



### KANGANA IN JAISALMER

Actor Kangana Ranaut took to Instagram to announce that she is off to Jaisalmer for the shoot of her film *Tejas*

LEISURE P2



### FESTIVALS BANNED

In view of the surge in cases in the 2nd Covid-19 wave, Karnataka has banned celebrations of all ensuing festivals

TWO STATES P7



### ENGLAND LEVEL SERIES

Jonny Bairstow's century and Ben Stokes' 99 help England level 3-ODI series against India

SPORTS P12

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# BANDH PARTIAL IN STATE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 26:** The dawn-to-dusk Bharat Bandh called by farmer unions protesting against three farm laws, evoked partial response in Odisha Friday. Protestors blocked roads and squatted on trail tracks at some places in the state while shops and market establishments remained closed, official sources said.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) called the bandh from 6 am to 6 pm to mark four months of the farmers' agitation at Delhi's three borders - Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri. The Congress and Left parties are supporting the bandh in Odisha.

Different farmer outfits like Naba Nirman Kisan Sangathan, the Odisha unit of the All India Krishak Sangharsh Samanyoya Samiti and others tried to enforce Bharat bandh across the state demanding repeal of the three new farm laws introduced by the Centre. The strike disrupted normal movement of people and vehicles in the state.

Several shops and markets in the state capital remained closed and wore deserted looks although vehicular movements and official functions remained normal during the bandh.



The Unit-II market in Bhubaneswar wears a deserted look during the 12-hour bandh, Friday

While Mo Bus and other public transport modes were hit, rallies and protests marches by the agitators at Master Canteen in the state capital and other parts of the state marked the bandh. The bandh call was given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, the umbrella body of farmer outfits from across the country to raise the issue of the controversial farm laws requesting the government to repeal the laws.

Suresh Panigrahi, member of the All India Krishak Sangharsh

Samanyoya Samiti said around 14 farmer outfits extended their support to the Bharat Bandh in the state while several political parties also supported the call. "We tried to impose the bandh in different parts of the state pressing for the repeal of the three controversial farm laws and consideration of our long pending demand. We tried to block the movement of vehicles at Master Canteen, National Highways besides countering train movements to impose the bandh and it was successful, Panigrahi said. The agitation

was supported by the Odisha Congress, Samajwadi Party, Communist Party of India-Marxist and Community Party of India besides the support of several farmer outfits. Although the BJD had not directly supported the bandh, the party had already ordered closure of schools, colleges and technical institutions in the light of the bandh call. Instructions had been issued by the state government to government employees to come to offices earlier.

No untoward incident was reported from across the state. The Congress

### 'BHARAT BANDH' A BIG SUCCESS: SKM

**NEW DELHI:** The 12-hour 'Bharat bandh' called by farmers protesting the three agri laws was a "big success", the Samyukta Kisan Morcha said Friday, and claimed that shutdown was observed in many parts of the country, including Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Bihar and Odisha. However, there was minimal impact in Delhi with no report of disturbance in the metro and road transport services, and major markets of the city remaining open during the day. In a statement, the Morcha alleged that its several leaders and cadres were detained by the police in Karnataka and Gujarat during the 'bandh' that marked four months of the agitation at Delhi's three borders - Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri. On Friday, the nationwide shutdown started at 6 am and was in force up to 6 pm across the country.

party, meanwhile, tried to rake up the issue in the Odisha Assembly and tried to create a ruckus inside the house. The Speaker later adjourned the house following frequent adjournments and the cacophony inside the Assembly. The farmer outfits declared the bandh as a success.

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## Fresh Covid curbs on April festivities

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 26:** Keeping in view the rising number of COVID 19 cases in the state and the country, the state government Friday issued a fresh notification restricting crowds for religious festivals slated in the month of April.

The order issued by the office of the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) said that public gathering for such festivals would not be allowed during the month citing the threat from the rising cases of COVID 19.

In April, important festivals like Pana Sankranti, Jhamu Yatra, Easter and Good Friday are scheduled which are likely to see congregation of public on these auspicious days of different faiths in the state.

"Danda Yatra" and 'Sriram Navami' and others fall in April and people usually congregate to celebrate the festivals during which it is not possible to adhere to COVID appropriate behaviour and such congregations have a potential to cause spread of the virus," the order said.

"In the interest of the health of the general public and for containment of COVID-19, it is hereby directed that congregation for

celebrations of the above festivals like 'Good Friday', Easter, 'Pana Samkranti', Jhamu Jatra, Danda Jatra and 'Sriram Navami' and associated religious and cultural congregations shall not be allowed in public throughout the State," it added.

The notification, however, said that religious rituals in churches, temples and other places of worship would continue as usual with limited number of persons with strict adherence to Covid safety protocols.

The notification meanwhile allowed the Collectors and Commissioners of Local Urban Bodies to take decisions to impose restrictions after assessment of the local conditions.

"Considering local conditions, Collectors and Municipal Commissioners may impose appropriate restrictions on entry of devotees into churches, temples, religious places and places of worship and in the celebrations there," the notification read.

These officials were also empowered to take decisions on the number of persons that can attend such festivals and rituals and in their jurisdictions but in strict adherence to the COVID safety protocols.

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We never mention it and prefer talking religious, emotional issues during polls, but our agenda is only development!

## Maharathy Jr BJD pick for Pipli bypoll

**Bhubaneswar:** The Biju Janata Dal Friday named Rudrapratap Maharathy as its candidate for by-elections in the Pipli Assembly seat, where polling is scheduled April 17. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced Maharathy's name for the Pipli bypolls, a day after the saffron party decided to field Ashrit Pattanaya from the seat. Rudrapratap Maharathy is the son of BJD stalwart and seven-time MLA Pradeep Maharathy, whose death in 2020 necessitated the by-elections. Thanking the Chief Minister for giving him an opportunity to contest the elections, he said, "I am optimistic about victory. My priority is to serve the people of Delang-Pipli. I will complete som of the unfinished works of my late father." Announcement of Rudrapratap's candidature was delayed as Pradeep Maharathy's wife, Pratiba, was also an aspirant. **More Pg 3**

## 8 rapes, 4 murders daily listed in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 26:** Odisha recorded an average of eight rape cases and four murders every day in 2020, according to the white paper on the state's crime scenario tabled in the Assembly Friday.

The report said, the state police registered 2,984 rape cases last year of which 2,907 cases were found to be true. Chargesheets were filed in 2,054 cases. As many as 1.34 lakh cognisable offences, including 4,088 dowry-related incidents, 1,470 murders, 2,166 cases of loot, 4,500 burglary, 10,412 theft, 3,524 swindling, 2,059 rioting, and 9,817 motor vehicle accidents were registered during 2020, the report said. According to an NCRB report for 2019, the state witnessed 1356 murders in 2019 as compared to 1470 in 2020.

Out of the 1.34 lakh cognisable offences, 1, 29,305 cases were found to be true and chargesheets were filed in 93,229 cases. Of the 1,470 murder cases registered last year, 1,392 were found to be true and charge sheets have been submitted in 694 cases. The state police registered 1, 21,525 cases under various IPC and

SLL crimes in 2019 against 1.29 lakh in 2020.

Similarly, the police registered 2,166 loot cases and filed chargesheets in 882 cases. Of the total cases, 2,127 were found to be true. In 2019, the police have registered 2492 robbery cases in 2019 as compared to As many as 1,816 accused persons have been arrested and stolen properties worth ₹4.24 crore were recovered during the year. However, the report said, the law and order situation was peaceful during 2020.

Twenty-seven cases of Hindu-Muslim animosity and three incidents of communal tension between Hindus and Christians were reported in the state in the period, the report said. The situations were brought under control with the timely intervention of local police and administration, the report said.

It said, the state has been successful in the management of the COVID-19 situation. As many as 8,902 police officers and staff were infected with the virus during the pandemic, 48 police personnel lost their lives on duty and 1,002 donated plasma after recovering from the infection, the report said.

## TRAUMA UNFOLDS



Patients from the COVID-19 dedicated Sunrise Hospital are being shifted after a fire from the adjacent Dreams Mall in Mumbai engulfed the hospital early Friday **(REPORT ON P9)**

## SC upholds Mistry's exit as Tata boss

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 26:** In a major victory for the Tata Group, the Supreme Court Friday set aside a National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) order restoring Cyrus Mistry as the executive chairman of the conglomerate.

A bench of Chief Justice SA Bobde, justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian said it is allowing the appeals filed by the Tata Group. "The order of NCLAT dated December 18, 2019 is set aside," the bench said while pronouncing the verdict and putting at rest the long-

drawn legal battle of the salt-to-software Tata conglomerate.

It said, "...All the questions of law are liable to be answered in favour of the appellants Tata Group, the appeals filed by the Tata Group are liable to be allowed and (the appeal by) the SP (Shapoorji Pallonji) Group is liable to be dismissed."

The bench, which dealt with the SP Group's contention regarding separation, said the valuation of the group's shares depends upon the value of the 'Tata Sons' stake in listed equities, immovable assets and others. "...At this stage and in this court, we cannot adjudicate



on the fair compensation," it added.

"We will leave it to the parties to take the Article 75 route or any other legally available route in this regard," the bench said. The SP Group had earlier valued its holding in the Tatas at ₹1.75 lakh crore.

However, during the hearing in the matter before the apex court, the Tatas had, on December 8 last year, said the valuation of the 18.37 per cent shares of the SP Group in Tata Sons Private Limited (TSPL) is between ₹70,000 crore and ₹80,000 crore. The SP Group had told the top court that Mistry's removal as the chairman of TSPL at a board meeting held in October 2016 was akin to a "blood sport" and "ambush", in complete violation of the principles of corporate governance and in pervasive violation of the Articles of Association in the process.

**MORE P11**

## ITBP deploys retired combat canines as 'therapy dogs'

CAPFs DEPLOY ABOUT 3,500 DOGS FOR A VARIETY OF ROLES IN THE INTERNAL SECURITY DOMAIN

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 26:** In a novel initiative, border guarding force ITBP has decided to utilise the services of its retired combat canines as 'therapy dogs' to help in the early recuperation of personnel undergoing medical treatment and also for their specially-abled children.

The challenges of life after retirement for the aged and out-of-service four-legged soldiers has been a subject of concern for various central armed police forces (CAPFs) that deploy about 3,500 dogs for a variety of roles in the internal security domain - ranging from detecting hidden explosives to sniffing out terrorists and drugs and assault and guard duties.

The issue was also discussed during a recently-held national conference on police canines that was

conducted by the newly-created cell for this subject in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

Dogs, at present, who retire from these central forces are usually handed over to animal NGOs or kept at a retirement home within the organisation for post-retirement care.

A first batch of five dogs who have been living in their 'retirement home' at the ITBP national training center for dogs and animals at Bhanu near Chandigarh have been inducted for a second innings task of being 'therapy dogs'.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Sudhakar Natarajan, the veterinary chief of the ITBP, tells PTI that Pooja, Tom, Rambo, Rani and Gravey, who recently retired from active service, are just over 11-years-old and have served in various anti-Naxal operations and counter-in-



surgency grids of the country along with their handlers accompanying Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) patrols.

"All five dogs have started visiting ITBP hospitals and have given soothing emotional support to patients, that is a welcome break for them from the dreary hospital mo-

notony.

"Also, these dogs have interacted with children with special needs, and the spark seen in their eyes is to be seen to be believed. An immediate connection between the child and dog was remarkable," Natarajan said about the preliminary findings of the new move.

A compliance report submitted by the border force to its administrative department - the Union home ministry - on Thursday said that the force plans to visit local schools, where specially-abled children are taught, with these 'therapy dogs' to spread joy. The report said the experiment is being watched and analysed.

"Our veteran K9 (canine) heroes have just been deployed as therapy dogs. The response of patients (ITBP troops under treatment in their hospitals) was very encouraging.

"Many are long-term patients and they expressed unalloyed joy in engaging with these dogs in non-verbal communication, purely from the heart. The long term effects on engagement with therapy dogs are being observed," the report said.

DIG Natarajan, the brain behind the move, said the aim of the ini-

tiative is to ensure that the canine soldiers who served with sincere dedication in the prime of their age and helped to save numerous lives from potential life threats, are taken care off even in their hey days.

"We are fully committed to looking after our darling veteran hero K9s who have served the nation, and now even in their retired life they are contributing as therapy dogs to give emotional support to patients and special children. "Since our dogs are highly trained and socialised, they are being used as a supportive therapy to manage autism and other special disorders in children," he said.

The DIG, also a veterinarian, said specially-abled children "connect with our furry darlings directly at the organic emotional level, that is not the case with human-to-human interaction, where expectations are involved".

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	49008.50	↑ 568.38
NIFTY	14507.30	↑ 182.40
DOLLAR	73.54	↓ ₹0.23
EURO	85.78	↑ ₹0.32
GOLD	₹44,637	↓ ₹58
SILVER	₹64,782	↓ ₹87

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	40.0°C	38.4°C
MIN	24.4°C	23.4°C
Humidity	58%	53%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather likely	



**FORTUNE FORECAST**

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**ARIES**

Your attractive personality is always at the disposal of others, and today you could benefit immensely through it. However, there is room for improvement and you could be drawn towards charity work. Ganesha says you will surely feel satisfied by helping the needy.

**TAURUS**

This day you will tend to be too bossy, too harsh on your subordinates or employees and end up making them miserable as well as hostile. Their insubordination could corrode the respect you get and, in addition, make things unworkable.

**GEMINI**

You will want some change in your daily routine today. You are likely to be fed up of the rut of daily life and are looking for a refreshing change. You need to apply your inherent creativity to your work to get more satisfaction out of it and to ease the boredom of your daily schedule, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**

Don't meddle in others' affairs today, suggests Ganesha. For they will not take it kindly. Adopt the middle path. Ganesha feels that you must keep your bravado and boldness in check.

**LEO**

Your pride and self-confidence will help you to excel in whatever task it is that you take up today. Other people will also praise you. You will buy new clothes and other possessions that you have been desiring since a long time, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**

You will be faced with serious financial problems today. You may even have to pay through your nose to get what you desire. Later in the evening, you might accomplish some short-term goals. Ganesha predicts that some vital business agreements will end your day in high spirits.

**LIBRA**

It's time to take what is already good, and turn it into something better. Take this day as a day to bring about improvements in your life and yourself. You may also consider taking up some extra courses in the evening. Maybe it's time for a salsa lesson, or learn how to toss a few Italian delicacies.

**SCORPIO**

Your sixth sense would work wonders today, as per to what Ganesha has to say. Trust your instincts and work accordingly. Work enthusiastically and dedicatedly. When the pressure of work mounts on you, take a break and unwind with the help of soft music.

**SAGITTARIUS**

It's time for some entertainment. Movies, picnics and dining out is on your mind. Invite your beloved and enjoy quality time with each other. Also, you will spend time with you family and friends, and attend a music concert together.

**CAPRICORN**

Actions speak louder than words. Your sincere efforts and honest intentions will motivate others also to put in their best, feels Ganesha. You'll be like a friend, philosopher and guide to them. People will follow you, but it has a darker side to as many will even over take you. It is certainly not a pleasant sight to see opportunities pass by!

**AQUARIUS**

You roar with absolute bliss today! Simplicity is your new avatar, and naturally, friends and acquaintances are mystified. You may wish to commune with the higher spirit and will seek solace in a quiet temple. Ganesha approves and predicts peace in plenty.

**PISCES**

Staying afloat needs about as much effort as swimming. Cryptic as this may sound, what it means is you need to constantly reinvent yourself if you wish to keep going. You will shine in your profession only if it is also your passion, says Ganesha.



**SCARLETT ADMITS BEING WRONG IN HITTING BACK AT HER CRITICS**

Hollywood star Scarlett Johansson has admitted she was wrong in hitting back at critics of some of her past opinions; such as, her defense of the role she essayed in *Ghost In A Shell*.

**NIKKI GETTING TREATMENT FOR ANOREXIA**

Big Brother UK star Nikki Grahame is getting specialist treatment for anorexia. Her mother, Sue, admits this is the worst anorexia episode she has had.



**RAJKUMMAR**  
on being called 'star'

**Mumbai:** Rajkumar Rao has a candid retort when you tell him he is successful enough now to be called a star.

"You can call me whatever, but call me Raj. I think Raj is a nice name," says the actor, in a conversation with IANS.

The actor, who won the National Award in 2014 for his title role in *Shahid*, has given memorable roles in numerous films in his 11-year-old career — notably, *Aligarh*, *Bareilly Ki Barfi*, *CityLights*, *Omeria*, *Newton* and *Trapped*. Despite fame and awards, he has always come across as grounded. How does he manage to stay that way?

"God has not given me wings to fly so there is no point flying! I am doing this for myself because I saw this dream when I was a kid who wants to act. I wanted to be an actor and acting gives me the most amount of happiness and I am doing this for my sanity and for my own happiness. It reaches out to so many people and you get so much love from them," he replied.

"I don't see any reason for me to not be real. I am an actor by profession but before that I am just a normal guy," he added.

Over his decade-long journey in Hindi cinema, Rajkumar has featured in many slice-of-life, realistic and drama films. One genre missing from his filmography is an out-and-out commercial masala entertainer, something Bollywood is famous for.

"Never say never. I haven't really given a thought to it honestly but if I get a script like that, then I would love to try. Why not?" he said.



**'My career journey is same as every Indian'**

**Mumbai:** Actor Ayushmann Khurrana finds it humbling that people find him relatable and says his career journey is the same as every Indian who is trying to carve a name for himself.

"It is truly humbling to know that the people of India find me relatable. It's a huge compliment because I do consider myself to be one of the masses, and my career journey is the same as every Indian who is trying to make a name, build a legacy through pure dedication and hard work," Ayushmann said.

He added: "I have tried to bring out their lives on screen, tell their unique and inspiring stories and showed everyone where the heart of my country lies. I guess that's what has resonated the most with people and, in turn, resonated with the brands that I currently endorse."



**Kangana heads to Jaisalmer for Tejas shoot**

**Mumbai:** Actress Kangana Ranaut took to Instagram to announce that she is off to Jaisalmer for the shoot of her film *Tejas*.

In the picture, the actress can be seen praying. She also added that she is 'distressed' to see the rise in Covid-19 cases everywhere and said that she is praying for the safety of all. In the image, she wears a sari and a necklace. She tied her hair in a bun.

"It was a very short trip home, now leaving for Jaisalmer for #Tejas shoot, distressed to see COVID cases rise everywhere, praying for everyone's well being .... also thank you for all the love and kindness bestowed upon #thalaivitrailer," she wrote.

Kangana launched the trailer of her upcoming film *Thalaivi* in Mumbai and Chennai March 23, her birthday. Last week, she was also declared winner of the Best Actress National Award for *Manikarnika* and *Panga*.

IANS

**Impact of theatre on its audience**

*It is important for people to not just be passive consumers as they are in a cinema hall, but become active participants when they are in a theatre, says popular stage actor Danish Hussain*



A scene from Hindi play *Sir Sir Sarla* featuring actors Makrand Deshpande and Aahana Kumra

**W**atching theatre often takes its audience to a different world altogether. Asked why the uninitiated should begin to watch plays, India's top theatre performers and veteran thespians weigh in.

Ahana Kumra of *Sir Sir Sarla* who has appeared in many movies says, "Theatre does make you a better person and performer because you put in months for rehearsal. Everything is live, and an artiste has to be ready to take whatever challenges come along. I always equate theatre to life. Most

importantly theatre makes you a capable actor." She feels that everyone needs to understand theatre and how much work an actor, director, and the whole crew put into it.

"You can learn so much from live plays, and I believe youngsters should experience this. While cinema is an important part of us, we must not forget that plays are an integral part of our culture," adds the

*Khuda Haafiz* actress.

Danish Hussain, who has acted in *Aaj Rang Hai* by Zee theatre says, "Nothing transforms you or touches you more than palpable human contact. To see another human-being conversing, emoting, performing before you can be a very transformative moment. So, I think it is important for people to not just be passive consumers as they are in a cinema hall, but become active participants when they are in

a theatre." The *Dance Like A Man* actor Joy Sengupta on the impact of theatre says, "I believe, there is no art like theatre for the simple reason that the art of theatre employs every other art. So many forms are employed in theatre to create a social and political discourse. Be it the battle of *Mahabharata*, or the condition of women in the 19th century, theatre can accommodate every story, every milieu and every genre and yes, all forms of arts. Therefore an audience who watches a play, appreciates aesthetics, becomes empowered socially and politically and definitely goes back highly entertained."

One thing that theatre offers that cinema and television can't is human contact. In theatre, the audience and performer breathe the same air. It's like falling in love or having a delicious meal or smelling a rose, opines celebrated stage actor Mahesh Dattani.

AGENCIES

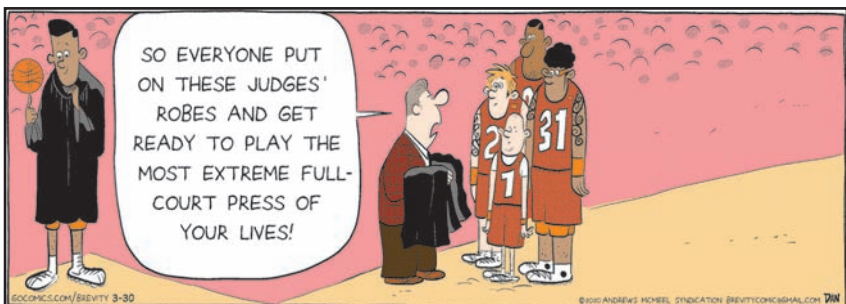
**PEANUTS**



**CALVIN AND HOBBS**

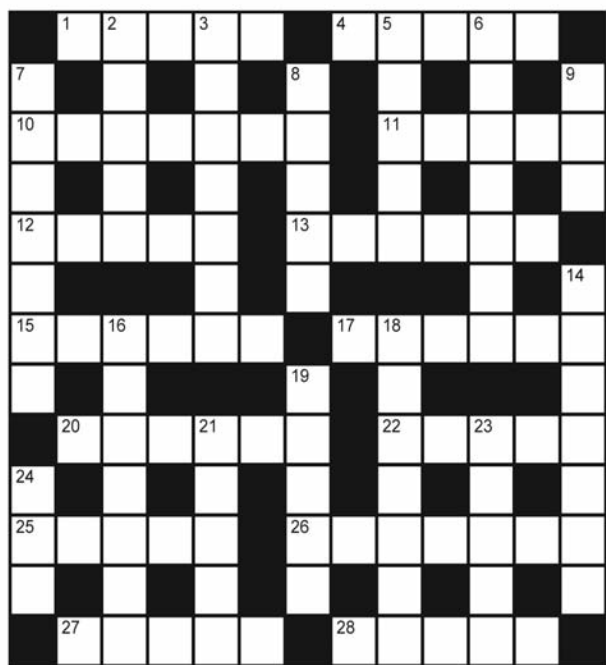


**BREVITY**



**FUN post**

**CROSSWORD**



**Across**

- 1 Condition
- 4 Certain berth
- 10 Type
- 11 Happen
- 12 Weeper of myth
- 13 Garrisons
- 15 Being
- 17 Fishing spot
- 20 Neutron star
- 22 Ring-tailed animal

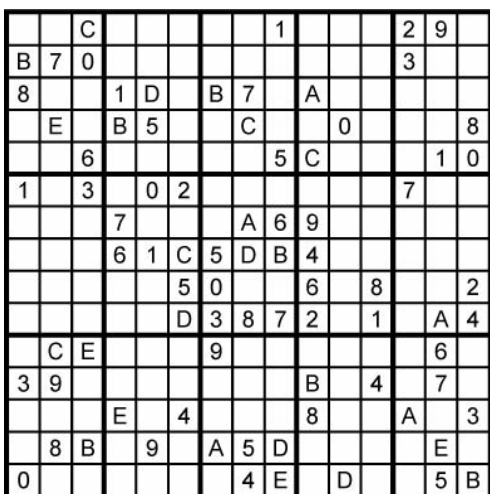
- 25 Earthy colour
- 26 Contemplating
- 27 Viper
- 28 Lazybones

**Down**

- 2 Trunk
- 3 Spear
- 5 Snapshot
- 6 One that got away
- 7 Retaliator
- 8 Bring together
- 9 Sphere
- 14 Encroach
- 16 Strengthen
- 18 Undertook
- 19 Pulitzer Prize category
- 21 Kind of preview
- 23 Light-footed
- 24 Watch pocket

**SUDOKU**

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

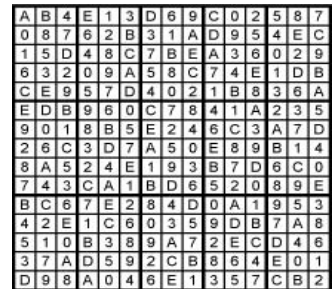


**SOLUTIONS**

**CROSSWORD**



**SUDOKU**



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	12,62,44,322	10,18,41,122	27,69,971
India	1,18,46,855	1,12,64,637	1,60,949
Odisha	3,39,694	3,36,482	1,919



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**HONDA**



CRUT bags Smart SPV award

**Bhubaneswar:** Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT) which runs Mo Bus service has been adjudged winner at 6th Smart Cities India Awards 2021 in the 'Smart SPV/Municipal Corporation' award category. The event was organised by the India Trade Promotion Organisation, the nodal agency of the Government of India under aegis of Ministry of Commerce and Industry & Exhibitions India Group.

WASSUP TODAY  
BHUBANESWAR

- Covid-19 Lockdown Star Award Ceremony by Panacea Charitable Trust, Soochana Bhawan, 5.30pm
- Odissi dance choreography by Mokshya, Buddha Mandir, Unit-IX, 5.30pm
- 10th Offa award by Ruchi, hotel Mayfair, Central Hall, 6pm
- World Theatre Day by Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi, Rabindra Mandap, 6.30pm

BALIANITA

- 56th Namayagna, Maa Jageswari Peeth, 8am

CUTTACK

- Second Mudra festival by Nuttya Jyoti, Town Hall, 6pm
- Inauguration of World Theatre Day, Kala Vikash Kendra, 6.30pm

PURI

- Badadanda Seva, Grand Road, 6.30am
- Puja by Pratihari Nijog, near Lion's Gate, 6pm

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  
LOST

I, Soumya Ranjan Mishra, S/o Late Purna Chandra Mishra of Sri Khetra Vihar, P.S.- Berhampur Sadar, Ganjam, Odisha, Mobile No.76279-91331 do hereby declare that my Indian Army ID Card Vide No.FO42242 of Regiment 610 EME has been lost somewhere during my travelling by motor cycle from my residential house to nearby Petrol Pump, which was reported to Sadar P.S. Vide SD No.03 on dt.19.03.2021. If any one will get this, kindly inform to above address or Berhampur Sadar P.S. (Soumya Ranjan Mishra)

MISSING



My mother Smt. Sukanti Devi, W/o Late Purna Chandra Mishra has left the house on 14.03.2021 to somewhere without information. Which was reported to Berhampur Sadar P.S. Vide Missing person Registration No. 27/ Dt.16.03.2021. Her age is 53 years, fair complexion, thin built, height 5'5" wearing saree, speaking Odia and Hindi. If any kind hearted person will traceout her, kindly intimate to the undersigned or Sadar P.S. Soumya Ranjan Mishra, Srikheta Vihar, Berhampur, Ganjam, Odisha, Mob. No.-7627991331

State writes to Centre over erratic supply of jabs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 26:** The state government is now reeling under the shortage of Covid-19 vaccines, keeping in mind the next round of universal vaccination drive for people above age of 45 years.

The Health department Friday wrote to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, asking them to ensure adequate supply of the vaccines and not discriminate among states when it comes to disbursement of vaccines.

"Odisha has already administered more than 20 lakh doses of vaccine to healthcare workers, frontline workers and age appropriate groups of citizens. From April 1, 2021, all citizens aged 45 years and above will be vaccinated and the state has estimated the target to be nearly one crore," Health Additional Secretary PK Mohapatra said in the letter.

He also added, "Presently, we are unable to plan vaccination sessions for even 15 days in advance due to insufficient and erratic vaccine supply to our state. It is seen that other states are achieving up to 3 lakh vaccinations daily due to adequate vaccine supply. It is requested that there should not be any discrimination between states in supply of vaccines."

The official said that the threat may loom large soon affecting the drive directly. "Keeping in view the heatwave conditions in our state, which will worsen over the

INOCULATION DRIVE



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The official said that the threat may loom large soon affecting the drive directly. "Keeping in view the heatwave conditions in our state, which will worsen over the

coming months, we are planning to accelerate our vaccination drive so as to vaccinate at least 2 lakh citizens daily and complete the target before the weather becomes more severe."

The state government in the letter also said, "You are requested to supply at least 15 days' vaccine requirement in advance to our state for uninterrupted vaccination drive."

nCoV -ve report must for travellers: BMC

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Mar 26:** The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Friday made it mandatory for the travellers to carry a negative RT-PCR test report, not older than 72 hours.

Addressing the media here, BMC Commissioner, Prem Chandra Chaudhary said that movement of people to the Capital city from other districts as well as other states is high. Thus, a guideline will be issued to ensure that the spread of Covid remains under control.

"There are chances that Covid-19 cases will go northward. However, a guideline will be issued soon to ensure that the travellers coming to Bhubaneswar from other states with high Covid-19 caseload have to undergo mandatory testing or carry Covid-19 negative report with them," Chaudhary stated.

He also mentioned that special surveillance and other enforcement activities are currently underway to contain the spread of Covid-19 in Bhubaneswar. It can be mentioned that the BMC had earlier stated that it will opt for RAT testing rather RT-PCR tests in a bid



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to detect and efficiently track the passengers, especially from red-flag states.

The state government had earlier red-flagged 12 states and mandated a 7-day home isolation for returnees from Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal, Karnataka, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and Chandigarh.

Fire breaks out at Cuttack bank

PNN & AGENCIES

**Cuttack, March 26:** A major fire broke out at the Mahanadi Vihar branch of Odisha Gramya Bank (OGB) under Chauhiaganj police limits here in the wee hours of Friday

Although the extent of the damage was yet to be assessed, properties including computers, furniture and electrical fitting worth lakhs of rupees were reduced to cinders.

According to sources, a few passersby spotted smoke emanating from the building housing the bank and alerted the Fire Services personnel who along with a police team rushed to the spot and managed to douse the flames after hours-long efforts.

By the time the blaze was brought



under control, furniture and document kept in the two rooms of the bank were reduced to ashes.

Though the exact reason behind the fire is unknown, electric short circuit is believed to be the reason behind the mishap, sources said.

REMINISCING GANDHI'S PURI VISIT



An all-faith prayer meeting under way at Gandhi Smriti Peeth in Puri, Friday, to commemorate the centenary of the Father of the Nation's first visit to the Pilgrim City

Odisha logs 234 new Covid cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 26:** Odisha's Covid-19 tally Friday surged to 3,39,694 after 234 more people tested positive for the infection.

The new cases were detected in 23 of the state's 30 districts, with 139 reported from different quarantine centres while the remaining 95 were local contact cases. Nuapada district recorded the highest of 33 new cases followed by Khurda district of which the state capital Bhubaneswar is a part (32), Cuttack (29) and Bargarh (24).

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The state's coronavirus death toll remained at 1,919 as there was no fresh fatality since March 22. This apart, 53 other Covid-19 patients have also died due to comorbidities in the state, he said.

The state currently has 1,313 active Covid-19 cases while 3,36,409 patients have recovered from the highly infectious disease.

Odisha has so far conducted over 89.20 lakh sample tests for Covid-19 including 28,662 Thursday while the state's positivity rate stands at 3.81 per cent.

Meanwhile, Odisha Chief Secretary in an order said: "In the interest of health of the general public and for containment of spread of COVID-19, it is hereby directed that congregation for celebration of festivals like 'Good Friday', 'Easter', 'Pana Sankranti', 'Jhamu Jatra', 'Danda Jatra' and 'Sriran Navami' and associated religious and cultural congregation shall not be allowed in public throughout the state."

CONSPIRACY ANGLE

CBI team meets Anjana Mishra

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 26:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials Friday met Anjana Mishra, the victim of the infamous 1999 gangrape case, at her residence in Nayapalli here. The investigating officer along with another CBI official held discussions with Mishra for around 40 minutes.

Speaking to Orissa POST, Mishra said, "I requested the CBI officials to unravel the conspiracy angle behind the heinous crime. I urged them to find out the persons who helped the prime accused

Anjana asked the CBI sleuths as to how much information they elicited from Biban, who was nabbed recently by the CP

Bibeknanda Biswal alias Biban to sneak out of the state after committing the crime and those who financed him initially."

"I asked the CBI officials as to how much information they could manage to elicit from Biban as they

NOBLE INITIATIVE



Former Barabati-Cuttack MLA Debashish Samantaray hands over a proposal to Cuttack Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani for construction of a barrage which, according to Samantaray, would help tackle the water crisis in the district

Bedlam in House as Cong rakes up farmer issues

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 26:** The Assembly Friday witnessed frequent disruptions as the Congress party raked up the issue of farmers' agitation against the three controversial farm laws of the Centre.

The party MLAs including Bahinipati came to the well of the House and shouted anti-government slogans and protested inside the House on the issue of controversial farm Bills.

Seeing the ruckus and consistent adjournments, Speaker SN Patro finally announced adjournment of the House for Friday and Saturday.

BJP MLA Mohan Charan Majhi demanded discussion on the issue of law and order situation in the state and claimed that the disruptions were used to avoid a debate on the important issue.

of repealing the order and the matter needed discussions and attention.

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Pradipta Naik (BJP) tried to persuade the agitating Congress MLAs to ensure smooth conduct of the House, but in vain.

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19 promoted to IAS

**Bhubaneswar:** The Ministry of Personnel and Public Grievances Friday said that 19 Odisha Administrative Officers (OAS) have been promoted to the cadre of Indian Administrative Service (IAS). The ministry claimed that the required administrative approvals from the President of India on the issue had been taken and the officials would now serve in Odisha under the IAS cadre. The OAS officials are Ganesh Patra, Sashadhara Nayak, Bikash Mohapatra, Brarati Harichandan, Manoj Pattnaik, Sadananda Nayak, Mary Lakhra, Dayanidhi Nayak, Srinibas Behera, Yudhishtir Nayak, Udaya Das, Sujata Sahu, Gangadhar Sahoo, Ashwini Mishra, Ramashish Hazra, Sushanta Mohanty, Jyoti Prakash Das, Sintanshu Rout and Krushna Prasad Patil.

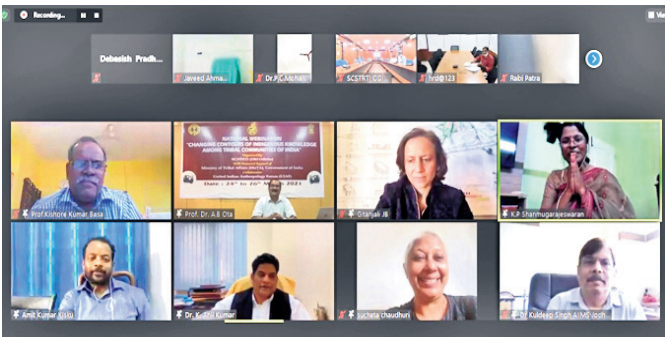
Curtains down on tribals' knowledge system webinar

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 26:** Tribal Research Institute, Odisha, in collaboration with Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, organised a three-day national webinar on 'Changing Contours of Indigenous Knowledge System among the Tribes of India', which concluded Friday.

The webinar was inaugurated March 24 by Navaljeet Kapoor, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Ranjana Chopra, Principal Secretary, ST & SC Development department.

This webinar brainstormed various dimensions of knowledge and data possessed by the tribes and indigenous people of India in form of unwritten and uncoded memories that are equally scientific and useful in their daily as well as special survival strategies. It also attempted to bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and modern science to prop-



agate a useful synthesis of both forms of knowledge.

The technical sessions were highly enriched with the learning and experiences shared by domain experts.

AB Ota, Director of SCSTRTI, said that the webinar was extremely productive and gave insights to the vast body of indigenous and traditional knowledge systems which have been preserved in unwritten form with the indigenous communities.

Ota said that as a way forward, the outcome of this webinar will be drafted and efforts will be taken to come out with a policy framework on changing contours of indigenous knowledge among tribal communities of India.

He added that a small core group will be formed which will work on the policy framework and submit its recommendation to Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India within months time.

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# 23 yrs on, powerloom workers await dues

Baladevjew Powerloom in Kendrapara had started manufacturing clothes in 1969. The state government had decided to close the textile mill in 1998, two years after it started incurring losses

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, March 26:** Hundreds of workers of Baladevjew Powerloom are yet to get their dues even though 23 years have elapsed since the closure of the government owned textile mill, sources said.

The issue came to fore recently after a delegation of the aggrieved workers, led by labour leader Muralidhar Das, submitted a memorandum in this regard to the district administration.

The saris, towels and other clothes produced by the powerloom were once very much popular in Kendrapara district.

"Kendrapara district has been deprived of any industry after the closure of the powerloom. Over 200 workers are yet to receive their arrears even though the textile mill had been closed around 23 years ago. We have raised the issue with the district administration and the elected representatives several times but to no avail," Das said.

In the meantime, at least 10 workers of the powerloom have passed away while many others are languishing in financial miseries.



AT LEAST, 200 WORKERS OF THE POWERLOOM HAVE BEEN GIVEN VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT SINCE SEPTEMBER 30, 2001. HOWEVER, THESE WORKERS ARE YET TO GET THEIR ARREARS FROM SEPTEMBER, 1996

The workers had filed a case in the Orissa High Court seeking their arrears and other benefits. The HC, in its March 6, 2019 order, had directed the liquidator to pay the arrears to the workers

Some people have encroached upon the powerloom land while equipment of the powerloom is rusting away and the roof of the structure has suffered extensive damage over the years

Many workers are suffering from old-age ailments and waiting for some assistance from the district administration, sources said.

Baladevjew Powerloom had started manufacturing clothes in 1969. However, the state government had decided to close the textile mill in 1998, two years after it

started incurring losses. The closure of the powerloom pushed many into financial miseries. At least, 200 workers of the powerloom have been given VRS since September 30, 2001. However, these workers are yet to get their arrears from September, 1996, sources added.

Various equipment and ma-

chinery of the powerloom were sold away without the knowledge of the workers. The workers had filed a case in the Orissa High Court seeking their arrears and other benefits. The HC, in its March 6, 2019 order, had directed the liquidator to pay the arrears to the workers. However, the workers are yet to receive their dues, sources said.

On the other hand, closure of



the powerloom has benefitted some unscrupulous persons. These people have encroached upon the powerloom land. "Valuable equipment of the powerloom is rusting away while the roof of the structure has suffered extensive damage over the years," said a source.

When contacted, ADM Basant Kumar Rout said the administration would look into the issue.

## KAYAKALPA SCHEME Malkangiri DHH tops state

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Malkangiri, March 26:** Malkangiri district headquarters hospital has topped the list of hospitals having won Kayakalp Award Scheme awards in the state for promoting and maintaining cleanliness, hygiene and creating sustainable practices in public health facilities.

Addressing a presser here Friday, chief district medical officer (CDMO) Dr Prafulla Kumar Nanda said that by getting to the top in Kayakalpa award, the DHH has created history and done the district proud.

A five-member Kayakalpa team had earlier visited DHHs and hospitals in all the 30 districts in the state. They had evaluated the standards and parameters in infrastructure, cleanliness, hygiene, parking facility, healthcare services, and sustainable practices in public health facilities, he added.

The Malkangiri DHH was adjudged the first among the Kayakalpa Award winners in the state. The hospital, now in a seven-storied hospital building, was dedicated to public service by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in 2018.



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jhumpura, March 26:** Even as water crisis is deepening with onset of summer in some remote and hilly parts of Keonjhar district, consumption of contaminated water supplied though drinking water projects has triggered diarrhoea in Hatibari and Naupani villages under Jhumpura block.

Over 40 people affected by diarrhoea were admitted to the Jhumpura and Champua hospitals, a report said.

Meanwhile, a medical team and health workers visited the two villages Thursday. The team has provided medicines and bleaching powder to the villagers to apply it in water tanks.

Five more people affected by diarrhoea in Hatibari were admitted to the Jhumpura hospital.

Locals of Hatibari and Naupani were scared as the water-borne disease has been spreading.

Villagers of Hatibari - Sabitri Champia, Mukta Champia, Sushama Champia, Rashmi Champia, Surya Munda, Ajit Munda and Sanatan Munda alleged that the water being supplied by the drinking water projects in their area has become contaminated as overhead tanks have not been cleaned. Besides, underground pipelines have broken. Due to leakages, water is being polluted. They also pointed out that overhead tanks have not been cleaned over years.

Health officials have camped in two villages and are treating people.

Medical officer of Jhumpura CHC, Dr PK Pati said that samples of drinking water from water tanks and have been sent for tests.

BDO BK Nayak said that the RWSS has been asked to clean the tanks and repair the pipelines.

## 5 vehicles seized for illegally transporting minerals in Joda

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Joda, March 26:** Illegal mineral transportation is yet to be curbed despite raids in Keonjhar. Police seized four trailers and a 12-wheeler truck carrying illegal iron ore near Bansapani Chhak under Joda police limits Friday. Two persons connected to it were detained.

Police came to know that some heavy vehicles were carrying iron ore from mines at Bamebari and Jurudi Thursday night. Police were in wait for the vehicles to pass at Bansapani Chhak.

## Mentally-challenged woman charred to death

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhadrak, March 26:** A mentally challenged woman burned to death in her house at Uchadiha village under Basudevpur block in Bhadrak district late Thursday night.

According to reports, the fire broke out at the house of Surendra Barik in the village last night. Later, the blaze spread to three other houses nearby.

Surendra's sister Kanak(40) was sleeping

when the incident occurred. Unaware for a long time about the fire, she was unable to escape from the house. Inside the house, she was burned alive in the blaze.

Locals reported the incident to Basudevpur fire brigade but as it had gone to put out a blaze elsewhere fire brigade from Soro arrived at the spot and doused the flames. By that time, twelve rooms and all the furniture in the house were gutted in the fire.

## Ancient Shivling, artifacts found from riverbed



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, March 26:** A Shivling and a few ancient sculptures were unearthed from Baitarani riverbed at Devigada Ghat in Jajpur district Thursday, villagers said.

The remains of a temple and an ancient Shivling had surfaced from Baitarani river near Dasarathpur in the district a few days ago,

sources said. According to a source, the Shivling and the remnants of an ancient temple were found during sand mining from the riverbed.

A Shivling, an idol of goddess Lakshmi and another sculpture made of black stones were unearthed from the riverbed Thursday.

Locals, meanwhile, have urged the state government to preserve the ancient idols and sculptures.

# Undying resolve: Women with sticks lead as Green Warriors



AGENCIES

**Nayagarh, March 26:** Several studies and reports have found that local communities play a major role in the conservation of forests.

A great reminder of this is the Chipko Movement, where women resisted deforestation in Uttar Pradesh (now Uttarakhand).

A case in point will be the tribal women of Odisha, who have been guarding their forests against smugglers for many decades - voluntarily. Armed with nothing but a stick, women go into local forests in groups of three to six to drive the timber thieves away. If they catch one, they issue a warning and confiscate the produce being smuggled. When matters escalate, they either bring these thieves to the village meeting and demand a public apology or fine or involve an NGO to initiate police action.

This is thengapali, a practice where every household takes turns to patrol their community forest with a stick (thenga means stick and pali means turn).

Thengapali started in Nayagarh district in the early 1970s but became popular in the 1990s when women came forward to

protect forests alongside men.

Women are solely responsible for keeping vigil on the forests in at least 300 villages in Nayagarh. In the Gunduribadi village of the district, the women-led forest protection committee has rejuvenated at least 500 acres of forest land

The presence of women sentinels in smaller pockets of the Mayurbhanj district has brought down the menace of smuggling

"We can spot the Giant Indian Squirrel in the Nayagarh belt, which wasn't the case a decade ago. Even the soil moisture retention has improved," said Manas Mishra, an environment activist who has studied the forest-dwelling communities of the Nayagarh-Khorda belt.

Thengapali has spread to other districts as well. The presence of women sentinels in smaller pockets of the Mayurbhanj district, such as Punasia, has brought down the menace of smuggling. They provide an extra layer of surveillance to the forests within the Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj. Dhaneswar Mahanta, who works with Vasundhara in the Reserve limits, said, "The forest department deploys two to five guards per forest. On that, these committees send at least three volunteers through the day."

The practice has also crossed over to the bordering state of Jharkhand and has become a case study that is now studied in the schools of Hampshire in England.

According to Y. Giri Rao, executive director of Vasundhara, a non-profit organisation that documents the forest conservation methods in Odisha, natural resources mean a lot more to women than men. "If the forest cover is depleted, the women would have to walk an extra mile to collect fuel for their daily needs," he said.

This dependence encouraged Sudamani Mahakud to take up thengapali at Punasia village. "If I need fuel to cook food, I can take leaves and twigs from the forest. If I need food to eat, the forest can give me greens and tubers. Some trees also have medicinal value. They are a source of food for the cattle as well. What more reasons do I need to protect the forest? I exist because the forest does," explained the 65-year-old, who has been guarding the forests for over two decades.

No sooner did women start protecting local forests, the conflict with the smugglers reduced. "If a group of men would confront smugglers, there were chances of fights. With women, there would only be verbal exchanges. In most cases, the smugglers belonged to neighbouring villages and so they would avoid confrontation with these women," said Sanjukta Basa, who runs NGO Sangram in the Mayurbhanj district.

The rules of patrolling are decided mutually, factoring in when women can take time off from their domestic duties. If three women go for the 6 am-9 am shift, the second group goes out between 9 am and 12 pm.

This continues till 9 pm or 11 pm. Guidelines to collect the forest produce are also laid down. For instance, a villager can take bamboo only after getting approval from the village committee.

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
Tender Notice No. 04-SBP-TRD-OT-2020-21, Dated : 22.03.2021  
**NAME OF WORK :** 4. OUTSOURCING OF OHE MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES IN JHARSUGUDA ROAD - DUNGRIPALI SECTION AND OTHER EMERGENCY / URGENCY BASED ONE WORKS IN SAMBALPUR DIVISION FOR ONE YEAR, AND CHECKING OF 25KV OHE BY FOOT PATROLLING IN THE SECTIONS TITLAGARH - LAKHOLI, TITLAGARH - SINGAPUR ROAD, TITLAGARH - SAMBALPUR, LANJIGARH ROAD - JUNAGARH ROAD, SAMBALPUR CITY - SARLA, SAMBALPUR - JARAPADA & JHARSUGUDA ROAD - SAMBALPUR OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION FOR THE PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS.  
**Approx Cost of the work (₹) :** 1,16,00,632.90, Period of Completion : 365 Days.  
**Date and time of closing of tender :** 1530 hrs of 21.04.2021.  
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 considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.  
**NOTE :** The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender.  
Complete information including e-tender documents is available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.  
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD) PR-649/L/20-21 Sambalpur

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**TENDER CALL NOTICE**  
**No. 153/RMCA Dtd. 26.03.2021**  
1. Name of the Work : Civil Work  
2. Number of Works : 03  
3. Estimated Cost : Rs.18.83 lakh to Rs.43.66 lakh  
4. Period of Completion : 04 to 06 Calendar Months  
5. Date & time of availability: From 3.00 P.M. of 26.03.2021 of Bid documents in to 5.30 P.M. of 06.04.2021 RMC Office  
6. Last date & time for receipt of Bids : By 5.30 P.M. of 06.04.2021  
7. Date of Opening of Bid : 11.00 A.M. of 07.04.2021  
8. Name & Address of the : Sub-Collector, Anandapur-cum-Chairman, RMC, Anandapur  
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal i.e. [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in).  
**Sd./- Sub-Collector, Anandapur-cum-Chairman, RMC, Anandapur**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**SHREE JAGANNATH EXPRESSWAYS PVT. LTD**  
**BRNL-SIMPLEX-GALFAR JV**  
**PUBLIC NOTICE ON REVISED USER FEE (TOLL) RATES AT MANGULI TOLL PLAZA APPLICABLE FROM 00:00 hrs on 01.04.2021**  
The public are hereby informed that pursuant to approval of revised user fee rates vide letter dated 25.03.2021 of NHAI, the user fee rates, on Fastag only, for use of section from Km 413.000 to Km 418.000 & Km 00.000 to Km 62.000 of NH 16 are going to be revised as under w.e.f 00:00 Hrs. on 01.04.2021 at Manguli Toll Plaza [Chainage:34.624 km, near village Harianta, District - Cuttack] in the State of Odisha.  

Category of Vehicle	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for Return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass valid for 50 journeys [Ref Para 3ii]
Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	125	185	4110
Light Commercial Vehicle, Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus	195	290	6470
Bus or Truck (Two Axles)	400	600	13350
Heavy Construction Machinery (HCM) or Earth Moving Equipment (EME) or Multi Axle Vehicle (3 to 6 Axles)	620	930	20610
Oversized Vehicles (Seven or more axles)	775	1165	25880

The rate for monthly pass applicable for local non-commercial vehicles residing within a distance of 20 Km from the toll plaza for the year 2021-2022 shall be Rs. 285.00/-

- The above rates are applicable for a completed length of 67.00 km which comprises of 64.75 km road length, 2.25 km of Bridge costing Rs. 10 Crore or more.
- The following concessions are available on Fastag only at above toll plaza.  
(i) Return Journey within 24 hours from time of payment for all categories of vehicles as per table above.  
(ii) 50 or more single journeys in a month from the date of payment, for all categories of vehicles as per table above.  
(iii) Pass at Rs. 285/- per calendar month for non-commercial vehicles residing within 20 Km. from the Toll Plaza.
- The scheme of giving concessions may be viewed at [www.nhai.org/concessionagreementcj.asp](http://www.nhai.org/concessionagreementcj.asp)
- The list of exempted vehicles is as given in the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rule, 2008 and the subsequent amendments thereof.
- The vehicle, which is loaded in excess of permissible load, shall pay as per the Gazette Notification Vide No. G.S.R 920 (E) dated 25th September, 2018.
- For viewing the fee notification dated 19th October 2011 published in the Gazette, letter of NHAI dated 25.03.2021 containing approval of revised rates and provisions in the Concession Agreement, the website <http://nhaitis.org> may be visited.
- Names and addresses are as under, for any enquiry and/or giving complaints/suggestions.

	Concessionaire	IE	PIU OF NHAI
Name of Representative	Mr. Anjan Patnaik	Mr. Amaresh Kumar	Mr. P. K. Singh
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Mobile No.	+91 9853010822	+91 80026 56052	+91 99785 25079



Be conscious first of thyself within, then think and act. All living thought is a world in preparation; all real act is a thought manifested. The material world exists because an idea began to play in divine self-consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO

# HC gets tough on Punjab, its tainted cops

The Amarinder Singh-led Congress government in Punjab is getting flak from the Punjab and Haryana High Court and the issue has ramifications across the country. The court has directed the state government to explain how and why it has chosen to appoint Punjab Police Service (PPS) officers to IPS-cadre posts of SSPs in the state. The court has held that these appointments are in violation of the IPS cadre rules and has also implored the Centre as a party to look into these "apparent violations".

The court noted the instance of PPS officer Rajinder Singh Sohal who was convicted in a criminal case but has been posted as the SSP of Gurdaspur, a post meant for the IPS cadre.

Further, the court has issued a show-cause notice to Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Anurag Aggarwal for "filing of false affidavit" in the matter. Aggarwal may face perjury proceedings if the Court is not satisfied with his response. The court has directed the state government to remove tainted or convicted police officers from duty until the policy is framed on action to be taken against these officers. Future proceedings in the court will be watched with great interest. Watch this space for updates.

## Bihar struggling to fill shortage of IAS officers

The Nitish Kumar-led NDA government in Bihar is increasingly re-employing retired officers. Its latest appointment is of retired IAS officer Deepak Kumar as the Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister. Kumar, a 1984-batch officer retired in February and was promptly re-hired.

Sources say the government has little choice when it comes to appointments due to the acute paucity of IAS officers in Bihar. Bihar apparently has only 202 IAS officers against a sanctioned strength of 359 officers. Not surprisingly, the deficit has impacted the quality of administration. It is not unusual for senior officers to be burdened with three or four departments each, apart from their principal task.

It is learnt that Nitish Kumar has requested the Centre to allot 54 IAS officers based on the civil service exam last year. It is reportedly also facilitating appointments to 22 posts from the 2018 batch, 15 posts from the 2019 batch and 16 posts from the 2020 batch under the promotion quota.

## Goa chief secretary in the eye of the storm

The Goa government's move to place a serving IAS officer in the State Election Commission (SEC) has backfired badly for not just Chief Minister Pramod Sawant but also the state chief secretary Parimal Rai. The Supreme Court has cancelled the recent appointment of state Law Secretary Chokha Ram Garg as the state election commissioner. In its stinging order, the apex court noted that the move was "a mockery" of constitutional mandate.

The court has further issued directions to all states and UTs to cancel similar appointments and to appoint only "independent persons to this high constitutional office", nipping in the bud any similar approaches that other states may have been contemplating. Sawant's 'innovative' approach is now unlikely to 'inspire' other states from attempting something along similar lines.

While political reactions to the decision have been muted, however, within babu circles in Panjim, it is Chief Secretary Rai who has become the most visible face to take the blame for this harsh indictment by the court.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilupthecherian@twitter.com](#). Let's multiply the effect.

## WISDOM CORNER

Every successful person in the world is a hustler one way or another. We all hustle to get where we need to be. Only a fool would sit around and wait on another man to feed him.

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.

If you're offered a seat on a rocket ship, don't ask what seat! Just get on.

## WORDSWORTH

### Butterscotch

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

## LOL

### A blonde joke

A blind man enters a bar and fins his way to a barstool. After ordering a drink, and sitting there for a while, the blind guy yells to the bartender, "Hey, you wanna hear a blonde joke?" The bar immediately becomes absolutely quiet.

In a husky, deep voice, the woman next to him says, "Before you tell that joke, you should know something. The bartender is blonde, the bouncer is blonde and I'm a 6' tall, 200 pound blonde with a black belt in karate. What's more, the fella sitting next to me is blonde and he's a weightlifter. The woman to your right is a blonde, and she's a pro wrestler. Think about it seriously, mister. You still wanna tell that blonde joke?"

The blind guy says, "Nah, not if I'm gonna have to explain it five times."

## FOCUS NEIGHBOURHOOD

# BANGLADESH AT 50



Kaushik Basu

**BANGLADESH'S GDP PER CAPITA NOW CLOSELY RIVALS INDIA'S AND SIGNIFICANTLY EXCEEDS THAT OF PAKISTAN. AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY, AT 74, IS HIGHER THAN IN INDIA (70) AND PAKISTAN (68)**

It feels strange to have known a country since its birth. For much of 1971, Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) was engaged in a war for independence. With US President Richard Nixon standing firmly behind Pakistan as President Yahya Khan's army tried to crush the independence movement by resorting to rape and genocide, millions of Bangladeshi refugees poured into India. I was then an undergraduate in Delhi and joined a team of students to work in the sprawling refugee camps that had sprung up in West Bengal and Odisha.

Full-fledged aerial war with Pakistan broke out on December 2. I vividly remember catching the night train in Kolkata to return to college during a curfew, under orders to keep all the lights off in the compartment.

This was the high point of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's career. She had opened India's doors to the refugees and intervened militarily to support Bangladesh, refusing to cave in to US pressure, which included sending the Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal. Khan's army surrendered to an Indian-Bangladeshi allied force on December 16, 1971. Bangladesh had already declared independence on March 26, but it was effectively born that day in December.

At independence, Bangladesh was one of South Asia's poorest countries — poorer than India, and much poorer than Pakistan. Described by then-US National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger as a "basket case," it floundered for several years, a vast archipelago of poverty and deprivation. Things got worse in 1974, when the Nixon administration suddenly cut off food aid to Bangladesh while the country was in the midst of a famine, on the grounds that it was earning some money by exporting jute bags to Cuba.

Today, as Bangladesh celebrates a half-century of independence, the country has become a case study in economic development that few would have predicted. When its GDP growth rate surpassed Pakistan's in 2006, many dismissed it as a one-off fluke. But Bangladesh has outpaced Pakistan every year since then, and — astonishingly —



**Today, as Bangladesh celebrates a half-century of independence, the country has become a case study in economic development that few would have predicted. When its GDP growth rate surpassed Pakistan's in 2006, many dismissed it as a one-off fluke**

is now one of the world's fastest-growing economies.

Bangladesh's GDP per capita now closely rivals India's and significantly exceeds that of Pakistan. Average life expectancy, at 74, is higher than in India (70) and Pakistan (68). The country is a leading global exporter of ready-made garments, and other sectors are taking off, too. Bangladesh's pharmaceutical industry, for example, is thriving. With 300 companies (several of which conduct research) the country now meets 97% of domestic demand, and is beginning to export globally.

True, Bangladesh still has much poverty and hardship, rising inequality, and an uncertain future trajectory: Climate change and rising sea levels continue to pose significant dangers, and political instability could yet re-emerge and disrupt economic progress.

Nevertheless, Bangladesh's remarkable economic transformation — the World Bank now classifies it as a lower-middle-income economy — deserves praise and can offer important lessons for today's low-income countries.

Bangladesh's rise is a story of both deliberate interventions and

chance. The country owes a large part of its success to progressive NGOs, most notably Fazle Hasan Abed's BRAC and Muhammad Yunus's Grameen Bank. One particular intervention that played a larger role than anyone expected was Grameen Bank's early decision that microfinance credits would go to the senior female member of the household. I have argued elsewhere that this gave women greater voice in the home, which in turn helped divert household expenditure toward child welfare. This is one of the main reasons why Bangladesh has made strong progress on development indicators such as life expectancy and literacy, and in combating malnutrition.

Bangladesh has one of the world's largest microfinance sectors, which has enabled households to break out of the debt trap and start their own small businesses. Using a computable general equilibrium model, Selim Raihan, SR Osman, and MA Baqui Khalily have shown that microfinance did more than just help the households that received money. By bolstering fiscal and monetary policies, it boosted the country's GDP by 9-12%.

But Bangladesh's success has also had a lot to do with luck. The Indian subcontinent has complex labor laws, notably the Industrial Disputes Act, which predates Indian and Pakistani independence in 1947, and has thwarted the emergence of large manufacturing firms able to realize economies of scale. Pakistan repealed the law in 1958, but for the wrong reasons, to enable big corporations to control workers. Moreover, it did so in a ham-handed way, thereby contributing to labor exploitation and crony capitalism.

Bangladesh, having once been part of Pakistan, was born without the law's baggage. But, unlike Pakistan, the country went on to develop its own labor regulations that were flexible without giving corporations unfettered power. This played an important role in Bangladesh becoming a successful global manufacturing hub.

Finally, a crucial political factor underpins Bangladesh's economic success. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has often been criticized, but she has made one essential contribution to the country's upward trajectory. Although Bangladesh's constitution guarantees religious freedom, it has been challenged by fundamentalist groups that renounce what the prominent Bangladeshi commentator Abul Barkat has described as the "liberal and humanistic origin of Islam in East Bengal." Sheikh Hasina, who is reputed to be innately secular, has kept these destructive forces at bay.

Many countries have succumbed to religious fundamentalism, with disastrous consequences for their economies. Bangladesh is notable for having withstood this danger. Its buoyant, vibrant economy, now with a 50-year track record, is testimony to this success.

*The writer, a former chief economist of the World Bank and chief economic adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University and Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution.*

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## SPECTRUM TIBET

# A Bill in solidarity with 6 million Tibetans



Lobsang Sangay

**THE TIBETAN SUPPORT AND POLICY ACT OF 2020 PASSED BY THE US CONGRESS IS A LANDMARK VICTORY FOR THE PEOPLE OF TIBET AND THEIR STRUGGLE AGAINST THE BRUTAL AND OPPRESSIVE CHINESE OCCUPATION**

The Tibetan Support and Policy Act of 2020 passed by the US Congress is a landmark victory for the people of Tibet and their struggle. This Bill acknowledges the struggle of people of Tibet against the brutal and oppressive Chinese occupation and is in solidarity with six million Tibetans who are suffering inside Tibet. This is also the recognition of the legacy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his earnest efforts towards the justice for Tibetan brothers. This will be a major boost to the Tibetan freedom struggle, and is thus of historic importance.

It is not an easy task to rise up against the fascist and dictatorial regimes. The manifestation of fascism as a democratic country won't be tolerated and has to be fought against. We Tibetans are fighting for our rightful cause and in this regard, we have knocked at the doors of conscience of every major global player. Getting the laws enacted is a gigantic task that too when it is against one of the most brutal powers of the world. We took to lobbying for enacting the Bill as a law; all the Tibetan asso-

ciations in the US were involved in it. The House passed the Bill with the overwhelming majority but only after a toiling effort from all. I made my effort toward the Senate and reached out to many Republican Senators, pursued to get the Bill passed, however success was yet far off and the period of hardship was not over: There was though a glimmer of hope in May. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's business meeting was called and Tibet was on the agenda. But then the business meeting was adjourned and nothing really happened from May onwards. I came to the US in October 2020 and the environment wasn't conducive.

In November 2020 I met the Democratic staff and Republican staff online and strategised on how we should go about the Bill. I was told that in the second week of December, the business meeting will be called and Tibet will be on the agenda again. The Bill had to pass on the Senate floor first before it could go to the House, which meant a lot of work was to be done and many things accomplished before the Bill could be presented. The Senate version had amend-

ments including the acknowledgment of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) as an institution that can reflect the official representative of the Tibetan diaspora all over the world and as the President of CTA. We wanted this major amendment, and as it goes every amendment has to be put to vote. We got the major breakthrough when the Tibet Bill was taken out of all other major Bills. This would mean a lot of focus on the agenda of Tibet.

The Tibet Policy Act Bill 2002 and Tibet Support and Policy Bill of 2020 are actually one. The later is actually the improvement, amendment and addition to the previous Bill. The 2002 Bill addresses the situation inside Tibet as occupied Tibet, gross human rights violations, and the appointment of a special coordinator to help in pursuing dialogue between the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese representatives. The Bill also calls for opening of US office in Lhasa that will help in providing funds, scholarships and other things, this will help the Tibetans to develop an understanding and get a formal education

in developing fields of science which would further strengthen the existence and survival of independent Tibet. In addition to it, the Tibet Support and Policy Bill of 2020 strongly calls for the religious freedom of the Tibetan people. The Chinese government should not interfere in the reincarnation process, if they, sanctions will be imposed on them.

Beijing's stand and the Chinese Foreign Ministry's stand on Tibetans government-in-exile is that of a separatist organisation insisted "no one should support it; no one should meet with their officials". This Bill counters the Chinese stand and acknowledges the CTA and the Tibetan freedom movement thereby sending a message all over the world. I am glad that six million Tibetans inside Tibet will get to hear the positive development and support for Tibet. So, it recognises the Tibet Issue as an international issue.

*The writer is President of the Central Tibetan Administration. Views are personal.*

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## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Apart from disinvestment

Sir, This refers to your report, 'Privatisation no solution' (Feb 23). For 2021-22 fiscal, the government has kept the disinvestment target at ₹1.75 lakh crore. Out of this, ₹1 lakh crore is to come from selling government stake in public sector banks and financial institutions and ₹75,000 crore would come as CPSE disinvestment receipts. To meet this aggressive target of raising funds, the government has lined up plans to monetise assets. But selling off public assets will lead to fiscal deficit and also increase wealth inequality as the government will put it in private hands at a lower than the market price. The government has an alternative to impose additional wealth tax. Rather than this, it may also increase GST rates on luxurious goods which will add more revenues by extending tax base. The government should not only reconsider selling profitable PSUs, but they should be strengthened and their management be empowered.

**Abhimanyu Sahoo**, BHUBANESWAR

### Conquer all

Sir, After PV Sindhu won by a whisker in that nerve wracking quarter-final match against Japan's Akaine Yamaguchi, there were high hopes that she would finally lift the elusive All England title this time as the semi-final opponent Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong looked easy meat for the plucky Sindhu going by her record against the youngster. But world number 11 Chochuwong ended the Indian's dream by sending her packing in two straight sets. Did the previous day's three-setter marathon drain Sindhu? Perhaps yes, but the world champion did not offer any excuse. Chochuwong proved to be a wily customer as she hoodwinked the world No. 7 with variations in the pace of rallies. The ace Indian shuttler has worked hard to reach where she is now. She had bounced back with a bang when people had started to doubt her levels of motivation and fitness. The superlative gold medal winning performance at Basel, Switzerland in the 2019 world badminton championship helped Sindhu silence her critics and, more importantly, break her jinx of satisfying herself for silver, in major tournaments, when the gold was there for the asking. She had overcome the indomitable Nozomi Okuhara — the player who beat Chochuwong in the All England final. The lanky Sindhu, however, must have been disappointed by her All England loss because she knows nothing like emerging triumphant at the Wembley stadium. The heartening feature of Sindhu's personality, however, is that she is ready to learn from past mistakes.

**Ganapathi Bhat**, AKOLA



# K'taka bans festivals in public places to curb Covid cases

AGENCIES

**Bangalore, March 26:** In view of the surge in cases in the second Covid-19 wave, Karnataka has banned celebrations of all ensuing festivals in public places to contain the pandemic across the southern state, a top official said Thursday.

"Celebrations of festivals like Holi, Easter, Shabe-Barat and Ugadi in coming weeks will not be allowed in public places to prevent large gatherings or mass congregations for containing the pandemic," said state chief secretary P Ravi Kumar in an order in Kannada here.

According to the state health bulletin, a record 2,523 new cases were reported Wednesday after 4 months, taking the state's Covid tally to 9,78,478, including 18,207 active cases.

As the epicentre of the virus, Bangalore registered 1,623 fresh cases in a day, taking its Covid tally to 4,22,859, including 12,472 active cases till date.

"The city civic administration and police are directed to not allow people to gather in large numbers

## 'No question of hiding Covid numbers'

**Bangalore:** Karnataka Health Minister K Sudhakar said Friday all factual data on Covid-19 is being made public. There was no question of hiding numbers and the government has no such intention nor is it possible to hide any details, he said.

"We are not hiding any statistics regarding COVID-19. All opposition leaders are welcome to give their valuable suggestions for controlling Covid. They can also figure out any flaws in the system," Sudhakar said. He said the Chief Minister may call an all party meeting to discuss the issue.

"We are free to discuss anything

in this regard," he was quoted as saying by his office in a release. He said the Manipal institute alone had 704 cases and it has been sealed. Stringent measures were being taken to curb spreading.

Maharashtra reported 35,000 cases yesterday while over 2,000 were recorded here. People should follow guidelines and youngsters should voluntarily take the elderly at home for vaccination, the minister said. Stating that the technical advisory committee on COVID-19 has suggested several precautionary measures, Sudhakar said the Chief Minister will take a decision in this regard.

The order warned of action under the Disaster Management Act and Karnataka Epidemic Diseases Act against those violating the Covid-induced guidelines.

"Large gatherings, mass congregations and public celebrations during the festivals may pose a threat of virus spread and cause setback to the gains made in weakening the chain of transmission of the infection," said the order.



Celebrations of festivals like Holi and Ugadi in coming weeks will not be allowed in public places across Karnataka

# Law and order in UP has improved, says NCRB data

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, March 26:** Despite the opposition campaign against the Yogi Adityanath government on the law-and-order issue, the latest data released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) states that the crime situation in the state has improved.

The NCRB data says that UP has witnessed a sharp reduction of 45.43 per cent in rape cases and has the lowest figures of crimes against women compared to the 21 major states of the country.

This has played an important role in changing the image and perception of Uttar Pradesh globally and re-establishing its iden-



tity. According to an official release, the state has seen a significant fall in the number of rape cases from 3419 cases in 2016 to 2317 cases in the year 2020.

The UP government has also recorded the highest conviction rate in the cases of crimes against women and cyber-crime in the country, says the report by NCRB.

Uttar Pradesh has taken several

steps to check crime against women which include anti-Romeo squads, UP-122 India App, night security cover scheme, women helpdesks and pink booths.

A total of 25,895 criminals have been sent behind bars till the year 2019. Despite being the most populous state, UP has also seen reduction in cases of murder.

With a density of 690 persons per square km, Uttar Pradesh has witnessed a sharp decline of 19.80 per cent from the year 2016 to 2020, in cases of murder.

Murder cases registered a reduction of 5.9 per cent in 2017. As many as 28,653 killings were recorded in 2017, down from 30,450 in 2016, the NCRB report said.

## CROWD AMID COVID



Devotees take part in a religious procession before Chhadimar Holi celebrations, at Gokul in Mathura, Friday

(PHOTO COURTESY: PTI)

## Centuries-old Vishnu idol unearthed: ASI

AGENCIES

**Hassan, March 26:** An ancient idol of Vishnu has been unearthed at Hale Belur in Hassan district of Karnataka, said an official of the Archaeology Survey of India (ASI).

The locals were digging a pond when they discovered the idol, Dr Shivakant Bajpai, Superintending Archaeologist of Bangalore circle, said.

The idol, according to him, belongs to the Hoysala era - the dynasty that had ruled the region from 10th century to 14th century and had built monuments such as the Chennakesava temple in Belur and Hoysaleswara Shiva Temple in Halebeedu in Hassan district. An ASI officer has been dispatched to look into the discovery and he may submit his report by Monday, Bajpai said.



According to him, the idol reinforces the popular notion in the area that Hale Belur was once the capital of Hoysala. The 5.5-foot-tall statue bore the signature of Hoysala style of architecture with intricate carvings.

It shows Lord Vishnu in Chaturbhuj, meaning four hands, holding shanka (conch), chakra (disc-like weapon), Geda (mace) and padma (lotus).

There were also two smaller idols of consorts at the feet of Lord Vishnu. "Barring some minor damage, the statue is intact," a local resident said.

# Food processing units to boost self-employment: Yogi govt

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, March 26:** The Yogi Adityanath government is trying to increase self-employment among the youth in rural Uttar Pradesh through food processing units. Under the current food processing industries policy, capital grants and rebate in interest are being provided to those who are setting up such units.

Apart from providing employment opportunities to people, these food processing units will also make the farmers of the villages economically self-reliant and fulfill the resolve of rural development.

According to the government spokesman, the state government will create new jobs in the rural areas through its 62,122 units.

A record investment of ₹10,500 crore has been made in the food processing industry which is considered to be the backbone of the project.

The government has made amendments in its food processing industry policy and will be ready to provide employment to around 3 lakh people by bringing investment of more than Rs 20,000 crore.

To increase employment and self-employment in rural areas, the units are being set up according to the area wise agricultural production. Units related to milk products will be set up in Aligarh, Bareilly, Bulandshahr, Kanpur Dehat, Jaunpur and Mathura, while Auraiya and Kasganj will have units for making ghee.

Products based on green chillies will be set up in Varanasi and Deoria, mango in Lucknow, Amroha and Sitapur, Kala Namak



FOCUS ON YOUTH

APART FROM PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO PEOPLE, THESE FOOD PROCESSING UNITS WILL ALSO MAKE THE FARMERS OF THE VILLAGES ECONOMICALLY SELF-RELIANT

THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE AMENDMENTS IN ITS FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY POLICY AND WILL BE READY TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT TO AROUND 3 LAKH PEOPLE

rice in Basti, Gorakhpur and Siddhartha Nagar; banana chips in Kushinagar and potato in Purvanchal.

The spokesman said that there is an emphasis on setting up food processing units based on maize cultivation in western and central Uttar Pradesh.

It is noteworthy that in order to promote food processing industries in Uttar Pradesh, the Yogi Adityanath government is giving an exemption in mandi rates to agricultural processing units and new rules have been

made for that purpose.

The government is completely focused on bringing up more units to the state so that with more employment opportunities, farmers can also get maximum benefit from these units.

The government has also proposed a plan to set up agriculture and food processing industries on the vacant land of big mandis in the state. Under this plan, the food processing units set up in the mandi area, which cost ₹5 crore or more, are being exempted from mandi duty for five years.

# ISRO to replicate NASA partnership model in India

TO COORDINATE JOINT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES BETWEEN ISRO CENTRES AND IIST, AKIN TO THE CALTECH-JPL MODEL, A DEDICATED FRAMEWORK HAS NOW BEEN PUT INTO PLACE, WITH CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME OFFICE LOCATED AT ISRO HEADQUARTERS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, March 26:** The ISRO is embarking on a mission of a different kind by taking the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST) to a much higher, futuristic research orbit. The Bangalore-headquartered space agency is striking a partnership with the IIST -- something similar to the JPL-Caltech model in the United States.

JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory) is federally funded by US space agency NASA and managed by Caltech (California Institute of Technology).

To coordinate joint research activities between ISRO centres and IIST, akin to the Caltech-JPL model, a dedicated framework has now been put into place, with CBPO (Capacity Building Programme Office) located at ISRO headquarters here as a focal point. An Advanced Space Research Group has been created to identify application-oriented

research projects of importance to ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) centres and matching with the interests of IIST faculty.

An Empowered Overseeing Committee has been constituted to review and approve the proposals.

CBPO Director, PV Venkitakrishnan said that under the initiative, "very advanced, totally new and futuristic projects" -- nothing that has been done by ISRO -- would be taken up.

"Twenty-eight to 30 projects have been identified", he said.

It's a mix of two-years, 3-5 years, and seven-year projects that would be pursued by IIST faculty.

Thiruvananthapuram-based IIST, an autonomous institution under the Department of Space (DoS) and a 'Deemed to be University', is similar to Caltech, according to him.

Asked about the time-frame by which he expects the partnership to reach the JPL-Caltech level,

Venkitakrishnan said: "We are expecting within eight to ten years. That is our ambition, our aim".

It was noted that NASA's JPL, founded by Caltech faculty, is the leading centre for the robotic exploration of the solar system. It also conducts Earth-orbit and astronomy missions.

JPL's workforce includes a diverse population of scientists, engineers, technologists, developers, communicators, designers, safety experts and business administrators.

Venkitakrishnan said through the Post-doctoral fellowship programme offered by IIST, ISRO wants to attract more and more talent towards space research.

He also said that the Union government has been requested to accord 'Institute of National Importance' status to IIST. Once approved, various ISRO centres would become constituent learning centres, allowing IIST to have a wider off-campus, he said.

## Allahabad HC shut till April 4 over Covid resurgence



AGENCIES

**Prayagraj, March 26:** There will be no physical court hearings in the high court at Prayagraj and Lucknow April 1 and 2 in view of the rapid surge in the number of Covid cases in these two districts. There shall be not even be physical filing or e-filing of cases for these two days.

The high court is already closed for Holi vacations from March 28 to 31. With April 3 and 4 being the weekend, the HC would now resume functioning on April 5.

As per a notification issued by Chief Justice Govind Mathur, the matters fixed for April 1 and 2 shall be taken up by the courts April 6 and 8, respectively, at Prayagraj.



We always wanted normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan. Everybody knows what that means. If there are trends in that direction, of course, I would welcome it

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

Rahul ji does not say anything from his wisdom. Borrowed wisdom does not give sense of reasoning

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

Telangana is a new state and at the time of State formation, Telangana was assured of many incentives such as industrial corridors, ITIR, a Steel plant, however none of those promises were fulfilled. The stronger the states emerge, the stronger our country will be

KT RAMA RAO | TELANGANA'S MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

SHORT TAKES

Night curfew in Maha from Sunday

**Mumbai:** Night curfew will be imposed in entire Maharashtra from March 28 in view of alarming rise in coronavirus cases, an official statement said Friday. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray ordered night curfew from Sunday onwards, it said. Thackeray also warned of stricter restrictions if the people did not observe COVID-19 safety protocol, it said.

FIR filed against Ramesh Jarkiholi

**Bangalore:** In a new twist to the ongoing probe into the sex scandal allegedly involving former Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, an FIR was registered against him Friday on a complaint by the woman,said to be in the purported video. Maintaining that he is innocent and ready for a legal battle against the "conspiracy", Jarkiholi said his "game will start now" and he was "capable enough" to face more such complaints. The FIR came hours after the woman released her third video statement this morning,announcing her decision to file a complaint against Jarkiholi through her lawyer Jagadish Kumar.

Goa cancels major festivities

**Panaji:** The Goa government Friday announced the cancellation of the official celebration of Shigmo, a popular indigenous peasant festival, due to rise in Covid-19 cases in the coastal state. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant told the Legislative Assembly during the ongoing Budget Session, that the SOPs should be followed strictly in public events like festivals and weddings.

SC junks plea seeking ban on sale of electoral bonds

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 26:** The Supreme Court Friday junked the allegations that the Electoral Bonds Scheme was shrouded in anonymity, leading to further anonymity in the financing of political parties by corporate houses, both in India and abroad.

The top court dismissed the pleas filed by two NGOs - Association for Democratic Reforms and Common Cause - seeking ban on sale of electoral bonds ahead of the Assembly elections in five states/UT.

A bench comprising Chief Justice S.A. Bobde, and justices A.S. Bopanna and V.Ramasubramanian

Transport hit as farmers block roads, rail

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 26:** Rail and road traffic was hit Friday in Punjab and Haryana as farmers blocked various highways and squatted on railway tracks at many places in the two states as part of their Bharat Bandh call in protest against the Centre's three farm laws.

Shops too remained closed at several places in Punjab and some places in Haryana in support of the farmers' Bharat Bandh call. Both the public and private transport remained off roads in Punjab. There was, however, no impact of bandh in the Union Territory of Chandigarh, the common capital of the two states.

The Samkyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), which is spearheading the farmers' stir, had called for the bandh from 6 am to 6 pm to mark four months of the farmers camping at various points of Delhi borders - Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri. SKM leader Ruldu Singh Mansa claimed they got the full support of various sections of the society, which made the Bandh successful. He said the stir will continue till their



An elderly woman raises slogans during a protest against the three new farm laws at NH 7 in Bathinda

PTI PHOTO

demands including that of the repeal of the three farm laws are met.

Since morning, farmers in the two states gathered at several highways and roads, including those in Amritsar, Bathinda, Ludhiana, Patiala, Mohali, Hoshiarpur, Phagwara, Ferozepur, Pathankot, Rohtak, Jhajjar, Jind, Panchkula,Kaithal, Yamunanagar, Sirsa, Hisar and Bhiwani districts.

Farmer union leaders said ambulances and other emergency vehicles, as well as marriage processions, had been permitted to pass. Because of the 'Holla Mohalla' festival at Sri Anandpur Sahib, vehicles carrying devotees were allowed to commute, they said, adding the protesters have even arranged 'langar' for devotees at various protest sites. Haryana BKU leader Gurnam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 26:** The country cannot be the "capital" for illegal immigrants, the Centre told the Supreme Court which on Friday reserved order on a fresh plea seeking directions for immediate release of detained Rohingya refugees in Jammu and restrain the government from implementing any order deporting them to Myanmar.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde refused to hear at this stage the intervention application filed by United Nations special rapporteur in the matter. "We will not hear you today. There is serious objection to it," the bench told the counsel appearing for the UN special rapporteur. "We are closing it for order," said the bench, which also comprised Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, after hearing submissions on the fresh plea. During the arguments, advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioner, said Rohingya children were subjected to killing, maiming and sexual exploitation

733 MYANMAR REFUGEES LIVING IN MIZORAM

After the recent military coup in Myanmar, a total of 733 persons, including policemen, have fled to Mizoram in India and are staying illegally across the state. These people entered Mizoram after facing persecution from the military in Myanmar



Delhi's 'spiderman' cops

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 26:** Three lives were saved in the heart of the national capital Friday when a Delhi Police head constable and constable decided to go all super-hero risking their lives climbing a building to rescue people trapped in a raging blaze.

DCP South Atul Thakur in a statement said that a call of fire was received at 6.55 a.m. from a building at Greater Kailash area and it was entrusted to Head Constable Daryav.

All available police station staff, including the SHO were among the first team to reach the site. "It was a fierce blaze on the second floor that had engulfed the third floor also.

"Three people -- Amit Sudhakar, 56, his wife Shalini, 48, and mother Sudha, 87, were trapped in the third floor balcony.

"The balcony was secured fully with iron grills, meaning there could be no rescued before the fire was extinguished."

However, the DCP said not just the fire what was also nec-



essary at that point before the survivors could be extracted out was calming down of their nerves -- and that is exactly what the two policemen - Head Constable Munshilal and Constable Sandeep did.

Once the rescue operation was in full swing supervised by the Delhi Fire Brigade personnel, Thakur said, "The brave police personnel scaled the walls from outside reached the iron rails and spoke to them, nearly hand-holding the three family members as the fire personnel launched the rescue from all sides."

ROHINGYA CASE



Representative image

(ICJ) and argued it has said that Myanmar has not presented any concrete measures aimed specifically at recognising the rights of the Rohingyas to exist as a protected group.

During the hearing, the counsel appearing for the United Nations special rapporteur referred to the application filed by him. The application filed earlier by the United Nations special rapporteur has said

that the Centre's decision for mass deportation of Rohingya as being "impermissible under international human rights law" and India should ensure that the Rohingyas enjoy "equality before the law and equal access to judicial remedies and individualised forms of due process".

On March 11, an interim plea was filed in a pending PIL seeking immediate release of detained Rohingya refugees in Jammu.

SL releases 40 Indian fishermen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rameswaram (TN), March 26:** Sri Lankan authorities Friday released 40 of the 54 Indian fishermen arrested by that country's navy earlier, officials here said.

Five of the four boats detained by the Lankan navy have also been released. Fisheries department officials here said. The remaining 14 fishermen, hailing from Karaikal, an enclave of Puducherry, continue to remain in Sri Lankan custody and are likely to be released later, they added.

A boat is also in Lankan custody. The Lankan Navy had arrested 54 Indian fishermen and detained five of their boats for allegedly fishing in that country's waters Wednesday night. The arrested fishermen belonged to Rameswaram and Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu and Karaikal.



Fishermen association representatives had expressed concern over such repeated instances of Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu being arrested by the Lankan navy and urged the Centre and state government to ensure their early release. Meanwhile, fishermen association leader Sesuraja said Friday they would not shun fishing operations indefinitely and also not boycott the April 6 Assembly polls, following the release of the fishermen today.

They had earlier threatened doing so if the fishermen were not released at the earliest.

TIME TO CELEBRATE



Women play with colours ahead of the Holi festival, in Jabalpur, Friday

PTI PHOTO



Bhushan also cited various letters written by the Reserve Bank of India as well as the Election Commission to contend that they had serious reservations about the Scheme. "It is true, as seen from the correspondence, that RBI has had

some reservations. But it is not correct to say that the RBI and the Election Commission of India opposed the Electoral Bond Scheme itself," observed the bench.

The top court also added that it is also not correct to say that the RBI was opposed to the Scheme in principle. RBI's objection was to the issue of bonds in scrip form rather than in demat form, it said.

Attorney General KK Venugopal submitted that the Scheme was intended to prevent unaccounted money having a sway in the elections and that under the scheme the donors are obliged to operate only through banking channels.

"This, according to the learned

Attorney General, curbed the menace of black money playing a huge part in the elections. Rakesh Dwivedi, learned senior counsel for the Election Commission of India, supported the Scheme," noted the bench.

The bench said the purchase as well as encashment of the bonds, happening only through banking channels, is always reflected in documents that eventually come to the public domain.

"All that is required is a little more effort to cull out such information from both sides (purchaser of bond and political party) and do some match the following," added the bench.



of the day quote

The economic condition of the country and the state (Ker) are weak and have become worse due to demonetisation and flawed GST



RAHUL GANDHI | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

I would like to clearly tell the people of the state that we will not impose a lockdown. There will be no closure of industries. There is no need to feel anxious



K CHANDRASEKHAR RAO |

TELANGANA CHIEF MINISTER

We have to reject dynastic parties and see that real democracy flourishes in Tamil Nadu also



J P NADDA | BJP NATIONAL PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Man dies after acid attack by gf

**Agra (Uttar Pradesh):** In a shocking incident, a young woman attacked her boyfriend with acid after she learnt that he was getting married to another woman. The incident took place Thursday evening in the Khandari area under Hari Parwat police station in Agra. The man, Devendra Rajput, 28, died of severe burn injuries in the hospital. According to reports, the couple fell in love while working in a private lab and were living together in a rented house.

45-yr-old man found hanging

**Midnapore (WB):** A 45-year-old man was found hanging near his home in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district Friday, triggering tension hours ahead of polling in the area, police said. The body of Lal Mohan Soren, whom the BJP claimed as their supporter, was found in a forest near his home in Bagmari in the Salboni police station area, they said. The BJP claimed that Soren was killed and hung from a jamun tree allegedly by Trinamool Congress "goons", a charge rubbished by the ruling party.

Three killed in road mishap

**Malda (WB):** Three civic volunteers have been killed and six others seriously injured after a police vehicle carrying them overturned in West Bengal's Malda district, police said Friday. The accident took place in Kaliachak police station area late Thursday night when a police team was returning in three vehicles after nabbing a wanted criminal, a police officer said. One of the vehicles, carrying the civic volunteers, overturned after the driver lost control over it and hit a guard rail, he said.

Man gets lifer for raping daughter

**Mumbai:** A special court here has sentenced a 65-year-old man to life imprisonment for raping his daughter and sexually abusing his minor granddaughter. Special judge Rekha Pandhare Thursday found the accused guilty of offences committed under section 376(2) (rape) of the IPC and provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The accused, a resident of suburban Bhandup, raped his 22-year-old daughter who had come for a visit in May, 2017, and threatened to kill her children.

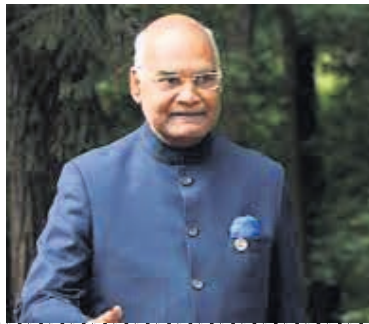


This country is not being run by the Constitution but the agenda of a particular political party

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

PRESIDENT UNWELL

President Ram Nath Kovind is undergoing check-up at the Army's Research and Referral hospital after complaining of chest discomfort Friday morning, the hospital said



ISI's new pressure trap for security forces in J&K

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 26:** Mounting pressure on security forces in Jammu and Kashmir through "deliberate" civilian killings is learnt to be a fresh trap of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) which is continuously involved in pushing terrorists through PoK-based launch pads along the Line of Control (LoC).

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has learnt from intelligence inputs that the motive behind the civilian killings in Jammu and Kashmir is only to build pressure on security forces which has now been gaining sympathy of locals in the Valley after abrogation of Article 370 -- which gave special status to the erstwhile state.

Seeking to counter the strategy, security forces in the Union



Territory are being regularly briefed by their commanding officers to not get in trap, and only follow the

"zero tolerance" motto against terrorist activities.

A source, privy to the inputs re-

ceived from intelligence wing, told IANS that the ISI has given clear direction to all its fresh batches of militants pushed in the Valley in the last one year to target civilians so that security forces could be put under pressure.

The ISI's direction followed proper management of law and order in Jammu and Kashmir in which "there has been no incident of civilian deaths after abrogation of Article 370".

"However, due to terrorist violence supported from across the border, terrorists deliberately target civilians to put pressure on security forces.

"Despite the attempts of terrorists, the number of civilian deaths in terrorist violence and cross firing has decreased post-abrogation of Article 370," the source said.

A written document submitted in

the Rajya Sabha by Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy also authenticated the fact that "terrorists deliberately target civilians to put pressure on security forces" in Jammu and Kashmir.

As per Home Ministry data collated between January 1, 2019 to February 28 this year, 78 civilian deaths were reported in Jammu and Kashmir during terrorist violence. Of them, 39 deaths were reported in 2019, 37 in 2020 and two this year.

Civilian killings in terrorist attacks have now been the major concern of the Central and the Jammu and Kashmir governments and it is learnt that a detailed plan has been prepared by the security forces to curb the menace and give befitting reply to the malicious motives of the ISI-led terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

MAHA'S 'LADY SINGHAM' FOUND DEAD



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Amravati (Maharashtra), March 26:** In a shocking incident, a 28-year-old female Range Forest Officer posted in the Melghat Tiger Reserve (MRT) in Amravati, committed suicide after alleging sexual harassment and torture at the hands of an Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer, in a purported suicide note, officials said here Friday.

The young woman RFO, (Mrs.) Dipali Chavan-Mohite, 28, shot herself at her official quarters in the Harisal village near the tiger reserve with her service revolver and succumbed on the spot, late on Thursday. Her blood-splattered body with the gun was recovered later by relatives and colleagues.

A no-nonsense and tough officer, famous as 'Lady Singham' for her dare-devilry against the forest mafias, Dipali's husband Rajesh Mohite is working as a Treasury Officer in Chikhaldhara, while her mother had gone to her native Satara when she resorted to the extreme step.

Earlier Friday, Dipali's family refused to take over her body for the last rites till the Amravati Police nabbed the accused named in her suicide note, sending shockwaves in the forestry circles across the state. Acting swiftly, the Amravati police went after the Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) Vinod Shivkumar, who figured in Dipali's 4-page suicide note, with an earnest plea that strict action should be taken against him so that nobody else should suffer her ordeal.

9 Covid patients die in Mumbai hospital fire



Firefighters attempt to douse the blaze

PTI PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 26:** Nine coronavirus patients died in a fire at a COVID-19 hospital in a Mumbai mall Friday, civic officials said, adding more misery to a state that has emerged as the hardest hit in the pandemic.

All nine patients died due to suffocation as a result of the fire while two other patients at the hospital had already died due to coronavirus before the fire broke out, the BMC said in a statement.

The hospital, however, claimed that there was no casualty due to the fire. "All the patients were shifted alive but there were a few patients on ventilator and were extremely critical. We believe the casualties are not due to the fire, but either in transit or at other hospitals (where they were shifted)," it said. The hospital had earlier said two deceased were coronavirus patients who were already dead from the disease when the fire broke out. The BMC also confirmed this claim. The fire brigade and police are probing the cause of the fire, the BMC statement said. The fire broke out at the Sunrise Hospital in the Dreams Mall building in Bhandup area around midnight, a BMC official said. The hospital is situated on the top floor of the four-

storeyed building. Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray who visited the spot in the afternoon said strict action will be taken against those found responsible for the fire. Thackeray apologised to the families of the victims and announced Rs 5 lakh to the kin of each deceased.

Thackeray said permission was granted to the hospital last year to run a COVID-19 centre temporarily. The blaze comes amid an upsurge in coronavirus cases in Mumbai. On Friday, the city logged 5,513 new infections, the highest daily count since the pandemic began. Altogether 78 patients were being treated at the 107-bed hospital when the fire broke out, the BMC said, adding 67 patients were shifted to other hospitals after the blaze. The cause of the fire has not been ascertained yet, the BMC said.

The fire fighting operation went on till 8 pm Friday, an official added. Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar who visited the site expressed surprise that a hospital was operating inside the mall.

Ten newborns were killed in a fire at a hospital in Maharashtra's Bhandara district in January this year. Former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said no lessons have been learnt from that tragedy.

SC dismisses SSR sister's plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 26:** The Supreme Court Friday refused to entertain the appeal of Sushant Singh Rajput's sister challenging the Bombay High Court order which refused to quash an FIR lodged against her on the complaint of actress Rhea Chakraborty, the late actor's girlfriend.

A bench of Chief Justice of India S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian dismissed the appeal filed by Priyanka Singh, saying it was not inclined to hear the matter.

Singh challenged the Bombay High Court's February 15 verdict, by which her FIR quashing petition was dismissed, saying the court overreached its power by examining allegations that were placed before the police through media reports.

Chakraborty, in her complaint before the police on the basis of which the FIR was lodged on September 7 last year, had alleged that Rajput's sisters had conspired with Tarun Kumar, a doctor, to obtain false prescription for administering banned medicines to the late actor.



In February, both the countries decided to re-implement the ceasefire agreement of 2003 to maintain peace at the borders

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 26:** India and Pakistan brigade commanders met Friday and discussed peace along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir: The brigade commander-level meeting took place to take forward the understanding to implement ceasefire decided last month. In February, both the countries decided to re-implement the ceasefire agreement of 2003 to maintain peace at the borders.

"Post the DGsMO Understanding 2021, a Brigade Commander Level Flag Meeting was held between Indian and Pakistan Army at Poonch Rawalkot Crossing Point 26

March, 2021 to discuss implementation mechanism as per the understanding," the Indian Army said. However, there has been no commitment from Islamabad to stop sponsoring terror and launchpads continue to exist, government sources said. Indian Army Chief General MM Naravane said not a single bullet has been fired at the LoC in the month of March.

India and Pakistan have reached understanding to implement ceasefire agreement reached during the talks between Director-General of Military Operations of both the

'62% OF EMPLOYEES HAPPIER WHEN WORKING REMOTELY'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 26:** As parts of the world open up and hybrid work becomes a reality amid the pandemic, about 62 per cent of employees said working remotely makes them happier, according to a new survey Friday.

About 56 per cent of employees said they are more productive when working remotely and 61 per cent said they can get more done in an eight-hour workday when remote, said the Forrester study commissioned by LogMeIn, a leading provider of Cloud-based solutions GoToMeeting.

However, only five per cent of decision makers surveyed believe remote workers are more productive, and 70 per cent said employees in the office are more trustworthy.

The study showed that nearly three-quarters of workers said the pandemic made them want to work more remotely in the fu-



Representative image

ture, with 83 per cent of employees saying that they are more likely to stay at their company if they are allowed to work flexibly. About 60 per cent of respondents said they were even willing to accept less pay in a trade for flexibility.

The study was conducted using two online surveys - one of 582 remote work decision-makers, such as those leading human resource

or IT departments, and a second survey of 427 employees - each at global organisations of 10-2,500 employees, shows they may not be. The research suggests that companies need to invest in establishing flexible work policies and programmes, and address a sizeable disconnect in trust between decision makers and employees.

'We might soon grow plants in space'

THE NEW BACTERIAL STRAINS DISCOVERED FROM DIFFERENT LOCATIONS ABOARD THE ISS FLIGHTS MAY HELP IN CREATING THE "FUEL" TO HELP PLANTS WITHSTAND SUCH STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

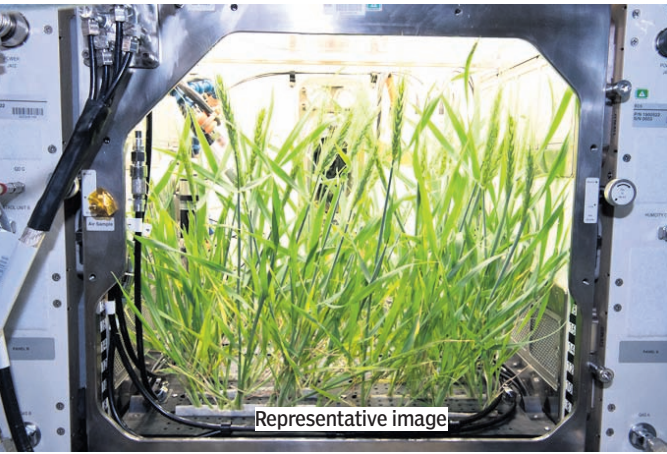
**Hyderabad, March 26:** Discovery of a novel bacterial strains aboard the International Space Station (ISS) suggests the possibility of astronauts growing their own vegetables while in space, says a new study by researchers based at University of Hyderabad (UoH) and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), among other institutions.

The new bacterial strains discovered from different locations aboard the ISS flights may help in creating the "fuel" to help plants withstand such stressful situa-

tions. The findings of the study were published in a recent issue of the journal Frontiers in Microbiology

The research teams were led by Dr. Kasthuri Venkateswaran of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, C.C. Wang of WorldQuant Initiative for Quantitative Prediction, Professor Appa Rao Podile from the University of Hyderabad (UoH) with expertise on plant growth promoting bacteria and plant microbiome and Dr. Ramprasad, a CSIR-pool Scientist.

The bacterial strains belonging to the family Methylobacteriaceae were isolated from different loca-



Representative image

tions aboard the ISS across two consecutive flights.

While one strain was identified as Methylobacterium rhodesianum, the other three were previously undiscovered and belonged to a novel species.

Genetic analyses revealed them to be closely related to Methylobacterium indicum.

The researchers named the novel species as Methylobacterium ajmalii, in honour of the renowned Indian biodiversity scientist, Dr. Ajmal Khan, former Professor at Annamalai University in Tamil Nadu. The genome analysis of Methylobacterium ajmalii strains

revealed the presence of genes that are involved in promoting plant growth.

Commenting on the discovery and based on the genomic data, the lead authors said that the strains might possess "biotechnologically useful genetic determinants that may help growing plants in extreme places where resources are minimal".

However, further experimental validations are being done to prove that it could, indeed, be a potential game-changer for space farming. The authors are looking forward to more exciting discoveries in collaboration with NASA's JPL.





I salute the brave soldiers of the Indian Army who stood with the brothers and sisters of Bangladesh in Muktijuddo  
**NARENDRA MODI** | INDIAN PRIME MINISTER

**JACK DORSEY CALLED OUT FOR TROLLING CONGRESS**

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey tweeted his frustration with US lawmakers' questions on the social media platform during a hearing about misinformation Thursday



**SUEZ BLOCKAGE: SIGNS OF ECONOMIC TOLL EMERGE**

AGENCIES

**SINGAPORE:** Reeling from the blockage in the Suez Canal, shipping rates for oil product tankers have nearly doubled this week, and several vessels were diverted away from the vital waterway as a giant container ship remained wedged between both banks.

The 400-metre-long Ever Given has been stuck in the canal since Tuesday and efforts are under way to free the vessel although the process may take weeks amid bad weather.

Shoei Kisen, its Japanese owner, denied a news report that it aimed to dislodge it by Saturday night, saying refloating efforts were ongoing. Separately, the Suez Canal Authority said it welcomed a US offer to help. The suspension of traffic through the narrow channel linking Europe and Asia has deepened problems for shipping lines that were already facing disruption and delays in supplying retail goods to consumers.

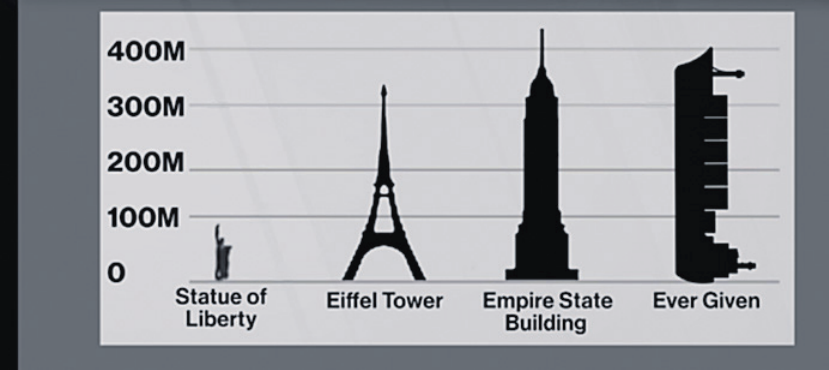
Analysts expect a larger upward impact on smaller tankers and oil products, like naphtha and fuel oil exports from Europe to Asia, if the canal remained shut for weeks.

"Around 20% of Asia's naphtha is supplied by the Mediterranean and Black Sea via the Suez Canal," said Sri Paravaikarasu, director for Asia oil at FGE, adding that re-routing ships around the Cape of Good Hope could pile about two more weeks to the voy-

**ENTIRE CREW OF EVER GIVEN IS INDIAN; ALL SAFE**

The entire crew of Ever Given, the container ship that is stuck in the Suez Canal since Tuesday blocking traffic in one of the world's busiest waterways, is Indian and is safe, said the company managing the container. In a report, news agency The Associated Press said Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement, the company that manages the Ever Given, said the ship's 25-member crew is safe and accounted for. Apart from the Indian crew, the ship had two pilots from Egypt's canal authority aboard the vessel to guide it when the grounding happened around 7:45 am Tuesday. A traffic jam on the Suez Canal, like the one caused by the massive Ever Given container ship, is rather a big problem. Shoei Kisen Kaisha, the company's owner, said, "All the crew came from India", adding that it is safe and the company is "trying to resolve the situation as soon as possible, but it is proving to be extremely difficult".

**ONE LONG SHIP**



**Men forced to rape family members in Ethiopia's Tigray region: UN**

*Dozens of witnesses in Tigray have said that soldiers from neighbouring Eritrea routinely killed civilians, gangraped and tortured women during the conflict*

REUTERS

**New York, March 26:** More than 500 rape cases have been reported to five clinics in Ethiopia's Tigray region, the United Nations said on Thursday, warning that the actual numbers might be far higher.

"Women say they have been raped by armed actors, they also told stories of gang rape, rape in front of family members and men being forced to rape their own family members under the threat of violence," Wafaa Said, deputy UN aid coordinator in Ethiopia, said in a briefing to UN member states in New York.

She said at least 516 rape cases had been reported by five medical facilities in Mekelle, Adigrat, Wukro, Shire and Axum.

"Given the fact that most health facilities are non-functioning and also the stigma associated with rape, it is projected that actual numbers are much higher," she added.

Ethiopia's UN ambassador, Taye Atskeselassie Amde, told Reuters his government took the allegations of sexual violence "very seriously" and had deployed a fact-finding mission. "Ethiopia has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual crimes and anyone found responsible for the despicable acts will be held accountable to the fullest ex-



tent of the law," he said. Dozens of witnesses in Tigray have told Reuters that soldiers from neighbouring Eritrea routinely killed civilians, gang-raped and tortured women and looted households and crops during the conflict. Eritrea's Information Minister Yemane Gebremeskel, responding in general terms to the UN briefing, said Friday that sexual violence and rape "are an abomination to Eritrean society" and should be harshly punished if they occurred.

Eritrea has repeatedly denied its troops were in Tigray, although Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Tuesday acknowledged Eritrean troops were present in the region. A dozen top UN officials called Monday for an end to indiscriminate and targeted attacks against civilians in Tigray, partic-

ularly calling out reports of rape and "other horrific forms of sexual violence."

Fighting in Tigray broke out in November between government troops and the region's former ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

The violence in Tigray has killed thousands of people and forced hundreds of thousands from their homes in the mountainous region of about 5 million. The United Nations has raised concerns about atrocities, while US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has described acts carried out as ethnic cleansing. Ethiopia rejected Blinken's allegation.

Abiy Tuesday acknowledged for the first time that atrocities such as rape had been committed and said any soldiers committing crimes would be punished.

THE MASSIVE CARGO SHIP EVER GIVEN HAS COMPLETELY BLOCKED THE SUEZ CANAL, A VITAL TRADE PASSAGEWAY FOR AS MUCH AS 12% OF THE WORLD'S SEABORNE TRADE

A PROLONGED BLOCKAGE COULD LEAD TO "SIGNIFICANT DISRUPTIONS TO GLOBAL TRADE, SKYROCKETING SHIPPING RATES, FURTHER INCREASE OF ENERGY COMMODITIES, AND AN UPTICK IN GLOBAL INFLATION," JP MORGAN WARNED

MEANWHILE, ANALYSTS HAVE HIGHLIGHTED INCREASED RISK OF ATTACKS ON OIL FACILITIES AMID GREATER ENERGY SUPPLY CHAIN VULNERABILITY AND REGIONAL TENSIONS



This handout satellite image by CNES 2021 released Thursday by Airbus DS shows the Ever Given container ship lodged sideways and impeding all traffic across the waterway of Egypt's Suez Canal

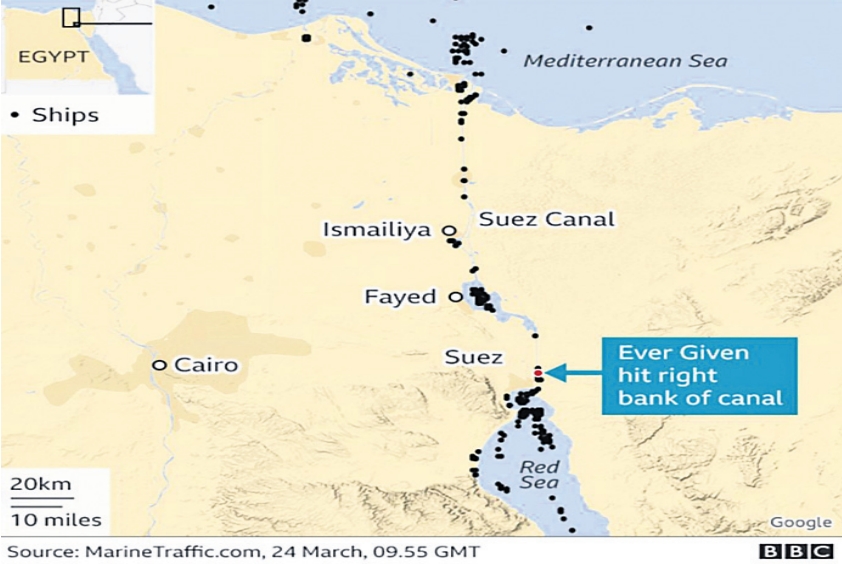
age and more than 800 tonnes of fuel consumption for Suezmax tankers.

Fuel is a ship's single biggest cost, representing up to 60% of operating expenses. By contrast, an already weak Asian gasoil, or diesel, market is also being made worse by the blockage since Asia exports the fuel to markets in the west, like Europe, of which more than 60% flowed via the choked Canal in 2020, according to FGE.

More than 30 oil tankers have been waiting at either side of the canal to pass through since Tuesday, shipping data on Refinitiv showed. About two dozen ships could be sighted from the shores of Port Said Friday morning, as the backlog built up along the Egyptian coast.

At least four Long-Range 2 tankers that might have been headed towards Suez from the Atlantic basin are now likely to be evaluating a passage around the Cape of Good Hope, Braemar ACM said. Each LR-2 tanker can carry around 75,000 tonnes of oil.

The impact of the shipping delays on energy markets is likely to be mitigated by demand for crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) being in the low season, analysts said. Several LNG tankers have been diverted, one Singapore-based shipbroker said, adding that sentiment for LNG tanker



rates is more positive following the incident. If the blockage lasts for two weeks, about one million tonnes of LNG could be delayed for delivery to Europe, Rystad Energy's head of gas and power markets Carlos Torres Diaz said in a note Thursday.

This could double to more than two million tonnes of delayed cargo deliveries in a

worst-case scenario of the Canal being blocked for four weeks, he added.

Meanwhile, oil traders said they are adopting a wait-and-see approach to see if a higher tide due on Sunday would help.

"We have some cargoes stuck... Going around the Cape of Good Hope will be worse," a trader with a western firm said.

**SUEZ BLOCKAGE IS HOLDING UP \$9.6BN OF GOODS A DAY**

The stranded Ever Given mega-container ship in the Suez Canal is holding up an estimated \$9.6 billion of goods each day, according to shipping data. This works out at \$400m an hour in trade along the waterway which is a vital passageway between east and west. Data from shipping expert Lloyd's List values the canal's westbound traffic at roughly \$5.1 billion a day, and eastbound daily traffic at around \$4.5bn. Its blockage is causing huge tailbacks of other ships trying to pass through the Suez Canal. The canal, which separates Africa from the Middle East and Asia, is one of the busiest trade routes in the world, with about 12% of total global trade moving through it. According to Lloyd's List tracking data there are more than 160 vessels waiting at either end of the canal. These include 41 bulk carriers and 24 crude tankers. Along with oil, the sea traffic is largely consumer products such as clothing, furniture, manufacturing components and car parts. BIMCO, an international shipping association, says the delays will only continue to grow and affect supplies. "For each day of delay my thought is it will take two days to undo the delays," said Alan Baer, president of logistics provider OL USA.

**32 killed in Egypt train collision**

REUTERS

**Cairo, March 26:** At least 32 people were killed and 91 injured when two trains collided in central Egypt on Friday, health ministry officials said.

"Unknown individuals" triggered the emergency brakes on one of the trains causing it to stop, the rail authority said. The second train, which was travelling in the same direction, crashed into the first from behind, it added.

Pictures showed train carriages derailed, several of them badly damaged, above a channel of water;

**Pictures showed train carriages derailed, several of them badly damaged, above a channel of water, as crowds looked on**

as crowds looked on.

The public prosecutor's office said it had ordered an investigation into the crash which took place close to the Nile-side town of Tahta, about 365 km south of Cairo. Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi mourned the victims of the crash

**How Ever Given got stuck in Suez Canal**



**What is the Suez Canal, and who controls it?**

The Suez Canal is a man-made waterway linking the Red and Mediterranean Seas. It belongs to Egypt.

When it opened in 1869, the canal increased the ease of global trade by offering a route that circumvented the need to round the horn of Africa. It's since remained crucial to international trade, including for the oil sector.

In 1956, Israel, Britain, and France invaded Egypt in an attempt to seize control of the strategic waterway after the country nationalized it. Their forces later withdrew. In 2015, Egypt launched a major and costly renovation of the canal. By some estimates, 12% of global trade now passes through it.

**How did the vessel get stuck?**

Cargo ships cross the narrow passageway one-by-one to avoid mishaps.

On Tuesday, a sandstorm reportedly hit the more than 1,300-foot Ever Given, decreasing visibility and battered the ship with heavy winds. That disruption caused the ship to become wedged sideways across the canal. In the heavy winds, for example, the ship's cargo could have formed a sail-like effect, propelling it off course. The vessel is just at the maximum length permitted for a ship to use the canal, so it also has very little wiggle-room. It is, for comparison, larger than the Eiffel Tower.

**What's being done to get it out?**

For several days, tug boats have been working away to dig around and pull out the most wedged part of the ship. There's been some movement, but it's a slow and massive project that could drag on for days, or even longer. Teams of spe-

cialists from places like the Netherlands are flying in to help.

As part of the process, the ship will likely have to be made lighter. That could mean removing some of its fuel - or some of its cargo, which would be even more time consuming, Bloomberg News reported. For the latter approach, specific equipment would have to be flown in.

**How has the incident affected international trade?**

The longer the Suez Canal remains blocked, or partially blocked, the more painful the financial repercussions are expected to be. Oil prices rose Wednesday due to fears over deepening disruptions in global trade, before falling again.

There's a backlog of some 237 ships left waiting, which could be carrying anything from live animals to natural gas, according to Bloomberg. On Tuesday, after the ordeal began, there were only around 100 ships waiting in line. Wednesday the number rose to around 185.

In the meantime, Egypt has opened up an alternative, though smaller, area of the canal. Lloyd's List, a shipping journal, estimated that each day the canal is closed some \$9 billion worth of goods are affected, the Associated Press reported. Delays at the canal will impact unloading schedules at other ports and docks, which can delay goods en route to producers, suppliers and consumers.

**Has this happened before?**

Most recently, in 2017, a Japanese vessel carrying containers became blocked in the canal after it had a mechanical issue. Tug boats and Egyptian authorities, however, were able to kickstart the ship within a couple of hours.

**4 killed in Bangla during protests**

**against Modi's visit**

**COX'S BAZAR:** At least four people were killed in the Bangladeshi city of Chittagong Friday after police fired at protesters during a demonstration against a visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, police officials said. "We had to fire teargas and rubber bullets to disperse them as they entered a police station and carried out extensive vandalism," Rafiqul Islam, the police official said, referring to protesters. Modi arrived in the capital Dhaka for a two-day visit to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence.

**Amazon denies workers 'pee in bottles'**

AGENCIES

**San Francisco, March 26:** Amid a mounting evidence of allegedly ill-treating its low-paid workers, Amazon has denied exploitative working conditions at its facilities, including forcing exhausted workers to 'pee in bottles'.

Replying to a tweet from US Representative Mark Pocan (D-WI), the ecommerce behemoth said the company's union-busting tactics allegations are baseless.

"Paying workers \$15/hr doesn't make you a 'progressive workplace' when you union-bust & make workers urinate in water bottles," Pocan said in a tweet Thursday.

Amazon replied: "You don't really believe the peeing in bottles thing,

do you? If that were true, nobody would work for us. The truth is that we have over a million incredible employees around the world who are proud of what they do, and have great wages and health care from day one".

"We hope you can enact policies that get other employers to offer what we already do," the company further stated.

Once the Twitter war started, several journalists and people who have documented such incidents at Amazon facilities began flooding the Web. Journalist James Bloodworth, whose 2018 book titled 'Hired: Six Months Undercover in Low-Wage Britain', documented his experience of low-paid work for companies including Amazon.



"I was the person who found the pee in the bottle. Trust me, it happened," Bloodworth responded to Amazon tweet.

Lauren Kaori Gurley, a labor reporter with Motherboard tweeted: "As a labour reporter who covers Amazon extensively...I can say Amazon delivery drivers not having a time or place to pee is one of the most universal concerns I hear about."

The Intercept published a report

on Thursday citing formal policy documents and emails from Amazon, detailing "more cases of drivers urinating into bottles" and even resorting to "defecating into bags".

"The practice, these documents show, was known to management, which identified it as a recurring infraction but did nothing to ease the pressure that caused it. In some cases, employees even defecated in bags," the report mentioned, detailing company's poor working conditions.

"We've noticed an uptick recently of all kinds of unsanitary garbage being left inside bags: used masks, gloves, bottles of urine," reads an email from an Amazon logistics manager provided to The Intercept.



# business

## of the day quote

Egged on by buoyant sales and enthusiastic consumer sentiment in the October-December period, developers launched several new projects in this quarter, with some spill-over from the pandemic-dampened 2020 pipeline

**ANUJ PURI** | CHAIRMAN, ANAROCK PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

India will keep its interest in mind in deciding on its strategic and economic decisions. We are a consuming nation and we will have to import energy for a long time. So whosoever gives up cheap, and easy, we will buy from them

**DHARMENDRA PRADHAN** | OIL MINISTER

The question is how many of the traders get business from Amazon. It is a well known fact that more than 80% of the total sales on Amazon are made by only about 35 firms, who are close to Amazon, so what is the benefit to the traders of India

**PRAVEEN KHADELWAL** | SECRETARY GENERAL, CAIT

## SHORT TAKES

### Shah to take over as M&M MD, CEO

**New Delhi:** Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) Friday said its current Deputy Managing Director and Group Chief Financial Officer Anish Shah will take over as the MD and CEO from April 2, 2021 with the mandate to have a complete oversight of and responsibility for all the Mahindra Group businesses.

### Square Panda to pump in \$50mn

**New Delhi:** Tennis legend Andre Agassi-led education technology firm Square Panda will invest \$50 million in India over a period of three years to strengthen early child education for 5 million primary school children.

### 'Energy demand to remain high'

**New Delhi:** The all-India energy demand is expected to be higher in March quarter of 2020-21 compared to same period a year ago despite the partial lockdown in some states due to a surge in Covid-19 cases, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said. Ind-Ra has published the March 2021 edition of its credit news digest on the power sector. The report highlights the trends in the power sector, with a focus on capacity addition, generation, merchant power, deficit and the recent rating actions by Ind-Ra.

# Cold weather depresses US consumer spending

THE ECONOMY IS FORECAST TO GROW BY AS MUCH AS A 7.5% RATE THIS QUARTER AFTER EXPANDING AT A 4.3% PACE IN THE FOURTH QUARTER

REUTERS

**Washington, March 26:** US consumer spending fell by the most in 10 months in February as a cold snap gripped many parts of the country and the boost from a second round of stimulus checks to middle- and lower-income households faded, though the decline is likely temporary.

Consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, dropped 1.0% last month after rebounding 3.4%

# India top recipient of Japanese financial aid since 2003

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 26:** India has been the top recipient of the Japanese government's financial aid under the Official Development Assistance (ODA) since 2003, surpassing China, an industry body said Friday.

India has been the top recipient of yen loans from Japan since 2003 surpassing China, which has been holding that position for many years, the International Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) said in a statement after a webinar on significance of Japan's ODA to India.

Between 2010 and 2020, Japan has committed a total of JPY 3.1 trillion for a wide variety of infrastructure projects in India, including connectivity projects in India's northeastern region, ICRIER said.

# BPCL sells 54.16% stake in NRL to OIL; 4.4% to EIL



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 26:** Privatisation-bound Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) Friday said it has sold its entire 61.5% stake in Numaligarh Refinery in Assam to a consortium of Oil India Ltd and Engineers India and Government of Assam for ₹9,876 crore.

OIL bought a 54.16% stake to raise its shareholding in the refinery to 80.16%, the company said in stock exchange filings. Its partner, Engineers India Ltd (EIL) bought a 4.4% stake and the balance 3.2% was acquired by Government of Assam.

The sale of Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) clears the way for privatisation of India's second-largest fuel retailer. In keeping with the Assam Peace Accord, the government had decided to keep NRL in



structure projects in India, including connectivity projects in India's northeastern region, ICRIER said. The Japan programme at ICRIER was established in 2007 and has actively undertaken in-depth research studies and fostered regular dialogue initiatives on harnessing the

# Tatas hail Apex court's ruling in Mistry case

consideration of ₹9,375.96 crore," BPCL said in the filing. The remaining 2.29 crore equity shares have been transferred to Government of Assam for ₹499.99 crore. "Post these acquisition OIL's cumulative equity shareholding in NRL (including pre-acquisition 26% shareholding) is 80.16%," the firm said in a separate filing.

EIL said it paid ₹699.99 crore for 3.21 crore shares in NRL while OIL bought 39.84 crore shares for ₹8,675.96 crore. "Chairman and Managing Director OIL, who is presently a nominee director of OIL on the board of the Target Company (NRL) would be designated as Chairman," it said.

Existing directors nominated by BPCL on the board of NRL would resign and rights of BPCL to appoint directors would be extinguished, it said. BPCL sold shares in NRL at a price of ₹217.75 per share, totalling ₹9,875.96 crore.

NRL operates a 3 million tonnes per annum oil refinery in Assam.

OIL currently holds 26% stake in NRL while Government of Assam has around 12.35%. Post NRL sale, BPCL would be left with three refineries at Mumbai, Kochi (Kerala) and Bina. The government is selling its entire 52.98% stake in BPCL in the nation's biggest privatisation till date.

Vedanta Group and private equity firms Apollo Global and I Squared Capital's Indian unit Think Gas have put in an expression of interest for buying the government's stake.

# PAYTM GETS FURTHER BOOST AS NPCI CAPS UPI TRANSACTIONS

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 26:** To bring parity in UPI digital payments and ending the monthly race to the top spot, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has issued guidelines capping the market share of UPI transactions to 30%.

This will help in providing diverse opportunity and prevent market dominance of the UPI ecosystem as it further scales up.



forecast consumer spending would decrease 0.7% in February and income would decline 7.3%.

Unseasonably harsh weather in the second half of February, including severe winter storms in Texas and other parts of the densely populated South region, depressed homebuilding, production at factories, orders and shipments of manufactured goods last month.

The ongoing rebound in economic activity will drive a strong recovery for OEMs next fiscal. Improving fleet utilisation and better availability of finance will also improve demand for CVs, while demand for PVs will be driven by improving urban consumer sentiment

**HETAL GANDHI** | DIRECTOR, CRISIL RESEARCH

## RELIABLE ALLY

India has been the top recipient of yen loans from Japan since 2003 surpassing China, which has been holding that position for many years

Between 2010 and 2020, Japan has committed a total of JPY 3.1 trillion for a wide variety of infrastructure projects in India, including connectivity projects in India's northeastern region

the foundation laying ceremony of which took place in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month. ICRIER Chairman Pramod Bhasin said that going forward, the endeavour is to set up a Japan centre at ICRIER to facilitate collaborative research and dialogue between Indian and Japanese experts.

It will help in developing deeper ties between the two nations and to improve investment infrastructure, he said. Indian Ambassador to Japan Sanjay Kumar Verma said that as the largest recipient of Japan's ODA, India has become an important strategic international partner to Japan. "India's continued rise in the global stage is supported by Japan and Japan's continued rise as a global leader is supported with its ODA initiatives in India.

"Japan's ODA can be used to promote sectors such as infrastructure, outer space, climate change issues, maritime (connectivity, security, freedom of navigation)," Verma said.

## RBI EXTENDS RESTRICTIONS

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has extended the restrictions on the withdrawal and deposits in the scam-hit Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank till June 30

cmk

## RELIABLE ALLY

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"Japan's ODA can be used to promote sectors such as infrastructure, outer space, climate change issues, maritime (connectivity, security, freedom of navigation)," Verma said.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 26:** Tata Group Chairman Emeritus Ratan Tata and Tata Sons Friday hailed the order by Supreme Court in the legal battle against ousted chairman Cyrus Mistry as a validation of the conglomerate's values and governance standards.

The apex court order set aside an NCLAT order restoring Mistry as the executive chairman of the conglomerate, while allowing appeals filed by the Tata Group.

Reacting to the development, Ratan Tata in a social media post said, "It is not an issue of winning or losing".

Appreciating the judgement passed by the Supreme Court, he said, "After relentless attacks on my integrity and the ethical conduct of the group, the judgement upholding all the appeals of Tata Sons is a validation of the values and the ethics that have always been the guiding principle of the group."

He further said, "It reinforces

After relentless attacks on my integrity and the ethical conduct of the group, the judgement upholding all the appeals of Tata Sons is a validation of the values and the ethics that have always been the guiding principle of the group

**RATAN TATA** | CHAIRMAN EMERITUS, TATA GROUP

the fairness and justice displayed by our judiciary."

Tata Sons, the holding firm of the Tata group companies, said the order of Supreme Court vindicates its position and upholds the governance standards adopted by the conglomerate over the years.

"The judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court vindicates the position of Tata Sons and upholds the governance standards adopted by the Tata Group over the years. Tata Sons is grateful to the Hon'ble Supreme Court," Tata Sons said in a statement.

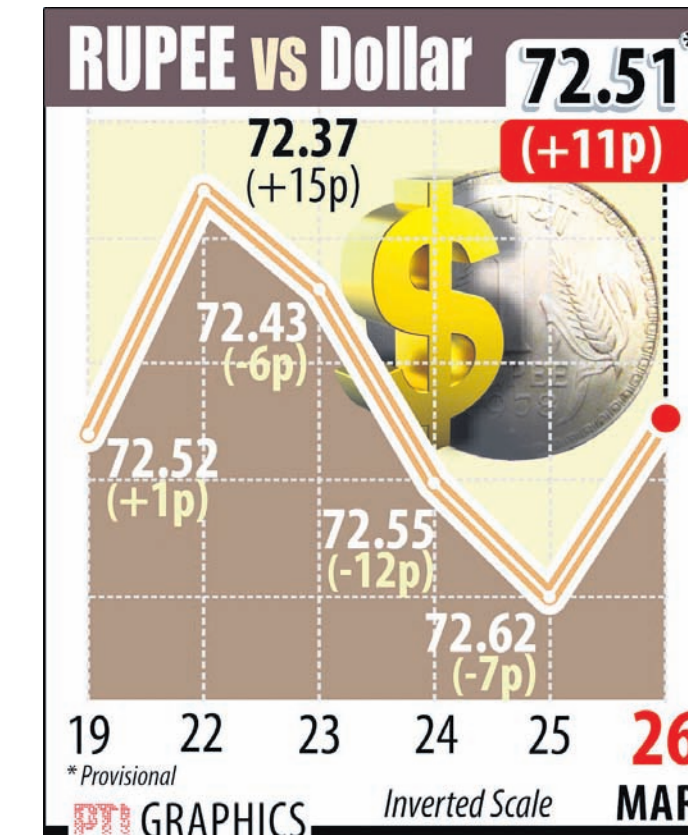
# Air India may get new buyers in May-June

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 26:** The much-delayed privatisation of Air India is likely to complete in the first half of this year. Speaking at an economic meet, the Union Minister for Civil Aviation, Hardeep Singh Puri said that financial bids for the national carrier will be submitted sometime in May. He said that the timeline for the submission of financial bids was decided in a meeting Thursday.

"Yesterday there was a meeting. They have decided that the financial bids have to come in within 64 days...the financial bids will be in sometime in May...after that it's a question of taking a decision and handing over the airline," he said.

He added that earlier attempts at privatisation were not successful because the attempts were "half



# JSW Steel completes acquisition of Bhushan Power and Steel



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 26:** JSW Steel has closed the acquisition of Bhushan Power & Steel Ltd, in a move that makes it the largest steelmaker in the country. The Sajjan Jindal-led company has paid ₹19,350 crore to the financial creditors of BPSL, it said March 26.

"This is an important milestone as it is the largest acquisition in the history of JSW Steel," Chairman Sajjan Jindal told employees in a letter soon after the deal was officially announced. "This acquisition not only aligns with our core business and purpose but also establishes our presence accelerates our growth vision in eastern India," he added.

The company in its announcement also shared the deal structure that looks complicated. But it was necessitated, Jt MD and Group CFO Seshagiri Rao told Moneycontrol, as the lenders committed insisted that the company couldn't bring in any other investor as it had submitted the Expression of Interest alone.

JSW Steel said a sum of ₹8,614 crore "has been arranged" in Piombino Steel Ltd (PSL), a unit of JSW Steel, through a mix of equity, and optionally convertible instruments, issued to the company and JSW Shipping & Logistics Private Ltd, and debt.

# WHATSAPP LEAK CASE: SAT SETS ASIDE SEBI'S ORDER



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 26:** In the high profile WhatsApp case, the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) has set aside Sebi's insider trading charges against few individuals, who circulated alleged unpublished price sensitive information about the financial results of half-a-dozen companies.

The case pertains to the circulation of Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI) in various private WhatsApp groups about certain companies, including Bajaj Auto, Bata India, Ambuja Cements, Asian Paints, Wipro and Mindtree, ahead of their official announcements to the stock exchanges.

The regulator had penalised Shruti Vishal Vora for releasing UPSI-related to financial results of the six companies through WhatsApp messages prior to official announcements by these companies.



# Gold rush continues for India



Earlier, KL Rahul's (108, 114b, 7x4, 2x6) perfectly executed hun-

**SHUT OUT THE NOISE:** KL Rahul celebrates his century with unique gesture as Rishabh Pant smiles

Left-handed Pant smacked successive sixes off Stokes in the 41st over, completing his 2nd ODI fifty, in 28 balls. After Rahul fell, Pant continued his six-hitting spree with Hardik Pandya (35, 16b, 1x4, 4x6) joining the fun activity as India amassed 126 runs in the final 10 overs. This is the second instance when India have hit successive 300 plus scores in five ODIs, the other one being in 2017.

**BRIEF SCORES: INDIA 336/6** (KL Rahul 108, Rishabh Pant 77, Virat Kohli 66, Hardik Pandya 35; Reece Topley 2/50) lost to **ENGLAND 337/4** (Jonny Bairstow 124, Ben Stokes 99, Jason Roy 55; Prasidh Krishna 2/58, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 1/63) by 6 wickets.



**SHUT OUT THE NOISE:** KL Rahul celebrates his century with unique gesture as Rishabh Pant smiles

Vijayveer Sidhu, 18, settled for the silver medal behind Estonia's Peeter Olesk in the men's 25m rapid fire pistol final, a result not good enough to secure a quota place for the Tokyo Olympics as it was only reserved for the gold-medallist.

But there was disappointment in store for the likes of Anish Bhanwala and Gurpreet Singh, who could not shine in the rapid fire final to bow out of Olympic contention on the basis of rankings points.

**ROME:** Italy started their World Cup qualifying campaign with a comfortable 2-0 win over Northern Ireland as the Azzurri set out to rectify their failures from four years ago. Domenico Berardi and Ciro Immobile scored in the first half in Parma Thursday. Switzerland won 3-1 in Bulgaria in the other Group C match. In Sofia, Switzerland scored all their goals in the first 13 minutes through Breel Embolo, Haris Seferovic and Steven Zuber. Kiril Despodov pulled one back for Bulgaria right at the start of the second half.

SAI Academy eves won both the Hockey India Junior (in orange) & Sub Junior (in yellow & blue) Women's Academy National Championships at the Kalinga Stadium which concluded Friday. Naval Tata Academy, Odisha (bottom) finished runners-up in the sub junior event, Thursday.

**HUBANESWAR:** Woman para athlete Jayanti Behera secured two gold medals at the National Para Athletics Championships in Bangalore, Friday. She completed her hat-trick of yellow metals when she finished on the top in the 100m with a timing of 13.11 seconds. In the morning, The Odisha para athlete also conquered the 200m in the T-47 category clocking 26.49 seconds. Earlier Thursday, she began her campaign with a gold in the 400m. It was for the fifth successive year where she has secured gold medals in 100m, 200m and 400m events.

**HUBANESWAR:** With a goal to captivate audiences and sports enthusiasts, India's first professional KhoKho league - Ultimate KhoKho - will kickstart later this year. Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI) has signed an exclusive multi-year TV & Digital broadcast deal with the competition. The teams will consist of men and U-18 from all states across India registered under KKFI. Player drafts are scheduled for mid-2021 and franchise-owners will be offered a bank of over 150 Indian players based on their performance and score in national and recently concluded high performance training camp in February 2021.

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