dangers.

On the other hand, the atmospheric temperatures have risen exponentially on the foothill areas due to raging fires.

Fires are reported from hills like Jodachua, Kuladiha, Devagiri, Nadari, Balianala and Panchalingeswar inside the sanctuary. It is said that fires are spreading from one hill to another.



No sooner did forest officials contain fire at one place, the blaze appears at another place. As fires are atop hills, firefighters find it difficult to reach higher terrains.

Squads have been formed to douse fires while DFO Biswaraj Panda and Kuladihsa ranger Bijay Mohapatra have been monitoring the fire fighting exercise in the

## GOING STRONG

**F**ires are raging in Jodachua, Kuldiha, Devagiri, Nadari, Balianala and Panchalingeswar hills. It is said that fires are spreading from one hill to another

**A**over 50 forest officials are camping inside the sanctuary and trying their level best to bring fires under control.

**A**s fires are atop hills, firefighters find it difficult to reach higher terrains. No sooner did forest officials contain fire at one place, the blaze appears at another place

sanctuary. The DFO said all efforts are on to extinguish fires in the sanctuary. A 30-member fire squad with fire

tenders and over 50 forest officials are camping inside the sanctuary and are trying their level best to bring fires under control. Many locals were roped in this exercise.

Meanwhile, reports from Khaira said that people in Makhanpur panchayat under this block are panicked after hearing roaring of a leopard in the area. The people have lost their sleep over the leopard's appearance.

About two months ago, a video went viral about a leopard wandering in Dularpur forest. The forest department had looked into the matter, but failed to trace the big cat.

"Now, leopard roaring is heard sometimes in the area," said some villagers like Sandhyarani Nayak, Bhamamani Behera and Ratnakar Majhi. Ranger Babita Soren said as forest officials are engaged in the firefighting in Kuladiha, the matter will be looked into later.

# Man gets 12 year RI for raping minor in Jajpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, March 10:** A man of Samarpalu village under Barchana police limits in Jajpur was sentenced to 12-year rigorous imprisonment (RI) Tuesday evening by the District Additional Sessions Judge Court for raping a minor girl of the same village September 17, 2015.

The District Additional Sessions and PCSO Court Judge Gyanendra Barik awarded RI to convict Sanjay Bankira based on statements of 15 witnesses. The District Legal Aid Authority was ordered to pay a compensation of ₹3,00,000 to the rape survivor.

The convict was also imposed a fine of ₹20,000 in addition to 12-year RI. In case the fine amount is not realised, the man has to un-

dergo another three months of additional imprisonment.

According to sources, the minor girl was sleeping alone in her home at Samarpalu village. Her family members had gone away to attend a cultural event organised on the occasion of Ganesh Puja.

Taking advantage of her loneliness at the dead of night, the convict barged into her house and dragged hereto the backyard of her house where he committed the crime.

After the survivor's family members came back home, they knew about the incident September 18 morning. They filed a complaint at the police station in this regard.

Local police had registered a case under Section 376 (ii) (f) of the IPC and Section 6 of the PCSO Act in this connection.

# Women still on fringe in politically savvy Ganjam



Kumuduni Patnaik



Pramila Bisoyi



Usha Devi



Sugana Deo



Nandini Devi



Ratna Manjari Devi



Usha Rani Panda



Latika Pradhan

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, March 10:** Even though women's participation in Ganjam politics is increasing, only a handful of them have been able to get elected to the Lok Sabha and the Odisha Assembly, a report said.

This has come at a time when women empowerment is the order of the day. It seems women cannot be in the forefront of politics in Ganjam district. Otherwise how would one explain this stark fact? Only three women from Ganjam district has made it to Parliament and only 10 to the Odisha Assembly in the last 70 years.

Reports said that only three women from Ganjam district have been elected to the Lok Sabha and 10 to the Odisha Assembly from 1951-52 to 2019. Renubala Pradhan was a Rajya Sabha member from 2008-2014 while Jayanti Patnaik was elected to the Lok Sabha from Berhampur seat in the 1998 elections.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik won from the Aska Lok Sabha seat in 1999. He resigned from the Lok Sabha after he was elected to the State Assembly from the Hinjilicut seat in 2000 Assembly elections. Later, in a by-election, BJD's Kumudini Patnaik was elected.

**It seems women cannot be in the forefront of politics in Ganjam district as only three women from the district have made it to Parliament and only 10 to the Odisha Assembly in the last 70 years**

Pramila Bisoyi became an MP after she was elected from the Aska Lok Sabha segment in 2019 general elections. However, only three women have been elected to the Lok Sabha and one to the Rajya Sabha during the last seven decades in a political conscious district like Ganjam.

Similarly, 10 women have been elected to the state Assembly. Among them, V Sugana Kumari Deo was elected to the state Assembly for nine times from Khallikote Assembly segment and once from Kabisuryanagar Assembly segment. She represented Congress party, Utkal Congress, Janata Party, Janata Dal and BJD in the state Assembly at different points of time but never became a minister.

Usha Devi has been elected for eight times from the Chikiti Assembly segment in the district. She represented Janata Dal and BJD for six times and twice became a minister. Late Usharani Panda was elected to the state Assembly from Aska and Sorada Assembly segments twice on Congress tickets and became a minister of state for a brief period in the Giridhar Gamang ministry.

Among the remaining seven, Ananga Manjari Devi from Congress was elected to the state Assembly from erstwhile Badakhemundi (currently-Digapahandi) Assembly segment in 1957. Shanti Devi from Janata Dal won from Sorada Assembly segment in 1990. Ratnamanjari Devi, an independent won from the Berhampur Assembly segment in 1977 elections.

Nandini Devi of BJD won from Sanakhemundi seat in 2014 Assembly elections. Among the seven women, six of them are from royal families.

BJD candidates Latika Pradhan won from the Kabisuryanagar Assembly segment, Manjula Swain from Aska and Suryamani Baidya from Khallikote reserve seat in the 2019 election.

Notably, after Odisha became a separate state in 1936, A Lakshmbai from Congress won from the Berhampur Assembly segment in 1937 and 1946. Lakshmbai who is also the sister of late President VV Giri also became the first woman deputy speaker of state Assembly from May 29, 1946 to February 20, 1952.

On the other hand, 16 women candidates from BJD and six from the Congress were elected from 22 wards of Berhampur Municipal Corporation in the 2013 Municipal elections. BJD's K Madhavi was elected as the first woman Mayor and Jyotsna Nayak as deputy Mayor of Berhampur Municipal Corporation.

Half the 503 gram panchayats in the district have woman sarpanchs and samiti members. Two women, Sonam Palai and Snehalata Panda have been elected as chairperson and vice-chairperson of the Zilla Parishad.

## AWARENESS DRIVE



Amid reports of forest fires, the forest department roping in folk artistes to perform street plays for creating public awareness on protection of flora and fauna at Chalanguda panchayat in Malkangiri district OP PHOTO

## Brown sugar worth ₹1cr seized

BALASORE:

In a major crackdown, the Special Task Force (STF) of Crime Branch seized around 1.5 kg of brown sugar from a person in Balasore district Tuesday evening. The contraband was valued over Rs1 crore, an official said. The peddler arrested was identified as SK Munaf Hussein of Jhadeswar area under Jaleswar police limits. Acting on a tip-off, the STF team conducted raids on a house near Laxmannath check gate on NH-16 leading to the arrest. The drug peddler was striking a deal of the contraband at that time. As Hussein could not produce any valid document in support of possessing the contraband item, he was arrested and produced in the District and Sessions Judge Court in Balasore district.

## Odia youth Ronit Ranjan tops NDA exam

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhadrak, March 10:** Odia youth Ronit Ranjan Nayak secured first position in the written examination and subsequent interview held for admission to the Army, Navy and Air Force wings of the National Defence Academy (NDA), his family informed Wednesday.

The test was conducted for the 145th course of the NDA

and Naval Academy for the 107th Indian Naval Academy Course (INAC). According to sources, Ronit's father Rashmi Ranjan Nayak is presently working as a Master Chief Petty Officer at INS Hansa in Goa. The youth attributed his success to Lord Jagannath, his parents and teachers at the AFPI.

Ronit belongs to Bachada village of Jagannathpur area in Bhadrak district. He was prepar-

ing for the examination at the Armed Forces Preparatory Institute (AFPI) in Kolhapur of Maharashtra.

Notably, the written examination was held by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) September 6, last year. However, the interview was conducted by Services Selection Board of the Ministry of Defence and the results were announced March 6, 2021.

# 9-HR MAYURBHANJ BANDH PEACEFUL

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada/Udala, March 10:** Even as fires are still raging in many parts of Similipal sanctuary for over 15 days, Bhanja Sena, a local outfit, observed a nine-hour Mayurbhanj shutdown Wednesday, in protest against the government's failure in containing the flames in the biosphere reserve.

The bandh was peaceful. The protesters started picketing in the Baripada town and other parts of the district. Commercial establishments, government offices and schools and colleges have remained shut. However, emergency services have been exempted from the bandh. They staged road blockades on national highways and state highways by burning tyres while vehicular traffic came to standstill along the highways due to the blockade.

Bhanja Sena activists forced closure of market places, government offices and shops at Udala. Sena activists took out a bike rally in Baripada town. The Sena activists accused the government of having completely failed in controlling the blaze in Similipal.

They accused the forest department of inefficiency. All the officials from top to bottom, who are in charge of the safety of the biosphere reserve, should be dismissed from their jobs, they shouted.

Reports from Kaptipada said, members of various outfits, political workers and staff of various institutions have joined the fire fighting exercise in the sanctuary.

Meanwhile, a delegation of the BJD visited Baghanta hill adjoining the sanctuary area and doused fires in some stretches. Hundred of youths accompanied by BJD leaders like Debasish Mohanty, Jitendra Mohanty, Abhay Singh, Ashirbad Das, Siru



## Drizzle brings in small relief

**BARIPADA:** Even as efforts are being intensified to douse fires in the Similipal sanctuary, a drizzle along with hailstorm occurred in many parts of Pithabata forest range Wednesday. The rain is expected to help contain the fire to a great extent. The sudden rainfall has brought in a bout of respite to the public as it is expected to douse the wildfire in major portions of the forest. Reports said, fires are still raging in Bhanjabasa, Podadiha, Dukura, Badagaon, Bangiriposi, Chahala, Barehipani, Usuki, Niana south and north, and core areas like Bokua, Khejuri, Kabatghai, Burandiha.

Soren, Binakar Mohapatra, Ashih Kumar das, Swarup Das, Bichitra Mohanty, Bijay Kumar Jena and Mukhtikant Pahadasingh took part in the protests.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,**  
**P.H. DIVISION, SAMBALPUR**  
Phone No.: (0663) 2412135; Email ID: eephdsbp@gmail.com  
**NOTICE INVITING TENDERS**

**NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement**  
**Bid Identification No. EEPHSBP-14/2020-21 Dt.04.03.2021**

01. Name of the Work	: 3 Nos. Works.
02. Type of Bid	: Single Bid System
03. Estimated Cost	: Rs.16.04 lakhs to Rs.39.98 lakhs
04. Period of Completion	: 45 (Forty Five) days to 90 (Ninety) days.
05. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: From 11.00 AM of dt.12.03.2021 to 5.00 PM of 22.02.2021
06. Last date/time of receipt of bids in the portal	: 5.00 PM of 22.02.2021
07. Date & Time of opening of tender	: At 11.00 A.M. of 23.02.2021
08. Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid	: Executive Engineer, P.H. Division, Sambalpur, Brooks' Hill, Near Stadium, At/Po- Motjharan, Dist- Sambalpur-768001

Further details can be seen from the website <http://tenders.ori.nic.in> or [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)  
Sd./- Executive Engineer, P.H. Division, Sambalpur  
OIPR-13026/11/0016/2021

**e-Procurement Notice**  
**OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, GOPALPUR**  
**Tender Call Notice No.454 Dt.08.03.21**  
**Bid Identification No.05/2020-21**

Bid document consisting of work, estimated cost, cost of tender paper, E.M.D., time of completion, class of contractors and the set of terms and condition and condition of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Govt. website i.e. [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)

Total Number of Civil works	1 No.
Estimated cost	Rs.62 to Rs.65 lakh
Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal	11.00 A.M. of dt.09.03.2021 to 6.00 P.M. of dt.16.03.2021 for online bidding
Last date of receive of Bid through Online	6.00 P.M. of dt.16.03.2021
Date of opening of bid	11.00 A.M. on Dt.19.03.2021

Sd./- Executive Officer,  
N.A.C., Gopalpur

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
Tender No.: 38-KUR-TRD-OT-2020-21  
Dt.: 03.03.2021

**Name of the Work: EXECUTION OF OVER HEAD EQUIPMENT MODIFICATION WORK IN CONNECTION WITH PROVISION OF FOB AT KHURDA ROAD, KHALIKOT, MANCHESWAR, JANKIDAIPUR, JENAPUR ROAD IN KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.**

Approximate Value : ₹ 30,17,598.74

Tender closing date & time: upto 1300 hrs. of 26.03.2021.

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

Complete details & tender documents will be available at website <http://www.irps.gov.in>

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD),  
PR-611/L/20-21 Khurda Road

**OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, PATRAPUR**  
At/Po:-Patrapur, Dist:-Ganjam, Pin:-761004 (Odisha), E-mail:-ot-patrapur@nic.in  
TENDER CALL NOTICE NO.- DATED

No.177:- The Block Development Officer, Patrapur,Ganjam,Odisha invites sealed percentage rate bid tender on behalf of Government of Odisha from registered and eligible Civil Contractors, C & B of the State PWD (R&B) / Water Resources / Rural Works / M.I. / C.P.W.D for the following works for tender value as mentioned against each work in column No. 3 eventually to be drawn up in the PWD - P1 form in conformity with the Detailed Tender Call Notice.

Sl. No.	Name of the Project	Approx. Cost of Project in Rs.	Cost of tender schedule in Rs.	EMD @ 1% in Rs.	Stipulated period of completion
1.	New construction of Sub Centre Building at Kelua	2426702.00	6000.00	24267.02	6 (Six) calendar months
2.	New construction of Sub Centre Building at Surangi	2426702.00	6000.00	24267.02	6 (Six) calendar months
3.	New construction of Sub Centre Building at Kharanpada	2426702.00	6000.00	24267.02	6 (Six) calendar months
4.	New construction of Sub Centre Building at Padagadi	2426702.00	6000.00	24267.02	6 (Six) calendar months
5.	New construction of Sub Centre Building at Talasasani of Arkul	2293422.00	6000.00	22934.22	6 (Six) calendar months
6.	Construction of New Sub-Center at Tumba of Tumba Gada	2293422.00	6000.00	22934.22	6 (Six) calendar months
7.	Construction of Labour Room at Tumbudi	2294617.00	6000.00	22946.17	6 (Six) calendar months
8.	Const. of New Sub-Centre Building at B Nuagam	2300635.00	6000.00	23006.35	6 (Six) calendar months

The tender papers including Tender Call Notice, Approved Tender Schedule & DTCN will be available in the official website <http://www.ganjam.nic.in> from Dt.10-03-2021 to 19-03-2021 upto to 5.30PM and can be downloaded from the above website. The last date for receipt of Tender Paper is upto 3.00 PM of 20-03-2021 through Registered Post / Speed Post only. The sealed tenders received through Registered / Speed Post will be opened on dated 22-03-2021 at 11.30 AM in presence of the contractors or authorized representatives at Patrapur Block Office. The Authority reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason therefor.

OIPR-19058/11/0001/2021 Block Development Officer, Patrapur, Ganjam

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA “e” PROCUREMENT NOTICE**  
**Bid Identification No. 28 of 2020-21**  
Tel. 06842-253314 eerwss\_plb@nic.in

No. O-1231

**1. Name of the Work:-** Execution of different Rural Piped water supply schemes in the district of Kandhamal. (Refer DTCN available in the website:- [tendersorissa.gov.in](http://tendersorissa.gov.in)); **2. Total No. of work:-** 01 No.; **3. Estimated Cost :-** Rs.62.33 lakhs; **4. Eligible Class of Contractor :-** B & A; **5. Period of Completion:-** 06 (Six) months (Refer DTCN available in the website:- [tendersorissa.gov.in](http://tendersorissa.gov.in))

**6. Other Details:**

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding		Date and time for opening of Technical Bid
		From	To	
Superintending Engineer, RWSS Division, Phulbani	28 of 2020-21	Dt.12.3.2021 At 10.00 hrs.	Dt.22.3.2021 Upto 17.00 hrs.	Dt.23.3.2021 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)  
Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded in website only.  
OIPR-25006/11/0013/2021 Sd./- Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Phulbani

**NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement**  
Tel. No. 06752222092, e-mail id- [eerwpuri@gmail.com](mailto:eerwpuri@gmail.com)

No. 2477 (Online - 24) Date: 08.03.2021

No. O-1240: The Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Puri on behalf of Government of Odisha invites percentage rate tenders through e-procurement for 19 Nos. of work for the year 2020-21 in the district of Puri.

1. Total no. of works	: 19 Nos.
2. Tender cost of packages	: Amount varies from Rs.0.53 to 35.39 lakhs
3. Class of contractor	: As per DTCN.
4. Period of completion	: 1 (One) Calendar month & 2 (Two) Calendar months.
5. Period of availability of tenders on-line/ Date & time of bidding on-line/ last date of seeking clarification/ Date of opening of tender papers.	

Procurement Officer	Bid identification No.	Availability of tender on-line for bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date, time & venue of opening of tender
		From	To		
1	2	3	4	5	6
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Puri.	Online- 24	12.03.2021 at 11.00 A.M.	23.03.2021 up to 3.00 P.M	22.03.2021 up to 1.00 P.M	24.03.2021 at 11.00 A.M. Office of the E.E.,R.W. Division, Puri.


6. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents, which is available in website: "https://tendersodisha.gov.in".  
Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Puri  
OIPR-25065/11/0028/2021



“

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught.

SRI AUROBINDO



# Ethics in investing

I have always held that it cannot be a coincidence that India’s richest community (the Jains) and biggest business families— Ambani, Birla, Jindal, Oswal, Munjal, Hinduja, Adani are all vegetarian. The law of Karma is clearly in play: the less hurt you cause, the more abundance you attract. What I have always felt deeply disappointed by, though, is that given their enormous financial clout, the Jains have not used the considerable power of their purse to mainstream the basic tenet of their faith: ahimsa. Unlike the Jews in America, whose wealth has elevated their cause, brought it legitimacy and world focus, the Jains have largely believed in separating business from belief. Such a pity because they could be such a powerful force for good. What’s needed is not the odd donation, no matter how munificent, but an unabashed meaningful and organised incorporation of the principle of non-violence into all business dealings and decisions. It’s not investing in ethics but ethics in investing that will convert our planet into a kinder, cleaner, healthier world for all.

Just after Independence, the Jains controlled the stock market and they decided they would not invest in meat and meat related products and in any violence rated company. Alas, this lasted only a few years and the Jains themselves started owning gelatine and bone companies and companies that used animal products like porcelain/ bone china. Many of them went into mining and jewellery that involves mining.

Many years ago Hemendra Kothari, if I remember correctly, was very keen to start an ethical investment fund. But he never got beyond the “whom to appoint as consultant stage.” The issues involved were complicated: what constitutes ethics. All business is destructive of the earth: whether construction or laying railway lines, cement, chemicals or paper. So where to draw the line and how to draw it. I was asked to be on it and was very, very anxious on whether we would get into ‘deep’ environmental investigation or just skim the surface and make certain basic rules to make it easy for people to invest. Anyway the investment fund never happened, which is a pity.

But here it is finally- what I’ve been nattering on about for years now: the world’s first cruelty-free and climate-conscious Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) that I hope will act as a model for India.

Here is the genesis. In 2017, three very smart, very vegan investment professionals set up Beyond Investing, a US-based registered investment advisor. CEO Claire Smith has 35 years’ experience working in the finance industry at UBS and as a partner at Albourne in areas including derivatives and hedge fund research; Lee Coates, OBE, is UK financial advisor Ethical Investors and founder of Cruelty Free Super in Australia; and Larry Abele is founder of Auriel Investors, an FCA-regulated asset management firm in London with a strong track record in impact investment leadership.

These three musketeers have pioneered what could be a financial revolution. Beyond Investing avoids companies involved in unethical practices towards animals, people, and the planet. Its stringent screening process weeds out animal exploitation, child labour; high carbon intensity; the burning or extraction of fossil fuels, single-use plastics, and any other activity deemed to have a significant negative impact on the environment.

Beyond Investing uses its assets to pressure companies to make positive changes in their business practices to reduce their harm to animals and the environment. It has developed a platform YourStake, which facilitates corporate engagement by allowing any size of investor to mount a petition to a company to encourage it to change some aspect of its activities. Other investors may pledge their shares to support campaigns on the platform and the total is reflected as dollar amount of shares held across all investors who have pledged. Here below are some examples of their campaigns: We call on Apple and Verizon to stop selling leather products in their stores; we call on Ford and General Motors to stop offering leather interiors in their vehicles; we call on Starbucks to continue their transition towards plant-based substitutes by providing plant-based meats and fish alternatives in their outlets.

One year ago, Beyond Investing launched the US Vegan Climate ETF (ticker: VEGN), on the New York Stock Exchange, providing investors with an ethical financial option. Screened as per vegan and climate-conscious principles, here below are the categories consciously ruled out: Investment - companies excluded for reason of investment in fossil fuel and other environmentally damaging activities; animal testing - companies excluded for reason of testing on animals; animal products - companies excluded for reason of business activities involving the production and use of products derived from animals; trained animals - companies excluded for reason of keeping using animals for sport or entertainment or keeping animals in captivity; energy production - companies excluded for reason of energy production using fossil fuels; fossil fuel - companies excluded for reason of involvement in the exploration, production and refining of fossil fuels; high carbon - companies excluded because of their high carbon emissions; human rights - companies excluded for human rights abuses; military and defence - companies excluded for involvement in weapons manufacture; other environmental - companies excluded for other forms of environmental damage; tobacco - companies excluded for producing tobacco.

The selected criteria point the way toward the industries of the future, and the results have been heartening. Since inception, VEGN has returned 27.69% total return on market price against the S&P500 Index’s 19.75% through to end August 2020. Performance was particularly strong in August, when the ETF outstripped the S&P500 Index by 2.12% on the same basis.

Equally important is that with its focus firmly on avoiding the most damaging companies to the environment, VEGN has a lower carbon, waste, and water footprint per unit of revenue than the S&P 500, and many other ESG indexes.

While the stocks represented in the S&P 500 Index create 129.67 tons of waste per \$1 million of revenue, stocks in VEGN create only 5.04 tons. Similarly, the metrics for carbon emissions and water consumption of companies in the index are significantly lower.

In the past year, assets in VEGN have steadily grown to now exceed \$25 million, to which Beyond Investing CEO Claire Smith, reacted, “we’re thrilled that more and more investors are switching out of index funds rooted in the profits of past destruction, towards our more sustainable alternative. As the world turns to ethics to save itself, investors seeking to be ahead of the curve should consider VEGN.”

Personally, I can think of no better country than India with its wealthy and tech savvy vegan/ vegetarians, and no better time than now against the backdrop of the pandemic highlighting the catastrophic consequences of eating animals, to support and emulate this trailblazing initiative. Do good and do well. What could be better?

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

## WISDOM CORNER

“

Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.

CARL JUNG

“

Life is either a great adventure or nothing.

HELEN KELLER

“

Everything you can imagine is real.

PABLO PICASSO

# HIMALAYAN SALAMI TACTICS

FOCUS CHINA



China is aggressively building many new villages in disputed borderlands to extend or consolidate its control over strategically important areas that India, Bhutan, and Nepal maintain fall within their national boundaries

In disputed Himalayan areas. In the name of “poverty alleviation,” the Communist Party of China is callously uprooting Tibetan nomads and forcing them to settle in artificial new border villages in isolated, high-altitude areas. The CPC has also sent ethnic Han Chinese party members to such villages to serve as resident overseers.

Creating a dispute where none previously existed is usually China’s first step toward asserting a territorial claim, before it furtively tries to seize the coveted area. Xi’s regime frequently uses civilian militias in the vanguard of such a strategy.

So, just as China has employed flotillas of coastguard-backed civilian fishing boats for expansionist forays in the South and East China Seas, it has been sending herders and grazers ahead of regular army troops into desolate Himalayan border areas to foment disputes and then assert control. Such an approach has enabled it to nibble away at Himalayan territories, one pasture at a time.

In international law, a territorial claim must be based on continuous and peaceful exercise of sovereignty over the territory concerned. Until now, China’s Himalayan claims have been anchored in a “might makes right” approach that seeks to extend its annexation of Tibet to neighbouring countries’ borderlands.

By building new border villages and relocating people there, China can now invoke international law in support of its claims. Effective control is the sine qua non of a strong territorial claim in international law. Armed patrols don’t prove effective control, but settlements do. The speed and stealth with which China has been changing the facts on the ground in the Himalayas, with little regard for the geopolitical fallout, also reflects other considerations. Border villages, for example, will constrain the opposing military’s use of force while aiding Chinese intelligence gathering and cross-frontier operations.

Satellite images show how rapidly such villages have sprouted up, along with extensive new roads and military facilities. The Chinese government recently justified constructing a new village inside the sprawling Indian border state of Arunachal Pradesh by saying it “never recognised” Indian sovereignty over that region. And China’s territorial encroachments have not spared one of the world’s smallest countries, Bhutan, or even Nepal, which has a pro-China communist government.

China conceived its border-village programme after Xi called on Tibetan herdsmen in 2017 to settle in frontier areas and “become

guardians of Chinese territory.” Xi said in his appeal that, “without peace in the territory, there will be no peaceful lives for millions of families.” But Xi’s “poverty alleviation” programme in Tibet, which has steadily gained momentum since 2019, has centered on cynically relocating the poor to neighbouring countries’ territories.

The echoes of China’s maritime expansionism extend to the Himalayan environment. Xi’s island building in the South China Sea has “caused severe harm to the coral reef environment,” according to an international arbitral tribunal. Likewise, China’s construction of villages and military facilities in the borderlands threatens to wreak havoc on the ecologically fragile Himalayas, which are the source of Asia’s great rivers. Environmental damage is already apparent on the once-pristine Doklam Plateau, claimed by Bhutan, which China has transformed into a heavily militarised zone since seizing it in 2017.

Indian Army Chief Manoj Naravane recently claimed that China’s salami tactics “will not work.” Yet even an important military power like India is struggling to find effective ways to counter China’s territorial aggrandisement along one of the world’s most inhospitable and treacherous borders.

China’s bulletless aggression – based on using military-backed civilians to create new facts on the ground – makes defense challenging, because it must be countered without resorting to open combat. Although India has responded with heavy military deployments, Chinese forces remain in control of most of the areas they seized nearly a year ago. So far, China’s strategy is proving just as effective on land as it has been at sea.

The writer is Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Brahma Chellaney

CHINA’S NEWLY BUILT BORDER VILLAGES IN THE HIMALAYAS ARE THE EQUIVALENT OF ITS ARTIFICIALLY CREATED ISLANDS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA, WHOSE GEOPOLITICAL MAP XI’S REGIME HAS REDRAWN WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT

## SPECTRUM POLITICS

# Where all aspiring autocrats will fail

Although it may seem hard to believe for anyone who watched the spectacle, former US President Donald Trump’s recent second impeachment trial in the Senate suggested that American democracy remains strong. Four years of Trump’s bombast and blatant flouting of precedent and procedure had undermined confidence in the US political system’s resilience. But the impeachment proceedings seemed to affirm the hardness of the country’s democratic institutions.

The Trump administration shook America by actively rejecting those institutions, culminating in the January 6 invasion of the US Capitol by a Trump-summoned mob. Under President Joe Biden, it feels like solid footing has been regained.

In fact, US democracy remains vulnerable, not least owing to many Americans’ lack of commitment to democratic institutions. While Trump worked to de-institutionalise America and enrich himself while in office, the Republican Party either sat on its hands or in some cases applauded, paving the way for sedition. Many Americans and a sizable chunk of the political elite were willing to see US democracy overthrown – an impression that all but seven Senate Republicans reinforced when they voted to acquit Trump in February.

Of course, even if Trump’s Senate trial fell short of the two-thirds majority needed to convict him for inciting the January 6 insurrection, his effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election failed. American political institutions prevailed. Democracy triumphed. Trump didn’t think strategically or have a plan to translate his autocratic tendencies into new, authoritarian institutions. Frighteningly, however, a more serious and savvy wannabe autocrat might have succeeded where Trump failed. It is not difficult to see how.

Successful autocrats need to have something that looks like an overarching political project. At the end of the day, Trump’s “America First” was mostly posturing, because he couldn’t deliver real improvements in the lives of his base. All successful autocrats – like former Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, postwar Argentine President Juan Perón, or current Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni – somehow “deliver the goods” for their core constituencies.

Trump delivered, but only to the rich, by cutting taxes and regulations. His symbolic gestures won’t endure, and his “Make America Great Again” slogan is destined for burial at the back of millions of American closets.

Republicans would be wise to

consider this. Instead, much of the party, both in Congress and at the state and local level, still clings to the false narrative of election fraud and support for the insurrectionists, or advances the notion that the storming of the Capitol was staged to undermine Trump. This is deeply concerning.

Fortunately, the US political system has many sources of resilience. One is the integrity of local and state officials, such as those who certified last November’s presidential election result in Michigan, despite threats from Trump supporters, and Georgia’s Republican governor and election administrators, who stood up to threats from Trump himself. Another is the judiciary, with even judges appointed by Trump refusing to give any credence to the groundless claims of electoral fraud propagated by the president and his allies. These officials did their job and believed in the system.

But the Achilles heel of Trump’s populist appeal was his extreme anti-statism. He hated the government and couldn’t bear to strengthen its capacity. For proof, one need look no further than the countless appointed positions in the federal government that remained unfilled throughout his four-year term, not to mention his administration’s disastrous COVID-

19 response, capped by a botched vaccine rollout. Successful populist leaders, by contrast, harness the power of the state in discretionary ways to create jobs for their supporters, and to provide them with goods and services. That was anathema to Trump, and he paid the electoral price for it. Many Americans face genuine problems, and Biden – thankfully – is not hamstrung by antipathy to using the state’s power to make a difference in their lives.

Democracy’s survival requires both the state and society to be strong and counterbalance each other. Maintaining this equilibrium demands constant effort. Ultimately, it engenders greater state capacity to deliver what citizens want and encourages greater social mobilisation to monitor this capacity. This is the corridor in which Trump could not function. It is also, one hopes, where all aspiring destroyers of democracy will ultimately fail.

The writer is Institute Director of the Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts and Professor at the University of Chicago’s Harris School of Public Policy.

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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)

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B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

## Changing face of JEE

Sir, Joint Entrance Examination - Mains and Advanced, for admission to premier engineering colleges of the country (23 IITs, 31 NITs, IIITs and GFTIs) is the toughest entrance examination. Till 1971, IIT JEE was held for five IITs (Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Kanpur and Kharagpur). In 1972, IITBHU; in 1994, IIT Guwahati and in 2001, IIT Roorkee was added. Subsequently, new IITs started, Regional Engineering Colleges converted to National Institutes of Technology, and IIITs and GFTIs added. Most of the states use JEE Mains scores for admission to engineering colleges. There are 4000 engineering colleges, but 90 per cent of these fail to fill half the seats. The competition is for getting admission in around 200 colleges. Major companies of the country visit IITs/NITs for employment of engineers in their final year at high salaries, hence rush is there for getting admission into these institutes and this makes it tough to crack JEE.

Gopal Mittal, BHUBANESWAR

## Farmers ready for heat

Sir, The agitating farmers camping at the borders of Delhi braved the harsh winter and now they are getting ready to cope with the heat. On March 5 they completed 100 days of protest. According to the agitating farmers, their protest is no longer against farm laws, they are now protesting against repression and also against labour laws. They believe that the government does not understand their plight and it is indifferent to the protest. Hence, the farmers are now devising plans to campaign in election-bound states against the BJP. There is an urgent need to put an end to this agitation in an amicable way. Summer in the northern plains is very harsh. Given that many of the protesters are elderly people, there is growing concern about their health. The government’s unfair and unscrupulous ways of dealing with the protest have aroused resentment among the farmers. The NIA has served over 20 notices to the farmers so far. The Prime Minister and the Agriculture Minister repeatedly said that the farm laws would not be repealed. The farmers’ hope of finding a workable solution to the issue has been dashed. Hence, they have resigned themselves to a long wait. The government hopes that weariness would prompt the farmers to retreat. The farmers are now looking to the Supreme Court for help. It had set up a committee and it was delegated to start deliberations and submit its recommendations. The committee is likely to submit its report in March. One wonders what will the committee suggest and what will be the Supreme Court’s order.

Venu GS, KOLLAM



# ‘No democracy left’: PC Chacko quits Cong ahead of Kerala polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi/Kochi, March 10:** In a blow to the Congress in poll bound Kerala, senior leader PC Chacko Wednesday announced his resignation from the party, alleging group interest in deciding party candidates for the coming assembly elections.

Chacko, who was a former working committee member of the Congress, is the second senior leader to quit the national party after Jyotiraditya Scindia.

Scindia joined the BJP after his resignation over differences with Congress' Madhya Pradesh state leadership.

Amid demand from a group of 23 senior Congress leaders for an organisational overhaul of the party, Chacko, who headed the Joint Parliamentary Committee on 2G Spectrum during the second UPA rule, also alleged that the national leadership of the party has not been active for the last two years.

He, however, did not announce his future plans but made it clear on his views on the BJP, saying the saffron party “is not a political factor” in the southern state.

“I have sent my resignation letter to Congress president (Sonia Gandhi) and to Rahul Gandhi. This decision, I have been deliberating for the last many days,” Chacko told a press conference in New Delhi, announcing his decision to quit over alleged undemocratic ways in selection of candidates for the Assembly polls.

“No democracy left in Congress. Candidate list has not been discussed with the state Congress committee,” he alleged.

Hitting out at the leadership of the two groups in Kerala's Congress party--“A” group headed by former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy and “I” group led by senior party leader Ramesh Chennithala, Chacko alleged that only Chandy and Chennithala know who all are being fielded as the party's candi-



**I come from Kerala where there is no Congress party as such. There are two parties Congress (I) and Congress (A). It's a coordination committee of two parties functioning as KPCC**

PC CHACKO

dates in April 6 Kerala Assembly polls.

“I come from Kerala where there is no Congress party as such. There are two parties Congress (I) and Congress (A). It's a coordination committee of two parties functioning as KPCC,” Chacko alleged.

The two groups have been active in the state unit of Congress since the period of veteran leader and late K Karunakaran and senior leader AK Antony.

While the A group was then headed by Antony, the I group was led by Karunakaran.

As the discussions between state Congress leadership and representatives of the party high command on deciding party candidates are progressing in New Delhi, Chacko said the high command is “agreeing with the proposals given by both the groups”.

“This groupism is the biggest

bane of the Congress party in Kerala. Kerala is facing a very crucial election and in this election, the people want the Congress to come back. But, the stumbling block is the groupism which is practiced by top leaders of the Congress party,” said Chacko, who was a former Lok Sabha MP from Kerala.

Chacko, who was also a former state minister, said he had been continuously arguing with the high command to put an end to the groupism in the state but failed.

“Unfortunately, the high command is also agreeing with the proposals given by both the groups (a reference to “A” and “I” groups),” he alleged. “Today in Kerala, nobody can be a Congressman,” Chacko said.

Asked about his future plan including his views on the BJP, Chacko said his assessment is that the saffron party is not going to make any gain in Kerala. “In Kerala, BJP is not a factor. They cannot win. Minds of Kerala people are not in favour of BJP,” he said.

He said the Left parties are always fighting against the BJP and they have always supported the Congress. “I don't think that essentially, ideologically we are enemies. But we are fighting as political enemies. That fight will continue,” Chacko said.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, March 10:** The CPI-M Wednesday released its first list of 83 candidates for the April 6 Assembly polls.

The list includes Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who will contest from Dharmadam in Kannur district. His son-in-law Mohammed Riyaz has also been given the party ticket. Many others who are known as close aides of Vijayan include – P Rajeev, KN Balagopal, VN Vasavan and MB Rajesh have also been given tickets to contest. All four had lost the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Among others, who got the tickets include ministers KK Shailaja from Mattannur and KT Jaleel from Thavannoor.

With the first list out, it is the ruling CPI-M in Kerala which has got off the blocks to the upcoming Assembly polls and at the first look at the list of candidates released Wednesday, it is very clear that this is a list by and for Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan as he appears to have had the final call.

In the 140-member Kerala Assembly, the CPI-M, which leads the Left Democratic Front this time will contest 85 seats and its party secretary A Vijayaraghavan released the list of 83 names, with



**It's going to be a high voltage campaign and this is for the first time that Vijayan would be leading the party in an election, as all along it was his arch rival in the party -- VS Achuthanandan who did it**

two more to be announced later.

Of the 85 seats, 74 will contest under the party symbol, while nine are Left supported independents and the list includes four candidates who are below age 30 and there are 12 women candidates.

“Thirty-three sitting Legislators, including five present Cabinet ministers have not been re-nominated this time. Parliamentary and non-parliamentary duties are both equally important and hence those who are not nominated will be engaged in organisational work. The yardstick that was applied was all

those who had two terms should stand out, as it was meant to bring in new faces. Then the list has been vetted, discussed and debated at our various party levels, which is an excellent democratic process,” said Vijayaraghavan.

The educational qualifications of the 83 candidates include 42 graduates, 14 postgraduates, two each medical doctors and PhD holders and one architect, besides 28 who have a degree in law.

Another notable inclusion this time is former State Minister and Speaker – K Radhakrishnan and not

to mention Central committee member MV Govindan, who is returning to parliamentary politics after a gap of 15 years.

Another surprise in the list is none other than the wife of Vijayaraghavan – R Bindhu, a professor by profession and a former Mayor of Thrissur Corporation.

The most shocking omission, which came as the biggest surprise last week, was economist turned Finance Minister Thomas Issac, who will not be contesting this time.

And on account of his failing health, 97-year-old VS Achuthanandan for the first time after 1996, is also not contesting.

“A look into the list reveals that this is a list for and by Vijayan, as he has included only those whom he knows. The danger is, in case, things don't turn out the way that he wishes, then it's curtains for him, but if he manages to retain power, his place in the Indian politics will reach a new high. It's going to be a high voltage campaign and this is for the first time that Vijayan would be leading the party in an election, as all along it was his arch rival in the party – VS Achuthanandan who did it. So it's the most challenging time for Vijayan,” said a media critic who did not wish to be identified.

## Former UP bureaucrats come in farmers’ support



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, March 10:** The ongoing farmers’ agitation against the farm laws is now getting support from an unexpected quarter. Former IAS and IPS officers in Uttar Pradesh have started supporting the farmers’ demands.

A former Uttar Pradesh IAS officer, Vijay Shankar Pandey, known as a crusader against corruption, and former additional director general of police SN Singh, in a joint statement, have announced their support to the agitating farmers.

They have called upon farmers to continue with their stir for the repeal of the Centre's three new farm laws. Vijay Shankar Pandey said that he, along with his group comprising several former government officials, fully support the farmers' demand for a law that guarantees minimum support price (MSP). He confirmed that SN Singh was a signatory to the joint statement.

Pandey said he has been expressing his concerns through the media over the stubborn attitude of the Union government in finding a unanimously acceptable solution to the farmers' issues.

“The Narendra Modi government should make a fair introspection of its mistakes without any further delay and listen to the protesting farmers in an unbiased manner: The govern-

ment should take prompt corrective measures, as the issues affect 70 per cent of the country's population which is engaged in agriculture. After all, the growth of this largest segment of population will ultimately reflect in the overall national prosperity and increase in GDP,” he said.

Pandey said his group has also decided to support the Uttar Pradesh Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, consisting of 22 farmer unions in the state and agitating at the village level for the repeal of the three farm laws and for passing a legislation that guarantees MSP. “Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced on various platforms, including in Parliament, about the continuation of MSP, we are of the firm opinion that the farmers' agitation should also continue till the procurement of the forthcoming wheat crop is ensured at full MSP across the country,” he said.

He further said that former civil servants and other prominent persons would now be deputed as observers for the cluster of districts to boost the morale of the protesting farmers and to ensure that farmers are not harassed by the government agencies. “These functionaries will also interact with the respective district magistrates and other officials concerned to ensure that middlemen are eliminated from the procurement chain and that farmers get full MSP,” he said.

## UP khap bans jeans for women, shorts for men

*The Rajput community panchayat also warned that those found violating the diktat will be punished and face boycott*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Muzaffarnagar, March 10:** A khap panchayat in Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar district has barred women from wearing jeans and men from wearing shorts, saying they are part of western culture and that people should wear traditional Indian clothes.

The Rajput community panchayat also warned that those found violating the diktat will be punished and face boycott.

The panchayat was convened March 2 in Pipalshah village under Charthawal police station. Announcing the panchayat's decision, community leader and Kisan Sangh chief Thakur Puran Singh said it was decided to bar women from wearing jeans and men from wearing shorts.

He said these clothes are part of the western culture. “We should wear our traditional clothes such as sarees, ‘ghagra’ and ‘salwar-kameez,’” he said.

Those found violating the order will be punished and boycotted from the community, Singh said. The khap panchayat also protested the Uttar Pradesh government's decision to grant reservation to Scheduled Castes (SC) and backward classes in the upcoming panchayat polls.

Singh said the panchayat expressed concern over the decision and condemned it.

The state government issued its reservation policy for panchayat polls last month. According to the policy, seats will be reserved for SCs, backward classes and women in the elections.



## Gorakhpur: Youth arrested under anti-conversion law

*On the complaint of the girl's mother, an FIR under sections of kidnapping and UP Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020 was lodged*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gorakhpur, March 10:** A youth belonging to Bihar was arrested in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur district for allegedly kidnapping and forcefully marrying a Hindu minor girl, police said Wednesday.

A case of kidnapping along with provisions of the recently enacted anti-conversion law of the state has been lodged and further sections of law, if required, will be added after the girl's statement, police said.

Police are also searching the person who facilitated the ‘nikah’ ceremony. Tabarak Khan, a native of Samastipur district in Bihar and living in a rented house

in Shahpur police station area, kidnapped a 14-year-old girl living in the neighbourhood and forcefully married her March 1.

He issued life threats to her and warned against telling anyone about the marriage and sent her back to her home the same day.

The girl's mother told police that the accused had often been teasing her daughter. Recently, the mother found a document in Urdu from her daughter's school bag and after inquiring came to know that it was a marriage certificate (nikahnama).

The girl, who is a Class VI student, had not told anyone about the marriage apparently out of fear. The girl's family is poor, police said.

“On the complaint of the girl's mother, an FIR under sections of kidnapping and UP Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020 was lodged Sunday and the accused was arrested Tuesday,” SHO of Shahpur police station SK Singh said.

The medical report is awaited and other sections of the law would be added after the statement of the girl in court, he said.

# Kerala HC notice to Centre on plea challenging IT Rules

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kochi, March 10:** The Kerala High Court Wednesday sought the Centre's response on a plea challenging the constitutional validity of new Information Technology (Guidelines For Intermediaries And Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

Considering the plea filed by digital media outlet ‘LiveLaw’, Justice PV Asha directed the government not to take any coercive action against the petitioner for non-compliance of the provisions under Part III of the new rules, which deal with digital media regulation.

According to the petitioner, the Rules notified February 25 “imposes an unconstitutional three-tiered complaints-and-adjudication structure upon publishers, which makes the executive both the complainant and the judge on vital free speech questions involving blocking and take down of online material.”



**Considering the plea filed by digital media outlet ‘LiveLaw’, Justice PV Asha directed the government not to take any coercive action against the petitioner for non-compliance of the provisions under Part III of the new rules, which deal with digital media regulation**

As per the petition, the mechanism is both arbitrary and violates the rule of law and separation of powers, especially since there is no provision for the aggrieved publishers to appeal against the deci-

sion of the Inter-Departmental Committee consisting only of members of the executive.

Tuesday, the Delhi High Court had issued a notice to the Centre on a petition challenging the Rules.

# Mayawati turns to Kanshi Ram to regain lost ground

AGENCIES

**Lucknow, March 10:** Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati is now turning back to her mentor, late Kanshi Ram, to regain the lost ground in Uttar Pradesh.

Mayawati has directed her dispensation to celebrate the 87th birth anniversary of the party's founder March 15 on a grand scale this year.

Events on the occasion will be held not just at Kanshi Ram Smarak in Lucknow, but at all the divisional headquarters across the state.

This will help in mobilisation of supporters and party cadres at the local level and is designed to galvanise party workers ahead of the panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh, party sources said.

After the Kanshi Ram birth anniversary celebrations, Mayawati will be holding organisational review meetings to streamline preparation for the elections.

The BSP has been in a state of



### STATE OF INERTIA

■ THE BSP HAS BEEN IN A STATE OF INERTIA IN UTTAR PRADESH SINCE THE YOGI ADITYANATH GOVERNMENT CAME TO POWER IN 2017

■ MAYAWATI HAS BEEN SPENDING HER TIME IN DELHI AND PARTY CADRES REMAIN CLUELESS ABOUT THE PARTY'S DIRECTION

inertia since the Yogi Adityanath government came to power in 2017.

Mayawati has been spending her time in Delhi and party cadres remain clueless about the party's direction.

Nine BSP MLAs have already parted ways, adding to the sense

gloom the party.

Meanwhile, the BSP supremo Wednesday attributed the BJP's rise to power to the “wrong” and “anti-people” policies of the Congress.

“Every party faces ups and downs. After independence, parties like Jansangh and BJP had been fin-

ished,” said Mayawati in a statement. But, she said, the BJP with its communal and anti-people policies is at its peak today.

“The BJP is in power because of the wrong and anti-people policies of the Congress,” she said.

Alleging that both the UP and

central government have been ignoring the interests of the people, society and the nation, Mayawati said they are busy trampling the opposition and misusing power.

“This is unfortunate for the democracy and everyone is concerned about it,” she said.

The BSP chief also advised her party leaders and workers to meet various government officials after fixing appointments with them to secure justice for people in cases of atrocities against them. The BSP statement said the party has completed the first round of district-level review meetings for the preparation of the panchayat elections.

During this meeting, office bearers of all 75 districts and 18 divisions presented their detailed report to the party leadership, the statement added.

While reviewing the preparations for the panchayat polls, Mayawati also said if they are held fairly, the BSP would win many seats.



## of the day quote

Sachin Vaze is not Osama Bin Laden. It is not right to target a person and hang him and then investigate



UDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER

University education should instill curiosity and creativity in students



KALRAJ MISHRA | RAJASTHAN GOVERNOR

I would like to draw your kind attention towards a matter of pressing importance whereby multiple religious heads, saints of various religions in India, are senior citizens but are not being able to get vaccinated as they may not have an Aadhar card or aren't technology savvy to get themselves registered for it



PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI | SHIV SENA MP

## SHORT TAKES

### 57 students test nCoV +ve

**Tirupati:** At least 57 students of a TTD-run vedic school at Tirumala have tested positive for the coronavirus. "TTD management has shifted the students immediately to SVIMS (Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences) super specialty hospital at Tirupati for better treatment," said a Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) official Wednesday. However, the students were mandated to carry along with them the Covid negative test report, after the resumption of the classes.

### Man killed, buried by wife

**Hyderabad:** A 32-year-old woman was Wednesday taken into custody for allegedly killing her husband and burying his body in the compound wall area of their house here, police said. On the intervening night of February 8 and 9, the woman attacked her 38-year-old husband with a knife while he was consuming liquor and allegedly killed him as he was reportedly misbehaving with her daughters from her first marriage, they said. The man's brother later filed a complaint with police, sources said.

### US Defence Secy to visit India

**New Delhi:** US Defence Secretary Lloyd J Austin will be on a visit to India from March 19 to 21 that is expected to focus on ways to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific and strengthen overall defence and security ties. The defence ministry said Austin's visit as part of his first overseas travel emphasises the strength of India-US strategic partnership. "Secretary of Defence of the United States of America General Lloyd J Austin will visit India from March 19 to 21," it said. In June 2016, the US had designated India a "Major Defence Partner".

### 2 terror modules busted in J&K

**Srinagar:** The Jammu and Kashmir Police have busted two terror modules and prevented IED blasts after arresting seven persons who were mostly radicalised and drawn to militancy through social media, police said Wednesday. Vijay Kumar, Inspector General of Police, Kashmir, said at a press conference here that in the last few days the Awantipore police have busted two terror modules of terrorists planning to carry out IED blasts.



Every type of crime is at its peak in Uttar Pradesh and there is a very bad state of crime control

MAYAWATI | BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY SUPREMO

## TA CAPTAIN ANURAG THAKUR

Union Minister Anurag Thakur Wednesday became the first serving MP to be appointed as Captain in the Territorial Army



# Mamata 'attacked' during campaign

MAMATA CLAIMED THAT THE ATTACK WAS A WELL-PLANNED CONSPIRACY TO 'REMOVE HER' FROM THE POLL CAMPAIGN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Nandigram (WB), March 10:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged Wednesday that she was attacked by "four-five men" who manhandled her during the election campaign in Nandigram, because of which she was injured in the left leg.

The incident happened around 6.15 pm when Banerjee was about to leave Birulia area near Reyapara after praying at a local temple. "I was standing outside my car with the door open. I was praying from there on seeing a temple. Few people came around my car and pushed the door. The door hit my leg," she said.

The Chief Minister said that her leg got swollen because of the injury and she was feeling feverish, besides having chest pain. Pointing to her leg, she told reporters, "See how it has swollen."



The incident happened around 6.15 pm when Banerjee was about to leave Birulia area near Reyapara after praying at a local temple.

"Some people deliberately did it. Of course, it is a conspiracy. There

were no local policemen around me, neither the district police superintendent was present at the spot," she alleged. The Chief Minister also has severe pain in the waist, TMC MP Sukhendu

Sekhar Ray, who is at present in Nandigram, said.

Banerjee was seen being carried by her security personnel to the backseat of her SUV from the front seat, which she usually occupies during travel, as she was in pain. A white cloth was also wrapped around her injured leg.

The incident triggered a security scare as the Chief Minister gets Z-plus protection. Banerjee, who was supposed to stay the night in Nandigram, was being brought to Kolkata. A green corridor was created to rush her back to the state capital from Nandigram in the Purba Medinipur district, around 130 km away. The Election Commission of India (ECI) sought a report from the state police on the alleged attack on Banerjee.

"Many people don't want her to campaign for the elections. They want her to be removed from their

path. That is why she has been attacked by goons. People will give a befitting reply," state minister and senior TMC leader Subrata Mukherjee said.

The BJP alleged that Banerjee was trying to turn a "simple accident" into a "pre-planned conspiracy", and demanded a CBI investigation.

"It can happen that she met with an accident but to claim that she was deliberately pushed is not acceptable. She has a lot of security personnel guarding her round the clock," BJP's national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya said.

"Such tactics to gain sympathy are unacceptable. I think the matter should be handed over to the CBI for investigation," he added. State Congress president Adhir Chowdhury said such "tactics to gain sympathy" would not work this time.

## 'Pak running many terror training camps in PoK'



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 10:** Pakistan is running many terrorist training camps in occupied Kashmir and using them to push terrorists into Indian territories, the government said in the Parliament Wednesday.

Replying to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister of State for Home, G. Kishan Reddy, said the government has consistently pressed Pakistan to put an end to cross-border infiltration of terrorists and dismantle the infrastructure supporting terrorism on a permanent basis.

"According to reports, there are several terrorist training camps in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK), which are used for training and subsequently infiltrating trained militants and terrorists into Jammu and Kashmir for carrying out terrorist activities. Some of these training camps are still active, which are imparting training to the militants," he said.

Reddy added that the government has repeatedly raised the issue of Pakistan's continued support to cross-border terrorism and terrorist infiltration in bilateral, regional and multilateral fora. To destroy one such terror camp, India had carried out the Balakot air strike two years ago.

On February 26, 2019, at around 3.30 a.m., 12 Mirage 2000 fighter jets crossed the Line of Control (LoC) and destroyed a Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terror camp in Balakot.

The Balakot airstrike demonstrated India's prowess to retaliate to Pakistan's sinister intentions. Codenamed as 'Operation Bandar', the air strike was conducted by the seventh and ninth squadrons of the Indian Air Force.

# TIRATH SINGH RAWAT IS NEW U'KHAND CM



Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya administering the oath to new Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat at Raj Bhawan, in Dehradun uni photo

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Dehradun, March 10:** BJP MP from Pauri Garhwal, Tirath Singh Rawat was sworn-in on Wednesday as the new Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, a day after the resignation by Trivendra Singh Rawat.

Governor Baby Rani Maurya administered the oath of office to the new Chief Minister at the Raj Bhawan in Dehradun.

"Congratulations to Tirath Singh Rawat on taking oath as the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand. He brings with him vast administrative and organisational ex-

perience. I am confident that under his leadership the state will continue to scale new heights of progress," Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted minutes after the swearing in ceremony.

Earlier in the day, the BJP Legislative Party took the call to appoint the new Chief Minister.

The outgoing Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat made the announcement of his successor post the meeting.

Union Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', MPs Ajay Bhatt, Mala Rajya Lakshmi and Naresh Bansal and BJP National General Secretary and state in-charge Dushyant Gautam were present at the meeting.

The meeting was called following the resignation by Trivendra Singh Rawat on Tuesday following the direction by the BJP's central leadership after three days of turmoil as several party MLAs expressed their unhappiness over the functioning of the former Chief Minister.

## FESTIVE FERVOUR



A worker is cleaning the idol of Lord Shiva on the eve of Maha Shivratri at Vijay Nagar Shiv Mandir in Jabalpur UNI PHOTO

## Bill passed to regularise unauthorised colonies in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 10:** Parliament Wednesday passed the National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second (Amendment) Bill, 2021, to regularise unauthorised colonies.

While Rajya Sabha had passed the bill February 9 in the first leg of the Budget Session, Lok Sabha passed it Wednesday amid Opposition ruckus over farm laws.

Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri said in Lok Sabha that the bill would give protection to unauthorised colonies from sealing till December 31, 2023.

"There is a public perception that the issue of unauthorised colonies has been delayed by some political parties when they were in office," Puri said while replying to a debate on the bill.

The House later passed the bill by a voice vote. Puri said the problem of unauthorised colonies predates the assumption of office by the Narendra Modi dispensation in 2014, but no previous government took this issue up with any degree of seriousness.

"In 1947, 17 per cent of India's population lived in cities. The population of Delhi was 8 lakh at that time.... The 1951 census showed Delhi's population at 22 lakh. The 2011 census showed Delhi's population at 1.6 crore.

There will be another census this year and I expect the population of Delhi to be close to 2 crore, if not higher," Puri said.

It is a matter of great shame that between 2006 when the process of regularisation started and 2014, all the governments which were in power in the city of Delhi did nothing, Puri said and sought cooperation from parties to bring relief to the citizens of Delhi.

## 'Pfizer wants to make vax in India'

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 10:** Pfizer Inc has told the government it wants to produce its coronavirus vaccine locally if assured of faster regulatory clearance and freedom on pricing and exports, two sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

The US company pulled an application last month seeking emergency approval for its product in India after the drug regulator declined its request to skip a small local safety trial. That has kept its vaccine, developed with Germany's BioNTech SE, out of one of the world's biggest drug markets. Pfizer was the first company to apply for emergency use authorisation in India, proposing to import doses from its US and European facilities instead of producing locally. "US companies want to produce vaccines in India under joint ventures," said one of



the sources, citing Pfizer and fellow US drugmaker Moderna Inc.

"They want faster approvals for clinical trials and emergency authorisation use. They fear the government will introduce price control policies."

Another source confirmed Pfizer was interested in manufacturing in India but Reuters could not find a second confirmation on Moderna.

The companies did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The health ministry directed Reuters to the foreign ministry, which did not immediately

respond to emailed queries.

While withdrawing its application in early February, Pfizer said it would again seek emergency use approval to launch its COVID-19 vaccine in India, potentially a market of 1.35 billion people, and would provide more data as it becomes available.

On the government's demand to manufacture in India, the company earlier told Reuters: "Once the pandemic supply phase is over and we enter a phase of regular supplies, Pfizer will evaluate all additional opportunities available."

The Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine maker, is already bulk-manufacturing the Oxford University/AstraZeneca product and plans to start producing the Novavax Inc shot from next month.

The government has not allowed it to sell on the higher-priced private market, however, and is also controlling exports.

# Hackers hit Indians with ransomware supporting farmers

THE RANSOMWARE IS DESIGNED TO TARGET ENTITIES CONNECTED WITH FARMERS' PROTESTS IN INDIA, WITH THE HACKER GROUP TITLED KHALSA CYBER FAUJ REPORTED TO BE LEADING THIS ATTACK IN THE COUNTRY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 10:** In a unique way to support protesting farmers in India, cyber criminals have launched a new ransomware attack in the country that does not ask for money but justice for the community, conveying a message that no data will be recovered until the demands of the farmers are met, a new report revealed Wednesday.

The ransomware is designed to target entities connected with farmers' protests in India, with the hacker group titled Khalsa Cyber Fauj reported to be leading this attack in the country.

Quick Heal Security Labs, the



threat research and response division of global cybersecurity firm Quick Heal Technologies, said it has discovered the ransomware named as "Sarbloh", which is being distributed through malicious word documents via emails, containing a political message supporting the

farmers' community.

"The latest Sarbloh ransomware that appears to be working in the favour of farmers without any monetary gains is a testimony to their growing attack abilities," said Himanshu Dubey, Director, Quick Heal Security Labs.

Surprisingly, threat actors through this new attack technique are infecting user devices by encrypting their files without asking for a ransom, which is usually the key objective of any ransomware.

"Khalsa Cyber Fauj is using military-grade encryption on system files to turn them useless," the company mentioned.

The news came as apart from intensifying the agitation at Delhi's borders, farmers are now trying to strengthen the stir against the Union farm laws on social media platforms as well.

Farmers have been protesting against the various newly enacted Union farm laws since November

26, 2020, at various borders of the national Capital.

"Threat actors have constantly demonstrated innovation through their evolving attack strategies. We will continue to analyze the threat environment and deploy safety measures for our users," said Dubey.

The company advised users not to download any attachment that comes from unknown emails and messages.

"Avoid clicking on unverified links and those found in spam email. Besides, practice backing up the data so that it can be recovered in case of compromise, and keep up dating antivirus solutions to stay protected," the company said.



of the day quote

We have revived and started many plans. Projects such as expressways, defence corridors and Jal Jeevan Mission will take Bundelkhand to new heights



YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CHIEF MINISTER

India shares a land and maritime border with Myanmar and has direct stakes in the maintenance of peace and stability in the country. As part of our 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' policies, India has supported socio-economic development in Myanmar and facilitated the process of democratic transition in the country



V MURALEEDHARAN | MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

She (Banerjee) is an outsider in Nandigram. She does not even cast her vote here. I am not only the 'bhoomiputra' (son of the soil of Nandigram), but also a regular voter of the area. I have been with the people of this place for several years unlike Banerjee, who comes here only during polls



SUVENDU ADHIKARI | BJP LEADER

SHORT TAKES

FIR registered in Delkar's death case

**Mumbai:** Mumbai Police have registered an FIR on charge of abetment to suicide in connection with the death of Lok Sabha member Mohan Delkar, a senior police official said Wednesday. Delkar (58), a seven-term MP from Dadra and Nagar Haveli Union Territory, was found dead in a hotel in Marine Drive area of south Mumbai February 22. The FIR was registered Tuesday after Delkar's family members visited the Marine Drive police station and lodged a complaint, the official said.

Girl killed in leopard attack

**Amreli:** A three-year-old girl was mauled to death by a leopard at a village in Gujarat's Amreli district, a forest official said Wednesday. The incident took place around 9.30 pm Tuesday in Hemal village under Jafrabad taluka when the girl and some other children were playing outside their houses. A leopard suddenly pounced upon the girl and dragged her away, range forest officer, Jafrabad, G L Vaghela said.

Biker shoots man

**New Delhi:** A contractual employee working with BSES as a driver was critically injured after a biker fired at him in South Delhi's Andrews Ganj area Wednesday morning. The victim has sustained a bullet injury in the neck and is admitted to the All India Institute Of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), where his condition is said to be critical.

Ex Naxal held

**Balrampur:** A former Naxal commander and his associate were arrested for allegedly trying to extort ₹10 lakh from a woman sarpanch in Chhattisgarh's Balrampur district, police said Wednesday. Praveen Khess alias Nepali, a former 'zonal commander' of the rebels, was held from his village Mainpat in neighbouring Surguja district while his aide Sanjay Lohar was arrested from Rajpur police station area of Balrampur, police said.

Constable shot

**New Delhi:** A Delhi Police constable Wednesday suffered bullet injury while chasing two men in south Delhi's Defence Colony area, officials said. The incident took place around 9 am, they said.

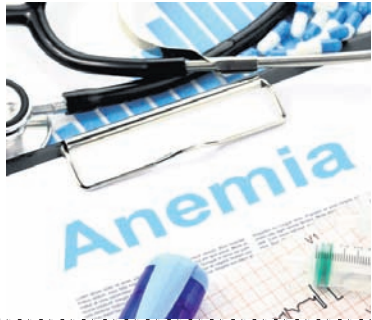


I want to tell all senior citizens in Delhi that I will send you to Ram temple in Ayodhya once the construction work is completed

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

NOBLE STEP

The Gurugram district administration will soon launch a drive to free women from anemia and protect children from malnutrition. Under this project, the Gurugram district administration will conduct a survey to check the weight and height of women and children



THE DAREDEVILS



Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh and former Navy Chief Admiral (retd.) VS Shekhawat and other officers during the commissioning of Navy's third stealth Scorpene class Submarine INS Karanj, at Mumbai dockyard

PTI PHOTO

Khattar govt wins trust vote

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, March 10:** The Manohar Lal Khattar-led BJP-JJP government Wednesday won a trust vote that was moved by the main opposition Congress on the issue of the three central farm laws, less than one-and-a-half-years after the coalition came to power.

While 55 members were opposed to the no-confidence motion, 32 members, comprising all 30 Congress MLAs, supported it.

The no-confidence motion debate was taken up in the Assembly for over six hours. MLAs pondered over the pros and cons of the farm laws, with Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda claiming the ruling dispensation has lost



people's trust. Showing his maturity and grace to convince the opposition that the government was not against the farmers, Leader of the House and Chief Minister Khattar categorically cleared the air saying the farm laws would not be repealed at any cost though if after the laws were enforced and the farmers encountered losses, then

his government will do everything in its power to help them.

Khattar said "if the MSP (minimum support price) of crops will come to end with the execution of laws, both Punjab and Haryana would be the worst losers".

He informed the House that the government was ready to bring amendments in the MSP law.

"The MSP and the 'mandi' system will remain in the state. We have been purchasing 10 crops on the MSP," Khattar said.

Blaming the Opposition for provoking farmers and making them think that if the laws are implemented, they will lose their land and income, he said, "You are forcing the farmers to think this way. Stop doing this."

HIREN CASE

POLICE OFFICER SACHIN VAZE REMOVED FROM CRIME BRANCH

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, March 10:** A day after Vimla M. Hiren, the widow of slain Thane businessman Mansukh Hiren pointed an accusing finger at Mumbai Crime Branch officer Sachin Vaze, the government has transferred him, Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said here Wednesday.

"Assistant Police Inspector (API) Vaze is currently serving with the Crime Branch...We have decided to remove him from there to another department," Deshmukh said.

However, Bharatiya Janata Party's Leader of Opposition (Council) Pravin Darekar said this was not enough and reiterated the demand to immediately suspend and arrest Vaze - attached to the elite Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) of Crime Branch.

The development came a day after Vimla Hiren's statement to the Anti Terrorism Squad on March 7 said: "I suspect (API) Vaze must have murdered my husband" and demanded an investigation."

Hiren's SUV Scorpio, with 20 gelatin sticks and a purported typewritten threat note, was found abandoned near Antilia, the multi-storied residence of Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani.

Announcing Vaze's transfer, Deshmukh urged the Opposition that if they have any documents pertaining to the case, they can submit it to the government or the ATS, which is now probing the Hiren case.

On Tuesday, the Centre abruptly transferred the SUV case to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), but the state ATS will probe the businessman's death case.

Gangrape survivor's father dies 'in accident'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kanpur (UP), March 10:** The father of a 13-year-old rape survivor was killed Wednesday in a road accident outside a health centre in Kanpur's Ghatampur area, where the girl was taken for a medical examination, police said.

Interacting with media persons, the aggrieved family claimed that the girl's father was killed in a planned manner. The prime accused in the rape case, Golu Yadav, son of a police sub-inspector, was arrested earlier and efforts were underway to nab his brother Saurabh and friend Deepu, Kanpur Deputy IG Preetinder Singh said. While the medical examination of the rape survivor was going on at the community health centre (CHC) in Ghatampur, her father went out for a cup of tea and he was hit by a truck, Singh said.

The minor's father was taken to Lala Lajpat Rai (LLR) hospital, where he succumbed to the injuries. An FIR has been registered under relevant sections of the IPC and the mat-

Teen raped by uncle

A 15-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her uncle and left in an unconscious state in a village in Mohanganj area here, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place on March 8 when the girl was supposed to be taken by her uncle to her maternal aunt's place but instead was escorted to an orchard where she was raped by him, the victim's mother alleged in the FIR.

ter is being probed, the DIG said.

Five police teams, including surveillance personnel, have been formed to nab Saurabh and Deepu at the earliest, Singh said. According to the police, the 13-year-old girl was allegedly raped by Golu and Deepu in Sajeti area here Monday.

The class 8 student had gone out to collect fodder for cattle Monday when she was abducted by the duo and taken to a secluded place where she was allegedly raped. Saurabh had allegedly threatened the minor of dire consequences if she told anyone about the incident, the police said.

'33% sitting TN MLAs have criminal cases against them'

Out of the total sitting MLAs from the poll-bound state, 38 (19 per cent) MLAs have serious criminal cases against them

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 10:** Thirty-three per cent of the sitting MLAs in Tamil Nadu - 68 out of the 204 - have declared criminal cases against them, according to a report by poll rights group ADR (Association for Democratic Reforms).

Serious criminal cases are non-bailable offences with over five years of imprisonment. The report also said that 157 (77 per cent) Members of the Legislative Assembly have declared their financial assets to be worth crores.

About 89 (44 per cent) MLAs have educational qualification between fifth standard pass and 12th standard pass while 110 (54 per



cent) are graduates and above. Three MLAs are diploma holders, it stated.

The report said 78 (38 per cent) MLAs are aged between 25 and 50.

While 125 (61 per cent) MLAs are between 51 and 70 years, one MLA is 77-years-old. Out of the 204, only 17 (8 per cent) MLAs are women.

that it reduces stress and anxiety and one gets addicted to the immediate false good feeling," Sahil Kohli, Consultant, Neurology, Narayana Hospital, Gurugram, told IANS.

"However, over the long term nicotine dependence leads to mental illnesses including attention disorders, anxiety disorders and depression which becomes even worse when a dependent person tries to quit smoking," said Kohli, on the occasion of No Smoking Day, which is observed March 10.

A study, published in the journal Cochrane Library, showed that people who stopped smoking for at least 6 weeks experienced less depression, anxiety and stress than people who continued to smoke.

The researchers, including



Representative image

Quit smoking for better mental health: Experts

THE HEALTH EXPERTS EMPHASIZED THAT PEOPLE THINK SMOKING HELPS IN RELIEVING STRESS AND ANXIETY. HOWEVER, WHAT THEY DO NOT KNOW IS THAT THE PRESENCE OF NICOTINE IN CIGARETTES CAN CAUSE ANXIETY SYMPTOMS OR MAKE THEM WORSE

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 10:** Smoking cigarettes is not merely just associated with different types of cancers or heart diseases but it can also affect your mental health, experts warned Wednesday.

The health experts emphasized that people think smoking helps in relieving stress and anxiety. However, what they do not know is that the presence of nicotine in cigarettes can cause anxiety symptoms or make them worse.

"Research has shown that smoking initially gives a sense of relaxation and seems to relieve anxiety which is due to nicotine, which creates an immediate sense of relaxation so people smoke in the belief

Gemma Taylor from the University of Bath, in the study that involved 170,000 participants also found that people who quit smoking also experienced more positive feelings and better psychological wellbeing. "From our evidence we see that the link between smoking cessation and mood seem to be similar in a range of people and most crucially, there is no evidence that people with mental health conditions will experience a worsening of their health if they stop smoking," Taylor said. Smoking is the world's leading cause of preventable illness and death. However, some people believe that quitting might exacerbate mental health problems.

"Quitting smoking potentially saves one from stroke, associated

heart health issues and anxiety, which tend to get severe with mental health problems," said Rajul Aggrawal, Senior Consultant, Neurologist, Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, New Delhi.

As per a World Health Organization (WHO) report released in October 2020, there are approximately 120 million smokers in India that account for 12 per cent of the world's total smoking population.

The report stated that each year, over 1 million people die in India due to the consumption of tobacco. Of the total Indian smoking population, 70 per cent of the adult males in India smoke while the number of adult female smokers is between 13 to 15 per cent.



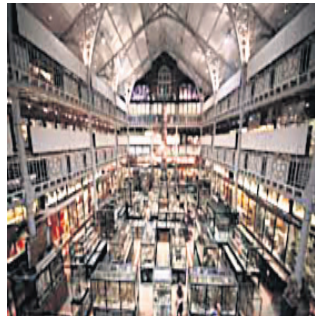


“It’s a remarkable, historic, transformative piece of legislation which goes a very long way to crushing the virus and solving our economic crisis

NANCY PELOSI | SPEAKER, US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## JEWISH MUSEUM REOPENS

Tel Aviv’s newly revamped Museum of the Jewish People attempts the ambitious undertaking of bringing almost 3,000 years of Jewish history and tradition under a single roof. The museum, reopened to visitors this week after more than a decade



## of the day quote

“I went from room to room, and literally, children that in any other place in the world would be fine, they might get a little sick but they’d get recovered, but not here in Yemen. This is hell. It’s the worst place on earth. And it’s entirely man-made



DAVID BEASLEY | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

“Beijing’s interference in the succession of the Panchen Lama more than 25 years ago, by disappearing the Panchen Lama as a child and attempting to replace him with a PRC government-chosen successor, it remains an outrageous abuse of religious freedom



NED PRICE | US STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESPERSON

“If you look at the Sustainable Development Goals or before that the Millennium Development Goals, there is a clear global compact that woman empowerment is a key component of socio-economic development today



RANDHIR JAISWAL | INDIA’S CONSUL GENERAL IN NEW YORK

## SHORT TAKES

### Capitol troop stay extended

**Washington:** The Pentagon has announced that the deployment period of the nearly 2,300 National Guard troops at the US Capitol has been extended till May 23. In a statement issued Tuesday, Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said that the extension was approved by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. The deployment period was set to end this week. “Nearly 2,300 National Guard personnel will continue the support mission. This represents a reduction of nearly 50 per cent of the current support force,” Kirby said in the statement.

### Russia to make vax in Italy

**Milan:** Russia has signed a deal to produce its Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine in Italy, the first contract in the European Union, the Italian Russian Chamber of Commerce announced Tuesday. The deal was signed with Adienne Srl, the Italian subsidiary of a Swiss-based pharmaceutical company, and Kirill Dmitriev, CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund.

### Portugal Prez begins 2nd term

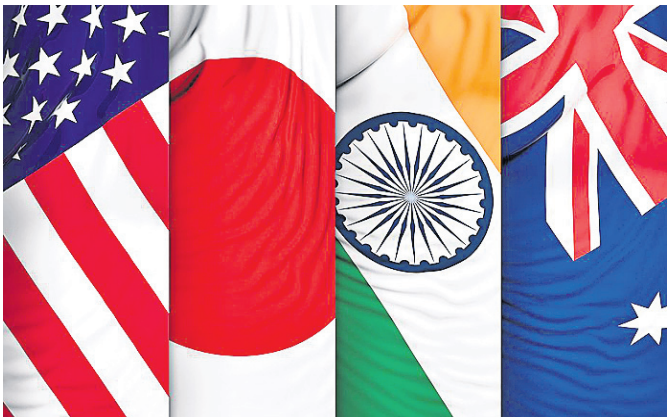
**Lisbon:** Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa has started his second term as head of state, promising “good use of European funds, with good management” of financial resources to help the country’s post-pandemic recovery.

### Pak to jab the elderly

**Islamabad:** Pakistan Wednesday began vaccinating elderly people aged 60 years and above against the novel coronavirus, according to Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Faisal Sultan. The group of elderly people have been planned to receive the vaccine in the second phase of a nationwide vaccination drive. Pakistan started its Covid-19 vaccination drive February after the arrival of Chinese vaccine doses, with the frontline health workers given the priority for inoculation.

# Quad to hold 1st summit

Friday’s summit will be the first time that the Quad is meeting at the top leadership level



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, March 10:** The top leaders of the US, India, Australia and Japan will hold their first summit under the framework of the Quadrilateral coalition Friday to discuss a range of issues facing the international community, the White House has announced, amidst growing global concerns over China’s increasing assertiveness in the strategic Indo-Pacific region.

Announcing the virtual summit to be held March 12, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that US President Joe Biden will discuss a variety of global issues ranging from COVID-19 challenge, economic crisis and climate change during the meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga. Formed in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami and formalised

in 2007, the Quad has met regularly at the working and foreign minister level. Friday’s summit will be the first time that the Quad is meeting at the top leadership level, Psaki told reporters at her daily news conference Tuesday.

That President Biden has made this one of his earliest multilateral engagements speaks to the importance we place on close cooperation with our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific, she said.

A range of issues, of course, we expect to be discussed, I should say, facing the global community from the threat of COVID to economic cooperation and, of course, to the climate crisis, she said.

Psaki described India, Australia and Japan as America’s key partners. At a separate news conference, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said that the summit will showcase the Quad’s ability to pool capabilities and build

habits of cooperation to address some of those urgent challenges they face.

Now, at the same time, I would just note that the Quad is not about any single challenge. It’s not about any single competitor. This is an entity forged and formed because we share common interests... Maritime security is, of course, an important one, but our shared interests go well beyond that.

And I think you will see reflected in the agenda the breadth of those shared interests in the aftermath of the Quad meeting, he said in response to a question.

Quad members are uniquely positioned to help lead the world out of the deep crises that we’ve spoken about recently – and, of course, that includes COVID-19 – and towards the more positive vision that we all seek. And it’s a vision that we in large part share with our fellow Quad counterparts, he said.

The Quad is a grouping with important friends and allies of the United States, and it’s a grouping that is predicated on shared interests, Price said.

Asserting that this shows the administration’s commitment to the Indo-Pacific, he said it is a region that holds tremendous promise for the US, also tremendous challenges. The four Quad member countries have been highlighting their resolve to uphold a rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific. However, Price refrained from answering questions on South Korea joining the Quad.

# Be prepared to face ‘complex and difficult’ situations: Xi tells PLA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Beijing, March 10:** Chinese President Xi Jinping has told the country’s military that it must be prepared to respond to a variety of “complex and difficult” situations at any time, and to resolutely safeguard national sovereignty. Xi, who heads the ruling Communist Party and the military made the remarks at a panel discussion attended by representatives of the armed forces during the annual Parliament session in Beijing Tuesday. “The current security situation of our country is largely unstable and uncertain,” Xi said.

“The entire military must coordinate the relationship between capacity building and combat readiness, be prepared to respond to a variety of complex and difficult situations at any time, resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security

and development interests, and provide strong support for the comprehensive construction of a modern socialist state,” he said.

Xi spoke to the military delegates of the National People’s Congress, (NPC) which is due to end its six-day annual session Thursday.

There are 288 national legislators from the armed forces, the largest group of lawmakers in the NPC which has over 2,000 members. The Parliament session is taking place in the backdrop of China’s decision to pull back its troops from the contentious area of Pangong Lake area in eastern Ladakh region in a synchronised withdrawal of soldiers by the Indian Army. India has told China that the disengagement of troops at all friction points is necessary to bring peace and tranquillity on the border and for the development of bilateral relations.

**The current security situation of our country is largely unstable and uncertain**  
XI JINPING | PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

# LAKE PLACID



An aerial view shows rotten trees in a toxic lake, which is an ash dam composed of the ash produced from burning coal and the wastewater discharged from the power plant near Yatagan in Mugla province, Turkey

REUTERS

# Russia slows down Twitter

REUTERS

**Moscow, March 10:** Russia said Wednesday it was slowing down the speed of Twitter in retaliation for its alleged failure to remove banned content, and threatened a total block if the US platform did not comply with its deletion demands.

The move, which escalates a growing stand-off between Moscow and US social media firms, comes weeks after Russian authorities accused Twitter and others of failing to delete posts it said illegally urged children to take part in anti-Kremlin protests.

Twitter did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Russia has traditionally taken a more hands-off role in policing the internet than neighbouring China. But as domestic political tensions have risen this year over the arrest and jailing of Kremlin critic



Alexei Navalny - which triggered nationwide protests - it has signalled a tougher line.

Roskomnadzor, the state communications regulator, said in a statement that as of Wednesday there were more than 3,000 posts containing illegal content on Twitter, which it accused of ignoring its deletion requests for years.

Twitter was already under pressure in Russia after it was named as one of five social media platforms being sued for allegedly failing to delete posts urging children to take part in illegal protests, the Interfax news agency cited a Moscow court as saying Tuesday.

## Yemen urges int'l probe into migrant centre fire

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Sanaa, March 10:** Yemen’s government has called for an international investigation into a deadly fire at a migrant detention facility in capital Sanaa that claimed the lives of at least 60 people.

According to a statement released by the state-run Saba News Agency Tuesday, Information Minister Muammar Iryani strongly condemned “the horrific crime committed in a detention centre for the African immigrants”.



He said that “the incident occurred after launching a crackdown campaign by the Houthis militia that arrested African migrants from the city’s streets and public markets, offering them the choice of joining the fighting or facing imprisonment and deportation,” Xinhua news agency reported citing the Saba statement.

# China, Russia to build lunar research station

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Beijing, March 10:** China and Russia said they will build a lunar research station, possibly on the moon’s surface, marking the start of a new era in space cooperation between the two countries.

A statement posted on the website of the China National Space Administration Wednesday said the International Lunar Research Station would also be open to use by other countries, but gave no timeline for its construction.

It described the project as a “comprehensive scientific experiment base with the capability of long-term autonomous operation.” The station would be “built on the lunar surface and/or on the lunar orbit that will carry out scientific research activities such as the lunar exploration and utilisation, lunar-based observation, basic scientific experiment and technical verification,” the statement said.

It said a memorandum of understanding on the project was signed Tuesday by Zhang Kejian, administrator of the China National Space



Administration, and Russian space agency Roscosmos chief Dmitry Rogozin.

Russia and China will “adhere to the principle of co-consultation, joint construction and shared benefits, facilitate extensive cooperation in the ILRS, open to all interested countries and international partners, strengthen scientific research exchanges, and promote humanity’s exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purpose,” the Chinese statement said.

Russia is a participant in the International Space Station but its space programme has been somewhat eclipsed by those of China, the US, India and others. China has planned four crewed missions this year to work on its first permanent orbiting space station, the core module of which could be launched as soon as next month.

# Pope seeks answers over weapons sales post Iraq trip

FRANCIS HAS SAID IN THE PAST THAT WEAPONS MANUFACTURERS AND TRAFFICKERS WOULD HAVE TO ANSWER TO GOD ONE DAY

REUTERS

**Vatican City, March 10:** Pope Francis condemned weapons manufacturers and traffickers for selling arms to “terrorists” in comments Wednesday reflecting on his recent trip to Iraq.

He said he was grateful to have been able to make a visit that eluded his predecessors and described it as a “sign of hope after years of war and terrorism and during a harsh pandemic” for both Christians and Muslims.

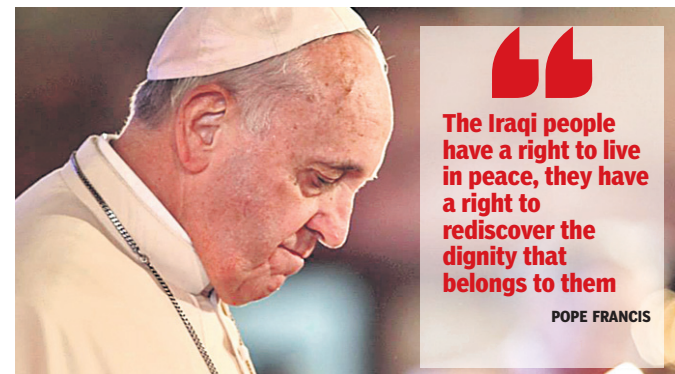
“The Iraqi people have a right to live in peace, they have a right to rediscover the dignity that belongs

to them,” he said in his weekly Vatican audience, held online due to COVID-19.

Iraq suffers from chronic mismanagement, corruption and a steady level of violence often linked to rivalry between Iran and the United States in the region 18 years after the US invasion of Iraq.

The 84-year-old pope saw ruins of homes and churches in the northern city of Mosul Sunday that was occupied by Islamic State from 2014 to 2017.

“And I asked myself (during the trip), who sold the weapons to the terrorists, who sells weapons to terrorists today who are carrying out



“The Iraqi people have a right to live in peace, they have a right to rediscover the dignity that belongs to them

POPE FRANCIS

massacres elsewhere, for example, in Africa,” he said, departing from his prepared address. “It is a ques-

tion that I would like someone to answer.”

Francis has said in the past that

weapons manufacturers and traffickers would have to answer to God one day.

Calling for fraternity throughout the world, he described his meeting Saturday in the holy city of Najaf with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, one of the most influential figures in Shi’ite Islam, both within Iraq and beyond, “unforgettable”.

He said he felt compelled to make the visit to Iraq, which saw the tightest security ever for a papal trip, to be close to “that martyred people, that martyred Church”.

Iraq’s Christian community, one of the oldest in the world, fell to

about 300,000 from about 1.5 million before the US invasion and the Islamist militant violence that followed. Hours after the pope left Monday, Iraq’s Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi urged rival political groups to use dialogue to solve their differences, a move he said would reflect the “love and tolerance” shown by the pope.

Many in Iraq hope the papal visit will garner more international support for Kadhimi’s government to handle sensitive crises, including reigning in Iran-backed militias whose power and influence Kadhimi has sought to curb since taking office May 2020.



## of the day quote

The banking industry is moving towards a more collaborative and open environment while focusing on data protection and minimising systemic risks. The Covid pandemic has placed banks under extreme stress as revenue sources plummet and credit risks rise exponentially

**SANJAY AGGARWAL** | PRESIDENT, PHD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

Indian Railways has planned for redevelopment of stations by leveraging real estate potential of land that can be spared and air space in and around the stations

**PIYUSH GOYAL** | RAILWAY MINISTER

Digital banking or Digital is here to stay and is the future but it is equally important to safeguard the interests of all stakeholders

**RAVINDRA PANDEY** | DEPUTY MD AND CDO, STATE BANK OF INDIA

## SHORT TAKES

### BlackOpal forays into NBFC sector

**New Delhi:** Asset management firm BlackOpal Wednesday announced its foray into the non-banking finance lending space and will mainly focus on financing stuck projects in the real estate sector. The company has received license from the RBI to start NBFC operations, which will be carried out under a special purpose vehicle: BlackOpal Financial Services Pvt Ltd. BlackOpal has already raised \$1.5 million by way of minority stake dilution, and plans to use 50% of the funds in retail segment and the rest in real estate projects.

### Cartier roped in as Chairperson

**New Delhi:** Nissan Motor Company Wednesday said it has appointed Guillaume Cartier as the new Chairperson for Africa, Middle East, India, Europe and Oceania (AMIEO) region. Effective April 1, Cartier will lead all Nissan operations in the region, which covers more than 140 markets across four continents with a population of around 3.8 billion people, representing more than 30% of global vehicle sales, the Japanese auto major said.

### FinMin releases final instalment

**New Delhi:** The Finance Ministry Wednesday released the 12th and final monthly instalment of revenue deficit grant of ₹6,194 crore to the states. With the release of this instalment, a total amount of ₹74,340 crore has been released to eligible states as Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant in the current financial year, the ministry said in a statement. The Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grants are released in monthly instalments as per the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission.

### IEX inks share sale pacts in IGX

**New Delhi:** The Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) Thursday said that it has inked two separate share purchase agreements to sell 31% of its stake in its subsidiary Indian Gas Exchange (IGX). The IEX will sell 26% stake in IGX to NSE Investments Ltd and 5% equity to ONGC. "Indian Energy Exchange Ltd has executed 2 separate share purchase and shareholders agreements, for sale of equity shares held by the company in its subsidiary, namely, Indian Gas Exchange Limited," according to a BSE filing.



We are looking at enhancing connectivity to the Northeast now. Special emphasis is on the routes to Arunachal Pradesh. The hiring of pilots, from defence forces on deputation and induction of new aircraft in the fleet are being carried out

**HARPREET A DE SINGH** | CEO, ALLIANCE AIR

## MSME SECTOR GETS A BOOST

Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Nitin Gadkari Wednesday inaugurated two technology centres at Visakhapatnam and Bhopal. He also inaugurated three extension centres of big technological centres and seven mobile Udyam Express



# India's e-Comm market to hit \$111bn by 2024

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, March 10:** India's e-commerce market is expected to increase by 84% by 2024 to \$111 billion, according to a new report from global financial technology company FIS Wednesday. The growth will be driven by mobile shopping, which is projected to grow 21% annually over the next four years, said the report. The research found that global trends in digital commerce accelerated under the pandemic.

Countries including India have seen a shift in consumer behaviour caused by Covid-19, and new payment trends are shown to be on the rise. "The Indian e-commerce industry has witnessed a huge upsurge



## ON THE RISE

The research found that global trends in digital commerce accelerated under the pandemic

Countries including India have seen a shift in consumer behaviour caused by Covid-19, and new payment trends are shown to be on the rise

Digital wallets (40%) followed by credit card (15%) and debit card (15%) were the most popular payment methods online in 2020

The report projects digital wallets will overtake cash as the most popular in-store payment method by 2024

due to Covid-19 and there is substantial room for future growth," Phil Pomford, Managing Director of Asia Pacific, Worldpay from FIS, said in a statement. "e-Commerce capability is no

longer limited to just traditional websites, and physical retail has blended with the digital world."

The "2021 Global Payments Report by Worldpay from FIS" examined current and future pay-

ments trends across 41 countries. In India, "buy now, pay later" is the fastest growing online payment method.

Currently only 3% of the market, based on analysis in the report, is

# Cabinet clears amendments to Insurance Act for raising FDI to 74%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 10:** The Union Cabinet Wednesday gave its nod for amendments in the Insurance Act, paving way for 74% foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sector. Currently, the permissible FDI limit in the life and general insurance stands at 49% with ownership and management control with Indian.

According to sources, the Cabinet in its meeting has approval for amendments in the Insurance Act, 1938.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Budget 2021-22 said, "I propose to amend the Insurance Act, 1938 to increase the permissible FDI limit from 49% to 74% in insurance companies and allow foreign ownership and control with safeguards."

Under the new structure, the majority of directors on the board and key management persons would be resident Indians, with at least 50% of directors being independent di-



Under the new structure, the majority of directors on the board and key management persons would be resident Indians, with at least 50% of directors being independent directors

rectors, and specified percentage of profits being retained as a general reserve.

# SBI bags 'Best Performing Bank' award for 2020-21

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** State Bank of India (SBI) was adjudged as the Best Performing Bank for the year 2020-21 and was given Award of Excellence for Recognition of outstanding performance in Implementation of SHG Bank Credit Linkage Programme and Mission Shakti Loan-State Interest Subvention Programme for the year 2020-21.

SBI, during the current FY 2020-21 has already credit linked 45753 SHGs and the Bank is confident of crossing ₹50,000-mark before March 31, 2021. The Bank has successfully disbursed ₹777 cr this year to eligible SHGs. In addition, it also sanctioned Covid Emergency Loans of ₹.27 cr to 4,880 SHGs.

Despite Covid-19 situation, all the staff at SBI ensured to provide adequate credit supply to SHGs. Door step visits by officials of SBI, organising Loan distribution camps in presence of District Magistrates and other important government functionaries ensured timely disbursements to SHGs in Khorda, Jagatsingpur, Kalahandi, Sundergarh, Bolangir, Keonjhar,



Kondhamal, Malkangiri, Nowrangpur, Rayagada, Gajapati, Puri, Nayagarh, Bargarh, Sonepur.

The Bank conducted 17 Mega SHG Camps and 723 Branch wise SHG camps to reach out to the SHGs for credit linking them to support their business activities.

In the grand function arranged at Lok Seva Bhawan, Bhubaneswar by Women, Child Development and Mission Shakti Department, in token of the genuine efforts by the Bank and its officials, State Bank of India was awarded with the Award of Excellence and Certificate. RumaDey, the Chief General Manager (CGM) of State Bank of India, Bhubaneswar Circle received the same from Smt.TukuniSahu, Hon'ble Minister for Women, Child Development and Mission Shakti in the presence of Chief Minister Naveen Pattnaik, Director, Mission Shakti, Sujata Kartikeyan and other important Government functionaries.

## February PV sales rise over 17% Y-o-Y

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 10:** Low interest rates along with pent-up demand accelerated domestic passenger vehicle sales in February on both year-on-year and sequential basis.

Accordingly, sales of passenger vehicles increased by 17.92% in February 2021, according to data from the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) released Wednesday.



Overall, a total of around 281,380 passenger vehicles were sold last month compared to over 238,622 units during the same period of 2020. In January 2021, 276,554 units of passenger vehicles were sold.

The category includes sub-segments of cars, utility vehicles and vans. A total of 155,128 passenger cars were sold in the domestic market up 4.43% from an off-take of 148,541 units sold during the like period of 2020.

## PANDEMIC IMPACT

# Housing sales likely to drop 34% in FY21: Ind-Ra

The recovery will likely be dominated by Grade I players, whose sales are likely to grow by 49% Y-o-Y in FY22, after a 14% Y-o-Y increase in FY21, finds the research

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 10:** Housing sales in volume terms is likely to decline 34% this fiscal because of the Covid-19 pandemic but demand is expected to rise in 2021-22 from a weak base, according to India Ratings and Research. The agency expects the residential real estate sector to stage a sharp K-shaped recovery in the next financial year.

"The overall floor space sold is likely to increase by 30% Y-o-Y (year-on-year) in FY22 after a 34% Y-o-Y decline in FY21," it said in a statement. The agency emphasised that the overall sales in FY22 could still be around 14% below FY20 level.

The total residential floor space sold in India remained largely stagnant at 326 million sq ft in 2019-20.

The floor space sold declined 41% Y-o-Y in the first nine months of this fiscal year; the rating agency said, and expected 34% fall in the entire 2020-21.

India Ratings noted that Grade I players (large real estate firms) have managed to buck the trend. Their market share expanded to 15.6% in the first nine months of this fiscal year as they managed to report a 4.3% Y-o-Y increase in sales

projected to increase to 9% by 2024.

Digital wallets (40%) followed by credit card (15%) and debit card (15%) were the most popular payment methods online in 2020. Data in the report shows that purchases made with digital wallets are expected to increase their market share of on-line payments by 2024 to 47%.

The FIS report found that Point of Sale (POS) market in India is projected to increase by 41% between now and 2024, according to data in the report.

The most popular in-store payment method is cash at 34%, followed by digital wallets (22%) and debit card payments (20%). The report projects digital wallets will overtake cash as the most popular in-store payment method by 2024, accounting for 33% of payments.



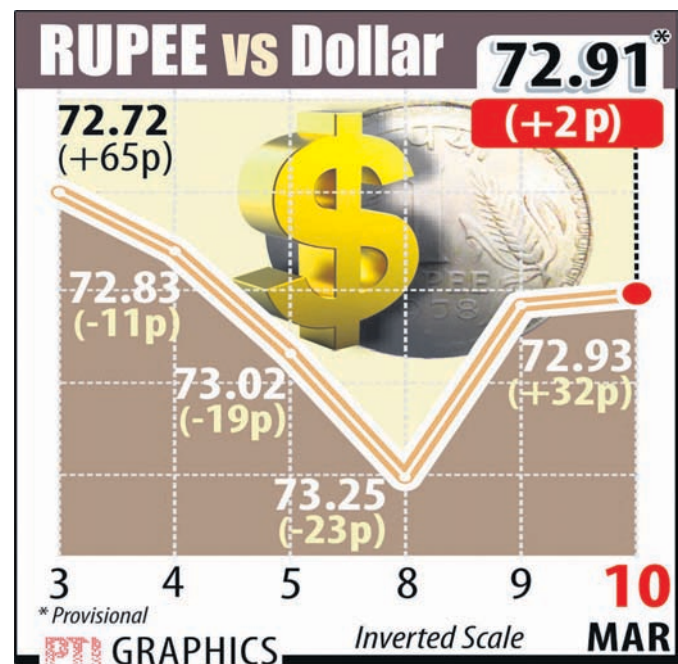
despite the pandemic.

India Rating said the recovery will likely be dominated by Grade I players, whose sales are likely to grow by 49% Y-o-Y in FY22, after a 14% Y-o-Y increase in FY21.

"India Ratings and Research expects the performance of the residential real estate sector to improve in FY22 from a weak base currently.

"Grade I players are likely to see a surge in growth from a moderately strong base, while non-Grade I players are likely to see a reversal of the sharp decline experienced in FY21," the agency said.

India Ratings said that lower interest rate on home loans is likely to improve the affordability of house ownership. India Ratings and Research is a fully-owned subsidiary of the Fitch Group.



# Goldman Sachs to invest \$10 billion over 10 years

REUTERS

**New York, March 10:** Goldman Sachs Group Inc said Wednesday it will invest \$10 billion in an initiative to support Black women over the next 10 years, focusing on areas including healthcare, job creation and education.

## SUPPORT FOR BLACK WOMEN

The bank's "One Million Black Women" initiative is a part of its commitment to impact the lives of at least one million Black women by 2030, the company said.

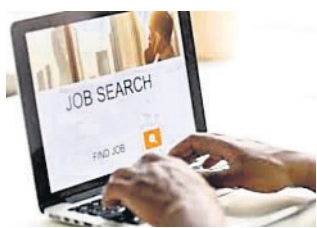
Against the backdrop of protests over the death of African-American George Floyd last year, major companies have pledged to increase diversity, donate to civil rights groups and change their policies. Goldman will also set aside an additional \$100 million over the next decade for philanthropic ventures focused on African-American women.

Reducing the earnings gap for Black women could potentially create between 1.2 million and 1.7 million jobs in the United States, the company said, citing research.

Goldman created a \$10 million fund last year to promote racial equity, and had then said it invested around \$200 million over the decade to organizations dedicated to serving communities of color.

Rosalind Brewer, chief executive officer of drugstore chain Walgreens Boots Alliance, and Lisa Jackson, vice president of environment, policy and social initiatives at Apple Inc, will sit on the advisory council of the new project.

# Job postings rise in February: Report



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 10:** Job postings went up in February, mainly led by hiring activities in FMCG, food and packaged goods sectors, according to a report. Monster.Com's Monster Employment Index showed that job postings witnessed a six per cent sequential growth in February.

The report revealed that most of the industries have shown growth with import/export (10%), FMCG, food and packaged goods (9%), and printing and packaging (9%), BPO/ITES (7%), banking/financial services and insurance (7%) and garments/textiles/ leather / gems and jewellery (7%), witnessing significant increase in job postings in February as compared to January this year.

Whereas, engineering, cement, construction, iron/ steel declined by 3%, home appliances 5%, and retail 6%.

In terms of year-on-year (y-o-y) growth, the overall index in February still showcases a significant drop of 15% mainly on account of the impact of the pandemic across some of the key sectors.

# 'IPL BRAND VALUE FALLS FOR FIRST TIME IN SIX YEARS'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 10:** The brand value of the Indian Premier League (IPL) went down for the first time in six years - by 3.6% over one year. From ₹47,500 crore in 2019, it fell to ₹45,800 crore in 2020, the first decline since 2014, a report said Wednesday. "Year 2020 was a challenging one with economic distress and uncertainty due to Covid-19. The sports economy was not immune to this crisis, and the pandemic disrupted the sporting calendar for the year, with a string of tournaments being postponed or cancelled."

IPL was relocated to the UAE as the Indian government had paused sporting activities due to Covid-19. But the BCCI was keen to organise the IPL, and that's why the



tournament was shifted, like it did in 2009, when it was played in South Africa. Duff & Phelps undertook a study during the initial lockdown period to analyse the initial

impact of Covid-19 on the value of the IPL ecosystem, which was estimated in the IPL Brand Valuation Report 2019.

"In our impact study, we had men-

tioned that depending on the extent of the post Covid-19 slowdown, most sponsorship contracts may get renegotiated next year, as the spending power of the advertisers and sponsors is likely to be impacted by the economic slowdown," Duff & Phelps said.

In 2020, the IPL had lower sponsorship revenues as compared to previous years. Much of this is attributed to Vivo pulling out of the title sponsorship deal and being replaced by Dream11. Dream11 paid ₹222 crore for the season, as against Vivo's cancelled contract of ₹440 crore/season for the IPL title sponsorship.

The individual franchisees have also witnessed a reduction in their brand values over the last year, mainly due to reduced franchisee-related sponsorship revenue, loss of

## Vivo back as IPL title sponsor

**NEW DELHI:** Chinese smartphone firm Vivo is back as the title sponsor of the IPL, almost a year after the sponsorship deal with the BCCI was suspended amid the India-China border standoff. The company, which competes with players like Xiaomi and Samsung in the Indian market, also stated that it will expand its portfolio of premium devices, and focus on new technologies like 5G. "Vivo is back as the title sponsor of IPL and that is very encouraging and exciting for us because IPL is the biggest property in India and is a perfect amalgamation of sports and entertainment," Vivo India Dir (Brand Strategy) Nipun Marya said.

gate receipts, reduced food and beverage (F&B) revenue and certain teams' on-field performances.

The report further stated that champions Mumbai Indians remained the most valuable franchise with a brand value of ₹761 crore. However, this is down by 5.9% from ₹809 crore in 2019. The highest drop

in brand value was suffered by three-time champions Chennai Super Kings, who were evaluated at ₹611 crore which is down 16.5% from ₹732 crore after IPL 2019. Kolkata Knight Riders have seen the second highest brand reduction at 13.7% from ₹629 crore after IPL 2019 to ₹543 crore last year.



OLIVEIRA'S EXTRA TIME GOAL SENDS PORTUGUESE SIDE TO QUARTERS

# Porto show Juve the door in UCL



**Turin, March 10:** Juventus and Cristiano Ronaldo crashed out of the Champions League round of 16 on away goals for the second successive year as the Bianconeri were eliminated by 10-man Porto. Sergio Oliveira scored in extra time to send Porto into the quarterfinals of Europe's premier club competition despite a thrilling 2-3 loss in Turin after Federico Chiesa's two goals had given Juventus hope. Porto, which played most of the second leg at a numerical disadvantage after Mehdi Taremi's sending off, advanced on away goals after the matchup ended 4-4 on aggregate. Juventus went out in the round of 16 on away goals to Lyon last season. Oliveira also netted Porto's first goal, from the penalty spot, but Chiesa scored twice in the second half to level the tie for Juventus and send the match into extra time. Porto appeared to have all but won it before Adrien Rabiot reduced the deficit three minutes from time

## Haaland brace sends Dortmund into last 8

**DORTMUND:** Erling Haaland sent Borussia Dortmund into the Champions League quarterfinals for the first time since 2017 with two goals in a heated 2-2 draw with Sevilla. Haaland took his season tally to 10 goals for Dortmund to advance with a 5-4 win on aggregate. The Bundesliga team won the first leg of their last 16 tie 3-2 in Seville, where Haaland also scored two. The Norwegian has 20 altogether in just 14 appearances in Europe's premier tournament in his young career, and he was the key factor in Dortmund moving on. Youssef En-Nesyri scored twice for Sevilla.

minute after Bianconeri defender Leonardo Bonucci had blocked Zaidu Sanusi's effort. Taremi was also involved in Porto's goal as he won the penalty when he was fouled by Merih Demiral and Oliveira converted into the bottom left corner. Juventus appeared transformed after the break and drew level four minutes into the second half as Ronaldo controlled a Bonucci ball over the top and knocked it on for Chiesa to curl into the top right corner. Juve's hopes of turning the tie around grew further five minutes later when Taremi was sent off after he kicked a ball away and received a second yellow card moments after his first booking. Chiesa headed a Juan Cuadrado cross into the top left corner in the 63rd minute. The Bianconeri were made to regret their wasted opportunities as, five minutes from the end of extra time, Weston McKennie fouled Oliveira, who dusted himself off to fire a free-kick under the wall and into the bottom left corner.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, March 10:** The International Cricket Council (ICC) Wednesday formally announced that Southampton will host the inaugural World Test Championship (WTC) final between India and New Zealand in June and a limited number of fans could be allowed if the easing of lockdown in the UK continues.

The game will be played inside a bio-secure bubble at the Hampshire Bowl in Southampton from June 18-22. The venue was confirmed to this agency Monday by BCCI President Sourav Ganguly.

## Hockey teams to get allowances under TOPS: SAI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 10:** The core group players of both the Indian men's and women's hockey teams will be entitled to a monthly allowance of ₹50,000 under the government's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) till the Tokyo Games in July-August this year.

"The Mission Olympic Cell has sanctioned ₹50,000 per athlete as out-of-pocket allowance for the members of the Indian men's and women's hockey team under the TOPS," the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said in a statement.

A total of 58 hockey players, 33 men and 25 women, will benefit from this decision. "We have many players who come from very difficult economic backgrounds and an allowance of this accord will definitely help them pursue the sport through to the Olympic Games without any hindrance," men's team captain Manpreet Singh said.

This will be the first time that the women's team will be considered under TOPS for OPA. "This decision taken today really goes to show that women's hockey is equally important, and we are being given equal benefits which is a big encouragement for us," said skipper Rani Rampal.

"Should the UK government's phased easing of COVID-19 lockdown measures proceed as planned, it is anticipated that a limited number of fans will be allowed into the Hampshire Bowl to watch the final," the ICC statement read.

Initially, the final was supposed to be held at the Lord's but the ICC Board and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) decided to change the venue to ensure that the fixture could be staged safely with the potential impact of COVID-19 minimised for all involved.

"In selecting the Hampshire Bowl, the ICC drew on ECB's experience

of delivering a full summer of bio-safe international cricket in 2020," the ICC said. "The venue provides world-class playing and training facilities, giving both teams the best possible environment in which to prepare."

New Zealand were the first team to qualify for the final and they were joined by India following their 3-1 series win over England which concluded Saturday.

"The ICC World Test Championship final is the pinnacle event in the Test calendar and is intended to be a week-long celebration of the oldest form of the game,"

Geoff Allardice, ICC General Manager, Cricket said.

England and Wales Cricket Board Chief Executive Officer Tom Harrison added: "We are delighted that the ICC has chosen to host the inaugural World Test Championship Final at The Hampshire Bowl.

"As the world's first fully bio-secure cricket venue, it has shown itself capable of delivering international matches to the highest of standards, even against the backdrop of a global pandemic. I am sure the finale of the ICC World Test Championship will be a wonderful occasion."

# Natarajan faces race against time for T20s

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, March 10:** Pacer T Natarajan is racing against time to be battle-ready, making him doubtful for at least the early part of India's five-match T20 series against England starting here Friday. Spinner Varun Chakravarthy's failure to clear fitness tests has ruled him out of the series.

Chakravarthy has repeatedly failed to clear the fitness test at the National Cricket Academy in Bangalore while yorker specialist Natarajan is yet to join the squad here due to an apparent 'shoulder niggle'.

"Varun Chakravarthy was selected because he recovered from his shoulder injury that ruled him out of the Australia series. He did his rehab at the NCA and started throwing normally.

"However, he has failed to clear the YoYo test mark stipulated for a 2km run at least twice," a senior BCCI source told this agency on conditions of anonymity.

The question now being asked is why did the Chetan Sharma led committee select such a player, who, after the month of October, hasn't played even one competitive game for his state Tamil Nadu.



It is learnt that Rahul Chahar will be inducted in the squad as he is already in the bio-bubble since the start of the Test series. In case of Natarajan, the NCA medical staff is trying to get him fit or at least the later part of the series.

Rahul Tewatia is training with the Indian team in Ahmedabad as he awaits his second fitness Test results. The T20s will be followed by a three-match ODI series in Pune.

## ICC RANKINGS

### Pant 7th in Tests, Ashwin move to 2nd

**DUBAI:** Following his breathtaking century in the fourth Test against England, young Indian wicketkeeper batsman Rishabh Pant Wednesday achieved a career-best seventh position in the ICC Test rankings. Pant has jumped seven places. The 23-year-old shares the seventh place in the batsmen rankings with compatriot Rohit Sharma, who moved up one spot, and Henry Nicholls of New Zealand. However captain Virat Kohli, who remains fifth, is at his lowest points tally since November 2017 while Cheteshwar Pujara (13th) is under 700 rating points for the first time since September 2016. R Ashwin has leapfrogged New Zealand's Neil Wagner to the second position among bowlers. He is also ranked fourth among all-rounders, now ahead of Shakib Al Hasan.

### India 2nd in T20Is

**DUBAI:** India climbed a spot to second in the latest ICC men's T20I team rankings ahead of a five-match series against top-placed England beginning March 12. England are seven points ahead of India, who were third before the away series against Australia. Australia's 2-3 loss to New Zealand in a recent five-game series pushed the side below India with just one point separating the two.

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Printed and published by Tathagata Satpathy on behalf of Navajet Printers and Media Pvt. Ltd. and printed at Navajet Printers, B-15 Industrial Estate, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar -751010, Odisha;Phone:7894447142(Marketing). Editor: Tathagata Satpathy, RNI No. ORIENG/2011/37159