



## PRIYANKA NOMINATED

Priyanka Chopra Jonas will be one of the presenters at the 74th British Academy Film Awards, April 10, 11

LEISURE P2



## EC NOTICE TO MAMATA

The EC has issued a notice to Mamata Banerjee for making 'false statements' against central forces on election duty

TWO STATES P7



## HARSHAL, ABD SHOW

Harshal Patel and AB de Villiers fashion RCB's win against MI in IPL-14 season-opener

SPORTS P12

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# Naveen launches 'mission mask'

FINES DOUBLED AS CM URGES PEOPLE TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS

POST NEWS NETWORK

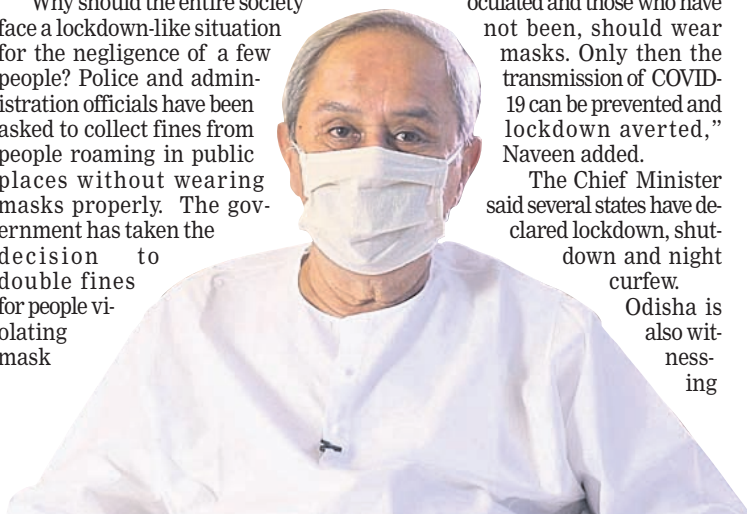
**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced Friday a 14-day mask-donning campaign to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the state. In his address to the people of Odisha, the chief minister asked them to wear masks properly and not just carelessly hang those on their necks.

"We can beat coronavirus if we wear masks properly. Masks must be worn in a way so that it covers the nose, chin and mouth. We should never step out of our homes without masks. If we strictly follow this rule for 14 days, it will become a habit with us," Naveen said.

The chief minister appealed to all mothers to ensure that family members wear masks properly while stepping out. He said government officials are keeping a watch outside,

so mothers should increase the vigil at home. "If mothers are alert the virus will never enter their house," asserted Naveen.

"Why should the entire society face a lockdown-like situation for the negligence of a few people? Police and administration officials have been asked to collect fines from people roaming in public places without wearing masks properly. The government has taken the decision to double fines for people violating mask



norms," said Naveen. "Mask is now the most important shield against COVID-19. All those, including the ones who have been inoculated and those who have not been, should wear masks. Only then the transmission of COVID-19 can be prevented and lockdown averted," Naveen added.

The Chief Minister said several states have declared lockdown, shutdown and night curfew. Odisha is also witnessing

## COVID: 12 ODIAS DIE IN GUJARAT

**BERHAMPUR:** Twelve Odias have lost their lives in the last one week in various cities of Gujarat due to COVID-19, said the migrants staying there. Among those dead is the husband of Gangadharpur gram panchayat's former sarpanch. He succumbed to the virus April 7, informed his family sources. He was undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Surat for the last five days and over ₹3 lakh was spent. But he did not survive," said a family member. Describing the situation as 'grave' in Gujarat he said, "We reached the crematorium there at 11.00am the same day to perform his last rites. But the cremation was done late at 6.00pm as the site was overcrowded. It just goes to show how bad the situation is."

a surge in cases which could be contained if 'we follow the safety protocols and use a mask', he said.

"Other countries are currently facing the third wave of COVID-19. Nobody knows how many waves we have to face. But if we make a small change in our lifestyle and wear masks, then we could protect ourselves from the virus and avoid

the negative impact of lockdown," Naveen said.

Officials said that the penalty for not wearing masks or donning them improperly has been doubled. Anyone without masks or wearing it in a wrong manner will be fined ₹2,000 for the first two times. It will then be increased to ₹5,000 from the third violation onwards.

1800 266 266 1 (tollfree)

## VAX SHORTAGE LOOMS LARGE

# Odisha seeks 25L Covishield doses



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/New Delhi, April 9:** The Odisha government once again urged the Centre to provide 25 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine immediately to make the 'Tika Utsav' successful in the state. Odisha has been continuously raising the demand for Covishield before the Centre in the last few days. Even, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had sought 10 days of vaccine stock during the virtual meeting Thursday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Additional Chief Secretary (Health) PK Mohapatra wrote a letter Friday his counterpart in the Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare urging the latter to expedite vaccine supply.

"The overall performance of our state in vaccination programme is more than the national average in all categories of targeted beneficiaries. However, the state government is in full agreement that Covid vaccination in Odisha should be stepped up and we are pre-

pared to undertake three lakh vaccinations daily," Mohapatra said in his letter.

"Unfortunately, due to the extremely low supply of vaccines to our state, we had to close down two thirds of our vaccination centres. Several districts are now in stock-out situation and are unable to continue the vaccination programme," Mohapatra mentioned.

The issue has been raised repeatedly with the Health Ministry earlier but still remains unaddressed, Mohapatra added.

During the video conference Thursday with chief ministers, Modi urged everyone to organise the 'Tika Utsav' across India, April 11 to 14. Keeping that in mind, Odisha has asked for 25 lakh doses of Covishield.

Odisha however is not the only state which is suffering from vaccine shortage. More than 70 centres in Mumbai remained closed Friday due to the shortage of vaccines. The Delhi government has urged Modi not to send vaccines to other countries and instead provide it on a war-footing domestically.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Yes, I gave her a rabies one! You see, corona vaccine is out of stock.

## VACCINATION PROVES FUTILE

# Two Capital Hospital staff still test positive

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** Two employees of Capital Hospital, a doctor and a health worker have tested positive for COVID-19 even after getting both the doses of the vaccine jab. Hospital officials told Orissa POST that the doctor is working in the Casualty department while the health worker is engaged in the surgery ward.

"Two COVID positive cases were found in our hospital. One was a doctor working in the Casualty department while the other one is a paramedical staff engaged in the surgery ward. Both of them have been put under quarantine," Dr Laxmidhar Sahoo, director, Capital Hospital said Friday.

"After the two positive cases, the samples of other staff and patients who came in contact with them were tested and all reports came out to be negative. The tests were conducted through the Rapid Antigen method," Sahoo added.

The hospital premises were sanitised after the detection of the two cases. The director said that all preventive measures are taken to maintain hygiene in the hospital and prevent the spread of the virus.

Sahoo explained as to why the two may have contracted the disease in spite of completing their vaccinations. "May be adequate antibodies were not formed to counter the invasion of COVID-19 pathogens," Sahoo said.

This however, is not the only case where healthcare workers



## 1000+ CASES 1ST TIME IN 2021

**BHUBANESWAR:** Odisha's COVID-19 tally soared to 3,46,808 as the state registered this year's highest single-day spike of 1,282 new cases, a health official said Friday. One fresh fatality pushed Odisha's coronavirus death toll to 1,924, he informed. The last time the state had reported more than 1,000 new infections was November 11 last year. It had reported 1,220 daily cases then. Of the new infections, 755 were reported in quarantine centres, while 527 were detected during contact tracing. Sundergarh district reported the highest number of new cases at 224, followed by Khurda (192) and Kalahandi (108). **More P4**

have been infected by the virus even after inoculation. Similar cases have been reported from other states also.

# STATE BOARD EXAMS ON SCHEDULE: DASH

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** Due to the steep rise of COVID-19 cases in India, students and their parents are apprehensive about physically appearing for the Class X and XII exams conducted by the BSE, CHSE and CBSE. Earlier reports said that a huge number of students had signed petitions asking the Centre to either cancel the exams or to conduct them online. The hashtag 'cancelboardexams2021' has been trending on Twitter for the last few days.

Odisha School & Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash however, ended all speculation Friday and said there will be no postponement of state board exams and they will be held on schedule. He said that the board exams for Class X and XII will begin May 3 and May 18 respectively as announced earlier. The minister also informed that keeping in mind the spike in coronavirus cases in Odisha, the number of examination centres will be increased so that COVID-19 protocols can be followed properly.

It should be stated here that the School and Mass Education department Wednesday decided to cancel physical



classes of Class IX and XI in all government, government-aided and private schools. Classes will remain suspended till April 30 and then the situation will again be reviewed. However, physical classes of Class X and XII students will continue as usual till April 25, 2021 as notified earlier.

The CBSE had also clarified that students will not face any trouble in appearing for the CBSE Class X and XII board exams 2021 as all COVID-19 guidelines will be followed during the exams. The examinations will take place between May 4 to June 10 and students will have to appear physically.



## THE ELITE AT FAULT

Most of the visitors Friday at the Bisuba Mandap in Cuttack wore their masks in a wrong manner flouting COVID-19 guidelines during the virtual book launch of the Hindi translation of 'Odisha Ithihaas' by Dr Harekrushna Mahtab. The book was unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

## Terror group AGuH neutralised in J&K

AGENCIES

**Srinagar, April 9:** With the killing of seven militants of Ansar Gazwat-ul-Hind (AGuH) in two different operations in Shopian and Pulwama districts of South Kashmir in the last 24 hours, the proscribed terrorist outfit has been wiped out in Kashmir; top police officials said Friday. In the two encounters, four security personnel were injured.

The encounter at Shopian started Thursday evening and ended Friday with the killing of five terrorists. Two ultras, including the chief of AGuH Imtiyaz Ahmad Shah, were killed in a second operation at Tral in Pulwama district Friday.

Police sources said both the operations at Shopian and Tral in South Kashmir are over now. A large quantity of arms and ammunition, including seven AK rifles and two pistols has been recovered from the slain terrorists, the police added.

"Both the ongoing operations at Shopian and Tral are over. Five terrorists in the first and two in the second operation were neutralised. Both the terrorist groups are from the same outfit. Seven AK and two pistols recovered," Dilbag Singh, DGP, J&K said.

"With these two encounters and elimination of seven terrorists the terrorist group AGH (Ansar Gazwat-ul-Hind) fully wiped out once again," he added.

## MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	49591.32 ↓ 154.89
NIFTY	14834.90 ↓ 38.90
DOLLAR	75.05 ↓ ₹0.02
EURO	88.95 ↑ ₹0.17
GOLD	₹46,588 ↓ ₹250
SILVER	₹66,961 ↓ ₹540

## WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	34.9°C	33.8°C
MIN	21.0°C	19.0°C
Humidity	70%	74%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Rain or thunder-shower

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 9:** People are yet to digest the huge Facebook data leak including that of 6.1 million Indians. Amid this comes another threatening news. Microsoft-owned professional networking platform LinkedIn is now facing a massive data leak of 500 million users that is allegedly being sold online.

An archive with data purportedly scraped from 500 million LinkedIn profiles has been put for sale on a popular hacker forum, with another two million records leaked as a proof-of-concept sample by people behind the hack.

"The four leaked files contain information about LinkedIn users whose data has been allegedly scraped by the threat actor, including their full names, email addresses, phone numbers, work-



place information, and more," said a report Friday in 'CyberNews'.

The leaked data up on sale includes LinkedIn IDs, full names, email addresses, phone numbers, genders, links to LinkedIn profiles, links to other social media profiles, professional titles and other work-related data, something that can be very useful for sites dealing with

such information.

"While users on the hacker forum can view the leaked samples for about \$2 (approximately ₹140) worth of forum credits, the threat actor appears to be auctioning the much-larger 500 million user database for at least a four-digit sum, presumably in bitcoin," the report mentioned.

**The four leaked files contain information about LinkedIn users including their full names, phone numbers and workplace information**

REPORT

The company said in a statement Friday that it has 'investigated an alleged set of LinkedIn data that has been posted for sale and have determined that it is actually an aggregation of data from a number of websites and companies'.

"It does include publicly viewable member profile data that appears to have been scraped from LinkedIn. This was not a LinkedIn data breach, and no private member account data from LinkedIn was included in what we've been able to review," the

company said in a statement. "When anyone tries to take member data and use it for purposes LinkedIn and our members haven't agreed to, we work to stop them and hold them accountable," the company added.

The author of the post, however, claims that the data was scraped from LinkedIn.

Earlier this month, personal data of nearly 53.3 crore Facebook users, emerged online after a hacker posted the details on a digital forum.

The leaked data included Facebook ID numbers, profile names, email addresses, location information, gender details, job data, and other details.

Facebook however, said this was old data that it previously reported on in 2019. "We found and fixed this issue in August 2019," a Facebook spokesperson said.



# leisure



## OLLY ALEXANDER ON WHY HIS BAND 'YEARS & YEARS' SPLIT

Singer Olly Alexander, who was part of the band 'Years & Years' with Mikey Goldsworthy and Emre Turkmen, says he knew they would eventually split. He says the music they were creating was no longer compatible. However, he adds that they were still on good terms with each other.

## OSCAR-NOMINATED THE FATHER IN INDIAN THEATRES APRIL 23

Hollywood drama *The Father*, which has been nominated in six categories at the 93rd Academy Awards, is set to release in India April 23. The film, directed by Florian Zeller, stars Anthony Hopkins, Olivia Colman and Mark Gatiss. The film narrates the tale of an ageing man who battles dementia.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today you will go overboard trying to spruce up your looks. You attempt to imbibe new looks. A very desirable date will raise high expectations in you and will keep you on the edge of your seat. Ganesh advises you to take it easy as real relationships are not measured by outward expressions.

**TAURUS**  
Your romantic relationship will be working on an overtime today, says Ganesh. You will discover answers to the finer aspects of your love life. Overall, you will have a refreshingly creative outlook all through the day.

**GEMINI**  
Today, you will do an amazing job in dividing your time between work and family. Despite your preoccupation with work, you will take time off for your family, and even plan out a small outing, leaving them pleasantly surprised. Also, your dreams are about to come true.

**CANCER**  
Today, you are likely to be brimming with love and compassion. However, certain negative thoughts will spoil all your good work. But don't fret! Your efforts won't go wasted and you will get the desired results sooner or later, says Ganesh.

**LEO**  
Do not be surprised if you find yourself today in a situation that somehow feels like a landmark moment in your life. Whether it is a personal matter or something related to work, that you must wait to find out, you will need all your grit and diplomacy to sail through.

**VIRGO**  
The bulb of ideas will burn bright today. A possible see-saw between your contractual obligation and current duties may baffle you. New contacts will stand you in good stead. Blood will prove thicker, and family and friends will consolidate their place in your life.

**LIBRA**  
Letting things build up inside you is never a good idea. Learn from this as there is every possibility that today might turn out to be an aggravating and exasperating day for you. You may feel that way due to all the amassed emotions and resentments, so let it all go.

**SCORPIO**  
While not the Trot, you shall, however, trot on the lines of radicalism today, predicts Ganesh. Learn to think as you would, and always have, but act as others would have you to, advises Ganesh. Be the maverick that you are only with those who are closest and dearest, cautions Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Your friend base is slated to multiply today. At work, additional responsibilities will be thrust upon you, and you will also be given charge of new resources. Ganesh predicts you taking up the challenge and emerging triumphant in all spheres today.

**CAPRICORN**  
Overcome with feelings, you may take decisions that may stand in the way of success. Don't let your sentiments ruin your future prospects because the damage done will be beyond repair, warns Ganesh. Today, there are also chances that your down-to-earth nature and amiable approach will win the hearts of many.

**AQUARIUS**  
You will come out top in whatever you choose to do, and success will smell honeysuckle sweet! Naturally, recognition and rewards await you. Take your friends to that trendy café; you needn't wait for a reason to party, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
An important day today, you can expect to reach a much-awaited milestone either on the domestic front or at the workplace, says Ganesh. Expect your professional status and your social standing to receive a boost.

## Sonam wishes 'behen' Swara on birthday

**Mumbai:** Actress Sonam Kapoor took to Instagram to wish actress Swara Bhaskar a Happy Birthday Friday. Sonam posted a couple of pictures from her wedding, where she is posing with Swara. In one of the pictures, the two actresses flaunt the mehendi on their hands while in the next, Sonam can be seen dressed up as a bride and is accompanied by Swara and her sister Rhea Kapoor. Calling Swara her 'behen' (sister), she wrote: "Dear Behen, we just spoke a day before and I realised that our friendship is a godsend. Sakshi, Bindiya and Chandrika... of every person you've essayed, my favourite remains the one you are off-screen. May your voice only amplify with time, love you lots. Happy happy birthday, Swaru. @reallyswara." Commenting on the post, Swara wrote: "Love you so much Sonammmmmmm! You are the bestest", followed by three purple heart emojis. Sonam and Swara are very close friends and have collaborated on films together as well. They have shared the screen in films such as *Prem Ratan Dhan Payo*, *Raanjhanaa* and *Veere Di Wedding*.



As well. They have shared the screen in films such as *Prem Ratan Dhan Payo*, *Raanjhanaa* and *Veere Di Wedding*.

## PRIYANKA TO PRESENT BAFTA

**London:** Priyanka Chopra Jonas is one of the presenters at the upcoming 74 British Academy Film Awards, which will take place April 10 and 11 at Royal Albert Hall. The actress, who is currently in London, took to Instagram Stories to repost from the official BAFTA Instagram page, announcing the news. "So honoured and excited to be presenting at the #EEBAFTAs this Sunday!" she wrote. The category she will present, EE BAFTA, represents the Rising Star Award that honours new talent. Earlier called Orange Rising Star Award, it is now designed as EE owing to commercial reasons. Other presenters this year include Phoebe Dynevor, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Cynthia Erivo, Hugh Grant, Richard E. Grant, Tom Hiddleston, Felicity Jones, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, James McAvoy, David Oyelowo, and Pedro Pascal. Priyanka and other presenters at London will be joined virtually by presenters from the Los Angeles including Rose Byrne, Andra Day, Anna Kendrick and Renee Zellweger. Priyanka's last outing onscreen was *The White Tiger*, a film she featured in as well as produced. Interestingly, *The White Tiger* has two nominations at the BAFTAs this year — for lead actor Adarsh Gourav in the Leading Actor category, and writer-director Ramin Bahrani in the category of Best Adapted Screenplay. Recently, Priyanka and her husband, pop star Nick Jonas, announced the Oscars 2021 nominations.



## Celebs react to lockdown in Mumbai

**Mumbai:** With Mumbai experiencing another lockdown situation during the day, curfew at night and lockdown on weekends, many B-town celebrities expressed their opinion on the matter Friday. While some celebs shared their plan for the weekend lockdown, others reacted to the current situation in the city.

Singer Shaan shared a photograph of himself on Instagram and wrote: "Ready for the Weekend!!! But nowhere to go!!! #lockdownweekend begins from tomorrow in #maharashtra... #stayhome... #staystrong #staysafe."

Talking about his team in Zee TV's music reality show *Indian Pro Music League*, the singer added: "And keep supporting #ananyabirlafoundation-bengaltigers @ipml\_official @zee5shows @zeetv."

"*Ae Dil Hai Mushkil*" on the flute. "Nobody's Perfect... I am Nobody. TAG a Nobody. New hobby for the new lockdown (also unlike my piano I can pack this in my suitcase and play it in the middle of shoot.) This was my practice video to take a nice video to put on Instagram but then we must also share the not so perfect stuff on Instagram so sharing this one only. Also this is my intense concentration face," Adah wrote.

Diana Penty shared a throw-back photograph where she is seen taking bath in a swimming pool. "And this is how I'm taking on curfews, lockdowns and this mad, mad heat... too bad this is a throwback. Stay safe everyone," she wrote.

Expressing concern for her elderly parents, veteran actress Soni Razdan tweeted: "Does anyone know if take away is open on Sat Sun ... during the weekend lockdown in Mumbai city? Have to send food to my parents Sunday. In case not allowed to send it then could send them from a restaurant. But not sure if one is able to do that on the weekend lockdown." IANS

## Homeopathy gives credence to mental symptoms: Expert

World Homeopathy Day is observed throughout the globe April 10 every year to commemorate the birth anniversary of the founder and architect of Homeopathy, Dr Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann. Hahnemann was a German physician, great researcher, linguist and applauded scientist. He was qualified in traditional system of medicine, but his scientific bent of mind, keen observation and analytical thought made him to finally quit that system and he founded a new system of Healing Homeopathy. Homeopathy took its birth amidst criticism and controversy. But as time passed by, it has undergone a lot of experiment, observation and interference. Time has tested it on suffering humanity. And that's why it has become the second most widely accepted alternative system of treatment with due government patronage.

1-Homeopathy treats the patient as a whole and not the disease. 2-It gives credence to the mental symptoms. Most of the chronic diseases originate in mind first and then the symptoms appear in body. The modern school is slowly coming to this stand.

3-It adopts the novice method of individualisation in the process of treatment. 4-Homeopathic medicines are non-toxic and harmless and do not have side effects. 5-It is cost effective and easy to administer for patients of all age groups. 6-There is no drug resistance issue in homeopathy due to dynamic nature of medicines. 7-Its scope in paediatrics is acid tested. In geriatric too, it has a wide scope in many diseases like osteoarthritis, BHP,

dementia among others. 8- In maternity and child health, this system has astounding success rate. 9-For emerging new viral diseases, it has better approach. 10-Many autoimmune diseases are on the rise which is well amenable to homeopathic treatment because of its holistic approach. 11-Surgical diseases like warts, corns, BHP, piles, fissures and fistula, renal stones, fibroadenoma breast are well handled by this treatment. 12- Homeopathy is a very good option for incurable cases where palliative treatment is needed.

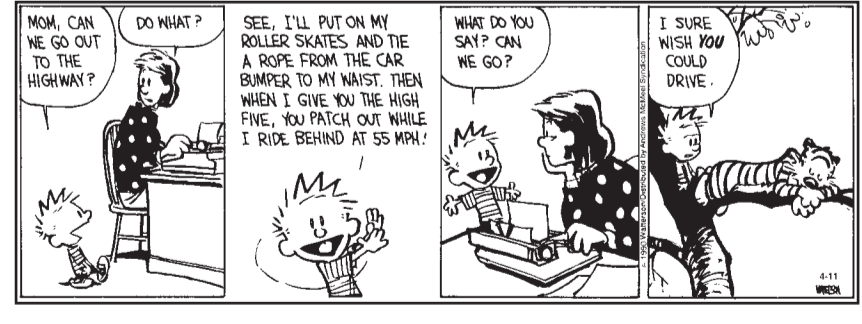
13- For most of the lifestyle diseases, homeopathy renders better solutions. On this World Homeopathy Day, humanity pays tribute to that great soul, Dr Samuel Hahnemann.

**Dr Kedarnath Naik MD (Hom) Reader, Obstetrics & Gynaecology Dr Abhin Chandra Homeopathic Medical College and Hospital, Bhubaneswar**

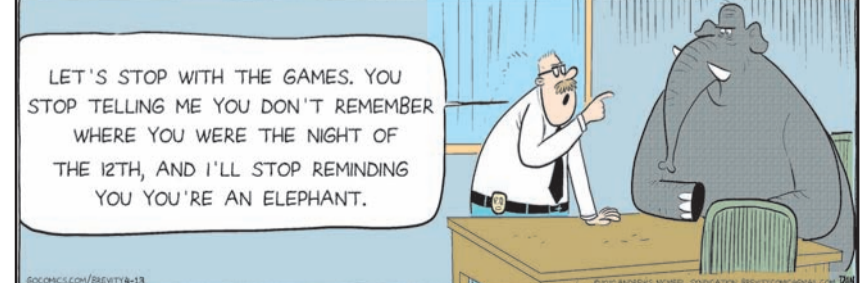
### PEANUTS



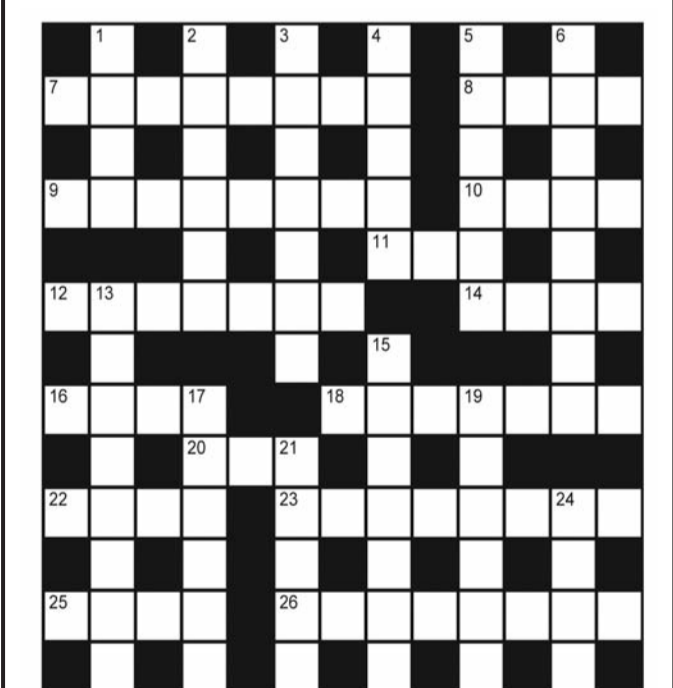
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



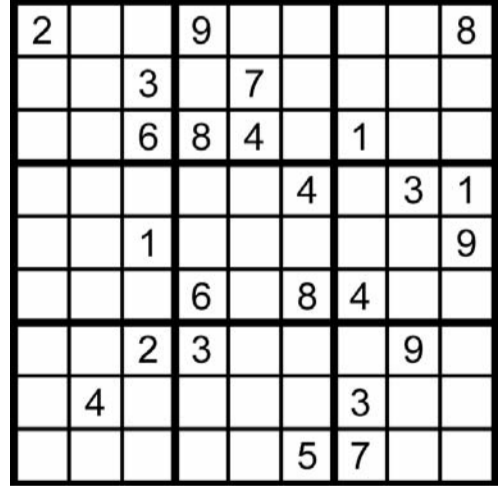
### FUN post CROSSWORD



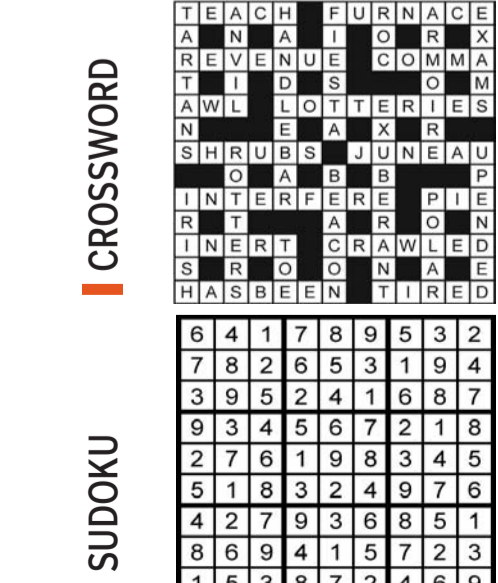
- Across**
- 7 Curs
  - 8 Military group
  - 9 High-angle gun
  - 10 Malayan dagger
  - 11 Pittance
  - 12 Chinese dish (4,3)
  - 14 Meager
  - 16 Voyaging
  - 18 Fire-breathing dragons
  - 20 Spigot
  - 22 Chalupa alternative
  - 23 Levels
  - 25 Lunar trench
  - 26 Double-crosser (3-5)
  - 3 Sudden attack, medically
  - 4 Some Romanovs
  - 5 Commotion
  - 6 Palermo native
  - 13 Australian state
  - 15 Cyclone
  - 17 Coral reefs
  - 19 French pastry
  - 21 Animal hides
  - 24 Have to have
- Down**
- 1 Ho-hum (2-2)
  - 2 More hideous looking

### SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



### SOLUTIONS



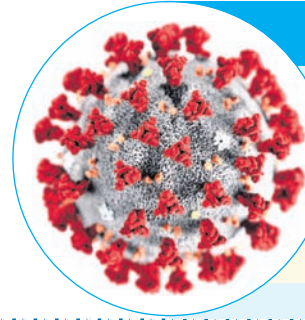
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW





**FESTIVAL AHEAD**

The Ram Mandir in Bhubaneswar being refurbished ahead of the Ram Navmi, Friday



**COVID-19 TRACKER**

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	13,48,75,889	10,85,39,759	29,20,337
India	1,30,60,542	1,19,13,292	1,67,642
Odisha	3,46,808	3,39,200	1,924

# High chrome ore price killing industries: KNIA

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, April 9:** The Kalinga Nagar Industries Association (KNIA) has urged the Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) for reduction in the floor price of chrome ore. In a letter to OMC Managing Director Balwant Singh, the industries body has claimed that the price of ferrochrome has come down to ₹92,000 per tonne from ₹1,02,500. The price is likely to fall further, said the KNIA.



The Kalinga Nagar Industries Association has claimed that the price of ferrochrome has come down to ₹92,000 per tonne from ₹1,02,500

The lifting of chrome ore has dropped sharply due to the high floor price of the ore

The body has said that Rohit Ferro-Tech plant at Kalinga Nagar has stopped its production due to shortage of chromites

March 17. The lifting of ore has come down to 3,080 tonne from March 18 to April 3.

As per the KNIA, the OMC has missed the opportunity to liquidate its ore stock due to wrong KPMG (Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler) formula and high price. The mining corporation and the state exchequer have suffered huge losses due to lower dispatches of chrome ore.

The KNIA has requested the OMC to revise the formula and correction factor as suggested by the PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC). It has also urged the OMC not to add additional royalty on the chrome ore

floor price. The chrome ore floor price is linked to ferrochrome price, said the industries body.

The industries association has requested the state government and the OMC to revise the chrome ore price formula and protect the interests of chrome ore based end-user industries in Odisha and the common public.

The KNIA has claimed that the Rohit Ferro-Tech plant at Kalinga Nagar has stopped its production due to shortage of chromites. Similarly, the ferrochrome units of Jindal Stainless and VISA Steel are also facing difficulties due to high prices of chromites.

## RI gets 2 years in jail for bribery

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** The Special Vigilance Court here Friday sentenced a revenue inspector (RI) to two years of rigorous imprisonment in a bribery case in 2000.

Special Vigilance Judge Sanjeeb Dubey also slapped a penalty of ₹10,000 on the convict, Binayak Ghaturai, RI of Bhusandpur in Khurda. Non-payment of the penalty would entail an additional three months of rigorous imprisonment, the court ruled.

Raj Kishore Baliarsingh had approached the Tangi tahsildar, seeking permission for laterite stone quarrying. Subsequently, the tahsildar forwarded the application to Ghaturai, who was the revenue inspector, for enquiry. Ghaturai, however, demanded ₹2,000 to submit a 'favourable' enquiry report.

## Handcuffs for tipsy drivers

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** Cracking the whip on drunken driving, the state government once again asked the Commissionerate Police to arrest people driving vehicles in twin city under the influence of alcohol, instead of imposing pecuniary fine on them.

Commerce and Transport secretary Madhu Sudan Padhi has written a letter to the Police Commissioner Thursday.

Power for compounding certain sections of Motor Vehicle (MV) Act has been delegated to police officers in the state. However, power for compounding under Section 185 of the Act has not been delegated to the police officers.

Therefore, Padhi asked the police commissioner to instruct all police stations under Commissionerate Police not to compound the drunken



driving cases. "Drunken drivers must be arrested as per the provisions of MV Act," he said. The move came after a lady was reportedly allowed to go after she was found driving a vehicle under the influence of alcohol in the capital city recently.

For detection of drunken driving, adequate number of breath analysers has been provided to police stations and RTOs, he added.

The Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety in August 2015 had directed that "in case of driving a vehicle under the influence of drinks

and drugs, the police should prosecute the offender and seek imprisonment as prescribed under Section 185 of MV Act, 1988 even for the first offence."

The Committee has also asked the state for suspension of driving licence of such offender for a period of not less than three months.

Section 185 of the MV Act says, "Whoever, while driving or attempting to drive a motor vehicle under the influence of drinks and drugs, shall be punishable for the first offence with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine of ₹10,000 or with both; and for a second or subsequent offence, with imprisonment for a term which may extend up to 2 years, or with fine which may extend to ₹15,000 or with both."

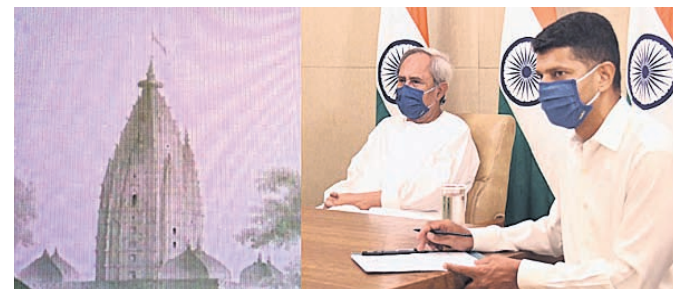
As many as 1,068 road accidents have occurred in the state due to drunken driving during 2019.

## CM okays rehab package for SAMALEI project

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday approved the Rehabilitation and Resettlement package under the SAMALEI (Samaleswari Temple Area Management and Local Economy Initiative) project for the development of Maa Samaleswari temple in Sambalpur. Approving the package, the Chief Minister directed the officials concerned to ready the project plan by May 15.

The required land will be purchased and acquired directly from private landowners and compensation will be provided under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency of Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. While ₹1 lakh will be provided immediately for transport



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik approves the rehabilitation package through videoconference. 5T Secretary VK Pandian is also seen

and other facilities, each evicted family will be given ₹10,000 for 12 months.

The priests of the temple will have the opportunity to get land in exchange for land. If the value of the land provided is less than the market price of the original land of the priest, then the compensation will

also be paid according to the price difference. The priests will be given a rehabilitation allowance of ₹20 lakh or the value of their house, whichever is higher.

Priests who do not have a home will be provided with proper resettlement packages in consultation with the district Collector.

Private land will be purchased directly from all shop owners having valid land documents. A grant of ₹1 lakh will be provided in two installments to relocate the shop.

The families with unauthorised small kuccha houses or partially pucca houses on government land will be paid ₹50,000 or the value of the house, whichever is more. In addition, 650 square feet of land will be provided to such families for resettlement. The Sambalpur Municipal Corporation will provide transportation, food and other basic amenities for 8 days.

For unauthorised housing in private areas other than slums, the government will provide market price of the house, rehabilitation assistance of ₹2,57,475 and one-time assistance of ₹50,000 per family for relocation.

## STF arrests two gunrunners from Cuttack

**Bhubaneswar:** The Special Task Force (STF), a dedicated wing of Odisha Police to tackle organised crimes, Friday claimed to have arrested two persons in Cuttack on charges of gunrunning. According to STF sources, Suresh Kumar Das and Soumyaranjan Dalei, both residents of Jagatsinghpur, have been arrested after eight pistols, two 7mm and six country-made single bore ones, and 20 live ammunition were recovered from their possession near Sikharghat bridge under Niali police limits in Cuttack. A case (12/2021) under Sections 25 and 27 of the Arms Act has been registered in this regard. "They [the accused] are members of a notorious gang involved in various cases in multiple districts (sic)," the STF tweeted. During interrogation, the accused revealed that they had procured the firearms from Kalinga Sahoo, Dhananjay Sahoo, Susanta Moharana of Kantapada and Bana Swain of Arakuda. They were asked to dispose the case to the anti-socials who have been collecting money from illegal sand miners in Niali and Naugaon areas. The STF has seized around 22 firearms and 54 live ammunition apart from arresting seven criminals within a year, said the source.



**EXCLUSIVE LEHENGAS & SAREES**



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**MENSWEAR, SAREES, LEHENGAS AND GOWNS**



# No Modi wave, only Naveen wave in Pipli: Rudra

Rudra Pratap Maharathy, the BJD candidate for Pipli bypoll, in his interview with Manish Kumar of Orissa POST, talks about his campaign and why Modi wave, if there is any, is likely to fail in Pipli. Excerpts:

What are the development works done by your father late Pradeep Maharathy on which you are seeking votes? A lot of works were done by my late father starting from roads, schools, health sector, irrigation, drinking water and upliftment of farmers. Development is an ongoing process and I will go forward with the agenda of development. For this I am already taking suggestions as well as blessings from the voters.

What makes you the best candidate for the MLA post? I have already covered 43 out of 46 panchayats in the constituency. My father took care of the people for many years and treated them as his own family. They see him in me and expect the same level of dedication and love from me and have high hopes from me. I will work as per the

needs and suggestions of the voters. There are issues like kuccha houses, paddy procurement, KALIA scheme irregularities in the area. Do you admit existence of such problems? Most of these things you mentioned have been taken care of in my area. My first priority in these areas will be to complete all the incomplete tasks. There are also drinking water problems in some pockets of the area. If elected, I will make it as priority and ensure drinking water facilities for the people of the area.

What poll promises are you making to the voters? Now, my priority is to meet the maximum number of people I can meet and take their suggestions and feedback. I am making a note of all the demands and will start working on all the demands raised by the people from Day 1 if elected as the next MLA from the area.

There were speculations of other BJD leaders including your mother who could have got the ticket. Are you getting support from all of them? My mother is always with me. I could not have gone ahead without the blessing of my mother and my father. There is no other such leader who is unhappy and all are working together to ensure victory of the BJD.

Is there any Modi wave or BJD wave in some pockets of Pipli constituency? There is only one wave in Pipli-Delang and that is Naveen Patnaik wave. I am fully sure that the hard

work done by the CM and my late father will yield very good results in the upcoming bypoll.



RUDRA PRATAP MAHARATHY | BJD CANDIDATE FOR PIPLI BYPOLL

# Voters will reject dynastic rule: Ashrit Pattanayak

The BJP candidate from Pipli Assembly constituency, Ashrit Pattanayak, talks to Manish Kumar of Orissa POST about his plans, campaign and what can go wrong for the BJD. Excerpts:

Pipli is considered to be a stronghold of BJD. How do you plan to invade their fort? The Modi wave is much stronger than the BJD's influence. People in Pipli and Delang are now supporting our party. They are very happy with the governance and policies of the Modi government. They know that voting for the BJD will ensure the development of this area.

You have prior experience of contesting polls and this time the BJD candidate is a newcomer. Will this help you? The people of the region do not want dynastic rule. So he will not have much support in Pipli. Though a BJD leader was voted from the region for almost 32 years, the region is still deprived of the basic amenities. The people of Pipli and Delang believe in democracy and will reject dynastic rule this time.

What are the major issues here that might go against the BJD? There have been no development activities in the constituency under the BJD rule. Neither the MLA nor the Chief Minister ever focused on this area. During my visit to the constituency I have seen the apathy of the government towards this area. There are many issues but the BJD neglected them all.

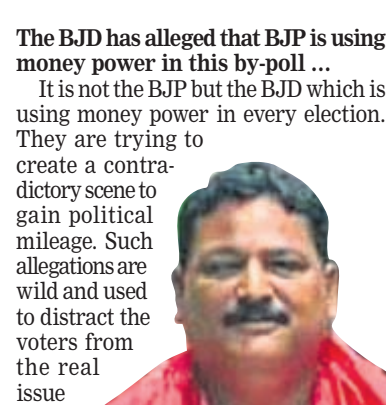
The BJD has alleged that BJP is using money power in this by-poll ... It is not the BJP but the BJD which is using money power in every election. They are trying to create a contradictory scene to gain political mileage. Such allegations are wild and used to distract the voters from the real issue.

Several ministers, MLAs and MPs are now campaigning for BJD? How will you counter that? We have several dedicated party workers who are working hard to spread the message of development works undertaken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and apprise the people of the misrule of the BJD. We are talking to them about the people-centric governance of Prime Minister Modi.

What are your key poll promises to the electorate? We are promising the people of establishing fear-free governance. We plan to bring development to this area if I am elected from this seat. We are consulting various people here and winning their goodwill. We are also taking their suggestions on how we can collectively move together.

Why should the people vote for the BJP? It is the BJP that has been framing and implementing pro-people and pro-poor policies and taking care of the interests of all sections of the society. This is the party which takes everybody together in governance.

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ASHRIT PATTANAYAK | BJD CANDIDATE FOR PIPLI BYPOLL

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## 1,282 new nCoV cases

Bhubaneswar: Odisha's Covid-19 tally reached 3,46,808 as the state registered this year's highest single-day spike of 1,282 cases Friday, a health official said. The state had reported 1,220 daily cases November 11 last year.

## Dolphin numbers double in state: Annual survey

Bhubaneswar: The annual dolphin census released by the Odisha government, Friday, revealed that dolphin numbers in the state increased more than twice in 2021 as compared to last year. The survey, which was carried out in Chilika, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapala, Puri, Berhampur, Bhadrak and Balasore, estimated that about 544 dolphins were spotted during 2021 as compared to only 233 last year. With 209 Irrawaddy Dolphins spotted this year, their figure remained almost same as compared to 2020 where 208 dolphins were seen.

## WASSUP TODAY

CUTTACK ■ Jal Satyagraha by Mahanadi Banchoo Andolan, Kali temple near Jobra, 9am

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

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit, I, Natasha Nisit Hemani aged about 24 years, D/o. Nisit Hemani, Resident of Shop No. 15, Sector - 5, Rourkela - 2, P.S.- Sector - 7, Dist.- Sundargarh, Odisha declare that, my maiden name is Natasha Nisit Hemani. Consequent upon my marriage with Amit Kumar Dash I was known as Natasha Dash. On 1st December 2020 I got divorce from Amit Kumar Dash and now residing in my parental house. Now, I have changed my name from Natasha Dash to Natasha Nisit Hemani for all purpose. Both the names Natasha Nisit Hemani and Natasha Dash stands for one and same person i.e. myself.

# Identify more places for ecotourism, boating: CS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 9: Encouraged with the response of tourists in eco-tourism sites, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra Friday asked respective officials to identify more natural sites for eco-tourism and boating facility.

Holding a high-level meeting here, Mahapatra directed the collectors, Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs), and Water Resource department engineers to identify more spots having greater potential for development to eco-tourism and eco-recreation centers.

He directed the officers of concerned departments to identify around 100 suitable sites in water bodies through joint enquiry for setting up of jetties and boating facilities. The Forest department was also directed to identify around 15 forest tracks for giving jungle safari experience to the tourists.

Mahapatra made it clear that the locations should be identified on the basis of objective criteria of exotic experience to the tourists, and, their competitiveness for being popularized in international market. Proper choice of the location



CHIEF SECRETARY SC MAHAPATRA

and their popularization will attract private investment to the sector soon, and that will take state's eco-tourism to the next level, he stated.

The Chief Secretary suggested converting the tents at eco-spots to cottages with proper fire safety precautions. He emphasized on making the community management model more professional with appropriate training and orientation to the local community, Van Surakhya Samiti (VSS) and self help groups.

Additional Chief Secretary of Forest and Environment department Mona Sharma said, "Community ecotourism devised by Odisha has proved to be the best practice leading to expected out-

comes. In recent years Odisha has evolved as the only state on national level to have started community ecotourism."

Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) wild life, Sashi Paul said that as of now, 47 destinations spreading over 18 districts have been operationalised in the state. These locations have 333 cottages with accommodation capacity of 705 persons.

Four spots, namely Nrusinghath in Bargarh district, Koraput pine forest in Koraput, Patora dam site in Nuapada and Tensa in Sundargarh, are at the finishing stage of commissioning. These spots will have night halt facility for the tourists.

According to sources, the number of visitors at the eco-destinations has increased from 11,500 in the year 2016 to 40,019 in the year 2019-20. Defeating the wreck caused by Covid-19, the number of tourists to eco-destinations touched 57,000 just within five months (November to March, 2021) during the year 2020-21. The revenue collection from this activity has also increased from Rs 1.57 crore to Rs 8.32 crore during the Covid period.

## Rain, thunderstorm likely for three days

Bhubaneswar: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Friday predicted rain, thunderstorm along with lightning in several parts of the state for the next three days.

The IMD has issued Yellow Warning for the next three days. While issuing the warning for Sunday, the department said, "Thunderstorm with lightning and gusty surface wind speed reaching 30-40 kmph is very likely to occur at one or two places in Gajapati, Ganjam, Kandhamal, Malkangiri, Koraput, Nayagarh, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Balasore and Bhadrak." In its forecast for Sunday, the department said, "Light to moderate rain or thundershower is very likely to occur at a few places in Gajapati, Ganjam, Kandhamal, Malkangiri, Koraput, Nayagarh, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak and at one or two places over the rest of Odisha."

## 'Consult Home Min on Ch'garh trains'

Bhubaneswar: The Railway Board Friday suggested to the Odisha government to take up the issue relating to its demand to cancel all passenger trains from Chhattisgarh to the state, with the Ministry of Home Affairs. While replying to a letter of Chief Secretary S C Mahapatra seeking cancellation of all passenger trains from Chhattisgarh to the state, Railway Board chairman Suneet Sharma wrote, "You may seek necessary guidance from the Ministry of Home Affairs."

# Ashrit has max criminal cases, Ajit richest: ADR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 9: The Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Odisha Election Watch Friday released its report of the 10 candidates fielded for Pipli by-election based on their affidavits submitted before the Election Commission.

According to the report, Ajit Mangaraj of Congress is the richest with net assets of Rs 8,01,40,006 (Rs 8 crore) while he has a liability upto Rs 2 crore.

He was followed by the BJD candidate Rudra Pratap Maharathy which has a self declared assets worth Rs 5,26,71,997 and a liability of around 13 lakh. Ashrit Pattanayak, the BJP candidate was ranked third with the assets worth Rs 97 lakh and a liability of Rs 399.

In terms of self declared criminal cases, BJP's Ashrit Pattanayak has the maximum of 11 cases against him and a total of 19 serious cases under the IPC. He claimed that he has cases of criminal intimidation, mischief, theft, rioting, criminal trespass and others against him.

He was followed by Rudra Maharathy who had four cases and 11 serious cases under IPC. Rudra has cases like criminal intimidation, theft, mischief, dacoity,



In terms of education, BJD's Rudra Pratap Maharathy is the most qualified with a Post Graduation degree while Ajit Mangaraj of Congress has a graduation degree. BJP's Ashrit Pattanayak claims to be Class XII pass

attempt to murder, obscene acts and songs and others.

Mangaraj has six cases and eight serious cases under IPC. He has been legally accused of criminal intimidation, trespassing, cheating, sale of obscene objects to young persons, harbouring robbers and others.

In terms of education, BJD's Maharathy is the most qualified with a Post Graduation degree while Mangaraj has a graduation degree. Pattanayak claims to be Class XII pass.

# Utkal students flay closure of hostels

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 9: Students of Utkal University blocked the national highway at Vani Vihar square Friday morning for several hours protesting the closure of hostels by the varsity authorities.

The decision was taken after BMC issued guidelines for higher education institutions to vacate the hostels. Due to this, the office of Warden of PG Hostels asked the PG 4th semester boarders to vacate the hostels by April 12.

Mahesh Prasad, a protesting student, said, "We opposed the decision because if government had no objection in keeping places such as liquor stores open then why are they closing the university hostels?"

They also questioned the commencement of Pipli bypoll amidst this pandemic. Another student Manas Kumar Sahu said, "Parties

and candidates are gathering thousands of people for the campaign and speeches which violates the Covid-19 protocol. Looking at this, closure of hostels for the students is highly illegal."

After hours of protest, the students met BMC commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary who accepted their demands and decided to keep the hostels open with guidelines and protocol in place, after which the students called off the protest.

Earlier, PG council chairman Thursday had apprised the members of the order of BMC to vacate hostels in view of rising Covid-19 cases. The hostel and university authorities decided that the PG 4th semester boarders shall have to vacate the hostels by April 12, while PG 1st semester boarders shall have to vacate immediately after the completion of mid-semester exam April 16.

# PM lauds Mahtab's role in freedom struggle

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, April 9: Lauding the role of Harekrushna Mahtab in the freedom movement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday said the late leader had spent several days in jail and devoted his whole life to the struggle for an independent India.

The Prime Minister also highlighted the role of Mahtab, the first chief minister of Odisha, in the abolition of social evils like untouchability while releasing the Hindi translation of the book 'Odisha Itihaas' written by the late leader. The book has been translated into Hindi by Shankar Lal Purohit.

Modi said it is important that the diverse and comprehensive history of Odisha should reach the people of the country.

He stressed on the need for comprehensive study into history. He opined that many important events and aspects of the freedom struggle could not be brought before the country in the proper form.



Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab at the event, Friday

"In the Indian tradition, history is not limited to kings and palaces. History evolved with people over thousands of years. In our lives a common man is the focus point," said the Prime Minister.

He also cited examples of Ramayana and Mahabharata where, he said, most of the descriptions are based on the common people. "Mahtab went to jail opposing the party under which he became the Chief Minister. I had met Mahtab a few months after the Emergency and got impressed with his per-

sonality," he added. Talking about the role of Odisha in the freedom struggle, Modi said movements like the Paika Rebellion, Ganjam Revolt and Sambalpur Struggle gave new energy to the revolt against the British rule.

The Prime Minister also highlighted the role of Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Acharya Harihar Mahtab, Rama Devi, Malati Devi, Kokila Devi and Rani Bhagyawati.

He also noted the contribution of the members of the tribal community who had troubled the

# Modi said it is important that the diverse and comprehensive history of Odisha should reach the people of the country

Britishers with their patriotism and valour. He remembered the great tribal leader Laxman Nayak.

The Prime Minister said the history of Odisha represents the historical strength of the entire India. This strength, reflected in the history, is connected with the present and future possibilities and stands as a guide for us, he added.

The Prime Minister called for taking the history of Odisha and its grandeur to all parts of the world. Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan said 'Odisha Itihaas' is not just a book but it's a true narration of the glorious history of Odisha and its people. Pradhan thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for launching the Hindi version of the book.

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# Tribal women get raw deal

## SAL SEEDS COLLECTION & SALES

Tribal women spend around 10-12 hours daily but are paid only ₹15-20 per kg of seeds. This has happened as the state government is yet to ensure minimum support price for these minor forest produce. As a result they are forced into distress sale

Financial constraints of authorised Primary Procurement Agencies (PPA), involvement of middlemen and lack of market access are also some of the reasons behind the distress sale. The TDCCOL is able to buy only a small fraction

Reports said over 60 per cent area of Kalahandi district is filled with sal forests. Come summer, the tribal women could be seen collecting the seeds and its flowers in the jungles in various parts of the district by sweeping the ground with brooms

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Reports said over 60 per cent area of Kalahandi district is filled with sal forests. Come summer, the tribal women could be seen collecting the seeds and its flowers in the jungles in various parts of the district by sweeping the ground with brooms.

Sal trees bloom with the advent of summer and the seeds start sprouting of the flower. Seeds and flowers fall on the ground with blow of wind and the tribal women find the time opportune to collect the seeds.

The women after collecting the seeds bake them in low fire and later, press the shell with a pestle to extract the seeds. Seeds are then dried up under the sun to sell them in the market. Traders with licenses buy the seeds from tribal women and transport them to outside of the state to various factories and manufacturing units.

However, these women receive just ₹15-20 for a kg. This has happened as the state government is yet to raise the MSP of sal seeds. Tribal women have lodged several complaints with the district administration at various points of time but their pleas are yet to be addressed.

When contacted, tribal leader Paramananda Maji said a hike in MSP would benefit the tribal women and he demanded that the government address the problem.



## VIGIL ON BORDERS

As Covid-19 infections fast spread in Chhatisgarh, police have sealed a border point on the Jagdalpur-Kosagumuda road in Nabarangpur district to stop entry from the neighbouring state, Friday  
OP PHOTO

# Power production hit as 2 OPGC units go kaput

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jharsuguda, April 9:** Power production was badly affected in Odisha after two units of the Odisha Power Generation Corporation (OPGC) Limited situated at Banharpali in Jharsuguda district got disconnected from Budhipadar electric grid sub-station Thursday afternoon.

This situation comes close on the heels of Talcher Thermal Power Station (TTPS), owned by NTPC,



ceasing its unit in Angul district. Around 420 megawatt of power production was disrupted owing to disconnection of the OPGC unit alone, an official source said. On being informed about the dis-

connection and closure of production, OPGC managing director Prashant Kumar Mohapatra immediately reached the unit and took stock of the situation, the source added.

Following a complete blackout in the Budhipadar grid sub-station, the first and second units of OPGC here tripped, public relations officer (PRO) of the OPGC project Himanshu Sekhar Behera expressed.

Notably, power production was also severely affected earlier for two consecutive days due to leakage in tube in the second unit April 3.

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# CM inaugurates ROB in Titlagarh



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bolangir, April 9:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated one of the longest railway over-bridges (ROBs) in the state at Hatapada level crossing near Titlagarh railway station in Bolangir district on the evening Friday.

The CM inaugurated the ROB through video conferencing, in the presence of Works Minister Prafulla Kumar Mallick. Among others who were present at the event in Titlagarh were Women and Child Development Minister Tukuni Sahu, Bolangir MP Sangeeta Kumari Singhdeo, chairman of Western Odisha Development Council Asit Kumar Tripathy, Bolangir Collector Chanchala Rana and Sub-Collector Somesh Upadhyay.

The level-crossing has earned the moniker of 'Sorrow of Titlagarh'. Thousands of people visit Titlagarh on a daily basis. Titlagarh railway station is the busiest railway station in western Odisha with connectivity with all the states and handles hundreds of passenger, express and good trains daily.

People from nearby areas like Kesinga, Bhawanipatna, Nuapada, Kantabanji and Rajakhariar come to Titlagarh town for work on a daily basis. Tourist spots around the area also attract a lot of visitors.

With so many trains passing through Titlagarh, the gate at the level crossing is shut most of the time on any given day.

Local residents and visitors experienced a lot hardship after being stuck in traffic snarls at the level-crossing for hours. This is why the level-crossing is referred as 'Sorrow of Titlagarh'. "With the inauguration of the ROB, we will no longer have to wait for hours at the level-crossing," observed local residents.

The 1,042-metre long and 11.05 metres wide ROB is constructed at a cost of ₹71.59 crore including state's share of ₹38.43 crore and Railway share of ₹33.16 crore.

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Local residents and visitors experienced a lot hardship after being stuck in traffic snarls at the level-crossing for hours. This is why the level-crossing is referred as 'Sorrow of Titlagarh'. "With the inauguration of the ROB, we will no longer have to wait for hours at the level-crossing," observed local residents.

The 1,042-metre long and 11.05 metres wide ROB is constructed at a cost of ₹71.59 crore including state's share of ₹38.43 crore and Railway share of ₹33.16 crore.

# Migrant returnees leave admin on edge in Ganjam

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhatrapur, April 9:** Even as Covid-19 infections keep rising in Ganjam district, return of migrants is feared to worsen the situation. The district administration, seemingly worried over the trend, has been busy taking up preventive measures, a report said.

According to the report, the daily rate of infections has touched two digits. Last years, the Covid situation had gone out of control in the district when over a lakh of migrant workers returned from other states. Now, migrants have been returning home in hordes every day in trains from hotspot states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh. Most of the towns in these states are under night curfew and lockdowns.

Meanwhile, the administration and the health department have put in place health screening at Berhampur and Chhatrapur railway stations for the people coming from outside. Besides, the administration has made provision of recording the details of returnees at the level of panchayats and the civic body.

Gamjam police have launched a 10-day special drive to ensure people abide by Covid safety guidelines when Covid cases are rising in the district.

Meanwhile, the district administration has closed Ramalingeswar park and Tampara Lake for every Monday to avoid congregation of people. Similarly, the restrictions have been imposed

in Taratarini Temple for the devotees. The famous Shakti shrine will remain closed every Wednesday. The state registered 1,282 new COVID-19 cases in last 24 hours while Ganjam recorded 32 cases. Thursday, the district reported 31 cases.

**FRESH CURBS**  
In view of the rising number of infections in the district, Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange Friday imposed fresh restrictions as part of preventive measures against the deadly virus.

According to sources, the fresh advisory issued by Kulange meant to keep the Gopalpur and Sunapur beaches closed on every Saturday and Sunday.

In a similar vein, tourist destinations like Ramalingeswar Park and the famous Tampara Lake in Ganjam district will also remain closed every Monday, a district administration official stated.

The Collector has issued an order to keep Maa Taratarini temple closed on every



Wednesday. The shrine will open for six days a week and sanitisation work will be carried out in the temple during closure.

Notably, the Ganjam administration had earlier prohibited feasts in the close vicinity of the shakti peetha.

The ritual of tonsuring children's heads has also been banned here. Hundreds of devotees throng the Taratarini temple during Chaitra Mela. Children are tonsured paying obeisance to the presiding deity.

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The Collector has issued an order to keep Maa Taratarini temple closed on every

# INTER-STATE LOOTER GANG BUSTED, 3 HELD

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, April 9:** After 15 days of investigation, police have busted an inter-state gang that defrauded people through ATMs in Sambalpur. Police arrested three fraudsters of Uttar Pradesh involved in cash loot through ATMs, Friday. Police have seized ₹1.55 lakh and 12 ATMs from them.

According to reports, there were frauds to the tune of ₹3.30 lakh through Keshibahal SBI ATM counter in Kuchinda area of Sambalpur. Following a complaint in this regard, police started an investigation.

According to police, the fraud-

## ATM FRAUDS IN SAMBALPUR

sters adopted a technique through which they deliberately failed cash transactions at the ATMs. In fact, they could get cash withdrawals even though the SMS message in their cell phones displayed transaction failures. Later, they used to lodge complaints through customer care centres of the concerned bank and get money reverted into their accounts.

The accused were identified as Prince Kumar (23), Aditya Singh (22) and Bablu Lal Singh (25) Uttar Pradesh, SP Batul Gangadhar said.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**SHREE JAGANNATH EXPRESSWAYS PVT. LTD**

The general public is hereby notified that Gazette Notification No. S.O.2421(E) authorised the collection of toll at K.M 34.624 during the construction period, namely at Manguli Toll Plaza, village-Harianta, Dist-Cuttack, in the state of Odisha, for the stretch of NH- 16 from K.M 413.000 to K.M 418.000 and K.M 00.000 to K.M 62.000 of the Bhubaneswar-Jagatpur-Chandikhole section.

The said notification also authorises the collection of toll at KM 40.500 after six laning. Hence, as per the above Gazette Notification, the toll collection will be at **KM 40.500**, Village-Bandalo, Tangi, Dist-Cuttack from 00:00 hrs on 15.04.2021 instead of KM 34.624 at Manguli.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
**Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur**  
E-mail: eetilrdivn@gmail.com

**E-procurement Notice No - EE, TID, SNP - 01/2021-22**

No. A-19:- The Executive Engineer, Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites online Percentage rate tenders in single cover system to be received in online mode only for the works as detailed below.

1 Name of the work	Canal Lining Works
2 No. of Works	14 Nos
3 Class of Contractor	'D' & 'C' Class (Odisha PWD or relevant class of other licensing Authority.)
4 Bid Identification No.	EE, TID, SNP-01/2021-22
5 Estimated Cost	Varies from Rs 7.67 to Rs 17.80 Lakhs
6 Period of Completion	As per mentioned in NIT
7 Date & time of availability of bid documents in the Portal.	From 13.04.2021 (10.00 AM) to 22.04.2021 (05.30 PM)
8 Last date/time for receipt of bids in the Portal	In portal -22.04.2021 from 10.00 A.M up to 05.30 P.M.
9 Date of Opening of Bid	On Date 23.04.2021 (11.00 AM onwards in the Office of the undersigned)
10 Name of the Officer inviting Bid	Executive Engineer, Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur (Dist.-Subarnapur)

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.

Sd./- Executive Engineer, Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur  
OIPR-32362/11/0002/2122

# 65K-yr old civilization had flourished on Mahanadi basin

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, April 9:** Remains of a Paleolithic civilization and a later age civilization dating back to 65,000 years and 25,000 years old respectively were discovered on the upstream of the Mahanadi river basin near Bhatli in Bargarh district. The discovery was made by a group of researchers of the PG department of History in Sambalpur University.

A team of the history department comprising Prof Pradip Kumar Behera, coordinator Dr Nina Thakur, Nabin Kumar Sahu, curator of the museum Khirasindhu Barik, research scholars and students of archeology (fourth semester) have been carrying out the excavation in Toradunga village in Bhatli and found broken pieces of crockery and sculptural remains and potshards, believed to be of a paleolithic civilization.

An archeological research is being conducted in the area since 2015. The samples of the archeological remains had been sent to Birbal Sahani Institute of Paleo science in Lucknow and Phytolith Research Institute in Pune



Researchers and workers carrying out an excavation at Toradunga

for testing. These institutes had conducted tests on the archeological samples by using Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) dating method. This method allows age determination of sediments deposited during the last glacial interglacial cycle and fluvial environment of the area.

The research has confirmed that the archeological remains in the Bhatli area dated back to 65,000 years and some are of 25,000 years old. The researchers said that the life and livelihood of the civilization centered mainly on forest and agriculture.

The researchers have found a stone slab, two pestles containing iron oxide and several other household items of that era.

The researchers also pointed out that paleolithic civilization had flourished at Toradunga. The archeological finds gave an insight that the people had trading links with other cultures.

Dr Behera observed that there was a need for more and intensive research in the upper end areas of Bargarh district, which could give archeological clues about such ancient civilization.

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/20-21/E-Tender/66 Dt. 06.04.2021

(1) Tender No. e-Tender-EstateKUR-297-2020, Dt. 30.03.2021

**DESCRIPTION** CONSTRUCTION OF COVER SHELL WITH RCC ROOF 02 NOS. OF BOGIE SHOP BETWEEN NEW AND OLD CONIDIAL SHELL AT CRW/ MANCHESWAR.

**Approx Cost of the Work (₹):** 66.55 Lakhs

(2) Tender No. e-Tender-EstateKUR-298-2020, Dt. 30.03.2021

**DESCRIPTION** CONSTRUCTION OF STRUCTURAL COVER SHED AT PIT LINE OF CRW/ MANCHESWAR.

**Approx Cost of the Work (₹):** 66.45 Lakhs

**Completion Period :** 10 (Ten) Months. (for both the tenders).

**Tender Closing Date and Time :** At 1500 Hrs. of 21.04.2021 (For all the Tenders.)

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website: <https://www.ireps.gov.in>

**Note :** The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / Corrigendum issued for this tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) / Khurda Road  
PR-07M/21-22

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, KALAHANDI RWS&S DIVISION, BHAWANIPATNA**  
e-mail: eerwsskld@gmail.com, eerwss\_kld@nic.in, Phone No.: 06670-230784

**INVITATION OF BID THROUGH e-TENDERING**

No. O-15:- Bid Identification No. 01/EE/RWSS/2021-22/Bpt Dated 06.04.2021

01. Name of the work: As per ANNEXURE-A

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding on office hour only		Date of opening (Technical Bid)
		From	To	
1 Executive Engineer, Kalahandi RWS&S Division, Bhawanipatna	2 01/EE/RWSS/2021-22/Bpt Dated-06.04.2021	3 12.04.2021 10.00 A.M.	4 19.04.2021 05.30 P.M.	5 20.04.2021 10.00 A.M. onwards

Cost of tender paper & payment of EMD to be made online payment system. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://tenderodisha.gov.in>. The original documents should be scanned and uploaded. OIPR-25005/11/0001/2122

Sd./- Executive Engineer, Kalahandi RWS&S Division, Bhawanipatna



FOCUS WEST BENGAL

# WILL DIDI SCORE A HAT-TRICK?



Some experts opine that Didi's social base has remained unscathed despite the BJP's rise

With four phases of the eight-phased election for 294-seat West Bengal Assembly having been over, both major contenders – TMC and BJP – are hoping of wresting power in the state. The bumper voting exceeding 80% in almost every phase thus far with large hordes of women queuing up outside polling booths is interpreted by many experts in terms of TMC inching towards a big victory. Projecting herself as daughter of Bengal fighting to save the Bengali pride, her sustaining a leg injury and subsequent campaigning on a wheelchair eliciting her sympathy especially of womenfolk and the welfare schemes she has launched during her regime for the uplift of the poor and women, are some of the masterstrokes that are likely to pay electoral dividends to help Mamata Banerjee stage a hat-trick.



Anil Singh

**WITH THE BJP PULLING OUT ALL STOPS, THE TMC HAS BECOME DEFENSIVELY OFFENSIVE TO COUNTER ITS MAJOR POLITICAL ADVERSARY**

concerns pertaining to its ground-level cadre that is excessively 'dominant and violent'.

Some experts opine that Didi's social base has remained unscathed despite the BJP's rise. The TMC has consistently got 42% to 45% votes since 2011, and BJP's gain has been at the expense of the Left and Congress, and now when the Left and Congress are aligned, they don't in any way pose a threat to either TMC or BJP. However, the core challenge for Didi is to prevent an identity-based vote along caste, tribe and religious lines, to which she has seemingly succeeded to some extent by focusing on Hindus as well.

Exodus from TMC to BJP began with the exit of Mukul Roy and his formal entry into the saffron party in November 2017. Roy fell out with Mamata in 2015 after his name figured in the Saradha scam as well as the Narada sting operation allegedly involving Trinamool leaders. Roy is credited with helping the BJP winning 18 seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls and engineering defection of other influential TMC leaders to the BJP.

In response to the BJP's promise of return to 'Sonar Bangla' (Golden Bengal), the TMC has projected Mamata, as 'Bengal's own daughter' (Bangla Nijer Meyeke Chai), and the BJP as 'outsider' and 'communal'. The TMC's 'Maa, Mati, Manush' campaign that helped Didi wrest power from the Left by stopping an SEZ in Nandigram and the Tata Nano project in Singur, is now used as a ploy by the BJP as a symbol of

failure of the Mamata government to bring investment and jobs to the state.

To counter the BJP's charge, the state in September 2020 claimed that between 2015 and 2019 Bengal had received business proposals worth amounting to Rs 12, 32, 603 crore and employment generated during this period was to the tune of 2.8 million. In her election speeches, Mamata has tried to counter the BJP by saying that at a time when unemployment has reached its zenith across the country, Bengal has boosted job growth by 40% due to its thrust on the MSME sector. Apart from recently launched two schemes – Duare Sarkar (government at your doorstep) and Paray Paray Samadhan (solution at your neighbourhood), the Mamata government has also launched other welfare schemes, including a Rs 5 lakh universal health insurance named Swastha Sathi, and has focused on issues like road repair, drainage, drinking water. These follow Mamata's earlier schemes such as old age pension and Kanyashree for the girl child which continue to be very popular.

In February this year, the Mamata government announced 20 lakh pucca houses and 100 English-medium schools for SCs/STs, increased aid to government-recognised madrasas, schools in tea gardens, hike in aid to farmers, and a Rs 5 egg meal for workers. TMC sources claim that Swastha Sathi has been a super success, with free rations to people dur-

ing the Covid-19 lockdown drawing a good response and the Rs 5 meal in some selected urban areas of the state is also a success. All these measures have put the TMC on a firm ground.

By the closing part of February this year, Mamata tried to frustrate the BJP's politics of 'communal polarisation' by launching an attack on the Modi government's move of hiking petrol-diesel-LPG prices, along with focusing on the Centre's total disregard for the farmers' protests seeking repeal of three controversial farm laws, concentration of power and decision-making in the PMO by negating the claims of cooperative federalism, and usurping the rights and powers of the states on education, healthcare, agriculture, social welfare. Thus, Mamata has tried to transform the election into a partial referendum on the Modi government's performance.

Didi has positioned the TMC as a 'progressive' alternative to the BJP in its vision of India and as a party concerned with gender equity and social delivery, a party that believes in cooperative federalism and accords due recognition to the worth of dissent as an essential component of successful democracy. Mamata's recent missive to non-BJP Opposition parties has elicited suitable response and regional satraps like RJD, NCP, Shiv Sena, DMK and Samajwadi Party have extended their support to the TMC.

There is proverbial saying that what Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow and in accordance with this Bengal is also known for bucking the trend and overturning expectations. Most of the non-partisan and independent pre-election surveys have given a comfortable lead to the TMC, though with somewhat reduced numbers compared to 2011 or 2016, along with the BJP winning 100-110 seats. Some observers opine that a big victory for Didi amid large-scale efforts at polarisation and pressure from the central agencies is going to set a template for how to fight the current dispensation at the helm at the Centre and demonstrate that the electorate is willing to vote for a progressive alternative to the BJP.

The writer is a senior journalist.

## Fresh minds in MEA

Everybody loves a diplomat. Last month, after revamping its policy of inviting interns, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) opened its doors to interns. It was swamped by a deluge of applications from across the country. Under the new policy, MEA will take in about 60 interns every year in two batches, with each intern spending three months in the ministry. Sources say that the earlier 2016 policy was revised by Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla recently. The idea is to bring young persons from different parts of the country to witness the making of the foreign policy up close.

While internships are pretty normal in the US government, which attracts droves of students fresh out of college to learn how the state functions, it is a novelty in India. Sources say that if the MEA 'experiment' is successful, the government may replicate the model in other ministries and departments to bring in fresh minds, hopefully with new ideas as well. Perhaps the MEA could start with itself. It is well known that India's diplomatic corps needs much more than the sanctioned strength of 912 diplomats. How many of these interns will be motivated to want to become career diplomats remains to be seen. But the MEA initiative will be followed closely by interested parties.

### AI-BASED POSTINGS FOR BABUS LIKELY

It is often said about babus that once they join the civil service, usually in their 20s and early 30s, very few build on their skills. But that may be about to change. The Modi sarkar is reportedly in the midst of creating a database for officers that will maintain data about their background, interests and training history, among others. This will help list suitable candidates for different vacancies based on artificial intelligence (AI). Future postings may now rely on this AI-based system.



BABUDOM BYTES  
Dilip Cherian

The system is apparently based on the Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) which is used to provide focused and interest-based online training to officers. Sources say that the system being developed by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) will now provide a strong incentive to babus to constantly upskill themselves and take up courses since their future postings will depend on their training history. This initiative, along with the lateral entry of specialists from outside the government, is what the Modi sarkar is betting on to improve policymaking and governance.

### CAT AND THE WHISTLEBLOWER

Indian Forest Service officer Sanjiv Chaturvedi is known for his tireless fight against 'the System'. He has been a thorn in the side of many a state government and institution (or a whistleblower depending on how you view it). His run-ins with the authorities in the Haryana government and the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) kept him in the headlines.

In this particular instance, the 2002 batch Uttarakhand cadre officer has challenged the 360-degree appraisal system and lateral recruitment in the Nainital bench of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT). A judge has recused himself from hearing Chaturvedi's plea after it was disclosed that the judge has appeared against Chaturvedi on different occasions. Curiously, earlier in January, CAT chairman L Narasimha Reddy too had recused himself from hearing the case. The judge's recusal means that Chaturvedi's plea will have to be taken up by another bench. Back in March 2019, too, the CAT chief had recused himself from hearing Chaturvedi's three other petitions citing some "unfortunate developments" and other reasons. But going by the whistleblower's track record, such delays are unlikely to put him off his stride. Watch this space for updates.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

### WISDOM CORNER

- Great men are like eagles, and build their nest on some lofty solitude. —ARTHUR SCHOENHAUER
- One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. —FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
- Science is organized knowledge. Wisdom is organized life. —IMMANUEL KANT

### WORDSWORTH

#### Mithridate

A mithridate is an antidote to poison. A recipe for a mithridate in Nicholas Culpeper's English Physician Enlarged of 1653 begins: "Take of Myrrh, Saffron, Agarick, Ginger, Cinnamon, Spikenard, Frankincense, Treacle, Mustard seeds, of each ten drams". It goes on to specify schenanth, stoechas, galbanum, costus, turpentine, pepper, castorium, cubeb, troch, cypheos, bdellium, gum arabic, macedonian parsley seeds, opium, cardamoms, fennel seed, gentian, dittany, annis seeds, asarabacca, orrisacorus, valerian, sagapen, and several other ingredients. It then says they should all be compounded with wine and honey. By this time preparation is completed, your patient has probably expired, of old age if not of the poison or infectious disease that was the original reason for creating this extraordinary mixture. Many of Culpeper's herbs remain widely known, but some others are a mystery or uncommon (such as cubeb, once a popular substitute for black pepper). Culpeper's comments on the efficacy of the remedy remind one of snake-oil salesmen at their most exuberant: "It is good against poison and such as have done themselves wrong by taking filthy medicines, it provokes sweat, it helps continual waterings of the stomach, ulcers in the body, consumptions, weakness of the limbs, rids the body of cold humours, and diseases coming of cold, it remedies cold infirmities of the brain, and stopping of the passage of the senses, by cold, it expels wind, helps the colic, provokes appetite to one's victuals, it helps ulcers in the bladder, as also difficulty of urine, it casts out the dead child, and helps such women as cannot conceive by reason of cold, it is an admirable remedy for melancholy, and all diseases of the body coming through cold, it would fill a whole sheet of paper to reckon them all up particularly." The antidote was named after Mithridates VI, the king of Pontus, a small kingdom on the southern shore of the Black Sea. He fought four wars with Rome, finally being defeated by Pompey in 65 BC. Mithridates is said to have tried to protect himself against poison by taking progressively larger amounts of the ones that he knew about until he was able to tolerate lethal doses. As a result, anything that was thought to provide a general antidote to poison or disease became known as a mithridate.

### LOL

#### Sorry for eating the peanuts

A man visits his aunt in the nursing home. It turns out that she is taking a nap, so he just sits down in a chair in her room, flips through a few magazines, and munches on some peanuts sitting in a bowl on the table. Eventually, the aunt wakes up, and



her nephew realizes he's absentmindedly finished the entire bowl. "I'm so sorry, auntie, I've eaten all of your peanuts!" "That's okay, dearie," the aunt replied. "After I've sucked the chocolate off, I don't care for them anyway."

### SPECTRUM DEMOCRACY

# Myanmar's young demand their future



Achim Steiner

**MILITARY RULE TURNED MYANMAR FROM ONE OF THE MOST PROMISING ECONOMIES IN ASIA INTO ONE OF ITS WORST PERFORMERS**

Half of Myanmar's population is under the age of 30, and many of these young people have benefited from their country's fragile, imperfect democratic transition over the past decade. They know the military's return to power could reverse hard-won gains in human development and fundamental freedoms. Their future is at stake.

So are their lives. On March 27, General Min Aung Hlaing used the occasion of Armed Forces Day to claim that the military would protect the people and promote democracy. In fact, this turned out to be the bloodiest day since the military coup on February 1.

And yet, as a father clutching his dying son poignantly noted, "on this day, both lives and futures are being lost." With their prospects vanishing before their eyes, tens of thousands of young people have taken to the streets across Myanmar. They are refusing to live without hope.

But the country's backsliding is already being felt acutely. In addition to COVID-19, Myanmar is confronting a compounding economic crisis. The World Bank's recent regional forecast shows GDP on track to shrink by 10 per cent in 2021, compared to 6.8 per cent growth in 2019 and 1.7 per cent growth in

2020, when the country was reeling from the pandemic.

Late last year, the UNDP's Household Vulnerability Survey signaled that poor households are being pushed further below the poverty line, while many vulnerable households are being dragged toward it. Even previously financially secure households are facing massive shocks from business closures and loss of employment.

On the streets of Yangon, Mandalay, and other cities, Myanmar's citizens have come to experience these crises in the starkness of terms, with countless personal tragedies unfolding behind the data. Young people are watching employment opportunities disappear as investment plummets. International buyers and factory owners are questioning the viability of their local operations, given the lack of worker safety and security. Unable to guarantee continued production and reliable logistics, many businesses have halted operations entirely. With these closures, even more young people will lose their jobs.

The internet is the lifeblood of this generation, but it has been restricted. The suppression of information, free speech, and internet access threatens to push Myanmar back

into isolation. But this is happening at a time when a whole generation of young people have come to know what it is like to enjoy better jobs, freedom of speech, access to information, and improved education.

These developments shaped younger cohorts' values and aspirations, instilling them with a sense of civic consciousness. Their expectations reflect the real possibilities that they had previously seen ahead of them: the potential of a different future than the one their parents had known.

History offers stark reminders of what the young are likely to face. In 1950, Myanmar's per capita income was higher than that of Malaysia or Thailand. But the following decades of "closed-door" policies resulted in severe underinvestment in the economy and public goods and services, with deep and corrosive effects on human capital. Military rule turned Myanmar from one of the most promising economies in Asia into one of its worst performers.

The parents and grandparents of today's young people know what it was like back then, and their bitter experience has been recounted to their children and grandchildren. Young Myanmar does not

want the clock turned back. They will not be silenced. Taekwondo champion and dancer Kyal Sin, 19, (also known as Angel) was wearing an "Everything will be ok" shirt when security forces gunned her down in Mandalay. Thousands of young people like her continue to stand on the streets each day, full of defiant optimism as they face the military and courageously demand the country they want and deserve.

As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has stressed, there is only one way forward. The security forces must stop the violence, the generals must return Myanmar to the democratic path by respecting the results of last year's election (which the National League for Democracy won decisively), and all political prisoners must be freed.

Only then can there be progress on reforms to deliver fair economic development and human rights – including freedom of movement, the right of safe return for refugees and citizenship – and on controlling the spread of the virus. Only a society that invests in its very humanity can be at peace with itself.

The writer is an Administrator of the UNDP. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

### OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Atmosphere of fear

Sir, The news that has been constantly heard, seen and read about corona through various electronic media and print media has caused a stir among the people. An atmosphere of fear has been created among the people. Such fears may not have been seen or heard even in the first wave. In fact, people are in a quandary. On the one hand, there is an atmosphere of fear, and on the other hand, there are many measures that the government is taking to counteract this fear. Then the government starts giving advice to the people. There is a second wave of coronavirus across the country. Schools, colleges and public gatherings are being banned. For the first time since the start of the pandemic, India has recorded more than 1.15 lakh new cases of Covid, a unique record during the second wave. The next four weeks are very crucial, the government has said. Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh are the five states with the highest rates of daily infections. If so, why are the prime minister and the home minister busy with election rallies that millions of people are taking part in? In many rallies, even the prime minister and the home minister are seen not wearing masks. What kind of message does this send to the people? The brutal beating of the general public for not wearing masks has created a sense of disgust in the public mind. Adopting a change is a continuous process that can never be blamed on people. So the ways to change habits without creating fear among the people should be constantly evolving.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

### Mere numbers

Sir, India having the world's third-highest number of billionaires after the US and China does not mean we are in seventh heaven. Millions of impoverished still grapple to get two square meals a day and making ends meet remains a daily struggle. The gulf between the haves and the have-nots is ever-widening, and the rising unemployment rate is a concern. For the record, Mukesh Ambani - 10th on the global billionaires' list - became the richest person in Asia, nudging out Chinese business tycoon Jack Ma. Amazon CEO and founder Jeff Bezos topped the list for the fourth year on the trot. But these are mere numbers for the man on the street!

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE



## COVID SURGE Bengal govt on tenterhooks

THE COVID-19 CASE COUNT IN BENGAL THIS YEAR SHOWS THE INFECTION RATE HAS DOUBLED SINCE LAST YEAR

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, April 9:** With masks vanishing from public life and Covid protocols being ignored in election rallies and meetings there has been a more than 14-fold rise in the number of Covid cases in West Bengal in the last one month. The state government has started imposing restrictions on public life to check the spread of the virus.

The Covid-19 case count in Bengal this year shows the infection rate has doubled since last year. While it took two months for the number to increase 10 times last year, this year it has happened in less than a month. Going by the health department statistics May 24 last year, the state had recorded 208 fresh daily cases. It took a little more than two months for the daily cases to rise 10-fold when Bengal reported 2,198 cases July 18. This year, 255 new cases were reported on March 16 and the fresh cases of Covid reached 2783 April 8.

The massive surge in Covid cases has prompted the state government to go back to 50% employee attendance in government offices. The state government in October last year decided to reduce the number of employees attending office to 50% and asked them to work on a rotational basis. However, with the improvement in the situation there was relaxation and more employees started coming to office. Chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay in



a meeting Thursday decided to go back to the rotational method of 50% attendance while the rest of the employees were asked to work from home.

Not only that the steep surge has prompted the state health department to call back senior doctors, including infectious diseases specialist Yogiraj Ray, who had played a sterling role in combating Covid during the first phase of the infection, to Beliaghata ID Hospital. The nodal hospital for Covid care currently has 265 beds and 100 more are ready to tackle the surge in patients. Ray was released from the ID Hospital to the School of Tropical Medicine about a couple of months ago. In addition to Ray, the health department has also called in two more senior doctors, Rajarshi Basu and Arijit Sinha, both from NRS Medical College, for Covid duty at Beliaghata hospital.

It has also asked government hospitals as well as private facilities to gear up to meet all eventualities. "All the hospitals that had Covid facilities have been asked to reactivate them so that they can meet the increasing needs of the Covid patients," a senior official of the health department said. The Calcutta High Court is also thinking of restricting the number of lawyers according to their cases as was done during the previous phase.

"The speed of vaccination is crucial at this juncture. Now with the 45 plus (workforce) included in the inoculation programme and the daily number of vaccinations hitting above 30 lakhs in about 10 weeks, about 30 crore people should have some protection. If this vaccination speed jumps up further, we will hopefully reach a baseline by July end," the official said.

## Maha postpones public service exams indefinitely

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, April 9:** In view of the massive Covid-19 spread, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government has decided to postpone the Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC) exams scheduled for April 11, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced Friday.

"The government has decided to postpone the MPSC's pre-service non-gazetted Group B Joint Pre-examinations, 2020. The fresh dates of these exams shall be announced later after a review of the Covid situation in the state," he said. The decision followed a high-level overview of the pandemic situation with Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil, Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat, Urban Development Minister Eknath Shinde, Water Resources Minister Jayant Patil, Relief & Rehab Minister Vijay Wadetiwar and others.



Also present was Leader of Opposition in the Council, Pravin Darekar of the BJP, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena President Raj Thackeray, besides top government officials.

## Mamata gets EC notice again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi/Kolkata, April 9:** The Election Commission has issued a notice to Mamata Banerjee for her "completely false, provocative and intemperate statements" against central forces performing election duty in West Bengal, provoking a defiant TMC boss to declare she will continue doing so until "the CRPF stops working for BJP".

The notice issued Thursday night said the West Bengal chief minister prima facie violated various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Model Code of Conduct with her remarks against the central forces. The chief minister has been asked to respond to the notice by 11 am on Saturday.

"Prima facie, completely false, provocative and intemperate statements made by Mamata Banerjee Attempts to berate and vilify Central Paramilitary Forces during electoral process are causing extreme demoralisation amongst ranks and file of these forces," the notice said.

It lauded the CAPFs for rendering a yeoman's service since late 80s election after election, especially in ensuring area domination and causing deterrence for anti-social hooligans with their sheer presence. Banerjee, on the campaign trail, reacted angrily. She repeated her accusation that the poll watchdog was doing the BJP and home minister's bidding. Banerjee, at her election rallies, has often accused central forces of intimidating voters "under instructions from Union Home Minister Amit Shah" and also asked women to restrict their movement. This is the second notice to Banerjee in the last few days.

On Wednesday, the poll body had issued her a notice over her alleged appeal for votes along communal



**I will continue speaking about the CRPF until they stop working for the BJP. Once they stop doing that, I will salute them. I do not care anything about your (EC's) showcause letters. You are working at the behest of the BJP. I wonder why there is no MCC violation when the PM campaigns on polling days**

MAMATA BANERJEE

lines, saying it was in violation of the model code and the Representation of People Act. "NO INDEPENDENT PROBE": The Supreme Court Friday declined to entertain a plea seeking direction for investigation by an independent agency into the incident where Mamata Banerjee was injured after an alleged attack on her in her poll constituency Nandigram.

lines, saying it was in violation of the model code and the Representation of People Act. "NO INDEPENDENT PROBE": The Supreme Court Friday declined to entertain a plea seeking direction for investigation by an independent agency into the incident where Mamata Banerjee was injured after an alleged attack on her in her poll constituency Nandigram.

## Court sends Vaze to judicial custody

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 9:** A special NIA court here Friday sent suspended police officer Sachin Vaze to judicial custody till April 23 in the case of recovery of an explosives-laden SUV from near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house and the death of businessman Mansukh Hiran.

Vaze, arrested March 13, was produced before the special court after the end of his NIA remand and the judge chided him for leaking documents to the media.

Vaze had released a letter April 7, in which he had claimed that former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh had demanded Rs 2 crore from him to continue his service in the Mumbai police and alleged another minister Anil Parab asked him to collect money from contractors. Special judge PR Sitre sent the suspended assistant police inspector (API) in judicial custody till April 23 after the anti-terror agency didn't press for his further custody.

After the court remanded Vaze to judicial custody, defence lawyer Abad Ponda requested the judge to



provide him a secure cell in jail, saying his client apprehends danger to his life. The 49-year-old suspended API was later taken to the Talaja jail in adjoining Navi Mumbai.

The accused had been in the custody of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) since his arrest on March 13, over two weeks after the explosives-laden SUV was found parked near Ambani's house in south Mumbai February 25. Vaze is also under the scanner over the alleged murder

of Hiran, who was in possession of the SUV.

Meanwhile, the judge reprimanded Vaze and his defence team for leaking documents to the media April 7 and not submitting them in the court after following proper procedures laid down under the CrPc. The matter was brought to the court's notice by special public prosecutor Sunil Gonsalves, who represented the NIA. He told the court the accused had been given opportunity to write or submit whatever he wants to say to the

court after following prescribed procedure. Despite that some documents were given by the accused to his lawyers in the last hearing, Gonsalves said. "Even the NIA was not aware about these documents. He was allowed to speak to his lawyers for five minutes during the last hearing and he took advantage of it," Gonsalves said.

Responding to the same, Waze's lawyer Ponda said, "I am surprised, I'm unaware about it and not involved in it." Reprimanding the accused, the judge said such acts should not be repeated.

"I had asked you to follow proper procedure, you have every right to submit whatever you want, even in the form of confession. But why was proper procedure not adopted as per CrPc? This should not happen again," judge Sitre said.

Vaze had tried to submit the letter to the special NIA court Wednesday. However, judge Sitre refused to take his letter, which had serious allegations against Deshmukh and Parab, on record and told him to follow the required procedure. Parab has rubbished allegations made by Waze.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 9:** Coming down heavily on some political leaders in Maharashtra receiving the COVID-19 vaccine at their residences, the Bombay High Court Friday said if the Prime Minister and President of the country can go to hospitals and get inoculated, then politicians in the state should also follow suit.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G S Kulkarni was hearing a public interest litigation filed by advocates Dhruvi Kapadia and Kunal Tiwari seeking door-to-door vaccination facility for senior citizens above the age of 75, specially-abled persons and those who are bed-ridden or wheelchair bound. Advocate Advait Sethna, appearing for the Centre, told the court that door-to-door vaccination facility was not yet available.

The bench asked if the policy was not available then how come some political leaders of Maharashtra were getting vaccinated in their homes. "Political leaders in Maharashtra are getting the job sitting at their homes. If policy does not permit door-to-door, then how come for these politicians the policy is different. There



has to be uniform policy for all," Chief Justice Datta said.

"Everyone including the Prime Minister and President of India are going to centres and hospitals to get the vaccine. The political leaders of Maharashtra are not a class apart. This sends a wrong message," the court said. The court warned the concerned state de-

partment of action if it came across any such incident in future.

"Whatever has happened has happened but, henceforth, if we find or come across any such report that a politician got a job at home then we will take action," Chief Justice Datta said. The bench also noted another issue of concern in the state, that is lack of vaccines.

## 'Covid vax war' rages between Centre, Maha

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, April 9:** With the state reportedly left with barely one and half day's doses, a vaccine "war" has been raging between Maharashtra and the Centre in the past couple of days with state Health Minister Rajesh Tope now comparing the grim situation in the state vis-a-vis Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled states like Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

Hours after Tope Wednesday said that the state had only 3 days doses of the Covid vaccines in stock, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan hit back, virtually blaming Maharashtra for the current spread of the pandemic across the country.

"Throughout the last year, I have been a witness to the mis-governance and utter casual approach of the Maharashtra government in battling the virus. The lackadaisical attitude of the state government has singularly bogged down the entire country's efforts to fight the virus," he had said.

He also deplored attempts by some state governments to "distract attention" from their failures and spread panic among the people, even as the Centre rushed 7.50 lakh doses to the state Thursday. Stung by the missive, Tope



pointed out that though there is no dispute with the Centre over the vaccine supplies, the situation of the biggest state in the country was grimmer and hence it needed more doses to combat the pandemic.

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) President Sharad Pawar also spoke with Harsh Vardhan Wednesday the prevailing Covid status in Maharashtra and said the latter had assured all help in tackling it.

As the Centre Thursday informed that the state would be given 17.50 lakh doses from April 15, but Tope said the state's de-

mand is at least 40 lakh vaccines per week in view of the terrible spread here compared with other states. Seventy-five of the 120 vaccination centres across Mumbai, including a jumbo COVID-19 facility in business district BKC, suspended inoculation Friday morning due to a shortage of doses, BMC sources said.

The remaining centres are likely to suspend the vaccination drive by afternoon or evening as the available stock is fast depleting, according to the sources.

Meanwhile, Mumbai is expected to get up to 1.80 lakh fresh doses of COVID-19 vaccines Friday. Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) executive health officer Mangala Gomare told PTI. Mumbai's coronavirus tally crossed five lakh-mark Friday with the addition of 9,200 cases, while the death toll reached 11,909 as 35 patients died, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said.

The number of deaths reported Friday is the highest since October 26 last year, when 37 persons had died, the data shared by the civic body said. With the new cases, the caseload of the country's financial capital mounted to 5,00,888. The city has added nearly one lakh new cases in the last 12 days only.

## Battle of nerves between TMC & BJP in North Bengal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, April 9:** North Bengal, with its 54 seats spread across seven districts, has all the wherewithal to be a game-changer this election, with the BJP striving hard to hold its fort in the region, and the TMC seeking to recover its lost ground amid changing political equations.

Once considered a bastion of the Congress and the Left Front, north Bengal districts - mostly dominated by tribal and minority communities - have largely remained out of bounds for the TMC, barring a brief period of time.

The ruling camp had managed to fare well in 2016 state polls, when it bagged 25 seats in the region, but the subsequent general election in 2019 changed the course of the wind in favour of the BJP, which won seven of the eight Lok Sabha seats and stayed ahead in 35 assembly segments.

The TMC, which pulled up its socks after the Lok Sabha poll debacle, has, however, managed to woo back GJM leader Bimal Gurung, who holds sway over at least 15 assembly seats and 11 Gorkha communities. BJP state president Dilip Ghosh stated that his party is confident of sweeping North Bengal this election.

Negating him, senior TMC leader and state minister Gautam Deb claimed that "tables would be turned



on rivals" and the ruling party will emerge victorious in the northern part of the state. Voters in north Bengal's 54 seats - Cooch Behar (9), Jalpaiguri (7), Alipurduar (5), Darjeeling (6), North Dinajpur (9), South Dinajpur (6) and Malda (12) - have weathered many a storm over the past few years, including the 104-day-long Hill strike over statehood demand in 2017, as they sought the protection of indigenous rights.

The saffron party, sensing anger over infiltration in the region, made NRC and CAA its poll planks to impress the electorate and pocket votes in 2019. It had also inducted leaders from various local outfits, stitched an alliance with social groups, such as the Rajbanshis in Cooch Behar, to gain a foothold. Gurung, the chief of one of the two factions of Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM), lent his support to

the BJP back then. The party had also claimed credit for facilitating the historic Land Boundary Agreement in 2015 - which allowed 51 Bangladeshi enclaves to become a part of India and 111 enclaves in Cooch Behar to merge with Bangladesh's territory. The TMC, however, had claimed that the age-old matter was resolved only after its dispensation took the initiative, and paved the way for territory swap. In Darjeeling, the promise of a permanent political solution and growing resentment against the TMC government over "atrocities" perpetrated during the 104-day agitation in the Hills, also helped the BJP cement its foundation. Similarly, in Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri and minority-dominated Dinajpur and Malda - the saffron camp was steadfast in exploiting the issue of infiltration to outsmart the TMC.

## Adopt jumbo Covid facilities, Maha CM tells pvt hospitals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 9:** Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray Friday asked private hospitals to adopt some of the jumbo COVID-19 treatment facilities set up in the state.

Speaking at a virtual meeting with representatives of private hospitals etc, the CM said such adoption will help patients get adequate care in terms of doctors and nurses, as well as remove misconceptions, if any, among people about these facilities.

State health minister Rajesh Tope said 80 per cent beds in private hospitals have been taken over by the government and, hence, they should create additional bed capacity. Tope also said Remdesivir injections should not be administered to asymptomatic patients.

Medical Education minister Amit Deshmukh said retired nurses and doctors should be re-deployed for some time to tackle the recent surge in cases, and asked private hospitals to expand their ICU beds and oxygen capacity.

Thackeray, who also chaired a meet of representatives of the diamond association, urged them to bring about a change in their way of functioning as strict curbs were necessary to break the virus chain.



# national

## of the day quote

The entire Sachin Vaze-Anil Deshmukh controversy shows the character of the ruling alliance in Maharashtra. They have no right to remain in power and we demand their resignation

Prakash Javadekar | Union Minister

The 400th Birth Anniversary of Guru Teg Bahadur should not be looked as a religious event but much more emphasis should be put on highlighting the sacrifice of Guru Teg Bahadur for religious freedom

Mallikarjun Kharge | Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha

It is downright irresponsible of boards like the CBSE to force students to sit for exams under the prevailing circumstances. Board exams should either be cancelled, rescheduled or arranged in a manner that does not require the physical presence of children at crowded exam centres

Priyanka Gandhi | Cong Gen Secretary

## SHORT TAKES

### Mother throttles 3-yr-old daughter

**Bangalore:** A 26-year-old woman strangled her three-year-old daughter to death using her 'dupatta' (veil) after the minor reportedly took the side of her father during a tiff over who should watch TV, the police said. The police said that the child's biggest mistake seemed to be loving her father unconditionally and telling him everything that had transpired during the day. The accused has been identified as Sudha. While her husband Eeranna works as a coolie, Sudha was working as a maid at a tiles shop in Mallathhalli in Bangalore.

### Senger's wife gets BJP nomination

**Lucknow:** Almost one-and-a-half-years after he was expelled from the BJP on charges of rape, former MLA Kuldeep Singh Senger's wife, Sangeeta Senger has been made party candidate for the upcoming panchayat elections. Sangeeta will contest from Fatehpur Chaurasi in Unnao Zila Panchayat elections. Sangeeta Senger had won the zila panchayat chairperson election in 2016. Party sources said that her candidature was approved by state BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh and state general secretary (organization) Sunil Bansal.

### 3 of family found dead at home

**Coimbatore:** A 47-year-old woman and her teenage son and daughter were found dead in their house at Mudalpalayam near Tirupur, some 50 KM from here, in the early hours of Friday. According to police, the woman, whose husband died in October last, had called her sister in Udhagamandalam Thursday night and told her that the family was committing suicide. On being informed by the sister, police rushed to the house in the early hours and broke open the door, only to find the three hanging dead from the ceiling, they said.

### Gold worth ₹ 30.73L seized

**Mangalore:** Customs officials at the Mangaluru International Airport (MIA) have seized 647 gm of gold worth ₹30.73 lakh from a passenger who arrived here from Dubai. The passenger, Ibrahim Panalam Abdullah from Kasaragod in Kerala, arrived here by the SpiceJet flight SG 146 from Dubai late Thursday evening, a customs release here said.

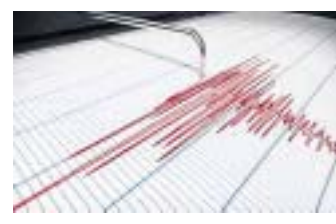


Amid the growing cases of Covid-19, lack of vaccines is a serious issue and not a celebration. By putting own countrymen at risk is it right to export Covid vaccines?

Rahul Gandhi | Congress Leader

## NON-UNIFORMITY OF HIMALAYAS FORESEES LARGE EARTHQUAKES

Scientists have found that the Himalayas are not uniform and assume different physical and mechanical properties in different directions which could result in significantly large earthquake events



## RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

# All above 18 yrs free to choose religion, says SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** The Supreme Court Friday said persons above 18 years of age are free to choose their religion as it refused to entertain a plea seeking directions to the Centre and states to control black magic and religious conversion.

A bench of Justices RF Nariman, BR Gavai and Hrishikesh Roy told senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for petitioner advocate Ashwini Upadhyay, "What kind of writ petition is this under Article 32. We will impose a heavy cost on you. You argue on your own risk."

The bench said there is no reason why a person above 18 can't be allowed to choose their religion.

It further told Gopal Sankaranarayanan, "There is a reason why the word 'propagate' is there in the Constitution."

Sankaranarayanan then sought liberty to withdraw the petition and permission to make representation to the government and the law commission.

The bench also refused to grant permission to a representation to the law commission and said, "No we can't grant you this permission." It dismissed the petition as withdrawn.

The plea filed by Ashwini Upadhyay has also sought directions to ascertain the feasibility of appointing a committee to enact a Conversion of Religion Act to check the "abuse of religion."

Religious conversion by "carrot and stick" and by "hook or crook" not only offends Articles 14, 21, 25, but is also against the principles of secularism, which is an integral part of the basic structure of the



The Apex Court told senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, "What kind of writ petition is this under Article 32. We will impose a heavy cost on you. You argue on your own risk"

Constitution.

"Petitioner states with dismay that the Centre and States have failed to control the menace of black magic, superstition and deceitful religious conversion, though it is their duty under Article 51A," said the plea filed through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey.

Alleging that the government has failed to take any concrete action against them, the plea said the Centre may enact a law with minimum imprisonment of 3 years that may extend up to 10 years and a hefty fine may be imposed.

## US navy holds ops in Indian waters sans permission

THIS IS IN DISSONANCE WITH INDIA'S MARITIME SECURITY POLICY OF SUCH EXERCISES REQUIRING ITS AUTHORISATION

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 9:** In a statement being looked at closely by the Indian government, the US Navy's 7th Fleet has said it conducted Freedom of Navigation Operations within India's exclusive economic zone off the Lakshadweep Islands without India's permission. This is in dissonance with India's maritime security policy of such exercises requiring its authorisation.

"On April 7, 2021 (local time), the USS John Paul Jones asserted navigational rights and freedoms approximately 130 nautical miles west of the Lakshadweep Islands, inside India's exclusive economic zone, without requesting India's prior consent, consistent with international law. India requires prior consent for military exercises or manoeuvres in its exclusive economic zone or continental shelf, a claim inconsistent with international law," said a statement by the US 7th Fleet Public Affairs.

The statement would be jarring for New Delhi since the US is among India's closest strategic

The US statement in this regard would be jarring for New Delhi since the US is among India's closest strategic partners with both sides having repeatedly opposed China's maritime expansionism

The US Navy's 7th Fleet has said it conducted Freedom of Navigation Operations within India's exclusive economic zone off the Lakshadweep Islands without India's permission



partners with both sides having repeatedly opposed China's maritime expansionism, particularly in the South China Sea. India and the US hold Naval exercises throughout the year.

"We conduct routine and regular Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs), as we have done in the

past and will continue to in the future. FONOPs are not about one country, nor are they about making political statements," the statement said.

In the Quad group meeting held in February this year, the first since a new US administration took over, the partners pledged "to

strengthen cooperation on advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific region, including support for freedom of navigation and territorial integrity".

The Quad grouping consists of the US, India, Japan, and Australia, and is viewed as a buffer against an increasingly assertive Beijing.

## DESERTED TOWN



A view of deserted roads during a night curfew imposed in the wake of coronavirus pandemic amid a countrywide spike in coronavirus cases in Prayagraj PTI PHOTO

## EASTERN LADAKH STANDOFF

### India, China hold 11th round of military talks

The Indian delegation is led by Lieutenant General PGK Menon, the Commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** India and China held another round of military talks today to take forward the disengagement process in the remaining friction points such as Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang in eastern Ladakh, people familiar with the development said.

The 11th round of the Corps Commander-level talks began at around 10:30 am at the Chushul border point on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, they told news agency Press Trust of India.

The 10th round of the military dialogue took place on February 20, two days after both militaries concluded the withdrawal of troops and weapons from the North and South banks of the Pangong lake. The talks had lasted for around 16 hours.

The Indian delegation at today's talks is led by Lieutenant General PGK Menon, the Commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps. One of the people cited above said India will insist on completing the disengagement process at the remaining friction points at the earliest.

Late last month, Army chief General MM Naravane said the threat to India has only "abated" following the disengagement in the Pangong lake areas, but it has not gone away altogether.

The border standoff between the Indian and Chinese militaries erupted on May 5 last following a violent clash in the Pangong lake areas and both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.

## Sunni Board to challenge ASI survey order

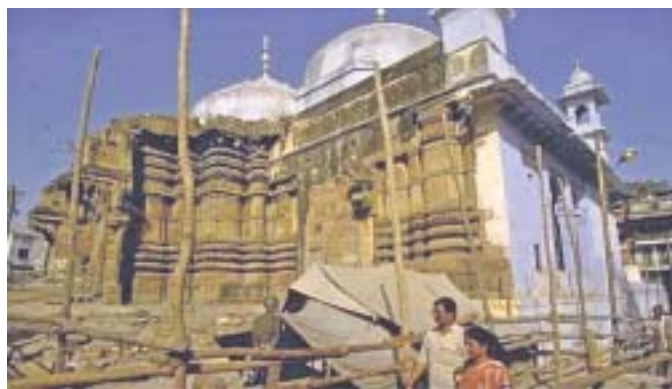
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, April 9:** The Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board has said that it will challenge the Varanasi court order, allowing archaeological survey to take place at the Kashi Vishwanath-Gyanvapi mosque site, in the higher court.

Asserting that the status of Gyanvapi Masjid is beyond question, the Board chairman Zulfar Faruqi said the order violates the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 which has been upheld by the Supreme Court on many occasions.

A civil court in Varanasi, Thursday, had given its approval for survey of Gyanvapi Mosque and Kashi Vishwanath temple Mosque complex by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

The court further directed the Uttar Pradesh government to bear the cost of the survey. The ASI is



likely to set up a five-member team that will visit the campus soon.

In a statement, Zulfar Faruqi, Chairman, UP Sunni Central Waqf Board, said the order of the Civil Judge, Varanasi ordering a survey by the Archaeological Survey of India will be challenged before the Allahabad High Court.

## 3 UP women given anti-rabies vaccine instead of Covid jab

AGENCIES

**Shamli (Uttar Pradesh), April 9:** A probe has been ordered in the shocking incident in which three women were allegedly administered anti-rabies injections instead of the Covid vaccine at a government hospital in Shamli district.

Three women - Saroj, 70, Anarkali, 72 and Satyavati, 60, - had gone to the government community health centre in Kandhla Thursday to get vaccinated against the coronavirus.

After the vaccination, the women were handed anti-rabies vaccine slips, which led to a protest by their family members at the facility.

The condition of Saroj began to deteriorate and she complained

of nausea. Her family members took her to a private doctor who was aghast to see that she had been given the anti-rabies vaccine instead of the Covid vaccine.

The families have lodged a complaint with the Chief Medical Officer Sanjay Agarwal. Brijendra Singh, in-charge of the health centre has said that an inquiry would be conducted into the incident. He said strict action will be taken against those found guilty.



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

## As political leaders relax, it's time for voters to open gift boxes

TRUE TO THE FREEBIE CULTURE PREVALENT IN TAMIL NADU, THE VOTERS, WHETHER IN THE URBAN OR RURAL AREAS, HAVE BEEN LOADED WITH GIFTS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, April 9:** As the leaders and cadres in Tamil Nadu are relaxing after the rough and tough days of elections and are waiting for the results May 2, the voters are happy with the 'gift boxes' given to them by the political parties.

True to the freebie culture prevalent in Tamil Nadu, the voters, whether in the urban or rural areas, have been loaded with gifts which include, among others silver amulets, gold coins, token for gold coins and gold ornaments, television sets and other consumer items.

Senior leader of DMK Duraimurugan told this news agency, "It's not a freebie culture, we strongly deny that. We are a political party who is always with the peo-

ple, and local leaders may provide them a gift or so out of love and not for exchange of anything. This is the reality and all the other terminologies are wrong."

In several parts of Tamil Nadu political parties have provided to voters which could be used at supermarkets and other provisional stores to buy groceries and other necessary items.

Murugan K, a voter of Velachery, Guindy said, "Yes, I have received a packet which contained tokens for buying one month grocery items from the local shops. Other than that there was another token by another political party which is to buy a gold coin from a local jewellery shop."

The freebie culture of Tamil Nadu electoral politics is rampant

even in 2021 and voters are happy at the small gifts they receive in exchange for the votes cast. While both the major Dravidian parties and even national parties resort to the culture of freebies, it seems that this would continue well into the next elections also.

Rajalakshmi Selvaraj, a housewife from Trichy said, "Mostly the gifts are of use to the family but there are instances wherein the political parties even cheat, our neighbour received a silver amulet as gift but when the packet was opened the product was inferior and it even gives one itching sensation. Now we cannot complain as these are freebies and voting is already over."

Interestingly, in several areas of South Tamil Nadu, the voters were given tokens for local meat shops to



buy meat and even fish from the vendor.

C Rajeev, Director of Centre for Policy and Development Studies,

a Think Tank based out of Chennai said, "All said and done, the political parties of Tamil Nadu have inculcated the culture of freebies in

society and they cannot roll back on it. We are into detailed research on elections of Tamil Nadu and how the freebie culture is affecting the will of the people."

With the culture of freebies deeply rooted in the politics of Tamil Nadu, weeding it out may not be easy even for the national parties and, interestingly the national parties, including the Congress and BJP are following suit with the Dravidian parties in distributing freebies.

There were allegations against the BJP women's wing national president Vanathi Srinivasan of having distributed cash at Coimbatore South where she is in a tough four-cornered fight against Superstar turned politician Kamal Haasan, Mayura Jayakumar and R Doraiswamy.



of the day quote

Unlike you (Yogi Adityanath), we like our music, our poetry, our mishti & yes, our Romeos too!

MOHUA MOITRA | TRINAMOL CONGRESS MP

I feel the age limit should not be restricted. Even the younger generation should be vaccinated. All above the age of 18 years should be given the vaccine," Rane told reporters here

VISHWAJIT RANE | RAJASTHAN HEALTH MINISTER

My concern is that a large number of farmers are sitting along Haryana's borders. Coronavirus cases are spreading fast and I have to save them too from corona

ANIL VUJI | HARYANA HOME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Two IT officials held for graft

Mumbai: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has nabbed two Income Tax Department officials for allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 15 lakh, an official said here Friday. The arrested officials were identified as Dilip Kumar and Ashish Kumar, both attached as Inspectors of the ITD Investigation Unit-I in Ballard Pier, Mumbai. Third accused, Inspector SN Rai, has been named by the CBI and further investigations are underway. According to the CBI, a case was registered against the accused trio who demanded the bribe amount from the complainant for helping him out during a probe by the ITD.

Lalu's bail petition hearing delayed

Ranchi: The Jharkhand High Court Friday deferred by a week the hearing in bail petition of jailed RJD president Lalu Prasad in a fodder scam case. The bail prayer in the Dumka treasury case was postponed for April 16 by Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh after the CBI sought time to file its reply on the matter. Prasad's lawyer Kapil Sibal appearing through video-conferencing argued that the central probe agency was deliberately delaying the matter as it wanted to keep his client in the jail "due to political reasons."

Tapovan tunnel disaster toll 781

Gopeshwar (Uttarakhand): More than two months after the glacial disaster in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, one more body was recovered from the Tapovan tunnel, pushing the toll in the tragedy to 78, officials said Friday. Rescue teams recovered another body from the main tunnel at the Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel project on Thursday, Chamoli District Disaster Management Officer NK Joshi said. An avalanche February 7 had caused large-scale damage to the project besides totally demolishing the Rishiganga hydel project at Raini village in the district.

Man held for raping 6-yr-old girl

Bhopal: A man was arrested in Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh for allegedly raping a six-year-old girl, police said Friday. Sanjay Tomar (20) lured the girl to his home and raped her five days ago, said Kolar police station inspector Chandrakant Patel. The girl told her mother about the ordeal Thursday after which a police complaint was lodged. Tomar was arrested.



I laughed when I saw my name in the letter. I never met him (Waze), nor have I spoken to him ever. Everyone knows my strict working style...So conduct an inquiry SHARAD PAWAR | NCP CHIEF

ASSAM POLL OFFICIALS CAUGHT ON CAMERA WITH POSTAL BALLOTS

In a shocking video that has emerged from Assam, two men with Election Commission cards are seen carrying what appears to be postal ballot papers. An inquiry has been ordered after locals in Silchar - which went to polls April 1



SII legally bound to supply more Covid vax: COVAX

AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN SII AND GAVI SPECIFIED THE LATTER WOULD RECEIVE 1.1 BILLION DOSES OF EITHER THE ASTRAZENACA VACCINE OR THAT OF NOVAVAX FROM SII

REUTERS

New Delhi, April 9: The Serum Institute of India (SII) is legally compelled to ship coronavirus vaccine to global vaccine sharing facility COVAX, its co-lead Gavi has told Reuters, a provision that could complicate the firm's efforts to boost domestic supplies.

India, where infections have surged to 13.06 million, suspended all major exports of vaccines last month to fill demand at home, forcing the world's biggest vaccine maker to divert nearly all its production to the domestic market.

"The agreement is legally binding and served as a basis for the first-round allocation document, which has been communicated to all participating economies," a Gavi spokeswoman said in an email.

The pact specified Gavi would receive from SII 1.1 billion doses of either the AstraZeneca vaccine or that of Novavax, with 200 million committed, and the rest on option.



COVAX had expected here a total of more than 100 million doses from SII between February and May, but has so far received here only about 18.2 million

J&J to begin India trial of its single-shot vax

Bangalore: Johnson & Johnson has told Indian regulators that it will soon begin clinical trials of its single-shot COVID-19 vaccine in the country, the Indian Express newspaper reported Friday. The US drugs and healthcare giant has sent a letter to Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) saying it would "very shortly apply for permission to conduct clinical bridging trials in India," according to the report. The report comes as many vaccination centres in India grapple with a shortage of vaccine supplies as the country of 1.3 billion is battling a second wave of COVID-19 infections that has eclipsed the first. India's government, however, has repeatedly said there is no shortage of shots.

SII partner AstraZeneca has already issued it a legal notice over delays to other shipments, even as many Indian states have complained of a shortage facing priority recipients. Gavi said its pact with SII took effect when the World Health

Organization approved the AstraZeneca shot February 15, after a source said SII had originally been supposed to send doses to COVAX only from May.

"SII has pledged that, alongside supplying India, it will prioritise the COVAX multilateral solution for equitable distribution," Gavi added.

COVAX had expected here a total of more than 100 million doses from SII between February and May, excluding supplies for India, but has so far received here only about 18.2 million.

Serum has sent another 10 million doses to the Indian government through COVAX, Gavi said.

Gavi did not respond Friday to questions about what now lies ahead. SII also did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

From an initial August target of vaccine coverage for 300 million of its highest-risk people, or just over a fifth of its population of 1.35 billion, India has upped the figure by about 100 million, adding pressure on SII to crank up supplies.

No plan to stop, curtail train services: Rlys

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 9: The railways Friday said there is no plan to curtail or stop train services and assured passengers that trains will be provided on demand amidst reports of migrant workers rushing to their hometowns, reminiscent of the days following the coronavirus-triggered lockdown.

Railway Board Chairman Suneet Sharma assured the passengers that there is no dearth of trains and the railways is ready to put them into service on a short notice. "There is no plan to curtail or stop train services. We will run as many services as required. There is no cause for alarm. We can run trains immediately on demand if there is any rush. This rush is normal during the summer season and we have already announced trains to clear the rush," he said at a press briefing.

With the number of COVID-19 cases on the rise, a sudden surge in passenger movement at railway stations was reported from across the country. Many travellers, speaking to the media, said the fear of an imminent lockdown was the reason behind their trips.

"There is no shortage of trains for those who want to travel. I assure everyone that trains will be provided on demand," Sharma said. The Railway Board chairman also ruled out the need for a COVID-negative certificate to travel by train. He said the railways has not received any communique yet from Maharashtra to stop or curtail the movement of trains in view of the rising number of coronavirus cases.

Fresh curbs on media coverage in Kashmir

In an order this week, the police chief in the Kashmir Valley set out new guidelines for journalists covering the insurgency, in which militant attacks have targeted security forces



REUTERS

Srinagar, April 9: Police in the Himalayan region of Kashmir have asked journalists to refrain from live coverage of gun battles with militants fighting Indian rule in the territory or protests, calling such reports a provocation amounting to interference in their duties.

India has deployed tens of thousands of police and soldiers to keep the peace in the disputed Muslim-majority region after revoking its constitutional autonomy in 2019 to weld the region more tightly to the country.

In an order this week, the police chief in the Kashmir Valley set out new guidelines for journalists covering the insurgency, in which militant attacks have targeted security forces. "No operational content should be carried which is likely to incite violence or contains anything against maintenance of law and order, or which promotes anti-national sentiment," police chief Vijay Kumar said.

Media were advised to stay away from the site of gunbattles or situations that shaped as a challenge to law and order, and not engage in live coverage, he added.

Kumar said journalists' right to freedom of speech and expression was subject to reasonable curbs, so as not to endanger the lives of others or compromise national security. "Do not interfere in the professional and bonafide duty of police and security forces at encounter sites," he said.

More than 50,000 people have died in the revolt that erupted in 1989, government figures show. Human rights and separatists put the toll at double. In the past, police have said the presence of television cameras and journalists at trouble spots in Kashmir often encouraged people to come out in the streets and break the law by throwing stones. But journalists said the new rules were meant to coerce them into not reporting.

"Press freedom is the cornerstone of a democracy and any attack on it undermines the democratic setup of which media is the fourth pillar," the Kashmir Press Club said in a statement.

RAFALE ROW

India cheated to tune of ₹21,000 crore: Cong

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 9: The Congress Friday questioned the Narendra Modi-led government over the explosive revelations made by a French news portal in the Rafale deal alleging that there was 'massive corruption' and loss to public exchequer of at least ₹21,075 crore.

The remarks came after a French news portal mediapart.fr in a three series investigation claimed that it was in possession of documents that showed Dassault Aviation, which manufactures the Rafale jet, and its industrial partner Thales, a defence electronics firm, paid a "middleman" several million euros in "secret commissions" in connection with the ₹59,000 crore deal for 36 jets for the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Addressing a press conference here Congress national media in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala said, "The scandalous expose of

facts and string of documents have uncovered a concerted collusion to defraud the public exchequer as also massive corruption."

Firing salvos at the BJP-led Central government, Surjewala said, "Isn't it correct that the Indian Negotiating Team' (INT) August 10, 2015 arrived at a benchmark cost of Euro 5.06 billion for 36 Rafale fighter jets including weaponry package etc. Is it now not proved by the document released by the French News Portal, who has accessed Enforcement Directorate (ED) documents recovered from the middlemen?"

He questioned that isn't it correct that the price of 7.87 billion euros for 36 aircraft was decided by Dassault Aviation in its internal meeting dated January 20, 2016.

He asked is it not correct that the Indian team had rejected this price calculation of Euro 7.87 billion for 36 aircraft.



Migrants board a train to leave for their home states amid rise in Covid-19 cases across the country at Jalandhar City railway station, Friday

PTI PHOTO

Unchecked climate change could extinct many species

Remaining within the climate goals of the Paris Agreement, which aims to keep global heating well below 2°C, ideally at 1.5°C, would save the majority of species

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 9: Many animals and plants unique to the world's most stunning natural places face extinction if greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, according to a new scientific study published in the journal Biological Conservation.

The species included India's snow leopard, one of the most charismatic animals of the Himalayas.

However, remaining within the climate goals of the Paris Agreement, which aims to keep global heating well below 2°C, ideally at 1.5°C, would save the majority of species.

A global team of scientists analysed almost 300 biodiversity hotspots - places with exceptionally high numbers of animal and plant species - on land and at sea. Many of these



hotspots contain 'endemic' species, unique to one geographic location such as one island or one country. They found that if the planet heats by over three degrees, then a third of endemic species living on land, and about half of endemic species living in the sea, face extinction.

On mountains, 84 per cent of endemic animals and plants face extinction at these temperatures, while on islands that number rises to 100 per cent. Overall, 92 per cent of land-based endemic species and 95 per cent of marine endemics face negative consequences, such as a reduction in numbers, at three degrees. Current policies put the world on track for around 3°C of heating.

Endemic species include some of the world's most iconic animals

and plants. Besides the snow leopard, endemic species threatened by climate change include lemurs, which are unique to Madagascar.

In Asia, islands including the Indian Ocean Islands, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka along with the Western Ghat mountains could lose most of their endemic plants due to climate change by 2050. Other threatened species in the region include iconic animals such as the Persian panther and the Balochistan black bear. Many Himalayan species are threatened, such as the medicinal lichen Lobaria pindarensis, traditionally used to relieve skin ailments, arthritis, and indigestion, and the Himalayan musk deer.

Coral reefs such as those in South East Asia are also threatened by

temperatures rising over 1.5°C.

The study found that endemic species are 2.7 times more likely to go extinct with unchecked temperature increases than species that are widespread, because they are only found in one place; if climate change alters the habitat where they live, they are gone from the face of the earth. If greenhouse gas emissions keep rising then places like the Caribbean islands, Madagascar, and Sri Lanka could see most of their endemic plants go extinct as soon as 2050. The tropics are especially vulnerable, with over 60 per cent of tropical endemic species facing extinction due to climate change alone.

But all is not lost. If countries reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement then most endemic species will survive. In total, just two per cent of endemic land species and two per cent of endemic marine species face extinction at 1.5°C, and four per cent of each at 2°C. Strong commitments from global leaders ahead of the climate change summit in Glasgow later this year could put the world on track to meet the Paris Agreement, and avoid the widespread destruction of some of the world's greatest natural treasures.

ASSAM D-VOTERS

Son contests polls, mother barred from voting

AGENCIES

Barpeta, April 9: A resident of Bheragaon village in Lower Assam's Barpeta district, Tahamina Khatun's son Faruk Khan contested the Assam Assembly election as an Independent candidate from Jania constituency. Polling for this seat was held April 6 as part of the third and final phase of the election in Assam.

Call it an irony of the electoral process in Assam or daily reality of some of scores of its residents, while her son contested the Assembly polls as a candidate, Tahamina Khatun could not cast her vote, for him or any other contestant.

Faruk said his mother's name had been marked as a D-voter in the electoral roll for the past 23 years.

"It is sad that my mother could not vote in this election even though I am a candidate. She has no right to vote because she has been marked as a D-voter," he said.

Faruk claimed that the government does not have any record of who marked his mother as a D-voter in

the electoral roll and why it was done. "My mother had sought information about the D-voter tag from the government through RTI. In its reply, the government said there was no available record of marking her as D-voter," Faruk said.

The office of the Circle Officer, Kalgachia Revenue Circle sent a letter (No. KGC-14/2008-09/2276) to Tahamina Khatun in 2019 saying, "As per records the D-mark is seen to have been put in the year 1997, but no such records of putting the D-mark is available in the office of Kalgachia Revenue Circle."

Faruk said apart from his mother, there are 4,471 people who have been marked as D-voters in the electoral roll of Jania constituency. "In our village, 110 people names have been marked as D-voters. In the past 23 years, they couldn't get their voting rights. We have already approached the Supreme Court but a verdict is awaited," he said.

He added that the issue of D-voter should be finished in Assam because many genuine Indian citizens are still barred from voting.



# international

## of the day quote

We strongly condemn appointed Italian PM's unacceptable remarks on our elected President, return the impudent remarks



Our overseas health and care workers make such a vital contribution to our health system and have been a key part of the fight against the pandemic.



One in four people in rich countries have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, compared to only one in 500 people in low-income countries



TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS | DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WHO

## SHORT TAKES

### 1 killed, 5 injured in Texas shooting

Houston: One person was killed and five others injured during a shooting in the US state of Texas, according to local police.

### 132 killed in Darfur clashes

Khartoum: West Darfur Governor Mohamed Abdalla Al Doma announced that 132 people were killed in the recent armed clashes in El Geneina, the conflict-hit Sudanese state's capital city.

### Turkish military jet crashes

Ankara: A military plane crashed into the sea during a training flight, Turkey's defence ministry said Friday, adding that its two pilots were rescued.

### Libya gets 57K AstraZeneca doses

Cairo: Libya has received more than 57,000 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine from the COVAX initiative. The UN Children's agency, UNICEF, said the doses that arrived late Thursday have been earmarked to health workers, people older than 75 and people with chronic disease.

### Terrorist killed

Peshawar: A terrorist was killed during a shootout with police when they were on a routine patrolling in northwest Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police said.



No one country can solve the problems of climate crisis. Countries that are most responsible for greenhouse gas emission should share responsibility for protecting the people vulnerable to the impact of climate change

JOHN KERRY | SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY FOR CLIMATE, US

## PANDEMIC'S HIDDEN THREAT

Hardships caused by the coronavirus pandemic have forced former sex workers in Mexico back into the trade years after they left, made it more dangerous and reduced some to having sex in cars or on sidewalks for lack of available hotels



# Cautious optimism prevails in Indo-Pak ties

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Islamabad, April 9: Pakistan and India relations may have hit a small bump with the recent decision by the Imran Khan-led government to refrain from importing cotton and sugar from New Delhi and reopening the trade, a decision approved and then disapproved within 24 hours after deference by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) and the federal cabinet; experts still believe that there is a positive and cautious optimism in Islamabad that the defrosting in relations with India is still holding ground.

Insiders, who are monitoring the ongoing situation of relations between India and Pakistan closely, maintain that despite the recent bump, which certainly sparked some flames of uncertainty in the defrosting process of relations between the two nuclear-powered arch-rivals, the process has not been derailed or halted, with prime reason being that too much time and efforts has been put in by both sides through active backdoor and backchannel engagements.

As per sources, engagements



through backdoor channels between India and Pakistan started way back in 2018, with high level people with relevant seniority from both capitals initiated active but quiet talks, with an aim to de-escalate tensions and pave way towards normalcy.

Further details revealed that the process of backdoor engagement continues till August 2019.

However, after India abrogated Article 370 and 35A and changed the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, this process of engagement and defrosting of tensions was brushed to an immediate stop.

the spring of the year 2020.

As per insiders, both sides had a series of meetings at various locations outside Pakistan and India as the initiative was encouraged and supported by influential countries, who urged both sides to keep the contacts alive.

Sources also revealed that the restart of engagements were the reason why both sides agreed to de-escalate tensions along the Line of Control (LoC) and enforce ceasefire. Both sides, as per sources, have been all ears for each other, when it comes to hearing the concerns. Pakistan has expressed its concern over the issue of statehood, being enforced in Jammu and Kashmir. Indian officials have responded to the concern, stating that they could even talk about not bringing any changes demographics, the insider source confirmed.

India, on the other hand, has raised its concern over cross-border terrorism, being exported from Pakistan. Pakistan responded and assured the Indian side that Islamabad was strictly following policy of zero tolerance towards non-state actors, who engage in any armed activity.

# Little progress in Iran nuclear talks



Police officers stay in front of the Grand Hotel Wien, in Vienna, Austria, as closed-door nuclear talks with Iran take place

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Berlin, April 9: Nascent talks aimed at bringing the United States back into the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran broke Friday without any immediate signs of progress on the thorny issues dividing Washington and Tehran, but with delegates talking of a constructive atmosphere and resolving to continue the discussions.

Two working groups that have been meeting in Vienna since Tuesday to brainstorm ways to secure the lifting of American sanctions and Iran's return to compliance with the deal reported their initial progress to a joint commission of diplomats from the world powers that remain in the deal — France, Germany, Britain, China and Russia.

Russian delegate Mikhail Ulyanov tweeted that participants had "noted with satisfaction the initial progress made." "The commission will reconvene next week in order to maintain the positive momentum," he said in a statement.

The talks took place without the United States, which unilaterally left the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of

Action, in 2018, under then-President Donald Trump. He embarked on a campaign of "maximum pressure" by restoring previous sanctions and adding new ones on Iran. But an American delegation headed by the Biden administration's special envoy for Iran, Rob Malley, also has been in the Austrian capital this week. Representatives from the other world powers have been shuttling between the US and the Iranians to facilitate indirect talks.

After the US withdrawal, Iran has been openly violating the deal's restrictions, steadily increasing its stockpile of enriched uranium, increasing the purity it is enriching, and installing and operating new, more efficient centrifuges, among other things.

President Joe Biden, who was vice president under Barack Obama when the original deal was negotiated, has said he wants to bring the US Back into the deal but that Iran must reverse its violations.

Iran argues that Washington's departure from the deal was the first violation and that the US must make the first move and remove sanctions before Iran returns to compliance.

## MAGNIFICENT MAGMA



Lava oozes from a new fissure near Fagradalsfjall, Reykjanes Peninsula, Iceland

REUTERS

# Oli faces new threat from Oppn

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kathmandu, April 9: Nepal's primary opposition party, the Nepali Congress has begun talks with the Nepal Communist Party-Maoist Centre and the Janata Samajbadi Party to unseat Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and form a coalition government under its leadership.

Nepali Congress President, Sher Bahadur Deuba, had called a meeting of the opposition parties Friday which ended on a positive note, according to party leaders. Oli is under pressure to resign after his decision to dissolve the house December 20 and call for fresh elections was overturned by the Supreme Court February 23. In wake of the verdict, opposition parties had been demanding his resignation on moral grounds but he



has been holding fast.

The Prime Minister is also facing problems inside his own Nepal Communist Party-UML as a huge section of senior party leaders have started forming parallel party structures while challenging his "authoritarian" way of running the party and the government.

NCP-Maoist Centre spokesperson Narayan Kaji Shrestha told media that both his party and the Nepali Congress are almost on the same page but are waiting the decision of the Janata Samajbadi Party, the fourth-largest party in the legislature, and still undecided on whether to lend support Oli or Deuba.

Two senior Janata Samajbadi Party leaders, Chairman Mahantha Thakur and Rajendra Mahato are separately negotiating with Oli to extend support to his government in case it falls into a minority.

Meanwhile, the NPC-Maoist Centre that had lent support to Oli in February 2018 has not withdrawn its support so the government still enjoys a majority in the house. It, however, assured that as soon as opposition parties decide to unseat Oli, it will withdraw its support.

# Prince Philip's 4 royal visits to India and a tiger controversy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 9: Britain's Prince Philip — the Duke of Edinburgh, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II, who passed away at the age of 99 Friday morning, made four memorable royal visits to India in his long years of accompanying the 94-year-old monarch during her nearly 69-year reign.

The UK's longest-serving royal consort joined the Queen in India in 1959, 1961, 1983 and 1997 — during which he made quite an impression with his sense of humour, which often also got him into some controversy.

"Deeply saddened at sad demise of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, an iconic pillar of the British monarchy, regarded by his people and world with the highest esteem and affection. India had the

honour of receiving him and HM The Queen on four memorable occasions," the Indian High Commission in London said. During his 1961 visit to India, he was pictured with the Queen and the Maharaja and Maharani of Jaipur with a dead eight-foot tiger he had shot while on a hunt. It happened to be the same year he became president of the World Wildlife Fund UK.

He also shot a crocodile and mountain sheep on that trip but it was the photograph of the tiger that caused ripples around the world. Later in life, he went on to reinvent himself as an environmentalist and "champion of the natural world" as UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson referred to him in his tribute Friday.

During Prince Philip's last visit to India to mark the 50th anniversary of independence in 1997, he joined the Queen on a visit to



Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar where the royals laid a commemorative wreath at the site associated with General Dyer's orders to open fire on a large Baisakhi gathering in April 1919. As someone known for his gaffes, among his many infamous ones includes his query of the death toll at the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. "Two thousand? It

wasn't, was it," he questioned, as he passed by a plaque at the memorial, which read "This place is saturated with the blood of about two thousand Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims who were martyred in a non-violent struggle." "That's wrong. I was in the Navy with Dyer's son. That's a bit exaggerated... it must include the wounded," he is re-

ported to have said. Among his other gaffes included a quip at Indian-origin entrepreneur Atul Patel during a Buckingham Palace reception for hundreds of successful British Indians in 2009: "There's a lot of your family in tonight." Ten years earlier, while inspecting a factory in Edinburgh and coming across an old-fashioned fuse box, he said: "It looks as if it was put in by an Indian." It had become common practice for the UK media to regularly compile a list of the Duke's many gaffes, many of which were believed to have been made in a light-hearted vein. Philip was born June 10, 1921, on the Greek island of Corfu, the youngest child and only son of Prince Andrew of Greece and Princess Alice of Battenberg. His childhood was turbulent and in 1930, when he was eight years old, his mother was committed to a se-

course, that's continuing to this day and I hope that it will continue into the future." The three will work on hundreds of experiments in biology, biotechnology, physical science and Earth science. On the International Space Station, they are joining NASA's Kate Rubins, Michael Hopkins, Victor Glover and Shannon Walker, Russians Sergey Ryzhikov and Sergey Kud-Sverchikov and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Soichi Noguchi.

Rubins, Ryzhikov and Kud-Sverchikov arrived in a Soyuz ship in October; Hopkins, Glover, Walker and Noguchi — the crew of the SpaceX Crew Dragon Resilience — joined them in November.

# Soyuz docks with ISS

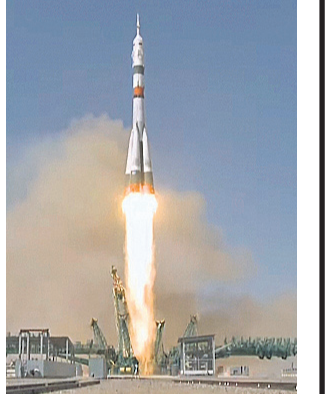
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Moscow, April 9: A trio of Russian and American space travellers launched successfully and reached the International Space Station Friday.

NASA astronaut Mark Vande Hei and Russian cosmonauts Oleg Novitskiy and Pyotr Dubrov blasted off as scheduled at 12:42 pm (0742 GMT, 3:42 am EDT) aboard the Soyuz MS-18 spacecraft from the Russia-leased Baikonur launch facility in Kazakhstan. They docked at the station after a two-orbit journey that lasted just over three hours.

It is the second space mission for Vande Hei and the third for Novitskiy, while Dubrov is on his first mission. The launch came three days before the 60th anniversary of the first human flight to space by Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin and the 40th anniversary of the first launch of NASA's space shuttle.

"When we started, we were competing with each other and that was one of the reasons we were so successful at the beginning of human space flight," Vande Hei said at a pre-flight news conference Thursday. "And as time went on, we realised that by working together we can achieve even more. And of



course, that's continuing to this day and I hope that it will continue into the future."

The three will work on hundreds of experiments in biology, biotechnology, physical science and Earth science.

On the International Space Station, they are joining NASA's Kate Rubins, Michael Hopkins, Victor Glover and Shannon Walker, Russians Sergey Ryzhikov and Sergey Kud-Sverchikov and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Soichi Noguchi.

Rubins, Ryzhikov and Kud-Sverchikov arrived in a Soyuz ship in October; Hopkins, Glover, Walker and Noguchi — the crew of the SpaceX Crew Dragon Resilience — joined them in November.



# business



**The robust revenue growth rides on a low base of the year-ago quarter, besides higher government capex amid a commodity upcycle, among others. A closer look at the revenue breakup indicates 50% of the recovery is contributed by automobiles, IT services and construction**

**HETAL GANDHI** | DIRECTOR, CRISIL RATINGS

## L&T ARM BAGS SAUDI CONTRACT

The renewables arm of Larsen & Toubro's Power Transmission & Distribution Business has secured a turnkey EPC Contract worth ₹5,000-7,000 crore, to set up the Sudair Solar PV Project of 1.5 GW capacity in Saudi. L&T said, it has received the contract from the consortium of ACWA Power and the Water and Electricity Holding Co



## of the day quote

India's debt ratio at the end of 2019, prior to the pandemic, was 74% of GDP, and at the end of 2020, it was almost 90% of GDP. So, that's a very large increase, but it is something that other emerging markets and advanced economies have experienced as well



**PAOLO MAURO** | DEPUTY DIRECTOR, FISCAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT, IMF

You will always have naysayers and disgruntled custodians out there who do not want to embrace technology and that is okay with us, that happens with every disruption...What I'm super excited about is that entrepreneurs in this country are embracing technology and building robust digital businesses



**AMIT AGARWAL** | GLOBAL SENIOR VP & COUNTRY HEAD (INDIA), AMAZON

The sports culture has always been a big crowd puller and a uniting force across the country. With the mindset and widespread acceptance of this vertical, it has grown multi-fold to encompass wider and multiple streams



**ASHISH BHATTACHARYA** | FOUNDER & MD, INDIA ACCELERATOR

## SHORT TAKES

### Tanishq reinvents wedding brand

**Mumbai:** Tanishq, a jewellery firm and arm of Tata-owned Titan Company, has unveiled a new brand proposition for its wedding exclusive sub-brand 'Rivaah' -- Jewel for every tradition. The new proposition from Rivaah by Tanishq communicates the meaning and significance of every ritual and jewellery the bride wears. Moreover, the Tata group brand is banking on upcoming wedding season for demand revival.

### SpiceXpress restarts flights

**New Delhi:** SpiceXpress, the cargo arm of SpiceJet airline, started operating regular freighter flights on Delhi-Bangkok and Mumbai-Bangkok routes from Friday. "The airline has deployed its Boeing 737-800F aircraft on these routes...The first flight carrying eight tonnes of cargo operated today," a statement said. It said these flights will help in regular transportation of auto parts, perishables including fruits, vegetables and seafood, electronic items, etc.

### Morgan Stanley buys stake in iBus

**New Delhi:** Morgan Stanley India Infrastructure has made an investment of ₹150 crore (\$21 million) to acquire a stake in tech firm iBus, a statement said. The quantum of the stake purchase was not disclosed. iBus offers in-building wireless solutions (IBS), outdoor small cells and other last-mile connectivity solutions to mobile operators to enable them to serve their customers seamlessly.

### TCS to help Ericsson in R&D

**Bangalore:** Tata Consultancy Services announced Friday that it has joined forces with Ericsson to help the latter build and operate its cloud-based R&D digital workplace. Ericsson, a technology leader in 5G and a leading provider of information and communication technology, has been at the forefront of innovation and continues to evolve next-generation network architectures to stay ahead of the curve, a TCS statement said.

# Fuel consumption contracts 9.1% in FY'21

**THIS IS FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT INTAKE HAS CONTRACTED SINCE 1998-99**

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 9:** India's fuel demand contracted by a massive 9.1% in the financial year ended March 31, the first in more than two decades, as a stringent lockdown imposed to curb the spread of the pandemic pummeled economic activity, government data showed Friday. India consumed 194.63 million

tonnes of petroleum products in 2020-21 as compared with 214.12 million tonnes demand in the previous year, according to the latest data released by the oil ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC).

This is the first time that the fuel consumption has contracted since 1998-99, the most historical year for which government data is available. The demand contraction was led by diesel, the most-consumed fuel in the country. Diesel consumption fell 12% to 72.72 million tonnes while petrol demand shrank 6.7% to 27.95 million tonnes.

The government imposed a nationwide lockdown at the end-March of last year, shutting down factories



and businesses, halting most road transport, canceling flights and stopping trains. The lockdown was lifted in stages beginning June.

The GDP is estimated to have contracted by 7.8% in 2020-21 after economic activity showed signs of recovery in last quarter of 2020.

However, a second wave of Covid-19 infections despite a broadening

vaccination roll-out, with renewed lockdowns implemented in some states, is threatening to hit the nascent recovery.

Domestic cooking gas LPG was the only retail fuel that posted growth, with consumption rising by 4.7% to 27.59 million tonnes from 26.33 million tonnes in 2019-20. This growth occurred, on the back of free cylinders that the government gave to poor as 'Covid relief'.

With airlines remaining shut for the most years and yet to resume full-scale operations, jet fuel (ATF) consumption fell 53.6 per cent to 3.7 million tonnes.

While naphtha sales were almost flat at 14.2 million tonnes, bitumen (used in road construction) rose 6

per cent to 7.11 million tonnes as the government stepped up construction activity to reflate the economy.

Fuel consumption had halved in April last year following the imposition of the lockdown. It started to recover after the lockdown restrictions were eased.

Petrol sales returned to pre-COVID-19 levels in September last year and festival seasons helped pull diesel demand up in the following months.

In March, fuel demand soared 18% to 18.77 million tonnes with diesel consumption rising 27% and petrol climbing 25.7%. This was possible because of low base effect of March 2020 when restrictions came into effect.

# 'Second Covid wave poses increased risk for banks'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 9:** India's second wave of Covid-19 infections pose an increased risk to the country's fragile economic recovery and its banks, Fitch Ratings said. Accordingly, Fitch expects a moderately worse environment for the India's banking sector in 2021, but headwinds would intensify should rising infections and follow-up measures to contain the virus further affect business and economic activity.

Lately, India's active Covid-19 infections have been increasing at a rapid pace; new infections have exceeded 100,000 a day in early April 2021, against 9,300 in mid-February 2021.

Fitch forecasts India's real GDP growth at 12.8% for the financial year ending March 2022 (FY22). "This incorporates expectations of a slowdown in 2021 due to the flare-up in new coronavirus cases but the rising pace of infections poses renewed risks to the forecast."

"Over 80% of the new infections are in six prominent states, which combined account for roughly 45% of total banking sector loans. Any further disruption in economic activity in these states would pose a setback for fragile business sentiment, even though a stringent pan-India lockdown



**This second wave could dent the sluggish recovery in consumer and corporate confidence, and further suppress banks' prospects for new business**

like the one in 2020 is unlikely."

As per Fitch, operating environment for banks will most likely remain challenging against this backdrop.

"This second wave could dent the sluggish recovery in consumer and corporate confidence, and further suppress banks' prospects for new business. There are also asset quality concerns since banks' financial results are yet to fully factor in the first wave's impact and the stringent 2020 lockdown due to the forbearances in place."

"We consider the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME)

and retail loans to be most at risk. Retail loans have been performing better than our expectations but might see increased stress if renewed restrictions impinge further on individual incomes and savings. MSMEs, however, benefited from state-guaranteed refinancing schemes that prevented stressed exposures from souring."

According to Fitch, private banks are more exposed to retail but also have much better earnings capacity, contingency reserves and core capitalisation to withstand stress on their portfolios.

In contrast, state-owned banks remain more vulnerable as their prevailing weak asset quality and greater participation in relief measures are not commensurate with their limited loss-absorption buffers.

"The extension of the MSME refinancing scheme until 30 June 2021 will alleviate short-term pain, but potentially add to the sector's exposure to stressed MSMEs, which was around 8.5 per cent of loans, Fitch estimated.

"Nevertheless, we believe the second wave could have a more modest impact than the initial wave on our assessment of the operating environment in India, based on global examples of residents and economies adjusting their activities - including much less stringent and more localised restrictions than last year."

## McDonald's to operate 24/7 for 'contactless delivery'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 9:** Westlife Development, which operates McDonald's restaurants in southern and western region in India, Friday said the quick service brand's restaurants will operate 24/7 for contactless delivery from select stores in Mumbai.

"In wake of the new restrictions announced to curb the spread of Covid-19 infections in Maharashtra, Westlife Development Ltd owned McDonald's restaurants will operate 24/7 for contactless McDelivery from select stores in Mumbai," Westlife Development said in a regulatory filing.

The brand will further be doubling up on its convenience channels of McDelivery, takeaway and On-the-Go as the state has announced new set of restrictions to arrest the mounting Covid-19 cases, the company added.

Saurabh Kalra, Chief Operating Officer, McDonald's India West and South said "We have been able to cater to our customers' demand through our omni-channel strategy making McDonald's food available for consumers wherever, whenever and however they want." Westlife Development recently announced vaccination cover for all its 10,000 employees which includes both its corporate office employees as well as the McDonald's restaurant staff.

# Siemens ties up with Hinduja Group for EV charging infra

AGENCIES

**Chennai, April 9:** Siemens Limited and the Hinduja group's Switch Mobility Automotive Limited have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to play in the electric commercial vehicles segment.

Siemens also said Siemens Financial Services (SFS), the financing arm of Siemens AG, would consider a minority investment in OHM Global Mobility Private Limited, another Hinduja group company.

While Switch Mobility would bring in its electric commercial vehicles into India, Siemens would



provide the charging infrastructure technology and charging infrastructure management software solution to enhance the energy-efficient operations of the chargers, Siemens said. According to Siemens, it would also collaborate with Switch Mobility on new business models such as eMobility-as-a-Service (eMaas), integrated depot energy

management, Vehicle-to-Grid (V2G) as well as on-site/off-site renewable energy sources by leveraging batteries from commercial vehicles.

"With our experience of more than 230 electric vehicles already in operation successfully in India and the UK, we see immense growth opportunities for Switch's expansion in India, Europe and many global markets," said Dheeraj Hinduja, Chairman, Switch Mobility.

"Siemens is a global leader in e-mobility solutions for commercial vehicles. We have been implementing projects for electric commercial vehicles across the globe," said Sunil Mathur, MD and CEO, Siemens Limited.

# India better prepared to handle 'economic fallout'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 9:** India's economy is better prepared to handle any economic fallout emanating from the resurgence of Covid-19 cases, as the government, financial institutions and the industry have gained valuable experience of operating in the hard environment.

Accordingly, industry watchers have cited accelerated vaccination drive along with massive adoption of e-commerce by India Inc and low interest rates as factors which will mitigate the intensity of any economic shock.

In contrast, the localised lockdowns are expected at best to slow down the progress of economic recovery, but not stall it. "Like the first wave, even the second wave of Covid-19 would adversely impact the GDP growth and the process



of the ongoing economic recovery," Sunil Kumar Sinha, Principal Economist, India Ratings & Research, said.

"However, despite localised lockdowns being witnessed in different parts of the country, its impact will be minimal because economic agents

by now have not only learnt to live with it, but they have also learnt to navigate through it," Sinha said.

Lately, India has seen a sharp resurgence of the pandemic that has led to the re-imposition of containment measures and limited lockdowns in some of the impacted

## CHALLENGES GALORE

# Next few months critical for economic revival, finds report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** The next few months will be critical for India as the renewed Covid-19 surge challenges the country's immature economic recovery, global forecasting firm Oxford Economics said Friday. It also said that while the impact so far appears milder and the economy more resilient, Indian policymakers have no room for complacency.

It further said that with state governments reluctant to reintroduce strict lockdowns, the economic impact will be much less severe than in the second quarter of last year. "The next few months will be critical, as the renewed Covid-19 surge challenges India's immature recovery."

"While the impact so far appears milder and the economy more resilient, policymakers have no room for complacency," Oxford Economics said. It said that based on the international experience, the vaccination rate in India is far below the level required to contain the virus by itself.

"The second wave likely has some way to go both in height and breadth. "If the health situation



While the impact so far appears milder and the economy more resilient, policymakers have no room for complacency

Based on the international experience, the vaccination rate in India is far below the level required to contain the virus by itself

## FOREX RESERVES DROP BY \$2.415bn TO \$576.869bn

worsens substantially and tighter restrictions are reimposed widely, this would threaten our baseline forecast for the first half of 2021," Oxford Economics said.

It said mobility levels are likely to come under more pressure in the coming days as the second wave looks set to widen.

The global forecasting firm, however, said it does not expect to see a massive decline like in 2020, as targeted lockdowns remain the preferred containment strategy.

## FM URGES WORLD BANK TO SUSTAIN CRISIS RESPONSE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** Amid surge in Covid-19 cases, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Friday urged the World Bank Group (WBG) to explore the possibility of sustaining crisis response keeping in mind debt sustainability of vulnerable countries.

The minister said this while participating in the 103rd meeting of the Development Committee of the World Bank-International Monetary Fund (IMF) through video conferencing.

She also appreciated the proactive role played by the WBG in helping developing countries get access to vaccines in a timely and affordable manner in coordination with other multilateral agencies like WHO and GAVI (Global Vaccine Alliance).

The WBG, she observed, has stepped up its financing in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic with total financing approvals exceeding USD 100 billion for the first time. In her intervention at this session, the finance minister said countries are all engaged in steering their economies and people safely out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government of India has taken several measures to contain the spread of the pandemic and also to mitigate its social and economic impact including a series of economic stimulus packages in the past one year, she said.

Sitharaman informed that the government has announced Aatmanirbhar packages of ₹7.1 lakh crore, amounting to more than 13% of the GDP. These packages were meant not only to provide social protection to the poor and vulnerable but also to push forward the economic reforms.

TOP LOSERS			9 APR
4873.20	Bajaj Finance	-3.12%	BSE SENSEX
6826.05	UltraTech Cem	-2.16%	
102.90	NTPC	-1.95%	
668.45	Axis Bank	-1.94%	
566.45	ICICI Bank	-1.79%	
923.90	IndusInd Bank	-1.22%	
1982.65	Reliance	-1.11%	
1404.00	L&T	-1.06%	
1421.65	HDFC Bank	-0.83%	
17527.10	Nestle	-0.80%	
POINTS			%
-154.89			

**Mumbai, April 9:** The country's foreign exchange reserves declined by \$2.415 billion to stand at \$576.869 billion in the week ended April 2, RBI data showed on Friday. In the previous week ended March 26, the reserves had decreased by \$2.986 billion to \$579.285 billion.

The forex kitty had touched a record high of USD 590.185 billion in the week ended January 29, 2021. In the reporting week ended April 2, 2021, the decline in the reserves was mainly on account of a fall in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves.

FCA declined by \$1.515 billion to \$536.438 billion, weekly data by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

The gold reserves dropped by \$84 million to \$34.023 billion in the reporting week, as per the central bank data.

**While it is too early to gauge the impact of the second wave on macro variables, we believe that the impact is unlikely to be of the same magnitude as last year, as a segment of the economy has already adapted to the new post-Covid normalcy**

**MADHAVI ARORA** | LEAD ECONOMIST, EMKAY GLOBAL FINANCIAL SERVICES

states such as Maharashtra, Punjab, Delhi and Chhattisgarh.

According to a Crisil note, from March 29 to April 4, daily cases shot up from 68,000 to over 1 lakh - marking a whopping 52 per cent increase. The country is expected to clock a GDP growth rate of around 26.2 per cent in Q1FY22.

"Lead indicators are pointing to a mild sequential moderation in activity," said Madhavi Arora, Lead Economist, Emkay Global Financial Services. "While it is too early to gauge the impact of the second wave on macro variables, we believe that the impact is unlikely to be of the same magnitude as last year, as a segment of the economy has already adapted to the new post-Covid normal, while the vaccination drive continues its traction, revenue spending trends are much better, financial conditions are more stable, and global growth, led by the US, will have spillovers," she added.

According to ICRA's Principal Economist Aditi Nayar: "The baseline expectation is that the government and corporates are better prepared to handle this wave of the pandemic."



# HARSHAL, ABD LIFT RCB

## Virat & co scrape past defending champions Mumbai Indians by two wickets in thrilling IPL 2021 opener



Harshal Patel appeals for a wicket; AB de Villiers (inset) plays a shot during his innings

the onus on himself to take his side home. The game was going comfortably until an unnecessary attempt cost the South African his wicket as he was run out while going for a double.

With two required off last two balls, Mohammed Siraj ran for a single – a leg-bye, before bowling hero Harshal hit the winning run off the final ball.

Earlier, Harshal became the first player to get a five-for against Mumbai Indians. Reserve opener Chris Lynn (49, 35b, 4x4, 3x6) partially made amends for his part in a horrible mix-up that led to skipper Rohit Sharma's (19) run-out, by adding 70 runs in seven overs for second wicket with Suryakumar Yadav (31, 23b, 4x4, 1x6).

That stand was the platform that MI needed to fire during the back-end. Fresh from his exploits for India, Ishan Kishan blazed his way to 28 off 19 balls (2x4, 1x6) but Harshal got a few wickets in the final over to prevent MI from inflicting bigger damage.

On a Chepauk track where a good score is anything in the region of 150, the total was certainly par for the course. Kyle Jamieson (1/27 in 4 overs) had an impressive IPL debut with his disconcerting bounce but the seasoned Yuzvendra Chahal (0/41 in 4 overs) has clearly lost his bearings for some time now.

But Harshal, Chahal's Haryana teammate made it up with some accurate wicket-to-wicket bowling in the 18th and 20th over.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Mumbai Indians 159/9 (Chris Lynn 49, Suryakumar Yadav 31, Ishan Kishan 28; Harshal Patel 5/27) lost to Royal Challengers Bangalore 160/8 (AB de Villiers 48, Glenn Maxwell 39, Virat Kohli 33; Jasprit Bumrah 2/26, Marco Jansen 2/28) by 2 wickets.

Sundar and debutant Rajat Patidar. However, Kohli and new signing Glenn Maxwell (39, 28b, 3x4, 2x6) put together 52 runs for the third wicket before Jasprit Bumrah (2/26) dismissed his national team skipper. Maxwell too followed Kohli shortly as MI debutant Marco Jansen (2/28) got the wicket to reduce RCB to 103/4.

RCB were struggling at 122/6 in 16.3 overs when De Villiers took

defending champions to a par score of 159/9. In response, RCB had to toil hard before getting the winning run on the final ball of their innings.

Chasing 160, RCB were off to a good start with Washington Sundar (10) being promoted up the order to open the innings with his skipper Virat Kohli (33, 29b, 4x4). From 36 for no loss in 4 overs, RCB were reduced to 46/2 in 5.5 overs, losing

# Master vs apprentice

## MSD'S CHENNAI SUPER KINGS TAKE ON PANT-LED DELHI CAPITALS IN THEIR INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE CAMPAIGN OPENER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 9: It will be a battle between 'young apprentice and his master' when Rishabh Pant's Delhi Capitals and MS Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings square off each other in an IPL match here Saturday, with both sides aiming for a winning start to their campaign.

The Delhi franchise ended runners-up last season in the UAE and would be aiming to go one better this time and a good start would be what they will be looking for.

Three-time champions CSK had a forgettable season last year, finishing at seventh out of eight teams and they would also be seeking a winning start in their bid to make amends of a poor IPL 2020.

Keeper-batsman Pant, anointed to captaincy in the absence of injured Shreyas Iyer, has said recently that he would put his learning from Dhoni to use in DC's season opener.

Delhi's strong batting line up of Shikhar Dhawan, Prithvi Shaw, Ajinkya Rahane, Steven Smith and Pant himself will look to fire on all cylinders right from the opening game.

Dhawan (618 runs) was the second highest run-scorer in IPL 2020 and looked in good touch in the recent ODI series against England. He would be raring to go this season.

Shaw will be itching to prove his worth after amassing 827 runs in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. It is most likely that Shaw and Dhawan would open.

Captain Pant, a hard-hitting batsman, is in the form of his life, having emerged as a match-winner for India in the series against Australia and England. He would like to continue his good run.

The Delhi team also possesses the likes of all-rounder Marcus Stoinis, Shimron Hetmyer and Sam Billings but will have to get their team combination right, as only four overseas players can feature in the playing XI.



**TODAY'S MATCH**  
CKS vs DC  
TIME 7.30 PM  
Telecast: Star Sports channels

## BEHRENDORFF IN FOR HAZLEWOOD

MUMBAI: Australian fast bowler Jason Behrendorff will replace compatriot Josh Hazlewood in the CSK squad after the latter pulled out of the IPL. The development was confirmed by the IPL organisers in a statement. Behrendorff, a left-arm pacer, has featured in 11 ODIs and seven T20Is for Australia so far. This is Behrendorff's second IPL stint after having represented Mumbai Indians in 2019. He played five matches and picked up as many wickets at that time.

be bolstered by the return of the experienced batsman Suresh Raina, who is their all-time leading run-scorer, with 5,368 runs.

Raina will strengthen the top-order, which has the likes of young Ruturaj Gaikwad, South African Faf du Plessis and Ambati Rayudu.

With the likes of young Sam Curran, who almost pulled off a win for England in the final ODI against India, and Moeen Ali, along with great finisher Dhoni, Chennai also has a stable middle-order.

Their bowling attack will be led by the ever-improving Shardul Thakur, who can also bat, and Deepak Chahar. And then there is Ravindra Jadeja, the wily left-arm spinner, who can also be handy with the bat.

Behind the closed doors at the Wankhede Stadium, which was ravaged by a slew of COVID-19 cases before it was cleared to host matches, it remains to be seen whether Pant is able to outsmart Dhoni, or 'MSD' has his way.

# India to take on Argentina in FIH Pro League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Buenos Aires, April 9: The Indian men's hockey team will return to top-level international competition after more than a year when they take on Olympic champions Argentina in the first match of the two-game FIH Pro League tie here, Saturday.

After being stuck at their base at the Sports Authority of India, Bangalore centre for the entire last year during the coronavirus outbreak, the Indians will finally get to play high-intensity international matches.

India played their last FIH Hockey Pro League match against Australia in February last year in Bhubaneswar. The Indians are

currently fifth in the FIH Pro League standings with 10 points from six games, with two wins and as many losses and draws.

World champions Belgium are atop the standings with 32 points from 13 games, followed by Germany (19 points from 8 matches), Netherlands (18 from 11) and Australia (14 from 8).

# New dates for men's ACT hockey decided

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kuala Lumpur, April 9: Postponed multiple times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the men's Asian Champions Trophy hockey will now be held from October 1 to 9 in Dhaka, the continental governing body said.

The Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) was earlier forced to postpone the ACT for both men and women twice because of the pandemic.

"In our mission to bring hockey back to the pitch after the global disruption caused by coronavirus, I am pleased to announce the rescheduling of dates for the postponed

Men's Asian Champions Trophy 2021 in early October this year," AHF chief executive Tayyab Ikram said.

"It is yet another victory in our battle against the virus and its effects on the sports world, and I wholeheartedly congratulate the Asian Hockey family, Bangladesh Hockey Federation and hockey lovers worldwide for this win," he said in a statement.

The new dates of the men's ACT have been confirmed with the Bangladesh Hockey Federation and are also approved by the International Hockey Federation (FIH), the AHF said.

The sixth edition of the biennial event will take place

at the Maulana Bhashani National Hockey Stadium in Dhaka among six teams – Japan, India, Pakistan, Korea, Malaysia and hosts Bangladesh.

The men's edition was supposed to be held in Dhaka from March 11 to 19, while the women's event was to be organised in Donghae, South Korea, from March 31 to April 6.

Originally, both the tournaments were scheduled to be held last year but were postponed because of the deadly virus. While the original dates of the men's event was from November 17 to 27 last year, the women's tournament was scheduled from June 14 to 21.

# India eves lose to Belarus in friendly

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 9: The Indian women's football team's campaign in Uzbekistan came to an end with a 1-2 defeat to Belarus in the second friendly match in Tashkent.

Maymol Rocky's India had earlier lost the opening tie of the two-match friendly series to a much higher-ranked Uzbekistan 0-1 in extremely cold and windy conditions April 5.

After a barren first half when the Indian team defended doggedly, Belarus, ranked three spots below India in world rankings, took the lead through a Shuppo Nastassia's penalty, before Piliipenka Hanna doubled the

lead. For the visitors, Sangita Basfore, skipper during the tour of Turkey in February this year, pulled one back in added time.

India's livewire, right full-back Anju Tamang, made several forays into the rival half and fell back in defence as per the team's requirement and was responsible for several turnovers, which helped the visitors regroup and launch attacks in the first half.

Belarus were awarded a penalty after one of their strikers was adjudged to have been fouled inside the Indian box. Nastassia slotted the ball to the left of goalkeeper Aditi Chauhan, who anticipated correctly but the ball was just too far beyond her

reach. Belarus added a second 10 minutes later, when Hanna was played through into the Indian penalty box, and she squeezed her shot between the keeper and the near post, as the ball hit the upright and bundled in.

A determined India, though, didn't give up. Skipper Indumathi found Manisha on the left with a piercing through ball and latter pulled the trigger after sprinting into the Belarus box, but her effort was saved.

Basfore got one back late in added time, slotting home from 30 yards out. Though the Belarus goalkeeper got her glove to the ball, the shot had too much power to sail into the goal.

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