

NORA CHALLENGES FANS

Actor Nora Fatehi scorches social media with her new Instagram post and challenges fans saying they "can't take it"



US, IRAN N-DEAL

Iran Friday said it was ready to welcome the return of the United States to the nuclear deal

INTERNATIONAL



SACHIN HOSPITALISED

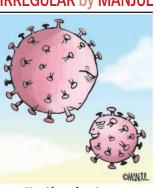
Sachin Tendulkar has been hospitalised as a precautionary measure, six days after he

tested COVID-19 positive SPORTS P12

12 PAGES |₹4.00

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 3 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | SATURDAY, APRIL 3 | 2021



Now I know how to grow exponentially. I was in Mr Vadra's body recently

SHORT **TAKES**

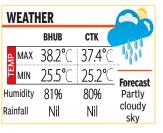
■ Vice President in state on 2-day visit



Bhubaneswar: Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu arrived in here Friday is on a two-day visit to the state. A special aircraft carrying the Vice-President reached the **Riiu Patnaik International Airport** (BPIA) at 11.00am. He was welcomed at the airport by Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Governor Ganeshi Lal. The Vice-President proceeded to the Raj Bhawan from the airport. Naidu will inaugurate the 600th birth anniversary ceremony of Adi Kabi Sarala Das and attend 40th annual day of Sarala Sahitya Sansad at Sarala Bhawan in Cuttack. After attending the two events. Naidu will return to the canital and Saturday attend the convocation ceremony of Utkal University.

3 terrorists killed in Pulwama encounter

Srinagar: Three unidentified terrorists were killed in an ongoing encounter between the terrorists and security forces at Kakpora in South Kashmir's Pulwama district on Friday morning, officials said. "Three unidentified terrorists killed in encounter at Pulwama. Incriminating materials, including arms and ammunition recovered. Search going on," police said. Earlier the gunfight took place after a joint team of the police and the Army cordoned off the area and launched a search operation on the basis of a specific information about the presence of terrorists.



Covid-19 second wave may peak by mid-April: Scientists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: Scientists have predicted using a mathematical model that the ongoing second-wave of COVID-19 pandemic across the country could peak by mid-April, following which the infections may see a steep decline by the end of May.

During the first wave of COVID-19 infections across India, the mathematical approach, named SUTRA, predicted that the initial surge of infections in August would peak by September and lower in February 2021.

Scientists, including Manindra Agrawal from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, applied the model to predict the trajectory of the current surge in infections and found that the number of daily new infections is likely to peak in mid-April for this ongoing pandemic wave.

"For the last several days, we have found that there is a reasonable chance that the cases in India could peak some-

INDIA OVERTAKES US IN DAILY COVID CASES

NEW DELHI: India has overtaken the US to become the country with second-highest daily COVID-19 cases in the world. Brazil leads the chart with 91,097 cases recorded in the last 24 hours. India recorded 81,466 new coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours. About 77,718 new cases were reported in the US April 1. India has been witnessing a spike in cases since the last three weeks. India recorded its first coronavirus case January 30 last year and since then, a total of 1,23,03,131 people have been infected. In the US, the first case was found January 22 and has now surged to 30,538,427, respectively. If the total deaths are considered, India is at the fourth position after the US. Brazil and Mexico.



A health worker collects a nasal sample from a passenger for COVID-19 test, amid coronavirus pandemic, in New Delhi, Friday

■ During the first wave of COVID-19 infections across India, the mathematical approach, named SUTRA, predicted that the initial surge of infections in August would peak by September and lower in February 2021

time between 15-20 April. It is a sharp slope, but on the way down, it would likely be equally sharp, coming down very fast and by end of May may see a dramatic reduction," Agrawal said.

"There is some uncertainty in predicting the peak value of daily new infections because of the sharp rise. Currently, it is coming to 1 lakh infections per day, but this can go up or down. But the timing remains the same between April 15-20," he added.

The scientists predict that in the current wave, the first state to peak could be Puniab in a few days, followed

using a mathematical model, that the ongoing second wave of COVID-19 pandemic could peak by mid-April, following which the infections may see a steep decline by the end of May

■ Now, scientists have predicted,

by Maharashtra. However, the IIT Kanpur professor added that the model's prediction of the new peak is sensitive to the daily new infections data. "Even a little bit of change each day

causes the peak numbers to change by several thousand numbers. But the location of the peak has remained on mid-April," he added.

Independent calculations made by scientists, including Gautam Menon from Ashoka University in Harvana, have also predicted that the peak of the ongoing wave of infections could be between mid-April and mid-May.

COLLECTORS ASKED TO BOOST HOSPITAL INFRA

RHIIRANFSWAR. The state Health Department Friday asked all district Collectors and Commissioners of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to boost the infrastructure in government hospitals to cope with the threat increase in the number of COVID patients in the state. The instructions given by the department comes in the wake of con sistent rise of COVID cases in the state. The department has asked the Collectors to put in place all the necessary infrastructure such as beds, oxygen cylinders and others, besides ensuring smooth supply of medicines to COVID patients. "Taking note of the rapid surge of COVID-19 cases in the country and the state, you are requested to take measures immediately to mitigate the pandemic." the communique read.

However, Menon cautioned that such projections of COVID-19 cases should really be trusted only in the short term. "Any excessively precise prediction, of a peak within just a 5-day window, would ignore the many uncertainties associated with the inputs to any such calculation," Menon, who was not involved in the SUTRA modelling, told this news agency. Agrawal noted that the model uses three main parameters to predict the course of the pandemic.

"The first is called Beta, or contact rate, which measures how many people an infected person infects per day. It is related to the R-naught value, which is the number of people an infected person spreads the virus to over the course of their infection," Agrawal explained.

The other two parameters, he explained are 'Reach', which is a measure of exposure level of the population to the pandemic, and 'Epsilon' which is the ratio of detected and undetected cases.



SW Cement

mishap kills 50



AGENCIES

Hualien County (Taiwan), **April 2:** A train partially derailed in eastern Taiwan Friday after colliding with an unmanned vehicle that had rolled down a hill, killing 50 people. With the train still partly in a tunnel, survivors climbed out of windows and walked along the train's roof to reach safety after the country's deadliest railway disaster.

The crash occurred near the Taroko Gorge scenic area on the first day of a long holiday weekend when many people were hopping trains on Taiwan's extensive rail system. The train had been carrying more than 500 people.

The National Fire Service confirmed the death toll, which included the train's young, newly married driver. and said all aboard had now been accounted for. More

ern voice, raspy," she said, "and he

He sensed she felt sad and alone

"It was so sweet," Ross said, dab-

bing a tissue to her eyes. "At the

time I had lost a lot of faith in God."

lobby that night and except an oc-

casional break were together until

In his cellphone, Floyd listed

They took walks in the parks

Ross, a mother of two, as 'Mama.'

and around the lakes of Ross's na-

tive Minneapolis, which was still new

to the Texas-raised Floyd, and dined

out often: "He was a big man," she

said, describing his daily weightlift-

ing, "and it look a lot of energy to

his death, she said.

keep him going."

They had their first kiss in the

was, like, 'Sis'? You OK, sis'?

and offered to pray with her.

than 100 people were injured, it said. Railways news officer Weng Hui-ping called the crash Taiwan's deadliest rail disaster.

Weng said a construction truck operated by the railway administration slid onto the track from a work site on the hillside above. No one was in the truck at the time. He said the speed of the train was not known.

The train had only partially emerged from a tunnel and many escaping passengers were forced to scramble out of doors and windows and scale the sides of the train to walk along the roof to safety.

The stretch of track where the orange-striped train came to a halt hugs the coastline. Yellow and red police tape marked the area of the crash. Images from the scene showed part of the wall of one car had smashed into a seat.

New helpline

to check

number issued

wildlife crime

Assam poll team carries EVM in BJP candidate's vehicle

AGENCIES

Guwahati, April 2: The Election Commission Friday ordered fresh voting in one polling station of Assam's Ratabari seat following a controversy over officials inexplicably transporting an electronic voting machine (EVM) in a BJP candidate's car Thursday. The officials involved have been suspended, sources have said. The incident had led to violence in Karimganj district where the seat is located. The car belonged to the wife of Krishnendu Paul, a BJP contestant in nearby Patharkandi. Top Opposition leaders Friday cited this to allege malpractices by the

The incident in Karimganj widely shared on social media. It followed the break-down of the Election Commission-assigned vehicle of polling team posted Ratabari. It was on its way back to the strong room after voting, official sources said. The presiding officer contacted the sector officer for a replacement vehicle and was assured of one.

The polling staff, however, inexplicably took a lift in the private car. Krishnendu Paul's electoral affidavit confirms that his wife, Madhumita Paul, owned the vehicle.

As the car approached the locality where the strong room is situated, supporters of the Opposition identified the vehicle and mobbed it, along with the driver. The district administration had to resort to police action to disperse the crowd and secure the vehicle, the EVM, and the polling personnel, officials said.

AWARENESS ON AUTISM



A motorbike rally was organised by Zain Foundation from Sandy Tower to Baramunda in Bhubaneswar to spread awareness on the occasion of the World Autism Day, Friday (Story on P2)

A first kiss, a battle with addiction: Floyd's girlfriend testifies

IN HER TESTIMONY, ROSS SPOKE ABOUT ADDICTION: AS WITH MILLIONS OF OTHER AMERICANS, FLOYD AND SHE STRUGGLED TO QUIT OPIOIDS

Minneapolis, April 2: George Floyd's girlfriend took the witness stand Thursday and described their relationship, from a first kiss to date nights at restaurants, but also spoke about how an addiction to painkillers took hold of their life together.

Courteney Ross, 45, was the first witness who personally knew Floyd to testify at the trial of Derek Chauvin, the former Minneapolis policeman charged with murdering the man she loved by kneeling on his neck during an arrest last May.

In her testimony, Ross described how her romance with Floyd began in 2017 when he offered to pray with her. She also spoke about addiction: As with millions of other

Americans, Floyd and Ross struggled to quit opioids.

"It's a classic story of how many people get addicted to opioids," Ross said. "We both suffered from chronic pain: mine was in my neck, his was in his back.

CHAUVIN MURDER TRIAL

The death of Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, set off protests across the United States and around the world over racial injustice and police brutality against Black people.

Prosecutors wanted the jury to hear Ross' frank account of opioid use to undermine a central plank of Chauvin's defense in a trial seen as a litmus test of accountability in

US policing Chauvin's lawyers argue that



Floyd's death, which the county medical examiner ruled a homicide at the hands of police, was really an overdose from the fentanyl found in his blood at an autopsy.

Prosecutors have said Eric Nelson. Chauvin's lead attorney, has sought

to raise the drug use in an effort to muddy Floyd's character and that the theory would be contradicted by medical evidence.

Nelson seemed to acknowledge the sensitivity when he stood up to cross-examine Ross: "I'm sorry to hear about your struggles with opioid addiction," he began. "Thank you for sharing that with the jury.

Before that, Ross, who had pinned a heart-shaped brooch to her black jacket for the occasion, smiled fondly at the memory when asked by prosecutors in the fourth day of witness testimony how she first met Floyd. "It's one of my favorite stories to tell," she said.

'SIS'? YOU OK?

Ross, 45, said she first met Floyd in August 2017 at a Salvation Army homeless shelter, where he worked as a security guard. She was waiting in the lobby to visit the father of her son after closing up the coffee shop where she worked. Floyd approached her.

"Floyd has this great, deep, south-

Bhubaneswar, April 2: The alarming rise in crime related to wildlife in the state has become a major cause of concern for both the state police and Forest department officials. To rein in the growing menace, the Special Task Force (STF) of state Crime Branch Friday released a mobile phone number (9439263646) urging the citizens to share information related to any crime against wildlife in their locality with the police. The STF has assured financial rewards to the informants and promised not to disclose their names.

'In case of seizure or arrest based on the specific and pinpointed information, the concerned informer would be suitably rewarded," the STF announced in a press note.

Earlier, the STF sleuths succeeded in arresting two wildlife smugglers and seized a leopard skin from their possession in Bolagarh area of Khurda district in intervening night of Thursday and Friday. The accused persons identified as Sudhira Behera and Subhash Chandra Behera are the

residents of Nayagarh district. A case (11/2) has been registered at the STF police station here under various Sections of IPC and Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. The skin seized from accused has been sent to the Wild Life Institute of India at Dehradun for chemical examination.

STF, the specialised wing of state police dealing with organised crime, has seized 12 leopardskins, six elephant tusks and two deer hide during the last one year.





JAMES ALMOST FIRED 'AVATAR' **SEOUEL WRITERS**

Filmmaker James Cameron has shared that the pre-production of his upcoming Avatar sequels was not as smooth as it seemed. The director told author Marianne Williamson that he almost fired his Avatar sequel writers' room, which is pitching new ideas for the upcoming movies.

HAILEY BIEBER SAYS TROLLS 'MESS' WITH HER MIND

American model Hailey Bieber, who is married to pop star Justin Bieber, says she has limited the use of Instagram owing to heavy trolling. Hailey was speaking to psychologist Jessica Clemons in a new vlog when she made the





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ARIES

Career decisions and money matters will keep you busy today. And after all the work, you will want to spend some leisure time and take it easy. A leisure trip may materialise which will put you in high spirits

TAURUS

You will win the heart of your family members today, forecasts Ganesha. Try and delay auction bids or sealed tenders. Joh asnirants may look forward to belated success in interviews. Ganesha advises you to take abundant precautions in all critical matters.

GEMINI

Your business rivals may compete with you in sales and deals today, warns Ganesha. Care and concern must be the two watchwords in all your dealings. Hostility may come in the way of love. Those spurned in previous romantic liaisons may get a chance to pen a new love story, says

Today, you may have to do a lot of multi-tasking at work, predicts Ganesha. And you are likely to do it with the dexterity of a juggler. You will finish your pending

LEO

You will exercise your will today and will be in the mood to soar like a free bird today. You will not be in the mood to listen to anyone. Work related travel will be beneficial. Guard against ego clashes in personal relationships, says Ganesha

VIRGO Today you need to

carry on with your success without resting on your past laurels. You will also need to stay focused and organised to continue with the same success level that you enjoyed in the past

LIBRA

If there's a knock on your door today, there's a very strong possibility it might be a marriage proposal. Don't get startled, and grab (literally!). The stars send you a partner who shall be your match in every way.

SCORPIO

It seems, the book, 'How to win friends and influence people' has left a great impact on your mind, bringing about a lot of change in your practical life too. As you switch to a new business venture, your efforts will be appreciated. In short, you are a personality that every one would take a note of.

SAGITTARIUS

Running helter-skelter and muddling of affairs is on the menu. Expect not to find even a moment's peace. But take a break, says Ganesha. And dive right back in the chaos and make the most of it.

CAPRICORN

Impulsiveness, which is not really your trait, will be very evident in whatever work you do today, say Ganesha. Money matters will keep you preoccupied for major part of the day, but ironically, your otherwise methodical approach to everything will go for a toss.

AOUARIUS

Lady Luck gazes lovingly upon you today! Bosses are pleased, colleagues are happy, and this makes work seem like leisure. You may want to get in touch with old friends who have moved far away. What are you waiting for, asks Ganesha, in this age of communication?

PISCES You will have frequent mood swings today but you will still manage to fix a work related goal. Your mood will be better if you focus on work. You might feel stressed about some personal matter, but Ganesha says it is not a matter to worry. You will receive some good news by the end of the day

Nora challenges fans



Alia tests positive for Covid

Mumbai: Alia Bhatt has tested positive for Covid-19. The actress took to Instagram to share with fans that she has isolated herself and is in

under home quarantine. I am following all safety protocols under the advice of my doctors. Grateful for all your love and support. Please stay safe and take care," Alia posted on Instagram Thursday

Alia's rumored boyfriend, actor Ranbir Kapoor, had got infected with Covid a few weeks back.

Kathiawadi. The film is slated to hit screens July 30. She is also part of Ayan Mukerji's

Karan Johar's *Takht* and Jasmeet K. Reen's Darlings, which she has co-produced with Shah





A scene from play Shesha Sanlapa staged at Bhanja Kala Mandap

Holy City troupe presents Shesha Sanlapa

Bhubaneswar: Ramchandi Socio Welfare Cultural Orginasation of Puri staged the play Sesha Sanlapa (Last Dialogue) Friday, on the second day of monthly drama festival Natyadhara, here at Bhanja Kala Mandap.

Natyadhara is organised Department of Odia Language, Literature

and Culture, Govt. of Odisha in collaboration with Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi and Odisha Natya Sangh, on first three days and on the second Sunday of every month. The drama staged Friday

was written by Ganeswar Mohapatra and directed by Pradyumna Mohanty. Play's plot revolves around

Gautam Das, a clerk in a government office who also writes street plays to criticise the wrongdoings of the establishment. Expectedly, due to his fearlessness he gets suspended from his job. Though he takes a vow not to bow before anyone, ultimately he is

forced by a local legislator to com-**NATYADHARA** promise with his **FESTIVAL** values. Against his will, Gautam writes a script glorifying the

achievement of the MLA. This haunts him immeasurably and he ends his life after writing the last dialogue of the The dignitaries who at-

tended the event include ONS president Haren Sahoo, playwright Krupasindhu Nayak, ONS secretary LB Roy and vice-president Prakash

Superbikers' rally marks World Autism Awareness Day in City



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Zain Foundation Trust, Bhubaneswar Friday organised a superbikers' rally here to observe the World Autism Awareness Day

Bikers' Club participated in the event to support the initiative. The bike ride was flagged off by Prabodh

Several members of Bhubaneswar Super

Mohanty, the Managing Director of SN Mohanty Group.

While a similar rally was organised Friday in Pune, the Trust will hold more rallies in Chennai, Bangalore and Indore in coming days to sensitise people about autism, said Gargi Bhattacharya, a trustee



member of the Foundation Trust. The rally that kicked off from the premises of Sandy's Tower, passed through important intersections such as Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, CRPF Square and culminated near Trust's office at Baramunda. A number of kids with autism presented gifts to the superbikers.

Mothers of a few children with special needs were also felicitated on the occa-

After the grand success of this superbikers' rally, the Trust has some other programmes in store.

'We have also planned a series of advocacy exercises in Bhubaneswar as well as other cities. Besides, we will organise a special fair April 4 where our children will showcase their craftsmanship," said Bhattacharya.

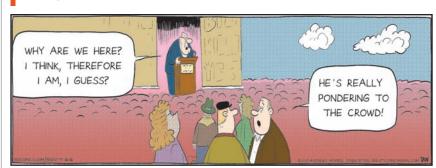
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES



BREVITY



FUN

CROSSWORD 10 Copyright @2021 PuzzleJunction.com

Across

Scarf material

- 3 Farm unit
- 6 Slow-witted 9 Japanese dish
- 10 Tussocks 11 Kind of runner
- (4-8)
- 14 Ground cover
- 16 Social affair

18 Tattler

- 17 Male cat
- Down 1 Parked oneself
- 2 Zest producer 4 Chinese tea

22 Bedouin's mount

23 Helping

26 Blubbers

27 Wildcat

25 Harem room

- 5 Little sound 6 Shortfall

- 16 Little rocks 19 Foal's mother

7 Kind of ox

11 Mascara site

13 Nanking nanny

12 Mall binge

15 Catch-22

8 Finance

- 20 Bring together 21 Canyon sound
- 23 Suds source 24 Rule out

SUDOKU

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

		8	5			2		0		7		1		
	2			Ε	1						В		9	
0	6					Г		7		1		8		,
		9	4	1		- 8	- 1		3	С	2	77. S		Е
	- 7	Α				В	- 44	3	9			O	3	2
		0							D	9		6	7	C
			8				С			5		Α		В
3	Α	7			Е			9				- 5	4	
D						1	-			3				
5			С								8		Ε	1
	8	4				П		Е	П				1	
	П		1		Α	Г		8	П	2	9			
	Г	3	Ε		4	Г					0		Α	7
		6			3	0	7		5		D	В		
Α	1								С			0	2	D

SOLUTIONS



SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



SIGHT TO BEHOLD

Srimandir silhouetted against the setting sun in Puri, Friday

22 E	COVID-19 TRACKER									
		INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD						
	World	13,04,14,047	10,50,56,579	28,43,61						
	India	1,18,46,855	1,15,25,039	1,63,39						
	Odisha	3,41,772	3,37,430	1,92						
	111111111	: 	: 	: 						

BJP alleges attack, BJD says saffron paranoid



BJP workers stage a dharna in front of Pipli police station, Friday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Friday accused the BJD workers of attacking their worker during a campaign rally in Pipli Assembly constituency where bypoll is scheduled for April 17.

The BJP claimed that one of their party workers was attacked in the Sahajpur panchayat for supporting the saffron brigade. Soon after hearing the alleged attack, the victim and party members including the BJP candidate for the Assembly seat Ashrit Pattanayak reached the Pipli police station.

The BJP workers staged a sit-in on the police station premises. Soon a group of BJD workers also reached the police station and protested against the BJP's claim refuting the allegation of any such attack.

The victim, meanwhile, alleged that he was attacked because of his allegiance to BJP. The incident was (66)

The BJD has ruled the state for more than 25 years and the development is evident everywhere. The BJP is afraid of losing the seat IPSITA SAHU | BJD LEADER

Use of violence is not acceptable in poll process. We condemn the attack. We had demanded arrest of the person engaged in such activities and have been assured by the police of timely action PRITHVIRAJ HARICHANDAN | BJP LEADER

reported from Raigiripur village in Sahaipur panchayat.

"Some BJD workers came to me when I was on my scooter and asked

me why I am supporting BJP. Soon

they took the keys of my vehicle and

tried to damage it. They also threat-

ened me of dire consequences for

supporting the party," Chittaranjan Naik, the alleged victim said. The BJP demanded strict action against the culprits and continued their agitation on the PS campus only to be dispersed from the site after assurance from the police to

nab the attackers by Friday night. The BJD said that the BJP is paranoid and sees its likely defeat

in the upcoming bypoll. "The BJP is afraid of the election and that is why it's indulging in such activities. The BJD has ruled the state for more than 25 years and the development is evident everywhere. The BJP is afraid of losing the seat," Ipsita Sahu, BJD leader who was present in the police station said.

BJP leader Prithviraj Harichandan said, "Use of violence is not acceptable in poll process.

BJD, Cong release star campaigners' lists

A few days after the completion of nomination process for Pipli bypoll, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the Congress party Friday released their star campaigners' lists.

Inclusion of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's name in the BJD star campaigners' list gave hints that Patnaik is likely to campaign for party candidate in the bypoll. Names of several ministers have also been included in the regional party's star campaigners'

Ministers Ashok Chandra Panda, Samir Ranjan Dash,

Tukuni Sahoo, Tusharkanti Behera and a few others have been included in the list. Several MLAs and MPs have also found place in the list.

Puri MP Pinaki Mishra, former Puri MLA Maheswar Mohanty and former Brahmagiri MLA Sanjay Das Burma have been made star campaigners for BJD. Similarly, the names of party leaders Debi Prasad Mishra and Pranab Prakash Das have been included in the list.

The Congress party's list of star campaigners includes AICC Odisha in-charge A Chellakumar, Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Niranjan Patnaik, senior party leaders Narasingha Mishra and Tara Prasad Bahinipati. A few other star campaigners of Congress party are: Bhakta Charan Das, Chiranjibi Biswal, Jayadev Jena, Prasad Harichandan. Saptagiri Ulaka and Suresh Routray.

We condemn the attack. We had demanded arrest of the person engaged in such activities and have been assured by the police of timely

1/3rd of trained youths got jobs in five years

Bhubaneswar, April 2: Even though the state government has formed Odisha Skill Development Authority (OSDA) in order to ensure employment opportunities for educated youths, data tabled in the Assembly shows that only one third of the skilled youths have got placements in the last five years.

As per a written statement given by Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Premananda Navak in the House recently, as many as 54,325 youths have been trained under Placement Linked Training Programme through various private and government project implementing agencies (PIAs) during 2015-16 and 2019-20. Out of them, only 18, 419 youths have been

The highest 6, 343 youths have got skill upgradation training in Cuttack district during the last five years of whom only 1, 939 have got jobs. Similarly, only 707 of 2, 543 trained



54,325 youths have been trained under Placement Linked Training Programme through various private and government project implementing agencies during 2015-16 and 2019-20. Out of them, only 18, 419 youths have got

The highest 6, 343 youths have got skill upgradation training in Cuttack district during the last five years of whom only 1, 939 have got jobs

The lowest 203 youths have been imparted the skill training programme in Malkangiri district during the period. Out of them, only 77 got jobs

youths of Keonjhar district have received placements.

In Khurda district, 2, 711 out of 6,084 skilled youths got jobs while 521 of 2,190 youths of Dhenkanal district got placements during the period.

Similarly, 3, 800 youths of Ganjam, 3,184 of Sundargarh and 2, 290 of Rayagada district have got placement-linked training programmes from 2015 to 2020. However, only 764 from Ganjam, 856 from Sundargarh and 783 from Rayagada districts got jobs.

The lowest 203 youths have been imparted the skill training programme in Malkangiri district during the period. Out of them, only 77

Oppn sees vote bank politics behind KALIA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: A day after the state government distributed about Rs 700Crore KALIA assistance to 34 lakh farmers, Opposition BJP and Congress smelled vote bank politics behind the move. They alleged that the government has transferred the money to woo voters ahead of Pipli bypoll.

The government has directly

transferred Rs 693.94 crore to the bank accounts of over 34 lakh farmers under the KALIA scheme. However, it has not transferred the financial assistance to the beneficiaries of Puri district in view of model code of conduct.

"To influence of the voters of Pipli, the government transferred such a huge amount of fund to the farmers," alleged state BJP farmers' wing president Pradip Purohit.

He urged the state government to publish the panchayat-wise list of KALIA beneficiaries.

Congress leader Suresh Routray alleged that the BJD government has given KALIA money to win votes in Pipli. However, BJD leader Amar Stapathy said, "KALIA is an existing scheme and not meant for the Pipli bypoll. As April 1 was a good day for the state, the fund was

Sarala Das enriched Odia language: V-P on Adikabi's 600th birth anniv



V-P M Venkaiah Naidu confers 'Kalinga Ratna' on Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan as Governor Ganeshi Lal and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan look on

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack/Bhubaneswar, April 2: Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu Friday said inculcating reading habit among children from a young age will help strengthen their foundational literacy and personality.

educationists, intellectuals, parents and teachers to bestow special attention in promoting the reading habit among children and underlined the importance of reading in the development of children's personalities. "This is imperative for their (chil-

The Vice-President called upon the

wean away children from excessive use of gadgets," Naidu said while addressing Odia Adikabi Sarala Das's 600th birth anniversary function in Cuttack.

dren) personalities to develop and to

While stressing on the uses of mother tongue among the people, particularly

children, the Vice-President said reading and writing should be inculcated by teachers to strengthen foundational literacy. More authors should write books for children. These books should be written and illustrated keeping in view the children's varying interests and abilities, he said.

Noting that he has been championing the cause of promoting the use of the mother tongue in every state, Naidu said: "Firstly, the medium of instruction up to primary school must be in the mother tongue or local language. Many studies have already catalogued the advantages of studying in mother tongue during early schooling. Besides, the administration and the judiciary too should use the local language to effectively communicate with the people.

On Adikabi Sarala Das's literary achievements, Naidu said the Mahabharata written by him has not

dimmed among Odia people even after hundreds of years because of his unique style and diction. He said this shows the importance of writing and communicating with the people in simple, colloquial language.

Hailing Sarala Das as not just Adi Kabi, but also as Adi Aitihasika (historian) and Adi Bhugolbith (geographer), Naidu said Sarala Das was a pioneer in democratizing literature as he had used colloquial language as early as the 15th century.

Naidu compared Sarala Das with Kabir and Yogi Vemana, while highlighting great poets having an extraordinary ability to communicate complex emotions and ideas in a simple language and leave a lasting impression on a wide cross-section of readers.

Hailing Das as a literary genius, who earned the title of 'The Father of Odia Language', Naidu said that he has enriched Odia language and culture. "No wonder. Odia came to be recognised by the Government of India as a Classical Language of India with Sarala Das standing as a beacon," he added.

On this occasion, Naidu complimented Biswa Bhushan Harichandan, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, for being conferred with the prestigious 'Kalinga Ratna'.

Earlier in the day, the vice-president released the book titled 'Neelimarani My Mother, My Hero', written by MP Achyut Samanta at Raj Bhavan in Bhubaneswar.

On his arrival at Biju Patnaik International Airport, Naidu was welcomed by Odisha Governor Ganeshi Lal and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

Man kills sis-in-law over property

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, April 2: A 45-year-old woman was allegedly stabbed to death by her brother-in-law over property dispute at Uparsahi in Sikharpur area under Chauliaganj police limits here in the wee hours of Friday, a police official said.

The victim was identified as Kamakshi Swain. Her husband had died of jaundice a few years back, the official said.

The incident came to the fore around 7:40am when Kamakshi's niece, 10, informed the former's family as well as the Chauliaganj police about the murder.

Chauliaganj police officials reached the spot along with forensic experts and started an investigation.

"We spotted the lifeless woman in a pool of blood. There were multiple deep injuries on her body," a senior police official said.

Meanwhile, the victim's family members alleged that the incident is fallout of a property dispute.

"She [Kamakshi] had a fight with her brother-in-law, Himanshu Mohanty, 42, late Thursday night over some property issue. An enraged Himanshu locked Kamakshi in the kitchen and stabbed her to death. Himanshu had earlier attacked my sister over the same issue. I had suggested Kamakshi to approach the police in this regard, but she declined as the matter was resolved amicably," victim's brother Ajit Bhuyan said.

Himanshu has surrendered before the police. "As per preliminary investigation, the murder is fallout of a land dispute. Forensic experts and police team have been investigating into the case," DCP Prateek Singh said.

The murder weapon, a blood-stained knife, has been recovered from the spot, another police official said.

CENTRE OKAYS ₹489CR ROAD **INFRA PROJECTS**

New Delhi: Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari approved Rs 488.55 crore for upgradation, rehabilitation and reconstruction of several road projects in Odisha. According to the ministry. the construction of a bypass on NH-59 for Berhampur town including 4L ROB on EPC mode in the state has been approved with a budget Rs 196.94 crore The Union minister also approved construction of a railway over bridge at Matiapada on Puri - Konark Road on EPC mode with a budget Rs 137.61 crore. The ministry approved Rs 154.05 crore for the reconstruction of five submersible bridges replacing them with high level bridges of NH-326 (Malkangiri - Motu) in the state.

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The project has been taken up at a

cost of Rs 450 crore and is expect-

hief Secy appreciated the beauti-

ed to be completed within 30 months

Uful location for the project and

taken up in the adjacent hills and the

Water Resources department would

plan for the drainage systems and

suggested that plantation to be

have 100 seats and 500 beds

Phulbani med college likely in 30 months

water conservation structures.

The 5T Secretary suggested pro-

vision of facilities for attendants like

accommodation and food facilities.

He further suggested that doctors

and staff staying in the campus

should have proper ecosystem for

working and residential facilities for

the families including recreational

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: The

Commissionerate Police Friday

arrested seven persons on charges

of hurling bomb at the members of

a rival group over past enmity at

Azad Nagar in Sundarpada area

Talim Khan, 24, alias Bunty, Sk Ahmad Alli, 45, Sk Saukat Alli, 43,

babul Basar Khan, 32, Sk Sayad

Alli, 50 and Md Asfar Iqbal, 36. All

the accused belong to Azad Nagar.

at loggerheads for the past few

months over the village committee

president election. On Thursday

evening, when a meeting was un-

derway at the village, the seven

accused came to spot and hurled a

According sources, the accused and the complainants have been

The accused were identified as Sk Sarafat Ali, 36, alias Papu, Abu

under Airfield police limits.

Bhubaneswar, April 2: If things go as per plan, a new medical college and hospital in Kandhamal would be completed within 30 months. This was revealed at a review meeting of a high-level team of state government officials at

On the direction of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, senior officers comprising Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra, 5T Secretary VK Pandian and Works Secretary Krishan Kumar visited Kandhamal Friday to review the progress of construction of the new medical college and hospital in Phulbani.

The state Cabinet, in December 2020, had decided to set up a medical college in Phulbani. The medical college will have 100 seats and the hospital will have 500 beds. The project has been taken up at a cost of Rs 450 crore and is expected to be completed within 30 months.

During the visit, Mahapatra directed the district administration to provide all support especially the availability of construction material for timely completion of the



Chief Secretary Suresh Mahapatra, 5T Secretary VK Pandian and Works department secretary Krishan Kumar during their visit to Kandhamal OP PHOTO

7 arrested for bomb

hurling at Sundarpada

project. He appreciated the beautiful location for the project and suggested that plantation to be taken up in the adjacent hills and the Water Resources department would plan for the drainage systems and

part of 'Mo School' campaign.

water conservation structures

The Chief Secretary and 5T about various issues of the district.

Covid precautions protocol.

ECOR SETS NAT'L RECORD IN FREIGHT LOADING

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: The East Coast Railway (ECoR) has created a record in India for surpassing all previous records in freight loading in financial year 2020-21.

The zonal railway achieved 205 million tonne of freight loading during the period. Last year too, the ECoR had created a record of 202.56 MT loading. But this year it moved ahead and broke its own record. "By this, ECoR became the first zone to cross the milestone of 200 million tonne of loading for two times in a row. It also broke its own record of 200.95 MT of freight loading achieved last financial year 2019-20. The target set by the Board for the financial year for ECoR was actually 203.02 MT, which the zone has clearly surpassed," a statement from the ECoR said.

The department also said that all the three divisions-Khurda Road Division, Sambalpur Division, Waltair Division and improved



achieved 205 million tonne of freight loading during the period

Last year too, the ECoR had created a record of 202.56 MT loading. But this year it moved ahead and broke its own record

their earlier records. The department said that to achieve this loading figure, East Coast Railway utilised 8,447 wagons per day - about 154.8 rakes/trains per day.

The ECoR said that works were done despite the challenges of lockdowns and Covid-19. "This remarkable loading has been achieved despite lockdown and closure and less workforce in industries and in mineral units under East Coast Railway jurisdiction. To achieve this remarkable performance, ECoR utilised its manpower and rolling stock items in best possible way and with proper planning and coordination with government sectors and industries." the statement from ECoR said

With this achievement, ECoR became the most profit making zone in India amid all railway zones. "With an operating ratio of 47.71 per cent, the zone easily becomes the most profitable zone of Indian Railways. Operating ratio is the term used to determine the profitability. For every rupee earned by the zone, it has to spend 0.47 paisa. Different sectors across the spectrum have shown tremendous increase over last vear." the ECoR said.

Utkal all set for **50th Convocation**

Bhubaneswar: Utkal University is all set to organise its 50th Convocation Saturday, Vice President of India M Venkaiah Naidu will grace the occasion as the chief quest by delivering the convocation address. Higher Education Minister Arun Sahoo and Governor Ganeshi Lal will also be present at the ceremony, Altogether 41 PhD degrees, 90 gold medals will be given away to the scholars. Similarly, five doctor honoris causa will be conferred on five eminent odias who have excelled in different fields in the country.

MAN DUPED OF ₹72L IN CITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: A man has allegedly lost around Rs 72 lakh to fraudsters who promised him to sell a property and help him get Rs 1.20Crore loan from a nationalized bank in the city. The victim has lodged a complaint with Khandagiri police in this regard. According to the complaint, the

accused persons including a former employee of Bank of India (BoI) met the victim at his rented house at Khanduala Nagar in Dumduma area July 3, 2020. They offered him to purchase a suitable plot or flat in the city and assured him to facilitate a loan from Kharavela Nagar branch of BoI.

They sent some photos of a landed plot measuring 2.400 soft at Panchasakha Nagar in Dumduma area under Khandagiri police limits. Subsequently, the victim paid Rs 5 lakh in cash and Rs 67 lakh in cheque for the purpose in July 2020. However, they also allegedly made him sign various forged documents in order to hand over the land and for the loan. The accused neither gave him the land nor returned the money taken from him. They allegedly threatened of dire consequences if asked for his

WASSUP TODAY

BHUBANESWAR ■ Social service award by Youth for

- Voluntary Work, Buddha Mandir, Unit-9, 5.30 pm
- Third evening of Shrestha Odiani Competition by Sambhabana Trust, Unit-2 Primary School, 6 pm

PURI

BALANGA

■ Badadanda Seva, 6.30 am

■ Dola Festival of Paschimashambhu Dev. Balanga, 6 am

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.

The traffic flows should be planned properly including the auto and taxi stands and alternative alignment for NH in front of the site to avoid accidents, he said.

The campus will have facilities for 300 seated boys' hostel, 150 seated girls' hostel, 650 capacity auditorium, 100 seated resident doctors' hostel and quarter for doctors & staff.

The high-level team, thereafter, visited the AJO government high school and government girls' high school in Phulbani. Both the schools have been selected under the high school transformative initiative as

The accused and the

complainants have been

at loggerheads for the

past few months over

the village committee

bomb at some villagers including

the complainant standing nearby.

Later, they also started attacking the

victims with sword, iron rod and

A youth sustained severe in-

Airfield police arrested seven

The accused were sent to judicial

juries while another escaped with

persons by registering a case under

various sections of the IPC.

custody by the court Friday.

president election

wooden sticks.

minor bruises.

Secretary interacted with the teachers, alumni, school management committee and students. Based on their feedback, it was decided to take up various school development activities like smart class room, library, infrastructure development, sports facilities etc. Kandhamal collector and SP briefed

In view of the Covid situation, the district administration was directed to be alert and enforce strictly the



MP Bhartruhari Mahtab, MLAs Muhammad Moquim and Souvic Biswal and CMC Commissioner Ananya Das launch a mechanised sweeping vehicle at Jobra

State records 461 fresh nCoV cases

Bhubaneswar, April 2: State's Covid-19 tally surged to 3, 41, 772 Friday as 461 more people tested positive for the infection, a Health department official said.

Meanwhile, 218 persons earlier tested positive for the viral infection recovered Friday, added the official.

Of the new cases registered in 24 of the state's 30 districts, 272 were reported in quarantine centres, while the remaining infections were detected during contact

Nuapada district registered the highest number of new cases at 86, followed by Khurda (69), Sundargarh (62) and Kalahandi (36), the official said.

The state's coronavirus death

Bhubaneswar: April 2: Heatwave

continued to grip many places of

the state Friday when Boudh

recorded the highest temperature

of 43 degrees Celsius. Ten other

places in the state also recorded

a maximum temperature of 40

Bhubaneswar Met Centre, Bolangir

recorded a day temperature of 42.2

degrees Celsius, followed by

Malkangiri (42), Sambalpur (41.6),

Talcher (41.5), Titlagarh (41.2),

Sundargarh & Jharsuguda (41 each),

Bhawanipatna & Hirakud (40.5

each) and Baripada (40).

As per evening bulletin of

POST NEWS NETWORK

degrees or above.



toll remained unchanged at 1,921 as no fresh fatality was reported since March 30.

For the first time this year, the number of active cases crossed the 2.500-mark, Friday

The state has thus far tested over 91.03 lakh samples for Covid-19, in-

cluding 30, 716 Thursday. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik urged people to strictly adhere to the Covid-19 guidelines and get vacci-

Boudh sizzles at 43 degrees C

MET PREDICTS THUNDERSTORMS WITH LIGHTNING AT SOME PLACES IN STATE

Twin city of Bhubaneswar and

Cuttack recorded a maximum day

temperature of 38.2 and 37.4 de-

grees Celsius respectively. The

weatherman informed that not a

single place of the state has re-

ceived rainfall between 8:30am

very likely to fall by 2-4 degrees

Celsius at many places over the

state during next two days and no

The maximum temperature is

and 5:30pm Friday.

nated when their turn comes

POST NEWS NETWORK

cases in the state capital, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Friday, reduced the number of people to be allowed at marriage-related functions from 200 to 100.

BMC caps marriage gatherings at 100

Issuing an order, the BMC stated that only 100 people will be allowed to participate in marriage functions and 50 for funeral ceremonies. The civic authority also has prohibited any other gatherings, promotional activities, conferences, annual functions and other kind of iubilee celebrations by institutions and individuals.

large change thereafter, it said.

Meanwhile, the IMD has forecast

light to moderate rain or thunder-

shower at many places over the

It also said thunderstorms with

lightning and gusty surface wind

speed reaching 40-50 kmph is very

likely to prevail at one or two places

in Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Jajpur,

Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Balasore,

Mayurbhanj, Ganjam, Nayagarh,

Khurda and Jagatsinghpur dis-

tricts, Saturday. Similar weather

condition would prevail at some

places of Rayagada, Gajapati,

Ganjam, Mayurbhanj, Balasore,

Jajpur, Bhadrak and Kendrapara

on the next day (April 4).

state during next three days.

"We have been observing rise in Covid cases for the last 7-8 days Bhubaneswar, April 2: In the and thus we have decided to put furwake of a steep rise in Covid-19 ther restrictions on social gatherings. We are also planning to increase testing. Enforcement activities will be stricter in coming days. Meanwhile, we are targeting vaccination of up to 7,000 to 10,000 per day," said BMC Commissioner,

Prem Chandra Chaudhary. Furthermore, the order also mentioned that any other kind of social gathering will require specific permission from the BMC. It can be mentioned that the civic authority here in January had also allowed a maximum of 200 persons for marriage-related functions and 100 for funeral gatherings.

BGU celebrates 5th foundation day

Bhubaneswar: Birla Global University, Bhubaneswar celebrated its fifth foundation day April 1, the day Odisha became a separate state. Trilochan Mohapatra, Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education and Director General of ICAR graced the occasion as chief guest and delivered the foundation day lecture. The ceremo ny started at the university seminar hall with the traditional lighting of lamp along with rendering of the Saraswati Vandana. Mohapatra discussed various issues and challenges the farmers and the agriculture sector in the country is currently passing through. He stressed on expanding the scope of agricultural education in universities, and how it can open a plethora of opportunities for the young and talented people. He stressed on how agriculture can contribute towards moulding India into a 5 trillion-dollar economy.

Underpass near Khurda DM's office irks locals



Activists of Khurda Nagarik Manch holding a demo

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, April 2: Activists of Khurda Nagarik Manch have opposed the construction of an underpass on National Highway-16 near the district Collector's office

The activists have urged the district administration to take necessary steps for construction of a

flyover near the Collector's office. Members of the outfit Friday prevented the employees of a private firm from carrying out the

construction work "Several outfits have pleaded for the construction of a flyover at the spot near Khurda Collector's office. But, the administration has done precious little. Some leaders of the ruling party are tacitly supporting the underpass construction," said a few members of the Manch.

It is worth mentioning here that the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) is now widening the NH-16 at Khurda. The NHAI has dethe administration to take necessary steps for construction of a flyover at the spot

The activists have urged

cided to construct underpasses at Palla and Tapang squares and near the Collector's office.

Members of the Nagarik Manch have claimed that construction of an underpass near the Collector's office will create inconveniences for the locals. Besides, the underpass may cause road mishaps in the lo-

"Hundreds of people usually visit the Collector's office every day. Besides, the locality is witnessing frequent traffic snarls. Construction of an underpass near the Collector's office will not improve the situation. The authorities concerned should build a flyover in the locality," said the

Manch activists

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Refugee influx from Myanmar into Kendrapara may happen



Many people are already fleeing the Myanmar fearing persecution in the hands of the armed forces and arriving in neighbouring countries like India and Bangladesh. As a result, a fear of refugee infiltration into Kendrapara through the water routes

of the Bay of Bengal haunts people

Some locals say that the district administration should issue a high alert in the territorial waters bordering the district to prevent influx of Myanmar's refugees into the coastal pockets. The refugees in the guise of fishermen might come in small boats, they noted

POST NEWS NETWORK

Mahakalpara, April 2: The unrest in Myanmar has increased the possibility of refugees entering into Kendrapara district through various sea routes. This can happen as the district lacks a proper security

The unrest is the outcome of the recent ouster of the Myanmar's democratically elected government by the armed forces of the country and subsequent crackdown on the residents. Many people are already fleeing the country fearing persecution in the hands of the armed forces and arriving in neighbouring countries like India and Bangladesh, As a result, a fear of infiltration by the Myanmar refugees

into Kendrapara district through the water routes of the Bay of Bengal cannot be ruled out due to lack of coastal security measures in place.

Some locals have opined that the district administration should issue a high alert in the territorial waters bordering the district to prevent influx of Myanmar's refugees into the area. It is apprehended that the refugees in the guise of fishermen might come in small boats and infiltrate into the district. Later, the refugees after their arrival might erect shanties in the jungles near the sea and set up their base there.

Some local residents alleged that illegal colonies have cropped up along the beach in the district. They said these colonies have been set up mostly by Bangladeshis, who ini-

With a spurt in Covid infections, police have intensified checking on border areas of Malkangiri, Friday

ermen. So the arrival of Myanmar refugees cannot be ruled out, they observed. They also pointed out that both the forest department and the district administration have been slow in tackling the infiltrators. So refugees fleeing Myanmar can take advantage of this fact. Several problems like lack of staff, shortage of arms and ammunition at Jambu and Tantiapal marine police stations and non-availability of patrol boats have made this coastal region very vulnerable.

People said a large number of Bangladeshi refugees have already made Kendrapara their home build ing colonies indiscriminately. So the influx of Myanmar refugees cannot be ruled out.

Locals alleged hundreds of trawlers illegally sail into the prohibited area of Gahirmatha. However, the district administration has done nothing to prevent such illegal activities. They said the localities of Hukitola, Lunchogola, Shola Muhana, Madali and Nasi jungles are very vulnerable areas.

'The administration should be proactive and prevent the influx of Myanmar refugees," local people observed.

When contacted, Kendrapara SP Sandeep Sampat Madkar said they do not have any information regarding Myanmar refugees. 'We are keeping a tab on this sensitive issue and the department will act promptly if the situation so demands," said Madkar



HARD LIVING

A tribal couple collecting mahula flowers from forest floor in Koksara area of Kalahandi district, Friday

Fires still raging at 51 places in Similipal National Park

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, April 2: Forest fires have been spreading in the Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district with the forest department failing to contain it. The park recorded fires at 51 places Friday while it was at 41 places March 31.

According to reports, forest officials. ODRAF teams and locals have been trying to douse the fires at these places. It is said that the firefighting teams were exhausted as fires break out at new places.

The forest department has intensified the awareness drive in the region, but hunters are said to be behind such fires.

"Fires were reported from 38 places in south division of the sanctuary while the north division reported fires at 13 places Friday," said M Jagajayananda, the field director of the STR.

The heat generated by the forest fires and the heat condition have made life miserable for wild animals and humans in the area.

The fires have damaged vast areas in the national park. This has affected several endangered



The fires have damaged vast areas Fires were spotted in Jenabila, Dukura in the national park. This has Naana South, Naana North,

affected several endangered Uparabarahakamuda, Kendumundi, plants and animals in the park Pithabata and Chahala

Six ODRAF teams along with 50 firefighters and 600 forest officials have been deployed in these areas to douse the fire. The exact cause behind the forest fire has not been ascertained yet

Fires were spotted in Jenabila, Dukura Naana South, Naana North, Uparabarahakamuda,

Kendumundi, Pithabata and

Six ODRAF teams along with 50 firefighters and 600 forest officials have been deployed in these areas behind the forest fire has not been ascertained vet.

Notably, the chief of the task force on wildfire Sandeep Tripathy said March 13 that the proactive steps taken by the state government to curb the spread of forest fire in Odisha has led to the total

NTPC celebrates **Utkal Diwas**

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, April 2: The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) celebrated the 86th Utkal Diwas at Dulanga Coal Mining Project in Sundergarh in compliance with Covid guidelines.

The celebration was marked by cake cutting and playing of the state anthem. Project head of Dulanga CMP, CR Barik, senior officials and team members deliberated on the contributions of many erestwhile legendary leaders to the formation of the sepa



rate Odisha province. Odisha is the first state to be formed on the basis of its language.

The project head and the GGM detailed out the coal production target for the current fiscal and the production data of the pre-

Hydropower project hangs fire

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, April 2: The work of Chheligada hydropower project in tribal-dominated R Udaygiri block of Gajapati district has hit a tardy pace, causing widespread resentment among locals. The project assumes importance as this is in a backward region and it will help in electrification of many remote villages, a report said.

According to the report, the work of the main dam has not yet started. It was in 1985 when then Congress government proposed the project and had taken up its survey work. 20 years after this (in 2005), its outlay was pegged at Rs 97 crore. But as the project work gets delayed. its cost has escalated to Rs 706 crore.

The delay is likely to lead to further cost overrun while the time line for completion of the project is uncertain. But the executive engineer of the project has hinted that the project may be completed by 2024.

After completion of the project, 3600 hectares of farmland will get irrigation coverage in Mohana and R Udaygiri blocks in Gajapati dis-Digapahandi and Sanakhemundi blocks of Ganjam district. Moreover, it will generate



yet started. It was in 1985 when then Congress government proposed the project and had taken up its survey work. 20 years after this (in 2005), its outlay was pegged at Rs 97 crore. But as the project work gets delayed, its cost has escalated to Rs 706 crore

he work of the main dam has not

fter completion of the project, 3600 hectares of farmland will get irrigation coverage in Mohana and R Udavgiri blocks in Gajapati district, Digapahandi and Sanakhemundi blocks of Ganjam district. Moreover, it will generate about 30 megawatt of electricity every day. This hydropower project is expected to alleviate the power crisis in the region

about 30 megawatt of electricity every day. This hydropower project is expected to alleviate the power crisis in the region.

Besides, the project will help in removing the drinking water woes in the region. Over 500 families will face displacement at Chheligada, Bidyadharpur, Taligaon, Kajili and Subiga. It is said that displacement issues have hindered the work.

The administration has been trying to clear the bottlenecks. The fourth meeting of the rehabilitation and peripheral development advisory committee was held August 13, 2019. It was attended by the then southern range RDC, MP Chandrasekhar Sahu, Gajapati Collector, chief engineer and other engineers of the Berhampur water resources division, Mohana MLA and other people's representatives

It was learnt that Rs 29 crore has been paid as compensation to the

and the displaced people.

displaced family. A colony has been set up at Samantrapur near Digapahandi where all facilities have been put up for the displaced families.

According to the executive engineer of the project, the blueprint of the dam entails damming up the water of a hill stream from Ramgiri hill. A tender for the dam construction will be floated in April Meanwhile, construction of a canal and a tunnel in the hill has started.

Jungle Surakhya Samitis see red over road inside reserve forest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, April 2: A row has broken out over a road project proposed to come up in Gudupangi forest under Nuagaon block of Nayagarh district with members of 12 Jungle Surakhya Samitis strongly opposing it, a report said.

According to the report, the road is being laid through this forest under MGNREGS. Earlier, the people of Gudupangi used to protest, but now people of 11 other villages have come out against it.

Villagers of Gudupangi agree to allow a foot track inside the forest, but opposed a permanent road. Because, they have been nurturing the forest since 1982.

They argue that if a 2-km road inside the forest is allowed, it will damage the flora and fauna, besides paying way for timber mafia and country liquor makers to plunder the forest

Members of the Jungle Surakhya Samitis from Dhenkena, Malisahi, Khandugaon, Kridaspur, Balugaon, Saradhapur, Champatipur, Natugaon, Laxmiprasad, Sinduria, Bhattasahi and Ghaduala have taken up the issue with the adVillagers argue that if a 2-km road inside the forest is allowed, it will damage the flora and fauna, besides paving way for timber mafia and country liquor makers to plunder the forest



ministration. They have apprised the MLAs of Nayagarh and Dasapalla, the forest and environment minister, the Chief Secretary, the subcollector, the SP and the Nayagarh DFO about their resistance to the road project inside the forest.

Notably, in February this year, when the road project was started, people of Malisahi, Dhenkena and Khandugaon strongly opposed it February 5. However, people of 17 other neighbouring villages supported the project. The conflict ended up in an armed confrontation between the project supporters and opponents. But the administration intervened in time and settles the issue at a meeting February 6.

As road work resumed again,

the opposition has started.

On the other hand, people of 17 villages, who have been facing commuting problem, have been repeatedly urging the Collector to carry forward the road project.

Arjun Nayak, a village head of Gudupangi, said villagers allow a foot track inside the forest, but opposed a permanent road. "The reason for the opposition is, we have been protecting and nurturing the Dadhinauti forest since 1982. New trees are growing up. It is vibrant with wildlife. A 2-km road inside the forest will damage the flora and fauna. The permanent road will pave the way for timber mafia and country liquor makers to plunder the forest," he pointed out.

Medicinal plants vanishing from Nayagarh forests

Khandapada, April 2: Timber mafia has been plundering valuable trees and plants, especially those containing medicinal qualities in various forests of Nayagarh district. Now, Adhunga plants are in their target.

Adhunga plants are fast vanish ing from forests in the district as mafia from outside are cutting these trees with the help of locals. Environmentalists have expressed concern over it, a report said.

The forested landscape was once rich with Adhunga plants. Now, they are found rarely in some areas.

much demand in preparation of some Ayurvedic medicines and some traders from outside have set their sights on these plants. Leaves and branches of Adhunga plants are used for bouquets while its fruits act as a repellant for bugs in houses.

Locals said some Ayurvedic practioners from outside have engaged middlemen to collect Adhunga plants from forests. With the help of local people, these middlemen have been collecting these trees.

People came to know of the value of these plants in 2008 when Antaryami Sahu, a retired teacher



of Kantilo area, had opposed cutting of these plants. He visited villages, sensitising people and their representatives about protection of these plants. Thereafter, felling of Adhunga plants had been stopped as the forest department took immediate action to prevent cutting.

After a long gap, plundering of the Adhunga plants has started in some pockets

Antaryami Sahu came to know about the development and visited Kaliapalli village recently. He saw some people cutting down Adhunga plants. On enquiry, it was learnt that a man from outside the state asked the locals to cut down these trees. The middleman has even paid some advance to buy its seeds and bottom parts. "A kg of raw seeds is sold for Rs 20 while a kg of dry seeds is Rs 35," they added.

Some medicines are prepared from its seeds. When contacted, Khandapada ranger Sridhar Panda said some unscrupulous people cut down these trees and eke out their living by selling it.

'The forest department is aware of the development. About a month ago, forest officials had seized logs of Adhunga trees, which were being shifted in a bus from Gania area. But the persons who were taking the logs could not be caught," he

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Sealed quotations are invited from reputed Authorized Distributors/Dealers for procurements of Lab. Equipments/ CBCS Books/ Projectors (OHP)/Water Purifier/Laser Printer (HP) (All in One)/Convertible Refrigerator/Vacuum Cleaner/Desktop for IDP (World Bank Funding under OHEPEE, Govt. of Odisha). Detailed specifications, terms and conditions, tender paper are available in the OHEPEE link of college website: tsdcollege.in. Last date for submission of quotations/tender is 15 days from the date of publication of the notice.

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This is faithfulness, to admit and to manifest no other movements but only the movements prompted and guided by the Divine.





The wait for PESB appointments gets longer

onder why key appointments in the public sector are held up? Here's a clue. The Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) has been functioning without a chairperson since September last year when the then chairman Rajiv Kumar was shifted to the Election Commission. Also, the key post of member, one of three, has not been filled for a long time. Curiously, the selection board has seen five chairmen in the past five years and is awaiting a sixth!

This situation has finally come to the notice of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, which passed adverse comments on the Modi sarkar's failure to fill the top positions in the PESB. Sources say that the parliamentary panel has directed the PESB to report in three months about the number of vacancies and also supply reasons why these posts have not been filled. Moreover, the panel also noted "with anguish" the abysmal number of women in public enterprises. It has sought to know from the PESB whether this is due to the absence of competent women aspirants or the glass-ceiling effect.

Apparently, as many as 135 posts of CMDs and directors have not been filled for more than six months to a year. And with several CMDs set to retire during the year, the number of vacancies is likely to grow unless quick action is not taken.

CVC struggling with delayed action in vigilance cases

Perturbed by the prolonged delays in finalizing disciplinary cases, a parliamentary committee has recommended to the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) to explore the feasibility of holding the concerned authorities answerable



BABUDOM BYTES Dilip Cherian

for inaction or delayed action. The committee has also asked the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) to provide funds to the CVC for strengthening its surveillance capabilities and database.

In its report to the panel, the CVC had come down heavily on the Central Board of Direct Taxation (CBDT), the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) and Railways, among others, for delays in pursuing vigilance cases. According to the CVC report, out of the 3,371 cases received in 2020, the commission disposed of 2,717 cases by way of tendering advice. It however indicated that 654 cases may have to be moved forward to 2021 due to the delays in pursuing the cases.

But the Chief Vigilance Commissioner Sanjay Kothari and his team at the CVC received a shot in the arm after the panel decided to advise the government to give adequate funds to the commission to cope with the growing financial frauds.

DoPT directs ministries to speed up cadre reviews

The Modi sarkar is feeling stifled in its efforts to get the cadre controlling authorities of services like IAS, IPS, IFS and others to conduct the exercise which would then allow the government to undertake further administrative reforms, which may include shutting down obsolete services and merger of some cadres for better efficacy.

According to sources, Deepak Khandekar, Secretary, Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), has directed all cadre controlling authorities to appoint joint secretary-level nodal officers to ensure that the cadre reviews are completed promptly. The government aims to get one round of cadre review for all services completed in five years.

The government's action is clearly prompted by the growing number of vacancies in government services, complaints of delayed promotions from several affected officials. However, the cadre controlling authorities in the various Central ministries and departments have blamed the Covid pandemic for defaulting on the prescribed timeline laid down for the reviews. But the government is no longer willing to accept this plea, as the DoPT's memo indicates. It wants to move ahead with its plans to streamline the cadre structures to satisfy functional requirements and remove existing deficiencies in the system.

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WISDOM CORNER



I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do, so throw off the howlines, sail away from safe harbor, and catch the trade winds in vour sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and

missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that

WORDS**WORTH**

is why I succeed.

By Jove

Your belief in my abilities is both gratifying and slightly alarming. In this case, though, your trust is not misplaced. Jove is the older name the Romans had for the god Jupiter (which derives from an alteration of Jovis pater, father Jove). Jupiter was the Roman god of the sky, the sovereign deity who had powers over both gods and men (he was later identified with the Greek Zeus). If you got on his wrong side, he started chucking thunderbolts at you. There was a temple to him on the Capitol in Rome. From medieval times, Jove has been used in English as a poetical way of referring to Jupiter. It has also been linked to Jehovah, a form of the Hebrew name of God used in some translations of the Bible. By Jove was a mild oath, an exclamation that indicated surprise or gave emphasis to some comment, which dates from the sixteenth century. It was originally a neat way of calling on a higher power without using the blasphemous by God. Shakespeare used it in Love's Labours Lost in 1588: "By Jove, I always took three threes for nine". It's a very British expression.

What's the difference?

Jewish man walks into a bar and Asits down. He has a few drinks, then he sees a Chinese man and punches him in the face. "Owch!" the Chinese man says. "What was that for?' "That was for Pearl Harbor," the

Jewish man says. "But I'm Chinese!" "Chinese.

Japanese, what's the difference?'



Then, the Chinese man walks up to the Jewish man and punches him in the face. "Ouch!" the Jewish man says. "What was that for?" "That was for the Titanic," the Chinese man says. "But that was an iceberg!" "Ice berg, Goldberg, what's the difference?'

FOCUS ASSEMBLY POLLS

WINDS OF CHANGE



Anita Saluja

MAY 2, THE DATE OF THE RESULTS FOR THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN THE FIVE STATES **WILL GO DOWN** IN HISTORY FOR **HAVING TURNED** THE TIDE OF THE **POLITICAL CAREERS OF BIGWIGS, NOT ONLY MAMATA BANERJEE OR EDAPADI** PALANISAMI, **BUT ALSO THE NEHRU-GANDHI SCION RAHUL**

ay 2, the date of the results for the Assembly elections in the five states - West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, will go down in history for having turned the tide of the political careers of bigwigs, not only Mamata Banerjee or Edapadi Palanisami, but also the Nehru-Gandhi scion Rahul Gandhi. It may not be "khela shesh" (game over) for the TMC supremo, as proclaimed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but yes, definitely, "pariborton" (change) is in the air.

The BJP has turned the West Bengal Assembly elections into a do-or-die battle as it is looking forward to topple the 10-year "misrule" of Mamata Banerjee. The pollsters have predicted a three-digit figure for BJP, which had mere three seats in the outgoing Assembly The BJP, however, is confident of defeating Mamata, having sweated it out for the last few years to form the government in the one-time Left bastion, now occupied by TMC Even if BJP crosses the 100-seat mark in a 294-member Assembly, it will be a great push for the rightist party in an erstwhile Left bastion, perhaps opening the doors to form a government after the next Assembly polls. The presence of the Left and the Congress is nowhere to be seen, with the contest being limited, between the BJP and the TMC.

The campaign in West Bengal has turned into a fierce battle, where the political rivalry and bitterness are not only reflected in vitriolic speeches and abuses, but the wrath towards one another is also manifested in physical violence and blood on the streets. It's not only the leaders, who can't see eye-to-eye with one another; but the workers have also turned enemies, as never before.

For the Election Commission, it would be a real challenge to contain violence in the polls, which has been wisely stretched into 8 phases, to avoid any untoward incident. Amidst this bedlam, if Mamata Banerjee succeeds to halt the jug-



The BJP has turned the West Bengal Assembly elections into a do-or-die battle as it is looking forward to topple the 10-year "misrule" of Mamata Banerjee. The pollsters have predicted a three-digit figure for BJP, which had mere three seats in the outgoing Assembly

gernaut of BJP, it will be the biggest-ever win for the lady, who single-handedly has taken up the task to confront the Central government. It's one lady versus the entire Central Cabinet and also the turncoats, who, at the last moment, ditched the Chief Minister. Mamata's victory will catapult her straight to the Centre, where she may be asked to lead the anti-BJP forces. Voices of her leading the campaign will undoubtedly be raised by her party, declaring her to be the person most suited to become the prime ministerial candidate of the secular forces. However, if she loses, it will be difficult for her to make a comeback in the near future, as the formation of a BJP government will mark a new beginning in West Bengal.

Both the Congress and the Left have no role to play in Bengal elections though they are contesting to cut the anti-incumbency vote, thus helping the TMC. The

Congress leadership has so far kept itself away from the campaign, as it doesn't want to be seen hobnobbing with the same Left, against whom it is contesting a fierce battle in Kerala. Moreover, it is aware of the fact that the votes for the Congress-Left combine will only help consolidate votes for the BJP. "We are putting up a token fight in West Bengal, as we don't want BJP to win," stated a senior Congress leader.

For the Congress, however, Kerala is the state, which can herald the revival of Rahul Gandhi's leadership, bringing him back as the Congress president. Pitched against the LDF Government, the Congress, this time, is facing a tough resistance from the incumbent government. The pollsters, too, have predicted a victory for the LDF government, though Kerala has seen the formation of an alternate government, after every five years. Breaking the trend, this time

round, the incumbent government is likely to come back, though no one can blame Rahul Gandhi for not campaigning in Kerala.

In Kerala, it is indeed a tough fight between United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Left Democratic Front (LDF). If, under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi, the Congress can topple the LDF government, it will be a big victory for him. The young leader realises the importance of victory in any of the states and if he manages to win Kerala, the only state where he can turn back the political tide, he will make a mark as a Congress Leader. Both he and his sister Privanka Gandhi are aware that the G-23 rebel group is waiting anxiously to strike, after the elections. If at all they fail to wrest the government from the LDF in Kerala, it will mark the beginning of unrest in the Congress, with the rebels expected to raise the pitch against Rahul Gandhi. For a change, both the brother and the sister are working over-time criss-crossing West Bengal and Assam to ensure the victory of the Congress. However, while in other states, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, they have no stakes, in Kerala and Assam, they still have the possibility of working wonders. In Puducherry, the Congress is sure to lose, due to the mess created by former Chief Minister V Narayanswamy. Even the Congress legislators ditched him at the last-minute, thus toppling his government. Victory in any one of the five states for the Congress will bring a ray of hope for Rahul Gandhi, who is seen to be struggling hard to make a mark in Indian politics. A win in Kerala or Assam will surely restore the waning confidence of the workers in him, making his task to adorn the post of Congress president much easier. However, if he fails to achieve victory in these crucial Assembly polls, the voices of dissent may bring to an end his political career, finally closing the doors of politics for the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty

SPECTRUM CURRENCY

GANDHI

Is Bitcoin good for business?



Willem H. Buiter

THE BOTTOM LINE IS **CLEAR: BITCOIN IS AN EXCESSIVELY RISKY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY UNDESIRABLE INVESTMENT. IT IS NOT A SENSIBLE SOLUTION TO ANY EMERGING-MARKET PROBLEM**

In a recent commentary for the Financial Times, economist Dambisa Moyo makes a case for why business leaders should invest in Bitcoin. Her three main arguments are that Bitcoin is a way to mitigate company risk; cryptocurrencies can provide possible solutions for doing business in emerging economies; and digital currencies augur an exciting new future of "currency platforms."

Is Moyo right? Let's take her

points in turn. First, it is unclear how buying Bitcoin can mitigate company risk. The only risk Moyo identifies is that of missing out on what could be one of the greatest speculative bubbles of all time. True, a company that missed out on a continued Bitcoin appreciation could face dire consequences - including acquisition by a Bitcoininvested rival. Obviously, investing in Bitcoin is one sure way to avoid missing out on capital gains on Bitcoin. But that hardly makes it a wise investment, especially when one weighs the potential returns against the high risk of ma-

terial capital losses Equally far-fetched is the idea that cryptocurrencies could provide solutions to problems often encountered in emerging economies. It is true that, unlike conventional fiat money – which includes central bank digital currencies (CBDCs)-

decentralized private cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin are not at risk of being "over-issued" by profligate governments. It is also true that the risk of over-issuance is greater in some emerging markets than in most advanced economies.

But over-issuance of currency is

just one possible threat to emerging-market financial stability, and removing it does not suddenly make Bitcoin a reliable store of value. Quite the contrary: Bitcoin's price volatility since its inception in 2009 has been staggering. On March 29, 2021, its price reached \$57,856 - some distance below its alltime high of \$61,284 on March 13with a market cap close to \$1 trillion. According to a note from JPMorgan on February 17, its threemonth realised volatility at the time was 87%, compared to just 16% for gold. Similarly, a recent study finds that Bitcoin's price volatility is almost ten times higher than that of major fiat currencies (such as the US dollar against the euro and the yen).

Moyo also suggests that Bitcoin could facilitate remittances to low- and middle-income countries. But this ignores the fact that Bitcoin transactions are notoriously inefficient. Because its block size is capped at one megabyte and the block-discovery process takes approximately ten minutes per block, only seven

transactions can be completed In principle, they could be imper second. By contrast, Visa executes an average of 1,700 transactions per second, and could fea- consumer and business in its jusibly handle more than 65.000 transaction messages per second. By design, Bitcoin is simply too inefficient ever to become an effective medium of payment.

Similarly, the fact that Bitcoin's supply is fixed at 21 million units is more of a drawback than a selling point. A proper currency should be able to undergo a massive expansion in supply when circumstances demand it, such as in the case of a financial crisis or a shock to aggregate demand. There can be no lender of last resort or market maker of last resort capable of systemic rescue operations with Bitcoin and other decentralized cryptocurrencies. Finally, is Bitcoin really the van-

guard of a new digital-currency infrastructure that wise investors cannot afford to ignore? No, because the CBDCs under development in China and elsewhere have nothing in common with Bitcoin and other decentralized private cryptocurrencies. There is no blockchain or other distributed ledger technology (DLT) involved, nor is proof of work required to establish the validity of a transaction.

Rather, CBDCs function as straightforward digital versions of conventional bank accounts.

plemented as individual accounts with the central bank for every risdiction Alternatively those accounts could be guaranteed by the central bank, but held with a wide range of private finan-

cial institutions Simply put, Bitcoin and other proof-of-work cryptocurrencies are an environmental disaster. Worse, cryptocurrencies can be replicated without bound, further amplifying the environmental damage. As of March 29, 2021, CoinMarketCap listed 4,490 cryptocurrencies, starting with Bitcoin (with a \$1.08 trillion market cap) and followed by Ethereum (with a \$204 billion market cap).

The bottom line is clear: Bitcoin is an excessively risky and environmentally undesirable investment. It is not a sensible solution to any emerging-market problem, and it cannot possibly serve as a store of value or reliable medium of exchange. The sooner it and other DLT-based cryptocurrencies are relegated to a footnote in economic history, the better.

> The writer is Visiting Professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University.

> > ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

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

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B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Expand vaccination

Sir, Apropos, "Vaccination for 45+ begins today', Orissa Post, April 1. As the vaccination drive opens for all above 45, it calls for a reinforcement of the infrastructural facilities necessary to cater to the huge mass of beneficiaries now eligible for the jabs along with the 60-plus, who would turn up to the vaccination centres duly for their second shot as their four-to-eight week period between the two doses closes in. With COVID positivity rising among the younger population, the government would do well to include people above 18, especially who are willing to take jab. Making the largest number immunogenic to the virus is crucial to break the chain of transmission. At the same time, the authorities need to stay focused on and constantly review the efforts to check the spread of the rapidly escalating cases of COVID-19 infections and deaths. Driven largely by the highly transmissible UK variant of the coronavirus that has struck the country, the surge has given rise to a grave situation. Any laxity or complacency in following the COVID-appropriate behaviour at both the individual and institutional (both government and private) levels is fraught with serious repercussions. Irresponsible actions have the potential to spin our hardpressed health system out of control. Ramping up sampling and testing of random people in crowded places and contacts of COVID patients is urgently needed to contain the virus. Only then can we avoid another lockdown.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Encourage bilateral trade

Sir, Pakistan's decision to allow imports from India is a welcome move. Pakistan is finally permitting the import of yarn and five lakh tonnes of sugar from the country. This will help India to explore the market and reduce carry overstock for the following season, Earlier, Pakistan had stopped the import of cotton and yarn from India after political fallout over the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir in August last year. Pakistani textile manufacturers have been demanding that imports from India be allowed, as it would be a cheaper option for them. Both nations should come forward to encourage bilateral trade by creating livelihood for the people. Resumption of trade between the two neighbours will also go a long way in improving the bilateral relationship between the two nations. It is a welcome move that the process has already begun.

Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)



TWO STATES



OrissaPOST

SATURDAY | APRIL 3 | 2021 | BHUBANESWAR

Mukhtar Ansari's ambulance papers fake

ANSARI'S WIFE HAS WRITTEN TO PRESIDENT RAM NATH KOVIND, EXPRESSING FEARS THAT HE MIGHT BE KILLED IN A FAKE **ENCOUNTER WHILE BEING TRANSFERRED FROM PUNJAB TO UTTAR PRADESH FOLLOWING A SUPREME COURT DIRECTION**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Barabanki (UP), April 2: A case has been registered here after the documents of an Uttar Pradesh registration number ambulance. used to transport gangster-turned politician Mukhtar Ansari to a Mohali court, were found to be fake.

The BSP MLA from Mau, who is wanted in Uttar Pradesh for various cases, was produced before a Mohali court March 31 in connection with an alleged 2019 extortion.

Amid tight security arrangements, Ansari was taken to court in a wheelchair. He was sent back to Punjab's Rupnagar jail in an ambulance after the appearance.

"After an initial probe, the name and address given for the registration of the ambulance were found to be false. An FIR in this regard has been registered by an additional road transport officer against Dr Alka Rai, whose name was given for



the registration of the ambulance," a senior police official said.

The FIR was registered under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code, including 420 (forgery), 471 (fraudulently or dishonestly using documents as genuine), 467 (forgery of valuable security) and 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating).

Superintendent of Police, Yamuna Prasad said acting on media reports that Ansari was produced in a court in Punjab on an ambulance with the registration number of Barabanki, police teams probed the matter and found that documents such as PAN, electoral photo id card and others were fake.

'The address on which these documents were made was also found to be wrong," he said.

The Supreme Court had recently directed the Punjab government to hand over the custody of Ansari to the Uttar Pradesh Police, saying it was being denied on trivial grounds under the guise of medical issues.

The apex court had also said that a convict or an undertrial prisoner, who disobeys the law of the land, cannot oppose his transfer from one prison to another and courts are not to be a helpless bystander when the rule of law is being challenged with impunity.

The court had said the custody of Ansari be handed over to Uttar Pradesh within two weeks so as to lodge him in Banda district jail in Uttar Pradesh.

The apex court had also noted that

Ansari was allegedly involved in various cases like attempt to murder, murder, cheating and conspiracy apart from offences under the Gangsters Act, lodged in Uttar Pradesh and out of them, 10 cases are at the stages of trial.

Ansari's wife has written to President Ram Nath Kovind, expressing fears that he might be killed in a fake encounter while being transferred from Punjab to Uttar Pradesh following a Supreme Court direction.

His brother, BSP MP from Ghazipur, Afzal Ansari told PTI, "To divert attention from the life threat to Mukhtar, BJP government is making wheelchair and ambulance an issue.'

"If the BJP is making Mukhtar Ansari a 2022 election agenda, we and our supporters will also make vindictive action of the government against their family an issue,

Mansuri had met

Chief Minister Yogi

solve his problem

name in the video, said.

Adityanath approaching

Interestingly, Azeem Mansuri

had even approached former Uttar

Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh

the police to help him

Dalit youth held captive, tortured by 4 over affair



have been

and provisions of the

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lakhimpur Kheri (UP), April 2: A 22-year-old Dalit man was allegedly held captive and tortured by four people on suspicion that he was having an affair with a girl of their family, police said Friday.

The man's family members had claimed that an iron rod was also inserted in his rectum, but Circle Officer Pradeep Kumar Verma, who is investigating the case, denied the charge, saying the medical examination and

probe so far indicate this is not

true. "The accused have been arrested and the victim is under treatment at the district hospital. His condition has been stated to be serious," police

said. According to police, Wednesday night, the Dalit man was mercilessly beaten up by the accused, causing injuries to his private parts.

Tikonia Station House Officer Gyan Prakash Tiwari said, "On the complaint by the victim's brother, an FIR was registered against four persons.'

"They have been charged under

Wednesday night, the Dalit man was mercilessly beaten up by the accused, on suspicion that he was having an affair with a girl of their family

Indian Penal Code sections 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt) and 506 (criminal

intimidation), and provisions of the SC/ST charged under Indian (Prevention of **Penal Code sections 323** Atrocities) Act," he (punishment for voluntari causing hurt) and 506 They had sus-(criminal intimidation), pected that the man

was having an af-

SC/ST (Prevention of fair with their **Atrocities) Act** kin. "All the four accused, Bramhadeen GYAN PRAKASH TIWARI I STATION and his three sons Bharat, Gajraj

and Raju, have been arrested,' he said notifying that a probe into the matter is on.

Circle Officer Verma said that the claim that an iron rod was inserted in the man's rectum was found un-

"The medical examination and probe so far indicate that the allegation of insertion of iron rod in his rectum is not true," he said.

2 arrested in nun harassment row PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jhansi (UP), April 2: Two people have been arrested for breach of peace and misbehavior in connection with last month's alleged harassment of nuns here, police said

Two nuns and two postulants were taken off an express train and detained for questioning by railway police in Jhansi March 19 after local Bajrang Dal activists complained that two women were allegedly being taken forcibly for religious conversion.

"On Thursday night, during patrolling on the station, SHO, GRP, Sunil Kumar Singh got information that two persons were arguing with policemen near booking hall," said

Gangrape claims

Neem Khan Mansuri Circle officer, Government Railway Police (GRP),

"They were threatening to launch an agitation claiming that police did not act properly and let the nuns go," he said. "No action had been taken against these two earlier in the case. However, after this, Anchal Arjaria and Purukes Amraya, members of a Hindu outfit, were arrested for breach of peace and their role in misbehaving with the nuns," he added.

After the issue of nuns being forced off the train came to light last month, the police had said there was no basis in the complaint by the Bairang Dal activists and all four women later took the next train to their destination in Odisha

SHAMLI COPS PLAY CUPID FOR WEDDING OF 2-FT TALL MAN

Shamli (UP), April 2: Azeem Mansuri (26), a two-ft-tall man, has finally received two marriage proposals and this young man is now hopeful of getting married in the coming weeks.

Last month, Mansuri had made headlines when he approached the police with a request to find him a bride. The police were expectedly surprised at this unusual request but promised to help nevertheless.

Mansuri is a Class 5 dropout who currently runs a cosmetic store. He blames his height—rather, a lack of it—on his inability to find a partner. After his story went viral, Mansuri started receiving marriage proposals. There is one from Ghaziabad and Mansuri is rather



keen on it. Another woman has proposed to Mansuri on WhatsApp. "You are alone, I am alone, I live in Delhi

and I want to marry you," the

Yadav in 2019 to help him find a bride. He had also met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and then approached the police to help him

solve his 'problem'. The youngest of six siblings from a Kairana-based family, Mansuri has faced taunts and insults in

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

another life

Meerut (UP), April 2: On her way back home from tuition, a class 10 student was allegedly abducted and raped following which she committed suicide after returning home at his village in Meerut district, police said on

Friday. The girl belonging to a village under the Sardhana Kotwali area consumed poison after returning home on Thursday evening, said police adding she died in the hospital during the treatment.



The police, on the basis of a suicide note left by the girl, have arrested two of the accused and have launched a manhunt to nab two others

Meerut's Rural Superintendent of Police Keshav Kumar said four youths were involved in abducting and raping the girl and the police, on the basis of a suicide note left by the girl, have arrested two of the accused and have launched a manhunt to nab two others.

In her suicide note, the girl had named four persons, including neighbouring village residents Lakhan, son of Sanjay, and Vikas, son of Balwant alias Murali, besides two others

Lakahn and Vikas have been arrested while the police are on the lookout for two others, the SP said.

The SP said the girl was abducted by four youths of Kapasad village and raped in a tower near her house. After returning home, she narrated her woes to her parents and consumed some poisonous substance sometime later, prompting her parents to rush her to the SSD Global Hospital in Modipuram, where she died during the treatment.

Modi colluded with IT officials for raids: Stalin

gave reservation to

the Most Backward

Communities including the Vanniyars. It was

DMK that categorised

Kongu Vellala Gounder as a backward class

provided reservation to them

M.K. STALIN I DMK PRESIDENT AND CHIEF MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE

community and

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

M.K. Stalin on Friday hit out at was arrested under MISA and I

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of "colluding" with officials to conduct raids on DMK functionaries after Income Tax searched premises of his daughter Senthamarai, and asserting that his party cannot be intimated by such threats.

Addressing a poll programme at Jayankondam in Ariyalur, Stalin said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached Madurai yesterday night. He conducted meetings with IT officials to conduct raid on the

premises of DMK functionaries." He said that 30 IT officials had conducted raids at his daughter's residence and 100 policemen were

deployed outside. "We are DMK and we cannot be Chennai, April 2: DMK President intimidated by the Income Tax or and Chief Ministerial candidate CBI raids and we don't fear that. I

> raids," he said. Noting that such raids were conducted at the premises of AIADMK leaders earlier, he said. "AIADMK is now controlled by the Central government using the central agencies. This is DMK and we won't budge an inch by

cannot be cowed

down by these

such threats. He said that with only 3 days remaining for elections, the Income Tax raids were aimed to confine DMK leaders and workers at their homes. "This won't

work for DMK cadre. This is a different party and the people of Tamil Nadu will give their answers to this on April 6, the election day."

No MLAs in DMK-led front can be purchased by BJP: Cong leader

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Coimbatore, April 2: "None of the MLAs in the DMK-led alliance from Tamil Nadu can be purchased by the alleged power-hungry BJP as was done in many of the states," Opposition Congress Leader in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjuna Kharge said on Friday.

"It was impossible and nobody can buy any MLA from Tamil Nadu," Kharge told reporters while replying to a question after he accused BJP of encouraging defection and toppling of governments by purchasing MLAs in States like Goa, Manipur, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh

"MLAs in Tamil Nadu are welleducated, highly qualified and fight for social justice; they cannot be

purchased," Kharge said. Terming BJP as a poisonous snake, Kharge said that the party was implementing RSS ideology of dividing people on religious and communal basis, which was evident from the violence during the visit of Uttar Pradesh Chief

Minister Yogi Adityanath to the



lives of people have become miserable and growth of all ses, MSMEs, textile and agriculture sectors have declined MALLIKARIUNA KHARGE I

CONGRESS LEADER

city two days ago.

'From demonetisation to GST, the lives of people have become miserable and growth of all businesses, MSMEs, textile and agriculture sectors have declined," he said.

Referring to the criticism by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that Congress has no achievements during its 70 years of rule, he said the party has ensured right to education, food security up to 2014 while BJP government has destroyed the economy.

"Modi takes decision without thinking, without consulting and takes the nation backwards," Kharge

said. On the criticism of dynasty politics, he said that after former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, there was no Prime Minister from the Gandhi

As far as AIADMK was concerned, there was no Anna or Amma and it was only Amit ShahADMK,

he added Asked about the IT raids on the premises of son-in-law of DMK president, M K Stalin and DMK leaders, he said this was the method in which the BJP government functions i.e. by threatening the opposition through various agencies.

Over 3 crore people want temples freed from govt grip: Isha-

Coimbatore, April 2: "In just a the 'FreeTNTemples' campaign has been endorsed by more than three crore people," the founder of Isha Foundation Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev has said.

"Not only have the citizens of this state spoken their will, so have spiritual leaders of the community who have long sought this reform," he said in his second letter to the Chief Minister K Palaniswami and Opposition

Leader M K Stalin. Also, Vasudev posted an appeal to the leaders on his Twitter handle saying, "Hereby, I convey the heartfelt wishes of over 3 crore Tamils. As responsible political leaders, I beseech that you liberate temples, the core of Dravidian pride, to be always remembered as the restorers of the soul of TN to its full glory & possibility." He urged the Chief minister and the Opposition Leader to make a promise to the Tamil people that their beloved temples will be given back to them under your leadership.

DMK goes with Stalin's Kolathur segment, AIADMK fields Rajaram

AGENCIES

Chennai, April 2: The DMK men are in an upbeat mood in the Kolathur constituency. They are bullish about their party president MK Stalin's re-election for the third straight time from this city segment which, they say, he nurtured for a decade though being in the

The DMK's campaign appeared to be the most visible with propaganda at a feverish pace across the segment for April 6 Assembly polls and Stalin is the party's Chief Minister candidate

DMK's electioneering is driven by several teams like a small group of men affiliated to the Labour Progressive Front, party's trade union wing led by a man in his 50's, who criss-cross the nook and cran-

nies off Paper Mills Road holding LPF-DMK flags and distributing pamphlets."Support DMK for creating job opportunities and to protect the rights of workers," he told a resident as 'trade union people' of Centre's rail coach making unit, Integral Coach Factory which is nearby, joined them.

Young women, separately, go door to door giving away pamphlets that list out the 'achievements' of 'Anitha Achievers Academy', an initiative by Stalin to train students free of cost from middle, low income and poor families in accounting software, Tally and tailoring.

"Over 500 students have been trained in Tally and all of them have been provided laptops free of cost and 395 women have learnt tailoring and got motorised sewing



distributed the pamphlet proudly claimed. 'Placements' were also fa-

cilitated for them, she added. The AIADMK camp is counting

schemes and poll promises like free houses for those who do not own any and Rs 1.500 assistance per month to people. The ruling party is

■ The AIADMK camp is counting on its government's slew of welfare schemes and poll promises like free houses for those who do not own anv and Rs 1.500 assistance per month to people.

■ DMK is highlighting 'Anitha Achievers Academy', an initiative by Stalin to train students free of cost from middle, low income and poor families in accounting software Tally and tailoring

 Rajaram gave Stalin a run for his money in the Thousand Lights segment in 2006 and the DMK leader managed to win by a whisker, a margin of 2,468 votes that year

nee Aadi Rajaram to take on Stalin.

warhorse who was once praised by

Rajaram is a noted party

Ruling party men take pride in recalling that Rajaram gave Stalin a run for his money in the Thousand Lights segment in 2006 and the DMK leader managed to win by a whisker, a margin of 2,468 votes that year. It was over a decade ago and now

vals but also party backstabbers.

the people 'desired' Stalin's leadership and he would win by a huge margin, DMK workers countered. They recalled Stalin's promise that Kolathur would be developed into a model segment and 'this will also be the CM's constituency.'

The extent to which the DMK is focusing in this constituency could be gauged from the fact that a small stretch of Red Hills Road in Kolathur alone has two 'Therdal Panimanai'-(Election work stations that teem

late AIADMK supremo Jayalalithaa machines for free," a woman who on its government's slew of welfare also pinning its hopes on its nomifor resolutely opposing not only riwith party men).





national



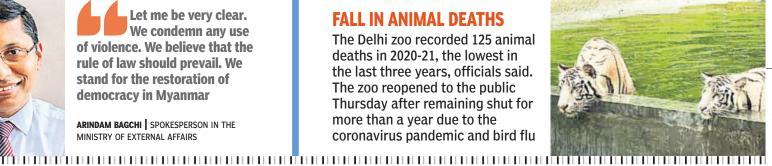
Let me be very clear. We condemn any use of violence. We believe that the rule of law should prevail. We stand for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar

ARINDAM BAGCHI | SPOKESPERSON IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

FALL IN ANIMAL DEATHS

The Delhi zoo recorded 125 animal deaths in 2020-21, the lowest in the last three years, officials said. The zoo reopened to the public Thursday after remaining shut for more than a year due to the coronavirus pandemic and bird flu





It's a matter of concern since exponentially. But there is no need to

government is monitoring the situation and taking all necessary

ARVIND KEJRIWAL DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

The total revenue collection by the Excise and **Taxation** Department in Himachal Pradesh in

FY 2020-21 has surpassed the previous financial year's figures by 3 per cent despite the Covid-19

JAI RAM THAKUR HIMACHAL PRADESH CM

Raiding the opposition is the BJP's coping mechanism when facing electoral defeat



RAHUL GANDHI CONGRESS LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Robert Vadra tests covid+ve

New Delhi: Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has cancelled her campaign schedule of Assam. Tamil Nadu and Kerala after her husband Robert Vadra tested Covid-19 positive. However, she has tested negative. She has released a video message apologising to the people, saying that doctors have advised her to he in self-isolation, so she is following the guideline.

Four killed in road accident

Jaipur: Four people, including a couple, were killed Friday when a truck carrying marble stone overturned on a car passing by it in Rajasthan's Pali district, police said. All four killed in the accident were in the car on which the truck overturned on NH-62 near Balrai village of the district, Endla police station's SHO Bihari Lal Sharma said. The killed people were identified as Ashwani Sharma, his wife Rashmi, relative Manoj Sharma and driver Buddha Ram, the SHO said.

Woman found dead

New Delhi: A 26-year-old woman was found dead Friday inside her rented accommodation in northwest Delhi's Mangolpuri area, police said. The deceased has been identified as Jyoti, they said. On Friday at 10.52 am, police got information that a woman's body was lying on the fourth floor of a house in Mangolpuri area, a senior police officer said. Police reached the spot where the deceased was found lying with injury marks on her head and right side of the face, the officer said.

India pitches for early disengagement



Indian, Chinese troops and tanks disengage from the banks of Pangong lake area in Eastern Ladakh

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 2: India Friday hoped that China will work with it to ensure disengagement of troops in remaining areas of eastern Ladakh at the earliest, and asserted that de-escalation of tension alone will lead to restoration of peace and tranquility in border areas and provide conditions for progress of bilateral ties.

At a media briefing, Spokesperson in the Ministry of External Affairs Arindam Bagchi said the two sides continue to remain in touch through military and diplomatic channels on the issue. He also referred to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's comments that a prolongation of the situation is in neither side's interest.

We, therefore, hope that the Chinese side will work with us to ensure that disengagement in the remaining areas is completed at the earliest," he added.

This, he said, would allow both sides to consider de-escalation of forces in eastern Ladakh as that

alone will lead to the restoration of peace and tranquility and provide conditions for progress of the bilateral relationship. Bagchi also said that there was a consensus that the two sides should now quickly resolve the remaining issues in the region.

"The disengagement in Pangong Lake area was a significant step forward and it has provided a good basis for resolution of other remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control in western sector," he said. Bagchi said the two sides had detailed exchange of views on the remaining issues both at the the senior commanders' meeting and the discussions held under the framework of Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on border affairs.

Following the disengagement in the Pangong lake area, India and China held the 10th round of military talks, the WMCC meeting besides a telephonic conversation between the foreign ministers of the two countries.

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

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed withdrawal of troops and weapons from the North and South banks of Pangong lake in February in line with an agreement on disengagement.

In the subsequent military talks on February 20, India insisted on resolution of outstanding issues including in Depsang, Hot Springs and Gogra. India has been insisting that peace and tranquility along the border is essential for overall ties between the two countries.

Last week, Army Chief Gen MM Naravane said that the threat to India has only "abated" following the disengagement in Pangong lake areas but it has not gone away al-

The infection is caused by the varicella-zoster virus Chickenpox spreading rapidly in Gaya

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, April 2: There is a chickenpox breakout reported in Bihar's Gaya district. Hundreds of patients from all age groups have been affected, according to village officials.

Banshraj Bigha and Boknari villages under the Paraiya Khurd block have reported many cases. Villagers from Paraiya Khurd are blaming the district administration for not visiting the affected areas

The chickenpox infection is caused by the varicella-zoster virus. It causes itchy rash with small, fluid-filled blisters. It is highly contagious to people who haven't had the disease or been vaccinated against it.

Villages like Vanshraj Bigha



and Boknari are said to be the hotspots with more than 100 patients in the age group of two to 80 being affected.

Mathura Prasad Vidyarthi, resident of Boknari village and father of Uri-attack 'martyr' Sunil Kumar Vidvarthi, told the media that the state government has completely failed in rising to the occasion.

"Health officials of Gaya have never visited our village since the chicken pox break out began," Vidyarthi said.

'When my son died in the Uri attack, the state government had announced to open a primary health center in our village. It has not happened yet," Vidyarthi said.

Rahul Kumar, a resident of Boknari village said: "My 5-yearold son got chicken pox. For a week he was sick. We did not have any medicines for the disease. We just prayed to the goddess (Mata Rani) and kept the patient in-

Sunaina, another villager, told the media that over 100 people are affected with the chicken pox breakout. "Our village head (Mukhiya) and Sarpanch informed health officials about the contagious viral breakout but no one has come here for inspection.'

Maha faces acute shortage of blood

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 2: As the Covid-19 pandemic hits Maharashtra again, a massive shortage of blood, like in the middle of 2020, looms ahead, sending panic signals afresh among the health authorities.

The State Blood Transfusion Council (STBC) has alerted the state government after which the situation is being monitored on a daily basis, it was announced on Friday.

Food and Drugs Administration Minister Dr Rajendra Shingane revealed that the average availability of blood stocks is barely sufficient to last a week in the state, putting a question mark on routine or emergency surgeries and other blood requirements by hospitals.

There is a huge shortage of blood in major cities like Mumbai, Thane, Pune... the availability is for 6-7 days, in some other districts it may be around 10-11 days Collections need to be ramped up drastically," he urged. Housing Minister Dr Jitendra Awhad urged the youth to organise blood donation camps or come forward vol-



untarily and donate blood while adhering to all Covid protocols.

Mumbai social worker Rakesh Upadhyay said that though there is not much requirement for blood among Covid-19 patients, the blood collection cycle has virtually stopped since the past 12 months owing to the pandemic and lockdown. The blood banks in Maharashtra

face an acute shortage of blood... It is the dire need of the hour and people should step forward to donate blood, voluntarily and selflessly, as it's a noble and humanitarian case," Awhad appealed.

The state government has also called upon political parties, NGOs, social organisations and the corporates to undertake blood donation camps and encourage the youngsters to donate blood.

Eateries, bars, malls to be shut for a week in Pune

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, April 2: Eateries, bars and restaurants in Pune district of Maharashtra will remain shut for seven days starting April 3 in view of the spike in coronavirus cases of late, a senior official said

A curfew will be in place across the district from 6 pm to 6 am, and malls, cinema halls and places of religious worship will also be shut during this seven-day period, he said.

The administration introduced these "stricter restrictions" in the district, which reported more than 8,000 COVID-19 cases in the past two consecutive days. The decision to impose these curbs was taken during a review meeting chaired by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar here Friday. "These stricter restrictions will

be applicable for seven days from Saturday, As part of it, there will be a curfew from 6 pm to 6 am. Eateries, bars and restaurants will remain closed, but home delivery of the food will continue," Pune divisional commissioner Saurabh Rao said.

Ambani security scare probe: NIA questions club owner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 2: The National Investigation Agency which is probing the case related to a bomb scare near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence here on Friday recorded the statement of the owner of a club, said an official.

The agency had conducted searches at the 'social club' located inside a hotel in south Mumbai Friday. The NIA is probing alleged links of its owner with cricket bookie Naresh Gor and suspended police constable Vinayak Shinde, the official said. The club owner was seen arriving at the NIA office around 11 am and left around 4.50 pm.





Devotees offer prayers outside Sacred Heart Cathedral Church, in New Delhi. Entry was restricted with prior

DNA test gives clean chit to rape accused

THIS YOUNG MAN WAS FALSELY BOOKED FOR RAPE AND SPENT 26 MONTHS IN JAIL BEFORE THE DNA TEST ON THE SURVIVOR'S CHILD PROVED THAT HE WAS NOT THE BIOLOGICAL FATHER

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh), April 2: This young man was falsely booked for rape and spent 26 months in jail before the DNA test on the survivor's child proved that he was not the biological father.

Amit Kumar, 24, was accused of raping and impregnating a minor girl at his Dattawali village in

Amit, who was working in Faridabad, had come to his village to attend the marriage of his elder brother in July 2018.

Seven months later, he was summoned by the police in February 2019 and accused of raping the girl. His mother and sister-in-law had already been detained. Amit rushed back and was arrested.



Amit's father, Sajjan Singh, told reporters that he had a dispute with the survivor's father over a piece of land and the case was set up to set-



Amit was charged with rape and under sections of the POCSO Act while his elder brother, Chandra Shekhar, was charged with voluntarily causing hurt. With his younger

brother Sunil and a distant relative Teekshan Pal, he was also booked for criminal intimidation and house trespass at the Barla police

Chandrashekhar got bail, and Sunil and Teekshan's names were later removed from the charge sheet because there was not enough evidence against them. Amit was lodged in the Aligarh

district jail. Amit's lawyer Hariom Varshney said they pleaded before the court for a DNA test of the survivor's child to ascertain whether Amit was guilty of having raped her which led to pregnancy. The survivor came with the child

at the hospital in the fifth attempt and the samples of Amit and the child were taken in March last year.

The report came last month which

stated that Amit was not the biological father of the child.

"It is apparent that the FIR was lodged after considerable delay, that too, when pregnancy was detected. The victim alleged that the same was a result of rape committed by Amit but DNA report submitted in sealed envelope and opened before this Court reveals that applicant is not the biological father. The bail has finally been granted by the Allahabad High Court," Varshney said. Aligarh SSP Kalanidhi Naithani, meanwhile, said the police would seek legal opinion from the joint director of prosecution after going over the case diary.

Amit's counsel said that his next step will be to apply for his client's discharge from all charges under which he was booked.

No ban on export of Covid vax: MEA

India is one of the world's biggest drugmakers, an increasing number of countries have already approached it for procuring anti-coronavirus vaccines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi. April 2: Asserting that India has not imposed any export ban on anti-coronavirus vaccines, the Ministry of External Affairs on Friday said the country has taken the lead in sending vaccines abroad with over 640 lakh doses supplied to more than 80 countries till now.

Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi also said the ministry's 'Vaccine Maitree' initiative to supply vaccines abroad has been "very successful and very well liked" by our partners

across the world. "As on date, under the 'Vaccine Maitree' initiative, we have supplied a total of about 644 lakh doses to the global community and of these, 104 lakh doses have been supplied as a grant, 357 lakh doses on a commercial basis and 182 lakh doses through the COVAX initiative," Bagchi said at an online media briefing. With regard to the demand for made-in-India vaccines, many countries across the world have been requesting for their supply, he said. "I don't have an exact number for what is the demand

(for the vaccines) because it is a request based on the requirement of countries," Bagchi said. The 'Vaccine Maitree' initiative has been extremely successful and very well liked by our partners across the world and "we are continuing to try to supply to the extent possible given our domestic requirements", Bagchi said. Asked about reports that Nepal

has approached India to procure 5 million more vaccine doses but has not got any response, he said India has taken the lead on sending vaccines abroad. "No country has shared with

the world the number of vaccines that India has while vaccinating its own population. Till now, we have supplied vaccines to more than 80 countries across in the world and we have already stated that our external supplies would be done keeping in mind our domestic requirements," the MEA spokesperson said.

"At this time, I hope our partners understand that vaccines are primarily purposed for domestic consumption. I want to emphasise that we have not imposed any export ban on vaccines," Bagchi asserted.







national



BJP is not interested in the development of **Pondicherry** V NARAYANASAMY

SENIOR CONGRESS

SIGNAL IS FASTEST GROWING APP

Amid the brouhaha over new and controversial WhatsApp privacy policy that is set to come into force from May 15, privacy-focused messaging app Signal became the fastest-growing app globally, including in India, both in downloads and monthly active users (MAUs) in the first quarter last year, according to a new report.





BJP has won more than 50 seats out of 60 in the first two phase of Bengal polls, Didi (Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee) herself is losing from

AMIT SHAH UNION HOME MINISTER

IT raids on Stalin ji's son in law is yet another example of **GOI** hounding political oppon through their trusted agencies



MEHBOOBA MUFTI PDP PRESIDENT

Parkash Singh Badal had promised to extend free power facility to farmers for agricultural operations and

fulfilled this commitment in the very first cabinet meeting after assuming power in the state

SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL | SAD CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

Fake call centre busted

New Delhi: Twenty-five employees of a fake call centre here have been apprehended for allegedly duping US nationals, Delhi Police officials said Friday. The call centre was in Saidullajab in south Delhi's Mehrauli area, they said. Its employees used to dupe US nationals by asking them to pay membership fees on the pretext of providing them US government grants for unemployed persons and handicapped persons, police said.

Senior citizen killed by tiger

Seoni (MP): A 62-year-old man was killed by a tiger in a field near Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh Seoni district Friday, an official said. The incident took place in Ghatkohka buffer area at around 5am and the deceased has been identified as Ghasiram Verma, Pench field director Vikram Singh Parihar said. "He was collecting mahua seeds. The tiger mauled him to death and then went back into the forest," he said in a statement.

Four Naxals surrender

Narayanpur: Four Naxals, three of them collectively carrying a reward of Rs 7 lakh on their heads. surrendered before the police in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district Friday, an official said. The cadres, including three women, turned themselves in before the police citing disappointment with the "hollow" ideology of the Maoist movement and increasing pressure of the security forces, Narayanpur superintendent of police Mohit Garg said in a statement.

6 people drown

Hyderabad: In a tragic incident, six people drowned in Godavari river in Telangana Friday. The incident occurred at the VIP Pushkar Ghat at Pochampahad in Nizamabad district. Police said rescue workers pulled out five bodies while search was on for the sixth.

Farmer hangs self

Bilaspur: A 58-year-old farmer allegedly committed suicide in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur district Friday after he reportedly did not get a duplicate copy of a document of his land from a local revenue official, police said in a statement.

'Concern over nCoV cases in 11 states/UTs'

New Delhi, April 2: The Central government on Friday said that the coronavirus situation in 11 states/Union Territories is a matter of "serious concern" and urged the Chief Secretaries and Directors General of Police concerned to take appropriate action in this regard.

The directions were given during a review meeting Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba held with Chief Secretaries, DGP and Health Secretaries of Maharashtra, Puniab. Karnataka, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Chandigarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Haryana.

These states and Union Territories have been reporting a very high rise in daily Covid cases and mortalities in the last two weeks. India recorded 81,466 new coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours, the highest since October 2020

Taking note of the present situation due to the continuous deterioration of the Covid scenario over the fortnight, the Cabinet Secretary pointed out that the current Covid case growth rate of 6.8 per cent in March 2021 has surpassed the previous record of 5.5 per cent (June 2020).

The country also reported 5.5

Active cases in India J&K 2874 Ladakh 267 Punjab **24644** -HP 3221 WB 6513 Uttarakhand **2236** UP **11918** Sikkim 4 Rajasthan 9563 MP 17096 Gujarat 18057 Dadar & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu 191 Chhattisgarh 28987 Maharashtra 367897 Telengana 6159 Goa **1716**----Karnataka **30884** -Andhra Pradesh 8142 Puducherry 1290 duding foreign Nationals) | **(more than 70% cases due to comorbidities) | # Figures re being reconciled with ICMR | # States wise distribution is subject to further v on as an 2/4/2021 at 8:00 AM Source: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

per cent growth rate in daily Covid deaths in this period. While India was reporting about 97,000 daily new Covid cases at the peak of the pandemic in September 2020, it has now reached the critical figure of 81,000 daily new cases.

In a detailed presentation, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan highlighted the current trajectory of Covid in the states and UTs while Information and Broadcasting Secretary Amit Khare showcased ways of effective behavioural change

communication to instil Covid appropriate behaviour among the populace.

Niti Aayog's Member Health. Dr V.K. Paul emphasised on need for states to follow a protocol for sharing clinical and epidemiological data for more detailed study of mutant strain of virus for genome sequencing.

Union Home Secretary A.K. Bhalla pointed out that the 11 states and UTs that are showing a surge in daily Covid cases have not shown

commensurate increase in enforcement of containment activities, and urged the Chief Secretaries and DGPs of the states and UTs for taking appropriate strict action in this regard.

These states and UTs were categorised as "states of grave concern" on account of their high and rising daily case and higher daily deaths. These have contributed 90 per cent of Covid cases (as on March 31) and 90.5 per cent of deaths (as on March 31) in last 14 days, and have crossed or close to crossing their early reported peaks during

It was pointed out the situation was particularly worrying in Maharashtra, and the state administration was advised to take up immediate and high-effective measures to ensure containment of active cases and daily deaths through adherence of the standard clinical management protocol shared earlier with all states and UTs

Another worrisome aspect pointed out was that Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, along with peri-urban areas have recorded the recent high rises in Covid cases, and how the spread of infection from these areas to the rural areas with weak health infrastructure would overwhelm the local administration was also

Mamata broke model code of conduct: BJP

Kolkata, April 2: The Trinamool Congress Friday complained to the Election Commission of partisan behaviour by central police forces in favour of its rival BJP, while the saffron party made a counter-complaint that Chief Minister Mamata Benerjee had violated the model code of conduct by being inside a polling booth in Nandigram for two hours on polling day.

A high level Trinamool Congress delegation, led by Yashwant Sinha, former Cabinet minister and now TMC vice president and state minister Subrata Mukherjee, met the Chief Electoral Officer Aariz Aftab with its complaint alleging central police forces acted with partiality in favour of the BJP at certain polling centers. Soon afterwards, a BJP delegation led BJP leader Sishir Bajoria and former governor Tathagata Roy told the Chief Electoral Officer that the chief minister's presence inside the booth for two hours disrupted the polling process and was against the model code of conduct.

Sinha told reporters after meeting Aftab that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home



Minister Amit Shah are influencing the poll process by passing on instruction from Delhi

"We have told them, the role of central forces have been partial in many booths in the first two phases. There have been incidents of violence and attacks on our party supporters by BJP. We have asked the EC to see to it this was not repeated in the next six phases," Sinha said. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday had also accused central forces deployed in Nandigram constituency, where she is locked in battle with her former lieutenant, Suvendu Adhikari now with the BJP, of helping the saffron party Central police forces function under the home ministry, which is headed by

Akhilesh's dream project in shambles



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agra, April 2: The total neglect and failure to maintain the 207 km-long cycle track from Etawah to Agra, the Rs 133 crore dream project of former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, has reduced it to a state of shambles.

No longer does the ruined cycle track attract fitness freaks. The concrete lavered cycle track through wilderness and ravines of the Yamuna, never found patrons, in fact. Long-distance runner and cycling maniac Pramod Katara said that "vil-

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 2: China said that

it has shared all data and analyses

with the experts of the World Health

Organization (WHO) tracing the

origin of Covid-19, and it is ready

to continue working with global

experts to jointly study and analyse

The joint study group of WHO

and China to trace the origin of

Covid-19 released a report two days

ago, in which it flagged that more

data will be made available to the

the data.

lagers in many stretches used the track for drying cow dung cakes, or for washing clothes"

In the Bah area, close to the dreaded Chambal ravines, the track was not even fully complete, but the Akhilesh government was in a hurry to inaugurate the project on November 26, 2016.

The cycle track with colourful pillars meandering along shady trees, had to be bulldozed in Agra, to make way for the six-lane Fatehabad road, connecting the Kheria airport with the Taj Mahal. "Since this stretch of road is frequently used by VIPs and foreign dignitaries, a plan to widen it had been there in the pipeline for a long time,' a contractor at the site along the city's Mall Road said.

But now the cycle track is used by buffaloes. In any case the project was a non-starter from the very beginning. These days how many people use cycles? Not many. Even students opt for scooters and mobikes.

"For want of security foreign tourists showed no interest, said environmentalist Shravan Kumar Singh.

prehensive and expert-led mecha-

nism to expeditiously investigate

the origin of coronavirus. The US,

the UK and several other countries

have also voiced their concerns

Reacting to India's demand, China

said that they had twice invited

WHO experts for the study of the

origin of Covid-19 and offered nec-

essary facilitation for the team's

work, fully demonstrating its open-

ness, transparency and responsible

attitude. China further said that

the joint study group tracing the ori-

over the findings.

Shared all data with WHO

to probe Covid origins: China

FOLK SHOW



Artists perform Rabha Folk dance Hamja during an election rally of BJP in Kamrup district, Assam

Liquor shops in Chhindwara open amid lockdown

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chhindwara (Madhya Pradesh), April 2: A three-day complete lockdown has been imposed in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district from Friday, following the surge in coronavirus cases in the district. While all shops and markets are closed, liquor shops are still open and the Congress has slammed the ad-

ministration for this. Congress spokesperson Sved Jafar tweeted: "Stop fudging the Covid-19 figures in Chhindwara, even after so many deaths the officials sitting in the district administration and the state Health ministry are found sleeping just like 'Kumbhakaran'. Shivraj Singh Chouhan ji, if you have time, take the feedback of people in Chhindwara where the three-day lockdown has been imposed, but the liquor shops are open." Chhindwara SP Vivek Agarawal said that the liquor shops are open as the guidemention of their closure.

'Stones pelted at Tikait's convoy'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, April 2: Stones were allegedly pelted at the convoy of farmer leader Rakesh Tikait in Rajasthan's Alwar district, damaging the rear windshield of his car. Police have detained a student leader, who the Bhartiva Kisan Union claimed, belonged to ABVP, the student wing of the BJP, and accused the party of being behind

Tikait, however, was not in his car when the stones were allegedly adding no one was injured in the incident. The incident took place when Tikait's convoy reached Tatarpur chauraha on its way to his second rally venue, the SP said, adding the farmer leader addressed two rallies in the district Friday.

He said Kuldeep Rai, a student leader of Alwar-based Matsya University, along with his supporters showed black flags when the cavalcade was passing. "At this, some of the cars stopped and their occupants in the vehicles argued with them over the issue. Amid all this, the windshield of one car was damaged apparently in stone pelting," the SP said. BKU's state president Rajaram Meel, who was accompanying Tikait, alleged that at least 40 to 50 people carrying sticks stopped the convoy and entered into an altercation with them. "We were moving towards Bansur after addressing the first meeting

INDIA DECLINES TO COMMENT ON **PAK'S FLIP-FLOP** ON BILATERAL TRADE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: India Friday declined to comment on Pakistan's flip-flop on plans to go for limited imports of sugar and cotton from the country.

"We have seen reports on this. But as is evident, we are not the right party to whom this question should be directed at," said Arindam Bagchi, Spokesperson in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). His response came following questions on the issue at a media briefing.

In a volte-face, Pakistan's Cabinet on Thursday rejected the proposal of a high-powered committee to import cotton and sugar from India. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said there can be no normalisation of ties until New Delhi reverses its decision to revoke the special status of Jammu and



Kashmir. The somersault came a day after the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) under newly-appointed Finance Minister Hammad Azhar on Wednesday decided to buy the two key items from India, lifting a nearly two-year-long ban on their import from the neighbouring country. Asked whether India is planning to restore the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan, Bagchi said he does not

have any information on it. India withdrew the MFN status to Pakistan following the Pulwama terror attack in 2019. To a question on whether there was any interaction between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Pakistani counterpart Qureshi in Dushanbe on the sidelines of a conference, the MEA spokesperson said he was not aware of any such interaction with the Pakistani

investigators by Beijing. gin of Covid-19 has unanimously A day after the report was reagreed that the allegation of a 'lab line from the Centre makes no pelted, Bhiwadi Superintendent in Harsoli when the incident took leased, India had demanded a comleak' is extremely unlikely. of Police Ram Murti Joshi said, Karaikal district: Where independents have more fight in them

THIS TIME. THE KARAIKAL DISTRICT OF THE UNION TERRITORY OF PONDICHERRY IS WITNESSING THE INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES GIVING A TOUGH FIGHT TO THE PARTIES. ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES IN THE PONDICHERRY REGIONS ARE SMALL WITH ABOUT 25.000-35.000 VOTERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karaikal, (Pondicherry) April 2: In every Assembly election, contestants belonging to popular political parties alone are considered as serious contenders, rarely are the independents so

This time, the Karaikal district of the Union Territory of Pondicherry is witnessing the Independent candidates giving a

toughfight to the parties. Assembly constituencies in the Pondicherry regions are small with about 25,000-

The popularity of individual candidates in the area often becomes the deciding factor in winning elections. On many occasions and in many constituencies, Independents have risen up to expectations and won the elections.

This time, three constituen-

ciesin Karaikal district - Tirunallar,

Nedunkadu, and Neravy-TR Pattinam constituencies are seeing independents as among the top contenders. In Tirunallar, former Minister and two-time MLA PR Siva is contesting as an independent. He was earlier with the AINRC.

The constituency has now been allotted to the BJP. He is taking on Congress's R Kamalakannan, who served as Agriculture Minister in the Narayanaswamy-headed

cabinet. BJP has fielded GNS

Rajasekaran. the Nedunkaduconstituency, Dr V Vigneswaran, a prominent social activist in the area, is contesting as an independent. He was previously with the DMK.

He is taking on AINRC'sS Chandrapriyanka(sitting MLA) and Congress's A

Marimuthu, former MLA. In the Neravy TR-Pattinam constituency, two independent candidates VOTE

are among the main contenders. Sitting MLA

Geetha Anandan, who was with the DMK, is contesting as an independent as she was denied a ticket this time. VMCS Rajaganapathy, son of former Minister VMC Sivakumar, is also in the fray as an independent.

They both are taking on DMK's Nagathiyagarajan and BJP's VMCS Manoharan. Interestingly, the BJP candidate and the independent VMCS Rajaganapathy are brothers. If any of the independents go on to win the elections, they might play a crucial role in the formation of the next government in the Union Territory.







nternational



This is for the first time that so many Indian-origin candidates are running for elections in **Chicago land for this upcoming Townships election. It's our time to** serve for the community we live in. It's important that Indian-Americans are represented in local body elections. JITENDRA DIGANVKER US REP LEADER

APRIL FOOL: JILL BIDEN PRANKS STAFF

Staff, secret service and press were treated to dessert by a woman with short black hair, a black face mask and nametag that read "Jasmine", who made her way through the cabins as the first lady travelled home to Washington after visiting California.





pressure and calling for sanctions or other will only aggravate

confrontation and further complicate the situation, which is by no means constructive.

ZHANG JUN UN AMBASSADOR, CHINA

As the federal increasingly complex over the years, the role of the Cabinet has evolved as well. In addition to serious policy discussions, Cabinet meetings are an opportunity for the president to lay out broad directions for how his team should operate.

CHRIS LU FORMER CABINET SECY





DR HANS KLUGE WHO

SHORT TAKES

Extremist kills self, her baby

Tunis: Tunisian authorities said a female suicide bomber killed herself and her baby during counterterrorism operations in a mountainous zone in struggling interior provinces. Two other Islamic extremists were killed in the security operations Thursday night. Tunisian forces killed one suspect, whose wife then killed herself by activating an explosive belt while holding her baby in her arms. according to the ministry.

Death threats to Italy's health minister

Rome: Police in Italy have seized computers and other devices allegedly used by four Italians to send death threats and offensive emails to the country's health minister to protest his firm stance on coronavirus lockdowns. The Carabinieri health police said Friday that the emails were sent between October and January from foreign computer servers and contained violent threats of retaliation against Health Minister Roberto Speranza and his family, "including explicit death threats."

Fire kills 3 in Rohingya camp

Cox's Bazar: A fire Friday destroyed more than 20 shops in a makeshift market near a Rohingya refugee camp in southern Bangladesh, leaving at least three people dead, Local police chief Ahmed Saniur Morshed said they recovered the bodies from the debris after it took firefighters several hours to bring the blaze under control. The fire broke out early Friday when residents of the sprawling Kutupalong camp for Myanmar's Rohingya refugees were asleep.

Pope celebrates **Holy Thursday**

Vatican City: Pope Francis celebrated a surprise Holy Thursday Mass with the cardinal he fired last year, extending an extraordinary gesture to Cardinal Angelo Becciu by celebrating the liturgy that commemorates Jesus' Last Supper with his apostles before his crucifixion. News of the celebration in Becciu's private chapel was confirmed by Becciu's private secretary. The visit carried enormous symbolic weight and could suggest Francis may have come to realise he had erred in his handling of the Becciu dossier.

US, Iran may give another **shot to N-deal**



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Brussels, April 2: Iran and the major powers in the agreement to keep Tehran from developing nuclear weapons said Friday they were ready to welcome the return of the United States to the deal.

The chair of the group including the European Union, China, France, Germany, Russia, Britain and Iran said that the participants "emphasized their commitment to preserve the JCPOA and discussed modalities to ensure the return to its full and effective implementation," according to a statement after their virtual meeting, referring to the acronym for the accord – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The group said they would resume further talks next week in Vienna on the 2015 agreement, "in order to clearly identify sanctions lifting and nuclear implementation measures. The statement also said that the

group's coordinator "will also intensify separate contacts in Vienna" with all participants of the nuclear agreement and the United

In Tehran, state television quoted Abbas Araghchi, Iran's nuclear negotiator in the Friday virtual meeting said that any "return by the U.S. to the nuclear deal does not require any negotiation and the path is quite clear.'

The US can return to the deal and stop breaching the law in the same way it withdrew from the deal and imposed illegal sanctions on Iran," Araghchi was quoted

Washington pulled out of the deal unilaterally in 2018 under President Donald Trump, but successor Joe Biden has indicated that the US would be willing to rejoin.

But there are some complications. Iran has been steadily violating the restrictions of the deal, like the amount of enriched uranium it can stockpile and the purity to which it can enrich it. Tehran's moves have been calculated to put pressure on the other nations in the deal—Russia, China, France, Germany and Britain — to do more to offset crippling sanctions reimposed under Trump.

Iran has said that before it resumes compliance with the deal, the U.S. needs to return to its own obligations under the deal by dropping the sanctions.

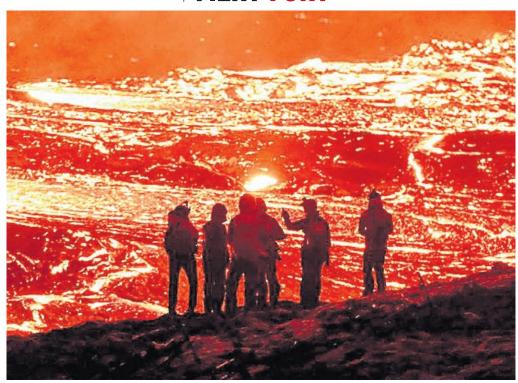
The International Atomic Energy Agency has said that over the past two years, Iran has accumulated a lot of nuclear material and new capacities, and used the time for "honing their skills in these areas."

Myanmar junta cuts internet

Myanmar, April 2: Opponents of military rule in Myanmar marched and laid bouquets of flowers Friday while trying to find alternative ways to organise their campaign of dissent after the authorities cut off most users from the internet.

A man flashes the three-finger salute as he passes burning tires during a protest against the military coup, in Mandalay, Myanmar April 1, 2021. Protests have taken place almost daily since the military overthrew the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi Feb 1. Hundreds of civilians have been killed in a crackdown by security forces that have drawn international condemnation.

Friday, security forces opened fire at a rally near Myanmar's second city Mandalay, wounding four people and 2 critical, according to three domestic media organi sations. Across the country, demonstrators left bouquets of flowers, many with messages of defiance, at places associated with activists killed by the security forces



A volcanic eruption in Geldingadalur in Iceland's Reykjanes peninsula, March 20. The volcano in Iceland spewing lava into the sky cloud continue its spectacular display for years, potentially becoming a new tourist attraction on the island known for its natural wonders.

Pak, B'desh in UK travel 'red-list'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 2: Pakistan and Bangladesh are among four additional countries added to the "red list" of nations from where travel to and from England is banned to control the spread of coronavirus. The ban announced Friday will come into effect from April 9 and also cover the Philippines and Kenva in response to concerns about new vari-**FEAR** ants of COVID-19 in those regions, like those detected in South Africa and Brazil.

India currently is not on the red list of countries, with an air bubble arrangement in operation for essential travel while non-essential international travel from the UK remains banned under current lockdown rules.

"Philippines, Pakistan, Kenya and Bangladesh have been added to

England's red list to protect the country against new variants of coronavirus (COVID-19), at a critical time for the vaccine programme," the Department for Transport (DfT) said in a state-

"With over 30 million vaccinations delivered in the UK so far, the additional restrictions will help to reduce the risk of new variants - such as those first identified in South Africa (SA) and Brazil - entering England. So far, surveillance has found that few cases of the SA variant have been identified as being imported from Europe, with most coming from other parts of the world," it said.

From 4 am local time next week Friday, international visitors who have departed from or transited

through these four additional countries on a 40-country red list in the previous 10 days will be refused entry into England.

Only British and Irish citizens, or those with residence rights in the UK (including long-term visa holders), will be allowed to enter and they must stay in a government-approved quarantine facility for 10 days.

They will also be required to arrive into a designated port. No direct flight bans from these countries will be put in place, but passengers are advised to check their travel plans before departing for England.

During their stay, all passengers linked to the red list are required to take a coronavirus test on or before day 2 and on or after day 8, and are not allowed to shorten their compulsory 10-day quarantine period on receipt of a negative test

EU nations struggle to show Covid-19 vaccine solidarity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Brussels, April 2: The European Union is struggling to show complete coronavirus vaccination solidarity among member nations, after a week of negotiations over the distribution of extra doses exposed fissures Friday. Five EU nations that struggled most to get their vaccination drive going were given extra doses from an alliance of 19 other countries. Three nations weren't part of the deal, however, showing the difficulties of compromise politics when COVID-19 cases are surging again.

At an EU summit last week, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz criticized the allocation of shots in the 27-nation bloc, saying



that some countries were receiving more than their fair share at the cost of others. EU leaders failed to agree on a correction mechanism, leaving it to their EU ambassadors.

Late Thursday a deal was reached on how to distribute an early batch of 10 million Pfizer-BioNTech doses

with Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia and Slovakia receiving a proportionally large number of doses. Austria, along with the Czech Republic and Slovenia, didn't get additional shots.

'We are grateful for the remarkable efforts" and solidarity of fellow EU member states, Latvian Prime Minister Krisjanis Karins

He said the extra shots "will bring us closer to our common goal a collective immunity across the EU." AstraZeneca shots are cheaper and easier to handle than vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna. Overall, the EU continues to lag well behind nations like the United Kingdom and United States when it comes to vaccinations.

Russia to buy anti-riot gear

Moscow, April 2: Russia has issued tenders to buy anti-riot kits and protective police gear, state procurement documents showed, ahead of a protest that allies of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny hope will be the largest in modern Russian history.

Navalny, 44, was jailed in February on charges he said were fabricated. He declared a hunger strike Wednesday in a bid to force the prison holding him to provide proper medical care for what he said was acute pain in his back and legs.

His allies, who staged three demonstrations in the winter to demand his release, said they would announce a date for a new nationwide street protest once 500,000 people had registered to attend.

tered so far. The authorities have called such street protests illegal and have pledged to break them up.

An Interior Ministry tender, published on Russia's state procurement online portal March 30, requested the provision of more than 2,000 police anti-riot kits worth some 239 million roubles (\$3.15 million). Each kit includes body armor, a helmet and leg protectors.

The ministry also issued tenders for the purchase of 1,625 protective kits, 200 helmets and more than 400 bulletproof vests

In February, the prison authority issued tenders for the purchase of hundreds of tasers, smoke grenades and protective gear after nationwide rallies in support of

Dutch PM wins no-trust motion

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

The Hague, April 2: Dutch caretaker Prime Minister Mark Rutte Friday narrowly survived a noconfidence vote called after he was accused of misinforming Parliament and actively seeking to move an inconvenient lawmaker to another position.

The premier's credibility was however seriously damaged as parliament passed a motion of disapproval, saying he had not told the truth about remarks made during coalition talks, reports dpa news agency.

At a special session Thursday, almost all parliamentary groups voiced severe criticism of the right-wing liberal premier after he gave the impression that he wanted to sideline an inconvenient critic and several opposition parties called for a vote of confidence.

After a long and turbulent debate over Rutte's controversial statements during government formation talks, the opposition ultimately lacked a majority for a vote of no-confidence in the early hours of Friday in The Hague.

Rutte was expected to continue efforts to form his fourth coalition government after parliamentary elections in mid-March handed his centre-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) a majority.

A first round of coalition talks was unexpectedly broken off last week after a confidential memo became public.

The note, which became public Thursday, mentioned re-positioning Pieter Omtzigt, a lawmaker known for often asking pointed or inconvenient questions to the government.

Before the note became public, Rutte had claimed that the lawmaker had not been a topic of conversation.

Once the note appeared to contradict him, the premier told parliament that he had forgotten this remark. saying he had never intended to move the Christian

China wildlife crackdown needs 'more teeth' China tested thousands

Shanghai, April 2: China and its neighbours must not only crack down on wildlife trade but also shut legal loopholes that allow diseaseprone species to be farmed, experts said after an investigation team concluded that COVID-19 most likely originated in animals.

A World Health Organizationled study, published Tuesday, said it was "likely to very likely" that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that caused the global pandemic, was introduced to humans from bats via an intermediary species, with wildlife farming playing a crucial role.

Tong Yigang, a Chinese animal disease expert involved in the joint study, said the findings vindicated Beijing's decision last year to ban trade in wildlife for human con-

sumption. But the report also drew attention to the wildlife farms still allowed to operate legally, serving the tradi-

tional Chinese medicine (TCM) in-

dustry and the fur trade - and cre-

ating more spillover risks.

pool of animals that are more or less genetically homogeneous, where a virus can easily evolve," said Christian Walzer, chief veterinarian at New York's Wildlife Preservation Society.

China tested thousands of animal samples to trace the coronavirus's origins, but the study said more investigations were required. It also recommended surveys at mink and raccoon dog farms, which China still allows even though they are infection-prone.

'Cramming millions of animals together in these abusive industries creates a perfect petri dish for pandemics, and unless we ban farming for fur ... we will continue to play Russian roulette with global public safety," warned Peter Li, China expert at Humane Society International.

Regulatory gaps, lax enforcement and transnational trafficking gangs have allowed the wildlife trade to continue, experts said. Pangolins, an endangered mammal identified as a potential intermediary species for

SARS-CoV-2, remain a major prize. Pangolin scales were an officially recognised TCM ingredient - used to treat conditions like arthritis until last year. Though China has since cracked down, activists complain that punishments remain uneven: in a recent case, traffickers caught on the island province of Hainan were given only relatively small fines

Foreign traffickers also remain in

pangolin scales delivered into China.

'There's no real government con-Shepherd, executive director of the Monitor Conservation Research trafficking. "There's no enforce-

operation. A special economic zone in the border district of Mong La in Myanmar, owned by Chinese businesses, has long been a source of

trol there in Mong La," said Chris Society, who studies illegal wildlife ment of any kind."

at mink and raccoon dog farms "In many places, wildlife trading isn't seen as a priority or even as something that is necessarily wrong, and we are suffering a pan-

of animal samples to

origins, but the study

were required. It also

recommended surveys

trace the coronavirus's

said more investigations

demic because of it. China says the original spillover event could have occurred beyond its border, but critics say wildlife trading networks in Myanmar and Laos would not exist without Chinese

demand, and Chinese investment. "I don't buy it that the Chinese are not responsible for these: they are driving it," said Amanda Whitfort, an animal welfare law specialist at Hong Kong University.







Democratic lawmaker.



business



Tremendous progress has been achieved in building national highways across the country... We have achieved a road building pace of 37 km of highways a day NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

THE GREEN MISSION

India's greenhouse gas emissions are the third largest in the world, contributing 7 per cent to overall global emissions and temperature rise.





At present, we can roll out 9,200 units a Hosur plant that we commissioned in February. Given the rise in demand now, we are planning to treble our capacity

TARUN MEHTA | CO-FOUNDER, ATHER ENERGY

We continue to explore opportunities for value creation through our

remain focused on optimizing value through such strategic exits and are equally committed to

BAJRANG KUMAR CHOUDHARY

distinguished consumers now have the opportunity to prebook this latest offering, Aprilia SXR

125, offering to maxify lives, with the new Aprilia experience

DIEGO GRAFFI CMD. PIAGGIO INDIA

SHORT TAKES

Sebi attachments

New Delhi: Markets regulator Sebi has ordered attachment of bank as well as demat accounts of Alchemist Holdings and three individuals to recover investors money to the tune of Rs 444.67 crore. The recovery proceedings have been initiated against the entities after they failed to refund investors money as directed by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). The regulator, in August 2015, had asked Alchemist Holdings and its directors to refund investors money. The company had mobilised Rs 444.67 crore through the issuance of redeemable preference shares to 4.26 lakh people. In an attachment notice Thursday, Sebi asked banks and depositories not to allow any debit from the accounts of Alchemist Holdings and three individuals.

PNB eyes experts

New Delhi: Punjab National Bank is looking to hire a nonjudicial member for seeking advice on issues like compromise and write off related to loans. The public sector lender has invited expression of interest (EoI) from professional or retired personnel based in or around Delhi. "Punjab National Bank, one of the leading public sector bank in India having its corporate office in Dwarka, New Delhi, invites **Expression of Interest from** professional/ retired personnel based in or around Delhi, for honorary positions (One Non- Judicial member),' it said in a notice. The nonjudicial member will act as a member of the Head Office Committee, which has been constituted by the bank for scrutinising the proposal relating to compromise/write off, the release of guarantors, waivement of legal action among others.

Mansa bagged

New Delhi: ANG Lifesciences India Ltd on Friday said it has acquired printing and packaging firm, Mansa Print & Publishers Ltd, which has undergone corporate insolvency resolution plan, as part of its strategic backward integration, Located at Baddi in Himachal Pradesh, Mansa Print & Publishers Ltd is engaged in printing and packaging business covering manufacturing of packaging products including cartons, corrugated boxes and aluminium foil. In addition to this, it has a separate stationery division with hightech machinery giving good business opportunity, ANG Lifesciences India (ALI) said in a regulatory filing.

State refiners told to review import contracts with Saudi

Govt tells four state-owned refiners to use collective bargaining power to get favourable terms with the Middle East country

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 2: Amid tensions with Saudi Arabia over oil production cuts, India has asked its state refiners to review contracts they enter into for buying crude oil from the Middle East nation and negotiate more favourable terms, a top official said.

Keen to break producers' cartel dictating pricing and contractual terms, the government has told Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) to look for oil supplies from outside the Middle East region and use collective bargaining power to get favourable terms.

India imports 85 per cent of its oil needs and is often vulnerable to global supply and price shocks. When oil prices started to rise in February, it wanted Saudi Arabia to relax output controls but the Kindgom ignored its calls. This has led to India now pressing for diversification of the supply base.

'Traditionally, Saudi Arabia and other OPEC producers have been our mainstay suppliers of crude oil. But their terms have often been loaded against the buver." the official with direct knowledge of the discussions said. For one, Indian firms buy two-thirds of their purchases on term or fixed annual contracts. These term contracts provide assured supplies of the contracted quantity but the pricing and other terms favour only the supplier, he said.



'While buyers have an obligaquantity, Saudi and other producers have the option to reduce supplies in case OPEC decides to keep production artificially lower to boost prices. Why should the consumer have to pay for decisions of OPEC? If we commit to offtake, they should also supply no matter what," he said. More importantly, the buyer has to indicate at least six weeks in advance of their intention to lift quantity out of the annual term contract in any month and has to pay an average official price announced by the producer.

"In an ideal market, the pricing should be of the day when the loading is taking place. That way we can get the advantage of any drop in international oil rates. But that is not the case. They insist on selling at their official selling price only, the official said. To begin with,

contracts and instead buy more from the spot or current market. Buying from the spot market would ensure that India can take advantage of any fall in prices on any day and book quantities. "It's like stock market. You would want to buy shares on a day or time when the prices are low. So is the case with crude oil - we would want to buy when we see there is a drop. Term contracts devoid us of that flexibility," he said. Indian refiners have raised spot purchases from 20 per cent a decade back to 30-35 per cent of the total oil bought now.

"We want pricing flexibility as well as the certainty of supply even during times when production falls due to any reason." he said adding stateowned refineries have been asked to coordinate buying and explore joint strategy with private refiners

Adani bags ₹1,169 cr NH project in Odisha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: Adani Enterprises Friday said it has won a Rs 1,169.10 crore highway project in Odisha from the National Highways Authority of India

The contract has been won by Adani Enterprises' wholly-owned subsidiary Adani Road Transport Ltd (ARTL). "ARTL has received a letter of award (LOA) for ...development of six lane Badakumari - Karki Section• of NH-130-CD Road ... Under Raipur-Visakhapatnam Economic Corridor in Odisha on HAM (hybrid annuity mode)," the company said in a regulatory filing to the BSE.

With this, Adanis will have a total of 10 NHAI road projects under **HAM** and others

The company said its bid project cost is Rs 1,169.10 crore and the construction period is two It further said ARTL would continue to evaluate and bid for attractive opportunities in the transport sector which generates value for the stakeholders.

The group would use its immense expertise and experience of setting up complex and mammoth infrastructure projects in record time and to world-class quality standards and also successfully operating them, it added.

With this project award, Adani Group will have a total of 10 NHAI road projects under HAM, Toll-Operate-Transfer (TOT) and Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Toll basis in Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Madhva Pradesh, Kerala, Gujarat, West Bengal

SAIL clocks best quarterly sales



New Delhi, April 2: Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) clocked its best ever quarterly sales at 4.27 million tonnes (MT) during the March quarter of the last fiscal year, up 14 per cent over the year-ago period.

The domestic steel giant's crude steel production too increased by 6 per cent during the quarter to 4.55 MT. "(SAIL), the Maharatna PSU, has recorded its best ever quarterly performance in both production and sales during Q4 FY'21. the company said in a statement.

The company had clocked 3.74 MT sales and 4.31 MT crude steel output during the January-March quarter of the fiscal 2019-20.

About annual figures, the company said despite the volatility in the market during the year, the determined efforts by the company to improve its volumes saw it clock its best ever annual sales at 14.87 MT, a growth of 4.4 per cent over 14.23 MT during FY'20.

SAIL chief Soma Mondal said, 'After the difficult market conditions during the initial months of the financial year, the company adopted focussed approach on improving its volumes, improving operational efficiencies, operating the facilities at optimum levels, de-leveraging its balance sheet, reducing its inventory levels, etc. The multi-pronged strategy has helped us top the performances during the month, quarter as well as the year.'

The team effort by SAIL employees helped in seizing the opportunity offered by the pick-up in the economic activities in the country especially the steel intensive sectors like infrastructure, construction, automobiles, etc, she

In line with its focus on reducing the borrowings, the company has reduced its gross debts by around Rs 16,150 crore to stand at Rs 35.330 crore (provisional) as on March 31, 2021 vis-a-vis Rs 51.481 crore as March 31, 2020

Won't exit India: Frank Templeton

New Delhi, April 2: Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund Friday said its commitment to India remains 'steadfast' and the fund house has no plans to exit its operations

This comes following media reports suggesting intervention by the fund house's US-headquartered parent seeking the diplomatic route for a "just and fair" hearing by market regulator Sebi in the investigation pertaining to six woundup debt schemes. According to the reports,

Franklin Templeton had threatened to exit India if it was not given a fair hearing. In a letter to investors Franklin Templeton Asset Management (India) Pvt Ltd President Sanjay Sapre said, "we have no plans to exit our India business. Any speculation suggesting otherwise, or any rumours around sale of business in India are incorrect and simply that-rumours".

Sapre said that Franklin Templeton was an early entrant in the Indian mutual fund industry and remained a part of the industry even while many other global asset managers decided to leave. He, however, did not deny reports of engaging with government authorities. "Our engagement with government authorities, in India and globally, is also something we, and many companies



endeavored to keep all stakeholders, including the relevant government and diplomatic authorities, appropriately informed of developments, and will continue to do so," Sapre said.

The intention in reaching out remains bringing the current matters to an appropriate conclusion. The fund house said it has full confidence in Sebi and all regulatory and statutory authorities.

The fund house has been fully transparent with the regulator and extended fullest cooperation to them, to help them examine the circumstances surrounding the winding up of the six schemes by Franklin Templeton last year. The fund house had closed six of its debt funds in April 2020, citing redemption pressures and lack of liquidity in the bond markets. These schemes, together having over Rs 25,000 crore assets under management, were Franklin India Low Duration Fund, Franklin India Dynamic Accrual Fund, Franklin India Credit Risk Fund, Franklin India Ultra Short Bond Fund and Franklin India Income Opportunities Fund.

MCL eyes 168 MT coal output in FY'22 THE COMPANY SPENT RS 193 CRORE UNDER CSR IN 2021 FISCAL.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: The Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) has set a target to produce about 168 million tonnes (MT) of coal during the financial year of 2021-22, said PK Sinha, Chairman-cum-Managing Director of MCL, Friday

"MCL has broken all its previous records by achieving the highest ever production of 148.01 million tonne. Now, we aim to produce about 168 million tonnes (MT) of coal during FY'22," Sinha said, adding MCL registered coal production growth 5.5%

MCL also achieved the highest ever coal dispatch of 146 MT with a record over-burden removal of 174.5 million cubic meters (MCuM) setting a strong foundation for making Coal India achieve target of one billion production by 2024 Coal supply to consumers achieved a growth of 8.9%

'The coal production, dispatch and OB removal of MCL during the financial year 2020-21 was the highest ever at 148.01 MT, 146 MT and 174.5 MCuM respectively." CMD said.

Sinha also said the Capital Expenditure (Capex) of Rs 230 crore was invested in FY'21, the highest among all the Coal India subsidiaries. According to the company, MCL is likely to double its Capex as it is expected to invest Rs 4600 crore in FY'22.

MCL is committed to providing clean coal with minimum impact of environment. In this regard. the company is implementing nine First Mile Connectivity projects to provide pollution-free state-of-the-



art rake loading system at a total expenditure of Rs 3,600 Crore. This will generate a capacity of 126

MCL, in the year ending March 31, 2021, spent Rs 193 crore under CSR, achieving 14.5 % growth over its target of Rs 168.44 crore for Financial Year 2020-21.

MCL had signed a tripartite

agreement with the state government and SUM hospital for setting up of a 525-bedded COVID Hospital at Bhubaneswar and a 150-bedded COVID19 hospital at Talcher. Besides, company also established a dedicated COVID Health Centre of 50 beds in Jharsuguda and other Covid Care Centres having a capacity to accommodate 85 patients.

₹3,309cr disbursed to MSMEs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) department stated that a loan amount of Rs 3308.69 crore was disbursed under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) during FY'21. A total of Rs 3417.02 crore was sanctioned for the help of these units.

ECLGS was launched by the



Centre to provide financial assistance to MSMEs who faced severe losses due to the pandemic. Moreover, the department revealed that around 3694 firms out of 4358 units were provided Rs 115 crore under PMEGP. The state government has also

offered financial support of Rs 774 lakh to 2814 members of SHGs under PMFME scheme. Also, 21 SHGs were provided subsidy of Rs 53.96 lakh by the department.

For the development of packaging and branding of the state's food products, the state government has granted Rs 8.50 lakh to the Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society (ORMAS).

Reliance extends deadline for Future deal

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 2: Reliance Retail Ventures, the retail arm of Reliance Industries, has extended the timeline for six months to complete its Rs 24,713 crore deal with Kishore Biyani-led future group to buy its retail and wholesale business.

Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL) has extended the timeline for the "Long Stop Date" from March 31, 2021 to September 30, 2021, said a regulatory filing by Future Retail.

"Pursuant to the provisions of scheme and other transaction documents executed in relation thereto, RRVL has in exercise of the right

provided thereunder, extended the timeline for 'Long Stop Date' from March 31, 2021 to September 30, 2021 which has been duly acknowledged by Reliance Retail and Fashion Lifestyle Limited, whollyowned subsidiary of RRVL," it said.

Long Stop, an established practice in mergers and acquisition transaction, is a timeframe in which parties agree on which all the conditions precedent for a transaction need to be fulfilled and the transaction completed.

The deal, which is contested by Amazon, is facing legal hurdles and a decision from the Supreme Court is pending over the petition



filed by the e-commerce major. The Future-Reliance deal, which was announced on August 29, 2020,



has already received clearance from regulators such as CCI, SEBI and bourses, and the scheme of arrange-

ment is now awaiting the nod from the NCLT and shareholders.

Though the Supreme Court has granted a go-ahead to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for its proceedings but has asked it not to pass any final order sanctioning the scheme. The NCLT has reserved its order over the scheme of arrangement in which all the Future Group's retail assets would be consolidated under Future Enterprises Ltd and then would be

transferred to RRVL through sale. Last month, a Single Member Bench of the Delhi High Court had directed the Future Group to stay the deal. However, this was challenged by the Future Group before the Division Bench of the Delhi High Court, which stayed the order of the Single Member bench.

Amazon and Future have been locked in a bitter legal tussle after the US e-commerce giant dragged Future Group to arbitration at Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC), arguing that the latter had violated their contract by entering into the deal with rival

Amazon had invested in Future Coupons in August 2019 with an option of buying into the flagship— Future Retail after a period of three to 10 years.

Barty in Miami Open final



SWEATING IT OUT: Ash Barty reaches for a backhand return during her match against Elina Svitolina (not in pic) at Miami Open, Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Miami, April 2: In her first match at this year's Miami Open, Ash Barty was one point from elimination. Now she's one win from becoming a repeat champion. The top-ranked Barty returned to the final by beating No.5-seeded Elina Svitolina 6-3, 6-3 Thursday.

Barty has gained momentum after starting the tournament by saving a match point against qualifier Kristina Kucova. That was Barty's first match outside her native Australia since February 2020. "Whenever you come back from a match point, it's a little bit of a strange feeling," she said. "You have to be more open with what the possibilities the rest of the tournament could be, and keep going out there and keep fighting, knowing you could have just as easily been out of the tournament.

Barty, who is assured of retaining her No. 1 ranking next week, will play for the title Saturday against the winner of the second semifinal between No.8 Bianca Andreescu and No.23 Maria Sakkari.

On the men's side, unseeded 20year-old Sebastian Korda's breakthrough run ended with a quarterfinal loss to No.4 Andrey Rubley, 7-5, 7-6(9-7). Korda, slowed in the second set by a left thigh injury, was the youngest American to make the men's quarterfinals in Miami since Robbie Ginepri in 2003.

While Korda departed, his sisters, Jessica and Nelly, were in contention at the LPGA's ANA Inspiration in California after breaking par in the first round

Rublev and Hubert Hurkacz of Poland will play in their first semifinal at a top-level ATP event when they meet Friday night. Hurkacz advanced by rallying past No.2-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas 2-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Hurkacz, seeded 26th, has won three in a row when facing a top-five opponent, but he beat Tsitsipas for only the second time in their eight meetings.

"I just try to like keep building my game and improving," Hurkacz said. "Not all the time are you going to have the results that you want, but if you stay positive and improve your game, the results will eventually come.

They're coming for Barty after she was locked down for a year in Australia because of the coronavirus pandemic, which forced the cancellation of the 2020 Miami Open. Barty won the event in 2019, and said her run to that title was different from this year's matches in

"Chalk and cheese," the Aussie said. "The conditions have been different here this week. It has been a lot warmer and physically very demanding.'

Barty had been 1-5 previously against Svitolina, but took charge with two early breaks and used her strong serve and deep slices to keep the Ukrainian on the defensive.

Midway through the second set, Svitolina made a rare trip to the net, and Barty responded with a perfect lob winner that drew an appreciative pat of the racket strings from her opponent. On match point, Barty closed out the victory with a forehand winner and a fist pump.

Hurkacz's upset win further scrambled the men's draw. Novak Djokovic, Rafa Nadal and Roger Federer skipped the tournament, and No.1-seeded Daniil Medvedev lost in the quarterfinals Wednesday

night to No. 7 Robert Bautista Agut. Bautista Agut will face No.21 Jannik Sinner in the first semifinal Friday, and a first-time ATP Masters 1000 champion will be crowned

"Maybe I feel extra pressure, because I'm the one left who's in the top 10," Rublev said. "But everyone can win now. All of them are playing good tennis.

Hurkacz was serving at 0-2, 15-40 in the second set when he began his comeback. He steadied his baseline game, while Tsitsipas became increasingly erratic and frustrated as the match progressed.

"I was very stressed these two weeks," Tsitsipas said. "I felt like it was my opportunity. It's a very disappointing loss. Everything was under control. And suddenly, I don't know, self-explosion.3

Hurkacz hit 15 aces and saved 10 of the 13 break points he faced. He'll climb in next week's rankings to at least 27th, a career high.

CRICKET GREAT DOWN WITH COVID-19

Sachin hospitalised as precautionary measure



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 2: Former India captain and batting icon Sachin Tendulkar has been hospitalised as a precautionary measure, six days after he tested positive for COVID-19.

The 47-year-old took to twitter to announce the development Friday. "Thank you for your wishes and prayers. As a matter of abundant precaution under medical advice, I have been hospitalised. I hope to be back home in a few days. Take care and stay safe everyone," Tendulkar wrote.

Tendulkar had tested positive for the dreaded infection March 27 and was in home isolation ever since. "He is doing fine and has been admitted for normal (course of) treatment," a source close to Tendulkar told this agency.

The batting great, who was part of India's historic World Cup win in 2011, also wished his teammates on the 10th anniversary of the victory. "Wishing all Indians & my teammates on the 10th anniversary of our World Cup win," he tweeted.

Besides Tendulkar, former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan, his elder

Iyer to go under the knife April 8

MUMBAI: India batsman Shreyas Iyer is set to undergo a surgery April 8 for his shoulder injury which had ruled him out of the last two ODIs against England and the entire IPL. The 26-year old Iver had suffered the injury during the first ODI against England in Pune on March 23 when he dived on a drive hit by Jonny Bairstow off pacer Shardul Thakur, He looked in tremendous pain as he left the field clutching his shoulder. "Shreyas will get operated April 8 for his shoulder injury," a source in the know of things told PTI. Iyer is likely to be out of action for a minimum of four months. He had signed up with Lancashire but now is unlikely to play for the English county side in their oneday tournament starting July 23.

brother Yusuf and S Badrinath all of whom had recently participated at the Road Safety World Series Challenge - have so far announced that they have tested positive for COVID-19.

Tendulkar had led the Indian team to victory in the veteran's tournament in Raipur where crowds were

Bhagat, Kadam sail into semis No decision yet on Osaka torch relay

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, April 2: World No.1 Pramod Bhagat and World No.5 Sukant Kadam sailed into the semifinals of the Dubai para-badminton tournament after winning their respective matches here.

In the SL3 category, Bhagat showed why he is the top ranked in the world with a strong performance against Indonesian Ukun Rukaendi, taking 44 minutes to emerge 21-16 21-13 winner.

In the SL3 category, participants usually have impairment in one or both lower limbs and poor walking/running balance. Bhagat will play Muhammad Huzairi Abdul Malek of Malaysia in the semifinals.

Bhagat has partnered Manoj Sarkar (SL4) in the men's doubles and will play against Mohammad Arwaz Ansari and Deep Ranjan Bisoyee in the semifinals.

In the SL4 category, players have impairment in one or both lower limbs and minimal impairment in walking/running balance, but bet-



ter compared to SL3. He is also in the mixed doubles quarterfinals alongside Palak Kohli.

Kadam, in SLA category, stormed into the semifinals with a comfortable win over Muhammad Norhilmie Mohd Zainudin from

Kadam started off slowly but as the game progressed, he became more confident and won 21-17, 21-8. Kadam will be playing Marcel Adam of Germany in his last-four ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tokyo, April 2: A decision has not yet been reached on rerouting the Olympic torch relay later this month around the city of Osaka, the president of the Tokyo Games organizing committee said Friday.

"We are discussing with the Osaka prefectural government as well as the executive committee so we can come to a conclusion at our earliest convenience," Seiko Hashimoto said in an online briefing.

The mayor of Osaka and the governor of the prefecture said Thursday they wanted relay legs through the city April 14 to be canceled because of rising cases of

The relay started from northeastern Japan a week ago and is crisscrossing the country with 10,000 runners. It is to end July 23 at the opening ceremony.

The relay is a test to see if organizers can pull off a large-scale event during the pandemic. Any

failures will prompt more questions about the risks of holding the Olympics and Paralympics with 15,400 athletes entering Japan, accompanied by tens of thousands of officials, judges, coaches and media.

Organizers said last month that fans from abroad would be barred from attending the Olympics and Paralympics. Hashimoto has said repeatedly that a decision would be announced this month on maximum capacities at indoor and outdoor venues. She hinted Friday that decision might be delayed.

"Within the month of April there may be some changing circumstances," she said. "But we would like to come out with an overall direction within this month. But at which point we would be able to make that direction, I am not able to say right now. We are in the middle of discussions right now."

Organizers are hoping to fill venues as much as possible with local fans. They had budgeted USD 800 million for income from ticket sales,



but will be millions short because

of the ban on fans from abroad. Any shortfall will have to be made up by Japanese government entities. The official cost of the Olympics is USD 15.4 billion, but several government audits suggest it may be twice that much. All but

USD 6.7 billion is public money. Hashimoto said organizers had filed a "protest" with the weekly magazine Shukan Bunshun, which published 280 pages of leaked documents this week about planning for_

the opening and closing ceremonies. Organizers asked that the material be removed from the "online version" of the magazine. Hashimoto said the leaked documents "contain secret information that needs to stay inside the organizing committee, which could eventually hinder the effective management of the organizing committee." Most of the documents seem to deal with internal communication and not with concrete plans for the ceremonies.

The magazine, in a statement Friday, said it was operating in the public interest because taxpayer money was involved. "It is clear this (publication) does not constitute a violation of copyright or an interference with business operations," the magazine said.

KKR desperate to turn fortunes post tough transition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 2: Two-time IPL champions Kolkata Knight Riders will be striving for consistency in their bid to recreate old magic which has been lost during a difficult phase of rebuilding after Gautam Gambhir's departure.

Be it the opening combination, middle-order or finding a finisher, KKR struggled for stability in the last edition in the UAE, while a change of captaincy at the halfway stage did not help them either.

Add the floundering forms of their two biggest Caribbean stars - a half-fit Andre Russell and Sunil Narine, who is not even half the bowler after being repeatedly called for suspect action, KKR missed the playoffs for a second time in a row in the Gambhir era.

Here's is a SWOT analysis of the side that will take on Sunrisers Hvderabad in their season-opener in Chennai April 11.

STRENGTHS

In Eoin Morgan, his first stint as full-time KKR captain, the Purple Brigade have got one of the most astute brains of the white-ball for-

The English World Cup-winning skipper, who took over the role after seven games last season, was one of the brightspots for the team in 2020.

The left-hander struck 418 runs

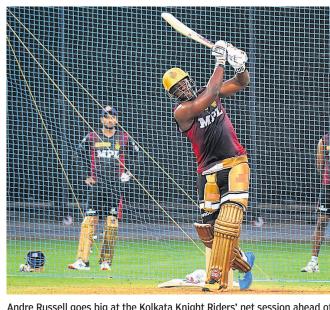
in 14 innings at an average of 41.80 and also hit the most sixes (24), giving impetus in the death overs with his cameos KKR have made some smart ad-

ditions to their squad in the miniauction, apart from retaining their core of the side - 17 players - despite a disappointing season. By bringing back Bangladesh

star all-rounder Shakib-Al-Hasan and signing 2016 IPL Final manof-the-match Ben Cutting, they have got the much-needed backups for the Windies duo of Narine and Russell, who failed to fire last

KKR will also be buoyed by the smash-hit international debut of Prasidh Krishna, who took 4/54 in the first ODI against England in the recently-concluded series.

This would also mean KKR would have a settled pace attack spearheaded by Aussie superstar Pat Cummins with Lockie Ferguson as the back-up option.



Andre Russell goes big at the Kolkata Knight Riders' net session ahead of

WEAKNESSES

Once their strength, KKR of late has struggled in the spin department. Left arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav is a shadow of his past and retuned with just one wicket in five matches, of which

of CPL final for Trinbago Knight Riders as he was found chucking. It was another mystery spinner, Varun Chakravarthy a Tamil

and went on to miss four matches.

Before that he had to be pulled out

Naud architect-turned-cricketer who took up the responsibility in Narine's absence to finish with most wickets – 17 – for KKR. But Chakravarthy's fitness has come under the scanner time and

again as it remains to be seen how he shapes up for the IPL.

OPPORTUNITIES

Having decided to step away from being captain to 'focus on his batting', Dinesh Karthik too will look to make amends in 2021.

Then there are the seasoned duo of Shakib and veteran Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh who too will look to make most of the limited opportunities that come their way on slow tracks on offer

in Delhi and Chennai. KKR have two interesting uncapped new signings in Venkatesh Iyer and Vaibhav Arora, who too will look to grab their opportuni-

Left-hand Madhya Pradesh batsman Iver is fresh from a blistering 146-ball 198 against Punjab in the Vijay Harare Trophy.

Himachal Pradesh mediumpacer Arora is in the form of his life after taking a hat-trick on debut against Maharashtra in the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

THREATS

KKR would need good start from opener Shubman Gill to give better starts this year in the Powerplay overs. Gill consumed a lot of deliveries upfront in most games which did create pressure on middle-order.

The Morgan-led side would look to ensure that they get a winning combination, something that eluded them last time as they would be desperate to make the cut.

KKR squad: Eoin Morgan (C), Dinesh Karthik, Shubman Gill, Nitish Rana, Tim Seifert, Rinku Singh, Andre Russell, Sunil Narine, Kuldeep Yadav, Shivam Mavi, Lockie Ferguson, Pat Cummins, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Sandeep Warrier, Prasidh Krishna, Rahul Tripathi, Varun Chakravarthy, Shakib Al Hasan, Sheldon Jackson, Vaibhav Arora, Harbhajan Singh, Karun Nair, Ben Cutting, Venkatesh Iyer and Pawan Negi.

SOHINI CLAIMS DOUBLE CROWN



POST NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad, April 2: Odisha's rising tennis star Sohini Mohanty won both the singles and doubles crown at the Super Series U-14 event at the Alexander Waske Tennis Academy in Ahmedabad, Friday. Sohini beat Hyderabad's Vanshika Maria Vaiz Vasanth 6- 🛶 0, 6-0 in the final.

In the doubles final, Sohini was paired with Avani Sujit Chitale and the duo beat Prarthana Solanki and Priyanka Sanjay Rana 6-1, 6-4. The Farhan Ali-coached Sohini is touted to become one of India's top tennis players.

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

he was not given the ball in one.

One of the architects of their

twin triumphs in 2012 and 2014

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