



UNDERPLAYING ADULATION

Actor Rashmika Mandana says it is amusing to be described as 'National Crush' by some fans

LEISURE P2



GARBAGE BAN

A unique waste bank in Varanasi is helping to fill the pockets of people in exchange for plastic waste

TWO STATES P7



CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH

Iran Foreign Minister Zarif has urged EU participants of the 2015 nuke deal to maintain a 'constructive' attitude

INTERNATIONAL P10

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BHUBANESWAR | TUESDAY, APRIL 6 | 2021

12 PAGES | ₹4.00

India tops global Covid charts

Country surpasses US and Brazil and hits highest average daily tally

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 5: India's daily Covid-19 tally is now the highest in the world, surpassing Brazil and the US, as it recorded over one lakh cases in the last 24 hours.

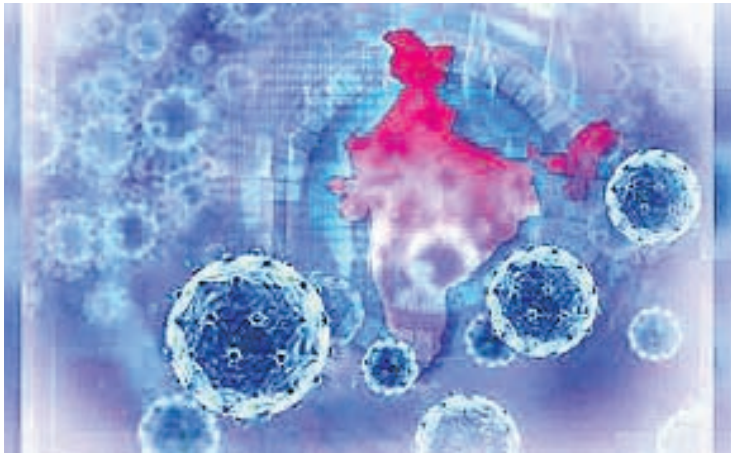
During the past one day, Brazil recorded 31,359 new Covid-19 cases, while US logged 34,282. Besides this, India, which now recorded an all time high of 1,03,558 new cases, has also surpassed Brazil's average tally of 64,324 and the US's 64,019 to become the biggest hotspot.

It is now recording an average of 78,489 Covid-19 cases per day, based on a 7-day moving average to visualise the number of new Covid-19 cases and calculate the rate of change.

Notably, India, which is witnessing the second wave of the pandemic, added 5,49,423 Covid-19 cases over the last week, while US and Brazil logged 4,42,981 and 4,50,268 cases, respectively. Daily cases in India had peaked September 16 last year, with 97,894 people testing positive for the virus in a single day.

India has become the second country in the world, after the US, to add more than 1,00,000 cases in a single day at any time during the pandemic.

Eight states -- Maharashtra,



Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab -- have shown a steep rise in the daily Covid cases, and account for 81.90 per cent of the new cases.

Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 57,074 (55.11 per cent). It is followed by Chhattisgarh with 5,250 while Karnataka reported 4,553 new cases.

With 50,223 more cases in the last 24 hours, India's total active caseload has reached 7,41,830, and comprises 5.89 per cent of the country's total cases.

Five states -- Maharashtra,

Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Punjab -- cumulatively account for 75.88 per cent of the total active cases in the country. Maharashtra alone accounts for nearly 58.23 per cent.

India's cumulative recoveries stand at 1,16,82,136 as on Monday with 52,847 recoveries were registered in the last 24 hours. The national recovery rate is 92.8 per cent.

A total of 478 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours, with eight states accounting for 84.52 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum fatalities, at 222, and Punjab followed with 51.

78,489

INDIA'S AVERAGE DAILY TALLY

64,324

BRAZIL'S AVERAGE DAILY TALLY

64,019

US'S AVERAGE DAILY TALLY

GOVT HINTS AT DAY CURFEW

BHUBANESWAR: Quick on the heels of night curfew in 10 districts, Health Minister Naba Kishore Das Monday said day curfew will be imposed, if required. Speaking to mediapersons here, Das said the state has been witnessing a surge in daily COVID-19 caseload with cases being detected from railway stations, airport and a number of educational institutions. "The state government is closely monitoring the situation and will take a decision on imposition of day curfew, if need be. As of now, District Collectors have been asked to closely monitor the situation," he said. Night curfew has been enforced in 10 districts from Monday. The districts included Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Balangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Koraput and Malkangiri. Speaker SN Patro Sunday said the Chief Minister is reviewing the COVID-19 situation and a decision on day curfew is likely to be taken in 4-5 days. Later, the SRC said there was no such plan.

Covishield crunch

BHUBANESWAR: While Covid-19 cases are rapidly rising in the state, the government is headed for an acute shortage of Covishield vaccine. Bijay Panigrahy, Director of Health and Family Welfare, said there is a stock of about six lakh doses of Covishield that will last for two days. The government has sought supply of more vaccines. It has requested the Centre to supply minimum 15 lakh Covishield doses immediately in view of the surge in cases and the heat wave. However, only 3,49,130 doses have been assured. Keeping in view the heat-wave, timings for Covid-19 vaccination at all centres will change with immediate effect. Additional Chief Secretary, Health and Family Welfare PK Mohapatra directed officials to conduct vaccination at all sites between 8 am and 12 noon and 3 pm and 6 pm.

SC likely to hear Pari case April 19

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, April 5: The Supreme Court has set April 19 to hear a petition filed by Saudamini Sahu, the mother of 5-year-old girl, Pari, pleading the Supreme Court to order an independent probe by CBI into the alleged rape and murder of Pari in July last year in Jadupur, Nayagarh.

The case was heard by registrar of the Supreme Court Rajesh Kumar Goel through video conferencing Monday and asked the registry to list the case before the bench of Justice AM Khanwilkar for hearing. The registrar observed that the state of Odisha has already filed the counter affidavit and the CBI may file its counter affidavit in the

meantime.

During the hearing, the counsel appearing for Saudamini Sahu, advocate Swastik Dalai, implored the registrar for the urgent listing of the case. The counsel argued that the case pertains to the investigation into the rape and murder of a minor girl as well as the rampant organ trafficking.

Earlier, Odisha Police had filed an affidavit in the case stating that there is no need of directing a CBI probe in the murder and rape of Pari as the Orissa High Court had monitored the investigation done by SIT in the case. The Odisha Police had submitted in the SC that the forensic department of SCB negated the charges of the missing of organs and bones of the victim.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I want an office loan... Thanks to work from home my home has been turned into an office!

'Letter-bomb' blast: Maharashtra HM quits

MUMBAI: Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh has resigned from his post, hours after the Bombay High Court asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe the corruption allegations levelled against him by former Mumbai Commissioner of Police Param Bir Singh, a top Nationalist Congress Party leader said here Monday. "Soon after the high court directives, Deshmukh met NCP President Sharad Pawar and offered to resign to ensure an impartial probe. After the nod, Deshmukh has gone to meet CM Uddhav Thackeray to submit his resignation," NCP spokesperson Nawab Malik told mediapersons. P9

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	49159.32	↓ 870.51
NIFTY	14637.80	↓ 229.60
DOLLAR	73.81	↑ ₹0.13
EURO	86.55	↑ ₹0.27
GOLD	₹45,394	↓ ₹24
SILVER	₹65,020	↓ ₹69

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	37.5°C	36.0°C
MIN	22.0°C	24.4°C
Humidity	91%	71%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast: Partly cloudy sky		

₹50L seized ahead of Pipli bypoll

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 5: Police and special squad Monday seized around ₹50 lakh unaccounted cash from the possession of two persons near Pipli. The two men on a motorcycle were caught at Tarakaj Square when they tried to give the police a slip during a routine check. They were detained for interrogation.

The two men, who hail from Balanga area in Puri district, did not stop at the frisking point. They were chased by the police and intercepted at Tarakaj Square. The seized money was in the denomination of ₹500 in 20 bundles, Pipli tehsildar Sapan Kumar Nanda said. Later, the amount was seized from them and they were detained. The two were identified as residents of Balanga area. Further investigation by the police was underway to ascertain the source of the money, police source said.

The BJD, in a petition to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), alleged that the two men belonged to the BJP. Due to growing fear of losing the election, the BJD is pumping in huge amounts of money to influence Pipli voters, the BJD alleged. "We demand that police patrol and surveillance teams be



increased to ensure that the BJP does not succeed in its illegal activities of pumping money into the election," the party said in its petition and demanded investigation to trace the source of the illegal money and to bring the guilty to book. BJP candidate for the seat Ashrit Pattnayak denied the allegation and said the money does not belong to the party.

Meanwhile, all three major political parties started campaigning in the constituency. BJD candidate Rudra Pratap Maharathy and his supporters campaigned in various areas Monday while BJP leader Sambit Patra joined the campaign trail for his party candidate Ashrit Pattnayak. Congress candidate Ajit Mangaraj also held a motor cycle rally to woo voters.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will campaign for his party candidate Rudra Pratap Maharathy soon. Sources said, a decision to this effect was taken at a meeting in the residence of Pratap Deb. Polling for the seat will be held April 17 and votes will be counted May 2.

French report claims payment of 1.1 mn euros in Rafale deal

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 5: The Congress Monday sought a thorough probe in the Rafale jet deal and demanded answers from Prime Minister Narendra Modi after a French media report claimed that a payment of 1.1 million Euros was made by the aircraft manufacturer to a "middleman", a charge denied as "completely baseless" by the BJP.

Referring to the report by Mediapart, a French online journal, Chief Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala claimed that the report has proved that there was corruption in the biggest defence deal, and asked why action should not be taken against those involved, including Dassault Aviation, for violating the defence procurement procedure, which clearly entails that there will be no middlemen.

Hitting back at the Congress, BJP leader and Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad dismissed as "completely baseless" the allegations of corruption in the Rafale deal and said the opposition party made a big issue of the defence deal in 2019 Lok Sabha polls but lost badly.

The Supreme Court had rejected a demand for a probe in the purchase



There was corruption in the biggest defence deal and why action should not be taken against those involved, including Dassault Aviation for violating the defence procurement procedure which clearly entails that there will be no middlemen

RANDEEP SURJEWALA | CHIEF CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON



The allegations of corruption in the Rafale deal are completely baseless and the opposition party made a big issue of the defence deal in 2019 Lok Sabha polls but lost badly

RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD | BJP LEADER AND UNION MINISTER



of the fighter aircraft and the CAG also found nothing wrong, Prasad said. The allegations of corruption were "completely baseless", the minister said, and suggested that a report in the French media about the alleged financial irregularity in the deal may be due to "corporate rivalry" in that country.

According to the Mediapart, its

report was based on an investigation by the country's anti-corruption agency Agence Francaise Anticorruption (AFA), which found that after inking the deal, payment was made by the Dassault Aviation, the manufacturer of Rafale fighter jets. As per the report, the manufacturer has not been able to answer the queries posed by the AFA.

India's backward states lead power demand recovery

INDIA'S ANNUAL POWER DEMAND FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 35 YEARS IN 2020/21

AGENCIES

Chennai, April 5: India's less industrialised states have led a recovery in electricity demand that began in September, a Reuters analysis of government data showed.

Power use in less industrialized states such as Bihar and Chhattisgarh in the east, and Uttar Pradesh and Punjab in the north, grew at over 10% each compared with the previous year, both for the quarter and the six months ending on March 31, the data showed.

All these states - which have high agricultural and residential power consumption - consumed more electricity than in the previous year, though India's annual power demand fell for the first time in at least 35 years in 2020/21.

The imposition of coronavirus lockdowns resulted in a fall in electricity consumption for six straight months through August, but consumption has since risen for seven consecutive months, with usage in March rising at the fastest pace in 11 years.

Industries and offices account for half the country's annual electricity consumption. Senior government leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi have cited the recovery in demand for power as a sign that the economy is also beginning to recover from its worst slump in decades.

More industrialised states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat witnessed a decline in annual electricity use during 2020/21, according to an analysis of the fed-

eral electricity grid regulator POSOCO's daily load despatch data.

Power demand growth in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have lagged the national average in the last seven years, but consumption in Gujarat has grown faster than national average during that period, government data shows.

During the latest quarter, electricity consumption grew 7.3% in Maharashtra, India's most industrialized state.

However, Tamil Nadu - where a large number of major automakers are located - saw its electricity consumption fall 2.8% in the same period. Consumption grew at 9.4% in the western state of Gujarat during the quarter, but it fell marginally in Karnataka - a southern state with a large tech industry.

Power use growth in March quarter vs last year

India's state-wise electricity supply growth (in %) during the quarter ended March 2021, compared with the same period last year

Maharashtra	7.29
Gujarat	9.39
UP	11.75
Tamil Nadu	-2.76
MP	9.69
Rajasthan	9.73
Telangana	9.12
Karnataka	-0.38
Andhra Pradesh	4.11
West Bengal	15.17
Haryana	9.98
Punjab	16.21
Chhattisgarh	17.71
Bihar	16
Odisha	15.07
All India	8.39

Note: March quarter of FY 2020 had one extra day as 2020 was a leap year

SOURCE: POSOCO

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FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Ganesh anticipates some exciting times for you. You are likely to meet some people today who will prove to be assets in the future. You apply yourself to perfection in work, and in your thinking. Towards that end, says Ganesh, you will have to remain practical.

TAURUS

It will be an optimistic day with its share of day dreaming, says Ganesh. You will be submissive at work, giving in or blindly following the advice of your peers. Things at work may be tense and cause some trouble today afternoon, but they will be much more to your liking by nightfall as you return to the comfort of your beloved and your home.

GEMINI

You are likely to be concerned about your finances, jointly held assets and property, says Ganesh. Also, you will be a little edgy today. Even the most insignificant problems will dampen your mood. You will probably take chances in money matters. Ganesh advises you to keep your cool and return to your charismatic self.

CANCER

There is nothing extraordinary about today. You will be busy doing the routine work and will find contentment in the mundane. The absence of thrill and adventure doesn't mean that you'll be free for most part of the day. By evening, you may get indications that tomorrow may not be this boring.

LEO

The complete family man that you are, it is your near and dear ones who have always laid the foundation of your success. So why should today be any different. The auspicious tides of the day begin from your home and follow you everywhere. Be it work or play, you have a tempo that is undiminished. It's going to be a great day, says Ganesh, so just go with the flow and smile your way through everything.

VIRGO

Mundane, everyday routine will get on your nerves today, warns Ganesh. Don't make a mountain out of a mole hill. All said and done, you won't let anything affect your zest for work. You will break new ground to win the hearts of others, feels Ganesh.

LIBRA

Put up that 'Do Not Disturb' sign on the door today. That's because Ganesh feels the tingle in your bones to want to stick to your preferred subject matter. This will help you achieve good progress in your research. Also, expect to be hit by a wave of nostalgia. Keep your eyes open, for, you are likely to find someone special with whom you will share your feelings.

SCORPIO

Ganesh predicts you will possibly plan to launch a new product today. But put off the launch if you want to supersede certain unscrupulous elements. But after a waiting game, you may go ahead with your plan with much fanfare, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS

Zoom in on complicated problems and solve them with style, says Ganesh. Don't fret over problems; instead concentrate on ways to solve them. Your day will get even better when perhaps, news from an overseas friend reaches you.

CAPRICORN

Today, you will get back to playing the power game, using both fair and unfair means to achieve your goals, says Ganesh. Intellectual growth will be phenomenal; equally good will be your intuitions. In fact, your gut feelings will guide all the decisions you take today, and rest assured, none will leave you in a soup.

AQUARIUS

You have managed to carve a niche for yourself. Today, you may see the tangible benefits of all your past hard work. But business rivals may poke and pinch; even your health may trouble you. However, you will manage to smile and take things in the right spirit, approves Ganesh.

PISCES

An auspicious time for starting new projects, today will see you make substantial investments in your future. Your family is the foundation of your success, and keeping that in mind will provide you with some vital insights. Your smile wins many a heart today, says Ganesh.



CARRIE'S EASTER GIG RAISES OVER \$100K FOR CHARITY

Singer Carrie Underwood recently raised more than \$100,000 for Save The Children initiative through a special Easter gig for fans. The live gig My Savior: Live From The Ryman live-stream, had traditional hymns from her album *My Savior*.

HOW POSNER WILL CELEBRATE HIS EVEREST EXPEDITION

Singer Mike Posner says he will celebrate his expedition to Mount Everest by spending a few weeks doing absolutely nothing. The singer has announced that he will attempt to climb Mount Everest to raise funds for a non-profit justice reform charity in honour of his late father.



BELL BOTTOM FEELS LIKE A COMEBACK FILM: HUMA

MUMBAI: Actress Huma Qureshi says working in the upcoming Akshay Kumar-starrer spy thriller *Bell Bottom* was special for the entire unit because it was the film they shot last year when the first unlock phase started. "Bell Bottom is going to be a very special film for all of us, whether it is me or the whole cast and crew for that matter, because it was the film we shot last year when the first unlock phase started," Huma said. "It was going back to the film set for all of us. For actors, normalcy means hearing those words, 'roll camera', 'action', 'cut', and after that long and sudden phase of staying at home, *Bell Bottom* was our first step to normalcy, it's like a comeback for everyone. We are fortunate that we finished the shoot peacefully on time. We cannot wait to share the film with the world," she added. IANS

More B-towners in Covid grip

MUMBAI: Actors Vicky Kaushal and Bhumi Pednekar have announced that they have tested positive for Covid-19.



Bhowmik had also revealed Sunday that they have tested positive for the virus.

Vicky informed that he is living under home quarantine and taking medication as prescribed. He also requested all those who came in contact with him recently to get themselves tested.

"In spite of all care and precautions, unfortunately, I have tested positive for Covid-19. Following all essential protocols, I am under home quarantine, taking medication as prescribed by my doctor," Vicky shared in an Instagram post.

Shortly before this, Bhumi informed on social media that she has mild Covid symptoms and has isolated herself. IANS



Vegan community gears up for 'Go Vegan' tweetathon

Speciesism is a human-held belief that all other animal species are inferior, says a veganist



Animal rights and vegan activists across India will use the Twitter platform to raise awareness about veganism April 8. One of the key themes for the vegan movement in India is laws around exploitation of farm animals, said an organiser.

Adding that most people in India are still unaware about the vegan movement or veganism, which is often described as a diet in popular parlance, Amjor Chandran, one of the organisers of Vegan India Movement, says: "It's not a diet, but a social justice movement for animals to dismantle speciesism. Speciesism is the human-held belief that all other animal species are inferior." "I am much healthier and happier knowing no animal had to suffer for my food. I don't drink cow milk and don't eat meat because no one should suffer for our choices," says actor

Mallika Sherawat. "I became vegan three years back simply because I chose to live out of my food choices and variety that I had. I did not want to hurt any living species for my greed on a food plate and saw that logically this gave me sounder sleep, healthier body and I was making a difference to the environment, and climate change," says Sangeeta S Bahl, 53, the Oldest Everest in India.

"While the earth heaves under the weight of our greed, and our resources run out, we have been presented an opportunity of a lifetime. To rethink. Today we have a choice to change the way we eat, to change the way we live. No taste is worth our freedom. Or theirs," opines singer Anushka Manchanda.

In the tweetathon, members of the movement will use hashtags #GoVegan and #EndSpeciesism in an endeavour to urge people to abstain from consuming animal products which inflict suffering on innocent animals. AGENCIES

Rashmika not swayed by 'National Crush' tag

NEW DELHI: Rashmika Mandana has a working birthday Monday, facing the camera for the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer *Goodbye*, which she has signed even before her debut Hindi film *Mission Majnu* released.

Rashmika, who is known for roles in hit Telugu films such as *Geetha Govindam* and *Dear Comrade* among others

is amused that fans down South have coined the term 'National Crush' to describe her. She prefers to underplay the adulation.

"I am aware of it but at the same time I am not. I know that there is so much love for me out there but I am not swayed by it. I know where my roots are and I know what all this is. I am mindful of who I am a person. I am totally grounded and my team hates me for it, but that is the kind of person I am," shares Rashmika. IANS

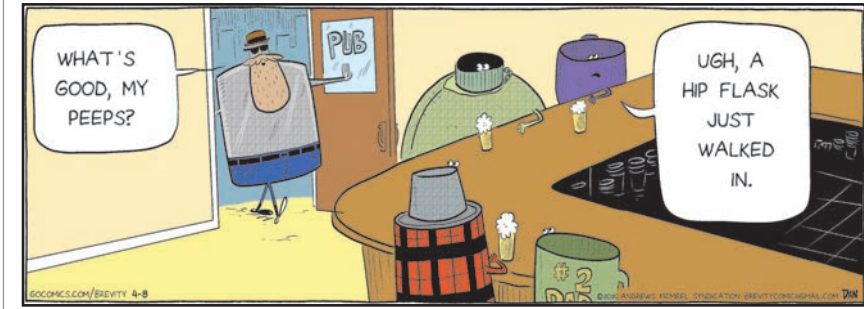
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

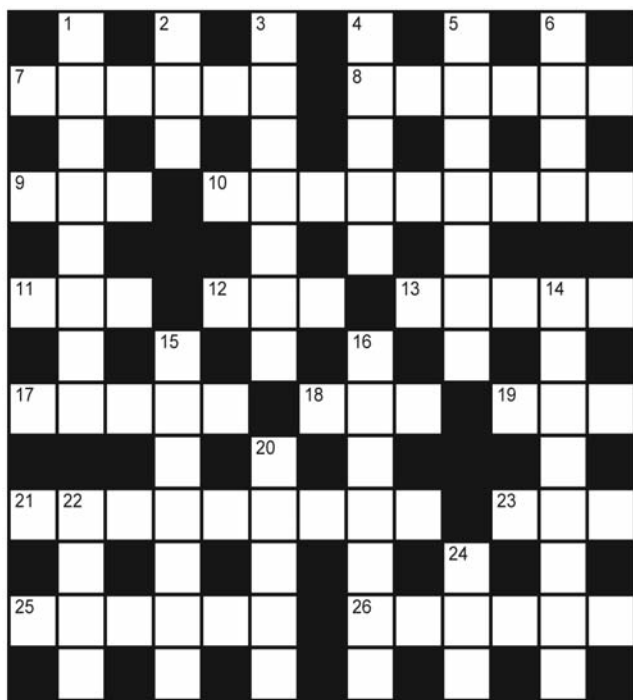


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Be a busybody
 - 8 Calamine, e.g.
 - 9 Wetland
 - 10 Methodical
 - 11 Skye cap
 - 12 Nile reptile
 - 13 River embankment
 - 17 Chill out
 - 18 Evergreen
 - 19 Female rabbit
 - 21 Smelly cheese
 - 23 Assist
 - 25 Jovian planet
 - 26 Plump
 - 4 Assumed name
 - 5 Now and then (2,5)
 - 6 Apple leftover
 - 14 Anger and hate, e.g.
 - 15 Seaport
 - 16 Gallery display (4,3)
 - 20 Combat zone
 - 22 Persia, today
 - 24 Greek letter
- Down**
- 1 Move
 - 2 Tokyo, once
 - 3 She's in the money

SUDOKU

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

	2	1	4	8				
	5			3			7	
			1					
	4		5					
				7	4			
8								1
	6			4			2	
2					5			3
3			8	2		7	1	

SOLUTIONS

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

3	4	8	6	7	1	5	2	9
5	7	2	9	3	4	6	8	1
1	9	6	8	2	5	4	7	3
8	1	7	5	6	2	3	9	4
2	3	4	1	9	8	7	5	6
9	6	5	3	4	7	8	1	2
6	2	3	7	8	9	1	4	5
7	5	9	4	1	6	2	3	8
4	8	1	2	5	3	9	6	7

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

OIPR-06014/13/0001/212

State to spend ₹2,548 cr under ICDS in 2021-22

CHIEF SECRETARY DIRECTS OFFICIALS TO FOCUS ON DEVELOPING THE AWCs TO NEXT LEVEL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 5: The State government has decided to spend ₹2,548.37 crore under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in the year 2021-22.

The State Level Empowered Committee headed by Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra approved the Annual Programme Implementation Plan (AIP) of ₹2,548.37 crore for ICDS Monday.

Out of the total estimation, ₹2,341.43 crore is meant for Anganwadi services including supplementary nutrition, uniform, medicine kit equipments etc for children and ₹7.42 crore earmarked for care of adolescent girls in the age group of 11-14 years. ₹199.52 crore is for Poshan programme.

The principal components of adolescent girl care scheme include the nutrition support at the rate of ₹9.50 per girl for 300 days. Besides, ₹1.10 lakh per project is invested



₹2,341.43 crore is meant for Anganwadi services including supplementary nutrition, uniform, medicine kit equipments etc for children

₹7.42 crore earmarked for care of adolescent girls in the age group of 11-14 years. ₹199.52 crore is for Poshan programme

Around 35.08 lakh children are under the fold of Anganwadis. Besides, around 7.32 lakh pregnant and lactating women along with 13,082 adolescent girls are also being served through AWCs of these projects

towards supply of iron folic acid supplement, health check-up and referral services, nutrition and health education, skill training etc.

Mahapatra asked respective officials to develop the Anganwadis to the next higher level through district specific plans. He emphasized on fa-

cilities for the children like safe electricity, toilet, drinking water and learning through playing. The care of drop-out adolescent girls in the age group of 11 to 14 was also emphasized by the Chief Secretary.

The Women and Child Development (W&CD) department was directed to have Aadhaar linking of all the adolescent girls included under the 'scheme of adolescent girls'.

W&CD Secretary Anu Garg said, "Presently four broad programmes namely Sakshyama Anagnawadi services, Supplementary nutrition, Scheme for adolescent girls and Poshana are being implemented through 338 ICDS projects with fund sharing from state and central governments."

Director Social Welfare, Arabind Agrawala said around 35.08 lakh children are under the fold of Anganwadis. Besides, around 7.32 lakh pregnant and lactating women along with 13,082 adolescent girls are also being served through AWCs of these projects.

DEMOLITION DRIVE



An excavator engaged by BDA pulls down an encroachment at Kalinga Nagar in Bhubaneswar, Monday
OP PHOTO

Cop lands in Vig net

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, April 5: Vigilance sleuths here Monday claimed to have arrested an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) posted at Madhupatna police station in the Millennium City while receiving ₹20,000 as bribe.

"Pranab Kishore Praharaj, an ASI of police, has been taken into custody while accepting ₹20,000 from Sanjib Kumar Behera of Cuttack in order to settle a loan dispute of the latter," an official of anti-corruption wing of the state police said.

The money has been recovered from the possession of Praharaj. The residential quarter of the accused at Police Colony in Cuttack was being searched when the last report came in.

Beware of fake notice: CUO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 5: After witnessing a few fake notices on reopening of the campus, Central University of Odisha, Koraput released a statement Monday asking students to beware of such fake notice.

"It is therefore clarified that students need not take cognizance of such fake notice. Any decision regarding the physical reopening of the campus shall be communicated to the students and their guardians through a press release and the official website of the university as and when such decision is taken," CUO notified.

WASSUP TODAY

BHUBANESWAR

- Protest by construction workers' union, Master Canteen Square and Joint Labour Commissioner's office, Kharavel Nagar, near district treasury, 11am

SAKHIGOPAL

- Concluding event of Satyabadi Kala Sansad, Damodar Mandap, 6pm

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

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit Dt.05.04.2021 before the Executive Magistrate, Puri, I, Praphul Pradhan, Narendrakona, Dist.- Puri have changed my name from Praphul Pradhan to Prafulla Pradhan according to my PAN Card for all future purpose.

573 new cases push Covid tally to 3,43,268

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 5: Odisha's Covid-19 tally Monday mounted to 3,43,268 after 573 more people tested positive for the infection, the highest single-day spike this year, a Health department official said.

The new cases were detected in 28 of the state's 30 districts, with 337 cases reported from different quarantine centres, while the remaining 236 were local contact cases, he said. Khurda district of which the state capital Bhubaneswar is a part reported the highest 96 cases followed by Sundergarh (80) and Nuapada (60).

Director of Health Services Bijay Panigrahi said all those entering Odisha from Chhattisgarh in border districts will have to undergo Covid-19 testing. The government

The new cases were detected in 28 districts, with 337 cases reported from different quarantine centres, while the remaining 236 were local contact cases



A health worker engaged by BMC sanitises a 'Mo Bus' at Master Canteen in Bhubaneswar, Monday
OP PHOTO

has already issued directions to all the border district authorities in this regard, Panigrahi said.

The state's coronavirus death toll remained at 1,922 as no fresh fatality has been reported since Sunday, he said, adding that as many as 53 other Covid-19 patients have also succumbed to the infection so far.

The state currently has 3,358 Covid-19 cases while as many as 3,37,935 patients have recovered

from the highly infectious disease. The state has far tested over 91.88 lakh samples for the novel coronavirus, including 28,109 Sunday.

Meanwhile, the state government has decided to impose night curfew from 10 pm to 5 am in 10 districts - Sundargarh, Bargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Balangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Malkangiri, Koraput and Nabarangpur - from Monday.

'Petroleum, oil consumption in state stands at 5,697 TMT in FY 21'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 5: Total petroleum, oil and lubricants consumption in Odisha during 2020-21 fiscal stood at 5,697 TMT, which is 3.4 per cent of the country's total consumption, said Tarun Kapoor, the Secretary to Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Monday.

Kapoor was in Bhubaneswar to meet Oil & Gas PSUs (IOCL, HPCL, BPCL, OIL, ONGC, GAIL and RBML & NAYARA) officials. He also mentioned that MS consumption in the state was 775 TMT (2.4% of India), High Speed Diesel (HSD) consumption was 2505 TMT (3.5% of India) during FY'21. The major petroleum product supply points which cater to the energy needs of Odisha's economy are Paradip, Jharsuguda, Somnathpur and Bhubaneswar, he added.

He also interacted with Chief Secretary of Odisha, Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, and discussed various issues related to oil & gas industries and sought assistance from state government.

Kapoor said, "Oil & gas CPSEs have invested ₹2, 13, 209 crore in Odisha out of which 25 projects (worth ₹43,322 crore) have already been completed. There are 34 ongoing projects worth ₹77,331 crore for



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There are 34 ongoing projects worth ₹77,331 crore and 10 proposed projects with an investment of ₹92,556 crore

A total of 12 LOIs have been issued for setting up of CBG plants and 1 LOI has been issued for set up of RUCO- Bio-diesel plant

and 10 proposed projects with an investment of ₹92,556 crore."

"A total of 12 LOIs have been issued for setting up of CBG plants and 1 LOI has been issued for set up of RUCO- Bio Diesel Plant. A

new LPG import facility at Paradip is being shortly commissioned (by May 2021). Two new LPG plants are being constructed at Rayagada and Khurda," he added.

According to the secretary, three new POL terminals are being constructed at Berhampur, Sadashivpur and Jharsuguda to meet the growing POL demand of the state.

"A Bio Ethanol plant is being set up at Bargarh in Western Odisha by Bharat Petroleum (BPC) to meet the requirements of 10 per cent ethanol blending in MS. The Oil Industry has started the supply of ethanol blended MS in the state and shall achieve the targeted 10 % blending with MS during the year 2021-22, Kapoor said.

BMC to increase Covid beds

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 5: With an increase in Covid-19 cases in the state capital, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Monday, stated that it will increase the number of beds in the Covid-designated hospitals in a phase-wise manner to enhance treatment facilities for patients.

Addressing the media here, BMC Commissioner, Prem Chandra Chaudhary said that the BMC will increase the bed strength from existing 150, depending on the number of patients that would test positive and cannot be home quarantined. The BMC which earlier had about 1,700 beds had surrendered 1,050 of them observing drop in cases between November and December.

"Everyday around 5 to 10 travelers are testing positive for coronavirus infection at the Biju Patnaik International Airport. Presently, about 70 infected patients are undergoing treatment at the designated hospitals under the jurisdiction of BMC till yesterday. The

number is likely to go up. Therefore, we have already started the process to add more beds for accommodating the patients," the BMC Commissioner said.

Responding to a query on sudden cause of Covid cases here, he added that since there are no travel restrictions and people in the city are not adhering to protocols like maintaining social distancing, the number of cases is increasing. Meanwhile, discussing on the possibility of imposition of night curfew in Bhubaneswar, he said that the decision in this regard will be taken by the state government.

The enforcement squad, Monday, sealed a private coaching institute at Jaydev Vihar which was found violating Covid norms by overcrowding and failing to exercise social distancing at the institute. It can be mentioned that a commerce student of BJB Higher Secondary School was found Covid-19 positive. The civic authority had advised those who came in contact with the infected student to isolate themselves for a week.

Civil supplies office sealed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 5: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Monday, sealed Odisha Rajya Jogan Nigam office, the state civil supplies office, Nayapalli, after detection of six Covid positive cases.



Following detection of positive cases, the BMC instructed all the staffers of the office for testing. All employees present there underwent RT-PCR tests to know the status of spread of virus among them.

"As a preventive measure and with instructions of BMC Commissioner Prem Chandra Choudhary, the enforcement squad zone sealed the office for 48 hours. Moreover, a penalty of ₹5,500 was imposed on the office for not following Covid protocols. The office authorities have been told to sanitise their premises," said a senior BMC official.

Support Marine Bio-resources Centre at FM: Pratap Sarangi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 5: Union Minister of State for Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Pratap Chandra Sarangi Monday wrote a letter to Union Health minister Harsh Vardhan requesting support for Marine Bio-resources & Bio-technology Centre at Fakir Mohan University, Balasore. Sarangi requested adequate provisioning of financial resources for infrastructure development, capacity building and manpower.

In a letter Sarangi said that Fakir Mohan University, a state university at Balasore, has established a Centre for Marine Bio-Resources and Bio-Technology in its campus. This is by far the only centre of its kind in Odisha and amongst a very few in the country. Odisha with immense potential in its long coast line of 480 km is the most ideal state for research and extension in marine Bio-resources.

Balasore, is strategically located with vast coastline with well supported industrial eco-system, congenial for development of marine resources, he said.

In view of the above, the Marine centre will not only contribute to commercial exploitation of marine bio-resources but also create



The Marine centre will not only contribute to commercial exploitation of marine bio-resources but also create employment opportunities for rural youth

employment opportunities for rural youth. This will be a 'state of the art' scientific marine centre to undertake research and development activities as well as innovation in the field of marine bio-technology and bio-resources.

"I earnestly request for your support for the Centre for Marine Bio-resources & Bio-technology at Fakir Mohan University, Balasore by way of adequate provisioning of financial resources for infrastructure development, capacity building & manpower", said Sarangi in the letter.

Earlier, the State Health Minister Naba Kishore Das had written two letters to the Union Health Minister for building second AIIMS hospital in Odisha's Sundargarh district and for not merging the Rourkela based National Institute for Malaria Research field unit of The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) with the unit in Ranchi.

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Watermelon farmers in distress as 'mystery' disease damages crops



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajnagar, April 5: Watermelon farmers in the flood-prone areas under this block in Kendrapara district are a worried lot these days as an unidentified disease have affected their crops.

According to a report, the 'mystery' disease has shattered the hopes of these cultivators as it has caused the watermelons to break open and rot much before harvesting. This has come as a double whammy for the farmers who had lost their paddy crops due to flood in the last Kharif season.

The fruits are being affected when they grow to the size of one kg. The farmers have applied pesticides on the advice of agriculture and horticulture experts but that is not helping them in any way.

The unknown disease is affecting their crops when the watermelons grow to the size of 1 to 1.5 kg. They are trying to tide over this crisis by harvesting the watermelons when they are still small, but traders are refusing to pay even ₹5 per kg.

Loss of crop due to the 'mystery' disease has pushed the farmer into distress as they stare at a bleak fu-

The 'mystery' disease has shattered the hopes of these cultivators as it has caused the watermelons to break open and rot much before harvesting

The farmers are forced to harvest the watermelons when they grow up to a size of 1 kg, but traders are not ready to pay even ₹5 per kg

The farmers had borrowed heavily from private money lenders and are now unable to repay their loans after the huge crop loss

did not rain in their area. They were planning to harvest their crops from the second week of March but fate decided otherwise.

They were expecting to harvest over 100 quintals from each acre and a total crop of 1,700 quintals from their 117-acre farmland. This could have helped them to tide over the losses which they faced during their paddy cultivation in the last Kharif season. However, as ill luck would have it, instead of growing big in size, the watermelons cracked and decomposed.

Another farmer Ganesh Sethi said watermelon plants have withered and small watermelons are getting decomposed. When contacted, farmer Bailochan Rout said he has lost his sleep pondering over repayment of loans.

Meanwhile, Residents have demanded that Agriculture department should rush a high-level team to the area to review the crop damage and make provision of financial assistance to the affected farmers.

Villagers try to revive dead man in Nayagarh



POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, April 5: Though humans have achieved giant strides in the field of science and technology, superstition is still ingrained in the minds of people in today's era, especially in rural areas of the state.

According to a report, some villagers tried to breathe life into the body of deceased person at Barasahi village under Sarankul police limits in this district, Sunday night. The villagers tried to resurrect the dead man but their efforts went in vain.

Reports said, a traditional Danda Nacha programme was underway at Barasahi village Saturday night when a performer identified as Rabi Nahak, 45, fell sick due to some reasons. Co-villagers rushed him to the district headquarters hospital in Nayagarh for treatment. However, the doctors at the hospi-

tal pronounced him "brought dead".

However, his family members, instead of conducting a post-mortem, took the body back to the village for cremation. There the family members and villagers, with help of sorcerers, performed rituals throughout the night to resurrect the dead man with a belief that the body was possessed by God. As part of tantrik rituals, the villagers poured pot full of water on the body and started rituals to breathe life into the body.

On being informed, police reached the spot and tried to convince the villagers saying it as an 'impossible' act to breathe new life into the dead man. Later, the villagers too realised it and agreed to cremate the body as per Hindu custom and performed his last rites. Sarankul police have registered a case and started an investigation.



Residents taking part in a rally demanding establishment of a mega steel plant in mineral-rich Keonjhar district, Monday

OP PHOTO

Ganjam admin directs serving packaged food at weddings

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, April 5: The district administration here Monday directed people to serve packaged food to guests in wedding ceremonies in the district as it issued additional guidelines revising the cap on the number of guests at marriage ceremonies to 100.

This has been done with a view to arrest the sharp rise in the number of Covid-19 cases in the district.

As part of the guidelines, the organisers have been directed to provide packaged food instead of organising community feasts at these events.



"The number of guests shall be limited to 100 only during marriage ceremonies, while packaged foods will be provided to the guests to help prevent spread of Covid-19 during the functions," the order

issued by the district administration stated.

Anyone found violating the official guidelines will be dealt with strictly as per the provisions under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and other relevant laws, the order said.

Notably, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (CMC) and Cuttack Municipal Corporation (BMC) have also put cap on social gatherings by restricting the number of guests in the marriage ceremonies to 100 in their jurisdictions.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Naba Das hinted at the need of day curfew in the state by reiterating an ear-

lier statement Surjya Narayan Patro, the Speaker of the Odisha Assembly.

Das said that if need arises the day time curfew might be imposed in the state

He said that Collectors have been empowered to clamp night curfew if required in their respective regions, while observers have visited the districts bordering Chhattisgarh and other states. The state government has been emphasising on testing and mass vaccination, Das added.

However, the Special Relief Commissioner SRC had ruled out any plan by the government to impose day curfew in the state.

POWER GRID REMAINS NON-STARTER

Uninterrupted power supply still a dream for Cuttack villagers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nischintakoili, April 5: The state government has taken up various projects to supply electricity to the people in rural areas across the state.

Similar steps have been taken to provide high quality and uninterrupted power services to people in villages under this block in Cuttack district. However, due to administrative apathy and delay in implementation of projects the benefits of the projects are yet to be available to the beneficiaries.

The non-functioning of a power grid at Kendilo village under Asureswar panchayat of this subdivision even after its inauguration is a case in point.

According to reports, the state Energy Minister Dibyashankar Mishra in the presence of state Law Minister Pratap Jena inaugurated a 33/11 KV power grid at Kendilo four months back. The power grid was built at an outlay of ₹5 crore. It was expected to provide optimum voltage and uninterrupted power to over 10,000 people living in 67 villages under 10 panchayats of Nischintakoili subdivision.

However, the power supply is yet to resume to the villages as many



POWER SUPPLY IS YET TO RESUME TO THE VILLAGES AS MANY OF THE WORKS IN THE GRID ARE YET TO BE COMPLETED

of the works in the grid are yet to be completed. As a result, with summer round the corner frequent disruptions in power supply like low voltage and load shedding continues to plague the people in the area.

This has happened as the consultancy agency, which had received the contract for the work, left the

midway after allegations of sub-standard works and irregularities surfaced against the firm. The consultancy firm left the project without connecting the grid to the villages. In fact, the power grid was inaugurated in a hurry with most of its works remaining incomplete.

When contacted, executive engineer Pabitra Kumar Jena of Salipur Electricity Division said power supply has not resumed from the grid as works on the 11-KV feeder is yet to be completed. On the other hand, work on the 33-KV breaker is yet to start. Residents have demanded completion of the pending work of the project at the earliest and resumption of power supply to the villages.

Major fire breaks out at RSP; no casualty reported

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 5: A major fire broke out at the Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) in Sundargarh district in the wee hours of Monday.

The inferno has gutted properties worth lakhs of rupees as a number of machineries and hardware were reduced to ashes.

According to a source, the fire mishap took place at around 3.00am following a sudden explosion of slag boiler at Steel Melting Shop (SMS)-II of the plant. Molten iron was scattered leading to the outbreak of the blaze.

The control Room of the SMS-II was completely engulfed in flames. Some officials who were on

duty at the spot noticed the blaze and immediately informed fire-fighting personnel about the incident.

On being informed, a team of fire personnel rushed to the spot and doused the flames after striving for over a couple of hours. No casualty has been reported in the incident, a fire official said.

Meanwhile, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the plant has ordered a probe into the mishap. A four-member team comprising general manager level officials has been formed by RSP authorities to find out the exact cause behind the fire, an official stated. Work at SMS-II has been temporarily halted after the accident.

AP to hold elections for Samitis, Zilla Parishad in disputed Kotia

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jeypore, April 5: After successfully conducting panchayat polls in the disputed Kotia region of Koraput district of Odisha, the Andhra Pradesh government has issued a fresh notification Sunday to conduct elections for the post of Panchayat Samiti as well as Zilla Parishad members in the region.

The neighbouring state will hold the polls in single phase April 8. Notably, Andhra Pradesh had

earlier held elections in the same fringe areas February 14. Odisha government had then opposed the move and requested its AP counterpart to refrain from the electoral process as the matter is still sub-judice. Nevertheless, the panchayat elections were conducted in three disputed villages of the Kotia region namely Talaganjeipadar, Phatuseneri and Phagnaseneri. The three villages have occupied the centre-stage concerning the five-decade old territorial dispute.

FLARING ANGER



Members of Congress party staging a sit-in demanding roll back of hike in power tariff in Sambalpur, Monday

OP PHOTO

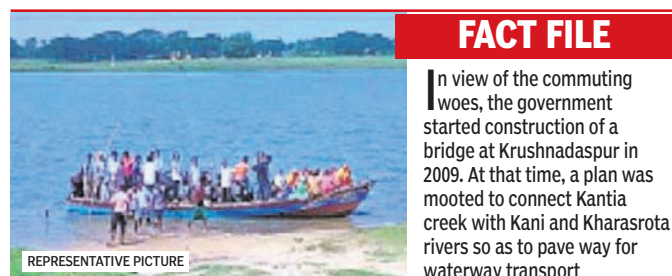
PEOPLE OF 17 PANCHAYATS SUFFER COMMUTING WOES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pattamundai, April 5: Thousands of people living in riparian Dhoya cut-off area under Pattamundai block of Kendrapara have been suffering commuting woes over years due to poor road connectivity and absence of a bridge across Kani river.

According to reports, villages like Singhagan, Nuapatana, Badaraulia and Sanaraulia have remained cut off from the block headquarters due to lack of road connectivity and a bridge. People in the area have long been demanding a bridge over Kani.

In view of the commuting woes, the government started construction of a bridge at Krushnadaspur in 2009. At that time, a plan was mooted to connect Kantia creek with Kani and Kharasrota rivers so as to pave way for waterway transport. Since then, the work of the bridge has been halted. The work is confined to construction of seven pillars. For delay in the bridge proj-



The rural development department is executing the bridge project, which also comes in the area of the river connectivity project. The department has got approval of the Inland Waterways Authority of India for the map and design of the bridge

FACT FILE

In view of the commuting woes, the government started construction of a bridge at Krushnadaspur in 2009. At that time, a plan was mooted to connect Kantia creek with Kani and Kharasrota rivers so as to pave way for waterway transport

ect, people have to face commuting problems.

The rural development department is executing the bridge project, which also comes in the area of the river connectivity project. The rural development department has got approval of the Inland Waterways Authority of India for the map and design of the bridge.

Once completed, the bridge will facilitate communication to seven panchayats under Pattamundai

block, five panchayats under Aul block, four panchayats under Bari block. For ten years, people of these villages have been pressing for completion of the project.

Activists of the Congress' local unit in Pattamundai and Kendrapara have demanded a bridge across Kani river.

Congress leaders like Ganeswar Behera and others warned of agitation if the government fails to take expeditious steps to complete the bridge project.

Yogi vs Kejri over Ganga vs Yamuna issue

AS MUCH AS 760 MGD OF SEWAGE WATER IS DISCHARGED INTO YAMUNA DAILY THROUGH 18 DRAINS, OF WHICH 610 MGD ALONE IS FROM DELHI

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow April 5: It is now Kejriwal versus Yogi Adityanath and the war is over Ganga versus Yamuna. Uttar Pradesh Minister Siddhartha Nath Singh said, “Even after spending Rs 5,300 crores in the last six years, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s Yamuna remains toxic. Another surprising thing is that the Delhi government has made a provision of Rs 2,074 crore again in its Budget of 2021-22, to clean Yamuna.

“On the contrary, the Yogi Adityanath government has cleaned the Ganga within two years after the formation of the government in 2017. Crores of devotees took a dip in the holy, hygienic and clean Ganga during the Kumbh-2019 held in Prayagraj, which was highly appreciated across the globe.”

He further said that Delhi is the oldest and the first city situated on the banks of Yamuna. As much as



760 MGD (Million Gallons per Day) of sewage water is discharged into Yamuna daily through 18 drains, of which 610 MGD alone is from Delhi. When seen from a distance, Yamuna actually looks like a dirty drain and the water has a foul smell too.

In the year 2014, the Kejriwal government had announced to spend Rs 5,300 crores in the name of cleaning the Yamuna and

arranged funds for it. But there is hardly any work done and the condition remains miserable.

“It can be easily understood that the Kejriwal government has not been able to revive the Yamuna with so much money in the last six years and the question remains – where is the hard-earned money of the people gone?” he asked.

On the other hand, Yogi

Adityanath in Uttar Pradesh has succeeded in cleaning the Ganga water in the state.

Just two years after the formation of the Yogi government, Kumbh was held in Prayagraj.

During that time, the government had cleaned the dirty water coming from Naini, Jhusi and Prayagraj in Sangam by establishing treatment plants on 46 large sewage and drains.

These drains discharged 270 million litres of dirty water every day. Eight regular and two temporary sewage treatment plants were installed on 46 sewage and drains.

The government also collaborated with the National Environmental Engineering Institute (NEERI) for this task. Drainage was treated at levels above 30 Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD). In Kumbh-2019, crores of devotees from all over the world took a dip in the holy, serene and clean Ganga.

Leaves of docs, paramedics cancelled in Kashmir Valley

J&K HAS BEEN WITNESSING A SPIKE IN DAILY CASES OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, April 5: Authorities in Kashmir Monday ordered cancellation of leaves of doctors, nurses and paramedical staff in the valley hospitals in view of the spike in COVID-19 cases in the union territory.

In an order issued here, Director Health Services, Kashmir, asked all the chief medical officers/medical officers/medical superintendents and other territorial offices

falling within the jurisdiction of the Directorate to cancel the leaves amid upsurge of the pandemic. “All the leaves either sanctioned or under consideration at Directorate level or at respective offices of CMO’s and other DDO’s in respect of doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and other official of



SPIKE IN COVID-19 CASES

this Department are here by cancelled forthwith except maternity leave and leave taken in view of extreme medical exigencies,” the order said.

The director also directed the chief medical officers/medical superintendents and other territorial offices to refrain from for-

warding any kind of leave to his office till further orders.

Jammu and Kashmir has been witnessing a spike in daily cases over the last few weeks. The Lieutenant Governor’s office Sunday also ordered closure of schools up to class 9 for two weeks and class 10 to 12 for a week.

Villages to go digital in UP

Under the Digital Village Scheme, the government offers such facilities as mini bank, mini ATM, hotel booking and mobile and DTH recharge in the villages

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



Lucknow, April 5: The Yogi Government in Uttar Pradesh has prepared an action plan to convert all the rural areas into ‘smart’ villages in order to ensure that the benefits of the welfare schemes are provided to even the last person of the society.

The Chief Minister has planned to make all the Panchayat Bhawans digital. This will not only link the distant regions to the mainstream society but will also ensure effective and transparent implementation of the welfare schemes of the

government at the grassroots level, thereby benefiting the needy.

The Uttar Pradesh government will be linking Gram Panchayats with an ‘optical fibre network’ to provide broadband internet services in the coming days. The project has been undertaken under the National Broadband Mission to digitalise every village in the country.

The state government has already linked more than 31,149 Gram Panchayats with optical fibre networks and is working on providing internet connectivity to all the vil-

lages soon. About 70% of the population of Uttar Pradesh resides in the rural areas.

There are about 2,498 Panchayat Bhawans in the state out of which 206 are multipurpose ones. The government said that the vision of the programme is centred on three key areas: digital infrastructure as a utility to every citizen – digital identity, mobile phone and bank account, safe and secure cyberspace; governance and services on demand – services available in real time on online and mobile platform, making financial transactions electronic and cashless, and digital empowerment of citizens – all documents, certificates available on cloud. e-Pathshalas will also be set up at the Panchayat Bhawan where the farmers will also be taught about all the cultivation techniques through digital means.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has prioritised radical digitalisation to induce economic inclusiveness through a host of initiatives.

RAZED TO THE GROUND



A man stands on the debris of houses destroyed in a fire in Srinagar

PTI PHOTO

ARCH OF WORLD’S HIGHEST RLY BRIDGE COMPLETED

Chenab Rail Bridge: The 1.3-kilometre-long bridge aims to boost connectivity to the Kashmir Valley and it is being constructed at a cost of ₹1,486 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kauri, April 5: The construction of the arch of the world’s highest railway bridge that soars 359 metres above the bed of the Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir was completed Monday, with the Northern Railways terming the achievement a milestone.

The bridge, which is 35-metre higher than the Eiffel Tower in Paris, is expected to be completed within a year, officials said. “It is a historic day for the Northern Railways and a milestone in the completion of the USBRL project, connecting Kashmir with the rest of the country. The project will be completed within two and a half years,” Northern Railway General Manager Ashutosh Gangal told reporters at the work site here in Reasi district.

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal watched the lowering of the closure segment of the arch by cable crane through a video link from Delhi. Senior officers, including Gangal and Konkan Railway Chairman and Managing Director Sanjay Gupta, attended the function here. “The self-supporting arch is an engineering marvel and has brought us closer to our goal of the dream

project. After the completion of the arch, we will move further, and are hopeful of completing the bridge within a year,” Gangal said. The Railway Ministry said that the 5.6-metre last piece of metal (closure segment) was fitted at the highest point of the arch Monday. It joined the two arms of the arch that currently stretch towards each other from both banks of the Chenab, it said. “This completed the shape of the arch. After completion of the arch work, removal of the stay cables, filling of the concrete in the arch rib, erection of the steel trestle, launching of the viaduct and track laying work will be taken up,” the ministry said.

Gangal said that the construction of the bridge involves fabrication of 28,660 metric tonnes of steel, 10 lakh cubic metres earthwork and 66,000 cubic metres of concrete. The bridge is designed to withstand high wind speed of up to 266 kmph and earthquake forces of highest intensity, Gangal said. For the first time, the Indian Railways used phased array ultrasonic machines and established a NABL-accredited lab at the site for weld testing, he said in a statement.



Ramayan Museum & Cultural Centre in Ayodhya soon

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ayodhya, April 5: The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has decided to set up an international level ‘Ramayan Museum and Cultural Centre’ on 10 acres of land at the Ram Snehi Ghat that lies between Ayodhya and Lucknow.

This will enable people to get a “grand and divine darshan” of Lord Ram’s life at one location.

A kitchen with dishes from Madhubani, Awadh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka will also be operational. A brainchild of the Chief Minister, construction of the ‘Ramayana Museum and Cultural Centre’ is proposed to take shape in about 10 acres of land marked on the Lucknow-Ayodhya highway, 54 km from Lucknow and 64 km from Ayodhya.

Ramayan-era arts, culture, handicrafts, folk cuisine, Ramayan Vishwa Yatra Vithika, Ram Van Gaman Marg, Ramayan-based art gallery, Ramayan-based li-



brary, research and publication centre, presentation of Ramayan through puppetry, Ramilila performances in the campus will be the major attractions of the centre.

A special centre for handicrafts will be established and special souvenirs will be made.

Handicrafts are available in all styles of the country, such as terracotta, cast, metal, paper mache, textiles and stones and these will be put on display and sold as sou-

venirs. The Ramayan World Yatra Vithika will showcase the culture of Ram, as it is present in all the countries of the world. Related photographs, videos will be shown virtually. Continuous chanting of the Ram Charitmanas will be done at the centre. The Ram Vanagaman Marg will have videos of 280 sites while there will also be a gallery of paintings of Ramayan in folk style, miniature style and modern painting style. In the forest area, there will

be separate plantations of the Ramayan trees in a rectangular form. Construction will be done keeping in mind arrangements for the stay of the domestic and foreign tourists on the campus.

Large rooms for group passengers, some dormitories and some single rooms will be built. Four large rooms will be built for administrative control. Passengers will have the facility of group hymns in the morning and evening.

Multilevel parking and about two dozen toilets for women and men will be built.

Director of the Department of Culture, Shishir said that the land has been earmarked in Bhavaniyapur Khevi village for the establishment of ‘Ramayana Museum and Cultural Centre’. He said that the detailed project report (DPR) is being prepared by IIT Kharagpur. The estimated cost of the project is around Rs 150 crore.

The centre will be run by the Ayodhya Research Institute.

81-yr-old woman contesting UP panchayat polls

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kanpur, April 5: An 81-year-old woman will be contesting the upcoming panchayat elections from Uttar Pradesh’s Kanpur district to ensure better facilities and development of her village.

Rani Devi of Rudrapur Bail village in Chaubepur block of the district, said: “I decided to contest the panchayat to ensure development of my village. At this age, neither I have greed for any post, nor I am here to at the behest of any political party. I have decided on my own to contest the poll for overall development of my village.” She has filed her nomination papers for Block Development Council (BDC) member.

Rani Devi said: “My village does not have even basic facilities like a road network, proper drains and drinking water supply.”

‘Garbage bank’ to fill people’s pockets with money

ON BRINGING A LARGER QUANTITY OF PLASTIC, MONEY IS GIVEN TO PEOPLE ACCORDING TO THE WEIGHT OF PLASTIC WASTE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Varanasi, April 5: A unique waste bank has been opened in Uttar Pradesh’s Varanasi to keep the environment clean. This bank involves transactions through plastic waste. The plastic is collected by the people of the city, volunteers of the plastic waste bank as well as consumers and deposited here.

If the quantity of plastic is less, then an individual is given a cloth bag or face mask in lieu of that plastic waste. On bringing a larger quantity of plastic, money is given to the people according to the weight of the plastic waste. This bank is helping to fill the pockets of people in exchange for plastic waste.

This bank located at Maldahiya in Varanasi is called the ‘Plastic waste bank’.

According to Municipal Commissioner Gaurang Rathi, KGN

and UNDP are working on the Public Private Engagement (PPE) model. A ten metric ton capacity plant has been set up at Ashapur in Varanasi. There is a ban on polythene in the city. Tetra packs and water bottles are in circulation which are disposed by recycling them.

KGN Director Sabir Ali said the city collects nearly two tons of polythene waste every day. Apart from this used drinking water bottles are purchased for Rs 25 per kg. After processing this waste, it sells for nearly Rs 32-Rs 38 per kg.

He said plastic buckets, cans, mugs etc. are purchased at Rs 10 per kg which are sold after saving Rs four to five. The bank also takes waste like cardboard etc for recycling. The plastic waste collected in this bank is deposited at the sewage treatment plant at Ashapur. The plastic waste is pressured with the help of a pressure machine.



The plastic is separated in which the polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles are pressed with a hydraulic baling machine and collected in the form of a bundle which is sent for

further processing. Other plastic wastes are also separated and are sent for recycling. This waste is then sent to Kanpur and other places, where with the help of a machine,

the plastic waste is used to make plastic pipes, polyester threads, shoe laces and other material. In this initiative by the Municipal Corporation, this bank has been created for the disposal of plastic waste. V.D. Tripathi, Chairman of the Mahamana Malviya Ganga Research Centre, BHU, said the carbon molecules are smaller and lighter on burning polythene which penetrates inside the nose. This reduces a person’s ability to breathe. The plastic can’t be disposed off easily.

If the burnt plastic waste is swallowed by living organisms, then it results in swollen stomach which ultimately causes death. If this plastic is thrown on the roads and is eaten by cows and other animals, then it is harmful for them. It causes more physical harm than poisoning. There would be a lot of benefits from opening such a waste bank.

Bengal is a knowledge hub, yet we have failed to cash in on that to transform the state industrially and create jobs. There is scope to build a parallel Silicon Valley here given the number of software engineers the state trains every year

DINESH TRIVEDI | FORMER UNION MINISTER

Indira Gandhi did not bow to threats from the US. But it is the misfortune of the country that the prime minister goes to Bangladesh and does not mention how Indira Gandhi contributed and 90,000 soldiers surrendered

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER

Vaccination doses have been exported to 84 countries. The amount exported is higher than the number of vaccine doses given to the people in India. Should we care about people from our country or from other countries?

RAGHAV CHADHA | AAP SPOKESPERSON

SHORT TAKES

Truck carrying EVMs attacked

Silchar (Assam): Three persons have been arrested for allegedly attacking a truck carrying reserve EVMs in Cachar district of Assam during the second phase of polling, a police officer said Monday. The police have identified more than 20 people for their alleged involvement in the incident which occurred at Jhapirbond near the National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project (NATRIP) centre in the district, he said. "All the arrested persons were produced before the court and were sent to judicial custody," the officer added. Cachar District Magistrate Keerthi Jalli has ordered a magisterial probe into the incident by Additional District Magistrate Ruth Lienthang.

Woman, son burnt to death

Srinagar: A woman and her son were charred to death in a fire at a locality here, officials said Monday. The blaze broke out in a house at Haft Chinar Sunday night. Six houses were gutted in the incident, according to the officials. A 40-year-old woman and her six-year-old son were taken to the SMHS hospital, where they were declared brought dead, they said. A case has been registered and investigations are on to ascertain the cause behind the fire, they added.

2 workers die of suffocation

Ahmedabad: Two labourers suffocated to death and another became critical on Monday after inhaling toxic gas while cleaning a septic tank at Vedach village in Gujarat's Bharuch district, police said. The incident occurred in the morning when three labourers were segregating solid waste from the liquid inside the tank. They fell unconscious due to the sudden discharge of toxic gas. They were rushed to a nearby hospital in Jambusar in an ambulance.

3 die in factory roof collapse

Ludhiana: Three people died and seven were injured when the roof of a factory collapsed at Baba Mukand Singh Nagar here Monday, officials said. Forty people, mostly labourers, were rescued from the site. Of the injured, the condition of three were stated to be critical, officials said, adding efforts were on to find out where more people were trapped under the debris.



Our jawans are not cannon fodder to be martyred at will. No Indian jawan should face an enemy without body armour in the 21st century. It needs to be made available to every soldier

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

COURT DISMISSES KANGANA'S PLEA

A sessions court Monday dismissed an application filed by Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut challenging the proceedings initiated against her by a magistrates court in connection with a defamation complaint lodged by veteran lyricist Javed Akhtar



Covid survivors rush to take the jab

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 5: As India witnesses a surge in Covid-19 case-loads, those who have survived the deadly disease and had antibodies for a certain period (up to six months) are now rushing to take the vital jab in order to avoid reinfections, health experts said Monday.

Reinfection means a person once infected and recovered from the SARS-CoV2 virus -- the virus that causes Covid-19 -- gets infected again, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As is the case with other viruses, a case of reinfection cannot be ruled out, the agency had noted.

If a person gets infected and re-covers, the "natural infection immune response" can last for nearly six months, says the World Health Organisation (WHO). However, the "protection may not be lifelong", hence, vaccination is important.

"Emergence of the second wave of Covid in the country also raises questions about longevity of sustained immunity post Covid infection. Hence, it is advisable to take vaccine for people who were earlier diagnosed with Covid," Dr Harshal



R Salve, Associate Professor at the Centre for Community Medicine, AIIMS in New Delhi, told IANS.

Covid reinfection cases have been very rare in India.

According to a recent study conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), nearly 4.5 per cent cases have been reported as reinfections. The study, forth-

coming in the journal Epidemiology and Infection, examined 1,300 individuals who tested positive for the virus twice. Of these, only 58 or 4.5 per cent, were found as possible reinfections.

Another study, led by the University of Oxford in the UK, showed that people who once contracted Covid are "highly unlikely"

PM, HEALTH MIN TO INTERACT WITH CMs

NEW DELHI: Amid a surge in coronavirus cases, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with chief ministers Thursday to discuss the COVID-19 situation and the ongoing vaccination drive, sources said Monday. Modi's last interaction with chief ministers was March 17 during which he had expressed concern over the rise in COVID-19 cases in parts of the country and called for "quick and decisive" steps to check the "emerging second peak". Sources said the meeting would take place April 8 from 6:30 PM. Ahead of the PM's interaction with chief ministers, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan will Tuesday hold a meeting with health ministers of 11 states and Union Territories, which have been witnessing a surge in coronavirus cases, to review the situation there. These 11 states are Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan.

to contract the disease again for at least six months. "Covid survivors can get the vaccine but this can be delayed for at least three months after recovering as the immunity last for 3-6 months. Later, vaccination is indicated for protection as well in case it happens for decreasing the severity, in case Covid happens," Neha Gupta, Infectious Diseases Specialist at Medanta-The Medicity, Gurgaon told IANS.

People with co-morbidities can be more at a risk than the general population, revealed a recent study by PGI, Chandigarh. It showed that people suffering from Type 2 diabetes

and those with the metabolic disease having no sufficient antibodies or low immunity levels after the first infection are at a greater risk of reinfection.

Globally, very few cases of reinfection have been confirmed. The first case was reported from Hong Kong in August 2020, where a 33-year-old man reportedly tested positive first in late March 2020. After making a full recovery with negative viral tests, he tested positive again for while travelling in mid-August.

A couple of cases from the United States, Belgium, Israel and Ecuador were also reported.

INDIA JOINS MULTILATERAL NAVAL DRILL 'LA PEROUSE'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: India and three other Quad member nations Monday joined France in kick-starting a three-day mega naval exercise in the eastern Indian Ocean, in reflection of their growing strategic cooperation in the region.

Officials said the Indian naval ships Satpura and Kiltan along with P-8I long range maritime patrol aircraft are participating in multilateral exercise 'La Perouse'.

The Indian Navy ships and aircraft will exercise at sea with ships and aircraft of navies of France, Australia, Japan and the United States during the exercise, they said.

Indian Navy Spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said the exercise will witness complex and advanced naval operations including surface warfare, anti-air warfare and air defence exercises.

He said it will also feature weapon firing exercises, cross deck flying operations and tactical manoeuvres among others.

"The exercise will showcase high levels of synergy, coordination and interoperability between the friendly navies," he said.

"Participation by the Indian Navy in the exercise demonstrates the shared values with friendly navies ensuring freedom of seas and commitment to an open, inclusive Indo-Pacific and a rules-based international order," Madhwal said.

Besides host France, the four other participants are members of the Quad or Quadrilateral coalition.

India has been expanding co-operation with navies of the US, Japan, Australia and France in the last few years.

ELECTION SCENES



PTI PHOTO

Polling parties travel on a buffalo cart for the election duty in a remote area, on the eve of the final phase of Assembly polls, Kamrup (Rural) district, Monday

ASSAM POLLS 171 votes cast in booth that has only 90 voters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Haflong (Assam), April 5: Total 171 votes were cast in a booth in Assam's Dima Hasao district, even though 90 people were eligible to exercise their franchise, officials said Monday, revealing a massive irregularity.

The booth is in the Haflong constituency, which went to the polls in the second phase April 1. Haflong witnessed 74 per cent polling.

As the incident came to light, the District Election Officer suspended five poll officials of the booth, set up at 107(A) Khotlir LP School, and proposed a re-poll.

However, the official order for re-election at the booth, an auxiliary polling station of the main voting centre at Mouldam LP School, is yet to be issued.

The suspension order by the Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer of Dima Hasao was issued April 2, the next day of polling, but it came to light on Monday morning.

Stating dereliction of duty, the EC suspended Seikhosiem Lhangum (Sector Officer), Prahlad Ch Roy (Presiding Officer), Parameswar Charangsa (1st Polling Officer), Swaraj Kanti Das (2nd Polling Officer) and Lalzamlu Thiek (3rd Polling Officer) with immediate effect.

The voters' list of the polling station had 90 names, but 171 votes were cast in the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM), officials told PTI.

The head of that interior village refused to accept the voters' list and brought a list of his own. Then, the people of the village voted according to that list, an official said.

It was not immediately known why the polling officials accepted the village head's demand and whether there was any security personnel present at the polling station or the role they played.

PLEA IN SC SEEKS UNIFORM RETIREMENT AGE FOR JUDGES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 5: A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking a uniform retirement age for judges of both the apex court and the high courts.

The plea, moved by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay sought direction from the top court to the Centre to take steps to make the retirement age of judges of high courts and Supreme Court uniform, as it is irrational to have different retirement age for judges of constitutional courts.

Alternatively, being protector of right to speedy justice guaranteed under Article 21, the Court may use its plenary constitutional power to declare that the judges of high courts shall retire at the age of 65 years until Centre takes steps to reduce the pendency of cases from



15 to 3 years, the plea said.

The plea said in developed countries, the retirement age of higher court judges varies from 70-80 years. For example, judges retire at the age of 75 years in the UK and Canada and at the age of 70 in Australia, the Netherlands, Ireland, Belgium, and Norway. Moreover, judges work for lifetime in the US, Russia, New Zealand and Iceland, subject to their physical-mental fitness.

The plea contended that uniformity in the retirement age will not only necessary to reduce pendency of cases but it will also attract and retain the best legal talent on the bench. To reduce judicial and procedural errors, India needs more experienced judges, argued the petitioner.

At present, the retirement age for the apex court judges is 65 years whereas for the high court judges, it is 62 years. The plea argued that the judges of the high court will work independently, without any expectation to move to the top court, if retirement age is made uniform.

Finest lawyers don't want to become judges of the high courts because instead of continuously giving valuable services to the nation, high court judges are compelled to retire at a very early age i.e., 62 years, said the plea.

After Delhi, Tikait threatens tractor agitation in Gujarat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 5: Bhartiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait Monday threatened to start a farmers' tractor agitation in Gujarat after Delhi, and said time has come to gherao the state capital Gandhinagar and also break barricades if needed. Talking to reporters outside the Sabarmati Ashram here, Tikait claimed farmers in Gujarat were unhappy and suffering.

Hundreds of farmers have been camping at Delhi's borders since November last year against the Centre's three agriculture reform laws. They are demanding a repeal of the three laws along with a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their produce. The protesting farmers took out a tractor rally in Delhi January 26.

"Farmers will conduct an agitation in Gujarat using their tractors. Time has come to gherao



Gandhinagar and block roads. If needed, we will have to break barricades too," Tikait said. The BKU leader is on a two-day tour of Gujarat since Sunday to campaign against the Centre's three farm laws.

On the second day of his visit, Tikait, accompanied by former Gujarat chief minister Shankersinh Vaghela, paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at the Sabarmati Ashram.

"Farmers are suffering because there is no agitation here. There is no backing from courts also. Farmers are compelled to say they are happy and making profit. Please give us that technology which is helping Gujarat's farmers to reap benefits," said Tikait.

How 'chimpanzee poop' is helping prevent Covid-19?

THE ASTRAZENECA VACCINE USES A REPLICATION-DEFICIENT CHIMPANZEE VIRAL VECTOR BASED ON A WEAKENED VERSION OF A COMMON COLD VIRUS (ADENOVIRUS) THAT CAUSES INFECTIONS IN CHIMPANZEES AND CONTAINS THE GENETIC MATERIAL OF THE SARS-COV-2 VIRUS SPIKE PROTEIN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 5: The Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine, a version of which is also being used in India, is made from an adenovirus isolated from chimpanzee poop, which has been genetically changed so that it is impossible for it to grow in humans.

Now known as Covid-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca, it was formerly called AZD1222. AZD1222 was co-invented by the University of Oxford and its spin-out company, Vaccitech. It uses a replication-deficient chimpanzee

viral vector based on a weakened version of a common cold virus (adenovirus) that causes infections in chimpanzees and contains the genetic material of the SARS-CoV-2 virus spike protein.

After vaccination, the surface spike protein is produced, priming the immune system to attack the SARS-CoV-2 virus if it later infects the body.

The vaccine has been granted a conditional marketing authorisation or emergency use in more than 70 countries across six continents.

The Serum Institute of India



(SII), the world's largest vaccine manufacturer by volume, is manufacturing a version of the Oxford-

AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine named 'Covishield' in India.

India is stepping up vaccination

efforts against Covid-19 amid a renewed surge in the number of cases. The country registered 1,03,558 new coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours, the highest ever single-day spike since the onset of the pandemic last year, taking the total tally to 1,25,89,067 Monday.

Monday, the death toll increased to 1,65,101 with 478 new fatalities.

The number of people who have recovered from the disease surged to 1,16,82,136, while the case fatality rate stood at 1.31 per cent, according to official data.

So far, 7.91 crore doses of Corona

vaccine have been administered in the country since the drive began on January 16 after the approval for Covishield and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

The vaccination drive started for healthcare workers January 16, followed by vaccination for frontline workers from February 2. Later, persons aged 60 years and above and those in the age group of 45-59 years with identified 20 comorbidities were covered from March 1.

Subsequently, from April 1, all persons aged 45 years and above are eligible for Covid vaccination.

She (Mamata) has not only violated the essentials of the Model Code of Conduct by making such remarks (asking Muslims to vote en-bloc for TMC) but this is also a criminal violation of the Representation of People Act, 1951. The poll panel should initiate action against her and her party

MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI | UNION MINISTER



As we speak, we are reaching full bed capacity in South Goa District Hospital as well as Goa Medical College, where we hardly have 15-20 beds and 10-15 beds, respectively. Every day we are getting between 30-40 admissions a day and this is increasing and we feel that this will go higher

VISHWAJIT RANE | HEALTH MINISTER, GOA



The state government will not hesitate to act tough on private tutorials that are still conducting classes physically even in the wake of rising Covid cases

S SURESH KUMAR | EDUCATION MINISTER, KARNATAKA



SHORT TAKES

Election officer suspended

Barpeta (Assam): Barpeta election officer Shashi Kumar Deka was suspended in connection with the theft of Rs 55 lakh from his office chamber, an order from the Chief Electoral Officer of Assam said. As per the order issued by CEO Nitin Khade Sunday night, Deka was placed under suspension with immediate effect till the completion of the inquiry. The district's Assistant Commissioner Gayatri Sarma was given the responsibility of the election officer of Barpeta, which is going to the polls in the third phase Tuesday.

Rotten rhino carcass found

Alipurduar (WB): The decomposed carcass of a full-grown rhinoceros was found in the Chilapata forest range in West Bengal's Alipurduar district, officials said Monday. The carcass with the horn missing was found Sunday in the Banila 12 compartment area of the forest, they said. It is suspected that the rhino was killed for its horn by the poachers, said Rajendra Jakhar, north Bengal's Chief Forest Conservator (Wildlife). This is the first such incident at the forest since October 2019, triggering tension in the Forest Department.

Illicit liquor making unit busted, 13 held

Pratapgarh (UP): A case has been registered against 13 people here in connection with the busting of a unit manufacturing illicit liquor, police said Monday. SP Akash Tomar said the unit was busted in Babuganj Bazar under Kunda police station limits late Saturday night during a raid jointly conducted by the police and the excise department.

5.4 magnitude quake hits Sikkim

Gangtok/Kolkata: An earthquake of 5.4 magnitude hit Sikkim Monday night, an official of the National Centre for Seismology (NCS) said. Tremors were also felt in parts of West Bengal and Bihar, he said. The quake occurred at 8.49 pm at a depth of 10 km near the India-Bhutan border. Tremors were felt in Gangtok and other parts of the Himalayan state, he said.



The increase in the rate of transition of Covid-19 across the country is a major concern and a challenge too. The vaccination campaign needs to be moved more rapidly in this context

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | CHIEF MINISTER, DELHI

Deshmukh quits in a cloud

CM Uddhav Thackeray has appointed senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader, ex-Speaker and Labour Minister Dilip Walse-Patil as the new Home Minister



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 5: Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh has resigned from his post, hours after the Bombay High Court asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe the corruption allegations levelled against him by former Mumbai Commissioner of Police Param Bir Singh, a top Nationalist Congress Party leader said here Monday.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has appointed senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader, ex-Speaker and Labour Minister Dilip Walse-Patil as the new Home Minister.

The CM also tweaked his cabinet by handing over the Labour department to Minister Hasan Mushrif, and State Excise portfolio to Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

Among the seniormost leaders in the state, Walse-Patil, 65, has been a 6-time MLA from Ambegaon in Pune district, has been a Minister with experience in handling diverse departments, and served as the Speaker of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from 2009-2014.

Earlier, the high court verdict triggered off a high-level political drama in the state culminating in Deshmukh's resignation.

Among the seniormost leaders in the state, Walse-Patil, 65, has been a 6-time MLA from Ambegaon in Pune district and served as the Speaker of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from 2009-2014

“Soon after the high court directives, Deshmukh met NCP President Sharad Pawar and offered to resign to ensure an impartial probe. After the nod, Deshmukh has gone to meet Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to submit his resignation,” NCP National Spokesperson and Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik told mediapersons.

In his resignation letter to the CM, Deshmukh said: “In the wake of the HC ruling, I feel it would be improper for me to continue in the post on ethical grounds. Hence, I have decided to voluntarily keep away from the post. Kindly relieve me from this responsibility.”

The fast-paced development came shortly after a division bench comprising Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G S Kulkarni directed the CBI to conduct a ‘preliminary probe’

within 15 days into Singh's allegations against Deshmukh.

March 30, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government had appointed a high-level committee by a retired Bombay HC judge, Justice K U Chandiwal to probe the matter.

Meanwhile, Deshmukh rushed to New Delhi late this evening amid speculation that he would challenge the Bombay HC verdict in the Supreme Court.

Several BJP bigwigs including State party chief Chandrakant Patil, Leaders of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis (Council) and Pravin Darekar, Sudhir Mungantiwar and others welcomed Deshmukh's move to resign from his post to ensure an impartial probe.

This is the second major setback for the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the past three months with a minister compelled to quit the cabinet.

February 28, the Forest Minister Sanjay Rathod had quit amid a huge row following the death of a Tik-Tok star Pooja Chavan (22) in Pune February 7. After the incident, the BJP threatened to withdraw its members from a joint panel of the Shakti Bill and disrupt the legislature proceedings during the Budget Session in March if Rathod continued in in the ministry.

NORTH INDIA LIKELY TO RECEIVE RAINFALL

The hilly areas of north India and the plains are likely to receive widespread rainfall from April 5-9, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Monday. It said a fresh western disturbance is very likely to affect western the Himalayan region from April 6



SUV CASE

NIA captures high-end bike

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 5: The NIA has seized a high-end bike, suspected to be registered in the name of an alleged woman associate of API Sachin Waze, arrested for his alleged role in planting an explosives-laden SUV near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence, an official said Monday.

Sleuths of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) brought the bike in a tempo to its office in south Mumbai Monday, he said.

The woman, an alleged associate of suspended assistant police inspector Waze, was questioned by the NIA Friday, sources said.

The probe agency had Thursday searched a flat in Mira Road area which was in the woman's possession, they said.



The NIA suspects she accompanied Waze to a city-based hotel February 16, before the explosives-laden SUV was found near Ambani's residence Antilia here February 25, the sources said.

The NIA had earlier seized eight high-end vehicles used by Waze, who was arrested in the case last month.

The NIA is also conducting a probe into the death of Thane businessman Mansukh Hiran, who was in possession of the SUV before it was found with explosives near Ambani's house.

Hiran was found dead in a creek in Thane March 5.

Centre, state initiative

JOINT OFFENSIVE AGAINST MAOISTS



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 5: Unlike other issues, the BJP-led Central government in New Delhi and the Congress-headed state government in Chhattisgarh, are unanimous over their offensive against Maoists in the 'red corridor' of India.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah Monday said that the Centre will intensify counter-insurgency operations against Maoists following the massive loss of CRPF troopers in a gun-battle on Saturday. Though the BJP and the Congress remain national political rivals, the state's Bhupesh Baghel government has reinforced the same view as that of Shah.

Eighteen CRPF troopers had been missing after five security personnel were killed and 30 others injured Saturday in a fierce gun-battle with Maoists in a forest near the border between Bijapur and Sukma districts in Chhattisgarh. Sunday, bodies of 17 of the 18 troopers were recovered from the site, taking the toll up to 22.

Shah, who visited the state for the first time since he assumed charge as Home Minister in the Narendra Modi government, in a review meeting with the Baghel government, said: “I want to assure the country

that this fight will not be stopped, rather it will continue with more intensity till the end. In this fight, our victory is definite in the end.”

In the same vein, Chief Minister Baghel said the government was determined to set up security forces' strategic camps deeper into Maoist pockets.

However, there are some who feel otherwise. Take for example, former Director General of Police of UP, and Assam and Director General, BSF, Prakash Singh, whose book “The Naxalite Movement in India” covers the subject comprehensively.

Singh told IANS that both the government and the Maoists need to understand that the last 50 years of violence have not yielded anything. “Both sides can fight this war for another 100 years but it will only result in the loss of lives. It is not a simple law and order problem. Tribals have grievances - real or perceived - which need to be addressed. Some of their misgivings can be dispelled,” Singh said.

The Maoist movement, many analysts believe, are an outcome of governmental apathy towards tribals, absence of land reforms, abject poverty prolonged deprivation, unemployment, and overall, lack of good governance.

‘Pariksha Pe Charcha’ to be held Apr 7: PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday announced that his annual interaction with students, Pariksha Pe Charcha, will be held April 7 in a new virtual format.

A new format, several interesting questions on a wide range of subjects and a memorable discussion with our brave #ExamWarriors, parents and teachers. Watch ‘Pariksha Pe Charcha’ at 7 pm 7th April, the prime minister tweeted.

Along with his tweet, he also tagged a video on the event in which the highlights of this year's ‘Pariksha Pe Charcha’ were detailed.



We have been living under the shadow of coronavirus for the last one year and because of that I have to forego the charm of meeting you in person and have to be with you in a new format - the first virtual edition of ‘Pariksha Pe Charcha’, Modi said in the video.

He also urged students to look upon exams as an opportunity and not as an end of life's dreams. A voice-over in the video said that the prime minister would speak with children as a friend and also interact with teachers and parents during the virtual event.

Modi also talked about the pressure of what would people and parents say which sometimes became a burden.

In the video, the prime minister also said that this was ‘Pariksha Pe Charcha’ but was not confined to just a discussion on ‘Pariksha’ or exams.

HARVEST SEASON



A farmer plucks wood apples in an orchard during its harvest season, in Patna

PTI PHOTO

IAF to use AI tech for threat monitoring: Chief

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 5: Artificial Intelligence-assisted next-gen technologies would be employed for threat monitoring in the Indian Air Force's captive networks, including the current network upgrades, IAF chief Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhadauria said Monday.

If we intend to utilise AI heavily in combat aviation, we may need to redefine or even abandon some traditional principles. These principles are not strict or templated. Essentially different nations with different threat perceptions would have different requirements and this would have evolved over a period of time and experience, he said, at an E-symposium on Artificial Intelligence for Air Warriors organised by the FICCI here.

AI can give you models with impeccable logic to prove that the proposed solutions are the best, he added. Talking about Artificial

Intelligence in air warfare, he said that it can bring enormous changes in the way air wars are fought in the aerospace domain.

On Artificial Intelligence in the force, Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria said Our entire inventory management has been computerised and digitised and we have already started to work on AI based formulation so as to come out with predictive maintenance or predictive threat scenario.

“We have started testing AI and AI-based applications on some projects which are at the different stages,” he added.

On training strategy, the IAF chief said We have already working on effective training strategies where data recorders example are being used to identify outliers in pilot performance, be it in operations, exercises using AI techniques to determine the strong and weak points in terms of manoeuvring or overall orientation, etc.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Aligarh, April 5: Experts of Ayurvedic, Unani and modern medicines said lifestyle changes were necessary to control obesity and allergies.

They were deliberating upon how to combat obesity - through prevention and medications and therapies commonly used to treat allergies in a multi-disciplinary online seminar on ‘Obesity and its Prevention, Allergic Diseases’ organised by the Faculty of Medicine, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). We need to find ways to combine both the traditional and modern medicine systems for a major role in the fight against lifestyle diseases, said AMU Vice Chancellor, Prof Tariq Mansoor.

“Of course, we cannot adopt these procedures for all diseases, but for chronic diseases there is a lot of scope,” he added pointing out that since the spread of Covid pandemic,



“the government is also encouraging multi-disciplinary research in various systems of medicine,” the Vice Chancellor said.

Stressing the need for joint traditional and modern medicine research, Prof Mansoor said that AMU is a multi-disciplinary university and we can take advantage of the facilities for collaborative research.

Speaking on the treatment and prevention of obesity in Ayurvedic

medicine, Prof Jonah S (All India Institute of Ayurvedic, New Delhi) recommended lifestyle changes and appropriate modification in daily diet to improve health along with oral medications to help optimizing the metabolism.

He elaborated how Ayurvedic plants and herbs help in controlling obesity “Because Ayurveda focuses on healthy nutrition, stress reduction, and cultivation of a balanced lifestyle, many people look to its

dietary principles and natural remedies when they want to lose weight. People in many Western countries are using the Ayurvedic regimens and remedies as part of their overall healthcare,” said Prof Jonah.

Dr Paras Wani (Incharge, GTB and IHBAS Unani Unit, Director of Ayush, GNCT, New Delhi) explained how Siman-e-Mufrat (obesity) is considered as a Phlegmatic (Balghami) disease in Unani medicine.

She added that obesity can be prevented by maintaining Asbaab-e-Sittah Zarooriyah (essentials of life) namely the proper and balanced diet, physical activity, balanced retention and evacuation.

Dr Paras explained the various modes of treatments with Ilaj bil Ghiza (Dietotherapy) and Ilaj bil Tadbeer (regimental therapies). Dr Uwais Ashraf (Faculty of Medicine, JNMC) described how obesity is the root cause of all lifestyle diseases in modern medicine.

"Obesity leads to coronary artery

disease, hypertension, fatty liver and PCOD among other health problems. Obesity has a strong genetic and biochemical basis and these areas are being looked into for newer therapeutic modalities,” he said.

Dr Uwais added that diet, lifestyle and behavioural therapies are necessary in the management of obesity.

He also gave a slide presentation on preventing and treating obesity. Speaking on preventive measures to avoid allergies, Prof Rubi Anjum (Chairperson, Dept of Tahaffuzi wa Samaji Tib, AMU) discussed various Unani therapies of Ilaj-bil- Tadbeer.

She spoke about treatments through special regimens and methods to maintain general health through modulation in ‘Asbaab-e-Sitta Zarooriya’.

Prof Rubi also shared a list of foods to try to avoid allergies such as ginger, citrus fruits, turmeric, oily fish and onions.

of the day quote

I know everyone will face difficulties. Despite this, I say lives should be given preference over everything. The damage done by the new virus variant is hard to detect right away. One's condition worsens suddenly. For this, we have to be careful

SHEIKH HASINA | PRIME MINISTER, BANGLADESH

Massive efforts have been made by the British public to stop the spread of the virus. As we continue to make good progress on our vaccine programme and with our roadmap to cautiously easing restrictions underway, regular rapid testing is even more important to make sure those efforts are not wasted

BORIS JOHNSON | PRIME MINISTER, UK

Phuc demonstrated leadership of the highest order in decisively responding to the coronavirus pandemic. His successor will face daunting challenges but will be aided by Phuc's legacy of transparency that earned him popular support

CARL THAYER | PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

SHORT TAKES

Pak judge, family shot dead

Islamabad : A Pakistan anti-terrorism court judge, his wife and two children were killed after unidentified gunmen opened fire at his vehicle in Swabi district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police sources said. The judge was on his way to the national capital Islamabad when the militants ambushed him and killed him with his family members near an interchange at the motorway Sunday.

Israel welcomes new spy aircraft

Tel Aviv : The Israeli Defence Ministry said the country's Air Force has received a new intelligence aircraft that will provide the military with "unprecedented" reconnaissance capabilities. The so-called "Oron" airplane landed Sunday in the Nevatim airbase after more than nine years of developments by the Defence Ministry, Air Force, Intelligence Directorate, Navy, and the Israel Aerospace Industries.

6.1-magnitude quake jolts NZ

Wellington : An earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale jolted New Zealand's east sea Monday and was widely felt in the North Island. The quake occurred at 7.37 p.m. (local time) in the East Cape region, 120 km east of Te Araroa at a depth of 33 km, according to GeoNet, the country's geological hazard information centre. Last month, three strong quakes jolted the sea off the coast of the North Island, which resulted a tsunami warning on the coast.

Cargo vessel collision kills 27

Dhaka: At least 27 people died after a small launch carrying over 100 passengers capsized after colliding with a cargo vessel in Bangladesh's Shitalakkhya river, officials said Monday. The incident took place on Sunday evening at Narayanganj district, about 16 km southeast of Dhaka. While five bodies were recovered on Sunday, rescuers retrieved 22 bodies Monday as a salvage vessel pulled out the launch with the help of a huge crane around midday, rescue officials said.

Iran seeks 'constructive' move from EU members of 2015 nuke agreement

Parties to the Iran nuclear deal have agreed to convene in Austria Tuesday to discuss ways to bring the deal back to life



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Tehran, April 5 : Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has urged European participants of the 2015 nuclear agreement to maintain a "constructive" attitude in the meeting scheduled to take place Tuesday in Vienna.

Zarif made the demand in a telephone conversation with his British counterpart Dominic Raab, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in an online report Sunday.

The two diplomats discussed the latest developments related to the deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in the call, held at Raab's request.

Zarif reiterated Tehran's position that Iran will return to its JCPOA obligations after the "illegal and unjust" sanctions imposed by the US are "completely and definitively" lifted and verified by the Islamic Republic.

Raab said, according to the report, that his country will make efforts for the negotiations to bear fruits.

Parties to the Iran nuclear deal have agreed to convene in Austria

Tuesday to discuss ways to bring the deal back to life.

US State Department spokesman Ned Price confirmed that American representatives will attend the meeting, adding that the country remains "open to" direct talks with Iran.

But, Iran has ruled out any "direct or indirect" contacts with US representatives in Vienna.

The two countries are in a stand-off over reviving the nuclear deal.

The Joe Biden administration has said that if Iran returns to full compliance with the JCPOA, Washington would do the same.

But Iran insists its full compliance will only take place once US sanctions are removed.

The deal was reached in 2015 between Iran and the US, the UK, Russia, France, China, Germany and the European Union.

Iran gradually stopped implementing parts of its JCPOA commitments from May 2019, one year after the administration of former US President Donald Trump unilaterally abandoned the agreement and re-imposed sanctions against Iran.

Myanmar protesters challenge military



REUTERS

Myanmar, April 5: Demonstrators in Myanmar held protests demanding the restoration of Aung San Suu Kyi's government Monday and called for more coordinated nationwide dissent against the military junta, as regional nations prepared for talks on the crisis.

At least 564 people, including 47 children, have been killed by security forces during protests against the Feb. 1 coup, an activist group has said.

The movement has included street marches, a civil disobedience campaign of strikes and quirky acts of rebellion organised on social media.

Activists called for a nationwide clap later Monday in appreciation of those ethnic minority armed groups that are supporting the democratic cause, and young demonstrators who have been at the vanguard of protests, trying to shield or rescue people wounded by security forces.

"Let's clap for five minutes on April 5, 5 p.m. (10:30 GMT) to honour Ethnic Armed Organisations and Gen Z defence youths from Myanmar including Yangon who are fighting in the revolution... on behalf of us," Ei Thinzar Maung, a protest leader, posted on Facebook.

Besides the brutal crackdown on street protests, the junta has sought to suppress the campaign by shutting down wireless broadband and mobile data services.

Israel PM appears in court to face corruption charges

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, April 5 : Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was back in court for his corruption trial Monday as the country's political parties were set to weigh in on whether he should form the next government after a closely divided election or step down to focus on his legal woes.

Between witness testimony in a Jerusalem courtroom and the consultations at the president's office across town, it promised to be a day of extraordinary political drama, bringing into sharp focus on Netanyahu's increasingly desperate efforts to stay in power.

He is Israel's longest-serving prime minister and has clung to power through four hard-fought elections in less than two years, even as he has faced allegations of bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

The March 23 election was largely a referendum on his leadership but produced no clear verdict.

Israel's political parties, meanwhile, began meeting with President Reuven Rivlin to recommend which candidate should be tasked with forming the next government.

After each election, Israel's pres-



You have created an opportunity to rebuild your country, but there is one precondition—all foreign fighters and troops must leave the country. It is a unique opportunity to build a united sovereign stable and prosperous country

CHARLES MICHEL | EU COUNCIL, PRESIDENT

Indonesia landslides, floods kill over 100

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jakarta, April 5 : More than 100 people were killed and dozens are missing after floods and landslides hit East Nusa Tenggara province in Indonesia, officials and media reports said Monday.

Volcanic debris from Mount Lewotolo engulfed homes Sunday following heavy rain, killing 20 people and leaving more than 60 missing, Thomas Ola, the head of Lembata district, told dpa news agency.

"Fourteen villages are still totally isolated, with roads inaccessible," he said.

The death toll is likely to increase as information was still being gathered from the villages, he said.

Mount Lewatolo has erupted intermittently since December.

In another part of the province, the death toll after flash floods and landslides hit villages on Adonara



island Sunday rose to 73, Metro TV news channel reported.

Access to the island had been difficult because of high seas, said Raditya Jati, spokesman for the National Disaster Management Agency.

"The only way to get there is by sea and strong winds and storms mean that we can't sail," he said.

Furthermore, interruptions to internet access mean limited in-

US SHUTS GUANTANAMO PRISON

A once-secret unit within the Guantanamo Bay detention center that had fallen into disrepair has been closed and the prisoners moved to another facility on the American base in Cuba, the US military said Sunday.



rental rain, strong winds and large waves during the week ahead.

The tropical cyclone Seroja may intensify over the coming day and is expected to move south-west away from Indonesia, it said.

President Joko Widodo said he was deeply saddened by the disasters.

"I understand the plight of our fellow citizens affected by the disasters," he said.

"I'm calling for immediate provision of health care, food and other basic needs to the affected people and restoration of infrastructure."

Indonesia has recorded nearly 1,000 disasters since January, mostly hydro-meteorological hazards, including flooding and landslides, according to the disaster management agency.

At least 337 people have been killed, 55 are missing and 4.3 million have been affected, with many displaced, it said.

UK launches mass testing programme



REUTERS

London, April 5 : British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Monday everyone in England will be able to take a COVID-19 test twice a week in a new drive to track the pandemic as society reopens and the vaccine rollout continues at its rapid rate.

Johnson, who is expected to confirm plans to relaunch international travel and open sections of the economy later on Monday, said the new mass testing programme would break the chain of transmissions and spot cases without symptoms. As much of Europe enters new lockdowns to tackle surging cases, Johnson has set out a staggered plan to ease restrictions in the coming months, a huge boost for one of the worst-hit countries during the pandemic.

Libya's stability stressed by EU

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tripoli, April 5 : Charles Michel, President of the European Council, met the Prime Minister of Libya Abdul Hamid Dbeibah in the capital Tripoli, and stressed the European Union (EU)'s support for stability in the war-torn country.

"Michel expressed the EU's readiness to provide all forms of support to the Government of National Unity to enhance stability in the country and hold elections," Xinhua news agency quoted a statement issued by the Libyan Government of National Unity.

"Michel also emphasised that all the EU countries speak with a unified voice regarding supporting the Libyan authorities in all issues, including development, immigration, security, and elections," it said.

The Prime Minister commended the EU's role in supporting stability and security of Libya, stressing the importance of the Libyan-European partnership and cooperation in

issues of mutual interest, the statement added.

In a tweet on Sunday, Michel said: "I came to Tripoli in a moment of hope and challenges. The EU stands by the Libyan people and its new leadership. We are ready to increase our support to a unified, sovereign, stable and prosperous Libya."

Dbeibah's Government of National Unity was approved by the House of Representatives (Parliament) in a major step towards re-establishing stability in the country that has been roiled by conflict for a decade.

The interim government is tasked with preparing for national elections, scheduled for December 24.

2.1 mn people in Ethiopia in need of humanitarian assistance: UN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Addis Ababa, April 5: The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) disclosed Sunday that around 2.1 million people in Ethiopia's eastern Somali regional state are in need of humanitarian assistance.

In a bi-weekly humanitarian bulletin report, the UNOCHA disclosed 2.1 million drought-affected people in the Somali regional state need humanitarian assistance, the Xinhua news agency reported.

The UNOCHA disclosed the drying up of traditional water sources as well as the availability of limited functional water boreholes in the



In a bi-weekly humanitarian bulletin report, the UNOCHA disclosed 2.1 million drought-affected people are in the Somali regional state

drought-affected areas, has meant water trucking schemes are urgently needed.

This is in addition to various food and non-food humanitarian assistance the UNOCHA needs to meet the needs of the more than two million needy people in the state.

"At least \$65.5 million is required to cover all identified needs," the UNOCHA disclosed.

Conflict, drought, and seasonal floods have contributed to internal displacement in Ethiopia's Somali regional state and elsewhere.

The humanitarian needs in the country have also been exacerbated by the outbreak of the Covid-19 disease.

Ethiopia currently has the largest number of Covid-19 cases in east Africa, as well as the fifth-highest number of Covid-19 cases in the African continent as a whole. Ethiopia currently has recorded 208,961 Covid-19 cases and 2,890 Covid-19 related deaths as of Sunday noon.

business

of the day quote

Safety is an integral part of Volvo's ethos. During the last one year we have worked with utmost care and concern for the safety and wellbeing of our employees. We had put in place stringent health related protocols during this period

JYOTI MALHOTRA | MD, VOLVO CAR INDIA

There has been reduced sugar sales by nearly 1 million tonne due to sluggish demand owing to the nationwide lockdown imposed in March last year, resulting in shutdown of all confectionery, soft drinks, chocolates, biscuits and sweetmeats business

JAIPRAKASH DANEGAONKAR | PRESIDENT, NFCSF

The retail industry will again start experiencing severe liquidity challenges due to the 'Retail Lockdown' in the state, while the fixed operating costs remained intact

KUMAR RAJAGOPALAN | CEO, RETAILERS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

SHORT TAKES

Hyundai sells over 1mn SUVs

New Delhi: Automobile major Hyundai Motor India has cumulatively sold over one million SUVs in domestic and export markets since its inception, the company said Monday. At present, the company offers four SUVs in the country, namely Venue, Creta, Tucson and Kona Electric. "With over 1 million cumulative SUV sales in domestic and export markets, we have reiterated the promise of Make-in-India over nearly two and a half decades of our presence in India," said Tarun Garg, Director (Sales, Marketing & Service), Hyundai Motor India.

Yes Bank loans & advances up 0.8%

New Delhi: Yes Bank Monday said its loans and advances grew by a marginal 0.8% on a y-o-y basis to ₹1,72,850 crore at the end of March 2021. However, the figures are provisional and are being released ahead of the official announcement of the financial results for the quarter ended March 31, 2021, Yes Bank said in a regulatory filing. Bank's loans and advances in the same period a year ago stood at ₹1,71,443 crore.

Investors' wealth falls over ₹454L cr

New Delhi: Investors' wealth tumbled over ₹4.54 lakh crore in morning trade on Monday as markets crashed amid a sharp spike in coronavirus cases in the country. The 30-share BSE benchmark index plummeted 1,449.03 points to 48,580.80 in morning trade. Following this, the m-cap of BSE-listed companies dived ₹4,54,987.72 crore to ₹2,02,71,414.07 crore.

Adani acquires residual stake

New Delhi: Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) Monday said it has acquired 25% stake of Vishwa Samudra Holdings in Krishnapatnam Port for ₹2,800 crore. This will result in APSEZ increasing its stake from 75% to 100% in Krishnapatnam Port, which is located on the east coast of India in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh, is an all-weather, deep water port; has multi-cargo facility with a current capacity of 64 million tonne per annum (MTPA).



History has proven that a sluggish economy is a major cause behind the rise of trade protectionism

ZHANG YUEJIAO | DIRECTOR, LEGAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, CHINA

TRILATERAL TRADE COULD REACH \$110bn

The trilateral trade between India, Israel and the UAE can propel to a high of \$110 billion by 2030 by tapping into their mutual strengths, said top diplomats. The comments were made at an event organised by the International Federation of Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce (IFIICC), to discuss the ongoing business collaborations



LG Electronics exits from loss-making mobile business



AGENCIES

Seoul/New Delhi, April 5: LG Electronics said Monday that it will withdraw from the mobile business after years of money-losing performance amid intensifying competition with bigger rivals.

The South Korean tech powerhouse said in a regulatory filing that its mobile communications (MC) unit will no longer produce and sell handsets after July 31, citing its long slump and fierce competition in the industry.

The decision came two months after the company said its MC division is open to "all possibilities" for its future operations.

LG's mobile business has been in the red since the second quarter of 2015. Its accumulated operating losses reached 5 trillion won (US\$4.4 billion) last year.

LG, once the world's third-largest handset maker, reportedly had talks with Vingroup of Vietnam and Volkswagen of Germany to sell the mobile business, but the talks fell through, according to industry insiders.

'Housing sales up 44% in Jan-Mar 2021 across eight cities'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: Sales of residential properties across eight major cities grew 44% in the January-March period this year to nearly 72,000 units as demand recovered, according to Knight Frank India.

Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Pune performed well on the back of the Maharashtra government's decision to reduce stamp duty. 71,963 units were sold during Q1 2021, 44% more than in Q1 2020.

This healthy growth in sales also encouraged developers to launch new projects which are reflected in the 76,006 units launched during the quarter, substantial growth of 38% y-o-y," Knight Frank India said in a statement.

SWIGGY CLOSE TO RAISING ₹5,862cr AT \$5BN VALUATION



AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 5: Online food delivery platform Swiggy is close to raise \$800 million (about ₹5,862 crore) in funding, with investors Falcon Edge Capital, Amansa Capital, Think Investments, Carmignac and Goldman Sachs joining as new investors, that will take its valuation to nearly \$5 billion.

According to an internal memo sent by company founder Sriharsha Majety to employees on Monday and seen by IANS, existing investors Accel and Prosus will also participate in the series J round of funding.

Singapore-based GIC Private Ltd and the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) are also likely to participate in the ongoing funding round at a later stage, people aware of the deal revealed.

Swiggy was valued at \$3.7 billion when it raised funds in February last year. The fresh fundraising comes at a time when Zomato is planning for a \$750 million-\$1 billion IPO later this year.

India well prepared to combat 2nd wave: FinMin

AFTER BATTLING A HISTORIC PANDEMIC IN FY 2020-21, THE INDIAN ECONOMY IS POISED TO BUILD BACK BETTER AND STRONGER AS IS REFLECTED IN THE MOVEMENT OF SEVERAL HIGH-FREQUENCY INDICATORS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: Having successfully managed the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, India is well prepared to combat the scourge of the second wave, the Finance Ministry's monthly economic report said. The report further said high-frequency data indicates that India is on the path to become better and stronger.

"After battling a historic pandemic in FY 2020-21, the Indian economy is poised to build back better and stronger as is reflected in the movement of several high-frequency indicators.

Instrumental in this resilient comeback will be a strong revival in investment growth supported

by the AtmaNirbharBharat Mission and a massive boost to infrastructure and capital expenditure provided for in the Union Budget 2021-22," the report said.

The rise in daily new cases since mid February marks the onset of second wave of Covid-19 infection in India, the report said, adding the country "has, however, been able to delay the onset of the second wave - the gap between the first peak to start of the second wave has been 151 days in India while it was much lower in other countries."

At this juncture of the onset of the second wave, the report said, India is well prepared to combat the scourge of the virus.

"The wheels of India's capex cycle have been set into motion,



signs of which are imminent in the second half of the year. As the vaccination drive continuously upscales in India and guided by the learnings of India's successful management of pandemic during its

first wave, India is now well armed to combat any downside risk posed by the recent surge in Covid-19 cases," the report said.

With the end of a challenging 2020-21, the crest of a brighter and

Manufacturing activities ease in March: Survey

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 5: India's manufacturing sector activities lost further growth momentum and fell to a seven-month low in March as demand was constrained by the escalation of the Covid-19 pandemic, a monthly survey said Monday.

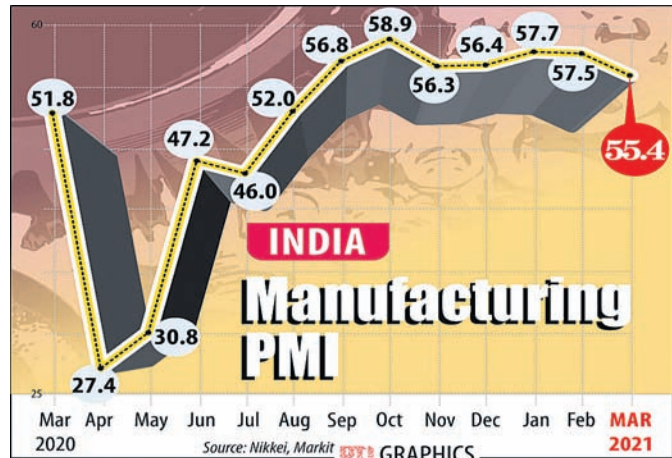
The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell from 57.5 in February to a seven-month low of 55.4 in March.

However, the latest reading was indicative of a substantial improvement in the health of the sector that outpaced the long-run series average, it said. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

"Production, new orders and input buying expanded at softer rates," said Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at IHS Markit.

Lima further noted that "survey participants indicated that demand growth was constrained by the escalation of the Covid-19 pandemic, while the rise in input buying was curtailed by an intensification of cost pressures." "With Covid-19 restrictions expanded and lockdown measures re-introduced in many states, Indian manufacturers look set to experience a challenging month in April," Lima said.

India recorded an all-time high of 1,03,558 coronavirus infections in a day pushing the nationwide Covid-19 tally to 1,25,89,067, ac-



CHALLENGING TIMES AHEAD

Survey participants indicated that demand growth was constrained by the escalation of the Covid-19 pandemic

The survey noted that employment declined in March, taking the current sequence of job shedding to a year

cording to the Union Health Ministry data updated Monday.

The survey noted that employment declined in March, taking the current sequence of job shedding to a year. "Panellists indicated that the fall stemmed from Covid-19 restrictions related to workforces. Despite the reduction in payroll numbers, outstanding business rose only marginally," Lima said. Business confidence waned in

On the price front, the rate of input cost inflation was among the strongest seen over the past three years

According to experts, a sudden surge in Covid-19 cases is likely to prompt the RBI to maintain status quo on policy rates

March. While some firms foresee output growth in the coming 12 months, the vast majority predicted no change from present levels.

On the price front, the rate of input cost inflation was among the strongest seen over the past three years. However, selling prices increased only moderately as companies limited their adjustments to retain a competitive edge and boost sales.

LOCKDOWN BLUES

FMCG Cos prepared to allay impact of 'future disruption'

We are applying learnings from last year on streamlining the supply chain to ensure minimal disruption in supplies. Some of the measures implemented last year, like order-booking through our call centre and WhatsApp, have been stepped up

ADARSH SHARMA | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (SALES), DABUR INDIA

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 5: Amid surging Covid-19 cases in the country, FMCG companies say they are applying learnings from the last year when nationwide and several localised lockdowns impacted their manufacturing and supply chain, to mitigate impact of any future disruption.

Emami Ltd Director Harsha V Agarwal said based on the earlier experience, the company is well prepared to manage any sudden local lockdown and resultant uncertainties, if any.

"We are agile and keeping a close watch on the situation. Simultaneously, we are beefing up our supply chain by building stock of both finished goods as well as RMPM (raw material and packaging material), wherever necessary.



"We are also trying to ensure that our stocks are nearest to the selling point as much as possible so that our response time is minimised to tackle the situation in the event of any disruption. However, currently we see no disruption anywhere," Agarwal said.

Dabur India Executive Director-Sales Adarsh Sharma said it is applying learnings from the last year to ensure minimal disruption in

supplies. "We are applying learnings from last year on streamlining the supply chain to ensure minimal disruption in supplies. Some of the measures implemented last year, like order-booking through our call centre and WhatsApp, have been stepped up. We have also increased the frequency of supplies to distributors and outlets in the impacted markets to tide over any potential impact," he said.

Arvind Mediratta, MD and CEO, METRO Cash and Carry India said: "We have absorbed all the learnings from the past year with respect to disruption in supply chain and evolving consumption and buying behaviour of customers. "We are now better equipped to ensure enough stock availability for our customers, especially the kiranas. We also have our e-commerce app for convenient online

shopping for our customers".

"With the current upswing in Covid-19 cases, it is difficult to predict the geography and tenure of localised lockdowns. We do not expect any supply chain disruptions. As a proactive measure, we have ramped up our productions levels and are building optimal inventory levels across multiple points in our supply chain from factories to warehouses across the country," Godrej Consumer Products CEO - India & SAARC Sunil Kataria said.

Apart from the weekend lockdown in Maharashtra, strict restrictions came into force from Monday 8pm onwards under which shopping malls, bars, restaurants, small shops will be open only for take-aways and parcels. Saloons and beauty parlours will also remain closed in the state.

The daily rise in Covid-19 cases in India crossed the grim milestone of one-lakh from 20,000 infections in just 25 days, unlike last year when it took 76 days for daily cases to reach the then peak of 97,894 on September 17, reflecting the speed at which the virus is spreading.

India recorded an all-time high of 1,03,558 single day new coronavirus infections pushing the nationwide Covid-19 tally of cases to 1,25,89,067, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated Monday.

MAN UNITED FIGHT BACK

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, April 5: Mason Greenwood completed a strong comeback by Manchester United in a 2-1 win over Brighton that strengthened the team's grip on second place in the Premier League.

While Manchester City is all but certain to capture the league title, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side is looking to underline its progress by finishing as runner-up and going all the way in the Europa League.

Brighton made life difficult and United academy graduate Danny Welbeck put the visitors on course Sunday for their first-ever league victory at Old Trafford, only for Marcus Rashford and Greenwood to reply in the second half.

This match was far less dramatic than United's 3-2 win in September's reverse fixture — when Bruno Fernandes converted a penalty after the final whistle — but Brighton made the hosts work hard for its victory.

United consolidated second place and is four points ahead of third-place Leicester and 11 ahead of Tottenham in fifth.

Dean Henderson was chosen ahead of David De Gea in goal for United and did well to repel a point-blank header from Welbeck, only for the striker to direct home the rebound in the 13th minute.

Rashford provided a smart, angled finish from Fernandes' pass to make it 1-1 in the 62nd. Brighton's penalty appeals fell on deaf ears after Harry Maguire appeared to pull back Welbeck close to the goal, before Greenwood's diving header from Paul Pogba's mishit shot completed the recovery in the 83rd.

Earlier, Tottenham caved in again, conceding an 85th-minute goal to draw 2-2 at Newcastle and stay outside the top four.

If Jose Mourinho's team could see out victories, it could likely already start planning for life in next season's Champions League. After all, Spurs have dropped 11 points because of goals conceded in the final 10 minutes of games this season, the most of any Premier League side.

As it is, Tottenham is in fifth place — two points behind fourth-place Chelsea — and engaged in a furious tussle with perhaps six rivals for the final qualification positions for Europe's elite competition.

It was the northeast club that converted a contentiously awarded, stoppage-time penalty to somehow secure a 1-1 draw at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in September.

On this occasion, it was Joe Willock — a player on loan from Tottenham's fierce rival, Arsenal — who grabbed the late equalizer,



MATCH-WINNER: Mason Greenwood (R) wheels away in celebration after scoring the winning goal against Brighton, Sunday

after Harry Kane's double cancelled out the opening goal from Joelinton.

Tottenham have failed to win six games this season in which it led at half time. That is also the most of any team.

FULHAM COLLAPSE

With 77 minutes gone in its match at Aston Villa, Fulham was leading 1-0 and heading out of the relegation zone at the expense of Newcastle. Within four minutes, Scott Parker's team was behind and staring at another week in the bottom at least.

Trezeguet, a second-half substitute, scored in the 78th and 81st minutes before Ollie Watkins added a third in a 3-1 win for Villa, which was again without captain and star player Jack Grealish. Third-to-last

Fulham dropped three points behind Newcastle.

SOUTHAMPTON ALMOST SAFE

Southampton's top-flight status looks to be safe for another season after coming from behind to beat Burnley 3-2. Ten points now separate Southampton from Fulham, which only has seven games left.

Nathan Redmond completed the comeback in a thriller at St. Mary's Stadium with a 66th-minute volley, following strikes before half-time by Stuart Armstrong and Danny Ings.

Burnley had gone 2-0 ahead thanks to a penalty by Chris Wood, who then set up Matej Vydra for the second. Southampton climbed up to 13th place. Burnley are seven points clear of Fulham.

Hurkacz clinches Miami Open title

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami, April 5: With the Big Three absent at the Miami Open, and the next generation in tennis scrambling to fill the void, it was Hubert Hurkacz of Poland who made a breakthrough.

The 24-year-old Hurkacz won the biggest title of his career by beating 19-year-old Jannik Sinner of Italy 7-6(7-4), 6-4 in Sunday's final.

Hurkacz improved to 10-0 in Florida this year, including the Delray Beach title in January. Ranked 37th, he is projected to climb to a career-high 16th in next week's rankings.

The matchup in the final was a surprise even though Novak Djokovic, Rafa Nadal and Roger Federer skipped the tournament, as did reigning US Open champion Dominic Thiem.

Hurkacz eliminated No.2-seeded

Stefanos Tsitsipas and No.4 Andrey Rublevbeat — the first time he has beaten two top 10 opponents in the same tournament.

Hurkacz was poised early while playing his first final in the top-level ATP series, the Masters 1000. In the first set, he raced to a 3-0 lead, briefly fell behind and then played a solid tie-breaker, closing it out by winning a 25-stroke rally.

Sinner, playing in just his third Masters 1000 tournament, wobbled serving at 6-5 in the first set and was broken at love. He lost his serve twice more to fall behind 4-0 in the second set. Hurkacz returned well and broke four times as he became Poland's first Masters 1000 champion.

World No.1 Ash Barty won her second successive Miami title Saturday when Bianca Andreescu retired in the final because of a foot injury while trailing 6-3, 4-0.



Fakhar Zaman's controversial run out in 2nd ODI vs SA

It's up to umpires to decide if de Kock was at fault: MCC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 5: Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman's contentious run-out in the second ODI against South Africa has sparked a debate on spirit of the game with Marylebone Cricket Club saying it was "up to the umpires to decide" if Quinton de Kock had attempted to mislead the batsman.

In a stiff chase of 342, Zaman smashed a spectacular 193 in a losing cause as the batsman was run out in a controversial fashion involving South Africa wicketkeeper de Kock.

The stumper pointed his finger towards Lungi Ngidi but the ball was, in fact, thrown by Aiden Markram towards the keeper's end and it was a direct hit. Zaman had slowed down his pace at the end of his second run and could not make it back into his crease.

Replays showed that de Kock had seemed to convince Zaman into believing that the throw was going to the non-striker's end.

"Law 41.5.1 states: It is unfair for any fielder wilfully to attempt, by word or action, to distract, deceive or obstruct either batsman after the striker has received the ball," the MCC, custodians of the game, tweeted.

In another, the MCC wrote, "The Law is clear; with the offence being an ATTEMPT to deceive, rather than the batsman actually being deceived. It's up to the umpires to decide if there was such an attempt. If so, then it's Not out, 5 Penalty runs + the 2 they ran, and batsmen choose who faces next ball."

The debate around de Kock's gesture was whether he was intentionally attempting to deceive Zaman into thinking that the throw was headed for the other end, leading to the batsman slowing down his pace while going for the second run at the Wanderers Sunday.

Many in the Pakistan cricket circles blamed de Kock for "deliberately distracting" Zaman, leading to his dismissal. Former captain

Waqar Yousif and fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar questioned the South African's act.

"What a master inning by @FakharZaman. Treat to watch. Single handedly brought the game here. Sad end to the inning. Deserved a 200. Was the spirit of the game compromised by South Africa & @QuinnDeKock69 in that run out?" Akhtar asked in a tweet.

Waqar wrote on his twitter handle, "Record breaking inning. Simply Outstanding @FakharZamanLive. What about this cheeky giggle from Quinton tells you?"

ICC Law 41.5 says: "Deliberate distraction, deception or obstruction of batsman. 41.5.1 in addition to 41.4 states it is unfair for any fielder willfully to attempt, by word or action, to distract, deceive or obstruct either batsman after the striker has received the ball."

However, the Pakistani opener, who achieved the highest score by a batsman in an ODI chase, refused to blame de Kock.

"The fault was mine as I was too busy looking out for Haris Rauf at the other end as I felt he'd started off a little late from his crease, so I thought he was in trouble. The rest is up to the match referee, but I don't think it's Quinton's fault."

"I played a very good innings but it would have been better if we had won the match," Fakhar said after the game. South African captain Temba Bavuma said de Kock's act was "quite clever".

"You've always got to look for ways especially when things are not going your way, got to find ways to turn momentum around. Quinny did that," Bavuma said. "I don't think he broke the rules in any kind of way. It was a clever piece of cricket."

PACE CONCERNS ADDRESSED, BUT SPIN STILL A CONCERN FOR KINGS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: With a new name and a stronger squad, Punjab Kings will be hoping for a change of fortunes this season after spending big money on addressing their death bowling concerns and beefing up a not-so-inspiring middle-order.

Punjab Kings finished sixth last season but missed out on a play-off spot narrowly after bouncing back strongly with five wins on the trot.

They lost games they should have won and if that controversial short run call did not go against them in their tournament-opener against Delhi Capitals, they would have ended up sneaking into the top-four.

Lack of support to lead pacer Mohammed Shami and the big-hitting Glenn Maxwell not firing also hurt their chances, areas they feel they have addressed this season.

Here is a look at the team that will open their campaign April 12 against Rajasthan Royals in Mumbai.

STRENGTHS

Punjab Kings have one of the strongest batting line-ups this season. They have a dangerous opening pairing in skipper KL Rahul, who won the 'Orange Cap' last season, and the ever-reliable Mayank Agarwal.

Universe Boss Chris Gayle, who

hammered 288 runs in seven games at a strike rate of 137.14 last year, is expected to start from game one this time after warming the bench in the initial part of the 2020 edition.

Include flamboyant wicketkeeper-batsman Nicholas Pooran to the mix and the top four seems sorted. They have also roped in the services of the World's No.1 T20 batsman Dawid Malan, seen as Gayle's back-up.

After Maxwell's expected departure, the middle-order has been strengthened with the arrival of all-rounder Moises Henriques and Tamil Nadu batsman Shahrulkh Khan.

Deepak Hooda has also proven he can strike the ball hard and is experienced enough to play the role of the finisher. In Fabian Allen, Punjab Kings have another overseas all-rounder option.

The pace attack has boosted by the signing of Australian speedsters Jhye Richardson and Riley Meredith, who had a sensational Big Bash campaign. Alongside Mohammad Shami and England's Chris Jordan the quartet makes for a formidable fast bowling unit.

WEAKNESSES

Punjab Kings' biggest weakness is the lack of quality spinners. They released off-spinner K Gowtham, who ended up becoming the most expensive buy ever at the latest auction.



Coach Anil Kumble (R) and assistant coach Andy Flower during Punjab Kings' practice session ahead of IPL 2021

The likes of Murugan Ashwin and young Ravi Bishnoi, who impressed last season, will be expected to deliver. They have added Jalaj Saxena, who is a highly experienced domestic player and picked up 10 wickets in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy earlier this year at an excellent economy rate of 6.26.

But with no internationally successful players in the spin department, it remains the weakest link. The team also don't have another India pacer of the calibre of Shami.

OPPORTUNITIES

Punjab Kings are yet to win an IPL title. With most of their bases covered on paper, they seem like

strong contenders this year. This season is the perfect opportunity for Rahul and his men to get their hands on their maiden title, having charted out a three-year plan under his leadership and coach Anil Kumble's guidance.

The league will also provide Rahul much-needed match practice ahead of the T20 World Cup. The generally calm and composed wicketkeeper-batsman looked out of sorts in the T20 series against England.

THREATS

Shami, who fractured his wrist in Australia last year, has not played cricket in four months. With the national team's workload management to be kept in mind in a busy year, it remains to be seen if he plays all league games. He had a memorable run last year with 20 wickets and the team's success will depend a lot on his performance.

The squad: KL Rahul (c/wk), Mayank Agarwal, Chris Gayle, Mandeep Singh, Prabsimran Singh, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Sarfraz Khan, Deepak Hooda, Murugan Ashwin, Ravi Bishnoi, Harpreet Brar, Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ishan Porel, Darshan Nalkande, Chris Jordan, Dawid Malan, Jhye Richardson, Shahrulkh Khan, Riley Meredith, Moises Henriques, Jalaj Saxena, Utkarsh Singh, Fabian Allen & Saurabh Kumar.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, April 5: Rajasthan Royals organised a stadium live show here to launch their jersey for the IPL beginning April 9. The IPL starts in Chennai Friday.

The Sawai Mansingh Stadium was taken over by a 3D projection and light show as Rajasthan Royals players revealed their jersey for the 2021 season.

An audio-visual show was live broadcast from the stadium to fans around the world and players of the Rajasthan Royals team in their bio-bubble in Mumbai.

"The show was a celebration of everything that the Royals fans hold dear to their heart – the stadium, the city of Jaipur, the Rajasthani culture and landscape – as well as a reflection of how the franchise's association with Red Bull is helping them move forward at rapid pace, bringing out new ideas and helping the team grow," RR said in a release.

RR are the inaugural edition winners. South African all-rounder and IPL's most expensive auction buy, Chris Morris said, "Unbelievable reveal of the new jersey. From 2015 till now the jersey has changed a lot since the last time I played for Royals, and it is a beautiful jersey."

