



FIR AGAINST GAUAHAR

The BMC has filed an FIR against actor Gauahar Khan for continuing to shoot despite testing +ve for Covid-19

LEISURE P2



MARTIAL LAW IN YANGON

Myanmar's junta has declared martial law in parts of the country's largest city as security forces killed more protesters

INTERNATIONAL P10



3RD T20I TODAY

After levelling the series, India look to take lead when they take on England in third T20I

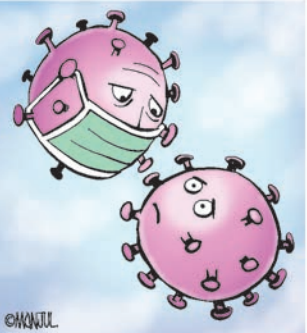
SPORTS P12

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Always wear a mask or else you might catch carelessness from humans

SHORT TAKES

No printing of ₹2K notes in last 2 yrs

New Delhi: ₹2,000 currency notes have not been printed in the last two years even as the quantum of India's highest denomination currency note has come down, the Lok Sabha was informed Monday. In a written reply, Minister of State for Finance Anurag Singh Thakur said 3,362 million currency notes of ₹2000 denomination were in circulation on March 30, 2018, constituting 3.27 per cent and 37.26 per cent of the currency in terms of volume and trade.

Batla murder: Death penalty to Ariz Khan

New Delhi: Thirteen years after the Batla House encounter, a Delhi Court Monday sentenced Ariz Khan, who was convicted of the murder of inspector Mohan Chand Sharma and other offences, to death. Additional Sessions Judge Sandeep Yadav called it a 'rarest of rare case' while awarding the death penalty. The prosecution had sought death penalty for Khan in the case, while the counsel for the convict sought leniency on the ground of his young age. P9

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	50395.08 ↓ 397.00
NIFTY	14929.50 ↓ 101.50
DOLLAR	73.03 ↓ ₹0.28
EURO	86.51 ↓ ₹0.33
GOLD	₹44,880 ↑ ₹108
SILVER	₹67,390 ↑ ₹423

WEATHER	
	BHUB CTK
TEMP MAX	37.0°C 36.2°C
TEMP MIN	23.8°C 22.6°C
Humidity	96% 87%
Rainfall	Nil Nil
Forecast	Fog or mist in the morning

Govt drops holding tax hike

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: After drawing ire from locals and the Opposition over unprecedented hike in holding tax by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), the state government Monday put the unpopular revised holding tax rates on hold.

Speaking to media, Housing and Urban Development Minister Pratap Jena said holding tax in the capital city will continue to be collected as per the old rates following a direction of the Chief Minister.

"The BMC had taken a decision to increase holding tax on the basis of the benchmark valuation of land. A petition had also been filed in the Orissa High Court challenging the decision of the BMC. Taking serious note of people's concern, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has directed to put the revised tax rates on hold till further orders of the High Court," Jena said.

It may be mentioned that the civic authority here in February 2019 had revised the benchmark value of the land cost in the capital on instructions by the general administration department. As a result, the revised holding



A rally by Congress party workers demanding withdrawal of the increase in holding tax by the Bhubaneswar civic body, in the City, Monday.

tax rates saw an increase of 10 to 50 times amidst pandemic.

However, the move triggered widespread resentment as residents and political parties vehemently opposed the revision, stating that it will increase the holding tax manifold. Earlier

on the day, Congress activists had staged protests in front of the BMC headquarters at Kalpana square here seeking immediate rollback of the tax rates. BJP leaders had also carried out a rally, Friday, demanding revocation of the steep hike within a month.

"Relieved to know that owing to resentment of the people of Bhubaneswar, the holding tax increase decision of the BMC has been put on hold. Good sense prevailed. Hats off to the collective will and efforts of the people of Bhubaneswar," tweeted Bhubaneswar Lok Sabha MP Aparajita Sarangi immediately after the announcement from the state government.

Furthermore, the BMC, last week had passed an order stating sealing of properties of tax defaulters against whom certificates have been initiated under Orissa Public Demands Recovery (OPDR) Act. However, BMC Deputy Commissioner of Revenue, Srimanta Mishra clarified that the sealing would only be done against commercial and industrial properties.

"Firstly, I would like to mention that we will follow the state government's decision and roll back the holding tax rates. The amounts of those who have already paid under the increased rates will be adjusted with against the pending months. Secondly, the OPDR Act is not against individual households. It is against big and old defaulters. No notice will be given to seal individual household," he said.

Banks shut ops as part of all-India stir

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: Supporting the nationwide strike, all five bank associations in Odisha Monday staged demonstrations in the city opposing the Centre's decision to privatise two state-owned lenders.

As part of the nationwide stir, all banks in the state remained shut, putting customers to immense difficulties.

The Centre had proposed privatisation of two public sector banks in the budget 2021. Members of five banking associations — AIBEA, NCBE, AIBOC, BEFI and AIBOC have declared a two-day strike March 15-16 against the decision.

RP Das, convener of the United Forum of Bank Unions, the umbrella outfit of the above associations, said, "Once the banks are undertaken by private companies, all rural banks will be shut down. In the era of 'Bank Nirbhar Bharat', where all the schemes of the government are being implemented by PSBs, the proposal to privatise two PSBs is retrograde and inimical to national interest. In last five decades, PSBs have played a pivotal role in the rapid economic development of the country, infrastructure development, uplift of the economically weaker section of society."

The associations condemn the proposal of sale of PSBs, insurance companies and CPSEs and urge the Centre to roll back the strategic disinvestment plan and have a public consultation with the stakeholders including trade unions before taking further steps.

'No plan to bring fuel under GST'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 15: Amid record-high fuel prices, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Monday said there is no proposal as of now to bring crude oil, petrol, diesel, jet fuel (ATF) and natural gas under the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

When the GST was introduced on July 1, 2017, amalgamating over a dozen central and state levies, five commodities - crude oil, natural gas, petrol, diesel, and aviation turbine fuel (ATF) - were kept out of its purview given the revenue dependence of the central and state governments on this sector.

This meant that the central government continued to levy excise duty on them while state governments charged VAT. These taxes, with excise duty, in par-



ticular, have been raised periodically.

While the taxes haven't come down, a spike in global oil prices on demand recovery has pushed petrol and diesel to an all-time high, leading to demand for them come under the GST. "At present, there is no proposal to bring crude petroleum, petrol, diesel, ATF and natural gas under GST," Sitharaman said in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha.

She said the law prescribes that the GST Council shall recommend the date on which the goods and services tax be levied on petroleum crude, high-speed diesel, motor spirit (commonly known as petrol), natural gas and ATF.

"So far, the GST Council, in which the states are also represented, has not made any recommendation for inclusion of these goods under GST," she said.

The council may consider the issue of inclusion of these five petroleum products at a time it considers appropriate keeping in view all the relevant factors, including revenue implication, she added.

Including oil products in GST will not just help companies set off tax that they paid on input but will also bring about uniformity in taxation on the fuels in the country.



BACK TO LOCKDOWN

City streets wear a deserted look during the complete lockdown imposed by the authorities due to a spike in coronavirus cases, in Nagpur, Monday

PTI PHOTO

Beyonce most-feted female in Grammy



AGENCIES

Los Angeles, March 15: With her four wins at 2021 Grammy Awards, pop diva Beyonce became the most awarded female artiste in the history of the ceremony.

At the 63rd edition of Grammys, organised by the Recording Academy, Beyonce was nominated in nine categories and won an award with Megan Thee Stallion for "Savage (Remix)" for best rap song as well as one for "Black Parade" for best R&B performance. In the pre-telecast premiere ceremony, the pop star won the best music video award for "Brown Skin Girl" and another trophy for "Savage."

With 28 Grammy wins in all, Beyonce broke a mark set by veteran singer Alison Krauss. She trails only classical conductor Sir George Solti, who still holds the all-time record with 31 Grammys.

"As an artist, I believe it's my job and all of our jobs to reflect the times. And it's been such a difficult time. And so, I want to uplift, encourage, and celebrate all the beautiful Black queens and kings that continue to inspire me and inspire the whole world," the pop singer said after winning the R&B performance award for "Black Parade". MORE P-2

Coming soon: Vax sans needles and cold storage

AGENCIES

Geneva, March 15: New Covid-19 vaccines, including ones that don't require needles and can be stored at room temperature, may be ready for use later this year or next year, the World Health Organization's top scientist said.

Six-to-eight new immunizations may complete clinical studies and undergo regulatory review by the end of the year, Soumya Swaminathan, the Geneva-based agency's chief scientist, said in an interview Saturday.

New vaccines will add to the 10 already shown to work within a year of Covid-19 being declared a pandemic. The world needs more immunizations, especially as the virus's continuous circulation spawns dangerous new variants and drug-makers struggle to meet orders.



Only 122 countries have started immunizing people, according to data collected by Bloomberg.

"We're thrilled with the vaccines that we have," said Swaminathan, an Indian pediatrician best known for her research on tuberculosis

and HIV. But "we can improve further," she said. "I think, well into 2022, we're going to see the emergence of improved vaccines."

The current crop of experimental vaccines use alternative technologies and delivery systems, and

include more single-shot inoculations, and vaccines that are administered orally, via a nasal spray, and through the skin using a type of patch. These could bring immunizations that are better suited to specific groups, such as pregnant women, according to Swaminathan.

More than 80 candidate vaccines are being studied in people, though some are still in the early stages of testing and may not be successful. Companies with Covid-19 vaccines already in use have also begun testing updated versions designed to thwart variants of the coronavirus that have emerged in recent months.

"We need to continue to support the research and development of more vaccine candidates, especially as the need for ongoing booster immunization of populations is still not very clear at this point," Swaminathan said. "So we need to

be prepared for that in the future."

The WHO's strategic advisory group of experts on immunization is reviewing whether people who have been infected with SARS-CoV-2 need to have two doses of vaccine. Some research indicates that a natural infection works to prime the immune response to SARS-CoV-2, much as a first dose would, making a second injection unnecessary.

Giving only one dose of vaccine to Covid-19 survivors could free up more supplies, Swaminathan said, though it could present "practical and logistical challenges in many countries" if blood tests are needed to measure patients' antibody levels before deciding if a second jab is warranted.

The roll out of safe and effective vaccines is also raising questions about how to efficiently and ethically conduct clinical trials of experi-

mental vaccines, she said. Placebos will be replaced with a "gold standard" vaccine in a so-called non-inferiority design when it's no longer ethical to use a placebo, Swaminathan said.

Meantime, one approach the WHO is exploring is to compare three or four candidate vaccines simultaneously with a placebo. A similar study design was used to test the efficacy of drug therapies for Covid-19, and may mean trial participants would have an 80% chance of receiving an experimental vaccine and only a 20% chance of getting placebo.

"We are in discussions now with several companies with vaccines in development to see if we could launch something like this on a global trial platform," Swaminathan said, adding that she's optimistic such a study may begin in the first half of 2021.

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Think positive today and watch the world around you changing. Regardless of how difficult things may seem, Ganesh advises you to take it without getting upset. If you set your mind to something, you can do it. You have the Midas touch today, so it is a good time to introduce a new strategy.

TAURUS

Ganesh urges you to be prepared for setbacks and disappointments today. Your efforts may end in being a waste of precious time and energy. The results you get are likely to be far below your expectations. Falling short of your target is likely to weigh you down with stress and anxiety.

GEMINI

You will be in a state of heightened sensitivity today. Therefore you need to curb down on your emotions. You will be able to successfully express your feelings to someone, and your feelings will play a vital part in your life, says Ganesh.

CANCER

Ganesh suggests you not to be sentimental or hasty. Try to handle things deftly in stead of dodging bad episodes or turning a blind eye to them. You will give priority to domestic and private life in stead of career or business aspects.

LEO

You will feel more emotional today and share your feelings with your friends and near ones. For those who are searching for a life-partner, this might be the time when you will get hitched. You will develop a new perspective on some issues in the office.

VIRGO

It is more than likely that you will reap financial profits from foreign contacts, predicts Ganesh. You will excel in all the activities that you undertake today. Your dream of establishing a mammoth business enterprise in a foreign country will take flight today.

LIBRA

Ganesh says today will be the start of a new love story for you and you will be able to spend time with someone very dear to you. You will be more conscious today about your appearance and may even go to the beauty parlor. Do remember the saying- beauty lies in the eye of the beholder.

SCORPIO

There are strong indications that today you will be receptive and sensitive towards the needs of other people. Negative vibes will disrupt your thinking, and you will rely on the company of close friends to keep you in good cheer. Do not succumb to the pessimism that might cloud your thought today as it is only a passing phase, advises Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS

Ganesh foresees business expansion on your cards. Your friends, relatives and other contacts across seven seas will lend a helping hand to develop your business. And thanks to your super communication skills that make the task easier.

CAPRICORN

Some people do back-breaking work throughout their life, and still don't taste the sweet taste of success. While in your case, success will be easy as pie. You are already loaded with work and some new projects- assignments will be added to that, today.

AQUARIUS

You will not need a reason to party today. Be it the news of a friend getting married or you buying a new car, you are in a mood to celebrate life like anything! Apart from this, you will have a smooth sailing through out the day, foresees Ganesh. If you are a businessman or a professional, you will move one step closer to your target.

PISCES

A day of mixed fortunes awaits you, where taking risks could prove to be your undoing, or provide you with handsome returns, says Ganesh. This is because you could come out on top by treading cautiously, but uncalculated risks will probably throw your calculations out of gear.



BENEDICT OPENS UP ON SHERLOCK SEASON 5

British actor Benedict Cumberbatch has revealed that a fifth season of the hit BBC TV series *Sherlock* is a possibility. However, the 44-year-old actor, who rose to fame playing a reimagined version of the popular sleuth created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, doesn't see it happening anytime soon.

JENNIFER AND ALEX 'WORKING THROUGH' THEIR RELATIONSHIP

Contrary to reports over the weekend, Jennifer Lopez and her fiancé Alex Rodriguez are not parting ways after being together for four years. "We are working through some things," the couple said in a statement to *People* magazine.



GRAMMYS 2021

Megan wins big, Taylor sets record

Los Angeles: Megan Thee Stallion was the big winner at the 63rd Grammy Awards, winning three trophies in a night when Beyoncé broke the record for most number of Grammy wins. Scoring an individual haul that stands at 28 Grammys, Beyoncé has now surpassed the record previously held by Alisson Krauss.

Taylor Swift also entered the record books. With her Grammy for Album of the Year for *Folklore*, she became the first singer-songwriter to win the prize three times, and overall fourth musician to achieve this feat.

Megan won three Grammys — Best New Artist, Best Rap Song and Best Rap Performance — at the in-person live/virtual ceremony hosted by Trevor Noah Sunday night (Monday according to India time) that had, as a highlight, an extended in-tribute section honouring those who died in the last one year.

"There's going to be stages that are intricately designed to be socially distanced but at the same time engaging with the people, so it'll feel like you're there at some sort of music-festival-meets-awards-show-meets-special-concert just for you at home," Noah said in his opening monologue.

Wearing an open jacket and boa, drawing a joke from host Noah about the same, Harry Styles opened the ceremony with his hit, *Watermelon sugar*, which also saw him win the Best Pop Solo performance category this year. The opening act also included performances by Billie Eilish, joined by her brother and collaborator, Finneas, who performed *All I ever wanted*. Haim performed *The steps*.

Following the first award, DaBaby and Roddy Ricch's performance of

their song *Rockstar*, joined by a choir of older white people in what looked like judge's robes, laid the foundation for what was going to be a vocal night for Black musicians.

Perhaps the strongest voice at this year's Grammy Awards was that of Atlanta-based rapper Lil Baby who

won Best R&B Performance and saw her become the singer with most number of Grammys.

Beyoncé's record-breaking win came after her wins in the Best Music Video category for *Brown skin girl*, which she shared with daughter Blue Ivy, and Best Rap Performance, which



Beyoncé (L) and Megan on stage during the 63rd Annual GRAMMY Awards at Los Angeles Convention Center, Sunday

once again raised the issue of treatment of the Blacks in the US, with a powerful performance of his song, *The bigger picture*, which was released amid the nationwide Black Lives Matter demonstrations last year.

Three awards presented during the telecast went to protest songs. *Lockdown*, released by Anderson .Paak, which was inspired by the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, won for Best Melodic Rap Performance. *I can't breathe*, by H.E.R. won Song of the Year. *Black parade*, Beyoncé's own release, from her *Black Is King* film,

she shared with Megan Thee Stallion for their song *Savage* (remix). Apart from sharing the award with Beyoncé, Megan also won the inaugural award of the night — Best New Artist.

"I don't want to cry. It's been a hell of a year, and we made it," said Megan while accepting her award. She also set the stage on fire with her performances of her songs, *Body*, *Savage* and *Up*, and with three wins out of four; she was the star of the night, till Ringo Starr announced that Billie Eilish won the Record of the Year, making it her second consecutive win in the same category.

LIST OF WINNERS

Record of the year: *Everything I Wanted* by Billie Eilish
Album of the year: *Folklore* by Taylor Swift
Song of the year: *I can't breathe* by Demst Emile II, H.E.R. and Tiara Thomas
Best pop solo performance: *Watermelon sugar* by Harry Styles
Best pop duo/group performance: *Rain on me* by Lady Gaga and Ariana Grande
Best R&B album: *Bigger love* by John Legend
Best R&B performance: *Black parade* by Beyoncé
Best traditional R&B performance: *Anything for you* by Ledisi
Best progressive R&B album: *It is what it is* by Thundercat
Best R&B song: *Better Than I imagined* by Robert Glasper, Meshell Ndegeocello and Gabriella Wilson
Best new artist: Megan Thee Stallion
Best rap performance: *Savage* by Megan Thee Stallion featuring Beyoncé
Best rap song: *Savage* by Megan Thee Stallion featuring Beyoncé
Best rap album: *King's disease* by Nas
Best melodic rap performance: *Lockdown* by Anderson .Paak
Best traditional pop vocal album: *American standard* by James Taylor
Best music video: *Brown skin girl* by Beyoncé
Best song written for visual media: *No Time to Die* by Billie Eilish
Best compilation soundtrack for visual media: *Jojo Rabbit*
Best score soundtrack for visual media: *Joker* by Hildur Guðnadóttir
Best global music album: *Twice as Tall* by Burna Boy
Best dance recording: 10% by Kaytranada featuring Kali Uchis

Best dance/electronic album: *Bubba* by Kaytranada
Best contemporary instrumental album: *Live at the Royal Albert Hall* by Snarky Puppy
Best rock performance: *Shameika* by Fiona Apple
Best metal performance: *Bum-Rush* by Body Count
Best rock album: *The new abnormal* by The Strokes
Best rock song: *Stay High* by Brittany Howard
Best alternative music album: *Fetch the bolt cutters* by Fiona Apple
Best country solo performance: *When my prayers* by Vince Gill
Best country duo/group performance: *10,000 Hours* by Dan + Shay and Justin Bieber
Best country album: *Wildcard* by Miranda Lambert
Best country song: *Crowded table* by Brandi Carlile, Natalie Hemby and Lori McKenna
Best new age album: *More Guitar Stories* by Jim 'Kimo' West
Best jazz vocal album: *Secrets are the best stories* by Kurt Elling
Featuring Danilo Pérez
Best improvised jazz solo: *All blues* by Chick Corea
Best jazz instrumental album: *Trilogy 2* by Chick Corea, Christian McBride and Brian Blade
Best large jazz ensemble album: *Data Lords* by Maria Schneider Orchestra
Best Latin jazz album: *Four Questions* by Arturo O'Farrill & The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra
Best gospel performance/song: *Movin' On* by Jonathan McReynolds and Mali Music



Gauahar booked for shooting despite being Covid +ve

Mumbai: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has filed an FIR against Bollywood actress Gauahar Khan for continuing to shoot despite testing positive for Covid-19.

Confirming the same, film producer Ashoke Pandit tweeted from his verified account Monday: "I condemn the illegal act committed by actress @Gauahar_Khan by attending the shoot even though she was COVID positive thus putting other crew members' lives to danger. I thank @mybmc & @MumbaiPolice for their swift action."

The film producer also tweeted a copy of the FIR filed by the BMC against Gauahar Khan which has her name written on it.

Meanwhile, the BMC and Mumbai Police Monday posted cryptic tweets from their official accounts saying that an FIR has been filed against an actor for flouting quarantine rules without mentioning names. Gauahar Khan is yet to respond.

MIRROR ORGANISES AUDIO PLAY, SEMINAR FOR ASPIRING ACTORS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Members of Mirror, a city-based theatre troupe, staged an audio play *Nila Dianka Sandhanare* at the meeting hall of Utkal Sambadika Bhawan here, Monday.

"This is for the second time we are organising an audio drama in Bhubaneswar," said Mirror's director Sibashankar Tripathy. The artistes delivered their dialogues into the microphone sans make up and without sporting the costumes of the characters they played. They learnt a lot about the work of voice and dialogue delivery after attending the event, said some aspiring actors who were part of the event.

The play was written and directed by Siba Shankar Tripathy while actors Raghu Behera, Prashant Mohapatra, Santosh Nayak, Pradip Das, Raj, Suresh and Minakhi



performed the audio drama.

A seminar based on the application of voice and dialogue was also held on the occasion which was inaugurated by journalist and litterateur Pradyumna Satpathy. Eminent theatre director Manoj Patnaik, actor Binayak Mishra and radio artiste Chandamani Singh took part in the seminar.

The event was organised in collaboration with National School of Drama and Department of Odia Language, Literature and Culture, Government of Odisha.

Steel City troupe leaves viewers in splits

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Kalinga Kala Parishad, a theatre troupe from Steel City Rourkela, presented play *Highway Kila* at Bhanja Kala Mandap here Monday, on the second evening of the five-day comedy drama festival.

Written by Sanjay Hati, the play was directed by Uma Shankar Panda.

The event is being organised jointly by the city's popular theatre troupes Panchamaveda and Shrishti Theatre. The play shows how innocent people in the society are cheated by some common in the guise of promoters of network business. It also reflects the mindset of some

STATE-LEVEL THEATRE FEST



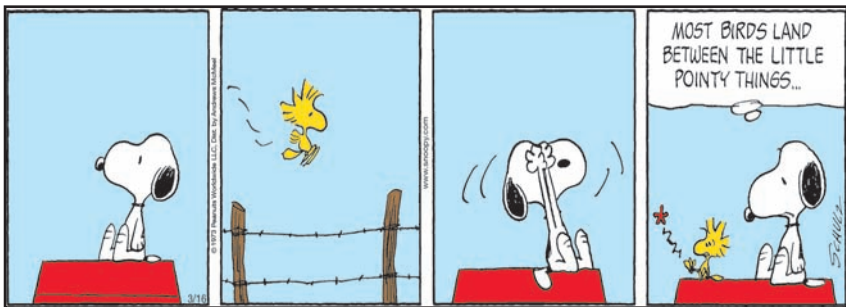
A scene from the play *Highway Kila* staged at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Monday

highly educated youth who want to become rich overnight investing little. The play was dedicated to the memory of actor and director Pulin Mansingh who passed away recently.

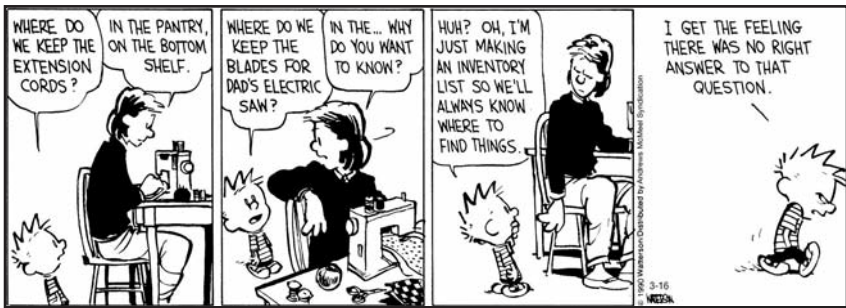
The dignitaries attended the evening as guests include eminent dramatist Ramesh Das, Commander Dasarathi Nandakishore, Principal of Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalay(USM) Guru Bijay Jena and ex-USM lecturer Maya Das.

Three more humorous plays will be staged and six eminent personalities in the field of art and culture will be felicitated on the closing day of the festival, informed Panchamaveda's secretary Prakash Maharana.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

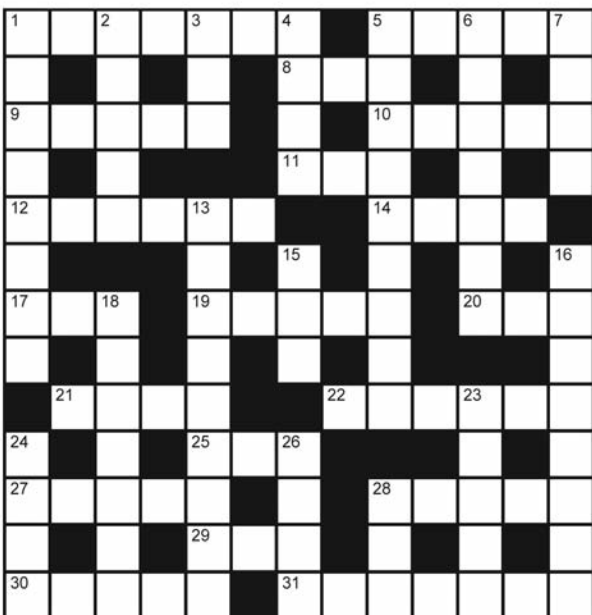


BREVITY



FUN post

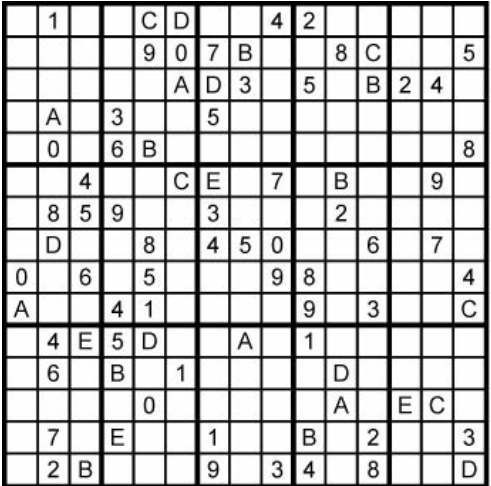
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Emulator
 - 5 Reprimand
 - 8 Séance sound
 - 9 Back tooth
 - 10 Tweak
 - 11 Coffee cup
 - 12 Jot down
 - 14 Dieter's target
 - 17 Catchall abbr.
 - 19 Iron man?
 - 20 Mudbath locale
 - 21 Greenish blue
 - 22 Error
- Down
- 1 Made fast, as a relationship
 - 2 High flier
 - 3 Garage contents
 - 25 Little squirt
 - 27 African language
 - 28 Swap
 - 29 Court ploy
 - 30 Iota preceeder
 - 31 Snake
 - 4 Streetcar
 - 5 Pasta
 - 6 Devilfish
 - 7 Put in stitches
 - 13 Wolf spider
 - 15 Diminish
 - 16 It's under a house
 - 18 Hot pepper
 - 23 Orange container
 - 24 Border on
 - 26 Vats
 - 28 Road goo

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

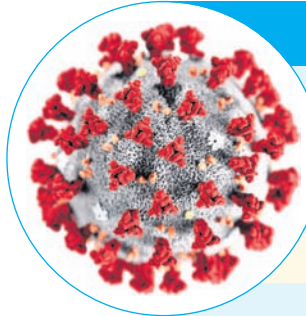


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



CITY BEAUTIFICATION

An artist engaged by BMC draws a mural near Bhubaneswar railway station, Monday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	12,05,53,285	9,70,71,313	26,67,257
India	1,10,63,140	1,07,48,907	1,58,725
Odisha	3,38,258	3,35,730	1,918

SCRAPPAGE POLICY TO BOOST CAR SALES: SUNIL TANEJA

The automobile sector which has already borne the brunt of Covid-19 pandemic is now facing challenges from fuel price hike that has affected the growth in sales. In a tete-a-tete with **Orissa POST**, Managing Director of **Espirit Toyota Sunil Taneja** highlighted several key steps including the new scrappage policy that would cushion the impact of rising petrol and diesel prices. Excerpts...



■ The pandemic and rising fuel prices have affected sales. Aren't they?

■ Yes, of course. The growth in the auto sector is down due to the pandemic. The sales were very low due to the lockdown. On other hand, rising fuel prices is another concern for the sector. The spiraling prices have impacted on sales. In fact, prices of all the commodities have gone up after the pandemic. The government could have planned better to introduce eclectic and hybrid vehicles. It could have reduced dependence on fuel. The government should have to be proactive instead of being reactive.

■ When do you think the sales will bounce back?

■ We believe normalcy would return very soon. The government has announced the Scrappage Policy which will encourage people to dispose of their old cars. This will also boost the demand in the market. The government should also promote hybrid and EVs to boost their demand. The sales will also increase as vaccination drive has already started. Also, the pandemic has changed people's mind-set. They now

prefer to have their own car instead of depending on cabs.

■ Are we prepared for EVs and hybrid cars?

■ See, CNG cars, EVs and hybrid ones will not be 100 per cent feasible now as it will take some time to have the necessary infrastructure in place. But it should start selling. We hope that there will be lot more actions in 2023. If the Centre promotes these vehicles, the sales of EVs and hybrid cars will get a boost. However, this segment will occupy low market share

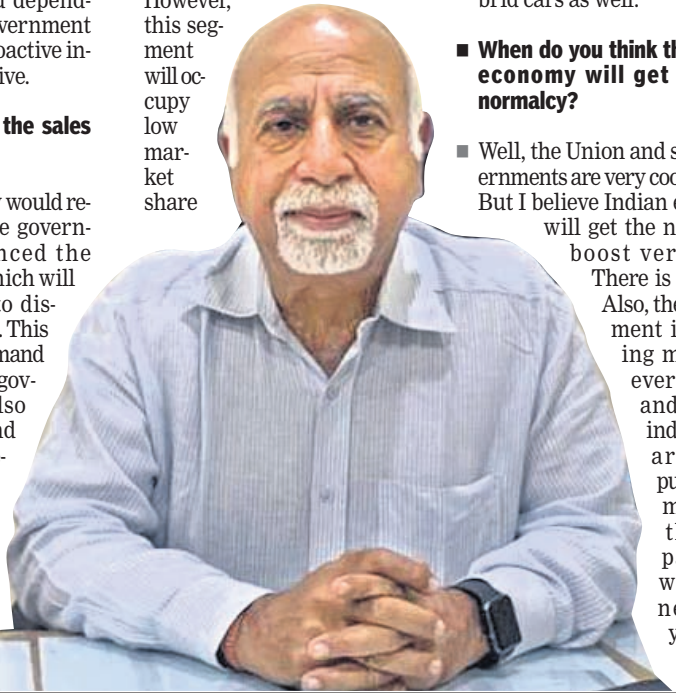
depending on technology and price. The government has given incentives to EV segment and is active on this count.

■ Your take on Budget 2021-22?

■ We are pleased to hear the introduction of the Scrappage Policy. We expected this policy would come much early. However, the central government did not reduce GST. We were hoping for the reduction of GST in this Budget. We are also hoping incentives for hybrid cars as well.

■ When do you think the Indian economy will get back to normalcy?

■ Well, the Union and state governments are very cooperative. But I believe Indian economy will get the necessary boost very soon. There is demand. Also, the government is spending money in every sector and private industries are also pumping in money in their capacity. It will take next two years.



KRUSHI ODISHA 2021

Govt disbursed ₹20K crore loans to farmers: Naveen

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday inaugurated 'Krushi Odisha 2021' at Biju Patnaik Play Ground here through videoconferencing. The Agriculture department is organising the festival in association with Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Patnaik said that Odisha has achieved significant milestones in field of fisheries and aquaculture as the state has received two prestigious national level fisheries awards recently. The state bagged the 'Best Marine State' award and Kalahandi received the 'Best District Award' in inland fisheries sector. "Odisha government has provided more than Rs 20,000-crore loan to state farmers till now," he said.

On the occasion, Agriculture minister Arun Sahoo said, "For development of agriculture, the farmers need assistance of all kinds such as skill development, knowledge about new agricultural techniques, infrastructure development, market support in distribution and loan availability, and they will get all this at Krushi Odisha Mahotsav which is a great place for farmers to learn new skills and techniques of farming."

"This year's theme is 'Integrated Farming: Towards Farmers' Prosperity'. The official mascot for the mahotsav is 'Mushroom'. Mere cultivation of crops cannot bring a spectacular progress in farmer's financial condition. An integration of agriculture, horticulture, fishery, dairy, poultry and other allied activities can only make farmer prosperous," Sahoo said.

"Fisheries & Aquaculture sector in Odisha grew at an impressive rate of 18.98 per cent and produced around 8.16 lakh metric tonne fish during 2019-20. Odisha also showed growth in other productions such as rice, sweet potato, brinjal, coconut, egg and meat," said the minister.

ASBM IS MY PASSION, NOT COMPULSION: PROF PATTANAYAK

Prof Biswajeet Pattanayak created history by introducing the blockbuster 'Lagaan' - a commercial movie - in serious classroom teaching at the prestigious IIMs and corporate board rooms. He pursued his passion and founded ASBM University, a reputed educational institution in the country. There are many achievements and awards to his credit for his devotion to education. In an interaction with

Orissa POST, Pattanayak, Founder & Group Director of ASBM, spoke about his journey as an educator. Excerpts...



■ How was the idea of ASBM born?

■ I started my career at SAIL working as an occupational management psychologist at Rourkela Steel Plant. Because of my love for and interest in teaching, I decided to switch over to academics. I was selected as assistant professor at National Institute of Industrial Engineering (NITIE, Mumbai), Government of India. There, I was privileged to train more than 1,000 top executives from more than 200 reputed companies. Later, I moved to Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow and was the founding Chairperson of the Management Development Programme there. I also worked for ESSAR Group as its HR Head, then in IIM - Indore and thereafter I was the Director of Indian Institute of Bank Management, Guwahati, an RBI Institute.

I strongly believe that when somebody is in the prime of his/her career, he/she should look back to the origin and try to do something for his/her own state. Since I was in the field of management education, I thought of creating opportunity to provide such education to the students of Odisha. Because of this passion, I resigned from the director's post and returned to Odisha to become an educational entrepreneur, or edupreneur. The news shocked my friends, acquaintances and well-wishers, because entrepreneurship was frowned upon in those days. But I came here precisely because of my thought process. Leaving the cozy positions that I held was a great challenge, by God's grace and with the support of my friends, my vision became a reality in 2006 and ASBM was established.

■ How did you earn the name of 'Lagaan Professor'?

■ It is a very interesting story. Once I went to a theatre to watch the movie 'Lagaan'. I found that the entire gamut of organisational behaviour and human resource management was depicted nicely in that story. It is necessary for a leader to spot talent and then manage it effectively for organisational success, as Amir Khan did in the film. So, while watching it, suddenly an idea struck me that

the story could be used to teach management education. I developed the case study and used it first in the classroom of IIM-Indore. My students liked it very much and the case study became internationally popular. I have conducted the 'Lagaan Workshop' for many corporate houses. I also conducted this workshop in an international conference in China at the invitation of the American Psychological Association. Because of this, my students and also my colleagues started calling me as the 'Lagaan Professor'.

It is very satisfying for me as a teacher, when I think out-of-the-box. This, in fact, has led to the International Teaching Excellence Award that has been bestowed on me by Accredited Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), USA.

■ Do you think Indian education system focuses on exams rather than learning?

■ Education enlightens you with knowledge; that knowledge has to be translated into skills, and skills into competence. I think examinations should be there to evaluate the competence. But learning shouldn't be examination-centric. The students should not learn only to fetch marks in the examination. Apart from examination, the students should prioritise learning and knowledge acquisition. For this to happen, we all need to create an environment of learning.

■ Do we need a revised education system to boost employability?

■ Unfortunately, employability-

ity is pretty low now because of the present emphasis on theoretical perspective with bookish knowledge without understanding the practical implications. The New Education Policy is very much pragmatic and can give a boost to learning along with employability. What is important now is its proper execution. One more thing - coaching centres should be abolished, and the students should have a parallel integrated journey along with their academic curricula.

To give an example, we use an integrated 'Finishing School' model in ASBM. When new students enter the university, we map them for their language proficiency and conduct psychometric test to understand their attitude. Then we keep on imparting training along with classroom education. At the end, full dress rehearsal is held by inviting the recruiters to conduct mock interviews. This prepares the students to face the actual recruitment process with confidence. This is why our placement record is excellent from the inception.

■ How does ASBM handle stress on students?

■ The present generation is very ambitious. The students are knowledgeable and informative. The only thing that they lack is focus. We address this concern by appointing mentors. Each teacher works as a mentor to a small group of students. We also organise multiple activities for the students to engage them and reduce their stress. Even during this pandemic and lockdowns, ASBM has conducted the highest number of webinars in the country and also online certificate courses.



24 probe panels formed in 20 yrs

OUT OF 24, REPORTS OF 13 PANELS HAVE BEEN LAID BEFORE THE STATE ASSEMBLY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: The Home department has constituted 24 judicial panels during past 20 years for probe into various cases and incidents in the state.

In a written reply to a question raised by Rengali MLA Nauri Nayak, Home (MoS) Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra said that the government has set up 24 judicial commissions of inquiries since 2000. The minister informed the House that the judicial panels were formed for investigation into the cases including po-

lice firing at Gumudumaha village, chit fund scam, setting up of permanent benches of Orissa High Court and Puri Jagannath Temple Ratna Bhandar missing keys.



Out of 24, reports of 13 panels have been laid before the Assembly while the inquiry of three commissions has been closed before the panel submitted the reports.

The closed down cases are - confrontation between police and Puri bar association members occurred in 2001, police firing at Rangabhati and Raigarh villages in

MoS HOME REPORT

Reports submitted by eight panels yet to be laid before Assembly

Govt received final reports from 20 commissions and interim reports from another

Inquiry of three commissions closed before submission of reports

Nabarangpur district in 2001 and police firing at Bhuban in Dhenkanal district in 2009.

Similarly, the government is still examining the reports of the com-

mission set up for Kandhamal violence (2007), setting up of High Court permanent benches at different places, Pipili 'gangrape' case (2011), police firing at Gumudumaha village (2016), SUM hospital fire incident (2016) and missing of Ratna Bhandar keys.

Moreover, the government has not laid the final reports of seven commissions of inquiry and interim reports of commission to probe unauthorised collection of public deposits in the state before the Assembly, he said.

As per the data provided by Mishra, excluding the chit fund commission (which has submitted 7 interim reports), all remaining 19 commissions have submitted their reports.

VIG BOOKS 562 BABUS IN 6 YRS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: The Vigilance Directorate has registered corruption cases against 562 government employees over the past six years, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik told the Assembly, Monday.

In a written reply to a question raised by Malkangiri MLA Aditya Madhi, Patnaik, who holds the Home portfolio, said that 541 Vigilance cases have been filed against 562 employees for possession of disproportionate assets from 2015 to 2020.

The total worth of movable and immovable properties listed by Vigilance in these cases is more than Rs 626.23 crore, Naveen said.

Patnaik said that chargesheets have been filed against 14 govern-

ment employees and final reports have been submitted in five cases. An investigation into 522 cases against 543 government employees is in progress while departmental action has been recommended against 344 government servants, the CM mentioned.

Out of the listed assets, some have been frozen while others are in the custody of the accused or their family members, Naveen added.

The Vigilance has also frozen the deposits of the accused with the financial institutions. Out of the seized cash, some amount has been left in the custody of the accused or their family members to meet emergency expenses while the remaining amount has been deposited in the nationalised banks under the 'Deposit at Call' account, Patnaik said.

BJP urges CM to regret paddy procurement lapses

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: Pandemonium continued in the Assembly for third day, Monday as both opposition and ruling party members stalled the proceedings throughout the day.

Treasury bench members demanded unconditional apology from BJP MLA Subhas Panigrahi for attempting suicide in the House last Friday, while the saffron party members asked Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to express regret for his government's "inability" to ensure smooth procurement of paddy from farmers despite assurances.

As soon as the House assembled for question hour at 10:30 am, ruckus erupted with lawmakers of the ruling BJD and opposition parties engaging in slogan shouting in the well of the House.



■ DEADLOCK CONTINUES IN HOUSE FOR ANOTHER DAY

■ BJD DEMANDS BJP MLA'S APOLOGY FOR SUICIDE ATTEMPT INSIDE ASSEMBLY

Patro first adjourned the House till 11:30am and later till the post lunch session at 4pm. With no improvement in the situation in post lunch session, the House witnessed

adjournments for several times and was adjourned till Tuesday morning.

BJD members led by party general secretary (organisation) and

Jajpur MLA Pranab Prakash Das, trooped into the well of the House demanding apology from the BJP member for creating a bad precedent by attempting suicide inside the House.

"We will not allow the House to function till the BJP MLA tenders apology. He has brought down the dignity of the august House. The BJP members are trying to take political mileage by making such an (suicide bid) attempt," government chief whip Pramila Mallick said outside the House.

The government is ready to resolve the paddy procurement issue through discussion, he said.

Leader of Opposition PK Naik (BJP) said there was no question of his party colleague apologising. "Instead, the Chief Minister should regret his government's failure to address the genuine problems faced by the farmers, who are not able to

sell their paddy in mandis despite the government's assurance."

Naik also sought clarification from the Chief Minister as to why the ministers went to the well of the House, Friday.

There is no attempt to bring back normalcy. The Speaker has not convened an all-party meeting despite ruckus for the third consecutive day, he said. The BJP leader also denounced Patro's remark outside the House.

Congress whip Taraprasad Bahinipati, who displayed some placards in the House, blamed both BJD and BJP for the situation. "It is laughable that both BJD and BJP are demanding apology from each other, while farmers' problems are not addressed," he said.

Bahinipati said Congress will not allow the House to function unless farmers' paddy are totally procured by the government.

MMDR Bill tabled in Parl kicks up row

KULDEEP SINGH, OP

New Delhi, March 15: The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Amendment Bill, 2021, introduced in the Lok Sabha Monday, laid provision for bringing utilisation and composition of District Mineral Foundation (DMF) fund under the purview of the Union government.

The Bill introduced by Union Minister of Coal and Mines Pralhad Joshi seeks to amend the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 which empowered the state government to prescribe functions of DMF. Among the amendments in several provisions, the Bill seeks to amend section 9B of the principal act to empower the Union government to issue directions regarding composition and utilisation of fund by the DMF.

"After sub-section (3), the following proviso shall be inserted, namely: Provided that the Central Government may give directions regarding composition and utilisation of fund by the District Mineral Foundation," reads the Bill introduced in Lok Sabha Monday.

However, the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, empowers the state governments to prescribe the composition and functions of the DMF. The sub-section 3 of section 9B of MMDR Act 1957 states that the composition and functions of the foundation shall be such as may be prescribed by the state government.

Earlier, Orissa POST had in August reported that the Centre is planning to make changes in the rules of District Mineral Foundation.

Chaudhry assumes charge as ADG, PIB

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: Rajinder Chaudhry, a senior Indian Information Service (IIS) officer, Monday assumed the charge of the Additional Director General (ADG) of Press Information Bureau (PIB), Odisha region.

He will be heading the PIB, Bhubaneswar and Regional Outreach Bureau (ROB), Bhubaneswar.

He will also be acting as the Additional Press Registrar of RNI. Prior to his current charge as the ADG, Chaudhry was the Chief Media Officer in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

WASSUP TODAY

BHUBANESWAR

- 34th 'Shradhanjali Samaroh' by Tridhara, Rabindra Mandap, 9am onwards
- Rally and protest by 'Sakhyara Bharat Karmachari', Master Canteen Square to Assembly, 11am
- Demonstration by Nilachal Executive Association, Lower PMG, 11am
- 'Krushi Odisha', Biju Patnaik Playground, Baramunda, 3.30pm
- Inaugural occasion of 13th Kalinga Herbal Mela, Idco Exhibition Ground, 5.30pm
- 'Sahitya Samaroh' by Bhubaneswar Bhanja Bharati, Sookhana Bhawan, 6pm
- Birth anniversary celebration of poet Dr. Prasanna Mishra, Jay Bharat Bhawan, Nicco Park Square, 6pm
- Inauguration of electric vehicle by Morris Garage (MG), near Apex Institute of Technology, Pahal, 6pm

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

SHRINKING POWER OF STATES



THE BILL SEEKS TO AMEND SECTION 9B OF THE PRINCIPAL ACT TO EMPOWER THE UNION GOVERNMENT TO ISSUE DIRECTIONS REGARDING COMPOSITION AND UTILISATION OF FUND BY THE DMF

CONGRESS MP SHASHI THAROOR OPPOSED THE INTRODUCTION OF THE BILL SAYING THAT THE BILL IS VIOLATIVE OF ARTICLE 48 (A) OF THE CONSTITUTION

The objective of the foundation is to work for the interest and benefit of persons, and areas affected by mining related operations in the manner prescribed by the state government. The DMFs have been directed to take all major decisions in a participatory mode, in consultation with gram sabhas of the respective villages

It is to be mentioned here that the objective of the foundation is to work for the interest and benefit of persons, and areas affected by mining related operations in the manner prescribed by the state government. The DMFs have been directed to take all major decisions in a participatory mode, in consultation with gram sabhas of the respective villages.

The holder of a mining lease, in addition to the royalty, pays to the District Mineral Foundation of the district in which the mining operations are carried on, an amount which is equivalent to the percentage of the royalty if the lease has not been granted through auction and 25 per cent of the royalty, if the lease has been granted

through auction.

Significantly, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor opposed the introduction of the Bill saying that the Bill is violative of Article 48 (A) of the Constitution because it fails to acknowledge the adverse impact on environment and biodiversity by stipulating automatic transfer of rights, approvals, clearances and licences from previous lease holders to the new owners.

He also said the Bill impinges upon the federal structural of the state as prescribed by the Constitution by awarding the power to the Union government alone to auction of mines owned by the states thereby encroaching upon the rights exercised by the state to hold auctions.

Naveen's pat for Delhi Flying Club

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 15: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday lauded the Delhi Flying Club for celebrating the 105th birth centenary of former chief minister Biju Patnaik by dedicating March 5 every year to honour and recognize legendary pilots of the country.

Patnaik said Delhi Flying Club is an iconic flying institution of India from where Biju Babu received his flying licence.

The people of Odisha and India owe to the Delhi Flying Club for adventures of Biju Babu in aviation. I thank Dr BB L Madhukar for revitalising the memories of Biju Babu as an aviator. Biju Babu continues to be a great source of inspiration for all of us," Patnaik said.



Patnaik also said that former chief minister Biju Patnaik always encouraged everyone to stand strong for the weak and disadvantaged in the face of strong adversity.

"We will always endeavour to fulfill his dreams, his ambitions to recreate the glory of Kalinga. I wish the Delhi flying Club all the best in its endeavour for serving the nation", Patnaik said.

FOR A CLEANER & BETTER CUTTACK



Housing and Urban Development Minister Pratap Jena allots a vending zone stall to a makeshift shopkeeper at an event organised by the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) at Saheed Bhawan in the Silver City, Monday. Barabati-Cuttack MLA Mohammed Moquim and other dignitaries are seen. According to CMC commissioner Ananya Das, as many as 106 shopkeepers allotted stalls on the first day



ODISHA IN PARLIAMENT

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 15: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Amar Patnaik Monday urged the Centre to establish an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Sundargarh as it would help provide quality tertiary care in the backward areas of western Odisha.

Speaking during the Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha, the BJD MP said that the state government had urged the Centre to set up an AIIMS in Sundargarh district. "Since Bihar has already got its second AIIMS and a similar proposal is under consideration in another state, it is proposed that a second AIIMS may be considered at Sundargarh too," Patnaik told the Upper House.

"Despite being the second largest district in Odisha, Sundargarh has

the second highest tribal population in the state—50.7 per cent. Scheduled

Castes also constitute a large proportion of the district's population and have reported a much higher incidence of poverty. The majority of farmers in the district are marginal with an average operational holding of 0.59 hectare. Thus, establishing a second AIIMS in Odisha [at Sundargarh] would cater to the healthcare needs of the vulnerable population," Patnaik said.

Patnaik told the House that the institution of national repute will promote medical education in the area. The infrastructure available at Sundargarh can be utilised for setting up AIIMS, and the Centre may not immediately have to invest in in-

The infrastructure available at Sundargarh can be utilised for setting up AIIMS, and the Centre may not immediately have to invest in infrastructure

AMAR PATNAIK | BJD MP

rastructure, the BJD MP pointed out.

"As part of a CSR initiative, an MoU has already been signed between the Odisha government and National Thermal Power Corporation Limited to establish a medical college and hospital. The construction of the project has been completed and the equipment procurement process is underway. The hospital is designed for 500 beds and the college will be adequate enough to have 100 MBBS students. Additionally, the location will be suitable for setting up AIIMS as it is easily accessible through road, railways and air," Patnaik further said.

Provide CGHS facilities to freedom fighters: Mahtab

BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab Monday urged the Union government to provide Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) facilities to freedom fighters and also check whether they are getting the benefits under the scheme. Speaking during the Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, the BJD MP said that people from all walks of life participated in the freedom struggle, the MP added. Around 10 lakh people were jailed and many people faced atrocities for taking part in Freedom movement. Mahtab also said that very few freedom fighters are alive and urged the government to provide CGHS benefits to unmarried children and widows of freedom fighters.

Nanda demands classical status to Odissi music

BJD MP Prashanta Nanda Monday urged the Union government to grant classical status to Odissi music.

Speaking during Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha, Nanda said historical evidences suggest that music and dance were being seriously pursued under royal patronage right from 2nd Century BC and by around 10th Century AD in Odisha.

"Odissi music had crystallized into a distinctive classical form. The treatises unmistakably point to the fact that Odissi is one among the few schools of classical music. It has a distinctive system of Raga and Taala and a characteristic style of rendition that is lyrical in its

movement with wave-like ornamentations. The tradition always has two components written and oral," Nanda said.

The BJD MP further stated that Odissi music is the finest reconciliation of harmony with melody which loses nothing of the essential quality of the classical music.

"The individualist character of Odissi music makes every recital an enjoyable exercise in interpretation and self expression. It has its core Ragas of its own. Bharat Natyashastra also mentioned about Udra Magadhi Prabutti which is Odissi. Athatali is unique to Odissi music. It is nowhere in any other classical music," Nanda said.

CP releases WhatsApp no to rein in street crimes

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: The Commissionerate Police Monday released a WhatsApp number urging the denizens to send information related to street crimes in order to curb the rising robbery and snatching incidents in the Capital city.

Speaking to Orissa POST, DCP Umashankar Dash said that people can send the videos and images or any information regarding the crimes taking place in their localities on the WhatsApp number, 7077798111. They can also share im-

People can send videos and images or any information regarding the crimes taking place in their localities on the WhatsApp number, 7077798111

portant details of the criminals related to snatching and robbery with police through the number.

The victims can also send their complaints through the WhatsApp

number. The identity of the sender and the complainant will be kept secret.

He also said that the special squads created at each police station in the city have succeeded in arresting 25 snatchers and recovered around 30 mobile phones during the last couple of days.

Dash revealed that database containing interrogation report, pictures of criminals and other details about criminals arrested in various cases during the last five years has been kept at the Special Cell, 'Property Offense Cell'.

Over 1L vaccinated on single day

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: Achieving a significant milestone in Covid-19 vaccination, the state has inoculated over 1 lakh senior citizens and people with comorbidities Monday alone.

As per Health department data, 95,576 persons above the age of 60 and 4,697 persons in the age group of 45 to 59 years (having comorbidities) got the Covid-19 jabs in the state Monday.

There were 927 active sites in the state out of which Covaxin was administered at 46 sessions. Altogether 1,21,572 persons including 5,320 healthcare workers and 15,979 frontline workers got the jab.

With this, a total of 12,81,362 persons have received Covid-19 vaccine in the state, so far.

State's Covid-19 tally mounted to 3,38,258 after 66 more people tested positive for the virus Monday, as the state completed one year of its battle against the pandemic, a Health department official said, adding that the positivity rate of Odisha stands at 3.91 per cent.

NAVEEN UNVEILS 'DBT-ILS BIO-INCUBATOR' IN CITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the 'DBT-ILS Bio-incubator' at the Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) Campus II in Niladri Vihar area here through a virtual platform, Monday.

The bio-incubator has been established with support from Centre's Department of Biotechnology (DBT), state's Science and Technology department and Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC).

Appreciating the initiative, Naveen said that the bio-incubator will promote research and development in biotechnology. Besides, it would encourage the youth to take up entrepreneurship in biotechnology. He said that the startup policy of the state government would encourage business opportunity in the coastal state.

Science and Technology Minister Ashok Chandra Panda said that with impressive infrastructure and dedicated scientific manpower, ILS is well placed for taking up mega initiatives.

BJD bats for passenger train between Haridaspur & Paradip

Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP in Rajya Sabha Subhash Chandra Singh Monday urged the Union government to commence passenger train service from Haridaspur to Paradip via Kendrapara.



BJD MP Subhash Chandra Singh said that Odisha's seven districts are still not connected with train services even after 75 years after Independence

Speaking during Zero Hour in the upper house, the BJD MP said that seven districts of the state are still not connected with train services even after 75 years after Independence. "After 75 years of Independence, in seven districts out of 30 districts of Odisha, there is no train connectivity; there is no train facility. Work on the new train line from Haridaspur to Paradip via Kendrapada is already over and commercial train has been allowed on this line by the Railway Ministry," Singh said. "I request the Railway Ministry to sanction passenger train to Kendrapara because thousands of workers go from Kendrapara to Paradip for day-to-day work. I demand and request the ministry to sanction passenger train from Haridaspur to Paradip via Kendrapara," Singh said.

BJD urges Centre to release paddy subsidy

New Delhi: A delegation of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MPs Monday met Union Minister for Food Piyush Goyal and demanded expediting the process of lifting paddy from the state and clear pending subsidy of Rs 5,616 crore to the state. In a memorandum submitted to Goyal, the BJD MPs said that the state has suffered a cumulative loss of about Rs 1,721.16 crore due to delay in release of subsidy. "The Centre has refused to bear this burden," MPs said. "Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation (OSCS) has so far borrowed a staggering Rs 19,000 crore to run the paddy procurement programme as the Centre has not released subsidy. All resources including sanctioned limit of bank finances have been exhausted by OSCS. Non-release of subsidy in time leads to a huge interest burden on the OSCS," BJD submitted in the memorandum.



Department of Bio Technology's Secretary, Renu Swarup, said that the Union government and DBT are taking several initiatives for promoting startups and entrepreneurship in biotechnology. The ILS bio-incubator will play a major role in biotechnology in coming days, she said.

ILS director Ajay Parida said that the bio-incubator will have 10,000 sqft incubation space and dedicated scientific instrumentation for carrying out research in the field of agriculture, healthcare, diagnosis, devices and value addition and food processing.

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Delay in land acquisition hits work on Ekalavya School



REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION HAS IDENTIFIED 15 ACRES AT CHANDNIMAL VILLAGE IN THE BLOCK. OVER 15 TRIBAL FAMILIES RESIDE ON THIS LAND BUT THE ADMINISTRATION IS YET TO DISPLACE THEM AND TRANSFER THE LAND FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE SCHOOL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, March 15: The decision to set up an Ekalavya Model Residential School in Jujumura block of this district received a setback after the construction of the proposed institution was excluded from the tender process called March 4, a report said. Ekalavya Model Residential School aims to improve education of students in the tribal-dominated regions of the country. The scheme has been taken up for implementation by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs. In 2018-19, the ministry had announced to set up such schools in blocks where the population of the tribals is either 20,000 or more than 50 per cent of the total population. The Jujumura block in Sambalpur district was included in the scheme for setting up one such school. The process for building the proposed school was launched two years back.

However, to the utter surprise of Jujumura block residents, the school did not feature in the list of identified sites when the tender was floated March 4. This has sparked resentment among the residents in the block and the district. Notably, a plan outlay of ₹18 crore has been sanctioned for construction of the Ekalavya Model School. The school and hostel buildings will be constructed on 3.5 acres, while the playground, staff quarters and garden will be constructed on the remaining land. The Bridge and Roof-Co India has floated the tender. The last date for submission of the tender was March 1, while the tender was opened March 4. This has happened due to problem in transfer of land for establishing the school. It is apprehended that delay in establishment of the school might affect the future of tribal students who were expecting to get admitted in this school. Sources said that the district

FACT FILE

In 2018-19, the ministry had announced to set up such schools in blocks where the population of the tribals is either 20,000 or more than 50 per cent of the total population. The tribal dominated Jujumura block in Sambalpur district was included in the scheme

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administration has identified 15 acres at Chandnimal village in the block. Over 15 tribal families reside on this land but the administration is yet to displace them and transfer the land for construction of the school. However, revenue officials have claimed it as pasture land. Locals have questioned the wisdom behind the land acquisition. They said it will take a long time to convert such large amount of land before starting the construction works. When contacted, Jujumura tehsildar Suman Minz said the land was identified for the purpose before his joining. The tribal families residing on the land had initially protested against the move. Later, they relented after a decision was taken to provide four decimal of land to each tribal family for their rehabilitation. He said even though these are pasture land but the land conversion and other works has reached the final stage.



Even as coronavirus continues to spread unabatedly, lakhs thronged the famous Shiva shrine of Chandaneshwar in Bhogarai of Balasore district on the first Monday of Hindu month of Chaitra in violation of Covid norms

OP PHOTO

Over ₹2.8cr water tax due from Balasore residents

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, March 15: Owing to staff crunch, water taxes to the tune of over ₹2.8 crore have been outstanding against the residents of Balasore town in this district, an official source informed Monday. Even as many of the local residents do not pay their respective bills in this regard, the Balasore Public Health department has failed to collect the outstanding amounts leading to the deficit situation. According to a source, nearly 1,63,000 residents consume around 22 million litres of drinking water in Balasore town every



day. Accordingly, groundwater lifted from 74 deep wells is being supplied to the local denizens through five overhead and 13 underground tanks.

The tanks have a total storage capacity of 80 million litres of drinking water. The drinking water is being supplied to over 14,368 consumers through pipelines, of which 208 consumers are commercial and other establishments and 14,160 are individual families. Water taxes have been fixed at ₹106 per month for well-to-do families, at ₹52 per month for BPL families including those coming under national food security yojana and at ₹346 per month for industrial houses as well as commercial establishments. The consumers are supposed to pay their respective water bills by

the 10th day of every month, a departmental official said. On being contacted, the department executive engineer Pareswar Jena said, "We are passing through severe staff crunch and have no way out for collection of payments. The state government has sought assistance of self-help groups (SHGs) for the collection of water taxes and supply of drinking water to authorised consumers as well." "Hence, we will engage one active member from each local SHG as 'Jala Sathi' for the purpose. Accordingly, 14 persons will be appointed in Balasore town," the executive engineer added.

Tutor arrested for beating minor students

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, March 15: A home tutor was arrested Sunday evening for allegedly beating two Class III students at Purusottampur under Marshaghai police limits in Kendrapara district. The arrested tutor was identified as Rajendra Rout. Rout was nabbed by Marshaghai police following an FIR lodged by one of the guardians earlier in the day. The arrested was forwarded to a local court, an official of the police station informed. According to a source, two 9-year-old boys, Manabadiitya Dash and Abhishek Parida, failed to answer a question asked by the tutor. All of a sudden Rout got irritated and started beating them up with a plastic pipe. Both the students sustained injuries on their back and hands. Later, the two minor boys were admitted to Marshaghai community health centre (CHC) by their guardians for treatment.

Model bus stand remains a distant dream

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, March 14: Five years have passed since a model bus stand was envisaged for the ever-increasing populace of Dhenkanal town. But the project has not progressed at all due to non-availability of a suitable location. The old bus stand is hardly meeting the requirements of the passengers and they face problems on a daily basis. Resentment among the residents of the town as well as frequent commuters are building up against the local administration as it is not making a whole-hearted effort to construct a modern bus terminus. Dhenkanal is very important from the political, administrative and industry perspectives. A number of industries have set up their units in this district and there are national level institutions like the IIMC. If the tourism potential is taken into consideration, the district has several attractive destinations including Kapilas and Saptasjya.



Dhenkanal town being the district headquarters, all the important offices are located here. Every day thousands of people from Jajpur, Keonjhar, Angul and Cuttack visit this town. So the lack of a proper and modernised bus terminus is causing lots of problems to the commuters. Realising the problems, the Odisha government had decided to set up a model bus stand in the town. Accordingly the plan for an ultra modern bus stand was laid out by Dhenkanal Regional Improvement Trust (DRIT). Five acre of land at Mahishapat was identified where

it would be built. However, before the project could take off, it hit a road block. It was learnt that the area identified is used by the district administration to host the annual 'Pallishree Mela' during Laxmi Puja. So, the search for a suitable place started again. Another five acre located in front of RTO office was selected. But later it was learnt that Reliance has got the land on lease basis. So far, no alternative land has so far been found for the proposed bus stand. The tehsil department has informed the collector about the present situation of the project.

The information has also been passed on to the OSRTC. Amid all this, the existing bus stand is nothing short of a headache to the commuters due to lack of maintenance and facilities. The OSRTC officials have visited the bus stand to take stock of the situation. However, since then there has been no further progress. When contacted, Collector Bhumesh Chandra Behera said the concerned authority has been intimated to find out the present status of the land in front of the RTO office. We will decide our next step after receiving the report from OSRTC. PWD Minister Prafulla Mallick meanwhile said a meeting will soon be convened between the OSRTC Secretary, other officials and the Collector to find out a solution for the proposed bus stand. "The OSRTC land close to National Highway-55 will be given priority. After getting to know about the lease status, the future course of action will be decided," the minister said.

LOCALS LOCK UP ALUMINIUM PLANT OVER JOBS, DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, March 15:irate locals locked up four gates of Aditya Aluminium plant protesting against jobs given to outsiders in the firm and the company's failure to resolve the drinking water problem and bad road conditions, Monday. The protestors alleged that the company is spending the funds under its corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme elsewhere instead of using it for the benefit of the local residents.

The residents, under the banner of Veer Surendra Sai Anchalik Suraksha Samiti, staged a sit-in to press for fulfillment of their demands. As a result, transportation of goods from the plant was severely hit for over eight hours from 8am till 4pm. The agitators relented only after the HR head of the company Bibekananda Mishra and Sweta Upadhaya, Rengali tehsildar Tunu Meher and SDPO Tapan Mohanty reached the spot and assured to look into their demands. A local resident, Kiran Behera, alleged that the residents lost their

land and everything during the establishment of the plant. The company had promised to provide jobs to the locals but went back on its promises. Block chairperson Satya Narayan Agarwal said that the company has even failed to resolve the drinking water problem in 16 panchayats. When contacted, company's HR head Bibekananda Mishra said the company is providing employment opportunities to the locals and drinking water to the residents. The rest of the problems will be resolved through discussions, he added.

Trawler owner shot dead in broad daylight

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, March 15: A trawler owner was shot dead by masked miscreants over suspected past enmity at Naupalagadi near Balaramgadi river mouth under the Marine police limits in the district, Monday. The deceased was identified as Bijay Kumar Pradhan, a former sarpanch of Baincha panchayat and a resident of Ghodapada village. The incident occurred when Pradhan was supervising unloading of fish from one of his trawlers at Naupalagadi in the afternoon. Fishermen were unloading fish from a trawler when four to five

youths reached the spot on two bikes and had tiff with him on some issues. The unidentified youths suddenly attacked him with sharp-edged weapons. Marine police IIC Gopal Chandra Singh said. Pradhan tried to save himself by running inside his trawler when the miscreants fired four rounds of bullets on his chest and neck before absconding. Pradhan collapsed on the spot. Police reached the spot and took him to the district headquarters hospital where doctors pronounced him dead on arrival. Police have registered a case and launched a manhunt to nab the culprits, Singh said.

Dhenkanal Forest dept banking on technology to contain wildfires

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, March 15: In order to reinforce its fight against wild fires and make it more precise and accurate, the Dhenkanal Forest department has been provided with two ultra-modern drones equipped with theromo-censor cameras. These drones, each costing ₹8,60,000, will help the Forest department personnel identify fire points in the jungle. Besides having a speaker, these drones have the facility to measure temperature. It can take also take accurate pictures from a height of 700 metres. The most striking feature of these drones is that they can identify fire spots accurately in the dark as well. According to Forest department sources, the employees have been trained to fly the drones. The de-



TACKLING FOREST FIRES

The Dhenkanal Forest department has been provided with two ultra-modern drones equipped with theromo-censor cameras. These drones, each costing ₹8,60,000, will help the Forest department personnel identify fire points in the jungle. The most striking feature of these drones is that they can identify fire spots accurately in the dark as well

partment is presently using only one drone for Kapilas Sanctuary. It is being used once every two hours. The second one has been kept at the DFO office. It will be pressed into service in emergency cases only. At the same time, the department

is using a manual drone to keep a watch on Charakhola Reserve Forest and Paniohala hill near the town. Since this drone can only take pictures during the day when sufficient light is available. The newly procured thermo-censor drone is being used to keep a watch

Prakash Chand Gogeneni said, "We are using the manual drone over Charakhola reserve forest and Paniohala during the day when sufficient light is available. The newly procured thermo-censor drone is being used to keep a watch

on forest fires in Kapilas sanctuary. I am also receiving training on how to fly this drone." Notably, forest fires had engulfed forests in Kapilas sanctuary, Hindol range, Sarangi range, Kankadahada forest area and Bhuban forest areas. The forests near towns like Paniohala, Charakhola and Megha Reserve Forests did not escape from wild fires as well. During summer the wild fires are assuming dangerous proportions. At places, fire particles are blown into nearby villages causing threat to properties. To check wild fire incidents, the forest department has taken steps several steps including patrolling and creating awareness among the members of Vana Suraksha Samiti and villagers living close to jungles.

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HANDICRAFTS MELA

ତାରିଖ : ୧୩ ରୁ ୨୨ ମାର୍ଚ୍ଚ, ୨୦୨୧

Date : 13th to 22nd March, 2021

Opening Time : 2 pm to 9 pm

ସ୍ଥାନ : ରକ୍ତ ବଜାର, ସେକ୍ଟର-୫, ରାଉରକେଲା

Venue : Bhanja Bhawan, Sector-5, Raurakela

ORISSA STATE AIDS CONTROL SOCIETY (OSACS)

(Department of Health & Family Welfare), Government of Odisha

No. 934/OSACS Dated: 12.03.2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR LABORATORY INSTRUMENTS

No. CAD-1534:- Orissa State AIDS Control Society (OSACS), invites sealed tenders from authorized manufacturers/ distributors/ approved dealers having valid GST registration for supply of different Laboratory Instruments for different Care support Treatment (CST) Center. The list of items along with venue and other detailed terms and conditions are available in the website www.osacs.nic.in, which can be downloaded for use. Interested parties may submit their tender super-scribing as "Tender for supply & Installation of Laboratory Instruments for OSACS" to the undersigned through Speed Post / Registered Post / Courier only which should reach on or before **12.00 Noon of 30.03.2021** positively and the same will be opened at **12.30 P.M.** of the same date by the committee in presence of the participants. The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all the tender without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./- Project Director
Orissa State AIDS Control Society,
(Department of Health & Family Welfare), Govt. of Odisha
2nd Floor, Oil Orissa Building, F-Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751009/11/0006/2021

“

Let all circumstances, all happenings in life be occasions, constantly renewed for learning more and ever more.

THE MOTHER

BENGAL, IT IS

The run-up to the Assembly polls in West Bengal has grabbed national headlines for the fierce fight being witnessed between the ruling Trinamool Congress and the BJP. It is more so because of the injuries Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee sustained hours after she filed her nomination from the Nandigram constituency on March 10. The BJP is out to capture the state without which, as the party top leadership has declared, its victory remains incomplete. As such, the Bengal election is not simply about one single state, but its fallout will have ramifications in national politics as well. This does not hold good for the elections to three other states and one Union Territory – Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Pondicherry - which are going to polls at the same time but not in the same manner.

Many in this country expressed happiness on hearing that a large state like Tamil Nadu and a populous state like Kerala could hold polling on one single day. That demonstrated the expertise and efficiency which the Election Commission of India (EC) is capable of. However, in the case of West Bengal, the polling that will be held in eight phases demonstrates how shamelessly the same EC is playing to the tune of the BJP. No doubt, Assam too, has polling in three phases but that is understandable since a major part of that state has mountainous terrain. It is West Bengal which will be pivotal in deciding the future of democracy in India.

From the BJP's perspective, vanquishing Mamata Banerjee is more important than winning elections in the other states since she is the only politician in power whom the BJP is finding tough to tame, unlike most other Opposition leaders and non-BJP Chief Ministers. That apart, victory in Bengal Assembly elections could bring more Lok Sabha seats to the BJP's kitty in 2024 election. With the farmers' unrest, the BJP is seen to be losing ground in the Hindi belt. Admittedly, no other political party seems to be gaining the BJP's lost ground, yet the bosses have probably realized that states like West Bengal will become extremely important for their survival in power next time through. They cannot expect the same from the Southern states as the BJP is perceived as an alien pro-Hindi force down there.

A subplot to this electoral drama is the ideological-tactical clash between the CPI-M and the Naxalite outfit CPI-ML on the issue of opposing the BJP and the Trinamool which requires deeper understanding of both those parties' stand regarding Mamata and Modi.

Four days after suffering injuries at Nandigram, Mamata Banerjee is back on the campaign trail, participating in a Kolkata rally on a wheelchair. What is amazing is the statement issued by the EC claiming that Mamata's injuries were accidental and not a result of any attack. It must be noted that such reports can only be generated by the supposedly impartial 'EC Observers'. These observers are primarily in-service IAS and IPS officers from other states who are expected to be truthful and uninvolved in their assignment which includes overseeing the process of campaigning, account management as well as actual polling. It is well known to all those who have contested elections as serious candidates that the worst kind of mischief is played by these very same holier than thou observers. Therefore, the EC's statements pertaining to West Bengal should always be taken with a handful of salt.

WISDOM CORNER

- “

Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough.

OPRAH WINFREY
- “

If you get up in the morning and think the future is going to be better, it is a bright day. Otherwise, it's not.

ELON MUSK
- “

An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come.

VICTOR HUGO

WORDSWORTH

■ Meteoric rise

The idiom does sound like a contradiction. However, when we look into the history of meteoric, it isn't as silly as it sounds. To start with, the phrase meteoric rise is a lot older than you might think. It starts to appear in print in the 1860s, though there are hints that it may be older. Since then, the phrase has itself rapidly risen in popularity and has become a cliché best avoided. This is an early example: He [Lord Byron] called himself, in one of his poems, “The grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme;” and there is some similarity between the suddenness and splendour of his literary career and the meteoric rise and domination of the First Bonaparte (A Complete Manual of English Literature, by Thomas Budd Shaw, 1865). Older forms are meteoric career, known from the early part of the century (for example, in A Year in Europe by John Griscom, dated 1823), and meteoric talent, which is recorded from 1833. These and your form are all based on a figurative sense of meteoric that came into existence about 1820. One reason why the expression now seems wrong is that we've lost a key part of the image in the minds of these early users. For them, something meteoric began unexpectedly and spectacularly but soon sputtered and died. People had in mind the sudden appearance and transient brilliance of a meteor streaking across the night sky. By implication, a meteoric rise was swiftly followed by a meteoric fall that led to extinction of talent or reputation. Both rise and fall here are themselves figurative, with no implication of physical direction, though part of the idea behind it may have been that a meteor appearing low in the sky seems to rise as it travels towards the zenith. We will leave it to psychologists of language to explain why we should now stress the rise and not the fall. Incidentally, meteor derives from a Greek word meaning raised or lofty. Its first sense in English was of any atmospheric phenomenon, hence meteorology for the study of the atmosphere and weather. Meteors were divided into several classes: an aerial meteor might be a cloud; watery meteors were rain, snow, hail and the like; a 1576 translation of a work by Erasmus mentioned “hoar frosts and such like cold meteors”. A fiery meteor might be a shooting star but could also be lightning. However, from quite early on, meteor by itself came to refer specifically to the bright streak caused by an extra-terrestrial object heated to incandescence in the upper atmosphere.

LOL

How far to the town?

A unit of soldiers was marching a long dusty march across the rolling prairie. It was a hot blistering day and the men, longing for water and rest, were impatient to reach the next town. A rancher rode past. “Say, friend,” called out one of the men, “how far is it to the next town?” “Oh, a matter of two miles or so, I reckon,” called back the rancher. Another long hour dragged by, and another rancher was encountered.



“How far to the next town?” the men asked him eagerly. “Oh, a good two miles.” A nearly half hour longer of marching, and then a third rancher. “Hey, how far’s the next town?” “Not far,” was the encouraging answer, “only about two miles.” “Well,” sighed the optimistic sergeant, “thank God, we’re holding our own, anyhow!”

FOCUS EMPLOYMENT

OF JOBS & XENOPHOBIA



As such the topic of reservations is one of India's deep fault lines, but that is more applicable to social identity, not place of domicile

There seems to be a sudden epidemic of sorts, to legislate jobs for locals, in various States of India. Most recently the State cabinet of Jharkhand approved of a policy to reserve 75 per cent of the jobs in the private sector for local residents only. These are all jobs that pay less than ₹30,000 a month. While this is not official yet, it is likely to be announced during the ongoing budget session of Jharkhand legislature. This comes barely a fortnight after Haryana passed a similar law. The Haryana threshold is about ₹50,000 a month. Andhra Pradesh too has passed such a law in 2019. Many other states including Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Gujarat have all either announced, or are in the process of implementing policies to reserve jobs for locals. In Tamil Nadu which is among the five States heading for Assembly elections, the DMK has promised in its election manifesto that it would implement a policy of 75 per cent jobs reservation for Tamils, if elected to form government. Incidentally, the Haryana legislation also fulfilled a promise from the manifesto of one member of the ruling coalition.

What explains this epidemic? Firstly, it comes from a populist impulse, such as announcing freebies. But that does not mean it does not have popular support. Indeed, a national survey done by the Centre for Study of Developing Societies and Lokniti in 2017 revealed that nearly two third of the youth support the idea of job reservation for locals.

Somehow this idea has broad appeal. The second reason could be the weakness in the employment situation. Just after last year's lockdown, the unemployment rate had shot up to more than 30 per cent in April, with 122 million people losing their jobs. The hardest hit were migrant workers in cities, who are employed in construction, restaurants, malls, courier services etc. Most of these are in the informal sector, i.e. jobs which are not covered by health or retirement benefits. By July the unemployment rate had dropped below 10 per cent as per CMIE data. The September and December quarterly results of corporate India showed booming profitability

which is one of the reasons why the stock market is greatly enthused. Foreign direct investment flow has been handsome, and next year's outlook is for a growth of at least 11 per cent in GDP.

Why then is the employment situation not cheerful? That's because labour market fortunes are typically a lagging indicator of the health of the economy. It recovers the last. Just as the stock market is a leading indicator, i.e. it becomes bullish much before the actual economy starts recovering, the labour market pick up is seen much after other signals, such as industrial production, capacity utilisation, consumer spending and exports have improved substantially. In this sphere there is also an additional spectre of jobless growth. As per reports from the World Bank, nearly 70 per cent of India's manufacturing jobs are in danger of becoming obsolete or redundant due to automation. So, improvement in job prospects may take much longer than the speed of the economic revival. A third reason for the appeal of jobs for locals is inherent xenophobia. This is not unique to India or Indian States, but is universal. It was spectacularly manifest in the Brexit vote, when Britons thought that foreigners were taking away local jobs, and hence voted to secede from the European Union. The actual facts were much less damaging. If anything, the so-called foreign workers contribute to the local economy through their productivity, and by paying both consumption and income taxes.

In America too, the anti-migrant sentiment was exploited during the recent presidential election campaign. Of course, the fact is that the United States remains the most-friendly and accepting of immigrants among all developed economies. Indeed, 17.4 per cent of the US labour force is made up of foreign-born workers. Even then every campaign for a sons-of-soil policy, for job reservation, whips up this anti “outsider” sentiment. In the case of Haryana, one of the reasons given for justifying reservations was the proliferation of slums, presumably attributed to “outsiders” shifting to the State for work.

Despite the rhetoric and populist impulse, it is worth examining why this idea is ultimately infructuous or irrelevant. Firstly, it goes against the Constitution of India. In fact, it violates several fundamental rights, such as freedom to move anywhere, the right not to be discriminated on the basis of place of birth, the right to be treated equally before laws and

the right to pursue one's livelihood. These are enshrined variously in Articles 14, 15, 16 and 19 of the Constitution. Surely if the Haryana law is challenged in court, it will be declared unconstitutional. As such the topic of reservations is one of India's deep fault lines, but that is more applicable to social identity, not place of domicile.

Secondly, the actual data on inter-State migration shows that inter-State migration is relatively low in India. While the country may have an estimated 100 million migrants, most of them are intra-state not inter-state. As per 2011 census, India had only 5.6 crore inter-state migrants. They often bring skills, motivation, energy which may be in short supply or lacking locally. For instance, harvesting of crops like wheat and rice, or sugarcane is largely done by landless workers who are migrants. Construction labour too has a big migrants component. A third aspect to highlight is that free movement of labour partly compensates for the uneven economic progress of different States.

Inter-State divergence within India is a puzzling anomaly. One would have expected poorer States to grow more rapidly than richer States leading to some kind of convergence. The migration pattern is in some ways an equilibrium market outcome that partially smoothes out labour market rigidities. It also partially addresses the mismatch arising out of difference in ageing demographics of India. That is why we see migration from high fertility States to lower fertility States.

States like Kerala have instituted enlightened policies of training migrant workers in the local language (Malayalam) and also offering good education for their children. In the medium to long term there is no option but for a big national focus on education, skilling, training and enhancement of human capital, which can get us out of this scarcity mindset of rationing jobs for locals. Clearly this is not the appropriate domain of being “vocal for local”.

The writer is an economist and Senior Fellow, Takshashila Institution.

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SPECTRUM ENVIRONMENT

The menace of wildfires



Pradeep Kumar Nayak

THE RECENT INCIDENTS OF FOREST FIRES IN DIFFERENT REGIONS OF ODISHA HAVE EXPOSED OUR SHORTCOMINGS IN FACING NATURAL DISASTERS

The summer season is aptly dubbed “the fire season” because most of the tropical jungles the world over catch fire during this period. Wildfire, more often than not, results from exposure of dry leaves and wood to the torrid heat of the sun for a long period of time that usually ignites a spark. On the contrary, tribal people who practise ‘podu’ cultivation or ‘swiddening’ or slash and burn method of agriculture in hill terrains at times set fire to the dry leaves resulting in a destructive conflagration. Anyway, setting fire to the jungle amounts to ecocide that creates ecological disequilibrium and adversely affects the flora and fauna. Of late, forest fires in the Simlipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district, in the Ranipathar Ghat regions of Boudh and Kalinga Ghat forest belt of Kandhamal district have caused widespread panic among the people. The billowing smoke and the smouldering fire have considerably raised the temperature of the affected regions.

Phillip Connors, the former ed-



itor of The Wall Street Journal, in his book “The Fire Season” has vividly described the large-scale devastation caused by a jungle fire known as the McKnight Fire that took place in the Black Range Forest Range in the South West of America in 1951. This jungle fire destroyed 50,000 acres of forest cover and priceless bio-diversity. To quote Phillip Connors, “Jungle fires are malignant intruders in a fragile landscape.” Ever since that incident the American forest guards and officials are on alert to check incidences of fire accidents in their jungles. They use a sophisticated instrument called Osborne Fire Finder to accurately locate the jungle fire and its distance from them. The world has hardly

forgotten the devastating jungle fire in California in 2018 in which 0.72 million hectare of valuable virgin forest was reduced to ashes. The toxic fume emanating from the burning jungle made the affected region dark and smoky for three days. Similarly, the forests in the vicinity of Victoria and New South Wales in Australia caught fire in January, 2019 and decimated millions of animals and ravaged 5.8 million hectare of green cover.

As per the Forest Fire Survey Report of India (2020), in our country an area of 1,52,421 square kilometre out of a total forest area of 7,12,249 square kilometre are vulnerable to jungle fire. So, adequate protective measures must be taken. In India, 24,817 incidents of forest

fires were recorded in the year 2015. Similarly, in the years 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, the fire accidents in forests were reported to be 35,888, 37,059, 58,083 and 29,547 respectively. In February 2018, the forest fire in the Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka was one of the worst cases in India. It destroyed 4,800 hectare of precious jungle. The helicopters of the Indian Air Force took five days to douse the fire.

The recent incidents of forest fires in different regions of Odisha have exposed our shortcomings in facing natural disasters that are very often presumed to be unforeseen. The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 should be strictly enforced in our country to check wanton destruction of our forest cover and wildlife, otherwise culprits will be emboldened to go against the Nature at their will and pleasure.

The writer is Principal, Jeevan Jyoti College, Raikia (Kandhamal). Views are personal.

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Flawed selection

Sir, Apropos the report ‘BJP fields big names’ (March 15, Orissa POST), the BJP has made a wrong choice in foisting big names in key Assembly constituencies in the poll fray in West Bengal. Contrary to expectations, the selection of Ashok Lahiri and Swapan Dasgupta for the forthcoming polls may not be a vote-clincher from the Bhadrakol fraternity as all of them are viewed as rank outsiders, with hardly any local connections. It is quite obvious that these nominees of the saffron brigade do not have the grassroots connect, as their professional careers have largely been outside the state. Moreover, the very fact that being on the wrong side of age may not go down well with the electorate, who aspire for ‘visible young faces’. Babul Supriyo, the crooner-turned-politician is a relatively political lightweight and barring Locket Chatterjee, the other cine stars being fielded are political greenhorns and may not necessarily sway the voters the saffron way. Such a move will definitely dishearten the rank and file of the party at the grassroots level. Before announcing the names, the central leadership should have tested the ground realities.

Amit Banerjee, NEW DELHI

India & Myanmar

Sir, Myanmar's neighbouring countries India and China have adopted entirely different policies on the recent developments in Myanmar. China is covertly providing support to Myanmar army while India is closely watching the developments in Myanmar. China wants to take advantage of the army coup and the subsequent violence and killings. India, on the other hand, is keeping a dignified silence on the developments. It is aware of the fact that a wrong turn from its side may break off diplomatic relations between the two countries. India and Myanmar have been maintaining good diplomatic relations for a long time. Both countries have collaborated in operations against insurgent bases in Myanmar. India has provided weapons to Myanmar. It trains Myanmar military personnel as well. China, on the other hand, is providing Myanmar with finances to crush protests opposing the coup. Instability in India's neighbourhood is exploited by China for its own goals. It adopted the same policy on Nepal political crisis too. India does not want Myanmar to move into Chinese embrace. Instability in Myanmar and Chinese intervention in its internal affairs may cause security concerns for India. It needs to wait and watch and see things in the right perspective instead of taking hasty decisions.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

BJP trying to curtail powers of elected Delhi govt: Kejriwal

The Centre moved the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill - 2021 in the Lok Sabha

The Bill seeks to define certain roles and powers of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 15: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Monday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Central government of trying to curtail the powers of the elected Delhi government through the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill - 2021, moved in the Lok Sabha.

Kejriwal, while referring to the GNCT Bill-2021, said the BJP introduced the Bill because it was rejected by the people in the 2020 Delhi Assembly elections.

"After being rejected by the people of Delhi, the BJP seeks to drastically curtail powers of the elected government through a Bill in the Lok Sabha Monday. The GNCT Bill is contrary to the Constitutional bench's judgement. We strongly condemn BJP's unconstitutional and anti-democracy move," Kejriwal tweeted.

The Delhi Chief Minister's reply came soon after the Centre tabled



After being rejected by the people of Delhi, the BJP seeks to drastically curtail powers of the elected government through a Bill in the Lok Sabha Monday. The GNCT Bill is contrary to the Constitutional bench's judgement. We strongly condemn BJP's unconstitutional and anti-democracy move

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CM

the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

The new bill, which is an amendment to the Government of National Capital Territory of

Governor (L-G) in Delhi.

As per reports, the Bill is proposed to give more powers to the L-G. The Bill would most likely revive the tussle between the Centre and the Delhi government.

In February this year, when the Union Cabinet had approved the proposed amendments to the Government of NCT of Delhi Act, the Arvind Kejriwal government had called it a murder of constitutional democracy. The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Centre appointed Delhi L-G had a falling out due to this constitutional power tussle for the last six years.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 15: Legislators of Delhi's ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chanted 'Jai Shri Ram' for the first time during the budget session which started March 8 and ended March 12, but saw their BJP counterparts not joining them and even leaving the chamber amid the sloganeering.

The AAP, which seemed averse to get a Hindu tag so far, even presented a "deshbhakti" (patriotism) budget.

Presenting the budget for 2021-22 March 9, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who holds the Finance portfolio, termed the annual budget a "deshbhakti" budget and said the Delhi government under Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's leadership has adopted 10 principles of 'Ram Rajya' and made all efforts to justify its claims, citing its development works in the last 6 years.

The AAP, from the first day of the session, tried to create an atmosphere of patriotism in the Assembly right after the Lt Governor's Address, and it remains to be seen how effective its use of 'deshbhakti' and 'Ram Rajya' against the BJP will be.

Kejriwal, in his recent visit to Surat where his party performed unexpectedly well in the civic polls, had stated that people have started taking the AAP as an alternate not only in Gujarat but in many other poll-bound states too, and his speech in the Delhi Assembly seems to indicate that the AAP is trying a masterstroke to counter the BJP and



Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who holds the Finance portfolio, termed Delhi's annual budget a "deshbhakti" budget and said the Delhi government under Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's leadership has adopted 10 principles of 'Ram Rajya'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Party legislator and spokesman Saurav Bharadwaj said the party highlighted its achievements and related its development works with patriotism, thinking the opposition (BJP) would support it. However, he said that the BJP's response had amazed them.

"Even we were surprised to see that BJP legislators did not pay heed to deshbhakti or Ram Rajya slogans. It seems that the BJP leadership has yet to decide whether to oppose AAP's deshbhakti or oppose it."

Asked by IANS as to whether the party will carry its 'deshbhakti' strategy in other states, Bharadwaj

said: "It is not a political strategy of AAP. It came as a reply for the BJP as it has been questioning whether Kejriwal is Ram bhakt or not. Therefore, Kejriwal gave a reply to the BJP that he is a Lord Hanuman bhakt and his government follows principles of Ram Rajya."

Though Kejriwal and Sisodia targeted the BJP inside and outside the Assembly, alleging it of not supporting their patriotism, the BJP is not impressed.

Delhi's Leader of Opposition Ramveer Singh Bidhuri told IANS that the BJP would welcome AAP's patriotism syllabus if they include "the Modi government's achievements including construction of

the Ram temple and surgical strike against Pakistan... otherwise, their patriotism syllabus will not be a complete patriotism syllabus."

"We will welcome it if they adopt BJP's path of Lord Ram, but their (AAP) strategies will be incomplete without including PM Modi and BJP's achievements."

Reacting to Kejriwal's statement for taking senior citizens to Ayodhya once the Ram temple is completed,



It is not a political strategy of AAP. It came as a reply for the BJP as it has been questioning whether Kejriwal is Ram bhakt or not. Therefore, Kejriwal gave a reply to the BJP that he is a Lord Hanuman bhakt and his government follows principles of Ram Rajya

SAURAV BHARADWAJ | AAP LEGISLATOR

Bidhuri said: "BJP won't oppose this move because it is a win-win situation for us if they do so. Before it, the opposition slammed BJP for not building Ram temple in Ayodhya and now when it has been started, they do not have so much on this."

"Kejriwal should take senior citizens to Ayodhya, I personally will be too happy. But, before leaving for Ayodhya, he should thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for making this dream come true."

World's highest railway bridge achieves construction milestone

THE ICONIC BRIDGE WILL SOAR 359 METRES ABOVE THE BED OF THE CHENAB RIVER AND WILL BE 30 METRES HIGHER THAN THE EIFFEL TOWER IN PARIS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, March 15: In a historic moment, the railways has connected the two ends of the main arch of the world's highest bridge on the Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district which will provide direct connectivity to Kashmir Valley.

The iconic bridge will soar 359 metres above the bed of the river and will be 30 metres higher than the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

Railway officials termed the development a "historic" one.

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal had recently shared the news on Twitter. "In a historic moment, the arch bottom of the Chenab bridge has been completed today. Next, the arch upper of the engineering marvel in making will be completed," he said. The minister, who also shared a video of the achievement, had said it was set to become the world's highest railway bridge.

Facing grave challenges and life-threatening hazards posed by rough terrain and geological thrust zones, engineers and workers are toiling overtime to meet the last extended deadline set for completion of the



In a historic moment, the arch bottom of the Chenab bridge has been completed today. Next, the arch upper of the engineering marvel in making will be completed

PIYUSH GOYAL | RAILWAY MINISTER

world's highest railway bridge connecting Kashmir with the rest of the country. The Northern Railway will be completing the most difficult 111-kilometre long section of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail link by December 2022 which would connect Kashmir to the rest of India through the railway network.

The 272 km railway line is being undertaken at an estimated cost of Rs 28,000 crore by the Northern Railway. The first section connecting Udhampur to Katra and the third section between Banihal and Baramulla have been completed

with both sections operational. The work to complete the most difficult Katra-Banihal section is going as per schedule, they said. The Udhampur-Katra

(25 km) section, Banihal-Qazigund (18 km) section and Qazigund-Baramulla (118 km) section have already been commissioned.

The last remaining section, the 111 km Katra-Banihal section is currently under execution, officials said, adding that 126 km out of 174 km of tunnels on this section has already been completed. They said the project is, perhaps, the most difficult new railway line project undertaken in the entire Indian sub-continent. The terrain passes through young Himalayas, which are full of geological surprises and numerous problems. For execution purposes, the project has been divided into three sub-sections, they said.

Katra-Qazigund leg, the most difficult stretch of the project, and its alignment of this stretch which is 129 km long, passes through Patni and Pir Panjal ranges, they said. This alignment requires construction of 62 important and major bridges and minor bridges, besides construction of 35 tunnels, totalling a length of 103 km and bringing the percentage of the total length of the alignment of tunnels to approximately 80 per cent.

BACK TO SCHOOL



Students wearing masks attend morning prayers at a school in Srinagar, Monday. Most of the primary schools reopened in the Kashmir valley from Monday amid strict COVID-19 guidelines imposed by the government.

PTI PHOTO

Top Jaish man killed in Kashmir

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, March 15: Top Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) terrorist, Sajad Afghani, has been killed in an encounter at Rawalpura in South Kashmir's Shopian district Monday.

DGP Jammu and Kashmir, Dilbag Singh, confirmed to IANS that Afghani, instrumental in recruiting terrorists, has been killed in the encounter that entered its third day. Besides the JeM man, the other

terrorist killed so far was identified as Lashkar affiliated Jahangir Ahmad Wani from Rakh Narapora.

IGP Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, congratulated the Shopian police and security forces for eliminating Afghani during the three-day-long encounter that started Saturday after specific inputs regarding presence of terrorists. A joint cordon and search operation was launched by Police, army's 34 RR and the CRPF Saturday. Police said during the search op-

eration, as the presence of terrorists got ascertained they were given opportunity to surrender; however, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party, which retaliated leading to an encounter.

Police said Sunday morning repeated announcements were again made to hiding terrorist to surrender but the terrorist fired on the joint search party which to Jahangir Ahmad Wani's death. Wani was affiliated to the Lashkar-e-Taiba.

'5% area in commercial buildings for EV charging'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 15: Delhi Power Minister Satyendar Jain has directed commercial buildings, cinema halls, hotels and others in the city having a capacity for parking around 100 cars to set up charging stations for electric vehicles in the parking lot.



Under Delhi's EV policy, a subsidy of up to Rs 6,000 per charging point can be availed by commercial complexes. This decision was taken with the aim of tackling range anxiety and promote faster adoption of EVs in the national capital

SATYENDAR JAIN | DELHI POWER MINISTER

Through this decision, the Delhi government has set a target of 10,000 charging points by December this year. "All buildings such as malls, shopping complexes, cinema halls/multiplexes, office spaces, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, etc that have a parking capacity of more than 100 vehicles to set aside at least 5% of their total parking capacity for EVs along with suitable slow EV chargers," Jain said.

The Minister added, "Under Delhi's EV policy, a subsidy of up to Rs 6,000 per charging point can be availed by these complexes. This decision was taken with the aim of tackling range anxiety and promote faster adoption of EVs in the national capital."

Amarnath Yatra likely to attract heavy rush: CRPF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, March 15: This year's Amarnath Yatra is likely to witness heavy rush of pilgrims, a top CRPF officer here said Monday, and asserted that all necessary arrangements will be made to ensure it passes off peacefully.

Inspector General (IG) of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Jammu sector, P S Ranpise said all units and formations have been briefed about the threat posed by sticky bombs, and asked to remain on high alert.

The 56-day yatra to the 3,880-metre-high cave shrine of Amarnath in the South Kashmir Himalayas is scheduled to start from the twin routes of Pahalgam and Baltal on June 28 and culminate on August 22.

Talking to reporters after inaugurating a free medical camp organised by the 166th Battalion of the force in Sidhra here, the CRPF IG said, "It is likely that the yatra this year will attract heavy rush, and keeping this thing in mind, we will study the requirements, and all necessary arrangements will be made for the success of the pilgrimage."

"We already had a meeting with civil police and projected the requirement... We will study the lo-



gistic requirements needed at the Yatri camps and might require more forces," he added.

To a question on the number of troops required for the pilgrimage, the IG said, "That will be decided by the government after a review of the overall situation."

The CRPF officer said quick reaction teams (QRTs) would be de-

ployed wherever required, including in yatri camps and along the 270-km Jammu-Srinagar national highway.

"Personnel who will be deployed on yatra duty will also undergo pre-induction training like in the past," Ranpise said.

He said the CRPF has adequate deployment along the highway and

would be utilising drones and other technology during the yatra.

On the recent recovery of sticky bombs and measures taken by the force to counter the threat, he said, "I agree with police that it is a serious matter as the timer-activated devices are easy to use against civilian and security targets."

"We have already alerted our

The 56-day yatra is scheduled to start from the twin routes of Pahalgam and Baltal June 28 and culminate August 22

units and formations, and briefed them about the new threat. We have to remain alert (to counter the terrorist plan)," the officer said.

He said CRPF convoys always take necessary precautionary measures before proceedings towards their destinations and usually remain protected.

"We have to ensure that our convoys have minimum contact with the public, and there should be no unnecessary halting. Strict vigil and precautionary measures need to be taken (against sticky bombs)," he said.

Hundreds of locals availed the free medical camp. CRPF spokesperson Shivnandan Singh said the force is organising medical camps on a daily basis in different areas to reach out to the people as part of a goodwill programme.

of the day uote

The people of the country today expect an apology from leaders of Congress and Aam Aadmi Party who all along called Batla House encounter a fake encounter

ADESH GUPTA | DELHI BJP PRESIDENT

They (Congress-AIUDF alliance) would not be able to check infiltration, neither will they fulfil the dreams of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva and Bhupen Hazarika

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

What is the meaning of having an elected government and the Council of Ministers when it has no power?

MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Shah's rally cancelled

Jhargram (West Bengal): The cancellation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's poll rally in Jhargram due to a "technical snag in his helicopter" triggered a war of words between the TMC and the BJP, with the ruling party claiming that the glitch was actually "poor turnout" and the saffron party leader tweeting a video of a jam-packed ground. Shah was scheduled to address a rally in the Jhargram district Monday, but he delivered a brief speech virtually. The senior BJP leader said that he could not attend the rally as his chopper developed a technical glitch.

Dhinakaran moves court

Chennai: AMMK leader T T V Dhinakaran Monday filed a memorandum before a city court, where a case challenging the resolutions adopted at the general council meeting of the AIADMK in September 2017 was pending, to detach him from the case. Recording the same, the judge A R V Ravi adjourned the matter to April 9 with a direction to the original petitioner, late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa's confidante V K Sasikala, to inform the court of her stand on the issue.

Vendor stabbed to death

Patna: An eatery vendor was stabbed to death in Bihar's Bettiah city in West Champaran district, an official said Monday. The deceased, Sukhdev Sharma, sustained multiple stab wounds on his face and was found dead inside the premises of his eatery. Mukul Parimal Pandey, SDPO of Bettiah Sadar confirmed the incident.

Drugs, firearms seized; 4 held

Malda (WB): Four persons were arrested and 260 gm of brown sugar and four firearms seized from their possession in West Bengal's Malda district Monday, police said. The arrests were made during naka-checking on NH 34 in Gazole area, a police officer said.

Lioness run over by vehicle

Amreli: A lioness was killed after being hit by a vehicle near Pipavav port in Gujarat's Amreli district Monday, a forest department official said. The carcass of the big cat, in the 5-9 year age group, was found in the port's truck parking area.



Congress is not following in Mahatma Gandhi's footsteps. Congress and Rahul Gandhi are following in Jinnah's footsteps. This will destroy Assam and India

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | MADHYA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

LATHIKA TO CONTEST AS INDEPENDENT

A day after she resigned as Mahila Congress chief and tansured her head in protest following denial of ticket, Lathika Subhash Monday quit the party and decided to contest as an independent for the April 6 assembly election from Ettumanoor in Kottayam



Nullify results if NOTA gets max votes: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: The Supreme Court Monday asked the Centre and the Election Commission to respond to a plea seeking that an election result be nullified and fresh poll conducted if maximum votes in a constituency favour the NOTA (none of the above) option.

A bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian issued notices to Union Ministry of Law and Justice and the poll panel on the plea which also seeks a direction that rejected candidates be barred from taking part in fresh poll in the constituency.

Initially, the top court expressed reluctance to the plea of advocate and BJP leader Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay saying if NOTA is polled the most and as a result, no candidate is declared elected then how a valid Parliament will be constituted.

"If some political party with influence on people manages to get candidates rejected then seats will remain unfilled in Parliament. It is a Constitutional problem. If your argument is accepted, and all candidates are rejected and that con-



stituency goes unrepresented completely, then how will you constitute a valid Parliament," the bench asked during the hearing conducted through video conferencing.

Senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy, appearing for Upadhyay, said the very fact that an elector will have the right to reject will lead a situation where political parties will have to field candidates acceptable to voters.

She said the NOTA option has no real value at present as to get an election annulled, votes cast in favour of NOTA has to be more than 50 per cent of total valid votes and as a con-

sequence, candidate, getting more votes from rivals, gets elected irrespective of how much votes were cast in favour of NOTA. "Underlying suggestions are very hard to be accepted, even though we understand importance of what you are saying", the bench initially observed.

"Issue notice," the court ordered. The plea, filed through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey, has also sought a direction to the Election Commission to restrict those candidates and political parties whose election has been nullified, from taking part in the fresh polls.

Top TN leaders file nomination

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Mar 15: Over 800 candidates, including heavyweights-Chief Minister K Palaniswami and Leader of Opposition MK Stalin, have filed their nomination for the April 6 Assembly elections in the state in which actor-politician Kamal Haasan has also thrown his hat in.

Palaniswami, AIADMK Joint Coordinator and DMK president Stalin filed their papers on Monday from Edapadi in Salem and Kolathur in Chennai, respectively. As many as 854 persons including 127 aspiring women legislators have filed nominations since the process began March 12, according to EC figures.

AMMK leader TTV Dhinakaran, Kamal Haasan, state ministers KA Sengokottaiyan, D Jayakumar and P Thangamani, Stalin's son Udhayanidhi, Naam Tamizhar Katchi founder Seeman, senior DMK leaders E V Velu and Duraimurugan and Vanathi



Srinivasan, BJP Mahila Morcha chief, were among those who filed nominations Monday. Dhinakaran has shifted to Kovilpatti from his RK Nagar seat here which he represents in the present Assembly, while Haasan seeks to make his electoral foray from Coimbatore South in the western industrial city.

The AIADMK, which is contesting from 179 seats and the DMK, from 173 segments, are locked in a battle of votes to form government,

with the former in the ruling saddle for a decade and its rival keen to dethrone it and stage a comeback.

Haasan's MNM, floated in 2018, is also seeking to make inroads in the state dominated by the Dravidian majors DMK and AIADMK, with the actor-politician being critical of both parties on corruption and governance.

While Palaniswami filed his nomination from native constituency Edapadi in Salem, Stalin did the same from Kolathur in the city, with both seeking a hat-trick of sorts from their respective seats.

Stalin, who filed his nomination here, was accompanied by Harbour MLA PK Sekar Babu and party functionary NR Elango, in line with the EC mandate on two persons alone being with the candidate while submitting the papers to the Returning Officer. The last date for filing nominations is March 19 and single phase polling will be held for a total of 234 seats April 6.

107-year-old man gets Covid vax shot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: Kewal Krishan, who was just five years old during the deadly the Spanish Flu of 1918, and later became part of the drafting committee of the Constituent Assembly of India, received his first shot of anti-COVID-19 vaccine in Delhi Monday, his son said.

Krishan, now 107, stepped out of his home in south Delhi "for the first time since the coronavirus-induced lockdown was imposed late March in 2020" to get his Covishield jab, son Anil Krishna said.

"We had kept him literally in a bubble, and given the nature of the virus, we decided to keep him safe within the confines of home. And, today, we just took him in a car to the hospital, where he had undergone



a major operation in 2019, got the vaccine shot, and came back," he said.

He is feeling fine and has not exhibited any adverse effects post immunisation, the son said, adding, that he performed his daily 'puja' after returning home.

"When the pandemic hit us all last year and we got to learn about the

Conspiracies can't stop me: Mamata



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jhaldal/Balarampur (WB), March 15: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is still recuperating from the injuries she sustained last week in Nandigram, asserted Monday that she would continue her fight against the BJP "as long as her heart beats and vocal cords function".

The TMC supremo, who addressed two rallies in Purulia during the day, also said that no conspiracy or injury can stop her from taking forward her battle against the saffron camp, while stressing that the BJP, despite bringing in leaders from Delhi, will cut no ice with the people of Bengal.

Banerjee, after filing her nomination in Nandigram March 10, suffered severe injuries on her left leg, hips, arm, neck and shoulder during electioneering as she was allegedly pushed to the ground by miscreants. TMC leaders have claimed that BJP men orchestrated the attack, a charge denied by the saffron camp. The Election Commission also ruled that she suffered injuries following an accident, and not an attack.

"Wait for a few days, my leg will get better. I will see whether your legs get to move freely on Bengal's soil," the Chief Minister said at Jhaldal, in a veiled attack on saffron camp leaders. The feisty TMC boss further claimed that "no other government in the world has done as much work for its people as her dispensation".

Suvendu seeks rejection of Mamata's nomination

Suvendu Adhikari, the BJP Candidate against Mamata Banerjee in Nandigram, Monday said he has sought rejection of the nomination of the West Bengal chief minister for not declaring six criminal cases against her while filing her papers.

Launching a scathing attack on the Centre over the rise in fuel prices and disinvestment of public sector units, Banerjee said, "Their (BJP's) Prime Minister cannot run the country, (he is) totally incompetent."

"On March 10, I sustained injuries on my body. Maybe, due to good fortune, I was saved. Some may have thought I will not be able to go out at all with my broken leg, but (for me) people's wellbeing is far more important than my own pain," Banerjee insisted.

Mocking the BJP's 'rath yatra', Banerjee said that she has always known that chariots are taken out for Lord Jagannath and his divine siblings.

Hitting out at Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the cancellation of his first public meeting of the day at Jhargram, Banerjee, insinuating that the rally was called off due to lack of attendees, said, "Had he requested, we would have sent some people to the venue."

Bill to amend juvenile justice law introduced in Lok Sabha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: A bill to amend the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015, which seeks to increase the role of district magistrates and additional district magistrates, was introduced in the Lok Sabha Monday.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor opposed the bill at the introduction stage but Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani rejected the points raised by him.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2021 was later introduced by a voice vote.

As per the Cabinet decision, in every district, the district magistrate and the additional district magistrate will get the power to monitor functions of agencies responsible for the implementation of the Act.

The district child protection unit will also function under the district magistrate.

According to amendments cleared by the Cabinet last month, before becoming a member of a child welfare committee, background and educational qualification checks will be included. The amendment to the bill intends to empower district magistrates and additional district magistrates to authorise orders of adoption, propose that appeals on the orders of adoption may be referred to the divisional commissioner, and to strengthen child welfare committees by incorporating provisions relating to educational qualifications for the members and stipulating eligibility conditions for selection of the committee.

'Ban designated smoking areas to curb nCoV spread'

IN INDIA, SMOKING IS BANNED IN ALL PUBLIC AREAS AS PER THE COTPA, 2003. SECTION 4 OF THIS ACT PROHIBITS SMOKING IN ANY PLACE TO WHICH THE PUBLIC HAS ACCESS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 15: With preventive healthcare taking the centre stage in the fight against coronavirus, citizens, scientists and politicians have called for abolishment of designated smoking areas (DSAs) in public places like hotels, airports and restaurants, which are not only a health threat to passive smokers, but also likely hotspots of virus transmission in the absence of Covid-19 appropriate behaviour.

While calling for a ban on such designated smoking spaces in the country, Raman Gangakhedkar, the CG Pandit National Chair at ICMR, said, "It has been seen that no safe distance norms are followed in these zones which are usually like smoke-filled cham-



bers where people take off their masks and follow no social dis-

tancing norms. Hence, there are chances that the virus may remain

airborne for a long period while smokers come and go, adding to the risk of transmission."

"In the absence of Covid-19 safety norms, there is always a threat of transmission from such closed spaces, particularly at a time when we are facing the threat of the second wave of the pandemic," he said.

"Also, new evidences show that the people with pre-existing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are more susceptible to becoming severely ill with Covid-19, an infectious disease that primarily attacks the lungs. Tobacco, being one of the causes behind these NCDs, indirectly puts the tobacco users and smokers at the risk of being affected by Covid-19. The death risk among such Covid-19 patients is two times higher than non-smokers. This just adds to the healthcare

burden," he added.

Gangakhedkar, who is the former head of epidemiology and infectious diseases, ICMR, and member of the national task force for Covid-19, was the face of the government's press briefings when Covid-19 was at its peak. He was speaking at a webinar on '100 per cent smoke free public places: challenges and way ahead', organised by SpeakIn, an online learning and speakers' platform.

Expressing similar views, BJP national spokesperson Gopal Krishna Agarwal said, "In the wake of Covid-19, the importance of preventive healthcare has gained importance. Banning designated smoking places, which are health hazards for non-smokers, will be just one of the preventive measures towards good health in times of the pandemic."

of the day quote

The BSP will contest on all the 403 assembly seats in UP and will perform well. The performance of the party will be good in the panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh

MAYAWATI | BSP PRESIDENT

Punjabis want answers for the fraud committed on them by Amarinder Singh who while promising jobs to youth also got forms signed from them and issued affidavits promising the same

SUKHBIR BADAL | SHIROMANI AKALI DAL (SAD) PRESIDENT

People will certainly give us (the position) next time they will change (the party in power). We will come back (to power)

SIDDARAMAIAH | LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN KARNATAKA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SHORT TAKES

Bail to Rhea: NCB moves SC

New Delhi: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has moved the Supreme Court challenging the Bombay High Court order granting bail to actress Rhea Chakraborty, arrested over drugs-related charges in actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death case. A bench of Chief Justice Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian will hear the plea March 18.

Five dead in Kishanganj fire

Patna: Five persons of a family, including four minors were charred to death in a massive blaze that broke out in Bihar's Kishanganj district early Monday leaving at least one more critically injured. The fire broke out in Salam colony under Kishanganj police station at around 2.30 a.m. The deceased were identified as Noor Alam and his four children aged between of 4 and 12.

Woman raped; three detained

Kota (Raj): A woman was allegedly raped by the brother of a man she had married and later left in Rajasthan's Baran district, police said Monday. The woman was returning home with a man she was now living with along with the child and her minor sister when her former brother-in-law and four others waylaid them near Chajawar village Saturday night, they said. The culprits took the family to a nearby field. They attacked the man and tied his hands and legs with a rope. The main accused then raped the woman in front of her current husband, DSP Yogendra Singh said.

Spurious liquor kills four in UP

Pratapgarh (UP): Four people, including a woman, died after consuming spurious liquor in Uttar Pradesh's Pratapgarh district, police said Monday. Four police personnel, including the Nawabganj police station incharge, have been suspended following the incident at Manoharpur Rampur Dabi village in Sangramgarh police station area, an officer said. The four residents purchased liquor from Babulal Patel on Saturday and consumed it. They were admitted to the Sangramgarh community health centre as their condition deteriorated, Allahabad Range Inspector General Kavindra Pratap Singh said.



The Delhi court's verdict today in the Batla House encounter case thoroughly exposes the terrorist sympathisers and doubters lobby in the country. Now Sonia Gandhi, Mamata Banerjee and Arvind Kejriwal who raised questions on the integrity of our police forces must apologise to the nation

Prakash Javadekar | BJP LEADER & UNION MINISTER

'BIG RELIEF'

The carriageway of NH-24 leading to Ghaziabad from Delhi, which was closed since January 26, was reopened for commuters o Monday, police said



BATLA HOUSE ENCOUNTER

Death penalty for Inspector's killer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: A Delhi court Monday awarded death penalty to Ariz Khan for the murder of decorated Delhi Police Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma in connection with the sensational 2008 Batla House encounter case, saying the offence fell under the "rarest of the rare category" warranting the maximum sentence.

Additional Sessions Judge Sandeep Yadav said Ariz be hanged by neck till death. Inspector Sharma of the police's special cell was killed during the Batla House encounter between the police and alleged terrorists in Jamia Nagar in south Delhi following serial bomb blasts in the national capital in which 39 people died and 159 were injured.

The court also imposed a total fine of Rs 11 lakh on Ariz in the case. It said Rs 10 lakh should be immediately released to the family members of Sharma.

"I feel the fine of Rs 10 lakh is insufficient. Hence, I am referring the matter to Delhi Legal Services Authority for award of additional compensation," the judge further said. Additional Public Prosecutor A T Ansari, appearing for the police, sought death penalty for Ariz, allegedly associated with the terror outfit Indian Mujahideen, saying it was not just any killing but a murder of a law enforcement officer who was a defender of justice.



File photo of Ariz Khan

PTI PHOTO

Ansari said the case attracts exemplary punishment, which is capital punishment. He further said a police officer was killed while discharging his public duty.

"Ariz along with others was carrying deadly weapons which clearly suggests that they were ready to kill anybody in any eventuality. They were the first to start fire without any provocation," the public prosecutor said. He added that widespread concerns were raised after the incident regarding the safety of police officers and it instilled fear in the minds of the common people.

Advocate M S Khan, appear-

ing for Ariz, opposed the death penalty and said the incident was not premeditated. The court had said March 8 that it was "duly proved that Ariz Khan and his associates caused murder of police official and fired gunshot on the police official".

A trial court had sentenced Indian Mujahideen terrorist Shahzad Ahmed in July 2013 to life imprisonment in connection with the case. His appeal against the verdict has been pending in the high court. Ariz Khan had fled from the spot and was declared proclaimed offender. He was arrested on February 14, 2018, and faced the trial.

The following is the chronology of events in the 2008-Batla House encounter case

- **SEPTEMBER 13, 2008:** Serial blasts rock New Delhi killing 39 people and injuring 159.
- **SEPTEMBER 19:** Encounter took place between police and terrorists; FIR lodged.
- **JULY 3, 2009:** Ariz Khan and Shahzad Ahmad declared proclaimed offender by the Court.
- **FEBRUARY 2, 2010:** Shahzad Ahmad arrested from Lucknow.
- **OCTOBER 1:** Investigation of the case transferred to Crime Branch of Delhi Police.
- **JULY 30, 2013:** Indian Mujahideen terrorist and co- accused Shahzad Ahmed awarded life imprisonment.
- **FEBRUARY 14, 2018:** Ariz Khan arrested after a decade being on run.
- **MARCH 8, 2021:** Ariz Khan convicted for murder and other offences.
- **MARCH 15:** Court awards death penalty to Ariz Khan, imposes Rs 11 lakh fine.

SURGE IN COVID-19 CASES

PM to hold meeting with CMs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with chief ministers on the COVID-19 situation and the ongoing vaccination drive on Wednesday as the Centre looks to ramp up the inoculation exercise amid a rise in infection in some states.

Official sources said Modi will hold a video conference to discuss the issues with chief ministers, an exercise which he has been holding regularly since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Modi's last interaction with Chief Ministers was in January before the vaccination roll-out. He had announced that the Centre will bear the expenses of vaccinating nearly three crore healthcare and frontline workers in the first round and suggested that public representatives, a reference to politicians, should not be part of this initial exercise.

The drive has now moved on to next round to cover people over 60 years of age, and those aged above 45 years and having comorbidities.



FILE PHOTO

India recorded 26,291 new COVID-19 cases Monday, its highest single-day spike in 85 days, taking the country's infection tally to 1.13,85,339, according to Union health ministry data. Health experts and doctors have attributed this "sudden rise" to people turning complacent, not following COVID-19 appropriate behaviour and "assuming all

is well now". India is, meanwhile, fast approaching total vaccination coverage of 3 crore.

Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu continue to report a surge in COVID-19 daily cases, accounting for 78.41 percent of the new cases, the Union Health Ministry said Monday.

TERROR PROBE

NIA raids 11 locations across India

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 15: Tightening its noose around the Islamic State (IS) operatives in India, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Monday carried out searches at 11 locations in Kerala, Karnataka and Delhi, including the premises of Mohammed Ameen aka Abu Yahya, whose group had identified several people in Kerala and Karnataka for "targeted killing".

An NIA spokesperson said that the anti-terror probe agency carried out searches at 11 locations, including eight locations in Kerala spread over the districts of Kannur, Mallapuram, Kollam and Kasargod, two locations in Bengaluru and one location in Delhi in a case pertaining to terrorist activities of a group led by Ameen, a resident of Kerala.

The official said that the group has been running various IS propaganda channels on different social media platforms such as Telegram, Hoop and Instagram for propagating the violent Jihadi ideology of ISIS and radicalising and recruiting new members for the IS module. The NIA had registered a case March 5 this year against seven known and other unknown accused persons under several sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

The official said that the searches were preceded by extensive verification carried out jointly by the NIA, the Special Cell of Delhi Police,



and the ATS of Kerala Police.

The official said, "The group of radicalised individuals under the leadership of Ameen owning allegiance to proscribed terrorist organisation IS had identified certain individuals in Kerala and Karnataka for targeted killing."

They had also planned to undertake 'Hijrat' (religious migration) to Jammu and Kashmir for engaging in terrorist acts.

The official said, "Ameen had travelled to Jammu and Kashmir immediately after his return to India from Bahrain in March last year and had been camping in Delhi for the last two months for establishing connection with J&K based operatives having allegiance to IS."

The official adde that the searches were conducted at the premises of Ameen and his associates, who were members of various groups or channels on encrypted chat platforms.

Rajnath calls for dialogue on farmers' issue

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 15: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Monday called for a dialogue between the protesting farmers and the union government.

Appealing to the agitating farmers, who have been upset over the new farm laws since they were passed in September last year, Rajnath Singh said any problem can be resolved through talks.

"The BJP's resolve is to double the farmers' income, and in no case, the MSP will end," he said, referring to the apprehension among farmers who have been agitating on the Delhi borders since November 26, 2020.

Singh, who was addressing a meeting of the BJP state executive in Lucknow, said: "We are all from farmers' families and we are ready for amendments and solutions, whatever is needed in the interest of agriculture."

He focused on the role of grassroots workers in the Bhartiya Janata Party and said this was the only party which has not seen a split so far. "This is not a crowd of workers aiming to gain power but a lively party which has a po-



litical vision," he said.

Commenting on the construction of the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya, the minister said: "People used to say that whenever elections come, BJP leaders speak about construction of the Ram temple. It is a coincidence that when the structure fell in Ayodhya, there was a BJP government in the UP, and Kalyan Singh was the chief minister."

Referring to the face-off with China in Ladakh last year, the minister said, "Our Army jawans have been displayed courage and valour with patience. We do not wish to attack anyone but will not tolerate the grabbing of our land."

Hackers hit 32 Indian firms via Microsoft email servers

THE COUNTRY MOST ATTACKED WAS THE US (21 PER CENT OF ALL EXPLOIT ATTEMPTS), FOLLOWED BY THE NETHERLANDS (12 PER CENT) AND TURKEY (12 PER CENT), ALONG WITH INDIA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 15: At least 32 Indian organisations have been attacked by hackers who exploited vulnerabilities in unpatched Microsoft business email servers, a new report warned Monday adding that the finance and banking institutions have been hit the most in the country.

The finance and banking institutions (28 per cent) in India are followed by government/military organisations (16 per cent), manufacturing (12.5 per cent), insurance/legal (9.5 per cent) and others (34 per cent), according to Check Point Research. Overall, the hacking attempts on organisations using the services of those unpatched on-premises servers have multiplied by more than six times (or tripled) in the past 72 hours.

Most targeted industry sector has been government/military (27 per cent of all exploit attempts), followed by manufacturing (22 per cent), and then software vendors (9 per cent), the researchers noted.

"A full race has started among hackers and security professionals. Global experts are using massive preventative efforts to combat hackers who are working day-in and day-out to produce an exploit that can successfully leverage the remote code execution vulnerabilities in Microsoft Exchange," said the researchers from the cyber security firm.

Amid reports indicating that about five different hacking groups are attacking the business email servers of Microsoft, the tech giant has also detected a new family of ransomware. Named as 'DearCry', the new ransomware is "being used after an initial compromise of unpatched on-



premises Exchange Servers," Microsoft said in a tweet last week. It uses the same four vulnerabilities that Microsoft linked to a new China-backed hacking group called "Hafnium".

On March 3, Microsoft released an emergency patch for its Exchange Server product, the most popular

mail server worldwide. All incoming and outgoing emails, calendar invitations and virtually anything accessed within Outlook goes through the Exchange server.

Orange Tsai from DEVCORE, a security firm based in Taiwan, reported two vulnerabilities in

January. Unaware of the full magnitude of these findings, Microsoft was prompted to further investigate their Exchange server. The investigation uncovered five more critical vulnerabilities.

The vulnerabilities allow an attacker to read emails from an Exchange server without authentication or accessing an individual's email account.

Further vulnerability chaining enables attackers to completely take over the mail server itself.

"If your organisation's Microsoft Exchange server is exposed to the internet, and if it has not been updated with the latest patches, nor protected by a third party software, then you should assume the server is completely compromised," warned Lotem Finkelsteen, Manager of Threat Intelligence, Check Point Software.

of the day quote

Six-to-eight new immunizations may complete clinical studies and undergo regulatory review by the end of the year

SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN | WHO CHIEF SCIENTIST

What the Biden administration has inherited is a broken system at the border, and they are working to correct that in the children's interest

NANCY PELOSI | SPEAKER OF THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Like everyone who saw it I was deeply concerned about the footage from Clapham Common on Saturday night

BORIS JOHNSON | BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Iran opens new missile facility

Tehran: Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard Monday inaugurated a new underground facility designated for missile storage, the country's state TV reported. The report quotes Guard commander Gen. Hossein Salami as saying that cruise and ballistic missiles will empower the force's navy even more. The TV report showed footage of scores of missiles in an enclosed space resembling an underground corridor. It did not say where the facility is located nor how many missiles are stored there.

Rise in Mideast arms imports

Stockholm: Arms imports to the Middle East rose by a quarter in the decade to 2020 even though arms sales globally remained stable over the same period, a Swedish watchdog said Monday. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, or SIPRI, said the Middle East figures were driven chiefly by the world's largest arms importer, Saudi Arabia, which increased its purchases by 61%. Egypt's imports rose 136% and Qatar's 361%. SIPRI said the international sale of major arms stayed at the same level during the period from 2011-2020.

Popularity of Aussie govt dips

Canberra: Australia's Opposition Labor Party has taken an electoral lead over the ruling government for the first time after the latter's popularity plunged to a 12-month low, according to a poll. The latest edition of Newspoll published Sunday night found that the Labor party leads the governing coalition 52-48 on a two-party preferred basis. It comes after the two parties spent the first two months of 2021 deadlocked at 50-50 and marks the first time Labor has led the coalition since March 15, 2020.

IS operative killed

Kabul: Afghan security forces have killed an Islamic State (IS) operative and arrested another terrorist in Nangarhar, a statement of the provincial government issued Monday said. According to the statement, the security forces stormed the terror group's hideout in Dagai area of Mohmandara district Sunday night killing the operative Mahmoud Jan on the spot, reports Xinhua news agency. The statement also said Mahmoud Jan who had served as an IS commander in Mohmandara district was also in charge of the conscription for the extremist group in the neighbouring Lalpor district.



It (Quad summit) went very well. Everything went very well

JOE BIDEN | US PRESIDENT

MEGHAN SEEKS PROOF IN BUCKINGHAM PALACE BULLYING PROBE

After being accused of creating a toxic work environment at Buckingham Palace, Meghan Markle has now legally demanded evidence against the probe



Martial law imposed in Yangon towns as deaths rise

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Yangon, March 15: Myanmar's ruling junta has declared martial law in parts of the country's largest city as security forces killed more protesters in an increasingly lethal crackdown on resistance to last month's military coup.

At least 38 people were killed Sunday and dozens were injured in one of the deadliest days of the crackdown, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, an independent group tracking the toll of the violence.

Most of those killed – 34 – were in Yangon, where two townships, Hlaing Thar Yar and neighboring Shwepyitha were being placed under martial law.

A video from Hlaing Thar Yar township showed people running away after gunfire was heard. Those fleeing carried one injured person and tried to revive two others, one who seemed to be dead or dying, the footage from independent Democratic Voice of Burma showed.

Hlaing Thar Yar was the location of 22 civilian deaths Sunday, according to the aid group, which

MYANMAR COUP

At least 38 people were killed Sunday and dozens were injured in one of the deadliest days of the crackdown

Most of those killed – 34 – were in Yangon, where two townships, Hlaing Thar Yar and neighboring Shwepyitha were being placed under martial law

said more than a dozen civilians was wounded and described a large number of junta forces engaged in the township.

Since the takeover six weeks ago, Myanmar has been under a nationwide state of emergency, with its civilian leaders ousted and detained and military leaders in charge of all government. But the announcement on state broadcaster MRTV late Sunday appeared to be the first use of the term martial law since the coup and suggested more direct military control of security, instead of local police.

The announcement said the State Administrative Council acted to enhance security and restore law and



Anti-coup protesters surround an injured man in Hlaing Thar Yar township in Yangon, Myanmar

AP PHOTO

order and said the Yangon regional commander has been entrusted with administrative, judicial and military powers in the area under his command.

Four other deaths were reported in Bago, Mandalay, and the northern city of Hpakant in Kachin state, according to the aid group and local media.

In Yangon, video posted on social

media showed crowds of people, some wearing hard hats and gas masks, running down a street amid sounds of gunfire. The demonstrators quickly sprayed vapor from fire extinguishers as they retreated — a tactic widely used to smother tear gas and create a vapor screen that makes it harder for police to pursue or shoot demonstrators.

There were also reports of in-

Chinese-financed factories set on fire

YANGON: Anti-coup protesters Sunday set on fire several factories financed by Chinese in the industrial Hlaingthaya suburb of Myanmar's main city. The Chinese embassy said many Chinese staff were injured and trapped in arson attacks by unidentified assailants on garment factories in Hlaingthaya and that it had called on Myanmar to protect Chinese property and citizens. China is viewed as being supportive of the military junta that has taken power. As plumes of smoke rose from the industrial area, security forces opened fire on protesters in the suburb that is home to migrants from across the country, local media said.

juries from live rounds and rubber bullets in other parts of Yangon, including Insein district, where billows of black smoke could be seen after security forces reportedly set roadblocks on fire.

Six dead, dozens missing in China sandstorm

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, March 15: Six dead, dozens missing as Beijing, northern China and Mongolia hit by worst sandstorm in a decade

Residents have been warned to wear protective clothing outside and stay clear of billboards, construction sites and other potential falling objects. Sandstorm caused by hot, dry conditions meeting 'Mongolian cyclone', says China's weather bureau.

China is experiencing the most severe sandstorm in a decade as 12 provinces in the northern part of the country are blanketed in yellow sand and dust, according to a notice issued by China's National Meteorological Centre Monday.

The range of the sandstorm also covers the widest area seen in the past 10 years, from Xinjiang and Gansu in the northwest to the northern regions of Inner Mongolia and Hebei, the notice said. Mongolia's National Emergency Management Agency said on Monday that the strong sandstorms had caused six deaths and 81 people were missing in the country.

China's National Meteorological Centre issued a "yellow" sandstorm warning Monday morning.

Prachanda proposes to drop 'Maoist Centre' from party name

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, March 15: Chief of Nepal's CPN-Maoist Centre (MC) Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" has proposed to drop "Maoist Centre" from the party's name to make it acceptable for communist forces in the country, who do not like Maoism, to join it, according to a media report Monday.

CPN-MC member Shiv Kumar Mandal said that former Prime Minister Prachanda was always in favour of unity among all communist forces of the country and suggested that if dropping "Maoist Centre" from the party's name could help unite these forces, then the party should be ready for that, The Himalayan Times reported.



The proposal to change the name of the party came as CPN-MC faces the heat to bolster the party after the Supreme Court recently nullified its merger with CPN-UML led by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, it said.

This has created a situation where Prime Minister Oli suddenly sees his position strengthened in the party, as he has a clear majority in the Central Committee and Parliamentary Party.

FIRST QUAD SUMMIT

Exclusive cliques should not be formed, says China

Relevant countries should abandon the Cold War mentality and ideological bias: Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, March 15: China said Monday that no "exclusive cliques" should be formed as it accused some countries of trying to "drive a wedge" among regional nations citing the "China threat" and asserted that they will "end up nowhere".

Quad countries involving the US, India, Australia and Japan held their first virtual summit Friday during which President Joe Biden told leaders of the coalition that a "free and open" Indo-Pacific is essential to their countries and vowed that his country was committed to working with its partners and allies in the region to achieve stability.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the virtual summit alongside Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.

"Relevant countries should abandon the Cold War mentality and ideological bias, do not form exclusive cliques and act in a way conducive to solidarity, unity, regional peace and stability," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here.

He was answering a question about the first Leaders' Summit of the Quad countries and the reported remarks by US National Secretary Advisor Jake Sullivan that the four leaders discussed the challenge posed by China and said all four believed the democracies could help compete with autocracy.

"For some time, some countries have been exaggerating the so-called 'China threat'. China challenges to drive a wedge among regional countries to sow discord between their relations with China," Zhao said.

"What they have done is against the trend of times which is peace, development and win-win cooperation and runs counter to the common aspirations of people in the region," he said.

"They will gain no support and will end up nowhere," he said.

"The state-to-state exchanges and cooperation should be conducive for improving mutual understanding and trust among the countries and should not be targeted against and undermine the interests of third parties," he said.

PRAYER FOR SAFETY



Buddhist monks spread embers in a bonfire before devotees walk across hot coals to pray for safety at Mt. Takaosan in Japan

REUTERS PHOTO

CATHOLIC CHURCH CANNOT BLESS SAME-SEX UNIONS, SAYS VATICAN

REUTERS

Vatican City, March 15: The Vatican said Monday that priests and other Catholic Church ministers cannot bless same-sex unions and that such blessings are "not licit" if carried out.

The Vatican's doctrinal office, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), issued the ruling in response to questions and moves in some parishes to impart such blessings as a sign of welcome to gay Catholics since the Church does not permit homosexual marriage.

Pope Francis approved the re-



homosexual persons" and help them grow in the faith.

The CDF note said that since marriage between a man and a woman was a sacrament and blessings are related to the sacrament of marriage, they could not be extended to same-sex couples.

"For this reason, it is not licit to impart a blessing on relationships, or partnerships, even stable, that involve sexual activity outside of marriage (i.e., outside the indissoluble union of a man and a woman open in itself to the transmission of life), as is the case of the unions between persons of the same sex," it said.

sponse, the CDF said, adding that it was "not intended to be a form of unjust discrimination, but rather a reminder of the truth of the liturgical rite".

It said such blessings were not permissible even though they were "motivated by a sincere desire to welcome and accompany

'Republic of Queues': 10 years on, Syria is a hungry nation

AS SYRIA MARKED THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE START OF ITS UPRISING-TURNED-CIVIL WAR MONDAY, PRESIDENT BASHAR ASSAD MAY STILL BE IN POWER, PROPPED UP BY RUSSIA AND IRAN

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beirut, March 15: The lines stretch for miles outside gas stations in Syrian cities, with an average wait of five hours to fill up a tank. At bakeries, people push and shove during long, chaotic waits for their turn to collect the quota of two bread packs a day per family.

On the streets in the capital of Damascus, beggars accost motorists and passers-by, pleading for food or money. Medicines, baby milk and diapers can hardly be found.

As Syria marked the 10th anniversary Monday of the start of its uprising-turned-civil war, President Bashar Assad may still be in power, propped up by Russia and Iran. But millions of people are being pushed deeper into poverty, and a majority of households can hardly scrape together enough to

secure their next meal.

With Assad preparing to run for a fourth seven-year presidential term in the spring, some have questioned whether he can survive the sharp economic deterioration and anger in areas under his control. Poverty levels are now worse than at any point throughout the 10-year conflict.

"Life here is a portrait of everyday humiliation and suffering," said one woman in Damascus. Her husband lost his job at an electronics store last month, and now the family is drawing on meager savings that are evaporating fast. The woman said she had taken up teaching part-time to help make ends meet. Like others, she spoke on condition her identity remains hidden, fearing arrest.

With two kids and an elderly father to care for, she said life had



become unbearably difficult and she is gripped by anxiety for the future. Until recently, she could smuggle in her father's medicines from Lebanon, but now Lebanon has its own meltdown and shortages. "I go to the souk and really have

to think of priorities, buying only the bare necessities for cooking. I try not to look at the other stuff my children might like," she said.

The decade of war has wreaked unfathomable destruction on Syria. Nearly half a million people have

been killed and more than half the pre-war population of 23 million displaced, whether inside or outside the country's borders, the world's worst displacement crisis since World War II. Infrastructure is in ruins.

Through most of the conflict, Assad was able to shield Syrians in government-held territory from unbearable economic pain. Even if barely sometimes, the state kept fuel, medicine and other supplies coming and the currency propped up.

Now he has gained a decisive upper hand in the war with Russia and Iran's help, his grip on areas under his control is unquestioned, and the rebellion is largely crushed.

But the economy has fallen apart with startling swiftness. It was hit by a double blow of new, far-reaching US sanctions imposed last year and the financial meltdown in

Lebanon, Syria's main link with the outside world. That proved too much, on top of the strains of war, government corruption, other Western sanctions in place for years and the coronavirus pandemic.

The United Nations says more than 80 per cent of Syrians now live in poverty, and 60% are at risk of hunger. The currency has crashed, now at 4,000 Syrian pounds to the dollar on the black market, compared to 700 a year ago and 47 at the beginning of the conflict in 2011.

"When you put all of these things together, there is no surprise that we are seeing rising food insecurity, rising hunger," said Arif Hussein, chief economist at the UN World Food Program. "Not only in the breadth, meaning lots and lots of people, but also in the depth, meaning people are closer to starvation today than ever before."

of the day quote

Indian ship-breakers are set to procure between 230 and 240 vessels, with a combined weight of over 1.9 million light displacement tonnage this fiscal, compared with 214 vessels weighing 1.77 million ldt bought last fiscal

RAHUL GUHA | DIRECTOR, CRISIL RATINGS

At MG, our focus has always been around bringing ground-breaking innovation in the automotive space. We are extremely honoured to partner with IIT-Delhi, a force to reckon with in the global technology space. We are confident this initiative will bring significant value to IIT Delhi students

RAJEEV CHABA |
PRESIDENT AND MD, MG MOTOR INDIA

The health and safety of employees and their families have been the utmost priority for the company. We have taken the initiative to acknowledge the dedication of the employees despite the difficulties created by the pandemic

SANJAY KUMAR JAIN |
CHRO, JINDAL STAINLESS

SHORT TAKES

Govt to sell 16.12% stake in Tata Comm

New Delhi: The government Monday said it will sell up to 16.12% stake in Tata Communications Ltd (TCL) through an Offer for Sale starting Tuesday at the floor price of ₹1,161 per equity share. As part of its exit plan from Tata Communications, the government is initially offering to sell up to 2.85 crore equity shares.

Airport sector to incur ₹5,400 cr loss

Mumbai: The domestic airport sector is expected to incur a net loss of ₹5,400 crore, and cash loss of ₹3,500 crore in FY21, impacted by a 66% y-o-y slip in passenger traffic amid Covid-19 induced travel restrictions, rating agency Icria said in a note Monday. It also said that given the significant delays in tariff orders in the past, timely tariff orders of regulator AERA, remains critical from the credit perspective.

APSEZ bolsters global footprint

Ahmedabad: Adani Group subsidiary Adani Ports and Special Economic Zones Ltd (APSEZ) has bagged the contract to develop and operate West the Container Terminal (WCT) in Colombo, making it the first Indian port operator in Sri Lanka. The company has received a Letter of Intent from Sri Lanka's Ministry of Ports and Shipping and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority for setting up the container terminal on a Build, Operate and Transfer basis for a period of 35 years on a public-private partnership basis.

GST: FinMin releases ₹1.10L cr

New Delhi: The finance ministry has released the full ₹1.10 lakh crore estimated GST compensation shortfall to the states with the release of final weekly installment of ₹4,104 crore. With the release of the 20th installment, 100 % of the total estimated shortfall of ₹1.10 lakh crore for the year 2020-21 has now been released to the states and UTs with Legislative Assembly. Out of this, an amount of ₹1,01,329 crore has been released to the states and ₹8,879 crore to three UTs.



Climate finance of \$100bn a year and green technologies for mitigation actions promised in 2009 under the Paris accord are still not on the table for developing countries. This \$100bn is today more than \$1tn and the finance is not on the table

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR | ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

FUEL PRICES REMAIN STEADY

Fuel prices in the country have remained unchanged for over a fortnight now even though global oil market remains volatile with regular variations in prices. Accordingly, petrol continues to be priced at ₹91.17 a litre and diesel ₹81.47 a litre in New Delhi Monday



Nationwide strike impacts services of govt banks

The government policies are going to have ill effects on the economy as also it will be reflected in the upcoming polls in some states

SOWMYA DUTTA | GENERAL SECRETARY, ALL INDIA BANK OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: Banking services such as cash withdrawals, deposits, cheque clearing and business transactions were impacted across the country Monday, the day one of the PSU bank union's strike, against the proposed privatisation of two more state-owned lenders. United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella body of nine unions, had given a strike call for March 15 and 16, and claimed that about 10 lakh bank employees and

officers of the banks will participate in the strike.

In the Union Budget presented last month, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced the privatisation of two public sector banks (PSBs) as part of the government's disinvestment plan.

All India Bank Officers Association (AIBOC) General Secretary Sowmya Dutta said the government policies are going to have ill effects on the economy as also it will be reflected in the upcoming polls in some states. He said nearly all the bank employees have taken part in the two-day strike except for top-level employees.

"All banking services are impacted from cash withdrawals to deposits, business transactions, loan process, cheque clearing, account opening and business transactions," he said.

He said the striking employees

BANK STRIKE DAY 1



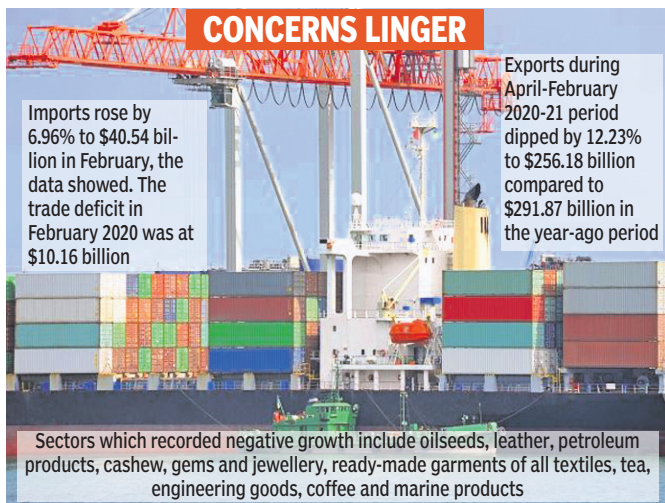
have taken out rallies, wherever permitted, across the country, and given a sat-in and if the government does not listen to them they will go for an even bigger, indefinite strike like the one on the lines of on-going farmers' agitation.

"We are connected with crores of

population through our branches, we are educating our customers about the government's ill policies and how it is going to impact them," Dutta said.

Through the Department of Financial Services, the bank unions have also conveyed to the Finance

February exports up 0.67%, trade deficit widens to \$12.62bn



AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 15: Growing for the third consecutive month, the country's exports rose marginally by 0.67% year-on-year to \$27.92 billion in February even as trade deficit widened to \$12.62 billion, according to official data released Monday. Imports rose by 6.96% to \$40.54 billion in the month, the data showed. The trade deficit in February 2020 was at \$10.16 billion. Exports during April-February 2020-21 period contracted by 12.23% to \$256.18 billion compared to \$291.87 billion in the year-ago period. Imports dipped 23.11% to \$340.8 billion in April-February.

In February, oil imports declined by 16.63% to \$8.99 billion while during April-February the shipments were down by 40.18% to \$72.08 billion. Gold imports in February jumped to \$5.3 billion from \$2.36 billion in the year-ago month. Sectors which recorded positive exports growth during February include oilmeals, iron ore, rice (30.78%), carpet (19.46%), spices (18.61%), pharmaceuticals (14.74%), tobacco (7.71%),

and chemicals (1.2%).

Sectors which recorded negative growth include oilseeds, leather, petroleum products, cashew, gems and jewellery, RMG (ready-made garments) of all textiles, tea, engineering goods, coffee and marine products.

Commenting on the data, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Sharad Kumar Saraf pointed out that the marginal growth in exports was mainly on account of container shortages across the country which limited supply in the last week of the month due to increasing Covid-19 cases in certain states.

Rising exports from China have led to the shortage of containers in the region as most of the empty containers are available only for exports from China, as the shipping lines and container companies are being paid hefty premiums for bringing empty containers back to China, he said.

He asked that the government must address some of the key issues including timely announcement of the new foreign trade policy.

WPI-based inflation rises to 27-mon th high of 4.17%

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 15: The wholesale price-based inflation rose for the second consecutive month to a 27-month high of 4.17% in February, as food, fuel and power prices spiked. The WPI inflation was 2.03% in January and 2.26% in February last year. After witnessing months of softening of prices, the food articles in February saw 1.36% inflation. In January it was (-) 2.80%.

In vegetables the rate of price rise was (-) 2.90% in February, against (-) 20.82% in the preceding month. Inflation in pulses was 10.25% in February, while in fruits it was 9.48%.

Inflation in the fuel and power basket was 0.58% in February, against (-) 4.78% in January on rising prices of petrol and diesel.

Petroleum product prices have reached historic highs as international crude prices have surged in recent months and due to high indirect taxes both at the centre and state level.

ICRA Ltd Principal Economist Aditi Nayar said the doubling in the WPI inflation in February reflects the rise in commodity prices brought on by the global risk-on sentiment, hardening of crude oil and fuel prices, as well as a fading of the favourable base effect for



The WPI inflation is expected to harden further to around 9-9.5% by May, before displaying a gradual moderation to 4% each by the end of 2021

food items. Core inflation was at 5.5% in February.

"Steep month-on-month upticks in items such as fibres and oilseeds do not bode well for the CPI inflation. We maintain our view that inflation dynamics will rule out any further rate cuts, with a status quo expected through 2021.

Looking ahead, we expect large upticks in the WPI inflation over the next three months, as the wedge

between the commodity prices and their year-ago level intensifies," Nayar said.

ICRA expects the headline and core WPI inflation to rise to around 6% each in March 2021.

The headline WPI inflation is expected to harden further to around 9-9.5%, and the core-WPI inflation is likely to climb to 7-7.5% by May 2021, before displaying a more gradual moderation to 4% each by the end of 2021, Nayar added.

ITM B-School HoD Prof Krupesh Thakkar said "we still hold our view of RBI's Monetary Policy Committee's stance of accommodative policy with no change in short-term interest rates when they meet in April 2021. However, some emphasis would be given on rising fuel prices and its impact on other products".

Importance of possessing Critical Illness Insurance Policy

A critical illness insurance policy ensures that one doesn't drain his entire life's savings to cope from a life threatening disease



TA RAMALINGAM

As per the World Cancer Report of 2020 by World Health Organization (WHO), one in 10 Indians will develop cancer during their lifetime. This statistic shows how susceptible we are to critical illnesses like cancer and it makes us think—Are we on the right track in taking care of ourselves and our family members in case of a medical exigency like cancer? I don't mean to scare you with this information, but my purpose is to make you aware that medical exigencies are unpredictable and can change a person's life drastically.

Critical illness like heart attack, cancer, permanent paralysis, etc.

can translate into huge medical costs and may affect your family's financial health too. Hence, I believe that a person should have a critical illness insurance policy in addition to their comprehensive health insurance policy. Some of the key features and benefits pertaining to this policy are:

- Under a critical illness insurance policy, a policyholder is eligible for a claim if s/he is diagnosed with the ailment which is listed as a part of the policy. This list of ailments varies from insurer to insurer.

- While a comprehensive health insurance policy takes care of hospitalisation expenses, a critical illness insurance policy provides you a lump sum amount as per the sum insured, if diagnosed with the illness listed in the policy. Hence, this policy is known as benefit only policy. For instance, a policyholder who has a critical illness policy with a sum insured of ₹10 lakh is

diagnosed with cancer; the hospitalisation expenses come down to ₹5 lakh. The policyholder will be given ₹10 lakh by the insurer irrespective of the hospitalisation costs policy. If cancer is a listed ailment under the policy. In fact, it is not mandatory for the policyholder to be hospitalised to make a claim. It's up to the policyholder to use the amount as per his/her discretion.

- The claim processing for critical illness policy is quite easy. All a policyholder needs to do is produce the diagnosis reports for the listed ailment.

Like any other policy, while buying a critical illness insurance policy, going through its T&C is of utmost importance. Understand the list of ailments that are covered under the policy and whether or not any pre-policy medical examination is required. This policy is available on annual basis and long-term basis, depending on the options available with the respective insurer. Insurers also have a



benefited from the crisis, such as the digital sector, dominant players are among the biggest winners."

The report did not name spe-

India's arms import dips by 33%: Report



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 15: India's arms imports have decreased by 33% between 2011-15 and 2016-20, a report by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said. The report stated that because of decrease in import, Russia was the most affected supplier, although India's imports of US arms also fell, by 46%.

Russia was the largest arms supplier to India in both 2011-15 and 2016-20. However, Russia's deliveries dropped by 53% between the two periods and its share of total Indian arms imports fell from 70 to 49%.

In 2011-15, the US was the second largest arms supplier to India, but in 2016-20 India's arms imports from the US were 46% lower than in the previous five-year period, making the US the fourth largest supplier to India in 2016-20.

France and Israel were the second and third largest arms suppliers to India in 2016-20. India's arms imports from France increased by 709% while those from Israel rose by 82%.

US becomes India's second biggest oil supplier: Report

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 15: The United States overtook Saudi Arabia as India's second biggest oil supplier last month, as refiners boosted cheaper US crude purchases to record levels to offset OPEC+ supply cuts, data from trade sources showed.

The switch in supplies, triggered by lower US crude demand, coincided with Saudi Arabia's voluntary extra 1 million bpd output cut on top of an agreement by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies (OPEC+) to maintain lower production.

India's imports from the United States - the world's top producer - rose 48% to a record 545,300 barrels per day (bpd) in February from the prior month, accounting for 14% of India's overall imports last month, showed the data.

cific firms, but singled out the technology sector as the one showing the most dramatic concentration in market power, with price markups increasing at twice the rate as economy-wide markups over the past 20 years.

The market-disrupting companies that displaced incumbent firms two decades ago have become increasingly dominant players that do not face the same competitive pressures from would-be disruptors today, the study said.

FM's comment on crypto brings relief to industry



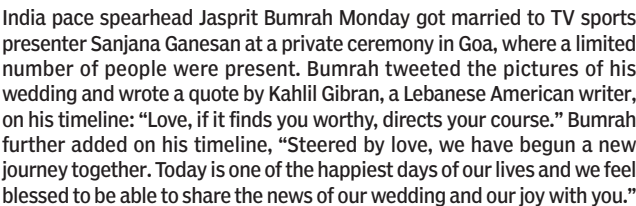
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 15: With Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman saying that all windows on cryptocurrencies will not be closed down, industry stakeholders Monday said that a positive move at this point can unleash a host of opportunities for the country.

Her comments at an India Today conclave last week came amid speculation that the government may ban cryptocurrencies in the country. "The very fact that the FM has mentioned willingness to experiment, shows the government's resolve in bringing digital revolution.

(The writer is the Chief Technical Officer at Bajaj Allianz General Insurance)

INDIA SEEK MOMENTUM

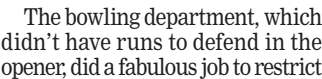


Ahmedabad, March 15: Their confidence soaring high after a resounding series-levelling win, India would look to build on their new approach of batting freely and fearlessly when they take on England in the third T20I here, Tuesday.

The Men in Blue were off to a horrible start in the T20 series, suffering a demoralising eight-wicket loss in the opening match but turned the tables on England with a seven-wicket win in the second game.

In stark contrast from the first match, Virat Kohli and his men excelled in all departments. The inclusion of Ishan Kishan, who made a sparkling debut with a 32-ball 56, allowed India to go ahead with their new approach that encourages batsmen to express themselves.

The hosts will also gain confidence from Kohli unbeaten innings in the previous game as he took the side past the finish line, breaking a sequence of low scores. Both Kohli and Shreyas Iyer will target big scores.



England to 164. The biggest positive would be Hardik Pandya bowling four overs which allowed the

hosts to go with an extra batsman. The bowlers will look to replicate their good show from

the last match where they found their rhythm.

What India would aspire is a better effort from Rishabh Pant. The big-hitting wicketkeeper has looked lethal in both outings but failed to capitalise on his starts.

India are unlikely to tinker with the winning combination save the return of star white-ball opener Rohit Sharma who is expected to be back in the side after being rested for a couple of games. With Kishan faring well, KL Rahul who looked out of sorts in both the outings, is expected to make way for Rohit.

The primary objective for India remains the same - to get an idea of the core group of players going into the ICC T20 World Cup in October.

With the series locked at 1-1, the third T20 promises to be a cracker of a contest with both teams battling for the bragging rights at the Narendra Modi stadium. With the game set to unfold on a surface that is red soil beneath, the spinners are expected to test the batsmen.

Dipti scripts Sports Hostel victory

Sports Hostel
players celebrate
one of their goals

Milan, March 15: A fast hat-trick for Cristiano Ronaldo still wasn't enough for third-place Juventus to close in on Inter, who managed to extend their lead at the top of Serie A.

Nine-time defending champion Juventus beat Cagliari 3-1 but remained 10 points behind Inter, although it has played a match less. Inter snatched a 2-1 win at relegation-threatened Torino and moved nine points clear of second-place AC Milan after the Rossoneri lost 0-1 at home to Napoli.

Ronaldo's first-half hat-trick set it on the way at Cagliari. It was the perfect response to criticism the Juventus forward and his teammates had come in for after the Bianconeri were knocked out of the Champions League by Porto in the round of 16 earlier in the week. Giovanni Simeone netted a consolation goal for Cagliari.



It was a so-called perfect hat trick, as the Portugal forward scored with his head, right foot and left. It took Ronaldo's tally to 770 career goals, surpassing Brazilian great Pele's official total. Both wrote messages marking the occasion on social media.

Lautaro Martinez headed in a late winner to help Inter take a potentially crucial step towards a first league title since 2010. Martinez netted five minutes from time after Antonio Sanabria had cancelled out Romelu Lukaku's opener from the penalty spot.

London, March 15: It says a lot about Arsenal's struggles that not even a first north London derby win in more than two years does much for its Premier League targets. Even after coming from behind to beat Tottenham 2-1, Arsenal is in 10th place and 10 points from the top four.

The more significant results Sunday in the Champions League chase were victories for Manchester United and Leicester, which both pulled further clear.

United, which is 14 points behind leader Manchester City in second, beat fifth-place West Ham 1-0. Leicester remains a point behind United after routing Sheffield Wednesday 5-0. Chelsea are now five points further back in fourth after only managing a draw Saturday.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: Dipti Rani Kujur scored a brilliant hat-trick to help Sports Hostel seal a 6-4 victory in their Odisha Women's League match against SAI-STC at

the Kalinga Stadium here, Monday.

Dipti scored in the 67th, 83rd and 88th minutes, while Manisha Naik scored a brace (sixth & 45th). Sridevi Hansdah (24th) was also on target. For SAI-STC, Deepa Nayak scored a hat-trick (22nd, 75th & 80th), while

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